

Deciphering the buzz of Delta-8 THC in the USA on Twitter

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Introduction / Issues: Delta-8 THC, a minor cannabinoid present in cannabis plants, has gained popularity due to its legal status, despite having weaker psychoactive effects compared to its counterpart, Delta-9 THC. Delta-8 THC is often marketed as a legal alternative in jurisdictions where Delta-9 THC is either illegal or only available for medical use. This study analysed the content of tweets related to Delta-8 THC posted between Jan 2020 to June 2022, by state cannabis laws.

Method: A total of 97,196 historical tweets were retrieved from Twitter API version 1.2. The tweets were categorised geographically based on the legal status of cannabis for non-medicinal and medicinal use. The topics of the tweets was identified using unsupervised topic modelling.

Results: The analysis revealed four main topics: i) tweets that promotes the consumption of Delta-8 THC products to achieve psychoactive high, which were common across all jurisdictions, ii) tweets that discussed the legality of Delta-8 THC, particularly prevalent in jurisdictions where cannabis for non-medical use is illegal, iii) tweets about the Delta-8 THC industry, primarily found in jurisdictions where cannabis for non-medical use is legal, and iv) tweets promoting Delta-8 accessories and product, often observed in jurisdictions where cannabis is legal for medical use only.

Discussions and Conclusions: Most of the tweets were marketing-oriented, regardless of the legality of Delta-9 THC. Future research could investigate the impact of these marketing strategies to help key stakeholders better understand the evolving landscape of Delta-8 THC.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: CL, GC, and JL were supported by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Scholarship and Fellowships (APP2005317, APP2010008, APP1176137). NCYSUR is supported by Commonwealth funding from the Australian Government provided under the Drug and Alcohol Program. The funding bodies had no role in the study design, collection, analysis, or interpretation of the data.