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Incorporating coopetition into the entrepreneurial marketing literature

Directions for future research

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to extend the entrepreneurial marketing literature to account for coopetition (the interplay between cooperation and competition). This paper is also designed to highlight the research gaps surrounding coopetition, so that academics, working at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface, can undertake more investigations linked with this topic.

Design/methodology/approach – The entrepreneurial marketing literature was reviewed to develop a conceptual framework, guided by three research propositions, examining the antecedents and consequences of coopetition, as well as the boundaries of the coopetition–organisational performance relationship.

Findings – Coopetition activities are driven by an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset – the degree to which managers and employees believe in the importance of cooperating with competitors. Also, coopetition can help entrepreneurs access new resources and capabilities from their competitors; however, "too much" coopetition can lead to tensions between such rival firms. Additionally, it is proposed that the relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance is moderated by competitive intensity (a facet of the competitive business environment). That is, with higher levels of competitive intensity, entrepreneurs are less likely to improve their performance from coopetition activities. That is, the competitive business environment can affect the delicate balance between the forces of cooperativeness and competitiveness.

Originality/value – Entrepreneurial marketing research has concentrated on individualistic perspectives concerning how entrepreneurs operate their businesses. In this viewpoint, the competitive assumptions of the marketing/entrepreneurship interface are extended to account for coopetition. This paper also outlines the areas within the coopetition literature that entrepreneurial marketing scholars should appreciate. Specifically, entrepreneurial marketing scholars are recommended to examine the antecedents and consequences of coopetition, coupled with the moderating role of competitive intensity (a facet of the competitive business environment) in the coopetition–organisational performance relationship. This paper ends with a recommended methodology for academics to test the conceptual framework in future empirical research.

Keywords Entrepreneurial marketing, Competitive intensity, Organisational performance, Coopetition, Marketing/entrepreneurship interface

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction

The objective of this viewpoint is to explore how coopetition (the interplay between cooperation and competition) can be incorporated into the entrepreneurial marketing literature. Entrepreneurial marketing (also known as the marketing/entrepreneurship interface) is a cross-disciplinary domain that has expanded, in terms of research, over the

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past 30 years (Davis *et al.*, 1985; Carson, 1990; Collinson and Shaw, 2001; Hills *et al.*, 2008; Jones and Rowley, 2011; O'Cass and Morrish, 2016; Thompson-Whiteside *et al.*, 2018). Entrepreneurial marketing integrates the forces of market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation (Miles and Arnold, 1991). Market orientation is the implementation of the marketing concept, throughout the organisation: generation of, dissemination of and responsiveness to market intelligence, whereas, entrepreneurial orientation is the degree to which firms engage in: risk-taking, innovative and proactive behaviours (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Baker and Sinkula, 2009; Boso *et al.*, 2013). While there is some disagreement in the extant literature concerning how entrepreneurial marketing should be defined and conceptualised, it has been established that the marketing/entrepreneurship interface comprises: risk-taking, proactive and innovative behaviours that firms use to create value for customers (Whalen *et al.*, 2016).

Like other topics in the broader management literature, entrepreneurial marketing has typically been examined from an individualistic perspective, whereby authors have examined various business strategies that are driven by the resources and capabilities of entrepreneurs in their own companies (Duus, 1997; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2002; Mort *et al.*, 2012; Crick and Crick, 2015). The marketing/entrepreneurship interface has scarcely considered the notion of coopetition (also referred to as coopetition activities or strategies) (Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick and Crick, 2016; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018), in which entrepreneurs cooperate with their competitors to perform superiorly than if they operated on an individualistic basis (Chetty and Wilson, 2003; Ang, 2008; Rusko, 2011; Ritala, 2012). In this viewpoint, coopetition is explored to help entrepreneurial marketing scholars to appreciate how such theory could be better served with insights into collaborative business strategies (Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick and Crick, 2016; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018).

Coopetition has been formally defined as "a dynamic and paradoxical relationship, which arises when two companies cooperate together in some areas, such as strategic alliances, but compete with each other in other areas" (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000, p. 411). Coopetition is a well-established topic in the broader management literature (Lechner and Leyronas, 2009; Mathias *et al.*, 2018). Scholars have found that by collaborating with competitors, entrepreneurs provide themselves with access to: resources, capabilities and opportunities that would not be available if they operated on an individualistic level (Park *et al.*, 2014). Through coopetition, entrepreneurs are likely to improve their organisations' performance, owing to possessing new ways of competing within their business environment (Ritala *et al.*, 2014; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016). Yet, limited research surrounds the antecedents of coopetition, namely, the factors that are likely to help entrepreneurs to engage in coopetition activities (Crick, 2018a). Also, the nature of the relationship between coopetition and organisational performance has been scarcely studied (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012; Crick, 2019). Specifically, it is of interest to explore whether this link is non-linear and moderated by factors like the competitive business environment.

Interestingly, there has been a recent body of entrepreneurial marketing research that has examined the role of network members (and collaboration) in helping entrepreneurs to compete within their markets and create superior value for their customers. Specifically, in an entrepreneurial marketing-themed special issue of *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, various papers examined how entrepreneurs might be better served by networking with certain stakeholders to improve their performance (Andersson *et al.*, 2018; Crick, 2018a; Foster and Brindley, 2018). These papers examined different issues associated with entrepreneurial networks, such as: firms cooperating with certain stakeholders in the Far East (Andersson *et al.*, 2018), coopetition in agricultural markets

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(Crick, 2018a) and the networking of female entrepreneurs in the services sector (Foster and Brindley, 2018). Consequently, this viewpoint addresses a current call for research, examining the role of networks in entrepreneurial marketing strategies, with a focus on coopetition activities.

The aim of this paper is to highlight these under-researched areas surrounding the coopetition literature and link them with entrepreneurial marketing theory. Guided by a series of research propositions, some directions for future research are suggested. Further, this viewpoint is designed to inform scholars, working at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface, on how entrepreneurial marketing can strengthen the coopetition literature (i.e. fill certain research gaps). As such, this study is divided into the following four sections. First, the entrepreneurial marketing literature is reviewed and linked with theory surrounding coopetition. Second, to explore the research gaps pertaining to the coopetition literature, a conceptual framework, with three research propositions, is developed to examine the antecedents and consequences of coopetition activities, as well as the boundaries of the coopetition–organisational performance relationship. Third, some directions for future research are suggested to highlight how entrepreneurial marketing theory can be used to address the under-researched issues associated with the coopetition literature. Fourth, the paper is concluded.

Framing literature

Market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneurial marketing is positioned at the interface between the marketing and entrepreneurship literature (Hills *et al.*, 2008; Miles *et al.*, 2015; O'Cass and Morrish, 2016). Underpinning these two strands of literature are the forces of market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation (Miles and Arnold, 1991). Market orientation is the implementation of the marketing concept and the organisation-wide creation of customer value (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Market orientation has been conceptualised and operationalised in numerous respects, with some authors describing it as a set of firm-level behaviours (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Cadogan *et al.*, 2008; Cadogan, Kuivalainen and Sundqvist, 2009), whereas other academics have studied it as a corporate culture (Narver and Slater, 1990; Slater and Narver, 1994; Homburg and Pflesser, 2000). Regardless of how market orientation is conceptualised or operationalised, a consensus in the extant body of knowledge is that it involves information-processing activities (Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995), in which firms obtain and react to information pertaining to their customers and competitors and create superior forms of customer value (Crick, 2018b).

Entrepreneurial orientation is the "strategy-making processes that provide organisations with a basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions" (Rauch *et al.*, 2009, p. 762). There have been different conceptualisations and operationalisations of entrepreneurial orientation, but scholars have agreed that it is a multi-dimensional construct, comprising: risk-taking, innovative and proactive behaviours (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Boso *et al.*, 2013). Indeed, certain scholars have considered competitive aggressiveness and autonomy as facets of entrepreneurial orientation (George and Marino, 2011; Sundqvist *et al.*, 2012). Both market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation have been found to help companies to improve their performance (e.g. sales) (Mentzer and Ozsomer, 2002; Baker and Sinkula, 2009). As mentioned earlier, the forces of market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation are used to conceptualise the marketing/entrepreneurship interface (Hills *et al.*, 2008; Miles *et al.*, 2015; O'Cass and Morrish, 2016). The dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing are discussed in the following section.

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Dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing

Entrepreneurial marketing has been conceptualised as a seven-component construct, comprising: a proactive orientation, opportunity-driven behaviours, customer intensity factors, innovation-focused behaviours, risk management activities, resource-leveraging behaviours and value creation factors (Morris *et al.*, 2002). A proactive orientation is the degree to which entrepreneurs are prepared to take bold steps when designing and executing their business strategies, so that they influence their competitive business environment (Narver *et al.*, 2004; Eggers *et al.*, 2013). The opportunity-driven dimension of entrepreneurial marketing concerns the ways that entrepreneurs scan their competitive business environment for new ways of achieving a competitive advantage (Morrish *et al.*, 2010). Customer intensity refers to the extent to which entrepreneurs develop and sustain relationships with their customers, such as through collecting and responding to information about their wants and needs (Miles and Darroch, 2006). This is something that compares with a customer orientation, a key dimension of the market orientation construct (Narver and Slater, 1990; Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995).

Innovation-focused behaviours involve the ways that entrepreneurs design and implement creative and technological processes within their operations, e.g. developing new products to fulfil their customers' wants and needs (Morrish and Deacon, 2011; Hallback and Gabrielsson, 2013). Risk management concerns entrepreneurs' awareness of the chances of success *vis-à-vis* failure of their business strategies, as well as the steps that they take to mitigate risk, like managing their resources and capabilities to reduce financial losses (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2002; Gilmore *et al.*, 2004; Morrish *et al.*, 2010). Further, resource-leveraging activities are those that entrepreneurs use to utilise their financial and non-financial assets, so that they can implement their competitive strategies (Kraus, Harms and Fink, 2009; Gross *et al.*, 2014). Often, entrepreneurs in small companies have a limited array of resources (including cash) at their disposal (Chaston, 2000; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Gilmore, 2011). Resource-leveraging activities help entrepreneurs maximise their organisational performance through managing the correct resources in appropriate competitive strategies (Bjerke and Hultman, 2002; Morris *et al.*, 2002; Crick *et al.*, 2019).

The value creation dimension of entrepreneurial marketing focuses on one of the most important issues in the broader marketing literature, namely, the ways that businesses can create value for their customers (Payne *et al.*, 2008; Kumar and Reinartz, 2016). There are numerous methods to create customer value, like through market-oriented behaviours (generating, disseminating and being responsive to market intelligence) (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Homburg and Pflesser, 2000; Cadogan *et al.*, 2008); hence, entrepreneurs must engage in customer value-oriented activities that match their available resources and capabilities (Hills *et al.*, 2008; Guercini, 2012; Krisjanous and Carruthers, 2018). These seven dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing condense the marketing/entrepreneurship interface into a set of activities used to integrate the forces of market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation (Morris *et al.*, 2002; Whalen *et al.*, 2016; Crick, 2018a). In this current study, the theory surrounding the marketing/entrepreneurship interface is linked with some under-researched issues pertaining to the coopetition literature. Such conceptualisations are discussed as follows.

Coopetition and entrepreneurial marketing

As highlighted earlier, the entrepreneurial marketing domain has been approached using individualistic assumptions, such as entrepreneurs depending upon their own resources and capabilities to create value for their customers and not collaborating with their competitors (Duus, 1997; Stokes, 2000; Gilmore, 2011; Mort *et al.*, 2012). For instance, Crick *et al.* (2018)

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examined a case study of a small business in tourism sector in the UK. In their paper, they found that the owner-manager was attempting to run a lifestyle-oriented firm, but because of poor planning, changes to the local competitive business environment and social factors, the business model was unsuccessful and firm-level performance suffered. Specifically, the owner-manager had not undertaken enough planning, as resources were scarce. This meant that the business model was not sustainable and may have been assisted by networking with the correct stakeholders. Although it is common for entrepreneurs to plan through using their own resources and capabilities (Crick and Crick, 2015), the coopetition literature suggests that companies are likely to improve their performance if the owner-managers collaborate with their competitors (Rusko, 2011; Ritala *et al.*, 2014; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016).

In certain instances, collaborating with competitors is a positive business strategy for entrepreneurs, due to providing them with resources, capabilities and opportunities that would not exist under an individualistic business model (Ritala, 2012; Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014; Mathias *et al.*, 2018). Collaborating with competitors could be a risky strategy for entrepreneurs, as there is potential for tensions between rival firms, as well as the chance of losing unique selling points that owner-managers might have worked very hard to develop (Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidstrom, 2014). As the marketing/entrepreneurship interface deals with the ways that entrepreneurs assess risk and engage in competitive strategies intended to create value for customers (along other innovative and proactive behaviours) (Jones and Rowley, 2011; Foster and Brindley, 2018), it is of interest to link coopetition with the entrepreneurial marketing literature. By bridging the theoretical gap between these two strands of literature, the prior-mentioned individualistic assumptions of the entrepreneurial marketing perspective (as per Duus, 1997; Stokes, 2000; Miles and Darroch, 2006; Gilmore, 2011) can be extended, so that the theory can account for a collaborative business strategy (namely, coopetition) dimension.

One of the few studies to link coopetition activities with entrepreneurial marketing was written by Crick and Crick (2016), who used the empirical context of a Taekwondo organisation in New Zealand to examine the multiple levels of coopetition. These authors found that entrepreneurs can engage in three types of coopetition activities, namely, local-level coopetition (where collaboration occurs with competitors within a close geographic proximity), national-level coopetition (where collaboration occurs with competitors across multiple regions of the same country) and organisation-level coopetition (where collaboration occurs with competitors across different sectors and is not restricted to a certain country). Albeit examined in the context of a sporting organisation, Crick and Crick (2016) argued that coopetition is a highly suitable topic for entrepreneurial marketing research, as it concerns the delicate balance between the forces of competitiveness and cooperativeness. Henceforth, there is evidence to suggest that coopetition can be theoretically related to the entrepreneurial marketing literature (supplementing Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018).

Coopetition is likely to help entrepreneurs improve their performance (e.g. sales), as it allows them to access resources, capabilities and opportunities that would not be available if they competed on an individualistic level (Ritala, 2012; Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016). In the entrepreneurial marketing (and entrepreneurship) literature, there is the underpinning assumption that the owner-managers of small firms have limited resources and capabilities to invest into their business strategies (Chaston, 2000; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Gilmore, 2011; Crick and Crick, 2018a). Owing to their resource disadvantages, entrepreneurs must find dynamic ways to create value for their customers and make effective use of their limited resource base (Westhead *et al.*, 2001). If owner-managers have access to limited resources and capabilities, coopetition (or similar

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collaborative business strategies) could be highly effective activities to help them to achieve their objectives, maximise their performance (e.g. sales) and compete within the competitive business environment (Chetty and Wilson, 2003; Andersson *et al.*, 2018).

Alves and Meneses (2015) examined the informal and formal processes for how entrepreneurs select partners for their coopetition strategies. These authors found that entrepreneurs may need to cooperate with their competitors for personal and professional reasons and manage assets with strategic alliances, by using the skills of the coopetition partners (namely, rival firms). Alves and Meneses (2015) highlighted the importance of cooperating with competitors, so that entrepreneurs can be provided with new resources, capabilities and opportunities. Network members are critical stakeholders for entrepreneurs, as they might help them to operate successfully in their market(s) (Hill *et al.*, 1999; Rocks *et al.*, 2005; Andersson *et al.*, 2018; Foster and Brindley, 2018). It appears that competitors can also be effective network members in the correct circumstances (depending on firm-level and industry-level contingencies). Therefore, collaborating with rivals should be incorporated into the research positioned at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface (building upon Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick and Crick, 2016; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018). The facets, antecedents and consequences of coopetition are explored in the next section.

Facets, antecedents and consequences of coopetition

Crick (2018a) explored the facets, antecedents and consequences of coopetition using three dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing, namely, a proactive orientation, resource-leveraging behaviours and innovation-focused behaviours. While Crick (2018a) highlighted that it would have been interesting to apply all seven dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing to coopetition activities (Morris *et al.*, 2002; Whalen *et al.*, 2016), the three that were selected explained how coopetition can be managed (the facets of coopetition), the factors that motivate entrepreneurs to cooperate with their competitors (the antecedents of coopetition) and the performance outcomes that such strategies might yield (the consequences of coopetition). Crick (2018a) selected these three dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing, as they were conceptually -related to the coopetition literature (Bjerke and Hultman, 2002; Hills *et al.*, 2008; Morrish *et al.*, 2010). Consequently, as noted in the previous section, coopetition activities have been linked with the marketing/entrepreneurship interface (Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick and Crick, 2016; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018), but more research is needed to integrate these two strands of literature.

Crick's (2018a) study examined the link between coopetition, under an entrepreneurial marketing perspective, using qualitative insights from the New Zealand wine industry. This sector was chosen, as it manages high degrees of cooperativeness and competitiveness, a key factor needed to study coopetition (Rusko, 2011; Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014). Regarding the facets of coopetition, the construct can occur in three forms, namely, resource-sharing activities (the lending and borrowing of equipment between competitors), capability-sharing activities (rival firms sharing their knowledge and experience) and regional-level coopetition (a combination of resource and capability-sharing activities within a certain geographic region) (Ritala *et al.*, 2014; Granata *et al.*, 2018). By managing such facets, owner-managers should be able to develop and implement performance-driving forms of coopetition, mainly those that help them to achieve their business objectives (Crick, 2018a). By not engaging in coopetition, small businesses might struggle to create value for their customers, due to possessing a limited resource base (Crick, 2015).

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Concerning the antecedents of coopetition, Crick (2018a) found that having an industry-wide cooperative mindset and having access to competitors' resources and capabilities are necessary factors to help entrepreneurs to engage in coopetition activities. An industry-wide cooperative mindset was described as when a large proportion of the competitors (or managers and employees in these entities) within a certain sector share the view that collaborating with competitors is likely to improve organisational performance. These findings support the argument that coopetition can only exist in certain competitive business environments, where rivals are prepared to cooperate with one another (Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016; Granata *et al.*, 2018). If owner-managers can foster these drivers of coopetition, they should be able to add value to such collaborative arrangements, by sharing resources and capabilities with competing organisations to mutually benefit all parties (Crick, 2018a). That said, Crick (2018a) stressed that the antecedents of coopetition remains an under-researched area.

In terms of the consequences of coopetition, Crick (2018a) found that coopetition activities are likely to help entrepreneurs perform better than if they operated an individualistic business model. However, Crick (2018a) highlighted that entrepreneurs have different performance objectives, such as market-level survival and sustainable competitive advantages (as per Katsikeas *et al.*, 2016), for which coopetition activities can yield various performance outcomes. Crick (2018a) found that coopetition is only likely to drive sustainable competitive advantages if entrepreneurs manage larger organisations with more resources and capabilities to invest in their various competitive strategies (Westhead *et al.*, 2001; Miles and Darroch, 2006). Hence, although research has begun to examine the facets, antecedents and consequences of coopetition under an entrepreneurial marketing perspective (Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick and Crick, 2016; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018), further studies are required to strengthen such theory. The role of entrepreneurs in managing coopetition activities is explored in the following section.

Role of entrepreneurs in managing coopetition activities

Coopetition is often studied at the firm level, whereby, two or more businesses collaborate to perform in ways that they would not be able to achieve if they had operated individualistically (Chetty and Wilson, 2003; Ang, 2008; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016). However, within the companies engaging in coopetition strategies are entrepreneurs, the ones who are involved in risk-taking, proactive and innovative behaviours when collaborating with rival firms (Granata *et al.*, 2018). Entrepreneurs are individuals who typically make the decision to collaborate with their competitors, so they need to be confident that they are working with correct rival firms (the ones that can provide them with superior assets and can be trusted in the short-term and long-term future) (Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Ritala, 2012; Mathias *et al.*, 2018). Yet, if entrepreneurs have a team of employees, they should ensure that the collaborative values that they possess (as owner-managers) are infused throughout their companies, so that such strategies are fully implemented (Crick, 2015). In the next section, a series of research propositions are developed to examine some of the under-researched areas associated with the coopetition literature.

Research propositions

Conceptual framework

While there are certain issues surrounding the coopetition literature that are well-established (e.g. the performance consequences of coopetition) (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016), there are other areas that are under-researched. In this viewpoint, three issues are highlighted, as important topics that have been scarcely studied. These

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issues are developed into a conceptual framework, guided by three research propositions (Figure 1). That is an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset is anticipated to be a driver of coopetition activities (Proposition 1); coopetition activities are expected to have a non-linear (inverted U-shaped) relationship with organisational performance (Proposition 2); and competitive intensity (a facet of the competitive business environment) is evaluated as a moderator in the coopetition–organisational performance relationship (Proposition 3). These research propositions are developed as follows.

An organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset and coopetition activities

Most research surrounding the coopetition literature has focused on the performance consequences of such strategies, rather than their antecedents (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016). The few studies that have examined the factors that motivate entrepreneurs to engage in coopetition activities have explored the mindset driving these collaborative behaviours (Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016). An organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset is the firm-level beliefs surrounding the importance of collaborating with competitors (Crick and Crick, 2018b). If entrepreneurs (and their employees) believe that they will improve their performance (e.g. sales) if they share resources and capabilities with rival firms, they might engage in behavioural forms of coopetition (Crick, 2015). As such, coopetition activities, like resource- and capability-sharing activities (Crick, 2018a), are likely to be manifestations of an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset (Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016). It is important that all members of a business share this organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset (not just the owner-managers), as this may limit the extent to which coopetition-oriented behaviours are implemented (Crick and Crick, 2018b).

Outside of the coopetition literature, other studies have examined the link between organisation-wide mindsets and firm-level behaviours. For instance, Kor and Mesko (2013) examined the notion of a firm's dominant logic (comparable with an organisation-wide mindset), namely, the ways that management teams conceptualise their businesses and have assumptions about how their companies should be managed (Prahalad and Bettis, 1986; Obloj *et al.*, 2010). If managers and employees believe that a certain activity is an important driver of organisational performance, they are likely to engage in firm-level behaviours that are in sync with their dominant logic (Kor and Mesko, 2013). These authors discussed how resource investments (for instance, to certain departments of an organisation) are a behavioural manifestation of a dominant logic, whereby a corporate culture directs firm-level behaviours (Homburg and Pflesser, 2000). Returning to the coopetition literature, if entrepreneurs and their employees believe that coopetition is a performance-driving business strategy, coopetition activities could be a behavioural manifestation of such an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset (Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016).

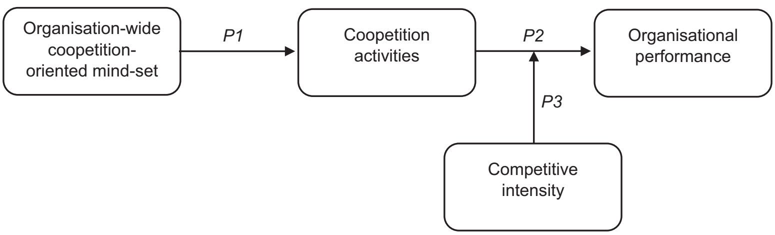

Figure 1.
Conceptual framework

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To stress a vital point, an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset is conceptualised as a firm-level construct, meaning that all members of a company should believe that coopetition is a positive driver of organisational performance (Crick and Crick, 2018b). If entrepreneurs (as owner-managers) possess assumptions about the importance of collaborating with competitors, but these assumptions are not infused throughout the company, it is argued that an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset does not exist. Although entrepreneurs are key individuals in managing coopetition strategies (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014; Granata *et al.*, 2018), functional-level employees also engage in certain forms of coopetition. Specifically, members of staff, who have an interface with customers, might recommend rival firms' offerings, if they cannot supply a good or service (demanded by a customer) themselves (Crick and Crick, 2018b). It would be interesting to test whether an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset drives coopetition activities (building upon Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016). Henceforth, it is anticipated that:

P1. An organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset has a positive relationship with coopetition activities.

Non-linear relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance

To emphasise a previous point, various authors have examined the performance consequences of coopetition activities (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016). Once again, prior work has highlighted that to overcome certain resource disadvantages, entrepreneurs in small businesses can access new resources, capabilities and opportunities from their competitors, meaning that coopetition activities can improve organisational performance (Lechner and Leyronas, 2009; Rusko, 2011; Ritala *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, a commonly used theory surrounding the marketing/entrepreneurship interface is the resource-based view of the firm (also known as resource-based theory) (Kocak and Abimbola, 2009; Gross *et al.*, 2014; Khizindar and Darley, 2017; Crick, 2018a). This theoretical perspective suggests that organisational performance (conceptualised in numerous capacities) is driven by business' resources and capabilities (Nason and Wiklund, 2018). Therefore, resource-based theory has the key assumption that larger companies, with more assets at their disposal, are more likely to have higher levels of performance than smaller firms, with fewer resources and capabilities (Westhead *et al.*, 2001).

Under the resource-based view, the resource- and capability-sharing activities that comprise coopetition strategies are likely to help entrepreneurs, managing small companies, perform in ways that would not be possible if they operated an individualistic business model (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016). That said, most authors examining the performance consequences of coopetition have only considered the linear relationship between these two constructs (Ritala, 2012). That is, while coopetition activities may provide entrepreneurs will a range of benefits, it is suggested that collaborating with competitors is only a positive competitive strategy up to a certain point. Specifically, if entrepreneurs collaborate with their competitors, they could reach a stage, in which they share "too many" resources and capabilities with rival firms, creating tensions between such competing entities (Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014). Tensions surrounding coopetition activities could include conflict and power imbalances, whereby "too much" coopetition could create a diminishing-returns effect in the link with organisational performance (Tidstrom, 2014).

With "too little" coopetition, entrepreneurs are forced to compete with a potentially limited volume of: resources, capabilities and opportunities (Crick, 2015). As discussed throughout the entrepreneurial marketing literature, often small firms do not have large-scale assets that can be invested into their business strategies (Carson, 1990; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2002;

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Gilmore, 2011; Gross *et al.*, 2014). As such, if little networking occurs with competing companies, an individualistic business model can reduce the opportunities that entrepreneurs can strive for (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014; Granata *et al.*, 2018). Yet, with "too much" coopetition, as mentioned above, entrepreneurs risk creating tensions (e.g. conflict and power imbalances) with their competitors (Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidstrom, 2014). Thus, entrepreneurs are faced with the difficult task of engaging in the "optimal level" of coopetition activities. If entrepreneurs exceed this inflection point, they risk becoming dependent on competitors' resources and capabilities – affecting the degree of conflict and power imbalances that are at play (Crick and Crick, 2018b). Consequently, it is expected that:

> *P2*. Coopetition activities have a non-linear (inverted U-shaped) relationship with organisational performance.

Moderating role of competitive intensity

In addition to scholars predominately examining the linear relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance, such studies have scarcely considered the contingencies that could affect this link (Crick and Crick, 2016; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016; Granata *et al.*, 2018). While numerous contingencies could be explored, a limited area of research surrounds whether the competitive business environment affects the relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance, with very few authors having examined this factor (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012). The competitive business environment concerns external (outside of the firm) market-level forces that shape how companies operate in their industries (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Ferrier, 2001; Chung and Kuo, 2018). Moreover, there are different facets of the competitive business environment, such as technological turbulence, market dynamism and competitive intensity (Slater and Narver, 1994; Cadogan, Cui and Li, 2003). The latter is the area of focus in this viewpoint, as competitive intensity (the degree to which rivals are competitively fierce in their markets) (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993) is linked with coopetition activities (Ang, 2008).

As a non-coopetition illustration, the competitive business environment has been a topic of great interest in the market orientation literature, whereby scholars have debated over its moderating effect in the market orientation–organisational performance relationship (Slater and Narver, 1994; Murray *et al.*, 2011). The authors who have found a significant moderating effect have suggested that with lower levels of environmental turbulence (which can include competitive intensity), market orientation is more likely to lead to improvements in organisational performance – owing to fewer competitive distortions in the market, allowing companies to create value for their customers (Cadogan *et al.*, 2009). Yet, with higher levels of environmental turbulence (again, including competitive intensity), businesses might struggle to differentiate their products and services from the increased magnitude of rivals in the market (Cadogan *et al.*, 2003). Linking with the themes of this current study, it is of interest to explore whether competitive intensity moderates the coopetition–organisational performance relationship.

As firms become competitively fierce within their markets, it could be that they become less likely to share resources and capabilities with their rivals (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012). That is, coopetition involves the paradoxical relationship between the forces of cooperativeness and competitiveness (Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Le Roy and Czakon, 2016; Granata *et al.*, 2018; Mathias *et al.*, 2018). Thus, even in the most cooperative forms of coopetition, there will always be a rivalrous factor, influencing the networks that are being managed by competing entities (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000). Therefore, as the degree to which entrepreneurs exhibit competitive behaviours (through competitive intensity) increases, they might reduce the

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cooperativeness within coopetition activities, creating less-effective coopetition strategies. As such, it is suggested that higher degrees of competitive intensity could weaken the relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance. Yet, this moderating effect has scarcely been studied (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012; Crick, 2019), creating scope for additional investigations.

Returning to the conceptualisation of the non-linear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance (Proposition 2), the reason that such a link occurs between two constructs is that a third variable is affecting the dynamics (Cadogan *et al.*, 2009). As coopetition concerns the interplay between cooperation and competition (Chetty and Wilson, 2003; Rusko, 2011; Mathias *et al.*, 2018), it is likely that the competitiveness between two or more firms that engage in coopetition strategies determines the non-linear link with organisational performance (Park *et al.*, 2014; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016). Hence, a third variable that underpins the non-linear relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance could be competitive intensity (a facet of the competitive business environment). It is argued that with an excessive magnitude of competitive intensity, explanations can be made surrounding the potentially non-linear relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that:

P3. Competitive intensity negatively moderates the relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance.

In the following section, these three research propositions are shaped into some directions for future research.

Directions for future research

Despite coopetition being a well-studied issue in the broader management literature, there are some important areas that need to be investigated. As coopetition activities have scarcely been incorporated into the entrepreneurial marketing literature (Alves and Meneses, 2015; Crick and Crick, 2016; Crick, 2018a; Daidj and Egert, 2018), it is proposed that scholars exploring this field can use their expertise to fill such research gaps. Further, the marketing/entrepreneurship interface is far from being a saturated research domain (i.e. there are plenty of issues that need to be addressed) (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; Mort *et al.*, 2012; Gross *et al.*, 2014; Miles *et al.*, 2015; O'Cass and Morrish, 2016; Whalen *et al.*, 2016). Entrepreneurial marketing scholars should investigate coopetition activities, as well as their antecedents, consequences and boundaries to study how collaborating with competitors helps entrepreneurs to overcome certain resource disadvantages by accessing new resources, capabilities and opportunities from their competitors (as per Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014; Granata *et al.*, 2018; Mathias *et al.*, 2018). Entrepreneurial marketing scholars should investigate the following issues when applying the marketing/entrepreneurship interface to the coopetition literature.

First, entrepreneurial marketing scholars should examine whether an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset has a positive relationship with coopetition activities (building upon the work of Gnyawali and Park, 2011; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016; Crick, 2018a). Second, research positioned at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface should also address whether the relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance is non-linear (inverted U-shaped) (extending research by Park *et al.*, 2014; Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidstrom, 2014). Third, entrepreneurial marketing scholars should examine the boundaries of coopetition activities; that is, whether the performance consequences of

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coopetition are negatively influenced by the degree of competitive intensity (Ang, 2008; Ritala, 2012; Crick, 2019). Indeed, these directions for future research can be studied through only theory-testing quantitative research. Thus, entrepreneurial marketing scholars should use effective operationalisations and high-quality (reliable and valid) statistical data to test these conceptual assertions.

Specifically, if entrepreneurial marketing scholars choose to test this paper's conceptual framework, they should undertake a methodology that is based on the following data collection and data analysis techniques[1]. In terms of an empirical context, it is important to study coopetition an industry (or industries) that is both highly cooperative and highly competitive (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Rusko, 2011; Bengtsson and Johansson, 2014). That is, coopetition is the interplay between cooperation and competition, meaning that it is important to investigate such activities where cooperative and competitive forces are at play (Crick, 2018c). For example, academics have studied coopetition in agricultural markets, such as the wine industry (Crick, 2015; Granata *et al.*, 2018). Once researchers have selected an appropriate empirical context to study coopetition, a survey-based is recommended. Surveys could be used to collect data on the operationalisations of the constructs depicted within this paper's conceptual framework (e.g. coopetition activities, competitive intensity and organisational performance).

When operationalising the constructs used within the conceptual framework, scholars should attempt to use established measures, such as Ritala's (2012) adopted measurement scale of coopetition activities. Further, when developing a survey, academics are recommended to pre-test its content with a sample of academics and practitioners to ensure that it is readable and addresses the correct issues (Crick, 2018b). Then, if researchers decide to test the conceptual framework that was developed within this viewpoint, they are recommended to do so using structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is a combination of multiple regression and factor analyses that addresses the quality of measurement scales, alongside testing hypothesised relationships (Sundqvist *et al.*, 2012). SEM is an appropriate technique, as the conceptual framework is relatively complex, as it involves multiple hypothesised paths and a moderation effect (in addition to any control variables that scholars might wish to use, e.g. firm size). SEM allows researchers to test such models (Cadogan *et al.*, 2008) and would be a suitable data analysis technique to employ in future research.

Scholars, working at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface, should address the following areas of reliability and validity. Reliability is the extent to which researchers will obtain similar (or identical) results if they were to repeat their study in the same setting, whereas validity is the degree to which researchers have measured what they intended to measure (Crick, 2015). Reliability can be addressed through using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α), whereby a reliable measure should yield a score of greater than 0.70 (Eggers *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, academics can use the composite reliabilities (which should be above 0.60) and the average variance extracted (ideally, should be greater than 0.50) to assess the reliabilities of their measures (Cadogan *et al.*, 2008). Validity can be checked in multiple capacities. Face validity can be evaluated through pre-testing surveys with knowledgeable academics and practitioners (Crick, 2018b). Convergent validity can be checked through having high-quality measures, as indicated by the results in SEM software (e.g. high factor loadings and low error variances) (Murray *et al.*, 2011). Discriminant validity can be tested through Fornell and Larcker's (1981) tool to ensure that variables are not too highly correlated to the extent where they are measuring the same construct. Researchers should also consider testing for common method variance in future research (Boso *et al.*, 2013). This paper is concluded as follows.

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Conclusions

The objective of this viewpoint was to explore how coopetition (the interplay between cooperation and competition) can be incorporated into the entrepreneurial marketing literature. This objective was achieved through reviewing the respective literature associated with coopetition activities and entrepreneurial marketing. From this investigation, the following three conclusions are made. First, it is concluded that limited research surrounds the antecedents of coopetition, for which academics should examine whether an organisation-wide coopetition-oriented mindset is a driver of coopetition activities. Second, it is also concluded that scholars should test the non-linear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between coopetition activities and organisational performance. Third, it is finally concluded that competitive intensity (a facet of the competitive business environment) has been minimally examined as a moderator in the link between coopetition activities and organisational performance. Thus, academics should test this moderating relationship in future research. In closing, it is argued that entrepreneurial marketing scholars are studying an appropriate domain that can be used to fill these research gaps surrounding the coopetition literature. Such academics should integrate these strands of literature to add a collaborative business strategy dimension into research positioned at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface.

Note

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