



Experiential events in the communication and advertising strategy of the brewing sector

Los eventos experienciales en la estrategia de comunicación y publicidad del sector cervecero

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How to cite this article / Standardized reference:

Campillo-Alhama, Concepción, Herrero-Ruiz, Laura, & Ramos-Soler, Irene. (2024). Experiential events in the communication and advertising strategy of the brewing sector [Los eventos experienciales en la estrategia de comunicación y publicidad del sector cervecero]. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 82, 01-23. <https://www.doi.org/10.4185/rllcs-2024-2208>

Received Date: 28/07/2023

Acceptance Date: 19/10/2023

Publication Date: 20/12/2023

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The brewing sector is committed to advertising communication strategies in which brand experiences and their dissemination in social networks stand as fundamental premises to achieve strategic objectives. Experiential events emerge in a notorious way to reinforce consumer brand experiences.

Methodology: This descriptive, exploratory and multivariable research characterizes the experiential events of the sector with a methodological design based on content analysis; it also analyzes the effectiveness of the dissemination of events through Instagram and YouTube, along with the overall interaction and engagement obtained by beer brands on Instagram. **Results:** The musical and single promoter events stand out as immersive

experiences, with a limited presence of influencers and with a 2.0 communication strategy that is not profitable in the execution and post-event phase. The overall interaction obtained in the digital platforms analyzed is quite irregular, and engagement, with the exception of some brands, shows modest results in terms of the design of user-oriented experiences. **Discussion:** These experiential events in the beer sector can be reformulated as creative proposals for different targets, and their communicative-relational strategy should be reinforced in certain phases of their planning. **Conclusions:** The experiential 2.0 events developed by beer brands stand as a powerful communication tool that allows to establish and strengthen links between brands and consumers to generate engagement, notoriety, public image and reputation.

Keywords: Experiential marketing; Experiential events; Brewing sector; Events 2.0; Instagram; YouTube; Engagement.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El sector cervecero apuesta por estrategias de comunicación publicitaria en las que las experiencias de marca y su difusión en redes sociales se erigen como premisas fundamentales para alcanzar objetivos estratégicos. Los eventos experienciales emergen de forma notoria, en este contexto, para reforzar las experiencias de marca del consumidor. **Metodología:** En esta investigación de carácter descriptivo, exploratorio y multivariable se realiza una caracterización de los eventos experienciales del sector con un diseño metodológico basado en el análisis de contenido; se analiza, además, la eficacia de la difusión de los eventos a través de Instagram y YouTube, junto con la interacción global y el *engagement* obtenidos por las marcas cerveceras en Instagram.

Resultados: Destacan los eventos de carácter musical y de promotor único como experiencias inmersivas, con una presencia limitada de *influencers* y con una estrategia de comunicación 2.0 que no se rentabiliza en la fase de ejecución y de posevento. La interacción global obtenida en las plataformas digitales analizadas es bastante irregular, y el *engagement*, a excepción de algunas marcas, presenta resultados modestos en cuanto al diseño de experiencias orientadas al usuario. **Discusión:** Estos eventos experienciales del sector cervecero pueden ser reformulados como propuestas creativas para diferentes *targets* y su estrategia comunicativa-relacional debe ser reforzada en determinadas fases de su planificación. **Conclusiones:** Los eventos experienciales 2.0 desarrollados por las marcas cerveceras se erigen como una poderosa herramienta de comunicación que permite establecer y afianzar vínculos entre marcas y consumidores para generar engagement, notoriedad, imagen pública y reputación.

Palabras clave: Marketing experiencial; Eventos experienciales; Sector cervecero; Eventos 2.0; Instagram; YouTube; Engagement.

1. Introduction

The digital transformation of advertising communication has led to a multitude of formats, media, and channels that have transformed the relationships between brands and customers in the consumer society (Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2010; Álvarez-Flores et al., 2021). In the current communicative context, beer brands are opting for promotional and communication strategies in which social networks, brand experiences, and the user, now transformed into an "adprosumer," are fundamental premises to achieve strategic objectives (Casado and Salazar, 2017; Data Social, 2019; Álvarez-Ruiz and Castro-Patiño, 2020; Álvarez-Rodríguez and Selva-Ruiz, 2022; Castelló and Del-Pino, 2022; Chacón and Moreno, 2022; Herrero, 2022). Consequently, the promotional and communication strategies that have been reconfigured in the digital society are also very present in this sector of economic activity that represented 1.4% of Spain's GDP in 2022 (*Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2023).

If brand advertising communication emerges as a true driver of knowledge, attitudes, opinions, and social behaviors, in the alcoholic beverage sector in general, and in the beer sector in particular, communication has had to adapt both to current legislation and to its self-regulation to reach the target audience through formulas far removed from conventional advertising creative and dissemination strategies (CE, 2001; Quiles

2005; Montes-Santiago and Lado, 2009; Pulido, 2015; Álvarez-Rodríguez and Selva-Ruiz, 2022; Llamosas-Falcón et al., 2022). This progressive communication restriction in the alcoholic beverage sector, imposed by Law 34/1988, of November 11, General Advertising (art. 5, 8.3. and 11), Law 7/2010, of March 31, General Audiovisual Communication, and its update in Law 13/2022, of July 7, General Audiovisual Communication, conditions both corporate and beer brand strategies (Canga and Morera, 2022). Consequently, we find ourselves in a sector where innovative and disruptive communicative and relational management strategies are developed to contribute to the corporate objectives of brewing companies so that they are competitive and sustainable (Osorio-Parra and Orozco-Toro, 2020; Álvarez-Rodríguez and Selva-Ruiz, 2022; Canga and Morera, 2022; Tapia-Yupa and Moreno-Gavilanes, 2022).

The advertising investment in the alcoholic beverage sector in the twelve key markets¹, including Spain, according to the Business Intelligence report on alcohol: beer + spirits (Zenith, 2022), is expected to increase by 4% to 5% in 2023 compared to previous years. Brands in this sector are thus recovering from their most significant decline in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This circumstance significantly affected this sector of activity, both due to the reduction in consumption volume and the decrease in advertising investment, which fell by 52% compared to 2019 (elEconomista, 2022; Infoadex, 2022; Zenith, 2022). In this regard, and in the context of economic recovery, beer brands are using conventional and digital media, especially social networks, to disseminate promotional and corporate advertising campaigns (Casado and Salazar, 2017; Mayorga, 2017; Perales, 2021; *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2022; 2023; Chacón and Moreno, 2022; UN, 2022). In a market absolutely saturated with offline and online advertising proposals (Álvarez-Ruiz and Castro, 2020; Álvarez-Rodríguez and Selva-Ruiz, 2022; Canga and Morera, 2022; Castelló and Del Pino, 2022), experiential events emerge significantly to reinforce consumer brand experiences with clear communication and relational objectives. These experiential events are designed based on the characteristics or attributes that shape the brand's identity, contribute to the differentiation and positioning of corporate or product brands, and provide the consumer with a meaningful experience that becomes a true added value (Lenderman and Sánchez, 2008; Galmés, 2010; Campillo-Alhama et al., 2014; Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama, 2021; Herrero, 2022). In essence, the goal is to create experiences that are remembered in a positive and memorable manner by the target audience.

In this contribution, an approach is made to the context that has been identified as the subject of study and its advertising self-regulation. Additionally, a descriptive, exploratory, and cross-sectional research is presented on experiential events in the Spanish beer sector. These events are considered one of the most robust formats implemented in the advertising and relational communication strategies of the brands.

2. The Spanish beer sector

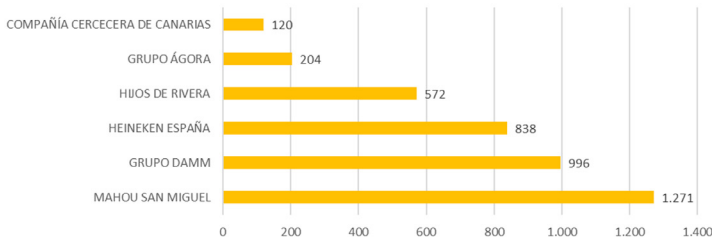
The Spanish beer industry, with a turnover that exceeded 4 billion euros in 2022 (*Observatorio Español de las Drogas y las Adicciones*, 2022; *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2023), is characterized by significant innovation, the development of R&D&I programs, and the implementation of corporate development strategies such as mergers, acquisitions, and cooperation agreements. It represents one of the most relevant agri-food sectors in terms of annual exports (Núñez et al., 2019; Statista, 2022; *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2023) and has a significant impact on the national economy. According to the consulting firm Kantar (2023), there has been a significant recovery in out-of-home consumption in 2022, with a 14% increase compared to the previous year, as the at-home consumption that occurred during the pandemic decreased. This is clearly reflected in the socio-economic data of the beer sector.

¹ The twelve markets included in the report are: Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Together, they represent 73% of the total global advertising investment.

2.1. Market structure, characteristics, and consumer behavior

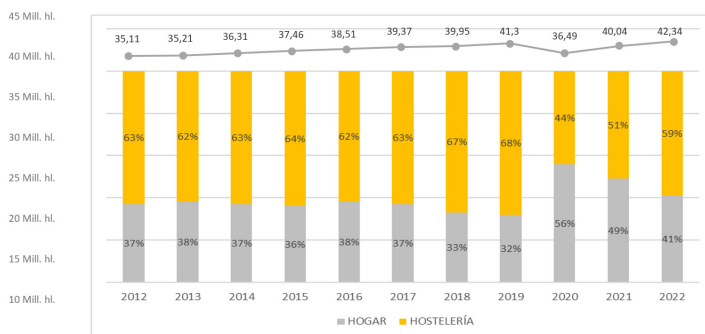
According to *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación* (2023), the year 2022 marked the recovery of the beer sector after the impact of the pandemic, despite significant global economic uncertainty and the international geostrategic situation resulting from the war in Ukraine. In Spain, there are six major brewing groups (*Mahou San Miguel*, *Grupo Damm*, *Heineken España*, *Hijos de Rivera*, *Grupo Ágora*, and *Compañía Cervecera de Canarias*), alongside which there are smaller, less prominent, and lower-revenue associated groups (Álvarez-Ruiz y Castro, 2021; Statista, 2022; *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2023).

Figure 1: Revenue of the leading business groups in the Spanish beer sector (in millions of euros).



Source: *Cerveceros de España* and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (2023), *eEconomista* (2022). Own elaboration (2023).

Figure 2: Evolution of beer consumption (in millions of hectoliters).



Source: *Cerveceros de España* and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (2023), *eEconomista* (2022). Own elaboration (2023).

The report from *Cerveceros de España* y *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación* (2023) confirms that the craft or artisanal segment is the one most affected by economic uncertainty, with a 3% decrease in production and the number of operational centers in 2022. Thus, compared to the pre-pandemic period, there was a 20% drop in production and a 35% decrease in beer companies. As for the consumption of non-alcoholic beer, it reached 16.4%, consolidating Spain as the world leader in non-alcoholic beer production, with a sales increase of 16.1% more than in 2021 (*Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación* 2023). This indicates that Spanish consumers are not primarily seeking the alcoholic content of this beverage but rather other tangible functional values such as taste or freshness. Regarding Spanish exports of this product, there was a 13.4% increase in 2022 compared to the previous year, with 4.2 million hectoliters exported and the United Kingdom as the main market. The sector contributed 5.84 billion euros through tax revenue, a 24% increase from the previous year.

The total beer consumption in Spain during 2022 was 42.34 million hectoliters: 59% associated with the hospitality sector and 41% associated with home consumption. These consumption

figures, compared to 2021 data (40.04 million hectoliters), represent an increase of 1.04% and surpass pre-pandemic consumption levels reached in 2019 (41.3 million hectoliters). In this regard, the socio-economic report of the sector reveals that beer consumption remains moderate, following a Mediterranean consumption pattern: over 90% of occasions are associated with the consumption of other foods. 83% of the population aged between 18 and 65 consumes it occasionally or regularly, and it has replaced wine as the most sought-after alcoholic beverage by Spaniards, capturing more than a third of the alcoholic beverages market (*Observatorio Español de las Drogas y las Adicciones*, 2022). It is the young people aged 18 to 24 who consume it to a lesser extent, accounting for only 2% of the total consumption occasions

among the adult population (Kantar, 2023). The consumption frequency data also indicate that it does not correspond to situations associated with "binge drinking," as approximately half of consumers do so daily or at least on two occasions per week.

On the other hand, the beer sector has undergone a significant turning point since 2019 when large corporations incorporated corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies based on environmental sustainability, linked to the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, focusing on four functional areas: packaging, energy, water, and carbon production (Álvarez-Ruiz and Castro, 2020; Llamosas-Falcón et al., 2022; *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2023; *Grupo Ágora*, 2023). Along with these strategies, the sector embraces other social commitment initiatives to raise awareness about responsible and moderate consumption, road safety, and the revision of its self-regulation code in advertising (*Cerveceros de España*, 2009; *Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2022, 2023).

The brand value of the beer sector in Spain reached 9,000 million euros in 2022, a 9% increase compared to 2021 (*Cerveceros de España* and *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*, 2023). This parameter, following Mayorga (2017) and Núñez et al. (2019), is composed of consumer loyalty, brand awareness as the extent to which brands are known or recognizable to consumers, perceived quality as a reputational component, association with positive attributes, and other assets such as patents, trademarks, and relationships with interest groups through various channels and media.

2.2. Advertising self-regulation of the sector

The advertising self-regulation code in the Spanish beer sector from 1995 was a pioneer in the field of food and beverages in our country. It represents the commitment of breweries to design commercial communication proposals that ensure legality, honesty, truthfulness, and social responsibility, regardless of compliance with current legal and administrative regulations (*Cerveceros de España*, 2009). They must also respect the fundamental principles of fair competition and good commercial practices, avoiding crossing the boundaries of ethics, integrity, or human dignity. The code embraces European recommendations aimed at reducing harm related to the abuse or improper consumption of alcohol through the development of these sector-specific action protocols, as well as the establishment of effective mechanisms in the areas of promotion, marketing, and distribution. These mechanisms include the dissemination of social advertising campaigns with educational and preventive objectives for the population (CE, 2001).

In this regard, within the general principles of the code, the term "commercial communication" is referred to as:

It is defined as follows: "communication carried out with the aim of directly or indirectly promoting the purchase of a product through the contracting of advertising space in print media, radio, television, cinema, outdoor advertising, or the internet in exchange for financial compensation, and direct consumer promotion actions through mail, mobile phone, or the Internet." (*Cerveceros de España*, 2009, p.7).

In this regard, companies associated with the code undertake explicit general commitments such as not directing commercial communications to individuals under 18 years of age, informing on the labeling of packaging and containers of the prohibition of consumption for this group, using actors in beer advertising who are at least 21 years old, not associating product consumption with personality maturity, and not using designs, communication codes, fictional characters, or individuals associated with the child and underage audience.

Specifically, beer commercial communications cannot be disseminated through printed media intended for this group or in physical spaces where minors are present (with a physical distance that ensures non-exposure), or in media, articles, reports, or information specifically aimed at this target audience. Regarding television, it ensures that beer advertisements are not aired before 8:30 PM (Peninsular time), regardless of internal resolutions or regulations of each channel. Furthermore, it prohibits advertising broadcast immediately

before, during, or after television, radio, or cinema programs intended for a child or underage audience, commercial communications targeting minors through SMS on mobile phones, chat rooms, and online games, or sponsorship and collaboration in events specifically intended for minors, with the exception of those that, due to their social nature, are part of the activities of organizations working for the development and education of this group (Quiles, 2005; *Cerveceros de España*, 2009; Pulido, 2015; Llamosas-Falcón et al., 2022).

3. Experiential marketing and 2.0. events

The total beer consumption in Spain during 2022 was 42.34 million hectoliters: 59% associated with the hospitality sector and 41% associated with home consumption. These consumption figures, compared to 2021 data (40.04 million hectoliters), represent an increase of 1.04% and surpass pre-pandemic consumption levels reached in 2019 (41.3 million hectoliters). In this regard, the socio-economic report of the sector reveals that beer consumption remains moderate, following a Mediterranean consumption pattern: over 90% of occasions are associated with the consumption of other foods. 83% of the population aged between 18 and 65 consumes it occasionally or regularly, and it has replaced wine as the most sought-after alcoholic beverage by Spaniards, capturing more than a third of the alcoholic beverages market (*Observatorio Español de las Drogas y las Adicciones*, 2022). It is the young people aged 18 to 24 who consume it to a lesser extent, accounting for only 2% of the total consumption occasions among the adult population (Kantar, 2023). The consumption frequency data also indicate that it does not correspond to situations associated with "binge drinking," as approximately half of consumers do so daily or at least on two occasions per week.

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Brands are aware of the impact that experience has on consumer behavior, and for this reason, experiential, creative, and innovative events have emerged as a new format for engaging with audiences (Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama, 2021; Herrero, 2022). They are incorporated into comprehensive brand communication strategies, alongside other formats such as conventional and 2.0 advertising, conventional and 2.0 relationship management (Cuenca-Fontbona et al., 2022), media relations, owned media, promotions, and similar formulas, sponsorships, and partnerships (such as strategic alliances), street marketing and ambient marketing, content marketing, branded content, inbound marketing, influencer management, storytelling, or transmedia narrative (Eventoplus, 2022; IAB Spain, 2023b). Events have become an immersive brand experience that allows for the creation of a positive image and long-term reputational value (Masterman and Wood, 2006; Wohlfeil and Whelan, 2006; Galmés, 2010; Hede and Kellett, 2011; Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2013; Campillo-Alhama and Herrero-Ruiz, 2015; Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama, 2021; Chacón and Moreno, 2022).

These individual or collective experiences in response to the same stimulus are reinforced through digital communication on social networks. 2.0 communication has created new spaces for sharing lived experiences,

showcasing the key identity attributes and values of brands (Campillo-Alhama et al., 2014; Casado and Salazar, 2017; Mayorga, 2017; Osorio-Parra and Orozco-Toro, 2020).

The beer sector utilizes experiential events with the goal of highlighting the brand-consumer relationship and creating emotional bonds with the brands. Digital transformation has allowed these experiential events to become 2.0 events through the integration of social media and technological tools in all phases of the event (Campillo-Alhama et al., 2014; Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama, 2021). Thus, we can observe how events organized by beer brands, within their communication and advertising strategies, use social networks as platforms for dissemination and interaction with their audiences, involving them in the brand experience in the pre-event (or introduction), execution (or integration), and post-event (or focus) phases.

4. Experiential events and 2.0 communication strategy in the beer sector

Experiential events are based on two concepts proposed by Schmitt (1999; 2006) known as experiential strategic modules and experience providers. Experiential strategic modules represent key types of experiences for conveying information, whether about the brand or the organization behind it. Experience providers, on the other hand, are tactical tools used to design specific types or formats of experiences for customers and consumers (Schmitt, 2006; Alcaide and Merino, 2015; Campillo-Alhama and Herrero-Ruiz, 2015).

There are five types of experiential strategic modules, and these categories are not exclusive: we refer to them as sensory experiences (involving proposals with a strong sensory presence that shape perception), emotional experiences (involving feelings and emotions; affective experiences that generate positive moods, joy, or pride), cognitive experiences (cognitive experiences to creatively solve problems and attract customers or consumers; representing an intellectual challenge based on surprise, intrigue, or provocation), performance experiences (involving physical aspects and identified with bodily experiences, lifestyles, moments, behaviors, actions, or behaviors), and relationship experiences (social experiences that involve community feelings and also contain sensory, emotional, cognitive, and performance aspects).

Regarding experience providers, they represent a set of resources that can be used to turn experiential strategic modules into concrete actions (Galmés, 2010; Alcaide and Merino, 2015). Among them are visual identity (naming, logos, graphic identity, odotopes, or olfactory identity), product presence (its appearance, packaging design, and presentation), brand co-management or co-branding (its use through strategic alliances and partnerships), spatial environments (the architecture of establishments or points of sale, their decoration, and environmental elements), the corporate website and electronic sales media (e-commerce), the organization's staff in direct contact with customers or consumers, as well as corporate events and 2.0 communication.

With the advent of social media and digital platforms, users share content created by brands or themselves, facilitating interconnection and fostering interaction between brands and consumers aimed at increasing awareness and generating engagement as the main intangible value.

The IAB Spain report (2023a) reflects that 43% of users use social media to follow corporate and product brands, a percentage that has increased significantly since 2017. If we look at target segmentation by age, the demographic segment of 25 to 34 years stands out (with a 67% following), followed by the 35 to 44-year-old segment (50%) and the 18 to 24-year-old segment (46%), with less following of commercial brands. Among the different sectors, 37% of internet users follow accounts related to the alcoholic beverage sector, surpassing other relevant areas such as sports (35%), home (35%), textiles and accessories (34%), or education (20%), among others (UN, 2022).

"The experiential events developed by beer groups in Spain serve as a powerful communication tool for establishing and strengthening bonds between brands and consumers"

In the same report, it is indicated that for 40% of users, it is essential to search for information on social media before purchasing a product, hiring a service, or attending an event. In this regard, the generation of content through influencer marketing on social media is highlighted (IAB, 2023b), and Instagram (with 65%), Facebook (65%), and YouTube (63%) are identified as the social media platforms with the highest audience penetration (IAB Spain, 2023a). Instagram increases its penetration compared to 2022, and YouTube is positioned alongside BeReal with a user experience satisfaction index of 7.9 out of 10, surpassed only by the instant messaging network WhatsApp. Both Instagram (7.4) and YouTube (7.9) are above the average satisfaction rating for user experience and maintain visit frequency compared to 2022.

On the other hand, according to Infoadex (2022), the estimated real investment registered in the advertising market reached a volume of 11,601.9 million euros in 2021 (a growth of 7.8% compared to the previous year). The growth rate in 2021 for controlled media (or conventional media) was 11.5%, with an investment of 5,440.9 million in 2021. They thus reached a 46.9% market share (1.7% more than in 2020). Estimated media (or non-conventional media) accounted for 53.1% of total advertising investment in 2021, with an investment of 6,161.0 million euros, an increase of 4.7% compared to the previous year. If we focus on the digital sector, we can see that it achieved the highest volume of investment within controlled media, with a growth of 14.2% in 2021 and advertising investment reaching 2,482.2 million euros, compared to 2,174.3 million in 2020. Digital accounted for 45.6% of controlled media in 2021. Social networks represented 67% of digital media, with Instagram being the social network with the highest advertising investment (35%), followed by Facebook (32%) and YouTube (19%), which increased its advertising investment by 3% compared to 2019.

The beer sector has adapted to the new demands imposed by digital transformation, as it uses social media, especially Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, to communicate with users, create communities, and generate content (Mayorga, 2017; Osorio-Parra and Orozco-Toro, 2020; Herrero, 2022). Instagram emerges as a space for creating publications associating the positive consumption of the product with values such as culture, leisure, music, or tourism (Álvarez-Rodríguez and Selva-Ruiz, 2022; Herrero, 2022), and YouTube as the primary video format for beer brands, especially for ads and events (Data Social, 2019). Thus, the United Nations (2022) refers to data presented by the World Health Organization on the consumption of alcoholic beverages and emphasizes that advertising and the presence of brands in the sector on social media have significantly influenced the exponential growth experienced in this economic activity over the years. Thanks to the ability of these platforms to obtain comprehensive data on user interests and behaviors, positive messages related to beer consumption are disseminated and reinforced (Reinoso-Carvalho et al., 2019; Perales, 2021; UN, 2022).

The experience offered by Instagram is essentially visual (posts) and audiovisual (reels), providing users with proposals through carefully crafted formats and expressions in terms of content and formalization. On the other hand, YouTube has positioned itself as the dominant video platform, with most videos being free and without the need for login. Furthermore, its penetration is so extensive that it has become the second most used search engine by users after Google (Baños-González et al., 2020; Álvarez-Flores et al., 2021). In fact, within the digital platforms, YouTube stands out for being available in more than eighty languages, having a growing number of active users (over two billion per month), and offering over one billion hours of daily views. Professional content generated occupies the most visible positions in search results (Sixto-García et al., 2021). Instagram and YouTube are positioned as the main platforms for publishing images and video content, which has led to exponential growth in the use of both digital media by beer brands in the dissemination of their events within promotional, relational, and experiential strategies.

A 2.0 event is one that integrates social media both in its planning and execution, as well as in the post-event phase. Consequently, experiential 2.0 events, designed through the strategic modules of Schmitt (1999; 2006) described above, represent a departure from one-way communication channels where interaction with the stakeholders of organizations was not possible. Instead, they now move towards a new paradigm in which the event is designed using multidirectional channels with active participation from individuals, groups, and influencers associated with the event (Campillo-Alhama et al., 2014; Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama, 2021; Eventtia, 2023). This paradigm requires brands to have a clear and defined strategy that integrates social media and 2.0 platforms with other communication channels and media in the event launch (introduction phase).

It also involves a permanent intention to engage in direct and transparent conversations with stakeholders (integration and focalization phases). Online and offline communication is a fundamental premise in the design and implementation of communicative and relational processes for corporate and beer brand events.

5. Objectives and Methodology

In this descriptive, exploratory, and multivariable research, three general objectives are proposed: firstly, to analyze the main characteristics that define the experiential events organized by beer brands through the operationalization of variables into tangible, observable, and measurable indicators; secondly, to evaluate the effectiveness of their dissemination through Instagram and YouTube, as the main platforms used by brands on social media; finally, we aim to measure overall interaction with users along with the generation of engagement, as emotional commitment between brands and consumers through Instagram.

Based on the objectives, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

- H.1. Experiential events in the beer sector can be characterized and defined based on common and homogeneous traits.
- H.2. The effectiveness of the dissemination of experiential events in the beer sector yields better results on the social media platform Instagram than on YouTube.
- H.3. Events developed by beer brands exhibit significant differences in the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) "global interaction."
- H.4. The level of global interaction and engagement generated by experiential events, as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), coincides in the majority of beer brands in the sector.

Through a methodological design based on content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Batthyány and Cabrera, 2011; Wilson, 2011), first, a characterization of the events held between June 2021 and September 2022 is conducted, coinciding with the summer period, as it is the peak consumption season for the product (Cerveceros de España y Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2022; 2023). Second, the effectiveness of event dissemination through Instagram, the preferred social media platform for beer brands (Data Social, 2019; IAB Spain, 2022; Metricool, 2023), and YouTube, which has become the most popular platform for the dissemination of related audiovisual content (Castelló y Del-Pino, 2022), is analyzed. For the third objective, the global interaction and engagement obtained by beer brands through the dissemination of their experiential events on Instagram (Metricool, 2023) from one month before the event execution (introduction phase) until one month after its conclusion (focalization phase) are added to the analysis.

To select the beer brands that will be part of the non-probabilistic convenience sample, the *Socioeconomic Report of the Beer Sector in Spain 2022* (Cerveceros de España and Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2023) was consulted. In this report, the main beer groups operating in Spain, along with their brands, were identified based on their descending order of revenue: *Mahou San Miguel* (*Mahou Cinco Estrellas, Mahou San Miguel, Selecta, Alhambra, Reina, Brutus*), *Grupo Damm* (*Estrella Damm, Daura, Voll-Damm, Estrella del Sur, Carlsberg*), *Heineken España* (*Heineken, Cruzcampo, Desperados, El Águila, Amstel, Buckler, Paulaner*), *Hijos de Rivera* (*Estrella Galicia, 1906*), *Grupo Ágora* (*Ámbar, Marlen, Moritz*), and *Compañía Cervecería de Canarias* (*Tropical, 1924, Dorada, Corona, Guinness, Budweiser*). The group "otros asociados" (other associates) was excluded as it does not represent specific beer groups but rather a conglomerate of different brands also operating in the Spanish territory.

Regarding the selection of the sample of experiential events executed by beer groups for the research, an intentional search was conducted from June 2021 to September 2022, based on the main brands identified in the sectoral report as the primary source of information. Google Alerts was used for this purpose since it relies on an algorithm that ranks different web pages according to user interests and preferences (Kelly, 2018). The following entries or keywords were used: *eventos cerveza* (beer events); *eventos cerveza España 2021* (beer

events Spain 2021); *eventos cerveza España 2022* (beer events Spain 2022); *eventos experienciales cerveza* (beer experiential events); *eventos experienciales cerveza España 2021* (beer experiential events Spain 2021); *eventos experienciales cerveza España 2022* (beer experiential events Spain 2022); *eventos y redes sociales cerveza 2021* (beer events and social media 2021); *eventos y redes sociales cerveza 2022* (beer events and social media 2022); *eventos marcas de cerveza España 2021* (beer brand events Spain 2021); *eventos marcas de cerveza España 2022* (beer brand events Spain 2022).

During the analyzed period, 17 events developed by beer brands were identified, all of which exhibited the characteristics established by Schmitt (1999; 2006) in the five strategic modules that allow the creation of sensory, emotional, cognitive, action, and relationship experiences. Out of these, 16 events, in addition to meeting the experiential characteristic, incorporated integrated 2.0 communication through hashtags in all three phases of their planning, as shown in the following table.

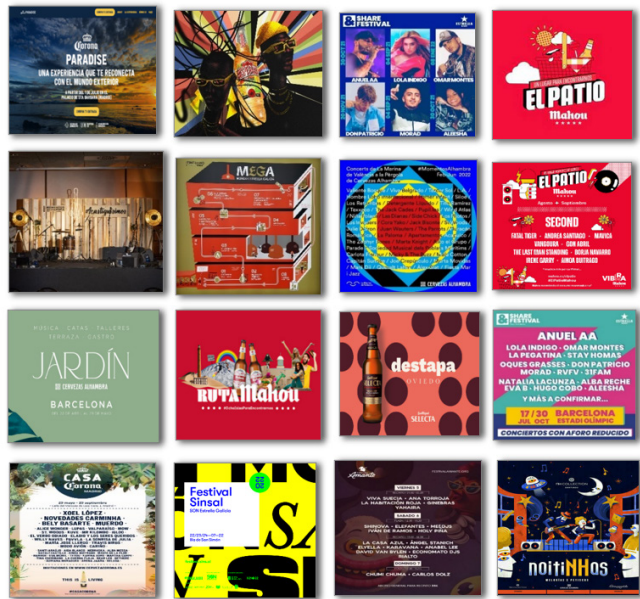
Table 1. Sample of 2.0 Experiential Events in the Beer Sector (2021-2022).

	Event	Beer Brand // Business Group	Year
1	<i>Corona Paradise</i> #coronaparadise	Corona // Compañía Cervecera de Canarias https://cervezacorona.es/	2021
2	<i>Design Collective</i> #DesignCollective	Desperados // Heineken https://www.desperados.com/es-es/agegate	2021
3	<i>Share Festival 2021</i> #share2021 #sharefestivalbcn	Estrella Damm // Grupo Damm https://www.damm.com/es/cervezas/estrella-damm	2021
4	<i>El Patio de Mahou 2021</i> #elpatiodemahou	Mahou Cinco Estrellas // Mahou San Miguel https://www.mahou.es/cervezas/	2021
5	<i>Escenario Momentos Alhambra</i> #MomentosAlhambra	Alhambra // Mahou San Miguel https://www.cervezasalhambra.com/es	2021
6	<i>Mega Museo Estrella Galicia</i> #megamuseoestrellagalicia	Estrella Galicia // Hijos de Rivera https://estrellagalicia.es/	2022
7	<i>Fiesta Mar i Jazz Festival</i> #MariJazz	Alhambra // Mahou San Miguel https://www.cervezasalhambra.com/es	2022
8	<i>El Patio de Mahou 2022</i> #elpatiodemahou	Mahou Cinco Estrellas // Mahou San Miguel https://www.mahou.es/cervezas/	2022
9	<i>Jardín Cervezas Alhambra</i> #jardinalhambreamadrid	Alhambra // Mahou San Miguel https://www.cervezasalhambra.com/es	2022
10	<i>Bienvenidos al verano</i> #OchoIslasParaEncontrarnos	Mahou Cinco Estrellas (Islas Canarias) // Mahou San Miguel https://www.mahou.es/cervezas/	2022
11	<i>Destapa Selecta "Destapa Oviedo"</i> #selectasanmiguel #destapaselecta	Selecta San Miguel // Mahou San Miguel https://www.sanmiguel.com/es/cervezas/selecta-san-miguel/	2022
12	<i>Share Festival 2022</i> #ShareFestBCN	Estrella Damm // Grupo Damm https://www.damm.com/es/cervezas/estrella-damm	2022
13	<i>Casa Corona</i> #casacorona #casacoronamadrid	Corona // Compañía Cervecera de Canarias https://cervezacorona.es/	2022
14	<i>Festival Sinsal (Son Estrella Galicia)</i> #SinSal2022	Estrella Galicia // Hijos de Rivera https://estrellagalicia.es/	2022
15	<i>Festival Amante</i> #festivalamante2022	Ámbar // Grupo Ágora https://ambar.com/	2022
16	<i>NoitiNHas 2022</i> #noitinhas	Alhambra // Mahou San Miguel https://www.cervezasalhambra.com/es	2022

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

As a methodological tool for collecting qualitative and quantitative data, a content analysis form has been designed and validated. This form includes operational variables of dichotomous and polytomous categories that allow for the identification of basic characteristics of experiential events designed by the beer sector (Eventoplus, 2022). Additionally, the dissemination of the selected events on Instagram and YouTube, as the main digital platforms (IAB Spain, 2023a; Metricool, 2023), is analyzed using three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): the effectiveness of dissemination on both platforms, which relates followers and/or subscribers to the number of posts during the analyzed period for each event, the overall interaction that values the number of likes and comments relative to the number of posts on Instagram, and the engagement generated through this social media based on the previous KPI in conjunction with the number of followers of the events included in the sample.

Figure 3: Mosaic of Beer Brands' Events (2021-2022).



Source: <https://www.google.es/imghp?hl=es>
Own elaboration (2023).

Table 2. Analysis sheet (code book): experiential events and digital communication.

EVENT DENOMINATION		
Characterization Experiential Events	Promoter	(1) Sole Organizer (2) Sponsor (3) Collaborator-Partner
	Character	(1) Musical (festivals) (2) Cultural (design-art) (3) Cultural (museum-related) (4) Gastronomic (5) Landscape-Nature
	Design	(1) Experiential Immersion (2) Non-Experiential Immersion
	Event Attendance Management	(1) Social Media Contest (2) Ticket Purchase (3) Free Entry
	Use of Influencers in Promotion and Dissemination Strategy	(1) Presence of Influencers (2) Absence of Influencers
	Communication Strategy and Content Generation (*)	Introduction (pre-event) Integration (execution) Focalization (Post-event)

Instagram	nº of publications	Effectiveness of dissemination: $\frac{\text{Nº FOLLOWERS}}{\text{Nº POSTS}}$
	nº of followers	Global Interaction: $\frac{(\text{TOTAL LIKES} + \text{TOTAL COMMENTS})}{\text{Nº POSTS}}$
	likes + comments	Engagement: $\left(\frac{\text{TOTAL LIKES} + \text{TOTAL COMMENTS}}{\text{TOTAL INSTAGRAM PUBLICATIONS}} \right) * 100$ $\frac{\text{Nº FOLLOWERS}}{1.000}$
YouTube	nº of videos	Effectiveness of dissemination: $\frac{\text{Nº SUBSCRIBERS}}{\text{Nº VÍDEOS}}$
	nº of subscribers	

Source: Eventoplus (2022); Metricool (2023). Own elaboration (2023).

(*)The phases that occur in the generation of content in the digital communication strategy are identified as follows: introduction (dissemination months before the event, informing users that the event will take place but not providing more information), integration (content is generated on the same day of the event, before it begins to create anticipation among attendees), and focalization (the dissemination is carried out by the organizing/sponsoring/collaborating brand once the event is over, with the aim of sharing the experience and promoting dialogue between the brand and the consumer/attendee of the event).

During the methodological procedure, training for the coding of the sample was conducted, and the objectivity of the content analysis was checked through the inter-coder reliability process (Piñeiro-Naval, 2020). An Observed Agreement Percentage Index (PAo) of 94% (higher than the desirable 80%) has confirmed that the data coding is based on the same interpretations by the members of the research team.

6. Results

Based on the results derived from an exploratory qualitative and quantitative analysis, based on the three research objectives set out, the main characteristics of the experiential events of the brewing groups operating in Spain, the use of the social network Instagram and the audiovisual broadcasting platform YouTube are identified, as well as the effectiveness of their communication-relational strategy, interaction and engagement.

Experiential events in the analyzed sector are characterized by the production of beer brands as exclusive organizers (68.7%). Music events (macro-festivals, concerts, encounters with artists integrated into the event's design) stand out significantly, accounting for 56.2% compared to other formats. The use of immersive resources that make the experiential event an interactive and unique personal experience for attendees is highly prevalent (93.8%), with the aim of generating emotional connection or engagement. Regarding event attendance management, the distribution is more balanced, with a tendency towards ticket sales in half of the analyzed events (50%), while free entry events account for 43.8%. It is noteworthy that the use of influencers in event management in this sector is relatively low, at only 31.2%. This suggests that beer brands focus on designing immersive events directly for attendees/consumers to create personal, original, innovative, and creative brand experiences that allow for establishing permanent emotional bonds.

Regarding the promotional strategy of the events, it is relevant that the majority of the effort is made in the pre-event or introduction phase (87.6%). However, it would be advisable to reinforce content generation by the organization, both during the event itself (integration phase: 25%) and after its conclusion (focalization phase: 6.4%). Strengthening this intervention in the event's content generation strategy would increase brand

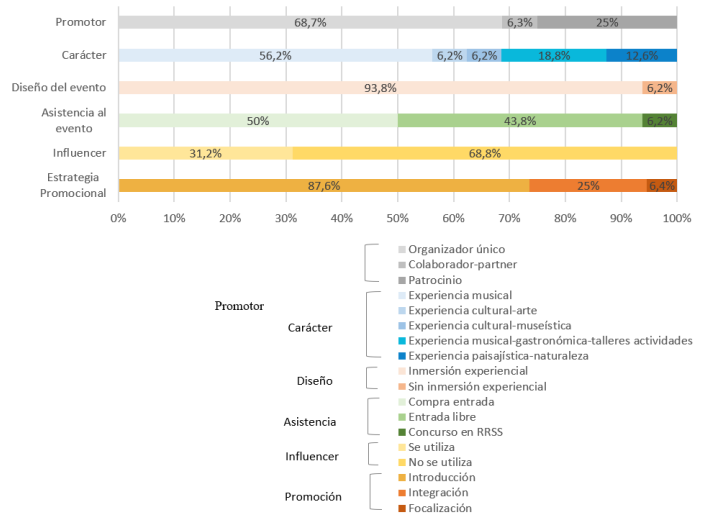
visibility and reputation. Consequently, we can confirm the hypothesis 1 related to the homogeneity of the characteristics that define and identify experiential events in the sector. Based on the characterization of experiential events in the analyzed sector, Figures 5 and 6 present disaggregated data on their dissemination through Instagram and YouTube. In this analysis, we observe the heterogeneity in the event dissemination strategies by beer brands and how these strategies impact the number of event followers (Instagram) or subscribers (YouTube).

The data shown in Figures 5 and 6 allow us to establish, as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) (Metricool, 2023), the level of effectiveness in the dissemination of the 16 events that make up the intentional sample. To do this, in Figure 7, this ratio is analyzed based on the number of followers/number of posts on the Instagram social network, as well as the number of subscribers/number of videos posted on YouTube, as reflected in Table 2.

As we can see, most experiential events achieve a more significant value on the Instagram social network than on YouTube. Two events from the same beer brand stand out on Instagram, with the same percentage value (Corona Paradise and Casa Corona: 0.477). Regarding YouTube, as in the previous case, two experiential events sponsored by the same brand are also identified (Share Festival 2021 and Share Festival 2022 by Estrella Damm: 1.550). Therefore, we can partially confirm hypothesis 2, as the effectiveness of promoting experiential events in the beer sector shows better results on one of the two digital platforms analyzed (Instagram), except in the case of sponsored events (YouTube).

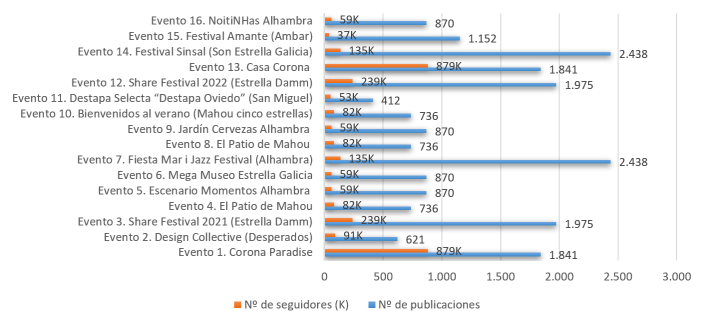
Based on the previous results observed in Figure 7, Figure 8 presents the second KPI, global interaction on Instagram for the analyzed beer events as cross-sectional results, using the methodology reflected in Table 2. A ranking is established to identify which brands have developed their 2.0 communication strategy more effectively

Figure 4: Characterization of Experiential Events in the Beer Sector (2021-2022).



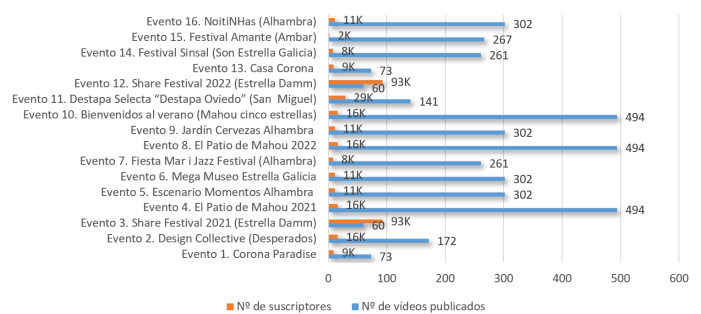
Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Figure 5: Analysis of event dissemination through Instagram (2021-2022).



Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Figure 6: Analysis of event dissemination through YouTube (2021-2022).



Source: Own elaboration (2023).

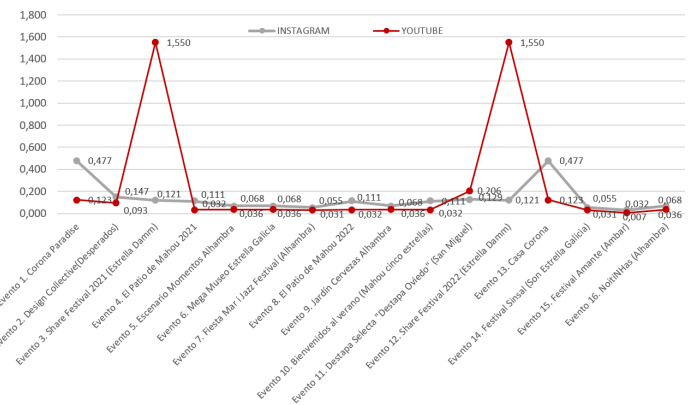
and their position compared to the other events from competing brands. Global interaction on the YouTube platform is not represented since user interactions (likes and comments) are very scarce and do not determine or discriminate significant interaction as a research result that would allow establishing a correlation with the data resulting from Instagram.

Thus, we can observe that in Area A, there are eight events in which beer brands have developed an optimal or notable global interaction strategy, highlighting their effectiveness in the following order: "El Patio de Mahou 2021" (with a value of 254.70) and "El Patio de Mahou 2022" (with a value of 235.56), along with "Share Festival 2021" by Estrella Damm (value: 226.70), represent the three most notable events; followed by "Corona Paradise 2021" (value: 83.05), "Share Festival 2022" by Estrella Damm (value: 73.64), "Festival sinSal" by Estrella Galicia (value: 41.84), "Casa Corona 2022" (value: 36.48), and "Bienvenidos al verano de Mahou" (value: 29.04). In Area B, there are events that have obtained limited results in terms of global interaction: we find "Destapa Selecta 'Destapa Oviedo'" by San Miguel (value: 26.25), "Design Collective (Desperados)" (18.96), "Escenario Momentos Alhambra" (value: 15.45), "Jardín Cervezas Alhambra" (value: 12.35), "Fiesta Mar y Jazz Festival" by Alhambra (value: 8.16), "NoitiNHas" by Alhambra (value: 8.10), "Mega Museo Estrella Galicia" (value: 3.80), and at the bottom of the ranking is the "Festival Amante" by the Ambar brand (value: 2.94).

Consequently, the interaction results obtained by different beer brands when developing the 2.0 communication strategy for their experiential events are quite irregular in this brand experience format. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, which was based on significant differences in event diffusion according to the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of global interaction, is verified.

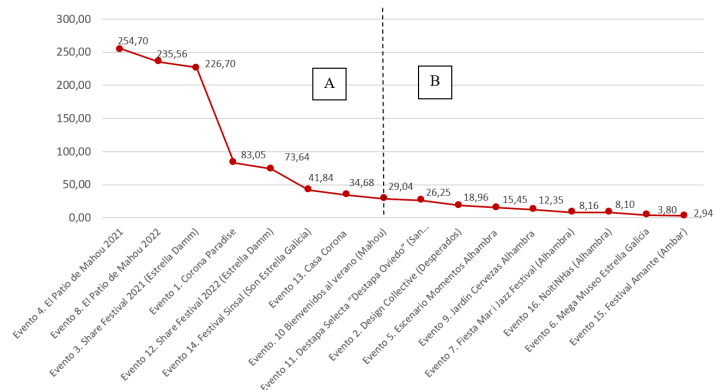
The third KPI analyzed is the engagement generated by events through Instagram, and it is observed, through the obtained results, that there is some dissonance between this parameter and global interaction (Figure 8) in some of the beer brands in the intentional sample.

Figure 7: Effectiveness in event promotion (Instagram and YouTube).



Source: Own elaboration (2023).

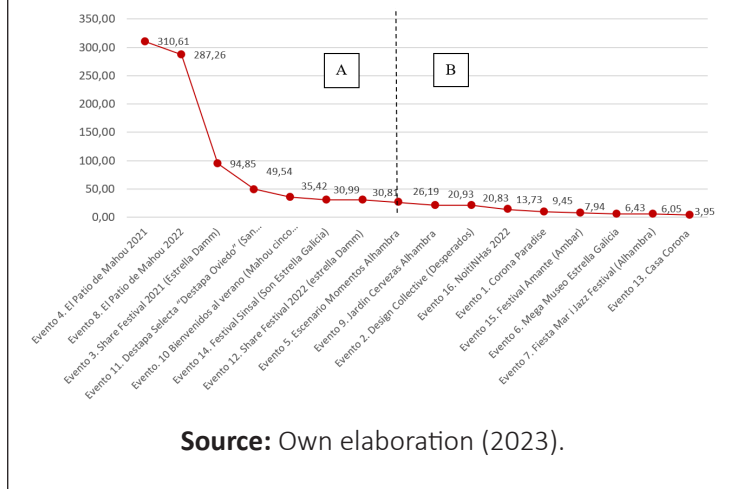
Figure 8: Global interaction of beer sector events (2021-2022) on Instagram.



Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Events like "El Patio de Mahou 2021" (value: 310.61) and 2022 (value: 287.26), "Share Festival 2021" (value: 94.85) and 2022 (value: 30.81) by *Estrella Damm*, or "Festival Sinsal" by *Estrella Galicia* (value: 30.99) remain in Area A, consistent with their previous position regarding the earlier parameter. However, events like "Destapa Selecta 'Destapa Oviedo'" by *San Miguel* and "Escenario Momentos Alhambra" are also located in the preferred area in terms of generating engagement, despite not achieving significant global interaction (Area B), as seen in Figure 8. In Area B, you will find events that continue to be located in this second area and correspond to their global interaction: "Jardín Cervezas Alhambra 2022" (value: 26.19), "Design Collective" by *Desperados* (value: 20.93), "Festival Amante" by *Ámbar* (value: 7.94), "Mega Museo Estrella Galicia" (value: 6.43), and "Fiesta Mar i Jazz Festival" by *Alhambra* (value: 6.05). Along with them, the events organized by *Corona*: "Corona Paradise" (value: 9.45) and "Casa Corona" (value: 3.95), as well as "NoitiNhas" by *Alhambra* (value: 13.73), also position themselves in the less relevant area. Therefore, there are some differences between global interaction and engagement obtained by certain events in the *Corona*, *Alhambra*, and *San Miguel* brands, located in different areas in Figures 8 and 9, although most beer brands do have the same area positioning for both analyzed KPIs (Metricool, 2023): global interaction and engagement. Consequently, we can affirm that in the digital communication strategies of most beer brands, the positional results obtained in both parameters coincide. Hypothesis 4, which refers to the coincidence of the level of global interaction and engagement generated by experiential events in the beer sector as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), is partially verified.

Figure 9: Engagement of beer industry events (2021-2022) on Instagram.



Source: Own elaboration (2023).

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The experiential events developed by beer groups in Spain serve as a powerful communication tool for establishing and strengthening bonds between brands and consumers. They are designed as unique and innovative experiences to generate engagement, public image, and reputation. *Mahou San Miguel* stands out in particular in terms of the number of events developed in the analyzed period, accounting for 50% of the proposals (eight events) for brands such as *Mahou Cinco Estrellas*, *Selecta San Miguel*, or *Alhambra*. In contrast, we find *Grupo Damm* (with two events for *Estrella Damm*), *Compañía Cervecería de Canarias* (with two events for *Corona*), *Hijos de Rivera* (with two events for *Estrella Galicia*), *Grupo Ágora* (with one event for *Ámbar*), and *Heineken* (with one event for *Desperados*). The digital communicative context has allowed these experiential events to become 2.0 events through the integration of social media and new technologies in all phases of their design, production, and post-production.

After conducting the research, it can be concluded, based on the obtained characterization (Figure 4), that companies in the beer sector generally act as sole promoters of events. The format of musical experiences aimed at a young target audience between the ages of 25 and 34 (IAB Spain, 2023a) stands out, representing a notable 56.2% of the total, with a focus on young adults. These experiential events, along with other formats that create immersive experiences for users, can be reformulated and enhanced as creative, communicative, and relational proposals for different target audiences, such as young people aged 18 to 24, who represent only 2% of beer consumption in the adult population (Kantar, 2023). Furthermore, there is an opportunity for beer brands to

"The Spanish beer industry, with a turnover that exceeded 4 billion euros in 2022."

enhance the communicative management of events, through the creation of their own content on Instagram and YouTube, both during the execution phase (integration) and after the event's conclusion (focalization). On the other hand, there are substantial differences between brands in the sector and their corporate groups in terms of the diffusion of experiential events, based on the KPI (Key Performance Indicator) ratio of diffusion efficiency on both digital platforms (Figures 5, 6, and 7). In general, a higher level of efficiency is achieved in the visualization of event content on the Instagram social network compared to YouTube, except when it comes to events that have been sponsored (but not organized) by the brand itself (Figure 7), where the importance of the audiovisual format for macro-events on YouTube is evident.

It is also observed that brands and beer groups manage the diffusion of their events in a very uneven manner, as they obtain heterogeneous results in terms of global interaction and engagement generated through Instagram (Figures 8 and 9). Although when analyzing global interaction and engagement as KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), brands integrated into *Mahou-San Miguel* and *Grupo Damm*, with annual events such as *El Patio de Mahou* or *Share Festival*, are identified as highly efficient. However, most brands from other beer groups present much more modest results in comparison with both business groups. On the opposite end, we find *Heineken España* and *Grupo Ágora*, with the lowest global interaction and engagement indexes generated by their events *Design Collective* and *Festival Amante*, respectively. In this regard, it is essential to highlight the irregularities in the communication strategies and event management of different beer brands and their corporate groups.

This research on the beer sector, which is conditioned by various regulations, legislation, and advertising self-regulation (Cerveceros de España, 2009), and should be updated to incorporate new formats such as events, has several limitations that will be addressed in future studies. These limitations include the measurement of ROI (Return On Investment) based on other tangible and intangible parameters that complement ROE (Return On Engagement) as an evaluation of brand communication in social media. Expanding the study to include other prominent social media platforms such as TikTok or BeReal (IAB Spain, 2023a), as well as analyzing heterogeneous target segments based on sociodemographic and psychographic variables (Eventtia, 2023), would provide a more comprehensive understanding of advertising communication strategies (branded content, storytelling, or transmedia narrative) and 2.0 experiential events of major beer groups. Additionally, the analysis of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), as well as their communication on social networks and digital platforms, would allow for evaluating sustainability in the design and execution of events in an economic sector that has already integrated social and environmental strategic policies in its corporate philosophy to increase brand reputation.

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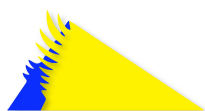
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