Cannabis City

LA’s Medical Marijuana Landscape

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Background

• Four hundred plus medical marijuana dispensaries in Los Angeles... perhaps 1,000?
• Rapid expansion, followed by several waves of closures and re-openings.
• Significant controversy over the “true” purpose of MMD’s (no single answer).
Geography to the Rescue!

- Lewis: Landscape is our unwitting autobiography...
- Using our amazing Jedi-powers of observation and some Jedi skills, we can help the fine folks of Los Angeles better understand what’s going on with this industry.
Data and Methodology

• Two data sets:
  – Los Angeles Times
  – Photographic Database

• Content analysis of business names
  – Deconstruct each name, categorize, reconstruct, categorize.

• Landscape analysis of photo inventory.
Results

• Initial set of nearly 16 categories of MMDs reduced to 8, then 4 uber-categories.
• Many possible hybrids of major categories and sub-categories.
Corporate Clinic

- Uses the landscape vocabulary of mainstream medical professions to evoke scientific and business legitimacy.
- About 30% of the medical marijuana dispensaries could pass for mainstream medical facilities.
- This kind of look is particularly popular in middle-class neighborhoods, where potential opposition to marijuana distribution might be expected.
Mascots
Corporate Clinic
A large number of MMD’s made an appeal to compassionate care. Many of these fell into the corporate category. This one used initials and a name, plus the green-cross. Compassionate clinics accounted for about 17% of all dispensaries.
Corporate Clinic
Compassionate Clinic
Compassionate Clinic (with camo?)
Compassionate Clinic (with camo?)
Bunker Clinic

- These clinics attempt to camouflage themselves by blending into the urban landscape fabric.
- Frequent uses of initials in business name which serve to conceal, rather than reveal the nature of the business conducted within.
- Use of code terminology to mask nature of business to un-initiated.
- Similar strategies used in vice-elicit landscapes.
- About 15% of the dispensaries we tracked were labeled "bunker" dispensaries.
Mascots
Classic Bunker Dispensary
Bunker – Initials Only
Bunker – only sign is on the door
Bunker – Hiding in Plain Sight

• Is it a pot shop or a chic furniture store?

• Some dispensaries blend in by camouflaging themselves as a “normal” store.
Common strategy to equate marijuana with naturalistic, holistic or organic foods/medicine.

It’s all natural!

Just like Whole Foods!

Nature’s remedy!

About 30% of dispensaries were categorized as "granola" clinics
The Mascots
Granola

- Herbal, alternative, healthy, green, holistic, and organic are the key terms.
- Lots of earth tones in the signs and motifs.
Granola - Compassionate Clinic

- This sign hybridizes the Granola/eco/organic theme with the “compassionate care” theme.
- Eco-care
- It also has a highly professional design vocabulary… like an I-phone or Toyota Prius.
Granola / Bunker
Corporate Granola?
El’ Granola-Bunker
Recreational Use Dispensaries

• About 25% of the dispensaries used a recreational appeal to market themselves.
• Several sub-categories were evident as well.
  • Granola-Stoner
  • Stoner-Fantasy
  • Stoner-Recreation
  • Stoner-Care, etc.
• Most visually interesting.
Recreational Clinic – Venice Beach
Stoner - Care

- 6%
- Ample use of color, but an appeal to both “global” and the slangy “meds”.
- Curious because under the law, the pot must be grown locally.
Granola – Stoner Mascot

Respect the classics man.
Granola – Stoner/ Fantasy

Respect the classics man.
Pot or not?
Pot or not?
Pot or not?
Pot or not?
Stoner Fantasy

• Overt and/or coded references to recreational uses of marijuana and/or its hallucinogenic effects.
• Frequent use of psychedelic exterior colors, especially purple, but also references to magic or other fantasy items.
• Hendrix man!
Stoner (Granola?) Fantasy - Mascot
Stoner (Granola?) Fantasy
Stoner Fantasy
Eco - Stoner Fantasy... man.
Stoner Fantasy
Stoner- Fantasy

RED MOON
818.997.6912
www.redmoon.com
Stoner Recreation

• Open references to Pot as recreational, but without ties to the Hippies, or dragons...
• Partaaaay.
• Bob Marley!
• The Chronic... yo...
Mascots
Stoner - Recreation
Stoner - Recreation
It’s Always 4:20 at the Green Oasis

Vapor Lounge

Dispensary

11924
Stoner - Compassion
Spatial Patterns

• By ZIP code, there were only a few clusters by category around Los Angeles.

• Neighborhoods around USC, for example, had a significant cluster of “stoner recreation” dispensaries.

• Middle class neighborhoods tended to have elevated concentrations of “corporate clinics”, particularly the “compassionate” variety.
Implications

• Medical Marijuana's days may be numbered in Los Angeles, and perhaps elsewhere because there will be a poor defense of medical marijuana by the public who will have likely have read the landscape of medical marijuana largely in terms of the most outrageous minority – stoner fantasy and stoner recreation, while the “compassionate” discourse is largely mute on the landscape.