



BUYING CULTURE: INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS IN GUATEMALA

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International travelers have a growing influence on host cultures in the 20th century, in part due to the purchases made during their travels. These purchases take many forms that include purchases for oneself, as gifts, and for resale. Moreover, academicians note that tourists devote approximately one-third of their expenditures to shopping (Littrell, Baizerman, Kean, Gahring, Niemeyer, Reilly, & Stout, 1994).

Methods in this study included structured interviews conducted by two teams of Earthwatch volunteers who assisted the Principal Investigator. Data were collected in Antigua, Guatemala during Summer 1999 and interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, or Japanese. Data were analyzed with NUDIST and Excel computer software programs.

Demographic data illustrate that informants held citizenship from 32 countries with a total of 269 interviews conducted. Subjects were comprised of 60% women and 40% men.

Purchases fell into a range of types. Often salient meanings of purchases were associated with unique interactions with indigenous Maya or objects that reflected indigenous culture. In fact, these interactions were sighted as some of the most meaningful experiences by all informants. Single males tended to purchase fewer, more utilitarian items while married females regularly made purchases that included home items. While men bought fewer mementos of their travel, the items themselves often held salient meanings for them. For informants, meaningful interactions with indigenous Maya contributed to tourists' purchases and the overall quality of their travel experiences in Guatemala.

Littrell, M. A., Baizerman, S., Kean, R., Gahring, S., Niemeyer, S., Reilly, R., & Stout, J. (1994). Souvenirs and tourism styles. *Journal of Travel Research*, 32(1), 3-11.