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Inhibitors of Success in Interorganizational Collaboration in Tourism Context and Best Practices to Face Them

Interorganizational collaborations are fascinating, both in their complexity and in the feats they can accomplish. Perfectly executed, a strategic alliance is a golden opportunity that allows partners to create strong and lasting competitive advantages. On the other hand, it can also become a real Pandora's box for the organizations involved. Indeed, partners can destroy each other while trying to collaborate. Despite the inherent risks, this type of collaboration is becoming more popular. While some collaborations succeed in avoiding or overcoming the pitfalls, most of them downright fail or settle for unsatisfactory results.

While the success factors of collaboration have been extensively studied, inhibitors of success, that is to say the problems leading inevitably to failure, have received little attention from researchers. Both are essential in order to fully understand the complexity of an interorganizational collaboration and how to make it efficient. Knowing what to do is great. But this is only one side of the story. Knowing what to avoid and how to get out of a misstep are essential information in the reality of managers. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to determine key inhibitors of success in interorganizational collaboration and best solutions to overcome them.

Since cooperation is widespread in the tourism industry, the latter has been selected as the study context. Inspired by the methodological traditions of Grounded Theory and the Delphi method, we will collect data using two techniques: (1) semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, and (2) qualitative questionnaires (Delphi Method). First, interviews will reveal the main problems experienced by tourism stakeholders during interorganizational collaborations. Possible solutions may emerge at this stage but are expected later in the data collection. Second, the Delphi method will allow a panel of experts to determine best practices for overcoming problems.

Drawing on previous research and data collected during a preliminary fieldwork (13 semi-structured interviews with tourism actors), we have identified seven inhibitors of success: *opportunism*, *cultural differences* (both in terms of corporate cultures and national cultures), *communications problems*, *roles and responsibility problems*, *interpersonal issues*, *information asymmetry* and *power asymmetry*. It should be noted that they all are relational problems, whose importance tend to be underestimated by managers. Yet, our data reveal that these problems overlap or are interrelated. Often, one problem leads to another. And so on. It is therefore essential to know how to get out of a misstep, as a problematic situation can quickly become a quicksand in which the partners are sinking until the collaboration ends.