

## Papers

### Trust in tourism cooperation networks: analysis of its role and linked elements in Parnaíba, Piauí, Brasil

Confiança em redes de cooperação do turismo: análise de seu papel e elementos vinculados em Parnaíba, Piauí, Brasil

La Confianza en redes de cooperación del turismo: análisis de su papel y elementos vinculados en Parnaíba, Piauí, Brasil

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#### Keywords:

Trust;  
Cooperation;  
Linked Elements;  
Tourist Destination.

#### Abstract

This study aimed to demonstrate the role of trust and the elements that are linked to it – contracts, support institutions and reciprocity – in the decision to cooperate in the tourism sector of Parnaíba, Piauí, Brazil. For that, an exploratory research with a qualitative approach was carried out, in which nine managers of the lodging sector – hotels and inns – were interviewed. The data were analyzed using the Content Analysis technique. Findings confirm the existence of several interorganizational cooperation networks in the destination, that the relationships are informal and the cooperation is represented by service recommendation, exchange of knowledge/information and promotion actions. The main contribution of this paper is to demonstrate that trust is present in local networks, but trustworthiness – an individual attribute – was also relevant in the decision to cooperate. In addition, it is proven that support institutions and reciprocity appear as complementary to trust, while contracts substitute trust and are used only in relationships outside the destination. Finally, eight research propositions are presented as a result of the empirical study to be tested on future investigations.

#### Palavras-chave:

Confiança;  
Cooperação;  
Elementos Vinculados;  
Destino Turístico.

#### Resumo

Este trabalho objetivou demonstrar o papel da confiança e dos elementos que se vinculam a ela – contratos, instituições de suporte e reciprocidade – na decisão de cooperar no setor turístico de Parnaíba, Piauí, Brasil. Para tanto, realizou-se uma pesquisa exploratória, com abordagem qualitativa, na qual foram entrevistados nove gestores de empresas do setor de hospedagem. Os dados foram analisados com o uso da técnica da Análise de Conteúdo. Os resultados apontaram que existem várias redes de cooperação interorganizacional no local, que as relações são informais e se traduzem na indicação, troca de conhecimento/informação e ações de promoção. A contribuição deste trabalho está em demonstrar que a confiança está presente nas redes locais, mas a confiabilidade, entendida como um atributo individual, mostrou-se também relevante na decisão de cooperar. Além disso, comprova-se que instituições de suporte e reciprocidade aparecem como complementares à confiança, enquanto contratos substituem a confiança e são usados somente nas relações fora do

território. Por fim, são apresentadas oito proposições de pesquisa, como resultado do estudo empírico, a serem testadas em estudos futuros.

#### Palabras clave:

Confianza;  
Cooperación;  
Elementos Vinculados;  
Destino Turístico.

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#### Resumen

Este artículo intenta demostrar el papel de la confianza y de los elementos que se vinculan a ella – contratos, instituciones de apoyo y reciprocidad – en la decisión de cooperar en el sector turístico de Parnaíba, Piauí, Brasil. Así, se realizó una investigación exploratoria y cualitativa con nueve gestores de alojamientos turísticos locales. Los datos fueron analizados con la técnica del Análisis de Contenido. Los hallazgos mostraron que hay distintas redes de cooperación interorganizacional en Parnaíba, que las relaciones son informales y se traducen en la indicación, intercambio de conocimiento/información y acciones de promoción. La contribución principal fue demostrar que existe confianza en las redes locales, pero la confiabilidad, un atributo individual, también se presentó como relevante en la decisión de cooperar. Además, se comprueba que las instituciones de apoyo y la reciprocidad aparecen como complementarias a la confianza, mientras que los contratos sustituyen a la confianza y se utilizan solamente en las relaciones fuera del territorio. Por último, se presentan ocho proposiciones de investigación, como resultado del estudio empírico, a ser probadas en trabajos futuros.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In a context of competitiveness, companies have adopted a diversity of strategies that favor improvements in their performance, such as interorganizational cooperation networks (Beritelli, 2011; Scott, Cooper & Baggio, 2008). Conceptually, networks constitute an arrangement – formal or informal (Denicolai, Cioccarelli & Zucchella, 2010) – between firms that reflect the search for complementary resources between partner organizations (Oliver, 1990), in order to generate economic returns that, in isolation, each actor would hardly achieve (Verschoore, Balestrin & Perucia, 2014). In the same vein, Borgatti and Foster (2003) argued that networks represent repetitive resource exchanges between organizations, which can rely on trust to protect transactions and reduce transaction costs.

Studies on cooperation networks cover varied sectors, such as construction material (Castro, Bulgacov & Hoffmann, 2011), furniture (Hoffmann, Lopes & Medeiros, 2014), agribusiness (Colet & Mozzato, 2016) and tourism (Bock & Macke, 2014; Costa & Franco, 2018; Gomes, 2010; Silva & Flôr, 2010). In the latter, it was recognized that network cooperation benefits not only individual companies, but also communities and the tourist destination as a whole (Vieira & Hoffmann, 2018). These observations seem to be important, bearing in mind that destinations compete with each other to attract travelers even before individual businesses (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003), at least initially.

In addition, the tourism industry is made up mostly of micro and small enterprises (SMEs) (Baggio & Cooper, 2010), with significant interdependent relationships to provide local services (Denicolai et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2008; Xavier, Inácio, Wittmann & Flecha, 2012), which justifies the relevance of networking to build competitive strategies in the tourism market (Hocayen da Silva & Teixeira, 2009). In the Brazilian context, studies have shown that alliances between tourism SMEs help to reduce costs and increase information sharing (Cerqueira, Sacramento & Teixeira, 2010), provide dialogues favorable to innovation and ongoing learning (Fortunato & Garcez, 2016), besides generating competitive advantages that minimize the impact of large enterprises (Hocayen da Silva & Teixeira, 2009).

It is thus observed that the analysis of the networks places the relational aspect of tourism in the foreground (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2016; Giglio & Carvalho, 2013) and raises the understanding of its mechanisms, dynamics and fundamentals, among them the role of trust and how to articulate it with cooperation, central aspects of the present paper.

Trust is defined as the intention to accept vulnerability to a trusted party, based on the positive expectations of its actions (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). It favors the creation of networks between companies, due to the advantages it offers to its participants (Lanz & Tomei, 2015). For

the operation of networks, it is important that their members feel secure about the future behavior of those with whom they trade (Gambetta, 1988), to the point of assuming the risks involved in the relationship (Luhmann, 1988), and disregarding other safeguards for cooperative conduct. This justifies the presence of trust in the literature on interorganizational networks (Thorelli, 1986), for more than three decades, as a key element in their formation.

According to Putnam (2005), trust lubricates social life by providing the context for any transaction, including economic ones. Thus, the existence of trust reduces the possibilities of opportunism on the part of the actors from a perspective of collective action (Olson, 1999). In other words, trusting someone means that even if the trustee has chances, it is not prone to act in a way that causes harm to a trustor (Gambetta, 1988). This assumption can generate an environment in which mutual responsibilities and obligations impact on reducing transaction costs and can increase efficiency (North, 1990).

Although cooperation and trust are often linked to each other, they are not synonymous (Maciel, 2001), just as trust and trustworthiness are not. There are authors who understand some level of trust as a necessary condition for cooperation (Gambetta, 1988; Lanz & Tomei, 2015), while others emphasize the possibility of cooperation even in environments without trust (Axelrod, 2010). In these contexts that make trust development unfeasible, it is necessary to have elements that are linked to it, by substitution or complementation, to corroborate the creation of cooperation networks (Czernek, Czakon & Marszałek, 2017).

The theoretical justification of this paper is supported by Maggioni, Maroz and Mauri (2014) and Czernek et al. (2017), who recommended investigating, respectively, lodging SMEs, focusing on interorganizational trust to better understand the presence of elements that are linked to it in the formation of networks. The discussion about these elements consists of an original proposition and one of the conceptual advances expected from this study.

In general, the elements act as substitutes when trust does not respond for cooperation and another component is required to form networks. The complementary elements, in turn, add to the trust between partners for their strengthening or to increase the quality in economic exchanges. Thus, to substitute trust, or as its complement, entrepreneurs make use of contracts (Czernek et al., 2017; Williamson, 1985), support institutions (SIs) (André, 2004; Hoffmann, Molina-Morales & Martínez-Fernández, 2007) and/or reciprocity (Axelrod, 2010, Gouldner, 1960).

In this context, the present investigation turns its attention to the SMEs of the lodging sector of Parnaíba (PI), one of the 65 key destinations of Brazil (MTur, 2008). Thus, the objective of this study is to demonstrate the role of trust and the elements that are linked to it – contracts, support institutions and reciprocity – in the decision to cooperate in the tourism sector of Parnaíba (PI).

Based on this objective, this work is developed around concepts regarding trust and its linked elements, as well as interorganizational cooperation and tourism. Subsequently, the methodology of the study and the characteristics of the field of investigation are presented. Finally, the results, conclusions and a research agenda are presented.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Trust and Cooperation Networks**

The concept of trust mentioned above pervades two central components: vulnerability, which deals with an individual's willingness to put himself at risk with a partner (Luhmann, 1988), since other ways of monitoring its behavior are not considered; positive expectations, which refer to the belief that the trustee acts beneficially or at least in a non-detrimental way with the trustor and therefore decides to cooperate with the trusted party (Gambetta, 1988). It is also important not to confuse the concepts of trust and trustworthiness, since this refers to specific attributes of the individual actor (Barney & Hansen, 1994), in terms of his ability (competence), benevolence (loyalty, concern for the other) and integrity (adherence to ethical and moral principles). Trust, therefore, exists in the relationship between individuals and/or organizations, while trustworthiness captures competencies and characteristics of the trusted party (Mayer et al., 1995).

Considering that networks involve the simultaneous presence of contradictory factors, such as consensus and conflict, collaboration and competition (Powell, 1990), the assertion that trust is an important tool for the quality of collaborative relationships is valid (Rosas & Camarinha-Matos, 2009). The advantages of having trust as the basis of interfirm relationships are varied. It reduces the need for formal mechanisms (Uzzi, 1996) and builds a more appropriate environment for dealing with exchange and business relationships because it minimizes transaction costs and opportunism (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). Since entrepreneurs feel more comfortable in transacting with other network members, resource sharing can occur at high levels (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998), and positively impact their business performance (Vieira & Hoffmann, 2018).

Empirical research on the relationship between trust and cooperation has suggested that one can be strongly influenced by the other. In the cluster of meshes in Nova Petrópolis (RS), Neumann, Hexsel and Balestrin (2011) verified a low cooperation due to lack of local trust. A similar situation was identified by Andrichi and Hoffmann (2010) in a tourist cluster of Santa Catarina. In the region of Guarapuava (PR), Castro et al. (2011) identified that the lack of trust among local actors jeopardized business cooperation. In Mauritius, Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2012) concluded that residents' trust in local government institutions was decisive in supporting tourism development, reinforcing the opinion of Beritelli (2011) that the possibilities for cooperation increase, as attention to trust is given. Bock and Macke (2014) found in a rural tourism network in Rio Grande do Sul that relationships based on trust and reciprocity are decisive for the strengthening and continuity of this alliance. Brandão, Temoteo and Cândido (2018) confirmed that trust facilitates collective learning in a hotel chain in Paraíba.

However, interorganizational networks may not be motivated by trust and even in the realities in which it is not present, cooperation may exist (Axelrod, 2010; Lanz & Tomei, 2015), because those involved accept safeguards to decide for partnerships. Thus, trust-related elements that act as their substitutes or complements emerge (Czernek et al., 2017), such as contracts, SIs (support institutions) and reciprocity explored in this study.

## 2.2 Elements Linked to Trust in Cooperation Networks

### 2.2.1 Contracts

Contracts, in the context of networks, comprise agreements in writing, legally valid, that have the function of coordinating and controlling actions, aiming at collaboration between the parties (Lanz & Tomei, 2015). Thus, contractual mechanisms explain how companies should act and ensure that each one shares the same understanding of rights and duties in the relationship (Lumineau & Malhotra, 2011). Hence, the use of contracts minimizes risks and can promote cooperation (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992).

For a long time, contracts have been recognized as the traditional substitutes for trust (Granovetter, 1985), especially in the case of contexts in which the latter is not present or is not enough to generate alliances, so some protection must exist in cooperative behavior (Neumann et al., 2011). However, the disadvantage of the contract is that its elaboration is costly and slow, in addition to its inherent incompleteness (Lumineau & Malhotra, 2011), which makes it difficult to delineate all contingencies in the long term (Williamson, 1985).

From another perspective, Czernek et al. (2017) pointed out that contracts can play a complementary role to trust to foster cooperation in the sense that written agreements are not only results of lack of trust but also a requirement of public institutions or partners' operational/financial requirements. This complementarity is especially important when it is believed that trust is subject to weaknesses such as the need for substantial time to develop, and to open up possibilities for opportunism (Granovetter, 1985), which makes contracts useful for counterbalancing a possible breach of trust (Lanz & Tomei, 2015). These last authors added that both contracts and trust have limitations that make them risky or inefficient to use, and for that reason they admit the combination of both elements.

### 2.2.2 Support institutions

Support institutions (SIs) comprise organizations geared to operate in a given territory, which provide

specialized services (Brusco, 1993), act as repositories of knowledge and facilitate the development of competitiveness of local firms (Molina-Morales & Martínez-Fernández, 2010). SIs encompass universities, research centers and/or government organizations, business associations and public/private funding sources (Boari, Molina-Morales & Martínez-Cháfer, 2017), who have the ability to obtain information outside the cluster – and/or the network – and internalize it with the companies (Molina-Morales & Martínez-Fernández, 2010).

In the perspective of substitution, it is shown that SIs can initiate cooperation by easing dialogues and negotiations (André, 2004; Selin & Beason, 1991), encouraging companies to form partnerships, especially in the context of SMEs (Baggio & Cooper, 2010), which would be enough to reconcile heterogeneous interests (Franco, 2007) and overcome a possible lack of trust.

In empirical research, SIs are relevant to networks. In the Jæren region of Norway, horizontal cooperation was successful due to the development of a technological support institution, which facilitated learning (Asheim & Isaksen, 2002). In the tourist itineraries of Minas Gerais, in Brazil, SIs have responded by initiating cooperation between networks belonging to different municipalities of the State (Knupp & Mafra, 2012). On the other hand, in the hotel chain of Brasília (DF), the lack of government support, which could be associated with the intermediation of SIs, was the main obstacle to business partnerships (Miranda Júnior, Costa & Hoffmann, 2016). Silva, Almeida and Ferreira (2014) also suggested that the lack of support from SIs compromised the cohesion among the actors of the network investigated by them. Carrão (2004) already had argued that the support of governmental institutions is indispensable to the survival of networks. Although cooperation often comes from the isolated initiative of firms, it is common for the government to act as an inducer of the process (Pereira & Lopes, 2010).

In the logic of complementarity, Locke's (2001) findings show that the technical-financial support of SIs, to the economic agents of a given cluster, favored the construction of trust between them. This situation is justified because the cooperative actions, intermediated by these institutions, have resulted in successful experiences that have, therefore, enabled the mutual trust of the companies. By aiming to reduce opportunism, SIs insert some level of trust that is important for cooperation.

In this reasoning, it is inferred that the action of an organization linked to the collective interest, to coordinate compliance with established norms (Beritelli, 2011), leads to concrete possibilities for cooperation, even in the absence of trust (Axelrod, 2010). For this reason, SIs can act as substitutes for trust or act at a previous stage and interfere with entrepreneurs to encourage the formation of partnerships.

### *2.2.3 Reciprocity*

Reciprocity comprehended as a mutual contingent exchange of benefits between two or more parties, which carries the stability of the socioeconomic system that surrounds them. For the balance of relationships, people tend to help those who have helped them, or not to harm those who have supported them (Gouldner, 1960). Hence, reciprocal conduct can be supported by a rational and calculated decision aimed at rewarding a benefit in the future (Siqueira, 2005), especially since in certain contexts, non-payment of a favor can lead to social sanctions for the deserter (Putnam, 2005). Thus, reciprocity, in the logic of cooperation, implies the obligation to reciprocate a favor (Siqueira, 2005).

The argument that strengthens the substitution link between reciprocity and trust is defended by Axelrod (2010), according to which, in order to have cooperation, there must be the possibility of replicating the behavior of the other – collaborative or deserting – in repeated interactions between the parties. This circumstance can lead to possibilities for cooperation, since when two economic actors have desirable and reciprocal behaviors, they tend to reward the beneficial action offered even without trust between the parties. This view is in line with the results found in Maciel's investigation (2001), where cooperation in research networks in the Brazilian Northeast did not identify trust, but rather increased interactions aiming economic success. Thus, if a company interacts with another, sharing information, lending equipment, or simply recommending its service to a customer or supplier, it may charge the aid at a later time.

From the point of view of complementarity, it is added that reciprocity can also foster trust (Powell, 1990), since beneficial reciprocal actions in the long term promote a perception of security and stability for entrepreneurs, which leads to future transactions from the trust generated. This, moreover, is the social function of reciprocity: to initiate trust-generating interaction among those involved (Gouldner, 1960).

In short, reciprocity constitutes rational, calculating and interested behavior, based on the strategic decision of the individual, a situation that is so much in opposition to benevolence, a typical attribute of trusting relationships (Colquitt et al., 2007). Over time, reciprocity can also stimulate interorganizational trust (Powell, 1990).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This article is a descriptive and exploratory, bibliographic field study (Vergara, 1997), with a transversal and qualitative character (Flick, 2009), following the recommendations of Costa (2018), in response to the commonly quantitative past of the investigations in this area. In the present study, the city of Parnaíba geographically delimits the cooperation network investigated, according to Baggio and Cooper's (2010) comprehension that a destination, in its complex system of formal and/or informal interactions, can be considered the network itself.

#### 3.1 Definition of Variables

This work focused on five categories – cooperation, trust, contracts, support institutions and reciprocity – and started from the *ex ante* subcategories identified in the theoretical framework. For cooperation, the baseline study was Costa (2009), while for trust, the subcategories were those recommended by Colquitt et al. (2007). As for the other three categories (linked elements), the investigation focused on the *ex ante* subcategories discussed in Axelrod (2010), Baggio and Cooper (2010), Gouldner (1960), Ring and Van de Ven (1992) and Siqueira (2005). In sequence, data collection allowed the identification of new subcategories (*ex post*) in the exploration of the themes. These unforeseen subcategories were included in the analyzes to provide greater subsidies for the discussion, a fact that reinforces the exploratory characteristics of this investigation (Table 1).

**Table 1** – Research categories and subcategories

| Category             | <i>Ex ante</i> subcategories   | Reference                                      | <i>Ex post</i> subcategories                                  |
|----------------------|--|--|---|
| Cooperation          | Service recommendation;<br>Exchange of knowledge and information;<br>Promotional actions                                       | Costa (2009)                                   | Complementarity;<br>Durability/frequency of the relationships |
| Trust                | Direct measures <sup>1</sup> ;<br>Positive expectations;<br>Willingness to be vulnerable                                       | Colquitt et al. (2007)                         | Trustworthiness   |
| Contracts            | Intra network contractuality   | Ring and Van de Ven (1992)                     | External contractuality                                       |
| Support institutions | Initiation of cooperation;<br>Technical support;<br>Facilitate dialogues and negotiations                                      | Baggio and Cooper (2010)                       | -   |
| Reciprocity          | Individualism of partners;<br>Obligation in the retribution of behavior;<br>Behavior conditioned to the conduct of the partner | Gouldner (1960) Siqueira (2005) Axelrod (2010) | Social sanctions  |

<sup>1</sup> Direct measures deal with direct inquiry to the respondent whether or not he/she trusts a partner

**Source:** Own elaboration based on the reference and the research data.

#### 3.2 Case Selection, Data Collection and Treatment of Data

The destination chosen was Parnaíba (PI), whose main tourist attractions are Parnaíba Delta and the coastal area (Perinotto, 2013; Perinotto & Santos, 2011). It is part of the 65 Brazilian key destinations (MTur, 2008) and constitutes one of the 5.5% best performing cities in the national tourism economy (MTur, 2015). It has

basic infrastructure to host tourists – hospitals, city bus station, airport, lodging facilities, receptive tour operators, food and beverage services – and it has in the activity one of the main mechanisms of job creation and local income (Perinotto, 2013).

Parnaíba participates, along with Barreirinhas (MA) and Jericoacoara (CE), of the Route of Emotions (Rota das Emoções) (Sebrae, Senac & MTur, 2006), an integrated tourist itinerary fostered by the Brazilian federal public policy of regionalization (Fratucci, 2009), the first tourism interstate consortium in this country (Bouças da Silva & Ribeiro, 2018), which is an indication of cooperation and justifies the choice of the case. In this study, the tourist destination, within its territorial limits, is the location variable considered and operationalized as the cooperation network itself, given that it is a cluster that brings together firms with complementary relationships (Andrighi & Hoffmann, 2010; Scott et al., 2008).

The unit of analysis refers to the companies associated to the lodging sector – hotels and inns – and evaluated in the TripAdvisor site until September 2016. From this, it arrived at the universe of 17 enterprises and, for the determination of the subjects of the research, the criteria of adhesion and theoretical saturation were used (Fontanella, Ricas & Turato, 2008). Finally, nine enterprises were interviewed. Table 2 assists in the contextualization of the research participants.

Data were collected locally through the application of a semi-structured script, containing the variables highlighted in Table 1. The interviews were conducted in person in October 2016. The technique used was Content Analysis, as defined by Bardin (1977), following the categories and subcategories shown in Table 1. At the end of this paper, we will present propositions that are constructed based on the results of the research, as an effort to the deepening of the current theme.

**Table 2** – Sample characterization

| Company | Years in existence | Size  | UH # | Trip Advisor rating | Respondent Position  | Education        |
|---------|--------------------|-------|------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| A       | More than 20 years | Small | 70   | 3.5                 | Reception manager    | Higher education |
| B       | 6 years            | Micro | 18   | 4.0                 | General manager      | Postgraduate     |
| C       | 3 years            | Small | 22   | 5.0                 | General manager      | Higher education |
| D       | 6 years            | Small | 26   | 4.0                 | Reservations manager | Higher education |
| E       | 6 years            | Micro | 57   | 3.5                 | Owner                | High school      |
| F       | More than 20 years | Small | 72   | 3.0                 | General manager      | Higher education |
| G       | More than 20 years | Small | 57   | 3.5                 | Reservations manager | Higher education |
| H       | More than 20 years | Micro | 18   | 3.0                 | Owner                | High school      |
| I       | 6 years            | Micro | 10   | 3.5                 | Reception manager    | High school      |

Source: Own elaboration based on research data.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Category: Cooperation

Table 3 shows that the *ex ante* subcategories were confirmed and that two new categories (*ex post*): “complementarity of the companies” and “durability/frequency of the relationships”.

**Table 3** – Contents relating to cooperation

(continue)

| Company  | CONTENT  |
|--|--|
| <i>Ex ante</i> subcategory – Service Recommendation – Horizontal network |  |
| A  | “When it is high season, we recommend other hotels. We give their telephone number”.   |
| B  | “My partners really are partners and not competitors. I even work with several hotels”.  |
| C  | “We have alliances with other hotels, which is a routine partnership of the city, the exchange [...] of clients”.  |
| D  | “Lodging services, we always recommend when our inn is full [...] or when the client asks for one with a lower price [...] we even call our partners to set prices and pass on to the client who is here”.                             |
| G  | “We also recommend other hotels, inns”.  |
| I  | “We send clients there [...] to other inns”.   |
| <i>Ex ante</i> subcategory – Service Recommendation – Vertical network   |  |
| A  | “We work with all local tour operators, especially those with prominence [...] the groups that they finalize there, they recommend us here and when the groups arrive directly at the hotel, we recommend these local tour operators”. |

**Table 3** – Contents relating to cooperation

(conclusion)

| Company  | CONTENT   |
|--|---|
| <i>Ex ante</i> subcategory – Service Recommendation – Vertical network |   |
| B  | “We start with local tour operators [...] They sell our hotel and we sell Delta tour that is set by them”.  |
| C  | “From the start, we find it necessary to work together, as a priority, with local receptive tour operators [...] restaurants too”.  |
| D  | “We have a partnership with a restaurant [...] whoever eats there competes for lodging here. The same thing, who comes here, competes for a sushi barge”.   |
| E  | “We get in touch with the receptive operators and recommend them. They recommend us to their clients, the more we send our clients to them”.  |
| F  | “There’s a restaurant here [...] that we try to recommend”.   |
| G  | “Receptive tour operators [...] is partnership. Often, they recommend us and we recommend them”.  |
| H  | “It is only service recommendation, mainly receptive tour operators and restaurants, nice, good and cheap places”.  |
| I  | “The partnership of the local tour operators is the recommendation of their services”.  |
| <i>Ex ante</i> subcategory – Knowledge and information exchange        |   |
| B  | “My client sometimes says he did not like the recommendation [...] Then I call my partners to inform them about the complaints”.  |
| C  | “With hotels [...] we exchange information about customers [...] and with restaurants”.   |
| D  | “The owner of the inn is friendly with owners of other lodging companies [...] so they can exchange ideas, experiences. He asks how are they doing, what can be done to improve their businesses”.  |
| E  | “When there is a mistake (with partner service) that they (clients) do not like, we tell our partners [...] that the client complained”.  |
| <i>Ex ante</i> subcategory – Promotion actions                         |   |
| B  | “There are big tourism fairs that we can’t attend individually, so the <i>Convention</i> [...] takes the promotional material (brochures etc.) from everyone and discloses it”.   |
| D  | “At ABAV [...] not all the entrepreneurs in Parnaíba could participate in it, but the <i>Convention</i> went there to represent them [...] took their brochures”.   |
| E  | “ABAV, BNTM and other events [...] that are abroad, we have to participate through Sebrae or on our own [...] When not everyone can go, because there are several hotels [...] the most interested, with the best (financial) condition at the moment, are the ones that go”. |
| <i>Ex post</i> subcategory – Complementarity of the companies          |   |
| A  | “The ones who still have relationships [...] would be the receptive tour operators with the hotels, even because there is a dependency on one another. Who offers tour services needs to host people somewhere”.  |
| C  | “In terms of structure, equipment, investments, we find it costly [...] to create our small company to attend tours, trips. So this was our first partnership action, with local, eminently receptive tour operators”.  |
| D  | “We have a company (receptive tour operator). It makes it much easier [...] when the customers come searching for a tour”.  |
| A  | “We already have very old partnerships [...] we meet at Sebrae meetings [...] usually at least once a month”.   |
| B  | “We have been with our partners for a long time, since the beginning of the company”.   |
| C  | “Since the beginning of the company, we have found it necessary to work together [...] so there is a coexistence”.  |
| D  | “We hold meetings to discuss [...] there is a meeting almost every month”.  |
| E  | “It’s a long history [...] because we have contact with these companies every day [...] we meet and there (in meetings) we negotiate”.  |
| F  | “It’s because we work with it (partner company), because it is a friendly relationship. The owners have known each other for a while”.  |

Source: Own elaboration based on research data.

## 4.2 Category: Trust

In the trust category, a new subcategory has emerged, "partner trustworthiness", and only the "positive expectations" subcategory did not have enough content to prove it (Table 4).

**Table 4** – Content relating to trust

| Company   | Content  |
|---|--|
| <b>Ex ante subcategory – Direct measures</b>              |  |
| A   | “Those we work with, we trust. Even because it has to start from trust to maintain good relationships. Not only in business, but in personal life”.  |
| B   | “I believe I trust [...] we work with partnerships and not with the idea of a competitor”.   |
| C   | “Yes, I trust. From the taxi driver to the public institutions”.   |
| E   | “Look, I do trust. Because if I don’t, I don’t want that partnership”.   |
| F   | “Companies we’re directly connected to, yes, we trust. With the others, I realize that there is a certain caution”.  |
| G   | “I think so, with respect to trust”.   |
| H   | “I do not trust, since trust is a strong word [...] You know that nobody does anything in return without interest”.  |
| I   | “I trust [...] because we have a friendly relationship. The owners know each other”.   |
| <b>Ex ante subcategory – Willingness to be vulnerable</b> |  |
| A   | “I do not feel comfortable (in exchanging information). Even because with the selfishness of the tourist trade [...] they can often use this information to denigrate us with their own client and with ours”. |
| B   | “Obviously there are some confidential things, but yes, we do exchange (information)”.   |
| C   | “Yes (I feel comfortable in exchanging information), because we are creating this well. From coexistence to the <i>feedback</i> ”.   |
| D   | “There is no such comfort of sharing information. We want to gather (information), but without sharing the true information (of our company)”.   |
| <b>Ex post subcategory – Partner trustworthiness</b>      |  |
| A   | “We always recommend the partners that satisfy the desire of the clients [...] they provide a quality tour, with good food. That was enough to keep the partnership”.  |
| B   | “We observe which company is providing the best service for the customer [...] I'm not going to sell just the one (tour operator) that sent me a client, but the one that offers the best service”.            |
| C   | “Most important is the quality of what they offer”.  |
| D   | “We recommend our partner and ask for the client's <i>feedback</i> when he comes back. With this, we eliminate those who we'll not recommend anymore”.   |
| G   | “(I recommend because) I believe they are very malleable, easy to negotiate. And, comrades, right? For what we need”.  |
| H   | “The problem is not trust, it is the quality of the service offered [...] we focus on tourist satisfaction, so I do not always recommend the same company”.  |

Source: Own elaboration based on research data

### 4.3 Category: Contracts

In this category, a new theme emerged, regarding contracts established with external partners (external contractuality) (Table 5).

**Table 5** – Content relating to contracts

| Company   | Content   |
|---|---|
| <b>Ex ante subcategory – Intra network contractuality</b> |   |
| A   | “We do not sign a contract with any company [...] it's more a personal relationship [...] everybody who works in the tourism of Parnaíba and region, practically everyone knows each other. It is a very old relationship”. |
| B   | “There really is such a trusting relationship. There are no written contracts [...] the majority, if not all local partners, establish verbal agreements. Even because trust already exists”.                               |
| C   | “With local companies we tend not to do this type of contract (written)”.   |
| D   | “With a formal contract, no [...] Because the partnership can happen with contract or not”.   |
| E   | “The companies here, we do not demand (contract), because we have a very open partnership. If there is a problem [...] we discuss it”.  |
| F   | “It works with verbal agreement [...] but (the partner's word) is very fragile. At any time you may suffer a loss in these verbal agreements [...] it would be important for it to be formalized”.                          |
| G   | “The partnership really does take place, verbally”.   |
| H   | “A contract requires many things [...] I have never signed a contract to establish a partnership here”.   |
| I   | “We only make verbal agreements”.   |
| <b>Ex post subcategory – External contractuality</b>      |   |
| C   | “Three receptive tour operators from outside (from Piauí) obliged us [...] to sign the contract, because otherwise there would be no partnership [...] we were stuck with them for a year”.                                 |
| D   | “We usually have contracts, but with companies from outside the state [...] depending on the movement, negotiation, we can extend, but we always have a contract”.  |
| E   | “We do not care much about contracts with local companies, but with all from out of state, yes. With out of state companies we have contracts. With those from here, we have a verbal contract.”                            |
| G   | “With companies from outside we have everything in written contracts”.  |

Source: Own elaboration based on research data.

#### 4.4 Category: Support institutions

In this theme, no subcategory emerged from the content (Table 6).

**Table 6** – Content relating to Support institutions

| Company  | Content   |
|--|---|
| <b>Ex ante subcategory – Initiation of cooperation</b>             |   |
| B  | “There was no way everyone could meet, it was every man for himself. Then from the work of Sebrae [...] meetings, lectures, then we meet”.  |
| C  | “If it were not for Sebrae's interference, we would continue to work individually [...] which today has the best result [...] of tourism is due to this. If Sebrae or any institution [...] like the <i>Convention</i> , let it loose again, everyone keeps working on their own”.                        |
| D  | “(The role of SIs) to put it into the head of the businessman that, alone, he is not going anywhere. But together it gets easier for him, as well as for other companies [...] with Sebrae and <i>Convention</i> , it is easier”.   |
| E  | “There has to be incentive (from SIs) for us to work together. Sebrae [...] always articulating and making us wake up. It sends information, calls for a meeting. You participate and that helps. Because otherwise, we end up just staying in our own corner”.   |
| F  | “An initiative in this sense (to stimulate cooperation), is on the part of Sebrae [...] they are very involved with this, where everything that is discussed in the local tourism industry converges”.  |
| H  | “When some partnership, cooperation happens, it is due to Sebrae. People alone, they have no time, no interest”.  |
| <b>Ex ante subcategory – Technical support</b>                     |   |
| A  | “I think that Sebrae and the Superintendence (Municipal Tourism) did a very interesting job [...] training of professionals who work in the area, offering many courses for waiters, receptionists, and various areas that work within the hotel industry, tour operators [...] also tour guide courses”. |
| B  | “We have received, in the last two years, a project from Sebrae [...] (to form) innovative companies”.  |
| C  | “Other partnerships were with institutions such as Sebrae, Senac [...] in terms of quality of service and consultancies”.   |
| E  | “Sebrae has helped us a lot. They give a lot of guidance [...] always looking for us [...] for employee preparation course, service evaluation, including some certificates”.   |
| F  | “Sebrae [...] in the case of hotels, address the issue of excellence in service, to improve the infrastructure issue”.  |
| G  | “Sebrae has a lot of good courses”.   |
| H  | “Sebrae acts to qualify people [...] such as formalizing (the company), how to assemble (partnerships), how to select (partners)”.  |
| <b>Ex ante subcategory – Facilitate dialogues and negotiations</b> |   |
| A  | “The only time that tourism companies here have contact [...] is during the meetings that take place in Sebrae [...] Other than that, as far as I know, there is no such partnership [...] sit and organize local tourism”.   |
| B  | “Due to the emergence of <i>Convention</i> , we saw this greater ease. So we meet at meetings, exchange information. Some hoteliers come and ask us for tips and vice versa. We feel that the bonds have narrowed”.   |
| C  | “This union, the real joint work [...] this possibility for everyone to sit at the same table and talk [...] without much fighting, it really helped, over the years, because Sebrae has always been the mediator [...] the main responsible for this process”.   |
| D  | “We still see a lot of rivalry here. But it really needs an organization (SIs) in the middle for the business to work, otherwise there would be no partnership, nor negotiations”.  |
| E  | “If you take away Sebrae, we will be much more harmed than we are already [...] Sebrae intends to bring all these people to talk, exchange experiences and turn that into a line of thought”.   |

Source: Own elaboration based on research data.

#### 4.5 Category: Reciprocity

From the interviewees' statements, "social sanctions" appear as a new subcategory, and "behavior conditioned to the conduct of the partner" cannot be proven given the insufficiency of content (Table 7).

**Table 7** – Content relating to reciprocity

| Company | Content |
|---------|---------|
|---------|---------|

**Ex ante subcategory – Individualism of partners**

- A “There is a very great selfishness on the part of the companies and businessmen here [...] tour operators, hotels, the trade in general”.
- B “We still notice many with this individualistic mentality. But I think it's starting to change. We know that alone we cannot. We need each other to grow”.
- D “Yes, entrepreneurs are very individualistic”.
- E “I think the businessman here is individualistic [...] He divides partnerships [...] of trips, excursions, but each one has his price and practices here in the tourism market of what he thinks is the best for himself”.
- F “Tourism has to be seen as a whole and not as an individual issue, which is what happens here [...] People still see their neighbor, their competitor, as a threat to their profits”.
- H “The entrepreneurs here are totally individualistic”.

**Ex ante subcategory – Obligation in retribution of behavior**

- A “This company I mentioned [...] I feel this obligation (of retribution) towards them because 100% of the people looking for them, they send them here. And usually we also recommend our clients to them”.
- C “You have exchange of favors [...] but I do not feel obligated to return this favor, because depending on the profile of my client, I will not always be able to reciprocate the recommendation”.
- D “Yes, I reciprocate, for sure. The same thing, if I recommend [...] and then the company do not recommend us, they recommend someone else [...] there is no partnership”.
- E “A tour operator sends me a group, a client [...] it stands to reason that if tomorrow my clients are looking for a tour [...] we'll call there to see if they have a place for them”.
- I “I feel (an obligation). As they are bringing clients to me, it is also good to recommend them back, reciprocate”.

**Ex post subcategory – Social sanctions**

- B “It is (badly seen). We realize that entrepreneurs, who just want to look at them, end up falling short of the rest. So, in the exchange of information, we become more apprehensive [...] Is it worthwhile that I recommend? Because it had to be a two-way street”.
- C “It is both frowned upon by colleagues, and by the market itself. Because [...] the one who is working in cooperation, tends to improve his own service, and the other does not [...] it is difficult for him to stay in the market because his colleague turns his back and says: you do not help me, so I will not help you either”.
- D “Individualistic entrepreneurs are very frowned upon by others”.
- F “More individualistic entrepreneurs are seen with a certain distrust”.

**Source:** Own elaboration based on research data.

## 5 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Interorganizational cooperation in Parnaíba has been identified from a variety of informal actions – without internal contractuality – and strongly relies on SIs for partnerships to take place. In the case studied, informal cooperation is more frequently reflected in the partners' service recommendation (Table 3), in line with the results of the study developed in the same locality by Costa (2009), Costa, Nascimento, Hoffmann and Bouças da Silva (2017). Service recommendation is a form of cooperation that occurs both vertically and horizontally, which is in line with the understanding of Hoffmann et al. (2007) that an organization can simultaneously belong to vertical and horizontal networks. The fact that there is an action that denotes the cooperation helps the understanding of the phenomenon itself, therefore it is not necessary to ask directly to the entrepreneurs interviewed if they cooperate.

It is important to note that horizontal cooperation between SMEs was previously recognized as a common practice by Carrão (2004), demonstrating that collaborative actions are possible, even in highly competitive tourism contexts (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011). The most noticeable motivation in the competitor's recommendation is to attend the flow of visitors in the high season, as it is the moment when the companies reach their maximum operational capacity. Therefore, this cooperation is induced by the overflow of demand. In the case of vertical relationships, the lodging companies are usually articulated with receptive operators responsible for the tours and with restaurants in the city, reiterating the logic of complementarity of tourist services (Denicolai et al., 2010, Scott et al., 2008).

Another aspect that emphasizes the presence of cooperation is the exchange of knowledge and information (Table 3) among entrepreneurs – as previously pointed out by Bock and Macke (2014) and Cerqueira et al. (2010) – meetings organized by SIs or informal meetings, with the aim of solving common problems, including those dealing with customer complaints about services provided by partners. At that point, Stacke, Hoffmann and Costa (2012) had already recognized that the exchange of these resources constitutes a

common cooperative action in tourist clusters, which is cited by Hoffmann et al. (2014) as essential to the competitiveness of these territories.

The actions to promote the destination (Table 3) are another form of cooperation, anticipated by Bonet (2004), which strengthens a logic of co-competition (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011). The competing companies enter into cooperation arrangements in the external promotion of their local attractions and services (Tremblay, 1999). However, the statements show that these initiatives are mostly based on the articulation of SIs – especially Sebrae and Convention & the Visitors Bureau of Parnaíba (CVBP) – a fact that reinforces what has been said in the literature on SIs and their role as supporters of tourism enterprises (Hoffmann & Campos, 2013).

Because they are SMEs whose characteristics involve low operational and investment capacity (Balestrin & Vargas, 2004), one of the possible explanations for companies to cooperate is access to resources that are scarce or complementary to them (Oliver, 1990). Given the difficulties faced by entrepreneurs – promotion costs and access to privileged information, for example – even if they do not want to cooperate, they need partnerships so that potential customers know their services and visitors enjoy the tourism product as a whole (Denicolai et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2008), as can be seen in Table 3.

Aside from the need to obtain resources externally (Oliver, 1990), the durability and frequency of the contacts (Table 3) justify the approach for the companies to cooperate with each other, and refer to the question of the repetition of interactions as one of the elements that foster cooperative alliances between the parties (Axelrod, 2010). This fact corroborates Granovetter's (1985) thinking that social connections favor economic gains.

In terms of trust, evidence was confirmed regarding its presence in the tourism network of Parnaíba (Table 4) and its importance for cooperation (Rosas & Camarinha-Matos, 2009). Only Company H stated that it did not trust the firms with which it commercially related and stressed that the competence of the partner – trustworthiness – is what most impacts on its decision to cooperate. This situation revealed that the entrepreneurial motivation to compose cooperative arrangements is also based on the quality of services rendered – a result previously presented by Costa et al. (2017) – and following the understanding of Franco (2007) on strategic cooperation, based on the rational choice of the manager.

Therefore, it is pointed out that not only trust exclusively, but also trustworthiness contributes to cooperation. Trustworthiness, therefore, is a distinct factor that influences the decision to cooperate – mainly to recommend – because the maintenance of the network is conditioned to the competence of its members (Mayer et al., 1995). This result coincides with the work of Colquitt et al. (2007), who also verified a significant relationship between trustworthiness and trust, which indicates that the emphasis attributed to the competence of the partner generates the trust necessary to strengthen cooperative alliances.

Concerning the willingness to be vulnerable to the partners (Table 4), opinions differed, especially regarding the exchange of information. Some of the companies that expressed discomfort in this sharing attributed it to the fear of misuse of information by competitors. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that this perception of risk is greater in situations involving, in addition to partners, other market players. Maintaining heterogeneity is an important strategy for individual businesses (Barney, 1991), however, it is in line with what is recommended in the literature on networks, since access to the partner's fine-grained information increases the firms' innovation capacity and positively impacts their performance (Uzzi, 1996).

Concerning the linked elements, the interviews showed that the contracts are not used to govern relationships between the clustered companies (Table 5). This reinforces the substitution link between trust and contractual mechanisms (Granovetter, 1985), leaving aside the notion of contracts as an antecedent of cooperation. The research also indicated the contractuality of commercial relationships external to the destination (Table 5) to ensure the commitment of the parties about their rights and duties (Lumineau & Malhotra, 2011), something unheard of in this investigation. The analysis of this situation proves the influence of the territorial factor on the reality of the SME (Carrão, 2004), because the geographical proximity favors the existence of competitive resources for the companies such as the trust developed over time (Hoffmann et al., 2014), which generates savings in the transaction costs of these relationships (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992; Williamson, 1985).

With regard to the fourth category of analysis – support institutions – were underlined, above all, Sebrae, Convention (CVBP) and the Municipal Tourism Superintendence (MTS), as organizers of the Trade meetings and intermediaries of the business partnership (Table 6). This situation had already been presented by Baggio and Cooper (2010), Knupp and Mafra (2012), Pereira and Lopes (2010), for whom SIs play an important role in initiating cooperation in destinations. Also, the technical support offered by these institutions to improve the qualification of their employees and to consolidate cooperation networks, as pointed out previously by Hoffmann and Campos (2013), Miranda Júnior et al. (2016).

SIs initiatives foster rapprochement between entrepreneurs who, according to those interviewed, might not meet to discuss partnerships. Thus, the performance of these institutions of the researched destination is seen as decisive for local entrepreneurs to dialogue and negotiate among themselves (Table 6), corroborating previous literature (André, 2004, Selin & Beason, 1991). These allegations state that SIs can be competitive resources of destinations (Hoffmann & Campos, 2013), with the potential to help overcome absence or low trust, by impacting local cooperation.

As for reciprocity, there is evidence of its presence in the cooperation network of Parnaíba, since corporate individualism (Powell, 1990) seems to guide the economic interactions of the local tourism industry (Table 7). Nonetheless, Company B's discourse suggests that individualistic behavior may be giving way to collective thinking because of the entrepreneurs understanding that in order to compete, cooperation may be needed (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Tremblay, 1999). The identification of local collaborative practices, mainly due to SIs, suggests that closer tourism relationships, coupled with successful experiences of cooperation, strengthen interorganizational trust.

Another aspect that indicates reciprocity, influencing the composition of networks, concerns the sense of obligatoriness in the return of a favor (Gouldner, 1960). The only manager who claimed that he did not feel obliged to repay the aid offered was justified by the incompatibility between the quality of the services of the companies which recommend him and the demands of his client (Table 7). To repay a favor, therefore, is confirmed as a common practice which is also associated with the fear of retaliation by the partners, confirming Axelrod's study (2010). On the other hand, the non-payment of an aid – a service recommendation or the exchange of information, for example – can generate social sanctions for the deserter (Putnam, 2005), since he is frowned upon by businessmen, which is likely to harm their future commercial relationships in the tourist cluster (see social sanctions, Table 7).

From the analyzes, one can make considerations about each central construct of this paper: cooperation, trust and its linked elements tested here (contracts, SIs and reciprocity). These elements were organized in categories from the literature inputs (ex ante subcategories) and obtained aspects added to them (ex post subcategories) from the empirical verification, such as: "complementarity of the companies" and "durability/frequency of the relationships" (cooperation); "Trustworthiness" (trust); "External contractuality" (contracts); and "social sanctions" (reciprocity). It is confirmed that these results subsided the elaboration of research proposals – which will be presented next – and should be empirically tested in the future, in order to deepen the themes discussed here.

Taking as its starting point the objective of demonstrating the role of trust and the elements that are linked to it in the decision to cooperate in the tourism sector of Parnaíba (PI), it is concluded that, in this locality, there is an interorganizational network in which cooperation was materialized by actions of service recommendation, exchange of knowledge/information and promotion of the destination. These actions were perceived both horizontally and vertically, informally and not very complex. The act of recommending is more concrete due to the complementarity of tourism services, than as a planned action of the companies. That is, the need to rely on the service of the partner to support visitors motivates the business cooperation. In the other two actions of cooperation highlighted, the SIs demonstrated their protagonism so that the business articulation happened. This fact assumes that in Parnaíba, the network established itself in a natural process of complementarity of resources, aiming to improve the experience of the tourists in the destination. Thus, it is proposed:

**Proposition 1:** The complementarity of tourism services entails intra-territorial cooperation.

Trust appears as a facilitator in the formation of these networks, with practices that make it possible to increase competitiveness, such as the exchange of resources, like information and knowledge. However, companies must pay attention to the sharing of resources with non-partners and the significant individualism of entrepreneurs. This ratifies the fact that trust in Parnaíba occurs at the interorganizational level (between the lodging companies) and not in the institutional (in the destination as a whole). Thus, it is concluded that in the studied destination there is not only a single network, but several of them, with different configurations, a possibility already described by Hoffmann et al. (2007) and Costa et al. (2017). In this way, the subsequent propositions are suggested:

Proposition 2: Trust favors intra-territorial cooperation.

Proposition 3: The territory factor contributes to the creation of local networks with different configurations.

Proposition 4: The same actor can participate in vertical and horizontal networks simultaneously.

It is also worth noting that trustworthiness divides attentions with trust in the decision to cooperate, since compliance with the commercial aspect of the companies, especially the quality of services, weighs in the formation of alliances. This situation reinforces the previous understanding of Colquitt et al. (2007), that trustworthiness can precede trust in networks. Thus:

Proposition 5: Trustworthiness is an antecedent of trust for establishing cooperation.

It is reiterated that SIs – in particular Sebrae, CVBP and MTS – have been recognized as central to local cooperation, because they: (i) raise in the entrepreneurs the importance of partnerships; ii) foster closer relationships by facilitating dialogues and negotiations; and (iii) provide technical support for professional qualification and networking. Thus, the presence of these institutions characterizes these networks as interorganizational. SIs, in this sense, act in complement to trust within the networks, by favoring a greater willingness for the companies to be vulnerable to their partners, since these institutions can use their own reputation, their look to the collective action and its trustworthiness in this mediation. Thus:

Proposition 6: Support institutions contribute to cooperation, as a complement to trust.

Reciprocity appears as imperative, in the return of aid received, and subject to penalty. It shapes itself as a calculated and individualistic action, and is a driver in the entrepreneur's awareness of the need to cooperate in order to compete. Thus, the obligation in the repayment of aid favors the decision to cooperate, although the rational choice of who to cooperate with is determined more by the trustworthiness of the partner. In the dynamics of the network studied, it is relevant to the entrepreneurs to pay attention to retaliation, since the complementarity between companies configures a risk environment for those who assume defecting behaviors. This interdependence, identified as one of the central motivators of cooperation (Denicolai et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2008; Xavier et al., 2012), demands from tourism companies a reciprocal action over time with other market players. It is concluded that these categories are strongly related to each other, and that reciprocity acts in a complementary way to trust in local networks. That is:

Proposition 7: Reciprocity contributes to cooperation, as a complement to trust.

As expected, the contracts proved to be irrelevant to compose the relationships in the investigated context, being used only for those extraterritorial, which is consistent with the understanding of clusters as environments that provides favorable resources for the formation of networks, such as trust and SIs. Thus, in this study:

Proposition 8: The contracts contribute to extraterritorial cooperation, as a substitute for trust.

This set of propositions can be explored in future research, in order to verify how the bonds with trust are given in other conditions. For the reality studied, SIs and reciprocity are complements and contracts are substitutes. Herein lies the central contribution of this work.

It should be noted, finally, that this study is limited, a priori, by the research object: SME lodging companies evaluated on TripAdvisor. As a research agenda, it is recommended to extend the research to the other companies in Parnaíba. In addition, it has returned to a tourist destination, thus opening up the possibility of comparative studies, which diminish the local effect of the results. Although the qualitative approach is not

in itself a limitation, a continuity of this work would be to do it in a quantitative way, converting categories and subcategories confirmed or that emerged from this work into variables, and test them in the destination itself, or even in other tourist locations.

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**Appendix A - Semi-structured Script – Trust in tourism cooperation networks: analysis of its role and linked elements in Parnaíba, Piauí, Brasil**

| Obj.   | Categories   | Subcategories  | Questions  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Demonstrate the role of trust and the elements that are linked to it – contracts, support institutions and reciprocity – in the decision to cooperate in the tourism sector of Parnaíba, Piauí, Brazil | Trust  | Direct Measures  | 1. Do you cooperate/have alliances with other local companies? What kind of companies? What motivates you to search for partners in business?  |
|  |  | Positive expectations  | 2. What's the main criteria to choose a partner?   |
|  |  | Willingness to be vulnerable   | 3. Do you believe that the companies in this territory trust in each other? Considering the business environment, would you say that the local companies form alliances due to their mutual trust? |
|  |  | (Colquitt et al., 2007)  | 4. Do you trust your partners? Do you feel comfortable of sharing information with your partners? Do they provide quality services? Do they honor their commitments?                               |
| Cooperation  | Service recommendation                               | 5. Do you discuss with other companies in this territory about joint actions? How often? What kind of joint actions are you intending to do/have you implemented?  |  |
|  | Exchange of knowledge and information                | 6. In the last five years, have you tried to exchange ideas, information or services with other local companies? How did this happen?  |  |
|  | Promotional actions                                  | 7. Do you discuss possible joint actions with companies of other destinations? How often? What kind of joint actions are you intending to do/have you implemented?   |  |
|  | (Costa, 2009; Costa et al., 2017)                    | 8. In the last five years, have you tried to exchange ideas, information or services with companies from other destinations? How did this happen?<br>9. Do your extra territory partnerships affect your relationship with local companies? Do you feel that the local companies which interact with extra territory firms awake distrust within the local partners? |  |
| Contracts  | Intra network contractuality                         | 10. Do you usually sign contracts when you decide to cooperate with another company? Why? Have you signed any partnership contract in the last five years?   |  |
|  | (Lumineau & Malhotra, 2011; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992) | 11. When do you think is necessary to formalize an alliance? Why?<br>12. Do the local companies use to sign partnerships contracts? If yes, what is the main purpose for that?   |  |
| Support institutions   | Initiation of cooperation                            | 13. Is it necessary an incentive/intermediation of a support institution for the local companies decide to work together (to initiate an alliance)? Why?   |  |
|  | Technical support                                    | 14. What is the main contribution of the local support institutions for the intra territory cooperation?   |  |
|  | Facilitate dialogues and negotiations                | 15. Is there any successful cooperation experience formed due to the initiative/intermediation of a local support institution? Which one/What support institution?   |  |
|  | (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Hoffmann & Campos, 2013)     |  |  |

|   |             |  |   |
|---|-------------|--|---|
|   | Reciprocity | <p>Individualism of partners</p> <p>Obligation in the retribution of behavior</p> <p>Behavior conditioned to the conduct of the partner</p> <p>(Gouldner, 1960; Siqueira, 2005; Axelrod, 2010)</p> | <p>16. Do you think that the local entrepreneurs are individualistic? Do they like to help other entrepreneurs?</p> <p>17. Do you feel that the individualistic entrepreneur gets a bad reputation within the destination?</p> <p>18. Imagine that a local entrepreneur helps you out with something (service recommendation, important business information etc.), do you feel an obligation in the retribution of this behavior, even there is no current partnership (or friendship) between you?</p> <p>19. Do you cooperate with other companies that helped you in a past time?</p> |
| <b>PART 1 – COMPANIES CHARACTERIZATION</b>  |             |  |   |
| 1. Companies name:  |             |  |   |
| 2. Corebusiness: <input type="checkbox"/> a. Lodging <input type="checkbox"/> b. Food and Beverages <input type="checkbox"/> c. Lodging, Food and Beverages |             |  |   |
| 3. How many employees does your company have? _____.  |             |  |   |
| 4. How long have this company been operating (formally or informally)? <input type="checkbox"/> a. Years _____.   |             |  |   |
| <b>PART 2 – RESPONDENTS CHARACTERIZATION</b>  |             |  |   |
| 5. Position in the company: <input type="checkbox"/> a. Owner/partner <input type="checkbox"/> b. Manager <input type="checkbox"/> c. Others _____.         |             |  |   |
| 6. How long have you been working for the company?  |             |  |   |
| 7. Gender <input type="checkbox"/> a. Masculine <input type="checkbox"/> b. Feminine  |             |  |   |
| 8. Schooling degree:  |             |  |   |
| 9. Email:   |             |  |   |
| Observation:  |             |  |   |