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Coopetition in Tourism Destinations: A Bibliometric Mapping of an Emerging Research Domain

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ABSTRACT

Despite tourism destinations being recognized as ideal contexts for coopetition due to their structural interdependence and network characteristics, coopetition research in tourism remains severely underexplored, representing only 5.6% of total coopetition scholarship. This study provides a comprehensive scientometric analysis to map the intellectual structure, identify key contributors, and reveal emerging trends in this nascent field. Using Web of Science and Scopus data spanning 1996-2025, we analyzed 157 publications employing CiteSpace software to generate co-citation networks, keyword co-occurrence patterns, and cluster analysis. The analysis reveals significant geographic concentration, with 43.7% of research originating from European institutions and 28.5% from the Americas. Four distinct intellectual communities emerge: conceptualization and operationalization studies, trust and network governance mechanisms, strategic applications and performance outcomes, and entrepreneurial cognition. The field demonstrates evolution from basic definitions toward multidimensional constructs encompassing managerial, strategic, behavioral, and contextual dimensions, yet exhibits structural fragmentation with minimal international collaboration. Tourism research predominantly treats coopetition as an explanatory variable for strategic advantages rather than investigating its formation mechanisms, contrasting with broader coopetition literature. Critical gaps include absence of intra-organizational coopetition studies, limited cross-destination comparative research, and narrow focus on specific tourism types. This research advances tourism coopetition scholarship by documenting disciplinary knowledge flows through dual-map overlay analysis, quantifying structural fragmentation that impedes knowledge accumulation, and establishing temporal evolution patterns across consolidation and acceleration phases, thereby providing actionable priorities for destination managers and researchers seeking to bridge theoretical development with practical implementation.

Keywords: Coopetition, tourism destination, inter-organizational networks, bibliometric analysis, co-citation

INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations represent complex systems characterized by high levels of interdependence, complementarity, and simultaneous competition and cooperation among stakeholders (Chim-Miki et al., 2025). Hotels compete for guests while simultaneously collaborating to promote the destination; restaurants strive for customers yet jointly participate in culinary tourism initiatives; attractions contend for visitor attention while cooperating to create integrated tourism packages. This paradoxical dynamic defines coopetition, a strategic behavior increasingly recognized as fundamental to destination competitiveness (Gernsheimer et al., 2024).

The concept of coopetition, introduced by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996), challenges traditional competitive/cooperative paradigms by recognizing that organizations can derive mutual benefits from strategic collaboration with competitors (Bengtsson et al., 2016). While initially developed within game theory and applied to manufacturing sectors, coopetition has found particular resonance in service industries characterized by network structures and complementary offerings (Meena et al., 2024). Tourism destinations epitomize such contexts: they function as inter-organizational networks where public and private actors must coordinate to deliver the integrated product tourists consume, yet simultaneously compete for visitor spending, investment, and recognition (Chim-Miki et al., 2020).

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Despite tourism destinations being theoretically identified as ideal contexts for coopetition networks, due to

their high presence of SMEs, complementary product structures, centralized destination management organizations, shared goals, co-location dynamics, and dual external-internal competition pressures (Chim-Miki et al., 2024), academic research on tourism coopetition remains remarkably limited (Zhang et al., 2023). A preliminary literature review revealed that from 284 coopetition papers published in Scopus and Web of Science databases between 1996 and 2015, only 15 (5.6%) focused on tourism applications (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017). This striking disparity raises fundamental questions: Why has coopetition theory, so relevant to tourism's structural characteristics, received such limited scholarly attention in this domain? What intellectual foundations exist? What theoretical perspectives dominate? What critical gaps constrain knowledge advancement?

The nascent state of tourism coopetition research creates both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, the limited corpus makes comprehensive synthesis difficult and theoretical consolidation elusive. On the other hand, it signals an emerging research frontier with significant potential for theoretical contribution and practical impact. Understanding how knowledge in this domain has evolved, which conceptual frameworks guide inquiry, and where research efforts concentrate becomes essential for advancing both scholarship and practice.

This study addresses these imperatives through comprehensive scientometric analysis of coopetition research, with particular focus on tourism applications. We employ CiteSpace methodology to examine: publication trends and research evolution over time; collaborative networks among authors, institutions, and countries; intellectual structure through co-citation analysis; thematic clusters and conceptual frameworks; and temporal dynamics revealing shifting research priorities. Our analysis synthesizes both general coopetition literature and tourism-specific applications to clarify how coopetition theory has been conceptualized, operationalized, and applied within destination contexts.

Theoretical Framework: Coopetition In Tourism Destinations

The Coopetition Paradigm: Conceptual Foundations and Evolution

The term “coopetition” emerged in academic discourse through Brandenburger and Nalebuff's (1996) seminal work Co-opetition: A Revolutionary Mindset That Combines Competition and Cooperation, which introduced a game-theoretic perspective on business strategy. These authors argued that business relationships cannot be reduced to zero-sum competitive dynamics or purely collaborative arrangements. Instead, organizations engage in simultaneous cooperation to create value and competition to appropriate it, a paradoxical but strategically rational behavior that characterizes modern market structures (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Corbo et al., 2023).

Over the two decades following its introduction, coopetition evolved from a simple definitional construct of cooperating and competing simultaneously toward a sophisticated multidimensional framework encompassing motivations, processes, governance mechanisms, and outcomes (Bengtsson et al., 2020). Contemporary scholarship recognizes coopetition as occurring at multiple levels: intra-organizational, inter-organizational, and inter-individual (Meena et al., 2023). This multilevel perspective acknowledges that coopetition manifests differently depending on organizational boundaries, power dynamics, and institutional contexts (Klimas et al., 2022).

Two conceptual streams characterize coopetition literature (Chim-Miki et al., 2024). The first emphasizes process dynamics, the mechanisms through which organizations balance cooperation and competition, manage inherent tensions, and navigate the “coopetition paradox” of simultaneously creating and claiming value (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). This stream focuses on governance structures, trust-building mechanisms, conflict resolution processes, and boundary management strategies that enable sustainable coopetitive relationships (Della Corte & Sciarelli, 2012). The second stream prioritizes outcomes, the competitive advantages, innovations, performance improvements, and value creation resulting from coopetition strategies (Crick and Crick, 2019). These scholars examine how coopetition enables resource pooling, knowledge sharing, risk mitigation, and market expansion that individual organizations could not achieve independently. Both

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streams share fundamental recognition that coopetition represents a paradigm shift beyond traditional strategic frameworks (P Chiambaretto, M Bengtsson, AS Fernandez, MH Näsholm).

Tourism Destinations as Natural Coopetition Contexts

Tourism destinations embody organizational and institutional characteristics that make them paradigmatic contexts for coopetition behavior (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017; Czakon & Czernek, 2016). Many structural features establish tourism as an ideal domain for coopetition research and practice. First, pervasive SME presence with network dependency**.** Tourism industries worldwide are dominated by small and medium enterprises, independent hotels, family-owned restaurants, local tour operators, artisan shops, that individually lack market power but collectively constitute the destination product (Maracajá et al., 2024). These SMEs derive superior returns through network participation, leveraging collective marketing, shared infrastructure, and coordinated service delivery that individual firms cannot provide (Czakon & Czernek, 2025). Second, extreme product complementarity and interdependence**.** Tourists consume destinations as integrated experiences combining accommodation, dining, attractions, transportation, and services from multiple providers (Cortese et al., 2021). A hotel's success depends on restaurant quality, attraction appeal, and transportation accessibility provided by competitors and complementors. This radical interdependence means individual firm performance correlates strongly with collective destination performance, creating powerful incentives for cooperative behavior despite competitive interests (Della Corte & Aria, 2016).

Third, institutionalized destination management structures. Most tourism destinations operate formal governance mechanisms, destination management organizations (DMOs), tourism boards that coordinate private sector activities and align public policy with industry needs (Messori, 2022). These institutions provide organizational infrastructure for coopetition: neutral convening spaces, shared information systems, collective marketing budgets, and conflict resolution mechanisms that reduce transaction costs and enable sustained collaboration among competitors (Czakon & Czernek, 2021).

Fourth, resource sharing imperatives. Tourism destinations often develop around shared natural or cultural resources, beaches, mountains, heritage sites, cultural traditions, that no single entity controls but all depend upon (Mariani, 2016). Managing these commons requires collective governance, coordinated conservation efforts, and equitable access agreements, institutionalizing cooperation even among direct competitors. Additionally, shared infrastructure and collective reputation as public goods further entrench cooperative interdependence (Kirillova et al., 2020).

These characteristics position tourism destinations not merely as contexts where coopetition occasionally occurs, but as organizational fields where coopetition constitutes the fundamental operational logic. Understanding destination competitiveness requires moving beyond firm-level competitive strategy toward network-level coopetition strategy (Chim-Miki et al., 2024).

METHODS

Data Collection and Corpus Construction

This study adopts bibliometric analysis to systematically map the intellectual landscape of coopetition research in tourism destinations. Bibliometric methods offer quantitative, replicable approaches for examining scholarly output, identifying influential works, and detecting knowledge structures within research domains (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Unlike narrative reviews relying on subjective selection, bibliometric techniques enable comprehensive field mapping through citation analysis, co-authorship networks, and keyword patterns (White & McCain, 1989).

We selected the Web of Science Core Collection as our primary data source due to its comprehensive coverage, rigorous quality standards, and structured metadata that facilitates robust bibliometric computation. The search strategy employed two keywords, “coopet*” and “touris*”, queried across all fields to capture the full spectrum of coopetition-tourism scholarship, including variations such as coopetition, co-opetition, cooperation-competition, tourism, tourist, and touristic.

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Table 1 documents our data collection protocol. The initial search yielded 159 documents. We implemented quality control by excluding non-research materials (review materials) and verifying thematic relevance through title and abstract screening. This refinement process produced a final corpus of 157 articles, providing a reliable foundation for subsequent analysis.

Database	**Web of Science Core Collection**
Search Query	"coopet*" AND "touris*" (All Fields)
Initial Results	159
Exclusions	Non-relevent materials
Final Corpus	157

Table 1: Data Collection Protocol

The refined dataset was analyzed using CiteSpace, a specialized bibliometric visualization software that transforms bibliographic records into interpretable network structures (Chen, 2013). CiteSpace excels at revealing temporal dynamics, identifying emerging themes, and detecting influential contributions through sophisticated citation algorithms, making it particularly suited for examining nascent research domains like tourism coopetition.

Disciplinary Knowledge Flows

Journal dual-map overlay analysis provides a macro-level perspective on interdisciplinary knowledge circulation (Chen, 2012). Figure 1 visualizes the disciplinary foundations of tourism coopetition research, with citing journals positioned on the left and cited journals on the right. Colored citation arcs trace knowledge pathways between fields.

The overlay reveals tourism coopetition scholarship draws primarily from two disciplinary streams: “economics/economic/political” and “psychology/education/social”. These citing domains direct knowledge flows toward “economics/economic/political” and “economics/economic/political” clusters on the cited side. This pattern indicates tourism coopetition research synthesizes economic strategic frameworks with behavioral and social perspectives, reflecting the field's dual focus on competitive dynamics and collaborative relationships. The cross-disciplinary citation structure underscores tourism coopetition as an integrative domain bridging strategic management, organizational behavior, and economic geography.

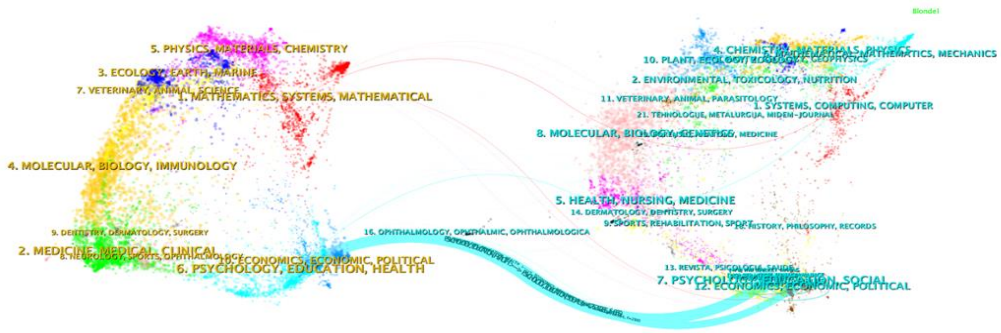

Figure 1: Dual-map overlay of disciplinary knowledge flows

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Publication and Citation Trends

Figure 2 illustrates the temporal evolution of tourism coopetition research through publication volume and cumulative citations. The field exhibits a distinctly emerging character, with sporadic early contributions (1996, 2004) followed by sustained growth beginning in 2010. Publication output accelerated markedly after 2015, reaching peaks of 24 articles in 2021 and 18 in 2022.

The cumulative citation curve (blue line) demonstrates exponential growth, rising from near-zero before 2010 to approximately 600 citations by 2025. This trajectory reveals increasing scholarly attention and knowledge accumulation, though the field remains nascent compared to mature research domains. The steepening citation curve after 2018 suggests tourism coopetition scholarship has achieved critical mass, with foundational works now being widely recognized and integrated into subsequent research.

The gap between recent publication peaks (2021-2022) and citation accumulation indicates a natural citation lag, recent articles have not yet accrued substantial citations. Nevertheless, the sustained publication growth and accelerating citation rates signal tourism coopetition's emergence from peripheral curiosity to recognized research priority within tourism and strategic management scholarship.

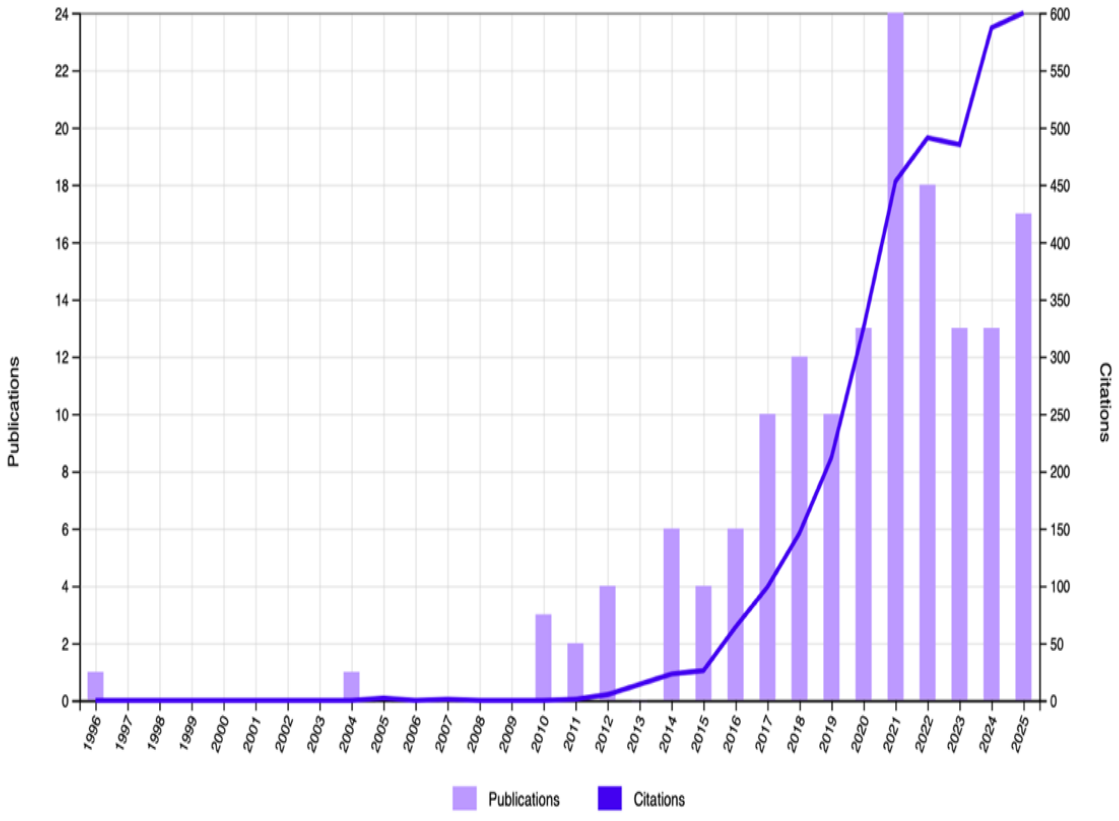

Figure 2: Annual publication output and cumulative citations (1996-2025)

Co-authorship Networks

Co-authorship analysis reveals the collaborative structure underpinning tourism coopetition research (Katz & Martin, 1997). Figure 3 displays a network of 136 authors, represented by nodes, connected through 121 collaborative links, with a density of 0.0132, meaning only 1.32% of potential connections are actualized. This indicates highly fragmented collaboration patterns typical of nascent research domains.

The network's high modularity (0.9016) confirms distinct, isolated research communities. Four collaborative clusters of five or more authors emerge, representing localized research teams with intensive internal cooperation but minimal cross-cluster integration. The largest cluster demonstrates the most sustained collaborative output, while the three smaller clusters indicate emerging partnerships.

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This fragmented structure reveals a critical limitation: tourism coopetition lacks the interconnected collaborative infrastructure necessary for cumulative knowledge building. The absence of bridge connections between clusters prevents knowledge transfer across research communities, contributing to theoretical fragmentation. Unlike mature fields with dense, overlapping collaborations, tourism coopetition scholars operate largely within isolated silos, constraining field coherence and paradigmatic development.

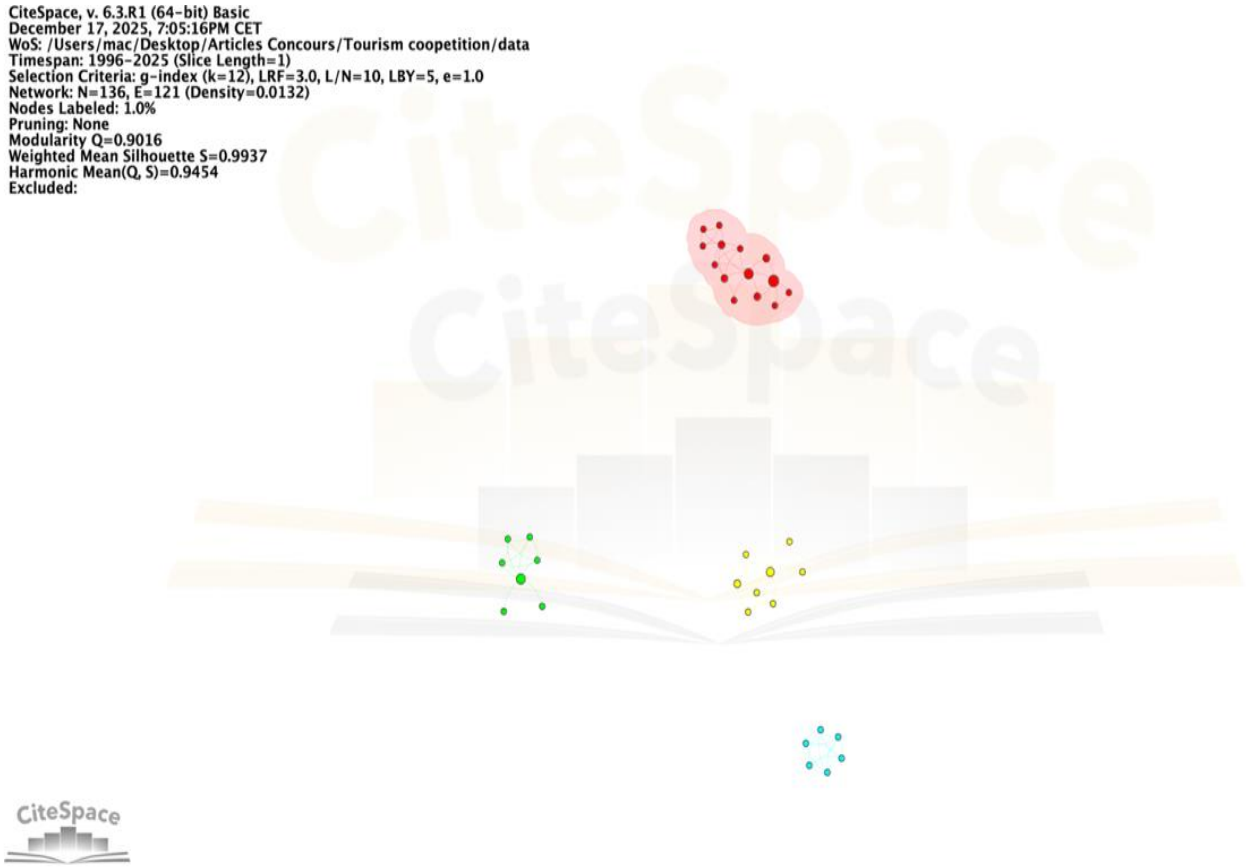

Figure 3: Co-authorship collaboration network

Geographic Distribution and International Collaboration

Country-level analysis reveals the geographic concentration of tourism coopetition research and patterns of international collaboration. Figure 4 displays the country co-authorship network comprising 50 countries connected through 79 collaborative links, with a network density of 0.0645. This relatively low density indicates limited international collaboration, with only 6.45% of potential cross-country connections realized.

The network exhibits high modularity (0.9016), confirming geographically clustered research communities with minimal intercontinental collaboration. Central positioning of Spain, China, Poland, USA, and Brazil suggests these nations serve as collaborative hubs, though the dispersed peripheral nodes indicate many countries contribute in isolation without sustained international partnerships.

Table 2 identifies the most productive countries in tourism coopetition research. China leads with 25 publications, followed by Brazil (19), USA (18), and Poland (18). European nations demonstrate strong representation, with Spain (17), England (16), Italy (15), and Portugal (13) collectively accounting for substantial output. This geographic concentration reveals a predominantly Euro-Asian research landscape, with notable contributions from Brazil.

Collectively, the top three countries (China, Brazil, and USA) produce 39.5% of total publications, while the top ten account for approximately 60% of research output. This concentration, combined with the network's fragmented structure, indicates tourism coopetition research remains geographically constrained, lacking the global collaborative infrastructure characteristic of mature international research domains.

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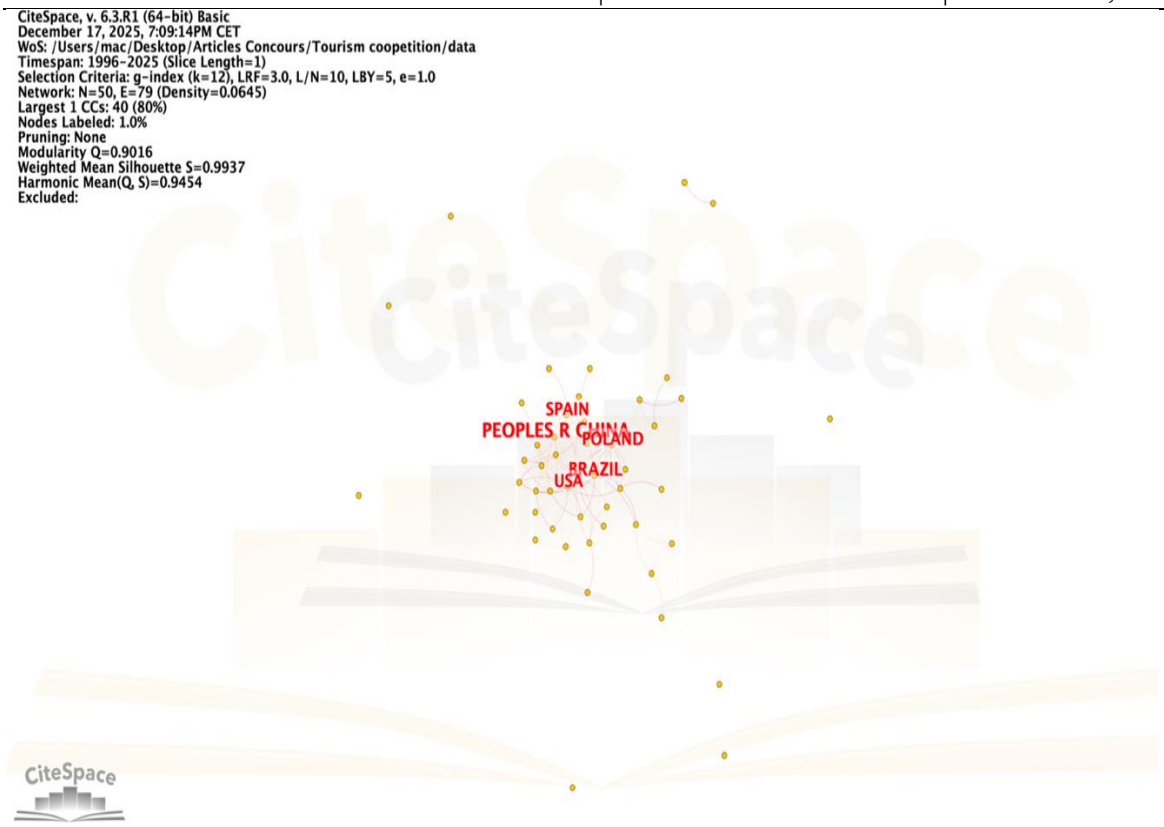

Figure 4: Country collaboration network

Rank	Country	Publications
1	China	25
2	Brazil	19
3	USA	18
4	Poland	18
5	Spain	17
6	England	16
7	Italy	15
8	Portugal	13
9	Canada	10
10	Austria	7

Table 2: Top 10 most productive countries in tourism coopetition research

Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals thematic priorities and conceptual foundations within tourism coopetition research. By examining which terms scholars use together, we identify the field's intellectual focus and emerging research directions (Chen, 2012).

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Table 3 presents the most frequently occurring keywords in the corpus. “Cooperation” dominates with 47 occurrences, followed by “coopetition” (36) and “innovation” (34), indicating the field's core conceptual terrain. “Networks” (34) and “competition” (33) appear with similar frequency, reflecting coopetition's fundamental paradox of simultaneous competitive and cooperative dynamics. “Performance” (28) emerges as a prominent outcome variable, suggesting scholarly interest in coopetition's strategic implications.

The presence of “tourism” alongside domain-specific terms like “strategy” (18), “destinations” (16), and “management” (16) confirms the field's tourism-specific focus while revealing its strategic management foundations. “Co-opetition” (15) as a variant spelling indicates terminological diversity that may fragment literature searches and impede knowledge consolidation.

Frequency	**Keyword**
47	Cooperation
36	Coopetition
34	Innovation
34	Networks
33	Competition
28	Performance
20	Tourism
18	Strategy
16	Destinations
16	Management
15	Co-opetition

Table 3: Most frequently occurring keywords

Intellectual Structure: Co-Citation Cluster Analysis

Co-citation analysis identifies foundational works and intellectual communities within research area by examining which authors are cited together (Chen, 2012). When two authors frequently appear in the same reference lists, they likely address related concepts, share theoretical perspectives, or investigate similar phenomena. CiteSpace's clustering algorithm groups co-cited authors into thematic communities, revealing the field's conceptual architecture (Rossetto et al., 2018).

Figure 5 visualizes the author co-citation network for tourism coopetition research, comprising 296 nodes and 1,028 links. The network's modularity (Q=0.7563) indicates well-differentiated thematic clusters, while the weighted mean silhouette (S=0.882) confirms strong internal cluster coherence. Four distinct intellectual communities emerge, each representing a specialized research stream within tourism coopetition scholarship.

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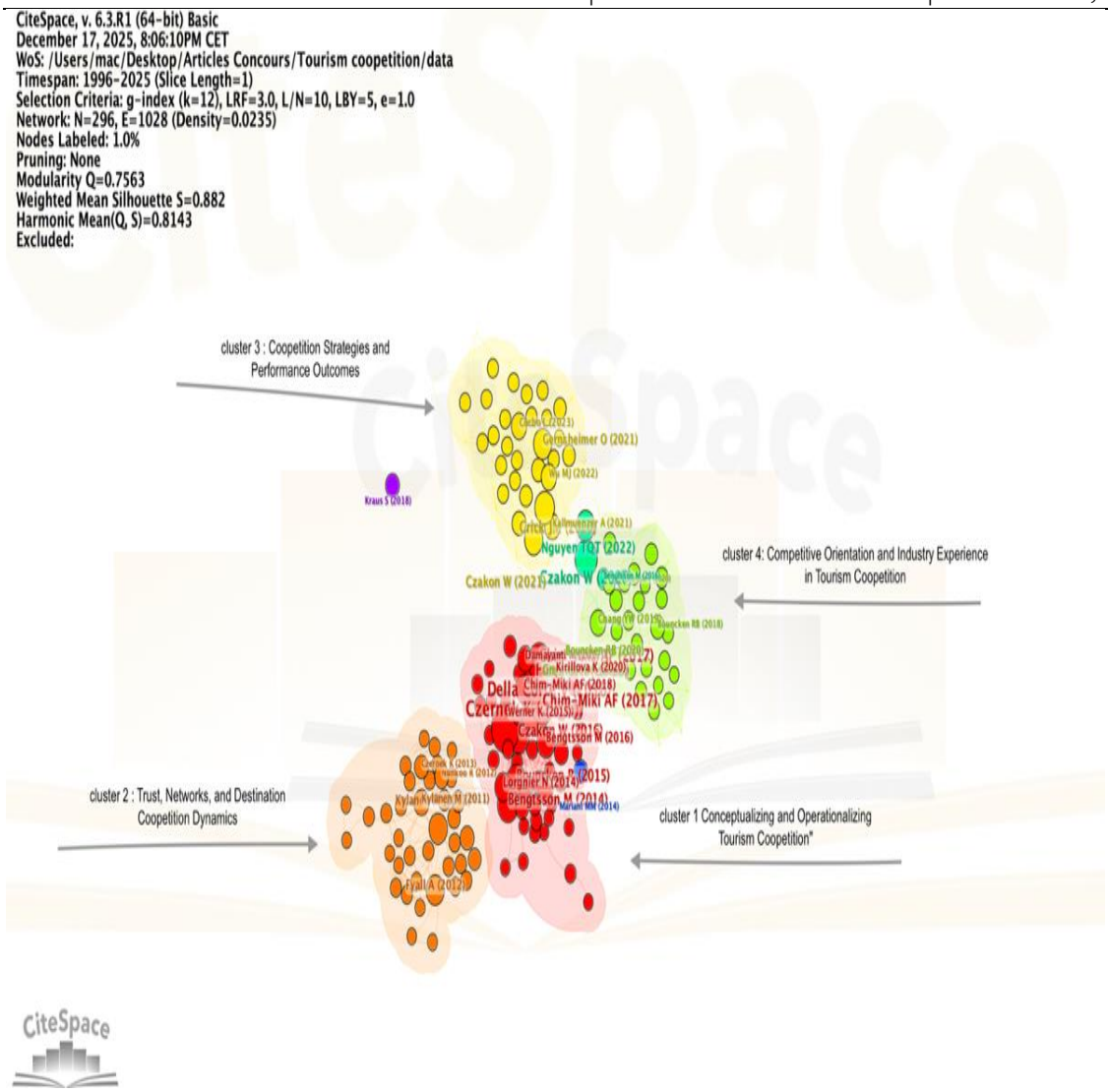

Figure 5: Author co-citation network with thematic clusters

- Cluster 1: Conceptualizing and operationalizing tourism coopetition

The largest cluster addresses a fundamental challenge in tourism coopetition research: how to theoretically define and empirically measure a phenomenon that is simultaneously competitive and collaborative. What unifies this intellectual community is the preoccupation with construct validity and measurement precision in contexts where traditional competitive/cooperative dichotomies fail. Anchored by foundational works on coopetition model development and behavioral measurement scales (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2018; Czakon et al., 2020), this community addresses definitional precision and construct operationalization. Key contributions examine platform coopetition in tourism industries (Bilbil, 2019) and preliminary conceptual models specific to destination contexts. This cluster's prominence reflects ongoing theoretical consolidation efforts as scholars work to adapt general coopetition frameworks to tourism's distinctive characteristics, high SME density, product complementarity, and destination-level interdependence.

- Cluster 2: Trust, networks, and destination coopetition dynamics

Cluster 2 emphasizes relational mechanisms enabling coopetition within tourism networks. Central works investigate trust-building processes in Polish tourism networks (Czakon & Czernek, 2016), synthesize tourism coopetition literature to establish research agendas (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017), and apply coopetition perspectives to destination-level analysis. This intellectual community prioritizes understanding how competing tourism firms overcome trust barriers, manage knowledge sharing risks, and sustain collaborative relationships despite competitive tensions. The cluster's focus on network governance and relational dynamics reflects tourism destinations' inherent interdependence structures.

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- Cluster 3: Coopetition strategies and performance outcomes

The third cluster examines strategic applications and performance implications of coopetition in tourism contexts. Research within this community investigates organizational resilience through coopetition during crisis periods (Czakon & Czernek, 2025), alliance orientations and financial performance effects, and competitive strategies among small tourism firms like ski resorts (Mota et al., 2025). This outcome-oriented perspective addresses managerial concerns: Does coopetition enhance competitiveness? Under what conditions? What organizational capabilities enable effective coopetitive strategies? The cluster's recent temporal focus suggests growing interest in evidence-based coopetition management.

- Cluster 4: Competitive Orientation and industry experience in tourism coopetition

Cluster 4 explores how entrepreneurial orientation, market experience, and competitive mindsets shape coopetition engagement. It investigates why some tourism actors embrace coopetition while others resist despite structural incentives, directing attention toward psychological and behavioral factors underlying strategic choice. The cluster's intellectual coherence derives from micro-foundational analysis: examining individual manager cognition, firm-level strategic orientation, and entrepreneurial experience as determinants of coopetition adoption. Crick and Crick (2022) research challenges conventional wisdom by demonstrating that strong competitor orientation enables rather than inhibits collaboration, as sophisticated entrepreneurs develop cognitive schemas accommodating paradoxical simultaneous competition and cooperation. The unifying insight is that coopetition effectiveness depends not only on network structures or institutional mechanisms but fundamentally on actors' cognitive capacity to navigate strategic paradoxes without forcing binary competitive/cooperative choices.

Temporal Evolution of Research Clusters

Timeline visualization (Figure 6) offers chronological perspective on how intellectual communities have emerged and evolved within tourism coopetition scholarship. By mapping clusters along a temporal axis, we trace the field's conceptual development from foundational works to contemporary research frontiers.

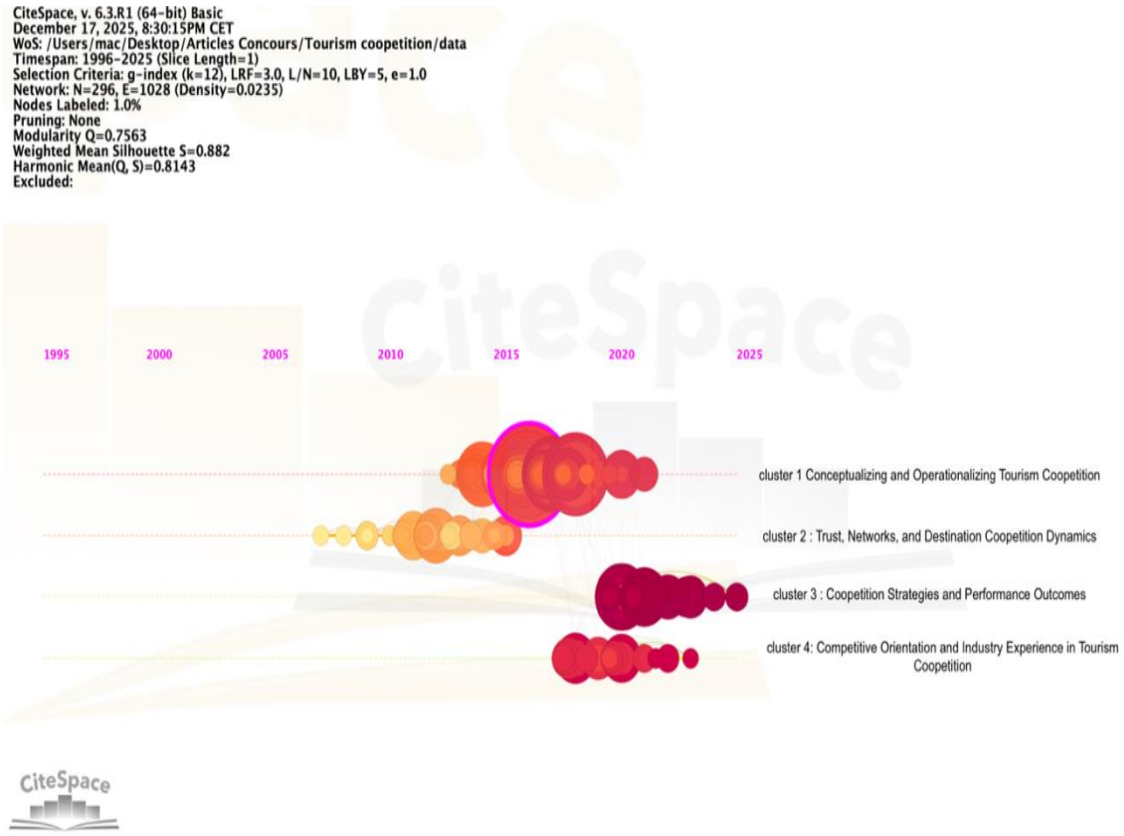

Figure 6: Timeline visualization of co-citation clusters

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The timeline reveals distinct phases in tourism coopetition's intellectual evolution. The earliest emerging Cluster is Cluster 2, spanning 2005-2015 with peak activity around 2010. This pioneering work established relational foundations, investigating how competing firms build trust and sustain collaboration despite competitive tensions. Its early positioning reflects foundational efforts demonstrating coopetition's relevance to destination contexts.

Cluster 1 shows sustained activity from 2010-2020, concentrated during 2015-2018. This extended span indicates ongoing theoretical refinement as scholars adapted general coopetition frameworks to tourism's distinctive characteristics, high SME density, product complementarity, destination interdependence. Cluster 4 emerged more recently, concentrated between 2018-2022. This reflects growing attention to micro-level factors, managerial cognition, entrepreneurial orientation, prior experience, that enable coopetition adoption. Its recent emergence suggests field maturation: foundational concepts established; research now investigates implementation factors. The third cluster represents the most contemporary stream, dominating 2020-2025. This latest wave addresses outcome-focused concerns: performance effects, competitive advantages, crisis resilience. Its positioning at the field's leading edge indicates transition from theoretical exploration toward evidence-based management applications.

This trajectory, from relational foundations through conceptual refinement toward behavioral and performance orientations, mirrors typical domain maturation. All four clusters remain active, suggesting tourism coopetition continues developing simultaneously across multiple intellectual fronts rather than progressing linearly through discrete phases.

Citation Burst Authors and Research Hotspots

Table 4 identifies authors whose work experienced sustained citation surges, revealing tourism coopetition's intellectual trajectory. Chim-Miki and Batista-Canino (2017) demonstrated the strongest burst during 2020-2022, marking the period when tourism coopetition gained recognition as a distinct destination management framework. Della Corte and Aria (2016) burst spanning from 2017 to 2021 provided foundational contributions linking coopetition strategies to sustainable competitive advantage in destinations. Concurrently, Czernek et al. (2017) burst (2017-2021) established trust-building mechanisms as critical enablers of tourism network coopetition, demonstrating how third-party legitimization facilitates competitor collaboration.

Recent bursts signal theoretical maturation. Czakon and Czernek's work (2016) (2019-2021) reflects attention to governance mechanisms, while Crick and Crick's research (2020) (2022-2025) indicates emerging focus on marketing performance and competitive intelligence within coopetitive frameworks. Two critical junctures emerge: 2017-2021 represents consolidation when foundational scholars established theoretical legitimacy through empirical work on trust and network governance; 2020-2022 marks acceleration toward operational dimensions including co-marketing, value co-creation, and crisis resilience, likely catalyzed by COVID-19's impact on tourism collaboration patterns.

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References	Year	Strength	Begin	End	1996 - 2025
Fyall A	2012	4.06	2014	2017	
Kylanen M	2012	4.06	2014	2017	
Kylänen M	2011	3.46	2014	2016	
Bengtsson M	2014	5.12	2016	2019	
Della Corte V	2016	6.05	2017	2021	
Czernek K	2016	5.5	2017	2021	
Bouncken R	2015	4.19	2017	2020	
Lorgnier N	2014	3.46	2017	2019	
Fong VHI	2018	5.52	2019	2022	
Czakon W	2016	3.68	2019	2021	
Chim-Miki AF	2017	5.24	2020	2022	
Crick JM	2020	4.11	2022	2025	

Table 4: Top authors with strongest citation bursts

Research Implications

This scientometric analysis reveals tourism coopetition as rapidly maturing yet structurally fragmented, with four distinct intellectual communities operating largely in isolation and limiting cumulative knowledge building. To advance theoretical coherence and practical impact, we identify three critical priorities. First, theoretical integration through multi-level frameworks connecting destination governance, inter-organizational networks, and firm-level strategies via case studies examining how DMO mechanisms foster coopetition; temporal dynamics research tracking coopetitive relationship evolution across destination lifecycles; and paradox management studies investigating tension navigation mechanisms, temporal separation, spatial differentiation, organizational ambidexterity, that sustain productive coopetition. Second, pivoting from problem documentation toward solution design requires comparative institutional analysis testing whether Polish network mechanisms

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(third-party legitimization, reputation) operate across Anglo-Saxon, European, and emerging market contexts; intervention studies evaluating DMO-facilitated coopetition versus organic coopetition emergence and digital platforms as enablers; crisis coopetition research examining which COVID-19-induced practices persisted post-crisis; and validated performance instruments measuring coopetition intensity and outcomes at network and destination levels. Third, addressing structural limitations necessitates further collaborations testing Western framework portability across the 60% geographic concentration in top ten countries. Formal research consortia overcoming the 1.32% co-authorship density through coordinated agendas and shared instruments; and bridging research-practice gaps via implementation studies, participatory designs positioning managers as co-researchers, and policy experimentation frameworks. The field presents significant opportunity for theoretical contribution and practical impact, requiring deliberate consolidation efforts and sustained focus on actionable knowledge generation.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we aimed to advance the intellectual structure of the coopetition in tourism destinations field by studying past works and evaluating the most critical and influential papers, authors, institutions, and countries over nearly three decades. We began by extracting comprehensive information from Web of Science and Scopus, which showed marked acceleration in publication output in recent years, indicating growing scholarly interest in coopetition dynamics within tourism contexts. The next step was to perform co-citation cluster analysis, keyword co-occurrence examination, and citation burst analysis, which allowed us to identify four distinct research streams. From this analysis, we developed a comprehensive overview of the tourism coopetition domain and its intellectual architecture, revealing how the field has evolved from basic definitional work toward sophisticated multidimensional frameworks encompassing managerial, strategic, behavioral, and contextual dimensions, with critical junctures during consolidation and acceleration phases when the field gained theoretical legitimacy and shifted toward operational applications.

Despite growing scholarly attention to tourism coopetition, significant gaps and challenges remain. Our analysis revealed minimal collaboration among researchers and strong geographic concentration in European and American institutions, which limits the generalizability of current theoretical frameworks. The absence of dense international research networks further demonstrates the field's fragmented nature. Moreover, the predominant treatment of coopetition as an explanatory variable rather than dependent variable suggests an urgent need to shift from benefit documentation toward understanding formation mechanisms and sustainability conditions across diverse institutional contexts. Our study provides a valuable baseline and navigation tool for researchers to investigate deeply into tourism coopetition. For example, researchers can examine how vertical and horizontal coopetition dimensions interact simultaneously in destination networks, explore coopetition dynamics in Global South tourism contexts beyond Western institutional frameworks, investigate how digital platforms and technologies transform coopetitive possibilities, analyze DMO governance mechanisms that foster sustainable coopetition intensity, and conduct longitudinal studies tracking coopetitive relationship evolution across destination lifecycles. In our view, tourism coopetition is a maturing field that requires further research using multi-level frameworks connecting destination governance, inter-organizational networks, and firm-level strategies, comparative institutional approaches recognizing contextual particularities, and implementation-focused designs generating actionable knowledge for destination managers. Through this article, we aimed to contribute to the knowledge base of the tourism coopetition domain by providing the first comprehensive scientometric mapping specifically focused on tourism destinations that clarifies the field's conceptual architecture, reveals theoretical and geographical gaps, and establishes priorities for future inquiry toward building truly competitive and collaborative destination ecosystems.

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