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Literature Reviews

Theoretical roots and paths for advances in tourism coopetition studies

Raízes teóricas e caminhos para avanços nos estudos de coopetição em turismo

Raíces teóricas y caminos para el avance en los estudios de cooperación turística

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Keywords:

Tourism coopetition;
Theoretical roots;
Society-centered tourism development.

Abstract

This study identified the theoretical roots of coopetition in tourism and proposed a research agenda to shape the coopetition paradigm more aligned with theoretical tourism perspectives. We provided a more precise understanding of the theoretical approaches that support coopetition in tourism and pathways for the continuous development of this paradigm. Our study is a systematic literature review that uses two techniques: bibliometric and Multidimensional Scaling Analysis. Results reveal 29 theories, with 12 predominating, primarily rooted in management. The particularities of the tourism context incorporate new directions and shape coopetition based on social and tourism-specific theories. The theoretical roots emphasize coopetitive stakeholder relationships and highlight value generation as a key outcome. The findings suggest a trend toward constructing a coopetition paradigm aligned with society-centered tourism development. The study proposes a research agenda to consolidate an intellectual structure for coopetition in tourism, fostering sustainable and value-driven advancements in the field.

Palavras-chave:

Coopetição turística;
Raízes teóricas;
Desenvolvimento turístico centrado na sociedade.

Resumo

Este estudo identificou as raízes teóricas da coopetição em turismo e propôs uma agenda de pesquisa para moldar o paradigma da coopetição mais alinhado às perspectivas teóricas do turismo. Fornecemos uma compreensão das abordagens teóricas que sustentam a coopetição em turismo e dos caminhos para o desenvolvimento contínuo desse paradigma. Nosso estudo é uma revisão sistemática da literatura que utiliza duas técnicas: bibliometria e Análise de Escala Multidimensional. Os resultados revelam 29 teorias, com predominância de 12, principalmente enraizadas na gestão. As particularidades do contexto turístico incorporam novas direções e moldam a coopetição com base em teorias sociais e específicas do turismo. As raízes teóricas enfatizam as relações coopetitivas com as partes interessadas e destacam a geração de valor para a comunidade de acolhida como um resultado-chave. Os achados sugerem uma tendência para a construção de um paradigma de coopetição alinhado ao desenvolvimento do turismo centrado na sociedade. O estudo propõe uma agenda de pesquisa para consolidar uma estrutura intelectual para a coopetição em turismo, promovendo avanços sustentáveis e orientados a geração de valor social.

Palabras clave:

Coopetición turística;
Raíces teóricas;
Desarrollo turístico centrado en la sociedad.

Resumen

Este estudio identificó las raíces teóricas de la coopetición en turismo y propuso una agenda de investigación para definir un paradigma de coopetición más alineado con las perspectivas teóricas del turismo. Aportamos una comprensión de los enfoques teóricos que sustentan la coopetición en

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turismo y las vías para su desarrollo continuo. Nuestro estudio consiste en una revisión sistemática de la literatura que utiliza das técnicas: bibliometría y análisis de escalamiento multidimensional. Los resultados revelan 29 teorías, con 12 predominantes, principalmente basadas en la gestión. Las particularidades del contexto turístico incorporan nuevas direcciones y definen la coopetición basándose en teorías sociales y específicas del turismo. Las raíces teóricas enfatizan las relaciones coopetitivas con los grupos de interés y destacan la generación de valor para la comunidad anfitriona como un resultado clave. Los hallazgos sugieren una tendencia hacia la construcción de un paradigma de coopetición alineado con el desarrollo turístico centrado en la sociedad. El estudio propone una agenda de investigación para consolidar un marco intelectual para la coopetición en turismo, promoviendo avances sostenibles orientados a la generación de valor social.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of coopetition underscores the simultaneous interaction between competition and cooperation across players (Damayanti et al., 2017). Coopetition establishes a value network among multiple stakeholders, including companies, organizations, and customers, who strategically collaborate by balancing competition and cooperation to maximize benefits (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). Coopetition has attracted researchers from various sectors who study strategic management, competitiveness and cooperation, thereby contributing to a dense theoretical body of knowledge toward a paradigm.

The coopetition perspective continues to develop as a broad paradigm and sub-area of strategic management (Fong et al., 2018; Klimas et al., 2023; Köseoğlu et al., 2019), due to its strategic focus on creating value through coopetitive advantages arising from relationships that span different levels. The growth of coopetition as a value-generation strategy and emerging paradigm has necessitated a deeper understanding of this construct from its theoretical foundations. In this context, several studies have identified specific theoretical delimitations, for example, Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah (2016), Bouncken et al. (2015), Czakon & Mucha-Kuś (2014), and Klimas et al. (2023). Early studies in the field presented a systematic literature review to show how the transposition of coopetition knowledge for tourism is occurring and to suggest a research agenda (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017b, 2017c). More recent studies have performed a literature review of elements of coopetition (Oliveira-Ribeiro & Chim-Miki, 2022) or about specific tourism modalities, such as wine tourism (Maracajá et al., 2024). Rusko (2024) reviewed the multifaceted perspectives of cooperation networks in contemporary literature on tourism and destinations. However, within the databases, search terms, and selection criteria adopted, no reviews explicitly focused on the theoretical roots of coopetition in tourism and hospitality were identified.

This research addresses a gap in Tourism and Hospitality (T&H) research by identifying the theoretical roots of coopetition in the sector. This study aims to identify, classify, and integrate the theoretical roots underlying coopetition research in tourism, examine their evolution and articulation through citation, co-citation, and Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) analyses, and propose a research agenda for the theoretical advancement of the field. By outlining the intellectual framework of coopetition in tourism to support the advancement of the field, this research allows us to examine whether the specific characteristics of tourism are reflected in the theoretical foundations used to explain coopetition in this context. The research also highlights similarities between tourism and management studies regarding the coopetition paradigm and examines how theories from other fields are adapted to tourism. Additionally, it suggests ways for future research to advance the coopetition paradigm in T&H, supported by theories from the field.

A mixed methodological approach was used, combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with statistical and bibliometric techniques. Ninety-two scientific articles on coopetition in T&H were analyzed using citation, co-citation, and multidimensional scaling (MDS) analyses. This study stands out from previous SLRs in three key ways: (1) it identifies the theoretical foundations of coopetition in tourism and hospitality, (2) it shows how these theories are applied in tourism studies using a mixed-methods methodology, and (3) it offers a more comprehensive review of the existing literature. In this way, this study produces (i) theoretical and methodological contributions, (ii) implications for future empirical research, and (iii) implications for management.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Coopetition strategy in tourism: double-edged sword and many underpinnings

As a conceptual framework, coopetition shapes the strategic behaviors of organizations by encouraging competitors to form cooperative networks aimed at achieving common objectives despite differing individual interests (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). This simultaneous occurrence of cooperation and competition can foster innovation and value creation; however, it is also fraught with risks and challenges (Della Corte & Sciarelli, 2012; Kylänen & Rusko, 2011). The dual nature of the effects of coopetition makes it more difficult to define the boundaries of the paradigm. It has consequently led scholars to adopt various theoretical frameworks to better comprehend coopetition across different sectors and industries (Fong et al., 2018). In our study, we adopted the theoretical roots as it corresponds to the set of conceptual foundations used by the literature to explain, interpret, or frame the phenomenon of coopetition in tourism. The term is used in an inclusive sense, recognizing that the studies analyzed use frameworks with different degrees of formalization. In this way, we recognize that theory encompasses a structured system of concepts and explanatory relationships, while approach and perspective designate broader ways of analyzing a phenomenon. In turn, vision corresponds to a conceptual lens that guides the interpretation of relationships or behaviors, and construct represents a delimited concept that can be operationalized within a theory or model. This distinction allows us to preserve the terminology adopted in the original studies without assuming that all identified frameworks have the same theoretical status.

Considering all economic sectors, Klimas et al. (2023) suggested that the scientific literature on coopetition has defined ten principal theoretical foundations: Game Theory, Resource-Based View, Network theory, Transaction Cost Economics, Resource Dependence Theory, Institutional Economics Theory, Strategic Learning Theory, Dynamic Capabilities, Tension Management, and Mutual Trust. In the tourism industry, cooperative efforts are indispensable for tourism destinations' marketing, attractiveness, and overall performance (Mariani et al., 2014). Tourism development is characterized by a networked and interdependent approach (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017c); therefore, the extent of coopetitive relationships within a tourism destination can significantly enhance its competitiveness (Della Corte & Aria, 2016). Coopetition is conceptualized as a resource within the framework of Resource-Based View (RBV) (Crick & Crick, 2020) and as a behavioral strategy evidenced by Resource Dependence Theory, underscoring its role in fostering development and value generation (Chim-Miki et al., 2024; Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2018; Czakon et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Resources for creating competitive advantages and co-creating value can be acquired through various means, including alliances with competitors (Cortese et al., 2021a, Cortese et al. 2921b; Vasanicova et al., 2022; Yavuz & Çemberci, 2022). In tourism, both competitive and cooperative dynamics are essential for the effective provision of products and services. Consequently, tourism destinations must adeptly manage the interplay of resources and capabilities among the companies within the network that comprises the tourism offering (Wang & Krakover, 2008), thereby amplifying both the individual benefits and collective advantages generated through this interaction (Damayanti et al., 2017).

The coopetition strategy emerges as a critical element in the dynamism of networks within tourism segments, where stakeholder collaboration is driven by efforts towards innovation (Lin et al., 2022; Romero et al., 2019), management of resource dependence (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011), sustainability (Filimonau, 2021), co-marketing initiatives (Wang & Krakover, 2008), and the enhancement of the tourism experience (Crick et al., 2022). This approach underpins tourism development grounded in the co-production and co-creation of value (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2018; Volschenk et al., 2016).

Complementarity and interdependence underpin the destination's tourism offering (Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015; Grängsjö, 2003). As a result, tourism destinations become environments conducive to implementing coopetition strategies (Della Corte & Sciarelli, 2012; Grängsjö, 2003). Moreover, tourism often exhibits a synergistic relationship with other industries, such as the wine industry, with interconnection established in wine tourism (Crick et al., 2020). This intersectoral relationship is also characterized by coopetition (Crick, 2018), wherein multiple intra- and intersectoral stakeholder relationships are strategically developed from the perspective of competitive cooperation, leading to the generation of individual and collective advantages and thereby fostering benefits across different levels and sectors.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

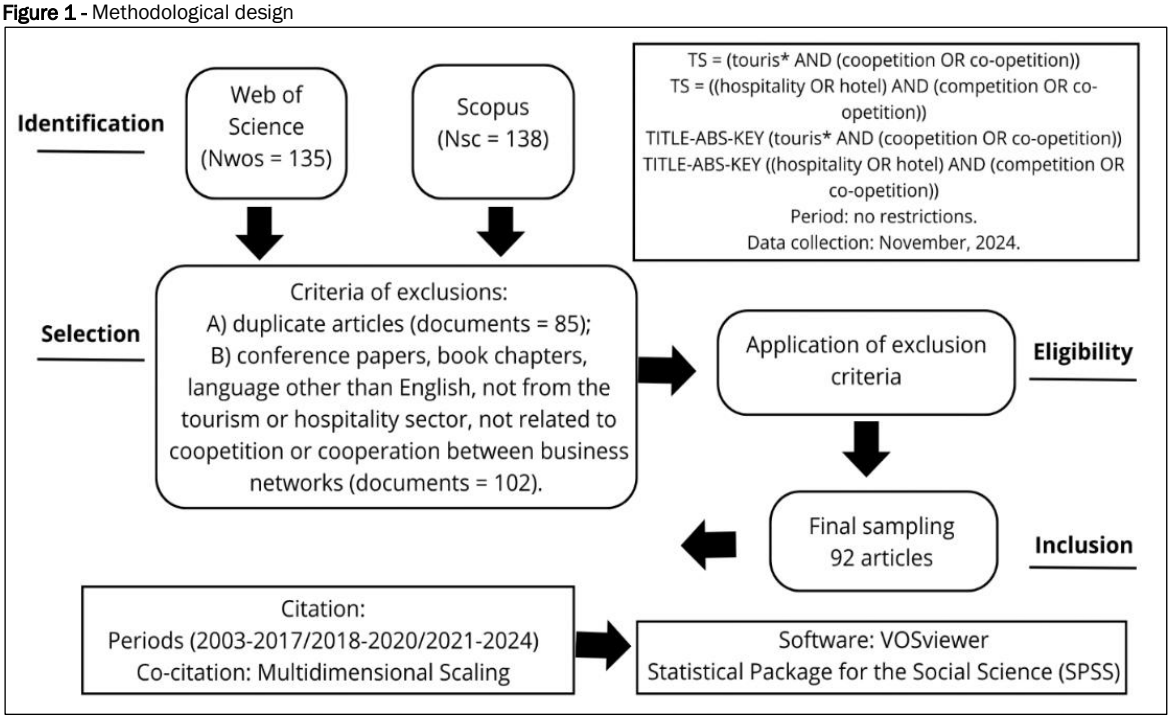
3.1. Nature and research techniques

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) applies a multi-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses based on Köseoğlu et al. (2019). The PRISMA protocol was used to ensure a systematic and reliable selection of relevant scientific articles (Moher et al., 2009). Bibliometric techniques, supported by VOSviewer v.1.6.13, were employed to analyze citations and co-citations. Citation analysis was structured into three periods representing different stages in the intellectual development of tourism coopetition research. The first period (2003–2017) represents the emergence and consolidation of the field; the second period (2018–2020) represents a transitional phase characterized by theoretical diversification and culminating in the COVID-19 pandemic; and the third period (2021–2024) reflects the subsequent expansion of the field and the emergence of new research directions. The pandemic was considered a turning point that intensified an ongoing academic reconsideration of tourism development, including greater attention to resilience, sustainability, stakeholder relationships, and society-centered approaches. A quantitative analysis was conducted using Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) in SPSS v.29.0.0.0, generating two-dimensional graphs illustrating similarities in the authors' co-citation structure. The proximity of points indicates theoretical coupling, revealing shared frameworks used to explain the coopetition phenomenon.

3.2. Database selection and collection

The search for articles was conducted on the Web of Science and Scopus databases in February 2025. The two databases were selected because of their multidisciplinary coverage, relevance to tourism, hospitality, and management, availability of standardized metadata, and suitability for citation and co-citation analyses. We employed the following Boolean search terms and field labels: touris* or hospitality or hotel and coopetition or co-opetition in the articles' title, abstract, or keywords (see Figure 1). There were no restrictions on the publication period, thus including all relevant publications up to December 2023. However, the earliest article in the sample was published in 2003.

Figure 1 - Methodological design



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Subsequently, a refinement process was undertaken based on exclusion criteria to ensure a sample pertinent to the phenomenon of tourism coopetition. From the 273 articles, 85 duplicated records were removed using the Rayyan software. These exclusions were verified by cross-referencing titles, authors, publication years, and journals. Another 102 were eliminated for not meeting the previously defined criteria, namely, 14 were book chapters, 16 were conference papers/proceedings papers, 9 were in a language other than English, and 57 did not study the

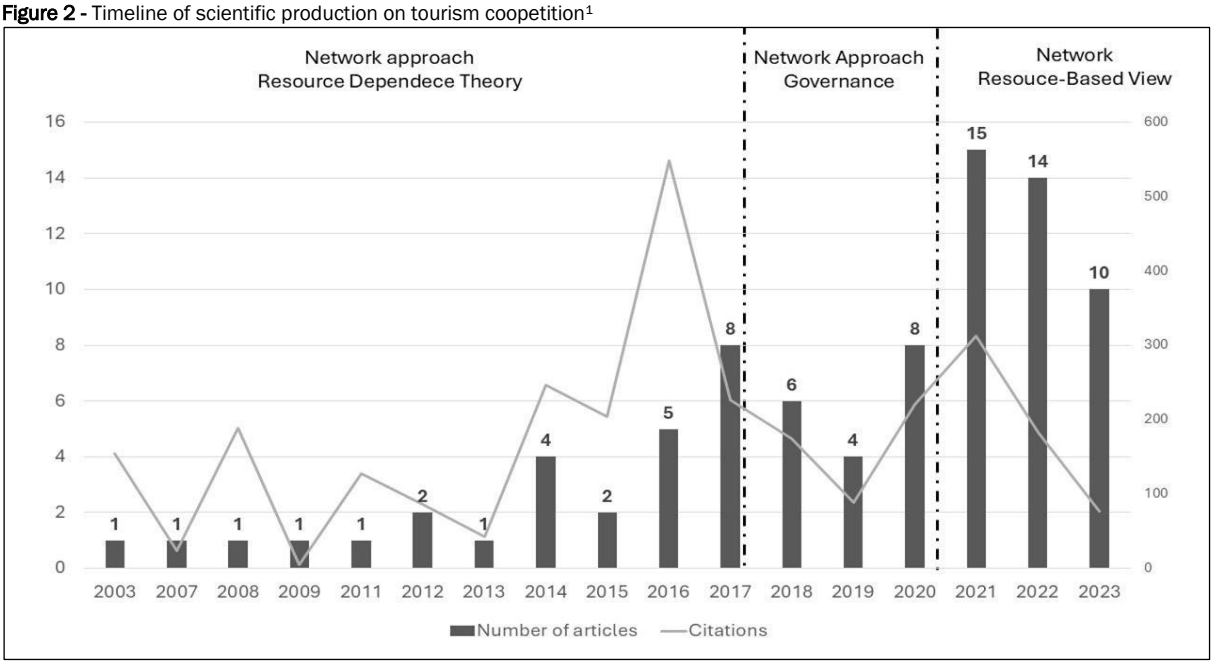
phenomenon of coopetition in tourism or hospitality. Two independent researchers reviewed the articles to ascertain whether the analysis context pertained to the tourism or hospitality sectors and whether they were studies of coopetition. In cases of disagreement, a third independent researcher was consulted to resolve disagreements. The final sample size was 92 articles on coopetition in the T&H industry.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis of publications

The analysis of tourism coopetition studies shows citation trends over time, with an increase in publications leading to a decrease in citation concentration. A notable peak in citations occurred between 2014 and 2018, followed by a gradual decline in citation frequency in later years, which is expected due to the more recent publication dates of these articles (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Timeline of scientific production on tourism coopetition[1]



Note: Citation data as of November 25, 2024.
Source: elaborated by the authors.

Analyzing articles across each period reveals distinct contributions to tourism coopetition research. In the first period (2003–2017), Grängsjö's (2003) study stands out with 96 citations, introducing a coopetitive business theory based on marketing networks of microenterprises and independent entrepreneurs in tourism destinations. Network theory and Resource Dependency Theory were the primary theoretical foundations during this phase. In the second period (2018–2020), Van der Zee and Vanneste's (2015) work became the most cited, offering a comprehensive review of tourism networks, while governance theories begin to gain relevance.

In the most recent period (2021–2024), the influence of key authors from previous years persists. Network theory continues as a core framework and is now complemented by governance theories and the Resource-Based View (RBV). Research on tourism coopetition gained momentum during the pandemic (2020) and has remained relevant post-pandemic, reflecting cooperative strategies adopted by destinations to overcome challenges and drive recovery.

In summary, Figure 2 shows growth in tourism coopetition research over time, together with a gradual broadening of the theoretical lenses used to explain the phenomenon. This evolution suggests that coopetition has come to be analyzed not only as a relational configuration between organizations, but also as a mechanism to coordinate actors, mobilize resources, and respond collectively to contexts of greater instability. In this sense, contemporary challenges in tourism, such as climate emergencies and crisis recovery, overtourism, pressure on territorial resources, destination regeneration, and improvement in the generation and distribution of social value from tourism, offer relevant contexts to test the explanatory capacity of these different theoretical roots of coopetition.

4.2. Citation analysis

The analysis of citations over time highlights the significance of each article. This analysis illustrates the impact of these articles on the academic community and reveals how the intellectual structures of the scientific field are shaped. Table 1 presents the number of citations organized according to the three established periods for analysis.

The top ten articles (Table 1), ranked by total number of citations (A1 to A10), demonstrate a focus on several key areas: Co-Marketing (A1, A3), Co-Management of shared tourism resources and cross-border coopetition (A6), managerial perceptions of competitors (A4), motives for coopetition (A9), the dynamics involved in building coopetition networks (A8, A10), and a systematic literature review on coopetition (A2). The predominant theoretical frameworks underpinning these studies include Network Theory, Dynamic Capabilities, Governance, Resource Dependence Theory, and Mutual Trust.

Additionally, from Table 1 we examined the top ten articles based on the highest average annual citations (A9, A14, A2, A32, A19, A4, A5, A21, A36, and A8). It was observed that only five articles from the most-cited list remain, albeit in a different sequence (A9, A2, A4, A5, A8). The remaining five articles with high average annual citation rates (A13, A32, A19, A21, A36) introduce new perspectives to the study of coopetition. While the primary topics of interest—Co-Marketing, managerial perceptions and motives for coopetition, and the dynamics of coopetition networks—continue to be prevalent, recent studies also explore coopetition in relation to sustainability within the Hospitality and Tourism industry (A13, A36) and the synergies across different industries or sectors (A32). These ten studies are grounded primarily in Dynamic Capabilities, Network Theory, Dependence Theory, and Mutual Trust. Still, three other theoretical perspectives—Resource-Based View, Relational View, and Actor-Network Theory—have contributed to understanding coopetition in tourism.

Table 1 - Citations of scientific articles on tourism coopetition by period[1] (continue)

Rank	Code	Article	Annual citation average	Total citations *n* = 92	Periods		
					2003-2017 *n* = 28	2018-2020 *n* = 18	2021-2024 *n* = 46
1	A1	Wang & Krakover (2008)	11.8	189	92	43	54
2	A2	van der Zee & Vanneste (2015)	20	180	16	69	95
3	A3	Grängsjö (2003)	7.3	154	96	26	32
4	A4	Czakon & Czernek (2016)	18	144	3	49	92
5	A6	Kylänen & Rusko (2011)	9.8	128	50	31	47
6	A5	Czernek & Czakon (2016)	15.9	127	16	46	65
7	A7	Mariani et al. (2014)	11.6	116	25	51	40
8	A8	Della Corte & Aria (2016)	14.4	115	10	44	61
9	A9	Czakon et al. (2020)	27	108	0	7	101
10	A10	Mariani (2016)	9.9	79	6	29	44
11	A13	Filimonau (2021)	22	66	0	0	66
12	A11	Fong et al. (2018)	10.7	64	0	20	44
13	A12	Kylänen & Mariani (2012)	5.3	63	20	17	26
14	A69	Volschenk et al. (2016)	7.4	59	2	15	42
15	A16	Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino (2017c)	8.3	58	0	16	42
16	A15	Damayanti et al. (2017)	7.9	55	0	18	37
17	A14	Guo et al. (2014)	5.4	54	13	17	24
18	A21	Crick et al. (2021)	17.7	53	0	0	53
19	A19	Czakon & Czernek-Marszalek (2021)	15.3	46	0	2	44
20	A17	Pesämaa et al. (2013)	3.8	42	11	16	15
21	A28	Crick et al. (2020)	10	40	0	5	35
22	A18	Tuohino & Konu (2014)	3.9	39	12	12	15

Table 1 - Citations of scientific articles on tourism coopetition by period[1] (conclusion)

Rank	Code	Article	Annual citation average	Total citations *n* = 92	Periods		
					2003-2017 *n* = 28	2018-2020 *n* = 18	2021-2024 *n* = 46
23	A22	Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino (2018)	6.5	39	0	6	33
24	A20	Lorgnier & Su (2014)	3.8	38	5	13	20
25	A29	Pilving et al. (2019)	7.4	37	0	2	35
26	A36	Nguyen et al. (2022)	18.5	37	0	0	37
27	A32	Crick et al. (2022)	18	36	0	0	36
28	A23	Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino (2017b)	5	35	0	13	22
29	A24	Fong et al. (2021)	10	30	0	0	30
30	A30	Czernek et al. (2017)	3.9	27	0	6	21
31	A26	Kirillova et al. (2020)	6.5	26	0	0	26
32	A25	Suhartanto (2017)	3.6	25	0	12	13
33	A27	Taylor et al. (2007)	1.4	24	9	4	11
34	A31	Werner et al. (2015)	2.7	24	3	10	11
35	A33	Zemla (2016)	3	24	1	4	19
36	A48	Lin et al. (2022)	12	24	0	0	24
37	A41	Della Corte & Sciarelli (2012)	1.9	23	4	4	15
38	A49	Jooss et al. (2023)	23	23	0	0	23
39	A54	Bahar et al. (2022a)	11.5	23	0	0	23
40	A34	Idrees et al. (2018)	3.5	21	0	8	13
41	A39	Cortese et al. (2021a)	7	21	0	1	20
42	A35	Bilbil (2019)	4	20	0	1	19
43	A51	Kallmuenzer et al. (2021)	6.7	20	0	0	20
44	A42	Liu et al. (2020)	4.8	19	0	2	17
45	A61	Zainal-Abidin et al. (2023)	18	18	0	0	18
46	A37	Schnitzer et al. (2018)	2.8	17	0	5	12
47	A38	Esteve-Perez & Garcia-Sanchez (2018)	2.8	17	0	5	12
48	A40	Lam-González et al. (2019)	3.4	17	0	0	17
49	A43	Damayanti et al. (2018)	2.8	17	0	5	12
50	A46	Zach et al. (2021)	5.7	17	0	0	17
51	A50	Yi et al. (2021)	5	15	0	0	15
52	A57	Köseoğlu et al. (2021)	5	15	0	0	15
53	A44	Romero et al. (2019)	2.8	14	0	3	11
54	A52	Carvalho et al. (2020)	3.3	13	0	0	13
55	A58	Song et al., (2022)	6.5	13	0	0	13
56	A73	Liu et al. (2023)	13	13	0	0	13
57	A47	Webb & Schwartz (2017)	1.7	12	1	2	9
58	A56	Grauslund & Hammershøy (2021)	4	12	0	0	12
59	A59	Vasanicova et al. (2022)	6	12	0	0	12
60	A45	Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino (2017a)	1.6	11	0	5	6

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on data from Scopus and Web of Science using VOSviewer software.
[1]**Note:** Information obtained on November 25, 2024.

A combined reading of Table 1 shows that the influence of literature on coopetition in tourism was initially built around network coordination, co-marketing, shared resource management, and trust relationships. However, a comparison between accumulated citations and the annual average of citations reveals a recent diversification of the agenda, with presence of studies related to sustainability, intersectoral relationships, and new ways of joint value creation. This movement suggests a transition from a predominantly organizational interpretation of coopetition to a progressively broader perspective, in which the relationships between players can also be analyzed in terms of their consequences for destinations and society. Thus, the citation structure simultaneously indicates continuity in the theoretical roots of the field and openness to emerging issues in tourism, such as the society-centered tourism development perspective.

4.3. Key influential articles and themes

Several influential articles have shaped tourism coopetition research over time. Three seminal articles—(A1) Wang and Krakover (2008), (A3) Grängsjö (2003), and (A6) Kylänen and Rusko (2011)—were identified as the most cited articles in the early years. Wang and Krakover (A1) examined the dynamics of coopetition through strategic alliances for collaborative destination marketing between larger and smaller organizations in the tourism industry. The consistent citation of A1 underscores the ongoing importance of co-marketing as a primary driver of coopetition in tourism.

Similarly, Kylänen and Rusko's study (A6) provided empirical insights into the coopetition as a strategy for managing shared resources among tourism destinations, and it is based on dependency theory. The relevance of cross-border coopetition, highlighted in this work, continues to be a trend in the field. In contrast, Grängsjö's article (A3) presents a decline in citations over time. It examined coopetitive marketing networks of microenterprises using a network theory.

While most prominent articles from the early period maintained or increased their citation counts, some exceptions were observed, such as Mariani et al.'s (2014) study (A7), which focused on tourism destination management for sustainability. Its limited focus on coopetition probably contributed to this result. Conversely, the literature review of Van der Zee and Vanneste (2015) (A2) emphasized the network theory as the background of coopetition and the study has significantly increased citations since its publication. A2's influence over the years highlights the importance of literature reviews supporting the development of a field of research.

4.4. Emerging trends and theoretical advancements in tourism coopetition research

Some of the most significant articles have shaped tourism coopetition research by reflecting a growing emphasis on trust mechanisms, strategic alliances, and sustainability. Specifically, empirical studies by Czakon and Czernek (2016) and Czernek and Czakon (2016) (A4, A5) registered sharp citation spikes. These works took legitimization, reputation, emotional relationships, and social embeddedness to be crucial drivers of network trust under the framework of mutual trust and dependency theory. Their work prompted ongoing research into trust as a core building block of coopetition dynamics.

Czakon et al. (2020) (A9) further developed the field by developing a scale to measure behavioral antecedents of coopetition, situating competition as an intentional strategic choice. Taken together, these papers offer a conceptual foundation for understanding the dynamics of tourism coopetition. In addition, formalization and coordination of coopetitive relationships also received increasing attention. Mariani (2016) (A10) examined drivers fostering coordination of coopetition networks with a focus on formal contracts and agreements as drivers of cooperative tourist destination strategies.

Sustainability and industry synergy emerged as key trends in tourism coopetition research. Filimonau (2021) (A13) explored coopetition networks in the hospitality food supply chain for green innovation, highlighting organizational prerequisites and the use of coopetition to reduce food waste, aligning with sustainability goals. Research on inter-industry coopetition, such as in wine tourism (A28, A32), introduced the Resource-Based View (RBV), Relational View Theory, and dependency and complementarity frameworks for value co-creation. Actor-Network Theory also became prominent in addressing sustainability challenges in tourism destinations (A36), particularly in managing relationships between diverse actors like businesses, governments, and local communities.

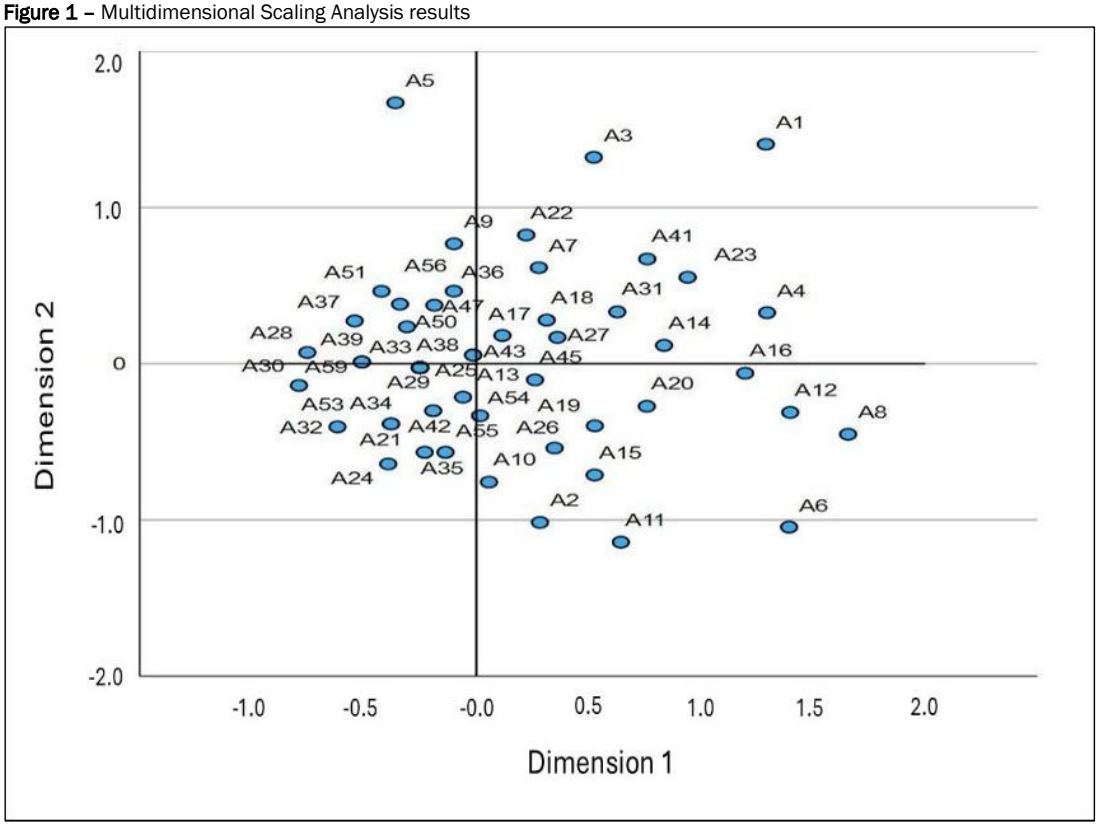
The coopetition paradigm evolved with studies like Czakon and Czernek (2021) (A19), which focused on managerial perceptions of competitors and their impact on interfirm relationships. While not anchored in a specific theory, this work gained citation traction and emphasized the importance of cooperation in tourism destination management.

Although recent publications have yet to garner many citations, they reflect the evolving frameworks of coopetition in tourism, including society-centered approaches based on social value (A81), associationism (A91), wine tourism (A89), data sharing (A88), tourism vocation (A92), overtourism (A84), spatial coopetition (A86), and tourism clusters (A90).

4.5. Multidimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS)

We performed two multidimensional scaling (MDS) analyses using the PROXSCAL procedure in SPSS, based on the co-citation matrix. The first MDS analysis utilized a two-mode matrix, where articles were listed in both rows and columns, and '1' was assigned for co-citation and '0' for no co-citation. The results, shown in Figure 3, were assessed for goodness-of-fit using Tucker's congruence coefficient (0.97663) and the Dispersion Accounted For (DAF) value (0.9538). According to Arce et al. (2010), these values indicate a good fit, as a perfect adjustment would be 1. This analysis provided a comprehensive overview of the database, showing a balanced distribution of publications across quadrants, with studies in close proximity to each other.

Figure 1 – Multidimensional Scaling Analysis results



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

We identified the predominant theoretical perspectives from the studies in each MDS quadrant to understand the integration of theories. While the data showed high dispersion in terms of different theories applied to similar research goals, no dense primary theoretical roots emerged. However, the network theory, resource dependence theory, and resource-based view were prevalent across all four quadrants (Table 2), indicating that authors used these theories to explore various coopetition topics and connected them with diverse theoretical approaches.

Table 2 – Theoretical roots of tourism coopetition (continue)

Theory	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Frequency
Network theory	3	10	10	5	28
Resource dependence theory	3	2	7	2	14
Resource-based view	2	1	6	4	13
Mutual trust	2		5	3	10
Value co-creation	1	2	4	2	9
Strategic learning theory	1	4	2	1	8
Tourism competitiveness		1	3	2	6

Table 2 – Theoretical roots of tourism coopetition (conclusion)

Theory	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Frequency
Governance	2	2	1	1	6
Relational view	1		3	1	5
Dynamic capabilities		2	1	1	4
Transaction cost economy		1	2	1	4
Institutional economics theory	1		2	1	4
Tension management	1		1	1	3
Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework	2				2
Cluster theory			2		2
Spillover theory			1	1	2
Social exchange theory			1	1	2
Commitment theory			1	1	2
Systems theory			1	1	2
Theory of competitive response			1	1	2
Absorptive capacity theory	1		1		2
Leadership theory	1		1		2
Actor-network theory		1			1
Business ecosystem theory		1			1
Competitive intelligence		1			1
Game theory	1				1
Social network theory			1		1
Tourism life cycle model (TALC)			1		1

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The combined analysis of Figure 3 and Table 2 reveals a theoretical framework that is simultaneously concentrated and diverse. The network theory, resource dependence, and the resource-based view appear across different MDS quadrants, suggesting that they provide cross-cutting foundations for the field. On the other hand, perspectives such as trust, value co-creation, governance, relational view, and tourism competitiveness bring the research closer to more specific dimensions of destination functioning. This configuration suggests that the theoretical development of tourism coopetition is moving beyond its management-based roots stemming from management through its combination with approaches capable of incorporating territorial interdependence, multi-stakeholder relationships, and value generation beyond the individual enterprise.

The overview allows us to understand the current theoretical status of coopetition in tourism. Of the ten most used theories in coopetition studies in the management area that were previously identified by Klimas et al. (2023), it can be seen that all of them are also found in tourism coopetition research. However, different theoretical strands emerged: Tourism Competitiveness, Value Co-creation, Governance, Relational View, Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework, Cluster Theory, Spillover Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Commitment Theory, Systems Theory, Theory of Competitive Response, Destination image, Absorptive Capacity Theory, Leadership Theory, Actor-network Theory, Business Ecosystem Theory, Competitive Intelligence, Social Network Theory, Tourism Partnership Life Cycle Model and Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (TALC). Although they are not the main theories, we can consider that tourism is expanding the roots of coopetition and creating particular theoretical connections. This trend of new theoretical currents reflects and reaffirms the peculiarities of tourism.

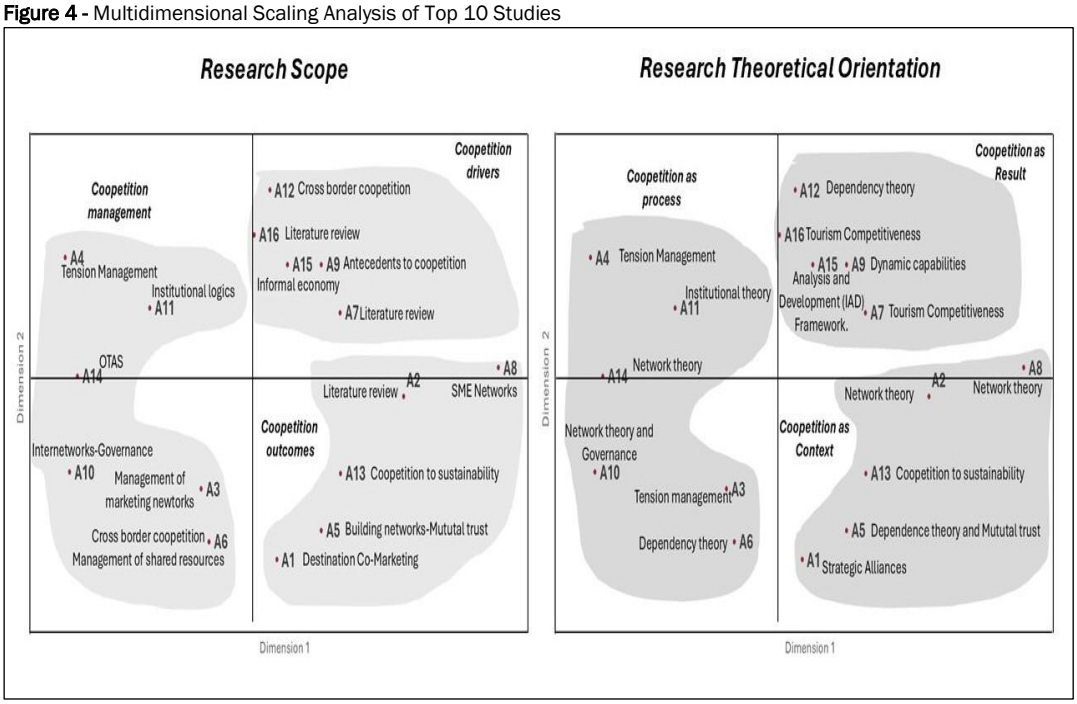
Among the 12 theories in evidence in the coopetition tourism studies, four stand out as marking the development of new paths for rethinking tourism development: Value Co-creation, Tourism Competitiveness, Governance and Relational View. These theories stand out for emphasizing the importance of value generation as the main effect of tourism, indicating a trend in the construction of the paradigm of coopetition in tourism that aligns with the assumption of coopetitiveness defined by Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino (2018).

As a theory, Value Co-creation is an approach that recognizes that value is not built solely by organizations but results from interactions and collaborations between stakeholders (Nie & Tang, 2022). Tourism competitiveness, in turn, involves multiple factors and actors, including infrastructure, services, marketing, innovation capacity, firms, governments, and society that can offer a high-quality experience and attract visitors. Governance concerns organisations' management and control systems, directly involving decision-making processes and mechanisms linked to

trust among diverse stakeholders with shared goals (Mariani, 2016). Finally, the Relational View emphasizes the relevance of relationships and interactions between stakeholders, recognizing the values that help build networks of trust and interdependence (Crick et al., 2022). The combination of these perspectives can also broaden the capacity of coopetition research to address contemporary problems in tourist destinations, such as overtourism.

To refine the analysis, we performed a second MDS analysis focused only on the leading studies (A1–A10), based on theoretical coupling. For this, we built a two-mode matrix that considered the top 10 articles in the rows and columns and input the number of references the two articles have in common. The results were interpreted in two ways. Firstly, we identified the main research scope of the article in each quadrant (left side of Figure 4); second, we identified the main theoretical perspective (right side of Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Multidimensional Scaling Analysis of Top 10 Studies



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Three clusters emerged from the leading studies on tourism coopetition. The first, 'Coopetition Management,' focuses on understanding institutional logic, managing cooperation with competitors, governance, and co-marketing or shared resources. The second cluster, 'Coopetition Drivers,' examines the factors that drive coopetition or provides literature reviews that advance the field. It views coopetition as a result. The third, 'Coopetition Outcomes,' explores creating competitive advantages for SMEs, improving sustainability, building mutual trust in networks, and co-marketing tourism destinations. Table 4 presents an analytical synthesis of the Roots and Prospects of Tourism Coopetition.

The interpretation of the three clusters shows that the literature organizes coopetition in tourism according to a conceptual sequence that encompasses its management, the factors that favor its formation, and the results produced by coopetitive relationships. This structure demonstrates that no single theoretical perspective fully explains the phenomenon. While governance, tension management, and institutional theory contribute to understanding how coopetition is coordinated, dynamic capabilities and resource dependence help explain why actors resort to coopetition, and trust, networks, and sustainability perspectives contribute to interpreting its results. The three groupings, therefore, reinforce the multi-theoretical nature of coopetition in tourism destinations.

Table 4.- Analytical and illustrative synthesis of the Roots and Prospects of Tourism Coopetition

Theory	Overlap with tourism coopetition	Example of topics in H&T	Example of studies in tourism coopetition
Network theory - It analyzes interaction among actors and examines network properties like centrality, size, equivalence, autonomy, density, and cohesion (Milgram, 1967).	Tourism coopetition involves a partnership between two or more stakeholders aimed at developing the tourism sector. The dynamics of networks shape the tourism coopetition configurations.	Tourism Coopetition typologies Coopetition networks by DMOs or business associations. Networks among H&T firms for co-marketing or co-production.	Della Corte & Aria (2016); Grängsjö (2003); Guo et al. (2014); Mariani (2016); Van der Zee & Vanneste (2015); Zemla (2016).
Resource dependence theory - It examines how reliance on external resources influences organizational behavior, decision-making, and shapes strategies and relationships. Managing external dependence and power dynamics is vital for a firm's development (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).	Tourism firms depend on external resources such as tourists, suppliers, infrastructure, and DMO support. Resource dependence and complementarity, especially with key entities controlling major attractions or transport, are critical factors in tourism coopetition.	Studies of H&T SMEs, small tourism destinations or regional destinations using coopetition strategy to reduce external dependence and vulnerability.	Fuentes-Fernández & Gilinsky (2022); Kallmuenzer et al. (2021); Kylänen & Mariani (2012); Kylänen & Rusko (2011).
Mutual trust - It highlights that trust is crucial for effective cooperation and long-term collaboration, emphasizing reliability, competence, integrity, and benevolence among partners (Mayer et al., 1995).	Trust can facilitate effective cooperative and competitive interplay between organizations and firms of the H&T sector, and mitigates the uncertainties and risks associated with coopetition. It is a variable of tourism coopetition.	Trust-building mechanisms among firms and destinations; trust as a moderator in networks for incremental innovation; Trust and reciprocity.	Czernek & Czakon (2016); Czakon & Czernek (2016); Pesämaa et al. (2013); Yavuz & Çemberci (2022).
Tension Management - Tension management, based on paradox and duality studies in organizational and strategic management, is essential for firms to collaborate while safeguarding their competitive interests (Smith & Lewis, 2011).	Coopetition involves the paradox of cooperating and competing simultaneously. Managing the resulting tensions is key to co-creating value and achieving shared goals without compromising individual strategic objectives.	Management of conflicts and tensions among tourism businesses;	Bahar et al. (2022); Czakon & Czernek (2021).
Institutional theory - Institutional Theory examines how institutions shape behavior, decisions, and structures, covering the role of social and cultural pressures in influencing organizational practices and their adoption, generating Isomorphism.	Many external institutional pressures influence the cooperation and competition dynamics between tourism firms. They may engage in coopetition to gain legitimacy, meet regulatory requirements, or respond to industry standards.	Causality and antecedents of coopetition in SMEs; Institutional logic of coopetition; Formal and informal mechanisms of coopetition.	Fong et al. (2018); Idrees et al. (2018); Zhang et al. (2023).
Dynamic Capabilities - It is the organization's ability to develop and restructure the internal and external competencies to respond to market changes and unstable environments (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997).	Tourism coopetition is a mechanism for firms to collectively develop capabilities to respond to external shocks and risks and acquire competencies to leverage opportunities.	Knowledge transfer dynamics; Micro foundations of dynamic coopetition capabilities.	Czakon et al. (2020); Da Silva et al. (2023); Fong et al. (2021); Werner et al. (2015).
Governance - It is a conceptual representation of the coordination of a network of social systems based on collective decisions, representing the capacity of government to create and implement policy together with society (OMT, 2010).	Tourism coopetition requires engaging and managing various stakeholders working in networks, governments, firms, and communities that share a common interest in developing the tourism destination.	Associationism based on coopetition; governance of networks of tourism destinations, tourism circuits or cross-border destinations.	Chim-Miki et al. (2020); Della Corte (2009); Hermawan & Hutagalung (2020); Mariani (2016); Tuohino & Konu (2014).
Strategic Alliances - It embraces a diversity of collaborative partnerships between organizations that collaborate to achieve mutual goals while maintaining their independence. Alliances leverage complementary resources or share risks (Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2004).	In tourism, competitors collaborate to enhance the destination's attractiveness while competing for individual gains. Coopetition is a way to leverage the destination through collective efforts.	Co-marketing and co-development of tourism destinations; innovation capacity; shared risk.	Schnitzer et al. (2018); Wang & Krakover (2008); Webb et al. (2021).
Tourism Competitiveness - It is the ability of a destination to deliver goods, services and experiences that perform better than other destinations simultaneously, improve the quality of life and preserve the environment for future generations (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).	Both frameworks recognize the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to create shared value and enhance competitive advantages.	Coopetition to improve the management of tourism destinations toward competitiveness and attractiveness.	Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino (2017b); Mariani et al. (2014); Suhartanto (2017); Vasanicova et al. (2022).
Sustainability It is the development that meets the needs of the present and preserves the resources for the needs of future generations, integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Brundtland Commission, 1987).	Both perspectives advocate for creating value that benefits all parties involved using a collaborative approach to foster economic, social, or environmental benefits to the tourism destination.	Coopetition to waste management in the hospitality sector; Networks to tourism destination sustainability.	Filimonau, (2021); Nguyen et al. (2022); Phi & Waldesten (2021)

5 CONCLUSION

By analyzing 92 scientific articles using bibliometric and statistical techniques, the study offers a comprehensive overview of the intellectual development of coopetition in tourism. Citation, co-citation, and Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) analyses identify key theoretical roots and clusters of related studies. The analysis, spanning three time periods (2003–2017, 2018–2020, 2021–2024), highlights the evolution of the theoretical framework and the enduring influence of studies on network dynamics, trust, governance, and strategic alliances in tourist destinations. These themes remain central and frequently cited in coopetition research.

In summary, the results show that coopetition in tourism maintains roots primarily associated with strategic management, especially network theory. However, the progressive incorporation of perspectives such as trust, value co-creation, governance, relational view, and tourism competitiveness demonstrates a broadening of the field toward more socially and relationally oriented interpretations that are sensitive to the specificities of destinations. Thus, the theoretical evolution of coopetition in tourism seems to occur less through the replacement of its original bases and more through the combination of these with perspectives capable of explaining relationships between multiple actors and different levels of value creation.

This trajectory supports the possibility of developing a more society-oriented coopetition paradigm, provided that future research delves deeper into the conditions under which cooperation between competitors generates benefits not only for companies but also for destinations and host communities. For destination management, the results reinforce the need to understand coopetition as a relational and collective capacity, and not merely as an interorganizational strategy.

The findings also highlighted that the hospitality studies on coopetition are comparatively underrepresented in the reviewed literature. Thus, hospitality emerges as a relevant context for extending the theoretical development of coopetition. Its relational structure, involving firms, employees, visitors, local suppliers, and communities, can provide a context to examine how theoretical roots such as network theory, resource dependence, trust, value co-creation, and sustainability operate in hospitality settings. In particular, hospitality is a useful context for advancing the social value creation dimension of coopetition in the society-centered paradigm.

5.1. Research implications

The implications of our study can be synthesized into three groups. First, the study identifies the ten leading articles in the field: Wang & Krakover (2008); Van der Zee & Vanneste (2015); Grängsjö (2003); Czakon & Czernek (2016); Czernek & Czakon (2016); Kylänen & Rusko (2011); Mariani et al. (2014); Della Corte & Aria (2016); Czakon et al. (2020); Mariani (2016). These articles are shaping the literature on tourism coopetition.

Second, the study identifies 29 theoretical perspectives in tourism coopetition, with 12 predominating. This result is partially aligned with previous studies but identified new trends that tourism is pushing. Based on our results, coopetition in tourism coincides with seven theoretical roots identified by Klimas et al. (2023) in all industries and sectors in general. However, in tourism, coopetition is also rooted in three groups of theories related to social networks and their architectural models and tourism theories. The first group included theories of Value co-creation, Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework, Social exchange theory, Leadership theory, Relational view, Commitment theory, Actor-network theory, Competitive Intelligence, and Social network theory. In the second group, we observed theories such as Cluster theory, Spillover theory, Systems theory, Theory of competitive response, and Business ecosystem theory. The third group embraces the specificities of tourism with theories of Tourism competitiveness, Governance, and Tourism life cycle model (TALC).

The findings complement previous studies in literature on the theoretical roots of coopetition. Other management theories and tourism-specific theoretical approaches support coopetition and direct new pathways. They suggest that the tourism coopetition paradigm is evolving by incorporating social and relational perspectives alongside tourism-specific frameworks. These theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant to tourism coopetition because they view the phenomenon as an unavoidable strategic behavior to be embraced for attaining mutual goals, distributing collective gains, and consequently promoting value creation at different levels and across different segments. Our findings corroborate the authors' view on coopetitive advantages as a source of value creation for tourism destinations (Volschenk et al., 2016) and the use of coopetition within a society-centered paradigm (Chim-Miki et al., 2023).

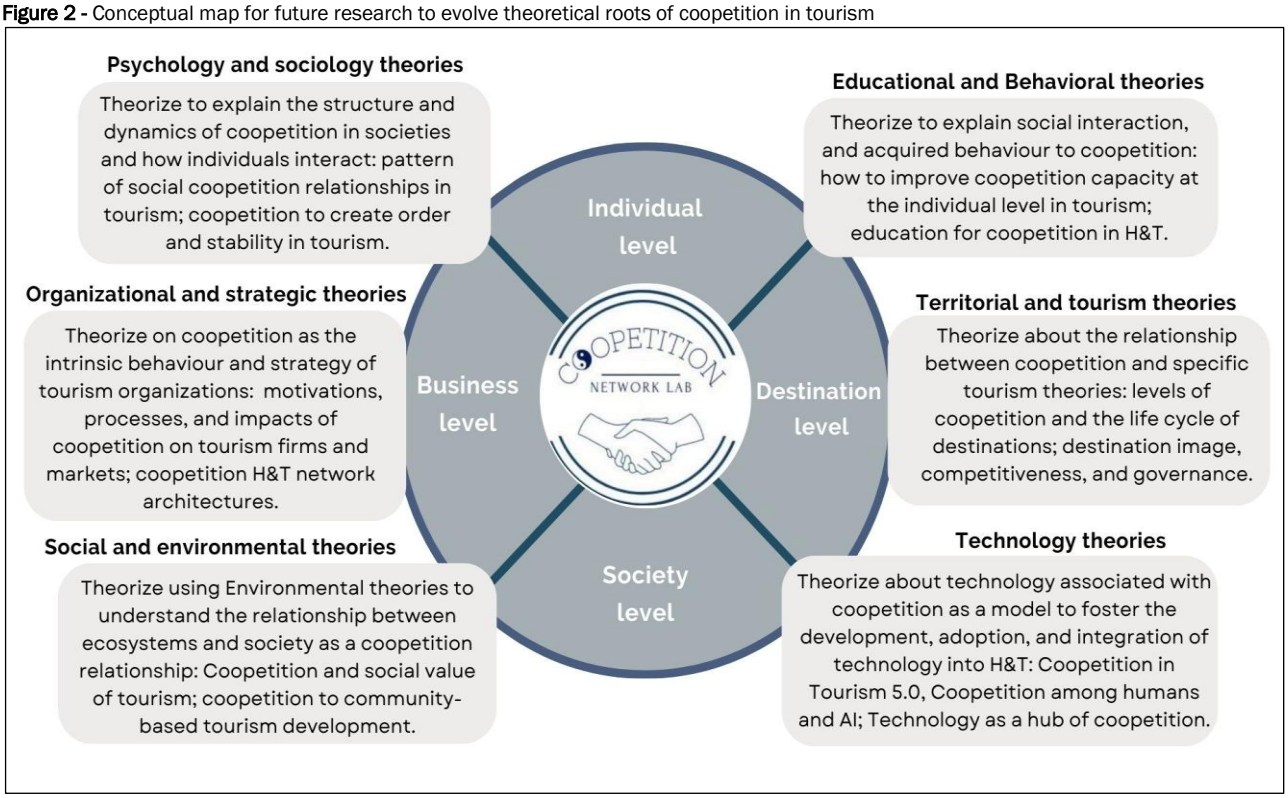
Although this study is conceptual, from the findings we can suggest some practical propositions for tourism destination management and governance. For DMOs and local governments, the identified theoretical roots suggest that coopetition networks should be designed and established with transparent participation rules, clearly defined actor responsibilities, and mechanisms for managing shared destination resources. For tourism firms and business associations, the findings highlight the importance of selecting partners based on resource complementarity, and strategic fit for sustaining the coopetition networks. A mediated coopetition by formal agreements may define shared objectives, information boundaries, benefit-allocation criteria, and trust-building practices, while also helping to manage intrinsic tensions. Host communities should be active players in the coopetition networks, involved as beneficiaries and consultees. Residents should be participants in defining the value expected from tourism, as well as evaluators of the impact. These propositions can foster destination-level coopetition as a collective and territorial capacity, rather than solely as an interfirm strategy. However, it is important to note that these propositions were derived from a systematic review rather than empirical study. Therefore, they should be interpreted as theoretically informed guidelines whose effectiveness requires validation across different destination contexts.

5.2. Unveiling the foundations and future directions of tourism coopetition

Although this study does not pursue an empirical path, its findings have practical implications for future research and for the development of tourism planning, management, and evaluation policies. Coopetition as pre-strategic behavior was expected to be explained by theories from psychology, sociology, and other behavioral sciences. However, the results of this study found that tourism coopetition studies draw primarily on management and economic theory rather than interdisciplinary theory. Similar results appear in the leading studies (A1 to A10), and it shows that coopetition in tourism is both strategy- and competitiveness-driven.

The findings also reveal a worrying lack of tourism-specific theories despite the close relations between tourism, hospitality, and host communities. There are a few open research issues that remain unresolved, including the model of tourism destination competitiveness, determinants reducing the performance of coopetitive networks, the optimization of public–private and for-profit/nonprofit coopetition, digital coopetition, and sustainability measures for coopetition in tourism destinations. Tourism and hospitality theories are needed to address the particular characteristics of the industry but also respecting the multidisciplinary of the field to develop social value beyond competitiveness. Based on this, we have developed a research agenda for coopetition in tourism (Figure 5).

Figure 2 - Conceptual map for future research to evolve theoretical roots of coopetition in tourism



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

This agenda (Figure 5) becomes important for addressing contemporary challenges that exceed the response capacity of isolated organizations. In contexts of overtourism, further research can examine how governance, trust, and tension management mechanisms condition coopetition among stakeholders in defining limits and priorities for tourism development. In the face of climate emergencies, disasters, or other crises affecting destinations, resource dependence, dynamic capabilities, and network perspectives can contribute to explaining the joint mobilization of resources, organizational adaptation, and the building of collective resilience. Finally, the articulation between value co-creation, sustainability, and relational perspectives can deepen the analysis to identify who benefits and who bears the costs arising from tourism development based on the coopetition strategy. These paths reinforce the need to progressively shift coopetition research from an exclusively business-oriented emphasis to a multi-level, territorial, and society-centered approach.

5.3. Research limitations and final considerations

The methodological process adopted in this study followed a transparent and reproducible approach. We combined exploratory analysis with systematic literature review, producing high-quality evidence. Nevertheless, there were certain limitations, such as using only two high-impact databases, which cannot cover all relevant literature. The exclusion of other databases constitutes a limitation of the research, as it does not include regional publications, books, and works that are not indexed. Furthermore, the search strategy is always a limiting factor for SLR. We restricted articles to those containing the words "tourism or hospitality" and "coopetition or co-opetition," which may have excluded relevant studies that examine coopetition in tourism without using these exact terms. The bibliometric techniques used also bring research limitations. The co-citation analysis identifies patterns of intellectual proximity based on shared references, but this is not always the case of theoretical agreement. In addition, this technique may favor older and more established publications. Likewise, Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) reduces complex similarity structures to a limited number of dimensions, which facilitates visualization but inevitably involves some loss of information. Therefore, the theoretical configurations identified in our study should be understood as representations of the intellectual structure of the field rather than as definitive or exhaustive classifications of the theoretical foundations of tourism coopetition.

The broad theoretical scope of some articles also made it difficult to compare studies and identify the predominant theoretical perspective. Future studies should draw on additional databases and complementary methods, such as meta-analysis in order to better understand the theoretical foundations of coopetition in tourism. The limited representation of coopetition in hospitality studies was a limitation in considering the results as representative of both tourism and hospitality. Future research should therefore examine coopetition more systematically in hospitality contexts, particularly its implications for social value creation.

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Data availability statement

The data is not available due to restrictions on ownership and distribution rights because it is an RSL that analyzes articles from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, and not all of them are open access.

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