DESTIGMATISING THE RECREATIONAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Specialising in Business Science (BUS6000W/BUS07)

Prepared by:

Nqobile Bundwini (BNDNQO001)

Supervisor:

Dr James Lappeman, School of Management Studies, University of Cape Town

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SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DECLARATION REGARDING PLAGIARISM

I, the undersigned, Nqobile Bundwini, hereby declare that this research is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Business Science specialising in Marketing at the University of Cape Town.

I further declare that I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong. I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others. I understand that the University of Cape Town may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

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ABSTRACT

Cannabis is the world's most cultivated, trafficked and used illicit drug, and the move towards its legalisation has given rise to a nascent industry that is attracting increasing attention from investors, manufacturers, and researchers. Due to the plant maintaining its illegal and stigmatised status in many countries, cannabis research is limited, which has resulted in a significant gap in imperative knowledge about this burgeoning industry. Although the cannabis industry is clearly making a move from stigmatised to mainstream, little research has been conducted to investigate this transition, more particularly in a South African context. This dissertation investigates destigmatisation processes and strategies employable by cannabis organisations by way of three individual but interconnected studies. They aimed, respectively, to conduct a systematic literature review of organisational destigmatisation and establish a practitioner-driven research agenda; to depict the destigmatisation landscape of South African recreational cannabis organisations through a mixed methods content analysis and; finally, to explore the influence of these organisations' destigmatisation strategies on attitudes towards cannabis.

Study 1 presents a destigmatisation model as its main contribution, finding that stigma management strategies are classified into six main categories: Conforming, Hiding and Structural Responses were identified as stigma avoidance or perpetuation strategies, and Affirming, Challenging, and Infusing as destigmatisation strategies. Affirming strategies were found to be at the heart of destigmatisation, and an industry-collective approach to destigmatisation was ranked as the most prioritised research need by South African cannabis industry professionals. Study 2 found that Infusing strategies were significantly the most popular of the destigmatisation methods used by South African recreational cannabis organisations, accounting for nearly 80% of the themes, with branding tactics predominant in this category. Key insights revealed that there is a mismatch between the strategies most employed by cannabis businesses and the strategies that exert the strongest influence on attitudes, which Study 3 found to be recontextualisation of the cannabis industry, evidenced by education using scientific facts and figures. These findings

highlight that a lack of knowledge is the main barrier to cannabis industry destigmatisation and should be counteracted by the rhetoric activity of educating the public.

In summary, this study served to inform destigmatisation processes for core stigmatised organisations - with a focus on the cannabis industry; to catalyse cannabis destigmatisation research in a manner relevant to the South African cannabis industry; to provide a detailed description of the destigmatisation landscape of the South African cannabis industry from an organisational perspective; and, lastly, to determine the most influential destigmatisation strategies from a consumer perspective.

Keywords: organisational stigma, destigmatisation, cannabis industry

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Table of Contents

List of tables

List of figures

List of addenda

Overview and structure of dissertation

In its broadest sense, this dissertation focuses on contributing to destigmatisation theory and providing destigmatisation guidance to the cannabis industry. The dissertation is presented in 4 parts and was completed in the 'thesis inclusive of publications' format. It includes three separate studies, to be submitted for publication as journal articles, and accompanying chapters as outlined below.

Part 1 of the dissertation provides an introduction and background. Chapter 1 begins with a brief background and rationale of the study, follows with an outline of the research aim and question, and concludes with the structure and layout of the thesis. Two in-depth literature review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) lay a foundation for understanding the key concepts upon which this study is based: stigma and destigmatisation, and the cannabis industry. Chapter 4 presents a comprehensive description of the methodologies employed in each of the studies, including methods of sampling, data collection and analyses processes, as well as ethical considerations and theoretical frameworks where applicable.

Part 2 presents the findings. Each study is introduced, along with brief descriptions of the processes followed, and their findings are comprehensively presented (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). These chapters represent the extended versions of the studies, to be qualified and submitted to various academic journals for publication.

Part 3 centres on the discussions of the research findings. It begins by separately discussing key insights drawn from the findings of the 3 studies (Chapter 8), links the 3 papers insights to discuss synthesised findings, and presents resulting implications for academia and practice. Chapter 9 concludes the dissertation by presenting an overall summary, discussing the limitations of each of the studies, and conferring recommendations for future research.

Part 4 of the dissertation provides key support materials such as a consolidated list of references, addenda, figures, and tables.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This introductory chapter provides a brief background of the study, a discussion of its significance, overarching problem statement and research aim, and the knowledge gaps it addresses. The rationale of the 'thesis inclusive of publications' is discussed following a graphic depiction of the specific research questions addressed by each study. The chapter then concludes with a summary.

1.2. Background

Cannabis is the world's most commonly cultivated, trafficked, and used illicit drug, and the move towards its legalisation has given rise to a nascent industry that is attracting significant attention from investors, manufacturers, and researchers (Dsouza, 2019). Due to the plant maintaining its illegal and stigmatised status in many countries, research about cannabis is limited and this has resulted in a significant gap in imperative knowledge about this burgeoning industry. Although the cannabis industry is clearly making a move from stigmatised to mainstream, little research has been conducted to investigate this transition, more particularly in a South African context. In addition, the marketing or promotion of cannabis is largely restricted. However, one of the most widely used platforms to promote the industry is social media. As such, this study aims to explore the destigmatisation of the cannabis industry through social media, by way of three independent studies. Study 1 aimed to conduct a systematic literature review, establish a research agenda for the South African cannabis industry and to provide a working model for how destigmatisation takes place; Study 2 aimed to identify extant destigmatisation strategies through a mixed methods content analysis of social media posts by South African cannabis businesses; and Study 3 aimed to explore the effect of destigmatisation strategies on social media on attitudes towards cannabis.

1.3. Problem statement, significance, and research aim

Given its potential lucrativeness and potential for economic activity, the cannabis industry's value is inadvisable to ignore. However, stigmatised markets are more likely to fail than non-stigmatised

ones, as the former have a lack of socio-political legitimacy, and of financial and governmental support (Dioun, 2018). Although organisations within stigmatised industries can survive despite the lack of support (Voss, 2015), they face challenges in the form of legal barriers to trading, research and communications, and widespread social disapproval, that organisations in legitimate markets do not. Research has shown that, in stigmatised markets where the stigma is based on the product rather than on individuals or members of organisations, the removal of stigma in the view of stakeholders such as regulators, advertisers and the public is possible over time (Slade Shantz et al., 2019). To overcome stigma barriers and ensure longevity, stigmatised organisations aim to destigmatise the market and its associated products or services (Smith et al., 2021). Slade Shantz et al. (2019) highlight the lack of a conceptual framework for understanding stigmatised markets and the strategies that can be pursued if businesses decide to participate in them, and further emphasise the significance of this gap due to the challenges that these markets face. Link and Phelan (2001) argue that researchers have found it difficult to develop a common theoretical definition and perspective of stigma, while Deacon (2006) stresses the cruciality of having a coherent model of (de)stigmatisation processes that aid the understanding of both its origins and effects. This is further supported by Zhang et al. (2021) who stated that scholars have studied the classification of event and core stigma, identified consequences of organisational stigma, and reported organisational reactions to stigmatisation; but that less surveillance has been done for the process of (de)stigmatisation. Study 1 of this dissertation contributes to this understanding.

Although stigma is detrimental when perceived as threatening to any stakeholders, some stakeholder groups are more powerful than others (Voss, 2015) and the outcomes of their disapproval can more severely affect organisational performance (Heugens & Lander, 2009). Consumers are key to organisational survival, with their loyal purchasing forming most organisations' primary stream of income. A consumers' disposition towards the business is therefore a vital issue as it directly influences their purchase behaviour. As such, the experience of (de)stigmatisation that existing and prospective consumers have of the cannabis industry is of key interest and is explored in Study 3 of this dissertation.

While numerous studies have focused on stigmatising legitimate markets for a host of reasons, fewer scholars have focused on destigmatising taboo markets (Dioun, 2018), which highlights a

gap in literature that neglects how markets evolve along with social movements. This study aims to contribute to this area of knowledge, described by Hudson (2008) as an 'emerging field of research that strives to understand organisations that lack broad-based social acceptance'. According to Thomas (2022), the cannabis industry is estimated to unlock R118 billion for the African continent economy should governments approve its legalisation. As one of the African countries with an ideal climate for cannabis cultivation, this represents a vital opportunity for South Africa. Thus, there is economic value in the acceptance and success of the industry in South Africa and this study aims to address a gap in research that aids in understanding the process of this societal acceptance. In a geographically focused context, this study also provides unique insights for the South African market, as stigma – being a social construct – varies in its presentation and evolution across different societies (Smith et al., 2021). Lastly, Study 2 contributes to emerging management research examining the role of visuals (Barberá-Tomás, Castelló, De Bakker & Zietsma, 2019; Santos, 2023) by investigating how visuals impact destigmatisation processes using Instagram as a data source.

1.4. Specific research questions

As this thesis consists of multiple studies, they each address varying research questions. These are summarised in the table below, including how each study contributes to the fulfilment of the overarching research aim.

Table 1.1: Specific research questions

Study	Research question	Fulfilment of broad research aim
"Destigmatising South Africa's recreational cannabis industry: A mixed methods literature review and research agenda"	RQ1 (qualitative): "What are the destigmatisation methods present in extant literature for core-stigmatised markets?" RQ2 (quantitative): "How do South African cannabis	Creating a model for how destigmatisation occurs, and establishing a research agenda to catalyse further destigmatisation research for the South African cannabis industry

	industry professionals rank these areas for research in terms of importance, actionability and informativity?"	
"Destigmatising the recreational cannabis industry: A mixed methods content analysis of Instagram posts by leading South African cannabis brands"	RQ1 (qualitative): "What are the destigmatisation tactics present in the Instagram content of South African recreational cannabis firms?" RQ2 (quantitative): "How do these destigmatisation tactics rank in terms of predominance?"	Obtaining an understanding of the destigmatisation landscape of the South African cannabis industry from an internal, organisational perspective; in particular, what strategies cannabis businesses employ for destigmatisation
"Exploring the influence of destigmatisation strategies in the Instagram posts of South African recreational cannabis brands on attitudes towards cannabis"	"How do destigmatisation strategies in the Instagram posts of leading South African recreational cannabis brands influence attitudes towards cannabis?"	Exploring the ability of various destigmatisation strategies used by South African cannabis organisations to effectively influence attitudes towards cannabis; from an external, consumer perspective. This study gains consumer insights and guides organisations toward the most effective strategies.

1.5. Rationale of thesis inclusive of publications

This dissertation resembles the 'PhD by publication' format, in that separate studies were conducted with a common theme, accompanied by introductory and synthesising chapters. The studies of this dissertation were conducted with the aim of submission for journal publication. A PhD by publication is defined by Park (2007) as an award in which the thesis is examined based on a series of peer-reviewed academic papers, typically within an overarching paper that presents an

overall introduction and a synthesised discussion or linkage of the studies. Boud and Lee (2009) suggest that the rapid increase in doctorates by publication is a necessary response to policy-led pressures for research productivity in research-intensive universities. Furthermore, article publication displays both individual and institutional competency (Horta & Santos, 2016; Sinclair, Barnacle, & Cuthbert, 2014).

According to Jackson (2013), the PhD by publication is an attractive option for early career academics, given the institutional pressure to 'publish or perish' as well as the acknowledgement that a PhD is essential for a career in academia. Davies and Rolfe (2009) discuss numerous benefits of this approach including a guarantee of publications from PhD work, the opportunity for the researcher to gain experience in several different research methodologies that may not comfortably fit within a single large study, as well as a closer relationship between research and practice. In addition, this study selects multiple studies to fill the large research gap more rapidly. The format provided the researcher an opportunity to analyse and disseminate the data quickly, counteracting the risk of it becoming dated or of motivation running low over time. This approach also allowed the researcher to publish in a supervised environment; a rare opportunity. An additional advantage for the researcher is the external review of the articles with reviewers serving as an extension of the supervisory panel, and the objectivity of blind peer review. It further allows for feedback from differing contexts and cultures, which has the potential to broaden research expertise (Horta & Santos, 2016). Although the approach of the dissertation is to collate the independent studies to contribute to the broader study, a requirement for publication is that each article independently displays structural and academic integrity. As such, there is inevitable overlap or repetition of various aspects such as literature reviews and introductions.

1.6. Ethical considerations

Where applicable, ethics approval for this study was requested from and granted by the Commerce Faculty's Ethics in Research Committee at the University of Cape Town (Addendum A). Study 1 conducted a literature review based on publicly available data, with no human subjects. However, some ethical considerations are important when conducting literature reviews, namely,

the avoidance of plagiarism, the avoidance of poor-quality and redundant publications, and ensuring accuracy in data extraction (Wager & Wiffin, 2011). Study 1 ensured the removal of poor-quality redundant publications (see Figure 4.2) and used rigorous referencing to avoid plagiarising. Study 2 used publicly available Instagram posts as the data for analysis, with no human subjects required; as such ethics approval was not sought. Ethics approval was granted for Study 3, in which in-depth interviews were conducted with human participants. In the case where human subjects were used, verbal consent was obtained prior to the commencement of interviews and participants were ensured of their anonymity and ability to terminate the interview process with no consequences, should they wish to do so. All data was stored on password protected devices, to which access was granted only to the researchers involved in the study.

1.7. Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the broad research aim of the dissertation and specific research questions for each study, as well as a description and rationale of the dissertation format. The following chapters discuss literature on stigma and destigmatisation, the cannabis industry and social media marketing.

Chapter 2 Stigma and Destigmatisation

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth theoretical discussion of stigma. It begins with its varying definitions and an elaboration of stigma as a social construct, followed by its application to an organisational context. It describes the various ways in which organisational stigma and destigmatisation manifest and provides instances of previous destigmatisation studies. It concludes with a discussion of cannabis industry destigmatisation and a chapter summary.

2.2. Stigma

Link & Phelan (2001) argue that researchers have not developed a common theoretical perspective on stigma. What is known is that the theory of stigma in social science can be traced back to Goffman's (1963) research on stigma as an individual construct. Goffman defines stigma as the 'spoiled identity' of an individual that arises from 'physical abominations' such as disabilities, 'character blemishes' such as homosexuality and mental illness, or 'tribal identities' stemming from race, culture or religion. An alternative study defines stigma as a negative social evaluation that taints a social entity as 'flawed, deviant or inferior' (Grandy, 2008). Delfabbro et al. (2021) refer to stigma as the attribution of negative sentiments towards an entity, object or individual and further state that stigma can be public, perceived, or self-referential, with negative consequences for individuals including low self-esteem, loss of self-efficacy, social isolation, and a reluctance to seek help. Summers et al. (2018) raise that stigma is 'a process by which certain individuals are devalued and alienated from specific types of social interactions, because they are perceived to possess a negatively valenced characteristic (e.g., age, gender, and medical condition)'. Link and Phelan (2001) further posit reasons for the differences, including the application of the stigma concept to multiple unique contexts and resultant dissimilarities in conceptualisation; and the differences in emphasis as a result of the multidisciplinary nature of stigma research. Stigma research has also found that stigma has been classified at diverse levels. At the individual level it has been studied considering body, character, and tribal identity elements,

while at an occupational level it has focused on physical, social, and moral aspects and, at organisational and industry levels it has been classified from conduct, event and core perspectives (Zhang et al., 2021).

Although different frames of reference have led to heterogeneous conceptualisations, the given definitions have in common (1) that there exists a unidirectional pressure driven by negative sentiments, (2) that there is a resulting negative experience for the object of those sentiments, and therefore (3) there is an existing a power dynamic in which those bearing the sentiments have the ability to cause suffering to the object. This considered, the most suitable perspective of stigma for the purposes of this study was offered by Link and Phelan (2001) who apply the term stigma when stereotyping, segregation, status loss and prejudice co-occur in a power situation that allows them to unfold. They further elaborate on this dynamic by highlighting that stigmatisation depends on socially centred premises that are fundamental to understanding its process. These state that stigmatisation is dependent on central issues of the sociological enterprise: power and the faculty to arrange resources; that stigmatisation can only occur through social interactions (Link & Phelan, 2001), which consider that negative experiences of stigma, although can be anticipated, are only realised through relations with society (Goffman, 1963); and that stigmas reflect society at a particular time and place and are thus subject to change according to cultural and societal configurations at any given time. This is dependent on how context shapes lifestyles and life prospects of individuals, which define the nature of power and inequality, as well as normative beliefs of the moral and immoral (Link & Phelan, 2001). The work of Becker (2008) discusses stigma through the lens of deviance and echoes the view of the power dynamic, stating that social groups create deviance by making the rules whose contravention constitute deviance. As such, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but a result of the application of rules by society to an offender (Becker, 2008). An additional premise Link & Phelan (2001) discuss is that all aspects of stigma exist on a continuum in which responses and their impact range from mild to severe.

In the case of the cannabis industry, the power rests with stakeholders such government and regulatory bodies, the finance sector, society, and extant and potential consumers. Government and regulators hold significant power in that, without the easing of regulations, the industry's trading, expansion, and marketing activities are limited or completely prohibited. Crucial financial support of cannabis businesses is also either limited or absolutely withheld as a result of stigma and resultant, and consumers which would be essential to survival are unlikely to support the industry if attitudes towards it remain the same. While more research has been conducted regarding individual stigma (Meisenbach, 2010; Callais, 2009), organisational stigma has received less research attention.

Organisational stigma

Devers et al. (2009) define organisational stigma as a label that conjures collective perceptions that an organisation possesses a fundamental deindividuating and discrediting flaw. According to Devers and Mishina (2019), organisational stigma results from an evaluation by stakeholders that an organisation holds values that are expressly counter to their own. A key difference between individual and organisational stigma is that being stigmatised is an active process for organisations, and a passive one for individuals, as individuals have not done anything except involuntarily possess a negatively perceived characteristic (Link & Phelan, 2001). Conversely, stigmatised organisations actively make decisions leading to their stigmatisation, such as trading goods in a negatively perceived category, or through wrongdoing. Although organisational stigma research dates back decades (Schrader, 1994), more recent marketing research has drawn on Goffman's theory to investigate how stigma operates in a commercial context, such as stigmatised products and stigmatised industries or markets (Slade Shantz et al., 2019).

Various research has been conducted on organisational event stigma and relevant parties' responses (Clark & Li, 2020; Frandsen & Morsing, 2020; Nowinska, Anderson & Lorenzen, 2019; Dewan & Simons, 2016). Further research focusing on employees involved in stigmatised organisations has been conducted on job-based stigma, or 'dirty work' and their destigmatisation

strategies (Carter, Toubiana & Ruebottom, 2020). Furthermore, organisational stigma research has been conducted from various perspectives. In particular, research has been conducted on the impact of organisational stigma on the organisations' employees (Cattani, 2020; Phung et al., 2020; Bongiorno, 2017; Lewis, D'Lisa & Pate, 2017; Shantz & Booth, 2014). Employee-focused stigma, known as occupational stigma, includes negative physical, social, moral or emotional prejudices from society about certain occupations (Xiang et al., 2022). Toubiania and Ruebottom (2022) investigate the unfolding and implications of dynamics within stigmatised occupations, with a focus on the sex work industry, revealing that sex workers clandestinely create social support groups with similarly stigmatised others; resulting in 'bounded entitativity': a sense of belonging to a community group within the broader context of dissent. Occupational stigma can arise as a result of both events (Frandsen & Morsing, 2021) and core stigma (Capo et al., 2019).

Organisational stigma has the tendency to negatively affect not only organisations and their outcomes, but also key stakeholders associated with them (Hudson, 2008; Lacey, 2003; Sutton & Callahan, 1987). Further studies have been conducted on the transfer of organisational stigma across units within organisations, across organisations, or from an organisation to an entire field (Capo et al., 2019; Sadri Karami & Moschieri, 2017). Transfer stigma, also known as courtesy stigma, refers to a non-stigmatised entity becoming stigmatised merely through an association with a stigmatised organisation. Organisational stigma, like individual stigma, can thus be described as 'infectious' as it taints entities via involvement with the organisation; through which they assume the same persistent stigma as its original bearers (Phung et al., 2021). Thus, the benefits of destigmatisation span beyond the organisations to their suppliers, employees, customers, and all service providers.

Helms, Patterson and Hudson (2019) assert that the prevalence of organisational stigma research has increased as a result of the paucity of theory that investigates one of the most popular constructs in organisational theory, legitimacy, and stigma's grounding in stigmatising audiences' negative evaluations; they offer a research agenda to create a comprehension of these audiences.

Overall, research on organisational stigma has focused on its sources and negative impacts (Tracey & Phillips, 2016; Devers, Dewett, Mishina & Belsito, 2009; Wilson & West 1992; Wilson & West 1981), and some even on its positive impacts (Tracey & Phillips, 2016); however, the processes of stigmatisation and destigmatisation remain relatively unexplored (Sadri Karami, Helms, Phung & Piazza, 2020). This point is further iterated by Zhang et al. (2021) through their statement that scholars have studied the classification of event and core stigma, identified consequences of organisational stigma, and reported organisational reactions to the risk of stigmatisation; but that less surveillance has been done for the process of (de)stigmatisation.

Event stigma

Event stigma results from 'discrete, anomalous, and episodic events' such as public corporate scandals and misconduct (Hudson, 2008). In instances of event stigma, a normal organisation can be stigmatised for harmful or morally offensive behaviour (Palmer, 2012; Greve, Palmer, and Pozner, 2010). Event stigmas result from voluntary action, and as such they are considered controllable, albeit persistent (Devers et al., 2009). Frandsen and Morsing (2021) investigated event stigma as it pertains to employees in the financial sector, following organisational wrongdoing. Their study found that employees use a 'stigma shield' to mitigate the negative effects of stigma and proposed the concept to describe emotional detachment strategies they employ to protect themselves in both work and home settings. All types of organisations may experience event stigma caused by deliberate organisational wrongdoing such as corruption, accidents, product faults, corruption, and bankruptcy. Page (1984) explains another perspective, conduct stigma, which refers to the ability of individuals to manage their association with the stigmatising event. The transient nature of events means that event stigma is often something that organisations, over time, can distance themselves from. The ability of organisations to separate themselves from the stigma is the key difference between event and core stigma.

Core stigma

Core stigma is due to the nature of an organisation's core attributes: who it is, what it does, and whom it serves (Hudson, 2008). Core stigma is defined as an evaluation held by social audience(s) that an organisation is devalued owing to a core attribute (Hudson, 2008) and typically depends on the industry of which an organisation is a part, e.g., the tobacco, abortion, and adult entertainment industries. Examples of research that has been conducted on core-stigmatised industries include investigations into abortion clinics (Hudson, Wong-MingJi & Loree, 2000), men's bathhouses (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009), the sex work industry and legal brothels (Wolfe & Blithe, 2015; Toubiana & Ruebottom, 2022), swingers clubs (Thomas, 1997), gambling institutions (Delfabbro et al., 2021), professional wrestling franchises and mixed martial arts organisations (Helms & Patterson, 2014; Ashley et al., 2000); tattoo companies (Velliquette, 2000), travel agencies (Hampel & Tracey, 2017), Pakistani immigrant organisations (Chaudhary, 2020); gun collectives (Blithe & Lanterman, 2017), the cannabis industry (Giraudo, 2020; Khessina, Reiss & Verhaal, 2020; Lashley & Pollock, 2020; Müller, 2019; Dioun, 2018), human tissue traders (Reuber & Morgan-Thomas, 2017), media (Siltaoja et al., 2015), Chinese manufacturing firms and China's shadow education industry (Guan, 2020; Xu, Wei & Chen, 2019), the nuclear industry (Eyles & Fried, 2011), and organic farming (Siltaoja et al., 2020).

Dissimilar to the remedial nature of event stigma, core stigma is connected to the practices and stakeholders that define organisations' essence and is therefore more enduring as it is inseparable from the fundamental functioning of the organisations. Some examples of core-stigmatised organisations include advocacy firms when their primary clientele is stigmatised (e.g., HIV/AIDS patients) or when the organisations' strategies and tactics are antagonistic or disruptive and they are therefore negatively perceived (Elsbach & Sutton 1992). One of the key differences between core and event stigmatised organisations is that the stigmatised image of core-stigmatised organisations is irreparable and widespread approval and endorsement is harder for them to obtain. Hampel and Tracey (2017) echo that where core stigma occurs, the disapproval tends to be enduring (Hampel & Tracey, 2017) with multiple consequences for the organisation. Diversification dynamics, for example, are more complex for core-stigmatised organisations.

Diversifying into multiple lines of business is challenged due to the increased attention that stigmatised operations attract, which are present in diversification into both stigmatised and non-stigmatised domains. Goffman (1963) reported that the removal or reduction of a stigma is much more difficult for those who remain 'stuck' in stigmatising categories. An in-depth literature review of core-stigmatised industries is presented in Study 2 of this dissertation. As such, the only recourse available to stigmatised organisations may be to attempt to change societal perceptions to reduce stigma.

2.3. Destigmatisation

In order to gain acceptance and ensure survival and wellbeing, stigmatised organisations can engage in various strategies aimed at removing or reducing their stigma. Destigmatisation can be defined as removing negative associations and decreasing shame or disgrace around stigmatised phenomena (Merriam-Webster, 2021) to gain increased societal acceptance.

Previous studies have discovered various stigma-management strategies — that is, varied means of managing, coping with, and countering stigma, considered vital in assisting companies to handle the day-to-day realities of being stigmatised. Whereas some of the strategies are distinct from each other, others conceptually overlap and have the potential to create uncertainty when stigma is considered beyond a singular level, and as the need arises to obtain more categorical examinations of stigmatisation (Zhang et al., 2021).

Organisational destigmatisation

Some stigmatised organisations not only develop strategies to manage stigma, but manage to destigmatise completely, gaining widespread acceptance among previous stigmatisers (Hampel & Tracey, 2017). For instance, conventional media initially devalued online dating organisations believing they promoted promiscuity; subsequently they touted these companies for providing an environment that enabled the building of relationships (Hampel & Tracey, 2017). Likewise, religious entities previously held negative evaluations of life insurance providers as they were believed to challenge the sanctity of life by putting a price on it; however, they later endorsed

them for playing a part in ensuring the survival of disadvantaged and grieving families (Zelizer, 2018).

The destigmatisation efforts of organisations experiencing event stigma differ from those experiencing core stigma. Event-stigmatised organisations may, for example, distance themselves from stigma following a fraud scandal by dismissing and publicly renouncing the individuals deemed responsible. A similar route cannot be explored by organisations experiencing core stigma, as the reason for their stigma is routed in their essential activities, which they cannot divorce without ceasing to exist (Lashley & Pollock, 2020).

Destigmatising event stigma

Depending on the event that gave rise to the stigma, organisations' responses include replacing an organisation's leaders, if caused by their improper behaviour; product recalls, if caused by product defects or failure; apologising or denial strategies, if the organisation's actions caused a crisis; or even policy changes to align with stakeholders' accepted norms (Hersel et al., 2019). Sutton and Callahan (1987) observed that destigmatisation efforts following the bankruptcies of US firms comprised five categories: "concealing," "defining" (explaining the facts), "denying responsibility," "accepting responsibility," and "withdrawing" (refusing to participate in any mitigation activity). An example of event-stigma destigmatisation attempts on an international scale was the dismissal, public denouncement, and legal charging of police officers following instances of disproportionate and fatal police brutality against African Americans in the US. Another example was the altering of South African schools' codes of conduct following student protests demanding Black students' right to wear their hair in its natural state – an action deemed punishable prior to the protests.

Destigmatising core stigma

A few researchers have explored approaches to the destigmatisation of core-stigmatised organisations (Lashley & Pollock, 2020; Dioun, 2018; Reinmoller & Ansari, 2016; Helms & Patterson, 2014; Carberry & King, 2012; Vergne, 2012; Humphreys, 2010). For instance, men's bathhouses elect to act clandestinely by operating in secret locations with minimal or no signage, revealing their activities only to their customers (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009). Helms & Patterson (2014) discuss co-opting by the example of MMA organisations using their stigma of violence explicitly in order to attract new customers or reduce stigma-induced anxieties amongst existing ones. Some organisations straddle stigmatised and non-stigmatised categories such that full focus is not solely attributed to the stigmatised category (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). Destigmatisation strategies for core-stigmatised organisations are discussed in-depth in the literature review and research agenda study (Chapter 4) of this dissertation.

2.4. Chapter summary

This chapter began with a brief discussion of stigma in its original, social, context. It then provided more in-depth discussion of stigma in an organisational context, distinguishing between event and core stigma and their manifestations. It then moved on to a theoretical elaboration of the focus of this paper, destigmatisation, and how it is approached in both event and core-stigmatised contexts. The ensuing chapter particularly focuses on cannabis and the cannabis industry.

Chapter 3 The Cannabis Industry

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the cannabis industry, beginning with an outline of its history, and the controversy and stigma of cannabis. It then discusses the legal status of cannabis globally and in South Africa, the emergence of the cannabis industry as a result of increasing legalisation, and provides a description of extant marketing regulations surrounding the cannabis industry in various countries as well as South Africa. It concludes with a summary of the chapter.

3.2. The history of cannabis

The cannabis plant includes a number of related species, the most common of which are two subspecies dubbed by Carl Linnaeus in 1753, *Cannabis sativa L.* (the non-psychoactive subspecies, more commonly known as hemp), and *Cannabis sativa*, the psychoactive subspecies known as marijuana (Warf, 2014). *Cannabis indica* and *Cannabis ruderalis* were discovered and named by a Russian botanist in 1924. Each of these subspecies has several variants. The psychoactive subspecies on which this study focuses, *Cannabis sativa,* contains delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which causes an array of sensory and psychological effects (Warf, 2014). Hemp is known to contain negligible traces of THC, while its psychoactive counterpart is known to contain up to 20% and must be heated to temperatures above 100°C for its psychoactive properties to be experienced. Thus, psychoactive cannabis has been consumed by either cooking and eating it, heating its oils for topical application, or smoking it. A comprehension of the cultural and medical history of cannabis use is key to the effective integration of cannabis in contemporary practices (Hand et al., 2016).

Cannabis is considered one of the world's most ancient cultivated crops and is historically believed to have been first discovered and used in Asia in the Neolithic period, more than 12 000 years ago (Warf, 2014). The base of evolutionary origin of *Cannabis indica* was in the Hindu Kush mountains

in highland South Asia, while *Cannabis sativa* is said to have originated in temperate Central Asia (Duvall, 2019). The presence of cannabis has been reported in Africa since the 15th century; its use having been possibly introduced to the continent by Arab merchants believed to have had connections to India. According to Zuardi (2006), this is indicated by similarities in the nomenclature used for producing the plant in Africa and India. The evidence of cannabis presence in east central and southern Africa denotes the expatriation of the plant, however it was consumed, cultivated, traded, and distributed throughout the region as early as the Late Iron Age (Murimbika, 2020). Cannabis farming began in Africa after the crop arrived from its evolutionary homeland in southern Asia, and North African farmers planted cannabis for hemp into the early 1900s, although it was considered a negligible crop (Duvall, 2019). According to Mogoro and Odeku (2020) the existence of cannabis dates back to the 1700th century when it was cultivated for the purposes of fibre, food and medicine. Its use in Africa is similar to its use across the globe. For millennia, cannabis has been used in various ways: religiously, industrially, medicinally, and recreationally (Kohek et al., 2021; Carter, 2020; Aroonsrimorakot, 2019).

Religiously, cannabis has been used alongside traditional spiritual rituals including meditation, prayer, chanting, and fasting as a medium through which spiritual experiences were enhanced; and its use in connection with religion, historical and modern, has been studied to an extent by researchers in diverse disciplines (Heide et al., 2022; Kohek et al., 2021; Ferrara, 2020; Gritsenko et al., 2020; Johnstad, 2020; Cozad, 2018; Ghiabi et al., 2018; Yeterian, Bursik & Kelly, 2018; Gibson, 2010; MacRae, 1998; Aldrich, 1977). It is said to have been cultivated and used in rituals by Zoroastrian priests, for spiritual performance during the Islamic era, and was known to be popular during the 13th century Mongol conquests (Ghiabi et al., 2018). In Rastafari, the cannabis plant is considered the 'original Tree of Life' (Hollensbe, 2021) The "holy herb" or the "supreme herb" as they name it, is used by ingesting it in food and beverages in sacred communal activities (Ferrara, 2020). The Rastafarians believe cannabis frees one from the perfidious consciousness of Babylon, involving materialism, inequality, injustice, racism, and exploitation; and incites the discovery of their true, consecrated selves (Ferrara, 2020). In India, cannabis was historically used during religious ceremonies and is still commonly used in the present, observed in part for

practices honouring the goddess, Shiva; and due to its inviolable association with religious worship, the Indian government has not been able to completely ban the substance (Aroonsrimorakot, 2019). Hindu people have long integrated cannabis into their sacred rituals, and it is referred to in Vedic scriptures as one of the five sacred plants of Hinduism; one of the major beliefs being that a guardian angel exists within its leaves (Hand et al., 2016). These scriptures refer to it as 'a source of happiness', a 'donator of joy' and a 'bringer of freedom' (Zuardi, 2006). In South Africa, the 2018 historic ruling by the Constitutional Court for the decriminalisation of cannabis for personal use was greatly initiated by a legal case motivated by the complainant's right to freedom of religion (Constitutional Court of South Africa, 2018). A noteworthy point is that even users who do not consume cannabis as part of any recognised religion still use it in a manner congruous with spiritual intents, or as an expression of the related concept of unreservedly exercising supremacy over one's consciousness (Bone & Potter, 2021). It is known that the history of Africa regarding traditional and spiritual uses for cannabis has largely been excluded from extant literature (Duvall, 2019); however, it is anecdotally known that the plant has long formed – and still does today – an integral part of indigenous, spiritual practices. Although cannabis has a longstanding history of spiritual use, its normalisation in Western societies during the last decades was spurred by medicinal use, and has led to increased recreational use (Johnstad, 2020).

Cannabis has been used medicinally in numerous cultures and, upon exposure to western medicine in the 19th century, rapidly gained popularity as an anaesthetic, antiepileptic, and hypnotic (Hand et al., 2016). Also in the medicinal context, cannabis has reportedly been used for thousands of years in the Hindu religion for the treatment of various ailments such as nausea, pain, loss of appetite, anxiety, and insomnia (Crocq, 2020). Historically, it was used specifically for mental health treatment by the Hindu deity Shiva, who reportedly rested under a cannabis plant and consumed its leaves to reduce anxiety after family arguments (Tackett, 2022). Traditional Thai medicine and massage practitioners used cannabis to treat a variety of health conditions as an analgesic, sedative, massage oils and astringent. It is also used for the treatment of depression, stress, pain, and fatigue **(**Aroonsrimorakot, 2019). Kuppuram (2021) discusses the use of cannabis as a treatment for neuralgia, convulsive disorders, emaciation, sleeplessness, nausea in

chemotherapy patients; as well as its role in easing muscle tension, spasms and chronic pain. In present day medicine, numerous other uses of cannabis have been documented, including digestive and nutritional disorders, inflammation, multiple mental and nervous system disorders, skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders, circulatory system and blood disorders, ophthalmological conditions, as well as musculoskeletal disorders and traumas (Balant et al., 2021; Tomida, Pertwee & Azuara-Blanco, 2004).

Recreationally, cannabis use has been used to access its multiple psychoactive effects, including euphoria, reverie, heightened sensory perception, creativity, empathy, altered sense of time and space, enhanced appetite and sexual desire, sleepiness, and enhanced introspection (Hand et al., 2016). Research has shown that most recreational cannabis users make a conscious choice to consume it to increase their quality of life and describe it as a substance that makes daily activities more enjoyable (Capler, 2009). Qualitative studies investigating the reasons for recreational consumption cite motives such as improving socialising, relaxation and concentration, and increasing the pleasure associated with mundane and enjoyable activities such as household chores, listening to music, watching television, reading, and meditation (Capler, 2009). The following excerpts from one of these studies provide insights into the value of recreational use according to the users:

> "Just about any activity is enhanced while under the influence of cannabis. I like hiking, cycling and dancing when I'm stoned or high and... I enjoy art, music, philosophy and meditation while intoxicated. Going to a museum is one of my favourite activities under [the] influence"
>
> (Osborne & Fogel, 2008)

> "In my humble opinion, weed is not a drug; it's a seasoning... like salt for your life. So, just the same as a person would use salt to enhance a bland soup or what have you, smoking weed can make things more intense and enjoyable..."
>
> (Osborne & Fogel, 2008)

3.3. The controversy of the cannabis industry

The cannabis industry is stigmatised and immensely controversial. In the context of this dissensus, the arguments against the proliferation cannabis legalisation stem from various streams of thought. Generally, supporters are of the opinion that cannabis legalisation leads to improved public health, economic stimulation, and a reduction in criminal justice expenditure; while opponents believe that legalisation will increase cannabis use, negatively affect health and safety, lower educational achievement amongst the youth, and increase criminal activity (Breijyeh et al., 2021).

Despite cannabis being the most widely used illicit drug in the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022), its use, possession, cultivation and supply are prohibited by international treaties and drug laws in most countries. More particularly in a public health view, opponents of its legalisation suggest that it has the potential to increase cannabis abuse in society, negatively affect brain function and development, long-term physiological health, as well as lead to increased injury and mortality due to cannabis-impaired driving (Wilkinson et al., 2016). A key concern of opponents is that allowing for-profit businesses, dubbed "Big Marijuana", to market and sell cannabis could lead to aggressive marketing targeted at addicted users, furthering their drug problem; similar to alcohol and tobacco, where organisations make significant profits from individuals with serious addiction conditions (Lopez, 2018). Similarly, McGinty et al. (2016) discuss the creation of a new cannabis industry that, like tobacco, prioritises profit over societal wellbeing as a major concern. In the same socially oriented vein, cannabis has been highlighted as a risk factor for poor mental health and educational accomplishments, unemployment, problematic personal relationships and overall reduced life satisfaction (Fergusson & Boden, 2008; Fergusson et al., 2002; Patton et al., 2002). Additionally, some researchers have suggested there is a positive correlation between cannabis use and crime (Pedersen & Skardhamar, 2010). In the 1930's, cannabis was a significant issue in the 'War on Drugs' and numerous educational programmes, films and articles were released to devalue the drug, including 'Assassin of Youth', 'The Weed with Roots in Hell', and 'Reefer Madness' (Boyd, 2009). Currently, cannabis is still maintained as a

Schedule 1 “dangerous drug” (Pflueger, Palermo & Martinez, 2018) and remains illegal in many countries.

Stigma is seen as a heterogeneous social construct in that what may be perceived positively by one audience may be stigmatised by another (Paetzold et al., 2008). In the case of the controversial cannabis industry, this difference of opinion exists even within seemingly homogenous cultures. In Thailand, for instance, the government and law enforcement consider it a dangerous substance and users have been criminally charged, and the common Thai people consider it as a recreational substance abused by youngsters for its euphoric effects; however, it is considered by medical fraternities and oncologists as a miracle plant with an array of valuable medicinal and industrial uses (Aroonsrimorakot, 2019). This dissent is also evident in the extant debates concerning the legalisation of cannabis industry (McGinty et al., 2017; Galston & Dionne, 2013). In contrast to the negative evaluations of cannabis, public opinion regarding cannabis has diverged greatly in recent decades, and there has been a fairly consistent increase in the trend toward favouring its legalisation (Stringer & Maggard, 2016; Caulkins et al., 2012). These liberal attitudes have been reflected in a growing willingness amongst various political parties to allow the use of cannabis for medical purposes and, in some countries, for personal and recreational use (Wright, 2019). Interestingly, as with the opponents of cannabis legalisation, many proponents’ motivations are based on public health concerns. These arguments include the view that cannabis prohibition creates a barrier to discovering the therapeutic potential and public health benefits of medicinal cannabis consumption (Bone & Seddon, 2016). Some research suggests that the legalisation of recreational marijuana could play a role in reducing the prevalence of public health issues such as prescription opioid overdose (Bachhuber et al., 2014), while later studies have empirically proven that its legalisation in some countries has indeed led to a decrease in opioid overdose deaths (Bone & Potter, 2021; Boehnke, Litinas & Clauw, 2016). Many cannabis users driving change in cannabis policy confound societal perceptions of the ‘drug taker’, as cannabis has been found to be used not only due to addiction or for its psychoactive properties, but for pain and nausea management as well as a host of other medical conditions (Bone et al., 2018). The medical cannabis industry is believed to play a key role in overall cannabis legalisation,

as its legalisation for medicinal use has been a precursor to recreational cannabis legalisation (Kilmer & McCoun, 2017). There has also been a steady decrease in the perceived risks associated with cannabis use (Pedersen & Skardhamar, 2010). This shift has been attributed to more positive media coverage of cannabis and its benefits, a decrease in conservative religious affiliation, growing legalisation in various countries, public figures admitting to and even advocating for its use, and changes in the attitudes of medical professionals (Stringer & Maggard, 2016). From another perspective, proponents argue that cannabis legalisation has been shown to have significant economic benefits, such as the creation of a new industry and therefore increased economic activity and tax revenue. Furthermore, arguments for cannabis legalisation suggest that it has spurred innovation, entrepreneurship, and the creation of new jobs (Deloitte, 2018). Pro-legalisation arguments that focused on criminal justice issues emphasise the potential for legalisation to reduce prison overcrowding and decrease racial disparities in marijuana arrests. In addition, proponents argue that cannabis cultivation, use, trade and possession has proven difficult and costly for law enforcement to eradicate (Bone et al, 2018; Barrat et al, 2012).

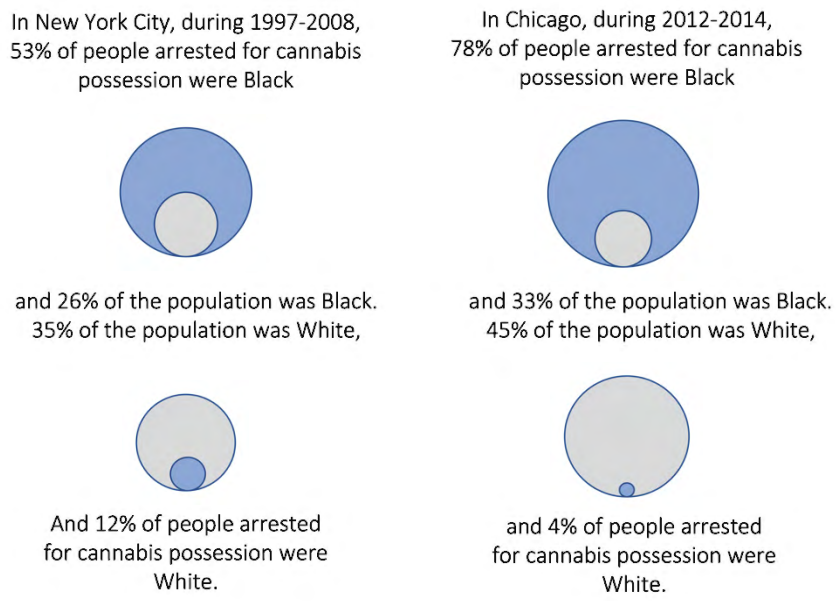
3.4. Criminalisation of cannabis

Perceptions of cannabis's association with deviance and mental health disorders were cited as issues that reinforced the move to criminalise the drug (Dirisu, Shickle & Elsey, 2019). In the United States, cannabis was criminalised in the 1920s against the advice of the American Medical Association submitted on record to Congress (Aggarwal et al., 2009) and, in Canada, its prohibition was initiated in 1923 at a time when most Canadians were unaware of the drug, and despite a lack of evidence of problematic cannabis use (Fischer et al., 2003). Due to increasing pressure and the overwhelming power of the US, other countries began to follow in their footsteps. India's criminalisation of cannabis occurred in various forms after the 1961 convention of the United Nations Convention on Narcotic Drugs (UNCND) that categorised the plant and its derivatives on Schedule IV (Kuppuram, 2021). Although they initially opposed the move, citing its social and religious ties, cannabis later became highly regulated, while they still allowed 'bhang' for religious use (Kuppuram, 2021). Cannabis was a legal substance in South Africa even during the colonial period; however, colonialists' attitudes began to change in 1992 when cannabis criminalisation

began, grouping the plant with other drugs such as cocaine, heroin and morphine (Kemp, 2015). After the first national statute was executed, punitive measures were initiated and were enforced through the Weeds Act of 1937, the Abuse of Dependence-producing Substances and Rehabilitation Centres Act 41 of 1971 and the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 (Weihrauch, 2021). The punishments for contravention of the Acts had varying levels of severity ranging from prison sentences to exorbitant fines in different jurisdictions (Murimbika, 2020). Another example on the African continent was when, in 1966, the Nigerian government instituted severe punitive measures such as the death penalty for cannabis trafficking and cultivation, as well as prison sentences for its possession or use (Klantschnig, 2014).

Numerous scholars argue that the punitive approach to cannabis as part of the 'War on Drugs' was motivated predominantly by obtaining a means of social control targeted both against left-wing insurgencies and poverty-stricken rural dwellers; and that racial minorities in particular have been presented as dangerous and mentally unstable, while state actors have benefited from the subjugation of these non-white users (Budeli, 2021; Vélez-Torres, Hurtado & Bueno, 2021; Ghelani, 2020). Duvall (2019) posits that Africa is largely ignored in the collective historical narrative of cannabis, and that this shared nonportrayal overlooks the fundamental importance of African knowledge to the global practice of cannabis use. More significantly, the exclusion of Africa intellectually supports the notion that drug use is a racially determined behaviour. This exclusionary narrative, being uncontested by testament of the African history of cannabis, enabled anti-Black, racial biases regarding cannabis drug use. According to Duvall (2019), a key outcome of these stereotypes in the US was racially biased drug-law enforcement, depicted further in the data presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Cannabis arrests and population by race in New York City and Chicago, 1997-2014



In the US in 2010, among males aged 18-25, 17% of Blacks and 20% of Whites admitted to cannabis use in the past month

Source: Duvall (2019)

In August of 2022, the sentencing of Women's' National Basketball Association (WNBA) star athlete, Brittney Griner, to 9 years in a Russian prison for cannabis oil possession sparked global outrage for its egregiously unjust severity (Talmazan, 2022). Furthermore, negotiations between the two countries for a potential prisoner swap between Griner and a Russian national imprisoned in the US for the far more heinous crime of arms dealing further indicates that harsh cannabis prohibition is still being used as a means of political power, with Black individuals bearing the brunt of it (Ganguli & Abrams, 2022).

In South Africa, cannabis prohibition was a lucrative opportunity to further enable the system of Apartheid as they sought politically and racially motivated policies to segregate whites and non-whites (Henama, 2020). Although the data in the above figure is not available in a South African context, researchers have found that racially motivated cannabis arrests were so heavily enforced in the country that, around the 1950s, the UN recorded seizures of cannabis in South Africa as accounting for over 50% the world's annual recorded totals. More specifically, the country's

cannabis seizures accounted for 50% of the world's total in 1946, 52% in 1948, an increased 67% in 1950 and an alarming 76% in 1951 (Nkosi, Devey & Waetjen, 2020).

Despite the harsh penalties against cannabis, its cultivation and use only became more prolific, leading to a relaxation of prison sentences due to the difficulties associated with enforcing them on a large scale (Klantschnig, 2014). Singhal and Ahmad (2020) note the numerous harmful effects that criminalisation has on society that prohibitionists have ignored. The strain on criminal justice systems is one of them, with studies finding that incarceration expenses in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia average between 2 and 6 times the financial resources spent on health and social services (Eurasian Harm Reduction Association, 2017); this finding pertains to the cost of prisoner maintenance; excluding other expenses such as police work and case investigations, court proceedings, and lost taxes due to the removal of incarcerated individuals from mainstream society. An alternative study based on the US previously found that the government was predicted to save $13,7 billion in expenditure related to cannabis prohibition, if they legalised it (Miron, 2010). Other social ills attributed to criminalisation are the negative social, economic, physical and mental effects incarceration has on the individual (Singhal & Ahmad, 2020), including a likelihood to exacerbate sentencing in a subsequent offence, severely limiting employment opportunities, affecting child custody hearings, obtaining welfare assistance, voting, and securing a visa. Furthermore, criminalisation contradicts the principles of harm reduction as the stigma associated with it leads to social exclusion, driving users to hazardous practices and increasing susceptibility to illness and overdose while simultaneously inhibiting access to healthcare and harm reduction services (Singhal & Ahmad, 2020). Moreover, it enables a parallel, unregulated 'black market' leading to unrestricted access and harmful use.

Growing numbers of influential entities are pushing the narrative that cannabis criminalisation and prohibition causes more problems than cannabis use. As a result, drug prohibitionists have begun to experience increasing pressure due to a determined, reputable and rapidly growing resistance to punitive drug policies; finding it increasingly challenging to plausibly justify harsh anti-cannabis

laws (Levine, 2003). Cannabis prohibitionists thus appear to be powerless in preventing the global advancement of the cultivation, use, and normalisation of cannabis (Klantschnig, 2014; Levine, 2003; Zimmer, 1997). Prohibitionists who study global trends have even expressed an explicit concern regarding their capacity to effectively prohibit cannabis worldwide (Levine, 2003). As attitudes toward cannabis continue to liberalise in many cultures, the process of normalisation of cannabis in wider society amongst both users and non-users is expected to continue to grow over time (Wright, 2019). In response to these societal changes, cannabis legalisation is increasing globally, with African countries mimicking the cannabis legalisation patterns of western countries as they did with its prohibition.

3.5. The legalisation of cannabis

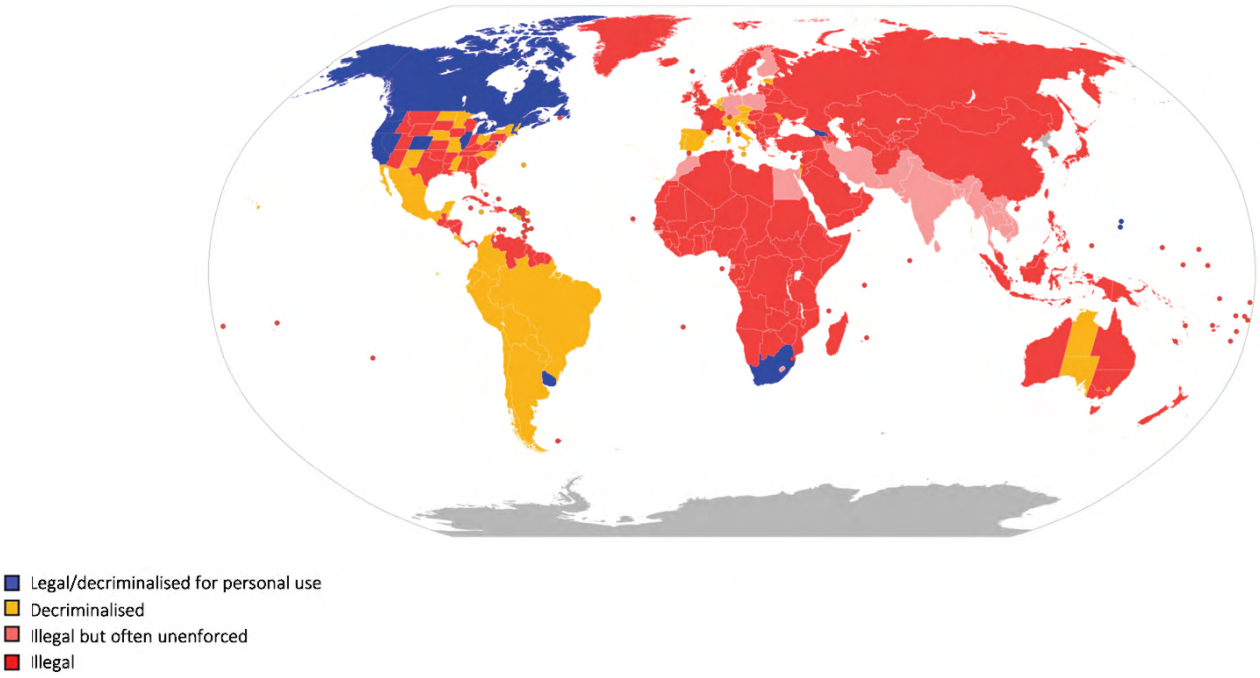
Support for the legalisation of cannabis has increased substantially since the 1980s (Felson, Adamzyck & Thomas, 2019). In response, marijuana policy has rapidly shifted and continues to do so, mirroring the shifts in public opinion (McGinty et al., 2016). As such, the legality of cannabis use has been at the forefront of public debate, with the state of legalisation vastly differing across the globe. Although most countries in some way still prohibit the possession, use, cultivation, distribution and/or sale of cannabis and cannabis products, they differ tremendously in the behaviours allowed, the resources devoted to enforcing the prohibitions, the penalties imposed on offenders, as well as citizens' knowledge of their policies (Pacula et al., 2005). In addition, Hammond et al. (2020) state that, as processes of decriminalisation and growing acceptance differ considerably around the world, the phenomenon should be viewed as a process rather than as isolated events (Hammond et al., 2020).

Since the 1980s, the Netherlands has boasted an effectively administered system of decriminalised and regulated cannabis trade. Governments in Europe, Australia and North America have taken learnings from them in this regard. Regulators and politicians, policy makers and law enforcement, as well as journalists and ordinary tourists have witnessed that decriminalising and regulating cannabis has had substantial benefits, particularly when compared with the drawbacks and costs

of prohibition in the US. The continued triumph of the Dutch's contrasting and less punitive cannabis policies has weakened the US anti-drug campaigns and significantly impacted the spread of de facto and official decriminalisation (Levine, 2003).

In 2013, Uruguay became the first nation to fully legalise cannabis for recreational use (Wright, 2019) and, since 2018, cannabis has been legal for both medicinal and recreational use in Canada (Government of Canada Department of Justice, 2019). The US has 36 states that have legalised medical cannabis and, although recreational cannabis remains a Schedule I Controlled Substance at the federal level, it has been legalised in over 18 states (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2022). In April 2020, after decades of controversy and debate, the Lebanese government legalised the cultivation, production, and sale of medicinal cannabis (El-Khoury et al., 2022); a significant step considering that Arab nations have been particularly conservative on the issue of drug policies. Cannabis for medical use was legalised in the UK in November 2018 and, although recreational cannabis remains illegal, law enforcement gives low priority to recreational cannabis offences and has deprioritised pursuing cannabis consumers and small-scale cultivators (Bone, Potter & Klein, 2018). Following decades of severe punitive consequences for cannabis possession and use, Thailand decriminalised recreational cannabis in June 2022, becoming – at the time of writing – the most recent country to change cannabis legislation and the first Asian country to do so (Condé Nast Traveller, 2022). Other countries in which cannabis is decriminalised include Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Australia, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Belgium, Estonia, and Moldova. The below map (Figure 3.2) indicates the legality of cannabis on a global scale.

Figure 3.2: Global cannabis legality



Source: Wikipedia (2022)

The process of decriminalising cannabis was initiated in South Africa in 2017 and finalised in 2018. In March 2022, the President of South Africa publicly announced in his State of the Nation address that cannabis will be legalised, and the government released a master plan to catalyse the cannabis and hemp industries (Harper, 2022). This is expected to be of great economic benefit to small-scale rural cannabis growers located in the economically depressed areas of South Africa (Henama, 2020). It is also expected to provide economic stimulation at a time where the economy is in a dire state, with both the highest youth unemployment and Gini coefficient – that is, the largest disparity between the affluent and the impoverished – in the world, caused by the system of Apartheid. This has sparked an emergence of an industry that, although new and controversial, may be of significant importance to South Africa's economic recovery.

3.6. The emergence of the cannabis industry

Drugs in general have played a significant role in global trade for centuries (Warf, 2014). However, the formalised global cannabis economy is nascent, having risen predominantly since the year 2017 and touted as a new path for economic progress (Duvall, 2019). For retailers, legalisation represents new opportunities and challenges (Deloitte, 2018). This depicts a radical shift in the governance of cannabis from criminalisation and stigmatisation to either decriminalisation or, in more liberal states and countries, a regulated market-based model as seen in the alcohol industry (Pflueger, Palermo & Martinez, 2018). Legal recreational cannabis retailers offer users an accessible, more socially accepted alternative to 'black market' cannabis transactions. This alternative purchasing option can be associated with a decrease in crime as it provides legal means of procuring the substance, diverting business away from illicit trafficking avenues (Thacker et al., 2021).

The decriminalisation and legalisation of recreational marijuana has created retail markets similar to those of alcohol and tobacco (Saloner et al., 2015), with the emergent industry indeed showing signs of exponential and increasing growth. In the US, the cannabis industry was estimated at $52 billion in 2019, and had increased jobs in the industry by 76% (Evans, 2019). Its economic impact was approximately $23 billion in 2017. In 2020, the cannabis industry grossed between $17.5bn and $21.3bn in revenue, creating between 240,000 and 321,000 full-time jobs; and is expected to grow to $41 billion by 2026 (Sainato, 2022). In the state of Washington, alone, cannabis tax and licensing revenues reached $367,4 and $395,5 million for the 2018 and 2019 tax years, respectively (Boyd, 2020). In May 2019, the state of Illinois legalised recreational cannabis and, on 1 January 2020 opened their legal cannabis market for business, grossing $3,2 million on that first day alone; the 6 days following that reflected total sales of $10,8 million, and $39 million was made in the first month (Agnew, 2022). Similarly, the cannabis industry in South Africa is predicted to be worth R28 billion a year, creating 130 000 valuable jobs (Harper, 2022).

According to Taylor and Walker (2018), Colorado's production and sale of cannabis and cannabis related products in 2018 created more output and employment than any other industry in the state. In 2021, cannabis sales reached $2,2 million, with the state collecting $423,5 million in fees and taxes (Blevins, 2022). In response to the early growth, an accelerating influx of capital from

profit-oriented commercial corporations for this new market was reported (Bone, 2018). In more developed countries, the industry is rapidly burgeoning into a sophisticated market. Several US states such as Colorado and California have upended the legal situation, developing products, achieving economies of scale, and positioning themselves as cannabis industry leaders (Bone et al., 2018). In Europe, some quasi-legal retail markets have been in existence for a few decades, such as the Dutch Coffeeshop system (Korf, 2008) and 'pusher street' in Christiania, Copenhagen (Asmussen Frank, 2008). Another example of the industry is Cannabis Social Clubs (CSC's), originally developed in Spain to provide members with a reliable supply of cannabis, the opportunity for social use, and protection from prosecution by grouping resources and sharing responsibility (Hudock, 2019). The legalisation of cannabis has contributed to tourism, with 'cannabis tourism' being identified as an area with huge investment potential (Kovacevich, 2018; Taylor & Walker, 2018). Cannabis tourism is defined as purchasing cannabis products with the intent to consume them while temporarily traveling away from one's usual place of work or residence (Taylor, 2020). Cannabis tourism may also involve visiting dispensaries or facilities involved in cannabis processing, attending cannabis friendly retreats, and educational courses such as culinary cannabis classes (Pachmayer et al., 2021). South Africa may consider cannabis tourism as a form of special interest tourism in which they would have an advantage, as the country grows some of the largest amounts of cannabis in the world. This poses an opportunity to diversify the tourists visiting South Africa, by attracting cannabis industry consumers (Henama, 2020).

In California, themed 'wine and weed' tourist experiences have gained popularity (Taylor & Walker, 2018). Kang and Lee (2021) have conducted research into cannabis festival events in Denver, Colorado; indicating their advancement of cannabis tourism. Further examples include events featuring cannabis tasting sessions, cannabis food classes and luxury cannabis getaways (Wright, 2019). The focus on cannabis-infused catering is becoming increasingly mainstream, with food service businesses, such as Restaurants Canada, hosting seminars focused on cannabis cooking, and a growth in cannabis-friendly accommodation themed around 'bud-and-breakfasts' (Porter, 2018). In South Africa, several traditional restaurants in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape

Town have begun to incorporate cannabis-infused foods into their existing menus, serving items such as cannabis sushi, pizzas, breakfasts, milkshakes, cocktails and hot beverages, and desserts (Pasiya, 2020). Although few, some restaurants have opened that specialise only in cannabis-infused foods and beverages, including 420 Café in Johannesburg and Infusion on Long in the bustling Long street of Cape Town (Pasiya, 2020; Pijoos, 2019), serving infused burgers, tacos, seafood, steak, and even fine dining. In a less formal environment, multiple businesses provide cannabis dining experiences from their own homes or host them in private venues across the country. South Africa's first commercially available cannabis-infused beer, Durban Poison Lager, has been marketed online and made available at various cannabis expos and even grocery chains (de Villiers, 2018).

While the alcohol and tobacco markets serve as convenient models upon which to base the commercial cannabis industry, the market that is emerging and the process by which it is being constructed is diverse, complex and unclear (Dioun, 2018; Hsu, Koçak, & Kovács, 2018; Palermo, Martinez, & Pflueger, 2016). Kang & Lee (2021) state that, for US states that have fully legalised recreational cannabis, the transition from the pre-existing illegal cannabis culture to the emergence of legal cannabis culture poses unprecedented legal, political, operational and managerial challenges and implications for all stakeholders involved. The existence of numerous, differing cannabis policies further complicates the attainment of an understanding of the plant and emphasises the necessity to have both a global perspective and local approaches when exploring cannabis markets (Wanke et al., 2022). By effectively regulating cannabis, South African tax revenue can be expected to grow significantly as, typically, custom and excise taxes on substances such as tobacco and alcohol are higher than traditional commodities (Mogoro & Odeku, 2020).

3.7. Regulation and marketing of the cannabis industry

Cannabis organisations are severely limited in terms of the language and images permissible in their advertising; thus, to attract customers, businesses have to creatively devise alternative marketing strategies to navigate these laws (Barker, 2022). With the variances and complexities

of the global cannabis market, the regulations governing the industry vary greatly in different areas. According to Bone (2018) governments in general have not committed to the regulation of cannabis markets, leaving it to civil society, with the support of lower-level governance agencies, to experiment with different approaches. In certain markets where the sale and use of recreational cannabis is legal, some regulatory guidelines with regards to the marketing of the industry and the use of related products have been put in place.

Colorado laws state that cannabis companies cannot advertise on television, radio, print and digital media in the absence of "reliable evidence that no more than 30% of the publication's readership is reasonably expected to be under the age of 21." (Barker, 2022). Also in Colorado, cannabis advertising that targets out-of-state persons is prohibited. Out-of-state visitors are restricted to purchasing from recreational cannabis vendors exclusively, and it remains illegal to consume cannabis in public (Colorado Cannabis, n.d). The age requirement to purchase recreational cannabis products is 21, users are not permitted to share or distribute their purchased products which are only allowed to be bought from licensed cannabis dispensaries. The maximum amount is 2 ounces per adult, hours of sale are limited to between 8am and midnight; and the contravention of any of these laws could result in fines or legal charges. In Canada, users are permitted to purchase cannabis and cannabis oil which are grown by licensed producers at selected retail locations, as well as from federally licensed online producers. Additionally, residents will be able to grow up to four plants at home and local provinces will be allowed to set their own regulations of how it is sold and where it can be consumed (Government of Canada Department of Justice, 2019).

Uruguay implemented laws permitting individuals to grow up to 6 female plants in their homes and the formation of cannabis cultivation clubs that allow up to 99 plants. Adults over the age of 18 are permitted to procure up to 10 grams a week from licensed pharmacies. Furthermore, their government implemented a state-controlled cannabis dispensary regime as well as a cannabis

regulatory institute, to counteract the proliferating black market and the associated violence and crime (Maas, 2022).

Other cannabis marketing related regulations include set guidelines for plain packaging with little branding and strict health warnings have been set by various governments, as well as restrictions on targeting young people, promotions through sponsorship and using popular celebrities, characters or even animals in advertisements to promote cannabis (Wright, 2019). In the Netherlands, regulations prevent coffee shops that sell cannabis products from advertising them, selling hard drugs, selling marijuana to minors, selling amounts greater than the legally specified quantity, and allowing public disturbances (MacCoun & Reuter, 2001).

In South Africa, three medical cannabis pharmacies opened in April 2022, complete with an online medical doctor and chef (Patrick, 2022). THC Pharmacy, the country's first legal cannabis pharmacy, supplies only users in possession of a permit in the form of a card and is registered with the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) and the Department of Health. Although a master plan for the legal recreational cannabis industry has been released by the South African government, there currently are no clear regulations in place regarding permissible quantities, or even what constitutes a 'private dwelling', which is the only context in which its use is legally permitted; leaving the country's citizens, businesses and law enforcement uncertain in their approach (Bulose, 2022).

3.8. Destigmatising the cannabis industry

Research has shown that, in stigmatised markets where the stigma is based on the product, rather than on individuals or members of the organisations that serve the market, the reduction of stigma in the view of stakeholders such as regulators, advertisers and the general public is possible over time (Slade Shantz et al., 2019). According to Devers et al (2009) this stigma is not only possible to overcome, but destigmatisation is essential to organisational survival. As such, organisations

operating within a stigmatised market may attempt to destigmatise it by changing the perceptions of their stakeholders (Slade Shantz et al., 2019). One such strategy includes normalising the devalued products or the consumer groups that the organisations serve, reframing them as acceptable (Slade Shantz et al., 2019) using various communications targeted at key stakeholder audiences. In the case of markets in which recreational cannabis is illegal, communications permissible to organisations in the industry are largely restricted.

Although there is considerable paucity of research into the destigmatisation of cannabis organisations, some studies have identified their attempts at reducing stigma, albeit it largely through a medical cannabis lens (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). The cannabis industry exists both medicinally and recreationally. Recreational cannabis is more highly stigmatised than medical cannabis (Morris, 2018), and destigmatisation efforts differ between the two contexts. Research into the reducing stigma in the medicinal cannabis category highlights that industry actors incorporate positive elements from the healthcare category, while concurrently disidentifying with and discrediting the black market and another emerging category, recreational cannabis (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). Given the difference in perceptions towards the two categories, as well as the fact that the medical cannabis industry is partly responsible for further stigmatisation of the recreational, it is valuable to study destigmatisation in the medical and recreational cannabis industries separately. This study focuses on the destigmatisation of the recreational cannabis industry.

It is worth noting that the legalisation and growth of an industry does not necessarily lead to reduced societal stigma. Delfabbro et al. (2021) conducted research into public stigma related to the gambling industry and found that the highest levels of stigma were reported in Croatia, in which the gambling industry experienced the swiftest growth in the past 20 years of all countries investigated, including Israel and Australia. Value can thus be found in furthering destigmatisation efforts even in countries where the opening of the cannabis industry has already taken place.

3.9. Chapter summary

This chapter gave a comprehensive discussion of the cannabis industry beginning with an outline of its geographical history and its history of use in various cultures and religions. The controversy of cannabis was discussed from various perspectives, followed by an explanation of the current legal status of cannabis globally and in South Africa. An elaboration of the emergence of the cannabis industry as a result of increasing legalisation was provided, with examples of various forms of the industry. The chapter concluded with a description of extant marketing regulations of the cannabis industry in various countries. The next chapter presents a detailed discussion of the methodological approaches employed in this dissertation.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 reviewed relevant literature related to stigma and destigmatisation, and the cannabis industry. To achieve as holistic as possible an understanding of destigmatisation from various perspectives, insights for this dissertation were obtained at an industry level by means of a systematic literature review (Study 1), as well as from an organisational perspective (Study 2) and audiences' perspectives (Study 3). Studies 1 and 2 employed a mixed methods approach, whereas Study 3 explored its research question qualitatively. Methodologies that allowed for all these perspectives were selected and are outlined in this chapter. First, an overarching mixed methods research discussion is provided, followed by a recap of each study's research questions for context. The specific methodological choices are then discussed for the respective studies, including sampling, data collection and analysis methods analysis.

4.2. Mixed methods research

Mixed methods research approaches involve using both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, which enables researchers in multiple disciplines to assiduously explore complex phenomena (Halcombe & Hickman, 2015). Quantitative studies offer deep insights into a problem, whereas quantitative data provide a more general and generalisable understanding.

Creswell and Clark (2011) articulate that mixed methods research is suited to studies in which:

- A single data type may be insufficient to explain the phenomena;
- Results from one approach need to be explained by the other;
- Exploratory (qualitative) findings need to be generalised or quantified;
- A second method is required to enhance a primary method;
- A theoretical stance needs to be taken; and
- An overall research question is best addressed with multiple phases or projects

Mixed methods were selected for this study because the cannabis industry is relatively unexplored; as such a qualitative exploratory approach was suitable to obtain insights into the themes that exist, and the quantitative phase was required to gain further information about the themes identified in the first phase. More specifically, the quantitative phase of Study 1 enabled the themes identified in the qualitative phase to be ranked in order of importance to feed into the prioritisation of the research agenda topics; and the quantitative phase of Study 2 was able to show the popularity (frequency) of the themes identified in the qualitative phase through thematic analysis.

Referred to by some as the "third methodological movement", mixed methods offer researchers alternative methodologies in a way that is more comprehensive than what could be done by either qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Fetters, Curry and Creswell (2013) reiterated that the mixed approach provides powerful tools to integrate the two data types when investigating layered and complex processes. In mixed methods, the researcher collects and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data; and links the two forms of data either concurrently by merging them, or sequentially by having one phase develop from the other, or embedding the one within the other. Typically, the researcher would also give priority to one form of data over the other depending on what the research question emphasises (Creswell & Clark, 2011). A key characteristic of mixed methods research is the integration of the two types of data; one cannot simply conduct the two separately, as the value of the approach lies in insights drawn from cohesive combination. At the design level, integration is achieved by one of three arrangements, namely, convergent, explanatory sequential, and exploratory sequential designs (Fetters, Curry & Creswell, 2013).

Convergent, also known as concurrent, designs involve the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data concurrently or within a similar timeframe (Fetters, Curry & Creswell, 2013). Some studies apply a *parallel* approach to this design, collecting the data separately and concurrently, conducting the analysis separately and then combining them (Saint Arnault &

Fetters, 2011). Other studies apply an *interactive* approach, in which iterative data collection and analysis leads to adjustments in the data gathering processes. Hatta et al. (2020) examined clinical dialogues about cancer treatments Japan, intertwining qualitative and quantitative strands in both collection and analysis such that the two informed each other. Through this dynamic analytical approach, shifting between inductive and deductive methods, they were able to examine a working hypothesis about the relationship between temporal change (quantitative value) in clinical dialogues to examine the strength of patients' motivation to participate in a clinical consultation (qualitative value).

In an explanatory sequential approach, the research collects and analyses quantitative data first, the findings of which then inform the formation of the qualitative data collection instrument(s) and analyses. Shahhosseini and Hamzehgardeshi (2015) investigated the facilitators and barriers of nurses' participation in Continuing Education by collecting data from surveys and used the findings to qualitatively explore their perception of the most common facilitators and barriers through in-depth interviews.

Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante, and Nelson (2010) explain that, in exploratory sequential designs, qualitative data is first collected and analysed, the findings from which inform the quantitative phase that follows. For instance, Hildago et al. (2020) investigated the psychological impact of Covid-19 on the Spanish population by conducting qualitative interviews; the findings therefrom used to construct a survey identifying what population profiles were most affected. Through this approach, they were able to give deep insights into the moods brought on by the pandemic such as sadness/depression, anxiety, and rage; and further determine that more women than men were affected, and that a greater increase was observed in the youth. The value of mixed methods in this study was demonstrated in detecting specific needs for psychological support (qualitative value) and where best to allocate such resources (quantitative value). The mixed methods studies of this dissertation employ this approach, beginning with qualitative analyses which inform the quantitative data collection and analyses in the subsequent phase. For instance, in Study 1, themes

of destigmatisation are explored qualitatively through a systematic literature review and analysis; and further value is provided by the quantitative data which identifies priority areas for research as ranked by cannabis industry professionals. This is further discussed in the respective sections below.

4.3. Study 1

"Destigmatising South Africa's recreational cannabis industry: A mixed methods literature review and research agenda"

4.3.1. Research questions

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

RQ1 (Qualitative): *'What are the destigmatisation methods present in extant literature for core-stigmatised markets?'*

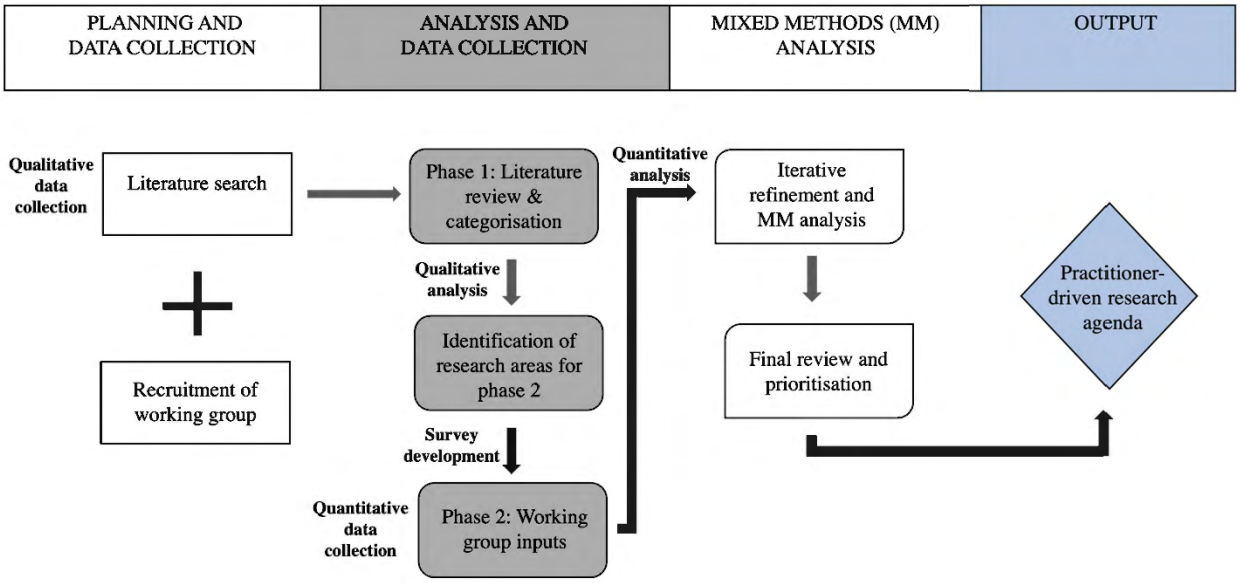
RQ2 (Quantitative): *'How do South African recreational cannabis industry professionals rank these areas for research in terms of importance, actionability, and informativity?'*

4.3.2. Methodological overview

Phase 1

This study was initiated through an extensive search of academic journal databases in various disciplines. The studies were analysed using qualitative and mixed-method data analysis software, MAXQDA2020, and key themes were identified. A less common approach to research agendas is a practitioner-driven approach, which establishes a working group of experts to review and rank topics of priority for research according to certain criteria (Hopkins et al., 2017). This study combined the abovementioned methods, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Mixed methods practitioner-driven research agenda process



Adapted from: Hopkins et al. (2017)

4.3.3. Sample

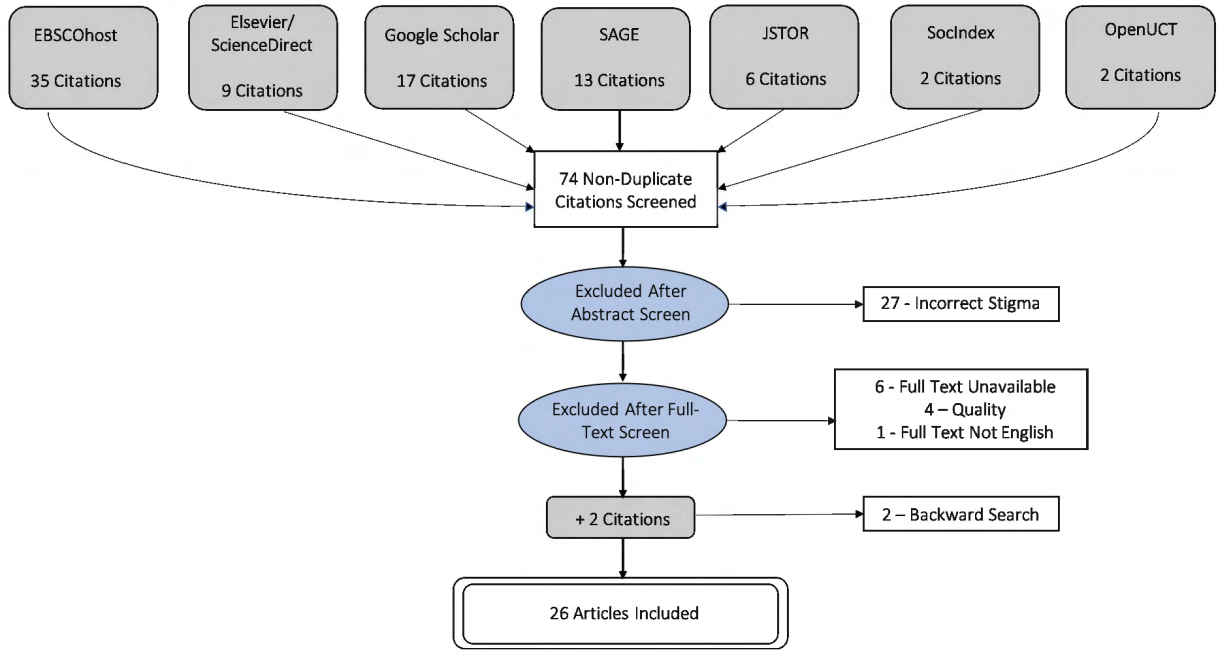
Given the lack of theoretical research on the destigmatisation of the cannabis industry, this study draws on literature from various core-stigmatised industries to develop a framework for destigmatisation. The cannabis industry is a core-stigmatised industry. As core stigma and event stigma differ in their core definitions and destigmatisation approaches, this study included research that investigated the reduction of core stigma specifically. The literature was selected from all available disciplines, ranging from finance management and sport sciences to health sciences, the arms industry, as well as tourism management. Only English-language studies were included in the sample.

4.3.4. Data collection

The final set of literature for this study included journal articles, doctoral dissertations, and a published case study. The literature was identified using keywords such as 'organisational destigmatisation,' 'core stigma,' and some variants and synonyms, e.g., 'organisational legitimation,' and 'stigma reduction'. Preliminary relevance was established by the title of the

articles, which yielded a total of 84 articles. The removal of 10 duplicates yielded a total of 74 articles. Further exclusions were made as per the Prisma diagram depicted in Figure 4.2 below. Twenty-seven articles were excluded because they addressed the incorrect stigma for the purposes of this study, i.e. stigma other than core stigma, such as individual or event stigma. Some papers were excluded because they were either only abstracts or work-in-progress, therefore full text versions of the papers did not yet exist at the time of data analysis. A backward and forward search was conducted for comprehensiveness. Backward search, i.e., using the reference lists of each article to identify relevant sources, yielded 2 relevant articles; and forward search, i.e., searching for articles that cited any of the relevant studies, yielded no additional articles. None of the additional articles resulting from this final phase were excluded. The literature search ultimately yielded 26 articles for analysis. It is further noted that no date range was specified in order to obtain an extensive as possible batch of relevant studies.

Figure 4.2: Literature review Prisma diagram



4.3.5. Data analysis

The articles were qualitatively analysed using thematic analysis with MAXQDA, a qualitative and mixed-methods analysis software. The content was coded in multiple rounds, refining the coding

scheme after each instance to reach an agreement on the final coding for each item of content. Reiterative coding was conducted until no further changes were required. Validity was established through continuous debriefing to establish inter-rater reliability. Reiterative coding reduced the number of codes from 42 to 13, and these were classified into 6 major categories. The findings are discussed in Part 2 of this dissertation.

4.3.6. Phase 2: Working group

To align the ultimate research agenda to South African recreational cannabis industry needs, a working group of recreational cannabis industry professionals was consulted for input. The group consisted of founders and CEOs, and marketing and content managers of South African recreational cannabis organisations, which sell cannabis itself for recreational consumption and/or cannabis-infused goods and cannabis-related paraphernalia. As the sale of recreational cannabis was not yet legalised at the time of data collection, all consultants were ensured of anonymity. The working group database was developed through a combination of the researcher's professional networks, online searches, and referrals from other members. Fourty professionals were invited via email to participate, using an informative invitation email (Addendum B) including a link to an online survey on the online survey platform, Qualtrics. The survey requested consultants to review the research areas in the link, which were destigmatisation tactics, and rank them, using rank order questions, according to the criteria shown in Table 4.1. This list of criteria was adapted from the practitioner-driven research agenda conducted by Hopkins et al. (2017). The quantitative findings are detailed in Part 2 of this dissertation.

Table 4.1: Working group criteria

CRITERIA	QUESTION ADDRESSED
IMPORTANCE	How important is research into this topic in terms of destigmatising the recreational cannabis industry?
INFORMATIVITY	Can it contribute additional knowledge? Could the knowledge add informative value to your organisation and industry?
ACTIONABILITY	Can it inform actionable destigmatisation of the recreational cannabis industry?

4.4. Study 2

"Destigmatising the recreational cannabis industry: A mixed methods content analysis of Instagram posts by leading South African cannabis brands"

4.4.1. Research question

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1 (Qualitative): "*What are the destigmatisation tactics present in the Instagram content of leading South African recreational cannabis firms?"*

RQ 2 (Quantitative): *"How do these destigmatisation methods tactics rank in terms of frequency of use?"*

4.4.2. Methodology overview

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed methods approach to conduct a content analysis of the Instagram posts of recreational cannabis firms in South Africa, in two phases. It began with an initial inductive analysis phase, followed by a quantitative component based on the results of the previously conducted qualitative analysis (Creamer & Ghoston, 2013). Content analysis is a methodology used to make replicable or valid inferences from texts, which can include text as well as visual media and artifacts (Weber, 1985; Krippendorff, 2004). Prasad (2008) denotes that it is the study of content in relation to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages and that it centres around making valid, replicable and objective inferences about these messages, based on specific rules. One of the advantages of content analysis is its versatility in that it can be applied to textual, visual, and audio data (Stemler, 2015). As an unobtrusive method, additional advantages are that data cannot be contaminated during the process of data collection, and its utility in studying sensitive topics (Prasad, 2008).

Although predominantly used in social science and mass communication research to investigate social change, cultural symbolism, changing trends in mass media content and social movements

(Prasad, 2008), content analysis has been applied to disciplines as diverse as political sciences, communications, history and psychology, criminology, and language studies. It has been used to study trends in the mission statements of schools and colleges (Bebell, Stemler & Heimler, 2020; Creamer & Ghoston, 2013; Morphew & Hartley, 2006); to investigate speech patterns of 911 homicide callers (Adams & Harpster, 2008) and linguistic patterns of psychopaths (Woodworth et al., 2012). In the context of social media, Winter et al. (2014) used content analysis to link the content of Facebook status updates to personality dimensions.

Social media has been proven to provide rich data for the purposes of content analysis. The widespread proliferation of email, the web, digital photography, social media, YouTube, and text messaging has provided large amounts of permanent, preserved data on various entities; there has been an increased interest in mining this data, dubbed "big data", to study patterns of varied phenomena (Stemler, 2015). Instagram has been used for visual content analyses (Rogers, 2021; Asquith, 2021), textual content analyses (Walsh-Buhi et al., 2021), and, more commonly, a combination of both (Molder et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021; Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019; Acuti et al., 2018; Pila et al., 2017; Andalibi, Ozturk & Forte, 2015).

Increasing global changes in cannabis legislation have led to the proliferation of openly communicated cannabis-related content on social media platforms (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2016). However, the social media marketplace for cannabis is still heavily regulated and restricted, therefore cannabis organisations look for creative means to navigate the limitations, such as using influencers to brand their products or spread their messages; and some studies have explored the impact of social media marketing on destigmatising cannabis (Bakken & Harder, 2022). Few studies have undertaken content analyses of Instagram posts used by cannabis industry players. Bakken and Harder (2022) argue that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter play a huge role in strengthening social and political standpoints on a global scale, such as the legalisation and commercialisation of the cannabis industry. As such, they utilised content analysis to study the transformation of cannabis culture through marketing on Instagram. Asquith (2021)

used content analysis to study common visual clichés used by cannabis brands on Instagram, while Jenkins et al. (2021) investigated how cannabis businesses foster online presence and exert influence on the youth. More broadly, Demant et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative content analysis of Nordic drug markets on Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram.

Content analysis has most frequently been conducted using a quantitative approach, mainly through counting the occurrence of words (Spillane, Wong & Giovenco, 2021; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which this study employed. This study utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches, further detailed below.

4.4.3. Inclusion criteria

As the field of this study is based in commerce, with an interest of how cannabis companies craft destigmatisation messages aimed at end-consumers or audiences, companies that engage in the sale of recreational cannabis products to end-consumers were of interest. As such, Instagram accounts aimed purely at spreading cannabis-related messages (with no product offering) or B2B cannabis businesses were excluded for the purposes of this study. The selection criteria of posts were guided by the research questions, were that they had to indicate an attempt at destigmatisation, that is, that aimed to convey cannabis in a different light from its longstanding stigmatised views. Therefore, posts that were simply to promote new store launches and relocation announcements, public competitions, filler posts and unrelated motivational posts were excluded from the sample. Duplicate posts were also excluded from the data. The theme of destigmatisation was identified in the posts based on reviews of extant destigmatisation theory and the researcher's evaluation.

4.4.4. Sample

The sample selected for this study were South African recreational cannabis firms, drawn through an Instagram search for recreational cannabis pages and cross-referencing them with their country

of origin. The content selected for analysis were the published images and their accompanying captions; the overall analysis ultimately being visual and textual. The study collected data posted between September 2018, when the Constitutional Court ruled for the decriminalisation of cannabis in South Africa, until March 2022, where the data collection period concluded as there were no further posts to collect; ultimately covering three and half years' worth of published Instagram posts.

The research targeted the four most-followed recreational cannabis organisations' Instagram accounts, given their exposure to the largest audiences. Goodleaf (Instagram handle @foragoodleaf) and Taste of Cannabis (@taste_of_cannabis_) position themselves as South African cannabis brands providing cannabis food, cannabis beverage and cannabis cosmetic products with a focus on CBD products. Zootly (@zootly) positions themselves as South Africa's top all-encompassing cannabis grow, smoke and CBD brand, and Bongalong (@bongalongsa) position themselves as South Africa's first cannabis brand offering high-class, locally made smoking gear.

4.4.5. Data collection

The Instagram posts of these firms were perused for posts published after the decriminalisation of cannabis in South Africa, from September 2018 until the latest post at the time of data collection, March 2022. Content (including both images and accompanying captions) was collected using the screenshot tool, saved as images in respective folders, and imported into the data analysis software program, MAXQDA. Followers' comments or replies were not included as it was the organisations' content that this study focused on and not the consumers' engagement with the content.

4.4.6. Data analysis and validity

Thematic analysis was performed using MAXQDA in the inductive phase of the study, which revealed common themes of destigmatisation in the data. The content was coded in multiple rounds by two researchers, refining the coding scheme after each instance in order to reach an

agreement on the final coding for each item of content. Reiterative coding was conducted until no further changes were required. Validity was established through continuous debriefing to establish inter-rater reliability. The ultimate step to establish validity involved an additional reviewer independently establishing their level of agreement with the final coding scheme reached by the previous rounds of coding. Any disagreements were discussed until a consensus was reached. The quantitative, phase of this study performed basic frequency distributions to determine the most and least commonly used destigmatisation methods. Ultimately, 721 Instagram posts were visually and textually analysed, resulting in 3 082 code assignments. The findings are detailed in Part 2 of this dissertation.

4.5. Study 3

"Exploring the influence of destigmatisation strategies in Instagram posts of South African recreational cannabis brands on attitudes towards cannabis"

Methodological overview and research question

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory approach to address the research question:

"How do destigmatisation strategies in the Instagram posts of leading South African recreational cannabis brands influence attitudes towards cannabis?"

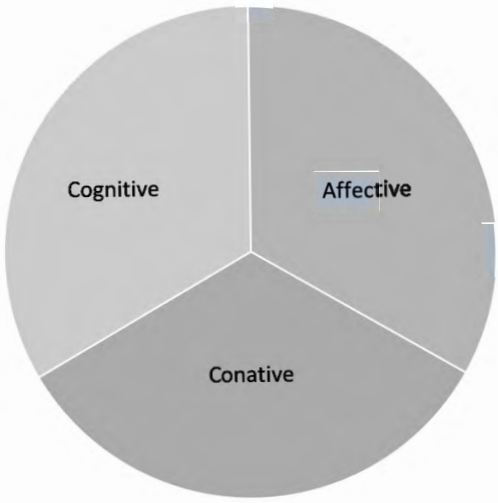
4.5.1. Sample

Twenty-two participants were ultimately interviewed, recruited using a combination of judgement and snowball sampling. Initially recruited participants provided the information other participants suitable for interviewing. The sample included adults between the ages of 18 and 65, who reside in South Africa. The participants included both individuals who do and do not follow recreational cannabis brands' Instagram accounts in order to minimise bias in attitudes.

4.5.2. Theoretical framework

A widely used model in researching attitudes in consumer behaviour is the tricomponent attitude model, which classifies attitudes into three components believed to interact in a relatively consistent and balanced relationship with one another (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006). The cognitive component refers to the knowledge and beliefs that consumers have regarding a particular object, while the affective and conative components refer to the emotions and behaviours the consumer has towards the object, respectively, as a result of their knowledge and beliefs. Multiple studies in diverse disciplines have employed the tricomponent attitude model to explore attitudes. Pangriya and Kumar (2018) utilised the model to understand consumer attitudes and buying behaviour towards online private label brands, while Makanyeza and du Toit (2017) used it to determine the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on consumer attitudes. More recently, it has been used to explore how attitudes are influenced by food-related personality traits of tourists (Baah, Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2020) and, more historically, to determine the attitudes of Hong Kong citizens towards the 'green movement' (Chan & Yam, 1995). In Bangkok, the investigation of consumer attitudes towards online shopping were based on the model (Mengli, 2005) and, in Tanzania, the exploration of consumer attitudes towards African indigenous vegetables in Moshi (Kazungu & Nyagango, 2020). In the field of business management, the model informed an evaluation of shoppers' brand attitudes toward a supermarket brand (Thomas, 2020) and, in finance, customer attitudes towards an international trade payment system (Moe, 2019). The widespread use of the model indicates its value in multiple fields to determine attitudes of various audiences. The tricomponent attitude model (Figure 4.3) provided the framework upon which this study was based, informed the creation of data collection instruments, and guided the data analysis and presentation of findings.

Figure 4.3: Tricomponent attitude model



Adapted from: Schiffman & Kanuk (2006)

4.5.3. Data collection

Participants were interviewed using a discussion guide created to investigate cognitive, affective and conative elements of attitudes towards cannabis (Addendum C). Interviews were conducted by both the principal researcher and a trained research assistant, and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on participants' discussions. To adhere to Covid restrictions in place at the time of data collection, interviews were conducted via the online meeting platform, Microsoft (MS) Teams. Interviewers described various destigmatisation methods and shared a MS Powerpoint presentation to visually depict examples. Photo elicitation was used as the primary method to generate verbal discussion to garner data. This method involves using visual images in an interview and asking participants to comment on them (Bigante, 2010). Photo elicitation produces a different kind of information as it evokes feelings, memories, and information (Harper, 2002), which was crucial to understanding cognitive, affective and conative elements of attitudes. The contrast between conventional interviews and photo elicitation lies in how interviewees respond to the symbolic representations in the images. The parts of the brain that process visual information are, in evolutionary terms, older than the parts of the brain that process verbal information; therefore, visual photographs evoke deeper parts of human consciousness than words do (Harper, 2002). This typically results in deeper, more layered insights. A significant part of the process of photo elicitation interviewing is a collaborative effort rather than an individual

effort by the researcher. It therefore results in the occurrence of joint theorising in the interview. However, the researcher still has a facilitative role, extracting what is required in the interview and assisting the participant to frame and formulate their responses (Jenkings, Woodward, & Winter, 2008). Benefits of this method include helpfulness in introducing sensitive subjects, such as cannabis.

The use of MS Teams aided the transcription of the interviews through its automated transcription feature. Consent to record the interviews was obtained after introducing participants to the study, and imprecise portions of transcriptions were cleaned by re-listening to the audio recordings and correcting inaccuracies. The transcriptions were uploaded to MAXQDA for thematic analysis.

4.5.5. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was performed using MAXQDA in the inductive phase of the study, which revealed common themes of destigmatisation in the data. The content was coded in multiple rounds by two qualitative researchers, refining the coding scheme after each instance in order to reach an agreement on the final coding for each item of content. Reiterative coding was conducted until no further changes were required. Validity was established through continuous debriefing to establish inter-rater reliability. The ultimate step to establish validity involved an additional reviewer establishing their level of agreement with the final coding scheme reached by the two initial coders. The findings of this analysis are detailed in Part 2 of this dissertation.

4.6. Chapter summary

This chapter concluded Part 1 of this dissertation by discussing the methodological approaches employed in each study, preceded by an overarching elaboration of mixed methods research. The respective selections of samples and sampling approaches, data collection methods and processes, as well as analyses and research validity and reliability were specified following a reiteration of the research questions. The following section of the dissertation, Part 2, presents the studies themselves (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) and the findings resulting from the analyses described in this chapter.

PART 2: FINDINGS

Chapter 5 "Destigmatising South Africa's recreational cannabis industry: A mixed methods literature review and research agenda"

5.1. Introduction

Due to a longstanding history of stigma, with restrictions imposed on its use and trade, promotion, and research, knowledge about the emerging cannabis industry is limited. As the legalisation of cannabis is becoming increasingly common throughout the world, emerging cannabis organisations are faced with this gap in imperative knowledge required to survive. Although stigmatised organisations can thrive despite a lack of support (Voss, 2015), they face challenges in the form of legal barriers to research and communications as well as social disapproval, that non-stigmatised organisations do not. This study reviews extant literature on destigmatising core-stigmatised organisations to develop a framework for destigmatisation. Organisations studied in this review include gun collectives, brothels, men's bathhouses, mixed martial arts organisations, organic farming, human tissue traders, university kink clubs, and cannabis organisations, amongst others. The study further aims to establish an actionable research agenda to encourage future research and theoretical modelling. Stigma, being a social construct, is attributed and perceived differently in various societies. As such, this study focuses on the South African context, contributing to developing a nuanced understanding of the country's unique social fabric.

5.2. Descriptive findings

The earliest paper in this review was published in 2002 and the most recent in 2020. During this period, an average of 2.6 articles were published per year, peaking at 5 publications per year in both 2019 and 2020, indicating a recent rise in research attention to core stigma reduction. The reviewed papers were published in journals belonging to various disciplines including Management Studies, Sociology, History, and Policy Studies. The literature lacked geographical diversity, with 65% of the papers having a focus on the United States, 12% on Canada, 7% each on the UK, Finland and China, and only 1 publication on South Africa.

5.3. Thematic findings

An initial total of 42 codes were identified through thematic analysis, which were ultimately reduced to 15 codes through reiterative coding and placed into 6 major categories: Affirming, Infusing, Challenging, Hiding, Conforming, and Structural Responses.

5.3.1. Structural responses

Structural responses referred to organisations adjusting their internal structure and/or operations in order to mitigate the negative consequences of stigma. This category had little research attention for core-stigmatised firms, with only 3 of the articles having reported it as a stigma reduction strategy. Chaudhary (2020) described the transitioning of stigmatised immigrant organisations from formal back to informal status as a result of the costs and pressures resulting from stigma. Durand and Vergne (2015), in their analysis on the arms industry's response to media attacks, found evidence that corporate strategy was adjusted to anticipate negative attention. Finally, Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) proposed that acceptance can be gained by changes to an organisation's structure, managerial team and/or business model (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002).

5.3.2. Conforming

The relatively least prevalent destigmatisation strategy of conforming was reported by 2 of the 26 articles. Conformity as a strategy refers to the seeking of acceptance by complying with the existing laws, regulations and expectations of the society in which the stigmatised organisation operates (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2020). For example, legal brothels in Nevada are legally permitted to operate given that they comply with Nevada law and state regulations (Wolfe & Blithe, 2015). For many core-stigmatised organisations, to fully conform would be to cease to exist (Lashley & Pollock, 2020), thus it is expected that an analysis of core-stigmatised organisations would reveal minimal conformance strategies. Coslor et al. (2018) investigated 'kinky sexuality' student organisations in US universities, finding that their conformity enables official approval from institutional bodies as they transition to formal status. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) provide the

example of firms seeking acceptance by conforming to government regulations in registering with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

5.3.3. Hiding

Hiding strategies involve operating secretively, such as using discreet locations and limited or selective advertising to limit awareness by stigmatising audiences (Hudson, 2008). Hudson and Okhuysen (2009) reported that men's bathhouses used out-of-the-way locations, discreet signage, and exclusive membership cards. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) report on some organisations using selection by selecting an environment most advantageous to the stigmatised firm, which may lead to increased acceptance of the organisation within that environment (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2020). Blithe and Lanterman (2017) reported on the strategy of privacy and secrecy in managing stigma. They found that gun collectives concealed information and weapons, used covert transactions, and convened in secret locations in order to avoid stigma. Hiding strategies typically do not serve stigmatised firms to gain acceptance in broader society; they simply keep the organisations and their activities hidden from stakeholders who hold negative perceptions.

5.3.4. Affirming

While some organisations use hiding strategies, others choose the direct opposite: proudly declaring their existence (Hudson, 2008). Rather than simply attempting to avoid the consequences of stigma, stigmatised organisations can own their stigma and use it to their advantage (Helms & Patterson, 2014). Ramarajan and Reid (2013) posit that affirmation lightens cognitive load and relieves the anxieties associated with presenting an inauthentic self.

Allying with other stakeholders

Although some alliances are broken when a firm is stigmatised (Lee & Zhong, 2020), some turn to alliance networks (Yang & Ji, 2019) to overcome stigma. Core-stigma is more effectively reduced when a larger number of organisations in a stigmatised industry, instead of concealing or

disguising their actions, unambiguously own their identities by publicly advocating and openly celebrating their existence (Khessina, Reis & Verhaal, 2020). Research also indicates that pressure on each individual within a group is lessened as the size of the group increases (Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015). In a similar vein, Comyns and Franklin-Johnson (2018) suggest that a sole stigmatised firm may feel their load is lightened with the knowledge that other organisations are available to act. These alliances are even more valuable in the cannabis industry, where businesses are up against large regulatory and governmental bodies. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) reported that new organisations can work with established organisations to lobby for legislative change in laws and regulations that hinder their growth and argue that such alliances may have more impact than a stigmatised organisation on their own. Allying was reported as a strategy by 4 articles. Student kink organisations actively built connections with similar groups (Coslor et al., 2018); gun collectives engaged effectively in groups to subvert the stigmatised elements of their collective identities (Blithe & Lanterman, 2017); and human tissue traders found that alliances legitimated their activities by rallying other similar organisations for collective support (Reuber & Morgan-Thomas, 2017). An indirect form of affirmation occurs when vanguard customers disclose and celebrate stigmatised organisations' identities by candidly discussing them and their products. Khessina, et al. (2020) argue that stigma concerns are lessened by rallying vanguard customers to openly discuss and celebrate their use of the stigmatised product.

Using stigma to attract

Campana, Duffy & Micheli (2020) critically evaluated RuPaul's Drag Race as a stigmatised organisation which 'has built its success on the active spectacularisation of its core stigma'. In a similar vein, researchers drew on social psychology learnings to posit that being stigmatised cand be perceived positively as a 'mark of distinction' (Mishina & Devers, 2012). Three of the articles reviewed reported on organisations using their stigma as an attraction tool. MMA organisations co-opted stigmatising 'violent' labels to draw in potential customers and to bait politicians and the media for free, albeit negative, publicity (Helms & Patterson, 2014). Coslor et al. (2018) found that some university kink clubs used explicit words such as 'bondage', 'domination', 'submission', and

'sadomasochistic play' in their purpose statements. In these cases, the controversy garnered by strategically using stigmatising labels was a catalyst for awareness and an introduction to their activities. Interestingly, for the cannabis industry in particular, stigma-embracing firms are believed to perform better in environments with higher levels of opposition to cannabis legalisation than stigma-embracing firms with lower levels of opposition (Dioun, 2019).

5.3.5. Challenging

Challenging strategies involve activities that not only affirm stigma identities, but challenge stigmatisers to accept them, or at the least reassess their stigmatising beliefs. In this review, Challenging strategies were identified as allying with stigmatisers, resubjectification, and rhetoric.

Allying with stigmatisers

Some organisations attempt to reduce stigma by allying with those who stigmatise them in order to influence their perceptions. Facing stigmatisation, the Thomas Cook travel agency offered valuable information to their staunchest critics by providing foreign news to the media, which benefited their international reporting (Hampel & Tracey, 2017). The stigmatised shadow education industry in China saw such education organisations ally with stigmatising parents by combining parent and child programmes (Guan, 2020), offering valuable education to the parents and thereby gaining wider acceptance. These relationships could also play out as attempts to safeguard non-stigmatised stakeholders such as customers, vendors and regulators from stigma transfer, such that they may interact with the organisation without suffering the negative consequences of their stigma (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009).

Resubjectification

Resubjectification strategies involve creating new, more socially desirable identities for individuals involved with core-stigmatised organisations. In destigmatising the organic farming industry,

organisations attempted to divorce the idea of farmers as 'deviant village-idiots' by identifying them as skilled and science-driven individuals (Siltaoja et al., 2015). Thomas Cook agency presented their travellers as 'refined and desirable company', opposing the widely held perception of them being 'poorly-educated' and 'unruly' (Hampel & Tracey, 2017).

Rhetoric

Rhetorical strategies are defined as the 'deliberate use of persuasive language to legitimate or resist an innovation by constructing congruence or incongruence among attributes of the innovation, dominant institutional logics, and broader templates of institutional change' (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Examples include the use of scientific facts and figures in order to educate stakeholders or to discredit existing logics; or the use of highly impactful and emotive language in communications, lobbying and activism. Rhetoric was identified as a strategy by 9 of the articles. Hudson (2008) found that stigmatised organisations engaged in social and political disputes with stigmatisers regarding the basis of their perceptions. A strategy employed by cannabis shops in response to police raids in Toronto involved countering the claims of the state by emphasising the health benefits of cannabis and using facts and figures to delegitimise the state's claims (Müller, 2019). These shops also used emotive language, expressing that they were in fact helping ailing individuals. Human tissue traders highlighted that excess human tissue is valuable to scientists, and that discarding it results in essential samples being wasted (Reuber & Morgan-Thomas, 2017). Actors in the MMA industry actively sought out news media in order to proactively educate audiences who held misperceptions (Helms & Patterson, 2012). Thomas Cook's travel agency also depicted his critics as a 'misguided minority', and described their character as being out-of-touch (Hampel & Tracey, 2017). The nuclear industry employed a similar censuring approach, arguing that costs to environmental health were manufactured by critics, and based on 'junk science', to further their own political agenda (Eyles & Fried, 2011). Furthermore, organic farmers used science to delegitimise stigmatising audiences, whose information was dubbed 'pseudo-science' (Siltaoja et al., 2020). Education was found to be an imperative destigmatisation strategy to medical cannabis firms, who emphasised their responsibility to provide patients with accurate

information on the potency of their medicine in order to inform them (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). Medical cannabis organisations also took advantage of society's moral need to provide care to the ill, using emotive language and patient testimonials to reflect their contribution to the preservation of a widely accepted basic human right. Lashley and Pollock (2020) also identified patient testimonials as central to the identification of cannabis as medicine, in turn reducing its stigma. Lastly, Dioun (2018) found that medical cannabis companies used compassionate framing during campaigns for the legalisation of medical marijuana.

5.3.6. Infusing

Infusing refers to stigmatised firms 'borrowing' positive associations. Infusing tactics rely on extant values that resonate with broader society, tying these values to the stigmatised organisation. Infusing was reported in various ways in the literature, including recontextualisation, diluting, and corporate social responsiveness (CSR). According to this literature review, infusing strategies have received the most research attention regarding core stigma reduction.

Recontextualisation

Recontextualisation strategies reframe the stigmatised industry in an attempt to appeal to more socially approved values. Siltaoja et al. (2015) aptly defined recontextualising as applying labels to the industry that conform to hegemonic moral and social norms. Apropos of the cannabis industry, the most common type of recontextualisation in the literature was the citing of health benefits. Lashley and Pollock (2020) found that, in the medical cannabis industry, organisations used the term 'medical marijuana' to relate to patients' rights to medical care. Medical cannabis dispensaries spoke of their moral compulsion to provide health care to the sick and dying (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). Aranda, Conti and Wezel (2020) further deduced that the 'vice' stigma of cannabis was reduced by highlighting its safe consumption and potential health benefits. Considering that stigmatisation is fostered by cognitive associations with physical danger, illness and death (Jones et al., 1984; Goffman, 1963), convincing stigmatisers of marijuana's health benefits can be an effective method of destigmatisation. Stressing economic benefits emerged as

another recontexualisation tactic, with the organic farming industry being highlighted as a source of business opportunities (Siltaoja et al., 2020), positioning themselves as a lucrative and beneficial market segment. Thomas Cook travel agency emphasised their role in promoting the UK's peaceful relations with other countries and demonstrated their potential in educating and culturising the British population in an attempt to decrease perceptions of themselves as organisers of immoral and philistine activities (Hampel & Tracy, 2017). The other side of this coin, rather than adopting socially approved labels, was to minimise their similarity to other undesirable identities. For example, the medical cannabis industry tended to clearly dissociate from the recreational cannabis industry; Nevada's legal brothel industry drew distinctions between legal and illegal prostitution; and the Canadian nuclear industry attempted to break the connection between environmental health risk actions to portray themselves as a non-threatening industry (Lashley & Pollock, 2020; Wolf & Blithe, 2015; Eyles & Fried, 2011). Coslor et al. (2018) found that core-stigmatised organisations often leveraged credible social dialogue, such as human rights, to highlight issues pertinent to mainstream society. In another study, Blithe and Lanterman (2017) found that gun vendors reframed their display of highly racist artefacts as historical preservation, emphasising a more widely approved principle and in turn avoiding the stigma attached to their controversial products. Recontextualisation was the most-reported strategy, with nearly 40% of the articles citing it as a strategy used by core-stigmatised firms.

Branding

Branding contributes to the creation of meaning and order, so it is expected that stigmatised industries use branding to develop meanings of its identity in attempting to change perceptions (Eyles & Fried, 2011). Four of the studies identified branding elements as a destigmatisation tool. The South African cannabis organisation, Bongalong, managed stigma through the design of their bongs – informed by the notion that a well-designed, artistic, sleek and modern product would conflict with the perceptions of cannabis smoking as a 'lazy' and 'dirty' activity (Scadron & Koelble, 2008). Bongalong also created a highly functional e-commerce website focused on quality customer service to aid destigmatisation. Language was also used as a tool in branding-related

destigmatisation tool. The word 'cannabis' was used as opposed to the more stigmatised term 'marijuana', and medical cannabis clients were referred to as 'patients' (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). In the case of organic farming, the practice was renamed to 'luomu', taking on the tone of a separate brand free of controversy (Siltaoja et al., 2015). Images also played a role in managing stigma, with entrepreneurs avoiding the use of the marijuana leaf and opting instead for professional and simple images (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). The nuclear industry used the colour blue in its branding and communications, providing a visual reference to the natural world, clean production, and blue skies depicting openness and limitless thought (Eyles & Fried, 2011). Medical marijuana dispensaries used what was described as a 'squeaky-clean front-stage image', using their store layouts, product packaging and presentation of staff to appear professional and project the image of a credible business providing valuable healthcare services (Lashley & Pollock, 2020).

Localisation

One paper investigated the notion of being locally focused as a mechanism through which medical cannabis businesses attempted to reduce perceptions of them as 'outsiders. By building familiarity and, ultimately, empathy with a community, being locally focused was believed to make it easier for the public to make positive deductions regarding their activities (Lashley & Pollock, 2020).

Piggybacking

One paper described affiliation with other non-stigmatised third parties as a way in which stigmatised organisations could 'piggyback' on their good name. For example, the highly stigmatised human tissue trade industry used hyperlinks to other organisations on their website, directing readers to evidence from neutral third parties to corroborate and lend credibility to their own messages (Reuber & Morgan-Thomas, 2017). The external organisations, being non-stigmatised, are thought to provide a passage through which the stigmatised organisation can build non-stigmatised associations.

Repeated exposure

Through repeated exposure, an audience becomes desensitised to a stigmatised object, creating a sense of normalisation (Kelly et al., 2007). Repetitive and carefully crafted exposure of stigmatised products or activities to the public was reported by 3 studies. Gun collectives used gun events as a mechanism for normalisation by adopting a casual disposition to their actions as everyday activities, by positioning harmless items alongside potentially dangerous weapons, and by creating 'family-friendly' events (Blithe & Lanterman, 2017). Increasing the portion of the public exposed to stigmatised activities also served this purpose. The brothel industry, for example, availed their services to the broader public or 'outsiders' of the industry, viewing that as an opportunity to challenge negative perceptions (Wolfe & Blithe, 2015). Khessina et al. (2020) argued that medical cannabis stigma concerns were reduced owing to a higher number of open discussions about dispensaries and their activities. Examples of other industries that have employed this technique are the gambling industry, the sex change market, and the plus-sized fashion industry (Slade Shantz et al., 2019).

Diluting

Another more complex tool for stigma-reduction involves firms diluting or 'loosening' their association with the stigmatised industry (Devers et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2008). This involves an organisation straddling both stigmatised and non-stigmatised categories in order to deemphasise the stigmatised. Lashley & Pollock (2020) illustrated this strategy in the context of the medical cannabis industry, where firms position cannabis as a mere part of a larger, wellness-oriented offering. These dispensaries often offer cannabis as part of holistic healing, including acupuncture, yoga, and reiki therapies; thereby decreasing the focus on the stigmatised product such that it is less threatening to the public. These organisations also deliberately position themselves as 'wellness therapists' as opposed to 'cannabis sellers', exposing audiences to cannabis in and amongst other more socially endorsed activities and managing their stigma in the process.

Using corporate social responsibility (CSR)

A commonly used infusing strategy was for core-stigmatised firms to engage in CSR campaigns in an effort to signal congruence with the widely accepted principle of serving society. CSR has been highlighted as an effective communication strategy to lessen industry stigmatisation (Wolfe & Blithe, 2015), as perceived risks are lessened when benefits are invoked (Eyles & Fried, 2011). This allows attention to be deflected from more criticised activities, and thus mitigates negative perceptions (Grougiou et al., 2016). Previous studies show that CSR is a prime strategic tool (Kemper et al., 2013; Lin-Hi & Müller, 2013; Perks et al., 2013) through which organisations influence third parties' perceptions (Groening & Kanuri, 2013; Herzig & Moon, 2013) by showcasing their operations as in line with socially endorsed activities (Vergne, 2012; Philippe & Durand, 2011; Hudson, 2008). Furthermore, prior studies acknowledge the role of CSR disclosures in securing broader stakeholder support (Hillenbrand, et al., 2013; Park et al., 2013) and attracting investors and analysts (Dhaliwal et al., 2011). Table 5.1 summarises key findings of the literature review.

Table 5.1: Summary of literature review findings

Category	Definition	Strategies	Times reported	Articles
Structural responses	Adjusting internal structure and/or operations to mitigate the consequences of stigma	1. Transitioning from formal back to informal status 2. Adjusting corporate strategy 3. Making changes to an organisation's structure, managerial team and/or business model	3	Chaudhary (2021); Durand & Vergne (2015); Zimmerman & Zeitz (2002)
Conforming	Seeking acceptance by complying with the existing laws, regulations and expectations of the society in which the stigmatised organisation operates	1. Complying with statutory regulations 2. Conforming to widely accepted societal standards	2	Wolfe & Blithe (2015); Coslor et al. (2020)

Hiding	Operating secretively	1. Clandestine locations 2. Limited or selective advertising	3	Zimmerman & Zeitz (2002); Hudson & Okhuysen (2009; Blithe & Lanterman (2017)
Affirming	Owning stigma; proudly declaring identity	1. Allying with other stigmatised organisations 2. Using stigma to attract	7	Helms & Patterson (2014); Blithe & Lanterman (2017); Reuber & Morgan-Thomas (2017); Coslor et al. (2018)
Challenging	Not only owning stigma identities, but challenging stigmatisers to accept them or at least reassess their beliefs	1. Allying with stigmatisers 2. Resubjectification 3. Rhetoric	13	Hampel & Tracey (2017); Guan (2020); Siltaoja et al. (2015)); Hudson (2008); Müller (2019); Reuber & Morgan-Thomas (2017); Helms & Patterson (2014); Eyles & Fried (2011); Siltaoja et al. (2020); Lashley & Pollock (2020); Dioun (2018)
Infusing	Borrowing' positive associations, relying on extant values that resonate with broader society, tying them to the stigmatised organisation.	1. Recontextualisation 2. Branding 3. Localisation 4. Piggybacking 5. Increased exposure 6. Diluting 7. Using CSR	39	Kelly et al. (2007); Scadron & Koelble (2008); Eyles & Fried (2011); Philippe & Durand (2011); Vergne (2012); Wolfe & Blithe (2015); Grougiou et al. (2016); Blithe & Lanterman (2017); Hampel & Tracey (2017); Reuber & Morgan-Thomas (2017); Coslor et al. (2018); Slade Shantz et al. (2019); Aranda, Conti and Wezel (2020); Khessina et al. (2020); Lashley & Pollock (2020); Siltaoja et al. (2020)

5.4. Working group results

The ultimate number of publications identified in this systematic literature review further depicts the paucity of research conducted on the destigmatisation efforts of core-stigmatised organisations. Furthermore, only 1 publication focused on the South African recreational cannabis industry. As such, all research areas identified in the analysis were considered to be lacking and were presented as research 'gaps' to the working group. Ultimately, 8 members of the working group ranked the gaps according to 3 criteria: importance, informativity, and actionability. The results identified which research areas emerged as most important, most informative, and most actionable regarding destigmatising South Africa's recreational cannabis industry. This compilation and prioritisation of topics can be used by academic researchers to identify areas of direct

importance to core-stigma reduction. It may also assist cannabis firms to set funding priorities for research. There were notable variances even within the broader categories of destigmatisation. For example, within the affirming category, allying with similar stigmatised organisations scored relatively high (4.4 in importance, 4.0 in informativity, and 3.9 in actionability), as opposed to using stigma to attract (8.9 in importance, 9.0 in informativity and 10.3 in actionability). This may indicate a higher level of confidence in the knowledge of the working group in using their stigma to attract, and thus needing less research in this area than in allyship with similar firms. This finding is unsurprising, as using stigma to attract is a strategy based on internal and known characteristics of the business and industry whereas allying with other organisations may be less familiar territory, considering its nascency. There was slight variation across the criteria within the research area itself. For example, allying with similar stigmatised organisations received a mean importance of 4.4, and mean informativity of 4. With a mean score of 3.9 for actionability, the indication is that this area is believed to be important and informative, with a slightly stronger belief in its ability to translate into actionable destigmatisation of the cannabis industry.

5.5. Prioritisation of destigmatisation tactics for research

The general prioritisation of research on various destigmatisation strategies was based on calculating the mean of each strategy's importance, informativity and actionability scores. This prioritisation was as follows:

(1) Allying with similar stigmatised cannabis organisations

(2) Resubjectification

(3) Recontextualisation

(4) Diluting

(5) Allying with stigmatising stakeholders

(6) Compliance

(7) Increased exposure

(8) Rhetoric

(9) Structural responses

(10) Branding

(11) Localisation and CSR

(12) Piggybacking

(13) Using stigma to attract

(14) Hiding

The most highly ranked research need was for research on allying with similar organisations. This indicates a belief among the working group that the South African recreational cannabis industry would benefit most from guidance on a collective approach to destigmatising the industry. Researchers can address this need through studies on the collective pursuit of destigmatisation and its effects on effectively increasing acceptance. Resubjectification was also highly ranked, indicating the partiality of changing negative evaluations of sellers and consumers of recreational cannabis. Comparative studies can be conducted to investigate recreational cannabis organisations that use resubjectification strategies and those that do not, in order to determine any differences in stakeholder perceptions towards them. In addition, researchers should consider whether varying degrees of stigmatisation drive organisations to a particular strategy or category of strategies. It is also recommended that researchers investigate whether relationships between various strategies exist, and how to leverage increased destigmatisation by combining and shifting across certain strategies. Quantitatively, scholars could test the above destigmatisation model and identify the most and least valuable strategies and their juxtapositions. Qualitative approaches can be used to understand the experiences of stigmatised industry professionals, to answer questions such as: How are identities impacted by various destigmatisation strategies? Which strategies give the organisations a greater sense of control over the destigmatisation process? How do the personal characteristics of cannabis business owners drive their use of various strategies.

Consumer psychology studies may explore the effect of various strategies on various consumer behaviour elements such as attitudes, perceptions and motivations. In addition, the above list of destigmatisation could be given to recreational cannabis consumers, rather than cannabis professionals, to gain the consumers' perspective of the importance of various strategies. Further research could also be conducted on the effects of various strategies on differing stigmatising stakeholders to answer questions such as: Do affirming strategies have a higher impact on destigmatisation amongst potential investors than on the government, or vice versa? Lastly, future studies could compare the higher-ranked strategies the lower-ranked strategies to investigate if and why differences exist in their valuation.

5.6. Chapter summary

This chapter introduced Study 1 of this dissertation, presenting the qualitative themes present in the literature regarding core-stigmatised organisations and their stigma management strategies. It then discussed the outcome of the quantitative ranking of these strategies as research areas for prioritisation, according to the working group of cannabis industry professionals consulted for input. Further discussion of these findings, as well as the resulting model of destigmatisation, are discussed in Chapter 8 of the dissertation; and its limitations are presented in the concluding chapter, Chapter 9. The next chapter introduces the findings of Study 2 of the dissertation.

Chapter 6 "Destigmatising the recreational cannabis industry: A mixed methods content analysis of Instagram posts by leading South African cannabis brands"

6.1. Introduction

In this study, the frequencies of various destigmatisation tactics employed by cannabis organisations is explored. By analysing the Instagram posts of four post-legalisation cannabis companies, the research explored themes used to concurrently sell cannabis related products while building the new era of cannabis marketing. This study approaches this problem through content analysis, a methodology employed to make valid and replicable inferences from data, which can include text and visual media (Krippendorff, 2004). One of the main advantages of content analysis is that it is an unobtrusive method, which translates into the further benefit of lower costs, a reduced likelihood of the contamination of data during collection and, in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, a method that does not require physical interpersonal interaction. This chapter begins with a brief background to the study, reiterates its research questions and briefly outlines its methodology, which was discussed in detail in Chapter 4. It then provides a detailed account of the thematic and descriptive findings of the analysis.

6.2. Background

Due to rapid global changes and differences in the legal and social status of cannabis, regulations and limitations on its online marketing are numerous, yet equivocal and obscure. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have varying rules regarding cannabis-related content. These include the prohibition of content that references prices of or discounts on products; product menus, images of cannabis itself or cannabis paraphernalia, links that lead to external pages that direct consumers how to purchase cannabis products, or contact information (Gunelius, 2020). It is important to note not only the rules of posting cannabis-related content online, but also the consequences of breaching these rules, as that directly influences how strictly they are adhered to. The repercussions of contravening the regulations of online cannabis content are relatively moderate, with the most extreme punitive measure being the deletion of the

account in question, and the milder being an issued warning (Gunelius, 2020). As such, and as a result of the general ambiguity of cannabis regulations, there exists a certain margin of freedom for marketing cannabis online. Thus, the use of social media marketing to destigmatise cannabis may prove to be a valuable avenue for research.

Since the digital revolution, the benefits of social media marketing have been robustly researched. Most businesses conduct some form of social media marketing and communications; it is so inherent today that those who do not are frequently regarded as obsolete. The benefits of social media marketing include its ability to reach large audiences at a fraction of traditional marketing costs, its flexibility and convenience to both marketers and audiences, its provision of analytics, the range of options it offers, and its ability to target certain demographic segments. A benefit more closely related to the purposes of this study is the anonymity that social media offers. In exploring the value of anonymity on the internet, Lim, Zo and Lee (2011) highlight its importance for psychological wellbeing as it can protect individuals from discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, physical disability, and attractiveness. In a stigmatised industry where an individual's association with the businesses or products could expose them to social disapproval, social media is considered a safe space in which to engage with the product. With regards to the cannabis industry, the said engagement could be, amongst others, for purchasing, educational, or even conversational purposes.

Given its reach, its appositeness regarding stigmatised contexts, and its popularity of use, there is value in researching cannabis industry destigmatisation through social media. This study explored the themes of various destigmatisation strategies by South African cannabis brands on the microblogging social media platform of Instagram, as well as the frequencies thereof.

6.3. Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1 (Qualitative): *"What are the destigmatisation tactics present in the Instagram content of South African recreational cannabis firms?"*

RQ 2 (Quantitative): *"How do these destigmatisation tactics rank in terms of frequency of use?"*

6.5. Findings

The approach of this research assumed a managerial perspective emphasising the ways in which organisations instrumentally employ strategies to garner societal support. Thematic analysis resulted in 81 codes in the first iteration of coding, and after more rounds of iterative coding and agreement, the final code set consisted of 37 codes. Descriptive statistics determine the prevalence of destigmatisation methods across the brands' platforms, which are presented subsequent to the below thematic findings.

6.6. Thematic findings

The thematic codes related to the major destigmatisation categories of Hiding, Affirming, Infusing, and Challenging. Instances of codes belonging to other categories, Structural Responses and Conforming, were not identified in the analysis of the data. The codes identified are discussed and visually referenced below using excerpts of caption text and images from the data.

6.6.1. Affirming

One of the main categories of destigmatisation strategies is through affirming, which refers to openly expressing association with the stigmatised object, or even loudly and proudly declaring it. Helms & Patterson (2014) indicate that owning stigma can be used to the advantage of the stigmatised firms. The analysis of the Instagram posts revealed that the sample did this in two ways: allying with other stigmatised players in an attempt to actively build a cannabis community, and using stigmatised labels and symbols in their content, either to attract attention or to appeal to an existing cannabis community that is familiar with the terms. Overall, Affirming strategies were used 310 times.

Allying with other stigmatised organisations

Comyns and Franklin-Johnson (2018) suggest that a sole stigmatised firm may feel their load is lightened with the knowledge that other similarly stigmatised organisations are available to act. These alliances are even more valuable in the cannabis industry, where businesses are up against large regulatory and governmental bodies. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) reported that new organisations can work with established organisations to lobby for legislative change in laws and regulations that hinder their growth, and such alliances may have more impact than a stigmatised organisation on their own. This strategy was employed 14 times across the various Instagram accounts through both images and text. The below excerpts represent examples of images and text that depict Affirming both through using images of cannabis, thus affirming their association with the plant, and allying with other stigmatised cannabis stakeholders, which depict efforts to foster a cannabis community.

Figure 6.1: Allying with other cannabis organisations, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [October 28, 2020]

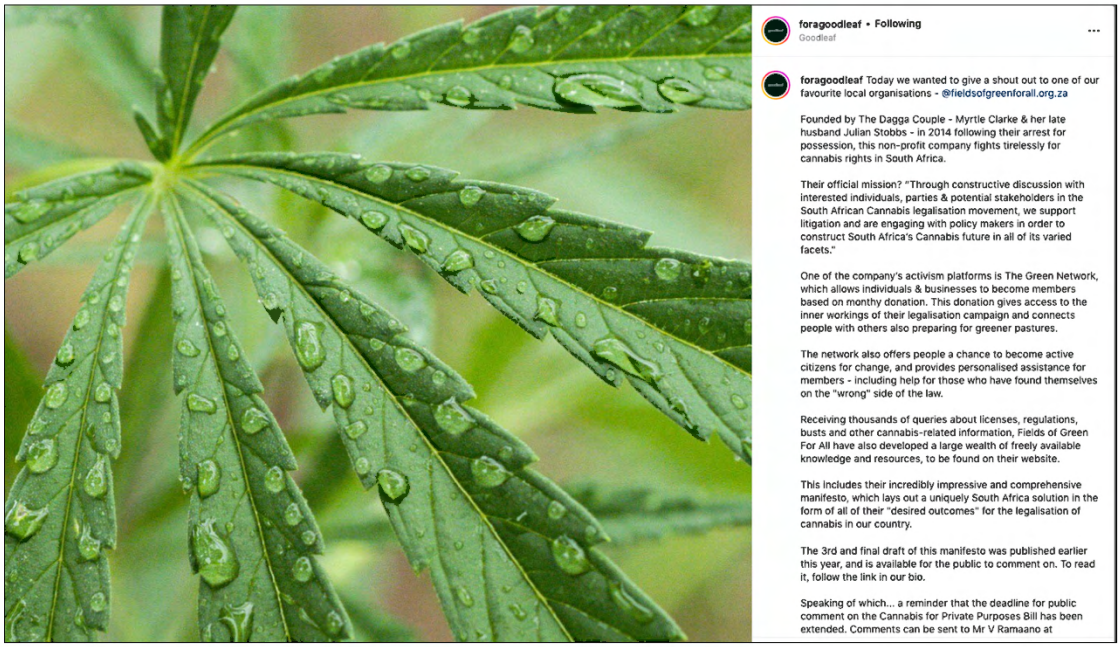


Figure 6.1 depicts an image of the cannabis plant, and the accompanying caption depicts an association with the cannabis organisation, Fields of Green 4 All, which advocates for the rights of adult personal cannabis use.

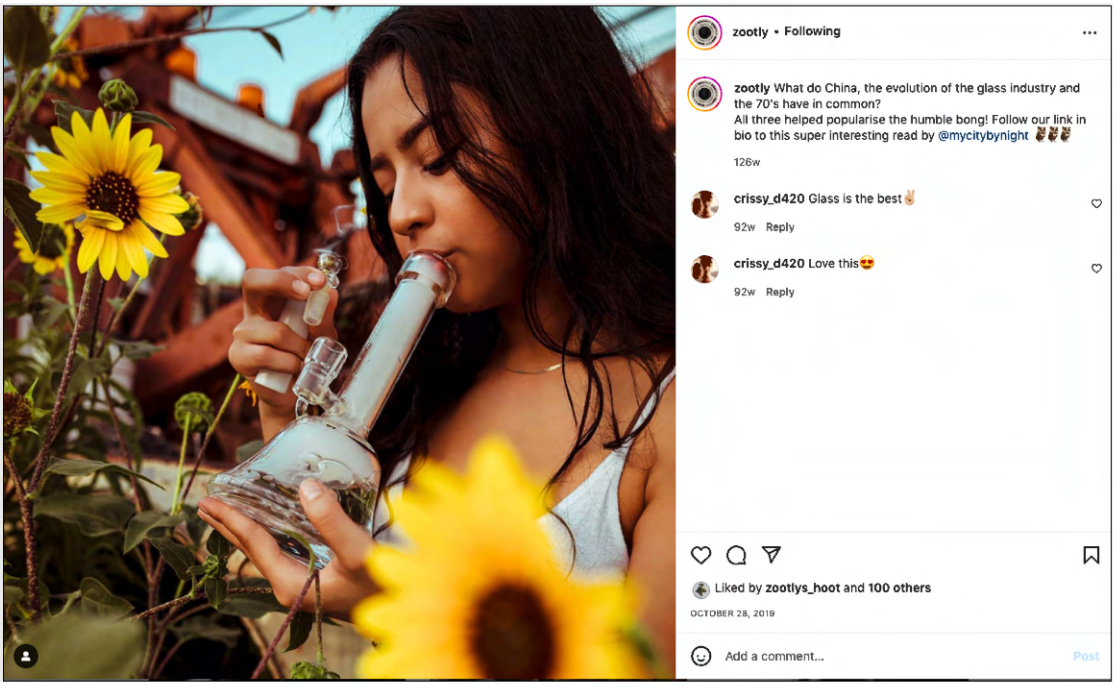
The below caption, extracted from a post published on 3 June 2021, indicates a clear attempt by the brand to build an African cannabis community by partnering with cannabis organisation, Highlands Investments in Lesotho, Africa:

Figure 6.2: Allying with other cannabis organisations, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [June 3, 2021]

Using stigma to attract

Some stigmatised organisations use labels attributed to them by stigmatising audiences to, through 'shock tactics', garner attention. Coslor et al. (2018) found that, in such cases, the controversy garnered by strategically using stigmatising labels was a catalyst for awareness and an introduction to their activities. This served to attract the attention required to engage with audiences. Many posts used the well-known and widely stigmatised image of the marijuana plant to affirm and attract attention. Other examples included images of a rolled cannabis joint or the action of smoking a bong – a widely stigmatised activity.

Figure 6.3: Bong smoking, @zootly Instagram post [October 28, 2019]



Another example involved using stigmatised name alternatives for cannabis, particularly in a South African jargon context, to draw attention from stigmatising audiences or to appeal to the extant cannabis community. One Instagram post depicted various South African names for cannabis, with the caption stating the significance of every word to different people.

6.6.2. Infusing

The most popular destigmatisation tactics formed part of the Infusing category, in which cannabis businesses rely on extant values that resonate with broader society, tying those values to themselves in order to be associated with them and thus more widely accepted; less stigmatised. According to the preceding literature review article as well as this study's analysis, Infusing tactics occur in at least seven different ways: *recontextualisation, branding, dilution, localisation, piggybacking, increased expo*sure, and *using CSR.* All Infusing strategies were employed (310 times overall).

Recontexualisation

Recontextualisation involves reframing the industry to appeal to more socially approved values. Siltaoja et al. (2015) aptly defined recontextualising as applying labels to the industry that conform to hegemonic moral and social norms. The most common example employed by the sample was the citing of health benefits. Considering that stigmatisation is fostered by associations with physical danger, illness and death (Jones et al., 1984; Goffman, 1963), convincing stigmatisers of marijuana's health benefits can be an effective method of destigmatisation.

Citing health benefits

The brands cited health benefits 557 times in a number of ways, including linking cannabis (particularly its non-psychoactive component, CBD) with the physical healing of various illnesses or their symptoms (n=180), mental health treatment (n=155), overall wellness and vitality (n=89), cosmetic or dermal health (n=56), sports or athletic health (n=27), women's health (n=19), sexual health/pleasure (n=9) and animal health (n=11). The below excerpts depict some examples.

Figure 6.4: Health benefits, @taste_of_cannabis_ Instagram post [August 27, 2020]

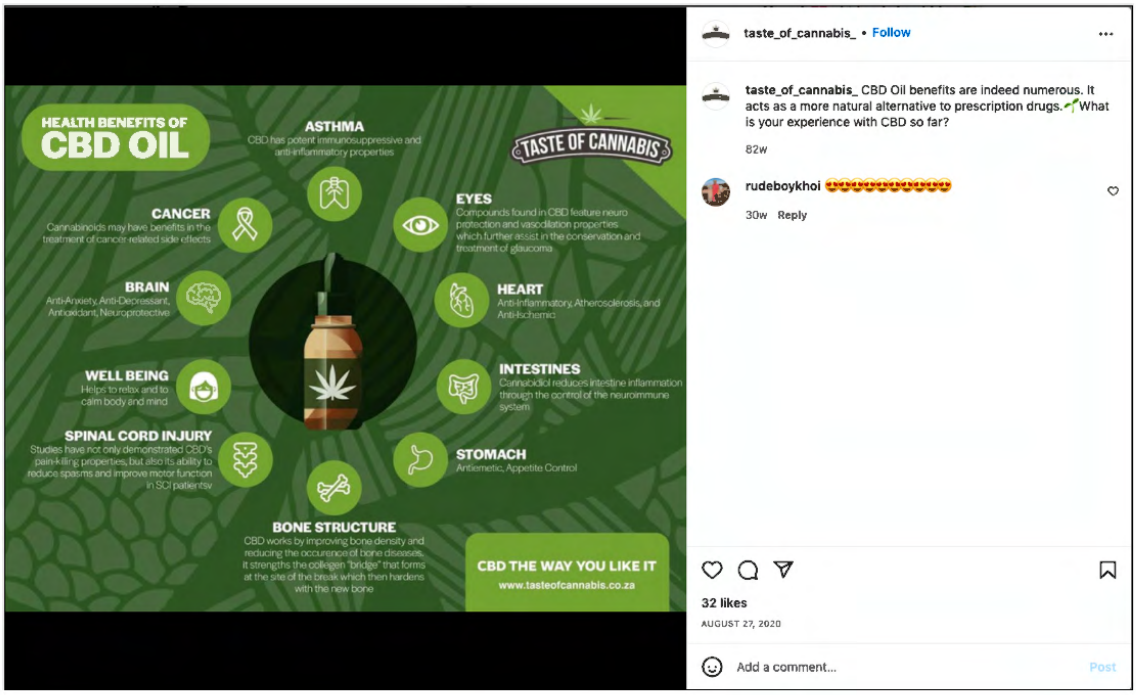


Figure 6.5: Mental health, @zootly Instagram post [January 18, 2020]

▶ CBD can help sleep - Aspects that will negatively affect your sleep are: stress, anxiety, restlessness, and general imbalances in the body. These issues can be treated with CBD as it is known to calm the user down.

Figure 6.6: Overall wellness/vitality, @taste_of_cannabis_ Instagram post [July 16, 2020]

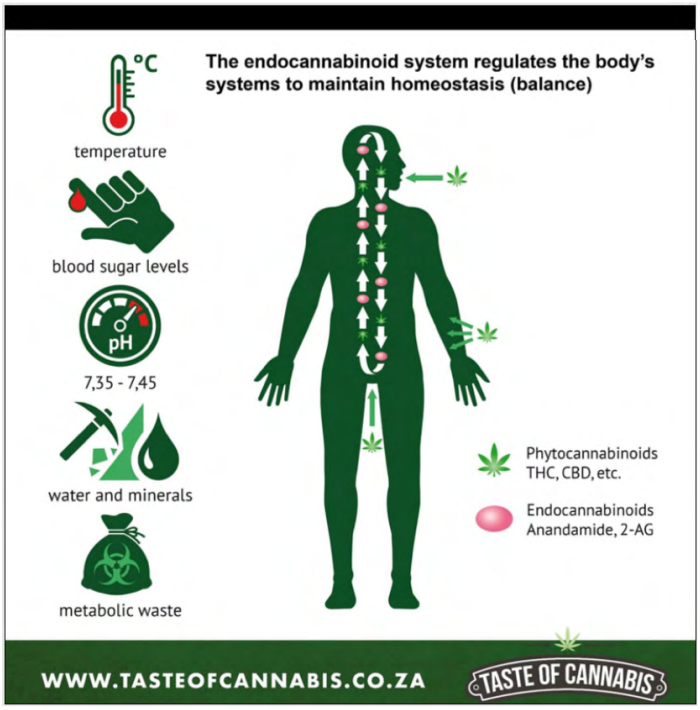


Figure 6.7: Cosmetic/dermal health, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [January 3, 2020]

foragoodleaf Say hello to your daily glow ✨

The third product in our Soothe range, the goodleaf glow serum is a lightweight facial oil to reawaken your natural radiance.

This hero product targets signs of fatigue and a lackluster complexion by utilising the benefits of baobab, mongongo and 200mg of cannabis sativa (CBD) oil.

This high performance and nutrient-rich botanical serum fortifies the skin barrier, offering protection against the elements by locking in moisture and restoring balance for youthful, healthy looking skin.

Figure 6.8: Sports health, @foragoodleaf Instagram post: February 17, 2020

Being that cannabis is an anti-inflammatory, it is also a great tool for muscle recovery and pain relief following intensive workouts.

Another notable finding was that those who co-used also got about 43 minutes more exercise per week than those who didn't.

Ultrarunners sometimes use cannabis to battle nausea and boredom on long runs, and epidemiological studies show cannabis-users tend to be leaner, less prone to diabetes and have healthier blood sugar levels.

Figure 6.9: Women's health, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [February 6, 2020]

Figure 6.10: Sexual health/pleasure, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [February 14, 2020]

When applied topically, CBD acts as a 'vasodilator' - widening your blood vessels and allowing fresh oxygenated blood to flow through them more easily. In genital areas, this fresh blood is associated with increased arousal and stimulation.

Figure 6.11: Animal health, @taste_of_cannabis_ Instagram post [August 20, 2021]

Citing economic and social benefits

The brands cited economic advantages (n=6) such as entrepreneurship, job creation, tax income, and mitigating the effects of recession. The social benefits (n=4) communicated about cannabis were the reduction of opioid reliance, and a decline in prosecutions as a result of cannabis legalisation.

Figure 6.12: Caption from @foragoodleaf Instagram post [August 9, 2019]

> **And there must be something to it, because in 2017 they made $1.1 million in annual profit. When asked why they grow weed? "To provide honorable, spiritual jobs for women," says Sister Kate. "We stand for the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship." Amen to that 🙌**

Figure 6.13: Social benefits, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [June 25, 2021]

Branding

This refers to using elements related to brand building to boost positive perceptions and reduce stigmatised opinions of cannabis. Brands used elements of professionalism, such as mentioning (in text) or depicting (in images) professional, friendly, or knowledgeable staff; functional or innovative product design; sleek or modern product or packaging design; attractive store design and layout; attractive and professional or iconic imagery, and even green marketing. A diversion from the typical colours associated with cannabis (red, yellow, green, and black) was also apparent in products, packaging and other marketing communications, as brands moved towards colours not associated with marijuana such as white, blue and gold.

Figure 6.14: Functional/innovative product design & packaging, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [July 13, 2019]

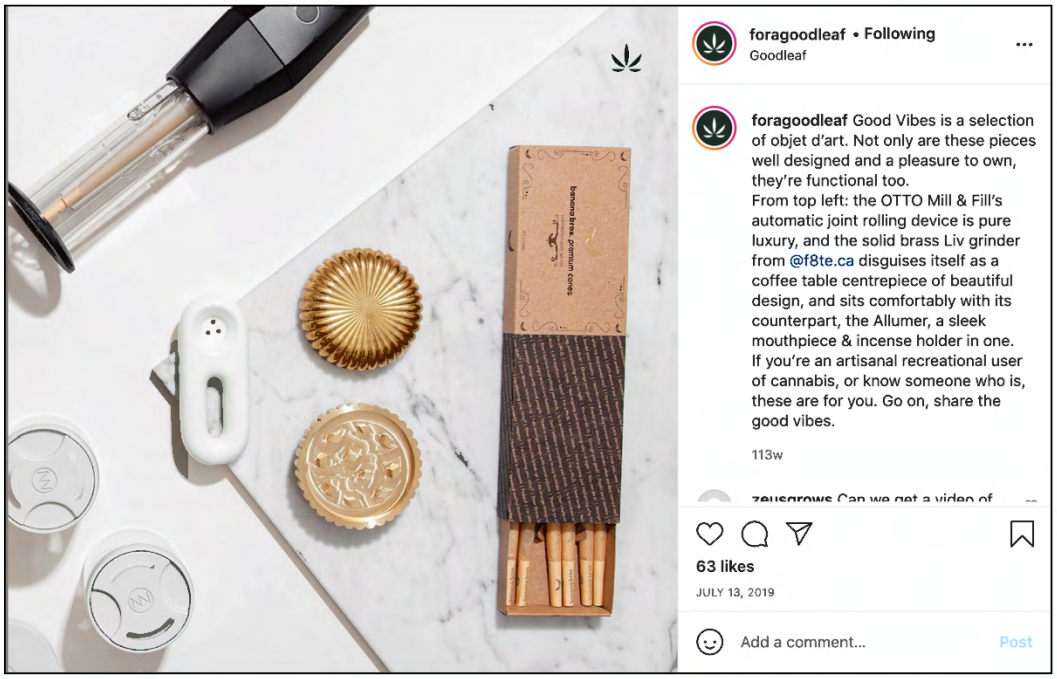
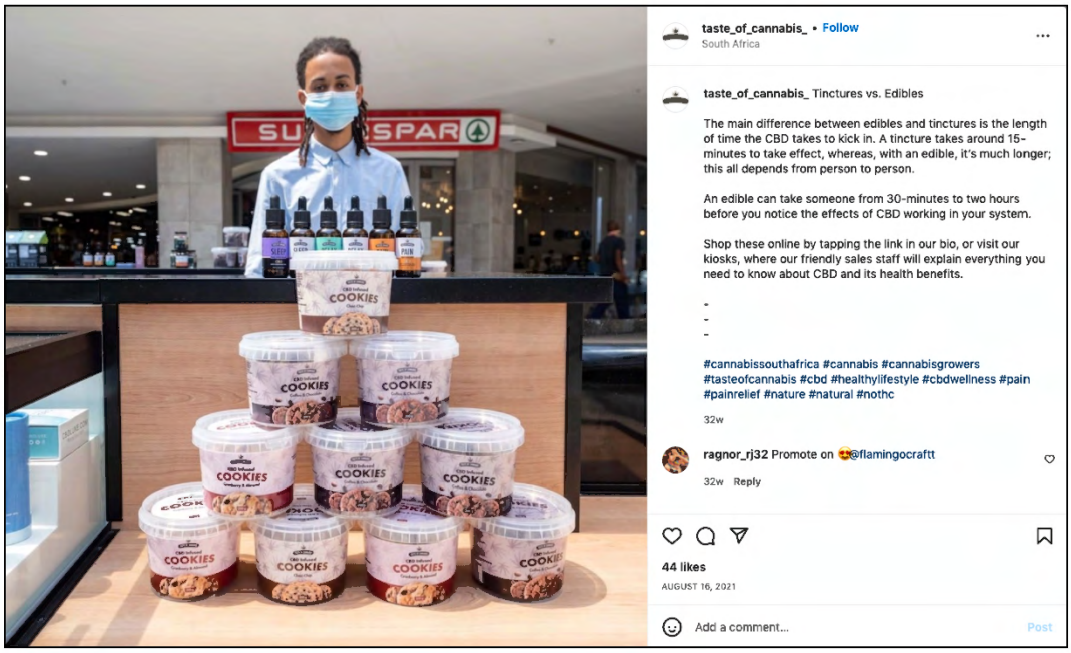


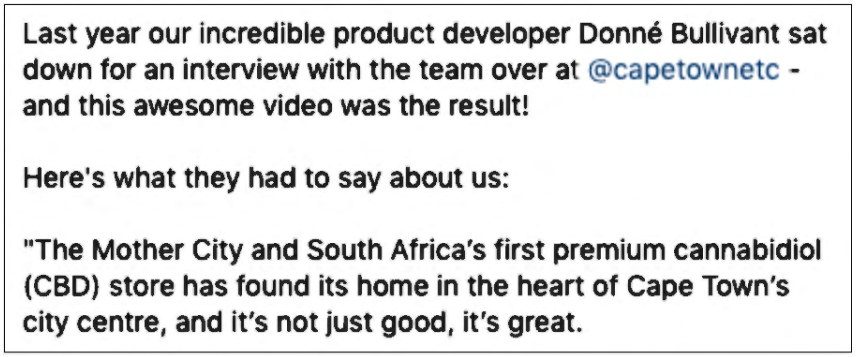
Figure 6.15: Professionalism in staff and store layout, @taste_of_cannabis_ Instagram post [August 16, 2021]



Localisation

Localisation refers to the notion of being locally focused as a mechanism through which medical cannabis businesses reduced perceptions of them as 'outsiders. By building familiarity and, ultimately, empathy with a community, being locally focused was believed to make it easier for the public to make positive deductions about them (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). This tactic was used a total of 14 times across all accounts. Goodleaf employed the tactic 8 times, mostly focusing on the city of Cape Town.

Figure 6.16: Localisation, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [July 24, 2020]

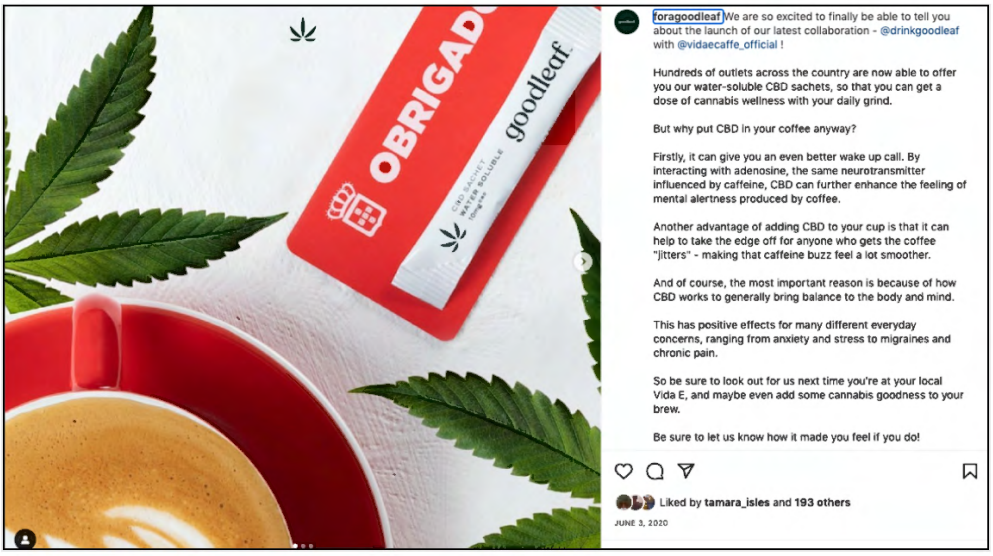


Piggybacking

Cannabis businesses using this method partner with non-stigmatised third parties as a way to 'piggyback' on their good name. The external organisations, being non-stigmatised, are thought to provide a passage through which the stigmatised organisation can build non-stigmatised associations. Overall, this was employed 31 times across all posts (30 times by Goodleaf, 1 time by Zootly). Goodleaf had the highest number of partnerships with companies including Jason Bakery, coffee franchise Vida e Caffè, farmer's market Good to Gather, plant-based food brand Kind But Good Food, and well-known supermarkets Pick n Pay and Checkers.

Figure 6.17: Partnership with well-known local bakery, Jason Bakery, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [October 28, 2019]

Figure 6.18: Partnership with coffee franchise, Vida e Caffè, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [June 3, 2020]



Increased exposure

Through repeated exposure, an audience becomes desensitised to a stigmatised object, creating a sense of normalisation (Kelly et al., 2007). Various ways increased exposure was employed includes hosting or promoting cannabis industry events; highlighting its industrial uses in textiles, paper and building products; and emphasising its increasing societal acceptance. In the most-used instance of increased exposure, the sampled cannabis brands also attempted to normalise cannabis by incorporating it with daily routines such as coffee, smoothies, workouts, occupational work, and skin and sleep routines. These tactics were employed a total of 218 times.

Figure 6.19: Increasing societal acceptance, @bongalongsa Instagram post [September 18, 2018]

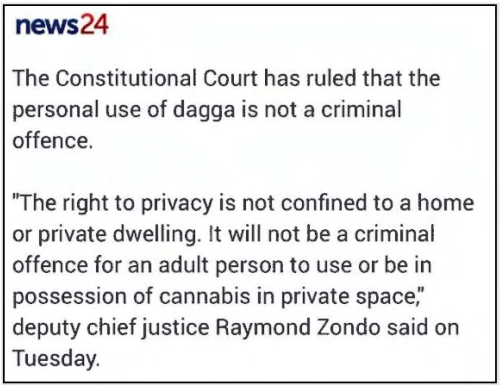
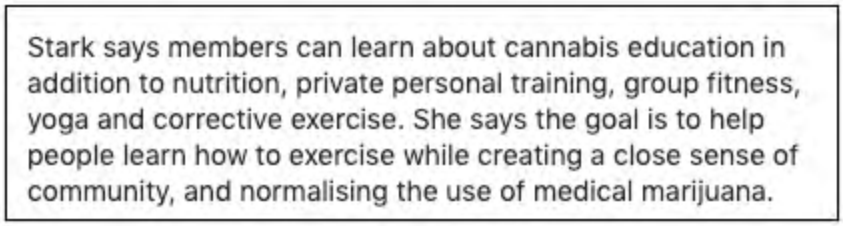


Figure 6.20: Daily incorporation, @taste_of_cannabis_ Instagram post [January 11, 2021]

Diluting

Another more complex tool for stigma-reduction involves firms diluting or 'loosening' their association with the stigmatised activity or industry (Devers et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2008). This involves an organisation straddling both stigmatised and non-stigmatised categories to deemphasise the stigmatised. The sampled brands indicated offerings such as nutrition and fitness, as well as meditation and general mind-body wellness along with cannabis products. Dilution was one of the lesser used strategies, employed a total of 3 times across all posts, and only by Goodleaf.

Figure 6.21: Diluting, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [February 1, 2021]



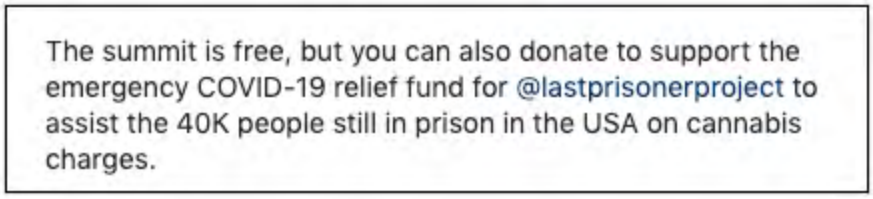
Corporate Social Responsibility

One of the employed Infusing strategies involved firms engaging in CSR campaigns in an effort to signal congruence with the widely accepted principle of serving society. CSR has been highlighted as an effective communication strategy to lessen industry stigmatisation (Wolfe & Blithe, 2015), as perceived risks are lessened when benefits are invoked (Eyles & Fried, 2011). This allows attention to be deflected from more criticised activities, thus mitigating negative perceptions (Grougiou et al., 2016). Each brand highlighted their CSR at least once; the strategy being used a total of 20 times, and mentioning the support of small-scale farmers, artists, women

empowerment, and youth. Interestingly, South African cannabis brand Goodleaf signaled support of the relief of US related social issues, the opioid crisis and cannabis-related imprisonment.

Figure 6.22: Women empowerment, @zootly Instagram post [August 9, 2021]

Figure 6.23: US cannabis-related imprisonment, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [April 19, 2020]



6.6.3. Challenging

Challenging strategies involve activities that not only affirm stigma identities, but challenge stigmatisers to accept them as well, or at least reassess their beliefs. In the preceding literature review, challenging strategies were identified as allying with stigmatisers, resubjectification, and rhetoric. Allying with stigmatisers involves attempts to reduce stigma by providing value directly to stigmatising audiences in order to influence their perceptions. This strategy was not employed in any of the sampled cannabis brands' Instagram posts in the specified period.

Resubjectification

Resubjectification, which involves creating new, more socially desirable identities for individuals associated with core-stigmatised organisations, was used 358 times, indicating the popularity of this strategy. The brands enacted this by depicting cannabis users in a positive light, engaged in socially approved activities such as reading, meditating, active and outdoor situations, working productively, or simply with healthy- looking skin and bright smiles, as opposed to the stigmatised 'lazy stoner' stereotype.

Figure 6.24: User depicted in an active setting, @zootly Instagram post [January 9, 2021]

Figure 6.25: User depicted in an outdoor setting with a book, @taste_of_cannabis_ Instagram post [August 9, 2021]

Rhetoric

Rhetoric includes the 'deliberate use of persuasive language to legitimate or resist an innovation; done by constructing congruence or incongruence among attributes of the innovation, dominant institutional logics, and broader templates of institutional change' (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Rhetoric was used 386 times. Examples include the use of scientific facts and figures in order to educate stakeholders or to discredit existing logics; or the use of highly impactful and emotive language to attack stigmatisers and dispute negative views; activism and lobbying; and user testimonials to appeal to emotions associated with the basic right to health. The below excerpt equates negative views of cannabis to obsolescence and racism, and the following uses the testimonial of a child's health to appeal to emotions.

Figure 6.26: Attacking stigmatisers, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [April 19, 2020]

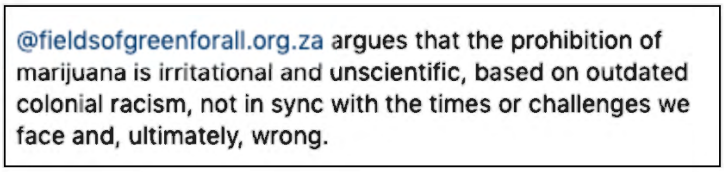


Figure 6.27: Patient testimonial, @foragoodleaf Instagram post: April 19, 2020

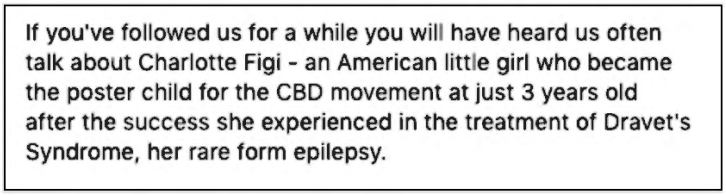
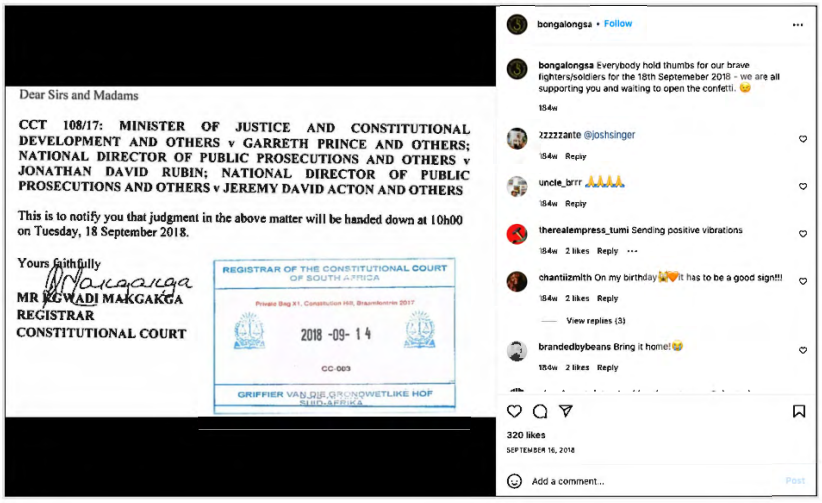


Figure 6.28: Depicting lobbying, @bongalongsa Instagram post [September 18, 2018]



Hiding

Hiding strategies involve operating secretively, such as using clandestine locations and limited or selective advertising to limit awareness by stigmatising audiences (Hudson, 2008). Hiding was the most unpopular category, accounting for 15 out of 4 456 thematic codes assigned. These posts mainly depicted the ability of their products to hide cannabis related activities. Although attitudes towards cannabis are changing, many users are still affected by the stigma and its consequences associated with cannabis. The posts employing hiding strategies took this into account and attempted to reassure their users of discretion.

Figure 6.29: Concealment of cannabis, @foragoodleaf Instagram post [July 13, 2019]

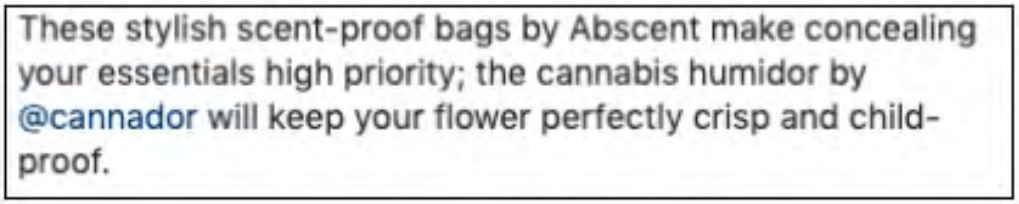


Figure 6.30: Discretion, @zootly Instagram post [April 15, 2021]

6.7. Descriptive findings

The sample had a total of 40 873 followers at the end of the data collection period. Seven hundred and twenty-one (721) Instagram posts were analysed from the four most-followed South African recreational cannabis business accounts, following the removal of duplicates and other posts that did not fulfil the selection criteria. The Instagram accounts consisted of:

1. @foragoodleaf, with 14 200 followers and 459 posts analysed
2. @bongalongsa, with 13 300 followers and 20 posts analysed
3. @taste_of_cannabis_ with 7 469 followers and 161 posts analysed

4. @zootly, with 5 904 followers and 81 posts analysed

Overall, 3 070 instances of various destigmatisation tactics were identified. The popularity of these tactics employed by the cannabis organisations is indicated in Tables 6.1 – 6.4, which summarise their frequencies across each organisation's Instagram accounts, along with some summative figures. The total frequencies of each tactic across all accounts are presented in brackets in the first column, while the instances of tactics per organisation are presented in their respective columns alongside their percentages, providing descriptions of destigmatisation efforts from an industry level while also highlighting the individual companies' approaches.

6.7.1. Hiding tactics

The unpopularity of tactics that serve to conceal the use - and other aspects – of cannabis are evident in the low number of instances they appear across the Instagram accounts. Overall, only 15 instances were identified, accounting for 0,5% of all tactics overall. Goodleaf's concealment tactics accounted for 47% of these, Zootly and Taste of Cannabis for 40% and 13% respectively, while no Hiding strategies were identified in Bongalong's posts.

Table 6.1: Hiding tactics - frequencies per organisation

Destigmatisation tactic	Goodleaf	Zootly	Taste of Cannabis	Bongalong	Overall summary%
Concealment/discretion (15)	7 (47%)	6 (40%)	2 (13%)	0	0,5%

6.7.2. Affirming tactics

Affirming tactics were more popular than Hiding tactics, with a total of 308 instances identified, forming 10% of tactics overall. Goodleaf's posts accounted for 75% of all Affirming tactics while Zootly, Taste of Cannabis and Bongalong's posts accounted for 8%, 15% and 1% of all Affirming posts respectively. The tactic of allying with other cannabis stakeholders formed 0,5% of tactics overall, while using stigma to attract attention accounted for 10% of all tactics.

Table 6.2: Affirming tactics - frequencies per organisation

Destigmatisation tactic	Goodleaf	Zootly	Taste of Cannabis	Bongalong	Overall summary%
Allying with other cannabis stakeholders (14)	12 *(86%)*	1 *(7%)*	1 *(7%)*	0	0,5%
Using stigma to attract (294)	218 *(74%)*	25 *(9%)*	48 *(16%)*	3 *(1%)*	10%
Total (308)	230 *(75%)*	26 *(8%)*	49 *(15%)*	3 *(1%)*	10%

6.7.3. Challenging tactics

Challenging methods accounted for a total of 12% of tactics across all categories. This included the use of rhetoric and resubjectification which accounted for approximately 12% and 0,4% of tactics overall, respectively. Goodleaf was predominant in its use of rhetoric tactics accounting for 83% of rhetoric tactics employed across the organisations, followed by Taste of Cannabis which accounted for 13%. Taste of Cannabis and Goodleaf had equal percentages (5%) of resubjectification tactics overall, while Zootly used resubjectification tactics the most, accounting for 38% of them. Resubjectification was significantly less popular, accounting for only 0,4% as opposed to rhetoric which formed 12% of tactics across all categories.

Table 6.3: Challenging tactics – frequencies per organisation

Destigmatisation tactic	Goodleaf	Zootly	Taste of Cannabis	Bongalong	Overall summary %
Rhetoric (357)	296 *(83%)*	13 *(4%)*	46 *(13%)*	2 *(1%)*	12%
Resubjectification (13)	5 *(38%)*	3 *(23%)*	5 *(38%)*	0	0,4%
Total (370)	301 *(81%)*	16 *(4%)*	51 *(14%)*	2 *(0,5%)*	12%

6.7.3. Infusing tactics

Infusing, the category of the most employed – and most extant – strategies, had 2 377 code assignments, forming nearly 80% of tactics used overall. The most popular Infusing strategy was the use of branding elements such as professionalism, mentions of the quality and effectiveness of products, green marketing, attractive product and packaging design, and store design. Branding accounted for nearly 40% of all codes categorised under Infusing. The next most common Infusing

strategy was the recontextualisation tactic of citing health benefits, comprising 18% of all tactics. Goodleaf employed branding tactics the most, accounting for 45% of them, while Taste of Cannabis posts formed 39%. Across all organisations, branding tactics accounted for 30% of all tactics employed. Recontextualisation tactics followed branding in popularity, accounting for 18% of tactics overall, as shown in the far-right column. The popularity of citing the health benefits of cannabis was evident, forming 98% of recontextualisation tactics, while citing economic and social benefits comprised only 1% and 0,7% respectively. Bongalong employed no resubjectification tactics, while Goodleaf employed 75% of them. Following in popularity was the tactic of mentioning third parties to lend credibility to destigmatisation communications, which formed 9% of tactics overall. Goodleaf employed this tactic the most, accounting for 97% of its posts. Also evident was the traction of depicting appealing foods in conjunction with cannabis, which comprised 4% of all tactics noted. Using humour in communications was noted 25 times overall (0,8%). Similarly, using statements that communicated transparency about cannabis products formed 0,9% of all destigmatisation tactics, while posts mentioning the safety of cannabis formed 0,4%. The tactic of associating cannabis with societal values such history, tradition or spirituality was also less popular, being employed 24 (0,8%) times overall. The use of vulnerable individuals such as children and senior citizens also showed low popularity, being used 20 times (0,6%) overall. Echoing the finding that Hiding tactics are unpopular, low frequencies of repudiation were noted in the data: loosening their association with cannabis through diluting was scant, forming only 0,1% of all tactics.

Table 6.4: Infusing tactics - frequencies per organisation

Destigmatisation tactic	Goodleaf	Zootly	Taste of Cannabis	Bongalong	Overall summary %
Branding (934)	420 *(45%)*	131 *(14%)*	361 *(39%)*	22 *(2%)*	30%
Recontextualisation (567): • Health benefits (557) • Economic benefits (6) • Societal benefits (4)	426 *(75%)*	16 *(3%)*	125 *(22%)*	0	18%
Repeated exposure (218)	154 *(71%)*	14 *(6%)*	46 *(21%)*	4 *(2%)*	7%
Credible 3rd party (274)	265 *(97%)*	6 *(2%)*	0	3 *(1%)*	9%
Humour (25)	21 *(86%)*	2 *(8%)*	1 *(4%)*	1 *(4%)*	0,8%

History/Tradition/Spirituality (24)	22 *(91%)*	1 *(4%)*	1 *(4%)*	0	0,8%
Awards and accolades (4)	3 *(75%)*	1 *(25%)*	0	0	0,01%
Safety (12)	12 *(100%)*	0	0	0	0,4%
Transparency (26)	9 *(35%)*	1 *(4%)*	16 *(61%)*	0	0,8%
Humour (25)	21 *(84%)*	2 *(8%)*	1 *(4%)*	1 *(4%)*	0,8%
Mentioning nature (5)	5 *(100%)*	0	0	0	0,1%
Piggybacking (31)	30 *(96%)*	1 *(3%)*	0	0	1%
CSR (20)	17 *(85%)*	1 *(5%)*	1 *(5%)*	1 *(5%)*	0,7%
Appealing/healthy foods or nutrition (119)	45 *(38%)*	6 *(5%)*	67 *(56%)*	1 *(1%)*	4%
Animals (24)	5 *(21%)*	3 *(13%)*	16 *(67%)*	0	0,8%
Children/senior citizens (20)	18 *(90%)*	2 *(10%)*	0	0	0,7%
Women's rights/issues (9)	5 *(56%)*	1 *(11%)*	3 *(33%)*	0	0,3%
Sports (22)	13 *(59%)*	2 *(9%)*	7 *(32%)*	0	0,7%
Localisation (15)	9 *(60%)*	5 *(33%)*	1 *(7%)*	0	0,5%
Diluting (3)	3 *(100%)*	0	0	0	0,1%
Total (2 377)	1 503 *(63%)*	195 *(8%)*	646 *(27%)*	33 *(1%)*	77%

6.8. Chapter summary

This chapter detailed the qualitative, thematic and quantitative, descriptive findings resulting from the content analysis of the Instagram posts of four post-legalisation cannabis brands in South Africa. It provided a brief description of the cannabis brands sampled, including Instagram metrics of interest. It presented a detailed account of every destigmatisation tactic identified in the content, and further broke down the frequencies thereof. Chapter 8 of this dissertation comprehensively discusses the insights resulting from these findings and proceeds to link these insights to the insights of the other two studies of this dissertation.

Chapter 7 "Exploring the influence of destigmatisation strategies in the Instagram posts of South African recreational cannabis brands on attitudes towards cannabis"

7.1. Introduction

There are insufficient guidelines for core-stigmatised organisations to refer to when planning their destigmatisation efforts. This study aimed to gain in-depth insights on how cannabis firms influence their audiences' attitudes through destigmatisation strategies used in their Instagram posts. In this chapter, the findings – and the means employed to reach them – are discussed. First, a brief theoretical background is presented before highlighting the significance of the study and reiterating its research question. A brief discussion of its methodology then is provided (a more detailed version of which was presented in Chapter 4); and the findings follow, in which a demographic description of the sample precedes the thematic findings.

7.2. Background

Some theory on stigma management reveals destigmatisation tactics including educating audiences; firms decoupling themselves from the stigmatising element (Devers et al, 2009); disguising their activities (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009); morality infusion, which entails using actions and narratives to align their industry with alternative values (Lashley & Pollock, 2020); or adjusting their practices to conform to generalised expectations (Helms & Patterson, 2014).

Consumers can frequently change how they evaluate organisations, and these judgments often have a moral basis. For instance, audiences may shift their evaluation from stigmatisation to acceptance or vice versa. These radical shifts in consumer evaluations can have a major impact on organisations, yet theory struggles to account for how they occur (Mitra & Hota, 2019). Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge regarding which destigmatisation tactics are most effective in convincing relevant audiences to invest their resources and provide support (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). Gaps in destigmatisation literature further increase when the stigma is

associated with negative perceptions of the actual goods being offered (Lashley & Pollock, 2020), such as the cannabis industry. One key method of reducing stigma is through influencing attitudes towards the stigmatised object (Link & Phelan, 2001). Schiffman and Kanuk (2006) discuss the tricomponent attitude model, which posits that attitudes consist of three main elements: cognition, which pertains to the held knowledge and beliefs about a particular object; affect, which relates to the feelings and emotions towards it; and conation, which refers to the actions and behaviours towards the object.

7.3. Significance

The value in this study lies in providing a consumer-focused view by exploring the influence of various destigmatisation strategies on their attitudes. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in providing insights about consumer attitudes in the context of stigmatised markets, and the managerial contribution in highlighting the most effective methods with which cannabis businesses can influence them. By identifying where the businesses' efforts and their influence on their audiences align or diverge, this study can enable cannabis businesses to aim for congruency and optimal results.

7.4. Research question

The research question this study investigated was as follows:

RQ (Qualitative): "*How do destigmatisation strategies in the Instagram posts of leading South African recreational cannabis brands influence attitudes towards cannabis?*"

Demographic description of sample

The sample for this study was predominantly female (68%), with the rest identifying as male. Their ages ranged from 22 to 57 years; and their population groups were Coloured (9%), Black (77%), White (9%) and Indian (5%). The demographic data of the 22 participants is presented in Table 7.1

below. Participants were interviewed with the guarantee of anonymity, as such they are identified by consecutive numbering.

Table 7.1: Sample demographics

Participant	Age	Race	Gender
1	30	Coloured	Female
2	25	Black	Female
3	26	Coloured	Female
4	27	Indian	Female
5	22	Black	Male
6	33	Black	Female
7	32	Black	Female
8	34	Black	Female
9	28	Black	Female
10	26	Black	Female
11	28	Black	Male
12	26	White	Male
13	32	Black	Female
14	41	Black	Female
15	31	Black	Male
16	37	White	Male
17	34	Black	Female
18	28	Black	Male
19	33	Black	Male
20	45	Black	Female
21	24	Black	Female
22	57	Black	Female

7.5. Thematic findings

As found in the preceding content analysis study, cannabis companies use various destigmatisation tactics, which form part of strategies that are classified into the categories of Affirming, Infusing, and Challenging. Per category, all the strategies and their tactics identified in the preceding content analysis study are discussed below regarding their influence on the various components of attitudes. The cognitive, affective and conative components of attitudes refer to

how the tactics influence the participants' knowledge and beliefs, feelings and emotions, and actions and behaviours, respectively.

Ultimately, 944 code assignments were made. A first glance at the findings reveal that the affective component was predominant; indicating that, overall, participants' feelings and emotions toward cannabis (32% of code assignments) were more influenced by the destigmatisation strategies than their knowledge and beliefs (24%) or actions (22%). The aim of this study was to obtain insights into the influence of destigmatisation tactics on attitudes towards cannabis. In order to accessibly present these insights, the strategies and their tactics are discussed below regarding their influence on the three components of attitudes and presented along with quotation excerpts from the interviews for evidential value.

7.5.1. Affirming category

The Affirming category consists of allying with other stigmatised organisations to form a unified voice and co-opting extant stigmatising labels to attract the attention of audiences. Regarding the former, participants were shown examples of Instagram posts that depicted the organisation's affiliation with cannabis activist organisations such as Fields of Green 4 All, filmmakers and cannabis food publications such as Bong Appetit, cannabis edibles companies such Munchies and cannabis cultivators such as Highlands Investments. Allying with other cannabis companies was reported to have minimal influence on knowledge and beliefs, while only one participant expressed a positive emotion and all others that it had no emotional effect. Most participants said the tactic would not move them to act or behave in any way either, with only 2 participants mentioning they would be inclined to do more research about the organisations, and 1 stating that it would move them towards pushing the cannabis industry further. Posts that explicitly used stigmatising labels and imagery included images of the stigmatised marijuana leaf in branding and communications, as well as using various stigmatised names for cannabis such as 'dope', 'kush', 'blunt', and 'dagga' to draw attention.

Table 7.2: Attitude influences of Affirming tactics

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Allying with other cannabis organisations	<u>Cognitive</u> "Yeah, I didn't know about them but I have come to know about so many people, or so many businesses, that are working together" (Participant 2) "I think certainly over a decade ago it certainly would have been a lot more informative, a lot more groundbreaking. I don't necessarily think that it adds anything to me because I've been following quite a bit of this from a legal standpoint, I guess it affirms, but it doesn't necessarily influence me" (Participant 19) <u>Affective</u> "Not at all. Not moved" (Participant 18) "The fact that companies are coming together is great... As individuals you won't get as much done, but when companies come together and they have the capital and the resources, then I think things can move along a bit faster than it would if it was just me and you, for example" (Participant 3) <u>Conative</u> "This motivates me... To still continue and keep pushing" (Participant 12) "I think I'm more curious. I would actually find out more about (the organisation) and why they even started and why they feel so strongly about it" (Participant 10) "I will personally maybe just research a little bit more" (Participant 2)
Using stigma to attract	<u>Cognitive</u> "What is the intention behind having the actual leaf picture? Because in and within itself just carries a certain stigma and whether or not it's on a very sophisticated looking facial product, if I'm seeing that leaf already, I'm thinking, 'ah, Zol' [stigmatised cannabis label]. From a branding perspective, it feels like it's counterproductive to what they would be trying to achieve. Because you can still tell me that it's Kentucky fried chicken without putting a chicken there, and I'll still buy it." (Participant 21) "So here for example, in my brain, when you took me here, I'm thinking 'This is cool. What is it? It's a skin cream, and actually I've been looking for a product that will help me'... But the moment I see that plant, my brain goes back to the negative. Outside of that leaf and that joint, I think it can be grafted into society as a normality" (Participant 21) "Yeah, I guess I'm familiar with all these words, so knowledge-wise nothing has changed. (Participant 7)

	"It's quite crazy how many different names there are. Yeah, interesting seeing all of them, obviously some have quite negative connotations, but when you see them all... almost makes it feel like. Seeing so many people calling it different names makes you feel like 'well, if there's so many names, then obviously many people are doing this and therefore it's good" (Participant 16) "I think it's more relatable, that's the first thing I feel when I see these words, like 'oh, funny', it kind of makes me giggle a bit and I feel... kind of entertained cause it's so relatable, you know, it's words I've used amongst my peers growing up. I think in a positive way it catches my eye. I think for someone who might have a negative connotation to these words, you know, it would still, you know, catch their eye" (Participant 1) <u>Affective</u> "Yeah, this one doesn't really change much either" (Participant 15) "I think that perhaps triggers an intrigue" (Participant 21) "I actually wanna laugh because as somebody who uses it myself and knows so many people within my community who use it as well. Like, these are our words... and I love when it's represented like this. You know, it's not something that we're trying to hide. It makes you feel good or like, it's almost like something that's like sneaky" (Participant 4) "I love it. I don't think we should now use other more acceptable words, you know... it is what it is, what you grew up hearing. I think just call it what it is. It makes it easier because now you want to try and change it. And in a way that might... I don't know if it's a good thing. I don't want to use other words than what we know it as" (Participant 3) "When you are looking at some of these words, it's words that bring back happy feelings, very happy memories and I certainly fully support the use of destigmatising the words and imagery around it as well" (Participant 19) "I find it more relatable because I know most of these names. It's cool. Because it's teaching us to call it what it is and also reminding us of the various names we've had to (use) to hide it or euphemise it" (Participant 17) "It's a 50/50 because some words will interlink very well with the veterans or people who've been consuming cannabis. But for people who want to try for the first time, it's safer to use words like 'herb' and all that. You know, usually when you associate it with madzinga, madekwana, dipatshe, nyaope [vernacular terms for 'drugs'] and all that" (Participant 11) "Some of the words just sound very violent. They're not appealing. If someone had to use blunt, it's talking about like a hardcore drug, more like a cocaine or something. The slang words used come across as being harsh. It sounds incriminating, yeah. I can go to jail because I am walking around with a blunt. The words aren't inviting or comforting. They make me feel violence" (Participant 10) "When I see such words the old me would be like 'this is negative'. Like, why are we blunting? Why are we blazing marijuana, just the name marijuana, like pot... I just see a group of people sitting mo khoneng [Setswana for 'on the corner'], blunting, blazing. You know what I mean?

	Like for example “skyf”. That's a cigarette in my mind and has a negative connotation, but because I'm more aware I know that it's not only negative” (Participant 13) <u>Conative</u> “This post to me seems more negative. I mean it's using negative words, but it wouldn't attract me. I feel like I wouldn’t want to be associated. Like I wouldn't want somebody to pass by and see my name on some ‘[participant name] liked this’. So that's what this post does for me. I wouldn't share it cause it's portraying cannabis in a negative light. I wouldn't want to be associated with that” (Participant 2)

7.5.2. Infusing category

The Infusing category consists of strategies such as recontextualisation, branding, diluting, piggybacking, and using corporate social responsibility. All the strategies and their tactics, identified in the preceding content analysis study, are discussed below regarding their influence on the various components of attitudes.

Recontextualisation

The recontextualisation strategy, which serves to reframe the industry to appeal to more widely accepted values, includes tactics such as highlighting the health, economic and social benefits of cannabis and the cannabis industry. Participants were shown example Instagram posts; the images and captions were discussed, as well as how they influence each component of their attitudes.

Health benefits influenced the knowledge of nearly all participants, who were not aware of at least one of the health benefits mentioned in the posts shown to them. Highlighting the health benefits of cannabis products for pregnant women, as well as cannabis’s role in the reduction of harmful substance abuse were indicated as particularly enlightening. This tactic was reported as influential on feelings and emotions by nearly 60% of participants. All but one emotion mentioned were positive and indicated feelings of safety, reduced shame, joy, hope, validation, and intrigue. The negative emotion reported was scepticism as a result of seeing too many varying health benefits. Actions influenced by this tactic included conducting more research, sharing posts or spreading the word, intentions to try out cannabis products, immediately following cannabis companies’

Instagram accounts, and even intentions to get involved in the industry with the goal of healing people.

Participants were also shown several posts indicating economic benefits such as job creation and entrepreneurship, tax income, and poverty alleviation for some minority groups. In one of the posts, cannabis was referred to as a 'hero crop' for the African continent's economy. Some participants noted that the economic benefits cited increased their knowledge of cannabis. This was credited for changing beliefs that cannabis was beneficial only for its psychoactive properties in the context of recreational consumption. This tactic had mixed reviews in terms of emotions, with only 10% of interviewees stating it influenced their feelings and the majority explicitly saying it changed nothing for them emotionally. Feelings mentioned included reassurance and hope, excitement about economic possibilities, and increased confidence in using cannabis. Just over 40% of participants indicated that this tactic could move them to act in various ways ranging in intensity, from doing further research, to sharing the posts with their networks, to possibly signing a petition for legalisation, to actively getting involved in the industry to address high unemployment rates or for personal financial reasons.

Social benefits of cannabis legalisation mentioned in the Instagram posts included a reduction of social crises such as opioid dependency in the US, as well as the pardoning and clearing of thousands of people with marijuana-related convictions in the US. All participants indicated their knowledge and beliefs were not affected, as they were all already aware of the social benefits of the cannabis industry. Just under 50% reported they felt emotions regarding social benefits, such as hope for social relief, and concern and frustration about the slowness of cannabis legalisation in South Africa. Some participants said they were influenced to pursue actions such as conducting more research to educate themselves further about social benefits or sharing their knowledge of social benefits with others.

Table 7.3: Attitude influences of recontextualisation

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Health benefits	Cognitive "I mean a majority of these I've certainly been aware of, but some of them have been quite informative. For example, I didn't know that it's good for breaking heroin addiction. Didn't know that women who are pregnant as well, for example, it's good to know that it has health benefits for that" (Participant 19) "...to be honest, I knew only some of the benefits. I didn't know the specific one that's on the screen right now. Addiction." (Participant 6) Affective "Hundred percent, it really does (affect) my feelings to be honest cause... the specific one that's on the screen now about addiction.. That's an intriguing one, actually" (Participant 6) "When it comes to something that's being banned or being restricted, we have to, like, give ourselves a reason to enjoy something or to feel shameless about something, and soon as we hear – like you said – if you see or you hear health benefits, you feel less shame" (Participant 4) "I don't necessarily believe everything that I see about it because it's like, okay, I wake up with a headache. Next thing I see a post that says CBD is great for headaches. I have joint pain, then 'CBD, great for joint pain!' like I think I need to try it for myself" (Participant 2) Conative "At some point in time, we have to go (abroad) and find out how they can assist us in starting our own thing. We need to get started with... more than anything, healing people through this product" (Participant 20) "I'm following now that, after you showed this... I went to Instagram and I opened. So now I'm following @foragoodleaf" (Participant 22) "You know the information where it says it can be used to treat depression, it can be a useful cancer treatment and all of these things. I would even try it myself" (Participant 18)
Economic benefits	Cognitive "For me it's... taking me away from just knowing it as something people get high on. Because all a person has ever known is that cannabis is used to get high or to get a good feeling. But you actually see here that it's far beyond just the human element, but it also helps to boost, you know, the economy and also being something that they're using to empower women" (Participant 10) "Yeah, it's something that I definitely didn't think about. I think a lot of us don't think things like this could potentially create jobs. I think we focus so much on the cannabis itself and where we use it with somebody else but it's such a good point to think about that. It's job creation, it's employment for a lot of people, it's business" (Participant 4)

	"It definitely changes my knowledge because I've never thought about the impact that it can have on the economy. I think it's because we know it is not a very expensive substance. But this, I feel like we can use this money in our economy, so it definitely gave me more knowledge about this, and I think even for some countries they might even need the money more than us you know." (Participant 8) <u>Affective</u> "Yeah, I feelings don't really change there" (Participant 15) "It's actually enhancing my confidence in using cannabis, because I can see that at least in different countries, it helps with different things" (Participant 22) "You know, it gives you a little bit of hope for people. I am an empath, so I think about people who would have lost their job or who are unemployed looking for something. It's very reassuring to think something as simple as cannabis and growing it and selling it in different ways can create jobs" (Participant 4) <u>Conative</u> "(This is) probably something I would share, especially when it's African and third world countries" (Participant 7) "Does it cause me to do something? I would like to start a business already, so by the time it's legalised I am there, you know?" (Participant 9) "At some point in time, we have to go (abroad) and find out how they can assist us in starting our own thing... You see, with this government, it's all for themselves. Nothing for the people. If I start a farm a garden, let's say... it will expand into certain hectares of land and (if) I'm in affiliation with Tanzania, Kenya and all those things. I (could) have 200 people on my payroll. So where can we get started with making our lives better?" (Participant 20)
Social benefits	<u>Cognitive</u> "Umm... No. These are things we know already" (Participant 19) <u>Affective</u> "I mean, imagine people that have been in prison several times just for carrying bud, you know? For years. You'll find someone really serving time for years just for carrying a small gram each. Really. That socially is not fair, and certain places in the world, people are really affected by the number of arrests, just for carrying... So, this helps" (Participant 14) "Let's say you have this field of cannabis, and you employ around 5200 people, and you give them a livelihood. You give them 4000 a month. That's a benefit to their families. So, I don't know what's taking so long. I don't know. It's long overdue... I'm concerned" (Participant 20)

	Conative "I think for me in my head (this is) maybe something I would then want to kind of look into and explore. Because as a country I do think that we are still very conservative even though we are leaning to being more westernised and all of that" (Participant 21) "I think we need to get to a point as people where we need to be open-minded about things, like we shouldn't be tunnel-visioned anymore. Let's do things differently, guys. There are opportunities. Like for example this whole cannabis thing is an opportunity to benefit people in different ways. So, let's be open to these things, so I'd definitely share with people" (Participant 13)

Branding

In the preceding content analysis study of this dissertation, branding-related strategies were found by far to be the most employed destigmatisation strategy by the cannabis businesses. In order to determine the effectiveness thereof, participants were shown a couple of Instagram posts depicting such strategies and were questioned about their influence on their knowledge and beliefs towards cannabis. Posts depicting attractive imagery such as calming images of nature, pets, or that depict professional photography; attractive and/or functional product design; and colours in branding, packing and communications that deviate from the typical colour combinations that have long been associated with marijuana (green, red, black, and yellow). Some posts depicted sleek and modern paraphernalia such as smoking pipes and bongs and grinders in gold, white and powder pink colours with creative structural designs, while others depicted attractive store designs and professional looking staff. The branding-related posts that had the most influence on the cognitive component of attitudes were those that involved attractive and/or innovative product design. The predominant sentiment was that they were previously unaware of how advanced the cannabis industry was in this regard. Some participants explained that the product design and 'anti old marijuana' colours used in packaging had the effect of normalising cannabis products, deviating from stigmatised perceptions. Some indicated that it made them believe the product is more credible. Actions mentioned in response were only to share the posts within their networks. Branding elements had a lot more influence on the affective component of attitudes than on the cognitive and conative components. With regards to emotions, most participants expressed that they were delighted and impressed with some of the attractive designs of cannabis products.

Table 7.4: Attitude influences of branding

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Attractive imagery	<u>Cognitive</u> "This doesn't change anything about my beliefs... It doesn't give me knowledge, no" (Participant 12) "You know, it also links it to the perception of wellness, which is in the post with the lady doing yoga. You know, we have to rely on a lot of connections between a brand and the human being or a brand and a specific category in the world. This immediately... changes your perception of it and links it to it being a good thing for wellness, so these are notes that you're taking out of it just from the image before you even come to reading the copy" (Participant 6) "I like how clean they are, the images, so that's quite premium I suppose. They're informative, they're light, they are normalising it by using those positive associations" (Participant 15) <u>Affective</u> "I definitely feel so calm and at peace. It's like you can hear the birds in this picture. And I love it. Aesthetics these days are back. So, if you can change something that was once seen as so bad is something that is now just tranquil and you know, relaxing. I love it" (Participant 3) "I wouldn't say (it changes) my knowledge or action, but definitely my feelings. Yeah. Yeah. I feel a bit... How would I put it? Inspired. You look at innovation and some of the work that they're doing. Yeah, it feels a bit inspirational" (Participant 15) <u>Conative</u> "Those are pretty interesting ones... I might share, I think these are some pretty good pictures" (Participant 16)
Innovative/functional product design	<u>Cognitive</u> "I didn't know that this is where cannabis was at in terms of technology and advancement" (Participant 8) "Well, I mean, this absolutely makes it feel like it's... Well, like it's trendy, it's mainstream. It's just, you know, an ordinary product, just like any other product you may be using, right? So yeah, it absolutely makes it feel like it's, you know, very normal and ordinary. I mean that second one with that sort of skin cream... It could be just like any other cream that contains other pharmaceuticals, you know, like a retinol cream or something. I mean it – it's looking very similar to that and... This definitely, you know, makes it feel like it's just... just another consumer product." (Participant 16)

	Affective "Is this a pre rolling machine? I want one of these. This is so cool!" (Participant 12) Conative "This speaks to a different type of market of people that are actually... more than your regular Joe down the road... at a joint with friends. But I think this is, for me... very elegant. It would definitely want to make me buy (cannabis products)" (Participant 8) "It looks very nice. Yeah, and it makes me kind of want to find that way to actually wanna go and find out where I can get that, you know?' (Participant 1) "From a design perspective, if my CBD skin care or my CBD pharmaceuticals have that kind of appeal then yeah, I'm more likely to purchase that, especially like Goodleaf, the way that they've branded" (Participant 4)
Colours different from 'old marijuana colours'	Cognitive "I think the move away from sort of the traditional, the weed colours, the tie dye, T-shirts etcetera is certainly slowly fading and opening up more avenues for a product relation that is not necessarily directly linked to the usual weed bugs that you you're used to" (Participant 19) "I think across the board this is well designed as well, I think that that speaks to... the colours, the wording... It gives them a more credible impression." (Participant 7) Affective "But looking at this, it's got such a calmer feel and it really shows that it's different that cannabis really comes in different forms, and we need to now think bigger than the typical norm of what ganja is (Participant 13) Conative "It even goes with the colours on my Insta. That's cool. I would definitely wanna share that" (Participant 1)

Localisation

Another Infusing strategy identified in Studies 1 and 2 was that of localisation, in which cannabis brands made efforts at benefiting a specific community to lessen the perception of them as outsiders. Posts indicating this strategy mostly included promoting events aimed at a particular community and were mostly encapsulated in the caption, rather than the image. The captions

promoted events using texts such as “We’re starting with this event in Cape Town. Joburg and Tshwane – fear not! We will be bringing it up to Gauteng next month”. Some were more broadly focused on the country: “It’s proudly made here in South Africa!”. This strategy was reported as not very influential on beliefs for most participants. Only two participants indicated it influenced the cognitive aspect of their attitudes by making them believe the cannabis industry was inclusive. In terms of actions, most participants referred to cannabis events, indicating they would attend and/or invite others to attend.

Table 7.5: Attitude influences of localisation

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Community events	Cognitive “I feel this picture is such a representation of everyone in the community because I've seen people, especially black people, say that they don't feel like they have a community in Cape Town because when you go out it's a lot of white people. So, this is great because now you know okay, it's not just aimed at one group of people. Everyone is welcome. They are including everyone not just in the event but in their home.” (Participant 3) Affective “Uh, I would have positive feelings towards it because it's including people. I would say localisation works. It's inclusive.” (Participant 2) Conative “I would go attend and I would urge people who are so against marijuana to actually go attend and listen to maybe other people speaking about its benefits... and to understand why some people actually use marijuana” (Participant 2) “I would definitely go to one of these. Yes, yes, I would definitely go to one of these. It doesn't feel... the invitation doesn't feel like it's closed off to a specific community of weed heads. Yeah, it feels open. It feels very welcoming” (Participant 21)

Piggybacking

The Infusing strategy of piggybacking involves stigmatised organisations partnering with non-stigmatised organisations in order to ‘piggyback’ on their good name. The external organisations, being non-stigmatised, are thought to provide a passage through which the stigmatised

organisation can build non-stigmatised associations. Example posts shown to participants depicted cannabis company, Goodleaf, partnering with coffee franchise Vida e Caffè to avail CBD sachets as a beverage additive, as well as their partnership with popular local Cape Town bakery, Jason's, to create CBD-infused baked goods. Another example was a partnership with some of South Africa's leading supermarkets, Checkers and Pick n Pay, in which the retailers stocked Goodleaf's CBD-infused, flavoured water. Cognitively, most participants were unaware that large retailers were stocking cannabis-related products, and some indicated that it made them perceive cannabis as more 'normal'. Affectively, participants expressed a reduction in guilt, comfort and trust, and fascination. Those who indicated behavioural influences spoke of a willingness to try cannabis products because of these partnerships.

Table 7.6: Attitude influences of piggybacking

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Partnership with non-stigmatised organisations	Cognitive "Yeah, I think what it does here is, as a consumer of these other brands, it's like, okay, I'm already buying from those. And if they're partnering with somebody like, you know, with Goodleaf even though it's CBD, it's kind of like... Well then if they're okay with it, then I, then I'm sure, you know, I can be okay with it" (Participant 1) "It kind of accredits it in a way because it's like okay, if they say it's okay, then it must be okay. They're not gonna sell rubbish, right? I'm like, okay, if Checkers is putting it here so openly, then surely it's okay. (Participant 12) Affective The clients are very conservative and if they say yes to backing cannabis as a concept as a whole, already that's a trust factor ticked" (Participant 21) "The innovation and the potential for innovation in cannabis marketing is really something that always fascinates me. Uh, you know, checked by what people can come up with like just everyday products that you would use like a croissant for example. I'm like whaaat?" (Participant 19) Conative "I think the partnerships matter, considering the actual client base and who they were trying to introduce it to... but I love this partnership. I think it's very creative. I think my gosh I wanna try some of this" (Participant 9)

Children and senior citizens

Minors and senior citizens are considered some of the most vulnerable individuals in society. Therefore, highlighting the safety of cannabis product use for these groups is an Infusing strategy used by cannabis companies to communicate that if cannabis products are safe for children and elders, they are safe for everyone. Fifty-five percent of the participants indicated that this tactic had an influence on their knowledge and beliefs about cannabis. Mostly, the cognitive influence was evident in enlightening individuals that cannabis products can be used by children with no negative effects. Children using cannabis products was one of the themes identified in the preceding content analysis study and, in this study, had the highest number of and strongest emotional responses of all tactics used. Predominantly negative, feelings mentioned by participants included high levels of scepticism, unease, worry, and confusion; using words such as "upset", "uncomfortable", "intense", "risky", and "not convinced". The small number (2) of participants who expressed positive emotions did so on the basis that it is used for medicinal purposes only and that cannabis is a 'natural' remedy as it is a plant. Even amongst participants who – in response to other strategies – held more positive attitudes towards cannabis use, reasons for the negative emotions were evidently influenced by stigmatised beliefs, such as cannabis impacting children's development; and heightened concern of using "this drug" for vulnerable minors. Some highlighted the issue of consent, in that children are not able to consent to their consumption of cannabis or the use of themselves in messages aimed at destigmatisation. Interestingly, a couple of participants initially expressed strong negative emotions towards this concept but, as they read an Instagram caption about a research study that proved cannabis beneficial to children, changed their tone to a more neutral or positive stance. One participant expressed an emphatic "No!" regarding cannabis use in minors, but ended their statement with "Okay, it's fine, they can use it because I see they achieved positive results" (Participant 22), after reading up on the research; alluding to the power of scientific research in destigmatisation. Participants who changed their response in this way also added that the use of cannabis for children must still be monitored closely, highlighting that there is still concern and scepticism regardless of their attitude change. The only reason given for a possible change in their attitudes towards this was that cannabis would have to be proven to have medicinal/health benefits for the

minors. Thus, the provision of more scientific research in this vein was mentioned multiple times as something that may make them feel more comfortable. This translated into the conative findings, in which most actions influenced by this tactic were to conduct more research in the participants' personal capacity in order to (in)validate claims made by the cannabis companies. One participant explained that she may be moved to administer certain cannabis products to her child after considering it a natural plant that could ease sleep issues. Interestingly, when attitudes were negative regarding children, cannabis was referred to as 'a drug'; and when they were positive, the phrasing changed to the word 'plant', or 'medicine'. In addition, negative attitudes were usually accompanied by what were clearly stigma-informed visualisations, such as "a 5-year-old holding a joint". Attitudes were starkly different with regards to senior citizens. The similarity was that it would have to benefit their health to elicit favourable responses, but participants expressed a concern for senior citizens struggling with ailments for which conventional pharmaceutical interventions had not resolved. The main sentiment was that cannabis may be a more effective, natural alternative for geriatric health problems, the predominant emotions were a sense of comfort as well as intrigue, and actions mostly indicated recommending or giving cannabis products to their elder family members and networks.

Table 7.7: Attitude influences of using children and senior citizens

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Children	<u>Cognitive</u> "Uh, this changed my knowledge as I never knew that young children are able to indulge in cannabis without any heavy side effects" (Participant 5) "Yes, yes, yes to everything. I agree with everything. The children, babies. It's therapy, you know, because cannabis is natural. It's nature. I mean... we shouldn't frown against certain treatment like this if it's been researched (Participant 14) "This creates new knowledge because in all my years I've never known kids or newborns to be a suitable group for consumption. However, what I don't see is maybe scientific information of the benefit. So, I'm questioning this and then now I'm asking the question are we taking it too far?" (Participant 17) "It certainly surprised me. I mean, I think it's when it comes to the child... that's the information that I certainly would not have known or thought about at all and it certainly piques my interest in the sense that, look, if they're saying it's safe for children

	and there's scientific evidence backing that up as well when it comes to sort of the therapeutic benefits" (Participant 19) "Yeah, I think this one I have mixed feelings about. So, on the one hand, I think that it can destigmatise it, because if the research has been done and somebody has said yes, it's safe for children, it destigmatises it completely because (it's) something that we've been made to believe is absolutely not for a minor... Somebody who's a teenager, let alone a child" (Participant 4) They're still kids, they still need to be monitored. Then you know when you are old, you can in your small room lounge, host your friends. You have a cannabis party there, you smoke joints, you shake like being over alcohol, what you call beer or something. But it's different with young kids. They need to get at a certain level. Their mind has to grow to a certain diaphragm or diameter to develop for them to be able to use and understand why you use things like this (Participant 20) "No with kids! What is that they wanted to achieve when they're using cannabis on a newborn baby? If they say it was a therapy, what type of a therapy? What was this therapy trial for? What were they trying to cure? Let's read there. [reads study report in IG caption] … Okay, no, I hear. Yeah. No, it's fine. It makes sense. Yeah, they've achieved what they wanted to achieve and positively so yeah, they can use it. It has worked because they've achieved positive results, but still when it comes to newborns and small kids, I think they need to be monitored closely" (Participant 22) "Hmm. Okay, so I'm a bit like 'whuuu!' This is very intense, you know, seeing a child utilising this product. But then again, what if this child has a disease that cannabis can assist in curing? But my first thought, I'm like mara [Zulu for 'but'] so innocent, how can they make a little baby utilise cannabis? But we won't know until... So, for example you showed me that trial. I don't know what the outcome of the trial is... [reads caption] Okay so his parents were procedurally wanting to do everything they could to help him. Okay I see it says the son is doing fantastically well... So, there is something there, but for me personally it's not something I would do for my child. I feel like they must be a little bit older. But yeah, if (the evidence) is there, it's there. It's just I think if I hear more stories like this, then I may be more inclined to be open" (Participant 13) <u>Affective</u> "So, I think that in some sense CBD has its place where children whether we figured out one place it is. Umm, but I think that a post like this doesn't completely convince me... about its efficacy in children unless adequate studies have been done (Participant 4) "This is crucial. Kids are a crucial demographic. Obviously, there's concern... but if the work has been done to destigmatise it and set it up as just a plant that can help with calming children... It's okay. It does great in terms of destigmatising because... if you're giving it to a child then it isn't that risky in terms of... If it's legal and it's just a plant, I think that's what I'm trying to like.... indoctrinate my brain to think. Yeah, it's just a plant and has good health benefits and you're not having a 5-year-old holding a joint" (Participant 21) "I would have to say I don't know how I feel about using children, mainly because I feel like when you are being used in a campaign, at least you should be able to give consent. And I don't know how the children will" (Participant 3)

	"I mean, I'm like, upset. Why you involving kids into this? It makes me uncomfortable... How does it help them? What does it do to your system? Does she become dependent on it over time? What are the side effects? Because I feel like children are still developing, many things have yet to be regulated in their body... formed or developed so it's a no for me... Leave the kids out of this. First of all, they don't even understand what that is. Secondly, for me, I feel like I would look at the parent and feel like they are irresponsible. Maybe I'd have to further understand why you would give it to a child, but in the current moment, with the knowledge that I have, obviously I don't have any knowledge regarding children and cannabis. I'm just against it" (Participant 10) "Yeah, right now I'm confused. Like I'm worried... because I'm not like there's no full scope on what's happening. Like, the child... is it just to drive that... it can be used by anyone? Are they saying that babies can also use it? Yoh, yoh, yoh I'm worried. I am really worried because I would think that even with its legalisation, it would be for 18 and above, you know, and if you're giving to a child, I don't know, I really don't know about kids consuming this drug" (Participant 9) "But also knowing what I know about it. I think that you need to properly back it up with the research to convince people" (Participant 4) "Very uneasy. Because it's been stigmatised for so long as something that's bad and all this research is new. So. I think we've been phasing it in bit by bit. So, to just push it to kids so quickly... like why would kids need it? I mean if we were talking about all these mental health benefits and just health benefits in general, like... what's happening with kids that they would need it?" (Participant 1) "It's a bit unfair. It's quite upsetting to do trials on babies because they cannot even consent to that. You know, so should something happen to them, their parents are liable for their health. Adults, that's okay because it would have been their choice, you know. But for children? I just... no, man. That's a bit too much. That's a bit too much for children" (Participant 18) "We are walking into unchartered territories. So the feelings, actions and knowledge about it, because the knowledge about it, what I've heard, and what I've read from papers also from the NHS, which is the National Health Service of Great Britain when it comes to children and some doctors don't want to give kids cannabis or anything related to it until they are 25, usually, so (they) could be fully developed, however the good side of it, we have also seen us other species, in some case studies where they've given some children who were born with epilepsy... CBD or THC, they come out after three years after that the epilepsy stops happening and many actually carry on a normal life. So yeah, me, I'm going 50/50 with this one" (Participant 11) "So, I have to be honest, like the first thought with this kid is like 'oh, are these irresponsible parents?' But then the second one which included research etcetera is a lot more... convincing, I guess, or is definitely new knowledge and makes me think okay, maybe that parent in the first one isn't so irresponsible" (Participant 16) "Okay this is an interesting one because I know that there's major controversy and arguments against... 'Oh, should children be allowed with CBD products? What are the doses?' It needs to actually be stringently looked at. I personally feel as if it is acceptable if a child with epilepsy was having, you know, 6 to 7, 8 seizures a day and he or she

	needs CBD oil. Who's to say you can't put that CBD oil in a little chocolate? So that's where I'm coming from. And I'm a dad myself. My daughter's grown up around with cannabis all around her and I'm educating her (that) this is natural medicine... There's a major responsibility that needs to be adhered to this, but approached in the right manner" (Participant 12) "Jeez, I think on children it's a bit hectic. You know, I wouldn't associate cannabis and kids. Because for me it's like, what could they possibly be suffering from in order to have this? Because a child can just enjoy a normal donut. You know why? Why does it have to have cannabis? I mean, if there were doing it for kids that have mood swings or anxiety, that maybe I could understand, but just a random child having a donut with cannabis, that I don't get. But I also understand what they're saying is that it's so safe that you can do that. But then how safe is it in the long run for a child?" (Participant 8) <u>Conative</u> "In my knowledge right now concerning kids and marijuana... Yeah, I don't know what happens. I will do my research" (Participant 9) This I would want to see more facts. Because it's still all very new and this is the quiet this statement is a bit farfetched. I would want to read more about this, like right now I actually want to read more about this because I haven't seen those before" (Participant 2) "I wouldn't trust them as my only source because this is the first time hearing of it. So, I would want to get proper information about it, not necessarily because I wanna try it on my newborn or anything, but just I just want to know if this is for real or if it's just... far-fetched marketing" (Participant 12) "I would have to do my own research on it, you know... That other post about a newborn baby... maybe they're sick. If it's for medicinal... go for it... I'm glad that they can help that baby. But in my knowledge right now concerning kids and marijuana... I don't know. I will do my research" (Participant 9) "I think that's what I'm trying to... indoctrinate my brain to think: It's just a plant, right? And has good health benefits and you're not having a 5-year-old holding a joint. Then I think in that sense it's very interesting and I would probably consider getting my baby girl high. I don't mind. So that they can sleep and not cry a lot. I don't mind" (Participant 21) "If I knew someone who had a child who was suffering with some kind of behavioural issues. I would probably recommend" (Participant 7) "The outcome (would be determined) by me reading the studies. But for me personally it's not something I would do for my child" (Participant 13)
Senior citizens	<u>Cognitive</u> "The stigma is the young person who's using it... But it's an older couple. It portrays it in a different light. The general person who hasn't been convinced yet about using

	cannabis will see this and be like 'oh, okay, it's a couple in their mid-age using this', and it makes it easier to accept" (Participant 4) "But in terms of older people for sure, because they just have a lot going on with life. You know, your muscles are not working. This is not working, that's not working, and you just get to a point where I think when you get to a certain age, nothing works because it's literally old age. So, if you can have something that will alleviate all the pain, you know, then then let it be so, you know, give your gran cannabis and it's all good for me. That makes perfect sense. It's aligned with what I understand of cannabis" (Participant 8) "The fact that they're older, it's kind of like. In a way that's positive, you know, looking up to an older generation that's still standing for something like this" (Participant 1) <u>Affective</u> "I guess it paints a very interesting picture because they're an old couple chilling in their pyjamas. Really, it's not like a 20-something-year-old sitting in the kitchen getting stoned. But yeah, yeah, you know I guess I'd want to know why they have it. Perhaps they would then trigger the perception change, but right now I'm just like, okay, this is interesting" (Participant 21) "It definitely makes me happy to see this because I feel like most of the negative attitudes (come) from the older people. It's so funny because when they were younger, most of them smoked this as well. But they made it out to be a bad experience, like, 'Stay away from that, it's bad for you!' I like how older people are changing, because even my gran now her mindset has changed so much about cannabis as a whole. So, this makes me happy (Participant 3) <u>Conative</u> "In terms of the older folk, I mean... This makes me want to, you know, say to say to elderly relatives... Hey, you should be using this" (Participant 16) "I would probably recommend for (old) people who are in pain as well" (Participant 7)

Repeated exposure

The content analysis study of this dissertation identified multiple instances of repeated exposure in the Instagram accounts of cannabis businesses. These aimed to create a sense of normalisation by desensitising audiences towards cannabis and included community-friendly events and depictions of its incorporation into daily activities. Participants saw cannabis-infused baked goods such as donuts and macarons, coffees, smoothies and flavoured waters. They were also shown cannabis infused skin products (facewash, moisturisers and sunscreens), vaginal serums, sports and pet products. Majority of the posts' images positioned a cannabis product amongst settings

depicting daily routines such as exercise or a study or work desk with coffee, books and devices. In the caption texts, phrases such as “a daily dose”, “safe to use in the office”, “perfect bedtime snack”, “incorporate into your daily health and wellness routine”, and “say hello to your daily glow” highlighted cannabis products as items that can be used every day. Another method noted was the mention of the increasing global changes towards cannabis, such as highlighting its growing legalisation and societal acceptance in other countries in an attempt to make audiences perceive it as more normalised. There was a general belief among participants that if one hears something often enough, they start to believe it. Thus, they believed repeated exposure to positive communications about cannabis had the potential to influence their attitudes. Influences on knowledge included some participants previously having been unaware of the various uses depicted in the examples, having previously associated cannabis with smoking or oils. Feelings resulting from the knowledge gained typically showed an increased level of acceptance or curiosity, safety and openness in the events environment, and even a frustration with the slowness of cannabis industry legalisation; and resulting actions were indicated as attending and inviting people to events with the aim of education, the willingness to try and recommend some cannabis products, and conducting research about cannabis to find out more.

Table 7.8: Attitude influences of repeated exposure

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Daily incorporation	<u>Cognitive</u> “You see the thing with repetition is that if something is repeated often enough, you start believing it. So yes, it would influence some other aspect of knowledge or feelings” (Participant 17) “If I think of the person who maybe had their doubts about it, I think that repeat exposure, just showing you how much of it is out there, how many brands they are, how many different types of products there are, would change your mind about cannabis itself” (Participant 4) “It adds knowledge because it's not your typical ‘space cookie’ that we are used to. I'm used to your common edibles, you know. What you're showing now looks scrumptious. And then it doesn't mean that I am spiked or anything.” (Participant 9) “It adds information because something like skin care product or something like that. I didn't know that they had that” (Participant 9)

	"I love this. I did not know about this, so I'm actually curious to read up more about this. I think we are very sex-positive which is great, but we should also address how women struggle with certain things. We have a lot of hormones, emotions and it's not that easy to just 'get up and go'. So, this is this is nice and now people can actually feel like it's normal to not have a high all the time" (Participant 3) "I didn't know that they even made cannabis infused lube!" (Participant 17) "I am drawn to it because I am constantly learning about new ways to use it. I mean with the other post... I didn't think that you could use like a CBD product as lubrication" (Participant 4) <u>Affective</u> "It does change how I feel towards it, because even now, personally I first (thought) it's CBD oil. Then you see chocolate, then you see tea then like it's being put in everything and that repeated exposure... It does make me have a more positive attitude towards it, like, okay, this is fine. I mean, if they're putting it literally everywhere and everything, then it must be" (Participant 1) "Yeah, I mean, again, this is making me feel like... it's just another consumer brand that shouldn't have any stigma at all, quite frankly. And also, you get this feeling that there's so many, many uses that it's like, why hasn't this been legal for longer?" (Participant 16) "I'm a big fan of innovation, so this type of thing will always influence me. You put it in your coffee? And I love coffee as well. So yeah, this for me would be a big one, definitely towards desensitising it and normalising it" (Participant 15) "I love the fact that they are incorporating it into food because it means your day-to-day life doesn't have to be for example you smoking a blunt" (Participant 10) <u>Conative</u> "I think people associate with just smoking and that's something that's not necessarily attractive to everyone. I think the more that you're able to show the wide spectrum of products that you can infuse cannabis into, sort of like everyday usage products, is something that really does is very strong message and a lot of my friends for example, have been persuaded is to try a lot more edible stuff than just smoking" (Participant 19) "Hundred and ten percent, I'm in. Bona [Setswana for 'look'] I would have it right now. I actually went to Clarence with my mom, and we went to this one store called Neked. The entire store is about drinking tea, cannabis infused tea, and pastries and all of that stuff. So, I am all for it. All for it. All for it and it tastes good too" (Participant 13) "What you're showing now looks scrumptious, you know, and then it doesn't mean that I am spiked or anything." So that's a good thing. And then I actually wanna try these things they" (Participant 9) "I love this. I did not know about this, so I'm actually curious not to read up more about this" (Participant 3)

Community-friendly events	Cognitive "I think all I'm getting from this is that it's clearly a bigger field or a bigger spectrum than what I thought. I didn't know people take it so to heart and are pushing it. So, reading this for me is like 'oh, there are people that are all about this and they are out there to normalise it'. It's the first time I see this kind of movement of cannabis (and that) they put it as a brand. Yeah, it's a lot broader than what I thought" (Participant 8) Affective "It does influence in a very good way... makes me more curious" (Participant 20) "It gives rise to... being able to openly ask questions because you know you are in a safe space" (Participant 4) Conative "Yes, in the sense that would go attend and I would urge people who are so against marijuana to attend and listen to maybe other people speaking (about) its benefits... and to understand why some people actually use marijuana" (Participant 5) "I would also go for me to also find factual information instead of just being spoon fed by (the) media" (Participant 10) "It gives rise to actually attending the event and putting yourself in a space where you find that community that buys into the notion of cannabis and being able to openly ask questions" (Participant 3) "For me, no, it would not impact me in any way. It won't make me go 'Oh, yes. We finally made it. You know, I've been struggling with this. I've been talking to people. No one has been listening to me, you know. Now it's finally happening'. No, no, I have no real attachment to it in that manner" (Participant 8)

Diluting

Some posts showed the intention of deemphasising cannabis by positioning it as part of a larger offering. This strategy is aimed at minimising organisational stigma by diluting or 'loosening' their association with cannabis; straddling both stigmatised and non-stigmatised categories. Participants were shown examples of posts offering cannabis products along with nutrition and fitness, as well as meditation and general mind and body wellness. Most participants indicated that diluting had no influence on the cognitive aspect of their attitudes. Those whose beliefs it did influence reported differing effects, such as a change in their perception of cannabis users from

lazy to active individuals, and in their perception of cannabis to being a healthy and 'normal' product. Feelings were also diverse, with participants mentioning emotions such as "calm", "comfortable", "curious", and "impressed". Interestingly, participants who expressed negative emotions explained that the emphasis on cannabis was too subtle, that it felt 'misleading', that cannabis had no authentic correlation to the non-stigmatised categories, and that cannabis should be shown for what it is. Few participants indicated that it would cause them to act by exploring the offering, as well as sharing the posts with their networks.

Table 7.9: Attitude influences of diluting

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Cannabis as part of wellness offerings	<u>Cognitive</u> "I get the feeling that, essentially, users of this brand are also living a healthy life that goes beyond just the use of their product" (Participant 16) "It is a good one because the minute you put something in the gym then already people will change their mindset to say, okay, if you can advertise at virgin active, this means cannabis is healthy, you see. Unlike putting it in a club" (Participant 22) "If I understand, they are promoting it in the gym and giving more education on the benefits... and that is showing how positive cannabis is when you are exercising and being active. Yeah, definitely it, it has its benefits" (Participant 14) <u>Affective</u> "It did not have any effect on me. I've never done the meditation bit and I don't really care about that. I just want my CBD" (Participant 2) "I think it's a different way of looking at it and normalising it actually through yoga. So yeah, I'm quite impressed" (Participant 15) "This brings like a calming effect. So, looking at this, I'm like, it's perfectly okay. It's bigger than just the consumption... It's a spiritual thing" (Participant 13) "I would want to feel like that. Like, who does not want to feel relaxed, meditated, yoga, filled, you know. Why wouldn't you want that? And everyone needs to have a different outlet of some sort, whether it's prayer... clubbing, alcohol, cigarettes, whether its weed, whether its yoga" (Participant 8) "I'm curious how in do you infuse it in the with exercise because for me particularly it relaxes my nerves" (Participant 20) "I'm just, you know, I see how they subtly touching upon the CBD. I mean it's a nice post. It's just I feel as if it's a bit too subtle" (Participant 12)

	This is one of those where I think it has the potential to mislead people. I think that, certainly for die-hard users, there's literally no correlation between being a Zen yoga person and the good vibes from weed and the correlation to, you know, just the use of the cannabis products... In reality people like just chilling out and just, you know, maxing out on the sofa or something like that. I don't necessarily think it encourages you to go out there and live your best Pilates yoga life" (Participant 19) "But it defeats the purpose of it all, because it's a core instrument... Cause if you are trying to remove it then you're kind of, well in my opinion, misleading people" (Participant 11) <u>Conative</u> "Linking it to Wellness and to good things and keeping your body in check... so you know the consumer take-out here is, you know, cannabis is not bad for your health, it's actually good for your health then yes. Definitely changes my feelings about it. Definitely makes me want to, you know, dive into it to be honest" (Participant 6) "Yes, yes. So, like if I did yoga every day and I love the way the room looks. For instance, yeah, I would definitely share that" (Participant 1)

Third party

Some cannabis destigmatisation posts depicted the use of a third party to either spread or support their intended message. The third-party posts mentioned or tagged credible individuals such as health professionals, scientists and academics; and well-known health entities such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the National Health Service (NHS). Other organisations mentioned included the United Nations (UN) and the National Football League (NFL). Many posts cited tertiary institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and other universities. These posts typically showed these organisations to be in support of cannabis as a medicinal resource or elaborated on cannabis research conducted by these institutions. Some posts mentioned specific governments and legal entities, such as Zimbabwean ministers, South Africa's Constitutional Court and its Department of Justice, and showing their move towards cannabis legalisation. Other third parties used were celebrities and influencers. Although they may not always be credible, the large followings and loyal fan bases of these individuals provide potential for influence. Celebrities mentioned openly admitted to their use of cannabis and association with the industry and touted the benefits thereof. They included sports legends such

as Mike Tyson, Al Harrington and Ricky Williams – who reportedly left the NFL league in order to freely consume cannabis after being suspended for its use on multiple occasions; musicians such as Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Bob Dylan and Snoop Dogg; actors such as Whoopi Goldberg, Jessica Alba and Jessie Williams, as well as other influential figures such as Elon Musk. Participants were asked about the use of third parties and its effect on their attitudes. Overall, the use of credible organisations had a much stronger influence on attitudes than the use of celebrities and influencers. The latter elicited more feelings of scepticism, where participants expressed little trust in celebrities and influencers given that they receive financial compensation for many of their communications. Only 3 participants cited positive emotions including trust, comfort with using cannabis, and a feeling of relatability to the celebrities. Cognitive findings revealed that this tactic did not add much valuable knowledge of cannabis for the participants. Where it did influence beliefs, the change was from a perception of users as 'lazy', to believing that cannabis improves one's life, with one participant expressing a belief that it enhances sports performance as a result of seeing a prominent sports figure endorsing it. This tactic also had little influence on behaviours, with one participant indicating the tactic would influence them to try cannabis products that their idols promote, and another that they would share such posts within their networks. Mentioning credible institutions

Table 7.10: Attitude influences of using third parties

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Celebrities and influencers	<u>Cognitive</u> "Yeah, I'm not the person that can be moved via a big name or a celebrity, so it doesn't affect me, but I understand why you would use somebody who has that clout" (Participant 6) "Uh, I'm not moved by celebrities. They don't move me, these people. I feel like they just get paid to promote these things" (Participant 11) "For me, I'm generally not super influenced by people like this. I'm more influenced by those previous posts than... the endorsement for me is like... I don't believe it. They could just be getting paid to say this and don't necessarily believe it themselves" (Participant 16) "It will show very well that, even though they still take it, they're still, you know, winners... And it proves very well it will delete a lot of stigmatisations... showing that

	the marijuana doesn't make you lazy, it actually improves you... You know, can actually be a bit of a game changer. That's why in America they let it slide because they really saw the benefit for it in sports" (Participant 9) <u>Affective</u> "Definitely makes you feel like it's okay to have it as well. We've seen so many pictures of Rihanna smoking and, you know, it's just like if she if she does it as a woman, why not be that open about it" (Participant 4) "It will definitely move me. When I look at how Seth Rogen is approaching this whole thing on his social media. I love it. It makes them feel more relatable. Sometimes we put celebrities and influencers on a pedestal, and this just makes them feel like... you can be my neighbour" (Participant 3) "I don't think that influencer marketing is always authentic or believable. Let's just put it out there that I think it sometimes reads as gimmicky because a lot of these people are just doing it for whatever money they'll get from that... it loses (credibility) because people are always chasing likes and tweets etc." (Participant 19) "Using celebrities... Obviously as humans for some reason when your favourite influencer's using something, there's a trust that gets built on that. So, I think them actually finding certain celebrities or certain role models, it will build that trust in people actually even trying out cannabis product" (Participant 10) <u>Conative</u> "It's expanded even more because there's so many influencers, content creators who are very widely followed and their opinions are trusted. For me personally, when I really wanted to try Goodleaf was when Yoliswa [South African influencer] had posted about, you know, the vape pens. And I was sold on that. So that just shows you the power of it is somebody whose opinion you trust" (Participant 4) "It may move me to go ahead and share what they're posting and what they're saying" (Participant 1)
Renowned organisations and/or professionals	<u>Cognitive</u> "Everything that's put out there that's drug related needs to have some kind of big company in order to prove credibility. Whether they are right, whether they are wrong, we will never know because we're not doctors, we're not scientists, you know, we're just gonna believe what we've been told - it's either you take it or you don't. You know, some people haven't been vaccinated because I think they're gonna die, you know, like Bill Gates is trying to kill Africa. Some of us did it because we were told by WHO" (Participant 8) "But if the World Health Organisation says... this is actually good... it really does give credibility. So, it's not just me thinking that I would want to try this because my favourite celebrity did it" (Participant 9) <u>Affective</u>

	"If for example Goodleaf said cannabis after work doesn't affect productivity, I might have questions but... We trust researchers. If they say, 'according to my findings', then it's your finding and we just have to go with it" (Participant 9) "(It influences) my feelings. Definitely, because you're getting a stamp of approval from a global organisation, an organisation that is known, trusted and believed in" (Participant 6) "I guess the cynical person on the street who doesn't have a very good view of the World Health Organisation because of the pandemic... You know, your conspiracy theorists, this wouldn't necessarily work on them. They'd be like, how is the World Health Organisation making money out of this?" (Participant 16) "Some of these organisations they are not trustworthy themselves. I don't think about them at all. They have got their own agendas" (Participant 18) "That WHO and the UN... Generally, those Westerners are usually very biased institutions. So, with CBD, economical wise, the Western world will usually have that advantage to have a jumpstart on it. It might sound good on paper, but it might be a very bad thing for the developing world... How are people from the corporate social side gonna be able to put this stuff to the market without getting bullied out by big corporations? It's a very delicate and sensitive situation. But I don't take them serious. I'd rather listen to my doctor in Africa cause we are the best" (Participant 11) "We all want a stamp of approval on something, especially when it's a big governing body institution or those big names in healthcare because cannabis has so much to do with health and, you know, it's a drug. That stamp of approval reaffirms us. It makes us feel like, okay, if you know the WHO said it's okay, then it definitely is. It's been checked it's been approved by a big governing body... those are the kind of players in the game that make the decisions that say whether something is safe or reliable, it's kind of like consulting the manual" (Participant 4) <u>Conative</u> "I would not be immediately persuaded to do something. I'm a very curious person, so once I read that I will go and do my own research just to make sure that whatever they're speaking is actually factual and not just for any marketing scheme" (Participant 5) And the reason why this one is specific would, uh, urge me to make some sort of action or feel away about is because it comes from the World Health Organisation... This would actually urge me to take more action or be more public about marijuana. (Participant 15) "I think is quite positive and definitely is influential in in terms of sharing this with people like 'Look, even the World Health Organisation says that the likelihood of maybe becoming a drug addict because of using CBD is, you know, very, very low" (Participant 16)

Corporate social responsibility

The use of CSR initiatives was identified as a common destigmatisation strategy for core-stigmatised organisations in the systematic literature review study of this dissertation. It was, however, not popular among the cannabis businesses investigated, as shown in the antecedent content analysis study. While asked about their influence on their attitudes, participants were shown the few posts in which cannabis businesses supported various social causes such as youth and struggling creatives, women empowerment, coronavirus relief charities and racial inequalities. This had the potential to positively impact attitudes, however participants mostly required the initiative to be relevant to the society in which they operate, matter to them personally, or to be authentic to cannabis itself. It is important to note that, if not authentic, it could do further damage to the image of these stigmatised entities. The use of CSR was reported to positively influence some participants' beliefs about the cannabis companies. Favourable feelings mentioned spoke of 'relatability' and 'positivity', while negative emotions centred around scepticism of the authenticity of the CSR, as well as whether they are taking enough action to enact positive, relevant, impactful social change.

Table 7.11: Attitude influences of CSR

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
CSR posts	<u>Cognitive</u> "It draws attention to those companies because if I were to maybe Google something about June 16 and then there's a CBD company talking about it then I know that, okay so you are on our side. We are building a community together. Unlike thinking that they are just there to just kill our children. Because I don't think any tobacco or alcohol company would raise awareness or talk about such social ills" (Participant 21) "It's awesome. I mean, any major organisation should definitely give back. And also looking at people who may not even be pro-cannabis... but they wanna help people. So it does attract those that wanna help. You know, and not only those that are into cannabis. So I think it reaches out to a lot more than just that audience" (Participant 1) "It is a company at the end of the day, and any company that wants to be recognised in society has to have some kind of social responsibility. And so, for me it makes sense that look, if we can create cannabis farms and create employment, then things are (done) the right way. They've got the right protocol, they've got the right standards, they've got the right safety, and everything has been thoroughly researched. All those things that you need to put it into a company (have) been applied" (Participant 8)

	"I feel like there are other CSR initiatives they can choose to jump onto. Like specifically here in South Africa, like fetal alcohol syndrome. They should shine a light on that. It doesn't really change much without linking it to the correct CSR initiative. I'm just like, okay everyone's talking about (Youth Day) because it's June 16... But what about cannabis brands supporting or creating awareness around, you know, supporting cannabis growers in Africa? One hundred percent there you've got like a direct link. Relevancy is key in this one" (Participant 6) <u>Affective</u> "Seeing how it can be a helping hand to those who are in need... It being involved in that for me brings it to a better light, it removes it more from the negativeness that it carries and more towards the positivity because now it's impacting lives outside of a person having to consume it. It's not a matter of 'You need to then consume it, and then they'll do something'. It's more of 'We are beyond just the cannabis. We also care about the lives of people outside of the consumption of it" (Participant 10) "I think it makes a brand a lot more relatable and accessible to post about things that are other than their brand" (Participant 4) "That makes me feel good, because now they're not just pushing their agenda to get it legalised, but they also focusing on other aspects of our communities that also need attention. Which I think is good because you're not just making it about yourself and your cause, you're actually reaching out and doing something for someone else" (Participant 3) "It would influence my feelings if they took it a step further, especially in their content to advocate. What's happening now is gentrification. Whereas many black people are behind bars now, the whites are opening up the market for themselves to profit" (Participant 17) "I honestly believe CSR is not a social media post. I'd find it more relatable if they said 'We have funded 10 cancer patients' or something... I find that missing in a lot of brands on social media, including what this one says. It commemorates Youth Day, that's nothing. But 'training rural start-ups part of our CSR for the youth this year'. That for me is CSR. A post for me is not CSR" (Participant 17) <u>Conative</u> "If it's linked to what they're doing, I would be like 'guys, join onto their bandwagon'. Talk about it, share the post and spread this information far and wide" (Participant 6) "Corporate social responsibility just makes me have a better attitude towards the company, not necessarily cannabis use, so I would support the company for its corporate social responsibility, but not necessarily for the cannabis" (Participant 2)

7.5.3. Challenging category

This category's strategies involve challenging stigmatisers to reassess their stigmatising beliefs. The Challenging strategies employed by cannabis brands in the antecedent content analysis study included resubjectification and rhetoric.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric involves deliberate use of persuasive language to construct incongruence among attributes of the stigmatised object and dominant institutional logics. Examples include education using scientific facts and figures in order to educate stakeholders or to discredit existing logics; depictions of lobbying and activism; and the use of highly impactful and emotive language in communications to either 'attack' stigmatisers or appeal to the emotional valence elicited by patient testimonials. For example, one post's caption referred to stigmatising governments as "cruel and nonsensical" for impeding access to cannabis as a medicine, and another used the testimony of an epileptic 6-year-old girl whose condition was positively impacted by cannabis use. The findings regarding the approach of educating audiences using scientific facts and figures shows significant potential for influencing attitudes; being cited as having strong influences on beliefs, feelings and actions toward cannabis. Regarding the tactic of educating with facts and figures, all participants reported an influence on their beliefs about the plant, establishing perceptions that it is credible and safe for use. No negative emotions were mentioned regarding this tactic; emotions discussed included feelings of trust, reassurance, and curiosity. Actions reported by participants included conducting more research to further educate themselves, educating others, and being more inclined to use cannabis products. The tactic of lobbying and activism was less impactful overall; not influencing any beliefs about cannabis, but only adding to some participants' knowledge as they were previously unaware of how much work has been done in cannabis activism. The few participants who indicated feelings elicited by activism expressed pride, amazement and curiosity. Only 2 participants shared that it would influence their actions, citing conducting further research and sharing posts as their influenced behaviours.

Using patient testimonials had a stronger impact on behaviours, mainly cited as the inclination to try cannabis products based on these reviews; and on emotions, expressed using words such as "trust", "openness", and "relatable". Three participants, however, reported that they were sceptical of testimonials, given that individuals are known to be compensated for sharing product experiences and are thus less credible. On actions, testimonials were said to cause some of the participants to want to conduct further research to vet them, or to try out some of the products themselves. The final tactic of the rhetoric strategy, using strong language to attack stigmatisers, elicited strong – and mixed – emotions, with 17 of the participants expressing negative emotions and only 3 reacting positively to the strategy. The root of the negative emotions, interestingly, was a collective ideology that one should approach others with respect regardless of their opposing views. The participants with positive emotions expressed a relief that some entities remove "fluff" and "tell it like it is" (Participant 17), and a feeling that this approach is necessary to create change in conservative societies, that it felt like retribution for cannabis having been vehemently attacked over time, and that it will lead to necessary engagement (Participant 19).

Table 7.12: Attitude influences of rhetoric

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Education (scientific facts and figures)	<u>Cognitive</u> "It does educate me. There's probably some statistics I haven't even seen before, you know, with the regards to studies of cannabis" (Participant 1) "I think that it does... destigmatise it, because if you know the research has been done and somebody has said yes, it's safe for children within these guidelines then, you know, it destigmatises it completely, because that's something we've been made to believe it is absolutely not for" (Participant 4) "Things like this with facts and figures would make them seem more credible. So that that works for me. Facts and figures work for me" (Participant 2) "I think with the new research that they're finding and bring to the table. It does somewhat change perspective" (Participant 18) "I would think that if this was paired with a study that that this one's testimonial is based on, it would be a lot stronger" (Participant 16) <u>Affective</u>

	"We trust researchers. If they say 'according to my findings', then it's your finding and we just have to go with it. If for example Good Leaf just said cannabis after work doesn't affect productivity, I might have questions... But because you say, 'studies show' then I am in" (Participant 9) "It definitely makes me feel curious and I'd like to know more" Participant 1) "Yes, yes, yes, yes to everything... It's given we shouldn't frown against certain treatment like this if it's been researched" (Participant 14) "Yeah, that's positive and reassuring" (Participant 7) <u>Conative</u> "It's challenging me to try to understand... With this study, how was the study conducted and what on what foundation did they establish the conclusion that it doesn't affect productivity, when you've heard people say 'I've been smoking weed for this long and I don't feel like I can do certain things anymore'. I think it's just challenging that narrative that I've always had that if you smoke weed over a long period of time, there comes a point where your brain just starts to slow down while the study says 'No, it's still fine, it doesn't affect your productivity'. So I think it's challenging me" (Participant 10) "I'm very pro using scientific research and studies to back up whatever fact you're putting forward. So the fact that this one (is) backed by studies and all of that, I think it definitely positively affects my like actions. I think that's the biggest thing cause, I mean anyone can say anything about anything on the Internet, but if you back it up by research and examples of it, then I'm more inclined to go in, go down the rabbit hole to figure out what else we can do... to bring light to what actually should be happening" (Participant 6) "Probably make me feel more comfortable using it and probably something I would share" (Participant 7) "It certainly piques my interest in the sense that if they're saying that it's safe and there's scientific evidence backing that up as well when it comes to the therapeutic benefits of it. That's actually something that I would love to find more about for sure, and certainly be able to certainly influence me to have a much more open mind around that" (Participant 19)
Lobbying and activism	<u>Cognitive</u> "I don't necessarily think it will influence the way I act, but it does increase my knowledge... seeing the allyship... of what's happening on the frontlines" (Participant 6) <u>Affective</u>

	"I would say pride... (It) makes me feel proud that a couple of them are doing such a major movement. It's very cool" (Participant 1) "This is actually interesting as to what they did, I see here that they turn things around by them getting arrested? What really caught my eye was the part where they changed things around." (Participant 5) "I can't believe I missed that cause this is amazing!" (Participant 4) "I think it's sad that they were harassed by the police. Especially for something that is such a minor offense, if any" (Participant 7) <u>Conative</u> "It makes me want to get read up to know more, like what is the actual work being done in the background to make this a thing that should be legalised, that we should pay attention to?" (Participant 6) "I might share it only on the basis that there are people who are working towards... decriminalising it" (Participant 9)
Testimonials	<u>Cognitive</u> "I think for any brand, any product, a testimonial does wonders, especially for something like this which is so stigmatised. Before you try it, you wanna know 'Has another person like me done this? What was their perception of it? Was it okay? Did they have a good experience?' It can really change your mind to have those testimonials" (Participant 4) "It's quite informative. Because of a lack of knowledge or just a lack of access to the information, people often don't know much about the sort of medicinal properties around these, and to me this is surprising as well, because I'm like, 'Oh, I did not know that either!' And I certainly think that this could be very useful for the majority of the population, especially like testimonials of this nature, they often give a very personal touch or experience... Cause often you realise that some of the ailments that they have are actually treatable, and most likely similar to yours. It's certainly something that goes a long way. It goes a long way in sort of a swaying prevailing attitudes around cannabis" (Participant 19) <u>Affective</u> "I'm not disputing the testimonials themselves or anything like that... But I do sort of think maybe could this just be a once off? So it doesn't necessarily affect my views as much as some of the others" (Participant 16) "Some of these people might have been bought to say whatever that is that they are saying. So until I have my own knowledge or done my own research or had my own personal experience. I would not really believe all of this because it could be just propaganda use for boosting sales or for engagement" (Participant 18)

	"It's very personal. It draws on the relational aspect and I understand this, like working with clients and relying so much on word of mouth and people's personal experiences" (Participant 4) "Everyone will tell you that the best form of marketing for any product is word of mouth. So, with getting a review from somebody who has actually used it, and she's quite vocal about how it made her feel and why she tried it and what it's like and how it feels. It gives you a sense of. I guess a beginning (of a) sense of trust in the product" (Participant 6) <u>Conative</u> "Hearing from someone who's physically experienced it will definitely make me more prone to buying it... or trying it out myself" (Participant 1) "Testimonial kind of advertising works for me because I would think 'okay this is not like a paid sponsorship kind of thing. It's real'. So... I think it makes me more open to the idea of using CBD in general" (Participant 2) "It gives you a sense of... I guess a beginning (of a) sense of trust in the product, which will then influence me to maybe go and try the product for myself" (Participant 6)
Attacking stigmatisers	<u>Affective</u> "I like these kinds of posts. They are more stimulating for me. They – and maybe this is a personality trait... I don't like fluff, when I'm being talked to, and that is why I struggle with social media. Because it's so packaged to show an idea that isn't always very realistic. So when I see something like this, this is what would draw me more than a post of a celebrity or a woman with clear skin saying they used it" (Participant 17) "I really like this kind of sort of marketing for sure. Because cannabis usage has been so vehemently and so overtly attacked over the years as well. I do think that an aggressive strategy is certainly a lot more... impactful. If anything, it'll get people talking for sure. And the more people talk, the more curious they will be, they will then be able to educate themselves. So, I absolutely don't think that there's anything wrong with this. Taking a much more hardline approach does have its benefits, especially when you are dealing with a lot of people who lean more towards the conservative side" (Participant 19) "I'm not a big fan of people attacking people who don't agree with them, so this is probably a method or routine or technique that I wouldn't particularly support even though they reasons might be valid so" (Participant 7) "I don't think it's something that should be, you know, shoved down people's throats to believe in" (Participant 8) "I don't agree with the approach, if you don't, if you don't like something. Keep quiet. Keep it to yourself" (Participant 22)

	"I feel like calling people out, especially the government... calling them cruel, it evokes something negative in the rest of the people, because then they will feel like 'Okay, the guard is up again'. Would you like to be called out like that by the government? Especially [if] you want to do something good. You have to balance it perfectly" (Participant 3) "The way I see it, the use of such strong language lends itself to protest type action. The easiest way to get under people's skin is to paint the opposition in a rough, harsh light so that you as an individual get riled up enough to want to form intense change and do it now, right? So you can use it to your advantage... But it can also come back and bite you because it can build this idea that you're not willing to have a sit down and calmly engage on a cool level" (Participant 6) "The framing of it, I think it can be taken into a bit of a negative space, but I understand as well why they're going that route because you get to a point where you keep talking about something and nothing is happening that you do get to a place where you're just angry and you're like, guys, can we actually just have change now?" (Participant 4) "It can create... that hate-induced feeling or urgency. You wanna go and do something like now. But sometimes that action is not really the answer. Sometimes you know you need to find yourself in spaces where we can discuss, and we can try and figure out what the answer is. I don't know if that makes sense" (Participant 1) "So with anything, right, whether be it a beef or someone's opinion. Personally, I feel like we shouldn't be attacking anyone. We should just respect whatever they think, their opinions and stuff. So to attack people like that... Aowa [Setswana for 'No']. Why are you saying that they are nonsensical, and they are cruel or stuff like that? You know, I don't agree with that" (Participant 9) <u>Conative</u> "With the proper backing, and if that actually makes sense to me, then I don't see a reason why I would not stand for and fight for wisdom per se" (Participant 5)

Resubjectification

Resubjectification involves creating more socially desirable identities for individuals involved with core-stigmatised organisations. The brands enacted this by depicting cannabis users in a positive light, engaged in socially approved activities such as reading, meditating, active and outdoor situations, working productively, or simply with healthy- looking skin and bright smiles as opposed to the stigmatised 'lazy stoner' stereotype. Resubjectification, which included redefining the cannabis user, had a strong influence on the beliefs about cannabis users, mainly changing stereotypical perceptions of users as 'lazy stoners', moving towards a belief that cannabis users can also be 'normal', productive, responsible members of society.

Table 7.13: Attitude influences of resubjectification

Tactic	Quotations per attitude component
Redefining the cannabis user	<u>Cognitive</u> "I think it's challenging in the sense that... for the typical user it is not what you know... on the street corner and stuff like that. So I like the approach. because I think it speaks to the different properties or benefits so it adds to my knowledge to say that yeah man, this can be for us all. It's beyond recreational what-what. It's not limited to that" (Participant 20) "Well, it gives me knowledge because of what you had mentioned about people seeing people that smoke marijuana as lazy and unproductive. Whereas some people smoke marijuana, and they go about their day perfectly fine or even better actually being more productive than they usually would be" (Participant 5) "I think we've been fed a narrative for so long and the reality just does not fit into that. And so, seeing imagery of just regular people of different skin colours of different cultures and different professions as well... because the truth is like on a surface level we think 'Oh. You know a smoker or a cannabis user has to look a certain way' but the truth is it can be a CEO of a company, a businessperson" (Participant 4) "It isn't just like the rest of culture, as some people honestly think that it is just that a certain type of person uses it. It's really for everyone. So this I think is the biggest mind changing... kind of imagery" (Participant 22) "Usually, cannabis is associated with dirty people with locs or wearing Jamaican colours. So, looking at this makes it acceptable. So, it's like she's carrying... what do you call it? Vitamins and posing with that" (Participant 14) "I get what they're trying to do here. But I'm intrigued (that) all three images had, first and foremost, females. And second of all, all three of them are Caucasian. It would be very interesting to see if you put people like me, for example, I like to think I'm an upstanding member of society. But it does make me believe and feel that... it's just a product that we all use. Everyone uses hand sanitiser, for example, like it's on that level" (Participant 6) "This post for me just kind of simplifies the fact that okay, it's okay to do it, and you're not a bad person for doing it like how it's stigmatised in the world out there" (Participant 8) "There is a particular look to what the sort of stock-standard user is, but I do think that certainly this kind of marketing could go a long way shifting prevailing mindsets generally" (Participant 19) Yes, it does (influence my beliefs) because now it's more in a positive light. Someone being a Stoner, that's what I've always known of cannabis. But when you look at the imagery it brings it more towards the positive light that I can, for example be consuming cannabis. But like the lady who's glowing, who's smiling, I would associate someone who's on cannabis with like frail skin or looking at their eyes red or they look sleepy. So you see someone who's just like me, who doesn't take it. So, it kind of changes the

	lights regarding that and the girl sitting reading a book, it's just innocent, and you might find in that moment maybe her cup of coffee has a good leave of cannabis thing" (Participant 10) "You just see someone who's regular, someone who's normal. They're not acting out; they're not jumping on the bench. They're not throwing people with the pillows, you know? So I think it moves it more towards normalising it as a day-to-day life thing versus that one event or that one party on a Saturday. So I think it just brings back to the fact that you can live a normal life while still consuming things that relate to cannabis just based on the pictures" (Participant 10) <u>Affective</u> "It definitely changes my feelings. The other day, my partner and I were watching Stranger Things and there was a scene where the one guy was in the car and hotboxing it. And my partner said he's so sick of this image of stoners, you know, because it's like people think when you use cannabis, you sit in the stockroom and you just smoke the whole day., you got nothing done, you just eat. So, I feel like images like this are good" (Participant 3) "And I'm also excited like, it's exciting that such things are being actually published and sent out there" (Participant 9) "It also evokes positive feelings, and these people seem normal so..." (Participant 7) "I think it's about time they do that and not always make it... some guy who's got dreads and his dreads look dirty and he doesn't know what he's doing, where he's going. Well, some people are highly functional, to go about their day. So I'm glad that this is kind of the advertising that they're moving into. And like I say it, it will get to the point where in a few years' time, all of this makes sense and it's a norm" (Participant 8) <u>Conative</u> "You see so by me seeing this... It's somebody who 'Oh, okay, she even uses then it means it's okay... let me use it as well'. So the knowledge of the product expands on a daily basis, you see, and we destigmatise" (Participant 20) "And once again I would share it just because we want to. The whole thing of legalising is also destigmatising. So if we can show people that you know what, you can have some CBD or you can smoke or something and you can go about your life. You can still be productive. That will be good" (Participant 3)

7.6. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results from the analysis of the 22 qualitative in-depth interviews conducted, which served to gain insights into the influence of the destigmatisation strategies identified in the preceding content analysis study. These findings were presented according to the various categories of strategies, the strategies, and the tactics of those strategies. It further

qualified the findings according to the theoretical framework, the tricomponent attitude model, providing excerpts from the interview for further detail. A discussion of the insights resulting from these findings is presented in the subsequent chapter, and connections of these insights to those of Studies 1 and 2 are provided.

PART 3: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 8 Discussion, implications and conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This dissertation provided a multifaceted understanding of how destigmatisation occurs and can be catalysed in the cannabis industry, providing a theoretical perspective at an (core-stigmatised) industry level through the literature review (Study 1), an organisational perspective via content analysis (Study 2), and a consumer perspective through a qualitative exploration of destigmatisation strategies' influence on audience attitudes (Study 3). This chapter provides discussions as well as both theoretical and practical implications for each of the studies separately. It then discusses connections between the findings of the three studies, as well as implications for practice based on these linkages. The below sections provide in-depth discussions of the intra and interconnections of the various studies, providing insights for the destigmatisation of the recreational cannabis industry and recommendations for future studies to catalyse research in this regard.

8.2. Discussion and implications

In the first study, a mixed methods approach provided a rigorous synthesis of extant core-stigma destigmatisation literature informed the destigmatisation model depicted in Figure 8.1, which graphically depicts the relationships between stakeholders – and the effects that occur – in a stigmatised industry. A deeper analysis into the relationship between stigma perpetuation and reduction revealed that at the very heart of destigmatisation is Affirming. Figure 8.1 depicts an environment in which the strategies that serve to reduce stigma (Challenging, Infusing) cannot occur without at least a rudimental affirmation of their identity; that is, acknowledging the value of their identity enough to persist despite a limiting and scrutinising environment. Conversely, those that serve as stigma avoidance or even stigma perpetuation strategies (Hiding, Conforming, Structural Responses) occur when the organisations conceal aspects of – or their entire – identities, essentially diverting from Affirming.

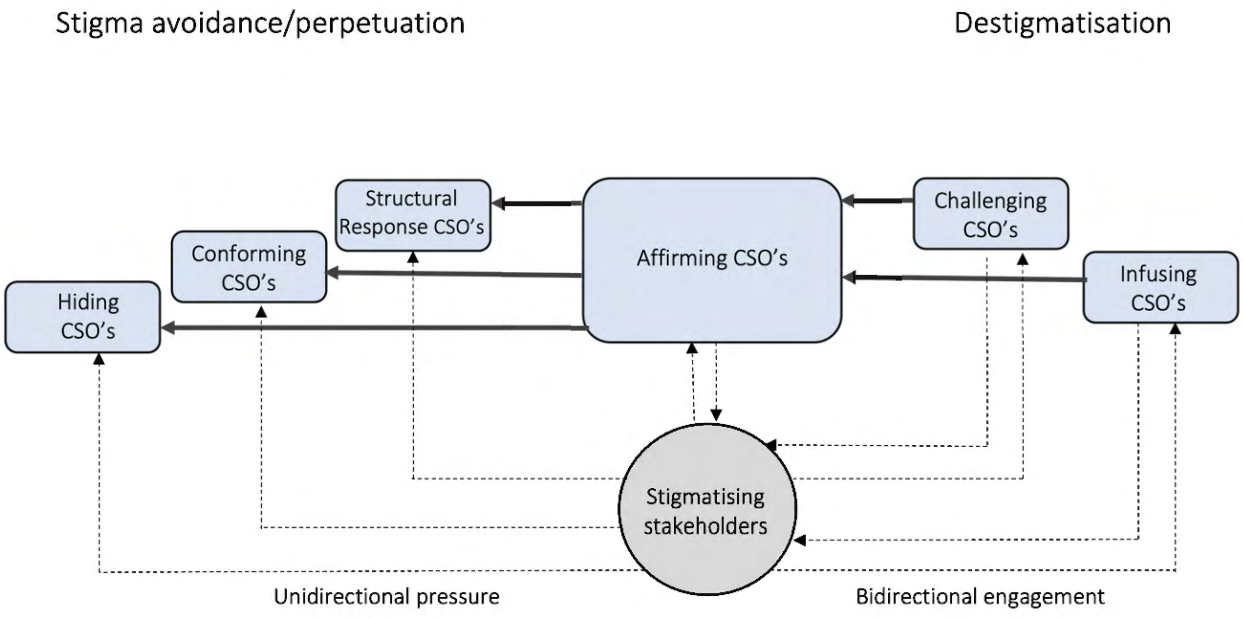
A further look into the relationships between the strategies reveal that they also vary in relation to their proximity to Affirming. Core-stigmatised organisations that make structural changes to avoid the effects of stigma divert from affirming and defending their authentic position. However, this does not necessarily entail concealment or denial of their activities or identities. The diversion from affirming is more extensive when these organisations respond by conforming, such as cannabis sellers ceasing to trade cannabis, and instead restricting their product offering cannabis-related items such as grinders, bongs and rolling paper. This renders the firms unable to conduct activities that were central to their existence, diverting further away from being an affirming organisation. On the far extreme, Hiding strategies involve organisations trading and advertising covertly, ensconcing themselves within environments that echo similar values or choose to take part in the stigmatised activities. In hiding themselves, they attempt to keep their existence essentially unknown to stigmatisers, which approximates an outright denial of their identity to certain audiences. This represents the antithesis of Affirming as it is the most extensive diversion from publicly declaring their identity.

Similarly, in a destigmatisation context, Challenging and Infusing strategies vary in their proximity to Affirming. Organisations who choose Infusing strategies will apply extant socially endorsed labels to themselves, their products or consumers. Infusing does, to an extent, signify both Affirming and Challenging by raising awareness of its positive attributes, in turn challenging conventional discrediting stereotypes. However, Challenging strategies serve to disrupt the status quo. By educating, lobbying, and openly debating with stigmatising stakeholders, core-stigmatised organisations not only affirm the positive aspects of their identities but compel stigmatisers to do the same. The activism, lobbying, and educating by cannabis organisations and other advocates have caused governments to change laws and regulations, such as legalising medicinal cannabis trade, and decriminalising recreational cannabis use in South Africa (Lubaale & Mavundla, 2019). In addition, there has been a vast shift in the tone of cannabis reporting by the media, and in general public perceptions (Stringer & Maggard, 2016). These strategies not only affirmed the organisations' identities and challenged perceptions, but altered the social, political and legal structures in which they exist, allowing them to affirm themselves with fewer hinderances. Thus, if cannabis businesses are to further the destigmatisation agenda, prioritising Affirming and

Challenging strategies may prove more beneficial. In a more practical sense, cannabis organisations would benefit from focusing on strategies such as rhetoric, educating stakeholders, and recontexualising.

Dissimilitude exists between the communication flows of the stigma avoidance/perpetuation and destigmatisation environments. Stigmatising stakeholders such as the general public, governments, and investors place unidirectional pressure on core-stigmatised organisations, causing some to hide, conform, or adjust their structure to mitigate its effects. In this context, they are powerful inhibitory forces that hamper the stigmatised organisations' success while creating an environment of stigma avoidance and perpetuation. On the other hand, destigmatisation is more likely to occur when stigmatising stakeholders are forced to engage with the organisations. Affirming, Infusing and Challenging essentially force the stigmatisers to engage with the organisations – whether through heightened cognisance, or active response such as debating or policy reform. This indicates an environment of bidirectional engagement, serving the destigmatisation agenda more effectively than the contrasting unidirectional pressure.

Figure 8.1: Destigmatisation model



*CSO's: Core-stigmatised organisations

The findings of the second study indicate that recreational cannabis brands are actively, and almost daily, utilising Instagram as a channel for destigmatising cannabis and marketing their products. The most popular strategy employed by cannabis brands was that of using branding elements; particularly the tactics of attractive and/or functional product design and 'rebranding' cannabis using colours that divert from those typically associated with marijuana. This finding was not particularly surprising, as these companies sell cannabis products and as such should aim to place their products in a positive light. If the stigma they aimed to mitigate was based solely on the unattractiveness of their branding or the look and functionality of their products, branding strategies may have sufficed. However, the nature of core stigma means that, for cannabis brands, the stigma exists because of cannabis itself. Thus, destigmatisation must take place at a more rudimentary level than product design and colours. The entire industry and the product at its core should be destigmatised if cannabis businesses are to be destigmatised. Challenging strategies, therefore, should be at the forefront of their efforts. Based on the research agenda of Study 1, the most important area identified by cannabis industry professionals was that of a collective approach to destigmatisation; that is, a concerted effort by the 'cannabis community' to destigmatise cannabis itself, allowing restrictions to be relaxed or removed. This would expand the market and its opportunities, in which they could all subsequently partake on a more individual level. The implication is thus not that branding should not be prioritised, but that its prioritisation would be more beneficial at a later stage; once the cannabis industry has gained wide societal acceptance; once financial, legal and regulatory, marketing, and other barriers have been lowered.

Although there is a mismatch between the most frequently employed strategy and the strategy that could more effectively influence attitudes; the cannabis brands are not too far off. After branding, the most popular tactic formed part of the recontextualisation strategy of the Infusing category. This indicates that cannabis brands do consider reframing the industry an important strategy to pursue. The tactic referred to is that of highlighting health benefits. Considering that much of the stigma is based on its association with negative effects on public health, reducing negative health perceptions has great potential to destigmatise the industry. There was, however, a large gap between these consecutively popular strategies, with branding accounting for 20% of the strategies used and citing health benefits accounting for 14%.

The analysis of Study 1 highlighted that stigma is still present in diverse organisations including men's bathhouses, MMA organisations, organic farmers, travel associations and medical cannabis organisations; indicating that organisational stigma still exists in multiple ways. Study 3's findings highlighted that cannabis stigma is still deeply entrenched in society. All participants, including those who generally expressed positive attitudes towards cannabis and its legalisation, noted that negative opinions of the plant are pervasive and that it would take a lot of effort and time to change it. Some noted that this even affected how they engage with cannabis products. For instance, a participant who expressed comfort with using cannabis products and experienced what they referred to as positive benefits also stated that she would not act in a way that would publicly associate her with cannabis as a result of its stigmatised status:

> "The reason I've never even reposted is just... I know some people see it negatively, so I don't want to be necessarily associated with it, even though I do support it [and] I think it's great" (Participant 2)

This illustrates the effects of the previously described concept of transfer or courtesy stigma (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009). Non-stigmatised individuals and organisations alike may distance themselves from cannabis even if they themselves approve of it, out of fear of experiencing the consequences of being stigmatised through association. The implication is thus that, although word of mouth is deemed one of the most influential methods of marketing (Li et al., 2018; Bughin, Doogan & Vetvik, 2010), cannabis organisations may not be able to harness its power to the extent that non-stigmatised organisations can.

Cannabis stigma also appeared to be predominantly associated with recreational use by youth. For instance, participants in Study 3 tended to express more comfort with depictions of senior individuals using cannabis, whether for medicinal or recreational purposes. Older individuals using cannabis products medicinally was generally touted as a natural alternative to pharmaceutical medicines for various ailments, and their recreational use was viewed as less problematic. Interesting to note was that there was a difference in the language used when referring to older people using cannabis as opposed to younger people. The latter were generally described using

more stigmatised terms. One participant referred to older people 'chilling', while younger people were 'getting stoned':

> "... they're an old couple chilling in their pyjamas. Really, it's not like a 20-something-year-old sitting in the kitchen getting stoned" (Participant 21)

The implication of these views for cannabis marketers pertains to the use of resubjectification; that is, redefining the cannabis user. Marketers may benefit from placing greater efforts on redefining younger consumers of cannabis products to counteract the view of young consumers being 'stoners'.

In Chapter 3, white supremacy and the control of minority racial groups was briefly discussed as the underlying basis for cannabis prohibition. This has been proven by racial statistics of cannabis-related prosecutions and has been mentioned by multiple large organisations and individuals calling for social justice in cannabis legalisation processes. Ben & Jerry's point out that cannabis legalisation is mostly lucrative for white individuals, as 81% of cannabis executives are white, while many Black Americans remain prosecuted for its use and possession. They further posited that, during the period between 2001 and 2010, Black individuals were 273% more likely to be arrested than their Caucasian counterparts for cannabis related offences, despite similar rates of use. After legalisation, this percentage dropped by only 9% to 264% (Ben & Jerry's, 2022), indicating that this remains an issue even post-legalisation. This been acknowledged by some governments in their cannabis legalisation processes. For example, the American states of Illinois, New Jersey and Massachusetts's legalisation efforts include the reservation of some licenses for social equity applicants including people of colour residing in areas disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs (Agnew, 2022). Some states have also begun the process of expunging the criminal records of people incarcerated for cannabis crimes (Vinicky, 2022). Some Study 3 participants, when discussing redefining the cannabis consumer, mentioned that they took issue with mostly White individuals being depicted in positive cannabis use situations such as using cannabis while engaged in work or physical activities. Resubjectification, therefore, gave rise to some negative emotions amongst Black participants:

> “Where’s the black person? It doesn’t talk to me because I don’t see someone who looks like me. Wasn’t it Black people associated with cannabis stigma? Why is it mostly White people being used to destigmatise [it]?” (Participant 15)
>
> “I get what they're trying to do here. But... all three of them are Caucasian. It would be very interesting to see if you put people like me, for example. I like to think I'm an upstanding member of society” (Participant 6)
>
> “What's happening now is gentrification. Whereas many black people are behind bars now, the whites are opening up the market for themselves to profit” (Participant 17)
>
> “But I would want to see somebody who looks like me using it positively, because it’s usually depicted badly with people who look like me” (Participant 1)

The implication is thus that, when aiming to destigmatise cannabis, it is inadvisable to ignore the widely reported basis of cannabis stigma, namely systematic racism, and those who suffer its effects. Particularly in South Africa, which currently still experiences the effects of Apartheid, and whose population is over 80% Black (Statista, 2022). Recommendations are for cannabis marketers are to direct efforts at dismantling racism while dismantling stigma, as the two are fundamentally connected; and attempts to avoid it may result in further negative perceptions of inauthenticity and responsibility avoidance, potentially damaging their reputation and undoing destigmatisation efforts. In a more practical sense, corporate social responsibility destigmatisation strategies would best be linked to relevant issues such as racial justice, and resubjectification strategies should focus on redefining Black cannabis consumers to counteract longstanding racially linked cannabis stigma.

A common misconception is that an attitude pertains to feelings or emotions. But attitudes are more complex than that; they include knowledge and beliefs, as well as actions and behaviours. Although interconnected, the three components do not always correlate. For instance, people may believe (cognitive) that drunk driving is dangerous and unethical and may feel negative feelings (affective) such as fear and discontent towards it; however, they may still engage in the action of driving under the influence (conative). As such, it is possible that businesses can influence

one (or two) aspect(s) of attitudes without influencing the other(s); and even then, to varying degrees. It may, therefore, be useful to investigate each component separately. As such, another layer of analysis for Study 3 isolated each of the three aspects of attitudes to gain insights into which themes were predominant in each attitude component.

When isolating the cognitive aspect of attitudes, the most common beliefs regarding cannabis demonstrate that cannabis destigmatisation is an occurring reality. An overwhelming majority of the beliefs discussed by participants in response to destigmatisation strategies indicate a move towards normalisation. Nearly 40% of all beliefs were that cannabis is acceptable or 'normal'. Mainly in response to the destigmatisation tactics of repeated exposure and recontextualisation, participants displayed a shift in their beliefs from cannabis being a negatively perceived drug to being what some described as a normal, everyday product that they expressed comfort in using. The subsequently predominant belief was that cannabis products provide health benefits (15%), and that cannabis is versatile in its uses (12%) as opposed to the typically stigmatised method of consumption: recreationally smoking to access its psychoactive properties. In this regard, participants mentioned being previously unaware that cannabis can be used for various purposes communicated by cannabis business, such as health, cosmetic, and sexual purposes. Other cognitive influences included beliefs that the cannabis industry has economic benefits (9%), is larger than they were aware of and has significant potential for growth (8%), is safe for consumption by vulnerable individuals such as minors (3%) and is a better alternative to pharmaceutical medicines (1%). More negative cognitive attitudes included the belief that the cannabis industry is dubious (12%), mainly regarding the use of celebrities and/or influencers in destigmatisation communications as well as the use of cannabis for children. The implication is thus that, through recontextualisation and repeated exposure, there is potential for cannabis marketers to normalise cannabis products and gain increased societal acceptance. The contrasting implication is that, although cannabis has the potential to be normalised, this is less so with regards to its use by minors. As such, cannabis marketers may benefit from destigmatising cannabis by citing health, economic and social benefits for consenting adults, but should tread lightly when communicating its benefits with regards to vulnerable individuals such as children.

In investigating affective attitudes, the feelings and emotions mentioned most in response to destigmatisation tactics were feelings of safety and trust in using cannabis products (25% of all emotions) which largely involved discussions referring to recontextualisation and resubjectification, followed by fascination (18%) and curiosity (15%) which mainly pertained to the versatility of cannabis as a product and its vastness as an industry. The most prominent negative emotion was scepticism and distrust (11%), mentioned mostly in response to the use of celebrities and influencers in cannabis communications and the mention of cannabis use for children. Deductively, the ensuing negative emotion was concern (5%), also in response to cannabis use for minors. This finding highlights the ability to create attitudes of trust in the safety of cannabis products, which strongly contrast longstanding feelings of cannabis being unsafe for consumption, through reframing cannabis itself as well as redefining its users.

When analysing the conative, i.e. behavioural element in isolation, the most predominant actions mentioned by participants involved the pursuit and sharing of cannabis knowledge and information, namely, conducting further research to further inform themselves (accounting for 30% of actions overall); sharing information with others (25%) either through resharing posts online or engaging in conversations; and purchasing and trying cannabis products (23%). Other actions included openly supporting cannabis legalisation through actions such as signing petitions and other acts of activism (8%); attending cannabis events such as webinars or in-person expos (6%); recommending cannabis products to others (5%); and actively getting involved in the cannabis industry such as starting cannabis businesses (3%). The most predominant action of participants conducting further research in their individual capacity was cited in response to nearly all destigmatisation tactics. For example, when responding to the strategy of recontextualisation, participants mentioned that they would 'read up more' to ascertain claims of the economic, social and health benefits of cannabis. When referring to the use of third parties such as celebrities and influencers, or even large organisations, participants' actions were predominantly to 'conduct more research' in order to mitigate potential distrust of these parties, or simply to further inform themselves. The below excerpts from the interviews show how this sentiment was communicated.

"I think it makes me wanna read more about the organisation and the work that they're doing" (Participant 10)

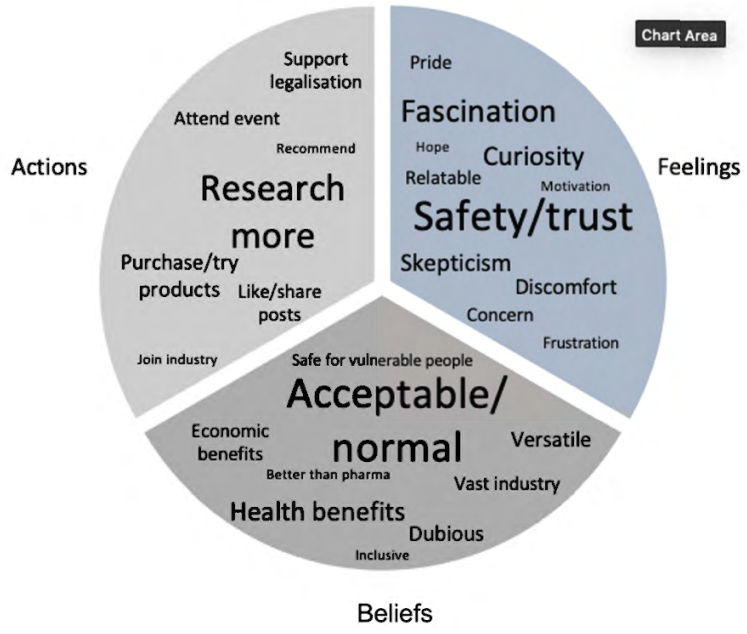
"I would also just do a little bit more research for myself because it's like 'one cure' to a whole lot of things, so I wouldn't necessarily believe" (Participant 2)

"I'm curious as to like, go in and actually read an article or something just to know more, cause (there's) gotta be so much more to it than just those, you know, 4 words" (Participant 1)

"I would want to do more research about it, actually. Instead of relying on a post on social media" (Participant 9)

The predominance of the action of conducting further research correlates with the ensuing discussion, which indicates a widespread belief that there is a lack of knowledge regarding cannabis. It logically follows that there are low levels of inclination for individuals to be publicly involved with cannabis, whether growing the industry through business or supporting its advancement. Individuals are less likely to invest in the stigmatised cannabis industry until they understand more about it. Thus, the lack of reputable cannabis information is a major drawback to its adoption as a commercial industry. Figure 8.2 depicts the predominance of various beliefs, feelings, and actions regarding cannabis.

Figure 8.2: Tricomponent attitudes towards cannabis



Adapted from: Schiffman & Kanuk (2006)

For marketers, the main implication of the differences between cognitive, affective and conative attitudes is that in order to build a strategy, the desired outcome in terms of attitude influence must first be identified. For example, is the aim predominantly to influence beliefs, feelings, or actions? The next important question for marketers should then be "what beliefs, feelings, or actions are desired?". Additionally, firms should determine their intended audience. The audience they are attempting to communicate to is likely to have an impact on the choice of destigmatising content. Once clarity of these fundamentals has been established, marketers can then implement strategies that have the most potential influence leading to the desired outcome from the right audience.

Despite the increasing legalisation of cannabis, many governments continue to enforce restrictive policies and regulations on research into the harms or benefits of cannabis products that are available to consumers. As a result, research on the health effects of cannabis has been limited, leaving patients, health care professionals, and policy makers without the evidence they need to make sound decisions regarding cannabis (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Many participants echoed this fact, mentioning a significant lack of credible information and education about cannabis and the cannabis industry, which was linked to emotions such as uncertainty, curiosity, and distrust. The following excerpts reinforce this notion:

> "So, I think for my own knowledge or growth and further understanding I would attend such an event, because where else would I find the knowledge besides Googling on the Internet? And not everything that's on the Internet is actual, factual truth" (Participant 10)

> "... because of this stigma attached to the usage of cannabis or cannabis related products, the education around its usage and its effects are sometimes lost" (Participant 19)

> "Developed research is not something that's on the market and that's easily accessible to people and it's not being pushed in the right way" (Participant 8)

> "The research and the knowledge is not out there as to what the benefits actually are, and it hasn't been. It's communicated in small communities versus the general public having access to it" (Participant 6)

This further echoed that the actions mentioned the most by participants involved a desire to conduct more research to be more informed, which would lead to people feeling more comfortable or confident in using cannabis products. This insight logically leads to the ensuing discussion.

The majority of, and strongest, negative emotions cited by participants in Study 3 was in response to the use of minors in cannabis communications. Despite the strength of these negative emotions, the provision of facts and figures resulting from scientific research was indicated to strongly mitigate concerns and, in some cases, completely overturn them. Moreover, research mitigated many negative emotions such as distrust or scepticism regarding using celebrities and influencers or using well known corporations to back up cannabis messages. This translated to the insight that empirical research has great influence on even the most cogent of attitudes. As such, research has intense potential for destigmatising cannabis. Furthermore, this highlights the responsibility of researchers to provide accurate, credible, and responsible cannabis research as it is the basis upon which beliefs, emotions and, more importantly, actions regarding cannabis, could be altered. The implication of this insight is twofold: there should be a concerted effort by cannabis businesses to enable scientific research that provides more cannabis education if they hope to influence attitudes; and, for academia, research should be rigorous, objective, and credible in order to responsibly educate audiences while serving to destigmatise the cannabis industry. In Study 2, the content analysis found that the second most popular strategy was the use of scientific facts and figures to back up the cannabis brands' messages. However, the references made were all external and mostly international. For instance, the brands would state their message, provide a name of either a professional researcher or research institution, and sometimes provide a link to the study for further reading. As previously discussed, South African cannabis research is severely limited; it would be in the best interest of local cannabis industry destigmatisation if they not only referred to international research that has been conducted, but further enabled research in the South African context in order to appeal to the country's market.

The Infusing category of destigmatisation strategies proved predominant in the themes identified in Study 1 and Study 2. In the literature review of Study 1, 58% of all themes reported formed part of the Infusing category and, in the content analysis of Study 2, a significant 77%. This indicates an effort by cannabis brands, particularly in Study 2, to 'rebrand' cannabis by using tactics such as professional and/or attractive imagery, mainly of socially favourable activities such as sports and outdoor activities, or subjects such as pets; depicting their staff as professional and knowledgeable; using colours in their branding and communications that divert from the typical colours associated with marijuana; highlighting the quality and effectiveness of their products; as well as modern or attractive product design and packaging.

The majority (nearly 80%) of the destigmatisation strategies used by cannabis brands on Instagram were Infusing methods. In particular, branding strategies were predominant, forming 30% of strategies overall whereas all other strategies, excluding recontextualization (18%), formed less than 10% each. In Study 3, the strategy that had the strongest positive influence on attitudes was recontextualisation, which involves tactics that reframe the industry to appeal to socially accepted values such as citing economic, social, and health benefits. Citing health benefits in particular had the strongest influence of all the tactics; more predominantly on knowledge and beliefs (91% of participants reported an influence) and actions and behaviours (100% of participants' actions were influenced) than on feelings and emotions (55%). Of the recontextualisation tactics, social benefits were overall marginally stronger (influencing 45% of both cognitive and affective, and 55% of behaviours) than economic benefits (influencing 50% cognitive, 32% affective and 59% conative). This indicates a mismatch between the destigmatisation methods cannabis brands are prominently engaged in and what could have the strongest impact, which translates to an important insight for practice: if they aim to strongly influence attitudes towards cannabis, cannabis brands should lessen their efforts on branding tactics and focus more on reframing the cannabis industry. Emphasising health benefits in particular is likely to further this goal.

Studies 1 (literature review) and Study 2 (content analysis) both indicated low frequencies of Hiding, Conforming and Structural Response strategies, which were found to be stigma avoidance and stigma perpetuation strategies. Instagram's privacy feature enables users to select the

audiences allowed to see their profiles. The fact that all the sampled cannabis brands in Study 2 had publicly viewable profiles was the first indication that the companies are comfortable with visibility and do not attempt to hide themselves or their activities. In Study 1, avoidance and perpetuation strategies formed a minute part of all strategies identified; in Study 2, no Structural Response or Conforming strategies were reported and only 2% of posts indicated some form of Hiding. This further indicated a move away from any concealment related activities, and a move towards destigmatisation strategies which signal either Affirming, Infusing or Challenging. This led to the key insight that cannabis businesses are gaining increasing confidence in owning their stigmatised identities.

8.3. Limitations

The methodological approaches of Study 1 resulted in a few limitations. With regards to the working group, input was sought from individuals involved in recreational cannabis trade, and no other industry actors such as cannabis users, cannabis clubs and cannabis activists were consulted. As such, the recommendations of the research agenda may not fully represent the research needs of South Africa's recreational cannabis industry. Second, the research areas presented to them were based on literature that is limited in amplitude. There therefore may be destigmatisation strategies lacking academic research attention, that may be of priority in the industry, that were not included in this research agenda. The weak amplitude of literature may also explain the association between cannabis related stigmatisation and racism. In Study 2, Instagram posts were used to explore cannabis destigmatisation strategies. The limitations are thus that, firstly, Instagram is a microblogging platform, capturing succinct snapshots of destigmatisation tactics as opposed to other platforms that allow for more loquacious communications such as websites, blogs, and industry publications. These platforms may provide larger quantities of data to investigate more in-depth destigmatisation attempts. This also speaks to the use of microblogging social media platforms in their entirety as a limitation of the study. It is possible that there might be different ways of destigmatising the industry, and these may obtain varying results. However, this does not reduce the significance of using Instagram for this study; the platform uses various tools such as images and text, providing a diverse and therefore rich source of theorising. The

ability of Instagram as a social media platform to inform the public, thereby influencing knowledge; to affect emotions and enable users to act through engaging with and sharing content, make it a viable channel through which to gauge the three related attitude components. An additional limitation of Study 2 is that, in general, the existence of public profiles of cannabis companies are limited due to existing stigma and its resulting limitations. As the cannabis industry becomes more prolific and barriers are lowered, more businesses may become more visible and provide more significant quantities of destigmatisation data to investigate. The first limitation of Study 3, being a qualitative study, involves its sample size. Twenty-two participants were interviewed, resulting in an inability to generalise the findings to larger populations. The aim of this study, however, was not generalisation, but to obtain in-depth insights into destigmatisation tactics' influence on beliefs, emotions, and behaviours; as such, this limitation does not invalidate the value of the findings. An additional limitation of Study 3 was that MS Teams was used as a platform for the in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are usually informed by the building of rapport between the researcher and the interviewee to establish a sense of trust and participants to engage comfortably. Therefore, not conducting the interviews face-to face had the potential to impede such rapport. Contrastingly, due to the stigma and resulting sensitivity associated with the cannabis industry, participants may have felt more comfortable with online interviews. In addition, conducting the interviews online meant that precautionary measures could be taken in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. A more nuanced limitation of Study 3 is based on previous research which highlights the bias of users of stigmatised products, or those surrounded by them. For example, Delfabbro et al. (2021) reported that individuals who believed their friends, family and work colleagues approved of gambling tended to report lower levels of public stigma towards the activity, and that stigma ratings were also lower when people generally had more positive attitudes towards gambling as a form of leisure activity. The contempt perceived to apply towards problem gamblers was also lower when the respondents were themselves regular gamblers. As such, participants in the sample who used cannabis products, or had associates who do, may have more positive attitudes overall or may be more effortlessly influenced by destigmatisation tactics. The study used a combination of judgement sampling (by contacting followers of cannabis business's Instagram accounts) and snowball sampling (by referrals of participants who do not

follow the accounts or use cannabis products) to mitigate this bias. However, it may be useful to investigate users and non-users separately for comparison purposes.

8.4. Recommendations for future research

Various literature consulted in this dissertation points to cannabis prohibition and its resultant stigma, being racially motivated. Therefore, as cannabis stigma has racial foundations, so should its destigmatisation. The ensuing recommendation is thus that future research be conducted with a focus on resubjectification of minority groups such as Black cannabis users. As this dissertation focused on social media as a platform, particularly specifically Instagram, future research could explore cannabis destigmatisation through other social media platforms such as Twitter, Tik Tok and Facebook and other online channels such as websites and blogs; or offline avenues such as cannabis expos or tradeshows. It may also prove beneficial to narrow focus on various perspectives, such as research on cannabis business owners operating in the stigmatised industry. The research could aim to understand their experiences, challenges, and methods of stigma navigation and reduction. An additional recommendation is to investigate various aspects of the cannabis industry separately. More specifically, research on hemp or kenaf (cannabis derivatives) as industrial resources for textiles and building materials may yield differing results from research on psychoactive cannabis products or the medicinal use of cannabis. A clear delineation of these components of cannabis may provide insights into how cannabis related (de)stigmatisation may differ according to its uses. Another distinction that can be made in future research is to determine differences between attitudes towards THC and CBD products. Given that the former is psychoactive and the latter not, there is an expectation that an analysis of the two may yield differing opinions. Some participants who were acquainted with the cannabis industry from experience were also interested in sharing their experiences, knowledge of cannabis. In addition, (de)stigmatisation research can be conducted with a focus on reasons underpinning cannabis use. For instance, as stigma is a social construct with social foundations, research can be conducted on stigma related to religious use, recreational use, use in relation to traditional and cultural customs, as well as medicinal use. Lastly, with regards to various stakeholders, future research could also

draw attention to understanding cannabis activists and lobbyists in relation to the work they do to destigmatise the industry, as well as cannabis businesses, lawyers, and economists.

8.5. Conclusion

This dissertation contributes to establishing a body of empirical research for cannabis industry participants to managing stigma and gaining societal acceptance. Given its potential lucrativeness and potential for economic activity societal support is necessary for this nascent industry to fulfil its potential to spur economic activity in South Africa, and to counteract longstanding negative perceptions and misinformation created by stigma. Without credible research to assist in destigmatisation, the cannabis industry is unlikely to overcome barriers associated with stigmatised markets such as financial, legal, and regulatory hindrances. Through a multi-study approach, this dissertation holistically explored cannabis industry destigmatisation from industry, organisational, and consumer perspectives.

PART 4: REFERENCES

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Addenda

Addendum A: University of Cape Town Commerce Faculty Ethics Approval

Faculty of Commerce
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
2.26 Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 4375/ 5748 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 4369
E-mail: jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za
Internet: www.uct.ac.za
@Commerce UCT **UCT Commerce Faculty Office**

21 02 2022

Nqobile Bundwini
School of Management Studies
University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2022/02/019

Destigmatising the recreational cannabis industry through online marketing in South Africa

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Dec-2023 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

2022.02.21
19:18:24 +02'00'

Jacques Rousseau
Commerce Research Ethics Chair
University of Cape Town
Commerce Faculty Office
Room 2.26 | Leslie Commerce Building

Office Telephone: +27 (0)21 650 2695 / 4375
Office Fax: +27 (0)21 650 4369
E-mail: jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za
Website: http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/com/Ethics-in-Research

Addendum B: Working Group Invitation Letter

Nqobile Bundwini
Lecturer
School of Management Studies
Faculty of Commerce
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701, South Africa
Room 5.28.1 Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus Rondebosch, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5826
E-mail: nqobile.bundwini@uct.ac.za

Invitation to Participate in Cannabis Industry Destigmatisation Research

Dear [insert name],

My name is Nqobile Bundwini, a lecturer and PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. I am researching the cannabis industry in South Africa and would like to request your expertise as a cannabis industry professional. This would be by answering 3 main questions and 5 short demographic questions, which should take you no longer than 10 minutes.

My PhD thesis, titled "Destigmatising the Recreational Cannabis Industry in South Africa", investigates effective methods of managing stigma in the industry with the aim of informing cannabis industry policy in SA, as well as marketing strategies for recreational cannabis businesses. Through a literature review, I have identified various ways in which cannabis businesses attempt to destigmatise their organisations and the cannabis industry as a whole. I ask for you, being a cannabis industry professional, to rank each destigmatisation tactic in terms of 3 criteria: importance, informativity and actionability. These criteria are further defined in the questionnaire.

Please read through the definitions of each destigmatisation tactic (on the following page) in order to understand their role in destigmatising the cannabis industry, before accessing the questions. You are welcome to refer to these definitions should you need to while completing the questions. If you are keen to participate, kindly click the following link to access the survey: https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d6xeMTrE012DkRo

Thank you for your contribution. Take care and keep safe.

Sincerely,

Nqobile Bundwini
Lecturer, Researcher, PhD Candidate
Marketing Department
School of Management Studies, UCT
Email: nqobile.bundwini@uct.ac.za

"Our Mission is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society."

Nqobile Bundwini
Lecturer
School of Management Studies
Faculty of Commerce
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701, South Africa
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Definitions of destigmatisation tactics (to be ranked)

Compliance: complying with South African laws and regulations with no pushback, so as to avoid increased attention to the business.

Hiding: conducting cannabis-related activities discreetly in order to limit attention to the business.

Allying with stigmatising stakeholders: working together positively with those who view the cannabis negatively in order to influence their perceptions. Eg. providing information to health professionals about assisting patients with cannabis.

Using stigma to attract attention: coopting or using the negative labels applied to the cannabis industry, in order to attract publicity and draw attention to the industry. Eg., using the words 'marijuana', 'weed', 'stoner' in public communications to attract attention - whether negative or positive.

Resubjectification: depicting cannabis users and sellers as respectable members of society. Eg., depicting users as working professionals or respectable family members, as opposed to the 'lazy stoner' stereotype.

Rhetoric: deliberately using persuasive language to depict the industry as legitimate. Eg., educating the public on cannabis using science, facts and figures; discrediting existing logics about cannabis; engaging in public debates, lobbying and activism.

Branding: using attractive brand elements to craft a more socially desirable image. Eg. professional-looking staff, sleek product design, using quality technology.

Recontextualisation: reframing the industry in terms of its benefits to society. Eg. highlighting the economic, health and societal benefits of the cannabis industry.

Localisation: focusing on the local community to increase familiarity, becoming 'one' with a community – which decreases perceptions of the industry as "outsiders".

Piggy-backing: using the services and products of non-stigmatised partners – in this way, cannabis businesses 'piggy back' on the good name of others and 'borrow' positive associations.

Increased exposure: positioning cannabis use as part of everyday life, and repeatedly exposing the public to it in order to normalise it and increase acceptance.

Corporate social responsibility: engaging in socially beneficial activities, such as charities in order to contribute positively to society and create more positive perceptions.

Structural and operational responses: implementing changes in the structure of the business to mitigate the effects of stigma. Eg. changing to or keeping the business in informal status, adjusting the managerial team, or changing the business model, in order to increase broader acceptance of cannabis businesses.

Addendum C: In-depth Interview Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide and Information: In-depth Interviews

Section 1: Introduction

Thank you for your time and interest in taking part in this study. Our aim in gaining an in-depth understanding of the effect of cannabis destigmatisation tactics on your attitudes toward cannabis. This discussion will last approximately 45 mins to an hour. Before we begin, we would like to remind you of your rights:

- The UCT Commerce Research Ethics committee has formally approved of this research
- Your responses will remain anonymous and no identifying information will be kept
- This interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes, and the recordings will only be available to me, the principal researcher and my research assistant,
- The recordings will be stored on a password protected device with access given only to the researchers involved in the study, and they will be discarded after the completion of our research
- You have the right to withdraw from or terminate this interview at any time with no consequences

Section 2: In-depth Interview Discussion Guide

There are various methods of destigmatisation used to shift the tone of cannabis from its previously stigmatised status to something more positive. Some cannabis businesses use these methods in their Instagram posts in order to reach certain audiences. These methods are grouped into three main categories: Affirming, Infusing, and Challenging. We will elaborate on each of these, and give you some examples of the destigmatisation in the form of Instagram post excerpts that we will show you on the screen. We will start with some basic introductory questions.

1. Have you ever engaged with cannabis business's Instagram posts? This includes liking, commenting, sharing, etc.
2. Have you ever purchased recreational cannabis products? This includes cannabis itself for recreational use, or paraphernalia such as bongs, grinders, cannabis cosmetics, or even clothing merchandise?
3. How would you describe your attitude in general towards recreational cannabis?
4. What is your opinion of the legalisation of cannabis in South Africa?

5. What do you think would be the benefits/pros of cannabis legalisation in SA?
6. What do you think would be the cons of cannabis legalisation in SA?
7. What are your feelings in general towards posts that paint recreational cannabis in a negative light?
8. What are your feelings in general towards posts that paint recreational cannabis in a positive light?

Section 2: Main questions

In this section, we will discuss destigmatisation tactics belonging to various categories. We will define the category and the tactics and show you images as examples. We will then ask you three main questions about each one, namely how it affects your beliefs towards cannabis, your feelings about cannabis, as well as your actions and behaviours with regards to cannabis.

Affirming

Some Instagram posts are Affirming posts, meaning they display an affirmation, or the 'owning' of cannabis, such as proudly declaring they are a cannabis brand.

One of the ways some posts show affirmation is by grouping together and allying with other cannabis businesses. I will now show you a post that the tactic 'allying with other cannabis businesses'.

- Does this have any effect, whether positive or negative, on what you *believe* about cannabis?
- Does it have any effect, whether positive or negative, on how you *feel* about cannabis? How does it make you *feel* towards cannabis?
- Does it have any effect, whether positive or negative, on how you *behave or act* with regards to cannabis? *Probing (if needed): For example, does it inspire you to share the post with others, or comment, to publicly agree with them, support a legalisation petition, or to even purchase any cannabis products? How would you act as a result of seeing such a post?*

Another way of displaying affirmation is by using stigma to attract, or 'luring in' audiences by using their stigma labels for attention. For example, the use of words such as 'dagga', 'ganja', and 'mary jane'. Because these carry stigma, they attract attention. I will now show you a post from a cannabis business that does this.

- Does this have any effect, whether positive or negative, on what you *know or believe* about cannabis? *Probing (if needed): Please elaborate on how it may change your knowledge or beliefs.*
- Does it have any effect, whether positive or negative, on how you *feel* about cannabis? How does it make you *feel* towards cannabis? *Probing (if needed): Please elaborate on how why it makes you feel this way towards cannabis?*
- Does it have any effect, whether positive or negative, on how you *behave or act* with regards to cannabis? *Probing (if needed): For example, does it inspire you to share the post with others,*

or comment, to publicly agree with them, support a legalisation petition, or to even purchase any cannabis products? How would you act as a result of seeing such a post?

Infusing

Some Instagram posts are Infusing posts, meaning that they 'borrow' positive associations or existing widely accepted values and tie them to cannabis, or their organisation.

One of the ways some posts display Infusion is recontextualising. This means reframing the cannabis industry in an attempt to appeal to more socially-approved labels. For example, citing the health benefits of cannabis. I will now show you an example of a recontextualisation post.
Show example and repeat questions

Another Infusing method is through Branding (using elements of branding, such as a 'sleek' product design to move away from the 'dirty' label of cannabis).
Show example and repeat questions

Let's talk about localisation. This means being locally focused on a particular community, to reduce perceptions of the cannabis industry as 'outsiders', and to build familiarity.
Show example and repeat questions

How about piggybacking? This means affiliating with other non-stigmatised third parties as a way to 'piggyback' on their good name.
Show example and repeat questions

Increased exposure. Through repeated exposure, an audience becomes desensitised to a stigmatised object, creating a sense of normalisation.
Show example and repeat questions

Diluting means diluting or 'loosening' association with cannabis, such as offering it as part of a larger 'wellness' offering of yoga, or other therapies.
Show example and repeat questions

Some posts display corporate social responsibility initiatives by the cannabis business, such as giving to a charity. This can build positive associations that can reduce stigma.
Show example and repeat questions

Challenging

Some Instagram posts are Challenging posts, meaning they don't just 'own' cannabis proudly, but also challenge other audiences – especially stigmatisers – to do the same, or at least reassess their beliefs.

Show example and repeat questions

Some 'Challenging' posts show allying with stigmatisers, offering some value to those who stigmatise them in order to influence their perceptions.

Show example and repeat questions

Resubjectification means creating new, socially desirable identities for individuals involved with cannabis, whether that's the seller/supplier/distributor, funder, or the user. Usually this displays cannabis/cannabis product users in socially accepted activities, such as sports or working.

Show example and repeat questions

Some use rhetoric, which involves deliberately using persuasive language, like emotive or strong words, scientific facts and figures, and even patient/user testimonials.

Show example and repeat questions

Section 3: Demographics and social media

Please answer some basic demographic questions before we finish. Please answer the following:

Age: _____

Province of residence:

- ☐ Gauteng
- ☐ Western Cape
- ☐ Mpumalanga
- ☐ Limpopo
- ☐ Northern Cape
- ☐ Eastern Cape
- ☐ Kwazulu-Natal
- ☐ Free State
- ☐ North West Province

Country of birth: _____

How would you describe yourself in terms of population group:

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Coloured
- ☐ Indian/Asian
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Social media use:

Which, if any, social media platforms do you make use of:

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ WhatsApp

- [ ] LinkedIn
- [ ] Snapchat
- [ ] TikTok
- [ ] Others

How frequently, on average, do you access social media platforms, like those included above?

- [ ] More than once a day
- [ ] Once a day
- [ ] A few times a week
- [ ] Once a week
- [ ] Once a month

Do you have frequent/regular access to the internet?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Closing

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this research. Do you have anything else you would like to add that we have not covered already?

Thank you for your contribution. Take care and keep safe.