changing lifestyles in the age of fear: projective analysis of social insecurity and consumption patterns

Pável Reyes-Mercado* and Julieta Mercado-González

Economics and Business School, Universidad Anáhuac México Norte, Mexico
Email: pavel.reyes@anahuac.mx
Email: julieta.mercado@anahuac.mx
*Corresponding author

Diana Dávila-Ruiz

Graduate Management Department, Universidad de Monterrey, Mexico
Email: diana.davila@udem.edu

Abstract: This paper analyses the influence of social insecurity, consumer responses, and changes in consumption behaviour. The paper contributes to existing literature by including fear in consumer vulnerability domain. Due to the apparent research gaps in the field and scarce literature, as exploratory approach we chose a qualitative technique: an adaptation of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) was used to gather metaphors for sensitive themes that are better expressed in terms of pictures and associative ideas. Under the basis of 64 projective interviews of victims or related to victims of social insecurity, their interpretations through symbolic imagination of the meaning of consumption in the face of public insecurity are identified. Results reveal that strong consumers’ emotions are central to understand the consumption phenomena: fear, its sources, and its consequences in the form of changing lifestyles and purchase patterns are broad themes. Implications for managers, policy makers, and future research are offered.

Keywords: social insecurity; fear; purchase patterns; consumer behaviour; projective techniques; Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique; ZMET.


Biographical notes: Pável Reyes-Mercado graduated in Electronic Engineering from Toluca Technological Institute in 2000. He obtained his Master in Business Administration from Monterrey Technological Institute for Higher Studies (ITESM) in 2003. His industrial work experience includes positions at Alcatel, Coca Cola Company and HSBC Bank. He obtained PhD in Managerial Sciences from EGADE Business School, Mexico City and he currently is Associate Faculty in Anahuac University. His research interests include adoption and diffusion of emerging technologies, networked consumer behaviour, and markets growth.

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1 Introduction

Events external to consumers may hinder individual power to decide and perform purchases and, eventually halt business growth. Much of the research regarding external factors in individuals have been developed in the field of psychology (see, for example, Keil, 2004; Goldstein and Kopin, 2007) and to a lesser extent, in marketing, perhaps with the exception of Moschis (2007a) who proposes a general model linking stress and consumer behaviour. Research on how social insecurity influences consumer behaviour has received little attention with the exception of some studies analysing the influence of post-traumatic stress disorder originated by terrorist attacks (Ruvio et al., 2014; Somer and Ruvio, 2014) and natural disasters (Baker et al., 2007). While the occurrence of such unexpected events is of relatively low probability, recurrent criminal events as passer robbery, transport robbery, burglary, and extortion provoke a heightened sense of personal vulnerability. This study is relevant and timely to Latin American and other countries since “nearly one in three global homicides” occurs in the region [Wall Street Journal, (2014), p.1]. Countries as Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico present homicide rates which are among the highest 20 in the world. Perceptions on citizen insecurity show that “up to 65 per cent stopped going out at night due to insecurity and 13 per cent reported having felt the need of move to another place” given the fear of becoming victim of crime [UNDP, (2013), p.1]. Particularly, Mexico has been ranked in the place 142 in the Global Peace Index (IEP, 2015) due to urban gang violence and the domestic conflict related to drug traffic. During 2013, 33.9% of Mexican households had at least one family member who was a victim of crime being passer robbery, extortion, ad burglary the most prevalent (INEGI, 2015). Mexico along with Venezuela and Colombia show the lowest
perceptions on societal safety and security. The previous makes Mexico an interesting case study to analyse social insecurity and consumption patterns.

Fear in all forms affects consumer behaviour and spreads locally and globally. This insecurity affects citizens to stop going out to restaurants, shopping malls and public places. Individuals adopt different ways of dealing with fear: physical conditioning, oriented philosophies such as yoga, buy homes in tight urban areas, closed TV circuit among others (Ruiz, 2012). Others authors have concluded that the feeling of insecurity affects the quality of life and there is a paradox that the concern apparently is higher among women and older adults than in young and male, even though these are the most targeted (Kessler, 2013). Managers need to understand the consequences of stress in consumer behaviour and create marketing plans that minimise emotional dimensions (Maier and Wiliken, 2014).

This paper aims to push the boundary of existing knowledge about consumption and consumer responses towards under researched situational context: consumer vulnerability. Specifically, we address the question: How do consumers react to direct and indirect consumption experiences under a heightened sense of social insecurity? Our focus on social insecurity can be distinguished from existing research because:

a. is a common life experience in the study region

b. involves a relatively high degree of physical, psychic, and material risks

c. has the potential to influence dimensions of consumer behaviour, i.e., adaptive and maladaptive buying behaviours and societal consumption

d. consumer responses may affect consumers themselves, neighbourhoods, and communities.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews literature on consumer vulnerability and consumer stress. Section 3 describes the study design and steps of the qualitative methodology. Section 4 details and interpret qualitative data and findings of two Mexican cities. Implications for managers and policy makers are discussed in Section 5. The paper concludes with some limitations and offers some avenues worth to research in the future in Section 6.

2 Literature review

2.1 Consumer vulnerability

The relationship between consumer vulnerability and its influencing factors involves both internal states to the consumer and outside events. In particular, consumers’ responses are linked to policy since the consumer’s responses can be associated to a varying degree of vulnerability. “Consumer vulnerability is a state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions...” [Baker et al., (2005), p.7] that is not controllable by consumers at the moment of the consumption (Andreasen and Manning, 1990). The interaction between consumers’ states and internal states with the external environment causes vulnerability-situations in which the consumption experience impacts individual and social perceptions of the self. Consumer’s internal characteristics relates to
Changing lifestyles in the age of fear

1 biophysical: age (Pettigrew et al., 2005), ethnicity (Kipnis et al., 2013), or disabilities (Baker, 2005)

2 psychosocial: self-image (Mittal, 2015), socio-economic status (Goldsmith and Clark, 2012), and fear of being victimised (Langenderfer and Shimp, 2001) aspects linked to vulnerability.

Similarly, consumer’s internal states involve individual transitional dimensions and life cycle events as moods, motivations, and the closer social networks, i.e., divorce, deaths of significant others (Moschis, 2007b). Broader structural issues beyond consumer’s control as discrimination, natural disasters (Baker et al., 2007), and violence exerted to others (Ruvio et al., 2014) adds a link on external influences and consumer vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005). Contexts for consumer vulnerability ranges from the consequences of natural disasters (Baker, 2007) to the threat of terrorist attacks (Ruvio et al., 2014; Somer and Ruvio, 2014) to deviant consumption in the form of acquisitive crime (Martin et al., 2013).

2.2 Consumer stress and consumer responses

On internal consumer states, Moschis (2007a) argues that there is a wide variety of expected and unexpected life events which act as sources of stress. Alongside with such sources, consumers who engage in planned and unplanned consumption activities pose an additional source of stress. Both sources influence the emergence of consumption-coping responses to such sources of stress in a number of ways. Researchers distinguish between two main forms of stress depending on the duration: acute stress and chronic stress. Acute stress refers to observable events which are thought to be threatening because they represent changes (Wheaton, 1990). Also refers to an event or situation that is evaluated as stressful by the consumer and requires mental and behavioural adjustments within a relatively short period. Chronic stress refers to persistent conditions in the social environment resulting in a problem to perform adequately in social roles (Wheaton, 1990). Chronic stress is distinguished from acute stress primarily by its longer duration. Specifically, consumers may involve on whether confrontative or contrivance responses to the stressors. As a consequence of their coping responses, consumers involve in purchase behaviours aimed at restoring their personal levels of stress previous to the unexpected event (Moschis, 2007a). In particular, consumers may exhibit adaptive or maladaptive purchase behaviours. Through adaptive behaviours, consumers adjust themselves to a different context. Noteworthy, maladaptive behaviours also attempt to achieve lower stress levels by engaging in dysfunctional behaviours, e.g., abuse of alcohol.

We consider the two big themes previously discussed are suitable to analyse the impact of social insecurity events on consumer behaviour in the Mexican context because a number of reasons. First, the temporal, geographical, and severity features of social insecurity are powerful sources of stress for consumers. Second, consumer propensity to engage in purchase decisions given a heightened stress level derived from unexpected external events is another relevant source of stress. These two sources of stress detonate consumer’s responses associated with consumption patterns. On one hand, confrontative responses are behaviours directed to the external event, e.g., reallocating assets, using
financial services, purchasing insurance, and using prepared food. On the other hand, contrivance responses are directed towards the inner aspects of the consumer; cognitive and behavioural activities as deferring the purchase, delays, denials, and rationalising the outcomes belong to this category. Consumers may also engage in compliance responses as a way to maintain their current habits of decision-making and purchase patterns. Third, the outcome of consumption-coping responses take the form of adaptive behaviours which are behaviours oriented to change towards a constructive behaviour. Another potential outcome for coping responses is the emergence of maladaptive behaviours in which consumers attempt to reduce anxiety level through activities that result in dysfunctional outcomes. Ruiz (2012) mentions that humans have adopted different ways of dealing with fear: physical conditioning, oriented philosophies such as yoga, buy homes in tight urban areas, closed TV circuit among others.

2.3 Consumption

Some researchers have studied the psychological stress between gender (Esper and Furtado, 2013) and its impact through food and alcohol consumption. They suggest that evidence seems to be stronger for the relationship between stress and alcohol consumption. For men, drinking alcohol is a reaction to stress, unlike women who raise food consumption specially snacks, chocolates and cakes. According to Mikolajczyk et al. (2009), there are consistent associations between unhealthy food consumption and depressive symptoms and perceived stress among female, but not among male. Others researchers have found that alcohol consumption is often used by students to relax or relieve stress and tension (Veloza Gómez et al., 2012). Others authors have concluded that the feeling of insecurity affects the quality of life and there is a paradox that the concern apparently is higher among women and older adults than in young and male, even though these are the most targeted (Kessler, 2013).

Discussed literature was taken as a preliminary step that informed the in-depth interviews. We started interview people with the only assumption of a short temporal distance from the insecurity event or narration and the moment of interviews.

3 Qualitative study

3.1 Method

Qualitative research consists of interpretive and material practices that make the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos. Qualitative research study phenomena in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Given the scarcity of functional literature on social insecurity and consumption, we started to analyse the relationship between insecurity a consumption decisions using Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) (Zaltman, 1997) – a methodology designed to address and construct mental patterns of thoughts and emotions. It uses different images and metaphors referring the consumer’s memories and representations, constructing patterns of the consumer’s thinking and behaviour. The study units are
images that consumers select and represent their deepest emotions and feelings. ZMET is a hybrid methodology grounded in various domains, including verbal and non-verbal communication, visual sociology, visual anthropology, literary criticism, semiotics, mental imagery, cognitive neuroscience and phototherapy (Zaltman, 1997). Metaphors stimulate the working of the human mind, humans think in images, sensations, cognitions, experiences and own existence. Consumers select their own images and control the stimuli in a guided conversation with personal in-depth personal interviews. We chose to use ZMET due to a number of reasons. First, personal experiences with stressing insecurity events may be altered by memory and cognitive dissonance when retrospective information is requested to sample respondents, ZMET as a projective technique encourages respondents to freely associate ideas on their consumption choices. Second, positivist approaches towards attitudes, feelings, and beliefs are mainly focused on expressed consumer preferences while interpretive techniques focus on revealed preferences in which cognitive processes of social desirability and cognitive processing are not involved. Third, projective techniques are less intrusive of consumers’ mental processes and gather information based on individual meaning of a variety of consumption decisions rather than the objective attributes of the products being purchased.

Specifically, we followed the next steps for the qualitative stage of the study:

1. One week in advance to the in-depth interviews, the authors requested the interviewees to select and bring between 8 to 10 images related to the social insecurity and their personal consumption. Remaining steps refer to in-depth interviews.

2. At storytelling step, interviewees described and explained meanings, contents and associations they found in each picture they chose. This task was completed to shed light on the reasons, deep feelings and thoughts that explain their selection.

3. At the missing images step the interviewees described the images that they had not found and would have liked to find. They described the meaning and importance of such missed images. This step enabled the interviewees to share feelings and thoughts about those special missed images.

4. At discarding image step, the chosen figures were analysed and those closely related or which stood for the recurrent ideas or feelings were put aside and the concept that they represented was taken into account.

5. Sorting or triad step. The interviewees were requested to sort different groups of images according to their perceived meaningful or evident to them. This generated a significant labelling or description for each group by the interviewees. This task allowed determining themes or constructs relevant to interviewees.

6. Metaphor probe/expand step. We asked for some other pictures that extend the frame of the previous pictures in directions that would help the researcher to understand deep thoughts and feelings. The interviewees made deeper reflections on groups of images and developed deep metaphors. These metaphors influence on what each individual interprets, says and does; they started their development through some adaptations to the social and cultural environment, they remain unspoiled and shared socially.
Sensory images. Interviewees were requested to describe emotions, feelings and thoughts in terms of the senses as colours, sounds, smells, tastes and touch. This task was completed through phrases in which the interviewees linked the senses with the social insecurity and consumption.

Vignette. In this step, interviewees were requested to create a short story on social insecurity and the consumer as a study unit. Stories expressed their own thoughts and feeling about the how social insecurity influences consumption patterns.

Collage. Interviewees created a summary collage on how social insecurity relates to their consumption patterns.

Outcomes of previous steps include extensive sets of photographs and storytelling for each of the interviewees. Such outcomes are available as supplemental materials for the paper for traceability purposes. Input information for ZMET methodology was gathered through interviews in the Metropolitan areas of Mexico City and Monterrey, the two largest cities in Mexico.

Authors analysed the materials generated by ZMET methodology in Spanish. Resulting codification and classification of themes as well as consensus models, anatomy maps, and hierarchy maps were translated to English following the suggestion of Churchill (1979): translating from one language to another (Spanish to English) by one person, and then to translate back (English to Spanish) by another person to assure consistency of terms. Translation process was carried out by the authors and mostly all concepts were consistent. A few words with translation issues due to idiomatic expression of Spanish and the differences were settled under consensus of the authors.

For the application of the technique, a judgement sample of 32 observations was gathered in Mexico City: 27 students and 5 employees, 15 men and 17 women (age range: 19–55 years; age mean: 22.5 year) living in the metropolitan area of Mexico City. The overall sample belongs to socio-economical levels A/B (monthly household income: more than $5,000.00 USD), C+ (monthly household income: between $2,058.00 USD and $4,999.99 USD) according to AMAI (2005). A similar sample was gathered in Monterrey: 32 observations, 16 men and 16 women (age range: 18–55 years; age mean: 24 year) living in Monterrey. The sample individuals were filtered out on the basis of exposure to at least one recent, direct or indirect, personal experience related to social insecurity (extortion, robbery, burglary, car theft, and kidnapping).

3.2 Contextual background

Mexico City and Monterrey are the two main cities in Mexico. Monterrey has been traditionally taken as cradle of modern Mexican industry as well as the headquarters of Mexican multinational companies as Cemex and Femsa. The city includes the neighbourhood of San Pedro Garza, one of the most affluent locations in Mexico –most of interviewees are related to this geographical zone. From 2006 violent started to escalate: kidnappings, extortions, and robbery increased to levels not seen before. By 2011 a casino was attacked and burnt by gangs which resulted on the killing on 40 people (The Economist, 2011). To city started to surpass such troubled situations by developing private-public partnerships that allocated money and human resources to recruit new police officers; this generated a new wave of trust and insecurity levels started to decrease (The Economist, 2013). Mexico City is capital of Mexico and comprises a
metroplitan area of 20 million inhabitants. The last years Mexico City had been out of the riots more frequent in other cities, it was a relatively calm city (Forbes, 2014) but a surge in crime figures has recently grown. Apparently, such surge may be related to the operations among illegal gangs and drug dealers (Forbes, 2015).

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Consensus maps

As a first outcome of the qualitative research, we defined the resulting constructs. We codified each of them through assignment of numerical values that express the number of recurrences across the interviews to then group them in attributes (features of the social environment as related to social insecurity), functional consequences (outcomes of attributes as related to the social insecurity), psychosocial consequences (outcomes of attributes as related to the inner aspects of the consumer), and values (deep personal cognitive processes derived from the functional and psychological consequences) (Christensen and Olson, 2006). Table 1(a) presents the mentioned words and phrases for each construct category which were expressed by the interviewees and the number of mentions (in parentheses) and classified by the authors for Mexico City. Table 1(b) represents the codification and classification of constructs for Monterrey.

Table 1(a) Codification and classification of constructs for Mexico City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Functional consequences</th>
<th>Psychosocial consequences</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Hazardous city (11)</td>
<td>1 Causes fear (23)</td>
<td>1 I cannot express (1)</td>
<td>1 Family (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Corruption (13)</td>
<td>2 Changes my routine (6)</td>
<td>2 I have a feeling of insecurity (25)</td>
<td>2 Anxiety (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Violence (8)</td>
<td>3 I do not use public transportation (8)</td>
<td>3 Do not know what to do (5)</td>
<td>3 Impotence (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Kidnapping (6)</td>
<td>4 I stopped wearing luxury brands (5)</td>
<td>4 Do not say what I think (4)</td>
<td>4 Uncertainty (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Robbery (16)</td>
<td>5 I stopped using fancy bags and wrist watches (4)</td>
<td>5 I do not trust anyone (7)</td>
<td>5 Concern (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Poverty (7)</td>
<td>6 I associate with dark clothing, caps, and balaclavas (2)</td>
<td>6 Fear (20)</td>
<td>6 Stress (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Darkness (11)</td>
<td>7 Changing consumption patterns (2)</td>
<td>7 Think that something bad will happen (2)</td>
<td>7 Sadness (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Government is not doing its job (16)</td>
<td>8 Changing lifestyle (4)</td>
<td>8 Stress and anxiety (3)</td>
<td>8 Nerves (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1(a) Codification and classification of constructs for Mexico City (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Functional consequences</th>
<th>Psychosocial consequences</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of justice (1)</td>
<td>9 Government control and censorship (10)</td>
<td>9 Concern (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Poor public lighting (8)</td>
<td>10 The world is afraid (2)</td>
<td>10 Psychological harm (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gangs (3)</td>
<td>11 Lack of community action (4)</td>
<td>11 Pain (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Observe (5)</td>
<td>12 We cannot live free (3)</td>
<td>12 Car windows closed (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Theft (6)</td>
<td>13 We have no control (2)</td>
<td>13 Install alarm systems (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Extortion (3)</td>
<td>14 Conflict (2)</td>
<td>14 Do not wear conspicuous gadgets (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Physical assaults (2)</td>
<td>15 Less tourism (2)</td>
<td>15 Do not walk alone on the street (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Afraid of taxi driver (4)</td>
<td>16 Afraid of taxi driver (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Distrust unknown telephone numbers (2)</td>
<td>17 Do use Uber (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Afraid of walking alone (6)</td>
<td>18 Be aware (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Feel insecure in own home (5)</td>
<td>19 Keep in touch with family (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Impairment of outside activities (3)</td>
<td>20 Avoid valuables or luxury (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Distrust/fear of cops (5)</td>
<td>21 Lock my house (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Suspicious of people (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1(b) Codification and classification of constructs for Monterrey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Functional consequences</th>
<th>Psychosocial consequences</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Death (3)</td>
<td>Changes in routine (stop going out at night, plan activities at home) (13)</td>
<td>1 I feel trapped (7)</td>
<td>1 Injustice (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Fear (7)</td>
<td>Order delivery, games, movies at home (4)</td>
<td>2 I am afraid (1)</td>
<td>2 Evil (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Corruption (2)</td>
<td>Increased security products (safe, gate, monitoring) (6)</td>
<td>2 I feel anxious (5)</td>
<td>3 Impunity (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Violence (6)</td>
<td>Keep a low profile, less luxuries and sumptuous objects (7)</td>
<td>4 Nothing gives me confidence (4)</td>
<td>4 Sadness (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Insecurity (9)</td>
<td>Increased communication with family (6)</td>
<td>5 I am concerned (8)</td>
<td>5 Impotence (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Decreased road trips (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 I am constantly nervous (3)</td>
<td>6. Deception (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Increased air travel (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 Unsure (6)</td>
<td>7 Vulnerability (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Increased use of mobile phones to be connected (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 I feel stressed (3)</td>
<td>8 Spirituality (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, and anxiolytics (10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 Isolation (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Yoga, karate, and exercise practice to relax (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Lack of freedom (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Increased social media connection (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following outcome was a consensus mental map which took as information input the constructs category from Table 1(a) and Table 1(b). The model involves thoughts and feelings generated by social insecurity dimensions. Following Zaltman (1997), we considered as relevant only those feelings and thought which received at least four mentions from different interviewees. The complete consensus map that relates feelings and though that are provoked by social insecurity is presented in Figure 1(a) and Figure 1(b) (for Mexico City and Monterrey respectively), i.e., a mental map that links main concepts that brought up through metaphor elicitation as they were mentioned during the interviews. Each node in the consensus map represents a construct and the number in parentheses reflects the mentions that the construct received from different interviewees.
Figure 1(a)  ZMET consensus model for Mexico City
To read and interpret the consensus map, we follow the rule of thumb suggested by Christensen and Olson (2006):

1. Look for central constructs. The first step is to locate the most highly connected constructs that are linked to other constructs. Figure 3(a) and Figure 3(b) (for Mexico City and Monterrey respectively) presents a number of central constructs for both cities: hazardous city, fear sources, fear, changes in lifestyle, and lack of government job. In the case of México City a lack of government job was predominant while for Monterrey an attachment to religion was relevant. Given that these constructs are highly interrelated with many others, broad themes become visible from the consensus map. These themes represent how consumers perceive reality and organise their thoughts and feelings into more granular units of meaning. In this regard, the above mentioned constructs frame how respondents view themselves under a heightened sense of social insecurity. They identify what social insecurity represents and how they react towards their social environment.

2. Look for the overall goal/end state. The most mentioned overall goal among the thematic segments are feelings of insecurity and changes in lifestyle. Respondents indicated, in a variety of shades, that they engage in changing lifestyles and experience feelings of insecurity given how they sense social insecurity. The consensus map shows that feelings of insecurity are linked to fear and sources of fear.
as well as changes in lifestyle which, in turn, are associated with stop wearing luxury brands, stop using fancy bags/wrist watches, and stop using conspicuous gadgets.

3 Look for missing constructs. Looking for concepts or ideas which are not explicitly showed in the consensus map. For example, while analysing interviewees’ responses, we noticed that use of guns weather for self-defence or aggression were not mentioned during the interviews. The underlying assumption is that there may be relationships between social insecurity and guns but we could not find any construct grounded on empirical data.

4.2 Broad meaning themes

From the consensus map, five big themes emerged: government not doing its job, fear, hazardous city, and changing lifestyle, and spirituality. These constructs are regarded as core to the study because most of the effects of social insecurity expressed by the interviewees find the way through such big themes. A secondary constructs is related to consumer uncertainty.

The first theme is government not doing its job, relates to constructs as government corruption, control and censorship from government, distrust of cops, which is associated to individual responses of distrust to other people. This theme was not mentioned in Monterrey. Additionally, impotence feelings are linked to stopping self-expression and lack of community actions.

The second theme, fear, is associated with individuals having a general feeling of insecurity as well as a specific feeling insecure in their own house, and a feeling of not knowing what to do.

The third theme, hazardous city, links to violence, robbery, dark areas inside the city, extortions, kidnapping thefts. The fourth theme is changing lifestyle. The theme includes do not wearing conspicuous gadgets, fancy bags and wrist watches, luxury brands, install alarm systems, and avoid walking alone on the streets and driving in roads. Moreover, do not use public transport and do use Uber-like cabs are constructs related to transportation inside-the-city constructs. The fifth theme is spirituality which was mentioned exclusively in Monterrey. Respondents mentioned religion as a tranquiliser. They showed greater attachment to God and a greater spiritual reconciliation.

4.3 Anatomy maps for changing lifestyle

For deep analysis of specific themes from the consensus map, an anatomy map was built. An anatomy map presents a more granular representation of meanings for a given theme. The main ideas expressed through quote comments by interviewees are summarised and linked with the theme. Follow the objective of the study, we focus on the construct changing lifestyle showed in Figure 2(a) and Figure 2(b) (for Mexico City and Monterrey respectively). The map depicts the duality between ‘started to consume’ and ‘stopped consuming’ as two polar consumer behaviours. Regarding findings in Mexico City, the anatomy map provides on the one hand a description about product categories that interviewees stopped consuming as conspicuous gadgets, fancy bags, wrist watches, and luxury brands. On the other hand, consumers associated a change in lifestyle related to a number of ideas as feeling insecure in their own house, lock home and set alarms, and keeping car’s windows closed. Respondents in Monterrey mentioned they stopped using
sumptuous objects, going out at night, being open in their social media profiles, and travelling by road. In contrast, as part of changes in lifestyle, respondents started personal activities at home and families as well as taking personal protection and relaxation techniques lessons. Consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and anxiolytics was also mentioned as a consumption activity whereas attachment to religion was a non-consumption activity.

**Figure 2(a)** Anatomy map for changing lifestyle for Mexico City

**Figure 2(b)** Anatomy map for changing lifestyle for Monterrey (see online version for colours)

### 4.4 Hierarchy maps

A hierarchy map is built using relationships between the ideas expressed by interviewees and summarised in the consensus map. The researcher locates the dominant relationships between the ideas and present segment them in attributes of the phenomena, its functional and psychological consequences as well as end states (Gutman, 1997). Figure 3(a) and Figure 3(b) show deep feelings that emerges from the interviewees regarding social insecurity in which is salient the perception that the government is not doing its job, which has the consequence of a hazardous city as well as perceiving a sense of corruption. Functional consequences include government control and censorship, avoiding the use of public transportation and a range of fear sources. Psychological consequences relate emotions as fear, insecurity and changing consumption patterns. The overall end states are related to stress, uncertainty, and noteworthy sadness.
Figure 3(a)  Hierarchy map for differentiated values in Mexico City

Figure 3(b)  Hierarchy map for differentiated values in Monterrey
5 Managerial implications

The results from this study indicate the ways in which consumption lifestyle change when people have a heightened sense of becoming a victim of social insecurity. Managers and policy makers can get benefits from using the results to develop business strategies and public policies. Marketing managers can use the results from this study in at least twofold ways: On one hand, the study results indicate which products are likely to be purchased or stopped being purchased. Hence, marketing managers may alter product features and store environment according to the occurrence of the external events, that is, social insecurity perceptions. This study also offers a framework to analyse consumer emotions and the related changes in lifestyle. Consumption-coping responses can shed light to provide consumers with clues on the product categories more suitable to their coping response.

Specifically, interviewees expressed thoughts and emotions on three category products. First, concerns about wearing luxury goods as bags, watches, and gadgets in their daily life were a salient finding of this study. Consumers prevent themselves from using such products since they can become crime victims. Managers need to be aware of deeper consumer’s motivations to purchase luxury goods in a context of positive forecasts (Euromonitor, 2016). Second, this study shed light on the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and anxiolytics in Monterrey—a city with a recent history of dramatic violent events. While being aware that insecurity is related to higher consumption of these products, managers need also to understand the types of behaviours associated to such products: Adaptive behaviours are behaviours focused on re-establishing consumers’ stress levels to balance levels through the deployment of behaviour that do not harm consumers and their immediate social circle while maladaptive behaviours may provoke harm to consumers. Third, findings of this research found a component of non-consumption related activities as attachment to religion. Although this paper focuses mainly of the purchase decisions associated to social insecurity, managers need to gain awareness of the type of activities consumers may choose to cope with stressful events. Consumer may, in fact, substitute consumption with others activates which not necessarily imply purchase decisions.

Policy makers can gain insights on the product categories consumers choose under specific emotional levels. Hence, government agencies and NGOs can promote those product categories that better help individuals cope with strong emotions under a context with high social insecurity. Moreover, policy makers can gain insights on how people react in reference to social insecurity through consumption-coping responses.

The results from this research shed light on how push the boundaries of existing literature linking social insecurity and consumption patterns. A salient feature of our study was that fear arise as a primal emotion when consumers are exposed to social insecurity. Researchers wanting to pursue further studies can use theories as protection motivation theory (Rogers, 1975, 1983) which attempts to analyse how fear impacts persuasion activities or theory of emotion and adaptation (Lazarus, 1991) which proposes that appraisal processes lead to emotional responses, which in turn, lead to coping activities focused on reducing problems.
6 Conclusions

This paper has engaged in identifying the big themes and relationships between social insecurity and consumptions in two cities of Mexico. The study is exploratory in nature and utilised a projective technique to raise consumers’ feelings and thoughts. Results for Mexico City show that there are four big themes related to social insecurity: fear, hazardous city, lack of government job, and changing lifestyles. Although there are similar results for both cities, there is a difference in Monterrey where the attachment to religion was significantly mentioned. The study contributes to literature in that it extends the domain of consumer vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005) by adding deep consumers’ emotions as fear as a consumer response to vulnerability.

The qualitative methodology utilised in this study analyses deep feelings and thoughts derived from metaphoric thinking and generates a map of relationships among big themes and constructs.

While qualitative methodology helps analyse functional and psychosocial consequences from the perception of social insecurity attributes, it may limit the broad actionability of marketing tactics and plans. Future research may aim to study marketing tactics as development of communication and advertising campaigns as well as product improvements in view of social insecurity perceptions. One of the main critiques for projective research techniques is the high dependability they have upon the researcher which lowers reliability levels. Due to the previous, this study triangulated results for two similar cities and study samples with consistent results. More research is needed to understand purchase intentions across a number of product categories and consumer’s personality traits.

References


Changing lifestyles in the age of fear


