



The implementation of NAFTA has increased the importance of mutual knowledge and understanding among the partners, particularly in the case of Canada and Mexico, who do not have the long trading history the United States has enjoyed with both its border nations.

Some early work is under way at the Department of Marketing of Laval University. Studies (toward MBA theses) have been conducted by two students on the mutual perceptions of Canadian and Mexican business people of each other; some of their findings will be published in a paper to be delivered in June to the Administrative Science Association of Canada. Their conclusions on Mexican perceptions of Canada and Canadian business are particularly interesting and useful.

Based on interviews with 130 exporting companies from the Federal District of Mexico (and 150 exporters in each of Ontario and Quebec), the study found that, in Mexico, "Canada is perceived as being less economically and industrially developed than the United States," although its equal political stability was recognized.

Mexicans perceived Canadians as "most trustworthy and ... better negotiators than Mexicans" but not as high performers as Americans. Mexicans surveyed regarded both Canadians and Americans as more professional than themselves.

Canada and the U.S. had com-

Mutual Perceptions: Getting to Know Our Partners

parable scores on the qualifications of their work forces. Canadian commercial conditions were seen as equally attractive to the Mexicans as their domestic ones.

"Mexican business people perceive the competence of Canadian companies' capabilities as lower than the American ones except in pulp and paper, and environmental protection. Regarding their capabilities in the field of energy, Canadian and American companies have comparable scores. Another important fact is the similar scores of Canadian and Mexican companies in the following fields: automotive industry, textiles, mining and petrochemicals."

The study found Canadian products and services to be generally well perceived,

but to score lower than American ones most of the time. "Canadian products and services seem to have a lower level of specialization, of innovation, of elaboration, and to be offered in a narrower range than American

ones. Mexican people also think that the adaptation of Canadian products and services to the Mexican demand is lower than the adaptation of Mexican and American ones."

The study, entitled "*The Mutual Perceptions of Canadian and Mexican Business People Within the North American Market*", also looks at Canadian views of Mexico. Findings include the impression that the Mexican companies have a rather negative image in Canada, and are perceived to have a poorly qualified work force, and as offering unsatisfactory after-sale service and commercial promotion.

From the brief introduction to it here, however, it is possible to agree with one of the authors' conclusions: "Canadian business people are well perceived and should take advantage of their trustworthiness in their commercial relations with Mexicans. This fact is important because of the predominance of human relations in the Mexican culture."

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Access

Access, the newsletter of the new Access North America (ANA) program, is published monthly and only in *CanadExport*. Subscribers to *CanadExport* automatically receive *Access*. It examines opportunities for Canadian businesses, introduces some Canadians already operating in the Mexican and U.S. markets, profiles specific sectors, and notifies readers of forthcoming events related to doing business in Mexico.

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