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Abstract

The Finnish design industry has not been the target of much academic research. Research has been conducted mostly from an artistic rather than a business perspective. The target of this research paper is to fill some of this research gap by concentrating on Finnish design-intensive companies. This research paper answers the question: how internationalized are Finnish design intensive companies? Their internationalization stages have been compared to Luostarinen's POM posture.

Data from the FIBO database was screened according to Standard Industry Classifications to find design oriented companies. After this initial quantitative screening, companies were rescreened qualitatively, seeking to expunge companies, which did not fit the profile. Source material came from the Finland International Business Operations Database (FIBO), which contains the 1997 export strategies of 390 companies representing 46% of total Finnish exports. Data of their internationalization has been collected according to Luostarinen's (1979) POM posture. Other important sources for this research paper were: Johanson – Wiedersheim-Paul (1975), Johanson - Vahlne (1990), Johanson - Vahlne (1977), Gabrielsson (1999) and Salimäki (1996). These authors have all contributed to internationalization theory formulation.

Results indicated that Finnish design-intensive companies' export strategies divide into 3 clear categories: beginners, intermediates and advanced. The total number of examined companies was 44. The majority of companies were in the very early stages of internationalization. The beginner group, which either had no or only a rudimentary internationalization strategy accounted for 57% of the design population. Their exports were very sporadic and exports were simply goods, indicating a very rudimentary export pattern.

The intermediate group had developed a more complex export strategy than the beginners. This indicates that their internationalization strategy is further developed to include, not only goods, but systems as well. The intermediate group accounted for 30% of the entire design population. The final group was the most experienced in internationalization and was therefore labeled the advanced group. This group utilized a combination of goods, services and systems product strategies indicating a very sophisticated level of exports. This group accounted for 14% of the population. The Finnish design industry is only in the early phases of internationalization. Design companies deviated from the mainstream POM pattern; companies skip the direct investment marketing operation systems. They move directly from exports of goods to production abroad. This can be explained by high Finnish labor costs and the labor intensity of the design industry.

Key words	Muotoiluteollisuus, muotoilu, design, internationalization, kansainvälistyminen, globalization, FIBO
Further information	