

**The Economic Impact of Mexican Visitors
Along the U.S.-Mexico Border: A Research Synthesis**

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ABSTRACT: The U.S.-Mexico border region hosts an influx of visitors who cross on a regular basis from Mexico to shop, socialize, vacation and seek a multitude of services in U.S. border communities. Based on a synthesis of regional research and on input-output analysis, Mexican visitors' expenditures along the U.S.-Mexico border generate an estimated eight to nine billion dollars in output (sales) and help support more than 150,000 jobs.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mexican visitors constitute an important component in the economy of communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. These visitors enter the U.S. regularly for shopping, tourism, work, and socialization with family and friends. In the process, a considerable amount of money is spent on a multitude of items (groceries, clothing, appliances, furniture, etc.) and services (hotels, restaurants, medical facilities, etc.). Several studies have been undertaken to examine and evaluate this cross-border shopping activity at the regional level. This paper synthesizes the findings of these studies, outlines a profile of the typical Mexican crosser, provides estimates of direct expenditures by Mexican visitors and measures the economic impact of these expenditures in local communities. The paper also hopes to trigger interest in a comprehensive study of Mexican visitors along the U.S. southern border.

To achieve these objectives, several studies in the border states of Arizona (Charney and Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2002), California (Cox, 1998; Kada and Kiy, 2004; San Diego Association of Governments, 2005; San Diego Dialogue, 1994; Sierra López and Serrano Contreras, 2002) and Texas (Ghaddar et al., 2004; Guo et al., 2005; Simpson et al., 2005; Vincent et al., 2003) were analyzed. The data extracted from these studies provided a profile of Mexican shoppers and an estimate of their expenditures, which were then analyzed using an input-output model to arrive at the economic impact to border communities. Results reveal a substantial overall impact in the range of eight to nine billion dollars along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The next section provides some background information on the U.S.-Mexico border region followed by a review of the data obtained from regional studies. Section IV discusses the methodology and reports the results. The last section concludes.

II. BACKGROUND

The U.S.-Mexico border extends 1,952 miles (3,141 km) from San Diego, California on the Pacific to Brownsville, Texas on the Gulf of Mexico. The region is home to more than 12 million people who live primarily in sister cities on both sides of the political borderline. A high level of interaction between the two sides takes place on a daily basis as evidenced by the large volume of crossings that occur. People cross frequently from side to side, either in cars, buses, and/or on foot. In 2004, the number of northbound crossers exceeded 240 million people, the majority of whom, around 80 percent, crossed in personal vehicles. Estimates from border officials indicate that at least half of this crossing activity is attributed to Mexican nationals who enter the U.S. using a laser visa¹ or some other form of legal documentation (I-94, resident alien card, etc.). U.S. citizens comprise the other half. The Texas border is the busiest in terms of crossings by passengers in private vehicles, buses and on foot. The California border is a close second followed by the Arizona border. Minimal crossing activity takes place along the New Mexico border line (Table 1).

¹ A laser visa is a type of visa issued to Mexican citizens allowing them to stay in the U.S. for up to 30 days and to travel within 25 miles of the border (75 miles in the case of Arizona).

Table 1
2004 U.S.-Mexico Border Crossings - Northbound
(in thousands)

Port of Entry	Passengers in Personal Vehicles	Passengers on Buses	Pedestrians	Total
Arizona	25,114	209	9,186	34,509
California	66,394	1,315	18,197	85,906
New Mexico	1,601	18	261	1,880
Texas	97,828	1,846	20,440	120,114
U.S.-Mexico Border	190,937	3,389	48,084	242,409
Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics				

The majority of Mexican visitors to the U.S. arrive for the purpose of shopping. To cater to this need, malls, shopping plazas and downtown retail areas in border communities have emerged and, in some cases, exist and thrive merely because of Mexican shoppers. Interviews with retailers, hotel owners and business people attest to this fact: border tourist attractions such as South Padre Island in Texas attribute more than half of their activity to Mexican visitors during certain seasons (Ghaddar et al., 2004) and in South San Diego County, Baja Californians account for 10 to 69 percent of area businesses' retail sales (Crossborder Business Associates, 2002). Furthermore, economic crises in Mexico appear to have a significant impact on sales levels in border cities and counties: Patrick and Renforth (1996) find that the 1994 Mexican peso devaluation resulted in a 41.8 percent decline in retail sales in Texas border cities. The 1982-83 devaluation had similar impacts in Texas (Diehl, 1983; Prock, 1983). Gerber (1999) also reports a decline in total taxable sales in California's San Diego and Imperial counties in response to unanticipated peso devaluation. Further evidence of Mexican nationals being an important component of retail sales activity in border regions is the combination of low

per capita incomes along side high per capita retail sales (Table 2). For example, the city of McAllen’s per capita income constitutes around two-thirds of the national average while its per capita retail sales are twice the national average. Adkisson and Zimmerman (2004) incorporate this observation in an empirical model and report a positive border effect, whereby retail sales relative to local income are higher in border metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) than in non-border MSAs.

City	2002 Per Capita Retail Sales Percent of National Average	2000 Per Capita Income Percent of National Average
San Diego, CA	105%	109%
Calexico, CA	141	46
Yuma, AZ	129	78
Nogales, AZ	172	47
El Paso, TX	91	67
Del Rio, TX	107	57
Laredo, TX	105	51
McAllen, TX	205	69
Brownsville, TX	93	45

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Census 2000, 2002 Economic Census

III. DATA

This study utilizes data from reports and research projects that evaluate the economic impact of Mexican visitors to various border regions. For the state of Arizona the study included is *The Economic Impacts of Mexican Visitors to Arizona: 2001* (Charney and Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2002). The study administered surveys to 2,612 Mexican visitors as they exited the U.S. through land and air ports of entry in Cochise, Pima, Maricopa, Santa Cruz and Yuma counties. Estimates of these visitors’ expenditures amounted to \$962.9 million in 2001.

For California, several studies were considered. The first is *Who Crosses the Border: A View of the San Diego/Tijuana Metropolitan Region* (San Diego Dialogue, 1994), which was administered to 5,663 crossers as they entered into San Diego County through land ports of entry. The study estimated annual expenditures of Mexican visitors at \$2.8 billion in 1992. The second is a report prepared by Cox (1998): *Survey of Border Crossers: Imperial/Mexicali Valleys*. The report covers findings of 3,188 surveys administered to crossers into Imperial County, California. The results reveal that Mexican crossers spent about \$40 million in the County in 1998. The third study reports the findings of *Patrones y Hábitos de Consumo en Baja California* (Sierra López and Serrano Contreras, 2002), a paper which examines the spending patterns of Baja California border residents. The results of 786 surveys show that Baja Californians along the U.S. border spend \$1.6 billion annually in the U.S. The last study is a recent research project undertaken by the San Diego Association of Governments (2005) to estimate the economic impact of border wait times. Data was collected from 3,603 crossers at three ports of entry along the San Diego-Baja California border. Findings reveal that border delays result in foregone trips and, consequently, an output loss of \$2.3 billion in San Diego County and \$0.2 billion in Baja California.

Three Texas studies examine Mexican visitors to the Rio Grande Valley, two of which are tourism reports of visitors to the area (Simpson et al., 2005; Vincent et al., 2003). The third study, *The Economic Impact of Mexican Visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley 2003* (Ghaddar et al., 2003), looked at 1,027 visitors to malls and shopping districts in

Cameron and Hidalgo counties. Survey results estimated 2003 expenditures at \$1.4 billion.

The above studies were analyzed to estimate expenditures by Mexican visitors per party per trip. Expenditures per trip vary mainly by mode of travel ranging from around \$30 for pedestrians to over a \$1,000 for air travelers², with car travelers spending an average \$100-200 per trip and bus travelers paying more or less \$75 per visit (Table 3).

Table 3	
Average Expenditures/Party/Trip by Mode of Entry³	
Arizona	\$92
<i>Pedestrians</i>	\$39
<i>Car</i>	\$99
<i>Bus⁴</i>	\$69
<i>Airplane</i>	\$1,317
California⁵	\$142
<i>Pedestrians</i>	\$39
<i>Car</i>	\$170
<i>Bus</i>	\$80
Texas	\$152
<i>Pedestrians</i>	\$20
<i>Car</i>	\$182
<i>Bus</i>	\$80
<i>Airplane</i>	\$2,038

To arrive at annual expenditures of Mexican shoppers, estimates of per visit expenditures were projected on 2004 crossing statistics. For Arizona, it is estimated that Mexican

² Airplane travelers are those who either enter the U.S. through the airport of an American border city, or those who travel by air from the interior of Mexico to a Mexican border city and then enter the U.S. through a land port. These shoppers constituted a small fraction of collected surveys (10.6 percent of Arizona study and 1.4 percent of Texas study).

³ Average expenditures are for the years 2001 for Arizona, 2004-2005 for California, and 2003 for Texas.

⁴ The Arizona study did not include bus travelers. Reported estimate was calculated as the average of pedestrian and car travelers' expenditures.

⁵ San Diego Association of Governments' study provides the \$142 figure as overall expenditures per crosser. No breakdown by mode of entry is available. Pedestrian, car and bus estimates were calculated based on that figure, the weight of each mode of entry (obtained from 2004 crossing statistics along the California border), and expenditure patterns depicted by the Arizona and Texas studies.

shoppers spend around a billion dollars a year. In California, these expenditures are close to \$3.8 billion and they exceed three billion dollars in Texas annually, for a total of almost eight billion dollars along the U.S.-Mexico border in 2004 (Table 4).

Table 4		
Estimated Expenditures of Mexican Visitors by County⁶		
(in thousands)		
County	Mexican Crossing Parties⁷	Estimated Expenditures⁸
Arizona	11,522	\$1,014,976
Cochise County	2,417	\$237,870
Pima/Santa Cruz Counties ⁹	5,871	\$470,132
Yuma County	3,234	\$306,974
California	26,709	\$3,768,506
Imperial County	7,609	\$1,037,276
San Diego County	19,101	\$2,731,230
Texas	22,238	\$3,201,592
Cameron/Hidalgo Counties ⁹	7,486	\$1,117,350
El Paso County	7,211	\$944,853
Webb County	3,862	\$516,662
Other border counties ¹⁰	3,679	\$622,728
U.S.-Mexico Border	60,469	\$7,985,073

IV. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The analysis of existing studies had two objectives, the first of which was to establish a profile of the average Mexican shopper. The second objective was to obtain the data

⁶ Airplane visitors were excluded from the analysis.

⁷ Border crossing statistics along the U.S.-Mexico border were adjusted to reflect crossings by Mexican visitors based on the ratio of Mexican/alien crossings to total crossings as reported in the studies cited. These numbers were then divided by average party size by location and mode of travel to arrive at the number of crossing parties.

⁸ 2004 dollars

⁹ Pima and Santa Cruz data are combined because, given the counties' geography and location of ports of entry, it is difficult to determine the proportion of visitors who cross through one county's port of entry and then visit the other county. The same is true for Cameron and Hidalgo counties in Texas.

¹⁰ Other border counties in Texas include Val Verde, Maverick, Presidio, and Starr counties.

needed to measure the economic impact of expenditures by these shoppers. To achieve the first objective, results of existing studies were reviewed and integrated within a framework that describes the characteristics of Mexican crossers along two dimensions: location and mode of travel/entry. To achieve the second objective, this profile provided the data needed to conduct the input-output analysis. A description of this methodology is presented in section B.

A. Profile of Mexican Visitors

General Characteristics of Mexican Visitors

Characteristics of Mexican visitors vary widely: they stay anywhere from a few hours to several days, they spend little or considerable amounts of money and their visiting frequency can range from once a year up to once a day. One distinguishing feature, though, is the mode of travel. Pedestrians appear to have a distinct profile from those who enter in their private vehicles. Airplane travelers also seem to be different from the above two groups. Location is another feature that may impact crossing and spending characteristics. Thus, in our attempt to profile this group we take into account the mode of travel as well as the location of crossing.

Shopping is the primary reason to cross into the U.S. for more than two-thirds of Mexican nationals. Other reasons are social in nature, like visiting family and friends, or are work related (Table 5). Around 80 percent of crossers enter in their private vehicles since a car allows them freedom of movement between different shopping locations in the U.S. as well as enough room to handle the volume of their purchases. Pedestrians

constitute 20 percent of crossers with the remaining few (about one percent) crossing by bus (Table 1). Those who cross into California seem to visit more frequently than those who cross into Texas, with around half of California visitors crossing daily or on a weekly basis compared to 16 percent for Texas visitors¹¹. Pedestrians generally cross more frequently than those using other modes of travel (Table 6). Regarding the length of their stay¹², almost all of Mexican shoppers to Arizona enter and leave the U.S. the same day. Though the majority of Texas visitors are day trip visitors as well, a considerable portion (36 to 40 percent) stay overnight for usually up to seven nights. Pedestrians, along with bus crossers, are predominantly day visitors, while around 43 percent of those who enter in their personal vehicles tend to stay overnight (Table 7). One possible reason why visitors to Texas stay longer is that these visitors are more likely to have traveled from farther south. Visitors to Arizona border towns are primarily from sister cities right across the border. About a third of visitors to Texas, on the other hand, come from cities farther from the border such as Monterrey¹³. Another variable increasing the likelihood of longer trips in Texas is the proximity of vacation destinations such as South Padre Island to the border.

¹¹ No data is available to evaluate Arizona visitors' frequency of crossing.

¹² No data is available to evaluate California visitors' length of stay. However, given the higher crossing frequency of this group, it might be concluded that California visitors tend to stay for shorter periods of time relative to Texas visitors.

¹³ Monterrey is the industrial capital of northern Mexico with a population exceeding 1.5 million. It is less than 150 miles from the cities of McAllen and Laredo on the Texas border.

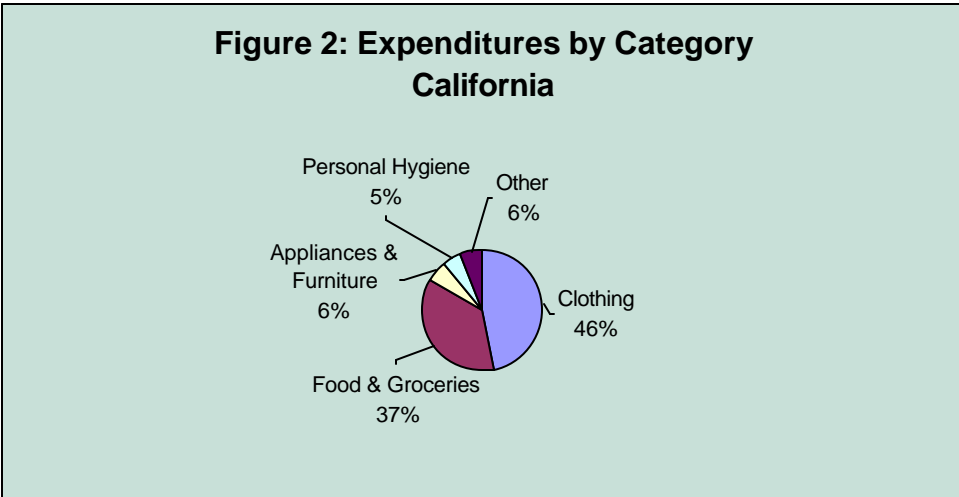
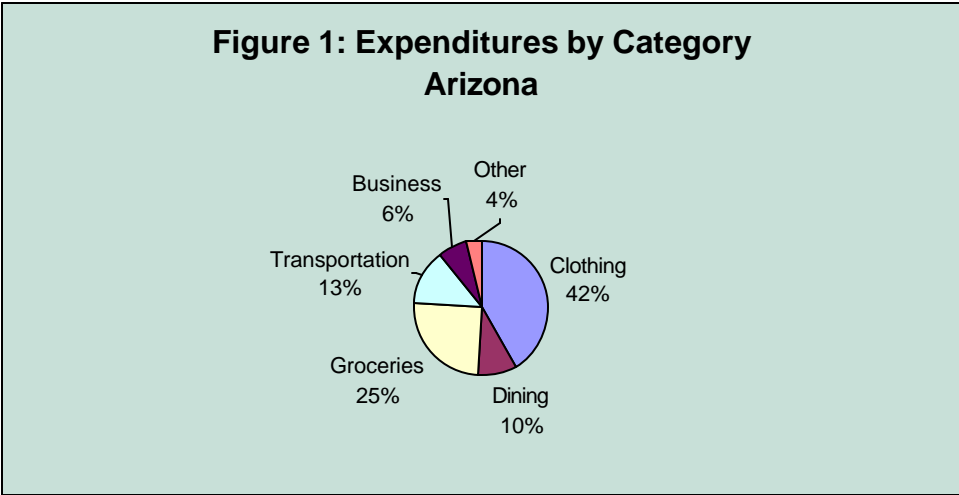
Table 5 Primary Reason for Visit				
	Shopping	Social Visits	Work	Other
Arizona	72%	8%	14%	6%
California	42-68%	9-12%	8-29%	7-21%
Texas ¹⁴	85%	41%	10%	48%

Table 6 Frequency of Visits					
	Daily or Almost Daily	1 to 2 Times per Week	Several Times per month	Several Times per Year	Once per Year
Arizona	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
California	11-19%	29-36%	14-34%	9%	9-17%
Texas	6%	10%	35%	45%	5%
<i>Pedestrians</i>	12%	16%	47%	26%	0%
<i>Car</i>	4%	9%	33%	49%	5%
<i>Bus</i>	2%	2%	33%	48%	16%
<i>Airplane</i>	0%	0%	15%	39%	46%

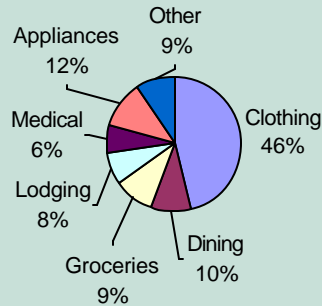
Table 7 Length of Stay			
	Day Trip	1 to 7 Nights	8 or more nights
Arizona	96%	3.8%	0.2%
<i>Pedestrians</i>	97%	3%	0%
<i>Car</i>	97%	3%	0%
<i>Airplane</i>	7%	74%	19%
California	NA	NA	NA
Texas	56-63%	36-40%	1-4%
<i>Pedestrians</i>	98%	3%	0%
<i>Car</i>	55%	43%	1%
<i>Bus</i>	71%	27%	2%
<i>Airplane</i>	8%	75%	17%

¹⁴ Multiple responses were possible for Texas' sample, since question asked about reasons for visiting rather than the primary reason.

Mexican visitors spend their money on a variety of items and services. Clothing items constitute more than 40 percent of total expenditures. Groceries are another important category along with food-related expenses such as dining at area restaurants (20-35 percent). Texas visitors also spend a considerable portion on lodging (around eight percent) given their proclivity to stay over night. Figures 1, 2, and 3 provide a breakdown of Mexican shoppers' expenditures in Arizona, California and Texas, respectively.



**Figure 3: Expenditures by Category
Texas**



Shopping Traits of Mexican Visitors

An assessment of the shopping traits of Mexican visitors to the South Texas border region revealed that Mexican shoppers exhibited a very high level of brand loyalty, were very price and quality conscious, and had especially favorable views of U.S. products in terms of their technological advancement, price competitiveness, high quality, and variety of choices (Vincent et al., 2003). Similar findings were reported for Mexican shoppers from Baja California who pointed to prices, variety and quality as main reasons for shopping in the U.S. (Sierra López and Serrano Contreras, 2002; San Diego Dialogue, 1994). Guo et al. (2005) further explore Mexican nationals' motives to shop in the U.S. beyond the external motives of product quality, variety and competitive pricing. Based on structural equation modeling, they find that psychological factors (desire to show off power, enjoyment of a more civilized shopping environment, aspiration to be an opinion leader, and yearning to be a successful person) are positively associated with cross border shopping frequency.

B. Economic Impact of Mexican Visitors' Expenditures

Economic Impact Analysis

Economic impact analysis is the study of changes in the level of economic activity in a given area in response to changes in demand for goods and services. In this case, the change in demand is triggered by Mexican visitors' expenditure outlays. To perform this type of analysis, an input-output model, which depicts inter-industry relationships within an economy, is utilized. Based on monetary transaction flows, both between businesses and between businesses and final consumers, the model estimates a series of impacts (direct, indirect, and induced) to a regional economy. Direct effects are the result of direct spending by Mexican visitors on merchandise, food, accommodations, etc. This direct spending generates sales of goods and services, local tax revenue and employment of workers. Indirect effects are due to inter-business purchases in response to these direct expenditures. The induced effects are the result of households increasing their expenditures when receiving income through the direct and indirect expenditures. Total economic impacts are the sum of direct, indirect and induced effects. In this study, the 2002 IMPLAN (IMpact Analysis for PLANning) model is used to measure the economic impact of Mexican visitors' expenditures to counties along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Economic Impact Results

Mexican nationals who cross into the U.S. through southern land ports of entry make a significant contribution to local economies. Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11 report the economic impact analysis results in terms of output, indirect business taxes, labor income and

employment, respectively¹⁵. Mexican visitors' direct expenditures in border communities result in total output impact of \$8.8 billion, around half of which occurs in California, 35 percent in Texas (approximately \$3 billion) and the remaining 15 percent in Arizona (more than one billion dollars). As a result of this output, over a billion dollars are generated in the form of taxes (Table 9) and \$3.6 billion are in the form of labor income (Table 10). This economic cycle supports more than 150,000 jobs in border cities and towns (Table 11).

Table 8				
Output (Sales)				
(in thousands)				
County	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Arizona	\$1,014,976	\$96,122	\$120,529	\$1,231,627
Cochise	\$237,870	\$18,876	\$22,034	\$278,780
Pima/Santa Cruz	\$470,132	\$53,102	\$72,419	\$595,653
Yuma	\$306,974	\$24,144	\$26,076	\$357,194
California	\$3,768,506	\$256,268	\$422,656	\$4,447,430
Imperial	\$1,037,276	\$51,537	\$69,800	\$1,158,614
San Diego	\$2,731,230	\$204,731	\$352,856	\$3,288,816
Texas¹⁶	\$2,578,864	\$168,973	\$343,912	\$3,091,749
Cameron/Hidalgo	\$1,117,350	\$56,521	\$149,745	\$1,323,615
El Paso	\$944,853	\$78,306	\$135,507	\$1,158,666
Webb	\$516,662	\$34,146	\$58,661	\$609,468
U.S.-Mexico Border	\$7,362,346	\$521,363	\$887,097	\$8,770,806

¹⁵ Dollar amounts reported in the tables reflect 2004 values.

¹⁶ Excludes the following counties: Val Verde, Maverick, Presidio, and Starr

Table 9				
Indirect Business Taxes				
(in thousands)				
County				
Arizona	\$135,675	\$4,348	\$7,882	\$147,905
Cochise	\$31,709	\$914	\$1,528	\$34,151
Pima/Santa Cruz	\$63,193	\$2,405	\$4,640	\$70,237
Yuma	\$40,774	\$1,029	\$1,714	\$43,517
California	\$578,045	\$10,595	\$28,223	\$616,863
Imperial	\$163,964	\$2,141	\$5,598	\$171,702
San Diego	\$414,081	\$8,454	\$22,626	\$445,160
Texas¹⁶	\$384,075	\$8,807	\$23,993	\$416,875
Cameron/Hidalgo	\$173,637	\$2,388	\$10,157	\$186,183
El Paso	\$136,483	\$4,295	\$9,402	\$150,180
Webb	\$73,955	\$2,124	\$4,434	\$80,513
U.S.-Mexico Border	\$1,097,796	\$23,749	\$60,098	\$1,181,643

Table 10				
Labor Income¹⁷				
(in thousands)				
County	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Arizona	\$416,413	\$32,626	\$40,460	\$489,499
Cochise	\$96,564	\$5,894	\$6,926	\$109,384
Pima/Santa Cruz	\$194,829	\$18,168	\$24,631	\$237,628
Yuma	\$125,021	\$8,564	\$8,902	\$142,487
California	\$1,638,758	\$96,708	\$145,958	\$1,881,424
Imperial	\$441,815	\$18,305	\$21,979	\$482,099
San Diego	\$1,196,943	\$78,403	\$123,979	\$1,399,325
Texas¹⁶	\$1,100,351	\$55,294	\$112,147	\$1,267,791
Cameron/Hidalgo	\$478,463	\$18,751	\$49,424	\$546,638
El Paso	\$401,180	\$25,571	\$43,891	\$470,641
Webb	\$220,709	\$10,972	\$18,832	\$250,512
U.S.-Mexico Border	\$3,155,522	\$184,628	\$298,565	\$3,638,714

¹⁷ Labor income includes employee compensation and proprietors' income.

Table 11 Employment				
County	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Arizona	19,968	1,073	1,450	22,491
Cochise	4,368	204	270	4,842
Pima/Santa Cruz	8,916	568	858	10,342
Yuma	6,684	301	322	7,307
California	60,943	2,361	4,254	67,558
Imperial	17,679	587	839	19,105
San Diego	43,264	1,774	3,415	48,453
Texas¹⁶	57,544	1,861	4,209	63,614
Cameron/Hidalgo	25,237	688	1,948	27,873
El Paso	20,458	792	1,526	22,776
Webb	11,849	381	735	12,965
U.S.-Mexico Border	138,455	5,295	9,913	153,663

The contribution of Mexican visitors' dollars to local economies varies from one community to the other (Table 12). In certain areas, the economic impact of Mexican visitors' expenditures as a percentage of employment and output figures is close to 40 percent (Imperial County), while in others it does not exceed four percent (Pima/Santa Cruz counties, San Diego County). This is not surprising since the economic impact of cross border expenditures usually varies in importance depending on several factors such as the relative size of the U.S. border city, distance to the border, and type of retail/shopping district (Clark, 1994; Patrick and Renforth, 1996). Within Arizona, the largest relative impacts are felt in Cochise and Yuma counties. In California, Imperial County benefits from the most significant impact¹⁸, and in Texas, Webb County seems to

¹⁸ Similar to the findings of Cox (1998), the size of Mexican visitors' expenditures in Imperial County relative to the size of the County's economy seem unreasonably large. Gerber (1999) concedes that this may be due to the fact that some of these expenditures take place outside Imperial County.

be the one where Mexican visitors make the largest contribution, in percentage terms, to the local economy.

Table 12		
Economic Impact of Mexican Visitors' Expenditures		
	Share of County Employment ¹⁹	Share of County Output ²⁰
Arizona		
Cochise	9.4%	10.0%
Pima/Santa Cruz	2.4%	2.5%
Yuma	11.7%	9.9%
California		
Imperial	38.5%	37.1%
San Diego	3.4%	3.1%
Texas		
Cameron/Hidalgo	7.7%	8.5%
El Paso	8.5%	7.9%
Webb	16.6%	16.9%

V. CONCLUSION

The U.S.-Mexico border region is a unique example of social and economic integration, where cross-border shopping is one aspect of that reality. Mexican citizens cross frequently into the U.S. to shop, work, dine, vacation, and visit friends and family. What they spend on those visits results in a key contribution to local economies. Overall, expenditures are estimated at almost eight billion dollars along the U.S.-Mexico border. These expenditures generate a total of approximately \$8.8 billion in output (sales), \$1.2 billion in business taxes, \$3.6 billion in labor income, and more than 153,000 jobs.

¹⁹ Total employment impact divided by 2004 county employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

²⁰ Total output impact (in 2004 dollars) divided by total personal income as reported by 2002 IMPLAN data files (in 2004 dollars).

Despite the conservative nature of these estimates, the reader has to be aware of several limitations given that this paper utilizes data from several studies at different points in time. First, each of the included research projects uses a different survey, different survey locations and a different sampling design. For example, the Arizona study administers surveys to Mexican visitors as they exit the U.S., compared to as they enter for California, while the Texas studies conduct surveys at area malls. Second, there is an underlying assumption that whatever patterns of crossings, expenditures, etc. existed at the time of each analysis still exist today. Third, in the cases where no expenditure or breakdown data was available, data from other studies was projected for those areas. For instance, the expenditures for Texas' Cameron and Hidalgo counties were assumed to hold for El Paso and Webb counties where there are no recent studies exploring Mexican visitors. Nevertheless, the estimates reported in this paper serve to shed a light on the size of this often overlooked market segment and fall in line with educated guesses of local community leaders. The limitations merely serve to highlight the importance of a coordinated and comprehensive research effort between academic institutions and business entities in different regions along the border area to better understand and more reliably evaluate the impact of Mexican shoppers on US border communities.

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