Defining Safe Cannabis Consumption within the Retail Space

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Overview

- Present Study
- Role of retail staff
- Safe Consumption
- Potential future directions and partnerships
Present Study

- Conducted 107 hours of ethnographic observation across 3 Seattle cannabis retail shops
- Interviewed 33 cannabis shop owners, staff, managers, and certified medical consultants across 17 shops
Understanding Safe Use

- Cannabis as medicine
- Potency and product types
- The retail space
Findings

- Education is key
- Consumption bolsters expertise
- Safe consumption framed
...you can't just put the weed on the wall and have it sit there, and have no one talking about it. How do you know what to buy? How much does it cost? What do I do? Without those people on the front lines, nothing happens. You can have all the packaging, you can have the best weed, you could have the cheapest weed. You could have all that, but there's no one there to, it comes back to educate the customer about that product

Ty, Jane’s Corner, Budtender
You're getting high but there's beneficial factors where you're medicinally feeling better without having to take the cough syrups and the pharmaceuticals that they always want to shove down your throat. There's so much more. It's a homeopathic way of getting better, so people always just assume that you're getting high, but I've had tumors removed in the past couple years, and I've had precancerous tumors removed, and I honestly feel that because of my cannabis use...that keeps those things at bay.

Raquel, Carrington’s Corner Pot Shop, Manager
I had a gentleman that had anxiety. He was like, "I just wanna get off some of these pills. I take so many pills." I'm like, "I can help you. I'm not a doctor. I can't give you medical advice but this is what's worked for me because I have generalized anxiety disorder. I know what that feels like, so let me show you a couple things. And you don't even have to get high if you don't want to." I showed him a couple of things. He very rarely takes any of his pills anymore, and he utilizes cannabis.

- Raquel, Carrington’s Corner Pot Shop, Manager
When I consume cannabis, I’ll just eat the distillate. I mean, you can’t tell people that, it’s illegal to tell people to consume distillate. It says on the package you are not supposed to consume it directly, but it is edible. The way they make the cannabis extract to make the edibles is the same way they make distillate so it’s perfectly fine. I don’t tell people that, but if they ask me how I consume cannabis or they need a higher dose, I’ll tell them “I eat the distillate, it’s consumable and that’s just what I do.” I’m not telling them to consume it, I’m just telling them what I do. I’m an adult, I see the label, and I’m just choosing to bypass it. That’s my decision and they can make that decision too, but I’d never tell them to do it directly.

Shelly, Eddie’s Pot Shops, Budtender
Ty: What are you looking for today?

Customer: I have been getting really sick lately after I smoke. I throw-up and feel like crap. I’m usually all about dabs, but I think I need something not as potent.

Ty: Yea, it sounds like you may have cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome, you may want to take a tolerance break, just cool off for a minute.

Customer and Ty talk briefly about different products that are not as potent and benefits/draw backs of tolerance break. After considering his options, the customer decides to just buy his usual type of product: highly potent wax.

Customer: Yea, nah, I think I’m just going to go with this for now and think about this [tolerance break] for next time.

- Jane’s Corner
Staff Consumption

…since I've been here, my consumption definitely went up. Well, I wouldn't say up, just different mediums of consumption, I guess. More range of it. And then, yeah, it felt like it was important to stay high. But I also felt the pressure to try so many different things, so that I, in turn, could be more knowledgeable to explain what things are going to taste and feel and smell like.

- Amelia, Eddie’s Pot Shops, MC Budtender
Safe Consumption

…since taking my medical class, it really helped me to look at my own consumption. …and realize that I was consuming way too much and for way too long of a time. I learned how it affects your development in your brain, and your cause and effect, kind of your communications. ...It helps me to take a step back and sort of check myself with not smoking too much.

- Amelia, Eddie’s Pot Shops, MC Budtender
…in my opinion on drug use and alcohol use is, if it's right for you then the best thing to do is take an educated approach to it and take a step by step approach to really understand it and respect the powers of it and the real bearing that it can have on your psychology and I think that's the important thing is making sure people understand the real potencies and the real risks and the real benefits to the different mediums you can take them.

- Kevin, Eddie’s Pot Shop, Store Manager
Moving Forward

- Budtenders may play a key role in information disseminating in the future
- Deep investment in success of the industry and enjoyable, safe experiences for consumers
- Need to build lines of communication between budtenders and researchers