Resource sharing with local partners: How do hotels benefit?

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

In tourism, resource sharing with local partners is becoming increasingly important as cooperative efforts are seen as specific modes for hotels to reduce shortages of information, technology, or market-related processes. Locally interconnected hotels are expected to share tangible and intangible resources across their horizontal and vertical boundaries, complementing traditional competitive strategies to achieve cooperative benefits and firm performance. We developed a conceptual framework relating resource sharing to benefits and firm performance. Our results reveal that various facets of resource sharing provide certain benefits with varying strengths for hotels. Vertical tangible resource sharing offers the most pronounced potential for benefits but can negatively affect financial performance. While some scholars assert that cooperation helps firms with limited resource endowments, we argue that hotels must be sufficiently strong to cope with cooperation challenges effectively. Our results support both perspectives. Within the hospitality context, some resource sharing mechanisms generate more benefits for large and high-star hotels, while others do so for small and low-star ones.

1. Introduction

Tourism settings are characterized by networks and small-scale structures that challenge incumbents to systematically capitalize on external and internal resources to respond to market demands. In this vein, extant research findings document the usefulness of cooperation in tourist destinations (Wilke et al., 2019; Della Corte and Aria, 2016), and there is evidence that cooperation among tourism service providers and intermediaries is beneficial for participating parties (Chang et al., 2019). Cooperation, despite its associated risks of failure (e.g., Dyer and Singh, 1998), is positively annotated and supported by theoretical foundations and empirical evidence. A specific cooperative arrangement refers to resource sharing, which corresponds to partners' joint efforts to leverage, invest, and maintain their capabilities and assets (Cao and Zhang, 2011).

The hotel industry plays a vital role within the tourism supply structure but has to overcome multiple challenges (e.g., complex marketing and distribution, technological development, global competition, and pandemic issues). Moreover, in tourism, a community of interdependent local actors (e.g., hotels, restaurants, transportation operators, and visitor attractions) creates, in complementary efforts, a composite local product. For these reasons, sharing resources (e.g., physical assets and marketing efforts) within the ecosystem—for instance, among local hotels and organizations operating at different stages of the value chain—is more reasonable than providing offers in isolation (e.g., Palmer, 1998; Zhang et al., 2009). Resource sharing occurs in interorganizational arrangements ranging from loose connections to formalized alliances or business groups (e.g., Cabiddu et al., 2013; Della Corte and Aria, 2016).

The resource-based view and its extensions (Barney, 1991; Dyer and Singh, 1998; Lavie, 2006) suggest that resource sharing affects cooperative value creation, and empirical findings document the value-creating effects of resource sharing among organizations (e.g., Jiang et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2007). However, these findings must be critically assessed as contextual idiosyncrasies have been largely ignored.

We analyze resource sharing within the context of local tourism by adopting the perspective of focal hotels[1] and conceptualizing resource sharing activities with reference to different types of shared resources (tangible and intangible) and partners (horizontal and vertical). As resource sharing and its effects on outcomes have not been sufficiently researched in tourism settings, we intend to answer the following central question: Does cooperation based on resources benefit partners and

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[1] This relates to what Lavie (2006) denotes as the "ego network perspective": In accordance with this notion, we consider the amount of resource sharing that a focal firm (the "ego" under study) performs with a set of multiple partners ("alters").

contribute to firm performance?

Conceptualizing resource sharing from distinct perspectives refers to a complex, multifaceted construct that we adapt for application in the local tourism context, a significant element of the hospitality ecosystem. We study how hotels share resources with local partners, and how and why their resource sharing is associated with cooperative benefits and firm performance. In addition, we refer to hotels' internal resources and capabilities related to resource sharing and empirically test the conceptual logic presented in this research using survey data from Switzerland.

This research contributes to the extant knowledge in cooperation with a contextual focus on tourism. Our empirically gained insights should inform managers (particularly in the hospitality industry) and policymakers and lead to a better understanding of the benefits of contextual resource sharing.

2. Conceptual foundations

2.1. Resource-based view and related perspectives

Although interorganizational cooperation has been viewed from different perspectives, resource-based considerations have been accepted as powerful conceptual bases for studying this phenomenon (Das and Teng, 2000; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos, 2011). Resources are "anything which could be thought of as a strength or weakness of a given firm" (Wernerfelt, 1984, p. 172) and mainly refer to assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, or knowledge, owned by a firm. Resources that are assessed as valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutional are of strategic importance (i.e., idiosyncratic) and allow firms to achieve sustainable competitive advantages (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984).

The assumptions of firms' resource ownership and the role of resources in boundary-spanning contexts have been relaxed in the relational view (Dyer and Singh, 1998) and in an extension of the "conventional" resource-based view (Lavie, 2006). According to relational logic, critical resources may be embedded in interfirm resources and/or span firm boundaries, and exchange partners' synergy-sensitive resources can generate relational rents (Dyer and Singh, 1998). Therefore, relational rents accrue by combining, exchanging, and investing in idiosyncratic resources (Dyer and Singh, 1998). Similarly, Lavie (2006) states that resource-based advantages are created not only within firms but also through interconnected firms when sharing resources. Value creation and rent appropriation are not limited to resources residing within organizational boundaries. Firms can benefit from using resources that they do not fully control or own when interconnected with partners. Hence, according to relational logic, sources of competitive advantage are not restricted to internal resources (Lavie, 2006; Das and Teng, 2000).

Apart from resource-based perspectives, other approaches, such as Porter's (1990) diamond model, can be considered to understand the competitive advantages of interorganizational arrangements. For instance, drawing on Porter's (1990) diamond model, which has been developed as a conceptual logic to explain a nation's competitiveness, factor endowments, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and firm strategy, could be interpreted as decisive factors for (tourism) ecosystems. Firms in such ecosystems benefit from favorable conditions and choose competitive strategies—cost leadership, differentiation, or focus—and cooperative strategies to achieve attractive competitive positions and superior profits (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Porter, 1980).

2.2. Nature of resource sharing

2.2.1. Meaning and (dis-)advantages

Resources that transcend organizational boundaries are essential elements of cooperative strategies (e.g., Das and Teng, 2000; Dyer and Singh, 1998). Cooperation, referring to "similar or complementary co-ordinated actions taken by firms in interdependent relationships to achieve mutual outcomes or singular outcomes" (Anderson and Narus, 1990, p. 45), substantially characterizes interorganizational arrangements. Firms cooperate to access complementary capabilities (Diestre and Rajagopalan, 2012), to gain knowledge and learn (Dyer and Singh, 1998), to realize resource-intensive projects, as well as to innovate and to develop technologies (Gnyawali and Park, 2011). Resource sharing as the "process of leveraging capabilities and assets and investing in capabilities and assets with supply chain partners" (Cao and Zhang, 2011, p. 166) across organizational boundaries is meaningful when practicing cooperation.

Resource sharing firms pool or combine resources to create advantages, thereby achieving greater scale, enhanced competitive position, synergies, or mutual learning (Soda and Furlotti, 2017; Lavie, 2006). However, engaging in interorganizational relationships to share resources can also be associated with disadvantages for firms such as managerial complexity, opportunism risks, knowledge leakage, or partial loss of autonomy and flexibility (Barringer and Harrison, 2000).

2.2.2. Interorganizational arrangements

In interorganizational arrangements, resource sharing can be practiced in alliances, joint ventures, coopetition relations, or loose connections (e.g., Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Lavie, 2006), indicating that horizontal or vertical resource arrangements are meaningful implementation modes (Gulati, 1998). In horizontal relations, firms have similar, comparable offers and operate at the same stage in a value chain, a context in which firms cooperate and compete simultaneously (i.e., coopetition). Similarities in products and operations (procurement and marketing) provide an opportunity for resource sharing to satisfy partners' comparable needs with joint forces. However, horizontal relations may lead to cooperation-competition paradoxes and thus conflicts, opportunism, and knowledge leakages (e.g., Bengtsson and Kock, 2000). In vertical relations, firms operate at different levels of the value chain (i.e., upstream and/or downstream) and are therefore less prone to coopetition paradoxes.

Various interorganizational relations focusing on horizontal and vertical cooperation have been examined (e.g., Dyer et al., 2018), although few studies on resource sharing in interorganizational contexts have been conducted (e.g., Miller et al., 2007; Um and Kim, 2019).

3. Conceptual development

We develop a conceptual logic relating resource sharing to cooperative benefits and firm performance. Considering the tourism context of resource sharing, we focused on hotels within the tourism network. Our conceptual model is shown in Fig. 1 (without control variables), and follows the logic that tangible and intangible resource sharing with local partners (horizontal and vertical[2]) affects the cooperative benefits that lead to firm performance (market and financial performance). Moreover, considering context-specific aspects, we investigated whether the relationship between resource sharing and cooperative benefits was moderated by certain context-specific constructs.

3.1. Resource sharing, cooperative benefits, and firm performance

The relational view (Dyer and Singh, 1998) and the extended resource-based view (Lavie, 2006) suggest two main value-creating mechanisms of resource sharing: resource combining to generate synergies, and resource pooling to reduce costs via scale effects. A firm

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[2] The interpretation of the vertical direction in a "typical" supply chain (up-/downstream relations) cannot be directly adopted in tourism because tourism supply is provided by a network of actors contributing complementary services that are not necessarily up- or downstream to each other (Zhang et al., 2009).
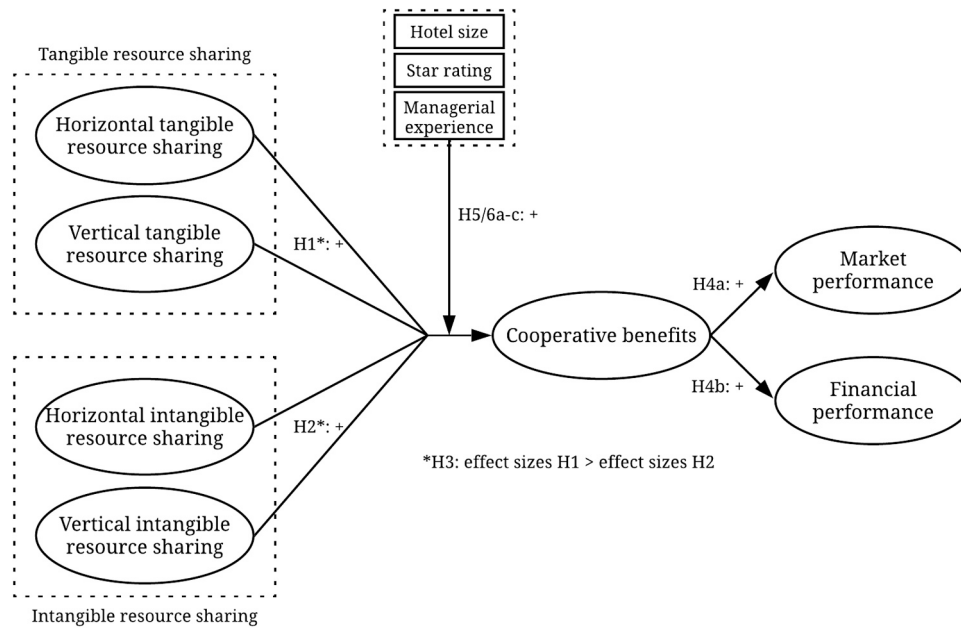
Fig. 1. Conceptual model (without control variables).

achieves cooperative benefits if it creates value with partners and is capable of appropriating it (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Lavie, 2006). Empirical findings show that firms achieve benefits and cooperative advantages when sharing resources in business groups, alliances, or supply chain relations, thus demonstrating value-creating effects (e.g., Miller et al., 2007; Um and Kim, 2019).

In contemporary tourism, hotels face many challenges such as the need to access and absorb external resources. Thus, cooperation and resource sharing represent promising avenues for hotels to find and cultivate partnerships in close spatial proximity. Within local supply systems, hotels can share resources with other hotels (i.e., horizontal) or with dissimilar organizations in terms of offered services or goods, such as restaurants, transportation operators, and visitor attractions (i.e., vertical; Zhang et al., 2009). Such endeavors can be organized in arrangements ranging from loose exchanges and initiatives to formalized forms with written contracts and procedures such as formal partnerships, business groups or joint ventures (Lavie, 2006; Zhang et al., 2009).

Hotels can share tangible and intangible resources with local partners. Sharing tangible resources is realized through methods such as making joint investments, purchases, marketing and sales efforts, implementing joint systems and channels, co-developing assets, or combining services or offerings (e.g., Cabiddu et al., 2013; Della Corte and Aria, 2016). On the one hand, resources are pooled, enabling scale effects and achieving cost splits or enhanced buying and advertising power. On the other hand, dissimilar resources are combined to create synergies or resource bundles, such as product bundles and packages, which an isolated hotel can not provide without local partners (Soda and Furlotti, 2017; Lavie, 2006).

Thus, hotels can locally share tangible resources to reduce costs, enhance customer attraction, leverage offerings, and increase revenue. We argue that the more intensive sharing of tangible resources with local partners leads to more cooperative benefits for hotels.

Hypothesis 1. *Local tangible resource sharing as perceived by managers is positively associated with perceived cooperative benefits.*

When organizations share intangible resources such as information and knowledge, they grant each other access to these resources to learn, challenge their methods, and innovate (Jiang et al., 2015; Van Wijk et al., 2008). Local tourism networks offer promising opportunities for

sharing intangible resources. Organizations such as hotels can engage in spontaneous or more formalized exchanges with trusted partners, thereby sharing information, knowledge, and experiences regarding common challenges (understanding guest needs and tourism trends, adapting to digitalization and to evolution in marketing and distribution channels etc.). Thus, accessing intangible resources from local partners helps hotels develop attractive product offerings, implement efficient (digitally supported) processes, improve marketing and sales, and boost innovation capabilities (e.g., Novelli et al., 2006; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). We argue that intensive local intangible resource sharing increases cooperative benefits for hotels.

Hypothesis 2. *Local intangible resource sharing as perceived by managers is positively associated with perceived cooperative benefits.*

Tangible resource sharing requires substantial effort but offers benefits, such as cost reductions, tangible additions to offerings, and enhanced marketing power, which immediately affect guests' attraction and/or satisfaction. Intangible resource sharing impacts hotels differently; hotels typically do not engage in radical innovation, R&D activities, or patent creation (Hjalager, 2002). Therefore, in contrast to businesses in other industries, hotels lack mechanisms by which information and knowledge absorption from external partners could help create substantial competitive edges. Generally, despite hotels accessing valuable information and knowledge from local partners, converting these intangible resources into concrete and successful business development remains difficult (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000). Thus, we suggest that the cooperative benefits obtained by hotels depend more strongly on tangible than intangible resource sharing.

Hypothesis 3. *Relative to intangible resource sharing, tangible resource sharing with local partners has a stronger association with perceived cooperative benefits.*

The research findings indicate that firms that benefit from resource sharing can improve their performance (e.g., Cao and Zhang, 2011; Um and Kim, 2019). Accordingly, the cooperative benefits of resource sharing imply improved competitiveness. Hotels can differentiate themselves from competitors, as cooperative benefits allow them to introduce high-quality services and superior, unique offerings, as well as reach customers more effectively. Consequently, hotels can acquire customers and enhance their satisfaction and retention (Cao and Zhang,

2011; Chang et al., 2019). Hotels can also reduce costs as cooperative benefits enable them to operate more efficiently (Cao and Zhang, 2011). Thus, cooperative benefits enhance hotels businesses and financial performance.

Hypotheses 4a+b. *Perceived cooperative benefits are positively associated with perceived (a) market and (b) financial performance.*

3.2. Contingency effects of size, star rating, and managerial experience

To benefit from resource sharing, firms must find and engage attractive partners; manage, coordinate, and govern inter-organizational relationships; avoid or resolve cultural clashes with allies; and deal with risks associated with opportunistic or unpromising partner behaviors (Barringer and Harrison, 2000; Park and Ungson, 2001).

Hotels may be unable to profit from resource sharing when there is a shortage of internal resources and capabilities. Value creation and extraction from resource sharing are achieved more effectively by hotels with higher star ratings and critical sizes (e.g., Cao and Zhang, 2011). Their broader internal resource bases in terms of quality and quantity allow them to overcome the above-mentioned challenges, as they attract lucrative local partners and possess bargaining power, as well as the capacity to invest effort and money. In addition, experienced managers are able to establish solid contacts with other organizations and manage inter-organizational relationships (cf. Hernández-Carrión et al., 2017).

Hence, the cooperative benefits from resource sharing are higher for hotels that are larger, equipped with higher star ratings, and employ more experienced managers.

Hypotheses 5a-c. *High levels in (a) firm size, (b) star rating, and (c) managerial experience strengthen the positive association between local tangible resource sharing and cooperative benefits.*

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4. Methodology

This study examined the context of Swiss tourism, focusing on hotels as the unit of analysis. Specialized actors such as hotels, restaurants, transportation operators, and visitor attractions fulfill tourists' desires and contribute to a "composite local product" (Palmer, 1998; Zhang et al., 2009). These industry stakeholders are somewhat interdependent, and sharing resources for firms in tourism seems promising compared to "staying alone." In Switzerland, tourism generated 19.3 billion Swiss francs of gross added value in 2019, corresponding to about 2.7% of the country's GDP. Switzerland has approximately 4650 hotels, more than 60% of which have a capacity of less than 50 beds (Schweizer Tourismus-Verband STV, 2020).

4.1. Data collection, preliminary fieldwork, and sample

To test our hypotheses, we collected data from primary and secondary sources, surveying top-level hotel managers (i.e., key informants) in Switzerland and obtaining data from a "guest-rating" agency.

Enriching our conceptual logic and measures with expert knowledge (i.e., conducting in-depth interviews), we performed several context-specific activities considering the idiosyncrasies of tourism and the hotel industry in particular: (1) we conducted interviews with various experts at an early stage of this research to gain industry-specific insights; (2) we put substantial effort into gathering context-specific knowledge to refine the well-established measures; (3) we developed an initial version of the questionnaire that was iteratively refined through inputs obtained from sequentially interviewing tourism experts and business scholars; (4) we pre-tested the survey instrument with five hotel managers, asking them

to take the survey and referred to cognitive testing techniques (e.g., speaking aloud) to assess and refine the instrument (e.g., Presser et al., 2004). This preliminary work helped us choose and adapt existing measures and provided fine-grained, context-sensitive insights into the local resource sharing measure.[3]

From January to March 2020, we collected data using web-based standardized questionnaires distributed via e-mail to key hotel informants in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. We followed the guidelines of Dillman et al. (2014) to design and distribute the web-based survey.

We contacted 2967 hotels and received 579 responses (a response rate of 19.51%). Two cases with special business concepts and 56 cases in which we could not verify the respondents' top-level positions were excluded. Furthermore, the list-wise deletion of observations with missing values resulted in the exclusion of 30 cases, resulting in a final dataset comprising 491 hotel managers. We assessed the potential non-response bias and found no indication when examining early responses (received before the first reminder; n = 225) and late responses (received after the first reminder; n = 266), and no significant mean differences regarding various variables (i.e., number of rooms, managerial experience, years in current position, and all constructs used) were detected through t-tests.[4] Moreover, chi-square tests revealed no significant differences between early and late respondents in terms of the type of lodging (hotel, hotel garni, bed and breakfast, etc.) and star ratings.[5]

Appendix A of the Supplementary Material provides an overview of the hotel characteristics in our sample.

4.2. Measures

Table 1 lists the measures (items and scale properties) used in this study. For cross-validation purposes, we also collected "harder facts" on cooperation (used forms and quantity of formal agreements) and approached a professional agency to obtain overall guest-rating scores.

4.2.1. Resource sharing

We consulted the extant research on resource sharing in non-tourism contexts (e.g., Cao and Zhang, 2011; Miller et al., 2007) and adopted the basic logic of measurement from these studies. In addition, we reviewed tourism literature (e.g., Della Corte and Aria, 2016; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007) to identify additional relevant resource sharing activities. We used 31 items to capture resource sharing and asked the respondents to assess the extent to which they engaged in resource sharing activities. Items were measured using a 5-point scale (1 = "not at all" to 5 = "to a large extent").

4.2.2. Cooperative benefits to hotel

We adapted cooperative benefits from two extant measures of cooperative performance (Jiang et al., 2016; Perry et al., 2004), considering the extent to which a focal hotel benefits from local cooperative activities. Our respondents assessed eight items on a 5-point scale (1 = "not at all" to 5 = "to a large extent").

4.2.3. Performance

Considering various criteria specific to the hotel context (e.g., Avci et al., 2011), we measured market and financial performance using four items each and asked our respondents to assess them relative to direct

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[3] Prior research on resource sharing also used thorough procedures for scale development (e.g., Cao and Zhang, 2011; Jiang et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2007). The required effort for instrument development also corroborates why general, context-insensitive survey measures for resource sharing are inappropriate.

[4] t-values range between − 1.17 and 1.45; no significant differences at $p < .05$

[5] For type of lodging: χ^2 (6 df) = 5.19; for star rating: χ^2 (6 df) = 9.85

Table 1
Measurement model.

Construct (s) Items		Mean	SD	Loading[a]	z-value	ITC
CFA A: Resource Sharing[b]						
Degree to which listed activities are conducted (a) with other local hotels (horizontal) and (b) with different kinds of businesses and organizations (vertical) (1 = not at all; 5 = to a large extent)						
Horizontal intangible resource sharing ($\alpha = .88$; $\rho = .88$; AVE =.66)						
hirs1	Sharing information about tourism industry trends	2.92	1.33	deleted		
hirs2	Sharing knowledge of guest markets	2.74	1.28	.85	53.92	.88
hirs3	Sharing experiences in the domain of online marketing	2.64	1.25	.91	75.65	.91
hirs4	Sharing experiences about electronic booking channels	2.81	1.29	.81	45.12	.86
hirs5	Sharing knowledge of new digital tools	2.68	1.28	deleted		
hirs6	Sharing operational figures	2.21	1.25	.66	23.59	.78
Vertical intangible resource sharing ($\alpha = .89$; $\rho = .90$; AVE =.75)						
virs1	Sharing information about tourism industry trends	2.67	1.20	deleted		
virs2	Sharing knowledge of guest markets	2.59	1.20	.86	56.65	.91
virs3	Sharing experiences in the domain of online marketing	2.36	1.17	.93	78.93	.93
virs4	Sharing experiences about electronic booking channels	2.27	1.18	.80	42.66	.89
virs5	Sharing knowledge of new digital tools	2.25	1.17	deleted		
Horizontal tangible resource sharing ($\alpha = .86$; $\rho = .81$; AVE =.58)						
Marketing-related dimension (3 items)		1.83	1.01	.85	45.86	.86
htrs1	Implementation of shared offline advertising campaigns	1.88	1.12			
htrs2	Implementation of shared digital advertising campaigns	1.86	1.14			
htrs3	Maintenance of shared internet appearance	1.74	1.09			
Sales-related dimension (4 items)		1.95	.93	.84	43.19	.83
htrs4	Mutual sales support (e.g., communication media of partner for own guests)	2.12	1.21			
htrs5	Supplementation of own product with offerings from partners(e.g., exclusive sales discount)	1.98	1.13			
htrs6	Distribution of cross-corporate combined products (packages)	2.02	1.21			
htrs7	Sharing joint components of offers (e.g., fitness facility)	1.69	1.06			
Inbound-related dimension (3 items)		1.68	1.06	.67	23.40	.86
htrs8	Purchasing goods together	1.79	1.24			
htrs9	Purchasing services together	1.72	1.14			
htrs10	Purchasing digital products together (e.g., software)	1.55	1.05			
Support-related dimension (3 items)		1.53	.79	.67	23.56	.83
htrs11	Shared investments with pooled financial resources	1.36	0.85			
htrs12	Shared implementation of tasks in the area of human resources (e.g., training)	1.84	1.18			
htrs13	Cross-corporate scheduling of employees	1.40	.81			
Vertical tangible resource sharing ($\alpha = n/a$; $\rho = .79$; AVE =.66)						
Marketing-related dimension (3 items)		2.11	1.04	.86	32.59	n/a
vtrs1	Implementation of shared offline advertising campaigns	2.13	1.13			
vtrs2	Implementation of shared digital advertising campaigns	2.17	1.16			
vtrs3	Maintenance of shared internet appearance	2.04	1.14			
Sales-related dimension (4 items)		2.28	1.07	.76	26.94	n/a
vtrs4	Mutual sales support (e.g., communication media of partner for own guests)	2.32	1.18			
vtrs5	Supplementation of own product with offerings from partners (e.g., exclusive sales discount)	2.28	1.25			
vtrs6	Distribution of cross-corporate combined products (packages)	2.39	1.28			
vtrs7	Sharing joint components of offers (e.g., bike rental)	2.14	1.22			
Fit CFA A: $\chi^2 = 250.90$; df = 58; normed $\chi^2 = 4.33$; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .04; CFI = .95; TLI = .94						
CFA B: Cooperative Benefits and Performance						
Cooperative benefits ($\alpha = .93$; $\rho = .93$; AVE =.70)						
Assessment of obtained benefits (1 = not at all; 5 = to a large extent)						
Due to the abovementioned cooperation…						
cb1	… our cultivation of existing guest market has improved.	2.37	1.09	.85	59.70	.87
cb2	… our business can access new guest markets.	2.47	1.14	.88	71.74	.89
cb3	… our business can provide higher quality of products to guests.	2.61	1.24	.83	52.95	.86
cb4	… our business has improved its efficiency.	2.36	1.16	.89	76.52	.91
cb5	… our business can better meet the challenges of digitalization.	2.25	1.17	.75	34.33	.81
cb6	… our business can offer better value-for-money.	2.25	1.14	deleted		
cb7	… our business has increased overnight stays.	2.49	1.19	deleted		
cb8	… our business has increased its profitability.	2.31	1.15	.80	45.46	.85
Performance						
Assessment of performance indicators relative to direct competitors (−2 = much worse; 2 = much better)						
Market performance ($\alpha = .74$; $\rho = .75$; AVE =.51)						
perf1	Customer satisfaction	3.99	.77	.60	16.04	.78
perf2	Employee satisfaction	4.05	.76	deleted		
perf3	Customer loyalty to the business	3.96	.79	.65	17.83	.81
perf4	Image of the business	3.98	.79	.86	24.60	.85
Financial performance ($\alpha = .80$; $\rho = .80$; AVE =.59)						
perf5	Trend in overnight stays	3.72	.82	deleted		
perf6	Average occupancy	3.60	.85	.80	29.77	.86
perf7	Growth in sales revenues	3.64	.79	.85	33.35	.87
perf8	Profitability	3.56	.91	.65	20.58	.82
Fit CFA B: $\chi^2 = 129.11$; df = 51; normed $\chi^2 = 2.53$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .03; CFI = .98; TLI = .97						

Notes: SD = standard deviation; ITC = item-total correlation; α = Cronbach's α; ρ = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted;

[a] standardized loadings from confirmatory factor analyses;

[b] correlated error term for inbound-related and support-related dimensions (of horizontal tangible resource sharing) was modeled in CFA 1. This is reasonable due to a logical relation between inbound and support activities: These two types of practices are "farer from customers" compared to the others (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000).

competitors (5-point scale from −2 = "much worse than direct competitors" to 2 = "much better than direct competitors").

4.2.4. Additional measures

We included several variables in our analysis (coding displayed in brackets) to control for potential confounding effects: we controlled for location (urban, rural tourist center, other rural areas; expressed with two dummies), chain-affiliation (dummy), firm size (logarithm of offered rooms), star rating (≥ 4 stars = 1; < 4 stars = 0), and the respondents' tourism-related managerial experience (number of years) to account for differences in the available resources.

5. Data analysis

We used univariate and multivariate data analysis techniques, such as simple descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test our measurement models. Correlation analyses were applied to cross-validate the perceptual measures of resource sharing and market performance, using data from alternative sources. These initial steps ensured that the constructs were validated.

Thereafter, we performed structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the structural paths and test our hypotheses.[6] SEM can be used to simultaneously assess relationships in complex models with multiple independent, intermediate, as well as (correlated) dependent variables. We used multigroup models to test the contingency effects (see details below).

5.1. Measurement reliability and validity

Considering the number of indicators in our measures, we estimated two measurement models. The first measurement model referred to resource sharing and comprised 31 items assigned to the horizontal, vertical, tangible, and intangible dimensions. Our second measurement model comprised measures of cooperative benefits and performance.

We assessed the global and local fits of the measurement models. When assessing the models, items exhibiting low factor loadings (<.6) and items with highly correlated error terms were excluded. In the resource sharing measurement model, we allowed for one correlated error term (MacKenzie et al., 2011); Table 1 lists the CFA results. Fit indices (root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA], standardized root mean square residual [SRMR], comparative fit index [CFI], and Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI]) indicated reasonable model fits according to conventional criteria and given our model complexity (cf. Hu and Bentler, 1999). Convergent validity was supported, as all factor loadings were reasonably high, and the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded .5 for every construct. The reliability estimates (Cronbach's α, composite reliability ρ) were all above .7 (Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminant validity was established by verifying whether the AVE of each construct was higher than the squared correlation of the construct with any other construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

5.2. Common method bias

We avoided and minimized issues of common method bias by ensuring confidentiality, pretesting, and altering answer formats throughout the survey (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) applying the principal component factor method to all of our final items indicated that an eight-factor solution explained 71.09% of the total variance. The largest factor accounted for 33.70% of the total variance (unrotated factor solution); thus, no general factor was found that accounted for the majority of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003),

suggesting that common method bias is not a serious threat.

5.3. Representation of constructs and cross-validation

To test the structural paths, we averaged the item scores for constructs to reduce model complexity, mitigate normality concerns in the original items, and obtain precise estimates of structural parameters (Bandalos, 2002). Specifically, we collapsed all items ("total aggregation") for horizontal and vertical tangible resource sharing for simplicity (Bagozzi and Edwards, 1998). For these "collapsed" scales, Cronbach α was .93 for horizontal and .91 for vertical tangible resource sharing. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the constructs.

Descriptive statistics indicate that firms do not engage extensively in resource sharing, with "horizontal tangible resource sharing" exhibiting the lowest (mean: 1.76) and "horizontal intangible resource sharing" the highest construct average (mean: 2.60). We also cross-validated our scores with other related variables to explore the criterion validity. Cross-checking of our resource sharing scores revealed substantial and significant correlations between these scores and related variables (also obtained through the survey; Table 3). Moreover, to cross-validate our measure for market performance, we obtained aggregated overall guest-rating scores – "TrustYou Scores" – and found a high correlation between them and market performance (rank correlation, $\rho = .30$, $p < .001$).

5.4. Base model

We ran structural equation models to test H_{1-4} (see Fig. 2) and reported the standardized coefficients. Owing to potential confounding effects, we estimated models linking our control variables to both dimensions of performance (but not to "cooperative benefits"). In our models, covariances among all exogenous variables (including controls) were freely estimated, and the same was true for covariances among performance constructs. Overall, the model's fit was good (RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .02; CFI = .97; TLI = .94; $\chi 2 = 26.15$; df = 14; normed $\chi^2 = 1.87$).

H_1 and H_2 were supported: horizontal tangible ($\beta = .18$, $z = 4.33$, $p < .001$) and intangible ($\beta = .13$, $z = 2.92$, $p < .01$) resource sharing and vertical tangible ($\beta = .37$, $z = 9.85$, $p < .001$) and intangible ($\beta = .24$, $z = 5.88$, $p < .001$) resource sharing are significantly related to cooperative benefits. Cooperative benefits significantly affect the market ($\beta = .12$, $z = 2.55$, $p < .05$) and financial performance ($\beta = .13$, $z = 2.95$, $p < .01$), supporting H_{4a} and H_{4b}. However, the effects (i.e., estimated coefficients) must be interpreted against the fact that our model explains a high amount of variance in the cooperative benefits construct ($R^2 = .52$), but not in financial ($R^2 = .08$) or market performance ($R^2 = .05$).

H_3 suggests that tangible resource sharing is more strongly associated with cooperative benefits than intangible resource sharing. Our findings revealed stronger (coefficient) effects for tangible in comparison to intangible resource sharing in the same "direction" (horizontal, vertical). To judge the significance of these differences, we used likelihood-ratio tests to assess χ^2 differences when the respective paths were constrained to be equal (significant $\Delta \chi2$ implies that the model fit is worse with an equality constraint imposed on the paths and, thus, that the effects differ significantly). We performed these tests on our original model with unstandardized paths (to compare the effects of absolute changes in the average indicators) and on a model that included standardized coefficients for our constructs of interest.

Our tests indicated a significant difference between the unstandardized paths (to cooperative benefits) of vertical tangible and intangible resource sharing, with $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 5.39, $p < .05$. This difference remained marginally significant when standardized coefficients were used, $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 3.38, $p < .1$. However, we did not find any support for H_3 when conducting similar tests for the horizontal resource sharing dimensions, with unstandardized coefficients: $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 1.64, $p > .1$ and standardized coefficients: $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = .44, $p > .1$. In summary, H_3

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[6] CFA was performed prior to SEM. After having tested our measurement models, we used average item scores for SEM to create more parsimonious models and alleviate normality concerns (see below).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and inter-construct correlations.

							Construct correlations (lower triangle) and squared correlations (upper triangle)						
Construct	# items	Mean	SD	Range	ρ	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Horizontal intangible resource sharing	4	2.60	1.09	1.00 – 5.00	.88	.66	/	.26	.40	.13	.25	.00	.02
2. Vertical intangible resource sharing	3	2.41	1.08	1.00 – 5.00	.90	.75	.51	/	.12	.33	.33	.00	.02
3. Horizontal tangible resource sharing	13	1.76	.80	1.00 – 4.62	.81	.58	.63	.35	/	.16	.24	.00	.01
4. Vertical tangible resource sharing	7	2.21	.96	1.00 – 5.00	.79	.66	.36	.57	.40	/	.39	.00	.00
5. Cooperative benefits	6	2.40	1.00	1.00 – 5.00	.93	.70	.50	.58	.49	.62	/	.01	.03
6. Market performance	3	3.98	.64	2.00 – 5.00	.75	.51	.06	.04	.00	.04	.09	/	.07
7. Financial performance	3	3.60	.72	1.00 – 5.00	.80	.59	.13	.14	.11	.05	.18	.26	/

Notes: SD = standard deviation; ρ = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; means, standard deviations, and correlations are based on average item scores.

Table 3
Spearman rank correlation coefficients – resource sharing and related variables.

	Horizontal cooperation			Vertical cooperation	
	Used forms[a]	# of arrangements		Used forms[a]	# of arrangements
Horizontal intangible resource sharing	**.37*****	**.39*****	Vertical intangible resource sharing	**.28*****	**.31*****
	(n = 392)	(n = 483)		(n = 426)	(n = 488)
Horizontal tangible resource sharing	**.43*****	**.44*****	Vertical tangible resource sharing	**.31*****	**.41*****
	(n = 392)	(n = 483)		(n = 426)	(n = 488)

[a] The most formalized form used by the firm: 0 = no cooperation; 1 = informal cooperation (spontaneous, verbal agreements); 2 = formal cooperation (written agreements, simple contracts); and 3 = highly formal cooperation (detailed contracts, equity arrangements, joint organizations). The option of "no cooperation" was available.
*** = significant at $p < .001$; missing values in cross-validation variables cause differences in "n."
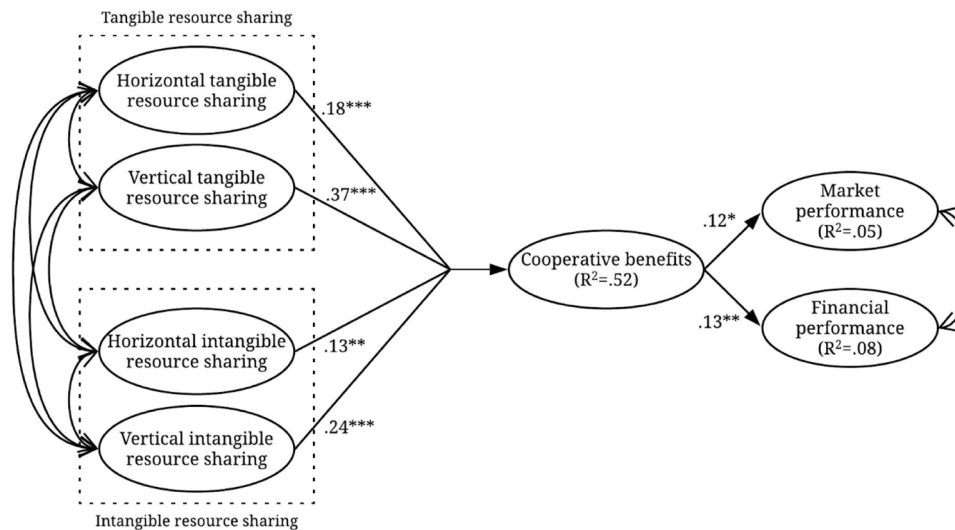

Fig. 2. Base model (control variables included but not displayed). Notes: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$; standardized coefficients are displayed; curved arrows represent correlations included in the model.

was partially supported (i.e., only for vertical resource sharing dimensions).

Performing additional tests, we found evidence for stronger effects on cooperative benefits of the vertical "direction" of sharing tangible resources relative to the horizontal one, with unstandardized coefficients: $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 4.69, $p < .05$ and standardized coefficients: $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 8.70, $p < .01$. However, our tests indicated insignificant differences when comparing the effects of vertical and horizontal intangible resource sharing, with unstandardized coefficients: $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 2.55, $p > .1$ and standardized coefficients: $\Delta \chi^2$ (1 df) = 2.47, $p > .1$.

When estimating a rival model that corresponded to our base model but with direct effects of the resource sharing dimensions on the performance constructs included, we found that one of the direct paths was

significant: a negative path between vertical tangible resource sharing and financial performance (β = −.17, z = −2.89, $p < .01$).[7]

5.5. Multigroup models

To test H$_{5a-c}$ and H$_{6a-c}$, we referred to multigroup modeling to estimate the structural paths separately for a pair of subgroups in our sample and compare the structural coefficients across these groups. We

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[7] We also performed mediation tests and our findings supported the model of the construct "cooperative benefits" being conceptualized as a (partial) mediator. The effects of resource sharing on performance diminished when cooperative benefits were introduced.

Table 4

Multigroup analyses (H_{5a-c} and H_{6a-c}) with significant effect differences in bold.

Paths	Groups with unstandardized coefficients and χ^2 - tests					
	Small vs. large ($\geq$ 50 rooms)		Low- vs. high-star category		Low vs. high managerial experience (m.exp.)	
Horizontal tangible resource sharing → Cooperative benefits	Small	.14†	Low (< 4 stars)	.19**	Low m.exp.	.26**
	Large	.29***	High ($\geq$ 4 stars)	.26**	High m.exp.	.22**
	χ^2 – test[a]	2.20	χ^2 – test	.42	χ^2 - test	.15
Vertical tangible resource sharing → Cooperative benefits	**Small**	**.47***	**Low (< 4 stars)**	**.45***	Low m.exp.	.39***
	Large	**.25***	**High ($\geq$ 4 stars)**	**.25**	High m.exp.	.36***
	χ^2 - test	**6.87**	**χ^2 – test**	**5.01***	χ^2 - test	.19
Horizontal intangible resource sharing → Cooperative benefits	Small	.15**	Low (< 4 stars)	.13**	Low m.exp.	.06
	Large	.12†	High ($\geq$ 4 stars)	.12	High m.exp.	.16**
	χ^2 - test	.18	χ^2 – test	.02	χ^2 - test	1.73
Vertical intangible resource sharing → Cooperative benefits	**Small**	**.15**	**Low (< 4 stars)**	**.16**	Low m.exp.	.28***
	Large	**.33***	**High ($\geq$ 4 stars)**	**.35***	High m.exp.	.20***
	χ^2 - test	**5.16***	**χ^2 – test**	**5.27***	χ^2 - test	1.08
Cooperative benefits → Market performance	Small	.07*	Low (< 4 stars)	.09**	Low m.exp.	.09*
	Large	.06	High ($\geq$ 4 stars)	.02	High m.exp.	.06
	χ^2 - test	.07	χ^2 – test	1.24	χ^2 - test	.39
Cooperative benefits→ Financial performance	**Small**	**.15***	Low (< 4 stars)	.13**	**Low m.exp.**	**.17***
	Large	**.01**	High ($\geq$ 4 stars)	.03	**High m.exp.**	**.04**
	χ^2 - test	**4.46***	χ^2 – test	1.90	**χ^2 - test**	**3.80†**

Notes: path coefficients are reported from multigroup models where all structural coefficients are allowed to differ across a certain pair of subgroups.

† $= p < .1$,

* $= p < .05$,

** $= p < .01$,

*** $= p < .001$;

[a] χ^2 tests compare these models with models in which the path coefficient of interest (row) is restricted to equality across groups (one degree of freedom). The significant χ^2 tests imply that the coefficients from the two groups for one structural path are significantly different.

compared the following subgroup pairs: large hotels (50 or more rooms) with small hotels, high-star category hotels (four and five stars) with lower-star hotels, and hotels that possess higher levels of managerial experience with those that possess lower levels (median split).[8]

One procedure for detecting such a significant path difference is to compare a multigroup model in which all path coefficients are allowed to differ across subgroups (unconstrained model) to a model that is the same, except that the coefficient of interest is constrained to be equal across subgroups. When the first multigroup model fits the empirical data substantially better than the second (significant χ^2 test), it can be assumed that the coefficient of interest is not equal across the groups.[9] This procedure was repeated for each structural path of and for each subgroup pair. Table 4 reports the results.

The effects of vertical or horizontal tangible resource sharing on cooperative benefits were not significantly stronger for larger hotels, hotels with higher star ratings, or those with more managerial experience; hence, H_{5a-c} was not supported. Interestingly, vertical tangible resource sharing had weaker effects on cooperative benefits in the high-star (relative to low-star) and large (relative to small) hotel subsamples.

H_{6a} and H_{6b} (but not H_{6c}) were partially supported because the impact of vertical intangible resource sharing on cooperative benefits is stronger for larger firms and firms with higher star ratings. However, the impact of horizontal intangible resource sharing did not differ across groups.

We also analyzed the effects of cooperative benefits on the performance variables, and the results are presented in Table 4.

6. Discussion

This study examines resource sharing, its interdependencies, participants' benefits, and performance outcomes in tourism, focusing on hotels. Our empirical research proves that resource sharing and its specific combinations offer cooperative benefits and positively affect firms' outcomes.

6.1. Contributions to literature and methodology

This study mainly refers to the relational view (Dyer and Singh, 1998) and the extended resource-based view (Lavie, 2006) to contribute to extant knowledge in the tourism context. Moreover, we recognize ecosystem issues and refer to Porter's (1980) diamond model in which related and supporting industries, among other facets, can be viewed as major sources of resource sharing. First, we considered resource sharing from a cooperative perspective, discussed its conceptualization, and developed a logic for future research. Second, we adopted a context-sensitive approach and incorporated tangible and intangible resource sharing by hotels across horizontal and vertical firm boundaries. Accordingly, we showed how interconnected firms (Lavie, 2006) act in the context of local tourism and provide insights into the multifaceted nature of the resource sharing construct.

On this basis, we present (thus far lacking) large-scale empirical evidence for the tourism context, addressing the issues of various resource sharing practices for different firms. In line with prior studies in other contexts (e.g., Jiang et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2007), our research in a local tourism context confirms the potential of resource sharing, as the dimensions considered in this study were positively associated with cooperative benefits. We also hypothesized that tangible (relative to intangible) resource sharing has a stronger impact on cooperative benefits owing to the lower relative relevance of intangible resources in tourism and found support for the vertical resource sharing dimensions; vertical tangible resource sharing shows the strongest effect in terms of the creation of cooperative benefits. However, our multigroup analyses revealed that this finding is contingent on firm size and star level as it

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[8] Note that we confirmed measurement invariance across our pairs of subgroups regarding our measurement model: multigroup analyses showed that imposing invariant factor loadings (or intercepts) did not worsen model fits considerably for any pair of subgroups (see Appendix B of the Supplementary Material).

[9] Unstandardized coefficients are compared as variables' variances are not necessarily indifferent across subsamples.

applies only to small and low-star category hotels. This result indicates that access to tangible resources from vertical partners (marketing and sales-related) may have special relevance for small and low-star hotels. The resources of vertical partners are more heterogeneous than those of focal hotels relative to horizontal partners, suggesting that heterogeneity provides synergistic relationships (Soda and Furlotti, 2017) from which small and low-star category hotels can particularly benefit. Vertical tangible resource sharing is advantageous for these businesses to compensate for shortages in internal tangible resources by accessing complementary additions, a mechanism that also seems relevant for large and high-star hotels (albeit to a lower extent). Additionally, our findings suggest that it is not too difficult for resource-constrained hotels to secure an adequate climate of cooperation among non-rival vertical partners (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000). However, this contradicts our suggestion that firms lacking the internal capacity to cope with the various challenges of cooperation are less successful in securing advantages from resource sharing. Our findings also reveal that the internal capacity to cope with cooperation challenges (indicated by size and star rating) is beneficial when conducting vertical intangible resource sharing. This insight contradicts prior assumptions that cooperation is particularly useful for resource-constrained firms (e.g., Teng, 2007). Large and high-star hotels may be better equipped to access and use complementary knowledge, information, and know-how from dissimilar actors outside the hotel industry to achieve sustainable business development. Hence, our results require a differentiated view of resource sharing practices when elaborating on the question, "Who benefits the most?".

Cooperative benefits are positively associated with market and financial performances. These findings complement prior research on the impact of cooperative activities on firm performance (e.g., Brito et al., 2014) and corroborate the relevance of cooperation for actors in local tourism supply systems (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007).

These results must be compared with three additional findings. First, our model has relatively low explanatory power for performance, indicating that resource sharing is unlikely to be among the most essential determinants of hotel competitiveness. Second, our multigroup analyses raise doubts about whether the created cooperative benefits significantly affect the performance of resource-rich hotels (see Table 4, lower rows). Third, the positive effects of resource sharing can only be fully revealed through the intermediate variable of cooperative benefits, which provides additional insight for future research (Cao and Zhang, 2011).

6.2. Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, our findings indicate opportunities to establish resource sharing and extend traditional competitive strategies. In general, hotel managers should consider resource sharing and engage in these activities, which, currently, as the low assessments of the items in Table 1 indicate, is not the case. Following these insights from the descriptive statistics, it must be emphasized that more extensive resource sharing of any activity leads to more beneficial effects for a hotel. Although potential resource sharing disadvantages such as a partial loss of flexibility and autonomy or dependence on partners must be carefully considered and managed – hotels can improve their competitiveness and performance by sharing resources. Our findings provide guidance for hotel owners and managers in assemblling their resource sharing portfolios.

Managers of larger and higher-classification hotels should consider the benefits of vertical intangible resource sharing. These hotels also gain advantages from tangible resource sharing in the vertical (e.g., joint marketing tools or offers and sales support) and horizontal (e.g., joint marketing resources, purchases, investments, and human resources) directions.

For managers of smaller and lower-class hotels, vertical tangible resource sharing offers particular potential. Although larger and higher-classification hotels also benefit from this type of resource sharing, their comparative benefits are lower.

In general, hotels should not neglect sharing intangible resources as this can be accomplished with little effort when mechanisms, such as meetings for exchanging information or ideas, are set in place. With local partners, this could be strategically relevant as hotels are challenged to build joint forces when developing their businesses further.

Although local cooperative benefits are assumed to increase hotel performance, managers should note that resource sharing (of any kind) and cooperative benefits in the local context do not safeguard against a lack of competitiveness. Issues such as location, strategic positioning, leadership, and employee quality must be considered when explaining the variances in hotel success. Low efforts in local resource sharing activities need to be acknowledged (see Table 1), which indicate that firms are unwilling and/or unable to capitalize on these exchange practices. However, our findings suggest that higher engagement in resource sharing might be profitable, knowing that such endeavors require focus and persistence. Hotel owners and managers must critically reflect on their status quo, and issues such as flexibility and agility should be included in the strategic action agenda. The selectively pursuit of certain activities may be the starting point for generating cooperative benefits and outcomes.

6.3. Limitations and directions for future research

In our conceptualization of resource sharing and its value-creating effects, some issues have not been addressed. First, no other cooperative activities apart from resource sharing were considered; second, we did not account for differences in the formal design and partnership structures for resource sharing; third, we did not explicitly incorporate costs and efforts for cooperation; fourth, we used cross-sectional data from a single country. The data for our study were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we cannot speculate on the potential effects of external shocks in our research model. In ad-hoc interviews, managers indicated that hotels had returned to "business as usual" post the pandemic. Hence, as there are currently no major changes in the nature of resource sharing, there is no evidence of drastically different findings (Dogru et al., 2023). Moreover, future research should consider the costs, effort, and drawbacks associated with creating cooperative benefits. Overall, our empirical results support the notion that cooperation in a tourism setting, including hotels, offers interesting options for participating parties.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Baldauf Artur: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Bandi Tanner Monika:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Pfammatter Adrian:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Validation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103648.

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