

# Online public drug dealing

An analysis of motivation in use of cryptomarkets and Facebook-markets

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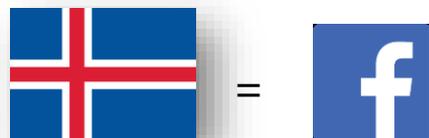


# Background

- Project: Nordic Drug Dealing on Social Media (NDDSM)
  - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden
- Research group: Jakob Demant (PI, Den), Atte Oksanen (Fin), Helgi Gunnlaugsson (Ice) + 15 local students
- Aim: *Where on social media does drug dealing take place? How is it done? And how do the participants perceive risk?*
- Qualitative research
  - Digital ethnography
  - Semi-structured interviews (textual based on Wickr)

# Summary of findings in NDDSM

- National differences



- Social media
- Communication
- Trust
- Motivation
- Encryption

# Public vs. private online markets

| Topic                | Public online drug markets         | Private online drug markets |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Social media</b>  | Facebook, Instagram                | Snapchat, Wickr, Messenger  |
| <b>Communication</b> | One-to-many                        | One-to-one                  |
| <b>Trust</b>         | Low                                | High                        |
| <b>Motivation</b>    | Network building                   | Security                    |
| <b>Encrypted</b>     | Cryptomarkets, Darknet drug forums | Wickr, Signal, Telegram     |

# Cryptomarkets vs. Facebook groups

|                                       | <b>Cryptomarkets</b>          | <b>Facebook groups</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Access</b>                         | Simple searches<br>Profile    | Simple searches<br>Profile  |
| <b>Visibility</b>                     | Seller ads<br>Profiles        | Seller posts<br>Profiles  |
| <b>Encryption</b>                     | Yes                           | No  |
| <b>Other risk minimizing measures</b> | Feedback system<br>Pseudonyms | Feedback system (Swe)<br>Fake profiles<br>Using emoji and nicknames for drugs |
| <b>Geographical reach</b>             | International                 | Local   |
| <b>Delivery</b>                       | Post                          | Face-to-face  |

# Data

- NDDSM: 107 interviews with sellers (63.4%) and buyers (36.5%)

Out of these:

- 46 interviewees had experience with darknet
  - 11 of these were with Finnish darknet forums only
- 52 interviewees had experience with Facebook
  
- **TOTAL: 56 individual interviews** (78.6% sellers)

# Motivation to use cryptomarkets

## 1) Getting new contacts or drugs

*I: Can you summarize for me why you use darknet for buying and not some other way?*

*P: I don't know anyone who has the drugs I find interesting, other than the weed I pick up in Christiania.*

## 2) Price and quality

I: (···) Do you think it was more appealing when the drugs came from Darknet, or why do you think they bought from you?

IP: It was a mixture of it being easier, cheaper (we gave bulk discounts that beat Christiania's [prices]) and the quality was far better and consistent.

### 3) Full anonymity

*I: Why did you sell on darknet instead of selling a different way?*

*IP: I have a real job where it wouldn't be cool to be recognized. Anonymity is important for me. Besides that, it would be extra money, and... an adventure.*

### 4) Feedback system

IP: Darknet clearly seems less risky for me, as long as you don't order from countries such as Holland. On darknet you don't have to deal with a shady criminals that can potentially scam or rob you (...). On darknet you can report the dealer if the product in no way lives up to your expectations.

## 5) Less contact with “real criminals”

IP: I just have an idea that the average seller on darknet doesn't commit violent crime, in the sense that you can scale crime. Reversely, I can't exclude the possibility that there are bad apples on the darknet markets. Anyway, I support criminals in my local area less this way.

# Motivations for using Facebook

## 1) Expand their business

*IP: The advantage is that you have collected all “addicts” in your area in one place. I would never have reached so many at once without Facebook.*

...

*IP: I started [using Facebook] 2 years ago by using the groups to sell because I moved to [larger city]. (···) I [used to live] in a small city where people knew that I sold, so they just called me.*

## 2) A wider selection of drugs

*IP: Facebook has a bigger assortment than I was used to from the street.*

### 3) A common way to communicate

*IP: Well, I just wanted to get rid of my mushrooms [laughs] (...)  
It felt pretty naturally.*

...

*IP: I don't know any other places.*

...

*IP: It's clearly the easiest because everybody uses it.*

### 4) Immediate delivery

IP: (...) Facebook was exclusively for personal use and darknet was for resale.

## 5) Minimal preparation needed

I: Do you still buy on darknet? I would imagine it would be quite attractive on Iceland.

IP: No – too much of a hassle to be honest, the markets are so unstable and acquiring bitcoin is time consuming. I do think a lot of the drugs I buy [on Facebook] do come from the dark net though.

# Summary of motivations

## Similar within both markets:

- A wider selection of drugs
- New contacts/expanding their business

## Differences:

- Facebook is a **well-known** way to communicate, that offers **immediate delivery** without much **preparation** needed.
- Cryptomarkets provide full **anonymity** and includes a **feedback** system that increases the level of security. It also gives better **prices and quality** drugs, without interfering with **“real” criminals**.

**Conclusion:** Public online drug markets offer a range of possibilities, satisfying various needs and wishes from both buyers and sellers.

# Thank you!

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