

Organizational fit or failure : competitive environments, generic and specific strategies in Great Britain and the Netherlands

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CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The objective of this study was to gain more insight into the relationship between the competitive environment, generic strategies and specific strategies regarding manufacturing technology and human resource management (HRM). This chapter summarizes the conclusions of the previous chapters and addresses the problems encountered while performing the analyses by discussing the validity of the questionnaire and future research. Section 8.1 presents a summary of the empirical results regarding the relationship between the competitive environment, generic strategies and specific manufacturing and HRM strategies. Section 8.2 summarizes the country differences between Great Britain and the Netherlands and thus explores whether organizations in one of the two nations have a competitive advantage over the other, while Section 8.3 presents a summary of the differences detected between the chemical and food & drink industry. In Section 8.4 the question - as formulated in Chapter 3 - whether strategic groups within the industries are present is discussed. Section 8.5 then turns to the data collection instrument employed and discusses issues relating to the validity of the questionnaire. Finally, in Section 8.6 suggestions for future research are presented.

8.1 Summary of empirical results

As was mentioned in the Introduction of this book, the objective of this study was not to determine whether certain specific strategies are more important than others, but merely to study if and how parallel specific strategies link up with the chosen overall strategy. The results in that sense are encouraging, since organizations with coherent environment-generic strategy-specific strategy gestalts indeed perform better than those organizations where this coherence is lacking. However, before turning to the topic of which gestalts represent a coherent profile, the classification schemes used for the competitive environment, generic strategies and specific manufacturing and HRM strategies are summarized first.

The competitive environment (Chapter 3) is described in two dimensions that were derived by applying a PRINCALS analysis to a set of statements describing the environment of the companies. Dimension 1 portrays a continuum between a "drive to cost control" and a "drive to innovate" and refers to items that affect the

intrinsic operations of the company. Dimension 2 represents a continuum between a "drive to sophisticated marketing" and a "drive to minimize the marketing effort" and thus relates to items that affect the necessity for well-developed marketing and sales activities.

The generic strategies (Chapter 3) are classified according to Porter (1980) in the Dutch sample and according to Miles & Snow (1978) in Great Britain. In the Dutch sample of chemical and food & drink companies, five generic strategies are detected: i) differentiation, ii) cost leadership, iii) differentiation focus, iv) cost focus and v) a combination strategy of differentiation, cost leadership and focus. The British chemical and food & drink companies are characterized by two generic strategies: i) defenders and ii) analyzers.

The specific strategies regarding manufacturing technology (Chapter 4) are characterized by the degree of flexibility and integration expected to be achieved in the manufacturing function. In large batch and mass production this results in four categories of technological settings that represent a gliding scale from little to much flexibility and integration - synonymous to little and much investment in advanced manufacturing technologies: modified large batch and mass production, automated large batch and mass production, flexible large batch and mass production and, finally, innovative large batch and mass production. In continuous process production also four categories are distinguished which, however, represent opposite poles on this continuum. Limited investment in advanced manufacturing technologies has taken place in three categories: automated planning in continuous process production, automated design in continuous process production and automated continuous process production. On the opposite end of the continuum resides flexible continuous process production where a relatively higher level of flexibility and integration is assumed.

The specific strategies regarding HRM (Chapter 5) are classified by the level of strategic integration and decentralization. Four types of HRM strategies emerge: a 'true' HRM strategy which is integrated with the generic strategy pursued and decentralized to a lower level in the organization; an 'imposed' HRM strategy that is also integrated with the generic strategy pursued but implemented in a centralized manner; an 'evolving' HRM strategy, where personnel policies are developed at a decentralized level without being integrated with the generic strategy pursued; and, finally, a traditional personnel strategy without strategic integration and decentralization.

In Chapter 6 the manufacturing strategies are compared to the HRM strategies. To study the impact of advanced manufacturing technologies on the work organization - and thus the HRM strategy - the average changes in the production environment that the chemical and food & drink companies perceive after the implementation of advanced manufacturing technologies, are used as a benchmark.

To determine whether gestalts are coherent or incoherent, six different types of fit are examined (Chapter 7): i) the fit between the generic strategy and the competitive environment, ii) the fit between the technological setting and the generic strategy, iii) the fit between the technological setting and the competitive environment, iv) the fit between HRM and the generic strategy, v) the fit between HRM and the competitive environment and, finally, vi) the fit between the technological setting and HRM. These different types of fit are then related to the performance - in terms of Return on Sales (ROS) - of the organization. The best performing coherent gestalts are presented in Table 8.1 for the food & drink industry and in Table 8.2 for the chemical industry. The numbers of the companies correspond to a short company description in Appendix A.

<i>Competitive environment</i>	<i>Drive to cost control</i>	<i>Drive to innovate</i>
<i>Drive to sophisticated marketing</i>	Company number 14: * combination strategy of cost leadership, differentiation and focus * automated planning in continuous process production * true HRM	Companies number 10 & 11: * analyzer strategy * innovative large batch and mass production evolving and true HRM respectively
<i>Drive to minimize the marketing effort</i>	Company number 15: * cost leadership strategy * flexible continuous process production * true HRM	No food & drink companies operate in this environment

Table 8.1: *Best performing coherent gestalts in the food & drink industry*

<i>Competitive environment</i>	<i>Drive to cost control</i>	<i>Drive to innovate</i>
<i>Drive to sophisticated marketing</i>	Company number 3: * analyzer strategy * innovative large batch and mass production * true HRM	No chemical companies operate in this environment
<i>Drive to minimize the marketing effort</i>	Companies number 5 and 7: * cost leadership and cost focus strategies respectively * automated and flexible continuous process production respectively * traditional personnel management	Company number 1: * defender strategy * flexible continuous process production * Traditional personnel management

Table 8.2: *Best performing coherent gestalts in the chemical industry*

Although these results are not surprising and consistent with what theory would predict, they also contain some striking observations. First, a combination strategy of cost leadership, differentiation and focus only successfully appears in the food & drink industry in a competitive environment with a drive to cost control and a drive to sophisticated marketing. The hypothesis that this combination strategy is only feasible when differentiation occurs through the creation of a perceived added value through marketing, seems confirmed by this result. A perceived - rather than real - added value is almost impossible to achieve in the chemical industry due to the importance of the technical specifications of the product. Furthermore, all the companies in the food & drink industry pursue true HRM strategies even when based on the competitive environment, strategy and technological setting a less advanced form would suffice. Furthermore, company 15 utilizes flexible continuous process production while a less advanced manufacturing technology would also match the generic strategy and environmental conditions. 'Over' investment also occurs once in the chemical industry, but now concerning the technological setting of company number 7. Flexible continuous process production is theoretically too advanced for the competitive environment, generic strategy and HRM strategy, but seems to contribute to better performance. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the implementation of advanced manufacturing technologies increased efficiency to such an extent that the cost incurred were offset. The question then, however, arises whether company number 5 will not be lagging behind in the future. Company number 3 in the chemical industry also seems out of place, but since it balances between a drive to cost control and a drive to innovate (Figure 7.2) it possesses a completely coherent gestalt that also allows a further movement in the direction of a drive to innovate. Finally chemical company number 1. The defender strategy presents a misfit with the competitive environment, technological setting and the HRM policy pursued. Because this company belongs to the best performers in the industry, it is assumed that in this case the strategy implemented differs from the strategy formally stated. This problem will be elaborated upon in Section 8.5.

Although due to the nature of the sample none of the results may be extrapolated to a larger whole, for the companies in our sample it can be concluded that superior performance is achieved by those organizations that are internally consistent and at the same time aligned to the competitive environment without losing sight of competition. Sun-Tzu's two-thousand year old wisdom quoted in the Introduction for them indeed holds:

"He who knows the enemy and himself,
Will in a hundred battles not be in danger".

8.2 Summary of country differences between Great Britain and the Netherlands

Two European countries were included in the analysis to explore potential differences between the organizations in Great Britain and the Netherlands. With respect to the relationships studied only a relatively limited number of significant differences appeared. The British and Dutch companies differ significantly on environmental dimension 1: the drive to innovate is much stronger in British than in Dutch organizations. Consistent with this finding the British companies invest more in advanced manufacturing technologies, such as CAD, CAM, Robots and FMS. These differences between the countries are, however, partly attributable to the nature of the sample. The British sample contains more large batch and mass production firms than the Dutch sample in which continuous process production is the dominant mode of production. Since the possibility to gain flexibility and integration benefits by the implementation of advanced manufacturing technologies is larger in large batch and mass production than in continuous process production, this could also explain why advanced manufacturing technologies are implemented more in Great Britain. Furthermore, the British and Dutch companies in the sample differ in size. Since the British companies are in general larger than their Dutch counterparts, the investment in advanced manufacturing technologies could possibly also be attributed to differences in size. This, however, needs to be further investigated.

The specific strategy on which both countries were expected to differ most is the HRM strategy, since this is most strongly embedded in the institutional context of the countries. Analysis of the business systems and industrial relations in both countries indeed reveals that differences with respect to the content of HRM strategies exist. Because of the existence of societal effects on HRM practices, HRM strategies are examined at a level where the societal effect has less direct impact. At this level - where HRM strategies are characterized by the degree of strategic integration and decentralization - no substantial differences between the type of HRM strategies are detected. Among the companies that practice traditional personnel management, however, the vast majority is Dutch.

Finally, a difference in the performance measure - Return on Sales (ROS) - is observed: the British companies possess a significantly higher ROS than their Dutch counterparts. This is also believed to be partly rooted in the financial-institutional context, especially since subjective performance measures do not indicate a significantly better performance of the British firms.

No differences, however, between Great Britain and the Netherlands are found when the nature of relationship between the competitive environment, generic strategies and specific manufacturing and HRM strategies is examined. Although the type of combinations differ between - and within - the countries, in each country coherent gestalts outperform incoherent combinations. So for the

companies in this sample it can be concluded that being British or being Dutch does not automatically contribute to gaining a competitive advantage.

8.3 Summary of industry differences between chemicals and food & drinks

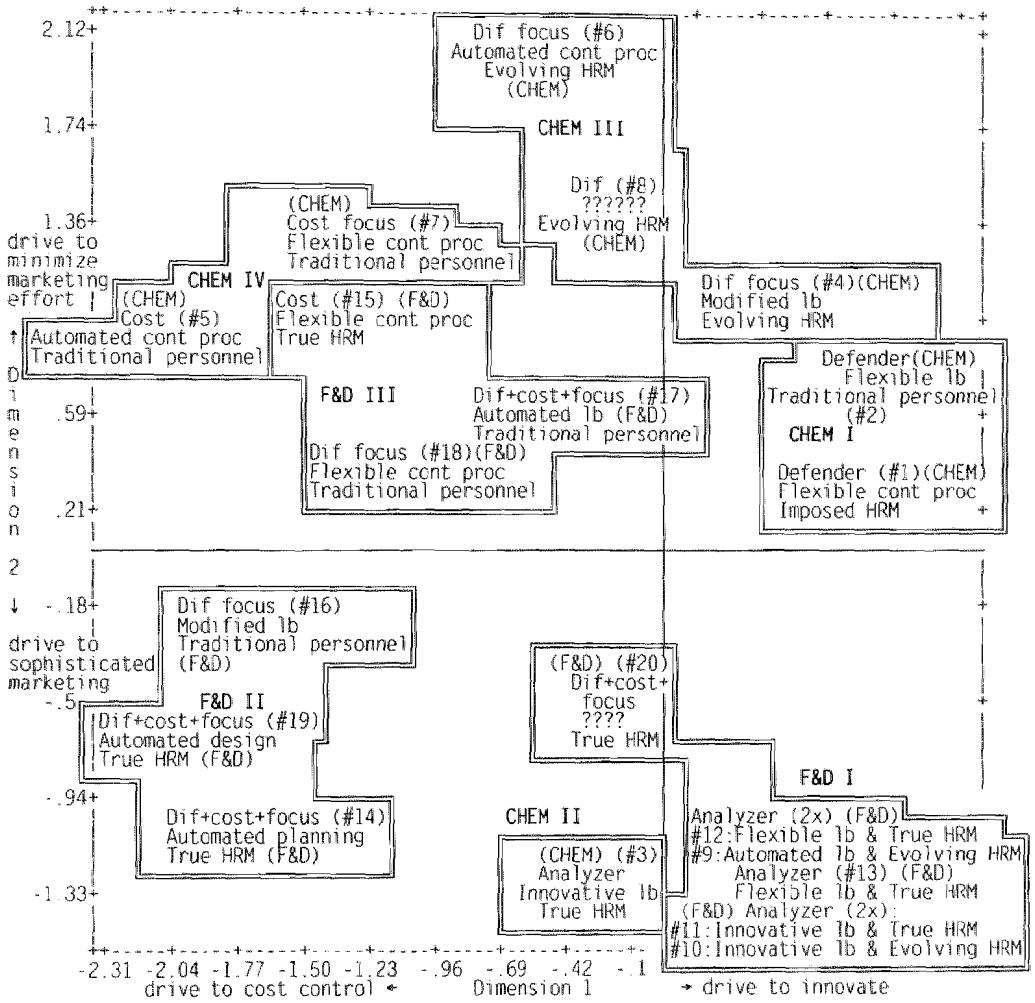
Two industries were included in the sample to examine whether the relationship between the competitive environment, generic strategies and specific manufacturing and HRM strategies differs between the chemical and food & drink industry. The main difference between the industries can be found in the competitive environment they operate in. The food & drink industry obtains a significantly higher score on environmental dimension 2 'the drive to sophisticated marketing'. This difference is a logical consequence of the characteristics of both industries (Chapter 3). The importance of sophisticated marketing is also reflected in the fact that a combination strategy of cost leadership, differentiation and focus is only found in the food & drink industry. As was explained in Section 8.1, a simultaneous emphasis on differentiation and cost leadership is only feasible when differentiation is achieved through the creation of a perceived - rather than real - added value, which can be attained in the food & drink industry.

Although the explanations behind the gestalts of competitive environment, generic and specific strategies differ, the fact that only coherence leads to superior performance does not differ over industries.

8.4 Do strategic groups exist within the industries?

In Chapter 3, clusters within the chemical and food & drink industry were established to examine the relationship between competitive environment, generic strategies and specific manufacturing and HRM strategies within industries. Since the different clusters within both industries showed considerable variation in their perception of the competitive environment, the question arose whether these clusters could be viewed as strategic groups.

Strategic groups are defined as groups of firms in an industry that pursue similar strategies (Porter, 1980) that are tied to similar resource commitments (Cool & Schendel, 1987). Furthermore they are separated from other groupings by mobility, entry and exit barriers (Mascarenhas & Aaker, 1989). The different food & drink and chemical clusters labeled with their strategy-technology-HRM pairs in their respective competitive environments are presented in Figure 8.1. The discussion on whether strategic groups are present can, however, remain but tentative since no information on mobility, entry or exit barriers is available.



- CHEM = Chemicals
- F&D = Food & Drinks
- Dif = Differentiation
- Dif focus = Differentiation focus
- Dif + cost + focus = Combination of differentiation, cost leadership and focus
- Cost = Cost leadership
- Cont proc = Continuous process production
- Lb = Large batch and mass production
- Traditional personnel = Traditional personnel management

Figure 8.1: Food & drink and chemical clusters labeled with strategy-technology-HRM pairs in their respective competitive environments

In the food & drink industry three clusters were distinguished. Although cluster I consists of firms that all pursue similar strategies, their resource allocation to the manufacturing function differs. Therefore it is suspected that this cluster contains two strategic groups: companies number 10 and 11 on the one hand and companies 9, 12, and 13 on the other. Companies number 10 and 11 employ manufacturing strategies that are more advanced and they both perform significantly better than the other companies. Although a difference in performance in itself is no criterium to classify strategic groups, these two companies might have created entry barriers through the combination of aggressive advertising and the creation of a brand name. Cluster II consist of two firms - number 14 and 19 - that operate with similar strategies and similar resource allocation patterns and are thus expected to belong to the same strategic group. Company number 16, however, pursues a different generic and a different HRM strategy. Finally, cluster III contains three companies that have very different profiles. These companies are obviously not expected to belong to the same strategic group.

In the chemical industry, four clusters were distinguished. Cluster I contains two firms that at first glance appear very similar. It was concluded however in Chapter 7 that the generic strategy stated of company number 1 is suspected to differ from the strategy implemented. If this is the case these companies do not belong to the same strategic group. Cluster II only consists of one firm. This makes any conclusions on strategic groups, of course, impossible. The three firms in Cluster III all have similar generic strategies, and although there is a significant performance difference between company 4 and 6, these firms could belong to the same strategic group. Finally, cluster IV. Although the generic and HRM strategy is similar, a difference exists with respect to the manufacturing strategy. Since resource allocations in this area differ, also these companies are not expected to be positioned in the same strategic group.

So, on the basis of the information available not many strategic groups exist among the companies in our sample: three in the food & drink industry and one in the chemical industry.

8.5 Validity of the questionnaire

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the International Organizational Observatory (IOO) was a pioneer attempt at building a European-wide data base on the functioning of organizations. Since the questionnaire was thus not developed with this specific research project in mind, several problems in the measurement of concepts were encountered. These problems - which were addressed in the previous chapters - will be summarized in this section. Also suggestions for improvement of the questionnaire are provided.

In Chapter 3 generic strategies were measured using Porter's (1980) and Miles & Snow's typologies. To determine which strategies the companies pursued, the Dutch companies were asked whether they emphasized cost, quality or both and/or focused on a specific segment (Appendix B). The British companies were asked to state their generic strategy, after which the British researchers classified them on the basis of a list of key features derived from Miles & Snow's (1978) work. In this approach a risk exists that the strategy stated by the companies differs from the strategy implemented (as is suspected in chemical company number 1). Although this risk can never be completely avoided when questionnaires are used, the risk can be minimized by formulating the question in such a way that the temptation to provide a desired answer is minimized. A suggestion would be to develop a list of statements based on Porter's (1980) and Miles & Snow's (1978) work for which the companies determine on a scale from 1 (incorrect) to 4 (correct) how they rank on this statement. The advantages of such an approach are that i) 'wishful' thinking is minimized because of the increased number of diverse statements and, ii) potential combinations between features that are not included in the original typologies could be detected.

In Chapter 4 the implementation of advanced manufacturing technologies was discussed. It was assumed in this chapter that increased implementation of advanced manufacturing technologies resulted in increased flexibility and integration of the manufacturing function. However, to determine the real impact of the implementation of advanced manufacturing technologies additional information is necessary on i) the objectives to be realized before implementation, ii) whether these objectives are indeed realized at the present time, iii) whether the manufacturing system is fully developed or whether improvements are still being made and iv) which performance measures are used to determine a potential increase in flexibility and integration (if these were the objectives).

In Chapter 5 HRM strategies were analyzed. There are, however, several improvements to be made in the questionnaire employed to analyze more in depth whether HRM strategies rather than traditional personnel management is pursued in the companies. First, questions on the content of HRM need to be extended that specifically address the HRM components of recruitment and selection, performance appraisal and compensation and training and development. Second, questions need to be included on the level of strategic integration, such as whether the personnel manager is a member of the management team, whether he is involved in developing the generic strategy for the division or business unit and whether he specifically incorporates the objectives of the generic strategy into an HRM strategy. Finally, the integration of the different HRM components needs to be addressed since this is - besides strategic integration and decentralization - also an important part of the definition of an HRM strategy compared to traditional personnel management.

Finally in Chapter 7, performance implications were analyzed. The performance measure employed is, however, too restricted. First, it was measured over a one year time period only. This entails the risk that the result is influenced by incidental external factors beyond the control of the company. Second, to measure the impact of strategies performance measures should be extended beyond financial criteria. So, ideally a performance measure should be a multi-year multi-faceted measure that includes, besides multiple measures of financial performance, also non-financial data. The collection of financial data, however, proved to be very difficult due to the nature of the sample. Furthermore it was argued in Chapter 7 that the existence of country and industry differences complicates the interpretation of financial measures. Therefore it is suggested to create a performance index similar to that of Govindarajan (1988), Govindarajan & Fisher (1990) and Conant, Mokwa & Rajan Varadarajan (1990). This would imply that respondents rate performance items, such as profit or market share, on two scales: 1) a Likert-scale ranging from 'significantly below average' to 'significantly above average' and 2) a Likert scale ranging from 'not important' to 'extremely important'. Using the data on importance as weights, a performance index can then be calculated. To have some check on the validity of this self-report, 'objective' data on profit and sales should remain part the performance questions.

8.6 Future research

In Chapter 2 the different parts of the IOO questionnaire were described and it was explained why only a limited number of topics are included in this study. Since, however, data on these topics are collected and available, the present analysis can be extended to organization structure, planning and control systems and information systems. An interesting research question in this context would be whether the coherent gestalts remain coherent when the decisions regarding organization structure, planning and control and information systems are incorporated in the analysis. Furthermore the current analysis can be extended to France, since also the French data are now available.

Since the relationships could now only be studied in a small sample, the classification schemes developed to position the companies with regard to the competitive environment and specific manufacturing and HRM strategies as well as the proposition that coherent combinations outperform incoherent gestalts, need to be tested in a larger sample.

One of the most promising avenues of future research is provided by the IOO. Based on experience with the data collection instrument in this study and in other studies by other member countries, an improved questionnaire is currently developed. This new instrument focuses on specific research questions, and thus

loses the general nature it now possesses, and is considerably shorter to reduce the interview burden put on companies. Furthermore questions are equal in all the countries that agree to participate in the analysis of a particular research question, which enables the more rigorously testing of the research questions in a larger sample.

SUCCES OF FALEN VAN ORGANISATIES

Generieke en specifieke strategieën in Groot Brittannië en Nederland

De beslissingen die ondernemingen nemen ten aanzien van concurrentiefactoren in hun omgeving, zijn een bepalende factor in de vorming van hun strategieën. Het succes van deze strategieën is echter afhankelijk van de mate van consistentie in de genomen beslissingen. Een onderneming functioneert alleen als een coherent geheel wanneer de betrokkenen in de verschillende delen binnen de organisatie weten hoe hun beslissingen elkaar beïnvloeden - met andere woorden: wanneer de samenhang tussen de interne en externe aspecten van strategie bekend is.

In dit onderzoek zijn vier van deze aspecten nader bestudeerd. In de eerste plaats is de concurrentie-omgeving van de onderneming onder de loep genomen. De concurrentie-omgeving is gedefinieerd als het geheel van concurrentiefactoren waarmee de onderneming in direct contact staat. Te denken valt hierbij aan de klanten, leveranciers, financiers, aandeelhouders en concurrenten. Het tweede aspect is de generieke strategie van de onderneming. De generieke strategie geeft aan op basis waarvan de organisatie binnen een specifieke produkt-marktcombinatie een voordeel tracht te behalen op de concurrenten. Dit is bijvoorbeeld mogelijk op basis van het produceren tegen de laagste kosten (kostenleiderschap) of het creëren van een in de ogen van de consument uniek produkt (produktdifferentiatie). Het derde en vierde aspect tenslotte omvatten de specifieke strategieën op het gebied van produktietechnologie en *human resource management*. Deze specifieke strategieën geven aan hoe de generieke strategie wordt geïmplementeerd op genoemde functionele gebieden.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is meer inzicht te verkrijgen in de relaties tussen de concurrentie-omgeving, de generieke strategie en de specifieke strategieën op het gebied van produktietechnologie en *human resource management*. Deze relaties zijn onderzocht in een steekproef van chemische en voedingsmiddelenbedrijven in Groot-Brittannië en Nederland. De belangrijkste vraag die aan het onderzoek ten grondslag ligt, is: Presteren bedrijven die een optimale afstemming van bovengenoemde aspecten hebben weten te realiseren beter dan bedrijven zonder deze coherentie?

In **hoofdstuk 1** wordt het onderzoek in het theoretisch kader van de (neo)-contingentiëtheorie geplaatst. De contingentie-theorie is ontwikkeld in de jaren zestig als reactie op de universele benaderingen van organisatie-onderzoek waarin getracht werd regels en richtlijnen te ontwikkelen waaraan iedere organisatie - ongeacht haar specifieke kenmerken - zou moeten voldoen om succesvol te kunnen

opereren. In de contingentietheorie wordt expliciet erkend dat het succesvol functioneren van een bedrijf wordt bepaald door contextuele factoren, zoals bijvoorbeeld de concurrentie-omgeving. De neo-contingentietheorie voegt hieraan de rol van het management toe, door te stellen dat de karakteristieken van een organisatie deels worden bepaald door omgevingskenmerken en deels door bewuste keuzes van het management.

Eén van de belangrijkste veronderstellingen die ten grondslag liggen aan de (neo)-contingentietheorie is dat er een optimale afstemming (ofwel fit) moet bestaan tussen de omgeving, structuur en strategie van de organisatie om succesvol te kunnen functioneren. Het in dit proefschrift beschreven onderzoek is gebaseerd op deze veronderstelling en past daarmee binnen het (neo)-contingentiedenken. De toegevoegde waarde van deze studie ligt voornamelijk in de aard van de steekproef (die besproken wordt in hoofdstuk 2) en het feit dat meerdere interne kenmerken - te weten de produktietechnologie en *human resource management* - gerelateerd worden aan de concurrentie-omgeving en strategie.

In **hoofdstuk 2** wordt de onderzoekopzet behandeld. Het onderzoek is uitgevoerd in het kader van een Europees project - de 'International Organizational Observatory' (IOO) - waaraan zeven Europese onderzoekinstellingen deelnemen. Dit internationale kader heeft grotendeels de aard van de steekproef en de methode van dataverzameling bepaald. In Nederland hebben 14 bedrijven, voornamelijk werkzaam in de chemische en voedingsmiddelensector, deelgenomen aan het onderzoek. In Groot-Brittannië omvatte de steekproef 24 bedrijven, verdeeld over verschillende industrieën waaronder de chemie en voedingsmiddelensector. De data zijn verzameld met behulp van een door de IOO ontworpen gestructureerde vragenlijst. Deze vragenlijst is ingevuld tijdens interviews met leden van het managementteam van de betrokken divisies of *business units*.

In **hoofdstuk 3** wordt de relatie tussen de concurrentie-omgeving en de generieke strategie in de Britse en Nederlandse steekproef geanalyseerd. De kernvraag in dit hoofdstuk is: Is in de onderzochte industrieën sprake van consistente omgeving-strategiecombinaties? De analyse vindt plaats in drie stappen. Stap één bestaat uit het analyseren van de concurrentie-omgeving van de betrokken ondernemingen. Deze blijkt effectief weer te geven door middel van twee dimensies. De eerste omgevingsdimensie beschrijft een glijdende schaal van een 'noodzaak tot kostenbeheersing' tot een 'noodzaak tot innovatie'. De tweede omgevingsdimensie bestaat uit een glijdende schaal van een 'noodzaak tot intensieve marketinginspanningen' tot een 'noodzaak tot het minimaliseren van de marketinginspanningen'. Stap twee omvat het bepalen van de generieke strategie van de bedrijven, terwijl in stap drie de omgevingskenmerken worden gekoppeld aan het strategieprofiel. Voor de bedrijven in de Britse en Nederlandse steekproef blijkt een bepaald strategieprofiel inderdaad samen te hangen met bepaalde omgevingskenmerken. Wanneer de omgeving noodzaakt tot innovatie volgen bedrijven

voornamelijk prospector-, analytisch- of verdedigerstrategieën. Strategieën op het gebied van kostenleiderschap, kostenleiderschap gecombineerd met een nisoriëntatie en combinatiestrategieën van kostenleiderschap, produktdifferentiatie en nisoriëntatie komen voornamelijk voor in een omgeving die aanleiding geeft tot kostenbeheersing. In een omgeving waar het minimaliseren van de marketinginspanningen noodzakelijk is, komen vooral kostenleiderschap, kostenleiderschap gecombineerd met een nisoriëntatie en (technische) produktdifferentiatie voor, terwijl in een omgeving waar intensieve marketinginspanningen belangrijk zijn, bedrijven voornamelijk concurreren op basis van een prospector-, analytisch- of combinatiestrategie van produktdifferentiatie, kostenleiderschap en nisoriëntatie. In de meeste onderzochte bedrijven blijken de bestaande omgeving-strategiecombinaties consistent. In zes bedrijven binnen de chemische en voedingsmiddelenindustrie is dit niet het geval.

In **hoofdstuk 4** wordt de relatie tussen de specifieke strategieën op het gebied van produktietechnologie, de concurrentie-omgeving en de generieke strategie geanalyseerd. De kernvraag in dit hoofdstuk is: Is er sprake van consistente omgeving-strategie-technologiecombinaties in de onderzochte industrieën in Groot Brittannië en Nederland? De analyse vindt plaats in twee delen. In het eerste deel wordt onderzocht of de traditionele produktie categorieën van stukproductie, massaproductie en continu-procesproductie moeten worden aangepast wanneer de ondernemingen geavanceerde produktietechnologieën zoals bijvoorbeeld CAD, CAM of FMS hebben geïmplementeerd. Aangezien de implementatie van geavanceerde produktietechnologieën leidt tot significante verschillen in perceptie van de produktieomgeving, worden de traditionele categorieën aangepast. Binnen de categorieën van massaproductie en continu-procesproductie is daarom een glijdende schaal opgesteld die het spectrum van weinig tot veel flexibiliteit in produktie en integratie tussen de produktiefasen beslaat. Op basis van deze 'verfijnde' categorieën zijn de produktiesystemen van de bedrijven opnieuw geclassificeerd. In het tweede deel worden de verfijnde produktie categorieën aan de concurrentie-omgeving en de generieke strategie gerelateerd. De meerderheid van de bedrijven in de steekproef blijkt consistente omgeving-strategie-technologiecombinaties te bezitten.

In **hoofdstuk 5** wordt de relatie tussen de specifieke strategieën op het gebied van *human resource management* (HRM), de concurrentie-omgeving en de generieke strategie besproken. De overkoepelende vraag in dit hoofdstuk is: Zijn de strategieën op het gebied van HRM zodanig geformuleerd dat ze de consistentie van de aanwezige combinatie van omgeving en generieke strategie ondersteunen? Aangezien de institutionele context en cultuur van Groot-Brittannië en Nederland de interpretatie van de afzonderlijke HRM componenten in beide landen beïnvloeden, zijn vier typen HRM strategieën onderscheiden waarop de institutionele context en cultuur van het land minder directe invloed hebben. Deze vier typen - een 'echte'

HRM strategie, een 'opgelegde' HRM strategie, een 'zichzelf ontwikkelende' HRM strategie en traditioneel personeelsmanagement - verschillen in de mate van integratie van HRM met de generieke strategie en de mate van decentralisatie van HRM beslissingen. Bij de meeste bedrijven in de steekproef blijkt de geformuleerde HRM strategie de aanwezige combinatie van omgeving en generieke strategie te ondersteunen. Van de vijf bedrijven zonder deze consistentie wordt een beneden gemiddeld bedrijfsresultaat verwacht.

In **hoofdstuk 6** wordt de relatie tussen de specifieke strategieën op het gebied van produktietechnologie en *human resource management* besproken. Ook in dit hoofdstuk geldt als leidraad de vraag of consistente technologie-HRM-combinaties aanwezig zijn. Om dit te onderzoeken wordt eerst per geavanceerde produktiemethode geanalyseerd hoe de implementatie daarvan de produktie-omgeving van de onderzochte bedrijven beïnvloedt. Vervolgens worden de gevolgen van deze invloeden voor de organisatie van het produktiewerk en het management van (produktie)personeel geanalyseerd. De introductie van geavanceerde produktiemethoden blijkt in massaproductiebedrijven de grootste veranderingen te veroorzaken. Dit komt voornamelijk doordat de massaproductie bedrijven menen dat de implementatie van geavanceerde produktiemethoden de integratie tussen de verschillende produktiefasen versterkt en de voorraden gereed produkt en onderhanden werk doen afnemen. Dit impliceert ook dat de gevolgen voor *human resource management* in massaproductiebedrijven groter zijn dan in bedrijven met een continu-proces. In massaproductiebedrijven neemt de produktie-omgeving immers sterker toe in complexiteit. Het is dan ook niet verrassend dat de enige twee bedrijven die niet over een consistente technologie-HRM-combinatie beschikken, gebruik maken van massaproductie. In maar liefst vijf continu-procesondernemingen was zelfs sprake van een 'over'investering in HRM. Om een consistente technologie-HRM-combinatie te verkrijgen had hier traditioneel personeelsmanagement volstaan. In de overige bedrijven is, volgens de theorie, sprake van een consistente technologie-HRM-combinatie.

In **hoofdstuk 7** wordt per Brits en Nederlands bedrijf in zowel de chemische als de voedingsmiddelenindustrie het aantal consistente en inconsistente afstemmingen tussen de externe en interne aspecten van strategie geïnventariseerd. Deze worden vervolgens gekoppeld aan het bedrijfsresultaat. De zes mogelijke combinaties - die in de voorgaande vier hoofdstukken uitgebreid zijn besproken - betreffen de afstemming tussen: i) de concurrentie-omgeving en de generieke strategie, ii) de specifieke strategie op het gebied van produktietechnologie en de generieke strategie, iii) de specifieke strategie op het gebied van produktietechnologie en de concurrentie-omgeving, iv) de specifieke strategie op het gebied van HRM en de generieke strategie, v) de specifieke strategie op het gebied van HRM en de concurrentie-omgeving en vi) de specifieke strategieën op het gebied van produktietechnologie en HRM. Het bedrijfsresultaat is gemeten als

het rendement op omzet. De hypothese dat bedrijven waar bovengenoemde combinaties een coherent geheel vormen, boven gemiddeld presteren wordt bevestigd. Opvallend is dat bedrijven die volgens de theorie teveel investeren in geavanceerde produktiemethoden en HRM (een consistente combinatie had dus ook met minder investeren kunnen worden bereikt) eveneens boven gemiddeld presteren.

In **hoofdstuk 8** tenslotte, worden de voornaamste conclusies uit de voorgaande hoofdstukken samengevat. Dit gebeurt in drie delen: de algemene empirische bevindingen, de verschillen tussen Groot Brittannië en Nederland en de verschillen tussen de chemische en voedingsmiddelenindustrie. Naast een aantal methodologische overwegingen wordt tenslotte een aanzet tot verder onderzoek geformuleerd.