

MARKET ENTRY STRATEGIES

Establishing brand recognition in the Mexican market can take time. A visible presence in the market is essential to establish credibility with both distributors and consumers.

Although imports from Canada have grown, Canadian fish products are not well known in the Mexican market. The general concept of Canada as a clean country helps to create a positive image for fish products, but there is still little brand name recognition. In recent interviews, the only Canadian brand names that distributors and merchants consistently named were Brunswick sardines and Ice Capy salmon. The Mex-Can and Wood Bay brand names were occasionally mentioned. In spite of this, Canada claims around 10 percent of the import market, which is better than for most other food products.

Canadian companies that have succeeded in Mexico frequently say that establishing a visible presence in the market is essential. Some establish relationships with Mexican agents. Others have found that partnerships with Mexicans are also a powerful way of overcoming cultural and language barriers. On the other hand, some companies say that in order to establish a major market presence, a representative office or Mexican subsidiary may be needed.

For example, executives of *Brunswick de México* said in interviews that they considered that a local office was essential for the intensive sales effort they had planned when they entered the market in 1992. They rely heavily on their Mexican office to clear away regulatory hurdles and present the product to the Mexican market in its best possible light. A substantial local organization was also needed to get the product into supermarkets on a national scale.

In a partnership or joint venture, the Canadian partner typically supplies technology, management know-how and capital. The Mexican partner provides market knowledge and access, as well as the labour for local value-added. This type of partnership is particularly attractive to local companies because capital is both scarce and expensive in Mexico.

For fresh fish, the best way to approach the market is to contact merchants at *La Nueva Viga* in Mexico City. Some merchants there say they are skeptical of Canadian suppliers, however, because some have been unable to supply adequate quantities of the products listed in their promotional materials.