

A critical note on coopetition in tourism and hospitality literature

Sonia Messori
Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, network dynamics and its implications for a variety of organizational phenomena have garnered increasing interest in management and organizational studies (Chen et al., 2022). The network approach is widely used to investigate the structure and behavior of the service sector and its components, especially in the tourism and hospitality industry (Baggio, 2017). This is due to the fact that organizations in tourism destinations are highly networked, with a multitude of independent suppliers linked together in the offer an integrated tourism product (Zach and Hill, 2017), from which depends both individual and collective success (Novelli et al., 2006; Stienmetz and Fesenmaier, 2019). The absence of this stakeholder coordination might hinder tourism development (Moscardo, 2011). A considerable amount of literature has been published on the topic, investigating tourism stakeholders' collaboration (Beritelli, 2011; Fyall et al., 2012; Van der Zee and Vanneste, 2015) or competition (Becerra et al., 2013; García, 2013; Sanchez-Perez et al., 2020) and, more recently, coopetition after this concept migrated from organizational studies to tourism research (Chim-Miki and Batista-Canino, 2017a; Kylänen and Rusko, 2011).

Hence, the fragmentation of destinations and the necessity to offer tourists an integrated product, call for stakeholders' coordination strategies. Additionally, the tourism industry has to respond to an increasing number of challenges, including uncertainty related to the financial crisis, a new geography of global tourist flows from emerging economies, fluctuating energy prices and the push towards a low-carbon economy, threats of terrorism and political upheaval, demographic change, and the consequences of climate and environmental change for destination attractiveness (Hall et al., 2015). Tourism displays a high degree of sensitivity to global economic, financial, and social crises and other external shocks. This sensitivity is exacerbated by the industry's reliance on the maintenance of positive images (Calgaro et al., 2014). Moreover, due to the abundance of substitute goods, tourists display a large adaptive capacity to flexibly substitute place, time, and type of holiday, thus translating into a high elasticity of demand with respect to the reputation, conditions, and quality of the destination. Thus, the tourism industry, being demand-driven, is highly reliant on tourists' risk perception, where actual or perceived risks influence travel intention and behavior (Bratic et al., 2021; Garg, 2015). This is because destination perception is generally carried out based on stimuli processing, which may be significantly influenced by an individual's psychological factors (Perić et al., 2021) and by external factors (Floyd et al., 2003). As a result, effective inter-agency collaboration and communication could help to strengthen destinations' resilience and expedite their medium-to-long recovery (Hartman et al., 2020).

Over the last few decades, cooperation between competitors, or coopetition, has become widely acknowledged as a new business strategy (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Tsai, 2002). This hybrid strategy, by definition, is a joint endeavor aimed at maximizing the gain of all the involved stakeholders while also benefiting the customers (Webb et al., 2021), leading to win-win situations (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996). Since this concept is recognized to be industry-specific and contextual (Czakoń et al., 2020), this study is conducted within the tourism industry to account for industry-specific characteristics. Tourism destinations are particularly susceptible to coopetition due to organizational interdependence, firm co-location, the prevalence of small and medium-sized enterprises, and high external competition (Chim-Miki and Batista-Canino, 2017; Della Corte and Aria, 2016). The management literature has traditionally used systematic reviews to offer a consistent structure to research on coopetition (Bengtsson and Raza-Ullah, 2016; Bouncken et al.,

2015; Czakon et al., 2014; Devece et al., 2019; Dorn et al., 2016). Yet to the author's knowledge, only Chim-Miki and Batista-Canino (2017a; 2017b) have published tourism-focused systematic literature reviews on this topic, with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the state of research conducted between 1996 and 2015. However, apart from not considering studies published after 2015, the cited reviews employ a different sampling strategy and categorization system than the present study. A comprehensive understanding of the key industry- and context-specific factors of cooptation that have been explored in existing literature is still needed for the benefit of researchers as it may help determine the need for further research into a strategic management concept in tourism and hospitality literature. This paper organized the findings into the dimensions of antecedents, processes, and outcomes to efficiently integrate the literature and to draw suggestions that will aid future research. To this end, the main questions addressed in this paper are: (1) From prior tourism and hospitality research, which antecedents, processes, and outcomes of cooptation can be identified? (2) Does complementarity among the tourist product components influence any of these dimensions?

Literature Review

This section illustrates the theoretical underpinning of this paper, which holds onto two standpoints: 1) the management literature on cooptation and 2) the conceptualization of tourism destinations.

The concept of cooptation refers in the academic literature to the hybrid behavior of cooperation and competition (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014; Tsai, 2002) arising when competing firms' private interests align, resulting in a common interest that encourages the involved firms to start cooperating (Padula and Dagnino, 2007). Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) were the first to introduce this concept in game theory and employed it to indicate inter-firm relationships allowing competitors to reach win-win conditions. Bengtsson and Kock (2000) refined it further by limiting it to competitors who produce and market the same products. Cooptation has been studied at the intra-, inter-firm level and the network level (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014; Dorn et al., 2016), and scholars have relied on various theoretical perspectives to analyze the logic behind it (Schiavone and Simoni, 2011): the minimization of transactions costs, the avoidance of the "prisoner's dilemma", a product of network embeddedness and the possibility to access resources that would otherwise be hard to get. Aside from the drivers of cooptation, research has focused on the likelihood of cooptation, interaction among firms, and results (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014). Bengtsson and Raza-Ullah (2016) noted that in the literature cooptation is viewed as either a relationship or a network context and proposed a new approach incorporating both.

Interest in geographical networks has presumably grown in the literature because economies tend to develop through the emergence of territorial clusters, typically around a specific natural resource, market need, or local skill (Enright, 2003). For example, the tourism industry is known to depend on natural, historical, and cultural heritage (Yang et al., 2010) around which tourism destinations develop. Destinations are a location-based market (Michael, 2007) characterized by the spatial concentration of organizations, geographical characteristics and landscape, heritage, infrastructure, and facilities. The multiple networks of actors exist in proximity to each other forming mutual service chains, networks, and interactions (Kylänen and Rusko, 2011). Thus, tourism destinations are more propitious to cooptation given the co-location of multiple independent firms interdependent with the creation of the tourism product (Czernek and Czakon, 2016). This leads to the assumption that the complementarity between the components of the tourism product might trigger favorable conditions for cooptation by attributing significance to inter-organizational

relationships and strategies, from which the success of individual actors and that of the entire destination depends.

Marshall (1890) was the first to study organizational co-location and labeled the agglomeration of small and medium-sized enterprises specialized in different parts of a given production activity as industrial districts, identifying positive externalities and economies of scale. However, when applied to tourism businesses (Haugland et al., 2011; Hjalager, 2000; Marco-Lajara et al., 2014) the industrial district approach encountered some reservations because of the fragmented structure of the tourism industry, involving many actors from different but interrelated sectors (Bernini, 2009; Jackson and Murphy, 2002). Thereby, to support the heterogeneous tourism product, Porter's cluster theory (1998) studying the geographical concentration of firms producing similar or related goods, was further developed by tourism scholars (Benner, 2017; Fundeanu, 2015; Kachniewska, 2013). The cluster approach was based on the premise that each firm's activity adds value to the efforts of the others, making the whole output greater than the sum of its parts (Poon, 2003). A tourism cluster brings together firms to produce a successful product that benefits the local community economically and socially (Novelli et al., 2006). Similarly, the network approach to destinations (De la Ballina Ballina, 2021; Gan et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Valeri and Baggio, 2020) was employed to explore the cooperative behaviors between competitors linked by economic and social ties. This approach focused on the framework formed by the interactions and linkages of the multiple stakeholders involved in the development of the tourism product (Baggio et al., 2010), since the performance of a destination is dependent on these linkages and not only on its intrinsic characteristics (Del Chiappa and Presenza, 2013).

The literature reviewed above emphasizes the importance of the context in defining the key characteristics of coopetition. As a result, the specificities of the tourism industry should be addressed while studying coopetition in the tourism and hospitality literature.

Methodology

This paper adopted a two-stage methodological procedure. First, a systematic literature review was performed to ensure a reproducible, objective, and rigorous procedure (Tranfield et al., 2003). Second, based on the results of the literature review, an integrative theoretical framework (Pearce, 2012) of the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of coopetition in a destination was developed. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol guided the review process (Moher et al., 2009), consisting of the four stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA Flow Diagram.

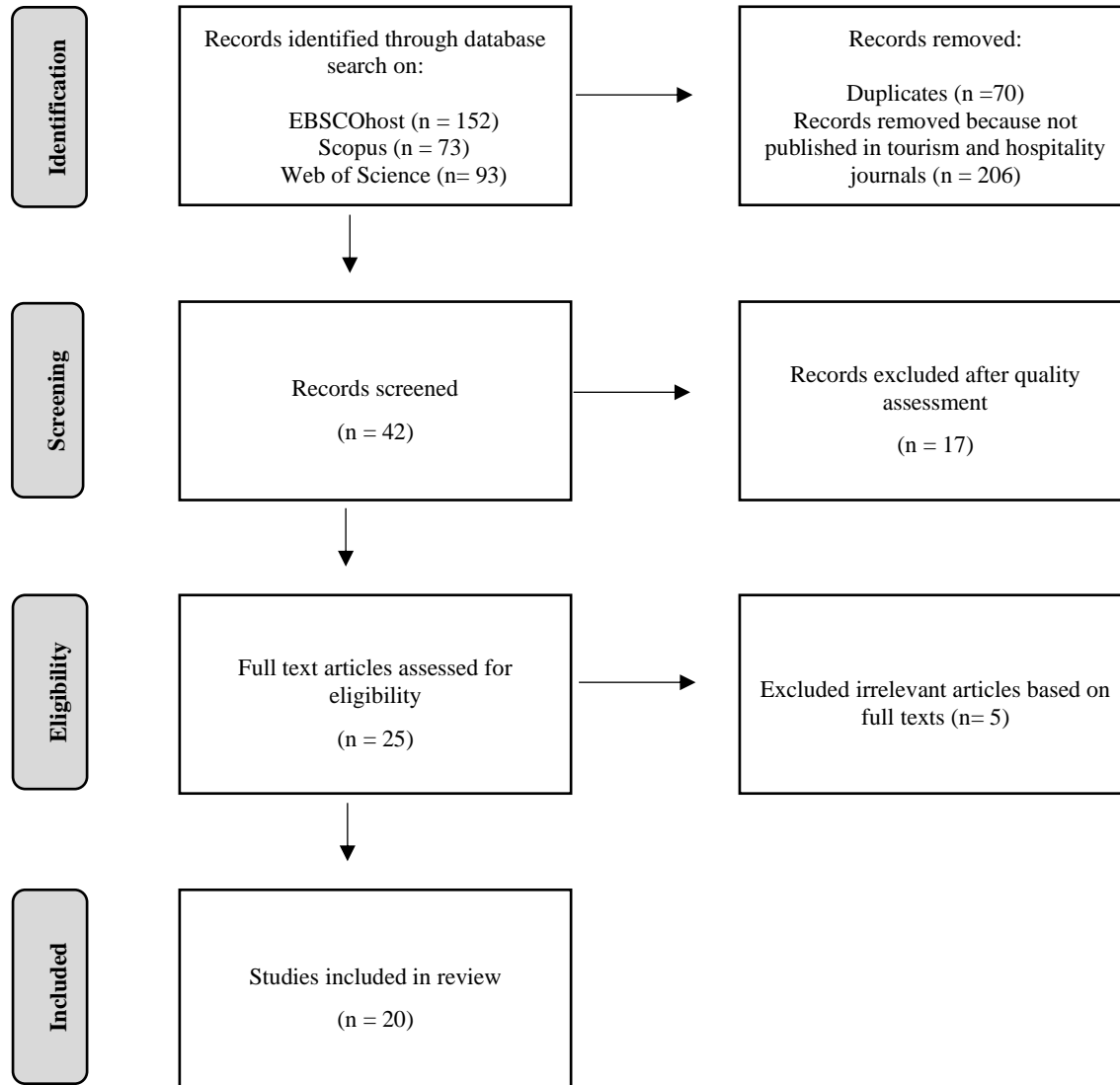
The identification stage began with the search of the keywords "coopetition" or "co-opetition" and "tourism" on all fields in the online databases "EBSCOhost", "Scopus" and "Web of Science" in January 2022. The search was limited to articles written in English language and no time limits were set. A total of 318 articles were retrieved of which 152, 73, and 93 articles in EBSCOhost, Scopus, and Web of Science respectively. However, only the 42 articles from tourism and hospitality journals were kept to remain consistent with the scope of this research.

During the screening stage, the articles' quality was examined to establish their appropriateness for inclusion in this review. This quality assessment relied on the implicit rating of a specific journal rather than a formal application of quality assessment criteria (Tranfield et al., 2003). The selected journals were: *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism*

Marketing, Journal of Travel Research, Tourism Economics, and Tourism Management. A total of 25 articles were retained after this step.

In the eligibility phase, only articles with a primary focus on competition within tourism destinations were manually selected. This resulted in 20 articles suitable for inclusion in the final database of this study.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow diagram



Source: Moher et al. (2009)

Once the final database was created, a data extraction process followed. This process was supported by a coding system developed by the author in an Excel matrix to facilitate the categorization and the analysis of the literature. The matrix registered both basic information (authors, title, keywords, publication details, affiliation, country) and specific ones. The latter included the articles' theoretical foundation, competition conceptualization, level of analysis, and industry- and context-specific factors identified. These factors were further categorized into the

three dimensions of antecedents, processes, and outcomes of coopetition. This thorough data collection and analysis grounded the development of the integrative theoretical framework.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the current state of research on coopetition in tourism and hospitality literature, including the authors, journal acronym, year of publication, authors' country of affiliation, purpose of the research, level of analysis used, and whether the research identified antecedents (A), processes (P), or outcomes (O) of coopetition within tourism destinations.

Table 1. Synthesis of the reviewed papers

Authors	Journal	Year	Country	Researched topic	Level of analysis	Focus on
Bahar et al.	TM	2022	New Zealand	Coopetition balance between hotels and platforms	Inter-firm	A, P
Bilbil	CIT	2019	Turkey	Role of external institutions in coopetition	Network	A, P
Chin et al.	CIT	2015	Brunei; England	Destination competitiveness model	System	P
Czakon and Czernek-Marszałek	JTR	2020	Poland	Coopetition from managers' perspective	Inter-firm	A
Czernek and Czakon	TM	2016	Poland	Role of trust	Inter-firm	A
Czernek et al.	JDMM	2017	Poland	Trust and formal contracts	Inter-firm	P
Damayanti et al.	ATR	2017	Australia; Indonesia	Patterns of coopetition in the informal economy	Intra-, Inter-firm, network	P
Della Corte and Aria	TM	2016	Italy	Model and test of the variables that induce coopetition, their relationship and firm performance	Network	A, P, O
Falk	TM	2017	Austria	Effects of coopetition on tourism demand	Inter-firm	O
Fong et al.	TM	2021	China	The interplay of relationships among horizontal, vertical, diagonal suppliers	Network	P

Fong et al.	TM	2018	China	Evolution of cooperative practices of four tour operators in Macau	Inter-firm	A, P
Huang et al.	JTTM	2021	China	Rationalization of how tourism enterprises make decisions and evolve during the Covid-19 pandemic	Inter-firm	A
Kallmuenzer et al.	IJHM	2021	Austria; France; Italy; USA	Antecedents of cooperation differentiating between SMEs and family-run SMEs	Network	A
Kirilova et al.	JDMM	2020	China	Cooperative joint destination brand	Network	O
Köseoglu et al.	IJHM	2021	Poland; USA	How cooperation can influence competitive intelligence practices in Hong Kong hotels	Intra-, Inter-firm, network	P
Romero et al.	TE	2018	Spain	Influence of cooperation on innovative behaviour of restaurant firms	Inter-firm	O
Wang and Krakover	IJCHM	2008	Spain	Cooperation from the perspective of local tourism industry stakeholders	Inter-firm	A, P
Webb et al.	IJCHM	2021	USA	Benefits of cooperation for the hotel industry	Inter-firm	O
Webb and Schwartz	TE	2016	USA	The bias of a performance indicator	Inter-firm	A
Zach et al.	ATR	2021	Austria; Norway; USA	Determinants of the adoption of “me-too” innovations in cooperation between ski-lift operators in the Federal State of Tyrol	Inter-firm	A

Only 20 articles on cooperation within destinations have been published in top tourism and hospitality journals to date, and all in the last few years: one article was published in 2008, while the rest have been published since 2015. This demonstrates that the concept of cooperation is a recent addition to the tourism and hospitality literature, that it is gradually displacing the concepts of sole competition or cooperation. The majority of the authors of the reviewed literature are based in the USA, followed by China and Poland.

Most of the reviewed articles seek to identify cooperation antecedents for tourism destinations (Figure 2). In line with economic theory, economic advantages are considered a primary factor in

firms' propensity to engage in cooperative dynamics (Kallmuener et al., 2021): an analysis of prospective individual gains exceeding costs is discovered to be the beginning of cooperative dynamics (Czernek and Czakon, 2016). However, because tourism is a socially embedded activity, focusing solely on economic benefits is insufficient. The emotional connections between partners, as well as firms' dependence on the appeal and performance of a destination, function as a moderating factor (Czernek and Czakon, 2016; Kallmuener et al., 2021). Alliance membership (Zach et al., 2021) and managers' collaborative mindset (Czakon and Czernek-Marszalek, 2020; Wang and Krakover, 2008) have also been shown to be significant antecedents of cooperation, together with reputation, even though the latter is a necessary but not sufficient condition (Czernek and Czakon, 2016). Additionally, meaningful communication and social relationships built on trust and confidence in partners have been identified as key antecedents for family-run hospitality firms (Kallmuenzer et al., 2021).

The environment is important as well, but whether it is one of the key cooperation antecedents is discussed in the literature. Acute environmental shocks, such as the Covid-19 outbreak, can induce tourism firms to cooperate (Huang et al., 2021). The same holds true for changes in institutional environments (Fong et al., 2018), even though third parties and external institutions may contribute to the insurgence of conflicts and tensions (Bilbil, 2019). Apart from environmental adversity or change, the environment is not regarded as a primary antecedent of cooperation (Czakon and Czernek, 2016). Zach et al. (2021) demonstrate that location-specific features, such as distance to the closest agglomeration, the existence of a nearby neighbor, and a destination's performance, have little to no impact on the likelihood of ski-lift operators cooperating. Similarly, Della Corte and Aria (2016) demonstrate that geographical proximity does not always promote cooperation, since cultural differences and local identity may prove to be more influential in the definition of local tourism firms' interactions. The only case in which market uncertainty and the competitive environment characterizing tourism destinations might favor cooperation is for family-run firms (Kallmuenzer et al., 2021). These firms might be more susceptible to environmental changes due to their often stand-alone, family-driven position and might be more eager to cooperate.

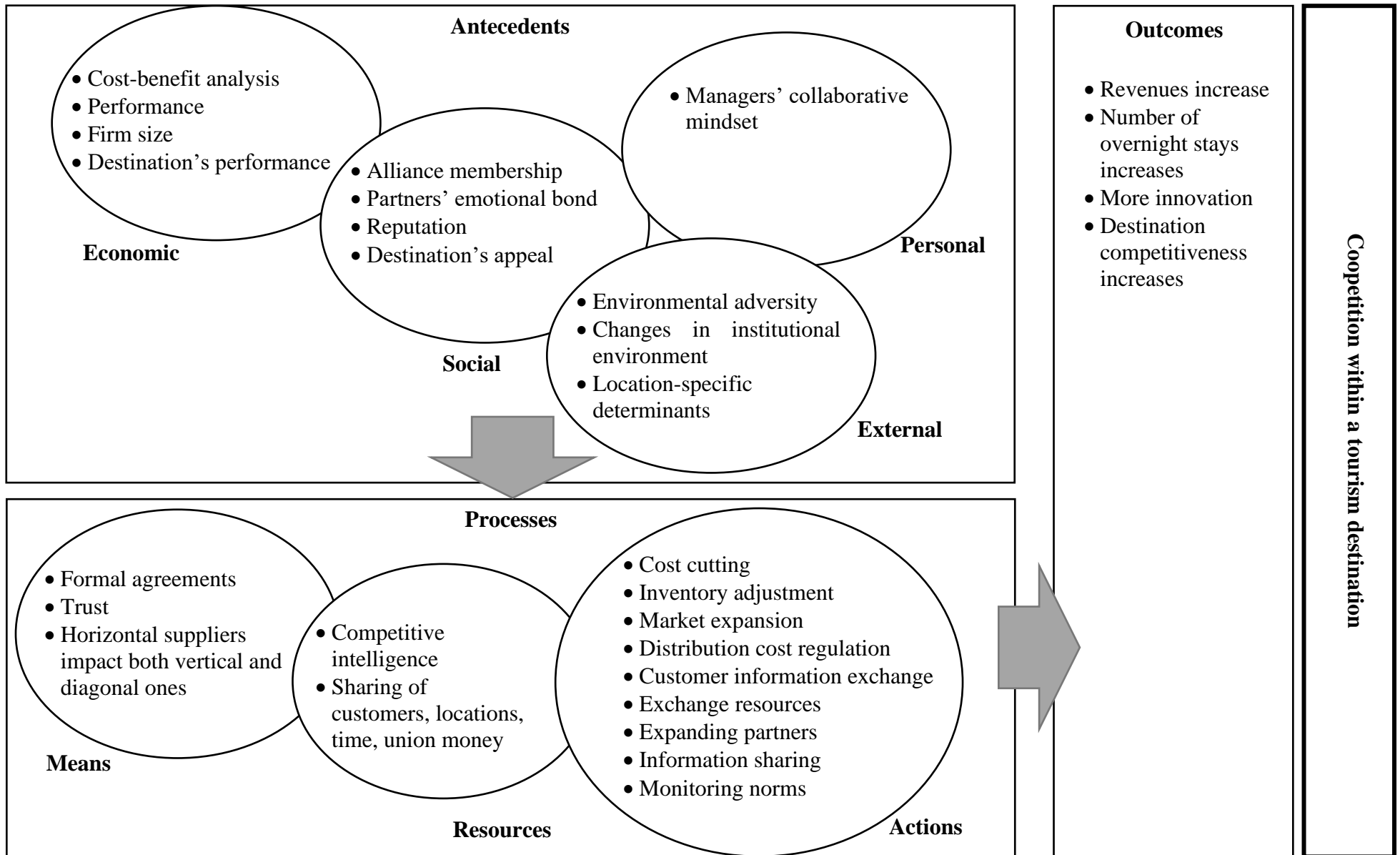
Finally, size is found to be a significant antecedent of cooperation (Zach et al., 2021). For example, in Bali, transnational corporations compete with medium-sized firms, and not with small local ones (Chin et al., 2015). The articles reviewed in this research all put emphasis on context-specific rather than industry-specific factors. Only Fong et al. (2021) address the tourist industry's peculiarities, considering the existence of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal value chain linkages. None of the reviewed articles has investigated whether the complementarity of the tourism product might be a primary cooperation antecedent.

The second most investigated dimension is cooperative processes, and especially on whether cooperative interactions are governed by formal or informal agreements. According to Czernek et al. (2017), oral agreements based on trust and formal contracts complement each other. The converse is true for the informal economy, where cooperation is governed by norms and trust rather than formal contracts (Damayanti et al., 2017). The primary cooperative activities identified by the reviewed literature vary according to the level of analysis used. For instance, while examining cooperation between hotels and platforms, the main activities are inventory adjustment, distribution cost regulation, target market expansion, and customer information exchange (Bahar et al., 2022). Hotels cooperate explicitly on cooperative intelligence practices on an intra-organizational level, but cooperative law and the fear of opportunism hinder them from cooperating at an inter-organizational level (Köseoglu et al., 2021). Inter-firm cooperative activities include the development of new

products, the expansion and establishment of formal institutional partners, the sharing of information, the enforcement of rules, the monitoring of norms, and the use and exchange of different resources (Fong et al., 2018). The latter is particularly relevant in the informal economy, where cooperative activities primarily consist of the sharing of multiple resources including customers, locations, time, and union money (Damayanti, 2017). However, also research concentrating on cooperation processes does not specifically examine how industry-specific factors fit into or may lead to cooperative processes. Also in this case, only Fong et al. (2021) address how cooperation between horizontal suppliers impacts both vertical and diagonal suppliers.

Finally, part of the reviewed literature studies the outcomes of cooperation, which mainly consist of an increase in revenues (Webb et al., 2021), demand (Falk, 2017), innovation (Romero et al., 2018) and competitiveness (Della Corte and Aria, 2016) for the involved firms. Once more, no focus is placed upon industry-specific factors and on how these might relate to the outcomes of cooperation. Given that the reviewed studies indicate that cooperation is beneficial for the involved firms, it might be interesting to try to understand whether, considering the complementarity of the tourism product, cooperation can be expected to confront disruptions, strengthen strategic management, communication strategies and readiness measures that define destination resilience. This might have particular importance in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Prideaux et al. (2021) underline that since crisis events usually affect the entire destination community, stakeholders' collaboration might be strategic in responding to changes in tourism demand. The authors provide some examples among which low-altitude ski resorts affected by climate change that need to respond to falling demand by either collaborating to develop new attractions and activities or closing their businesses. Similarly, Shrestha and Decosta (2021) highlight the need for local communities to rely more on their own resources and organic collaboration among stakeholders to face the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 2. Main competition antecedents, processes and outcomes



Conclusion and Discussion

This paper systematically reviewed the literature on coopetition within tourism destinations published in selected top tourism and hospitality journals. The purpose of this study was to identify the key antecedents, processes, and outcomes of coopetition within destinations explored by existing literature, as well as arguments for the justification of the transportation of the concept of coopetition from organizational studies to tourism research. Hence, the interdependence and complementarity typical of the tourism industry and its product are considered a lens through which analyze the literature.

However, results reveal that most studies focus on the antecedents of coopetition, and more specifically on context- rather than industry-specific ones. The same applies to outcomes and processes. Therefore, this review suggests that more attention could be devoted to the study of the interdependence and complementarity among the components of the tourism product and tourism stakeholders and to their implications for the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of coopetition. This could be crucial in explaining coopetition in the context of tourism destinations and supporting the need for additional research in this emerging branch of literature.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering an overview of findings and discussions in the tourism and hospitality literature on coopetition. This paper addresses the peculiarities of the tourist industry and its product, as well as the impact they have on firms' productive coalitions, by taking into account specificities often neglected by the literature. However, this study has two main limitations connected with the methodology. Firstly, despite the use of a rigorous and replicable approach, the search was restricted to publications in English language in top peer-reviewed tourism and hospitality journals. As a result, future studies may be more comprehensive and incorporate publications on the subject that have not been published in dedicated tourism and hospitality journals. Therein, a broader keyword search might be employed in the article search phase. Since tourism is a multidisciplinary field of study, the same theoretical concept might be expressed by different keywords in different disciplines. Thus, a more inclusive search might reveal the whole picture of coopetition (and related concepts) in tourism destinations, rather than shedding light on only a few of its facets. Secondly, since only a small number of publications were found to be suitable for inclusion in this study, bibliometric or meta-analysis techniques could not be employed to complement the descriptive results of this study with an analytical perspective. Hence, bibliometric or meta-analysis techniques might be considered for a future review paper.

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