Public Opinion and Cannabis Policies: What Can We Learn from Canadian Market?

by

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Marketing and Consumer Studies

Guelph, Ontario, Canada
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ABSTRACT

PUBLIC OPINION AND CANNABIS POLICIES:
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CANADIAN MARKET?

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This thesis explores the phenomenon of public opinion on cannabis legalization in Canada. Specifically, this study investigated consumers’ opinions towards the cannabis policy and its market place. A netnographic study on four online communities: Canadian Weed Forum, Roll It Up Forum, subreddits r/marijuana and r/canadians, was conducted. Findings suggested that consumers’ opinions on the cannabis legalization policy vary from strongly supportive to strongly negative statements. Overall, consumers could be divided into different groups: groups of enthusiasts and haters of legalization. This study found that negative attitudes toward cannabis policy exist in the Canadian market. Additionally, product and price are found as important marketing mix elements in the market place. Results suggested that four symbolic boundaries: quality boundary, purpose boundary, source boundary and geographical boundary influencing the meaning of product to consumers. Different price points also impact on consumers’ attitudes towards cannabis product in the market place. Conceptual and managerial contributions are also offered.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Advisor May Aung. Your time, dedication and patience have guided me to the development and completion of this thesis. I am so grateful for your support and encouragement, especially during the hard time of my thesis progress. I have learned so much from you and you will always be a role model for me in the next chapter of my life. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Towhidul Islam and Dr. Laila Rohani. You both have given me great advices and mentorships for my thesis progress. Moreover, I would like to thank Dr. Jian Zhou to chair my defense. I appreciate your time to re-schedule the date and given me valuable insight. Additionally, I would like to thank all my professors and faculties in the department of Marketing and Consumer Studies at the University of Guelph, especially to Rita Raso. Your guidance and support made such an impact to my academic experience. It was such an honor to be one of the graduate students in this department. I would also like to thank you all my friends: Miriam, Allison, Zuzanna, Emily and Shreya – you guys definitely made this journey a little bit better!

Finally, I would like to thank my father and my mother. You are my inspirational for my master’s degree path. More importantly, I want to thank my husband Tuan Anh and my son Luke. You guys are the reason of this thesis completion. I love you both very much!
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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The legalization of cannabis (or marijuana, informally) in Canada on October 17th, 2018 has had complex effects on the citizens. By using Uruguay and the USA (specifically, Colorado and Washington States) cannabis-used models and the information provided by the Cannabis Task Force, legislators have examined and discussed the policy for cannabis regulation in Canada (Government of Canada, 2016). However, there is still a need to understand better the public opinions about the legalization and its market place. Therefore, this research study hopes to explore and offer some insights within this Canadian context.

Cannabis legalization has been a debate for many years in Canada, however, the reality set in during 2015 federal election as political candidates expressed a public interest in decriminalization. A Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and regulation was commissioned in 2016 to examine and recommend the framework for the legalization with 5 main objectives: minimizing harms of use, establishing a safe and responsible production system, designing an appropriate distribution system, enforcing public safety and protection; and accessing marijuana for medical purposes (Government of Canada, 2017). The task force has collected and enforced the framework by studying from both United States and Uruguay cannabis market (Government of Canada, 2018). Also, Cannabis Task Force emphasizes on the importance of alcohol and tobacco model frameworks to define the cannabis regulations. This regulation framework has shaped the Canadian cannabis policy with three main purposes: to protect the youth, to keep the profit out of illicit market and maximize the benefits of cannabis consumption to adult (Government of Canada, 2018). Thus, in order to maximize the benefit of cannabis regulations for consumers, the Government of Canada has been doing surveys to understand the cannabis usage populations (Statistics Canada, 2018). However, there is still an on-going need to explore further, for example to capture unbiased perspectives of consumers on cannabis policy and the market through online environments.

Internet has given a great opportunity for people to be able to communicate and interact with other at anywhere and anytime without constrains in time and places (Anderson, 2005). Social media provides an environment for members to express themselves, establish and maintain social connections with others (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Online community enables connections for people who have the same interests and preferences to share and to get together (Seraj, 2012). Cannabis consumers mainly use specific forums to share, provide and debate cannabis and cannabis-related information. Additionally, social media provides suitable platform for businesses to conduct viral advertising and marketing (Golan & Zaidner, 2008; Utz, 2009). However, academia researchers and legislators within the context of cannabis industry have-yet to examine the consumers’ opinions through online environment.
1.2 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The objective of this research study is developing an understanding of cannabis consumers in regards of the policy and the cannabis market place in Canada through online environment. Thus, this study will apply netnography research method on relevant online communities.

To fulfill this research objective, the following research questions are proposed within the context of relevant online communities.

1. What are the general perspectives of cannabis’ consumers for Canadian cannabis policy?
2. What are the perspectives of cannabis’ consumers regarding Canadian cannabis policy on the market place (specifically relating to core marketing mix elements)?
   a. What are the perspectives of cannabis’ consumers on cannabis price related policy?
   b. What are the perspectives of cannabis’ consumers on cannabis product related policy?
   c. What are the perspectives of cannabis’ consumers on cannabis-licensed vendors related policy?
   d. What are the perspectives of cannabis’ consumers on cannabis promotion related policy?
3. What are the conceptual and managerial contributions resulting from this study?

1.3 Research Design and Overview of Chapters

Cannabis is a new phenomenon not only in global environment but also in Canadian market. In chapter 2, academic literature on cannabis and cannabis consumption for different purposes were introduced. Furthermore, social media is a great environment for cannabis consumers to express their perspectives. Therefore, social media streams and the nature of users were included in this study. Lastly, past cannabis studies through social media platforms were analyzed and provided a gap in literature that needed to be addressed.

Because the objective of this research study is to investigate consumers’ opinions on cannabis towards cannabis policy and its market place, an exploratory and descriptive investigation is recommended. Netnography methodology allows the usage of public information available throughout online forums “to identify and understand the needs and decision influences of relevant online consumer groups” (Kozinets, 2002:3). This methodology allows researchers to observe the participants in an online environment that provides the unique characteristics of Internet such as: alteration and accessibility of content, anonymity, and archiving of data (Kozinets, 2015). Since the main use of netnography is to understand online communities, and to fulfill the objective
of this research study, this methodology was suitable and appropriate to use. Therefore, a qualitative method was used in this study.

In chapter 3, a discussion on advantages and disadvantages of netnography was introduced. Three preliminary studies were conducted to provide an optimal solution for research sites. Thus, researcher decided to go with six cannabis online communities from global environment to specific Canadian environment to fulfill this research study. In the next section, in order to conduct netnography research methodology, Kozinet’s guideline (2015) were used. With that, only four online communities were found to fulfill these requirements. These are Roll It Up Forum, Canadian Weed Forum, sub-reddit r/marijuana and sub-reddit r/canadians. Moreover, Kozinet’s guideline (2015) for selecting data criteria was used to select postings and replies to conduct and analyze data from these four online communities. These requirements for data criteria include relevance, quality, richness and unique. A brief summary of the data set was introduced in the next section where number of posts and replies for each online community were provided. Lastly, in chapter 3, researcher provided an ethic process for netnography methodology while conducting this research study.

In chapter 4, research findings from this study were introduced and presented through four online communities. Firstly, similar patterns of cannabis consumers’ perspectives were found relating to cannabis policy. Furthermore, two main groups of cannabis consumers connecting to Canadian cannabis policy are presented as Groups of Enthusiasts and Haters of Legalization. Within the groups of enthusiasts, optimistic enthusiasts and confirmed enthusiasts are found as two large groups and their characteristics can be seen as mainly positive towards the cannabis policy. On the other hand, haters of legalization are the main population of cannabis consumers in all four online communities. Haters of legalization are divided into four different groups: anti-government believers, big-company haters, nostalgic consumers and confused consumers. These different types of haters can vary in hate spectrum towards the cannabis policy from the extreme position to mid position. Secondly, product and price are found as two key factors from marketing mix elements for Canadian cannabis market place. Four symbolic boundaries were found in the product category that would significantly impact cannabis users in these four online communities. Furthermore, two price points of cannabis product were found as effecting the cannabis market place from the consumers’ perspective.

In the last chapter, discussion on result findings on cannabis policy and its market place were introduced. Moreover, conceptual contribution was presented. Cannabis legalization is still a new phenomenon that this research hopes to provide additional managerial contribution to both policy makers and licensed vendors. Lastly, limitation and future research suggestions are also provided.
2 Literature Review

Researchers have explored and investigated cannabis in decades. However, marketing academic literature does not explicitly explore cannabis market place because of the legal prohibitions that existed in Canada. This literature review will present basic information about cannabis and Canadian cannabis policy. Additionally, in the next section, past studies on cannabis for both medical and recreational purposes will be presented. Lastly, in order to fulfill the research objective and questions, past studies of social media and cannabis in social media platforms will be illustrated.

2.1 Cannabis in Canada

In this section, an introduction of cannabis will be presented. To answer the research objective and questions, Canadian cannabis policy will be discussed in detail through the regulation timeline and marketing mix elements.

2.1.1 What is Cannabis?

There are over 400 compounds identified in cannabis plant with more than 80 contributing to the psychoactive properties for which it is consumed (Adrian, 2015). Two types of cannabis that are popular are cannabis sativa and cannabis indica. To activate all the herbs, the substance needs to be heated and is thus typically consumed by smoking or cooking (Shiplo, 2015). Cannabis can be used for two main purposes: medical use or recreational use. Cannabis has been used as medical products worldwide (Han, Compton, Bianco, & Jones, 2018; Park & Wu, 2017). Patients who are diagnosed with chronic illness are described medical cannabis to relieve their pain (Berman, Symonds, & Birch, 2004). In Washington State, 73% of patients who have chronic illness endorsed the benefits and effectiveness of using cannabis to maintain and minimize the pain level (Carlini, Garrett, & Carter, 2017). Government of Canada does realize the importance of using cannabis as a form of relief from pain, nausea, and inflammation. Therefore, Health Canada has endorsed medical producers for the access to cannabis to patients under Medical Purposes Act regulation (Government of Canada, 2017).

Cannabis is not only be used for medical purposes but also for recreational purposes. Consumers digest cannabis to increase their sensations, decrease their social anxiety and take part in religious gateway (Warf, 2014). Consumers of cannabis have pleasurable experience due to release of dopamine to the brain. Also, the psychoactive effect is paired with a heightened sensation to light and sound, an increased appetite and a feeling of calm. Thus, consumers indulge cannabis for leisure purposes. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime stated that more than 160 million individuals consumed recreational cannabis products worldwide in 2007, with the majority from university students. Young males from the ages of 15 to 24 years old are the highest consumers of cannabis in Canada (Shiplo, 2015). Even strict regulation came into play, the consumption of cannabis still increased significantly. For example,
within the first 5 month of cannabis regulation in 2014, Colorado estimated $165 million USD for retail sales of cannabis (Henschen, 2014). Cannabis is consumed not only through smoking or vaping but also through eating. In Netherland, edible cannabis products have been consumed widely. Coffee shops in Amsterdam market brownies, cookies and other type of edible products. In fact, 45% of the cannabis revenue is coming from edible products (Friese, Slater, Annechio, & Battle, 2016). As cannabis consumption continues to increase dramatically, edible products will be another category likely to be added to the regulations in the coming years.

2.1.2 Regulation of Cannabis in Canada

Cannabis policy has been explored and studied extensively in other countries. For example, cannabis regulation in Uruguay has been investigated with advances and challenges (Hetzer & Walsh, 2014; Queirolo, Boidi, & Cruz, 2016). United States is also a country that understands the impact of cannabis policy in different states, as cannabis is not legal under federal scope (Resko et al., 2019; Rolles, 2018). However, it is not the researcher’s intention to compare and contrast cannabis policies in different countries. Thus, these policies will not be included in this research study.

Under federal criminal law, cannabis has been identified and categorized as illicit drug in 1923 (Hathaway & Erickson, 2003). The long history of prohibition did not prevent Canadians using cannabis (Statistics Canada, 2017). Prior to the cannabis legalization in Canada, Task Force, a team of members who provided different specialties on cannabis, was created in 2016 to provide a regulation framework that would shape the cannabis policy (formally known as Cannabis Act). In order to understand the Canadian cannabis policy, regulation framework was analyzed in this section.

By taking public health approach for legalization framework, Task Force mainly aims to protect the population for cannabis addiction but more specifically protect the harms out of children, youth and vulnerable population. With high level of priority, the cannabis regulation framework suggested a minimum age for possession, purchase and sale. With the successful in alcohol and tobacco policy, Task Force believed that the minimum age of 18 years old should be designated under federal level. However, provinces and territories can set higher (but not lower) minimum with various other factors of distributing and selling cannabis just as alcohol. Most provinces set the minimum age of 19 to match with regional legal drinking age.

Secondly, Cannabis Act wants to replace the illegal black market with legal market where consumers can freely purchase cannabis under a safe environment. For example, most adult consumers would prefer to purchase cannabis from legal sources even if the price is higher from illicit market (Watson & Erickson, 2019) One of the main debate is that legalization of cannabis, combined with regulation, would significantly reduce the illicit market and its associated dangers. With that objective, Task Force also consulted of how to establish a safe and responsible supply chain, specifically
towards the production, distribution and retail. In the cannabis industry, the production can range from cultivation and harvest of the plant material, and its subsequent preparation, to the manufacture of products using cannabis as a raw material including concentrates and other derivatives. There were debates between private-section production model or government model. The Task Force argued that the new cannabis policy should be able to fulfill the safety and quality standards for cannabis products in order to protect the public health and safety. With the relevant experience and success from the government for medical cannabis production, Task Force suggested this new commercial production should continue to be regulated by the Government of Canada. This is to ensure the cannabis products fulfill specific quality standards and accurate description of potency. Additionally, Task Force acknowledged the importance of open market to support small private productions. Thus, licensing smaller-scale producers with limitation would support the diversity of the market; prevent the development of monopolies and also avoid surplus in illicit producers.

In addition, Task Force emphasizes on the importance of cannabis distribution in a safe environment for consumers. Thus, implementing a government monopoly distribution is strongly suggested by the Task Force. Furthermore, retail outlet model was suggested as it can maximize the sales of cannabis and minimize the harms for unwanted populations. By having storefronts, provinces and territories can easily controlled access to vulnerable populations and curbed overconsumption. Cannabis retailers were suggested to be in distance away from schools, community centers, public parks etc. to ensure the public health and safety. Additionally, Task Force suggested that employees of retailers learned and prepared themselves with cannabis safety course in order to provide a suitable service to consumer in a safe manner.

On October 17th, 2018, The Cannabis Act was passed in Canada in effort to accommodating the usage of cannabis under government control. According to the Government of Canada, the main purpose of cannabis policy is to fulfill 3 goals: prohibit youth from cannabis consumption, prevent profits out of illegal production and distribution, and protect the health and safety of citizen by decriminalize cannabis for adult. Cannabis products are now available for both medical and recreational purposes. The Honorable Jane Philpott, Minister of Health, stated specifically that Canadian approach to cannabis is “collaborative and compassionate” to ensure the human rights of the citizens and strengthen the shared responsibilities between consumers and government (Government of Canada, 2016). In order to protect these three goals, the cannabis policy has provided a strict guideline with number of controls and safeguards.

Cannabis policy (Cannabis Act) was introduced to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The policy was initiated by the federal government to set the minimum standards for consumers to purchase and consume cannabis legally. Furthermore, provinces also have the flexibility to act on and provide provincial cannabis guideline basing on the federal cannabis policy. Thus, specific cannabis guideline to be applied in Canada can be different provincially. For the purpose of this paper, researcher will focus mainly on the cannabis policy under the federal scope.
Cannabis policy mainly focused on prohibitions and obligations as also offences. As such, there are several prohibitions for adults when consuming cannabis. For example, in division 1, section 8(1), Government of Canada (2018) stated that:

Unless authorized under this Act, it is prohibited

(a) For an individual who is 18 years of age or older to possess, in a public place, cannabis of one or more classes of cannabis the total amount of which, as determined in accordance with Schedule 3, is equivalent to more than 30 g of dried cannabis;
(b) for an individual who is 18 years of age or older to possess any cannabis that they know is illicit cannabis;
(c) for a young person to possess cannabis of one or more classes of cannabis the total amount of which, as determined in accordance with Schedule 3, is equivalent to more than 5 g of dried cannabis;
(d) for an individual to possess, in a public place, one or more cannabis plants that are budding or flowering;
(e) for an individual to possess more than four cannabis plants that are not budding or flowering; or
(f) for an organization to possess cannabis. (Cannabis Act, 2018)

It is also to be noted that cannabis plant has to be produced in the licensed manufacturing, with majority from the government source. Government of Canada prohibited individuals or organizations, without authorization, to process, possess and distribute cannabis plant. For example, under division1, section 9(1)(c) and (d), the government of Canada stated that

Unless authorized under this Act, it is prohibited for an individual

(i) to distribute one or more cannabis plants that are budding or flowering, or
(ii) to distribute more than four cannabis plants that are not budding or flowering; or
(d) for an organization to distribute cannabis. (Cannabis Act, 2018)

For the purpose of this research study, researcher will look at the cannabis policy (or Cannabis Act) under the context of Marketing Mix: Product, Price Place and Promotion.

2.1.2.1 Product

Products of Cannabis and Cannabis-related have a strict guideline for components, maximum yield quantity and the purpose of cannabis usage. For example, cannabis products or cannabis-related products cannot include brands name and element the same way for alcohol products. In division 2, subdivision B of cannabis policy, a requirement of packaging and labeling were found. Package and label for
cannabis products also must follow the regulation guideline. For example, cannabis package cannot contain brand element, image, and must be child-resistance package following with uniform color. Cannabis and cannabis–related product’s labels provide the information of the product, expiry date, stability period, and rotation. Section 26 has illustrated the compliance for cannabis product:

Unless authorized under this Act, it is prohibited for a person that is authorized to sell cannabis to sell it in a package or with label

(a) If there are reasonable grounds to believe that the package or label could be appealing to young person;
(b) That sets out a testimonial or endorsement, however displayed or communicated;
(c) That sets out a depiction of a person, character or animal, whether real or fictional;
(d) That associates the cannabis or one of its brand elements with, or evokes a positive or negative emotion about or image of, a way of life such as one that includes glamour, recreation, excitement, vitality, risk or daring; or
(e) That contains any information that is false, misleading or deceptive or that is likely to create an erroneous impression about the characteristics, value, quantity, composition, strength, concentration, potency, purity, quality, merit, safety, health effects or health risks of the cannabis. (Cannabis Act, 2018)

This figure below will illustrate packaging and labels of legal cannabis that meet all the requirements from cannabis policy.
Learning from alcohol and tobacco studies, price is one of the determinants of consumption (Guindon, 2014; Her, Giesbrecht, Room, & Rehm, 1999). Government influences cannabis price under federal level such as fixed prices on certain products, price guideline for minimum and maximum prices, tax charges on set amount per unit of a product, sales tax and limit on production amounts or even number of producer licenses (Government of Canada, 2018).

Cannabis product will be priced at the same rate for certain products over all the territories of Canada. However, provinces are also provided an opportunity to put on their own tax for different cannabis types and products. A research was conducted by the government of Canada in 2019 to investigate the average price of dried cannabis product in each province. Furthermore, the study illustrated the price pre-legalization, post-legalization and the percentage of change in price. In the pre-legalization era, Nunavut and Northwest Territories had the highest dollars per gram, consequentially at $15.24 CAD per gram and $12.71 CAD per gram. Quebec and New Brunswick were at the lowest price points with $5.82 CAD per gram and $6.34 CAD per gram. When the legalization took place, the price point for dried cannabis in all provinces increased significantly with a change from 3% up to 30%. Interestingly, New Brunswick cannabis increased the highest, from only $6.34 CAD per gram up to $8.27 CAD per gram. Ontario cannabis was priced quite constantly at $7.42 CAD per gram in pre-legalization era and $8.05 CAD in post-legalization era. Following Ontario pursuit, British Columbia
did not change much in price after legalization. It started at $6.89 CAD per gram to $7.15 CAD per gram with change of 3.7% increase (Statistics Canada, 2019).

2.1.2.3 Place

Medical practitioners and recreational vendors can be licensed in order to provide cannabis products to consumers. More importantly, recreational cannabis retailers are now authorized to sell cannabis and cannabis-related products to consumers in a safe and secure area. Licensed places need to follow the regulation guideline in order to be in practice. Legal cannabis retailers cannot put information or images outside of the store to protect young population looking and attracting by it. Also, license cannabis venues are required to provide screening and security process to stop younger person (under minimum age requirement) having access at the stores. Venues are required to display official cannabis retail seal outside of stores. Retail operator and workers also must have cannabis retail license in order to work, contribute cannabis with certain duties and responsibilities under the act. Employees of retail cannabis stores are required to complete an AGBO Board approved training program before their first day of work to support the safe sale and consumption of cannabis.

2.1.2.4 Promotion

Under the Cannabis Act, without authorization, it is prohibited to promote cannabis, a cannabis accessory or services related to cannabis. Therefore, it is prohibited to promote any information about its price or distribution; any promotion with testimonial, endorsement and sponsorship, depiction of a person, character or animal will also be banned. Promotion with brands elements in manners that associated with image or lifestyle that includes glamour, recreation, excitement, vitality, risk or daring will be prohibited. However, a person who is authorized by the government can promote cannabis in a prescribed place and manner and informed communication with buyer who is 18 years of age. The communication with consumer can include point of sale depending on only its availability, its price or its availability and price. The Cannabis Act does have strict guideline of promotion in such way that cannabis product, cannabis accessory or service related to cannabis will not contain any terms, expression, logo, symbol, illustration in regards of promotion, and cannot be displayed in any publication, broadcast and communication outside of Canada. For example, in division 3, section 43 of the Cannabis Act, it is stated that:

Every person that is authorized under this Act to produce, sell or distribute cannabis must provide to the Minister, in the prescribed form and manner and within the prescribed time, information that is required by the regulation about any promotion of cannabis that they conduct, including a promotion referred to in paragraph 16(c). (Cannabis Act, 2018)

Cannabis product has to be packaged with label that is following the same guideline with promotion to fulfill the goal of the regulation. Authorized places cannot display
cannabis, packages or labels of cannabis in manner that can result young person seeing it and cannot allow young person (depending on the age minimum requirement for each territories) to be in store according to the Cannabis Act.

Overall, there seems to be many relevant elements embedded in the regulations in Canada. Government of Canada provided this strict cannabis policy in order to protect and maintain the objectives. This research hopes to explore and offer further understanding of consumers’ perspectives on the regulation of cannabis and its market place under the scope of Marketing Mix.

2.2 Past Studies on Cannabis for Medical Purpose and Recreational Purpose

Cannabis phenomenon has been studied widely throughout the world. Thus, cannabis studies can be divided into two main categories: cannabis studies for medical purpose and cannabis studies for recreational purpose. In this section, a brief introduction of these studies in different purposes is introduced.

2.2.1 Cannabis Studies for Medical Purpose

Medical experts and researchers are still debating the benefits and risks of using cannabis under medical forms. Many medical researchers have stated that cannabis can be used as pain relief (Berman et al., 2004; Borgelt, Franson, Nussbaum, & Wang, 2013). Cannabis, when activated, can effectively remove chronic pain associated with brachial plexus root avulsion. Specifically, patients with fibromyalgia that are suffering from concomitant symptoms such as tiredness, morning stiffness, sleep and affective disturbances are benefit from using cannabis as treatments. Cannabis consumers with fibromyalgia reported that their quality of life is significantly improving (Fiz et al., 2011). Besides physical pain relief, cannabis has been using as psychology treatments. Posttraumatic stress disorder patients have the most benefits by using cannabis for medical purpose. Patients reported that cannabis might be helpful to manage PTSD symptoms for veterans (Bonn-Miller, Vujanovic, Drescher, & Maisto, 2011). Also, using cannabis as symptoms relief is considered a normal behavior comparing to drinking alcohol or other drugs use (Bonn-Miller, Vujanovic, & Zolensky, 2008).

However, there are also many concerns of using cannabis for medical purposes. The main argument is that cannabis can be an addiction towards vulnerable population. First of all, young population is affected the most from the use of cannabis. Young adults who have regular cannabis use will more likely to have symptoms of cannabis use disorder and dependence in adulthood time (Guttamannova et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018). Young consumers who use cannabis early are more likely to increase the risk on brain development. This would result in an increase of cannabis use disorder, depression, anxiety and psychosis. Secondly, vulnerable consumers are more likely to have some dependence on cannabis. It is found that patients with psychotic disorders are more vulnerable to cannabis disorder and psychosis (Os et al., 2002).
Even though medical cannabis has helped patients to relieve pain, symptoms to increase their quality of life, there is no doubt that cannabis might be misused towards vulnerable populations.

### 2.2.2 Cannabis Studies for Recreational Purpose

Cannabis has become normalized as part of a social accommodation for young people (Aldridge, Parker, & Measham, 1998). Researchers have shown that using cannabis is a rational consideration of costs and benefits as consumers indulge cannabis for their lifestyles (Duff et al., 2012; Hathaway, 1997; Pearson, 2001). Leisure purpose and cannabis have been a great topic for researchers in this field. Motivations to use recreational cannabis have been studied (Goode, 1971). Some other studies focused on the type of place and when to use cannabis (Hathaway & Erikson, 2003) that showed that consumers tend to use recreational cannabis in private areas under a social setting (with friends or partners). More importantly, cannabis-usage has linked with more party lifestyle or social lifestyle (Bernburg, Thorlindsson, & Sigfusdottir, 2009; Miller & Plant, 2002). Researchers show that participants are more likely to increase their cannabis usage when they are in the moods, surrounding with friends and in a “party” environment.

Recreational cannabis use helped consumers to feel relax, feel good and enjoy the lifestyle. In fact, most consumers considered the positive outcomes of using cannabis outweigh the negative consequences (Hathaway & Erikson, 2003). Depending on the leisure activities, cannabis enhances the activities and reduces the stress level and responsibilities (Osborne & Fogel, 2008; Pearson, 2001). One study has focused on the role of leisure on young population and showed that even though cannabis is not an essential to their life, young consumers still use cannabis when there is leisure life event (Liebregts et al., 2015). More importantly, most researchers have not found link between criminal offences with regular cannabis use apart from possessing and using cannabis (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2003; Pedersen & Skardhamar, 2010).

### 2.3 Past Studies within the context of Social Media

In this section, social media and the nature of users in social media were introduced and discussed. Two classifications for social from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Kozinets (2015) guided the decision on online communities. Past cannabis studies on social media were found and introduced in the next section. Lastly, gap in cannabis studies on social media was identified.

#### 2.3.1 What is Social Media?

Online environment has evolved over time. First one is Web 1.0 (web presence). Members cannot contribute or facilitate the content in Web 1.0. With Web 1.0 format, all the content on the website is provided by the Web hosts or moderators. The
development of Web 2.0, especially Social Media platform, stirs up the new way of communication on Internet. O’Reilly (2016) described Web 2.0 as “a set of economic, social and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the Internet, a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects” (O’Reilly, 2006). Web 2.0 platform enhances the experience of members since it opens the flow of knowledge, opinions and collaborations between people through the online stream. It strengthens

Because of the characteristics of Web 2.0, Social Media platforms were introduced more user’s power to control the website and broaden the horizons of discussion. It also helps to increase the participation and openness from online members. This created a unique context to users. Thus, users came to engage more in different social media platforms to enhance their experiences in online environment. In the next section, different types of social media streams and the nature of members will be described this relationship in detail. Thus, it provided basic information to understand better the type and nature of social media streams and online communities.

2.3.2 Social Media Streams and Nature of Members

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, Social Media is form of media that “users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other contents (such as videos)” (Merriam Webster, 2011). Social Media, in fact is a type of Web 2.0 applications. Social media support dialog between user and user and therefore, changing the way of traditional website contents and knowledge. There are many different streams or platforms of social media vary between Instargram, Twitter, Facebook and other online communities.

Social Media platforms can be divided through theories of media research (social presence, media richness) along with social process (self-presentation, self-disclosure) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social presence is how the social media can be achieved differently through “acoustic, visual, acoustic” contact (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). The social presence is high when the social influence on the communication for members is large. Media richness for each social media is different depending on the amount of information that is allowed to be transmitted in a given time interval (Daft & Lengel, 1986). This leads to some social media platforms resolve ambiguity and uncertainty faster and more efficiently. Secondly, another dimension to categorize Social Media is the concept of social process. Self-presentation is a type of social interaction that members have two main goals: to influence objectives to gain rewards and to create an image that is consistent with his own personal identity (Goffman, 1971). Self-disclosure is when members, consciously and unconsciously, present revelation of personal information (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Combining these two dimensions, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) divided social media into six different groups that are presented in the table below:
Figure 2: Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

With the lowest social presence/media richness, it is understandable that blogs and collaborative projects (for example: Wikipedia) are in this category since it is more often text-based website. Social networking sites and content communities do provide social presence/media richness as they both provide more than just text-based conversation. This can range from pictures, videos, to other forms of media. Social networking sites have higher score on self-presentation/self-disclosure because social networking sites do provide specific theme of domains. Lastly, visual social world and virtual game world will have the highest score on social-presence/media richness as they both provide face-to-face interaction in online environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For this study, focus will be on online communities such as content communities.

Kozinets has another way to categorize different forms of social media. The first dimension is the “intensity of the communal share and care relationships”. In this dimension, social media streams can have different characteristic of “formal” or “friendly”. Formal relationships are “quite superficial, short-lasting and relatively insignificant”. Opposite to that, friendly relationships can be described as pleasing and long-lasting. The second dimension to categorize social media streams is “focus and orientation”. Social media can vary depending on the purpose of its activity such as discussing of football, or a movie show – this is for one specific activity on the website. Also, there are sites that do not contain one specific theme of activity or interest such as Facebook. Basing on these two dimensions to categorize social media, Kozinets has created four types of online social experience.
“Organizational social enterprises” are online social experiences that focusing on sharing information and social connections between people who have the same, central interest or activity throughout the website. The characteristics of “organizational social enterprises” is unifying in orientation and formal in communal relationship between members. This will benefit researchers to understand a group of members with specific activity under online environment. This is the group of online community that this study will explore within the context of cannabis consumption. Specifically, online community’ is defined as a group of people with a common interest or shared purpose and can be divided depending on the range of purposes and motivation of their members (Preece, 2000).

With classification of social media from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), content communities have the medium social presence and low self-disclosure. Thus, this
illustrated the characteristics of members whose main objectives are to provide contents with low aim for disclosure. Kozinets introduced organizational social enterprises as a high focus/orientation with gemein schaft (formal). Organization social enterprises include members with formal connections to each other whose main objective is to provide information in one specific activity as also. With these two concepts, in order to fulfill the research objective and questions, cannabis online communities will be examined and researched.

2.3.3 Cannabis Studies on Social Media Streams

Members has been increasingly using social media to participate in debating political and civic issues (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Even though cannabis is still a new topic for academia researchers, various research studies on cannabis have been conducted through social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, SNS).

There are many studies about different types of cannabis and the characteristics of consumers through Twitter platforms. Generally, Twitter's members reflected positive attitudes and behaviors towards cannabis usage for many different reasons- either providing health benefits, increasing social context or even increasing sex and romance (Cavazos-Rehg, Krauss, Gruca, & Bierut, 2014; Thompson, Rivara, & Whitehill, 2015). Researchers also explored and analyzed Twitter data on different forms of cannabis such as concentrates and edibles within the U.S population (Daniulaityte et al., 2015; Lamya et al., 2016). They found that consumers tend to provide positive tweets than negative ones for these different cannabis-use methods. In additionally, geo-location is an important factor to predict the quantities of cannabis-related tweets. Twitter's members' postings were significantly higher in legal recreational cannabis states than illegal states. Characteristics of consumers are also the main topics for many researchers. The demographics of members for cannabis Twitter are mainly male and generally in a younger age range (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2014; Daniulaityte et al., 2018; Montgomery, Heidelburg, & Robinson, 2018). However, there are conflicts with racial profiles of members where one study found that the majority of respondents were white male (Daniulaityte et al., 2018) and the other finding is mainly African American population (Montgomery et al., 2018). Researchers also found that cannabis-related content on Twitter exposed to young adults in a high rate (Cabrera-Nguyen, Cavazos-Rehg, Krauss, Bierut, & Moreno, 2016; Montgomery et al., 2018). This also increases the risk of early try in younger age or regular cannabis usage.

To my limited knowledge, there is only one research study that was done through Instagram platform on cannabis. Cavazos-Rehg and colleagues (2016) had been studying cannabis-related posts on Instagram. Authors had done a qualitative research on 2-week worth of Instagram pictures that were included hashtags related to cannabis. Additionally, the research study explored what contents Instagram were posted relating to cannabis.
However, there is lack of study on cannabis through online communities, for example, through specific themed forum.

### 2.3.4 Cannabis Online Communities

Online community gathers members who have the same interest or same purposes to facilitate, share information through a specific online environment. Depending on the nature of an online community, the impression of members to the community will effect on the willingness to participate (Sun, Rau, & Ma, 2014). The idea of sharing, discussing (or online social interactions) is powerful to the online environment, especially to organizational social enterprises. Online communities can be for specific products, specific brands, specific interest groups among others. There is cannabis related global online communities as well as cannabis related online communities specifically for Canada. These are presented next.

#### 2.3.4.1 Global Cannabis Online Communities

Cannabis has always been a rising topic for people to discuss and debate. Therefore, it is not surprising to see many cannabis online communities that open up to participants from all over the world. In this section, four popular cannabis online communities that are suitable for this research study are described in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sites</th>
<th>Research Communities</th>
<th>Basic Info</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Number of Posts</th>
<th>Number of Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.thcfarmers.com">http://www.thcfarmers.com</a></td>
<td>THC Farmers Forum</td>
<td>Mainly for cannabis grower and cultivation</td>
<td>66,726 members</td>
<td>83,372 posts</td>
<td>1,873,253 replies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.rollitup.org">http://www.rollitup.org</a></td>
<td>Roll It Up Forum</td>
<td>Cannabis - related information</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>More than 700,000 posts</td>
<td>More than 10 million replies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.reddit.com/r/marijuana">http://www.reddit.com/r/marijuana</a></td>
<td>r/marijuana</td>
<td>Sub-reddit for cannabis</td>
<td>136,000 members</td>
<td>96,993 posts</td>
<td>527,921 replies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Brief summary of information of four global cannabis communities

**Grasscity Forum** ([www.Forum.Grasscity.com](http://www.Forum.Grasscity.com)): Grasscity Forum is one of the most popular forums in which the main discussion is about marijuana-related information. There is the total of 1,215,408 posts with 21,031,757 replies. Grasscity Forum has the total of 660,339 members. This largest community started in 2007. To submit a post or reply on this community, user can register with an email. On the top page of the forum, there are “Forum List” where posts are categorized according to different themes of the sub-forums (For example: Smoking accessories, Smoking Marijuana & Consumption, Medical Marijuana, Marijuana News and Marijuana Regalization, etc.), “Trending Threads” is where posts are sorted based on the number of replies and views, and “New Content” is where the most recent replies will be on the top of the page.

**THC Farmers Forum** ([www.THCFarmers.com](http://www.THCFarmers.com)): This forum is specifically geared towards people who grow cannabis or relate to cannabis-cultivation. The website also provides the information and reviews about seeds. The forum has 84,372 posts with 1,873,253 replies. THC Farmers Forum has 66,726 members. The site is still new as it was created in September 2017 by user “logic”. Also, the forum has an option whether
members can upgrade the membership to premium for a lifetime by paying 100 US Dollar.

Figure 5: Front page of THC Farmers Forum (2019, www.THCFarmers.com)

Roll It Up Forum (www.Rollitup.org): This forum was created in 2006 by one user “Admin”. It has more than 700000 posts and more than 10 million replies. The number of members is unknown to the researcher. This forum discusses mainly about how to grow cannabis. Also, members can also discuss other things beside cannabis-related topics. Members of this community can share and debate from how to grow cannabis to all other cannabis-related discussions.
Figure 6: Front page of Roll It Up Forum (2019, [www.rollitup.org](http://www.rollitup.org))

**Reddit Website ([www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com)):** Reddit website was created by Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian in 2015, which primarily focuses on social news and discussion. Reddit.com has been ranked number 6 of most visited website in U.S and number 21 in the world (Alexa Ranking, 2019) with most of the visitors coming from the United States. Reddit had 542 million monthly visitors with 234 million unique members (Alexa Ranking, 2019). With each different point of interest, contents can be classified into
different groups, called “subreddits”. Themes of subreddits can be variety: news, science, fitness, music, food, movies, etc. Members can register as members to submit posts or comments. Also, members of reddit (Redditors) can also vote up or down for each submission to determine the position of the submission. Most voted-submission will be on top of the subreddit or home page. Comments can also be up-voted, or down-voted, and top voted comments will be on the top of the submission, which is more likely to be noticed by redditors.

**Sub-reddit r/marijuana** ([www.reddit.com/r/marijuana](http://www.reddit.com/r/marijuana)): “Marijuana” is one of the most popular subreddits that focuses on cannabis-related news and discussions. This subreddit is an educational and informative subreddit for marijuana, dedicated to policy news, advocacy, opinion, health and discussion. In addition, this subreddit has more than 136,000 members. Started in October 2012, this subreddit has had more than 96,993 posts and 527,921 replies. There are 10 moderators for this subreddit.

![Figure 7: Front page of sub-reddit r/marijuana (2019, www.reddit.com/r/marijuana)](http://www.reddit.com/r/marijuana)

This community can provide cannabis-related news. For example, on April 27th, 2019, one user posted an article, which is relating to Medical Cannabis used in medical trial for aggressive kids.
Also, redditor of this community can ask any questions relating to cannabis. For example, on April 28th, 2019, another user had posted this question:

Figure 9: Example of cannabis-related question on sub-reddit r/marijuana (2019, www.reddit.com/r/marijuana)
in sub-reddit r/marijuana, ‘legalize’ word is the frequently mentioned throughout the forum. Another word ‘legalized’ was ranked third. This suggested an interest of members to discuss and debate regarding cannabis legalization in this forum.

2.3.4.2 Canada Cannabis Online Communities

Even though Cannabis Online Communities (specifically online forums) relating to Canada has been on the Internet for a while, they began to gain significant momentum only after the cannabis regulation was introduced in Canada. In this section, two Canadian cannabis online forums are presented in detail regarding the number of members, posts and replies.

**Sub-reddit r/canadiens (**[www.reddit.com/r/canadiens](http://www.reddit.com/r/canadiens)**):** sub-reddit r/canadiens is a subreddit that includes a “group of Canadian smokers, tokers, vapers, dabbers, extractors, bakers, chefs, medical patients, and dootchie passers who believe that Cannabis makes their life healthier and happier”. This community has been on reddit since 2013. Members have been making the total of 16,173 posts with 250,804 replies (March 2019). To administration the community, six reddit members have been nominated as moderators for this subreddit. The most popular submission (up-voted ones), with news and discussion about any Canadian marijuana-related information, will generally be on top of the page. The submission can be categorized into different aspects, such as “Hot” (most up-voted posts), new (most recent posts), or even “controversial” (posts that have many up-votes along with down-votes), “top” (most recent up-voted posts), and “rising” (recent posts that start to have more up-votes).
By using subredditstats.com, a website that provides basic statistics such as the number of subscribers, comments per day, posts per day, post votes, etc., analyzing subreddit statistics is easy. It also provides the top keywords for that specific subreddit. In April 2019, researchers conducted a brief search for this specific forum. For r/canadians, "legalization" word is frequently mentioned throughout the forum. Interestingly, 'ocs' (A.K.A Ontario cannabis store) was also frequently used in r/canadians.

**Canadian Weed Forum** ([www.CanadianWeedForum.com](http://www.CanadianWeedForum.com)): Canadian Weed Forum is an online community in which members can comment and share information about medical and recreational marijuana in Canada. The forum was created in September 2018 by admin KingCBD. On April 8th, 2019, the forum has the total of 115 members, 723 posts, and 3545 replies. The Canadian Weed Forum is divided into 8 subsections: Introductions and announcements, The Law, Cannabis News and Notes, Where to Buy, Growing, Medical Marijuana, The Product, and The Open Mic. "Introduction and announcements" sub-section has three categories: new members introduction, admin announcements, and forum rules. "The Law" sub-section is where federal and provincials' laws governing cannabis usage are debated. "Cannabis News and Notes" is where members can have the latest news on cannabis in Canada. "Where to buy" is the environment where members can share and comment on online and retail locations for purchasing marijuana, cannabis, and CBD oil. Members can provide information on tips and tricks on how to grow their own weed in "Growing" sub-section. "Medical marijuana"
provides information on licensing, laws and procedures of how to obtain medical marijuana. In “The Product” sub-section, members can talk about marijuana-related products such as dried cannabis, edibles, CBD oil, or even Cannabis Infused Recipes. Last sub-section is “The Open Mic” which members can discuss anything that is not cannabis-related.

Figure 11: Front page of Canadian Weed Forum (2019, www.canadianweedforum.com)

“The Law” sub-section mainly focuses on the legalization law. Members can explore and debate both provincial laws and federal law of marijuana in Canada. This section has the total of 108 posts and more than 500 replies. “Where to Buy” is information on online and retail locations to purchase marijuana-related products. Also, members can review the licensed sellers as also share the price and the buying experience through this sub. There is the total of 111 posts with more than 600 replies.
3 Research Methodology

For this research study, in order to fulfill the research questions and objective, netnography methodology was applied. Firstly, an introduction of netnography methodology was introduced in the first section. Following that, preliminary studies and outcome were offered in the next section. In the last section of chapter 3, researcher introduced Kozinet’s guideline (2015) for research sites criteria and data criteria. Ethic component was also included to reflect researcher’s attempt for privacy in netnography research methodology.

3.1 Netnography Research Methodology

To better understand the cannabis online community, this research study used netnography methodology. It can also be seen as an online ethnography methodology. Kozinets (2015) introduced netnography as “set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the Internet, including mobile applications”. Considering that cannabis is a sensitive topic to explore with personal interaction, using netnography would be more effective to maintain naturalistic and observational manners through online environment, especially online communities (Kozinets, 2015). Comparing to other qualitative methodology, netnography is considered a quick and inexpensive methodology (Kozinets, 2002). Due to the nature of this research study, netnography methodology provided a deeper understanding of consumers’ opinions on cannabis. Therefore, this type of research did fulfill the needs of this study well.

On the other hand, there are weaknesses of netnography methodology are needed to be addressed. Firstly, the authenticity of the respondents is a debatable matter as members are generally not clear what they want to convey (Xun & Reynolds, 2010). Members express their feelings and thoughts on sensitive products on the Internet easily. However, this also means that members’ identities are unclear. Secondly, Internet research ethics is concerned whether the information published is considered public or private property (Kozinets, 2015). Lastly, the netnography research might not be reliable depending on the context (Xun & Reynolds, 2010).

In this section, preliminary studies and outcome will be discussed in detail as well as the process of selecting online communities for this study.

3.2 Preliminary Studies and Outcome

Through literature review, researcher found cannabis studies within the context of Twitter and Instagram. Researchers analyzed Twitter data to examine patterns on different aspects of cannabis-related tweets (Caberra-Nguyen et al., 2016; Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2014, Thompson et al., 2015). Some researchers analyzed Twitter data on marijuana concentrates and on marijuana edibles in the United States (Daniulaityte et
al., 2015; Lamy et al., 2015). Also, the characteristics such as racial/ethical or motivations to use of cannabis consumers were also examined through Twitter data. (Daniulaityte et al., 2018; Montgomery et al., 2017). For example, Daniulaityte and colleagues in 2018 found significant data on the members’ demography and drug use characteristics (see figure 12). They analyzed Twitter members to provide insights on different cannabis forms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Total Sample N = 687 Number (%)</th>
<th>Marijuana Concentrate Users n = 329 Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>408 (59.4)</td>
<td>209 (63.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>262 (38.2)</td>
<td>113 (34.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>7 (1.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>43.0 (15.7)</td>
<td>39.1 (15.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>56 (8.1)</td>
<td>35 (10.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>598 (87.0)</td>
<td>274 (83.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>592 (86.2)</td>
<td>270 (82.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>63 (9.2)</td>
<td>57 (17.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Than College</td>
<td>90 (13.1)</td>
<td>50 (15.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College or more</td>
<td>587 (85.4)</td>
<td>273 (83.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifetime use of cannabis product</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana concentrates/dabs</td>
<td>329 (48.1)</td>
<td>329 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbal/flower marijuana (weed/bud)</td>
<td>680 (99.0)</td>
<td>328 (99.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resin/hashish</td>
<td>500 (73.1)</td>
<td>272 (82.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kief/keef</td>
<td>373 (54.8)</td>
<td>260 (79.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana edibles</td>
<td>582 (84.8)</td>
<td>316 (96.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis tinctures</td>
<td>161 (23.7)</td>
<td>105 (31.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingestible oil (e.g. Rick Simpson oil)</td>
<td>199 (29.2)</td>
<td>133 (40.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD oil</td>
<td>205 (30.1)</td>
<td>138 (41.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics of cannabis use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily/near daily use of flower/herbal cannabis</td>
<td>316 (46.0)</td>
<td>196 (59.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of first cannabis use, Mean (SD)</td>
<td>17.8 (6.6)</td>
<td>17.1 (5.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>States of Residence by Marijuana Legalization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>83 (12.1)</td>
<td>48 (14.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical, Less Restrictive&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>187 (27.2)</td>
<td>102 (31.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical, More Restrictive&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>128 (18.6)</td>
<td>58 (17.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>289 (42.1)</td>
<td>121 (36.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Recreational group included 5 states: AK, CO, OR, WA, and DC  
<sup>b</sup> Medical, less restrictive group includes 11 states: AZ, CA, HI, IL, MA, MI, ME, MT, NM, NV, RI  
<sup>c</sup> Medical, more restrictive includes 9 states: CT, DE, FL, MD, MN, NH, NJ, NY, VT  
<sup>d</sup> Illegal™ group included 26 states: AL, AR, GA, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MO, MS, NC, NE, ND, OH, OK, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WV, WI, WY.

Figure 12: Table of demographic and drug use characteristics (Daniulaityte et al., 2018)
Researcher also found one study on cannabis that was examined through Instagram platform. Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2016) researched marijuana-related posts through Instagram by analyzing posts' contents (see figure 13).

![Figure 13: Marijuana-related hashtags (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2016)](image_url)
Thus, researcher planned to do preliminary searches on two Social Media streams: Instagram and Twitter.

**Instagram Prelim Search:** In the beginning of February 2019, researcher did a search on Google to figure out popular accounts on Instagram for cannabis community. This resulted me with 10 popular cannabis Instagram account: @weedaccounts, @absolutextracts, @erik.nugshots, @frenchycannoli, @hellomd_com, @ngaio420, @snoopdogg, @glasspipes420, @truefarma and @weedagram420 (https://www.hellomd.com/health-wellness/the-top-10-marijuana-inspired-instagram-accounts ). Based on this list, researcher looked up each account on Instagram to analyze the content and comments in the period of three weeks. However, the quality of comments was low in these comments that usually only contain one or two words and emojis. Therefore, doing a qualitative netnography methodology with these accounts will not be suitable to fulfill the research objective and questions. Secondly, researcher used the popular hashtags for cannabis on Instagram following Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2016) paper. There was the total of 24 hashtags (figure 13) that were investigated through Instagram. Researcher analyzed the comment section for the most 10 popular posts from each hashtag. However, the same scenario happened with these popular posts. The quality of comments from members was generally low with no conversation between members. Therefore, researcher decided not to use Instagram as research site for this study.

**Twitter Prelim Search:** Following the Instagram preliminary search, researcher did a short investigation on Twitter platform. By using the hashtag from Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2016) paper, researcher read through each Twitter post in the period of two weeks. Because Twitter platform is primarily for people to ‘re-share’ content rather than to ‘comment’ on, conversation flow was not expected through each topic. Because of this reason, there was no data to analyze and fulfill the research questions and objectives. Therefore, Twitter was eliminated for this research study.

Thus, researcher decided not to pursue the research study social media stream Instagram and Twitter.

**Online community Prelim Search:** A decision to do a preliminary research on alternative online environment was made. Researcher did a preliminary search for online community in March 2019. To begin with, researcher followed Kozinets’s guideline for research site criteria: relevant, active, interactive, substantial and heterogeneity (Kozinets, 2015). Based on these characteristics, researcher did a preliminary search on cannabis online communities through Google Search bar. The search started with “Cannabis Forum” on Google and found 71,300,00 results. This also resulted in both global cannabis forums and Canadian cannabis forums. Thus, researcher chose four global cannabis forums including: Grasscity Forums, THC Farmer Forum, Roll it up Forum and Marijuana forum and analyzed through the posts and comments. The majority of the forums have good amounts of posts and conversations to examine. However, researcher decided to put marijuana.com forum
out of the list due to its inconsistency with number of replies in posts (for each topic in the forum, there are one or two posts that consist a high number of replies, however, the majority of posts do not contain much information towards the posts). Therefore, marijuana forum does not qualify for interactive factor. Additionally, researcher did the same Google search for Canadian cannabis forum, which resulted in 7,110,000 results. The decision on most popular forums was made: The Canadian Weed Forum. Other forums besides the Canadian Weed Forum do not contain any posts and replies from members, which disqualified them from the data site criteria. The main reason, primarily, was that most of the forums were created after the legalization period and still in the development phase. Therefore, they do not have enough active, interactive and substantial elements for this research study.

Based on these findings, researcher still wanted to consider more cannabis online communities. This had led me to explore cannabis sub-reddits on website www.reddit.com. According to sub-reddit information, researcher found that r/marijuana has the highest numbers of members and posts with 136,000 members and more than 90,000 posts. With more than 500,000 replies, I believed that this sub-reddit would also be a good site for this study. However, r/marijuana is a global cannabis online community, which resulted me to also find alternative subreddits that only focus on Canadian market to fulfill my objectives and research questions. I found that r/canadians contain more than 20,000 members with 16,000 posts and 250,000 replies. With the criteria in mind, both sub-reddit forums fulfilled the required elements. I considered these two sub-reddit forums are good candidates for the methodology. Therefore, six cannabis online communities were examined for the purpose of this research: Canadian Weed Forum, Roll It Up Forum, Grasscity Forum, THC Farmers Forum, r/marijuana and r/canadians. However, after the data collection procedure was done, Grasscity Forum and THC Farmer Forum were excluded from the data set due to few and irrelevant data to address the research questions and objectives. Specifically, the researcher only found one post from THC Farmer Forum that was meaningful to all the research requirements. An effort to find significant data in Grasscity Forum was not successful as well. Overall, four online communities were selected, examined and analyzed in this research study. These are Roll it Up Forum, Canadian Weed Forum, sub-reddit r/marijuana and sub-reddit r/canadians.  

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Research Communities

Only four cannabis online communities (discussion forums) were included in the study. These are (i) Canadian Weed Forum, (ii) Roll It Up Forum, (iii) sub-reddit r/marijuana and lastly, (iv) sub-reddit r/canadians.

The four remaining cannabis online community regularly offer information, news and discussion associated with this specific purpose. These research sites had fulfilled the criteria of Kozinets (2015):
• Relevance to the research focus: These online communities are specific for cannabis consumers.
• Active: Daily posts and replies are discussed between members.
• Interactive: There are high interactions between members through these posts and replies.
• Substantial: The content of these posts and replies is informative.
• Heterogeneous: Members who are older 18 years old (or 21 years old in some other forums) from around the world can participate in these communities.

In two global online communities, Roll It Up Forum and sub-reddit r/marijuana has fulfilled these four criteria elements of Kozinet’s guideline. These two communities are specifically used for cannabis and cannabis-related information. Researcher found a consistency in new posts and replies every day of these two communities. Moreover, in Roll It Up forum and r/marijuana, the content in posts and replies is informative and resourceful to the research study. Lastly, in order to post and reply in these two forums, members have to sign-in with a restriction for age limit, which is than 18 years of age and beyond.

Additionally, two Canadian online communities: Canadian Weed Forum and sub-reddit r/canadians have also fulfilled the requirements of Kozinet’s guidelines. These two forums also include information relating to cannabis and cannabis-related elements, specifically for Canadians. Furthermore, posts and replies were updated daily in these two communities which had fulfilled active criteria. In these two communities, researchers found that posts and replies provided significant amount of information that would be helpful for this research study. In order to participate in these two online communities, members are required to sign-in with also age limit of over 18 years of age. Therefore, these two Canadian online communities met Kozinet’s guideline for selecting research sites.

3.3.2 Data Criteria

In order to use in netnography methodology, data had to fulfill the requirements as stated in Kozinet’s guideline (2015):

• Relevance: Data has to be relevant to the research questions.
• Quality: Contents in posts and replies are significantly high in quality to analyze.
• Richness: Posts and Replies can be representative of the overall dialogue.
• Unique: Contents in posts and replies provide unique information for the research.

According to Kozinets’ s guideline for choosing the data that would be beneficial to the netnography methodology, relevance, quality, richness and unique are important factors to help choosing data that can fulfill the research objectives and questions. Firstly, researcher wanted to discuss the relevance criteria for this research. According
to the research questions, researcher wanted to explore the consumers’ attitudes
towards Canadian cannabis regulation and the marketplace through price, product,
promotion and place elements. Therefore, any posts that contained discussion of any
topic mentioned above were collected and included in the data set. To fulfill this
requirement, keywords such as “Canada legalization”, “Canadian legalization” or
“Canadian marketplace” were used in “search” tool from these online communities. Any
posts and replies that were from October 17th, 2018 to September 15th, 2019 were
satisfied with ‘relevant’ requirement. For example, the two posts (see figure 14) below
were asking about the consumers opinions in “Government controlled weed stores” and
“MOM- the best way for non-growers to source weed right now”- which would be
relevant information about place. Thus, these two posts were considered to be in the
data set because they both were satisfied with the research requirements.

Secondly, the quality of data is significantly important to netnography
methodology (Kozinets, 2015). Through quality factor, researcher, indeed, wanted to
increase the reliability of the data and the ability to analyze the ‘dialogue’ between
members on these topics. Therefore, posts had to have more than 10 replies. To the
researcher limited knowledge, study of cannabis through online environment was a rare
phenomenon to be researched. Thus, the researcher wanted to explore and include
data that can be representative for the population. Lastly, ‘unique’ data was investigated
to provide a "deeper quality" in terms of "dialogue’ between consumers for regulation-
themed topic and legal marketplace topic areas.
The post from the example above was included in the data set. Firstly, the post provided a ‘conversation’ with 15 replies. Secondly, the post was very meaningful because the replies mainly focused on the reasons why members chose cannabis from government stores differently. Lastly, this post was considered unique because the replies were including different themes and sub-themes relating to the research study. Specifically,

This should be an interesting poll maybe a year from now when we get a ton of votes. As this rolls out, people’s experience is going to start to weigh in.

One of the members provided a positive feedback in his reply:

At this point I am very happy where I get mine from having spoke with them yesterday as far as they know they will be allowed to continue as they do not sell recreational you must have a medical condition to buy.

However, another user did not provide the same positive attitude towards government weed store as he stated:
Not a chance… I don’t support the people who tried to fuck me over for 50 years. I’m not stupid. I remember. Not to mention they like me now because I have money. What kind of fool ignores that and does business with folks who only like your money after trying to ruin you. WTF. I’d be one dumb animal to fall for this legal stuff nonsense. It’s not legal unless you pay them… or grow your own. That’s a no brainer. (2018, www.canadianweedforum.com)

These types of replies under this post were the quality factor that researcher considered as important to be included in this research data set.

3.3.3 Data Sets

Four different forums: Canadian Weed Forum, Roll It Up Forum, sub-reddit r/marijuana and lastly, sub-reddit r/canadints. were examined and analyzed in the period from October 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2018 to September 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2019. To find the information that could be qualified for the research study, advanced search had been used in each online community. Instead of using key word search, the researcher used timeline search all the research sites. In the next step, researcher skimmed through all the posts and replies to see whether the posts could satisfy the research questions.

After choosing important posts based on researcher’s judgement, each post and replies were read, reflected carefully and chosen to be included in the data set. The table below is a brief summary of all the data included for this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canadian Weed Forum</th>
<th>Roll It Up Forum</th>
<th>r/marijuana</th>
<th>r/canadints</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of sub-sections</td>
<td>4 sub-sections</td>
<td>2 sub-sections</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6 sub-sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of posts</td>
<td>15 posts</td>
<td>14 posts</td>
<td>5 posts</td>
<td>6 posts</td>
<td>40 posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of replies</td>
<td>264 replies</td>
<td>932 replies</td>
<td>149 replies</td>
<td>817 replies</td>
<td>2162 replies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Summary of data on four cannabis online communities
All four online communities (discussion forums) researched in this study provided a significant amount of data (a total of 40 posts 2162 replies) to be analyzed. All these data collected were saved in excel files. Coding was done reflecting research questions proposed for this study. Several different themes and sub-themes that answer the research questions were identified. Appendix A provided brief information of posts and number of replies in the data set of Canadian Weed Forum community. Furthermore, appendices B, C and D also offered information from other communities in the order of Roll It Up Forum, sub-reddit r/marijuana, and sub-reddit r/canadians. In the following section, the process of data analysis was offered in detail.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

Data collection in netnography is a phrase whereas research participated and immersed in the culture and data analysis (Kozinets, 2015). It is important to understand the context of the data and how interactions between members were conducted. Researchers, through netnography methodology, are evolving with the data by seeking, analyzing and reflecting deeply (Kozinets, 2015). In this research study, two specific types of data were captured in order to answer the research questions: archival and field note data. Archival data is various forms of communication, text and visual from the posts and replies of members; which are directly copied from the online community. Field note data is the researchers’ own comments, reflections and observations of the communities. Therefore, archival and field note data are used in this research study.

For netnography methodology, two basic forms of capturing data are possible manual or via computer assisted software. Due to the nature of the research study, contents from both posts and replies were manually copied to an excel file from these online communities. All the data collected were saved as text and excel formats. The data were then analyzed using analytical coding and hermeneutic interpretation. For this study, interpretation of the researcher played an important role in analyzing the collected data. Appendix E provided a simplified example of how researcher using analytical coding and hermeneutic interpretation for the data analysis process.

Coding is the first step of netnography analytic process (Kozinets, 2015). Each data collected from cannabis online communities was assigned into categories (like ‘regulation’ or ‘market place’). Next, the researcher did note on the side of the data to reflect any additional thoughts or comments. In order to see the general or conceptual pattern, the next step is called ‘abstracting and comparing” (Kozinets, 2015). The data then was sorted into smaller sub-categories to identify the pattern. Furthermore, data pattern and focus were generalized to explain the consistency of the research findings. Lastly, theorizing step was conducted and developed after combining generalizations.

By observing through members’ posts and replies as well as compiling and searching for patterns of data through four different cannabis online communities, two major themes of this research study emerged. Specifically, this study explored the
social characteristics of cannabis consumers on the online environment and key factors determining the decision making of cannabis purchases were captured. In order to successfully conduct the research study, hermeneutic interpretation, along with analytical coding, was used mainly to explore the possibilities of understanding text message conveying from members. Specifically, the research primarily focused on observing the members’ opinions in online communities and their reactions through different context. Using hermeneutic interpretation process helps navigating and identifying different characteristics of members in conversations and their opinions on important key factors of marketing mix.

In the next section, ethical procedure of the researcher was reflected in detail for this research study.

3.4 Ethics

Ethics are an important factor of any type of research. Especially for online research, ethical procedure tends to be somewhat unclear with many unique issues that are from an online communication. Netnography methodology can trigger some of ethical problems because the research can be of personal in nature. Some main issues that were raised in netnography methodology are whether data on online is public or private, whether there is a need to inform participants' consents, if any harm is going to be done to members and etc. (Kozinets, 2015). In order to prevent having some issues of this methodology, concealment of the data was done. There are different degrees of concealment base on Bruckman’s guideline in 2006: no concealment, minimum, medium and maximum concealment.

Due to the nature of this research study, the researcher had disguised the identity of the members’ names and pseudonyms. As Bruckman (2006) argued pseudonyms should be considered as the first names of members, therefore, those should also be treated confidentially. On the other hand, in order to distinguish data from different online communities, the source of the data site, however, would be displayed to acknowledge the diversity of sources. It is also assumed here that the lack of ‘privacy’ in viewing these online communities means no ‘harm’ was done. Because these posts and comments were freely available on these online communities, direct quotations were collected and displayed in this research study. The decision was based on the fact that these communities were understood to be public websites; therefore, the privacy information was considered members’ responsibility. Lastly, no vulnerable groups were identified in the research. Generally, netnography methodology studies typically do not need an informed consent of documentation because it is considered low risk of harm (Kozinets, 2015). Therefore, a minimum concealment was done in this research study.
In brief, the members’ names and profile pictures were not displayed in the report in order to protect members’ identities. Furthermore, date and time would not be mentioned in the finding section. However, the name of the community that the data were from would be mentioned in the research findings. These steps will help to minimalize tracing back information. This process would also help to protect the identities of members in these forums. All quotes from posts and replies were directly copied from these online communities; spelling errors and grammar were not changed to keep the authenticity of the data.

Throughout the research study, self-reflection of the researcher was established and executed in every parts of the data analysis. This is to ensure that no harms were done to any participant through this study of these online communities.
4 Findings

This chapter outlines the results of a netnography investigation that was conducted through four different cannabis online communities towards the Canadian cannabis policy and its market place. During the investigation, researcher has found trends and patterns in consumers’ characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, and external factors that provide qualitative insights about the Canadian cannabis industry. Thus, in this chapter, these findings will be divided and discussed thoroughly that will fulfill the research questions and objectives.

According to the research questions and objectives, research findings should provide significant insights of Canadian cannabis policy and its market place. Furthermore, these aspects were explored and investigated under the scope of consumers’ perspective. Firstly, while investigating the opinions of consumers towards this policy, researcher found the patterns in consumers' characteristics and divided them into two major groups: Groups of Enthusiasts and Haters of Legalization. Secondly, this section offers how cannabis members illustrated the key factors and patterns in their decision-making process. Specifically, product factor and price factor mainly influence in how consumers decide between legal cannabis products and illicit products. In the product category, four boundaries were discovered through consumers’ perspective in their postings in online communities. These four symbolic boundaries will be discussed more in details in the next sections in the order of high to low degree of importance. Lastly, in the price category, ‘government’ price and ‘street’ price are examined and elaborated in all four cannabis online communities. Thus, these two price points will be discussed in detail to provide better understandings of Canadian cannabis market place.

4.1 Canadian Cannabis Policy

Since the beginning of the cannabis legalization, the cannabis policy has been such a debatable issue that should be investigated and explored. In this research context, Canadian cannabis policy defines at the law and policy that guide federal government and provincial governments in order to maintain the public policy objectives such as protecting the youth, protecting vulnerable populations and keeping the profit out of the criminal organizations. Thus, it strictly administered in many different aspects of the cannabis industry. This regulation resulted in wide range of appraisals and criticisms. Under consumers’ perspective, appraisals can be the positive of consuming cannabis products freely without fearing jail time or changes in the nature of cannabis researches in Canada. Criticisms of policy mainly focus on how strict cannabis guideline is that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of cannabis consumers. These appraisals and criticisms are found to be associating with the members’ characteristics in these four cannabis online communities. Additionally, researcher found similar patterns in these characteristics that are beneficial to be presented as different groups and their
associated members. The degree of members’ characteristics is illustrated on the spectrum of ‘love’ and ‘hate’ relationship (See Figure 16).

Figure 16: Spectrum of ‘love’ and ‘hate' relationship from members towards Canadian cannabis legalization policy

In the next section, these characteristics of members will be examined, analyzed and discussed in detail, mainly two different groups: Groups of Enthusiasts and Haters of Legalization. Groups of Enthusiasts are in the ‘love’ spectrum towards the Canadian cannabis policy. Additionally, for group of enthusiasts' categories, two smaller populations: Optimistic enthusiasts and confirmed enthusiasts are found and defined. On the other hand, Groups of Haters were categorized as closer towards the ‘hate’ spectrum. Researcher illustrated four different hatred groups in the order of high to low degree of hatred spectrum: Anti-Government Believers, Big-Company Haters, Nostalgic Consumers, and Confused Consumers. Due to the nature of cannabis product, members are found as more often in the two extreme opposite spectrums towards the Canadian cannabis policy. Thus, researcher will discuss important characteristics of different groups in the next sections.

4.1.1 Group of Enthusiasts

Groups of Enthusiasts are defined as members who preferred the change of cannabis legalization. Some of the characteristics that can be seen in groups of enthusiasts are ‘love-able’, ‘preferable’, ‘freely’ and ‘proud’ in regards of change in the cannabis era. Groups of Enthusiasts are primarily optimistic in the cannabis policy because this will increase the benefits of consumers, additional support for the economy and government in general. Thus, these individuals are interesting in legal cannabis products, the market place and guideline to optimizing the experience in the legal
matters. However, some of these optimistic members are still frustrated to the policy but they believe changes would be in place to maximize the experience in legal cannabis market. It is worth to notice that groups of enthusiasts are the minority of the members’ populations in these four cannabis online communities.

To better understand this specific population in online community, group of enthusiasts are divided into two different small groups: optimistic enthusiasts and confirmed enthusiasts. Extreme to less extreme of ‘love’ relationship towards the policy is the main criteria to separate these two groups of enthusiasts. Members who are 100% happy with the legalization will be included into the optimistic enthusiasts. Additionally, members who are generally happy with the legalization, but find some frustrations in cannabis policy’s loopholes, will be in the confirmed enthusiasts. These smaller groups categories are to help researcher better understanding different characteristics of enthusiasts.

4.1.1.1 Optimistic Enthusiasts

Optimistic enthusiasts are extremely optimistic about the cannabis legalization in Canada. These members enjoy the end of ‘prohibition’ of cannabis and how cannabis legalization has changed positively in their daily life. Main reason of this enjoyment come from the idea of consuming cannabis products without the criminal consequences such as jail time or job lost. Under a social standpoint, the enjoyment would lead to a positive experience of cannabis consumption. For example, a reply from a post “Marijuana Legalization is Failing in Canada” from Roll It Up Forum, had stated:

They just need enough growers/retail shops to meet the huge demand. Legal cannabis is going to be boom in terms of investors/tourism among other things for Canada…. I’m just happy people to enjoy Cannabis without fearing jail time/loss a job due to testing and etc. I hope more countries fellow along and get the plant legalized. (2018, www.rollitup.org )

Optimistic enthusiasts strongly believe that the cannabis legalization framework will contribute many different aspects of Canada. This can include from economy perspective, or tourism, or even cannabis pharmaceutical researches. For example, in the figure above, the user stated that legal cannabis would be beneficial to the Canadian tourism industry. This leads to a happy statement of how other fellow countries should join this phenomenon. Additionally, optimistic enthusiasts can be found under ‘happy’ news of Canadian cannabis legalization. For example, in sub-reddit r/marijuana, one user posted a happy new of Canadian cannabis legalization. The new is “Now that Canada has legalized cannabis the nation’s scientist have an opportunity to lead world research on the cannabis genome and the plant’s potential pharmaceutical uses” (sub-reddit r/Marijuana). In the comment section, researcher found many optimistic enthusiasts happily commented and replied to each other. The conversation was simple and positive:

Thank you Canada
You're welcome bud – one other user replied
Haha I see what you did there. – the original commenter responded back humorously (2018, www.reddit.com/r/marijuana)

Some patterns that are seen in these optimistic enthusiasts are humor, cool and non-Canadian. In all four online communities, optimistic enthusiasts often replied to other members with Canadian jokes. These words and phrases were commonly used “Thanks Canada”, “You’re Welcome”, “Haha”, “Polar Bear Bastards”, “You forgot to apologize to them”, etc. These jokes and funny comments from optimistic enthusiasts have provided a friendly environment to other members. Additionally, some of these optimistic enthusiasts are described as non-Canadians. In some replies, members would state themselves as citizens of other countries such as America. In general, non-Canadian optimistic enthusiasts positive enjoy the cannabis policy and provide insight that they would come and visit Canada for cannabis experience. Moreover, some non-Canadian optimistic enthusiasts envy with the cannabis legalization in Canada because in members' location, cannabis possession would lead to jail time. For example, two quotes of non-Canadian optimistic enthusiast can be seen in this reply that illustrate the positive envy from sub-reddit r/canadiens:

Ok cool. Be grateful weed is legalized and you won’t be arrested for smoking a joint or having a bit of weed in pocket ever again. In some parts of the US you can go to jail for any amount of weed on you. I believe in some states even having it in your blood counts as possession. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadiens)

As an American, it may be time to finally knock it off with all of our Canadian jokes. Well done you polar bear loving bastards. You did it, you really did it. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadiens)

lol. Nah bro, keep it up. We gotta stay humble, no offence taken.- as one replied (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadiens)

Overall, optimistic enthusiasts are extremely positive and happy with the Canadian cannabis policy. Their relationships with other members are described as humorous and joyous for this legalization in Canada. The majority of the optimistic enthusiasts are non-Canadian citizens.

4.1.1.2 Confirmed Enthusiasts

On the spectrum of ‘love’ relationship with the cannabis policy, confirmed enthusiasts are individuals that share positive characteristics of optimistic enthusiasts. Generally, confirmed enthusiasts do enjoy the benefits of legalization of cannabis. For example, confirmed enthusiasts who has experienced in legal cannabis purchase
process, would defense the system just like optimistic enthusiasts. In the example below, one user had defensed the benefits of legalization to amateur consumers.

... I don’t know a single daily cannabis smoker who buys from legal market; my friends who smoke legal recreational weed are the ones who smoke 1 joint every so often with their partners when they go on a hike...they might have a gram that stuffed in their freezer that comes out at the end of the night of drinking, but more often than not they’re putting their flashers on and stopping by to grab a pre-roll. Does LP weed suit them? Yes, and that’s great. It’s a good step... (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadients)

This example clearly illustrated the characteristics of confirm enthusiasts. Additionally, these specific members associate the cannabis policy’s purposes such as protecting the youth and preventing illegal market would benefit the cannabis industry as a whole. Confirmed enthusiasts in all four online communities subjectively defensed the cannabis legalization in a positive manner. Mainly, confirmed enthusiasts prefer post-legalization because it protects their cannabis legal right. One great example of user that is a confirmed enthusiast:

I am sorry but I am NOT for illegal pot selling it took to long to get to this point of having it available and to have idiots selling where the police can see and observe and charge them. As for what these dispensaries sell well you are growing your own so should not be a big deal to you but what the story doesn’t tell us if the sales were for kids or adults.
I do not want this screwed up by a couple of idiots and lets face it that what they were so I am all for arresting them and putting their stupid ass’s in jail cause when you think about it stupid 1 and 2 could even effect your legal right to grow your own, bigger picture my friend is what counts. (2019, www.canadianweedforum.com)

In the quotation above, this user would use negative words such as ‘idiots’, ‘charge them’, ‘arresting’, ‘stupid ass’s in jail’ to describe illegal dealers. This confirmed enthusiast prefers having legal cannabis available to him because that means of his cannabis legal rights.

One main aspect that differentiates between optimistic enthusiasts and confirmed enthusiasts is given a doubt of loopholes in legalization. Confirmed enthusiasts, even though positively prefer the cannabis policy, believe that it is important to strengthen the downsides of cannabis legalization such as faults in legal rights and policy. Unlike optimistic enthusiasts, confirmed enthusiasts see that the policy objectives had not been fulfilled due to the strict federal guideline of cannabis. An example can be seen under a reply from r/canadients:
… But it (cannabis policy) does nothing to combat all the things they campaigned on and repeated over and over and over and over…take out black market, protect kids, strongly regulate, etc…

...

When will people learn? You can’t fight wars on ideology- whether it’s a war on terror, or a war on graffiti, or a war on crime, or war on cannabis- it’s logically (and practically) impossible to ‘win’. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadints)

4.1.2 Haters of Legalization

Unlike groups of enthusiasts, haters of legalization are more on the ‘hate’ spectrum towards the cannabis policy. The early phrase of cannabis policy received many criticisms from members through these online communities. These specific members disagree with the cannabis legalization in different aspects such as politics, economy and cannabis policy. Additionally, hatred towards each specific factor categorized different group of haters. In this research, the characteristics of these ‘haters’ are categorized into four different small groups: ‘anti-government believers’, ‘big-company haters’, ‘nostalgic consumers’ and lastly ‘confused consumers’.

In the spectrum of ‘hatred’, anti-government believers and big-company haters were against everything about the cannabis legalization in Canada. They believe that this framework mainly focused on maximizing the profit of the government and private co-operations. It is worth to notice that anti-government believers and big company haters are the majority of the members’ data that was collected in four online communities. Nostalgic consumers are on the medium hate spectrum, as they prefer the cannabis era prior to legalization. However, their views on legalization are not as extreme as the two groups stated above. Lastly, confused members are in the middle of ‘love’ and ‘hate’ relationship towards the legalization. Additionally, confused members are different from confirmed enthusiasts because their lack of understanding of cannabis policy would result in a negative experience in cannabis policy. These four groups of haters will be deeply explored in the next sections.

4.1.2.1 Anti-Government Believers

Anti-Government believers, unfortunately, are the majority of the members in all four cannabis online communities. These members have a strong negative sentiments and attitudes towards the Canadian cannabis policy. Main reason of negative opinions is the belief of government’s greediness in legalization. Due to the nature of cannabis, members had stronger sentiments and attitudes in events from these online communities. Additionally, anti-government believers’ extreme negative opinions more often lead to high engagements on any cannabis-related discussions. For example, one user has stated this in his reply of a post towards congratulating Canada in legalization:
Do your homework before you defend the illicit Cannabis Cartel and one of the most criminal and corrupt politician to ever hold the PM's office in Canada. Trudeau in fact gave the Cannabis file to an incompetent and totally corrupt former Police Chief (known as one of the most craven dissembling people in politics today FYI) who used the opportunity to not only retain the INDUSTRY OF PROHIBITION FOR POLICE, but also engage in a wholesale expansion of funding various new programs and the alarming introduction of the toughest set of laws regarding Cannabis ever seen in Canada. They have enhanced the criminal prohibition and created a proposed monopoly, a system which is actually a cartel... (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadiens)

This reply is a great example of showing the relationship between anti-government believers and the cannabis policy. These members occasionally pointed out who were responsible for this legalization and criticized the particular person for the negative points in cannabis industry. However, more often anti-government believers disagreed with the government as a whole than individual.

A strong indication of anti-government believers is that they tend to create hostile environment in these online communities. Anti-government believers would disagree with anyone who purchased from the legal market. According to these members, buying from legal market would result in supporting the cannabis monopoly where only the government is profiting from it. This indication is strongly seen in Canadian Weed Forum and Roll It Up Forum. Even though these hostile comments from anti-government believers still existed in two sub-reddits r/marijuana and r/reddit, researcher found that these comments could be downvoted from fellow members or removed from the moderators. For example, in the post relating to experience of purchasing cannabis from a legal store, one anti-government believer had stated:

Well my opinion is:

Hey you wanna buy from the gov, the very people who'd be just as glad to jail you, go for it. That's a complete fool to me. I don't kiss the hand of those who've been slapping us for 60 years. I've actually got principles. to me if you partake in the legal forced system, you've got ZERO principles.
I know the harm trudeau and his predecessors had to DECENT people. Seems to me that these giddy with legal weed are simply feeling guilty buying from a criminal like the Gov.
Oh I see they legalized it, they gotta be nice guys NOW right. What narrow minded thinking these capitulators must have.
Sorry you don't like my opinion…but I'm supposed to respect your…interesting at best.
I will NEVER support legal weed until they pay for what they did to folks. This is called scruples, principle and back-bone.
I don't deal with garbage companies like the government’s LP’s
Enjoy the hypocrite weed…I hear the cough factor is justified.
Don't feel guilty…buy away
In my neck of the world legal buyesr are thought of as pretty out of it to be polite. (2018, www.canadianweedforum.com)

Anti-government believer in the example above compared people who purchasing government cannabis (A.K.A Legal cannabis product) as 'complete fool'. A strong negative statement of 'never support legal weed' can be seen throughout these anti-government believers in all four online communities.

Additionally, there are some common words that anti-government believers primarily used for posts and replies in all four communities such as “monopoly”, “greediness”, “hypocrite”, “Trudeau”, “government”, “police” and “corruption”. These words are associating government with being the negative force that fails the cannabis legalization in Canada.

In the end, anti-government believers are the majority of the members in all four online communities. Their attitudes and behaviors are in the extreme ‘hate’ spectrum of the organization. Anti-government believers not only are against the cannabis policy, but also do not support the government running the cannabis industry as claimed. Overall, there was no positive aspect for the policy from the anti-government believers.

4.1.2.2 Big-Company Haters

Additional to the anti-government believers, big-company haters are also on the most extreme ‘hate’ spectrum towards the cannabis policy. Big-Company haters are also the majority of members throughout these cannabis online communities. They share the same negative characteristics with anti-government believers such as hostile and disbelief. However, these negative attitudes and behaviors are not resulting from the government but from the cannabis companies in Canada. Specifically, this type of members shares negative attitudes in forms of disagreement regarding big pharmaceutical and recreational cannabis companies. Again, these members associate main players in the cannabis industry as greediness and monopoly the cannabis. In the addition to that, big-company haters’ negative behaviors often result in supporting local dealers and purchasing illegal cannabis products in the black market. In the example below, it is easy to see the frustration and disagreement of big-company haters towards C.E.O of a cannabis company:

This is why you don’t invest in big companies. Canada is done if all you can do is pump and dump. That payday is stolen investor money really. Does his performance merit that much pay? The days of the conman are going as reality sets in. All they have projected future revenue. The time is coming when you have to earn based on sales, not just con investors with flawed models. I for one welcome the change. (2019, www.rollitup.org)
In this example, it is worth notice that board members of cannabis companies usually compare to ‘conman’- a negative word to describe people who use lies to be in benefit. In the same with anti-government believers, big-company haters illustrated the relationship between big co-operations with negative analogies such as being monopoly and government-owned. A reply from one member illustrated the attitudes of big-company haters from a post relating to cannabis policy in r/canadients:

In anti trust law they are referred to as barriers to access, or industry entry barriers. They are structural components designed by corrupt lawmakers that are owned by industry lobbies who collude together to create favorable regulations for the dominant players in order what they may either gain or retain exclusive control while giving the appearance of a healthy competitive industry anyone can join.

Canada’s Anti-trust laws are such a joke an illegal monopoly isn’t illegal so long as there is “competition”. But here in Canada competition can legally be defined as competition with a wholly owned subsidiary. So it’s a legit playing field cause others can play, like me vs. also me. That is how Rogers and Bell get away with creating cartel market conditions on telecomm despite that its illegal. They just create a subsidiary that THEY OWN, and compete with themselves. Hilarious? Let’s take it down!!! (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadients)

In this population, words that were commonly used are “monopoly”, “illegal”, "cartel", “stolen”, “no competition”. These negative words are used to describe the cannabis market as a monopoly playground for powerful groups of people not only from companies but also from the government. Comparing to the anti-government believers, big-company haters did not fight with other members relating to cannabis-related news or events. They were more focusing on describing the fact of how big companies are bullying the cannabis market. Overall, these hostile attitudes and behaviors of big-company haters are in all four cannabis online communities.

4.1.2.3 Nostalgic Consumers

After the first two groups of extreme hatred, researcher found another important group that were less on the hatred spectrum. Nostalgic consumers are defined as members who prefer the cannabis era prior to legalization. This type of members expects that the legalization would support and increase the experience of consuming cannabis. However, cannabis product was considered more accessible, cheap and in good quality prior to the legalization. This had led to the negative sentiments of nostalgic consumers for the cannabis policy. Nostalgic consumers also share the same characteristics with anti-government believers and big-company haters as they all disagree with the government and powerful companies monopolizing the cannabis industry. Additionally, nostalgic consumers assumed that legalization event had increased the price of cannabis, decreased the quality of its as also minimize the joyful experience consuming cannabis. It is worth arguing that nostalgic consumers showed
the frustration of cannabis policy. In the example below, this nostalgic consumer had described his experience of purchasing cannabis before the cannabis legalization settled in:

Sad thing is weed was way more accessible prior to legalization in Ontario. There were four top notch dispensaries within blocks of my house. Now there’s only one near me. No edibles and It’s really seedy with homeless people hanging around sleeping and begging. I wouldn’t feel safe going anywhere near it by myself. They say they are going to have 25 stores by April…for 14 million people. (2019, www.rollitup.org)

Nostalgic consumer found that the experience of buying and consuming cannabis has worsened after the legalization. Words that often used by nostalgic members are “more accessible”, “prior legalization”, “better quality”, “higher price”, and “greediness”. These words are often used to describe the frustration in cannabis policy from nostalgic members. Lastly, nostalgic consumers are the minority of the members in these online communities.

4.1.2.4 Confused Consumers

Unlike the first three groups of haters, confused consumers are on the least ‘hate’ spectrum towards the Canadian cannabis policy. Confused consumers are defined as members who have confusion in the cannabis policy. These members’ confusions came from the strict guideline that the government has set out. There are two different types of confusions: law-per-se confusion and cannabis policy objective confusion. Law-per-se confusion focuses on questions that are relating to different parts of the cannabis policy. For example, in Roll It Up Forum, there were confused consumers who were questioning about the limitation of plants that one could plant and produce in Canada. Law-per-se confusions do not often lead to a negative experience.

On the other hand, cannabis policy objective confusion is defined as questions towards the fact that how this strict cannabis policy would fulfill the objectives it had set out. In Canadian Weed Forum, an event that police had ticketed a citizen for a cannabis jar inside his truck led to a discussion. One member had asked of the reason of how a cannabis jar inside a private property (a car) would result in a ticket and thus, fulfill the objectives the cannabis policy had in place. This is a great example of cannabis policy objective confusion. More often, this type of confusion resulted in a negative experience and attitudes for confused consumers, which could lead them to be anti-government believer.

Confused consumers associate the cannabis law as confusing and frustrating. This leads to a negative attitudes and behaviors towards the legalization, such as engaging with anti-government believers and big-company haters. Confused consumers usually raised questions under posts relating to the policy. For example, one comment
from r/marijuana is a confused statement towards a post relating to different cannabis guideline for each province:

Ya exactly, I’ve heard that they’ve somehow managed to make it even harder to smoke it in Quebec than when it was actually illegal. You can still buy weed easily enough, but if you get caught using it literally anywhere, you get a huge fine.

Note: I don’t live there, this is just what I’ve been told by my coworkers. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/marijuana)

Lastly, confused consumers are the minority of members in these online communities. These members are often found in Canadian Weed Forum and Roll It Up Forum. On the other hand, researcher could not puzzle the reasons why confused consumers are not in the other two sub-reddits r/Marijuana and r/canadiens.

4.2 Canada Cannabis Market Place

The cannabis legalization has shaped the market differently. Prior to this era, cannabis was prohibited and classified as dangerous drugs. Consumers now can consume, experience cannabis for both medical purpose and recreational purpose. There is lack of understanding how legalization shifted in a consumers’ perspective to the market place. Thus, this research findings aim to explore and analyze this phenomenon through four online cannabis communities.

To conduct an understand of consumers’ opinions on the cannabis market place in Canada, marketing mix elements including product, price, promotion and place has been used to divide and categorize data. Research findings suggested that only product and price are significant in this matter. In this section, product and price are described in detail along with important external factors that influence consumers’ decision-making process for cannabis. Firstly, some boundaries appeared in order to illustrate the behavior, characteristic and relationship of members towards this specific product aspect. These boundaries are (i) Quality boundary, (ii) Purpose Boundary, (iii) Source Boundary, and lastly (iv) Geographical Boundary. Consequentially, these symbolic boundaries will be discussed in the order of high degree to low degree of importance. Furthermore, price factor includes two sub-sections, which are ‘Government’ price and ‘Street’ price. Researcher will discuss thoroughly the differences between these two price points and how these influence on the cannabis’ purchase intentions of consumers in four online communities.

4.2.1 Product

Cannabis product used to be classified as an addictive drug and was prohibited to use for recreational purpose throughout Canada. On October 17th, 2018, the government of Canada has passed the Cannabis Act, which allows people consuming
cannabis and cannabis-related products under both medical reasons and pleasure purposes. However, the use of cannabis was documented way before the legalization through the illicit market (A.K.A black market). Therefore, a big change in legal manner has shaped the cannabis market place differently under consumers’ perspective. Members from these four online communities not only provided their experiences but also share their own opinions for both legal cannabis products and the illegal products.

Furthermore, in categorizing these patterns of consumers’ opinions, four symbolic boundaries were found and analyzed in this research study. The most important boundary influencing the choice of cannabis product is quality boundary. Secondly, purpose boundary provided insights on the difference in terms of cannabis products for medical and cannabis products for recreation. On the third part, source boundary described reasons why consumers prefer cannabis coming from illicit market rather than the legal retailer. The last boundary is geographical boundary that explained the differences in terms of product experiences for different provincial cannabis products.

4.2.1.1 Quality Boundary

Quality is described as the degree of excellence of something. In this research context, members in these online communities reported that a quality cannabis product has to be ‘fresh’ and ‘smoke-able’. For cannabis consumers, quality is one of the most important factors in the purchase decision-making process. Regardless of the characteristics of the members, many argued that the quality of cannabis from legal source is lower comparing to illegal cannabis product from the black market. This argument is consistent in all four online communities. Additionally, given the nature of the product, if consumers in these cannabis online communities had negative experiences in the quality of the legal products, they would express heavily and negatively in the forums. Ones argued that they would not purchase the cannabis from the government stores due to its “too dry”, “long storage”, or even “expired” quality. Some members concerned and described the quality of product is in bad shape consistency throughout the time. Thus, the quality boundary shifted consumers away from the legal cannabis products. One member commented on the quality of legal cannabis product:

We talk about some of these products, even the cheapest of them sitting on the shelves for 3-4 months. Can you imagine how long these will sit on the shelves before selling (2019, www.canadianweedforum.com)

Researcher found that the negative quality pattern of legal cannabis product is consistent in all four online communities. However, sub-reddit r/canadiens aggressively contained the majority of negative experiences in all 4 out of 6 posts and more than 60% of the comments. For example, in one post relating to a cannabis-related new in sub-reddit r/canadiens forum, members were making fun off the news and shared their negative experiences.
People have been saying it’s being blown out of proportion, but if you go buy some legal green of the same type from 3 different retailers, you'll likely be served 3 jars of varied quality that smell different from each other and while one may have really nice nugs, the other two are likely either popcorn buds or are about half shake. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadients)

Another user replied negatively to the comment above.

It would be great if we either had a set standard the bud would have to meet before sale like in the food industry or if they would sell popcorn buds or shake separately either for a reduced price or at the least have it be in labeled containers. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadients)

Although the quality for legal cannabis product were mentioned and compared in many ways with illegal cannabis, black market cannabis product was not described in detail in terms of the quality often. The illicit products were generally described as in ‘good’ quality, but no explanation was provided from members in all four online communities why the illegal product is good quality.

In quality boundary, the analogy of ‘high price-good quality’ was mentioned in a great amount in order to express the disappointments of members in legal market. These legal cannabis products in the market were high price but low quality comparing to low price and high quality from illicit market. Thus, this event led to a negative experience in the cannabis market and resisted the consumers to purchase these products. For example, one user from Roll It Up Forum has elaborated his experiences in purchasing low quality product in Nova Scotia legal market.

I don’t know what stores are like in other places, but in NS you look at a list and pick from it. No looking, no smelling, just pick a plastic bottle wrapped in a box based on some vague description… Low quality, high price, and inconsistent availability of preferred products is just a nuisance people aren’t going to pay 50/8th for. Corporatization of cannabis is a fail (2019, www.rollitup.org)

Overall, quality boundary is an important reason that obstructs consumers from choosing the legal cannabis product. In all four online communities, members described quality of these legal products as ‘low’, ‘expired’ and very ‘dry’. Comparatively, cannabis products from illicit market are still preferable for consumers due to its high-quality content.

4.2.1.2 Purpose Boundary

Prior to the legalization, cannabis product can only be consumed for medical patients. After august 2018, Cannabis product can now be used for both recreational purpose and medical purpose. As for medical purpose, the cannabis policy has enriched the experience for some members. For example, medical patients that use
cannabis for that purpose can also increase the limit in growing their own plants or accessing to products in more variety of retailers. In fact, many medical cannabis members described the enthusiasts of how they were approved more plants in addition to four cannabis plants per household to support their needs of usage. However, the legalization era also has a downside for medical-purpose consumers. Specifically, some members had raised a concern of cannabis shortage in many areas in Canada for medical patients. For example, one user stated negatively: “medical users have to take a back seat” (Roll It Up Forum). This means that cannabis supply has been prioritized for recreational consumers rather than medical patients. This negative frustration from medical patients would likely to shift their intentions of cannabis from the original purpose into recreation purpose. This example explained how importance of purpose boundary is to minimize the change of cannabis usage intention.

On the other hand, recreational purpose uses of cannabis have been increasing significantly after the legalization. These online communities have celebrating for this phrase by positively complimenting on the Canadian Federal government. Cannabis products for recreational purpose were happily bought and these consumers expressed the positive through all four forums. This can be seen under ‘optimistic enthusiasts’ and ‘confirmed enthusiasts’. A comment from r/marijuana member is a great example of how positive cannabis product for recreational purpose was received under online consumers’ perspective:

It takes a village (or country) I’m proud of the feds of changing the laws but I’m even more proud that the rest of our leaders are all over it too. Law enforcement is very supportive, premier of Ontario says smoke weed anywhere you can smoke cigarettes. Parks Canada makes the campgrounds fair game with a policy of ‘go for it’… It’s all just so reasonable. I love my country! And we have room for so many more people to move in…love immigration…come on over?. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/marijuana )

Unfortunately, the demand of recreational cannabis has far exceeded the supply from the government. For this particular reason, cannabis products for recreational reason were criticized heavily. Government and private entities in the cannabis industry were to blame for the shortage. This pattern is also found in ‘anti-government believers’ and ‘big-company haters’. Moreover, members from these online communities described their experience with purchasing medical cannabis products better than the recreational products. For example, one user described his positive experience when purchasing his cannabis product through medical specialist as pleasant and joyful. He stated:

At this point I am very happy where I get mine from having spoke with them yesterday as far as they know they will be allowed to continue as they do not sell recreational you must have a medical condition to buy. (2018, www.canadianweedforum.com )
In conclusion, purpose boundary differentiates in terms of the experience purchasing products and the quality of the products. Members in online environment expressed their positive towards the medical cannabis product more than the recreational one. If members found the negative experience in medical product, they tend to switch their purpose into recreational. However, negative experience in recreational product will not switch the intention of consumers into medical purpose.

4.2.1.3 Source Boundary

Source boundary is boundary that differentiates the source of cannabis production. In this section, two cannabis sources will be analyzed and discussed in detail: government source and black market source. Government source, as the name stated, was for cannabis products coming from the legal government production. Black market source includes local dealers and illegal cannabis organizations. According to the findings, researcher found that there is a relationship between source boundary and quality boundary. More often, products coming from government source were reviewed as low quality such as ‘dry out’, ‘burnt flavors and ‘expired taste’ in all four online communities. Most members agreed that they would try government cannabis product once and would not come back to the store.

On the other hand, illicit products from black market were considered better choice for consumers because of their high quality and other external factors such as good price, variety offers and conveniences. Cannabis products from illicit market are still significantly striving after the legalization. A member from Roll It up replied to another comment above relating to source boundary:

Different animal entirely. We didn’t decriminalize, we legalized with government regulated growers. Everyone that had weed before, still has weed…except the government suppliers. The black market and illegal dispensaries are going strong & we are allowed to grow and share. (2019, www.rollitup.org )

It is important to differentiate cannabis depending on the source of the production. Quality and experience in government cannabis products were reviewed negatively by members in all four online communities. Thus, products from black market are still a preferable choice for many online members.

4.2.1.4 Geographical Boundary

Geographical boundary is the least important boundaries in the product category. Under consumers’ perspective for this research context, geographical boundary was to examine the differences in provincial legal products such as the quality, experience and delivery rates. Cannabis product in Ontario is discussed and debated more frequently in 'Canadian Weed Forum'. Ontario product from the Ontario Cannabis Store has received criticism in many different aspects such as low and expired products, registering credit card or even slow delivery rate. For example, one user from Canadian Weed Forum
criticized Ontario cannabis product due to a “breach of user info” in Ontario Cannabis Store. Furthermore, slow delivery rate decreases the overall experience for this consumer. These events would keep the consumers away from Ontario Cannabis Store.

Even though Ontario products received many criticisms, products coming from British Columbia gained more positive feedbacks from members in these online communities. Some customers praised British Columbia products for quality on strains, lower prices and better variety of cannabis-related products. From Roll It Up Forum, a post asked consumers’ experience in purchasing legal cannabis product, one consumer compared between Ontario and British Columbia experience:

The Ontario cannabis store isn’t very good but the cannabis store online in BC has them beat on strains and prices and also bongs etc…but if you don’t live in BC you can’t buy…which don’t make sense seeing mj legal all over the country.

OCS is more expensive than a street dealers price for weed. Street dealers in Ontario are still cashing in…even more so now. (2019. www.rollitup.org)

It is worth to mention that there was lack to no information about other provinces’ products. Researcher only found one comment on a positive experience in Nova Scotia in terms of purchasing in a legal store. It is belief that the population in British Columbia and Ontario is higher than the rest of the provinces. Thus, this might result in lack of data for cannabis products for other provinces and territories.

In conclusion, geographical boundary is the least important factor in the decision-making process for cannabis product. Ontario cannabis product has a negative reputation for low quality, high price with a bad experience. British Columbia, on the other hand, was appraised from consumers for the opposite characteristics from Ontario.

4.2.2 Price

The research finding has suggested that cannabis members in four online communities are highly sensitive to the price factor. Due to the nature of cannabis high price, the gap between prices from legal market and illicit market would shift the intention of purchase of consumers. Researcher found that the majority of the members on all four online communities agreed that they perceive price as a second importance reason to not supporting the cannabis market place. Thus, in the next section, this phenomenon will be examined and described in detail.

To better understand consumers’ opinions regard price point, researcher found two common themes that described these patterns and characteristics logically: ‘government’ price and ‘street’ price. In this research context, ‘government’ price is price point that was set by the government of Canada and its provincial government.
Opposite to that, ‘street’ price is for price point that was introduced by local dealers or illegal retailers from the black market. In this section, result findings on consumers’ attitudes and behaviors for each price point will be introduced and discussed. Furthermore, researcher reflected these price points towards the Canadian cannabis market place to better understand the consumers’ opinions for this phenomenon.

4.2.2.1 ‘Government’ Price

Under the federal law, cannabis legal product is being priced and taxed both under federal guideline and provinces’ policy. This means that there are some cannabis products, which will be priced federally with same price tag in every area of Canada. Additionally, provinces will be given the opportunity to provide price and tax guideline for other cannabis products that are not in the federal common list. The research findings suggested that consumers perceive ‘government’ price is on the extreme spectrum of expensiveness. For example, one user in Canadian Weed Forum expressed his negative attitudes for the government high price tag:

> Over a hundred bucks for a quarter, wow.

> How are they offering this on the street for half the price?

> It’s not like they can make the claim the the weed is safer through any of these outfits when your getting mouldy bud, for one.

> I’d like to know if any third parties are checking any of these growers product for any issues, seems that there isn’t.

> Over-packaging seems to be an issue in my eyes too.

> Big assed plastic jar for a gram of weed, or even that tube for a grossly over-priced pre-roll.

> $20 for a joint, my goodness. They don’t seem to get the idea of under-cutting the black market. (2019, www.canadianweedforum.com)

Comparing to ‘street’ price, ‘government’ price is two times more expensive without any justification of the price increase. Furthermore, members in all four online communities cared about the relationship between quality factor and price point. Most agrees that legal cannabis product has not delivered the expectation in terms of quality for the expensive price tag along with it. For example, one member stated that :”If the pricing and quality don't get under control to a reasonable level, the black market will thrive” – as discussing about purchasing product in a legal cannabis retailer (2019, www.canadianweedforum.com)

The example above was to illustrate the consequences of how negative attitudes towards the price point could benefit the cannabis illicit market. Data suggested that
these negative attitudes were significantly consistent in all four online communities. Members expressed these negative attitudes for the ‘government’ price and why it would shift their intentions to support the black market. Additionally, these members are mainly haters of legalization that were described above.

Even though consumers are mainly frustrated with the ‘government’ price point, some members see this high price tag as a way to maintain the cannabis legalization such as supporting government suppliers, distributions or even cannabis policy guidelines. Also, these members feel safe and secure when purchasing government cannabis product and the high price tag is the compensation for those secure feelings. Researcher found that these defenses are primarily coming from groups of enthusiasts. However, these types of comments tend to trigger negative arguments from ‘anti-government believers’ and ‘big-company haters’ as they mostly disagreed with these defenses.

Overall, the majority of consumers’ opinions towards the ‘government’ price are negative due to lack of justification for the high price point. These negative attitudes for ‘government’ price will consequence negatively as consumers will shift their purchase to the black market.

4.2.2.2 ‘Street’ Price

‘Street’ price is defined as price point for illicit cannabis product, coming from illegal dealers and black market. In all four online communities, ‘street’ price is consistently preferable by consumers because it was cheaper from two third (2/3) or half of the price point in dispensaries. The big gap in price point created a resistance of consumers to purchase from the legal market. Consequentially, Canadian black market is still thriving under the legalization era. For example, one user made a strong prediction of black market success. He suggested that high quality with lower price in cannabis products would still be preferable choice for consumer in the long run:

I’d make a solid bet that the Canadian black market in weed sales still makes more money in sales than dispensaries. Illegal trade recirculates cash back I to the economy. All income is taxed, doesn’t matter where it comes from, as soon as it enters a bank even after being laundered, it will be taxed.

MoMs are still the cheapest and highest quality option to buying weed in Canada, they most likely always will be. Why start licensing weed when the black market isn’t an actual problem. I’d even say that black market shop are more reliable, consistent, and friendly than the average dispensary. (2019, www.reddit.com/r/canadients)

Interestingly, research findings suggested that consumers mainly agree that cannabis legalization has been beneficial not only to the black market but also to the consumers. Because the barriers to enter the cannabis market were lowered due to the legalization,
black markets provided a variety of different products in a lower price point. Thus, customers are offered better cannabis products and better price points comparing to the legal cannabis market place.

In conclusion, it is important to better understand the importance of the price factor of cannabis product. The research findings suggested that consumers in all four online communities prefer cannabis products from the black market due to the lower price point. Negative attitudes for the expensive 'government' price resulted in shifting the consumers’ intentions towards illicit market. Additionally, 'street' price is still very attractive to consumers and thus, black market has been successfully thriving even after Canadian cannabis legalization.

4.3 Summary of findings

Cannabis legalization in Canada has shaped the consumers’ perspectives and opinions in regards of the cannabis policy and its market place. In additional, researcher found similar patterns of characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of cannabis consumers in four cannabis online communities that would answer the research questions and objectives. To better understand this research, the result findings were divided into two different sections that examined and analyzed two main parts of the cannabis legalization: its policy framework and the market place.

The study findings suggested that characteristics of members are the most relevant to illustrate and understand consumers' opinions under the scope of Canadian cannabis policy. In all four online communities, these characteristics were located under different ‘love’ and ‘hate’ relationship spectrum. Firstly, two main populations found on the positive 'love' spectrum were ‘optimistic enthusiasts’ and ‘confirmed enthusiasts’. Optimistic enthusiasts are members who positively appraise the Canadian cannabis policy. In the less extreme of ‘love’ spectrum, confirmed enthusiasts positively supported the cannabis policy because of the benefits for the economy, research, and citizens' cannabis rights. However, confirmed enthusiasts believed some of loopholes in the policy needed to be fixed in order to serve and strengthen its purposes. If the confusion led to a negative experience, confirmed enthusiasts can switch into the negative consumers of legalization framework. Secondly, the majority of the members in all four online communities are classified as haters of legalization framework. Two common populations are ‘anti-government believers’ and ‘big-company haters’ that locate more in the extreme ‘hate’ spectrum. They both negatively disagreed with the legalization framework. Additionally, they associated government and big co-operations as greediness, monopoly and solo profit. Through the less extreme ‘hate’ relationship towards the cannabis policy, ‘nostalgic consumers’ prefer cannabis experiences such as purchasing process, options of cannabis strains prior to the legalization. ‘Confused consumers’ mainly had frustration and confusion in regards of strict cannabis policy. Thus, this led to a negative experience and relationship for the cannabis policy. Lastly, due to the nature of cannabis product, researcher found that there were usually heated
conversations between these groups of members as they defended their opinions aggressively.

On the other hand, product and price are the key factors that influence the Canadian cannabis market place. The research findings suggested four symbolic boundaries from highest degree to lowest degree of importance under the product category: quality boundary, purpose boundary, source boundary and geographical boundary. In this context, members would decide to go for illicit cannabis products if the legal ones would not surpass these four boundaries. Thus, this event would also lead to a negative experience for members. Additionally, researcher found that the gap between ‘government’ price and ‘street’ price would also influence the decision-making process for online consumers. When ‘government’ price was too high without any justification, members of all four online communities would pursue cannabis products from the black market. Hence, this would increase the profit from the illicit market.
5 Discussions and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore, investigate and examine the cannabis phenomenon within the Canadian cannabis policy and its market place. Prior to this study, there was no academic research for this new important event. In existing researches, some had explored some forms of cannabis usage in many aspects such as the demographic of cannabis consumers, different forms of cannabis usage, patterns in characteristics of consumers, etc. (Cabrera-Nguyen et al., 2016; Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2014; Daniulaityte et al., 2015; Lamya et al., 2016; Montgomery et al., 2017). However, an understanding of consumers’ opinions and how to improve the experience of legal cannabis are still missing. Therefore, findings from this study make early contributions by offering insights regarding Canadian cannabis policy and the legal market place.

This chapter is divided into three main sections: discussions, contributions and conclusions. In the discussion section, two main themes, Canadian cannabis policy and Canadian cannabis market place, are briefly discussed through the scope of consumers’ opinions in the online environment. Secondly, researcher offers both the conceptual and managerial contributions from this study. Lastly, in the conclusion section, limitations and future research suggestions are provided.

5.1 Discussion

This study’s objective is to expand the understanding on the impact of cannabis legalization to the consumers through the policy and the market place. In order to fulfill the research objective, the research questions were relating what the cannabis consumers’ perspective for Canadian cannabis policy and the market place through online communities. The finding results suggested that two main themes had been explored: Canadian cannabis policy and Canadian cannabis market place. This study provided a broad study of such under the context of online environment, especially four cannabis online communities: Canadian Weed Forum, Roll It Up Form, sub-reddit r/marijuana and r/canadians. In the first section, consumers’ opinion about the policy is divided into two groups of consumers. The second section discusses on consumers’ opinions about market place. Findings of four boundaries in product factor and two sub-themes in price factor are also addressed.

5.1.1 Discussion on Canadian cannabis policy

The cannabis policy in Canada has received many compliments as also criticisms. The wide range of opinions is divided into two main groups of consumers: Group of Enthusiasts and Haters of Legalization. As the names suggested, group of enthusiasts includes consumers having positive feedbacks and opinions towards the cannabis legalization. These positive feedbacks can vary from high to medium positive spectrum. Additionally, we can see different degree of positive associating with the
types of enthusiasts. There are two types of enthusiasts that were identified in this research: Optimistic enthusiasts and confirmed enthusiasts.

Optimistic enthusiasts are on the high positive spectrum. These consumers show appreciation of using cannabis without fears. At the same time, these positive feedbacks mainly come from the benefits of cannabis legalization. Optimistic enthusiasts believe that policy will contribute significantly not only to the economy but also cannabis researches in Canada. At the same time, there is also a trend that half of the optimistic enthusiasts are non-Canadian citizen. For example, positive feedbacks can be seen in one post regarding how Canada can now lead world research on cannabis.

Confirmed enthusiasts are individuals who share some of the characteristics of optimistic enthusiasts. These consumers support cannabis policy from the government. However, confirmed enthusiasts believe that the framework can be strengthened in a better manner to support the benefits of both the government and also the consumers.

Opposite to the groups of enthusiasts, haters of legalization provided insights by their criticism towards the policy. Consumers from all four online communities agree that cannabis laws strictly prohibited many aspects of the industry that leads to frustration of cannabis consumers. These haters of legalization are divided into four different groups depending on the degree of hatred spectrum. This includes (i) Anti-Government Believers, (ii) Big-Company Haters, (iii) Nostalgic consumers and (iv) Confused consumers.

Anti-Government Believers are the majority of consumers in these cannabis online communities. These specific consumers have a strong negative sentiments and attitudes towards the cannabis policy mainly due to the government controls. Because the nature of the product, anti-government believers are more aggressive to groups of enthusiasts and they create a hostile environment online. This indication can be seen more frequently in Canadian Weed Forum and Roll It Up Forum. This environment cannot be seen much in the other two sub-reddits because moderator tends to remove those negative and hostile comments.

Additional to anti-government believers, big-company haters also associate greediness to big companies in the cannabis industry. Negative attitudes and behaviors can be seen comments towards big-company news in these online communities. Given the large part of big companies dominating cannabis industry, for example Canopy Growth, Ontario Cannabis Store, etc., big-company haters strongly assumed these companies has monopolized and bullied local, smaller players.

Nostalgic consumers and confused consumers are more in the medium hatred spectrum. Nostalgic consumers are described as preferring the cannabis era prior to government legalization. Their argument is that cannabis was more accessible, cheap and good quality. Even though they have negative attitudes towards government
because of ruining cannabis products, it is not as negative as anti-government believers and big-company haters. Confused consumers are the minority of the population. However, they provided deeper insights of cannabis policy’s frustration. Researcher found that frustration of cannabis policy could lead to negative attitudes and thus, confused consumers could become anti-government believers or big-company haters.

This study demonstrates a correlation between ‘love’ and ‘hate’ relationship spectrum of consumers and how these characteristics connecting with the Canadian cannabis policy. These research findings suggest that the Canadian cannabis policy received more negative opinions under the scope of consumers in all four online communities. Mainly, these negative attitudes and behaviors come from the disagreements to the government and big retailers. Members assume that the cannabis policy strengthen the power of government and big cannabis companies such as monopolizing the industry, profiting significantly from the market and criminalizing the consumers and local dealers without an opportunity to provide supports to these groups. Thus, these negative assumptions outweigh the positive impact of the cannabis policy under the scope of consumers. Furthermore, the results provided insights to policy maker of how to maximize the policy. Generally, cannabis consumers in online communities associated the cannabis policy as a tool for government and cannabis companies monopolizing the industry. Additional to that, these negative associations also come from the lack of helping citizens for local market such as local dealers who would grow their own products. With this insight, researcher hopes that a change in cannabis policy will be possible in order to maximize the consumers’ experiences and benefits in cannabis legal products. Overall, this has answered the first research question of this study.

5.1.2 Discussion on Canadian cannabis market place

Since the legalization, it is interesting to identify and understand this phenomenon under the marker perspective. Interestingly, research found that consumers engaged to cannabis market place intensively and illustrated their opinions strongly on these online communities. Results indicated that product and price would drive the consumers’ decision-making process. Cannabis product is one of the most important reasons for consumers to decide between legal market and illicit market. Boundaries have been found in cannabis products that would significantly influence the consumers. From the highest importance to the lowest, these boundaries are (i) quality boundary, (ii) purpose boundary, (iii) source boundary and lastly (iv) geographical boundary. In addition to product, ‘government’ price or ‘street’ price does influence significantly on the choice of cannabis in the market place. In the next section, a discussion on both product and price will be elaborated.

Quality boundary is the most important factor for cannabis consumers when deciding a product. The majority of consumers agreed that quality of cannabis product from the legal market. Research findings suggested that consumers would switch to an illicit product when legal cannabis would not surpass the standard and expectation of
quality factor. Next, purpose boundary was to divide cannabis products under the scope of medical aspect or recreational aspect. In the finding, medical patients/consumers found the benefit of increasing the limit to plant cannabis but also negatively criticized of how cannabis products are being prioritized for recreational purpose. Thus, if this negative experience continues, consumers for medical purpose will switch to consume recreational cannabis product. Additionally, to the first two boundaries, source boundary suggested that cannabis products can be divided into two different categories based on the source of the production. Consistency with the quality boundary, cannabis products coming from government received negative feedbacks from the members in online communities. These products were described as low quality. Thus, this boundary prevented consumers to purchase and support products from the black market. Lastly, geographical boundary implied that Ontario cannabis products worsen in terms of quality, variety of selection, and experience comparing to British Columbia. For example, some consumers stated that their experiences in consuming British Columbia cannabis products were positive, as the process of purchasing was convenient, the quality of cannabis described as ‘high’ due to the freshness and also consumers were provided many options when choosing. This even leads to a negative opinion of consumers for the Ontario cannabis market place.

In the addition to the product, research findings also suggest that the legal cannabis market place is negatively perceived by the consumers in online communities because of price factor. The majority of members in all four online communities agreed that ‘government’ price in the cannabis market place is too high without any justification for it. Furthermore, big gap difference in ‘government’ price and ‘street’ price resulted in the choice of purchasing illicit cannabis products in black market place.

The relationship between product, price and the decision-making are important to the retailers. With that suggested, cannabis retailers should focus more what consumers’ needs and wants for this product. The research finding found that consumers are highly sensitive to the quality and price of cannabis. If cannabis product did not pass the standard of quality comparing to the black market, consumers would turn away from retailers and pursue the illicit products. Price is also the factor influencing on the decision-making of cannabis consumers. Cannabis consumers mainly agreed that high price tag for legal product without justifications for it would persuade consumers away. Thus, it is important for retailers and policy makers to suggest a better price strategy to maximize the sales of cannabis in legal manners.

Unfortunately, this research study did not find any significant data on both promotion and place from online communities. For promotion aspect, due to the strict policy for retailers to promote cannabis, it is understandable that consumers would not provide any attitude for this. Researcher also assumed that there was no promotion in the black market for cannabis product for consumers to express their opinions in this matter. Interestingly, in four online communities, place aspect of the marketing mix was not also found. Some members expressed how they could buy from online websites (besides Ontario cannabis store online, any other online website is considered from
black market) but no written data was found. Therefore, researcher assumed that promotion and place are not important to cannabis consumers.

In conclusion, the research findings suggested that the Canadian cannabis market place, in terms of legal industry, is not received positively for both product and price from members in all communities. On the other hand, the black market for cannabis is still successfully thriving even after the legalization mainly due to high quality, low price product. Therefore, these research findings fulfilled the second question of this study.

5.2 Contributions

In the next section, the conceptual and managerial contributions of this research are discussed.

5.2.1 Conceptual Contribution

The long prohibition of cannabis had resulted in the lack of studies in this phenomenon. The cannabis legalization in Canada has opened a new chapter for many researchers to deeper understand this new category of product in more meaningful ways. In additional to that, this research study hopes to contribute to this phenomenon in three main cannabis literature areas: cannabis policy, cannabis market and also cannabis studies on social media. In this section, the researcher will discuss these contributions more in details.

First and foremost, this study answered the main question of Canadian cannabis policy. Specifically, the researcher examined the cannabis policy under the scope of consumers’ opinions. These consumers’ opinions towards the cannabis policy can also associate with the consumers’ characteristics. For example, ‘anti-government haters’ and ‘big-company haters’ represented a majority of consumers who do not agree with the cannabis policy. On the positive note, the legalization received positive appraisal and support from ‘optimistic enthusiasts’ and ‘confirmed enthusiast’. Additionally, the cannabis policy is considered significantly strict to the consumers that would persuade consumers to not purchase from the legal government retailers. More importantly, this study contributes to the understanding of cannabis consumers under the spectrum of ‘love’, ‘hate’ relationship. More often, if the negative experience was received, consumers would express more negatively on these online communities. With these result findings, researcher also hopes to contribute to the developing of cannabis consumers’ profiles. In the past studies, most of the cannabis consumers’ profiles were related more to the demographic (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2017; Daniulaityte et al., 2018; Montgomery et al., 2019), lifestyle (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2015) and attitudes/behaviors towards cannabis only (Daniulaityte et al., 2015; Lamya et al., 2016). However, the study on consumers’ attitudes and behavior towards this specific policy did not exist. Thus, this research study hopes to contribute in cannabis policy under the scope of consumers’ opinions.
Canada is one of the first countries that decriminalized cannabis product for both medical purposes and recreational options. This created a new legal market for recreational cannabis usage. Because of the recent legalization in Canada, there was no study designated for only its market place, especially Canadian cannabis market place. With the long prohibition of cannabis, this research study hopes to fill a gap in marketing literature with this unique product by providing insights about Canadian cannabis market place. Additionally, through this research study, researcher believes that product and price are the main key factors that influenced on consumers decision-making process. Furthermore, four symbolic boundaries for product factor such as quality boundary, purpose boundary, source boundary and geographical boundary were found in this study. These four boundaries contributed to the understanding of cannabis product and provided an opportunity for other researches in this category. On the other hand, the gap in prices for legal cannabis and illicit ones fulfilled the reason why black market is still thriving under the legalization era. Thus, this event expanded the study of price for such special product.

Lastly, past studies have explored cannabis topic through two main streams of social media: Twitter and Instagram. For example, there are studies on different cannabis strains, consumers’ attitudes, characteristics towards cannabis, and consumers’ profiles on Twitter (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2017; Daniulaityte et al., 2018; Montgomery et al., 2019). One study researched on cannabis-related post on Social Media. To the researcher’s knowledge, there were little studies of cannabis in online environment. Thus, this study fulfilled that gap in academic literature of cannabis in online environments. The research study implied that cannabis consumers provided significant opinions and attitudes towards this topic more openly through these online communities. The lack of personal information and how sensitive consumers are towards this product implied that online communities are great environments for consumers to express and debate. Furthermore, past studies of cannabis through Twitter and Instagram were lack of understanding of consumers’ opinions in the market where cannabis legalization was under the federal scope. Therefore, this study hopes to provide insights on consumers’ attitudes and behaviors on cannabis subject through online communities.

Overall, the study in a way is an addition made to the cannabis literature by providing consumers’ attitudes towards policy and market place through online communities.

5.2.2 Managerial Contribution

Given the complexity of cannabis legalization, providing an efficient cannabis policy can be challenging. Understanding consumers’ perspective can serve as another tool to the policy makers to maximize the benefits of the complicated policy. It provides an opportunity to consider consumers’ attitudes toward any specific problems in the policy. As the results suggested, consumers would turn away from legal cannabis products because the cannabis policy in Canada was perceived as negative for
consumers. More importantly, study results found that the Canadian cannabis policy’s purposes such as protecting the youth, keeping the profit out of black market and serving the citizens are not effective through consumers’ opinions. Consumers are still considering the illicit market to purchase and consume cannabis. Therefore, this research hopes to provide a different aspect in utilizing cannabis policy for the benefits of consumers. Policy makers can use this research study to understand the effect and consequences of policy better as this will provide an opportunity to fulfill the policy’s purposes.

Secondly, Canadian cannabis market place is, in need, a significant change in terms of product and price. This study provided deep insights for retailers to market their cannabis products and price to attract consumers more. Specifically, four symbolic boundaries for product factor should be considered when proving cannabis to consumers. Quality is considered most important reason for consumers in online communities to purchasing different cannabis products. This significant insight can help retailers how to improve the sales. Creating a high-quality product with reasonable price can help resolve the negative assumption from the cannabis consumers and would, in fact, improve their experiences. Building higher quality cannabis products will motivate and engage consumers in choosing from the legal market rather than the illicit one.

Interestingly, most of the positive attitudes and behaviors from online consumers in these communities are coming from non-Canadians. This was expected as Canada was one of the first countries to legalize this product under the scope of federal laws. The cannabis legalization would likely provide a great opportunity for cannabis tourism in Canada. Thus, this could be a great opportunity for cannabis vendors to maximize this booming trend for tourists in Canada. One needs to be treated with caution in this regard though as it can also have implications due to laws and regulations of other countries.

5.3 Conclusions

This section offers limitations and future research directions.

5.3.1 Limitations

The environments of this study mainly based on the online contexts, Canadian Weed Forum, Roll It Up Forum, sub-reddits r/marijuana and r/canadians. It should be noted that the phenomenon was examined and analyzed under the scope of consumers’ opinions. Again, these opinions were mainly focusing on answering the questions on Canadian cannabis policy and its market place. These opinions, however, can be biased through these online communities due to the sensitive nature of cannabis and online communities. Furthermore, most consumers in these four online communities are considered cannabis ‘specialists’ as they stated in the majority of comments. Therefore, these opinions might be true to frequent cannabis consumers but not for the other occasional or first-time cannabis consumers. As a result, the
A netnography study conducted for this investigation focused entirely on the four online communities that only captures a partial side of this phenomenon.

This study also has some limitations on the netnography methodology. Firstly, this research studies only investigated through four online communities. The data set was small to understand the whole picture of this phenomenon. Secondly, during the data collection which were six weeks, there were three posts in the data set that were deleted or removed. This could be due to the fact that moderators have the ability to remove any negative post in the online communities. Unfortunately, these posts were removed from researcher's data set. Thirdly, the researcher conducted this study manually without the help of technological. This can result in a biased result on the researcher's side. Moreover, the duration of the data set (from October 17th , 2018 to September 15th , 2019) was significantly short as the cannabis policy had improvised and improved from the time of the research conduction. Therefore, cannabis consumers might have different experiences or opinions on this matter beyond this time frame. Lastly, my research study focused on the intensity of posts and replies in these four online communities. Knowing the identity of members (unlike the content in the posts and replies) would not be beneficial for the research objective and questions; thus, it was not investigated and included in the research data set.

### 5.3.2 Future Research Suggestions

It would be interesting to compare and contrast this phenomenon through different social media streams in order to see the patterns on cannabis topic. For example, a research study on consumers' opinions through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and online communities towards the Canadian cannabis policy and the market place would provide a bigger and better picture. Because of the early phrase in cannabis legalization, potential longitudinal studies could also exist in future to better understand how the policy impacts on the consumers. For example, studies on this phenomenon in long time duration of 10 years would provide significant data and insights on consumers' perspective on policy and Canadian market place over time.

This study also introduces new opportunities to look at online communities for unique product such as cannabis. For these types of sensitive topics, a better understanding of their online environment and context would significantly be meaningful. Furthermore, these researches will be helpful to develop new theory on consumers' behaviors towards sensitive products such as cannabis.

Furthermore, as the stability of cannabis policy and its market place improves, other research methodologies will also be suitable to explore and investigate this phenomenon. For example, one can use interview to understand the consumers' perspective deeper for this type of product. Moreover, future research can use recent advances of machine learning such as text mining and topic modeling (Hagen, Uzuner, Kotfila, Harrison, & Lamanna, 2015; Mohar & Bogdanov, 2013). Further investigation
can be done with latent class (i.e segmentation) method based on the deeper insights from this qualitative approach (Burke et. al., 2010).

Canada cannabis legalization is such a phenomenon that contributes greatly to economy and social aspects of Canada. However, because of its early phrase, there was lack of some understandings when developing the legal framework. This creates an opportunity for researchers in this field to conduct studies to fully understand the consumers’ perspectives on cannabis policy and its objectives. Studies on cannabis policy making and its impact on consumers will contribute towards and expand the much needed insights for policy research area.
REFERENCES


*Example of posts that were considered in the data set* (2019). Retrieved from [www.canadianweedforum.com](http://www.canadianweedforum.com).


Seraj, M. (2012). We Create, We Connect, We Respect, Therefore We are: Intellectual, Social, and Cultural Value in Online Communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(4), 209-222.


## APPENDICES

**Appendix A: Data Set Table – Canadian Weed Forum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section/Sub-Section</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th># of Replies</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Product/Price and Experience</td>
<td>Will you Use Government ran weed stores?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Oct 23 2018-May 6 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/Price and Experience</td>
<td>Why do Canadians hate to buy marijuana online</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>March 28 2019 – April 7 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/ Price and Experience</td>
<td>Falls Cannabis Shop to open in early May</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 4 2019 - Jul 5 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/ Price and Experience</td>
<td>Dry Weed through legal dispensaries</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>March 16 2019-April 6 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/ Price and Experience</td>
<td>What prices are you finding online?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>April 19 2019- May 2 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/ Price and Experience</td>
<td>After complaints, P.E.I cannabis producer aims to change, reduce packaging</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Feb 5 2019 – March 17 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/Price and Experience</td>
<td>Ontario to grant up to 25 licenses for pot stores amid supply fears</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Dec 14 2018 – March 9 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/ Price and Experience</td>
<td>Same Weed Strain Different Price</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 3 2018 – Nov 27 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Product/ Price and Experience</td>
<td>Same day shipping of weed</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Oct 19 2018 - Nov 13 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/Provincial Law</td>
<td>Ontario releases cannabis regulations for retail stores set to open April 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 15 2018 – Nov 20 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/Provincial Law</td>
<td>“Illegal” Toronto pot shops to be closed down</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Oct 16 2018-Oct 22 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/ Canadian Federal Law</td>
<td>Edibles and Drinks</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Sep 29 2018- Oct 30 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/General Comments</td>
<td>Police Shut Down new enterprise</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Feb 21 2019 – April 16 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/ General Comments</td>
<td>Driver ticketed for having open cannabis in car</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nov 2 2018- nov 6 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section/Sub-Section</td>
<td>Posts</td>
<td># of Replies</td>
<td>Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>'Canada is done': Bruce Linton likely to pop up in U.S cannabis industry following Canopy exit</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>July 8 2019- July 13 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Selling Cannabis-Infused Gummy Bears could Get you 5 years in Jail and a $1M Fine In Canada</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>June 15 2019-June 18 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Health Canada 'build first' policy a blow to craft cannabis industry: critics</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>May 17 2019 – May 21 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>UN- Canada’s medical cannabis programs are poorly regulated</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>March 6 2019- March 9 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Pot Sales in Canada by dollar amount</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>January 27 2019- February 1 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Marijuana Legalization is Failing in Canada</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>November 14 2018 – November 15 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Where are the seeds? Cannabis stores across Canada face shortages..lol</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>October 29 2018 – December 12 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Ontario Cannabis Store mum on backup delivery plan amid Canada Post strikes, wave of complaints</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Oct 24-2018-October 27 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Canada: Ontario Government Announces Cannabis Retail Rules</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>October 24 2018 – October 26 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Marijuana Patient/Canadian Patient</td>
<td>Cannabis in Canada has become Black or White… pick your side</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>October 19 2018-October 19 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grow Room/General Marijuana Growing</td>
<td>Way to go Canada</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>October 17 2018 – December 31 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grow Room/General Marijuana Growing</td>
<td>Canada proud</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>January 6 2019 – September 2 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
## Appendix C: Data Set Table - sub-reddit r/marijuana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s Time to Protect Workers Who Use Marijuana</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jan 12 2019 – May 8 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After many decades of wasting resources and lives on a silly drug war, Canada is stepping up to the plate to legalise cannabis tomorrow- finally</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>October 16 2018- Oct 23 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now that Canada has legalized cannabis the nation’s scientist have an opportunity to lead world research on the cannabis genome and the plant’s potential pharmaceutical uses</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>October 18 2018 – December 09 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pot Topics: Canada legalizes cannabis; Colorado pot sales top 1B</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>October 21 2018 – October 23 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day hopefully I won’t have to explain this to people it will just be common knowledge. Cheers to legalization in Canada</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Jan 13 2019 – May 8 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix D: Data Set Table – sub-reddit r/canadians**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Replies</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult-use cannabis sales through regulated channels in Canada reached a new high in June after meandering for much of the first half-year of legalization, according to the latest, seasonally adjusted data from Statistics Canada</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>September 10 2019 - September 11 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20 eighths! thank you The Joint in Assiniboia for not being evil and greedy.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>September 5 2019 - September 5 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELI5: Why is the cannabis industry in Ontario a disaster and what can be done to fix it?</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>August 31 2019 – Sep 1 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CannTrust stock slides another 28% after regulator says another facility is non-compliant .</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>August 12 2019 – August 14 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Reasons Why I Hope Cannabis Legalization Fails in Canada</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>August 13 2019 – August 14 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CannTrust allegedly used fake walls to hide pot from Health Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Jul 11 2019 – Jul 12 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price and Experience</td>
<td>Oct 23 2018</td>
<td>&quot;Will you Use government run weed stores?&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 5th 2019</td>
<td>CCB</td>
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