

Turistas: Una Mercancía en San Antonio Palopó

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Resumen:

Hay proyectos en San Antonio Palopó que tratan de mejorar la economía y la calidad de la vida del pueblo a través de la promoción del turismo local. Con la posibilidad del crecimiento del turismo en San Antonio Palopó es importante a estudiar como la gente de San Antonio ya trabajan con las turistas y están involucrada en el turismo. También, si hay más turismo en el futuro, esta información podría ser útil a los que quieren entender como el pueblo lo vería. Además investigué las opiniones de las turistas sobre el pueblo y los comparé con las opiniones de la gente de San Antonio sobre las turistas. Mas que todo este estudio investiga como la gente de San Antonio piensa en “el otro” – las turistas.

Abstract:

There are plans to increase tourism and tourist attractions in San Antonio Palopó in attempts to improve the economic status and quality of life in the town. With the possible augmentation of tourists and time spent by tourists in San Antonio Palopó, it is important to study how the people already have interactions with tourists and, in some cases, are economically dependent on them, in order to better predict how the town might feel if the local tourism industry grows. Additionally, I investigated tourist beliefs about the town and contrasted them with the people’s own beliefs about tourists. This paper focuses on two main target groups. The chief target group, consisting of 27 people, is people from San Antonio that are on some level economically dependent on tourism and/or have many interactions with tourists. The second target group consists of 16 people who have knowledge of tourists.

Tourists: A Commodity in San Antonio Palopó

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Florencia handed me a hand woven mat, about 7” by 7”, with a woven handle at one corner in the shape of an ear of corn. She said that it was to kill the flies in my room. I took the small square fly swatter and thanked her. Then she said that I could use the mat or I could do what the Chinese do and catch flies with one hand. She shot her right into the air, pretending to grab a fly. Then she slowly brought her hand in front of her and opened her palm gradually as if she was holding a fly. Then she said that I could let it go and grab it again, as her hand quickly reached into the air to “grab” another fly. I asked her where she learned about that. She said that she loved to watch “Películas China” and laughed.

Introduction

Last summer, it was a long hot drive to Asheboro, North Carolina, and not realizing the magnitude of a trip from Williamsburg, Virginia, I thought I had passed the town after my fourth hour of driving. I pulled into a McDonalds to ask for directions (it turns out I was already in Asheboro at this point). I approached the young woman working the register and asked her for directions to my friend’s house. She said she couldn’t help me. Then one of her co-workers, a tall young man with black hair and blue eyes, looked at her and asked her if I spoke English.

Furious, I later complained to my friend about the incident. To which he replied, “well, you look pretty Hispanic.” This wasn’t my first encounter with racism; I have had people ask me for a “Bagel-o Sliced-o” when I worked at a bagel shop. But this instance is the most vivid in my mind because at that point I realized the almost continuous racism experienced by people who are placed under the label “Hispanic” in the United States. Thus began my interest in learning about how people think about and group others.

Before I came to Guatemala, I wondered what people would think of me. In the United States people think that I am Hispanic, but I wondered how I would be labeled in Guatemala – would I become my town’s gringo? Could I pass without being noticed if I did not speak? (I was unaware that I would be living in a town where women exclusively wore *traje*.) As it turned out I did not receive just one label – I received several! I felt culturally ambiguous for the first time, and it was great. Of course I was labeled, but these labels varied dramatically from person to person. I was called gringa a few times, some people thought I was Argentinean, some thought Canadian, and some even thought I was a Guatemalan Ladino. On two occasions I even tried to blend in with everyone else in San Antonio, but I am fairly certain that it did not work.

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TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

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When I wore my glasses many people thought I was either Chinese or Japanese. My host family even told people that I was Chinese or Japanese and I knew Kung Fu so that the *borachos* (drunk men) in town would be afraid of me. Unlike John M. Watanabe’s experience in Guatemala where one Mam speaking Chimalteco concluded that his “predilection for Chimalteco life must have originated in his ancestral roots as an “Indian” from a faraway place called Japón,” (1992: 22) the people that I encountered from San Antonio, not only knew what Japón was, but also had a set of ideas of what it meant to be a *Japonesa* and a *Chinita*. At least one family I encountered thought that it meant I could kick some serious butt and catch flies with one hand.

So then I began to wonder, how do people here group others? I knew that I hadn’t changed dramatically in appearance or demeanor in my short flight from the United States to Guatemala, yet my labels had changed dramatically. Suddenly I went from being perceived as Hispanic to being thought of as a gringa/guatemalteca/mexicana/chinita/tourist. Certainly, I enjoyed my state of cultural ambiguity. With my glasses I was one type of tourist, without them I was another. It was like being Superman, who changes from mild-mannered Clark Kent to amazing superhero by simply taking off his glasses and wearing a spandex jumpsuit. I was the opposite, I just had to put *on* my glasses to transform from arachnophobic Nicole Keenan to become San Antonio’s *Superchinita*: Kung Fu Master extraordinaire. Granted, no one *actually* called me *Superchinita*; although, I secretly wished that they had. Regardless, I often heard *China* and *Japonesa* when I wore my glasses. My instant cultural transformation made me curious: what did the people here think about the “other”? How did they perceive the other, how

did they group them, and why was I allowed the luxury of cultural ambiguity in San Antonio Palopó, Guatemala?

Ethnicity in Guatemala

Because this study focuses on how indigenous people in San Antonio Palopó perceive the other, it is important to consider the group that is one of the largest “others” for the indigenous people in Guatemala: Ladinos. Obviously, with the global economy and the influx of people from all over the world, the Guatemalan population has become even more diverse and complex (Adams and Bastos 2003). However, despite this cultural shift and the increasing presence of tourists in Guatemala, the most predominant ethnic groups in Guatemala are still “indígenas” and “ladinos”. When the term was first used, “ladino” described an indigenous person that had learned Spanish or acculturated (c.f. Tax 1941: 21; Sherman 1979: 187; Watanabe 1992: 57). It then developed into a word to describe children who were half indigenous and half Spanish, and by the late sixteenth century – since many of these children were born out of wed-lock – “ladino” and “illegitimate” were seen as similar terms (c.f. Sherman 1979: 319; Watanabe 1992: 57). However, times have changed; now “ladino” generally refers to a person who speaks only Spanish, wears Western clothing, and identifies with Guatemalan national society instead of a local indigenous culture (Watanabe 1992: 254).

Indigenous self-identification has certainly changed over the years and will probably continue to change in the future. Initially, indigenous people in Guatemala did not consider themselves a unified Maya or one part of a Maya kingdom. In fact, the word Maya was even used to describe any other group of native people in the area or in a different town (Restall 2004: 71). However, more recently there has been a shift toward a pan-Maya movement in Guatemala. According to Fisher (2001) it has become more common to self-identify as Mayan instead of a person from a certain town or a speaker of a certain language in towns such as Tecpán and Patzún. This conclusion is based on fieldwork conducted in Guatemala about 10 years ago (c.f. Fisher 2001: 245; Restall 2004: 82).

An Indígena or a Maya now is generally recognized by whether or not they speak an indigenous language such as K'iche, Kaqchikel, or Mam, identify with an indigenous outlook, and identify themselves as part of a local culture. Traditionally a Mayan person was also identified by his or her dress, or *traje*, but many Mayans have changed from traditional clothing to a preference for Western clothing.

There has been a long history of tension between Ladinos and Indígenas. According to John Watanabe in his studies in a Chimalteco community, “the purely cultural practices that distinguish Indian from Ladino continues to impute innate, mutually derogatory racial dispositions: to Maya, Ladinos are by nature arrogant, lazy and untrustworthy; to Ladinos, Indians will be forever brutish and uncivilized” (Watanabe 1992: 57). In the process of my research, however, Ladino/Indígena tensions were described as something of the past. Only rarely did people mention that they felt that Ladinos discriminated against Indígenas, and if someone expressed dislike for Ladinos they rarely explained why. I would not venture to say that this means that there are no longer tensions between the groups, but perhaps instead that it was something that many people did not want to discuss with me or something that simply should not be discussed. Perhaps people did not discuss a dislike for Ladinos because the tensions between these groups are subtle in day-to-day life. Regardless of the reasons, I was not able to uncover many thoughts regarding Ladinos.

Edward Fisher points out that the Ladino and Indigenous tensions are apparent in tourism interactions. Certain tourist brochures published by INGUAT, the state run Guatemalan Tourist

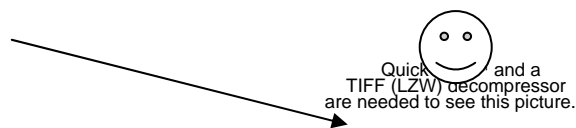
Institute, place heavy emphasis on the country's Mayan history (Fischer 2003: 29). He also mentions that the "Guatemalan candidates in the Miss Universe pageants are always *ladinas*; however, they also always appear in the national costume section of the competition wearing particularly beautiful and elaborately crafted Maya dress" (Fisher 2003: 29). According to Fisher, there are Mayans who complain about these actions saying that they see these advertisements of the Mayan culture as the "worst sort of hypocrisy: racists promoting stereotypical images to the world to enrich themselves by maintaining a system of oppression of Maya peoples" (Fisher 2003: 30).

Tourism and the Maya in Guatemala

Tourism often recognizes that indigenous people have maintained many of their cultural practices, such as speaking an indigenous language. Yet often in relation to this difference, indigenous people are also the objects of a "tourist gaze" that has a tendency to construct them as a "culture and people surviving oppression, modernity, and capitalism through struggle against the nation and racialist elite, creating a monolithic stereotype that erases the heterogeneity and cultural diversity of the Maya" (Casteñeda 2004:36).

Additionally, there is the tourist tendency to see other cultures as traditional and persevering, while viewing one's own culture as modern and dynamic. According to Dean MacCannel (1989), tourism is not only a result of modernity but it also has the purpose of allowing the tourist to contrast the traditional culture with the modern one. MacCannel also asserts that that modern tourism is a reaction against modern influences. He notes that people visit more "traditional" cultures in order to escape from the industrial age and seek a sense of authenticity. However, Erve Chambers notes that the search "is itself an expression of the modernity from which the tourist seeks to escape" (2000: 95). By labeling certain people as traditional, tourism imposes the "pervasive influence of modernity by imagining those few objects of desire that are supposedly not modern" (Chambers 2000: 95). Thus, tourists tend to view the visited culture as static, traditional, and unchanging.

Tourists also tend to distance themselves from the visited culture and objectify its people. While doing a time allocation study with a vendor, or *ambulante*, from San Antonio Palopó who works in Panajachel (a town 30 minutes away from San Antonio that has more tourists), I really saw for the first time the tourist gaze and how it tends to treat the visited people as cultural objects. One weaver, Sandra, who wore traditional San Antonio Palopó *traje*, was nice enough to let me follow her around Panajachel for five hours to document her day. She tried to sell to a group of four people sitting in the outdoor section of a vegetarian restaurant by waving her arm with a hand woven scarf draped over it in their general direction and saying "*chalina*." One of these women promptly took her camera out of her bag and took a picture of Sandra while she was trying to sell. I was so annoyed for Sandra that I took out my camera and took a picture of the tourist while I was standing 5 feet away from her to see how she liked strangers taking her picture. Here is the picture:



Tourists, probably including this woman, have developed conceptions about what it means to be a Maya. Some view them as the persevering Maya who are and have struggled against countless adversities. Others view them as a very traditional people. Some education discourses refer to them as the decedents of the Maya, with the implication that these people are no longer Mayan (Fisher 2003: 121). There are countless other perceptions. In the middle of all of these ideas about the Maya from the outside and tourist attractions displaying Mayan culture, how do the people who are being visited perceive their visitors?

The Study Site

San Antonio Palopó

San Antonio Palopó is a 34 square kilometer municipality that sits on the eastern side of Lake Atitlán and is 1590 meters above sea level (Diagnostico 1995: 12). The weather during my visit was spring-like and, because it was the rainy season, it rained for about 1 to 2 hours almost every day.

San Antonio is a relatively large municipality, but a tranquil town. When I asked people to describe their town some responses that I received were “quiet”, “traditional”, and “religious.” In fact, it is so religious and traditional that it doesn’t even have a liquor shop. Moreover, the only noise pollution, other than the dogs and chickens, is the music blasted from each of the six churches’ body-sized speakers. The traditional aspect of the town is also reflected in the gender division apparent in the town. The women do not leave the house at night, they continue to wear traditional dress, and they typically stay at home with the children, weave on a back strap or foot looms, sell their weavings, or some combination of the three. Men, on the other hand, more often use western clothing, have different jobs than women, weave exclusively on foot looms, and are usually the only people seen in the street at night.

According to the *Diagnostico Del Municipio de San Antonio Palopó* there were about 9024 people living in the municipality in 1995. However, the town does not feel like it has that many inhabitants. The municipality can be divided into two parts: urban and rural. The urban population of San Antonio Palopó was 2212 in 1995 and the rural population was 6812. In the rural area, above the town and to the side, they grow coffee, frijol, anís, and cilantro. The urban area, located in the lower center of the municipality, has a serious space problem. Mainly, there is not enough room for all of the people that live here so the houses are built right on top of each other, and 3 or 4 families share a bathroom. The style of houses in the urban area depends on the wealth of the family living in it. Most houses are covered with corrugated tin. The wealthiest homes are the *chalets*, which are often seasonal homes for the Guatemalan elite. Some of the wealthier people living in San Antonio Palopó have tile floors, patios, and multilevel homes, but there are relatively few of these. People who are able to afford homes of adobe or cinder blocks have them. Others are made of *paja*, or thin bamboo sticks (*caña*) and mud/adobe layered between the sticks.

San Antonio is a relatively ethnically uniform town where over 90% of the residents consider themselves to be indigenous. At least one *Tuneco*, the word people from San Antonio use to describe themselves, said that he thought San Antonio was 100% indigenous. I would tend to agree with him since the only other women that I saw wearing western dress in San Antonio were other students, tourists, and women who work in the municipality but do not live in San Antonio. The most prominent non-indigenous residents of San Antonio are the police and the resort homeowners, the *chaletteros*. The chalets are all on lake-front property and ten times the

size of the homes of most people living in San Antonio. Generally, the chalets are rarely occupied full-time.

I discovered through one of my main contacts, who is a sociologist working to improve the quality of life of the people in the Lake Atitlán area, that there are 102 municipalities in Guatemala that are considered to be in a state of poverty. Of the 102, eleven are considered to be in a state of extreme poverty. Three of those municipalities are in the District of Sololá: San Marcos, San Pablo, and San Antonio Palopó. While tourism is the biggest industry in the District of Sololá, San Antonio is relatively independent of tourism, especially when compared to towns like Panajachel.

The way most people in San Antonio make a living is either through weaving or harvesting onions. There are several people who hire others in the town to weave certain patterns to be exported to Quetzaltenango, Alta Vera Paz, Guatemala City, or Antigua. Many weavers are *ambulantes* who sell their weavings in the streets of Panajachel and San Antonio. There are at least two weaving cooperatives in the town, as well as a ceramics cooperative. A paper maché cooperative is also being organized in town. Weaving with a foot loom is one of the largest moneymakers in town; however, it has only been used for about 28 years in San Antonio, after it was brought over from Quetzaltenango by a few local entrepreneurs. Before this innovation, only the women wove using back-strap looms. However, now both men and women weave. Several people also make their money by caring for chalets. There are 68 chalets in San Antonio; many owned by rich out-of-town Guatemalans, and each chalet often has people from the town working for it. Another resource for money in the town is the pickup trucks, the main form of local transportation. There are 24 pickups and a several men often share the job of working on one pickup. There are also a handful of *lancheros* (boat drivers) from San Antonio, and four or five men who drive minibuses for tourists. Several men in San Antonio are fishermen. However, like many other jobs held by people in San Antonio, the amount of money earned is often not consistent: there are days when they catch many fish and there are days when they catch very little.

Although the town is one of eleven municipalities in Guatemala in an extreme state of poverty, it does have some luxuries that I considered part of daily life in the United States, including cable TV, which was put in a month ago, and *agua potable*, (potable water) which is piped over from Patzún.

Current State of Tourism in San Antonio Palopó

The tourist season in San Antonio is July and August. I conducted a survey of 13 tourists and all of the tourists that I spoke with came to San Antonio by lancha or ferry.

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The Tourists Are Coming!

Ferry Boats and Lanchas are the main forms of transportation for tourists to San Antonio.

Currently, most tourists arrive in San Antonio by lancha, usually as part of a lake tour to visit the church and see the view – which is famed to be the best view of the lake from any town. There is a boat tour that travels from San Pedro to Santiago and then to San Antonio. Typically, when tourists come as a part of this tour, they have already visited the main street in Santiago, the *calle principal*, which is filled with vendors selling a multitude of handcrafts. This street is also known as *calle gringo* because of the large number of tourists that walk up and down it. By the time the tourists reach San Antonio, therefore, they have already visited and spent their money in one of the main tourist shopping areas in the Lake Atitlán area. The tourists usually stay from 30 minutes to an hour visiting the town. Tourists tend not to stay for a prolonged period of time in San Antonio, or to visit it as frequently as other towns, despite the magnificent view, interesting culture, and colonial church. The relatively remote location and the general lack of infrastructure and tourist-related attractions also contribute to the shortness of tourist visits.

If you build it they will come?

Two groups in San Antonio have been formed in order to build and increase tourist attractions in San Antonio, in the hope of increasing both tourist flow and the length of time visited. According to the current mayor of San Antonio Palopó, some of the problems that he hopes to fix in the town are poverty and lack of education. As a result, he and the municipality have formed a committee to improve the quality of life in town through tourism. Additionally, another group, *Asociación de Emprendadores Unidos de San Antonio Palopó* (ADEUSAP) was formed by a selected committee of 75 people that attended a town meeting about local tourism. I had the privilege of attending the group meetings of this second committee and interviewing their current president, Luciano Pérez Pérez. I also had the pleasure of conversing with the mayor about his and the municipality's project to increase tourism to San Antonio.

The municipality's plan for tourism is based on a study done by a student at the University of San Carlos that includes tourist attractions from Panajachel to San Lucas. The model of this plan includes sandy beaches, improved streets, and a two-story building with a restaurant on top and a place for artisans on the bottom. The design of this building is intended to have cultural meaning, with squares to represent the skirt of the men's *traje* and a pointed roof to represent the volcanoes. There will also to be a large circular ramp for the elderly and handicapped to ascend from the lower street near the lake to the main street in front of the church. The municipality's plan also includes improvement of the streets in San Antonio, which currently are relatively inaccessible to tourists. The entire plan has an estimated cost of 4 million quetzals.

ADEUSAP's plan is largely based on ecotourism and has several goals including creating a unique tourist attraction in San Antonio Palopó, incorporating more women and young people in the process of increasing tourism, and working together with other groups in the town to improve tourism. The group's plan also includes home stays with Mayan families and five INTECAP courses that would be offered to the people in San Antonio in order to improve tourism. These classes would include training on how to teach tourists how to weave and make tortillas, tour guide classes, hostel and hotel administration and organization classes, horticulture classes, and onion marketing. The courses would begin in the end of July and would help the people in the town learn how to do the various jobs that would be required for their ecotourism plan. The tour guide course would be 6 months long and end with an official certification. The classes would most likely be offered at night when people had less work.

If tourism is augmented in San Antonio Palopó, then the town's economic dependence on tourism could, in turn, increase. Therefore, I feel that it is important to look to people from San Antonio who are already economically dependent on tourism as a prediction for how the rest of the town might react to the growth of tourism. Additionally, while these town groups have great intentions for San Antonio Palopó, they consist of only a few citizens of the town and could probably use some input from members of the community who work with tourists, but might not have time or be able to attend meetings. Since I was already interested in how people view the "other" and categorized other people, I saw this as a great opportunity to apply my personal interest to a study that might help a town in the quest to improve their quality of life. I hope that my study can help these groups to see how the people who are already involved in tourism feel and think about tourists.

Methods and Limitations

My study focuses mainly on the urban region of San Antonio Palopó, since I was told not to go to the rural regions alone because it was dangerous for a lone female tourist. Moreover, most tourism and tourist attractions, aside from the occasional guided nature walk, occur in the urban area of San Antonio Palopó. The chief target group of my study included people who are economically dependent on tourism in some fashion: people who sell items, or provide transportation or other services to tourists. I also had a second target group of people who are knowledgeable about the town and tourism in San Antonio. These people included the mayor, members of the groups who want to increase tourism, and the tourists themselves. I interviewed 27 people from the first target group and 16 people in the second target group.

The First Target Group: People who work in tourism and are economically dependent on it in some form

The first target group consisted of 17 women and 10 men. Of the 17 women who work with tourists that were interviewed, 14 were *ambulantes* and were on some level economically dependent on selling their products to tourists on the streets. Of the 10 men interviewed, 5 provide transportation. With this group, I used the participant observation method, time allocation, informal conversations, formal interviews, free lists and pile sorts.

Of the 27 formal interviews conducted with the first target group, all of them consisted of a free list and 15 of them contained a pile sort. These interviews lasted anywhere from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. In conducting the free list, I asked the informants to tell me what types of tourists there are. The pile sort group was constructed out of responses from the first nine free lists. For the pile sort, I requested that the interviewees group the words that describe tourists into three groups: ones that they like, do not like, or do not have an opinion about. I also included "ladino" in the pile sort to see how people in San Antonio felt about Ladinos as well. An obvious limitation with my research is that in many of people's eyes I am a tourist, so when I asked people their opinions of tourists, I am essentially an outsider asking them what they think of outsiders. It is like walking up to someone and saying, what do you think of me? Another limitation with the pile sort is that for the most part it required that the subjects have the ability to read. In response to this, I read the cards to two of the pile sort subjects, but it is possible that my voice inflections could have affected their responses.

I also conducted a shadowing time allocation study with one *ambulante* from San Antonio as she went to sell in Panajachel. I followed her around for five hours while she was selling and I wrote down what she was doing every 5 minutes, while also trying not to get in the

way of her negotiations with tourists. Limitations with the shadowing time allocation method are invariably associated with the fact that the subject is aware that you are following them around, so your presence may affect their actions (Mueller 1999: 76).

I attempted to do some decision modeling about what made someone decide to sell to some tourists on the street and not others. However, during the interviews women would say that they offered to all tourists (although I had seen that this was not the case). So I tried some decision modeling during the shadowing time allocation study and while sitting with women selling in the street. This was a much more successful approach. However, due to time limitations I was not able to gather a significant amount of data with this method.

Another limitation in my research with this target group was also my inability to speak Kaqchikel. Moreover, some of the people I would have liked to interview did not speak Spanish. Additionally, I was only in San Antonio for 6 weeks, which was not enough time to complete all of the research I would have liked. I wanted to do at least two sessions of fixed-spot time allocation, where I would have sat at a café on Santander Street in Panajachel observing how the vendors and *ambulantes* from San Antonio sell their products. Unfortunately, the only day I had time available to conduct fixed spot time allocation, there was only one *ambulante* from San Antonio to be seen on Santander Street and I had already completed my shadowing time allocation with her. Beyond all of these limitations, I feel that the most apparent limitation in my research was that I was a novice anthropologist conducting fieldwork for the first time.

The Second Target Group: Prominent members of the community knowledgeable about tourism and tourists in order to gain a context for my research

The second target group consisted of 16 people, 13 of which were tourists. With this group I used formal interviews and surveys as my main form of data collection. I formally interviewed 3 prominent members of the community, and each of these interviews lasted roughly 45 minutes. For the tourist survey, I approached tourists who had visited San Antonio and were standing in front of the church. Limitations associated with the survey are that most tourists are only in San Antonio for 30 minutes as a part of a tour and I asked some qualitative questions that required some time to answer.

Hypothesis

Keeping in mind my limitations in this study, trying to figure out how and what people think is a grand task in itself, without even approaching how people feel and think about other *people*. Without trying to oversimplify the thought processes of the people who were gracious enough to aid me in my study, I expected to find that direct interactions with tourists and the media would be two of many factors to have an impact on how people from San Antonio perceived tourists. I also expected to find that tourist's nationalities would dictate groupings of tourists and impressions of them.

Tourists in San Antonio Palopó: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

Categories of Tourists: The Good and The Bad

When I asked people about different types of tourists, I was often told that there were two groupings, “good” tourists and “bad” tourists – before I had even asked about preferences in tourists. The good tourists were those who generally helped the people of San Antonio in one way or another; the bad tourists were generally the cheap ones or the ones who were difficult in business negotiations (i.e. the ones that don't speak Spanish). Some phrases used to describe the

“good” tourists included that the tourists like to joke, talk, understand Spanish and spend their money. The “bad” tourists were people that were perceived to be cheap, generally do not speak Spanish, or do not benefit San Antonio. The “bad” tourists were a combination of people who did not interact with the people of the town: they did not talk to them, did not buy anything, and seemed disinterested. The pile sort results back up this idea of a tourist. When many of the informants explained why they did not like a certain type of tourist, if they disliked any, it was because that type of tourist could not speak Spanish, was not interested in talking, or did not want to spend their money on the individual’s products.

Several people in the free list interview listed the different countries people were from, and then elaborated that they preferred the people from the countries that generally understood Spanish or were perceived to buy more things, for one reason or another. Others in the free list divided their groups in to those that are rich, middle class, and “hippies” or “mochilleros” (backpackers). These informants said that they did not like the people that might be classified as low-budget tourist.

People seem to generally think of tourists in two planes, if they buy and if they are easy to communicate with. The country of origin is a secondary attribute of the tourist instead of the main categorization as I had anticipated in my hypothesis. Preference is generally given to people who are willing spend their money (or help; spending money and helping are often seen as synonymous) or they can communicate with more easily. Any dislike for any people from any specific country is justified with “they don’t buy a lot” or “I can’t communicate with them (they don’t like to talk or they can’t speak Spanish).”

The Ugly: The problems wide scale that are a result of tourists

More tourism in San Antonio has the potential to mean more money passing through the town. But with tourists there are also wide-scale problems that extend beyond categories of tourists. More tourists, good or bad, can become a problem for the town. Tourists not only travel with their money, but also their traditions, their illnesses, their habits, and their judgments.

When I asked one informant about tourists he said that there were advantages and disadvantages to increased tourism. He said the advantages were that they will come and buy things, they will rent rooms, they will eat, and they can look at the view and look at the traditions and partake in some of them. The disadvantages he listed were sexually transmitted diseases, the possibility that they might teach their culture to the people in the town, and the possibility that they might smoke and bring drugs to San Antonio. This informant seemed to sum it all up. With increased cultural interaction the town will inevitably change. Whether or not these changes are positive or negative depends largely on how tourism projects in San Antonio develop. There is also the risk that tourists will come to the town and not help at all, thus creating resentment within the town.

The Gender Divide: Just like a Middle School Dance

At 6:30 I went to Florencia's home to have dinner – she was running around the kitchen getting things prepared. In her face you could see that she seemed preoccupied with something. I asked her if she was feeling well. She shrugged her head to the side and asked why the meeting is so late. I said I don't know and I apologized for the inconvenience of having to make me dinner a little earlier than usual. She said that wasn't a problem, it's just that a meeting starting at 7 is too late for women. She said she has daughters and she wants them to be home early and when it's dark because something could happen to them and she would be very bothered and upset if

someone hurt them. She said if they died of sickness or got sick it would be different, but if someone hurts them she would be more upset. She was emphatic about saying that she did not want my mother to be upset if someone hurt me. She told me to ask the professor if it was okay to ask the men at the meeting to change the meeting time. I told her the men from the meeting walk Emily home and me so that we are safe. Then she asked me if they were good men, because if they are good men it is okay but how do you know they are good men or not? I told her I thought they were good men, and she insisted that I ask the professor if I should still go to the meetings/or see if the meeting time could change.

The gender roles in San Antonio are extremely divided. Women do not leave the house to walk in the street at night unless they have a specific reason. Men have begun to wear western clothing, but it would be shameful if a women chose to wear anything but a *huipil*, *corte*, and *sinta* (head wrap). If women wear western clothing, they only do so outside of the boundaries of San Antonio. One girl told me that she dressed just like me in Xela where she goes to school, but always changes back into *traje* to come back to San Antonio. Men and women also have very different jobs. The only people from San Antonio that are *ambulantes* are women. During my time allocation study with one woman, she tried to sell 30 times and did not sell to a single tourist. This data may be skewed because I was following my informant, Sandra, and she knew that I would buy something from her. However, she also me that she was feeling tired and that her foot hurt her. Men weave on a foot loom and make things to sell, but the women are the only ones who sell in the street. Men often stay in the stores in San Antonio to sell their goods. Men are also exclusively in charge of transportation for tourists. These job differences greatly affected the results I received in the pile sort and during interviews.

If you look at the pile sort chart in the appendix you will see that men and women have very different responses. Perhaps the disparity is due to the fact that all women interviewed were *ambulantes* and all men interviewed had different jobs – some owned stores and some provided transportation for tourists. Their interactions with tourists may be affected based on their different types of employment. Women overall had more negative sentiments about tourists and seemed to focus much more on whether or not a person could speak Spanish, whether an individual is from country that is likely to speak Spanish, and if the individual was from a country whose tourists are known not to spend very much. The least popular tourists were “China” and “Holondesa”. The reason for not liking these people was most often stated as “they don’t speak/understand Spanish.” The men overall seemed more positive about tourists; preferring ones that they can communicate well with and ones who provide business for them. The men were not very positive about tourists who did not provide money for them or help for the town. The least favorite tourists among the men were *mochilleros* (who were also described as poor tourists and hippies). The people I spoke to that did not like this type of tourist generally did not like them because they did not do any good for the town, and because they just travel through without buying anything.

I think that the differences in attitude toward tourists among men and women can be attributed to the different interactions with tourists each gender through their different jobs. When women sell in the street, they approach the tourists with their products. Sometimes tourists are friendly, want to talk, and buy things, but more often women encounter tourists that shake their heads and say that they do not want to buy anything. Some tourists respond negatively to the *ambulantes* by taking their pictures without permission or getting angry when they are approached. Additionally, there seems to be a divide among the women who sell weavings to

tourists: they are competitors. Women who sell to tourists in San Antonio stay there because they say that there are too many people selling in Panajachel, while women who sell in Panajachel say that there are already women selling in San Antonio or they are already affiliated with a standing store in San Antonio. During my conversations and encounters with various women from different weaving groups, it seemed that there are strains of territorialism among the women weavers of San Antonio. Men, on the other hand, are in positions where tourists come to them to ask for their services. Men do not need to haggle with tourists to the extent the women do and men, due to the type of work they have, do not have to approach tourists for business. The men from San Antonio are lancha drivers, pickup drivers, microbus drivers, hotel managers, and store owners. When a tourists buys a product or service from them, it is more often the tourist that requests the service or initiates negotiations, for example, by walking into a store or reserving a hotel room. Although men will shout in the street in Panajachel at tourists – yelling destinations like Antigua for bus trips – many of these men are not from San Antonio. It seems with this disparity in jobs held by men and women, women are more likely to have negative ideas of tourists because they are more often ignored by tourists.

So what is a tourist?

One of my questions in my interviews was “what is a tourist?”. Most people seemed to have an easier time telling me about the different kinds of tourists and whom they liked, than they did defining what a tourist actually is. Maybe it’s like walking up to someone and saying, “Hey, what’s a human?” Those who were able/willing to tell me what they thought a tourist is, generally told me that a tourist is someone who comes to the town to see the view, to learn about the culture, and to buy things. However, in the process of the free-lists, pile sorts and my time in San Antonio, I was also able to ascertain, at some level, how people think about tourists and, thus, what they think a tourist is.

Tourists are often thought of as commodities. People’s interactions and conversations with me about tourists reflected this idea. They like the tourists that are easy to work with, friendly, and most importantly: spend their money. They dislike the tourists that are difficult to work with (those that do not speak Spanish) and do not spend money. The two groups formed to increase tourism in the town acutely reflect the idea that tourists are thought to be commodities because both groups hope to increase tourism in the town as a way of raising its economic status.

Nicole Keenan by day, *Superchinita* by night...but a commodity all the time

So what does this collected information mean for my status of cultural ambiguity here? Why was I afforded multi-ethnicity in one town? When I was in San Antonio, I was definitely an outsider, but everyone thought I was from different places. I have ascertained that – as a tourist – I was often seen as a commodity. But why was I given so many different labels with so many different meanings? Part of the ambiguity, I believe, comes from the fact that I consider myself biracial, half Filipino and half Irish. However, I thought that here I would just be considered an American in Guatemala, as that was my experience when I traveled elsewhere. In the United States people generally think that I am Hispanic. Here my cultural status was different, and I was not given just one label that almost everyone agreed upon. My label changed daily, so something must be different here compared to the United States. In San Antonio Palopó, I believe that part of my ambiguity comes from the fact that tourists come from a wide range of places, and that most discussions of tourists do not seem to be about specific kinds of tourists, but usually about tourists in general. “*Japonesa*”, “*China*”. “*Gringa*”, and “*Mexicana*” are

secondary thoughts to the idea that I am an outsider and a tourist. I am a tourist; this is my label. If I am tourist that speaks Spanish and buys things, then I am a good tourist (and with my huge size suitcase full of textiles I was a *very* good tourist), while other more specific labels are more or less descriptors of the broader label of tourist.

Where do people learn about tourists? Where do the labels come from?

When I asked people where they learned about tourists I got a wide range of responses. Some said that they learned about tourists by interacting with them, others said that people learned about tourists from other people in the town, and some told me that people could go take classes in Panajachel about tourists. Due to the wide range of answers, I am under the impression that people interpreted my question differently. Tourism is a popular focus of study in Guatemala, so when I asked where people learned about tourists, many naturally thought I was referring to learning about the subject of tourism.

Courses about tourism aside, knowledge about tourists varies from person to person. In the process of my research I discovered that people had several ideas of different labels and their respective meanings, indicating that knowledge about tourists comes from a wide range of sources and individual experiences. For instance an *Americano* could either be a person with lots of money, a *Norte Americano*, a *Gringo*, or a *Centro Americano*. There was also some variance in the word *pobre* (poor). Some people did not see the poor as tourists at all, and when they encountered this word in the pile sort they said, “I like the poor because I am poor.” Others expressed this opinion in the interview process by saying that a tourist was someone with lots of money. The one type of tourist that everyone liked were the volunteers; the ones that want to help the poor.

Due to the wide range of definitions of tourists, I think that thoughts and ideas about tourists are based more on an individual level and depend on an individual’s level of education, economic status, and type of interaction with tourists. Obviously the media has some influence, as evidenced by one young boy I ran into who thought that all Chinese people knew Kung Fu, as well as Florencia’s account of the Chinese catching flies. However, the individual’s experiences and interactions seem to have the largest influence on thoughts about tourists. I knew a family that had a guide bring tourists to their home so that the tourists could learn how to weave on a foot loom, and each time they visited, tourists bought something from this family. In the pile sort every member of this family said that they liked guides. However, when interviewing *ambulantes* in the streets of Panajachel, many of them indicated that they did not like guides because the guides tell the tourists to buy elsewhere.

Those who divided the tourists into rich, middle class, and poor categories, were among the wealthier people in San Antonio. Many others, who did not hold as much economic clout in San Antonio, did not seem to know what was meant by “middle class”. The tourists that each individual did not like were generally those that did not help them economically, but their categorizations and preferences changed depending on the type of job and experiences each individual had. There are a multitude of factors that influence how people think, let alone how they think about other people, and I could not have hoped to find all of them in the short period of 6 weeks. There are undoubtedly more factors involved in what the people of San Antonio think of tourists, and these can only be uncovered with more studies and more time.

So what do the tourists think?

Talking with tourists who were visiting San Antonio Palopó was mildly difficult, and it took a period of several days to gather results from 13 tourists. Why? Well, most tourists only have 30 minutes in San Antonio and they are in a rush to leave. Additionally, since they are only in town for a short time they really have not been around long enough to form an opinion of it. Plus, the tourists come in small waves about 3 or 4 times a day, and during each wave I only had enough time to interview 2 or 3.

All of the tourists that I spoke with came to San Antonio by lancha and all but two were passing through as part of a tour, however, some came on their own to see the town. I did not encounter tourists traveling with very young children (3 and under), with the exception of one large family from Guatemala. Everyone was traveling with other people. I began to understand how the women selling goods to tourists feel on a daily basis when several tourists ignored me. Even when some tourists granted me an interview, they did not seem to be terribly enthusiastic about answering my questions, many often answering my questions with, "I don't know." However, I was able to ascertain some of what the tourists liked and did not like about the town. The features of the town that were most favored by the tourists were the view, the church, the traditional culture and feel of the town. Some tourists were adamantly against the idea of the town losing its culture and the inclusion of more "western" tourism features in the town. The problems and concerns expressed by tourists I interviewed were about the trash in the streets and the lack of/poor quality of public bathrooms.

Conclusion

Without tourism I can't do anything, without tourists I can't do anything.

-A vendor from San Antonio

Tourists are coming to San Antonio, and the people I studied want them. Even granted that my target group was people who are already dependent on tourism in some form, the town's acute dependency on tourism seemed very apparent. For some families, tourism and selling to the whims of tourists are their only sources of income. Moreover, the competition among weaving groups, and the resulting harsh sentiments, may be augmented with increased tourism and length of tourist visits in San Antonio. However, the increased availability of tourist money also has the potential to improve the quality of life of the people of San Antonio. Tourists often come and want to help the people in the town, giving them clothes, toiletries, and money. I know at least one woman that supports all of her children and sends them to school with only the money she makes from tourists. Tourists also give her some of their clothes and the family has a small collection of toiletries that were given to them by visiting tourists. However, there is a danger in seeing the growth of the tourism industry as the end-all-be-all way of improving the quality of life in San Antonio. One must that remember San Marcos is also a new hub for new age tourism in the Lake Atitlán area, but is still one of eleven municipalities in the country in a state of extreme poverty.

Based on the data from the first target group, it seems my respondents would react favorably to increased tourism to the town as long as it brings them direct monetarily benefits. However, if there were no direct exchange of money, this group would react negatively. Thus, I suspect that if this group, which is dependant on tourism, would react negatively, the rest if the town would follow suit. The categorizations and thoughts about tourists that were shared with me seemed to see them mainly as a commodity which can be used to help improve the town. Additionally, most people preferred tourists that spent their money on their products. So as long

as tourists are coming, and their money is going into the pockets of people in San Antonio, I think that they will react favorably to increased tourism in their town.

The people in the town also prefer tourists that want to interact and talk to them on a personal level, and the tourists have indicated that they like the culture in the town. So it seems that increased interactions between tourists and the people of the town would be considered favorable, although with more tourists there are also several downsides and obstacles which must be considered. If the groups trying to bring tourism to the town can attract the preferred types of tourists (those that spend their money and appreciate the culture of the town), however, their hard work and ideas have the potential to improve quality of life in San Antonio.

In the end, I hope that the community of San Antonio Palopó can use the data that I have assembled in order to anticipate how the town might react to an increase in tourism. Additionally, I hope my study helps the groups working to promote tourism growth to gain a better understanding of the opinions of the people of San Antonio Palopó towards increasing tourism in their town.

Future Research Possibilities

Having only 6 weeks in a town that still remains an enigma to me, I was unable to venture down every theoretical avenue that I would have liked. I think it would be interesting to do this particular study with more decision modeling and more time allocation. That way, instead of hearing what *Tunecos* have to say about other tourists one could really see how they interact with tourists and thus gain an understanding of perceptions of tourists at a deeper level. Additionally, another researcher might gain different results as a result of differences in gender, age, ethnicity, and language abilities.

Stepping away from tourist groupings in San Antonio, I think it would be interesting to study various changes in the town. San Antonio Palopó is by no means an unchanging town. Not only are there are efforts to increase tourism, but the men that once wore *traje* have begun to show a preference for western clothing, and according to *Tunecos* themselves the annual town Fiesta has changed significantly in the past year. I would have liked to study people's perceptions of the Fiesta, how it has changed, and why.

Additionally, one aspect of San Antonio that I found the especially interesting is the gender divide. People in other towns around the lake indicated that the gender divide in San Antonio was more pronounced than in neighboring towns like San Lucas. I am extremely curious about the gender divide in San Antonio – what it means locally to be a man or a woman, and how these roles are changing with the growth of tourism and changes in the town.

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Appendix: Data Collected and Tables

Decision Modeling: Who Buys and Doesn't Buy

I attempted to do decision modeling with women ambulantes using the question, “why did you approach that tourist and not this other one?”, because the nature of their work requires more active selling techniques. With this information I discovered that ambulantes in Panajachel tend not to offer items to tourists that they believe are Guatemala nationals because they are from here and are not going to buy. Tourists walking in large groups away from the docks sometimes are not approached because they look as if they have come from a tour of the lake, and so have just come from Santiago and spent their money there. Younger tourists are not approached as often as older tourists because they are perceived to buy less. Due to time limitations, I was not able to employ this method a significant number of times, but I was able to collect the following data.

General Trends of Who is Perceived to Buy from Ambulantes

Information Gathered through Interviews, Free lists, Pile sorts and Decision Modeling

Those Who Buy	Those Who Don't Buy
North Americans	Nationals – people from here
French	Tourists walking in large groups from the docks
Older Tourists	Younger Tourists
Rich Tourists	Those with a Guide
	Poor Tourists
	Chinese
	Cheap Tourists
	Dutch

Pile Sort Results

X = those that were liked

O = those that were not liked

_ = did not have an opinion or did not know what it was

Bold denotes male informants and male totals

Informant	A	A	A	E	E	E	E	E	D	F	F	D	D	D	I	Total	Total	Total
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	X	O	-
	7	6	2	4	5	6	8	9	8	4	2	4	1	2	2			
Americano	_	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	_	11 (7,4)	2 (1,1)	2 (1,1)
Holondesa	O	O	X	O	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	_	7 (2,5)	7 (7,0)	1 (0,1)
Japones	O	_	X	X	O	O	X	O	X	X	_	X	X	X	_	8(4,4)	4(4,0)	3(1,2)
Gringo	O	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	_	10(5,5)	4(4,4)	1(0,1)
Aleman	X	O	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11(5,6)	4(4,0)	0
Ladino	_	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	11(6,5)	3(2,1)	1(1,0)
Los que hablan español	X	_	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12(6,6)	2(2,0)	1(1,0)
Los que no hablan español	O	_	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	_	8(3,5)	5(5,0)	2 (1,1)
Nacionales	X	_	_	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	_	7(4,3)	5(3,2)	3(2,1)
Extranjeros	_	_	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11(5,6)	2(2,0)	2(2,0)
Europeos	_	_	_	X	O	O	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	9(3,6)	3(3,0)	3(3,0)
China	_	O	O	O	O	O	X	O	O	X	_	X	X	X	_	5(1,4)	7(7,0)	3(1,2)
Los de Francia	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	_	12(7,5)	2(2,0)	1(0,1)
Los de Italia	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	_	10(6,4)	4(3,1)	1(0,1)
Mochilleros	O	_	_	X	O	O	O	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	6(3,3)	7(3,3)	3(3,0)
Ricos	X	O	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11(5,6)	4(4,0)	0
Clase Medio	X	X	_	X	O	X	X	X	_	X	X	_	X	X	_	10(6,4)	1(1,0)	4(2,2)
Pobres	O	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	_	O	O	X	X	X	8(5,3)	6(4,2)	1(0,1)
Los que quieren ayudar los pobres	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15	0	0
Los que les encantan la naturaleza	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12(6,6)	3(3,0)	0
Los que tienen guía	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	_	8(4,4)	6(5,1)	1(0,1)