

Cultural entrepreneurship in mature and less mature institutional fields: Do musicians and music groups benefit from ambidexterity?

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» Abstract

We set to study ambidexterity effects on individual and group performance across institutional fields with distinct degrees of maturity. Musicians and music groups provide a rich and so far under-researched context for the study of ambidexterity effects in cultural entrepreneurship. We carried out a survey with professional musicians from Canada. Our results suggest that musicians do not really benefit from ambidexterity. They seem to be better-off focusing on a single strategic emphasis. The effect of such strategic emphasis, however, is contingent upon the institutional field represented by the music genre in which they are embedded. Our results suggest that in the field of classical music, musicians benefit from market exploration, i.e., trying to reach out and attract new audiences to their concerts. In other fields, musicians benefit more from product exploitation, i.e., sticking to their core competencies and repertoires.

» Keywords

Entrepreneurship, music, ambidexterity, institutions, exploration.

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Introduction

Which strategy yields more success for a musician or for a music group: sticking to a well-known repertoire and to the usual codes traditionally adopted by their pairs or exploring unknown territories by improvising and breaking traditions? Which strategy is more likely to yield high performance for an entrepreneur: focusing on developing known activities that are more likely to generate incremental innovation or trying out new activities in unknown technological and market territories that are generally riskier but more likely to generate innovation? Should cultural entrepreneurs focus on becoming better and better at ‘business as usual’ or should they ‘blindly pursue breakthrough’? Broadly speaking, in the literature on innovation the former strategy corresponds roughly to the notion of exploitation, whereas the latter corresponds to the notion of exploration (March, 1991). Doing both at the same time is generally designated as ambidexterity (O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2008; Tushman, Anderson, & O'Reilly, 1997).

So far, ambidexterity—i.e., simultaneous exploration of new capabilities and exploitation of current capabilities—has been mostly treated at the organizational level. Its implementation seems difficult to achieve because exploration and exploitation involve different organizational learning models (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000) which require distinct organizational architectures (Galunic & Eisenhardt, 2001) and compete for resources, leading to tensions and trade-offs (March, 1991, 2006). Hence, “*the empirical evidence of the organizational ambidexterity-performance relationship remains limited and mixed*” (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008, p. 393). There is, however, some evidence that ambidexterity is beneficial for large companies and small and medium-sized enterprises, especially when they are facing rapid changing and turbulent environments (Galunic & Eisenhardt, 2001; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Voss & Voss, 2013). That said, the notion of ambidexterity has not yet been systematically assessed and treated in the context of cultural entrepreneurship, where the individual entrepreneur might be as important as the organization in explaining innovation and change, in particular in cultural sectors where long-standing traditions and social norms rule and contribute to maintain a relatively stable environment.

Thus, our study addresses the question of how ambidexterity—both at the individual and at the organizational level—influences the performance of cultural entrepreneurship in mature institutional fields. We refer to mature institutional fields for two reasons. First, mature institutional fields provide a distinct context for a robust test of the relationship between ambidexterity and performance. Most previous studies have emphasized the importance of ambidexterity for organizational learning in dynamic turbulent environments, which generally correspond to emerging institutional fields where individual and collective action seem to be more likely to promote institutional change (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004). As cultural sectors emerge, mature, and eventually decline, cultural entrepreneurship is likely to be more common in periods of industry and organizational emergence, and less common in mature fields. Hence, we want to investigate whether ambidexterity still enhances performance in more mature fields and stable environments.

Second, research on institutional entrepreneurship has focused on the organization, inter-organization, and field levels, very often neglecting the individual (Aldrich, 2011). We consider that agency at the individual level cannot be overlooked, as individual behavior might indeed enact values that either conform to or contest accepted cultural norms. Goodrick and Salancik (1996) found that vague institutional pressures give room for organizational agency in shaping new standard practices. Some studies have also argued that structure and certainty in a field is associated with bigger risk-taking behavior among the actors (Beckert, 1999; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006), while others claim that

conditions in an emerging field are more likely to open up for interpretations and agency (Oliver, 1991; Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004). This line of thought suggests that in emerging fields individuals might be able to build the legitimacy that is necessary to promote institutional change, whereas in more mature fields large organizations are more likely to possess the power and legitimacy necessary to change the rules of the game and promote institutional entrepreneurship (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). However, research has not yet systematically compared individual versus group or organizational agency across institutional fields with different levels of maturity.

Thus, we test these insights from the innovation and the institutional entrepreneurship literature by examining the performance effects of ambidexterity, exploration and exploitation, both at the individual and the group levels, across institutional fields with distinct degrees of maturity. Specifically, we focus on musicians and music groups from a diverse range of fields: from classical music (likely the most mature and traditional field) to pop, rock, folk, and soul, among others. Despite being a rich context to study creativity and innovation, the music industry has been the object of relatively few empirical studies in entrepreneurship (Colbert, 2003). In addition, most previous studies have focused on one specific field within the music industry, usually concentrating on less traditional genres that favor improvisation and change, such as jazz (Barrett, 1998), rap (Sköld & Rehn, 2007), popular music (Peterson & Berger, 1971), and 'Do It Yourself' (Scott, 2012). Compared to classical music, these are relatively newer genres that constitute less mature institutional fields, i.e., fields where institutional pressures, practices, rules, cognitions, and cultural and social norms are relatively less well established and less coded than in the traditional mature field of classical music. Hence, we focus on how ambidexterity, exploration and exploitation, affect performance in this more mature field versus in the less mature music fields where cultural entrepreneurship is, *a priori*, more likely to happen.

In the next section we present the theoretical background that motivates our study. The following sections introduce our empirical research, presenting its methods as well as the results of our pilot study. The last section discusses our findings and the limits of the current study, offering suggestions for further research.

Theoretical background

Exploration, exploitation, and firm performance

Exploration and exploitation have been mainly theorized at the organizational level. In his seminal paper, March (1991) describes the relation between exploration and exploitation as "a central concern of studies of adaptive processes" and asserts that "maintaining an appropriate balance between exploration and exploitation is a primary factor in system survival and prosperity." (p. 71). March (1991: 71) also makes explicit that "Exploration includes things captured by terms such as search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation" whereas "Exploitation includes things such as refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, execution." Doing both of them implies simultaneous exploration of new capabilities and exploitation of current capabilities, which is generally designated as ambidexterity (O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2008; Tushman, Anderson, & O'Reilly, 1997). Ambidexterity is arguably critical to long-term survival and success (He & Wong, 2004; Lubatkin et al., 2006; March, 1991), because the performance of an organization might well depend on its ability to "*engage in enough exploitation to ensure the organization's current viability and to engage in enough exploration to ensure future viability*" (Levinthal & March, 1993: 105).

However, implementing ambidexterity is difficult because exploration and exploitation involve different organizational learning models (Baum, Li, & Usher, 2000; Benner & Tushman, 2003; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), require different organizational architectures and processes (Galunic &

Eisenhardt, 2001; Smith & Tushman, 2005), and ultimately compete for resources, generating tensions and leading to trade-offs (March, 1991, 2006). Given these organizational issues, several scholars have questioned whether ambidextrous strategies are necessarily more successful than simpler strategies that focus either on exploration or on exploitation. For instance, Van Looy et al. (2005) suggested that adopting a single focus on either exploitation or exploration helps an organization to avoid the complexity associated with ambidexterity. Engaging in exploration activities helps innovative organizations to identify the most receptive audiences (Song, Droke, Hanvanich, & Calantone, 2005), whereas focusing in exploitation activities facilitates communication and integration (Voss & Voss, 2013).

The contradictions between exploitation and exploration and the endeavors to reconcile both orientations have been discussed in different contexts such as organizational learning (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008), technological innovation (Smith & Tushman, 2005), and dynamic capabilities (O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2008). Baum, Li, and Usher (2000), for example, suggest that "exploitation refers to learning gained via local search, experiential refinement, and selection and reuse of existing routines. Exploration refers to learning gained through processes of concerted variation, planned experimentation, and play." (p. 768) O'Reilly III and Tushman (2008) suggest conceiving ambidexterity as a dynamic capability instead of a question of organizational design. Dynamic capabilities are then defined as the ability of an organization or social actor to reconfigure assets and existing capabilities. These dynamic capabilities are at the core of agents' and organizations' will to innovate. Indeed, Tushman and O'Reilly (1997) define ambidexterity in the context of innovation as the "*ability to simultaneously pursue both incremental and discontinuous innovation*" (p. 24). Innovation, however, has costs, and despite intense scholar investigation, there is relatively limited and mixed empirical evidence of the organizational ambidexterity-performance relationship (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008).

Exploration, exploitation, and ambidexterity across functional domains

Voss & Voss (2013) distinguish between exploration and exploitation in product and market domains. These authors assert that product development and marketing are basic business functions that represent distinct dimensions for exploration and exploitation. "Within the product domain, *product exploration* emphasizes developing new products, technologies, and product capabilities, and *product exploitation* emphasizes increasing returns from existing product capabilities. Within the marketing domain, *market exploration* emphasizes marketing programs that attract new customers, and *market exploitation* emphasizes marketing programs designed to retain and increase purchases from current customers." (Voss & Voss, 2013: 1459-1460).

Thus, organizations may have distinct strategic emphases in different functional domains, and these functional-level strategic emphases combine into organizational-level strategic vectors (Burgelman, 2002; Voss & Voss, 2013). "Firms can achieve strategic ambidexterity by combining exploration and exploitation across or within functional domains. The crossfunctional combinations exhibit ambidexterity across product and market domains to (1) exploit current product capabilities with the goal of attracting new customer markets, which corresponds to a market development growth strategy, or (2) explore new product capabilities that target current customers, corresponding to a product development growth strategy (Ansoff, 1965). Within functional domains, product ambidexterity simultaneously explores new product capabilities and exploits current product capabilities, whereas market ambidexterity simultaneously explores new customer markets and exploits current customers." (Voss & Voss, 2013: 1460).

Investigating strategies deployed in the nonprofit professional theater industry in the United States, Voss & Voss (2013) found that the effects of exploitation and exploration on firm performance are completely contingent. They found positive performance effects for a market development strategy that combines product exploitation with market exploration, which provides partial support for a cross-

function ambidexterity strategy. However, they found that within-function ambidexterity has positive effects only for larger firms, suggesting that smaller, nascent organizations lack the resources, capabilities, and experience required to manage the tensions and trade-offs that emerge when exploration and exploitation are to be developed within a single domain. This raises the question whether ambidexterity is possible and desirable to implement in small firms as well as for the self-employed.

Exploration and exploitation in small and single-person organizations

Although ambidexterity has been theorized mostly at the organizational level, we conjecture that “the relation between the exploration of new possibilities and the exploitation of old certainties” (March, 1991: 71) might well be an issue for small groups and individuals as well. It might be that, just as large and old organizations, self-employed individuals also have to *engage in enough exploitation to ensure current viability and to engage in enough exploration to ensure future viability* (Levinthal & March, 1993). Self-employed individuals and small organizations generally would not have the resources and the organizational design complexities that large organizations have. In this case, a single-focus strategy or a relatively simple cross-function ambidexterity strategy might yield better results (Van Looy et al., 2005; Voss & Voss, 2013). Therefore, we formalize our first general research question as follows:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Do self-employed and small organizations benefit from ambidexterity?

Specifically in the context of cultural entrepreneurship, artists and cultural entrepreneurs in general might be tempted to simultaneously pursue both incremental and discontinuous innovation. Ambidexterity can actually constitute an efficient way to deal with the high level of uncertainty regarding the acceptance of new artistic endeavors by the public. However, it can also lead to tensions and trade-offs when cultural entrepreneurs are faced with the choice of either taking the risk of finding new ways of presenting their artistic production or sticking with their core performances. Since we investigate these issues in the music industry, we specifically ask the following question:

Specific research question (RQ1a): Do musicians benefit from ambidexterity?

Institutional fields

Innovating often carries costs: economically (as it increases risk), socially (as it might reduce legitimacy), and cognitively (as it demands more cognitive effort). A way of reducing these costs is to base actions on institutionalized patterns that provide legitimated ways of social interaction and, eventually, innovation. Indeed, the ability or will to innovate is directly dependent on the institutional configuration or the institutional field in which agency takes place (Hollingsworth, 2000).

An institutional field is composed of social actors (organizations or individuals) which share institutionalized rules and resources. DiMaggio & Powell (1991, p. 64) define an institutional field as a recognized area of expertise or activity. According to neo-institutionalism, once actors are structured into an institutional field, isomorphic forces (mimetic, normative or coercive) compel actors to the adoption of similar practices. A mature institutional field has “stable, routinized interactions between participants” (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006, p. 28). Social action converges isomorphically based on taken-for-granted templates that give to participants the mutual awareness of participation in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, W., 2008).

Therefore, the concept of field suggests an arena, “a system of actors, actions, and relations, whose participants take one another into account as they carry out interrelated activities. Rather than focusing on a single organization or movement, or even a single type of organization or movement (population), it allows us to view these actors in context.” (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005, p. 10). Institutional fields provide social actors with the cultural patterns that will eventually guide social action and interaction. These institutionalized cultural patterns act simultaneously as a resource for

solving problems and constraining action and the ability of social actors to conceive options for their everyday situations (Giddens, 1984; Whittington, 1992).

An institutional field is therefore delimited by a specific distribution of rules and resources that “... constitute a recognized area of institutional life” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). It is formed through repeated interactions among social actors in the development of common understandings and practices that will eventually form the rules and resources that define the field. At the same time, these rules and resources shape the patterns of interaction based upon which they are produced (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000). Actors who participate in related field activities share similar rules and resources.

Exploration, exploitation, and ambidexterity across institutional fields

To the best of our knowledge, research has not yet fully examined the performance effects of exploration and exploitation across different institutional fields with distinct degrees of maturity. It seems reasonable, however, to hypothesize that the effectiveness of each strategic emphasis, as well as of ambidexterity, will be contingent on some characteristics of the institutional field in which individuals and organizations are embedded. Even though we refrain from formalizing specific hypotheses in this exploratory study, we conjecture that product exploration will be less effective for performance in mature institutional fields than market exploration, because the routinized interactions among participants in a mature institutional field are likely to set expectations about product characteristics which must be satisfied, favoring incremental product innovation instead of radical product innovation. This suggests that actors in mature institutional fields might benefit more from exploring new markets, adopting a market development strategy, rather than a product development one. Less mature institutional fields, on the other hand, are less likely to have the isomorphic forces that compel actors to adopt similar practices. Such fields are often more likely to reward product exploration and ambidexterity. If this line of thought is correct, then the performance effects of exploration, exploitation, and ambidexterity will be contingent on the maturity of the institutional field in which actors are embedded.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Are performance effects of exploration, exploitation, and ambidexterity contingent on the institutional field in which actors are embedded?

In the music industry, we suggest that music genre provides a good proxy for the institutional field in which musicians are embedded. Specifically, we suggest that classical music constitutes the most mature and traditional institutional field in the music industry, where shared cognitions and cultural and social norms are well established and coded. Other music genres are relatively less mature, younger in terms of history, and also with a relatively more flexible set of conventions. We conjecture that exploration, exploitation, and ambidexterity will likely have different effects on performance depending on the music genre in which the musician is embedded.

Specific research question (RQ2a): Are performance effects of exploration, exploitation, and ambidexterity contingent on the music genre in which musicians are embedded?

Method

Data collection and sample

Data come from a survey we have designed and administered to a sample of professional musicians in the region of Québec, Canada. We designed a web survey to collect the data and used different channels to reach potential participants. All respondents are active professional musicians belonging to major music associations, professional orchestras and/or ensembles of different music genres. Four major music associations in Québec, Canada, accepted to send the questionnaire link to its members

using their newsletters, websites and social networks. These associations were the Quebec Music Council (CQM), Professional Society of Authors and Composers of Québec (SPACQ), Quebec's Union of Artists (UDA), and the Quebec's Musicians Guild. Respondents did not receive any compensation in exchange of their participation.

Over 200 participants responded to our survey. Preliminary analysis allowed us to eliminate outliers and inconsistent respondents from the database (uncompleted questionnaires, etc.), leaving one hundred eighty-six (186) exploitable questionnaires. The mean age of the professional musicians in our sample is 40.2 years-old. 36.8% are females and 29.6% obtained a MSc or a PhD degree.

We believe that musicians constitute an interesting population to study the ambidexterity-performance relationship both at the individual and organizational level, since many of them take part in more than one music group, allowing us to better disentangle individual and organizational behaviors. Therefore, we adapted and developed measures for ambidexterity and performance at both levels of analysis.

Dependent variables

It is difficult to capture performance in one single variable. Hence, we measured several variables representing complementary aspects of performance. At the individual level, our performance measures included the musician's *average income per month* (self-reported gross income), *revenues from concerts* (gross income weighted by the self-reported percentage of income generated through concerts), and *number of concerts per month* (average of number of concerts reported for the last 12 months).

At the group level, we asked each musician to focus on the main group they belonged to and measured the *perceived artistic performance of the group* (self-reported in a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = well below other groups in the same music genre to 7 = well above other groups in the same music genre) as well as the *number of paid concerts* done by the group in the last 12 months. Since individual musicians do not necessarily know the total amount of revenues generated by the group, we relied on the individual measures of financial performance in our analyses.

Independent variables

In order to measure ambidexterity, we adapted the exploration and exploitation measures developed by Voss & Voss (2013) in the context of the professional theater industry. These authors distinguished exploration and exploitation in the product and market domains, measuring them at the organizational level. We kept their distinction between product and market exploration and exploitation, but adapted their measures to the music industry and developed measures tapping respectively at the organizational and individual levels.

Product exploration was measured by 4 items that yielded Alpha coefficients of .82 at the individual level and .87 at the group level.

Product exploitation was measured by 4 items that yielded Alpha coefficients of .66 at the individual level and .80 at the group level.

Market exploration was measured by 4 items that yielded Alpha coefficients of .90 at the individual level and .92 at the group level.

Market exploitation was measured by 4 items that yielded Alpha coefficients of .83 at the individual level and .91 at the group level.

Taken together, these four scales showed relatively good reliability, as well as discriminant and convergent validity. Market exploration and market exploitation were, however, highly correlated both at the individual and at the group levels. Confirmatory factor analysis supported, nevertheless, the

discriminant validity of both scales. Detailed results of the factor analyses conducted on these scales are available from the authors.

We also identified the *music genre* of each respondent by asking which music style they mainly played in live concerts. We then classified all the musicians in two groups, according to their musical style: those playing classical music (baroque, modern, romantic, etc.) and those playing other styles (jazz, popular, world music, etc.). Based on the logic of the maturity of the field, we considered that musicians playing classical music belong to a more mature field than musicians playing other kinds of repertoire.

Control variables

We also controlled for a number of covariates, both at the individual and group levels. First, we selected for the main analysis only musicians that were self-employed and that took part in live concerts. This is justified because the revenue streams of employed musicians differs significantly from the self-employed, most of the musicians in our sample were self-employed, and we were interested in investigating ambidexterity effects for the self-employed. In addition, the exploration and exploitation measures derived from Voss & Voss (2013) make more sense for musicians that play in live concerts, since they explicitly include items such as “challenging yourself to increase the number of people that come to your concerts for the first time” (market exploration) and “encouraging the presence of your fans to your concerts” (market exploitation).

Second, we included twelve control variables in our main analysis: *age*, *sex*, *number of years of professional experience* (as a professional musician), *role* (singer or instrumentalist), *commitment* (working as a professional musician part-time or full-time), *number of years of music education* (both formal and informal music education), *parents musicians* (dummy coded to indicate if at least one of the musician’s parents was also a musician), *management education* (dummy coded to indicate if the respondent has followed any management courses), *management competencies* (a self-assessment of the respondent’s management competencies, indicated in a 7-point scale ranging from 1= null to 7 = excellent), *managerial activity* (dummy coded to indicate if the respondent was also a manager or producer of one or several other artists), *CD recorded* (dummy coded to indicate if the respondent had already recorded a CD as main artist), and the *number of groups in which the individual is involved* (in which the musician plays professionally).

Main Analysis and Results

Table 1 shows the results of our regression analyses at the individual level. Table 2 exhibits main results for the group level. In order to avoid collinearity issues, we could not run regression analysis with both the individual- and group-level ambidexterity variables simultaneously.

Table 1. Regression results at the individual level.

Dependent variable =	Total monthly revenues			Revenues from concerts			Number of concerts per month		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Main effects									
<i>Age</i>	-.180	-.197	-.207	-.192	-.206	-.197	-.206	-.186	-.157
<i>Sex (0 = female)</i>	.178†	.194†	.187	.220*	.118	.119	.071	.089	.064
<i>Years of professional experience</i>	.158	.184	.205	.082	.108	.085	.204	.164	.102
<i>Role (0 = singer; 1 = instrumentalist)</i>	.124	.115	.130	.121	.139	.152	.130	.135	.169
<i>Commitment (0 = part-time; 1 = full time)</i>	.415***	.435***	.437***	.334***	.319**	.328**	.357***	.372***	.370***
<i>Years of music education</i>	.004	-.003	-.022	-.032	-.054	-.071	-.047	-.045	-.077

<i>Parents musicians (0 = none of them; 1 = at least one of them)</i>	-.032	-.030	-.045	-.049	-.117	-.113	-.132	-.115	-.098	
<i>Management education (0 = none; 1 = management courses taken)</i>	-.060	-.076	-.066	.078	.059	.057	.191†	.196†	.166	
<i>Management competencies (self-assessment, 7-point scale)</i>	-.088	-.107	-.091	.048	.072	.092	.204*	.195†	.206†	
<i>Manager (0 = no managerial activity; 1 = some managerial activities done by the individual)</i>	.009	.003	.002	-.083	-.156	-.163	-.137	-.136	-.154	
<i>Has already recorded a CD as main artist (0 = no; 1 = yes)</i>	.090	.108	.088	.111	.119	.100	-.007	.044	.018	
<i>Number of groups in which the individual is involved</i>	.002	.013	.001	.052	.058	.052	.223*	.209*	.187†	
<i>Music Style (0 = classic; 1 = otherwise)</i>	-.353**	-.373**	-.351**	-.526***	-.462**	-.440***	-.068	-.057	-.032	
Strategic emphasis										
<i>Product exploration</i>	.069	.024	.041	.123	.106	.115	.111	-.137	-.124	
<i>Product exploitation</i>	.050	-.038	-.031	-.073	-.431*	-.424*	-.012	-.063	-.074	
<i>Market exploration</i>	-.077	-.041	-.041	.012	.378†	.378†	-.037	.135	.154	
<i>Market exploitation</i>	.019	-.141	-.129	.079	.182	.194	.234*	.025	.060	
Two-way Strategic emphasis x Music style interactions										
<i>Product exploration x Music style</i>		.063	.043		.025	.006		.321*	.293†	
<i>Product exploitation x Music style</i>		.124	.133		.411*	.400*		.043	.026	
<i>Market exploration x Music style</i>		-.052	-.060		-.415†	-.408†		-.291	-.283	
<i>Market exploitation x Music style</i>		.183	.163		-.079	-.093		.324	.287	
Three-way ambidexterity x Music style interactions										
<i>Product exploration x Product exploitation x Music style</i>			.035			.095			.124	
<i>Market exploration x Market exploitation x Music style</i>				-.018			-.010		-.005	
<i>Product exploration x Market exploitation x Music style</i>				.061			.030		.109	
<i>Product exploitation x Market exploration x Music style</i>					-.101		-.023		.111	
Model fit										
R ²		.282	.294	.307	.369	.436	.445	.430	.473	.520
ΔR ²			.012	.013		.067	.009		.043	.046
ΔF		2.220**	.376	.419	3.058***	2.530*	.335	3.735***	1.630	1.836
N		113	113	113	106	106	106	101	101	101

Coefficients are standardized beta weights.

† p < .10

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

In Table 1, models 1 to 3 show that none of our variables of interest has a significant effect on the total revenues of the musicians in our sample, with the exception of music style that shows that on average musicians playing classical music are better paid than others. This confirms that our scales of exploration and exploitation are indeed more relevant for predicting performance in live concerts (in comparison to other variables chosen), as shown in models 4 to 6, which analyze revenues from concerts as dependent variable. The significant coefficients of music style across models 1 to 6 underline the importance of including the genre (or the institutional field) when analyzing financial performance of artists.

Model 5 reveals that neither product exploration nor market exploitation has a significant effect on revenues from concerts. However, the results for product exploitation and market exploration indicate that the effects of these strategic emphases on revenues from concerts are contingent on the music genre. Product exploitation has a negative main effect on performance, but its effect is actually positive for musicians that do not play classical music. The reverse is true for market exploration: it has a positive effect on the revenues from concerts of classical music, but it has a negative effect on the performance of the musicians playing other music genres.

Interestingly, model 7 shows a positive effect of market exploitation on the number of concerts realized, and models 8 and 9 show a positive effect of product exploration on the same performance indicator for non-classical musicians. It seems that although market exploitation and product exploration increase the number of concerts a musician does, these strategic emphases do not convert this higher number of concerts into income.

Table 2. Regression results at the group level.

	Perceived artistic performance			Number of concerts in the last 12 months		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Main effects						
<i>Age</i>	.028	-.041	.065	-.007	.053	.143
<i>Sex (0 = female)</i>	.088	.117	.146	.073	.103	.107
<i>Years of professional experience</i>	.296	.381	.296	.226	.225	.141
<i>Role (0 = singer; 1 = instrumentalist)</i>	.005	.030	.047	.108	.082	.063
<i>Commitment (0 = part-time; 1 = full time)</i>	.144	.224†	.167	.314**	.364**	.358**
<i>Years of music education</i>	-.108	-.135	-.152	-.109	-.119	-.084
<i>Parents musicians (0 = none of them; 1 = at least one of them)</i>	.030	.067	.051	.050	.101	.108
<i>Management education (0 = none; 1 = management courses taken)</i>	-.043	-.093	-.082	.262†	.268†	.296*
<i>Management competencies (self-assessment, 7-point scale)</i>	.083	.082	.105	.360**	.380**	.378**
<i>Manager (0 = no managerial activity; 1 = some managerial activities done by the individual)</i>	-.100	-.145	-.157	-.058	-.061	-.052
<i>Has already recorded a CD as main artist (0 = no; 1 = yes)</i>	-.064	-.067	-.069	.039	.010	.014
<i>Number of groups in which the individual is involved</i>	.010	.069	.082	-.004	.049	.078
<i>Music Style (0 = classic; 1 = otherwise)</i>	.035	.000	-.044	-.055	-.085	-.158
Strategic emphasis						
<i>Product exploration</i>	.205	.260	.280	-.165	-.345†	-.366†
<i>Product exploitation</i>	.047	.284	.312	.172	-.044	-.067
<i>Market exploration</i>	.066	-.215	-.214	.048	-.009	.010
<i>Market exploitation</i>	.337*	.191	.201	.012	.027	.018
Two-way Strategic emphasis x Music style interactions						
<i>Product exploration x Music style</i>	-.005	.111		.237	.295	
<i>Product exploitation x Music style</i>	-.226	-.210		.297	.302	
<i>Market exploration x Music style</i>	.314	.096		.090	.009	
<i>Market exploitation x Music style</i>	.183	.229		-.030	.016	
Three-way ambidexterity x Music style interactions						
<i>Product exploration x Product exploitation x Music style</i>		-.229†			-.144	
<i>Market exploration x Market exploitation x Music style</i>		-.221†			.070	
<i>Product exploration x Market exploitation x Music style</i>		.083			.076	
<i>Product exploitation x Market exploration x Music style</i>		.273*			.186	
Model fit						
R ²	.399	.440	.510	.432	.463	.502
ΔR ²		.041	.070		.031	.039
ΔF	2.267*	.986	1.797	2.595**	.786	.972
N	75	75	75	75	75	75

Table 2 complements Table 1 at the group level. It shows (model 3) that within-function ambidexterity is negatively associated with artistic performance as perceived by non-classical musicians, whereas cross-function ambidexterity corresponding to a market development strategy is positively associated with the perceived artistic performance of non-classic groups. However, none of these types of ambidexterity is significantly associated with the more objective performance measure of number of concerts done in the last 12 months (model 6).

Discussion

Our first set of research questions asked if self-employed musicians and small organizations (specifically, their music groups) benefit from ambidexterity. Our results suggest that the answer is a qualified no. In none of our individual level analyses did ambidexterity have any significant effect. We only found significant ambidexterity effects on the perceived artistic performance of music groups, but such effects disappear when performance is captured by a more objective measure such as number of concerts. It seems that what professional musicians perceive as being most effective for artistic performance is actually not really effective for actual performance.

Our second set of research questions asked if the performance effects of exploration and exploitation were contingent on the institutional field in which musicians are embedded. Our results suggest that the answer is a qualified yes. Although we did not find at the group level any significant effect for the two-way interactions between strategic emphasis and music style, at the individual level such interactions significantly impact performance measured by revenues from concerts and number of concerts. Product exploration increases the number of concerts done by non-classical musicians, but does not significantly increase income. Product exploitation has no significant effect on the number of concerts, but significantly increases the revenues from concerts for non-classical musicians, compared to classical musicians. Inversely, market exploration significantly decreases revenues from concerts for non-classical musicians, compared to classical musicians.

Conclusion

Given the relative lack of empirical studies focusing on entrepreneurship in the music industry (Colbert, 2003), we believe that our research provides interesting insights at the cross-section of the fields of cultural entrepreneurship, institutional theory, and innovation. Specifically, we set to study ambidexterity effects on individual and group performance across institutional fields with distinct degrees of maturity. Musicians and music groups provide a rich and so far under-researched context for the study of ambidexterity effects in cultural entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, our results suggest that musicians do not really benefit from ambidexterity. It may be that implementing ambidexterity is too complex and requires more resources than self-employed musicians and their groups have. As a result, they are better-off focusing on a single strategic emphasis. The effect of such strategic emphasis, however, is contingent upon the institutional field represented by the music genre in which they are embedded. Our results suggest that in the field of classical music, musicians benefit from market exploration, i.e., trying to reach out and attract new audiences to their concerts. In other fields, musicians benefit more from product exploitation, i.e., sticking to their core competencies and repertoires.

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