Coopetition, the simultaneous presence of cooperation and competition in an inter-organizational relationship (e.g., Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Lado et al., 1997), has been gaining increasing attention in management practice since more and more firms across several industries have chosen to cooperate with their competitors, inter alia, in the automotive industry (e.g., Chi et al., 2007; Dussauge & Garrette, 1997; Wilhelm, 2011), the transportation industry (e.g., Krajewska et al., 2008; Lydeka & Adomavičius, 2007; Tidström, 2009), the health-care sector (e.g., Barretta, 2008; Peng & Bourne, 2009), and the high-tech industry (e.g., Ghobadi & D’Ambra, 2012; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Lechner & Dowling, 2003). Such cooperative relationships with competitors tend to be unstable, complex to manage and exhibit high failure rates (e.g., Park & Russo, 1996; Park & Ungson, 2001).

Coopetition research has frequently stressed the apparently intricate nature of dealing with the simultaneous presence of competition and cooperation, and has also already offered important insights into its nature, forms and consequences. Following Brandenburger & Nalebuff’s (1996) original contribution, research interest has increased rapidly (Walley, 2007). Researchers have focused, for example, on the conceptualization of coopetition (e.g., Chen, 2008; Luo, 2004), the conditions for the formation of coopetition (e.g., Brandes et al., 2007; Mariani, 2007), the management of coopetition, the underlying processes (e.g., Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; De Rond & Bouchikhi, 2004), and the outcomes of coopetition (e.g., Luo et al., 2007; Luo et al., 2006).

However, although coopetition research has prospered in the past 20 years, there is still no unanimous understanding (Gnyawali & Park, 2011) and it seems that some of the studies that actually center around coopetition use different terminologies, such as “co-operation-competition dilemma” (Faems et al., 2010), “Tension between cooperation and competition” (Day et al., 2012), or “competitor cooperation” (Ingram & Yue, 2008). For those studies that employ the term coopetition, inconsistent usage and conceptualization needs to be diagnosed, hindering research progress. Additionally, the research field is highly fragmented and heterogeneous with regard to the different aims, methods, and foci of the studies. Extant contributions are mainly of exploratory character regarding the applied methodology and often examine single coopetition cases to provide a first basis for understanding the concept (e.g., Cassiman et al., 2009; Mariani, 2007). Consequently, a general overview and
systematization of the extant contributions appears warranted to provide a more multifaceted understanding of coopetition phenomena (Bengtsson et al., 2010).

Overall, the interplay between the two contradictory logics of cooperation and competition is often hailed, but only selectively examined in detail, and these selected studies usually follow different understandings on the nature and relevant features of coopetition so that an overall and coherent systematic is only vaguely conceivable. This, of course, also provides little guidance to practitioners dealing with these countervailing and complex forces in their daily work (e.g., Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Dowling et al., 1996).

This study therefore aims at contributing to the extant literature by systematically gathering, analyzing and synthesizing contributions relevant for coopetition research and practice. The main objective of the study is to build a narrative synthesis of the literature to provide a comprehensive overview (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Torgerson, 2003). Moreover, we aim at providing a multidimensional conceptualization of coopetition, its antecedents, forms and consequences by consolidating extant research, and, based on this to offer an agenda to guide future research efforts.

To identify the studies relevant for the research field, we chose a period of 20 years (1992-2012), looking for coopetition (and synonyms in various spellings). We chose three widely used academic databases (ABI/INFORM, EBSCO, SSCI) and restricted our search to scholarly peer-reviewed journals in English. To ensure that all relevant literature has been included, the search was complemented by a separate query on webpages of journals relevant to the organization science/business policy literature (e.g., Journal of Management, Strategic Management Journal). Lastly, we also included four books on the topic coopetition.

We obtained over 2000 results which were assessed in four consecutive steps: First, we sorted out duplicates and irrelevant formats such as brochures or notifications. In the second step, we screened the journal titles and removed those which were not relevant for the field of business policy (e.g., „Computer Security“, or „Health Affairs“). In the third step, we analyzed the titles and abstracts of the articles and sorted those out, which did not deal with simultaneous competition and cooperation. Here, articles that referred to public policies, or “tax competition” were eliminated from our sample. The remaining articles were then analyzed with regard to their entire content eliminating those articles, which did not fit our research focus. With this systematic procedure, we finally identified 117 articles which are relevant for the coopetition research field.

Our analysis results in a synthesizing research framework that systematizes extant research along three distinct phases of a coopetitive relationship: In the initial coopetition phase (phase 1) we subsume studies that deal with a) the conditions for the emergence of coopetition, e.g. the market structure, and b) the formation and configuration of coopetition, e.g. the structural setup. Studies which we attributed to the management and shaping phase (phase 2) deal for instance with approaches to balance competition and cooperation. In the evaluation phase (phase 3) the outcome is assessed (e.g. value created). This systematization of the status quo of coopetition studies is also able to reflect common themes and approaches, commonalities and differences in the conceptualization and application of coopetition. Based on this, we finally also systematically identify open questions for further research and suggest a consolidated research agenda.
REFERENCES


