

## SLOVAKIAN AND AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THEIR MARKETING VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that marketing training and education will be essential to Central and Eastern European societies in making a successful transition from socialist to capitalist economies. While marketing educators may argue that a great challenge exists in developing a basic understanding of the notion of marketing in such societies, perhaps this task is being accomplished by the forces and environment of the marketplace. This study indicates that both Slovakian and American students have unexpectedly similar levels of knowledge of marketing's basic vocabulary. Several implications of these findings are given, such as a recognition that many European societies may be more ripe than anticipated for advanced study of the marketing discipline.

The authors of this paper compared the marketing vocabulary knowledge of pre-business students from two major American-based universities: one representing the Slovak Republic and one representing the United States. The premises of this study are that marketing education plays a major role in the transformation from a centrally-planned economy to a market-driven economy, and that young business leaders must be cognizant of the marketing functions. The objectives of the study were: a) to identify what marketing vocabulary Slovak and American pre-business college students understood prior to their first marketing course, b) to compare and contrast the differences between the two samples and c) to help marketing educators better understand the mechanics of the marketing discipline as applied to former Central Europe countries.

Self-report questionnaires were used to gather the data at both institutions. To evaluate the vocabulary knowledge of the sample students, the researchers chose eighty-three (83) marketing-related concepts/terms from numerous principles of marketing textbooks. The respondents were asked to rate each concept/term from the marketing function perspective. That is, based on the student's schooling and personal experiences, he/she was to rate each concept/term on a five-point Likert scale with one anchor stating "definitely a part of the marketing process" and the other

stating "definitely not a part of the marketing process."

The results make clearer what marketing vocabulary young Slovak and American pre-business students know/recall prior to entering their first marketing course. The study also compared the marketing vocabulary differences between Slovak and American pre-business students. The underlying assumption being tested is that the Slovak students had had little or no exposure to the marketing philosophy and the American students, presumably, had had more exposure based on experiences living in a capitalist country. The study presents both intuitive and counter-intuitive findings.

Surprisingly, the results indicated more similarities between groups than variances, allowing the authors to infer that Slovak college students are just as cognizant about marketing vocabulary as their American counterparts. The comparative research suggests that the Slovak students are much more similar in marketing knowledge than one would expect at this stage of Slovakia's market-oriented transformation. Thus, the question being tested, in general, can be answered "no." "Are there marketing vocabulary knowledge differences between pre-business college students in Slovakia versus those in American?" Perhaps even more compelling to ask then is, "Why are these two groups so similar?"

These results suggest several implications for marketing educators. U.S. marketing educators are increasingly facing saturated markets and declining enrollments. Thus, Central and Eastern Europe is riper than expected for these entrepreneurs to expand operational sites and offer both general marketing studies and specialized marketing graduate studies.

Intuitively, one would expect American college students to know more marketing vocabulary than their student counterparts in Central Europe. However, six years after the fall of Communism, this study finds that Slovak college students have essentially the same marketing vocabulary knowledge as Americans. Perhaps Slovakia, and other Central European countries, are learning business philosophies much faster than expected.