The Role of Cultural Intelligence in Marketing Adaptation and Export Performance

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ABSTRACT
This study examines how export manager cultural intelligence (CQ) affects the relationship between marketing-mix adaptation and export performance. From a resource-advantage theory perspective, the authors posit that export managers’ motivational and metacognitive CQ are intangible but valuable resources that influence marketing strategy and export performance. According to survey data from 153 U.S. exporting firms, export managers’ metacognitive CQ positively moderates the relationship between marketing-mix adaptations and export performance. Furthermore, export managers’ motivational CQ positively moderates the relationship between environmental differences and marketing-mix adaptations. The study adds to the theoretical understanding of the adaptation-performance relationship and provides valuable guidelines for exporting firms in the recruitment, training, and promotion of export managers.

Keywords: marketing-mix adaptation, export performance, exporting, cultural intelligence

In its attempt to successfully enter Asian markets, Italian-based scooter manufacturer Piaggio adapted its Vespa to better fit the local environment. The “Indian Vespa” comes with a narrower floorboard to allow shorter riders to reach the ground more easily; drum brakes have replaced disk brakes to make it easier to change flat tires, which occur more frequently on India’s weaker road infrastructure; and a side footrest has been added to adapt to Indian women riding sidesaddle to accommodate their floor-length saris (Meichtry 2010).

These adaptations to the Vespa were the result of a strategic decision based on analysis and understanding of a host country environment that differs from the home country. The success of such decisions hinges on the international marketing manager’s sophisticated understanding of local regulations, infrastructure, and customer preferences as well as the manager’s motivation and willingness to make adaptations.

The degree of marketing adaptation in international markets and its link with export performance has received considerable attention in the literature. On the one hand, marketing standardization is expected to reap benefits from economies of scale and reduced complexity (Schilke, Reimann, and Thomas 2009). On the other hand, differences in the cultural, economic, and regulatory environments may require an adapted marketing strategy (Cavusgil and Kirpalani 1993; Navarro et al. 2010; Sousa, Ruzo, and Losada 2010).

Empirical investigations into the relationship between marketing-mix adaptations and export performance...
have yielded inconclusive findings, with some studies reporting a positive relationship (e.g., Calantone et al. 2004; Cavusgil and Kirpalani 1993; Navarro et al. 2010; Sousa, Ruzo, and Losada 2010), others a negative relationship (e.g., Chung 2009; Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson 2008; Schilke, Reimann, and Thomas 2009), and still others no relationship (e.g., Kotabe 1990; Lages, Jap, and Griffith 2007). Given the empirical ambiguity in terms of a main effect, researchers have increasingly applied a contingency perspective to identify contextual moderating variables to further understand when and where adaptation or standardization leads to greater performance (Katsikeas, Samiee, and Theodosiou 2006; Xu, Cavusgil, and White 2006).

Empirical findings suggest that firm characteristics such as firm size, cost leadership strategy, degree of marketing coordination and global market participation (Schilke, Reimann, and Thomas 2009), and duration and intensity of exporting activities (Hultman, Katsikeas, and Robson 2011) exert moderating effects on the adaptation–performance relationship. Schilke, Reimann, and Thomas (2009) also find that industry characteristics such as product homogeneity and industry focus moderate this relationship. Other researchers have focused on the degree of fit between the external environment and the firm’s marketing strategy (Hultman, Robson, and Katsikeas 2009; Katsikeas, Samiee, and Theodosiou 2006). Cavusgil, Zou, and Naidu (1993, p. 497) summarize the contingency perspective by concluding that “it is difficult to make blanket statements about suitable standardization/adaptation strategy without an examination of the company background, product/industry features, and the characteristics of the export market.”

The contingency perspective has provided considerable insights, but one contingency factor that has received limited attention in the literature is the skills and abilities of the export manager (Griffith and Hoppner 2013; Sousa, Ruzo, and Losada 2010). This is surprising, given the centrality of the export manager in market selection and the design and execution of international marketing strategy (Hultman, Robson, and Katsikeas 2009; Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Piercy 1998). Thus, this study examines the influence of the export manager’s motivational and metacognitive cultural intelligence (CQ) on strategy and performance in the international market.

Cultural intelligence is a recently conceptualized (Earley and Ang 2003) and operationalized construct (Ang et al. 2007) in the international human resources literature. Early empirical evidence suggests that it is significantly related to expatriate adjustment (Wu and Ang 2011), more positive outcomes in international negotiations (Imai and Gelfand 2010), and reduced stress from international travels (Ramsey et al. 2011). However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have examined export manager CQ and its effects on international marketing strategy and export performance.

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it expands the theoretical foundation on contingency theory by incorporating export manager CQ as a contingency factor that affects the relationship between international marketing strategies and export performance. This is grounded in Hunt and Morgan’s (1995) resource-advantage theory (R-A theory), which suggests that human resources can lead to competitive advantages if the export manager’s skills and abilities are valuable and difficult to imitate. Second, we shift the focus from more abstract and less managerially controllable firm characteristics such as firm size or environmental factors to the more concrete characteristics of the export manager by examining how the export manager’s CQ moderates the relationship between marketing-mix adaptation and export performance. The findings provide important guidance for managers as they strive to develop effective international marketing strategies and offer practical implications for firms attempting to recruit and develop effective export managers.

We proceed by discussing the theoretical underpinnings from R-A theory and CQ from which the study hypotheses evolve. Then, we present the empirical setting and study results. Next, we discuss the findings and their implications for theory and practice. We conclude by noting some limitations and offering directions for further research.

**CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

We develop a conceptual model that incorporates the key variables of export performance, marketing-mix adaptation, environmental differences, and export managers’ motivational and metacognitive CQ. Export performance is the extent to which the firm achieves its strategic, financial, and competitive objectives for a specific export venture in one market (Cavusgil and Zou 1994). Marketing-mix adaptation is the means by which the firm implements its export strategy in response to internal and external forces. Consistent with prior
research (e.g., Lages, Jap, and Griffith 2008), we view marketing-mix adaptation as the integration of the conventional four Ps of marketing (product, price, place, and promotion). We draw from Ghemawat’s (2001) CAGE framework and define environmental differences as the combined external forces based on cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic differences. We provide clear definitions for motivational and metacognitive CQ subsequently. We illustrate the conceptual framework in Figure 1.

The Export Manager as a Human Resource Advantage

Our focus on the export manager’s CQ is grounded in Hunt and Morgan’s (1995) R-A theory, which views the firm as a bundle of heterogeneous and imperfectly mobile resources (see also Griffith and Yalcinkaya 2010). The R-A theory builds on the resource-based view of the firm (Barney 1991), but one important extension is its identification and categorization of seven specific resources; (1) financial, (2) physical, and (3) legal resources are considered tangible resources and (4) human, (5) organizational, (6) informational, and (7) relational resources are considered intangible resources (Hunt 2000). Competitive advantage arises from the development and leveraging of unique combinations of heterogeneous and imperfectly mobile resources (Seggie and Griffith 2008). Thus, by accumulating and deploying the right combination of resources, firms can gain a sustainable competitive advantage, and the value of a given resource is gauged by its potential to be a competitive differentiator (Hunt 2000).

Intangible human resources are especially important to firms because they are action oriented and stimulate the use of other resources (Magnusson, Westjohn, and Boggs 2009). Yet, to a large extent, intangible resources are “embodied within the employees of the firm and are only firm resources to the degree to which the firm aggregates the resources embodied within employees” (Griffith and Yalcinkaya 2010, p. 20). Therefore, the ability of the firm to generate and sustain a competitive advantage is based on the skills and competences of its managers (Griffith and Hoppner 2013).

This places the international marketing manager at the center of attention of the firm’s global operations. In a constantly fluctuating global environment, the international marketing manager must have the necessary

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Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

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skills to develop, implement, and constantly recalibrate the firm’s international marketing plan (Moeller and Harvey 2011). Griffith and Hoppner (2013) argue that successful international marketing managers need to possess the necessary soft skills to be able to make critical adjustments to the firm’s marketing strategy in response to changes in the internal and external environment. Griffith (2010) illustrates the complexity of the global environment and suggests that global marketing managers must be able to carefully address the influence of the institutional environment to determine optimal degrees of adaptation of the marketing mix.

The human resource value of the export manager is in his or her ability to adjust and recalibrate the firm’s marketing strategy. Accordingly, the existence of CQ does not influence performance directly; rather, it is only through some vehicle, such as the implementation or adjustment of the firm’s marketing strategy, that the firm can realize the value of CQ. The role of management decision making in firm performance outcomes is further supported by, for example, strategic choice theory (e.g., Child 1972; Hitt and Tyler 1991) or upper echelons theory (Hambrick and Mason 1984), which suggest that the success of an organization depends on the competence of its management. We aim to extend the export marketing literature by focusing on the effects of the export manager’s CQ, as a characteristic that influences decision making. This, in effect, makes the international marketing manager a critical source of human capital.

**CQ**

Although CQ has garnered considerable attention, primarily in the international human resources literature (e.g., Chen et al. 2010), it remains scarce in the international marketing literature. It was initially conceptualized (Earley and Ang 2003) and empirically validated (Ang et al. 2007) as a four-dimensional construct consisting of (1) motivational, (2) behavioral, (3) cognitive, and (4) metacognitive dimensions. Ang et al. (2007, p. 338) define each of the four dimensions as follows: Motivational CQ reflects “the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences.” Behavioral CQ reflects “the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions when interacting with people of different cultures.” Cognitive CQ entails “knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultures. This includes knowledge of the economic, legal, and social systems of different cultures.” Finally, metacognitive CQ refers to “the mental processes that individuals use to acquire and understand cultural knowledge,” and “relevant capabilities include planning, monitoring, and revising mental models of cultural norms for countries or groups of people.”

The original conceptualization viewed CQ as an aggregate of the four dimensions, and early empirical examinations focused on the aggregate CQ construct. The findings from these studies suggest that CQ, in aggregate, is positively related to more effective intercultural negotiation (Imai and Gelfand 2010), improves density of social networks (Fehr and Kuo 2008), and enables managers in multinational corporations to set culturally suitable goals and implement organizational innovations more effectively (Elenkov and Manev 2009). Other works, however, examined the four dimensions separately and often found differential effects. For example, Ang et al. (2007) find that metacognitive CQ is significantly related to cultural judgment and decision making, whereas motivational CQ is related to interactional adjustment and well-being. These findings suggest that the different dimensions, though certainly related, are relatively independent.

This suggests both a need to consider the dimensions independently and a need to develop theory and empirical evidence on which dimensions are critical for which types of interactions (Chua, Morris, and Mor 2012). Similarly, Ang et al. (2007, p. 364) conclude that there is a need to investigate “where specific dimensions of CQ have special relevance to different outcomes.” In this vein, several studies have focused on motivational CQ specifically. Templer, Tay, and Chandrasekar (2006) find that expatriate managers with higher motivational CQ have better general and work adjustment in a foreign country. Ward and Fisher (2008) also demonstrate a positive relationship between motivational CQ and expatriates’ general adjustment to a foreign environment. Chen et al. (2010) find a positive relationship between motivational CQ and work adjustment among expatriates, and this relationship is moderated by subsidiary support and cultural distance. Finally, Chen, Liu, and Portnoy (2012) find that real estate agents with higher motivational CQ had more sales transactions with clients/agents from a different culture.

Another group of studies has focused particularly on metacognitive CQ. Chua, Morris, and Mor (2012) find that managers with higher metacognitive CQ collaborate across cultures more effectively. Klafeln, Banerjee, and Chiu (2009) focus on metacognitive CQ as the
linchpin to explain managers’ success in navigating different cultures. Metacognitive CQ is particularly important because it enhances “(a) contextualized (vs. abstract) thinking; a thinking style characterized by high degrees of sensitivity to the cultural embeddedness of human motivations and actions, and (b) cognitive flexibility: the discriminative use of normative schemas and behavioral scripts in response to the shifting cultural expectations in the environment” (Klafeln, Banerjee, and Chiu 2009, p. 319).

Our literature review reveals that researchers have focused primarily on the motivational and metacognitive CQ dimensions. We posit that these dimensions are also particularly relevant in the export management process for three reasons. First, metacognitive CQ is more than just knowledge (cognition) and behavior because it encapsulates the awareness of one’s understanding of cultural differences, planning for how to use one’s knowledge before an intercultural encounter, and checking and recalibrating assumptions and mental maps when expectations and actual experiences differ (Ang et al. 2007). In effect, “individuals with high meta-cognitive CQ understand processes and conduct business transactions more effectively because they track their progression, identify potential cultural misunderstandings, and modify their behavior according to the cultural setting” (Elenkov and Pimentel 2009, p. 297). This has led some researchers to conclude that metacognitive CQ is perhaps the most central dimension among the CQ dimensions because it links cognition and behavior (Chua, Morris, and Mor 2012; Thomas et al. 2008).

Second, motivational CQ does not capture a person’s ability but rather is focused on the desire to gain understanding and knowledge of different cultures and a self-efficacy dimension (the belief in one’s ability). Thus, the motivational CQ dimension captures a conceptually different facet through its focus on motivation rather than actual capabilities (Chen et al. 2010). Furthermore, Chen, Liu, and Portnoy (2012, p. 94) suggest that motivational CQ is a more fundamental dimension than cognitive and behavioral CQ because it provides “agentic control of affect, cognition, and behavior that facilitate goal accomplishment.” Whereas the four different dimensions are positively correlated (Ang et al. 2007) and we could argue that more motivated people are more likely to have higher abilities, this may not necessarily be so.

A third reason motivational and metacognitive CQ have received more attention is that, apart from theoretical considerations, the operationalization of cognitive and behavioral CQ in particular is somewhat problematic. Accepted operationalizations of cognitive and behavioral CQ (e.g., Ang et al. 2007) ask respondents to describe aspects of their CQ, not to demonstrate it objectively. More valid cognitive and behavioral assessments would not ask respondents about their knowledge and behaviors but rather require that respondents engage in problem solving and demonstrate culturally sensitive behaviors (Ward and Fisher 2008).

Accordingly, from the preceding arguments and supporting literature, we posit that motivational and metacognitive CQ are particularly relevant in the export management process and develop specific hypotheses for each dimension. It could be argued that motivational and metacognitive CQ are directly related to international marketing strategy and export performance. However, prior research has emphasized the need for the international marketing manager to execute and adjust the firm’s global strategy in response to the internal and external environment (Griffith 2010; Griffith and Hoppner 2013). Therefore, we posit that motivational CQ interacts with the environment to drive marketing adaptations and that metacognitive CQ interacts with marketing adaptations to enhance performance.

**Motivational CQ and Marketing Adaptations**

As differences in the environment between the exporter’s home country and the host country increase, evidence suggests that the degree of marketing adaptation increases. For example, greater differences in the sociocultural, technological, and marketing infrastructure environment lead to greater product adaptations from Swedish exporters (Hultman, Katsikeas, and Robson 2011). Among U.S. exporters, legal and regulatory differences lead to increased product adaptation (Calantone et al. 2004). Likewise, Katsikeas, Samiee, and Theodosiou (2006) contend that differences in the legal, customer, and technological environments lead to greater marketing-mix adaptations among exporters in the United Kingdom. Finally, Sousa and Lages (2011) find a significant, positive relationship between export managers’ perceptions of differences and marketing-mix adaptations, and Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson (2008) discover that psychic distance has a positive relationship to adaptation in retail strategy. Thus, the accumulated evidence suggests a positive relationship between environmental differences and marketing-mix adaptation.

We suggest that motivational CQ strengthens the relationship between environmental differences and market-
ing adaptations. Empirical research has largely focused on expatriate adjustment, and growing evidence shows that motivational CQ contributes to greater expatriate adjustment, job performance, and job completion (Chen et al. 2010). Evidence has also shown that sales performance with a culture other than the salesperson’s own culture increases with high motivational CQ (Chen, Liu, and Portnoy 2012) and that high motivational CQ leads to more cooperative behavior in intercultural negotiations (Imai and Gelfand 2010).

When environmental differences increase, we posit that export managers will respond with increased action and a greater adaptation of the marketing mix. Motivational CQ reflects people’s interest in and drive to adapt to new cultural environments (Templer, Tay, and Chandrasekar 2006). It captures both a self-efficacy belief in one’s ability to be successful in culturally diverse environments and the intrinsic interest in other cultures (Chen et al. 2010). Motivational CQ “triggers attention and effort [and] stimulates and channels an individual’s cultural knowledge and strategies into guided action” (Templer, Tay, and Chandrasekar 2006, p. 157). Thus, we expect motivational CQ to trigger the attention and interest of export managers toward the environmental differences between home and export markets.

Accordingly, we expect export managers with high levels of motivational CQ to respond to environmental differences with greater adaptation of the marketing mix. Adapting the marketing mix is an outlet for export managers with high motivational CQ to take guided action on their intrinsic interest in other cultures and the belief in their ability to adapt effectively to other cultures. In contrast, we expect export managers with low motivational CQ to behave in a more universalist manner. Although environmental differences may be substantial, the success of the firm’s existing domestic marketing strategy should overcome environmental differences without significant adaptation. We formalize these arguments in the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Motivational CQ positively moderates the relationship between environmental differences and marketing-mix adaptations.

**Metacognitive CQ and Export Performance**

Recent anecdotal evidence suggests that effective marketing adaptations can have a significant, positive effect. KFC’s tremendous success in China has been attributed to its willingness to radically alter its marketing strategy from its U.S. strategy (Bell and Shelman 2011). SABMiller relies on heavily localized marketing campaigns to expand its global footprint in the beer industry (Quelch and Jocz 2012). Starbucks recently announced a change in course in its China strategy. After 14 years of trying to persuade the Chinese to buy into its foreign coffee culture experience, Starbucks will now try a more locally tailored approach (Burkitt 2012).

However, adapting to meet the needs of host country markets entails an increase in costs. In his provocative article, Levitt (1983) famously writes that “the world’s needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenized” (p. 93) and that “different cultural preferences, national tastes and standards, and business institutions are vestiges of the past” (p. 96). Accordingly, Levitt argues that global success requires global standardization. In contrast, an adapted marketing strategy may mean sacrificing economies of scale. Therefore, firms should only undertake such an effort if they expect the benefits to exceed the costs (Calantone et al. 2004). This requires an export manager with a sophisticated understanding and sensitivity of cultural and regulatory elements to determine the appropriate amount of marketing adaptations.

Griffith and Hoppner (2013) develop a list of ten soft skills (e.g., tacit knowledge, ability to learn and unlearn, flexibility) that global marketing managers need to make successful tactical adaptations to their firm’s global marketing strategy. We add metacognitive CQ as a useful skill and posit that it interacts with the firm’s marketing strategy to enhance export performance.

Managers with high metacognitive CQ have greater capacities to be aware of others’ cultural preferences and are able to question cultural assumptions (Ang et al. 2007). Furthermore, research has described metacognitive CQ as “thinking about thinking, comprising the processes of monitoring and adjusting one’s thoughts and strategies as one learns new skills” (Chua, Morris, and Mor 2012, p. 117). Accordingly, we expect metacognitive CQ to enhance cross-cultural competencies through an increased sense of awareness that customers’ motivations and behaviors are shaped by their cultural contexts and a greater cognitive flexibility (Ang et al. 2007; Chua, Morris, and Mor 2012).

Building on this logic, we expect export managers with high metacognitive CQ not to make more marketing adaptations necessarily but rather to better determine which marketing adaptations to implement and which to refrain from implementing. Some marketing adapta-
tions may be required by the regulatory environment, implying that such types of adaptations are similar across all firms and competitors. Although methods that firms use to achieve compliance may vary, the decision to comply should not; otherwise, the firm cannot conduct business in that market. However, many adaptations are discretionary and result from a keen understanding of the specific cultural environment and customer needs and desires. Managers must use cultural knowledge to anticipate how a particular market might receive an existing marketing mix and which adaptations might substantively improve the marketing mix. Even if the source of an adaptation idea comes from observing competitor behavior, the focal firm must still evaluate the merit of such an adaptation within the context of its own complete marketing mix and strategy.

Export managers with high levels of metacognitive CQ are better prepared to interpret cultural manifestations in the target market than managers with low levels because metacognitive CQ enhances cultural judgment and decision making (Ang et al. 2007). We argue that the metacognitive awareness, with its accompanying cognitive flexibility, is more important than just knowledge about the traditional practices of another culture. Thus, managers with high metacognitive CQ should recognize, evaluate, and implement adaptation ideas better than managers with low metacognitive CQ.

H₂: Metacognitive CQ positively moderates the relationship between marketing-mix adaptations and export performance.

METHOD
Sample
We examine the hypothesized framework with a sample of U.S. exporters that we gathered using two approaches. The first approach relied on collaboration with a regional Export Assistance Center in the United States. As part of a communication with its members, an invitation was issued to participate in an online survey. The number of recipients of the invitation is unknown, but 211 potential participants opened the e-mail invitation. From this, we gathered completed and usable responses from 62 U.S. export managers (29% response rate). The second method compiled a list of 1,381 e-mail addresses of export managers with the help of salesforce.com. After an initial e-mail invitation and three follow-up reminders, the survey was opened by 183 managers and generated 91 usable responses (50% response rate, 7% of total initial sample).

Before pooling the two samples, we examined them for significant differences. The analysis revealed similarities in terms of export intensity (foreign sales/total sales), years of export experience (19 vs. 23), and year of entry into the export market in the current study (1999 vs. 1998). However, the firm size in the sample drawn from the salesforce.com sample was slightly larger (35% vs. 10% of firms with more than $100 million in revenues). Nonetheless, given the similarities between the two samples and the lack of significant differences, we deemed the two samples comparable and pooled them into one larger sample for analysis.

We defined an export manager as someone who was actively involved in the firm's exporting activities and had decision-making authority. The questionnaire included screening questions to ensure that the participant met the criteria as a key informant that made decisions for an exporting business unit. Respondents who did not meet these criteria were unable to complete the survey. Half the sample (49%) identified themselves as managers, and the other half held positions as vice presidents, chief-level officers, or owners of the firm. Half of all firms (51%) had sales of less than $50 million, and 76% had sales of less than $100 million. Foreign sales accounted for 21%–25% of total sales, on average.

To minimize respondent bias in the choice of focal export market, each informant was asked to randomly respond with reference to the largest, third-largest, or fifth-largest export market (Katsikeas, Skarmeas, and Bello 2009). As a result, 40 different countries were identified as focal export markets, with 39% in Australasia, 29% in Latin America (South, Central, and Caribbean America and Mexico), 14% in Europe, 12% in the Middle East and Africa, and 5% in Canada. The two most commonly identified markets were Brazil (13%) and China (10%).

Instrument Development

Following best practices in the international marketing literature (e.g., Hultman, Katsikeas, and Robson 2011; Katsikeas, Samiee, and Theodosiou 2006), we developed a structured survey instrument in several stages. Initially, we carefully defined each construct’s domain. Then, using a review of the literature and field reviews, we drafted items to reflect the conceptual domain of a particular construct. An iterative process with evaluation and feedback from international marketing academics and export managers developed the final questionnaire. Academic experts and export managers were
asked to check that the items were valid measures of the proposed constructs, that the items were meaningful and understandable, and that they were not loaded or offensive.

**Measures**

Ang et al. (2007) develop and validate scales to measure motivational and metacognitive CQ. In line with recommendations from academic experts and field interviews with export managers, we adapted these scales to reflect the export manager context. The unit of analysis in the study is the export venture, which pertains to a specific product or line of products exported to a particular foreign market (Cavusgil and Zou 1994; Hultman, Kat-sikeas, and Robson 2011). Consistent with the literature (e.g., Lages, Jap, and Griffith 2007), export performance includes economic, strategic, and competitive export performance. Accordingly, we adapted a five-item export performance construct from Sousa, Ruzo, and Losada (2010) and Zou, Taylor, and Osland (1998), which captures growth, profitability, customer satisfaction, competitive performance, and strategic dimensions of export performance.

Prior research on export marketing adaptations has typically considered the four Ps of the marketing mix and asked respondents to indicate the degree of adaptation of each dimension (e.g., Katsikeas, Samiee, and Theodosiou 2006; Lages, Abrantes, and Lages 2008). Consistent with Navarro et al. (2010) and guided by field interviews of export managers, we decided to include one indicator for each marketing-mix element.

Ghemawat (2001) defines the four dimensions of distance as cultural, administrative (political), geographic, and economic distances—known as the CAGE framework. We created a four-item scale to capture the export manager’s perception of each of these dimensions.

Guided by past export performance studies, we also include several control variables. We include firm size (total sales) to control for potential scale economies; firm resource advantages to control for physical and financial resource advantages degree of internationalization (foreign sales/total sales), duration of export venture (years since entry), and years of overall exporting experience to control for extra resources and capabilities that experienced exporting firms may have; and the export manager’s international experience, to ensure that the individual effects of CQ are not just individuals learning through export experience. To add robustness to the model, we also control for the interaction effects of the CQ dimension opposite to the hypothesized relationships. That is, we control for the interaction between motivational CQ and marketing adaptations on export performance and for the interaction effect between metacognitive CQ and environmental differences on marketing adaptations.

**Nonresponse Bias**

Following Armstrong and Overton’s (1977) recommendation, we assessed nonresponse bias by comparing the responses of early and late respondents. Specifically, we tested the first and last quartiles of the sample for significant differences across means for each of the theoretical constructs. The results of the t-tests indicated no significant differences between early and late respondents for motivational CQ (t = .72, p > .10), metacognitive CQ (t = .75, p > .10), environmental differences (t = 1.12, p > .10), marketing adaptations (t = .61, p > .10), and export performance (t = .68, p > .10), suggesting that nonresponse bias is not a problem in our data.

**Analysis**

The study tests the hypotheses by employing partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), using the statistical tool Smart PLS 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, and Will 2005). We selected PLS as the appropriate method for this study for four reasons. First, PLS is similar to regression, but it simultaneously models the structural paths. Furthermore, rather than assume equal weights for all indicators of a scale, the PLS algorithm allows each indicator to vary in how much it contributes to the composite score of the latent variable. Second, PLS can effectively handle relatively smaller samples (n = 153) (Hair et al. 2013). Third, PLS calculates the interaction variables by creating all possible products from the two sets of indicators. These product indicators are used to reflect the latent interaction variables (Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted 1996). Fourth, PLS effectively handles both formative and reflective constructs. Consistent with the literature (Navarro et al. 2010), we analyzed and interpreted the PLS model in two stages. We evaluated the validity and reliability of the measurement models and then evaluated the hypotheses in the full structural model.

**Validity and Reliability**

To evaluate the validity and reliability of each construct, we examine the factor loadings, composite reliability,
and average variance extracted (AVE), which we present in Table 1 with all measurement items. In general, factor loadings should exceed .70 to indicate that the variance between the construct and its indicators is greater than the error (Carmines and Zeller 1979).

Reliable constructs should have a composite reliability that exceeds .70 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). All constructs in this study exceeded this threshold. We assessed convergent validity by examining the AVE. This measures the proportion of variance explained by the indica-

Table 1. Reflective Constructs: Items for Construct Measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Loading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivational CQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(adapted from Ang et al. 2007; CR = .90, AVE = .75)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive CQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(adapted from Ang et al. 2007; CR = .95, AVE = .86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I consciously apply cross-cultural knowledge when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export Performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(adapted from Sousa, Ruzo, and Losada 2010; CR = .90, AVE = .64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you think your competitors rate your performance in this market? (1 = “unsuccessful,” and 7 = “highly successful”)</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do you think your customers rate your performance in this market? (1 = “unsuccessful,” and 7 = “highly successful”)</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How profitable has this export venture been over the past five years? (–1 = “loss,” and 5 = “highly profitable”)</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Please indicate the level of average annual revenue growth over the past five years. (1 = “–6% or worse,” and 8 = “&gt;21%”)</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This export venture has strengthened our strategic position. (1 = “strongly disagree,” and 7 = “strongly agree”)</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing-Mix Adaptation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Navarro et al. 2010; CR = .89, AVE = .66)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate the extent to which your firm has made adaptations for each element of the marketing mix:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Product (e.g., quality, features, packaging, brand name, labeling, service, warranty)</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Price (e.g., profit margins, Discounts, sales/credit terms)</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Place (e.g., channel structure, outlets, type or role of intermediaries)</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promotion (e.g., message/theme, media allocation, sales promotion, sales force role, promotion budget)</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on Ghemawat 2001; CR = .73, AVE = .74)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate the level of differences between the U.S. market and this export market on...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultural differences (e.g., language, ethnicity, religion, social norms)</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Economic differences (e.g., gross domestic product per capita, education level, infrastructure, financial resources)</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Geographic differences (e.g., physical remoteness, climate, sea access)</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Political differences (e.g., commonwealth ties, corruption, legal environment)</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.
tors compared with the proportion due to measurement errors. Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend that AVE should exceed .50; all constructs in this study exceeded this threshold. Finally, discriminant validity was evident in that all squared phi correlations were less than the respective variance extracted estimates for all pairs of constructs (e.g., Fornell and Larcker 1981).

We modeled the control variable, resource advantages, as a formative construct. Formative constructs should be used when indicators are defining characteristics of the construct, the indicators are not interchangeable, and the indicators do not covary (Jarvis, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff 2003). Evaluating the validity and reliability of formative constructs requires analyzing the weights and examining potential collinearity issues (see Table 2). All variance inflation factors were below 2, considerably below the recommended threshold of 5 (Hair et al. 2013). In summary, the analysis of the measurement model satisfies common validity and reliability criteria, and we conclude that the data are appropriate for further structural analysis. Table 3 presents the construct correlations.

**Common Method Bias**

Because data for both the dependent and independent variables came from the same respondent, common method bias (CMB) might be present, which could distort the findings. Consistent with current thinking (MacKenzie and Podsakoff 2012), we paid careful attention to the design of the questionnaire to minimize CMB. First, MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012) suggest that the key to minimizing CMB bias is to ensure that the respondent is able and motivated to respond accurately without satisficing. The study focuses on managers responsible for making exporting decisions for the firm, and thus we filtered out and eliminated potential respondents without such responsibilities from the analysis. To enhance motivation, the respondents were promised a summary report of the findings to ensure high personal relevance.

Second, we minimized survey length and scale complexity following input from export managers and academic experts. This process minimized item vagueness and provided clear and concise items.

Third, item order was in reverse causal order, with dependent variables first and the independent variables second (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Finally, given that the key contribution of this study is the examination of the moderating influence of the export manager’s CQ, a model with multiple moderating effects is complicated, which rules out easy prediction by respondents of how the variables might be related (e.g., Hultman, Katsikeas, and Robson 2011).

In addition to the procedural remedies to minimize CMB, we conducted *ex post* statistical tests to examine the potential effects of CMB. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis in SPSS, which divided the items into their intended constructs and explained more than 70% of the variance. In comparison, we also forced a one-factor solution, which explained less than 25% of the variance. Subsequently, we subjected the data to CMB bias testing in LISREL 8.80. First, we estimated a single superordinate construct reflected by all the study’s items (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The model fit statistics showed poor fit to the data ($\chi^2(230 \text{ d.f.}) = 1,900.76$, $p < .01$; normed fit index = .49; nonnormed fit index = .48; and root mean square error of approximation = .22), suggesting that CMB does not distort the results. In the second and more stringent approach, we controlled for the effects of an unmeasured latent factor (Podsakoff et al. 2003). In this method, items are allowed to load on their theoretical constructs, as well as on a latent com-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate how your business compares with your major direct competitors in this export market in terms of …</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cost leadership advantage</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Financial resources advantage</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Legal resources advantage</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marketing differentiation advantage</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>1.57</td>
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</table>
### Table 3. Construct Correlations and Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Export performance</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Marketing adaptations</td>
<td></td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Environmental differences</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Metacognitive CQ</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Motivational CQ</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Resource advantages</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Firm size</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Foreign sales/total sales</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Export market size</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Year of entry</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.178*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Export manager experience</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Firm exporting experience</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.54**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1998.83</td>
<td>16.31</td>
<td>21.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>14.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Notes: AVE for reflective constructs are on the diagonal.
mon methods variance factor. We compared the significance level of the correlations between the study variables in models with and without the latent common methods factor. We observed no difference in the significance level between variables, which enhances confidence that CMB does not distort the results.

RESULTS
After demonstrating the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the second stage of the two-stage process examines whether the structural model supports the proposed hypotheses. Table 4 presents the results in a hierarchical manner. Model 1 includes all the control variables, and in Model 2, we add the hypothesized interaction variables. Consistent with H1, motivational CQ positively moderates the relationship between environmental differences and marketing adaptations ($\beta = .17, p < .05$). Furthermore, metacognitive CQ positively moderates the relationship between marketing adaptations and export performance ($\beta = .23, p < .01$), in support of H2. The R-square in Model 2 improves from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized Relationships</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_1$: Environmental differences $\times$ motivational CQ $\times$ marketing adaptation (supported)</td>
<td>$\beta = .22^{**}$ 2.90</td>
<td>$\beta = .19^{*}$ 2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_2$: Marketing adaptation $\times$ metacognitive CQ $\times$ export performance (supported)</td>
<td>$\beta = .25^{**}$ 2.86</td>
<td>$\beta = .23^{**}$ 2.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control Links

| Environmental differences $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .22^{**}$ 2.90 | $\beta = .19^{*}$ 2.58 |
| Marketing-mix adaptation $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .06$ .81 | $\beta = .05$ .11 |
| Motivational CQ $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .08$ .83 | $\beta = .12$ 1.39 |
| Motivational CQ $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .28^{***}$ 3.57 | $\beta = .32^{***}$ 4.98 |
| Metacognitive CQ $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .09$ .61 | $\beta = .08$ .60 |
| Metacognitive CQ $\times$ export performance | $\beta = -.08$ -.90 | $\beta = -.06$ 1.25 |
| Environmental differences $\times$ metacognitive CQ $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .11$ 1.55 | $\beta = .08$ .71 |
| Marketing adaptation $\times$ motivational CQ $\times$ export performance | $\beta = -.09$ 1.36 | $\beta = -.13^{*}$ 2.20 |
| Resource advantages $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .25^{**}$ 2.86 | $\beta = .23^{**}$ 2.89 |
| Market size $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .07$ .39 | $\beta = .06$ .45 |
| Foreign sales/total sales $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .07$ .35 | $\beta = .06$ .33 |
| Firm size $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = .08$ .40 | $\beta = .07$ .49 |
| Manager export experience $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = -.10$ .95 | $\beta = -.08$ .85 |
| Firm export experience $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = -.09$ 1.24 | $\beta = -.10$ 1.43 |
| Duration of export venture $\times$ marketing adaptation | $\beta = -.10$ 1.15 | $\beta = -.10$ 1.24 |
| Resource advantages $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .25^{**}$ 3.22 | $\beta = .29^{***}$ 3.99 |
| Market size $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .19^{***}$ 3.36 | $\beta = .18^{***}$ 3.73 |
| Foreign sales/total sales $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .33^{***}$ 4.43 | $\beta = .31^{***}$ 5.04 |
| Firm size $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .11$ 1.32 | $\beta = .10$ 1.42 |
| Manager export experience $\times$ export performance | $\beta = -.12$ 1.26 | $\beta = -.13$ 1.76 |
| Firm export experience $\times$ export performance | $\beta = .08$ 1.44 | $\beta = .06$ .98 |
| Duration of export venture $\times$ export performance | $\beta = -.07$ .10 | $\beta = -.07$ .45 |

*p < .05.
**p < .01.
***p < .001.
17% to 18% ($f^2 = .012$) for marketing-mix adaptations and improves from 41% to 45% ($f^2 = .072$) for export performance. To facilitate understanding, Figure 2 illustrates the interaction effects. Panel A of Figure 2 illustrates the role of motivational CQ. A significant, positive increase in marketing adaptations occurs as environmental differences increase when the export manager has high motivational CQ; however, no significant difference occurs in the degree of adaptation for export managers with low motivational CQ. Similar slopes are evident in Panel B with respect to the role of metacognitive CQ and export performance. When the export manager has high metacognitive CQ, an increase in marketing adaptations leads to greater export performance. However, when metacognitive CQ is low, the regression slope is slightly negative.

Several of the control variables are also significant. Environmental differences have a significant, positive relationship with the degree of marketing adaptations ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$). Marketing adaptations are not significantly related to export performance ($\beta = .03$, $p > .10$), which is consistent with the ambiguity in the literature in terms of a main effect and provides further evidence of the need to consider contingency factors. Resource advantages ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), market size ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$), and degree of firm internationalization (foreign sales/total sales; $\beta = .30$, $p < .001$) are all related to export performance.

We also controlled the direct effects of motivational and metacognitive CQ as well as the moderating effects of the CQ dimensions when swapping their positions in the model. With respect to direct effects, only motivational CQ has a significant relationship to export performance ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$). With respect to the alternative interaction effects, the interaction effect between metacognitive CQ and environmental differences on marketing adaptations is not significant ($\beta = .08$, $p > .10$), and the interaction effect between motivational CQ and marketing adaptations on export performance is also not significant. However, in Model 2, when we add the hypothesized interaction with metacognitive CQ to the model, the interactive effect of motivational CQ is negative ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$). This finding further supports our argument that motivation to adapt is not sufficient; the export manager needs metacognitive CQ to implement valuable adaptations.

**DISCUSSION**

This research sheds light on the relationship between adaptation of the marketing mix and export perform-
The bivariate correlation between marketing adaptation and export performance is positive and significant, which suggests that firms would benefit from greater adaptation in international markets. However, when standard control variables (e.g., firm size, international experience, resource advantages) are included in the model, no significant main effect occurs between adaptation and performance. This lends support to prior arguments that suggest that firms cannot make simple recommendations about marketing standardization or adaptation without a clear understanding of contextual circumstances (Cavusgil, Zou, and Naidu 1993).

The contingency theory perspective states that an optimal strategic choice for all firms under all circumstances does not exist, and thus it should not be surprising that a significant main effect does not exist for a broad sample of firms (Hultman, Robson, and Katsikeas 2009). Recent research has advanced understanding by identifying various firm, industry, and country characteristics that moderate the adaptation–performance relationship (e.g., Hultman, Katsikeas, and Robson 2011; Schilke, Reimann, and Thomas 2009). Yet the role of export manager skills has largely been absent from prior literature, and thus the primary contribution of this study is that it uncovers the moderating role of export manager metacognitive CQ in the performance of marketing-mix adaptation strategies. Thus, the findings advance theory by strengthening the theoretical foundation on contingency fit. The supported hypotheses highlight the importance of human resources in the firm and bring a deeper understanding to the inconsistencies in the adaptation–performance relationship.

The introduction of export manager CQ to the export performance literature is important because it is one of the first empirical examinations that have explicitly considered the skills and abilities of the export manager. Evidence from this study suggests that export managers with greater motivational CQ tend to deploy more marketing-mix adaptations, though those adaptations do not necessarily lead to improved performance. More importantly, the evidence suggests that when export managers with high metacognitive CQ make marketing-mix adaptations, export performance improves. In essence, high metacognitive CQ enables export managers to devise better adaptations and exercise better decision making when determining which adaptations to introduce.

Recall that managers with high metacognitive CQ are more aware of others’ cultural preferences and question cultural assumptions (Ang et al. 2007). Thus, metacognitive CQ should enhance cross-cultural competencies through an increased sense of awareness that customers’ motivations and behaviors are shaped by their cultural contexts and a greater cognitive flexibility (Ang et al. 2007; Chua, Morris, and Mor 2012). In a broader sense, the findings lend support to the concept of international marketing managers as a potential human resource advantage by virtue of the strategic choices they make on behalf of the firm. In summary, international marketing managers high on both motivational and metacognitive CQ should be strong assets for the firm because they not only recognize when adaptations are required, and thus make more adaptations, but also exercise better judgment in determining how best to deploy those adaptations to address the observed environmental differences.

This empirical investigation of metacognitive CQ provides support to three of Griffith and Hoppen’s (2013) ten important soft skills for global marketing managers. Among those related to metacognitive CQ are learning (i.e., the ability to integrate new knowledge), unlearning (i.e., the ability to relinquish an outdated dominant logic), and intuition (i.e., a sense of certainty without knowing how that conclusion arose). We do not claim that metacognitive CQ is the only skill that matters for successful export managers but rather view this as an early foray into a greater focus on the skills and characteristics of effective export managers. Thus, we echo Griffith and Hoppen’s call for researchers to focus more effort on the global marketing manager as the unit of analysis.

Managerial Implications

The managerial implication of this research is that firms should strive to ensure that their export managers possess or can acquire high CQ, with a particularly important role for metacognitive CQ. Metacognitive CQ is the key CQ ingredient that enhances export performance. Thus, metacognitive CQ assessment should be a relevant component of the recruitment and selection process for export managers. To achieve this end, hiring managers should familiarize themselves with the concept of CQ and include CQ assessments as part of an overall evaluation process of candidates for export manager positions. To aid in this process, prior research (Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh 2006) has examined personality correlates with CQ. Of the Big Five personality dimensions, conscientiousness and openness to experience are significantly related to metacognitive CQ, and motivational CQ is predicted by extraversion and openness to experience.
Beyond the recruitment and selection of export managers with high metacognitive CQ, firms should develop metacognitive CQ in the existing staff involved in export marketing. Earley and Mosakowski (2004) suggest that unlike inherent aspects of personality, CQ can also be learned, developed, and enhanced; recent findings in the human resources field urge firms to provide CQ training for managers undertaking expatriate assignments (e.g., Chen, Liu, and Portnoy 2012). The same prescription should apply for existing and future export managers.

Earley and Mosakowski (2004) describe a multistep process for increasing managers’ CQ. This process includes an initial assessment of strengths and weaknesses, focused training on weaknesses and the provision of organizational resources in support of such training, and a careful evaluation of the effectiveness (and potential adjustment) of new skills. Earley and Peterson (2004) further emphasize the “thinking about thinking” aspect of metacognitive CQ. They note that effective intercultural training should go beyond mere country-specific information and challenge participants to reflect and evaluate on their knowledge structures.

In summary, deploying export managers with high metacognitive CQ is a managerially actionable item achieved through recruitment, selection, and/or training. Because metacognitive CQ plays an important role in export management success, firms should attempt to hire managers with high metacognitive CQ and also nurture it in their existing ranks of managers.

Limitations and Further Research Ideas

In conclusion, we note several study limitations, which also present opportunities for further research. First, the sample is based on U.S. exporting firms. The possibility remains that the findings are unique to this cultural context, and thus the generalizability of these findings in other cultural contexts should be taken cautiously. Some studies (e.g., Steenkamp and De Jong 2010) have found that Americans have a stronger national identity and a weaker global identity than people from most other countries. Though tested at the consumer level and not necessarily the same as CQ, this may indicate that at least motivational CQ may be lower in the United States than in other countries. Thus, further research should investigate whether the benefits of motivational and metacognitive CQ are uniquely American phenomena. Does the relationship hold in European or Asian cultures, or is there something unique about the American context that offers an important role for motivational and metacognitive CQ?

We chose to examine a holistic export performance construct and an integrated marketing adaptation construct. Prior research has found differential effects for different performance dimensions (e.g., financial, strategic, market) or different marketing-mix dimensions (Tan and Sousa 2013). Thus, further research could extend this study by examining whether and how CQ has different effects on finer-grained operationalizations. Doing so would provide a deeper theoretical understanding of the effects of CQ and additional guidance for firms aiming to address particular performance shortcomings.

In summary, many new, exciting research opportunities remain to fully understand CQ, marketing adaptation, export performance, and the role of human resources as a valuable, rare, and inimitable resource. This study contributes to the literature by shifting the focus to the moderating role of the export manager’s skills and by examining the differential effects of motivational and metacognitive CQ. More specifically, metacognitive CQ positively moderates the relationship between adaptation and performance. This is a significant contribution to the international marketing literature because prior research on whether adaptation increases performance has been inconclusive. The current research adds export manager CQ to the discussion and confirms its significant role in the success of international marketing strategies.

NOTES

1. We also estimated the model using ordinary least squares regression and covariance-based SEM. The alternative estimation techniques produced qualitatively identical results, enhancing the robustness of our results.

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