

# Unveiling the coopetition pathway: the stakeholder influence in the specialty coffee market

Unveiling the  
coopetition  
pathway

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Received 4 March 2023

Revised 7 December 2023

24 January 2024

Accepted 2 February 2024

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aimed to understand coopetition in the context of Brazilian specialty coffee grower Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), based on the need to differentiate the beans in and outside the farm level, taking into account the stakeholders' influence.

**Design/methodology/approach** – In this study twenty semistructured interviews were carried out with coffee growers and managers of cooperatives, associations and supporting institutions involving two Brazilian coffee geographical indications. Data were analyzed using a mixed grid composed of qualitative, semantic and categorical factors.

**Findings** – Strategic moves undertaken by coffee growers and stakeholders have shaped the pathway of coopetition among coffee growers, as determinants to frame it as a deliberate or emergent pattern (intentional or unplanned, respectively). Our findings provide evidence that coopetition development among firms is deliberate when influenced by firms' or stakeholders' cooperative moves and emergent when influenced by firms' or stakeholders' competitive moves.

**Originality/value** – Although the firm/stakeholder relationship is often approached as a joint wealth creation effort, stakes are not always fairly distributed, so one of the parties may be negatively affected, with consequences for the development of coopetition. Underpinned by a stakeholder-oriented resource-based theoretical lens, this investigation of the development patterns of coopetition linked to the strategic actions undertaken by firms and stakeholders has resonance on competitive advantages.

**Keywords** Stakeholder management, Geographical indication, Strategic positioning

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Differentiation is an interesting strategy for agribusinesses to ensure that its innovation efforts (e.g. development of a new or better product) are perceived by customers (Brenes *et al.*, 2014). A differentiated product has multiple attributes designed to meet an increasingly segmented and personalized consumer demand (Sanz Cañada and Macías Vázquez, 2005). Both structured and more informally managed firms (e.g. family-owned farms) take advantage of differentiation strategies, and are capable of implementing and capturing value from them, as long as they vertically integrate their operations, focus on certification and sustainability and/or make use of geographical indications (GIs) of origin as marketing tools (Brenes *et al.*, 2020).

Opposed to conventional practices involving low-cost or cost leadership strategies, differentiated rural products are obtained from significant shifts in production knowledge, habits and behavior (Ingram, 2010). Since the paths to differentiation involve vertical



Benchmarking: An International  
Journal

Vol. 32 No. 3, 2025

pp. 1045-1068

© Emerald Publishing Limited

1463-5771

DOI [10.1108/BIJ-03-2023-0138](https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-03-2023-0138)

integration to a significant degree (Miranda *et al.*, 2022), new forms of partnerships among farmers aimed at generating relevant technical information become necessary (McKenzie, 2013), providing room for cooperation. While ascending the value ladder, firms can assume value-added processes, branding (storytelling), certifications, distribution and/or direct trade (Teuber and Jensen, 2021). All of them shorten the distance between producers and consumers, permitting product uniqueness to operate without communication noise, thus strengthening competition.

Competition can be practiced simultaneously with cooperation, as is recognized by the term *coopetition* (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996). It aims to achieve better collective and individual results (Czakov *et al.*, 2014; Gnyawali and Ryan Charleton, 2018). The study of *coopetition* considers the ambiguous relationships existing among competitors that interact through interconnected and interdependent activities, resources and actors (Osarenkhoe, 2010). This theme is experiencing increasing recognition in the competitive strategy literature (Czakov *et al.*, 2020; Gnyawali and Park, 2011), including several literature reviews to understand this phenomenon (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014; Czakov *et al.*, 2014; Devece *et al.*, 2019; Gernsheimer *et al.*, 2021). While this strategy was proven to be important in innovation and technology-intensive industries (Ritala *et al.*, 2016), less emphasis has been given to organizations located in emerging countries (Devece *et al.*, 2019) and those in the primary sector (Czakov *et al.*, 2014).

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to provide qualitative empirical evidence of Brazilian coffee growers' simultaneous cooperative and competitive behavior to serve the specialty coffee market. Brazil is an interesting case study since it is the world's major green coffee producer and second largest consumer, being the only producing nation with high consumption levels as well (Guimarães *et al.*, 2019). Small farms comprise the majority of growers (72%), whose diverse coffee production system represents all combinations of farm size, technology usage, best practice implementation, technical assistance access, productivity and profitability (GCP, 2016).

The cultivation of specialty coffees is part of a broader movement of resistance to the homogenization of supply, which includes other products, such as craft beers and fine chocolates, where consumers' interest in the origins and conditions in which they are produced influences the purchase decision (Marescotti and Belletti, 2016; Reardon *et al.*, 2001). This change in consumer behavior has prompted producers to seek to differentiate the beans (Brenes *et al.*, 2020) by investing in improving quality. However, the value chain of coffee, besides the material quality aspect, includes symbolic and in-service quality attributes, forcing farmers and their organizations to strive to control part of these distinctions (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). Even though it is a segment still imbued with traditionalism, reflected in the large presence of commodity producers that are chiefly concerned with productivity and scale, those who assume the risks of producing and marketing specialty coffees maintain an active innovative agenda.

The need to stay abreast with the pace of transformations has led coffee growers to consider the establishment of local organizations, enabling learning from new interaction to strengthen their voices. In this new context, innovation has emerged as a complex and dynamic process, not necessarily linear, resulting from collective and individual actions occurring simultaneously. Political and trade associations (cooperatives), created and composed by coffee growers (Dentoni *et al.*, 2013), have promoted innovations in a complementary way with individual efforts, resulting in the desired traceability of these coffees with specific quality attributes (Theuvsen, 2004), through digitally recorded information to end consumers. Also, the image associated with the territory, aimed to attract the interest of buyers and third parties aspiring to partnerships, has enabled them to implement strategies and obtain higher profits by cooperating to achieve co-specialization (Barney, 2018) and distinction.

The resource-based view (RBV) establishes the framework in which the value creation process to achieve the distinctiveness of a differentiation strategy has to be approached in an environment of resource scarcity, due to firm limitations (size, knowledge, capabilities), where strong and healthy relationships (rare, valuable, inimitable) matter (Barney, 1991). Therefore, the unit of analysis in this work is not limited to individual coffee growers, but considers the environment that surrounds them, based on valuable resources and capabilities created and shared among the coffee growers and their stakeholders, as advocated by the literature (Barney, 2018). In this broader context, a RBV incorporating stakeholders' perspectives has been welcomed while considering sustainability not only in relation to competitive advantage, but also in relation to stakeholder relationships, in which competition and cooperation are equally valued (Freeman *et al.*, 2021; Jones *et al.*, 2018).

Differentiation through superior quality requires effective internal control systems (at the farm level), and external market detection capabilities as well as relationships with customers (beyond the farm level) (Hooley *et al.*, 1998). The rise of specialty coffees represents a disruption in the means of producing and marketing commodity coffee, requiring a change in mentalities that can be facilitated or influenced by third parties that make up the stakeholder environment (Šumane *et al.*, 2018). From the governance of a GI via an organization in which different stakeholders interact, a confluence of common values and objectives is expected to improve the quality and reputation of the product of a given territory (Castelló, 2021). However, in this context of continuous interaction with a relative degree of dependence, coopetition among coffee growers emerges, either planned or unplanned (Czaron *et al.*, 2014; Mariani, 2007), directly influenced by the quality of the relationships developed with stakeholders (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Although the firm/stakeholder relationship is often approached as a joint wealth creation effort, stakes are not always fairly distributed, so one of the parties may be negatively affected (Jones *et al.*, 2018), with consequences for the development of coopetition.

Thus, the objective of this study is to understand coopetition in the context of SMEs composed of specialty coffee growers, based on the need to differentiate the beans at and off the farm level, taking into account the stakeholders' influence. For this purpose, we carried out qualitative and exploratory research in two GI regions that benefit from the differentiation of coffee beans, comprising SMEs of coffee growers and stakeholders, such as political and trade associations and support institutions.

Consequently, the study presents an exploration of (1) coopetition development patterns among coffee grower SMEs and (2) the implications of stakeholders' influence on coopetition development. Our findings contribute to knowledge about coopetition with the necessary empirical evidence, as pointed out by Czaron *et al.* (2014), of an understudied phenomenon in agricultural SMEs, which unfolds differently within and outside the farm level, and is influenced by stakeholders (Barney, 2018; Freeman *et al.*, 2021). These are aspects still insufficiently explored in the literature (Harala *et al.*, 2023). The decision to undertake this study stemmed from a desire to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and offer valuable insights for both academia and practical applications regarding the influence of stakeholders in the development of coopetition, emergent or deliberate (Czaron *et al.*, 2014; Mariani, 2007).

In the next section, we present the theoretical framework of this study (Section 2), with an emphasis on coopetition and the adoption of differentiation strategies in agribusiness, especially involving GIs, given the influence of stakeholders in this context. Then we describe the methods for data collection and analysis (Section 3) and present and discuss the results, highlighting how coopetition strategies have been adopted at and off the farm level by the research subjects in both GIs under study (Sections 4 and 5). Finally, our concluding remarks, implications (Section 6) and limitations of are presented (Section 7).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Coopetition

Coopetition should not be considered a dichotomous construct in a continuum between competition and cooperation, but a multidimensional, complex and dynamic concept that takes different forms at multiple levels of analysis in relation to processes, patterns, origins and evolution (Bouncken and Fredrich, 2016; Czakon *et al.*, 2020; Gernsheimer *et al.*, 2021). Coopetition occurs when competitors choose to cooperate in some dimensions while continuing to compete in other dimensions, or when cooperating firms begin to compete while continuing their cooperation, with different patterns of evolution resulting from these two starting points (Czakon *et al.*, 2020). The environment in which businesses are created also influences the emergence of coopetition – for example, the COVID-19 pandemic enhanced the role of improvisation (Fuentes-Fernández and Gilinsky, 2022) especially when third parties participate in the structure and process of their development (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019; Monticelli *et al.*, 2018, 2023).

Thus, the logic of coopetition is to achieve a double benefit as a result of the driving forces of competition, through competitive activities, both upstream (R&D, procuring and processing of raw materials) and downstream (distribution, marketing and midstream production), at the same time, enabling access to resources through cooperation (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000). Cooperation makes it possible to increase companies' resources, knowledge base and innovation, but its management imposes challenges such as knowledge secrecy and internal tensions between actors (Gast *et al.*, 2015).

The development of inter-organizational relationships, in which cooperation with competitors entails a search for resources that would otherwise be inaccessible (Morris *et al.*, 2007), as well as a way to create and improve competitive advantage (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2016), denote the essence of the RBV (Barney, 1991). Resources and competencies form the basis for a sustained competitive advantage: companies grow in the directions set by their capabilities, which are dynamic and slowly expanding (Mahoney, 1995).

To improve these inner resources and competencies, the resource based-view has been expanded to account for the external environment, where typically SMEs struggle to survive within their sectors, by building relationships with key stakeholders to enhance customer based-assets (Barney, 2018). When mentioning large and/or small firms' competitive environment, it is important to consider their interactions, local and/or distant, in broad and open strategic system logic (Della Corte and Sciarelli, 2012). Underpinned by a stakeholder-oriented resource-based theoretical lens, this study investigates, in Brazilian specialty coffee GIs, how multiple coffee growers and multiple stakeholders some of which operate outside a firm's boundaries cooperate to create co-specialization (Barney, 2018; Freeman *et al.*, 2021), preserving and delivering the local attributes that distinguish each producer and its respective region.

Despite this importance, not all coopetition relationships documented were developed with stakeholder involvement. Some respondents surveyed mentioned this interaction, since it certainly influences the main parties involved, but none really elaborated on this construction. Studies such as Bengtsson and Kock (2000), Festa *et al.* (2017) and Assens and Coléno (2014) mention the existence of unions, associations, cooperatives, suppliers and institutions, but the description of their influence is only superficial, although their importance is often referred to as paramount. Like these studies, Chiambaretto *et al.* (2019) and Monticelli *et al.* (2021) always describe the influence of stakeholders as positive, disregarding nuances on their participation that might trigger negative outcomes.

Deepening the analysis of this influence may require addressing the patterns that govern the study of coopetition, such as a deliberate and emergent strategy (Mariani, 2007). Some studies do not address business relationships through these specific terms, but the descriptions of their development infer approximations, such as Chiambaretto *et al.* (2019) as

deliberate and [Assens and Coléno \(2014\)](#) as emergent. The deliberate strategy concerns an intentional move by the players, clear or announced, designed by a leading actor or a consensus involving all the parties ([Czakon, 2018](#); [Czakon et al., 2014](#)). This intentional strategy can sometimes be induced or mediated by a third party ([Monticelli et al., 2018](#)), required for coordination ([Chiambaretto et al., 2019](#); [Harala et al., 2023](#)), performed by associations ([Depeyre et al., 2018](#)) and/or institutions ([Monticelli et al., 2021](#)). Specifically in SMEs from emerging countries, agents from formal institutions are encouraged to promote mediated coopetition, focusing on competitive advantages to maintain the parties' adherence ([Monticelli et al., 2021](#)). Mutual trust and commitment can reduce the risk of opportunism and undue sharing, especially when there is an incentive to build social proximity ([Jakobsen and Steinmo, 2016](#)).

On the other hand, the emergent strategy concerns an unplanned move by the parties, in which casual interactions may lead to competition in cooperative relationships or cooperation in competitive relationships ([Czakon, 2010](#)). According to [Czakon \(2018\)](#), the emergent strategy has three development patterns: induced by partner behavior; developed in reaction to competitor behavior; and/or induced by regulator behavior. In this perspective, coopetition is believed to start as an emergent strategy that only afterward becomes deliberate: the process is "forced", since it requires the activation of cognitive processes that are revised frequently, forcing players to reflect on creative ways to explore the value chain ([Mariani, 2007](#)). Through this lens, the emergent strategy is inferior in comparison with deliberate strategy. Some studies have confirmed a preference for deliberate strategy over emergent strategy ([Czakon et al., 2014](#); [Monticelli et al., 2021](#)). The induced process of emerging strategy has been analyzed as a negative bias, as an imposition on players, driven in a reactive process.

So far, the work of [Efrat et al. \(2022\)](#) stands out as the first to qualify the emergent strategy as better than the deliberate one. While previous findings associated the emergent approach with environmental constraints, they found it to be mainly driven by internal forces, given that the parties involved were strongly bonded by previous acquaintance. Also, "while under the deliberate approach the framework is established first and then the firms turn to fill it in with the substance, under the emergent, the essence already exists and the firms are therefore focused on creating the right frame around it" ([Efrat et al., 2022](#), p. 11).

## *2.2 Differentiation strategy in agribusiness (GIs, terroir and stakeholder influence)*

Commodity strategies tend to prevail among emerging market companies, due to the natural characteristics of their countries, whose products are commonly mined (e.g. minerals, oil and gas) or cultivated (e.g. plants, meat and wood), then marketed according to the specifications of the foreign brand owner, leaving them as undifferentiated products sold at a lower price ([Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2019](#)). Climbing the value chain and engaging in activities with greater added value are major challenges that Latin American agribusinesses face ([Brenes et al., 2020](#)). These hurdles can be overcome through processing and differentiation of raw materials, giving them attributes that are unattainable by commodities ([Reardon et al., 2001](#)).

In an environment of increasing competition in the agribusiness sector, dominated by large retail chains and international trading companies, the participation of small producers only becomes possible by means of differentiation of their products and diversification of their sales channels ([Marescotti and Belletti, 2016](#)). Product differentiation based on quality, environmental impact and social impact is part of a broader trend towards the increasing importance of credibility characteristics in the food industry ([Reardon et al., 2001](#)). This can offer SMEs a competitive advantage in global markets, due to their greater flexibility and customization capability ([Dunning, 1995](#)). Quality and safety characteristics that constitute credible attributes include: food safety; healthier foods; "authenticity" (including place of origin and tradition); production processes that promote a safe environment and sustainable



agriculture; and “fair trade”. These factors can be adopted by producer associations and public entities to better incorporate this dynamic of diversification, since their coordination, changes in practices and investments are more costly and difficult for individual SMEs (Reardon *et al.*, 2001).

Accessing these more attractive markets, through the offer of niche products with credible attributes, requires understanding traceability as a management tool and a competitive differential in which information plays a valuable role (Zhou and Xu, 2022). Internally, it allows for better control of the production process, to the point of avoiding the undesirable and unproductive mixture of commodity coffee and specialty coffee; externally, it enables better communication of the special characteristics of the product and its desired link to the origin (Castelló, 2021; Moe, 1998; Ringsberg, 2014). Whether internal or external, traceability is directly related to the use of technology, since data collection instruments generally benefit from digitization, which can positively impact information-based governance (Ehlers *et al.*, 2021). Data collection is now considered an innovative activity, based on the importance of digitized information, both from the standpoint of product innovation and business processes (OECD/Eurostat, 2018).

In this context, coffee is gradually losing its commodity nature, since several differentiating criteria are emerging in the market, based on social and environmental sustainability, coffee quality characteristics and the place of production, opening the way for a new form of market competition based on global niches (Marescotti and Belletti, 2016). The GI of coffees is a promising lever for differentiation that, when well-coordinated, can exploit the strong link between the quality of the product and its territory of origin, and become a governance tool for all localized agro-food production systems (Cuervo-Cazurra *et al.*, 2019; Marescotti and Belletti, 2016), as well as a commercial tool that influences consumers’ taste preferences (Artêncio *et al.*, 2021). At the GI level, multi-stakeholder governance involves balancing interests along the value chain in order to generate value for the producer, individually and the territory, collectively (local community, coffee growers, coffee shops, local newspapers, regional websites, tourist facilities, etc.). Different perspectives are integrated, despite conflicting interests, so as not to sacrifice the generation of economic profits developed from cooperative elements (Barney, 2018; Freeman *et al.*, 2021).

Specialty coffee GIs have borrowed a concept from French wine GIs that lacks an objective definition, but somehow governs the communication centered on the collective experience of the territory, the terroir (Castelló, 2021). All the efforts to promote a territory’s uniqueness and quality are considered. Although the starting point of the concept is the local product (producer dependent), the economic value created, when adequately achieved, is spread throughout the territory, in which shared cultural values support and communicate its distinctiveness (community dependent). To spread and set a narrative that runs a machinery fueled by resources, structures and people with this level of social impact, a minimal level of infrastructure and legitimation is required (Castelló, 2021). Competition and cooperation in this specific environment, focused on coffee growers’ and stakeholders’ actions, should have a positive interplay aiming at producing top-quality coffee via the pursuit of excellence (Witkowski, 2013), since unbalanced, unfair and disharmonious practices by at least one of the parties can ruin the terroir intent (Freeman *et al.*, 2020).

The approach to a GI territory concerns a collective system-level relationship, in which environmental and societal issues must be considered (Castelló, 2021; Harala *et al.*, 2023), besides the micro-level interactions between firms (e.g. Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Kraus *et al.*, 2017). The behavior within the GI territory is affected by all its constituent parties, demanding proper alignment of the shared purpose among all the stakeholders to avoid misappropriation of value (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Although studies implicitly assume that stakeholders are involved in a positive way, their engagement can also have negative consequences, due to destructive aims, misalignment of interests, power imbalances, cultural

clashes, intractable stakeholder conflicts or ignorance of a different context (Jones *et al.*, 2018; Kujala *et al.*, 2022). To achieve a positive engagement in the rapidly transforming specialty coffee market, relationships must be interactive, with a higher level of encouragement and willingness to be open to change, rather than reactive, with a higher level of vulnerability and little disposition for dialog (defensive or hostile) (Jeffery, 2009).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research characterization

The research reported in this article was qualitative and exploratory in nature. This approach allowed a comprehensive exploration and understanding of the nuances within the context of coopetition involving specialty coffee growers, enabling a rich and detailed analysis of their strategies regarding cooperation and competition within and outside their farms. The exploratory nature of this study was aimed to uncover new insights, perspectives and potential areas for further investigation. The decision to undertake this study stemmed from our desire to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and offer valuable insights for both academia and practical applications regarding the influence of stakeholders in unintentional or deliberate mechanisms of coopetition (Czakov *et al.*, 2014; Mariani, 2007).

#### 3.2 Sample selection for study

Analysis of the wine market, representing the primary sector, has afforded large contributions to the study of coopetition, but the advances in this respect have been identified mainly in developed countries (Albert-Cromarias *et al.*, 2022; Crick and Crick, 2023a, b; Dana *et al.*, 2013; Festa *et al.*, 2017; Fuentes-Fernández and Gilinsky, 2022; Granata *et al.*, 2016; Granata *et al.*, 2018). Although the wine market offers a highly suitable empirical context to investigate coopetition (Crick, 2018), its players are typically highly educated and sophisticated, its pricing is not determined by commodity rules and the product in general is often classified as a luxury consumable. The coffee market considered in this study, on the other hand, is mainly composed of low-to-medium income farmers, its pricing is governed by commodity rules and only a tiny portion of the market is given luxury treatment, the so-called specialty coffees, achieved through differentiation strategies.

From the 1990s onwards, economic liberalization measures have impacted the international coffee market and competition has become fiercer, resulting in a search for product differentiation based on sensory, social, environmental and/or regional quality attributes (Marescotti and Belletti, 2016; Sylvia and Saes, 2007). In this context, GIs have been strengthened in the coffee sector to give uniqueness to products and increase their competitiveness, allowing producers, who compete with their own brands, to protect regional products in a cooperative way. That is, GIs act by mediating cooperation between competitors.

Thus, to meet the purpose of this study to evaluate coopetition in different environments with dependence on cooperation and competition, we analyzed the GI of the “Cerrado Mineiro Region”, the first and oldest coffee GI in Brazil, formalized in 2005 and located in the main coffee producing state in the country, Minas Gerais; and the GI of “Alta Mogiana”, a precursor in the state of São Paulo, formalized in 2013. This difference in the timing of recognition of the GIs made it possible to evaluate the relationships established among coffee growers and the entities that make up the environment, without compromising the study by ruptures (in the case of the oldest) or dazzlement (in the case of the most recent).

#### 3.3 Data collection

Twenty semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out (Table 1) with coffee growers (the owners and/or their heirs usually sons or daughters), representatives of cooperatives

No	Coffee growers/ institution	Acronym AM – Alta Mogiana CM – Cerrado Mineiro	Position	Date	Time	Contact means
1	AMSC	Political Association AM	Manager	08/21/2018	27 min	Skype
2	AMSC	Political Association AM	Manager	09/13/2018	1 h 06 min	Skype
3	Coffee grower 1  Coffee grower 2	AM	Coffee grower son Coffee grower son	10/11/2018	2 h 09 min	In Person
4	AMSC EMATER MG	Support Institution CM	Manager Scheduling manager	08/22/2019	28 min	WhatsApp
5	Coffee grower 3	AM	Coffee grower	09/16/2019	41 min	Skype
6	EPAMIG	Support Institution CM	Technical manager	09/23/2019	41 min	WhatsApp
7	Coffee grower 4	AM	Coffee grower daughter	01/30/2019	36 min	In Person
8	COCAPIL	Trade Association AM	Sales manager	01/30/2019	1 h 06 min	In Person
9	Coffee grower 5	CM	Coffee grower son	11/06/2019	41 min	WhatsApp
10	Coffee grower 6	AM	Coffee grower	11/07/2019	23 min	WhatsApp
11	Independent exporter	AM	Co-owner	11/07/2019	1 h 07 min	In Person
12	Coffee grower 7	CM	Coffee grower and offspring	11/11/2019	1 h 42 min	In Person
13	Federation of coffee growers from Cerrado	Political Association CM	Manager	11/11/2019	1 h 07 min	In Person
14	EXPOCACCER	Trade Association AM	President	11/11/2019	51 min	In Person
15	SEBRAE MG	Support Institution CM	Manager	11/12/2019	53 min	In Person
16	EPAMIG	Support Institution CM	Research manager	12/09/2019	1.185 words	Written
17	Coffee grower 8	AM	Coffee grower son	12/09/2019	24 min	Skype
18	BSCA	National Support Institution	Technician	12/17/2019	27 min	Phone
19	Coffee grower 9	CM	Coffee grower	12/18/2019	38 min	WhatsApp
20	Coffee grower 10	CM	Coffee grower daughter	01/21/2020	44 min	Phone

**Table 1.**  
General information  
about the interviews  
carried out for data  
collection

**Source(s):** Created by the authors

(*Cooperativa dos Cafeicultores de Ibiraci* - COCAPIL and *Cooperativa dos Cafeicultores do Cerrado* - EXPOCACCER) and supporting institutions (Company for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension of the State of Minas Gerais - EMATER MG, Agricultural Research Company of Minas Gerais - EPAMIG, Brazilian Support Service for Micro and Small Enterprises - SEBRAE MG and Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association BSCA), and managers of the associations that administer both GIs (Alta Mogiana Specialty Coffee AMSC and Federation of Cerrado Coffee Growers). The coffee growers were identified through contact with the managers of the associations, who also helped to identify the institutions that support these farmers in their production and marketing efforts, as they encourage the collaborative network that promotes the good reputation of the specialty coffee of the respective region. The representatives of the cooperatives participating in the research also belong to the associations that manage the GIs.

Two of the interviews carried out with the manager of Alta Mogiana (interviews 1 and 2) were important to validate the proposal of this work. Interview 3 was the only one carried out



with three interviewees interacting at the same time. The other interviews were conducted individually. For all interviews conducted, a semistructured interview guide was used consistently. This script adhered to the data collection dimensions specified in [Appendix 1](#) and ensured a comprehensive exploration of relevant topics while allowing flexibility for in-depth inquiry. It also helped to maintain consistency across interviews. The survey questionnaire layout used for each interviewee group is specified in [Appendix 2](#).

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and later transcribed, and their content was submitted to preliminary coding ([Bengtsson, 2016](#)), subject to theoretical deepening carried out from the literature review. In addition, document analysis and institutional websites were used to validate the authenticity of the information collected in the interviews and our direct observation to ponder the quality of the responses, taking into account the environment in which they were collected. Thus, for each of the studied coffee growers, data from the interviews were completed with secondary data regarding their product differentiation, competitiveness, partnerships and market share. These multiple measures were employed to ascertain the accuracy and validity of the findings, serving for triangulation of data.

### 3.4 Data analysis

A mixed grid consisting of qualitative, semantic and categorical content analysis was implemented ([Bastos \*et al.\*, 2019](#)), supported by the consulted literature and following the guidelines of [Bengtsson \(2016\)](#): (1) decontextualization, by coding of the interviews, to reduce the volume of material into smaller meaning units and facilitate further analysis; (2) categorization, enabling a better definition of the units of analysis, and (3) compilation, in which description takes place and the subject is brought together scrutinizing and interrelating categories and subcategories. At this stage, competitive and cooperative practices, as well as innovative activities in product and process associated with specialty coffees ([OECD/Eurostat, 2018](#)) were combined, resulting from the adopted strategic positioning of differentiation by quality ([Table 2](#)).

Data to be collected	Categories	Subcategories	Theoretical reference
Relationship between coffee growers + involvement of, associations (trading and political) and support institutions	Competition	Competition for markets, products, services, time, attention and resources	<a href="#">Bengtsson and Kock (2000)</a> , <a href="#">Bengtsson <i>et al.</i> (2016)</a> , <a href="#">Czakon <i>et al.</i> (2014)</a> , <a href="#">Gnyawali and Ryan Charleton (2018)</a> , <a href="#">Czakon <i>et al.</i> (2020)</a> , <a href="#">Monticelli <i>et al.</i> (2021)</a> , <a href="#">Barney (2018)</a> , <a href="#">Freeman <i>et al.</i> (2020, 2021)</a> , <a href="#">Kujala <i>et al.</i> (2022)</a>
	Cooperation	Actions, motivations, benefits, difficulties, asymmetries	
Differentiation (superior coffee quality)	Innovative activities (R&D, marketing and brand equity, employee training, software development, innovation management and intellectual property)	Traceability and technology employment (farming, storage and commerce)	<a href="#">Hooley <i>et al.</i> (1998)</a> , <a href="#">Moe (1998)</a> , <a href="#">Teuber (2010)</a> , <a href="#">Marescotti and Belletti (2016)</a> , <a href="#">Ringsberg (2014)</a> , <a href="#">Zhou and Xu (2022)</a> , <a href="#">Cuervo-Cazurra <i>et al.</i> (2019)</a> , <a href="#">Brenes <i>et al.</i> (2020)</a>

Source(s): Created by the authors (2023)

**Table 2.**  
Categories and  
subcategories for data  
analysis

#### 4. Findings

We separated our results into two levels of analysis: inside the farm (at farm level) and outside the farm (off the farm level). Differentiation by quality involves the concern with control and guarantee of quality of the product at the farm level, as well as the sharpened perception of the market and the monitoring of the brand's reputation off the farm level.

##### *4.1 Competition in the field (at farm level): improving product quality*

Several interviews evidenced a gap in the producer's knowledge, commonly unable to recognize the value of their product. The following excerpts illustrate this situation:

"... unfortunately, in my region, the producers are not doing well, they only go to the guy at the cooperative who sells the coffee and say, "sell my coffee for so much", they don't even care if their coffee is good, they want x Reais [Brazilian currency, R\$], obtaining this price is deemed fair enough. (...) This is something that has to gradually come to an end, you know, I think people have to know what their coffee is (...)." (coffee grower 5)

"There are producers who arrive with a sample of coffee that was produced in a conventional way. They treat it as a commodity, which is taken to a cooperative. They arrive here saying "Try this coffee here for me, make a sensory evaluation of it". We taste a producer's coffee and the guy has a jewel in his hand that he doesn't know he has, do you understand? (coffee grower 8)

Especially for new specialty coffee producers, who grow as time progresses, the speed of incoming information and knowledge is faster than the absorption of the necessary competence for processing. In order to balance this procedure, which tends to smooth out with the passage of time, it is common to have the help of political and trade associations, as well as support institutions to speed up the learning process and avoid wasting the time spent.

An evident point revealed in the speech of support institutions and political associations is the influence of the new generation in managing family businesses. The position of the interviewed coffee growers attests to this observation: there was no coffee grower interviewed who was the original founder or representative of the previous generation.

"The way of thinking of this new generation is a little different ... and this new generation thinks more collectively than individually. These people who participate in these joint actions ... the ones who are really there are the producer's children who are now taking over and focusing on specialty coffees (...) They are bringing more technology and more innovations to coffee farming in the region." (...) "not only the use of technology but also the quality issue, using technology to achieve quality." (Political Association AM)

I see that the best results, on average, have been where there is a succession transition. The son, younger, takes over and then there is a leap forward. (...) they are people who have better command of information, they are more open to it. I see there is a benefit. But this often comes from a family with tradition, which has been doing a good job. But when young people take over, especially young people who have undergone training, who have more information, they are prepared for it. It's a normal thing, they leap over hurdles. When young people take over, they take the lead, they gain. They abandon commodity coffee to make gains. (Support Institution CM)

*4.1.1 GI Cerrado Mineiro.* As a means for producers to acquire the knowledge they lack, the initiative of the Federation of Cerrado Coffee Growers in mobilizing adequate resources and institutions for training or consulting coffee growers was observed. This association, representing the collective desire of the group of coffee growers and enjoying prestige and reputation for the work developed with the GI, is very active in this type of action, such as the one carried out in partnership with SEBRAE-MG, through the EDUCAMPO platform. All the indicators they have are based on facts, on real, concrete numbers for decision making. The assimilation of knowledge from the training and consultancy programs is heterogeneous, which generates different results among the members of the groups.

Competition emerges from this disparity, when comparing the results of the least productive with the most productive, so that the former strive to catch up with the latter.

“Our challenge is to achieve the best economic result producers; ( . . ) we always classify the most profitable (farms), the average ones and the least profitable ones. So, today the farm with the best index in the field, in Cerrado Mineiro, is farm x, for example. ( . . ) If the farmer agrees with it, gives his approval, the other producers will go to that farm to find out what it's been doing. With all this blind data, a behavior is common: “Wow, my farm is farm y, I thought I was the best, but I see that I'm dragging our group's average down”. “Whoever is this top farmer, tell us what you are doing because we have to learn.” (Support Institution CM)

SEBRAE is a pillar; it helps with courses and management. We have an agronomist who takes care of the calculations, the management part. He visits monthly. We pay part of it and SEBRAE pays the other part. We won an award; we were the only one in the Cerrado Mineiro Region, for sustainability in 2013, through SEBRAE analyses. They examined the practice of biological analysis, preserving the natural enemy and not killing with so much pesticide.” The SEBRAE consultant, through the EDUCAMPO project. (coffee grower 7)

SEBRAE MG has a platform called EDUCAMPO whose purpose is to generate strategies, projections, scenarios and integrated analyses to build capabilities and create opportunities for the individual and collective development of local agribusiness. It works with the support of individual consultancies, to provide training that enhances management experience, exchange of knowledge and networking among producers and consultants.

*4.1.2 GI Alta Mogiana.* The permanent search for this knowledge acquisition puts pressure on the market for professionals qualified to perform this role. The Alta Mogiana GI does not have a collective quality management project with the same resourcefulness as the Cerrado Mineiro GI: it lacks stronger institutional support that offers a development, promotional and sustainability plan for the long term. In GI Alta Mogiana, it is the cooperative structure that provides the appropriate technical knowledge for producers to participate in the specialty coffee market, however with limitations that foster competition among them. These passages below clarify this situation:

The association doesn't help with guidance, we would have to look for people who are specialists, technicians. For example, there's an agronomist who already works for us, he is from Cooperative Y, and he's very good, ( . . . ). But, in addition, we are studying the possibility of paying him a monthly fee, to see if he will pay more attention to us. That's difficult, right? He is an employee of Cooperative Y, we are members, he earns a good salary. (coffee grower 4)

Today producers have all the know-how on the farm, production, planting and everything else. But unfortunately they are not professionalized, and there are not enough honest professionals to guide the producers. When I came here I saw that many of these producers were being passed over by large traders, exporters, and even cooperatives, do you understand? (coffee grower 8)

Cooperatives, responsible for processing most of the coffee available in the market, where a large part of the post-harvest services converge, are impacted by this additional workload resulting from the particularities linked to the processing of specialty coffees (separate storage, processing, reprocessing, etc). This new demand for activities changes the nature of the service provided, which is incorporated into the routine of the professionals involved, who are not always prepared to absorb them. In this context, the attention given to coffee growers ends up being compromised, generating demands for it to be restored. The services provided follow the same logic, and the following report complements the previous one:

It's a lot of work. I say that from the moment we started selling specialty coffees, my work changed a lot. ( . . . ) During harvest season we sample 120 to 150 per day. The last samples you usually have to repeat the next day, because you're too tired, your taste buds are not picking up anything else. (Trading Association AM)

#### *4.2 Competition in accessing new markets (off the farm level): building new relationships*

Commodity coffee, since it respects a generic quality standard, is characterized by a lack of processability criteria and interest in its local specificities (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). This productive anonymity encourages the composition of combined batches from producers, without harming the parties involved. The storage of commodity coffee is less compartmentalized, since it can be mixed with others, with its identification required only for the cooperative's internal control (payment for sales, charging for time and storage space, etc.).

The logic of specialty coffee breaks with this characteristic, since it 1) distinguishes the product and its producer; 2) forbids the mixing of coffees with different classifications, qualities and/or producers and 3) operates with significantly lower volumes. These characteristics determine the condition of its processing and storage, which guarantee its traceability. The meticulous and particular treatment given to specialty coffee puts pressure on the entire cooperative's physical and relational structure, designed to meet the demands of commodity coffee, which is less oriented towards superior quality. The following excerpts illustrate this situation:

... if you understand how the market works, this differentiation is not interesting for the cooperative, 1) because it will have to pay more, 2) it identifies that this coffee is differentiated, but it does not pay for the differentiation (...) it's something that's been happening more as a result of competitive pressure than their own will. (Exporter AM)

(...) the processing of all coffees is done at the cooperative, in addition to being a member of the cooperative there, I also contract the cooperative's service, in terms of exports. There really is this conflict within the cooperative, (...) people think I'm there as their competitor. The cooperative also doesn't make much effort to export coffee, so it ended up that I also saw an opportunity to export here in the region (...). I think it's a very narrow business mentality, because I'm generating revenue for the cooperative, when I use their storage, bagging, loading and unloading services. I even sometimes buy coffee from cooperative members ... (coffee grower 10)

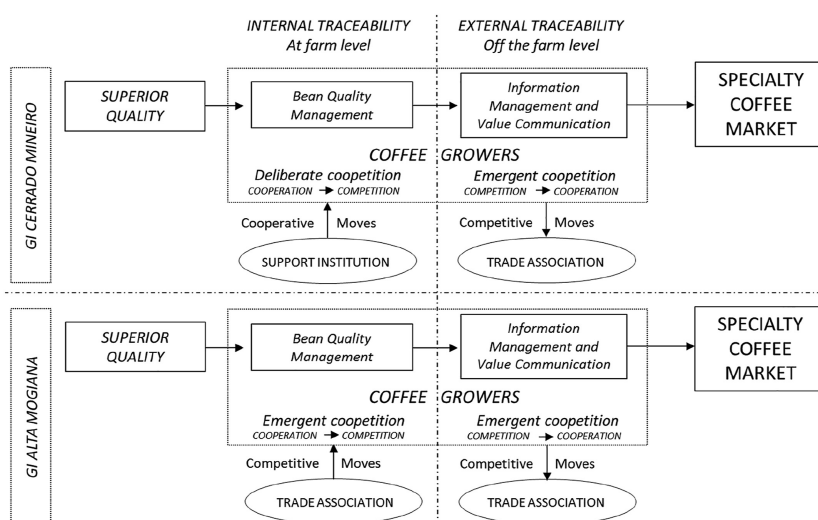
These contradictions affect the cooperative-coffee grower relationship and trigger a cooperative relationship between coffee growers wanting to skip the cooperative's intermediation and establish direct contact with customers. This new market configuration requires cooperatives to be able and willing to adapt to a new appreciation of the producer and his individuality, contrary to their longstanding economic policy. A remark of a cooperative's president explains this logic:

We have two businesses here: one is warehousing and the other is marketing. They are not dependent on each other, but they should help each other. We see it like this: the member leaves his coffee here, he is a good member. (...) If the buyer can't buy his coffee that is here, then we'll have to fight with the buyer, because it was a commercial failure. The producer won't sell cheaper abroad, he will sell more expensive abroad. Price by price, he puts it here. (...) So, our view is that failure to pay the price that is out there is incompetence, a difficulty on the part of our commercial department, which we have to help resolve. (Trading Association CM)

The following section discusses the main results presented in this section. Furthermore, based on academic literature on coopetition and stakeholders, two propositions are presented to guide future studies on the subject.

## **5. Discussion**

The model presented in Figure 1 represents the research results, facilitating understanding of the interplay of coopetition, differentiation and stakeholder influence, identifying their points of contact as well as the resonance of their interactions. The model organizes the confrontation of the findings with the theoretical support of the literature, evidencing the



Source(s): Created by the authors (2023)

**Figure 1.**  
Research  
representation model:  
coopetition,  
differentiation and  
stakeholder influence

origin of coopetition in the two investigated environments: inside and outside the farm gate. The patterns developed were different at each GI at the farm level and similar at each GI off the farm level.

Although all stakeholders influence the coffee growers, only two of these influences are presented in the context of this work based on their relevance to coopetition development: SEBRAE-MG, as a support institution, and the cooperatives as trading associations.

To meet the high quality standards required of specialty coffee, the traditional knowledge of coffee growers needed to be increased with formal knowledge provided by associations, whether political or trading, as pointed out by [Sumane et al. \(2018\)](#) among farmers in general. The brand work conducted by GI Cerrado Mineiro managed to attract a support institution (SEBRAE-MG) to enable this increase in knowledge, whose relationship with coffee growers was primarily cooperative (with a weak competitive threat and strong cooperative potential, supporting both quality improvement and management capabilities of producers).

Cooperatives, on the other hand, changed the nature of the relationship among coffee producers in the transition from the commoditized market to the specialty coffee market. When the market was only commoditized, cooperatives posed a weak competitive threat and had strong cooperative potential; when the commoditized market started being divided with that of specialty coffees, cooperatives began to pose a strong competitive threat (in the logic of differentiation from the coffee growers' perspective) even though a strong cooperative potential remained.

### 5.1 Deliberate coopetition under stakeholder influence

The initial cooperation practice between coffee growers at the farm level in both GIs did not mature to the point of becoming a transparent and reliable environment in order to promote competition spontaneously. To accomplish this improvement, the GI Cerrado Mineiro managed to attract a support institution (SEBRAE-MG) that acted as an intermediary and orchestrating actor able to promote the connection between them, without harming bilateral relations, similar to the findings of [Chiambaretto et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Harala et al. \(2023\)](#). Our findings corroborate the literature, since it is expected that support institutions will increase

the commitment of valuable resources, which is more likely to happen among companies/producers that share similar experiences (Jakobsen and Steinmo, 2016), enhancing the differentiation process (Gnyawali and Ryan Charleton, 2018) and inhibiting knowledge transfer restrictions (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2019).

The GI Cerrado Mineiro developed a formal quality management project, which started from the early cooperation of those involved, characterized by the intentional search for collective gain without any reciprocal contribution, mediated by a support institution, whose unfolding generated a “value-sharing agreement” that aimed to obtain above-average earnings (Gnyawali and Ryan Charleton, 2018) for the territory. This pattern of cooperative relationships illustrates what was identified by Czakon *et al.* (2014) as deliberate cooptation, having cooperation as the starting point.

When valuing cooperative elements in a firm’s economic relationship, as indicated by Freeman *et al.* (2021), the support institution’s goal became more diverse than the preferred dimension of financial performance, achieved by building competitive advantage through collaboration for the positive interaction of coffee farmers. This positive stakeholder influence with transparent initiatives fostered competition for “coffee bean excellence”, exceeding the expected differentiation that supports the specialty coffee market, which triggered the collective terroir bias at least, among the stakeholders involved in the GI. Similar to what was suggested by Witkowski (2013), the coffee growers were led to “pursue excellence”, in a continuous game of overcoming their own performance. Following the findings of Jeffery (2009), the support institution encouraged coffee growers to adopt a concrete interaction that fostered a willingness to change (bean improvement) with the expectation of gain for all the GI’s players. Based on this stakeholder influence and involvement, we propose that:

- P1. Cooperation in the relationship of stakeholders and firms involved in cooptation influences its development to a deliberate pattern

### 5.2 Emergent cooptation under stakeholder influence

Similar to the findings of Šūmane *et al.* (2018) regarding farmers in general, innovations related to specialty coffees require new knowledge and skills from coffee growers for adaptation of new and old practices at the farm level. In order to speed up this learning process, it is common to rely on qualified professional support, whose participation leads to increasing competition among coffee growers for resources and/or attention. This service gap provided by the cooperative triggered a negative interplay of producers fighting for adequate assistance. When narrowing the group of assistants, the benefits of generalized exchange were lost, as expected (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). The collective starting point at the farm level, gradually and unintentionally (due to resource limitation) caused a clash of the coffee growers against each other, restricting the benefit to a few privileged producers, similar to what was suggested by Freeman *et al.* (2021). This emergent development path of cooptation, whose starting point was cooperative, is in line with the findings of Czakon *et al.* (2014), who argued that conflicting relationships trigger unilateral behavior.

Off the farm level, coffee growers had no interaction, since marketing was mainly intermediated. The desire to commit to direct trading led producers to engage in an unknown activity as they climbed the value chain, unaware of the efforts it would take to achieve the intended benefit, ultimately culminating in cooptation (Walley and Custance, 2010). The individualistic (competitive) impetus of direct trading confronts the commodity marketing model, in addition to highlighting the disparity in commercial opportunities that were previously exclusive to cooperatives. In this new context, similar to that suggested by Kujala *et al.* (2022), coffee growers emerged as new stake-seekers that destabilized the power coalition. When cooperatives responded by reclaiming their part of the stake (holding control



of coffee prices, hampering marketing), they reinforced the system's destabilization, already disrupted by other detrimental forces, similar to the suggestion of [Freeman et al. \(2020\)](#). This conflict between coffee growers and a stakeholder (cooperative) was stimulated by strategic divergences between commodity coffee and specialty coffee, as well as the structural dependence of the cooperative, which eventually unfolded into episodes of power abuse (power asymmetry). The emergence of direct trading destabilized the intermediaries' (cooperatives') market power, leading coffee growers to collaborate and coordinate the new seller-buyer relationship ([Fingleton, 1997](#)). This emergent development path of coopetition, whose starting point is competition, follows the findings by [Czaron et al. \(2014\)](#), in which cooperation is induced by resource sharing along the value chain.

This conflicting stakeholder relationship with coffee growers experiencing misalignment and ignorance of a different emergent context ([Kujala et al., 2022](#)) caused relationships to become reactive and defensive, cornering one of the vulnerabilities ([Jeffery, 2009](#)).

Based on this stakeholder influence and involvement, we propose that:

- P2. Competitive movements in the relationship between stakeholders and firms involved in coopetition influenced its development into an emergent pattern.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The objective of this study was to understand coopetition in the context of specialty coffee producers organized as SMEs, based on the need to differentiate the beans "inside and outside the farm gate", taking into account the stakeholders' influence. The nature and development of coopetition resulting from the relationships among coffee growers under the influence of stakeholders proved to be different at the farm level on each GI and similar in both GIs off the farm level. Strategic movement undertaken by coffee growers and stakeholders shaped the pathway of coopetition of coffee growers, determinant to frame it as a deliberate or emergent pattern. When cooperative moves were undertaken among stakeholder and coffee growers, the coopetition among coffee growers developed deliberately; when competitive moves were undertaken among stakeholders and coffee growers, the coopetition among coffee growers developed emergently.

Therefore, our findings provide evidence of the development of coopetition among firms to be deliberate when influenced by firms' or stakeholders' cooperative moves and to be emergent when influenced by firms' or stakeholders' competitive movements. Our findings also reinforce that deliberate coopetition concerns an intentional movement announced by the players ([Czaron, 2018](#)), which can be induced or mediated by a third party ([Chiambaretto et al., 2019](#); [Harala et al., 2023](#)), and that emergent coopetition involves unplanned movement by the players through casual interaction ([Czaron, 2010](#)). In describing coopetition in a specific agricultural setting, strongly supported by stakeholders within a limited territory, our study combines and advances previous knowledge about the influence of stakeholders (including third parties) on competitive relationships ([Chiambaretto et al., 2019](#); [Gernsheimer et al., 2021](#); [Harala et al., 2023](#); [Monticelli et al., 2021](#)), with an approach highlighting positive and negative aspects of this intervention ([Freeman et al., 2020](#); [Kujala et al., 2022](#)).

This study contributes to the existing literature on coopetition in three ways. First, it extends cooperation theory regarding cooperation among competitors and competition among cooperators in a setting highly influenced by stakeholders. Second, it contributes to the study of development patterns of coopetition, approaching cooperative and competitive movement of firms and stakeholders and their influence on the progress of these relationships. Third, it contributes to the intersection between coopetition and stakeholder literature, expanding the scope of analysis to more complex environments such as networks and ecosystems, highlighting positive and dark side practices.

The study also contributes to managerial practices in three ways. First, it helps managers to better understand the influence of stakeholders on coopetition practices. Second, it also contributes to identifying the conflicts that emerge among firms and stakeholders and how they affect the sustainability of the relationships, and hence the competitive advantage. Third, it helps to guide managers' decisions about the differentiation process in a more effective way, avoiding harmful shortcuts and emphasizing the weight of sustainable relationships for the construction of competitive advantages. At last, the study provides insights from the viewpoint of positioning and strategic management, whose expected behavior by practitioners involves a considerable change in mindset and attitude, since the relationships maintained among its players over time are characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, complexity and dynamism in pursuit of results (Bengtsson and Raza-Ullah, 2016).

Regarding this change in mindset and attitude, the younger generation represented in most of the coffee grower interviews, grew up in a more complex and internationalized business environment, accustomed to technology and the use of social networks, allowing them to establish direct contact with final consumers. These young people are more likely to confront the challenges of marketing, which involves broader perspectives and education, strategic flexibility and greater awareness in dealing with opportunities. Finally, it promotes a willingness to implement changes in the business environment, which is a hallmark of entrepreneurs.

## 7. Limitations and future research

Although this study has contributed to the coopetition and stakeholder literature, there are some limitations. First, the Brazilian coffee sector is very representative in this quality differentiation process, with 14 GIs registered with the National Industrial Property Institute (INPI) (MAPA, 2023), making coffee the product with the highest number of GIs in the country. The two GIs explored here are among the oldest, focused on *Coffea arabica*, but the newer producers have expanded this to the species *Coffea canephora*, which might pose a challenge to governance, since the latter species has been consistently considered to have lower quality, although this perception is slowly changing. Second, the study focuses only on GI organizations. Producers and cooperatives that do not belong to a GI may have different patterns of coopetition, as they do not necessarily work under the specialty coffee bias. We therefore suggest carry out studies with agents not linked to GIs, to identify possible divergences in the results, as well as among agents from different links in the production chain (e.g. coffee growers and roasters) involved in direct trading.

This investigation offered new and improved insights with regard to the interdisciplinary literature, paving the way for future research that can be further addressed. The specialty coffee market is essentially a family business, underexplored from the perspective of coopetition (Bouncken *et al.*, 2015). The coexistence of commodity coffee and specialty coffee within production units, even on farms where specialty coffee production is intensified, influences the strategy at the level of individuals, paving the way for the study of intra-organizational coopetition. Different generations compete on strategy, while cooperating on execution.

Another promising avenue is the influence of the stakeholders' profile, which was not addressed but might influence the outcome of the relationship: whether it was an "external" group of the core operation of the business, such as communities, local government authorities, local institutions and other interested/affected parties or parties involved in the core business, such as suppliers, contractors, distributors or customers. Stakeholder classification might be necessary to properly conduct research in this regard.

Lastly, cross-country investigations will help to evaluate if these empirical findings have international resonance. Once this direction is pursued, nations with comparable conditions should be studied, such as Colombia, Puerto Rico and Ethiopia, etc.

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(The Appendix follows overleaf)

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**Table A1.**  
Data collection  
dimensions that guided  
the semistructured  
interviews

Data collection instrument (interview topics)	Goals of the interviews
(i) Relationship among coffee growers, (ii) relationship between coffee growers and associations of specialty coffees (trading and political) and (iii) relationship among coffee growers and support institutions	Describe the dynamics of coopetition among coffee growers under the influence of trading and political associations, and support institutions
(i) Mobilization of resources to seek competitiveness (human, physical and organizational capital), (ii) motivators for differentiation (example: consumer demands, internal and external market, globalization) (iii) role of the territorial component (branding and governance) (iv) role of technology (at and off the farm level)	Understand individual and collective activities for differentiation promoted in the sector (partners, institutions, associations and coffee growers), with an emphasis on the use of resources and technology
(i) Knowledge and information (complex and long supply chain) the influence of associations and support institutions and the role of managers, (ii) influence of the geographical indication for the region and the individual producer (perception of value by consumers), (iii) technology to bring both ends together (social networks, traceability, marketing and sales), (iv) competition as a driver of differentiation higher remuneration as a result of work at the farm level (differentiation desired by consumers), (v) the new generation of coffee farmers (open mind to change)	Describe how individual and collective activities interact to influence the production and marketing of Brazilian specialty coffees (at and off the farm level)
<b>Source(s):</b> Created by the authors	

Interviewee group	Questionnaire for survey
Coffee growers	a) How is your relationship with the association? And with the cooperatives? And with the support institutions? b) Do you chase knowledge or do they bring support? Do you hire any consultants? c) Do you work with your own brand? d) When it comes to post-production, do you send the coffee somewhere? Is there machinery to perform this function? e) Do you harvest? Who does the marketing, you or the cooperative? Is any other type of company involved in this marketing? f) How does traceability happen? How to find a lot that is stocked in the cooperative or in other company? g) How did the market operate when the reality was just commodity coffee? h) Do you realize the need to have any certificate? i) How do you producers help each other in and outside the farm level? j) Do you export? Do you sell directly? k) Has your coffee won any awards?
Cooperatives, associations and support institutions	a) How does operation differ for commodity coffee to specialty coffee, in and outside the farm level? b) How does geographical indication impact coffee growers and the region? c) How do you promote innovation for coffee farmers? d) How does traceability guide and influence the work you provide to coffee growers? What role does technology play in this process and how?

Source(s): Created by the authors

**Table A2.**  
Survey questionnaire  
layout carried out for  
data collection

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