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REBELS WITH A CAUSE: PERCEPTIONS, BELIEFS, AND THE COOPETITIVE DYNAMICS OF ENTREPRENEURS IN THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW SPACE INDUSTRY (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

In the earliest stages of existence, entrepreneurs and founders are actively trying to acquire resources and sponsorship, most often in fields that do not yet exist. The focus for early-stage entrepreneurs in the New Space Industry is on establishing the direction of a nascent field by influencing governmental policy so they may carve out a salient space for their firms. Yet despite the numerous policy-relevant implications and the need to contend with the governments ruling over them, we have little knowledge of the role of regulatory bodies and their mutual interaction with these entrepreneurs. This paper investigates how, and under what conditions, coopetition emerges between focal actors in the emergence of the New Space entrepreneurial field.

Method

Using qualitative data from individuals in the New Space Industry, and archival data from conference proceedings from the past eight years (2003-2011) of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Space Conference, we explore the actions entrepreneurs take to engage coopetitively with regulatory bodies and authorizing agencies. In our empirical analysis, we examine how ethos acts as a key mechanism in enabling coopetition, and the perceptions, beliefs, and coopetitive dynamics of entrepreneurial dynamics and emergence.

Results and Implications

In exploring the emergence of the New Space Industry, we find that a combination of cooperative and competitive dynamics exists at an individual-level among entrepreneurs, investors, and key individuals representing regulatory bodies and authorizing agencies as each navigates strategic positions. In contrast to firms, the various entities involved in the emergence of a new field face ambiguity with respect to when and how to engage collaboratively and when and how to engage competitively and in this paper, we identify the various drivers that guide a coopetitive orientation, in the absence of formal contracts and agreements.

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