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Every moment remains memorable.

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Abstract

China is the largest seafood consumers driven by its large population and growing middle class. However, while the demand for salmon in the country has increased, its consumption remains low compared to the country's overall consumption of seafood and presents a huge market potential. Norwegian salmon has a competitive position, and existing studies have examined this position broadly and have not explicitly looked at its market positioning. Accordingly, this study tried to address this using a mixed methods research design involving a survey with close and open-ended questions to Norwegian salmon exporters complemented with online interview chats with Chinese consumers and secondary data from website and other sources.

Based on the descriptive and thematic analysis of the data, the study's findings consistent with previous studies (e.g. Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017) confirm that although Norwegian salmon has the largest market share in the Chinese market, there is potential for further growth. Specifically, the findings show that the market positioning of the Norwegian salmon follows a differentiation strategy positioning in terms of the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place and promotion to set it as a high-quality premium pricey product targeting the Chinese middle class. However, the findings show that while this is the case, the Norwegian salmon exporters do not seem to pay enough attention to the details of the Chinese market, such as its differences between regions, lifestyles, and buying habits electronic platforms.

Consistent with the literature, the findings also show that the market positioning in terms of both product and price might be affected by macro, industry and firm-level factors. The findings show that politics can affect the market overall. Also, there is a danger from the threat of substitutions due to imitations and new entrants where the Chinese themselves will start competing with Norwegian salmon exporters. Similarly, the findings show that strategies to support the market positioning of Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market and the factors that affect also exist at the country, industry and firm levels. Specifically, at the country level, there is a need to promote cultural exchanges and bilateral relations. At the industry level, Norwegian exporters need more customer education and market orientation. Norwegian firms should consider partnering with Chinese firms along the value chain to cement their market position.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.2 Problem statement	3
1.3 Research questions.....	3
1.4 Research aim.....	3
1.5 Significance of the study	4
1.6 Limitation	4
1.7 Structure of the thesis	4
CHAPTER TWO	5
LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 Market positioning.....	5
2.3 Factors affecting marketing and positioning	10
2.4 Strategies for supporting market positioning.....	15
2.5 Summary.....	18
CHAPTER THREE	20
METHODOLOGY	20
3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.2 Research Design	20
3.3 Population and sampling for survey	20
3.4 Selection of participants for interviews	21
3.5 Data Collection Method.....	21
3.6 Data Analysis Methods.....	22
3.7 Reliability and Viability	22
3.8 Ethical Considerations	22
CHAPTER FOUR	23
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	23
4.1 Introduction	23
4.2 Overview of primary and secondary data sources	23
4.3 Presentation of findings	24
4.3 Market positioning	25

4.3.1 Overall market perception.....	25
4.3.2 4Ps of marketing	27
4.4 Factors affecting market positioning.....	33
4.5 Strategies to support market positioning	36
CHAPTER FIVE	39
CONCLUSION	39
REFERENCES	41
Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire to Norwegian salmon firms	46
Appendix 2: Online interview chats with Chinese consumers	57
Appendix 3: Secondary data on Norwegian salmon products and their prices in China	58

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of Norwegian firms exporting salmon to China	23
Table 2: Overview of Chinese	24

List of Figures

Figure 1: Firms's perception of increase in Norwegian salmon export to China in the past five years	25
Figure 2: Firms's perception of increase in Norwegian salmon export to China in the future	25
Figure 3: Firms's perception of factors driving consumption of Norwegian salmon in China	26
Figure 4: Norwegian salmon exports product types	27
Figure 5: Price positioning of Norwegian salmon	28
Figure 6: Place or distribution channels	30
Figure 7: Promotion of Norwegian salmon	31
Figure 8: Factor affecting Norwegian salmon exports and market positioning in China	32
Figure 9: Strategies implemented to support Norwegian salmon exports in China.....	35

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Norway is the world-leading producer of Atlantic salmon (Norwegian Seafood Council, 2021; Skallerud et al., 2012; Straume et al., 2020). Studies reveal that in 2019, Norway exported 1.1 million tonnes of farmed salmon worth NOK 72.5 billion (Norwegian Seafood Council, 2021; Jansen, 2020). The exported volume and value increased by 6% and 7% when compared to 2018. According to Nguyen (2019), the European Union (EU) was the leading market for Norwegian Salmon, about 1.6 million tonnes worth NOK 68 billion. However, in 2019 the market share fell by 7 %, due to stiff competition from Scotland and other European countries (Nguyen, 2019).

To remain competitive globally, Norway has expanded its market to Asian countries, focusing on China, the biggest consumer of seafood in terms of absolute volume due to its large population and growing middle class (World Bank, 2013; Ma & Xiao, 2010; Nguyen, 2019; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Xu & Sulong, 2020). Accordingly, there has been increased investments by Norwegian companies supported by the government's diplomatic and bilateral efforts to realize this export market potential (Chen & Garcia, 2016). In their study of the Norwegian salmon exports to China, Xu and Sulong (2020, p. 5) observe, "Although China is not the most significant share of the exports, the market potential is significant." According to the Norwegian Seafood Council (2021), in 2019, China represented the most significant growth market for Norwegian salmon.

Norwegian salmon to China is a fascinating story that starts in Japan. Retelling the same level, NPR (2015) present an exciting dialogue that involved Bjorn Eirik Olsen and some of the Japanese and Norwegian actors involved in the introduction of salmon to Japan. The NPR (2015) reported, "He says in the '80s, the country had a problem; they had too much salmon. The government hired Bjorn to sell it to the country that's famous for eating fish. Bjorn figured it and went to Tokyo to unveil the next big thing, salmon sushi." The rest of the story is history as Norway managed to strike one of the most significant opportunities to redefine the salmon industry. It was disruptive innovation that created a new product platform to ride on the existing

Japanese sushi food industry. The success was to repeat itself in China as Norwegian salmon entered the Chinese market as part of the restaurant (Wang, 2003). However, this opportunity of strength to ride on the global popularity of sushi could also be its point of weakness as the Chinese prefer cooked and warm dishes (Fabinyi & Liu, 2014). Although salmon consumption remains low compared to China's overall seafood consumption, the trends suggest a vast market potential.

However, the political fallout between Norway and China in 2010 had adverse effects on the exports of Norwegian salmon (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Kolstad, 2020). According to Chen and Garcia (2016), since 2010 despite the repairing of the relations with China the Norwegian Salmon suffered a 30 percent loss and recovering it will not be easy. Apart from politics, other scholars (e.g. Asche et al., 2018; Fan, 2017; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Straume, 2017) have also noted that several other factors are affecting Norwegian salmon exports to China, including physical presence and proximity, marketing efforts in terms of branding and reputation, technological and business innovation such as technology in the farming of salmon and agglomeration.

Equally, strategies play a critical role in maintaining a competitive advantage and increasing market share. Thus, for the Norwegian salmon, it seems there has been a concerted effort at the country, industry, and firm-level to explore and exploit the potential of the Chinese market (Asche et al., 2018; Fan, 2017; Lindkvist et al., 2005; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Straume, 2017). These strategies and internationalization efforts can be taken as learning efforts and a 'boomerang' meaning a virtuous cycle where good things keep on building on each other on both the part of the Norwegian salmon exporters and the Chinese market (Xie, 2005). Arguably, these efforts paralleled by Norway's investments in innovation and technology gives Norwegian salmon a unique position in global markets, including China (Bergesen & Tveterås, 2019).

However, while China presents a significant marketing potential for Norwegian salmon, its full potential cannot be realized unless there is an understanding of market positioning, factors influencing it and strategies necessary to support it. Therefore, specifically, there is a need to examine the nature of the Norwegian salmon exports industry to China, specifically, its market positioning as well as identify and understand the factors affecting it and the strategies required to support it. Doing this will update the theoretical understanding of

the subject. It will also inform the Norwegian firms, the salmon industry, and the Norwegian government to develop the necessary interventions to support salmon exporters to China rates.

1.2 Problem statement

Several studies (e.g. Ma & Xiao, 2010; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017) show that the Chinese market and its growing middle class presents the most significant potential for the global salmon market. Some of these studies, such as Ma and Xiao (2010) and Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017) have studied Norwegian salmon exports to China. Respectively, they find that Norway still maintains a leading position compared to Japan, U.S.A, Canada, and Chile. Similarly, other studies have looked at factors affecting the Norwegian salmon exports and the strategies by Norwegian firms (e.g. Ling, 2018; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). However, despite their importance to the broader understanding of Norwegian salmon exports to China, these studies have not explicitly looked at their market positioning. Therefore, there is a need to understand and explain how well-positioned Norwegian salmon exporters are to increase their market share and maintain their competitive advantage. Accordingly, the following research questions suffice:

1.3 Research questions

1. What kind of market positioning is done by Norwegian salmon exporters in the Chinese market?
2. What factors affect the Norwegian salmon exporters' market positioning in the Chinese market?
3. How do the Norwegian salmon exporters respond to changes in the Chinese market concerning their market positioning?

1.4 Research aim

The aim of this study is to understand the market positioning of the Norwegian salmon exports in the Chinese market.

1. To describe the market positioning of Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market.
2. To understand the factors affecting the Norwegian salmon exporters' marketing positioning in the Chinese market.
3. To identify and evaluate the strategies put in place to support the market positioning of Norwegian salmon exports to China.

1.5 Significance of the study

Carrying out this study is important to update the existing theoretical understanding on Norwegian salmon exports to China in terms of its marketing and positioning, factors influencing it and the strategies. The study is also important to the Norwegian salmon exporters themselves to give them the information they need to develop strategies realize the full market potential. The same applies to government so that it can develop informed policies and interventions to help of the Norwegian Salmon exporters.

1.6 Limitation

The study was limited in terms of time allocated to conduct the study, which could have affected the survey response rate. It was also conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting the researcher's access as some companies either closed or are operating limited hours. The study only considered companies listed on the Norwegian Seafood council.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This chapter provided background and motivation for the study, the problem statement, questions and objectives, the study's significance, and its limitations. Subsequently, Chapter 2 is the literature review and chapter 3, the research methods. Chapter 4 presents the results, followed by the discussion in chapter 5. Chapter 6 concludes with the key findings, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature to understand the existing research and identify gaps on the topic. Specifically, it looks at the market positioning of the Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market, factors that affect it and the strategies used to support it. It concludes with a summary of the key points.

2.2 Market positioning

The marketing concept is that the customer is central to an organization's activities and decisions (Keelson, 2012; Webster, 1988). The central argument is that to achieve sustained success; marketing involves the activities undertaken by a firm to identify and satisfy customer needs more effectively than their competitors (Kotler, 2000, 2016). In the same vein, we can use the term market to identify and describe the place where the seller and the customer met each other, in this case, the Chinese market. To examine and understand this market, we use two related but different concepts: market orientation and market positioning (Blankson et al., 2013; Kyriakopoulos & Moorman, 2004).

On the one hand, market orientation refers to a unifying belief for serving the customer through a firm's capability to anticipate market requirements and building relationships by deploying organization-wide processes necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers, and thus, continuous superior performance for the business (Blankson et al., 2013; Kyriakopoulos & Moorman, 2004). Grunert et al. (2010, p. 7) add that it involves "the generation of market intelligence, its dissemination within the business organization, and its use to direct business activities [...], can drive superior company performance in various contexts and industries [...], including exporting manufacturers." On the other hand, market positioning refers to the efforts or activities taken to modify the tangible or intangible characteristics associated with a marketable offering or product compared to the competition (Blankson et al., 2013). Also, Fernandes et al. (2017) argue that in the context of marketing decisions, positioning indicates the place that a company, brand or product will occupy in a given industry as well as the perception and mind of its public as well as helping the company determine the segment that brings significant returns. Furthermore, they elaborate that

positioning means using the appropriate resources and adjusting strategies in response to changes in the market.

The two are different but related and complementary in that while ideally, market orientation comes before market positioning, the latter also influences the former (Blankson et al., 2013; Fernandes et al., 2017). Both are relevant, creating the relevant market exploitation and exploration strategies where the former is about executing current knowledge and the latter findings new knowledge or market innovation (Kyriakopoulos & Moorman, 2004). In this thesis, market orientation refers to adequate knowledge about the market, including its segmentation. In the same vein, market positioning refers to the decisions or activities taken to make the marketable offering or product visible to the customers against the competitors' offerings. Accordingly, to understand and describe the marketing and positioning of the Norwegian salmon exports in the Chinese market, the subsequent sections discuss in sequence three related ideas: market, market segmentation, and market positioning. While Melewar et al. (2008) have applied the marketing mix to salmon trading, their studies only focused on Europe and was a qualitative case study limited to a single company and on retail marketing. Therefore, the extent to which their findings are generalizable to the Norwegian salmon industry nor the context of the Chinese market remains unknown.

First, the market understanding is that China is the world's biggest market for seafood and the third-largest fish importer after Japan and the US (World Bank, 2013). Primarily, this is due to its large population and growing middle class (Ma & Xiao, 2010; Nguyen, 2019). However, the market expansion to Asia focusing on China started after Norway started to decline its largest market, the EU, due to stiff competition from Scotland and other European countries. Although Norwegian salmon could have entered the Chinese market earlier (Xu & Sulong, 2020), it seems it was the first and formally introduced to the Chinese market in 1996. Six years later, Ma and Xiao (2010) show that reveal the Norwegian salmon exports to China have grown by about 7.9 percent. It has risen tremendously since 2010 and in 2016 recorded 50 000 tonnes compared to about 4000 tonnes in 2011 (Bang et al., 2012; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). However, according to World Bank (2013) and Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017), it remains a small share compared to the overall country's seafood consumption. Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017), further states that in 2016 the salmon food consumption in China reached 50 000 tonnes compared to its total consumption of 35 million tonnes of seafood. Thus, compared to its total seafood consumption, the Chinese market shows a high market potential for salmon and

Norway's opportunity. In 2019, the Norwegian Seafood Council (2021) reported that China represented the most significant growth market for Norwegian Salmon. Overall, the evidence suggests that there is a vast potential for Norwegian salmon exports to the Chinese market relative to its overall seafood consumption.

Second, market segmentation refers to sub-dividing the market into homogenous subset of customers where each subset can be target with a distinct marketing mix (Kotler, 2000). Arguably, to under the market segmentation of the Norwegian salmon exports to China, there is a need to look at its history to the Asian market. A decision to target the sushi market, a high-end value market serving the middle and other high-income groups, was made the Norwegian salmon entered the Japanese market (NPR, 2015). According to the NPR (2015) report, Japan has its salmon, which served mainly as a cooked dish and had a history of being susceptible to lice infections and therefore perceived as low-quality. The report argues that the Norwegian salmon was differentiated and positioned as high quality from the Japanese salmon. Once the Japanese sushi chefs adopted it, it diffused globally and entered China through Japanese restaurants. Naturally, it targeted the middle class and high-income. However, it seems income is not the only approach to understand the Chinese market. The study by Xu and Sulong (2020) suggest different lifestyles among regions and cities, especially between the inland and coastal regions. They argue that there are differences in seafood consumption between top tier cities and mid-tier cities, with the former consuming more than the latter. To them, the mid-tier cities represent an untapped market potential for salmon products. They also suggest that the young college-educated millennium is a market segment that needs attention. Bang et al. (2012) also suggest that lifestyle preferences are essential when considering the Chinese market. A study by Lindkvist et al. (2005) also points to environmentally friendly Chinese consumers or prosumers meaning proactively environmentally friendly consumers. However, empirical studies on Norwegian salmon exports to the Chinese market seem to treat the Chinese consumer exceptionally, the rising middle class being homogenous. According to Melewar et al. (2008), segmentation is still required even in a market that appear to be homogenous.

Third, the thesis uses the marketing mix or product, place, price and promotion also termed the four Ps of marketing (Kotler, 2016) to examine how the Norwegian salmon is presented and positioned as a solution to meet the customers' needs of the Chinese market. The product, salmon, is a name derived from salmonid, a collective name for all Salmonidae fish family fish (Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). There are two main types of salmon, the Atlantic and

Pacific salmon, which can also be wild or farmed (Ma & Xiao, 2010). Norway produces the Atlantic salmon, both wild and farmed, and the farmed salmon makes a significant share of the exports (Liu et al., 2011). While the high demand for Norwegian salmon is due to rising income levels in developing countries, the awareness of its benefits for healthier living is also a contributing factor (Asche & Sikveland, 2015). The exports include fresh and frozen whole fish as the majority and a smaller share of smoked and cured fillets (Ma & Xiao, 2010).

Generally, a differentiation strategy sets the Norwegian salmon product apart as a high-quality product from competitors such as Alaska and Chile (Asche & Sikveland, 2015; Luan, 2011; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Xu & Sulong, 2020). For instance, evidence shows that the salmon from Chile has been susceptible to lice which have reinforced the Norwegian advantage (Kumar & Engle, 2016). However, Yusuf et al. (2015) suggests that apart from the product itself, a need to consider product innovation refers to how the design, content quality, and performance are significant to attract target customers. According to Luan (2011), the freshness of salmon is a key quality attribute that matters to the Chinese market but its understanding points to several factors that include color and juiciness. Overall, innovation and technology play an important role in producing the product and improving it (Asche et al., 2007). Innovation, both technological and non-technological, has been at the core of its differentiated strategy, not only focusing on the fish product but the whole value chain from production to marketing, giving it an advantage compared to other countries (Cojocararu et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2018). While the salmon product or its forms have been received as they are, Lindkvist et al. (2005) argues that there is need to understand the customers' needs such as demand for environmentally friendly products and also consider shifting to live fish sales to respond to the need for environmentally conscious Chinese consumers or prosumers. Similarly, some salmon products might have to be modified to fit into the Chinese cultural taste and size of households. The challenge is that although sushi originally created a premium position for Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market, the market is different in that the Chinese prefer cooked and warm dishes (Fabinyi & Liu, 2014).

Similarly, the pricing of the Norwegian salmon has followed a differentiation strategy in which it is priced as a premium product compared to salmon from other countries. Arguably, the strategy is tied to its quality positioning and can be considered as innovative pricing where

a signal about value for money are important to attract target customers (Yusuf et al., 2015). Helander (2017) suggest that since Norwegian salmons considered an exclusive product, the price must be high to prevent it from becoming an everyday meal. Otherwise, it will lose its value. Then the idea is that there is need for patience as the premium price will work in the long term as the Chinese market evolve to adapt more and more to Norwegian salmon. However, empirical studies seem to be unclear whether the prices of salmon product are set at the industry level or firms are free to set their own prices. Also, the extent to which either scenario affects the firms remains unexplored. Existing studies only attribute the pricing to demand and supply factors as well as the premium pricing based on quality and differentiation.

The same strategy of differentiation has been applied to ‘place’ or marketing channels, consciously or unconsciously. Originally salmon entered the Chinese market through Sushi which positioned it as a cold dish to be eaten in restaurants. Although recent studies such as Wang (2003) and Xu and Sulong (2020) show that others like retail or supermarkets are also used as a marketing channel, it seems a uniquely Chinese approach could be missing based on a more informed market orientation and segmentation. According to Melewar et al. (2008), there are decision that should be taken to achieve distribution or channel objectives. These include the role of distribution, the design of the channel, selection and performance criteria for channel partners. They further argue that if the market is urban middle class a more up-market food retailers should be considered instead of supermarkets. However, their argument is in the context of Europe and might not apply to the nature of the Chinese market. In the context of China, empirical studies such as Helander (2017) argues that digital market is a well-developed marketing channel using Chinese platforms. The challenge is that since fish is sold in a general fish market (e.g. Helander, 2017), is it not an ideal channel to position salmon which is a high-quality product there.

Lastly, promotion refers to the communication of the product or benefits through advertising, publicity, personal selling, and service information to attract target customers (Yusuf et al., 2015). According to Melewar et al. (2008), promotion increases a product's competitiveness over and above price. They also argue that a more significant percentage of the promotion budget should be allocated to customer education in new markets. In a study focusing on consumer preferences, Wang (2003) finds that psychology, sociology,

anthropology, regional factors, and nutritional factors play a role in promoting a product such as Norwegian salmon. She further argues that demographic factors, experience, perception, and preferences affect food choice. She finds that there was also a belief that Japan has the best salmon compared to Norway, and she thinks it is because people associate salmon with Japanese sushi. She also finds that product attributes such as quality and price affect perceptions and suggest that they should be the focus of promotional activities. She suggests that the promotion of Norwegian salmon needs to target the younger generation and take a regional approach. Helander (2017) also emphasizes the need to use digital technology and e-marketing to promote Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market.

According to Fan (2017), the brand plays a vital role in promoting salmon in terms of its value, characteristics, and association. Thus, promoting a brand encourages association with a product and helps customers differentiate a product from others. She finds demographic factors such as age and income to affect brand perception. Together with Williams and Capps (2020), she acknowledges the NSC's role in the generic promotion of seafood, including salmon. However, Williams and Capps (2020) argue that it is an under-investment compared to the market potential for such products, including salmon. While these studies suggest the importance of promotional activities based on the survey of customers (e.g. Fan, 2017; Wang, 2003) and what the NSC is doing (e.g. Williams & Capps, 2020), we still do not know the actual firm practices when it comes to promotion activities.

2.3 Factors affecting marketing and positioning

Several studies, for example, Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017), Toft (2018) and Xu and Sulong (2020), have examined factors that affect Norwegian salmon exports to China. These factors can be external at the macro-level and industry/market level or internal at the firm's level. At a macro-level analysis can be done with the PESTEL framework (e.g. Johnson et al., 2011), which refers to political-economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors and CAGE framework (e.g. Ghemawat, 2007), which is an acronym for cultural, administrative, geographical, and economic distance at a country level. The two frameworks can be combined to give six political, economic, technological, environmental, geography and cultural factors. At an industry/market level, Porter's five forces (Porter, 2008) provide a helpful lens and have been used by Rakvåg and Sandøy

(2017) to look at the industry and market structure of the salmon industry in respect to Norwegian salmon exports to China. At a firm level, the resource-based view (e.g. Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984), including the capabilities approach (e.g. Teece, 2014), has been used by Toft (2018) to look at Norwegian firms exporting salmon to China. However, these frameworks have been used broadly but not applied to the specific context of market positioning of Norwegian salmon exports in the Chinese market, and this thesis makes this effort.

At a general marketing level, political, economic, cultural, technological, environmental factors affect whether a firm should export its product to another country, in general, and applies to the specific context of Norwegian salmon (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Ling, 2018; Melewar et al., 2008; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). Norway and China have experienced warm bilateral relations, but there have been some diplomatic falls out. The awarding of the Nobel Prize to a Chinese dissident resulted in Chinese sanctions on Norwegian Salmon exports (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Kolstad, 2020; Ling, 2018). It affected the trade relations between the two countries and consequently the exporting country's market share.

According to Ling (2018), Le Roy, one of the largest Norwegian salmon exporters, had to re-enter the market after a temporary exit. If the relationship had worsened, that would mean the end of Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market affecting the product's availability and giving an advantage to competitors. Also, customers become reluctant to buy from an unfriendly country. Apart from the challenges arising from a political fallout can bring, the political arrangements in a country can impose an administrative burden on the ease of doing business, resulting in delaying a product or affecting its availability to the market. For example, Chen and Garcia (2016) show that since the political fallout and the repair of relations between China and Norway, new stringent measure for food quality and inspection have been passed in China targeting imports. Another challenge for Norwegian salmon exporters is that they find the legal environment to make them difficult to form joint ventures with Chinese companies and instead prefer to have wholly owned companies which consequently affect their closeness to the market and hence their market orientation as well as positioning particularly in term of place (marketing channels) and promotional activates as they are less embedded in the Chinese market compared to local Chinese firms (Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017).

Economic factors also play a role in affecting the market potential, the product, and its pricing (Melewar et al., 2008). Although there is a perceived economic distance between Norway and China in terms of gross domestic product per capita and nominal (Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017), there is need to consider that both countries are doing well economically (Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). Norway's economic position creates a positive perception of its country-of-origin status and makes its product regarded highly as a quality product that can also charge a premium price in the Chinese market (Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). These investments influence the quality of the salmon product produced by the country. In turn, China has a significant population, rising economy and middle class, make it a market with a vast potential for Norwegian salmon (Zheng et al., 2018). Its economic position and rising middle class make it possible to position Norwegian salmon as a quality product charging a premium price to differentiate it from other countries (Helander, 2017). Also, Norway's economic position means the country can manage public investments in innovation and marketing of its image and product development (Iversen et al., 2020).

Studies show that Norway is a technology leader on salmon production and innovation across the value chain from production to marketing (Bergesen & Tveterås, 2019; Cojocaru et al., 2021; Hersoug et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2018). While technology refers to the actual salmon farming, it also extent to processing and distribution of the salmon, non-technological innovation such as organizational innovation including agglomeration or cluster approach (Hersoug et al., 2021; Skallerud et al., 2012; Straume, 2017), market innovations such as the initial internationalization of salmon through Japanese sushi (Wang, 2003) and introduction of futures contracts (Bergfjord, 2007). Arguably, these technologies and innovations give Norwegian firms a competitive advantage in the market through quality product and an opportunity to charge a premium price which ensures superior returns. However, Rui and Zhu (2015) observes that there is need to consider technology and innovation and extent it to call centers and distribution centers. For instance, despite the visible advantages of digital technology, Helander (2017) observes that it is hardly used to complement the two Ps of marketing: place and promotion in the marketing of Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market and doing so will be a game changer.

The geographic distance between China and Norway is significant and affects the choice of transportation (Oglend & Straume, 2019; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Straume et al., 2020). However, Norway has a significant advantage over Chile to supply salmon to China

because of its higher proximity to the Chinese market, enabling it to supply a high-quality product of fresh salmon at a cheaper cost than Chile (Oglend & Straume, 2019). In addition to proximity, infrastructure such as physical offices help Norwegian exporters gain a competitive advantage as it lowers the cultural distance between Norway and China (Ling, 2018; Ma & Xiao, 2010).

Cultural distance matters in that it distinguishes culture between any two different contexts (Helander, 2017). It affects both the overall marketing understanding and positioning of any product. Specifically, it affects how the product is positioned and promoted. It has been mentioned that while Norwegian salmon entered the Chinese market through Japanese sushi which is cold dish, the Chinese consume fish products as warm or cooked dishes (Wang, 2003). Its newness and introduction through the Japanese restaurant could be the reason why Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017) observe that the Chinese consumption of salmon remains a minute's percentage compared to their overall consumption of seafood. Therefore, cultural distance affects the promotion of the product as well. Also, cultural distance affects doing business in general and the market orientation of firms in foreign market is very important if they are to succeed.

The factors that affect market positioning of products also exist an industry/market level. According to Porter, there are five forces working at this level which include rivalry among existing competitors, the threat of new entrants, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers and the threat of substitute products. These forces have been applied to the Norwegian salmon exports to China by Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017) but not specifically looking at their marketing and positioning. The current rivals are companies from Alaska, Chile, Scotland, and Canada (Helander, 2017; Iversen et al., 2020; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). Although these companies from these countries have the potential to threaten the Norwegian salmon market share in China, Norway has experienced first mover advantages and is also a technology leader when it comes to salmon production. Also, these rivals have been affected by diseases in the case of Chile and regulatory issues for Canada. Overall, the Norwegian salmon companies are well positioned to outpace the market, and they have attractive margins than that of their rivals (Hersoug et al., 2021). Therefore, Norway's competitive advantage means it enjoys superior returns that allows it to invest into technology and innovation to maintain its product quality, charge a premium price as well enjoy excellent promotional

benefits. Norwegian firms enjoy a country-of-origin advantage and overall brand which should make their promotional efforts much easier.

Similarly, the threat of new entries affects an industry or market. However, while the market looks lucrative, new entrance into the Salmon market impacts on profitability and exerts pressure on the existing salmon companies (Helander, 2017; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). However, there are economic, regulatory, and strategic barriers for the entrants such that their threat becomes low. Furthermore, Norway increases the barriers for new entrants into the market through use of technology, clusters or agglomeration factors, branding, and reputation (Gaasland et al., 2020; Hersoug et al., 2021). The threat of substitute is very low due to the nature of the salmon products (Ling, 2018). However, considering the Norwegian salmon as a rare and immutable product, other salmon products can try to compete to fill them same niche and meet the same need although we might not take them to be substitutes in a traditional way (Helander, 2017; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Xu & Sulong, 2020). This could happen if the Norwegian salmon becomes unavailable in the market, for example due to sanctions, and desperate customers can switch to other products, but it seems the quality of Norwegian Salmon is not easy to substitute. However, Rui and Zhu (2015) observe that most customers do not know the difference between Norwegian salmon and other types of salmon, and this leads to a satisficing behavior by some retailers where they falsify the origin of the fish and sell it to recoup more profits. While salmon production has high barriers to entry because of production environment, Lindkvist et al. (2005) cautions that China is already a big player in the seafood industry and is also involved in the reorganization and division of labor in the seafood global value chain including the reprocessing and value addition to salmon products. Therefore, their capability building efforts to enter the salmon production including buying and investing in salmon farms else should not be overlooked.

Buyers can also have bargaining power in the market, and by their nature, Chinese customers yield considerable buying power as shown by the extent of the market loss after the Chinese sanctions. However, Norwegian salmon enjoys a status symbol of quality within the market which influences its premium pricing and product positioning. Suppliers also have a role to play, and if they are concentrated, the more they threaten the profitability of the Norwegian salmon industry (Irrarázaval & Bustos-Gallardo, 2019). However, Norwegian salmon exporters are organized in agglomeration or clusters that give them high bargaining power and maintain their product quality and contain costs to avoid threatening their pricing

and profitability (Cojocararu et al., 2021; Skallerud et al., 2012; Straume, 2017) also this as part of the overall innovation across the value chain.

Lastly, as alluded to earlier, the literature on market orientation and market positioning (Blankson et al., 2013; Kyriakopoulos & Moorman, 2004) argue that a firm's organization-wide processes and efforts matter. Therefore, a firm's resources or capabilities, including financial, human capital, technological and social capital (e.g. Chisholm & Nielsen, 2009), are essential for its market positioning activities. Thus, financial, and human resources are needed together with information such as market intelligence reports to improve the firms' market orientation (Kyriakopoulos & Moorman, 2004; Melewar et al., 2008). Also, the same resources are essential for developing the product, its pricing strategy, identifying the place or channels for taking it to make and undertaking promotional activities. However, these resources should be dynamic, especially in an international environment such as an export market requiring a firm's learning efforts (Teece, 2014). For instance, social capital is unique because of its interaction with the market, each other, and competitors. Gard (2005) describes the Norwegian salmon firms as embedded in the local Chinese environment, which allows them to learn from local interactions.

2.4 Strategies for supporting market positioning

In management studies, strategy refers to managers' action to attain one or more of the organization's goals or "a general direction set to achieve a desired state in the future (Ahmed et al., 2014). Such an action involves identifying the necessary course of action, integrating organizational activities, and allocating resources to meet the desired goals (Higgins et al., 2014). An organization can have different strategies to meet several goals or address specific problems. In this thesis, the interest is to look at various potential courses of actions at the firm and industry level to support the market positioning of the Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market.

Factors that affect the Norwegian salmon exports are found at the country, industry and firm levels. At a country level, factors such as politics, economics, technology and culture play an important role in determining market potential as well as market compatibility in terms of the distance between the trading countries (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Ling, 2018; Rakvåg &

Sandøy, 2017). While certain political position cannot be sacrificed by countries, it is how problems are resolved when they arise. The political fallout between China and Norway in 2010 provide important lessons for both countries on how to resolve such issues. However, there are business challenges that arise out of the two countries nature of political arrangements. For example, according to Chen and Garcia (2016), Norwegian salmon exporters currently experience lengthy and delayed food quality and safety procedures. They also suggest that such challenges can be resolved if there is a free trade agreement between the two countries. However, they observe that while such an agreement exists between China and Chile acting as a form of competition to Norway, its offers Chile benefits on smokes salmon whereas as Norway exports mainly Atlantic frozen salmon. Arguably, given the demising exports of Norway after 2010, working towards a free trade agreement could go a long way in securing the market. Also, since no barriers exist between Hong Kong and the mainland (Luan, 2011), and China encourages reprocessing and reselling of fish products, strategies partnerships with Chinese Hong Kong based companies might also be a relevant strategy to circumvent these challenges.

Similarly, investments and support for technology and innovation and research (Asche et al., 1999; Hersoug et al., 2021) form part of proactive strategies that create long-term gains as the market evolves and becomes mature. Furthermore, the cultural distance between the two countries can be bridged through cultural exchanges and students' programs (Deardorff et al., 2012). There is ample evidence by Saxenian (2008) that student mobility creates benefits for sending countries as these students provide global pipelines by which business activities can be connected between their home countries and host countries as have been seen in the case of India and China. In the context of the Chinese-Norwegian seafood trade relations, Lindkvist et al. (2005) highlight the role of formal and informal networks and their role in building bridges across political, cultural, and geographic distance between people and organizations across different parts of the world. According to him, "The networks seem to be able to overcome what is called "psychic" and cultural distance (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003). Psychic distance relates to the difficulties created by different commercial languages, levels of education and business legislation" (Lindkvist et al., 2005, pp. 7-8) can overcome both psychic However, the conditions that incentivizes such activities might not be the same. Furthermore, Norway is an environmentally friendly country, an image that bolsters Norway's country of origin label and overall brand, which increases product positive image and positioning as a premium product priced for the top end market (Toft, 2018). Overall, while the country level factors might be

beyond the firm and industry, evidence such as Lorentzen (2009) and Hallerud and Tengs (2018) suggest that lobbying by Norwegian salmon firms and industry plays an important role to influence government policies for supporting industries.

At the industry level, Norwegian salmon exporting firms are reputable for working as agglomeration or clusters that allow knowledge spill overs between them and give them bargaining power when interacting with suppliers (Aslesen, 2009). Also, Cojocarú et al. (2021) suggest the need to innovate across the value chain, requiring different firms to collaborate. Therefore, the industry association, including the Norwegian Seafood Council, should play a facilitating role for collaboration to take place. Furthermore, while the Norwegian Seafood Council has played a more active involvement in the promotional activities of Norwegian salmon (Williams & Capps, 2020), more work needs to be done to get a more comprehensive market orientation. Existing studies such as Wang (2003) points to differences on customer behavior between top tier cities and mid-tier cities, and inland cities and coastal cities. Other studies such as Fan (2017) and Williams and Capps (2020) also point to differences among the perceived homogenous Chinese middle class (Fan, 2017; Williams & Capps, 2020). Educating the customer is a role that can also be played at the industry level to address what Rui and Zhu (2015) observe as satisficing behavior by some retailers who substitute and falsify other salmon for Norwegian salmon. Overall, strategies can be developed and deployed at the industry level to get a better understanding of the market and help the positioning of the Norwegian salmon in terms of a better and high-quality product that maintains its premium pricing and uses effective channels and promotional approaches.

Similarly, a competitive advantage can be attained at the firm level if the firm's resources are correctly and efficiently utilized (Rui & Zhu, 2015; Toft, 2018). Therefore, the resource-based view suggests that the relationship between the firm's internal resources and sustainability is significant for the firm's natural environment. In a study conducted by Rui and Zhu (2015), the researcher found out that the distribution mean is substantial for companies to enter multiple markets and then emphasize the competitive advantage of the supply chain and channel partners' selection. According to them, supply chain activities mean a lot in terms of the products. Its distribution and pricing place as cost advantages become value advantages, meaning expected quality at a value-based price with superior customer benefits. In the same vein, Cojocarú et al. (2021) emphasize the need to innovate the value chain, which suggests that companies need to have a holistic view of innovation from production to the customer and

find new ways to create value across these activities. According to Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017), Norwegian salmon exporters should invest in their presence in the market, build relationships and local human resources, types of contracts and build their brand and reputation. Helander (2017) also emphasize relations and argue that it makes on the Chinese concept of Guanxi which is consistent with social capital, which puts networking at the center of business activities. Such an approach should be easy for Scandinavian firms, which, according to market studies (Mattsson, 1997), relies on the concept of network marketing based on industrial marketing. Lastly, Lindkvist et al. (2005) observe that Chinese firms also have an interest in the seafood industry and have played an essential role in internationalizing its division of labor in the global value chains and will soon compete with Norwegian firms or can partner with them. Salmon is not an exception and suggest partnership as a win-win scenario as local firms are embedded in the local market and can overcome the barriers to marketing and positioning.

2.5 Summary

Evidence (e.g. World Bank, 2013; Ma & Xiao, 2010; Nguyen, 2019; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Xu & Sulong, 2020) suggests that there is a significant market potential for Norwegian salmon exports in the Chinese market compared to the current levels of consumption, explicitly targeting the middle class and high-income groups. Overall, the market positioning of the Norwegian salmon follows a differentiation strategy as a unique and high-quality product offering immense nutritional value compared to competitors (Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Toft, 2018; Wang, 2003). The same applies to its pricing as a premium product targeting the middle-class market and fetching top-end prices and distributed through high-end marketing channels and supported by respective promotional activities (Helander, 2017; Zheng et al., 2018).

However, the market positioning is also affected by various factors at the macro-level, industry, market levels, and firm-level. At the macro-level, political, economic, cultural, technological, and geographic factors affect the products, pricing and marketing channels, and promotional activities (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Ling, 2018; Melewar et al., 2008; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). Mostly cultural factors seem to be the main barrier in the consumption of Norwegian salmon (Fabinyi & Liu, 2014; Lindkvist et al., 2005; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). At the industry/market level, Norwegian firms have a competitive advantage over their rivals. The threat of new entries or substitutes is low as it is a technology and innovation leader in Atlantic

salmon farming (Bergesen & Tveterås, 2019; Cojocaru et al., 2021; Hersoug et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2018). However, sanctions against Norwegian firms can force buyers to look for substitutes. Norwegian firms operate in clusters which enable them to get better bargains from suppliers. Although the Chinese buyers have bargaining power, the uniqueness of the Norwegian Atlantic salmon offsets it. At the firm level, the resources and capability of the firm play a vital role in the marketing and positioning of the Norwegian salmon (Rui & Zhu, 2015; Toft, 2018).

Therefore, at each level of the country or government, industry/market, and firm, appropriate strategies are needed. Lobbying government by the firms and industry is vital to get the necessary policies including international relations, industry and innovation, as well as fund market intelligence studies which can help overcome barriers in the export market that affect market positioning of Norwegian salmon (Asche et al., 1999; Hersoug et al., 2021; Lindkvist et al., 2005). Market intelligence is essential as studies by Fan (2017); Helander (2017); Wang (2003); Williams and Capps (2020) show that the Chinese market is not homogenous as there are differences across ages and regions.

The Norwegian salmon exporters, both industry and firms, should leverage Norway's country of origin or image advantage (Kleppe et al., 2002). Also, they should promote customer education which is essential for understanding the product attributes of the Norwegian salmon and help with differentiation from competitors' products (Rui & Zhu, 2015). Equally, firm and industry levels investments along the value chain in innovation, technology and marketing are essential for market positioning and competitive advantage of Norwegian salmon (Cojocaru et al., 2021). In the long term, Lindkvist et al. (2005) argues that partnering with Chinese firms will give Norwegian a foothold.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter starts by presenting the research design. It is followed by the selection of participants. In the same sequences follows the data collection and analysis methods and ethical considerations for the study.

3.2 Research Design

The research design was a mixed method (e.g. Creswell, 2014) meaning combining quantitative and qualitative aspects. Quantitative aspects used an online survey with closed and open-ended questions. Qualitative aspects used online interview chats and secondary data. Overall, the study took a descriptive and cross-sectional research nature. Descriptive research aims to describe a factor associated with a situation or phenomenon (Kelley et al., 2003). In this case, it answers the questions of how, when, what, and where. The descriptive research design was applied to examine the marketing and positioning of Norwegian salmon export to the Chinese market, factors affecting it and the appropriate strategies to support it.

3.3 Population and sampling for survey

Polit and Beck (2010) argue that understanding the population and how or whether to get a sample is essential in quantitative research. While a researcher might not have access to the entire population, they can access a target population and a study population (or accessible population). A target population is the entire group of people who are of interest to the researcher. This thesis's targeted population are all the seventy firms listed on the Norwegian Seafood Council website that export salmon. Seven of these firms replied that they did not or no longer exported salmon. However, seven of the firms responded that they do not export salmon making the target population sixty-three. Since the target population is small, the whole target population, termed a census was used in the study, and does not need sampling (Fowler, 2013).

3.4 Selection of participants for interviews

The qualitative aspects of the study used a non-probability sampling, specifically purposive and convenience sampling of Chinese consumers. According to Saunders (2007) and Creswell (2014), purposive sampling is where a researcher uses his knowledge or base the selection of participants on some knowledge-driven criterion. They also argue that convenience sampling refers to an approach's easiness and fewer constraints such as time, cost and accessibility of participants in carrying it out. The convenience sampling is ideal considering the short period provided to conduct a Bachelor thesis. According to Malterud, Siersma and Gussora (2016), although some researchers argue that qualitative research should have at least ten participants and others indicate at least 2 participants, this is neither here nor there. Instead, they argue that while the actual number is subjective, whether the study is narrow and supported by literature or broad is not supported by literature but expects to build theory as in grounded approach. The two sampling techniques and the fact that the study is supported by literature or a thematic framework justify the approach. Initially, the researcher targeted eight Chinese consumers, and five of them agreed to participate. The social media platform WeChat, which is popular in China, was used to identify them. Overall, it is essential to consider that the survey questionnaire also has open-ended questions, which serves the same purpose as direct interview questions, and the two are complementary.

3.5 Data Collection Method

The study used primary sources of data as well as secondary sources. Primary data refers to firsthand information from the respondent and participants on the study of interest. Quantitative methods used an online survey questionnaire, see Appendix 1. The survey used Google forms to collect data. The survey was sent to seventy firms identified on the Norwegian Seafood Council website. Of the seven firms, some responded that they did not export salmon, others said that they did not export to China. One firm reported that it was not interested into the survey. In the end, the survey was only targeted at sixty-three Norwegian firms, and only five Norwegian firms responded. The researcher sent three emails of invitation to participate in the study to the firms. The first email invitation was sent on 20th April,2021 and there were two respondents. The second email, a reminder was sent out on the 29th April,2021, and there were three more responses. Unfortunately, the third email reminder was sent on the 3rd May,2021 but did not yield any further responses. Since the survey was for market positioning was done for the first time, the study did not aim for representativeness but took an explorative

approach. Qualitative methods collected data from the Chinese consumers using online chat sites. An online interview protocol or guide see Appendix 2 was used. The interview guide used different questions from the survey and focused more on the four Ps of marketing and strategies to support them. Informed consent and voluntary participation were obtained in both cases. No personal information or confidential information about the specifics of the firms was collected. In addition to primary sources, secondary data came from the firms' websites, the Norwegian Seafood Council website and Chinese social media sites.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

The overall data reduction and analysis process involved both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Quantitative aspects involved descriptive analysis using graphs and pie charts and qualitative aspects used thematic analysis. Specifically, the thematic analysis involved compiling the data by putting together all related open-ended questions from the survey and online interview chats for each group of participants: firms and consumers. After this researcher first went through the set of questions and answers to understand the patterns that emerge by identifying key words and phrases as guided by the themes from literature reviews. The same approach was applied to secondary data. The data from the quantitative analysis is first presented followed by the qualitative data and a summary is provided triangulating the two together in comparison with the literature.

3.7 Reliability and Viability

Validity means the researcher take the necessary steps to ensure that their findings are accurate, whereas reliability indicates the extent to which their approach is consistent and repeatable (Creswell, 2014). This study used multiple strategies to ensure validity, including using diverse sources for data collection and external checks by the supervisor and basing the analysis on a thematic framework. Similarly, reliability was ensured by following precise and repeatable steps as well as documenting them so that future researchers can follow the same steps and can produce almost similar findings.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are the moral principles that govern how a researcher must conduct their work and that they must be honest about the research goals, get informed consent and must not harm the participants, pays attention to anonymity, confidentiality and safe storage of data (Saunders,

2007). Accordingly, the researcher adhered to research ethics prior, during and upon completion of the studies. Participants were not required to indicate their personal information such as names and contact numbers on the questionnaire, in this case, achieving anonymity. All data was stored in a secure and safe storage barring unauthorized access. After the study, participants will be contacted and informed of its findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 outlines the methods for collecting and analyzing data to address the three research questions: first, what kind of market positioning is done by Norwegian salmon exporters in the Chinese market? Second, what factors affect the Norwegian salmon exporters market positioning in the Chinese market? Third, how do Norwegian salmon exporters respond to changes in the Chinese market regarding their market positioning? Accordingly, this chapter presents the findings based on primary and secondary data collection. It starts by presenting the demographic profile of participants, followed by the data. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings.

4.2 Overview of primary and secondary data sources

The study had five Norwegian firms as respondents for the survey and interviewed five Chinese consumers. The study was only interested in what the firms do in terms of the market positioning, factors that affect it and strategies that can support it and how the Chinese consumer perceived the market position. Therefore, extensive data on the characteristics of the firms and consumers were not collected. Table 1 gives an overview of the Norwegian salmon exporting firms.

Table 1: Overview of Norwegian firms exporting salmon to China

Norwegian firm	No of employees	Years exporting to China
F1	250 and above	20-49

F2	20- 49	10-19
F3	10-19	10-19
F4	5-9	5-9
F5	250 and above	20-49

According to Table 1, the Norwegian firms range from very small to large firms. The firms also have a varied number of years exporting to China, with at least ten to nineteen years, and two firms in each of the two five to nine years and twenty to forty-nine years groups. Table 2 gives an overview of the five Chinese consumers.

Table 2: Overview of selected Chinese consumers

Chinese consumer	Age	Province	Province GDP per Capita level	Method
C1	20-30	Sichuan	Mid-tier	Wechat on line talk
C2	40-50	Zhejiang	Top-tier	Wechat on line talk
C3	30-40	Canton	Top-tier	Wechat on line talk
C4	30-40	Beijing	Top- tier	Wechat on line talk
C5	30-40	Fujian	Top-tier	Wechat on line talk

The participating Chinese consumers fall into three age groups. Two of these age groups, 20-30 and 30-40, are young and social media savvy. All the participants except one based in top tier provinces referring to the highest GDP per capita of at least 11 218 US dollars whereas mid-tier provinces a GDP per capita of at least 8, 085 US dollars. Although top-tier provinces have significant spending power, according to Xu and Sulong (2020), there are lifestyle differences among provinces, especially between inland regions such as Beijing and coastal regions such as Fujian, and mid-tier provinces such as Sichuan and top-tier provinces such as Beijing. These lifestyle differences can also result in different market dynamics and suggest the need for further segmentation of the Chinese market.

4.3 Presentation of findings

The presentation of the findings is guided by three major themes as identified in the literature review: marketing positioning of Norwegian salmon, factors that affect it and the appropriate support strategies. The findings for each theme are presented in sequential order, starting with comments by representatives of the Norwegian firms or salmon exporters, followed by the Chinese consumers and secondary data. The presentation starts by highlighting respondents and participants' comments, further elaborated by secondary data and concludes by bringing the key findings together and compare them with the literature.

4.3 Market positioning

4.3.1 Overall market perception

The Norwegian salmon exporting firms were asked their comments on the extent of the Chinese market for Norwegian firms in the past and how they perceive it in the future on a scale of 1 (least extent) to 5 (great extent). Generally, there was consensus that the Norwegian share of the Chinese market was large and increasing and focused on the Chinese middle class. The comments of Norwegian firms on closed-ended questions show that China presents a huge market potential for Norwegian salmon and has also been increasing in recent years, as shown by Figure 1 and Figure 2

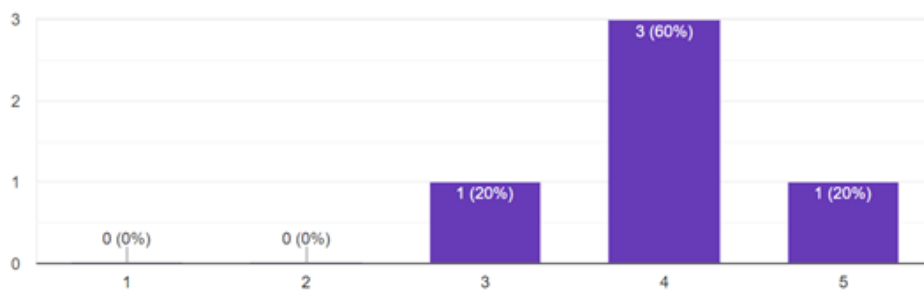


Figure 1:Firms' perception of increase in Norwegian salmon export to China in the last five years

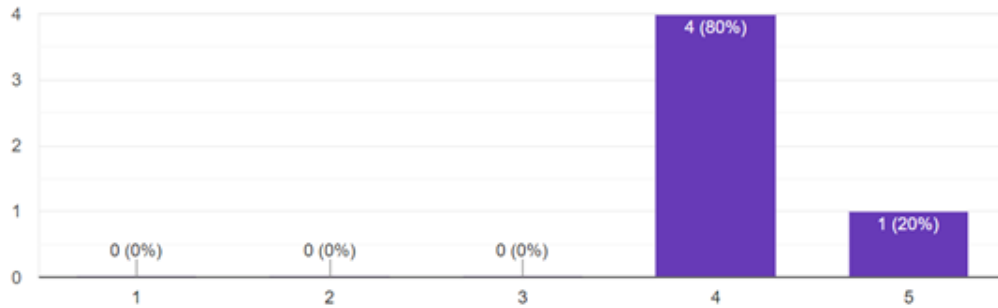


Figure 2: Firms' perception of increase in Norwegian salmon export to China in the future

The Norwegian firms also commented on which aspects drove the consumption of Norwegian salmon in China by ticking a check box against the specific factor. Figure 3 shows their perceptions.

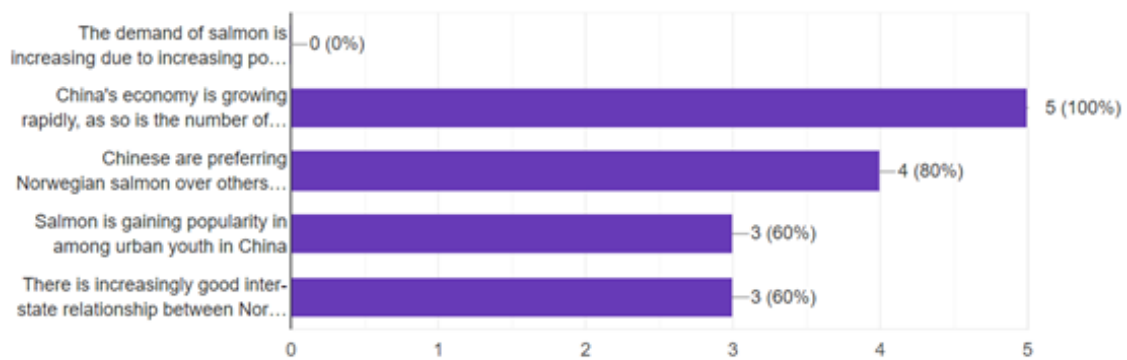


Figure 3: Firms' perception of factors driving consumption of Norwegian salmon in China

According to Figure 8, the comments of Norwegian firms show that the factors driving consumption of Norwegian salmon in China were the growing Chinese middle class, specifically the young, the uniqueness of Norwegian salmon and also improvements in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Based on their perception of the increase of Norwegian salmon exports in the past and future as well as driving factors, the Norwegian firms were asked to elaborate on the target market. They provided the following comments:

F1: "We sell salmon via resellers and importers in China, and it will therefore be somewhat difficult to provide accurate answers."

F2: "Salmon is ...more expensive than other proteins, so depending on the development of the middle class in China how it can be targeted."

F3: "It important to target a growing segment"

F4: "Norwegian salmon is tasty and healthy food, and great protein sources for Chinese Middle Class"

The comments by the firm representatives show that the Chinese market for Norwegian salmon has been growing in the past and will also grow in the future, specifically targeting the middle class. Also, the Chinese consumers were asked to give their comments and they reported the following:

C1: "I like it. If it is not too expensive, I can consume it."

C2: "I like Norwegian salmon but won't go to eat it deliberately..."

C3: "Just so so..."

C4: "Before, I like Norwegian salmon very much."

C5: "I do not pay attention to where the Salmon is from. I won't purchase it due to where it is from (I do not know salmon from where it is better)."

The comments by Chinese consumers show that there are mixed reactions which range from liking it to some ambivalence and negative feelings. These comments contrast with the comments of the Norwegian firms, suggesting a significant market potential but where much work is required to realise it. The literature also suggests the same. For example, Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017) and the World Bank (2013) report that the number of salmon consumed compared to the overall seafood consumption is minimal. However, evidence (e.g. Bang et al., 2012; Ma & Xiao, 2010; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Xu & Sulong, 2020) suggest that Norwegian salmon market in China has grown. Despite this, the comment by a Norwegian firm, F1, suggests that there could be a lack of comprehensive market orientation, which according to Blankson et al. (2013) and Fernandes et al. (2017), is important before market positioning can take place. The comment by F1 suggests that the reason could be the use of Chinese intermediaries such as resellers and wholesalers.

4.3.2 4Ps of marketing

Overall, the comments by both the Norwegian firms and Chinese consumers show that the positioning of Norwegian salmon follows a differentiation strategy across the same four Ps of marketing or marketing mix. These comments agree with the literature (e.g. Asche &

Sikveland, 2015; Luan, 2011; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Xu & Sulong, 2020), which argues about the same. Specifically, when asked to comment on the salmon product, the Norwegian firms reported in response to the close-ended questions that they export salmon in three forms: fresh, chilled salmon, frozen salmon, frozen fillet and smoked salmon, as shown by the Figure 4.

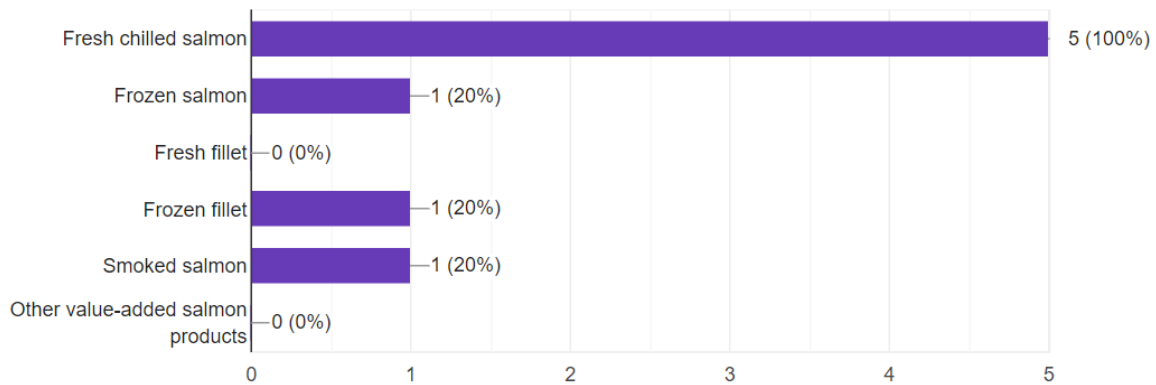


Figure 4: Norwegian salmon product types

One firm has exported frozen salmon before but not now. The comments from the Chinese consumers did not elaborate in what form they bought the salmon but only indicated where they bought them. The comments by the Norwegian firms are also corroborated by secondary data which shows the same salmon products in the Chinese market. These findings are consistent with the literature, for example Ma and Xiao (2010). On the product characteristics, the Chinese consumers commented that Norwegian salmon is of a higher quality compared to competitors such as Japan, Chile, Australia and Canada. They gave the following comments:

C1: "I think I prefer Norwegian Salmon over (country X- name anonymized). Now country X is polluted. I think people are reluctant to eat X salmon."

C4: "The Norwegian salmon tastes very good.... Regarding the sashimi, taste of Norwegian salmon far exceed salmon from other countries."

These comments on the quality of high quality of Norwegian salmon is consistent with evidence provided by NPR (2015) report that Norwegian salmon was differentiated as high quality when it was introduced to the Asian market. Also, Asche and Sikveland (2015) argues that Norwegian salmon is known for its healthier living benefits, but they do not explain their point further. Arguably, the high quality of Norwegian salmon could be attributed to the investments in technology and innovation (Asche et al., 2007) along the value chain (Cojocar

et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2018) as well as the environmental consciousness or friendliness of the Norwegian environment.

Similarly, both Norwegian firms and the Chinese consumers commented that Norwegian salmon is priced at a premium. The comments of the Norwegian firms on the closed-ended questions are shown in Figure 5.

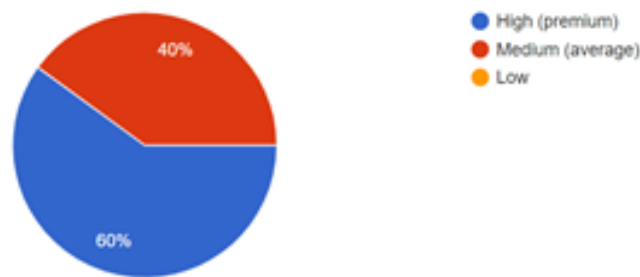


Figure 5: Price positioning of Norwegian salmon

Figure 5 shows that although three of the Norwegian firms see Norwegian salmon as a high premium product, two of the firms position it as a medium-priced product, suggesting that it probably occupies the mid to high-end range. The Chinese consumers agree with the Norwegian firms on the price positioning of Norwegian salmon. According to C1 and C4, the price of Norwegian salmon is relatively higher compared to other countries. They gave the following comments:

C1: "The price is relatively higher."

C4: "The price of Norwegian salmon is relatively higher than salmon from W, X, Y, and Z."

However, C4 indicates that the price of Norwegian salmon is relatively higher than other countries, but it is lower than the one from Faroe Island. C4 suggests that Norwegian salmon occupies the mid to high end compared to the one from Faroe Island, and this comment is consistent with the comment by a Norwegian firm, F2 who places Norwegian salmon in the middle in response to a closed ended question. Although C2, C3 and C5 do not mention the price of Norwegian explicitly, they indicate that they eat it or buy it in Japanese restaurants. They gave the following comments:

C2: "I only eat in Japanese restaurant. I haven't thought about to eat it in other places"

C3: "High-end Japanese restaurant."

C5: "Most of the cases in Japanese restaurant"

The comments by both Norwegian firms and the Chinese consumers are also corroborated by secondary data as shown in Appendix 3 which shows that Norwegian salmon is relatively highly priced compared to other competitors. These findings are consistent with the literature by Xu and Sulong (2020) and the history captured by the NPR (2015) report on introducing Norwegian salmon to the Asian market as a high-end quality and premium product. According to Yusuf et al. (2015), a differentiation strategy involves quality positioning and innovative pricing to signal the value of money to attract target customers. In the same vein and the specific context of Norwegian salmon, Helander (2017) argues that since Norwegian salmon is an exclusive product, the price must be high to prevent it from becoming an everyday meal. While the finding confirms that the Norwegian salmon is a highly priced product compared to several countries, its relative price compared to Faroe Island suggest that it might be a mid to high end priced product but warrants further investigation.

The participants commented on the positioning of Norwegian salmon's place or market channels. Figure 6 provides an overview of the comments of the Norwegian firms in response to closed-ended questions. Most of the firms sell to importers, followed by processors and wholesaler at the same level and supermarkets and direct customers with the least. It is surprising that these firms do not report to be using electronic channels. When asked in a follow-up question, the firms do not rate themselves highly or lowly but in the middle of using supermarkets and high-end channels to distribute their products, suggesting that the bulk of their products go to the market indirectly importers and wholesalers as suggested by F1 when asked to comment on the knowledge of their target market. Perhaps, this also explains why the Norwegian firms seem to have a low market orientation of the Chinese market.

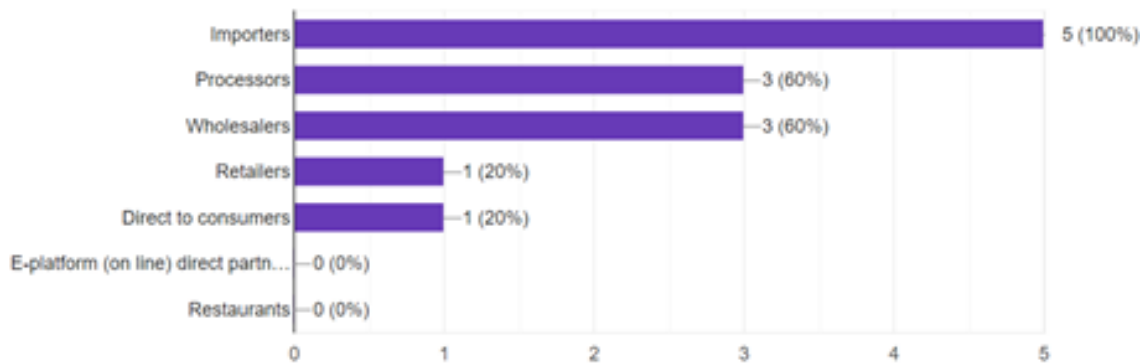


Figure 6: Place or distribution channels

Accordingly, the Chinese consumers were asked to comment on what they perceive as distribution channels of Norwegian salmon products in China. The Japanese restaurant emerges as the most popular channel of distribution followed by the supermarket. Like Norwegian firms, the Chinese customers except one (C4) do not indicate that they have bought Norwegian salmon on an electronic platform.

It seems that although Norwegian salmon appears on some online platforms and C4 bought it, this could be for advertising purposes or could be imitations after all. These findings are surprising because, with the development of e-commerce channels in China, one would expect Norwegian salmon exporters to leverage this great opportunity. However, another explanation could be that Norwegian salmon exporters are selling through importers and wholesalers, as shown in Figure 5 and have less contact with the consumer at the end.

Similarly, the promotion of Norwegian salmon seems to follow brick and mortar approach with little or no digital presence and advertising as shown in Figure 7. The firms reported that they mostly use exhibitions and expos, suggesting that their approach could be more of a business-to-business marketing targeting importers and wholesalers and not a business to consumer approach.

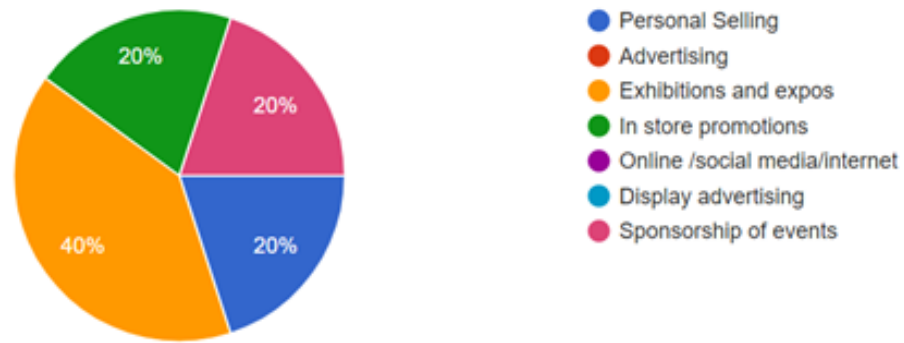


Figure 7: Promotion of Norwegian salmon

The lack of advertising suggests that consumers or potential customers might not have adequate knowledge of Norwegian salmon. Also, it seems some of the Chinese consumers lack education or awareness on where to find Norwegian Salmon. When the Chinese consumers are asked to comment on how they perceive the promotion of Norwegian salmon or at least get to know about the product, most of them suggest that they got to know about it in a Japanese restaurant. However, the consumers can distinguish between a Japanese restaurant and Norwegian salmon. It seems the Japanese restaurants also use the reputation of Norwegian salmon to market themselves. C1 and C4 suggest that they have seen and buy it online respectively, it does not seem to be a conscious effort by the Norwegian salmon exporters to promote it online. It also seems that Norwegian salmon is not proactively promoted, or the Chinese consumers and potential customers do not know about. C2 stressed to use electronic platform and C4 advised that these platforms including live streaming can be critical for educating Chinese consumers about the Norwegian salmon and help it against imitations. They gave the following comments:

C2: "In e-commerce channel, stress about the word Norway"

C4: "In Tik Tok, try to explain how to distinguish between Norwegian salmon from X (name of country taken out)."

These findings on the distribution channels and promotions contrast with Helander (2017), who advises Norwegian salmon exporters to use digital technology and e-marketing to promote their product in the Chinese market. He further suggests selling Norwegian salmon on a digital platform to distinguish it from other fish sold in a general market. Promotion is essential because it increases a product's competitiveness over and above price (Melewar et al., 2008).

Contrary to Wang (2003), who suggest that the Chinese consumer confuses Norwegian salmon with Japan, we do not find the same but rather that they can make a distinction between the two. Arguably, these findings support Fan (2017) and Williams and Capps (2020), who suggest that the Norwegian salmon brand needs further promotion.

4.4 Factors affecting market positioning

The Norwegian firms and Chinese consumers commented on the factors they perceive to affect the market positioning of Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market. Specifically, the Norwegian firms responded to closed-ended questions on several macro-levels and industry and firm-level factors. Figure 8 shows their perceptions.

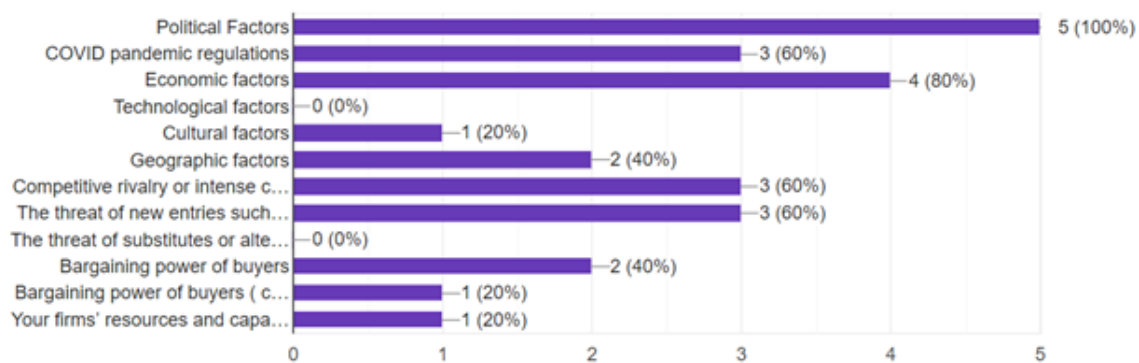


Figure 8: Factor affecting Norwegian salmon exports and market positioning in China

According to Figure 8, the comments of Norwegian firms show that most of the factors affecting the Norwegian salmon exports in general and market positioning, in particular, were external and included political, economic factors, COVID pandemic regulations, cultural factors, geographic factors, competitive rivalry, the threat of new entries. The bargaining power of buyers and suppliers were indicated by two firms and one firm, respectively. Only one firm indicated that the firm resources and capabilities affected it on internal or firm level factors. When asked to explain their close ended responses the firms made the following comments:

F1: "We see that the political uncertainty and COVID pandemic may influence it strongly, but it may also be influenced by the salmon and price offered from Australia and Chile."

F2: "First and foremost there has to be an underlying purchasing power to be able to have a significant demand for Salmon, but a large portion of China is both able and willing to do so. One of the main factors are political factors where historically market restrictions are causing a reluctance to depend too much on the market. As well as ILA and PD restrictions on the fish being allowed to export into China reduces the potential volume as well as regularity."

The Chinese consumers also commented that politics, the environment, health and safety were the factors that affected their perception of Norwegian salmon. C5 mentioned that there was much negative news about Norway, particularly its wrong political decision. However, C5 did not give specific on the political decision. Furthermore, C5 highlighted that there were also environmental and health concerns raised over Norwegian salmon. These perceptions are following comment.

C5: "As a Chinese consumer, Norwegian salmon recently get a lot of negative news. For example the Norwegian political wrong decision. For example, there is news about Norwegian salmon is over-farming and with high fatality case. For example, last year the outbreaks in Beijing seafood market. It is found imported cases caused by the cutting boards that have handled Norwegian salmon,"

and *"First of all is that Norwegian government should have correct political view about China's own business. It should respect our own national sovereignty. Second of all is the food safety. Norwegian salmon was banned once due to food hygiene."*

Other Chinese consumers did not mention political factors, they also highlighted that they were concerned about the environment and health. Although one of the comments does not apply directly to Norwegian salmon, it shows that the consumer is environmentally conscious and might have the same perception and take the same action if environmental standards are perceived to be lacking. For example, C1 and C4 made these comments:

*C1: "salmon. Now Country Z (**name withdrawn**) is polluted. I think people are reluctant to eat Z salmon."*

C2: "Before I liked the Norwegian salmon very much. However, there is a lot of negative news in social media or media in China recently, such as Tiktok, kuaishou, new news. It is reported that the Norwegian salmon farming environment is very poor. This negative news makes me reluctant to buy."

Although there are other factors mentioned by firms different from the ones mentioned by the Chinese consumers, the consumers also identify that the Norwegian salmon export faced a threat from new entrants. They highlight that China itself has also started salmon farming and they see the imports referring to Norwegian Salmon exports as facing a downturn in the future. The consumers also indicated that there was a threat to Norwegian salmon from substitutes which are fake products. They made the following comments:

C1: “.... There are some sellers are faking salmon from B as from Norway, which helped salmon from B increasing the price. However, it damages the salmon reputation from Norway....”

C3: “.... Besides, China has already begun to farm salmon in China. There is pandemic going on. I think the import salmon market is in a downturn.”

C2: “Before I liked the Norwegian salmon very much. However, there is a lot of negative news in social media or media in China recently, such as Tiktok, kuaishou, new news. It is reported that the Norwegian salmon farming environment is very poor. This negative news makes me reluctant to buy.”

Overall, there is an agreement as in the literature (e.g. Chen & Garcia, 2016; Kolstad, 2020) between Norwegian firms and Chinese consumers that politics affects Norwegian salmon exports to China. The comments from the Chinese consumers also show that the political factors also affect other aspects, including the perceived quality of Norwegian salmon, as negative news tends to create negative perceptions about other things. There are also health and safety issues, which has become topical because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, although an environmental question was not asked directly in the closed-ended questions given to Norwegian firms, one has expected them to suggest another factor in the open-ended question. In contrast, the Chinese consumers show that they are concerned with the environment and the farming environment of Norwegian salmon. The role of environmental aspects, environmentally conscious consumers or prosumer has been identified by Lindkvist et al. (2005), who suggested the need for the Norwegian salmon industry to pay attention to this threat. Similarly, culture plays a role and affects how the Norwegian salmon is positioned in the Chinese market (Helander, 2017; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). Also, the finding show that Norwegian salmon export face threat from new entrants such as Chinese salmon farmer. The emergence of new entrants to challenge existing players in the salmon industry has been identified by Helander (2017) and Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017).

4.5 Strategies to support market positioning

The Norwegian salmon firm commented on the strategies used to support Norwegian salmon's market positioning in the Chinese market. Figure 9 shows their responses to the specific strategies.

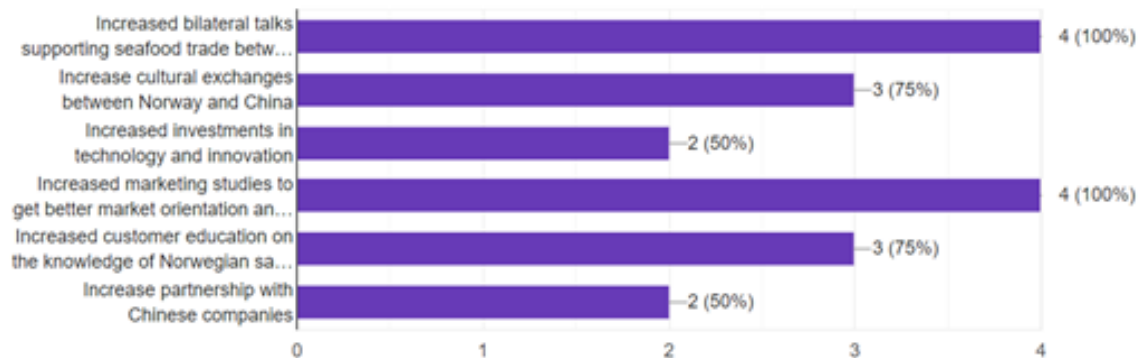


Figure 9: Strategies implemented to support Norwegian salmon exports in China

Overall, the comments from the Norwegian firms show that several strategies implemented to support Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market. When asked to explain the above comments, only F1 and F2 made the following comment:

F1: "As far as I know the Norwegian Seafood Council have done all of the above (not sure about the last one), but I might be wrong."

Although F1 and F2 did not attribute any of the strategies to their individual companies, this does not suggest the firms are not doing anything. Perhaps, it is an area that needs further examination. The Norwegian firms also suggested what they think should be done as shown by these comments:

F1: "Perhaps marketing Norwegian salmon as from a seafood nation (which is not a product you can sell to Chinese consumers who want to buy something firm that they can actually consume instead of a seafood nation which is untangible),"

And,

“Learn more about the different channels and apps that Chinese consumers actually use, and how to market and position companies’ products in an effective way so it leads to actual purchases,”

And,

“... I also think that companies would benefit from letting their sales employees spend time in China to get to know the culture, language and how they think to improve the sales and marketing of the companies’ products to this market.”

F3: “Important with trading agreement so there’s no duty on Norwegian Salmon.”

F4: “Increased bilateral talks supporting seafood trade between China and Norway. Importing Norwegian salmon to China has 10% import tax while there’s no tax on country X”, and “Need more close communication and exchange by both countries and industries.”

The Norwegian firms commented that there is a need to revisit some of these strategies at the country, industry, market, and individual firms. These strategies include revisiting the overall country of origin marketing approach, firms sending their sales employees to study the Chinese culture, language and market, using electronic marketing or e-commerce and the need to maintain and promote good bilateral relations between China and Norway. Similarly, the Chinese consumers were asked to comment whether they were likely to increase their consumption of the Norwegian salmon, which signals its market potential. They gave the following comments:

C1: There should be more marketing and promotion. There should be more promotion price to let people experience the Norwegian salmon product.”

C2: “It is important to let people know that Norwegian salmon has a really good quality farming environment. At the same time, try to offer a good price” and “As for the promotion of Norwegian salmon, the nutritional value should be repeatedly introduced online. It should repeat promoting the good taste and high quality of salmon, good farming environment again and again.”

C3: “Before In e-commerce channel, stress about the word Norway...”

C4: “In China, I think only average signal meal is over 3000 RMB, which is around 462 USD dollar/person/meal. People will really pursue the quality of salmon. 90% of the salmon lovers they pay more attention to the price.”

C5: “First of all is that Norwegian government should have correct political view about China’s own business. It should respect our own national sovereignty...”

Overall, the comment by both the Norwegian firms shows that there a need for strategies to support Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market or to revisit existing ones. Similarly, the

literature also emphasizes the same, in particular the need for improved bilateral relations (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Ling, 2018; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017) efforts by the industry association and investments at the firm level (Asche et al., 1999; Fan, 2017; Helander, 2017; Hersoug et al., 2021; Lindkvist et al., 2005; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Wang, 2003; Williams & Capps, 2020). Kleppe et al. (2002) suggests that both industry and firms should leverage Norway's country of origin or image advantage (Kleppe et al., 2002) or at least revisit it. At a firm level sending sales employees to understand the Chinese culture and language will reduce the cultural distance which has also been identified by Helander (2017) and Rakvåg and Sandøy (2017). between the two countries and between the firms and consumers. Also, customer education is essential for promoting Norwegian salmon (Rui & Zhu, 2015). Lastly, the findings show that Norwegian salmon exports face the threat of new entrant from Chinese firms. To respond to this challenge, Lindkvist et al. (2005) argues that partnering with Chinese firms will give Norwegian a foothold in the long term.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

China is the largest seafood consumers driven by its large population and growing middle class (Bank, 2013; Ma & Xiao, 2010; Nguyen, 2019). However, its total consumption of salmon remains low compared to its total seafood consumption and, therefore, shows a vastly untapped market potential. Norway is the leading salmon exporter to China, but also its share remains small compared to the total seafood consumption and presents a significant market potential (Bang et al., 2012; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). As such, the pertinent question is how well-positioned Norwegian salmon exporters are to increase their market share and maintain their competitive advantage. However, despite the importance of this question, existing studies have not explicitly looked at their market positioning. Instead, the focus of the studies (e.g. Ling, 2018; Ma & Xiao, 2010; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017) has been on the market potential and factors affecting the Norwegian salmon exports and strategies in general. In response to this gap in the literature, the study described the market positioning of Norwegian Salmon in the Chinese market, identified and explained the factors affecting it as well as evaluated existing strategies.

Overall, the literature (Asche & Sikveland, 2015; Luan, 2011; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017; Rui & Zhu, 2015; Xu & Sulong, 2020) shows that Norwegian salmon follows a differentiation strategy, making it a high-quality product with premium pricing using high-end market channels and promotional activities. However, the literature shows that the competitive position held by Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market is affected by macro, industry and firm-level factors (Chen & Garcia, 2016; Ling, 2018; Melewar et al., 2008; Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017). The literature also argues that Norwegian salmon exporters need effective strategies at the macro, industry and firm level to position themselves in the Chinese market to maintain their competitive advantage and address the factors that affect their market positioning (Asche et al., 1999; Bergesen & Tveterås, 2019; Cojocaru et al., 2021; Hersoug et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2018; Lindkvist et al., 2005).

The findings of the study consistent with the literature (e.g. Rakvåg & Sandøy, 2017) confirm that although Norwegian salmon has the largest market share in the Chinese market, it remains a substantial untapped potential compared to the overall consumption of seafood. The findings also show that the Norwegian salmon's market positioning follows a differentiation strategy

across all the four Ps of marketing to position it as a high-quality premium product targeting the Chinese middle class. The positioning is affected by macro, industry, and firm-level factors which include bilateral relationships between China and Norway, a lack of comprehensive market orientation and understanding of Chinese buying habits, such as online trading, the threat of substitutes from fake products, and in the long term, the threat of new entrants as the Chinese themselves are learned to farm salmon. Although strategies exist at the country, industry and firm level, the study shows that they seem to have overlooked consumer education, learning from the consumers and the important of online shopping in the Chinese market.

Therefore, there is a need for interventions or strategies to be implemented or improved at the country, industry and firm level. These include a better market orientation of the Chinese market, promoting cultural exchanges and strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Also, consumer education and learning from consumers with the latter including sending sales and marketing people to spend time in China as well as outsourcing to Chinese marketing agencies. In the long term, Norwegian firms should consider partnering with Chinese firms across the value chain to avoid direct competition with Chinese firms.

The study was limited to a few respondents to a survey and selected participants for online interview chats, and, therefore, cannot be generalized to all Norwegian firms or the industry. Also, the study was limited only to firms and consumers and did not seek the opinions of other stakeholders such as the government, suppliers and market intermediaries. Another limitation is that although the findings show that politics affect the Norwegian salmon exports to China the reasons for this and their impact are not explained nor examined further.

Therefore, future studies could consider extensive cross-sectional studies and quantitative studies so that the findings can be generalized to a broader context. Also, there is a need to consider other stakeholders' views to fully view the market positioning of Norwegian salmon in the Chinese market. Furthermore, there is a need to unpack the role of politics, why it affects the Norwegian salmon exports to China in general and how it affects its market positioning explicitly. Future studies should also try to understand the market orientation of Norwegian salmon exporters in the Chinese market, the Chinese food and cultural habits and the role of online or e-marketing on the market positioning of the Chinese market.

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Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire to Norwegian salmon firms

Exploring Norwegian salmon exports to China

Survey

*Required

Please Consent below *

Tick all that apply.

- By ticking the box, I indicate my consent to participate
- I also want to receive results of the study, if so, tick the box

Company information

1. How many full-time employees do you have in your business?

Mark only one oval.

- 1 - 4
- 5 -9
- 10 - 19
- 20 - 49
- 50 - 99
- 100 - 249
- 250 and above
- Other: _____

2. How many years have been your company exporting salmon to China?

Mark only one oval.

1 - 4

5 - 9

10 - 19

20 - 49

3. In which year did it starting exporting salmon to China? *

Section B: Market potential of Norwegian salmon exports to China

4. To what extent has the exports of Norwegian salmon to China increased over the past five years?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Least Extent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Great Extent

5. To what extent do you see the exports of Norwegian salmon increasing in the future?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Least Extent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Great Extent

Section C: Market segmentation

Please rate the following statements on scale 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

6. The target market for Norwegian salmon is the Chinese middle class.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

Please explain your answer in 10 to 50 words

7. The target market for Norwegian salmon is the Chinese middle class between the age of 30 to 49.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

Please explain your answer in 10 to 50 words

8. The target market for Norwegian salmon is the Chinese middle class in top-tier cities/provinces like Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Tianjin, Hubei, Chonging and Shandong only.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

Please explain your answer in 10 to 50 words

9. The target market for Norwegian salmon is the Chinese middle class in middle-tier cities/provinces, such as Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Anhui, Hunan, Liaoning, Hainan, Henan, Sichuan.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

Please explain your answer in 10 to 50 words

Market mix

10. Product - In what form do you export your salmon to China?

Tick all that apply.

- Fresh chilled salmon
- Frozen salmon
- Fresh fillet
- Frozen fillet
- Smoked salmon
- Other value-added salmon products

If Other value-added salmon products, please kindly state:

11. Price - How do you describe the Norwegian salmon prices in the Chinese market?

Mark only one oval.

- High (premium)
- Medium (average)
- Low

12. Place - What are your distribution channels in the Chinese market?

Tick all that apply.

- Importers
- Processors
- Wholesalers
- Retailers
- Direct to consumers
- E-platform (on line) direct partnership with Chinese on line platform like JD, Alibaba's Hema Xiansheng
- Restaurants

13. Promotion - How do you promote salmon products in China?

Mark only one oval.

- Personal Selling
- Advertising
- Exhibitions and expos
- In store promotions
- Online /social media/internet
- Display advertising
- Sponsorship of events

Section E: Overall marketing mix

Please rate the following statement on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

14. Product (compared to competitors, Norwegian salmon is of the highest quality).

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

15. Price (compared to competitors, Norwegian salmon fetches the highest price and offers the highest value for money).

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

16. Place (compared to competitors, Norwegian salmon use upmarket and better distribution channels).

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

17. Promotion (compared to competitors, Norwegian salmon has the best promotional approaches).

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highest

Section F: Factors affecting Norwegian salmon exports to China

18. Please indicate which factors affect Norwegian salmon exports to China:

Tick all that apply.

- Political Factors
- COVID pandemic regulations
- Economic factors
- Technological factors
- Cultural factors
- Geographic factors
- Competitive rivalry or intense competition
- The threat of new entries such as competitors
- The threat of substitutes or alternative products e.g prawns
- Bargaining power of buyers
- Bargaining power of buyers (customers)
- Your firms' resources and capabilities

Please explain your selected factors above.

19. What could be driving the increasing consumption of Norwegian salmon in China?

Tick all that apply.

- The demand of salmon is increasing due to increasing population
- China's economy is growing rapidly, as so is the number of high-income earners
- Chinese are preferring Norwegian salmon over others due to uniqueness
- Salmon is gaining popularity in among urban youth in China
- There is increasingly good inter-state relationship between Norwegian and Chinese governments

Other: _____

Section G: Strategies to support Norwegian salmon exports to China

20. Which strategies have been put in place by different stakeholders to promote Norwegian salmon exports to China?

Tick all that apply.

- Increased bilateral talks supporting seafood trade between China and Norway
- Increase cultural exchanges between Norway and China
- Increased investments in technology and innovation
- Increased marketing studies to get better market orientation and to position Norwegian salmon
- Increased customer education on the knowledge of Norwegian salmon products
- Increase partnership with Chinese companies

Other: _____

Please explain your answer in 10 to 50 words

21. Which of the strategies above do you think did not work in the past and why?

22. Which of the strategies above do you think needs more effort or to be improved and why?

23. What else do you think should be done by the country, industry, and firms?

Thank you for participating in this Survey.

End of survey, please click submit.

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Appendix 2: Online interview chats with Chinese consumers

挪威三文鱼消费者调查问卷

Norwegian salmon consumer questionnaire

1.您喜欢挪威三文鱼吗？您会增加对挪威三文鱼消费量吗？

Do you like Norwegian salmon and are you going to increase your consumption of it?

2.与其他国家的进口三文鱼相比，您觉得挪威三文鱼怎么样？

What do you think about Norwegian salmon compared to salmon from other countries ?

3.您通常在哪里买三文鱼？海鲜市场？超市？日本料理店？星级酒店餐厅？

Where do you buy it ? seafood market?supermarket? Japanese restaurant? Fancy hotel restaurant?

4.与其他国家的三文鱼相比，您认为挪威三文鱼的价格怎么样？

What do you think about it's price compared to salmon from other countries ?

5.您是从哪些推广渠道得知挪威三文鱼的信息的？

Where have you heard about Norwegian salmon and do you think the message is clear?

6.您认为怎么样才能使人们/您更喜欢挪威三文鱼？

What do you think should be done to make Norwegian salmon appeal to you.

7.在中国一线二线省份，商家都采用哪些手段推广挪威三文鱼？是否采用线上平台进行推广？都有哪些？












In Top tier cities and mid-tier cities,which websites and forms of promotion are done on Norwegian salmon.Can you give some comments?
















8.您居住在哪个省市？

Which province are you living in ?





Appendix 3: Secondary data on Norwegian salmon products and their prices in China

Product

Product					Quality			
Product foam	Picture	Weight	Price /package	Dollar/ Exchange rate at 6,46	Comment 1	Comment2	Comment3	Comment4
Frozen whole piece		5-6 kgs	399	61.76				
						Very good package. The salmon meat looks very fresh.	I am very surprised in a good way. It is a big box. It is whole frozen salmon includes head and tails.High quality. It has been cut into 40 pcs. It is good date.I believe in JD and I like this brand.I believe that good brand combined with JD platform hands in hands will bring consumers reliable good food.	This time, delivery speed is faster compared with last buying. Last buying I gave mid-range start due to I think it is not so good. The customer service is very quick feedback.Therefore,I made another purchase.This time I am satisfied and I give good rating.I hope the seller can do better and better job.
Frozen fillet		500 g	129	19.97				
						Package is nice and environmental friendly.High value at price. I made a flat pan fried dish.It is delicious.	Not fresh at all./Rotten.I am Hermafresh membership. I placed the order yesterday and get the package today.It is not fresh.	I think this is not authentic salmon. It could be rainbow trout and sell it as salmon.

Product					Quality				
Chilled fillet		200g	59,9	9,27					
					https://www.freshema.com/	The meat is soft and loose.The size is small. Today got is not fresh.I often buy this product.It happens sometimes it is not fresh.	It is fresh,firm meat,in good size.It is cheap and good quality. Package is good.It is very delicious no matter how you cook it.	Very fresh. The date is 6th/April.Fresh, satisfied. When I get the parcel.I returned 2 parcel of 3rd/April,which is not fresh.Please pay attention to it.	One package it is 24th,today is day 4.It is not fresh.Another package is 26th.It is fresh.I hope in future only get the fresh one. Thank you.
Chilled fillet		400g	89,9	13,92					
					https://item.jd.com/100017988034.html	It turned out to be a positive surprise that the quality is so good. I highly recommend it.	My house buying salmon most of the time in JD.It is fresh. And it has been cut into the slide. It looks very fresh.It is fillet.IT is very delicious.The delivery is very quick.Thanks for the delivery man.I hope there are more promotion activity.I will buy it again.	This salmon is very good.The pity is that the delivery is too slow.From place the order to our home it takes 3 days. Normally JD platform other products are very quick.If can improve the delivery speed will be very good.My wife likes it very much.	I have to say that this salmon is very fresh.I am a big salmon fans.I have eat in a lot of Japanese restaurant.In comparison, this product is very fresh.It is great.If I want to eat salmon,I will buy from this brand.Delivery is one day.
Product					Quality				
Product foam	Picture	Weight	Price /package	Dollar/Exchange rate at 6,46	Comment 1	Comment2	Comment3	Comment4	
Smoked salmon		1kgs	198	30,65					
					https://item.jd.com/10121458889.html	This is repeated purchase, it is very fresh, I am very satisfied.	It is very fresh. The package is good. The taste is great.	The taste is very good and fresh.The quantity is good. I will buy again.	The salmon tastes good.It is delicious.It is a bit salty. I just received and defreeze it.

Price

Product foam	Picture	Country	Weight	Price/ CNY	Dollar	Picture	Country	Weight	Price/ CNY	Dollar	Picture	Country	Weight	Price/ CNY	Dollar
Frozen fillet		Norway	400g	179,00	27,62		Chile	300g	35,80	5,52		Newzeland	500g	275,50	42,52
Chilled fillet		Norway	400g	89,90	13,87		Chile	500g	99,00	15,28		Newzeland	500g	230,00	35,49