

How cannabis use is portrayed to adolescents and young adults via TikTok: A thematic content analysis

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Introduction and Aims: User-generated cannabis-related content on the increasingly-popular social media platform, TikTok, may influence adolescent's perceptions towards cannabis use. We aimed to examine how cannabis-related videos are portrayed on TikTok.

Method / Approach: Data were collected from TikTok accounts using hashtag based keywords on cannabis-related videos ($n = 1311$). Four researchers independently coded for number of views, likes, user category and theme.

Results: A subset sample ($n = 586$) revealed 54.78% of content depicted cannabis use positively, with 15.84% videos actively depicting cannabis or a cannabis administration product. Content portraying cannabis use as entertaining or humorous accounted for 41.29% of videos, with a further 23.89% discussing user's personal cannabis use experiences and 12.28% promoting the acceptability of cannabis use socially and culturally. On average, these videos received 1,454,000 views and 166,220 likes. Content creators were predominantly Caucasian and between the ages of 25-50. Users were equally likely to be male or female.

Discussions and Conclusions: From our sample of cannabis related videos, over half portrayed cannabis use positively. All videos were accessible to users under the age of 18 and with previous research demonstrating that exposure to cannabis related content may have consequences on adolescent attitudes and subsequent use, it is imperative that effective age restrictions and better regulations are implemented.

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