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Nonmarket and market strategies, strategic uncertainty and strategic capabilities **Evidence from the USA**

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Abstract

Purpose – Amidst rapid development in emerging economies, greater emphasis on public-private partnerships and a more complex regulatory environment, nonmarket strategy (NMS) is now widely viewed as a key component of a firm's overall strategy. This paper aims to investigate how nonmarket and market strategies are influenced by strategic uncertainties and capabilities and ultimately drive firm performance.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey addressing strategic uncertainties, capabilities, NMS and market strategy and firm performance was administered online to 193 practicing managers in the USA. Measures for competitive strategy (i.e. cost leadership and differentiation), NMS, management and marketing capabilities, competitive and technology uncertainties and firm performance were adopted from or based on previous work. Hypotheses were tested via SmartPLS.

Findings - Emphasis on NMS was linked to high marketing capability, high competitive uncertainty and high technology uncertainty. Cost leaders were more likely than differentiators to emphasize on NMS, although all three strategies were positive drivers of performance. NMS appears to be viewed as a part of an integrated strategic approach by managers in many organizations.

Research limitations/implications - The sample included mangers in multiple industries. Self-typing scales were used to assess strategic emphasis and firm performance.

Practical implications – Emphasis on NMS can promote firm performance, but the relationship is complex. Strategic managers should align the NMS with organizational capabilities and a market-oriented strategy appropriate for the firm.

Originality/value – This paper provides empirical support for a model linking select strategic uncertainties, capabilities, market strategy and NMS and firm performance. It supports NMS as a key performance driver, but with links to uncertainties and capabilities that differ from those of market strategies.

Keywords Uncertainty, Business strategy, Nonmarket strategy, Strategic capabilities, Strategic political emphasis, Strategic management and leadership, Corporate political analysis, NMS, Strategic political management

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

A market perspective on organizational success has traditionally dominated the business strategy literature, with firms crafting and executing strategies to leverage market forces. Today, however, many firms also engage in nonmarket activities, pursuing success outside of the traditional market realm. This phenomenon has generated scholarly interest about factors that influence a firm's nonmarket emphasis, as well as the link between nonmarket strategy (NMS) and firm performance (Bach and Allen, 2010; Baron, 1995; Wei et al., 2016; Buli, 2017; Mellahi et al., 2016).



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NMS refers to patterns of organizational actions designed to enhance firm performance outside of the market context by managing the institutional or societal context of competition (Lux *et al.*, 2011; Liedong *et al.*, 2017; Frynas *et al.*, 2017). The NMS domain is broad, including interactions between firms and external actors intermediated by the public, public institutions, government entities, the media and other stakeholders (Baron, 1995). With the continued development of emerging economies and a greater emphasis on government–business partnerships in many Western nations, it is now widely seen by some as an alternative to a market orientation and by others as a necessary complement (Doh *et al.*, 2012; Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Kingsley *et al.*, 2012; Sawant, 2012; Meyer and Peng, 2016).

Research assessing associations between NMS and both firm characteristics and outcomes has been multifaceted (Dorobantu *et al.*, 2017). NMS appears to be pursued more by larger firms than by smaller ones (Bach and Allen, 2010) and among firms in emerging economies with less developed regulatory regimes (Doh *et al.*, 2012; Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Kingsley *et al.*, 2012; Meyer and Peng, 2016; Khanna *et al.*, 2005; Marquis and Raynard, 2015). It is also influenced by such factors as industry membership, institutional context and market strategy (MS) (Wei *et al.*, 2016; Dorobantu *et al.*, 2017; Funk and Hirschman, 2017).

A number of scholars have identified a link between NMS and performance, but relatively little is known about precisely how this occurs (Parnell, 2015). However, the notion of an NMS-performance nexus is intuitive; nonmarket activity can enhance relationships with stakeholders, and ostensibly, firms would not pursue NMS if a performance payoff was not anticipated. However, some firms do not prioritize NMS, arguably because they do see such a benefit. To unravel this conundrum, scholars are focusing more on underlying mechanisms that appear to influence how NMS drives performance, including the influence of NMS on consumer perceptions of the firm (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006), access to financial resources (Madsen and Rodgers, 2015) and preferential access to political resources (Frynas *et al.*, 2006).

This paper expands knowledge about NMS by considering uncertainty and capabilities as NMS drivers. Specifically, it examines how competitive uncertainty, technology uncertainty, management capability and marketing capability influence MS and NMS in different ways and how the emphasis on these strategies in turn affects performance. It helps explain why NMS – broadly defined (Baron, 1995; Frynas *et al.*, 2017) – is more of a priority for some firms than for others. It concludes by offering suggestions for managers and outlining future research opportunities.

Literature review

Previous research on market strategies (MSs) focused on relationships with customers, competitors, suppliers and other market-oriented entities through cost leadership, differentiation and other competitive endeavors (Cadogan *et al.*, 2002; van Raaij and Stoelhorst, 2008). In contrast, NMS includes an array of activities from social initiatives to lobbying, campaign contributions and even direct collaboration with government actors (Delmas and Montes-Sancho, 2010; Lawton *et al.*, 2013; Okhmatovskiy, 2010). As the share of global output attributed to emerging economies continues to grow and government-business partnerships receive greater attention in many developed nations, NMS is now understood by many as a vital complement to market strategy (Doh *et al.*, 2012; Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Kingsley *et al.*, 2012; Sawant, 2012; Meyer and Peng, 2016; Brito-Bigott *et al.*, 2008). The distinction between NMS and MS is not always clear, however. It can be difficult to distinguish between public–private partnerships designed to benefit society and those that trade favors with politicians. Corruption can even be viewed as part of an MS in

emerging economies insomuch that firms engage in it to enhance competitiveness (Iriyama *et al.*, 2016).

Perspective is critical to one's understanding of NMS. It can be viewed positively in terms of enhanced relationships with stakeholders and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Morsing and Roepstorff, 2015; Scherer *et al.*, 2016; Wickert, 2016) or negatively in terms of cronyism and corruption through lobbying and political engagement (Iriyama *et al.*, 2016; Néron, 2016; Unsal *et al.*, 2016). A positive view could link NMS to higher performing firms, whereas a negative view could link it to poor performers less capable of meeting market demands. These competing connotations have led to diverse treatment of the construct (e.g. dos Reis *et al.*, 2012; Funk and Hirschman, 2017; Vázquez-Maguirre and Hartmann, 2013) and constitute an ongoing challenge for scholars.

Several distinct but overlapping NMS streams have emerged, including corporate political activity, strategic political management and strategic political emphasis (Oliver and Holzinger, 2008; Hillman and Hitt, 1999; Hillman et al., 2004; Hillman and Zardkoohi, 1999). Two broad conceptual questions about NMS can be identified across these perspectives. First, do NMS and MS represent alternative or complementary efforts to attain high performance? Some scholars posit NMS and MS as complementary, integrating nonmarket considerations into a single, overarching market-oriented strategy. Advocates of this view often emphasize on a stakeholder orientation, with strategic decisions based on multiple stakeholder interests rather than those of shareholder and customers (Bosse et al., 2009; Choi and Wang, 2009; Harrison et al., 2010; Harrison and Wicks, 2013). As such, NMS can enhance firm performance by helping the organization achieve broader social objectives (Singer, 2013). Other scholars emphasize on trade-offs between MS and NMS, whereby firms unable or unwilling to compete through MS emphasize on NMS instead (Parnell, 2015; Adly, 2009). They warn that goals vary across stakeholders, and market and nonmarket conflicts are inevitable, requiring strategic managers to make choices (Cavazos and Rutherford, 2012; Baron, 1995; Hadani et al., 2015).

Second, is NMS – as it relates to government – primarily a means of protecting the organization against a regime or is it a response to a lack of appropriate oversight? Indeed, NMS has been viewed as a defense mechanism – a "necessary evil" – for firms facing government overreach. Through domain defense, corporate political activity can advance private interests of the firm, minimize the effects of government policies at odds with corporate goals or maintain a status quo environment favorable to the organization (Baysinger, 1984; Keillor *et al.*, 2005; Lawton *et al.*, 2013; Baines and Viney, 2010). Even detractors of NMS acknowledge the need for responses to increases in government regulation (Parnell, 2015; Woiceshyn, 2011; Krozer *et al.*, 2013).

However, other scholars see political involvement by firms not as a means of protecting the firm from or palliating the regulatory regime, but rather as a proactive approach to enhance society. From this perspective, social and environmental challenges such as water depletion, worker exploitation, child labor and deforestation occur when governments are unwilling or unable to promote socially and environmentally responsible business practices (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Scherer *et al.*, 2006). Given this void, consumers and interest groups pressure firms to engage in political activity by working with non-governmental standards and norms (Valente and Crane, 2010). Proponents refer to this phenomenon as political corporate social responsibility (PCSR) (Wickert, 2016).

From the PCSR perspective, NMS is a necessary extension of MS because it incorporates social concerns (McWilliams and Siegel, 2000; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). Hence, CSR can be viewed as a building block of NMS to the extent that both seek to influence public policy

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in a manner consistent with social values and to enhance trust between organizations and society (Liedong *et al.*, 2015; Mellahi *et al.*, 2016; Scherer, 2017; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Schneider and Scherer, 2016). A number of scholars have promoted this view (Scherer *et al.*, 2016; Scherer *et al.*, 2014; den Hond *et al.*, 2014; Matten and Crane, 2005), but others are wary (Liedong *et al.*, 2015; Mellahi *et al.*, 2016; Scherer, 2017; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Schneider and Scherer, 2016). It is difficult to judge the extent to which this actually occurs in practice because executives tend to couch NMS in CSR terms while motives remain speculative.

Recent scholarship on NMS has been productive, but questions remain. How and the extent to which environmental factors and certain strategic capabilities drive NMS is not completely understood (Oliver and Holzinger, 2008; Parnell, 2015). Moreover, competing streams of NMS research underscore the disparate interpretations of the construct and its link to firm performance (Frynas *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, some scholars have called for an integrated market–nonmarket approach to strategy, but relatively little is known about how NMS interacts with MS (Chong, 2017). The remainder of this paper seeks to provide insight on how NMS and MS are influenced by strategic uncertainties and capabilities, and ultimately drive firm performance.

Hypotheses

This paper tests three sets of hypotheses that test for links between strategy and performance, between strategic uncertainty and NMS and between strategic capabilities and NMS.

Strategy and performance

The first set of hypotheses addresses two traditional market strategy approaches – cost leadership and differentiation – and a broad, nonmarket strategic orientation. The nexus between competitive strategy and performance has been elaborated throughout the literature (Dess and Davis, 1984; Parnell, 1997), but invoking an NMS can also promote organizational performance in various ways (Doh *et al.*, 2012). Industries influence and manage public policy concerning product safety, environmental and general labor concerns (Vázquez-Maguirre and Hartmann, 2013; Porter and Kramer, 2006). Select firms in an industry (i.e. strategic groups) may also seek to influence government entities in a similar fashion (Frynas *et al.*, 2006; Mahon *et al.*, 2004).

A number of management theories suggest a positive linkage between NMS and firm performance (Parnell, 2015; Economist, 2016; Macher and Mayo, 2015; Davis et al., 2010; Liu and Chen, 2015). Public choice theory reveals that organizations pursue mutually beneficial transactions with government entities (Bonardi, et al., 2005; Bonardi et al., 2006; Wood and Frynas, 2006). The behavioral theory of the firm suggests that organizations behave in ways that expand their resource and cognitive scope, even engaging in risky behavior when performance goals are not met (Ji-Yub *et al.*, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2015; Cyert and March, 1963). Resource dependence theory emphasizes on the procurement of resources critical to firm survival (Leroux and Goerdel, 2009). Similarly, the resource-based view accentuates the roles played by governments and other external entities in the assimilation of strategic resources (Wei et al., 2016). Stakeholder theory focuses on the need for strategists to consider a wide range of groups – beyond suppliers, customers and competitors – that influence and are affected by their actions (Hillman and Keim, 2001). Institutional theory emphasizes on how institutions can influence firm structure and strategy (Hadani, 2012). Each of these perspectives can help explain why an effective NMS can enhance firm performance (Mellahi et al., 2016; Dahan et al., 2013; Hadani and Schuler, 2013).

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41,2Empirical work investigating the direct link between NMS and performance has also
been productive. Although the *potential* organizational benefits of NMS are widely
understood, identifying clear, positive net effects (that justify costs) has been elusive
(Hillman and Zardkoohi, 1999; Dorobantu *et al.*, 2017). A consensus has not yet been
reached, but the majority of published work is supportive. Specifically, studies have
identified positive, direct performances links with effective stakeholder management (Bosse
et al., 2009; Choi and Wang, 2009), political connect and embeddedness (Shi and Cheng, 2016;
He *et al.*, 2007; Unsal *et al.*, 2016) and broad nonmarket activity (Bonardi *et al.*, 2006; Parnell,
2015). In their comprehensive review of NMS-performance work, Mellahi *et al.* (2016) found
that 102 out of 163 studies assessing a form of NMS and performance identified a significant
link. Hence, a positive association between each of the three strategies and performance is
anticipated in the present study:

- H1a. Emphasis on cost leadership will be positively associated with performance.
- H1a. Emphasis on differentiation will be positively associated with performance.
- H1c. Emphasis on nonmarket strategy will be positively associated with performance.

Strategic uncertainty and nonmarket strategy

The second set of hypotheses addresses links between NMS and strategic uncertainty – the extent to which an organization's managers perceive the environment to be unpredictable (Stonehouse and Snowdon, 2007; Leitner and Güldenberg, 2010; Nandakumar et al., 2011). The strategy process can be viewed as a means of managing uncertainty (Jauch and Kraft, 1986; Sun et al., 2009); as such, the type and amount of emphasis placed on various strategic endeavors can be understood as a function of how strategic managers interpret their environments (Parnell et al., 2012; Swamidass and Newell, 1987). Uncertainty about the competitive and technological environments weakens the foundation on which *market* strategies are developed. Faced with high uncertainty, managers must base their strategic actions more on conjecture than on facts, thereby increasing the risk of failure. One means of mitigating this risk is to seek *nonmarket* action. Faced with high competitive and technological uncertainty, managers may lobby legislators to erect entry barriers, adopt social initiatives to create public support, modify their business activities to align with current political trends or even pursue direct financial assistance from governments through loans or grants. If successful, they can leverage NMS to reduce uncertainty by placing boundaries around potential competitive action and the potential effects of technology.

Evidence that supports this argument in the US context might be found in emerging economies, where NMS tends to be associated more with corruption and has an unfavorable connotation (Adly 2009; Calderón *et al.*, 2009) that lack appropriate legal frameworks and infrastructures (Mantere *et al.*, 2009; Barron, 2010; Lailani Laynesa and Mitsuhashi, 2013; Vázquez-Maguirre and Hartmann, 2013; Holburn and Vanden Bergh, 2008; Peng, 2003). Although illegal in most countries, activities such as bribery, collusion with competitors and even direct payments to politicians are often tolerated in less developed nations (Cavazos and Rutherford, 2012; Kingsley *et al.*, 2012; Rival, 2012; Vázquez-Maguirre and Hartmann, 2013; Parnell and Dent, 2009; Parnell *et al.*, 2013; Mantere *et al.*, 2009). Strategic uncertainty also tends to be higher as well (Bonardi *et al.*, 2006; Delios and Henisz, 2003; Ghemawat, 2008). In such instances, managers may respond to high competitive and technological uncertainty by emphasizing NMS. Following this logic, it is proffered that uncertainty about both the competitive environment and technology will be positively associated with NMS emphasis in firms in the USA:

- *H2a.* Uncertainty about the competitive environment will be positively associated with emphasis on nonmarket strategy.
- *H2b.* Uncertainty about technology will be positively associated with emphasis on nonmarket strategy.

Strategic capabilities and nonmarket strategy

The third set of hypotheses examines the nexus between strategic capabilities and NMS. Strategic capabilities represent complex bundles of skills and accumulated knowledge that enable organizations to utilize resources and coordinate activities effectively (Assudani, 2008; Teece *et al.*, 1997). They are linked to idiosyncratic organizational competencies (Berchicci *et al.*, 2012; Vogel and Güttel, 2013; Peteraf *et al.*, 2013; Peng, 2003) and tend to be scarce, relatively immobile and difficult to imitate (Desarbo *et al.*, 2005). Firm capabilities can be important components of both MS and NMS (Baysinger, 1984; Bonardi *et al.*, 2005; Bonardi *et al.*, 2006). Indeed, strategic decisions addressing market and nonmarket realms represent choices about resources and capabilities (Zajac and Shortell, 1989; Porter, 1981; Certo *et al.*, 2006; Baron, 1995). At the organization level, managers develop resources and capabilities to align their organizations with legislation and agency enforcement (Aplin and Hegarty, 1980; Holburn and Vanden Bergh, 2008; Rival, 2012; Capron and Chatain, 2008; Oliver and Holzinger, 2008).

A link between capabilities and NMS is logical, but the direction is not entirely clear. Managers in organizations with strong strategic capabilities geared toward market orientation may accentuate MS, whereas those in organizations with less developed capabilities may emphasize on NMS to compensate for the deficiency. For example, managers in US firms reporting low capability levels in their organizations were more likely to report a higher and increasing emphasis on NMS (Parnell, 2015). Although empirical support for such a relationship is limited, this reasoning suggests a negative relationship between capabilities and emphasis on NMS.

An argument can also be made for a positive link. A growing stream of literature provides empirical support for the connection between strategic capabilities and MS (Agyapong *et al.*, 2016; Cacciolatti and Lee, 2016; Song *et al.*, 2006; Theodosiou *et al.*, 2012). It is logical that strategic capabilities could be essential to effective *nonmarket* approaches in the same manner. Indeed, success in the nonmarket arena depends on the satisfaction of multiple nonmarket stakeholders, including politicians, regulatory agencies and interest groups (Bach and Allen, 2010; Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Lux *et al.*, 2011; Rui, 2010).

This argument can be extended by considering the view that MS and NMS should be mutually reinforcing (Frynas *et al.*, 2017; Scherer *et al.*, 2016). If MS and NMS are viewed as a single entity, then capabilities must be developed for and aligned with *both* market and nonmarket approaches. Following this logic, capabilities that drive MSs can also drive an integrated market–nonmarket approach. Given growing scholarly support and increasing empirical evidence for an integrated market–nonmarket approach to strategy (Deng *et al.*, 2010; Mellahi *et al.*, 2016; Wei *et al.*, 2016; Dorobantu *et al.*, 2017), the net influence of capabilities on NMS is expected to be positive:

- *H3a*. Marketing capabilities will be positively associated with the emphasis on nonmarket strategy.
- *H3b*. Management capabilities will be positively associated with the emphasis on nonmarket strategy.

MRR Methodology

Strategy along Porter's typology (i.e. cost leadership and differentiation) was assessed with 41.2 items identified by Nayyar (1993). Emphasis on NMS was assessed via items based on those identified in the Deng et al.'s (2010) taxonomy. Scales developed and previously validated by Desarbo et al. (2005) were used to assess uncertainties and capabilities. Relative performance was measured via a five-point Likert scale with items adopted from multiple sources (Harris and Mongiello, 2001; Kaplan and Norton, 1992; Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Kaplan and Norton, 2001; Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Laitinen, 2004; Madanoglu et al., 2014; Norreklit, 2000; Phillips, 1999; Phillips and Moutinho, 1999; Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). Hypotheses were tested via SmartPLS (version 3) software. Advances in partial least squares modeling is well documented in the strategic management literature and is especially appropriate for exploratory research and complex modeling with latent constructs (Hair et al., 2012).

> A survey containing the strategy, uncertainty, capability and performance items was administered online through Cint's online insight exchange platform. Surveys were sent to full-time practicing managers in the USA; part-time managers and non-managers were excluded from consideration. From an initial population of approximately 1,400 gualified potential respondents, 193 surveys were completed. Multiple management levels, experiential backgrounds, industry affiliations, and organization sizes were represented, providing a cross section of management perceptions from individuals who have been exposed to a wide variety of strategic issues (Table I). Lower-level and middle managers

Variable	n	(%)
Management level		
Lower	49	29.4
Middle	85	44.0
Upper	59	30.6
Functional background		
Accounting/finance	30	15.5
General management/HR	70	36.3
Law	4	2.1
Marketing/sales	25	13.0
Production/engineering	46	23.8
Other	18	9.3
Gender		
Male	101	53.3
Female	92	47.7
Industry		
Manufacturing	66	34.2
Hospitality	16	8.3
Health care	19	9.8
Services	89	46.1
Other	2	1.0
Firm size		
Micro (<10 employees)	10	5.2
Small (11-50 employees)	35	18.1
Medium (51-250 employees)	69	35.8
Large (>251 employees)	79	40.9

Table I. Sample demographics were included to inform the analysis, as they have played a greater role in recent years in both strategy formulation and execution (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Raes *et al.*, 2011).

Findings

Strategy, uncertainty and capability scales were assessed for reliability and validity (table III). Two items in each of the original uncertainty and capability scales were eliminated to produce an optimal solution. Coefficient alphas exceeded 0.700, composite alphas exceeded 0.800 and average variance explained (AVE) exceeded 0.500 for all constructs (Tables II-III). The Fornell–Larcker criterion (Table IV) suggests discriminant validity in all instances.

Redundancy analysis was conducted to assess convergent validity for organizational performance. Four formative indicators – competitive position, market share, sales growth and return on assets – were linked to a single-item measure of overall firm performance. The path coefficient calculated in the analysis was 0.718, exceeding the recommended 0.700 threshold. Outer variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.627 to 1.923, well below the collinearity threshold of 5. A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples provided confirmation, producing p-values of 0.000 for each of the indicators.

Hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping a structural model that included links from each uncertainty and capability category with each strategy and from each strategy to performance. *H1* and *H2* were supported, but *H3* was not. R^2 coefficients were 0.390, 0.359, 0.372 and 0.424 for differentiation, NMS, cost leadership and performance, respectively (Table V and Figure 1). A subsequent bootstrap with only middle and upper-level managers was conducted to determine if including lower-level managers influenced the analysis. There were no differences in results (i.e. acceptance or rejection of hypotheses).

A revised, composite model was developed, starting with the tested model and adding prospective influences of cost leadership and differentiation on NMS. Bootstrapping was applied, and insignificant links were removed in a stepwise fashion until only significant ones remained in the model; the insignificant revenue–performance link was not removed to control for organizational size, however. All path coefficients in the final model are positive,

Item	Loading	Wording	
Strategy-co	ost leadership (α	= 0.809, composite reliability = 0.875, AVE = 0.636)	
Cost1	0.724	Pricing below competitors	
Cost2	0.826	Managing raw materials cost and availability	
Cost3	0.830	Process improvements and innovation	
Cost4	0.806	Product cost reduction	
Strategy-d	ifferentiation (α	= 0.819, composite reliability = 0.880, AVE = 0.647)	
Differ1	0.770	Extensive customer/consumer service	
Differ2	0.786	Building/maintaining the firm's reputation	
Differ3	0.831	Premium product quality	
Differ4	0.830	Highly skilled production personnel	
$NMS(\alpha =$	0.913, composite	e reliability = 0.939, AVE = 0.793)	
NMS1	0.871	Lobbying government officials for legislation favorable to the organization	
NMS2	0.896	Contributing to politicians, candidates or political action committees that	
		advance our interests	
NMS3	0.887	Working with government entities to create entry barriers for potential	Table II.
		competitors	
NMS4	0.908	Working with industry groups to campaign for public/government support	Survey items – MS
		favorable to our firm	and NMS

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71,2	Uncertainty-competition ($\alpha = 0.721$, composite reliability = 0.823, AVE = 0.538)								
	Unc_Comp2	0.676	There are many `promotion wars' in our industry						
	Unc_Comp3	0.771	Anything that one competitor can offer can be matched	readily by others					
	Unc_Comp5	0.781	One hears of new competitive moves almost every day						
260	Unc_Comp6	0.700	Our competitors are relatively weak®						
200	Uncertainty-technology ($\alpha = 0.711$, composite reliability = 0.849, AVE = 0.585)								
	Unc_Tech1	0.678	The technology in our industry is changing rapidly						
	Unc_Tech2	0.802	Technological changes provide big opportunities in our	· industry					
	Unc_Tech4	0.775	Technological developments in our industry are rather minor®						
	Unc_Tech6	0.799	The technological changes in our industry are frequent						
	Management capability ($\alpha = 0.838$, composite reliability = 0.891, AVE = 0.672)								
	Cap_Mgt1	0.786	Integrated logistics systems						
	Cap_Mgt2	0.812	Cost control capabilities						
	Cap_Mgt3	0.785	Financial management skills						
	Cap_Mgt5	0.793	Accuracy of profitability and revenue forecasting						
	Marketing capa	bility ($\alpha = 0.756$	composite reliability = 0.842 , $AVE = 0.572$)						
Table III.	Cap_Mkt1	0.639	Knowledge of customers						
Survey items –	Cap_Mkt2	0.695	Knowledge of competitors						
uncertainties and	Cap_Mkt3	0.807	Integration of marketing activities						
capabilities	Cap_Mkt4	0.751	Skill to segment and target markets						
	Cap_Mkt4	0.751	Skill to segment and target markets						
	Variable Co	mp Unc Cost 1	d Differ Mgt Cap Mkt Cap NMS Perform Rev	(Size) Tech U					
	Cost Lead	0.738 0.476 0.79 0.214 0.57	0.805						

0.557 0.521 0.513 0.821 Mgt Cao Mkt Cap 0.479 0.452 0.483 0.773 0.759 NMS 0.200 0.433 0.891 0.5270.4570.444 0.514 n/a^a Perform 0.547 0.504 0.749 0.622 0.468 Revenues 0.057 0.0920.0770.037 0.041 0.015 0.085 1.000 Table IV. 0.569 0.516 0.510 0.100 0.767 Tech Unc 0.487 0.453 0.499 0.541Fornell-Larcker matrix Note: ^aPerformance is measured as a formative construct

except for the competitive uncertainty-differentiation and differentiation-NMS links. The marketing capability–NMS link was not significant in the original model, but crossed the 95 per cent threshold in the revised model. R^2 coefficients were 0.379, 0.366, 0.408 and 0.424 for differentiation, NMS, cost leadership and performance, respectively. Results from the final bootstrap are presented in Table VI and Figure 2.

Structural properties of the final model were assessed further. VIF scores in the outer model ranged from 1.010 to 1.845, suggesting that collinearity was not a significant concern. The adjusted R^2 coefficient for performance was unchanged (0.412), denoting that the final parsimonious model does not sacrifice any predictive power. Effect sizes were assessed and interpreted following Cohen's benchmarks of 0.02 (small), 0.15 (moderate) and 0.35 (large) (Hair *et al.*, 2012). The effect size for each of the significant links was small, except for the

Hypoth	esisLink	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	<i>T</i> -statistics	<i>þ</i> - value	Significance	Nonmarket and market
H1a	Cost Lead \rightarrow performance	0.228	0.233	0.114	1.999	0.046	*	strategies
H1b	Differentiation \rightarrow performance	0.309	0.308	0.097	3.181	0.002	*	
H1c	$NMS \rightarrow performance$	0.301	0.303	0.073	4.128	0.000	*	
	Revenues (size) \rightarrow	0.036	0.009	0.073	0.493	0.622		
	performance							261
	Comp Unc \rightarrow cost lead	0.151	0.152	0.072	2.114	0.035	*	
	Comp Unc \rightarrow differentiation	-0.282	-0.286	0.081	3.503	0.001	*	
H2a	$Comp \ Unc \rightarrow NMS$	0.296	0.302	0.081	3.665	0.000	*	
	Tech Unc \rightarrow cost lead	0.275	0.272	0.094	2.920	0.004	*	
	Tech Unc \rightarrow differentiation	0.398	0.393	0.087	4.589	0.000	*	
H2b	Tech Unc \rightarrow NMS	0.243	0.239	0.087	2.796	0.005	*	
	Mkt Cap \rightarrow cost lead	0.065	0.065	0.098	0.662	0.508		
	Mkt Cap \rightarrow differentiation	0.191	0.186	0.126	1.512	0.131		
H3a	$Mkt Cap \to NMS$	0.152	0.157	0.098	1.554	0.121		
	$Mgt Cap \rightarrow cost lead$	0.247	0.253	0.102	2.429	0.015	*	
	Mgt Cap \rightarrow differentiation	0.320	0.333	0.109	2.929	0.004	*	
H3b	$Mgt Cap \rightarrow NMS$	0.037	0.035	0.111	0.335	0.738		7 11 1
								Table V.
Note: *	Significant at 0.05 level							Tests of hypotheses

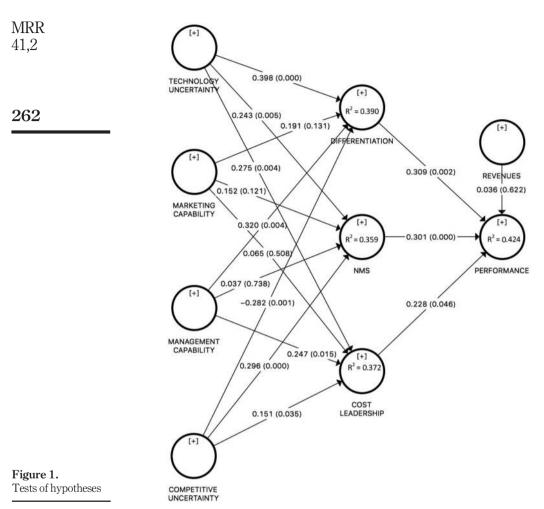
technology uncertainty-differentiation and management capability-differentiation links, which were moderate.

Discussion

Several findings warrant additional discussion. First, the positive performance links with both competitive strategies – cost leadership and differentiation – reinforce decades of research on the topic (Dess and Davis, 1984; Gopalakrishna and Subramanian, 2001; Murray 1988), while the positive NMS–performance link reinforces more recent work in the field (Mellahi *et al.*, 2016). These findings highlight the importance of competitive market-oriented strategies and elevates the significance of NMS as part of the equation.

Second, the possible explanations for the *positive* cost leadership–NMS and *negative* differentiation–NMS links are compelling. Differentiation could be viewed as an alternative to a nonmarket approach, with innovative businesses developing new products and markets *instead* of focusing on nonmarket factors. Cost leadership – as opposed to differentiation – could be seen as insufficient for sustained competitive advantage, with many low-cost businesses adding a nonmarket emphasis as part of the broader strategy. Following this logic, NMS could be a standalone approach for businesses that pursue differentiation but an integrated approach for those that pursue cost leadership. To such an extent, this finding could explain why NMS can be, but does not have to be, part of an integrated competitive approach (Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Kingsley *et al.*, 2012; Sun *et al.*, 2012; Singer, 2013; Baron, 1995).

In a similar vein, the perceived level of competitive uncertainty appears to drive firms toward either differentiation or a nonmarket approach. Specifically, firms were more likely to pursue differentiation where competitive uncertainty was low but pursue NMS where competitive uncertainty was high. Viewing low uncertainty through a capabilities lens might explain this phenomenon. For example, low competitive uncertainty could reflect the development of strong competitive knowledge, an

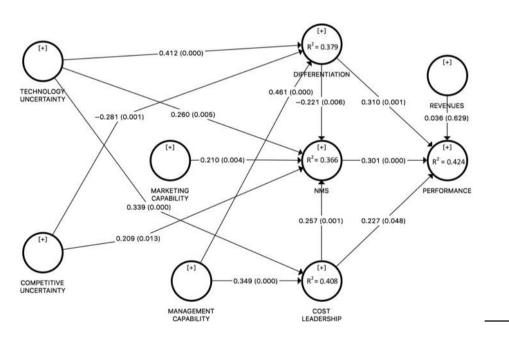


important strategic capability (Assudani, 2008; Teece *et al.*, 2016). Following this logic, firms with such a capability are better equipped to pursue a form of differentiation, whereas those without it may resort to a nonmarket alternative.

Third, the lack of significant links between marketing capability and market-oriented strategies – particularly differentiation – was unexpected. In general, effective marketing broadly supports the execution of any market-based competitive strategy (Cacciolatti and Lee, 2016). The lack of significance does not necessarily preclude an association. Indeed, these links were positive but insignificant in the original model, suggesting that other competitive and technology uncertainties are better predictors of differentiation emphasis.

The positive link between marketing capability and NMS is intuitive. For example, marketing is a key facet of campaigns that promote a firm's CSR activities, and marketing acumen is also important in efforts to gain political support (Krasnikov and Jayachandran, 2008; Morgan *et al.*, 2009; Ngo and O'Cass, 2012; Oliver and Holzinger, 2008; Wilden and

Link	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>p</i> -value	Significance	Effect size (f2)	Nonmarket and market
Comp Unc \rightarrow differentiation	-0.281	-0.284	0.087	3.244	0.001	*	0.074	strategies
Comp Unc \rightarrow NMS	0.209	0.216	0.084	2.476	0.013	*	0.039	
Cost Lead \rightarrow NMS	0.257	0.260	0.080	3.218	0.001	*	0.059	
Cost Lead \rightarrow performance	0.227	0.239	0.115	1.975	0.048	*	0.048	
Differentiation \rightarrow NMS	-0.221	-0.227	0.079	2.779	0.006	*	0.043	263
Differentiation \rightarrow performance	0.310	0.304	0.096	3.240	0.001	*	0.110	
Mgt Cap \rightarrow cost lead	0.349	0.358	0.082	4.261	0.000	*	0.140	
Mgt Cap \rightarrow differentiation	0.461	0.468	0.075	6.168	0.000	*	0.216	
Mkt Cap \rightarrow NMS	0.210	0.218	0.074	2.847	0.004	*	0.045	
$NMS \rightarrow performance$	0.301	0.298	0.076	3.985	0.000	*	0.123	
Revenues (size) \rightarrow performance	0.036	0.009	0.074	0.483	0.629		0.002	
Tech Unc \rightarrow cost lead	0.339	0.335	0.097	3.509	0.000	*	0.133	
Tech Unc \rightarrow differentiation	0.412	0.412	0.084	4.901	0.000	*	0.171	
Tech Unc \rightarrow NMS	0.260	0.250	0.092	2.840	0.005	*	0.061	
								Table VI.
Note: *Significant at 0.05 level								Refined model results



Gudergan, 2015). As a function, marketing appears instrumental to both market and nonmarket activities (Grinstein, 2008; Kirca *et al.*, 2005; Parnell, 2015).

Figure 2. Refined model

Finally, the development of management capabilities appears to align with marketoriented strategies in general, but not with NMS specifically. The distinction between marketing and management capabilities in the final model is compelling, as well-managed firms appear to emphasize on a market-oriented competitive strategy more than a nonmarket one. This relationship could be viewed differently from an integrated NMS–MS perspective. Indeed, certain strategic capabilities may be most appropriate for a particular market or NMS (Berchicci *et al.*, 2012, Parnell, 2011; Theodosiou *et al.*, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2012). Strategic managers who view the market and nonmarket domains as separate entities may seek to develop a different set of capabilities for each. In contrast, those who view NMS and MS as a single comprehensive strategy may pursue an integrated combination of capabilities designed to support that approach.

Conclusions

The increased emphasis on NMS as an integrated part of an organization's broad strategic effort rekindles a decades-old debate over the relative influence of industry and firm-specific factors on organizational performance (Karniouchina *et al.*, 2013). The fallout from this debate transitioned the field from an industrial organization orientation to one that focuses on firm-level resources and capabilities (O'Regan *et al.*, 2011; Barney, 1996). Regardless of one's perspective on integration, MS and NMS represent distinct paths to firm performance (Bach and Allen, 2010; dos Reis *et al.*, 2012; Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Lux *et al.*, 2011; Cavazos and Rutherford, 2012; Vázquez-Maguirre and Hartmann, 2013). Within this context, the present study investigated the performance impact of NMS as it relates to traditional cost leadership and differentiation strategies, as well as NMS links to strategic uncertainties and capabilities. It is distinctive in four ways, the latter three of which remain relatively unexplored in the literature.

First, the direct performance impact of NMS was positive and significant. When compared to the performance links of market strategies (i.e. cost leadership and differentiation), the effect size (f^2) of the NMS–performance nexus was the greatest. While the results of a single study should not be overgeneralized, the findings presented herein suggest that MS and NMS affect performance in similar ways. While this does not run counter to previous work in the field (Mellahi *et al.*, 2016), it demonstrates support for a model that considers MS and NMS as competing and direct drivers of firm performance.

Second, the cost leadership–differentiation split in the model suggests that a nonmarket orientation is more common among cost leaders than among differentiators. Indeed, viewing NMS from a cost perspective could provide insight into why cost leaders appear to be more likely than differentiators to engage in nonmarket activity. Perhaps, nonmarket initiatives – whether social or political – are pursued simply because they are viewed as *cost-effective*. Following this logic, a firm's CSR and lobbying activities might have less to do with published claims about the betterment of society and more to do with anticipated effects on the bottom line.

Third, the strong links between management capability and MS – but not NMS – suggest that firms pursuing NMS tend to lack broad management capability. Broadly speaking, this underscores the importance of strategy-specific capabilities (Oliver and Holzinger, 2008; Theodosiou *et al.*, 2012), but it also suggests that nonmarket initiatives could be pursued in part because of managerial shortcomings.

Finally, competitive uncertainty's negative association with differentiation and its positive association with NMS suggests that a keen understanding of competition underpins effective differentiation, and lacking one might prompt a shift toward a nonmarket approach. The uncertainty–differentiation link is consistent with Porter's original and subsequent views of differentiation (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Stonehouse and Snowdon, 2007). The uncertainty–NMS link is intuitive and consistent with an institutional perspective, as uncertainty could prompt an increased emphasis on NMS as a defense mechanism (Parnell, 2015).

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Managerial implications

There are several key managerial implications of this work. First, managers should develop capabilities that reinforce their firms' market strategies, an approach supported by most scholarly work (Dess and Davis, 1984; Ray *et al.*, 2004; Stonehouse and Snowdon, 2007; Zajac and Shortell, 1989; Parnell, 2010; Rashidirad *et al.*, 2013). The findings presented herein reinforce extant knowledge detailing how various MS–capability configurations impact performance (Day, 1994; Theodosiou *et al.*, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2012). As such, managers should develop, emphasize and support capabilities that underpin a strong market orientation.

Second, some firms view MS and NMS as components of a comprehensive, strategic approach (dos Reis *et al.*, 2012; Henisz and Zelner, 2012; Kingsley *et al.*, 2012; Sawant, 2012; Sun *et al.*, 2012; Singer, 2013; Baron, 1995), while others view NMS as a standalone endeavor (Vázquez-Maguirre and Hartmann, 2013; Porter and Kramer, 2002; Porter and Kramer, 2006). Managers seeking to integrate both dimensions into a single strategy should recognize the inherent trade-offs that are likely (Frynas *et al.*, 2017; Singer, 2013). Context is an important consideration as well, but at a minimum, managers should consider action in areas where nonmarket and market considerations coincide and are directly related to strategic success of the firm (Bach and Allen, 2010; Hadani *et al.*, 2015). For example, a health food store could become involved in a social initiative that supports organic farming, while a restaurant owner could lobby for certain food safety regulations. In this respect, nonmarket activities should reinforce the MS and thereby advance the firm's broader strategic orientation.

Finally, managers should give careful consideration before pursuing direct, nonmarket involvement in controversial or potentially contentious areas. For example, prior to passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, executives in US insurance and pharmaceutical firms had to decide whether to support and/or attempt to influence the legislation, even though it was forecast to affect their industries adversely over the long term. Some firms such as Pfizer decided to negotiate with the bill's political advocates – trading support for influence – while also revising their offerings to coordinate with impending government requirements. Many analysts supported this stance, arguing that public–private collaboration was the most effective approach under the circumstances. However, others argued that opposition to the plan could have prevented its passage altogether (Whelan, 2012; Fera, 2013). Hence, the long-term effectiveness of a proactive nonmarket approach remains unclear.

Limitations and future directions

Two limitations of this study should be recognized. First, the sample included mangers in multiple industries. Factors unique to an industry influence strategic action and performance in each of the firms represented. Although significant cross-industry differences in performance were not identified, industry membership likely influences the process by which an NMS is crafted and executed. Second, self-typing scales were used to assess relative competitive and objective performance (Ramanujam and Venkatraman, 1987; Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). This approach is especially appropriate for assessing performance with cross-industry samples because it assesses performance relative to competitors instead of relying on objective performance data that are driven in part by industry factors (McGahan and Porter, 1997). However, quantitative measures also provide an alternative lens for viewing performance, one that can also reduce the influence of common method variance (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Lindell and Whitney, 2001; Podasakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Several viable research directions have been identified. First, the relative influence of MS and NMS on performance warrants attention. Political considerations have always been

prominent in emerging economies, but this trend has become more pervasive in developed nations like the USA (Hillman and Hitt, 1999; Hillman and Zardkoohi, 1999; Oliver and Holzinger, 2008; Ozer, 2010; Kang and Liu, 2016). The increased emphasis on public–private partnerships and CSR, as well as the heightened influence of corporate and industry lobbyists, appears to have weakened the MS–performance link in many industries (Porter and Kramer, 2006; Mantere *et al.*, 2009; Singer, 2013; Cordeiro and Tewari, 2015; Macher and Mayo, 2015). Given the relatively large amount of unexplained performance variance in most strategy–performance studies, considering the role of NMS is germane.

Second, just as there are multiple generic MSs, there are multiple NMSs as well. For example, both CSR and corporate political activity purport to promote societal and governmental goodwill, but through different activities (Liedong *et al.*, 2015; Mellahi *et al.*, 2016). Nonetheless, the extent to which disparate nonmarket approaches can comprise a single overarching NMS remains unclear (Scherer *et al.*, 2016; Scherer *et al.*, 2014; den Hond *et al.*, 2014; Matten and Crane, 2005). Additional work delineating and validating specific NMSs is required.

Third, the link between firm size and NMS warrants further attention. Ceteris paribus, large firms are more likely than small firms to emphasize on NMS and to do so independently (Hillman *et al.*, 2004). However, smaller organizations can freeride by aligning with larger firms that support their policy preferences (Drope and Hansen, 2008). Because of differences in resource and capabilities, firms are not equally equipped to address political influences and therefore are likely to respond differently (Bonardi *et al.*, 2005; Oliver and Holzinger, 2008). The cost leadership and differentiation strategies may require different, complementary nonmarket approaches. Moreover, the positive association between NMS and uncertainties about both competitors and technology suggests that some top firms may develop NMS as a response to market uncertainties.

Finally, the long-term performance effects of NMS are unclear. For example, shortly after the 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, a number of firms took steps to disassociate with the National Rifle Association (NRA), the nation's most prominent advocate of gun ownership rights. But Georgia legislators countered the move by Atlanta-based Delta Airlines, eliminating an amendment that would have reinstated a \$50 million jet fuel tax exemption the company had sought. Delta found itself in the middle of an ongoing political and social debate on gun rights and faced boycott threats from consumers and activists on both sides of the issue. Exactly how this type of political and social intervention will affect Delta and other companies in the long run remains to be seen.

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