Research article

The Chinese media narrative of Thailand as a tourist destination after the legalisation of cannabis

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Chinese media narrative of Thailand as a tourist destination after Thailand legalised cannabis use for medicinal purposes, using framing and social identity theories. A content analysis was performed by three coders on 128 posts obtained between 2019 and 2022 from four media houses on the Chinese social media platform Weibo: Taiguo.com, Taihuabbs, Vision Thai, and The Sing Sian Media. The first three are Chinese media houses, and the fourth is a Chinese-language newspaper in Bangkok. The results revealed that the Chinese media's framing of the legalisation of cannabis use in Thailand was mainly neutral. In contrast, Chinese netizens' comments showed a negative perception of Thailand as a travel destination after the legalisation of cannabis use. In addition, the study identified the different themes and aspects of narrating, news sources, and media types used to present the information. The implications of these findings highlight the need for the Thai government to develop effective policies and communication strategies to address negative perceptions and promote Thailand as a safe and attractive destination for tourists. The study also suggests the importance of considering cultural and social factors when crafting communication strategies, particularly for sensitive topics such as cannabis use.

1. Introduction

Cannabis tourism is not a new concept and has been studied from varied psychological and social perspectives. Most scholars have exemplified cannabis tourism as marginal or deviant tourist behaviour, a lifestyle found in developed nations [1–3]. Research on drug matters within the tourism context has focused on a variety of issues, including tourist motivations [4], the attractiveness of certain destinations for foreign travellers [5], and the potential for international tourism cannabis markets [6]. The development of cannabis-related industries targeting visitors, including tourists from countries where all drugs are strictly prohibited, has increased interest in such topics as cannabis-oriented tourists' efforts to neutralise deviant connotations [7] and the role of the anticipated guilt from cannabis tourists' behavioural intentions [8]. For example, Belhassen et al. [9] acknowledge that 'cannabis consumption in tourism is driven and influenced by the wider process of the normalisation of cannabis use in Western societies' and identify four

umbrella groups of motivations to consume cannabis while travelling: experimentation, pleasure and diversion-seeking, the quest for authenticity, and accessible purchasing [10]. At the same time, the existing studies argue that the current definitions of drug tourism are too general and that varied tourist groups, such as spiritual and drug tourism, exist because of their self-perceptions and motivations [9,11]. Motivation is stated as a critical precondition for tourists' behavioural intentions. Tourists may engage in adventurous or risky behaviours as they consider tourism different from their usual routine, thrill-seeking, and less restrained. Subsequently, drug use within the tourism context is viewed as less threatening, even though it is associated with medical, social, and legal risks [12].

Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to legalise cannabis. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul signed a ministerial proclamation in February 2022 announcing the removal of cannabis and hemp from the drug control list, also known as the decriminalisation of cannabis products with the amount of tetrahydrocannabinol, the main psychoactive compound in cannabis, not exceeding 0.2% [13]. Since then, to regulate the use of cannabis, the Thai government has successively added many regulations. Thai leaders believe that cannabis can boost tourism in the country, and the newly appointed Minister of Tourism and Sports has long been advocating 'cannabis tourism'. He envisioned a distinctive 'cannabis medical tourism package', extracting essential oils and incense from cannabis, allowing tourists to be treated with cannabis through Thai massage [14]. According to research by the University of Thai Chamber of Commerce, the combined market for medical cannabis and hemp in Thailand will continue to grow at an annual growth rate of 15% until 2025, bringing in 43 billion in production and bringing growers and small businesses a considerable income [15]. Some media even started referring to Thailand as the Amsterdam of the East or the Las Vegas of the East.

However, the impact of cannabis legalisation in Thailand on the tourism industry may not be that straightforward. The attitudes towards cannabis in the neighbouring Asian countries, which comprise a significant share of the tourism income, remain very different. The Thai government is aware of the seriousness of the problem and has repeatedly reminded Thai citizens not to take cannabis products with them when going abroad. Punishments for taking cannabis into other Asian countries range from huge fines to the death penalty [16].

The same strict regulations also remain in effect in China, which controls cannabis as a narcotic drug and a class of psychoactive drugs. At the same time, Chinese tourists have long made a significant contribution to the Thai economy. China is undoubtedly the largest outbound tourism market in the world in terms of the number of outbound tourists and consumption levels [17,18]. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand was the most preferred destination for Chinese tourists, topping the list of most visited countries [19]. Correspondingly, China was Thailand's largest source of tourists [20,21], with over 11 million visitors travelling to the Kingdom in 2019 (an increase of more than ten times when compared with ten years ago).

Thailand's economic development is inseparable from tourism, and Thailand's economy suffered adversely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the COVID-19 epidemic, tourism accounted for about 20% of Thailand's GDP, and tourism revenue ranked 13th in the world. To revive the economy and boost tourism income, the country accelerated its pace of reopening, lifting all the restrictions for incoming visitors in 2022 [20]. Additionally, as indicated above, Thailand's tourism industry is inseparable from Chinese tourists [22,23]. However, Chinese tourists' response to the policy of cannabis legalisation is yet to be determined. It is reasonable to expect, however, that the Chinese media narrative on Thailand as a travel destination in the context of cannabis legalisation will affect Chinese tourists' attitudes and their intention to travel in Thailand. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the impact of cannabis legalisation on the Chinese media's narrative of Thailand as a tourist destination.

Although there have been multiple studies on the effects of the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand, the research has focused on issues such as the patterns and purposes for consumption of medical cannabis, consumers' perceptions and opinions towards the benefits and harms of cannabis [24,25], as well as the overall impact of the 'liberalisation' of medicinal uses of cannabis on the public and the healthcare system [26–28]. All these studies have examined 'domestic variables', the responses, and the effects of the legalisation within Thailand and on Thai citizens. However, given the significance of tourism for the Thai economy, it is important to investigate the potential impact of cannabis legalisation on inbound tourism. With China being undoubtedly Thailand's largest source of tourists, the attitudes of Chinese tourists towards this legislation are worth investigating. In this regard, the current study seeks to investigate the Chinese media's portrayal of Thailand as a tourist destination after the legalisation of cannabis and assess its impact on Chinese tourists' perceptions of Thailand.

2. Literature review

2.1. Background of cannabis legislation in Thailand

In 2018, Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to legalise cannabis use for medical purposes. The law was amended in 2019 to allow for the use of cannabis for research and development purposes [24,29]. The legalisation of cannabis in Thailand has attracted much attention both domestically [30] and internationally [24,31]; while there has been some discussion on the impact of this decision on the country's economy and healthcare system [24,29], research on its impact on the country's tourism industry is limited.

Several studies [32–36] have investigated the media representation of Thailand as a tourist destination, focusing on how it is represented in the media of different countries. For example, a study by Jirattikorn [37] examined how the Chinese media portrayed Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, little research exists on the Chinese media's representation of Thailand as a tourist destination since the legalisation of cannabis.

2.2. Relevant theories

This study used framing and social identity theories to analyse the data. Framing theory [38,39] suggests that how information is presented affects how people interpret it. The social identity theory [40,41] proposes that individuals partly define themselves by their group memberships and that these group memberships influence their attitudes and behaviours. Both theories are likely to help address the research questions.

2.2.1. Literature review

2.2.1.1. Background of cannabis legislation in Thailand. In 2018, Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to legalise cannabis use for medical purposes. The law was amended in 2019 to allow for the use of cannabis for research and development purposes [24,29]. The legalisation of cannabis in Thailand has attracted much attention both domestically [30] and internationally [24,31]. While there has been some discussion on the impact of this decision on the country's economy and healthcare system [25–27], research on its impact on the country's tourism industry is limited.

2.2.1.2. Cannabis tourism in other regions. Research on cannabis tourism has primarily been conducted in Europe and North America, with studies examining cannabis tourism in the Netherlands [43,44], the United States [10,44,45], and Canada [46,47]. These studies have explored the motivations of cannabis tourists, the impact of cannabis tourism on local economies, and the effects of cannabis legalisation on the tourism industry. However, limited research has been conducted on the impact of cannabis legalisation on tourism in Asia [1], particularly in the context of Thailand and its relationship with Chinese tourists.

2.2.1.3. Previous studies on Thailand as a tourist destination. Several studies [32–36] have investigated the media representation of Thailand as a tourist destination, focusing on how Thailand is represented in the media of different countries. For example, a study by Jirattikorn [37] examined how the Chinese media portrayed Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, limited research exists on the Chinese media's representation of Thailand as a tourist destination since the legalisation of cannabis.

2.2.1.4. Gaps in theoretical and methodological approaches. The current study fills a gap in the literature by using framing theory [38, 39] and social identity theory [40,41] to analyse the Chinese media's portrayal of Thailand as a tourist destination after the legalisation of cannabis. Framing theory suggests that how information is presented affects how people interpret it, while social identity theory proposes that individuals partly define themselves by their group memberships and that these group memberships influence their attitudes and behaviours. Both theories are expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of Chinese media narratives on Chinese tourists' perceptions of Thailand.

Moreover, methodological gaps exist in the literature as well. Numerous studies on cannabis tourism have relied on document analysis [46,47], reviews [45] or surveys [10,42] to gather data. While these methods provide valuable insights, they may not capture the full extent of public opinion or media representation. This study addresses this methodological gap by using content analysis to examine the Chinese media narrative on Thailand as a tourist destination, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of public opinion.

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that while there has been some research on cannabis tourism and media representation of Thailand as a tourist destination, there are still significant gaps in the literature. Specifically, there is a lack of research on the impact of cannabis legalisation on Chinese tourists' perceptions of Thailand and the application of framing and social identity theories in this context. Furthermore, there are methodological gaps in terms of the use of content analysis to explore media narratives on this topic. The current study addresses these gaps by examining the Chinese media's portrayal of Thailand as a tourist destination following the legalisation of cannabis and assessing its impact on Chinese tourists' perceptions of Thailand.

3. Method

This study utilised a formal approach to examine texts (content analysis), which involved converting the content into quantitative parameters and interpreting them according to their linguistic and value aspects. Considering that online media significantly affects travellers' decision-making, the content analysis focused on the official and private media narratives about Thailand as a tourist destination, shared on the Weibo platform in 2019 and 2022. This quantitative content analysis was conducted on the text and picture data from the online social platform Weibo.

The censorship system in China caused significant obstacles to this study. While the researchers used third-party software to capture the posts related to the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand on Weibo, the data remains incomplete. First, the data sources had to be limited to Sina Weibo, as searching for relevant information on http://Baidu.com (China's largest search engine) is impossible due to strict internet censorship and filtering mechanisms that prevent access to certain keywords or topics, such as those related to the legalisation of cannabis. Second, as posts containing the keyword 'cannabis (da ma)' are restricted by the censorship system, Chinese media may refer to cannabis with homonyms, combinations of Chinese and English letters, or even the emoji of grass leaves, which complicated the search [48].

The Weibo real-name system also limits the freedom of expression on Weibo to some extent, leading to self-censorship by users. Furthermore, the comments posted may not represent the true opinions of the authors. Finally, the extent to which these comments can

affect the perception of the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand by those who read them and their intention to travel to Thailand remained outside of the scope of this study.

Four leading official and private media were selected. Their description of Thailand as a tourist destination was analysed in an open, inductive way, considering the overall topic, target audience, information and communication type, attitude, the form of the post, and interactivity. The amount and frequency of narratives about Thailand as a tourist destination observed in 2019 and 2022 were analysed. The narratives were categorised by the overall topic, whether a particular post narrated Thailand as a tourist destination, narrative aspects, target audience, information and communication type, message form, interactions from viewers, and the primary attitude of target audiences. For the interactive part, the number of reposts, likes, and comments were counted to enable the researchers to understand the target audience's attitudes. Posts with fewer than ten engagements were categorised as invalid data.

The process entailed repeated, extensive text engagement and holistically reviewing the material [49]. First, the researchers selected the critical reception narratives inductively as themes emerged, starting with a pilot study of randomly selected posts. Second, they engaged in a deductive analysis of the search results based on the themes identified in the pilot. Finally, after establishing the tentative themes, they tested them against the entire sample and revised them as appropriate. Moving inductively and deductively between the content and possible themes allowed the researchers to establish the final themes they analysed to understand public sentiments.

Four media on the Chinese social media platform Weibo were selected for data collection: Taiguo.com, Taihuabbs, Vision Thai, and The Sing Sian Media. The first three are Chinese media, and the fourth is a Chinese-language newspaper in Bangkok, Thailand. Taiguo. com, a website for the Thai Chinese community, was launched in 2008, and its Weibo account Thailand.com had 1.66 million followers in December 2019. Taihuabbs is the largest Chinese forum in Thailand, and it covers various Thailand-related topics, such as tourism, culture, politics, economy, and entertainment. More than 554,000 followers have subscribed to this Weibo account. Vision Thai is a Chinese-language online media house founded by Taiwanese Thai people in 2015. It covers various aspects such as news and current affairs, social issues, business intelligence, tourism, food, culture, life, street interviews, and personal interviews. Its Weibo account has approximately 308,000 followers. Sing Sian Media was created on 1 January 1950 and was founded by Hu Wenhu, the famous 'King of Panacea Oil', and his brother Hu Wenbao. A total of 2,100,557 Sina Weibo users are following its account on Weibo. The collected data were analysed for validity and reliability. The researchers relied on two native Chinese speakers and the main Chinese-native coder to validate the items in the analysis and categorise the posts. Table 1 illustrates the inter-coder reliability test results.

4. Results

This section summarises the content analysis findings and presents them in tables.

4.1. Media narratives on the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand

The number of narratives from the selected Chinese media houses, namely Taiguo.com, Taihuabbs, Vision Thai, and The Sing Sian Media, were 34, 15, 5, and 74, respectively (see Table 2). The narratives from various media regarding the legalisation of cannabis peaked in the month when the policy was officially implemented (June 2022). Sing Sian Media had the most posts in June, followed by Taiguo.com.

4.2. Types of media

This study analysed the news sources of 128 collected posts. Among them, 75 (58.6%) posts were linked to Thai media news sources, 10 (7.8%) posts were created by Chinese media themselves based on various reports, and 43 (33.6%) posts did not indicate the source of the citation. The posts on The Sing Sian Media mainly indicated the citation sources, while most of the posts on Vision Thai, Taihuabbs, and Taiguo.com did not indicate the source (Table 3).

4.3. Narrative types

The study also analysed various media's similarities and differences in the aspects of narrating. The posts related to the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand were divided into eight subcategories: *A. policy introduction; B. related impact; C. positive news; D. negative news;*

Table 1
Reliability test results.

Coder		Researcher	Female A	Female B
A. Positive encouragement	n	1	3	3
	%	0.8%	2.3%	2.3%
B. Negative persuasion	n	5	14	18
	%	3.9%	10.9%	14.1%
C. Neutral statements	n	121	109	106
	%	94.5%	85.2%	82.8%
D. Strongly discouraged	n	1	2	1
	%	0.8%	1.6%	0.8%

Table 2

Media houses' examination of the narratives on the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand.

Media	Number of Posts	Percentage of Total Posts
Taiguo.com	34	26.6%
Taihuabbs	15	11.7%
Vision Thai	5	3.9%
The Sing Sian Media	74	57.8%

Table 3

Sources of news in the posts.

Source	Number of Posts	Percentage
Thai Media	75	58.6%
Chinese Media	10	7.8%
Unspecified Sources	43	33.6%

Note: Out of the 128 collected posts related to the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand, 75 posts were linked to Thai media news sources, ten posts were created by Chinese media based on various reports, and 43 posts did not indicate the citation source.

E. related products, store recommendations; F. local people's reactions; G. related research; and *H. medical benefits.* From the overall data, more than half of the posts related to the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand (71, accounting for 55.5% of the total data) take policy introduction as the central aspect of narrating, followed by negative news related to the legalisation of cannabis (Table 4).

Table 5 presents the different types of posts found in the Chinese media narrative of Thailand as a tourist destination after the legalisation of cannabis. The table identifies five post types: Positive encouragement, Negative persuasion, Strong discouragement, Disapproval caused by different ideologies, and Fear of cannabis itself (see Table 5), which can be summarised into three main types of posts: positive encouragement, negative persuasion, and strong discouragement.

Positive encouragement posts were found in relation to promoting Thai foods that contain cannabis as an ingredient, such as Thai basil fried rice, pork rib soup, and drinks, and providing positive feedback obtained from people who have tried them. In addition, Chinese media tends to use text with pictures to present such news, which is simple, direct, and suitable for Weibo users' habits. One of the posts featured a video whose style was found to be relaxing and interesting; however, this post received six likes with two negative comments from netizens who have been anonymised by the researchers: '*I've reported this post*' and '*I frowned the whole time while watching this video, do I need a urine test after returning from Thailand?*'.

Negative persuasion posts mainly warned Chinese travellers not to bring cannabis and cannabis-related products into Japan or other countries or highlighted the legal consequences that may arise from eating or accidently carrying cannabis products. These posts achieved a persuasive effect by emphasising the potential dangers and legal risks associated with cannabis use.

Strong discouragement posts were typically those forwarding announcements from the Chinese embassy in Thailand, which explicitly prohibited Chinese citizens from bringing cannabis and cannabis-related products back to China. These posts serve as strong warnings and are intended to be persuasive.

The remaining two post types reflected viewers' disapproval of the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand; different ideologies caused disapproval, mainly expressed through negative comments towards the United States and the 'Americanization of Thailand', while fear of cannabis itself was mainly due to the potential dangers associated with consuming cannabis.

5. Discussion

In this section, we discuss the implications of the findings and their contributions to the existing literature.

The framing theory suggests that how information is presented affects how it is interpreted [38,39]. In this study, the Chinese media's framing of the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand was mainly neutral, with only a few posts encouraging or discouraging tourists from travelling to Thailand. However, Chinese netizens' comments showed a negative perception of Thailand as a travel

Table 4

Narrative types.

Narrative Types	Number of Posts	Percentage of Posts
Policy introduction	71	55.5%
Negative news related to the legalisation of cannabis	47	36.7%
Related products and store recommendations	20	15.6%
Medical benefits	14	10.9%
Local people's reaction	13	10.2%
Related research	9	7.0%
Positive news	6	4.7%
Related impact	6	4.7%

Table 5

Chinese Media Narrative of Thailand as a Tourist Destination after the Legalisation of Cannabis in terms of Post Type, Description, and Example Quotes.

Post Type	Description	Example Quotes
Positive encouragement	Posts about Thai food with cannabis as an ingredient and those presenting the positive feedback obtained from those who have tried them.	*'Cannabis is added to the dishes, making Thai dishes high'.*—Vision Thai, June 20, 2022
Negative persuasion	Posts that warn Chinese travellers not to bring cannabis and cannabis-related products into Japan or other countries or highlight the legal consequences that may arise from eating or accidently carrying cannabis products.	*'Reminder from the Thai Embassy in Japan: Do not bring cannabis and cannabis-related products into Japan'.* —The Sing Sian Media, June 25, 2022; *'In crazy Thailand, 3-year-olds serve as "cannabis ambassadors"'.*—Taiguo.com, July 5, 2022; *'Brazilian tourist arrested in Bali for carrying cannabis from Thailand to Indonesia!'* —Taiguo.com, July 6, 2022
Strong discouragement	Posts that forward announcements from the Chinese embassy in Thailand explicitly prohibiting Chinese citizens from bringing cannabis and cannabis-related products back to China.	*'They call the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand "Americanization of Thailand"'.* —A Chinese netizen's comment, July 10, 2023; *'Our country has zero tolerance for drugs, will this affect our country?'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, July 25, 2022; *'The control after legalisation is beyond your control!'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, July 25, 2022
Disapproval caused by different ideologies	Posts expressing disapproval of Thailand's legalisation of cannabis based on differing ideologies.	*'They do whatever Western countries do, isn't that what gun control is all about?!'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, August 14, 2022; *'Thailand has allowed some catering and pharmaceutical industries to use cannabis in the past two years. Do they really want to be the "sick man" of Southeast Asia now?'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, August 14, 2022
Fear of cannabis itself	Posts expressing fear of cannabis itself.	*'This is really scary, who knows if the food we are eating contains cannabis or not ….'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, July 31, 2023; *'Didn't they introduce a lot of cannabis seasonings? If you eat on the street, will you accidently eat food containing cannabis condiments without knowing it?'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, July 31, 2023
Disapproval caused by related control policies that are ineffective and dissemination of poor information in Thailand	Posts expressing disapproval caused by ineffective control policies and the dissemination of poor information in Thailand.	*'As long as it is legalised, how can it not poison young people?'*—A Chinese netizen's comment, July 31, 2023 *'To be honest, with the level of supervision in Thailand, I will not dare to eat at street stalls in the future'.*—A Chinese netizen's comment, July 31, 2023
Negative perception of Thailand as a travel destination	Posts expressing negative perceptions of Thailand as a travel destination.	*'I won't go to Thailand anymore. What I'm most afraid of is that I don't know if I accidently eat any cannabis'.*—A Chinese netizen's comment, June 16, 2023; *'Anyway, if you want me to go to Thailand, I won't go, I'm afraid of eating cannabis'.*—A Chinese netizen's comment, June 15, 2023

destination after the legalisation of cannabis. Posts that used positive encouragement primarily introduced Thai foods with cannabis as an ingredient and presented the positive feedback obtained from those who had tried them. However, posts that used negative persuasion warned Chinese travellers not to bring cannabis and cannabis-related products to Japan or other countries or highlighted the legal consequences that may arise from eating or accidently carrying cannabis products. The Chinese media's strong discouragement posts typically comprised announcements from the Chinese embassy in Thailand that explicitly prohibited Chinese citizens from bringing cannabis and cannabis-related products back to China.

The social identity theory proposes that individuals define themselves in part by their group memberships and that these group memberships influence their attitudes and behaviours [40,41]. In this study, Chinese netizens' comments revealed that the disapproval of the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand was mainly caused by different ideologies, fear of cannabis, ineffective control policies, and the dissemination of poor information in Thailand. This finding highlights the importance of considering the audience's cultural background when formulating communication strategies [39], particularly in the context of sensitive topics like cannabis use [30].

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, the negative perception of Thailand as a travel destination among Chinese social media viewers after the legalisation of cannabis suggests that the tourism industry in Thailand may suffer due to Chinese tourists' negative attitudes towards cannabis use. This finding emphasises the need for the Thai government to develop effective policies and communication strategies to address negative perceptions and promote Thailand as a safe and attractive destination for tourists. Second, the findings suggest that social identity and cultural background influence how people interpret and respond to information. This finding highlights the importance of considering cultural and social factors when formulating communication strategies, particularly in the context of sensitive topics such as cannabis use.

6. Conclusion

The legalisation of cannabis in Thailand has been a topic of interest to the Chinese media, as evidenced by the 128 posts in our content analysis. Our study aimed to analyse the Chinese media narrative of Thailand as a tourist destination following the legalisation of cannabis. Using framing and social identity theories, we identified the different themes and narrative types in the posts and the news sources and media types used to present the information.

The results suggest that the Chinese media narrative on the legalisation of cannabis in Thailand is a mix of positive encouragement, negative persuasion, and strong discouragement. Positive encouragement posts promote Thai food with cannabis as an ingredient and the medical benefits of cannabis. In contrast, negative persuasion posts warn Chinese travellers of the legal consequences of carrying cannabis products and consuming them in other countries. Meanwhile, strong discouragement posts are often about the announcements from the Chinese embassy in Thailand prohibiting Chinese citizens from bringing cannabis and cannabis-related products back to China.

Promoting cannabis tourism in Thailand may be perceived as unethical, and drug tourism can lead to the exploitation of and perpetuate negative stereotypes about drug use. Therefore, our study suggests that caution should be exercised when discussing cannabis tourism and its potential economic benefits.

This study has several limitations, including data limitations, platform restrictions, keyword ambiguity, self-censorship, representativeness, narrow scope, and sample size. Data sources were confined to Sina Weibo, and the censorship system may have resulted in the use of homonyms, combinations of Chinese and English letters, or emojis as substitutes for the keyword 'cannabis'. Moreover, the study did not examine the extent to which these narratives influenced actual travel decisions. Including additional sources or increasing the sample size might have provided a more comprehensive understanding of public opinion.

Future research could benefit from expanding the sample size and collecting data from a broader range of Chinese media sources. Additionally, further studies could investigate narratives in Thai media regarding the legalisation of cannabis and compare them with those in Chinese media to identify similarities and differences. Finally, future research may explore the influence of social identity and cultural background on people's attitudes and behaviors concerning cannabis use in various cultural contexts. This would provide a more in-depth understanding of the impact of media narratives on public opinion and travel decisions related to cannabis legalisation in Thailand.

Author contribution statement

1) Conceived and designed the experiments (gathering data): SD, PS;
2) Performed the experiments (gathering data): SD;
3) Analysed and interpreted the data: SD, PS, SB;
4) Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data: SD, PS, SB;
5) Wrote the paper: SD, PS, SB.

Data availability statement

Data will be made available on request.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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