
Book Review

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Coopetition: Winning Strategies for the 21st Century
by: Saïd Yami, Sandro Castaldo, Giovanni Battista Dagnino and
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Coopetition (simultaneous collaboration and competition) was introduced to the field of business research in the mid-'90s (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996). After that, and especially in the third-millennium, the research interest around coopetition has been on the rise. The reasons are linked to a more generic trend in business practice towards collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders. The diffusion of strategic alliances and networks across industries in recent decades has not gone unnoticed by researchers – one of the most relevant and researched topic in business research are alliances in their different forms. As the field has evolved, different types of alliances (including coopetition) have rightfully claimed specific interest since they involve distinctive value creation and appropriation logics. In addition, the paradigm of coopetition not only draws from that of cooperation, but also that of competition, suggesting a unique and independent reasoning (Yami et al., 2010; Lado et al., 1997). Thus, emphasis on coopetition as a distinctive research phenomenon seems justified, but certainly a lot of clarification and research efforts are needed for the field to evolve into an independent area of inquiry.

The book thus asks an important question: is coopetition just another fashionable concept or true revolution in strategic thinking? The aim of the book is to provide evidence of the latter, that is, to show that coopetition is a self-standing, specific research object, which requires dedicated theoretical investigation in order to pose new questions from theoretical, methodological and managerial viewpoints. To address this aim, the book is divided into three broad sections. The first part is mainly conceptual, focusing on the emergence and relevance of coopetition strategy. The second part provides studies on coopetition strategy in multiple contexts. The final part views coopetition strategies at the aggregate (industry) level.

The conceptual part kicks off with a broad review on the concept of coopetition by Maria Bengtsson, Jessica Eriksson and Joakim Wincent. The authors explore the drivers, processes and outcomes of coopetition on different levels of analysis. In particular, coopetition is examined on the individual, organisational, inter-organisational and network level. The authors suggest further research on each of these levels and also stress

the need to examine their inter-linkages. Marco Galvano and Francesco Garraffo develop a very clear-cut conceptual analysis and related propositions of inter-organisational cooptition and reflect upon it against established work in strategic management. Their main message is that cooptition should be defined as collaboration between parties that are actual competitors at the time of collaboration. They further argue, following the classic work of Chen (1996), that resource similarity and market commonality affect the intensity of competition and subsequently firm behaviour in cooptition. Wojciech Czakon proposes important argumentation for 'emerging cooptition', suggesting that cooptition is not always a deliberate strategy, at least for all the parties involved. He presents evidence showing that inter-organisational relationships evolve dynamically in terms of collaborative and competitive interactions, sometimes forming cooptitive strategies. In the last conceptual piece, Philippe Baumard develops a complex analysis on learning behaviour in cooptition, borrowing broadly from economics, sociology and even biology.

The second part starts with an analysis by Giovanni Battista Dagnino and Marcello Mariani, which focuses on AlmaCube, an academic incubator of the University of Bologna. In line with the strategic entrepreneurship perspective (Hitt et al., 2001), they show how entrepreneurs not only collaborate with each other on knowledge and infrastructure sharing, but also compete in financing and marketing, providing a view of 'cooptition strategy' among entrepreneurs. Colette Depreys and Hervé Dumez offer an often overlooked viewpoint of cooptition – the role of architectural players. In their case from the US defence industry, they identify the role of customers and regulators on shaping the cooptition game. In particular, the role of regulators has not been extensively studied in existing cooptition research, even though their importance has been recognised (Jorde and Teece, 1990; Gnyawali et al., 2008). Sandro Castaldo, Guido Möllering, Monica Grosso and Fabrizio Zerbini explore the concept of third-party mediation in cooptition, which has not attained much empirical examination before either. They show how a third-party can bridge and select the information flows between parties in cooptition, facilitating both neutrality and trust building. Ossi Pesämaa and Per-Erik Eriksson revisit the game theoretic roots of cooptition by providing a simulation study focusing on nature-based tourism firms, which are in an intuitive position to benefit from local collaboration. The results suggest that cooptition is not a preferable option for such firms in single or repeated games when they act rationally. The authors suggest several implications from this result.

The third part takes off with a chapter by Pierre Roy and Saïd Yami, where they analyse cooptition in the context of oligopoly, as a situation where there are only few dominant firms that are bound together by a collective faith. They utilise classic concepts of strategic intent and disruptive strategy (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989; Hamel, 2000) in analysing how the French movie theatre sector has evolved in terms of their collective and competitive moves. Thomas Herzog examines the civil aircraft industry as an example where cooptition is a natural part of the game due to the immense costs and complexity involved. In his empirical analysis, he provides evidence on how cooptition manifests in complex projects through time, and also how the firms have actually handled the cooptition inside their organisations. Fabio Ancarani and Michele Costabile examine cooptition dynamics in convergent industries. On the basis of their analysis, they provide a taxonomy examining how various capabilities affect the success potential of cooptition initiatives in convergent industries. The last chapter, written by Frédéric Le Roy and Patrice Guillotreau, focuses on the industry dynamics from the

viewpoint of new entrants. They pose a question whether to engage in competition or collaboration with dominant firms. They analyse the French tuna industry, and find out that the new entrants changed the rules of the 'cooperative game' by their extremely competitive behaviour, which was at odds with the existing collaborative-cooperation model imposed by the existing companies.

Overall the book reaches its goal, showing many distinctive peculiarities of cooperation utilising rich data across the world. The analysis throughout the book is conceptual and qualitative, which serves well the explorative phase of the research field. Several novel and less researched issues of cooperation are brought to the forefront – the most notable of them being the analyses focusing on other players than the actual 'cooperators', as well as the numerous analyses on the industry level. After reading the book, the reader is left with increased knowledge of cooperation as a phenomenon, but also with a lot of questions for further research.

Indeed, even though the book is able to further the domain of cooperation by providing compelling conceptual and empirical evidence on the topic, several questions and ambiguities still remain. First, one unresolved issue deals with the level of analysis. Most authors of cooperation approach it from an inter-organisational or network perspective – as collaboration between competing firms – and this is the case in this book as well. However, some authors in this book suggest using the concept to investigate competitive and collaborative relationships also inside the organisations and between individuals. Thus, some ambiguity remains as to whether the concept refers to simultaneous collaboration and competition as a universal phenomenon, or as a strictly inter-organisational one. Second, while cooperation is presented from several perspectives and its benefits for the participating actors is well visible, the inherent costs and risks involved (e.g., for firms, industries, and customers) are often not addressed. Incorporating such 'dark side of cooperation' into various analyses could pay off in future by providing a more holistic perspective on the issue. Third, while the various authors agree in principle what cooperation is, the approaches to its boundary conditions are still different. For some authors, cooperation refers to collaboration taking place between direct competitors, where competition and collaboration are strictly situated in the same space, context and time. For other authors, cooperation is seen as an emergent and dynamic phenomenon, which does not have such strict boundaries in terms of time and competitive similarity, i.e. In addition, while most authors in the book approach cooperation as a horizontal phenomenon, some utilise the concept in vertical relationships between buyers and suppliers.

These ambiguities are understandable given that the field is still in its developmental phases. Indeed, the road towards an independent discipline is still long for cooperation researchers, and discussion approaching the different aspects of the concept will definitely help in this effort. *Cooperation: Winning Strategies for the 21st Century* is one part of this development, providing the reader with a sufficiently representative collection of current arguments revolving around the topic.

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