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## **New automotive advertising formats. The SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, branded content aimed at women**

### **Nuevos formatos publicitarios en automoción. SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, branded content dirigido a mujeres**

**Dates** | Received: 01/09/2021 - Reviewed: 13/11/2021 - In press: 13/11/2021 - Published: 01/01/2022

#### **Abstract**

Car brands understand buying a car is a major expenditure, hence they work hard to create great campaigns to promote their models and raise awareness of their brand values by generating interesting content to facilitate the purchase process for their customers. SEAT, together with Cosmopolitan magazine, redesigned the Mii model using proposals from the magazine's readers and launched a branded content campaign aimed at women in eight European countries simultaneously, based on the #ThisIsMii concept created by the &Rosás agency. This research analyses the twelve films created by SEAT for this campaign and details the combined use of online actions based on the case-study methodology, incorporating a variety of techniques such as content analysis of these pieces and in-depth interviews and a survey of 300 people aged between 18 and 65 years. The results suggest that SEAT is changing the way the content of the brands is interpreted; it is an outstanding example of a global project between a car brand and a Hearst Group publication to promote the new Mii model and give the target female audience a new perspective on driving.

#### **Keywords**

Branded content; Digital campaigns; Automotive; Advertising; SEAT; Brand strateg

#### **Resumen**

La adquisición de un coche implica un gran desembolso, las marcas de automóviles son conscientes de ello y por este motivo crean grandes campañas para promocionar sus modelos y dar a conocer sus valores de marca generando contenidos de interés que faciliten el proceso de compra. SEAT junto a la revista Cosmopolitan rediseñan el modelo Mii gracias a las propuestas de las lectoras y en torno al concepto #ThisIsMii creado por la agencia &Rosás lanzan una campaña de branded content dirigida a mujeres en ocho países europeos. El objetivo de la presente investigación es analizar las doce películas creadas para esta campaña y detallar el uso combinado de acciones online a partir de la metodología del estudio del caso (case study), incorporando varias técnicas como el análisis de contenido; entrevistas en profundidad y una encuesta a 300 personas de entre 18 y 65 años. Los resultados sugieren que SEAT cambia la forma de interpretar el branded content y constituye un ejemplo destacado de proyecto global entre una marca automovilística y una publicación del grupo Hearst para dar a conocer el nuevo modelo Mii y hacer que el público femenino al que se dirigen tenga una nueva mirada sobre la conducción.

#### **Palabras clave**

Branded content; Campañas digitales; Automoción; Publicidad; SEAT; Estrategia de marca

## 1. Introduction

For decades, brands, marketing specialists, and creative advertising designers have been faced with the difficult task of reaching people who see advertising as an intrusive form of communication. Contemporary society is made up of increasingly informed, intelligent consumers with changing needs. These consumers are not interested in conventional messages, even about mainstream products or services, yet they are open to brands that best suit their needs, whose values are aligned with their own, and with whom they can share experiences and connect emotionally.

Thus, the technological revolution and transformation of the media (Scolari, 2012) have brought about an important change in advertising communication (Del-Pino, Castelló and Ramos-Soler, 2013). Consequently, the growing use of the Internet has displaced the relationship that consumers had with traditional media, as they watch less television and spend more hours surfing the Internet (Martín and Fernández, 2014). As such, in order to reach these consumers, it is necessary to do so through differentiated advertising strategies. Advertainment was created as a combination of information, entertainment, and advertising (Imbert, 2003; Horrigan, 2009), for the purpose of responding to the needs of the prosumer (Toffler, 1980), who is trying to move away from conventional advertising, and who wants to be involved in the process of making decisions, expressing their interests and tastes, and generating content and opinions in order to influence others. By combining advertising and entertainment, branded content offers several advantages to brands, one of the most important of which is that it offers different narrative structures, and the narrative discourse is designed specifically for them (Del-Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015: 112).

Overwhelmed by brands, messages, and noise, consumers try to put distance between themselves and advertising. Moreover, no sector escapes this situation, not even the automotive industry. For this reason, several authors point to vehicles as a high- involvement product (Chen and Quan, 2021), and they advise product brands in this category to produce content of various types in order to foster a link between the brand and the consumer (Lou, Xie, Feng and Kim, 2019).

After a thorough literature review, publications have been found regarding the differences between branded content and product placement (Rogel del Hoyo and Marcos Molano, 2020), as well as branded content for luxury brands (Castillo-Abdul, Bonilla-del-Río and Núñez-Barriopedro, 2021), both of which have been found in the media (Miotto and Payne, 2019) and in the field of fashion (Arbaiza Rodríguez and Huertas García, 2018). However, there is a scarcity of academic publications related to the automotive sector and branded content, and even less regarding car brands aimed at the female audience, which is why this line of study has been addressed herein. Specifically, the international campaign created by Cosmopolitan for the SEAT Mii has been studied as a specific example of branded content aimed at women with the objective of changing their vision of the world of driving.

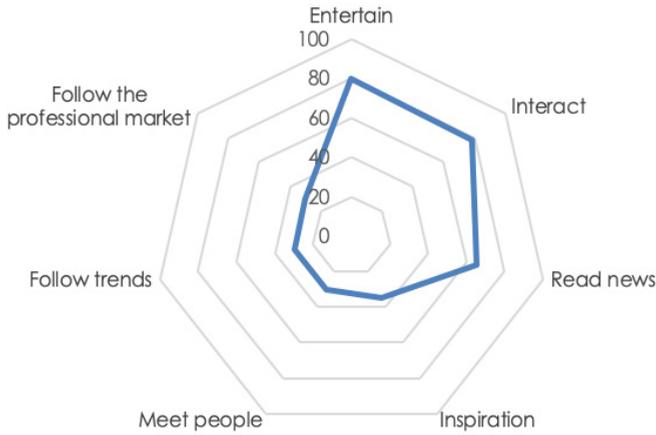
This research focuses on a SEAT brand case study due to the importance of the automotive industry for the Spanish economy, as the sector accounts for 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (Bonales and Mañas, 2021). Moreover, it is one of the sectors with the highest amount of advertising investment, having reached 13% of total advertising expenditure in 2018 (Infoadex, 2019). In addition, this Spanish car manufacturer is the leader in advertising investment on the Internet (Bonales and Mañas, 2021; Bonales, 2020a), and in 2020 it led the rankings in the Spanish market for the third consecutive year. In 2012, the Mii car model was recognised as the "Best Urban Vehicle" in Spain by the readers of *Mujer Hoy* magazine through its website, and the same year in Denmark, it was named "Car of the Year" (Pérez, 2012). This reaffirms the general acceptance as well as the innovative technology of this urban utility vehicle, which is the object of study in this research.

### 1.1. The automotive industry and the use of digital media in Spain

An automobile is one of the most expensive consumer products and its purchase is one of the most complex processes as well. For some authors, it is a lifestyle, a status symbol, a sexual and cultural icon, and even a means of mass transport. Its purchase involves a rational process based on the search for information, test drives, and comparisons (Bonales, 2020b; Bonales, 2021).

The rise of digital communication, and specifically social networks, has transformed consumer habits (Martínez, García and Sendín, 2013). These networks are becoming increasingly important in the communication strategy of brands because they are Internet spaces where people and companies maintain active communication with each other, and there is interaction with the target audience as well (Pedroni, 2013; Mir, 2016).

**Figure 1. Activities (%) published on social networks**



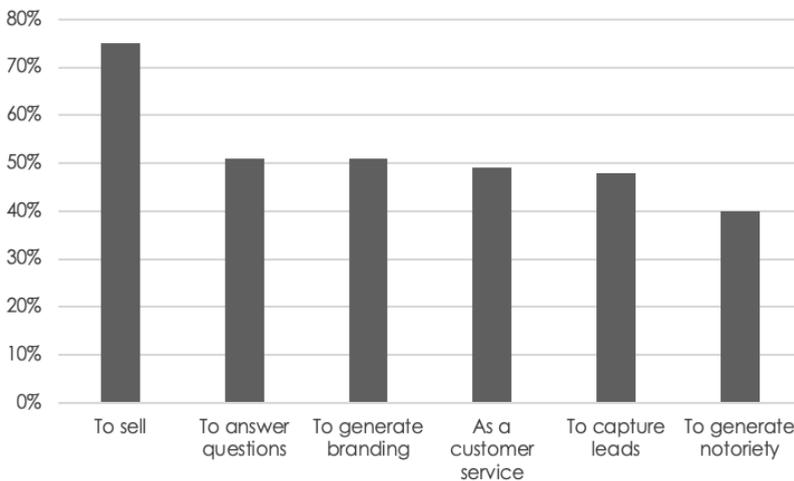
Source: prepared by the authors based on IAB Spain (2021)

The process of making a purchase decision, as well as consumption patterns, have been changing in recent years as citizens have gained greater access to information at their disposal thanks to the Internet. According to IAB Spain (2020a), 86% of potential customers search for information through this medium before visiting a dealership, and they also inquire about the brand, as well as its models, features and prices (Bonales, 2019).

A study conducted by IAB Spain in collaboration with PwC (2021) states that 36% of users engage with social networks for information, 29% for entertainment, and 25% to follow trends, respectively. According to the study, the act of following brands has fallen, yet there has been an increase in brand penetration.

The same study has determined that 75% of companies use social networks to sell, 51% to respond to doubts, and another 51% to generate brand image. Of the 75% of companies that use their official accounts for commercial purposes, 17% are automotive companies (IAB Spain, 2020b).

**Figure 2. Objectives of the use of social networks by businesses**



Source: prepared by the authors based on data from IAB Spain (2020b)

## 1.2. Branded content in the automotive industry

Branded content involves creating stories that are faithful to the brand's values, and through such content brands are able to mobilise and inspire potential customers –it is also the most efficient way of conveying a message (Cárcar, 2016). Consumers do not simply demand a product or service, but rather they want to communicate and identify with the values conveyed by the brand (Muller, 2016). Therefore,

one of the keys to this technique is storytelling, which offers the persuasive power of stories, not only to inform but also to create emotion that has an impact, and to generate a positive recollection in the minds of consumers. The characters in each story must be able to create empathy with the audience (Baraybar and Luque, 2018). Thus, emotional content has the potential quality of going viral. It involves the creation of content by the brand that is attractive to an individual, and that even engenders the desire to share this content with others and disseminate it on his or her social network.

Within the automotive sector, the first campaign to use branded content was an item for BMW, the German car manufacturer of high-end vehicles and motorcycles. In the year 2000, the US agency Fallon offered to make a series of short films for the brand, each of which was carried out by a renowned Hollywood director. BMW bought the idea and created the production company BMW Films, from which eight short productions were made under the name "The Hire", telling the adventures of "The Driver" (Clive Owen), a man who goes from one place to another in different models of the brand, highlighting aspects of performance from the point of view of entertainment, which was the reason for its success and virality. This branded content campaign was launched between 2001 and 2002. It received awards at the Cannes Lions Creativity Festival and represented a turning point in the history of Internet advertising. Fifteen years later, BMW repeated the success of the first series with "The Escape" on its BMW USA YouTube channel.

These productions were followed by others for brands such as MINI USA with "Hammer and Coop" (2007), Ford Motor Company with the short film "Le Fantôme" (2016), and Mazda, Subaru and Audi with their short film "The Eighth Dimension" (2018), which was used for the launch of the Audi Q8 and screened at the San Sebastian Film Festival.

There is no doubt that since the beginning of the 21st century, car brands have had to reinvent themselves to create focused messages, without an obvious intention to advertise, in order to continue connecting with consumers. While in the beginning microsites, fiction films with well-known directors and actors, and above all short films stood out (Pineda, Pérez de Algaba and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2013), which in some cases provided economic support for emerging audiovisual projects (Tur-Viñes and Segarra-Saavedra, 2014), automotive companies have been driving the trend of using digital channels to integrate attractive content related to their brands in order to generate emotion and achieve measurable results through experiences (Regueira, 2011).

Creative professionals face a big challenge in understanding the technology and communication revolution in order to convey the values of automotive brands, while at the same time establishing a bond with consumers through good ideas, storytelling and entertainment. The challenge is even greater when it comes to reaching women. If "the substantive content of competing products is difficult to differentiate, the selling effort shifts to differentiating distinctive aspects through which buyers can be influenced" (Levitt, 2007: 171), and this is where branded content must come in.

A study disseminated by magazine publisher TI Media, and presented at the "Automotive Seminar" organised by the International Advertising Bureau (IAB) in London in 2017, revealed that more than three quarters of women (the sample consisted of readers of Marie Claire and other brands from the same publishing group) believe that the automotive industry does not understand them as consumers (Marketing Communication News, 2018). Although this data is alarming, it is also encouraging for automotive brands as it offers them an opportunity to generate engaging content that appeals to the female audience.

In 2019, there were around 7.8 million women in Spain who were listed as the primary drivers on their vehicle insurance policies (UNESPA, 2019). According to the study, which was carried out by the *Unión Española de Entidades Aseguradoras y Reaseguradoras* (Association of Insurance and Reinsurance Companies), the cars considered most oriented toward the male population are the following models: BMW 3 Series, Volkswagen Passat, Audi A4, Ford Mondeo, Renault Laguna, and SEAT León. On the other hand, women prefer urban and utility models such as the Nissan Micra, Toyota Yaris, Volkswagen Polo, and Citroën C3. At the same time, Mini, Daewoo, Chevrolet, Fiat and Toyota are considered to be the brands that women buy the most. In the case of men, Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Mitsubishi, Volvo, and Audi top the rankings (UNESPA, 2017). Women always choose the same car, and regardless of age, the SEAT Ibiza is the model that most women drive in Spain, according to a report entitled *Y tú, ¿qué conduces?* (And you, what do you drive?).

Consequently, there is an obvious gender gap in the automotive sector that has not been taken into account by brands and agencies until now. This can be reduced by using branded content as an advertiser-driven initiative. This is the case of "Novel Adventures" (2008), the first online series aimed at women created by the car brand Saturn, which is part of the General Motors group. Even though it is difficult to find examples similar to the one just mentioned, SEAT has carried out two international campaigns with the Mii car model that could be included in this short list.

The SEAT Mii by MANGO (2014) was a collaboration between two Barcelona-based brands from two very different sectors, automotive and fashion. This special edition SEAT Mii was presented at the 080 Barcelona Fashion event, and an online competition was launched through social networks and Talenhouse for the purpose of offering the opportunity to design accessories that would be included in the edition. The SEAT Mii by MANGO offered the option of customisation with an upgrade of the standard equipment, and it even allowed buyers to purchase 15 units directly from the Amazon.fr website (exclusively for the French market), with a commitment to direct home delivery 72 hours after the purchase under the hashtag and web link #DeliveryToEnjoy.

Figure 3. Internet advertisement for the sale of the SEAT Mii By MANGO on Amazon.fr

## SEAT Mii by Mango Limited Edition

SEAT France

Source: Amazon.fr

As Ramos-Serrano and Pineda-Cachero (2009: 729) point out, the main objective of advertainment is to "lure the audience to the values of a brand in an attractive, suggestive way. Through the use of concepts such as advertainment, brands apply the knowledge of the entertainment industry to the creation of their own content". This was the aim of SEAT when it teamed up with Cosmopolitan to jointly create the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan. The campaign, created by the &Rosàs agency after winning the open bid, focused on the concept known as #ThisIsMii. The global project has been carried out simultaneously in the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, The Netherlands, Ireland, Germany and Denmark, and it departed from the concept of conventional advertising in order to raise awareness of the new SEAT Mii.

This co-branding (or brand partnership) with Cosmopolitan represents a clear, direct approach to a well-defined target with the aim of breaking into the 18 to 35 year old female market. The launch of the new car on 16 September 2016 at the #FashFest in London marked the end of a project that began a year earlier and resulted in a branded content campaign with various videos called "Horoscopes" and "Fast Food". These videos appeared on the social networks of both SEAT and Cosmopolitan from January to March 2017. Horoscopes are a series of 12 audiovisual productions that adapt the magazine's classic horoscope section to a current and contemporary feminine point of view, thus providing an open, comprehensive vision of the world of women, which in this case revolves around the ways of driving with their corresponding hashtags to be published on the Instagram, Twitter and Facebook accounts of both brands. These videos reflect the character of each zodiac sign in car-related circumstances, as well as the driving experiences from the point of view of the women in the videos of #ThisIsMii. The hashtags are a resource used throughout the campaign, as they are the common thread employed to highlight the personality of #ThisIsMii and open a universe of possible interpretations based on irony, a positive and carefree attitude, and enjoyment, which are values typical of both SEAT and Cosmopolitan.

The campaign kicked off ahead of the car launch with editorial content in the magazine, both print and online versions, about the world of driving. These posts were followed by others in order to generate excitement about the new Mii being showcased at #FashFest 2016 in London. SEAT's challenge was to design the new Mii Cosmopolitan special edition in accordance with the expectations of the target audience, which was a young, active, independent woman, by focusing on the lifestyle concept, thus adding a differential value not found among its competitors. To this end, Cosmopolitan readers were involved in the design of the special edition "Cosmopolitan Loves Mii".

Figure 4. Publication in Cosmo Magazine about the SEAT Mii By Cosmopolitan

The screenshot shows a webpage from Cosmopolitan magazine. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Cosmopolitan logo and categories: celebs, love, beauty, fashion, body. To the right, there are links for 'subscribe' and 'newsletter', along with search and social media icons. Below the navigation bar, a header section contains the text 'Created by SEAT'. The main headline reads 'The SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan is finally here'. Below the headline, a sub-headline says 'Get excited! After months of secrecy, our first venture into the car world has been revealed'. The date 'SEP 16, 2016' is displayed. There are two images: one showing a woman standing next to a dark red SEAT Mii car parked outdoors, and another showing a man and a woman on a surfboard in the ocean. Below the images, there is a quote from Kim St Clair Borden, Editorial Director of SEAT/COSMOPOLITAN: 'You know that feeling you used to get on Christmas morning when you could finally rip into your gifts after what felt like months of anticipation? Well, this is just like that... only better. (Okay, technically that depends on how generous Santa was to you as a kid. But still. This is pretty awesome.)' Another paragraph states: 'Last night, the brand new SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan was revealed for the first time ever. And that doesn't mean we just posted a few pics online. No, in true Cosmo style we debuted our very first car on the runways of Fashion Week in London.' A third paragraph mentions: 'More than 750 guests - including celebrities, fashion bloggers and party-ready Cosmo readers - watched as the Mii drove down the catwalk during the finale of the high street fashion show on Sept. 15.' A final paragraph describes the event: 'Afterwards guests joined the party to dance, sip cocktails and get a closer look at the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, which was parked amidst the action. With its deep violet colour and stylish design, Fashion Week seemed to be the perfect backdrop for its global debut.' At the bottom, there is a quote: 'This is such an exciting moment for us,' said Kim St Clair Borden, Editorial Director of SEAT/COSMOPOLITAN.

Source: Cosmopolitan UK

## 2. Methodology

The overall objective of this research is to study the international female-oriented branded content campaign for the Mii car model, SEAT's compact urban vehicle designed in collaboration with Cosmopolitan magazine and aimed at women between 18 and 35 years of age. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To determine the differences between women and men regarding the most highly-valued features when choosing a car, as well as the dissimilarity between the genders in relation to their awareness and recall of car advertisements.
- To describe the combined digital media strategy in the campaign #ThisIsMii.
- To identify the codes used by the SEAT brand within the concept of #ThisIsMii and analyse the 12 videos based on the signs of the zodiac.

In this research, a mixed methodology involving both quantitative and qualitative aspects has been used. The first phase consisted of reviewing the state of the issue on sales and investment data, the purchase process, and Internet advertising in order to develop the theoretical framework. To this end, we used advertising investment data according to brand and media, which was extracted from Infoadex, in addition to sales data published by the Spanish Association of Car and Truck Manufacturers, (*Asociación Española de Fabricantes de Automóviles y Camiones*) (ANFAC), as well as by the Federation of Automotive Dealer Associations (*Federación de Asociaciones de Concesionarios de la Automoción*) (FACONAUTO) in their annual reports published on their websites.

In the second phase, a survey was carried out between October 2019 and March 2020 based on a sample of 300 people aged 18-65 throughout the country in order to obtain information related to consumer criteria in the purchase decision in addition to their knowledge and recall of car advertising. The questionnaire, designed using the Google Forms tool, consisted of a set of open-ended questions on general introductory issues for the purpose of determining gender, age, car make or model, and other more specific questions on the users' knowledge and recollection of the automotive industry and its advertising in order to determine the influence of the latter on the decision to buy a car. This series of questions was followed by a semi-closed set of questions on the assessment of technological attributes and features that respondents were asked to rate based on a Likert scale.

In order to obtain the sample, the authors used the technique known as 'snowball sampling' (Van Meter, 1990), which consists of identifying the first persons to be surveyed and then obtaining other contacts, and so on, until the necessary sample is collected.

In the third phase, a case study method was applied, which originated in the Chicago School (Arzaluz, 2005), although the Harvard Business School has been the most successful in spreading the use of this methodology (Garvin, 2003). In order to carry out the case study, a content analysis of the zodiac videos was carried out (see Table 1), and an in-depth interview was conducted with a female advertising professional. This person is freelance art director Victoria Salsas, who was the only idea person at the &Rosás agency to participate in the creation and development of the #ThisIsMii campaign. The interview was conducted online, and the script allowed the interviewee to incorporate new topics or approaches into the conversation, with the investigators acting as a kind of "research instrument" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1987: 101), whose role was not only to obtain answers, but also to identify what was interesting for the research and how to obtain that information. The interviewee's input was vital to the present study, and the act of recording the interview was a key element in proving the validity and reliability of the data obtained from the research and in overcoming any possible bias on the part of the researchers in their interpretation of their own results (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Even though the case study methodology is most commonly used in business research and marketing (Ellet, 2007; Guzmán and Alejo, 2017), this qualitative technique has been highly important in the present context, as it has assisted the authors in understanding and analysing the brand strategy used by SEAT and its international partnership with Cosmopolitan.

**Table 1. Categories examined in the content analysis**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Description</b>
Horoscope	Zodiac signs are represented in each of the videos. [Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces]
Car	Presence of the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan car model [yes, no]
Protagonist	Indication of which element has the status or quality of being the protagonist [product, brand, character]
Shot	Visual and physical perspective of characters, objects and image elements [Close-up, medium shot, long shot]
Background	Scenery or setting used to present the main action [neutral, city, mountains, sea, and road]
Background colour	Color used on stage or background decoration [white, black, grey, blue, green, yellow, brown, orange, red, purple]
Car Colour	Colour used for the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan car model [violetto, candy white]
Headline	Presence of a headline or text at the beginning of the piece [yes, no]
Copy	Presence of text during the piece [yes, no]
Claim	Presence of a closing at the end of the piece [yes, no]
Logo	Presence of the SEAT brand logo [yes, no]
<i>Insight</i>	Concept obtained from the driving experience in which a solution is sought for a problem.

Categories	Description
Performance	Technical feature or quality of the vehicle that highlights each video.
Attitude	Characteristics transmitted in relation to the personality of each car reflected by a zodiac sign.

Source: Prepared by the authors

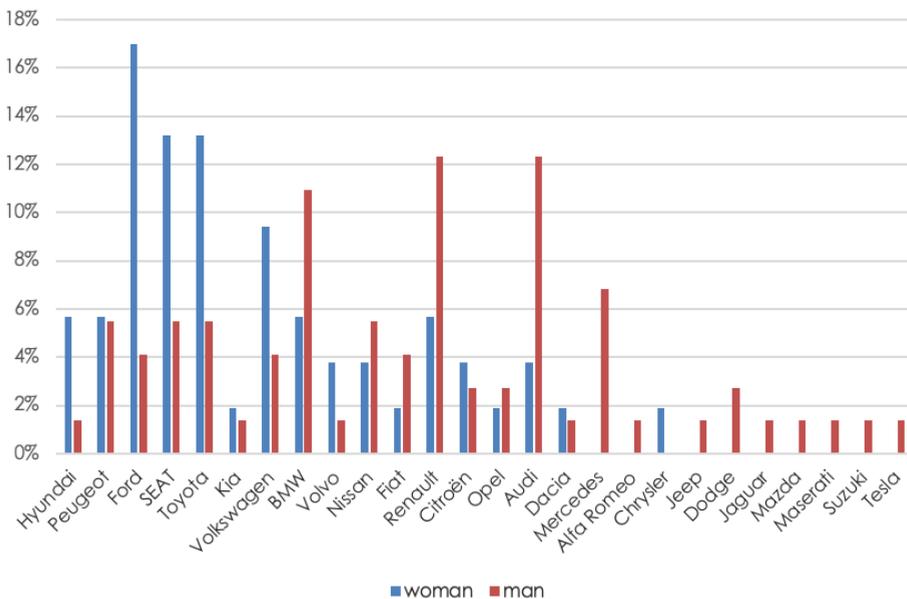
### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Survey: most highly-valued features; and respondents' interest in and recall of automotive advertising

Of the 300 respondents, 82% of the sample own a car (57% men and 43% women), while the remaining 18% say they do not own a car (43% men and 57% women). Likewise, out of the 43% who are men, 50% belong to the 18-34 age group, 31% to the 35-50 group, and 19% to the over-50 age group. In the case of women, 76% are in the 18-34 age group, 19% in the 35-50 group, and 5% in the over-50 age group.

Even though there are approximately 155 car brands in the world, the main car manufacturers are from Europe, the USA, and Japan, and these three dominate the European market with around 20 brands, as shown in Figure 5. Among female car owners, the three most common brands were Ford (17%), SEAT (13%) and Toyota (13%), and among male owners they were Audi (12%), Renault (12%) and BMW (11%). However, even though the numbers are smaller, men are the exclusive owners of car brands such as Tesla, Suzuki, Maserati, Mazda, Jaguar, Dodge, Jeep, Mercedes and Alfa Romeo, as can be seen in the graph below

Figure 5. Comparison of gender and car owned by the respondents



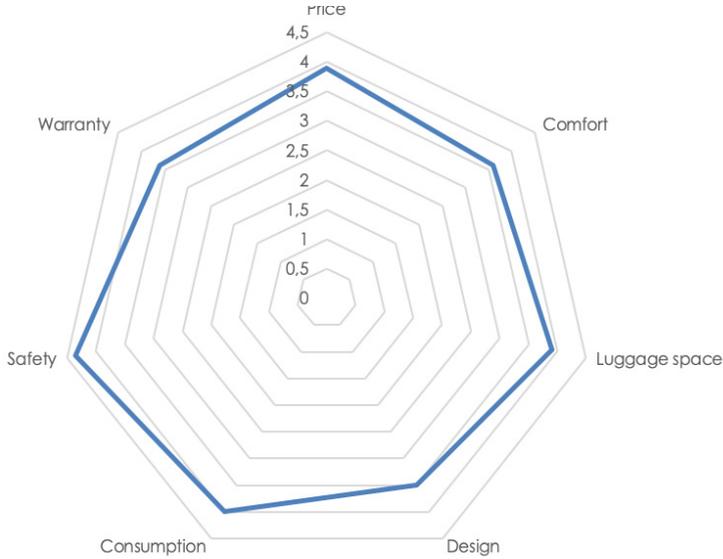
Source: prepared by the authors

In relation to the respondents' interest in advertising, 51% said they do not pay attention to advertising, while 49% said they do. Of the 51% who said they do not pay attention to advertising, 21% of this percentage are respondents who said they do not own a car, and 79% do own a car. At the same time, of the 49% of respondents who pay attention to advertising, 70% are women and 30% are men. Later, when asked to spontaneously recall an example of a vehicle advertisement, it was observed that the knowledge of the sector in the sample is medium to low. Few respondents gave examples, and those who did so responded only vaguely with ambiguous items. They cited BMW's famous "Do you like driving?" production, a campaign that is more than twenty years old, created in 2000 by the agency \*S,C,P,F. Another example is Volkswagen's "Like a Golf is not a Golf", which is a more recent campaign created in 2019 by the agency known as DDB Spain. Only 55% were able to write down an example and name the medium. The remaining 45% either didn't have this information, didn't remember, or didn't know where they had seen the advert.

In terms of attribute assessment by the respondents, the entire sample gave the highest score to safety, followed by fuel consumption, a spacious luggage compartment, and compliance with environmental legislation. On the other hand, the attributes they rated least enthusiastically were promotion, infotainment, and the warranty.

The responses of SEAT brand owners are very similar to those of the majority of the respondents. They also gave the highest scores to safety, fuel consumption, price, and a spacious luggage compartment. This was followed by warranty and comfort, with the same score, and last place was held by design.

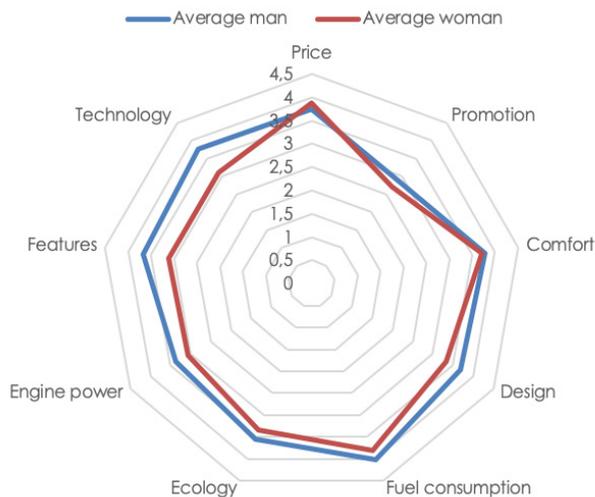
**Figure 6. Attribute ratings by SEAT brand owners**



Source: prepared by the authors

The female owners of a SEAT car rated safety the highest, followed by price, fuel consumption, comfort, and warranty. Likewise, men also rated safety the highest, followed by fuel consumption, technology, comfort, and performance. Thus, safety and fuel consumption are the two aspects of most concern to both male and female vehicle owners of this brand, yet they differ with regard to other variables. For women, comfort and warranty are more important than technology.

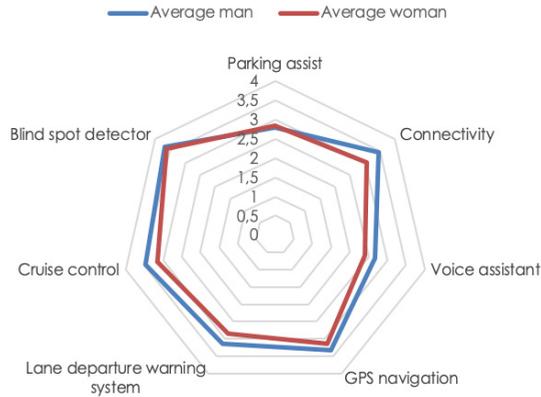
**Figure 7. Evaluation criteria according to the gender of respondents**



Source: prepared by the authors

According to the results of the survey, men give a higher rating to a vehicle's features. Of these, they consider the blind spot detector, connectivity, and cruise control to be the most useful aspects. On the other hand, women believe that the blind spot detector, GPS navigation, and cruise control are the most useful features.

**Figure 8. Performance rating according to the gender of respondents**



Source: Prepared by the authors

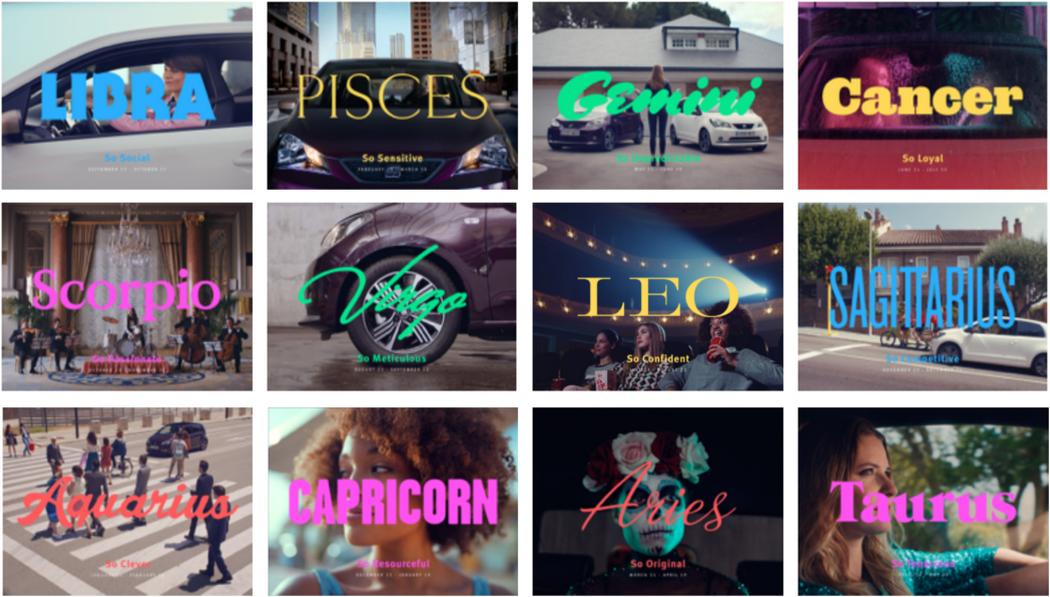
Respondents whom we might define as older, as they belong to the 36-65 age range, look for safety features such as Lane Departure Warning, while younger respondents in the age range of 18-35 rate GPS navigation and connectivity more highly. The following features are incorporated into the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, as its focus is on a very specific target audience, or in other words, women between 18 and 35 years of age: hill start assist; infotainment systems; and the Drive Mii App (available in Playstore or AppStore for Android and iOS). These features allow for control of the infotainment system from a smartphone, and also include accessories such as wireless charging for the mobile phone's battery and more. At the end of each horoscope video of the campaign analysed, emphasis is placed on several of the features identified as important for the results of our questionnaire. Accordingly, each zodiac sign focuses on one feature: Virgo: Rear parking sensors; Scorpio: Gear shift indicator; Sagittarius: Roadside assistance; Pisces: Drive Mii App; Libra: Brake assist; Leo: Lifestyle pack and parking assist; Gemini: two exclusive colours, candy white and violetto; Capricorn: car hook for hanging things; Cancer: exclusive interior details; Aries: space; Aquarius: no extra costs; Scorpio: Gear shift indicator; Virgo: rear parking sensors; and Taurus: smartphone integration.

### 3.2. Content analysis of the horoscope productions of the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan

There are twelve signs of the zodiac, and each one has certain characteristics and strengths that can influence an individual's personality, how they interact with other people, and their attitude toward life. This is precisely what is reflected by the #ThisIsMii campaign. Each video conveys the characteristics of each zodiac sign that define the personality of each of the women who appear in the adverts. Thus, the twelve stories revolve around each horoscope, with an adjective assigned to each one: Sagittarius: competitive; Pisces: sensitive; Libra: sociable; Leo: confident; Gemini: unpredictable; Capricorn: resourceful; Cancer: loyal; Aries: original; Aquarius: clever; Scorpio: passionate; Virgo: meticulous and Taurus: tenacious. In order to intensify or reinforce the characteristic in question, "tan", which in English means "so" (in the case of the English campaign) has been added in front of each adjective.

The twelve videos have a duration of 27 seconds, and all of them have exactly the same structure. All the stories are different, and are portrayed by different characters. Moreover, all the protagonists are young women between 18 and 35 years of age, who are part of the campaign's target audience and, at the same time, all the videos are narrated by a female voice-over.

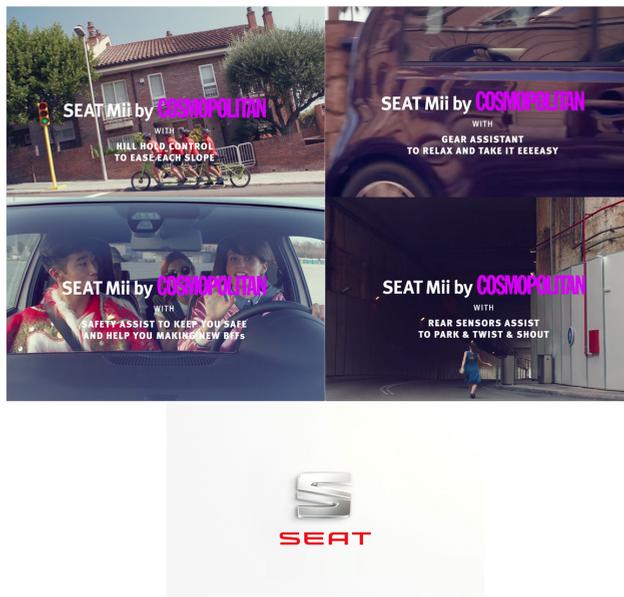
Figure 9. Horoscope-based #ThisIsMii campaign videos



Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

The structure of each video is characterised by the following opening format: "Horoscope + adjective (called attitude in the parameters) + dates of the sign". Thus, in the video corresponding to the Sagittarius sign, it begins as follows: "SAGITTARIUS, So Competitive, 22 November-21 December". However, despite sharing the same structure, a different typography and colour is used for each sign in order to transmit the personality linked to the different zodiac signs. The colours used in these typographies are yellow (3 times); magenta (3), coinciding with the corporate colour of Cosmopolitan; blue (2), coral (2) and green (2). Similarly, the videos also end the same way, or in other words, the ending is the same for all of them, as can be seen in Figure 10, and corresponds to the structure, "SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan + Features + SEAT Logo". Thus, in all the videos, the SEAT logo is present, as can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 10. Screenshots of the closing of several videos from the #ThisIsMii campaign



Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

Another of the parameters studied is the car itself, which is present in all the videos in white, or as they call it, *candy white* (31%), and violet, or *violetto* (69%), yet the protagonist is not the car, but instead is the actress. Women are the stars of the twelve videos, as they are the focus of the campaign. In 50% of the videos, a young woman appears alone in the driver's seat of the Mii, and in the other 50% she is accompanied by other female friends. Only in one video, which is the video of the Libra sign, there are men as well. According to the plot, even though they are strangers, the door is left open for them all to become friends.

The main setting used in the videos is the city, as the Mii is a small, easy-to-drive city car. The same locations consistently appear in the videos: a neighbourhood of detached houses, petrol station, car wash, car park, and coastal areas. There is only one non-urban setting, which is a cinema in the video of the Leo sign, yet the location is also related to a lifestyle very much in line with the *Cosmopolitan* magazine reader and the potential Mii owner.

**Figure 11. Screenshots of urban scenes from the #ThisIsMii campaign**



Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

In terms of colour and lighting, bright colours are used. Artificial lighting stands out, both for indoor locations as well as for shots inside the car. A very *Cosmopolitan* visual scene is shown, as it does not appear to be a real image, but rather one that is fantastical. This is the reason why this type of visual treatment is used, which is to accompany these highly caricatured, contradictory situations.

Daytime environments predominate, yet night scenes are also used in order to present different scenarios and actions as shown in Figure 12. Shots taken of the interior and exterior of the vehicle (dashboard, rear seats, etc.) are combined to show the widest range of situations and views of the car, with special emphasis on the differentiating features of this model such as headlights, colours, etc. This is due to the type of woman being targeted, who is active both day and night, and has concerns as well as plans. In short, the focus is on a versatile woman, just like the car, and this is exactly the type of woman being targeted by SEAT.

The medium shot is the most frequently used, which includes shots from inside the car that transmit control, individualism, and proximity to the character. The audio-visual adverts want to make the target audience feel like they are actually driving the car, or at least inside the car.

Figure 12. Screenshots of night scenes from the #ThisIsMii campaign



Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

Insight is another aspect that has been analysed, and it has to do with the creative concept obtained from the driving experience in which a solution is sought for a problem. A problem appears in all the videos, and the Seat Mii is displayed with an attribute or feature that is able to solve the problem, all of which comes with a cheerful, ironic tone. The copy and accompanying narration are essential in order to understand the message. An example of this is the following two zodiac signs: Leo: "The typical thing is to say that things disappear, fly, and go to another dimension, but you know that they only change places, just like planets. A hook for your headphones, your space helmet, or whatever you prefer"; and Taurus: "Your friends can count on you for a laugh and to go anywhere, but when you're right, you know you're right, and when you're wrong, you're right too. Smartphone integration to go to infinity and beyond". The problem is, they get lost because they want to be right all the time. Thanks to this insight, a feature of the vehicle is presented, which in this case is smartphone integration to allow one to use the vehicle's GPS navigator so they don't get lost.

Attitude is the adjective that defines the personality of each horoscope and is explained in the first part of the results. All of them convey the essence of the Cosmopolitan reader and, consequently, the nature of the potential customer of the vehicle: competitive, sensitive, sociable, confident, unpredictable, resourceful, loyal, original, smart, passionate, meticulous, and tenacious, as the character is presented in the videos.

There are also many accessories from the world of fashion and from the magazine itself: sunglasses, bags, shoes, and even a copy of Cosmopolitan as a nod to the target audience, all of which are integrated into the automotive world. In the Capricorn video, the feature that stands out is the built-in bag hook in the glove compartment.

Figure 13. Screenshots of the fashion and magazine-related accessories in the #ThisIsMii campaign



Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

All the videos speak of emotions and arouse them as well. One example in which the emotional component dominates is the Pisces video, where the protagonist appears with four different looks in the same video in less than 30 seconds. Thanks to this sudden change of wardrobe and hairstyle, the mood swings of the Pisces "sensitivity" are conveyed. All the action takes place inside the car with the actress in the driver's seat of the Mii. In the opening frames, she appears just behind the letters of her sign with her hair loose and straight. She looks doubtful. In the following frames she appears dressed in white with a tiara, looking very sad, and then she suddenly appears with her hair loose and curly, looking like a rocker with a silver jacket, black leather gloves with studs, and glitter in her eyes, somehow being associated with nightlife and partying. This video is dominated by medium shots of the car's interior. The girl is now smiling and enjoying herself behind the wheel. In the final frames, the main character has a more informal appearance, even beachy: tied-up curly hair, blue tank top with yellow trousers, red bracelet, white sunglasses, and blue nails, transporting the spectator to a certain state of tranquility.

**Figure 14. Screenshots of the Pisces video**



Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

To end this section, it bears mentioning that through the emotions presented in each of the twelve adverts, the aim is to transmit the subjective point of view of the Cosmopolitan reader in a way that is sincere, fresh, and at the same time versatile and full of contradictions.

### **3.3. #ThisisMii and the combined use of digital media**

The objective of the brand partnership between SEAT and the magazine that belongs to the Hearst International group was to create a limited edition of the Mii car model. They used a combination of undertakings along with digital media in order to advertise a car that was created with the aim of connecting SEAT with today's woman. In the initial phase of the campaign, the new design was implemented by SEAT's creative team in collaboration with regional editors and female readers of Cosmopolitan magazine.

The three main phases of the campaign included a teaser at the beginning of summer 2016, the launch on 16 September 2016, and the purchase promotion from January-March of 2017. The creation of content related to the car for the digital and print versions of the magazine, as well as for the social networks of both brands, was carried out by Cosmopolitan and the &Rosás agency. The Catalan agency suggested themes and set the guidelines for articles and postings for social networks (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook). With the published content, both SEAT and Cosmopolitan sought the participation of female users through their own profiles on social networks, mostly involving Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Through an official SEAT UK tweet, Figure 15 shows the launch of the limited edition, presented on 16 September 2016 in London at the #FashFest, organised annually by Cosmopolitan. After its launch, the calendar designed by the creative team was set in motion, and the Horoscope and Fast Food videos described above started to appear.

Figure 15. SEAT UK tweet on the premiere of the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan



Source: Twitter and Instagram accounts of Cosmopolitan Spain

The social network campaign kept the same tone as that of the audiovisual clips. The aim was to encourage participation, to show that female users have fun and live without fear and, if possible, to convince them to purchase a Seat Mii by Cosmopolitan, a vehicle with a multitude of extras that will help them personalise their driving experience.

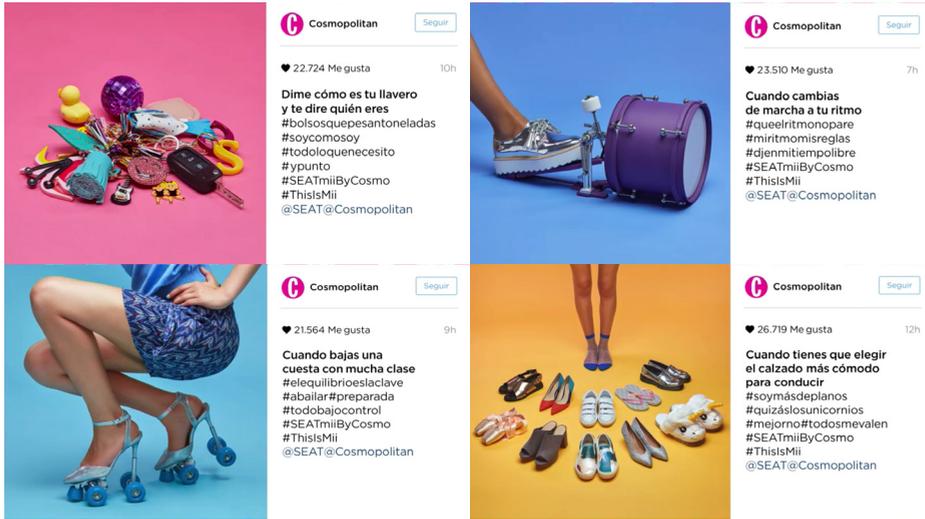
Figure 16. Tweet and post by Cosmopolitan Spain on the premiere of the SEAT Mii



Source: Twitter and Instagram accounts of Cosmopolitan Spain

Humour is the key to the #ThisIsMii campaign on social networks, where small jokes (memes) are made about the world of driving and women, encouraging conversation so that everyone can bring their own point of view without falling into the trap of clichés. Hashtags such as #soycomo soy, #bolsosquepesantoneladas, or #todobajocontrol were created for this purpose and refer to women's own personal experiences as drivers (insights). Figure 17 shows four examples of memes published by Cosmopolitan on Instagram. Due to the specific characteristics of this network, photography is the main ingredient, which stands out for its use of detailed shots and flat, saturated colours to highlight the main elements.

Figure 17. #ThisIsMii campaign memes on Cosmopolitan Spain's Instagram account



Source: Instagram account of Cosmopolitan Spain

### 3.4. In-depth interview

Victoria Salsas explained that she was in charge of the photography (fast food items for social networks) and the digital strategy of the #ThisIsMii campaign, while the three colleagues from &Rosás were in charge of the audiovisual capsules, the name she uses to refer to the horoscope videos. After marketing the SEAT by MANGO two years earlier, the car company sought to take a big leap forward by engaging in "a bigger partnership, leaving behind the world of fashion to immerse itself in the world of lifestyle in partnership with the Hearst Publishing House in order to have more to say, and to have a presence in several markets at the same time".

Likewise, Ms. Salsas also described the process of this 12-month campaign as "doing something with humour and originality" in order to reach a new target audience that is often "forgotten" by the automotive sector, and who have "clear interests that are quite far from simply driving". According to the interviewee, in order to reach this segment SEAT hired the media services of Cosmopolitan and even used the editorial group's own portfolio of influencers "to pay tribute to today's woman".

To launch the car, they used the occasion of Cosmopolitan's Fashfest, the 5-day fashion festival that takes place every year in London. In order to create expectations, Ms.Salsas points out that teasers were created using the "coming soon" strategy. In fact, these were audiovisual productions published on the social network accounts of both Cosmo and SEAT, followed by what are called "memes", which were used to make fun of certain "driving insights" in which the car did not even appear (see Figure 17). In this way, they were able to redirect traffic from Cosmopolitan to SEAT, and vice versa.

The art director describes in detail how the #ThisIsMii concept was created by the &Rosás agency through the production of a specific *video target*, or manifesto aimed at empowering women. With this production, it won the bid created by SEAT for the Mii car model. This hashtag concept is not only used to generate visibility, because in the words of the interviewee, "it is an attitude" through which they wanted to create "a narrative for each feature of the advertised car –ATTITUDE + FUNCTIONALITY– that's the key".

She also stresses that the campaign was envisioned for social media and the digital realm, not only due to the target audience at which the product would be aimed, but because of a budget issue, as the initial budget was reduced to a third, according to Mrs. Salsas.

The target profile is that of an "urban woman", which the art director describes with the following characteristics:

- Feminine, with an interest in beauty and fashion.
- Heath-oriented lifestyle.
- Youthful and modern.

- Unprejudiced.
- Success-oriented.
- Has an active social life, both online and offline.

In deciding the final design of the spots, Mrs. Salsas highlights several qualities of the product, such as "the design of the car, the accessories it offers, and the finishing touches that each user adds". Likewise, emphasis is placed on the importance of the colours, which were chosen by Cosmopolitan's own female readers, and which the magazine's female editors linked to safety, confidence, and determination, thereby ratifying the choice. Among all the colours proposed, two were chosen: purple (violetto) and white (candy white), which are the ones used in the horoscope videos.

The interviewee states that the colour violetto "was considered attractive and associated with elegance, sophistication and maturity", which is why this colour was later considered to be the product's greatest asset. This was confirmed by carrying out a test of the SEAT Mii car model –the colour was the most highly-rated element and it created surprise among female users. The violetto colour highlighted the importance of the details that had been chosen for this SEAT model, which they identified as "a clearly feminine color". On the other hand, "the interior details and the finish of the wheels create a perception of the car as being of a higher, premium category", Mrs. Salsas added.

During the extensive interview, the aspects to be assessed in the collaboration between Cosmopolitan and SEAT were also determined, as the fashion magazine has several variants. For example, it has a very specific female audience: young women with interests in beauty, fashion, technology, and design trends, who might be categorised as "frivolous", a label with which the brand did not want to associate itself. Therefore, it was thought "that Cosmopolitan should have a secondary role, more related to image and advertising", while at the same time serving as "a platform to launch the campaign and reach the target audience".

As for the chosen communication, it "had to be dynamic with the use of urban settings, and with an emphasis on the character and colour of the vehicle". "The most important aspect of the zodiac videos was the combination of colours, especially the use of violetto and similar shades", says Mrs. Salsas.

On the other hand, Mrs. Salsas states that "the campaign uses everyday situations in the world of fashion and driving as a guide, where women want to look good, have an active social life, and be in control of their driving". The following figure shows examples of these guidelines used for social media posts.

**Figure 18. Guidelines for posting memes on Facebook and Instagram**

	Facebook	September 19th	When you make an ambitious shoe choice for your night out.	#tonightismynight #mykindofdancingshoes #readytoparty #justrollwithit SEATMiiByCosmo #ThisIsMii @SEAT_local
	Instagram	September 22nd		*Mention the SEAT local profile that matches your country. Example: @cosmopolitanuk would mention @seatuk
	Facebook	September 27th	When you each share your unique view on the same trip.	#filterwars #bringonthe likes #friendlycompetition #thewinnerdrives SEATMiiByCosmo #ThisIsMii @SEAT_local
	Instagram	September 30th		*Mention the SEAT local profile that matches your country. Example: @cosmopolitanuk would mention @seatuk



Facebook    October 10th    When you have to decide who gets to drive on the way back.

Instagram    October 14th

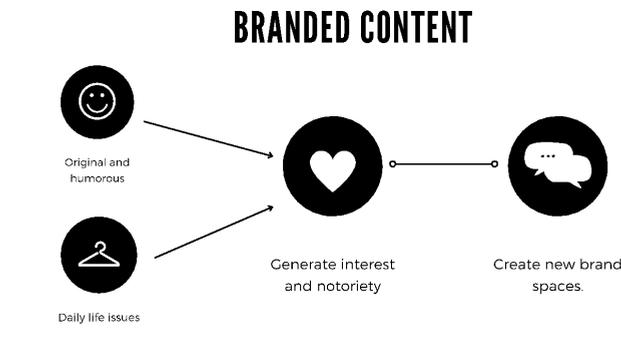
#itsononlyfair  
 #idrivefirst  
 #rockpaperscissors  
 #rockalwayswins  
 SEATMiiByCosmo  
 #ThisIsMii  
 @SEAT\_local

*\*Mention the SEAT local profile that matches your country. Example: @cosmopolitanuk would mention @seatuk*

Source: SEAT Spain

Finally, the interviewee mentions the most important elements for effective branded content: "create current content in a humorous way to spark their interest and thus connect with the target". She also refers to "the need to create other strategies and initiatives such as the Casa SEAT, a space for culture and getting together, because according to her it is not 'just about selling', but about creating other stronger links with the brand".

Figure 19. Branded content keys



Source: prepared by the authors based on responses from Victoria Salsas

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Brands and agencies are constantly looking for new ways to communicate and reach a highly-segmented audience. This is especially difficult for products that require a high level of involvement in the purchase decision, such as that of cars (Chen and Quan, 2021), due to the very nature of the product and because women feel that car brands do not understand them, and that car advertising does not generate appropriate messages that fit with their essence (Marketing Communication News, 2018). Given the importance of the automotive industry (Bonales and Mañas, 2021), car manufacturers must counteract this situation by finding new ways to communicate and reach the female audience by creating content that attracts their attention, because women have the ability to accept or reject the decision to buy this type of product. This is even more true because women are the ones who pay the most attention to advertising (of the 49% of the respondents who say they pay attention to advertising, 70% are women and 30% are men), so it is important to create discourses in line with their interests and expectations.

Following a more international, comprehensive advertainment strategy that combines information, entertainment and advertising (Horrigan, 2009), the Seat Mii car model changed its partnership, moving from the fashion sector (Mango) to the publishing sector (Cosmopolitan, Hearst Publishing House), and it has used the Internet and social networks (Martínez, García and Sendín, 2013) to disseminate its communication, possibly in search of greater reach and coverage in order to approach the female target audience of 18-35 year olds, unknown until now for the automotive sector, but with great potential as possible future customers. This is a commitment that could be seen as risky in the male-dominated world of driving, but the increase in the number of women drivers and car owners is a fact, and women are playing an increasingly important role in the decision to buy these types of products. Moreover,

nowadays women own their own cars, and the Spanish company SEAT is one of their favourite brands because of the safety of its vehicles, price, fuel consumption, comfort, and warranty, as stated by the female interviewees in the survey.

Collaboration between brands from different sectors, such as publishing and the automotive industry, increases the visibility of content and diversifies audiences. However, in the case of co-branding, it is important to remember that before developing this type of marketing strategy, the terms of the alliance must be analysed and highly-detailed, because sometimes such an agreement has a certain surprise factor for the final consumer and can go wrong, resulting in a situation that might not be beneficial for one of the parties if either of the brands is tagged with an unwanted label. This is the case of the Cosmopolitan reader being considered possibly "frivolous", and the fatal consequences that might have occurred if this had been associated with SEAT due to the fact that they were co-creating content together.

The &Rosás agency was at the helm of what could be considered the first global branded content campaign aimed at the female audience on the Internet, a project consisting of twenty graphic productions for social networks and twelve audiovisual works. All of this content integrates the values of the SEAT brand (Muller, 2016) and presents the product in a non-invasive way, creating and disseminating quality and diverse content in order to engage potential customers (Cárcar, 2016) by dealing with aspects of everyday life so that the items are more easily recalled by the target audience. To do so, the creative team responsible for this campaign resorted to the various zodiac signs. This creative resource fits very well with Cosmopolitan's style, as it takes into account the great diversity of personalities that exist in the female world and adapts the narrative to this group. The audiovisual items were made by using "driving insights" with a humorous tone and transmitting values associated with the Cosmopolitan brand to the SEAT Mii (glamour, fashion, and femininity), all of which are the fundamental aspects reflected in its content. The Mii is identified as an urban utility vehicle that is lively and agile, which is why the leading Spanish carmaker is targeting young, urban women who belong to the segment of the population that does not yet have family responsibilities. The competitive advantage belonging to SEAT is that female consumers prefer urban models and the SEAT brand (UNESPA, 2017).

Branded content offers a solution to specific needs that SEAT has in eight different markets. This campaign has become widely known but has also had a top-of-mind influence on consumers who belong to a very well-defined market. One idea that was confirmed in the in-depth interview with Victoria Salsas is that branded content must be interesting, as it must transcend into other areas of life, and it must generate branded spaces where other activities take place. The Casa SEAT in Barcelona is a good example of how brands, regardless of the sector to which they belong, should be more committed to consumers and the environment in which they live and not exclusively pursue sales in all of their actions.

Of the main conclusions highlighted by this research, one is the fact that both the Internet and social networks are the best options for offering visibility to content created ad hoc, and especially for the purpose of achieving an objective. In this regard, it is important to create publications with attractive, diverse content that aim to tell unique stories using a diversity of characters that empathise with the user or consumer, and that try to be a mirror of their own reality.

Therefore, storytelling, ideas and emotion are the three main elements that are helping to develop stories that connect with people to obtain measurable results through experiences (Regueira, 2011). Nevertheless, there is a certain sense of urgency to change the conversation related to women and cars. Addressing this target audience in the right way with the proper creative approach could be decisive in being more effective in reaching this target audience, which is becoming more important in the automotive field.

Buying a car is not an activity that is carried out frequently, but when a person is planning to buy a car, this action requires considerable thought, as it is an important financial decision, and because emotion plays a determining role in bringing a buyer closer to a brand. The cars we drive are a reflection of our personality. Not only is it a carefully selected investment that takes us from one place to another, but it defines who we are as well. Brands are aware of this situation, and this is why the messages they have been creating for the last two decades not only highlight the most valued features of a car, but they do so without the product taking centre stage, thereby bringing the brand closer to the consumer in a subtle, non-intrusive way.

For all these reasons, SEAT is taking a step forward in the creation of branded content aimed at women, not only because it has taken this sector into account in the design of the Mii, or because they are the protagonists of the videos, or even because it searches for them in specific print media where it knows they will be found, but also because a well-integrated advertisement campaign in an interactive environment can transform consumer habits (Martínez, García and Sendín, 2013), thereby introducing a new perspective on driving and establishing a renewed viewpoint on cars, which is something that has been quite unusual in Spain, at least until now.

Undoubtedly, a possible future line of research could be the analysis of other branded entertainment campaigns in the automotive industry, as well as the examination of similar content from other sectors aimed at women, with the goal of studying the approach used and how the discourse changes depending on the type of sector and product in question. Likewise, it would also be interesting to analyse the Corporate Social Responsibility actions carried out by the automotive sector for the purpose of promoting culture and solidarity activities such as that of Casa SEAT, or the Citroën Showroom in Paris at 42 Avenue des Champs Elysées. This is an area to which brands should also direct their attention in order to differentiate themselves from competitors, and to search for activities that are in line with the true DNA of their brand.

## 6. Acknowledgement

Translator: Charles Edmond Arthur.

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