



Keetie Sluyterman and Bram Bouwens, ***Brewery, brand and family: 150 years of Heineken*** (Amsterdam: Boom, 2014, 606 pp., ISBN 978 90 8953 429 3).

In the light of Heineken's 150th anniversary in 2014, the company commissioned a book project from Utrecht University that resulted in a research monograph titled *Brewery, brand and family: 150 years of Heineken* (also published in Dutch as *Heineken: 150 jaar brouwerij, merk en familie*). In this book, the Utrecht historians Bram Bouwens and Keetie Sluyterman have masterfully completed the task of explaining how a small brewery established at the quays in early-modern Amsterdam turned into a key player in the global brewing industry. The research monograph therefore constitutes a landmark in Heineken's historiography, but, arguably, also cannot be neglected by those interested in the (history of the) international beer industry more generally.

As the title suggests, a central role in the book is given to the importance of family and family control over the firm's long-term development, and how it carved out a steady but solid growth path for the company after 1864. The authors sum up the historical family dynamics masterfully in the last chapter on the mega-mergers that characterized the global beer industry after 2002. Although retaining family control and the financing of large acquisitions in this period seemed like impossible tasks to combine, Heineken successfully carried out four large acquisitions without losing the family character of the firm, which clearly sets it apart from other international breweries. The authors also devote much attention to the company's pre-history and how the Heineken family acquired the old Hooiberg brewery. This very interesting 'forerunner' chapter makes the book additionally relevant for those interested in pre-industrial breweries.

The book's main strength is that it clearly focuses on facets of corporate identity, aside from the family importance, that set the Heineken company apart as a leading firm in the Dutch brewing industry, and later as a large multinational. These issues are treated in a coherent and systematic way and are very well analyzed with regard to how they changed over time. These recurrent themes are: innovation, internationalisation, and labor relations. Innovation is placed in the foreground as a major driver in the company's success, especially in terms of serving an increasing range of consumers. The authors stress for instance that the early decision to produce German-style lager after 1870 clearly gave the company a competitive edge. In terms of labor relations, it is shown how Heineken aimed at a constructive relationship with its workforce, and how the firm has continued to recognize the value of human capital. In addition, the authors have

paid attention to the interconnection between the recurrent themes of innovation, internationalisation and labour relations behind the company. Early innovation by Heineken was for instance also caused by the company's inclination to look across the borders.

A second strength is that the book systematically makes the link between inside the walls of Heineken and broader societal developments. In particular, the authors pay significant attention to changing patterns of beer consumption, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Attention is paid to how the company has dealt with health issues and a negative image of alcohol consumption. In addition, the authors describe how Heineken gradually mastered commercial skills – which it lacked in the early stages – and was able to influence consumer behavior, and by extension, popular culture and lifestyle. Lastly, and related to this, is the visual strength of the book. Few company histories devote as much effort to displaying relevant visual material as this narrative of Heineken. The possibility to use the 'Layer' app to look for extra digital information makes this book even more dynamic and future-oriented.

Although this well-crafted book has very few shortcomings, a few remarks could be made. While the company's development is systematically linked to societal and macro-economic developments, first, a comparative dimension that positions Heineken within a Dutch-international business system remains regrettably absent. What does or does not set Heineken apart from other rapidly growing Dutch multinationals remains to a relative extent an open question (see pages 531-536), making it more difficult to situate the book in the broader body of literature on international business history. In other words, the analysis of Heineken's global operations is in the first place linked to the international beer market and the company's position therein, and less so broadened with existing literature on other (Dutch) multinationals (as in *Varieties of Capitalism and Business History*, 2010).

Second, and related to the first point to a degree, the connections between Heineken and political circles, both inside the Netherlands and abroad, are lacking. These issues are only explored in a few cases, for instance, a discussion is mentioned between the Ministry of Economics and Heineken on the role of multinational companies in developing countries (348), and the company's advertising strategy in terms of government regulation of alcohol consumption in the 1970s (317). However, business–government relationships are unfortunately not further explored in a systematic way. Given the importance of the firm, it would have been interesting to devote more attention to what working relationships Heineken developed with various state authorities locally, nationally, and internationally.

In spite of these minor points, nevertheless, this monograph constitutes a landmark in the rich and international historiography of

the Heineken company, and by extension it serves as an extremely useful comparative basis for examining the strategies of other large multinationals of the modern world economy.

In sum, the authors have impressively succeeded in writing a new history of Heineken. Through various recurrent themes – highly relevant to business history – such as family, consumption, innovation, labor relations, and internationalization, the book offers an impressively sweeping, coherent, and thoroughly-investigated narrative about the company. The authors explain the firm's steady yet robust international growth, and how Heineken continued to successfully adapt at critical junctions constituted by war, globalization, social tensions, and, finally, the consolidation of the global beer industry in recent decades. The book is therefore much more than seminal in studying Heineken's history, as it also constitutes a source of inspiration for any business historian.

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