

Exploring coopetition and value-based networks in business models for sustainability—A case study of the specialty coffee industry in Colombia

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[Correction added on 29 July 2024, after first online publication: The corresponding author's name has been corrected in this version.]

Abstract

Drawing on coopetition-based and values-based business model networks, we explore competitors' coevolutionary interactions to drive sustainability. Using a specialty coffee industry case study in Colombia, we propose an analytical framework for collaboration, leveraging resources to transform neglected industry values. We apply the congruence analysis method to compare theoretical expectations with empirical findings, providing rigorous evidence. Our study reveals that developing values-based networks through coopetition allows collective problem resolution and offers new opportunities for value creation. This research contributes to coopetition and values-based network theories, emphasizing practical implications for sustainability-focused business models. By highlighting competitor collaboration intricacies, our study enhances our understanding of the dynamics of local markets.

KEYWORDS

business model, congruence analysis, coopetition, sustainability, value creation, values-based networks

1 | INTRODUCTION

Sustainability challenges encompass social, environmental, and cultural values often overlooked within communities, impacting businesses operating therein. Some firms address these challenges by integrating them into their business models, creating new market value (Bocken et al., 2014; Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Schaltegger et al., 2016). However, constructing business models around these values demands resources beyond the capacity of a single firm, particularly limiting smaller firms' ability to incorporate sustainability into their strategies (Klewitz & Hansen, 2014). Even if smaller firms acknowledge the strategic importance of sustainable

business models, the innovation process may overwhelm them due to resource constraints (Halme & Korpela, 2014; Kiefer et al., 2019). Can competitors collaborate, pooling complementary resources to transform neglected industry values into new customer value?

Competitors within the same market often possess similar resources and specialized knowledge to meet demand and capitalize on environmental opportunities (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). Consequently, they make excellent collaborators in value creation, especially when their resources are complementary (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Lavie, 2006; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009). Sharing knowledge and business opportunities facilitates the exploitation of complementary resources, fostering the creation of new market offers. The primary analytical framework guiding this inquiry is the coopetition-based business models' perspective (Ritala et al., 2014).

Abbreviations: CON, Congruence Analysis; VBN, Values-bases Network.

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Acknowledging neglected industry values, a consensus on ideal values and the collaborative adoption of these values in business models lead to the formation of values-based networks (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017). This framework constitutes the primary analytical lens for this stream of research.

Our investigation explores how competitors collaborate to drive a network of business models for sustainability (Schaltegger et al., 2016). We aim to theoretically understand and explain this phenomenon by employing a qualitative small-N case study method through the congruence analysis (CON) approach (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). CON allows the deduction of specific expectations from abstract theories, enabling their comparison with a broad set of empirical observations. This rigorous approach supports the construction of a new analytical framework, enhancing our understanding of the phenomenon. Through CON, we will explore the complementary or competing nature of the analytical frameworks proposed by Ritala et al. (2014) and Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), applying them to our case study titled “Specialty Coffee Shop Network in the Coffee Cultural Landscape of Colombia.” Our findings illustrate that competitors can collaboratively steer their business models toward common sociosustainable values, leveraging complementary resources and resulting in a network of business models for sustainability. Our contribution to the literature is a novel analytical framework for collaboration among competitors, directing their business models toward neglected industry values through a values-based network.

Our primary research focus delves into examining the coevolutionary interaction among competitors' business models within a market, following Schaltegger et al.'s (2016) suggestion. Building on the proposal by Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), we utilize values as a lever to form business networks addressing problems beyond the scope of individual firms and their business models. Additionally, we consider Ritala et al.'s (2014) proposition in constructing business models based on coopetition to complement resources among competitors for value creation.

Overall, the new theoretical insight from the use of congruence analysis is a framework that effectively explains how competitors collaborated to promote sustainable practices and create a network of sustainable business models, filling gaps in existing approaches of the coopetition-based business model (Ritala et al., 2014) or the values-based business model network (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017). Our empirical findings integrate these study fields into a new analytical framework, providing a better explanation when established theories are insufficient.

The paper's structure unfolds: Section 2 presents the main expectations of coopetition and values-based network approaches. In Section 3, we introduce the congruence analysis (CON) approach and present empirical evidence regarding how competitors contribute to forming a business model network for sustainability. Section 4 contrasts the leading theory's expectations (derived from the conceptual background section) with empirical evidence (derived from the case study's observation) and delves into the analysis of each theory's implications and explanatory power. We culminate this section with a new analytical framework summarizing our conceptual and practical

innovation for collaboration among competitors, orienting their business models toward the neglected values of their industry through a values-based network.

2 | CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

This section introduces and specifies coopetition and values-based network approaches, focusing on propositions and expectations derived from both theories to comprehend competitors' collaboration when adopting neglected industry values in their business models.

2.1 | Coopetition approach

Coopetition, a term coined to describe the integration of collaboration and competition among competitors, has garnered significant attention in literature across various industries. Initially conceptualized by Nalebuff and Brandenburger (1996), it emphasizes the importance of leveraging shared resources to achieve common goals, thereby generating valuable outcomes. Building upon this foundational idea, Bengtsson and Kock (1999) expanded the definition to encompass firm-level behaviors where competitors collaborate for mutual benefits, such as value creation.

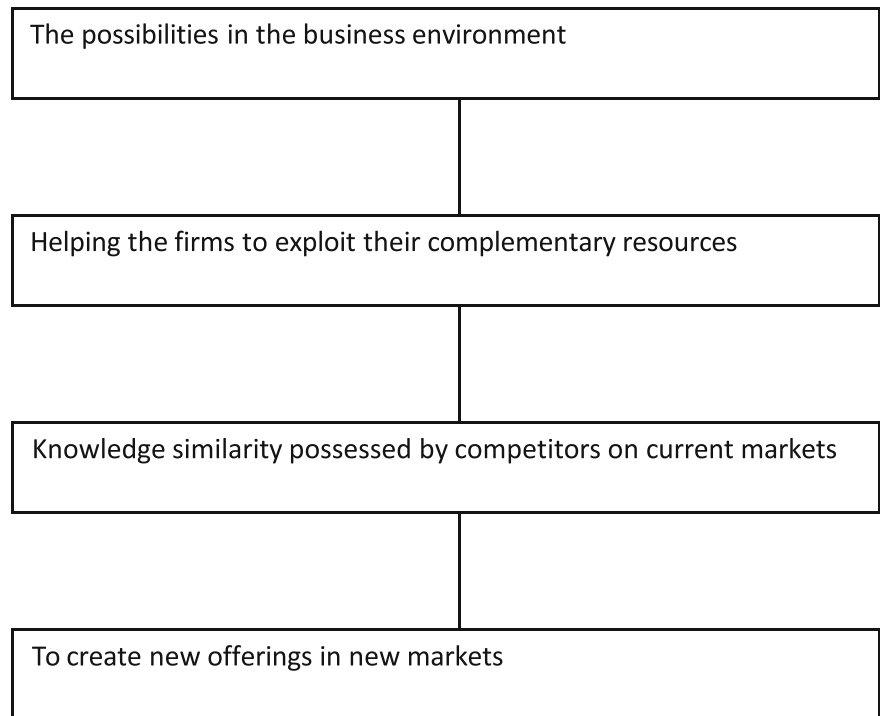
The literature on coopetition has evolved considerably, with contributions ranging from works introducing the concept, other to empirical evidence about outcomes of coopetition, to more recent studies examining its application in specific industries. For example, studies examining the outcomes of coopetition strategies conducted by Garcia-Castro and Aguilera (2015), Chou and Zolkiewski (2018), and Gnyawali and Madhavan (2001) delve into areas such as corporate reputation, overall firm performance, and innovation. Moreover, specific insights offered by Choi et al. (2010), Lindström and Polska (2016), Czakon and Czernek (2016), Mathias et al. (2018), Felzensztein et al. (2018), and Crick and Crick (2020) provide nuanced perspectives on coopetition strategies within various sectors. Such literature has shown how strategically using shared resources among collaborating firms is key to enhancing competitiveness (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Lavie, 2006; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009; Velu, 2016).

Trust building and adherence to shared norms, as Dyer and Singh (1998) emphasized, are critical factors for successful coopetition, enabling organizations to synergize their strengths and collectively enhance industry competitiveness. Therefore, while coopetition requires a set of skills and capabilities from the firms involved, it supports their ability to compete in the market, providing benefits for the industry.

Further elaborating on the operational dynamics of coopetition, Bengtsson and Kock (2000) stressed its embeddedness within broader industry networks, emphasizing that it does not occur in isolation but rather as a longer-term form of collaboration. Rusko (2011) expanded on this notion by highlighting the role of coopetition within business ecosystems, suggesting that its impact extends beyond individual firms to shape entire industry networks. Das and Teng (2000)

FIGURE 1 Expectations from the coopetition approach. Authors' elaboration based on Ritala, Golnam, and Wegmann (2014)

EXPECTATION COOPETITION APPROACH



underscored the importance of shared vision and mutual understanding in successfully integrating competitive strategies, aligning goals, and fostering cohesive working relationships. While the importance of shared vision and alignment of business and industry goals is underscored in this coopetition research, this is not further discussed in the context of sustainability strategies or common sustainable development goals for the industry.

Literature examining sustainability and coopetition gains depth from authors like Volschenk et al. (2016), Scandeliuss and Cohen (2016), Manzhynski and Figge (2020), and Kumar et al. (2021), exploring the interplay between collaborative strategies and sustainable practices across different industries. This nascent field of literature focuses on the sustainability outcome, developing the specifics of capabilities necessary for coopetition for sustainability.

Therefore, while empirical models of coopetition have focused on capabilities and the study of the phenomenon in business ecosystems, contemporary perspectives have focused on coopetition-based business models in entrepreneurial firms (Crick, 2019; McGrath et al., 2019). However, there is a noticeable gap in research on coopetition in the context of business models for sustainability and networks. While interest in coopetition and sustainability exists, coopetition in the context of business networks for sustainability has not yet been fully integrated.

Other approaches, such as the values-based network approach, as explored in the following, provide a complementary perspective, focusing on collaborative strategies aligned with sustainable practices.

For the congruence analysis from the coopetition approach, we emphasize the seminal article by Ritala et al. (2014), which proposed coopetition-based business models (see Figure 1). Through this analytical framework, we guide the exploration of how competitors could collaborate to incorporate neglected industry values into their business models, shedding light on practical implementations of cooperative strategies.

2.1.1 | Expectations from the coopetition approach

To summarize the main tenets of the coopetition approach (which are further elaborated in Table 1) and the theoretical expectations we might derive from them, we highlight the words of Ritala et al. (2014:238): “*The knowledge similarity possessed by competitors on current markets, as well as on the possibilities in the business environment, may help the firms to exploit their complementary resources even more strongly to create new offerings in new markets.*”

2.2 | Values-based network approach

The literature on values-based networks posits the argument that innovation addressing complex societal challenges will occur in a network of different agents and that understanding the shared values of such agents will be key to successfully bring about this innovation

TABLE 1 Summary of theoretical expectations derived from coopetition approach

Expectations from theoretical approach	Authors' topic	Authors	Year	Title	Source title
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Concept	Bengtsson, M., & Kock, S.	1999	Cooperation and competition in relationships between competitors in business networks	Journal of business & industrial marketing
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Concept	Nalebuff, B., & Brandenburger, A.	1996	Coopetition	New York
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Shared resources and capabilities	Ritala, P., & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, P.	2009	What's in it for me? Creating and appropriating value in innovation-related coopetition	Technovation
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Shared resources and capabilities	Dyer, J. H., & Singh, H.	1998	The relational view: Cooperative strategy and sources of interorganizational competitive advantage	Academy of management review
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Shared resources and capabilities	Lavie, D.	2006	The competitive advantage of interconnected firms: An extension of the resource-based view	Academy of management review
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Shared resources and capabilities	Velu, C.	2016	Evolutionary or revolutionary business model innovation through coopetition? The role of dominance in network markets	Industrial Marketing Management
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Network structures and ecosystems	Bengtsson, M., & Kock, S.	2000	"Coopetition" in business networks—to cooperate and compete simultaneously	Industrial marketing management
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Network structures and ecosystems	Rusko, R.	2011	Exploring the concept of coopetition: A typology for the strategic moves of the Finnish forest industry	Industrial Marketing Management
Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Network structures and ecosystems	Das, T. K., & Teng, B. S.	2000	A resource-based theory of strategic alliances	Journal of management
Knowledge similarity possessed by competitors on current markets	Outcomes of coopetition	Chou, H. H., & Zolkiewski, J.	2018	Coopetition and value creation and appropriation: The role of interdependencies, tensions and harmony	Industrial Marketing Management
Knowledge similarity possessed by competitors on current markets	Outcomes of coopetition	Garcia-Castro, R., & Aguilera, R. V.	2015	Incremental value creation and appropriation in a world with multiple stakeholders	Strategic management journal
Knowledge similarity possessed by competitors on current markets	Outcomes of coopetition	Gnyawali, D. R., & Madhavan, R.	2001	Cooperative networks and competitive dynamics: A structural embeddedness perspective	Academy of Management review
To create new offerings in new markets	Specific industries	Choi, P., Garcia, R., & Friedrich, C.	2010	The drivers for collective horizontal coopetition: a case study of screwcap initiatives in the international wine industry	International Journal of Strategic Business Alliances
To create new offerings in new markets	Specific industries	Crick, J. M., & Crick, D.	2020	Coopetition and COVID-19: Collaborative business-to-business marketing strategies in a pandemic crisis	Industrial Marketing Management

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Expectations from theoretical approach	Authors' topic	Authors	Year	Title	Source title
To create new offerings in new markets	Specific industries	Czakov, W., & Czernek, K.		The role of trust-building mechanisms in entering into network cooptation: The case of tourism networks in Poland	Industrial Marketing Management
To create new offerings in new markets	Specific industries	Felzensztein, C., Gimmon, E., & Deans, K. R.	2018	Cooptation in regional clusters: Keep calm and expect unexpected changes	Industrial Marketing Management
To create new offerings in new markets	Specific industries	Lindström, T., & Polska, P.	2016	Cooptation close to the customer—A case study of a small business network	Industrial Marketing Management
To create new offerings in new markets	Specific industries	Mathias, B. D., Huyghe, A., Frid, C. J., & Galloway, T. L.	2018	An identity perspective on cooptation in the craft beer industry	Strategic Management Journal
To create new offerings in new markets	Entrepreneurial firms	Crick, J. M.	2019	Incorporating cooptation into the entrepreneurial marketing literature: Directions for future research	Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship
To create new offerings in new markets	Entrepreneurial firms	McGrath, H., O'Toole, T., & Canning, L.	2019	Cooptation: a fundamental feature of entrepreneurial firms' collaborative dynamics	Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing
The possibilities in the business environment	Sustainability and cooptation	Kumar, A., Connell, J., & Bhattacharyya, A.	2021	Co-optation for corporate social responsibility and sustainability: drivers and success factors	Sustainability Accounting
The possibilities in the business environment	Sustainability and cooptation	Manzhynski, S., & Figge, F.	2020	Cooptation for sustainability: Between organizational benefit and societal good	Business Strategy and the Environment
The possibilities in the business environment	Sustainability and cooptation	Scandeli, C., & Cohen, G.	2016	Sustainability program brands: Platforms for collaboration and co-creation	Industrial Marketing Management
The possibilities in the business environment	Sustainability and cooptation	Volschenk, J., Ungerer, M., & Smit, E.	2016	Creation and appropriation of socioenvironmental value in cooptation	Industrial Marketing Management
Analytical framework	Analytical framework	Ritala, P., Golnam, A., & Wegmann, A.	2014	Cooptation-based business models: The case of Amazon.com	Industrial Marketing Management

Authors' elaboration based on the conceptual background.

(Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017). Values are understood as the subjective understandings of what is socially desirable, and tackling sustainability problems from a network solution will not be possible as such values are not sufficiently aligned. Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017) introduce this concept in relation to a complex form of sustainability-oriented innovation, business model innovation. In doing so, the concept of values-based networks builds on literature on topics such as business model innovation, sustainability integration, innovative collaboration, and the role of shared values in collaborative networks.

Regarding business model innovation for sustainability, the literature has evolved towards an understanding of its complex nature and the need of interplay of different actors. Seminal literature highlights complexity and dynamism as key elements of business model

innovation for sustainability (Schaltegger et al., 2016; Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008; Zott et al., 2011). Moreover, Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) stress aligning business models with environmental and social values in the context of sustainability, which already introduced the role of values in one of the seminal papers on business model innovation for sustainability. Bocken et al. (2014), Kiefer et al. (2019), and Klewitz and Hansen (2014) offer practical insights into sustainable business models in the face of resource limitations.

Chesbrough and Rosenbloom (2002) laid the groundwork for collaborative approaches, influencing how organizations approach business model innovation through open innovation. These collaborative approaches were soon introduced into the business model for sustainability literature as well: Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013) explore collaborative efforts within networks leading to innovative and

EXPECTATION VALUES-BASED NETWORK APPROACH

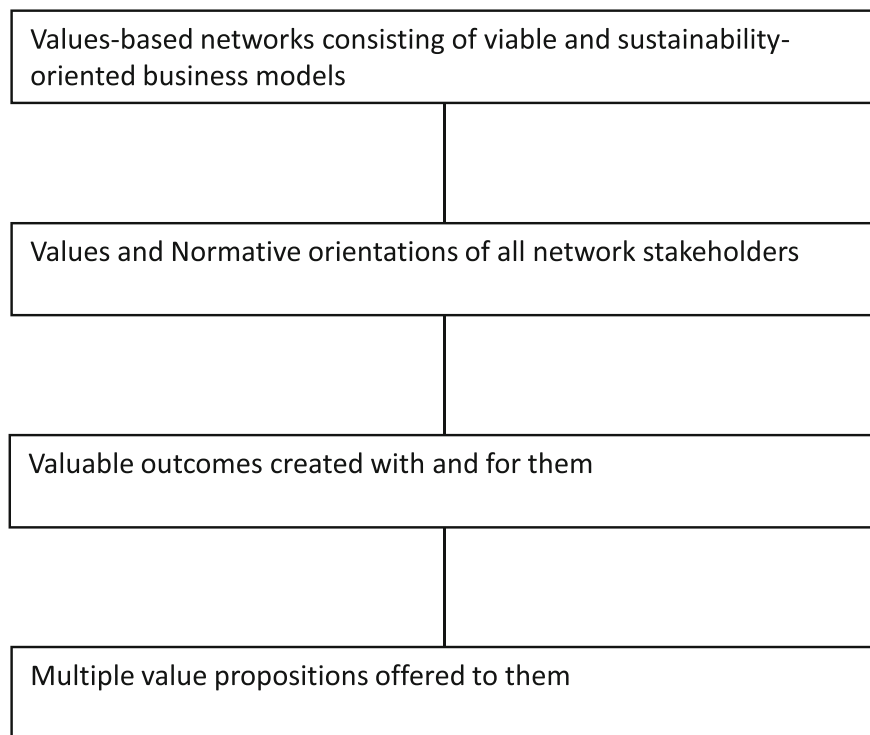


FIGURE 2 Expectations from the values-based network approach. Authors' elaboration based on Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017)

sustainable business models. Others look at the different roles firms might take in the networks: Inigo et al. (2017) delve into network orchestration, providing insights into how coordination within networks influences business model innovation. Engwall et al. (2021) explore how incumbents may use networks to test the waters in sustainability transitions. Stål et al.'s (2023) extensive review of external relationships in business model innovation for sustainability highlights the need for further exploration of the tensions in these relationships, and for a cooperative business model innovation for sustainability research agenda.

This matter of tensions between values is also explored by Schneider and Clauß (2020), whose findings showcase the interdependence of three key choices (catering for multiple purposes, behavioral consistency, and collaboration) of the multiple stakeholders involved to create cascading value. The literature on values in sustainability-oriented business model innovation has since gained nuance, with Neesham et al. (2023) aiming to provide a satisfactory analytical framework to actually define value, or Faccin et al. (2022) developing an actionable framework to develop competences for values-based innovation competences. Woolley et al. (2022) show how niches can be created through values-based networks, as in the case of sustainable chocolate.

Yet for the congruence analysis from the values-based network approach, we emphasize the seminal article by Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), which provides an analytical framework for understanding how businesses can collaborate based on shared values (see Figure 2), because later work builds on this work. Through this

analytical framework, we guide the exploration of how competitors could collaborate to incorporate neglected industry values into their business models, shedding light on emphasizing shared values as a driver for collaboration.

2.2.1 | Expectations from the values-based network approach

To summarize the main tenets of the values-based network approach (which are further elaborated in Table 2) and the theoretical expectations we might derive from them, we highlight the words of Breuer and Lüdeke Freund (2017:16) to provide a taste of the theoretical expectations of values-based theory: “*The formation of values-based networks consisting of viable and sustainability-oriented business models. This requires synthesis and careful definition of not only the values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders but also the multiple value propositions offered to them and the valuable outcomes created with and for them.*”

2.3 | Theoretical contributions and conceptual framework

This section encapsulates the theoretical expectations stemming from both cooperation and values-based network approaches. These

TABLE 2 Summary of theoretical expectations derived from values-based network approach

Expectations from theoretical approach	Authors' topic	Authors	Year	Title	Source title
Multiple value propositions offered to them	Concept	Zott, C., Amit, R., & Massa, L.	2011	The business model: recent developments and future research	Journal of management
Viable and sustainability-oriented business models	Sustainability and business models	Boons, F., & Lüdeke-Freund, F.	2013	Business models for sustainable innovation: state-of-the-art and steps towards a research agenda	Journal of Cleaner production
Viable and sustainability-oriented business models	Sustainability and business models	Engwall, M., Kaulio, M., Karakaya, E., Miterev, M., & Berlin, D.	2021	Experimental networks for business model innovation: A way for incumbents to navigate sustainability transitions?	Technovation
Viable and sustainability-oriented business models	Sustainability and business models	Schaltegger, S., Hansen, E. G., & Lüdeke-Freund, F.	2016	Business models for sustainability: Origins, present research, and future avenues	Organization & environment
Viable and sustainability-oriented business models	Sustainability and business models	Schneider, S., & Clauß, T.	2020	Business models for sustainability: Choices and consequences	Organization & Environment
Viable and sustainability-oriented business models	Sustainability and business models	Stubbs, W., & Cocklin, C.	2008	Conceptualizing a "sustainability business model"	Organization & environment
Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Collaborative approach and business model	Chesbrough, H., & Rosenbloom, R. S.	2002	The role of the business model in capturing value from innovation: evidence from Xerox Corporation's technology spin-off companies	Industrial and corporate change
Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Collaborative approach and business model	Inigo, E. A., Albareda, L., & Ritala, P.	2017	Business model innovation for sustainability: Exploring evolutionary and radical approaches through dynamic capabilities	Industry and Innovation
Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Shared resources and capabilities	Bocken, N. M., Short, S. W., Rana, P., & Evans, S.	2014	A literature and practice review to develop sustainable business model archetypes	Journal of cleaner production
Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Shared resources and capabilities	Kiefer, C. P., Del Río González, P., & Carrillo-Hermosilla, J.	2019	Drivers and barriers of eco-innovation types for sustainable transitions: A quantitative perspective	Business Strategy and the Environment
Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Shared resources and capabilities	Klewitz, J., & Hansen, E. G.	2014	Sustainability-oriented innovation of SMEs: a systematic review	Journal of cleaner production
Values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders	Values and networks	Neesham, C., Dembek, K., & Benkert, J.	2023	Defining value in sustainable business models	Business & Society
Values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders	Values and networks	Stål, H. I., Riumkin, I., & Bengtsson, M.	2023	Business models for sustainability and firms' external relationships—A systematic literature review with propositions and research agenda	Business Strategy and the Environment
Values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders	Values and networks	Faccin, K., Bittencourt, B. A., & Machado, L.	2022	Developing Values-Based Innovation Competences: An Ecosystemic Approach	International Journal of Innovation Management

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Expectations from theoretical approach	Authors' topic	Authors	Year	Title	Source title
Values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders	Values and networks	Woolley, J. L., Pozner, J. E., & DeSoucey, M.	2022	Raising the bar: Values-driven niche creation in US bean-to-bar chocolate	Strategy Science
Analytical framework	Analytical framework	Breuer, H., & Lüdeke-Freund, F.	2017	Values-based network and business model innovation	International Journal of Innovation Management

Authors' elaboration based on the conceptual background.

expectations serve as the foundational analytical framework employed to comprehend the dynamics of competitors' collaboration in integrating overlooked industry values into their business models. As part of our contribution to the conceptual background, we have synthesized the progressive themes explored by diverse authors, aligning them with their corresponding theoretical expectations. Tables 1 and 2 provide detailed insights into these expectations under the competition and values-based approaches.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Research design overview

The CON approach, designed for small sample sizes, facilitates the use of case studies to augment theoretical explanatory power and compare competing or complementary approaches based on real-life cases (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). This methodology comprises two subtypes: (a) the competing approach and (b) the complementary theory approach. The former assumes that empirical information judges the relative explanatory power of theories by comparing observations with expectations deduced from different theories, aiming to identify the most pertinent theory. Conversely, the complementary theory approach posits that theories lead to complementary real-world implications, offering a foundation for more comprehensive explanations and innovations.

As we will illustrate in Section 4, established or dominant theories of the coopetition-based business model (Ritala et al., 2014) or the values-based business model network (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017) could not explain satisfactory—and independently—how competitors can contribute to the formation of a business model network for sustainability; nevertheless, connecting the empirical findings from the case study to theoretical concepts derived from the theories, a new integrating these fields of research emerged that explains the phenomenon. Therefore, we found the development of the CON approach to be a valuable analysis in further understanding the phenomenon and providing new theoretical insights. Specifically, CON analysis allowed us to complement both theories and propose a newer theoretical framework to explain the case more effectively or fill significant gaps in the current theories.

3.2 | Case context

The unique combination of climatic conditions, altitude, and relief in 51 Colombian municipalities has resulted in premium coffee production. The coffee-growing families in this region have made the best use of these exclusive conditions, leading to the territory being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2011 (UNESCO, 2013).

The primary buyer of Colombian coffee is the National Federation of Colombian Coffee (FNC), an NGO that distributes coffee primarily to the international market and sets prices for coffee producers based on external factors such as the New York Stock Exchange and exchange rates. This fixed pricing system leaves producers with limited bargaining power and exposes them to market volatility (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 2023). As a result, the exploration of niche markets for high-quality coffee, known as Specialty Coffee, is limited, and producers are unaware of the value of differentiating elements such as best production practices and organoleptic properties. The absence of a value chain for specialty coffee further hinders its recognition and market presence, while FNC's focus on international distribution may overlook local or niche markets.

A group of 25 competing coffee shops in the Coffee Cultural Landscape of Colombia (CCLC) joined forces to implement sustainable practices of specialty coffee production and increase customer recognition. They collaboratively and competitively adopted a sustainable value proposition to promote domestic consumption of specialty coffee and recognize its social value. This strategy improved the conditions of coffee producers and roasters in the value chain while acknowledging the cultural value of the CCLC. As a result, consumers were connected with coffee-growing families in the region, which helped boost the industry's sustainability and promote its importance. This paper's main researcher was the facilitator of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network, who had the task of convening the owners of each café, coordinating the topics of subsequent meetings with the members, and facilitating discussions.

Based on the case study and theoretical expectations derived from the coopetition-based and values-based business model network approaches, we consider the Specialty Coffee Shop Network relevant to the CON approach. As we will describe in Section 3.4, we can find

some observations that correspond with some of the expectations from these theories. For example, the coffee industry faces a socio-sustainable challenge, and local coffee shops collectively decide to address it by incorporating sustainable practices into their businesses. By forming a network of business models oriented towards these values, coffee shops can explore new value creation and capture opportunities.

Using data collected through the CON approach, we could connect and differentiate theories based on the empirical evidence. The CON approach describes actors' evolution and relationships, which can challenge institutional change (Wilfahrt, 2022). The evidence links both theories with the competitors' characteristics and situations among them (Farahmand et al., 2020). Therefore, the CON approach lets us focus on specific characteristics that lead to the phenomenon of value creation for sustainability in the competitors' network, guided by the research question and supported by relevant theoretical expectations derived from the cooperation-based and values-based business model network.

Based on a search in Scopus in October 2023, congruence analysis, as designing case studies to approaches in small-N research, has been applied in the last decade 315 times in articles, of which 38 are in the business field (e.g., Dondofema & Grobbelaar, 2018; Konczal et al., 2023; Lombardi & Mazzoni, 2023). However, our research is the first to employ it to analyze the values-based network and cooperation approach.

3.3 | Data collection

This research aims to elucidate how a values-based network driven by competitors can collectively address neglected values in their industry, thereby fostering sustainability and creating new social and cultural value for local communities. The unit of analysis behind the four sets of questions is the Specialty Coffee Shop Network.

Regarding our sampling strategy, we conducted interviews with 17 owners and managers of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network from August 2022 to February 2023. The semistructured questionnaire (see Table 3) comprised eight questions, with an average interview duration of 90 min. Interviews were transcribed using Tactiq Software, a Chrome extension for real-time transcription, and analyzed with NVIVO Quantitative Data Analysis Software. The interviews yielded 264 pages of written content from over 23 h of recorded material. To ensure anonymity, numerical aliases (e.g., Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #10) were employed.

The interview guide, derived from theoretical analysis, included four sets of questions, each exploring perspectives from both cooperation-based business models (Ritala et al., 2014) and values-based business model networks (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017) (see Table 3). To illustrate the comparative competing or complementary approaches between these theories, we outline the main questions of each set. The first set explores the sustainability context of the specialty coffee industry. From the value-based networks perspective, these questions seek to identify specialty coffee shop network

members' perceptions of the sustainability challenges in their industry. Meanwhile, from the cooperation-based business model standpoint, the focus is on understanding the potential for value creation by the network related to the sustainability challenge.

The second set explores the mechanism for adopting common sustainability values into the business model networks. Here, the value-based network questions aim to uncover the values, normative orientations, and member characteristics of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network. Meanwhile, the cooperation-based business model's questions seek to identify the drivers behind collaborating with competitors through a network to adopt sustainable values.

The third set delves into collaboration among competitors to value creation. From the value-based network perspective, these questions aim to identify competitors' contributions to value creation related to sustainability challenges. Meanwhile, from the cooperation-based business model viewpoint, the focus is on identifying the added value of collaborating with network competitors' members, particularly compared with other industry actors.

Finally, the fourth set concerns the perceived benefits of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network. From the values-based network angle, the questions aim to validate the effective transformation from a traditional business model to one focused on sustainability due to collaboration among competitor's network members. On the other hand, the cooperation-based business model perspective aims to confirm whether specialty coffee shops' increased value captures opportunities resulting from the new value created by the Specialty Coffee Shop Network. Table 3 provides concise examples linking theoretical expectations to the purpose of the interview questions.

The CON approach involved iterative rounds over months. The first researcher identified theoretical approaches and derived expectations, creating a preliminary analytical framework. The second and third researchers critically evaluated and refined this framework based on theoretical insights. Despite the first researcher's dual role as a facilitator and researcher, potential biases were mitigated through consultation with the second and third authors, who lacked direct links to the empirical context. The second researcher also participated as an interviewer to capture empirical evidence in the case study.

3.4 | Data analysis

We conducted a congruence analysis by interviewing Specialty Coffee Shop Network members. The aim was to understand how these competitors collaborated to promote sustainable practices and create a network of business models for sustainability. The interview followed a semistructured approach, guided by cooperation-based and values-based business model network theoretical expectations (see Table 3). Our analysis involved iterative coding rounds over several months using inductive open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first researcher conducted the coding rounds, picking up the interviewees' key evidence to build the storytelling about how competitors can collectively address neglected values in their industry. These evidences were grouped by topics, which enabled us

TABLE 3 The interview guides

Sets of questions	Theoretical approach	Expectation from theoretical approach	Questions derivated of theory
First set. Sustainability context of the specialty coffee industry	Values-based networks	Value-based networks consisting of viable and sustainability-oriented business models	What are the sustainability challenges faced by the specialty coffee?
	Coopetition	The possibilities in the business environment	What is Specialty Coffee? Why is specialty coffee important for the region?
Second set. Mechanism for adopting common sustainability values into the business model networks	Values-based networks	Values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders	What is the Specialty Coffee Shop Network? What was the objective that these coffee shops set themselves? What were the characteristics of those who were part of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network?
	Coopetition	Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	What are the advantages of being part of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network? What are the reasons for a coffee shop to decide not to be part of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network?
Third set. Collaboration among competitors to value creation	Values-based networks	Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Was there collaboration on your part and/or on the part of competitors to make changes and/or definitions in the business model of your coffee shop and thus respond to the industry's challenge? Who were these competitors, and what did their collaboration consist of?
	Coopetition	Knowledge similarity possessed by competitors on current markets	What are the main advantages and disadvantages of accepting the collaboration of competitors in these cases? Do you think there are significant differences when this type of initiative is driven mainly by competitors and not by other types of actors? What are these differences?
Fourth set. Perceived benefits of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network	Values-based networks	The multiple value propositions offered to them	In order to respond to these challenges, was it necessary to make any kind of changes and/or adjustments to the business model of your coffee shop? What are the main differences between before and after these changes and/or adjustments?
	Coopetition	To create new offerings in new markets.	What effect has the collaboration between competitors for adopting a shared value proposition generated on value capture?

Authors' elaboration based on the coopetition-based business model (Ritala et al., 2014) and the value-based business model network (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017).

to form the preliminary data structure. The second and third researchers then critically evaluated this structure, contrasting the interview data with the literature review outcomes and the expectations set by the theories determined in the congruence analysis (coopetition and values-based network). During this process, we followed an inductive-deductive analysis based on the thematic grouping of codes around the themes in the theoretical discussion to arrive at the

four pivotal factors about how competitors contribute to the formation of a business model network for sustainability, namely (i) sustainable challenges, (ii) values-based networks, (iii) value creation with competitors, and (iv) transition from values to tangible value. Based on our findings, we created a conceptual framework summarized in Figure 3 and explained in detail below, with additional illustrative quotes.

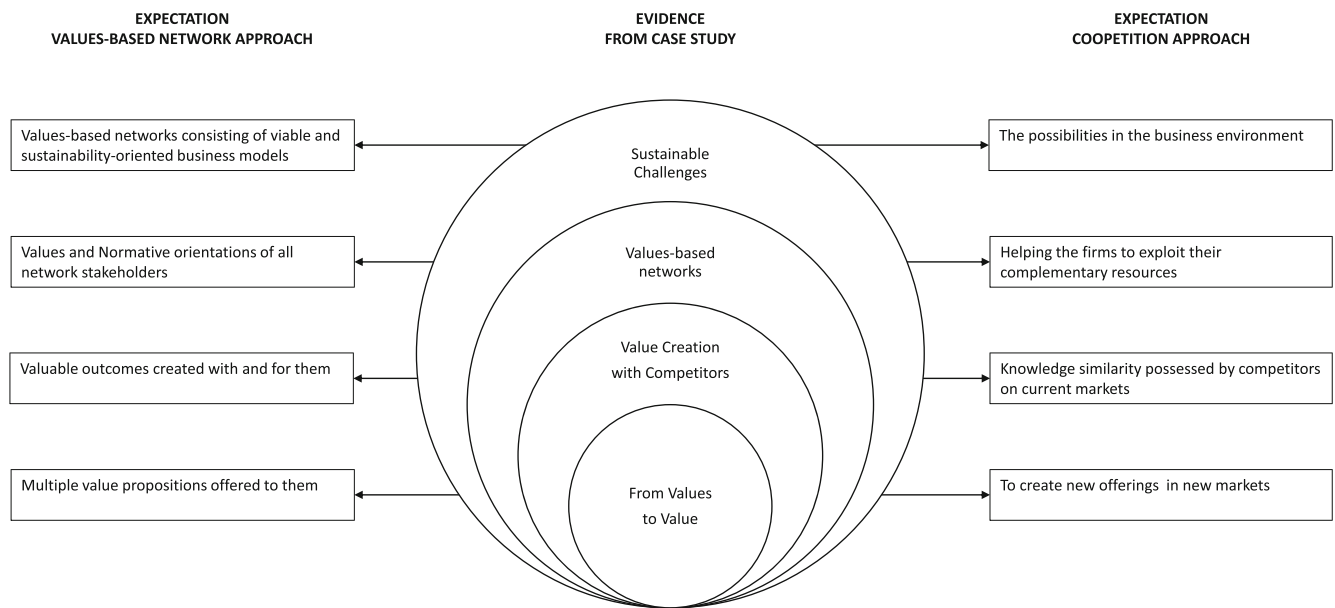


FIGURE 3 Conceptual framework. The link between expectations from theoretical approaches and evidence from case study. Authors' elaboration is based on Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), Ritala et al. (2014), and the evidence from the case study

Sustainable challenges refer to the social, environmental, and cultural hurdles confronting an industry, affecting different facets of the value chain. In the studied region, designated as a Cultural Coffee Landscape and a UNESCO World Heritage site, the volatility of coffee prices, determined by external factors like the New York Stock Exchange and exchange rates, directly impacts the socioeconomic conditions of producers.

"We are right in the heart of the coffee region, where the world's finest mild coffee is produced, and we must highlight it. The cultivation of coffee is essential for the Coffee Axis because it is one of our main agricultural products, and we have always been known as the country's coffee region"

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #7)

"The farmer sells the coffee, but the expenses involved in maintaining the farm are very high. As a result, coffee farming does not generate profitability for them, and coffee growers often look for other alternatives or, in the end, end up losing their land. Many sell their farms and move to the city, leaving their land abandoned."

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #6)

Values-based networks refer to the normative orientations of all competitors within the network, aligning toward the collective embrace of sustainability-related challenges.

In response to sociosustainable challenges within the specialty coffee industry, certain coffee shops in the region embraced a shared value proposition embedded in their business models. This led to the

formation of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network, characterized by informal rules and shared objectives governing network management. Membership criteria include a commitment to ensuring the traceability of best practices throughout the value chain and fostering a strategic approach that involves cultivating individual partnerships with producers and roasters in adherence to fair trade principles.

"The network's contribution primarily involved supporting coffee growers by purchasing coffee at better prices. These prices were not based on the production costs set, for instance, by the Federation, but instead, the network recognised that if coffee met the quality standards required by the network, it could be bought at a higher price."

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #4)

"Adopting a producer means forming a long-term partnership with them. While you may sample many coffees, which may all seem good, when you adopt a coffee grower, you commit to building a loyal relationship with them. It is a mutual commitment to delivering quality."

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #10)

Value creation with competitors refers to the collaborative strategy adopted by competitors to complement resources that enable the creation of value-focused sustainability in response to an industry's social, cultural, and environmental challenges.

Collaboration among competitors proved instrumental due to their shared resources, similar market information, and mutual interests in developing a new market. Competitors collaborated to

strengthen the business model components necessary for creating a new shared value proposition. This collaboration enhanced their ability to navigate the challenges associated with sustainable practices, leading to a more robust business model.

“That is why we have shifted our focus towards the academic aspect. We believe we have valuable experience and up-to-date information on coffee, but we also recognise the need to train individuals for the industry. There is a significant shortage of baristas and skilled coffee workers, and we aim to provide this training at costs that are accessible to anyone.”

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #6)

“So, as you meet all these people from coffee shops, they start teaching you more things. What you do not know, they do, and suddenly, you find yourself knowing something they do not. I would say these coffee shops become allies, coffee friends, and you share experiences.”

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #4)

From values to value refers to a new value proposition focused on sustainability. By shifting towards socially responsible values and implementing specialty coffee best practices along the value chain, specialty coffee shops enhanced product quality. This, in turn, increased consumer recognition of the cultural values associated with the product, resulting in elevated coffee prices and improved business income.

“As there has been some evolution: more knowledge, more techniques, and best practices have also improved the way the product is cultivated, meaning it meets higher standards. People now want to sell

coffee by stating where it comes from, its characteristics, the best practices used for production, drying, and processing, and everything related to coffee. This makes the product more appealing for selling.”

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #2)

“In the coffee shops of our fellow network members, everyone recognises their coffee grower. Offering that recognition to the person who puts in all the work to make that cup taste so delicious has a life-changing impact on coffee-producing families.”

(Owner Specialty Coffee Shop #15)

4 | RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 | Results of the congruence analysis approach

This section systematically compares the four pivotal evidences of how competitors contribute to the formation of a business model network for sustainability with the expectations deduced from theories of the co-competition-based business model (Ritala et al., 2014) and the values-based business model Network (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017). This comparison aims to evaluate the explanatory power of each theory in elucidating the case study and identify the degree of complementarity or competition between them. Blatter and Haverland's classification (2012:189) frame the results of this comparison as follows: (a) evidence aligns with expectations, (b) evidence contradicts expectations, or (c) evidence neither aligns with nor contradicts expectations directly. A summarized systematic analysis of both approaches is presented in Table 4.

Utilizing the congruence analysis to scrutinize co-competition and value-based network theories in the context of the Specialty Coffee Shop Network case study revealed four key interactions:

TABLE 4 Congruence analysis approach

Evidences (from case study)	Co-competition approach (Ritala et al., 2014)		Value-based network approach (Schaltegger et al., 2016) (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017)	
	Expectation	Congruence analysis	Expectation	Congruence analysis
Sustainable challenges	The possibilities in the business environment	Beyond the expectations	Value-based networks consisting of viable and sustainability-oriented business models.	In line with the expectations
Value-based networks	Helping the firms to exploit their complementary resources	Beyond the expectations	Values and normative orientations of all network stakeholders	Beyond the expectations
Value creation with competitors	Knowledge similarity possessed by competitors on current markets	In line with the expectations	Valuable outcomes created with and for them	Beyond the expectations
From values to value	To create new offerings in new markets.	In line with the expectations	The multiple value propositions offered to them	In line with the expectations

Authors' elaboration based on complementarity or competing approaches between the co-competition-based business model (Ritala et al., 2014) and the value-based business model network (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2017) in their explanation of the collaboration among competitors to drive a network of business models for sustainability (case study).

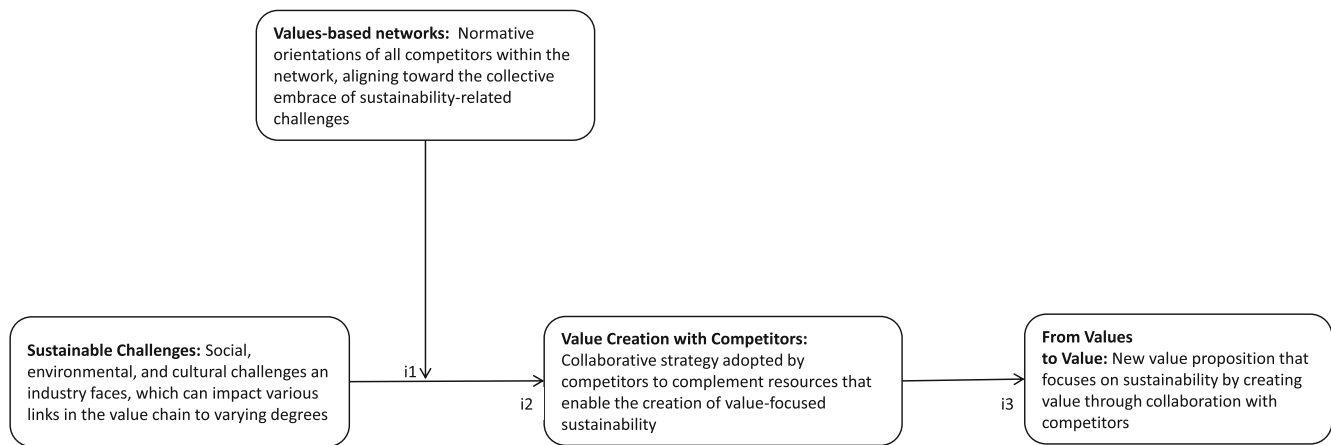


FIGURE 4 Analytical framework. Collaboration among competitors to drive a values-based network. Authors' elaboration is based on Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), Ritala et al. (2014), and the evidence from the case study

(a) complementarities, (b) convergences, (c) better explanation, and (d) insights beyond both theories:

Where do the two theories complement?

Sustainable challenge: Both theories commence with collaborative value creation based on market opportunities. However, the coopetition theory emphasizes making identified market opportunities a new value for competition, while the values-based network theory provides a more specific orientation toward sustainability. It underscores identifying overlooked social, cultural, or environmental values in the industry as market opportunities guiding value creation.

Where do the two theories converge?

From values to value: Both theories converge in their goal of creating new customer value through collaborative efforts among network competitors. This collaboration yields diverse value propositions centered on industry values often disregarded. Ultimately, a values-based network assists competitors in crafting end markets that are both competitive and appealing to customers.

Which theory explains it better?

Value creation with competitors: Both theories advocate involving various actors in a business model to create new value. However, the coopetition approach is better suited to explaining how competitors, specifically, drive values-based networks. Competitors, as key stakeholders, leverage their specialized market knowledge and resources to create customer value by understanding the market and identifying innovation opportunities.

What goes beyond both theories?

Values-based networks: Shifting towards sustainable values in business models necessitates new resources for innovative value creation. The case study underscores how the similarity and complementarity of resources among competitors foster the creation of sustainable value through networked value-based business models. This collaborative effort among competitors, guided by a value proposition and governed by a structured framework, extends beyond the scope of both study streams.

4.2 | Discussion of the results

In the preceding sections, we delineated the anticipated outcomes derived from competition and values-based business model network approaches. Subsequently, we examined how these expectations manifested in the case study, revealing complementary aspects between both theories; in turn, we identified four pivotal factors about how competitors contribute to the formation of a business model network for sustainability (sustainable challenges, values-based networks, value creation with competitors, and the transition from values to tangible value). This section explains the interactions among these key factors in a new analytical framework, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Interaction One (i1): Building upon insights from Ritala et al. (2014), Schaltegger et al. (2016), and Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), a values-based coopetition network embodies a collective endeavor where competitors recognize overlooked sustainability challenges in their industry, and they collaboratively determine the orientation of their business models towards restore these values. Coopetition allows small organizations to understand environmental risks better, navigate complex sustainability issues, and create mutually beneficial opportunities (Alcalde-Heras & Carrillo Carrillo, 2023). In turn, it contributes to the research gap identified by Terán-Yépez et al. (2020), which posits the need to go deeper into the recognition of opportunity in sustainable entrepreneurship. Without the identification of a sustainable opportunity, there will not be any opportunities to exploit when studying the sustainable entrepreneurship phenomenon.

Interaction Two (i2): Drawing from studies by Ritala et al. (2014), Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), and Freudenreich et al. (2020), the incorporation of neglected industry values into business models necessitates new or enhanced resources and capabilities. Collaboration with competitors within the network proves instrumental in accessing specialized knowledge and complementary resources,

facilitating value creation aligned with sustainability. These advantages are challenging to achieve with a single, small actor's limited technical and management resource (Amankwah-Amoah & Syllias, 2020; Halme & Korpela, 2014).

Interaction Three (i3): Anchored in the works of Ritala et al. (2014), Schaltegger et al. (2016), and Breuer and Lüdeke-Freund (2017), the concept of cocompetitive creation of new value empowers firms to collaborate in delivering innovative value to their customers.

Given the high uncertainty and social pressure surrounding sustainability, competing firms can collaborate on establishing a supportive setup that enables the diffusion and successful commercialization of their sustainable innovations (Planko et al., 2016) and promote customer acceptance (Christ et al., 2017). This approach strengthens the collaborative network and augments the likelihood of value capture through unique value propositions from each firm within the network.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

This research has contributed significantly by developing two pertinent theoretical approaches, namely cocompetition-based and values-based business model networks, grounded in a comprehensive case study. The case study vividly illustrates how substantial social and cultural value was generated for the local community.

The analytical frameworks of values-based networks and cocompetition have effectively addressed our research question, elucidating how competitors' interest in local sustainability challenges fosters a consensus to incorporate neglected values into their business models. This transformative business model suggests the potential amplification of resources for individual firms, with complementary resources between competitors facilitating the adoption of shared values. Consequently, a network of competitor firms can convert overlooked industry values into novel customer value, unlocking fresh opportunities for value capture.

A crucial managerial implication is the endorsement of cocompetition as a lever for business model development. Managers are encouraged to engage in cocreation processes with competitors, identify shared values, and explore opportunities presented by value-based networks. Policymakers, too, should integrate specific agendas that effectively address current sustainability challenges, emphasizing the necessity for coordinated efforts among all business actors to achieve substantial benefits.

While our study provides valuable insights into values-based networks within the specialty coffee industry in the Coffee Cultural Landscape of Colombia, we must acknowledge the limitation of our focus on this specific region and industry. Future research endeavors could broaden the scope by investigating the emergence of value-based networks driven by competitors in diverse geographical and industrial contexts. Exploring variations across regions and industries would enhance the generalizability of findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the formation and success of value-based networks in various settings.

Moreover, our case study, the Speciality Coffee Shop Network, unveils how value for sustainability is created through a network of competitors. However, the study's confined analytical frameworks necessitate consideration of additional aspects for a more comprehensive understanding. One notable aspect is the formation of a meta-organization governance structure, introducing unique power dynamics, tensions, and organizing practices (Berkowitz et al., 2022). Exploring the intricacies of such meta-organizations, especially their impact on stakeholders and local environments, presents a promising avenue for future research.

Additionally, an aspect that deserves attention in subsequent studies is the examination of variations in the effectiveness of values-based networks across different regions and industries. Understanding how contextual factors influence the formation and success of these networks can contribute to a more nuanced and contextually relevant framework.

In summary, while our research provides a robust foundation, the outlined limitations underscore the need for future investigations that transcend the boundaries of our specific focus, incorporating diverse contexts and organizational dynamics to enhance the applicability and depth of our insights.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The primary researcher of this paper served as the external facilitator for the network under investigation. This role facilitated extensive access to valuable data and informed the adoption of an insider-outsider research design. We transparently disclose this design and outline precautionary measures taken to address potential bias in the methods section.

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