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Research article

Community knowledge and perception of cannabis tourism and its socio-economic impacts in Mahikeng, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The legalisation of cannabis for recreational purposes in the United States was the beginning of cannabis tourism. It improved the perception and acceptability of cannabis use in many societies across the world, particularly in developed countries. This paper investigates the community knowledge and perception towards cannabis tourism in Mahikeng, South Africa. Data were collected using in-depth face-to-face interviews with key informants, and the data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach. The findings show that all participants know cannabis and cannabis users in their communities, but some participants did not know about cannabis tourism. The results further reveal that the participants had mixed perceptions towards cannabis tourism. Participants have a positive perception towards cannabis tourism, believe that it will contribute to the local and the country's economy. Participants with a negative perception argue that cannabis tourism will increase crime and gender-based violence. Therefore, the participants do not support the government's plan to legalise recreational cannabis use. In conclusion, the cannabis tourism sector has the potential to boost local and the country's economy. The knowledge and perception of cannabis tourism among communities must be improved for communities to support the cannabis tourism sector.

KEYWORDS

Cannabis tourism; recreational cannabis use; community knowledge of cannabis tourism; community perception of cannabis tourism; South Africa

Introduction

Cannabis tourism is an emerging form of tourism (Yakowicz & Kelleher, 2022), started in the United States when the first legalisation of recreational cannabis consumption passed on 6 November 2012 in Colorado and took effect on 1 January 2014 (Ferner, 2014; Kang et al., 2016; Meehan et al., 2020). Since then, the use and market of cannabis for recreational purposes have shown steady growth. The perception toward cannabis consumption is progressively changing in all parts of the globe. Several countries have followed in the footsteps of the United States, legalising and decriminalising recreational cannabis consumption (Kampanje, 2022; Liu & Stronczak, 2022; Shukela, 2020), and others are still contemplating doing so. The market of the cannabis tourism sector is worth billions of US dollars. In the United States, which is the largest cannabis tourism market in the world, the cannabis tourism sector was worth approximately US$17 billion in 2022 (Yakowicz & Kelleher, 2022). The global cannabis tourism market is projected to generate more than US$23 billion by 2030 (Hasse, 2025; Voser, 2025), affirming that the sector is lucrative and has the potential to provide substantial support to countries' economies. The legalisation and decriminalisation of recreational cannabis consumption may be a golden opportunity to alleviate poverty and boost economies in developing countries, particularly in African countries. Unfortunately, there is no single African country that has formally exploited this untapped, fastest-growing market for recreational cannabis use up to the present time. Few African countries, such as Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, have legalised the commercial cultivation and consumption of cannabis for medical and personal purposes (Shukela, 2020). Thomas (2022) argues that the market for cannabis in Africa would have hit US$7.1 billion in 2023 if countries had fully legalised cannabis for medical and recreational use. This is a lost opportunity for African countries to increase their revenue through tourism spending and the taxation of cannabis sales.

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More than 38,000 tons of cannabis are illegally harvested each year across the African continent, according to the United Nations (Maposa, 2020; Thomas, 2022).

South Africa is the only African country that permits individuals to use cannabis in their private homes for recreational purposes. On 18 September 2018, the Constitutional Court of South Africa upheld that individuals could cultivate, possess, and use cannabis in their homes (Constitutional Court of South Africa, 2018). However, laws around selling and purchasing cannabis remain equivocal. Selling and purchasing cannabis are illegal in the country. Based on the success of the US and Canada, intuitive views are that South Africa would benefit enormously from legalising and decriminalising recreational cannabis consumption as a tourism activity. The South African government acknowledged that the cannabis industry has the potential to lift the country's economy and reduce unemployment, which is one of the critical challenges facing the country. In February 2022, the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, estimated that the cannabis industry has the potential to inject R28 billion a year and sustain around 130 000 jobs, and he vowed to review the policy and legal framework so the government and traditional cannabis farmers may meaningfully benefit from the cannabis sector (Hilton-Barber, 2022; Thomas, 2022). South Africa dreams of branding itself as the world's ideal cannabis tourism destination (Mwareya, 2023), but this dream may remain a fantasy without removing legal stumbling blocks for the industry to kick start. The cannabis tourism industry in South Africa is up and coming, despite the legal obstacles. There are some cannabis tours and tourist accommodation establishments that provide domestic and international tourists with cannabis tourism services, but the establishments are still inconspicuous (Hilton-Barber, 2022). Sihlobo (2019) argues that the stigma associated with cannabis use and its effects is one of the factors that impedes the development of the cannabis sector in South Africa. This is associated with a high level of substance abuse (Maluleke, 2023), which is a serious problem threatening South African society. Cannabis consumers are often labelled lazy, unclean, criminals, and dangerous (Williams, 2021), and cannabis is among the most abused drugs in South Africa (Shuro & Waggie, 2024). With this perception of cannabis use among South Africans, it is much desired to investigate the knowledge and perception of local communities towards cannabis tourism before the government legalises the recreational use of cannabis. This paper, therefore, investigates the perception and knowledge of cannabis tourism and its perceived impacts on health and socioeconomic impacts in Mahikeng, South Africa.

Literature review

Cannabis tourism and its acceptability

Cannabis was once a *forbidden fruit*, but it is now gaining popularity in many parts of the world, particularly in developed countries. This popularity is the aftermath of legalising the consumption of cannabis for recreational purposes in Colorado (Ferner, 2014). Cannabis is an herbal drug. Cannabis tourism, therefore, is a segment of drug tourism (Belhassen et al., 2007), which encompasses all psychoactive drugs purchased and consumed by tourists at host destinations. Hoffmann (2014) defines drug tourism as traveling to a destination with a focus on acquiring and consuming legal psychoactive drugs in host countries. These drugs are often illegal or unavailable in their home countries (Pereira & de Paula, 2016). To some tourists, consuming drugs at destinations is not the primary motivation for travel to a destination (Taylor, 2019); it may be the secondary motivation or accidental. Traveling for drug consumption is not a new phenomenon; it existed even before the legalisation of recreational cannabis consumption in the United States. Hoffmann (2014) posits that travelling for drug consumption can be traced back to the 1960s, but drug tourism was unrecognised and unaccepted. Drug consumption had been regarded as a deviant activity that was unbearable in societies (Uriely & Belhassen, 2005). The legalisation of cannabis for recreational use came as a gamechanger in the tourism industry. It changed the perception of societies towards cannabis consumption (Doggett et al., 2025; McGrady et al., 2020). Cannabis users are gradually being accepted and less stigmatised (Pitt, 2024), leading to an increase in cannabis tourists. Music et al. (2024) show that 78% of Canadians and 75% of Americans who participated in the study strongly agree with the legalisation of cannabis for recreational purposes, and the number of people who disagree with the legalisation of the drug has declined in both countries. In the Netherlands, more than half (58%) of international tourist arrivals go to Amsterdam as their destination because the city offers opportunities for drug consumption (O'Regan, 2022). Travelers for recreational cannabis consumption in the United States are also increasing (Pitt, 2024). Cannabis resorts are budding in the US, South America, and Southeast Asia for tourists who seek an environment conducive to connection, education, centred on wellness, and thoughtful experiences in addition to accessing legal cannabis (Hasse, 2025).

A study conducted in Canada found that the acceptability of recreational cannabis consumption increased over time, whereas the acceptability of cannabis for medical use declined (Doggett et al., 2025). The acceptance and positive perception of local communities towards cannabis users is a requisite for the

success of the cannabis tourism sector. Cannabis tourists need to feel accepted, unjudged, and unstigmatised by residents around destinations so they stay longer and spend more money. Foreign tourists spend more money on cannabis than local residents. For example, Taylor (2019) found that tourists spent $103.87 while local residents spent $64.24. The support and perception of residents towards cannabis tourism are likely to be positive if the residents are aware of the benefits from cannabis tourism activities taking place in their communities (Wood, 2022). A study conducted in Humboldt County, California, found that personal benefits determine resident attitudes toward cannabis tourism (Pachmayer et al., 2021).

Economic impacts of cannabis tourism

The global market size and economic impact of cannabis tourism are difficult to measure because the consumption of cannabis in some countries is still illegal and criminalised. Consequently, the transaction of selling and purchasing cannabis occurs secretly to avoid arrests. Evidence, however, shows that the market for the cannabis tourism sector is growing and has the potential to boost economies in countries that have legalised and formalised this sector (Hasse, 2025; Ledsom, 2022; Wallace, 2016). In 2015, the value of the cannabis industry in the state of Colorado was estimated to be US$2.4 billion (Wallace, 2016), and this was only three years after the state had legalised the sale, cultivation, and recreational consumption of cannabis. It was expected that the sales of cannabis in the whole United States would reach US$22 billion in 2020 (Huddleston, 2016), and cannabis tourism revenue was more likely to increase as other states were also legalising recreational cannabis consumption. Only nine states had legalised recreational cannabis consumption by June 2018 (Sapra, 2018). A large proportion of existing literature on cannabis tourism focuses on the United States (Joseph-Mathews & Anatol, 2021; Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019; McGrady & Kang, 2022; Yakowicz, 2022), and this gives the impression that the United States dominates this phenomenal industry. Countries such as Canada and the Netherlands are also major players in the cannabis industry (Liang et al., 2023). One report reveals that the value of three major companies in Canada's cannabis industry is estimated to be US$22.5 billion (Young, 2018). Similarly, cannabis tourism, known as coffee shops in the Netherlands, attracts millions of tourists each year, especially in Amsterdam, which was once regarded as the world's capital of cannabis tourism (Mwareya, 2023). It was estimated that 3 million foreign tourists visit coffee shops in Amsterdam every year (Turner, 2022). It was also reported that a sizeable proportion of 46 million people who visited the Netherlands in 2019 went to Amsterdam, and many of them bought and smoked marijuana in coffee shops (Rodriguez, 2021). The Netherlands has positioned itself as the European recreational cannabis market. In 2020, approximately 149 North American companies were selected to supply a substantial quantity (56 tons) of cannabis to Dutch coffee shops annually (Bennett, 2020). Globally, the cannabis industry is expected to generate more than US$102 billion by 2026 (Thomas, 2022).

Legalising the cannabis industry is a treasured opportunity for governments to raise their fiscal revenue through tax and licensing fees. Healy (2014), Kang & Lee (2018) argue that fiscal benefits are the prime and genuine motive for legalising the cannabis industry, but tourism policymakers and tourism developers may argue that increasing the number of cannabis tourists is the main driving force behind the legalisation of the industry. In 2015, tax revenue collected from the sale of cannabis, excluding licencing fees, in Colorado, hovered around US$70 million, which is almost double the tax revenue the state raised from the sale of alcohol (The Denver Post, 09 February 2016). It is prudent to argue that cannabis tourism is a missed golden opportunity for countries that have not yet legalised recreational cannabis. A distinctive example, the Dutch government loses tax revenue estimated to be €4.8 billion per year on the sale of illegal cannabis (Bennett, 2020), which is the result of the lack of coffee shops in some parts of the country (Wouters, 2013). The Dutch government also imposed restrictions on coffee shops by the government to prevent foreign tourists from using them to curb criminal activities (Boztas, 2022; Nabben et al., 2015).

Social impacts of cannabis tourism

The wave of legalising recreational cannabis use has increased the popularity and acceptance of cannabis tourism in many societies, particularly in the West. Evidence indicates that cannabis tourism destinations are on the rise (Belhassen et al., 2007; Pereira, 2020; Wright, 2019), suggesting that societies are increasingly dissociating recreational cannabis use with deviant behaviour (Kang et al., 2016). This shift in attitudes and perceptions towards cannabis use is seemingly justifiable. The cannabis tourism industry provides unequivocal and praiseworthy economic benefits to households and local businesses, such as hotels and restaurants. For example, one report disclosed that the cannabis sector supported 98,200 jobs in Canada between 2018 and 2024 and contributed US$75.5 billion to the country's GDP (Deloitte, 2025, whereas in the United States, the sector sustained 210 000 jobs in 2019 (Barcott & Whitney, 2019), and the total employment supported by the cannabis sector was predicted to reach 428,059 in 2022 (Ouanhlee, 2022).

The legalisation of recreational cannabis use also boosts other tourism businesses, including accommodation and restaurants, in host communities. Reports and empirical studies indicate that hotel revenues increased in Colorado and Washington soon after the states legalised marijuana use (Charania, 2021; LaJeunesse, 2020; Meehan et al., 2020). In addition to economic contribution, cannabis consumption may stimulate social cohesion (Kavousi et al., 2021). However, the consumption of cannabis is met with harsh criticisms from conservative societies, public health organisations, and healthcare facilities for its contribution to increased crimes, poverty, and health problems (Bonny-Noach & Sagiv-Alayoff, 2020; Kim et al., 2016; Nabben et al., 2015). For example, the number of Colorado residents and non-residents who visited the emergency department because of using marijuana increased between 2012 and 2014 (Kim et al., 2016).

Methodology

This study is qualitative and followed an exploratory research design because cannabis tourism is still a new and unpopular concept in South Africa. An exploratory research design is applied by studies that aim to critically understand problems and obtain information that may be the foundation for conducting comprehensive studies (Sreejesh et al., 2014). The population of the study was the traditional community leaders and South African police officers in Mahikeng, the capital city of the North West Province in South Africa. The sample size was 15 key informants, of whom eleven (11) key informants were traditional community leaders of 11 different villages, and four (4) were South African police officers (Table 1). Two South African police officers were from the Mahikeng Police station, and the other two were from the Mmabatho Police station. This sample size was determined based on the data saturation theory, which states that the saturation of data is achieved when additional collected data does not contribute to answering the research question, but duplicates the existing data (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024).

Table 1: Description of participants and code

Participants	Code
Traditional community leaders are headmen delegated by senior traditional leader (chief) to manage villages or tribal areas.	CL
South African police officers are members of the South African Police Service (SAPS).	PO

A key informant sampling approach was deemed suitable for this study because key informants are assumed to be relatively well-informed about the situation of their communities. Tremblay (1957) posits that key informants are selected because they are expected to possess specialised information on a specific topic. Traditional community leaders and South African police officers meet the criteria of good key informants suggested by Tremblay. These criteria are to: hold a formal position in their communities; possess information relevant to the question under investigation; have the willingness to share the information with the interviewer; be impartial or objective; and can communicate the information in an intelligible manner (Tremblay, 1957). The data were collected in December 2024 through face-to-face interviews with the key informants, and all interviews were conducted in English by the researcher. However, the researcher was sometimes accompanied by a trained postgraduate tourism student who was familiar with the study area. Interviews with South African police officers were conducted at police stations, interviews with seven traditional community leaders were conducted in their homes, and interviews with four traditional community leaders were conducted at Barolong Boora Tshidi Traditional Council (King's office). Eleven participants granted permission to record their interviews using an audio recorder device. Four participants refused to have their interviews recorded. Therefore, the researcher requested the postgraduate students to take notes during the interviews. Permission was requested to comply with South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) of 2023, which promotes the protection and privacy of personal information. The recorded interviews were transcribed into text using an online transcriber application called TurboScribe. The transcripts were printed and compared with the recorded interviews for accuracy. Then, the transcripts were updated and corrected. The updated transcripts were analysed using a thematic analysis method. In Braun and Clarke's six-step framework for thematic analysis, the first step is to familiarise oneself with data, the second step is to generate codes, the third step is to create themes, the fourth step is to review themes, the fifth step is to define and name themes, and the sixth step is to write a report (Dawadi, 2020; Naeem et al., 2023; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Findings

Knowledge and perception of cannabis tourism

All the study participants know and are familiar with cannabis, but they know it by the name of marijuana. The participants also acknowledged that they know cannabis users in their communities. Some of the cannabis users are their friends and family members. One participant commented, "*Some of the people who use marijuana are our friends and relatives; we interact with them daily"* (Participant CL4). Interestingly,

one of the participants revealed that he sometimes uses cannabis. He even has three cannabis plants in his garden. The study participants, however, have different perceptions of cannabis users. A large proportion of the participants perceive cannabis users as nonconforming people who misuse it and misbehave. One participant says, "…*these people are our relatives and friends*; *it is difficult for us to say that they are doing a bad thing. But we take it as a bad practice to smoke marijuana*" (Participant CL2). This view was echoed by Participant CL6, who criticised cannabis users for smoking cannabis anytime and anywhere, "*People smoke marijuana anywhere and anytime during the day, even in the morning, and behave funny after smoking it*". Smoking cannabis in public areas is an offence in South Africa. One participant advised people to use cannabis in their private places, not in public, "*People must know that they must only smoke it in their homes, not in public spaces like streets, bars, taxi ranks, or bus stations. We arrest them when we see them smoking in place spaces*" (Participant PO2). However, it was clear that the concept of cannabis tourism is new and unpopular among the study participants. Most of the participants, particularly traditional community leaders, stated that they had never heard about cannabis tourism before. In fact, some of these participants were surprised to hear that there is cannabis tourism. They were also unaware that the South African government was planning to legalise and decriminalise the consumption of cannabis for recreational purposes. Only two traditional community leaders had heard about cannabis tourism, but they had heard it in other countries. One participant says, "*I heard about it in America, where people visit places for smoking marijuana*" (Participant CL10).

Perceived social impacts of cannabis tourism

When the participants were asked about the potential social impacts of cannabis tourism, they expressed opposing views. Some participants argue that cannabis tourism may exacerbate the situation, considering the current high level of crime, gender-based violence, and other nonconforming activities taking place in their communities and the country. One participant commented, "*Imagine the combination of alcohol and cannabis. It will be worse in our communities and the whole country*" (Participant CL6). The participants posit that cannabis tourism would promote criminal activities because cannabis users often become violent after using it. They added that theft may increase because cannabis users may steal from people to get money to buy cannabis. Currently, the use of cannabis in South Africa is relatively high among teenagers and young adults. Therefore, participants are also concerned that legalising recreational cannabis will have devastating impacts on teenagers and young adults. One participant comments, "…*legalising cannabis tourism will bring income at the expense of killing people? No, it is wrong. Cannabis is killing our people. Young children are targeted, especially at schools, where they do not attend classes, and some drop out of school"* (Participant CL8). The participants further argue that recreational cannabis consumption may lead to the use of other addictive and illicit drugs. One participant said, "…*if you ask those who use other addictive drugs like nyaope, they will tell you that they started smoking cannabis a bit by bit. Then, they upgraded to other drugs*" (Participant PO3). Nyaope is a common street drug in South Africa, it is a mixture of different drugs, including low-grade heroin, cannabis products, and antiretroviral drugs (Mthembi et al., 2019). This argument was also supported by another participant who contends that cannabis consumption is a risk factor for drug abuse. The participant says: "..... *I think marijuana is the reason why they start using drugs, because when they get used to it, they feel like it's no longer working for them. Then, they go for strong drugs*" (Participant PO4).

The participants with positive views of cannabis tourism do not believe that cannabis tourism will potentially cause any negative social impacts. They argue that the government will control cannabis tourism as it controls alcohol consumption. One of the participants says, "*I think the government will come up with measures to control it when it decides to legalise recreational cannabis use. If it controls alcohol consumption, it can also control cannabis"* (Participant CL7). Another participant argues that the consumption of alcohol is high in South Africa, but most criminal activities are not caused by alcohol consumption. Therefore, the consumption of cannabis is not expected to increase crime in South Africa because it will not surpass the consumption of alcohol. The participant states that: Almost every person drinks alcohol, but they do not commit crimes. Most crimes committed in our community, even in the whole of South Africa, are not caused by alcohol. So why will people commit crimes because of smoking cannabis? People will get used to it, and it will be normal like alcohol (Participant CL5).

Perceived economic impacts of cannabis tourism

Participants with positive views of cannabis tourism argue that cannabis tourism may bring many economic benefits to communities. Legalising cannabis tourism may create jobs and bring income to local communities and the whole country. One participant commented, "*Many people, especially youth in our community, are unemployed. Cannabis tourism may create jobs for them. Others may even grow cannabis. I am a farmer myself; I can grow it for a good purpose. We can sell it to the market to get money*" (Participant CL7).

Community participation in cannabis tourism

When participants were asked if they would participate in cannabis tourism as cannabis tourists, farmers, or sellers, few participants expressed their interest in participating in cannabis tourism as farmers. Some participants even have land they may use to grow cannabis. One participant said, "*I will consider it because it will be legalised, not smoking it, but for farming to make a profit*" (Participant CL8). The government allows people to cultivate cannabis for medical purposes, but they must apply for a license. A large proportion of the participants, particularly those participants with a positive perception of cannabis tourism, are in support of the decriminalisation and legalisation of recreational cannabis. The motivation for this support is the expected economic benefits of cannabis tourism expressed by a participant: "*Yes, I would support the legalisation of the cannabis tourism industry because it will bring income to our people*" (Participant CL9).

Discussion

This study provides insight into community knowledge and perceptions of cannabis tourism and its socio-economic impacts. The findings of the study indicate that all the participants know cannabis and some cannabis users in the community, but some participants had never heard of cannabis tourism. It is not surprising that few participants knew about cannabis tourism because recreational cannabis use is still not legalised in South Africa and in other African countries. Furthermore, tourism remains subdued and undeveloped in Mahikeng despite the community having many tourist attractions. This underscores the need for the government to create awareness of cannabis tourism in communities before legalising recreational cannabis use. The perceptions of cannabis tourism among the study participants differ depending on the perceived benefits and costs associated with cannabis tourism. Some participants have a negative perception towards cannabis tourism. These participants argue that cannabis tourism will increase crime and gender-based violence in the community and the country. The argument is that some cannabis users, especially teenagers may be stealing money from people to buy cannabis. This is more likely to happen when people get addicted to cannabis use. Cannabis users may also commit other crimes under the influence of cannabis. The participants with a positive perception of cannabis tourism, however, argue that most crimes committed in South Africa are not associated with drug abuse. Negative perceptions of cannabis tourism are aligned with the existing literature which shows that cannabis users in South Africa are still stigmatised and are linked to criminal activities and other undesired behaviour (Maluleke, 2023; Sihlobo, 2019). However, the participants' concerns may be understood because South Africa experiences a high level of crime and gender-based violence. Empirical studies and statistics reveal that crime and gender-based violence are serious problems in South Africa (Anwana et al., 2024; Naiker, 2025; Staff writer, 2025).

The concern that cannabis tourism may contribute to increasing school dropouts and drug addiction was raised by some participants. School learners may access and use cannabis freely when it is legalised. In line with this concern, Maluleke (2023) argues that cannabis use in South Africa is linked to substance abuse. Studies show that cannabis is one of the most abused substances by school learners in South Africa, alongside alcohol and cigarettes (Mokwena & Setshego, 2021; Shuro & Waggie, 2024). This result highlights the need for the government to implement strict measures to ensure that the legalisation of recreational cannabis use will not increase school dropouts and substance abuse in the country. The result of this study reveals that most drug users start using cannabis, and they upgrade to stronger drugs when cannabis is no longer strong enough for them. Previous studies reveal that the perception of local communities towards cannabis tourism is positive if local communities benefit from it (Pachmayer et al., 2021; Wood, 2022). The result of this study also shows that the participants who anticipate positive socio-economic benefits from cannabis tourism have a positive perception of it. Cannabis tourism is an opportunity for South Africa to boost its economy through revenue and create thousands of jobs. The cannabis tourism market is lucrative and growing. Different reports show that the global market for the cannabis tourism sector generates tens of billions of US dollars (Hasse, 2025; Thomas, 2022; Voser, 2025). Thomas (2022) estimates that legalising cannabis for recreational use may generate 130 000 new jobs in South Africa. Therefore, the participants with a positive perception of cannabis tourism support the government's plan to legalise recreational cannabis, and some of them are willing to participate in cannabis tourism as farmers because they have land to use for farming. Local communities support cannabis tourism if they expect to benefit from it (Wood, 2022). Probably, the participants with a negative perception of cannabis tourism will support it after the government legalises it. A study conducted in Canada and the United States discloses that the number of people who oppose the legalisation of cannabis declined in these countries (Music et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The consumption of cannabis for recreational purposes was once seen as deviant behaviour to be condemned. It is now gaining popularity across the world after being legalised in the United States. Countries are showing interest in legalising cannabis for recreational purposes. This study investigated the knowledge and perception of the Mahikeng community towards cannabis tourism and its socio-economic impacts. The findings reveal that all study participants know cannabis and cannabis consumers in their communities, but some participants did not know about cannabis tourism before this study. The participants who knew cannabis tourism had heard of it in other countries. These participants were aware of the South African government's plan to legalise cannabis use for recreational purposes. This result highlights that the knowledge of cannabis tourism in Mahikeng is limited. However, some participants have a positive perception of this form of tourism. This perception may be linked to the perceived socio-economic benefits that cannabis tourism may bring to the country and the local community. Because of these potential benefits, some participants affirm that they will participate in cannabis tourism as farmers of cannabis if the government legalises it. The participants who are against the legalisation of cannabis tourism argue that cannabis tourism may have negative social impacts, such as increased crime and gender-based violence, and these are serious problems facing their communities and the whole country. Limited knowledge and negative perception of some participants towards cannabis tourism indicate that cannabis tourism may not be fully accepted and supported in the Mahikeng community. The government may heighten the awareness of cannabis tourism and its potential socio-economic benefits for this sector to be supported and accepted in the community. Encouraging community residents to participate in cannabis tourism activities will improve their perception of cannabis tourism in case the government decides to legalise it. Referring to the success of countries that legalised and decriminalised cannabis for recreational purposes, the South African government is recommended to legalise and decriminalise cannabis for recreational purposes. Cannabis tourism may also be a boost to South Africa's entire tourism industry.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no other empirical study that has provided the knowledge and perception of the community towards cannabis tourism in Mahikeng or any other communities in South Africa. This study, therefore, informs the South African government to make informed decisions regarding the legalisation and decriminalisation of cannabis tourism. Considering cannabis tourism is a new and unpopular concept in South Africa, this study increases the awareness of cannabis tourism in the country. Although this study contributes to existing literature on the community knowledge and perception of cannabis tourism and informs policy development, it has some limitations. The first limitation is related to the study area. This study was conducted in a semi-urban community, where tourism activities are limited. Limited tourism activities in the community could limit the community's knowledge and perception of cannabis tourism. To overcome this limitation, further studies may be conducted in communities in urban and rural areas to determine whether the knowledge and perception in the communities differ from the knowledge and perception of the Mahikeng community. The second limitation is the methodology in terms of the study participants. The study involved key informants, who are South African police officers and traditional community leaders. These participants could be more informed than ordinary community residents because of the positions they hold, which may expose them to more information than ordinary community residents. A future study may investigate the knowledge and perception community residents towards cannabis tourism.

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