

# **INTERNSHIP REPORT**

**COMPANY C.,  
AN ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCER IN  
A GLOBALISED INDUSTRY**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A 6-month internship in a global city like London is a golden opportunity in terms of learning and self-development. I consider myself very fortunate and honoured as I was surrounded by wonderful people who led me through the completion of this project. I would thus like to take the opportunity to thank all the individuals who contributed, in one way or another, to the success of my internship at Company C., and helped in the production of this report.

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This internship was an amazing opportunity for me to discover the food industry, a fascinating field, as well as to develop my skills on many subjects. I consider this experience a huge milestone in my career development and I will make the most of the knowledge I acquired during these 6 months.

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# INTRODUCTION

As a third-year student at Sciences Po Toulouse, I was offered the possibility to live an international experience abroad. I decided to complete two internships of 6 months each.

I had the chance to accomplish my first internship at the French-Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (**FACCI WA**) in Perth from July 2015 to January 2016. I experienced the business world through this organisation as an event and administration coordinator. It was an amazing Australian adventure and I learned a lot about business, the functioning of an organisation and of course about the Australian way of life. Leaving a country where I spent half a year, and where I enjoyed myself, wasn't easy, but I knew new adventures awaited for me somewhere else...

I started looking for my second internship while I was still in Australia, around the beginning of October 2015.

In the search for my second internship, I was much more organised than for the first one. I arranged my cover letters by themes (more oriented marketing, communication, creativity... and so on) and created a database with the companies I contacted, especially in the food industry as I felt having recorded all these information might be useful in the future. I also used an Excel spreadsheet to reference the answers I received and to weigh the pros and cons when the answer was positive.

Also, I didn't waste time applying to offers on recruitment websites as I did for my first internship search. It had taught me that you never get any result when you keep applying on websites like [indeed.co.uk](https://www.indeed.co.uk) or [studentjobs.co.uk](https://www.studentjobs.co.uk). I mainly focused on companies I had a real interest in, even if they didn't post a concrete offer as I applied spontaneously.

This time I had a pretty clear idea of the kind of internship I was looking for and had established some criteria. I really appreciated my time at FACCI WA, though I wanted to experience something different for my second internship. I still think that diversifying your work experiences is a real asset. It enables you to learn a lot, experience different work environments and activities, develop your skills and be much more of a multi-tasker.

I wanted my second internship:

- To be **marketing**-related
- To be in the **food industry**
- To be located in **London**
- To be in an **English-speaking environment**
- To be in a **business** company (not an organisation or institution)
- To be **paid** (as I couldn't afford living in London otherwise)

As I have been vegan for 6 years now and was vegetarian before, food was always a subject I was interested in. I think that we have now access to new technologies and a great amount of knowledge on nutrition and food production, that enable us to seek for more sustainable food alternatives in a context where feeding a growing population has become a major challenge of the 21st century. There are indeed more ethical and environment-friendly ways to feed

ourselves today enabling us to avoid supporting polluting and unethical food production ways on an industrial scale: a vegan diet is part of it.

Step by step, as I became more aware of my own environmental impact, I grew a real passion for the food industry and its key trends, especially the “health food” one. Being really creative, I have also always been attracted by marketing and communication. The strategies elaborated by big food industry companies and the way they influence our consumer society, as well as the way people perceive a product, have always interested me.

I thus had an interview with Mrs. S., the Head of Operations at a company called Company C., an organic food producer specialised in coconut products. I had previously contacted Company C. spontaneously by email and was really interested in working with them as they offer very innovative and healthy products. As soon as I got a positive answer, I accepted the offer as I knew I would fit well in the team and that I would learn a lot about the food industry.

After moving to London and settling down, I was ready to start my adventure at Company C..

## **The Company’s profile**

**Industry:** Food & Drink

**Company type:** Private limited company

**Creation:** founded in 2005

**Nationality:** British 

**Address:** 455 Field Lodge Road, London JB6 7KI

 : +44 (0) 30 8667 9065

 : [info@companyc.com](mailto:info@companyc.com)

[www.companyc.com](http://www.companyc.com)

### **Balance sheet:**

Company C. is growing fast and expanding quickly. Financially speaking it has more than doubled its current assets between 2014 and 2015. In terms of net current assets (a company's assets after its current liabilities have been subtracted from its current assets), it went from £49,448 to £407,601 during the same time period. This shows that in a really short amount of time the company doubled its working capital.

### **Distribution:**

Company C. is now distributed in more than 38 countries worldwide including very well-known distributors like famous specialty and health stores.

### **Ideology:**

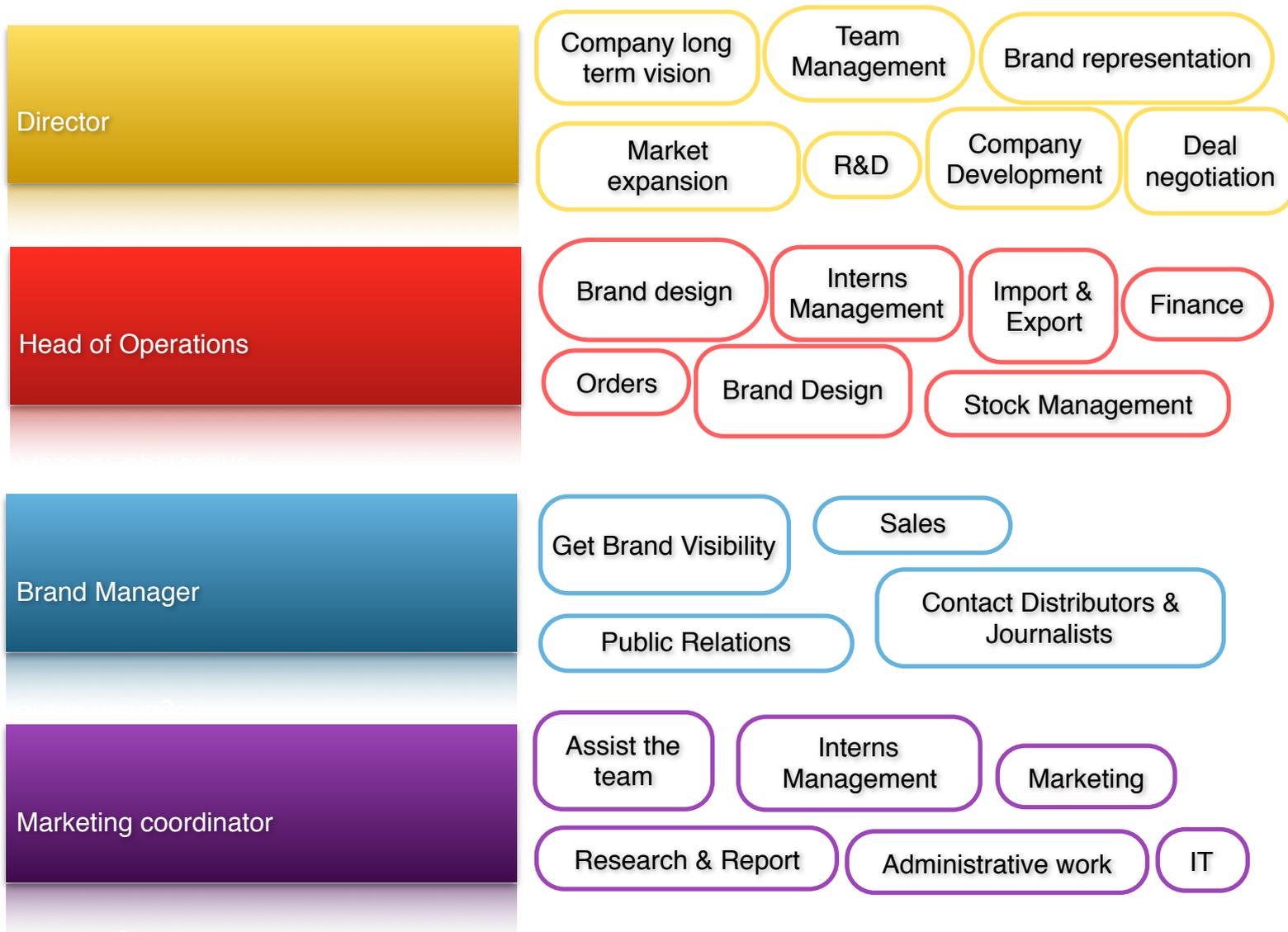
It is an honest, natural and premium company selling coconut products to the world.

In terms of range, it currently offers 48 products which are sold in more than 38 countries. The raw products the company uses come from Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Similarly, Company C.'s products are suitable for alternative diets (gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free...) and the company created partnerships with organisations it supports like: Action Against Hunger UK (it donates 10p per case of product sold to help ending child hunger, AAH have helped over 13.6 million people in 47 countries last year.) and Teen VGN.

## Team

Company C. Ltd is an 11-year-old company located in London. Even though it has developed its expertise for more than a decade and is currently expanding, it is still considered a new business and operates with a small team of five to six people. It has a start-up atmosphere, which enables team-work and communication. Below is the company's current hierarchal and functional structure:



## **Missions**

As in all businesses and especially in start-up-like structures, the work load is very important and missions can be very versatile. I felt I acquired more responsibilities and independence during my time at Company C.. The diversity of my missions increased and with it my skills and knowledge on the company, entrepreneurship and the food & drink industry.

While my first tasks were linked to my cultural upbringing (French translations, research for French distributors, contact with French journalists and bloggers...) step by step I was entrusted with more responsibility.

### **► Translation**

Firstly, I was in charge of translating documents from English to French and from French to English. This mainly concerned PR (Public Relations) articles our brand manager writes about our products and then sends to journalists to encourage them to publish about us. For example, I translated articles about our products being distributed by Harrods.

Similarly, I was in touch with journalists and bloggers from the Netherlands, and thus needed some PR materials to attached to my emails to get visibility there.

### **► Research, report and prospection**

Company C. is in constant development and is looking to expand its market share. Many analysis and research are thus necessary to be able to elaborate strategies according to each market's specifics.

Even before starting my internship at Company C. and while I was still in Australia working for FACCI WA, I was contacted to write a market analysis about coconut products in Australia. Later on, I wrote a market analysis on the Scandinavian market of health food. These were really interesting projects I worked on as they offered me a broad and complete image of food industry markets culturally distinct. It also taught me a lot about business culture in other countries and the non-identical specifics of the food industry abroad.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to take part in a research process from the beginning of my internship as one of my first tasks was to establish a list of farm shops around the UK which might be potential distributors of our products. Later on I established lists of French and Scandinavian shops specialised in health food in order to contact them and establish if they might be interested in distributing our products.

### **► Management**

At Company C. I learnt a lot in terms of management. I was put in charge of another intern, David (and then Thomas). This experience enabled me to learn how to delegate to someone else and be more efficient. When managing someone, we need to be extremely organised so I created a to-do Excel spreadsheet for myself and one for the other intern to be sure I was delegating the right tasks at the right moment. It was a really great lesson for managing people and prioritising my work.

Just as I did in Australia, I also reviewed internship applications and interviewed students looking for a placement at Company C..

Moreover, in terms of stock management I learned a lot. Indeed, we received products deliveries directly at the office and I helped handling the reception, stock inventory and management. For instance, for each show and exhibition we have to prepare the stock to bring. We also send samples to journalists, bloggers, potential distributors... and have to manage the stock to be able to deliver orders.

#### ► PR

MR. W. is our brand manager and works in PR as well as sales. He taught me a lot and enabled me to work on PR for the French, Dutch and Spanish market.

First of all, I created lists of French and Dutch bloggers, and was given lists of journalists for France, Spain and the Netherlands. Through my internship, I noticed it is much harder to get visibility in newspapers and magazine than online. Most of the journalists I contacted wanted to sell us space for advertisement on magazine whereas we were only looking for free publicity to illustrate article on health trends. MR. W. told me that only 20% of the magazine space is offered for free and the 80% left are for expensive advertising. Consequently I focused more on getting visibility online. Eventually, after sending samples we got some results in the media.

As I am really interested in online communication and marketing, I worked on our social media channels. For instance I published content on our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube timelines with articles, images, videos and posts to create interaction online and get visibility for the brand.

#### ► Business development

Following my internship at FACCI WA I had experience in business development as I was used to working on business proposals to businesses desiring to expand in Australia. At Company C. I was pleased to learn more about business development from the inside of a company and not only as an organisation offering options to help a structure to adapt in another country.

My research and market analysis work was part of this business development objective (find new distributors, get visibility...). Besides, I accompanied the co-founders on a business meeting with Mrs. T. from T. on Thursday 18 February 2016. She was representing a Singaporean distributor and we discussed about a potential business opportunity in Asia. We also talked about the specifics of the Asian market and how to adapt to the culture and habits on this continent. I was really interesting and showed me how to do business in the food industry.

What I really enjoyed at Company C. was also the start-up atmosphere. Indeed, we were a team in constant exchange and were able to communicate ideas to each other. I really appreciated being part of the structure and also have my ideas taken into consideration when it came to new products, our new website or online sales development.

## ► Marketing

Marketing can seem very shallow or even unnecessary to some companies, but it is a useful and versatile asset in a business. There is no marketing manager at Company C. for now, but as the company expands and develops it might be able to hire someone to work on it soon, that's one of the business development objectives. Consequently, currently the whole team works on marketing as it requires a broad skill set and is very diverse.

Through my work, I had the chance to do some marketing. Indeed, I worked on a marketing plan to have a broad idea of our current marketing situation (competition, market share, market, customer buying decision, objectives...) and to study the different options we have to invest in marketing in the future (promotion and pricing, advertising, proximity marketing, digital marketing, marketing materials...). This project was really interesting as I shared my ideas about how to promote the brand and expand the company's market. For instance, we looked for store displays to give more visibility to our products on the shelves and we looked for outdoors proximity advertising like having our brand advertised on taxis or buses. We also decided to work with Th. (an online platform providing its members with discount codes to use on health food companies' websites) in order to get online sales and visibility (they promoted us to their members through brand spotlight). We created two coupons to get discounts on our coconut oil sachets and gift pack, and then a discount on the whole range.

Digital marketing is probably the field in which I learnt the most. Working of different softwares (Illustrator, Photoshop) and learning how to use them is very dynamic and that's what I like about it. Company C. gave me responsibilities in this field and I was more than pleased to work on Illustrator and Photoshop to create promotional material (posters, press kits, brochures, recipes cards, website design material...).

## ► IT and SEO

As Company C. was working on its new website when I arrived, I had the chance to experience IT and website development too. Consequently, I worked on Wordpress to create posts, pages, add media, create discount coupons, and so on. In order to update all our online information I re-wrote product descriptions. Also, I was put in charge of trying the different website functions and report on the utilisation problems. Through the testings I did, I suggested some ideas about the products and how to present things or how to incorporate our Youtube videos. Step by step, I grew more aware of the different possibility on the new website and took care of its maintenance.

We decided to launch a Company C. forum on the new website as well, and I worked on it: to find the design, try it on the website and identify the problems (design, usefulness, utilisation, links, ergonomics...). Having a forum is a really big asset online as it creates traffic and helps with SEO (search engine optimisation). Nevertheless, we could not launch an empty forum as people would not post on it. Consequently, I wrote some questions we can use to start posts and create interest to attract people.

Talking about SEO, I learnt how to improve Company C.'s website's ranking on Google and get reports about our optimisation through **MOZ**.

Moz is a software as a service (SaaS) company that sells inbound marketing and marketing analytics software subscriptions. It has a lot of functions enabling the user to improve its website to get more visibility on search engine like Google or Yahoo. To get data about our website, we created a “**Campaign**” on Moz that analyses the traffic, domain authority, keywords ranking (from #1 to #10) and crawl issues. The software sends **weekly reports** about search visibility, external links, keywords ranking and total visits. It is a pretty ergonomic and easy to use software with great research tools like an **open site explorer** (it researches backlinks, finds link-building opportunities and discovers potentially damaging links), **fresh web explorer** (it analyses mentions of our brand, competitors, or any other key term that interests us), **keyword difficulty** (we enter keywords to see keyword difficulty and Google search volume), **on-page grader** (we enter a URL and a keyword on our site to generate an on-page grade report with recommendations on how to optimise a page), **crawl test** (it crawls a given website and its linked-to pages to help us discover duplicate content and summarise redirect locations), as well as a **rank tracker** (it reports the ranking of a webpage when searching for a keyword in a search engine). There are also other great and useful tools like **page optimisation** to score and optimise a page for a keyword and a **ranking** tool to analyse a keyword, add and manage them, and adapt landing pages.

#### ► Accounting

I also learnt how to do some accounting at Company C.. Indeed, I created PODs (Proof Of Delivery) in order to check every payment made for our delivery company L.. Afterwards I used an Excel spreadsheet to reference the payments and make sure the final cost was appropriate.

#### ► Event coordination

Just like at FACCI WA in Australia, I helped Company C. with some event coordination for the shows and exhibition the company took part in. I didn't attend every event I helped coordinating of course as these ones took place all over Europe (Belgium, Spain...). My role consisted in registering the company's profile and some of our products online, ordering badges, preparing stocks of samples to bring to the show, as well as suggesting ideas for the event.

This adventure in the health food industry was really fulfilling in terms of experience, knowledge and business development. Especially about the globalisation of this industry and the new strategies used by companies to adapt to the internationalisation of the market.

### **How does a food industry company cope with the world globalisation? What strategies does it develop to adapt to the internationalisation of the market?**

My internship at Company C. Ltd was a perfect opportunity to understand from inside the journey of a company in the food industry which is a very competitive sector (Chapter 1). It also enabled me to study complex international strategies elaborated in a booming environment in order to satisfy an international market (Chapter 2). Last but not least, my adventure at Company C. gave me an insider overview of the different prospects and development objectives of a company in the health food industry (Chapter 3).

## CHAPTER 1: COMPANY C. LTD, THE JOURNEY OF A COMPANY IN A VERY COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY

*“If you just work on stuff that you like and you’re passionate about, you don’t have to have a master plan with how things will play out.” - Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook.*

Is entrepreneurship an adventure that only requires a great idea, passion and boldness? I would say that in an industry like IT, and 12 years ago when Facebook was created, Mark Zuckerberg may have been right. In the 90s, new technologies became available and opened up a whole new industry. At the time of the dot-com boom in the 2000s, Google was still a baby company and the Internet was a growing innovation just-about to become accessible to mass market. The IT industry was not saturated by thousands of start-ups wanting to change the world through new softwares, and smart phones were still chimeras. Social networks were just about to hit the population’s interest and Facebook’s timing was perfect for it to become THE benchmark in terms of social platform.

However, the IT industry might be the exception that proves the rule. Indeed, the food industry is part of the “necessary” industries we can find on the marketplace: eating and drinking being primary human needs that have to be satisfied. Supplying food is the answer to a primitive demand human populations have had since trade became a common practice. Step by step and thanks to new technologies, the food industry became more complex: from farming and food production to packaging, distribution, retail and catering. The food industry market also largely expanded. For instance, if we only look at the EU in 2011, the food and drink industry represented a **€1,048 billion turnover** (it’s the largest manufacturing sector in the EU with 14.6%), it employed **4.2 million people** (it’s the leading employer in the EU with 15.5%), and concerned **286,000 companies**.<sup>1</sup>

People will always need food and as the global population keeps on growing, the supply will have to adjust to the demand. Many businesses are now playing in the big game of the food industry, which makes it a very competitive sector where big companies are well-established and have the means to keep their marketshare. This industry is in perpetual renewal as new food trends arise and create many opportunities for entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, entering such a competitive market is not easy and building a company in this sector requires passion, experience, financial assets and an operational business plan.

### **A) Company C. Ltd, a coconut story**

As the food industry evolved, many entrepreneurs decided to make their ideas come true and entered the industry’s market. Nevertheless, in such a congested sector it is hard to last if you do not offer consumers novelty and a long term perspective. It is thus very important to be ahead of the new industry’s key trends and offer innovative products. Company C. Ltd was created at the premisses of the health food trend. At the time, it was one of the first companies promoting the benefits of coconuts on the British market.

#### 1) The idea of bottling coconut water

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<sup>1</sup> From a 2013-2014 “Data & Trends of the European food and drink industry” report.

Mr. T was born in K., a state in Southern India which literally means “the land of the coconut palm tree” in Sanskrit (*kera* for "coconut palm tree" and *alam* for “land”). As Mr. T. grew up in an environment surrounded by Palm Trees he became an expert in coconuts and on how to use them.

In 2004, Mr. T. was working in the finance industry and as he was on a beach sipping coconut water from a green coconut, the idea of bottling coconut water came to him. That’s how Mr. T. decided to start the Company C. adventure and work for his passion for coconuts.

Company C. was created in 2005. The raw coconuts used by the company are not common: different varieties of coconuts are selected according to their features (fatty, sweet, meaty...) and used for their quality. The business started with **bottled coconut water** as its prime product made from a unique variety of small green coconuts with a sweet and nutty aroma. The same year, the company received its first **Excellence in Food and Drink Award** and was recognised by the judges as a healthy food and drinks producer.

## 2) Re-inventing coconuts

Company C. is now sold in more than **3,000** speciality and healthy outlets in the UK and **38** countries worldwide. With over 11 years of expertise, the coconut experts at Company C. know their products and only select the best coconuts for their customers.

Step by step Company C. added new innovative products to its range.

In terms of production, most of the products are made in the UK. Nevertheless, the coconut water and coconut oil are produced at the source (in Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Philippines) to avoid any sanitary contamination during transport, and to be able to process the coconuts at their sweetness/fat climax to obtain the highest quality possible.

As the business evolved it broadened its range and innovated to match the customers demand for healthy food.

## 3) A company surfing on the health trend

Since the 2000s, the **health trend** in the food industry has become a key selling argument as people became more aware of their health and how their diet affects it.

Company C. products are the perfect answer to consumer’s demand for healthier food as they are accredited by the **UK Soil Association** (organic certification), are suitable for **vegetarians, vegans** and **gluten-intolerants**, are **dairy free**, and are **substitutes** for products like butter, soy sauce, milk, flour... They are honest and high quality products with no hidden ingredients or preservatives.

In terms of **distribution** the brand is mainly sold by international top health food distributors like health and speciality stores, farm shops and deli shops and premium food stores. They are now distributed by Tree of Life, Diverse Fine Food Distribution, The health Store and Suma. Many stores also sell them like Harrods, Fenwick, Naturalia (France), Life, Revital (UK), WholeFoods, Holland & Barrett, As Nature Intended (UK), Lulu (Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi

Arabia), Wellness Warehouse (South Africa), Isetan (Japan), Mercontrol (Spain), Alma (Poland) and Samkaup (Iceland).

It seems Company C. specialises in healthy foods made from coconuts. Nevertheless, the health trend and awareness is pretty new in the food industry and is becoming more complex as new research disclosed.

## **B) The health food industry, a competitive niche?**

*“People are fed by the food industry, which pays no attention to health, and are treated by the health industry, which pays no attention to food.”* Wendell Berry<sup>2</sup>

In 1993, Mr Berry stated the idea that the food industry was not related to health. A decade later health food awareness broadened in North America as a “McDonaldization”<sup>3</sup> of diets led to obesity concerns.

Health is now a leading selling argument related to organic, free from (dairy, nuts, gluten, GMOs, preservatives...), vegetarian and vegan<sup>4</sup> products. After scandals hit the food industry (Spanghero’s scandal in 2013 in France for instance) the consumer’s trust in industrial food consumption was eroded and the answer from the industry to re-create trust between their products and customers was the health food trend.

### 1) The health trend: a booming market

At the premisses of the health food industry, the market and consumers it concerned was really small, it was a real **niche** in the sector. Considered like “weird products” in a consumption society surrounded by big chains and brands promoting “junk” food like McDonald or Coco-Cola, health food was minimalistic in terms of market and products (raw tofu, quinoa, basic and non-transformed products, craft and local food). Indeed, 15 years ago the only target market for these products were people directly concerned by health issues or moral values like vegans, vegetarians, gluten and lactose intolerants.

Through the increase of diagnoses of celiac disease, lactose sensitivities, obesity as well as health consciousness (food and diet education at school, Let’s Move project by Michèle Obama, WHO report on red meat linked to cancer in October 2015) and the pressure of society through media picturing fit and perfect bodies, more and more people demanded better and healthier food. What’s interesting is that health food is now consumed by many people who are not vegetarian, vegan, gluten intolerant ... It means the target market of this industry concerns a larger part of the population now: dietary vegans and vegetarians, gluten intolerants, health and organic food consumers, pescetarians, flexitarians, fitness food consumers, people on a diet, parents looking for healthy options for their children...

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<sup>2</sup> Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays (1993)

<sup>3</sup> Term firstly used in The McDonaldization of Society in 1993 by sociologist George Ritzer.

<sup>4</sup> « Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose. » - Official definition from The Vegan Society website.

How did such a niche industry become so popular?

Demand for these products increased through health consciousness, as well as studies and media influencing consumers towards healthier food. Indeed, industrials' answer in front of such a demand was simply to supply more organic, free from, vegan... options in their range of products to satisfy consumers and attract more clients. Similarly, new technologies enabled the industrial production of these products at a lower cost and introduced them to mass market, which enabled their democratisation and availability.

This is a phenomenon I personally noticed as I have been vegan for 6 years now. I remember how hard it was to find substitutes like tofu or vegetal milk in mass market channels, and how expensive these products were in specialty stores a couple years ago. Currently, almost every food chain offers vegetarian/vegan options in their menu and it is much easier to buy health food products in regular shops like supermarkets.

Indeed, as demand for health products increased the need for supply did too and that's where business opportunities arose: there is a market to conquer and profit opportunities to seize.

## 2) The business Rush towards health food

Once again, as the demand for healthier food increased, many companies started to supply it and lots of people launched new businesses specialised in health food. There are two major kinds of health food supplier in the industry at the moment: **big international corporations** already leaders in the food sector which developed healthier products to broaden their range as well as their market share, and new **start-ups** specialised in health food.

In 2013, the British "meat-free" sector reached **£625 million in sales** (data rose to £657 million in 2014). Nowadays **12%** of the British population identifies itself as "vegan" or "vegetarian" (it concerns 20% of the 16-25). Jennifer Pardoe speaks about a real recognition of the British "mega trend" as many brands like Birdseye or Sainsbury's now list vegan products. David Benzaquen, CEO of the American marketing agency PlantBased Solutions, stated there is an increase in private investments representing millions of dollars in vegan food start-ups.<sup>5</sup>

Recent reports from MINTEL (Global Market Research & Market Insight Agency) highlighted the importance of the health food market and its impressive growth over the last 5 years. For instance, the gluten-free food market is estimated to reach sales of **\$8.8 billion** in 2014, representing an increase of 63% from between 2012 and 2014. MINTEL also revealed sales of **free-from foods** are forecast to grow by **13%** to reach £531 million in 2016, up from an estimated £470 million in 2015.

There is currently a rush towards the health food sector for entrepreneurs, which has now reached a congestion point where **competition** rules it all. In this very competitive industry, big corporations have a size advantage compared to new and more specialised brands. Huge

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<sup>5</sup> Article from Damien Clarkson, « Business and entrepreneurs seize opportunities in rise of veganism », in The Guardian, 28 November 2014.

companies have great assets in a competitive market like a potential for economies of scale<sup>6</sup>, a well-known name as well as financial advantages over a newly created business.

I was able to notice this business rush towards health food while working at Company C. and studying the company's competition. I was really surprised by the number of competitors as and the versatility of the market: new products, new ideas and concepts were launched and offered new options for healthier food.

### 3) An internationalisation of the food industry key trends and competition

Food industry companies are now playing in a globalised world and need to adapt to international competition and the international definition of the health key trends.

The health trend is mainly **consumer-driven** by the growing interest among consumers for healthy meal alternatives and their demand for information about the products. The majority believes in a reduction of additives in food and predicts an increase of natural food free from additives, as well as in a strong increase in ecological and organically grown products.

Mintel Global Food and Drink Analyst, Jenny Zegler, revealed the top food and drink trends set to impact global markets. These will be focusing on:

- **Alternatives** (like new protein sources and potential substitutes to meat, cheese, ...)
- **Natural** and "less processed" food
- **Eco-friendly** options (production, treatment after consumption)
- **Fitness** diets having an impact on physical appearance and sports nutrition
- **Local** and **craft** products with a story
- **E-commerce** (more people are living in urban areas and are looking for convenient ways to buy food)
- Back to **basics** (ancient grains and superfoods)
- **Single-serve** and **on-the-go** portions

Through my experience as a vegan and through my internship at Company C. I would underline the two major international health food key trends as follow:

- The first major trend is linked to **food quality** and is defined by the ability for a company to disclose transparency, environmental impact, durability and origin of the ingredients.
- Then **convenience** is a core element in today's consumption trends: it includes both the development of more convenient and time-saving meal solutions for consumers, but also more convenient distribution channels for consumers (online grocery shopping for instance).

New technologies, food education and research have made the health trend a major international phenomenon allowing many **competitors** to enter the market. Indeed, the internet revolution enables every piece of information to be share in a second, and this works for new studies and reports about food too. Similarly, the **contraction of space and time** in transport has made it easier for a company to export and sell its products worldwide. All these elements have influenced the building of a complex and very competitive landscape of

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<sup>6</sup> In microeconomics, economies of scale are the cost advantages that enterprises obtain due to size, output, or scale of operation, with cost per unit of output generally decreasing with increasing scale as fixed costs are spread out over more units of output.

companies trying to expand their influence and marketshare in the health food industry. This was particularly noticeable when I attended shows and exhibition in the UK during my internship at Company C. like **NOPE** (Natural Organic Products Europe) and **FSDS** (Farm Shop and Deli Show) as many companies from different countries were competing for the same kind of products like vegan cheese (like the Canadian Daiya and the American Follow your Heart companies).

International competition hugely concerns companies specialised in the coconut health food industry. Indeed, Company C. is a British organic food producer in an internationalised and competitive industry, which puts it in competition with others like the American Vita Coco and the British Tiana.

## C) The coconut trend in the food industry

The coconut trend in the food industry was new a decade ago, but now products containing coconuts are everywhere. Through the health trend wave, many companies started to surf on exotic products like coconuts and their benefits.

### 1) Coconuts, from exotic to trendy



The coconut palm tree grows in the tropics and is widely called the “tree of life”. Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu belong to the 17 members Asia and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC), which is an intergovernmental alliance of Asia Pacific coconut producing countries. It represents **90%** of world production of coconuts and exports of coconut products.

India, Indonesia or the Philippines produce **3/4** of the world’s coconuts, and Company C.’s coconuts are from these regions.

The health trend triggered a search for **alternatives to dairies and gluten-based products**, which compelled the food industry to look for a new approach of coconuts. Indeed, coconuts used to be mainly produced for local purposes. For instance the coconut water and milk were used for cooking and drinking directly from fresh coconuts in Asia and Pacific (very used in Asian cuisine). As coconuts are dairy-free and gluten-free new approaches enabled industrials to diversify their use and exploit their benefits.

In the early 2000s the coconut trend arrived in Western countries and step by step new benefits and uses were attributed to coconuts. It went from an inexistent market to a booming one with products we can use daily.

### 2) The COCO-MANIA

People are now more aware of the risks processed-food represents and are more careful about their diet. People demand alternative options like gluten-free, sugar-free, vegetarian or vegan goods. Coconuts perfectly fit in that trend as they are gluten-free, lactose-free and possess many virtues more and more promoted as their popularity grows.

The prime product which started the “cocomania” in the early 2000s was the **coconut water**, but not the usual coconut water you can only enjoy from a fresh green coconut on an exotic beach: it was **bottled** coconut water. Fresh coconut water is a traditional drink for Pacific Islanders and tourists, but it is now a trendy cold-processed packaged drink positioned as a premium priced sports and health drink. The popularity of bottled coconut water boomed and this product became a “**must have**” stimulating consumer’s interest in coconut and its nutritional benefits. In terms of **hydration** value coconut drinks are really efficient, they are a well-known substitute for sport drinks. It is also full of electrolytes, calcium, potassium and magnesium - all perfect elements of a “**hangover cure**”.

Coconut-based products are very diverse and it seems this exotic fruit is a magic ingredient as coconuts are advertised as extremely **nutriment-dense**, high in **lauric acid** (helps boost the immune system) and also **anti-bacterial**, **antimicrobial** and **anti-inflammatory**. Coconuts are now praised as a major health food product you can use daily through a diversity of products: oil, butter, sugar, flour, water, snacks, milk, cream, vinegar, soy-free soya sauce, syrup,...

Coconut-based products are now increasingly recognised for their numerous health benefits and are advertised as one of the trendiest health food products on the market. The popularity of these products and the increasing demand offer many business opportunities.

### 3) The coconut trend and its business opportunities

*“Success attracts competition, and in selected product/service categories, can often lead to a perceived saturated market of too many companies chasing too few customer dollars. In most cases, however, there is still room for innovation and creativity.”* Larry White<sup>7</sup>.

While the “cocomania” started with coconut water as its prime product, the **segmentation** of the coconut market created many opportunities for new businesses to start or for existing ones to broaden their range.

An extensive research carried out by the analysts at Technavio<sup>8</sup> has shown the coconut water market in Europe to grow stupendously of more than **23%**<sup>9</sup> over the forecast period of 2016 to 2020.

Many companies are now fighting for market shares in the coconut-based health food industry. The key vendors in this sector are big companies like Coca-Cola, Green Coco Europe, PepsiCo and Vita Coco (mainly for coconut water). Nevertheless many other companies are specialised in coconut products like Alnatura, Amy & Brian Naturals, CHI coconut water, Coco Yoyo, Freedom Brands, Goya Foods, Happy Coco, INVO Coconut Water, Kulau, Reinland Fruchterzeugnisse GmbH, Rubicon Exotic, Tiana Fairtrade Organics, Tradecons GmbH, Tropical Sun, Unoco, Windmill Organics, World Coconut Trading, and Zumi Natural and of course Company C..

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<sup>7</sup> Larry White is an ISBDC advisor and independent business consultant.

<sup>8</sup> Provider specializing in market research.

<sup>9</sup> At a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)

These companies are playing in a very competitive sector and trying to get their products in the market through different distribution channels like hypermarkets and supermarkets, convenience stores, and specialist retailers. Since Europe has a strong network of supermarkets and hypermarkets with a number of global players such as Carrefour, Tesco, and Metro Group, the majority of packaged coconut products is sold from hypermarkets and supermarkets. However, this mainly concerns huge companies like Coco-Cola and PepsiCo which are already benchmarks in the food and drink industry, it is much harder for younger and smaller companies to make it through.

Company C. Ltd is specialised in coconut-based products and was created at the twilight of the health food trend. It is a start-up-like company evolving in a fiercely competitive and congested industry. With over 11 years of expertise, Company C. developed strategies to adapt to the market and the increase of competition worldwide. It was really interesting for me to learn how globalisation and the internationalisation of competition and opportunities impact business as well as a company's strategies.

## CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR AN INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

Company C. Ltd is a British London-based company. It firstly developed a **market base** in the UK and then expanded to other countries. With the health food trend boom, the globalisation of worldwide economies and the increase of competition in its sector, Company C. had to renew its strategies and apply them to an international market, competition and demand.

### **A) Company C.'s market authority: understanding the company's profile and place on an international market**

Thriving in a competitive industry is a challenge many companies face, but thriving in an international and competitive one is even harder. The food industry is a multi-complex sector evolving through trends the market defines, and adapting to such a versatile and diverse industry is complicated. Nevertheless, it was really fulfilling for me to observe this phenomenon at Company C. and to explore the strategies its team introduced in order to move forward and develop its market authority. The first strategy I pinpointed was that to manage a business and make it evolve in a very competitive and international sector, you have to know the **company**, its **competition** and define its **objectives**.

#### 1) The company's current situation

The food industry offers a very broad market to businesses willing to work internationally. Company C. is targeting a very competitive sector in the food industry: the **coconut-based health food sector**.

As a British company selling in 38 countries worldwide Company C. is already an international business and its market is international (with a strong market base in the UK).

#### Company C.'s market (for distribution):

- Health food stores
- Organic food stores
- Fitness industry (workout, yoga, gym,... centres)
- Alternative diets (vegan, vegetarian) or allergies (gluten intolerants, dairy-intolerants...) specialty stores
- Gourmet food shops
- Deli
- Farm shops
- In Europe and Asia (mainly urban areas)

#### Market trends:

The key trends in the food industry are the food quality and convenience. It means the quality of ingredients, materials and production methods, as well as the simplicity and ease of use, are now core factors in the decision making process of Company C.'s market consumers. I noticed this phenomenon while doing sampling demonstrations for the brand: before trying

our products people were always asking if the products were, vegan, organic, pure, natural... (food quality) and in which stores they were available (convenience).

#### Company C.'s profile:

- Strengths
  - **Availability:** Company C. products can be bought online, on e-market places, and internationally through local distributors.
  - **Food trends:** it offers high quality and innovative products.
  - **Diversity:** the company offers a broad range of 34 products.
  - **Quality:** it is a multiple award winning brand (Great Taste Awards).
  - **Values:** high quality, honest, healthy, natural, constantly improving and innovative.
  
- Weaknesses
  - **Brand awareness:** Company C. is a pretty new brand in the industry.
  - **Diversity:** the company doesn't specialised in one product but offers a broad range (it is harder to be well-known for a lot of products than to specialise in one).
  - **Visibility:** Company C. needs to improve its visibility for people to recognise it (social media, press magazines, TV, advertisement...in marketing)
  - **Online sales:** it needs to increase online sales.
  - **Premium:** its high prices might be problematic for the mass market or other countries.

## 2) Facing international and influential competitors

The health food industry is very competitive and there is a real rivalry among sellers trying to achieve goals like increasing profits, market share and sales volume by playing on elements like price, products, distribution and promotion. Competition in the coconut health food industry is international and challenging for small businesses as it includes **giants** like Vita Coco and Coco Cola, and attracts more and more entrepreneurs every year.

#### The competition's profile:

Company C. specialises in coconut products. Nevertheless, the competition in this food industry niche is fierce and broad.

- Competitors' strengths
  - **Specialisation:** Company C.'s competitors usually specialise and are known for one or two products: Vita Coco for coconut water and Tiana for coconut oil.
  - **SEO:** because they specialise in one product they are well-ranked through SEO and appear in the first pages/images in the Google Search Engine.
  - **Visibility through marketing and advertisement:** these competitors are also easily recognisable through packaging, TV ads, YouTube channels and famous people support (Vita Coco uses famous actresses in its ads for instance).

- **Brand awareness:** they are already known and trusted on the market, they are established and already part of consumer’s habits (recurrent and faithful buyers).
  - **Financial assets:** as established brands they have financial assets and are able to spend money on marketing, advertisement, R&D...
  - **Size:** these competitors are well-settled in the industry and have an access to economies of scale (which enables them to dominate pricing).
- Weaknesses
- **Quality:** Company C.’s competitors are not all organic or free-from, which means they will have trouble adapting to new food trends (for instance Vita Coco contains added sugar).
  - **Specialisation:** as they are specialised in a few products, their market target is thus smaller.
  - **Innovation:** Company C. keeps on innovating, improving its formulas and products whereas other brands are steady.

Having to compete with such companies is not easy and trying to create a monopoly in such a sector is almost impossible. In order to evolve and acquire more marketshare in the coconut health food industry Company C. has to define its objectives towards customers.

### 3) From a niche customer to a mass market objective

I already underlined the growth of health food customers and their influence in re-defining the food culture : few people were buying health food a decade ago and now health food consumers are growing among the population. People now buy healthy food because the label “healthy” means they will consume better products and not because they have dietary requirements (vegan, gluten and lactose intolerants...). Global sales of healthy food products are estimated to reach **\$1 trillion** by 2017, according to Euromonitor. Through health consciousness and environmental warnings, the buying decision process among consumers completely changed from “quantity” with the fast-food culture to “quality” with the health food one.

#### Company C.’s customers and their buying decision:

Health food customers can now be found in the **mass market** distribution channels, but Company C. isn't yet available in supermarkets. Indeed, Company C.’s products are high-quality and premium, which means they are quite **expensive** for the mass market and are mainly found in health food stores.

#### General decision process:

A general decision process for a buyer is as below:



Company C.'s customers have specific motivations and expectations when they buy food like weight loss, healthy results, body improvement and family well-being. For now Company C.'s products belong to an **Extensive Problem Solving** (EPS) category, which means they are new products (not first-need products) and buyers have no previous experience with them. It is a risky decision for the buyer and he/she needs to be convinced to reiterate the purchase.

The company's objective in terms of buying decision is to have its customers to establish a **Routinised Response Behaviour** (RRB) with its products, which means Company C.'s goods would become part of their daily grocery shopping bag and they would trust the company to feed them and their family (extensively Company C. would be THE family brand, the purchase will be perpetuated by the next generation). To achieve this, Company C. has to increase its presence on the market through **more distributors** (specialty ones as well as mass distribution channels) and broaden its range to reach a larger target market.

Company C. wants to reach more potential customers as well as make its current customers recurrent ones in order to secure future sales and increase its marketshare among competitors. Nevertheless, these require to work through different strategies to make Company C. a strong brand on the health food market.

## **B) Creating a strong brand: a core business strategy in an internationally competitive sector**

*“To succeed in business, you must build a brand and never destroy it. One competitive advantage I had when I ventured into manufacturing was my brand “Dangote,” which I diligently built in the course of my trading commodities.” – Aliko Dangote<sup>10</sup>*

Building a strong brand image (1) is hard in a competitive industry, but it enables a business to establish itself for long term relationships with lifetime business partners and customers, which means customers with a Routinised Response Behaviour (RRB). Many factors have to be taken into consideration like the packaging, logo, customer target, price positioning and values of the company. Building a company's image also implies the use of different strategies to increase its visibility and brand awareness (2). Finally, standing out in front of competition is a complicated process and Company C. uses differentiation to do so (3).

### 1) Building Company C.'s image

*“It seems to me that the **key is to stand out** from the very beginning so that you immediately attract members of your target market, get their attention, and then begin developing relationships to hopefully make them “lifetime” customers.” Larry White<sup>11</sup>*

Building a brand image is not easy. Indeed, if a company launches a new concept (like bottled coconut water), it is new on the market and needs to stand out right away. As coconut water became really popular, many other companies **copied** the idea and launched their own brand.

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<sup>10</sup> A businessman from Nigeria considered the richest man in Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Larry White is an ISBDC advisor and independent business consultant.

Usually if the starting company has a recognisable image, people will stick to it and be faithful customers. If the company which created the concept doesn't create a strong brand image, then competitors will overcome it to become the benchmark. It is thus primordial as a brand to be recognised and known through its image, logo, design and values.



In marketing, in order to build long term relationships with customers there are some key factors to consider: these are the “**know**”, “**like**” and “**trust**” factors. Building a brand image is related to the “**know**” factor.

To be a well-known brand it is necessary to understand the target customers, their habits, culture and expectations. This is the importance of the **3C's** (culture, consumers, connections). Company C.'s market target customers were originally in the **UK**, mainly **women** in their **30s**, **active** women with an interest in **health and fitness**, as well as their **family's well-being**. Their current target is more **international** and will vary according to the country they are targeting but the overall consumer definition will be similar to the latter.

Company C.'s price positioning as a maker of **premium goods** is also a core element in terms of brand awareness among its customers. It means high-quality, premium and perfect products, even in terms of packaging.

Having to stand out as a brand among competitors is not easy and requires investing in design and packaging in order to be recognised and well-known. The brand image has to be attractive and stand out on the shelves. That's why **in 2014 for Company C.'s 10th anniversary, the company decided to rebrand the whole range** with a new logo and more recognisable packaging. Of course it is not advisable for an internationally well-known brand to completely change its logo or whole appearance, but huge brands like Coca-Cola made some changes to follow consumer's trends (see beside). Company C. was still in the process of defining its image for the market and has now the means to appeal to its current customer's target (see below).

While working at Company C.'s, we were in the process of getting the products with their new packaging. This **brand image transition** was a huge step for Company C. and was worth the work it required. Indeed, while attending food shows, doing sampling demonstrations, as well as during my daily work, I got the opportunity to get feedbacks from our customers and distributors about the brand's transformation and all were really **positive**. Changing our packaging into a very stylish and premium one was a way to move towards a more international market. Nevertheless, after such a shift we had to make our current customers aware of the change and increase our visibility through different channels.

## 2) Increasing brand awareness and visibility

Rebranding Company C. was one step towards the creation of its image but creating a strong brand on an international market also requires working on **brand awareness** through **PR** (public relations) and **advertisement**.

Our PR manager, is in charge of getting Company C. into as many magazines as possible. As our customer target is mainly women interested in health, we target magazines specialised in health and beauty, food, fitness and family,... subjects related to **women's interest**. Mr. W. is directly in touch with British journalists and nutritionists, and also writes press releases to appeal to journalists so that they have a better idea of the benefits of Company C.'s products. While I was at Company C. I also worked on some PR as I translated the press releases into French and contacted French, Dutch and Spanish magazines to get visibility and increase Company C.'s brand awareness. For instance I got us in **Top Nature Magazine** (May-June 2016 issue - see above), which is mainly distributed at Naturalia, our French distributor.

Moreover, it is nowadays primordial as a brand to focus on **online PR and social media**. Indeed, these are new channels future generations will mainly use as ways to buy and get to now brands. As an accessible brand, Company C. really focuses on its social media and I helped publish daily content on Facebook, Twitter (we have 100,000 followers) and Instagram. I was also in touch with Robyn, our vlogger who is in charge of doing "How to" and "recipe" videos with our products for our YouTube channel. As we expended internationally I got in touch with French vloggers to do videos with our products like recipes (Chef Guillaume Mariais, Karen from Cuisine saine...) and also to do "How to" videos with our products in French (Audrey Redac from ConsumerReport).

Consequently, I worked on **online PR** at Company C. as I had to get Company C. on blogs and YouTube videos, as well as get content and pictures about the brand published on social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Scarlett and I published on our social media, and we got other bloggers to do so by sending them samples of our products to try and review online. I mainly worked on online PR for the UK, France and the Netherlands. Indeed, getting more visibility is really important especially when a brand tries to conquer new markets. In the Netherlands we got people like Simone's Kitchen and in France people like Paris By Vegan to publish articles and videos with our products.

Another way we got Company C. to increase its brand awareness and visibility was by attending many **shows and exhibitions**, in the UK but also abroad. These events are really important as they enabled Company C. to showcase new products, promote launches, meet with customers and also with potential clients, partners and distributors. Food shows are really great networking events for the industry and are marvellous to get business cards and useful contacts.

Besides, Company C. **sponsors events** by giving away samples in exchange of visibility. For instance, we gave products to Crossfit, distributors and yoga events as sponsors. Usually the organisers would give our samples away in goody bags so that potential customers can try our products. These sponsorships give us visibility and are really convenient as they enable us to reach our market target and make them try our products directly.

Finally, another option for a brand to increase its visibility is **advertising**. It is a strategy that works for startup-like structures when the CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost) and CLV (Customer Lifetime Value) make other distributor channels uneconomical. Nevertheless, investing in advertisements and media campaign is very expensive and brands like Company C. have to compete with wealthy competitors.

### 3) Differentiation, a key strategy to establish a brand in the food industry

Company C. is a fast-growing company. In order to compete with direct big competitors like Vita Coco, it decided to specialise in coconut-based products, which means our company is creating new innovative products made with coconuts to broaden its range.

First of all, Company C. offers a range of products defined by three **categories**: eat, drink and cook. This categorisation of products underlines the desire of the brand to broaden its growth prospects as it shows the brand now targets different **sub-industries**. Company C. started with bottled coconut water, which means it targeted the drink industry with a “non-processed” products (its coconut water being only pasteurised and bottled). It now targets “**more processed**” products like snacks, cooking ingredients, condiments and drinks.

Company C. differentiates itself from international competition by innovating in terms of **products and formats**. For instance, Company C. was the first company to introduce coconut oil in 10ml **sachets** on the market. This single-dose format is perfect for a use on-the-go (convenience key trend) as well as for daily oil-pulling<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, Company C.’s formulas for its coconut amino (substitute to soy sauce) and flavoured coconut vinegars (natural, chilli and nutmeg flavours) are unique on the market and shows a desire from the company to offer healthier options to its customers with the guarantee they will have the highest quality products. The brand recently launched its **Detox**, which is a capsule supplement made from coconut oil and chlorella for body detoxification. This innovation shows the brand is looking to extend its market share by targeting the **food supplement market**. This premium and innovative positioning for the brand is a differentiation strategy which enables Company C. to build a strong brand on the market.

Company C.’s ability to re-invent and differentiate itself is a really important strategy. Indeed, offering more products obviously attracts new customers and distributors and increases its potential market share.

Building a strong brand image is really important in order to create a strong market base and then being able to expand it. Internationalising Company C. and selling its products abroad is a great opportunity for the brand to extend its market share and increase its sales and grow, but this process is really complicated and requires a lot of work.

### **C) The internationalisation of a company: opportunities and obstacles**

The internationalisation of a company is an important step full of opportunities, but the process of extending one’s market is very complicated and requires analysis skills. Similarly, selling internationally implies the use of different strategies and tools now available thanks to new technologies (1). Each country having a different culture and specific buying habits, it is thus necessary to specialise and localise business strategies (legal aspects, cultural and linguistic adaptation, competition analysis) (2). Finally, the globalised economy and international competition has made it primordial for a company playing in the international food industry to improve its presence online, namely through SEO (3).

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<sup>12</sup> Oil pulling or oil swishing, in alternative medicine, is a procedure in which the practitioner rinses their mouth with approximately one tablespoon of ordinary cooking oil for 3-20 minutes, and then spits it out. This procedure is typically performed daily.

## 1) Studying an interconnected market: globalisation of the industry and new business strategies

New technologies and the Internet boom have brought many tools for businesses to internationalise their activity.

First of all, when a company wants to extend its business abroad in a specific country it needs to **study the local market** and establish an accurate business plan. For instance, I helped Company C. studying opportunities in Australia and Scandinavia by providing market analysis in which I studied competition, law and cultural habits for these particular areas.

**Brand awareness** is primordial when a company decides to expand internationally. After Company C. found distributors in France, the Netherlands and Spain, I was in charge of contacting **magazines** and **bloggers** there so that they promote our launch in these countries and give us visibility. It is necessary for potential customers to know that we are now available in their country and that they can buy directly from one distributor.

Company C.'s products are also available online on [www.CompanyC.com](http://www.CompanyC.com) and people from all over the world can order them. It also uses online channels to reach international markets, these are international e-marketplaces. **International eMarketPlaces** (IeMP) offer opportunities to sell worldwide and are "a virtual online market where organisations and individuals can adjust as sellers or buyers on the Internet". Working at Company C. Ltd I learnt a lot about IeMP, especially as I attended a webinar on that subject.

### Benefits of IeMP:

- Reach international customers (millions of people worldwide)
- Be where customers are already buying (no efforts to get them on our website – they are already in a shopping mood)
- IeMP are preferred to individual websites in certain countries (more trustworthy in China and India for example)
- Get more visibility in search engines internationally (SEO)
- No need for multilingual or multi-currency options on your own website
- Easier to manage (currencies, sales taxes...)

### Opportunities online:

- The global population is 7 billion people among which **3 billion are online internet users** (potential market)
- In these 3 billion internet users **1.5 billion are e-commerce buyers** and there are **0.5 billion IeMP users worldwide**
- Examples: there are 304 million active Amazon accounts and 162 million active eBay users.
- E-commerce sales have known a **growth of 35% a year** and is still growing quickly (especially in Asia and Oceania)
- Future expectations: Google and Facebook are planning on bringing the Internet to the world, which broadens the potential e-market possibilities of a business

### Why IeMP?

- Recent studies highlight that by 2020 the IeMP will own **40% of the global online retail market**
- 85% of UK online retailers want to list on more IeMP
- IeMP are the dominant seller to buyer e-business channels in Latin America, South Asia, Middle East and Africa
- 85% of the B2C business in China is driven by eMP

### Top global eMP:

- 400 existing IeMP
- The main are: Amazon, eBay, Alibaba, Tmall, Rakuten, Flipkart, Snapdeal, MercaLibre, Xiu.com and taobao.com

### Selling on Amazon:

- 14 existing sites worldwide (5 in the EU)
- 304 million users
- It is the leading IeMP in the USA (4<sup>th</sup> most popular website in the USA and 6<sup>th</sup> globally)
- Different features according to the country site
- Expanding in Latin America (Mexico in 2015)
- Everything is localised (language, currencies, news...)
- Trusted brand to sell internationally (customer service – security – fraud protection – payment...)

### Selling on eBay:

- 27 sites worldwide (expansion in Asia)
- 162 million users
- You can list on one of the 27<sup>th</sup> sites and sell your products worldwide
- Important to create quality titles in buyer's language

Company C. uses international e-marketplaces in order to reach a broader and more international audience. Indeed, IeMPs are a great way to easily start internationalising a brand without having to find local distributors. However, finding **local distributors** is the next step as it roots a brand's establishment in a foreign country.

## 2) An international presence : localised and specialised strategies

Once an international company decides to settle in a new foreign country it needs a **local distributors and structures** to supply its products to local selling points. As a foreign business, local habits and cultures are unknown so it is important to work with people from the country you are trying to settle in. It is primordial to **localise and specialise** one's strategies once you decide to conquer a foreign market.

An international company needs to match its international customers' expectations as well as their cultural habits. Company C. needs to be **adaptable** to European, American and Asian markets and their inhabitants' culture.

In terms of consumers it is important for Company C. to understand the mindset and habits of the market in which it wants to expand and develop a **marketing plan**. For instance, Company C.'s price positioning is premium but expensive food products are unaffordable in

countries like Poland, consequently there is a whole process of **re-thinking how to introduce Company C.**'s products in some markets. To better understand the customer's expectations in another country local surveys are essential. For instance, Company C. often organises sampling demonstrations in London in order to get feedbacks from consumers as well as to position itself compare to competition. Knowing your final customers is a major asset in this industry as it enables a company to better adapt to the market trend fluctuations, and this is even more important when your customers are international.

Culturally speaking, if a company wants to settle in a new country it needs to re-adapt its all profile to the new market. For instance, **packaging** must be translated in the local language. As Company C.'s company structure includes an international team speaking **various languages** (French, English, German, Spanish, Indian dialects...) it helps in the understanding of international markets as well as in terms of communication with foreign business partners. I had the opportunity to use my skills in French and German during my internship in order to communicate with potential distributors. In terms of linguistic adaptation I had the opportunity to translate a lot of documents including press releases which enabled me to then contact local magazines in France. I also worked on PR and marketing : my missions implied finding local and native speakers able to record **"how to" and recipe videos** in their native language in order for us to then publish the videos on our Youtube channel. I was in touch with Audrey Redac from Consumer Reporter and hired her to record "how to" and recipe videos in French as our strategy was to expand our influence on the French market. She really did a great job and I liked the independence and management of this project at Company C. as I was involved from the beginning to the end.

The process of entering a new market also includes a whole **legal adaptation**. Indeed, selling food products abroad requires certificates and authorisations which vary from one country to another. There were a lots of administrative work when Company C. started to sell in Japan and Turkey for instance as food legislation is really strict, and also a lot of forms to fill when dealing with new distributors abroad.

Finally, a core strategy in adapting one's company to a new international market is to use **business connections**. Company C. is working with **UKTI** (UK Trade & Investment) which is a UK Government department working with businesses based in the UK to assist their success in international markets. UKTI is really helpful as it organises meetings with potential distributors abroad (like the one I attended with a Singaporean distributor), as well as webinars (like one I attended on French retail) and seminars for its members. This organisation also promotes its members abroad by creating directories with companies's profile for other countries (I helped write Company C.'s profile description for a directory for Switzerland, see below). Company C. also works with **Chambers of Commerce** in order to settle in foreign countries. For instance, we worked with the British-Polish Chamber of Commerce while I was at Company C. and they promoted us during exhibitions, in their directory (see below) and organised a trip in Warsaw for Mr. T. and Mrs. S. to meet with potential business partners in Poland.

Through my experience at Company C. I really learnt the importance of localised and specialised strategies. It is a complicated and long process as it involves research, negotiation, partnerships, as well as adaptation to a completely new market and customer target. Nevertheless I found this process really interesting as it is challenging and enables the brand to perfect itself and conquer new markets. When a company decides to enter an international market, it has to face local competitors which is why performing local market analysis is so

important. However, facing international competitors is also an online process as e-commerce is growing and the Internet plays a huge role in terms of consumer behaviour. That's why SEO is now a key strategy for businesses.

### 3) Online competition : SEO strategies to compete in an international market

**SEO** stands for Search Engine Optimization and can be defined as the art of positioning a website, a web page or application in the first natural results of search engines, especially Google. It is an incredible online tool which helps with brand awareness and the increase of online sales. Doing SEO implies publishing accurate, frequent and quality content online.

It is a great strategy for small businesses to compete with giants in their industry. It implies improving one's **ranking online** so that a brand can reach more customers and have more visibility. It's a great process to expand internationally as the Internet has no borders. Everybody is now competing for a handful of positions at the top of search-engine results pages and SEO is a daily work I had the opportunity to do at Company C. (through Moz as I mentioned earlier).

Improving our SEO is also one of the reasons which made us create a **new website** for Company C.. Indeed, we worked on a new template for [www.Company C..com](http://www.Company C..com) to solve some issues and increase our SEO opportunities. For instance we created a **forum** and a **news page** to add content and links. Similarly, one strategy for out-thinking competition is to use more **long tail keywords** and that's why we decided to launch a forum on our new website (as when people will be asking questions about coconut products it will increase our SEO).



Indeed, being descriptive with keywords in content and engaging in a **long-tail keyword strategy** is the key when the online competition is saturated. Using long-tail keywords means a maximum ranking potential with less popular keywords like “how to use coconut flour for a gluten free recipe” instead of only “coconut flour”. It is a great way to win over competitors which only use common keywords.

**Social media** also plays a huge role in SEO and that's why it's important for us to publish content with keywords, add links and hashtags, and share publications about Company C.. Indeed, links, comments, likes, views and the numbers of subscribers matters when Google's algorithms rank websites on their search engine.

On the new website I also worked on improving our SEO, which implied creating keywords “**tags**” on each website page, as well as “**categories**” and also creating “**alt**” for each media content (alt is the name of a picture which will appear when clicking on it, see on the picture beside). Similarly, for each page when building a website and managing it, it is possible to add **SEO titles, SEO descriptions and SEO keywords**. Selecting all the keywords and adding them on each page was really interesting as I could observe the evolution of our ranking after working on SEO (though Moz rank optimisation and rank grader tools). In order to get a better ranking, I also re-wrote our **products descriptions** using more key words and

accurate definitions. Also, I worked on links optimisation by **inter-linking pages** (for instance on the recipes pages I hyperlinked products) and adding some links from our YouTube channel (I linked each product page to its “How to” video on our channel).

I have emphasised some strategies Company C. uses to develop its marketshare internationally. The first step is to understand one’s market authority in its industry, which means its positioning compared to competition and customers. It is then central to create a strong brand through the company’s image, brand awareness and ability to differentiate itself from competition. Finally, a major strategy to internationalise a business in a competitive industry is to know how to use new technologies and tools like international e-marketplaces and SEO, as well as being able to adapt to each market’s specifics by specialising and localising business strategies. In this chapter we looked at Company C.’s current strategies as an international business. It is now necessary to have a look at the company’s future objectives and development prospects in the health food industry (Chapter 3).

## **CHAPTER 3: COMPANY C.'S FUTURE AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS**

When we think about the future, we think about progress. Progress appears in one of two forms: **horizontal progress** (or extensive progress, from 1 to  $n$ ), meaning copying things that already work; and **vertical progress** (or intensive progress, from 0 to 1), meaning doing new things. There are thus two main options that appear for a company wishing to evolve: **globalisation and/or technology**<sup>13</sup>.

In the business world **extensive progress** is the most noticeable. For instance, bottled coconut water got popular on the food market in the early 2000s and a few companies were sharing the market at the beginning. Nowadays there are dozens of companies trying to make their way in the coconut field. Extensive progress is a pretty easy path to take for a company as the success of an idea has already been proven whereas **intensive progress** is more risky, implies a new idea and all the R&D costs linked to its development. Vertical progress is much more dangerous than horizontal but it also means a company can be the precursor of a new product on a market and thus have a **monopoly** on it for a certain amount of time; that's why many businesses like Company C. keep on innovating.

The future of a company is obviously something no one can predict. Nevertheless, through my experience at Company C. I was able to understand the company's objectives and development prospects for the next few years. This includes innovation (A), globalisation (B) as well as adaptation to new market opportunities and context (C).

### **A) Company C.'s intensive progress strategy: innovation is the key**

I would like to underline that through my experience at Company C. I can affirm that the company's desire to innovate is really intense. Innovating and creating new products made from coconuts and for a healthier lifestyle is Company C.'s objective. They are the coconut experts, offer innovative products in their range and will keep re-inventing coconuts through new products (1). Nevertheless, every industry or sector is led by trends, and so is the health food industry. Consequently, Company C.'s new innovations will have to fit in the market new trends and its customers's expectations (2). Finally, Company C. will have to innovate in terms of strategies to match an international market and the contraction of time and space in human goods trade (3).

#### 1) Launching new products on the market

Company C. was a precursor as it was the first company selling bottled coconut water in the UK. Step by step it had to expand to a broader market and offer customers new products in order to stay competitive.

Company C. is a really innovative company always looking for ways to improve and re-invent itself. For instance, while I was working for the company, we launched a range of **new products** like the coconut amino, Coco detox (food supplement), the coconut milk range, and the refill packs for the chips, flour, sugar and grated coconut, which is a lot of novelty for a company in barely 6 months.

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<sup>13</sup> Peter THIEL, *Zero to One*, 2014

Company C.'s managers know that it's important to keep on innovating if you want a company to succeed and keep up with a fast growing industry like the "free-from" market. Consequently, Company C. really invests in **R&D** and develops new products to conquer the market and be precursor in new sectors.

That's why Company C.'s objectives include adding new products to its range and making them more accessible, which means Company C. will have to evolve from a health and specialty stores brand to a **mass market** one. This implies offering customers more "**processed**" food products made from coconuts while keeping the high-quality and values of the company intact.

I am eager to see Company C. extend its range of coconut-based products as I know they will keep their promise and will always offer their customers the best of the coconuts even when they start conquering mass market channels like **supermarkets** with more "**globally appealing**" products like pop-corn made in coconut oil,vegan chocolate spreading, coconut bacon or flavoured cooking cubes.

I also think Company C. will still have to keep an eye on the upcoming food key trends while creating new products or re-inventing their formulas, as these ones will have a large impact on demand in the next few years.

## 2) Follow the new market key trends

Food industry companies now evolve in a globalised world and need to adapt to the international definition of its key trends. These are consumer-driven by their interest for healthy meal alternatives and information about the products. Company C. will thus have to keep up with the upcoming **health food trends**.

Company C. should consequently develop more **alternatives**, for instance some protein substitutes for meat or vegan cheese ("sheese") made with coconut oil as well as dairy-free yogurts. Also, the company should keep on defending its **values** like offering organic and natural products as these are becoming major criteria in the consumers decision process.

Furthermore, Company C. should keep on emphasising that their products perfectly match **fitness diets and sports nutrition**, as more and more people are paying attention to their diet and the media industry really advertises the importance of being fit.

Finally, Company C. will have to adapt to a more **mobile** (travel being more common), **urban** and **single people market** (divorce rates being on the rise, as well as life expectancy, which means people are more likely to live alone). This means creating new products formats like **single-serve and on-the-go portions** will enable companies like Company C. to differentiate themselves and offer products more adapted to our society evolution. Besides, new technologies have changed the way people consume goods nowadays and I think it is important for a company like Company C. to adapt to its customers new expectations and consumption behaviour.

### 3) Developing strategies with newly available technologies

Global population keeps on growing fast and urban areas are expanding, which means **e-commerce** is going to grow as people will be looking for more convenient ways to buy food. That's why Company C. should keep on working with international e-marketplaces (**IeMP**) and try to be distributed in new ones. Even if these distribution channels are international every country has its own e-commerce brand and I think it is important for Company C. to reach as many consumers as possible and thus to be listed on these platforms.

Similarly, Company C. will have to develop its ways to reach new customers when exporting, and that includes focusing on the **digital economy and online buying channels**. Indeed, it is crucial for a brand to be adapted to the web's opportunities and be able to be reached through **different devices** (mobile phones, tablets, laptops...). Small businesses with a strong web presence are proving to grow two times faster than the ones which don't and they realise 50% more sales.

It is important to understand how search engines are receptive to customer searches and to exploit the data collected to get information about what, how, where, when... products are purchased online. Google has recently launched "**Google Garage**" to help businesses exploit the opportunities the web offers through free **webinars** and **online trainings**. "Google My Business" is a great tool to help businesses manage their presence on Google as it enables them to have a look at audience view, engagement response, visibility and Google trends emphasises the existing insights on how people search for products and what keywords to use. I had the opportunity to attend some of Goggle's webinar during my internship at Company C. and learnt a lot about the web opportunities for businesses.

Google is the industry standard but other search engines like **Bing** are used, and need to be understood and considered by companies which want to increase their influence internationally. Bing is available in 35 countries, represents 621 million searches worldwide, with 12 languages supported and 15 billion searches worldwide monthly. In Europe, Bing is used by 18.1% of internet buyers, which represents 30 million UK searchers on Bing (45% UK internet users use Bing every month). It is used by 50% of internet users in the US, which is a real market opportunity for Company C. which hasn't reached the American market yet. The growth in Bing devices penetration for Microsoft through Windows 10 (+300 million devices running with Windows 10, 90% Microsoft Edge users retain Bing as default search engine) and its power index (average internet buyers) shows that they are more online spendings on Bing than on Google.

Finally, Company C.'s website is suitable for mobile use but through time it would be great to create a **mobile application** for the brand (though a game, a forum platform, a buying app). Mobile devices are now a key to the buyers decision journey. The growth of mobile searches represents 3 billion smartphones users in 2015 with people checking their phone more than 150 times a day. Also, 50% of searches are now on mobiles or tablets and 70% of buying conversions are processed within 5h on smartphones whereas it represents 7 days on computers.

To sum up, I think Company C.'s intensive progress development should include the addition of new products fitting the food industry's new key trends to its range and including the appropriate new technologies customers are now incorporating in their buying decision

process. In the view to expanding its marketshare and market target, I think Company C. will also have to strengthen its influence in the food industry by conquering new markets and territories (B).

## **B) Evolving in the food industry: globalise and expand abroad**

A brand evolving in a complex industry has to avoid stagnation and constantly improve itself in order to stand out and overcome its competitors. This is not easy and requires an interest for new strategies and innovation that will make a company take on opportunities and penetrate new markets. **Globalisation** could be considered as extensive progress but I understand it as the **natural prolongation of intensive progress**. Indeed, expanding Company C.'s market authority would just mean completing its intensive progress by offering innovative products to as many customers as possible, including international customers. Consequently, Company C. should keep on developing its grip on already penetrated markets in the first place in order to reinforce its base before expanding to unknown territories (1). Then it should find ways to penetrate new markets (2) before scaling to adjacent market in order to conquer a bigger share of the food industry (3).

### 1) Developing Company C.'s presence in already penetrated markets

The perfect target for a startup-like company is to begin with a small group of people concentrated together and served by few competitors. This enables a company to establish an almost-monopoly on a very small market. After settling a foothold in a country, it is time to expand in order to increase one's marketshare and opportunities. This is what happened with Company C. as it first created a **base in London and the UK in health stores** and then expanded to **Europe, the Middle-East and Asia**.

Company C. should carry on developing its presence on already penetrated markets like its British base, Europe (including Eastern Europe) and Asia before expanding to new countries like America. This implies to keep on finding **new distributors, business partners and customers**. During my internship I had the opportunity to observe the long and complex process of **increasing sales** and looking for **new distributors**. This procedure includes getting in touch with potential business partners (distributors, shops, outlets, deli, farm shops...) though different ways (business cards, exhibitions, online research...) and then introducing our products (brochure, samples, pricing...) to finally convince them to list our products in their structure (through business meetings usually).

I think it is important for Company C. to develop its presence in Europe and through more **mass market channels**. For instance, it would be really great for Company C. to be sold in supermarkets in France and all over Europe in the first place. Nevertheless, I think the company will have to adapt its premium products to these distribution channels in terms of **pricing and formats**. Company C. already started this process by offering **refill-packs** for its flour, sugar and chips instead of tins (these are more expensive). I think the company should keep on creating **cheaper formats** to be distributed in supermarkets as well as in countries with a lower buying capacity (like Eastern Europe). This would help the company strengthen its brand awareness in already penetrated markets as well as enable it to consider expansion in other countries.

## 2) Expanding the brand in new countries

Once a brand is well-established in surrounded countries and has a strong customer base, it is time to expand to other markets. Company C. created a strong base in the UK and is mainly selling to Europe and Asia, which means it still has expansion prospects on the American market (North and South) as well as Oceania. As I already mentioned, it will be important for Company C. to find **mass market distributors** in the near future, as these are really big consumption channels. Consequently, the brand is looking for **international distributors and chains** to list there products like Spar and Carrefour for instance. I also think the brand should look to expand to other potential market targets in other countries and continents.

While I was at Company C., the brand found a distributor in **Spain** (Mercontrol) and launched its products there. It was really interesting for me to have a look at the process of expanding one's influence in Southern Europe. I got to promote our launch there through PR work ([https://www.alimarket.es/noticia/215303/Company\\_C.-desembarca-en-espana-de-la-mano-de-mercontrol](https://www.alimarket.es/noticia/215303/Company_C.-desembarca-en-espana-de-la-mano-de-mercontrol)) in order to get our presence notified by local media.

The world's largest market for organic products is the **United States**. Nevertheless, penetrated the US market isn't easy as it's a very complex country and import/export rules are very tricky. Also, the US is the HQ of Company C.'s fiercest competitors including Vita Coco, Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Company C. will have to **differentiate** itself from these huge corporations in order to make its place in the US. During my internship, we looked at different ways to enter the US market, namely through vitacost.com, which is an American online discount store for healthy products. This website would give us a foothold on the American market, which would be a great opportunity for us to start on this continent. Similarly, we got contacted by **T-K-Maxx US** (or T-J-Maxx), which is an American department store chain providing discounted products.

Similarly, Company C. is looking to conquer **Asian markets** as these represent growing population and economies. At the beginning of my internship I attended a meeting with a Singaporean distributor offering to distribute our products in Asia. Following this meeting, we sent samples and I hope a business partnership will soon be concluded for Company C. to expand its influence and marketshare in Asia.

Nevertheless, establishing a brand in new markets implies overcoming many difficulties. Company C. needs to think about **market barriers** for each new opportunity like the weather, cultural habits, consumer expectations, consumer target presence, distributors, shelf life, costs of transport, standards of living, competition... Indeed, the penetration of new markets is hard and geographical studies are needed to localised Company C.'s strategy. For instance, when the brand found a distributor in Spain we had to work on our company's presentation in Spanish, look for translators for our marketing material, find local media and bloggers to promote us locally.

Company C. will also have to study **local laws** and obtain **certifications** for import/export purposes. Indeed, when the brand got distributed in Turkey for example, a lot of certificates were needed. Company C. is also looking to export in Australia in the near future (I did a market analysis on Australian opportunities). It is a market where import/export regulations

are really strict as the Australian government has regulations concerning the importation of goods on its territory. Each goods importation necessitates import permits, quarantine permits and treatments apply to specific categories and types of imported goods.

### 3) Scale to adjacent markets

The food industry, and more precisely the health food industry, offers many niche opportunities to businesses. To grow, a company has to scale to adjacent markets in this sector. It obviously implies conquering new territories, but also means a company can re-direct its market target towards **new markets prospects**. Scaling to adjacent markets means selling to non-customers and offering a wider range of products in different sectors.

I already emphasised the importance of adapting Company C.'s products to a more **mass-market distribution**. I think Company C. should also scale to the **healthy cosmetics** sector as it is part of the health trend and broadly concerns coconuts. Company C. already started targeting this market with its newly launched Coco Detox food supplement (for body detoxification) and 10ml Coconut Oil Sachet (for oil-pulling). Nevertheless, I think it would be great for the company to create a new "**cosmetic range**" of healthy beauty products made from coconuts like lip balm, shampoo, hair conditioner, skin cream and tooth paste, as coconuts have many uses in this sector.

Moreover, while at Company C. Mr. T. put me in charge of a "**bulk purchase**" project (buying in large quantities) and I did a business plan to study competition and have a look at our options. Bulk purchase for coconut products is a really great way to scale Company C.'s activity to adjacent markets as it means selling our products in industrial quantities to supply other companies or the restaurant industry. Doing a bulk market scan of competition and pricing, studying the different packaging options and thinking about a website structure for the business was really interesting and gave me the opportunity to work on a project on my own. I think Company C. should definitely launch itself in this sector as it is full of great opportunities and development prospects.

Consequently, I think Company C.'s upcoming development should include strengthening its position and brand awareness in already penetrated markets. Also, the brand should work on entering new markets in its influence zone (Europe and Asia) as well as in unknown regions like America and Oceania. Finally, I think Company C. should scale to adjacent markets in order to supply the growing demand for coconut products in different markets (cosmetics) and quantities (bulk). As a growing company, Company C. will also have to adapt to the changes that will impact the health food market in the upcoming years, and seize arising opportunities (C).

## **C) Seizing new opportunities: Company C.'s adaptation to growth and market changes**

Adapting food systems to global changes is a key in the health food industry. It is thus crucial for a company specialised in this sector to be adaptable to new challenges. The environment and the food industry are intrinsically linked for obvious reasons (production of goods). People are getting more and more environment-conscious and look for more environment-friendly ways to consume. This is a change any business in the food industry

will have to take into consideration in terms of development (1). Company C.'s fast growth will also have to do with expanding its domain of expertise thanks to new team assets in sales and marketing (2). Finally, as the company's influence and marketshare will increase it will be necessary to increase its production capacity to supply a growing demand (3).

### 1) New environmental challenges: producing in a sustainable way

The **environment** is a key factor in the food market dynamics and is now a crucial selling-argument. As a food industry company, Company C. has to keep up with the market shifts and key trends. I think it is important to cultivate a brand image that matches people's expectations in terms of honesty and values. Fortunately, coconut is a sustainable crop and is not intensively farmed. Every part of the coconut is also used including the shell for water filtration machines.

Company C. already emphasised its environment-friendliness by **recycling coconut water** from mature coconuts. Indeed, some mature coconuts are only used for their meat and the water was wasted in the process. Consequently, Mr. T. thought of a way to use this coconut water by producing **coconut vinegar**. Indeed, the coconut water from matured coconuts is now aged and fermented, and it produces 0Kcal coconut vinegar perfect for salad dressings and now sold as a condiment in the brand's range. Similarly, a lot of Company C.'s products are sold in **glass jars** (coconut oil, nectar, butter) or **metallic tins** (coconut flour, sugar, chips), which means people are able to re-use the container after using the product.

Moreover, I think Company C. will have to focus more and more on environment-friendly options for the production of its products as well as their treatment after use. It would be great for the company to **recycle the leftover of the coconuts** they use to make the packaging of their products. Also, it would be a major asset in front of competition to sell 100% coconut made products, "**from the content to the container**".

I think Company C. can still find ways to be more cost-effective and environment-friendly through new innovations like using **biodegradable plastic bottles** and using as much as possible all the resources coconuts can provide. For instance, Company C. could start by recycling the shell of the coconuts by creating bags in coconut skin they could sell online and give the profits to an eco-friendly organisation.

### 2) Investing in sales and marketing for future developments

As the company grows, a need to increase the size of the team arises. It appears Company C. will soon have to invest in **sales and marketing** as these are core elements of a growing business. During my internship I published some **job offers** for graduates and undergraduates for marketing and accounting positions. Hiring new people in marketing, sales and accounting would enable Company C. to increase its growth capacity and efficiency.

Indeed, as Company C. is now distributed in more and more countries with each having its cultural criteria, pricing, promotion schedules and so on, I think having a **specialised marketing plan** for development abroad would be a real asset in front of competition. Using marketing would be a great way to increase sales as well, as it means a product would

encourage users to promote the product itself through their network and then activate a chain reaction (especially in families, and from one generation to another). Similarly, incorporating more marketing forecast and structure in the company would enable Company C. to seize every new opportunity on the market and take the most of it to increase its growth.

Having new staff members in charge of marketing (planning promotion, advertisement, seasonality...) and more salespersons, as well as creating new **partnerships** with other organisations like Thrivo, is the next step in Company C.'s development I think as it would promote the brand through different channels, increase brand awareness and provide the company with more opportunities to **convert investment into sales**.

Having a well-prepared team will be necessary for Company C.'s development in the very near future. Indeed, the brand will appear on a 10-15min spot **TV show on the BBC** between July and September 2016. The whole event being under a confidentiality contract, I am not allowed to name the TV show this opportunity concerns, but it will surely offer Company C. a lot of visibility, brand awareness, sales as well as investments opportunities.

### 3) Increasing business production capacity for future growth

Managing production capacities in a view to developing a health food industry business is crucial. Indeed, planning for the future and its trends implies questioning what the world will look like in 10 to 20 years from now and will the business still fit in, especially in terms of food trends. It seems the coconut trend is here to stay and grow as our director Jabob Thundil underlined (<https://youtu.be/GVj5MhMfZS0>). Consequently, Company C. has to prepare for its development and **structure its supply capacity** according to demand.

**Import and export** have to be managed according to production capacities and demand in order for Company C. to avoid being **out of stock** or having to deal with **outdated and thus unsalable products**. Production capacity is increased either to meet an actual increase in customer demand or an anticipated increase in customer demand, which means **forecasting immediate and future demand** will have to be part of the company's daily analysis work.

As Company C. does not own the factories it uses to produce its goods (it uses outsources), I think it might be necessary to consider **investing in more efficient and malleable production methods** (using the existing equipment for more time by adding shifts or overtime, investing in new and more effective equipment...). During my internship I looked for more efficient facilities to pack our coconut flour, chips and sugar in a gluten-free environment as the currently used companies could not keep up with production.

Improving production operations and following a cost-efficient production plan is necessary when a company is growing as fast as Company C.. The company will have to forecast market expectations, work on inventory control as well as the availability of equipment and human resources (labour), standardise steps and time, and the risk factors, to be able to supply a growing demand.

I really think managing stock and production capacity will be a necessary element to handle at Company C. in the near future as demand will certainly arise and it is important to prepare for it.

## CONCLUSION

This adventure in the health food industry was really fulfilling in terms of experience, knowledge and self-development. It enabled me to project myself and I really discovered an environment in which I hope to work in the future. I feel this experience was a real confirmation of my desire to work in this sector as an entrepreneur.

I've learnt that managing a business is not easy and making it grow is really complicated but passionating as you build something you can be proud of and take part in every step of your business's growth. I have also been able to improve my skills in many fields including marketing, market analysis, communication, PR, IT, accounting and management.

This 6-month internship was also a great opportunity for me to study the health food industry's new trends and shifts. I discovered a lot about this sector, its complexity and competitiveness, as well as its many opportunities.

As an international company, Company C. Ltd also gave me the great opportunity to study the international strategies it uses to conquer a globalised market. It emphasised the importance of brand awareness, localised strategies and the use of new technologies to be able to expand its influence abroad.

Moreover, being part of a fast-growing structure also taught me that planing for future developments and adapting to changes is crucial. Company C. really highlighted the importance of innovation as well as expansion and adaptation to new markets, which is a lesson I shall remember for my future career. During my internship I was offered to join the company after I finish my studies at Sciences Po Toulouse. I felt really at home with my colleagues and loved the opportunities I was given, that's why I think this experience was a milestone how I know picture my career.

Finally, I feel very lucky I had the chance to work in the UK and know that this might be more complicated in the near future as on Thursday, June 23rd the British people decided to vote leave to an EU referendum. The Brexit will definitely change many things for people who wish to have an anglo-saxon work experience abroad, especially for student who will probably not get Erasmus opportunities and help.

This experience has been an excellent and rewarding adventure in the UK. I still have a couple weeks before the end of my internship and will make sure to enjoy the most of it. I would like once again to thank all the individuals who contributed to the success of my internship at Company C. Ltd as it has given me new insights and motivation to pursue a career in the health food industry abroad.