

Spirituality for Sale
An Analysis of Ayahuasca Tourism

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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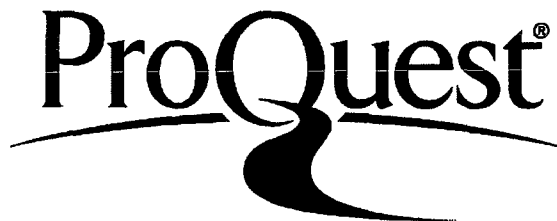
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has been approved

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically examines the complex social and cultural phenomenon of spiritual tourism, by interrogating the structures of knowledge, power, image and representation through the lens of ayahuasca tourism. Ayahuasca has been used by shamans for centuries in health and healing services, obtained largely through the means of hallucinogenic visions. Ayahuasca tourism involves Western tourists who travel to South America to participate in tours which include the drinking of ayahuasca.

Drawing on post-colonial and critical cultural theories, this analysis extends the theorizing of spiritual tourism by examining the ethical issues involved in commodifying spirituality and by exploring the cultural consequences of consumerism. Using a mixed-method approach, this work addresses the central ethical dilemma presented by ayahuasca tourism: to what extent is Amazonian culture and spirituality appropriated and commodified and in what ways does this help or harm the communities in question?

In order to assess both how these tours are marketed and sold, as well as to explore the potential impact of these tours on local Peruvian shamans, tour brokers, and community members, I conducted my research in two phases. First, I conducted a critical discourse and visual analysis of six ayahuasca tourism websites to assess both the discourses and representation of actors present on the sites. Second, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Iquitos, Peru, interviewing various actors, visiting tour lodges and observing ayahuasca ceremonies.

Key findings from the discourse analysis suggest that the discourse of ayahuasca tourism has severed the ceremonial use of ayahuasca from its indigenous roots, making

ayahuasca ahistorical and more easily appropriated. Additional findings from my fieldwork in Peru indicate that the commodification of ayahuasca as a both a plant and ceremony has resulted in a complex industry, one which presents both benefits and burdens to the local communities.

DEDICATION

There are many people to thank – many who made this experience possible. First, I could not have made it through this crazy journey without the enduring love, support and laughter of my two best friends, Kim Jules Kuhry and Francine Banner. Jules thanks for the past 20 years of friendship - especially for providing me an oasis in Seattle, when I needed a break from the AZ “heat.” Francine, I thank you for your brilliant academic insights and your wonderful sense of humor. Marie was right: We definitely have “something in common.” I also thank my family: my brothers, Matthew - who supported me and Stephen, who inspired me; my sister, Kathy, who believed in me, and my niece, Kari – who epitomizes peace and grace (and makes me laugh like mad). I also need to send special thanks to my Uncle Charlie, the only PhD/professor in my family; I thank you for your generous gift in support of my academic aspirations. I’m only sorry you didn’t get to see me follow in your footsteps. I also want to thank Chloe and Riley for being so patient and understanding with me—when I had to write instead of playing with you. You are great kids and I love you very much – and, guess what...I’m ready to play!

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Chapter 1

Spirituality for Sale: An Introduction

When I have partaken of aya-huasca, my head has immediately begun to swim, then I have seemed to enter on an aerial voyage, wherein I thought I saw the most charming landscapes, great cities, lofty towers, beautiful parks, and other delightful things. Then all at once I found myself deserted in a forest and attacked by beasts of prey, against which I tried to defend myself. Lastly, I began to come around, but with a feeling of excessive drowsiness, headache, and sometimes general malaise. (Villavicencio, 1858)

In 1858, Ecuadorian Manuel Villavicencio became the first non-indigenous person known to ingest ayahuasca and record his experience (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1975, p. 30). Though English botanist Richard Spruce consumed ayahuasca seven years earlier, he only managed to drink one cup and reported no significant effects, resulting in Villavicencio's notoriety as the first non-native to document an ayahuasca-induced state of altered consciousness (Ott, 1996).¹ Throughout the next two centuries, intrepid foreigners such as naturalists, anthropologists and writers continued to travel to the Amazon in pursuit of this medicinal plant. However, without accurate records, it is impossible to gauge exactly how many people came during this time.

In the mid 1950s, Harvard ethnobotanist Richard Schultes was credited with the first modern, academic exploration of the properties of ayahuasca (Schultes & Hoffman, 1979). Still, interview and anecdotal data suggest that general Western interest in

¹ Spruce is noted to have consumed ayahuasca in 1851 with the Tukano community in Vaupés, a department of Columbia which borders Brazil.

ayahuasca did not rise until the 1960s as a result of both the counter-culture movement in the United States and the influence of popular literary works such as the *The Yagé Letters* (Burroughs & Ginsberg, 1975) and *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (Castaneda, 1968). In spite of this brief increase in attention, ayahuasca continued to be known and sought after by only a small number of adventurous people – to those few interested in alternative experiences and ideologies, that is, until the mid-1980s.²

In 1984, ethnobotanist Dennis McKenna completed his thesis work on ayahuasca in the Amazona and published an article (along with G.H.N. Towers and F. Abbot) in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*; however, this work focused primarily on the chemical constituents of ayahuasca and not the experiential or historical aspects. It appears that ayahuasca's curative, spiritual and "mind-bending" properties entered into the "New Age" and psychedelic drug consciousness as a result of a different article; journalist Peter Gorman's cover article "Ayahuasca – Mindbending Drug of the Amazon" published in 1986 in *High Times*.³ Reportedly, this article was picked up by other journals and word of ayahuasca spread, resulting in a 25% increase in new trip requests (specifically which

² Though Terence McKenna is credited with pursuing the brew in 1976, his published work on this journey, *True Hallucinations* did not occur until 1994 (Dennis McKenna, personal communication, 2010).

³ Gorman's (1986) article, "Ayahuasca: Mind-bending Drug of the Amazon" was reportedly the first of its kind in a national magazine.

included ayahuasca) among the two primary tour companies in Iquitos shortly after its publication.⁴



Figure 1. Map of Peru – retrieved with permission from the CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pe.html>.

Over next twenty years, three more significant events occurred, bolstering ayahuasca’s popularity and increasing the development of the ayahuasca tourism industry in Iquitos. First, Terence McKenna’s chronicle of his Amazonian experiences, *True Hallucinations* (1994) was published, gaining a fair amount of press and attention among both the academic and alternative audiences. Next, American ex-pat, author and shamanic entrepreneur, Alan Shoemaker took a local Peruvian shaman “on tour” (to

⁴ The foreign born owners of Explorama and Amazon Tours informed Gorman that within months of his article appearing, not only did the tours business pick up, but all new customers requested that ayahuasca be included – resulting in the first wave of “ayahuasca tourism” in the region (personal communication, Peter Gorman June 29, 2009 and March 23, 2010). Subsequently, Gorman refers to himself as “Ground Zero” for ayahuasca tourism (though he reports he is not entirely comfortable with the term, ayahuasca tourism).

“perform” ayahuasca ceremonies) to the United States and Europe increasing ayahuasca visibility within western New Age circles. Then, in 2005, Shoemaker held his first annual “Shamanism Conference,” which brought (and continues to bring) over 150 shaman seekers to the Peruvian Amazon. Along with these events, the Internet produce websites devoted to the topic such as “ayahuasca.com.”⁵ Through these many routes, ayahuasca has evolved from an exotic, little known Amazonian vine to a globalized, more mainstream “medicine,” “drug,” or “sacred visionary plant” – a plant for which an entire tourism industry has developed. In order to more thoroughly introduce this topic, I turn now to a brief explanation of ayahuasca itself – “sacred medicinal plant of the Peruvian Amazon” (Luna, 1986).

AYAHUASCA IN THE AMAZON

Ayahuasca is considered to be the most widely employed hallucinogen in the Amazon, with combinations based on the *Banisteriopsis* genus, found in more than 70 different ethnic groups representing 20 language families in the Amazon basin and other areas of South America (Luna, 1986 in Winkelman 2005; Ott 1996). The importance of ayahuasca and its iconography in the cosmology, myths, and practices of many Amazonian tribes reflects the long history of ayahuasca use among those cultures (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1983; McKenna, 1999; Znamenski, 2007). The ayahuasca tea, as discussed throughout this work, is made by brewing the *Banisteriopsis caapi* (the

⁵ Described as “Exploring Ayahuasca, the healing, creative, botanical and scientific aspects of the Amazonian Great Medicine” this website offers an immense amount of information on ayahuasca. Additional websites which include similar topics are “tribe.net” and “yage.net.”

vine) with other plants that generally contain tryptamine alkaloids such as *psychotira viridis* (the leaves/bush). Brewed together, these plants most often produce dimethyltryptamine, known as DMT, the strength and psychoactive effect varying greatly depending on the preparation. Traditional uses of ayahuasca as found in the literature include: magical and religious uses, divination, cultural uses, and notably among the mestizo shamans, for healing (Dobkin de Rios, 1972, p. 37-47; Luna, 1983)⁶. Ayahuasca has also been used in ethno-medicine among indigenous and mestizo populations in Peru, Columbia and Ecuador (McKenna, 2004).

Once brewed, the tea is ingested, most often during a shaman-led ritual or ceremony, usually occurring at night (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1983; Winkelmen, 2005). Approximately 35-40 minutes after it is ingested, participants experience the hallucinogenic effect, including dream-like reveries (some of the more common visions include the “boa,” and other snakes (Dobkin de Rios, 1972), feeling of alertness and stimulation, as well as nausea and vomiting (Luna, 1983; McKenna, 2004).⁷ Shaman-led

⁶ Examples within these broad categories list ayahuasca as used: to tell whether strangers are coming, to learn whereabouts of enemies and to discover their plans, to cause illness to another through psychic means in witchcraft, to use a preventative agent against the malice of others and for pleasure and social interaction. Dobkin de Rios (1972) provides a comprehensive, detailed outline of the literature conducted on the historical use of ayahuasca in the Amazon – see pages 38-42, figures 3.1-3.3 for a complete discussion.

⁷ Ayahuasca is described throughout the literature as a “purgative” or substance to cleanse and heal the body and mind (Grunwell, 1994; Halpern, 2001; Luna, 1986; McKenna, 2004; Znamenski, 2007).

chants, incantations and songs (*icaros*)⁸ surround the participants as they experience the ayahuasca (Dobkin de Rios, 1972, Luna, 1986).

AYAHUASCA: A COMPLEX PHENOMENON

Ayahuasca seems to appeal to people unconcerned with traditional modals of life, people searching for the extraordinary, the remarkable and unusual facets of life. That there even exists a tourist industry to serve this population strikes me as amazing. That this industry is heavily advertised and available to anyone with financial means to undertake a trip, that it is not a hush-hush experience available only to a select few in the psychedelic drug underground, is perhaps even more astonishing. (Grunwell, 1998, p. 62)

As Grunwell suggests, indigenous and mestizo communities in the Amazon Basin have been experiencing a unique type of tourism in the past twenty years: ayahuasca tourism. Sometimes referred to as drug tourism (Dobkin de Rios, 1994, 2005) or spiritual tourism (Winkelman, 2005), this new form typically involves non-indigenous, Western tourists who purchase all-inclusive trips to the Peruvian jungles to participate in shaman-led ceremonies that include the drinking of the hallucinogenic tea ayahuasca. Ayahuasca is reported to produce intensely vivid, colorful and sometimes frightening hallucinations or visions (Luna & Amaringo, 1999; McKenna, 1999; Winkelman, 2005,

⁸ *Icaros* are the songs sung, hummed or whistled by the shamans during the ayahuasca ceremony. Referring to these “magic chants”, ayahuasca scholar Luna (1986) describes the “power” of the *vegetalista* (shaman) as “embedded” in the icaro (p. 99). The word “icaro” seems to be from the Quichua verb “ikaray” which means “to blow smoke” in order to heal (Luna, 1986, p. 100).

p. 210).⁹ Ingested by indigenous peoples for centuries, it has been incorporated in the past hundred years into the services administered by *mestizo*¹⁰ shamans as well. Though their practices vary somewhat, both groups utilize ayahuasca in providing health and healing services to their local communities (Dobkin de Rios, 1994; Luna 2003). While several studies have examined ayahuasca tourism and argue that it is increasing in popularity (Dobkin de Rios, 1994, 2005; Grunwell, 1998; Luna, 2003; Winkelman, 2005), few have investigated this trend and its implications for local culture and peoples in depth.

According to ayahuasca scholar Luis Eduardo Luna (2003), “The use of ayahuasca by indigenous and non-indigenous practitioners and in shamanic, religious and non-religious rituals has created a complex phenomenon” (p. 47). However, the research on ayahuasca tourism has yet to examine this phenomenon in a comprehensive way. There is no study which interrogates both the origins and the impacts of ayahuasca tourism (Stronza, 2001); none which integrate the voices of both the tourists and the local peoples from whom the indigenous knowledge and ceremony originate. Additionally, no research examines specifically the role of the broker or middleman in the industry, a role

⁹ In the Quechua language, ayahuasca means “Vine of the Soul” (aya-soul/dead, also “spirit” “ancestor” and wasca or huasca –vine or “rope”) and refers to the twisting mariri vine whose botanical designation is *Banisteriopsis Caapi* (or *b. caapi*) (Grob 1996 as found in Trimble, 2004). Ayahuasca is known throughout South America by a variety of names, dependent on the geographic region and the people within that region. These names include: *caapi*, *dápa*, *mihi*, *kahi*, *natemä*, *pindé*, and *yajé* (Schultes & Hofmann, 1992).

¹⁰ The term “mestizo” is used here akin to Luna’s (1986) conceptualization of *mestizo* as a socio-cultural construct, rather than ethnic or racial category, with the key commonality of *mestizo* people being the use of Spanish as their “mother tongue” (p. 15).

which carries much socio-economic power but is widely understudied and minimally understood (Cheong & Miller, 2000, van den Berghe & Keyes, 1984). Finally, there is a dearth of tourism research focused on the broader topic of spiritual tourism (Garfinkel, 2006; Norman, 2006; Winkelman, 2005). While there have been several studies examining its predecessors - religious tourism (Cohen, 1998; Rinschede, 1992) and/or pilgrimage tourism (Digance, 2003; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Shuo, Ryan & Liu, 1992; Vukonić, 1992) - few studies have focused specifically on spiritual tourism as conceived herein (Garfinkel, 2006; Li, Niininen, & Jacobs, 2006; Norman, 2006; Winkelman, 2005).

Given that there appears to be an increasing interest in spirituality and a decreasing adherence to organized religion in modern society, it is helpful to distinguish those factors that contribute to the Western tourist's interest in 'alternative spiritualities' as separate from the fairly well-established knowledge on religious/pilgrimage tourism (Raj & Morpeth, 2007; Smith & Robinson, 2006). For example, religious tourism is thought to be a worldwide phenomenon and the oldest form of tourism (Rinschede, 1992, p. 53). Consequently, this particular type of tourism has garnered a vast and wide ranging amount of research. Additionally, pilgrimage tourism fits well within this broader category, as many pilgrims report being driven by religious motivations (Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Shuo et al, 1992; Vukonić, 1992). However, neither of these literatures fully addresses the spiritual tourist as defined in this study. Though some may conceive of spiritual tourists as those who take a "modern secular pilgrimage" (Digance, 2003, p. 148), ayahuasca tourists differ from these pilgrims insofar as their primary motivation is

for a spiritual and/or transformational experience, one that is neither connected to a specific religion nor directed toward a particular site or sacred space (Digance, 2003, p. 144; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Shuo et al, 1992). It is this motivational, experiential aspect, combined with a self-described lack of affiliation with any organized religion, which differentiates the spiritual tourist from either the religious tourist or the modern pilgrim.

In this study, “spiritual tourism” is investigated (instantiated through the examination of ayahuasca tourism) as a neocolonial phenomenon situated in the broader context of economic and cultural globalization. Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt (1998) define neocolonialism as the “principal way of describing the retention of former colonies in perpetual subordination to the First World, in spite of formal political independence” (p. 53). Fueled by cultural voyeurism and the presence of third-party commercial brokers, ayahuasca tourism resonates within a paradigm that pivots on the inequality between “the West and the Rest” (Caton & Santos, 2009, p. 193). As such, spiritual tourism cannot be comprehensively understood without analyzing it as a commodified activity of Western tourists. While these concerns are echoed in fragments within the post-colonial, sociological and anthropological literature (Cohen, 1988; Hall & Tucker, 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Trask, 1999; Urry, 1990; Van Den Berghe, 1994), there appears to be no research which combines an examination of both the neocolonial and socio-economic discourses of tourism with a comprehensive ethnography of how these discourses manifest in the lived experiences of tourists, brokers and/or tourees (Cohen, 2004). This dissertation is uniquely designed to address this gap in the literature, thereby

extending the theorization of spiritual tourism, and, more importantly shedding light on the ways in which this emerging industry impacts the various people involved.

Thus, the goal of this dissertation is two-fold: first, it explores the discourse of spiritual tourism as a function of neocolonialism and commodification in the current phase of globalization; and second, it examines the ways in which spiritual tourism serves to maintain or breakdown the neocolonial relations between the tourist and the touree (Van den Berghe, 1994). In this dissertation, I investigate the locations and relations of power from multiple perspectives rather than using the traditional, dichotomous “host and guest” paradigm (Aramberri, 2001; Cheong & Miller, 2000, Smith, 1972).¹¹ The examination of power from these different perspectives was conducted to better understand how, and in what ways, this phenomenon serves to empower or marginalize the local communities from whom the ayahuasca originates.

EXAMINING THE PHENOMENON

My research engages with literature from a variety of fields including postcolonial, critical cultural, and globalization studies. While tourism research has been shaped primarily by anthropologists and sociologists (Riley & Love, 1999), current research methodologies are being informed by a new generation of scholars including political economists, political scientists, postcolonial theorists and geographers. As a

¹¹ Valene Smith’s (1989) edited volume *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* is often referred to as one of the foundational works in tourism literature. In this work, Smith characterizes the local population (of a destination) to be the “hosts” while the visiting tourists are the “guests”. While this particular paradigm has been employed in much of the tourism literature since its inception, it has also been critiqued for both its limited theoretical scope (Stonza, 2001), as well as its inaccurate description of the “reciprocity” inherent in such description (Aramberri, 2001).

result of this emerging cross-disciplinary discourse, qualitative researchers are advocating for a more eclectic, reflexive and culturally responsive approach to tourism studies, one that conceptualizes the processes of tourism as more sophisticated and nuanced than in the past (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Smith, 1999; Stronza, 2001). These theoretical developments have greatly influenced the methodological framework of my project and I employ this reflexive approach throughout my work.

Using a mixed-methods approach that draws largely from critical cultural, post-colonial, and ethnographic frameworks, my dissertation project will employ critical discourse analysis (Fairlough, 1995, 2003; Foucault, 1980, Naples, 2003), semiotic visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), and semi-structured, ethnographic interviews (Buroway, 1991; Naples, 2003) and to examine three distinct, though interconnected research questions:

Q1: Do ayahuasca tour websites employ a language of neocolonialism?¹² And, if so, how? What are the discourses used to advertise the tours?

Q2: Do ayahuasca tour websites reflect an appropriation and/or commodification of indigenous/mestizo culture or spirituality? And, if so, how?

Q3: What is the social, cultural and economic impact of ayahuasca tourism in the Peruvian Amazon as perceived by the community residents (in which the tours are

¹² Although territorial colonialism is understood to have ended after the World War II, Thomas (1994) argues that “persistence of neo-colonial domination in international and inter-ethnic relations is undeniable” (p.1). I agree and thus employ the term ‘neocolonialism’ akin to its use by Mowforth & Munt (1998) as the “principal way of describing the retention of former colonies in perpetual subordination to the First World, in spite of formal political independence” (p. 53). Ayahuasca tourism appears to occur in this paradigm of First World/Third World inequality.

located), the tour brokers (those who book/run the tours), the shamans (who administer the ayahuasca) and the tourists themselves? How do these groups differ in their perspectives/views?

The three primary questions which comprise my study were addressed in two distinct phases. The first phase of my study consists of a textual and visual analysis of ayahuasca tour websites. This analysis was conducted using critical discourse analysis (CDA), drawing largely from the work of Fairclough (1995, 2003). The second phase of my study consists of ethnographic field work designed to both test the veracity of the discourse analysis findings, as well as to immerse myself in the phenomenon that is ayahuasca tourism. Namely, through the use of interviews and observation, my goal was to give voice to all those involved in the industry, not simply the “hosts/guests” – bridging an important gap in the tourism literature (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Nash, 1989; Smith, 1978; Stronza, 2001).

In Chapter Two, I introduce the study by exploring the issues of globalization, tourism, spirituality and cultural appropriation and commodification. In doing so, this chapter introduces my literature review and my theoretical framework. I investigate “spiritual tourism” as a neocolonial phenomenon situated in the broader context of economic and cultural globalization. I argue that ayahuasca tourism appears to occur in the paradigm of the wealthier global north and the sometimes struggling global south, fueled by cultural voyeurism and the presence of third-party commercial brokers. The chapter explains how this empirically grounded study is designed to explore the phenomenon of spiritual tourism by interrogating the structures of knowledge and power,

and image and representation utilizing a post-colonial framework (Hall & Tucker, 2004). Finally, this chapter discusses how my research is designed to address the gaps in the tourism literature and extend the theorizing of spiritual tourism.

The next chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the most frequented ayahuasca tourism website, Blue Morpho Tours. Through a multi-level, detailed textual analysis, this discussion sheds light on the discursive aspect of the complex social and cultural phenomenon of spiritual tourism, as examined through an ayahuasca tourism website. From the Blue Morpho analysis emerged three primary themes or discourses (Fairclough 2003, p. 199). These three discourses included “The Corporate discourse,” “the New Age or spirituality discourse” and the “discourse of the Exotic” (a discourse which highlighted the wild aspects of the Amazonian flora/fauna/animals).

Additional findings included the near exclusion of indigenous or mestizo actors on the site (with the exception of the shamans), as well as the absence of any demographic, regional or cultural information regarding the Amazon or its inhabitants. Additionally, a subtle discourse of “paternalism” appeared in the context of how the local peoples were mentioned in the very few times they appeared on the site (noting how local staff cooked and cleaned and how the Center employed them to “aid their struggling economy”). The third notable elucidation from the Blue Morpho text was the surprising presentation of the broker as “host”, subsequently moving from the role of middleman to that of primary host –thus maintaining the host/guest dichotomy discussed throughout the tourism literature, at the exclusion of the Peruvian locals (Aramberri, 2001; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Smith 1978).

Chapter Four expands this analysis as it compares it to five additional tour websites. This extended analysis is conducted in order to better situate those findings within the socio-cultural contexts of spiritual tourism advertising at large (Fairclough, 2003; Janks, 1997). The textual and visual analysis presented herein reveals that all six of the ayahuasca tour websites in the study contained common discursive elements used to advertise and market their tours. These words, phrases and images clustered together to form the three main themes (or discourses) that I term the Corporate, New Age and Exotic Discourses. Further, the frequency and variation in the utilization of these discourses differed greatly among the sites, dependent on the tour broker – specifically whether or not the tour was facilitated by a foreign born, individual broker, a jointly owned/brokered venture or a locally managed, Peruvian tour operator. Among those managed by individual brokers, the broker's presentation of himself and his role (in the ayahuasca experience advertised) closely mirrored both the textual and visual elements included on his website, as well as the predominant discourses incorporated.

I conclude this phase of my research by suggesting that the discourse of spiritual tourism reflects the broader, more pervasive and enduring discourses of cultural imperialism (including those of appropriation and commodification) present throughout the critical cultural tourism literature. As a result of this analysis, I argue that spiritual tourism can be theorized best as a form of postmodern tourism, wherein the discourses of consumerism and commodification are coupled with a quest for the ethnic Other, situated in the current stage of economic and cultural globalization.

In Chapter Five, I give an overview of the ethnographic portion of my dissertation, focusing primarily on the tourists in the study. My fieldwork includes approximately 30 interviews which spanned the range of formality – some were sit-down, semi-structured in style, while others occurred as spontaneous, casual conversations.¹³ Regardless of their structure, all interviews were conducted to address the study's primary research question; designed to better understand the broader phenomenon of spiritual tourism, this research project employed methods specifically to explore stakeholders' perceptions of the socio-cultural, and economic impact of ayahuasca tourism in Peru.¹⁴ Additional data was collected by means of observation: I observed two different ayahuasca ceremonies in two very different settings.¹⁵ The first ceremony was

¹³ Interview participants were recruited in a variety of ways. Upon arrival in Iquitos, I connected with several people through professional contacts I had made during the previous summer (while conducting a pilot study in Ecuador). During these interviews, I asked each of my subjects if they knew of others with whom I should speak. By using this snowball sampling technique, I was able to locate several people involved in ayahuasca tourism – people difficult to locate without such references (Babbi, 2009)

¹⁴ As will be discussed throughout, interview questions were crafted to explore the processes of cultural imperialism and the commodification of culture, both present in the discourse of spiritual tourism.

¹⁵ Ceremonial observation provided the opportunity to observe “everyday tourist behavior” and for “in-depth dialogue” between the researcher and the stakeholders in the tourism setting (Belsky, 2004, p. 273). Because this method lent itself to more informal data gathering and discussion, it was useful in revealing the power dynamics most associated with tourism (ibid). Other benefits included the flexibility to change settings as people or activities/events change and the ease with which dialogue may be facilitated among the various groups involved (ibid, p. 278). For example, I rode from the city center, out to the ceremonial site and was able to talk at length with two young ayahuasca tourists. For these reasons, observations were used to gather data on tourist behavior

conducted at the *maloca* of Peruvian shaman and contained fewer than five people. The second ceremony was larger, with more than ten people participating; this ceremony was lead by an American shaman.¹⁶

Next, I explore the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism as occurring in the contact zone of Iquitos, Peru. I situate these findings within the socio-cultural and economic history of the region; a region that has been characterized by a pattern of “boom and bust” cycles of European interest in and exploitation of the Amazon. Then, I introduce and discuss my conceptualization of the three primary types of tourists (and tourisms) within the ayahuasca industry – Type I: those who want an experience that “specializes in shamanism”, Type II: those looking for “shamanism on the side” or Type III: those seeking a “shaman on the street.” By organizing my interview data around these typologies, I presented the key patterns, trends and potential problems of each.

Key findings indicate that the path by which a tourist access ayahuasca greatly reflects their motivations and their interaction with the plant and the shaman. Additionally, I conclude that ayahuasca is differently commodified within each of the Types. For example, in Type I, because the ayahuasca is the sole focus of the tourism, the

during activities within the privately owned tour/retreat site as well as in the public, community setting (e.g. while we all gathered at the restaurant downtown, while waiting to caravan out to the jungle). Such comparative observation is the best way to gain insight into tourist “performance” behavior or interaction differences when dealing with either other tourists or local residents.

¹⁶ Throughout the study, I have opted to provide more and less detail of events, in order to most appropriately maintain the confidentiality of those in my study (or to provide adequate acknowledgement of informants, when explicitly requested that I do so).

broker (and or shaman) charge incredibly high prices and the tourist is least likely to interact with local Peruvians. This type results in the most segregated, least interactive form of tourism – thus maintaining the service-provision relationship. Type II tourism suggests that the eco-tour lodges provide access to shamans as an “adjunct” to the tour, a feature added to stay competitive in the tourism market. A second form of commodification occurs here, as tourist demand sometimes results in mestizo shamans “dressing up” as native shamans – fabricating authenticity to appease the tourists. Lastly, in Type III tourism, the tourists access their ayahuasca and/or shaman “on the street”, not through a formal tour group. The commodification issues that arise from this form are concentrated largely around the increased “risks” that this tourist takes to drink ayahuasca. Specifically, because the sale of ayahuasca has become a widely recognized money making venture, “false shamans” have proliferated, providing the brew incorrectly, either through ignorance or malice, resulting in the tourist being conned, poisoned or, at times, assaulted by these charlatans.

Moving from the tourists to the locals, Chapter Six provides a discussion of the industry through Peruvian eyes. As stated throughout, the inclusion of local people’s perspectives on this trend is crucial in fuller understanding its impacts, as well as providing a means to give voice to those seen, but not heard on the ayahuasca websites analyzed in the first part of this work. Key findings indicate that local people seek the services of a shaman primarily for the issues of health, but also for social and emotional problems – especially those that deal with love and/or money. The shamans in the study reported that while many foreigners do come “for visions,” others come for psychological

issues such as stress or anxiety – differentiating them somewhat from the locals they treat. One of the clearest differences in the provision of their services between foreigners and locals is illustrated in the fees charged: the Type I shamans, who owned their own lodges, charged little to nothing, as their work was largely subsidized by the foreign revenue earned. The Type II shamans, who contracted with lodges, stated that they did charge locals a fee, but would treat them even if they could not pay. Many of the shamans in the study mentioned the economic crisis in the region, noting specifically the poverty experienced by many Peruvians. In addition to the shamans, this chapter also included an examination of ayahuasca tourism from the local community members' perspectives. Results here indicate that the “model” of tourism (either enclave or integrated) greatly impacted the extent to which economic and inter-cultural benefits were experienced by locals (Hazbun, 2007).

In the final chapter, I conclude that ayahuasca tourism has indeed become a multifaceted, dynamic and complex industry, one that is advertised, online, in ways consistent with traditional advertising (which commodifies culture and exoticizes local people and place). Additionally, I argue that while the “Types” of tourism function in ways that reflect neocolonial and culturally imperialistic tendencies, each may bring different benefits for local people. Lastly, through case studies, it became apparent that the most successful “ayahuasca tourism” venture appeared to be the ones which were jointly owned or managed – by both a foreign and local people.

Thus, ayahuasca tourism provides a variety of benefits and burdens to all those involved, distributed largely by the “type” of tourism participated in. Given the industry's

potential to either dramatically improve or significantly harm the lives of all of its stakeholders, a thorough investigation of this trend was important in clarifying these issues and informing future work. Specifically, it appears as though local Peruvians either support the idea of increased ayahuasca tourism in the region, or do not have a strong objection to it. Some shamans even expressed a desire to have their “own space” akin to the retreat lodges built (primarily) by foreigners. Still, in light of the historic economic cycles of boom and bust, processes which disproportionately impact indigenous and lower income mestizo communities and the tendencies of foreigners to disappear when such a “resource” runs dry (or loses popular attention), it is crucial that ongoing tourism development in the area be characterized by thoughtful, intentional and fair implementation of policies and procedures – designed in an equitable fashion, with the participation of local Peruvians, keeping in mind the history and tradition of those from whom this experience originates.

Chapter 2

Spiritual Tourism: Theoretical Considerations

In order to best understand the phenomenon of the spiritual tourist in the age of globalization, one must move beyond the binary forms of tourism theorizing examined thus far: origins of tourism versus the impacts of tourism (Stronza, 2001); types of tourism versus the motivations for tourism (Cohen, 1979, 2004; MacCannell, 1976); and the host/guest paradigm (Aramberri, 2001; Smith, 1978). Additionally, though there have been a multitude of studies conducted on alternative tourism, these too display a narrow view of the broader processes—focusing only on the various roles of small groups of stakeholders involved (e.g. the tourist, the local, and/or the broker or middleman) (Holden, 2003; McLaren, 2003; Smith, 1999, van den Berghe, 1994).

Similarly, only a few studies have examined ayahuasca tourism in any form. Of these limited studies, each investigates only one primary stakeholder in the process: either the tourists who participate in the ceremonies (Dobkin de Rois, 1994; Kristensen, 1998 in Grunwell, 1998; Winkelman, 2005) or the shamans who administer the ceremonies (Dobkin de Rois, 2005). Not one of the studies focuses on the local residents with whom the tourists may interact or impact. Nor do any of these studies provide an integrated analysis from which to understand the various standpoints (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1993 Naples, 2003) and experiences of those involved.

One way to address these limitations and to push the boundaries of these dichotomies is to examine spiritual tourism using an integrated, interdisciplinary approach. As such, my approach combines both discourse/visual analyses with a

comprehensive ethnography of ayahuasca tourism in order to diversify my data sources, methods and informants – specifically by incorporating all the actors involved in this phenomenon. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of my efforts to utilize such an approach to both contextualize this work within the broader framework of tourism studies and more fully introduce the theoretical concepts which inform it. As an interdisciplinary project, this dissertation draws from a variety of literatures and incorporates a diversity of methods. Specifically, my framework is informed by international political economy research, postcolonial and critical cultural studies, as well as sociological and anthropological literatures on tourism. First, it draws on Polanyi's (1957) conceptualization of economic "markets" and Appadurai's (2001) notion of globalization to understand the "supply and demand" processes of the contemporary tourism industry. Next, it incorporates Jameson's (1991) notion of post-modernity to situate spiritual tourism within the current phase of cultural and economic globalization. Thus situated, I articulate my definition of "spiritual tourism" largely through a comparison with the definitions provided by Norman (2006) and Winkleman's (2005). Due to the lack of spiritual tourism research, I draw here from previous studies of cultural tourism to best locate this form of tourism within the broader discipline. Then, guided by Said's (1993) view of imperialism and Pratt (1992)'s study of travel as a form of cultural imperialism, I examine spiritual tourism as a possible instance of neocolonialism¹⁷. Lastly, I draw from

¹⁷ Hall & Tucker (2004) describe neocolonialism as "the expansion of capitalism and economic and cultural globalization so that the core powers exercise influence over the postcolonial periphery" (p. 2). In short, neocolonialism thus replicates the subjugation of the other through both cultural and economic means.

Trask's (1999) work on the commodification of Hawaiian culture to illustrate how *ayahuasca* has become commodified and integrated into the spiritual tourism market, both locally and globally. Through the use of these frameworks, I argue that spiritual tourism is theorized best as a function of the postmodern condition, situated in the context of cultural and economic globalization which includes the discourse of commodification, consumerism and the quest of the Other in the current stage of globalization (Harvey 1992; Jameson, 1991; Urry, 1990, Munt, 1994).

THE GLOBALIZATION OF TOURISM

Tourism promotes the same colonial tendencies that agricultural companies, missionaries and others perpetrated in earlier centuries. Colonizing is not new, but tourism development as a form of colonizing is new and growing at tremendous rates. Between 1950 and 1990, tourist arrivals grew from 7 million to 80 million in the Americas; from virtually nothing to almost 50 million in East Asia and the Pacific; and from less than a half million to 14 million in Africa. The numbers are remarkable and the effects are catastrophic. (McLaren, 2003, p. 65)

McLaren's (2003) concerns provide a compelling argument for examining closely both the origins and impacts of tourism (Stronza, 2001). Tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry (Chang 1999; Kearney 1995). It is the largest employer in the world and is estimated to account for the largest export earnings by any industry (Azaraya 2004; Holden 2005; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). International tourism has grown exponentially since such travel was first tracked by the World Tourism Organization. In 1950 international "arrivals" numbered 25.3 million. This figure

increased tenfold to 592 million in 1996. In spite of the events of 2005 – terrorism activities, natural disasters, health scares, oil price hikes, exchange rate fluctuations and economic and political uncertainties – a record 800 million people traveled internationally that year (World Tourism Organization 2006). WTO data from 2006 reflect this trend, showing a 4.5% increase, totally 862 million visitors only a year later (www.world-tourism.org). The revenue from international receipts for 2005 has been estimated at US \$ 680 billion. In absolute terms, international tourism receipts increased by \$ 47 billion, an amount comparable to the combined tourism income of the Caribbean, Central America, South America and South Asia (World Tourism Organization, 2006).

Tourism now literally covers more ground than in previous decades; it also touches more people, people previously considered remote, unknown, uninteresting or simply out of reach (Agarawal et al, 2000; Azarya, 2004; McLaren, 2003; Salazar, 2006; Van Den Berghe, 1994). This new social interaction is occurring at a faster speed and across further spaces than ever before, creating a greater mobility of people, goods, ideas and services (Harvey, 1992, p. 240). Clearly, the tourism industry is gaining ground in both economic and spatial terms. Additionally, while such economic and social forces have existed for centuries (largely in the form of transatlantic ‘trade’ and colonialism) (Said, 1993), it is the hegemonic ‘discourse’ of globalization that has occurred in the last two decades which is understood both as a material phenomenon as well as a rhetorical ideology¹⁸ (Chase-Dunn, 1999; Fairclough, 2006; Gramsci, 1971; Jameson, 1998). Some

¹⁸ Gramsci (1971) is credited with most clearly elucidating the concept of hegemony, or how particular ideas dominate thinking in society. He argues that the ruling class presents

theorists have argued that the current phase of globalization involves what might possibly be the most fundamental redesign of the planet's political and economic since at least the Industrial Revolution (Mander & Goldsmith, 1997).¹⁹ It is within this context that spiritual tourism is examined here.

Academics and anti-globalization activists share many of the same concerns in addressing the rampant problems brought about by these global changes. These problems include, but are not limited to: stakeholder conflicts over economic 'development' within 'receiving' or host nations; environmental degradation; questions of political and social control over/privatization of natural resources; a lack of control and possession of ancestral lands; restrictions on legal, civil and political rights; high rates of poverty and unemployment; dislocation and deterritorialization of locals; and the commodification of indigenous peoples' spiritualities, sacred spaces and plants (Appadurai, 2001; Blaser, Feit & McRae, 2004; Cohen, 2004; Dobkin de Rois, 2005; Escobar, 1994; Mander & Goldsmith, 1996; Mander & Tauli-Corpuz, 2006; McLaren, 2003; Mowforth et al, 2008; Polet, 2004; Trask, 1999; York, 2006).

its definition of reality (the lived meanings, values or actions) in such a way that it is accepted as common sense. This ideology is created through consent, not force and develops as the only sensible way of seeing the world-any groups who propose an alternate view are marginalized. See also Said (1979, 1994).

¹⁹ Not coincidentally, some of the largest shifts in the tourism industry occurred since this time, most notably the "democratization" of travel after the Industrial Revolution due, in large part to the technological changes which produced increase mobility and productivity for Western middle class (Holden, 2005).

This new reach of tourism is often considered to be a result of economic globalization; the increasing interdependence of markets and production in different countries through trade in goods and services, cross border flows of capital, labor, ideas, peoples, as well as internal strategic alliances, mergers and exchanges of technology (Chase-Dunn, 1999; Smeral, 1998, p.372; Appadurai, 2001, p.5). Appadurai (2001) concurs with this view of globalization, describing it as “inextricably linked to the current workings of capital on a global basis” (p. 5) extending the earlier logics of empire, trade and domination.²⁰ In terms of the tourist industry, economic globalization can best be examined as a function of “supply crowds” and “demand crowds”, terms which were previously considered to be separate entities, but were put together by the market economy (Polanyi, 1957, p. 268). In addition to describing the actors involved in the supply and demand of tourism, I briefly address the issue of capital flows, by tracking to whom the tourism dollars mostly go. In doing so, I note the ways in which economic globalization furthers the process uneven development which contributes to several of the problems noted above (Escobar, 1994).

Supply Side Economics

Several of the key ‘actors’ (or stakeholders) are found in the “supply” side of tourism: international airline companies, hotel chains and tour operators (some of which are large enough to be considered multinational corporations); local and state

²⁰ This earlier logic will be addressed in the following discussion of commodification and imperialism. Among Appadurai’s (2001) concerns with the “flows” of globalization are the “relations of disjuncture” which precipitate various kinds of problems and frictions in society (p. 5-6).

governments; and the local elites, “brokers” or tour guides (Agarwal, 2000; Chang, 1999; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Salazar, 2006; Smeral, 1998; Spivakm, 1999; Van Den Berghe, 1994). The “tourees” or indigenous locals who provide either direct or indirect ‘service’ to the global tourist are also part of the supply chain (Trask, 1999; Van Den Berghe, 1994).²¹ In the current global economy, the single most important economic actor is the transnational corporation (McLaren, 2003; Jameson, 1998), and “the most potent symbol of globalization of the tourism industry is the growing size and influence of transnational corporations” (Agarwal, 2000, p. 248). These types of global companies often provide services to the group of tourists known as “mass tourists” – tourists who travel to “sun-sand-sea” or historical destinations with an advanced infrastructure and luxury accommodations and/or services (Azarya, 2004; McLaren, 2003; Van Den Berghe, 1994). If these types of tourists do visit more remote, rustic places, they often participate in package tours.²² In terms of capital flow, there is more “leakage” with mass tourism

²¹ Additional individual actors important to the tourism industry, but not discussed at length here include: guidebook writers, service industry personnel, media managers, film-makers, nature/animal photographers, journalists, marketing and advertising executives, as well as Information Technology website developers. Each of these actors help shape the “image” of the Other of tourism and in large or small ways control the tourist gaze (Pratt, 1992; Said, 1994; Urry, 1990). There are also several corporate/institutional actors, who, while outside the scope of this paper, should be listed here due to their vital role in wielding discursive power in the tourism industry. These include: the Commission for Sustainable Development, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Tourism Organization (WTO), and multiple programs of the United Nations (e.g. United Nations Environmental Program, the UN Council on Biological Diversity and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (McLaren, 2003: 7).

²² Package tours generally consist of a trip whereby all amenities (accommodations, transport, and food) are paid for and arranged for ahead of time (McLaren, 2003;

and package tourism than any other type of tourism (i.e. more money is funneled back to the corporate tour operator, hotelier or airline that organized the trip, rather than to the local communities with whom that tourist is interacting or in whose 'home' they are residing (McLaren, 2003; Scheyvens, 2001, Trask, 1999). As these corporate actors are typically located in foreign, largely Western countries, little money goes back to the local host communities. Given that several of the "ayahuasca tours" investigated in this project are managed by brokers/tour operators with alternate addresses in the United States, Canada and Britain, it seems likely that even the capital flow for these more specialized, unique and smaller scale tours flood out of Peru and away from the indigenous/mestizo individuals with whom the spiritual tourist has shared an 'enlightening' experience.²³ This outward flow of money occurs as most of the Western individuals who own/manage an ayahuasca retreat center live in the Amazon only part time. Thus, a percentage of their profit returns with them to their homelands, as opposed to staying in Iquitos and funneling back into the local economy. For example, in this study, two of the American

Scheyvens 2001; Van Den Berghe, 1994). Spiritual tourists in my own preliminary research fall into the "packaged tour" category, yet do not fit neatly into the "mass tourism" construct. This blurring of boundaries has been attributed to the post-tourist condition and will be examined in greater depth shortly (Urry 1990a).

²³ To date, the majority of my (preliminary) research of ayahuasca websites mention only that the brokers encourage tourists to "tip" their shamans accordingly (see www.biopark.org, www.ayahuasca-shamanism.co.uk). There is no mention of how much or what percentage of the tour "fee" goes to the shamans or local staff members. Additionally, Spivak (1999) suggests that among the developing nation states, there exists some complicity of "the power lines of local developers with the forces of global capital" (p.380). Thus, it is quite possible that even if the broker is a "local elite", few of the tourism dollars make their way to the laboring locals.

ayahuasca tour brokers lived at least half time in the United States, suggesting that at least a portion of their earnings are funneled back in their home economy, not to the local economy. Further, one of these, who co-owned his company with a Peruvian man, spent less than a quarter of the year in Peru signaling that his profits follow him back to the U.S. when he returns home.

In sum, while there are many “actors” on the supply side of tourism, there are also many “factors” which contribute to the proliferation of the tourist industry and the commodification of the international Other. These factors include technological advances in media products as well as an increase in the variety and type of media that depict and market tourist ‘attractions.’ Several theorists support the notion that because of the commodifying processes within the global tourist industry, in addition to places, *people* have become marketed as tourist attractions as well (e.g. the “toureer,” the “host,” the Other (Van Den Berghe, 1994, Smith, 1978; Said, 1979; Trask, 1999). The development of the Internet is one of the primary technological, globalizing forces in modern tourism and has served as a means of commodifying the local people involved in touristic activities (Buhalis, 1998; Jansson, 2002; McLaren, 2003; Smeral, 1998). Along with the expansion of the Internet and the increasing amount of virtual images of “far away” people and places (Salazar, 2006: p. 2), technological advances have increased the tourist’s ability to travel further away and at a faster pace. The decreased costs of flying combined with the improved efficiency and performance of airplanes have contributed greatly to the massive globalizing of the tourism industry and the democratization of tourism (Agrarwal, 2000; Harvey, 2006; Smeral, 1998; Smith & Robinson, 2006). Thus,

these changes impact local residents by increasing the flow of money, Western tourists to more remote and removed people and places.

In addition to advances in the ability to travel further, faster, these technological advances also take the form of an increased production of destination guidebooks, travel DVDs, travel “shows” on cable television, as well as educational, and documentary films which depict primitive people in primordial places (e.g. *Keep the River on Your Right: A Modern Cannibal Tale*, 2000).²⁴ Appadurai (1996) explains this mediated globalization as one of the primary ways in which the Other becomes part of the popular imagination:

The imagination—expressed in dreams, songs, fantasies, myths and stories, has always been a part of the repertoire of every society, in some culturally organized way. But there is a peculiar new force to the imagination in social life today. More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before. One important source of this change is the mass media, which present a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives, some of which entered the lived imaginations of ordinary people more successfully than others. (Appadurai 1996, p. 53)

This imagining occurs largely through the development of a myriad of *mediascapes* (Appadurai 1996, p. 33). According to Appadurai, mediascapes are the “landscapes of images,” referring to both the “distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information...which are now available to a growing

²⁴ See Li (2006) for a compelling discussion regarding the use of the “primitive” in academic discourse as a means of validating and legitimizing the Western intellectual’s need to differentiate him/herself from the Other.

number of private and public interests throughout the world”, and to the “images created by these media” (ibid). One example of how these mediascapes can expose the “first world” tourist to “possible” or “imagined” “third worlds” can be seen in a testimonial, by “Jake F” an American posting in January 2002 on the Blue Morpho website (www.bluemorphotours.com): “They [the guides] were very knowledgeable about the flora and fauna of the area and showed us things I thought only existed on the Discovery Channel!” Thus, the sheer number, variety and availability of new and exotic images has increased drastically the “possibilities” to which the Western tourist is exposed. Additionally, the globalizing of the tourism industry contributes to a wider dissemination of *ethnoscapes* than ever before (according to Appadurai, “ethnoscapes” are the “landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants...and other moving groups and individuals” (1991, p.33).

These global forces have resulted in a transformation from “mass tourism” being the predominant form of travel to more customized and individually tailored forms (Urry, 1990a; Munt, 1994).²⁵ In addition to the ease with which individuals can locate their desired destinations and make their own arrangements, the “changes in class, gender and generational distinctions of tastes have also contributed to tourism consumption changes and to a more complex and shifting hierarchy of objects becoming the focus” [of the tourist’s gaze] (Urry, 1995 in Agarwal, 2000, p. 243). For example, those tourists who fit

²⁵ According to the World Tourism Organization (2003) “do it yourself” [tourism] is becoming more and more common—particularly for the mature and experienced travelers, vigorously stimulated by the possibilities offered by low-cost airlines and the Internet.

the Type I typology discussed herein were typically older, professional people seeking ayahuasca for personal transformation and/or spiritual growth. On the contrary, those who pursued ayahuasca for hedonistic or drug seeking reasons were usually younger tourists, looking for adventure in the Amazon. It is toward the tourist that we now turn.

Demand Side Economics

The primary actor in the demand category of the tourism industry is the tourist.²⁶ Multiple theories of tourist identity and motivation have been proffered throughout the disciplines (including, but not limited to sociology, anthropology, economics, and environmental studies).²⁷ I provide only the briefest examination of these theories here, as I find those theoretical contributions which include a discussion of the consumerism of capitalist society and the commodification of culture to be much more useful and cogent in explaining the particular phenomenon of spiritual tourism (Appadurai, 1991; Cohen, 1988; Greenwood, 1978; Gunster, 2004; Harvey, 2006; MacLeod, 2006; Marx, 1972; McLaren, 2003; Trask, 1999; Urry, 1990a).

Some of the key sociological perspectives on tourism and traveling include MacCannell's (1976) notion that tourists search for the *authenticity* that is absent in

²⁶ There are a variety of 'new' types of tourists in the literature (Poon, 1989), including, but not limited to: "eco-tourists"(which can include: "ethnic tourists", "cultural tourists" and "spiritual tourists"); "sex tourists" "drug tourists" and "backpackers" (Ararya, 2004; Dobkin de Rois, 1994, 2005; McLaren, 2003; Scheyeveens, 2002; Van Den Berghe, 1994; Winkelman, 2005). However, a detailed discussion of each of these types of tourists is beyond the scope of this paper.

²⁷ See Phillimore & Goodson (2004); Holden (2005) and Cohen (2004) for more detailed conversations of the "field" or "discipline" of tourism.

everyday life; thus tourism is a reaction to the perceived lack of authenticity in modern societies (with a subsequent search for the authenticity of pre-industrial societies).²⁸

Another prominent theory is Krippendorf's (1986) view that tourists experience a need to oppose their post-industrial society and free themselves from their boredom; thus, tourism as *escape*. In his extensive and somewhat pioneering work on tourism, Cohen (1979, 2004) offers a typology of tourists, based on tourists' *experiences*. He lists five different 'types', organized by 'mode'; a key factor used to explain the differences is the degree of psychological and emotional attachment the individual has to their home environment (Holden, 2005: p. 144-145).²⁹

In addition to these sociological frameworks, anthropological perspectives include Graburn's (2001): view of tourism as a *ritual*, "one in which the special occasions of leisure and travel stand in opposition to everyday life at home and at work" (2001, p. 43). Graburn (2001) echoes Krippendorf's (1986) view of tourism as an oppositional act, but differs in so far as Graburn suggests that tourism can represent self-imposed "rites of passage" (p. 147). Poon (1993): describes the 'new tourists' as being 'less predictable and homogenous', less interested in package holidays and group travel. While the ayahuasca

²⁸ In short: the search for the primitive other (Pratt, 1992; Said, 1979).

²⁹ Within Cohen's typology, I place the spiritual tourist somewhere between the "Experiential Mode" which includes a "search for meaning away from one's home society...found through having new experiences...yet has his spiritual sense at home" and the "Experimental Mode" which describes the type of tourist who "no longer has their spiritual center in their own society...and are searching for an alternative one. They may engage in others' 'authentic' life but refuse to commit themselves fully to it" (Holden, 2006, p. 145).

seekers in my study appear to be searching for something out of the ordinary and ritualistic (akin to both Graburn and Krippendorf's notions), I find Urry's (1990) conception of post-modern tourism best suited in describing the spiritual tourists in my study. For instance, Urry's notion regarding the emergence of specialist agents who cater to this new "traveler" reflects well the proliferation of foreign born ayahuasca tour brokers located in this study. Additionally, these brokers advertise an "authentic" (sometimes "native") experience to the tourist-turned-"traveler", one that is individually tailored, yet flexible – mirroring the Corporate Discourse prevalent in the current stage of globalization. Though the other theorists described above offer helpful ways to understand the tourists in my study, it is Urry's (1990) contextualization of these tourists in the post-modern era that best informs my findings.

THE 'NEW' SPIRITUAL TOURIST IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

As mentioned earlier, I argue that spiritual tourism is best theorized as a function of the post-modern condition, which includes the discourse of commodification, consumerism and the quest of the Other in the current stage of globalization (Harvey 1992; Jameson, 1991; Urry, 1990, Munt, 1994). Jameson's (1991) "cultural periodization" is instructive for his provision of a more nuanced understanding of the "post modern" tourist. In his work, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson (1991) discusses the current era known as "postmodernism," by situating it in its proper stage of capitalism ("late capitalism") and describing its manifestations on various artistic, production and political forms (e.g. film, literature, architecture, labor relations, technological advances, advertising etc.). Jameson defines

three main stages or “fundamental moments” of capitalism: market capitalism, monopoly capitalism or the stage of imperialism, and postindustrial or, Jameson’s preferred term, “multinational capitalism” (p. 35-36). It is to this last stage of capitalism that Jameson attributes postmodernism’s unique contributions. These new elements include the advent of transnational business and the new international division of labor. Additional features include new forms of media interrelationships, the advent of computers and automation, and the flight of production to advanced ‘Third World’ areas (due to the relatively ‘cheap’ labor, underscored by conditions of both real and imagined unemployment and poverty in these regions)³⁰.

Social changes include the social crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies and gentrification on a now-global scale (p. xix). Examining postmodernism and late modernity from a Marxist perspective, Jameson argues that his is not a “cultural critique” but an attempt to name postmodernism as a “mode of production” in which cultural production finds a specific, functional place (p. 406). From this position, Jameson theorizes that the three main stages of capitalism reflect three stages of “cultural periodization”: realism (market capitalism), modernism (monopoly capitalism) and postmodernism (multinational capitalism). As stated previously, Urry (1990b) situates his description of the contemporary tourist within this postmodern period.

³⁰ See Escobar (1994) for a more detailed discussion of the production of discourse under conditions of unequal power. Escobar refers to this as “the colonist’s move” – one which entails specific constructions of the colonial/Third World subject in and through discourse in ways that allow the exercise of power over it. (p. 9).

Urry (1990b) describes the postmodern tourist as s/he who desires a 'real holiday'. The two central features of these holidays include the desire for the real-holiday *travelers* to separate themselves, spatially, from the mass-packaged *tourists* and the emergence of specialist agents and tour operators (along with its adjunct, 'more individually centered and flexible holidays' (Munt, 1994, p. 102). Additional features of postmodern tourism include the tourist's increase interest in "Otherness" and the "promotion of primitiveness" (Munt 1994) and their search for examples of 'authenticity' through 'tailor-made' holidays. These "holidays" are managed by small, specialist operators who can more readily translate into reality the tourist's desire to be a late twentieth-century adventurer, explorer or *traveler*.

Another aspect of post-modern tourism is the amount of de-differentiation involved. Munt (1994) describes de-differentiation as the emergence of new, postmodern tourism practices that "may no longer be about tourism, per se, but embody other activities...these postmodern tourisms are increasingly popular with cultural, adventure or nature-based tourisms estimated to be the most rapidly growing in the tourism industry (p. 104).³¹ This suggests that the "look and see" form of tourism is no longer the norm, but that postmodern travelers seek more meaningful, experiential and transformative

³¹ See also data from the World Tourism Organization (2004) which suggests that a decade later, 'cultural tourism' is leading the way of alternative tourisms (Richards, 2007). Munt's concept of de-differentiation is most easily found in the discourse from the Blue Morpho Tours website: "During the time between shamanism ceremonies and the workshop the guest will have the opportunity to participate in jungle excursions. Choose daily from the following list activities that will broaden your knowledge of the surrounding environment: Short or extended hikes; Boat excursion up Itaya River; Piranha fishing; or Bird watching" (http://www.bluemorphotours.com/shamanic_tour_info.asp).

activities during their vacation, and that diverse forms of tourism industries are rapidly evolving to meet these needs; I conceptualize the emergent ayahuasca tourism market in Iquitos, Peru as an example of one such industry.

Drawing from this framework of postmodern tourism, I contend that the term “tourist” is appropriate for the ayahuasca seekers in my study. Though many informants refuted the idea that foreign born ayahuasca seekers are “tourists,” (based on commonly held conceptions of mass tourism), I argue that they are “tourists;” only tourist in a postmodern sense, not a traditional one. I suggest that these emerging practices support my idea that spiritual “seekers” might also simultaneously be categorized as (post-modern) “tourists.” They search for Otherness through the security of a pre-planned trip to an exotic locale; a trip that offers a unique, possibly life-altering experience, while at the same time affording the distinction of “spiritual seeker,” “retreat participant” or shamanism center “guest” – providing the tourist with a strategy of exclusion, wherein they are identified as something “more” than (traditional) tourists.

Echoing Munt (1994) and Urry (1990), Raymond Bickson, managing director of Taj Hotels and Resorts illustrates his experience with these new spiritual tourists. He observes that as ‘baby boomers’ age and gray, they have more time and more disposable income to ‘look within.’ This ‘new breed’ of spiritual tourists used to be the “Lonely Planet crowd.”³² However, Bickson goes on to state that “Now, still at the cutting edge of the New Age, wellness and spiritual frontiers, they continue to feed their souls. They

³² He is referring to the guidebooks of the same name, purportedly aimed at those who prefer to experience a place ‘the way the locals do’.

just want to do it without giving up their creature comforts” (Garfinkel, 2006).³³ This desire to feed one’s soul, the ‘way the locals do’ (only with the stipulation that ‘creature comforts’ be included) represents well the post-modern tourist as described by Munt (1994).³⁴ These concerns for creature comforts are noted and embraced by the purveyors of ayahuasca tours, especially those in the Type I category.

In the first phase of my research, I discovered that the discourse of spiritual tourism reflects this theoretical framework of postmodern tourism quite well. Specifically, one of the ayahuasca tour websites incorporates the strategies of exclusion (Munt 1994) discussed above – suggesting that this new spiritual tourist does indeed seek to differentiate him/herself from the typical “tourist.” For example, on the El Tigre Journeys website,³⁵ it states that participation is limited to “twelve *pilgrims* of honest integrity, sharing and relaxed attitude, tolerant nature, stout heart and adventurous spirit” (my italics added for emphasis). Additionally, the site ‘warns’ potential consumers, “due

³³ Bickson’s perception of the average age and affluence level of many spiritual tourists is supported by Michael Winkelman’s findings in his 2005 study of ayahuasca tourists, titled “Drug Tourism or Spiritual Healing? Ayahuasca Seekers in Amazonia.” Winkelman found that the majority of the sixteen tourists in his study were “professionals,” over 35 years old, who each paid \$3,000 for the two week activity. Additionally, Winkelman’s research took place at a “retreat center,” suggesting that these tourists also craved the comforts of home (as opposed to “roughing it” in the “jungle”).

³⁴ Most of the ayahuasca websites evaluated provided detailed information regarding the accommodations of the tour, including, but not limited to the tiled bathrooms, hot showers and screen-in dining rooms, affirming the notion that comfort is indeed a concern of the ayahuasca tourist.

³⁵ www.biopark.org/peru.html

to the powerful and delicate nature of this journey, personal screening is required for participation”. By presenting the experience as limited to a select few, with the ‘right’ characteristics (yet without ‘guaranteed’ acceptance, as acceptance into the tour is highly selective) this website provides a strong example of the distinctive qualities of Urry’s (1990b) traveler. Additionally, by presenting the spots as ‘scarce’ or ‘limited’, this website reflects the new middle classes’ need to adopt “strategies of exclusion” (Munt, 1994, p. 117). These strategies of exclusion are implemented in order to seek and protect these new “travel “commodities.” In this case, the travel commodity for the Type I tourist is the ayahuasca experience now sold as a product for purchase, available only to those “accepted” into the program and who possess enough money and time to participate (ibid).

DEFINING SPIRITUAL TOURISM

As stated previously, ayahuasca tourism within this study’s framework is understood as an instantiation of “spiritual tourism” that can be understood as a neocolonial phenomenon situated in the broader context of economic and cultural globalization. Alex Norman (2006) describes the spiritual tourist as one who uses the transient nature of travel to explore ideas of religion and spirituality. Norman considers the spiritual tourist to be a traveler who seeks out either religious/spiritual places and/or experiences. Additionally, this spiritual tourist may seek to combine the need for both a religious recharge and a means of relaxation (ibid). While I find Norman’s definition useful in contextualizing the spiritual tourist, his conflation of both religious and spiritual motives serves to broaden the definition so much so that it becomes difficult to theorize,

operationalize and apply to the ayahuasca tourists in my study. In contrast to Norman, Yvonne Reisinger (2006) cites Adrian Van Kaam (1986) in her attempt to tease out the ‘spiritual’ and ‘religious’ dimensions of tourism. She does so by separating out personal motivations from more institutional ones and noting that one can have spiritual experiences that are not necessarily religious.³⁶ This distinction allows us to separate out the more organized, institutionalized nature of religious and pilgrimage tourism from that of a tourist seeking a sense of general meaning, sacredness or fulfillment in his/her travels. This search for meaning is more apparent in Michael Winkelman’s (2005) study of ayahuasca tourists in the Amazon. In his qualitative study of 16 retreat attendees, Winkelman argues that in contrast to the “drug tourist” characterization provided by Marlene Dobkin de Rios (1994), the tourists in his study sought a way to establish “spiritual awareness and relations and personal spiritual development” through the use of ayahuasca (p. 211). This development included “emotional healing” for many (and assistance in dealing with substance abuse issues for some; *ibid*). Thus, while Winkelman does not provide a formal definition of his subjects as “spiritual tourists,” he details the tourists’ stated motivations for and benefits from the ayahuasca retreat, both of which focused primarily on increased spiritual and personal awareness (*ibid*).

³⁶ Reisinger distinguishes between ‘spirituality’ which refers to the search for meaning, unity, connectedness and transcendence, the sacred and the highest of human potential and ‘religiousness’ which is concerned with systems of worship and doctrine shared within groups...often displaying adherence to the beliefs/practices of an organized church or religious institution (Reisinger, 2006, p.149-150). She also cites Van Kaam (1986) in stating that ‘a central quality of spirituality is that it can affect people with no religious beliefs’ (*ibid*).

While I find both Norman and Winkelman's discussions of spiritual tourism useful in broadening my understanding of this phenomenon, these alone do not provide me with a conceptually sound definition of this increasingly popular trend.³⁷ Both of these definitions leave out the destination communities of the local/indigenous people whose spirituality is appropriated. Additionally, neither author discusses the asymmetrical power relations involved between the tourists and the locals. Thus, I define spiritual tourism as a phenomenon of predominately non-indigenous, Western tourists traveling to foreign, often "exotic" countries with the aim of participating in traditional healing, transcendent or spiritual ceremonies.³⁸

My conceptualization differs from Norman and Winkelmans's in two specific ways. First, I include the destination of the spiritual tourists (e.g. to exotic, foreign countries) in order to underscore the socio-economic and cultural differences between the spiritual tourist and the local community visited. Second, I emphasize the racial/ethnic and socio-economic status of the tourists in particular, to highlight the potential for unequal power relations within this type of tourism. This revised definition brings to light these questions of power and appropriation specifically as a function of this spirituality

³⁷ See Attix (2002); Reisinger (2006); and Smith (2003) all of whom reference an increase in the number of spiritual tourists in recent decades.

³⁸ While the specific ceremonies in my study largely involve the ingestion of ayahuasca, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the wider, pharmaceutical and 'drug' using aspects of these particular tourists. See Dobkin de Rois (1994) for a detailed critique of ayahuasca tourists as 'drug tourists'.

industry (Smith, 1999) and more adequately captures the economic and cultural dynamics that occur within the phenomenon.

The dynamics of power as discussed throughout this case study are conceived of similarly to Michel Foucault (1978, 1980). In Foucault's many works, he emphasizes that power is a complex omnipresent 'relationship' in which the force of power is not unilateral, from institutions to individuals, but it is multi-directional³⁹. The fluidity of power allows it to flow in many ways, operating in both a repressive and productive manner, primarily between "targets" and "agents" (Foucault, 1977, 1978).⁴⁰ Similarly, I conceive of power to move between the brokers, tourists and locals in various capacities; I do not simply assert that the "tourists" hold the power (as agents) and the "locals" are powerless (as targets). Additionally, by drawing from Foucault's notions of power, I insert the broker into this study as a primary purveyor of power, one who directs the tourist's "gaze" vis a vis the locals (Cheong & Miller, 2000).⁴¹

Further, I draw from Foucault's work on the power of discourse, especially as I analyze critically the ayahuasca tourism websites. Foucault (1980) describes discourses

³⁹ Foucault (1978) conceives of power not as an "entity" but as a relational force.

⁴⁰ For example, in his work on prisons and punishment (1977), Foucault considers the "criminals" to be the targets and the "wardens" to be the agents (among many others).

⁴¹ It is important to note here, that while the "local's" position of power will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six with relation to "benefits" of spiritual tourism and instances wherein a local shaman may display his own "agency" vis a vis "performing" for tourists— the idea of power and relations of ruling within this system cannot be forgotten or back grounded (Pratt, 1992; Smith, 1999).

as “regimes of truth,” stating, “each society has its regimes of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” (p. 131). He argues that these discourses of knowledge have important power dimensions and they can perform an including and excluding function. Discursive formations provide the rules for what counts as knowledge and what does not – who speaks with authority and who does not (Tribe, 2004, p 54). They can be used to discipline, shape and rule the subject. Asking whose interests are being served through the sale of the ayahuasca ceremony is one way in which my research methods support my goal of examining spiritual tourism as a form of cultural imperialism and exploring the dimensions of power.⁴²

While there has been very little written on spiritual tourism, there has been much more written about cultural tourism in general. Communication and cultural studies scholar, Jennifer Craik (1997) notes a general “trend towards more engaged or experiential forms of tourist experience” since the mid-1980s and states that “the cultural component” has become a “key feature” in new tourisms (p. 114). Spiritual tourism can be understood as part of the larger categories of ‘new’, ‘alternative,’ and/or ‘cultural’

⁴² John Tribe (2001) proposes that tourism scholars utilize critical theoretical approaches such as Foucault’s (1974) to unmask issues of hegemony and ideology in research. He states, “The job of critical theory is initially to identify which particular ideological influences are at work. Ideology critique then asks whose interests are being served by a particular ideology (Tribe, 2001, p. 466).

forms of post-modern tourism⁴³ (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Poon, 1993; Reisinger, 2006).

Examples of these types of tourism include adventure tourism, special interest tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism.⁴⁴ As such, a discussion of these categories of tourism⁴⁵ is useful for the assessment of spiritual tourism as a phenomenon to appreciate its historical and cultural antecedents. Cultural tourism can thus understood as a *niche* tourism “where cultural sites, events, attractions and/or experiences are marketed primarily as tourist experiences” (Craik, 1997, p. 113).⁴⁶

⁴³ New tourism “is a phenomenon of large scale packaging of non-standard leisure activities at competitive prices to suit demands of tourists as well as the economic and socio-environmental needs of destinations”. While the ingestion of ayahuasca may not quite be characterized as a “leisure activity” the packaging and promotion of this tourism fits well into this category (Poon 1997 in Douglas et al, 2001: p. 3). Urry (1990b) describes the postmodern tourist as s/he who desires a ‘real holiday’. The two central features of these holidays include the desire for the real-holiday *travelers* to separate themselves, spatially, from the mass-packaged *tourists* and the emergence of specialist agents and tour operators (along with its adjunct, ‘more individually centered and flexible holidays’ (Munt, 1994: p. 102).

⁴⁴ While there is no widely accepted definition of adventure tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2006: p. 42) one of the key ideas is that it involves physical exertion, often combined with a sense of risk or danger (ibid). Special interest tourism (SIT) has been defined as “the provision of customized leisure and recreation experiences driven by the specific, expressed interests of individuals and groups” (Douglas et al, 2001, p. 3).

⁴⁵ Categories of tourism include. cultural tourism, ecotourism and special interest tourism.

⁴⁶ Cultural tourism is discussed herein as it is important in contextualizing tourism in Peru (the site of my research). According to Greg O’Hare and Hazel Barrett (1999), very few national and regional studies have been conducted on the economic flows of the Peruvian tourist industry and very little is known about the local and regional impact of tourism in Peru, even though “cultural tourism is... crucial to the development of

Given the dearth of literature on spiritual tourism, it is helpful to examine its predecessor, “ecotourism” and the ways in which the discourse as well as the “costs and benefits” have been analyzed. Coined in 1993 by Mexican architect, environmentalist and international ecotourism consultant Hector Ceballos-Lascuriain, ecotourism is considered to be “environmentally responsible travel...to relatively undisturbed natural areas...that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations (Mader, 2005). Celebrating its “25th Anniversary” recently, ecotourism has been linked to the environmental movement of the 1970’s and 1980’s and has been claimed to hold such “values” as being more ethically responsible than “mass” tourism, more environmentally friendly, and more respectful of local/indigenous cultures (Fennell, 2001; Holden, 2003; Mader, 2005). However, in his content analysis of 85 definitions of the term, Fennell (2001) discovered that almost 80% of definitions did not make reference to ‘ethics’ at all. While the definition and discourse of ecotourism hold promise for fair and equitable relations with indigenous peoples, the actualization of this rhetoric is less optimistic. Thus, while ecotourism has gained important political and economic attention (Gouvea, 2004)⁴⁷ there

international tourism in Latin America” (Richards 2007). A recent study by the World Tourism Organization (2004) indicated that Peru classifies 93 percent of its visitors as cultural tourists. Thus, while little is known about the economic flows of tourism in Peru, it appears as though the country utilizes this term to categorize the primary influx of its tourists. Thus, an understanding of how such tourism is defined is warranted.

⁴⁷ Ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of the global travel and tourism industry; the World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that this type of tourism represents 2-4% of global tourism (www.world-tourism.org, 1998). According to the International

are gaps and inconsistencies in the actual ways in which ecotourism is promoted, marketed and achieved and the discourse of “sustainability” that it presents (Fennell, 2001; Dorsey et al, 2004; Holden, 2003).⁴⁸ For example, West and Carrier (2004) describe ecotourism as an “institutional expression of particular sets of late capitalist values in a particular political-economic climate” (p. 384), that of the climate of neoliberal ideology (ibid).⁴⁹ West and Carrier (2004) thus situate their examination of ecotourism in a broader context which includes the role of the relationships between the rhetoric of ecotourism, the values of eco-tourists and the ways in which these are manifest in ecotourism projects (ibid).

As explained previously, this tourism reflects the customization of leisure experiences based on the specific, personal interests of individuals or groups (Douglas et al, 2001). As such, in addition to situating spiritual tourism among the literature on cultural and ecotourism, it is also necessary to contextualize it among the new category of

Ecotourism Society (ITS), ecotourism is expanding by 20% annually, compared with 7% expansions for the tourism industry as a whole. Additionally, the ITS reported that ecotourism generated US \$154 billion in revenues for the year 2000 (Gouvea, 2004, p. 1).

⁴⁸ For example, York (2006) observes, “for native peoples, ecotourism is just another form of often unwelcome development, an infringement on their lands usually without their consent, yet another threat to their rights and livelihoods, their cultures, lands and environment (p. 133).

⁴⁹ As defined in their work, the core prescriptions of neo-liberal ideology consists of “privatization, deregulation, and liberalization, all encapsulated within political beliefs about democracy, entrepreneurship, and individual freedom” (Peet 2002, p. 65 in West & Carrier, 2004, p. 384). While a fuller discussion of neoliberalism is beyond the scope of this prospectus, it is this ideology that best represents what I consider to be the culmination of the commodification and colonialization of the peoples and places of the global south.

special interest tourism (SIT). These experiences may range from cultural tourisms (e.g. cultural, heritage and/or indigenous tourism) to activity based tourisms (e.g. cycling, health, and cruise tourism) to more hedonistic tourisms (e.g. wine, food, and sex tourism) (ibid). In their book, *Special Interest Tourism*, Norman Douglas, Ngaire Douglas and Ros Derrett describe SIT as a “complex phenomenon characterized by flexible delivery, market segmentation and advances in technology affecting management and distribution” (p. 3). Similarly, I argue that spiritual tourism appears to incorporate some of these features including the packaging and selling of the ayahuasca tours on the Internet, as well as the ability to tailor the tours to suit individual needs.

SPIRITUAL TOURISM, CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE

As mentioned earlier, post-colonial studies and, particularly, studies on cultural imperialism and tourism provide much guidance for this focus on spiritual tourism (Etner & Prasad, 2003; Hall & Tucker; Nash, 1989; Pratt, 1992; Said, 1993; Smith, 1999). Post-colonial theory examines social-cultural interaction between the “West and the Rest” (Caton & Santos, 2009, p. 193) as influenced significantly by the legacy of colonialism (Ehtner & Prasad, 2003; Hall & Tucker, 2004). This study draws from post-colonial scholarship in two primary ways. First, spiritual tourism is defined as occurring between predominantly Western, capitalist societies and indigenous (and mestizo) communities, akin to the colonial relationship (colonizer/colonized). Second, it provides an examination of the discourse and representations of local people as presented on the ayahuasca tour websites to interrogate the possible power structures and binaries

constructed/maintained (e.g, civilized/uncivilized, developed/undeveloped, normal/exotic) (Britton, 1979; Caton & Santos, 2009; Said, 1979, Santos, 2006). For example, consider the following statements found on the El Tigre Journeys' site which advertises ayahuasca tours in Peru:⁵⁰

We will spend time with our Bora Indian friends of San Andres, sharing traditional dance and trading for their beautiful handicraft made from natural products of the rainforests and rivers. We'll attend a rarely-witnessed Bora manguaré ceremony of the talking drum and share traditional foods made of yuca (manioc) and other native edible plants and fish.

[Then]:

We'll visit the shy and more reserved Yahua people who are quite different from the more outgoing Bora in appearance, personality, and customs. This extended Yahua family group of about 25 individuals emerged from the remote rainforest to engage the outside world only a decade or so ago.

Writing in the condition of post-colonial studies, I argue that these quotes reflect Edward Said's (1979) notions of Orientalism and the hegemonic construction of the superiority of European identity in comparison with non-European peoples and cultures. Said argues that "throughout the exchange between Europeans and their 'others' that began systematically half a millennium ago, the one idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an 'us' and a 'them', each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident" (1993: p. xxv).

⁵⁰ El Tigre Journeys is one of the websites examined in this dissertation.. This text was retrieved on February 20, 2008 from <http://www.biopark.org/peru/millennium-agenda.html>.

The language on the website described above instantiates colonial relations by portraying the tourist as one of “us” and the various indigenous communities as “them.” For example, the Bora Indians are presented as the tourist’s “friend” (i.e. the “smiling native” (Trask, 1999), ready to perform their “rarely witnessed” ceremony just for the tourist. Additionally, the Yahua family group is depicted as ahistoric, frozen in time and only recently connected to the modern world. These representations serve to maintain and reinforce the superiority of the Western tourist as modern and civilized and the indigenous communities as backward or stagnant (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 6). C. Michael Hall and Hazel Tucker (2004) argue that such otherness is *essential* in tourism and it is this otherness that “makes a destination worthy of consumption” (p. 8).

Drawing from Edward Said’s (1993) definition of imperialism, cultural imperialism can be understood as a practice, a theory and and/or an attitude of domination or superiority of the West over Other, typically non-Western cultures. One way to understand spiritual tourism is to analyze the ways in which it serves as a vehicle for Western tourists to appropriate indigenous culture via the tourists’ participation in the ayahuasca ceremony. This appropriation occurs in the context of what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) calls the “contact zone.” Pratt describes the contact zone as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (p. 4).

Pratt’s work informs this study by providing a conceptual framework from which to analyze the discourse on the ayahuasca websites. In addition to situating spiritual

tourism as occurring in a “contact zone,” the language on the websites is examined to understand to what extent it reflects what Pratt calls moments of “anti-conquest.” Pratt defines anti-conquest as “strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert their European hegemony” (p. 7). Tourism scholar Carla Santos (2006) echoes this concept in her textual analysis of *The Best American Travel Writing 2001*. Santos argues that when we do not provide readers with socio-cultural and historical contexts, dominate Western notions are reproduced. The current study examines the potential for such hegemonic reproduction and explores the discursive strategies used to maintain the predominant economic and social order (Santos, 2006).

Commodification of Culture

In addition to examining spiritual tourism as a form of neocolonialism and cultural imperialism, this dissertation also investigates the industry of ayahuasca tourism as a means of commodifying indigenous and mestizo culture, specifically, the buying and selling of the ayahuasca tea. Huanani-Kay Trask’s treatment of tourism and the colonization of Hawaii assist in this study’s conceptualization of spiritual tourism as a culturally commodifying activity. Trask (1999) summarizes well the “sale” of Hawaiian culture: “The point is, of course, is that everything in Hawai’i can be yours, that is, you, the tourist, the non-Native, the visitor. The place, the people, the culture, even our identity as “Native” peoples is for sale” (p. 399). A significant number of works have examined and critiqued the commodification of culture from a variety of perspectives (Akama & Sterry, 2002; Appadurai, 1991; Cohen 1988; Dorsey et al, 2004; Gunster,

2004; Harvey, 2006; McLaren, 2003; Trask, 1999; Urry, 1990). Trends in this scholarship suggest that due to the advances in technology, an increasingly high number of formerly remote or hard to reach communities are now targeted as sources of markets and income, turning these people/places into new travel commodities.

According to Karl Marx (1992), in the capitalist market system, the principal focus of production is on exchange value, not on “use value”. The use value of commodities is subordinate to their exchange value, to their potential for the generation of profit. Thus, they become mere commodities to be traded: “goods, services and people are not to be – and for many, can no longer be- understood in any sense other than their value in the marketplace” (Gunster, 2004: p. 42).⁵¹ In his neo-Marxian analysis, Fredrick Jameson warns that as the market and the media become the only freestanding forces of production (p. 349), cultural production supersedes human production, resulting in the “reification” of consumer society. This “reification of culture” occurring now generates a “radical separation between consumers and producers”; the consumer cannot, nor does not care to know whom the producer might be (p. 315). This separation between consumers and producers and the subordination of the social/use value (of culture) to exchange value contribute the commodification of culture discussed in the tourism literature (Akama & Sterry, 2002). Tourism has become a commodity to be advertised,

⁵¹ Harvey extends Gunster’s critique, “the corporatization, commodification and privatization of hitherto public assests has been a signal feature of the neo-liberal project. Its primary aim has been to open up new fields for capital accumulation in domains hitherto regarded as off-limits to the calculus of profitability” (Harvey, 2006, p.44).

marketed and sold much like every other commodity, largely due to the rise in Western productivity and the resultant increase in leisure time for the middle class (Urry, 1990).⁵²

Not surprisingly, this process occurs most often in the form of commodification of indigenous cultures, replicating the neocolonial paradigm. While there have been reported benefits of such intercultural contacts, such as exposing tourists to alternative lifestyles (Rojek, 1998, p. 38), the consequences of this commodification are rife in the literature (Akama & Sterry, 2002; Blackford, 2004; Cohen, 1988; Dorsey et al, 2004; Mander & Tauli-Corpuz, 2006; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Trask, 1999; West & Carrier, 2004). These include, but are not limited to: the weakening significance of rituals (Blackford, 2004; Cohen, 1988; Trask 1999) and/or the exoticizing of local people (Dorsey et al, 2004; Mander & Tauli-Corpuz, 2006; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Trask, 1999).

To date, the impact of such commodification on the local communities affected by ayahuasca tourism has not been investigated. Given the potential ramifications for unwanted and/or unsolicited cultural transformation of indigenous and mestizo communities as well as the potential degradation of the ayahuasca ceremony, this phenomenon warrants closer inspection and merits further research. Thus, this research

⁵² Both the consumer and the neocolonial (Othering) discourses are clearly reflected on the WASAI ayahuasca website, "Those who have some time and money to spend can visit the Amazon Jungle and contact renowned "chamanes" and participate in one or more rituals of Ayahuasca. Also, you can visit Rio Branco from Puerto Maldonado where all this current get started and where lives a big number of families that belong to these groups. The neocolonial discourse is reflected in the anonymity of the "these groups" in Rio Branco; if you, the tourist, have the time and money, you may visit these nameless groups. This text was retrieved on March 25, 2007 from <http://www.wasai.com/ayahuasca.htm>.

begins in the following chapter with an examination of the most frequently visited ayahuasca tours website, Blue Morpho Tours.

Chapter 3

Surfing for a Shaman: Single Site Analysis

As tourism professionals—scholars and practitioners alike—let us not forget that we have a valuable role to play in constructing a different sort of world by helping both active and armchair travelers to imagine its people and cultures in new and more productive ways. (Caton & Santos, 2009, p. 204)

Given the ease with which anyone with access to the Internet can Google “ayahuasca tour” and instantly locate thousands of websites offering a wide variety of shamanic tours both in Peru and elsewhere, the Internet website has become the principal vehicle in the advertising of ayahuasca. As alluded to in the Caton and Santos (2009) quote above, having access to and control over the website’s content provides a critical source of power and representation within the ayahuasca tourism industry. Specifically, those who control the medium control the message; those brokers who have their own website may represent the Amazon’s plants, people and places however they see fit. In order to best understand the processes by which ayahuasca tourism is thus displayed for consumption this chapter examines specifically the discourses used to market these tours.

This chapter investigates the discourse of ayahuasca tourism by examining the primary medium through which ayahuasca is promoted, the internet website. Through the examination of the most frequently visited ayahuasca tourism website, “Blue Morpho Tours” (www.bluemorpho.com), it analyzes the commodification of the ayahuasca ceremony and investigates whether or not the means by which this tourism is advertised reflects the exoticization and othering of the local communities from whom the ceremony

originates. By doing so, it seeks to deconstructively map the discursive practices of Website advertizing (Foucault, 1980), analyzing the ways in which these practices are reflective of the discourses of appropriation and commodification, processes which appear to be widespread in the current age of globalization (Santos, 2006).

In order to best assess these discourses, data collection occurred at multiple intervals throughout the study. Findings during this time reveal an increase in the appearance of “ayahuasca tours” advertised online.⁵³ During the initial collection, there were 13 Internet websites offering ayahuasca tours to Peru. As of September 2009 (the end of the data collection), there were 17. Initially, six sites which advertised tours specifically to the Amazon were chosen for analysis from their appearance on meta-search engine Dogpile.com.⁵⁴ Of these six, four were founded or brokered by individual, non-Peruvians, from either the United States (three) or Italy (one), while two were listed as either a “Peruvian travel agency” or a “Peruvian tour operator” (with no individual listed). As is customary in critical discourse analysis investigation begins with a detailed examination of one text, preferably the most representative work, and then proceeds to examine other texts within the genre in order to confirm or disconfirm hypothesis, trends and patterns within the discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Janks, 1997). For that reason, an

⁵³ Data collected occurred between 2006 and 2009.

⁵⁴ Dogpile.com simultaneously queries the major search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo, MSN) and lists the resulting websites in order of popularity (those which receive the most traffic) (Spink, Jansen, Kathuria, & Koshman, 2006).

extensive analysis of Blue Morpho Tours was conducted first, as it was the most frequently visited website on Dogpile.com during the study period.⁵⁵

Through the use of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Foucault, 1980) and semiotic visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), this chapter explores the social problem of commodification of culture by examining the most frequented ayahuasca tourism website, “Blue Morpho Tours.” Several features of the text are analyzed, including the main discourses used to advertise the tour, as well as the identification and representation of key actors. This examination of actors highlights both those who are included and excluded from the text, providing important information regarding whose voice is present and privileged and whose is absent or suppressed. This analysis is informed by post-colonial theory and discussed in the context of new capitalism, wherein the “re-scaling of relations between global regional, national and local is fundamentally a matter of the transformation of capitalism” (Fairclough, 2003, p.220).

Discursively, spiritual tourism is therefore understood as the possible appropriation and commodification of indigenous and/or mestizo culture. Following Fairclough’s (2003) analytic model, there appear to be several obstacles to tackling this social problem. The three primary obstacles include, but are not limited to, the globalization of tourist markets and the expanded reach of tourist activities, (both literally and figuratively), the mainstreaming of New Age discourses and the appropriation of shamanism among Western spiritual seekers (Deloria in Deloria, Foehner & Scinta, 1999,

⁵⁵ Chapter IV continues with a broader analysis of the other websites in the study.

p. 321; Smith 1999) and the proliferation of the Internet to advertise to a wider, highly educated, and financially secure audience more quickly and cheaply than in the past. Notably, this access and capacity to influence or control processes of mediation is recognized as an aspect of power and the Internet itself is examined as one form of this mediation (Fairclough, 2003, p. 31).

WEBSITES AS A SOURCE OF PRIVILEGE AND POWER

The less well-known, the more exotic a destination is, the greater the chance to influence image through tourism marketing activities. One important tool for such long-range marketing activities in the 21st century is undoubtedly the Internet. (Arlt, 2007, p. 315)

Both access to, and control over, the content on the internet provide critical sources of privilege and power within the alternative tourism industry. The scale and scope of the internet has continued to increase within the field of tourism, specifically by the most affluent of potential tourists. For example, the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) estimated that among the 145.7 million American travelers in 2004, 67% used the internet for trip planning (TIA, 2004 in Kaplandidou & Vogt, 2006, p. 204). As of 2004, Nielsen/Netratings report that 75% of American households had internet access (www.netratings.com).

Website development and internet access have become cheaper and easier to use, broadening the scope of the production and consumption of this media. Still, even with such expansion, 80% of the internet traffic continues to go to just 15,000 popular sites. Most internet users are from the western world/global north and most alternative tourist

destinations are in the developing world or the global south (formerly considered the Third World) (Rojek, 1998 in Dorsey et al, 2004, p. 760). Additionally, the United States, Europe, and Japan account for 79% of the world's internet population, adding up to 41% of foreign tourism expenditure (World Tourism Organization, 1999 in Dorsey et al, 2004). Nielsen also reported in 2007 that while the typical user visits 25 websites a week, he/she spends as little as 48 seconds on each site (www.netratings.com). Thus, this short amount of time suggests that these alternative destinations are advertised seductively for the virtual tourist's gaze, designed specifically to attract the hurried user (Urry, 1990). They have become spaces that sustain consumerism via the standardization of images and packaging of landscapes, leading also to a privileging of 'sights' over 'sites' (Holmes 2001, p. 5 in Dorsey et al 2004, p. 754).

Perhaps the most important reason for examining the internet as a means of advertising is that one can examine directly the role of the intermediary in the industry (Cheong & Miller, 2000). The role (s) advertised on-line may be of the tour operator/organizer, director or guide, it may be the person/agency/company to whom the deposit is sent and the itinerary confirmed, but it is not specifically the "tourist" him/herself, nor is it the local "host," the one offering the experience and (likely) facilitating the ayahuasca ceremony. By examining this middleman via the internet site, one can move beyond the "hosts and guests" dichotomy (Aramberri, 2001; Smith, 1978); an important step, as cultural anthropologists have long insisted that tourism is an activity substantially shaped by the middleman (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Van den Berge, 1994).

As discussed previously, including the broker in this study provides a crucial lens through which to investigate how the local community is represented to the tourist on the both the website and in person, as the broker is primarily responsible for “selling” the indigenous community through its image and rituals (Cheong & Miller, 2000; van den Berghe, 1994). Thus, through both the expansion of international travel, as well as the increased use of the internet to search and secure one’s travel plans, the tourism website has emerged as a useful lens with which to examine the shifting nature of global flows of information, experience and exposure.

Dorsey et al (2004) observes that while there has been little or no analysis thus far of internet representations of tourism, there have been many studies of the content of traditional advertisements (p. 761). They include, but are not limited to, the tourism brochure studies conducted by Britton (1979), postcard analysis research by Albers and James (1988) and the study of “touristic images of natives” by Cohen (1993, p. 36). Additionally, while many examine tourism promotion on the internet, they do so from a marketing or management perspective. In contrast, the model of analysis utilized here reflects Dorsey et al’s (2004) model, as this is one of the few studies that comprehensively examines issues of cultural commodification, indigenous representation, promotional discourse and advertising specifically on tourism websites (utilizing both textual and visual analyses).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Thus this chapter design is greatly informed by the work of Dorsey et al (2004).

EXAMINING THE POWER OF DISCOURSE

As mentioned, the “Blue Morpho Tours” website was chosen as the site for this in-depth analysis due to its appearance on Dogpile.com as the most frequently visited website from the search term “ayahuasca tour” (between 2006-2009). According to Fairclough (2003), the website can be considered a promotional genre, a characterization of the new Capitalism, wherein there has been a proliferation of genres which have the implicit or explicit purpose of selling commodities, brands or individuals (p. 35). Here, a single site analysis seeks to obtain a rich, comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon (Magnet, 2007; Sujatha, 2007). While it is clear that the website functions to provide communication, findings from this detailed analysis suggest that its purpose is much more strategic: to attract potential tourists who are willing to pay \$1940.00 to participate in an “all-inclusive” nine-day “workshop/retreat” (includes five ayahuasca sessions). Thus, internet analysis has emerged as a critical medium in understanding social processes and serves as an appropriate method herein (Jones, 1998).

According to Norman Fairclough (2001), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is both a theory and a method. He defines a discourse as “the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view” (Fairclough, 1999, p. 56). Fairclough conceives of CDA as a theoretical perspective on language (or semiotic) analysis within the broader analysis of social processes (2001) and a way of linking social theories with linguistic theories (1999). The language use of any text contains 1) social identities, 2) social relations and 3) systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough, 1999, p. 55). Any investigation of these components includes an investigation of power; CDA

allows the researcher to specifically analyze the connections between the use of language and the exercise of power (Fairclough, 1995, p. 54). Additionally, CDA acknowledges the dialectical nature of language, how language is both “socially shaped and socially shaping” (p. 55). CDA considers the ideological function of discourse and examines the ways in which some discourses may “colonize” others (Fairclough, 1999, p. 27). For all of these reasons, CDA provides me with an appropriate analytical framework to deconstruct the neocolonial and commodification discourses present on the websites (Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

Thus guided by Fairclough (2003), this analysis includes an examination of both the internal and external relations of the text (p. 36-37).⁵⁷ This data was coded similar to the process conducted by Charollette M. Echtner and Pushkala Prasad (2003) whereby nouns, verbs and descriptors (adjectives and adverbs) were the primary units of analysis. Nouns were primarily assessed in terms of the activities offered on the tour and actors included or excluded (be it through suppression or back-grounding) (Fairclough 2003, p. 145). Verbs were tracked in order to elucidate the actions of both the actors listed and activities offered. Descriptors aided in interpreting the importance or prominence given the nouns. Once coded, grouping assisted in tracking key themes in the data (Santos, 2006).

⁵⁷ Both a close, meticulous reading of the semantic, grammatical and lexical relations of the actual text was conducted (internal) as well as an examination of the relation of this text to other elements of social events in which it is situated (external) (Fairclough, 2003, p. 36-37). In order to prepare the data for such analysis, all of the information on each of 13 web pages was downloaded and printed out for examination.

The text's external relations were analyzed by exploring how the discourses and findings identified intersected with the larger social practices of cultural appropriation and commodification as a function of the social structures of economic globalization and tourism (Fairclough, 2003). This linking of text to larger and more pervasive social and economic processes assists in contextualizing the findings and perhaps explaining why some voices or actors were included, while others were excluded (Caton & Santos, 2009). Thus, through a multi-level, detailed analysis of Blue Morpho's representation of itself, this study sheds light on one aspect of the complex social and cultural phenomenon of spiritual tourism, as examined through an ayahuasca tourism website.

Discourse of the Corporate, New Age and Exotic

Three primary themes or discourses emerged from this analysis. These three discourses included the "Corporate Discourse," the "New Age Discourse" and the "Exotic Discourse." In brief, the Corporate Discourse centers on the website's textual/visual elements which reflect a Western, business theme. In contrast, the New Age discourse includes those phrases and images which emphasize issues of spirituality, self-transformation and personal growth. The Exotic Discourse contains text, graphics and/or visuals which romanticize eroticize or otherwise create distance between the tourist and the local. Additional findings included the near exclusion of indigenous or mestizo actors on the sites (with the exception of the shamans), the absence of any demographic, regional or cultural information regarding the Amazon or its inhabitants, and the presentation of the broker as "host," subsequently moving from the role of middleman to that of primary host, thus maintaining the host/guest dichotomy discussed

previously, while at the same time effectively removing the local host (Aramberri, 2001; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Smith, 1978).

The Corporate Discourse

Drawing from Foucault (1972), Nancy Naples (2003) argues that in the examination of social issues, one must analyze carefully the ways in which discourse serves to shape, frame or constrain whose voices, ideas and knowledge are heard and whose are silenced (p. 107). In making visible these dominant frames, one can better reveal the means by which race, class and gender inequalities are produced and reproduced (p. 138). Naples' approach informs this analytic framework in determining how the discourse of spiritual tourism may organize power relations between the tourist, the broker and the local. In order to better understand the phenomenon of spiritual tourism and how racial, gender and class inequalities are produced (or reproduced), I include an investigation of this discourse. Specifically, I analyze the language on the websites, tracking themes and noting specifically words and phrases that reflect capitalistic, corporate frames (Naples, 2003).

For example, the very first line of the Blue Morpho site asserts that Blue Morpho "specializes" in "all inclusive Shamanic Workshops..." Phrases such as "specialize," "all inclusive," "workshops," and "excellent service" are utilized multiple times throughout the site and can each be attributed to a broader corporate, capitalistic discourse – a far cry from the spiritual, shamanic and transformative descriptors used on other pages of the site. Moving from the first line of the Home Page to the last paragraph on the same page, one finds this discourse reflected most succinctly and prominently, as it is the final piece

of text which the tourist sees, before, presumably, moving on to the next page (Shamanic Workshops): “Blue Morpho is dedicated to our clients' enjoyment of the experience. Our goal is for our guests to return to Iquitos beaming from their adventure into the jungle and impressed by our professionalism and commitment to service.” In the “About Blue Morpho” section, one is informed that the tour company has “already lead over 800 satisfied tourists to the camp,” thus providing a strong “track record” of “satisfied tourists”, language more appropriate to business brochure providing a service, than a tour group providing a spiritual experience.

In the internal analysis, the tourist is referred to by various names. Ranked in order of those terms used most often, the tourist was referred to as: guest (s), tourist, traveler, client, participant and person (s). Notably, the word “guest” was used five times more often than the next term, “tourist,” suggesting that the relationship between the purchaser of the tour and the provider of the tour is one of “host” and “guest.” While this finding may seem to contrast with a Corporate discourse, it actually appears to merge nicely with current corporate speak. For example, if one takes into account the linguistic turns in other customer-service oriented businesses, one will notice that even such retailers as McDonalds and Disneyland refer to their customers as “guests.” Incorporating these discursive elements into a website advertising shamanic workshops and spiritual retreats might best be understood through Fairclough’s (2003) interpretation of recontextualization whereby there is an appropriation of elements of one social practice (business transactions) within another (spiritual tourism website), placing the former

within the context of the latter and transforming it in particular ways in the process (p. 32-33).

Another example of such genre mixing can be found on the “About Blue Morpho” section whereby the “traveler” is offered the “opportunity to experience the realities of the mystical world surrounded by untamed wilderness in a safe and well-organized workshop.” Discussing both the “mystical world” and a “well-organized workshop” in the same sentence reflects the appropriation of the spiritual nature of the ceremonies offered. This recontextualization of the Corporate discourse within the New Age or spiritual discourse is one way in which the ayahuasca ceremony in particular, and indigenous spirituality more broadly have become appropriated and commodified.

One final example of this commodification can be found on the “Shamanic Workshops” section. After the lists of “Shamanism Workshops” and “Rainforest Excursions,” one is invited to join a “Group Workshop / Retreat:”

These group workshops are designed to illuminate the reality of Amazonian Shamanism in a sacred and ceremonial setting. As we journey into the depths of the Amazon rain forest, we hold the intent of spiritual transformation and learning through our work during these magical days.

Next to this text is a 1” x 2” color photo of a group of approximately 30, primarily white individuals, standing together with Souther and the tour shaman. Ian Munt (1994) would describe this mixing of the personal and the professional as “the commencement of professionalization processes in consumption,” beginning to occur as a function of

“postmodern travel” (p. 112). Munt describes these activities as the “blurring” of “occupational professionalism” and “consumption and leisure” (ibid).

Fairclough (2003) also discusses the blurring of “social boundaries.” Thus, this blending of social practices results in various forms of “hybridity” (ibid). For example, the mixing of a corporate business genre (workshop/retreat) with that of a spiritual or self-empowering genre (participating in a “sacred and ceremonial setting”) produces a hybrid genre. Through the employment of this interdiscursive analysis (combining the internal analysis of genres and discourses with the external analysis of its relation to social practices), one can identify more clearly the articulation of the commodification processes within the spiritual tourism industry (Fairclough, 2003; Smith, 1999).

The New Age Discourse

Similar to the Corporate Discourse, but perhaps less surprising, is the inclusion of several lexical and grammatical elements of the website text that cluster together to form this spiritual/New Age Discourse. Drawing from Matthew Wood’s (2007), *Possession, Power and the New Age*, this specific discourse is characterized by terms representing “spirituality” instead of religion, and an emphasis on the “self” instead of an external, formal “God” (p. 27). While the term “New Age” is both amorphous and contentious in the religious and sociological literatures (Hanegraaff, 1986, 2002; Kemp, 2004) it is used here to represent these primary themes as described by Wood (2007).⁵⁸ Additional

⁵⁸ Though the term “New Age” remains contested and is, perhaps a bit outdated, I have chosen it purposively to describe this specific discourse; the term “New Age” continues to provide most readers with a fairly common idea of the realm of non-traditional, alternative, and individualistic spirituality discussed herein. As Kemp (2004) argues,

qualities of this New Age discourse are that those involved are individual “seekers” of spirituality (not aligned with an organized group) and that these individuals are most likely to be “white, educated [and] middle class” (Wood, 2007, p. 27). While it is difficult to ascertain the socio-economic class of either the brokers (prior to their entrepreneurial activities in Peru) or the tourists reflected on the ayahuasca tour websites, the first two characteristics of the New Age seeker are representative of Souther. Additionally, the majority of individuals depicted on this website (not including the Peruvian shamans) appear to be Caucasian. Thus, Wood’s (2007) description of the discursive elements of the “New Age” best suits this examination.

Multiple nouns, verbs and descriptors were dedicated to the shamanic and spiritual dimensions of the tour. Additionally, 42 photos on the site illustrate either the shamans, the ayahuasca (preparation and brew), and/or the Ceremonial House (where the ceremonies take place). Of the textual elements, “spiritual” or “Spirit” was employed the most often throughout the site. Other terms used frequently included “sacred,” “visionary,” “transformational,” and “personal growth;” the phrase “sacred, visionary plant” (ayahuasca) was employed six times. The tourist is invited to come to the “center for shamanism...deep in the Peruvian Amazon rain forest where traditional shamanic methods and study could be offered in the environment where these techniques developed.” Note, here also, the retextualization of discourses, the focus is on the

“No alternative term to ‘New Age’ has yet achieved popular or scholarly currency” (p. 181). Similar to the brokers in the study, “[the term] New Age is averse to tightly-defined systems, and is inherently pluralistic in its approach to the truth...” (ibid).

shamanic activities, but these are described as “methods” and “techniques,” terms utilized more often in science than in spiritual terms (Fairclough, 2003).

The Shamanism Workshop Activity and Ceremony List includes the following activities (previous phrases bolded in original): Nightly Shamanic Journeys; Discussion and Identification of Medicinal Plants; Shamanism Journey Practice; Guided Meditations; Chakra Theory and Balancing; Camalonga Dream Journey; and Inkan Fire Ceremony. This list stands out as a unique blend of “New Age” activities, as the inclusion of Chakra Balancing (drawn from India) and the Inkan Fire Ceremony (from Southern Peru) represent a comingling of New Age techniques, whereby tourists can pick and choose among a wide variety of spiritually enlightening practices, some of which are clearly not endemic to the locale in which they are offered. Additionally, the spiritual tourist can “Learn out-of-body journeys to connect with power animals, spirit guides, and guardian angels. Harness their powerful healing capabilities to transform ordinary reality into magical living.” One can trace both native and Christian origins, providing a mix that might appeal to a wide variety of tourists. The placement of the following paragraph on the Home Page illustrates the prominence of this discourse as the main focus of the tour:

We work with traditional shamans (curanderos, medicine men and women) who practice the ancient and mystical shamanic arts of the jungle. The shamans conduct ceremonies and rituals, many of which utilize the use of sacred visionary medicinal plants, designed to open consciousness and bridge the physical and spiritual world. These ceremonies are personally transformational, positively changing the life of the participant. Experience Spiritual, Natural, and Energetic evolution.

Many scholars are concerned about the increasing appropriation of native culture and spirituality by non-natives, whether or not such individuals ascribe to the tenets of New Age spiritualities (Deloria, in Deloria et al, 1998; Dobkin de Rios, 1994; Smith, 1999, 2005). Linda T. Smith (1999) summarizes well this concern and lists “commodifying indigenous spirituality” as one of the ten forms in which imperialism still exists:

...the spirituality industry will continue to expand as people, particularly those in the First World nations, become more uncertain about their identities, rights, privileges and very existence. New Age groups currently appropriate indigenous spiritual beliefs at will...Despite protestations that spirituality is an experience through which non-indigenous people aim to help people, it is clearly a profitable experience. (p. 102)

While the New Age discourse is focused on the transformation of the individual, this “reconnecting of [one’s] lost or separated soul parts” belies the \$1940 price tag, thus obscuring the industry behind the “spirit” (Smith, 1999). Drawing from Smith, I argue that the discourse of ayahuasca tourism exposed herein supports well my definition of spiritual tourism (as proposed in Chapter Two).⁵⁹ Specifically, it reveals the asymmetrical power relations inherent in the industry, largely characterized by affluent tourists of the global north appropriating and or colonizing the beliefs and practices of those local people in “exotic” or “primitive” places.

⁵⁹ As noted in the previous chapter, I define spiritual tourism as a phenomenon of predominately non-indigenous, Western tourists traveling to foreign, often “exotic” countries with the aim of participating in traditional healing, transcendent or spiritual ceremonies.

The Exotic Discourse

Though less prominent than the previous two discourses, the Exotic Discourse is represented on the Blue Morpho website – most notably through the combination of verbal and visual elements of the text. The Exotic Discourse consists of text and images which portray indigenous/mestizo people and their environs in ways which romanticize, idealize, sanitize or in some way create a sense of ‘otherness’ for the tourist, perpetuating the binary of “us” and “them” (Caton & Santos, 2009; Etchner & Prasad, 2003; Hall & Tucker, 2004; Said, 1979). Verbal elements include many descriptors of the “place” in which Blue Morpho is situated. These include, but were not limited to, the “exotic and colorful wildlife,” “jungle shamanism,” “mystical world,” “untamed wilderness,” “isolated place,” and “your adventure deep within the jungle.” While the shamans are sometimes referred to as “traditional” or “native,” there is no mention, nor exoticization, of local peoples, something often found in representations of the Amazon or indigenous culture/spirituality (Etchner & Prasad, 2003; Munt, 1994; Said 1993; Smith, 1999, 2005). This exclusion of local actors will be discussed below. First, however, it is important to note that the visual cues perform a preparatory function. Of the 139 photos included specifically on the Blue Morpho Photos page, eight were devoted exclusively to “Sunsets” and another 27 to “Animal Pictures” (thus, there were no people in these photos). An additional five photos included in the “Iquitos, Belen and Quistacocha Zoo Pictures” contained images of animals. Four pictures of forest, plants or animals were found on the “Blue Morpho Camp Pictures” page and two more on the “Shamanic

Workshops” page. Combined, these visual elements totaled 46 photos – a full third of photos on the site – devoted exclusively to animals and environs.

In contrast, only 14 photos on the entire website appear to depict individuals who may be Peruvian (not including the Blue Morpho shamans, featured dominantly on the Photos page). Of these 14 photos, only eight photos include enough of the image to make out a person’s face or expression. Again, the strategies of inclusion and exclusion appear to favor the depiction of place and animals over that of local people (Dorsey et al, 2004). By thus controlling the representation of the Amazon and manipulating the lens through which the (virtual) tourist views the region, Souther and staff define (in advance) those “sights” worth seeing. In turn, they remove the local people from the picture and present the area as largely that of Souther’s alone, his own private reserve filled with colorful birds and mysterious animals. A further discussion of this conspicuous exclusion of local people is provided below.

The Exclusion of Local Actors

There is a conspicuous exclusion of local people as evidenced through both the verbal and visual elements on the site. Social actors were tracked to note the inclusion/exclusion of particular groups or individuals (Fairclough, 2003). “Locals,” be they indigenous or mestizo inhabitants of that area of the Peruvian Amazon, were mostly suppressed, with the exception of the shamans (as noted earlier) and the people who work as the “camp staff.” Neither the locals nor the “local community” were identified in any way (e.g., no information was provided on the group’s race, ethnicity, or region of residence).

Aside from the minimal information regarding the camp staff, there are only three other places where any type of local community is mentioned, albeit briefly. The first reference is on the Home Page, “Ceremonies with traditional shamans (*curanderos*) who currently practice native shamanism in local communities!” Interestingly, this is the only place in the entire text where an exclamation point is used, leading one to perhaps assume that this is a deliberate move to draw attention to the authenticity of the shamans who work at the camp thereby affirming their legitimacy (Fairclough, 2003). The second reference to the “locals” occurs on the “Shamanic Workshops” pages within the “Shamanism Workshop Activity and Ceremony List.” The locals are mentioned only in the following sentence, “The Amazon is home to thousands of medicinal plants used by the *locals* to cure many illnesses ranging from headaches to cancer” (*italics added*). Again, there is no mention of who these locals are or how they cure these many illnesses.

The third reference to the “locals” is on “Lodge & Meals” page, within the paragraph on “Location:”

The Blue Morpho Shamanic Center and Jungle lodge sits on privately owned 180 acres of Primary Forest 53 Km from Iquitos off the Iquitos Nauta road. We employ locals in all levels of employment, aiding their struggling economy. We contribute to town projects, and donate clothing and household items to the families.

In this example, the locals are excluded via means of “backgrounding;” they are mentioned, but not identified, named nor described (Fairclough, 2003, p. 105). As might be inferred from this short mention, the context within which the Center relates to the “locals” as a classified group alternates between the “specific” group of those who work

at the Center and the “generic” one of the locals and “their” struggling economy (Fairclough, 2003, p. 146). The particular process verbs such as “aiding,” “contribute” and “donate” cluster together and imply a paternalistic, colonial discourse between the Center and the locals, not unlike the colonial binaries discussed by Etchner & Prasad (2003) in their study,

These are the contrasts between the states of advancing, progressive, modern, developed and disciplined versus decadent, stagnant, ancient/primitive, undeveloped, and unrestrained. These persistent underlying binaries illustrate quite clearly the extent of colonial discourse permeating the representation of the Third World in tourism marketing. (p. 13)

This paternalistic, neo-colonial “us” and “them” representation reflects well Pratt’s concept of the anti-conquest, whereby the European subject (in this case, Hamilton Souther, “owner/founder”) attempts to secure his innocence (by employing, aiding, donating and contributing to the struggling locals) at the same time he asserts his Western, capitalist hegemony (his spirituality-based business and profit-making on his private land in the Amazon rain forest) (Pratt, 1992, p. 7). Thus, the unnamed locals who receive donations to their unnamed town are represented as “passivated” social actors, who serve as the “affected” or the “beneficiary”, the ones who are affected by the processes of the Blue Morpho Center (Fairclough, 2003, p. 146).

The final and most significant instance of “local” people mentioned or referenced in the text can be found on the “About Blue Morpho” pages. Attending to the *arrangement* of the team members, one might infer that they are organized intentionally

in a hierarchical fashion, from most important to least important (Fairclough, 2003). In the order they are presented on the web pages, these members begin with owner/founder/shaman (Souther), then profile the resident shaman(Don Alberto), and next a shaman who passed away in 2007 (Don Julio). Immediately following the owner and shamans are the three non-indigenous individual team members, each of whom provides a specialized service to the tourist (two men, Jeremy and John, and one woman, Mimi). Following these specialists are the Blue Morpho staff, presented last.

In addition to being listed last among those individuals who comprise Blue Morpho, several verbal and visual elements elucidate the differences in the ways in which the locals are represented in this section. First, each of the primary members of the Blue Morpho “team” are identified individually, by their first and last name, and are depicted by a high quality 1” x 1” color photo. With the exception of the two shamans, all four of the team members appear to be no older than forty years old and are photographed with only their head and shoulders showing, facing directly at the camera. Except for Souther, each exhibits a wide, open smile for the viewer. Note the openness and ease with which they appear to address the viewer and solicit some form of pseudo-social bond (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 122-3). This is in sharp contrast to the complete exclusion of the “local” staff members’ photographic representation. Additionally, all six “team members” are profiled individually (in contrast to the group description of the “staff” as detailed below). These brief bios describe the length of time the team members have worked with Blue Morpho Tours, list their credentials and detail their specific role/s within the camp.

Take for instance the case of Mimi. Mimi's complete bio is provided as an example to illustrate the discursive strategies of legitimation (Fairclough, 2003), as well as to provide a comparison to the paragraph which represents the "Blue Morpho Staff". Under her picture, Mimi is listed as "Apprentice, Trip Organizer, Camp Manager":

Mimi Buttacavoli: Mimi started apprenticeship in April of 2005. Mimi is fluent in English, Spanish, Italian and Sicilian. She is a licensed nurse trained in Oxford. She studied herbal medicine in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Her main duties include trip organizer, camp manager and nurse. Her depth of knowledge shines through in her personal interaction with guests in and out of ceremony.

The listing of Mimi's license from Oxford, her ability to speak four languages and her former study in/travel to Bolivia all suggest that she is highly trained and likely quite skilled in the services she provides for the tour. Munt (1994) argues that providing such a detailed list of qualifications reflects the "professionalization" characteristic of postmodern tourism, whereby it is no longer enough to simply introduce the tour leader (or staff), but to highlight both her academic qualifications as well as her traveling experience. This professionalization of the Blue Morpho team also extends to the shamans featured. For example, Don Alberto is described as having "over 35 years as a spiritual healer and over 3,000 ayahuasca ceremonies in his collective experience." In spite of providing such detailed information about Don Alberto's qualifications, it is only mentioned in passing that "when not working *exclusively* with Blue Morpho Tours" he serves as a "curandero [in] his local town" (*italics added*). Additionally, it states that

Alberto is “considered one of the very best and most powerful healers of the Ucayali River,” yet it does not state by or among whom he has earned this honor.

The inclusion of such business terms as “exclusively” and “very best and most powerful” reflects the Corporate Discourse found throughout the text. This discourse stands out in this brief bio and does not appear to be obscured by the utter lack of information provided on which town Don Alberto works in and among whom he has earned such accolades. Again, this exclusion of information may serve as a way to present the tour’s shaman as existing exclusively for Blue Morpho tours, somewhat ahistorically, quite separate from his own community (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Santos, 2006).⁶⁰

The individual presentation of each team member, highlighted by both a quality photograph and a detailed bio serves as a sharp contrast to the single paragraph in this section, describing the entire “Blue Morpho Staff”:

The Blue Morpho Staff: The Blue Morpho staff is in charge of the kitchen and food, cleaning, laundry, grounds maintenance, and assistance during ceremonies. They work hard during trips to provide excellent service, tasty food and a clean environment.

⁶⁰ For example, by disconnecting Don Alberto from his local people, his presence at the Blue Morpho center appears to occur solely and ‘exclusively’ for the guests. Through the website’s presentation of him as a wise man with ancient knowledge, he maintains an “authentic” veneer, regardless of the possible hardships or expectations of his daily life. While I in no way suggest that Don Alberto is not a true, authentic or legitimate shaman, I contend simply that by presenting him as existing only for the company (removed from any outside obligations, daily tasks or mundane activities), he is more easily marketed as a powerful shaman with “sacred” skills – unburdened by the profane nature of real life (Dorsey et al, 2004; Echnner & Prasad, 2003; Santos, 2006).

They are also of great assistance during ceremonies by giving support and helping people to the bathroom in times of need.

This paragraph introduces the viewer to the “staff,” who are most likely the “locals” employed by the Center, as discussed earlier. This representation of the staff differs from that of the rest of the “team” in several ways. First, as stated, the “staff” are presented in text only, there is no photo of the staff, nor any explanation as to why a photo is not included (e.g., perhaps the staff would like to secure their anonymity?). Second, the staff is referred to as a group, “they work hard,” as opposed to being introduced and named on an individual basis. Fairclough (2003) asserts that such impersonal representation of social actors can dehumanize them, taking away their focus as people, instead representing them instrumentally, as part of the organizational structure (p. 150). Third, compared to the other team members, the list of staff duties are highly labor intensive and, because they are not discussed in the context of specific credentials, appear as low-skilled chores. Here again, the local people are depicted as being “less than” the foreign staff (and, by extension, the tourists). Intentional or not, this circumscribed presentation of the website suggests the subjugation of local staff in contrast to foreign born staff— a juxtaposition which conflicts sharply with the New Age discourse and harmonious ideals espoused throughout the website.

Lastly, the staff are the only employees whom are described as helping people “to the bathroom” in times of need. This bathroom assistance is likely shorthand for helping people to wash and/or change themselves during or after a ceremony, as ayahuasca is a purgative, causing most people to vomit or experience diarrhea after drinking it

(McKenna, 2004). No other team members are listed as providing this type of care-taking to the tourist, thus reinforcing the binary between those who are skilled/(who lead the tourist) and those who are unskilled/(who clean the tourist) (Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003) limiting the role and potential of the ethnic other (Buzinde, Santos & Smith, 2006). In sum, the representation of local actors on the Blue Morpho website implies that rather than breaking down boundaries and celebrating differences, ayahuasca tourism maintains the hegemonic binaries of the superiority of the foreign staff (and/or tourist) as skilled/capable and the local staff member as unskilled/limited (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Santos, 2006).

The Amorphous Amazon

“Located on Km 53 of the Iquitos Nauta road in the Peruvian Amazon, just one hour travel from the city of Iquitos, our Shamanic Center and Jungle Lodge sits on 180 acres of privately owned primary forest.” In addition to the map of Peru located on the Homepage, this paragraph provides the most detailed information on the entire site regarding the context within which the Center operates. The Blue Morpho website provides little additional information on the historical or cultural context of either this particular physical region of the Amazon or the spiritual traditions of the “local communities” from which the “sacred visionary medicines” have been appropriated by and sold to Western, affluent tourists. There is no information on the country of Peru, the town of Iquitos, nor any information regarding the region of the Amazon in which the Center is located.

The term “traditional” is mentioned seven times on the website, however, there is no mention of whose traditions these might be. Not a single identifier of any local community (indigenous or mestizo) is provided throughout the website. This lack of attribution is quite troubling, as the tourist is encouraged to “enjoy a great variety of experiences, learning the customs and ways of traditional life.” However, it does not appear to be of any importance whose customs the tourist is going to learn. Simply stating that these medicines have “sacred,” “native” and “ancient” origins appears to be enough to sell the ceremonies as authentic rituals (Akama & Sterry, 2002).

A second example of this lack of reference to the origins of ayahuasca can be found on the “FAQ” page, in response to the question, “What is Amazonian shamanism”?

Amazonian shamanism originated in the tribes of the Amazon basin. Through their extensive understanding of their environment they utilized the many medicinal plants, forming a medical culture unique to its own. The Indians learned to heal from the spirits of the plants that they utilized. They connected through the sacred use of visionary plants where telepathy, shared consciousness, and astral travel were common experiences.

Here, too, the answer to the question is quite vague, stating that this shamanism originated “in the tribes” and that “the [unnamed] Indians” learned to heal (from the spirits). This vagueness might be interpreted to reflect either an (assumed) lack of interest regarding the specific historical origins (on behalf of the tourist) or a decision that the inclusion of such specifics was unimportant (on behalf of the producer). As Foucault

(1980) masterfully demonstrated, a discourse like this can perform a repressive role, furthering the interests of some groups (i.e., the tour operators) while suppressing the interests of others (i.e., the local community members from whom the operator has appropriated the ayahuasca) (Tribe, 2004, p. 54). The lack of recognition, acknowledgment or inclusion of the local voice on the website appears to further the processes of co-optation and commodification of both these “sacred plants” and this “isolated place” (Dorsey et al, 2004).

The third and final reference to any historical or cultural context within which the Blue Morpho Center operates can also be found on the “FAQ” page. The following was listed as the response to the question “Are there native communities in the area?”

The nearest native communities are outside of Iquitos. The small communities near the camp were formed as part of a government expansion program in the mid ‘90s. It is important to enjoy the jungle environment, absorbing the detail, while leaving behind as little of our culture as possible.

Again, without any additional contextual information, this answer appears somewhat confusing and hard to interpret. The last sentence echoes well Pratt’s (1992) concept of the “anti-conquest” discussed earlier: “the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert their European hegemony” (p. 7). Thus, while the tourist is encouraged to “enjoy” and “absorb” the jungle environment, (as well as to participate in the Peruvian ceremonies and customs), these experiences come with a qualification. The Western tourist is advised to do this “while leaving behind as little of *our* culture” as possible (*italics added*). The

tourist is encouraged only to take of the local culture and not leave any of the tourist's own culture. This statement assumes that the locals do not mind sharing their jungle and ceremonies, but that "they" do not want or need any of the Western "culture" which might accidentally be left behind. The use of the pronoun "our" in this sentence serves to separate the tourist from the local, from the unnamed, unknown native and mestizo communities who live somewhere in "their" jungle (Said, 1993).

Such discursive strategies (intentional or not) serve to Other these locals, perpetuating the colonial binaries of "us/them," "developed/undeveloped" "civilized/uncivilized," and thus more easily functions as a means to commodify the "jungle" culture for "our" consumption (Dorsey et al, 2004; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Gunster, 2004; Hall & Tucker, 2004).⁶¹

Following the model used by Elizabeth Dorsey et al (2004) in their examination of ecotourism advertising on the internet, this study also investigated the presence or absence of web links as a means of providing additional historical, demographic or contextual information regarding the location of the Blue Morpho Center or the antecedents of the ceremonies performed there (p. 774). Only four web links were included on the site, all of which focused on "Publications about Blue Morpho." Each of these links simply provided access to published stories about either the owner/founder,

⁶¹ It is important to note that while the author/s of the site provided no space to the naming, identifying or discussing the local Amazonian people (Foucault, 2002), they devoted a significant portion of the site to the naming and explaining local plants and animals, listing 223 different species over 16 printed pages (including the "Local Name," "English Name," "Scientific Name," and, in the case of the plants, "Uses").

Souther, or about the experience of participating in the tour itself. For example, two of the articles linked were found in the *National Geographic Adventure Magazine* and the *New York Times*, providing a further strategy of legitimation regarding the quality of the tour (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98). No additional historical or contextual information was provided in the links. The lack of contextual information is especially salient in this process of commodification, because, unlike print publication, space constraints are not a limiting factor of the online format (Dorsey et al, 2004, p. 773).

The Broker turned Host: Rendering the local extinct

While much of the literature frames the tourist exchange as taking place between the indigenous or local “host” and the tourist as “guest,” the morphing of brokers into hosts on the website thwarts this dichotomy by presenting the owner, Hamilton Souther, as the main “host.” This surprising presentation of the broker as “host” serves to move Souther from the role of middleman to that of primary host. Thus, this shift maintains the host/guest dichotomy discussed throughout the tourism literature, however it effectively removes the local from his/her context and renders him/her extinct (Aramberri, 2001; Santos, 2006; Smith 1978; Stronza, 2001). As stated previously, “guest” is the term used most often in reference to the tourist, thus representing this part of the dichotomy.

Additionally, because the local community is absent from the site, it appears as though Souther and his team are the exclusive Amazonian hosts. Souther’s cooptation of the host’s role may be considered a type of recontextualization, whereby Souther has appropriated the social practice of host from the local people onto himself (Fairclough, 2003). He now serves as the primary host, instead of functioning as the tourist broker or

middleman (the one who typically arranges the contact between host/guest) (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

The fulfillment of this role as primary host, coupled with the Corporate Discourse of impressing his guests by “professionalism and commitment to service”, Souther reflects the role of the “expert,” one of the emerging characters in the discourse of the new capitalism (Fairclough, 2003). This emergence as the tour leader, main shaman and camp host serves to further legitimate Souther’s presence as a Western, landowning businessman-turned shaman in the primary rainforest of the Peruvian Amazon, effectively selling the spirituality of the Amazon, without paying any noticeable tribute (on the website) to those from whom the rituals and ceremony originated.

CONCLUSION

If spiritual tourism is part of the larger discourse of commodification of culture, then the cultural texts of that discourse should be rigorously interrogated. Thus, issues regarding how the discourse of spiritual tourism appears to be constructed under conditions of unequal power (with the broker controlling the representation of both the local people and the ayahuasca experience), as well as how that power is exercised, were explored. Also, the language on the website marketing such commodities was investigated to determine the extent to which it served to exoticize and construct alterity in the process of Othering the local communities mentioned (Hall & Tucker, 2004; Said, 1979, 1993; Santos, 2006, 2009). Lastly, the language on the website was examined to determine which discourses were most salient and which actors most pronounced (Santos, 2006). For, as Said (1993) has noted, while “direct” colonialism has “largely

ended,” imperialism has not. It “lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices (p. 9).

Key findings from this comprehensive study of the Blue Morpho website suggest that business and spiritual discourses were combined to most strategically advertise the ayahuasca tour and, in turn, local actors were largely removed from the site, rendering them extinct in this process of appropriation. Through the use of Corporate Discourse, the privileging of place over people and the paternalistic references to the “locals” whom the tour broker employs, it appears that the discourse on this ayahuasca tour website reflects the broader tendencies of neocolonialism and cultural commodification within the spiritual tourism industry. The near absence of any reference to the historical, social or traditional context of the ayahuasca plant and ceremony serves to commodify the experience of ayahuasca by severing it from its indigenous roots, making it seem ahistorical and more easily appropriated as a product for purchase in an all-inclusive retreat package, available to anyone with enough time and money to take the tour.

Chapter 4

Exotic Adventures Await: Advertising the Ayahuasca Experience Online

The less well-known, the more exotic a destination is, the greater the chance to influence image through tourism marketing activities. One important tool for such long-range marketing activities in the 21st century is undoubtedly the Internet. (Arlt, 2007, p. 315)

As discussed earlier in this work, I argue that spiritual tourism in the Peruvian Amazon is fueled by the ubiquitous presence of ayahuasca on the Internet. I contend that the proliferation and marketization of ayahuasca tours online have contributed to the rapidly increasing flow of spiritual tourists to Iquitos. Further, I suggest that an investigation of this marketization is essential in understanding how the ayahuasca ceremony and Amazonian people/places are advertised and sold online, as the processes by which this occurs can greatly impact and significantly shape the “image” of ayahuasca and the Amazon. Thus, through an extension of the single site analysis conducted in Chapter Three, I now broaden the scope of my investigation to include the top five most frequently visited ayahuasca tour websites (as identified during my data collection period). This additional analysis explores the trends, patterns, anomalies and disjunctures involved in the selling of spirituality online.

The findings from the Blue Morpho Tours website analysis conducted in Chapter Three suggest that the means by which an ayahuasca tour is advertised may contribute to the appropriation and commodification of indigenous/mestizo culture. Specifically, the

integration of Corporate, New Age and Exotic discourses used to sell the tour seem to reflect those neocolonial discourses prevalent in the globalized spiritual tourism industry. However, because these results were gained from a study of a single website, it is prudent to explore the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism further, in order to extend these insights to more generalized claims about the processes of cultural commodification and appropriation. This chapter therefore presents data from five additional tour websites. As stated, this extended analysis is conducted in order to better situate those findings within the socio-cultural contexts of spiritual tourism advertising at large (Fairclough, 2003; Janks, 1997).

Similar to the previous chapter, this investigation consists of three primary questions which will be addressed through the use of critical discourse analysis (CDA), drawing largely from the work of Fairclough (1995, 2003) and visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The three primary questions are: 1) to what extent are the Corporate, New Age and Exotic Discourses present/absent in these sites? 2) How does the utilization of these discourses differ based on the broker of the tour? 3) Do these discourses reflect those broader themes of cultural imperialism and commodification of culture present in more traditional examples of tourism advertising?

As discussed in Chapter Three, the five additional websites in this study were chosen for their presence on Dogpile.com as the most frequently visited during the initial period of assessment (2006-2007).⁶² All websites were located by consistently using only

⁶² This list was cross-referenced with the three major search engines, Yahoo, MSN and Google (Appendix B). As noted in Appendix B, "Enjoy Travel Peru"

one search term throughout the study: “ayahuasca tour.”⁶³ Each tour was coded to include the location, the length, the cost of the tour and how many ayahuasca sessions were offered. Along with the logistics, each website’s mission statement and images/photos were explored. Additional identifying information collected included the name of the tour “broker” – the individual who had previously been defined as the middleman – neither guest nor host - but he who organizes the tour, and thereby retains the lion’s share of the revenue (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

One of the primary reasons for investigating the identification, presentation and role of the broker is to examine how the local Peruvian people are represented on the website. According to Cheong and Miller (2000),

The touristic gaze is considered to be a primary mechanism by which travel agents, guides and some locals operate in the power relationship *vis-à-vis* the tourists. This orientation to touristic power recommends attention be rather diverted from the tourists and redirected to focus on agents who are prominent in the control of tourism development and tourism conduct. (p. 78)

(www.enjoytravelperu.com) was listed among the top six in each of the search engines, excluding Dogpile (which listed it at number 13). However, the relevant tour information was not located on the website. Therefore, this site was removed from the study. Each of the sites listed above were found to be manageable and easy to locate all the necessary info within minutes.

⁶³ It is critical to note that I chose this term intentionally, as the focus of this dissertation is on the industry of spiritual tourism, examined via the case study of ayahuasca tourism. Other terms such as “ayahuasca retreat” “ayahuasca center” or “ayahuasca experience” may have garnered different results. Though most of the individually brokered companies refer to their services as “retreats” or “workshops”, each were located easily with this search term.

Diverting this “orientation to touristic power” back to the ayahuasca tour brokers provides a discursive method by which to explore the “relations of ruling” present in spiritual tourism. In her description of the “contact zone,” Pratt explains that these relations be considered “not in terms of separateness...but in terms of co-presence [and] interaction...often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 7).⁶⁴ Because the tourist will likely interact with local Peruvians during his/her ayahuasca tour and because the broker controls this tourist’s (virtual) gaze, it is imperative that the website text and images used to portray the local be investigated. Thus, as discussed earlier, by focusing on he who controls the image, we might better investigate the power differentials in this case study of spiritual tourism.

Additionally, the data was garnered specifically to determine if, and to what extent, the language of the websites serves to “commodify” the culture of those indigenous and mestizo communities involved with the ayahuasca tours.⁶⁵ Examining the discourse as reflective of the influence of capitalism on the spiritual tourism industry is informed by Theodor Adorno’s work on the “culture industry”: that culture is made specifically for the purpose of being sold; production is subordinated to distribution...and

⁶⁴ Pratt describes the “contact zone” as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (p. 4).

⁶⁵ Similar to the analysis conducted in Chapter Three, this study is informed by Dorsey et al.’s (2004) examination of advertising on ecotourism websites.

“people are now only capable of evaluating aesthetic objects based on their value in the marketplace” (Gunster, 2004, p. 37, 39).⁶⁶

Utilizing the CDA approach as discussed previously, I analyze how, when and in what ways indigenous/mestizo people are portrayed on the sites. I note the ways in which equality is portrayed between the indigenous/mestizo local and the tourist or tour broker, asking such questions as: is the local performing a laborious task? Is the local included in any photos with the tourist or with the tour broker? If so, what is the nature of the photo? Are the two parties involved in a mutual task? Is the local providing a service to the tourist? Or, is the local included simply as a “photo opportunity” – a smiling, gracious native? (Trask, 1999). A further set of questions will explore how locals are presented and whether or not they are depicted as “poor” (Escobar, 1994, p. 12).⁶⁷

Taken together, these questions will address issues of domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion by examining the relationship between all the

⁶⁶ In this work, Adorno describes the dialectical relationship between the “standardization” of popular music and the “marketability demands” that this repetition be “hidden beneath the illusion of individuality, difference and novelty” (p.24). Adorno utilizes the term “pseudo-individuation” to define the structural pressures that commodification imposes on all forms of cultural production; while capitalism at first “freed” the production of culture from its system of patronage and religious constraints (p. 33), this freedom was lost by the twentieth century as cultural production was increasingly organized as a “profit making industry” (p.34). Drawing from Adorno, I explore these structural pressures on the cultural production of ayahuasca as a service, a performance and a product throughout this dissertation.

⁶⁷ See Escobar (1994) for a more detailed discussion on the media representation of “Third World” people in the development discourse and how these images are employed to construct an image of “poverty” as defined by Western, industrial standards. In short, Escobar states, “these images just do not seem to go away” (p. 12).

actors involved (e.g. tourist-local staff, tourist- shaman, broker-local staff, shaman-local staff, etc) and tracking the various depictions of power within this relational dyads/triads. These depictions might include instances of equality, subservience, indifference or playfulness. Tracking these images aids in the identification of trends, patterns and/or inconsistencies in the broker's representation of indigenous and/or mestizo individuals and sheds light on the representational power of portrayal inherent in traditional tourism advertising and so clearly prevalent on the Internet website (Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003).

As discussed above, the ayahuasca tour websites in this study were chosen due to their presence on Dogpile.com as the most frequently visited during the initial period of assessment (2006-2007). As a result, I examined the following six tour companies' websites: Blue Morpho Tours, WASAI, El Tigre journeys, Peru Travels.net, El Mundo Magico, Sacred Peru Adventures and Ayahuasca-WASI. Of these six, four appeared to be founded, brokered and/or managed by foreign, non- Peruvian born men from the global north. Only WASAI and Peru Travels.net were billed as "tour operators," with no individual founders listed.⁶⁸ In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the most frequently visited websites advertising ayahuasca tours online, this chapter contains two main sections. The first section includes a comparative summary of each tour's logistical

⁶⁸ Lastly, it is important to emphasize that while this study does examine the representation of local Peruvian people, it makes no claims of addressing whether or not such portrayal is accurate (Dorsey et al, 2004, p. 763). Additionally, even if the locals are "represented" on the websites as being more equal, less exotic or subservient, it does not alter the likely reality that the brokers possess much more power and capital than the local people (Aramberri, 2001).

information in Table 1.⁶⁹ A brief description of each website's mission statement⁷⁰ and a description of the site's visuals/image are presented in Table 2. Following the tables I provide a brief summary or interpretive statement. Next, I offer a short discussion highlighting the most distinctive features of each site – noting similarities and differences to other sites, where most cogent. I conclude this section by exploring the broker's utilization of external links, analyzing whether and how these serve to contextualize the tour within the social, cultural, and geographic history of the region. Findings suggest that three of the four individual brokers provided almost no external information regarding the Amazon. On the contrary, the two Peruvian tour operators included a significant amount of data about and resources on the region. Francesco Sammarco (El Mundo Magico) was the only broker to include a comprehensive list of informational links and contextualization of the area within which he operates his programs.

The second section of this chapter provides an integrated analysis of the three main discourses as identified and discussed in Chapter Three: The Corporate, New Age and Exotic Discourses. Here, I investigate how the various brokers' incorporate these discourses and whether or not these discourses reflect the broader themes of cultural imperialism and commodification of culture present in spiritual tourism as conceived herein.

⁶⁹ Logistical information includes the company's history (i.e. name of the founder, year founded), types of tours offered, length of tours, and costs of tours.

⁷⁰ This data includes both formal mission statements, identified as such, and informal goal statements or tour operator identity statements.

Table 1. *Ayahuasca Tour Websites (ATW): Comparative Summary of Ayahuasca Tour (AT) Logistics*

	ATW name Internet address	Tour Broker/Founder	Date fnd.	Tour types/Destinations	AT length	AT Price USD\$
1.	Blue Morpho Tours www.bluemorphotours.com	Hamilton Souther- Non-Peruvian/U.S.	2002	Ayahuasca/ Iquitos	9 days	\$1940
2.	WASAI www.wasai.com	Peruvian tour operator	None listed	Nature, Adventure, Educational, “Mystical” (AT)* -throughout Peru	3-6 days	~\$290- 450
3.	Perutravels.net www.perutravels.net	Peruvian tour operator	1993	12 types: including: Cultural, Health, Archaeological --throughout Peru “Mystical/Esoteric” (AT)*/IQT	4 days	~\$340
4.	Sacred Peru Adventures www.sacredperuadventures.com	Steffan Heydon – Non-Peruvian/U.S.	2006	Ayahuasca/IQT* San Pedro/Andes	12 days	~\$1200
5.	El Mundo Magico http://www.ayahuasca-shamanism.co.uk/ *Onanyan Shobo” co-owned w/the Garcia-Ramirez family (Indigenous Shipibo family)	Francesco Sammarco- Non-Peruvian/Italy (resides in U.K.)*	2005	Ayahuasca/IQT* San Pedro ceremonies, Coca readings/ Andes	7 days	~\$930
6.	El Tigre Journeys http://www.biopark.org/peru.html	Howard Lawler – Non-Peruvian- has dual citizenship – U.S./Peru	1997	Ayahuasca/IQT* San Pedro/Andes	7-10 days	\$~1600- \$2050

Table 2. *Ayahwasca Tour Websites (ATW): Mission Statement and Visual Elements*

	ATW name	Mission Statement: Formal = F Informal = IF	Visual Elements
1.	Blue Morpho Tours	"Blue Morpho is dedicated to our clients' enjoyment of the experience. Our goal is for our guests to return to Iquitos beaming from their adventure into the jungle and impressed by our professionalism and commitment to service." IF	Displayed over 139 high quality color photos of flora/fauna of the Amazon and tour accommodations. Fewer than 10 photos of local people (not including BMT shamans).
2.	WASAI	"As a tour operator, our company offers a wide variety of itineraries in Peru, our main destinations are the wildlife in National Parks, archaeology and the legendary Cuzco and Machu Picchu." IF	Number of high quality color photos of plants, animals and/or landscapes Very few photos of locals. AT page contains four photos - only one of which depicts people. Several photos of lodge, pool, hotel.
3.	Perutravels .net	"We are a Peruvian Travel Agency with a vast experience in guiding thousands of tourists throughout Peru and South America since 1993." IF	Link to 67 color photos of flora, fauna, landscapes. Only a few of locals (3) or tourists (3) There are no images of tourists interacting with local people in any fashion.
4.	Sacred Peru Adventures	"We offer programs for shamanic experiences in Peru where we work with the sacred power plants Aayahwasca and San Pedro (Huachuma, Washuma, Wachuma). Our programs are facilitated in safe, supportive environments by highly qualified individuals. IF	A link to the "February 2009 12 day retreat" displays 57 (1 x 2") color pictures of retreat participants, ayahwasca brewing, the center's Shipibo shamans and the flora and fauna of the jungle.
5.	El Mundo Magico	"To support, promote and raise awareness of sustainable earth-honoring shamanic traditions through journeys, seminars and workshops aimed at the preservation of the local habitat of the Amazon Rainforest of Peru and its traditional, cultural and religious lore, with special regard to indigenous and <i>mestizo</i> shamanic practices" F	Mostly high quality, color photos: In descending order of frequency: shamans in traditional and modern attire. Photos of locals (both named and not), flora, some animals (i.e. a jaguar, a monkey and some insects) and a few photos of the founder, Francesco, co-director and only three photos of foreigners/tourists.
6.	El Tigre Journeys	"Our intention and mission is to be a dynamic and viable positive influence in the collective healing of all humanity and the Earth. One human spirit at a time. We are dedicated to the healing of the Earth and all humanity by helping as many as possible attain deep personal cleansing, holistic healing, rebirth of the soul, and a state of higher consciousness." F	The visual images/graphics differ markedly from all others. The celestial looking, multicolored font jumps off the homepage, the phrase "Peruvian SpiritQuest: shamanic retreats and Pilgrimages" shines against a black background filled with twinkling stars. No color photos at all on extensive homepage - some on "About us" page - small color photos of broker, shamans, staff.

SUMMARY OF TABLES

Table 1. Ayahuasca Tour Websites (ATW): Comparative Summary of Ayahuasca Tour (AT) Logistics. As is clear from the table above, those tours run by individual brokers are significantly more expensive than those run by the two Peruvian tour operators – suggesting that the bulk of the profit in the four other tours goes directly to the tour broker. The only exception here is in the case of El Mundo Magico, wherein the Onanyan Shobo facility is a joint venture between its Italian founder, Sammarco and the Shipibo family, the Garcias. All tour prices are all inclusive. (e.g. all meals, lodging and transportation to/from the airport to the lodge/facility are included). Additionally, the fee for drinking ayahuasca/paying the shaman is included in this price. A second notable aspect of the information above is that the most frequently visited site, “Blue Morpho Tours” is the only one to focus exclusively on ayahuasca shamanism in the Iquitos region. Each of the others offer more than the ayahuasca tour; notably, the two Peruvian brokers offer a wide variety of tours, spread throughout the country. The individually brokered tours offer other shamanic tours, primarily in the Andes. Again, El Mundo Magico stands out here, it is the only individually brokered company to offer an “eco-tour,” one focused solely on the flora/fauna of the Amazon, with no shamanic activities involved. Finally, it is helpful to contextualize the high price of the individually brokered tours in the context of local labor costs. As of 2010 purchasing power, tourists in these categories are spending upwards of USD \$150 a day, in a region where the average day’s wage is \$6.00, suggesting that there exists an enormous imbalance of power within the contact zone of Iquitos and between the broker, tourist and local.

Table 2. Ayahuasca Tour Websites (ATW): Mission Statement and Visual Elements

gives a quick introduction to the stated “mission” or “values” of each company, as well as a brief statement regarding the visual images on each site. These elements were presented as such to suggest that the companies appear to utilize the photographs or images in an intentional way – in way that reflects the priorities of the company. For instance, the two Peruvian companies favor images of landscapes, plants and animals over that of local people, implying that the majority of the tours are scenic, not necessarily “cultural” or educational in nature. In contrast, (and discussed in more detail a bit later), the mission of El Mundo is reflected well in its visuals – this site includes more photographs of shamans and local people than do any of the other sites in the study – reflecting the discourse of “honoring of shamanic practices”. Lastly, the New Age discourse so easily seen in El Tigre’s mission statement is mirrored on the website, rather than a preponderance of color photographs, its pages are more graphic in nature, depicting twinkling lights, flame spouting Incan figures and running jaguars. In sum, the mission statements (goal statements) and website visual elements were combined in order to give a quick, brief and easy to follow introduction to the ways in which the sites incorporate such features to best advertise their services.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

1. *Blue Morpho Tours*: As explained previously, the BMT website ranked first among all ayahuasca tour websites examined throughout the data collection period (2006-2009), representing the most frequently visited site and the one from which I began this comprehensive discourse analysis. Due to the extensive analysis it received in Chapter Three, only the briefest discussion will be provided here. In sum, though the site contained an extensive amount of text and a multitude of glossy images showcasing the plants and animals of the region, there was very little historical, geographical or cultural context provided regarding either the Amazon region or the people of Peru. This lack of context aides in the process of commodification by depicting people and places as unchangeable and isolated, existing only to serve the tourist and meet their individual needs (Dorsey et al, 2004; Hetata, 1998). As Dorsey et al (2004), argue this lack of information on the website is not a result of space constraints, as might be the case in print advertising (p. 773). As an individually brokered site, BMT displayed a high degree of appropriation and commodification of culture, as detailed in the previous chapter.

2. *WASAI Lodge and Expeditions*: On its homepage, WASAI refers to itself as “the best Amazon lodge and eco-tours in rainforest – Peru.” WASAI differs from BMT in many ways. First, WASAI does not appear to have a single “founder,” but is listed as simply a “tour operator.” Second, this tour does not occur in the Iquitos region of the Peruvian Amazon, but further southeast, approximately 50km from Puerto Maldonado. Third, ayahuasca or “mystical” tours are not the primary focus of this company – they

offer a variety of tour ranging from “adventure” tours to “educational tours”.⁷¹ Finally, WASAI’s ayahuasca tours are much shorter in length and cheaper in cost than those offered by BMT (or the majority of tours) as detailed in Table 1.

In addition to being one of the largest sites in the study (containing the most links and the most extensive amount of text),⁷² WASAI distinguishes itself from the other tours in two specific ways. First, it provides a short introduction to and history of ayahuasca prior to providing details about the tour. This contextualization of ayahuasca itself includes, but is not limited to: its legalization in Brazil (1987), the origin of the Quecha meaning of the word, the traditional and current uses of the plant medicine, as well as the controversy surrounding its use⁷³.⁷⁴ Second, WASAI is the only site which devotes an

⁷¹ In addition to the ayahuasca tours, this company advertises nature tours (“bird watching” “fishing”), adventure tours (“trekking and kayaking”), and educational tours (“conservation” and “volunteer/vacation”).

⁷² The El Tigre Journeys website contains a similar amount of information spread out over 40 plus printed pages.

⁷³ As discussed earlier in this dissertation, when brewed, ayahuasca activates dimethyltryptamine (DMT), a Schedule I narcotic in the United States, making the brewed tea illegal. However, this regulation of ayahuasca as a drug has been contested by those members of syncretic churches such as the União do Vegetal (UDV) and Santo Daime who use it in a sacramental, ritualistic way. Both churches have secured their right to drink ayahuasca by winning their legal battles in the United States Supreme Court, receiving protection through the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Additionally, the WASAI tour also refers to ayahuasca as “Santo Daime” in this section, “In more recent years, it [ayahuasca] has been known as “Santo Daime” which means ‘to give sanity’ and has more relation with Portuguese spoken in Brazil, but both names are correct to use it.” None of the other sites make reference to the Brazilian name for ayahuasca, nor is it clear why this company provides such information.

entire section to its “volunteer” program and the opportunities to conduct ecologically sound “conservation research.”⁷⁵

3. *PeruTravels.net*: Distinguished as the longest running tour operator in the study, this comprehensive travel company identifies itself quite simply as a “Peruvian site of tourism, travel and promotion.”⁷⁶ Similar to WASAI, Perutravels.net (hereafter, PT.net) lists no individual founder, offers a variety of tours and does not focus exclusively on

⁷⁴ Notably, the WASAI tour also refers to ayahuasca as “Santo Daime” in this section, “In more recent years, it [ayahuasca] has been known as “Santo Daime” which means ‘to give sanity’ and has more relation with Portuguese spoken in Brazil, but both names are correct to use it.” None of the other sites make reference to the Brazilian name for ayahuasca, nor is it clear why this company provides such information.

⁷⁵ In turn, the visuals on the WASAI site reflect this ecological emphasis: the majority of the photos are color, high quality pictures of plants, animals and or landscapes. For example, the only photo on the page introducing the “Mystical Ayahuasca Tours” is a dark, somewhat brooding sunset over an unidentified, expansive river. From this page one can click “Learn More” which takes the reader to the historical page, discussed previously. On this page, the updated website displays four photos, only one of which contains people; it appears to be members of the Ese Eja community mentioned on the previous introductory page. In this photo, two men are shown wearing no shirts and straw skirts and the three children in the distance are shirtless and barefoot. There are very few pictures of people (tourist or local) on the site at all. This “traditional” portrayal of native people will be discussed in further detail in the section titled “Exotic Discourse.”

⁷⁶ This website’s homepage consists of simple, linear, boxed text – punctuated by several small, color pictures of the Andes, tourists walking through cities and smiling Peruvian people.

ayahuasca (in contrast to the BMT site).⁷⁷ Another commonality with WASAI is the ayahuasca tour length, price and choice of location.⁷⁸

However, unlike the WASAI site, PT.net provides no background information on ayahuasca, shamanism or the indigenous, medicinal or cultural practices involved in the participation of the ayahuasca ceremony. Instead, the potential tourist is directed immediately to the ayahuasca tour agenda with no additional context provided. This site is distinguished from the others by this utter lack of information on ayahuasca. Further, without the provision of a cultural context (within which the ayahuasca ceremony occurs) this site commodifies the ayahuasca, thus rendering it a product for purchase among a multitude of potential tour experiences (Greenwood, 1978; Gunster, 2004; Trask, 1999).⁷⁹ As stated, PT.net's complete omission of contextualize information on ayahuasca is unique among all the websites in this study.

⁷⁷ On the homepage, one can click on links to 12 different types of tours as noted in Table 1. This site also provides links to other cities in Peru, under the heading "Peru Travel Guides": 30 different guides are listed.

⁷⁸ Like WASAI, Perutravels.net offers ayahuasca tours in Puerto Maldonado (in addition to the Perutravels.net tour offered in the Iquitos area of the Amazon). As noted in Table 1, the ayahuasca tours offered by this company are shorter in length than the individually brokered tours and are markedly less expensive; the four day tour prices are USD \$338 in Iquitos and USD \$450 in Puerto Maldonado. A guest on either of these tours can expect one or two ayahuasca sessions (depending on the tour's location).

⁷⁹ The lack of such a context is somewhat surprising considering the extensive amount of information supplied on the website regarding the regional and historical context of Peru.

4. *Sacred Peru Adventures*:⁸⁰ Similar to BMT, this site also lists an individual, foreign born broker, “Sacred Peru Adventures is a true labor of love and is the creation of Steffan Heydon.” Heydon appears to be an American, who lists his contact information as located in California.⁸¹ The Sacred Peru Adventures (hereafter, S.P.A.) site distinguishes itself from the others in the study in three primary ways. First, its welcome page includes a discussion of the potential events of “2012,” suggesting a spiritual urgency for potential tourists to join one of the programs. Second, Heydon’s vague presentation of himself (as broker) and his tour (location/facilities) most significantly distinguishes both he and his website from the others in the study. Lastly, S.P.A.’s incorporation of female, Shipibo shamans in its company diverges markedly from the

⁸⁰ A distinctive feature of this website is apparent immediately in its somewhat contradictory title. The blending of New Age and Exotic Discourses as discussed in Chapter Three is clearly evident in this company’s title “Sacred Peru Adventures”: it beckons the tourist to take a trip to Peru that is both “Sacred” (read: New Age) and an “Adventure” (read: Exotic). This hybrid title represents the genre mixing or blurring of social boundaries in contemporary social life and the mixing of social practices which results.⁸⁰ According to Fairclough (2003), “This is widely seen...as a feature of ‘postmodernity’ which writers such as Jameson (1991) and Harvey (1990) view as the cultural facet of what I am calling new capitalism” (p. 35). The depiction of the sacred trip as an adventure also describes the postmodern tourist’s search for ‘authenticity’ through ‘tailor-made’ holidays; holidays that are managed by small, specialist operators, such as Heydon, who can more readily translate into reality the tourist’s desire to be a late twentieth-century adventurer, explorer or traveler (i.e. not a “tourist”).

⁸¹ On the “About Us” page, Heydon’s brief biography states that he has been facilitating tours in the Peruvian Amazon since approximately 2006, ranking his tour company the newest in the study as seen in Table 1.

other study sites (as all other sites appear to employ male shamans). A short discussion of each of these features is provided below.

Upon entering the website, one is directed to a “Welcome Page.”⁸² As mentioned, the most distinguishing feature on this page is its opening paragraph which reads:

“Q'ero prophecy tells us that the time of great change is upon us. The Mayan Calendar ends in the year 2012 and a new cycle will begin. Indigenous wisdom is telling us that our time is running out. As a whole, humanity is being called to evolve to a new level of awareness.” This somewhat urgent message is followed by a brief line encouraging the reader, “It is time to Awaken Within the Dream.”

A second cluster of distinguishing features of this website is found on the “12 day Ayahuasca Retreats” page. In this section, the potential tourist is introduced to the retreat itinerary and program details, yet is not provided with the exact location of the retreat center.⁸³ Further, unlike the majority of the other sites, S.P.A. devotes almost no text to

⁸² The format for this page reflects that of the rest of the site (all of the links are arranged identically). Against the same green background of the homepage is a two framed window: the left frame displays three small photos in descending fashion and the right frame holds the respective links' text. The photos change with each link, but primarily show images of Heydon (two), pictures of an unidentified local woman both with Heydon (one) and alone (one), one picture of a shaman in traditional attire and at least three pictures of Belen. Described as both the “Venice of the Amazon” and conversely, as a “slum”, Belen is a floating town just south of Iquitos. See Dobkin de Rios (1972) for a fuller discussion of ayahuasca and its ritual use in Belen.

⁸³ The first line states quite simply, “Participants will spend 12 days at a magical retreat center deep in the jungle near Iquitos Peru.” Of the six websites, only one other does not list the actual location of its lodge (El Tigre) – distinguishing Sacred Peru Adventures from most of the others in the study.

the description of the retreat accommodations. Nor does it appear that Heydon “owns” his own facility or parcel of land, which, as an individual tour broker, differs significantly from all of the other sole brokers in the study.⁸⁴ Rather, the text suggests that Heydon brings his groups to this larger, unnamed facility in which there are groups led by other tour operators.⁸⁵ Given this lack of ownership, as well as a minimal amount of text devoted to Heydon’s status or position in the actual provision of shamanic services, it is quite unclear exactly what his role is, beyond tour broker.⁸⁶ This somewhat vague

⁸⁴ Website information from Blue Morpho, El Tigre Journeys and El Mundo Magico all indicate that these brokers own their own retreat centers on private land. However, El Mundo Magico’s facility Onanyan Shobo is described as a joint venture between Italian Sammarco and members of a Shipibo family.

⁸⁵ This information was gleaned from the section titled “Smoking and Tobacco” under the heading “Additional Information” in which Heydon explains, “The ayahuasca world, mostly considers tobacco smoking the norm as opposed to the exception. This can be challenging if you are sensitive to tobacco smoke. Tobacco is smoked in the Ceremonial Maloca during ceremonies and any other time...on the retreat grounds. This posed somewhat of a problem during the last retreat, as the center experienced its largest concentration of non-smoking guests. I proudly say that this was mostly due to the presence of individuals in my group.”

⁸⁶ In contrast to both Blue Morpho’s Souther and El Tigre’s Lawler, Heydon does not appear to consider himself a shaman or spiritual facilitator. However, his website does provide a significant amount of text detailing his life’s journey to his current spiritual adventures in Peru. Like each of the other individual, foreign born brokers in the study, Heydon expresses a long-standing interest in shamanic and/or spiritually transformative experiences. According to Wernitznig (2003) this narrative is quite common among those who refer to themselves as “white shamans” and will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

presentation of self most significantly distinguishes both Heydon and his website from the others in the study.

A final way in which this website distinguishes itself from all of the others regards the gender of the shamans employed; according to the website, most of the shamans who work with S.P.A. are indigenous, Shipibo females.⁸⁷ The safety and security for female tourists appears to be one of the main reasons for the incorporation of these shamans.⁸⁸ Explained on the “Ayahuasca Retreats – Itinerary and Program Details” page:

Ayahuasca facilitation in Peru has typically been a male dominated world. It is not uncommon for male shamans in Peru to misuse their leadership role to seduce unsuspecting foreign women that come to them for shamanic healing. The fact that we almost exclusively work with elder, female Shipibo ayahuasca shamans provides a safe environment for women coming to the Amazon for ayahuasca experiences.

⁸⁷ Data gained from the ethnographic portion of this study suggest that there is at least one other individually brokered ayahuasca company that works with female, Shipibo shamans operating in the Iquitos region: The Temple of the Way of Light. Still, female led ceremonies are a minority among the retreat centers in the area. For more information, on the Temple of the Way of Light, see <http://www.templeofthewayoflight.org>.

⁸⁸ As discussed in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six, this concern regarding the role of the shamans and the safety of the female tourist while under the influence of ayahuasca are not unwarranted. Accounts found on both the Internet and gained during the ethnographic portion of this work suggest that the abuse of shamanic power and position has often resulted in female tourists experiencing a wide range of difficulties – from unwanted sexual advances to sexual assault, and, at its most extreme, to rape.

This is the only explanation for the integration of female shamans in the company; apart from this, the website provides very little additional information on Shipibo culture, history or traditions. Thus, it appears that without any further context, the employment of these particular shamans could be interpreted as a specific marketing technique designed to provide a niche; perhaps the company wishes to cater to a primarily female target market.

5. *El Mundo Magico*: Founded by Italian Francesco Sammaro, this company also has an individual broker⁸⁹. The El Mundo Magico (hereafter, El Mundo) website also contains three primary features which distinguish it from the other websites in the study.⁹⁰ First, this company refers to its Iquitos-based retreat center as a type of shamanic

⁸⁹ It is important to note here that while Sammarco appears to be the El Mundo company's sole proprietor, he co-owns the Onanyan Shobo retreat center with the Shipibo family – the Garcia-Ramirez's. This center is located in Iquitos and is managed full time by the family (information herein was gained during the ethnographic phase of this dissertation study).

⁹⁰ The visual presentation of this homepage is unique in so far as above the title, "El Mundo Magico – the Magical World" is a small 1 x 1 inch picture of what appears to be hieroglyphic figures -- no hieroglyphic images were seen on any other sites. Under the title is a running tag line which reads: "Ayahuasca, Shamanism, Shipibo Shamanism, Amazon Plant Medicines, Shamanic Plant Diets, San Pedro Rituals, Sacred Journeys, Jungle Trips and Excursions in the Amazon Rainforest of Peru, Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Incas, Trail to Machu Picchu;" thus delineating immediately the breadth and depth of its shamanic services. A second visual feature includes the large color photo of a stone entry way, approximately four feet high and a foot wide, which leads out to a view of numerous mountains. The striking thing about this photo is that it is the sole photo on the homepage and is set atop a background which resembles a silhouette of an ancient, seafaring map – with text that appears to be Latin. The provision of this map seems at odds with the discourse on the rest of the website, as the "ancient" pictures, symbols and writing suggest such themes as exploration, discovery and in turn, possibly, conquest.

school, wherein shamanic apprenticeships and the typical ayahuasca diet are offered. Second, the content and focus of the site's visual images are markedly different from all the others; this site contains significantly more photographs which privilege the inclusion of locals over tourists. Third, the El Mundo site devotes an entire page to its "mission statement" – providing both a "formal" and "informal" statement. A brief discussion of each of these distinguishing features is as follows.

On the El Mundo main page, there are many links leading to a variety of different Amazonian experiences (including the ayahuasca "retreat").⁹¹ Additionally, a potential tourist can choose between two basic types of "Shamanic Journeys in the Amazon."⁹² While the first option is quite similar to the one offered at BMT, the second option is markedly different and distinguishes it from both BMT and the other sites in the study. The second option is to participate in the "shamanic apprenticeship program" which

⁹¹ Though the company provides a link to their "Amazon Expeditions and Ecotourism", at no other place in the entire website is the word "tour" present. Similar to El Tigre Journeys, El Mundo offers trips in both the Amazon and the Andes (and, in this case, also the "Coast of Peru"). Like El Tigre Journeys, potential tourists may participate in San Pedro rituals, in addition to ayahuasca.

⁹² The first option is most akin to the short "tour" or "retreat" experience offered by many of the other companies. This "retreat" lasts a minimum of one week and, at the time of original data collection (2006), included two ayahuasca sessions and cost GBP £720. Interestingly, as of 2009, the cost per week was reduced to GBP £610 (equal to ~ USD \$927). This may be due to the fact that the El Mundo company relocated its retreat center entirely to Onanyan Shobo (another ethnobotanical garden site in the Amazon), from the previous Sachamama site discussed in the 2006 text. The updated site also states that "four ayahuasca sessions will be offered" (per week) for those staying a minimum of two weeks.

includes the plant *dieta* or the “shamanic diet”. The minimum length for this experience is approximately three months and includes a strict physical diet, personal seclusion and absence from sexual contact.⁹³ El Mundo refers to itself as both a “School of Shamanic Apprenticeship” (2006) and as a “School of Advanced Studies in Amazonian Shamanism” (2009). This emphasis on shamanic education is reflected in the sheer amount of text included which specifically addresses the shamanic diet (five links), an entire link/page that lists the “Plant teachers of the Peruvian Amazon”⁹⁴ and, on the updated site, a link to audios of shamanic icaros (available for purchase)⁹⁵. Though the *dieta* is mentioned briefly on the Blue Morpho, El Tigre, and S.P.A., El Mundo surpasses them all in the amount of space devoted exclusively to the historical, ethnobotanical and shamanic aspects of the ritual use of ayahuasca (specifically of the diet).⁹⁶

⁹³ The cost for this stay in 2006 was £3,100; in 2009 it increased slightly to £3,560. A typical diet involves no salt, sugar, pork, alcohol and/ or sexual contact. For more details on the Shipibo *dieta* at El Mundo Magico, please refer to <http://www.ayahuasca-shamanism.co.uk/onanyanshobo-plants&diet.htm>. See also Eduardo Luna’s (1986) *Vegetalismo: Shamanism among the Mestizo Population of the Peruvian Amazon* for a detailed discussion of the mestizo shamanic plant diet.

⁹⁴ This page lists both the indigenous Quechua and the botanical names for over 100 different Amazonian plants. This list is similar to the one found on the Blue Morpho website discussed in Chapter three. A similarly extensive list of plant names can be found on the El Tigre Journeys website as well.

⁹⁵ One can find audio of these icaros on both the El Mundo and El Tigre websites.

⁹⁶ This statement does not include the “links” on the sites – as El Tigre Journeys provides many links to topics that focus exclusively on ayahuasca – however, even including these sites, El Mundo provides the most comprehensive information regarding the *dieta*.

As mentioned above, the second distinguishing feature of the El Mundo site involves the visuals contained therein. While the inclusion of high quality color photos is not unusual in this study, it is the content of the El Mundo photos which distance it from the others. Listed in order of frequency, these photos depict: 1) a number of different shamans, dressed in “traditional” attire ,as well as more “modern clothes”; 2) other Peruvian locals (including some who are identified by name; 3) Amazonian flora (i.e. pictures of ayahuasca both on the vine and cooking, tall jungle trees and a multitude of plants; 4) various animals (i.e. a jaguar, a monkey and some insects) and, lastly, a few include founder Sammarco and his co-director, Ignazia Posadinu. In contrast to the Blue Morpho site, El Mundo contains a minimal amount of photos of tourists/retreat participants; where it does, these people are primarily being guided by a local Peruvian shaman or staff member.⁹⁷ El Mundo’s privileging of shamanic images over touristic ones reflects the company’s self identification as a “Shamanic School” and its emphasis on the provision of shamanic services. This site also provides a wider range of photos depicting the shamans, than those on other sites. The shamans herein are frequently identified by name and are looking at the camera with various expressions; they are not

⁹⁷ There appear to be only three photos which contain foreigners; two of these depict a small group of people looking up at a tall tree, at the behest of a Peruvian man. The remaining photo is of a smiling Caucasian looking woman, in a broad sunhat, rowing a canoe.

portrayed as simply the “smiling native” found often in other types of tourism advertising (Albers & James, 1988; Trask, 1994).⁹⁸

El Mundo’s final distinguishing feature is its inclusion of an extensive “Mission Statement”. The significant amount of text devoted to this statement includes three primary sections, the “El Mundo Magico: The Magical Earth Mission Statement”, the “Informal Statement” and the “Who We Are” section. The formal statement contains a bullet point list of eight short statements. The key terms contained here differentiate it from the discourse found on the other sites in two specific ways; the adjectives incorporated are the least exoticizing of those on all sites, while the text provided is the most informative and grounded in the context of the Peruvian Amazon.

The key terms, listed in order of their frequency, include: Peru (4), Rainforest (4), indigenous (4), mestizo (3), preservation/preserving (3), sustain/sustainable (2), protection (2), conservation (2), and knowledge (2). Thus, the frequency and presence of these terms provide for a solid context within which the El Mundo ayahuasca retreats take place. This contextualization is in sharp contrast to the only other mission statement in the study (El Tigre) which does not include a single one of the key terms above.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ See the discussion of Cohen (1993) and Dann (1996) in Dorsey et al (2005, p. 762) as it relates to the representation of the indigenous ‘Other’ in print advertisement. See also Trask (1994) regarding the depiction of native Hawaiians.

⁹⁹ As stated, the only other company to include a formal “mission statement” is El Tigre Journeys. The primary difference between these two statements is the focus – El Tigre Journeys’ emphasis is on the healing and transformative work with individuals, not the sustainability and conservation of shamanic practices and the preservation of natural habitat, as discussed above regarding El Mundo. An excerpt from the El Tigre Journeys’

3. *El Tigre Journeys - Ayahuasca SpiritQuest*:¹⁰⁰ Founded by American born Howard Lawler, the El Tigre Journeys (hereafter, El Tigre) website distinguishes itself in three ways.¹⁰¹ First, the visual and textual presentation of the website contrasts starkly with the others in the study; it incorporates a variety of stylish fonts, multiple colors and twinkling lights. Second, Lawler's presentation of himself and his significant immersion in Peruvian and shamanic cultures distinguishes both he and his site. Finally, El Mundo

Mission Statement summarizes the entire section well, "Our sole focus and genuine motive has always been to help facilitate deep holistic healing, powerful spiritual realization, dynamic personal empowerment, and enduring positive life transformation in as many people as possible." This focus on the individual's spiritual transformation, combined with the graphics, text and images on the El Tigre Journeys' website represent well the predominant New Age Discourse contained within.

¹⁰⁰ Throughout the period that this data was collected (2006-2009), Lawler's company was called "El Tigre Journeys" which facilitated the Ayahuasca and Huachuma trips. However, as of November 2009, the updated website lists the current company name as "Choque Chinchay Journeys." Additionally, because the website states that Lawler holds "dual citizenship" in both the United States and Peru, it is likely that he considers himself to be of both countries (from the website, "We are a Peruvian company").

¹⁰¹ El Tigre Journeys is described as "[a] private education tourism organization... [that] embraces ethical principles for development of ecological and cultural tourism in the Peruvian Amazon." Reportedly, the company wants to help "promote, enhance, conserve, and restore the natural and cultural resources of Western Amazonia through various cooperative and independent initiatives supported, in part, by tourism enterprise." Similar to WASAI, this site emphasizes conservation and development. This ecological focus is largely absent on the Blue Morpho site, whereby the Amazonian culture and people are rarely mentioned outside of the context of the ayahuasca ceremony. In this respect, El Tigre's mission reflects that of the WASAI site more than that of Blue Morpho, in spite of the fact that El Tigre is also individually brokered. In addition to this "company's" mission statement detailed above, El Tigre Journeys also presents a special mission statement on its "Ayahuasca Spirit Quest" page - this is the more New Age sounding statement discussed above (footnote 85).

incorporates “strategies of exclusion” (Munt 1994) at a much higher rate than the others investigated herein. A short summary of each of these features is presented below.

As mentioned, the first and possibly most distinguishing feature of the El Tigre website is its visual and textual design which displays a variety of mystical looking fonts, colors, images and graphics. For example, the celestial looking, multicolored Papyrus font jumps off the homepage, as the phrase “Peruvian SpiritQuest: shamanic retreats and Pilgrimages” shines against a black background filled with twinkling stars. Visually, this is in sharp contrast to the Arial font set against a plain white or green background as seen, for example, on the BMT and WASAI websites. Also, there are no color photos of jungle animals, local people or the flora and fauna of the Amazon on this first page (features common on the other websites). These types of images are present on the site’s other pages (such as on the “about us” page where one can find small, color pictures of Lawler, his wife, his sister, the company shaman and the other staff members). However, even these photos are set atop the sparkling black background and next to images of Pre-Incan deities, jaguars and spurting fire spots. Lawler’s inclusion of these “native” or “ancient” looking graphics, coupled with the immense amount of “New Age” sounding text,¹⁰² results in an extremely unique, yet highly memorable website – markedly different than

¹⁰² As described in Chapter Three and expanded in this next section of the current chapter, “New Age” discourse consisted of those terms and phrases which reflect the spiritual, shamanic, self-transformative and esoteric features common within the ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ spiritualities. An example of New Age discourse can be found on the first few lines on the El Tigre website describing the “Ayahuasca SpirtQuest” retreats: “Illuminating monthly healing and consciousness retreats exploring traditional shamanic ayahuasca healing practices in the rainforest of the Peruvian Amazon.”

the others investigated herein.¹⁰³ More importantly, this design reflects a high degree of cultural appropriation and commodification: the incorporation of these “Pre-Incan” symbols, images and graphics provide a mystical, primitive and exotic flair to the site and, as is suggested by their inclusion, to the marketing of this “ancient” experience to contemporary tourists (Said, 1979; Smith, 1999).

The second significant feature of the El Mundo site is closely connected to the first. Within the context of this complex and exotic website, Lawler presents himself in a radically different way than the others, reflecting his immersion in Peruvian/shamanic culture and suggesting his desire to differentiate himself from his peers.¹⁰⁴ In short,

¹⁰³ This website is so colorful, elaborate and convoluted that it will likely either strongly attract or greatly repel a potential participant.

¹⁰⁴ One way in which Lawler’s presence on the website differs is the sheer difficulty it takes to “find” him. In order to locate Lawler’s biography on this site, one must first click and scroll through three lengthy and complicated pages of text. The site contains no “tabs” or links which lead you directly to detailed information – rather one is forced to scroll to the bottom of each page, applying a “hunt and peck” technique to locate the correct link. Once the correct page is accessed, there are two separate links each of which include extensive (albeit though slightly different) biographies of Lawler. One of these is located within the “About Us” link, the other is located within the “The Banco Maestro Ayahuasquero.” Both descriptions provide ample amounts of text and a color photo of Lawler. This somewhat difficult route (by which the tourist takes to read up on the tour’s “shaman”) is detailed here to illustrate how very different Lawler’s presentation of himself is, say compared to BMT’s Hamilton Souther. Souther is used for comparison here because he and Lawler have the most in common: both are American born men who own and operate ayahuasca retreat centers/tours in Iquitos. Additionally and most importantly, they both refer to themselves as “shamans” (or “curanderos” “ayahuasceros”) –unlike S.P.As Heydon or El Mundo’s Sammarco. In contrast to the El Mundo website maze, the BMT site provides several “tabs” on its homepage, each with drop-down menus for ease of access. Among these tabs on the very first screen is one tilted “About Us” from which one can locate Souther’s biography quickly and with ease.

Lawler utilizes a variety of names to refer to himself within various pages of the website¹⁰⁵. According to his most updated pages, Lawler alternately identifies as “Don Choque Chinchay”, “Don Howard” or, as in his email, “Otorongo Blanco” (“white jaguar”).¹⁰⁶ Unlike Lawler, BMT’s broker/shaman Hamilton Souther does not appear to identify nor refer to himself as “Don Hamilton,” nor has he assumed any titles similar to those claimed by Lawler - titles formerly afforded to Pre-Incan deities.

The third distinguishing feature of the El Tigre website is the extent to which it incorporates ‘strategies of exclusion’ prominent in postmodern tourism (Munt 1994). In addition to the markedly different “New Age” presentation of both the website text and the tour’s broker, El Tigre programs also contrast with the others regarding tour cost and (perceived) “accessibility.” Unlike the other websites, El Tigre does not list program prices on their website (one can only find mention of the \$500 deposit).¹⁰⁷ My 2007 email inquiry revealed that program prices ranged from USD \$1,549 to \$2049¹⁰⁸:

¹⁰⁵ In his extensive, self-penned, biography, Lawler describes himself as “A man of high integrity, genuine human warmth, humility, compassion, and strength but not possessed by power, he conducts his work in deep concentration, honestly, straightforward, and without deception. He is a man of his word with a deep sense of commitment and responsibility to those who invest their trust in him. He is a rare find in this day and time, a pure and dedicated practitioner of the original Chavin Mesa style, perhaps the most profound mystical practice every conceived by man.”

¹⁰⁶ According to www.incaglossary.com, “Don Choque Chinchay” means “Golden Jaguar” and is said to be the chief of the Otorongo’s in Chavin mythology.”

¹⁰⁷ According to the website, “If you’ve come this far and are seriously interested in being a part of an Ayahuasca Odyssey shamanic revival celebration ... then contact us by e-mail

The withholding of the tour's price, coupled with statements regarding exclusivity, suggests that this form of spiritual tourism resonates within the framework of postmodern tourism as discussed in Chapter One. The potential tourist is informed that participation is limited to "sixteen hearty souls of good intent and compatible nature for these very special 'New Beginnings' celebrations." Additionally, the site 'warns' potential consumers, "due to the powerful and delicate nature of this journey, personal screening is required for participation." By presenting the experience as limited to a select few, with the 'right' characteristics (yet without 'guaranteed' acceptance, as acceptance into the tour is highly selective) this text reflects the "hegemonic spatial struggles", one of the "distinctive qualities" of postmodern travel as conceived by Ian Munt (1994, p. 110). Munt (1994) describes these struggles as the way in which the "the new middles classes must adopt strategies of exclusion, to seek and protect the new travel commodities"¹⁰⁹ (p.117). These strategies are most readily employed via the advertising discourse of tourism, such as the creation of "tourist free places" which are "off the beaten track" (ibid). Munt (1994) argues that these attempts do not result in creating any real distance between the (mass) "tourist" and the (postmodern) "traveler", but instead, these strategies "amount[s] to little more than marketing..." (ibid, p. 118)

with a personal introduction and tell us why you'd like to share in our work. We'll send you more information by return e-mail with full details on cost, terms, and preparation."

¹⁰⁸ Though these prices were listed in 2007, they still remain higher than the all of the other tours in this current study.

¹⁰⁹ These commodities could include the drinking of the ayahuasca tea, and/or the participation in shamanic rituals as well as the ability to travel hundreds of miles into the Peruvian Amazon – experiencing things "exotic" and "unique."

OPERATING IN A VACUUM OR CONSIDERING THE CONTEXT?

INVESTIGATING THE MISSING “LINK”

The first section of this chapter included a brief analysis and summary of ayahuasca tour characteristics, in an attempt to better conceptualize tour similarities, differences and examine which processes were specific to broker type (e.g. “individual, foreign born broker, jointly owned venture or Peruvian owned operator). In addition to the primary text/visuals on each site, this analysis included an assessment of each tour’s most “distinguishing features,” that is, what made the website, program or tour broker unique from the others. Finally, an examination was conducted to better understand the ayahuasca tour website’s provision of links or paths to supplementary information (in addition to that included on the primary site). The utilization of these links appears to correspond quite well with the overall goal or focus of the tours brokered. For example, both of the non-individually owned companies provided a substantial amount of additional information connecting the reader to an abundance of text/sites regarding the cities, towns, history, culture, flora and fauna of Peru. Thus, the WASAI site includes many links about the country of Peru in general including links to geographical, historical, and travel relevant information on both the Amazon and the Andes, providing a strong context for the flora and fauna of the country. Although the WASAI website contains elements of the Exotic discourse present in many of the other sites (reflecting the lack of identification and context of local people), it also emphasizes a commitment to ecology and conservation (a unique finding among the six sites). Likewise

PeruTravels.net provides a substantial set of links to historical, ecological and cultural information on Peru under the heading, “About Peru.”¹¹⁰

This is in sharp contrast to the BMT and El Tigre websites.¹¹¹ As discussed in Chapter Three, though the BMT website included links to press articles promoting the owner (Hamilton Souther) and his Center, it did not supply any additional links on Iquitos, the Amazon or Peru).¹¹² Similarly, the El Tigre website provides the “Ayahuasca SpiritQuest Reference Library”.¹¹³ The provision of information on topics that revolve

¹¹⁰ Most notably among these links is a set of “Peru Pictures.” As seen in Table 2, the images of plants, animals and scenery predominate on this site. There are only a few which show Peruvian people (3) (largely in traditional clothing from the Andes) or tourists (3) (all of whom are involved in sporting activities such as hiking or bicycling in the snow and white water rafting). There are no images of tourists interacting with local people in any fashion. Similar to the visual analyses conducted in the previous chapter, this website favors the photographic representations of animals over people at a ratio of 7:1, suggesting that the exotic animals and sweeping landscapes are more appealing to the potential tourist than the local people of Peru. Like BMT, this site thus renders the local Peruvian extinct – not worthy of representation (Santos, 2006).

¹¹¹ As stated in Chapter 3, the Blue Morpho site provides links to publications about the Blue Morpho tours and its leader, Hamilton Souther. Beyond a small map of Peru, no other historical, cultural or ecological information is provided. In contrast, the El Tigre website contains an extensive “Reference Library” which provides articles about “Ayahuasca, Shamanism, Entheobotany, Entheoarcheology and related topics.” Still, the emphasis is on the ethnobotanical aspects of ayahuasca and shamanism. There is little to no information provided on the geographic region of the Amazon, the country of Peru or the town of Iquitos.

¹¹² In turn, the links featured reflect Souther’s role as the primary Peruvian Host, with this additional information focusing solely on he and his company without providing a larger context for the region within which he operates.

¹¹³ This “Library” contains “Reference Articles about Ayahuasca Shamanism, Entheobotany, Entheoarcheology and related topics. The list of references/links here mirrors El Tigre’s textual emphasis on ayahuasca; of the 25 references

only around the ayahuasca plant, ceremony or shamanism reflects the copious amount of site space devoted to the “transformative and healing power of the plant medicines.”

Different than the individually brokered sites discussed above, the El Mundo website provides a wide-range of information on the pages titled, “The Bookshelf.” “The Bookshelf” is described as a “free public resource” on a lengthy number of topics including, but not limited to: Ayahuasca, San Pedro, Ethnogenics and the Amazon Rainforest.¹¹⁴ Reflecting the company’s mission statement, these links seem to support El Mundo goal of promoting the preservation of the region, while at the same time participating in and educating others about the shamanic practices of the area.¹¹⁵

provided in the first half of this “library” not one of them provides information on Peru, Iquitos or the Amazon region in general. The Amazon is mentioned only in connection to the plants or shamanism (e.g. “Medicinal Plants of the Peruvian Amazon”, “The Amazon’s Sacred Healing Plants” and “Amazonian Shamanism: The Ayahuasca Experience”.) Like the BMT site, there are no links to geographical, cultural and/or historical information on Peru.

¹¹⁴ The site also contains a long list of external links (79) presented in alphabetical order, offering information on such diverse topics as Amazonian mythology, travel information for Peru, information on the “New Age/Pagan/Alternative Lifestyles” as well as information on the Quechua Language. Informational links on topics pertaining to health, vaccination, and medical or hospital emergencies were also provided on the page titled “Health Tips for Journeys to the Peruvian Amazon.”

¹¹⁵ Different from all of the other websites in the study, S.P.A.’s links appear to function as an advertisement page rather than an information resource. In describing how to get linked with the website, the “Sacred Peru Adventures Link Exchange” contains a qualifying statement that details the terms for inclusion on the site. While some of the links address the topics requested, a vast majority have little to no connection whatsoever and do not seem to meet these requirements at all. Examples of such links include those that address hemorrhoid care, hair loss treatment, online video dating and beef jerky. This somewhat strange menagerie of sites may be explained in part by the statement, “All we

In sum, the majority of the Western-owned companies appear to include only those links which reflect their particular emphasis, foregoing any information on the social/economic/historical and/or political situation in Peru, Iquitos or the Amazon.¹¹⁶ Dorsey et al (2004) explain this exclusion well, “Their [the websites’] failure to provide links to other sources with information on history, demographics and news of the countries and regions demonstrates an interest in depicting the spaces as unchangeable and isolated” (p. 774). This presentation of the Peruvian Amazon and its inhabitants as ahistorical and acontextual contributes to the commodification of culture evident in much of the travel and tourism literature (Caton & Santos, 2009; Cohen, 1993; Mowforth & Munt 1998; Santos, 2006). Additionally, the provision of such a limited and controlled representation of the racial and cultural ‘Other’ supports the idea that the discourse of spiritual tourism reflects notions of both cultural imperialism as well as commodification (Li, 2006; Pratt, 1992; Said, 1979, 1993; Smith, 1999).

DISSECTING THE DISCOURSE

As discussed at length in the previous chapter, several words and phrases clustered together on the Blue Morpho ayahwasca tour website to form three primary

ask is that you post a reciprocal link within 7 days using the following information...” S.P.A. may use this linkage system simply as an avenue for reciprocity, so that a link to this site might be included on a wide-range of others, thereby increasing both its visibility on the Internet and the subsequent possibility of increased business. As stated, this advertising strategy is markedly different from the others seen on the individually-brokered sites.

¹¹⁶ Only El Mundo included information on the country of Peru, the city of Iquitos or the Amazon region.

discourses: the Corporate Discourse, the New Age Discourse and the Exotic Discourse.¹¹⁷ Additional findings of these websites indicate a near absence of local, Amazonian people on the site as well as the presentation of broker Hamilton Souther as the main tour “host” (effectively removing the locals from this role). Throughout the examination of the additional sites herein, special attention was paid to the presence or absence of these discourses, as well as noting the ways in which local people were represented on the websites.¹¹⁸

Key findings from this extensive analysis indicate a similar utilization of the three primary discourses revealed in Chapter Three. A brief summary of these findings will be introduced here and more fully analyzed below. Two main themes were revealed from the Corporate Discourse analysis conducted in this chapter. First, in the promotion of shamanic services, most brokers coupled phrases of *exclusivity* (e.g “like no other” “rare opportunity”) with terms of *authenticity* (such as “genuine” “most traditional”) in order to assure customer satisfaction and successfully “sell” their spiritual services (Fairclough, 2003). Second, many brokers reflected the postmodern process of *professionalization* within the tourism industry (Munt, 1994). Examples here include the display of broker “credentials” on the websites and the description of Caucasian staff members’ work histories and special skills.

¹¹⁷ Similar to the methods used in Chapter Three, the analysis herein reflects that employed by Echtner and Prasad (2003). Once coded, grouping assisted in tracking key themes in the data (Santos, 2006).

¹¹⁸ The role of the broker of each site is investigated in various sections throughout this chapter, therefore a brief summary of these findings will be addressed only in the conclusion.

The analysis of the New Age Discourse also exposed several themes, such as the discursive mixing of various spiritual traditions and ideologies, a hallmark of New Age practice. However, the most salient finding was the striking similarity between the foreign-born individual ayahuasca tour brokers in this study and the “white shamans” in the United States investigated by Wernitznig (2003). Notably, both groups contribute to the “selling of spirituality” – the promotion of spiritual services as a product for sale – that, once purchased will give you profound insight, encourage your personal growth and ultimately support you in joining the ranks of the enlightened.

As might be expected in the study of spiritual tourism in the Amazon, this analysis unearthed multiple examples of the Exotic Discourse. Four major themes arose in this section. First, the shamans on the Peruvian tour sites (WASAI and PT.net) were depicted as faceless, nameless entities, described only as the “shaman” or “master shaman.” In sharp contrast, these two sites included the names of a variety of plants and animals encountered during one’s ayahuasca tour: thus privileging the flora/fauna over the local shaman and presenting the shaman as ahistoric, not important and removed from tourist (Caton & Santos 2009; Dorsey et al; 2004; Smith, 1999). The second finding here echoed the “imperial vision” illustrated by Pratt (1992), wherein the tourists were encouraged to “look” but not interact with nameless local people (e.g. in the “riverside town” - PT.net). Further, on many of the sites, local people and their lives were described as “unique” and “primitive” – terms which maintain binaries between the primitive local and the advanced tourist (Etchner & Prasad, 2003; Li, 2006; Santos, 2006). In contrast to the nameless, faceless locals described above, the third finding reveals the pervasive

theme of the “smiling gracious native”¹¹⁹ (Etchner & Prasad, 2003; Pratt, 1992; Smith, 1999; Trask, 1999). Finally, the Exotic Discourse was exposed in the visual analyses as well. For example, local people were largely absent from tour photographs and website images; if they were included, they were rarely identified by name (the exception here being the El Mundo site, as discussed previously).¹²⁰ Similar to the “naming” of the Amazonian flora and fauna in the textual analysis – this visual analysis also revealed a preponderance of these images, accompanied by individual identification (e.g. various types of ayahuasca or other botanicals). Lastly, the visuals included on the sights largely favored tourists over locals and portrayed the tourists “at rest”, while the local was often portrayed “at work.” As discussed shortly, Caton & Santos (2009) warn against the tendency of tour brokers to portray local people in situations of servitude, due to the power of imagery to reify “master-servant” binary characteristic of colonist discourse (p.207). A comprehensive analysis of these findings is provided below.

The Corporate Discourse

Similar to the description of the Corporate Discourse in Chapter Three, the discourse examined herein included the textual and visual elements which emphasized

¹¹⁹ A good example of this theme is illustrated on the El Mundo site; noting specifically the description of the Shipibo family members discussed herein).

¹²⁰ This finding exempts the shamans portrayed on the individually brokered tour sites – as these shamans were featured often and usually identified by name – notably, however, the shaman’s “voice” is not included on any of the sights – they are never quoted. At best, their icaros may be included on the site, however, these same sites offer the shamanic songs for sale – “icaro” CDs are available to the interested tourist at El Tigre or El Mundo.

business-industry terms or phrases. In tracking this theme, I noted specifically words and phrases that reflect capitalistic, corporate frames (Naples, 2003).

Similar to the Blue Morpho findings,¹²¹ WASAI includes a paragraph on what they believe contributes to a “great vacation”. Corporate language abounds in the list of these many factors: “Excellent planning...the best guides...the finest equipment, comfortable accommodations...fine dining”. Also similar to Blue Morpho, WASAI incorporates what Fairclough (2003) would deem strategies of legitimation, specifically that of “authorization” whereby within the text is reference to the authority of institutions (p. 98). This occurs in this same paragraph: “...we are highly recommended by the best world travel guides as South American handbook, Peru footprint...Lonely Planet, Frommers...” This legitimation is included to assure the potential tourist that the trip will be worth the investment and to promote the company’s positive reputation in popular travel circles. Given the size and scope of the WASAI tour business, this strategy of legitimation is fairly common and widely used.

Akin to the description above, the only other Peruvian tour broker, PeruTravels.net asserts, “Our travel team knows what ‘going the extra mile’ means—obtaining the lowest fares and demonstrating commitment and professionalism to your complete satisfaction.” Though each of these companies display evidence of the Corporate Discourse on their sites, this placement of text does not seem unusual here;

¹²¹ On its website, Blue Morpho offered a number of examples of language that comprised the Corporate Discourse. For example, in assuring the tourist excellence in service Blue Morpho states, “Our commitment to excellence, professionalism, and outstanding quality of service is the benchmark of our operation.”

both companies offer a variety of diverse tours and neither claims to specialize in ayahuasca tours. The description (and provision) of ayahuasca on these sites occurs as just another kind of tour, lumped together with adventure tours, cultural tours, nature tours, etc. Although each display some examples of a New Age and/or Exotic discourse on their sites, overall these companies make no great claims regarding the tourist's personal transformation, holistic healing or spiritual growth, as evident in much greater quantities on the individually brokered sites. Thus, the use of corporate language on these websites reflects each company's stated mission and appears much more appropriate in the site's discourse¹²².

Akin to the Peruvian brokers, the individual brokers in the study also reflected the use of the Corporate Discourse. In one way or another, all of the foreign brokered websites sites assert their ability to provide the ayahuasca tourist with the best, most profound ayahuasca experience, coupled with the highest quality of service. For example, the El Tigre Journeys site promises their customer "genuine expertly facilitated, real-life Amazonian shamanic experiences," as well as "an unequaled opportunity to experience genuine traditional Peruvian spirit plant shamanism at its Heart."

Additionally, this site devotes a significant section discussing the disclaimer "Don't

¹²² Regarding the missions statements, WASAI asserts, "As a tour operator, our company offers a wide variety of itineraries in Peru, our main destinations are the wildlife in National Parks, archaeology and the legendary Cuzco and Machu Picchu." Though PeruTravels.net lists no specific mission statement, their identity and function are clear: "Peruvian site of tourism, travel and promotion. Let us bring you, all about Peru through this complete source of tourism and travel services and information in order to travel around Peru."

confuse our work with ‘ayahuasca tourism.’ We are shamanic teachers and healers, not tourism operators.”¹²³ While these findings may appear somewhat intuitive, the propensity of the brokers to combine a discussion of “exclusivity” with “authenticity” in order to sell the spiritual tours was prevalent throughout the study.

El Mundo Magico also contains text that suggests a unique experience and an air of exclusivity, “Traditional Shipibo Indigenous Shamanic Centre: Like no others...” Akin to the disclaimer on the El Tigre Journeys site, Italian founder Sammarco echoes the need to differentiate himself and his staff from other potential ayahuasca providers. He does this on the El Mundo Magico webpage titled “Mission Statement and Who We Are.” Here, prior to providing his biography, the text above Sammarco reads, “We are NOT NEWCOMERS to the scene of shamanism!” This line suggests that there may be an increase in the presence of shamans in the region, as well as perhaps that some of these shamans may not be truly genuine, as suggested by the use of the term “scene”.¹²⁴ In turn, the Sacred Peru Adventures site claims, “Our Amazon healing retreats truly provide

¹²³ When this page was first retrieved in 2006, the disclaimer extended over two full printed pages. The first paragraph states, “We have been conducting seriously focused *Ayahuasca SpiritQuest* shamanic healing retreats since 1996, long before the pejorative term was invented and the current wave of “ayahuasca tours” appeared. We are not newcomers to this work as most others are.” Note the almost exact same phrase on the El Mundo Magico site.

¹²⁴ As will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, data garnered from the ethnographic portion of this study supports the idea that there has been a significant increase in the presence of “shamans” with whom the foreigner may drink ayahuasca. Additionally, several informants mentioned the proliferation of “false shamans” who have appeared in response to the increased interest in ayahuasca tourism in/around Iquitos.

a rare opportunity to experience ayahuasca healing at its finest.” Again, terms and phrases such as “like no other,” “rare opportunity” and “unequaled opportunity” exist to offer the potential tourist a unique experience, one they would not obtain at any of the other ayahuasca centers.

As is clear, this *exclusivity* is coupled with the promise of *authenticity*, through the provision of the most “traditional,” genuine,” “finest” and “expertly facilitated” ayahuasca experience possible – assuring the customer’s satisfaction with their spiritual sale. Put perhaps the most simply, PeruTravels.net claims, “Our master shamans are the best in the Amazon.”¹²⁵ This unique phrasing reflects the recontextualization of the spiritual genre of shamanism (e.g. “authenticity”) within the business genre of tourism (e.g. “exclusivity”) and provides an analytic framework from which to interpret the process of commodification of culture within the spiritual tourism industry (Fairclough, 2003).

In addition to the integration of business terms reflecting exclusivity, uniqueness and high quality service, each of the individually brokered sites contained another feature prevalent in postmodern (and apparently, spiritual) tourism: the “professionalization” of its broker (Munt, 1994). As seen in the description of “Mimi” on the Blue Morpho website in Chapter three, all of the foreign brokers in the study detailed either their

¹²⁵ The difference here is that the while each of the individually brokered companies identify the shamans with whom they work, PeruTravels.net only refers to them as “our...shamans.” This lack of attribution will be discussed in the section entitled, “Exotic Discourse.”

educational background and/or their experience with shamanism/New Age modalities.¹²⁶

El Tigre Journeys' founder Howard Lawler provides the largest amount of website text devoted solely to his qualifications. These qualifications include a discussion of his formal, educational background and professional experience, as well as an extended statement regarding his "shamanic" training.¹²⁷ Lawler describes himself as a "Ph.D. herpetologist who came to the Amazon to study its reptiles."¹²⁸ Further, Lawler reports that he "holds degrees in biology, education and cultural history from Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee."¹²⁹

Similar to Lawler, El Mundo Magico's founder Francesco Sammarco lists both his educational background and personal experience with various topics including, but not limited to: "shamanism, traditional medicines, religious anthropology and ancient and contemporary native cultures." Regarding his education the text reads,

Sammarco studied in the early 80s paleontology and archeology at the University of Lecce (Italy) as part of his BA (Hons) in 'Classics'. He also holds a BA (Hons)

¹²⁶ Like the majority of individual brokers in the study, Souther includes his formal education on his website, reporting on the "About Blue Morpho" page that he "earned a bachelor's degree in Anthropology."

¹²⁷ Lawler's detailed account of his shamanic training and qualifications will be discussed in the next section on the "New Age" Discourse.

¹²⁸ Elsewhere on the site he lists his "professional background in biology, ecology, ethnobiology, [and] environmental education" and states that he used to work as a "curator at natural history and cultural institutions in the United States."

¹²⁹ In addition to this extensive list, Lawler also includes a link titled "Professional Background" which directs the reader to his "Resume and Curriculum Vita Lawler's resume can be found at: <http://www.biopark.org/peru/helresume.html>.

in 'Classical Archeology' from King's College London/ University of London (U.K.) from the early 90s and a Masters Degree (MA) in 'Public Archeology' from the University College London/University of London (U.K.).

As discussed in Chapter three, Ian Munt (1994) argues that providing such a detailed list of qualifications reflects the "professionalization" characteristic of postmodern tourism, whereby it is no longer enough to simply introduce the tour broker, but to highlight both his academic qualifications as well as his shamanic experience.¹³⁰ Unlike Sammarco, Lawler or Souther, Sacred Peru Adventure's Steffan Heydon lists only his "spiritual" credentials, such as his "over 100 hours of training in past life regression hypnosis." A fuller discussion of each of the individually brokered statements regarding their spiritual or shamanic background is provided in the New Age Discourse section below.

The New Age Discourse

As discussed in the previous chapter, the term "New Age" is used here to represent the main themes discussed in Matthew Wood's (2007), *Possession, Power and the New Age*.¹³¹ While it is difficult to ascertain the socio-economic class of either the

¹³⁰ Munt (1994) describes the listing of a tour leader's "academic credentials and expertise in a specialized field" as a one of the four ways in which "postmodern travel" is distinctive from previous forms of "tourism" (p. 112). See also Fairclough's (2003) discussion of the role of the "expert" in the discourse of the new capitalism.

¹³¹ These themes include a "discursive emphasis upon the self and that self authority is paramount" (ibid, p. 27); that New Agers are concerned with "spirituality" instead of religion, that they are individual "seekers" of spirituality; and that the individuals most

brokers (prior to their entrepreneurial activities in Peru) or the tourists reflected on the ayahuasca tour websites, the first two characteristics of the New Age seeker are representative of three of the four the individual brokers.¹³² Similar to the findings in chapter three, the majority of individuals depicted on these websites (who are neither Peruvian shamans nor program staff) also appear to be Caucasian. Further, of the many testimonials included on the El Mundo Magico website that list the individual's profession, the majority of these reflects at least a college education.¹³³ Thus, Wood's (2007) description of the discursive elements of the "New Age" best suits this examination.

As might be expected given their websites' foci, the two Peruvian tour companies, WASAI and Perutravels.net contained the fewest examples of words or phrases which clustered together to form the New Age Discourse.¹³⁴ The page(s) of the WASAI website

likely to participate in the New Age experiences tend to be" white, educated [and] middle class" (ibid).

¹³² The exception here is Sacred Peru Adventures' Steffan Heydon who lists no formal post-graduate schooling. As discussed in the Corporate Discourse section above, Blue Morpho's Souther, El Tigre Journeys' Lawler and El Mundo Magico's Sammarco all are of Caucasian European or American descent and list degrees ranging from a bachelors' to a doctorate.

¹³³ Some examples of participant professions include, "journalist" "psychologist" and "teacher."

¹³⁴ PeruTravels.net includes almost no spiritual or esoteric words/phrases which might be classified as New Age Discourse. The following paragraph is the extent of the website's text devoted to either the ayahuasca or the ceremony: "The shaman starts the ceremony

that is the focus of the “Amazon mystic tours” beckons the reader, “Come to the Peruvian Jungle to participate in an AYAHUASCA session, have a deep and special experience” (text as in original). The phrases “spiritual,” “deep,” “sacred,” “ancient” and “traditional” are used most often, and almost exclusively, in this section of the website. Additionally, elements of the New Age discourse are clearly present here. The “mixing” of spiritualities discussed in the Blue Morpho analysis is most evident in the following statement on the WASAI site,

It [ayahuasca] unifies, oriental believes with christianism. From orient it takes the knowledge to unify soul with universe, karma, reincarnation, meditation, etc. While from christianism takes charity, forgiveness, generosity, love and Christian conduct with oneself and fellow man (text presented as in original).

This blending of various elements of different religious and spiritual traditions is a hallmark of New Age practices (Hanegraaff, 1986, 2002; Wood, 2007). The historian of philosophy Wouter Hanegraaff (2002) suggests that while the New Age movement is not “new,” certain features can be considered to be “radically new.” He argues that this new ‘religion’ is a “manifestation *par excellence* of postmodern consumer society, the members of which use, recycle, combine and adapt existing religious ideas and practices as they see fit” (p. 288 – italics in original). This presentation of the New Age and its members as examples of the postmodern consumer culture support my conceptualization

ICARANDO (smoking and blowing) the beverage with the smoke of Mapacho...asking for permission to the Almighty and the spirits of the plants to start the ritual. The effect of the hallucinogenic beverage is shown 20 to 30 minutes after drinking and the trance lasts approximately from 2 ½ to 3 hours.” No other websites describe ayahuasca as a “hallucinogenic” beverage.

of spiritual tourism as a postmodern phenomenon situated in the broader context of economic and cultural globalization. The ability to travel to the Amazon, stay at a comfortable lodge and participate in a wide variety of shamanic rituals exemplifies the consumerism afforded to affluent tourists.

Interestingly, though the El Tigre and El Mundo websites contained similarly large amounts of language reflecting the New Age Discourse¹³⁵, the El Tigre site was the only one in the study to specifically contest the identification of its work as “New Age”. Present on the second linked page titled, “Ayahuasca SpiritQuest: Listening to the Plants”, is the following disclaimer,

Our work is not ‘New Age’ shamanism. We are instead "Archaic Age" and are not "inventing" anything. Instead we bring forward ancient shamanic knowledge and technology refined thousands of years ago into this day and time when it is needed more than ever before in the history of humanity.

This statement (in addition to the page stating “don’t confuse our work with ayahuasca tourism”) seems to anticipate critique; it appears as though the website builds in this

¹³⁵ Each contained multiple pages, links and sections of text devoted to shamanic, healing and/or spiritually transformative activities and information – more than any of the other four websites in the study. For instance, the El Tigre Journeys website included the following terms, presented in order of frequency: “spirit/spiritual” 23 times; “traditional” 10 times; “ancient” six times; “powerful” five times.

counter-discourse to deflect even the possible suggestion that its services may be perceived as touristic, trivial or trendy.¹³⁶

In light of these disclaimers, one of the textual changes noted on the El Tigre website stands out as somewhat contradictory and counter-intuitive. During the period of data collection,¹³⁷ much of the website text remained the same. However, the presentation of the company's owner and founder, Howard Lawler, was altered significantly. During the initial data collection (2006) Lawler referred to himself as "Facilitator of Shamanic Programs." By November 2009, this title changed to "Principal Maestro of Shamanic Programs and Maestro of the Chavin Mesa." Because no additional text is provided to explain this transformation, it is impossible to discern precisely what this new title means: one cannot interpret clearly whether it reflects additional shamanic training or if it is simply a savvy marketing strategy – representing himself with the grandest title possible. Regardless of the rationale behind the modified title, it is clear that Lawler considers himself to be "a genuine maestro curandero (master; teacher healer)", in spite of his statements refuting the "New Age" nature of his work.

While this presentation of self varies somewhat among the individual brokers in the study, the majority express a "love" of Peru and/or the shamanic path possible

¹³⁶ Similar to the examples presented in Chapter three, the use of both "ancient shamanic knowledge" and the term "technology" in the same sentence represents the mingling of genres prevalent in the new capitalism of late modernity (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003).

¹³⁷ The majority of data collected herein occurred between 2006 and 2009: when the site was updated.

therein, contributing to the New Age Discourse.^{138 139} With the exception of El Mundo Magico's Sammarco, each of the other three brokers' biographies displays at least one significant feature of Wernitzing's (2003) "white shaman." Thus, in each of their personal stories is some component that fits well the stereotyped journey of those who claim shaman status and produce books of the "New Age" quality in the United States.¹⁴⁰¹⁴¹

My analysis finds that each of the brokers exhibits at least one significant feature of Wernitznig's (2003) "white shaman." For example, Souther mentions his "prophesized apprenticeship" in the Peruvian Amazon and the gaining of his title as "master shaman",

¹³⁸ Examples of such romanticizing include the following statement on the El Tigre Journeys site, "As have others before him, he [Lawler] fell in love with the land and the people..." Similarly, El Mundo Magico's owner Sammarco is described as "Hopelessly in love with Pre-Columbian cultures of the Americas, Taoism and ancient forms of divination..." Finally, Sacred Peru Adventures is described as "a true labor of love" of founder Steffan Heydon.

¹³⁹ A biography of each broker is included on the sites, detailing their individual journey to the creation of their company, as well as specifying with whom they have received either spiritual guidance or shamanic training. It is important to note here, that, in spite of the multiple words and phrases on each site which comprise the Corporate Discourse none of the broker's refer to their ventures as their "companies" or "businesses." Rather, they are called: a "Shamanic Center and Jungle Lodge" (Blue Morpho), "Shamanic Retreats and Pilgrimages" (El Tigre Journeys), "Shamanic Retreat Center" (El Mundo Magico) and "Ayahuasca Retreats" (Sacred Peru Adventures).

¹⁴⁰ See Wernitznig's (2003) work, *Going Native or Going Naïve: white shamanism and the neo-noble savage*, pps. 15-18 for a fuller discussion of these characteristics as they relate to "white shamans" and popular literature.

¹⁴¹ Short excerpts of these biographies are included in Appendix C.

thus reversing the roles from apprentice to master and thereby legitimizing his tourism venture. By describing the shamanic authority vested upon him by Dons Alberto Torres Davila and Julio Llerena Pinedo, Souther appears almost altruistic in his desire to lead his shamanic tours and the subsequent need to build a larger, more comfortable shamanism center; “it became clear that many people would benefit from similar spiritual work, and greater infrastructure was added to accommodate their needs.” The altruistic tone of this statement, coupled with the pre-established “legitimacy” of his place in the Amazon, obscures the fact that Souther’s tours are quite expensive and that he is the sole proprietor of his company, assuring him the majority of the profit.¹⁴²

In his discussion of white shamans and their production of New Age books, Wernitznig (2003) argues that this process of spiritual appropriation and commodification (my terms) is not unique. Rather, he explains that this narrative is quite common among white shamans:

Naturally, the apprentice shamans gain approval as they gain wisdom...They quickly move up the ladder of shamanism, dazzled by the discovery of their special gift for healing and teaching, which the elders have told them about in the first place. They are usually urged by their now generous teachers to pursue this talent and share it with the rest of mankind. The message is a salvation-like one: white shamans should endeavor to help the ‘ignorant’ overcome the obstacles of civilization. Which, of course, is a very euphemistic way of explaining their reasons for writing these books. They make

¹⁴² As mentioned previously, both Souther and the BMT’s website are integrated within this chapter as a point of reference and comparison, per the critical discourse analysis approach I employ in these two chapters.

the Indian teacher responsible for their impulse to produce these texts. Naturally, no one would ever admit that they produce these texts for the mere reason of earning a lot of money (this would go against their shamanic ethics!). (pp. 16-17)

Thus, Souther's "prophesized apprenticeship" might be seen as the work of Wernitznig's "elders" telling Souther about his "special gift" (ibid). Lawler, too, declares that he has an "extraordinary gift of shamanic knowledge...positive healing energy...[and] impressive ceremonial skill." However, unlike Souther, Lawler claims no human teachers, but attributes his shamanic skills and training to the "sacred plants themselves."

Heydon differs from both Souther and Lawler insofar as he does not call himself a shaman or claim to lead spiritual ceremonies. Rather, Heydon presents himself as a "healer."¹⁴³ Moreover it is Heydon's "dedication" to the "indigenous healing traditions" that best situates his biography within Wernitznig's (2003) white shaman trope. For example, the generosity of Heydon's "quest" to "bring all those who are ready" masks the money behind the motive: signing up to "experience the sacred power plants" with Heydon comes at a substantial price (\$1200 for 12 days).

Further, Heydon's quest sounds almost apologetic when he asks to be *paid* for this service. On the "Payment and Registration Page," it encourages tourists to get their deposit in early to keep their spot in the program. Additionally, this early deposit is designed to "... help insure that this magical journey can become a reality for all, we humble[ly] ask that you submit your full payment as soon as possible." "Humbly asking"

¹⁴³ In his biographical statement Heydon refers to the "development of his psychic abilities," his training in the "laying on of hands" as well as his ability to "see auras" (see Appendix C for the biographical statement.)

for payment so that this “magical journey” can be accessed by “all” echoes Wernitznig’s (2003) assertion that the provision of the white shamans’ product is couched as a “favor” to others and is not designed to reflect the profit involved. By admitting that his tours are run for money (with he as the sole proprietor), Heydon would be going against his spiritual (if not shamanic) ethics.

The desire to frame the provision of these shamanic services as altruistic and not for profit can be seen most clearly on the El Tigre Journeys website, whereby Lawler’s “motive” is expressly stated:

Our sole focus and genuine motive has always been to help facilitate deep holistic healing, powerful spiritual realization, dynamic personal empowerment, and enduring positive life transformation in as many people as possible.

We intend to be a positive influence in the joining of ancient and modern culture to meet the challenges and blessings of the coming Renaissance. We are genuine masters of the sacred medicines, our skill, intention, and integrity is impeccable ... and our invitation is to you, if you feel a calling to it.

As stated previously, those who “feel the calling” to Lawler’s services must make a special inquiry as to his fee, as it is not immediately available on the website. In sum, though these ayahuasca tour brokers claim to have received their training from Peruvians (or plants) (instead of Native Americans) and are selling ayahuasca ceremonies (instead of self-help books), the message is identical: purchase this product and you will gain spiritual insight, experience personal transformation and join the ranks of the enlightened.

The Exotic Discourse

As explained in the last chapter, the Exotic Discourse consists of text and images which portray both the people and the place of the Amazon in ways which romanticize, idealize, sanitize or in some way create a sense of ‘otherness’ for the tourist, perpetuating the binary of “us” and “them” (Caton & Santos, 2009; Etchner & Prasad, 2003; Hall & Tucker, 2004; Said, 1979). While all of the websites displayed at least some verbal/visual elements of the Exotic Discourse they differed greatly in precisely which elements of the site/tour were exoticized. For example, the two sites brokered by Peruvian tour companies tended to exoticize the people of the Amazon, rather than the region itself or the ayahuasca. Conversely, though the individually brokered websites provided a somewhat better context for the inclusion of local people,¹⁴⁴ these sites also contained exoticizing language and images regarding the Amazon’s people and place.

The WASAI website provides several examples of the Exotic Discourse. The last paragraph on the webpage introducing the ayahuasca ceremony displays a comingling of all three discourses. Speaking to the increased leisure time and disposable income of many foreign tourists (Holden, 2005), the text encourages, “Those who have some time and money to spend can visit the Amazon Jungle and contact renowned “chamanes” and participate in one or more rituals of Ayahuasca.” Referring to the shamans as “renowned” lends a business tone, reflecting the Corporate Discourse. The next sentence in this paragraph displays the exoticizing aspect of much tourism advertising (Caton & Santos,

¹⁴⁴ This statement excludes the Blue Morpho Tours website, which, as seen in Chapter Three, included very little mention of local Peruvian people and, aside from the shamans, identified no one by name.

2009), “Also, you can visit Rio Branco from Puerto Maldonado where all this...get started and where lives a big number of families that belong to these groups.” This vague allusion to the local people from whom the ayahuasca ceremony “got started” and to whom the tourist may visit echoes Carla Santos’ (2006) concerns about not providing a proper context when identifying or discussing the “other” in contemporary travel writing: “By failing, at times, to provide readers with socio-cultural and historical contexts within which to understand the situations introduced, dominant Western notions are reproduced over and over again. This allows writers and editors to ensure their innocence while asserting their power” (p. 260). As discussed previously, though the WASAI site provides multiple links on Peru, in general, and offers some contextual history on the ayahuasca ceremony itself, little information is provided on the local people from whom the ayahuasca originates.

Another example of such “othering” of the local people is found in the WASAI “services listed”: “Our programs include flora and fauna observation options in our refuge path net, fishing, alligators search, typical canoes, relax on hammock, swimming in the lakes or river banks, and *contacts with local population*” (italics added). Additionally, WASAI states, “You will see local communities and wildlife along the banks of the river.” Like the people along the Rio Branco, these locals are without a name or identity. Not only are they nameless and faceless, they are lumped in with the “wildlife” and “alligators”. Rather than *interacting* with the local population (as seen on the El Tigre Journeys site discussed below), the WASAI tourist is simply offered the chance to have *contacts with* or *see* the locals. Again, these observations fit nicely with

the theoretical concerns raised by Pratt (1992) and Said (1979), concerns about the “us and them”, about Westerners/global north tourists treating non-Westerners as spectacles, animals at the zoo (Mowforth et al, 2008).

A third example from the WASAI site comes from the only photo of people on the Ayahuasca Tours page. The image projected is of two men, shown bare-chested and wearing straw skirts, and three children who are shirtless and barefoot. This portrayal of the Ese Eja people in their traditional, (and perhaps native?),¹⁴⁵ attire reflects the concerns raised by numerous scholars regarding the representation of the ethnic ‘Other’ (in this case, the local people of the global south) (Britton, 1979; Bruner, 1989; Caton & Santos, 2009; Cohen, 1993; Dorsey et al, 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Smith, 1999; Trask, 1999). The decision to present this community in only straw skirts without shirts or shoes, paints these locals as “primitive” and “poor” (Rosaldo, 1993) through the gaze of the Western/global northern tourist (Urry, 1990b). Though community members may don traditional attire for specific ceremonies or events, it is unlikely that this is an accurate portrayal of daily life for these Peruvians.¹⁴⁶ Caton & Santos (2009) provide a useful summary describing the problems inherent in portraying the local as primitive:

¹⁴⁵ The Ese Eja community was mentioned on a different page on the website with regard to the specific region where the ayahuasca tours are located. However, it is impossible to ascertain the specific indigeneity of the group, as there is no historical or contextual information provided on the Ese Eja community from whom the WASAI company “can arrange an ayahuasca session with the local shaman.”

¹⁴⁶ Information gained during the ethnographic portion of this work (including an interview with a young Bora man) suggests that members of the two most frequently visited indigenous communities in the Iquitos region (The Boras and the Yagua) spend

Representation of hosts as traditional and as racially/ethnically distinct is problematic for multiple reasons. First, portraying hosts exclusively in traditional clothing, engaging in traditional activities, masks the dynamism of their cultures, presenting them as people who have not yet “embraced modernity”—people who live in places where time stands still...The overall impression one is left with is that of two very different worlds colliding—one simple, primitive, unchanging, and closely tied to nature; the other capable of manipulating the world’s resources to produce complex technologies that allow human lifestyles to be constantly changing shape. (p.199)

Thus, the Ese Eje image contains several features present in the commoditization and romanticization of the ethnic Other: the people are presented as ageless, timeless and exotic. In turn, this representation perpetuates the dichotomies evident in traditional advertising of the Other: civilized/uncivilized, modern/primitive, rich/poor (Dorsey et al, 2004; Pratt, 1992; Said, 1979, 1993; Santos, 2006).

Though the PeruTravels.net website contains fewer exoticizing adjectives (e.g. “magical” “amazing” “mystical”) than WASAI, it too portrays the local Peruvian people as faceless and nameless. As stated previously, this company offers two different ayahuasca tours with similar itineraries: one is located in the northern, Iquitos region of the Amazon (“Ayahuasca Tour in Iquitos”) and the other takes place in the southeastern region of Puerto Maldonado (“Ayahuasca Experience in the Peruvian Jungle”). Both tour

the majority of their day in modern clothing (e.g. jeans, t-shirts, and baseball hats) and only don their more traditional clothes when “performing” dances and selling handicrafts at their cultural center. This presentation of traditional clothing for tourist benefit has been addressed in the literature in reference to the Masai community in Africa and the commodification of that culture (Akama & Sterry, 2002).

descriptions are somewhat short in length and share common textual features.¹⁴⁷ While the focus of the tours is clearly participation in the ayahuasca ceremony, the text hardly mentions it at all, nor does it identify either the individual shaman or the community to which the shaman belongs. The lack of shaman attribution stands in sharp contrast to the identification of the flora and fauna seen on the tour. For example, the first line on the Iquitos itinerary states, “The ceremony starts at 10:00 pm. and it is directed by the master shaman who takes a sit with the participants making a circle.” The next mention of the shaman is found in the plan for “Day 01”: “After observing the Amazonian Sunset, we will take a night boat ride in the Yanamono Lagoons. We’ll enjoy the magical sounds of the jungle. Meet with a Shaman who will explain the Ayahuasca Ceremony.”

Given the stated focus of the tour, it appears somewhat odd to provide a name for the “lagoons” visited but not the shaman.¹⁴⁸ Due to this lack of attribution for the shaman who performs the ayahuasca ceremony, PeruTravels.net perpetuates the presentation of local people as faceless and nameless, rendering them as the ahistoric Other – instrumental to the ayahuasca tour organization, but not worth individual identification (Fairclough, 2003).

¹⁴⁷ Only the latter page displays a photo: this small color photo depicts two, smiling, Caucasian looking women in visors, disembarking from a canoe. Unlike the individually brokered websites, neither PeruTravels.net nor WASAI show pictures of the shamans from whom the tourist will receive the ayahuasca.

¹⁴⁸ This naming of Amazonian fauna is even more evident in a line from Day 02 which provides both the common and scientific name for the pink dolphins: “During the journey we will make a stop to observe the shy pink dolphins (*Inia Geoffrensis*) which are found only in the Amazon River.”

The description of the nameless shaman is almost identical on the Puerto Maldonado itinerary. This introductory paragraph states, “Our master shamans are the best in the Amazon.” However, there is no mention of the shaman again until “Day 02:” “After lunch, there will be an orientation chat with the master shaman to assure the effectiveness of the work he will carry out...The master shaman will guide you through a full spiritual cleansing and purification that will last until past midnight.” Again, though the shaman is not identified by name, nor the ceremony described in any further detail, there is a significant amount of text devoted to the exotic animals one may see while on the tour. Specifically, “Day 01” consists of a trip to “Monkey Island:”

During your hike through the island you will observe extraordinary scenery and lively flora that shelters a tremendous variety of monkeys in their natural habitat, such as the Black Spider Monkey, Capuchin Monkey, Tamarins, Squirrel Monkey, and the South American Coati...”

PeruTravels.net’s tendency to provide names for the flora and fauna, but not the people of the Amazon resembles the exoticizing strategies and the exclusion of the locals found on the Blue Morpho website.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the PeruTravels.net’s Iquitos tour lists both a trip to visit the “Yagua Village on the Momon River” as well as a “Full day in a riverside town”. In this unidentified town, the tourist will “be able to the see the unique way of life of the people who live in this community.” While one could posit that this description

¹⁴⁹ Though Blue Morpho lists over one hundred names of plant species on its site, there is no mention of the community in which or near which the tours function.

harbors neither a tone of coercion nor conflict, the namelessness of the community, the ‘riverside town’ and the subsequent invisibility of the local people are a good example Pratt’s framework regarding ‘relations of ruling’ within the “contact zone” discussed earlier.¹⁵⁰ This example also resonates with Pratt’s (1992) concept of the “anti-conquest,” defined by her as:

strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert their European hegemony...The main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the “seeing-man”...he whose eyes passively look out and possess. (p. 7)

This exoticizing discourse represents the “imperial” vision of the tourists, for they are encouraged to “see” the local people, not meet, nor interact, nor share a meal with ‘them’ (e.g. interactions commonly understood in the Western world as symbolic of equality and amity). Finally, referring to the local peoples’ way of life as “unique” serves to further marginalize and primitize these locals, situating them in what Li (2006) calls the “myth of pure primordiality,” whereby the Western [intellectual] fears that the ‘uniqueness’ or ‘difference’ [of these ... tribes] will vanish into a homogenous Western modernity (Li, 2006, p. 229). Therefore, the analysis conducted here informs my understanding of ayahuasca tourism as a (potentially) culturally imperialistic activity; one in which the ayahuasca tourist is removed from the local people, kept at a (safe) distance, encouraged

¹⁵⁰ Pratt describes the “contact zone” as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (p. 4). See also Foucault (2002) for a more detailed discussion of the discursive power in “naming”.

to “see” the Other, but not to “know.” These findings provide much evidence for and contributions to my theorization of spiritual tourism as a (potentially) neocolonial phenomenon.

With the exception of the Blue Morpho Tours website,¹⁵¹ all three of the individually brokered sites provide some contextual information for the shamans and/or the community with whom the tour interacts. El Tigre website, for instance, provides a significant amount of text identifying and discussing the qualifications of its Peruvian shaman, “Don Rober is a superbly gifted Lamista ayahuasquero curandero. He is a natural *maestro* (teacher) and native taught, whose knowledge has been passed down through many generations of indigenous Amazon jungle healers.” Note, both Rober’s name and ethnicity are listed. In other sections of the website, it is clear that retreat participants are encouraged to interact with the local people, as opposed to simply seeing them or having contacts with them, as evidenced on the previous two websites (WASAI and PeruTravels.net).¹⁵² This call for activities like “trading” and participating in “instructional activities” suggests that the tourist will not only interact with the local indigenous communities, but do so in relations a bit more equal than simply “watching” a performance or purchasing handicrafts. Activities which promote the equal exchange of

¹⁵¹ While the Blue Morpho site provides names for the shamans they work with there is a conspicuous lack of identifying information regarding the local community involved with this tour company (as discussed in Chapter Three).

¹⁵² Some examples from the El Tigre Journeys website include: “Friendship, trading and instructional visits with neighboring indigenous Bora, Yagua and Huitoto people” and Lawyer “coordinates activities and programs with our indigenous neighbors.”

ideas between tourist and local and provide the native host an opportunity to share his/her skills, knowledge and traditions with the foreigners assist in challenging assumptions of superiority (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Dorsey et al, 2004).¹⁵³

Although the El Tigre Journeys website identifies the local shaman with whom it works and provides some examples of equality between the tourist and the local, it also contains text which reflects these exoticizing tropes.¹⁵⁴ For example, the Yagua family group is depicted as ahistoric, frozen in time and only recently connected to the modern world. These representations serve to maintain and reinforce the superiority of the tourist as modern and civilized and the local indigenous community as backward or primitive (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 6; Santos, 2006).

Similarly, the El Mundo Magico site also identifies the shaman(s) and the community with whom they work, yet contain exoticizing discourse as well¹⁵⁵. However, the exotification process here is characterized by the pervasive image of the native local

¹⁵³ Activities such as these demonstrate that all valuable knowledge and skills do not necessarily flow from the “more advanced” West to the “less advanced” Rest (Caton & Santos, 2009, p. 201).

¹⁵⁴ Both the indigenous Bora and Yagua people are depicted as cute, shy and/or friendly (i.e the “smiling native” (Trask, 1999). As discussed in Chapter two, the Bora are: “ready to perform their rarely witnessed” ceremony just for the tourist.

¹⁵⁵ Though beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that, in addition to the Shipibo, the “Q’ero” people are identified on this site, on the page that promotes Shamanic Journeys in the Andes. Here too are elements of the exotic discourse: “...the Q’eros are among all Andean indigenous people the ones who have kept almost unchanged through the centuries their ancient knowledge and traditions.” Words such as “unchanged” and “ancient” promote the concept of the native people as ahistoric and primitive.

as the “smiling, gracious native host” (Trask, 1999). On the one hand, the subtitle of the Shamanic Journeys in the Amazon page reads, “Traditional Shipibo Indigenous Shamanic Center” – identifying both the community members and the type of shamanism practiced. Additionally, this page contains a large color photo of a shaman, dressed in traditional Shipibo attire with a tagline “Shipibo Master Shaman Don Alfredo...”¹⁵⁶ Even more explicitly, the site informs, “All the people who run the centre are from the Shipibo-Conibo ethnic group...” On the other hand, though this site contains the fewest instances of exotification (comparatively), it perpetuates the *Orientalism* trope of the “gracious native host” (Said, 1979; Trask, 1999) through the provision of the remainder of this same quote: “All the people who run the centre are from the Shipibo-Conibo ethnic group and are renown[ed] for their great sense of hospitality and kindness.”

Echoing Trask (1999), Caton and Santos (2009) argue that through the depiction of the smiling native full of hospitality and welcome one can “mask[s] the hardships that residents of poorer countries face and ignore their complexity as human beings” (p. 200). This common representation of native people as “warm and friendly, without a care in the world, happily waiting to serve Western tourists” (ibid) is reinforced by the second tourist testimonial listed on the El Mundo Magico’s “Testimonials” page:

This entire experience was in a word magic. It is so rare these days that people welcome other[s] into their families. We (my new wife and I) will forever treasure the

¹⁵⁶ It is important to repeat here that the El Mundo Magico website is one of the few to show native people in modern clothing in addition to photos of the shamans in traditional garb. This more accurate portrayal of native life refutes the “primitive” picture present so often in tourism advertising (Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003).

hospitality, generosity, and sheer warmth of Jose' and his magnificent family. (Daniel B. and Lizette N., South Africa).

Another testimonial reflects not only this native family's generosity, but also the power differential inherent in the "hospitality" provided (i.e. Pratt's 1992 "relations of ruling"), "Onanyan Shobo is the Real McCoy. Found by chance on the internet, it was everything I expected and more. A true indigenous retreat, owned and operated by a lovely Shipibo family that catered to our every whim" (J.B. Santo Domingo). The inclusion of testimonials which address both the authenticity of the experience, as well as the satisfaction of the customer, reflect the incorporation of the Corporate Discourse here as well: not only will you experience the "Real McCoy", you will do so while your "every whim" is "catered to." Additionally, this text illustrates Pratt's (1992) concept of the *anti-conquest* whereby the tourists herald the virtues of their hosts, while at the same time asserting their hegemony: their right to be catered to by native people. Thus, though the El Mundo Magico website offers the most description and inclusion of the native community within which the retreats take place, it too, contains examples of common, exoticizing tropes in the advertising of native peoples.

Similarly, the Sacred Peru Adventures site provides both identification of the shamans with whom they work and instances of exoticification. As mentioned earlier, S.P.A. is the only company examined herein to employ female shamans.¹⁵⁷¹⁵⁸ As stated,

¹⁵⁷ Note, they are the only company within this research project. As explained previously, there exists at least one other ayahuasca retreat center that works with female, Shipibo shamans.

this company includes only the racial/ethnic background of the shamans; it does not list the individual names of the shamans themselves. Though the site provides a photo of the shamans, no other identifying information is provided, rendering them a general category of “shamans” instead of a specific group of individuals with agency and power within the company (Fairclough, 2003).

Fairclough (2003) argues that this lack of attribution is a discursive feature within new capitalism, wherein social actors are largely presented with limited agency, as functional beings within the larger processes of the organization: “Impersonal representation of social actors can dehumanize social actors, take the focus away from them as people, represent them...instrumentally or structurally as elements of organization structures and processes. The opposite extreme to impersonalization is naming – representing individuals by name” (p. 150).¹⁵⁹ The lack of contextualization is one form of exoticizing the local – it does not appear important to describe the local Peruvian people with whom the tourists will interact, rather, large amounts of text are devoted instead to the ayahuasca and reasons for using the “sacred power plants.”

¹⁵⁸ Specifically, the tourist may work with “8 elder, female Shipibo ayahuasca healers, referred to as Maestras. These shamans “were tribal healers from various villages near Pucallpa, along the Ucayali River”, prior to their work with Sacred Peru Adventures.

¹⁵⁹ While Fairclough’s concern regarding the power to name or render a social actor anonymous is not new (see Foucault, 1980, 2002), the frequency with which these discursive devices occur, reflecting the corporatization and commodification of everyday life, is a specific feature of new capitalism (Fairclough, 2003). Additionally, these relations of power and domination “include not only capitalist relations between social classes but also...racial and colonial relations, which are diffused across the diverse practices of society” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 24). The presence of foreign brokers in the spiritual tourism industry represents one such social practice.

In addition to the text, the lack of contextualization for the Amazonian people and place is present in the website images as well. From the “12 day Ayahuasca Retreat” itinerary and program details page, one can click on a link to a photos page, displaying snapshots from the “February 2009” retreat. Of the 57, high quality (1” x 2”) color photos on this page, only six of these include Peruvian locals (not counting the photos of the shamans). Of these six photos, three are of local men either providing a service to the tourists (e.g. helping tourists off the boat) or appearing peripheral to the action (e.g. standing behind the tourists, sitting in the back of the boat behind the tourists). One photo shows a shirtless man attending to a pot of ayahuasca boiling ayahuasca (perhaps the male shaman, though it is impossible to tell, as the photos have no descriptors). One photo depicts two Peruvian men standing side by side, smiling and posing for the camera (one of whom appears to be the shaman, due to his traditional attire). The final image is the only one which depicts a local Peruvian (who does not appear to be a shaman) interacting with a tourist on somewhat equal terms – the two appear to be having a conversation and are facing each other, not the camera.

The omission of local Peruvians within this cache of 57 retreat photos becomes even more significant when juxtaposed with the much more frequent display of pictures containing either Amazonian flora/fauna or the retreat center and its maloca;¹⁶⁰ 23 photos depicting rivers, trees, and lodging are included – occurring almost four times more often

¹⁶⁰ The maloca is the ceremonial house or center where the ayahuasca ceremonies typically take place. Displaying a photo of the maloca was a common feature among the individually brokered websites. No such photos were located on WASAI or PeruTravels.net.

than photos containing local Peruvian people.¹⁶¹ More importantly, there are only 11 photos of the shamans on this page, portrayed only in their traditional, Shipibo pattern clothing; less than half of the amount of photos showcasing the retreat lodgings or environment.¹⁶² Again this exclusion of both local people and the lack of identification when they are present represent the Exotic Discourse described herein. Such strategies perpetuate the marginalization of those from whom the ayahuasca ceremony originates – pushing the local people to the periphery in this process of appropriation and commodification of culture.

¹⁶¹ This emphasis on the physical depiction of the tour lodge and locale is not unusual among the ayahuasca tour websites. Many of the tours devoted a significant amount of text/images in their description of the facilities. Specifically, Blue Morpho describes its accommodations as: “The bathrooms are complete with tile floors and are divided into three sections (flush toilets, showers, and sinks). Plumbed with running water and high water pressure makes for a great shower. Bathrooms are located in the main house, ceremonial house and bungalows.” These lengthy descriptions are accompanied with high quality photos, assuring the tourist that the accommodations are “comfortable” (Garfinkel 2006). Clearly, there is a stark contrast between the tourist’s participation in the “sacred, visionary [ayahuasca] journey” and his/her demand for “tiled bathrooms” with “high water pressure” showers. This juxtaposition was seen on other sights as well including the toilets, showers and hot water listed on the El Tigre Journeys. While the PeruTravels.net offered no accommodation information aside from stating that one stays in “the lodge”, it is the WASAI company that provided the most information and images regarding the lodging available. The amenities on this site included, but were not limited to: Internet access, radio, laundry, restaurant, a refrigerator in room, color T.V. and the piece d’ resistance, the swimming pool with pool-side bar.

In this juxtaposition lies the crux of Pratt’s (1992) notion of *anti-conquest*. One could argue that the monied, ayahuasca tourist is interested in temporarily “joining” with the local people, of participating in their sacred rituals, but that that is the extent of the “joining”- it stops when the ceremony stops. The tourist targeted in these websites is one who is attracted by the running water in the bathroom, the mosquito-netted bed, the private room, the one who wishes to return to the comforts of the centre; not the *Lonely Planet* backpacker, wanting to commune with nature and her people (Garfinkel 2006).

¹⁶² Photos of shamans comprise only 19% of the total pictures included.

A second way in which the photos contribute to the Exotic Discourse is evident in the number and type of photos which include the tourists. 21 photos portray (primarily) Caucasian tourists, dressed in modern (Western) clothing, engaged in a variety of activities both with and without shamans. Where the tourists are shown as engaged with the shamans, photos typically depict the tourist “receiving” something: a face painting, a massage, a water bath. No pictures depict any sort of mutual activity between either the tourist and the shaman or the tourist and the local. Further, there are no candid shots of such interaction between tourist and shaman, no free, non-scripted interchanges. Caton & Santos (2009) warn against the reliance of brokers to depict such scenes of servitude, no matter how subtle, as these images reinforce the “master-servant” binary characteristic of colonist discourse (p. 201). Finally, the photos of tourists by themselves portray them largely in transport scenarios (e.g. on a bus, on a boat, on a walk) or gathered round a table, possibly post-meal, resting. The few photos of tourists alone or with one other person depict the tourist posing for the camera and smiling. There are no photos of tourists engaged in any kind of playful or productive activity with one another and there are very few candid shots. This exclusion reflects the broker’s power to dictate how each actor is portrayed and the desire to portray the shamans in service and the tourists at rest, thus reinforcing the binaries between “host/guest, primitive/advanced, master/servant”(Caton & Santos, 2009; Echtner & Prasad, 2003) and, ultimately, between “us” and “them” (Said, 1979).

CONCLUSION

Information gathered during the ethnographic portion of this dissertation suggests that anywhere from 50-90% of all ayahuasca tourist traffic in Iquitos, Peru is generated by the tourist's exposure to the company's website.¹⁶³ The majority of all those interviewed stated that they believed "the media" (specifically "the Internet") was the most significant factor related to the increase in foreign interest in and pursuit of ayahuasca in the region¹⁶⁴. Additionally, those brokers (and/or shamans) who stated they had a website also reported a significantly larger client base than those without¹⁶⁵.

Key findings from both the single site study and the multi-site study suggest that of the six most frequently visited ayahuasca tour websites (between 2006-2009) the majority were brokered by foreign born, Caucasian men who fell "in love" with the shamanic practices, people and place of the Peruvian Amazon; three were owned by

¹⁶³ According to the brokers and shamans interviewed in the study, "Saw us on the website" and "word of mouth" were listed as the top two ways in which ayahuasca tourists learned about, and then chose, a particular tour/retreat. One company (co-owned by an American and Peruvian) reported that nearly 90% of all their ayahuasca tourism "came through the website." Of this 90%, all but 10% of those tourists drank ayahuasca during their stay at this lodge.

¹⁶⁴ People interviewed included tour brokers, shamans, local indigenous and mestizo community members, American ex-patriot business owners, Peruvian professionals (i.e. two medical doctors and an ethnobotanist) and tourists themselves.

¹⁶⁵ This includes those who maintained their own websites and/or worked for a company who had a website. These individuals reported some sort of presence on the Internet and attributed their success to this presence. Perhaps not surprisingly, these companies/individuals charged more for their services and frequently offered more comfortable accommodations. A more detailed discussion on this topic will be included in the following chapters.

Americans and one was a joint venture between an Italian man and several members of a Shipibo family. The remaining two tours in the study were “Peruvian tour operators” with no single founder/owner listed.¹⁶⁶ As hypothesized, he who brokered the company greatly impacted the predominant discourse(s) and/or images on the website. For example, while all of the sites incorporated some elements from each of the three primary discourses (the Corporate, New Age and Exotic Discourses) the two Peruvian sites contained the least amount of New Age language/images and about equal amounts of Corporate and Exotic languages/images. These companies offered a wide variety of sight-seeing, adventure and educational tours and advertised their ayahuasca tours in the same manner as these other tours. Because the promotion of the ayahuasca ceremony was not the focus of either company, but simply another possible experience among a range of experiences, the New Age discourse exalting the spiritually transformative and life altering power of ayahuasca was largely absent from these sites. As discussed at length previously, the New Age Discourse was featured predominantly on the individually brokered sites and contained many similarities to Wernitznig’s (2003) discussion of “white shamans.”

Though the Peruvian sites did not appear to exoticize either the ayahuasca or flora and fauna of the Amazon to the same extent as the foreign brokered sites, these tour brokers exoticized the local people/shamans in a unique fashion. Neither company provided images or identification of the shamans with whom the tourist would drink the

¹⁶⁶ American owned sites included: Blue Morpho Tours, El Tigre Journeys and Sacred Peru Adventures. The jointly owned Italian/Shipibo site was El Mundo Magico. The two Peruvian owned sites were WASAI and PeruTravels.net.

ayahuasca. This information appeared as somewhat irrelevant on the Peruvian sites and stood in stark contrast to the highly detailed information provided on the individually brokered sites; three of these four sites provided large, high quality photos and names of the shaman(s) involved in the program¹⁶⁷. Additionally, all but one of these sites identified the local indigenous or mestizo communities with whom the tourist would interact.¹⁶⁸

Thus, while the New Age Discourse was largely present on the individually brokered sites and absent from the Peruvian websites, examples of the Exotic Discourse varied among the sites, differentiated primarily by the *focus* of the exoticizing language and/or images. The Peruvian operators presented the shaman as a nameless, faceless entity, (instrumental to the tour, but not worth being named), while the individual brokers provided much more description regarding the shamans, yet often omitted salient information on the historical, socio-cultural, economic and political features of the “place” in which their tours operated. Three of the four individually brokered sites contained almost no links or additional data on the city of Iquitos, the flora, fauna or people of the Amazon, or the country of Peru.¹⁶⁹ This oversight is even more remarkable

¹⁶⁷ Sacred Peru Adventures provided the shamans’ photo and identified their ethnicity, but did not include names.

¹⁶⁸ As discussed at length in chapter three, the Blue Morpho Tours website provided almost no identifying information on the local community near the center.

¹⁶⁹ Only the jointly brokered company, El Mundo Magico, provided contextual links and data regarding the Amazon and its people.

in light of the immense amount of website space devoted to the naming of medicinal plants (i.e. usually both the common and scientific name), as well as the abundant number of photos which rarely included local people, yet frequently displayed exotic images (e.g. jungle animals, climbing ayahuasca vines, moody sunsets over the river, etc.).¹⁷⁰

Both of these processes of exoticization (i.e. the lack of shaman identification – on the Peruvian sites and the lack of information on the Peruvian Amazon – on the individually brokered sites) present the Amazonian people and the place as ahistoric, unchanging, untouched and primitive. Such a narrow representation distances the ayahuasca tourist from the rich historical, cultural context in which the tours take place, reinforcing the “host/guest – local/tourist” binary in terms of primitive/advanced, uncivilized/civilized, poor/rich (Caton & Santos, 2009; Cohen, 1988; Dorsey et al, 2004; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Smith, 1999). This removal of Amazonian people and place from their proper context serves to commodify the ayahuasca by severing it from its roots, appropriating it and making it a product more easily sold on the spiritual tourism market.

In sum, the textual and visual analysis presented herein reveals that all six of the ayahuasca tour websites in the study contained common discursive elements used to advertise and market their tours. These words, phrases and images clustered together to form the three main themes (or discourses) that I term the Corporate, New Age and

¹⁷⁰ Three of the four individually brokered sites included extensive lists of Amazonian ethnobotanicals.

Exotic Discourses. Further, the frequency and variation in the utilization of these discourses differed greatly among the sites, dependent on the tour broker – specifically whether or not the tour was facilitated by a foreign born, individual broker, a jointly owned/brokered venture or a locally managed, Peruvian tour operator. Among those managed by individual brokers, the broker’s presentation of himself and his role (in the ayahuasca experience advertised) closely mirrored both the textual and visual elements included on his website, as well as the predominant discourses incorporated.¹⁷¹

Finally, all of the websites contained discursive and visual elements reflective of the broader themes of cultural imperialism (e.g. the appropriation and commodification of culture) present in previous studies of tourism advertising. This last finding is especially troubling, given that these tours are couched in an extremely positive, almost holy, light: participation in the ayahuasca ceremony is touted as an opportunity for individual growth, transformation and redemption, while at the same time professing to provide a path to broader societal change and, eventually, global peace.¹⁷² Unfortunately, upon further scrutiny, this cheerful, hopeful discourse fails to maintain its shape and crumbles beneath the weight of the three primary discourses examined herein. These discourses reflect the culturally imperialistic strategies of representation identified by

¹⁷¹ Thus, the brokers who used less exotic language when referring to themselves, also had less exotic images on the site and fewer examples of the New Age Discourse throughout. The opposite extreme can be seen in the case of the El Tigre Journeys’ site. For example, El Tigre Journeys’ Howard Lawler refers to himself as “Don Choque Chinchay”, a great maestro and, in turn, his site contains the most esoteric images and the largest amount of text devoted to the New Age discourse out of all of the sites.

¹⁷² See the El Tigre Journeys website for the most pervasive use of this language.

Pratt (1992) as “anti-conquest” – in this case, that of the broker securing his innocence (via the provision of these spiritual, healing services) while asserting his hegemony (by charging up to \$2500 for a 12 day retreat, in a region where the average wage is six dollars a day). The tremendous discrepancy between the foreign broker’s fee and the local worker’s wage reflects the commodification of indigenous spirituality that Smith (1999) calls “one of the ten forms of imperialism that still exist” (p. 102). Specifically naming those involved in New Age activities, Smith argues that “Despite protestations that spirituality is an experience through which non-indigenous people aim to help people, it is clearly a profitable experience” (ibid).

I conclude this phase of my research by suggesting that the discourse of spiritual tourism reflects the broader, more pervasive and enduring discourses of cultural imperialism (specifically as a function of cultural appropriation and commodification), present throughout the critical cultural tourism literature. As a result of this analysis, I argue that spiritual tourism can be theorized best as a form of postmodern tourism, wherein the discourses of consumerism and commodification are coupled with a quest for the ethnic Other, situated in the current stage of economic and cultural globalization.

In the following chapters, I assess the veracity of my theoretical framework by comparing the findings from this discourse analysis to that of my ethnographic fieldwork in Iquitos, Peru. Such a comparison provides an innovative and unique contribution to the tourism literature, as there appear to be no studies which combine an examination of both the neocolonial and socio-economic discourses of tourism with a comprehensive ethnography of how these discourses manifest in the lived experiences of tourists, brokers

and the local people with whom the tourists intersect (Cohen, 2004). Thus, my work extends the theorizing of spiritual tourism while bridging an important gap in the tourism research.

Chapter 5

The “Contact Zone”: Iquitos as the Epicenter of Ayahuasca Tourism

Until this point, ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos, Peru has been examined “virtually”, through a detailed, multilevel critical discourse and visual analyses of ayahuasca tour websites. Findings from these analyses suggest that ayahuasca tours advertised online share certain features such as a tendency to rely on both Corporate and New Age language to market the tours and to exoticize the ayahuasca plant/ceremony, as well as the Amazon region and the local people (largely absent from the websites). Keeping in mind this discourse analysis, I turn now to the ethnographic portion of my research, focusing specifically on an examination of ayahuasca tourism “on the ground.”

It is the goal of this chapter to provide a current, clear and comprehensive picture of ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos, one that is both more illustrative and integrated than its predecessors. Throughout the work, I assess the presence of the three main discourses examined in the previous chapters. I highlight those instances where the Corporate, New Age and/or Exotic discourse(s) appear to manifest in the lived experiences of the ayahuasca tourist and/or of those with whom he/she intersects. Through a detailed analysis of the tourists (including not only their demographics, but their motivations, expectations and experiences as well), I hope to shed light on the changing face and shape of this increasingly popular phenomenon.

In this chapter, therefore, I provide an overview of the ethnographic portion of my dissertation, focusing primarily on the tourists in the study.¹⁷³ I begin with a description of Iquitos, the main hub of ayahuasca activity for foreigners. This discussion includes a concise history of the region, specifically as it relates to the European exploitation of the Amazon and its people. I analyze briefly the “boom and bust” cycles leading to the development of Iquitos first as a jungle town, then as an urban city; a place characterized throughout by periods of intense wealth and equally intense poverty. This historical overview is provided to contextualize the space within which ayahuasca tourism currently operates: to best illustrate how this tourism fits within the ongoing pattern of foreign interest in and exploitation of Peruvian resources.

After positioning this phenomenon in its historical context, I then situate it theoretically within the “Contact Zone” (Pratt, 1992). Interpreting the ‘contact zone’ as a social space where disparate cultures meet (e.g. tourist/local) in relations of asymmetrical power, I argue that the structure of this tourism industry reifies the subjugation of local people, in spite of its New Age, somewhat benign discourse of “healing” and “transformation.” Specifically, by limiting the capacity of the tourist’s interaction with the local people to that of servitude, ayahuasca tourism has the potential to maintain the imperialistic binaries between “us/them” “master/servant” (Caton & Santos, 2009; Said, 1979).

¹⁷³ While this chapter reflects data gathered during interviews with shamans and other locals, the focus here is on the tourists themselves. In chapter six I provide a fuller analysis of the Peruvian perspectives of this phenomenon. That chapter discusses the themes, patterns and disjunctures which arose from this interview data.

Upon situating ayahuasca tourism both historically and theoretically, I then present demographic data on general tourism trends in Iquitos – noting, for example, the 25% rise in all tourism in the Loreto Department between 2007 and 2008 and the preponderance of American and European tourists in the region.¹⁷⁴ This information is included to contextualize ayahuasca tourism within the Amazon, examining it as a subset of broader touristic trends. Next, I discuss briefly the use of the term “ayahuasca tourism” and the ways in which it has become contested. Then, I define and describe the two primary reasons given by informants for the recent increase in ayahuasca tourism in/around Iquitos: ayahuasca’s increasing presence on the Internet and the recently implemented annual Shamanism Conferences, initiated and organized by American expat, Alan Shoemaker, in 2005.¹⁷⁵

Drawing from the previous literature on ayahuasca tourist motivation (primarily that of Dobkin de Rios, 1994 and Winkelman, 2005), I next address the issue of motivation as revealed in my research, specifically as a function of the “ayahuasca tourist

¹⁷⁴ There was an especially large gap between American/European tourists and all other visitors to Loreto during the study period of June and July 2009. All demographic data was garnered through an interview with staff at the DIRECTURA office; the *Dirección Regional de Comercio Exterior y Turismo y Artesanía* (Regional Directors of Exterior Commerce, Tourism and Craftsmanship) is the regional regulatory agency which oversees the certification of “touristic establishments.”

¹⁷⁵ Details on Shoemaker’s 2010 conference can be found here: <http://www.soga-del-alma.org>. The conference is described on the website as follows: For the sixth year in a row, Gracia Ethnobotanics is pleased to have Soga Del Alma (Spanish for Vine of the Soul) hosting the 6th International Amazonian Shamanism Conference: “Grace and Madness”, which will allow people from all over the World to meet in the Peruvian Amazon, meet different types of curanderos (shamans) and learn more about how Shamanism is practiced and plants revered there.

typology” developed and discussed herein.¹⁷⁶ Key findings indicate that there are three primary routes through which foreign tourists access ayahuasca. The first route “Type I” tourism reflects those tourists most likely to book and attend an ayahuasca tour as described in the previous two chapters: these tourists are looking to “specialize in shamanism” and travel to Peru with the primary objective to drink ayahuasca in a structured, organized and comfortable setting. Type I tourists reflect well those identified by Winkelman (2005); they are motivated by primarily by spiritual growth and/or transformation and not hedonistic pursuits (Dobkin de Rios, 2005). Type II tourists are those searching for their “shamanism on the side”; content to experience an ayahuasca ceremony as an “adjunct” to their organized eco- or adventure tour. Tourists in this group typically drink ayahuasca only once or twice, through the services of a “contracted” shaman; in contrast to the Type I tourists, drinking ayahuasca is not the primary or sole reason for traveling to Peru. Motivations for participation in an ayahuasca ceremony for tourists in this group ranged from hedonistic to spiritually seeking.

Finally, tourists in the Type III category are those who obtain their “shamanism on the street.” These tourists engage in ayahuasca drinking on an individual basis, with the shaman being located via word of mouth or shamanic advertising in/around Iquitos. Type III tourists rarely drink ayahuasca as a member of any organized tour, nor is their principal reason for traveling to Peru to ingest the ayahuasca; it is treated as one activity on a list of activities to engage in while touring the Amazon. This type of tourist appears

¹⁷⁶ In these sections I specifically compare my results to those of earlier studies (Dobkin de Rios, 1994, 2008; Kristensen in Grunwell, 1998; Rumrill, 2005; Winkelman, 2005).

to best fit Dobkin de Rios' (1994) characterization of ayahuasca tourists as "drug tourists" – those seeking the hallucinogenic tea for hedonistic, not spiritual, reasons.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, due to their casual, informal and spontaneous approach to drinking ayahuasca, this group is at the highest risk of experiencing the "dangers" associated with the increased marketization of ayahuasca. These dangers include, but are not limited to, an increased potential for being conned, poisoned and/or sexually assaulted by "false shamans" (Dobkin de Rios, 2004) who have arisen in response to this growing market demand.

In sum, these findings indicate that the route by which ayahuasca tourists seek and attain ayahuasca largely reflects tourist motivation and to a lesser extent, tourist demographics. Additionally, this typology informs our understanding of the ways in which ayahuasca is commodified and whether (and how) tourists experience meaningful, equitable interactions with local people. Finally, as will be illustrated more fully in the next chapter, each of these types of tourism results in differing "benefits and burdens" for local people. Thus, a detailed analysis of these findings is discussed below.

¹⁷⁷ However, due to their lack of formal participation in organized settings, these tourists are the most difficult to research, making a comprehensive analysis of this group quite challenging and an area for further investigation.

IQUITOS: CAPTIAL CITY OF THE PERUVIAN RAINFOREST¹⁷⁸

Distinguished by its uniqueness as the largest city in the world inaccessible by road, the only way into or out of Iquitos is by air or water. From the airport, a tourist must make his/her way into the city either in a public *motocarro* or a private mini-van.¹⁷⁹ From this point, the ayahausca tourist experience may take a number of different paths – the tourist can either continue directly on to their pre-arranged tour lodge, located far from the city center (via a private speedboat down river) or they can stay in Iquitos, searching for ayahuasca from there.¹⁸⁰ Though often a harrowing ride for the uninitiated, most people arrive in the bustling downtown tourist zone quickly and safely. The *Plaza de Armas* serves as the central point for the majority of touristic activities in this Peruvian

¹⁷⁸ Though a comprehensive history of Iquitos is beyond the scope of this work, I will provide a brief overview of the key socio-cultural and economic developments of the region in order to best situate the context within which ayahuasca tourism takes place.

¹⁷⁹ *Motocarros* or “mototaxis” are the Iquitos version of a taxi. Similar to an Asian rickshaw, the *motocarro* is a three-wheeled vehicle – with a carriage or open-air seating area built on top of a motorcycle. Given the lack of highway systems and automobile plants, one must ship a car by plane or boat – both options costing far too much for the average Peruvian. Because of this, there are very few cars or trucks in the Iquitos region; vehicles such as mini-vans are often owned by tourist agencies or individual tour brokers and are widely considered as a symbol of wealth.

¹⁸⁰ The tourist who stays in Iquitos, but is interested in ayahuasca, has two main options: look for a “shaman on the street” or book a tour with one of the local agencies downtown who will connect the tourist to a shaman, typically as an adjunct service. Both of these activities will be discussed shortly – when I present my “ayahuasca tourist typology”.

port city. Amid a menagerie of internet cafes, souvenir shops and assorted restaurants,¹⁸¹ it is still quite easy to picture Iquitos in its heyday. The few short blocks from the Plaza to the *malécon* (boardwalk) contain the famed *Casa de Fierro* or “Iron House”¹⁸² as well as many elaborately decorated mansions, relics of the wealth and opulence of 19th century “rubber boom.”

Sitting on the banks of the Itaya River¹⁸³ and surrounded by 2, 500 miles of dense jungle, Iquitos is one of the most isolated major cities in the South America. With a population of nearly 400,000,¹⁸⁴ it serves as the capital of both the Maynas Province and the Department of Loreto. The Amazon region was reportedly first “discovered” in 1542 by one of Francisco Pizarro’s units in search of gold.¹⁸⁵ Finding no gold and plagued by illnesses, these Spaniards returned home, halting foreign economic and merchant activity in the region for almost three hundred years. However, this lack of commercial interest in

¹⁸¹ Restaurants in this area are owned both by locals and foreigners (including two owned by American expats). The majority of downtown restaurants are much more expensive than other eateries in the city, as they cater primarily to tourists.

¹⁸² Designed by French architect Gustave Eiffel (of Eiffel tower fame), this structure was purchased by a rubber baron at the International Exposition of Paris in 1889. Once dismantled, it was brought in pieces to Iquitos. Its heavy metal sheets were said to be carried by hundreds of men through the jungle, to be assembled downtown in 1890.

¹⁸³ Iquitos is 125km downstream from the Ucayali and Marañón rivers -the two main headwaters of the Amazon River.

¹⁸⁴ Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI). 2007. *Censos Nacionales 2005: X de Población y V de Vivienda*. [online] URL: <http://www.inei.gob.pe/>.

¹⁸⁵ Spanish “Conquistador” Francisco Pizarro initiated this expedition to the fabled “El Dorado” region. He later became the first Governor of colonial Peru (Lane, 2001).

the Amazon and its resources did not signal a reprieve from outside interference for the native people of Peru. Rather, Jesuit missionaries arrived shortly after Pizarro's failed expedition and quickly developed the system of *reducciones* – the forced settlement of native people from different tribes into large villages. Though the stated goal was to “convert the Indians,” some scholars argue that this mandated relocation was a means to control the locals, not save them (Luna, 1986, p. 26). Approximately 152 *reducciones* were said to have been developed by the Jesuits in the greater Amazonia region over the next 120 years (ibid).¹⁸⁶ The city of Iquitos began as one such “*reduccion*.” First located on the Nanay River, this area was called, “San Pablo de los Nepeñanos” but was eventually renamed “Iquitos Village” due to the preponderance of Iquitos natives in residence at the time. Founded in 1757, this Jesuit outpost nearly doubled in population between the first census recording in 1808 (pop: 81), and the second census of 1847 (pop: 150) (Lane, 2001; Luna, 1986). No historically significant events appeared to have been recorded until 1851 – a year that would leave an indelible mark on the region.

1851 was a pivotal year in Iquitos history, as it ushered in the signing of the Peruvian-Brazilian Agreement; a treaty which opened up free navigation to the Amazon River by both countries. This pact also solicited a truce between the two countries regarding “actual possession” of land and respect of boundaries, giving Peru leverage in

¹⁸⁶ The Jesuits were expelled from the region in 1767 and replaced for a short time by the Franciscan order. They remained only a short while longer, but were unable to exert any significant control or reign over the now larger department of Loreto (Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2000).

its territorial disputes with Ecuador and Columbia (Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2000).¹⁸⁷

This increased maritime activity was bolstered by the Peruvian government's creation of a naval base, purchase of British and American steamboats, exploration of the Amazon and its tributaries and increased European colonization (Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2000, p. 11-12). Ten years later, in large part due to its swift growth and firm establishment as the main Peruvian port along the Amazon, the Department of Loreto was created with Iquitos as its capital.

The rapid expansion of Iquitos' infrastructure, governmental integration and seafaring capacity led to what many consider to be the most crucial economic and cultural development in the region: the "rubber boom" of the late 1800s. Between 1851-1914, Peru exported rubber at an alarming pace, reaching its peak between 1870 -1900.¹⁸⁸ European entrepreneurs capitalized swiftly on the opportunity and, on the beaten and abused backs of enslaved indigenous workers, amassed an abundance of wealth in a relatively short time. As mentioned previously, these "Rubber Barons" constructed elaborate mansions in Iquitos with the majority of material imported from Europe, (examples of which still line the streets today). This architectural extravagance appeared even more extreme when compared to the poverty and inhumane treatment of the rubber

¹⁸⁷ See Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2000 for a more detailed discussion of the treaty and its economic ramifications.

¹⁸⁸ Actual years vary, depending on the source. See Lane (2001) and Santos-Granero & Barclay (2000) for more detailed discussion. The latter authors provide an especially useful perspective on the Peruvian State's role in the market and commerce activities during this time.

tappers themselves, the indigenous men entrapped in this emerging market. Somewhat fortunately, the rubber boom ended almost as quickly as it came. The two most commonly cited reasons for this demise are the development of rubber tree plantations in Malaysia (thanks to smuggled rubber tree seeds) which caused an over abundance in rubber supply and no further demand for Peruvian latex. The second reason is the advent of World War I (Lane, 2001). As might be expected in the case of European exploitation of less established regions, both the industry and the aftermath of the rubber era left inefaceable marks on the indigenous and (now growing) *mesitizo*¹⁸⁹ communities of Iquitos.

The boom and bust cycle of Iquitos continued once more in the 1960s, with the discovery of oil along the La Tigre River (Luna, 1986). Called “black gold” by some, the area again experienced an influx of foreigners, interested only in exploiting its natural resources. Again, low-income local Peruvian men became the primary labor force and experienced much suffering: most notably from the difficult, toxic work of oil extraction. Regardless of the harsh conditions, this newly developing industry provided employment and encouraged relocation to Iquitos. During this time, Iquitos experienced a dramatic demographic shift as intense immigration occurred; drawing those primarily from the rural areas of Loreto. The population of Iquitos more than quadrupled between 1961 and

¹⁸⁹ Though the word “mestizo” is often contested and variously defined, I follow Luna’s (1986) conceptualization of mestizo as a social and cultural term, rather than a racial one – noting that the mestizo people in my study are those who use Spanish as their primary language (i.e. they do not speak an indigenous language). Though many of my subjects self-identified as mestizo, this did not preclude their identification with their indigenous family ties: many discussed having some measure of indigenous heritage (e.g. a native grandfather or other relative) (p. 15).

1993 (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000, p. 286). Thus, the city's changing landscape included not only renewed foreign investment and extraction, but also a cultural shift, wherein the newly settled rural people, with their more traditional beliefs and practices, integrated and enriched the social fabric of this increasingly urban area (Luna, 1986).¹⁹⁰

In addition to oil, Iquitos' main exports currently include lumber, nuts, beer, rum, and camu-camu (fruit). Although Peru has achieved political independence and has somewhat aggressive trade policies, it continues to struggle with integration into the global economy. It is described as a relatively poor country in which socio-economic inequalities are significant (O'Hare and Barrett, 1999). It is in this context that I explore the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism.

As stated previously, I provide the historical framework above in order to position this tourism within its context of pervasive economic "boom and bust" cycles – to locate it within a region that is characterized by foreign domination, subjugation and exploitation of both natural and human resources. I argue that the contact zone of

¹⁹⁰ It is important to note here, that while the "oil boom", conceived as such, has largely past, the access to and extraction of oil reserves by foreign companies continues to be a serious and sometimes dangerous debate. In June 2009, during the course of my fieldwork, I witnessed several marches and protests, supporting the indigenous peoples' right to keep transnational businesses off of their lands. The most violent of these occurred on June 5, 2009 in the northern Amazonas town of Bagua (I was not involved in this particular protest). On this day, thousands of indigenous and non-indigenous protesters blocked highways to prevent extraction companies' access to their lands. The protestors denounced Peruvian President Alan Garcia's passage of up to 99 different neoliberal decrees; decrees that promoted the privatizing, selling and breaking up community land in the Amazon rainforest. This scene turned tragic as five indigenous and five mestizo protesters were killed, along with 23 police officers. It was reported that an additional 200 people were injured (though all numbers are refuted by police and protesters) (Bebbington, 2009).

ayahuasca tourism exists in a space within which local people are accustomed to a foreign presence – in both their material and spiritual lives. Be it through the forced labor at the hands of rubber barons or oil extractors, or the harsh, unwanted and unsolicited geographic and cosmological relocation caused by the missionaries, indigenous (and to a lesser extent mestizo) Peruvians have been relegated to a subservient place within the social and economic order of this jungle town. From this historical context, I now move to the theoretical context, placing ayahuasca tourism within the contact zone.

RESEARCHING THE CONTACT ZONE

As discussed previously, Mary Louise Pratt (1992) argues that from the mid 1700s forward, European economic and political expansion was intricately connected to, and bolstered by, European travel and exploration writing. She illustrates how these works created the “domestic subject” of Euro-imperialism and, in turn, legitimated the economic aspirations of expansion and empire (p. 4-5). Pratt (1992) defines the space in which these activities occur as the “contact zone:” “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (p. 6). Defined as such, this concept describes well Iquitos’ historical experience of European exploitation.¹⁹¹ However, it does not adequately portray the region as it is today. Iquitos’ socio-cultural and economic climate

¹⁹¹ This exploitation includes, but is not limited to: the forced resettlement of native people by the Jesuit missionaries, the enslavement of rubber tappers during the rubber boom, the post-boom debt-peonage system and the abusive labor practices of transnational oil companies.

is no longer characterized by overt displays of imperial coercion and conflict, but instead reflects more subtle forms of domination and subjugation (such as those advanced through neoliberal economic policies and processes of cultural globalization).¹⁹²

In her extended discussion of the contact zone, Pratt (1992) explains that the contact perspective:

emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travelees’ not in terms of separateness...but in terms of co-presence [and] interaction...often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (p.7)

These additional features more fully characterize the “contact zone” as I employ it in my work. Thus informed by Pratt (1992), I conceptualize the Iquitos region as the (physical representation of the) contact zone within which ayahuasca tourism occurs; it is the space where the ayahuasca tourist and the Peruvian local intersect, where their dissimilar cultures meet and from which their asymmetrical relations of power arise.

As discussed previously, this contact zone occurs as a function of its historical context wherein local people have been sporadically dominated and subjugated by foreigners, largely in response to economic booms. These “booms” have consisted of the

¹⁹² Neoliberal policy examples include, but are not limited to the Structural Adjustment Policies which lead to the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s and the newly designed free trade agreements which allow transnational access to and exploitation of the region’s natural resources (Bebbington, 2009) Examples of cultural globalization include the increased decompression of time and space (Harvey, 2003), as well as the explosion of the Internet, both of which contribute to the increase in ayahuasca tourism and the resultant appropriation and commodification of culture discussed throughout this work.

exploitation of natural resources, such as rubber and oil (and, more recently timber) from the Peruvian Amazon. Further, in conjunction with such booms have been periods of “bust” - in which either the abundance or attraction to such resources withered, leaving various communities dispersed throughout the region, with no foreseeable economic security. One implication of ayahuasca tourism occurring in this contact zone revolves around precisely this “boom and bust” cycle – around the propensity for foreigners to have a passing interest (and subsequent investment) in such “novel” experiences/resources. This tenuous relationship between foreign involvement in local economies characterizes the power imbalances of ayahuasca tourism and puts such commodified activities at risk of being abandon and/or forgotten once the activity is no longer of interest or deemed “valuable” (Akama & Sterry, 2002).

Still, since Iquitos is no longer perceived as a colonial context, marked by physical subjugation, this new contact zone should thus offer the potential for a more positive, respectful and equal exchange between tourist and local. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case. I provide two brief examples to illustrate the pervasive power imbalance occurring within the Iquitos contact zone. First, I reemphasize that among the limited studies on ayahuasca tourism, not one focuses on Peruvian residents – none include an extended analysis of how local people perceive this trend. Though two of the studies do include interviews with shamans (Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill, 2008; Rumrill, 2005), it is important to note that by virtue of their title and status, shamans are already among the most powerful people within the community. Thus, it is clear that the

research on ayahuasca tourism has, until now, privileged some voices and perspectives above others, perpetuating the power differentials within this contact zone.

A second example of such relations of power derives from my ethnographic fieldwork within the contact zone. As I will discuss in more detail shortly, the structure of the ayahuasca tourism industry itself greatly limits the tourist's opportunities to interact with local people in more equal and meaningful ways. Due to the increased amenities and resources of several ayahuasca tour companies, it is possible that the tourist will fly into and out of the Iquitos airport without meeting or speaking to more than five or six Peruvians during his/her week long stay.¹⁹³ Further, if the tourist does interact with a local, it will likely only be within a service-provision capacity (e.g. while the tourist is at the airport, in a taxi, in a canoe or getting their food served, dishes cleaned or clothes washed). Lastly, it is quite possible that the tourist does not even get to know the names of those who provide these services.¹⁹⁴ In these many ways, the structure of the industry manipulates the contact zone within which ayahuasca tourist and local meet, thereby preventing meaningful interaction and perpetuating the power imbalance between those who buy the services and those who provide them.

¹⁹³ As will be discussed in the section on "tourist typology", many ayahuasca tourists never spend more than an hour or two in the city of Iquitos during their visit to the Amazon.

¹⁹⁴ The two main exceptions are here are the names of the shaman (whose name the tourist likely learned from the Internet website) and the name (s) of the tour broker's relatives if they reside on site (e.g. his wife, children, etc). All of the Peruvian shamans in the study were married, though not all of these shamans lived at/near the tour location. Two of the gringo brokers/shamans were married (to local women) and both resided at their centers/homes.

As mentioned previously, the ethnographic portion of this dissertation was conducted in Iquitos, Peru over a seven week period (May – July 2009).¹⁹⁵ My unique research design included all of the stakeholders involved in ayahuasca tourism and drew heavily from the decolonizing methodologies and qualitative work of Smith (1999, 2005).¹⁹⁶ In addition to a handful of ayahuasca tourists,¹⁹⁷ the three primary categories of those interviewed are “Shamans”, “Local Community Members” and “Ayahuasca Tour Brokers.” Along with the tourists, these four groups represent the key stakeholders

¹⁹⁵ It is necessary to note here that the majority of this work was conducted with the aid and support of my Peruvian research assistant, Rodrigo. However, in order to present the data as clearly as possible and avoid confusion, I will refer to all research activities as though I had conducted them independently.

¹⁹⁶ Thus, my research techniques were chosen with an aim at doing the following: 1) providing indigenous and mestizo communities a tool to wage the battle of representation; 2) to create spaces for decolonizing; 3) to provide frameworks for hearing silence and listening to the voices of the silenced; and, 4) to analyze and make sense of complex and shifting experiences, identities and realities within the context of the broader research questions of the study (Smith, 2005, p.103)

¹⁹⁷ Tourists interviewed included one Swiss woman (in her mid 30s) involved in a large group ayahuasca retreat (consisting of predominantly European participants); two Australian post-graduate men (late 20s); one older English woman (early 50s); one French woman who was participating in her third ayahuasca, month-long retreat (mid-30s), and one young Israeli backpacker (in his mid 20s). Additional tourist data was gathered through an online survey conducted from October 2008 to September 2009. Though the survey did not generate enough responses to draw any statistically significant conclusions, a few survey respondents included detailed narratives of their experiences. This data has been incorporated into the study as appropriate.

involved in ayahuasca tourism. While a multitude of other individuals were involved in the study, the majority of data came from these interviewees.¹⁹⁸

“Shamans” are commonly known as those who specialize in plant medicine and provide curative services through the ingestion and administration of ayahuasca. Other titles include *vegetalistas* (Luna, 1986), *curanderos* (Dobkin de Rios, 1972), *ayahuasqueros* and *medicos* (interview data). I employ the term similar to Luna’s (1986), use, as that which refers to an individual who contacts the supernatural world, gaining knowledge, power and spirit helpers through this interaction.¹⁹⁹ Although this term has been variously defined and frequently debated (Luna, 1986) I chose it with intention, as it best reflects the terminology used by brokers on ayahuasca tourism

¹⁹⁸ Additional informants included: six staff members from various eco-tour agencies located downtown; three staff members of the regional tourism agency in Iquitos; three American expats who own businesses in Iquitos (both ayahuasca related and not); two Peruvian medical doctors (one: a practitioner employed by a non-profit agency, the other: a medical researcher); one Peruvian botanist (who works closely with foreigners looking to conduct scientific research on ayahuasca), and one European man involved in a shamanic apprenticeship and serving as a tour translator. See Appendix A for a complete list of interviewees.

¹⁹⁹ Additionally, much of the shaman’s power and skills are a direct result of their ingestion of with a variety of psychotropic plants (Luna, 1986, p. 14). In this study, the shamans interviewed specialized in the use of ayahuasca. Please refer to Luna’s (1986) seminal work titled, *Vegetalismo: Shamanism and the Mestizo Population of the Peruvian Amazon* for a more detailed discussion of the historical, social and medicinal aspects of mestizo shamanism in the region.

websites.²⁰⁰ Interview participants included seven mestizo shamans – four who live and worked in/around Iquitos and three who provide services to their respective communities along the rivers.²⁰¹ In addition to these shamans, I also interviewed two *gringos*:

²⁰⁰ All but one of the websites analyzed in the first half of this study referred to the mestizo and indigenous practitioners as “shamans.” Only the El Tigre Journeys site utilized the term “curandero.”

²⁰¹ In order to reach one informant who lived far up river, I decided to travel “like the locals do”. Although most tourists who journey to this particular spot do so via their tour company’s private speedboat (a four hour trip), I opted instead to take the public “*colectivo*.” As the only “*gringo*” on the large, two-story open-air boat, my presence was easily noticed and appeared to make me quite a novelty (as evidenced by the many shy smiles and even some outright stares I received during the ten hour trip). I passed the last two hours engaged in an entertaining conversation with “Lorena,” an older, gregarious woman, who had been laughing happily with her friends throughout the trip. Through my broken Spanish, her joyful warmth and some drawings in my notebook, we asked questions and shared bits of ourselves: she told me about her children, her town and how she takes this lengthy boat ride into the city each week, to sell her jungle fruits in Belén. I told her about my family, my parents and stated that yes there were “rivers where I lived.” I share this anecdote to illustrate how this experience both profoundly affected and greatly informed my understanding of the touristic contact zone. It was only because Lorena and I were on the same boat, traveling at the same pace in the same direction, that we were able to relate as fellow passengers. The equalizing force of the ten hour journey provided the time and space necessary to truly connect with one another, in an authentic way, on equal terms. In spite of the many privileges and resources afforded me (by both the country of my birth and the color of my skin), this brief, shared experience on the *colectivo* created a space within which Lorena and I could move beyond the “host/guest, tourist/local” binary typical of the contact zone. From this, I saw more clearly how the structural features of tourism (such as the use of a private speedboat) served to create distance and maintain boundaries between the tourists and the locals, rendering such experiences as mine nearly impossible in this contact zone. For example, among the tours in the study whose lodges are along the river, all but one of these transported their guests in a private speedboat.

American men who self-identified as ayahuasca facilitators²⁰² – the first of these provides shamanic services near his home (working independently) while the second owns and operates a “shamanic retreat center” providing ayahuasca ceremonies (in conjunction with a local shaman) as part of his services.²⁰³

In addition to these nine shamans, I spoke with individuals from three different mestizo communities: communities that are situated near ayahuasca tour centers. The first, San Juan de Yanayacu, is a community of 170 people who live along the banks of the Yanayacu River.²⁰⁴ The second set of community interviews occurred in the town of

²⁰² I employ the term “gringo” throughout this portion of my work, specifically when describing Caucasian tourists or shamans, as this is the preferred and commonly used nomenclature for white foreigners in the Iquitos area. The majority of Peruvians residents (and most non-Peruvians residing there) used this term in friendly, non-pejorative ways during the course of the study.

²⁰³ Though only one of these men formally identified himself as a “shaman” during the interview, both stated that they felt comfortable with others affording them this title. For this reason, I have included these men in the category of “shamans”. The question of categorization proved to be a bit of a methodological challenge, as several people could easily be cross-listed, fitting more than one description. For example, this latter gringo shaman could be termed both “shaman” and “tour broker”, as the services he provides and the identity he claims as “founder” of his center afford him these titles. For clarity, I have grouped people into the categories within which the majority of their energies or identities are focused. As appropriate, I will provide additional details regarding the subject’s role and place within the study.

²⁰⁴ San Juan de Yanayacu is located near three tour lodges and receives both ayahuasca and other tourists sporadically throughout the year.

Tamshiyacu.²⁰⁵ A final group of interviews occurred in Varillal, a small town located outside of Iquitos, along the Iquitos-Nauta highway.²⁰⁶

The third group of informants included those I term “ayahuasca tour brokers.”²⁰⁷ This diverse group consisted of one mestizo Peruvian (who co-owns an ayahuasca tour lodge with an American man),²⁰⁸ three members of a Shipibo family (who co-own a

²⁰⁵ Located along the Amazon River, this town is significantly larger in size (3,000 residents) and contains a much more developed infrastructure than any of the others in the study. Many credit the town’s growth and prosperity to the generosity and vision of Amazonian artist and shaman and resident, Don Austín Rivas-Vasquez. Three of the ayahuasca lodges in the area are owned/operated by members of the Rivas family, while at least two other local shamans provide ayahuasca services to tourists on an independent basis. A more detailed discussion of this shaman and his town will be provided in the following chapter.

²⁰⁶ Also known as the *la carretera*, this road extends 100km from Iquitos to the port town of Nauta. Twenty five years in the making, it is the only significant road in the area. One of my informants discussed the importance of this road in the proliferation of ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos. He suggested that the construction of this highway provides new access to formerly remote and isolated stretches of rainforest, making such tourism ventures both less expensive to build and easier to reach. I visited three of these lodges during the course of my fieldwork.

²⁰⁷ Interviews with tour brokers were semi-structured to elicit detailed information addressing brokers’ motivations, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the creation and management of the ayahuasca tour business; thoroughly examining this “broker perspective” as a location of power and privilege is critical, as this perspective is vastly understudied and minimally understood in the tourism literature (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

²⁰⁸ This lodge was located in the jungle, a few hours down river from Iquitos.

retreat center with an Italian man)²⁰⁹ and an American man (who runs his own tours, which included the provision of shaman-led ayahuasca ceremonies).²¹⁰

Tourism in Iquitos²¹¹

In Peru, the *Direccion Regional de Comercio Exterior y Turismo y Artesania* (Regional Directors of Exterior Commerce, Tourism and Craftsmanship) (DIRECTURA) is the regional regulatory agency which oversees the certification “touristic establishments.” Industry reports from this office suggest that between 2007 and 2008, there was a 26% increase in the number of tourists to the Loreto Department of Peru (in which Iquitos is located).²¹² Further, one of the most helpful reports listed the “number

²⁰⁹ These interviews occurred at the Onanyan Shobo retreat center, located approximately 1.5 hours outside of Iquitos (along the same highway as Varillal). Here, I spoke with three members of the Shipibo family who partner with El Mundo Magico’s Francesco Sammarco in facilitating ayahuasca services at their center. Family members interviewed included “Henry” Garcia-Ramirez, Eunice Garcia-Ramirez and Esther Garcia-Ramirez. Along with Sammarco, all three expressly requested to have their full names included in the study. Thus, I will refer to these individuals by name, as appropriate throughout the work.

²¹⁰ In sum, the results of all interviews will be incorporated throughout the next two chapters, in order to provide a rich and comprehensive picture of ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos.

²¹¹ Please refer to Appendix A –Methodological Appendix for a more complete discussion of the tourism industry in Iquitos and data collection methods relevant to this section.

²¹² From these reports I found that this empirical data largely reflected much of my interview data: tourism in Iquitos has been increasing. In 2007 14,483 tourists visited Loreto; in 2008 the number of tourists increased to 18,204. During this time period Loreto experienced the second largest Departmental influx of tourists – second only to the

of arrivals” by country/region for all “non-resident guests” in Peru “arriving at lodging establishments” (in Loreto). These arrivals were tracked each month. For example, according to the July 2009 report, the United States generated the largest number of tourists during this month (n = 2956), representing 37% of all foreign tourists.²¹³ Americans, “another European country” (n = 995), “Spain” (n = 656), “France” (n = 541) and “England – United Kingdom” (n = 447) were the top five countries of origin of foreign visitors to Loreto in July 2009. In the next section, I compare the demographic data of the tourists in my study to this Departmental data. In brief, the ayahuasca tourists described in my sample appear to be representative of the wider population of tourists in Loreto.

The DIRECTURA office not only serves to regulate and supervise existing tourism establishments: it guides in the creation and maintenance of new tourism ventures in and around Iquitos. Among their top projects is implementation of *the Plan Estrategico Regional de Turismo de la Region Loreto*²¹⁴ (The Regional Strategy of Tourism in the Region of Loreto). Interview staff reported that this strategy plan contains activities directly aimed at promoting shamanism within the tourism industry: “[The

capital city of Lima. All records discussed herein can be located at www.mincetur.gob.pe.

²¹³ In total 8056 non-resident visitors arrived in Loreto in July 2009, compared to 24,106 of “resident” or national tourists.

²¹⁴ http://www.regionloreto.gob.pe/web_dircatura/borradores/pertur.pdf

plan] considers shamanism to be a niche of growth inside the market for ecotourism.”²¹⁵

Staff provided “Activity #22” of the Plan as a specific example: “Produce and [distribute] training manual for shaman tourism that defines the responsibilities of the providers and considers the security of tourists and the quality of their experience.”

Both the staff’s explanation of Activity #22 and the actual text of the Activity itself contain language that reflects the Corporate Discourse (as discussed in chapters three and four). Phrases such as “niche of growth” and “training manual for shamanism” are clear examples of corporate language; language which recontextualizes the discourse of shamanism within that of tourism, creating a hybrid genre in order to market and sell the product (Fairclough, 2003). Additionally, the Peruvian government’s strategic plan to commercialize shamanism, in response to foreign interest, reflects the commodification of culture discussed throughout this work.

These findings support my conceptualization of spiritual tourism as a neocolonial phenomenon situated in the broader context of economic and cultural globalization. It illustrates my argument that spiritual tourism cannot be understood without analyzing it as a commodified activity of postmodern tourism (Jameson, 1991; Nash, 1989). For example, it is clear from the Activity #22 description that the purpose of the “training manual” is to dictate the behavior of the shaman, while, at the same time, “considering” the safety and quality of the tourist’s experience. In short, the onus is on shaman to act responsibly for the benefit of the tourist: there appears to be no text devoted to the

²¹⁵ All data gathered from Spanish speaking informants or from Spanish language articles/documents were first transcribed (in Spanish) and then translated (into English).

behavior or responsibility of the tourist, or any indication that the shaman's security will be safeguarded in the transaction. This example confirms that there continue to be asymmetrical relations of power within the contact zone of spiritual tourism (Pratt, 1992).

Ayahwasca Tourism in the Contact Zone

As discussed in the Introduction, the term “ayahwasca tourism” proved to be quite contentious in Iquitos, evoking a number of different responses throughout my research. It bears repeating however, as the remainder of this chapter focuses specifically on those I term “ayahwasca tourists.” For example, one American businessmen interviewed stated there “was no ayahwasca tourism.” He went on to say that if it was truly tourism, then “people would sit on bleachers and watch others in ceremony.”²¹⁶ He suggested that tourism is a primarily passive activity while participating in an ayahwasca ceremony is completely experiential. Another American refuted this term on different grounds, stating that the term “tourism” is somewhat “pejorative” as it presents ayahwasca use in a more superficial, recreational way than is warranted. He pointed to the physical toll that ayahwasca often takes on the body when ingested and the gravity of issues dealt with before, during or after one drinks, as examples of why ayahwasca should be taken

²¹⁶ This informant proffered several examples of things the “tourist” might see included: people vomiting, having diarrhea, dancing, crying and wandering around – all common occurrences during an ayahwasca ceremony.

seriously by all. Notably, of those who contested the term, all were foreign born – no local Peruvian shared that they found this term troubling.²¹⁷

Regardless of an individual's perception of the term 'ayahuasca tourism', practically every person in the study shared that he/she had seen an increase in foreign interest in (and pursuit of) ayahuasca in Iquitos, especially in the past three to five years.²¹⁸ While a multitude of reasons were given to explain this increase, the two most frequently cited factors were the proliferation of ayahuasca on the internet and the advent of the "Shamanism Conferences" organized by Alan Shoemaker.²¹⁹ A brief discussion of each is provided. As hypothesized at the outset, fieldwork data confirms that many credit ayahuasca's increasing popularity to the numerous forms of media now instantly available on the Internet. Information about ayahuasca can be accessed 24 hours a day via multiple sources such as online documentaries, YouTube videos, digital literary works,

²¹⁷ I recognize that this difference could be due to structural, definitional or language differences – as any foreign person who visits Iquitos (i.e. does not reside there) is commonly referred to as a *pasajero* (passenger). Due to these definitional issues, I have simply tracked and noted the differences in these responses throughout my study.

²¹⁸ These findings reflect a continuation of trends regarding foreign interest in ayahuasca, as discussed in previous literature – especially the studies by Grunwell (1998), Rumrill, (2005) and Winkelman (2005).

²¹⁹ Details on Shoemaker's 2010 conference can be found here: <http://www.soga-del-alma.org>. The conference is described on the website as follows: For the sixth year in a row, Gracia Ethnobotanics is pleased to have Soga Del Alma (Spanish for Vine of the Soul) hosting the 6th International Amazonian Shamanism Conference: "Grace and Madness", which will allow people from all over the World to meet in the Peruvian Amazon, meet different types of curanderos (shamans) and learn more about how Shamanism is practiced and plants revered there.

listserve, travel blogs and entire websites devoted to ayahuasca.²²⁰ In turn, web-surfers can now watch a shamanic ceremony, buy a CD with shamanic icaros, find a recipe on how to brew the ayahuasca and purchase the necessary plants, all from the comfort of their home.²²¹ As discussed earlier,²²² Appadurai (1996) argues such examples of mediated globalization contribute to the ways in which the Other becomes part of the popular imagination. Through the development of a myriad of *mediascapes* (Appadurai, 1991, p. 33) the Internet has opened new doors to ayahuasca fueling this tourism in Iquitos.

As stated, the second main factor contributing to the growth of ayahuasca tourism is the newly emergent “Shamanism Conference” in Iquitos, Peru. Several people mentioned American expat Alan Shoemaker as one of the “key figures” in ayahuasca tourism. Though he openly contests the term “ayahuasca tourism”, Shoemaker acknowledges that his conferences have grown in size over the past five years (since its

²²⁰ Several informants provided examples such as the “National Geographic” documentary on “Hamilton Souther” (see www.bluemorphotours.com). Others cited popular “New Age” and “Alternative” websites such as “ayahuasca.com” and “Tribe.net.”

²²¹ I call the trend of purchasing medicinal plants online and cooking them at home the “Buy your own/brew your own” phenomenon. While this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, it is important to note that one of my informants said he sells the pre-made brew over the Internet, with business “so good he can’t keep up.” I also interviewed two tourists who had told me about their experiences drinking ayahuasca in their apartment abroad.

²²² See Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion of Appadurai’s (1996) notion of *mediascapes*.

inception), bringing more people to the region (personal communication, June 6, 2009).

²²³ Shoemaker noted an increase in both those wanting to attend, as well as present at the conferences. Others in the study heralded the economic advantages of this annual conference, reporting an increase in pre-post conference business.²²⁴ However, it is not simply attendance at the conference that has been cited as contributing to ayahuasca tourism's increase. It is also the "word of mouth" process that occurs when participants return home and discuss their experiences with others. Almost every shaman and tour broker in the study reported that people came to their work through one of two primary channels: the internet and/or through "word of mouth." For example, when asked how foreigners find him, one mestizo shaman who has benefitted from Shoemaker's promotion replied:

Well now a days the very people who leave from my center, who leave after working with me go to their countries oh... well, in the course of their travels they find their friends, and that is where they recommend me, I think they say: "Look, I have worked with this person and I was able to find my path, I was able to find the healing I needed." Then that causes them to come with much more confidence in working

²²³ Pseudonyms have been provided for all informants, unless the individual expressly requested to be acknowledged by name – those included my translator, Peruvian Rodrigo Lajo Morgan, American ex-pat Alan Shoemaker, American journalist/ayahuasca tour guide Peter Gorman, sculptor, intellectual and shaman, Austin Rivas-Vasquez, El Mundo Magico founder Francesco Sammarco, and Onanyan Shobo co-partners and Shipibo family members, "Henry" Garcia-Ramirez, Eunice Garcia-Ramirez and Esther Garcia-Ramirez.

²²⁴ A variety of shamans, tour brokers and businessmen who work with Shoemaker informed this section.

personally with me. And each time more and more are recommended to my work.

And also all that information they sometimes tell me..."How did [they] come to me?"

I ask them, "How have [you] contacted me?", "Many great things are said about you on the Internet" they tell me, "There are no bad things, so for that reason we decided to work with you."

Thus, with an average of 175 people a year attending Shoemaker's conferences, it is fair to say that this event has contributed greatly to the popularity of ayahuasca among those abroad.²²⁵

Among those interviewed, two different shamans (one urban shaman, "Pepe" and one *ribereno*²²⁶ shaman, "Juan") described the increasing interest in ayahuasca as not only occurring in the Amazon, but more broadly. "Pepe" stated he believed the interest in ayahuasca has increased, "at a worldwide level", adding, "It is famous." Juan, the river shaman echoed this statement, only he pointed to the exportation of ayahuasca as an example of its popularity, "They prepare it and send it, they export. A lot of ayahuasca. Ayahuasca is now at a global level." This shaman added another dimension to the discussion of the globalization of ayahuasca: the desire of foreigners to become shamans.

²²⁵ As stated, many informants reaped material benefits from the presence of Conference goers. However, not all interviewed were in favor of Shoemaker's activities, citing that many local shamans were excluded from the conference. Several of these reported being "left out": unable to participate and/or benefit from annual event. This exclusion appears accurate, judging from the discourse on the Conference site: "You will be with the 200+ other like-minded individuals from all over the Globe and around 15+ of the finest hand-picked Shamans from the Upper Amazon to the Andes".

²²⁶ The common Spanish term used to describe those who live along the riverbanks.

Twice in his interview he commented on this trend, saying “now even tourists are shamans.”

Lastly, for those involved in either a shamanic apprenticeship, as suggested by the shaman above, or simply for those who want to prepare their body for the ayahuasca ceremony, the American-owned restaurants involved in Iquitos tourism have adapted to meet these needs. The “ayahuasca diet” has emerged as a specific meal and popular menu item in two of the most popular restaurants downtown. As discussed in chapter four, the ayahuasca diet consists primarily of steamed fish, steamed vegetables and rice. Interview data from the restaurant owners explains the presence of such a meal on the menu. Both men stated that they “see the [market] demand” and the “increasing interest in maintaining a proper ayahuasca diet” prior to and /or just after drinking ayahuasca (e.g. no fried food, no pork, no salt). Thus, both have designed and advertise this meal specifically for the ayahuasca tourists. Throughout my seven week stay in Iquitos, I saw no such diets advertised at other downtown businesses which catered to local Peruvians and not tourists, suggesting that the delineation of a “special diet” was most appealing to and appropriate for the ayahuasca tourist.²²⁷ Thus, from a restaurant in Iquitos, to a town along the river and even exported to those abroad, ayahuasca has gone global.

Moving from the macro-picture of ayahuasca (on a global scale) to the microcosm of ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos, the next section presents the ‘tourist typology’ discussed previously.

²²⁷ The provision and promotion of this diet is another example of how ayahuasca its related shamanic practices have become commodified.

AYAHUASCA TOURISTS – MOTIVES AND TYPES

One of the main concerns of this research centers on the ayahuasca tourist's motivations: what is it that compels someone to fly thousands miles around the world, pay up to \$2000²²⁸ to spend a week in the hot, humid jungle – all for the chance to drink what is widely considered to be a foul smelling, and even worse tasting, brown liquid? Investigating tourist motivation in spiritual tourism is crucial in helping to explain this newly emerging phenomenon. MacCannell (1976) argued that by tracing the footsteps of tourists, one can begin to understand the value systems in the modern world (Stronza, 2001, p. 265). More specifically, Western tourists appear to exemplify different values and patterns of consumption than non-Western tourists (Cooper et al, 2006). Including such questions on tourist motivation in my study helps to better inform what types of values these tourists bring to their participation in the ayahuasca ceremony and how those values may promote or hinder their interaction with the indigenous community.²²⁹

Among the studies on ayahuasca tourism, only a handful include an investigation of tourist motivation (Dobkin de Rios, 2004, 2008; Kristensen in Grunwell, 1998;

²²⁸ Note that this figure (\$2,000) is current in terms of 2010 purchasing power.

²²⁹ Regarding the “motivations” of ayahuasca tourists and the lack of research, Winkelman (2005) observes, “Yet, until more widespread and systematic studies of this kind are carried out, we will not know how typical this particular program is [that of the ‘spiritual tourist’ seeking ‘health’ and ‘spiritual renewal’] and the extent of the problems brought to our attention by Dobkin de Rios’ timely and seminal publication [regarding ‘hedonistic drug seekers’]” (215).

Rumrill, 2005; Winkelman, 2005).²³⁰ Findings from these studies suggest that people pursue ayahuasca abroad for three primary reasons: hedonistic/ drug-seeking (Dobkin de Rios, 1994; Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill, 2008)²³¹, health/healing (Grunwell, 1998, Kristensen in Grunwell, 1998; Rumrill, 2005; Winkelman, 2005)²³² and self-exploration/spiritual growth (Dobkin de Rios, 1994; Kristensen in Grunwell, 1998, Rumrill, 2005; Winkelman, 2005).²³³ Throughout this work, I compare my results with these three categories above, where applicable; noting differences and similarities throughout. Specifically, through the data gathered from shamans, tour brokers and

²³⁰ The majority of ayahuasca studies to date have focused on the medicinal, chemical, botanical and/or shamanic features of the plant itself, not the attention it has received by tourists/travelers from the global north (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Grob et al, 1996; Luna, 1986; McKenna, 1999, 2004; Ott, 1996) Further, of the key studies on ayahuasca tourists discussed herein, three of the four were published in journals whose focus is psychoactive drugs. The fourth study was an unpublished manuscript, mentioned in the one of the studies above. To date, there are no published studies on ayahuasca tourism in any social science or tourism journal - marking this work as the first of its kind to examine ayahuasca tourism from an interdisciplinary, critical cultural perspective.

²³¹ Referred to as “drug tourists” by Dobkin de Rios and Rumrill(2008). An example of this type of tourist can be seen in a 2007 article by Hansa Bergwall, a Seattle columnist writing for the local paper, *The Stranger*. Speaking of ayahuasca she states candidly, “The plant purges and heals, according to the locals, but I went to trip” (p. 23).

²³² This can refer to both physical and emotional healing and includes assistance in dealing with substance abuse (McKenna, 2004).

²³³ Referred to as “spiritual tourists”, Winkelman (2005) reported the retreat goers in his study to be seeking “spiritual awareness and personal spiritual development” (p. 211) and that their primary motive was “spiritual” (e.g. a quest for enlightenment, direction, awakening etc) and not purely “hedonistic” (p. 212).

tourists, themselves, I found that a tourist's motivation appears to be closely related to his/her (tourist) 'type' as illustrated below.

Tourist typologies – All roads lead to ayahuasca

Findings from my research suggest that there are three primary types of ayahuasca tourists – each defined by the route they take to access ayahuasca in Iquitos.²³⁴ In brief, “Type I” tourists are typically those who preplan their ayahuasca experience, researching and purchasing a tour online, whose primary reason for visiting Iquitos is to participate in shamanic ceremonies and drink ayahuasca. “Type II” tourists, are similarly interested in shamanic activities, however, these tourists access ayahuasca as an adjunct to their Amazon experience, not as the sole or primary focus. This group books their eco-adventure tour with a local, Peruvian tour broker – typically found downtown, between the Plaza de Armas and the malécon. The final group, “Type III” tourists participate in what I term the “shaman on the street” phenomenon.” These tourists are not involved with any type of tour. Rather, they access ayahuasca through more informal means, typically word of mouth, via other tourists or locals who present the idea to the tourist.

²³⁴ In order to best categorize my ethnographic data and better illustrate the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism, I created a “tourist typology” to which I will refer throughout the remainder of my work. While I recognize that these are not the only ways in which tourists purchase ayahuasca in Iquitos, these represented the most common forms of ayahuasca tourism in my work.

Each of these types are described and discussed in more detail below.²³⁵ Within each description is a brief discussion of the possible risks or negative aspects most commonly cited in each tourism type. Of the eight tourists interviewed for this project, five fit the Type I category and three fit the Type III. From the online survey data, three of the five respondents were best categorized as Type I, one was Type II and one Type III.

Type I – Specializing in shamanism

Type I tourists are those who pre-purchase their shamanic experiences often (though not exclusively) online.²³⁶ Of the three groups, these tourists typically spend the most money on their (extended) ayahuasca experience, as they book their trip with a company whose principal attraction and primary focus is the sale of ayahuasca ceremonies.²³⁷ These programs cost more and are usually longer in length than the others: typically lasting from five to 12 days. Interview data suggests that these tourists spend the least amount of time in the urban center of Iquitos; they get picked up at the airport and

²³⁵ In order to assess possible differences between the tourists in each “type”, I organized my interview data along these same lines, compiling the findings and analyzing the themes by the routes through which the informant: provided the ayahuasca, guided on a tour or interacted with tourists in some manner.

²³⁶ One tour brokered in this group shared that “90% of his business comes because of the website – people who report they saw [their] ayahuasca services on the Internet” supporting the notion that those who choose the specialized ayahuasca tours typically research the tours on the Internet.

²³⁷ These tourists spend more than the others, as the ayahuasca tour/retreat of this nature is significantly more expensive than the other types. The Type I companies reflect (and include) the types of tours analyzed in the previous chapters - those who advertise and line and are primarily brokered by foreign individuals.

quickly ferried away to the lodge on a private speedboat. All but one the brokers I spoke to (whose lodges are further from Iquitos) stated that they take the tourists directly to the lodge. As mentioned earlier, the structure of this type of tourism serves to distance the ayahuasca tourist from the local people, especially those in the urban center and has the potential to reinforce the negative binaries between those who pay for services and those who provide them.²³⁸

Though it is difficult to accurately assess how much time these individuals spend in or around Iquitos after their tour, anecdotal evidence suggests for these groups, the time is brief. For example, one of the gringo shamans/brokers interviewed informed me that, “95% of the people who come to our work, come specifically to Peru to work with us – [they] come straight to our work, and then most often they go straight home afterward.”²³⁹ Another informant suggested that this group may be characterized by “mid-age” people because of the slightly more expensive price of his tour. He reiterated that these tourists typically have an agenda and know what they want; “the mid-aged

²³⁸ Interview data from the DIRECTURA staff report this observation stating, “There is a great quantity of tourists that go directly to the jungle (generally to some lodge) without staying in Iquitos. This can be explained in part because a great deal of the tourism to the region is focused on nature and culture (and community tourism).” On the question of economic impact of this type of tourism, staff replied, “For DIRECTURA and the tourism sector in general, there is no difference or disadvantage whatsoever that it occurs like this- *but it would be more beneficial if the tourists would go to the jungle and as well as tourism inside the city*” (italics added).

²³⁹ Throughout this section, I categorize the shamans, brokers and others within these typologies as well. Clearly, those brokers who advertise their “ayahuasca retreat” online are defined best as “Type I” brokers, thus the typology goes beyond the tourist itself-reflecting those services best fit within each of the routes to ayahuasca.

person have more experiences, and he comes with a mindset. He already has the idea ‘I’m going to go down to the jungle and try the ayahuasca.’” During this same interview, the broker added, “Most of our passengers we pick them up from the airport and straight to the refuge, and from the refuge to the airport...Most of them don’t stay in a hotel, just very few of them. Maybe it’s 10% of them who stay in the city. Most of them prefer to go straight.”

Thus, the Type I tour structure not only contributes to a socio-cultural distance between the tourists and the locals, but contributes to economic *leakage*²⁴⁰ as well. Echoing the sentiments of the DIRECTURA staff regarding tourists’ lack of time in Iquitos, one Peruvian broker remarked, “Of course, that’s an ideal, if they stay that would mean more jobs. You know it increases incomes, all the economy grows and that’s a good thing. But most of them come from more advanced cities, we have to admit that. So, what good can they see? And they know that.” In spite of this lack of leakage within the city of Iquitos, these operators maintained that because the brokers need to purchase supplies, rent boats and hire staff, there is some economic benefit to local people (beyond that to the broker). They concluded the interview by stating, “Sometimes outsiders don’t realize how much we need tourists to come.”

Demographic, survey and interview data suggest that majority of tourists within this typology come from the United States, Canada, England, Australia, Germany and

²⁴⁰ “Leakage” is the way in which revenue generated by tourism is lost to external actors (i.e. when money is funneled back to the corporate tour operator, hotelier or airline that organized the trip, rather than to the local communities with whom that tourist is interacting or in whose ‘home’ they are residing (McLaren, 2003; Scheyvens, 2001).

Argentina.²⁴¹ Although the actual number of visitors varied by provider and month, some reported that group sizes were bigger in the summer months.²⁴² Additionally, several informants described this group as consisting of mainly “professionals.”²⁴³ There appeared to be no considerable difference among the gender of the tourists in this group; most reported that the number of men and women were equal.²⁴⁴

When asked about tourist motivations, two shamans differentiated motivation by age. One of the gringo shamans in this group stated that of those he worked with the younger people were “more into experimenting with different drugs²⁴⁵”, while the “older people –

²⁴¹ Though it is difficult to make claims with such a small sample, it does appear that most of the Type I ayahuasca tourist were from the United States and England. These finding reflect the tourism data from the DIRECTURA office and are representative of the broader tourism trends in the Loreto Department of Peru.

²⁴² Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to draw statistically significant results regarding these tourists’ average age, however, many reported that the majority of their business came from 25-45 year old.

²⁴³ According to one shaman who provides services both in Peru and in Europe, “Some tourists are architects, psychiatrists, philosophers, therapists, psychotherapists, nurses”.

²⁴⁴ One mestizo shaman noted that he had administered ayahuasca to more men than women over time. He remarked, however, that “inside women you can see...the intention and the understanding when it comes to connecting more with this spiritual world.” Though gender differences were explored throughout the study, very few informants actually commented on the varied experiences with and motivations for ayahuasca, as related to gender.

²⁴⁵ This finding, combined with the statement below that young people are only looking to drink ayahuasca for visions supports well the first type of tourist motivation discussed in the literature: hedonistic/drug seeking (Dobkin de Rios, 1994; Dobkin de Rios &

tend to be “more spiritually minded.”²⁴⁶ This shaman also said he saw more “thrill seekers in Peru” than he did when attending shamanic conferences in the “United States or Amsterdam” where he encountered “more spiritual seekers.” Additionally, a mestizo shaman (who facilitates his own ecological/retreat center out of Iquitos) shared that his clientele consisted mainly of older people, “professionals”.²⁴⁷

In other words, mostly professionals come, all of them professionals...so the majority who come where I am at are professionals. Very few come just do to the ayahuasca, one or two ayahuascas, very few. Lawyers, psychologists, anthropologists, surgeons, botanists, ecologists –later from acupuncture, they come from the other culture[s] that...almost all of the professional careers of the world are arriving.²⁴⁸

This shaman explained that for those who come, “Two things motivate them. One is the cure and another is the vision.” He said that it was typically the “younger people” who looked for “visions...experimentation.” He added, “The young people come to have the

Rumrill, 2008). However, unlike this research, my findings suggest that these motivations are largely a function of age – at least for the Type I tourists.

²⁴⁶ Few informants provided actual ages when speaking of “younger” and “older.”

²⁴⁷ This extended quote is included here, as it reflects the majority of responses of those involved in Type I tourism – most tourists were described as being “professional” by the brokers/shamans.

²⁴⁸ In this section, this shaman discusses the proliferation of ayahuasca via the media, stating that while some random journalists and authors would come and talk to him about his work in the past, this has greatly increased, adding “Now the reporters are coming constantly.”

experience of ayahuasca, nothing more.” However, given that the majority of his clientele were older, professional people, the shaman explained, “Most come to diet, for health reasons, not just experimenting...and other problems like stress.”²⁴⁹ The presence of those seeking “visions” was mentioned by only one other Type I broker – the broker who credited 90% of business to their website. This informant shared that the “clients...come primarily for “visions,” adding, “the ones who come here are curious about visions, experience, not with a medical aim. Very few. I don’t have those.”²⁵⁰

In contrast, the tourist motivations regarding health and healing were repeated by three other informants in the study.²⁵¹ First, a mestizo shaman (who owns his own center) stated that people come for health and healing, “Many come for physical ailments, stress, [for the] ‘spiritual part’ psychological problems”. He emphasized that people sought help for “most of all stress from work. I think this also causes the person to have many psychological problems.” Among these “psychological problems” this shaman reported helping people with “with addiction issues” He replied quite simply, “In the matter of alcoholism, drug addiction, I also have many people.” Two other shamans and one broker listed “drug addiction” and “alcoholism” as reasons for seeking ayahuasca. One stated,

²⁴⁹ Participation in ayahuasca for the relief from stress was noted throughout the study – primarily among the Peruvian informants.

²⁵⁰ This broker explained the definition of visions, used here, “I call it to vision. Because you see colors, you see animals, you see stars.”

²⁵¹ These findings lend support for those in the literature, who assert that ayahuasca tourists seek out health/healing services (Grunwell, 1998, Kristensen in Grunwell, 1998; Rumrill, 2005; Winkelman, 2005).

that in his “shamanic center” that a “High percentage of people come with a specific condition that they hope ayahuasca will help with, for healing.” The other commented that, “Drug addicts replace their drugs with ayahuasca.”²⁵²

The final motivation listed by a Type I shaman in this study more closely reflects the third type of motivation discussed in the ayahuasca tourism literature, that of “self-exploration/spiritual growth” (Dobkin de Rios, 1994; Kristensen in Grunwell, 1998, Rumrill, 2005; Winkelmen, 2005). This motivation also reflects the “New Age” discourse present in the earlier phase of this work. This gringo shaman stated that, in his work, he sees many people hoping to find a “genuine spiritual connection that has thus far eluded them.” The extended quote below is included to fully illustrate how this motivation is articulated. Additionally, it mirrors some of the “New Age” language found on the ayahuasca tourism websites:

They’ve often tried lots of religious and spiritual paths, you know, looking for this or that. Many people have gotten a lot from all of that but have not quite gotten there. The beauty of the shamanic path is that all, everything of value and benefit that is good, that you gain from all of those things, carries forward in the shamanic process of healing and illumination and, the things that you leave behind is pretty much the

²⁵² One informant stated that he knew of a man who came to drink ayahuasca both “to increase his own healing skills and well as getting some healing himself.” Though an accurate number could not be gained, anecdotal evidence suggests that of the three types of tourists, those in Type I were more inclined to work on the development of their own ‘healing skills’ than those in the other groups, as evidenced by the amount of people who sought after the shamanic diet and opportunities to “apprentice” in this category. The diet and apprentice possibilities were nearly absent for Type II and III tourists.

baggage. The things that didn't work, that are no longer of any real value that you may have been dragging as dead weight. That's part of the liberation and the cleansing aspect of ayahuasca – cutting that stuff loose and giving you a clean slate and a fresh start w/everything in front of you. The useful experience that you've gained in your own life experience...you don't forget any of that, you just have a different perspective on it...

In addition to this shaman/broker's report, anecdotal data provided online (via the survey) by an ayahuasca tourist supports this notion. In response to "main motivation for going on this tour" the tourist replied, "Ontological. I am interested in determining for myself (to myself) to the degree possible, "What is Real." Ayahuasca offers direct personal experience of non-ordinary realities."

Thus, the three primary motivations reported by those involved in Type I ayahuasca tourism parallel those discussed in the previous research. Some, typically younger tourists in this category, came for "hedonistic/drug-seeking" reasons (also described as simply for "visions" by my informants) (Dobkin de Rios, 1994). Others came for "health/healing" (Grunwell, 1988; Winkelman, 2005). These tourists appeared to be looking for both the relief of physical ailments as well as psychological ones – "stress" was one of the primary motivations mentioned by the mestizo shamans here. Finally, some tourists drank ayahuasca in order to attain "self-exploration/spiritual growth" (Winkelman, 2005). The descriptions of these tourists derived largely from one

gringo shaman/broker and data from the online survey; this portrayal reflected greatly the “New Age Discourse” analyzed previously in the work.

These findings suggest that while the Type I tourist may be attracted by the New Age and “self-transformative” discourse on the websites, their actual motives for seeking ayahuasca varied widely, not necessarily fitting neatly into one of the three categories identified in the literature. Further, in general, these tourists tend to be older, more professional and more financially secure than the tourists described in the other two groups. One reason for this may simply be the high price of the Type I tours, especially those brokered by individual brokers.²⁵³ A second reason may be that, akin to the “spiritual tourists” described by Raymond Bickson in Chapter Two, these tourists seek creature comforts while in their pursuit of spiritual growth.²⁵⁴

Type II – Shamanism on the side

As stated previously, similar to the Type I tourists, this group also participates in shaman led ayahuasca ceremonies. However, these tourists access the drink as an *adjunct* to the tour they are already on: drinking ayahuasca is neither the sole, nor primary focus of the tour. Typically, the Type II tourist books an eco- or adventure tour through a Peruvian broker in downtown Iquitos, suggesting that this type spends at least some

²⁵³For example, please see Table 1 in Chapter Four for a listing of six different ‘Type I’ tour prices.

²⁵⁴ As stated by Bickson in his discussion of older spiritual tourists, “Now, still at the cutting edge of the New Age, wellness and spiritual frontiers, they continue to feed their souls. They just want to do it without giving up their creature comforts” (Garfinkel, 2006)

measure of time in Iquitos, enough to find the office and book the tour.²⁵⁵ This tourist is characterized by their desire to explore the Amazon, beyond the shamanic experience, joining a tour that offers additional activities such as trekking through the rainforest, fishing for piranhas, bird-watching and/or swimming with the infamous pink dolphins of the Amazon.²⁵⁶

Of the eight Type II Peruvian tour brokers interviewed, all but two stated that, “yes,” upon request, they could (and do) connect tourists with a shaman so that the tourists may drink ayahuasca. Though contractual agreements differ among these companies, most stated that the tourist typically participated in only a limited amount of ceremonies during his/her tour.²⁵⁷ For example, one tour staff explained, “It’s only ceremonies. One or two ceremonies and it ends there. Because, as I’m telling you, we

²⁵⁵ Though these tours may also be booked online, it is the *focus* of the tour which differentiates between the two types, not the method of payment.

²⁵⁶ Here too, while the Type I tourist may engage in some of these activities during their stay at the ayahuasca tour lodge, center or retreat – they are somewhat limited, with the focus of this tour being the engagement with the “sacred visionary medicines.” This difference is explained well by one shaman/broker in the “Type I” group. When asked about these types of activities he replied, “There are activities that people can do, but they are secondary-free time kind of things. But it’s not fundamentally part of what we do – I want people to be totally focused [on the ayahuasca].”

²⁵⁷ According to a mestizo shaman in this category (who contracts with three different lodges), some tour brokers expect the tourist to negotiate the fee directly with shaman (who keeps the entire payment), while other companies charge the tourist for the shaman’s time, then pay the shaman only half of that fee, as you would an employee.

aren't specialized in shamanism."²⁵⁸ He went on to describe the route by which they connect the tourist to the shaman, but reiterated that his company does not take a percentage of the shaman's fee. This staff explained that his company provides the shamanic service to "complete the tour. For example, there are tourists who come, they want to do everything but also the ayahuasca, and they won't buy my tour if I told them I don't have ayahuasca." Thus, the inclusion of shamanic services in these tours is a keen business strategy. It provides a way to stand out from the crowd, distinguishing themselves from the competition. For if they do not offer ayahuasca in some form, the tourist will move on to find a company that does. This suggests that regardless of a tour company's belief in or support of the practice of drinking ayahuasca, it is necessary to provide the tourist with access to a shaman for this service; it is considered a crucial strategy in the company's ability to compete. In short, this is one concrete example of the commodification of Peruvian culture – ayahuasca has become a product to be sold in the ecotourism marketplace.²⁵⁹

Providing access to ayahuasca in order to compete in the tourism market differentiates this group from those in Type I: ayahuasca here is an "add-on" to the tour, not the focus. Offering it as an additional product is one way in which ayahuasca is

²⁵⁸ Again, the differentiation between the Type I and II groups is clear: these tours do not specialize in shamanism, while those in the Type I category do.

²⁵⁹ As I experienced during my fieldwork, the competition between Peruvian tour brokers in downtown Iquitos is fierce. There are at least 8-10 tour offices within two small blocks. In order to walk from the Plaza de Armas to the waterfront, a tourist must pass at least four different agents; each standing outside, blocking the sidewalk, waving their brochures and aggressively hawking their services.

clearly commodified in this process – akin to renting camping gear or booking an additional night hike in the jungle. However, this was not the only process of commodification I discovered when investigating this group. During an interview with one urban shaman, he shared that he “dresses up” for the tourists in order to appear “native.” As a mestizo who contracts with ecotourism companies, this shaman wears his “costume” of a feathered headdress and skirt of straw. He does this “to make the ceremony. I always dress that I am a native Yagua. This is my costume. I have to take my shirt off; I have to put on my crown.”²⁶⁰ He stated he only does this “if the tourists want it” and that he dresses in his “normal clothes” when administering to his local patients. This finding is significant for two reasons, first, as mentioned, it provides an example of ayahuasca’s commodification – the provision of the shamanic service is “packaged” to suit the desire of the tourist. Second, this packaging represents fabricated or staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1976); it is intended to appease the tourist’s interest in the “Other” as primitive, native or more “traditional,” thus reifying the colonist binary “us/them” “advanced/primitive” (Caton & Santos, 2009; Desmond, 1999; Greenwood, Said, 1978; Smith 1999, Trask, 1999). “Indigenous” culture is consumed by the tourist, even if it is inauthentic. This increased interest in the Other, coupled with the “promotion of primitiveness” reflects well the two of the key elements of postmodern tourism (Munt, 1994; Urry, 1990) and lends support to my argument that spiritual tourism is theorized

²⁶⁰ As mentioned earlier, along with the Bora, the Yagua are one of the most sought after and visited indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon. Well known among foreigners, many travel agencies and tour operators list “visit native communities” in their tour description.

best as a form of postmodern tourism (one which reflects the discourses of consumerism and consumption).

Dobkin de Rios and Rumrill (2008) argue that “the tourist is easily satisfied” by such examples of “pseudo-authenticity” and “seeks this authenticity to gain insight into his/her own life” (p. 77). Echoing the words of the shaman, “In fact, the tourist does not much care if the experience is real or fake” (ibid). The river shaman in this group affirmed this newly emergent commodification, stating, “Before there were chaman humble like me, that sang and always wiling for a good experience. But now the *gringos*, mainly the tourists like them to dress up, to put on a crown here.” Thus, from the urban shaman who contracts with lodges in Iquitos, to the river shaman ten hours upstream, the ayahuasca market demand has commodified ayahuasca not only as a “product” (to be added to the tour) but also as a “performance” – one in which the shaman must “dress up” to appease their customer.

Interview data suggest that the majority of these tourists come from France Australia, Canada, Israel and “European countries,” as well as some from England and the United States.²⁶¹ When asked which country are most of their tourists from, one tour staff laughed out loud and said “France! The French always like that thing with hallucinogens.”²⁶² Regarding the number of tourists who ask for ayahuasca each month,

²⁶¹ One river shaman stated that he worked with many people from Argentina, stating, “the people of Argentina are intent on taking ayahuasca.”

²⁶² This statement supports Dobkin de Rios (1994) and Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill’s (2008) conception of ayahuasca tourists as “drug tourists.”

one tour staff member stated that of the approximately 100 tourists they see each month, “about 15” want to drink ayahuasca. A different tour broker, further away from the Plaza, stated that in the “past four months... maybe 10” were looking to add an ayahuasca ceremony to their tour. This woman noted, however, that she saw tourist interest in ayahuasca “increasing” and attributed it to “propaganda²⁶³ and word of mouth.” The urban shaman mentioned above (who contracts with three lodges) said that he administered to around “20 people” a month, but qualified that it is “not consistent.” He shared that “July was beginning of the season” and typically more people came during this time.²⁶⁴ Similar to the informants in the Type I sector, it was difficult to get an average age of tourists, with one staff reporting working with “20-30” year olds. This staff said because his company specialized in “adventure tours,” they mostly got younger tourists, adding, “Younger people don’t need some [of the same] comforts as older people. They [older people] want comfort, more in a bed, a boat, or they want more convenience.” Though he gave a wide range of ages in his response, the urban shaman echoed this statement, sharing that, “Those that come most are younger.” Again, though the sample size is too small to assert statistically significant results, the anecdotal data supports the notion that this type of tourist is seeking adventure and action, with

²⁶³ E.g, advertisement of ayahuasca.

²⁶⁴ Again, this increase may be attributed to the Shamanism Conference which occurs annually, in mid July. Of those interviewed, however, it was the Type I brokers/shamans who most frequently mentioned the Conference and reported benefiting from it. The shaman above who made this statement did not mention the Conference at all.

“ayahuasca on the side”. Similar to the findings regarding gender in the Type I group, these informants largely stated that they worked with men and women equally.

Somewhat similar to the findings among the Type I informants, tourist motivation was largely a function of “age” for this group. Echoing the tour staff above, one of the other lodge staffers stated that people seek out ayahuasca for “hallucinations.” The urban shaman in this group also suggested that these primarily younger tourists were perhaps more hedonistic in nature, “What interests them is that they want to know how their ayahuasca visions are, what is their effect and what their friends recommend them.” This finding, though perhaps intuitive, suggests that younger people are looking for a psychedelic experience in the jungle, rather than drinking ayahuasca to address personal issues, relieve stress or get in touch with something of a more spiritual nature.

Offering a slightly more detailed response, the river shaman²⁶⁵ reported that people of “all ages” come with “different motivations.” He said that the “Younger ones want to know about the future, if they will marry soon, or if in their job they will continue or if they will leave soon, or in what countries they will live.” In contrast, he added that the “older ones” only come see him “if they have a problem – ‘it hurts here’- they call for that.” Thus, the motivations reported for this group seem to support only two of the three found in the literature – those of “hedonistic/drug seeking” and “health/healing.” Whether

²⁶⁵ Though this shaman resides far up river, like the urban shaman, he too works with tour groups that come through his village. Up to three different groups have brought tourists to his town, on and off, over the years. This shaman reported that if a tourist is interested in ayahuasca, the tour guide simply directs the tourists to his house and points, saying “the shaman lives there.” The tourist then visits the shaman and arranges the ceremony. The tour companies have no further involvement in the payment or planning of this service.

a function of their (typically younger) age, or as a result of their different motives for taking a tour, these individuals were characterized by their experiential approach to ayahuasca; the self-transformative, spiritual growth discourse prevalent throughout the Type I group was largely absent here.

Type III - Shamanism on the street²⁶⁶

The third and final group of tourists is characterized primarily by their lack of participation in any type of formal tour. These are the tourists who access ayahuasca via a shaman on the street. These tourists typically pay the least amount for their ayahuasca ceremony and are likely to spend the most time in town. This tourist may have already planned to drink ayahuasca before they arrived and waited to check out the possibilities until they were in Iquitos or they may have never heard of ayahuasca prior to their arrival and, upon learning of it, decided to “try it out.” Whether through word of mouth, the internet, a sign at the airport or being (sometimes) approached on the boardwalk, this tourist eventually finds a way to access ayahuasca and meet with a shaman.²⁶⁷ This route reflects a more spontaneous, casual and independent approach to ayahuasca than those of the other two types. When asked what he was seeking in his pursuit of ayahuasca, the

²⁶⁶ This title is not meant to convey a derogatory picture of shamans; a scene in which the shaman is hanging out on the street, either selling their services openly (like jewelry) or waiting to be propositioned by passing tourists. Rather, I suggest that there is an element of spontaneity and casualness to the route by which these tourists access ayahuasca.

²⁶⁷ Another “shaman on the street” development is the proliferation of guides at the airport holding up signs which read, “Ayahuasca here”. These developments concern the local shamans interviewed in this study. For example, one shaman (who runs his own ecological/healing center) stated that he does “not advertise at the airport” and that this is what differentiates him from the “commercial shamans” who were “all about money.”

young Israeli backpacker stated simply, “I’m just trying to drink [ayahuasca] as many times as I can before I leave.” This statement reflects the Type III tourist well. Each of the tourists interviewed in this category said that they had drank (or were planning to drink) with multiple shamans during their time in Iquitos. This “shopping around” appeared to best suit this group, as the drive-by approach to drinking ayahuasca lends itself to flexibility and choice of shamans, ceremonies and locations – options not readily available to the Type I or Type II tourists.²⁶⁸

Although this type of ayahuasca tourism provides more flexibility, choice and options than the other two, these benefits come with a potentially much higher price. Due to this phenomenon, the ayahuasca market demand has produced a variety of “shamans” who may subtly advertise their services to tourists along the boardwalk- where tourists congregate at night to view the river and enjoy the open-air restaurants. Several informants discussed the inherent risk and danger of this type of tourism. At minimum, I was warned that these tourists are easily “duped,” “ripped off” and “conned.” Both mestizo shamans and gringo shaman/brokers informed me that one “had to be careful of being approached on the street” and that “true shamans would never approach you.” This finding suggests that the commodification of ayahuasca in the Type III category differs from the Type I or Type II, in so far as the provision of ayahuasca, via the shamanic

²⁶⁸ Again, cost is a significant factor here. Clearly, the Type I tourist has made a financial commitment to one tour/group – usually to work with one or two shamans employed therein. Even for the Type II tourists who are connected to a shaman (via a lodge/tour broker), the cost of going on an eco-tour may limit the number and types of shamans accessed.

“service” creates very real dangers for tourists, as well as resulting in potentially damaging relations between foreigners and shamans.

While the prevalence of “false shamans” (Dobkin de Rios, 1994) will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, it is important to note here the two most serious and frequently mentioned “risks” in accessing ayahuasca on the street.²⁶⁹ The first danger is the possibility of being poisoned (or getting extremely sick) due to the inaccurate admixture of the plants involved. Often the uninformed “shaman” will either add too many items to the tea, or that the combination of plants may be wrong – both situations causing the ayahuasca to reach toxic, poisonous and possibly fatal levels. The second significant risk, especially for women traveling alone, is the possibility of unwanted sexual advances, sexual assault, and, as was mentioned multiple times in my interviews, the possibility of being raped by the shaman. According to one European informant who works for a local retreat center:

I’ve only heard some horror stories. Not really met any of them...But I have heard stories about, for example, young backpackers who were stepping off the plane and eager to take ayahuasca...because they are offered cheap price...pretty soon well the guy says, “Oh yes, I’m ayahuasca shaman. I’m a *banco*,²⁷⁰ I’m very powerful. I can heal you. I can give you good experience, just come to my house this night. I’ll set you

²⁶⁹ Reportedly, these dangers come from those either not qualified to administer ayahuasca or from those who are “mal-intended” and looking to “cause harm.”

²⁷⁰ *Bancos* are considered to be the highest, most skilled and powerful class of shamans. One informant stated that *bancos* “don’t really exist anymore.”

up.” So, for example, say a young girl on her own, taking the ayahuasca, feeling dizzy... she can end up with the shaman raping, or trying to abuse [her].²⁷¹

Thus, in addition to the clear example of how ayahuasca is appropriated and commodified within Type III tourism, those interviewed warned of the dangers inherent on the street. Due to its lack of structure and formal provision of services, this phenomenon creates the potential for real, life-altering harm (to the tourist) with little chance for regulation or recourse, in the event of an incident. Because the tourist is not connected to a formal tour group, nor are they likely drinking with “groups” of foreigners, these individuals put themselves at greater risk. Additionally, with no formal structures or witnesses, if something were to happen (e.g. being robbed or raped), it becomes a case of “he said/she said.” Finally, several informants noted the corruption among some of the local police officers and stated that, depending on the “shaman” in question, the tourist may have little to no luck pursuing legal action.²⁷²

Precisely because of the lack of formal tour involvement and lack of a formal provision of services, this group proved to be the least accessible and most difficult to

²⁷¹ Both the topic of poisoning and sexual assault will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

²⁷² Though not attacked by a “false shaman”, the story of Cara Cameron, 24 year old Californian model reflects well the difficulty in pursuing legal avenues in Iquitos, especially regarding sexual assault. As recently as February 2010 Cameron was reportedly raped by a Peruvian tour guide in Iquitos. She has since returned to the United States but continues to struggle to press charges against her attacker (retrieved on March 18, 2010 from http://blogs.sfweekly.com/thesnitch/2010/02/sf_state_grad_alleges_rape_in.php#more).

track in my study.²⁷³ According to one informant, the number of these types of tourists has dropped over the past few years, due to the “increase in information available on the internet” as well as the number of people who have now gone to Iquitos, drank ayahuasca and returned, sharing information on “good and bad” shamans by “word of mouth.” It is possible that the globalization of ayahuasca discussed earlier may have a positive impact on this type of tourism. Yet, without additional research, this remains a simply one possibility.

In sum, this tourist typology helps us to better understand the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos, Peru by serving as a framework from which to organize the types of tourists, as well as the resultant costs and benefits of each type. Specifically, the tripartite structure illustrates: who travels to Iquitos to drink ayahuasca (general demographics), why might they be doing so (common motivations), how the tourist accesses the ayahuasca (routes of acquisition), and what sort of cultural appropriation and/or commodification takes place as a result of tourism (costs/benefits). By creating a structure of tourist profiles, I aim to tease out the different benefits and burdens created by ayahuasca tourism – as understood from each of the actors (e.g. tourist, broker, local).

²⁷³ An extended ethnography may assist in gaining much needed data on these types of tourists, as the lack of formalized relationships within this group creates significant methodological challenges with regard to data collection and analysis. Given the potential dangers involved in accessing ayahuasca on the street, such an investigation might shed light on this phenomenon and possibly assist in increasing tourist safety.

CONCLUSION

Within this chapter, I explored the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism as occurring in the contact zone of Iquitos, Peru. I situated these findings within the socio-cultural and economic history of the region; a region that has been characterized by a pattern of “boom and bust” cycles of European interest in and exploitation of the Amazon. Next I introduced and discussed my conceptualization of the three primary types of tourists (and tourisms) within the ayahuasca industry – those who want an experience that “specializes in shamanism”, those looking for “shamanism on the side” or those seeking a “shaman on the street.” A brief summary is as follows.

Type I tourists best characterize those who might join one of the “ayahuasca tours” advertised online and examined in the previous chapter. These individuals typically spend the most money and time on their ayahuasca experience in Iquitos, yet spend the least amount of time involved in other activities in the region. They tend to be slightly older and more “professional” than the tourists described in the other groups. Additionally, these tourists appear to be most motivated by a desire for health, healing, self-transformation and/or spiritual growth. While some in this typology were described as “hedonistic or drug seeking,” these reports were limited and attributed to “younger people.” One reason for this may be due to the significantly higher cost of these tours. A second reason, suggested by the findings for the Type II tourists, may be that younger people are interested in a broader array of adventurous activities and less interested in a week long, highly focused, shamanic retreat.

Regardless of the reason, this data suggests that fewer Type I tourists were motivated by curiosity or entertainment than were those in Type II (Dobkin de Rios, 1994). Rather, these tourists parallel Winkelman's (2005) retreat participants, most came to Iquitos looking for physical, emotional or spiritual healing. Type I tours were differentiated also by the provision of guidance in shamanic dieting and/or shamanic apprenticeships. The processes of appropriation and commodification of culture are somewhat more subtle in this type of ayahuasca tourism, partially due to the level of respect and reverence with which these individuals approach the plant. However, these tours are the most expensive and are typically brokered by single owners making the economic distribution more limited among the local people. Additionally, the structure of the tour itself creates a boundary between the tourist and the locals, limiting the interaction and possibility for meaningful cultural exchange – one not based on the provision of service by the local to the tourist.

In contrast to Type I tourists, those identified as Type II appeared to be less focused on the shamanic aspects of ayahuasca and more on the experiential. This group consisted of slightly younger, more adventurous individuals, motivation by “hedonistic” reasons. Given the search for novelty and the short amount of time the tourist spends with the shaman, this type of tourism renders the commodification of ayahuasca more visible than the first type. As discussed by the urban shaman who contracts with eco-tour lodges, some tourists want a “native” shaman, so he dresses up, meeting that demand and performing that role (Akama & Sterry, 2001). While these tourists may spend more time in Iquitos, perhaps interacting with more locals, they spend less time with the shaman and

the ayahuasca, trivializing the experience and treating it as simply another “thing to do” on the tour.

Type III tourists reflect the phenomenon I call “shaman on the street.” Due to the unstructured, informal nature of their search for ayahuasca, these tourists were the most difficult to research and are reportedly at the greatest risk of harm. Several informants in my study mentioned this trend, detailing the frequency with which “false shamans” have been known to scam, poison and, at its most extreme, rape (women). Because of such instances, one of the shamans shared with me that the provision and receipt of ayahuasca services should perhaps be regulated, an idea proposed in the ayahuasca tourism literature (Dobkin de Rios, 1994, Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill, 2008).

Though designed more for economic gain than in response to tourist issues, the DIRECTURA office staff shared with me their official plan to promote shamanism as “a niche industry” – strategically capitalizing on the increased interest in shamanic activities, eventually marketing it among the other wonders of the Amazon. In the next chapter, I explore these “shamanic activities”, from the perspective of the shamans themselves. Additionally, I include information from local community members regarding their perspective of ayahuasca tours/tourists highlighting both the benefits and burdens this activity brings. Akin to the cost/benefit analysis provided of the three different types of ayahuasca tourism discussed herein, findings from Chapter Six indicate that local people are also differently impacted by the “type” or “model” of the ayahuasca tours experienced in the contact zone of Iquitos, Peru.

Chapter 6

Benefits and Burdens: Ayahuasca Tourism through Peruvian Eyes

“Well, it would be a tourism that is called a mystic tourism. Mystic tourism because they come to do their mystic work. It is mystic tourism.” (Lalo)

In the previous chapter, this spiritual or “mystic” tourism was examined through the lens of the “contact zone” that space in which the tourist and local interact, largely within asymmetrical relations of power. These relations were examined through three primary tourist categories – those who want an experience that ‘specializes in shamanism’ (Type I), those who want their ‘shamanism on the side’ (Type II) and those who look for a ‘shaman on the street’ (Type III). The processes of appropriation and commodification of culture were discussed within the context of each.

In this chapter, ayahuasca tourism is examined from the local, Peruvian perspective. This chapter expands the in-depth interviews conducted with local shamans, community members and tour brokers/staff, illustrating the thoughts, concerns, impressions and perceptions of the local people involved with the tours. I begin this analysis by providing a brief summary on the historical use of ayahuasca in the Iquitos region of Peru. Then, I explore the utilization of ayahuasca in its present context, drawing largely from my shaman interviews. Findings here reveal that local people seek out shamanic services primarily for reasons of health, but also sometimes for assistance with love or money troubles.

Next, I discuss the shamanic administration of ayahuasca primarily in comparative terms; I illustrate the differences between the local and foreign pursuit of

ayahuasca with regard to individual motivation and the fee structure for services rendered. As stated, local people usually drink ayahuasca to help diagnosis or heal a physical (or sometimes supernatural) ailment or to get answers or make decisions about life and love. Foreigners, on the other hand, sometimes want to “see visions and/or experience hallucinations.” Still, a large percentage of Type I tourists who spend a week or more “dieting” with the shamans were reported to also seek relief from physical or psychological stresses. Not surprisingly, the fees charged to foreign seekers are vastly larger than those of locals – who, in some cases – receive this help for free.

From here, I investigate the socio-cultural and economic impacts of this phenomenon. I provide examples of community perspectives, discussing specifically how the communities of Varillal and Tamshiyacu view the presence of ayahuasca tourist lodges and tourists in their midst; those in Varillal are nearly untouched by the tourists, while those in Tamshiyacu receive great benefits and experience a high level of interaction. I discuss the impacts of ayahuasca tourism within the context of the perceived benefits and burdens it provides, as expressed by the locals in my study, noting specifically both the increased economic and cross cultural gains, as well as the commercialization and dangers brought about the “false shamans” mentioned. I illustrate both the positive and negative aspects of ayahuasca tourism through specific examples of the communities of Varillal, Tamshiyacu and the Garcia family of Onanyan Shobo. In turn, I analyze how tourism models may influence the outcomes for local people: Specifically, I describe how the “enclave” model near the Varillal community provides

far fewer benefits than the “integrated model” seen in Tamshiyacu (and to a lesser extent, in Yanayacu).

Lastly, I explore the local perspective on the infusion of *gringo* shamans or ayahuasca tour brokers, in the region. I discuss the thoughts, feelings and concerns expressed by the Peruvian shamans, showing that of two shamans who directly addressed this question, neither of them seemed to mind “sharing” their knowledge with foreigners or foreign pursuit of shamanic training. Throughout this chapter, I continue to analyze the presence of the Corporate, New Age and Exotic Discourses, as explored in the first half of this work and assess the ways in which these discourses are revealed through the interviews.

The goal of this chapter is to complete the final phase of my analysis of ayahuasca tourism, through the investigation of the Peruvian perspective of this trend. Specifically, its aim is to represent the thoughts and concerns of those people in and around Iquitos who interact with spiritual tourism (either by choice or circumstance). Designed to gain a fuller understanding of the way in which local Peruvians view the buying and selling of ayahuasca to tourists (to assess what meaning this process holds), this chapter also provides practical information on the economic outcomes of the tours for the locals. Additionally, these findings suggest how, and in what ways, this tourism promotes or restricts cross-cultural understanding, awareness and appreciation between the tourists, the broker and the locals. Most importantly, the primary objective of this chapter is to give voice to those seen, but not heard, on the ayahuasca tour websites (Foucault, 1980; Naples, 2003; Smith, 1999).

MEDIATING TO THE MASSES – LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF AYAHUASCA AND OTHER MEDICINAL PLANTS

Seven of the nine shamans interviewed in this study identify as mestizo.²⁷⁴

“Pedro”, the urban shaman, explains his lineage as follows, “And my grandfather was a native Yagua. And we came out a little, how can I say, we are mixed with mestizos, now we are all not natives, we are mixed. Since the moment we are mixed, the mestizos with the natives, they made family with his family, and changed.” Luna (1986) contends that while mestizo shamanism still carries many of the traits of indigenous shamanism, its focus on healing and the incorporation of Christian or Catholic elements demarcate it, in some ways, from its “ethnic” roots (Luna, 1986, p. 30-32).²⁷⁵ Referring to the broad category of healers as *curanderos*, Luna (1986) refers to the mestizo shamans in his study as *vegetalistas*: “the person who has acquired his knowledge from a plant and who normally uses this plant in his diagnosis and sometimes also in healing his patients” (p. 32). He explains that unlike indigenous shamans, *vegetalistas* do not identify themselves with any specific tribal group, nor is there any “concrete community” supporting the individuals initiation to shamanism. Rather, this initiation is a matter of “personal choice

²⁷⁴ The remaining two are American spiritual entrepreneurs, who some call “gringo shamans.” Of these seven, five provided the bulk of the interview data, as one was only intermittently available and one shaman only spoke with me briefly, as he wanted to charge me USD\$50 for an interview.

²⁷⁵ Luna (1986) points out that “the idea of healing also includes the manipulation of spiritual forces in the alleviation of financial and emotional problems” (p. 32).

or individual vocation” (1986, p. 43).²⁷⁶ Though his work was conducted well over 20 years earlier, Luna’s (1986) description of the mestizo shaman’s lineage, initiation and healing orientation fit well the self-identification and story provided by the various shaman in my study.²⁷⁷

Though each of the shaman’s answers varied slightly, most echoed those found in the literature with regard to their use of ayahuasca and other medicinal plants.

Specifically, the shamans reported that their primary goal is to heal their patients through the use of ayahuasca; the plant is either taken by the shaman only (to diagnose and “see” what is ailing the individual)²⁷⁸ (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1986) or both the shaman and the patient drink the ayahuasca, with the shaman serving as both doctor and spirit guide. Ailments include those suffering from physical, psychological, emotional and/or spiritual conditions. This dual role of doctor and spirit guide was reflected in the ways in which three of the mestizo shamans identified themselves: “I am a naturist doctor” (“Hector”); “I simply consider myself as an intermediary for the spirits of the plants”

²⁷⁶ While a thorough investigation of the topic is beyond the scope of this paper, the ability to “become a shaman” without any social or community ritual or backing, may contribute to the proliferation of “false shamans” as discussed throughout this work.

²⁷⁷ With regard to the diet and sexual segregation common among the mestizo shamans in Luna’s (1986) work, the shamans in my study also reported adhering to these standards. The diets ranged from the shortest of three months (Pablo), to three years (Juan and Pedro), to the longest, five years – attained by the older and most experienced shamans in the study (i.e. Lalo, Rivas-Vásquez, and Hector).

²⁷⁸ As one gringo informant noted, Amazonian shamanism is “one of the few practices in the world in which the doctor often drinks the medicine on behalf of the patient, and the patient doesn’t drink the medicine.”

(“Pablo”); and, “I am the guide of spiritual orientation” (“Lalo”).²⁷⁹ The syncretism of ancient and Christian beliefs, characteristic of mestizo shamans (Luna, 1986) was also present in Pablo’s description of himself: “I always have considered myself a *curandero*. *Curandero, vegetalista, ayahuasquero*. Like I told you, I have a science that is very ample, but within it I always will consider myself an intermediary, most of all an intermediary from God, the mother earth and the mother ayahuasca”.²⁸⁰

All of the mestizo shamans reported that they provide services to their local community, in addition to administering ayahuasca to foreigners. The number of locals administered to by each shaman varied, sometimes according to the “type” of ayahuasca tourism the shaman was involved with. For example, Pablo stated that because he was at his center three times a week, he was only able to provide services in his home on the days he was in Iquitos.²⁸¹ He said that in Iquitos, during one week he may have “four or five” people visit him. At other times, he may see many more, stating, “There are times

²⁷⁹ It is interesting to note that of the mestizo shamans interviewed only these two included the phrases “spiritual” in their title and their answers on a frequent basis. Both of these shamans run their own centers and work with foreigners in the Type I group – suggesting that these shamans have acquired the “New Age” discourse of which foreign tourists are used to hearing.

²⁸⁰ Two of the other shamans in the study mentioned “God” and/or the “Bible” during their interviews. Juan explained, “I am Catholic, I have faith in God. I have surrendered to God that I, if I will die, if I am to live poor like this, but life for Christ, and if I will die, I will die for Christ too. So my humility will not allow me to be a great person, have things of wealth, instead within my humility I live here.”

²⁸¹ Pablo owns his own center, placing him in the Type I category. This center is approximately 1.5 hours outside of Iquitos, set back off the highway, in the jungle.

where, in a day, I attend maybe 10 people.” In contrast to Pablo, Lalo said he administered ayahuasca to locals, but only to a few: “yes very few, very few because they believe that because of me it [provision of his services] is organized - they believe that I will charge them a lot of money.”²⁸²²⁸³

Like Pablo and Lalo, many of the other shamans shared that the number of locals administered to varied from day to day, week to week, especially with regard to the types of help locals seek. For example, Pedro²⁸⁴ stated that he sees “three to four” locals a month who “come to take ayahuasca.” He stated that for “other cures...[people] come for that regularly. 30 people a month.” Juan²⁸⁵ also stated that he sees very few local people specifically to drink ayahuasca, for an “illness”, perhaps one person every two to three

²⁸² Like Pablo, Lalo runs his own ayahuasca center, located outside of his Iquitos home, far down river.

²⁸³ While payment for services will be covered a bit later, it is important to note here that these shamans’ provision of ayahuasca to foreigners²⁸³ has had starkly different impacts on their communities. According to Pablo, his work with his center affords him less time to work with local people, but allows him to provide these services for free. For Lalo, his provision of services to locals (both near his center and near his home in Iquitos) has been limited out of local fear that his fee will be prohibitive. Thus, it appears as though Type I tourism has resulted in both benefits and burdens for the local people with whom the shamans work.

²⁸⁴ Pedro is the urban shaman who contracts with three different ecotourism companies.

²⁸⁵ Juan is the river shaman who provides services to tourists, who lodge at three separate facilities near his town.

months. Finally, Hector²⁸⁶ shared that while he may attend anywhere from five to ten foreigners a month, he “sometimes...attend[s]...20, or sometimes 30 daily, of different illnesses.” Similar to the others, Hector said that this number varies and there is no consistency to the number or types of patients.

Findings from the interviews suggested that, unlike the ayahuasca tourists whose primary goal is to gain through the consumption of ayahuasca, local people sought out a shaman for a multitude of reasons. As stated previously, “health” was the most prominent response, with a variety of examples. Treatment of infections and *manchari* were given as the most common ailments. Both Pablo and Pedro stated that they treated children who had *manchari*. Pablo shared, “Well, I also attend many children. Many children with infection problems, or many times with *manchari*. *Manchari* are scares. You work on them with *icaros*, with some baths...” Pedro illustrated this condition further explaining:

Manchari is when the spirit of a child leaves. It gets frightened when [the child is] sleeping...Having *manchari* is when the spirit is in a different place...And the shaman has to cure them, has to return his spirit, so that they will be peaceful. Sometimes they have a fever, they have any type of sicknesses that attack. The child comes pale, when the *manchari* is mature [in an advanced state].

Pedro explained that this happens sometimes because “of a small fright, a fall or a bad blow.” In addition to *manchari* and infections, the shamans cited the following reasons why local people seek out their help for physical problems: issues with muscles/bones/

²⁸⁶ Hector is an urban shaman who worked with a tour company for 18 years, but no longer works in that capacity. He lives in Iquitos and works out of his home (which contains multiple beds, akin to a clinic).

joints, viruses, ulcers, *bichos* (small bugs), stomach aches, headaches, bone breaks and sometimes, cancer. Social or emotional difficulties also bring some locals to the shaman, especially those who seek ayahuasca. Two examples mentioned are individuals seeking help with issues of love and/or money.²⁸⁷ Juan describes these patients in the following way: “those who are from here, suddenly have a problem, family problem, their woman left,²⁸⁸ or they have a sick family member somewhere else and want to know if they are in Iquitos, in Pucallpa, and want to know, they have no chance of traveling, but taking the ayahuasca are able to reach it.” The concept of “traveling” or “going to a different place” while under the influence of ayahuasca is quite common among both shamans and lay people (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1986).

Some of the shamans provided detailed explanations regarding how they use the ayahuasca to heal. For example, Juan stated that when local people come to see him, both he and his patient take the ayahuasca, “Then the spirits of the medicinal plants come and

²⁸⁷ This finding was repeated in the interview with the staff at a Peruvian ayahuasca tour broker’s office who, when asked about local reasons for drinking ayahuasca replied, “Of course, there are a lot who for example drink ayahuasca... they are from here and drink their ayahuasca because they are going to make a business. They drink ayahuasca and they hallucinate, probably, and depending on their hallucination they realize if their business will be a good one or not”.

²⁸⁸ With regard to personal or love issues, another respondent, stated “I’ve known many people does that. “I’m going to *ayahuasquear* me”, they say. Maybe there they will see the woman who is cheating on them.”

present themselves as a doctor [to me].”²⁸⁹ Juan went on to say that the doctor (plant) comes and tells him, “to get rid of this pain you will give to such and such vegetable, such and such medicinal plant, with that you will be healed.” Juan reported that he remembers this remedy told to him by the doctor. He said, “In the morning after taking the ayahuasca, I go to the jungle, I pick that remedy, I give it.” This process of drinking the ayahuasca in order to diagnosis a problem and get help from the spirit doctors (or plant doctors) was a common theme throughout my interviews and reflects well the use of ayahuasca among mestizo shamans as discussed in the literature (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1986).²⁹⁰

Throughout these interviews, many of the shamans mentioned the proliferation of Western or more “modern” medicine, noting specifically how the access to these types of “doctors” and pharmaceuticals has somewhat changed the local quest for shamanic services. For example, both Hector and Lalo stated that people in the city (and out along the river) go to see these doctors before they come to the shaman for help. Additionally,

²⁸⁹ According to Luna (1986), this referral to plants as “doctors” is quite common among *vegetalistas*. He states, “They say that ayahuasca is a doctor. It possesses a strong spirit and it is considered an intelligent being with which it is possible to establish rapport, and from which it is possible to acquire knowledge and power...” He added, “I found that in *vegetalistas* reports plants they call doctors or *vegetales que enseñan* (plants that teach) either 1) produce hallucinations if taken alone, 2) in some way modify the effects of the ayahuasca brew, 3) produce dizziness, 4) possess strong emetic and/or cathartic properties, or 5) bring on especially vivid dreams” (p. 62-63).

²⁹⁰ Described his diagnostic process as “imagining”, Lalo explained, “You converse where their pain is, you can already imagine what it may be and make a prognosis. Whether it be *bichos* (small bugs) or be a virus or an ulcer, a break, you can already imagine and based on that you can then give the plant.”

Juan described how the people in his river town usually go to a health center first for care (though the nearest one is a two hour river ride away). One reason for this is that all children are covered under a basic insurance plan, which includes medications. It is only after the doctor cannot cure them that local people seek out the services of the shaman. Lalo stated that he found that this trend was mostly among the younger people and he was concerned about their lack of respect for natural, traditional medicine, “Yes, there is a difference that they [the youth] mainly prefer the doctor and also take their medicine, and leave the traditional medicine. Many times it is due to lack of knowledge. They do not know that that is complicated with a lot wasting chemicals and the other is natural.” Hector also explained how his patients only seek him out when Western medicine fails, “Here mostly people who come who have tired [of] doctors. For example, bronchial asthma, that almost killed my daughter. And I have totally cured her with small things, with the peel of plantains and beehives, and a drop of kerosene, nothing more.” Juan echoed Hector’s view that local people come to him after they try more modern means, stating, “That is the people who are from here when they have a problem. One may not know a malignant disease, they went from Iquitos, injections, pills, syrups, they cannot heal themselves, they come here and tell me, well... then the ayahuasca will tell. Take the ayahuasca, then a [plant] doctor will come and say... this is good for that”. Lastly, Juan described how the one instance wherein people always come to see him first (and not to the health center) is when they have been bitten by a snake. He shared that, “[He] is good [at] curing that by mean[s] of plants, blowing tobacco, singing the *icaro* of a bird that eats serpents.” Thus, while fewer local people seem to seek out the shaman, many still do so,

primarily for healing and some for forms of fortune telling, especially in the areas of personal relationships, love and money.

It is notable that not a single shaman reported local people coming to him seeking ayahuasca for what non-Peruvians would call “spiritual” reasons or “self-transformation” – those reasons so often cited by foreigners seeking ayahuasca.²⁹¹ When asked if and how the use of ayahuasca differed between local and foreign “patients,” the shamans expressed somewhat varied responses. Pablo, who caters largely to foreigners, gave the following answer to the question of differences among the two groups:

Ok, well, I think that people who come from outside or the foreigners are like more complicated, there is the problem of bones, most of all stress from work, I think, this also causes the person to have many psychological problems. And in regards to the local people, you can find in some more than others many problems. But mostly in children who have *manchari* or infections and some, more than others who have other strong problems like a type of cancer or some other type of problem.

²⁹¹ The only exception to this finding came from Pablo who explained that local people come to him individually, “But not necessarily to do work with ayahuasca but to do work with other types of medicinal plants and also by means of *icaros*. Mostly working in the spiritual part, blowing on them.” Thus, his use of the term spiritual was in the context of other ailments that did not require the use of ayahuasca. He explained that he did not actually work with ayahuasca much in Iquitos, as there was no “comfortable” space to administer ayahuasca there.

Pablo clearly stated that in addition to the problem of bones,²⁹² foreigners present with issues of stress and psychological problems, unlike local people who typically seek his help for more physical conditions. Similarly, Lalo also reported that the while locals come to see him for reasons of “health,” foreigners come to “diet.” He explained, “For me, where I am working, they [foreigners] come mainly to diet. Very little they come for one or two [ayahuasca] sessions, very little. Mainly they come to diet, health problems, other problems like stress. Stressed, to relax, [to seek] relief.” Again, among these shamans who attend to the longer term, ayahuasca as primary experience, Type I tourists, there is consistency – the foreigners with whom they work are looking to address stress and serious ailments. This is somewhat in contrast to those responses of Pedro and Juan, who cater to Type II tourists.

As seen in the previous chapter, Juan said the younger of these tourists seek information “about the future, if they will marry soon, or if in their job they will continue or if they will leave soon, or in what countries they will live, something for that.” He added that, like the local people, the “older ones” come if they have a health problem, “it

²⁹² An extended quote from the interview has been included here to explain the problem with the “bones”: “How do I say, sometimes they come from problems in the bones, sometimes there are dislocations they have in which the person is not aware of. Sometimes they say a lot of stress, but analyzing it they are surprised to find that they don’t have... The spine is not very correct or the spine has moved because of some type of movement, not necessarily for some type of accident or fall, but from the same abrupt movements that many times the person realizes causes the dislocation or out of place movement of bones. And this is where we rule out what they have and subsequently the treatment. But the treatment, since time doesn’t always help me, also with the problems of the bones I am working with my aunt. Within my family I am the only one who inherited all that was from my grandfather, I can say, and my aunt in being a *huesera*, she is one hundred percent...She dedicates one hundred percent to making treatments for bones, and I ask for her support. So she does those treatments.

hurts there.” Juan also stated that while he has seen an equal number of foreign men and women seeking ayahuasca, that typically, local women do not just come and drink ayahuasca like the foreign women do, “The people here, I repeat, [come] in case of illness, if they feel sick, then. If it is to take ayahuasca, I tell them ‘you are going to take ayahuasca to detect your illness.’ Then they take. But like that out of custom ‘I want to take ayahuasca’, then a woman might come, a young lady, no. Difficult. Only to cure illnesses may you take ayahuasca.”²⁹³ On the contrary, Pedro stated that he considered the motives of the foreigners to be not that different from the local people he attends to; when asked if there were differences between the two he replied, “No. Everything is the same. Everything is the same...Some [tourists] want to take ayahuasca, some want to be cured, some want flowering baths...for love, for money, for work.” Further, urban naturalist Hector concurred that “nerves” (or stress) are a significant reason why foreigners come to see him, “Well, they come from negative outside energies...Now they come with nerves [nervousness, stress, anxiety], so many things that happen over there, well it attaches the nerves”.

One final, significant difference between tourists and locals motivation regarding ayahuasca reflects the globalization of ayahuasca: the desire of foreigners to become shamans themselves. Twice in Juan’s interview he commented on this trend, saying “now even tourists are shamans.” This desire to be a shaman was not necessarily to stay in Peru and build a lodge, to become a spiritual entrepreneur like the tour brokers and gringo

²⁹³ This sentiment regarding women not taking ayahuasca was echoed by Rivas-Vasquez who reported that “in ancient times women never drank ayahuasca, because they were considered weaker.”

shamans in this study. Rather, he reported that these individuals planned to return to their country of origin and administer to others there. Additionally, Rivas-Vásquez shared that some foreigners are very interested in learning, “but they don't have the time to make a five years diet, so they make a diet alone in their own, avoiding some food and sex, and learning on their own from their visions.” Lalo also stated, while the majority of his foreign clients are not looking to become shamans, they want to do the diet and learn as much from the plants as they can. He added that he does not see local people interested in learning from him through the diet. He shared, “It does not interest them anymore, it does not interest them much because it looks like they have not seen a potential there [in the ayahuasca].” In sum, whether the shamans worked primarily with Type I or Type II tourists, they most reported differences between the local and foreign motivations for seeking shamanic services, in general, and ayahuasca in particular.

One of the most concrete and impactful differences in service provision for the shamans entails the fee structure for the foreigners and the locals. Not surprisingly, all of the shamans charged foreigners much more than they charged locals. The shamans who ran their own centers offered two options for services: the foreigner could either partake in an individual ayahuasca session or they could opt to stay for a week, doing the *dieta* and drinking ayahuasca several times. Pablo charged the highest prices in the study (USD\$500 per week/ \$75 per session). Lalo charged USD\$100 for a single session, stating, “If they go do an individual ayahuasca session 100 dollars is charged. Because it is to do a specific job.” However, his weekly fees are almost half of Pablo’s at \$50 per

day.²⁹⁴ In contrast to the Type I shamans, those in the Type II group charged significantly less. Pedro stated he earns anywhere from 80-150 *soles*²⁹⁵ (~\$25-50) per person, per session, but may make less than that if he is contracting with a company who pays him only half of the fee. Likewise, Juan stated that he typically charges 50 *soles* (~USD \$18).²⁹⁶ The power of the tourist dollar is illustrated by Pedro's explanation of the pricing, and his willingness (necessity) to "negotiate" his fee if needed; when asked the "maximum" amount that people might pay him, Pedro replied, "Yes well, only 150[soles]. No more, that's how far it will go. You can't charge more. Because sometime there isn't any. That's why business is business. If I say 150, they tell me, "no, a little less". All right, 120...there." Clearly, this negotiation of shamanic services is unlike the process of payment in the countries from where the tourists originate: medical or other therapeutic services professionals in the United States and Europe command a set fee, one that is not open to negotiation. Yet, in Peru, a foreigner can barter with a shaman for these services, in the same manner they might barter with a craftsperson or goods-seller in a market.

²⁹⁴ This includes room and board, as does Pablo's weekly fee. However, if you drink ayahuasca just the one time with either shaman, you are welcome and encouraged to stay the night in the maloca – though no other provisions are offered.

²⁹⁵ The *Nuevo sol* is the Peruvian currency (PEN), currently valued at \$.35 USD per 2010 purchasing power.

²⁹⁶ Interesting, the shamans who did not have their own centers discussed their fees in terms of soles, while the others listed their prices in dollars, signaling that the majority of their foreign transactions are in dollars, not soles.

When asked about the fees that locals pay the shamans for their services, many shamans commented on the poverty in their communities and the lack of money among local people. As mentioned before, the higher fees charged to foreigners by Pablo and Lalo results in starkly different provision of services. Pablo explained:

I don't only focus on the work in my center, with foreign people, but also within it here in Iquitos I am giving social support to the people who need it, of low economic recourses. Many of the people who have come to treat themselves, and many of them don't... Most of all I am centered on giving this support... voluntarily. It is a social support that I give now days in Iquitos. People come, people who know, like I said, they recommend to one another, they come to my house, I make them treatments and I don't charge them, there is not a single cost.

Pablo stated that he prefers his patients to give their money to others, as a social service. Still, he said, some do try to reciprocate, "They come bringing some products, plantains, or a chicken as a form of appreciation."²⁹⁷ On the other hand, Lalo stated that because he works with foreigners in his center, local people are concerned they cannot "afford" him:

Locals? Yes very few, very few because they believe that because of me it is organized they believe that I will charge them a lot of money. They abstain a little. ... But I tell them 'do not worry, if you have money or do not have money, but I have the obligation of attending them because it is about health'. Because that is the part... that

²⁹⁷ He explained further, "Well, some of the people by way of appreciation have tried to pay, but I have had one... I have made kind of a type of promise, for the blessings that I have obtained, of not charging them. Rather than to me I prefer that they give to other people who are also in need. This is what I tell them many times."

is why I am doing this work from integral small farm work because we are thinking about health, prevention... [*They give you what they have in the moment?*] What they have in the moment. If they do not have, well thank you, it cannot be demanded because the situation in our country is very dramatic.

Juan echoed the concerns about the economic state of his community. He said while the tourists often pay him 50 soles per session, the locals may only pay him ten, “A misery, sometimes they pay ten [soles] nothing more.” When asked if it was possible for locals to pay him more, Juan explained, “There is no money, there is not money. In agreement to the economy.”²⁹⁸ Juan stated that he considered ayahuasca tourism to be a good thing, one from which he benefited, “For me it would be very feasible, is would be as if God has put it in their hearts to work with me. It would be good. Because now life is very expensive. Here in Loreto, Peru, we are in extreme poverty...them coming to take ayahuasca is favorable to me.”

Juan also commented that this increased tourism would help not only himself but the community as well, “When the tourists come here they always bring this for this humble town. For the kids, notebooks, pens, some more games, that is what the tourist brings. And for me it’s very feasible that the tourists keep coming to support with...But I

²⁹⁸ Interestingly, in describing this same community, one ayahuasca tour staff interviewed in Iquitos stated, “The thing is to give a little help to [the] town’s people. It isn’t a poor people’s town, like I say, there aren’t poor people in the jungle, because they always have their food, but actually there are people in need. If the kid doesn’t have a block, it’s not a big deal, he won’t die, but in some way...” Though a more detailed discussion of issues of race and class among the Peruvian people is beyond the scope of this work, I found this perception that jungle people cannot be considered “poor” because of the abundance of “food” to be quite fascinating.

would like for more tourists to come so they may be more things for the school, the kids.”

The contribution by tourists to the townspeople of San Juan de Yanayacu was discussed by another respondent, “Rico” the Peruvian ayahuasca tour staff. He stated that tourists often offer to bring things for the community and ask the broker what would be best. Though he preferred that tourists bring toys, clothes, books, many tourists like to bring medicine for the people.²⁹⁹

Those are three communities with which we work, we bring... sometimes we have doctors groups, physicians, or college students, then they ask us what do these people need? Usually medicines, then they bring for parasites, ear pains, headaches, arthritis, those stuff, because we already know what problems most people have. We also support with... for example, the other day (...) we donated a writing machine, because they didn't have one. They've had to come here, paying two soles for each page, and sometimes it's hard for them to get two soles. Then we are always giving some support. Sometimes there are passengers who say "lower your price for us and we will bring [them] the remaining in medicines". That's a good thing.

Based on fee structure alone, it was quite difficult to ascertain if local people profit from the presence ayahuasca tourists in their communities, or if these dollars assist the shaman and his family only. However, when the tour is located right next to a community like

²⁹⁹ Rico said he prefers things other than medicine stating, “I don't like that much them bringing medicines, because as the pills come in English, no one will want to take something in English because they can't read English.”

that of the Yanayacu community, there does appear to be some benefit – especially when the shaman in the town provides ayahuasca services to tourists.³⁰⁰

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

On the other hand, when an ayahuasca retreat center is based more on an *enclave* model, then the neighboring community does not appear to reap the same types of benefits. An “enclave” model resembles the pre-packaged ayahuasca tours advertised online, wherein the tour’s fixed itinerary is designed by an individual broker who dictates the tourist’s gaze and the means by which he/she sees and (more rarely) interacts with local people (Hazbun, 2007). This enclave model was evident in Varillal, a community of approximately 600 people.³⁰¹ During my fieldwork, I traveled to this community and spoke to a few people who were sitting outside, along the road that one would take to get to one of the famous ayahuasca retreat centers, owned and operated by an indigenous shaman. I first spoke with a young man who worked in a small store, situated on the

³⁰⁰ Additional data provided by Juan indicates that the most important change in the town in the last few years has been the arrival of more money originating from tourism: “The people have a little extra income.” One source of this income comes from the lodges themselves. As Juan explained, “Each owner of the businesses pays a fare to this community, an amount, a small amount of... of 600 [soles] annually. In a year they pay 600 [soles]. Muyuna Lodge pays, Chingana [lodge] pays, Yanayacu[lodge] pays.”

³⁰¹ Given that all ayahuasca tourists who participate in the center near Varillal must travel directly through this community to get to the lodge, I intentionally sought out its members to interview. Their voices were included in the study to better understand the interactions between tourists and locals; specifically those locals who are not directly involved with a tour. Also, examining this phenomenon from the perspective of local people assists me in my attempt to provide more balance to those voices heard within the contact zone.

corner of the highway and the dirt road that leads to the lodge. When asked about the tourists who attend the retreats at the lodge, the man informed me that tourists rarely stop there. If they do, it is “only to buy water”. Mostly the tourists “drive by.”³⁰² Next, I spoke to an older man who lived a few doors down from the store. He appeared to sell fruit, cigarettes and other small goods from his home. He said that there has not really been any changes in the town since the tour lodges started appearing. He stated that the lodge near their town had been there for “four years.” When asked about whether or not the shaman “gives any money to or invests any money in the town,” the man said no, that he does not invest in any big projects. He clarified though, “but if you ask him for money for something, he will give it.”³⁰³ The man shared that he drank ayahuasca with this shaman, but only because he was working as a “watchman” for the lodge.³⁰⁴ He stated that, though some of the local boys have helped with construction and security, the lodge provides no significant employment for the townspeople. Like the young man, this gentleman reported that the tourists do not walk around the community or converse with locals, “they just drive by and wave.”

³⁰² When asked if people in the town sought the services of this shaman, the youth said many in the town do not drink ayahuasca “because they are evangelical”.

³⁰³ The man also mentioned that there were political problems in the town, but he did not attribute them to the lodges. He stated that he was the “leader” of his part of the community and that this part consisted of 22 families. The man said there were approximately 600 families in the entire community.

³⁰⁴ He had never really drank ayahuasca before this and stated that not many people (if any?) drink ayahuasca with the shaman.

These findings were echoed by two young girls interviewed (who also sold soda out of their storefront home). These girls stated that “the tourists drive by and wave”, but that they do not walk around the community, “buy things” or talk with the local people. They also said that the shaman does not do much for the town, but that “if you ask him for money for something, he will give it” (answering almost verbatim as the older man interviewed). The girls explained that they were “evangelical and did not drink ayahuasca.” When asked about those who do, they stated “We know that there are people who don’t know about the right path and still don’t know the truth.” They added that was an evangelical church in the campo.

Thus, for these locals, their proximity to a highly organized, expensive and well-known ayahuasca lodge did not result in any sort of broader, more equally distributed economic benefit. In sharp contrast to those of the Yanayacu community, far upriver, these community members’ interaction with the tourists was limited by its structure: as an enclave model, the tourists were simply driven by the locals – encouraged by design to look, wave and smile, not to wander through the town, talk to people, or purchase any goods. This type of model as described here, clearly reflects the Type I tourism discussed in chapter five, wherein the tourists are insulated from the local community within which or near which the tour operates – thus limiting the opportunity for either economic development or intercultural interaction (Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

The Benefits – Case Studies of Tamshiyacu and Onanyan Shobo³⁰⁵

The two most frequent responses given by Peruvians when asked about the possible benefits of ayahuasca tourism in their communities were: the increased income/economic support and the opportunity for intercultural exchange (or the preservation of culture through sharing it with foreigners). I provide two brief case studies to best illustrate these responses. First, I show how the promotion of Don Agustín Rivas- Vasquez's shamanic services both in Peru and abroad has greatly improved the river community of Tamshiyacu.³⁰⁶ Next, I share the stories of the Shipibo family of Onanyan Shobo – discussing their pride in their cultural heritage and their feelings about their shared ayahuasca retreat venture.

³⁰⁵ In order to address more fully address the issue of impact on individuals and communities, each person interviewed was asked to share what they considered to be the “benefits” and “burdens” of ayahuasca tourism. Questions were asked specifically to determine if these dollars contribute to new improvements and/or problems in the local community? (Stonza, 2001, p. 269). Including the local voice also assisted me in understanding the cultural and community impact of the commodification of ayahuasca (Smith, 1999). Additionally, interviewing locals provided some informative data including who gets involved in the ayahuasca tourism industry, as well as who does not. This investigation was conducted to reveal relations of power within the community, by assessing local choices and constraints as it related to one's individual participation in the ayahuasca tours (Stronza, 2001, p. 266).

³⁰⁶ Though a complete discussion of Don Rivas-Vásquez's life and work is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that while Rivas-Vásquez was born in Tamshiyacu, he learned the majority of his shamanic skills and built his first ayahuasca lodge while he lived in Pucallpa, a town 1500km away. Rivas-Vásquez was forced to leave Pucallpa due to increasing terrorism in the area and returned to Tamshiyacu where he built two new lodges.

In July, 2009, I traveled with Peruvian sculptor, shaman and intellectual, Rivas-Vásquez and his family, to his home in Tamshiyacu, Peru.³⁰⁷ Upon arriving in the town, Rivas-Vásquez headed toward the school which bears his name, whose emblem which displays his image;³⁰⁸ as stated during the dance performance, the school “Is named in gratitude of a person who demonstrated and continues to demonstrate his service and affection to the childhood and youth of his people.”

During a tour of the school,³⁰⁹ Rivas-Vásquez explained that he was born on this land and that it still belonged to his family. Interviews with school staff revealed that Rivas-Vásquez donated his land on which the school was built, approximately nine years ago.³¹⁰ Though the school started with only 120 children, the staff reported that today, 38

³⁰⁷ Tamshiyacu is a small town of approximately 3,000 people located on the banks of the Amazon River – 30km from the city of Iquitos. Though the formal purpose of the journey was to interview Rivas-Vásquez and to visit his town, the weekend trip evolved into something much larger: a 8th annual celebration of the founding of the school named after him, complete with dance performances, *futbal* and volleyball tournaments and a parade (in which all the school children marched or played instruments). Due to the number of festivities, my time with Rivas-Vásquez was limited; however, each day afforded new opportunities to celebrate his contributions and to speak to those who know him well.

³⁰⁸ The name of the school is *Institución Educativa Inicial, Primaria, Secundaria y Ocupacional “Rivas-Vásquez*; translated as “Original Education Institute Primary, Secondary and Occupational, “Rivas-Vásquez.

³⁰⁹ Over the course of this day, I spoke with teachers and administrators, and visited the fish ponds which provide interactive nature education opportunities and income for the school. Also, I witnessed the staff’s delight in receiving the trumpet and trombone Rivas-Vásquez brought with him from his recent trip to Europe. Sources state that many of the school’s instruments were procured by Rivas-Vásquez, through donation or purchase.

³¹⁰ Reportedly, because the school is built on Don Rivas-Vásquez’s private property, it cannot receive full financial support from the State. The plan is to donate the land to the

teachers and staff work with over 500 students; these students come from all over the region, some sailing for up to two hours to attend school.

In addition to the creation, promotion and development of the school, Rivas-Vásquez is credited with bringing other revenue to the town, also in the form of ayahuasca tourism. Prior to Rivas-Vásquez's return to Tamshiyacu the town had no lights, sidewalks or paths. Through his generosity and the donations he has solicited from foreigners, the town has experienced much growth and enjoys these tangible benefits produced by this tourism. According to interviews, Rivas-Vásquez owns two different lodges, his wife owns one and his son, Viejo, owns a fourth.³¹¹ Though foreign interest in ayahuasca (and its burgeoning tourism industry) has increased greatly in the past five years, Rivas-Vásquez appears to be a forerunner of the trend, serving foreign tourists here since the early 1990s.³¹²

Interviewees reported that Rivas-Vásquez incorporates many townspeople into his business by teaching them to make carvings and artesian crafts to sell to the tourists. Additionally, he has continued to encourage tourists to "sponsor" children from the town who are in need of resources, in turn, the tourists would "send things to the kids." Along

State, in order that the school might be eligible for more services. Currently, the State assigns some professors and helps with some repairs.

³¹¹ One of these lodges, "Yushintayta" (also called Yushin Taita) is located on the Río Tamshiyacu and is included on the DIRECTURA list of lodges, discussed in chapter five.

³¹² For example, in 1996, Miguel Kavlin released a 60 minute VHS documentary on Rivas-Vásquez, titled, "Sacha Runa: Spirits of the Rainforest. Peruvian Amazon Shamanism" highlighting his work at Yushitayta.

with the tourists sponsoring the kids from afar, Rivas-Vásquez brings many tourists through the town itself and to the school, so that they may meet the locals, see the children and gain a better understanding of how their dollars positively impact the town.³¹³ One school staff interviewed stated both the children and teachers appear to enjoy these visits and appreciate the attention brought to the school.³¹⁴

Thus, Don Agustín Rivas-Vásquez has demonstrated how, through his individual contributions and the donations of foreigners, the industry of ayahuasca tourism may serve to benefit more than he who brokers the tour. In this case, there is less leakage out of the community, providing economic benefit not only to those individuals who sell crafts to the tourists or work in the lodges, but also to the community writ large – through such activities as donations to school children and improvements in the town’s utilities and infrastructure. Though Tamshiyacu clearly exemplifies the generosity and vision of an extraordinary individual shaman/broker, it also serves as a good example of the benefits of an “integrated” tourism model. The “integrated” model of tourism refers to “tourism economies generated by an interactive back-and-forth process between tourists and diverse local entrepreneurs” (Hazburn, 2007, p.13). As opposed to the “enclave”

³¹³ While there, I witnessed such activity, as I was seated in the “places of honor” along with Viejo’s 12 European ayahuasca tourists, for the annual student dance performance. Earlier in the day, I had occasion to talk with one of the German women in this group, who shared that the majority of the tourists were from Germany, Austria or Switzerland – all of whom were participating in a 17 day ayahuasca retreat at the center run by Viejo, Rivas-Vásquez’s son.

³¹⁴ On a personal note, I, too enjoyed my tour and my participation in the many festivities and was greeted with warmth and kindness by the majority of the people I met that weekend.

models discussed earlier, this type of tourism lends itself more easily to interaction with locals and may contribute more easily to the dispersion of economic benefits among the community, suggesting that Rivas-Vásquez's integration of his business within his community may present the best model possible within the ayahuasca tourism industry.

In addition to the economic gains possible via ayahuasca tourism, a second form of community benefit, that of inter-cultural exchange and the preservation of traditional skills/values can be illustrated best through the example of the Onanayan Shobo retreat and the words of the Shipibo family members who co-own and run the facility.³¹⁵ The family shared that though they are originally from Pucallpa, (like Rivas-Vásquez) they were forced to leave their home due to the terrorist activity occurring there. Upon the family's relocation to Iquitos, Henry stated he was forced to quit University and go to work, though finding a permanent job was quite difficult due to the "huge economic crisis" in Iquitos at the time. Shortly thereafter, his family held a meeting and decided to market their handicrafts and shamanism to "work on what's ours." It appears as though Henry's grandfather met Francesco while he, the grandfather, was working as a shaman at another lodge. Subsequently, Henry and Francesco met and Henry proposed the idea for his family to work with Francesco "In both fields handicraft and shamanism," asking

³¹⁵ As stated previously, Onanayan-Shobo is a joint venture between Italian Francesco Sammarco (El Mundo Magico) and the members Shipibo family, the Garcias. On July 10, 2009, I met with "Henry" Garcia-Ramirez, Eunice Garcia-Ramirez and Esther Garcia-Ramirez at the center to talk with them regarding the creation of their ayahuasca retreat center and the ways in which foreign interest in ayahuasca has impacted their lives.

Francesco if he could “lend us a hand.”³¹⁶ After a short time, the family found a parcel of land, Francesco lent them the money to purchase it and agreed to send them “passengers” (travelers/tourists).³¹⁷ Summarized by Henry:

And that’s how we began working and we, the family, hold him in high esteem and thank a lot the [El] Mundo Mágico, Francesco, because he is the first person to give us a hand to start and continue with this work, because that’s why we can highlight and revalue our culture, which is slowly disappearing regarding handicraft and shamanism.³¹⁸

In addition to Eunice’s opportunity to practice the Shipibo tradition of giving massages,³¹⁹ other benefits were listed as well; Henry shared, “For example, also about the handicrafts, there are passengers arriving, we know, my mom or my dad are making blouses, skirts with their machine, and my sisters are painting, my mom, everyone. So in

³¹⁶ All quotes in this section were garnered via personal communication during the family interview, July 10, 2009. The center has been operating in its present location for three years.

³¹⁷ Though he is of Italian descent, Sammarco resides in England for most of the year, which contributes to the majority of Onanyan Shobo tourists being from England. Though much smaller in number, other tourists were reported to have come from “...Scotland, from Sweden, from Africa, also from Mexico, Colombia, nearby too, Belgium, Holland, also Russia.”

³¹⁸ This opportunity to revive and share their culture was mentioned by each member of the family throughout the interview.

³¹⁹ Eunice is the oldest daughter and the one who provides massages to tourists, upon request.

this way we keep practicing what's ours, the handicraft." One of the sisters adds that she enjoys the sharing of her culture, as much as the preservation that is offered through the "practicing" discussed by Henry:

Well, first of all, what I liked the most in the beginning of this shamanism Center, of medicinal plants, first of all it [what I liked] was about following our customs, and we are very happy to show all people coming here... first of all we thank that people a lot because they come from far away, wishing to know a lot of things and learn customs in this Center.

With this sharing comes a tremendous amount of pride in the cultural heritage of this family. An extended quote from one of the sisters is included to fully illustrate the pride involved and re-inscribed as a function of the family's work with foreigners in Onanyan Shobo:

Well, first of all, Christine, I want to tell you that I'm proud of being a Shipiba. While other Shipibo aren't known to be or don't tell their friends that they are Shipibo, while many persons don't identify themselves with their race, what they are. So I feel very proud of being a Shipiba because is my honor to been born in a Shipibo family, because that's how I do know a lot of things. One, what's another language, what's speaking Shipibo language. Two, what I learned from my friends and even my parents, which is the Spanish language.

Also using or making the Shipibo handicraft, which is a kind of gift we have, we can do what other people can't. Then also the meaning of the drawings [designs³²⁰], nowadays a lot of Shipibos don't know those meanings, because a lot of grandmothers, ancient persons, didn't speak a lot about the drawings. And I thank my parents a lot, and my grandma, who taught us a lot of stuff, as how to learn the meaning of a drawing. Because drawings are written; because in past times, as my brother said, we had no education and people couldn't read or write. So they communicated using the drawings. If someone was sick, they draw. Or a loving message, or presents, gifts, when someone was in love, I mean, presents, that [sort of] stuff.

Clearly, the family's participation in the ayahuasca retreat center provides many interpersonal and intercultural benefits, benefits mentioned in the tourism literature (McLaren, 2003; Rojeck, 1998).³²¹ However, these benefits were not limited to the

³²⁰ The word used in all cases is *diseños*. She is talking about the kind of patterns Shipibos draw in handicrafts, tattoos and paintings.

³²¹ Though Rojek (1998) primarily refers to the positive impact of exposing Western tourists to non-Western cultures and ideas, it is clear from the following statement that this Shipibo family enjoys being exposed to "American" culture as well: "Sometimes passengers teaches us a lot, I mean, the experience itself. Wow. For example, [as seen in] the first days. We have our own culture, Shipibo, and there is the American culture. There are two different cultures, but we have to serve them and they should end up satisfied, happy. But, how can that work? We don't know much about their culture. Then they themselves [say]: "Ah, I don't like this, I like that", then sometimes in our diary we made notes of things they like and don't like, and then giving like a lecture, advising our family, and that enriches us. And then learning more and more and more". Though this quote clearly contains the Corporate discourse of "serving" the tourists and

practice of and pride in culturally specific activities, but included economic profits as well. Henry explained,

Thanks to Onanyan Shobo, children can study, we can have houses with some comfort and, for example, our own vehicle. When we just began with this work, everything was owned by other people, everything rented, everything required a lot of money to be paid. Sometimes it didn't manage to pay the basic family [expenses that our family] spends. But as time went by, more passengers and also more incomings, and that helps us in every way.

In addition to the benefits that their individual family receives, the Garcias shared that they believe the center helps the surrounding community as well. Specifically, they employ young men to help construct and provide upkeep for the various bungalows on the grounds, as well as hiring other men and women to do odd jobs around the center.

In sum, ayahuasca tourism in Onanyan Shobo reportedly benefits both the Garcia family, and, to a lesser extent, the members of their nearest local community.³²² Still, in addition to these benefits, the family shared that their participation in the center posed a few minor burdens as well. Henry and the others explained that the challenges experienced were mostly a result of the lack of time they spend at home, due to their

accommodating their needs, there does appear to be a certain joy in better understand the foreigners, from the family's perspective.

³²² As is common with many of the ayahuasca tour centers I visited during my fieldwork, while it is necessary to travel through a small town/community, the actual location of Onanyan Shobo is quite a bit further down the "street", nestled within the jungle, far off the beaten path.

focus on “providing passengers a good service.” Henry stated that the time spent at the center takes away time from their children, “They have to study, but they also need us to be with them, or to help them in their study, doing homework, all of that. Sometimes [there is] a little lack of care at home because every family member is here.” Henry explained that he did not see this as a permanent situation, and said that “Little things...can be inconvenient.” However, he repeated, “I don’t see a lot of disadvantages.”

The Burdens – Assessing the cost of ayahuasca tourism

As Henry of Onanyan Shobo stated, “Now concerning the disadvantages, because not everything is an advantage, there are also disadvantages.” In addition to the lack of time with family reported by the Garcia’s, other shamans and Peruvian community members discussed the “disadvantages” of ayahuasca tourism. “Increased commercialization” tended to be the most common response – though the answers of what “negative” affects occurred as a result of this commercialization varied slightly throughout the study.³²³

³²³ During my ethnographic fieldwork, I experienced this commercialization first hand; though it was not the ayahuasca itself that was commodified, it was one shaman’s “knowledge” about it. Upon meeting with one of the urban shamans in my study, I was asked by the man to pay him USD \$50 “to have a chat”. This surprised me quite a bit, as up until that point no other respondents had made such a request. “Marcos” explained the fee was due to the fact that “the knowledge [he] has has a lot of value, and with this the people who are making studies will later benefit.” He commented that some time ago a foreign person made a doctorate thesis “based on interviews with him and now he [the foreigner] has a lot of money, but he [JM] didn’t get anything.” For this reason, Marcos informed me that he “always charges.” He added that that same afternoon he had an interview with “an anthropologist from Texas.” In debriefing this experience with my translator, he and I both admitted that upon considering this “deal”, our frame of reference shifted dramatically, from an appreciative, somewhat humble audience to a results, consumer oriented perspective – we both immediately thought that if I was going to pay, I “expected” to get a good interview. Clearly, the commodification of this shaman’s knowledge instantly created a consumer environment, one in which we

The lack of regulation of ayahuasca services and the increase in “false shamans” garnered the most concern, with the latter leading to two additional problems: that of incorrect dosing and possibly sexual assault on female tourists.³²⁴

In his interview with an indigenous shaman, Roger Rumrill (Dobkin de Rios, 2005) provides an account of the rise in ayahuasca tourism in the Amazon as the shaman expresses his concern over the proliferation of these “false shaman’s.” This shaman believes that the “phenomenon of drug tourism is opportunistic and based on an insincere corps of individuals anxious to gain economic benefit from borrowed mysticisms” (Dobkin de Rios, 2005, p. 203). Lalo reflects this concern and explained that because there “is no control,” there has been more commercialization of ayahuasca. He asserted that this lack of regulation can have “a very strong effect” and argued that, “If we do not stop that now, in the future it will be a killer.” When asked why, Lalo replied that “Everyone will want to be on that plan. Making money only with ayahuasca, getting money only with ayahuasca. It will be like a mine.”³²⁵ I am discovering that and want to

expected to get a product (i.e. the answers) which fit the price – something neither of us experienced before or since this encounter.

³²⁴ Of these two problems, incorrect dosing and unwarranted sexual advances/assaults, the shamans themselves mostly spoke to the former, while Peruvian tour brokers, local people and Caucasians in the study spoke more on the former.

³²⁵ Lalo refers here to the copper mines, increasing in number in the Peruvian Amazon.

make a lot of money.' That seek only money? There are many. They are opportunists.³²⁶

Pedro added to this concern stating that these types of shamans have increased a lot, "They get in without being shamans because they hear the song of the shamans; sometimes they record them."³²⁷ They fail and they deceive. They see you can earn something with shamanism."

Pablo echoed this sentiment, stating that people were mostly trying to take advantage of the situation by trying to "get a lot of benefits" or "export[ing]" the ayahuasca. He mused that, "Maybe today ayahuasca is like a drink or a medicine that interests a lot of people. Many try to benefit or take advantage of the situation. Or also many to look as though they *curanderos*." When asked about the commercialization of ayahuasca, Pablo immediately brought up the issue of the false shamans. Most notably, Pablo reported that he has had many cases where people have "tried to take advantage," by posing or "passing" as him. Pablo explained,

Well, I always work with people who I have never met, because they come to find me. But there have been other people contacted, who made themselves pass as

³²⁶ According to "Jesus" one of the medical doctors interviewed, the increase in foreigners in the region (perhaps due to the popularity of ayahuasca tourism) has resulted in a change in the local people's relationship to the gringos. He commented that the locals used to be much more subtle with tourists and now they were much more open, more demanding, seeing the foreigners as "having money and being objects of money" – culminating in more "begging" on the streets and "harassment" of foreigners. Thus the commodification of culture discussed throughout the study appears to result here in a more antagonistic relationship between the hosts and guests in Iquitos – one not previously seen in the region.

³²⁷ Pedro is referring to the *icaros*, the singing and/or whistling of the shamans during the ayahuasca ceremony.

me, in which they worked with other people making themselves pass, and they didn't have a good experience with him. He didn't do a good job. Later there were complaints, but no measures have been taken to make them unable to pass. It has happened many times.

Though none of my other informants shared a similar experience, almost all of them mentioned the proliferation of such charlatans and the serious problems associated with this trend. Marcos, the shaman who wanted to charge me \$50 to talk, explained that “[He] is authentic and real compared to other shamans... We can find many shamans who will *cuenteen* – tell us tales, things that are not true. Likewise, those shamans defraud people.” The frequency with which foreigners are conned by false shamans reflects the findings of Dobkin de Rios (1994) and Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill (2008) and was mentioned by others in the study including the “Rico” the Peruvian ayahuasca tour broker: “I don't think they are honest. I'm not hearing good comments. People are desperate and they pay a lot... then there are people who've seen this and see it as a way to get money.”

The first form of harm derived from this commodification of ayahuasca involved the actual content of the ayahuasca tea and the shaman providing these services. For example, Dobkin de Rois (1994, 2005) discusses the increase in tourists who overdose due to these untrained ‘shamans’: a byproduct of the unregulated ayahuasca tourism market in Peru. Additionally, Dobkin de Rios and Rumrill (2008), warn of these ill-prepared shamans, “They mix and match numerous plants without any concern for their toxic properties and cause distress and illness to many of their clients (p. 75). This risk

was also mentioned by several of the shamans in this study who noted that improper preparation or ill-will (on the shaman's part) while cooking the tea can cause intense illness/injury. Hector (the naturalist doctor who no longer works with tour groups), stated "Precisely for this reason [the money], the amount of young people who don't know has increased." The phrase "not knowing" sums well the propensity for these "false shamans" to poison the tourist out of either a desire to produce a brew likely to give extra-strong visions or out of lack of knowledge regarding how to mix the plants.³²⁸ Hector elaborated the potential harm caused by the commercialization:

Because sometimes they go to gain money, they don't go for the experiences they have. While I have had 45 years of experience in this medicine, I am 65 years old...If you give more than the dose...it can shock their brain. So, it needs to be limited. This is like a chemist who prepares a pill, a vitamin, anything that they make you take, is all calculated... like they say, when that person gets dizzy [or sick] they don't know how to take away the dizziness, and so by itself the dizziness has to pass.

Though many shamans and lay people interviewed in the study reported that "anyone can make ayahuasca," it is clear that not anyone can make it well and not all respondents agreed. According to Rivas-Vásquez:

Not anyone can prepare ayahuasca. It must be made by someone who knows how to prepare it so it can produce visions. *Toé* must be used in a very tiny quantity but is important for moving the electricity in nerves. There are people who use too much *toé*

³²⁸ Though rarely mentioned, there have been incidents where false shamans poisoned a tourist on purpose, in order to incapacitate them (usually to rob or rape them).

or even opium, because some ask for a strong ayahuasca, to produce a lot of visions.

That can produce madness or stop the heart.³²⁹

Pablo also commented on the use of ayahuasca simply to produce visions or make the ayahuasca “More psychedelic.” He warned that using ayahuasca in this way “Is the biggest error.”³³⁰ Pablo attributed the increasing interest in this aspect of ayahuasca to its presence on the Internet, stating, “And within those visionary experiences that normal people try doing, exploring, [that] gets captured in the Internet or in the books. For me this is not good information, because they making it more of an experiment - kind of a type of psychedelic or drug, at the same time.”³³¹ In this way, the shamans reflect the concerns raised by Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill (2008), that it is the “drug tourists” or those seeking a “hedonistic” experience that are driving the ayahuasca tourism

³²⁹ Rivas-Vásquez further warned that, “Ayahuasca can be bad for the body if it isn’t prepared well or if the person doesn’t know how to drink. It can damage your liver if you take too much of it and too little water.”

³³⁰ One of the Caucasian shamans interviewed also talked at length about how, though he does put additional plants such as “Toé” into his brew to make it stronger for the tourist, many false or poorly trained shamans do not cook the tea with the right proportions. He stated that such mistakes while brewing can “potentially cause you to lose your mind – and never get it back”. This statement was supported by a medical doctor interviewed. “Jose” stated that he had treated several foreign tourists who had either been given too much of the brew or a poisoned mixture. Those injuries treated included “blindness” in one woman and “unstoppable head-banging” in one man.

³³¹ Interestingly, Rivas-Vásquez added that he felt that “The ones who ask for strong ayahuasca are mostly drug addicts, some of them tourists, and that’s because their use of drugs makes them less sensitive to the ayahuasca effects.”

industry.³³² In spite of these varied concerns expressed by the shamans herein, the “hedonistic/drug seeking” tourist motivation was the discussed least throughout my study. Still, it clearly warrants concern and further research, especially as it relates to the Type III tourists, seeking “shamans on the street”, as discussed in chapter five.

The second major burden revealed in this work was the propensity of some unscrupulous shamans (both true and false) to sexually assault women. Dobkin De Rois (1994) foreshadowed these concerns, stating, “As some South Americans realize its money-making potential, they come to adopt a New Age vocabulary of shamanic healer/spiritual voyager. Charlatans with little or no training with ayahuasca may now present themselves as *curanderos*...risking not only the mental health of their customers, but their bodies as well (p.18).” At least half of those interviewed warned that there are some “shamans” operating out of Iquitos who have sexually assaulted female tourists

³³² Though only mentioned by Lalo, the Internet phenomenon I call “Buy your own/brew your own” also presents dangers and is a result of the commodification of ayahuasca. As discussed earlier in this work, individuals can now buy the ingredients (over the internet) to brew ayahuasca at home, “without a guide.” This can be a risky venture, according to Lalo, “If there is not guide it is a little... because as you are sensible you can fill of many things and have trauma for all of your life. That yes, you may traumatize yourself for all of your life. You may stay crazy.” A recent Google search with the term “ayahuasca buy” revealed five websites on its first page. These sites include both the plants necessary to brew the ayahuasca at home (the vine/leaves) as well as the instructions or “recipe”. For example, a young male Australian graduate student interviewed stated that he and his friend “Used to brew it at home all the time, but that gets old. We wanted to come over here, to the jungle, to get the true experience.” Also available for purchase online is premade tea, brewed by a shaman and mailed overseas (this form is not as highly advertised due to U.S. drug regulations). One shamanic informant stated that he can sell a “16 ounce bottle of ayahuasca for \$100” over the internet and that “business [is] so good [he] can’t keep up.”

while under the influence of ayahuasca.³³³ One local independent Peruvian tour guide reported that there “was a gringo known to ‘rape’ young women under the influence.” This “shaman” appeared somewhat notorious, as both he and his behaviors were identified (either directly or indirectly) throughout the study. Another informant stated, “He will try to get you in bed, if he can. Must be ayahuasca makes you horny, because this seems to be pretty common!” Additionally, a Caucasian female stated that she knew of two mestizo shamans who reportedly sexually assaulted two different women while drinking ayahuasca. One of the shamans named in this particular interview was also mentioned by a professional colleague of mine (via personal communication), “Santos” does have a ‘thing’ for comely young *gringas*, however, so be aware of that.”³³⁴ Though the shamans in my study mentioned their concern about improper dosing, more often than the possibility of sexual assault on foreign women, this remains one of the most pressing concerns for Peruvian tour brokers as well as gringos involved with ayahuasca tourism in

³³³ The majority of these concerns were not raised by the mestizo shamans in my study, but by Peruvian tour brokers, local community members and gringo shamans and/or ayahuasca tour brokers.

³³⁴ In addition to this interview data, I found two posts on the Lonely Planet’s “Thorn Tree” travel forum that mention solo female travelers being raped, in Iquitos, while drinking ayahuasca: “A single female on Ayahuasca is an easy target. Other than, it’s stupid, dangerous and I would never do it...find a buddy that doesn’t partake to watch and keep you safe. I have friends in Iquitos and know of a man who raped a woman while she was on Ayahuasca”. Another entry in this same thread revealed, “... I’ve talked to two other solo women travelers who had a very hard time with “S. P”. at R.A. With one of them it was bad enough that I would take it as a definite no go.” The actual name was removed herein, though, as an internet post, it is publically available, therefore no pseudonym is provided.

Iquitos. Thus, though one must always be cautious while drinking ayahausca, the sheer number of “shamans” available and the current lack of regulation or “controls” makes this activity a somewhat risky venture, especially for female tourists traveling alone. In sum, the commodification of ayahausca has resulted in not only the profaning of it as a “product” that is now “commercialized, but also in the potential harm to tourists caused by “false” or “insincere” shamans. These harms typically take the form of theft/con, poisoning by incorrectly mixing the plants, and/or sexually assault or rape.

Gringo shamans from a Peruvian perspective

In order to gain a better understanding of how Peruvians view the increasing presence of gringo shamans and ayahausca tour brokers in the region, I asked all local informants a similar set of questions.³³⁵ In general, most Peruvian shamans reported that they had heard of the gringo shamans, but appeared to have little to no opinion on the matter. Pedro explained that he did not consider these men to be shamans, but rather that they “look for [mestizo] shamans so that others can work. And they are the one that are representing [to the tourists]”. When asked if he considered them to be “really shamans,” Lalo answered:

Well, to learn, to have that virtue they have to be *netamente* (really/truly) Amazonians.

It is the same as if I go live in France, their ancestral part I cannot copy very well. One has to be *netamente*. It is the same. I take a plant to Europe and it is very cold, it will

³³⁵ Examples of such questions include whether or not the person had heard of gringo shamans, foreigners attending in Iquitos; did they consider these gringos to be “really shamans” and was there competition between the Peruvian and gringo shamans?

not handle the cold. So he who comes over here is very hot. To continue living in this heat he has to live with it (tolerate it) many years. It is not because I go against them.

We have to learn.

Lalo explained that though he does not think that gringos can come by this learning naturally, they may be able to acquire it over time. He stressed that he is comfortable teaching foreigners in order that the knowledge of the plants is not lost.³³⁶ “They have to go little by little to balance...I am not stingy when it comes to that nor do I go against them but rather we should learn more to be able to have more, leave that knowledge to more people.” Pablo agreed that gringos could learn to be shamans and identified one of the local gringo shamans by name during our interview. Pablo stressed the discipline needed by these foreigners, stating, “Sure, depending on the discipline [gringos can be shamans], everything is in the discipline. It is not just in coming, drinking ayahuasca and knowing how to sing the *icaros*. All of this makes you know if you should honestly follow this path.”³³⁷ Both Lalo and Pablo discussed the question of “competition” between shamans and, like their agreement on the possibility of true gringo shamans, they displayed similar responses. Lalo explained that, “Well, I believe in that aspect of competition... it may be. But I am not in that path of competition. Better yet I want to share.” Pablo also commented that, “Well, there is always competition between all

³³⁶ Lalo’s reference to France reflects his work in Europe. Lalo shared that he has taught maybe “200 to 300 people” about his “natural medicine” both in Peru and abroad.

³³⁷ By discipline it appears that Pablo was talking about the ability and willingness to diet as necessary.

different fields, I think. There are always some who want to give more than others, but for me I think that we all have a capacity and power to give and we are all equal, it is only that we have different forms of curing. No one is more than the other, for me.” The humbleness and generosity of these two shamans was evident in their responses, yet also reflects the type of tourism they are involved with: Type I, wherein foreign people come especially to work with them to experience the ayahuasca and learn from the medicinal plants.³³⁸ Thus, it is not surprising that these two shamans would be comfortable with and promote the idea of sharing their knowledge and skills with foreign tourists, as they benefit greatly from doing so.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I assess the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism through Peruvian eyes. As stated throughout, the inclusion of local people’s perspectives on this trend is crucial in fuller understanding its impacts, as well as providing a means to give voice to those seen, but not heard on the ayahuasca websites analyzed in the first part of this work. Key findings indicate that local people seek the services of a shaman primarily for the issues of health, but also for social and emotional problems – especially those that deal with love and/or money. The shamans in the study reported that while many foreigners do come “for visions,” others come for psychological issues such as stress or anxiety – differentiating them somewhat from the locals they treat. One of the clearest differences in the provision of their services between foreigners and locals is illustrated in

³³⁸ It is interesting to note here that none of the other shamans interviewed really spoke to the topic of gringo shamans, nor answered this question about competition.

the fees charged: the Type I shamans, who owned their own lodges, charged little to nothing, as their work was largely subsidized by the foreign revenue earned. The Type II shamans, who contracted with lodges, stated that they did charge locals a fee, but would treat them even if they could not pay. Many of the shamans in the study mentioned the economic crisis in the region, noting specifically the poverty experienced by many Peruvians.

In addition to the shamans, this chapter also included an examination of ayahuasca tourism from the local community members' perspectives. Results here indicate that the "model" of tourism (either enclave or integrated) greatly impacted the extent to which economic and inter-cultural benefits were experienced by locals (Hazbun, 2007). In brief, the community members of Varillal reported that they saw no particular advantages of having an ayahuasca tour lodge near their town and that the tourists simply "drove by and waved." The enclave design of this tour served to streamline the tourist's activities and agenda, narrowing dramatically both their literal and figurative gaze on the community. In contrast, the integrated model of ayahuasca tourism, promoted and developed largely by Rivas-Vásquez, resulted in concrete economic benefits for the people of Tamshiyacu, as well as intercultural advantages, such as providing an opportunity for tourists to meet and interact with teachers and students at the local school (built and maintained with a portion of tourism funds). Though neither an integrated nor enclave model entirely, the family members who co-own the ayahuasca retreat center of Onanyan Shobo shared that they consider the preservation and sharing of their Shipibo

heritage with tourists to be the primary benefit of their venture, adding that the community nearest them does receive some profit share in the form of job creation.

Both shamans and local people contributed to the discussion of the burdens of ayahuasca tourism. The main concern for all was the commercialization of ayahuasca which resulted in the proliferation of false shamans who “disrespect both the plant and the people”. The commodification of ayahuasca caused many of the shamans alarm due to the propensity for ill-prepared or untrained “shamans” to brew ayahuasca with either too much of one plant or an improper admixture of many. The second major concern raised in this study focused on the increasingly high number of shamans who sexually assault or rape foreign women while the women are under the influence of the ayahuasca.³³⁹ In response to these concerns, one shaman suggested that the provision of ayahuasca be “regulated” – a suggestion offered by American anthropologist and ayahuasca scholar Marlene Dobkin de Rios (1994; Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill, 2008).

Regardless of these disadvantages, all of the shamans interviewed were in support of this ever popular foreign pursuit of ayahuasca. For those shamans in the Type II category, an increase in this tourism would be greatly beneficial. Pedro stated that he

³³⁹ As recently as March 21, 2009, Peruvian television reported that a 23 year old German woman was severely beaten and raped in Iquitos during an ayahuasca ceremony. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from <http://www.facebook.com/l/88046;elcomercio.pe/noticia/450258/joven-alemana-fue-violada-golpeada-salvajemente-durante-sesion-ayahuasca-iquitos>.

knew of the (Type I) lodges wherein shamans had their own space to administer and he shared that he, too, would like that opportunity:³⁴⁰

There is a site I go [in the jungle] but there is no one to help me, and if I made a botanic garden it would be great to get support. I don't have the budget to make houses [lodging], so it would be very good. The one who helps me can manage me, so that they can recuperate their money. I am not ambitious for money, the money no...More my work. That is what I would like, that they would support me in making a botanic garden.

Though Pablo has his own lodge and, subsequently, does well financially, he too discussed how the increased interest in ayahuasca has changed over time and has resulted in positive benefits. One of the most vital outcomes of this tourism has been the ability to “talk about the medicine.” Recalling the historical persecution of shamans, over time, Pablo mused:

Sure, I have been able to see many changes, most of all, how do I say, after leaving work, with the treatments they have received they [the tourists] have seen many changes, at the root of these healings that they seen and have felt make the people recommend more the people and the medicines. And now days we can talk much more openly about ayahuasca. Before it was more hidden, because they considered us kind of bad people, if we worked with ayahuasca we were considered witch people,

³⁴⁰ Akin to those afforded to Pablo, Lalo and the Garcia family – where foreigners have provided assistance, primarily in the form of loans.

this is what they said before, and the people didn't think that within the work of ayahuasca you could do healing.

[*So there has been a huge increase?*] Yes, today you can openly talk and work with the ayahuasca medicine.

Thus, though there are clearly some drawbacks to the trend of ayahuasca tourism in the eyes of the Peruvian people in my study³⁴¹, there appear to be very real benefits as well. These benefits include the material and intercultural gains proffered by this tourism, but also involve something much more subtle – the promotion of the sacred, spiritual work of the shamans and the ability to conduct this work, out in the open, while garnering a significant level of respect; something not experienced by their predecessors who experienced ridicule, resentment and outright suppression of these traditional beliefs and practices (Luna, 1986).

³⁴¹ Including the reality that not all of the benefits noted are distributed equally among the locals whose lives intercede with the tours.

Chapter 7

Summing It Up - Selling Spirituality

Increased interest in ayahuasca and the resulting industry of ayahuasca tourism have created a complex phenomenon in the Peruvian Amazon. This dissertation is a case study in the ways in which ayahuasca has evolved from an obscure, medicinal plant used for centuries by indigenous and mestizo communities in South America to a globalized, commodified and highly sought after psychedelic/medicine; it examines specifically the tourism industry which has arisen to meet this popular demand.³⁴² In turn, this investigation of ayahuasca tourism provides a lens through which the broader field of spiritual tourism might be better understood.

Different than its predecessors—religious or pilgrimage tourism—contemporary spiritual tourism is a neocolonial phenomenon characterized by a postmodern, consumer-driven, individualistic search for meaning, self-transformation and self-actualization. This type of tourism emphasizes the self—a self not tied to institutions or dogmas, but grounded in a desire to experience change and inner peace through the alteration of one's consciousness, which is achieved through an individual's participation in a shaman led ayahuasca ceremony, conducted in the jungle darkness. As a result of this work, I argue that contemporary spiritual tourism can be theorized best as a form of postmodern tourism, wherein the discourse of consumerism and individualism are coupled with a

³⁴² The brew has become so popular that websites, syncretic religions and a tourism industry have developed to meet foreign needs/demands.

quest for the authentic, ethnic Other, situated in the current stage of economic and cultural globalization.

As stated previously, this examination of spiritual tourism was completed in two distinct phases.³⁴³ Until now, only a handful of studies had examined ayahuasca tourism and of these, none interrogated both the origins and the impacts of ayahuasca tourism (Stronza, 2001); furthermore, there were none which integrated the voices of both the tourists and the local peoples from whom the knowledge and ceremony originate. Key findings of this study indicate that ayahuasca tourism provides both benefits and burdens to the many stakeholders involved. Benefits reported by Peruvian shamans included a certain pleasure or contentment that the “medicine” of ayahuasca is being spread throughout the world (in healing both physical and psychological ailments).³⁴⁴ Additionally, shamans reported that this globalization has resulted in a newfound

³⁴³ First, I conducted a critical discourse and visual analysis of six ayahuasca tour websites in order to gain a more complete understanding of how these tours were marketed, noting specifically the primary discourses used to sell the tours and the ways in which these discourses maintain the neocolonial boundaries present in contemporary tourism (e.g. host/guest, primitive/advanced, master/servant). Next, I conducted fieldwork in and around Iquitos, Peru over a seven week period. This ethnography consisted of interviews with a variety of actors in ayahuasca tourism, visits to ayahuasca retreat centers and lodges, and observation of two ayahuasca ceremonies in which foreign tourists were involved.

³⁴⁴ This benefit was listed by Americans interviewed as well, including Alan Shoemaker and Peter Gorman who both stated that as long as people “get the medicine”, then there is no harm in such foreign interest. Other Caucasians interviewed shared that they benefited from the curative powers of ayahuasca including help with drug addictions, anxiety and stress management.

“openness” regarding ayahuasca use,³⁴⁵ allowing shamans to practice their trade publicly, thus garnering them “respect” now instead of scorn or suspicion. This increased respect, coupled with the opportunity to make money through such traditional practices, results in the third benefit reported: an increased interest in and desire to become shamans among the youth.³⁴⁶ A fourth benefit mentioned involved the intercultural exchange between foreigners and Peruvians and the pride that the Shipibo family, in particular, felt in sharing their traditional cultural practices with tourist. A fifth benefit was exemplified by the educational and infrastructure improvements in the town of Tamshiyacu that came as a result of increased ayahuasca tourism in the area.³⁴⁷ Finally, many individuals reported that the increased presence of ayahuasca tourists brings money and jobs to the struggling economy of Iquitos.

In contrast to these benefits, a number of burdens were listed as well. Some shamans expressed concern regarding the proliferation of false shamans who scam tourists. Many commented on the “money making” opportunity creating shamans who are either insincere or unskilled. A second burden discussed by local people and Caucasian business owners was the propensity for these false shamans to not only scam, but poison and/or assault unsuspecting tourists. A third burden revealed through

³⁴⁵ Specifically as it relates to legal and socio-cultural aspects of shamanic administration of ayahuasca in/around Iquitos, Peru.

³⁴⁶ This benefit was also listed among a few of the Caucasian business owners interviewed in Iquitos.

³⁴⁷ As detailed in Chapter Six.

community interviews indicated that the financial benefits of some tourism operations (primarily those in Type I tourism) benefit only the broker/shaman and his family members/staff. Unlike the town of Tamshiyaku mentioned above, the members of the Varillal community shared that there was no real benefit from those tourists who just “drove by and waved.” This “drive-by” structure reflects the negative aspects I identified in my critical discourse and visual analyses of tourism websites: in short, the way in which the local people are represented often served to either reify the “primitive” perception of Amazon people or to leave them out altogether – rendering them invisible and an unnecessary part of the “ayahuasca tour” experience. Finally, the increased presence of foreign ayahuasca tour brokers/shamans suggests that more of the Amazon has become privatized and owned by foreigners, developed without the involvement or participation of local people.

A final consideration regarding the impact of ayahuasca tourism involves the issue of “regulation” of shamanic services or the provision of ayahuasca in Iquitos. As noted, the Ministry of Tourism office hopes to capitalize on the niche of “shamanistic tourism” and, in turn produce a training manual which will define the responsibilities of the providers (shamans). While one shaman interviewed supported such regulation, others warn that such formalization may result in governmental interference in socio-cultural and traditional practices. An in-depth discussion of this debate and the possible outcomes of such regulation are not explored in this paper, yet certainly represent an area for further investigation.

The primary findings from this research suggest that ayahuasca tourism in this region has increased steadily over the past twenty years, with the most significant changes occurring in the past five. The two most commonly provided reasons for this growth are the availability of information regarding ayahuasca on the Internet and the annual “Shamanism Conferences” organized by American ex-pat turned Peruvian resident, Alan Shoemaker. In addition to the ayahuasca tours marketed on the web, one might also listen to shamanic icaros, watch an actual ayahuasca ceremony, read a first-hand account of an ayahuasca experience or buy the ingredients necessary to brew the tea at home. In these many and varied ways, this “sacred plant medicine” has exploded online and entered rapidly into the consciousness of Caucasian professionals of the global north: as reflected by the majority of ayahuasca tourists hailing from the United States, Canada, Australia and a multitude of Western European countries.

The proliferation of ayahuasca online provides these spiritual seekers an easy and convenient route by which to plan their ayahuasca experience, making an analysis of these websites crucial in understanding how the ayahuasca tourist first (virtually) encounters both the ayahuasca plant and the Amazonian people. Utilizing the critical discourse analysis approach of Fairclough (2003) and guided by postcolonial and critical cultural theories, the examination of websites herein revealed three primary discursive themes employed to market these tours. Elements of the Corporate, New Age and Exotic discourses were found on each of the six websites. However the frequency and variation in the implementation of these discourses differed greatly on the sites, largely as a function of the tour’s broker – specifically whether or not the tour was facilitated by a

foreign born-individual broker, a jointly owned/brokered venture or a locally managed, Peruvian tour operator. For example, those brokered by non-Peruvian individuals incorporated New Age language at a higher rate than did those run by Peruvian tour operators; they also cost significantly more. Additionally, these same websites presented the founder/owner as the sole Amazonian “host”, subsequently removing the local people from the picture both (literally and figuratively). Finally, the website which displayed the least amount of exoticizing language, while at the same time providing the most comprehensive context within which its tours took place, was El Mundo Magico: the only website in the study that was “co-owned” by a foreigner and a local, indigenous family. As discussed, El Mundo Magico’s retreat site, Onanyan Shobo illustrates the success of such a venture, when seen through the eyes of the Shipibo family involved. Though further investigation is warranted, these findings suggest that joint ayahuasca tour ventures may offer a more realistic, meaningful and fulfilling cultural exchange than those brokered by either individual, foreign brokers or larger, corporate Peruvian tour operators.

In sum, to varying degrees, all of the websites contained discursive and visual elements reflective of the broader, more pervasive themes of cultural imperialism, appropriation and commodification present in previous studies of tourism advertising and discussed throughout the critical cultural tourism literature. This finding is especially significant, given that the stated focus of the tours is on health, healing and the promotion of spiritual growth and change, yet this personal gain comes at a price – this holistically helpful experience may not be attained, in this way, by just anyone, but only by those

who willing to spend \pm \$150 a day. Though couched in positive, spiritually correct terms, this tour (and its price) belies the socio-economic conditions within which it operates – in an economy where the average day's wage is \$6 a day.³⁴⁸ In light of this, I argue that contemporary spiritual tourism can be theorized best as a form of postmodern tourism, wherein the discourses of consumerism and individualism are coupled with a quest for the authentic, ethnic Other, situated in the current stage of economic and cultural globalization.

Using this theoretical framework as my guide, I then examined ayahuasca tourism from the ground up. Through my ethnographic fieldwork, I learned that local people continue to utilize ayahuasca in ways consistent with the previous literature (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1983); the most common reasons cited included drinking ayahuasca for health, healing or diagnostic needs, as well as for clarity on social and personal issues, particularly those of love and/or money. The shamans interviewed shared divergent opinions regarding how, and in what ways, these local motivations differed from those expressed by tourists. My investigation in Iquitos revealed that, in addition to the ayahuasca tours advertised online,³⁴⁹ two other “types” of ayahuasca tourism occur in Iquitos: one involves tourists seeking ayahuasca as an adjunct to an adventure or eco-tour (Type II: shamanism on the side) and the second consists of those who seek ayahuasca informally, through word of mouth, possibly as a result of being approached and/or

³⁴⁸ All monetary amounts are provided in US dollars and are accurate for purchasing power of 2010.

³⁴⁹ These are Type I tours: those that “specialize in shamanism”.

offered ayahuasca in the airport or on the street (Type III: shamanism on the street). Findings here suggest that the extent to which ayahuasca is appropriated and/or commodified (as well as the benefits and burdens it creates for all actors involved) is largely a function of the specific “type” of ayahuasca tourism participated in; it is not simply a result of who brokers the tour or the way in which it is represented on the Internet.

For example, as mentioned, Type I tourists are typically exposed to ayahuasca and the Amazon online, primarily through the text and images chosen by the tour’s broker – via advertising which contains a significant amount of Corporate, New Age and Exotic discourses. Data suggests that these tourists are attracted by this discourse and are more interested in participating in shamanic ceremonies in the jungle than sightseeing around the Amazon. These tourists most closely match those in Winkelman’s (2005) study; characterized as spiritual seekers, they are motivated by the curative and transformative possibilities offered by ayahuasca and are looking to experience “authentic shamanism” from those who “specialize” in it.

Upon arrival to Iquitos, this tourist is immediately whisked away to their lodge, on a private speedboat, resulting in extremely limited contact with either the urban center of the Amazon or its people. The contact this tourist does have with local people is usually confined to the time spent with the shaman (in ceremony) or in a service relationship with tour employees (e.g. the local washes clothes, makes and serves the food). As primarily an enclave model of tourism, this tour insulates the tourist from the daily grind of the local people, their economy and their lived realities; it narrows the

tourist's gaze to fleeting images of crowded streets, busy ports and river villages. This process contributes to the commodification of the ayahuasca ceremony by removing it from its local context and sanitizing it. Type I tourists join in the "soul searing" experience of ayahuasca, yet do so from a position of comfort. After their ayahuasca induced "purge" they return to their individual, mosquito-netted rooms with running water and flushing toilets – amenities rare in the jungle communities and river towns near which these tours are located.

Drawing on the data gathered in the community of Varillal, the structure of this brand of "drive by and wave" tour suggests that the profit funnels to only a small group of people, typically to the broker, his family, the shaman and to the immediate staff employed (who are often family members of the broker). However, if the Type I tour is designed as an integrated model of tourism, whereby there is more interchange among the local people and the tourists, there is a greater chance that the community writ large will benefit. The investigation of Tamshiyacu illustrates how an individually brokered tour might be designed and operationalized in such a way that it provides a broader, more equitable distribution of benefits. This tour design also promotes increased interaction between the tourist and the local people – even if this interaction is constrained by the individual tour guide, it provides an additional opportunity for intercultural exchange and greater understanding of the context within which tour operates. Additionally, the interviews with the Garcias (the Shipibo family who share ownership of Onanyan Shobo) suggest that Type I tourism can provide excellent opportunities for intercultural exchange, if local people are allowed and encouraged to share elements of their culture

with tourists. Though shamanic services are the primary focus of the El Mundo Magico tour, the ability of Garcias to offer traditional massages and practice the Shipibo art of clothes-making and handicrafts afforded them a tremendous amount of both pride and joy in sharing their culture with others.

Similar to the findings in Type I tourism, Type II tourism also contributes to the appropriation and commodification of ayahuasca, resulting in different benefits and burdens than the other types. Because the Type II tourist is only looking to add an ayahuasca ceremony to his/her tour, the commodification occurs differently. The types of tourists in this category were described as younger, more adventurous and more experience-oriented than those in the Type I group. Characterized by motives that were hedonistic and/or curiosity-based (akin to those described by Dobkin de Rios, 2004; Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill, 2008), these tourists appeared more interested in sampling ayahuasca than those looking to specialize in it. Broker interviews suggest that in order to stay competitive in the Iquitos tourism market, one must find a way to offer ayahuasca to those who seek it. Thus, the shamans in this group were employed or contacted on an “as-needed” basis, as opposed to those in the Type I group (who typically are employed throughout the seven to twelve day “retreat” sessions). This contract-based provision of service, coupled with the limited contact between the tourist and shaman resulted in at least one form of fabricated authenticity, whereby the shaman “goes native” to appease those tourists who want an “Indian” shaman and meet this market demand.

In addition to the ayahuasca ceremony being tacked on to a tour and the interchange with the shaman occurring on a limited, sometimes false basis, this type of

tourism has the propensity to commodify and appropriate the experience further, if the tour lodge is located away from a town or community. Though these tourists most often book their tour from a downtown Iquitos office, once they leave on their tour, they may only interact with locals in the ways that Type I tourists do, primarily in a service-oriented capacity. Still, the community of San Juan de Yanayacu serves as an example of how, like that seen in Tamshiyacu, this type of tourism might provide extra income to the local townspeople via the purchase of handicrafts or souvenirs. Also, these tourists had more free time to join the locals in pickup games of soccer or volleyball, as they were not committed to a strictly regimented shamanic schedule. The shamans in this group stated that they appreciated the ayahuasca tourists and hoped for even more business, suggesting that even though they receive far less for their services than the Type I shamans, it is more than they receive from their communities, making it a worthwhile venture. Still, given the choice, one of the shamans shared that, like those in the Type I category who operated their own centers, he, too, would someday like to establish a lodge of his own. However, like the others, he would be dependent on the generosity of outsiders to procure a start up loan – thus maintaining the power differential inherent in tourism in general and ayahuasca tourism in particular.

Interestingly, the power differentials involved in Type III tourism are drastically different than those in the other two types. Similar to the tourists in Type I and II ayahuasca tourism, the individual who seeks a ‘shaman on the street’ retains the purchasing power inherent as a foreigner. However, because this tourist has no connection to any formal or organized tourism structures, he/she is at much greater risk

of experiencing the most detrimental byproducts of the commercialization of ayahuasca: the risk of theft, poison or assault at the hands of an ill-prepared, disingenuous or false shaman. Cited throughout the study as the most negative and troublesome aspect of ayahuasca tourism, the proliferation of charlatans motivated only by money has resulted in very real, very damaging incidents throughout the region. These incidents have elicited a call for regulation among some and for a more defined promotion of “shamanic tourism” by others. Either way, local people shared that these types of events were bad for publicity, damaging to tourism and harmful to the plant itself.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the commercialization of ayahuasca has created a complex situation in Iquitos, Peru. While the processes of cultural appropriation, commodification and imperialism have been illustrated throughout the study, it is vital to reiterate the positive impacts of this touristic trend. Due, in part, to its commodification, the curative and healing powers of this “sacred plant medicine” are now receiving positive attention both nationally and internationally, broadening the paths by which people might heal themselves (e.g physically and/or mentally) or find “spiritual” peace – in short, more people are now “getting the medicine”. This globalization of ayahuasca also creates a safe space for shamans to openly practice their trade and maintain their traditions. Additionally, such openness has served to revive local interest in/and pursuit of ayahuasca.³⁵⁰ Finally, younger generations are becoming more encouraged to learn from their elders and train in these shamanic arts—primarily as a

³⁵⁰ This local interest (by some reports) had faded dramatically due to the increase in Western-based medicine and the construction of health clinics in the region.

function of the market demand and secondarily, due to the new found respect for shamans among foreigners and locals, as becoming a shaman now offers both financial and personal rewards.

Thus, in these many ways, the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism in the Amazon proves to be complex. As stated previously, it is crucial that ongoing tourism development in the area be characterized by thoughtful, intentional and fair implementation of policies and procedures – designed in an equitable fashion, keeping in mind the history and tradition of those from whom this experience originates.

CONTRIBUTIONS

In sum, this work is intended to fill the theoretical gaps regarding spiritual tourism, contribute to the understanding of this unique tourism and inform how the industry of ayahuasca tourism might better meet the needs of all involved: the tourists, the brokers and the local people. Through my innovative research design, which examined this trend from both the outside in (discourse analysis) and the inside out (ethnographic methods), I have constructed a more complete and comprehensive picture of ayahuasca tourism in Peru. Prior to this work, there were no studies which investigated the industry in an integrated fashion taken from a multitude of perspectives. By diversifying my methods, my data sources and my informants, my dissertation addresses this void and expands the current knowledge base. Furthermore, the findings herein suggest that though the discourse of spiritual tourism may appear benign, possibly even altruistic, the ways in which this discourse is incorporated into both the advertising and sale of ayahuasca ceremonies are neither. Instead, this discourse reflects a capitalistic,

corporate veneer—one that is neither benign, nor altruistic, but one that mirrors the individualism and consumerism of our postmodern, globalized society. No other research on spiritual tourism combines this type of discourse analysis with a thorough ethnography— noting specifically the ways in which the discourse serves to shape foreign perceptions of local people, thereby promoting or restricting cross-cultural understanding, awareness and appreciation between the tourists, the broker and the locals.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the brevity of the ethnographic portion of this study, I suggest several directions for future research regarding the increasingly popular trend of ayahuasca tourism. First, this type of study would be best served if expanded in both breadth and depth. For example, one might conducted a similar ethnography in Pucallpa, a city mentioned multiple times during this research. According to several informants, Pucallpa is “where you should *really* go to drink ayahuasca.” Advantages noted in visiting this town included the fact that it is “less touristy” than Iquitos, “there are more real shamans there” and one can work with indigenous shamans more readily. During my short stay in Iquitos and the amount of buzz around Pucallpa, it seems prudent to conduct a study there, as soon as possible, perhaps developing a baseline of data to be reassessed at a later time—as its popularity grows. This type of longitudinal study might provide important data on the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of ayahuasca tourism – data obtained and analyzed as the industry develops, not as it is peaking.

Second, given the difficulty in researching the Type III tourists, those who look for a “shaman on the street,” it would be beneficial to focus on this group in particular.

One primary reason for centering extended research on this group is the fact that they are at such an increased risk of danger, due to their informal pursuit of ayahuasca. As noted throughout, these tourists are the most likely to run into “false shamans,” to drink independently (and not in a group) and therefore to have the least amount of resources or recourse if an incident occurs. Given this increased risk for very real harm, Type III tourism warrants further study and more extensive examination.

Third, due to the increased attention that ayahuasca tourism or “shamanistic tourism” has received by the DIRECTURA office of Peru’s Ministry of Tourism, it would be useful to work alongside those office staff involved in “creating a training manual” for shamans which details “provider responsibilities.” Such academic support might serve to inform the ways in which the government establishes these policies, primarily by encouraging the staff to include the shamans themselves in the process.³⁵¹ It was unclear from my current research whether or not such participation was requested, included or desirable in the establishment and implementation of this tourism activity. Given the historic “boom and bust” cycles and subsequent intrusion of foreign industry into the Iquitos region, it is prudent to support the shamans/local people’s participation in such governmental and economic ventures, which so clearly aim to regulate and profit off of their culture and livelihoods.

Finally, it would be helpful to examine the similarities and differences between the processes of ayahuasca tourism in urban areas (such as in/around Iquitos) and more

³⁵¹ From my interviews and the DIRECTURA strategic plan documents, it did not appear that shamans or other non-governmental officials were to be included in the planning, development or implementation of this plan.

rural areas (such as the Ecuadorian Amazon, situated on the Napo River). For example, this investigation could assess how the region's infrastructure predicts the number, type and motivations of those who seek ayahuasca in the jungles of Ecuador and those who seek it in the cities of Peru. Again, this examination might assist in understanding the processes of cultural appropriation and commodification. Also, if a similar industry does arise in Ecuador, such research as that provided in this dissertation might serve to inform how to best support local people in participating in and benefitting from this industry.

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APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

As stated in the introductory chapter, my study design is unique in its inclusion of all stakeholders' voices and will be the first of its kind to examine this phenomenon in this way. Both discourse analysis and ethnographic fieldwork methods were employed to most fully explore this new tourism trend. Drawing from the decolonizing methodologies and qualitative work of Smith (1999, 2005), my research techniques were chosen with an aim at doing the following: 1) providing indigenous and mestizo communities a tool to wage the battle of representation; 2) to create spaces for decolonizing; 3) to provide frameworks for hearing silence and listening to the voices of the silenced; and, 4) to analyze and make sense of complex and shifting experiences, identities and realities within the context of the broader research questions posed above (Smith, 2005, p.103). In order to meet these goals, this analysis included semi-structured interviews and ceremonial observations.

Interviews, as listed below, included all those involved in ayahuasca tourism: local residents, shamans, tour brokers and tourists, and to the extent possible, business owners. These interviews were semi-structured in order to adequately address the primary research question: the stakeholder perceptions of the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impact of ayahuasca tourists in Peru. Additionally, these interviews were designed to address the commodification of the ayahuasca ceremony, and the impacts of the commercialization of ayahuasca.³⁵² Given that none of the previous studies have

³⁵² These questions will include: to what extent, if any, do the various stakeholders in ayahuasca tourism consider the buying, selling and partaking of ayahuasca by non-Peruvians an example of commodification of culture? If stakeholders do consider this to be a commodifying process, what are the implications? Does this conceptualization

integrated the local perspective of ayahuasca tourism (beyond that of the shaman), I intentionally sought out communities wherein the ayahuasca tours were located.

I consider the exclusion of the local voice in the former studies especially concerning, given that the focal point of this tour is participation in the ayahuasca ceremony, a ceremony which originated in indigenous communities but is now packaged and sold by non-indigenous Western brokers (as well as local, mestizo shamans). As stated previously, without the inclusion of the local perspective, it is impossible to gauge if these newly flowing tourism dollars serve to strengthen or weaken the overall health and welfare of the community from whom the ceremony is taken. Do these dollars contribute to new problems and/or improvements in the local community? (Stonza, 2001: 269).

Including the local voice also assists in understanding the cultural and community impact of the commodification of ayahuasca (Smith, 1999). Additionally, interviewing locals provides informative data including who gets involved in the ayahuasca tourism industry (and why) as well as who does not. This investigation aids in understanding relations of power within the community, by assessing local choices and constraints as it relates to one's individual participation in the ayahuasca tours (Stronza, 2001, p. 266). Finally, without assessing both the individual tourist and the community perspective, researchers can only make assumptions about spiritual tourism and its potential impact on both groups.

change the quality and/or nature of the tourist-resident interaction? In what ways do the frequency and duration of ayahuasca tours in a community determine their economic value to local residents? Finally, how much "leakage" occurs with these ayahuasca tours; what percentage of the tourist dollars flows back to Western stakeholders and how much remains in the community or with the shaman who performs the ayahuasca ceremony?

There are three primary reasons why I consider a mixed methods approach most cogent in examining and explaining spiritual tourism. First, because my analytic framework draws from post-colonial and critical cultural studies, it is crucial that I include methods that specifically, intentionally and appropriately seek out the indigenous perspective on this phenomenon. While the importance of including the local's voice has been detailed above, its significance cannot be overstated: without it, I am vulnerable to recreating the colonial paradigm of which I am investigating, by perpetuating the binary of the "researcher" and the "researched" in the production of knowledge (Smith, 1999, 2004). My second reason for employing a mixed method approach is to address the theoretical and methodological gaps in the literature on ayahuasca tourism. As discussed earlier, there are no studies which examine both the origins and the impacts of this industry, nor do any of the current studies utilize methods which combine both discourse and ethnographic data (Dobkin de Rios, 1993, 2005; Winkelman, 2005). Third, given the diversity of my data types (i.e. textual/visual data, fieldnotes and ethnographic interview data), it is prudent that I employ different methods. My project includes the four types of triangulation identified by Norman K. Denzin (1978), data sources, methods, investigators and theories. This triangulation helps limit potential methodological biases and provides for a richer, more credible means by which to interpret explain phenomenon of spiritual tourism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Michel Foucault (1980) describes discourses as "regimes of truth," stating, "each society has its regimes of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (p. 131). He argues that these discourses of

knowledge have important power dimensions and they can perform an including and excluding function. Discursive formations provide the rules for what counts as knowledge and what does not – who speaks with authority and who does not (Tribe, 2004, p. 54). They can be used to discipline, shape and rule the subject. John Tribe (2001) proposes that tourism scholars utilize critical theoretical approaches such as Foucault's (1974) to unmask issues of hegemony and ideology in research. He states, "The job of critical theory is initially to identify which particular ideological influences are at work. Ideology critique then asks whose interests are being served by a particular ideology (Tribe, 2001, p. 466). Asking whose interests are being served through the sale of the ayahuasca ceremony is one way in which my research methods support my goal of examining spiritual tourism as a form of cultural imperialism.

As discussed previously, this dissertation included an examination of six ayahuasca tourism websites – examined at various points between 2006 and 2007. These sites were again examined in 2009 to track any significant changes and/or updates and to confirm continued their continued presence on the internet. All were located using the search term "ayahuasca tour." Additional criterion included that each website: 1) offered at least one ayahuasca ceremony during the course of the tour, 2) advertised tours specifically to the Peruvian Amazon, 3) presented the majority of the website text in English. It is important to note that this is a small case study of six websites, located by using a narrow search term and examined during a specific time frame. Given the fluidity of the internet and the propensity of websites to either change their content or disappear from the web altogether (Dorsey et al, 2004), I recognize that the findings herein are

subject to change and interpretation. Still, because this study is the first of its kind to critically analyze the content of ayahuasca tour websites, I hope that the analysis and subsequent findings herein contribute to a greater understanding of spiritual tourism and provide both insights and questions for future research.

In addition to investigating the discourse and images on the ayahuasca websites, I examined spiritual tourism as a form cultural imperialism throughout the ethnographic portion of my study. For example, I will noted the behaviors and language used by either the tourists or brokers that reflect the subjugation, distancing and Othering of the local people involved in the ayahuasca tours/communities. What role does the tour's broker play in promoting ayahuasca tourism within the local community as a means of socio-cultural and economic development? Lastly, spiritual tourism as a form of cultural imperialism was examined the industry's economic output. Questions included: to whom does the tourist money flow? Of those who receive some economic benefit, who benefits the most (e.g. the locals, the brokers, small-business owners)? Taken together, this qualitative analysis contributed to my research in three primary ways. First, it provided useful data on the social and economic outcomes of spiritual tourism for all stakeholders involved. Second, it informed me how, and in what ways, this tourism promotes or restricts cross-cultural understanding, awareness and appreciation between the tourists, the broker and the locals. Third, this investigation contributed to my theory development regarding spiritual tourism as a form of cultural imperialism by providing an empirically grounded context from which to interpret and explain the phenomenon.

Peru was chosen as the site of this study, because, of the three countries most frequented by ayahuasca tourists in the Amazon Basin (Peru, Ecuador and Brazil), Peru as it advertises the most tours online³⁵³. Also, Peruvian websites offered the greatest diversity, including many tours that were brokered by private, non-Peruvian individuals, as well as a few offered by local Peruvian owned companies. This diversity in sites made it much easier to compare the discourses on each (those owned by Peruvian companies as opposed to non-Peruvian individuals). Additionally, Peru has been the focal point of the majority of the research conducted on ayahuasca to date (Dobkin de Rios, 1994, 2005; Kristensen, 1998). Thus, my initial literature review provided me with as much information as possible on the Peruvian phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism (given the dearth of ayahuasca tourism in general). As stated, I conducted my research in the communities surrounding Iquitos because the majority of the ayahuasca tours occur in this region.

In addition to serving as one of the main cities for ayahuasca tourists' entry into the Amazon, Iquitos was designated as one of the six principal tourist locations (outside of the main hub of Lima) promoted by the Peruvian government (O'Hare & Barrett, 1999). However, although the Iquitos region reportedly has one of the largest amounts of "relative wealth" in Peru (due specifically to the presence of oil in Loreto) (ibid, p. 57), it has also been designated as having a low "evaluation of tourist attractions" (according to the Departmental Tourist Attractiveness Index of Mendoza Quintana (1997) in O'Hare &

³⁵³ While Ecuador and Brazil offer some tours, Peru offers the most tours found by the major search engines.

Barrett, 1999, p. 52). While economic impacts of tourism are not the sole focus of this study, it is important to note that there have been very few national and regional studies on the economic multipliers effects of the Peruvian tourist industry, nor is very much known about the local and regional impact of tourism in Peru (ibid). Thus, these economic factors were examined in addition to the socio-cultural ones.

In order to better understand the tourist experience in Iquitos, I visited the local tourism office called “iPeru.”³⁵⁴ Located downtown, just a few blocks from the Plaza de Armas, “iPeru” offers tourist information and assistance. Upon entering the office, I was provided with two separate handouts – detailing information on one side in English, the other in Spanish. The first sheet contained the names of 32 travel agencies and tour operators, all of whom were registered with the DIRECTURA³⁵⁵. Of those listed, five

³⁵⁴ When asked about ayahuasca tourists, the young man working here reported that while they do sometimes get questions regarding “how to find a shaman” or “where to go to drink ayahuasca,” this does not happen very often. He described his usual interaction with tourists as quite brief, typically involving only the provision of the listings and perhaps directions around town.

³⁵⁵ The *Dirección Regional de Comercio Exterior y Turismo y Artesanía* (Regional Directors of Exterior Commerce, Tourism and Craftsmanship) is the regional regulatory agency which oversees the certification of “touristic establishments.” In order to be included on the DIRECTURA database, a tourism establishment “should pay for being in the database.” However, my informant at the DIRECTURA office stated that payment was “not obligatory.” In exchange, the business are promoted by DIRECTURA (on lists such as the ones at iPeru) and invited to events. The DIRECTURA office supervises the establishments and provides a certificate in the case that “the conditions required by law” are kept. In the case where an establishment falsely presents itself, the *Superintendencia Nacional de Administración Tributaria* (Superintendent of Tax Administration – SUNAT) office is notified and a penalty fee is assessed to the agency. According to the staff at the DIRECTURA, all tourism establishments are obligated to register with SUNAT (the national office) as well as their respective municipal offices. Additionally, in order to

offered “shamanic services” or a “curative meeting with traditional medicine.” The second listing included the *albergues* (lodges)³⁵⁶ in the area that are registered with the DIRECTURA. Of the 21 listed, only three specifically mention the provision of “shamanic services.”³⁵⁷ Although it is not required by law to register, I was surprised to find that only eight of the 53 companies registered advertised ayahuasca (via the term “shamanic services”). In the early stages of my discourse analysis (2006), I identified at

legally function it is necessary to be inscribed in the *Registro Unico de Contribuyentes* (Single Registry of Taxpayer) division of SUNAT in order to obtain a municipal license. Interestingly, several of the brokers interviewed stated that one “didn’t really need a license” to operate in Iquitos, though if you were married to a local woman, you could easily “register your business in her name.” Notably, all five of the American businessmen interviewed were married to local women (including those who performed shamanic services, ran ayahuasca related activities or operated other businesses).

³⁵⁶ Interestingly, according to interviews with DIRECTURA staff, the definition of “albergue” at the national level is an accommodation that offers a large room with many beds and a shared bathroom (e.g. akin to a dorm or hostel in the United States/Europe). However all involved in tourism in this region prefer to use the term “albergue” when referring to a type of hotel inside the jungle (e.g. individual rooms with bathrooms). Though the English word “lodge” is not officially used, many operators use it because it seems more attractive to tourists.

³⁵⁷ Each of these lists includes the name of the agency, broker or lodge, along with its address, phone number and website/email address. Additional descriptive information termed, “Activities” was provided for each entry. On the list of travel agencies, for example, “Blue Morpho Tours” offers “Shamanic Sessions.” El Tigre Journeys can be found on the “lodges” sheet, under the name, “El Santuario de la Búsqueda del Espíritu” (translated loosely as the “Sanctuary of the Spirit Search”). It is described as providing “Adventures through the Momon river; Shamanic sessions and natural medicine.” Given the immense amount of text the El Tigre’s Journeys’ website devotes to the healing and transformative nature of ayahuasca, it is interesting to note here that the “shamanic sessions” are listed second on the activity list. Throughout this ethnography, I have attempted to track any inconsistencies or disjunctures between the discourse on the tour websites and the information available to the tourist in Iquitos.

least 11 ayahuasca tours online operated in the Iquitos region of Peru which specialized in ayahuasca. It appears as though the primary means of advertising ayahuasca tours is via the Internet, not the local tourism office; a finding which supports well my decision to critically analyze these websites.

Additional tourism data was gathered through an interview with staff members at the DIRECTURA office. Formally titled the “Regional Directors of Exterior Commerce, Tourism and Craftsmanship,” the DIRECTURA³⁵⁸ acts as a tourism regulatory body, certifying the three main types of tourist establishments: travel agencies, restaurants and accommodations. DIRECTURA staff provided me with an immense amount administrative data regarding tourism in Peru. This data, arranged according to multiple variables, was easily accessible from the agency’s website.³⁵⁹ In sum, these records helped me to situate my data on ayahuasca tourism within the broader context of foreign tourism in Loreto.

³⁵⁸ The *Dirección Regional de Comercio Exterior y Turismo y Artesanía*.

³⁵⁹ All records discussed herein can be located at www.mincetur.gob.pe.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT LIST

I. Shamans

- 1) “Jon” – gringo shaman - interviewed May 23, 2009
- 2) “Hector” – mestizo shaman – interviewed May 26, 2009
- 3) “Juan” – river shaman – interviewed on June 1, 2009
- 4) “Pedro” – mestizo urban shaman (contracts with three lodges) – interviewed June 5, 2009
- 5) “Lalo” – mestizo shaman (owns own center) – interviewed June 8, 2009
- 6) “William” – gringo shaman (owns own center) – interviewed June 11, 2009
- 7) Augustin Rivas-Vasquez – mestizo shaman/sculptor (owns own center) Tamshiyacu – interviewed June 12, 2009
- 8) “Mateo” – mestizo “medico-curandero” – interviewed June 16, 2009
- 9) “Pablo” – mestizo shaman (owns own center) – interviewed June 17, 2009

II. Local community members

- 1) “Josie” – Yanayacu – young woman involved with the handicrafts in town – interviewed on June 2, 2009
- 2) “Mrs. Rodriguez” - Tamshiyaku – interviewed June 13, 2009
- 3) Older man – Varillal – interviewed June 19, 2009
- 4) Two younger women – Varillal - interviewed June 19, 2009

III. Brokers: Two main groups:

a) Those who own/found/run the “ayahuasca tour lodges/centers”:

- 1) “Rita” & “Jaime” (staff) – ayahuasca lodge – interviewed June 10, 2009
- 2) Garcia Family (“Henry,” Eunis and Esther)- Shipibo family at Onanyan Shobo – interviewed on July 10, 2009

b). Those which offer ayahuasca as an “activity” along with a host of other activities:

- 1) “George” – Lodge – interviewed on May 25, 2009
- 2) “Patti” – Lodge – interviewed on May 25, 2009
- 3) Man at Lodge – interviewed on May 25, 2009
- 4) “Arturo” – Lodge – interviewed on June 9, 2009
- 5) “Oscar” – Tour operator - interviewed on June 10, 2009
- 6) “Loretta” – Lodge/tour operator – interviewed on June 10, 2009
- 7) “Rosa” – Lodge - interviewed on June 12, 2009

IV. Ayahuasca Tourists/participants (interview dates not included to maintain anonymity):

- 1) Swiss woman (in her mid 30s) involved in a large group ayahuasca retreat (consisting of predominantly European participants) - Type I
- 2) Two Australian post-graduate men (late 20s) drinking with several shamans in the area - Type III
- 3) Older English woman (early 50s) – Type III (had been Type I last summer)
- 4) French woman who was participating in her third ayahuasca, month-long retreat (mid-30s) – Type I
- 5) Israeli backpacker (in his mid 20s) – drinking with several shamans in the area Type III
- 6) Married American couple (both in mid 40s) – Type I

V. Key actors in ayahuasca in Iquitos:

- 1) Alan Shoemaker – founder “Gracia Botanicals” – interviewed on June 6 and June 9, 2009
- 2) Peter Gorman – journalist/Amazon tour guide – interviewed on June 29, 2009

VI. Other interested parties/referred interviews/American business owners:

- 1) “Jesus” – doctor with nonprofit agency – interviewed on May 27, 2009
- 2) “Jaco” – research doctor - interviewed June 6, 2009
- 3) “Romeo” – ethnobotanist – interviewed on multiple occasions from May 2009 to July 2009
- 4) “Cece” – Ministry of Tourism office tourism – interviewed on June 12, 2009
- 5) “Marta” – local woman – Tamshiyacu – interviewed June 13, 2009
- 6) “Pedro” – Bora man –interviewed June 17, 2009
- 7) “George” – gringo business owner -- interviewed June 22, 2009
- 8) “David” – translator (center) – interviewed June 10, 2009

APPENDIX B
TOP SITES ON MAJOR ENGINES

Top results for “Ayahuasca Tour” search on the three major search engines (getting the most activity according to Alexa.com as of March 31, 2007 – Yahoo, MSN, Google)*

YAHOO:

1. Eagle’s Wing - Center for Contemporary Shamanism
2. Ayahuasca SpiritQuest: Listening to the plants (El Tigre journeys)
3. Enjoy Travel Peru*
4. World Eco-Adventure Tours
5. Blue Morpho Tours
6. WASAI

MSN:

1. Blue Morpho Tours
2. Peru Travels.net
3. Enjoy Travel Peru*
4. World Eco-Adventure Tours
5. Spirit-Medicine Shamanic Journeys
6. El Mundo Magico

GOOGLE:

1. Blue Morpho Tours
2. Ayahuasca SpiritQuest: Listening to the plants (El Tigre journeys)
3. Enjoy Travel Peru*
4. WASAI
5. Peru Travels.net
6. Go2Peru - Shamanic Stay and Ayahuasca Ceremony

List for Study:

DOGPILE -- META-SEARCH ENGINE:

1. Blue Morpho Tours
2. WASAI
3. Ayahuasca SpiritQuest: Listening to the plants (El Tigre journeys)
4. Peru Travels.net
5. El Mundo Magico
6. Sacred Peru Adventures

APPENDIX C

AYAHUASCA TOUR BROKER BIOGRAPHIES

Short excerpts of these biographies are included below in relation to the analysis conducted in Chapter Four regarding Wernitznig's (2003) conceptualization of the white shaman.³⁶⁰

HAMILTON SOUTHER ("Shamanic Guide" - Blue Morpho):

The history of Blue Morpho began in Iquitos when Hamilton continued *his search of Peruvian shamans and a prophesized apprenticeship into the primary Amazon forest*. His guide, with 25 years experience leading tourists into the jungle, guided Hamilton and two other travelers to the first camp local, an ideal location for shamanic study along the Aucayacu River. This area of the jungle, steeped with traditional belief systems still intact, was home to various shamans actively practicing their traditional healing. *After a week of ceremonies, Hamilton and a local shaman agreed to continue the apprenticeship*. Thereafter construction began on a camp to live in during the study in this isolated place. As construction continued, *it became clear that many people would benefit from similar spiritual work*, and greater infrastructure was added to accommodate their needs.

He has studied shamanism in California, Cusco, and the Amazon and was *given the title of master shaman by Alberto Torres Davila and Julio Llerena Pinedo after completing an apprenticeship under Alberto and Julio*. Hamilton earned a bachelors' degree in Anthropology. He leads shamanism workshops...and guides in ceremonies.

³⁶⁰ Italics were added in each bio to highlight the features most reflective of Wernitznig's (2003) "white shamanism".

HOWARD LAWLER (“Don Choque Chinchay” - El Tigre Journeys):

Don Choque Chinchay was born as Howard Lawler in 1947.³⁶¹ He is a genuine maestro curandero (master; teacher healer) of the classical Peruvian huachuma mesa in the most sophisticated lineage of all time, the Chavín. His knowledge and mastery of the mesa art has been honed over four decades of practice as a shaman, healer and seer in service to holistic healing and higher consciousness...

He is a wholly plant-taught practitioner in the original archaic tradition because he understood that the original knowledge of the mesa first came to human beings directly from the Source through the sacred plants themselves.

Don Howard's extraordinary gift of shamanic knowledge, impeccable good intentions, positive healing energy, rich personal experience in the arts, and impressive ceremonial skill, accrued over forty years of dedication to the ancient mystical paths, guides us in our metaphysical and visionary journeys like no other.

³⁶¹ Lawler’s representation of himself as “Don Choque Chinchay” echoes the “ceremonious renaming” of the white shamans discussed by Wernitznig (2003, p. 18).

STEFFAN HEYDON (Sacred Peru Adventures):

Sacred Peru Adventures is a true labor of love and is the creation of Steffan Heydon.

Steffan has been a spiritual seeker nearly his entire life. His spiritual search began at the age of 13 when he read "Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda.


At age seventeen he was introduced to a group where he learned about the channeling of spirits. *At this time he was also given instruction in the development of his psychic abilities.* He was taught energy healing in the form of "the laying on of hands" and *began to see auras.*


Steffan has since *dedicated his life* to the study of the indigenous healing traditions of the Andes and the Amazon... *Steffan has now embarked on quest to bring all those who are ready to explore the rabbit hole of consciousness in ways never before imagined, to the Jungles of Peru and the Andes mountains, so that they may experience the sacred power plants in their place of origin.*

APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

To: Helen Quan
WILSN

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date:  10/09/2008

Committee Action: Expedited Approval
Approval Date: 10/09/2008
Review Type: Expedited F7
IRB Protocol #: 0809003312
Study Title: An Analysis of Ayahuasca Tourism - Understanding the Phenomenon
Expiration Date: 10/08/2009

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.