

THE BELGIAN MULTIPLE FOOD RETAILER DELHAIZE LE LION AND ITS CLIENTELE, 1867-1914

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Before the First World War, British food chain stores catered mainly to the working classes and they did so with a limited range of products, minimum cost and minimal service. In Belgium, the multiple food retailer Delhaize Le Lion started business in 1867, expanded rapidly, and acquired its own factories and brands as well as a nation-wide distribution network. In contrast to the British retailers, however, Delhaize appears to have aimed at a heterogeneous clientele, emphasizing both price and service. This article investigates differences and similarities between Belgium's and Britain's food chain stores prior to 1914, dealing with business organization, product range, and clientele.

In the second half of the 19th century, a new class of retailers emerged in Britain, setting up food chain stores ("multiple grocers").¹ As historian James Jefferys explained, there were two types of stores, the "grocery" and the "provision" type, with the former selling a considerable range of groceries and the latter specializing in a very limited range of imported products in mass demand such as ham, bacon, dairy products, and, after 1880, tea.² Even multiple grocers (such as Sainsbury) that had a somewhat wider product range specialized in a limited number of products.³ The multiples of the provision type especially were highly successful and grew rapidly.⁴ This growth occurred despite a lack of sophistication in selling methods. Products were distributed via a large number of outlets with minimum cost and minimal service. The clientele was almost exclusively working class. After 1900, multiple food retailers endeavored to improve the layout of their shops, their product displays and customer service, but only after the First World War did British multiple food retailers diversify their range of goods and begin to no longer solely serve the working class.⁵ Jefferys linked the

success of chain stores prior to 1914 to the rising buying power of the British working class, the increasing import of foodstuffs, and the development of food manufacturing with standardized, ready-packed and advertised brands. His treatment of the history of multiple retailers, written more than a half century ago, in 1954, has hardly been challenged.⁶

We wonder whether multiple grocers outside Britain, and particularly in Belgium, also started as working-class grocery shops that upgraded their practices around 1900. Belgium offers a good case of investigation. With fast industrializing regions around the towns of Liège, Verviers and Charleroi in the south, Ghent and Antwerp in the north, and Brussels as the center of political and financial power, tiny Belgium had become an economic giant by 1900. Its GDP per capita grew firmly from US \$2,700 in 1870 to \$4,220 in 1913 (1990 values). By 1913, Belgium was the third richest country in Europe, following England and Switzerland.⁷ Swiftly expanding food consumption per capita accompanied the growth of Belgian GDP during this period.⁸ Grocers benefitted from this development: their number rose from approximately 32,000 in 1880 to 51,000 by 1900 (and then suffered a slight retrenchment by 1910 to 43,000 grocers).⁹ Crucially, several food chain stores developed in Belgium in the late 1800s and early 1900s. While GDP in Belgium was growing during this period, the buying power of the working classes in Belgium, however, was substantially lower than it was in Britain. The 1908 inquiry of the British Board of Trade into the standard of living of the Belgian working class revealed that the average urban worker in the building, engineering and printing trades earned only about 50 percent of the British worker's wage.¹⁰ Belgian food prices were slightly higher than in Britain: a British working-class family's diet would have cost approximately two percent more in Belgium. Was the purchasing power of the Belgian working class before the First World War sufficiently high in order to sustain the expansion of multiple grocers as it did in Britain?

We will try to answer this question by studying one of the major Belgian multiple grocers, *Delhaize Le Lion*, which was established in 1867. Two well-informed contemporary observers seemed to have little doubt that the Delhaize chain store effectively targeted the working class. The aforementioned 1908 Board of Trade inquiry was most likely alluding to Delhaize when it wrote, "The 'family' grocer has now for his most serious competitor a certain well-known Brussels firm, which owns over 600 grocery shops [...] This firm caters largely to the working classes, and the prices which it quotes are as a rule appreciably lower than those quoted by other businesses, for what purport to be identical articles."¹¹ Four years earlier, Ernest Mahaim, professor in political economy at Liège University, stressed the role of Delhaize "in standardizing and lowering the prices of general consumption. Its customers, however, are, on the whole, from the working classes; it is not, except for a very few shops in the towns, a grocery firm of the highest class."¹² Still, the report of the Board of Trade also conceded that the greater part of the grocery trade remained "in the hands of the shop-keeping class, who do business on a modest scale."¹³ The report

explained that working-class families were constantly in debt to the local petty shopkeepers.¹⁴ Increasingly, however, family grocers were experiencing competition from the newly emerged multiple retailers (such as Delhaize) and also from consumers' co-operatives.

To discover whether, before the First World War, Delhaize might have prospered as a result of working-class purchases, we will investigate three aspects of Delhaize's commercial policy: the diversity of the shop's products, the range of its selling prices, and the services offered to its clientele. The British case suggests that these aspects were indicative of the customers a chain store wished to reach. Before doing this, we will characterize the overall organization of the Delhaize company and will compare it to that of its British counterparts.

Characteristics of the Multiple Grocer Delhaize

Just like the British food multiples, Delhaize started as a family business. However, in contrast to British chain stores, such as Lipton and Sainsbury, whose owners had a working-class and even poor origin,¹⁵ the founders of Delhaize had a distinct middle-class background.¹⁶ Jules Delhaize, who opened the first shop of what was to become the chain store Delhaize in 1867,¹⁷ was the oldest son of a family of eleven children, and a business administration teacher in a Brussels secondary school. According to Jules Vieujant (his brother-in-law who wrote several brochures on Delhaize), Jules Delhaize was obsessed by the idea of creating a retail system that would cut out as many intermediaries as possible.¹⁸

In 1875 the Delhaize company had 21 branches (13 in Wallonia, seven in Flanders, and one in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, a Brussels working-class suburb), while the head office and central warehouse were located in the capital itself. At that time, the firm had a total turnover of 1.8 million Belgian francs.¹⁹ Thirty years later, Delhaize had total sales worth of 60 million Belgian francs, 565 branches, and 4,300 employees working in stores, warehouses and factories.²⁰ Delhaize remained a family business, though. While British food multiples such as Lipton and Maypole Dairy Company were quoted on the London Stock Exchange in 1898,²¹ Delhaize refrained from addressing the public capital market. In 1907 Delhaize became a *société anonyme* (shareholding company), but the shares were nominative and could not be sold without the Board of Administration's permission. Administrators and shareholders were all members of the Delhaize and Vieujant families. Delhaize remained what Chandler labeled an entrepreneurial enterprise, where important policy decisions continued to be made by the founders of the firm, their inheritors and in-laws.²²

Before the First World War both the British chain stores and Delhaize hardly invested in real estate. This saved on fixed capital, which could be used more profitably in the trade itself.²³ While Delhaize owned only its shop in Charleroi in the 1870s, its British counterparts also chose to rent rather than to buy their premises. In 1914 Delhaize owned only 17 of its 744 points of sale.

In order to sell at the lowest price possible, Delhaize opted for a vertical integration of production and distribution, which the British and Dutch multiple retailers also did.²⁴ An 1875 price list announced that the firm roasted its coffee and that it possessed a mechanical installation for sugar sawing. A price list from 1884 mentioned a soap and soda factory, as well as a brush factory (the latter which would develop into a firm with approximately 400 workers). In 1895, a liquor distillery, a chocolate and cookies factory, and one for confectionery were added. The price list of 1897 mentioned an installation for ham smoking, the production of sugar-coated candy, the grinding of spices, and the production of sponges, while the firm also did its own printing work. The 1900 list featured Delhaize also as a producer of tapioca, tobacco and cigars, perfume and shoe polish. In 1903 the firm appeared to make its own mustard, and in 1905 the production of vinegar was added. The price list of 1910 referred to the packaging of tapiocas and pasta, and, finally, the list of 1914 noted the production of carpets and paint. In 1914, Delhaize had a total of 23 factories,²⁵ which means that between 1875 and 1914 the firm set up a new manufacture on average every twenty months. Goods Delhaize could not manufacture itself, the company bought directly from producers, so as to eliminate intermediaries. Thus, wine was imported directly from France, Algeria and Spain, and bottled in Brussels, which was also the case with English and Scottish beers. The frozen Milwaukee ham was smoked in Belgium, making use of the sawdust from the Delhaize brush factory.²⁶

A dense network of shops, scattered all over the country, had to assure regular, rapid and massive sales, as the intent again was to lower the selling prices.²⁷ While in 1875 the retailer had 21 branches, in 1884 the number of outlets had risen to 103. Between 1890 and 1900 the number of Delhaize stores increased by 274, and in 1900 the company had 450 shops; two years earlier Lipton had 242 branches in Britain.²⁸ Delhaize added another 208 shops in the following decade. On the eve of the First World War, no less than 744 Delhaize stores were spread across the Belgian territory. The British food multiples controlling 25 or more branches in 1915 had an average of 114 branches.²⁹ Those controlling 100 branches and more had an average of 339 shops. Delhaize thus surpassed the very largest firms operating in Britain.

However, the Delhaize shops were not all directed by the firm: according to the French economist Pierre Moride, only about half of the Delhaize shops in 1913 were regular branches or *succursales* (i.e., 350), and the other half were run by franchise holders. The latter were allowed to use the name of *Delhaize Le Lion* and were obliged to obtain their goods from Delhaize's warehouse.³⁰ It is not clear when exactly Delhaize started with the franchising system, but it could certainly explain why the chain store of such a small country appeared to be larger than the biggest firms operating in Britain: for about half of its shops (the franchised ones) Delhaize did not run any financial risk. For the public, though, there was no difference: in the price lists designed for customers the Delhaize shops were enumerated without distinguishing between the two kinds of shops.

Franchising also offered another advantage: it enabled Delhaize to sell the produce of its factories without establishing new branches. As Peter Mathias observed when discussing the manufacturing capacity of British multiples, "once production capacity, with extensive overhead costs, was installed this, in turn, exerted very strong influence indeed to be kept running at full capacity- which threw the emphasis on expanding the number of retail outlets to ensure this."³¹ In Delhaize's case, franchise holders provided this extra capacity. Vieujant wrote some lyrical paragraphs acclaiming the franchising system for the possibilities of upward social mobility it offered to the Delhaize staff. Those who had learned the trade by directing a Delhaize branch could now stand on their own feet and start a *maison de vente libre* or *maison à commission*, as it was called.³² Franchise holders were supposed to run their shops as regular Delhaize branches: the Delhaize inspectors who visited the branches also controlled the franchise holders' shops; the latter had to apply the Delhaize tariffs.³³ Thanks to the franchise-holder's investment the retailing empire could grow at a faster rate than would have been possible otherwise.³⁴ Was Delhaize's franchising policy innovative? Surely, the system was not new. From the 1850s, for instance, franchising was practiced in the retailing of sewing machines, but it is unclear how widespread the practice was in food retailing. Strictly speaking, the franchised shops were not part of the chain store as such since, according to Jefferys, the multiple organization had to have financial control over its subsidiaries.³⁵ As a result, Jefferys ignores franchising and so does Mathias.

The administrators studied the localization of each Delhaize shop carefully, to put it in full view within a town's commercial hub, as was typically the case in Britain too.³⁶ Like their British counterparts,³⁷ Delhaize shops were first implanted in industrial areas (the Walloon industrialized regions with mining, metal and glass trades, paying generally high wages in the Belgian context). From the 1880s, however, the company aimed at covering as many towns and villages as possible in the whole of Belgium, as if it wished to be present in every single locality of the country, becoming a downright nationwide company. By 1897, the firm was present in every important town, mostly with more than one outlet, but the company also established stores in remote, rural places like, for example, the village of Durbuy with only approximately 300 inhabitants. On the occasion of the 1897 Brussels world exhibition, Delhaize claimed that by installing stores in remote regions, it influenced consumption habits *everywhere*, diffusing new foodstuffs and other goods at low prices.³⁸ The suggestion that, owing to lack of external sources of finance, multiple stores' growth was confined to a relatively compact "heartland" certainly does not apply to Delhaize.³⁹ Also James Mayo's observation that in the early 20th century chain stores were reluctant to expand into rural areas, given the lower stock turnover and transport difficulties,⁴⁰ is not applicable here. Since the 1880s the dense Belgian railways were the backbone of the "Delhaize system."⁴¹ Of course, efficient transportation was no guarantee for a satisfactory turnover in remote places. However, although stores were occasionally closed down as

a result of insufficient sales, the overall visibility of the chain store as such may have been an important asset. The firm effectively used this nationwide coverage in its advertisements, appealing to the national sentiments of its clientele, which were particularly strong after the Great War.

The "Delhaize system" was not only marked by the elimination of intermediaries and the economies of scale realized by the massive purchases of the central warehouse, but also a standardization of the *savoir faire* of shop keeping.⁴² Paraphrasing Frederick Taylor, one may say that the Delhaize management was convinced that it had discovered the single best way to run a grocery and that it spared no effort instructing the branch managers as to how to proceed. From 1890 the price lists contained instructions regarding the storage of goods. The firm also distributed a *Règlement à l'usage des succursales* (ground rules for the management of the stores) containing detailed instructions on all aspects of shop keeping. A second edition of this manual probably dates from 1897, but there is no trace of the first edition date. The branch managers were expected to have a thorough knowledge of the directives, and the inspectors were urged to check their implementation as well as of the instructions issued weekly. The British regional multiple Sainsbury made a similar attempt to standardize working practices; however, Sainsbury published its first rulebook for branch managers only in 1914.⁴³

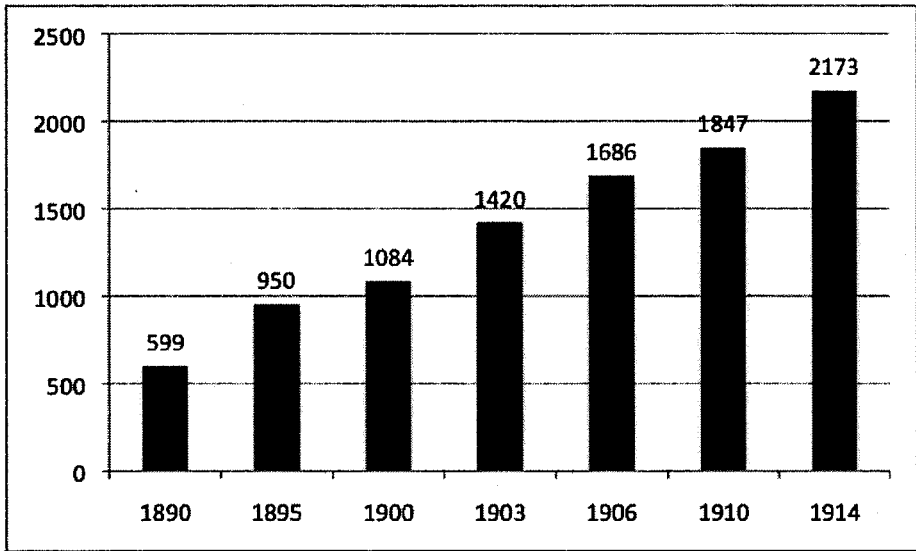
The display window was the subject of a separate chapter of the Delhaize's instruction booklet. According to the booklet, at least once a week the display window had to be refreshed. It had to be absolutely stuffed with a great variety of products, all of which had to be tastefully exhibited. Abundance, variety and freshness of product were the required qualities. For most British food multiples circa 1900, window advertising was equally important. Some companies asked their branches to have windows dressed in exactly the same way.⁴⁴ In contrast with Belgium's Delhaize, however, the provision multiples that dominated the British grocery trade before 1914 did not emphasize variety but rather, the few product lines they sold. Some favored a more dynamic presentation of their wares: at Massey's, Maypole's and Home and Colonial's, "assistants could be seen patting up butter or packaging tea in the windows."⁴⁵

Prices and Products

Before the First World War British food multiples catered mainly to the working classes and they did so with a limited range of products. The diversification of the multiples' product range after the war was part of a policy to attract other layers of the population. We argue that the diversity of Delhaize's product range is indicative of the clientele the grocer wished to attract. The *Tarif général des marchandises*, a price list meant for the branch manager, contains the complete list of products available in the Delhaize shops. The branches either had the products in stock or the manager could order them in Delhaize's central warehouse in Brussels from where they were dispatched within the day.

The Delhaize price lists contain 599 food products on offer in 1890 and 2,173 in 1914.⁴⁶ If the diversity of a shop's product range is an indication of a demanding middle-class clientele, then Delhaize fits the picture even before the First World War. Graph 1 shows the steady annual growth in the number of food stuffs at Delhaize (5.5 percent per year between 1895 and 1914), although the progress accelerated rapidly from 1890 to 1895 (9.7 percent) and 1900 to 1903 (9.4 percent), but then slowed from 1895 to 1900 (2.7 percent) and 1906 to 1910 (2.3 percent). Delhaize's increase and diversification of goods on offer was greater than the rise in Belgian private spending on food. While this increased by 71 percent between 1890 and 1914,⁴⁷ the number of foodstuffs in Delhaize's tariff lists rose by 260 percent.

Graph 1. Total number of foodstuffs for sale at Delhaize's, 1890-1914



Source: *Tarif général des marchandises* (Brussels, Cie. Delhaize, 1890 - 1914).

The same three categories of articles remained the core business of this chain store: alcoholic drinks, canned food, and sweets. These three categories provided from 64 percent (1890) to 71 percent (1914) of Delhaize's stock. Between both dates, a shift occurred among the three categories, with sweets losing some significance, canned foods holding position, but alcoholic drinks gaining importance (from 18 to 27 percent). By 1914, Delhaize supplied the impressive variety of 585 sorts of alcoholic drinks, of which liquor represented the bulk with 70 percent. This included pungent wines from Spain (Malaga, Sherry) and Portugal (Port), whiskey and gin from the UK, French liquors such as Cointreau, cognac and Anisette, local *genièvres*

and *elixirs*, and exotic drinks such as rum or Curacao. However, the share of liquor in Delhaize's total supply of drinks had somewhat diminished from 1890, due to more varieties of beer, wine and champagne. While the customer could choose between six different brands of champagne in 1890, he had the choice of no less than 59 kinds in 1914. The 13 varieties of wine in 1890 had risen to 54 in 1914. Liquor and particularly *genièvre* (or gin) might have been on the Belgian working-class' wish list, but wine or champagne were by no means part of the Belgian working-class consumption patterns. The widening choice of such luxury goods points to a bourgeois clientele, with growing purchasing power and regular luxury habits and, most likely, more experienced taste. In contrast to Delhaize, the British chain stores did not sell wine or liquor. When they attempted to diversify their product choice by selling alcohol, it was not a success.⁴⁸

Canned fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and milk kept their shares in the total supply of canned foods with, however, the addition of luxury goods such as lobster, truffles and asparagus in the 1900s. The share of sweets in Delhaize's total supply fell from 32 percent in 1890 to 28 percent in 1914. Within this category, the share of cookies and candy grew significantly from 1890 to 1914 (by 6.7 percent and 9.3 percent respectively), while that of chocolate rose more moderately (3.3 percent). Candy included caramels, bonbons, toffees and nougat, and cookies included waffles, macarons, boudoirs, *speculaus* and a seemingly limitless variety of styles, shapes and colors of cookies.

The relative importance of other categories of food and drinks remained fairly stable, although a product range such as dried fruits and vegetables, and nuts became less important (8 percent in 1890, 4 percent in 1914). Some other products were barely present on the Delhaize shelves in 1890, but gradually more brands and types were added. While in 1890 Delhaize did not sell mineral water, for example, it provided 23 different types in 1914, including very expensive ones, like the German Apollinaris, "the Queen of Waters." Only 11 sorts of syrups and juices could be bought in 1890, but in 1914 there were 43 choices. In 1890 one could buy 18 sorts of pasta, but in 1914 no fewer than 106, including some very refined ones such as *lazagnes extra*. In 1890, three different sauces were available, but in 1914 the number had risen to 54. In the category of coffee and chicory the degree of diversification was less impressive than may be expected, since Delhaize produced its own coffee. There were 21 sorts of chicory and 15 sorts of coffee in 1890, and 25 and 26 respectively in 1914. All in all, many outright luxury items were available at Delhaize's in 1890, and these grew in importance in the period from 1890 to 1914.

The availability of price lists also allows the calculation of the proportion of Delhaize own-brand products (manufactured or processed in the Delhaize factories) in the total number of food products on sale.⁴⁹ Delhaize's own brand increased from 8 percent of all food products in 1890 to 13 percent in 1910. However, this share fell to 11 percent in 1914, which should be linked to the swift development of general brand products. There

were some 25 percent of the latter in the 1890s, but 38 percent in the 1910s (testifying also to the fast diminishing of nameless products). Brand products in general (including the Delhaize goods) grew from about 35 percent in 1890 to 50 percent in 1914, which demonstrates the "first golden era for the modern brand mark,"⁵⁰ and, hence, the rapid and crucial shift in retailing and buying habits.

Given the vast array of luxury food items and drinks in the Delhaize shops, one might conclude that there is hardly any doubt that this Belgian food multiple positioned itself as a middle-class grocer. But what about the testimonies of the pre-war contemporary observers, who noticed that the store was successful in attracting working-class customers? An investigation of Delhaize's prices should enable us to nuance our findings. First of all, we tried to figure out whether Delhaize added cheaper or more costly products to its assortment. Ten foodstuffs were selected (cheese, pasta, mineral water, beer, coffee, fine meats, oil, wine, chocolate, and sugar) for which clear indications of the price per kilogram or liter were available. Differences of quality or type were ignored and the average price was calculated (of at least five varieties per product). The results were not conclusive. In some cases, adding more variation led to rising price differentials, as was the case with mineral water (17 percent price variation up to 1900, 41 percent in 1914), while in other cases there was hardly any substantial change in the price range, as with chocolate (29 percent in 1895 and 34 percent in 1914). Considering the variation coefficients and the average price per kilo or liter of the ten products, Delhaize seems to have aimed both at the lower and higher segments of the market. For example, in 1890 the cheapest coffee cost 1.75 francs and the most expensive coffee 3.90 francs (% Δ of 122), but in 1910 the cheapest coffee had become even cheaper (1.10 francs), and the most expensive one, more expensive (3.80 francs) (% Δ of 245). Yet, overall the average price of a kilo of coffee at Delhaize's decreased from 2.92 to 2.33 francs, a fact which was emphasized in its advertisements.⁵¹

This still leaves us with the question whether Delhaize was a good place to shop for the working class and whether its prices were lower than competitors'. Comparing prices between Delhaize and other retailers is quite difficult due to lack of data and/or precise information about the product or content. Data on three foodstuffs (coffee, sugar and chicory) were compared, using retail prices in 17 Belgian towns.⁵² This succinct comparison confirms what was claimed above: Delhaize aspired to both ends of the market. Its lowest prices were lower, but its highest prices were higher than other retailers'. Focusing both on price and quality, Delhaize clearly wished to appeal to the largest possible customer segment. With its ambition to serve both ends of the market, Delhaize resembled the Dutch chain store Albert Heijn, which established its first branch in 1895, advertising it with the slogan, "Rich and poor can buy at my place."⁵³

Incidentally, we might point to the fact that despite Delhaize's diversified product range (including not only groceries but also chemist products, brushes, carpets, etc.), the firm's managerial hierarchy was quite

rudimentary. In his comparison of English and American multiple stores, Alfred Chandler observed that the smaller number of product lines found in the English multiples corresponded to a more personal, nonhierarchical management and higher degree of decentralization, whereas the American multiples' broad product range was handled by a highly centralized and quite large managerial hierarchy.⁵⁴ Delhaize seems to have combined a personal, nonhierarchical management by the members of the Delhaize and Vieujant families and their confidants with a high degree of centralization in the Brussels headquarters.

Service to the clientele

The British case suggests that the service offered to the clientele was indicative of the customers multiple grocers tried to attract. A diversified product range, elegant shops, a courteous welcome, home delivery and credit facilities also could be important assets in gaining the clientele of the middle-class. Although British multiple grocers such as Lipton and Home and Colonial Stores acquired a few flagship stores with plate-glass windows and plenty of lights when they wished to conquer national markets, the fittings of most British multiple shops resembled a market stall more than the traditional grocer's.⁵⁵ Not until the turn of the century and even the interwar period did these shops improve in layout, become larger, have better fittings, and have more refined design and window-dressing.⁵⁶ This transformation was part of a policy aimed at attracting other than working-class customers.

Compared to the British multiple retailers, the Delhaize shops certainly did not lack elegance. Most of the Delhaize stores situated in major Belgian cities already occupied neoclassical houses between 1870 and 1914.⁵⁷ In the first two decades of the 20th century, Delhaize introduced some Art nouveau elements for the renovation or construction of a number of branches. So, already prior to 1914 the Delhaize shops were designed to make the shopping experience an agreeable one.

When circa 1910 the Dutch multiple grocer Albert Heijn gradually focused more on the wealthier layers of his clientele and when some British multiple grocers started to cater to the middle class in the inter-war period, they introduced both full home delivery and credit to dependable customers.⁵⁸ As early as 1890, the Delhaize price lists mentioned that the merchandise could be home delivered. Posters depicting an elegant young mistress studying a Delhaize price list in the presence of her maid awaiting instructions, advertised this possibility. Store assistants were at customers' disposal to carry packages to their homes or to railway stations. Again, these are indications of a middle-class clientele.

A service apparently not offered to the Delhaize customers was credit. In his 1897 brochure, Vieujant presented cash payments as a device to lower costs.⁵⁹ He also pointed to its educational effects: now, housewives would learn the meaning of thrift. In the price lists the mantra regarding the beneficial effect of cash payments was often repeated. In the British

food multiples, payment in cash was also standard practice.⁶⁰ Templetons even called himself a “cash grocer.” “Sales strictly for cash,” Mathias observes, “were a necessity, given the small amounts of capital brought into the trade.”⁶¹ However, the 1897 Delhaize manual specified that the store manager could grant credit to customers whose solvency was beyond doubt, albeit under his personal responsibility. The fact that the manager could ask central office for a *livret des clients au mois* (a register for customers paying their debts monthly) implies that giving credit to particular customers was institutionalized. Since workers were usually paid weekly, this seems to be another indication of the fact that a part of Delhaize’s clientele came from the middle class.

Finally, the emphasis on courtesy towards clientele suggests that Delhaize wanted to promote a discreet and distinguished shopping environment, quite another atmosphere than the shouting and the flamboyancy of the British multiple food stores.⁶² In the aforementioned *Règlement à l’usage des succursales*⁶³, Delhaize devoted several paragraphs of the 87-page manual to the question of courtesy towards clientele. The chapters on the selection and attire of shop assistants clearly elucidated what the firm expected of employees. Ideal Delhaize employees did their jobs with firm but quiet and discreet efficiency.

Overall the Delhaize management tried to implement virtues of order, dependability and cleanliness. The evaluation of store managers (which led to the amount of the bonuses that they could earn) was based on a system of points. Of the maximum 100 points that could be earned, the allocation was as follows: 20 percent sales, 20 percent attitude towards the customer, 20 percent application of instructions, 10 percent cleanliness, 10 percent inventory management, 10 percent book keeping, and 10 percent window display. In his 1900 brochure, Vieujant suggests that the training of staff was not only meant for commercial purposes, but also was part of a societal project promoting middle-class virtues: “an army of employees, scattered all over the country, is trained according to the principles of order, thrift, honesty and discipline, qualities without which no prosperity is possible.”⁶⁴

Conclusion: Assessing the Company and its Customers

Just like the British food multiples, Delhaize in its first decades of operation attempted to realize vertical integration of production and retailing and sought to open numerous outlets in order to quicken turnover, all of which was designed to reduce costs. British food multiples catered mainly to the working classes and they did so with a limited range of products and minimal service. Delhaize, however, offered from its early days a diversified range of groceries, and that variety continued to increase. Delhaize sought to create a particular organization, strategy, marketing, and, indeed, ambiance that would create a shopping experience in which all social classes could feel comfortable. The diversified product range (including a rich supply of luxury goods), the emphasis on customer courtesy, the layout of the stores,

the option of home delivery, and the availability of selective credit facilities all point to a company that was oriented toward a middle-class clientele. But Delhaize catered to the working classes too: it settled in industrial regions and small, rural villages and it offered and widely advertised goods at low prices. By so doing, this chain store diffused new goods throughout the country and piloted working-class families into a new world of consumption, although for many families this may have been restricted to images (via display windows and posters).

By aiming at a heterogeneous clientele, stressing both price and service, Delhaize definitely followed another path than its British counterparts. In contrast to the British food multiples, Delhaize did not build its empire on the working classes' rising demand for animal products. This food chain store offers a good example of modern mass retailing, with the sale of a wide range of products, including luxury ones, as well as more common and cheap foodstuffs. While the shape of the stores would change with the coming of the supermarket in the 1960s, Delhaize's general formula remained successful throughout the 20th century.

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17. Delhaize was established four years before Thomas Lipton, the founder of the future food multiple, entered the retail trade in Britain.
18. Vieujant, "Extrait," 5-10.
19. *Les Etablissements Delhaize Frères 'Le Lion'* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize, 1937), 34.
20. *Notice sur la maison Delhaize frères et Cie. Exposition universelle de Saint-Louis 1904* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize, 1904), 5.
21. Mathias, 111 and 166.
22. Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand. The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 237-238.
23. Mathias, 51, 55, 64-65 and 173.
24. Jefferys, 145 and 152; Roger Miellet, *Honderd jaar grootwinkelbedrijf in Nederland* (Zwolle: Catena, 1992), 235-239, 250-251 and 262-264.
25. Emmanuel Collet et al., *Delhaize Le Lion. Grocers Since 1867* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize, 2003), 28-31.
26. Collet, 31.
27. Jules Vieujant – Delhaize, *Mémoire présenté à MM. les présidents et membres du jury de l'Exposition internationale de Bruxelles de 1897 pour leur permettre d'apprécier et de juger dans son ensemble la participation de la Maison Delhaize Frères & Cie.* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize, 1897), 9.
28. Mathias, 101.
29. Jefferys, 137.
30. Pierre Moride, *Les maisons à succursales multiples en France et à l'étranger* (Paris: Alcan, 1913), 52.
31. Mathias, 68.
32. Jules Vieujant, *Mémoire présenté à MM. les présidents et membres du jury de l'exposition universelle internationale de Paris 1900 pour leur permettre d'apprécier l'influence exercée en Belgique par la maison Delhaizes Frères & Cie – Enseigne Le Lion de Bruxelles au point de vue de l'économie sociale* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize, 1900), 43.
33. *Ibid.*, 44.

34. Christina Fulop and Jim Forward, "Insights Into Franchising: A Review of Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives," *Service Industries Journal*, 17:4, 1997, 607.
35. Jefferys, 465.
36. Mathias, 53.
37. Jefferys, 147.
38. *Exposition internationale de Bruxelles. Mémoire présenté à MM. les présidents et membres du jury* (Brussels, Delhaize et Cie., 1897), 5.
39. Gareth Shaw et al., "Structural and Spatial Trends in British Retailing: The Importance of Firm-Level Studies," *Business History*, 40, 1998, 86.
40. James M. Mayo, *The American Grocery Store. The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 93.
41. Collet et al., 32-33.
42. John Perkins and Craig Freedman, "Organizational Form and Retailing Development: The Department and the Chain Store, 1860-1940," *The Service Industries Journal*, 19: 4, 1999, 129-130.
43. Williams, 56-57.
44. Mathias, 53.
45. Mathias, 49, 53.
46. Each product is counted as one item, taking into account all variations in weight and brand.
47. Segers, 225-226.
48. Mathias, 116 and 127.
49. *Tarif général des marchandises Delhaize Frères 'Le Lion'* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize), 1890 - 1914.
50. Liz Moor, *The Rise of Brands* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 18.
51. *Prix-courant Delhaize Frères Le Lion* (Brussels: Cie. Delhaize, 1890 - 1911), 10.
52. "Prix des principales denrées alimentaires au 28 février 1900," *Revue du Travail*, 1900, 310-311.
53. Jozef L. de Jager, *Arm en rijk kunnen bij mij hun aankopen doen. De geschiedenis van Albert Heijn en Koninklijke Ahold* (Baarn: Tirion, 1995), 37.
54. Alfred D. Chandler, *Scale and Scope. The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 255-261.
55. Mathias, 52.
56. Jefferys, 151.
57. Nelleke Teughels, "Marketing Food, Marketing a Necessity? Belgian Food Retailing and the Concept of Luxury in Advertising (1870-1940)," in Rengenier Rittersma, ed., *Luxury in the Low Countries* (Brussels: Pharo Publishing, 2010), 213-237.
58. de Jager, 44-45; Jefferys, 151.
59. Vieujant - Delhaize, *Mémoire*, (1897), 9.
60. Mathias, 47-48; Jefferys, 146.
61. Mathias, 50.
62. Jefferys, 146.
63. *Règlement à l'usage des succursales. IIe édition*, Brussels, Cie. Delhaize, s.d.
64. Vieujant, *Mémoire présenté*, (1900), 30.