

The Successfully Reposition of a Beer Brand Applying Strategic Planning and Transmedia Communication: The Case of Estrella Damm

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In the last decade, the Spanish beer market has undergone significant changes. Within this market, the traditional brand Estrella Damm had to simultaneously combat adverse commercial and social trends. Following an in-depth marketing and strategy reflection, the brand achieved a new and improved positioning. Simultaneously, it made the leap to social network communication, generating a considerable volume of downloads and conversations while drastically reducing its investment in conventional media. It also made product consumption highly seasonal linking it to the summer period and launched highly visible and creative communication actions aimed at young audiences. Estrella Damm is an outstanding example of strategic planning and social networks communication techniques.

For the purpose of this study, this research applies case study techniques, content analysis of selected representative pieces, and online actions monitoring. It also analyses the market, the brand evolution, and the economic situation of the company through the use of existing scientific and professional literature.

Keywords: beer market, strategic planning and beer, Catalan brands advertising, digital campaigns

INTRODUCTION

One of the campaigns that has attracted the most attention in recent years in the advertising sector and also between communication scholars in general (Arteta, 2021, p. 205-227) has been the one carried out by the beer brand Estrella Damm. This brand, very traditional in the Spanish market, had previously launched an enormous variety of campaigns without knowing how to transfer a clear and continuous strategy to its communication actions and was being relegated to an increasingly less prominent role in a market that was undergoing important changes and in which it was beginning to become obsolete.

But since 2009 it has been able to turn its communication around with a strong strategic planning, anchored in its region of origin under the concept “Mediterráneamente”, and which it has been able to anchor and make evolve during the last decade with extraordinary communicative talent. Thanks to this, the brand has reconnected with young people, making great use of social networks and achieving a highly effective transmedia mix.

Logically, this has had a very positive impact on Estrella Damm's sales figures and notoriety. But most importantly, these communication actions had a very refined strategic planning, an outstanding creative quality and offered some remarkable examples of storytelling. As a result, they were followed on social networks and generated conversation in the main digital forums. Thanks to its notoriety and marketing success in the field of marketing and strategic planning, the campaign we are going to analyze won a gold award in the 2010 edition of the EFI (Effectiveness) Awards held in Spain and¹ the Effectiveness Award for the Trajectory of a Brand granted by the AEA (Asociación Española de Anunciantes - Spanish Association of Advertisers) in 2019². These awards have a remarkable prestige because, unlike the creativity awards, they are not granted based on the supposed quality of the campaigns themselves, but on more objective criteria, since in order to compete for them, proven figures of marketing results quantified in sales, notoriety, engagement, etc., must be presented.

It is precisely in this last season (2019) that the "Mediterráneamente" campaign can be considered completed after ten years of development. Estrella Damm has made an important strategic move in its communication, entering into a line of greater social commitment but without abandoning the territory of the Mediterranean, and last summer presented a new line of campaign that calls for reflection on the sustainable use of the sea. For this reason, with this period closed, it seems a very opportune moment to investigate this campaign.

OBJECTIVES

Our general objective is to detect and study the communication elements of this campaign-strategy, creative proposals, stories conveyed, audio, video, and text messages, etc.- that have originated the public's interest and that explain its success, analyzed especially in relation to the cultural ingredients of its geographical and cultural reference (the Mediterranean). We also want to study its effect on the beer market and its consumers, studying them as audiences that consume contents through the media and interact with them.

METHODOLOGY

We have mainly applied the case study methodology, which has required, in turn, the development of a multimodal methodological format that has incorporated several simultaneous techniques detailed in the following paragraph. As is well known, the case study methodology has a growing use in the marketing world and in business research (Guzman and Alejo, 2017; Ellet, 2007). This research technique has its precedents in the Chicago School (Arzaluz, 2005, p. 111) and some of its most prominent authors have been Robert Merton (1970) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) (Feagin *et al.*, 1991). More recently, the Harvard Business School has played a very prominent role, developing modern case study theory and promoting the teaching and practice of the case study (Garvin, 2003).

Following this methodology, several qualitative techniques commonly used in communication studies have been used, such as the deduction of the brand's strategic planning and the analysis of the most significant pieces broadcasted during the period studied, in addition to the correlation and the sum effect existing between the actions carried out in the different media, also called transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006). Similarly, quantitative analyses typical of marketing have also been used to measure product consumption levels, sales increases, economic magnitudes, the evolution of company profits... And audience analysis through web metrics. All this was applied in a diachronic way, allowing us to observe the evolution of the different significant variables of this case study and to discover the underlying trends.

For this purpose, we have collected the necessary information from the scientific literature and existing professional publications. Likewise, some specialists in the sector were interviewed; official consumption data and trends in the beer market were used, divided by sectors, consumers and brands; the evolution of the main economic magnitudes of the Damm brewery group was studied. And analytics work has been carried out in digital environments to measure the success and interactions of the public with the brand's communications.

The time period studied (2009 to 2018) reflects exactly the very successful repositioning that Estrella Damm has carried out (the “Mediterráneamente” campaign) and that, as we were saying, have been extended during that five-year period, since as of the 2019 season the brand has made an important strategic as well as communicational turn, aimed at adapting its advertising campaign to the new times.

THE BEER MARKET IN SPAIN

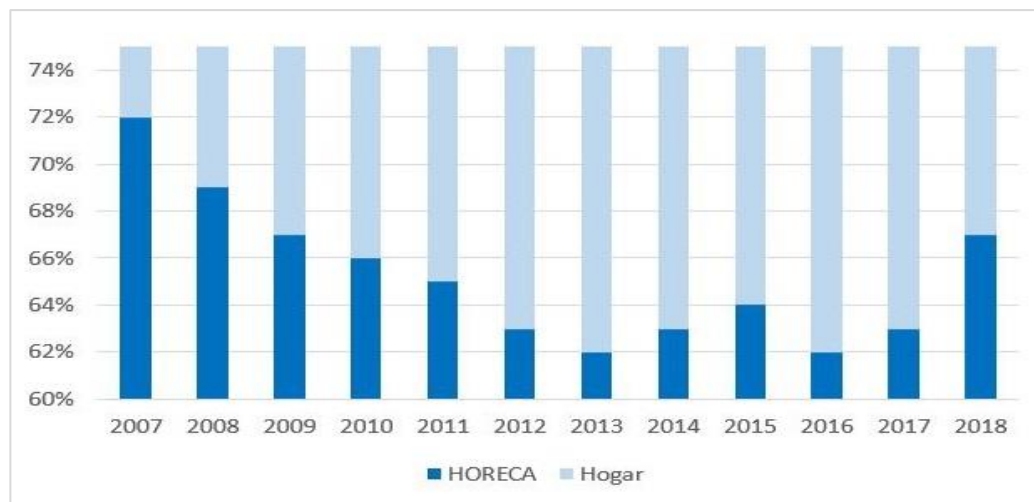
The movement that led Estrella Damm to initiate the campaign we are studying was largely due to the important changes that the beer sector was undergoing in our country ten years ago and that today seem to be practically consolidated. For this reason, we will begin by studying the initial situation and its evolution over the years. Most of the data contained in this section, where no other source is mentioned, are taken from the “Informe socioeconómico del sector de la cerveza en España” (ISSCE) (Socioeconomic reports on the beer sector in Spain) published annually by Cerveceros de España and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; the reports for the years 2007 to 2018 have been used because they cover the situation prior to the launch of the Estrella Damm campaign under study and cover the entire period during which the campaign lasted.

Consumption Levels and Other Characteristics

Beer consumption in Spain is one of the lowest in the European Union (EU). For more than a decade, the liters of beer consumed by Spaniards have not reached 60 liters per capita, standing at less than 50 liters between 2010 and 2017³. These figures are far below the European average of 70 liters and less than half the consumption of a German (116 liters) or a Czech (134 liters). This low consumption has to do with the Mediterranean diet and culture: in our country wine is frequently used to accompany meals and beer is almost never drunk individually, as it is considered a social drink, very suitable for drinking with family and friends⁴.

However, due to the volume of its population and exports, Spain is one of the main European and world producers of beer, being the fourth largest producer in the EU and the tenth largest worldwide. Almost 90% of the beer consumed in Spain is produced in the country⁵. In general terms, the Spanish beer sector moves some 12,000 million euros per year, which represents 1.1% of GDP⁶.

TABLE 1
EVOLUTION OF BEER CONSUMPTION: HOME VS. CATERING SECTOR



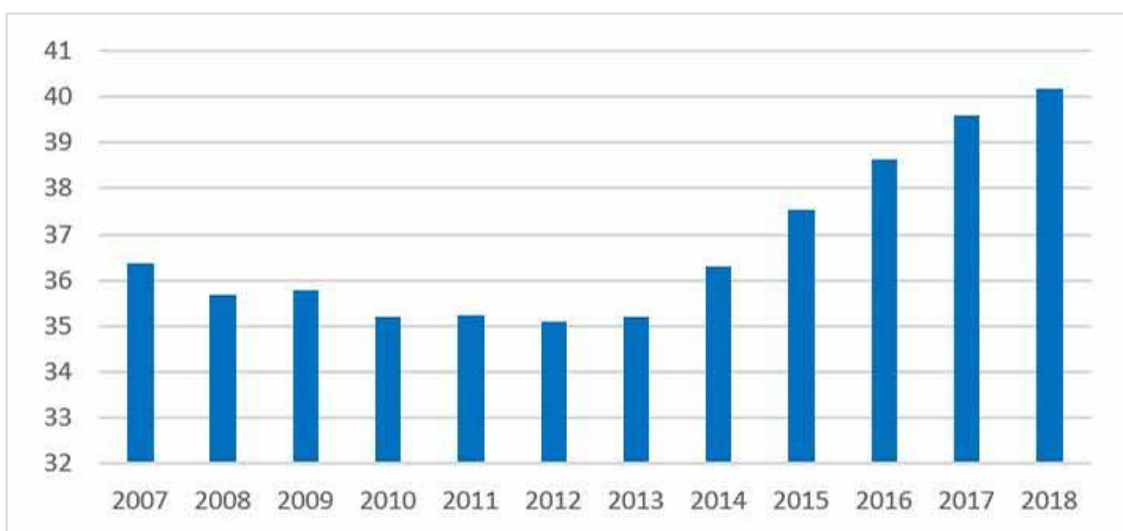
HORECA= Catering; Hogar= Home. Source: developed by the authors with data from ISSCE, years 2007 to 2018.

Despite the fact that its consumption is increasingly widespread on weekends, it is barely consumed in nightlife venues (5% of total beer consumption) where between 90% and 92% of the population - depending on the years studied - prefer distilled beverages⁷. Estrella Damm has tried to extend its presence in these places in several of the spots or short films broadcasted in its different campaigns, such as “Vale” (2015), “Las pequeñas cosas” (2016) and “La vida nuestra” (2017), where the protagonists could be seen consuming beer at night and in nightclubs. It should also be mentioned that Estrella Damm produces “Voll Damm double malt”, another type of beer with a strong flavor and higher alcohol content (7.2 degrees), which is much more suitable for drinking at night, and on which Damm concentrates its efforts as a beverage for pubs and nightlife environments.

Beer is the most consumed cold beverage in the catering sector, where it represents 46% of the total beverages consumed⁸. Consumption habits by channel reveal that beer is mainly consumed outside homes, especially in bars and restaurants. But during the financial crisis (2008-2014), out-of-home consumption moderated downward, while in-home consumption grew (Table 1).

Also, as a consequence of the crisis, overall beer consumption was stabilized with a downward trend between 2010 and 2013 (Table 2) from 36.37 million hectoliters in 2007 to 35.11 in 2012, the time of lowest consumption. Personal consumption fell by almost ten liters per capita, from 56 liters (2007) to 46.3 (2013).

TABLE 2
BEER CONSUMPTION IN SPAIN (2009-2018)



Figures in millions of hectoliters. Source: developed by the authors with data from ISSCE, years 2007 to 2018

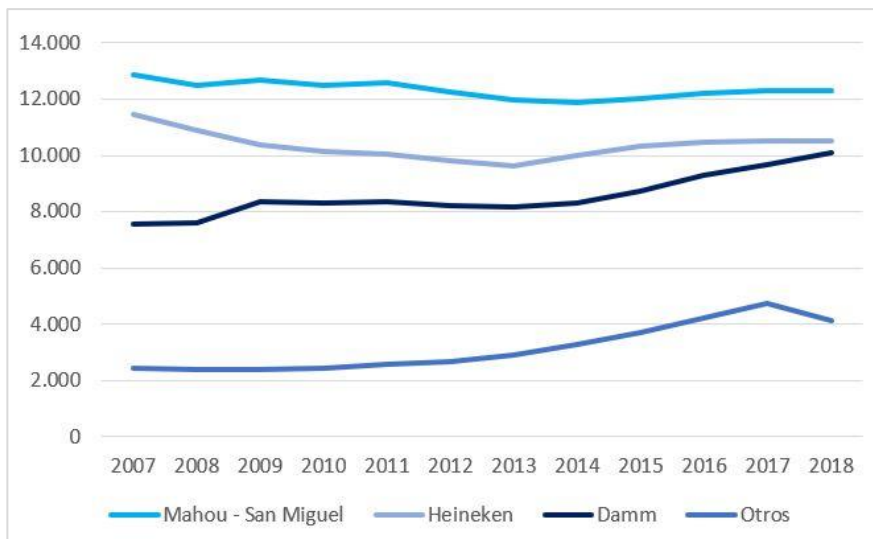
This means that during most of the time that the “Mediterráneamente” campaign lasted, beer consumption was stagnant with a downward trend, despite which, as we will see later, Estrella Damm grew significantly, gaining market share over the competition.

Another characteristic of the Spanish market is that it is the main producer and consumer country in the EU of non-alcoholic beer, which, depending on the year under study, accounts for between 13% and 17% of the total beer consumed⁹.

In terms of geographic areas, the regions that consume the most beer are, in this order, Andalusia, the center of the country (Madrid), Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, and the region of Valencia. As we can see, with the exception of the central area, all the regions noted for their beer consumption have a strong cultural link with the Mediterranean Sea and are surrounded by this sea, which is precisely the brand territory chosen and exploited by Estrella Damm in its campaign.

If we look at production in relation to the country's main brewing groups (Table 3), we can see that three of them stand out for their volume -the Mahou-San Miguel group, the Heineken group and the Damm group- compared to the rest of the manufacturers, which are in a second division.

**TABLE 3
PRODUCTION BY BREWERY GROUPS**



Figures in thousands of hectoliters. Source: developed by the authors with data from ISSCE, years 2007 to 2018.

We can also note the notable growth in Damm's production, whose sales, unlike the other major groups, come from practically a single reference, Estrella Damm. As can be seen in the table, its production level began to rise in 2009 to meet the demand awakened by the campaign we are analyzing, and experienced a significant increase as of 2014, with the end of the economic crisis, and is now practically on a par with the Heineken group.

Market Trends A Decade Ago

The beer market in Spain was then in the midst of a process of change, undergoing a structural evolution that can be summarized in three major parallel movements.

Disappearance of the Regional Brands

As a consequence of the progressive concentration of the national market, local brands that had enjoyed a quiet existence during the 20th century were faced with a dramatic dilemma: try to gain market share in other regions or disappear. This was a trend that also affected a wide variety of mass consumer products, particularly in the food market, which at the time was geographically quite fragmented, especially due to distribution issues. We can guess that this was one of the reasons behind the strategic change in Estrella Damm's advertising: to try to get out of Catalonia and the Mediterranean strip, where it distributed almost all its production, to attack the national market.

Concentration in Large Groups

Parallel to the previous process, and accelerating it, large brewing groups were formed which, applying a policy of mergers and acquisitions, began to consolidate production and distribution corporations, seeking greater profits thanks to economies of scale (see Table 4).

Rise of Imported Brands and Selected Beers

Some outstanding foreign beer brands have been in our country for some time, such as Heineken, Carlsberg and Coronita. However, the public's search for differentiation led the large groups that were being formed, many of them with foreign parent companies, to start importing a large number of brands, almost all of them with a select image and high prices which, although they have never gained a significant market share, would prepare the public's tastes for the subsequent boom in craft and signature beers.

TABLE 4
MAJOR BREWING GROUPS AND BRAND PORTFOLIO

Brewing group	Brand portfolio
Mahou - San Miguel	Mahou San Miguel Alhambra Carlsberg Kronenbourg
Heineken Spain	Heineken Cruzcampo Amstel Buckler Guinness
Damn	Estrella Damm Voll Damm Keler
Hijos de Rivera	Estrella de Levante Estrella de Galicia
Compañía Cervecería de Canarias	1906 Tropical Dorada
Grupo Agora	Modelo Ambar Moritz

Source: developed by the authors with data from ISSCE, years 2007 to 2018.

ESTRELLA DAMM: CATALAN BY ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION

The Damm group was created in 1876 by a German shepherd brewer who arrived in Barcelona fleeing the Franco-Prussian war. There, it developed a new recipe for light and mild beer to adapt it to local tastes, opening a brewery and a store for the public¹⁰. In the middle of the last century, this beer began its expansion along the Mediterranean coast (Valencia, Murcia and Mallorca) and some areas of Andalusia. And it was when the brand -which was then called Estrella Dorada and already had an easy-to-remember star on its label- began to become visible in relation to the family public, summer holidays and the beach, elements that are present in the memories of many people who spent the summer in Catalonia in the 60s and 70s of the last century, and which will be taken up and updated by the "Mediterráneamente" campaign.

Although it never lost these visual and affective identity signs, the brand stood out more recently in the world of communication for its innovative concern, carrying out a branded content action that allowed it to appear in several scenes of Woody Allen's film "Vicky Cristina Barcelona". But its commercial communication actions did not seem to have a clear and coherent strategy, offering for many years campaigns that changed direction and focus each season.

In 2008 the brand presented the eye-catching "Rocket Man" campaign that incorporated the slogan "Welcome to the Mediterranean" and placed Estrella Damm in this geographical and vital territory. It showed the (surreal) story of a person drinking an Estrella Damm sitting at the bar of a pub. Immediately,

the stool takes off like a rocket and drops it into a pool full of fun people by the sea. The campaign was not entirely successful, but it initiated a change in the communication strategy that would be deepened and readjusted in the following campaigns with remarkable success.

Strategic Planning: To Consolidate the Position in the Mediterranean Area

Estrella Damm understood that it had to find a long-term competitive positioning that would establish the brand in its own territory and neutralize the threats we have seen in point 4.2 above. Thus, the brand could enter the national beer market with distinctive and unique values, compete with foreign beer brands by showing local values and, finally, maintain its independence from the merger and acquisition policy of the large brewing groups. We will analyze these decisions from the knowledge offered by modern strategic planning, the use of which began to become widespread in Spanish agencies in the first decade of the 21st century, following the most widely disseminated manual on these techniques¹¹.

The geographical and cultural space of the Mediterranean seemed appropriate for several reasons:

- It corresponded to the origin of the product and its main area of distribution. In this regard, it should be noted that the Catalan origin could be a problem in the rest of Spain: the pro-independence political movements in Catalonia have caused reactions of rejection in the rest of the country that were taking the form of boycotts of Catalan products, as had happened with the well-known Freixenet cava, which saw its profits fall by 18.5% in a single year for this reason, among others¹². Therefore, the concept of “Mediterráneo” was very useful strategically: it refers to the Catalan territory and ideology but framing them in a wider area that does not arouse negative connotations.
- It connected with the images and the traditional heritage of the brand: beach vacations, fun and family moments, unforgettable experiences...
- It generated Mediterranean images and values that were favorable to the brand in several ways: good gastronomy, ancient culture of *savoir vivre*, enjoyment and adventures, leisure activities, etc.

**FIGURE 1
LOGO OF THE BRAND’S SLOGAN**

The image shows the brand's slogan 'Mediterráneamente' written in a bold, black, cursive script. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn quality. The 'M' is particularly large and prominent, and the overall style is reminiscent of a graffiti or street art font.

Although the concept of the Mediterranean appeared in Estrella Damm’s 2008 campaign and the slogan “Mediterráneamente” appeared in 2009, it was in 2012 when this logo was introduced with an original lettering that would be extraordinarily remembered for its modernity and outstanding personality.

As a result, the marketing department of Estrella Damm and its advertising agency Villar-Rosàs -which would remain in charge of the communication during the ten years of this campaign- decided to deepen the territorial space of the Mediterranean as the brand’s heritage and geolocation device, but incorporating some strategic and formal decisions of great importance:

- 1) Targeting the new generations and connecting decisively with the hipster public¹³.
- 2) Concentrating all communication investment in the summer period, as it is a very seasonal product, and consequently developing a very unified strategy in all actions to be carried out and media to be used.
- 3) Including in this strategy the work developed by the brand in digital environments, which from now on would be enhanced to promote the public’s dialogue with the brand.

- 4) Regarding the content and the formal field, to focus on the sea itself as a leitmotiv, which will play a major role in the campaigns.
- 5) Advertising stories of young people who are enjoying a summer vacation that will surely mark the rest of their lives because of the intensity and fullness of their experiences.
- 6) Incorporating in each year's campaign a high-impact musical theme to try to transform it into the song of the summer and multiply the visibility of the actions.

All these decisions and elements will be included in the communication actions and will weave with remarkable coherence the continuity of the "Mediterráneamente" campaign.

Coronita's Casual Competition

It appeared that the Coronita brand had chosen in parallel a very similar reason for its campaigns since 2009 with the advertising agency Delvico. Being linked to summer as a light beer, from Mexico, and drunk with a slice of lemon, it decided to draw attention to a place where it is often consumed: the beaches¹⁴. Specifically, it initiated a public awareness campaign to prevent the increasing pollution of beaches with garbage, waste and plastic debris (Figure 2). However, despite a certain coincidence with the object of Estrella Damm's campaigns, due to the different focus of both, it does not seem that they have collided or that the public relates them for this reason.

FIGURE 2
"CORONITA SAVE THE BEACH" CAMPAIGN



Source: «Coronita 2009 "Save the Beach"». Screenshot of the TV spot. Downloaded from (27/sept./2019): <https://bit.ly/2mFuNru>

Analysis of the 2009-2018 Campaigns

For this research, all the campaigns and the main commercial communication actions of the "Mediterráneamente" campaign were analyzed by applying the same template that studied their different characteristics, storyline, contents, audio and video messages, etc. It would be very lengthy to transfer here the main contents of each campaign one by one, so it seems more practical to detail the first actions and then explain, briefly and jointly, the characteristics common to all of them and the main variations that were introduced to renew the communication.

First Spots of the Series

The new phase began with “Formentera”, the story of a boy who arrives alone on this island, comes into contact with two friends and together they spend a vacation that never seems to end. As usual, this communication piece accompanied the “Mediterráneamente” concept with its own slogan, which would change with each successive annual campaign and contained a vital insight: “The good things never end if there is something to remind you of them”.

This spot deployed all the strategic and marketing considerations outlined above. And, although it was far from the executive virtuosity of later campaigns, it was a turning point for the brand that the public immediately perceived and appreciated: it achieved an increase in brand awareness of 236% in Catalonia and 128% in the rest of the country (according to OIPE TNS data); it received 2,750,000 visits on YouTube and managed to create a fan club of 137,000 followers. Likewise, the brand’s website experienced an 860% increase in visits¹⁵:

Without any significant changes in the presentation of the brand, price or promotions, Estrella Damm’s campaign achieved a 9.5% increase in sales -in value- during the months of June and July compared to the same period of the previous year, as well as a 12.8% annual increase (Nielsen data), a figure significantly higher than the 8.5% of the rest of the market.¹⁶

The second spot continued in the same vein but with a more approachable, fresh, and credible story. It shows an excellent storytelling of a group of friends in which two of them realize, at the end of an unforgettable vacation, that they have fallen in love almost without realizing it. The closing of this spot, “Sometimes what you are looking for is so close that it is hard to see it”, projects a polysemic message towards the couple who have just fallen in love and towards Estrella Damm, as it positions it in the territory of Catalonia against other Spanish brands of beer, and in the Spanish territory against foreign brands. Again, this campaign was a commercial success, achieving five million views on YouTube that summer (2010). And so would the following spots that achieved three million downloads (2011) and close to two million and a half million (2013).¹⁷

TABLE 5
RELEVANT DATA OF THE SPOTS OF “MEDITERRÁNEAMENTE”

Year	Spot title	Developer	Famous Character	Song/musical Group	Views*	Likes*
2009	“Formentera”	----	---	<i>Summecat / Billie the Vision & The Dancers</i>	6.3	13
2010	“San Juan”	----	---	<i>Applejack / The Triangles</i>	7.5	13
2011	“El Buli”	Isabel Coixet	Ferrán Adriá	<i>I wish that I could see you son / Hermann Düne</i>	2.3	4.2
2012	“Tramuntana”	----	---	<i>You can’t say no forever / Lacrosse</i>	4.8	11
2013	“Love of lesbian”	---	---	<i>Fantastic Shine /Love of Lesbian</i>	3.5	9.9
2014	“Estrena el alma”	Claudia Llosa	---	<i>La música es cultura / The Vaccines</i>	1.5	3.1
2015	“Vale”	Alejandro Amenábar	Dakota Johnson	<i>Our Place / Maïa Vidal</i>	0.8	0.9

2016	“Las pequeñas cosas”	Alberto Rodríguez	Jean Reno	<i>Those little things / Ramon Mirabet</i>	6.8	15
2017	“La vida nuestra”	Raúl Arévalo	Peter Dinklage	<i>(Don't fight it) Feel it / Aron Chupa</i>	8.5	18
2018	“Alex y Julia”	Dani de la Torre	Michelle Jenner	<i>The place to stay / Oriol Play Michelle Jenner</i>	10.6	13

* Accumulated figures in millions taken on September/26/2019. Source: developed by the authors with data from various sources, mainly YouTube, Anuncios magazine and Molismedia, 2017.

The Importance of Music

All Estrella Damm campaigns have carefully chosen a song as a musical element and this has had a significant part of the production effort for the payment of authorship and reproduction rights, and for the presence in each spot of the musical group or the respective singers. But the brand acted this way, convinced that the chosen song was a transcendental element of each campaign and that it would guarantee its permanence on Spotify and on the radios, in addition to supporting the connection of Estrella Damm with the music festivals it usually sponsors every summer.

The music was a sure way to connect with the chosen audience and both the music and the lyrics of the songs have been perfectly aligned with the theme of “Mediterráneamente”. And this element worked very effectively from the first campaign in 2009, when 400,000 people downloaded the song “Summercat” - popularly retitled “Tonight, tonight” because of its chorus- which reached number one on “Los 40 Principales”, Spain’s most popular sales chart¹⁸.

Incorporation of Celebrities on Both Sides of The Camera

Since its third year, the campaigns began to incorporate famous faces and names with the desire to increase their notoriety (Lorán & Martínez Polo, 2019). The first to do so was “El Bulli”, a commercial named after the then considered the best restaurant in the world, and which featured its owner and main chef Ferrán Adriá, in a film made by the well-known and award-winning director Isabel Coixet (Figure 3); it is not idle to recall that both personalities are recognized both for having been born in Catalonia and for having developed their respective activities in an innovative and original way. But, despite all these ingredients, the spot had one of the least successful audience results, getting two million downloads on YouTube that summer¹⁹.

FIGURE 3
“EL BULLI” CAMPAIGN WITH FERRÁN ADRIÁ



Famous 3 Michelin star chef Ferrán Adriá (right) and his restaurant El Bulli were featured in the 2011 campaign. Source: Estrella Damm YouTube channel. Downloaded from (27/sept./2019): <https://bit.ly/2nFDXUO>

Estrella Damm’s campaigns have also featured Oscar-winning director Alejandro Amenábar in the spot “Vale” (Figure 4), which was actually a true short film piece due to its length (12 minutes) and which exceeded 7 million downloads on YouTube. Regarding famous actors, Jean Reno appeared in the 2016 spot “The Little Things” and Peter Dinklage, very popular for his participation in the TV series “Game of Thrones”, did so in 2017 with “The Life of Us” (Figure 5).

FIGURE 4
POSTER OF THE SHORT FILM “VALE” BY ALEJANDRO AMENÁBAR



Source: (27/sept./2019) <https://bit.ly/2oyizRN>

FIGURE 5
CAMPAIGN “THE LIFE OF US” WITH PETER DINKLAGE



Source: Estrella Damm YouTube channel. Downloaded from (27/sept./2019): <https://bit.ly/2rhOpmz>

Change of Strategic Direction, Maintaining the Territory

The “Mediterráneamente” campaign ended in 2019 when Estrella Damm made a thorough strategic shift and presented “Alma” and “Amantes”, two new spots in a new stage focused on the protection of the Mediterranean Sea which, while maintaining the territorial concept of the previous ten years, align it with the sustainable development objectives promoted by the United Nations. This new phase in the brand’s

communication has been developed by the Oriol Villar agency -owned by one of the partners of Villar-Rosàs- the advertising agency that designed and managed the communication of “Mediterráneamente”. And one of its main objectives is to make explicit Estrella Damm’s commitment to sustainability, in line with the company’s 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, which incorporates measures to minimize the environmental impact of its activities.²⁰

THE COMBINED USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Although the spots in this campaign have been the most visible part for the general public, it is impossible to explain its effectiveness without analyzing the work done in the digital media, which have covered the most important part to achieve that transmedia effect, so sought after nowadays by commercial communications and which offers the public margins of initiative to interact and feel part of the process:

Right now, young people under 35 years old consume information, entertainment and culture through all kinds of platforms and mobile devices, a new communicative model in which the consumer has become a relevant actor who wants to participate and interact as a *prosumer* [...] Transmedia communication emerges as a discursive strategy that comes to facilitate the adaptation of communicative messages to the new digital scenario in which we find ourselves.²¹

That is precisely why, although it had already been working for some time in digital media and creating communities of followers in them, Estrella Damm was one of the first brands to systematically use this strategy to attract audiences from conventional media to digital media: it offered on television a summary of each year’s campaign which, in turn, acted as a trailer to capture the public’s attention and redirect them to its space on YouTube where they could watch it in its entirety (and several times), comment on it and then viralize it among their group of friends. Similarly, the songs of the campaigns, which, as we have mentioned, has been a very careful element that required a significant investment, were disclosed and used to redirect the public from Spotify or the radios to the brand’s digital communities.

In addition to this horizontal and simultaneous activation of the different media of each campaign, there was also a vertical activation, following the timeline, as the most recent spots attracted new audiences to those of previous years, so that the viewing of all of them has been growing cumulatively reaching millions of downloads.

It is worth noting that Estrella Damm did not limit itself to adding passive followers to its social networks, as many other brands do in a sterile way. On the contrary, it has been able to manage this human resource, mobilizing and activating it according to its interests. The brand’s ability to stimulate and facilitate dialogue with and among its followers is noteworthy, as highlighted by María Ferreras, then director of strategic alliances at YouTube and participant in the implementation of this project:

On Estrella Damm’s YouTube channel, it’s very interesting to pay attention to the comments from the public and that’s something I like to see in this campaign. For example, a person asks: “The final part is about Wii ringtones, can anyone tell me the name of this particular song?”, and Estrella Damm responds by directly offering the requested information. Another person commented: “Very good spot. It’s in Catalan and I don’t understand it”. And Estrella Damm, playing along, replies in Catalan. The brand therefore establishes a clear connection and develops a dialogue with consumers, it does not limit itself to transmitting emotions [...] and feeds it back through the comments that arise, so that this emotion expands and becomes contagious, becoming a global process.²²

Specifically, Estrella Damm’s YouTube channel in Spanish has 74,800 subscribers²³, in addition to another channel that the brand maintains in Catalan, which gives an idea of its public impact. Its campaigns have generated a large number of interactions in the networks, mentions in blogs and the creation of their

own fan pages and followers who reproduce and comment on the spots, songs, details of the filming... Other non-conventional media actions have been added to this, such as the organization of events and summer festivals -with the participation of some of the groups that performed the songs of the spots-, sponsoring actions -Barcelona football team-, etc.

Estrella Damm has made special use of five social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Spotify, in addition to the brand's own website, where direct links to all of them can be found.

Facebook

This community is home to some 860,000 followers who frequently receive information about the brand's actions and its products: information about festivals, personal comments from its followers, etc. It also includes mini-documentaries on activities related to the brand and the brewing of its beers.

Twitter

It has three accounts created since 2010: one in Spanish, one in Catalan and one in English for the British market. It has been used to generate expectation for new campaigns shortly before their appearance and to promote new musical groups with themes related to the brand. Taking advantage of the technological innovations of the app, it evolved from simple text messages to visual content (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6
SCREENSHOT OF TWITTER CHANNEL



Source: Estrella Damm Twitter channel, 2017.

Instagram

Estrella Damm's publications in this channel have progressed significantly over the years since its first action in 2012. They started offering food photos and then they have specialized in showing Mediterranean beaches, as well as allowing their users to share photos of this theme to create connections between them, transmitting the brand values (Figure 7). We think that the evolution experienced by this channel makes explicit the brand's intention to take advantage of each social network in the best possible way, adapting to the tastes of the public and maintaining the basic positioning of the campaign.

FIGURE 7
SCREENSHOT OF INSTAGRAM CHANNEL

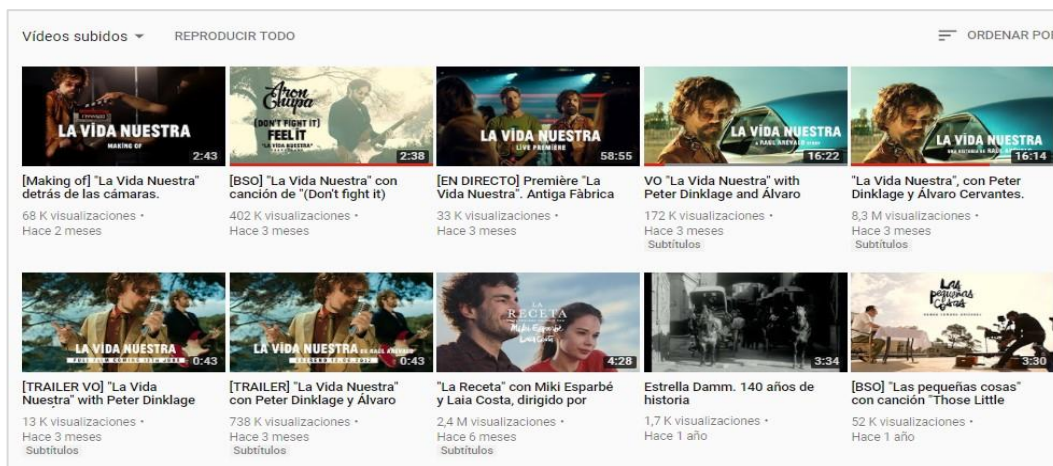


Source: Estrella Damm Instagram channel, 2017.

YouTube

In this social network channel, the brand has uploaded trailers, spots of its campaigns and the *making of* them in several languages. It has also been used to carry out a kind of pre-sale before the new campaigns appear before the general public (Figure 8). The most outstanding comments from the public are usually answered by the brand, which has intervened by moderating the debate.

FIGURE 8
SCREENSHOT OF YOUTUBE CHANNEL



Source: Estrella Damm YouTube channel, 2017.

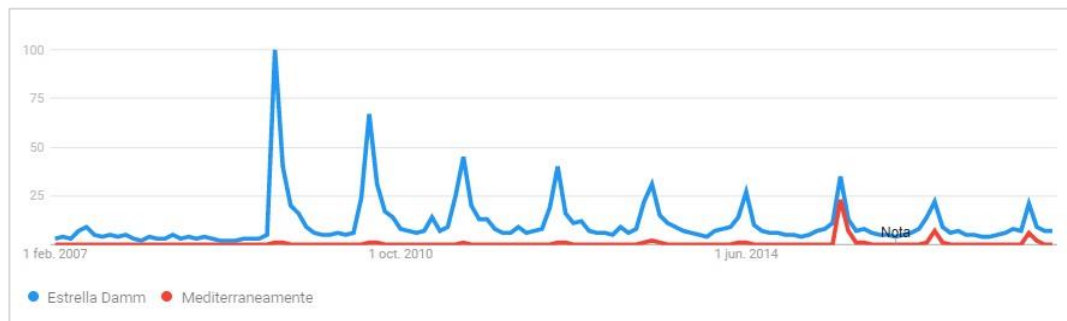
Spotify

The Estrella Damm playlist includes songs from the Sónar festival in Barcelona and other events in which the brand has been a sponsor, in addition to incorporating each summer the song used as the soundtrack of the corresponding campaign.

THE MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

It is enough to look at some general figures to quantify the success of this campaign over the ten years it has lasted. The Google Trends metrics (table 6) show with an absolute maximum (100 points) the notoriety of the first campaign in 2009, as well as the seasonal peaks each time a new campaign was launched in the summer. The loss of volume over time is logical because, as the campaign became better known, it was losing novelty.

TABLE 6
GOOGLE TRENDS CHART



Source: Google Trends, 2017.

It is already known that a wide variety of beer brands compete in the Spanish market, all of them allocating significant resources to communication and doing quality work in this aspect, especially in non-conventional advertising media (Formoso, Sanjuán & Martínez Costa, 2016). According to the report conducted by Datasocial²⁴ - from which all the data below is taken - beer brands are increasingly present in digital media: the community of beer followers exceeds 3.5 million users. Estrella Damm is the most followed on Facebook, the most active network in this consumer sector: this study gives it 859,000 fans, with twice as many followers as the next brand. Estrella Damm does not lead the second most-followed network, Twitter -although it is at the top of it- but it also generated the highest number of interactions on Twitter: 394 on average.

The third most followed network is Instagram and here, Estrella Damm is once again the leading brand with 155,000 followers; the next brand (Estrella de Galicia), has ten times fewer followers. Estrella Damm is also a prominent leader in the fourth most used network, YouTube.

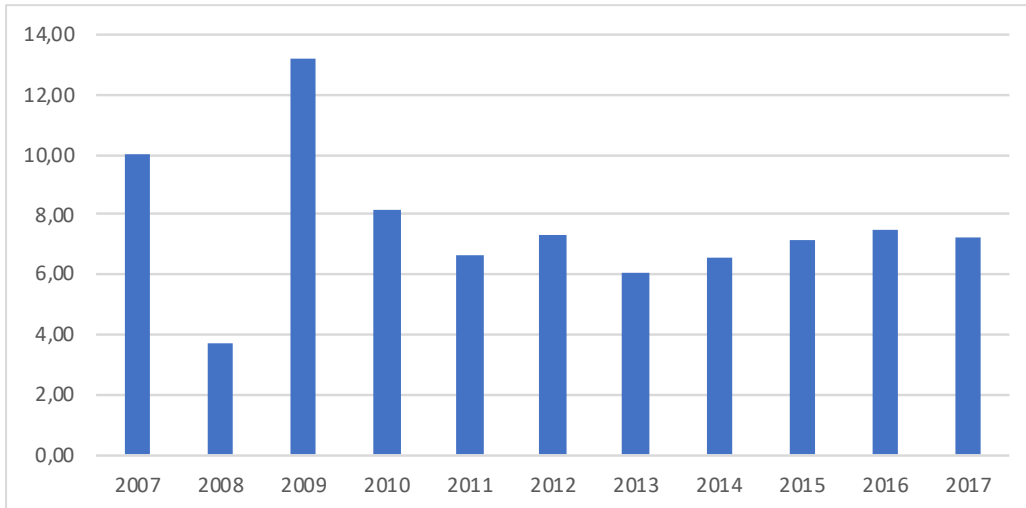
In summary, Estrella Damm has 31.4% of beer brand followers on social networks, far behind the next (Mahou) with 14.9%, which is proof of its excellent work in these media, following the multimedia interaction strategy it had previously designed.

VERIFICATION OF BUSINESS FIGURES

In conclusion, we wish to verify the positive impact that this decade of work in the field of marketing communication has had in commercial terms and at a business level, by observing the evolution of the Estrella Damm Group's business. It should be remembered that, unlike other beer groups that are highly diversified, this one depends to a large extent on Estrella Damm's sales, since the impact of this brand on the income statement is very direct.

The following data for fiscal years 2007 to 2017 were obtained from the Numerical Balance Sheet Analysis System (SABI)²⁵, a software tool developed by INFORMA and Bureau Van Dijk which, under subscription, provides access to the annual accounts of some 2.5 million Spanish companies.

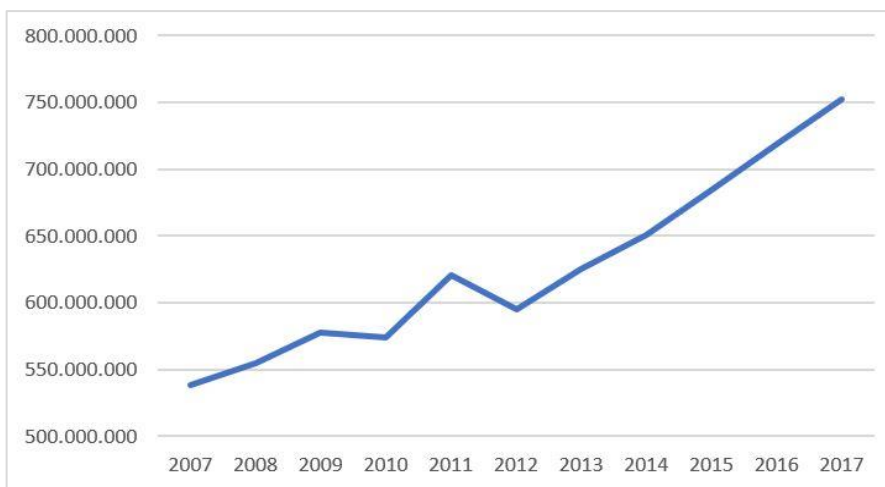
TABLE 7
EVOLUTION OF THE DAMM GROUP'S ECONOMIC PROFITABILITY



Source: Developed by the authors with data from SABI.

The Table 7 -where the economic profitability ratio indicates the return that the company can generate on its investments (ROI)- shows how the company drastically reversed the downward trend that began in 2008 thanks to the launch of the “Mediterráneamente” campaign in 2009 and was able to maintain a profitable evolution during the following years, despite the economic crisis and the drop in beer consumption levels.

TABLE 8
EVOLUTION OF THE DAMM GROUP'S OPERATING INCOME



Source: Developed by the authors with data from SABI.

It is also easy to see in the operating income (Table 8) the impact of the sales generated by the “Mediterráneamente” campaign, which increased from the first action in 2009 and continued to rise in the following years, driven by the results of the advertising campaign, the economic recovery of the country and the increase in beer consumption. All these figures clearly demonstrate the significant economic and business impact of the “Mediterráneamente” campaign developed by the brand over this ten-year period.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION: ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTACT QUALITY

As we can see, Estrella Damm’s communication campaign is an excellent example of updating the image of a brand applied to an advertising campaign that was able to renew communication and create its own very competitive territory, supported by cultural and geographic elements. This allowed it to emerge from a compromised commercial situation, with a future threatened by the creation of large brewing groups in the country and by the installation of well-known foreign brands. In order to achieve this, it was able to integrate social networks and musical activities into its communication, connecting with young audiences.

There are two main aspects that draw our attention in this case:

- The adoption of a highly competitive strategic positioning and its maintenance for ten years. But, despite its high level of solidity, the brand was able to apply it with flexibility in order to carry out very creative and emotional executions. It was also able to update it each new season, incorporating new stories and adapting it to the different media used.
- The complementary use of different media and communication channels in a practical application of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006) -called in advertising agencies “360 degree communication”-, extending communication from conventional media (especially TV), which were those previously used by the brand, to digital media, social networks, event sponsorship, etc., targeting both the domestic audience in Spain and tourists from other countries. Referring to the latter, it should be kept in mind that every year more than 80 million tourists and foreign visitors visit Spain (INE, 2019, pp. 50-51), who are concentrated in coastal areas and who consume significant amounts of beer.

To conclude, this case raises an old debate on the importance of the quality of advertising communication over quantitative aspects. Historically, measures of effectiveness have always been directly related to the budget invested in communication, especially in the purchase of advertising space, since this is the item that absorbs most of the financial resources. Consequently, the importance of achieving an optimum segmentation of the public and reaching the exact levels of repetition of the messages -neither more nor less pressure than necessary- was emphasized as the only way to maximize the money invested in advertising (Sanz de la Tajada, 1975). But this approach ignores the most important characteristic of any persuasive communication action, which is the **quality of the contact**: if the message has a brilliant execution and an effective approach, it will attract attention and will remain fixed in the memory in a very remarkable way, achieving a higher effectiveness than other actions that have a larger budget but offer a lower quality content and are overly concerned with segmentation, repetitions and other merely quantitative aspects.

The emergence of advertising creativity has already demonstrated the first part of the equation of this new efficiency. And subsequently, strategic planning techniques have demonstrated the second, which is why recent studies (see the extensive research by Vázquez-Cagiao, 2017, on effective advertising communication models) clearly establish that good strategic planning and brilliant creative execution are the pillars of true advertising effectiveness, focused on achieving quality communication with the public. These two elements (strategy and creativity) have provided an excellent level in this case study of Estrella Damm. And so, starting from a situation of inferiority and managing an advertising budget much lower than that of the companies that commanded the beer category, this brand has been able to build a completely renewed reputation and be the product with high levels of growth and profitability, gaining ground on the large brewing groups against which it competes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Mónica Álvarez Pérez, Deputy Dean of the *Faculty of Commerce, Tourism and Social Sciences* of the University of Oviedo, for her help in accessing data and reports on the beer sector, as well as for interpreting them appropriately.

Translated & edited by American Publishing Services (<https://americanpublishingservices.com/>).

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