The Future Drugs Landscape – Ushering in the Era of Digital Narcotics

Interview with Rohit Talwar – CEO – Fast Future Research

In this interview for Newsweek Poland, Rohit Talwar draws on his work on the future narcotics landscape to discuss the potential of digital narcotics. Rohit Talwar is a global futurist who leads Fast Future Research – working with clients around the world to help them explore how the global landscape and major industries could be transformed through disruptive advances in science and technology.

1. *How might advances in science impact the manufacture and distribution of narcotics?*

Scientific advances such as Nano-Bio-Info-Cogno (NBIC) Convergence could deliver ever more powerful, targeted and complex narcotics which will enable total customisation of the hallucinogenic effect and its duration. These drugs will be very expensive at first but the price will drop dramatically as the industry scales up. The technology will evolve so that eventually even these complex drugs will be manufactured at home – possibly by chemists, chemistry teachers and students trying to generate some income in their spare time.

Long before these 'Convergence drugs' reach the mass market, we will have seen big advances in home production technologies that could lead to significant growth in home manufacture. We see that a huge market will emerge for lifestyle drugs that are legal and which enable tailored effects to be delivered to the recipient e.g. enhanced concentration, more intense focus, reduction of stress and heightening of pleasure sensations. We see the potential for a range of legal businesses to enter the market for development, production and distribution of these legal high impact drugs.

2. *Could these hi-tech drugs of the future eliminate regular narcotics, as we know them now?*

Whilst some may transition to these potentially safer hi tech drugs, we expect there to be a proliferation of use of all types of narcotic in the shorter term as choice and accessibility widens. We also see the potential for people to combine these new drugs with more traditional ones to create tailored experiences and combination effects. If the price of hi-tech drugs falls and the quality can be proven, then this might damage the sales of traditional drugs and drive down both their price and quality as those in the traditional supply chains try

to compete with the new drugs. Inevitably many of the players in the supply chain would migrate to the new drugs if they saw significant profit potential.

3. Would the NBIC narcotics be legal?

We expect to see a range of 'legal highs' come to market – exploiting loopholes in the law. If big business sees a real market opportunity here then there may be pressure to legalise them completely. Those drugs which could have the most damaging effects will probably always remain illegal.

4. What would the drug distribution look like? Via internet, or maybe other sources?

The NBIC narcotics may take many forms. For example some may still come in tablet form – but be activated by an electronic signal. These would be delivered by physical distribution networks backed up by web based activation sites. Others might be delivered through signals transmitted via a headset or even by stimulating nano receivers that have been grafted to our brain cells.

5. What role might video games place in developing hallucinogenic experiences? What technology would have to be used for that purpose?

Research has shown that sound, colours, smells and electronic stimuli could trigger similar impacts in the brain to conventional narcotics. At the same time Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation via a headset could help trigger particular emotions and experiences. Hence a variety of hallucinogenic experiences could be triggered from within a gaming environment. As players progress through different gaming levels the depth of experience might intensify. Equally, we might find games emerge where you have to be in a particular hallucinogenic state before you can understand and compete in particular levels of the game.

6***. Do you imagine that Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) machines will be smaller, cheaper and - therefore - popular, not only as an antidepressant, but - with some new applications - as a comfortable narcotic***?
As the price drops you could find a growing range of applications and delivery models - whether legal or illegal. For example you might buy your own personal device or you may be able to rent them from specialty outlets in much the same way as you visit a beauty salon for a session on a sun bed. There is likely to be initial corporate hesitancy to enter this market but once the potential is proven, there might be strong pressure to legalise their use because of the positive potential mental health benefits of TMS and the level of control that could be exercised over their use.

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