

# **THE DISCURSIVE LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES OF A NASCENT MARKET**

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**JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO**

## ABSTRACT

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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Since the introduction of Gold&amp;Green Foods Ltd's Pulled Oats (Nyhtökaura) to the Finnish market in the spring 2016, the Finnish media has been increasingly reviewing different plant-based protein products. Gold&amp;Green Ltd's Pulled Oats has experienced extensive media coverage amongst other Finnish plant-based protein products which have been launched during 2016 such as VersoFood Ltd's Härkis, Viipurilainen Kotileipomo's Puhtikaura etc. It has yet to be seen whether the sudden inception of several plant-based protein product innovations will be defined as a pivotal era in the Finnish food industry or just a passing trend. Finnish media has also categorized MiFu as one of the up and coming food innovations and reviewed it beside Pulled Oats and Härkis. In this paper, the legitimation of plant- and dairy-based proteins is going to be studied. The purpose of this paper is to find out what kind of discursive legitimation strategies are used in the Finnish media and how the consumers perceive this phenomenon. The analysis of the media sources will be cross-compared with the findings of the semi-structured consumer interviews to gain insight of the categorization the nascent and audiences' legitimation strategies of the plant- and dairy-based protein market in Finland. The findings will be studied intertextually to find correlations and linkages between the two text sources. The suitable method for this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA). The key concept or the umbrella term in this paper, which relates to all the theoretical concepts is the categorization literature in the management studies. Categorization literature, or categories research is a rather new stream of research in the management studies. Historically speaking, it has initiated from the cognitive psychology and how firms categorize themselves (Porac, Thomas &amp; Baden-Fuller, 1989). Based on the findings, five legitimation strategies that Finnish media used were identified. The legitimation strategies were identified from of the individual texts, the intertextual totality, power implications from the tone of the identified from the empirical data and also the discursive practices used in the empirical data.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords:</b> categorization, self-categorization, legitimation strategies, nascent market, organization studies, critical discourse analysis, plant-based proteins, dairy-based proteins, Pulled Oats, Gold&amp;Green Foods Ltd, Härkis, Verso Food Ltd, MiFu, Valio Ltd</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of Gold&Green Foods Ltd's Pulled Oats (Nyhtökaura) to the Finnish market in the spring 2016, the Finnish media has been increasingly reviewing different plant-based protein products. Gold&Green Ltd's Pulled Oats has experienced extensive media coverage amongst other Finnish plant-based protein products which have been launched during 2016 such as VersoFood Ltd's Härkis, Viipurilainen Kotileipomo's Puhtikaura etc. It has yet to be seen whether the sudden inception of several plant-based protein product innovations will be defined as a pivotal era in the Finnish food industry or just a passing trend.

Despite the intensive media coverage on the plant-based protein products, it is difficult to distinguish how common plant-based diets are among Finnish consumers. According to latest data, vegetarian and vegan based diets account for 5% of the population (Helsingin Sanomat, 2015). In fact, Finnish consumers' meat consumption has not experienced a downwards trend in the past 65 years (1950-2015), on the contrary, average Finnish person is consuming more meat every year (Natural Resources Institute Finland, 2015). Based from the findings of the research of Natural Resources Institute Finland (Helsingin Sanomat, 2015), the consumers can be roughly divided into two categories: those who continue to consume meat and do not want to lower their consumption of meat products and to those that recognize the consumption of red meat should be limited.

In the Finnish media the plant-based protein products are often described as meat replacements, meat alternatives or meat substitutes. From this discussion it can be noted that the plant-based proteins have not established enough foothold in the Finnish victuals to be distinguished as own independent category (i.e. plant-based proteins), but they are rather fitted to the norm of the society as something that replaces the meat products.

The industry has experienced changes since at least the two of biggest Finnish food industry firms' (Valio Ltd, Paulig Ltd) recent financial and R&D resource allocation. Paulig Ltd acquired a major share (51%) of the start-up firm Gold&Green Foods Ltd's shares and Valio Ltd has launched a new dairy-based protein product MiFu. However, as MiFu is dairy-based protein, it is unclear how it fits to the market of the beforementioned products that are plant-based.

MiFu is a dairy-based, cottage cheese-like friable granule, which is intended to be used in cooking instead of meat. Unlike its fellow food innovations launched in 2016, Pulled Oats (oats and broad bean based product, named after resemblance to the dish Pulled Pork) and Härkis (broad bean based product), MiFu is not a vegan product, but it is still marketed as a substitute for meat proteins.

Finnish media has categorized MiFu as one of the up and coming food innovations and reviewed it beside Pulled Oats and Härkis. Since then the vegan community of Finland has expressed its outrage towards the dairy-based protein

offered by Valio Ltd, since it is not suitable for vegans and it should not be reviewed in the same context as vegan products as Pulled Oats and Härkis. The contradiction of how Valio Ltd's MiFu is seemingly categorized in the Finnish media beside the plant-based protein products, even though it is a dairy-based product, sets an interesting basis for the research for studying how the audience (Finnish consumers and the Finnish media) perceive it.

As mentioned before, Valio launching a product that has been compared to other products that do not seem to belong to the same product category per se, can be seen an example of category straddling. According to Hsu (2006), the firms that engage in category-straddling do not possess the capabilities in the categories they claim membership in and this will expose them on becoming 'jack-of-all-trades, but master of none'. How does MiFu fit on the market? Are Pulled Oats, Härkis and MiFu in reality competing in the same market?

The contradiction and the tensions between the three competing products and the novel market of plant- and dairy-based proteins in Finland will present a fruitful research setting on covering the categorization of firms, their products and how these are portrayed in the media, and how the consumers see these products and firms behind them. The reason why this study concentrates on only the three beforementioned products is that the market itself is so novel that there are only a handful of Finnish firms competing in it; the other competing firms in the Finnish market are not Finnish-owned; the other competing firms have not gained enough of media coverage; the other competing firms are unknown to the consumers; the three beforementioned products have been compared in the media side by side; and Finnish consumers are familiar with these firms and their products. The choice of concentrating on Gold&Green Foods Ltd's Pulled Oats, Versofood Ltd's Härkis and Valio Ltd's MiFu in this study comes down to the fact that all of the products have gained media coverage in the Finnish media, because of the their Finnish origin and that is why Finnish consumers have at least general knowledge of firstly of the firms and secondly their products.

Vaara, Tienari and Laurila (2007) studied the Finnish media coverage on pulp and paper sector mergers in order to understand the meaning-making processes of organizational phenomena, such as industrial restructuring, are legitimated in contemporary society. They studied how the discursive legitimation strategies are used in order to make sense of the global industrial restructuring in the media.

In this paper, the legitimation of plant- and dairy-based proteins is going to be studied. The purpose of this paper is to find out what kind of discursive legitimation strategies are used in the Finnish media and how the consumers perceive this phenomenon. The analysis of the media sources will be cross-compared with the findings of the semi-structured consumer interviews to gain insight of the categorization the nascent and audiences' legitimation strategies of the plant- and dairy-based protein market in Finland. The findings will be studied intertextually to find correlations and linkages between the two text sources. The suitable method for this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA). The following research question can be diluted from the initial research setting:

**Research question:** What kind of discursive legitimation strategies Finnish media uses to categorize the Finnish plant- and dairy-based proteins and how the Finnish consumers perceive this phenomenon?

With the help of this guiding research question, a survey was designed to research the phenomenon from the consumers' side. The data collected from the interviews will be analyzed by coding the findings according to main dimensions that will be the research focus: knowledge claims and grade of membership. Other empirical material will be collected from various media sources will be coded in similar fashion as the consumer interviews. The more elaborate explanation of the researched two dimensions will be presented in the research setting and the findings part. The full list of the Finnish media sources will be presented in the research setting and elaborated in the findings.

There were two sources of primary data: semi-structured interviews and newspapers and tabloids articles. Sample size of the semi-structured interviews was 16, they were conducted during the timeframe February 2017 to March 2017. The other primary empirical data covered 40 selected newspapers and tabloids articles from Finnish leading newspapers and tabloids during the timeframe November 2015 until January 2017. Based on the findings, five legitimation strategies were identified. The research setting was about legitimation strategies Finnish media uses with these three products, and the five found legitimation strategies can be summarized into following: publicization, normalization, authenticity, novelty and category fitness.

The key concept or the umbrella term in this paper, which relates to all the theoretical concepts is the categorization literature in the management studies. In the last chapters, some additional supporting theories from marketing and consumer research will be presented.

Categorization literature, or categories research is a rather new stream of research in the management studies. Historically speaking, it has initiated from the cognitive psychology and how firms categorize themselves (Porac, Thomas & Baden-Fuller, 1989). Most recently the aspect has shifted to more sociological approach and how the external environment of the firm is constructed and how it affects firm's behavior. Categories research can be seen as a fluid and flowing stream of literature that can be used in other management studies to enrich the study from a sociological perspective (Vergne & Wry, 2014).

To support the research question and the overall research setting, in the following chapter the theoretical framework will be presented. The theoretical framework will cover the main relevant theories considering this study. Some additional theories spanning the preliminary demarcation of the theories will be presented also to support the theoretical framework.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this paper will be presented in the following chapters. The key concept or the umbrella term in this paper, which relates to all the theoretical concepts is the categorization literature in the management studies. In the last chapters, some additional supporting theories from marketing and consumer research will be presented.

Categorization literature, or categories research is a rather new stream of research in the management studies. Historically speaking, it has initiated from the cognitive psychology and how firms categorize themselves (Porac et al, 1989). Most recently the aspect has shifted to more sociological approach and how the external environment of the firm is constructed and how it affects firm's behavior. Categories research can be seen as a fluid and flowing stream of literature that can be used in other management studies to enrich the study from a sociological perspective (Vergne & Wry, 2014).

The categorization literature has been recently reviewed in an article by Vergne & Wry's (2014). The paper provides an outlook on categorization literature, its inception in the management studies, the historical development of the field of research, an integration of the different research streams and its future directions. Vergne & Wry (2014) provide an example of Porac et al's (1989) study on competitive groups in Scottish knitwear industry and state that it is considered as one of the paradigmatic papers in categorization literature.

Porac et al's (1989) study drew influence from Hannan & Freeman's (1977) classical paper on organizational ecology and fitness as well as Porter's (1980) quintessential theorem on competitive advantage. The reasoning why the seemingly different research streams were both assessed in the Porac et al's (1989) paper, was that the competitive environment in which the firms participate is constructed from the individual strategies of the firms (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), as well as the strategies of the firms are heavily influenced by the external environment they operate in (Porter, 1980). As Porac et al (1989) stated, the fully understand the phenomenon of competitive groups, their influence on each other, the environment and vice versa, it is critical to acknowledge that there is a 'non-independence' amongst these factors. In this context, the dependent factors of firm-level strategies and group-level structures should be comprehended to fully make sense of the competitive environment and its effects on firms.

While categorization literature is seemingly novel research stream, the main notion is that it borrows and integrates theorem from different management studies. The following chapters the main theories used in this thesis will be presented and reviewed to gain general knowledge on the categories research. As categorization literature spans different research streams and disciplines, the selection of the featured theories was challenging. But for the sake of the research the most prominent and relevant theorem were chosen to be included. While the theoretical framework is mostly constructed of the categories research sub-theo-

ries, in the last sub-chapters some elements from the consumer research and marketing are going to be presented, in more detail, category knowledge theory (Sujan, 1985) and movement of cultural meaning (McCracken, 1985). Since the main theory part consists of categorization literature, the additional marketing and consumer research part will not be exhaustive, but more like an introductory and surface view of the research streams to add value to the theory base.

## 2.1 Market sensemaking

According to Rosa, Porac, Runser-Spanjol & Saxon (1999) audiences use media coverage and virtual dialogue to filter information about product similarities and differences for sorting out meaning of emerging market categories. Firms also use this tactic by looking through the lens of media coverage to discover their rivals and anticipate their moves instead of directly assessing the public positioning statements (Kennedy, 2005). This relates also to the statement Kennedy (2008) provided on the media's role of defining new market, as known as market sensemaking.

Kennedy (2008) stated that news stories and media coverage on the emerging market will act as way to familiarize the market to the audience. This is called market sensemaking. The theory relies on Weick's (1995) approach on how meaning is constructed in the organizations can be seen as a macro extension to the approach. In Weick's (1995) definition, sensemaking is a publicized speculation that enlightens unfamiliar or unexpected thing and how people deal with. As identified by Kennedy (2008), the media's application of new category label in an emerging market will result in audience acquiring a shared interpretation of its meaning.

The market sensemaking process in a nascent market is enabled by the media and news stories, firstly by providing media coverage, thus resulting in gained visibility and cognitive legitimation (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994) for the firms, and secondly the news stories place the not yet publicly renowned (i.e. not legitimate) firms in category that is still in emerging and incomprehensible. This results in making the firms more countable and less unknown. As identified by Alrich & Fiol (1994), cognitive legitimation of a firm refers to the spread of knowledge and the level of public knowledge of an action or activity. The highest form of the spread and level of knowledge is reached once the product, service or process is taken for granted.

Kennedy (2008) identified, that news stories not only make sense of the overall market, but that they will create a reference group or a network for the firms that are mentioned together. This will result in audience creating a perception of the firms and market in an abductive manner, meaning the they will absorb information from the news stories in order to make sense of the new category. The accumulation of the firms being mentioned together will develop a



sense of the market for the audience, that does not represent necessarily the market in reality. When the audience is influenced by a consistent usage of a term referring to a group of firms, they will see it as a category.

According to Kennedy (2008), by studying the media's co-mentions, meaning the mentioning several firms in one news story, it will be possible to recognize the associations of firms that are fundamental in constructing a new market category. Before there is no comparison and co-mentioning in the media, the audience will have limited perception and knowledge on the category. However, with the raising amount of co-mentions, the audience will be affected by the media's news stories and will have yet another interpretation and definition of the new market category. The codependent nature of market sense making process from the media's side to the audience side, is a complex phenomenon, since without the other there cannot be the other.

## 2.2 Categorical imperative

The categorical imperative approach sees categories as elements derived from the external environment and considers them alongside with the expectations of audiences such as critics, regulators, employees and consumers have on different types of organizations. The main element of this approach is that categories imply the cultural codes that derive from belonging to a particular category. Moreover, this results in a two-mode evaluation process where audiences first distinguish to which category an organization belongs to and second determine to which extent the organization fits into the expectations of the category. (Vergne & Wry, 2014)

The categorical imperative framework illustrated by Zuckermann (1999) describes the way the firms balance between differentiating and isomorphic actions in order to achieve the legitimate position on the market and be seen as valid category member. This only applies when the category has established enough of a foothold and can be seen as meaningful to the audience. To establish whether a firm operates in a meaningful category, the market sensemaking processes should be observed, which are the following: how well the knowledge of the category is spread and to which extent the level of knowledge has reached (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994).

Zuckermann (1999) take on the categorical imperative framework also recognizes the fact that the audience will be faced with a social confusion when categorizing firms. The firm will either face the cost of illegitimacy or they will tend to shift towards conformity to avoid the social confusion experienced by audiences. The cost of illegitimacy is constructed from the fact that if the firm is not considered as a valid actor on the market, they will not be classified and thus seen as unintelligible, followed by getting ignored by the audience. The unfit and illegitimate firms are in the end pressured to conform in order to reach the desired audience. In the following figure 1, Zuckermann's (1999) framework is elaborated.

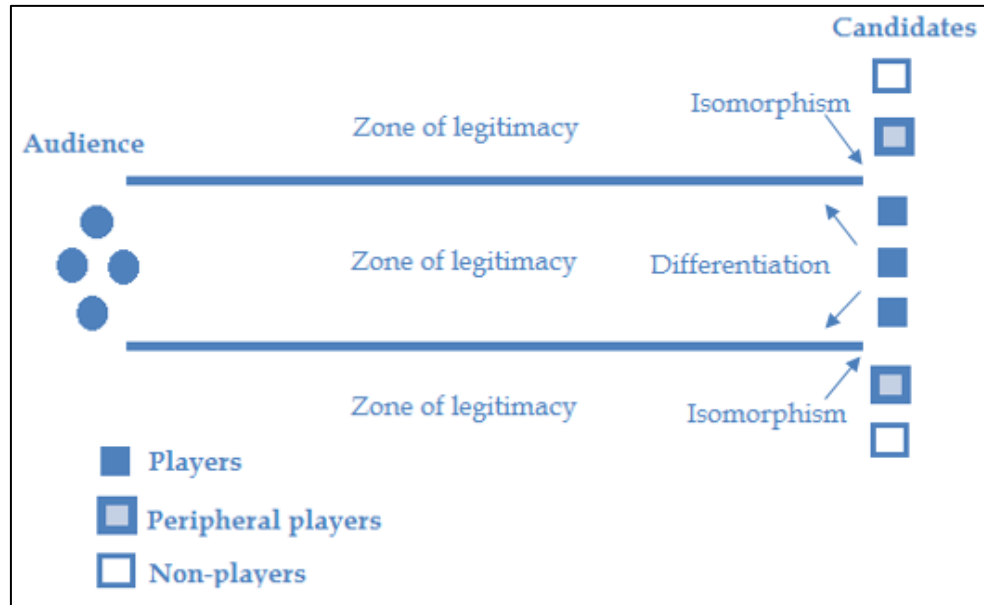


Figure 1. The categorical imperative framework.

As can be seen from the above figure, the players, peripheral players and non-players on the market balance between acts of differentiation and isomorphism in order to achieve the zone of legitimation according to the audience. While the players try to differentiate amongst each other, the peripheral players and non-players try to infuse isomorphic values from the players, in order to be seen as legitimate player on the market.

### 2.3 Category emergence

Whereas categorical imperative model is leaning more towards the isomorphism and differentiation acts of firms struggling to find their place in the market, category emergence sees the process of category creation as an aftermath of emerging firms in the market. These two aspects have been a contested issue in the categories literature, so to say, being a chicken or the egg conundrum (Vergne & Swain, 2017). The category emergence relates also to the Kennedy's (2005, 2008) views on market sensemaking, and it can be seen as refinement and continuation of this view.

According to Kennedy (2008), by studying the media's co-mentions, meaning the mentioning several firms in one news story, it will be possible to recognize the associations of firms that are fundamental in constructing a new market category. In category emergence, this type of behavior presented by the media can be seen set an example on how the category promoters (producers, media) develop a set of vocabulary to describe the emergent category. This is done in order to comprehend the category, but also to create criteria to evaluate the category. The extrinsic use of new vocabulary and discursive repertoires can possibly result in rejection, demotion, devaluation of the emergent category by

the incumbent actors or the audience (Durand & Khaire, 2017). The said category promoters, such as the producers themselves or the media, will play a key role in legitimizing the emergent category.

According to Durand and Khaire (2017), category emergence is present when there is a distinct need to label a material innovation. In Durand and Khaire's (2017) example, for instance Internet in the mid-1990's was not recognized as a category, since it was so novel and technically progressed. Later on, when it became enough familiar for larger masses, it became accepted and recognized category. This refers to the market sensemaking notion identified by Alrich & Fiol (1994), cognitive legitimation. The service, process or product is taken for granted once the spread of knowledge and the level of public knowledge of an action or activity has reached the highest form.

The facilitators of category emergence are usually new organizations, for example up-starts entering a highly competitive market with existing producers. They try to establish an edge or an advantage over the other competitors by generating new criteria for product selection. These trailblazers are fast-growing, aspirational and develop new organizational models that helps them to question the status quo of the market and the economic value of the rivals. (Durand and Khaire, 2017.)

According to Vergne & Swain (2017), often products or services are labeled or categorized after the category has already emerged. Also, often the new labels become obsolete, as soon as the category further develops and more players on the market appear, meaning the category members are relabeled. This can be seen in Negro, Hannan & Rao's (2011) example of Italian wines. The labels "Barolo" and "Barbaresco" are used to describe vinification practices, but they became contested after newcomers to area started using the same labels for their wines, despite different method of producing the wines. Vergne & Swain (2017) also noted that there are labels that do not refer to any category, but also that there are categories that are waiting to be labeled. This can be again seen as a paramount example of how categorization literature describes the category emergence and its paradoxicality: the conundrum whether the label was existing and independent by itself or it was in need of labeling because it lacked one.

## 2.4 Category straddling

Category-straddling means the firm's attempts on associating their products or services with a category that extends their initial category they have claimed membership in. However, per Negro, Hannan & Rao (2010), category-straddling is not appreciated by the audiences and it creates less meaningful identities for firms. This will lower the appeal of the firms' offerings in their associated category because of two reasons: firstly, the act of category-straddling creates confusion in the audiences such as the producers by not fitting the expectations and secondly the expertise of the firm will be hampered by not having the possibility acquiring the needed skills.

As Hsu (2006) stated, the firms that engage in category-straddling do not possess the capabilities in the categories they claim membership in and this will expose them on becoming 'jack-of-all-trades, but master of none'. The straddling firms may also burden their audiences' monitoring skills with their actions as they become difficult to classify. This will result in less positive evaluations from the audience (Zuckerman, 1999).

According to Negro et al (2010) widespread category-straddling will also lower the category contrast. The lowered category contrast will result in decreased appeal towards the category from the audience side. The appeal will lower in two ways: firstly, the more of the category members will be seen as marginal representatives of the category resulting in difficulties of defining and assessing the category; secondly, the lowered contrast will weaken the audience members' consensus about the category meaning because of atypical category members. The lowered appeal will result in less meaningful category members and thus the offerings will be less appealing for broad audiences.

Negro et al (2010) suggested that the category contrast is proportional to the average width of producers' niches in the fuzzy categories space. A producer's niche in a category space is constructed from the typicalities (grades of membership) in the all of the relevant categories. A producer with a broad niche will have partial fit in multiple categories while having a membership in multiple categories. The appeal of all offerings will decrease as the average width of niches rise and producer claims multiple category membership.

## 2.5 Self-categorization

All firms possess an organizational image that is reflected from the audience (for example stakeholders, consumers) point of view. Gioia et al (2000) suggest that organizational image is the firm's socially desired impression that covers certain aspects of the identity, but simultaneously misinterprets other aspects, while Dutton & Dukerich (1991) see organizational image more as firm's belief of how others view them. Both of the viewpoints can be seen as representation of exogenous organizational image building, thus springing from the audience, rather than the firm's input in it.

Firms with common attributes see themselves as cohabitants of the same category and claim category membership by associating themselves in the category. The claiming of the category membership happens by the firm itself establishing their association into a reference group (Lamertz, Heugens & Calmet, 2005). This process is called self-categorization. According to Porac et al. (1989), this always requires the presence of the other firms in the said category, so that the firms can demonstrate their membership in the category by either similarity or dissimilarity. Like category-straddling, the process of self-categorization risks to develop less meaningful identities for the companies, since they might not belong to the category they self-categorize.

According to DiMaggio & Powell (1988), self-categorizing companies will achieve legitimating effects since they will participate in institutional isomorphism in the said category in order to achieve the membership. DiMaggio & Powell stated three mechanisms on how institutional isomorphism takes place: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism.

Coercive isomorphism mechanism can be seen as a pressure from the external environment of the organization. The coercive mechanisms can be formal or informal, such as legislative changes in the environment stemming from political decision making, technological changes or other social pressures originating from authorities and governments. Thus, the organizations are forced to conform to these changes and they become more homogenous, and some of the organizations might self-categorize themselves in order to find fit in the market after the changes.

As identified by DiMaggio & Powell (1988), not all isomorphism is initiated by authorities, but also from uncertainty of the environment. Facing an ambiguous or uncertain environment, for example in times a technological change in the environment is poorly understood, organizations start to model or mimic other organizations to get rid of this uncertainty. These mimetic mechanisms are either done intentionally by using consulting services or such, or unintentionally by diffusing them from new employee turnover. To point out, even innovations might be mimetic mechanisms, as the organization tries to keep up with the rest of the innovating category members. Again, the organizations will become more homogenous, since they are mimicking each other in order to establish the legitimate status on the market.

Normative mechanisms of isomorphism relate to professionalization of organizations. This means the raising amount of professional staff and their likeness to each other. The likeness comes from the formal education such as universities and professional training institutions. These institutions enable creating close to interchangeable individuals in a vast talent pool. Other aspect on professionalization of the organizations, is the fact that organizations tend to hire personnel with experience in said field. Furthermore, this yet creates a chance of homogenization of the employees and thus normative mechanism is visible. (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)

## 2.6 Category knowledge

According to Sujon (1985), consumers' best guess of what category has to offer and what is the exemplar product in the distinct category provides them a pattern of expectations of the category. This pattern of expectations, for example what kind of attributes the product has or what is the typical configurations or performance levels of the product, is called category knowledge.

These said expectations will be organized to suit the most typical category members, or as known as 'exemplars' or 'prototypes'. Exemplars can be said to represent as a suitable demonstration of a category member, while prototypes

are seen as more abstract representation of the attributes common to the associated category members ( (Sujan, 1985)).

Sujan (1985) also identified two types of approaches consumers have when evaluating products or services: piecemeal approach and categorization approach. Piecemeal approach refers to the act of processing information through advertisements, package or other sources, while classifying each piece of information separately. The main notion of this approach is that the consumer comes up with consolidated view of the product by either adding or averaging the pieces of information of the attributes. This leads to merging of these reviews and finally establishing an integrated judgment based on the different pieces of information.

The categorization approach identified by Sujan (1985) however is constituted by the natural division of the information surrounding the consumers, into categories, thus enabling an efficient processing of the environment. This also enables an increased understanding of the environment, as the consumer can apply their pre-existing knowledge of the product category after receiving new stimuli or information about the category.

Sujan's (1985) elaboration on categorization approach is based on Mervis and Rosch's (1981) paper in the field of psychology and Cohen's (1982) paper in the field of consumer research. As per usual, marketing and consumer research combine and consolidate theorem from different streams of research, especially psychology and cognitive sciences, to understand the human factor in the topic of research.

The consumers can be divided roughly into two types: expert and novice consumers. The experts have a well-developed knowledge base of a category, while novices do not possess such information. Experts sense and acknowledge more easily match or mismatch in category members because of their prior knowledge, while novices do not necessarily notice the difference between a match or a mismatch product. Although the experts possess the prior knowledge, they might not rely on it as much as the novice consumers. Novice consumers rely more on their prior experience of a product because they do not have same developed set of expectations as the expert consumers. Novices also may have more extreme views on a product, but also more simplistic opinions about a product. (Sujan, 1985)

## **2.7 Movement of cultural meaning**

McCracken (1986) defined culture as a lens through which an individual perceives the surrounding world and its objects. Through this lens, it is determined how the said objects, or in this case consumer goods, will be perceived by the audience and how the cultural meaning passes from the object to the consumer. McCracken (1985), identified that this meaning is constantly in transit and fluid, ever-changing its form and traveling through several locations in the social world. The cultural meaning is taken from culturally and socially constituted

world, followed by movement to a consumer good. Following this pattern, the meaning is taken from the object and finally moved to the individual consumer. Thus, it can be stated that cultural meaning is located in three locations: culturally constituted world, the consumer good and the individual consumer. A noteworthy detail about McCracken's (1985) study is that it dealt with the consumers in the North American cultural context, so the study itself is very culture-specific. However, the study's findings of the movement of cultural meaning model is useful due to the fact that it holds much universal representation of human behavior. The movement of the cultural meaning can be simplified in the following figure 1 as identified by McCracken (1985). The below figure shows the movement of cultural meaning from the culturally constituted world, all the way to the individual consumer. To crystallize the main notion, culture supplies world with meaning, that can be divided into two types of sources: cultural categories and cultural principles (McCracken, 1985).

Cultural categories of the meaning refer to the system of distinctions that organizes the surrounding world, specified differently by each culture. The system of distinctions is for example time, space or nature. This results in each culture developing their own set of expectations what is appropriate or inappropriate in their own cultural context. As identified before, cultural meaning is constructed from cultural principles. Cultural principles can be seen as the guiding assumptions or ideas that help to segment the surrounding world through cultural categories.

As can be seen in the below figure, the consumer goods' rituals can be divided into four categories: possession ritual, exchange ritual, grooming ritual and divestment ritual. In the following paragraphs the rituals will be elaborated in more detail.

Possession ritual refers to the act of consumer claiming the consumer goods' possession as his or her own. Sometimes the possession ritual is not successful, and the consumer fails to claim the symbolic properties of the consumer good, hence the consumer good becomes a paradox. Consumer ends up owning a consumer good without possessing it and the symbolic properties stay immovable (McCracken, 1985).

While possession ritual deals with the consumer claiming a possession of a consumer good as their own, the exchange ritual is about consumer purchasing and presenting a consumer good to another consumer, meaning the cultural gift giving processes. In this ritual, there is a possibility of consumer moving meaningful properties to another, or at least a wish of this transfer of meaningful properties. For example, a gift given to a child encloses symbolic properties, such as properties the parent wishes the child to absorb (Furby, 1978). This ritual gift giving demonstrates also a possibility for interpersonal influence. Moreover, a consumer may try influence another by selecting a consumer good with specific symbolic properties, since the gift may or may not have been chosen by the receiver otherwise.

Grooming ritual can be seen either as a consumer's need of grooming their selves or the consumer goods' need for grooming to suit the consumer's expectations. In the case of grooming of consumer goods, the ritual deals with the fact

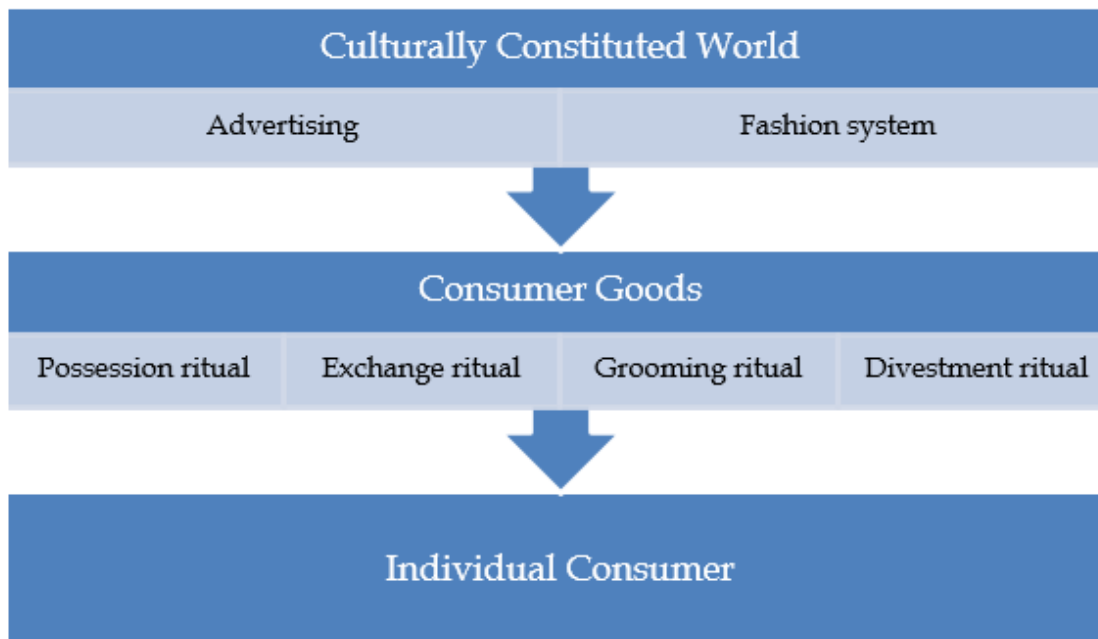


Figure 2. Movement of cultural meaning.

that the consumer desires that the consumer good will deliver heightened properties to them, for example as upgraded or luxury version of the product. The grooming ritual from the consumers own perspective relates to the continuous and repeated drawing of cultural meaning out of one's possessions. This type of behavioral pattern can be seen for example in "going out" rituals: one will have certain rituals as they prepare themselves for a special event. During the grooming ritual one will absorb meaningful properties from the consumer goods in order to give one for example confidence, aggression and defense. The advertisements in the make-up and hygiene products or clothing will try to create meaningful properties and to persuade consumers prone to the grooming ritual.

The fourth and final category of rituals is the divestment ritual. During the divestment ritual, consumers associate goods with their own or someone else's personal properties. This can relate to for example consumer selling their used clothes, cars or other consumer goods, or when consumer is acquiring something that has been used before by someone else. Divestment ritual is applied for two reasons: to erase the previous owner's personal properties from the object (for example house, car) or to erase own personal properties when getting rid of their own goods (for example clothes). After the divestment ritual is done, the meaningful properties are freed to the new owner of the goods, thus one can claim its ownership.

## 2.8 Conclusion of the theoretical framework

In this sub-chapter the conclusion of the theoretical framework used in this paper will be presented. In the following figure the linkages of the theories will



be presented. As category research borrows theories from other streams of research, in the following figure 3 the different disciplines and how they connect to the theoretical framework in this paper will be shown.



Figure 3. Theoretical framework in the context of different disciplines.

As can be seen from the above figure, the theories used in this paper that are part of category research, but also fall under the organizational research discipline. The additional theories, movement of cultural meaning and category knowledge originate from the different disciplines, the former falling under cognitive psychology and the latter under marketing research. This figure is not exhaustive, since the theories listed under organizational research could also fall under management research, since category research's theories are fluid and parts of theories are loaned from several disciplines. In the next chapter the data and research method are going to be presented and elaborated.

### 3 DATA AND RESEARCH METHOD

In the following chapters the collection of empirical data and the chosen method to analyze the data are going to be presented. Also, the justification of the data collection methods is going to be presented. Moreover, the chosen method critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be gone through for gaining a view on the method that was found suitable for this study.

Followed by this chapter of presentation of the collected primary empirical data and secondary data and the chosen method, the findings of the research will be elaborated.

#### 3.1 Data

The research was initiated by screening for suitable articles for the study. The suitable newspapers and tabloids to collect articles from were determined by their reachability and number of readers. The newspapers' and tabloids' average reachability in 2016 by number of weekly readers were the following: Helsingin Sanomat (HS) 321 828, Iltalehti (IL) 1 972 000, Ilta-Sanomat (IS) 2 172 000, Kaupalehti (KL) 690 000 and Yhteishyvä (YH) 1 878 167 (MediaAuditFinland, 2017). MTV News was not considered in the reachability study since it is media conglomerate, and they do not print newspapers and tabloids. MTV News web site's average weekly visitor amount was 1 319 000 on week 52 in 2016 (TNS, 2017).

The final 40 selected newspaper and tabloid articles from Finnish leading newspapers and tabloids were from timeframe November 2015 until January 2017. The timeframe was determined by the first article that covered the topic, in more detail, the Gold&Green Foods Ltd's upcoming launch of the product Pulled Oats. The key words used in finding the suitable newspaper and tabloid articles were: 'Pulled Oats', 'Gold&Green Foods Ltd', 'Härkis', 'Versofood Ltd', 'MiFu', 'Valio Ltd', 'plant-based proteins' and 'dairy-based proteins'. In total over 60 articles were screened for suitability. As identified already earlier, the screening was challenging due to the fact that Gold&Green Foods Ltd's Pulled Oats was predominant topic covered by the media, because Versofood Ltd's Härkis and Valio Ltd's MiFu were only launched during September 2016, and Pulled Oats already in April 2016.

After identifying the selected articles, the initial interview framework for the semi-structured interviews was made. The articles were read to gain the general knowledge on the media discourse of the topic and to initially identify the central themes and the tone of the discourse in the media. After reading the articles, the interview framework was modified. This was done to ensure that the interview framework covers researched topic and to find relations in the interviewee's discourse and how the media's discourse has possibly affected their perceptions.

Once the initial interview framework was done, the interviewees were sourced. The total amount of sourced interviewees was 16. The interviewees were sourced from different settings age being one criterion, second also for ensuring the diversity of the data, interviewees from different life stages: students, persons in working life, persons close to pension age. The interviewees were preliminarily screened based on their interest on the topic (plant- and dairy-based proteins) and knowledge of the products.

Following the preliminary screening the more hesitant informants (possibly the ones who do not use plant- and dairy-based proteins or do not know the products) were convinced to participate in the interview for ensuring differing viewpoints to be covered and for reaching the saturation of data. The purpose was to interview diverse population but the main point was to source for participants who have exposure on Finnish media channels, which limited the participants to native Finnish speakers. The interview questions were tested beforehand with one volunteer. However, this data was not used in any other analysis than to test the efficacy and clarity of the interview framework.

As this study's aim was not to generalize consumers' perceptions gained from media influence, but rather understand how they perceive the products and the overall phenomenon, random sampling would have not been suitable for this cause. Also, the reasoning why not to use a random sampling in this study are the following: the characteristics of the entire population should be comprehended, which is rarely possible in a complex qualitative study; and the research characteristics should be normally distributed for random sample of a population to account for a representative sample. As identified by Marshall (1996), there is no proof that the essence of qualitative research: values, beliefs and attitudes would be normally distributed thus probability approach is not suitable for conducting a qualitative study.

There were two sources of primary data: semi-structured interviews and newspaper and tabloid articles. Sample size of the semi-structured interviews was 16, they were conducted during the timeframe February 2017 to March 2017. The other primary empirical data covered 40 selected tabloid articles from Finnish leading newspapers and tabloids during the timeframe November 2015 until January 2017. The two sources of primary data were selected in order to cover the research question in its entity and the two key dimensions that were identified for data collection: the knowledge claims and grade of membership. The dimensions were based on the Kennedy's (2008) notion, that by studying the media's co-mentions, meaning the mentioning several firms in one news story, it will be possible to recognize the associations of firms that are fundamental in constructing a new market category. Also the dimensions took influence from Negro et al (2010) suggestion that the category contrast is proportional to the average width of producers' niches in the fuzzy categories space. A producer's niche in a category space is constructed from the typicalities (grades of membership) in the all of the relevant categories.

The leading newspapers and tabloids were determined by their number of readers, not by the circulation, since it would not represent the reachability of the newspapers and tabloids per se. The timeframe was determined by the first

article in any of these selected newspapers and tabloids that covered the topic, in more detail, the Gold&Green Foods Ltd's upcoming launch of the product Pulled Oats. The key words used in finding the suitable newspaper and tabloid articles were: 'Pulled Oats', 'Gold&Green Foods Ltd', 'Härkis', 'Versofood Ltd', 'MiFu', 'Valio Ltd', 'plant-based proteins' and 'dairy-based proteins'.

The collection of the various newspaper and tabloid articles covering all of the researched products was challenging, since the dominant product in the media portrayal since November 2015 has been Gold&Green Foods Ltd's Pulled Oats. The two latter products (Versofood Ltd's Härkis and Valio Ltd's MiFu) only started appearing in the media from September 2016. However, during the data collection, 40 different relevant articles were found suitable and sourced for the empirical data.

The secondary data was collected from a collection of academic articles and books, from the following fields of research: categorization literature, organization literature, marketing and consumer research. Marketing and consumer research theories were additional for enriching the theory base.

Next the tables summarizing the empirical data collection will be presented. Firstly, the newspaper and tabloid articles' empirical data sources will be elaborated, followed by the consumer interviews' interviewees general information summary will be provided.

Table 1. Empirical data from the newspaper and tabloid articles.

<b>Outlet</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>
<b>Helsingin Sanomat (HS)</b>	Leading Finnish newspaper	28
<b>Kauppalehti (KL)</b>	Leading Finnish daily business newspaper	4
<b>Ilta-Sanomat (IS)</b>	Leading Finnish tabloid	4
<b>Yhteishyvä (YH)</b>	Leading Finnish monthly newsletter for S-Group loyalty program	2
<b>MTV News</b>	Leading Finnish commercial media conglomerate	1
<b>Iltalehti (IL)</b>	Leading Finnish tabloid	1
<b>Total</b>		40

The most important source of articles was Helsingin Sanomat (HS) with 28 articles. All of the products have been reviewed the most in the beforementioned newspaper. The other newspapers and tabloids such as Ilta-Sanomat and Iltalehti often cite Helsingin Sanomat as their source, so during the empirical data collection of tabloid articles, those articles that cite Helsingin Sanomat were left out to enable to cover the topic from different sources of newspapers and tabloids and with different viewpoints. To describe the media sources in more detail, and

to gain sense what kind of articles they publish, next the sources selected for this study will be shortly introduced.

Helsingin Sanomat, established in 1889, is the largest subscription newspaper in Finland, owned by Sanoma. Its name is derived from the capital of Finland, Helsinki. It is published daily, except after certain public holidays. The paper has been politically independent and non-aligned since the 1932, earlier being influenced by liberal and nationalist political party (Sanoma, 2017).

Ilta-Sanomat was established in 1932 as afternoon edition of Helsingin Sanomat. In 1949 it became a separate tabloid and was named Ilta-Sanomat. It is a tabloid that is published six times per week (Sanoma, 2017). Iltalehti was established in 1980 as afternoon edition of the newspaper Uusi Suomi. Its current owner is AlmaMedia, based in Helsinki. Iltalehti is published in tabloid format six times per week. Its sister newspapers are Aamulehti and Kauppalehti (AlmaMedia, 2017). AlmaMedia operates also in the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland and Sweden. Kauppalehti is a business-oriented newspaper. It was established in 1898 and it is being published five times per week (AlmaMedia, 2017).

Yhteishyvä S-Group's customer loyalty program's monthly magazine. Yhteishyvä's online version is accessible even for the visitors not part of the customer loyalty program. S-Group is a Finnish network of companies operating in the retail and service industry, with more than 1,600 outlets in Finland. S-Group comprises the cooperatives and SOK Corporation along with its subsidiaries (S-Group, 2017). MTV News is part of Swedish media group Bonnier AB. The group also governs the operations of the Finnish tv-channels MTV3, Ava and Sub. MTV3's history dates back to the 1950's, the start of Finnish tv broadcasting. MTV News are broadcasted every night at 7pm and 10 pm, and the news have also an online outlet. (MTV, 2017)

As for the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees were sourced from different settings age being one criterion, second also for ensuring the diversity of the data, interviewees from various locations and different life stages: students, persons in working life, persons close to pension age. The interviewees were preliminarily screened based on their interest on the topic (plant- and dairy-based proteins) and knowledge of the products.

Due to the small sample size and for protecting the anonymity of the interviewees, no names will be shown or used when quoting an interviewee. Every interviewee has their own number, and it will serve as the distinguishing factor when quoting the interviewees.

For this research maximum variation sampling was kept in mind in the process of sourcing suitable population for the study. Maximum variation sampling was used to get heterogeneous sample of the population. This type of sampling is used to understand phenomena which vary widely from each other and to gain understanding of central themes which cuts across the variety of people. (Ritchie, 2003).

Sourcing of interviewees that would represent a heterogenous sample that is suitable for this study proved to be hard, put 16 interviewees in totality were interviewed. The youngest interviewee was aged 25 during the interviews, while the oldest was 63, so this provided a wide range of interviewees of different age,

since the age was one of the criteria when sourcing the interviewees. One noteworthy detail can be seen in the interviewee base is that 25 per cent of the interviewees were males and 75 per cent females.

The informants for the research were sourced with the help of purposive sampling. This represents a feasible way to develop an understanding on complex issues relating to human behavior. In qualitative research the samples are selected deliberately to display groups within the sampled population or particular features of the population, i.e. purposive sampling (Ritchie, 2003). In this study, age was the main criterion when sourcing the informants. This was done to ensure that all relevant age groups were covered and to provide setting for investigating any differences in perspective between age groups. In the following table 2 the general information of the interviewees can be seen.

Table 2. General information on interviewees

Interviewee number	Age	Sex
1	27	F
2	28	F
3	42	F
4	28	F
5	36	F
6	45	F
7	37	F
8	29	M
9	35	F
10	27	F
11	63	M
12	34	F
13	27	F
14	26	F
15	29	M
16	25	M

The optimum sample was determined by the variety of information gained through the interviewees and whether new information came up with each of the interviewee. In qualitative studies a very large sample does not by default stand for richer data and less sampling error (Marshall, 1996). In this study the focus was to find suitable, diverse informants (age being one parameter) for gaining the overall picture of the phenomenon. Also during the sourcing stage of the interviewees, sex of the interviewee was also considered, so the sample would not only have either male or female correspondents. The interviews were conducted in the language most comfortable to the interviewee, in these cases they were held in Finnish. The quotations found in this paper are translated

from Finnish to English. The translations were done accurately to not lose the main idea and notions of the interviewee transcriptions. Not everything could be translated word by word, which is always a risk in translations, so the main notion was to make sure that the general ideas, opinions and the themes and the tone of the interviewee was translated accordingly. Also, the newspapers and tabloids articles quotations that can be seen in this paper are translated from Finnish to English, and similar technique of translation was kept in mind: to not to lose the general ideas, opinions and the themes of the text.

In the following chapter the findings from the empirical data will be presented after which follows discussion, future implications, limitations and final conclusions.

### **3.2 Method: Critical discourse analysis**

The analysis of the media sources will be cross-compared with the findings of the semi-structured consumer interviews to gain insight of the categorization and legitimation of the plant- and dairy-based protein market in Finland. Both the semi-structured interviews and selection of newspapers and tabloids articles will be analyzed with the help of critical discourse analysis to find underlying issues, contradictions and relations in the data.

The choice critical discourse analysis (CDA) for the method for this study, came down to the fact that the studied topic deals with attitudes, contradictions and power relations of the media versus consumer perception on the topic. To first understand, what critical discourse analysis is meant for, one needs to understand what discourse analysis generally deals with.

Fairclough (2002), identified critical discourse analysis can be used as way to study the socially constituted world and the underlying power relations that affect different audiences. Critical discourse analysis can be used in studying the linguistics, where the importance of the transcription is relevant, but also in more general point of view, what kind of vocabulary for example is used in dealing with certain phenomena. Since this study concerns the legitimation strategies used in the Finnish media and how the consumers perceive this, the point of view will be more from the general tone of discussion, and how it is constructed in the Finnish media.

Discourse analysis as a term can be vague, since it can be understood in multiple ways. Nevertheless, to understand what discourse analysis is, first the word discourse needs to be covered. Discourse in its simplest form means pattern of speech, may it be in a written or oral form. It is also a certain way of understanding the world, talking about it or an aspect of the world. As a preliminary definition, discourse analysis can be described as an analysis of these patterns. Discourse analysis can be applied in various ways, one could for example study how national identity is constructed inside an organization with the help of discourse analysis. One way of applying discourse analysis could be to analyze contradicting or different patterns of discourse.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used as a method to unravel the underlying assumptions in social, societal, political and economic phenomena (Vaara et al, 2007). It also used to study power relationships between different discourses and actors. Major factor in CDA when applying it as a method is to consider the three levels of analysis: the textual elements, discursive practices and social practice (Vaara et al, 2007). The textual elements refer to the micro-textual parts and notions in the studied text, while discursive practices mean numerous practices of speech, text, writing as an entity and social practice the situational and institutional context of the studied content.

CDA presents a feasible way on studying the discourse of the Finnish plant- and dairy-based proteins in the media and how the consumers perceive this phenomenon. CDA is suitable method to use to find these factors in the written text and the semi-structured interviews, since CDA is by default an abductive method of research. When conducting a CDA, there is constant movement between the theory and the empirical data (Wodak, 2004). The material is reread and reinterpreted in order to gain insight on the phenomena as a whole. In this study, after the initial research and theoretical evaluation on the topic, two main dimensions are going to be studied. The dimensions for analyzing the media's role in legitimizing the plant- and dairy based proteins and the consumer perception on the topic are the following: knowledge claims and grade of membership. In the following findings chapters the dimensions and their justification will be presented in a more detail to understand the initial research setting and how the study was conducted.

The critique in critical discourse analysis can be divided into two-way model: normative and explanatory critique. The normative critique refers to the act of not only interpreting realities in the social world, but also evaluation and assessment of how they match certain values and how they constitute as standards in different aspects such as political, cultural or material. The explanatory critique deals with describing and showing the relation between for example power structures in the society on individual level or group level (Fairclough, 2012).



## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Next the research findings will be presented. First the general information of the results will be presented, followed by findings in the next chapter. All of the findings are listed under separate sub-chapters for further elaboration. Lastly a brief conclusion of the findings will be presented at the end of this chapter.

As already identified before, there were two sources of primary data: semi-structured interviews and newspaper and tabloid articles. Sample size of the semi-structured interviews was 16, they were conducted during the timeframe February 2017 to March 2017. The other primary empirical data covered 40 selected tabloid articles from Finnish leading newspapers and tabloids during the timeframe November 2015 until January 2017. The two sources of primary data were selected in order to cover the research question in its entirety and the two key dimensions that were identified for data collection: the knowledge claims and grade of membership. The both sets of empirical data were cross-examined and analyzed according to the principles of critical discourse analysis in order to achieve the level of intertextual analysis needed for successful implementation of the method.

The findings from the empirical data will be presented in three parts: firstly, the main findings from the empirical data will be presented in separate sub-chapters followed by other notable findings from the empirical data, secondly the data from the semi-structured interviews will be presented, thirdly the data from the newspaper and tabloid articles will be presented and lastly a conclusion of both data sets.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted during the timeframe February 2017 to March 2017. The reason why the interviews were not started earlier was due to the screening and collecting of the suitable newspapers and tabloids articles (last article dated January 2017). If the interviews would have been started earlier, there might have been a chance that not all of the interviewees would have been possibly exposed to the selected newspapers and tabloids articles that were included as other primary data. The studied two dimensions for covering the research question, the knowledge claims and grade of membership were based on the Kennedy's (2008) notion, that by studying the media's co-mentions, meaning the mentioning several firms in one news story, it will be possible to recognize the associations of firms that are fundamental in constructing a new market category. For uncovering the relations between the media discourse and the consumer perceptions, it was crucial that all of the selected articles were already published. The reasoning behind this was to see how the consumers perceptions of the product had been affected by the media's co-mentions and attempts to legitimize the products in different ways. As usual in qualitative studies, the interview framework was reviewed and modified several times during the interviewing phase. The newspaper and tabloid articles were also reread several times in order to establish the connection of the consumers perception and media's way of legitimizing the products, in more detail, how the media's tone

of discussion and vocabulary affected the consumers perceptions and building the two dimensions of each product.

The interview framework was designed to cover the research question in its entity, and focusing on two key dimensions that were identified for data collection: the knowledge claims and grade of membership. The dimensions were based on the Kennedy's (2008) notion, that by studying the media's co-mentions, meaning the mentioning several firms in one news story, it will be possible to recognize the associations of firms that are fundamental in constructing a new market category. Also the dimensions took influence from Negro et al (2010) suggestion that the category contrast is proportional to the average width of producers' niches in the fuzzy categories space. A producer's niche in a category space is constructed from the typicalities (grades of membership) in the all of the relevant categories.

Before modifying the interview framework, one other aspect was considered when design the outline of the framework: media behavior and the usage of media sources and whether it has dependency or correlation on how the consumers perceive the products. The timing of the changes in the interview framework will elaborated more in the following text.

Even though the interview framework was tested beforehand with one volunteer, when interviewing the first interviewee, it became clear that the interview framework should be modified to suit the research setting. The first interviewee revealed spontaneously that they have had changes in their diet in the past year, towards more plant-based diet and limiting the consumption of meat proteins. This fact was taken into account in the next interviews, and the interview framework was modified after the first interview to reveal better the underlying opinions and changes in the consumer behavior.

After the third interview, it became clear that the some of the questions, especially in the media behavior were not detailed enough to stimulate conversation. Two questions were added during the interview for more detailed information on media behavior and the interviewee's experience on advertising in the food industry. The two interviewees were contacted again to gain information from their point of view also to the new questions.

During the modification of the interview framework, it became clear that the correlation of media behavior or usage in according the products cannot be traced to find the exact pattern of causality. It has been tried in consumer research using elements from cognitive behavioral psychology studies, but so far the cause and effect has not been proven to be linear or straightforward. That is why the aspect of studying and conceptualizing of the relation of media behavior and usage of the interviewee and how it developed the perception on the studied products was not considered. The media behavior and usage questions were modified to gain general view on the interviewee's behavior and usage of media. They were also kept for further and detailed information on the interviewees.

After the fourth interview, it was established that the questions are too detailed, and the interview framework should be more relying to thematic structure than open-ended questions. The interview framework was not changed, but in the following interviews the interview framework was used more as thematic

background and the questions as leading questions in case the interviewee derived from the topic too much.

The following interviews ran smoothly and no changes were done, because the interview framework was enough clear and open (more thematic) so the topic was covered in totality in a concise manner. The duration of the interviews varied from 15 minutes to 45 minutes, depending on the interviewee. The first four interviews were shorter than the latter ones because of the structure and design of the survey. However, as the design was modified it was noticeable that the interviewees were able to discuss the themes in more detail and open up their definitions and views in more extensive way. As the two first interviewees were contacted again after the third interview, the data collected from all of the interviewees can be noted to be collected in similar way, thus being as valid as rest of the interviews.

The total amount of interviewees was 16. After the 14<sup>th</sup> interview, it became clear that the data is saturated, and no new information was coming up from the results. Two more interviews were conducted in order to establish that the data was saturated enough to end the semi-structured interviews.

Once the interviews were finished, the transcriptions of the interviews and the newspaper and tabloid articles were analyzed alongside to find the relations from the media discourse and how it affects the consumer perceptions. After re-reading multiple times both sources of the empirical data, major points and the fundamental tone of the discussion could be drawn out to crystallize the findings. The central discursive practices were distinguished in order to identify the legitimation strategies used in categorizing the Finnish plant- and dairy-based protein market.

Based on the findings, five legitimation strategies were identified. The five legitimation strategies are the following: publicization, category fitness, authenticity, normalization and novelty. In the following table the five strategies are presented as a general representation of the findings. Followed by the table, all of the legitimation strategies are elaborated and presented in detail. After the presentation of the legitimation strategies, the visualization of the empirical data will be presented in figures. A conclusion of the empirical data will be provided at the end of this chapter.

In the below table, the following was covered: the legitimation strategy used and identified name for the strategy; an example how the legitimation strategy was identified from the individual texts; the intertextual totality, meaning how this legitimation strategy can be seen in the totality of empirical data; power implications from the tone of the identified from the empirical data and finally also the discursive practices used in the empirical data that suits best to describe the legitimation strategy used. The discursive practices will be further elaborated in each sub chapter of the legitimation strategies, the ones in the table are just mere examples of the general discursive patterns used in identifying the legitimation strategies for clarifying the table's content.

Table 2. A model of discursive legitimation strategies used to categorize a nascent market

<b>Legitimation strategy</b>	Individual texts	Intertextual totality	Power implications
<b>Publicization</b>	Creates 'buzz', 'hype', delivered by media visibility or word of mouth	Publicized discourse and continuous assessment of the trending topic	Concentration of attention on the topic, media preference
Discursive practices:	<p>"Revolution at the dinner table - meat substitutes' sales booming and alternatives are being released continuously." Helsingin Sanomat (2016<sup>2</sup>)</p> <p>"Pulled Oats, well they wrote about it a lot, how do you say it, well popularized through the media. And also through the general street food hype." Interviewee 4</p>		
<b>Category fitness</b>	Enforces the category membership or non-membership	Evaluation of category attributes and product's fitness to the category	Media's role on governing the 'fitness' of product and consumers' approval or disapproval of the notions
Discursive practices:	<p>"I think that MiFu differs a lot from these three products. The two are very alike. Härkis and Pulled Oats. But MiFu differs a lot from these. In the end it is not that type of product one could use anywhere. It is not a main ingredient per se, as I would think of Pulled Oats and Härkis." Interviewee 9</p>		
<b>Authenticity</b>	Delivers authenticity over others, prioritization of one	Preference of the first mover on the market over the others	Choice of words by media and consumers' approval or disapproval of the notions
Discursive practices:	<p>"I don't know, it's just the original and authentic ... But I mean it is good that there are several products. But if I would have a choice between them [<i>Pulled Oats and Härkis</i>] I would take Pulled Oats. I don't know why." Interviewee 9</p>		
<b>Normalization</b>	Attempts to normalize and trivialize	Comparison of products 'normality' and fitness to conventional use	Choice of words by media and consumers' approval or disapproval of the notions
Discursive practices:	<p>"The success of Härkis has been eye-opening. Now Härkis has reached the same sales figures as Karelian stew meat. It is an iconic Finnish dish, however Härkis has only been on the market for a month." Helsingin Sanomat (2016<sup>2</sup>)</p>		
<b>Novelty</b>	Exemplifies innovativeness, newness, unconventional values	Emphasis on innovativeness and novelty value of the products	Media recognition and consumers' approval or disapproval of the notions
Discursive practices:	<p>"I have never seen similar products. But this is a positive problem. It is great that there are these types of innovations being born in Finland." Helsingin Sanomat (2016<sup>4</sup>)</p>		

Next the five identified strategies will be elaborated, followed by other findings, presentation of the data found and conclusion of the findings. As the

analysis was done intertextually, examples of these strategies can be found in the both collected empirical data.

#### 4.1.1 Publicization

The first identified legitimation strategy in the findings is the publicization. Publicization is the act of legitimating a product or service through media visibility and coverage by the media actors. Media ensues statements of the product that either lead to legitimating the product or illegitimizing the product in its category. Consumers respond to this either by agreeing with the delivered attempt of legitimation or act of illegitimizing or by disagreeing and ignoring with the statements.

Revolution at the dinner table – meat substitutes’ sales booming and alternatives are being released continuously. Meat substitutes’ demand is increasing furiously. Also the amount of products is increasing. Verso Food has created new broad bean based product, Valio a milk-based product. Helsingin Sanomat (2016<sup>2</sup>)

It can be noted from the above quotation that the media is ensuing a use of vocabulary of the products that the category is growing and ‘booming’. The main notion is that media is building a buzz around the products, thus enabling more publicized speculation of the category to transpire. The consumers are sensitive to this type of journalism and an image of ever-growing and trendy industry is fortified. The consumers participate in this act of legitimation by discussing it with their peers, as identified in the findings, almost half of the interviewed consumers (44%) stated that word of mouth as one of the most important sources of information. The following quotation is another example of media’s attempt of publicizing the phenomenon:” For example the hit product Pulled Oats is being pulled out of hands, and its supply cannot meet its vast demand.” Helsingin Sanomat (2016<sup>4</sup>)

The quotation represents a paramount example of hype creation around the product: the supply cannot anymore meet its demand. It is plausible whether the above statement relates to the reality itself, but the consumers take this information as the representation of truth, since their limited attention and not being able to process all of the information that the media bombards them. Interviewee 4 pointed out the fact there has been a clear hype around the new products:” There was such a hype about that [*MiFu*] too. And the protein amount, the dairy-based protein.” From the quotation, it can be noted that the interviewee recognized the media’s attempts in creating the hype around the products, and not only the brands, but the attributes, like protein amount. Some interviewees identified that the products have had more extensive media coverage, also in the social media. One interviewee (15) pointed out that the advertisement in Facebook group has gotten even out of hand, sometimes it is not clear whether a social media post is a genuine customer experience or a ‘puff’ piece by the producer or the company.

Well I have noticed in one Facebook group that there is a lot of advertising of new products, for example from the producers or restaurateurs side. They use it for promoting a launch of a new product. It is not always easy to spot if the post is a paid advertisement or a really genuine customer experience. (Interviewee 15)

It is noticeable that in the current information age, every media or social media channel a consumer uses have become a way for advertisers to justify their promotional campaigns by almost purposefully hiding the advertisement behind a review-like post. This results in consumers' need for critical reading of the sources and careful evaluation whether a social media post is genuinely another consumer's review on a product or advertisers way promoting their products.

#### **4.1.2 Category fitness**

Category fitness refers to the products attributes and definitions made by the media and the audience in relation to how the products fit on the market. It can be noted from the findings that not all of the products were perceived as having a "fit" on the market. This can be exemplified in the consumer perceptions of MiFu. In all of the articles (8 out of 40) that mentioned MiFu, it was either compared to Härkis or both Härkis and Pulled Oats. As per Kennedy (2008), media's co-mentions will serve as a way of constructing the new market category, which can be seen in this case. However, these co-mentions are not always perceived in a positive manner.

Firms with common attributes see themselves as cohabitants of the same category and claim category membership by associating themselves in the category, meaning they self-categorize themselves. As identified by Zuckermann (1999), the process of self-categorization risks to develop less meaningful identities for the companies, since they not might belong to the category they self-categorize. It is unclear has Valio self-categorized their product as a part of the reference group Pulled Oats and Härkis are since there is no clear cause and effect of this happening, but it is clear that the Finnish media is establishing market sense making processes with co-mentioning the products alongside each other.

As Negro et al (2010) suggested, the category contrast is proportional to the average width of producers' niches in the fuzzy categories space. A producer's niche in a category space is constructed from the typicalities (grades of membership) in the all of the relevant categories. A producer with a broad niche will have partial fit in multiple categories while having a membership in multiple categories. The appeal of all offerings will decrease as the average width of niches rise and producer claims multiple category membership. In MiFu's case there is a clear cause and effect between broad niche and less appealing offering. The average of consumer perceptions of MiFu was leaning towards negative claims (knowledge claims 0,44; 0,50 being neutral figure) and grade of membership perceived was 0,37 (non-member, ambiguous figure being 0,50), implying that Valio has not established a meaningful identity on the market. Nonetheless, the Finnish

media is portraying MiFu alongside Pulled Oats and Härkis, which implies media's efforts to make sense of the ambiguous environment.

To review the Finnish plant- and dairy-based protein market in a broad sense, one notion from the interviews can be taken out to examine the categorization of the food industry in Finland. When asked whether they had had MiFu outside their homes and for example in a restaurant, interviewee 7 replied the following: "I have had Härkis pizza in Kotipizza. I can't remember whether I have had Pulled Oats anywhere, although I have seen it on the menus of restaurant. I have not seen MiFu anywhere."

Not only MiFu is a non-vegan product, but it is not seen suitable for fast casual or gourmet setting in a restaurant. So is the main notion in fact that MiFu is not seen as a lone-standing product, but as a side product, "something to add, but not replace the main protein source of the entrée". It can be noted that currently the Finnish food industry has room for plant-based proteins, but dairy-based proteins are seen as a whole another category, and they should not be mixed in the consumers' point of view. This can be exemplified in the following quotation of interviewee 6:

I don't want to buy MiFu. But I would not buy cottage cheese either to replace it. I would buy MiFu [*when asked how one would replace MiFu if it would not be available*] but I don't think it gives the food any extra value or such. I don't really get it's point. (Interviewee 6)

The ambiguous identity of MiFu is creating confusion for the consumers, thus it can be noted that MiFu does not possess the category fitness for the market. When asked about the target group of the products, interviewee (9) pointed out the socioeconomic characteristics of the target consumer:

In my opinion they are more for people, or maybe not MiFu so much, but especially Pulled Oats and Härkis, who do not use any meat products, that is the target group more likely. But of course, those people who do not buy the cheapest products, no matter what marital status, single or in a relationship, or married with kids. Basically, those who want to buy quality food and try different things. Not necessarily people of certain age in this case. But someone who has purchasing power. Not the lowest social class who buy discounted or cheap food, because these products are not the cheapest. (Interviewee 9)

In the survey, questions about who would be suitable target customer for these products were included in order to gain sense whether the interviewee feels part of the target group and whether they see a distinct target audience for the products. Even though only one of the interviewees identified the socioeconomic characteristics of a target customer, it was an interesting notion on the power relations that the media might be implying when discussing these products. The

rest of the interviewees provided only a general idea of the target customer: either not a definite age group, or then a young adult; urban consumer who tries to eat less meat products or tries to be vegan.

But the most fundamental notion of the category fitness was not that difference of plant- or dairy-based proteins, but rather than the use of the product. MiFu was not seen in many cases as a main source of protein, but a supplementary or additional product, so the product's use is different than the two other products' use, thus it might not have the suitable qualities for fit in the category. The following quotation from interviewee 12 exemplifies this notion:

I think that MiFu differs a lot from these three products. The two are very alike. Härkis and Pulled Oats. But MiFu differs a lot from these. In the end it is not that type of product one could use anywhere. It is not a main ingredient per se, as I would think of Pulled Oats and Härkis.  
(Interviewee 12)

It seems that MiFu is seen as a separate product, not because of it being a dairy-based protein product, but because the usage of the product. MiFu is classified as an additional protein product, which does not seem to have full fit on the market, thus having a broad niche. Pulled Oats and Härkis however are seen more as niche products.

According to Zuckermann's (1999) categorical imperative framework the competition on the market is constructed so that the audience examine the legitimate players and choose the most attractive. Meanwhile the players challenge each other in order to promote their offerings to audience. Every player tries to differentiate themselves from one another but simultaneously to conform with the audiences' minimal requirement, thus the constant battle between the differentiation and isomorphism is established. From the data collected from consumer interviews, MiFu does not seem to have full fit in category. However, in the media MiFu has been reviewed alongside Pulled Oats and Härkis, which sets an interesting notion on the media's portrayal of MiFu.

### 4.1.3 Authenticity

Authenticity is the legitimation strategy that the media initiates and the consumers dilute the meaning from the sources. This action delivers authenticity to one product over the others products and thus prioritizes one over the others. This can be exemplified for example in the following quote from an interview with interviewee 7.

My favorite is Pulled Oats.

*Why?*

I don't know, it's just the original and authentic.



*Why do you say that Pulled Oats is the original one?*

Just because, I think they have copied [*interviewee implying that Versofood has copied Gold & Green Foods*]. But I mean it is good that there are several products. But if I would have a choice between them [*Pulled Oats and Härkis*] I would take Pulled Oats. I don't know why.  
(Interviewee 7)

The notion that then interviewee could not point out why Pulled Oats is the “original and authentic” one, sets an interesting example of the authenticity legitimation strategy claims. The consumers seemed to have consensus about the fact that Pulled Oats had been the first to enter the market, and the rest of the products being “copycats”, or riding the wave of hype that Pulled Oats had achieved. The Finnish media has also deliberately emphasized the fact that Pulled Oats was the first product on the market as can be seen from the following quotation of a newspaper article title: “First Pulled Oats came to the stores, then broad bean produce Härkis.” Helsingin Sanomat (2016)

Even though some of the interviewees had a certain image of both Pulled Oats and Härkis, not all of them could pinpoint the core differences between the two and also the reason why they would prefer one over the other. Pulled Oats seemed to have achieved some sort of first-mover advantage compared to others. First-mover advantage, as identified by Lieberman & Montgomery (1988), is a firm's obtained advantage on being first in the market. The first-mover advantage can come from technological pioneering (acquisition of a patent before others, developing the production or R&D to a higher level than others), preemption of scarce resources (positioning in geographical space or product-related space such as shelf space) or avoidance of switching costs (second- and third-mover need to convince the first-mover's attained customer to switch between products). Although this study did not cover studying the first-mover advantages, Pulled Oats has seemingly established itself with a status incomparable to other products.

#### **4.1.4 Normalization**

Normalization as a legitimation strategy is the act of trivializing and normalizing the products either through media or consumers. From the findings, it can be noted that there are attempts from media to normalize the studied products (Pulled Oats, Härkis and MiFu) as ‘meat substitutes’. The discourse Finnish media has built around the products is that they are namely substituting another produce, meat. For reasons such as the newness of the product category, unfamiliarity with the products and ambiguity of the market, the products are categorized as meat substitutes. The interviewed consumers that did not possess an extensive knowledge base on the products and on the market seemed to agree with this type of legitimation strategy.

In the newspapers and tabloids article 13 (IltaSanomat, 2016), Anna-Kajsa Lidell, the head of progress strategy of Food for Progress, that represents another plant-based protein product Oumph! (Swedish origin), stated that: “New products deserve to have their own name, and they should not be called as substitute of another product.” (IltaSanomat, 2016)

This statement presents a notion that the products in fact should not be categorized as substitutes, but rather than self-standing and independent category. It seems that Finnish media has taken the easy road, and categorized the new product releases as substitutes for meat, rather than own new product category. This relates heavily to the Weick's (1995) definition of sensemaking, which is a publicized speculation of unfamiliar things. The ultimate need for categorization and definition of something new results in applying and comparing it to familiar things. This type of media's sensemaking can be also seen as a representation of Kennedy's (2008) application of new category label in a nascent and emerging market, which leads to consumers sharing an interpretation of its meaning. As identified by Alrich & Fiol (1994), cognitive legitimation of a firm refers to the spread of knowledge and the level of public knowledge of an action or activity. The highest form of the spread and level of knowledge is reached once the product, service or process is taken for granted.

However, it is plausible whether this presents a valid way of building new product attributes and sense of the market. The unbearable ambiguity of the market and what the new product launches represent, forces the media in this fast-paced information society to define and categorize them in a simplistic way in order to achieve the balance of making sense of the surrounding and changing environment.

The need for the categorization and definition can be seen also in the other newspapers and tabloids articles, represented for example in following quotation: “The success of Härkis has been eye-opening. Now Härkis has reached the same sales figures as Karelian stew meat. It is an iconic Finnish dish, however Härkis has only been on the market for a month.” (Helsingin Sanomat, 2016<sup>2</sup>)

The fact the new product, Härkis, needs to be compared to an iconic dish in the Finnish culture, sets another example of the normalization strategy Finnish media is applying. Interviewee 7 also wondered, why even these types of products are called ‘meat substitutes’ and such.

But you know, there is even this Dutch company, called a vegan butchery or something. You can get their products from a specialty convenience store. They are frozen products. But I think it is bizarre to call some product as vegan chicken. (Interviewee 7)

This raises another question on the normalization process, why these products are marketed as substitutes for meat products. The explanation could be the following notion: to gain attention of the broader mass even though the products cannot yet to be said gained foothold as everyday products vast masses purchase. Interviewee 9 pointed out that they are not in fact purchasing these products as substitute for meat:

It would be different if I were vegetarian and I would not eat meat. I would then make different choices, but I do not purchase these products as an alternative to meat, because I also eat meat. It is just because Pulled Oats is a good product, and variation in the diet is refreshing, sometimes I eat Pulled Oats, sometimes I eat meat, or sometimes both. (Interviewee 9)

This is yet another contracting view on the media's attempt on using normalization as a legitimation strategy of the market. Some of the consumers pointed out, that these products are something else than a substitute for meat, but rather another option among food products. Like in the above quotations, some of the consumers felt like it was strange that these products are so heavily associated with being a meat substitute, meat alternative, when they are not choosing the products because of these type of reasons.

Lidell, the head of progress strategy of Food for Progress, that represents a plant-based protein product Oumph! whose quotation was mentioned earlier, also implied the following about the plant-based protein market:

We are currently living in a new era, where plant kingdom products are in a focal position. New product offers an alternative, not a substitute. It is important to point out how alike our product is compared to meat. To compare it how it tastes, but also how it can be used in cooking. Many like the taste and the consistence of meat. (IltaSanomat, 2016)

It seems that industry and the products are just at the beginning of their life cycle. It has not become a norm to eat plant-based protein products, that is why most consumers do not change their eating habits. Though it is hard to say yet what is the overall impact of launching these products to the food industry and consumer culture, some of the articles stated that in fact we are living amongst a pivotal era in the Finnish food industry. This type of discourse is exemplified in the following quotation: "Stranius sees that of all, the Meatless October campaign brought into public by Docventures started a new era in the food culture." (Helsingin Sanomat, 2016<sup>3</sup>)

The tv program that is referred in the quotation, Docventures, is one of most watched tv talk shows/documentaries in the recent Finnish tv history. The show's season one that aired in 2013 total reachability was 1,8 million viewers, and the campaigns that were started during the broadcast, such as Meatless October (Lihaton Lokakuu) among others gained a lot of traction among the viewers and also extensive media coverage (Finnpanel, 2015). It is plausible whether the one tv show started this trend, but it might have been aired in a convenient timing for tapping into this trend. Consumers also identified that there has been lately various plant- and dairy-based products that have been launched, so the market can be said to be growing.

Yes. Or one can notice that that type of products have been launched more and they have been marketed to a more broad target group than consumer whose diet is only plant-based, such as vegetarians or vegans. But I think it is a good thing that they have been targeted to a broader target group, and there has been discussion on how the diet should be versatile.

*In your opinion, why these products are targeted for a broader target group? What is the purpose of this?*

Well maybe the purpose is also that if the products were marketed to a certain target group, they would still present a minority. Then the products would not succeed. But also because there has been an ongoing discussion about healthy lifestyle, then these products are marketed for the sake of health reasons, like this is not bad and it is suitable for everyone. But maybe the quintessential reason is that the companies want to tap into the purchasing power, if the products are marketed too narrowly, then there is no turnover. (Interviewee 9)

The comments interviewee gave about the marketing and advertising of these products presents a fascinating notion on how the food industry operates. Are the companies in fact enabling these trends to happen with launching of these type of products, or are they just following the megatrends in the consumer culture?

#### **4.1.5 Novelty**

Novelty is the legitimation strategy used to emphasize the newness, innovativeness or unconventional values of the product. This relates also to the other legitimation strategy, authenticity. The media continuously used words like “innovation” associated with the products. Interviewee 10 pointed out that there has not been visibly any critique in the media about Pulled Oats:

Well Pulled Oats has been seen as a great innovation and as a ‘new Nokia’, the reviews have been clearly extremely positive and no one has never mentioned any critique towards it. Everyone seems to agree that it is an outstanding product. (Interviewee 10)

This perception is an interesting notion on the novelty value of Pulled Oats. According to the interviewee, the media has portrayed it as the new up and coming innovation from Finland, a ‘new Nokia’. Even though it is not possible to prove a clear cause and effect relation between the vocabulary usage of media and how it affects the consumers’ use of vocabulary when describing a phenomenon, 32 % of the interviewees used words such as ‘innovation’ and ‘invention’ when describing these products, especially Pulled Oats. The next quotation will serve as an example of media’s vocabulary usage:“ I have never seen anything

alike. But this is a positive problem. It is great that there are this kind of innovations born in Finland.” (Helsingin Sanomat, 2016<sup>3</sup>) The placement of this quotation in the article sets a distinctive tone to the discourse, that these products are something novel, innovative and this type of products are invented in Finland. It sets apart the market as a whole and directs the attention to Finland and its market. As interviewee 4 also pointed out:” ... And then also the innovation side of it [*Pulled Oats*], that no one ever imagined that one could produce protein out of it. It is an invention, an innovation, and there is the novelty value in it.” Similarly, interviewee 7 expressed notions about the innovative side of the product:” Well that it [*Pulled Oats*] is an invention and Finnish women have invented it, and it really spiked interest.” Also, interviewee 15 described the innovativeness of *Pulled Oats*, while *Härkis* was seen in another perspective:

Umm first time I ever heard of *Pulled Oats*, it was discussed as a Finnish food innovation. And later on when *Härkis* was launched, it lacked so to say the same innovativeness, but its supply chain is more reliable and one can actually acquire it easier from the convenience stores. (Interviewee 15)

While it seems that consumers have been influenced by the discourse of *Pulled Oats* in the media, with the use of same vocabulary that was used in the media, the two latter products *Härkis* and *MiFu* have not gained such traction from the media or consumer side. It exemplifies an interesting tone of discussion, as mentioned in the authenticity legitimation strategy, one product is favored over the other two, even though technically they have been also innovations in the Finnish food industry. Valio spent years of R&D efforts on developing *MiFu*, and Verso Food has been developing different broad bean products during the timeframe of several years.

It is fascinating how *Pulled Oats* has seemed to have been established as the one true innovation in the food industry, while the others are almost ignored and neglected. The fact that *Härkis* and *MiFu* do not possess the similar novelty value intrigue for the consumers as *Pulled Oats*, is yet another example on how media’s tone of discussion and use of vocabulary resulted in ever-going comparison of new products to the ‘one and only’ *Pulled Oats*. This legitimation strategy is tightly-knit with other legitimation strategy, authenticity, as *Pulled Oats* is seen as the original and authentic one, but also possessing the certain novelty value the other two products do not seem to have. The central focus of media and the consumers has seemingly been on *Pulled Oats*.

#### **4.1.6 Data from the consumer interviews**

Next the results of the consumer interviews will be presented in figures. On the x axis of the figures the Grade of membership of the product is measured compared to the y axis Knowledge claims. First the results of the *Pulled Oats* are presented, followed by results of *Härkis*, then *MiFu* and lastly the overall results where all of the products results can be seen.

Two dimensions were considered in quantifying the data and analyzing the discursive practices in the interviews and newspapers and tabloids articles: Knowledge claims and Grade of membership. The values of the dimensions are the following: for Grade of membership: member in the category, value 1,00; ambiguous, not a member, but not a non-member, value: 0,50; non-member in the category, value 0,00 and knowledge claims: positive claims on the product, value 1,00; neutral claims on the product, value 0,50; negative claims on the product, value: 0,00. The values in the fourfold charts are calculated with arithmetic mean.

I will now further elaborate how the two selected dimensions were analyzed and how the textual elements were transferred to values. The knowledge claims' values were sorted by positive, neutral or negative claims. The interview transcriptions and newspapers and tabloids articles were read multiple times and then coded according to the values. To some textual part to be coded as a representation of positive knowledge claim, it had to have positive adjectives, recommendation of the product or other positive notion such as a statement that the interviewee or the journalist would use the product or likes the product. Textual parts that were analyzed as neutral knowledge claims included were based on the following notions: general description of the product with no preference or recommendation, statement that does not reveal whether the interviewee or journalist likes or dislikes the product. Lastly, the negative knowledge claims were identified in the following manner: interviewee or journalist dislikes the product, uses negative adjectives associating to the product and states that would never use the product. A noteworthy notion at this point is that the amount of claims varied drastically between interviewees, on average an interviewee made 12 amount of knowledge claims, while 21 amount of membership claims. This will be further elaborated to understand why the amount of claims varied so much. An interviewee profile matrix will be presented to find out were there some relations between the amount of claims and the interviewees profile. In the next figure 3, the Pulled Oats' findings will be elaborated.

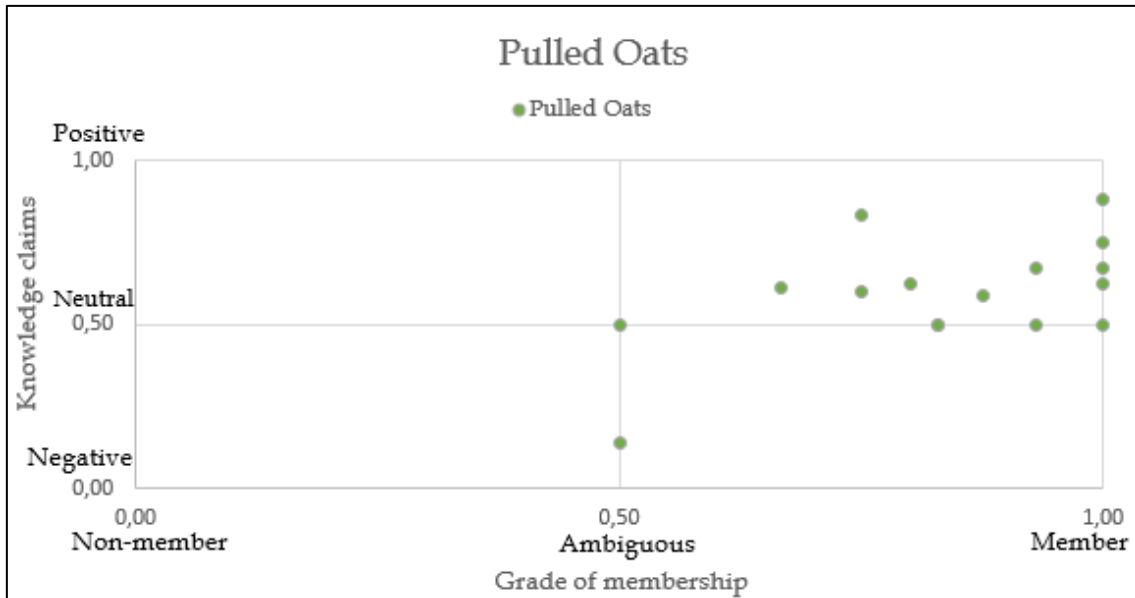


Figure 4. Distribution of data collected from the consumer interviews: Pulled Oats.

As it can be seen from the figure 3, the correlation between high Grade of membership to positive Knowledge claims is visible. Only one interviewee expressed dislike towards the product, while others were mostly neutral or positive. According to interviewees, Pulled Oats is a representative of its category, thus Grade of membership is high. The Grade of membership is high due to more positive or neutral Knowledge claims that result from the media's use and consumer's acknowledgement following legitimation strategies: authenticity, novelty and category fitness. The authentic and novel the product was described by the consumers, the more positive claims it got, and the more it seemed to fit the category norm. Next the figure 4 with the representation of Härkis' data will be shown.

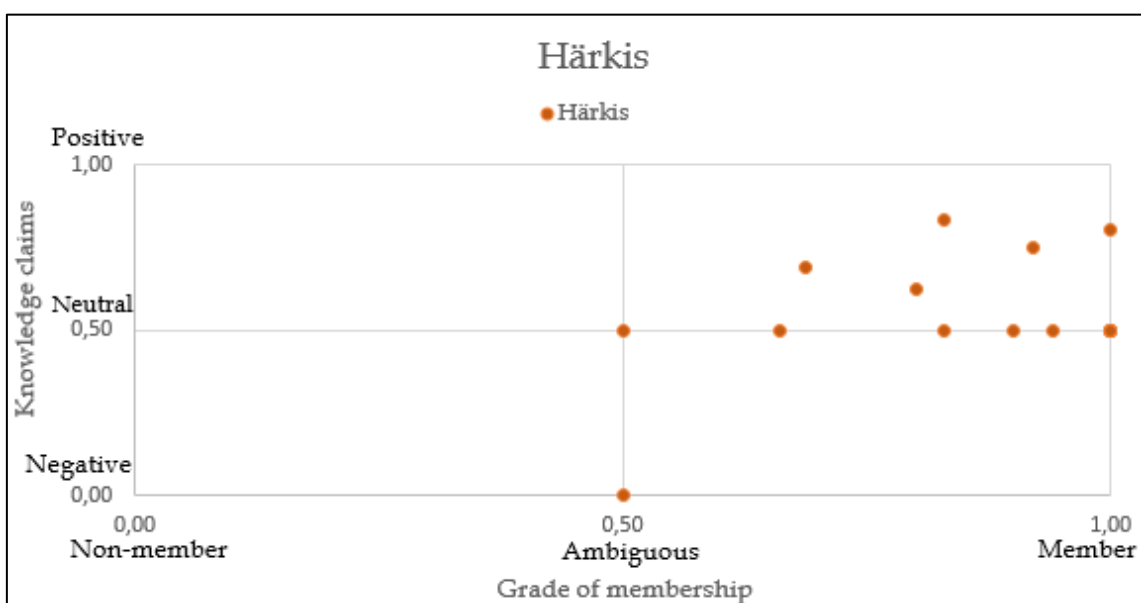


Figure 5. Distribution of data collected from the consumer interviews: Härkis.

Again, the high Grade of membership correlation to positive or neutral knowledge claims correlation can be seen. Härkis' data is more evenly spread towards more neutral and more ambiguous views on the product than Pulled Oats' data. This might be due to less use of authenticity and novelty legitimation strategies. Härkis was seen as a fit member of the category (category fitness legitimation strategy), but not as novel or authentic as Pulled Oats.

Later on also the averages will be presented which shows an interesting proximity of Pulled Oats compared to Härkis, even though from the data distribution it is clear that Pulled Oats received more positive reviews and more membership claims than Härkis. Next MiFu's data representation and overall explanation will be presented in the figure 5.

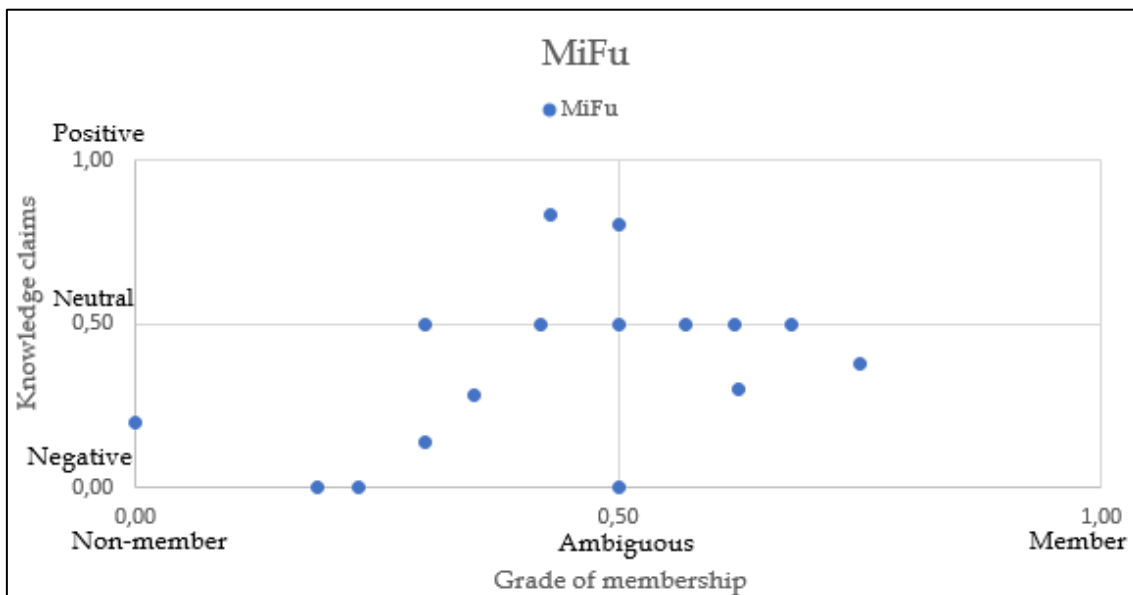


Figure 6. Distribution of data collected from the consumer interviews: MiFu.

As for as MiFu's data, the low Grade of membership correlates to the negative Knowledge claims. There is a clear difference when comparing to Pulled Oats' and Härkis' data to MiFu's data, the correlation of negative knowledge claims and decreasing grade of membership is visible. MiFu did not accumulate mentions from the authenticity or novelty legitimation strategies and it was perceived more as a non-member or ambiguous member of the category due to negative mentions of category fitness

Lastly the overall results from the consumer interviews will be presented in the figure 6 to gain better sense and comparison of the three products' similarities and differences.



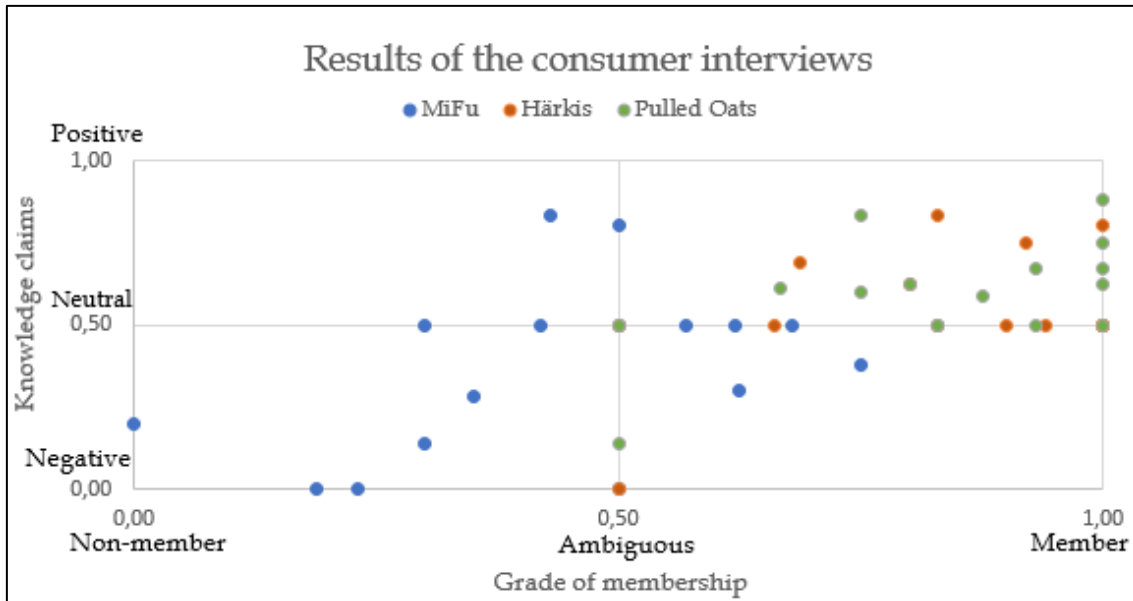


Figure 7. Results of the consumer interviews

As a generalization of the results, the data is spread more between positive and neutral knowledge claims and ambiguous and member grade of membership. The following can be deduced from the findings: Grade of membership lowers as the Knowledge Claims are more neutral or negative; The Grade of membership increases when Knowledge Claims are more positive. Next the averages of the consumer interviews will be elaborated.

Table 3. Averages of the consumer interviews

Product	Grade of Membership	Knowledge Claims
Härkis	0,85	0,54
MiFu	0,44	0,37
Pulled Oats	0,84	0,59

Härkis and Pulled Oats are almost on par with the Grade of Membership dimension with Härkis having 0,85 value on the dimension and Pulled Oats 0,84 value. It is noticeable that both Härkis and Pulled Oats have close to positive Knowledge Claims, with the value near between neutral and positive (Härkis: 0,54 and Pulled Oats 0,59). MiFu is seen as a non-member (0,44) and the Knowledge Claims are also on the negative side (0,37). Lastly the interviewee profile matrix will be presented. A further elaboration on the interviewee profiles will be provided.

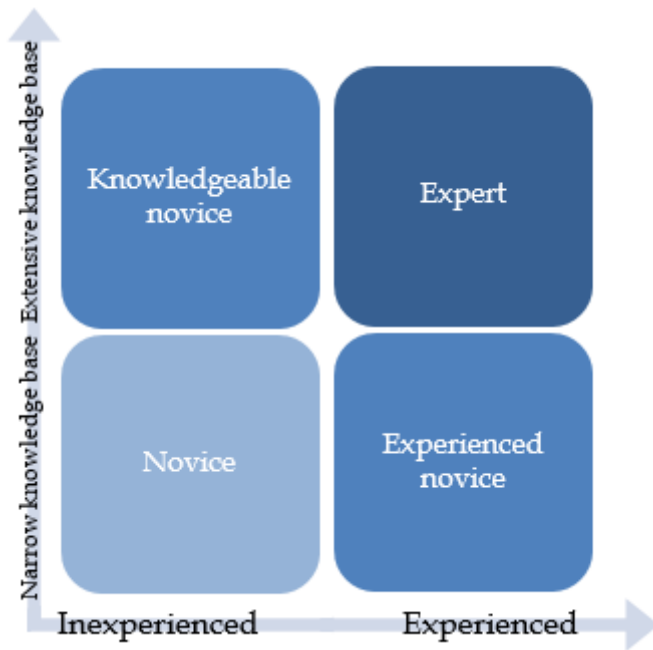


Figure 8. Interviewee profile matrix.

In the above figure the four different interviewee profiles are shown. To point out, this is not a comprehensive profile listing, just a rough division based on the interviewees' expressed opinions, knowledge about the topic, experience consuming these type of products and interest in the topic. The horizontal line below the profiles indicates the level of experience of the interviewee, ranging from inexperienced to experienced, meaning the experience in consuming these products in different settings. The vertical line on the left-side of the profiles indicated the knowledge base of the interviewee, ranging from narrow to extensive knowledge base, meaning the amount of knowledge the interviewee possesses of the topic. Next the profiles will be presented separately. The amount of separate claims (positive, neutral or negative Knowledge Claims; member, ambiguous, non-member Grade of Membership claims) will not be discussed since this is a rough division of the interviewees, not an extensive analysis. In the making of the interviewee profile matrix, Sujan's (1985) division of consumers into two categories, novices and experts was used as a guideline.

The low left-corner profile, novice, has the least experience in dealing with products in the topic and narrow knowledge base on the topic. There was a clear pattern of relation of the Grade of Membership claims and Knowledge Claims amount for different profile. Novices had less claims in total, due to the fact that they were not interested in the topic and did not possess the knowledge about the topic.

Knowledgeable novice, knew the products and could describe them, but did not have experience per se in consuming the products or being a customer of the companies. Knowledgeable novice had more Knowledge Claims but less claims about Grade of Membership.

Experienced novice knew the market structure but could not describe in detail the products that were discussed. Experienced novice had more Grade of Membership claims than Knowledge claims.

Experts knew the products well and market also. They also had experience in consuming the products and being a patron of the companies. Experts had the most claims due to the knowledge base and interest in the topic, they had on average most claims in both Knowledge Claims and Grade of Membership claims.

An assumption based on these findings can be made: the higher the knowledge base, the more discussion an interviewee will initiate, the more Knowledge claims they will make and the higher the experience level, the more Grade of Membership claims the interviewee will make. Next a table with the averages of Knowledge Claims and Grade of Membership claims each of the interviewee profile made will be presented for a clarification.

Table 3. Interviewee profiles.

Interviewee profile	Knowledge Claims (average)	Grade of Membership claims (average)
Novice	10	7
Knowledgeable novice	15	8
Experienced novice	6	20
Expert	36	23

These averages have been calculated from the interviewees that were able to be identified as a representative one of the four interviewee profiles. As mentioned before, the interviewee profiles are a rough presentation of the sourced interviewees' profiles, thus not all-encompassing representation of the interviewees.

Despite the intensive media coverage on the plant-based protein products, it is difficult to distinguish how common plant-based diets are among Finnish consumers. According to latest data, vegetarian and vegan based diets account for 5% of the population (Helsingin Sanomat, 2015). In fact, Finnish consumers' meat consumption has not experienced a downwards trend in the past 65 years (1950-2015), on the contrary, average Finnish person is consuming more meat every year (Natural Resources Institute Finland, 2015). Based from the findings of the research of Natural Resources Institute Finland (Helsingin Sanomat, 2015), the consumers can be roughly divided into two categories: those who continue to consume meat and do not want to lower their consumption of meat products and to those that recognize the consumption of red meat should be limited. The novices are the ones who continue to use meat, and the experts the ones that have already altered their diets into more plant-based more than few years ago or even a long time ago. Knowledgeable novices have gathered an extensive knowledge base, but do not have experience of the products. The experienced novice does not possess an extensive knowledge base, but has had long-term experience about these types of products. This is a rough division, since not all of the interviewees fit one box, they might be overlapping some attributes from one

profile and another. That is why there will be no further elaboration of which interviewee fit which profile, but rather an outlook on how the identified profiles came across the interviews. Experts had the most knowledge claims and membership claims, and the interviews lasted the longest. Unlike Suján's (1985) division of the two types consumers, the experts were prone to critique the products in a harsher sense and have more strong opinions about the products.

The consumers can be divided roughly into two types: expert and novice consumers. The experts have a well-developed knowledge base of a category, while novices do not possess such information. Experts sense and acknowledge more easily match or mismatch in category members because of their prior knowledge, while novices do not necessarily notice the difference between a match or a mismatch product. Although the experts possess the prior knowledge, they might not rely on it as much as the novice consumers. Novice consumers rely more on their prior experience of a product because they do not have same developed set of expectations as the expert consumers. Novices also may have more extreme views on a product, but also more simplistic opinions about a product (Sujan, 1985). In this paper, Suján's (1985) two profile division was further elaborated into four types of interviewee profiles, as already mentioned before.

#### **4.1.7 Data from the newspaper and tabloid articles**

In this section the figures with the data from the newspaper and tabloid articles will be presented. First the data of Pulled Oats will be presented, followed by data of Härkis and lastly MiFu's data. Also a figure showing all of the results of the newspaper and tabloid articles will be presented.

Notable difference in the newspaper and tabloid articles data and consumer interviews data is that no negative claims were made in general in the newspapers and tabloids articles. This can be seen as a representation either of a good journalistic practices (not trashing the products or the companies) or biased views on the topic (no critique to the products whatsoever). Next the data for Pulled Oats will be presented in the figure 7.

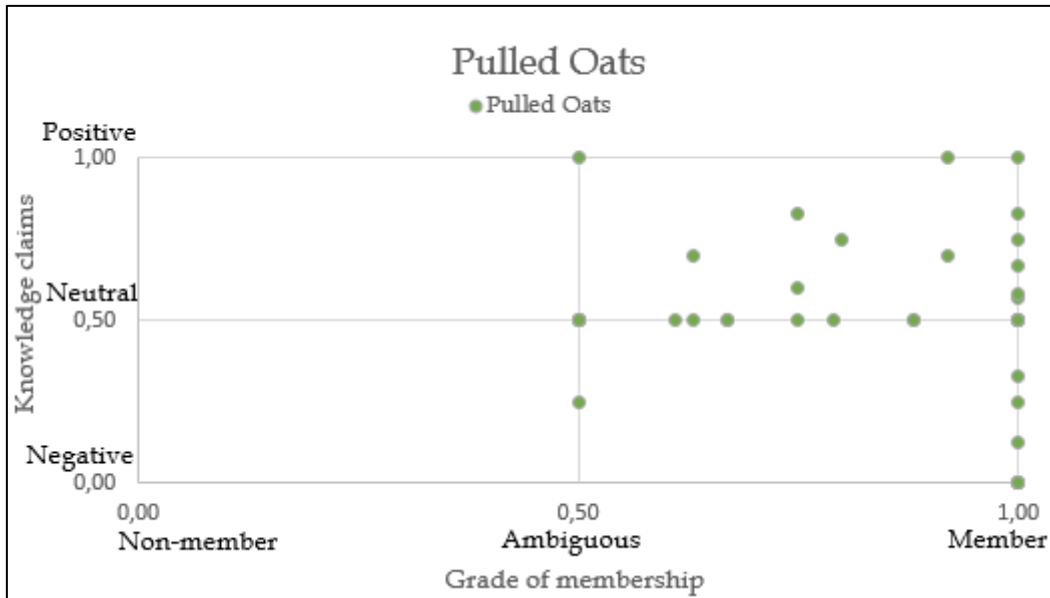


Figure 9. Distribution of data collected from the newspaper and tabloid articles: Pulled Oats.

The data for the Pulled Oats is the most extensive, since the launching of the product was done five months before the two latter products (Härkis & MiFu) were launched, thus media covered the product more than the other two products. It can be noted from the data of the newspapers and tabloids articles, that Pulled Oats has received more or less positive or neutral reviews from the media side. Also it can be noted that the data implies that Pulled Oats is member of the category according to the media. The following figure 8 will be a representation of Härkis' data from the newspapers and tabloids articles. Following Härkis, MiFu's data will be presented, and lastly the overall data from the newspapers and tabloids articles will be presented.

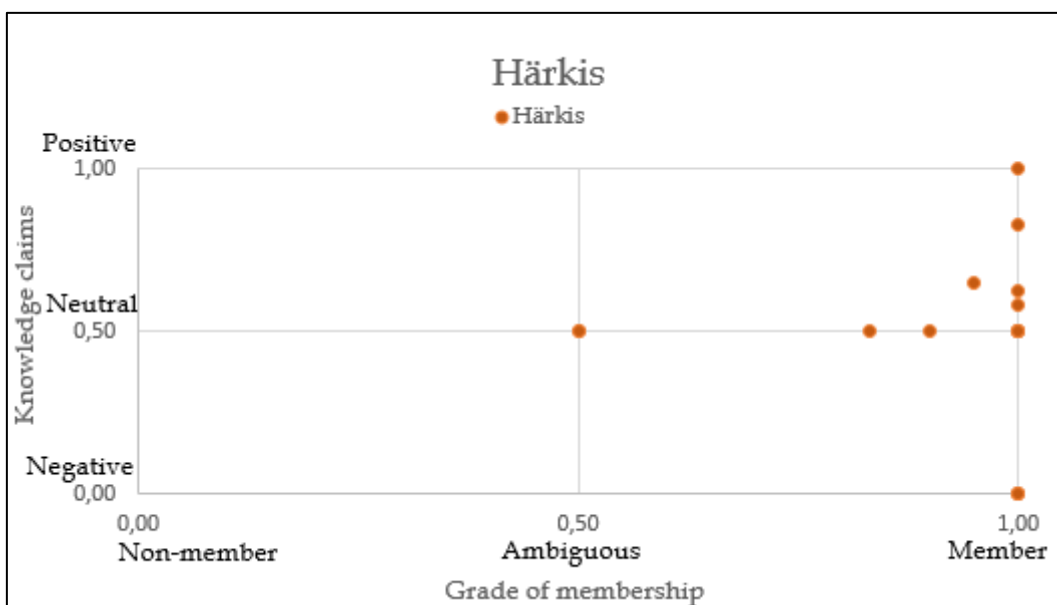


Figure 10. Distribution of data collected from the newspapers and tabloids articles: Härkis.

As can be noted from Härkis' figure 8, the data is less extensive than Pulled Oats' data representation. As already mentioned, this is due to the fact that Härkis and MiFu were launched five months after Pulled Oats. Härkis' data concentration is somewhat similar to Pulled Oats', more or less positive and neutral reviews and seen as member of the category. Next the data for MiFu will be presented in the figure 9.

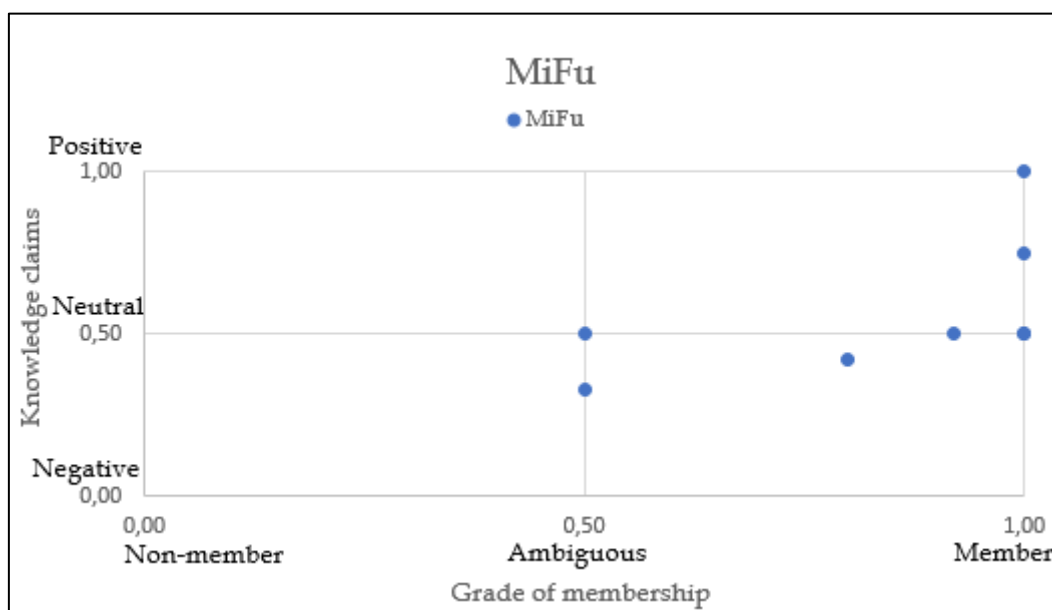


Figure 11. Distribution of data collected of the newspapers and tabloids articles: MiFu.

In the above figure 9, MiFu's data is represented. Unfortunately, the data is even less extensive than Härkis' data, with only handful of articles mentioning MiFu. A clear generalization of the data is difficult to give based on this representation. Lastly, in the following figure 10 the overall results of the newspapers and tabloids articles can be seen. The last figure will be more useful in gaining the general view of the media's reviews on the three products. As already identified before, Pulled Oats was prominent product in the newspapers and tabloids articles, and Härkis and MiFu were mentioned less. However, when the article mentioned Härkis or MiFu, it ultimately mentioned the other. Also often the articles mentioning either Härkis or MiFu, or both mentioned in the end Pulled Oats too.

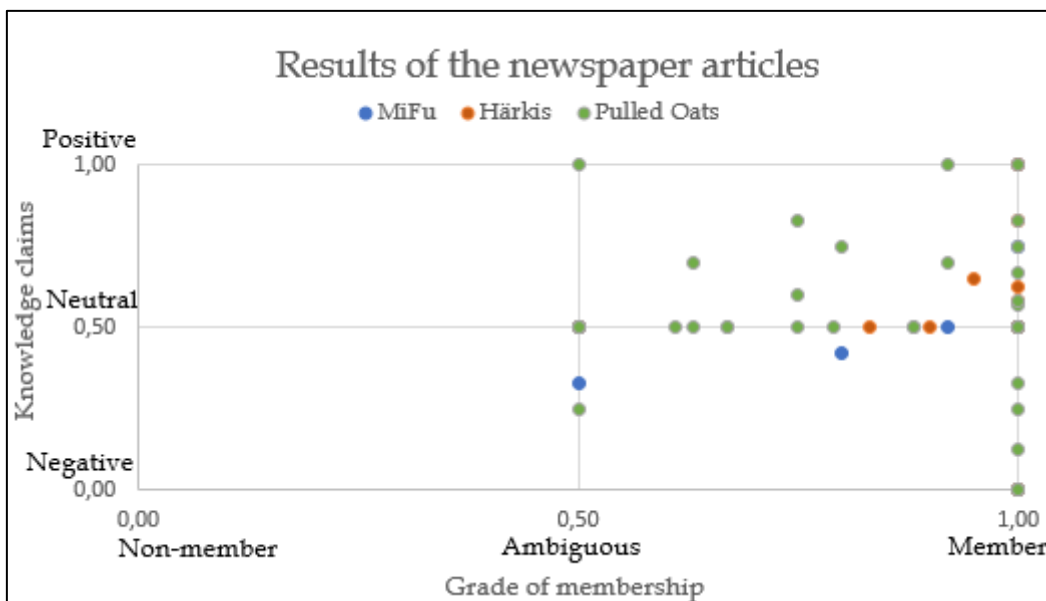


Figure 12. Results of the newspapers and tabloids articles.

The overall results aid in attaining the general view of the media's reviews of the products. Lastly, the averages of calculated from the newspapers and tabloids article data will be shown in the following table for further elaboration of the collected data.

Table 4. Averages of the newspapers and tabloids articles.

Product	Grade of Membership	Knowledge Claims
Härkis	0,92	0,56
MiFU	0,84	0,55
Pulled Oats	0,83	0,55

The above table shows the averages from the newspapers and tabloids articles. The variation between dimensions is not as harsh as in the data collected from the consumer interviews. All of the products knowledge claims fall into positive claims (if the calculations are rounded up). Also all of the products show high grade of membership values, meaning in the media's portrayal, all of the products are part of the same category. Noteworthy notion in this point, is that there were no 'non-member' mentioning in any of the texts. Still some negative knowledge claims were found, but in general the products were portrayed in a neutral or positive sense and all seen as a member of the category, or in some cases, ambiguous membership claims were made. Lastly a short conclusion of the findings will be provided before moving into the discussion part of this paper.

## 4.2 Conclusion of the findings and additional findings

Next the findings will be concluded. Also before moving to the conclusion part of the findings, some additional findings are going to be elaborated. The additional findings did not fit the main findings' categorization, but set an interesting example of other valuable information gained from the research.

One major point that came across several interviews was that the products have built an image of being Finnish, innovative, trendy even a healthy option to replace meat or other proteins. Even though many of the interviewees expressed such opinions, not all of the interviewees were interested or keen about the products. Interviewee no 8 revealed that they see Pulled Oats and MiFu more processed than healthy, and that the products are being portrayed as super foods.

Well the products are being marketed as super foods and also with the fact that they would contain something really good and in large quantities. But at least the way I see that it is something that is brought up more nowadays, and well, that they are really nutritious and other stuff, but first thing that comes to my mind is that they have been processed a lot along the way. (Interviewee 8)

It is clear from the above quotation that the interviewee does not see the products as necessarily the most healthy options, even though the products are associated with healthy lifestyle. Also one other notion the interviewee 8 pointed out, that the products might be riding the buzz that is circulating amongst them, which can be elaborated in the next quotation:

The direction of the food industry seems go more into less processed, more natural and locally sourced et cetera, or this has been clearly visible lately, and in the same time these products have been launched. I am not totally convinced that these products are part of this movement, at least in my opinion they just seem to be brought up, how would you describe it, for the sake of market value. (Interviewee 8)

The interviewee described on how conveniently the products have been launched alongside the general change in the advertising of the food industry and its products, more natural and eco-friendly values are brought up continuously. This is an interesting notion that challenges the healthy and eco-friendly image built in the media of these products.

As already identified, the findings could be crystallized into five legitimization strategies: publicization, authenticity, normalization, novelty and category fitness. These strategies were identified with the help of critical discourse analysis that was done intertextually: the data from the consumer interviews was compared and analyzed alongside the data from the newspapers and tabloids article.



This helped to establish a broad view of the Finnish plant- and dairy-based protein market and the way media uses different legitimation strategies in order to make sense of the market and inform the consumers about it.

The visualization and the averages of the data collected from the consumer interviews and the newspapers and tabloids articles represent a way quantifying the findings. Even though the method was critical discourse analysis, and textual elements are hard to put into numeral form, the two identified dimensions: knowledge claims and grade of membership were given a numeral equivalent in order to clarify the findings and show the relations of the dimensions affecting one another. The following figure 11 will show the consolidated results of the newspaper articles and consumer interviews in one figure.

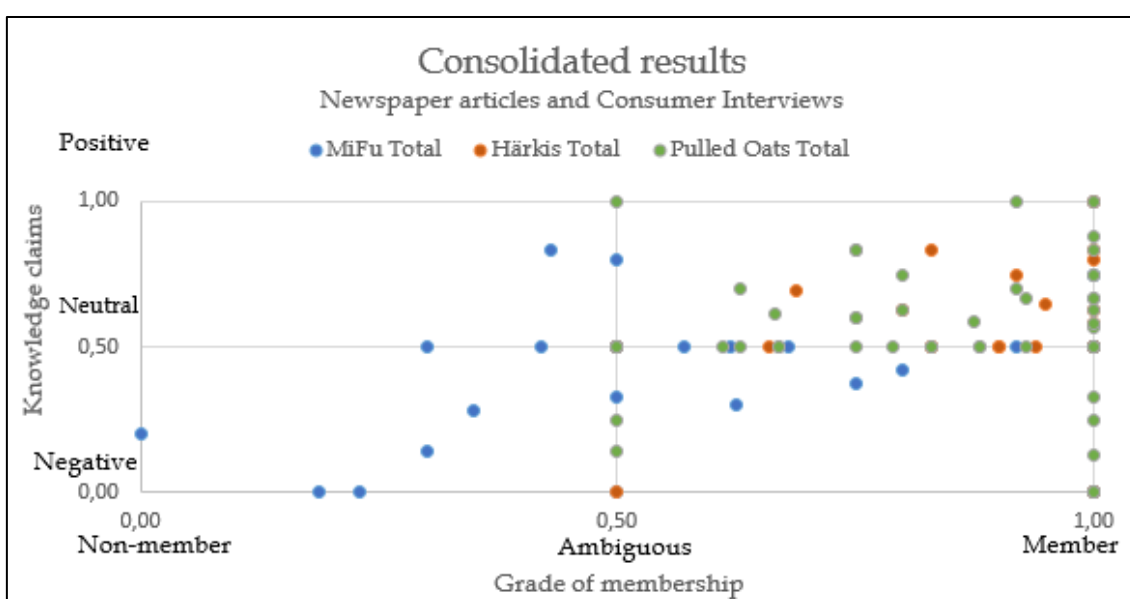


Figure 13. Consolidated results of the newspaper articles and consumer interviews.

The consolidated results show the both empirical data sets in one figure. As identified before and demonstrated in the above figure, Pulled Oats and Härkis took the majority of the positive knowledge claims and membership claims, while MiFu had more neutral and negative knowledge claims and more ambiguous and non-member claims.

To conclude the findings, the following figure 14 will serve as a conclusion of the five legitimation strategies identified in these findings.

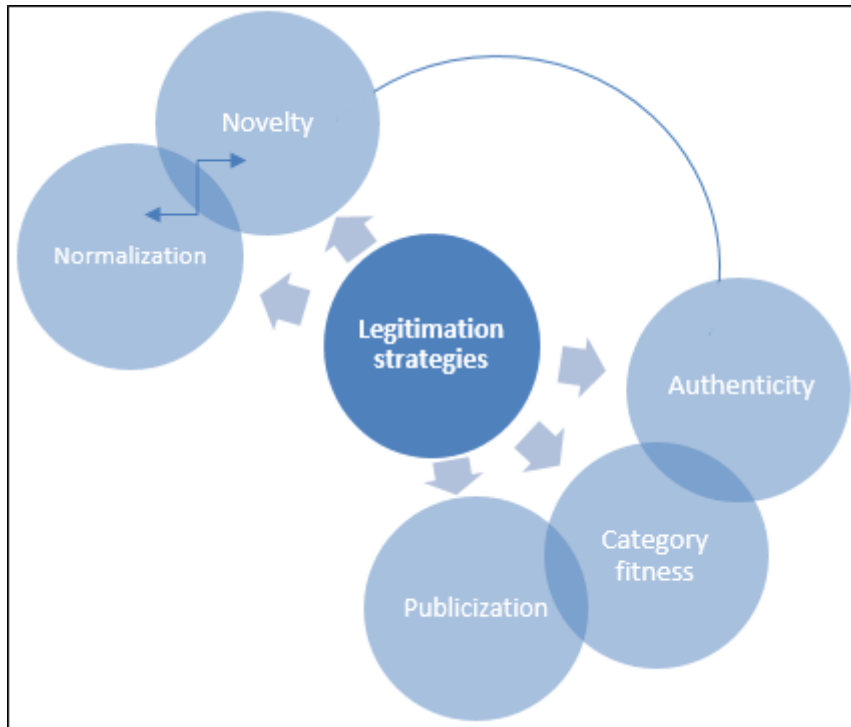


Figure 14. Conclusion of the legitimation strategies.

Above you can see the overall conclusion of the legitimation strategies identified in this paper. As seen in the figure the legitimation strategies: normalization and novelty are contradicted, yet overlapping; novelty and authenticity relate to each other; publicization, authenticity and category fitness are overlapping and interdependent to each other. This visualization of the legitimation strategies is not unequivocal, not only the three below are overlapping with each other and the two top ones with each other, but all of the strategies can be seen as continuation of one another and interdependent by default.

Next the discussion part of this paper will be presented, followed by future implications and limitations and finally a general conclusion.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The study conducted was a cut through review of the nascent market's consumer perceptions and the way media legitimizes the market's players. The research setting was about legitimation strategies Finnish media uses with these three products, and the five found legitimation strategies can be summarized into following: publicization, normalization, authenticity, novelty and category fitness. The findings of the research elaborated in the previous chapter show also a relation on neutral and negative perceptions of consumers leading to more ambiguous or non-membership of the category.

As identified in the findings chapter, several of the legitimation strategies are intertwined and interdependent, yet contradicting. Normalization as a legitimation strategy is the act of trivializing and normalizing the products either through media or consumers. From the findings, it can be noted that there are attempts from media to normalize the studied products (Pulled Oats, Härkis and MiFu) as 'meat substitutes'. The discourse Finnish media has built around the products is that they are namely substituting another produce, meat. For reasons such as the newness of the product category, unfamiliarity with the products and ambiguity of the market, the products are categorized as meat substitutes. The interviewed consumers that did not possess an extensive knowledge base on the products and on the market seemed to agree with this type of legitimation strategy.

Novelty as a legitimation strategy was used to emphasize the newness, innovativeness or unconventional values of the product. The media continuously used words like "innovation" associated with the products. This related also to the other legitimation strategy, authenticity. Also the fact that interviewees could not point out why Pulled Oats is the "original and authentic" one, as mentioned in the authenticity legitimation strategy chapter, sets an interesting example of the ongoing discourse. The consumers seemed to have consensus about the fact that Pulled Oats had the been first to enter the market, while the two latter products take advantage of Pulled Oats' media coverage. Notable aspect of the ongoing discourse in the media is that the articles have deliberately emphasized the fact that Pulled Oats was the first product on the market.

The Finnish media's a use of vocabulary of the products emphasizes the fact that the category is growing and 'booming' was the main notion publicization strategy provided. The media is building a buzz around the products, thus enabling more publicized speculation of the category to transpire. The consumers are sensitive to this type of journalism and an image of ever-growing and trendy industry is fortified. The consumers participate in this act of legitimation by discussing it with their peers, as identified in the findings, almost half of the interviewed consumers (44%) stated that word of mouth as one of the most important sources of information. While word of mouth was an important source of information, the category fitness strategy was ensued heavily through the media discourse. Category fitness refers to the products attributes and definitions made by

the media and the audience in relation to how the products fit on the market. It can be noted from the findings that not all of the products were perceived as a “fit” on the market. This can be exemplified in the consumer perceptions of MiFu. In all of the articles (8 out of 40) that mentioned MiFu, it was either compared to Härkis or both Härkis and Pulled Oats. As per Kennedy (2008), media’s co-mentions will serve as a way of constructing the new market category, which can be seen in this case. However, these co-mentions are not always perceived in a positive manner. The constant publicization and ensuing of category fitness provided by the Finnish media, which is then delivered to the consumers, and finally processed from the consumer-side was not positively perceived, as already noted in the findings. Firms with common attributes see themselves as cohabitants of the same category and claim category membership by associating themselves in the category, meaning they self-categorize themselves. As identified by Zuckermann (1999), the process of self-categorization risks to develop less meaningful identities for the companies, since they not might belong to the category they self-categorize. It is unclear has Valio self-categorized their product as a part of the reference group Pulled Oats and Härkis are since there is no clear cause and effect of this happening, but it is clear that the Finnish media is establishing market sense making processes with co-mentioning the products alongside each other.

As identified earlier, in the Finnish media the plant-based protein products are often described as meat replacements, meat alternatives or meat substitutes. The discourse of plant-based proteins in the Finnish media is heavily based on the normalization strategy presented in the findings. It can be noted that the plant-based proteins have not established enough foothold in the Finnish victuals to be distinguished as own independent category (i.e. plant-based proteins), but they are rather fitted to the norm of the society as something that replaces the meat products. As new products keep popping up and the market is evolving, it will be interesting to see how the legitimation strategies will develop and change form, as evidently, as the market and the surrounding world is changing, the legitimation strategies will change too. From a longitudinal perspective, it would be fascinating to research this topic in few years or even decades to understand how the food industry has evolved and changed. Did these three products mentioned in this paper establish their place in the market, or were they just a passing trend before other products?

As the newspapers and tabloids articles were hard to source due to the proximity of launching the products, the researched topic would benefit from more longitudinal research setting, for example in few years. The perceptions of the consumers could be then researched again to gain knowledge and understand, whether the products were only a passing trend, or did they claim their foothold in the Finnish food industry. One interesting notion that could be also researched in the following studies is country-wide comparison of comparable products and whether there are any cultural differences on the perceptions on the products. Another research setting could also deal with the same products studied in this paper, but in an international context. That is of course if the three products (Pulled Oats, Härkis and MiFu) have been successfully introduced to the foreign markets.

As Negro et al (2010) suggested, the category contrast is proportional to the average width of producers' niches in the fuzzy categories space. A producer's niche in a category space is constructed from the typicalities (grades of membership) in the all of the relevant categories. A producer with a broad niche will have partial fit in multiple categories while having a membership in multiple categories. The appeal of all offerings will decrease as the average width of niches rise and producer claims multiple category membership. In MiFu's case there is a clear cause and effect between broad niche and less appealing offering. The average of consumer perceptions of MiFu was leaning towards negative claims (knowledge claims 0,44; 0,50 being neutral value) and grade of membership perceived was 0,37 (non-member, ambiguous value being 0,50), implying that Valio has not established a meaningful identity on the market. Nonetheless, the Finnish media is portraying MiFu alongside Pulled Oats and Härkis, which implies media's efforts to make sense of the ambiguous environment.

The findings showed a high Grade of membership correlation to positive or neutral knowledge claims correlation. Härkis' data was more evenly spread towards more neutral and more ambiguous views on the product than Pulled Oats' data. This might be due to less use of authenticity and novelty legitimation strategies. Härkis was seen as a fit member of the category (category fitness legitimation strategy), but not as novel or authentic as Pulled Oats.

The Grade of membership is high due to more positive or neutral Knowledge claims resulted from the media's use and consumer's acknowledgment following legitimation strategies: authenticity, novelty and category fitness. The authentic and novel the product was described by the consumers, the more positive claims it got, and the more it seemed to fit the category norm.

However, the products in fact should not be categorized as substitutes, but rather than self-standing and independent category. When this will happen, is a matter of time. While the market is nascent, the legitimation strategies will continue to be enforced from the Finnish media side. The media has definitely taken the easy road, and categorized the new product releases as substitutes for meat, rather than own new product category. This relates heavily to the Weick's (1995) definition of sensemaking, which is a publicized speculation of unfamiliar things. The ultimate need for categorization and definition of something new results in applying and comparing it to familiar things. This type of media's sensemaking can be also seen as a representation of Kennedy's (2008) application of new category label in a nascent and emerging market, which leads to consumers sharing an interpretation of its meaning. As identified by Alrich & Fiol (1994), cognitive legitimation of a firm refers to the spread of knowledge and the level of public knowledge of an action or activity. The highest form of the spread and level of knowledge is reached once the product, service or process is taken for granted. In this study's case companies, it is visible that the beforementioned highest form of spread and level of knowledge has yet to be reached.

As already mentioned before, despite the intensive media coverage on the plant-based protein products, it is difficult to distinguish how common plant-based diets are among Finnish consumers. According to latest data, vegetarian and vegan based diets account for 5% of the population (Helsingin Sanomat,

2016). In fact, Finnish consumers' meat consumption has not experienced a downwards trend in the past 65 years (1950-2015), on the contrary, average Finnish person is consuming more meat every year (Natural Resources Institute Finland, 2015). Based from the findings of the research of Natural Resources Institute Finland (Helsingin Sanomat, 2015), the consumers can be roughly divided into two categories: those who continue to consume meat and do not want to lower their consumption of meat products and to those that recognize the consumption of red meat should be limited.

While some of the assumptions made in the initial research setting held true, for example the fact that MiFu is not seen as legitimate category member and its consumer perceptions are more negative than the other products, some surprising findings were made too. The fact that Pulled Oats was seen almost like a 'Holy Grail' of new products, even voted as a 'product of the year 2017' (MaistaSuomi, 2017), was astonishing. It is true that Gold&Green Foods Ltd were able to develop a new way of processing oats, a technological innovation, but how it is possible that it is overshadowing other technological improvements and developments in the field? Verso Food Ltd and Valio Ltd had been also developing their products for years, but why only Pulled Oats is seen as a trail-blazer for the food industry innovations in Finland? Like mentioned before, this study definitely needs a repeat take in the future, so that it is possible to see how these products last time and how the market has been developing since. Next the future implications and limitations of this study will be presented.

## 6 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

While the findings of the research point out a correlation on neutral and negative perceptions of consumers leading to more ambiguous or non-membership of the category, it still can be noted that this study had a small sample and the results hardly can be generalized. Also as the newspapers and tabloids articles were hard to source due to the proximity of launching the products, the researched topic would benefit from more longitudinal research setting, for example in few years. The perceptions of the consumers could be then researched again to gain knowledge and understand, whether the products were only a passing trend, or did they claim their foothold in the Finnish food industry. One interesting notion that could be also researched in the following studies is country-wide comparison of comparable products and whether there are any cultural differences on the perceptions on the products. Another research setting could also deal with the same products studied in this paper, but in an international context. That is of course if the three products (Pulled Oats, Härkis and MiFu) have been successfully introduced to the foreign markets.

As this was a small sample qualitative study, there are some limitations to which extent the findings can be applied. First of all, not all of the interviewees had as many knowledge claims and membership cues as the other, which can set a limitation on how accurately the consumer perceptions can be studied. Secondly, in this study there were on 25% male participants, and for more heterogeneous sample, the percentage could be higher.

In consumer research, often the socioeconomic status of the participants is taken into account for gaining a sense on how the phenomenon is perceived in different layers of society. Also for the sake of critical discourse analysis, this could have been useful to include in the study, to really delve into the underlying societal power relations and implications that the consumers perceive.

One valuable notion to the limitation of the study is that the interviews and the newspapers and tabloids articles were translated from Finnish to English, which can be a risk when considering whether the subtle cues can be translated from a language to another.

For further studying this phenomenon an international aspect could be taken into account, for example a study of Nordic plant-based proteins and their consumer perceptions country-wise and in cross-country wise. As the Finnish market is still nascent, within few years there could be a repeat study in more wider sense to establish differences country-wise and market-wise. Critical discourse analysis could be also suitable for this type of study, since the major point of conducting a CDA study is to peel the layers of social world and discover the concealed power relations and the way they affect the society.

Maybe due to the fact that the newspapers and tabloids articles were released so shortly after the launching of the products resulted in more neutral or positive views on the products. Still, there was no critiquing of the products, which is an interesting notion on the Finnish media's tone.

For future research on this topic, an endogenous point of view could be useful. The comparison of how the producers or the company representatives view their own offerings, compared to how the exogenous, the media and consumer view them, would offer an intriguing research setting. According to DiMaggio & Powell (1988), self-categorizing companies will achieve legitimating effects since they will participate in institutional isomorphism in the said category in order to achieve the membership. DiMaggio & Powell stated three mechanisms on how institutional isomorphism happens: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism. These three mechanisms could be studied in more detail in the study combining the endogenous and exogenous points of view of categorization.

The comparison of intra-organization view compared to the outer view would reveal even more differences on how the organization's efforts of categorization and association differ from the way media portrays them and in the end how the consumer sees these efforts from the organization and the media. To conclude this paper, next the final conclusions will be presented.



## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research provided an excellent point on studying the Finnish consumer culture and media coverage on novel products. As already suggested earlier, the study could be repeated in few years to see whether this sudden inception of plant-and dairy-based proteins made a pivotal impact to the Finnish food industry, or was it just a passing trend. Even though it would be the latter one, this phenomenon presented a fascinating research setting for this paper.

The study conducted was a cut through review of the nascent market's consumer perceptions and the way media legitimizes the market's players. The research setting was about legitimation strategies Finnish media uses with these three products, and the five found legitimation strategies can be summarized into following: publicization, normalization, authenticity, novelty and category fitness. The findings of the research showed also a relation on neutral and negative perceptions of consumers leading to more ambiguous or non-membership of the category.

The method used in this paper, critical discourse analysis is suitable for unraveling the underlying assumptions in social, societal, political and economic phenomena (Vaara et al, 2007). It also used to study power relationships between different discourses and actors. Major factor in CDA when applying it as a method is to consider the three levels of analysis: the textual elements, discursive practices and social practice (Vaara et al, 2007). The textual elements refer to the micro-textual parts and notions in the studied text, while discursive practices mean numerous practices of speech, text, writing as an entity and social practice the situational and institutional context of the studied content. In this paper two sources of empirical data were used for conducting critical discourse analysis: transcriptions of interviews with Finnish consumers and newspapers and tabloids articles from leading Finnish newspapers and tabloids.

Based on the findings, five legitimation strategies that Finnish media used were identified. The legitimation strategies were identified from of the individual texts, the intertextual totality, power implications from the tone of the identified from the empirical data and also the discursive practices used in the empirical data.

The Grade of membership is high due to more positive or neutral Knowledge claims that result from the media's use and consumer's acknowledgement following legitimation strategies: authenticity, novelty and category fitness. The authentic and novel the product was described by the consumers, the more positive claims it got, and the more it seemed to fit the category norm.

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## ATTACHMENT 1. INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK IN FINNISH

### Tuotteiden tunnettuus

1. Tiedätkö seuraavat tuotteet: Nyhtökaura, Härkis & Mifu k-ruoka, ruoka
2. Mistä kuuli ensi kerran tuotteista? (Mikä kanava)
3. Miten tuotteita kuvailtiin? (Artikkeli, mainos, millä tavalla tuotteita tuotiin esille?)

### Kohderyhmään kuuluvuus

4. Oletko ostanut tuotteita?  
(Jos ei ole ostanut niin oletko maistanut? Jos et ole maistanut niin haluaisitko maistaa?)
5. Miten kuvailisit tuotteita henkilölle joka ei tunne tuotteita?  
(Jos ei tiedä tuotteita niin kuvaile mielikuvia mitä oot saanu tuotteista, onko mitään kuvaa?)
6. Mihin tarkoitukseen käytetään?
7. Tiedätkö muita tuotteita jotka soveltuisivat käytettäväksi Nyhtökauran, Härkiksen tai MiFun tapaan?
8. Mainitse jokin tuote joka voisi korvata seuraavat (kaikkiin vastaus erikseen): Nyhtökaura, Härkis & MiFu
9. Minkälainen henkilö kuuluu mielestäsi näiden tuotteiden kohderyhmään? Nyhtökaura, Härkis & MiFu (kaikkiin vastaus erikseen)

### Mediakäyttäytyminen ja tiedonhaku

10. Mitä medioita käyttää?  
Nettisivut, lehtien nettisivut, sosiaalinen media, applikaatiot, radio, tv, lehdet, blogit
11. Millaista tietoa etsii? Jos ei ymmärrä kontekstia: Niin etsitkö uusista tuotteista tietoa?
12. Mistä saa tietoa uusista tuotteista ruokateollisuudessa?
13. Oletko huomannut muutosta ruokateollisuuden mainonnassa viimeisen vuoden aikana?
14. Mitä mielestäsi painotetaan uusien tuotteiden (ruokateollisuus) markkinoinnissa?

### Ruokavalio, kohderyhmään kuuluvuus

15. Ruokavalio, ruokavalion rajoitteet
16. Onko ruokavaliossasi tapahtunut muutoksia viimeisen vuoden aikana?
  - a. Jos on niin kerro miten? Miksi tässä on tapahtunut muutos?
  - b. Jos ei niin miksi? Jatka demografisiin jossei tule vastausta

### Demografiset kysymykset

17. Ikä
18. Asuinkunta
19. Elämäntilanne: opiskelija, työelämässä yms. opiskelija

## ATTACHMENT 2. INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK IN ENGLISH

### **Familiarity of the products**

1. Do you know the following products: Pulled Oats, Härkis & Mifu
2. Through which channels did you hear first time about the products?
3. How were the products described? (In the article, advertisement, commercial, how were the products brought up?)

### **Membership in a target group**

4. Have you bought any of these products?
5. How would you describe each of them to a person that is unfamiliar with the products?
6. For which purpose these products are used?
7. Do you know any other products that would be suitable to use in similar way as Pulled Oats, Härkis or MiFu?
8. Please mention any other product that could replace these products: Pulled Oats, Härkis & MiFu?
9. What kind of a person is part of these products' target group? (Nyhtökaura, Härkis & MiFu)

### **Media usage, behavior, search for information**

10. Which channels of media do you use?  
Websites, magazine websites, social media, applications, radio, tv, magazines
11. What kind of information do you search on the channels you use most?
12. Where do you get information on new products in the food industry?
13. Have you noticed any changes in the food industry's advertisements?
14. What is the main message that the new products in the food industry focus on?

### **Additional information**

15. Diet, dietary restrictions

### **Demographical information**

16. Age
17. Place of residence
18. Life status: student, in working life, etc.