

## **Madri Manía: How a newcomer rewrote the rulebook of Mediterranean-style Lagers**



### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Ah, the Mediterranean...

Lazy afternoons spent lounging on sun-drenched beaches or tucked away on cobbled streets. Blue skies, friends and family round the dinner table, laughter in the air. A picture-perfect holiday.

And, in your hands, a bottle of premium world beer. Chilled to perfection.

Why change a thing?

Well, because there's no bigger cliché. Look past the sunshine, the heritage and ads that could as easily be selling pasta sauce or tourism councils, and you'll see a world beer category missing out on the vibrancy and pace that world beer drinkers crave.

And to break into the competitive Mediterranean-style lager category, Molson Coors couldn't afford to play safe.

For Madri Excepcional, a new brand born from the partnership between Molson Coors and up-and-coming Spanish brewery La Sagra, changing this scene meant everything. It meant throwing sand in the eyes of established players and taking the world beer category from the seaside to the urban streets of Madrid.

A city that wasn't as widely known as other Spanish cities, but also a blank canvas for a beer entirely about novelty and progressiveness.

This is the story of how we created Madri Manía, becoming the most talked-about beer in the UK and the 7th best-selling beer in less than two years. The most successful launch in pubs and bars ever and, in supermarkets, bringing more value than all other product launches combined.

By shaking up traditions and embracing the new, Madri Excepcional took the beer market by storm, teaching us that you're never too grown-up to behave like a start-up.

Salud!



## 1. BACKGROUND & CHALLENGE

### BEER IS GETTING FANCIER...

Commanding 20% of the market, Molson Coors Beverage Company is the UK's second largest brewer, a huge scale strongly supported by popular mainstream brands like Carling and Coors.

And whilst the global beer industry will grow by 2.9% in the next decade<sup>1</sup>, it's undergoing deep transformations. With younger generations coming of age, healthier lifestyles becoming widespread, and home consumption growing, **people are drinking less and being more discerning when they choose to do so.**

Consequently, **lager's growth is being driven primarily by premium brands**, with the segment doubling in value in the last five years<sup>2</sup>.

Beer Watch: While mainstream beer sales decline, craft industry grows

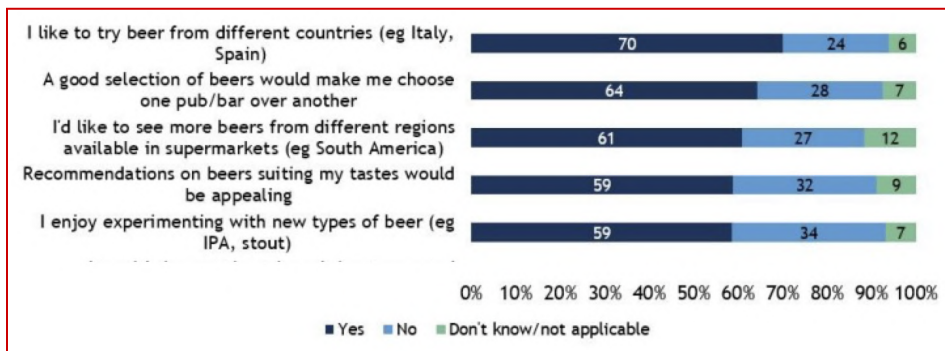
Higher class: why premium and craft options are the future of lager

To capitalise on this growth opportunity, Molson Coors urgently needed to further strengthen its premium lager offering.

### ...AND FANCY BEER COMES FROM THE CONTINENT

Premiumisation and experimentation are tightly linked: people's biggest drivers of choice are discovering beers from different places.

#### BEER - TOP DRIVERS OF CHOICE<sup>3</sup>



That's why **world beers are becoming one of the most important premium segments**, accounting for 33% of all lager sales by value, a 6 p.p. growth vs 2019<sup>4</sup>.

And whilst foreign provenance is a turn-on in itself, no place beats Continental Europe.



"Amongst the top 10 beer brands in the UK, there is an overwhelming fondness for European-style light lagers, taking up 8 positions in the ranking."



"We associate foreign lagers with stylish, aspirational qualities related to the country's heritage, such as fashion, cars, architecture. Drinkers feel they're drinking something more special, classier."

<sup>1</sup> Source: Future Market Insights, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Beer Report / Morning Advertiser 2022

<sup>3</sup> Source: Mintel Beer Market Report 2022

<sup>4</sup> Source: CGA Research



World beer is dominated by lagers with a Mediterranean appeal, like Birra Moretti, Peroni, and Estrella. Conjuring images of lazy afternoons spent in sprawling, sun-drenched piazzas, these brands play with Brits' deep-rooted fascination with Southern Europe's lifestyle.

Molson Coors needed a strong proposition to break into the competitive Mediterranean beer category, a credible product to quench consumers' thirst to discover new crisp lagers.

To hit the ground running, it needed the right partner.

### CREATING OUR OWN MEDITERRANEAN LAGER



Enter La Sagra, an artisanal brewery near Madrid.

Founded by Madrid-native Carlos Garcia in 2011, La Sagra quickly became one of Spain's leading producers of artisanal beer, its products garnering awards in beer competitions around the world.

Whilst La Sagra doesn't have centuries of history, nor a long family tradition in beer, they have a passionate, innovative team, keen to do something different.



So in 2020, through a joint venture, the master brewers at Molson Coors and La Sagra teamed up to create Madrí Excepcional: a 4.6% ABV lager, aromatic and with a flavour profile between bitter and sweet, making for a crisp taste.

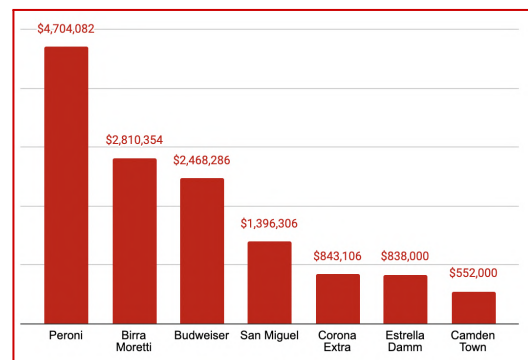
With ambitious goals of reaching sales of 500k HL in three years, Madrí Excepcional's launch wasn't business as usual for Molson Coors; its £3.5m debut activity needed to be disruptive if it were to

leave a mark in the world beer category.

But how could newcomer Madrí Excepcional make an impression in the competitive world beer segment, standing out amidst established, well-known competitors, who had been investing big in communication for years?

An exceptional challenge for Madrí Excepcional.

### BEER PLAYERS UK - INVESTMENT IN 2021





## 2. AUDIENCE

### WORLD BEER DRINKERS ARE THIRSTY FOR NOVELTY...

Premium lager drinkers tend to be younger, more gender-balanced and urban versus the average mass-market buyer. Educated and with higher disposable income, they have refined tastes and are willing to pay more for high-quality products.

But what we wanted to understand was **how world beer drinkers stood out amidst broader consumers of premium lager**. What makes them tick and what can we offer that's different vs the category?



They're discerning, self-expressive, and progressive. They crave success and affirmation, longing to be influential and respected amongst their Millennial peers.

**Above all else, though, is an unrivalled desire for newness and variety.** They revel in discovery, loving to try beers from different countries (70%) and different styles (60%)<sup>4</sup>, rarely being loyal to one brand (<20% repeat purchase over 12-week period).

**However, their hunt for the new extends beyond beer, reflected in their spontaneity and curiosity towards all aspects of life. They're always the first to try new things and want to be recognised as pioneering trendsetters.**

Considering this appetite for novelty, it's no surprise that, after years of monotony and disconnection from loved ones, they were desperate to make up for missed opportunities to explore, discover new things and enjoy themselves.

To capture an audience constantly pursuing novelty, we needed to forge our own path, offering something different from other world beers.

If you're ecstatic after a trip to the shops, it's your brain thanking you for the novelty  
*Richard A Friedman*

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The monotony of lockdown life has starved us of spontaneity and serendipity, which enhance learning and memory

- Richard A Friedman is a professor of clinical psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College



### 3. STRATEGY

#### **...BUT WORLD BEER PLAYERS BRING NOTHING NEW TO THE TABLE**

World beer drinkers want to be recognised by their drive, curious minds and love of good things.

Now, how is the category meeting these needs?



Slow, relaxed living, free of the shackles of modern life.  
 Family and friends around the table, styled in a sophisticated and classic manner.  
 Traditional architecture and cobbled streets, illuminated by the sunlight.

We soon realised all category players explored well-trodden Mediterranean clichés. Generic scenes that could easily be a tourism campaign, feeding on our fantasies that life in Southern Europe is simply better.

#### **INSIGHT**

**World beer drinkers are energised by discovery and novelty, but brands in the category depict a Mediterranean lifestyle that is slow and traditional.**

The perfect opportunity for Madrí Excepcional to stand out.

#### **CREATING A WORLD BEER BRAND LIKE NO OTHER**

Madrí Excepcional's launch needed to disrupt the world lager category, boldly breaking through its slow-paced, heritage-led tropes and bring progressiveness and modernity to consumers, whilst building an aspirational world recognisably Spanish.

And whilst our collective unconscious is replete with cultural symbols of Spain (tapas, sangria, flamenco, bull fighting, bold architecture), **neither of these images is specifically about Madrid.**

<u>WORLD BEER TROPES</u>		<u>MADRÍ DIFFERENCE</u>
SLOW & RELAXED	→	ENERGETIC
TRADITION	→	MODERNITY
HERITAGE & AUTHENTICITY	→	PERSONALITY & ATTITUDE
SAFE	→	BOLD
SUBDUED	→	PASSIONATE

The truth is, places like Barcelona and Andalucía are more evocative, carrying stronger mental associations that are often interpreted as more widely Spanish.

But Madrid, the very capital of Spain, is actually a blank canvas - people don't know it very well.



## culture trip

Often esteemed less mentionable than flamboyant Barcelona, Madrid keeps its secrets hidden for those who do not deliberately look for them. Discover some of the amazing facts that will completely change your image of the captivating capital of Spain!

## Quora

Madrid is the capital city of Spain, and while it may not have the same level of global recognition as cities like Paris, London, and Rome, it is still a major cultural and economic center in Europe.

What could be a challenge became our most exceptional opportunity: **we decided to transform the lack of knowledge surrounding Madrid into a virtue.**

**Tapping into world beer drinkers' desire for discovery, Madrí Excepcional would lift the veil on a different side of Spain, inviting them to explore a surprising new place and world beer.**

### **THE SOUL OF MADRID, AN ENERGISING BLANK CANVAS**

**Our strategy was to position Madrí Excepcional as a new, exciting world beer for novelty lovers, unafraid of challenging the status quo - and other sunshine lagers.**

Demonstrating our point of difference went hand in hand with defining the city of Madrid itself.

We would steer clear from Mediterranean tropes, focusing instead on Madrid's vibrant urban pace.

Madrid has excitement and novelty in spades, recently chosen as Time's best destination, 3rd best European city for Street Art<sup>5</sup> and 2nd best for foodies - but this vibrant, progressive spirit is something that has long been part of Madrid's identity.

In the end of the 1970s, coming out of a 40-year-old dictatorship, Spanish people were keen to take part in cultural trends and movements.

Madrid soon became the epicentre of this post-Francoist identity search, with punk music and synthpop becoming ubiquitous, the rise of new art movements, a visible LGBTQ+ community, and famous counterculture patrons, like Pedro Almodovar, Andy Warhol, and The Ramones.



The movement became famous as **La Movida Madrileña**.

The Movida movement can still be felt today, Madrid's culture brimming with creative freedom.

**It was the perfect jumping-off point for our brand to build its identity as modern and progressive, standing out amid a sea of laid-back sunshine lagers.**

Madrí Excepcional would portray Madrid as the epicentre of a forward-looking Spanish culture, one that mixes energy, cultures and new thinking, always looking to make things happen.

**Now it was time to paint our blank canvas with the Movida spirit.**

## The Guardian

**'Bless the chaos': La Movida Madrileña, Spain's seedy, wild post-Franco underground**

## i-D

**these photos capture madrid's club kids in the 80s**

*A new exhibition celebrates 'La Movida,' the experimental punk movement that emerged after decades of dictatorship in Spain.*

<sup>5</sup> Source: Time Magazine, TimeOut, Radical Storage



## 4. CREATIVE IDEA & IMPLEMENTATION

### OPENING THE DOOR TO THE SOUL OF MADRID

Firstly, physical availability was built at record speed during lockdown so, when consumers returned to pubs, they'd suddenly find a new beer.

Landing in this perfect moment created huge buzz and organic traction; now, we had to tap into this momentum for an impactful launch.

**We needed to capture consumers' desire to explore, presenting Madrid as a vibrant place full of surprises, to be unveiled during an afternoon or a night out.**



We needed our audience to feel like they were there, experiencing first-hand the unique spirit that flows through Madrid's streets, its progressive attitude and spontaneous sociability.

**We chose to materialise this longing to discover with an invitation: will you open this door?**



Leaping from our pack design, we created our red door, or Door Roja, a simple yet powerful symbol through which we could transport our audience to the streets of Madrid, immersing them in its culture. A window into El Alma De Madrid and an invitation to discover something new and exciting.

### TRANSPORTING VIEWERS TO THE STREETS OF MADRID

A [60" film](#) announcing the brand's launch transports the viewer - and the story's protagonist - from a typical UK train carriage to the city's streets. Our protagonist's journey is interrupted by the sudden sight of a Chulapo, our brand icon, who delivers some perfectly chilled bottles of Madri Excepcional.

Our protagonist, puzzled, decides to follow him...

He opens a red door in the train, discovering a vibrant Madrid full of vivid murals, modern flamenco beats and flowing cerveza. Each time we step through another door roja, we're met with vibrant terrazas, pulsing street parties and vibey rooftop bars.



One surprise after the other - no cobble streets and sunny beaches here, thank you.

The campaign positions Madri Excepcional as living in a different universe than other Spanish beers, whilst still leveraging elements of sociability and spontaneity, typically Mediterranean.





The hero film was supported by paid social and a national OOH plan, carrying the idea of exploring to static formats.

Boldly displaying 'The soul of Madrid' and 'El Alma de Madrid', the text forms a window through to the city, inviting the viewer for a more attentive see-through.

And, in homage to the street art culture which permeates Madridian culture, our own Madri murals in key urban areas proudly featured door roja alongside the newest introduction to the world lager category.



### EXPERIENCING THE SOUL OF MADRID FIRST-HAND

Beyond advertising, to live our brand promise, it was critical we allowed people to experience the novelty and vibe of the city for themselves, and activation was essential to bring this to life.



We created a hero event to transport consumers to the city's streets: a takeover of London's Vinegar Yard saw a "culture clash" of street food, street music and street art, serving up a fusion of creative and progressive energies of the two great cities to rival the Movida Madrileña itself.

A partnership with award-winning Nanny Bill's created Madrid-inspired burgers, complete with Manchego and Salsa-loaded fries.



Three original street art pieces were commissioned, created by Madrid-based artist group Boa Mistura and British creative muse Kojey Radical.

Finally, nights culminated in a music lineup including special guests Fusa Nocta (Madrid) and Lady Leshurr (UK), mixing their genre-spanning unique sounds through the night.







## 5. RESULTS

### WE CREATED A TRUE MADRÍ MANIA

In less than two years since its launch, Madrí Excepcional's impact has been nothing short of colossal.

Its sudden apparition has puzzled the nation, generating huge word-of-mouth.



Image: Steve Beech / Time Out

### The mysterious backstory of Madrí lager – and why it's suddenly appeared in every pub

The Spanish-sounding beer is everywhere. But where did it come from? And what is the secret to its success?



LADbible @Ladbible

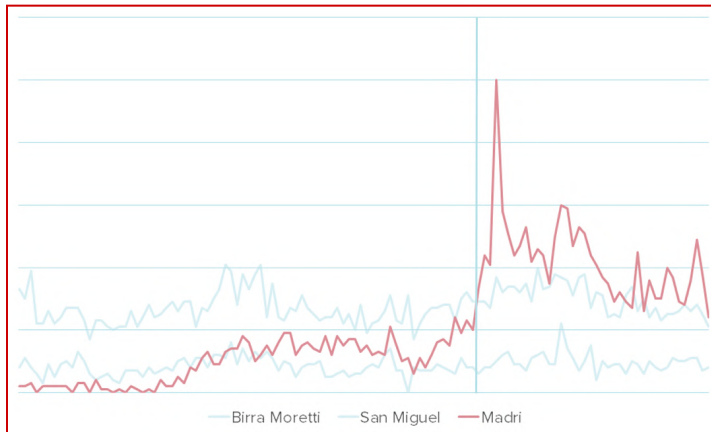
Madri lager appreciation tweet.

Sensational stuff.

11:00 AM · Apr 27, 2022

958 Retweets 651 Quotes 12.8K Likes

Our campaign debut led to extreme<sup>6</sup> search spikes, with many people noticing and commenting about the brand's spectacular rise.




@travjm · Follow

Madri has taken over as king of the lager game.

8:04 PM · Jan 8, 2022

74 Reply Copy link



LS @lukesnell · Follow

Tell you what the rise of Madri up the beer pyramid has been nothing short of sensational. Pint, can, bottle it can do it all. Could soon be knocking moretti off the summit

7:02 PM · Apr 25, 2022

17K Reply Copy link

Read 570 replies

Beyond emerging as 'the most talked about beer in Britain', **Madrí Excepcional became the 7th<sup>7</sup> largest lager beer in the total trade by value**, having grown almost 600% and surpassing established competitors like Budweiser, Carlsberg and Estrella Damm.

Across pubs and bars, **Madrí Excepcional is now the fastest growing draught world beer and the 5th largest draught lager overall**, having overtaken Heineken, Stella Artois, Estrella and San Miguel.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Google Trends, TimeOut, IrishMirror

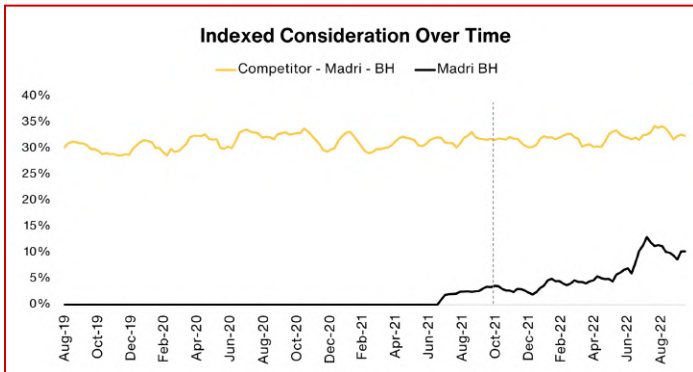
<sup>7</sup> Source: CGA Data 2023



Not only that, we're also the **most successful on-trade launch since records began**, delivering £108m in its first twelve months, and boasting the highest value ROS in the beer and cider category – no other brand putting more money into tills.

**In the supermarket, we're the 5th largest world beer in volume after less than a year, and added more value to the category than all other NPD launches in 2022 combined.**

**Madrí Exceptional now boasts the strongest 'cost vs revenue' ratio of all the Molson Coors portfolio, and the impact of media uplift on sales was double that seen across the rest of the portfolio. With a total revenue ROI of £1.53, TV/VOD and Social delivered the highest ROIs of £1.73 and £1.98 respectively.**



And whilst consideration for competitors (Peroni, San Miguel, Birra Moretti, Estrella) remained consistent, Madri's continues to grow, now with a Top of Mind awareness higher than Estrella.

Exceptional results for Madri Exceptional.



## **6. LEARNINGS**

### ***TO FACE GIANTS, THINK LEAN AND ACT QUICK***

Whilst across big corporations conforming can be comfortable, Madrí Excepcional's launch was nothing like business as usual.

**To quickly and successfully break into the cluttered Mediterranean-style Lager space, we couldn't do things like they were done before; we had to embrace a start-up mentality, accepting the risks that come from taking a leap into the unknown.**

We partnered with entrepreneurial La Sagra, creating an equal relationship in developing a new product, launched at surprising speed. We broke free from the stereotypes of the category, risking what could have been easy wins to bring something fresh and appealing to consumers.

We did it because, to thrive in life and in business, you must learn to adapt.

**Embracing change, agility and calculated risks in the pursuit of creativity is a necessity.** Those who resist it will inevitably perish, with no shortage of tales of brands who failed by clinging to old formulas.

Like our very own consumers, our story is one of learning to embrace newness, from start to finish.

By behaving like a small business within a big corporation, we became nimble enough to create a giant movement: Madrí Manía.

And this is just the beginning.

Vamos!