Facing the policy challenges of new drugs and new technologies

Monica Barratt
@monicabarratt
Overview

• Internet / digital technologies here to stay:
  – challenges & opportunities for drugs policy
• Emerging psychoactive drugs
  – What’s happening? Internet? Policy?
• Anonymous online drug marketplaces
  – What’s happening? Internet? Policy?
• Should we be looking beyond prohibition in an internet-saturated society?
National Drug Strategy 2010

‘The internet poses both challenges and opportunities for the National Drug Strategy. It is an efficient channel for information on illegal drug manufacture and use, and a difficult to regulate advertising medium for alcohol and tobacco. However, it also provides opportunities for providing information, and potentially treatment, to audiences who may not be reached through other media.’
Information

‘More than any other single factor, the exponential growth of information technology has changed the context in which individual decisions about drug use are made. The range of information available through the Internet is unprecedented and some is potentially dangerous—not only how to use drugs but also how to make them.’ (Klee, 2001)

Persons

‘One could not only link to sources of information, but to a vast network of persons.’ (Gatson, 2007)

‘The technology was built to connect people with information. What has happened is that it has connected people with people.’ (Krotoski, 2010)
Challenges and opportunities

• ↑ the spread of information
  – Challenges: Emerging drugs / new drug trends
  – Opportunities: Health promotion, Warnings, Monitoring

• ↑ connections between people
  – Challenges: Drug market participants
  – Opportunities: Treatment access, Alternative online space

• ↑ anonymous/pseudonymous communication
  – Challenges: Online drug marketplaces
  – Opportunities: Information access, Alternative online space
St Kilda,
11 March 2012
Internet & emerging drugs

• Diffusion
  – Accelerated news transmission
  – Alternative discourses in user-generated content

• Sales
  – Web-based stores but also through social media

‘The advent of the Internet accelerated and inflated the mephedrone scare, but also that online media allowed [web] user-generated information transmission, rather than simple dissemination by news media to audience, fostering competing discourses to stock drug scare themes as they emerged.’
(Forsyth, 2012)
Web Search Interest: kronic
Australia, Jan 2009 - Jan 2012
Categories: HEALTH (25-50%), Arts & Entertainment (10-25%), Shopping (0-10')

⚠ The categorisation taxonomy of Google Insights for Search has been updated during [ ]
⚠ An improvement to our geographical assignment was applied retroactively from 1/1/20

Interest over time

Learn what these numbers mean

[Chart showing web search interest over time for kronic, with annotations for key events]

A Kronic screening method developed
B Tall Black slapped with one-year ban for Kronic use
C WA Police query banned drug Kronic link to man's death
D NZ importer admits Kronic contaminated
E WA becomes first state with Kronic ban
F Roadtesting Kronic: Is fake grass worth the hype?
G Police look into 'Kronic'
Month/year of first synthetic cannabinoid use

N = 183 Australians who had used synthetic cannabinoids at least once.


Source: Barratt et al. (in preparation)
N = 290 Australians who had used synthetic cannabinoids at least once.


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N = 290 Australians who had used synthetic cannabinoids at least once.


Source: Barratt et al. (in preparation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where they first bought synthetic cannabinoids</th>
<th>First tried before 2011</th>
<th>First tried in 2011-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbal high shop</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex shop</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacconist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug dealer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Chemical supplier</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Markets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Kebab shop</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other - Skate shop</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hey Aussie Kronic fans - nothing dodgee going on... we only found out about the ban today so just clearing out the last of our stock.
It has to be gone by 2morrow close of business so we have 2 options... give heaps away for free or just dispose of it tomorrow. I know what we'd prefer! Up2 u if you want to order & take the chance.

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE ON ALL PRODUCTS PLUS SHIT LOADS OF FREEBIES WITH ALL ORDERS! :D
Summary

- Sales online play a minor role
- Diffusion of information through social networks, on and offline
- Early adoption associated with online media
- Mutual feedback between public interest, news media interest & prevalence of use as the uptake of a new drug occurs
Policy responses

• Legislative responses
  – Analogues clause (Criminal Code Act 1995, Section 314.1)
  – Groups of drug types rather than individual (TGA, 2012)
  – Any substance marketed as having similar effects to those currently prohibited (TGA, 2012)

• Problems
  – Changing/unclear laws for users and vendors
  – Complex interactions between state and federal
  – New products produced, cyclical pattern
Growth in hidden internet services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1990s to early 2000s</th>
<th>Mid 2000s</th>
<th>Late 2000s to 2010s</th>
<th>2010s + ?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few internet users, Unregulated frontier</td>
<td>Critical mass of internet users, more ‘public’</td>
<td>Everything public. Censorship by govt and corporations</td>
<td>Backlash to hidden internet services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘If you go back to some of the really early discussion, it was basically a small group of people who all partied together. People spoke quite openly about drug use. That’s changed over time as what was essentially a hobby website has grown to become a international resource and commercial enterprise.’

Dance music forum administrator, unpublished PhD data
White

1g MDMA - Border Proof Delivery!

Seller:
SKYY(100)

Price:
$12.07

Ships from: Netherlands
Ships to: Worldwide

Description:
This listing is for 1g of pure MDMA, straight from the source, lightly tanned. (this is also the one and only ingredient of our Pink Star © 'SKYY' xtc.)

Check our 5g and 10g listings for much better prices, we see the 1g as a sample. We can send this order only once per account, please don't order more than once.
The pure crystal MDMA comes hidden in a VERY secure small envelope, nobody will ever suspect there is anything interesting in the envelope, just read our feedback on SR and the forum. It easily gets into Australia, US, etc. You will not need to sign and it will fit the smallest letterbox. The address label does not show the sender country in the return address.

WE CAN LET OUR AMAZING FEEDBACK DO THE TALKING:

Many positive reviews are here on the Silk Road forum:
http://dkn255hz262ypmii.onion/index.php?topic=12479.0
Make sure you do a review, we regularly send out free samples to reviewers.

Top quality crystal mdma..
---------------------------------
"It was one of the best experiences of my life! Amazing body high. I loved it!"
"This is without a doubt the BEST MDMA EVER ON SR, MUCH MUCH BETTER THAN *** OR EVEN *** ...THIS IS THE BEST."
"Blew my head off...So yeh...Buy this stuff...its good shit :)

The most secure package on SR...
---------------------------------
"BRILLIANT packaging! 6/5! Good job!"
"Made it safely Downunder, top effort guys!"
"The packing was by far the best I've ever received here on SR. Stealthiest way possible. That's 10/5 for shipping!"
"The best and safest packaging/delivery i've seen in all my exchanges on SR. If you're in USA, SKYY will get you your product discretely, dont worry about quantity."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rating</th>
<th>feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Amazing everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early, very high hopes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>genius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early as requested. Great seller - will update product ratings when received :)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>THE ONE AND ONLY !! highly professional, works like a clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Amazing packaging actually fooled me to begin with made me laugh! will buy again :)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Product arrived very quickly (2 days) and packaging was excellent. Haven't tried product yet, but everything looks great.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>New buyer finalizing early. Seller has great reviews on here and on the forums.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>finalized early for trusted vendor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>It arrived quickly, and really well hidden (great job Skyy!). I tried it. It is the real deal!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early for trusted seller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Fast Delivery - Great Packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>went to see how many days i had before autofinalize and i accidentally clicked. i have not recieved this package but i have recieved from this vendor before and i was very impressed by the packaging and product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Holy. Shit. Slightly tan, stealthy packaging. New loyal customer. Made it the Midwest USA in a few days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>:)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early, will update later :-) update 6 days to UK, was getting a tad worried. Awesome product. Ordering more now!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 of 5</td>
<td>Finalizing early from a trusted seller! Cannot wait for the goodies :-)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SKYY

has been a member for 3 months
was last seen: today
ranked in the top 5% of sellers with 100% positive feedback from more than 300 transactions
has 229 fans become a fan

send SKYY a message

Who we are.
-------------
We are experienced Silk Road sellers from Amsterdam. We know what it takes to build a successful business here.

- We put your safety first.
- We source the highest quality product.
- We deliver on our promises!

These products come hidden in a VERY secure and small envelope, nobody will ever suspect there is anything interesting in the package, just read our feedback on SR and the forum. You will not need to sign, and it will fit the smallest letterbox.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>category</th>
<th>title</th>
<th>price</th>
<th>ship to</th>
<th>ship from</th>
<th>action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pills</td>
<td>100 x XTC - Pink Star ® 'SKYY' - 160mg</td>
<td>$112.47</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>add to cart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDMA</td>
<td>1 Oz MDMA - Border Proof Delivery!</td>
<td>$203.48</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>add to cart</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>10g MDMA - Border Proof Delivery!</td>
<td>$77.71</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
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<td>add to cart</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2g MDMA - Border Proof Delivery!</td>
<td>$20.04</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
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<td>add to cart</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>5g MDMA - Border Proof Delivery!</td>
<td>$40.49</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>add to cart</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1g MDMA - Border Proof Delivery!</td>
<td>$12.07</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>add to cart</td>
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<td>Pills</td>
<td>50 x XTC - Pink Star ® 'SKYY' - 160mg</td>
<td>$59.30</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>add to cart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pills</td>
<td>10 x XTC - Pink Star ® 'SKYY'</td>
<td>$12.07</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>add to cart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1g MDMA or
10 SKYY pills
12.07 BTC
+ 0.56 BTC postage
= 63.15 AUD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Unread Posts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silk Road discussion</strong></td>
<td>17455 Posts 1370 Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security</strong></td>
<td>10726 Posts 1322 Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shipping</strong></td>
<td>6830 Posts 634 Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drug safety</strong></td>
<td>6692 Posts 559 Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off topic</strong></td>
<td>14007 Posts 1281 Topics</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Unread Posts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product requests</strong></td>
<td>11264 Posts 1992 Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product offers</strong></td>
<td>17766 Posts 1618 Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rumor mill</strong></td>
<td>43641 Posts 2052 Topics</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Unread Posts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical support</strong></td>
<td>2348 Posts 451 Topics</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feature requests</strong></td>
<td>2056 Posts 404 Topics</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest markets</th>
<th>Unread Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Armory</strong></td>
<td>349 Posts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internet & anonymous markets

• Hidden internet as a tool AND a place
  – Tool: Operates like eBay ‘buy it now’
  – Place: Community of like-minded people

• Silk Road enables
  – Information transmission
  – Access to drug market participants
  – Sophisticated information on reputations
  – Reduced risks of physical violence... rip-offs?
Policy responses

• Regulate overseas internet content
  – It is not possible to ban hidden internet sites

• Ban Tor and Bitcoin
  – Tor and Bitcoin are peer-to-peer technologies

• Increase scanning of posted letters/packages
  – Costly, may slow postal system, harming business

• Infiltration of Silk Road by law enforcement
  – Costly, involves selling drugs... may disrupt market
The last straw for prohibition?

• Challenges of internet for drugs are significant
• To face these challenges we can:
  – Keep trying to enforce prohibition
    (which continues to fail...)
  – Consider alternative models of regulation
• Leads to the final session of today’s discussions on drug policy reform agenda
To conclude

• The internet is here to stay
• The normal desire for intoxication is here to stay
• We have described two ways the internet facilitates bypassing prohibition: through emerging drugs and anonymous marketplaces
• Effective ways of stopping these bypasses have not been found (what will future research show?)
• Is it possible or even desirable to try and block access to information, drugs and people in an internet-saturated world?
‘It is arguably the use of the web as an information source that may offer the greatest challenge to the incumbent paradigm, with experiential discourses offering alternatives to the hegemonic narrative, as the relationships between drugs, those who sell drugs and drug takers are reconfigured online.’

(Walsh, 2011)
References


• Simon Lenton, Matt Allen, Steve Allsop, Steve Bright, Vince Cakic
• All participants and all participating forums
• Australian Department of Health and Ageing for funding my PhD
• All family and friends who have endured 6 years of PhD!
To stay in touch with my work...

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
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<td>Email</td>
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Snail image