

Marketing Strategies for Global Expansion in the ICT Field

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Abstract

This study examines the marketing strategies of ICT companies as they globalise. Two major globalisation paths are distinguished: born globals and globalising internationals. These two globalisation paths are contrasted with traditional internationalisers. The paper describes the characteristics of these approaches and outlines a framework for understanding marketing strategies in the globalisation process. It further elaborates on four important dimensions, namely the uniqueness of the marketing proposition, the scope of the marketing strategies, and the standardisation across countries. The study develops propositions related to marketing strategies during the globalisation process and these are examined in an empirical study of Finnish and Swedish ICT companies. The empirical results show that the external globalisation pressure influences the selected globalisation approach. Moreover, globalisation approach and stage have an impact on the standardisation of the marketing offering. The study also finds that performance drivers differ based on the selected globalisation approach. Important implications for both academicians and practitioners in the international marketing field are drawn.

1. Introduction

In the information and communication technology (ICT) industry, the pressure to globalise business is great. The globalisation potential of these companies is extremely high. All major globalisation drivers - be they changes in macro environment, industry globalisation or internal company drivers related to efficiency - indicate only two options: globalise or die. Both huge benefits and risks are involved. (Yip, 1992, pp. 15-18) The internationalisation process of companies has been widely studied (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; Luostarinen, 1979). The prevailing knowledge on internationalisation as a process focuses on firms in the early phases of internationalisation (Melin, 1992, p. 113). Research has also been focused on both multinationals and on companies that are already global. However, there has been little research that would help us understand the globalisation process holistically and identify the different global approaches a company can take.

In the ICT field, the importance of an effective marketing strategy is especially important. We state the research problem as follows: How can ICT companies from small and open economies meet the huge globalisation challenge of developing products and marketing them for global markets? After the research problem has been defined, the research questions may be formulated as a partial solution to the research problem as follows: (1) What are the differences in the globalisation processes of ICT companies? (2) What are the global marketing strategy alternatives of the ICT companies? (3) What factors influence the marketing strategies of these companies and how?

The study examines the current literature and develops a framework and propositions with an interesting group of companies in mind that have successfully globalised their operations: the ICT companies originating from small and open economies (SMOPEC). The propositions are empirically tested in two such countries: Finland and Sweden. The ICT companies are typically telecommunications network, mobile phone, personal computer, component or software producers. The three crucial dimensions that are examined here are the uniqueness of the marketing proposition, the scope of the marketing strategy, and the standardisation across countries.

2. Theoretical review section

2.1 Globalisation of firms

The internationalisation of companies has been thoroughly examined by Johanson and Vahlne (1977) and Luostarinen (1979), who depict it as a stepwise process where companies proceed towards higher market involvement. Recently research has also begun to study the globalisation behaviour of companies. The development of a business from domestic to international and further to global takes place in several stages and a distinctive strategy is applied in each stage. A pioneer in reviewing the development of different kinds of managerial attitudes of the headquarters toward their country operations was Perlmutter (1969). Perlmutter argues that no single criterion of multinationality such as ownership or number of nationals abroad is sufficient. Quantifiable measures like, for example, investments abroad are useful, but not adequate alone. More important is the orientation toward foreigners, ideas, and resources in the company at all management levels. These attitudes or orientation may be described as ethnocentric (home-country oriented), polycentric (host-country oriented), geocentric (world-oriented) and regiocentric (region-oriented) (Chakravarthy & Perlmutter, 1985). Yip (1989) has argued that globalisation proceeds in three stages, which are development of the core strategy, internationalisation of the strategy, and globalisation of the strategy. Also, Craig and Douglas (1996) have found that global market expansion develops in three phases in addition to the domestic phase; these are initial market entry, local market expansion, and global rationalisation.

The globalisation of companies can be seen as a multidimensional phenomenon. Hence, it is useful to evaluate the stage of the company in the globalisation process with several measures such as mindset of management (e.g. management orientation and vision), strategic thrust (e.g. entry, local expansion, rationalisation), and geographical spread (e.g. sales derived outside home country / outside home continent, number of countries / continents with company presence). Earlier research has, for example, found that companies appear to have reached the international phase when over half of their sales is derived outside the home continent from several foreign countries, and the global stage when over half of their sales is derived from outside the home continent from several foreign countries and continents. (Luostarinen & Gabrielsson, 2004). These types of measures may be used for the initial selection of companies, but should be extended by also other measures.

In contrast to the traditional internationalisers, which are gradually transforming according to the stages pattern from the domestic stage towards the international stage (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; Luostarinen, 1979), there has been an increase in studies witnessing that some companies, called born globals in this work, do not proceed according to the above explained pattern, but have a global vision from inception and jump over stages and rapidly advance towards the global stage (e.g. Oviatt & McDougal, 1994; Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Madsen & Servais, 1997). An interesting new research stream is studying globalising internationals, that is companies which have first gradually internationalised their business and only then entered the globalisation stage (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2004). The globalising internationals represent a rather small proportion of the number of ICT companies, but their importance for the SMOPEC nations from which they originate is huge. In this study the main focus will be on the born globals and globalizing internationals, which are striving to reach the global stage. The globalisation of ICT equipment companies can be seen to develop along different paths, which are shown in Figure 1.

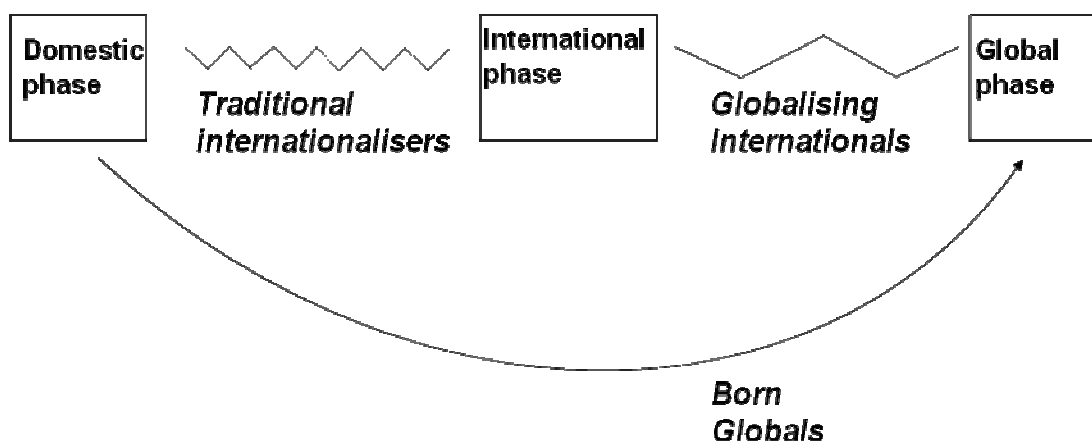


Fig. 1. Stages in the Globalisation of ICT Companies

2.2 Marketing strategy dimensions and strategic alternatives

On the basis of the findings of this theoretical review the global marketing strategies of the ICT companies may be divided into three dimensions that are of particular interest: First, the use of narrow versus broad scope in marketing strategies (see e.g. Porter, 1985, pp. 53-55). Second, it is also important to understand the degree to which the strategy contributes to either differentiation advantage or cost advantage (Porter, 1985) and therefore the uniqueness of the

marketing offering is important. Third, the standardisation of different marketing mix elements has been discussed widely in the literature on a more general level (see Keegan, 1969; Jain, 1989). However, few efforts have been made to investigate specifically the influence of globalisation on the standardisation of the marketing mix. Thus marketing strategy may be seen to consist of the following dimensions: (A) Scope of the marketing offering, (B) the uniqueness of the marketing offering, and (C) the degree of standardization of the marketing strategy dimensions. These three dimensions will now be examined briefly.

Development of the marketing offering scope. ICT companies need to consider the implications of globalisation for the scope of their specific marketing mix strategies, for instance their product, channel and branding strategies. It seems obvious that these strategies are under pressure to change for at least two reasons. First, ICT companies need to plan their marketing offering so that there is a fit with the globalisation stage of the company. For example those companies that have first during their international phase entered and penetrated their target markets, both geographically and with respect to customer segments (Ayal & Zif, 1979) by developing a broad marketing offering, are in the global phase expected to turn their attention to achievement of global integration benefits across countries resulting in a more focused offering (Yip, 1989). Second, as their product portfolio is under considerable pressure to change from many international businesses toward those selected for globalisation, the product development and marketing resources need to be reallocated. It is important to understand the broadness of product assortment, brand architecture, and channel coverage and its development.

Unique value proposition and marketing strategy. The firm may strive for the following distinctive types of competitive advantage according to Porter (1985): (1) low cost or (2) differentiation. These are based on the firm's ability to perform activities in the value chain either more cheaply or in a unique way compared with competitors. (3) The company may also seek these advantages with a focused customer segment in contrast to a broad customer base. Whatever alternative the company selects, it is important to develop a unique value proposition in its marketing activities compared with the competition. Moreover, in global business co-ordination of the marketing activities on a global scale is important (Porter, 1986).

Standardisation versus adaptation of marketing mix. The debate concerning whether to standardise or to adapt the product and marketing mix elements has gone on for a long time and

does not seem to be close to any conclusive theory or practice. The earlier work goes back to the 1960s when Buzzell (1968) studied the standardisation of international marketing strategies and the obstacles associated with them and Keegan (1969) the product and communication strategy. Most of the articles that have appeared since 1960s have been of a purely theoretical nature and empirical evidence is rare except for a few works, mainly on MNCs operating in developing countries (see, e.g., Hill & Still, 1984; Boddewyn et al., 1986; Ozsomer et al., 1991; Chang, 1995) and studies focusing on consumer preferences and segmentation (see, e.g., Verhage et al., 1989; Keillor et al., 2001).

Also, the issue of whether standardisation is feasible still seems to be unresolved. The most far-reaching interpretations have been presented by Levitt (1983), who has argued that emerging global markets provide opportunities to market standardised products across the globe, ignoring regional or national differences. Increased use of product standardisation in particular has been supported in the literature (Boddewyn et al., 1986; Whitelock & Pimblett, 1997), although, quite little empirical research has been conducted. Also, some research claim that there are still considerable differences across countries which needs to be addressed when planning the product and marketing strategies (Stremersch & Tellis, 2004). An important distinction should be made between standardisation of marketing programmes, emphasised by earlier literature (Buzzell, 1968) and standardisation of managerial processes, put forward by some more recent studies (Sorenson & Wiechmann, 1975; Walters, 1986). The focus in the process of standardisation is on the marketing philosophy, principles, and technology applied in the planning and preparing of marketing programs. The conclusion in many of the studies is that it is far easier to standardise the marketing planning process than the content of the programme. (Walters, 1986) Recent studies on large companies have indicated that standardisation of marketing strategies may have performance implications (Zou & Cavusgil, 2002) that increase the importance of this dimension.

3. Theoretical framework explaining marketing strategies and development of research propositions

3.1 Theoretical framework explaining marketing strategies

Attention is now turned to examine what factors affect marketing strategies when an ICT company globalises its activities. The development of the global marketing strategy is influenced by a number of factors. In Figure 2 we present a framework explaining the development of marketing strategies. The framework consists of three major explanatory blocks: (A) macro environment and ICT industry globalisation drivers, B) the globalisation approach and stage of the firm, and C) internal strategic levers, resources and decision-making factors. It is expected that macro environment and ICT industry globalisation drivers and internal resources influence the chosen globalisation approach. Moreover, all three blocks are expected to impact the marketing strategies. It is further assumed that on the basis of earlier research, the selected marketing strategy will have an impact on performance (Jain, 1989; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Townsend et al., 2004).

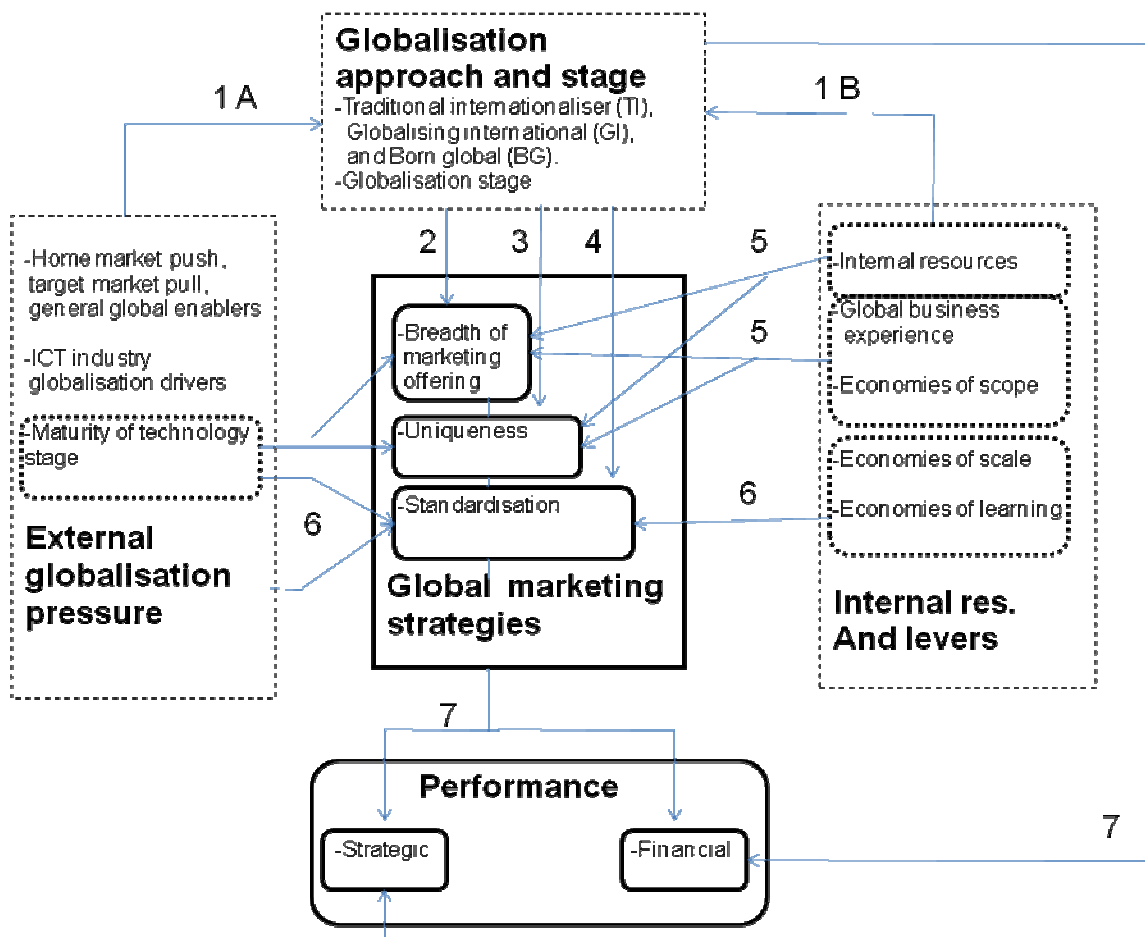


Fig. 2. The conceptual framework

3.1.1 External globalisation pressure

A number of macro industry environment-related factors influence the marketing strategies of ICT companies. The small, open and peripheral domestic market is expected to push the SMOPEC companies to globalise their business. On the other hand, the large size and openness of the global target markets appear to pull companies to globalise their activities (Luostarinen, 1994). The large global target markets are especially important for the ICT companies. Due to the often-high R&D costs it is of the utmost importance to spread these over a large number of markets. The home continent is not big enough and companies need to market the products globally on all continents. (See also Govindarajan & Gupta, 2000) The ongoing global trade liberation and regional integration into different trading blocks around the world is expected to further decrease trade and investment-related restrictions (Yip, 1989). Moreover, technological advances are expected to drive globalisation (Levitt, 1983).

In the high technology industry in general and in the ICT companies in particular, it may be assumed that the globalisation drivers are especially strong for a number of reasons. Firstly, the market need is homogenising between countries, and global or at least regional customers and channels are often present (see also Yip, 1989). Secondly, in high technology and in the ICT field in particular, competition is very intense and companies are often operating on a worldwide scale. Thirdly, the increasing technical standardisation in the industry speeds up the globalisation process in the telecommunications industry (Häikiö, 2001). Moreover, the latest development in the ICT industry has meant that the global competition has increased not only vertically but also horizontally. This has increased the importance of horizontal co-operation. Also, the technology lifecycles and dominant designs may be expected to impact marketing strategies (see Anderson & Tushman, 1990; Buzzel, 1968; Sorenson & Wiechman, 1975).

3.1.2 Globalisation approach

An ICT company needs to identify the businesses in which it wants to operate (Ansoff, 1987) and which businesses to globalise (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000). Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) have proposed that the product businesses requiring low adaptation and having high-expected benefits from globalisation are initially the most likely candidates for globalisation. The global orientation (Perlmutter, 1969), globalisation stage and globalisation approach i.e. born global (see Oviatt & McDougall, 1994) or globalizing international (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2004), are expected to influence marketing strategies.

3.1.3 Resources and levers

Internal strategic levers can be identified as the source of competitive advantage. Douglas and Craig (1989) introduce economies of scale, economies of scope and synergies as important levers. In the international entry stage, economy of scale is an important source of competitive advantage. A company often leverages its domestic production base and in this way reduces average unit costs by increasing production volumes. When the company penetrates the local markets in which it has established a position more deeply, the emphasis shifts towards achieving economies of scope; it expands within the selected geographic markets through an adaptive product and marketing strategy. New products can often be introduced via the same sales channels. This yields huge cost benefits.

In the global phase, the company starts to co-ordinate and rationalise its operations on a global basis to achieve benefits from synergies. Skills or assets that are transferable such as management skills, brand, and product knowledge may be leveraged globally (Douglas & Craig, 1989). The global and regional level of co-ordination of product and marketing-related requirements becomes important. These competencies and processes may bring a more sustainable competitive advantage than market-related advantages like economies of scale and/or scope.

Resources and capabilities are also expected to impact global marketing strategies (see e.g. Wernerfelt, 1984). For example, born globals lack resources in particular and they often select product and marketing strategies that do not require huge investments or then leverage the resources of other co-operation partners. In contrast, globalising internationals leverage existing resources fully and exploit the advantages of their existing resources in the market place.

3.1.4 Performance

Many authors have addressed the impact of marketing strategy on performance. For example, export marketing strategy impact on performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994) and the impact of marketing standardization on performance have been studied (Jain, 1989). Also this study expects that the selected marketing strategy will influence performance. Performance may be divided according to (Zou & Cavusgil, 2002) into strategic performance and financial performance; this approach is also followed here. Marketing performance includes factors like sales growth, market share and rate of new product introductions while financial performance may be measured with for example sales and profitability.

3.2 Proposition development

3.2.1 Impact of external and internal conditions on the globalisation approach

Globalising internationals differ from born globals in that they have often first internationalised within the European market. It was only in the late 80s and particularly in the 90s, that the macro and ICT industry started to change and the globalisation drivers forced globalising internationals to make their product and marketing strategies global (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2003). In contrast, the born globals have faced pressure to globalise from the very beginning of their existence and have, therefore, always had to apply global product and marketing strategies (see Knight & Cavusgil, 1996)

Resources and capabilities are also expected to impact global product and marketing strategies (see e.g. Wernerfelt, 1984). Born globals lack resources in particular and therefore they often select marketing strategies that do not require huge investments or then leverage the resources of other co-operation partners. In contrast, globalizing internationals leverage the existing resources fully and exploit the advantages that the available resources may bring them in the market place.

Hypothesis 1(a) The external globalisation pressure is higher for born globals and globalising internationals than for traditional internationalisers. 1 (b) The internal resources are higher for globalising internationals and traditional internationalisers than for born globals.

3.2.2 Impact of globalisation approach and stage of firm on marketing offering

The scope of the marketing offering is expected to develop during globalisation of a strategic business unit. In the international phase, companies often develop a large number of products and brands, and high channel intensity when the strategic thrust is to expand within the local market and then focus on selected products, brands, and channels as they enter global markets (Douglas & Craig, 1989, see also Mallen, 1977, pp. 71-87). During the maturing of the global phase, a broader product assortment, channel coverage and increasing use of sub brands and even new brands in order to sustain growth and supply the more diversified offering may be needed in those companies that have selected the globalizing internationals approach. The behaviour of born globals differs in this respect as they often select a niche strategy with a focused marketing offering for products, channels and brands (see also Knight, 1997, pp. 28-29). The following hypothesis may be stipulated:

Hypothesis 2. Globalising internationals and traditional internationalisers have a broader marketing offering than born globals who will select a focused marketing offering.

It is important for companies to develop a unique marketing proposition compared with the competition that can provide a cost or differentiation advantage (Porter, 1985). However, successful competition does not require limitation of the generic competitive strategies to either cost advantage or differentiation advantage (Murray, 1988). Instead, both should be targeted if possible. Under the current influence of the globalisation phenomena, competitors seek the lowest cost by locating their value activities wherever it makes sense (Yip, 1992). Therefore, the importance of distinctive marketing strategies becomes paramount. Firms that are able to create new market space and look systematically across the accepted boundaries of the industries have the potential to create new value curves (Kim & Mauborgne, 1999). Accordingly, they should look across substitute industries and strategic groups, redefine the buyer groups, look across to complementary product and service offerings that go beyond the bounds of their industry, rethink the functional-emotional orientation of their industry, and participate in shaping external trends and demand over time.

Recent research on globalising internationals has found that as the companies globalised, they initially selected a product category from which they had experience and then expanded to more value-added product categories during globalisation such as the increasing use of services, know-how, and systems elements in their offering (Gabrielsson et al., 2006). In channels, an innovative solution becomes increasingly important as globalisation advances; here hybrid channel solutions and use of the Internet in channel design (Madsen & Servais, 1997) are examples. Similarly, the importance of strengthening brand recognition and value is increasingly important as globalisation advances. Born globals have been found to use high value-added services, know-how and even systems in an early stage of globalisation (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Luostarinen & Gabrielsson, 2004, p. 393). The same have also been found to apply to unique brand and channel solutions. The distinction between born globals and globalising internationals is that the former need from inception to base their strategies on unique product and marketing strategies (Knight & Cavusgil, 2005) whereas for the latter this do not become important before globalisation and respective global competition increase (Cui, 1998, p. 96). Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis can be postulated:

Hypothesis 3 (a) Globalising internationals will increasingly use more unique marketing elements as globalisation advances, 3(b) while born globals will use a unique marketing offering from the inception.

Increased use of product standardisation in particular has been supported in the literature (Walters, 1986; Boddewyn et al., 1986; Ozsomer et al., 1991; Whitelock & Pimblett, 1997). However, the empirical evidence is scarce except for a few studies, mainly on MNCs (Sorenson & Wiechmann, 1975). The proponents of the adapted approach to global marketing claim that as customer and institutional characteristics differ significantly by area, some geographic adjustment is needed to be able to compete successfully (Simmonds, 1985). Recent studies have found that it is important to consider the globalisation stage and approach (Schuh, 2000). Globalising internationals can be expected to have first adapted their marketing strategies when penetrating international markets and only later rationalised their activities in the global phase. In contrast, born globals may be assumed to have been forced to standardise their marketing offering from the very beginning. The following hypothesis may be put forward:

Hypothesis 4 (a) Globalising internationals shift from adaptive marketing strategies towards highly standardised strategies as they globalise, 4 (b) while born globals apply standardised marketing strategies from the very beginning, 4 (c) while traditional internationalisers use adaptive marketing strategies.

3.2.3 Impact of external and internal factors on marketing offering

A number of external and internal factors will influence the different dimensions of the marketing strategies. The following propositions may be put forward.

The resources of the company may be expected to influence the marketing strategies. Especially those resources that fulfil the criteria of being valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable, have the potential for creating sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). For example, globally patented technologies, registered brands, superior marketing research, and innovative product concepts and designs are such resources. These types of resources drive marketing uniqueness compared with competing offerings (Millar et al., 2005). Also, the amount of resources may be expected to impact the selected marketing strategy. It may be assumed that

the more resources available the more unique the value proposition developed and the broader the marketing offering in general. The products may be expected to be more innovative due to higher R&D investments and the marketing concepts may be more unique due to investments in marketing research and campaign development.

Moreover, as the company globalises it gains global business experience, which is expected to decrease the lateral rigidity of decision-making towards introducing a wider assortment of more advanced and innovative products and marketing concepts (see Gabrielsson et al., 2006). Earlier research has found that maturing of technology may have an impact on the breadth of the offering. For example, the breadth of the product assortment has been found to be greatest during the maturity stage (see Anderson & Zeithmal, 1984). Furthermore, Hamel and Prahalad (1985) have argued that global companies need a broad product portfolio to support investments in key technologies (Hamel & Prahalad, 1985). Similarly the often highly specialised sales channels that are effective in the early stages of the product technology lifecycle need to be widened at later stages to include mass customer channels that enable expansion into new user groups (Lele, 1986; Moore, 1991). Based on the above discussion the following hypothesis may be postulated:

Hypothesis 5. The uniqueness and the breadth of the marketing offering is positively influenced by the internal resources, the global business experience, the maturity of the technology life cycle stage (positively on breadth and negatively on uniqueness), and the economies of scope.

The importance of finding a balance between globalisation drivers and the marketing strategy has also been emphasised in the literature (Yip, 1991, p. 7). It can be argued that when the globalisation drivers are strong, a more standardised marketing strategy alternative will be selected. Vice versa, when the globalisation drivers are weak or not present at all, a less standardised marketing strategy alternative is selected. The emerging of a dominant design is linked with the diffusion of technology (see Abernathy, 1978, p. 82). In an era of ferment, users are confronted with several technological alternatives and choosing any of them is risky. Hence, it is expected that mass-market adoption starts only when the dominant design has been established. A dominant design allows firms to design standardised products and interchangeable parts, and to optimise processes for volume and efficiency (Anderson & Tushman, 1990), and it can therefore be argued that the emergence of a dominant design favours

the use of standardised product strategies on a global basis (see also Abernathy, 1978). Furthermore, earlier research (see Buzzel, 1968; Sorenson & Wiechman, 1975) has found that the similarity of the product technology life cycle stage across countries favours the use of more standardised strategy alternatives. Due to the global nature of the ICT industry, it is expected that technology will diffuse more rapidly across countries and therefore product technology life cycles are becoming more similar in stage across countries. This also leads to emergence of a global segment which can be sold and marketed with a globally standardised approach. It can also be argued that the greater the economies of scale and economies of learning, the more a standardised product strategy will be favoured (see Quelch & Hoff, 1986; Keegan, 1969). The following hypothesis can be postulated:

Hypothesis 6. The marketing strategy standardisation is positively influenced by the globalisation pressure, similarity and maturity of the technology life cycle stages across countries, and economies of scale and learning advantage.

3.2.4 The impact of marketing strategy on performance

It has been argued that the marketing strategy influences both strategic and financial performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). It has also been proposed that there is a relationship between marketing strategy standardisation and performance (Jain, 1989). The uniqueness can be asserted to increase profitability due to increased competitive advantage (Porter, 1985), the standardisation degree due to the efficiency and consistency achieved and the benefits from transfer of ideas across countries (Zou & Cavusgil, 2002). However, the breadth of the marketing scope may be expected to unequally influence on the globalising international and born global. During the mature phase of a globalising international, the related extension of the product range is necessary to preserve growth and profitability, whereas, for the born global the amount of focus may be assumed to correlate with success. This research postulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7 (a) The strategic and financial performance are positively influenced by the uniqueness, the degree of standardisation, and the breadth of the marketing strategy of the globalising internationals. The same relationship is expected to the other types of firms, except for the breadth which influences (b) born globals negatively and standardisation which has negative influence on (c) traditional internationalisers.

4. Data and methodology

4.1 Data gathering process and variables used

The survey questionnaire was built based on previous literature when available. When building the measures for marketing strategies research by Cavusgil & Zou (1994), McDougall et al. (1994) and Solberg (2002) were used when applicable. With regards to performance measures the study relied to a large extent on Zou & Cavusgil (2002). Also previous measures were applied as explanatory variables, for example, globalisation drivers benefited from Townsend et al. (2004) and Zou & Cavusgil (2002), and resources related variables were partly based on measures by Zahra et al. (2003). New measures were developed when measures were not available from earlier literature. To secure the validity of the measures used in the questionnaire a pilot survey was conducted where different types of ICT companies were asked to fill in the questionnaire. Thereafter the researchers met the managers who had answered the questionnaire and verified that the questions had been understood correctly and whether some were difficult to answer. The survey was modified based on the feedback. As the targeted respondents were responsible for international marketing and therefore expected to be fairly fluent in English a questionnaire in English language was used in both countries.

The data was gathered as follows: The data base was acquired from a leading data information provider, Dunn & Bradstreet. The target companies were first approached by phone. Only those firms that were found to be international ICT firms were accepted to be part of the target population. Those willing to answer were sent an e-mail including a link to the questionnaire. The total of 1930 companies from Finland and Sweden were contacted and 616 were found to qualify the requirements at this phase. Out of these 506 (82.1%) agreed to participate and a link to the survey was sent to them. 309 (50.2%) answers were received from Finland and Sweden. Out of these answers 79 were incomplete, in 18 cases the company was not international, in 6 cases the company was not an ICT company, and 6 other companies were disqualified based on statistical quality check. This resulted in total of 208 usable answers, 105 from Finland and 103 from Sweden. This gives a total overall effective response rate of 35.2% for the study (45.5% for Finland, 28.6% for Sweden).

4.2 Classification of Companies

The firms were classified based on globalisation approach to three groups: the traditional internationalisers, globalising internationals and born globals. This was done due that their marketing strategies and resulting performance was expected to differ. We used earlier research to guide us in the classification. Important variables used to divide the firms were rapidity of start of foreign sales (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Knight et al. 2004; Kuivalainen et al. 2007) in home continent and outside home continent, global vision (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994), sales percentage outside home country and sales percentage outside home continent (Servais et al., 2007; Luostarinen & Gabrielsson, 2006). The variables and the classification criteria are listed below.

Born Globals (BG), (Total of 27 companies)

1. Start of foreign sales in Europe within 2 years from foundation
2. Start of foreign sales outside Europe within 2 years from foundation
3. Vision: global markets from inception
4. Sales outside home country at least 50 %
5. Sales outside Europe at least 10 %
6. Sales in at least 3 foreign countries

Globalising Internationals (GI), (Total of 27 companies)

1. Start of foreign sales in Europe
2. Start of foreign sales outside Europe later than 2 years from foundation
3. Entered first home market then Europe and later other continents
4. Sales outside home country at least 50 %
5. Sales outside Europe at least 10 %
6. Sales in at least 3 foreign countries

Traditional internationaliser (TI), (Total of 154 companies)

1. Company has international business based on sales or operations.
2. Does not fulfil criteria set for BG or GI.

4.3 Description of data

The descriptive statistics of the data are shown in Table 1. The statistical significances to test the equality of group means are shown on the last column (p value).

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	F value	P value
Economies of Scale	Traditional internationalisers	154	2,84	1,232	,099	7,312	,001
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,15	1,350	,260		
	Born globals	27	3,81	1,111	,214		
	Total	208	3,01	1,270	,088		
Economies of Scope	Traditional internationalisers	154	3,03	,966	,078	3,551	,030
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,15	1,231	,237		
	Born globals	27	3,59	1,010	,194		
	Total	208	3,12	1,021	,071		
Economies of Learning	Traditional internationalisers	154	3,34	1,099	,089	1,357	,260
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,15	1,134	,218		
	Born globals	27	3,63	,967	,186		
	Total	208	3,36	1,089	,076		
Percentage of Global Sales	Traditional internationalisers	154	5,59	13,542	1,091	109,208	,000
	Globalising internationalisers	27	42,44	22,699	4,368		
	Born globals	27	44,81	22,285	4,289		
	Total	208	15,47	23,291	1,615		
Uniqueness of Marketing Offering	Traditional internationalisers	154	3,097	,6323	,0509	1,898	,152
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,102	,6767	,1302		
	Born globals	27	3,352	,5770	,1111		
	Total	208	3,131	,6341	,0440		
Breadth of Marketing Offering	Traditional internationalisers	154	2,276	,4709	,0379	,550	,578
	Globalising internationalisers	27	2,329	,5491	,1057		
	Born globals	27	2,379	,5930	,1141		
	Total	208	2,296	,4973	,0345		
Globalisation Pressure	Traditional internationalisers	154	3,307	,5597	,0451	15,412	,000
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,765	,5854	,1127		
	Born globals	27	3,832	,5543	,1067		
	Total	208	3,434	,6002	,0416		
Internal Resources	Traditional internationalisers	154	2,623	,6981	,0563	16,197	,000
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,222	,5847	,1125		
	Born globals	27	3,243	,6332	,1219		
	Total	208	2,782	,7247	,0502		

Standardisation	Traditional internationalisers	154	3,3879	,79817	,06432		
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,7739	,55716	,10722		
	Born globals	27	3,8908	,72414	,13936		
	Total	208	3,5033	,78408	,05437	6,951	,001
Strategic Performance	Traditional internationalisers	154	2,2455	,84220	,06787		
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,0870	,95872	,18451		
	Born globals	27	2,9630	,75455	,14521		
	Total	208	2,4478	,91082	,06315	17,060	,000
Financial Performance	Traditional internationalisers	154	2,4156	,86932	,07005		
	Globalising internationalisers	27	2,9259	,86397	,16627		
	Born globals	27	3,0988	,70901	,13645		
	Total	208	2,5705	,88668	,06148	10,133	,000
Maturity of Technology	Traditional internationalisers	154	2,8669	,82405	,06640		
	Globalising internationalisers	27	3,1389	,64798	,12470		
	Born globals	27	3,0185	,68615	,13205		
	Total	208	2,9219	,78955	,05475	1,605	,203

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables used

4.4 Statistical methods

To test our hypotheses we will use several statistical analyses: linear regression, analysis of variance, and multinomial logistic regression. These are rather standard methods. Details can be found for example in Greene (2008). The data was analyzed using the SPSS.

5. Empirical results and discussion

In the following we will present and discuss the results of the statistical analysis of each hypothesis separately. The hypotheses are repeated here, for the convenience of the reader.

5.1 Impact of external and internal conditions on the globalisation approach

Hypothesis 1(a) The external globalisation pressure is higher for born globals and globalising internationals than for traditional internationalisers. 1 (b) The internal resources are higher for globalising internationals and traditional internationalisers than for born globals.

Based on the one-way ANOVA (Summary Table 1) we can see that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in *external globalisation pressure* between the three group means: the sample means are 3,31 for the TIs, 3,77 for the GIs and 3,83 for the BGs. Using Post Hoc analysis (Tukey's test) to compare the groups pairwise it can be seen that the TI group is significantly lower from the other two ($p < 0.001$). There is no significant difference between GIs and BGs, So based on the ANOVA hypothesis 1(a) is supported. This gives support to research claiming that global business environment has impact on the selected globalisation strategy of the company (Yip, 1989).

The group sample means for the *internal resources* are 2,62 for the TIs, 3,22 for the GIs and 3,24 for the BGs. A similar analysis as for *external globalisation pressure* shows that the three group means are different at significance level $p < 0.001$ and Post Hoc analysis that the TI group is significantly lower from the other two ($p < 0.001$). So hypothesis 1(b) is not supported since the BG group does not have significantly lower resources than the other two. This result is contrary to our expectations, but supported by some research claiming, for instance that BGs have relatively experienced founders (Reuber & Fischer, 1997) and acquire early financial resources from venture capitalists. (Laanti et al. 2007)

We also confirmed both results using a multinomial logistic regression model where *globalisation pressure* and *internal resources* were used as explanatory variables to explain the approach the companies had chosen. The results again show that the TI group is well differentiated from the other two based on the model, but GI and BG groups cannot be differentiated from each other. So the conclusions are identical to those of ANOVA.

5.2 Impact of globalisation approach and stage of firm on marketing offering

Hypothesis 2. Globalising internationals and traditional internationalisers have a broader marketing offering than born globals who will select a focused marketing offering.

The univariate analysis in Table 1 shows no significant difference in the mean *breadth of marketing offering*. The group sample means in our data are 2.276 for the TIs, 2.329 for the GIs and 2.379 for the BGs. The pairwise differences between the groups are not significant, either. Thus hypothesis 2 is not supported.

We also performed a multivariate analysis involving other variables of interest. This was performed as an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) by including the other variables as covariates. The results are shown in table 3. Again we conclude, that hypothesis 2 is not supported. This result is contradictory to earlier BG research claiming that these companies select a more focused marketing offering than the traditional internationalisers (Knight, 1997; Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2004). However, it can be noted that all of the groups have used a relatively focused marketing offering, in average. It may be that this is a particular characteristic of ICT companies. We will return to the effect of the other variables later in hypothesis 5.

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: Breadth of marketing offering

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	2,078	,257	8,076	,000	1,570	2,585
Internal Resources	,014	,065	,212	,832	-,114	,142
Global Experience	,040	,044	,911	,363	-,047	,127
Economies of Scope	,013	,036	,372	,710	-,057	,084
Maturity of Technology	,017	,045	,375	,708	-,072	,106
Approach (Group)			F=,067	,935		

Table 2. Estimated model for the breadth of marketing offering

Hypothesis 3 (a) Globalising internationals will increasingly use more unique marketing elements as globalisation advances, 3(b) while born globals will use a unique marketing offering from the inception.

We first studied if there is a difference between the mean levels of *uniqueness of Marketing Offering* using the ANOVA approach of table 1. The group sample means are 3.097 for the TIs, 3.102 for the GIs and 3.352 for the BGs, and the test shows no significant differences in the group means ($p=0.152$). Even when BG's are contrasted against TIs and GIs together, there is still not a statistically significant positive difference favouring the BG group ($p=0.104$ in a one-sided test).

However, our main interest was to study how uniqueness evolves as a function of globalization of the firms. We studied hypotheses 3 (a) and 3 (b) using regression analysis where the dependent variable was uniqueness and independent variable Percentage of Global Sales; this was done separately for the GI and BG groups.

The regression results for 3 (a) are given table 3, panel A. In the Globalising Internationals group the relationship between Percentage of Global Sales and Uniqueness of Marketing Elements is statistically significant, but the hypothesized sign is wrong, so there is strong evidence against hypothesis 3 (a). This is somewhat contrary to earlier research on evolutionary processes of MNCs. Research has found that MNCs need new innovative marketing strategies to defend their market position and ward off the contenders when they reach the global stage (Cui, 1998).

Panel A

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3,664	,256		14,310	,000
Global Sales	-,013	,005	-,444	-2,480	,020

a Dependent Variable: Uniqueness of Marketing Offering

b Selecting only cases for which Globalization Approach = Globalising internationalisers

Panel B

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3,468	,257		13,497	,000
Global Sales	-,003	,005	-,100	-,503	,619

a Dependent Variable: Uniqueness of Marketing Offering

b Selecting only cases for which Globalization Approach = Born globals

Table 3. Estimated models for the uniqueness of marketing offering as globalisation advances

The regression results for 3 (b) are given in table 3, panel B. The linear relationship is not statistically significant which means that for Born Globals the Uniqueness of Marketing Elements is reasonably constant as a function of globalisation stage. Thus we find partial evidence for hypothesis 3 (b) regarding the constant level, but despite of being higher there is not statistically significant evidence for higher level of Uniqueness of the BGs compared to the other two groups. This may be due to an insufficient sample size of BGs and GIs. Earlier research has found strong support for that BGs use unique marketing offering (Knight, 1997).

Hypothesis 4 (a) Globalising internationals shift from adaptive marketing strategies towards highly standardised strategies as they globalise, 4 (b) while born globals apply standardised marketing strategies from the very beginning, 4 (c) while traditional internationalisers use adaptive marketing strategies.

We use the same approach to test hypothesis 4 as we did in the case of hypothesis 3. First we note that based on ANOVA in table 1 we can conclude a highly significant ($p=0.001$) difference in the group means, the sample means being 3.380 (TI), 3.774 (GI) and 3.891 (BG). We can also state that in the pairwise Post Hoc comparison the TI group has significantly smaller mean value than the GI group ($p=0.042$) and the BG group ($p=0.005$), but there is not a significant difference between the GI and BG groups ($p=0.840$).

The regression results are given in table 4. From Panel A we see that the regression model is significant ($p=0.028$) and the standardisation is increased as a function of Globalisation stage. So hypothesis 4 (a) is supported. From panels B and C we conclude that the levels of standardization are relatively constant for both the BG and the TI group, and because the level is high for the BG group and low for the TI group, we get support for hypotheses 4 (b) and 4 (c) as well. This question of whether to standardize or adapt marketing strategies in foreign markets is a highly debated area in IB literature (Jain, 1989; Whitelock & Pimblett, 1997; Zou & Cavusgil, 2002). Some recent research has indicated that it is important to consider the globalisation strategy and stage of the company (Schuh, 2000; Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2003). Our research brings valuable and new results of the impact of the globalisation approach and stage on the standardisation of marketing offering.

Panel A

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,332	,213		15,635	,000
	Global Sales	,010	,004	,424	2,339	,028

a Dependent Variable: Standardisation

b Selecting only cases for which Globalization Approach = Globalising internationalisers

Panel B

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,594	,317		11,328	,000
	Global Sales	,007	,006	,204	1,041	,308

a Dependent Variable: Standardisation

b Selecting only cases for which Globalization Approach = Born globals

Panel C

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,391	,070		48,553	,000
	Global Sales	-,001	,005	-,010	-,120	,905

a Dependent Variable: Standardisation

b Selecting only cases for which Globalization Approach = Traditional internationalisers

Table 4. Estimated models for the standardisation of marketing offering as globalisation advances

5.3. Impact of external and internal factors on marketing offering

To study the effect of other factors we use multivariate regression models.

Hypothesis 5. (a) The breadth of the marketing offering and (b) the uniqueness of the marketing offering is positively influenced by internal resources, the global business experience, the maturity of the technology life cycle stage (positively on breadth and negatively on uniqueness), and the economies of scope.

The model to study hypothesis 5 (a) was already shown in table 2. None of the dependent variables used - Internal Resources, Global Experience, Economies of Scope, Maturity of Technology – are significant. So no part of hypothesis 5 (a) is supported. The result is

unexpected as earlier research examining the breadth of marketing offering, in particularly related to the product assortment (Anderson & Zeithmal, 1984) and channel width (Lele, 1986; More, 1991), has found that it is influenced by the maturity of technology. Also, results related to no impact of internal resources (Hamel & Prahalad, 1985) and scope are unexpected.

The results of the regression model to study hypothesis 5 (b) is shown in table 5. Maturity of Technology ($p=0.015$) and Internal Resources ($p<0.001$) are significant, but Global Experience and Economies of Scope are not significant. So hypothesis 5 (b) is only partially supported. This is line with earlier research claiming that certain types of resources drive marketing uniqueness (Millar et al., 2005).

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: Uniqueness of Marketing Offering

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	2,530	,299	8,456	,000	1,940	3,120
Maturity of Technology	-,128	,052	-2,443	,015	-,232	-,025
Internal Resources	,319	,075	4,230	,000	,171	,468
Global_experience	,018	,051	,345	,730	-,083	,119
Economies of Scope	,029	,041	,700	,485	-,053	,111
Approach (Group)			F=1,103	0,334		

Table 5. Estimated model for the Uniqueness of marketing offering

Hypothesis 6. The marketing strategy standardisation is positively influenced by the globalisation pressure, similarity and maturity of the technology life cycle stages across countries, and economies of scale and learning advantage.

Hypothesis 6 was studied using linear regression model, the results of which are shown in table 6. Global Pressure ($p=0.004$) and Economies of Scale ($p=0.033$) turned out to be significant, but Maturity of Technology and Economies of Learning were insignificant. The group effect was also included in the model and was significant ($p=0.019$). The hypothesis 6 is only partially supported as globalization pressure has the expected sign, but economies of scale has unexpected (negative) sign in the model. The evidence gained that the globalization pressure influences positively on the marketing strategy standardization is supporting earlier research

results (Yip, 1989). However, in earlier literature economies of scale has often been mentioned as an important driver of standardization of marketing offering (Levitt, 1983).

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: Standardisation

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	3,121	,410	7,608	,000	2,312	3,929
Global Pressure	,339	,116	2,919	,004	,110	,569
Maturity of Technology	-,099	,082	-1,205	,230	-,260	,063
Economies of Scale	-,101	,047	-2,152	,033	-,194	-,008
Economies of Learning	,042	,053	,793	,429	-,063	,147
Approach (Group)			F=4,042	,019		

Table 6. Estimated model for the Standardisation of marketing offering

5.4. The impact of marketing strategy on performance

Hypothesis 7 (a) The strategic and financial performance are positively influenced by the uniqueness, the degree of standardisation, and the breadth of the marketing strategy of the globalising internationals. The same relationship is expected to the other types of firms, except for the breadth which influences (b) born globals negatively and standardisation which has negative influence on (c) traditional internationalisers.

To study the performance we developed performance measures from questions related to a global perspective. Then we ran, separately for each globalization approach, a multivariate linear regression model to explain strategic performance and financial performance, as a function of chosen explanatory variables, including the ones appearing in hypothesis 7. In the regression model we included all the relevant variables from our framework. The regression results are shown in table 7.

We first consider the TI group. From table 7 it can be seen that Uniqueness of Market Offering is a very significant factor for both Strategic Performance ($p=0.002$) and Financial Performance ($p=0.004$). Standardisation is a weakly significant factor for Strategic Performance ($p=0.084$), with a negative sign, as expected, indicating that higher adaptation increases strategic performance. However, for Financial Performance standardization was not significant

($p=0.658$). Breadth of Market Offering was not found significant for neither Strategic Performance ($p=0.973$) nor Financial Performance ($p=0.251$). Hence we find partial support for hypothesis 7 (c).). The importance of uniqueness in driving performance is according to our expectations and is an important result. Earlier research has found in line with our findings that marketing adaptation enhances performance in traditional internationalizes (Aulakh et al., 2000, Calantone et al, 2006). However, earlier results have been mixed when different marketing mix elements are investigated and there may be a need to research each marketing mix element separately (Shoham, 2002).

The regression model for the GI group (table 7) does not indicate any significant relationships. Thus hypothesis 7 (a) is not supported. However, outside of our hypothesis, we found that internal resources is a very significant factor ($p=0.017$). In the case of the BG group we find (table 7) that breadth of marketing offering is a significant factor both for Strategic and Financial Performance ($p=0.014$). It should be noted that the positive sign of the regression coefficient was unexpected. This is contradictory to earlier research, which has indicated that focused approach enhances performance of Born Globals (Knight, 1997). It may be that while global expansion may be facilitated by the focused marketing offering it is still for performance reasons beneficial to have a wider offering available. Hypothesis 7 (b) is not supported but we suggest further research on this important variable. Zou and Cavusgil (2002) have found support that global marketing standardization increases global strategic and financial performance, while this present research could not find a significant relationship in either GIs or BGs to support this earlier finding.

Parameter Estimates

		TI		GI		BG	
Dependent Variable	Parameter	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
Strategic Performance	Intercept	-,027	,962	3,842	,099	,676	,564
	Economies of Scale	,044	,429	-,293	,251	-,113	,435
	Economies of Scope	-,023	,788	,388	,181	,202	,172
	Economies of Learning	-,015	,805	,149	,602	,289	,120
	Internal Resources	,460	,000	,332	,485	-,117	,672
	Percentage of Global Sales	,008	,057	,005	,632	,000	,959
	Uniqueness of Marketing Offering	,299	,002	,144	,733	,008	,973
	Breadth of Marketing Offering	-,004	,973	,186	,692	,613	,020
	Global Pressure	,056	,587	-,556	,187	-,445	,114
	Global Business Experience	,115	,086	,052	,853	,414	,042
	Standardisation	-,121	,084	-,478	,293	-,024	,913
Financial Performance	Intercept	-,147	,823	2,289	,182	-,462	,688
	Economies of Scale	-,017	,795	,167	,378	-,339	,027
	Economies of Scope	,007	,940	,115	,588	,285	,058
	Economies of Learning	,069	,329	-,140	,514	,317	,087
	Internal Resources	,233	,040	,922	,017	,066	,808
	Percentage of Global Sales	,003	,603	,003	,753	-,001	,811
	Uniqueness of Marketing Offering	,317	,004	,208	,513	-,361	,146
	Breadth of Marketing Offering	,153	,251	,000	1,000	,646	,014
	Global Pressure	-,097	,410	-,424	,181	,089	,740
	Global Business Experience	,213	,006	-,301	,165	,336	,088
	Standardisation	,036	,658	-,215	,523	,140	,516

Table 6. Estimated regression model for Performance

6. Conclusion

The theoretical contribution of this paper stems from the fact that both born globals and globalising internationals have been studied to a limited extent. This is especially so when we focus on the marketing strategies. Although born globals have been studied extensively under many names very few studies have focused on the marketing strategies in particular (e.g. Knight, 1997). Moreover, globalising internationals have been studied mainly from the internationalisation viewpoint (Luostarinen, 1979; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977), but less attention has been paid to the latest development, when they enter the global alignment phase, and hardly at all to their product and marketing strategies with only few exceptions (see Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2004).

The finding of this study that the globalisation pressure is impacting on the selected globalisation approach gives support to earlier research investigating global strategies of MNCs and their antecedents (Yip, 1989). The debate concerning whether to standardize or to adapt the marketing strategies has gone on for a long time (Jain, 1989; Whitelock & Pimblett, 1997; Zou & Cavusgil, 2002). Our research contributes by explaining the impact of the globalization approach and stage on the standardization of marketing offering. We believe that earlier research has not properly understood the importance of these explanatory factors. In fact this maybe the missing link in the earlier standardization debate.

It is important to understand the relationship of marketing strategy and performance. This research proposes that the drivers of performance may vary based on the globalization approach selected. Traditional internationalisers can enhance their performance by adapting their marketing strategies. This is giving support to some earlier research findings by Aulakh et al., (2000) and Calantone et al (2006). Moreover, it was found that unique marketing offering influence positively their performance. In contrast, born globals were found to achieve higher performance when offering a broader marketing offering, which is an interesting result. This is contradictory to findings of earlier born globals research, which has emphasized the importance of selecting a focused approach (e.g. Knight, 1997). Globalising internationals' performance was found to be influenced by the availability of resources.

This research also has important managerial implications. Managers need to assess their environment and the globalization pressure as it impacts on the globalization approach to be selected and on the degree of standardization of the marketing offering. It should also be noted that the performance drivers differ based on the selected globalization approach. In future research it would be interesting to study the marketing mix elements separately and their impact on performance. Also the research could be extended to also other countries than Finland and Sweden or other fields could be studied. We welcome comments and suggestions by researchers with similar interests in the globalisation phenomena and marketing strategies.

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