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The all-American beer: a case of inferior standard (taste) prevailing?

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Abstract

America's preference for homogeneous, bland-tasting beer may have been largely derived not from an efficient, market-clearing equilibrium, but rather as a result of a series of interesting historical processes and events. The authors argue that the U.S. market may have become locked in a sub-optimal equilibrium in which most consumers are no longer familiar with the full range of what beer is and can be. As a result, most competition in this market concerns advertising campaigns designed to differentiate between increasingly generic beers. Although the concepts of path dependency, switching costs, and lock-in have been employed principally in studies discussing technology standards, these ideas may be usefully extended to consumer branded products, including foods and beverages.



Keywords

Brewing industry; Beer; Path dependency; Lock-in; Standards

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