Consumer attitudes towards functional foods

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Outline

1. Health and functionality in food choices
2. Role of information and claims in functional products
3. Attitudes towards functional products
4. Impressions of buyers of functional foods
5. European consumers and functional probiotics in Proeuhealth-cluster
1. Health and functionality in food choices
Lots of foods
Taste
Safety
Origin
Production method
Health effects
Convenience
Price
Environmental impact
New improved foods
New improved food ingredients
Choice
Diet
Dietary advice
WELL BEING
Healthiness in food is a multidimensional concept

Perceived healthiness of food

- Energy content
- Possible harmful substances
- Nutrient content
- Functional components

- Sensory attributes: flavour, mouthfeel
- Satiety
- Physiological effects
Consumers and health-promoting food choices

• People know what they should eat
• How to make healthy options more appealing?
• Changes in food and purchase habits?
• Improving the health-related quality of existing products: low-fat, high-fibre, functional?
• Developing new products for consumers who do not eat products with conventionally high health image?

• Functional foods offer an alternative to express healthiness in food choices
Functional foods offer a new way to express healthiness in food choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Functional</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Following nutritional recommendations</td>
<td>• Product-specific physiological functions</td>
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<td>• More fibre, vegetables, fruits, low-fat products</td>
<td>• Individual motivations and needs</td>
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<td>• Balanced diet with moderate energy content</td>
<td>• PRODUCT THAT IMPROVES SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS</td>
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<td>• DIET THAT LOWERS THE RISK OF DISEASES</td>
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FUNCTIONAL FOODS

or

FOODs marketed with HEALTH-RELATED ARGUMENTS

What is the difference to the consumer?
CONSUMER GROUPS WITH DIFFERENT HEALTH STATUS

Healthy & well
- Young
- Elderly
- Exercising
- Working hard

Healthy with minor disorders
- Physically inactive
- Overweight
- Allergies
- Eye problems
- Caries
- Gut problems

Those at disease risk
- Obese
- Hypercholesterolemic
- Impaired glucose tolerance
- Elevated blood pressure

Those with a chronic disease
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
2. Role of information and claims in functional products
Functional foods belong to product categories

- Consumers do not regard functional foods as a separate group of products, but each product belong to a category of food
- Reasons for choices between categories vary: functionality or health-related issues are among other choice criteria
- Relevance of functionality varies between categories and individuals

Urala & Lähteenmäki, 2003
Example of a product card

Cholesterol-lowering spread
Example of a product card

Margarine spread
Spreads

- USE OF TIME
- FEAR OF DISEASE, PREVENTION OF DISEASE
- LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE
- BEING A BETTER PERSON, FITS THE IDEALS
- AVOID DISAPPOINTMENTS
- ECONOMY STAYS BALANCED
- CONVENIENCE, EASE
- GENERAL WELL BEING
- FAMILIAR WITH BRAND, SECURE
- KNOWS WHAT TO GET (PRICE-QUALITY)
- PACKAGE SIZE, PRACTICALITY, SELECTION
- CHOLESTEROL
- LIGHTNESS, ENERGY CONTENT
- PROMOTES HEALTHINESS, HEALTH EFFECTS

SPREADS
cut off 3, N=24

Urala & Lähteenmäki, 2003
What is said about the product?

- If consumers are promised more, will this promote acceptance?
- A survey with 958 respondents (17-81 years), mean age 40 years, 46% women and 54% men
- from 76 workplace cafeterias all over Finland

(Urala, Arvola & Lähteenmäki, 2003)
Strength of the claim
(Urala, Arvola & Lähteenmäki, 2003)

1. Product contains health promoting probiotic bacteria.
3. The probiotic bacteria in the product reduces the risk of gastrointestinal disorders
4. The probiotic bacteria in the product cure gastrointestinal disorders.
Strength of the claim
(Urala, Arvola & Lähteenmäki, 2003)

- Probiotics
- CLA
- Sitostanol
- Xylitol
- Added calcium
- Added fibre
- Low salt
- High pressure

perceived disadvantage (-3) or advantage (+3)
3. Attitudes towards functional products
Attitudes towards functional foods

Two studies carried out in 2002 (n=1156) and 2004 (n=1113) with a pattern of items on functional foods

1. Perceived reward
2. Confidence
3. Necessity
4. Safety (in 2004 data)

Based on factor analysis

Urala & Lähteenmäki, in press
Predicting consumers’ willingness to use functional foods

- ANOVA-models (repeated measures)

Urala & Lähteenmäki, in press
cholesterol lowering spread

Urala & Lähteenmäki, in press
probiotic yoghurt
low-fat cheese

Urala & Lähteenmäki, in press
4. Impressions of buyers of functional foods
Food and impressions

• Food can evoke both conscious and subconscious impressions

• Perceived health image (or naturalness or ethical value) are properties that can be used to express beliefs and self-defined picture of oneself

• Food choice is influenced by affective, more or less recognised meanings which cannot be measured with conventional methods by asking about opinions or beliefs
Feminine or healthy food defines the person

• A woman eating little and light foods is regarded as more feminine and pleasant than a woman eating a lot and heavy foods (e.g. Chaiken & Pliner, 1987; Bock & Kanarek, 1995; Mooney et al., 1994)

• Healthy or low-fat food eaters were rated as more healthy, sporty, attractive, intelligent, careful, calm and even more moral than those who ate unhealthy foods (Barker et al., 1999; fries & Coyle, 1995; Mooney et al., 1994; Stein & Nemeroff, 1995)
How to study impressions towards functional foods?

• Looking for an indirect method that could explore the impressions of users of functional food without attaching attention to what is studied

• So called shopping-list method was selected: between subject approach where respondents make evaluations of a fictional person with a shopping list to make his or her purchases (Saheer et al., 2004)
Impressions of buyers of functional foods (n=350)

• Description of a person and his or hers shopping list
• Respondent evaluated the buyer with 66 pairs of attributes what is the first impression of the buyer based on the shopping list

Experimental design
• 8 different shopping lists - each respondent received one randomly selected list
• Lists varied
  • Background list: items with healthy vs. neutral image
  • Target list: functional vs. conventional items
  • Buyers gender: woman vs. man

Saher et al., 2004
Users of functional foods (in comparison to users of conventional foods) were regarded as

• more disciplined, if the background list was neutral (with a healthy background list buyers were disciplined anyway)
• more innovative
• less gentle/ pleasant

Saher et al., 2004
5. European consumers and functional probiotics in Proeuhealth-cluster
The aim of the consumer platform

- Deliver information about the ongoing research in the PROEUHEALTH –clusters’ eight projects in a form that is comprehensible to the consumers
- Create a channel for enabling interaction between consumers and scientists
- Distribute science-based knowledge – not to promote probiotics and prebiotics as such
The activities

- website
- one page leaflets
- progress reports on research (2 per project)
- workshops with consumer organisations
Consumer and industry platform workshop in Sitges in March 2004

Rod Mitchell, EFCCA, United Kingdom
Esben Laulund, Chr. Hansen, Denmark
Aat Ledeboer, Unilever, Netherlands
Colette Shortt, Yakult, United Kingdom

Jean Michel Antoine, Danone, France
Christoph Cavadini, Nestlé, Switzerland
Gemma Trigueros, Technical Department OCU, Spain
Beate Kettlitz, BEUC, Belgium
Consumer and industry platform on ProEuHealth – cluster (probiotic) in Sitges Spring 2004

• Consumer representatives (Beate Kettlitz, BEUC and Gemma Trigueros, OCU) viewpoints into probiotic products

• Truthfulness of information: based on real and sound science
• Promised effects should be in the product
• What is the sufficient dose: how much should one eat, is there a risk of an overdose?
• Manufacturers should not promise too much.
• Consumers and their ability to understand the basis for functional foods (what are the effects and how they work) should not be underestimated, but the messages should still be simple.
• How the choosing functional product may impact the healthiness of the diet?
• Short term safety is ok, but can we be sure of the long-term safety?
• More information about the workshop: proeuhealth.vtt.fi
References

Thank you for your attention

Further information:

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