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Abstract

Previously, research on global brands has focused more on consumer brands than business to business brands. Also, it has been suggested that the implementation of a global brand strategy to local markets has been overlooked in the field of marketing research. This research aims at describing the local brand strategy implementation process of global corporate credit card brands. In order to be able to describe the brand strategy implementation process of global brands, the research problem was furthered into three subobjectives:

1. To describe the brand strategy formulation process in the context of global brands.
2. To describe the brand strategy implementation process, and analyse how the strategic plans are executed into an operational reality.
3. To describe how the companies operating in the Finnish corporate credit card market have adapted their global brand strategies.

The theoretical background for this research introduces global brands, global strategies and global brand strategies and their interrelated nature, as well as motivations for choosing to pursue them. Also, the issue of global standardisations versus local adaptations is studied, and the concept glocal branding is discussed. The empirical part consists of two case studies. The case study approach was chosen as the methodological approach, as it can be argued to provide both a thorough understanding of the local brand strategy implementation process, and brand-specific information. The research was conducted through interviews, for which the questions were derived from the theoretical framework for this thesis. In addition, secondary data, mainly statistics to support the study as background material, were collected from the Internet.

The research findings indicate, that in a very global field, such as the corporate credit card market, where both the biggest customers and competing brands are globally operating companies, it is possible to conduct the business almost entirely locally and have most of the brand strategy and its implementation adapted according to local market insight, as well as have a truly global strategy and standardise almost everything in relation to the strategy and its implementation.

The brand strategies are based on the business strategies, and the implementation process consists of decisions for product and service design, communications, brand identifiers and pricing. Continuous brand building is done by both case brands in order to support the brand image and positioning. Simultaneously, as part of the whole process, internal consideration is applied, as this relates to decisions on how to manage the brands, by whom and where from, as well as how to motivate and commit the staff to the strategy. Also, adaptations as well as standardisations are decided on, with the intent of meeting the overall strategic goals as efficiently as possible. In conclusion, the decisions on adaptations and standardisations should be seen as a continuum, not as an either-or decision. On this continuum, on the Finnish market, the two case brands lie on opposing ends.

Perhaps the most important outcome of this research is that a global brand can in fact not have consistency across all the markets it operates in, as the Business Eurocard case shows. It is possible to implement a global brand for just one market. However, it seems, as the American Express case shows, that it is more efficient, easy and perhaps cost-effective, to operate under a truly global brand strategy, where there is consistency in the brand image as well as the long-term strategic objectives in every market.

Key words	global brand, brand strategy, brand strategy implementation, brand management
Further information	

