Re-Branding "Reefer":

The Effects of Branding on Consumer Attitudes Towards Legal Cannabis

Abstract

Legal cannabis markets have begun rapidly emerging around the world and the trend seems poised to continue spreading. But even after the fight for legalization has been won, there awaits an entirely new battle for actors in the cannabis market: undoing the decades of stigma, stereotypes, and controversy surrounding the world's most valuable cash crop. Yet even in legal markets, little effort has been made to change the image or reputation of cannabis, as firms continue to use branding and marketing practices that only reinforce the stereotypes of the past. This study explores the absence of branding practices in the legal market and investigates how new branding practices might affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis — which, presumably, would influence the development of this controversial market. A quantitative experiment was conducted with a sample of 381 respondents who were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment groups. Respondents were exposed to a series of images that depicted legal cannabis through either *Immature* (unbranded, stereotypical) or *Mature* (branded, professional) branding practices, and the respondent's attitudes toward each image were tested. The results show that new branding practices — such as the creation of cannabis brands, efforts to stray away from cannabis stereotypes, and improved retail design — can generate more positive attitudes towards legal cannabis. However, the presence of familiar brands in the cannabis market through brand extensions can prompt more negative attitudes. After confirming that new branding practices can affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis, the study supports the theory that improved branding practices can affect the development of the legal market, and therefore serves as an encouragement to stakeholders in the cannabis industry to improve their branding practices.

Keywords: cannabis, marijuana, drugs, legalization, branding, marketing, consumer attitudes, emerging markets, market shaping, stereotypes, familiar brands, brand extensions, retail design

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 The *New* "War On Drugs"

Though it might have seemed like a far-off fantasy just a few years ago, cannabis legalization is rapidly becoming a reality. With legalization for recreational use in four U.S. States (Colorado, Washington, Oregon, & Alaska, plus the nation's capitol, Washington D.C.) and for medical use in 19 other states, legal cannabis is the fastest-growing market in America — increasing from a $1.4 billion market value in 2013 to $2.34 billion in 2014, with predictions of the market reaching $10 billion by 2018 (Arcview Group, 2013; Huffington Post, 2013). Considering that 58% of Americans believed that cannabis should be fully-legalized in 2013 (the highest number in U.S. history, up 10-points from 2012), federal legalization seems inevitable for the U.S. (Gallup, 2013). That's not to mention the increasing number of other countries moving in the same direction. Recently, Uruguay became the first country to legalize cannabis for recreational use (World Policy, 2014). Canada's medical cannabis market is worth $120 million and forecasted to reach $1.2 billion over the next decade, with 59% of Canadians in support of full recreational legalization (Wall Street Journal, 2014; CTV, 2014). Even Italy has begun planning for its military to grow medical cannabis to avoid the high cost of imported Dutch cannabis (Reuters, 2014). Currently, 11 European countries have allowed various forms of access to medicinal cannabis, and many more nations are starting to discuss the possibility of similar types of reform (High Alert, 2014).

It seems that this "experiment," as many refer to it, is far from over and cannabis legalization is set to continue spreading internationally. In their 2014 report, the Global Commission on Drug Policy made unprecedented suggestions for global reform, including to "allow and encourage diverse experiments in legally regulating markets in currently illicit drugs, beginning with but not limited to cannabis, coca leaf and certain novel psychoactive substances" (2014). After decades of a failed "War on Drugs," the movement to end cannabis prohibition is growing in support, both from the public and authorities. It is no longer a question of *if* cannabis will become legal, but *when*.

The cannabis market still has a bumpy road ahead of it, stretching far beyond its legalization. Even after it becomes legal, there still remains over seven decades of stigma attached to this controversial crop which can't simply be removed with the stroke of a pen. For producers and consumers alike, an entirely new "war on drugs" must be fought to remove the negative associations and stereotypes surrounding cannabis. Though it may be regulated similarly to alcohol within the next decade, there's no telling how long it might take before cannabis becomes as uncontroversial as

beer or wine. Similarly, while cannabis has been proven to have a wide range of medical uses — which even the White House is willing to admit, despite their refusal to remove cannabis from America's list of Schedule I drugs (White House, 2011) — it remains to be seen if and when those medical uses will become as widely acknowledged and implemented as traditional pharmaceuticals. Never before has a product with such a troubled history and reputation hit the market, so the future of how legal cannabis will settle into society remains something that no expert can confidently predict. Therefore, the legal and regulatory aspects of cannabis are only half the battle for the industry, leaving the future of cannabis to be determined by marketers as much as any authorities.

1.2 Problematization

While the cannabis is going through drastic changes — both legally and culturally — which even the most enthusiastic of advocates would have never predicted, the marketing of cannabis is evolving at a disappointing pace. Legally, cannabis may soon become a "new alcohol," but it will still take years, perhaps decades, before it is as socially, culturally, and commercially normalized as alcohol. Regulatory efforts will only work to create a market for legal cannabis. It will then take marketing and branding activities to shape the market and determine cannabis' role in society. It is undeniable that the $1 trillion spent globally each year on alcohol marketing influences its role in society (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2013). Therefore, just as the cannabis industry seeks to mold its market similarly to alcohol, it should also strive to market itself similarly and stray away from the black-market branding that still haunts the market.

Though most in the industry agree that cannabis needs to refine its reputation to change consumer attitudes and attract more customers, there is little to no research on exactly what type of marketing and branding efforts could be enacted to do so. Therefore, it would be useful to both actors in the legal cannabis market, as well as marketers with an interest in the unprecedented phenomenon of its development, to explore how new approaches to branding and marketing might shift consumer attitudes towards this controversial commodity.

1.3 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to examine how new branding and marketing practices can affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis and how such efforts might influence the development of the market. With this purpose, the study seeks to answer this main research question:

> **—Can improved branding practices for cannabis positively affect the development of its legal market and encourage its growth?**

In order the guide the study, the following sub-questions have been formed:

— **What characteristics of the cannabis market prevent brands from forming?**

— **How might new branding practices affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis?**

— **How might the entrance of familiar brands into the cannabis market affect consumer attitudes?**

— **How might improved retail design for cannabis dispensaries affect consumer attitudes?**

Using Kjellberg & Helgesson's theory on the nature of markets and market practices, the study will survey the current state of the legal cannabis market and the various market practices at work. This will provide a foundation to understand the importance of market practices such as the branding and their interconnectedness with the other market practices collectively shaping the sensitive legal cannabis market. After reviewing existing knowledge on branding, we can test how consumers might respond to their implementation in the cannabis market and gain insights about how such efforts might influence its growth.

1.4 Expected Knowledge Contribution

This research intends to contribute knowledge regarding the effects of branding on consumer attitudes towards cannabis and provide insights to marketers about how such practices might shape the legal market. While a fair amount of research has been conducted on cannabis, most studies seem to focus on health effects, socio-economic trends, and public opinion polls. Cannabis has yet to be explored within the disciplines of marketing or consumer behavior, leaving a research gap and lack of knowledge. The study hopes to provide insights to marketers in the cannabis industry about the importance of their role — not just for their own firm, but for the entire market— and provide insights as to how they can move forward in helping the market reach its full potential.

Given that cannabis is a very unique case of market formation, where a product that has been criminalized for nearly a century is suddenly becoming regulated and commercialized, the study also hopes to contribute knowledge to the disciplines of market studies and consumer behavior. Though cannabis is currently an anomaly, there has been much discussion about similar regulatory efforts being made to other prohibited drugs. Therefore, such research into the effects of the (re-)branding of formerly-criminalized drugs may contribute knowledge to similar markets that emerge in the future.

1.5 Delimitations

Given the complex nature of the subject at hand, this study seems to require a more complex delimitations section than the average thesis. Here, we will discuss two types of delimitations that should be addressed before moving forward: general (or ethical) delimitations and academic delimitations. First, let us discuss some **general delimitations**, which intend to prepare the reader for what it to come regarding the ethical perspective of this thesis:

Since this research deals with a highly-stigmatized and controversial market, it seems necessary to provide a brief explanation regarding the intentions of this research for any readers who are skeptical or opposed to the legalization or consumption of cannabis. Firstly, the legalization of cannabis seems essentially inevitable (at least for the Western world). Even those who feel strongly opposed to the use of cannabis can agree to varying extents on a few points: 1) that it is impossible to completely eliminate cannabis from society, 2) that it is foolish to keep cannabis unregulated and untaxed, with revenues flowing to the black market, and 3) that society should not continue arresting and imprisoning people for using a non-lethal (and, compared to alcohol, relatively harmless) substance like cannabis. The acknowledge of any of these arguments gives way to the creation of a legal cannabis market. So if we can acknowledge the utility of a legal cannabis market, it is worth exploring whether branding and marketing practices can affect the trajectory of the market's growth and encourage more regions to take steps towards legalization. Further, with the existence of a legal cannabis market, we must acknowledge that the firms within that market will strive to reach maximal potential, as is the case in any market. With that said, when discussing efforts to change consumer attitudes towards cannabis or attract new consumers, it is not an encouragement for the cannabis industry to persuade all consumers to become cannabis users.

Given its history of being a "gateway drug" that everyone should "Just Say No" to, it is understandable if some readers find it absurd or unethical to examine how to make more consumers use cannabis. Yet, we must acknowledge the $1 trillion of marketing expenditures spent annually by the alcohol industry. Is a Bud Light commercial automatically advocating a world where everyone is constantly drunk? Are the marketing efforts of a winery an encouragement of alcoholism? Though there is certainly controversy surrounding alcohol marketing, most would agree that the marketing departments of Absolut Vodka or Coppola Wines are not determined to turn us all into alcoholics. So when discussing how to change consumer attitudes towards cannabis and attract new consumers to the market, rest assured that it is only within the means that any marketer hopes to gain market share and attract customers. This paper is not an advocation for some Rastafarian dystopia where everyone is "stoned" and addicted to drugs. The only intended outcome of this discussion is to explore how branding and marketing might turn cannabis into a product as uncontroversial as a glass of wine or a beer. What might it take for cannabis to become a product that might be as effortlessly and

harmlessly purchased for a dinner party as a gift, as one might do so with a bottle of wine? So even if the reader feels that cannabis is a dangerous and terrible drug that does nothing but harm for society, consider that some people may feel the same way about alcohol — yet the alcohol marketing is nevertheless happening at an enormous scale and is worthy of researching. So if we can acknowledge that a legal cannabis market is inevitable, then cannabis branding and marketing should be worth examining for understanding and improvement.

Now let us briefly address some **academic delimitations** of this thesis:

Since the legal cannabis market has yet to be researched adequately from a marketing perspective, this research will be somewhat exploratory. The objective of this thesis is not to generate any groundbreaking or concrete conclusions, as the issues and problems surrounding the cannabis market are far too complex to be solved in a single Master's thesis. Rather, this study intends to act as a springboard for future research into the cannabis market and encourage both marketing researchers and practitioners to look at the emerging legal market from a new perspective. Nevertheless, this study will develop hypotheses based on existing theory and knowledge, and test them through quantitative methods in hopes of generating new insights about the problem at hand.

Regarding the methodology, the quantitative methods should also be viewed as somewhat exploratory. Given the lack of prior research, it would be impossible to produce a firm and detailed understanding of the problems at the hand in a single Master's thesis. Though the study should produce conclusive findings regarding the research questions, these issues will undoubtedly need to be researched further to generate more acute insights into the problem areas. For instance, due to limited resources and the researchers' judgement on the best environment to gather usable data within those resources, the quantitative studies were conducted only online. Further, the study's respondents came from various regions and were looked at collectively, rather than individually testing respondents from different regions. Therefore, the findings of this study are relatively broad and more in-depth future research may be needed to generate deeper insights into the problem areas.

Considering the lack of prior research into the cannabis market, this study may also seem somewhat unfocused at times. Approaching this new research area, the author found it necessary to digress more often than one might in a study focused on any other more widely-understood topic, in order to assure that the reader has an adequate understanding of what is being discussed. While the focus of this thesis is cannabis branding and its effects on consumer attitudes towards the legal market (and simultaneously, the development of the market itself), it seemed necessary to provide a broader discussion into these issues to assure that any reader can follow.

Lastly, we must address the controversial nature of cannabis again. Since cannabis is much more polarizing than most issues that one might find in an academic study like this, it is easy to be

seen as biased while discussing this topic. Though the author intended to remain as neutral as possible in this study, many readers may still find this study to be biased and feel that the author's personal views have influenced the study. To be clear, this study is written from a perspective that has accepted the emergence of the legal cannabis market and intends to encourage its growth, as any marketer does with their respective markets. Since that perspective may seem absurd to many based on their own personal opinions, some readers are bound to find this study biased for not remaining completely neutral about the fate of the emerging legal market and perceive it as unacademic in that sense. However, as a fellow Master's student noted in the defense seminar for this thesis, Milton Friedman's research is never considered "unacademic" because it is influenced by his personal views on free-market capitalism. While the author of this Master's thesis is no Milton Friedman, it is a good point to keep in mind when encountering any perceived bias within this study.

1.6 Disposition

This study consists of seven chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Background, (3) Theory, (4) Methodology, (5) Results, (6) Analysis & Discussion, and (7) Conclusion & Implications.

The Introduction chapter sets the stage for the research, identifying the problem, explaining the study's purpose and expected knowledge contribution, and noting its delimitations.

The Background chapter will dive deeper into the problem by reviewing existing literature and knowledge to give the reader a better understanding of the problem at hand.

The Theory chapter will explore previous theory and research that relates to the study in order to provide an academic background for the hypotheses of this report.

The Methodology chapter will explain the reasoning behind the chosen research design, including variables, survey questions, and the experiment sample. This section will then overview the two pre-studies and experimental main study that were conducted to test the study's hypotheses. The quality, reliability, internal validity, and external validity will also be discussed.

The Results section will review the data collected from the study and determine whether the hypotheses were supported or not supported based on the experiment's results.

In the Analysis & Discussion chapter, the study's results will be analyzed and further discussed by connecting them to prior theory and knowledge in order to gain a better understanding of the meaning of the experiment's results.

Finally, the Conclusion & Implications chapter will provide a general conclusion for the report, some managerial implications of the study's findings, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

2. Background

2.1 "The Starbucks of Pot"

While cannabis has made major regulatory strides in recent years, the marketing of cannabis seems to be somewhat stuck in the sofa. In a July 2014 cover story titled "Who Will Become The Starbucks of Pot?" AdWeek examined the state of cannabis marketing and branding (or lack thereof). At a recent Los Angeles "farmers market" for cannabis suppliers, AdWeek saw that "while all the vendors [were] expected to bring to market only the finest-quality [cannabis], very few, apparently, showed up having taken Marketing 101" (2014). Of the event's 50+ suppliers presenting their offerings to 4,000+ consumers in attendance, only one had a branded product. Its owner, Cheryl Shuman, explained how most cannabis suppliers in the Los Angeles market seem clueless about how to market their offerings. "Growers were coming up to me and asking, 'How do we make ourselves different? Maybe we should come up with a logo and a name [...] The branding of cannabis doesn't exist yet" (AdWeek, 2014).

The article gave a few explanations for why the cannabis industry lacks even the most basic marketing efforts, such as brand names and logos. The first of which was tied to the legal grey-area that the market still operates in. "Since the federal government still classifies pot as a Schedule I controlled substance [...] market conditions are not exactly ripe for branding" (ibid). Since less than half of U.S. states allow legal cannabis, each of which under different regulations, it is difficult for cannabis brands to grow. Therefore, the market remains atomized when it comes to suppliers and sellers — a plethora of small-scale "Mom-&-Pop shops" operating successfully in their own local markets but with little hope or incentive to expand. And since most of their competitors also lack strong marketing strategies or branding, the average cannabis firm sees no need to develop such things themselves in order to differentiate their offerings.

Further, the market is thriving even without strong brands that have "taken Marketing 101," giving actors even less incentive to spend time or money on marketing and branding activities. "That's because most consumers of cannabis don't think in terms of brands just yet. While it comes in assorted varieties [...] it's mostly sold as a commodity" (ibid). The average cannabis consumer doesn't demand an attractive brand or compelling marketing to make a purchase — they're just pleased to be able to purchase cannabis safely and legally, even if it means that their purchase is packaged in a Zip-Loc bag with a hand-written adhesive sticker.

This widely-accepted perception of cannabis as a commodity rather than a branded product has kept the industry from evolving beyond the unappealing image that it still wears. Today's cannabis dispensaries "look more like pawn shops than pharmacies, with their bright neon baggies of Bubba Kush and armed security guards. Seattle's The Green Skunk [dispensary], for example,

advertises 'Free Gram Friday' and features a heavy-lidded, thoroughly baked Pepe Le Pew as its mascot" (ibid). Even if this stereotypical aesthetic appeals to their target consumer, the cannabis retail experience is miles away from the pleasantness or ease of grabbing a Starbucks, with dispensaries embodying a "Fort Knox-style atmosphere" with "bulletproof glass and heat-packing security guards because banks and credit card companies refuse to do business with them, which makes them cash-only enterprises—as well as targets for thieves" (ibid). Though dispensaries have no choice regarding the security measures that are necessary to operate, regulatory road-blocks are no excuse for the weed-leaf logos, Bob Marley posters, stoner-slang, and other stereotypes that plague the market. The marketing gimmicks and unprofessional images presented by most cannabis firms might be fine for the average cannabis consumer, who would presumably be buying cannabis from the black market anyways if it were not available legally. However, these trends pose a major problem for the development of the market.

A recent New York Times piece on cannabis branding echoed the issues explored by AdWeek, writing: "Step into a Colorado pot dispensary at random, and you'll long for the luxuries of the DMV. Metal bars cover windows. Vinyl signs are tacked to walls. Guys in hoodie sweatshirts greet you from behind the counter. Even the act of ordering the product itself is borderline absurd. What grown adult can respectfully walk into a store and ask for an eighth of Green Krack and a nub of Big Buddha Cheese, please?" (New York Times, 2014).   The piece goes on to note how most cannabis dispensaries "look like underground abortion clinics" whose marketing often consists of "women with whipped cream straddling bongs" (ibid). Even the strongest cannabis advocates can acknowledge that the industry's image is "comically rudimentary" and desperately needs a make-over before it can "shed its stoner stigma" (ibid). As AdWeek suggested, the industry needs branding that looks "more Scandinavian than skunk" in order to put a consumer-friendly, non-stereotypical face onto cannabis (AdWeek, 2014).

While there are a handful of professionally-branded firms in the industry, most don't sell cannabis itself but rather products associated with cannabis such as vaporizers (cannabis e-cigarettes) and other accessories, or services such as online review pages or maps websites. "The closer you get to the plant, the fewer the people involved," says Joe Hodas, CMO of Dixie Elixirs, a brand of cannabis edibles (ibid). This makes many wonder just how the industry will look when the regulatory dust settles and cannabis becomes a fully-commercial product. Many see cannabis as looking more like the alcohol market, where branding is virtually as important as the product itself. "You could say that all bourbon is bourbon—it's the same proof, so what's a brand matter? But it does matter," says Hodas. Unfortunately, most cannabis suppliers seem content with selling it as a commodity, which looks more like "Prohibition-era alcohol," as one entrepreneur put it, rather than an industry of diverse, specialized, and consumer-friendly offerings (ibid).

These issues prompted AdWeek to ask when (or if) there will be a "Starbucks of pot." As they put it: "We all know that every category, from European imports to beauty products, has its leading brands, so which are the brands shaping up to dominate cannabis? Is the day coming when we could see a Marlboro (or Starbucks, or Mercedes-Benz) of pot?" (ibid).

While this is an important question for the industry, it isn't only about who will end up "dominating" the market. It's also a question of how the market itself will come to form. Being a "Starbucks" (or Apple or Nike or Coca-Cola, etc.) of a market doesn't only mean being the leader of it, but also transforming that market in the same way that Starbucks did with coffee industry. The issue of cannabis branding and marketing doesn't only concern who will become leaders within the market, but who will shape the market itself.

2.2 "Stoned Moms: The Industry's Greatest Untapped Market"

After Colorado's legalization of recreational cannabis, a study conducted by the state's Department of Revenue found some interesting trends regarding the frequency of use and share of overall demand for cannabis consumers. While "heavy-users," or those that use cannabis over 20 times per month, accounted for 29.9% of all cannabis consumers, this market segment purchased 87.1% of all cannabis sold. Meanwhile, consumers that use cannabis less than five times per month make up 53.7% of the market, yet only account for 3.6% of all cannabis sold (Colorado Department of Revenue, 2014). These statistics give some insight as to why the industry has yet to evolve regarding its branding and marketing. A large majority of legal cannabis is purchase by habitual users that consume it like a commodity and do not need consumer-friendly brands to persuade them to make a purchase. Further, one could presume that such heavy users — who consume cannabis heavily enough to qualify as a "stoner" — do not perceive the "stoner" motifs (i.e. weed leaf logos, Rastafarian imagery, street slang, etc.) of the industry's current image in the same way that a passive observer without the same relationship to cannabis might see them.

To gain more insights into both the market of today and its prospective future, Vice Media produced a documentary titled "Stoned Moms: The Marijuana Industry's Greatest Untapped Market," which was presented with this description:

> "If you get moms smoking then you can get almost anybody. That's the plan of the legal cannabis industry and they're searching for ways to get moms around the country to set down their wine and light up. We travel to Denver with Jessica Roake, a mother of two from the suburbs of Washington, DC for a mom-friendly cannabis tour. She gets blazed beyond belief in the name of market research" (Vice, 2014).

Mrs. Roake, the subject of the piece, explains that she used to use cannabis during college but gave it up before she became a mother. But "with legalization happening in states across America, making the consumption of cannabis more socially acceptable, Jessica is interested in picking it up again as a safe, recreational drug she can use when her kids go to bed" (ibid). For this piece of "market research," Vice chose Mrs. Roake because, as they explain it, "she's the kind of consumer the industry needs more of" (ibid). Though medical cannabis had already been legalized in Mrs. Roake's home of Washington D.C. before the piece's production, Vice decided to bring her to Colorado, which has been dubbed by many as "the Silicon Valley of cannabis," to get her motherly opinion on the most developed market in the industry.

Despite Mrs. Roake's past experience with cannabis, her current perception of it had clearly been influenced by common misconceptions and stereotypes. She recounts her first experience with purchasing legal cannabis in Washington D.C.: "When I first opened it, it was so pungent that I was terrified driving back to my house. Even after I got it out of my car. The next day, when I picked my kids up, I was like, 'What if the kids can smell it? What if the kids can get high in the backseat just from the smell of the weed?'" (ibid). Mrs. Roake's fear presents an important insight into the marketing woes that the industry faces. It is hard to imagine a mother becoming "terrified" that her kids could become intoxicated from the aroma of an open wine bottle. Yet consumers with minimal knowledge or experience with cannabis, such extreme fears and concerns may come naturally.

Throughout her visit to Colorado's cannabis industry, Mrs. Roake often used wine to rationalize her perception of legal cannabis. During a visit to a cannabis production facility, Mrs. Roake addressed her issues with the names of the various cannabis strains (or breeds/types) — which currently function as the main form of cannabis branding. She expressed apprehension to a strain named Jedi Deathstar. "I would say that if you were kind of wading in [to cannabis use]… You know, you go to the wine store and you get a pinot grigio. It's hard to imagine getting comfortably high if you're like 'I'm going to smoke some of the Deathstar!'" (ibid). Mrs. Roake became even more alarmed by a strain called Green Crack: "That's a real branding problem. You want to try to get rid of the stigma for moms. Green Crack is not going to help. " She then notices another plant with the name Black Sugar Rose and is immediately drawn to it. "See, the Black Sugar Rose — that's totally like a chardonnay name. That's accessible. You could be like, 'Come over.' Have a mom party. You would totally get a little Black Sugar Rose" (ibid).

According to the cannabis information service Leafly, a cannabis strain is based on the different genotypes and phenotypes that make up the plant (2014). As a result of decades of cross-breeding of different cannabis genotypes, there is a "virtually limitless selection of strains" (ibid). Over the years, countless cannabis strains have been developed and named by black market growers, who often gave them less-than-consumer-friendly names that eventually became official titles for the

breeds across the global market. For instance, names like Green Crack, Alaskan ThunderFuck, TrainWreck, Jack the Ripper, Agent Orange, Chernobyl, LSD, Durban Poison, and Deadhead OG are all universally-accepted, almost scientific names for certain genotypes of cannabis. However, not every name is so daunting. For instance, legendary cannabis grower and advocate Jack Herer named a popular strain after himself, which could easily pass as a commercial alcohol brand. Other more consumer-friendly names include Northern Lights, Blue Dream, Skywalker, Mr. Nice, Girl Scout Cookies, and God's Gift, among countless more (ibid).

Though Mrs. Roake seemed excited to be surrounded by cannabis plants, it is interesting to see how the name of a strain could immediately cause alarm. With no knowledge of the plants themselves, Mrs. Roake was immediately drawn to certain strains and repelled by others. For all she knew, Black Sugar Rose may have been much more potent strain of cannabis than Green Crack, yet a "chardonnay"-esque name could make her decide that it would be a much more suitable type of cannabis for a "mom party."

This is problematic considering that all staring names are completely arbitrary, decided by black-market growers years (or perhaps decades) ago to create demand for their illegal offerings, long before less-experienced cannabis users, such as moms, were considered a target consumer. And since hundreds of names have already been widely-adopted by the cannabis culture, there is no way to bring certain strains of cannabis to the market without referring to them by their widely-accepted black-market names, which understandably may scare off many potential consumers.

Later in "Stoned Moms," we watch Mrs. Roake's decision process at her first recreational cannabis shop. She chats with one of the shop's "budtenders" (a cannabis bartender/barista) while inspecting the unbranded glass jars with the various strain names printed on plain white stickers. Mrs. Roake dismisses a jar of Deathstar and attempts to explain what kind of cannabis she is looking for. The budtender recommends a strain called Juicy Fruit and gives a brief description of its effects. Mrs. Roake is satisfied with the budtender's recommendation and purchases a pre-rolled joint (cigarette) of Juicy Fruit cannabis.

Watching a new cannabis consumer such as Mrs. Roake go through these steps in the decision process provides some valuable insights for cannabis marketers. She dismisses several strains, like Green Crack and Deathstar, solely because of their names. She ends up settling for the Juicy Fruit — a name lifted from the popular chewing gum brand — after a recommendation from the budtender. Even though this strain of cannabis has no association with the chewing gum brand, one has to wonder if the familiar brand name automatically created positive attitudes for Mrs. Roake, just like a strain with "Crack" in the name brought up negative associations.

Regardless of the budtender's recommendation or explanation of the strain's effects, a familiar, consumer-friendly brand name clearly had a powerful effect on Mrs. Roake. If the

budtender had recommended Green Crack as the strain best suited to her needs, would she so easily make the purchase? If the budtender had given the same description of Juicy Fruit's effects for the Green Crack strain, would it have made Mrs. Roake any less intimidated by the strain? If the budtender had told Mrs. Roake that Juicy Fruit was actually a much stronger, more intense cannabis strain than Green Crack, would she still have chosen the Juicy Fruit?

Mrs. Roake's trip to Colorado serves as an interesting case study for marketers regarding how potential consumers perceive the branding and marketing of legal cannabis. While heavy-users, who purchase 87.1% of all Coloradan cannabis, may have no problem with strain names like Green Crack or Jedi Deathstar, they are clearly a deterrent to some of the casual cannabis consumers that account for over 50% of the market.   If legal cannabis markets want to increase sales among the large segment of occasional users, they will need to re-think the effects of having a cannabis strain with a name that compares it to freebase cocaine.

Sales figures aside, marketers must consider the effects that black-market branding has on consumers with zero-interest in cannabis. If Mrs. Roake, a former cannabis user with an interest in consuming again, was so intimidated by names like Green Crack, how would someone who has never consumed cannabis feel about such branding? Its effects go beyond convincing potential customers to purchase cannabis, but may also hinder the development of the market by creating negative attitudes towards the industry for all consumers (or voters).

In America's 2014 elections, Florida's bill to legalize medical cannabis failed by only 2%, missing the 60% majority that it needed to pass. Leading up to the election, anti-legalization groups advertised images of young children walking past legal cannabis dispensaries with large weed-leaf symbols on their exteriors. One can imagine that if the industry did not practice such poor branding, the prospect of legal cannabis in Florida may have seemed less frightening and the bill may have gained the extra 2% approval needed to pass. Yet because legal cannabis brands itself so poorly, the market may have lost the opportunity to grow significantly, as Florida is the fourth most-populated U.S. state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). If the industry's goal is to make cannabis as socially-accepted and commercially available as beer or wine, strain names like Green Crack and other poor branding practices will undoubtedly make that goal much more difficult to reach.

Vice's "Stoned Moms" piece only presents the opinions of one potential cannabis consumer, but it still speaks volumes about the current state of cannabis and the future challenges it faces. As Vice notes in the conclusion to the piece, "If federal prohibition is ever repealed and more states make weed legal, pot could become as mainstream as wine — but only if marketers figure out how to pitch their product. And it feels like there's still a lot of work to be done" (2014). During the entire piece, Mrs. Roake's only criticisms of the cannabis industry was its branding, marketing, and labeling — the traits of cannabis that the industry seems to pay the least attention to when it comes to

developing the market. So if there's "a lot of work to be done" before cannabis can go mainstream, it would be wise to address the aspects of the industry that scare off consumers like Mrs. Roake — which the industry desperately needs to win over.

2.3 The Great Debate: Alcohol vs. Cannabis

In an April 2014 episode of the podcast Freakonomics" the show's host, journalist Steve J. Dubner, poses a thought experiment:

> "Imagine a fantasy world that's exactly as the world is today – smartphones, cars, podcasts [...] but two things are missing: alcohol and marijuana. They don't exist yet. Then tomorrow, they are both discovered. What happens now? How are each of them used – and, perhaps more important, how are each of them regulated? If we were starting from scratch – with no cultural or legal baggage, with no preconceptions – how would we weigh the relative benefits and, especially, the costs of marijuana versus alcohol?" (Freakonomics, 2014)

The first to address this question is David Nutt, British psychiatrist and former chairman of the UK's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), who answers: "I'm not so sure about alcohol. I wonder if alcohol was discovered today, I think people would be very concerned about the toxicity. And I suspect alcohol would be banned within ten years if it became available today. If marijuana was discovered today, I think people would probably accept it" (ibid).

In Nutt's 2010 study, "Drug Harms in the UK: A Multicriteria Decision Analysis," he and his colleagues calculated the harms and social externalities of 20 different drugs. They did so by giving each drug a "harm score," which factored in mortality rate, cost of dependence, loss of relationships, injuries, crime, and costs to society such as health care, criminal justice, and lost productivity. "It turns out that alcohol was the most harmful drug overall, largely because of the massive harms to society, the huge economic cost, the huge health care cost, the huge policing cost of alcohol to society," Nutt says. "And cannabis scored less than half of the overall harms of alcohol" (ibid). In the podcast, Dubner notes a caveat to the study's results: the availability and prevalence of alcohol in society. Since alcohol is much more commonly consumed and easily obtained than other drugs, it naturally creates more negative externalities to society than illegal, less-available drugs. Yet aside from the social aspects of the alcohol vs. cannabis debate, Nutt and many others (including President Obama) agree that, on a strictly chemical level, alcohol is more harmful than cannabis. This year, a study from the National Center for Biotechnology Information also suggested that cannabis meets all seven criteria to serve as a substitute for alcohol and may be prescribed to alcoholics for treatment (2014). Further, new research is continuously emerging that supports various medical benefits of

cannabis, such as treatment of PTSD, cancer, epilepsy, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, and many more ailments (Business Insider, 2014).

Yet even with scientific evidence and expert opinions, the debate of cannabis and alcohol's relative benefits/harms remains highly controversial. Case in point: David Nutt was fired from his position as chairman of Britain's ACMD for stating that alcohol and cigarettes are more dangerous than cannabis and MDMA — a telling sign of just how far cannabis has to go before becoming a "glass of wine" to society. Comparing cannabis to alcohol, even with scientific data and medical expertise, is an outrageous act unless alcohol is said to be the victor — one of the many side-effects of 70+ years of prohibition and propaganda.

But we are not discussing the medical or social harms of cannabis or alcohol here, only the social and consumer attitudes towards the two drugs during this time of change. Which brings us to a moment that comes later in the Freakonomics episode.

After explaining the various externalities of cannabis and alcohol, host Steven J. Dubner asks his co-host, University of Chicago economist Steven Levitt, a rather blunt question: "If you could control all four of your kids in the future and require that they could only consume one or the other, marijuana or alcohol, which would it be?"

> LEVITT: I think that I would have them consume alcohol and not marijuana. Because I think alcohol is just such an integral part of being an American. And I think that if you have sensible attitudes towards alcohol, it can be a huge positive and doesn't have to be a huge negative. In 30 years, I'd probably give you a different answer because the role of marijuana in society might change. The role of alcohol might change. And it may be that if the social role of marijuana becomes very prominent and the hanging-out-with-the-wrong-kind-of-people destructive role goes away, the pure consumption of the marijuana might be better. But the consumption of the alcohol and the consumption of the marijuana are such a small part of what the social meaning of it is [...] (Freakonomics, 2014).

Even an acclaimed and award-winning economist like Steven Levitt — who searches for truth in data, statistics, and factual evidence — prefers the consumption of alcohol over cannabis, despite acknowledging that alcohol is more personally and socially harmful. To many, alcohol's role in society outweighs the harms of its use — and vice versa, cannabis' role in society outweighs its relative harmlessness. But how much of alcohol's role in society is re-enforced, or even manufactured, by its marketing and advertising?

The Institute of Alcohol Studies "[estimates] that each year more than £800 million is spent on advertising alcoholic beverages in the UK, with the global estimate approximating $1 trillion" (2013). In America, the alcohol industry reported $3.45 billion on marketing expenditures in 2011 (Federal Trade Commission, 2014). Compare these figures to cannabis, whose only marketing presence up until a few years ago was anti-drug PSA's stressing its dangers, and it's easy to see why

a few studies won't magically turn cannabis into society's preferred intoxicant. While society's familiarity and experience with alcohol clearly contributes to its social acceptance, it would be foolish to ignore the fortunes that have been spent selling alcohol (both literally and psychologically) to consumers.

Which begs the question: while no one can undo the last 70 years and miraculously wipe away the established attitudes towards alcohol and cannabis, as the Freakonomics podcast attempted to do with its thought experiment, how significantly will the role of (or attitudes towards) cannabis in society be affected by branding or marketing that more closely resembles that of alcohol? Aside from the legal and regulatory aspects of cannabis, how effective will cannabis be at "becoming a glass of wine" once its seriously flawed (or in some cases, non-existent) branding efforts evolve into something closer to alcohol's? Perhaps the cannabis industry's most important battle will not be fought in voting booths or offices of regulators, but in marketing departments. Though there's no telling when, or if, the cannabis industry will ever have $1 trillion per year in marketing expenditures, it might be useful to imagine a fantasy world where it does.

3. Theory

This chapter is comprised of two sections. The first half — The Market & Its Practices — will examine the the cannabis market and the various market practices shaping it, in order to provide the reader with a more holistic understanding of the mechanisms at work beyond the issue of legalization vs. prohibition. The second half — Branding & Its Practices — will explore the role and functions of branding in contemporary markets and culture through existing theory. At the end of this chapter, the two sections will be tied together so we can understand the broader effects of branding practices on the market's development before deducing our hypotheses.

3.1 The Market & Its Practices

The first half of our Theory chapter will provide some background on the history of cannabis, its traditional black market, and the emergence of the new legal market. Using prior theory, the objective is to produce a deeper understanding of the various forces shaping the market and establish a foundation to explore the functions of branding in the second half of this chapter.

3.1.1 An Unnatural Phenomenon

Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual model for the nature of markets and their practices was established to address "how ideas partake in shaping markets," in contrast with the common "natural phenomenon" perception of markets (2007). They compare the nature of markets to an "English-

style landscape garden" which appears to depict nature despite being "constructed and shaped by concrete activities" to fit a certain ideas or "representations of nature [...] more worthy of reproduction than nature itself" (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007). Market practices include any "efforts to shape markets as well as efforts to market in markets (to promote, advertise, sell, etc.)" (ibid). Kjellberg & Helgesson propose "a threefold conceptualization of market practice as exchange practices, representational practices, and normalizing practices," which are "entangled" "through chains of translations" (ibid). The cannabis market is undoubtedly "highly dependent on ideas" and would be the last market to be seen as a "natural phenomenon." Its black market was shaped by the negative ideas about cannabis, and the future legal market will be shaped by the wide range of opinions surrounding this controversial commodity. Therefore, the cannabis market seems ripe to be observed through Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual model in order to categorize the various forces at work and how their interconnectedness affects its development. After doing so, we may be able to view branding and marketing within that framework to explore how such practices might also translate to the other market practices shaping the legal cannabis market. So let us first define the three types of market practices, according to Kjellberg & Helgesson.

Normalizing practices are "activities that contribute to establish guidelines for how a market should be (re)shaped or work according to some (group of) actor(s)," which can include market reforms, "efforts to specify general rules of competition and marketing and the application of such rules to specific cases," "the shaping of voluntary standards, both private and official, which may substantially affect markets," and "activities related to strategic planning and establishment of objectives by individual market actors" (ibid).

Kjellberg & Helgesson describe **exchange practices** "the most straightforward of market practices," which consist of "concrete activities related to the consummation of individual economic exchanges [and] includes all the idiosyncratic activities related to a specific economic exchange, such as specifying and presenting products [or] negotiating prices and terms of delivery" (ibid). Exchange practices also include "more general activities [such as] advertising, organizing the distribution of goods, comparative product testing, etc." which "contribute to temporarily stabilize certain conditions (parties to the exchange, exchange object, price, terms of exchange) so that an economic exchange becomes possible" (ibid).

Representational practices are defined as "activities that contribute to depict markets and/or how they work" that serve to "bridge temporal and spatial distances between individual exchanges and produce images of this market" (ibid). For example, sales figures can serve as a solid representation of the intangible plethora of exchanges occurring within a market.

Within this conceptual framework, all "efforts to shape markets as well as efforts to market in markets" fall into these three categories of normalizing, exchange, and representational practices, though each practice can "translate" to other types of practices in various ways.

Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual framework (Appendix 1)

Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual framework is a valuable tool for this study. As we hope to investigate how new branding practices can affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis (with an understanding that improved attitudes can affect he development of the market), this model will not only help us to understand the broader affect that branding practices can have on the development of the legal market (through translations to other market practices), but also allow us to explore the nature of the legal cannabis market by examining the various forces at work through this framework. Therefore, while we intend to discuss existing theory and research on branding in this chapter, we should first provide an overview of the current state of the legal cannabis market through the lenses of Kjellberg & Helgesson's framework.

3.1.2 The Fifth "P"

Before examining the various market practices shaping the legal cannabis market, it would be beneficial to understand the history of cannabis prohibition and the black market that "naturally" emerged from it as a consequence of the "construction and shaping" done based on negative ideas about cannabis.

It is difficult to give a concrete explanation for how or why cannabis came to be prohibited and criminalized; there are many differing opinions and asserting any one of them as truth is sure to bring objections. So let us look at an excerpt from the Wikipedia page on "The Legal History of Cannabis in the United States," since Wikipedia's nature of community-editing should give us a relatively balanced summary of the differing perspectives that can be factually verified:

> "In 1936 the Federal Bureau of Narcotics noticed an increase of reports of people smoking marijuana, which further increased in 1937. The Bureau drafted a legislative plan for Congress seeking a new law, and the head of the FBN, Harry J. Anslinger, ran a campaign against marijuana. Newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst's empire of newspapers used the 'yellow journalism' pioneered by Hearst to demonize the cannabis plant and spread a public perception that there were connections between cannabis and violent crime. Several scholars argue that the goal was to destroy the hemp industry, largely as an effort of Hearst, Andrew Mellon and the Du Pont family. They argue that with the invention of the decorticator, hemp became a very cheap substitute for the wood pulp that was used in the newspaper industry. They also believe that Hearst felt that this was a threat to his extensive timber holdings. There are also facts that contradict that Hearst had a financial interest in banning the cultivation of hemp. Hearst newspapers had very big problems with debts to Canadian suppliers of paper. They used wood as raw material. If there emerged an alternative raw material, it would have lowered the price of the paper needed to print Hearst's many newspapers. However, in 1937, Hearst's newspapers were the only Hearst assets making money; Hearst's mining and forest products holdings had been ordered into reorganization by bankruptcy courts. Mellon was Secretary of the Treasury, as well as the wealthiest man in America, and had invested heavily in nylon, DuPont's new synthetic fiber. He considered nylon's success to depend on its replacement of the traditional resource, hemp" (Wikipedia, 2014).

Though the extent to which William Randolph Hearst's newspapers and other incumbent firms influenced the prohibition of cannabis is still debated, they undoubtedly played a role. There is no disputing that Hearst, who ran the largest publishing business in the world, personally shaped the public opinion and regulatory actions against the cannabis/hemp industry. In his theory of "markets as politics," Fligstein asserts how "the social structures of markets and the internal organizations of firms are best viewed as attempts to mitigate the effects of competition with other firms" (1996). It makes sense that Hearst may have tried to mitigate the effects of new advancements in hemp production by demonizing cannabis through the influence of his publishing empire as a political intervention. According to Fligstein's, there are two forms of state intervention in markets — direct (e.g. France) and regulatory (e.g. the United States) — though "both strategies of intervention can be captured by firms. States can either intentionally or unintentionally upset the status quo of a given market by changing rules" (ibid).   It is not out of the realm of possibility that Hearst's political influence and the threat of hemp to the wood pulp market lead to a coordinated political intervention to prohibit and criminalize cannabis (and with it, hemp). Of course, there are skeptics who argue that

Hearst's crusade against cannabis had no connection to his personal finances and was merely an act of public service in the face of a frightening drug. But there is no disputing that Hearst's infamous "yellow journalism" played a major part in the prohibition of cannabis. Fligstein also argues that "in new markets, the politics resemble social movements. Actors in different firms are trying to convince other firms to go along with their conception of the market. If they are powerful enough, they try to force their view" (ibid). Further, "conceptions of control may become political compromises that bring market stability to firms" (ibid). Whether the intent of Hearst's crusade against cannabis was self-serving or not, it stands as a textbook example, if only hypothetically, of firms using politics and state intervention to create conceptions of control that maintain market stability. Innovations in hemp manufacturing created a major threat to various markets, so a political movement was created to fight cannabis' threat to society, causing the state to intervene and effectively kill the markets for both hemp and cannabis.

The reality of the "markets as politics" theory in cannabis' history becomes clearer when one sees how incumbent firms are still lobbying for state intervention in the contemporary cannabis market to maintain stability. Anti-cannabis organizations such as the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America (CADCA) and the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids (formerly the Partnership for a Drug-Free America) "derive a significant portion of their budget from opioid manufacturers and other pharmaceutical companies," whose donations fund such political efforts as sending "a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder and other government officials urging them to keep marijuana listed as Schedule I, a designation indicating that it has no recognized medical use and is among society's most dangerous drugs" (The Nation, 2014). With Fligstein's theory in mind, one can see why a multi-billion dollar industry that markets pain medication would want to keep a natural, unpatentable drug with various medicinal uses, including pain relief, prohibited. Another one of the strongest opponents of cannabis legalization is law enforcement groups, such as police unions and the prison industry, who "depend on keeping the drug illegal" to not lose federal grants, forfeiture assets, and overall demand for law enforcement in a country where over 50% of all drug arrests are for cannabis (ibid). While law enforcement lobbyists claim that their opposition to cannabis legalization is only to protect society from a dangerous drug, they have admitted that legal cannabis would affect their bottom-line. For instance, the Geo Group, a firm that manages private treatment and detention centers, has reported to the Securities and Exchange Commission that "any changes with respect to the decriminalization of drugs and controlled substances could affect the number of persons arrested, convicted, sentenced and incarcerated, thereby potentially reducing demand for correctional facilities to house them" (ibid). The alcohol industry has also worked against the movement for legal cannabis, such as when the California Beer & Beverage Distributors political action committee donated $10,000 to the campaign against a 2010 ballot initiative to legalize cannabis in California

(ibid). While the alcohol industry also claims that such actions are rooted soley in public safety, it is clear that the legalization of a similar, less-harmful intoxicant would cause instability in the alcohol market.

If there has ever been a market that exemplified "markets as politics," it's cannabis — where political efforts not only shaped the market, but completely prohibited it, giving rise to the black market that cannabis has been traded in for decades. Though it is debatable whether the political efforts of certain actors — such as Hearst and Dupont in the past, or law enforcement, alcohol, and pharmaceutical firms in the present — have been motivated a fear of market destabilization or were truly rooted in nothing more than concern for public safety, they nevertheless display Kjellberg & Helgesson's assertion that markets are not "natural phenomenon" but rather "constructed and shaped by concrete activities" to fit a certain ideas (2007). Whether those ideas are strictly that cannabis is a danger to society or that it is a danger to stability of various markets, its history has been determined by ideas, and so will its future.

3.1.3 The Market Practices of Cannabis

With an understanding of the influence of politics on the cannabis market, let us now use Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual framework to review the various market practices at work in the cannabis market in order to examine its shaping. The objective of this overview is two-fold: first, to produce a deeper understanding of the various forces at work in the developing market (i.e. that the cannabis market is not a "black-and-white" issue of legal vs. illegal, but a complex network of tangled market practices); and second, to emphasize the broader influence that new branding practices may have on the shaping of the market (i.e. that the effects of new branding practices go beyond affecting consumer attitudes or decision making, as the function of branding is typically understood to be, but will also "translate" into other market practices and influence many other aspects of the market).

Normalizing Practices

We have already mentioned some of the normalizing practices that lead to the prohibition of cannabis, but now we should look further to the normalizing practices taking place today to establish the legal cannabis market.

The first example of a legal cannabis market since the widespread prohibition of the 20th century was the Dutch model established in the 1970s. Under the Netherland's Opium Act of 1919, all drugs were prohibited and criminalized. But with a 1976 amendment to the Opium Act, two classifications of drugs were made. Schedule I drugs, or "hard drugs," included "drugs presenting

unacceptable risks" such as heroin, cocaine, and amphetamines. Schedule II drugs, or "soft drugs," included cannabis and non-liquid hashish. Under these new classifications, the possession of up to 30 grams of "traditional hemp products" such as cannabis were only a "petty offense," while all other violations were considered criminal. The Dutch reform therefore did not legalize cannabis or establish a commercial market, but allowed an alternative to the unregulated and unsafe black market that cannabis shared with "hard drugs" like heroin and cocaine (Duncan & Nicholson, 1997).

Cannabis was not legalized but rather "tolerated" and regulated, though Dutch authorities made no secret about their intent to shape the black market. Calling it a "separation of markets," which the Dutch had implemented previously when they separated the gin and beer/wine markets, "the guidelines […] provided for toleration of 'house dealers' with a visible and controllable business, instead of an underground market" (ibid). The Dutch "separation of markets" established a semi-legal but regulated cannabis market to generate tax revenues that covered the social costs of the "hard drug" black market, such as addiction and crime. This separation made the Netherlands a pioneer for cannabis reform while also bringing a wave of "drug tourism" to Amsterdam. Here we see the first normalizing practices aimed at creating a stable market for cannabis for the cause of social well-being, influenced by the idea that drugs have different social costs and should therefore not be regulated uniformly. This contrasts most other normalizing practices that worked to prohibit and criminalize cannabis in the name of the same cause.

While the Dutch were liberalizing their approach to cannabis in the 1970s and 1980s, the United States was performing normalizing practices to fight the existence of the black market. After small steps towards cannabis reform in the 1970s, such as the founding of the lobbying group NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws), many regulatory actions were taken against cannabis reform. In 1970, the U.S. passed the Controlled Substances Act, which classified cannabis as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin, and granted the strictest punishments to its sale or possession . In 1973, the U.S. formed the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) from three existing anti-drug agencies, strengthening the enforcement of drug laws. In 1980, with the election of President Ronald Reagan, America's "War on Drugs" was launched. This effort led to the passing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which gave harsher punishments for drug violations. Two years later, this was strengthened with President Reagan's signing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Amendments Act of 1988, which made "life without parole the sentence for offenders […] with two or more prior convictions" and established the America's first "drug czar" (Duncan et al., 2014). During this era, the American government, and many others around the world, took political steps to both strengthen drug criminalization and actively combat the illegal black market that emerged in response to it.

It was not until the 1990s that further steps toward reform were taken. In 1996, California passed "Proposition 215, California's Compassionate Use Act, legalizing the cultivation, possession and use of marijuana for medical purposes, laying the groundwork for future laws across the country" (New York Times, 2013). Though Proposition 215 was far from establishing a legal medical cannabis market, it was a major breakthrough after more than a decade of strict anti-drug efforts. It would not be until the 2000s that states like California, along with the 19 other states that passed laws to permit some form of medical cannabis between 1998 and 2013, would begin showing configurations that could be considered legal cannabis markets. While much of America's medical cannabis industry seems to function like a typical market, the normalizing practices in place actually tell a very different story.

Under most regulations, organizations producing or distributing cannabis must operate under a non-profit status. Further, cannabis cannot be sold — it can only be "provided" to patients, who can choose to donate to the non-profit organization providing medical cannabis. This is why most medical cannabis firms are referred to as "collectives" rather than companies, and medical cannabis users are considered "patients" rather than customers. For-profit firms are not allowed to operate in the medical cannabis market — only "collectives" of "patients" who organize in order to provide medical cannabis to other patients, all of which must be funded by "donations." Despite such regulations, many medical cannabis markets still look and function similarly to a standard for-profit market, with all actors involved (from producers to distributors to consumers) agreeing to function more like a for-profit market, via regulatory loopholes and technicalities, to remain within the law. Here, we see the normalizing practice of "voluntary standards" which allow the medical cannabis market to exist under most regulations. Still, such regulations have shaped the markets significantly compared to how they might have developed "naturally" without such normalizing practices.

Significant normalizing practices were also performed in Canada around the turn of the century. In 2001, Canada passed the Marijuana Medical Access Regulations (MMAR), which gave people suffering from serious illnesses, like cancer or AIDs, access to medical cannabis. Medical patients "would be able to grow marijuana themselves under strict guidelines. Others would be allowed to buy it from companies licensed by the government" (CBC, 2009). The passing of the MMAR made Canada the first country in the world "to adopt a formal system to regulate the medicinal use of marijuana" (ibid). Like in America, this system granted medical cannabis to an increasing number of people, which slowly gave way to a legal, visible market.

The most significant step towards a legal, for-profit cannabis market came in the American states of Colorado and Washington in 2012, which both passed bills to legalize recreational cannabis. This made cannabis possession and consumption legal for all adults, not just "patients" with medical licenses, while also opening the doors for private firms to produce and sell cannabis. Though both

Colorado and Washington had already legalized medical cannabis, this normalizing practice of full legalization drastically shaped their cannabis markets. As Colorado became the first to allow cannabis retailers to open for business at the beginning of 2014, the number of actors in the market exploded in what has been coined a "Green Rush" of investment and entrepreneurship. Washington, whose first cannabis retailers opened in mid-2014, also underwent the same changes, as herds entrepreneurs and venture capitalists flocked to the market as it prepared for this drastic shift.

In 2013, Uruguay performed another significant normalizing practice by becoming the first country to legalize cannabis for recreational use (Washington Post, 2013). Uruguayan legalization not only worked to shape its own domestic market by removing cannabis from the black market and putting it in control of the state, but also served as a normalizing practice for the global market. In what many call an "experiment," Uruguay's cannabis reform sets an example for other countries considering full legalization and opens the doors for international cannabis trade if more countries follow suit. Still, there are continual normalizing practices at work in Uruguay, as the details of the new legal market are still being established, which has caused the selling of legal cannabis to be delayed until 2015 (Russia Today, 2014). Nevertheless, the legal reform in Uruguay is (and will be remembered as) a significant normalizing practice in the shaping of the global cannabis market.

Within these various markets, differing normalizing practices have been put into place to shape the individual markets in different ways. Even after passing full legalization in states like Colorado and Washington, there are still normalizing practices at work that keep these markets from developing "natural" via the infamous Invisible Hand.

In all legal markets (whether in U.S. states, Canada, Uruguay, etc.), cannabis producers and sellers must obtain government licenses to operate, though the stipulations of such licenses differ from market to market. In U.S. states with medical cannabis, production is limited to medical patients who are permitted to grow a certain number of plants for personal use, which can range from 6 plants per patient in Alaska to 24 plants per patient in Oregon. Patients can combine their plant allowances to form "collectives" where larger number of plants can be grown collectively for better economies of scale, which is how many medical dispensaries are able to procure enough product for sale. Patients can also apply for special production licenses that allow larger-scale growth, but even licensed producers are often limited to roughly 99 plants (ProCon, 2014).

Canada's medical marijuana market had a similar model for several years, but recently enacted the Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations (MMRP), which limits the production of medical cannabis to a small number of "licensed producers" with large-scale production capabilities. As of October 2014, there are only 12 licensed producers of Canadian medical cannabis (Health Canada, 2014). The MMRP made it illegal for anyone without a license to grow medical cannabis, which has outraged many stakeholders and sent actors back into the black market. Uruguay's new

legal model is similar to Canada's medical model with some characteristics of the U.S. markets. The Uruguayan government hopes to control commercial production with large government-run farms, but will permit cannabis users to grow small amounts for personal use, so long as they are registered as a cannabis user with the authorities (Russia Today, 2014). In Colorado's recreational market, vertical integration was initially required for all firms, forcing cannabis dispensaries to grow 80% of their inventory and allowing only 20% to be purchased from external producers. However, this policy will change in October 2014 to allow for stand-alone producers and retailers. In Washington, America's second fully-legal market, vertical integration is forbidden (Brookings Institute, 2013).

These various makeshift markets have been under constant threat by other normalizing practices. Under U.S. federal law, cannabis is still a Schedule I drug, making sale and consumption illegal. As medical cannabis markets have grown and gained visibility in America, the U.S. federal government has frequently intervened in their development, shutting down firms and taking criminal action against them. American medical markets have also been stifled by their own state legislators, who are supposed to uphold the laws passed by the state yet often succumb to the pressure to enforce federal laws instead. In 2012, Los Angeles had over 800 medical cannabis dispensaries — more than the number of Starbucks in the city. Yet the L.A. city council voted to close all medical cannabis dispensaries in the city, despite California state law (NPR, 2012). The city-wide shutdown never took place, though a large number of L.A. cannabis dispensaries were forced to close. The fully-legal states of Colorado and Washington have yet to encounter such strong intervention, yet federal regulations still prevent their markets from developing certain characteristics of a standard market — such as the ability to use banks for loans or depositing revenue because of federal laws (BBC, 2014). So even as normalizing practices are enacted on the state-level to allow cannabis markets to exist, those markets have been in a constant struggle with the normalizing practices in place by the federal government, which still work to prohibit and criminalize cannabis. Therefore, America's legal cannabis market has been constantly reconfigured over the last decade due to conflicting normalizing practices that blur the line of its legality.

Exchange Practices

We previously mentioned the non-profit system established in U.S. medical cannabis markets, where "collectives" of patients (rather than private companies) "provide" (rather than sell) cannabis to "patients" (rather than customers) and can only accept "donations" for their services (rather than charge a price). Though the medical cannabis market technically works within this system, most actors in the market (including consumers) seem to have an unspoken agreement that allows it to function more like a typical for-profit market. Though medical cannabis is not supposed to be "for

sale" but only provided to patients with "suggested donations" requested to help cover operating expenses, these "suggested donation" function much more like a firm price setting. A quick visit to WeedMaps.com, an online service that lists and reviews legal cannabis dispensaries, shows how medical dispensaries set prices for their products — though technically under the law, these prices are supposed to be "suggested donations" for services and are reported as such to the authorities. This non-profit system and the practices developed within it are examples of some of the unique exchange practices at work in the legal cannabis market. Though most market reforms restrict the sale of cannabis by for-profit firms, a market has developed within the non-profit framework as buyers and sellers agree upon certain "suggested donations." These unspoken agreements have provided stability for the production and distribution of medical cannabis and allowed a market to develop, even if it is only through legal loopholes and technicalities.

Before further exploring the exchange practices of today's legal market, we should again return to the black market to examine how its market practices influenced those of the present.

With the prohibition and criminalization of cannabis, a black market emerged with its own exchange practices. Given that it is an illegal market, these exchange practices are harder to define or examine than ones in a legal market. For instance, there is no clear supply chain in the black market. Cannabis producers could range from people growing cannabis in their closets to large-scale illegal production operations. Still, with the criminalization of cannabis, black market production could only reach certain scales and even the largest illegal cannabis producers could not compare to an industrial tobacco farm, considering that they must remain clandestine to avoid prosecution.

There is also no clear organization of the distribution of goods in the black market. Cannabis sellers could be casual dealers that sell their own cannabis crops or large organized networks of growers (producers), "middlemen" (or wholesalers), and dealers (retailers). There is no defined method of specifying and presenting products, comparative product testing, product labeling, or setting terms of exchange. If there is one exchange practice that can be adequately examined, it is the price setting of cannabis. Within the black market, cannabis has developed established "street prices." Although the "street price" of cannabis can fluctuated over time or differ by region, there are generally widely-accepted prices across the black market. The exchange practice of price setting is influenced by other practices, like the normalizing practice of prohibition. Cannabis' "street price" has been influenced by the fact that actors in the black market are breaking the law and, therefore, the risks associated with participating in the black market are accounted into the established price.

It is interesting how exchange practices of the black market have carried over to the legal market. Legal cannabis seems to set his prices based on illegal cannabis but has often ended up more expensive than the black market. In both Colorado and Washington, the price of recreational legal cannabis is twice as expensive as the illegal "street price" due to high taxes and other expenses of

operating legally (IB Times, 2014). In Washington, there are "endless layers of taxes associated with legal marijuana — a 25 percent wholesale tax, plus another 25 percent minimum retail tax. Tack on a sales tax and ultimately Washington's legal cannabis will have been taxed a total of 75% by the time it reaches the buyer" (ibid). So while the legal market strives to set prices equal to or lower than the black market, the costs of operating legally often prevent actors from doing so.

Regarding cannabis taxation, we also see Kjellberg & Helgesson's theory of how ideas shape market practices and market development. The "English-style garden" that regulators aim to recreate is the alcohol market. Like alcohol, age-restrictions are placed on the sale or possession of cannabis, as well as various other laws regarding its consumption (e.g. no public consumption, no driving under the influence, etc.). Yet the most significant exchange practice being shaped by a "renaissance painting" of how the market should look is the taxation of cannabis. Like alcohol and tobacco, a "sin tax" is placed on cannabis, meant to offset the social harms caused by its consumption. But such exchange practices were not "naturally" applied to the cannabis market, but merely "copied-and-pasted" from the alcohol market that regulators hope to recreate. With a lack of data regarding the social harms of legal cannabis, it is merely presumed that cannabis poses the same social harms as alcohol and should therefore be taxed similarly. This raises the question of how detrimental ideas can be to market shaping, as opposed to development via "natural phenomenon."

While there is still research to do on the externalities of cannabis legalization, we have already addressed how there exists much evidence that suggests that cannabis is less harmful than alcohol. Studies show that "the risk of a fatal overdose from using cannabis [is] extremely small [because] the estimated fatal dose is a far greater amount of cannabis than even a very heavy cannabis user could use in a day" (Hall, 2014). Compare this evidence to the dangers of alcohol that its taxes are supposed to offset: "Excessive alcohol use led to approximately 88,000 deaths and 2.5 million years of potential life lost (YPLL) each year in the U.S. from 2006–2010, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 30 years" (Center for Disease Control, 2014). Given the clear differences in social harms caused by alcohol and cannabis, it seems foolish to pose equally high "sin taxes" on cannabis that aren't adapted to the actual social costs of its use. The fact that cannabis consumption causes a psychoactive "high" should not warrant the automatic application of the exchange practices used in the alcohol market. Would it be logical for a nearly 75% tax to be applied to any product/service that provides consumers with some sort of "high," such as to yoga studios, acupuncturists, or massage parlors? While no one is arguing that cannabis should not be taxed, the influence of ideas on the shaping of markets is apparent in such exchange practices as taxation. These market practices did not emerge "naturally" to adapt to the "phenomenon" of the cannabis market, but have rather been constructed based on ideas of how the cannabis market should look, hindering the development of the market. Many actors in the legal market have already

reported how it is difficult to stay afloat, despite huge amounts of revenue flooding into the market, due to the high taxes applied to their businesses (USA Today, 2014).

The pricing correlation between the illegal and legal markets makes more sense when looking at other exchange practices of the latter that seem to be modeled from the former. Besides price setting, the organization of distribution is also influenced by the black market. Considering the restrictions placed on cannabis production and distribution and the high taxes tied to both, it becomes clear why prices in legal markets cannot fall lower than black market's. Tight regulations prevent the organization of distribution from developing freely and establishes a model that looks similar to the black market: countless small-scale producers growing in their homes or backyards, with even the largest producers unable to grow more than a well-organized illegal producer. There are no economies of scale through industrial production that exists in any other industry. Consider what the price of cigarettes might be if tobacco producers could only grow 100 tobacco plants at a time. How high would the price of beer increase if firms could only brew enough to meet the demand of a small, local "collective" of consumers?

Further complicating the legal market is the restrictions on importing and exporting. In the U.S., cannabis has not been allowed to cross state lines legally, which has restricted free trade between the legal markets. When Oregon legalized recreational cannabis in November 2014, it created the first shared border between two states with full-legalization (Oregon and Washington). While this will open the opportunity for inter-state cannabis trade, it is also set to cause instability in the market based on the differing normalizing and exchange practices of the two states. There are fears that Oregon's cheaper prices (due to higher supply and lower taxes) will steal business from cannabis firms in Washington (Huffington Post, 2014). Not only do these strict exchange practices affect the price and overall supply of legal cannabis, but also its demand and overall market size. "Most consumers would prefer to purchase [cannabis] legally, but the corner dealer might be tempting if he's selling at half price" (Time, 2014). And in states like Oregon and Washington, market practices may also significant shape the markets for similar reasons.

Another unique exchange practice in the cannabis market is its reliance on cash. In the U.S., cannabis is still illegal on a federal level, leaving the cannabis industry unable to obtain banking services. Under federal law, banks risk being prosecuted for several crimes including "aiding and abetting the distribution of marijuana" and "money laundering" by providing any financial services to cannabis firms (Forbes, 2014). Cannabis firms are unable to obtain even a basic checking account to deposit their revenues, forcing them to function as cash-only enterprises. Customers cannot pay with credit or debit cards, and sellers must protect the literal piles of cash that they earn. The inability to conduct cashless transactions clearly makes exchanges much more difficult for both buyers and sellers. Yet due to federal regulations, firms have no option but to adapt to the dangers of

running cash-only million-dollar operations. This has created a whole new industry of security agencies working specifically "high-value asset industries" (MarketWired, 2014). Again, these unique exchange practices leave the legal market looking similar to the black market. Exchanges are done with large sums of cash and protected by heavily-armed security guards, rather than being done with the ease of an invoice, check, or wire transfer as is possible in virtually every other industry.

Looking at the strictly-regulated exchange practices of the cannabis market, Kjellberg & Helgesson's theory of the nature of markets has never rang truer. The practices of the black market sprouted from ideas that cannabis must be prohibited and criminalized. But as legal markets emerge, their exchange practices are still being shaped by pre-existing ideas of how the market should operate, many of which are borrowed directly from the black market.

Representational Practices

Within the black market, representational practices are difficult to identify, given its illegal and clandestine nature. Drug dealers typically don't release annual reports to inform the public of their criminal activity's profitability, so representations of the market were developed in other ways. There have been estimates of the value of the illegal market, though such estimates are far from reliable. "Economists, reformists, law enforcement authorities and the pro-marijuana lobby [...] have come up with a variety of estimates. Put them all together and you get a range of $10 billion to over $120 billion a year. Such a wide spread is hardly a solid answer" (CNBC, 2010). Such estimates rely on data typically not used to calculate a market value, such as national surveys on drug use or records of arrests and seizures (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). In 2013, New York City Comptroller John Liu attempted to calculate the city's cannabis market value, which valued it at $1.65 billion illegally or $1.7 billion legally. Liu calculated the number of legal-age citizens and commuters in New York City, what percentage of them use cannabis based off of public surveys, an estimate of an average user's annual consumption, and approximate prices. This valuation also included an estimated $400 million of taxes that New York City could earn from legalization (Capital New York, 2013). A 2005 U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime report valued the global market with a similar approach, deriving the estimated market value from criminal seizures, to come up with a global market value of $141.8 billion (UNODC, 2005). While such studies provide a representation of the market, they are much less reliable than typical market representations that aren't derived from so many indirect statistics and approximations. A legal market is needed to provide accurate representations, so the representational practices of the global market are only improving as they are enacted within the smaller legal cannabis markets.

Though it is hard to get firm representations of the legal cannabis market due to how young and undeveloped it still is, there still exist representations that depict the market. With the birth of medical cannabis markets, more accurate representations of market size and revenue have come to light. These representational have mainly come from reported tax revenue to the governments where these markets exist. In 2011, Colorado had reported over $5 million of tax revenue collected from medical cannabis, which provided a representation of the greater economic impact of the state's legal market. In the same year, Oregon was reporting $6.7 million in tax revenue from medical cannabis (New York Times, 2012). These representations were instrumental to the further market reform in Colorado and other states, with Colorado taking into account the projected $130 million of tax revenue that it would generate through legalization in 2014 alone, $40 million of which would be dedicated to schools and education (Reuters, 2014). Over the years, these representations have become clearer, with market reports being developed for both the current value of legal cannabis in various states or countries, as well as the potential market value based on forecasts of expected reform. According to a 2014 market report, America's legal cannabis market has increased from a $1.4 billion market value in 2013 to $2.34 billion in 2014, with predictions of the market passing the $10 billion mark by 2018 (Arcview Group, 2013). Other independent reports come up with similar figures in their representations of the legal cannabis market.

There are other representational practices besides market valuation that can shape a market as unique as legal cannabis. In the Dutch market created in the 1970s, other, perhaps more important, representations shaped and encouraged the existence of a legal market. The "separation of markets" that the Dutch hoped to achieve was mainly out of concern for public safety rather than revenue creation. Within the "tolerated" cannabis market, studies showed that "the lifetime prevalence of marijuana use in Amsterdam under these conditions [was] only 5%, compared to 33% in the U.S. […] To the consternation of many American critics, the liberal drug policies of the Netherlands have resulted in no increase or a negligibly small increase in drug use. Cannabis use has remained steady in the Netherlands since 1976 while it has increased in the rest of Europe despite vigorous prohibition efforts. Declining numbers of young people are experimenting with drugs. There is only a very small market for cocaine and virtually none for crack. With few new addicts, the population of heroin and cocaine addicts in the Netherlands is now a relatively stable population of about 1,500 aging addicts — 30-40% of whom are foreign nationals drawn to the Netherlands by the greater safety of drug use there" (Duncan & Nicholson, 1997).

Though these are not traditional representational practices acting "to depict markets and/or how they work" on a strictly economic level, they are nonetheless representations that are effective in shaping the market. With the stigma and controversy attached to the cannabis, these depictions of how the legal market functions on a socio-economic level are just as effective in representing the

market based on its unique objectives and encouraging its existence in the face of opposition, which therefore shapes the market just as much as financial representations. The socio-economic success of the Dutch market was undoubtedly influential in the emergence and development of legal cannabis markets elsewhere in the world, as similar depictions of those latter markets will also influence the development of future legal markets.

The creation of Colorado's legal cannabis market has lead to many positive developments for the state. Some of which are tied directly to the cannabis industry and others not so directly, yet most of these developments serve as representations of the market that may encourage other regions to adopt a legal market. For instance, Colorado has seen a 1.2% growth in its working age population between 2012 and 2013, and added 66,300 jobs to the labor market between June 2013 and June 2014 (Business Insider, 2014) — over 10,000 of which are said to be directly related to the cannabis market (Drug Policy Alliance, 2014). Further, crime rates in Colorado's capital of Denver have decreased since 2013, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime reporting, with a 10.1% drop in overall crime and 5.2% decrease in violent crime (ibid). The Colorado Center on Law and Policy also predicts that the state is saving $12-40 million in law enforcement expenditures through legalization, without the average 10,000 arrests or citations per year made for minor marijuana possession (ibid). Colorado has also seen a slight decrease in teenage cannabis use with the emergence of a legal market, contrary to the fears of many opponents of legalization (Reuters, 2014). New research is also being generated on the health effects and medical benefits of cannabis, which also encourages the growth of the market. These types of reports serve as atypical representations of the cannabis market considering that normalizing practices like reform and regulation are so dependent on the social harms of a legal cannabis market. These new statistics and information provide positive and encouraging depictions of the market, which are essential to its existence and future growth.

3.1.4 Lost in Translations

We have already touched on the interconnectedness of cannabis' market practices, "entangled" "through chains of translations" (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007). There is the influence of representational practices (market valuations, tax revenues, socio-economic data) on the normalizing practices (regulations) in the cannabis market. As new depictions appear, they reduce the skepticism towards the cannabis market and encourage new regulations that allow its growth. Normalizing practices also affect representational practices, as new regulations allow such positive depictions of the market to exist in the first place.

Normalizing practices also significantly affect exchange practices in the cannabis market. Regulation that limits cannabis production prevents the organization of the distribution of goods from developing and economies of scale that could lower prices. Prices are also affected by the high

taxes imposed on cannabis through normalizing practices. Regulation that permits only non-profit "collectives" to distribute medical cannabis also influence the exchange practices of those markets. Other rules and regulations, such as Colorado's requirement of vertical integration for cannabis sellers, have shaped the exchange practices within the market such as price and organization of distribution of goods. And of course, there are more major translations between normalizing practices and exchange practices, such as how widespread cannabis prohibition prevents both inter-state trading in America (e.g. between California and Colorado), and international trade between countries with legal cannabis (e.g. America and Uruguay).

Given that there are so many different market configurations and market practices within the various legal markets, it is difficult to examine all of the translations at work in the greater cannabis market. Hopefully, this overview of the greater trends has drawn a clear enough picture of the cannabis market, and how its development is so dependent on the various market practices (many of which being rooted in ideas) and their interconnectedness. With this foundation laid, we have provided a new context for this study's objective of investigating the effects of new branding practices on consumer attitudes, with an understanding that new branding practices may influence the market on a much more significant scale by translating to the other market practices at work.

3.2 Branding & Its Practices

This next part of our Theory chapter will discuss the functions of brands and branding through existing theory and explore what their role might be within the legal cannabis market. At the conclusion of this section, we will link the branding theory back to our previous discussion of cannabis market practices before stating the hypotheses of this study.

3.2.1 Branding as Market Practice

There exists a large body of prior research on branding's effects on consumer attitudes and firm performance (Ogilvy, 1963; Lee, 2004; Fischer, Völckner, & Sattler, 2010). However, prior research often focuses on the impact of branding on firm performance, while for this study, we are concerned with the effects of branding on market performance and shaping. How is a market with little to no branding impacted by the introduction of new branding practices? Can the practice of branding, in itself, further the development of a market, particularly for a market that lacks the essential functions of branding? We have explored the various market practices at work in both the legal cannabis market and the black market, yet we have yet to touch on the effects of branding through Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual model for market practices. Given the unique nature of the cannabis market, how can branding serve as a market practice in this "entangled chain of

translations"? How might introduction of brands and new branding practices shape the market through translations to the normalizing, exchange, and representational practices currently at play?

The cannabis market has put little effort into branding, leaving us with little empirical evidence of how cannabis branding might shape the market. A significant amount of research and attention has been directed at many of the issues we have addressed, such as market size and potential, tax revenue, job creation, socio-economic trends, etc. But branding remains widely ignored, both by actors in the cannabis market and researchers examining it. A "central theme" of Kjellberg & Helgesson's market practice theory is "the issue of how ideas about markets partake in their shaping. What kinds of ideas about markets circulate in our society? How are these ideas translated into norms, individual exchanges and images of markets? What are the consequences of these translations?" (2007). It is now clear that the cannabis market has always been significantly shaped by ideas. Even today, the decades of prohibition, stigma, controversy, and general skepticism still influence its development. Public opinion plays an important role in the development of the market, as voting can allow the emergence and growth of the market (though lobbying and regulators nevertheless plays an important role, too). So, given the impact of branding on consumer attitudes and firm performance, we can speculate that new branding practices in the cannabis market may have significant effects on the overall development of the market.

Prior research has explored the different functions of branding, where branding can have symbolic or value-expressing purposes on utilitarian products, or utilitarian purposes on symbolic products (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; LeBeouf & Simmons, 2010). Currently, cannabis acts as a utilitarian product with utilitarian appeals for its consumers, and the market has done little to attempt to attach values or symbolism to it. The only values and symbolism currently attached to cannabis are the negative stereotypes and stigma that emerged from prohibition. Cannabis is in great need of new values, as product symbolism is of great importance (Solomon, 1983). Now that we have an understanding of the market practices at work in the cannabis market, it seems necessary to further explore the functional, social, and cultural roles of branding and explore how it might affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis, which would likely affect the shaping of the market.

3.2.2 The Culture of Brands

Cannabis' absence of branding practices may be due to an overall lack of research focused on branding's cultural or social influence. "Despite the importance of brands, marketing research lacks an adequate theoretical and methodological blueprint for studying the cultural role of brands in the global marketplace […] A large portion of branding literature examines the way companies can exploit global branding opportunities. Marketing scholars have paid much less attention to brands and branding as socio-cultural entities" (Cayla & Arnould, 2008). Some prior theory has viewed

branding from a broader perspective, such as Solomon's research on the role of products as social stimuli (1983). Yet knowledge of branding is often too concerned with firm performance rather than the social and cultural side-effects of branding — perhaps why cannabis firms seem to practice branding only to the extent that it will catch the attention of heavy-users.

When AdWeek asked "Who Will Be The Starbucks of Pot?" they were more concerned with who might dominate the cannabis market, like Starbucks has with the global coffee market. Yet it seems more important to wonder about who will change cannabis' role in society and consequently shape its market, à la Starbucks. Who will "brand" cannabis itself on a socio-cultural level, like Coca-Cola did for soda, Nike did for athletic wear, or Apple did for smartphones? In *How Brands Become Icons*, Holt defines brands from a cultural, rather than strategic, perspective:

> "Consider a new product that a company has just introduced. Although the product has a name, a trademarked logo, unique packaging and perhaps other unique design features — all aspects that we intuitively think of as the brand — the brand does not yet truly exist. Names, logos, and designs are the material markets of the brand. Because the product does not yet have a history, however, these markers are empty. They are devoid of meaning. Now, think of famous brand. They have markers, also: a name (McDonald's, IBM), a logo (Nike swoosh, Travelers umbrella), a distinctive product design feature (Harley's engine sound), or any other design element that is uniquely associated with the product. The difference is that these markers have been filled with customer experiences. Advertisements, films, and sporting events use the brand as a prop. Magazines and newspaper articles evaluate the brand, and people talk about the brand in conversation. Over time, ideas about the product accumulate and fill the brand markers with meaning. A brand is formed" (Holt, 2004).

With cannabis mainly acting as a commodity, there only exists the "brand" of the greater market, industry, and culture — which still looks very similar to the black market's "brand." If we look at the cannabis market as a brand (as in, the ideas and experiences associated with cannabis), it is a very troubled one. Years of prohibition and criminalization have associated cannabis with social harm and crime. With countless people in prison for cannabis, it has mostly been associate with crime, or at least the "shady" sides of society. Cannabis' "role" in society, as Steve Levitt referred to it, is much more negative than any material function is has (Freakonomics, 2014). Nevertheless, the "function" of cannabis (its effects, risks, benefits, etc.) has had a negative history, starting with the 1930s propaganda film *Reefer Madness* and continuing through contemporary anti-drug advertising. Cannabis has been mainly been portrayed though "stoner" stereotypes and myths in the media. Even in today's era of legalization, most media coverage surrounding cannabis reform can't seem to be reported with a straight face. Search for a random news piece on cannabis and you're bound to find some comical reference to old cannabis stereotypes or the use of stoner slang in the headlines. The consequences of these cultural standards become clear with Holt's explanation of brand formation:

"A brand emerges as various 'authors' tell stories that involve the brand. [...] Brand stories have plots and characters, and they rely heavily on metaphor to communicate and to spur our imaginations. As these stories collide in everyday social life, conventions eventually form. Sometimes a single common story emerges as a consensus view. Most often, though, several different stories circulate widely in society. A brand emerges when these collective understanding become firmly established" (Holt, 2004).

The negative stories of cannabis have formed its current conventions, but new stories are circulating with the emergence of the legal market. However, the cannabis "brand" (or collective understanding) has yet to shift away from its negative stories to form new conventions. Since cannabis is still sold as a commodity, with its only form of branding being black market names, its story remains similar to the one developed in the black market and consequently attracts mainly "heavy users" who would presumably consume cannabis whether or not it were legal. Since the market is mostly composed of consumers who have their own story — a positive one — about cannabis, firms haven't made much effort to change the brand for consumers with pre-existing negative attitudes. The stereotypes and "sleaziness" of the historically negative cannabis brand are still present and little is being done to create a new collective understanding.

Prior research can tell us why this is a problem. Stereotypes about products or brands play an important role in consumer behavior and self-concept (Grubb & Hupp, 1968; Munson & Spivey, 1981; Sirgy, 1982). Though most actors in the cannabis market seems to disagree, it is impossible for consumers to only consider the functionality of products without any concern for self-concept, social meaning, or value-expressing functions of products. This may explain why, no matter how much medical research or scientific evidence there exists to vouch for the positive aspects of cannabis, many consumers still refuse to take cannabis seriously based on its social role and meaning. We have understood for decades now products carry symbolism and stereotypes about one's self and others (Levy, 1959; Levy, 1982; Wright, Clairborne, & Sirgy, 1992). Yet actors in the cannabis market seem to believe that such stereotypes and symbolism will magically vanish with reform, research, legalization, or scientific evidence, rather than branding practices, which are most effective at forming new meaning and symbolism for products.

In October 2014, NORML and WeedMaps teamed up to promote the upcoming election's legalization initiatives in Oregon, Alaska, Florida, and Washington D.C. by producing a music video remake and "Positive Remix" of Afroman's 2000 hit song "Because I Got High." The original song perpetuated negative, stereotypical stories of cannabis, with lyrics like:

"I wasn't gonna run from the cops but I was high / Now I'm a paraplegic and I know why/
Because I got high, because I got high, because I got high..."

"I messed up my entire life because I got high / I lost my kids and wife because I got high say / Now I'm sleepin' on the sidewalk and I know why / Because I got high…"

The 2014 "Positive Remix" attempted to take back this negative characterization and communicate about the benefits of cannabis, with lyrics of how glaucoma, alcoholism, cigarette smoking, anxiety attacks, and other problems can be cured through cannabis:

"The state made revenue, because I got high / They built a school or two, because I got high / Now the state can fund drug treatment and I know why / Because I got high…"

Though it is encouraging that firms are attempting to tell new stories about cannabis during times of potential reform, it is unfortunate that those stories have to be told through the same narrative as the historically negative cannabis story. In their review of Afroman's "Positive Remix," Vice Music wrote: "If there's anyone to 'rebrand' marijuana, Afroman is kind of a questionable choice. He's a high school dropout who, all things considered, fits the classic 'stoner' stereotype perfectly" (2014). Indeed, if the cannabis industry wants to put a "positive remix" on the "classic" negative story of cannabis, should it really be told by a rapper with a huge afro, sitting on a rolling sofa surrounded by dancing weed leaves?

An icon has yet to arise to tell a new story and create new experiences for cannabis. A powerful brand does not only shape the success of a single firm, but can shape an entire market through the conventions it creates. "Customers value some products as much for what they symbolize as for what they do. For brands like Coke, Budweiser, Nike, and Jack Daniel's, customers value the brand's stories largely for their identity value. Acting as vessels of self-expression, the brands are imbued with stories that consumers find valuable in constructing their identities. Consumers flock to brands that embody the ideals they admire, brands that help them express who they want to be" (Holt, 2004). Cannabis' identity value is still low, with no strong brands working to create new stories or experiences, so the market still embodies negative ideals. Considering Kjellberg & Helgesson's assertion that market practices (or "all activities that contribute to constitute markets") are "entangled" "through chains of translations," a strong identity value created by just one firm could shape the market on a wider scale (2007).

Holt writes of the success of Corona beer through "cultural branding," with its "brief climb to iconic status" in the late 1980's, as college kids flocked to Mexico for spring break. "Beer drinkers didn't value partying as a generic concept associated with the brand. Rather, they value beer brands when the brands told the partying story that best resonated in American culture [and] had the most compelling partying myths" (Holt, 2004). Corona's popularity was short-lived, hitting a slump in the early-90s. But eventually Corona "ditched the brand's supposed partying brand essence and

concocted the 'Change Your Latitude' campaign. The ads depicted an idyllic beach scene — what American understood as a Mexican beach" (ibid). Corona sales reached record-highs with this rebranding. "How do we explain Corona's success? [...] Corona's association with relaxation does not explain the brand's success. Relaxation had been a central benefit in the beer category for many decades, long before Corona had significant distribution in the United States. Budweiser had emphasized a relaxation theme as far back as the 1950s, and other beer brands followed Bud's lead [...] The new advertising campaign had grabbed hold of Corona's valuable but dormant cultural real estate — the Mexican beach — to develop a different and more meaningful myth" (ibid).

With its lack of brands, cannabis has no one "to develop a different and more meaningful myth" (ibid). Of course, new stories are being generated and circulated that help cannabis stray away from the negative myths of the past, but there has yet to be a compelling myth that captures the culture's imagination — presumably because brands are needed to do so.

These stories and myths can also be understood as the brand salience. Salience is often understood as the "top-of-mind" quality that a brand seeks, like Coca-Cola has with soda. But there are other important aspects of brand salience. "Brand salience not only influences the propensity of a brand to be recalled due to consumer knowledge and awareness of the brand, but it may also influence when or under which circumstances the brand is recalled. For example, a consumer may recall Coca-Cola for parties, summer, drinks with friends, as an alcoholic mixer, or just for a relaxing cola with lunch" (Vieceli & Shaw, 2010). The ideas and contexts that a brand is culturally and psychological perceived through also account for its salience — e.g. the Mexican beach that Corona captured in the minds of American consumers. Yet, understandably, salience for the cannabis "brand" is very low or negative due to its traditional cultural role. While Coca-Cola is recalled for parties, summer, friends, and countless other positive contexts, cannabis is still mainly recalled for sitting lazily on the sofa, crime, and other "sleazy" contexts. It can be argued that this is not only due to inherent qualities of cannabis, but also because of its lack of branding practices. Consider iconic brands like Coca-Cola, McDonald's, or Budweiser, which have been widely available for consumers to personally experience and build their own "myths" or contexts for, while also having those "myths" constantly reinforced by the fortunes spent on marketing and branding over the years. Such iconic brands don't perform marketing or branding activities to build brand awareness (being that they're some of the most recognizable global icons in history), but to continually reinforce brand salience and positive cultural contexts.

Compare such iconic brands to cannabis, who has had its own "myths" created over the same span of time, mainly from the perspective that cannabis is a dangerous drug that society must avoid or be criminally punished for. Even as legalization emerges, there has yet to be an actor that gives cannabis its own "Mexican beach" or attempts to place cannabis in the same kind of positive cultural

contexts that Coca-Cola or Budweiser have developed through marketing and branding practices. This task of creating a new myth or building positive salience for cannabis will not be accomplished by political activists like NORML (using a one-hit-wonder rapper on a rolling sofa), legislation that creates legal markets, or any research that communicates new information about cannabis. This task can only be executed by strong brands that present consumers with new, more inspiring myths.

In her critical take on the cultural role of branding *No Logo*, Naomi Klein surveyed the history of how brands came to be the "souls" of firms and have consequently taken an overwhelming role in contemporary culture. "Competitive branding became a necessity of the machine age — within a context of manufactured sameness, image-based difference had to be manufactured along with the product" (Klein, 1999).

Consumers have become culturally accustomed to search for and identify with brands that don't just communicate the qualities of the products being sold, but also represent an intangible "soul" filled with ideas and meaning. This trait is not unique to product categories with high identity value, such as clothing, cosmetics, cars, etc., but has expanded to even the most commonplace of commodities. In the essay "How to Brand Sand," advertising executives argued that "you can indeed brand not only sand, but also wheat, beef, brick, metals, concrete, chemicals, corn grits, and an endless variety of other commodities traditionally considered immune to the process" (Hill, Grath, & Dayal, 1998). This mentality has been the foundation of marketing for the past two decades, where essentially everything that consumers purchase — be it running shoes, gasoline, personal electronics, or electricity — comes equipped with a "soul." Branding is the cultural status quo, the language that producers and consumers communicate though in virtually all exchanges — with certain exceptions, such as legal cannabis.

3.2.3 The Basic Functions of Brands

Brands like Starbucks are "in the business of taking a much more generic product — a cup of coffee — and branding it so completely that it becomes a spiritual/designer object. So Starbucks doesn't want to be known as a blockbuster. It wants, as its marketing director Scott Bedbury says, to 'align ourselves with one of the greatest movements towards finding a connection with your soul' (Klein, 1999). However, the objective of brands were very different in the past, where "the first task of branding was to bestow proper names on generic goods such as sugar, flour, soap and cereal, which had previously been scooped out of barrels by local shopkeepers" (ibid). Marketing-wise, the legal cannabis market seems to still be stuck in this whimsical pre-branded era. Generally, cannabis is sold as a generic commodity and scooped out of plain jars, a far less ambitious marketing strategy than Starbucks' pursuit of "connections with consumers' souls" (ibid) Yet such practices were precisely what prompted the need for branding in the market. "In the 1880s, corporate logos

were introduced to mass-produced products like Campbell's Soup, HJ. Heinz pickles and Quaker Oats cereal [and] tailored to evoke familiarity and folksiness (see Aunt Jemima), in an effort to counteract the new and unsettling anonymity of packaged goods" (ibid).

With its lack of brands and society's lack of experience with cannabis, there is a new and unsettling anonymity surrounding it, perhaps accounting for why social skepticism of cannabis remains. Cannabis is not just missing the "positive associations" that brands can generate for even the most generic products, but even basics roles of branding, like quality assurance, consistency, trust, and familiarity. The emergence of brands in the market would presumably build familiarity and trust for both individual firms as well as the entire market for this controversial commodity by fighting the negative stories and stereotypes that still circulate. If even one firm can create familiar and consistency for consumers through branding practices, they might also consequentially change the entire cultural narrative of cannabis.

In their 2011 piece "How Starbucks Transformed Coffee From a Commodity Into A \$4 Splurge," *Fast Company* spoke with Stanley Hainsworth, vice president global creative for Starbucks and former creative director for Nike and Lego, about how the branding not only allowed Starbucks to succeed at selling \$4 coffee, but made it the norm across the coffee industry. One could argue that, pre-Starbucks, the offering of a \$4 cup of coffee might have seemed almost as ridiculous as the offering of legal cannabis. Only the power of strong brands can prompt such drastic change in a market and the greater culture. Again, the question isn't whether a "Starbucks of cannabis" will emerge to dominate the market, but whether one will emerge to drastically transform the cultural role of this commodity and, simultaneously, its market. Discussing the concept of "brand experience" which Starbucks perfected, Hainsworth described it as, "experience first and product second, because no one is going to pick up your product and try it if they don't want to buy into the experience [...] There is a very intentional effort to inspire people to get caught up in that experience and say, 'I want to try that' — whatever that thing happens to be" (Fast Company, 2011).

It must be noted how important the role of retail design can be to the development of brand experience — case in point, Starbucks, who built its brand not just through its products but more importantly through the experience that its retail design offered customers. Prior research can verify the important of retail design to brand experience and brand image (Sulek, Lind, & Marucheck, 1995; Ashley, Ligas, & Chaudhuri, 2010; Rigik, 2014; Kent & Kirby, 2009). Such knowledge must also be considered when exploring branding practices, especially regarding the cannabis industry, where poor retail design is a may cause of the negative attitudes still directed at the market.

Hainsworth also stressed the importance of a brand's story in converting consumers. For cannabis, its current "story" or "experience" is not a positive or persuasive one, yet it is still being perpetuated by the "shopkeepers scooping generic commodities out of barrels" that populate the

legal market. The most important transformation that the market can undergo will not be any legal or regulatory changes, but rather the transformation that will occur when new stories and experiences are created through branding. If the experience is first and the product is second, the negative brand experience that emerged from cannabis prohibition will always be the most important point for consumers. It will take a new brand experience to "inspire people to get caught up in that experience and say 'I want to try that'" in order to transform the market and the culture (Fast Company, 2011).

In early 2014, the website *Abril Uno* ran a fake news story about Philip Morris launching a "Marlboro M" brand of cannabis cigarettes. The story came with fake quotes from Philip Morris and even a realistic mock-up image of a pack of "Marlboro M" cannabis cigarettes. "When the website ran the story 'Phillip Morris Introduces Marlboro Marijuana Cigarettes,' the Internet exploded and hundreds of thousands of people shared the link on social media" (Mic, 2014). The fake news piece generated an impressive amount of attention, especially considering it was coming from a relatively unknown and highly unreliable source. While the headline alone was destined to raise eyebrows, the most powerful aspect of the piece was the image of a Marlboro-branded cannabis product (see Appendix 2). Though Marlboro is nowhere near as beloved of a brand as Coca-Cola or Budweiser, with negative social attitudes to the tobacco industry and its marketing practices, it is nevertheless a cultural icon with high brand salience. To see such an iconic brand in the context of cannabis was a powerful experience, no matter what one's individual attitudes to Marlboro were. It begs the question of how consumer attitudes towards cannabis would change if the market received the "stamp of approval" of an iconic brand like Marlboro, Coca-Cola, or Starbucks. After all, such a situation is far from impossible:

> "Even though the life of legalized marijuana in the U.S. is still in its infancy, it's not that crazy to think that a huge company like Philip Morris would make a move into the ganja game. This past December, Bill Phelps, a spokesman for Philip Morris USA, maker of Marlboro, was very vague when asked about the possibility of the company's move into the marijuana business. 'We have a practice of not commenting or speculating on future business,' Phelps said" (Mic, 2014).

There is much speculation that existing firms and brands may move into the cannabis market as reform continues — whether it be tobacco firms, alcohol firms, pharmaceutical firms, agricultural firms, or even Starbucks itself. Prior research has explored the effects of brand extensions into new categories (Milberg, Sinn, & Goodstein, 2010; McCarthy, Heath, & Milberg, 2001; Spiggle Nguyen, & Caravella, 2012; Monga & John, 2010; Loken & John, 1993). Yet prior theory provides little knowledge about how the entrance of familiar brands into the cannabis market might play out, given cannabis' unique nature. With the stigma surrounding cannabis, there may be huge risks for established brands attempting to enter its controversial market. Similarly, consumers in the cannabis

market (particularly "heavy" ones) may react negatively to the entrance of existing firms into the market, especially after the decades of lobbying against legalization that so many firms have previously performed. It remains to be seen whether incumbent firms will attempt brand extensions into cannabis as the market grows, and it would be foolish to rule out such a possibility considering the market's size and potential. Nevertheless, the impact of strong branding in the cannabis market — whether it be a pack of Marlboro cannabis cigarettes, an actual "Starbucks of pot," or a new cannabis brand that becomes similarly iconic — will be significant and likely shape the market more drastically than regulatory changes. Regulation cannot create cultural contexts as efficiently as brands. It will be up to whichever brands emerge during the development of the market to determine its full potential.

The BRiC (brand relevance in category) construct offers two brand functions: risk reduction and social demonstrance. The risk reduction function represents how "brands identify the source or maker of a product" for consumers to recognize and "activate their knowledge" through to "form reasonable expectations about the functional and other benefits of a brand" (Fischer, Völckner, & Sattler, 2010). Social demonstrance means that "brands can serve as symbolic devices that allow consumers to project their self-image" by representing "intrinsic values (e.g. self-expression) or extrinsic values (e.g. prestige)" to either themselves or their social surrounding (ibid). Though brand relevance can differ across categories, it is clear that the cannabis market would benefit from stronger risk reduction activities, which would provide new information for consumers and build confidence about cannabis. Cannabis could also benefit from stronger social demonstrance functions, which allow consumers to find better values and meaning in cannabis than the generally low or negative forms of social demonstrance that cannabis has carried for decades. With both of these functions needed in the cannabis market, it is interesting to speculate which type of brands could serve them best. We might not known whether a Marlboro or Starbucks will ever enter the cannabis market, but we can still wonder what the effects would be if such a powerful brand did. The functions of risk reduction and social demonstrance will be essential in changing the cultural role of cannabis.

Cayla & Arnould argue that "a cultural approach [to branding] involves broadening our view [so] that brands are part of the fabric of popular culture and populate our modern mythology; they must be analyzed as cultural forms, carriers of meaning, and devices structuring thought and experience" (2008). Thus far, the only branding efforts in the cannabis market have mainly been uninspired attempts by the countless players in the "Green Rush" to get a hold of as much market share as possible as consumers shift from the black market to the legal market. In our endlessly branded culture, any new market has to create myths, carry meaning, and structure thought and experience in order to succeed. This is especially true for markets with a troubled past or complicated nature, like cannabis.

Let us consider Shove & Araujo's theory of domestication, where "artefacts," or material objects, must be "appropriated and aligned with existing practices and other artefacts" in order to be "inserted into everyday life" for consumers (2010). They present four steps that a material object must go through. First, "appropriation," where the object must be transferred and transformed into an artefact with meaning to the user. Next, "objectification," which aligns the artefact with other artefacts and gives cognitive meaning to its users. Third is "incorporation," where the artefact is embedded into everyday use through insertion into routines of users. Finally, there is "conversion," where the artefact is more externally understood and common meaning is formed.

It could be argued that cannabis has already gone through all four stages of domestication within the black market, but remains the same domesticated artefact even after legalization. Cannabis has already been appropriated and objectified to carry meaning, which is the widely-held negative view that cannabis is a harmful drug and danger to society. It has also already been aligned with other artefacts. Though cannabis may have certain positive alignments, like with beer, it has mainly been domesticated through an alignment with much more negative artefacts, like any other drug that is prohibited and criminalized. Cannabis has then already been incorporated into the routines of users, who have mainly been seen as criminal or at least "sleazy," and incorporated into the culture as a prohibited and criminal drug that should not be consumed. Finally, cannabis has already been converted, to some as a beneficial object that consumers use despite its prohibition, but mainly under the common meaning that cannabis is harmful and wrong.

Therefore, within these new legal markets, it seems that a re-domestication of cannabis is needed in order to re-align it with different artefacts and form a different common meaning. So whose responsibility is it to undertake this task? The cannabis market cannot simply rely on consumers to re-align cannabis and create a new meaning if they are continually presented the same stereotypical brand and "myths" that accompany it. It will be up to firms and marketers in the cannabis industry to tell new stories and offer new experiences — to find that "Mexican beach" that Corona offered to the American beer market. Cannabis needs to be re-aligned, not "re-mixed," like NORML and WeedMaps recently attempted to do.

The creation of a new "soul" for cannabis through branding practices would undoubtedly affect the shaping of the market by influencing the entanglement of normalizing practices, exchange practices, and representational practices that are currently shaping the market.

3.3 Summary of Theory

In the first part of this chapter, we discussed Kjellberg & Helgesson's view on the nature of markets, which explains how they are "constructed and shaped by concrete activities" to fit a certain ideas or "representations of nature [...] more worthy of reproduction than nature itself" (2007).

Along with our discussion of how ideas influence the development of market, we explained how Fligstein's "markets-as-politics" theory can be seen in the history of the cannabis market, as well as the political actions surrounding the contemporary legal market. We then used Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual model to categorize the market practices at work within the cannabis market and discussed how those practices are inter-connected and affect other market practices. This section intended to lay the foundation for the second half of the Theory chapter in two ways: first, by providing a deeper look into the forces at work within the cannabis market and provide the reader with an adequate understanding of it; and second, to explain the broader implications that all market practices have on the shaping of the market. By doing so, we can understand the true weight of new branding practices, where their effects go beyond attracting consumers to individual brands, but may also affect the normalizing, exchange, and representational practices of the entire market.

In the second part of this chapter, we discussed branding and branding practices through existing theory. We explored the history of branding and the role of brands in contemporary culture with the writings of Klein, Holt, and Cayla & Arnould. We also touched on the functions of brands (risk reduction and social demonstration) using the BRiC construct. With Shove & Araujo's theory of domestication, we discussed the stages that material objects must go through in the consumer's mind before becoming an artifact and suggested that a re-domestication may be needed for cannabis. We also referenced prior theory on stereotypes and symbols, retail design, and familiar brands and brand extensions. In this section, we provided a deeper understanding of brands and branding practices and explored their greater role/functions. If we consider Kjellberg & Helgesson's theory on the nature of markets and market practices, we can comprehend the broader effects of new branding practices, beyond how they affect consumer attitudes or behavior. If Kjellberg & Helgesson are correct in that all market practices are "entangled" "through chains of translations," then we can assert that new branding practices could affect the normalizing, exchange, and representational practices of the legal cannabis market. Therefore, if we can prove that new branding practices — such as the mere existence of brands in the market, the removal of stereotypes from the market, improved retail design, and the introduction of familiar brands into the market — have a positive affect on consumers, we can also argue that improved branding practices would positively affect the development of the market.

If the connection between the two parts of our Theory chapter is clear enough, we can now move on to state the hypotheses of this study which will be tested through quantitative methods.

3.4 Hypotheses Formation

Considering the cannabis market's lack of branding practice and cultural role of brands, there is much room to test how even the most basic branding practices might affect consumer attitudes

towards cannabis, which clearly have a significant impact on the market's development. Since branding is the language in which consumers and firms communicate, as brands give a "soul" to their products or services, the lack of branding in the cannabis market may be far more detrimental to its development than one might imagine. Since branding can manifest itself in many forms — be it a simple logo, packaging, retail design, product quality, or an intangible brand experience — there are several branding practices that should be tested to gain insights about which types might be most beneficial for the cannabis market.

H1: *Branded cannabis generates more positive consumer attitudes than unbranded cannabis.*

Our first hypothesis asserts that consumer attitudes towards cannabis can be improved by simply branding cannabis, rather than selling it as a generic commodity. Because risk reduction and social demonstrance are both needed in the cannabis market, the branding of cannabis will cause consumers to feel more positively towards cannabis than they might feel about the unbranded commodity than cannabis is currently traded as. Further, since branding practices have become so ubiquitous and are essentially the language with which firms and consumers communicate in contemporary markets, we can predict that consumer attitudes will improve if cannabis more closely resembles virtually every other consumer product on the market.

H2: *Cannabis brands with stereotypical imagery and language generate more negative consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*

Because the cannabis market is so crowded with stereotypes, which perpetuate old myths and negative stereotypes, brands that stray away from the common "stoner" stereotypes are more likely to create new myths and stories about both their own products and cannabis itself. Therefore, brands that continue to align themselves with cannabis stereotypes (such as weed leafs, Rastafarian culture, "stoner" culture, etc.) are more likely to perpetuate negative attitudes towards stereotypes, as opposed to brands that distance themselves from such things in order to create a new myth and collective understanding, which should improve consumer attitudes.

H3: *Improvements in retail design will improve consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis.*

The retail design or retail experience of a firm can often account for its brand experience (take Starbucks, for example). Recently, there has been much criticism of the cannabis retail experience, so much so that new stereotypes have formed about the new legal market. With new

innovations in retail design and retail experience, cannabis firms can stray away from such stereotypes and further encourage positive consumer attitudes towards the legal cannabis market. By presenting cannabis dispensaries that more closely resemble the modern retail experience (e.g. a Starbucks, an Apple store, etc.), we predict that consumer attitudes towards the presence of cannabis retails will consequentially become more positive.

H4: *The entrance of familiar brands into the cannabis market will generate more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*

Along with the positive effects of branding, the introduction of familiar brands into the cannabis market should also generate positive consumer attitudes. Brands that have already fulfilled the duties of a brand, such as trust, familiarity, quality assurance, and self-expression, may transfer those functions into the cannabis market if they ever decide to enter. Since such functions are greatly needed in the cannabis market, the simple presence of familiar with may bring the benefits of branding practices into the market and produce positive consumer attitudes.

These four hypotheses form the basis of this study, in which various branding practices will be tested in the context of the cannabis market in order to test their effects on consumer attitudes. Branding practices can come in many forms, though most of them are currently ignored by the cannabis industry. Therefore, it will be beneficial for the future of the volatile cannabis market to test the effects of various forms of branding practices in hopes of encouraging cannabis firms to perform them for the benefit of their own firms as well as the greater cannabis industry.

4. Methodology

4.1 Scientific Approach

With the motivation to explore the effects of branding practices on the cannabis market and consumer attitudes towards it, several hypotheses were deduced from existing academic theory and other relevant knowledge in order to be tested empirically (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The deductive nature of the research model influenced the decision of which quantitative method to adopt (ibid). An experimental research design was chosen in order to assure internal validity, where two groups are tested — an experimental group exposed to the chosen treatments and a control group that is not — and respondents are randomly assigned to the two groups (ibid). This research design allows for comparable results between the two groups by minimizing the differences (Söderlund, 2010). Since

hypotheses would be tested in order to investigate the relationship between certain variables, the research design is conclusive in nature (Malhotra, 2010).

By adopting an experimental design, the research can be described as causal, given that experimentation is the main form of causal research (ibid). This is because causal research requires independent variables that are manipulated in a relatively controlled environment so that other variables that may affect dependent variables are controlled as much as possible (ibid). It was decided early on that the experiment would consist of exposing subjects to different forms of cannabis branding and asked to share their reactions/attitudes to them. Considering that respondents were questioned directly after being exposed to various stimuli, there is a high probability that the results were causal. Since control images would be used on a separate group, both causality and internal validity are likely strengthened (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Quantitative research is typically used in experimentation it seeks to quantify data and allow statistical analysis of an experiment's results (Malhotra, 2010; Söderlund, 2010). A large number of respondents would be needed in order to produce strong data and statistical analysis which could allow for generalized conclusions.

4.2 Research Design

To ensure that the purpose of the research would be fulfilled, a pre-study was performed to develop the best research design and practices for the main study. The focus of the pre-study was to explore the cannabis market's current branding practices and search for new practices that might positively affect consumer attitudes. The main study's objective was to test how consumer attitudes towards cannabis might change between current branding practices (i.e. non-branded, cannabis as a commodity surrounded by stereotypes) and improved branding practices (i.e. branded, cannabis as a consumer-friendly good, distanced from old stereotypes).

In both the pre-study and the main study, two categories were creating for the different branding practices that would be tested in the research: *Immature* and *Mature*.

Much of the cannabis market's current branding practices can be considered *Immature* on several grounds. Firstly, in the sense that the market is immature (young) and brands have yet to develop. At the moment, cannabis is primarily exchanged and perceived as a commodity, sold out of jars and packaged in plain Zip-loc bags or generic plastic bottles. The functions of brands, such as risk reduction and social demonstration, are widely ignored in the industry. Though certain producers attempt to brand their offerings (usually poorly), the market currently functions like the commodity markets of the pre-branding era, where "generic goods [were] scooped out of barrels by local shopkeepers" (Klein, 1999). Further, the *Immature* category consists of the "immaturity" (unsophistication) of current cannabis branding practices — the reliance on black market strain names like Green Crack and old stereotypes that perpetuate social stigma.

The *Mature* category serves as a contrast to most of the branding practices that make up the *Immature* category. Firstly, the *Mature* category represents branding practices of a mature (developed) market — where brands have emerged and serve their brand functions. Such branding practices would include branded cannabis (by brand names, rather than strain names), as well as professional packaging on par with that of similar consumer goods. Essentially, *Mature* branding practices are those that could let cannabis look like any other product in a supermarket or shopping mall, rather than a "generic good" (ibid). The *Mature* category also includes branding practices that one might expect (or hope for) if the cannabis market develops further — say, 10 years in the future — or practices that might exist if cannabis were never prohibited. It also includes more "mature" (sophisticated) practices, where stereotypes like weed-leaf logos and Green Crack strain names are no longer perpetuated. Therefore, the *Mature* category adopted for the research refers to both a hypothetically "mature" (developed) cannabis market that also utilizes "mature" (sophisticated) branding practices (i.e. distancing the industry from past stereotypes, creating new myths).

Consumer attitudes towards *Immature* and *Mature* branding practices were decided to be tested in the experimental main study, which would be modeled after insights from the pre-study.

4.3 Pre-Study

The pre-study was conducted over a few stages: first, through qualitative interviews and discussions with consumers about cannabis branding/marketing; second, through two quantitative surveys. The pre-study interviews/discussions were intended to provide an understanding of which images should be selected as stimuli for *Immature* and *Mature* branding in the main study. The pre-study surveys were conducted to verify that *Immature* and *Mature* stimuli would cause the intended reactions and manipulation effect, where manipulations were interpreted as intended for the research objectives. Therefore, two pre-study surveys were conducted to test the incongruence between the two categories of stimuli and the respondents' reactions to them (Söderlund, 2010).

The objective of the pre-study was to develop insights about which current branding practices of the cannabis market generate negative consumer attitudes for the average consumer. The intent was not to identify the most extremely negative trends, but rather to identify which branding practices are most apparent to both target consumers (cannabis users) and non-target consumers (non-users). The interviews also intended to gather knowledge regarding which types of branding practices might encourage more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis.

4.3.1 Pre-Study Interviews

The pre-study interviews and discussions were conducted both in-person and online. The interviews were primarily done in-person (one-on-one, question and answer), while discussions were started in online forums to allow respondents to freely discuss the issue.

A convenience sample of friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances was used for the pre-study interviews. A wider sample was sought for the interviews, but proved difficult, as strangers seemed uncomfortable about discussing the issue in-depth enough to produce significant insights and their responses therefore seemed of little value for the pre-study. Though not ideal, convenience samples can be considered acceptable for certain purposes and, according to Bryman & Bell, are quite common in the fields of business and management (2007). Considering the study's limited resources and that attempts to use a wider sample proved fruitless, the convenience sample was decided to be sufficient for this phase of the pre-study

The subjects of the (in-person) interviews came from as many different backgrounds as could be found. Opponents of legal cannabis, supporters, and persons with neutral views on the issue were interviewed, as well as subjects with varying degrees of personal experience with cannabis. The subjects also differed in age, education, political ideology, and region of residence. Interviewees came from U.S. states where the legal status of cannabis differed (i.e. California, where medical cannabis is legal, or New York, where all cannabis is prohibited) and other countries such as Sweden (where cannabis is prohibited and more socially stigmatized than in the U.S.) or the Netherlands (where cannabis is "tolerated" but not very important or widely embraced by its residents).

The pre-study interviews were conducted in a casual and informal manner in order to receive the most honest opinions from the interviewees and keep them comfortable when discussing this somewhat sensitive subject. Since cannabis is a political issue and remains controversial, the interviews were conducted in a way to prevent the interviewees from feeling like their personal values were being examined. Therefore, the issues discussed in each interview often varied, focusing on whatever areas of the cannabis market or cannabis branding that the interviewees felt comfortable discussing. Throughout the interview phase, interviewees were shown various images from the current cannabis market, as well as mock-up images that were created as potential *Mature* stimuli. The interviewees reactions and opinions about these images influenced the selection of both *Immature* control stimuli and *Mature* treatment stimuli.

The interviews provided many insights that influenced the selection of the stimuli for the *Immature* control and *Mature* treatment groups. For instance, in several interviews with medical cannabis users from California, the interviewees explained how most dispensaries only hire young, attractive women as "budtenders." One interviewee noted how this gave the cannabis retail experience a "Hooters vibe," referring to the restaurant chain famous for its scantily clad waitresses. This trend was taken into account for the *Immature* stimuli, influencing the selection of an image

where two young female budtenders are seen posing behind the counter of a medical dispensary. Further, several non-users from California expressed their discomfort with seeing bright neon "weed leaf" symbols on the exterior of most medical dispensaries — an insight that prompted the selection of a control image with similar characteristics. Both cannabis consumers and non-consumers discussed the idea of cannabis shops looking more like "Starbucks" rather than "shady pawn shops," which also influenced the selection of the treatment image for a *Mature* cannabis retail design.

Strain names were also discussed in the interviews. Both cannabis users and non-users expressed dissatisfaction with strain names like Green Crack and Alaskan Thunderfuck. Several cannabis users acknowledged how such names gave cannabis a bad reputation, and most non-users expressed dissatisfaction about such strains of cannabis becoming available in their regions. Therefore, it was decided that such strain names should be included in the *Immature* stimuli, since even non-users were familiar with these names and noted them as reasons for their apprehension towards cannabis use or legalization.

The interviewees also influenced the choice of a "familiar brand" for the treatment stimuli to test whether existing brands that consumers are familiar with might change consumer attitudes towards cannabis if they entered the market. A selection of the interviewees were shown the mock-up image of "Marlboro M Brand" cannabis cigarettes which had become popular on the internet and partially inspired this study (see Appendix 2). Both users and non-users expressed dissatisfaction at the idea of Marlboro or any other tobacco firm entering the cannabis market. Many interviewees also had negative attitudes about the possibility of alcohol companies entering the cannabis market. One brand that came up several times in the interviews was Starbucks, as both users and non-users expressed positive attitudes towards either a cannabis brand extension of Starbucks, or a cannabis firm that resembled the brand experience of Starbucks. Therefore, Starbucks was chosen as the "familiar brand" to be tested in the treatment group with a mock-up image of Starbucks cannabis.

Alongside the in-person interviews, online discussions were started on popular Internet forums, such as Reddit, and social media platforms, like Facebook. These discussions intended to explore the issues from the in-person interviews from a different perspective, where respondents shared their opinions and interacted with other respondents. This method was useful in starting more in-depth discussions and debates than the one-on-one in-person interviews, in order to gain deeper insights and confirm the insights generated from the in-person interviews.

After conducting over 20 informal interviews with consumers of various backgrounds and personal relationships with cannabis, alongside the online discussions, the selection of images for the pre-study survey began based on the qualitative knowledge.

4.3.2 Pre-Study Surveys

The pre-study surveys intended to verify that the *Immature* and *Mature* stimuli used in the main study would generate the intended reactions and manipulation effects, as well as to test the incongruence between the images presented in the survey and the respondents' reactions to the various stimuli (Söderlund, 2010).

Immature stimuli was collected mainly from web searches for existing images of the cannabis industry. *Mature* images were both collected online and produced by the researchers. Some images were taken from existing cannabis firms that were deemed *Mature* in their branding practices by the researchers, such as a product image from the Colorado-based cannabis edibles brand Dixie Elixirs. Other images were mock-ups of fictional cannabis brands produced by graphic designers, found by the researchers through web searches. Certain images were manipulated by the researchers to change *Immature* attributes in order to strengthen the "maturity" of the image.

A "familiar brand" image was also produced by altering an existing product photo for a package of Starbucks coffee to create a mock-up image of Starbucks-brand cannabis. Only the text on the packaging was changed, but other features such as color, logos, and font remained unchanged to maintain the look and feel of the Starbucks brand.

Images from two existing cannabis-related service firms were also selected for the survey. First, two images of the online maps service Weed Maps were used. Recently, WeedMaps underwent a re-branding, where the weed-leaf symbol was removed from their logo and the logo's font was changed to a more modern, professional font. It was decided to use Weed Maps' previous logo and home page as an *Immature* image and their new, re-branded logo as a *Mature* image. The full-page *New York Times* advertisement for online cannabis review service Leafly was also selected as a *Mature* image since it also strayed from cannabis stereotypes in its branding and imagery.

In total, nine (9) *Immature* images (see Appendix 6) and 9 (nine) *Mature* images (see Appendix 7) were selected, displaying various forms of cannabis, cannabis edibles, cannabis retail environments, cannabis services, and cannabis promotional pieces/advertisements.

The surveys first asked respondents some demographic questions regarding age, gender, the country they live in, how cannabis is regulated in their region, how they personally believe cannabis should be regulated in their region, their personal experience with cannabis, and how they believe their personal experience with cannabis would be if it were legally available in their region (see Appendix 4). The survey then showed the selected images of cannabis to the respondents and asked them how they would feel about the product or service displayed in the image being sold or operating in their region. The respondents were given seven (7) response choices: "Very Dissatisfied," "Dissatisfied," "Somewhat Dissatisfied," "Neutral," "Somewhat Satisfied," "Satisfied," and "Very Satisfied" (see Appendix 5). This bi-polar seven-point scale (with values from 1 - 7, "Neutral" = 4) was intended to measure emotions and intentions so that the respondents would

fluctuate between two extremes (Söderlund, 2005). Given that so many images were being shown to the respondents, this single question with the "Dissatisfied-Satisfied" scale was asked after each image in order to keep the survey as short as possible and encourage respondents to complete the questionnaire. The "Dissatisfied-Satisfied" measure was chosen as the researchers felt that it could sum up the reactions of a wide-range of respondents with different views/experiences regarding cannabis. The respondents were not asked whether or not they would use the products/services in the images because that would exclude any respondents who don't use cannabis and generate redundant responses from that demographic. The "Dissatisfied-Satisfied" scale measured whether non-users were comfortable with the cannabis products/services being available in their region, as well as the feelings that cannabis users or potential users had towards the offerings presented.

Two surveys were conducted to prevent the order of the images from affecting the respondents' answers. The first survey displayed the nine (9) *Immature* images first, followed by the nine (9) *Mature* images. The second survey displayed the *Mature* images first, followed by the *Immature* images. At the end of each survey, the respondents were given a text field to share their thoughts or feedback about the images in the survey or the survey itself.

4.3.3 Pre-Study Data Collection

The pre-study surveys ran at the end of October 2014 over a little more than two weeks (October 14—31). They were conducted primarily online and distributed via email and social media, as well as popular online forums such as Reddit. Reddit was selected as a place of distribution based on its massive user base and its use of "subreddits," or smaller independent forums dedicated to certain subjects or user-bases. Through Reddit, the survey was presented to certain types of users based on the subreddit that it was posted — such as r/RedditForGrownUps, r/AskWomenOver30, r/Colorado, r/AskSeniors, and several more. Reddit has an active user-base, where posts can generate several thousand comments and detailed discussions within a matter hours, which also motivated the choice of distributing the survey there.

The surveys were presented to respondents as part of a Master's thesis on legal cannabis. It was not mentioned that the thesis was concerned with "marketing" as it was believed that such an admission might discourage respondents from participating due to the bad reputation of marketing surveys/research. The association of "cannabis" and "marketing" may have also discouraged participation in the survey if respondents with negative attitudes towards cannabis. Since such respondents — those who are skeptical or opposed to cannabis — were most needed, the survey was only presented as part of a Master's thesis about legal cannabis. The survey also offered the chance to win a $50 (or 300 SEK) gift card to the retailer of the winner's choice, if the respondents voluntarily entered their e-mail address at the end of the survey (see Appendix 3).

4.3.4 Pre-Study Data Analysis

To analyze a less-biased sample group, two filters were used to remove responses that provided unusable data. First, respondents were removed if they used cannabis "regularly," since such respondents likely had strongly positive pre-existing attitudes towards cannabis, regardless of branding practices, and would therefore provide unusable data to examine manipulations. Second, respondents who had answered that they felt "Very Satisfied" about an image of a Zip-Loc bag of "Green Crack" cannabis were removed. Since this image of "Green Crack" cannabis was the most *Immature* representation of cannabis in the survey, it was concluded that respondents who felt "Very Satisfied" about this image had irregularly positive attitudes towards any offering of legal cannabis. Therefore, these respondents were of little value to the researchers as they seemed to have the same attitude to any presentation of legal cannabis, regardless of branding or packaging.

The first pre-study survey (Cronbach's alpha = 0.967) — in which the *Immature* images preceded *Mature* images — received 304 responses in which the questionnaire was fully completed. After these two filters were applied, the sample size was reduced to 168 respondents. The second pre-study survey (Cronbach's alpha = 0.967) — in which the *Mature* images preceded the *Immature* images — received 201 completed responses. After the same two filters from the first pre-study survey were applied, the sample size was reduced to 142 respondents. Both surveys presented differences in attitudes towards *Immature* and *Mature* branding practices.

Pre-Study 1 — Stimuli Attitudes

Immature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.	*Mature* Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dispensary #1	4.31	1.81	Dispensary	5.65	1.69
Dispensary #2	4.54	1.84	Edible #1	5.19	1.71
Edible	4.66	1.87	Edible #2	5.11	1.91
Pre-Rolled Joints	4.94	1.70	Pre-Rolled Joints #1	5.24	1.76
Unbranded Cannabis #1	4.82	1.87	Pre-Rolled Joints #2	4.98	1.86
Unbranded Cannabis #2	4.64	1.80	Branded Cannabis	5.24	1.74
Unbranded Cannabis #3	3.70	1.69	Starbucks Cannabis	4.66	1.97
Promotional Piece	3.88	1.78	Promotional Piece	5.06	1.85
Old WeedMaps	4.90	1.84	New WeedMaps	4.98	1.83

Pre-Study 2 — Stimuli Attitudes

Immature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.	*Mature* Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dispensary #1	3.92	1.79	Dispensary	5.31	1.66
Dispensary #2	3.98	1.90	Edible #1	5.17	1.77
Edible	4.15	1.93	Edible #2	4.99	1.91
Pre-Rolled Joints	4.47	1.74	Pre-Rolled Joints #1	4.87	1.91
Unbranded Cannabis #1	4.30	1.87	Pre-Rolled Joints #2	4.78	1.77
Unbranded Cannabis #2	4.42	1.83	Branded Cannabis	5.04	1.69
Unbranded Cannabis #3	3.54	1.69	Starbucks Cannabis	4.49	1.94
Promotional Piece	3.70	1.86	Promotional Piece	4.75	1.81
Old WeedMaps	4.23	1.82	New WeedMaps	5.01	1.73

While both of the surveys yielded differences that were mostly between 0.5 or 1.0, these differences were still deemed significant, especially given the seven-point measurement scale. A one-point variation could be the difference between a consumer feeling "Somewhat Dissatisfied" or "Neutral" about legal cannabis, or consumer attitudes shifting from "Neutral" to "Somewhat Satisfied." In the first survey, the collective means of all nine *Mature* images (M=5.12; SD=1.81) scored higher than the collective means of the nine *Immature* images (M=4.48; SD=1.80). Similarly, in the second survey, the *Mature* images (M=4.934; SD=1.799) collectively scored higher than the *Immature* images (M=4.117; SD=1.843).

Attitude Index — Pre-Study 1

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.48	1.80	168
Mature	5.12	1.81	168

Attitude Index — Pre-Study 2

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.12	1.84	142
Mature	4.93	1.79	142

Considering the survey's length (25 questions total, 18 of which were images) and that both *Mature* and *Immature* images were being presented in the same survey, it was believed that the pre-study method may have attributed to the lower level of differences. Nevertheless, variations still arose between the *Immature* and *Mature* images, and ones that could make a significant impact on the cannabis market considering that many legalization elections are determined by a few percentage points. Therefore, the variations in attitude towards the different categories of images seemed adequate to be tested in a proper experimentation, where *Immature* and *Mature* images are presented to separate treatment groups.

Further, it seemed that the variations between *Immature* and *Mature* cannabis would have been more significant if the WeedMaps images had not scored so similarly. This similarity in attitude was attributed to the fact that the respondents were seeing the two images in the same survey and had perhaps already developed their attitudes towards WeedMaps after seeing the first image. Still, with a slight variation, the images seemed worthy of being tested in main study's treatment groups to test for variations when the images are presented separately.

Considering that both pre-study surveys were not conducted in an experimental manner, yet still yielded differences in attitudes towards *Immature* and *Mature* branding practices, the selection of images seemed adequate for use in the main study.

The pre-study also yielded a significant amount of respondents with pre-existing positive attitudes towards cannabis. Even with regular cannabis users filtered out of the sample group, there remained a large number of respondents who admitted to using cannabis "occasionally." This likely accounted for increased means in attitudes towards both *Immature* and *Mature* branding practices. It also was likely to have decreased the differences in attitudes between the two categories, given that many respondents seemed to respond positively to any depiction of cannabis, regardless of branding practices. Therefore, it was decided that the main study's sample group needed to consist of more respondents who did not have such strongly positive attitudes towards cannabis, or that the number of respondents needed to be higher so that biased respondents could be filtered out even more so while still leaving an adequate sample size.

4.4 Main Study

The main study adopted many elements from the pre-study except that it was designed to be closer to a true experiment. The main study was also an online survey with the same questions, response options, and images/stimuli, however, two groups were created to receive different treatments. The control group was exposed to only the nine (9) *Immature* images from the pre-study, while the treatment group was exposed to the nine (9) *Mature* images.

The study was conducted during the first week of November 2014 (November 3 - 10). It was distributed online through social media, e-mail, and various online forums. The timing of the study was intended to be opportune in collecting responses, as the U.S. mid-term elections took place on November 4 and various cannabis legalization bills were in the news. Since media coverage and public discourse on the issue of marijuana would be higher than usual during this period, it was hoped that the experiment would receive more respondents if conducted around the election, which it seems to have. Like the pre-study, the experiment was presented as a survey for a Master's thesis on cannabis legalization, with no mentioning of "marketing" or the focus of the thesis.

4.4.1 Experiment Sample

After learning through the pre-study that online distribution seemed most effective in encouraging participation and generating honest feedback, the main study was distributed online through the same channels as the pre-study. The study was targeted at respondents who were most likely to not have pre-existing positive attitudes towards cannabis. The study was bound to receive respondents with pre-existing positive attitudes, no matter how targeted the distribution was, but it had already been decided that such respondents would be removed from the sample. Therefore, the objective was to collect as many responses as possible, mainly from demographics with generally negative attitudes towards cannabis, in order to have a large enough sample to analyze at the conclusion of the experiment.

The experiment received 823 completed responses in total, where the respondents were randomly but equally distributed between the control and treatment groups. Respondents were then filtered out based on two factors from the demographic questions of the survey. For the question "What is your personal experience with cannabis?" respondents were excluded from the sample if they answered "I use cannabis on occasion" or "I use cannabis regularly." Respondents were also removed if they answered "I would use cannabis regularly" to the question "If cannabis were legal in your region and regulated like alcohol, what would your personal experience with it be?" It was decided that respondents would not be excluded from the sample if they answered "I would use cannabis on occasion" to the same question. Such respondents were included in the sample because the opinions of potential users were considered relevant to the research.

After removing unusable respondents from the sample, 381 responses remained — 194 in the control group and 187 in the treatment group. Though there was an uneven distribution of respondents to each group, the treatment groups were close enough in size to use for the study.

Gender of Respondents	Number	Percent of Total
Male	223	58.5%
Female	158	41.5%

Country of Respondents	Number	Percent of Total
United States	254	66.7%
Canada	78	20.5%
United Kingdom	17	4.5%
Sweden	5	1.3%
Other	27	7.1%

Legal State of Cannabis in Respondent's Region	Number	Percent of Total
Illegal and Criminalized	213	55.9%
Decriminalized but Prohibited	21	5.5%
Legal for Medical Use	91	23.9%
Legal for Recreational Use	27	7.1%
Respondent Does Not Know	29	7.6%

Based on the legality of cannabis in the respondents' various regions, the sample seemed comparable to the actual population relevant to this research, given that roughly half of the United States has some form of legal cannabis and all of Canada has legal medical cannabis.

Personal Experience with Cannabis	Number	Percent of Total
"I have never used cannabis"	115	30.2%
"I have tried cannabis once or twice"	64	16.8%
"I have used cannabis less than ten times"	71	18.6%
"I used to use cannabis but not anymore"	131	34.4%

Since roughly half of the sample had either never used cannabis or tried it only once or twice, the sample seemed adequate to be compared with the actual population, considering that 47% of Americans admit to having tried cannabis according to PEW research (PEW, 2014).

In response to the question "If cannabis were legal in your region and regulated like alcohol, what would your personal experience with it be?" the sample also seemed to consist of a satisfactory distribution of opinions.

Potential Experience with Legal Cannabis	Number	Percent of Total
"I would never use cannabis"	142	37.3%
"I might try cannabis once"	49	12.9%
"I might try cannabis a few times"	81	21.3%
"I would use cannabis on occasion"	109	28.6%

Opinion on How Cannabis Should Be Regulated	Number	Percent of Total
Illegal and Criminalized	17	4.5%
Decriminalized but Prohibited	23	6.0%
Legal for Medical Use	46	12.1%
Legal for Recreational Use	286	75.1%
"I don't know"	9	2.4%

Though the sample displayed higher approval for legal cannabis than many current opinion polls regarding personal opinions on how cannabis should be regulated, it was believed that these characteristics of the sample would not affect the objectives of the research, as the experiment focuses more on attitudes towards various presentations of legal cannabis rather than whether or not cannabis itself should be legal. With that said, the mean attitudes for both types of branding practices are likely more positive than they would be for the actual population.

Age of Respondents	Number	Percent of Total
18—25	141	37.0%
26—35	129	33.9%
36—45	56	14.7%
46—55	35	9.2%
56—65	17	4.5%
65+	3	0.8%

The only characteristic of the sample that was not representative of the actual population was its age. Though the sample's age skewed much younger than the actual population, the sample was

deemed satisfactory for the objectives of the experiment. Though younger demographics tend to have slightly more positive attitudes towards cannabis than older demographics — according to PEW research, 63% of Millennials believe cannabis should be legal, compared to 51% of Baby Boomers — the prevalence of younger demographics in the sample is not relevant to the objectives of the research. Since respondents were randomly but equally assigned to the control and treatments groups, the age distribution of the sample would not affect the results of the experiment as its objective is to compare the differences in mean attitudes between the different groups.

While the sample for this study may not be perfectly representative of the actual population, it was still considered satisfactory for the experiment. Given the limited resources of the study and the fact that regular or occasional cannabis users were removed from the sample, the sample would be adequate enough to perform the objectives of the experiment.

4.4.2 General Survey Design

The survey consisted of 25 questions, 18 of which tested the attitudes of the respondents to various forms of legal cannabis. After answering seven (7) demographic questions (see Appendix 4), the respondents were then randomly but equally assigned to one of treatment groups. The control group was shown only the nine (9) images of *Immature* branding practices (see Appendix 6), while the treatment group was shown the nine (9) images of *Mature* branding practices (see Appendix 7). The respondents were asked how they would feel about the product/service in the image being sold/ operating legally in their area immediately after being exposed to each image. Attitudes were measured on a bipolar, symmetrical 7-point scale of "Satisfied-Dissatisfied" attitudes, where the respondents could fluctuate between the two extremes in order to measure their intentions and emotions (Söderlund, 2005). The options presented to the respondents were: *Very Dissatisfied* (1), *Dissatisfied* (2), *Somewhat Dissatisfied* (3), *Neutral* (4), *Somewhat Satisfied* (5), *Satisfied* (6), and *Very Satisfied* (7). While odd-point scales have been criticized for the presence of a "neutral" option which may be overused as a lazy or uncritical option for respondents, it was decided that the "forced-response" of an even-point scale would be inappropriate for the experiment considering the subject matter of cannabis. Given the number of consumers who feel genuinely neutral about cannabis, it was decided that the survey should not force the respondents into only "Satisfied" or "Dissatisfied" attitudes. The 7-point scale was also wide enough to measure deviations in attitudes while also not presenting the respondents with too many or too few response choices.

Though it has been suggested that demographic questions should be presented at the end of a survey, the 7 demographic questions for the main study were presented at the beginning because the researchers hoped to make the respondents consider their personal attitudes and experiences with cannabis before being exposed to the images. The respondents were first asked their gender, age, and

country before answering 4 questions regarding cannabis: "How is cannabis currently regulated in your region?" "How do you think cannabis should be regulated in your region?" "What is your personal experience with cannabis?" "If cannabis were legal in your region and regulated like alcohol, what would your personal experience with it be?" These demographic questions also served as a manipulation control so that respondents with highly-positive attitudes towards cannabis could be removed from the sample.

To ensure that the respondents understood the questions and felt comfortable in their answers, the phrasing of the questionnaire was kept clear and simple (Söderlund, 2005). The questions and response choices were also kept consisted for all images in both the control and treatment group to prevent any confusion for the respondents throughout the survey.

4.5 Quality

Before discussing the results of the experiment, its reliability and validity should first be determined so that the quality of the survey's measurements can be ensured.

4.5.1 Reliability

To ensure its reliability, previously-approved measures from similar studies were utilized in the designing of the research to confirm that it could reproduce consistent results if the process of the measurements were repeated (Söderlund, 2005; Malhotra, 2010). In order to reduce the possibility for errors due to question design, the two pre-studies confirmed that the questionnaire was clear and understandable for the respondents and that expected manipulations were occurring. A 7-point scale was utilized for all questions and its indicators were consistent throughout the questionnaire to further ensure internal reliability (Söderlund, 2005). A Cronbach's Alpha of at least 0.925 was calculated on both of the pre-studies, encouraging its reliability and internal consistency, and a similar Cronbach's Alpha of 0.90 was tested on the main study. Since many of the images in the experiment were created by the authors specifically for the study, it is possible that the experiment's reliability was lowered based on the selection of images being tested. However, based on the pre-studies' finding, the influence of similar studies, and positive correlation of the Cronbach's Alpha testing, it is believed that reliability is high and the results of the experiment could be repeated (Malhotra, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4.5.2 Internal Validity

The main study was designed to be as close to a true experiment as possible given the resources at hand, since it uses two treatment groups to test manipulation variables, which generally

ensures high internal validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The pre-studies displayed the intended results of the manipulation variables, creating high internal validity for the main study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The risk of external factors affecting the experiment's results was minimized by keeping the questionnaire design consistent except for the manipulations, by ensuring that all respondents participated in a similar setting, and by randomly but equally distributing the respondents into the treatment groups (Malhotra, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011). While the main study is experimental in nature, it must be noted that the study is not a perfect experiment considering the stimuli utilized. A true experiment should use stimuli that is as identical as possible besides the manipulation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, given the study's limited resources, the researchers had to use existing images of cannabis products and services rather than create original images. Though the researchers attempted to utilized existing images that were as identical as possible, there are clearly differences in the images besides the manipulations. This aspect of the study may lower its validity and raise questions about whether it is a true experiment. Nevertheless, considering that the main study tested two groups that were exposed to different treatments, which is in line with Bryman & Bell's definition of an experiment, the main study will still be referred to as an experiment despite its potential flaws (2011).

4.5.3 External Validity

External validity was increasing by the online survey's random sample of participants and the random assignment of respondents to different groups (Söderlund, 2005). Though an artificial environment of an online survey can prevent its results from being generalized in the real world, Malhotra also encourages researchers to understand how the context or environment of a study may affect respondents (2010). Since respondents seemed more comfortable participating in an online, anonymous environment, the experiment's artificial environment should not prevent the results from being generalized in the real world as its environment seems to have encouraged more honest and eager participation from the respondents (Malhotra, 2010). External validity was also increased by the study's large sample and its adequate resemblance to the actual population regarding gender, age, and attitudes/experiences regarding cannabis. The sample's resemblance to the actual population is particularly strong regarding the traits most relevant to the study's focus, such as personal experience with cannabis and opinions on legalization. Further, respondents participated in the study voluntarily and mostly without any relationship to the authors, though the possible incentive of a $50 gift card may have affected the external validity. The use of volunteer online respondents may be considered convenience sampling, but given the large sample and the anonymous distribution of the survey among a wide range of demographics, the resemblance of the sample to the actual population seems too strong to consider the respondents a convenience sample. The random distribution of respondents

to the separate treatment groups also lowers the possibility of selection bias from the sample and increases external validity. Validity was also secured by the selected measures used to display the differences caused by manipulations.

5. Results

This chapter will discuss the data collected from the main study and the results of the manipulation variables regarding each hypothesis, along with additional insights. A summary of the hypotheses and their respective verdicts will be presented at the conclusion of the chapter. The reliability of the results were increased by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.911.

5.1 Manipulation Check

An index was created to measure attitudes towards each category's Branding Practices in order to ensure that the intended manipulations occurred in the main study. The index was tested with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.926. The means of the images with *Immature* Branding (M=4.48; SD=1.10) and the *Mature* Branding (M=5.00; SD=1.22) were compared and an independent t-test was performed that displayed a difference that was significant (t-value=4.901; p=0.000), thereby verifying the intended effects of the manipulations.

Index for Branding Practices

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.48	1.10	194
Mature	5.00	1.22	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 4.901; p=0.000

5.2 Hypotheses Testing

The results of the study were collected and the means of respondent attitudes to the various *Immature* and *Mature* stimuli were analyzed. The following table shows the mean attitudes to the individual images used in the study:

Main Study — Stimuli Attitudes

Immature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dispensary #1	4.24	1.09	Dispensary	5.43	1.13
Dispensary #2	4.47	1.16	Edible #1	5.03	1.18
Edible	4.69	1.12	Edible #2	5.09	1.27
Pre-Rolled Joints	4.84	1.06	Pre-Rolled Joints #1	5.03	1.22
Unbranded Cannabis #1	4.66	1.01	Pre-Rolled Joints #2	4.94	1.25
Unbranded Cannabis #2	4.61	1.08	Branded Cannabis	5.02	1.24
Unbranded Cannabis #3	4.06	1.15	Starbucks Cannabis	4.53	1.33
Promotional Piece	3.99	1.18	Promotional Piece	4.80	1.29
Old WeedMaps	4.72	1.06	New WeedMaps	5.13	1.20

For testing of the hypotheses, indexes were created to compare the effect of the study's manipulations — *Branding*, *Stereotypes*, *Retail Design*, and *Familiar Brands*— on the treatment groups. The verdicts for each of the hypotheses will also be determined in this section, based on the indexes of their respective variables.

5.2.1 Branding

The index for Branding compares the means of the two treatment groups based on the 7-point bipolar "Satisfied-Dissatisfied" scale presented with each image. The index included the attitudes towards five (5) *Immature* images presented to the control group and the five (5) *Mature* images presented to the treatment group. The *Immature* images include three (3) images of immaturely-branded (strain name only) cannabis, one (1) image of an unbranded cannabis edible, and one (1) image of immaturely-branded (strain name only) cannabis cigarettes "pre-rolled joints." The *Mature* images include one (1) images of a branded line of cannabis, two (2) images of branded cannabis edibles, and two (2) images of branded cannabis cigarettes/"pre-rolled joints." The means of the *Immature* branding (M=4.57) and *Mature* branding (M=5.02) were compared and an independent t-test was performed (t-value=2.649; p=0.022), showing a significant difference based on the manipulation of Branding. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was **supported**.

Branding Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.57	1.09	194
Mature	5.02	1.23	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 2.649; p=0.022

5.2.2 Stereotypes

The index for Stereotypes compares the means of the two treatment groups based on the 7-point bipolar "Satisfied-Dissatisfied" scale presented with each image. The index included the attitudes towards eight (8) *Immature* images presented to the control group and six (6) *Mature* images presented to the treatment group. *Immature* images were those which contained stereotypical imagery or communications, which included three (3) images of cannabis with immature strain names, one (1) image of cannabis cigarettes with immature strain names, one (1) image of an online service's home page and logo, two (2) images of stereotypical cannabis dispensaries, and one (1) image of a stereotypical promotional piece. *Mature* images were those which defied cannabis stereotypes, which included one (1) image of a non-stereotypical cannabis dispensary, one (1) image of maturely-branded lines of cannabis, two (2) images of a maturely-branded cannabis edibles, one (1) image of a non-stereotypical promotional piece, and one (1) image of an online service's home page and logo. The means of the *Immature* (with stereotypes) images (M=4.43) and *Mature* (without stereotypes) images (M=5.07) were compared and an independent t-test was performed (t-value=4.143; p=0.000), showing a significant difference between the groups based on the manipulation.   Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was **supported**.

Stereotypes Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.43	1.10	194
Mature	5.07	1.22	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 4.143; p=0.000

5.2.3 Retail Design

The Retail Design index compares the means of the treatment groups based on the 7-point bipolar "Satisfied-Dissatisfied" scale. The index included the attitudes towards two (2) *Immature* images presented to the control group and one (1) *Mature* image presented to the treatment group. The *Immature* images showed two different legal cannabis dispensaries with stereotypical retail design, merchandising, and branding (M=4.239; M=4.468). The *Mature* image showed a dispensary with strong, professional retail design, merchandising, and branding (M=5.425). The combined means of the *Immature* images (M=4.35) and mean of the *Mature* image (M=5.425) were compared and an independent t-test was performed (t-value=7.375; p=0.000) showed a significant difference based on the manipulation. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was **supported**.

Retail Design Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.35	1.12	194
Mature	5.43	1.13	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 7.375; p=0.000

5.2.4 Familiar Brands

The index for Retail Design compares the means of the two treatment groups based on the 7-point bipolar "Satisfied-Dissatisfied" scale. The index included the attitudes towards five (5) *Immature* images presented to the control group and one (1) *Mature* image presented to the treatment group. The *Immature* images showed five different depictions of non-branded (strain name only) cannabis (M=4.66; M=4.69; M=4.06; M=4.84; M=4.61). The *Mature* image was a mock-up of Starbucks-branded cannabis (M=4.534). The collective mean of the *Immature* images (M=4.57) and the mean of the *Mature* image (M=4.53) were compared and an independent t-test was conducted (t-value=2.961; p=0.003), but the mean attitudes showed an insignificant difference between the groups based on the manipulation, with *Immature* unbranded cannabis scoring virtually equal to the *Mature* cannabis from a familiar brand. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was **not supported**.

Familiar Brands Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.57	1.09	194
Mature	4.53	1.33	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 2.961; p=0.003

5.3 Summary of Results

Hypothesis	Description	Verdict
H1	***Branded cannabis*** *generates more positive consumer attitudes than unbranded cannabis.*	**Supported**
H2	*Cannabis brands with **stereotypical** imagery and language generate more negative consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*	**Supported**
H3	*Improvements in **retail design** will improve consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis.*	**Supported**
H4	***Familiar brands*** *generate more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*	**Not Supported**

6. Analysis & Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore how new branding practices might affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis. An experiment was conducted to test several hypotheses that emerged through the research and the results of the experiment were collected and analyzed in order to generate knowledge regarding the problem at hand. In this chapter, we will discuss the results of the experiment and what they mean in regards to the theory and hypotheses previously discussed.

6.1 The Effects of Branding on Consumer Attitudes

H1: *Branded cannabis generates more positive consumer attitudes than unbranded cannabis.*

Hypothesis 1 Supported

Previous research has explored the effects of branding practices on consumer attitudes, purchasing intentions, and firm performance (Ogilvy, 1963; Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Lee, 2004; Mady, 2011). Others have also explored the functions of brands, on a product-level, personal-level, and cultural-level (Klein, 1999; Holt, 2004; Cayla & Arnould, 2008; LeBeouf & Simmons, 2010; Fischer, Völckner, & Sattler, 2010). With Hypothesis 1, this study sought to test the findings of prior research and develop them further within the new context of the developing legal cannabis market. The research attempted to verify the importance of branding and branding practices on consumer

attitudes by testing whether new branding practices could positively affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis, a highly-stigmatized product/market. This objective was carried out in the context of whether branding practices can affect the shaping of the legal cannabis market, since its development is so dependent on consumer attitudes, with public opinion and election results directly influencing the emergence/growth of the legal market(s).

Hypothesis 1 was supported, as the results of the experiment showed that branded cannabis generated more positive consumer attitudes than unbranded cannabis, which the legal market primarily consists of. Though the difference was not strongly significant, it can be considered significant in the context of the legal cannabis market based on the fragile nature of its development. Considering that most efforts to further the development of the market are decided by the slightest margins of consumer attitudes (e.g. voting for legalization), even the slightest variance in attitudes may significantly impact the development of the market. Further, the positive effects of branding practices on consumer attitudes were proven throughout both pre-studies and the experimental main study, further validating Hypothesis 1.

With the results of the experiment, this study supports the significance of branding practices on consumer attitudes towards cannabis. Since cannabis is mainly traded as an unbranded commodity and the market widely ignores even the most basic branding and market practices, the research shows how beneficial improved branding practices might be to the development of the legal market; or, vice versa, how detrimental the lack of branding practices might be to the market's development. In line with previous knowledge, branding is not only needed for its most basic functions of indicating of trust and familiarity, but also to develop new "myths" about cannabis and perform other essential brand functions (Klein, 1999; Holt, 2004; Fischer, Völckner, & Sattler, 2010). Further, new branding practices may also create value-expressive or symbolic appeals for cannabis, as opposed to the utilitarian appeals of the market's unbranded, commodity-esque state (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Actors in the market should make use of this knowledge, not only for the success of their own firms, but also to encourage the development of the legal cannabis market.

If we consider Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual model, it is easier to understand the broader effects of improving consumer attitudes through the introduction of branding into the legal cannabis market. Cannabis branding is not an isolated practice, but one that can translate to the normalizing, exchange, and representational practices of the market. By improving consumer attitudes through branding, we can confidently predict that other market practices will be positively affected and influence the shaping of the market. Therefore, the introduction of brands into the market should not be looked at as a black-and-white issue, where the consequences are limited to consumer attitudes and behavior regarding the various brands, but as an activity that can influence the countless forces at work within the market.

6.2 The Effects of Stereotypes on Consumer Attitudes

H2: *Cannabis brands with stereotypical imagery and language generate more negative consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*

Hypothesis 2 Supported

Prior research has proven the effect of products on consumer behavior, attitudes and self-concept, especially when certain products are associated with social stereotypes (Ogilvy, 1963; Grubb & Hupp, 1968; Munson & Spivey, 1981; Sirgy; 1982). Other research has also explored the effects of symbols on consumers (Levy, 1959; Levy, 1982). These issues are of great importance to the cannabis market because cannabis has been plagued by stereotypes and negative symbols for decades. Hypothesis 2 of the study tested whether the finding of previous research on stereotypes could be replicated to verify the effect of stereotypes on consumer attitudes towards cannabis. Hypothesis 2 was supported by showing significant difference in attitudes towards branding practices that perpetuated or neglected cannabis stereotypes. The study verifies how branding practices that distance cannabis from previously-established stereotypes can improve consumer attitudes towards cannabis. Since much of the market's branding practices consist of symbols that carry negative stereotypes (weed-leaf symbols, Rastafarian imagery, etc.), the study verifies the power of symbols on consumer behavior and attitudes, thereby proving the negative effects that such practices can have on consumer attitudes towards cannabis — and simultaneously, the development of the market (Levy, 1959; Levy, 1982). Consistent with previous research on stereotypes and consumer behavior, the research shows how stereotypes can negatively affect consumer attitudes towards cannabis. This validates our assumption that the cannabis market's perpetuation of negative stereotypes and symbols through its branding practices may be detrimental to its development.

6.3 The Effects of Retail Design on Consumer Attitudes

H3: *Improvements in retail design will improve consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis.*

Hypothesis 3 Supported

The impact of retail design on consumer attitudes and firm performance has been confirmed in prior studies (Sulek, Lind, & Marucheck, 1995; Kent & Kirby, 2009; Ashley, Ligas, & Chaudhuri,

2010; Rigik, 2014). This research intended to test the findings of such studies in the context of the cannabis market and confirm that improvements in retail design can positively affect consumer attitudes and firm/market performance. With Hypothesis 3, the study intended to display that consumers feel more positively towards cannabis when presented with stronger retail designs than those commonly found in the current cannabis market. Hypothesis 3 was supported, showing that consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis retailers were more positive when retail design was stronger than the status quo of the market. Consumer attitudes were significantly improved when exposed to a Starbucks/Apple Store-esque cannabis dispensary, as opposed to the "pawn shop/ underground abortion clinic" retail design that is common in the market. The study therefore confirms that improvements in retail design can positively affect consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis and make consumers more comfortable with legal cannabis dispensaries operating in their areas. This finding validates our assumption that stronger retail design for cannabis dispensaries may encourage the growth of the market by improving consumer attitudes towards them. For individual cannabis firms, this finding confirms previous research regarding how retail design can differentiate firms and improve performance (Rigik, 2014). It also verifies previous finding regarding how retail design can improve store image (Kent & Kirby, 2009). Considering how poor retail design of cannabis dispensaries is a significant driver of negative attitudes towards cannabis, improvements in retail design may not only improve consumer attitudes towards individual firms by differentiating them from the common cannabis dispensary, but also improve consumer attitudes towards the greater cannabis market if more firms improve their retail design. If more dispensaries adopt a "Starbucks" approach to their retail design, consumers may be more accepting of the presence of cannabis dispensaries in their area. Since poor retail design is an issue commonly discussed by skeptics of the legal cannabis market, improvements in this area may be very significant to the development of the legal market by strongly affecting consumer attitudes.

6.4 The Effects of Familiar Brands on Consumer Attitudes

H4: *Familiar brands generate more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*

Hypothesis 4 Not Supported

Prior studies have explored brand extensions and the introduction of familiar brands into new categories (McCarthy, Heath, & Milberg, 2001; Milberg, Sinn, & Goodstein, 2010; Spiggle, Nguyen, & Caravella, 2012). Other studies have also shown the negative impact of brand extensions on the family brand name when brand extensions are unsuccessful (Loken & John, 1993). Hypothesis 4 was

developed to test the findings of previous research by testing whether a familiar brand with good fit in the cannabis category could generate more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis compared to new brands or no brands. For the study, consumer attitudes towards a Starbucks cannabis brand was tested against both unbranded cannabis and new of cannabis, as Starbucks was deemed a brand that fit into the cannabis category while still being a well-liked brand (compared to tobacco or alcohol brands, who might have stronger congruence to cannabis but were not tested due to their relatively negative consumer attitudes compared to a more consumer-friendly brand like Starbucks).

The results of the study showed that Hypothesis 4 was not supported and consumer attitudes were actually more negative towards a familiar brand within the cannabis category compared to unbranded cannabis or new brands of cannabis. Since that Starbucks was the only familiar brand tested for Hypothesis 4, it is possible that other familiar brands might generate different results. But considering that Starbucks was the most-liked and best-fitting brand for the cannabis category based on knowledge generated in the pre-study, it seems unlikely that other familiar brands might have produced different results for the experiment. Therefore, it seems that the presence of familiar brands in the cannabis market may not generate more positive attitudes towards cannabis, and actually might produce more negative attitudes towards cannabis than unbranded cannabis or new cannabis brands. The findings verify previous research about brand extensions generating negative attitudes if the fit is wrong (Loken & John, 1993). It is unclear whether the results of the study were due to the Starbucks brand being a bad fit for the cannabis category, or the cannabis category being a bad fit for any familiar brand. Perhaps in the future, familiar brands may find success in the cannabis category when consumer attitudes towards cannabis have changed. But currently, it seems that even the most beloved familiar brands are unlikely to generate positive attitudes towards both the cannabis category or their own brand's extension into it. Though Hypothesis 4 was not supported in this study, further research may be needed on the subject of familiar brands entering the cannabis market. But for now, it seems unlikely that any familiar brand would be well-received by consumers if they attempted to extend into the cannabis category.

7. Conclusion & Implications

The final chapter of this study will give a general conclusion of the research's findings, including their theoretical and managerial implications, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research on the subject of cannabis branding and market development.

7.1 General Conclusion

The purpose of this study was two-fold: to test the effects of branding practices on consumer attitudes towards cannabis and shed new light on the importance of branding in controversial and/or developing markets such as legal cannabis. As we reflect on the findings of the study, let us return to its main research question:

—Can improved branding practices for cannabis positively affect the development of its legal market and encourage its growth?

Considering the results of the study, it would seem that the theory that we set out to explore — that improved branding practices for cannabis can directly influence the development of its legal market — has been supported. Of the four hypotheses tested, three were supported by the results of the experiment, validating the impact that new branding practices can have on consumer attitudes towards cannabis. Since consumer attitudes are so instrumental to the shaping of the legal cannabis market, these findings also support the assertion that improved attitudes towards cannabis may assist in the development of the legal market.

In November 2014, Florida's ballot initiative to legalize medical cannabis failed by a mere 2% of the vote. Opponents of the bill focused on negative stereotypes of cannabis to persuade voters to say "no" to the initiative, using images of "sleazy" cannabis dispensaries in their campaigns and re-enforcing the negative ideas and imagery of cannabis. Had the legal market already worked to improve their branding practices of legal cannabis, the bill likely would have met a different fate and America's legal cannabis market would have grown significantly, as Florida is the nation's fourth most-populated state. Though actors in the market work hard to encourage its development, little effort or attention is given to the impact of strong or poor branding practices on consumer attitudes. With this research, we have effectively tested and supported the notion that new branding practices can positively shift consumer attitudes towards cannabis. Although further research is undoubtedly needed to develop more concrete knowledge on the subject, this study should serve as a reminder to actors in the cannabis market that the power of branding cannot be underestimated and ignoring its practices is a disservice to their own firms, the greater cannabis market, and the movement for rational cannabis policies.

7.2 Managerial Implications

Since the small segment of heavy cannabis users purchase an overwhelming majority of all legal cannabis, the market has now coasted for years on poor branding practices that appeal only to the heaviest users, with little worry of how less-heavy users or non-users feel about such practices.

And indeed, even with such poor branding, the cannabis market has made significant steps towards reform and legalization in recent years. However, if actors in the market hope to see it reach its full potential, a greater importance must be placed on cannabis branding practices in order to influence the attitudes of all consumers, regardless of whether or not they use cannabis. Even under legalization, the effects of 70+ years of prohibition still linger. Consumers will need new "myths" and understandings of cannabis before it will become the consumer product that the market hopes it can one day be.

We have also seen in our finding that familiar brands are unlikely to change consumer attitudes to cannabis. Though it is unlikely that a Starbucks or Marlboro will enter the cannabis market any time soon, there is still much speculation about when incumbent firms will attempt to get a piece of the fortunes that await in the legal cannabis market. We hypothesized that the presence of familiar brands in the cannabis market would generate positive consumer attitudes, given that brands are things with "souls" that ensure trust, familiarity, and self-expression — all traits that the cannabis market currently lacks due to its absence of brands. However, this hypothesis was not supported and a hypothetical Starbuck cannabis brand extension actually scored significantly lower consumer attitudes than both unbranded and branded offerings of legal cannabis. Perhaps this explains why existing brands have yet to make a move into the market. Perhaps cannabis is still too controversial of a commodity for beloved brands to involve themselves with. Or perhaps cannabis is too unique of a commodity to have giant brands simply step in and take over. Indeed, many actors in the cannabis market fear the day that "Big Pharma/Tobacco/Alcohol/etc." invade the market to make their millions after decades of lobbying against cannabis reform. The exact reasons for why familiar brands would not work well in the cannabis market is unclear. But based on the finding of this study, it seems apparent that a literal "Starbucks of pot" won't be hitting the market anytime soon.

If we take a broader perspective, however, the effects of familiar brands entering the cannabis market are a more complex issue. Considering Kjellberg & Helgesson's model, as well as Fligstein's markets-as-politics theory, we cannot end the discussion about familiar brands' entrance into the legal market simply based off of our findings that it can generate negative consumer attitudes. We have discussed the "5th P" of politics and understand that firms attempt to "mitigate the effects of competition with other firms" within markets, which we have witnessed within the cannabis market as pharmaceutical, alcohol, tobacco, and law enforcement groups have actively worked against the development of the cannabis market (Fligstein, 1996). Within Kjellberg & Helgesson's framework, we know that such market (or, anti-market) practices affect every other practice within the legal cannabis market. Therefore, if familiar brands (such as Starbucks, or major brands from the pharmaceutical, tobacco, or alcohol categories) ever decided to enter the cannabis market, their ongoing efforts to prevent a legal market from forming would cease and instead turn into activities

that encourage the growth of the market. Therefore, the effects of familiar brands entering the cannabis market go beyond how consumers respond to such an act. The political implications of familiar brands (and the powerful firms that own them) entering the cannabis market may be just as influential, if not more influential, on the development of the market as the effects on consumer attitudes through such a development. While we have concluded that the entrance of familiar brands into the market will not generate more positive consumer towards cannabis, it is impossible to say how such an activity would affect the greater shaping of the market. A Starbucks or Marlboro brand extension into cannabis may be received negatively by consumers, but the political implications of such firms making a move into the cannabis category may have far greater influence on the development than improved consumer attitudes would. Therefore, while we have found that familiar brands will not generate more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis, we cannot predict the broader effects of such an activity on the market as confidently as we can regarding the other three hypotheses (new branding, distancing from stereotypes, and improved retail design).

Through this study, we have seen that consumer attitudes can become more positive with the simple presence of cannabis brands, rather than the market consisting of the generic, unbranded commodity that cannabis is currently presented as. We have also confirmed that branding practices which distance cannabis from past stereotypes, stigma, and negative symbolism can effectively change consumer attitudes towards cannabis. And finally, we have confirmed that improved retail design can positively impact consumer attitudes towards the sale of legal cannabis. Therefore, if the cannabis market can ditch the Green Crack strain names for more consumer-friendly branding, distance itself from the weed-leaf logos and other "stoner" stereotypes, and make cannabis retailers look more like Starbucks than pawn shops, the struggle to have cannabis taken seriously by consumers will be a much easier one to win. While new medical research and positive socio-economic effects of cannabis legalization are indeed helpful, the presence of neon pot-leaves in dispensary windows or the Green Crack cannabis strains on a dispensary menus will only perpetuate the negative attitudes that have kept cannabis prohibited for so long. If cannabis really hopes to become a "new glass of wine," the actors in its market must start thinking beyond the stereotypes that have defined cannabis culture for so long and re-introduce the world to this powerful plant. And as brands are essentially spokespeople for contemporary culture, this task cannot be left to politicians, activists, the media, or consumers themselves. It will be up to brands and the practices that they perform to till the soil before the market can truly flourish.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

It must be acknowledged that there were some limitations of this research. Due to the limited time, money, and resources of the researchers, the scope of the study was limited. While the study's experiment attempted to be conducted through the best possible methods, certain comprises had to be made based on its limited resources. Though it is hoped that the results of the online survey are accurate and relevant to the subject of the research, we can acknowledge that other methods may have been more effective for the study. The use of survey has been criticized in the past, arguing that respondents often want to want to finish them as quickly as possible or that respondents often try to hypothesize what is being tested and change their answers accordingly (Jones & Sigall, 1971; Söderlund, 2005). Nevertheless, it proved difficult to carry out the experiment in any real-world settings, based on limited resources, legal restrictions, and the sheer difficulty of getting strangers to discuss cannabis openly and in-depth enough to collect useful data for the research. It is believe that the study used the best possible methodology given its human and financial resources, however, we still acknowledge that further research with improved methods is needed to more strongly validate the findings of the study.

Another limitation of the study was its sample, which skewed young in age and also attracted many respondents with pre-existing positive attitudes towards cannabis. Though respondents with strongly positive attitudes to cannabis were removed from the sample, there were still many respondents who personally believed that cannabis should be legalized. It would have been ideal to perform the experiment with a sample that consisted of more consumers with strongly negative attitudes towards cannabis, or more truly neutral respondents.

As noted in the Internal Validity section of Chapter 4, the stimuli used in the studies are also a limitation. With limited resources, the researchers had to rely on existing images or images that they could create independently for the stimuli tested in the experiment, which may have affected the findings of the experiment. The use of existing images, which were not perfectly identical beyond their manipulations, may also call into question whether the main study was a true experiment. Though the images chosen for the study were as identical as possible given what was available from existing images, they do differ beyond their manipulations so this should be kept in mind when reviewing the study and its results. Therefore, further studies with different or improved stimuli may be needed to more efficiently test consumer attitudes to various depictions of cannabis.

Though the researchers set out to test the effect of branding on consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis, it must be noted what kind of branding was being tested. As noted in the Theory chapter, brands are filled with stories, myths, and experiences — without them, they are just "markers with[out] meaning" (Holt, 2004). Given that the images in the study show either fictional or generally unknown cannabis brands, these brands have not been filled with stories and experiences like most brands are. Therefore, the study was limited in that it could only test the most basic

functions of brands, as described by Klein (1999). Nevertheless, it is believed that testing these basic functions of brands is still valuable and necessary in encouraging the growth of branding practices in the cannabis market.

There were also theoretical limitations to the research. Given that the legal cannabis market is virgin territory with little existing theory or research, the theoretical scope of the study is also limited. The study utilized existing marketing theory and literature that was relevant to the study's subject, yet the theoretical background for this research may still be limited compared to similar studies on different subjects. It is hoped that this study can serve to encourage further research regarding cannabis marketing in order to build a stronger pool of research surrounding the subject.

Due to the rapid changes occurring in the cannabis industry, some information in this study may already be dated, as new developments in the cannabis industry seem to arise every day. The researchers attempted to keep the study's information as up-to-date as possible, but it is possible that some of the information presented in this study may already be dated by the time of its publication.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this study show that new branding practices can have a positive impact on the development of the legal market, yet there remains many intricacies to this issue that should be tested. What types of cannabis brands produce the most positive consumer attitudes? And what types of retail designs? What brand attitudes are most important to cannabis consumers? Further, what are the effects of new personal brands in the cannabis market? For decades, few personal brands have shown aligned themselves with cannabis — think Bob Marley, Willie Nelson, Snoop Dogg, etc. How might consumer attitudes change if personal brands like George Clooney, Oprah Winfrey, or Barack Obama (after his presidency, of course) expressed support for legal cannabis? Besides the various types of branding practices that can be further researched, the issues explored in this study may also be in need of further testing. We have found that images of branded cannabis produce more positive attitudes than images of unbranded cannabis — but how might that issue play out in a different research setting, such as an actual cannabis dispensary? How might the experiment play out amongst a focus group of consumers with strongly negative attitudes towards cannabis? Again, cannabis branding is virgin territory, so there is much room to explore the effects of branding and marketing practices in the cannabis industry. And of course, the further development of legal cannabis markets will serve as research in itself, as well as open the doors for more in-depth research. It is hoped that efforts of this study will encourage further research into this area since the development of the legal cannabis market is such a unique and fascinating phenomenon.

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1 — Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual framework
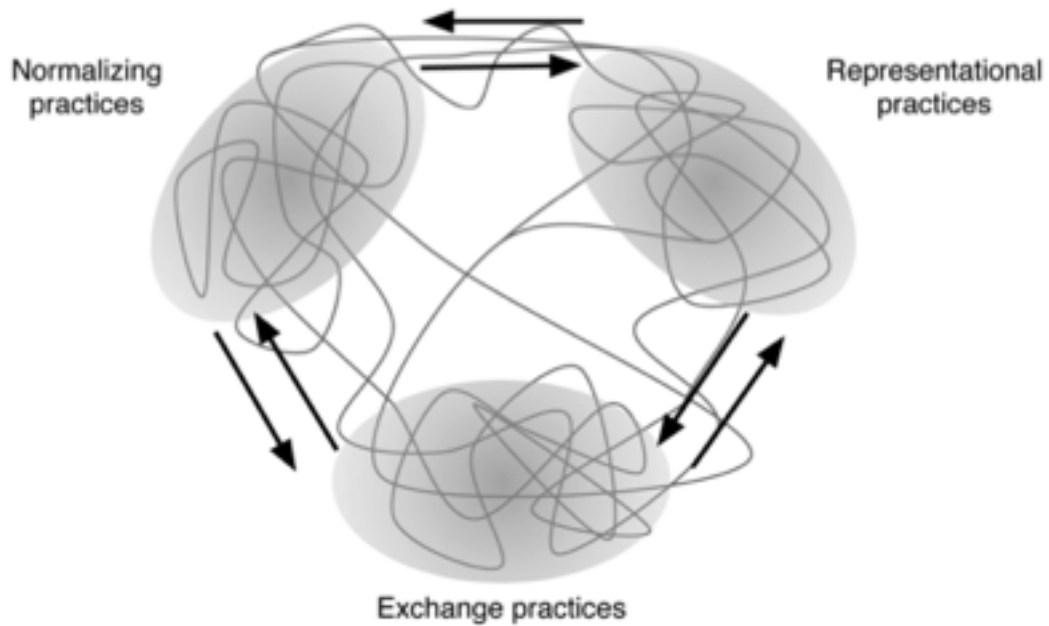
Kjellberg & Helgesson's conceptual framework, showing the entanglement of normalizing, representational, and exchange practices and their translations.

Abril Uno's fake image of Marlboro "M brand" cannabis cigarettes, an inspiration for the study and an image utilized in the pre-study.

Appendix 3 — Introductory Message for Pre-Studies & Main Study

The following is a market research survey on the legal cannabis market. You will first be asked a few questions about the legality of cannabis in your region and your personal views on cannabis. You will then be shown a selection of different products/services in the legal cannabis industry and asked some questions about them.

The survey should take 5 minutes. Please answer openly and honestly. Your answers are anonymous.

At the end of this survey, you can enter to win a $50 gift certificate to the retailer of your choice by submitting your e-mail address.

Thank you for participating! Your feedback is greatly appreciated!

Appendix 4 — Demographic Questions for Pre-Studies & Main Study

Q1. What is your gender?
  —Male
  — Female

Q2. What is your age?
  —18-25
  —26-35
  —36-45
  —46-55
  —56-65
  —65+

Q3. What country do you live in?
  —USA
  —United Kingdom
  —Canada
  —Sweden
  —Other

Q4. How is cannabis currently regulated in your region?
  —Illegal and criminalized
  —Decriminalized but prohibited
  —Legal for medical use
  —Legal for recreational use
  —I don't know

Q5. How do you think cannabis should be regulated in your region?
  —Illegal and criminalized
  —Decriminalized but prohibited
  —Legal for medical use
  —Legal for recreational use
  —I don't have an opinion

Q6. What is your personal experience with cannabis?
  —I have never used cannabis
  —I have tried cannabis once or twice
  —I have used cannabis less than ten times
  —I used to use cannabis but not anymore
  —I use cannabis on occasion
  —I use cannabis regularly

Q7. If cannabis were legal in your region and regulated like alcohol, what would your personal experience with it be?
  —I would never use cannabis
  —I might try cannabis once
  —I might try cannabis a few times
  —I would use cannabis on occasion
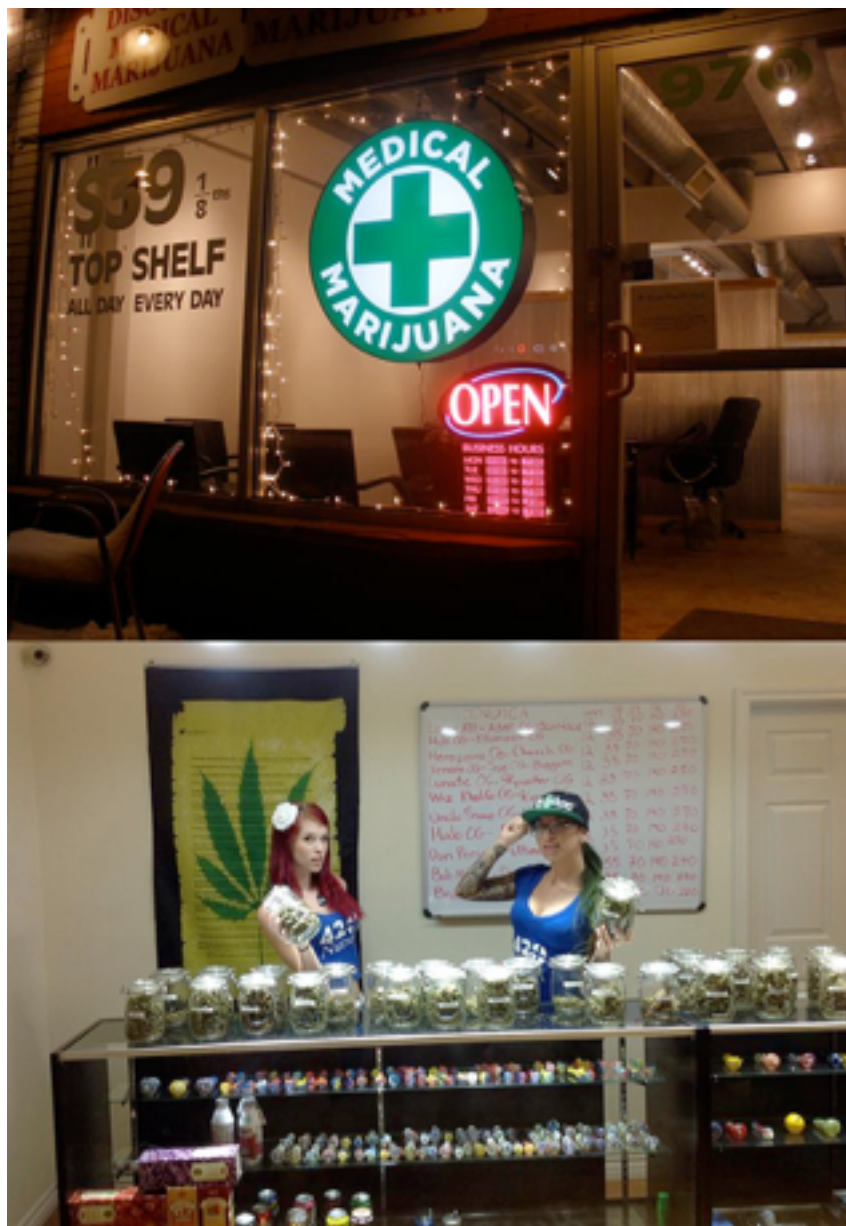 *—I would use cannabis regularly*

<u>Appendix 5 — Seven-Point Bipolar Response Scale for Pre-Studies & Main Study</u>

("Very Dissatisfied = 1; "Neutral" = 4; "Very Satisfied" = 7)

  —*Very Dissatisfied*
  —*Dissatisfied*
  —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
  —*Neutral*
  —*Somewhat Satisfied*
  —*Satisfied*
  —*Very Satisfied*

Immature Dispensary #1

The images above show a legal cannabis dispensary.

How would you feel about a cannabis dispensary, similar to the one pictured above, operating **legally** *in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*

Immature **Unbranded Cannabis #1**

The image above is a selection of cannabis sold at a legal cannabis dispensary.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*

Immature Edible

The image above is a cannabis edible (brownie infused with cannabis) sold at a legal cannabis dispensary.

How would you feel about this product being sold **legally** in your region?

—*Very Dissatisfied*
—*Dissatisfied*
—*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
—*Neutral*
—*Somewhat Satisfied*
—*Satisfied*
—*Very Satisfied*

Immature Promotional Piece

The image above is a promotional piece for a company in the cannabis industry.

*How would you feel about this company operating **legally** in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*

Immature Unbranded Cannabis #3

The image above shows cannabis sold at a legal cannabis dispensary.

*How would you feel about this product being sold **legally** in your region?*

—*Very Dissatisfied*
—*Dissatisfied*
—*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
—*Neutral*
—*Somewhat Satisfied*
—*Satisfied*
—*Very Satisfied*

Immature Dispensary #2

The images above show a legal cannabis dispensary.

How would you feel about a cannabis dispensary, similar to the one pictured above, operating ***legally*** *in your region?*

 —*Very Dissatisfied*
 —*Dissatisfied*
 —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
 —*Neutral*
 —*Somewhat Satisfied*
 —*Satisfied*
 —*Very Satisfied*

Immature Pre-Rolled Joints

The image above shows "pre-rolled joints" (cannabis cigarettes) sold by a legal cannabis dispensary.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*
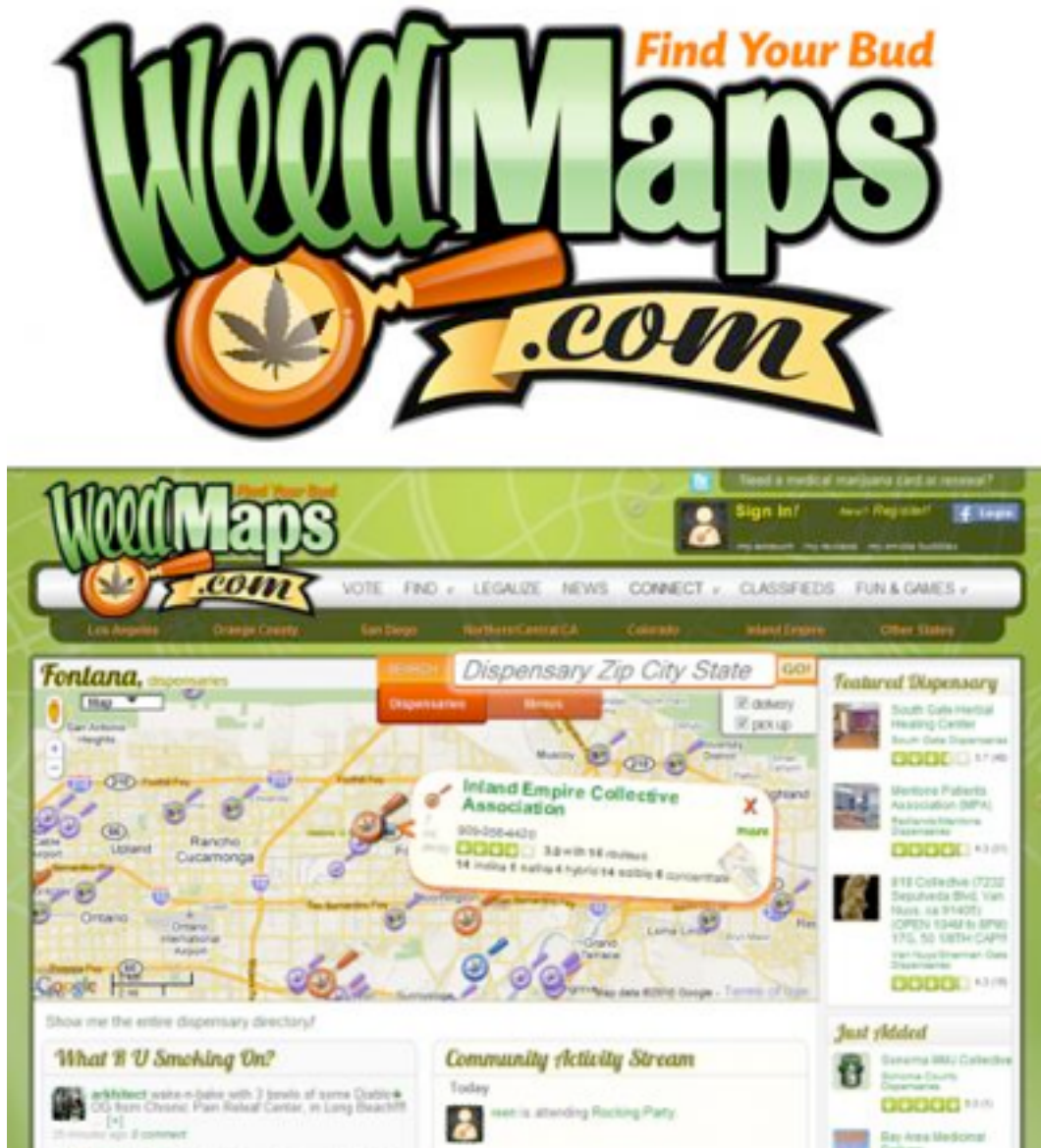
Immature Unbranded Cannabis #2

The image above is a selection of cannabis available at a legal cannabis dispensary.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

—Very Dissatisfied
—Dissatisfied
—Somewhat Dissatisfied
—Neutral
—Somewhat Satisfied
—Satisfied
—Very Satisfied

Immature Old WeedMaps Branding

The image above is an online maps service that locates legal cannabis dispensaries.

*How would you feel about this service operating **legally** in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*

Mature Edible #1

The image above shows a line of cannabis edibles sold by a legal cannabis company.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

—*Very Dissatisfied*
—*Dissatisfied*
—*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
—*Neutral*
—*Somewhat Satisfied*
—*Satisfied*
—*Very Satisfied*

Mature Dispensary

The images above show a legal cannabis dispensary.

*How would you feel about a cannabis dispensary, similar to the one pictured, operating **legally** in your region?*

—*Very Dissatisfied*
—*Dissatisfied*
—*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
—*Neutral*
—*Somewhat Satisfied*
—*Satisfied*
—*Very Satisfied*

Mature Pre-Rolled Joints #1

The image above shows "pre-rolled joints" (cannabis cigarettes) sold by a legal cannabis company.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

—*Very Dissatisfied*
—*Dissatisfied*
—*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
—*Neutral*
—*Somewhat Satisfied*
—*Satisfied*
—*Very Satisfied*

Mature Branded Cannabis

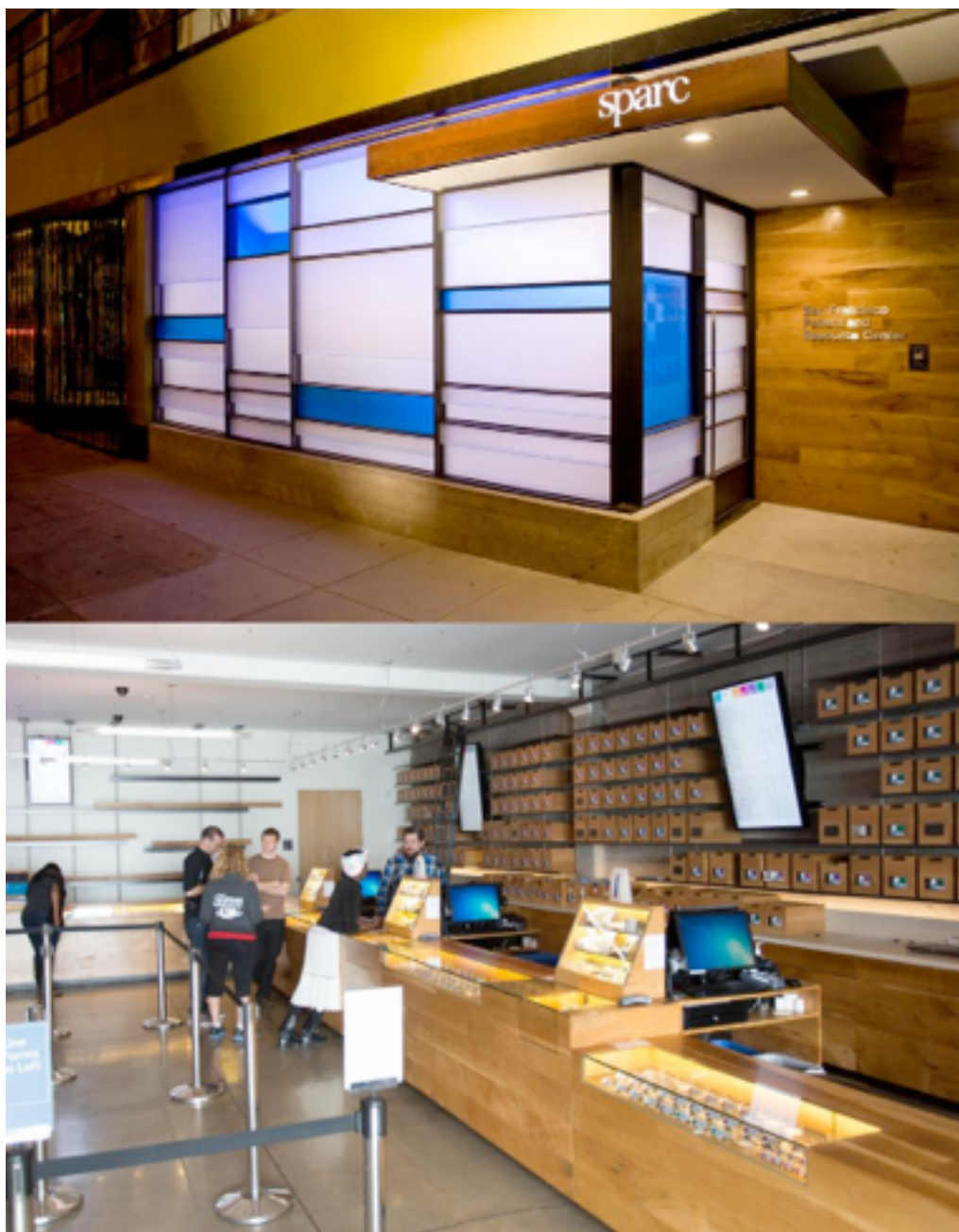*The image above shows various products sold by a legal cannabis company.*

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

—*Very Dissatisfied*
—*Dissatisfied*
—*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
—*Neutral*
—*Somewhat Satisfied*
—*Satisfied*
—*Very Satisfied*

Mature Promotional Piece

The image above is a promotional piece for an online service in the cannabis industry.

*How would you feel about this service operating **legally** in your region?*

- —*Very Dissatisfied*
- —*Dissatisfied*
- —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
- —*Neutral*
- —*Somewhat Satisfied*
- —*Satisfied*
- —*Very Satisfied*

Mature Starbucks Cannabis

The image above shows a line of legal cannabis sold by a major coffee company.

*How would you feel about this product being sold **legally** in your region?*

- *—Very Dissatisfied*
- *—Dissatisfied*
- *—Somewhat Dissatisfied*
- *—Neutral*
- *—Somewhat Satisfied*
- *—Satisfied*
- *—Very Satisfied*

Mature New WeedMaps Branding
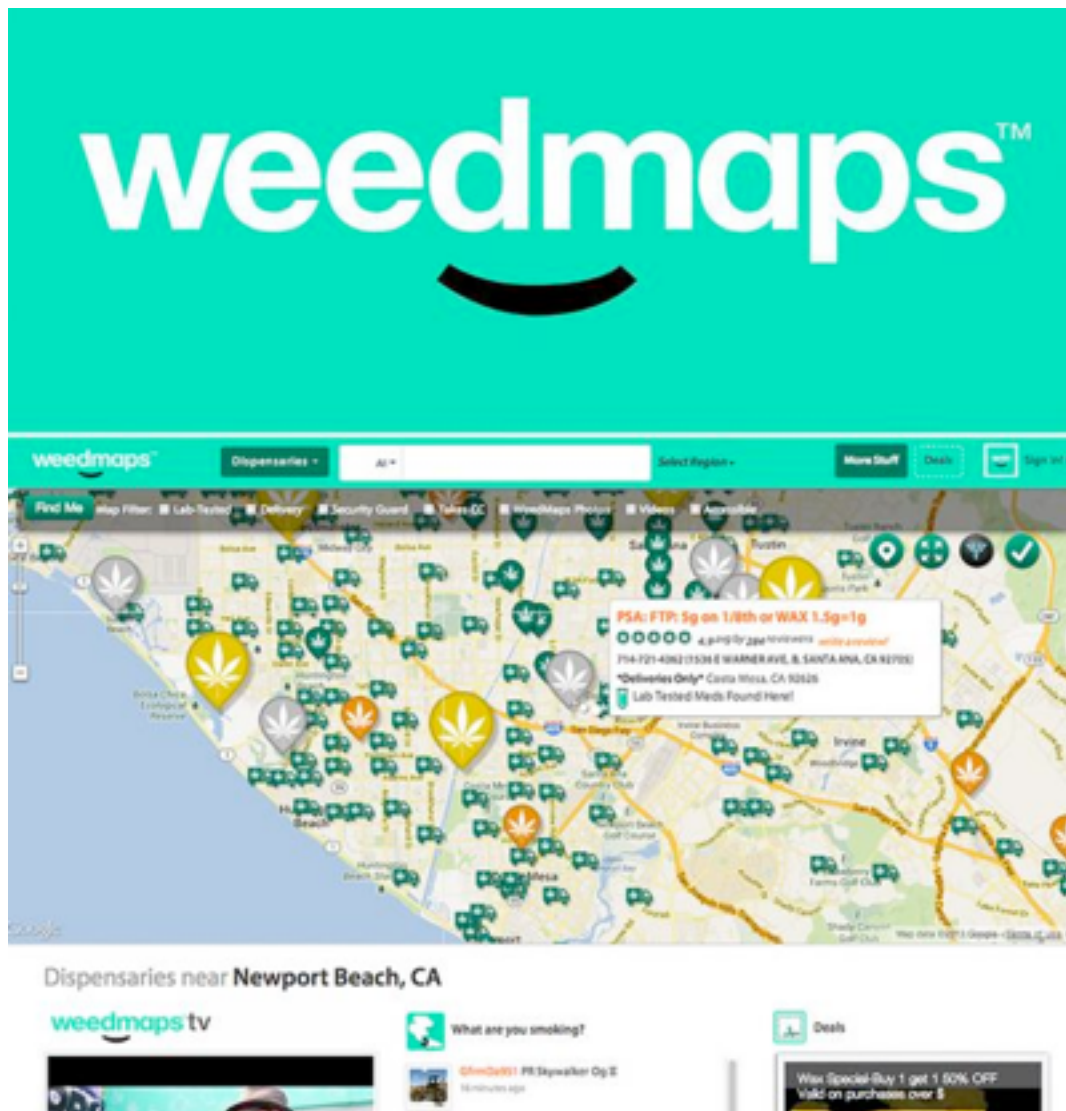
The image above shows an online maps service that locates legal cannabis dispensaries.

*How would you feel about this service operating **legally** in your region?*

- *—Very Dissatisfied*
- *—Dissatisfied*
- *—Somewhat Dissatisfied*
- *—Neutral*
- *—Somewhat Satisfied*
- *—Satisfied*
- *—Very Satisfied*

Mature **Edible #2**

The image above is a line of cannabis edibles sold by a legal cannabis company.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*

Mature Pre-Rolled Joints #2

The image above is a line of cannabis cigarettes sold by a legal cannabis company.

*How would you feel about these products being sold **legally** in your region?*

> —*Very Dissatisfied*
> —*Dissatisfied*
> —*Somewhat Dissatisfied*
> —*Neutral*
> —*Somewhat Satisfied*
> —*Satisfied*
> —*Very Satisfied*

Appendix 8 — Indexes of Pre-Studies

Pre-Study 1 — Stimuli Attitudes

Immature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.	*Mature* Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dispensary #1	4.31	1.81	Dispensary	5.65	1.69
Dispensary #2	4.54	1.84	Edible #1	5.19	1.71
Edible	4.66	1.87	Edible #2	5.11	1.91
Pre-Rolled Joints	4.94	1.70	Pre-Rolled Joints #1	5.24	1.76
Unbranded Cannabis #1	4.82	1.87	Pre-Rolled Joints #2	4.98	1.86
Unbranded Cannabis #2	4.64	1.80	Branded Cannabis	5.24	1.74
Unbranded Cannabis #3	3.70	1.69	Starbucks Cannabis	4.66	1.97
Promotional Piece	3.88	1.78	Promotional Piece	5.06	1.85
Old WeedMaps	4.90	1.84	New WeedMaps	4.98	1.83

Pre-Study 2 — Stimuli Attitudes

Immature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.	*Mature* Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dispensary #1	3.92	1.79	Dispensary	5.31	1.66
Dispensary #2	3.98	1.90	Edible #1	5.17	1.77
Edible	4.15	1.93	Edible #2	4.99	1.91
Pre-Rolled Joints	4.47	1.74	Pre-Rolled Joints #1	4.87	1.91
Unbranded Cannabis #1	4.30	1.87	Pre-Rolled Joints #2	4.78	1.77
Unbranded Cannabis #2	4.42	1.83	Branded Cannabis	5.04	1.69
Unbranded Cannabis #3	3.54	1.69	Starbucks Cannabis	4.49	1.94
Promotional Piece	3.70	1.86	Promotional Piece	4.75	1.81
Old WeedMaps	4.23	1.82	New WeedMaps	5.01	1.73

Attitude Index — Pre-Study 1

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.48	1.80	168
Mature	5.12	1.81	168

Attitude Index — Pre-Study 2

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.12	1.84	142
Mature	4.93	1.80	142

Appendix 9 — Indexes of the Main Study

Main Study — Stimuli Attitudes

Immature Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.	*Mature* Stimuli	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dispensary #1	4.24	1.09	Dispensary	5.43	1.13
Dispensary #2	4.47	1.16	Edible #1	5.03	1.18
Edible	4.69	1.12	Edible #2	5.09	1.27
Pre-Rolled Joints	4.84	1.06	Pre-Rolled Joints #1	5.03	1.22
Unbranded Cannabis #1	4.66	1.01	Pre-Rolled Joints #2	4.94	1.25
Unbranded Cannabis #2	4.61	1.08	Branded Cannabis	5.02	1.24
Unbranded Cannabis #3	4.06	1.15	Starbucks Cannabis	4.53	1.33
Promotional Piece	3.99	1.18	Promotional Piece	4.80	1.29
Old WeedMaps	4.72	1.06	New WeedMaps	5.13	1.20

Index for Branding Practices

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.48	1.10	194
Mature	5.00	1.22	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 4.901; p=0.000

Branding Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.57	1.09	194
Mature	5.02	1.23	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 2.649; p=0.022

Stereotypes Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.43	1.10	194
Mature	5.07	1.22	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 4.143; p=0.000

Retail Design Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.35	1.12	194
Mature	5.43	1.13	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 7.375; p=0.000

Familiar Brands Index

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	n
Immature	4.57	1.09	194
Mature	4.53	1.33	187

Results of independent t-test: t-value = 2.961; p=0.003

Appendix 10 — Summary of Results

Summary of Results

Hypothesis	Description	Verdict
H1	***Branded cannabis*** *generates more positive consumer attitudes than unbranded cannabis.*	**Supported**
H2	*Cannabis brands with* ***stereotypical*** *imagery and language generate more negative consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*	**Supported**
H3	*Improvements in* ***retail design*** *will improve consumer attitudes towards legal cannabis.*	**Supported**
H4	***Familiar brands*** *generate more positive consumer attitudes towards cannabis.*	**Not Supported**