

# Music subculture as a source of conspicuous consumption practices: a qualitative content analysis of “altered movement” songs and music videos

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to focus on analyzing the role of music subcultures in the communication and promotion of conspicuous consumption practices. The object of study is the “altered movement” as the music style of the drug subculture in Mexico.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A qualitative content analysis of 78 lyrics and music videos of “altered movement” was carried out between August and December 2018.

**Findings** – The analysis of lyrics and music videos leads to the identification of four narratives (from poor to rich, power through violence, lavish lifestyle and power over women) and diverse symbolic markers (luxury brands mainly) that together, display messages aimed at promoting conspicuous consumption practices.

**Originality/value** – The current research expands the body of literature of music subcultures in the consumer research area by contesting the common conception of this phenomenon as a healthy source of self-identity formation and deepening into its role as a source of conspicuous consumption practices.

**Keywords** Mexico, Conspicuous consumption, Qualitative content analysis, Music subculture

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

In marketing and consumer behavior literature, the study of subcultures revolve around the concepts of “subcultures of consumption” (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and “brand communities” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001), which position the consumption of a product, service or brand as the integrative and central element of a subculture. However, a subculture is a broader phenomenon in which consumption practices are governed by shared experiences, lifestyles, identities and ideologies (de Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007). Hence, it is fundamental to develop a broader analysis of subcultures in marketing research. We do so by studying a subculture through music, an important cultural force with the potential of creating and maintaining subcultures (Burkhalter and Thornton, 2014). Music subcultures have recently been acknowledged as relevant entities in the formation of self-identities, shared lifestyles and consumption experiences in contemporary societies (Ulusoy and Firat, 2011).

Thus, the current study will be centered on the analysis of a music subculture from a marketing and consumer perspective. This addresses different research gaps. First, there is a dearth of research in consumer research and marketing literature on music subcultures, despite its relevance to shaping consumer lifestyles (Ulusoy and Firat, 2018). Second, more research is needed to understand the negative communicative power of music (Lozon and Bensimon, 2014; Morris, 2014), as it has so far been studied as a healthy and positive source of self-identity (Ulusoy, 2016). Third, scant attention has been given to the role of music subcultures to convey conspicuous consumption practices and their potential negative consequences (Podoshen *et al.*, 2014).

This paper will focus on the drug subculture, which is inspired by the lifestyle of drug-traffickers. The drug subculture has become highly popular in the North of Mexico, the Borderlands and the South-western part of the USA (Bergman, 2015; McGirk, 2010). The “altered movement” is the central music genre of this subculture. It is characterized by explicit lyrics evoking images of violence and a lavish lifestyle (Baker, 2017). We will identify narratives and symbols (brands)

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conveyed by this emergent Mexican music subculture. This is aligned to [Ulusoy's \(2016\)](#) call for more research on identity narratives and shared meanings of consumption derived from music subculture experiences. Our findings will help to broaden our understanding of the way music subcultures use different discursive strategies to project a specific lifestyle and consumption practices that may have negative consequences for their followers.

First, we will review the evolution of the conceptualization of subcultures. Then, we will define the music subculture and its role as a source of conspicuous consumption practices. After the literature review, we will describe the qualitative content analysis method used for this study, as well as its application to the analysis of 78 songs' lyrics and music videos. The third section presents the analysis of the results and its implication for research in marketing and consumer behavior. Finally, we will discuss conclusions, marketing implications, limitations and future research lines.

## Literature review

### Postmodern subcultures

The conceptualization of the term "subculture" may be explained through three theoretical approaches developed by different schools of thought. The first approach is attributed to the Chicago School (1950), whose work was focused on contextualizing subcultures as deviant and undesirable elements of the society, e.g. the study of urban gangs in Chicago ([Blackman, 2005](#)). This negative approach to subculture was contested by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. Based on their studies on the emergent style-based working-class youth cultures in the UK during the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. punk subculture), CCCS defined subculture as a "legitimate counter-force of political resistance" ([de Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007](#), p. 196).

However, the cultural turn from modernity to postmodernity has brought about a new theoretical position that criticizes the CCCS conception of subcultures: post-subcultural theory ([Muggleton, 2000](#)). In contrast to the driving forces motivating youth working-class to defy dominant narratives and structures of the mainstream society during the 1970s, the contemporary subcultures revolve around consumption choices and individual lifestyles ([Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006](#)). Individuals have the opportunity to choose among different subcultures, each with its own set of stylistic goods. Hence, the monolithic social categories (class, race, gender, etc) that divided individuals into fixed and rigid subcultures have been substituted by individualized ways of forming social identities and lifestyles ([Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006](#)).

Even though the post-subcultural theory has received diverse critics such as its oversimplification of contemporary subcultures to individualistic practices without political meaning ([Bennett, 2015](#)) and its tendency to underestimate the importance of class and social inequalities in contemporary youth subcultures ([Hollingworth, 2015](#)); the postmodern turn to the study of subcultures has opened different perspectives to analyze them. Surprisingly, the study of contemporary subcultures has been overlooked by marketing and consumer

behavior researchers despite its relevance to the comprehension of shared consumer lifestyles and consumption practices ([Ulusoy, 2016](#)).

In the marketing literature, the concept of subculture has been treated as "subculture of consumption," defined as "a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand or consumption activity" ([Schouten and McAlexander, 1995](#), p. 43). Drawing on this definition, [Muniz and O'Guinn \(2001](#), p. 412) developed the concept of "brand community," defined as "a specialized non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand." Nevertheless, the centrality of consumption in subcultural analysis ignores the way subcultures are formed and maintained over time. It also ignores the lifestyles and factors that govern consumption practices within subcultures ([de Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007](#)).

To overcome these theoretical limitations and also contribute to the emergent area of subcultures and consumption practices, the current research will draw on a postmodernist approach to subcultures. This approach entails an interpretation of postmodern subcultures as:

[...] the consequence of the fragmentation of society and the means for producing the meaningful experiences that are sought in life, as well as for producing selves or self-images within these experiences ([Ulusoy and Firat, 2011](#), p. 558).

Consumers gain prominence in this interpretation of postmodern subculture, as they may perceive these subcultures as spaces to perform their personal lifestyle choices through the construction of collective identities and shared consumption practices ([Ulusoy and Firat, 2011](#)).

### Music in postmodern subcultures

The postmodern cultural turn has generated new perspectives across diverse disciplines, as it challenges previous conceptions about social reality. The main condition of modernity was based on providing a grand narrative able to control social life and generate a common future for humanity. Yet, the new conditions imposed by postmodernity privilege the multiplicity of narratives and the search for meaning and substance in the present life, not the future. In this case, postmodernity may be interpreted as contradictory to modernity, which means the rejection of objective reality in human social experiences to embrace the plurality and the social construction of reality ([Firat et al., 1995](#)).

The idea of postmodern reality as plural and fragmented could lead to a hyper-individualized society where individuals navigate without any type of real affiliation with a specific collective entity or subculture ([Pakulski, 2009](#)). This idea is reflected in the individualized understanding of subculture in the post-subcultural theory, in which the individual is free to float across subcultures in his/her search for meaning and identity construction ([Blackman, 2005](#)). Yet, [Firat and Dholakia \(2006\)](#) contend that the tendency of postmodernity to hyper-individualize individuals' behaviors has been misunderstood. The authors explain that the individuals' quest to enjoy rich and meaningful experiences is only possible through participation in communities.

From this perspective, postmodern subcultures must be understood as communities rather than just individual

life-projects. One of the most important cultural forces able to integrate individuals within a subculture, as well as to facilitate subcultural participation and integration is music (Ulusoy, 2016). Music is not only the reflection of a subculture but also a producer of meaningful shared experiences that help consumers build their self-images (Ulusoy and Firat, 2011). Moreover, it has the capacity to convey lifestyles and consumption practices that, in turn, can shape the way consumers experience a subcultural identity (Ulusoy, 2016). Given the key role of music in subcultural formation and maintenance, the current research will be focused specifically on a postmodern music subculture as the object of study.

### Conspicuous consumption practices in music subcultures

As mentioned above, music has the power to create subcultures (Burkhalter and Thornton, 2014) and key symbolic elements for social change (Ulusoy and Firat, 2018). However, the transformative potential of music on subcultures can be a double-edged sword. In subculture literature, there has been a common conception about music and music consumption as a healthy and positive source of self-identity (Ulusoy, 2016). This has generated a blind spot around the negative lifestyles and consumption practices transmitted by music subcultures toward individuals. Some examples of music subcultures analyzed through these lenses are Neo-Nazi music subculture and racist hate behaviors (Windisch and Simi, 2017), heavy metal subculture and tendencies to delinquency (Vuolo *et al.*, 2014) and hip-hop subculture and alcohol consumption (Pawson and Kelly, 2014).

Lozon and Bensimon (2014) refer to these music subcultures as “problem music” for their potential to lead listeners toward social deviance and psychological vulnerability. The same authors call for more research focused on the messages and themes conveyed by “problem music.” This echoed Morris’ (2014) observation on the communicative power of the “negative dialectic” of music. From a marketing approach, it seems relevant to pay attention to the type of negative consumption practices promoted by music subcultures, as a great number of consumers participate and organize their consumption activities within music subcultures (Ulusoy and Firat, 2018).

A negative consumption practice that has widely been projected in music subcultures, especially in hip-hop subculture, is “conspicuous consumption.” Podoshen *et al.* (2014) examined the negative effects of hip-hop subculture and music on US consumers, focusing specifically on conspicuous consumption and materialism as problems commonly associated with this subculture. Popular media has criticized the great emphasis that hip-hop subculture puts on material possessions and excess (Burkhalter and Thornton, 2014).

The current research regards conspicuous consumption as a suitable theoretical approach to analyzing how other music subcultures (aside from hip-hop) convey materialist and conspicuous consumption practices and lifestyles. Thorsten Veblen (1899) coined the term “conspicuous consumption,” defined as the need to achieve social status through the acquisition and use of goods as symbols of power and wealth (Gierl and Huettl, 2010). Consumers who pay a great deal of attention to social comparisons are highly susceptible to

conspicuous consumption practices (Goldsmith and Clark, 2012). These conspicuous practices enable them to project particular lifestyles, which are desirable and attractive to others (Lee and Luster, 2015).

Conspicuous consumption may also be regarded as a practice that consumers engage to create and communicate their social identity (Lamont and Molnár, 2001). As noted above in the definition of conspicuous consumption, the use of possessions as symbols plays an essential role in consumer identity formation (Wong *et al.*, 2012). Consumers may regard possessions as a means to strengthen and expand their sense of self (Belk, 1988). In a postmodern world dominated by images, products and services become symbols embedded with meaning, which, in turn, are used by consumers to represent their private and social self (Ekinici *et al.*, 2013; Shankar *et al.*, 2009). In the case of conspicuous consumption, some brands are imbued with status and prestige (e.g. luxury brands), so that consumers adopt them to enhance their social self and indicate affiliation to an important social group (Hawkins and Rome, 2019).

On the other hand, consumers often express their identities in terms of a narrative (Ahuvia, 2005). An identity narrative structure allows consumers to make sense of who they are, as they can use possessions and social roles within a storyline to play out a personalized version of themselves in society (Schembri *et al.*, 2010). However, consumers also absorb brand narratives from diverse communication media and make them part of their identity through the process of “narrative transportation” (Kim *et al.*, 2016), defined by Farace *et al.* (2017, p. 1) as “a feeling of entering a world evoked by the narrative.” In the case of conspicuous consumption, conspicuous narratives conveyed by media exert significant influence on consumers’ identities, as was shown by Chaudhuri and Majumdar (2006) in their study about the portrayal of wealth and prestige through conspicuous narratives disseminated by Indian movies and television (TV) soaps.

Given that music is not always a positive source for self-identity formation (Lozon and Bensimon, 2014), great attention must be paid to the type of symbolic markers (brands) and identity narratives music subcultures convey through lyrics and music videos. From a conspicuous consumption perspective, the current research will be aimed at analyzing the conspicuous consumption practices transmitted by a Mexican music style known as the “altered movement,” which has been regarded as a central part of the drug subculture, a new subculture in the north of Mexico and the south of the USA. The analysis of the identity narratives and brands endorsed by this music subculture will provide a broader understanding of its potential influence on listeners.

### “Altered movement”: the music of the drug subculture

In the late 2000s, a new music genre called “altered movement” arose in Mexico as the violence generated by drug cartels increased to unprecedented levels. This music style evolved from *corridos*, songs written to honor the feats of heroes of the Mexican Revolution’s such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata (McDowell, 2012). *Corridos* remained a part of Mexican culture, especially in the north of Mexico but they were overshadowed by other music styles. In the 1970s, with the rise of drug trafficking in northern Mexico, *corridos* songs



started covering it. This new musical style was named *narcocorridos* (Maihold and Sauter de Maihold, 2012).

In the 1970s and 1980s, *narcocorridos* gained great popularity across the Borderlands between Mexico and USA (Dávila, 2013), its main proponents were groups such as “Los Tigres del Norte” and “Tucanes de Tijuana” (Campbell and Hansen, 2014). To avoid being censored, *Narcocorridos* made heavy use of metaphors to communicate events related to narco-traffickers without risking censorship. In the early 1990s, as the influence of drug cartels grew, the Mexican singer Chalino Sánchez took the *narcocorridos* genre further with explicit and violent lyrics praising the narco-lifestyle. Beyond its explicit lyrics, Chalino Sanchez also introduced conspicuous consumption practices to *narcocorridos*: flashy clothes (shiny shoes, jewelry and belt buckles, cowboy hat [...]), brand mentions in lyrics, preferring imported liquor to tequila and album covers portraying expensive cars and weapons.

As part of the war on drugs, *narcocorridos* with explicit lyrics were banned from the media on both sides of the border. However, by the end of the 2000s, the popularization of this musical style online contributed to the transformation of *narcocorridos* into a new genre: “altered movement.” Through YouTube, this music found a way to directly reach new consumers and explicitly communicate narco-lifestyles (Rivera Magos and Carriço Reis, 2017). Most of the bands and singers of the “altered movement” are signed and sponsored by “Twins Enterprises,” a recording studio founded by Omar and Adolfo Valenzuela. Indeed, “Twins Enterprises” is regarded as the production center of the “altered movement” industry (Denselow, 2012).

A distinctive feature of “altered movement” songs is the portrayal of drug traffickers as rich, successful and powerful people. This representation seems to be appealing to young people (Sauceda, 2014). It is worth mentioning that there is a porous border between drug traffickers and *narcocorridos* music. Drug cartels often pay songwriters to tell their stories through *narcocorridos* (Muniz, 2013). This dynamic has also resulted in the assassinations of singers by enemy drug cartels. Chalino Sanchez himself was murdered in Culiacan, Sinaloa in 1992. Moreover, the most important artists of this music genre (among them, el Komander, Gerardo Ortiz, Larry Hernández, Calibre 50, Los Buitres and Bukanas de Culiacan) embrace the narco-lifestyle and the figure of the drug trafficker by adopting the first-person narration in their lyrics and music videos.

The “altered movement” also features specific items related to the lavish narco-lifestyle such as luxury cars (sports cars and pick-up trucks), flashy clothing, jewelry, expensive bottles of alcohol, free-flowing cocaine and high-powered weapons (Campbell and Hansen, 2014). Therefore, conspicuous consumption practices are inherent in the “altered movement” genre, through which people perceive drug trafficking as a means to get status, power and wealth.

## Methodology

A qualitative content analysis of lyrics and music videos was used to analyze conspicuous consumption practices in “altered movement” songs. This research method is a flexible data analysis method aimed at integrating, interpreting and synthesizing qualitative findings (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014).

The main priority of this research was to let patterns emerge from lyrics and music videos by using few preconceptions of the topic (conspicuous consumption practices). Hunter (2011) used a similar approach to analyze hip-hop lyrics and music videos.

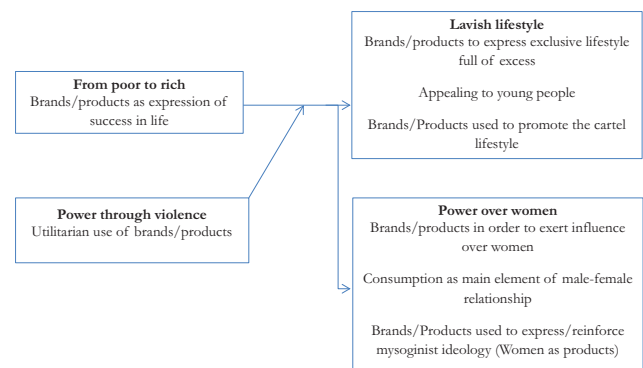
An exploratory research question served to guide the coding of the lyrics: how are conspicuous consumption practices portrayed in “altered movement” songs? For data collection, there were a series of specific indications to follow in the selection of the songs. First, songs released before 2009 were discarded because the “altered movement” emerged as of that year (García-Palafox, 2011). Second, only songs from the most representative artists of this music genre (Appendix) and with official videos on YouTube were considered. Having an official video posted means that these songs were selected by the artists and/or labels to be promoted. It also means that we had both audio (lyrics) and visual (video) information to analyze. Using these criteria, 78 songs were selected to be part of the final sample.

Following the recommendations of Hsieh and Shannon (2005), researchers immersed themselves in the data (song lyrics) through an inductive approach. The data were analyzed several times to obtain a global sense of them while at the same time capturing key concepts. After developing a coding scheme, each code was sorted into categories or clusters with the aim of organizing and providing meaning to the data. Finally, the categories were labeled with specific concepts that, in turn, generated a comprehensive view of the research topic. Two external researchers replicated the coding process to reach inter-coder agreement and reliability (Campbell et al., 2013). Findings from lyrics were supported and complemented by an analysis of their respective music videos.

## Analysis of results

Based on the analysis of the 78 songs and music videos, 4 predominant narratives of conspicuous consumption were identified: “from poor to rich,” “power through violence,” “lavish lifestyle” and “power over women” (Figure 1). All of these narratives depict the current economic and political situation in Mexico, where great levels of poverty and inequality, along with a lack of economic opportunities, have triggered an exponential increase of criminal violence related to

**Figure 1** Explanatory model of conspicuous narratives in lyrics and music videos of “Movimiento Alteredo”



drug trafficking (Atuesta and Ponce, 2017). In this context, poor people are more susceptible to adopt conspicuous consumption practices to engage in social comparisons with wealthier individuals (Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

The first narrative focuses on portraying the transition “from poor to rich.” This narrative communicates the hardships overcome by a poor person to become a powerful and successful drug trafficker. The storyline of this narrative is based on the depiction of a humble person facing difficult economic circumstances and surpassing different barriers to getting respect and success through drug-trafficking. This message may be easily adopted by poor people, who are looking for a way to gain social status.

The “from poor to rich” narrative communicates a compelling story to its target audience. First, it shows the daily life of a poor person, and therefore, there is no mention or display of luxurious items and conspicuous consumption. Then, the same person is portrayed as a successful drug trafficker who can afford luxury cars, fine clothing and prostitutes (Table III). From this narrative, conspicuous consumption practices are represented as desired goals in life. Hence, consumers may accept the risks associated with being a drug trafficker as long as they can get status and wealth through material possessions.

#### Que tanto es tantito by Noel García

Quise terminar la escuela y a la falta de feria, sobresalió el hambre, no había ni para las tortillas y por la familia, tuve que arriesgarme, empecé como ayudante para un hombre grande y de mucho valor, me curtió para el trabajo y al paso del tiempo jale me soltó.

I wanted to finish school and in the absence of money, the hunger remained. There was not even enough for *tortillas* and because of my family, I had to take the chance. I started as a helper for an old man and with great courage, he trained me for the job (drug-trafficker) and over time, he let me fend for myself Table I.

The second narrative identified in the analysis was “power through violence.” In this narrative, the manifestation of power is clearly represented by extreme violent acts against the drug cartel’s enemies. From this perspective, supremacy and respect become important values to drug traffickers, who brag of effectively carrying out their bosses’ orders. The songs within the “power through violence” narrative also transmit a sense of pride of belonging to a powerful drug cartel. This is in line with one of the reasons why people engage in conspicuous practices: to be associated with an important and prestigious social group (Isaksen and Roper, 2008).

Regarding the display of luxurious items, this narrative may be considered simpler than the other narratives of the analysis, as there are only a few mentions of brands. Instead, mentions

about high-powered weapons (e.g. rocket launchers, 50-caliber machine guns and grenades), trucks, armored sport utility vehicles and drugs (Table II) are common. Unlike other narratives, these products are portrayed not as status symbols but as tools used to exert violence. In this case, the “power through violence” narrative provides a glimpse into the dark side of being a drug trafficker but from a distorted perspective that focuses on exalting cruelty and ferocity as positive traits related to bravery and toughness.

#### Sanguinarios de la M1 by Los BuKnas de Culiacán

Con cuerno de chivo y bazooka en la nuca, volando cabezas a quien se atraviesa, somos sanguinarios, locos, bien ondeados, nos gusta matar.

With a goat’s horn (a metaphor for AK-47) and a bazooka on the neck, flying heads on anyone who crossed our way, we are bloodthirsty, crazy and very high, we like to kill.

The third narrative of the analysis was “lavish lifestyle,” in which it was possible to identify diverse leisure activities performed by drug-traffickers such as extravagant parties, gambling and car races. These leisure activities signal the power, status and wealth of drug-traffickers as they are able to spend huge amounts of money in unnecessary and economically unproductive activities. These expenditures are portrayed as rewards gained by risking their lives in illegal activities. Hence, consumers perceive the “lavish lifestyle” of drug traffickers as an attainable dream life despite the great danger it entails.

Besides leisure activities, the “lavish lifestyle” narrative mentions luxurious items such as sports cars, accessories (watches and caps), fine clothing and expensive liquors (Table III). Altogether, leisure activities and luxurious items portray drug traffickers as living an exclusive lifestyle full of excesses. In turn, drug traffickers show their respect and loyalty to the drug cartel they belong to as a sign of gratefulness. Therefore, the whole “lavish lifestyle” narrative conveys an appealing message to consumers about the benefits of being part of a drug cartel and the lifestyle they can enjoy by engaging in drug trafficking.

#### Edición Culiacán by El Jerry

Siempre en uno traemos muy buena línea, la X6 por la Cuauhtemoc se aproxima, de cerquita el Rolex es el que brilla, Carolina Herrera siempre la camisa, tenemos pa’ darnos lujos, no hay pendiente que la empresa patrocina.

Always in one, we bring a very good line, the X6 (BMW car) by the Cuauhtemoc street approaches, the Rolex shines and the shirt is always Carolina Herrera. We have enough money to pay for luxurious things; there are no worries because the business has it covered.

Table I Categories of items from the “poor to rich” narrative

Weapons	Cars (brands)	Luxury clothing and accessories	Drugs and alcohol	Others
AK-47	Hummer	Couch (cap)	Buchanan’s (whisky)	Prostitutes
R15	BMW	Fine clothing (brands not mentioned)	Corona (beer)	Dollars
Bazooka	Range Rover	Hoods	Marijuana	
Grenade launcher	Ford (trucks)	Rolex (watch)		
Bulletproof vest				
Handguns				

Table II Categories of items from the “power through violence” narrative

Weapons	Cars (brands)	Luxury clothing and accessories	Drugs and alcohol	Others
AK-47	Hummer	Sunglasses	Cocaine	Prostitutes
R15	BMW	Hoods	Corona (beer)	
Bazooka	Cadillac	Fine clothing (brands not mentioned)	Buchanan's (whisky)	
Grenade launcher	Chevrolet (trucks and sport utility vehicles)	Hermes (belt)	Johnnie Walker (whisky)	
Bulletproof vest	Jeep		Marijuana	
Handguns	GMC			
	Ford (trucks)			

Table III Categories of items from the “lavish lifestyle” narrative

Weapons	Cars (brands)	Luxury clothing and accessories	Drugs and alcohol	Others
AK-47	Chevrolet (sports cars)	Prada	Cocaine	Foreign prostitutes
R15	Ford (sports cars)	Ferrari	Johnnie Walker (whisky)	iPhone
M1	Ferrari	Louis Vuitton	Buchanan's (whisky)	Blackberry
Handguns	Lamborghini	Hugo Boss	Martel (cognac)	Samsung
	Bugatti	Lacoste	Champagne	
	Bentley	Dolce & Gabbana	Marijuana	
	Porsche	Gucci	Corona (beer)	
	BMW	Carolina Herrera	Tecate (beer)	
	Cadillac	Burberry		
		Adidas		
		Armani		
		Rolex (watch)		
		Cartier		
		Couch (cap)		
		Ferragamo (shoes)		

The last narrative of the analysis was “power over women.” Even though the songs belonging to this narrative may be regarded as “love songs” dedicated to a woman, the messages are loaded with misogynist content and women are conceived of as material goods. In this case, conspicuous practices are used to exert influence over women. Drawing on Baudrillard's (2005) theory of “object relation,” the woman is perceived as an object of desire, and hence, the man must provide expensive items to possess her. Consequently, consumption is the main element in the relationship between woman and man.

Compared to the other narratives, the “power over women” narrative displays items that are particularly difficult to afford even for the rich class. Examples of this narrative include mentions of super luxury cars with a price of over \$60,000 (e.g. Ferrari, Maserati and Bentley), designer clothing (e.g. Louis Vuitton, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana) and champagne [Table IV]). Another relevant aspect is that the drug trafficker is portrayed as a “man of many women,” as he appears with foreign prostitutes even if he is claiming his love for another woman. This narrative reinforces the strong misogynist ideology underlying “altered movement” songs (Sauceda, 2014).

### Los Titanes de Durango

Llegaron las vacaciones y nos fuimos a la playa, nos jalamos pa' Cancún allá la **agüita está clara**, Azulita como el cielo, a mis plebonas les encantan; antros, bares y casinos [...] pura tiendita de marca.

Holidays has arrived and we went to the beach, we headed to Cancun, where the water is the crystal, light blue as the sky, my

*plebonas* (girls) love it; clubs, bars and casinos [...] only luxury stores.

### Discussion

The identification of these four narratives comprising the sample of “altered movement” songs sheds light on the different messages, items and lifestyles projected by the drug subculture to individuals. Adepts of this music subculture find in drug traffickers a role model worthy of admiration and emulation. In addition, the identity narratives strengthen the idea of drug-trafficking as a means to attain a desired and prestigious lifestyle. The drug subculture, through the “altered movement” music style, embraces materialistic and conspicuous practices as crucial elements to achieve life satisfaction and gain social recognition. Hence, consumers attempt to emulate narco-lifestyle by either joining a drug cartel or by imitating narco-lifestyle through the consumption of luxurious brands, illegal weapons and expensive alcoholic beverages.

Regarding conspicuous consumption practices, the qualitative analysis of songs and music videos yielded different categories ranging from weapons, cars, clothing, accessories, alcoholic beverages, drugs and prostitutes. Each category may be understood as a particular manifestation of power, status and wealth. Drawing on Belk's (1988) concept of the “extended self,” possessions become an extension of our selves by enabling us to aspire to an ideal self. For instance, weapons provide power and respect, cars and fine clothing are symbols

Table IV Categories of items from the “power over women” narrative

Weapons	Cars (brands)	Luxury clothing and accessories	Drugs and alcohol	Others
M1	Chevrolet (sports cars)	Prada (sunglasses)	Cocaine	Foreign prostitutes
	Ferrari	Ferrari	Moet (champagne)	Mac (laptop)
	Lamborghini	Louis Vuitton (handbags)		iPhone
	Maserati	Hugo Boss		
	Bentley	Lacoste		
	BMW	Dolce & Gabbana		
	Racer cars	Gucci		
		Carolina Herrera		
		Burberry		
		Adidas		
		Armani		
		Rolex (watch)		

of wealth and prestige, drugs and expensive liquors represent a life of excess and hedonism and, prostitutes represent the power of men over women.

Altogether, these narratives represent a powerful vision of an appealing lifestyle that individuals can reach or imitate. Adepts of the drug subculture build their aspirational identities through the consumption of brands as symbolic markers. An iconic example of a brand strongly associated with the drug subculture is the Scotch whiskey “Buchanan’s,” which is widely mentioned in “altered movement” songs (Sauceda, 2014). Other brands that are regularly mentioned in these songs are Armani, Ralph Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, Cadillac, etc.

Identity narratives and brands within conspicuous messages conveyed by “altered movement” songs generate a “narrative transportation” effect on adepts of the drug subculture. Kim *et al.* (2016) contend that individuals experiencing narrative transportation enter into the world evoked by the story. The consequences of this process to the individual comprise emotional connections with characters and self-transformations (Batat and Wohlfeil, 2009). In the case of the current study, adepts are cognitively and emotionally involved in the narratives of “Movimiento Alterado” songs, which lead to a transformation of the individual in terms of lifestyle and consumption practices. As previously mentioned at the beginning of the section, listeners of “Movimiento Alterado” songs may adopt the narco-lifestyle through the consumption of specific brands and the imitation of subcultural practices.

## Marketing implications

The implications of the current research to the marketing and consumer behavior areas are manifold. First, the analysis of identity narratives provides a broader understanding of consumption practices and lifestyles within a music subculture. Thus, this research overcomes the theoretical limitation identified by de Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan (2007) about the central role marketing studies had given to consumption in the analysis of subcultures. Moreover, identity narratives may work as demarcating solutions through which individuals can strengthen their subcultural affiliation and maintain a coherent identity (Shankar *et al.*, 2009). Hence, identity narratives may be regarded as important elements to comprehend music consumption and music subculture affiliation.

Second, brands seem to have a relevant role in music subcultures as symbolic markers. Based on the analysis of “altered movement” lyrics and music videos, it was possible to identify numerous mentions and appearances of brands. From a conspicuous consumption perspective, these brands are elemental to portray a luxury lifestyle and their public consumption signifies prestige, status and affiliation to a prestigious social group (in this case, a music subculture). In the drug subculture, brands such as Buchanan’s, Ralph Lauren and Cadillac have become symbolic markers of this music subculture, echoing Burkhalter and Thornton’s (2014) observation about the power of music and brands to create and maintain subcultures.

Finally, this study diversifies the research of music subcultures as a source of conspicuous consumption practices. Most of the studies focused on this phenomenon have predominantly been based on hip-hop music subculture (Podoshen *et al.*, 2014; Burkhalter and Thornton, 2014). Findings from the analysis of the drug subculture as music subculture and the identity narratives, lifestyles and brands it transmits expand our understanding of the marketing implications of music subcultures. It also provides a marketing perspective of a recent subculture that has gained great popularity worldwide because of cultural expressions such as movies and TV series (Cabañas, 2014).

## Conclusions

The main aim of the study was to gain an understanding of the role of music subcultures in conveying conspicuous consumption practices. Music subcultures exert significant influence on the way consumers organize their consumption activities, lifestyles and identities in contemporary society (Ulusoy, 2016). However, there is a dark side in this phenomenon regarding the power of music subcultures to generate and reinforce negative behaviors on their adepts. Hence, the focus of the research was centered on the drug subculture and specifically its new music genre, the “altered movement.” The distinctiveness of this music genre lies in the messages it conveys on the lavish lifestyle of drug traffickers.

Through a theoretical approach based on identity narratives and brands related to conspicuous consumption, we carried out a qualitative content analysis of 78 songs and music videos. This analysis identified four narratives as follows: “from poor to



rich,” “lavish lifestyle,” “power through violence” and “power over women.” These narratives provided a broad vision on the different ways conspicuous consumption practices transmit power, status, prestige and wealth by engaging in drug trafficking. Beyond status, joining the drug subculture is also a way for individuals to feel like they belong to a prestigious group thus fulfilling important social needs.

The current study lays the groundwork for future research on other controversial music subcultures such as trap or funk carioca and their effects on identity formation and consumption activities in their adepts. Moreover, narratives and brands can be used as units of analysis to identify conspicuous consumption practices in music subcultures and thereby compare similarities and differences among diverse cultural contexts. In the case of the drug subculture, it would be interesting to expand the research through empirical studies aimed at gathering information from both Mexican and US fans of the “altered movement.” The findings of this study were based on conspicuous narratives from the music production side, so the appropriation of these narratives by music subculture’s adepts can bring new perspectives to comprehend this phenomenon.

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## Appendix

Artist	Song title	YouTube link
Los Buchones de Culiacan	El comando suicida del mayo	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5hHH5DXfL0">www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5hHH5DXfL0</a>
Los Buchones de Culiacan	La Orden	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Cxb0JFrrto">www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Cxb0JFrrto</a>
BuKnas de Culiacan	El juicio Final	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KRM55D9q50">www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KRM55D9q50</a>
Los Buchones de Culiacan	El señor de las Tanquetas	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqyDY_1n4J8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqyDY_1n4J8</a>
Gerardo Ortiz	Cara a la muerte	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtPc4LHoh3w">www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtPc4LHoh3w</a>
Enigma Norteño	Los Sicarios de Joaquin	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3x07PDh9Ec">www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3x07PDh9Ec</a>
Los nuevos elegantes	El señor	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsqZPCCYuus">www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsqZPCCYuus</a>
Larry Hernandez	El baleado	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V4dIN1DLAk">www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V4dIN1DLAk</a>
Movimiento Alterado	Sanguinarios del M1	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzod0gFjHlw">www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzod0gFjHlw</a>
Movimiento Alterado	Cárteles Unidos	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfC1Mqzo07w">www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfC1Mqzo07w</a>
El Komander	Leyenda M1	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4aw70KHkoU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4aw70KHkoU</a>
El Komander	La captura del Mayito Gordo	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7EvPTPMOc">www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7EvPTPMOc</a>
El RM	Sangre del Maldito	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ1xKfkjRDY">www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ1xKfkjRDY</a>
Enigma Norteño	El Señor Ivan	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRIOWKLY-BM">www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRIOWKLY-BM</a>
El Compa Chuy	Loco y Ondeado	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PRFi-RfC7E">www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PRFi-RfC7E</a>
La edicion de Culican	La fuga	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm26EptJlJU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm26EptJlJU</a>
Los mayitos de Sinaloa	El ahijado consentido	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KcwlMX-1zo">www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KcwlMX-1zo</a>
Lenin Ramirez	Gente del General	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3arCRqKRNo">www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3arCRqKRNo</a>
La edición de Culiacán	Eran como 120	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61jDsnMPA8s">www.youtube.com/watch?v=61jDsnMPA8s</a>
Noel Torres	Se vinieron los problemas	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NolXchTDvE4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=NolXchTDvE4</a>
Los Buchones de Culiacan	Viernes de desvelada	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scp0MG7SssQ">www.youtube.com/watch?v=scp0MG7SssQ</a>
Gerardo Ortiz	A la moda	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9keBAkC22M">www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9keBAkC22M</a>
Gerardo Ortiz	Mazatlán vs Culiacán	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAf87mwnaXg">www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAf87mwnaXg</a>
Enigma Norteño	El Chicken Little	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHeaPd-a2o0">www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHeaPd-a2o0</a>
El Komander	Estilo SL	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wA1Jxls91R4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=wA1Jxls91R4</a>
El Komander	Trato de muerte	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoPfSu_9B2s">www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoPfSu_9B2s</a>
El Komander	Borracho y escandaloso	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8eO8GLvhS0">www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8eO8GLvhS0</a>
El Komander	El gallero	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWylK9ELrZs">www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWylK9ELrZs</a>
El Komander	Negocio y amistad	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgDCZKtUxVv">www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgDCZKtUxVv</a>
Los Rojos	El junior presumido	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePBUpuxxgUA">www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePBUpuxxgUA</a>
Los Rojos	La conecte	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HD98IA-D5Q">www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HD98IA-D5Q</a>
La edición de Culiacán	La piscinada	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ca6yGNbJUY">www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ca6yGNbJUY</a>
La edición de Culiacán	El jerry	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y300Y3bJs90">www.youtube.com/watch?v=y300Y3bJs90</a>
Larry Hernandez	Gente VIP	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky05ff_ziEo">www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky05ff_ziEo</a>
Enigma Norteño	Los lujos del R	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1RtjDkznQ4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1RtjDkznQ4</a>
Enigma Norteño	¿Van a querer más?	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9G420TuNFYs">www.youtube.com/watch?v=9G420TuNFYs</a>
Gerado Ortiz	Damaso	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0CcSVHQSDU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0CcSVHQSDU</a>
Gerado Ortiz	El cholo	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7J7sR1bodA">www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7J7sR1bodA</a>
Gerardo Ortiz	¿Quién se anima?	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5ov9eaz16k">www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5ov9eaz16k</a>
El Komander	El elegante	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KIX40LvvpA">www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KIX40LvvpA</a>
Calibre 50	Gano Holanda, perdio China	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_cBljDHIU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_cBljDHIU</a>
BuKnas de Culiacan	Armas y Billetes	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZonJ-8ILWKI">www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZonJ-8ILWKI</a>
BuKnas de Culiacan	Nini tan dejado	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rMOuDwTzIk">www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rMOuDwTzIk</a>
Titanes de Durango	Las buchonas	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcuxApaRU5I">www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcuxApaRU5I</a>
El Komander	El señor de las hummers	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeEVKtJNVlg">www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeEVKtJNVlg</a>
El Komander	Fiesta en la playa	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piEmdisk0uQ">www.youtube.com/watch?v=piEmdisk0uQ</a>
Banda Tierra Nueva	La paniquiada	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eVcR6Jy9wc">www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eVcR6Jy9wc</a>
Los mayitos de Sinaloa	Let's go to the party	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGZ3hAyCdUg">www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGZ3hAyCdUg</a>
La edición de Culiacán	El bluntson	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9AumLEeVY8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9AumLEeVY8</a>
Los mayitos de Sinaloa	Atuendo Elegante	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiDstgrRDZQ">www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiDstgrRDZQ</a>
Los mayitos de Sinaloa	La roca	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnarsnKLNwg">www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnarsnKLNwg</a>

(continued)

Artist	Song title	YouTube link
El Komander y los Buitres	El tamarindo	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmB_sK5mvKA">www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmB_sK5mvKA</a>
El Komander	El cigarrito bañado	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63lSk9kxuyM">www.youtube.com/watch?v=63lSk9kxuyM</a>
Fuerza Tijuana	Ondead y decidido	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT9E9QItVTM">www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT9E9QItVTM</a>
Larry Hernandez	Mi paciencia	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW4JV5lpgSQ">www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW4JV5lpgSQ</a>
Gerardo Ortiz	Fuiste mia	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65uN9uxaf9k">www.youtube.com/watch?v=65uN9uxaf9k</a>
El Komander	Malditas ganas	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fP2Rg8K5b8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fP2Rg8K5b8</a>
El Komander	Muñequita rabiosa	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTjnsFLRoK4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTjnsFLRoK4</a>
Los dos Primos	Besos encantadores	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d60VNYE3g">www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d60VNYE3g</a>
El Komander	El Papel Cambio	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5sIEVnpi2k">www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5sIEVnpi2k</a>
Gerardo Ortiz	Mujer de Piedra	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM1ScFYLj4M">www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM1ScFYLj4M</a>
Los nuevos elegantes	Secuestro de amor	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ17XD8ClGo">www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ17XD8ClGo</a>
Los Bukanas de Culiacán	Le gusta que te den	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTtOcsVDfBg">www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTtOcsVDfBg</a>
El Komander	No mas por ser sinaloense	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMZi6jXLj3Q">www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMZi6jXLj3Q</a>
El Komander	El sabor a cal	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=la7ShLDRggU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=la7ShLDRggU</a>
El Komander	El muchacho de empalme	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCvIBylCB9w">www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCvIBylCB9w</a>
Yair Sanchez Ft. Colmillo Norteño	El empresario	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbpZuBpgVEQ">www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbpZuBpgVEQ</a>
Noel Torres	La estructura	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIOp99i0Z_8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIOp99i0Z_8</a>
Noel Torres	La guanabana	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_69CCbXJSW0">www.youtube.com/watch?v=_69CCbXJSW0</a>
Noel Torres	Que tanto es tantito	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URuVTIYvRAo">www.youtube.com/watch?v=URuVTIYvRAo</a>
La Trakalosa de Monterrey	Mi padrino el diablo	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xy8VPsStvs">www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xy8VPsStvs</a>
Los Plebes del Rancho	Del negociante	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAw8aiU5Ris">www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAw8aiU5Ris</a>
Los Cuates de Sinaloa	Las tres llamadas	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQXKSK3Jc_8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQXKSK3Jc_8</a>
Revolver Canabis	Cuento chino	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPUPewVB17Y">www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPUPewVB17Y</a>
Revolver Canabis	Sicario de Dios	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF4xr6nVzga">www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF4xr6nVzga</a>
Revolver Canabis	Brazo armado caído	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqhgciXffls">www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqhgciXffls</a>
Revolver Canabis	Con olor a Ferragamo	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-S5PyeeTs8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-S5PyeeTs8</a>
Titanes de Durango	Las buchonas	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcuxApaRU5I">www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcuxApaRU5I</a>

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