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Author(s)	Paula Martinmäki	Student number	
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Supervisor(s)	D.Sc. Birgitta Sandberg, M.Sc. Hanni Candelin-Palmqvist		

Abstract

The food industry has become a provider of health-enhancing products for the customers seeking to improve their standard of life by everyday choices. Some of the innovators of the industry provide products beyond traditional nutrition known as functional foods. In the Finnish food industry, the high level of innovation and the increased pressure to become competitive globally has resulted in an orientation towards creating functional food products. In order for the companies to be profitable and competitive, branding has become a necessity in the sector.

The global pressure, the evermore enhanced importance of branding, and the position of the relatively small Finnish food industry, create an interesting setting for examining the realities of the Finnish functional food providers. Therefore, the research question is: ***How is the international brand expression formulated in Finnish functional food companies?***

The theory is formed by charting different structures of branding, internationalization and brand adaptation. By combining these elements, a model is created for international brand expression for functional foods. The research was conducted as a case study of two Finnish functional food providers. The method of data collection was personal semi-structured interviews of three company representatives and an expert in the field.

The functional food market is evolving through gradual rising of awareness, interest to the sector and the development of new innovations and applications. The cooperation between the national actors in the field as well as with the international partners is important for the development of the business opportunities. The varied range of businesses connected nowadays to functional foods are required to recognize the benefit focus of a strong functional food brand and the strength of a globally unified brand. Furthermore, entering the field of functional foods requires innovation, strong unique position and the creation of new segments in the sector. The functional food industry remains a growth area, but the realization of the potential requires further development of the field, acceptance by the consumers and knowledge of the special characteristics of the sector.

Key words	Brand, international business, functional food, Finnish companies
Further information	