



## Peer Review Report


### PEER REVIEW REPORT FOR:

Fernandes, J. A. L., Sousa-Filho, J. M. de, & Viana, F. L. E. (2021). Sustainable business models in a challenging context: The Amana Katu case. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 25(3), e200205. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2021200205.en>

### HOW TO CITE THIS PEER REVIEW REPORT:

Fernandes, J. A. L., Sousa-Filho, J. M. de, Viana, F. L. E., & Jaber, T. (2020). Peer review report for: Sustainable business models in a challenging context: The Amana Katu case. RAC. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*. *Zenodo*. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4328903>

### REVIEWERS:

-  Tahrir Jaber (UiT Arctic University of Norway, Norway)  
*One of the reviewers chose not to disclose his/her review report.*

## ROUND 1

### Reviewer 1 report

Reviewer: Tahrir Jaber

Date review returned: July 20, 2020

Recommendation: Major revision

#### Comments to the authors

Sustainable Business Models in a Challenging Context: The Amana Katu Case

The purpose of this work was to investigate how sustainable business models can be co-created in a challenging context. The case-study was well-written and described. I appreciate the work done behind collecting the data and understanding the case itself.

Business model is not my area, so my comments are focused on the value-added of this paper and how a case study paper should be performed.

Disclaimer: The content of the Peer Review Report is the full copy of reviewers and authors' reports. Typing and punctuation errors are not edited. Only comments that violate the journal's ethical policies such as derogatory or defamatory comments will be edited (omitted) from the report. In these cases, it will be clearly stated that parts of the report were edited. Check [RAC's policies](#).

1. Abstract: the authors described what they have done in the paper, but they did not describe the purpose of the paper well and their contribution.

2. Introduction

(a) What is the gap in the literature that was studied, or what do the authors aim to test?

(b) What is the research question?

(c) About the case itself: why did the author choose this innovative project, why is it interesting to study? How is it sustainable?

(d) The last paragraph in the introduction should be re-written. 'The article is divided into six sections. After this brief introduction, we present the theoretical framework that supported it. That done, the methodological path that guided its realization is described, followed by the presentation of the case addressed in the fourth section and the analysis of the results achieved in the fifth section, in order to, at the end, consolidate the conclusions.'

3. Theory: my largest concern involves the theoretical part. I am missing a theoretical framework, how the authors used previous theory and what they are aiming to study/test?

(a) The first paragraph of the theoretical part is not clear. Please re-write it again.

(b) The authors grouped 11 patterns in the theory. Why these patterns are important in the study and how they have been used in the study? This was not clear.

(c) The same issue with the value creation (page 6), why is this important to this study?

(d) In general, I do understand why the authors incorporate SBM, but I don't know how this benefits their study.

4. Method: data collection and analysis appears capably done, but there are some methodological issues that should be addressed.

(a) More about single case study and how a single case study will answer the research question should be addressed.

(b) More information about how the data and how it was informed should be addressed. For example, who have been involved in their interviews, how did you interview them, what kind of questions have been asked, what are the purpose of the questions (or how the questions asked help you answer your research question)

(c) How the data was analysed? You described that you used a software but what type of method did you use to get your results should be addressed.

(d) I prefer that section 4 (case description) should be moved to the beginning of the methodology part not as a separate section. Furthermore, please cut out some information about the case itself.

5. Discussion: please link your result to previous studies/results.

6. Conclusion: limitations and contributions were not mentioned.

7. There were some types and formatting issues.

In sum, the case was well-described but I was struggling to understand how the theory was used in the paper. The authors put their efforts in describing the case but for me more effort should be put in describing their work in other words theory and method. I recommend that the authors cut down some information about the case and write more about their actual work in the method and theory. If the authors disagree with my assessment, they may consider making a firmer argument in the introduction/theory.

I sincerely wish the authors luck moving forward and I hope that my comments are in some way useful.

#### Additional Questions:

Does the manuscript contain new and significant information to justify publication?: Not applicable

Does the Abstract (Summary) clearly and accurately describe the content of the article?: Yes

Is the problem significant and concisely stated?: Yes

Are the methods described comprehensively?: Not applicable

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?: Yes

Is adequate reference made to other work in the field?: Yes

Is the language acceptable?: Yes

Does the article have data and / or materials that could be made publicly available by the authors?: Not applicable

Please state any conflict(s) of interest that you have in relation to the review of this paper (state "none" if this is not applicable): none

Rating:

Interest: 2. Good

Quality: 2. Good

Originality: 2. Good

Overall: 2. Good

## Reviewer 2 report

*Reviewer 2 for this round chose not to disclose his/her review report.*

## Authors' Responses

Dear Associated Editor and Reviewers,

Our responses are organized according to each observation received in an attached file *[below]*.

In advance, thank you very much for your contributions.

### Review Map – Round 1

#	Source	Comments	Revisions
1	Associate Editor	The case study is good and the choice of theories is ok. However, it seems that the theories are not used much in the explanation of the case.	Thank you very much for your feedback! We prioritize the use of theories in discussing the case (section 5), not in the case description (section 4).
2	Associate Editor	I would wish a little bit of restructuring though as I would like the achievements of this BM to be listed in the intro, making it clearer for the reviewer why this case is chosen.	Thanks for the recommendations. We emphasize some achievements of Amana Katu in the Introduction (fourth paragraph; p.2), in the excerpt that says: "Since it was designed in 2017 to participate in a competition of ideas and projects promoted by one university, Amana Katu has received a dozen national and international awards, highlighting the achievement of the World Water Race in Silicon Valley in 2018, and, currently, its rainwater system provides access clean water to over 7.000 people in Amazon region."
3	Associate Editor	The table overview of the achievement could be in the appendix as it is not directly relevant for the study.	Thank you very much for your suggestion. We put the table in the appendix, leaving only a small mention to certain achievements (p.17)
4	Associate Editor	Drop the bulletpoints and rather use tables.	Done! Thank you very much for suggesting this! We replaced bullets with tables, as you can see on page 5 (Table about SBM) and page 9 (Table about Circular Economy)
5	Associate Editor	I miss a discussion of how the two literatures compliments and/or overlaps each other.	Fixed! Thank you very much for picking this out. In the last paragraph of section 2.1 (p.7) we present the complementarity of theories, explaining that circular models of production (circular economy) constitute a type of SBM. The excerpt says: "Circular economy is clearly a kind of SBM, and sustainable business models that adopt circular economy principles are commonly called circular business models (Bocken et al., 2016; Jabbour et al., 2019). As SBMs, circular business models function as a way to reduce social and ecological impacts or even as a way to purposefully achieve sustainable development (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013)."
6	Associate Editor	I also think that the circular economy should be described first, as I think business models are a part of the circular economy - making the former a larger concept than business models. In the relationship between SBM and CE, would you say that a concept need first to fit in the CE framework before a SBM framework can be applied.	From the arguments of some authors (for example, Bocken et al., 2016; Jabbour et al., 2019) we consider circular models of production (circular economy) to be a type of SBM, and not the opposite. To strengthen this argument, we reformulate the last paragraph on p.7 (section 2.1): "Circular economy is clearly a kind of SBM, and sustainable business models that adopt circular economy principles are commonly called circular business models (Bocken et al., 2016; Jabbour et al., 2019). As SBMs, circular business models function as a way to reduce social and ecological impacts or even as a way to purposefully achieve sustainable development (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013)."

Continues

(continued)

#	Source	Comments	Revisions
7	Associate Editor	I miss a table showing the three phases and describing them.	Thank you very much for the opportunity to improve and detail research procedures. Following the suggestions, we prepared a table (Table 3) describing the three phases of the study (p.14)
8	Associate Editor	I also think that the coding could be further elaborated and categories showcased. Since a software was used, I think you can generate some table overview over categories etc.	Done! Thank you very much for suggesting this! To better describe the analysis categories we use, we used the opportunity and include them in Table 3 (p.14)
9	Associate Editor	I miss the connection to the business model. What element of the business model was focused upon in this case and what made it so successful?	Thanks for the opportunity to clarify. Our study emphasized the co-creation and development of a new venture that adopted a SBM. In the discussion part we returned to Lüdeke-Freund et al. (2018) SBM patterns in order to connect with literature. We explained more clearly in the case description and discussion, and showed that Amana Katu adopted, for example, 7 of 11 SBM patterns. The interaction of these patterns made it successful.
10	Associate Editor	Was there other elements not covered in the Ludeke Feund overview that emerged from the data. Was there one element which emerged as more important?	Thanks! Analyzed data reinforce the SBM patterns already discussed by Lüdeke-Freund et al. (2018), but our work contributes with the notion of “patterns combination”. We found that Amana Katu combined 7 of 11 SBM patterns in order to run its business model. In this line, we propose as an opportunity of future research a better understanding of the pattern combination phenomena in sustainable business models.
1	Reviewer 1	<b>Abstract</b> The authors described what they have done in the paper, but they did not describe the purpose of the paper well and their contribution.	Thank you for your comment. In this new version we included the purpose of the paper and contributions.
2	Reviewer 1	<b>Introduction</b> (a) What is the gap in the literature that was studied, or what do the authors aim to test?	Thank you very much for your feedback! To better describe literature gaps, we included new text (p. 2 and 3).
3	Reviewer 1	(b) What is the research question?	Thanks! We addressed literature gaps, and additionally we included the research question (p.3).
4	Reviewer 1	(c) About the case itself: why did the author choose this innovative project, why is it interesting to study? How is it sustainable?	Thank you for this! In line with your and Associate Editor recommendations, we emphasize some achievements of Amana Katu in the Introduction (fourth paragraph; p.2), in the excerpt that says: “Since it was designed in 2017 to participate in a competition of ideas and projects promoted by one university, Amana Katu has received a dozen national and international awards, highlighting the achievement of the World Water Race in Silicon Valley in 2018, and, currently, its rainwater system provides access clean water to over 7.000 people in Amazon region.”
5	Reviewer 1	(d) The last paragraph in the introduction should be re-written. “The article is divided into six sections. After this brief introduction, we present the theoretical framework that supported it. That done, the methodological path that guided its realization is described, followed by the presentation of the case addressed in the fourth section and the analysis of the results achieved in the fifth section, in order to, at the end, consolidate the conclusions.	Thank you for your comment. We re-wrote this paragraph with a better textual construction.
6	Reviewer 1	<b>Theory:</b> my largest concern involves the theoretical part. I am missing a theoretical framework, how the authors used previous theory and what they are aiming to study/test?	Thank you very much for picking this out. We introduced a framework (see section 2.3, p. 10- 12) that links SBM and circular economy principles and how they both interact with stakeholders.
7	Reviewer 1	(a) The first paragraph of the theoretical part is not clear. Please re-write it again.	Thank you so much for the suggestion. We agreed with the reviewer and removed the paragraph, as he found that it did not add significant elements to the work.
8	Reviewer 1	(b) The authors grouped 11 patterns in the theory. Why these patterns are important in the study and how they have been used in the study? This was not clear.	Thanks for the opportunity to clarify. Following Associate Editor comments, in this new version we put 11 patterns in just one table (Table 1). These patterns were important to show different SBM that emerged by literature, and to analyze case study data. Amana Katu has used 7 of 11 patterns, as we explained in the discussion part (second paragraph and others).
9	Reviewer 1	(c) The same issue with the value creation (page 6), why is this important to this study?	Thanks for the opportunity to clarify again! The function and aim of all business models is to create value, and this concept is central in the business model’s literature. Thus, we introduced the concept and discussion about business models. In this new version, we modified a short text in order to explain this. The excerpt says: “In general, value creation is the central aspect of any business model research (Freudenreich et al., 2019; Richardson, 2008; Wirtz et al., 2016; Zott et al., 2011). Value creation in SBM literature has received important attention because of its intrinsically potential to create social and environmental value, and spread this value to society.”

Continues

(continued)

#	Source	Comments	Revisions
10	Reviewer 1	(d) In general, I do understand why the authors incorporate SBM, but I don't know how this benefits their study.	Thanks for your comment. Our study emphasized the co-creation and development of a new venture that adopted a SBM. We included a new excerpt in the theory about this. In the case description and discussion, we explained more clearly, and showed that Amana Katu adopted, for example, 7 of 11 SBM patterns.
11	Reviewer 1	<b>Method:</b> (a) More about single case study and how a single case study will answer the research question should be addressed.	We appreciate the request, however, we understand that at the beginning of the introduction we made it clear why the case was chosen: "The choice of the case was guided by its adherence to the approaches of sustainable business models, which serves the purposeful sampling based on theory (Patton, 2014)" (p.12)
12	Reviewer 1	(b) More information about how the data and how it was informed should be addressed. For example, who have been involved in their interviews, how did you interview them, what kind of questions have been asked, what are the purpose of the questions (or how the questions asked help you answer your research question)	We are very grateful for the opportunity to be able to refine the description of the methodological procedures used in the research. For that, we elaborated a table (Table 3) describing the interviewed subjects and the focus of analysis according to each of the three phases of the research. (p.14).
13	Reviewer 1	(c) How the data was analysed? You described that you used a software but what type of method did you use to get your results should be addressed.	Thank you very much for your feedback! To better clarify the analysis procedures adopted, we reformulate the last two paragraphs of the Methods section (p.15).
14	Reviewer 1	(d) I prefer that section 4 (case description) should be moved to the beginning of the methodology part not as a separate section. Furthermore, please cut out some information about the case itself.	We prefer to keep the case description in a specific section (section 4), as it is part of the research results, not the methodology.
15	Reviewer 1	<b>Discussion:</b> please link your result to previous studies/results.	Thanks for your comment. We quoted some papers linking previous results with the present case study. But it is important to inform that the unique case study approach, with unique contributions, made it more difficult to link with other papers. Yet, we are addressing some literature gaps, one of them is about the little studies about SBM with small firms in a challenging context, so there are not many previous cases in order to compare or link.
16	Reviewer 1	<b>Conclusion:</b> limitations and contributions were not mentioned.	Thanks. In this new version we included contributions to theory and practice, and some research limitations.

## ROUND 2

### Reviewer 1 report

Reviewer: Tahrir Jaber

Date review returned: October 15, 2020

Recommendation: Minor revision

#### Comments to the authors

Thank you for addressing my comments in this revision.

#### Abstract

The authors described the name of the case as 'innovative sustainable business model called Amana Katu'. The business model refers to the company's strategy for making money. Amana Katu is the name of the case study they have studied and NOT the name of the business model.

This is how it stated in the paper 'In order to change that reality, an innovative sustainable business model called Amana Katu was co-created based on the principles of circular economy, and built through partnerships with NGOs, corporations and government'.

### Introduction

1. The same thing here at the introduction ... 'In 2017, in order to change that reality and aiming to mitigate the clean water problem in that region, an innovative sustainable business model called Amana Katu was co- created in'.
2. The authors mentioned in a sentence 'the three dimensions of sustainability' ... What are these dimensions?
3. Move this sentence to the conclusion and future studies 'future efforts could be focused on understanding aspects such as the role of university in the creation of sustainable business models.

### Theory

I appreciate the work done behind the theory and theoretical framework. But it is still not clear, how did you use the theory in your study. How the tables related to the circular economy and sustainable business model categories were applied in your study. Did you use them to develop your interview questions?

### Method

Still not clear, what kind of questions did you ask. How did you use the theory to address your questions and where the interviews took place?

### Case Description

What is the aim of the paper? Theory testing? Theory building?

If it is theory testing, then I prefer that you develop some propositions or statement that would be tested and compared with previous studied. (in other way formulate section 4 so it would be easier to grasp what you are aiming to achieve)

### Discussion

According to this sentence 'Based on the framework, value proposition, value creation and value capture are relevant aspects of SBM, without these points any business model performs successfully'.

Typing error, I guess you mean unsuccessfully?

### Conclusion

Write more about limitation .. how did you validate your result from a single case.

Good luck!

### Additional Questions:

Does the manuscript contain new and significant information to justify publication?: Not applicable

Does the Abstract (Summary) clearly and accurately describe the content of the article?: Yes

Is the problem significant and concisely stated?: Yes

Are the methods described comprehensively?: Yes

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?: Yes

Is adequate reference made to other work in the field?: Yes

Is the language acceptable?: Not applicable

Does the article have data and / or materials that could be made publicly available by the authors?: Not applicable

Please state any conflict(s) of interest that you have in relation to the review of this paper (state "none" if this is not applicable):.

### Rating:

Interest: 2. Good

Quality: 2. Good

Originality: 2. Good

Overall: 3. Average

## Authors' Responses

Thank you very much for the opportunity to polish our paper.

According to the recommendations made by the reviewers, we managed to evolve significantly.

The review letter and the current version of the paper follow.

### Review Map – Round 2

#	Source	Comments	Revisions
1	Reviewer 1	<b>Abstract</b> The authors described the name of the case as 'innovative sustainable business model called Amana Katu'. The business model refers to the company's strategy for making money. Amana Katu is the name of the case study they have studied and NOT the name the business model.	Thank you very much for your feedback. We rewrote the text in order to meet your change suggestion. The new paragraph is stated as follow: "In order to change that reality, a social business called Amana Katu created an innovative sustainable business model based on the principles of circular economy..." (p. 1).
2	Reviewer 1	<b>Introduction</b> 1 - The same thing here at the introduction ... 'In 2017, in order to change that reality and aiming to mitigate the clean water problem in that region, an innovative sustainable business model called Amana Katu was co-created in'. 2 - The authors mentioned in a sentence 'the three dimensions of sustainability' ... What are these dimensions? 3 - Move this sentence to the conclusion and future studies 'future efforts could be focused on understanding aspects such as the role of university in the creation of sustainable business models.	Thank you very much for your recommendations. Changes were stated as follows. 1 - We rewrote the text in order to meet your change suggestion. The new paragraph is stated as follow: "In 2017, in order to change that reality and aiming to mitigate the clean water problem in that region, a social business called Amana Katu created an innovative sustainable business model in Brazilian Amazon." (p. 2, second paragraph) 2 - Based on Elkington (1994) we detailed the three sustainability dimensions (social, environmental and economic) in the p. 3, fourth paragraph. 3 - Done! We moved the text to conclusion and future studies.
3	Reviewer 1	<b>Theory</b> I appreciate the work done behind the theory and theoretical framework. But it is still not clear, how did you use the theory in your study. How the tables related to the circular economy and sustainable business model categories were applied in your study. Did you use them to develop your interview questions?	The theory (SBM and CE) was used to develop the framework, to define the categories of analysis (Table 3), and to guide the data collection. Specifically, the elements covered by Tables 1 and 2 guided all the data collection (phases 1, 2 and 3), including the elaboration of the interview script used in phase 3. We introduced a paragraph after Table 3 to elucidate some topics present in the interview script.
4	Reviewer 1	<b>Method</b> Still not clear, what kind of questions did you ask. How did you use the theory to address your questions and where the interviews took place?	Thank you very much for suggesting this! Some aspects of the theory have already served as a basis for the interpretation of the data collected in phase 1 (secondary data) and phase 2 (participant and non-participant observation). However, some elements about SBMs and Circular Economy, contemplated in the theory and the framework, could only be understood in more depth through specific questions in the interview script. We introduced a paragraph after Table 3 to elucidate some topics present in the interview script.
5	Reviewer 1	<b>Case Description</b> What is the aim of the paper? Theory testing? Theory building? If it is theory testing, then I prefer that you develop some propositions or statement that would be tested and compared with previous studied. (in other way formulate section 4 so it would be easier to grasp what you are aiming to achieve)	Thank you very much for the opportunity to improve and detail this issue. Using Ketokivi and Choi (2014) as a reference, the article fits as "theory elaboration". From that view, we added a paragraph in the method section to explain this approach. In line with Reviewer recommendations and to strengthen this approach of "theory elaboration (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014), we created and inserted three propositions based on our findings. These propositions were included in section "5 Discussion and Propositions".
6	Reviewer 1	<b>Discussion</b> According to this sentence 'Based on the framework, value proposition, value creation and value capture are relevant aspects of SBM, without these points any business model performs successfully'. Typing error, I guess you mean unsuccessfully?	Thank you very much. Sure, we made the correction and changed the word for "unsuccessfully".
7	Reviewer 1	<b>Conclusion</b> Write more about limitation... how did you validate your result from a single case.	Thank you very much for your feedback! To better describe research limitations, we rewrote the last paragraph. The new text is stated as follows: "Addressing some research limitations, it is important to explain that Amana Katu is a successful SBM in a huge challenging context that needs more sustainable initiatives. Take account that other firms, startups and SBMs can be investigated in order to understand a more real situation of these businesses in that context. In other words, due to the specificities of the case addressed, the Amana Katu was not compared with other ventures of the same sector, which could allow a more in-depth understanding of the trajectory of SBM's in challenging contexts. Such expansion is relevant even considering Amana Katu as a representative case (Yin, 2014). So, as a single case study, this research has limited power to generalize."



## ROUND 3

### Reviewer 1 report

Reviewer: Tahrir Jaber

Date review returned: November 20, 2020

Recommendation: Accept

#### Comments to the authors

(There are no comments.)

#### Additional Questions:

Does the manuscript contain new and significant information to justify publication?: Yes

Does the Abstract (Summary) clearly and accurately describe the content of the article?: Yes

Is the problem significant and concisely stated?: Yes

Are the methods described comprehensively?: Yes

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?: Yes

Is adequate reference made to other work in the field?: Yes

Is the language acceptable?: Not applicable

Does the article have data and / or materials that could be made publicly available by the authors?: Yes

Please state any conflict(s) of interest that you have in relation to the review of this paper (state "none" if this is not applicable): none

#### Rating:

Interest: 2. Good

Quality: 2. Good

Originality: 2. Good

Overall: 2. Good

**Disclaimer:** The content of the Peer Review Report is the full copy of reviewers and authors' reports. Typing and punctuation errors are not edited. Only comments that violate the journal's ethical policies such as derogatory or defamatory comments will be edited (omitted) from the report. In these cases, it will be clearly stated that parts of the report were edited. Check [RAC's policies](#).