

Commercial Coopetition: Forms, Tensions and Managerial Perspectives

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Coopetición comercial: formas, tensiones y perspectivas de gestión

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Résumé de l'article

La coopétition commerciale consiste à coopérer avec des concurrents sur des activités proches des clients. Cette stratégie s'est beaucoup développée ces dernières années, mais n'a été que peu étudiée dans la littérature. La recherche vise à analyser les formes de coopétition commerciale et les tensions qu'elle génère, afin de comprendre les sources de blocage et proposer des dispositifs managériaux. Pour cela, nous avons déployé un protocole de recherche qualitative fondé sur 23 entretiens. Les résultats font apparaître des formes de coopétition commerciale créant différents types de tensions inter et intra-organisationnelles. Nous identifions également trois modes de gestion de ces tensions.

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ABSTRACT

Commercial coopetition consists of cooperating with competitors in customer-like activities. This strategy has developed substantially in recent years but has been little studied in the literature. This research aims to analyze the forms of commercial coopetition and the tensions it generates to understand the sources of blockage and propose management devices. To do so, we deploy a qualitative research protocol based on 23 semi-directive interviews with directors of alliances and partnerships. The research results reveal two forms of commercial coopetition that create five types of inter- and intraorganizational tensions and we identify three ways of managing these tensions.

Keywords: Commercial coopetition, management, tensions, *double booking*, sponsors, alliance and partnership directors

Résumé

La coopétition commerciale consiste à coopérer avec des concurrents sur des activités proches des clients. Cette stratégie s'est beaucoup développée ces dernières années, mais n'a été que peu étudiée dans la littérature. La recherche vise à analyser les formes de coopétition commerciale et les tensions qu'elle génère, afin de comprendre les sources de blocage et proposer des dispositifs managériaux. Pour cela, nous avons déployé un protocole de recherche qualitative fondé sur 23 entretiens. Les résultats font apparaître des formes de coopétition commerciale créant différents types de tensions inter et intra-organisationnelles. Nous identifions également trois modes de gestion de ces tensions.

Mots-Clés : Coopétition commerciale, management, tensions, *double-booking*, sponsors, directeurs d'alliances et de partenariats

Resumen

La coopetición comercial consiste en cooperar con los competidores en actividades cercanas a los clientes. Esta estrategia se ha desarrollado mucho en los últimos años, pero ha sido poco estudiada en la literatura. La investigación tiene por objeto analizar las formas de coopetición comercial y las tensiones que genera, con el fin de comprender las fuentes de bloqueo y proponer dispositivos de gestión. Por eso, hemos implementado un protocolo de investigación cualitativa basado en 23 entrevistas. Los resultados de la investigación revelan formas de coopetición comercial que crean tipos de tensiones interorganizacionales e intraorganizacionales. Identificamos maneras de manejar estas tensiones.

Palabras Clave: Coopetición comercial, gestión, tensiones, *double booking*, patrocinadores, directores de alianzas



International economic news is regularly punctuated by the announcement of new cases of cooperation between firms, especially between competitors. One example of such cooperation is the collaboration between Apple and Samsung in the field of mobile telephony and connected television. These two enemies have indeed allied themselves so that it is possible to access iTunes and other Apple services from a Samsung-connected TV through several technological gateways created between their competing systems. There are also many cases of commercial cooperation and distribution between competitors, for example, certain agreements created in the late 1990s in the field of air transport (Skyteam, Star Alliance and Oneworld). In the Information Technology (IT) sector, the 2017 business agreement between Hewlett Packard Enterprise and Microsoft, around “Cloud28+” (a business ecosystem designed to encourage companies to adopt the cloud), allowed these two competitors to combine their strengths and offer more efficient solutions to customers. Over the past decade, the literature on strategic management has shown a growing interest in these strategies that combine cooperation and competition, which are collectively referred to as coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Yami *et al.*, 2010).

Coopetition refers to situations where several companies, *business units*, departments or individuals pursue strategies that combine competition and collaboration simultaneously (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Gnyawali & Park, 2009). These strategies enable firms to achieve economies of scale, access strategic resources and create synergies while maintaining a high level of competition (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011). However, while coopetition increases the performance of firms (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Yami *et al.*, 2010), it also presents major risks for them.

Research shows that coopetitors share resources and therefore risk “arming” their competing partners (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Gnyawali & Park, 2009). This situation generates tensions not only between the coopetitors but also internally between people of the same firm. Indeed, the individuals involved must be both “friends” and “enemies”, and they are confronted with antagonistic interests and paradoxical situations

(Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016; Luo *et al.*, 2007; Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014). As these tensions may call into question the success of coopetition, several studies have highlighted the need to identify them and implement management devices to reduce them (Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Fernandez & Chiambaretto, 2016; Le Roy & Czakon, 2016; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009).

Research on coopetition has focused on coopetition located upstream in the value chain, such as in R&D (Bouncken *et al.*, 2018; Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015), innovation, or production (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Quintana-García & Benavides-Velasco, 2004; Ritala, 2012; Ritala & Sainio, 2014), mainly due to the colossal amounts of money that are often commonly invested in these projects. For example, Gnyawali and Park (2011) describe the case of coopetition between Samsung and Sony to develop and produce LCD screens for televisions. Their initial investment was \$1 billion each, and they then tripled their investment a few years later. However, in business practices, cases of commercial coopetition are more numerous (Robert *et al.*, 2018), particularly in the IT industry (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2013, 2018; Taylor, 2005). Academic work on the subject has thus far shown that commercial coopetition involves specific risks and can lead to tensions that can be detrimental to companies if they are not properly identified and managed (Bouncken *et al.*, 2018; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Pellegrin-Boucher & Roy, 2019). However, knowledge of these tensions remains undefined, especially according to the different forms that commercial coopetition can take, as recent work has suggested (Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Robert *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the objective of the current research is to (a) understand the forms of commercial coopetition, (b) identify the associated tensions, and finally (c) propose appropriate devices to better manage these tensions.

To achieve these objectives, we adopted a qualitative research protocol based on the analysis of semidirective interviews with directors of alliances and partnerships (DAPs) of international companies that set up and manage cooperative relationships (Miles *et al.*, 2018). We conducted this study in the software sector, which is a segment of the hypercompetitive and globalized digital and computer industry, in which cases of coopetition are particularly numerous (Fjeldstad *et al.*, 2004; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2013, 2018; Taylor, 2005).

The article is structured in four parts. In the first part, we present the theoretical framework and the literature review on the subject. In the second part, we describe the qualitative research method and justify the choice of the sector, the sample studied, and the protocol of data collection and analysis. The results are presented in the third part, i.e., forms of commercial coopetition, types of tensions, and the management devices put in place. Finally, we discuss these results from a theoretical and managerial perspective in the fourth part.

Literature Review

In this section, we define coopetition and identify the main tensions that have been highlighted in the literature. We address the streams of research that have been interested in coopetition management. The specificities of commercial coopetition are also highlighted.

Coopetition: Theoretical Framework

Coopetition refers to any strategy or relationship where cooperation and competition coexist simultaneously between at least two firms, *business units*, departments or individuals of the same company (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000, 2014; Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Czakon & Rgalski, 2014, 2020; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014). Coopetition can exist at the inter- and intraorganizational levels. Cases of interorganizational coopetition involve either dyadic or multipartnership relationships (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Rouyre & Fernandez, 2019). Situations of intraorganizational coopetition may arise at the level of the company's business areas, in both partner and competing distribution channels (such as an internet channel with salespoints), or within departments, for example, between competing R&D or IT departments (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Seran *et al.*, 2016; Tsai, 2002).

As some research has shown, coopetition, whether intra- or interorganizational, can be a source of growth and performance for companies (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Gnyawali *et al.*, 2008; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Robert *et al.*, 2018; Yami *et al.*, 2010). Coopetition enables faster innovation, which reduces costs, expands product portfolios through the integration of complementary products, and maintains a high level of customer satisfaction (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; Quintana-García & Benavides-Velasco, 2004; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009). The collaborative dimension allows faster access to new resources and reduces

costs, while the competitive dimension pushes organizations to continue to innovate (Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Robert *et al.*, 2018). However, coopetition presents the risk of resource and skills appropriation by the partner-competitor and creates tensions both between the coopetitors and within their organizations (Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016; Seran *et al.*, 2016; Tidström, 2014).

Coopetitive Tensions

Coopetition is by nature a paradoxical situation that creates a number of tensions that can also be described as paradoxical (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016; Clarke-Hill *et al.*, 2003; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Tidström, 2014). These are "*socially and cognitively constructed polarities that mask the simultaneous nature of conflicting realities*" (Lewis 2000, p. 276). Coopetitive tensions are thus a category of paradoxical tensions (Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Wilhelm, 2011) and are defined as two contradictory forces with opposing goals at the origin of the deterioration of coopetition, which have the potential to destroy it (Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidström, 2014). The literature review on coopetitive tensions distinguishes different categories of such tensions (Table 1).

Based on situations mainly related to product development, several studies have differentiated two levels of coopetition that cause tensions (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014), namely, inter-organizational coopetition (tensions related to coopetition relationships between firms that are both partners and competitors) and intraorganizational coopetition (when coopetition takes place within an organization). It then identifies four main types of coopetitive tensions, which may be related (1) to opportunism and value sharing, (2) to the sharing of knowledge and information, (3) to competition for internal resources, and (4) to cognitive dissonance and role conflicts. All these tensions can coexist simultaneously (Tidström, 2014), and several researchers have pointed out that the distinction between intra- and interorganizational tensions and their consequences is still poorly understood (Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014).

The Management of Coopetitive Tensions

Most of the research on coopetition agrees on the need to find managerial mechanisms to manage coopetitive tensions (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidström, 2014). This research can be divided into two main streams.

TABLE 1
Coopetitive tensions

Type of tension	Opportunism and value sharing	Knowledge sharing	Access to internal resources	Cognitive dissonance and role conflicts
Level of coopetition	Interorganizational	Inter- and intraorganizational	Intraorganizational	Inter- and intraorganizational
Characteristics	- Opportunity of actors who seek to capture the value and resources of the partners.	- Need to share some information and protect others.	- Competition between services for access to resources.	- Cognitive difficulty in accepting the paradox and changing mental patterns. Role conflicts.
Authors	- Lado <i>et al.</i> (1997) - Fernandez <i>et al.</i> (2014) - Tidstrom (2014) - Bengtsson <i>et al.</i> (2016)	- Das and Teng (2000) - Tsai (2002) - Gnyawali and Park (2009) - Bengtsson <i>et al.</i> (2016) - Fernandez <i>et al.</i> (2014) - Fernandez and Chiambaretto (2016)	- Tsai (2002) - Raza-Ullah <i>et al.</i> (2014) - Tidstrom (2014) - Seran <i>et al.</i> (2016) - Pellegrin-Boucher <i>et al.</i> (2018) - Chiambaretto <i>et al.</i> (2019)	- Bengtsson and Kock (2000) - Gnyawali <i>et al.</i> (2008) - Raza-Ullah <i>et al.</i> (2014) - Tidstrom (2014) - Le Roy and Fernandez (2015)

In the first stream, the research emphasizes the usefulness of separating the cooperative and competitive dimensions of coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Bouncken & Fredrich, 2012; Dowling *et al.*, 1996; Herzog, 2010; Oliver, 2004). The principle of separation is to create an organizational division on the cooperative and competitive dimensions of coopetition to prevent individuals from simultaneously managing opposing relationships. In practical terms, some employees, such as DAPs, are tasked with developing cooperative relationships with other companies, while salespeople maintain the competitive dimension with these same organizations (Bouncken & Fredrich, 2012). Each of these occupations therefore has to manage only one dimension of coopetition, which reduces antagonistic tensions at the level of individuals (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Dowling *et al.*, 1996; Herzog, 2010; Oliver, 2004). This organizational divide can also be applied at the level of a firm's business *units* or services. However, some research has shown that this separation creates other tensions, i.e., internal misunderstanding of the objectives of coopetition, willingness not to disclose certain information, conflicts of interest, etc., and thus does not fully manage the cooperative paradox (Chen, 2008; Clarke-Hill *et al.*, 2003; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Gnyawali *et al.*, 2008; Oshri & Weeber, 2006).

In the second stream, the research, in contrast, supports the idea of the acceptance or integration of the paradox, which corresponds to a more syncretic view of coopetition management (Chen, 2008; Gnyawali *et al.*, 2008; Le Roy & Czakon, 2016; Oshri & Weeber, 2006).

Some researchers have suggested that the least tense solution is to make individuals understand and accept the usefulness of the coopetition paradox (Chen, 2008; Oshri & Weeber, 2006; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018). This principle is based in particular on the work of Lewis (2000) and Smith and Lewis (2011), for whom the acceptance of paradoxes generates virtuous circles that improve

the performance within organizations. In particular, the authors conceptualize a dynamic balance model in which the recognition and acceptance of paradoxes by individuals facilitates the creation of virtuous circles that allow firms to overcome the paradoxical tensions they face (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Based on theoretical research, the authors thus show the managerial interest in accepting the reality of paradoxes and paradoxical strategies.

Finally, recent research has suggested that firms have an interest in combining these two approaches, which allows them to benefit from both integration and separation, as these two management streams complement each other more than they oppose each other (Fernandez & Chiambaretto, 2016; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Seran *et al.*, 2016). Thus, some research has highlighted managerial levers that belong to these two approaches, such as the role of trust between coopetitors (Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidström, 2014), strategic and organizational guidelines from top management (Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Tidström, 2014), or coopetitive team projects that reduce competition (Fernandez *et al.*, 2014).

These academic works represent an important step towards the better management of coopetitive tensions. However, they have some limitations. In particular, the situations studied have mainly been related to coopetition strategies that are carried out higher up in the value chain, i.e., R&D, innovation or product development activities (Bouncken *et al.*, 2018; Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Gnyawali *et al.*, 2008; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Ritala & Sainio, 2014); this information obtained from these situations is thus not transposable to situations of commercial coopetition. Some authors have considered it preferable to use a specific analysis framework for commercial coopetition because there are important differences that impact coopetitive tensions and their management (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Robert *et al.*, 2018).

The Specificities of Commercial Coopetition

Coopetition can be divided into two main categories, namely, customer-away coopetition and customer-like coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999, 2000; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Robert *et al.*, 2018). Commercial coopetition can be defined as a cooperative strategy that involves customer-like activities, such as sales, marketing or distribution (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Robert *et al.*, 2018). Recent research has shown that this type of market-oriented strategy is multiplying within firms (Chiambaretto & Dumez, 2016; Czakon & Czernek, 2016; Mariani, 2016), especially in the digital and computer sector (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2013, 2018). Some authors have also shown in recent work that commercial coopetition is different from coopetition located upstream in the value chain (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Pellegrin-Boucher & Roy, 2019; Robert *et al.*, 2018) and has several specificities that need to be considered. These specificities are as follows:

- First, coopetition located upstream in the value chain generally depends on either general management, R&D or the direction of technology alliances, whereas in the case of commercial coopetition, projects are the responsibility of the direction of sales and/or distribution partnerships. They do not involve the same profiles of individuals (engineers and/or scientific profiles vs. managers and/or commercial profiles);
- Coopetition located upstream in the value chain has an influence on the product or service, while market-oriented coopetition changes the way that the product or service is sold but does not change the product itself (Robert *et al.*, 2018);
- Finally, in coopetition away from the customer, one of the main risks is that one of the partners will seize the technologies of the other to improve their own offer, while in commercial coopetition, the main threat is that the competitor will take over the customers of the partner (*ibidem*).

These academic works have also suggested that the tensions associated with commercial coopetition and the management devices implemented to address them are different from those in coopetition located upstream in the value chain. In the case of commercial coopetition, these authors have shown, for example, the essential role played by DAPs in reducing existing tensions; this function allows the separation and integration of opposite dimensions

(Bouncken & Fredrich, 2012; Pellegrin-Boucher & Fenneteau, 2007; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018). Arbitration between the different sales teams, which are both in external and internal coopetition, is also a fundamental parameter that is used to complement the principles of separation and integration and reduce cooperative tensions (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018).

However, research has indicated that tensions may remain high despite the implementation of these devices. The literature suggests that tensions are greater in the case of commercial cooperative relations than in the case of technological innovation projects because competition is more intense (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Robert *et al.*, 2018). Some authors have pointed to the need for research on forms of commercial coopetition and associated tensions (Tidstrom, 2014; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016). In order to contribute to reduce this gap in the literature, this research aims to answer the following questions. What are the main forms of commercial coopetition? What tensions do they generate at the inter- and intraorganizational levels? How can we manage these tensions? The aim is to better understand the links between the coopetition forms, the corresponding tensions and the management devices implemented to address them.

Research Method

To achieve these objectives, we deployed a qualitative research protocol based on 23 semidirective face-to-face interviews conducted with 19 DAPs from 14 international firms in the business software sector, which is part of the digital industry (Miles *et al.*, 2018). The choice of this method was justified by our willingness to collect discursive data reflecting the mental universe of the interviewees. According to the authors, this method allows fine analyses in terms of process and is conducive to categorization via the analysis of occurrences in speeches.

A Representative Sector for the Analysis of Commercial Coopetition

The research took place from September 2016 to September 2019 with international companies in the business software sector that were headquartered in France and adopted commercial coopetition strategies simultaneously both in France and abroad. Pursuing a comprehensive objective, we chose to

conduct a single-sector study within the software sector, particularly in the field of business software. The choice of this sector was justified by the fact that commercial cooperative relations are particularly numerous and still little explored (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018). In addition, this globalized sector has a direct link to our theoretical questions (Troesch & Schikora, 2010; Yin, 2015). The literature has noted that companies in the digital and computer industries have been pioneers in coopetition strategies since the 1980s and that they have maintained multiple cooperative relationships between competitors at the international level since that time (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Contractor & Lorange, 2002; Fjeldstad *et al.*, 2004; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2013; Shapiro & Varian, 1999; Taylor, 2005). The term “coopetition” was created by Ray Noorda, the founder and CEO of the American software company Novell. At the time of the term’s creation, coopetition consisted of integrating hardware and software elements from competing firms into a common system (Shapiro & Varian, 1999).

In the business software sector, the majority of firms have at least two complementary and competing distribution channels, namely, direct sales with the company’s own sales force and indirect sales that are managed through cooperation agreements between often competing partners who distribute competing solutions to customers. Distributors are often competitors of their suppliers because companies in the sector are very diversified and positioned on close and strongly related activities (operating systems, various applications and software, databases, *cloud*, etc.). In this sector, sales are done in B to B format, i.e., firms do not sell to individuals but rather to other organizations in national and international markets, which explains the proliferation of distribution partnerships, especially between competitors.

Finally, we have chosen to study the players in this sector because they are the most represented in French professional associations such as ASAP (*Association of Strategic Alliance Professionals*) France, which is the French entity of an international association whose parent company is located in the United States, and ADALEC (French Association of Partners Managers and Business Developers). They are the only two French associations that bring together the professionals of international alliances and partnerships. In the case of the ADALEC association, 80% of the members come from the digital and IT sector, in particular from the business software sector. This sector is therefore particularly relevant for analyzing our research purpose.

Sample and Data Collection

From December 2016 until September 2019, we conducted 23 interviews with 19 DAPs from 14 companies in the business software sector. In some large companies, several DAPs share the responsibility for business relationships between partner competitors across all business areas (not the case in smaller firms). We wanted to meet all of these DAPs to triangulate the data. The 14 firms selected include eight large companies (IBM, Oracle, SAP, Dassault Systems, SAS, VMware, Sage, Accenture), three mid-sized companies (Générix, Criteo, PeopleDoc), two SMEs (Adents, Itesoft) and one startup (who wished to remain anonymous). All of these firms have very strong international activities (the average share of international turnover is at least 50%) and have their French headquarters located in Paris, which is the city in which we conducted the study. Four people were interviewed twice to complete some missing information.

We selected DAPs who had significant experience (over three years) in business alliance and partnership strategies in accordance with what is advocated in the literature (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Taylor, 2005). We also checked that the DAPs had all been confronted with situations of commercial coopetition. Sample size is critical in qualitative research, as a minimum size is required to ensure the internal validity of the research and to provide a satisfactory level of confidence in the results. Yin (2015) explains that sample size can be determined by the principle of replication or saturation. In this research, the sample size was determined according to the principle of theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is reached when no additional information that could enrich the research is found. The sample-building process stops when the last observation units analyzed have not provided any new elements. The composition of the sample was the result of telephone, e-mail and/or face-to-face prospection made during association meetings, according to an iterative approach, from the list of ASAP France and ADALEC members provided by the offices of these two associations. The sample was gradually formed by successive iterations, ensuring that the heterogeneity of the company size and of the gender and age of the DAPs was respected. Using this method and the saturation principle, we stopped the process after 19 iterations. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the sample.

TABLE 2
Sample description

Interviewee	Firm	Eff. World	Eff. France	Gender	Age	Seniority in position	Initial training	No of interviews	Interview duration
1	Oracle	137 000	1 587	M	45	10	Business School	1	1 h
2	SAP	96 500	1 710	F	45	15	Laws	2	1 h
3	IBM	381 100	6 982	M	56	10	Business School	2	1 h
4	PeopleDoc	270	130	M	52	15	Business School	1	1: 15 h
5	Adents	150	65	M	49	15	Business School	2	45 minutes
6	Generix	565	250	F	50	20	Laws	2	1 h
7	Vmware	24 200	172	M	48	10	Business School	1	30 minutes
8	SAS	13 741	276	M	45	5	Engineering school	1	35 minutes
9	Wise	13 100	1 761	M	52	8	Business School	1	30 minutes
10	Dassault Systems	16 140	3 380	M	53	10	Business School	1	3 h
11	Accenture	459 000	3 400	M	51	12	Business School	1	45 minutes
12	Itesoft	220	179	F	50	10	Business School	1	40 minutes
13	Criteo	800	180	M	35	3	Computer	1	45 minutes
14	Start up	8	8	F	32	4	Computer	1	1 h
15	SAP	96 500	1 710	F	39	8	Business School	1	1 h
16	IBM	381 100	6 982	F	56	12	Management	1	1: 30 h
17	Accenture	459 000	3 400	M	42	8	Business School	1	35 minutes
18	Dassault Systems	16 140	3 380	F	40	6	Laws	1	45 minutes
19	SAS	13 741	276	M	36	4	Business School	1	30 minutes

Data collection

The construction of the interview guide was carried out via identification in the literature review of relevant themes for this research, especially from the following studies. First, some research has shown that coopetition is a form of cooperation that benefits partner companies (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Yami *et al.*, 2010). The literature review also shows that coopetition is a source of tension, both at the intra- and interorganizational levels (Bouncken *et al.*, 2018; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Seran *et al.*, 2016; Tidström, 2014). The thematic dictionary was built from the works of Bengtsson and Kock (1999, 2000), Fernandez *et al.* (2014) and Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.* (2018). The objective was to understand the characteristics and forms of coopetition managed by DAPs (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999, 2000) by focusing on forms of commercial coopetition (Pellegrin-Boucher & Fenneteau, 2007; Robert *et al.*, 2018).

This approach led us to divide the interview guide into six themes, namely, characteristics of the partners, objectives of DAPs, characteristics of trade agreements, characteristics of the coopetition implemented, tensions related to coopetition, and management methods put in place to address these tensions, and then into 17 subthemes (see Table 3). The interviews were recorded, fully transcribed and manually coded according to the principles of content analysis by Miles *et al.* (2018).

Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out via a discourse analysis based on an analysis of thematic content (Dumez, 2013; Miles *et al.*, 2018). First, the analysis consisted of determining units of meaning (words, word groups or phrases related to one of the predetermined themes) and performing a counting of occurrences to measure the weight of each theme in the speeches. The occurrences were noted in matrixes for each interviewee, including personal observations and some particularly illustrative remarks made by the interviewees. Second, these matrixes were compared theme by theme to identify constants and divergences in speeches. We were thus able to bring out subthemes (and subcodes). During this second phase of analysis, we improved our codification by incorporating new themes that reflected new ideas expressed by the respondents that had not been included in the starting guide (Miles *et al.*, 2018). This method of analysis led to the identification of common and convergent themes within the respondents' discourses (Eisenhardt,

TABLE 3
Themes of the interview guide

Theme	Subtheme	Code
1. Firm characteristics	1.1. Nationality	FIRM_NAT
	1.2. Size	FIRM_TAIL
	1.3. Sector and activities	FIRM_SEC
2. Goals of DAPs	2.1. Create cooperation agreements	DAP_CREA
	2.2. Increase joint sales	DAP_CA
	2.3. Identifying and recruiting partners	DAP_PAR
3. Characteristics of trade agreements	3.1. Distribution agreements	CAR_DIS
	3.2. Direct sales with a partner	CAR_AVEC
	3.3. Coopetition	CAR_CO
4. Characteristics of commercial coopetition	4.1. Cooperation	CAR_COOP
	4.2. Competition	CAR_CONC
	4.3. Implementation mode	CAR_MOD
5. Characteristics of tensions related to commercial coopetition	5.1. Internal tensions	TENS_INT
	5.2. Interorganizational tensions	TENS_EXT
	5.3. Implications	TENS_IMP
6. Tension management	6.1. Separation	MGT_SEP
	6.2. Integration	MGT_INT
	6.3. Arbitration	MGT_ARB
	6.4. Others	MGT_AUT

1989). We were able to categorize forms of commercial coopetition, tension categories and implemented management devices. Data triangulation ensured that the results were not only related to the characteristics of the selected companies or those of the respondents (i.e., when similar occurrences appeared in the speeches of more than three DAPs from different companies, they were retained). Triangulation also achieved high levels of internal validity (Gibbert *et al.*, 2008). An excerpt from the encoding scheme is provided in Appendix 1.

Results

The data analysis identifies and characterizes two forms of commercial coopetition and five categories of resulting tensions and highlights organizational and managerial mechanisms that can help manage these tensions.

Two Main Forms of Commercial Coopetition

First, the issue of commercial coopetition is major for the interviewees because the percentage of sales made with competitors represents, on average, a quarter of the total turnover of the companies in our sample. In addition to this first result, which testifies to the strategic dimension of coopetition for the actors questioned, we identified two main forms of commercial coopetition (Table 4).

TABLE 4
Forms of commercial coopetition in the software sector

	Distribution coopetition	Direct commercial coopetition
Principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selling <i>through</i> a competitor. - Collaborations between competing companies where one company sells another's solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selling <i>with</i> a competitor. - Collaborations between competing companies that jointly offer their solutions directly to customers.
Modalities/ coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indirect distribution. - Systematic contracting. - Nonexclusive relationship. - No access to partner customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct sales with a partner. - Systematic contracting. - Exclusive relationship. - Access to partner's customers.
Temporality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medium-long term (> one year). Depends on the intensity of the competition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term or one-time (if common response to call for tenders). Depends on the competition.
Resources concerned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Variable stakes and investments. - Resources: marketing, information on firms and products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important issues and investments. - Resources: marketing, techniques, training, customers' information.
Interactions between coopetitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Few interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Numerous interactions. - Frequent presence of an intermediary to implement coopetition (digital services or consulting company).
Tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong

Distribution Coopetition

Distribution coopetition refers to collaborations between independent companies where companies sell the solutions of other competing companies for at least one of their activities. These relationships are generally nonexclusive and numerous and present variable stakes and investments and relatively weak interactions. They are established for a minimum period of one year and are defined and formalized through a regularly renewed contract; some last for several years but can be stopped overnight if the competition between the companies becomes too intense. These agreements are therefore relatively unstable: *"The partnerships between Oracle and SAP have stopped for about a year and a half because SAP had become too competitive with Oracle"* (DAP of a large firm).

Direct Commercial Coopetition

This term refers to forms of joint sale of solutions; it is not a question of "selling through", as seen in the previous case, but rather of "selling with", with companies often offering cross-selling solutions. The financial stakes are higher than those in distribution coopetition because the contracts represent higher levels of investment from customers. In addition, direct commercial coopetition often requires technological integration and better knowledge of solutions on both sides, which requires more investment from the companies involved. The pooled resources correspond to marketing and technical resources, training, and customer knowledge, which is a strategic resource that is not pooled in the case

of distribution coopetition. The involvement level on both sides is therefore higher than that in distribution coopetition because DAPs have to learn about partner solutions, understand their technology and exchange strategic information about customers. A DAP testified on this subject as follows: *"We must exchange strategic information on our technologies and on certain customers with partners-competitors. We also need to understand their products and their strategies. For this to work, we necessarily spend more time on it, and it requires more interaction"*. This type of relationship can be long-term (offering digital services using the cloud, for example, over a period of more than 3 years), on an *ad hoc* basis if it involves responding to a joint call for tenders, or developing a specific commercial solution over a limited period of time on behalf of a client of one of the coopetitors.

By comparing the two forms of commercial coopetition, it is interesting to note that distribution coopetition generally generates a lower turnover than direct commercial coopetition; however, with the contracts being more numerous, the total turnover achieved through distribution coopetitions is ultimately more important.

Tensions Linked to Commercial Coopetition

Analysis of the verbatim transcripts shows that commercial coopetition causes tensions between coopetitors, which generate internal tensions by domino effect. Five types of tensions are thus identified, each appearing in one and/or another of the forms of coopetition, at the inter- and/or intraorganizational level, and with

different intensities; the five types are market opportunism and the distribution of income, sharing of knowledge about clients, access to internal client resources, cognitive and emotional dissonance, and role conflicts close to clients. Likewise, managing these tensions requires different methods for each of them. Table 5 summarizes the different categories of voltages and details their characteristics.

Our results show that depending on the forms of commercial cooperation, the nature and extent of the tensions vary. Likewise, in general, internal tensions are more acute than interorganizational tensions, and this for at least two reasons.

First, the effect is more significant for individuals concerned with being colleagues. DAPs are often seen as “traitors” by sales, technical and R&D departments because they cooperate with “the enemy”. Then, cooperative actions initiated by DAPs are often poorly accepted because they question the roles and legitimacy of other actors such as salespeople or solution developers (R&D and technical staff): *“As DAPs, our situation is not easy because other departments do not understand why we are working with competitors. Technical staff believe that we have the same or better solutions in-house and that there is no need to look for other solutions from other companies. Our role questions their own added value”* (DAP of an ETI). These tensions, which are linked to the questioning of employees’ know-how, are intensified by the financial impact that role ambiguity can generate. In fact, the objectives of the sales representatives and DAPs are not always clearly defined, which can lead to an overlap of functions and a reduction in certain objective bonuses. A DAP testified as follows: *“The problem that arises in our company, and in many others, is that with our partners, we sometimes address the same markets and therefore the same customers as the sales department, which creates internal conflicts of interest between the salespeople and ourselves”*.

The tensions impact actors belonging to departments of the same company, i.e., commercial, technical, R&D, etc. Commercial and technical teams can in fact slow down or cancel cooperative projects carried out by DAPs if they are perceived as conflicting with their interests or with their traditional cognitive patterns: *“I remember a case of failure with an editor where the general management agreed but the R&D guys did not. The alliance eclipsed their own solution; they did not understand the point and did everything to ensure that the project did not succeed. We have lost many customers”* (DAP of an ETI). These results thus underline the importance of knowing how to manage these tensions to reduce their impact.

Tools to Manage the Tensions of Commercial Cooperation

When there are suitable organizational and managerial mechanisms (internal organization, communication around strategy, directives, management rules, etc.) tensions are less strong. In particular, arbitration procedures, the remuneration system called “double booking” and the use of “sponsors” appear to be relevant solutions to reduce the tensions of commercial cooperation and remove certain obstacles.

Arbitration

Arbitration helps resolve conflicts of interest related to markets (opportunism and income sharing) and access to internal resources (see Table 5). It is often preceded by communication actions concerning the strategy of the company, the responsibilities of each department, or management rules concerning the distribution of clients, which help to mitigate role conflicts and cognitive dissonance. A DAP from a large firm explained as follows: *“The management must intervene regularly if certain tensions are to be prevented from developing too strongly internally and blocking commercial projects”*. Two other DAPs confirmed this information as follows: *“It is important to have a leadership on which to lean that will make final decisions regarding the response to tenders, which teams respond to which tenders, and how”*. Arbitration occurs when, despite everything, no agreement can be reached internally regarding a contract or a call for tenders.

Arbitration solves situations quickly in the short term but generates long-term problems; resentment, frustration, and demotivation have been identified in companies that have resorted to this procedure. In contrast, other managerial solutions seem unanimously accepted by the main players in commercial cooperation, namely, DAPs and salespeople; one of them is double booking.

Double Booking

The results show that the commercial remuneration system called “double booking” makes it possible to overcome resistance and tensions in relation to commercial cooperation. This system consists of allocating a variable part of the salary of the sales representatives indexed to the turnover achieved by the DAPs so that the sales representatives do not feel threatened by the DAPs. The salespeople are thus encouraged to exchange useful information with the DAPs so that they can carry out commercial partnerships. Conversely, DAPs have

TABLE 5
Tensions related to commercial coopetition

Commercial cooperative tensions						
Types of tension	Market opportunism and income distribution between partners		Sharing customer knowledge	Access to internal resources of customer	Cognitive and emotional dissonance	Customer-like role conflicts
Forms of coopetition involved	Direct commercial coopetition		Distribution coopetition and Direct commercial coopetition	Distribution coopetition and Direct commercial coopetition	Distribution coopetition and Direct commercial coopetition	Direct commercial coopetition
Level of coopetition	Inter- and intraorganizational		Inter- and intraorganizational	Intraorganizational	Intraorganizational	Intraorganizational
Characteristics	<i>Inter:</i> Competition to capture the same customers and develop their own market shares.	<i>Intra:</i> Compensation split between DAPs and commercials.	Need to share and protect customer knowledge and know key organizational players, past projects, customer expectations in terms of product/service, future customer projects, turnover of customers.	Competition between services for access to customer service resources, i.e., technical support, after-sales services, training, marketing.	Difficulty in accepting paradoxical business strategy with competing distribution channels. Emotional dissonance (i.e., favoring offers from “foreign” competitors rather than those of our colleagues) generating feelings of betrayal, injustice, rejection.	Difficulty in accepting to compete with colleagues and collaborate with competitors.
Intensity of tension	Intra > Inter		Direct commercial coopetition > Distribution Coopetition	Little impact of forms of coopetition on this type of tension.	Intra > Inter; Direct commercial coopetition > Distribution Coopetition	Intra > Inter
Actors involved	DAP and commercial		DAP, sales, technical and R&D teams	DAP, sales, technical and R&D teams, marketing, training, customer service	DAP, sales, technical and research team, marketing, training, customer service.	DAP and commercial
Tension management	Arbitration; Sponsor; <i>Double booking</i>		<i>Double booking</i>	Arbitration; <i>Double booking</i>	Sponsor; <i>Double booking</i>	<i>Double booking</i>

part of their variable salary indexed to the turnover of salespeople so that they are also more inclined to help them. For all of the respondents, double booking appears to be “the only truly effective tool in the management of internal conflicts linked to commercial coopetition because it increases confidence and reassures sales representatives and alliance managers” (DAP of an SME). By financially attracting salespeople and DAPs to the total sales made by both parties, double booking simultaneously motivates salespeople and DAPs and eliminates any conflict of interest between them. Double booking reduces antagonistic tensions and increases trust and cooperation while maintaining a high level of stimulation to achieve high turnover. The analysis of the interviews shows that this system makes it possible to reduce the tensions related to the following:

1. The opportunism of individuals: “We trust each other more and help each other”;
2. Information sharing: “Since this system was put in place, salespeople have given us information on certain customers”;
3. Access to internal client resources: “There is much less conflict with other departments too, because we organize ourselves better in terms of time and resources allocation”;
4. Cognitive and emotional dissonance: “Salespeople better understand why the company has an interest in cooperating with competitors”; and
5. Role conflicts: “Salespeople are more comfortable with having an indirect sales force that can reach the same customers as them”.

The Role of Sponsors

The data analysis highlights the beneficial role of sponsors in reducing inter- and intraorganizational tensions, particularly those related to cognitive and emotional dissonance. Indeed, the DAPs have an interest in identifying a third person not only in the partnership but also in their own organization who will support and legitimize their role in the eyes of other services and of the management. This sponsor can be either the vice president of a large company, a key person in the organization chart, or an operational person who has internal influence: *"It is important to identify a sponsor in the partner who will support our actions and thus demonize partnerships between competitors. In fact, it is faster and easier in small firms to find key people who are well trained and informed than in large firms"*. One interviewee explained that the success of complex projects is often due to the influence of these third parties on the perception of cooperative action: *"When commercial projects are complex and contain a strong competitive dimension, it is essential to have the support of a person at the partner's but also internally. Otherwise, the people affected by the project will not understand that we are going through a partner who is a competitor when we could try to win the customer alone"* (DAP of an SME). This makes it possible to avoid blockages of certain projects: *"The R&D team at home blocked the project. They felt that they had such good products and that it was not necessary to collaborate with us. If we had had a sponsor there, maybe we could have saved the project"* (DAP from a large company).

Discussion

Theoretical Contributions

This research aimed to identify the forms that commercial cooperation can take and the resulting tensions in order to be able to better manage them. We identified two main forms of commercial cooperation and highlighted five types of tensions. We then identified methods of managing cooperation, including double booking, which has not been highlighted in the literature thus far. The results of this research thus make it possible to complete the current knowledge on cooperation and enrich the literature on its management.

The Forms and Characteristics of Commercial Cooperation

First, this research confirms the research highlighting the specifics of commercial cooperation compared to R&D cooperation (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018;

Pellegrin-Boucher & Roy, 2019; Robert *et al.*, 2018) and offers new theoretical contributions since it shows that commercial cooperation takes two main forms, namely, direct commercial cooperation and distribution cooperation. These two forms involve tensions of a different nature that must be managed with specific tools (see Table 5). In all the cooperative situations encountered, interorganizational cooperation generates intraorganizational cooperation and new tensions, which is an outcome that has not been identified in previous work. These results complete and enrich the work on cooperation close to customers (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2016; Czakon & Czernek, 2016; Mariani, 2016; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Pellegrin-Boucher & Roy, 2019; Robert *et al.*, 2018).

Better Knowledge of Cooperative Tensions

Our research enriches former research works that have shown the existence of cooperative tensions (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016; Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Raza-Ullah *et al.*, 2014; Seran *et al.*, 2016) by identifying five types of tensions linked to forms of commercial cooperation. The tensions linked to the opportunism of partners mainly concern the conquest of customers and markets. These tensions initially emerge at the interorganizational level, as evidenced by certain studies (Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Tidström, 2014); however, they also propagate at the intraorganizational level, which had not been highlighted until now. Moreover, we emphasize the link between the type of cooperation and the impact on the tensions created.

Tensions related to knowledge sharing relate to customer information and not to products (Robert *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, this type of tension concerns not only interorganizational cooperation (Fernandez *et al.*, 2014; Gnyawali *et al.*, 2008; Gnyawali & Park, 2009) but also the intraorganizational level (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019). These daily tensions are exacerbated internally in regard to direct commercial cooperation.

Our results complete the relevant literature (Luo *et al.*, 2007; Seran *et al.*, 2016; Tsai, 2002) by showing that in cases of commercial cooperation, the tensions related to the access of internal resources concern resources that are linked to support and customer service, i.e., technical service, marketing service, training service, and after-sales service. These resources are material (documentation, products, training), human (staff requirements), and financial (variable remuneration of sales representatives and DAPs).

The results contribute to the knowledge of the tensions related to cognitive and emotional dissonance (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Tidström, 2014) by extending them to coopetition close to the client. In addition, we show that these tensions concern a very wide category of actors, i.e., salespeople, DAPs, technical staff, marketing departments, training departments, and after-sales service-people, who can contribute to the success or failure of the project. coopetition. We also show that intra-tensions are more acute than interorganizational tensions. One explanation for this outcome may lie in the multidimensionality of this type of tension. These are in fact linked to strategic antagonisms (how can we collaborate with a competitor when we have identical offers internally?) However, it is also interpersonal (how can we favor the offers of “foreign” competitors rather than those of our colleagues?). They are also financial and technical since the know-how and the variable remuneration of certain contributors are called into question through the choices of coopetition (variable salaries of sales representatives, skills of internal technical teams). The combination of these different elements make the tensions longer lasting and more complex to manage since employees may feel that the DAPs are casting doubt on their legitimacy and their know-how (case of the technical team and sales representatives); they can also feel threatened regarding their remuneration (case of salespeople). Strong negative emotions are thus experienced, i.e., feelings of betrayal, injustice or rejection, which can be likened to emotional or affective dissonance.

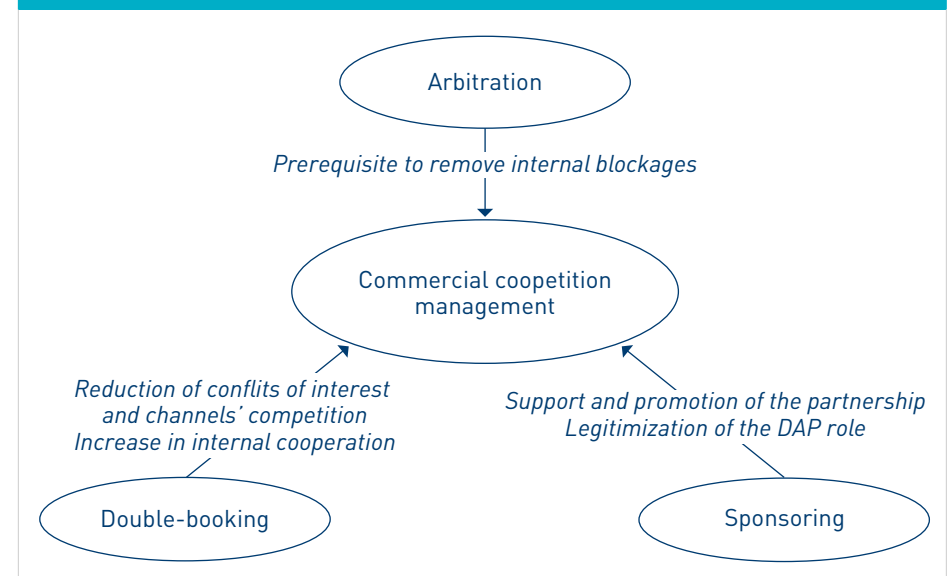
Managerial Implications: Management Methods Promoting the Success of Coopetition

From a managerial point of view, we offer several action mechanisms by which to manage the tensions related to commercial coopetition. We highlight the role of internal directives, communication and management rules (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018; Tidström, 2014) and that of arbitration (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018). The strategic directives make it possible to act upstream to make the managers involved aware of the company’s strategy, particularly coopetition. They also make it possible to compartmentalize responsibilities depending on the cooperative (DAPs) or competitive (commercial) dimension of coopetition and thus avoid certain tensions related to the paradox it generates (Fernandez *et al.*, 2013, 2014; Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2013, 2018).

Should this not suffice, arbitration can quickly resolve a conflict (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018); however, in some cases, this solution turns out to be short-term and generates other long-term tensions (resentment, demotivation, mistrust, etc.). It is therefore necessary to implement other solutions in parallel. Our research suggests that other tools can be used to reduce the brakes and blockages associated with commercial coopetition (Fig. 1 below).

FIGURE 1

Management of commercial coopetition: proposals for levers of action



In particular, we draw attention to the importance of the tool called double booking, which reduces conflicts of interest, softens competition and allows the development of internal cooperation while stimulating commercial activity. This procedure contributes to better acceptance and better individual and organizational integration of commercial coopetition. Finally, the presence of a sponsor improves

the legitimacy of DAPs and makes it easier to implement commercial coopetition strategies not only internally but also with partners. The use of a sponsor can also be part of an arbitration (Pellegrin-Boucher *et al.*, 2018) since the latter takes on the role of not only an influencer but also sometimes of an arbiter.

Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze the forms of commercial coopetition and their tensions to better understand these relationships and to put forward appropriate managerial responses. Thus, this research has identified specific forms of coopetition and studied the nature of existing tensions and certain managerial arrangements that had not been identified until now. It has also corroborated the idea developed by recent work according to which commercial coopetition is distinguished from cooperation located upstream in the value chain and requires a specific analytical framework.

The contributions of this research thus lie in the highlighting of (1) two original forms of commercial coopetition and their characteristics, (2) tensions of different nature and intensity, (3) a set of proposals for better management of commercial coopetition, and (4) links between forms, tensions and managerial solutions. In particular, we propose the implementation of double booking and sponsors to reduce cooperative tensions and increase the chances of success of cooperation.

However, this research has pointed out some limitations, which constitute new research perspectives. As this study is monosectoral, it would be advisable to investigate the strategies and issues that are specific to commercial coopetition in other industries with different competitive intensities and/or in an international management context in which the multicultural dimension increases the complexity of the relationships (both internal and external). On the other hand, enlarging the sample by integrating a larger number of VSBs/SMEs would make it possible to study asymmetric coopetitions (a small company that cooperates with a large company) and to see to what extent they generate tensions and/or impose specific management methods. This point would be interesting to explore further in future research that would take more into account the size of the company. Concerning the tools suggested for the management of tensions, the question of measuring their degree of effectiveness through specific indicators is also an interesting perspective for future study. Finally, as cooperation is a

dynamic process by nature (Gnyawali & Park, 2011), it would be interesting to study the implementation of these managerial mechanisms over time and at different levels. A better knowledge of the dynamics of cooperation is indeed an essential factor in the development of this type of relationship and in the management of the related tensions (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014).

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APPENDIX 1

Excerpts from the coding scheme

Themes	Level 1 subthemes	Level 2 subthemes	Code	Interview data/verbatim	Subcodes
1. Business characteristics	1.1. Nationality	1.1. 1. Nationality publisher	EDI_NAT	French publisher <i>"Our company is a French start-up" (i8 e.g.).</i>	EDI_NAT_FR
				1.1.1.2. European publisher	EDI_NAT_EUR
				1.1.1.3. American Publisher	EDI_NAT_US
2. Interviewee's Goals	2.1. Creation		ALL_CREA	2.1.1. Creating alliances and partnerships between publishers <i>"Some companies distribute competing solutions to each other" (I14).</i>	DAP_CREA_ED
				2.1.2. Creating alliances and partnerships with distributors <i>"There is a need to create ecosystems with multiple partners, including distributors".</i>	DAP_CREA_DISTRI
				2.1.3. Creating alliances and partnerships with integrators <i>"Integrators bring resources that we do not have as publishers".</i>	DAP_CREA_INT
3. Characteristics of trade agreements	3.1. Distribution agreements		CAR_DIS	3.1.1. Distribution Features <i>"In the case of distribution partnerships, it is a matter of selling through a partner who is sometimes our competitor on certain activities. In the enterprise software sector, there are many such partnerships".</i>	CAR_DIS_PAR
				3.1.3. Multiple <i>"Distribution agreements are multiple and nonexclusive and everyone makes them".</i>	CAR_DIS_MUL
				3.1.6. Coopetition Stops <i>"The partnerships between Oracle and SAP have been shut down for about a year and a half because SAP had become too competitive with Oracle. They no longer see themselves as partners at all but as enemies".</i>	CAR_DIS_ARR
4. Characteristics of coopetition	4.1. Cooperation		CAR_COOP	4.1.1. Cooperation is facilitated by the Director of Alliances and Partnerships <i>"It is all about the human".</i> <i>"If you change people, the alliance can also change completely".</i>	CAR_COOP_DIR
				4.1.2. Cooperation between competitors is facilitated by a third party <i>"If we have to cooperate with a competitor in an alliance, it is the service company that connects the competing solutions. Connectivity between systems and competing teams will be carried by the consulting team, never by our company".</i>	CAR_COOP_TI
				4.1.3. Links are created over the years even between cooperators <i>"With SAP's alliance manager, we have become almost friends".</i>	CAR_COOP_LI
				4.1.4. Cooperation is not exclusive in the case of distribution coopetition <i>"In the case of distribution coopetition, we have multiple partners, competing or not".</i>	CAR_COOP_EXC
	4.2. Competition		CAR_CONC	4.2.1. Competition is scalable according to the cooperator's strategy in relation to the partner <i>"If your partner develops solutions that are increasingly more competitive with yours, the relationship becomes more competitive and complicated".</i>	CAR_CONC_STRAT
				4.2.2. Competition is pervasive <i>"In the sector there is always the temptation for publishers to become integrative and vice versa".</i> <i>"Competition is pervasive in the industry. The best partners can become the worst enemies overnight".</i>	CAR_CONC_PRES



APPENDIX 1

Excerpts from the coding scheme

Themes	Level 1 subthemes	Level 2 subthemes	Code	Interview data/verbatims	Subcodes
5. Coopetition Tensions	5.2. Interorga tensions		TENS_ EXT	5.2.1 Interorganizational tensions between alliance and partnership directors <i>"When competition between our companies increases, the relationship between us becomes more complicated"</i> .	TENS_EXT_DIR
	5.1. Internal tensions	5.1.1. With R and D	TENS_ INT_RD	5.1.1.1. Internal tensions with the research and development team	TENS_INT_RD_ CONF
		5.1.2 General	TENS_ INT_GAL	5.1.1.2. Internal tensions with the services <i>"Our situation is not easy because other services do not understand why we work with competitors"</i> . <i>"Salespeople believe that we are working with the enemy and technical staff believe that we have such good or better solutions internally and that there is no need to look for other external solutions or services"</i> .	TENS_INT_GAL
6. Management	6.3. Arbitration		MGT_ ARB	6.3. Management Arbitration <i>"Indeed, management must intervene regularly if it is to prevent certain tensions from developing too strongly internally and blocking commercial projects"</i> .	MGT_ARB
	6.4. Others	6.4.1. Double booking	MGT_AUT_DB	6.4.1. Double booking <i>"It is the only truly effective tool in managing internal conflicts related to commercial coopetition"</i> . <i>"The issue of cooperation and partnerships is well understood by salespeople and sales management in my current business. Salespeople are indeed interested in total sales (commission on total budget direct sales and indirect sales) and not only on their sales. This is called double booking. This increases the size of the piece of pie for both salespeople and alliance managers. It motivates them, and there is no more tension between them"</i> .	MGT_AUT_DB