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Author(s)	Suvi Lintusalo	Student number	
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Supervisor(s)	D.Sc. (Econ.) Birgitta Sandberg, M.Sc. (Econ.) Eriikka Paavilainen		

Abstract

Corporate responsibility is the voluntary commitment by companies to aim at sustainable development. How the three dimensions of corporate responsibility (economical, ecological, and social) are weighed in companies depends on several factors. The incentives to implement responsibility can be internal or external. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of corporate responsibility in Finnish design clothing sector. The sub problems were as follows: "What are the special characteristics of Finnish design clothing sector?" "What are the corporate incentives for responsible behaviour?" and "How to turn corporate responsibility into a strategic competence?" Research was done by constructing two sets of interviews, first with the experts of the industry, and then interviewing the representatives of case companies. Design clothing sector was defined as sector producing clothing with high quality and unique characteristics, which can be mass-produced or not. The special characteristics of Finnish design clothing sector were the small size and consumers' interest in practicality of clothing. It was also stated that Finnish design clothing companies are pioneering in responsibility issues to some extent when compared to foreign companies.

The corporate internal incentives for responsibility in case companies ascended from the ethics of the entrepreneurs and external incentives were created from the globalisation and overall changes in the business environment. In order to gain strategic competitive advantages from responsibility, responsibility has to be in the very core of business idea and thoroughly implemented to all areas of business. The values set direction for corporate strategy and operational actions, and these values need to be communicated clearly and transparently. In the case companies the devotion to create sustainable business was embedded already in the corporate strategy.

What still lacks is well built co-operation system among companies, governments, and the civil society. This tri-party co-operation needs extensive rethinking of the whole business as well as societal system, but could provide prerequisites for sustainable development.

Key words	Corporate responsibility, design clothing sector
Further information	