

Tracking Illegal Pharmaceutical Sales on Social Media

Nisos continuously monitors mainstream and alternative social media platforms as well as other online communities for individuals and networks conducting illegal activities or violating platform terms of service (TOS). In fostering communication and community among their massive user bases, social media platforms can inadvertently become attractive markets for threat actors looking to exploit them to sell highly sought-after pharmaceuticals. Nisos tracks pharmaceutical sellers' evolving tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for soliciting buyers while maintaining anonymity and avoiding automated content moderation.

As of February 17, 2024, the [European Union's Digital Services Act \(DSA\) went into full effect](#). The DSA introduced new obligations for social media companies to curb illegal activity. Among other stipulations, social media companies are now responsible for online advertising, working with "trusted flaggers" to remove illegal content, and verifying the identities of third-party sellers to ensure products are not stolen or illegal.

Keeping up with these requirements as nefarious operators continuously change their tactics can be costly and time-consuming for Trust and Safety (T&S) teams. Nisos leverages our cross-platform visibility and analytical expertise to provide comprehensive reporting on TTPs and uproot criminal networks plaguing platform safety.

Cross-Platform Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

Nisos identified operators¹ using common TTPs across traditional social media platforms:

- Avoiding on-platform overt advertising and sales by providing off-platform redirects to messaging apps, including Telegram, Snapchat, and Wickr.
- Promoting pharmaceuticals available without a prescription and directing potential buyers to off-platform domains for purchases through illegitimate online pharmacies.
- The use of coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) to attract potential buyers.
- Sellers in the same network operating accounts across multiple social media platforms are likely to reach a wider audience.
- Use of common drug names in posted content and account information, as drug names are searchable across the majority of traditional social media platforms.
- Various prescription drugs available for purchase, indicating the sellers are likely not offering their own prescription medication.

¹For the purposes of this blog, the term "operator" refers to the individual, group, or operation in control of a social media account likely involved in nefarious activities.

Off-Platform Redirects to Messaging Apps

When marketing prescription drugs on a specific traditional social media platform, sellers are very likely negotiating the actual sales off platform based on off-platform redirects to various messaging apps and the lack of pricing information on platform. The most common off-platform redirects included Telegram, Snapchat, Wickr, and email. Nisos assesses operators provide off-platform redirects to avoid content moderation and prevent account suspension for violating platforms' TOS.



Graphic 1: Sample of pharmaceutical-related social media accounts' posts directing potential buyers off platform, where they very likely conduct drug transactions.

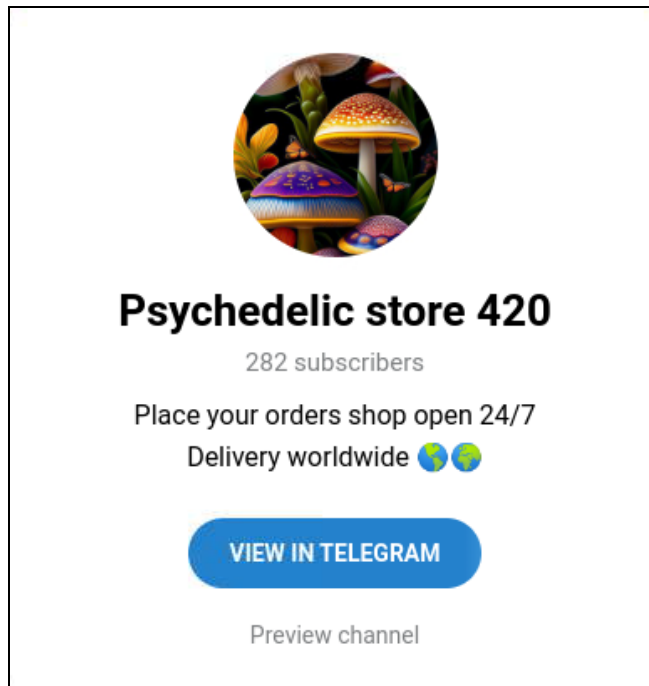
stoner plug
@stonerplug240

Make me your plug we got the best quality product, trust,loyalty, transparency and satisfaction is our major priority concern for all our clients


📍 Canada, USA, UK, Australia.... 🔗 t.me/dyxyzand 📅 Joined October 2023

828 Following **171** Followers

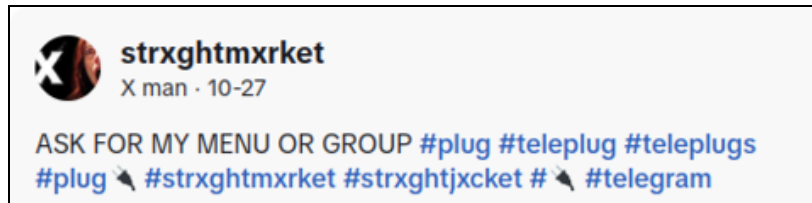
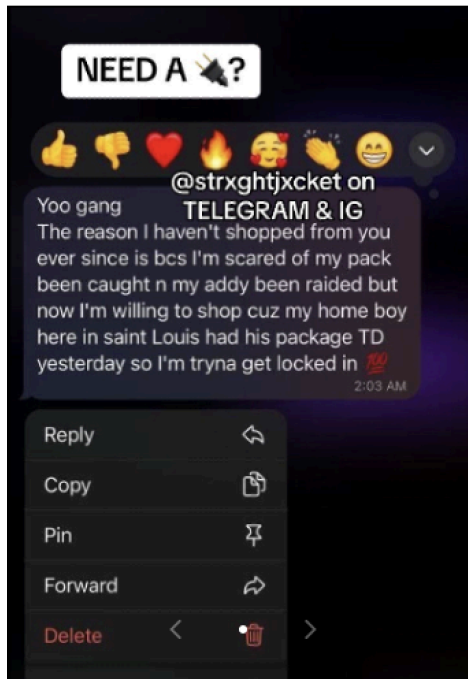
Not followed by anyone you're following



Graphics 2 and 3: X account directs users to the Telegram channel *Psychedelic store 420 (dyzxand)*.²

Nisos observed the term “teleplug,” often displayed as “tele 

²[https://t\[.\]me/dyZXand](https://t[.]me/dyZXand)



Graphics 4 and 5: Video featuring the “teleplug” emoji symbol advertising the Telegram channel @strxghtjxcket (top). The video features a positive feedback message regarding a successful Adderall delivery. The video poster used hashtags associated with teleplug and their Telegram channel (bottom).

Illegitimate Online Pharmacies

Nisos discovered accounts self-identifying as pharmacies and promoting the sale of various pharmaceuticals. Nisos identified these accounts by searching variations and combinations of pharmacy, available and online, alongside the pharmaceutical of interest. These terms frequently appear within accounts’ display names, usernames, and content captions. The pharmacy accounts direct users off platform—typically to domains with display names resembling their usernames—to purchase the promoted pharmaceuticals without a prescription. Many of these illegitimate pharmacies are located worldwide and are not limited to any specific region.



Graphics 6 and 7: X account bio advertising various pharmaceuticals available for purchase via their website (top) with a screenshot of the home page of their website, [pharmalime\[.\]net](https://www.pharmalime.net/).^{3 4}

Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior

Nisos identified a network of at least 14 accounts, very likely selling Percocet, Oxycodone Hydrochloride, and Farmapram, the Mexican version of alprazolam/Xanax. Nisos identified these accounts through their shared use of the hashtag *farmapram* in their content captions and listing of the same social media usernames within their posts and account bios: Snapchat username *WXYOG* and two Telegram usernames, *WXYOG* and *FL_OG*. Nisos observed these accounts frequently reusing video content and posting language across accounts on X. These accounts do not overtly sell pharmaceuticals but instead post promotional videos indicating they have large amounts of these

³[https://twitter\[.\]com/AaaPharmacy](https://twitter[.]com/AaaPharmacy)

⁴[https://www.pharmalime\[.\]net/](https://www.pharmalime[.]net/)

drugs. The accounts within this pharmaceutical sales network likely belong to a single individual or operation.

X Username	Pharmaceuticals Available	Account Creation
Farmapram2mg ⁵	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Farmapram, Percocet	August 2021
badass_bos32272 ⁶	Farmapram, Alprazolam, Xanax, Trankimazin	October 2023
BoyzGuy14661 ⁷	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Percocet	November 2023
Alprazolam_Plug ⁸	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Percocet, OxyContin	June 2023
WockHardt_Plug ⁹	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Percocet, OxyContin	June 2023
Oxycodone_30mg ¹⁰	Farmapram, Alprazolam, Xanax	June 2023
LeanMan_Rx ¹¹	Farmapram, Alprazolam, Xanax	June 2023
Akorn_Quagen ¹²	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Percocet, OxyContin	June 2023
Quagen_Akorn ¹³	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Percocet, OxyContin	June 2023
TDrankLord ¹⁴	Promethazine and Codeine (Lean)	July 2021
AmphetamineAdd1 ¹⁵	Promethazine and Codeine (Lean), Oxycodone Hydrochloride	October 2021
FarmapramX ¹⁶	Promethazine and Codeine (Lean), Oxycodone Hydrochloride	August 2021
GaseGrainy ¹⁷	Oxycodone Hydrochloride, Percocet, OxyContin	December 2023
DrankGhsp91185 ¹⁸	Promethazine and Codeine (Lean), Oxycodone Hydrochloride	November 2023

⁵<https://twitter.com/Farmapram2mg>

⁶https://twitter.com/badass_bos32272

⁷<https://twitter.com/BoyzGuy14661>

⁸https://twitter.com/Alprazolam_Plug

⁹https://twitter.com/WockHardt_Plug

¹⁰https://twitter.com/Oxycodone_30mg

¹¹https://twitter.com/LeanMan_Rx

¹²https://twitter.com/Akorn_Quagen

¹³https://twitter.com/Quagen_Akorn

¹⁴<https://twitter.com/TDrankLord>

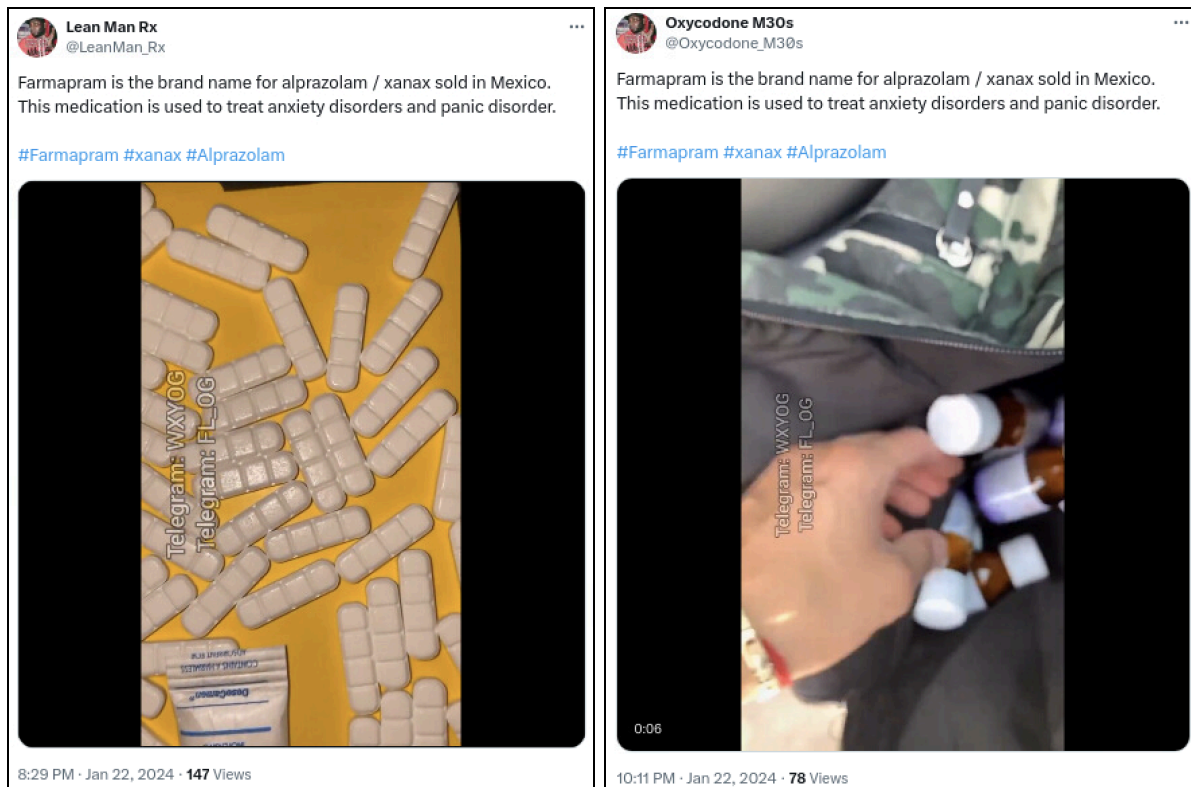
¹⁵<https://twitter.com/AmphetamineAdd1>

¹⁶<https://twitter.com/FarmapramX>

¹⁷<https://twitter.com/GaseGrainy>

¹⁸<https://twitter.com/DrankGhsp91185>

Unlike the US Food and Drug Administration’s regulation of Xanax, the Mexican government does not regulate Farmapram, commonly known as Mexican Xanax bars or Mexican Xanax. Farmapram is available for purchase without a prescription, is significantly cheaper than Xanax, and can legally be brought across the US-Mexico border under certain amounts.¹⁹ Mexican cartels are also known to manufacture counterfeit Farmapram laced with fentanyl and sell it at their pharmacy fronts.²⁰ The US Drug Enforcement Agency released a Public Safety Alert in 2021 warning about counterfeit prescription pills containing deadly amounts of fentanyl, with Mexico manufacturing the majority of these pills.²¹



Graphics 8 and 9: Sample of posts using the same language posted by accounts in the network.^{22 23}

Use of Common Drug Names

Most traditional social media platforms do not block searches for drug names in keyword or hashtag searches, allowing Nisos—and platform users—to easily identify drug-related content. Additionally, Nisos identified pharmaceuticals on X by filtering search results to posts containing media. Nearly all the observed content contained photos and videos featuring large amounts of the promoted pharmaceuticals or off-platform contact information.

¹⁹[https://zinniahealth\[.\]com/substance-use/xanax/farmapram](https://zinniahealth[.]com/substance-use/xanax/farmapram)

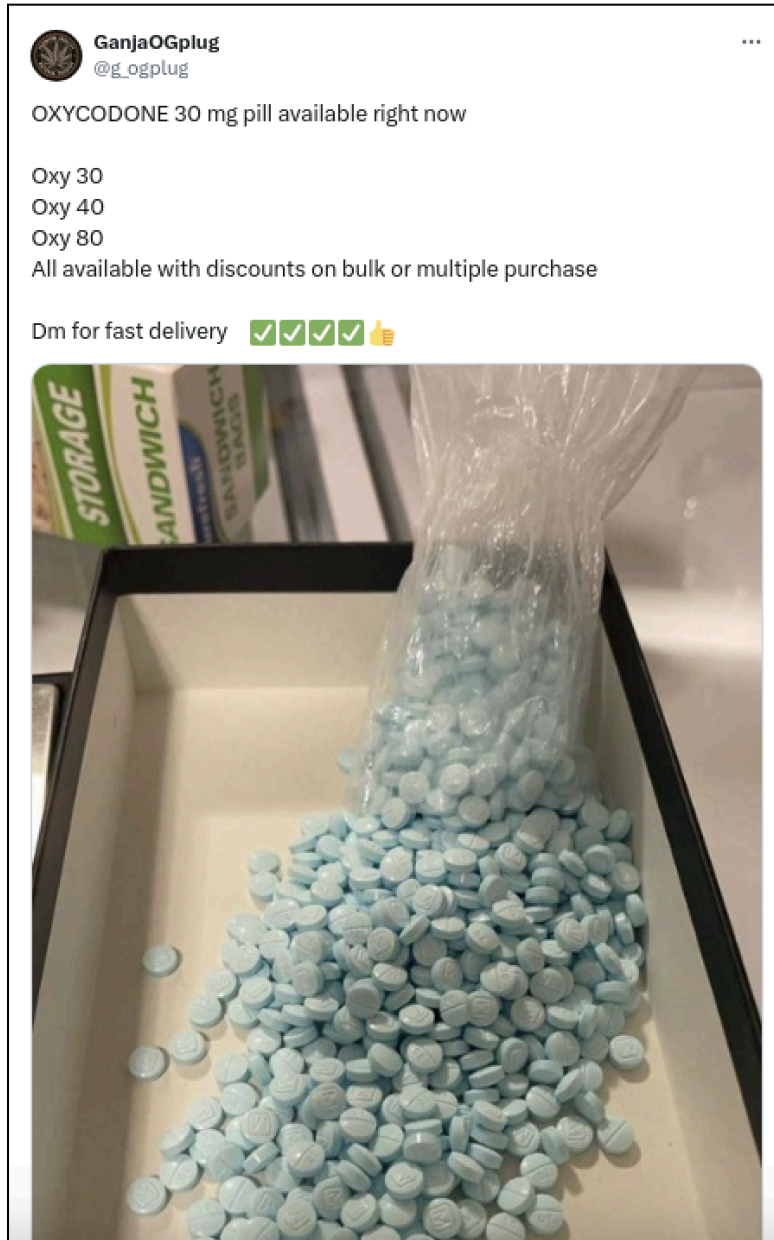
²⁰[https://www.theedgetreatment\[.\]com/mexican-xanax-bars-side-effects-risks-and-street-value/](https://www.theedgetreatment[.]com/mexican-xanax-bars-side-effects-risks-and-street-value/)

²¹[https://www.dea\[.\]gov/press-releases/2021/09/27/dea-issues-public-safety-alert](https://www.dea[.]gov/press-releases/2021/09/27/dea-issues-public-safety-alert)

²²[https://twitter\[.\]com/LeanMan_Rx/status/1749529804364259718](https://twitter[.]com/LeanMan_Rx/status/1749529804364259718)

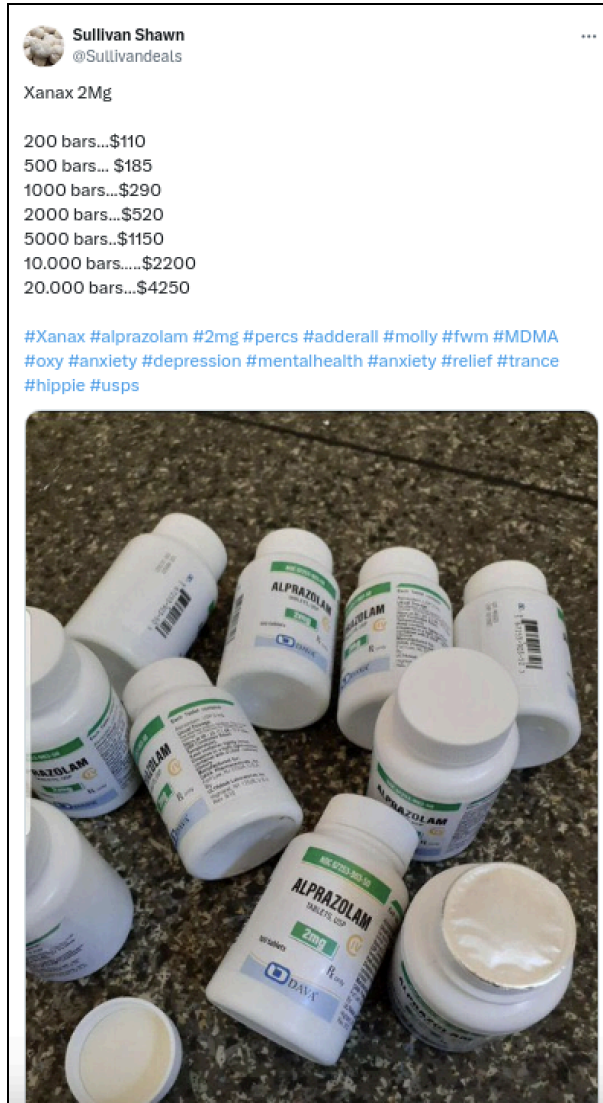
²³[https://twitter\[.\]com/Oxycodone_M30s/status/174955290490421353](https://twitter[.]com/Oxycodone_M30s/status/174955290490421353)

Nisos observed X accounts overtly posting advertisements for pharmaceuticals on the platform, complete with quantity and pricing information. The majority of the drug-related content observed on other social media platforms directs users off platform to complete drug transactions and does not feature drug prices within the posts. While Nisos did identify off-platform redirects in drug-related content on X, Nisos assesses X accounts are also conducting drug-related transactions within their direct messages (DMs) based on their posts featuring pricing and encouraging users to DM them on platform.



Graphic 10: X account g_ogplug advertising 30mg Oxycodone pills and directing users to their DMs.²⁴

²⁴[https://twitter\[.\]com/g_ogplug/status/1629150170314158082](https://twitter[.]com/g_ogplug/status/1629150170314158082)



Graphic 11: X account explicitly selling 2mg Xanax pills on platform.²⁵

Crossover with Other Illicit Activities

Nisos identified crossover between individuals likely selling pharmaceuticals and engaging in other illicit activities. In addition to selling prescription medication, these social media users also offer false bank notes, cloned credit cards, firearms, and illegal substances, including fentanyl.

²⁵<https://twitter.com/Sullivandeals/status/170749777440190569>



Graphic 12: X account stonerplug240's post stating they have fentanyl available for purchase.²⁶

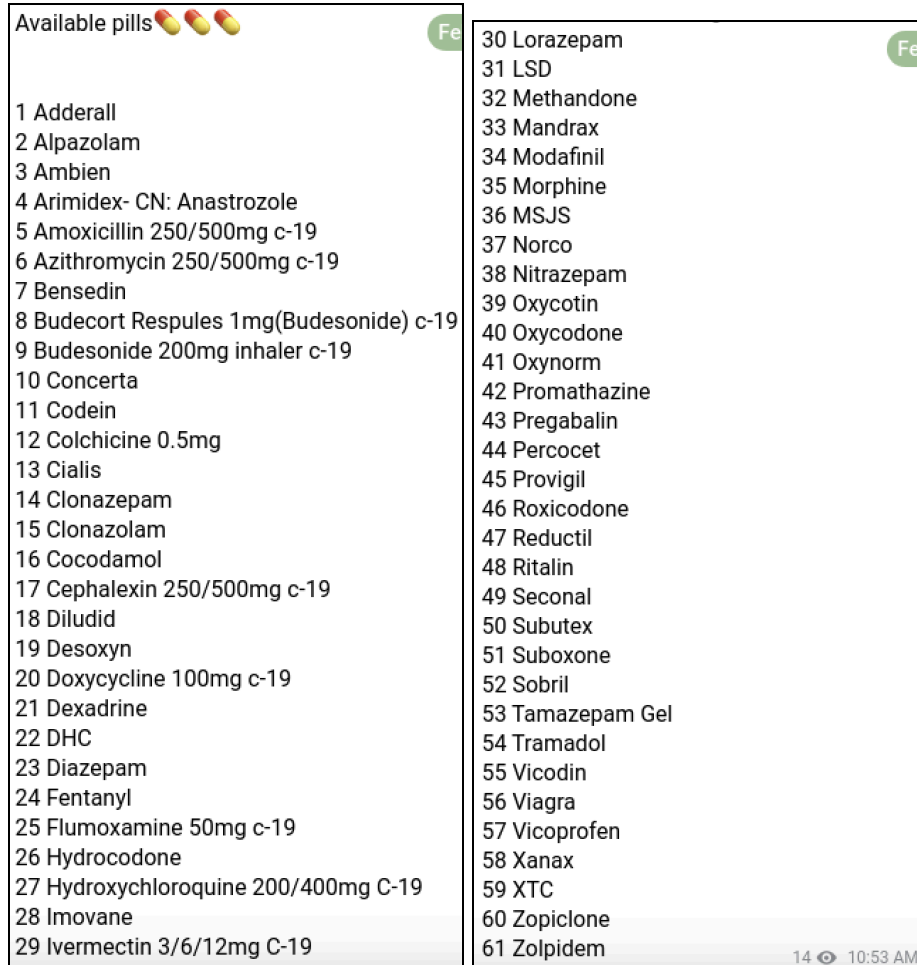


Graphic 13 and 14: Telegram channel dyzxand, associated with X account stonerplug240, advertises cloned cards and firearms.^{27 28}

²⁶<https://twitter.com/stonerplug240/status/1752078623383679164>

²⁷<https://t.me/dyZXand/4969>

²⁸<https://t.me/dyZXand/4967>



Graphics 15 and 16: Telegram channel dyzxand’s message listing pills available for purchase.²⁹

Conclusion

The DSA places greater responsibility on social media companies for maintaining the safety of their platforms. Illegal pharmaceutical sales and the other illicit activities they are frequently associated with pose a risk to social media users and present a challenge for T&S teams. The operators’ circumvention of content moderation and their ability to rapidly solicit buyers through CIB networks makes it difficult and time-consuming to identify and remove violative content. Nisos’ expertise in identifying indicators of illegal activity and content moderation avoidance across the broad spectrum of social media platforms uniquely positions us to help T&S partners identify and remediate dangerous content.

²⁹<https://t.me/dyxxand/4644>