

# Social Media Drug Markets

## Algorithmic affordances and the change of drug dealing

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# Background. Internet based drug dealing is changing

Social media drug dealing makes drugs potentially available to large groups of earlier un-disposed young people.

Furthermore, a wide palette of available drugs may tempt users to expand use from one to more types of drugs, as has been seen on the cryptomarkets (Barratt, Lenton, Maddox, & Allen, 2016).

In a previous studies Demant & Bakken showed how social media digital drug markets function, and revealed relatively few barriers in finding drug related content in Sweden, Iceland and Denmark (Demant et al. 2019). Similar findings exist for Australia (Moyle)

These markets are open markets with multiple adds on the platforms for the buyers to choose from. Few restrictions and competences needed in terms of access

# Background. Internet based drug dealing is changing

- Since the first documentations of app based and social media based drug dealing in 2018 there has been a rising debate in media and in prevention and law enforcement on these activities. This has provided stricter platform moderation and policing initiatives.
- We expect that this has sparked a displacement and/or transformation in the market. Hence increased moderation might have reversed the move to open social media, making drug markets reliant on one-to-one contact and more limited to the buyers' network.

# Aim

- Based on a netnography this paper seeks to explain accessibility of drugs in these social media markets, specifically in order to understand the role of (existing networks and) platform affordances.
- Platforms: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, SnapChat and Reddit
- Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Germany
- Small scale study conducted with funding from EMCDDA  
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# Theory

- Affordances: A concept that helps to understand and explain how the platforms themselves have an impact on the social behavior on these (in this case the drug dealing). (Evans 2017)
- Platform affordances is used to describe and interpret how the platform enables and constrains certain behavior.
- Affordances have been widely used in human-computer interaction and communication research to describe differences in communication due to platform

- Affordances can be understood narrowly as the perceived possible actions afforded by an object's materiality (Gibson 1979).
- Affordances are not features of the object nor outcomes of its use, but possibilities defined between the material and the user (Evans et al. 2017).
- While an affordance invites some behaviors, it does not determine specific consequences: platform design, restricting and promoting certain kind of action might in combination with the subjects agency spur or make more likely certain uses and outcomes (Evans et al. 2017).
- We examine the platforms affordances as expressed in the following features: recordability, anonymity, persistence of information and visibility of information.

# Online ethnography

- This method provides an ability to record and describe the markets: Online ethnography treats online spaces as data fields. These fields' available content, interfaces, affordances and local online culture all provide certain possibilities for use. Netnography (Kozinets 2019).
- Relevant for this study is the deep immersive ethnography into social media drug markets which generates qualitative data on what barriers protect a given user from being exposed to drug related content.
- The researcher makes “the journey on the platform” to find drug markets investigating and recording relevant data traces on how the platform helped or hindered them. These recorded data traces, as well as interpretations on the technical affordances are considered the data output.
- A detailed *immersion journal* is kept while investigating these online spaces, noting attempts, failures, successes, and more interpretive comments from the researcher.

# Methods

Multiple profiles were produced for the study. These profiles were as anonymous/ized as possible within the specific social medias, giving only the necessary information (that is, anonymous profile picture, a common name and location within the nationality of the data collection).

The profiles do not provide any information on the study, they can be described as covert. However, it is important to stress that they must be highly neutral exactly to access the social media sites without a prior search history, friend network etc.

For each platform examined in the study two profiles were created. When asked by the platform one was set as male and the other as female. The age was held at 22 years for both and geographic location was set to Denmark.

Eventually we created two more profiles for snapchat stationed in Germany.

# Immersion Journal: Allowing the profiles to take life

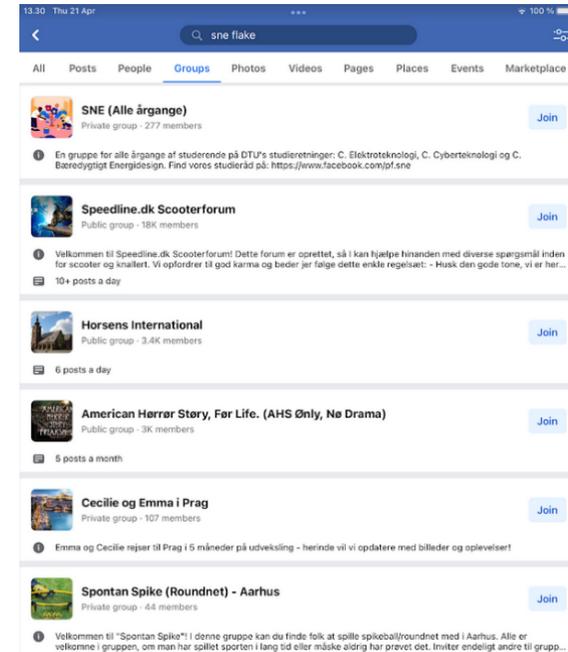
Time	Entry type	Platform	datasite	Description/interpretation	Column1	comment	link	Pictu
09:53	Startlog			Setting up Apple ID, and social media accounts. Instagram and snapchat was succesfull and easy. No succes with facebook account.				
09:57	Search	instagram		following accounts relating to cannabis culture. Searching codewords				
	making profile	snapchat		created female looking avatar with 420 in the name.				
	search	snapchat		search funciton in snapchat interprets and gives you many results. Have found		Hoping for one of the profiles to inigate contact, so I		
	search	snapchat		tried seringing for "sne" meaning snow in danish and kbh 1sne, cannabis, ryger				2.1
10:52	observation	snapchat		it seems that all the profiles I have added are now in my firend list. I don't think Its contigent on an addback. Correction I do have to				
11:08	search	tiktok		trying to search for keywords: non codedworded language like weed comes out with a link to community guidelines				2.2
	Search	tiktok		sne, ryger, røg, levering	sne, ryger, røg, leve	Tiktok seem really strictly moderated. Maybe with mo		
13:23	making profile	facebook		Struggling all day to make a facebook profile on IOS. Finally did it on a laptop posted a cartoon picture of a woman drawn in a psyc				
	making profile	facebook		Developing the profile by following rave, trance and christiania related sites and events. Both to form the alogorithm and to make th				
14:12	search	facebook		searched for "sjov I københavn" - a recommendation by a man in a bar. The group didn't come up. Scrolled down the list and asekd t				
14:16	find	facebook		found a group called "ryger til vi rammer den. With 1.5k members. The description says the group is for everything cannabis rel				2.3
14:17	observation	facebook		The scroll function in facebook makes it easy to find a lot of groups fast				
14:42	Search	facebook		searching for sjov I københavn, lalleglad I københavn didn't yield any results. The results seem to be pretty similar. Either because of				
		facebook		got a tip about "havens røde bær" which is supposed to be a cannabis sales place. Asked permission to join				
	barrier	facebook		wanted to join "knep mig det er billigt", but got declined due to my profile being too new.				
	search	facebook		Searching for wickr yielded a lot of groups related to FCK, one of the only things the profile has liked. I will need to find more drug re				

# TikTok and Facebook



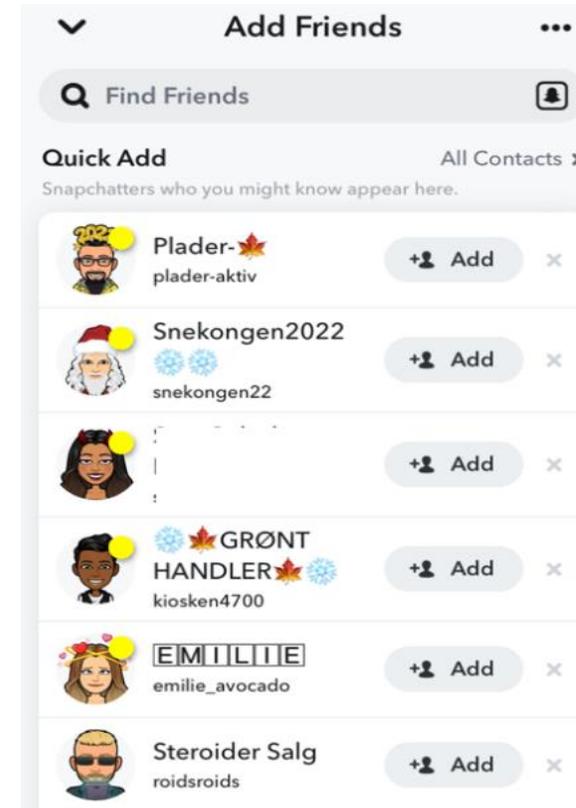
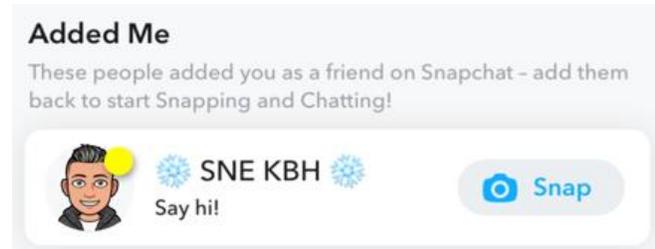
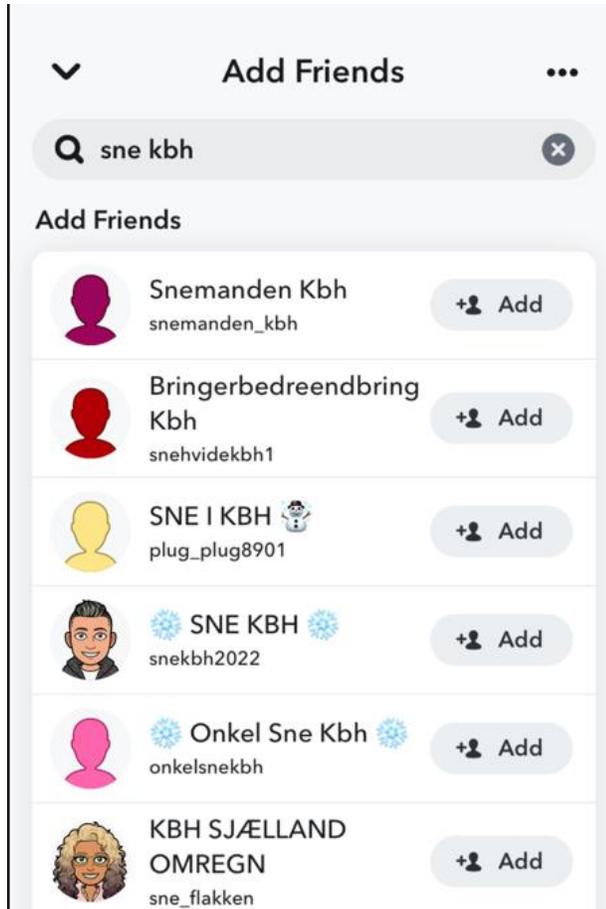
No results found

This phrase may be associated with behavior or content that violates our guidelines. Promoting a safe and positive experience is TikTok's top priority. For more information, we invite you to review our [Community Guidelines](#).

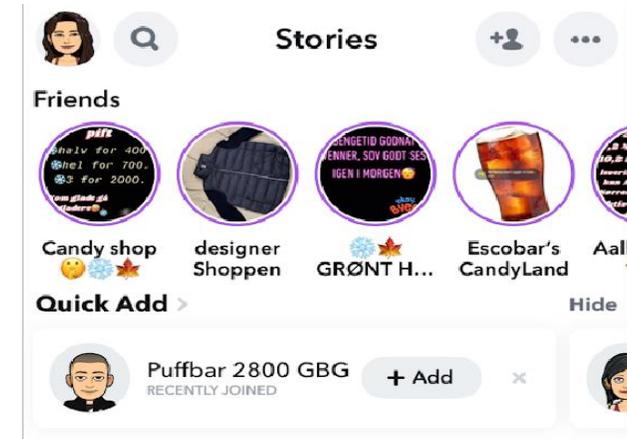




# Snapchat



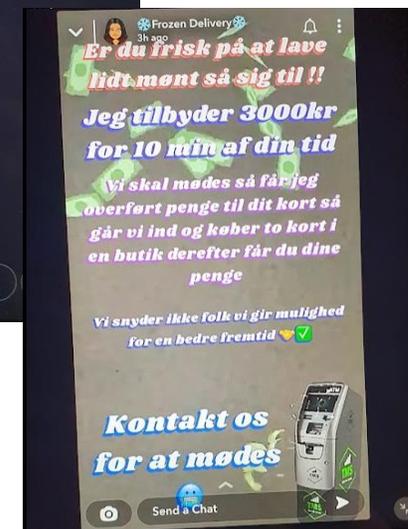
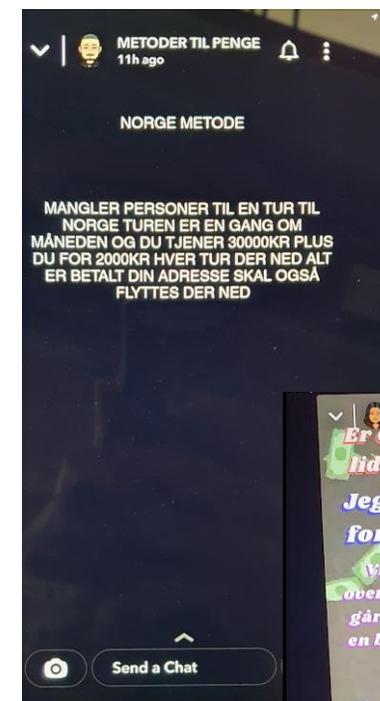
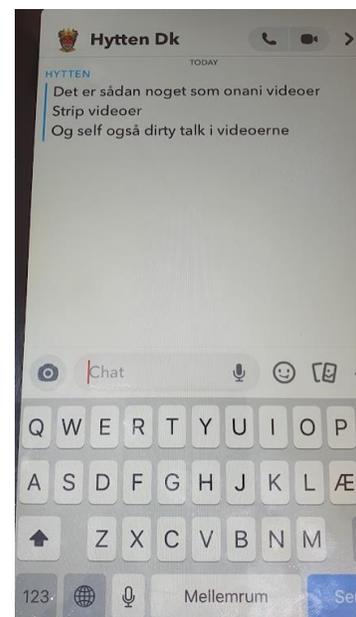
# Snapchat storries



# Sweden and Germany

- Many profiles partially or solely sold alcohol especially in Sweden, where alcohol over a certain percentage has to be bought in designated shops. Hence there was a market for brought out alcohol that is not supported in Denmark. Nitrox oxide and amphetamines where also more advertised than in the Danish marked . However, cocaine and cannabis were also the most commonly advertised products in the Norwegian and Swedish markets we gained access to.
- The same searches were replicated in Germany with no results. Suspecting that our account was region locked due to the Danish phone number we used to register the account, we registered a new account with a German phone number, which also returned with no identified drug sellers.

# Drift potential – earning money of snapchat



# Reddit

site:reddit.com coke wickr

All Images Videos News Shopping More Tools

About 2.970 results (0,41 seconds)

Tip: Search for **English** results only. You can specify your search language in Preferences

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**Kbh's bedste coke** ❄️ Wickr: gelat66 - 1 g 700kr | 2 g 1300kr

6 May 2022 — ❄️ Kbh's bedste coke ❄️ Wickr: gelat66 - 1 g 700kr | 2 g 1300kr | 3 g 2000kr | 5 g - 3000kr | 10 g 5500kr Kontakt mig for mere info .

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**Søger Coke København. Wickr rrr17 : r/DetSorteMarkedFyn**

4 Dec 2021 — Søger **Coke** København. Wickr rrr17. 1. 2 comments. Copy this post's permalink to the clipboard. 2 Comments sorted by Best.

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**Coke 400 800 1000 wickr holger21 : r/aarhuskiosk - Reddit**

Søger metadon i Jylland gerne 1-2 glas med 100stk. 20 mg. Kontakt på Wickr. Rasmus187street ... r/aarhuskiosk. Join • in 3 hr.

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**Coke wickr holger21 aarhus : r/Slikhytten - Reddit**

7 days ago — 380 subscribers in the Slikhytten community.

Posted by u/legitsalg 47 minutes ago

**Oxycontin & Xanax havest på lager** ✅ - skriv privat 📩 - Gratis levering i hele Kbh / Sjælland 🚚🇩🇰

0 Messages 🎁 Award ➦ Share 📌 Save ... [Live Chat](#)

Posted by u/legitsalg 54 minutes ago

**Hvis du er en ærlig og troværdig person at handle med så skriv privat** 📩🇩🇰 \_\_\_\_\_ Oxycontin 80mg & 40mg Xanax 1mg fås snart til 150kr Per ark & køb af 10 eller mere sælges de til 100kr Per ark 🇩🇰

0 Comments 🎁 Award ➦ Share 📌 Save ...

Posted by u/losangeles55689 3 hours ago

**🇩🇰🇩🇰 bedste sten i KBH og omegn 🇩🇰🇩🇰 hurtig levering og den bedste kundeservice hos Jimmy 🇩🇰🇩🇰 0,5 for 400, 1g for 800 🇩🇰🇩🇰 Max 30 min ventetid. Bedste kvali i København 🇩🇰🇩🇰 Wickr- Jimjones64**

0 Comments 🎁 Award ➦ Share 📌 Save ...

Posted by u/OwnBlacksmith86 3 hours ago

**LYNGBY/VIRUM/SORGENFRI 🇩🇰🇩🇰 Så vi atter tilbage med byens bedste rygere 🇩🇰🇩🇰 Vi står klar med det bedste kval, til de bedste priser i hele omegnen! 🇩🇰🇩🇰 LÆKKER LYS BLOMST 🇩🇰🇩🇰 ROYAL KUSH 🇩🇰🇩🇰 1,4 🇩🇰🇩🇰 100,- 8,5 🇩🇰🇩🇰 500,- 18 🇩🇰🇩🇰 1000,- 🇩🇰🇩🇰 VANVITTIG KVALITET - KUN SKARPE PRISER 🇩🇰🇩🇰 🇩🇰🇩🇰 W: guldgruppen 🇩🇰🇩🇰**

0 Comments 🎁 Award ➦ Share 📌 Save ...

Posted by u/sneoveruniverset 3 hours ago

**AALBORG COKE TIP TOP KVALITET 🇩🇰🇩🇰 🇩🇰🇩🇰 VILLE DU SUGE,RYGE ELLER SKYDE COKE SOM ER TOP KVALITET SÅ KONTAKT OS PÅ 🇩🇰🇩🇰 FØLGENDE: 🇩🇰🇩🇰 🇩🇰🇩🇰 . SNAPCHAT: SNEOVERBYEN. WICKR: SNEOVERBYEN 🇩🇰🇩🇰 🇩🇰🇩🇰 🇩🇰🇩🇰**

0 Comments 🎁 Award ➦ Share 📌 Save ...

Posted by u/Regnbue\_kbh 8 hours ago

**Bedste sten i kbh, køre døgnet rundt! Wickr: Nonstopd**

0 Comments 🎁 Award ➦ Share 📌 Save ...

# Post advertising other subreddits



# Discussion and limitations

- Differentiation between platforms can very much be described in relation to affordances
- Differentiations between countries:
  - 1) may to some degree also be described via affordance as languages are moderated in accordance to the local team and its efforts.
  - 2) Depends on user preferences between platforms
-

# Conclusion

- Low or no moderation combined with the promised anonymity of Snapchat, the temporal nature of messages and the easily searchable usernames makes the platform ideal for illicit use.
- On a more general level we find that the Social media drug markets have changed. The former markets, that consisted of more stable platform type of dealing (larger open groups) is still evident to some degree. The subreddits in Denmark confirms that.
- However, the hypothesis “that we would see a major change” did not appear