

V&S Group 90 years old

V&S Group was founded on 17 October 1917. Today, 90 years later, V&S can look back on a long, successful journey. As one of the world's leading companies in the beverage industry – with a raft of spirits brands such as ABSOLUT VODKA, Grönstedts Cognac, Plymouth Gin, Aalborg Akvavit and OP Anderson and wines including Chill Out, California White and Blossa mulled wine – there is no doubt that V&S has every reason to be proud of its history.

Milestones in V&S's history include the advent and abolition of the monopoly, divestments and acquisitions, and the creation and launch of many different brands, including ABSOLUT VODKA. It is also possible to track Sweden's changing drinking habits by looking at V&S's history. In 90 years V&S has gone from being a local player to one of the leading beverage companies on a global market.

A lively nonagenarian that's seen a lot

The V&S story began back in 1917, when for reasons of alcohol policy the Swedish State wanted to implement a national monopoly for the production, import, export and wholesale trade of alcoholic beverages in Sweden. One of the aims of a monopoly was to eliminate the private profit interests in alcohol handling.

The early years in the history of V&S – or AB Vin- & Spritcentralen as it was known up until 1989 – were characterized by the fact that private wine and spirits producers and wholesalers were incorporated into the new monopoly. Companies like Grönstedts, Cederlund and L O Smith became part of V&S.

In the 1930s, the most popular alcoholic beverage was unflavoured vodka. In 1930 a total of 16.3 million litres of the vodka types Absolut Renat Brännvin and Kronbrännvin were sold in Sweden, to a population of 6.1 million. Another popular drink during that time was the fortified wine Madeira. V&S also began developing new products in the 1930s, including the liqueurs Anisette, Vit Cacao and a Swedish Green Curaçao. Skåne Aquavit was also launched, along with Dessert, a fruit wine based on rhubarb which became very popular.

Sales dropped dramatically during the Second World War, and in 1940 sales volumes were at their lowest since the 1920s. The war also placed a severe restriction on spirits production based on sugar and potatoes.

The 1950s saw a greater interest in wine, partly due to a tax increase on spirits. At around the same time a special campaign called Operation Wine was launched, which aimed to encourage people to choose wine rather than spirits.

V&S Group is a Swedish-owned corporation with extensive international operations. The V&S product portfolio includes both own brands for local, regional and international sales, as well as agency products. The Group has operations in 10 countries and worldwide distribution in 126 markets. The biggest brand is ABSOLUT, the fourth biggest premium spirits brand in the world. The Group has approximately 2,300 employees and sales in 2006 amounted to SEK 10.3 billion.



Increased wine imports meant that V&S now started bringing in wine in tanks on liners, rather than in barrels, and bottling it in Sweden. V&S had three liners – Vinia, Vinlandia and Vindemia – which made a dozen or so voyages a year each until the mid-1980s, primarily to the Mediterranean countries.

Further information

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