

## **Telva: A Groundbreaking Publication in the History of Spanish Women's Press**

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### Abstract:

The Spanish woman's magazine Telva was founded in 1963 as the country's first contemporary upmarket fashion and style magazine. Its launch opened a new field in the existing national women's press market. Telva would lead this segment until the mid 80's, which led it to compete with Spanish editions of high-fashion magazine titles from around the world. Almost twenty years passed from its visionary launch to the arrival of large international publishing firms in the country. A few female magazines existed in the Spanish market, but during 50's and 60's scarcity of titles and poor circulation were probably the best ways to describe this segment, specially compared to other countries. Foreign female magazines were sold in Spain, but the national offer was rather unfortunate. The new magazine concept introduced by Telva proposed novelty in both contents and structure to the traditional Spanish women's press. During the years the magazine remained almost companionless it was able to forge a clear identity, to connect with the Spanish woman and to construct an identifiable discourse that would remain intact decades later. Most publications addressed to women have similar contents and analogous discourses, but it is in its Spanish origin and tradition, and its reader identification and loyalty that Telva has found its formula for success.

An in-depth analysis of the first five years of the magazine (a total of 101 numbers) as part of a work in progress, will be the papers main source to take an up close look the publication's beginnings and the ideals and principles behind its discourse. It will also aim to analyze how this strategy not only made Telva the top Spanish upmarket fashion and style magazine, but also served as a window of opportunity for a new segment inside the Spanish women's magazine market.

Keywords: Telva, Spanish women's magazine market, Spanish tradition, reader loyalty, discourse.

## 1. Beginnings: Spanish women's magazines

Spanish women's magazines beginnings were far behind other European countries<sup>1</sup> and even fell behind American publications. Causes for the fact vary from author to author, but what is true is that while national publications failed to subsist, foreign magazines found their way into Spain<sup>2</sup>. This explains the fact that, even though the number of national publications was limited, those few who could afford the international magazines that were available, were informed of the latest news and trends, and furthermore had acquired the ability to distinguish the characteristics of quality publications.

It was after 1833 when publishing for women began to find its way in Spain. On what concerns fashion, the first important Spanish publication dedicated exclusively to it was *La Moda Elegante Ilustrada*. The magazine was bought and reformed in 1861, its original was *La Moda* founded in 1842. Most of the content of the publication was dedicated to the description of fashion products, fashion trends and dress patterns – one of its objectives was to guide readers in reproducing fashionable designs. Its lifespan was notorious compared to other magazines during this period.<sup>3</sup> This and the numerous audiences it reached made it one of the protagonists of the spread of consumer culture in Spain.

Many were the experiments conducted by editorials, intending to copy the successful model produced by *La Moda Elegante Ilustrada*. By the end of the century, there were four well-established fashion periodicals; this was a symptom that many Spanish women were interested in fashion, style and consumption. Even though the country was still far behind from the leading powers, this denounced significant progress. The increase in number of pages dedicated to advertising was also a noteworthy sign when measuring both the consumer culture and the growth of publishing for women. (Cruz, 2011)

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<sup>1</sup> One clear example of the underdevelopment of Spanish women's magazines was the late appearance of the first national fashion plates, "In Spain the first fashion plates - the collections of engravings by Juan de la Cruz, Marcos Téllez, A. Rodríguez and others – were not produced until the last third of the eighteenth century, one hundred years later than France." (Cruz, 2011: 108)

<sup>2</sup> By 1964, one year after the launch of *Telva*, the international women's publications that were sold in Spain amounted to 22. Some of them were *Brigitte*, *Burda Moden*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Marie France*, *Jardin des Modes*, *Woman* and *Lana Moda*. (Azqueta, 1980: 554)

<sup>3</sup> Spanish women's publications during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century appeared and disappeared relatively quickly. Out of 95 registered women's publications in the nineteenth century only six of them had a lifespan of more than five years. These were: *La Moda* (1842-57); *El Correo de la Moda* (1851-1914); *El Angel del Hogar* (1864-69); *La Moda Ilustrada* (1876-82); *El Salón de la Moda* (1884-1914); *El Eco de la Moda* (1897-1902). One must take into account that short lifespans were a common denominator in all sectors of the print industry in Spain at the time, this was not and exclusive phenomenon of women's periodicals. (Azqueta, 507)

Of these four publications, *El Eco de la Moda* the Spanish version of *Le Petit Echo de la Mode* was perhaps the one that varied most from the dominating model imposed by *La Moda Elegante Ilustrada*. One relevant aspect of its uniqueness was its target audience. Until its emergence, women's periodicals were part of the aristocratic and bourgeois lifestyle. The same happened in France, *Le Petit Echo de la Mode*, formerly *L'Echo de la Mode*, was the leader of women's press for the masses. The Spanish edition of this French publication was successful in completing the same task in Spain, opening the women's magazine market to modern women. The magazine did not fail to keep its standards, and kept its upper-class readers, but had the ability to intertwine contents for a different type of reader. This is a very important concept when dealing with Telva's target audience. The Telva woman identifies with a modern socially active and working lady, never neglecting, but rather loving her role as a wife, mother and her household duties.

This was only the beginning of the amplification of the target audience for female magazines. It was in 1945 with the appearance of *Elle* that women began to fully identify with the proposition of the modern woman.<sup>4</sup> *Elle* was the magazine that finally presented the fantasy of having it all: a successful and fulfilling job and a traditional family life. This was the model Telva would dare to follow almost twenty years later in Spain, where there was no national offer like it. Telva also found great insight from both *Marie France* and *Marie Claire*, these magazines were far different from what was found in the Spanish market. Their aim was for women's publications to reach the upper middle class and middle classes, this novelty would be an instant success. One of the most important details when dealing with the history of Spanish fashion magazines is their close reference and inspiration from their homologous French publications<sup>5</sup>. Even though with time, the French influence in Spanish publications has slowly vanished, when Telva was launched, this French influence was a cultural phenomenon that not only dealt with the fashion industry, but with many aspects of society.<sup>6</sup> But perhaps the success of Telva was precisely taking the French model as inspiration, but making it 100% Spanish. The magazine's name also reflects its interest to serve the Spanish female market. It's a woman's name taken from Asturian literature and also popularized by famous comics titled "*Piñón y Telva*".

By 1962, there were only three notorious women's periodicals in Spain: *Ama*, *El Hogar y la Moda* and *Labores del Hogar*. It was a time of scarcity of titles, especially

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<sup>4</sup> Margorie Ferguson considers the importance of women's magazines when contributing to the wider cultural processes that define the positions of women in a given society at a given time. (Ferguson, 1983)

<sup>5</sup> The inevitable bond that unites the fashion industry with women's press explains why most publications instinctively looked to France for inspiration, specifically from Paris, the epicenter of fashion at the time. French fashion created a variety of quality content for fashion magazines. It was precisely the French who were pioneers in the conception of fashion plates and illustrations for fashion press.

<sup>6</sup> It is curious to see how by 1963, and especially after WWII, with the success of Dior's New Look, countries like the United States were freed from the style dictates from Paris. Fashion journalists and advertisers in magazines like *Vogue* began to show their support for American designers.

when compared to other countries' evolution of this type of press. Besides the shortage of publications, both contents and format of the existing publications were extremely underdeveloped. This is precisely what *Telva* would contribute to the Spanish women's press industry, and instead of doubling other countries successful magazines – where it did find inspiration- it will consist of a new modern media product specifically for the Spanish Women. What made *Telva* the first contemporary upmarket fashion and style magazine in the country was not only having the most up to date specialized information, but presenting it with high quality format in both formal and graphic aspects. Spanish women no longer had to seek for international magazines to satisfy their interest. A letter published from one young reader from Bilbao in one of its first numbers says she no longer buys Italian or French magazines, *Telva* has all the information, at a better price and now she has no language barriers and understands everything.<sup>7</sup> Another reader writes to the magazine exposing a comparison between *Telva* and other international modern magazine titles

“I've told myself more than once that you couldn't give us more for so little money ... even though we get French magazines, I repeat to my husband that *Telva* falls short of any other European magazine titles.”<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The *Telva* Woman

It was clear from its beginnings, *Telva* aimed to serve its reader as best it could. This effort to be useful and not only entertaining and profitable was perceived accurately by its target audience. Its original editorial mission has varied though the years, in great deal because of the market competition, but its essence and values remain, this is one of the reasons why *Telva* is able to maintain its readers. Specifically, we talk about the *Telva* woman. Since day one, *Telva* knew the key to success was to focus on its reader. Fortunately, many Spanish women felt identified with the *Telva* woman and have remained devoted to the publication, and it loyal to them. Curiously, one of the main characteristics of female magazines readers is their disloyal behavior when acquiring publications (Diaz Soloaga, 2007). It is known that women get easily carried away by a magazines cover or a headline, the ability of the *Telva* woman to blindly trust its magazine and forgive its trespasses, is certainly not a common behavior amongst female magazine readers. This is still one of *Telva*'s keys to surviving a strong rivalry after almost fifty years of its launch.

The Spanish woman was thankful for a magazine that introduced novelty into both format and contents. It was actually the first modern women's publication in the country. Born breaking schemes, it introduced a modern woman, which was able to adapt to new times without contradicting traditional values. In its opening number read “It is possible that you dreamed of a magazine like *TELVA* and *TELVA* with readers

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<sup>7</sup> *Telva* nº 20 30/07/1964 pg. 7

<sup>8</sup> *Telva* nº 36 15/03/1965 pg. 24

like you, that's all.” Telva found anxious readers and the readers, most of them who bought foreign magazines, found themselves with a one of a kind national quality woman’s magazine. Surrounded by a rather unfortunate offer of publications, Spanish women did not hesitate to become Telva readers. Contrasting with the vast majority of publications, Telva was not a magazine intended for the aristocracy and upper classes. Telva was the first modern woman’s magazine, high quality in both contents and format but for the middle class woman. The social economic level of Telva readers during the first year can be perceived in the chart below:

### 1. Reader's Social Economic Level

Upper class	8,5%
Middle – upper class	41,1%
Middle – lower class	40,5%
Lower	9,9%

Source: (Azqueta, 1980: 550)

One of the factors that have intervened in Telva maintaining its essence after almost 50 years, with an ambiance of strong competition, is it few changes of editors. In this almost half a century there have only been four editors leading the magazine. Covadonga O’Shea is perhaps its most well known editor in chief. O’Shea, is a Spanish journalist, she led the magazine for over 25 years. Many agree she was part of Telva’s key players in the fight to outlive the entrance of international publishing groups in the 80’s. O’Shea formed part of the Telva team since the beginning, she believed “a woman’s magazine’s most important function is to inform on topics that are specifically feminine, and, at the same time, entertain in these areas of information.” (Gómez Rivera, 1975: 90) It is important to take into account that these women’s magazines were probably a women’s mains souce of information from the world around them during that time. An important detail to know is that Telva’s foundation takes place during the Spanish State of Francisco Franco, were there was rigorous censorship for the press.

Telva’s approach when informing Spanish women was both traditional in values, especially in matters such as marriage and family, and modern, when dealing with society’s changes such as women’s introduction to both higher education and employment. In the magazine’s pages it is easy to find al sorts of information on educational opportunities, job descriptions, offers and courses to motivate women to undertake another role in society.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. The first Spanish high fashion magazine

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<sup>9</sup> “Telva was very interested in all matters having to do with the Spanish woman, and certainly in the legislative reforms that allowed greater access to jobs and responsibility” (Muñoz Ruiz, 2002: 235)

The responsibility Telva undertakes when becoming the country's first contemporary upmarket fashion and style magazine is not only towards the reader, but towards the advertisers who have been responsible for its growth. Its impressive to see how, since its first number, the magazine, is aware of the importance of advertising, one might think its surely to secure its financial health. This might be an essential reason, but its constant encouragement towards an ambience of creativity and innovation in the advertising world is surprising, for the publication, magazines give advertising the relevance it deserves.

Many of the magazines available in the country – specially the foreign press-offered the ultimate trends and had a good number of advertisers. What could Telva offer Spanish society? Telva knew what both the Spanish reader and the Spanish advertiser wanted and had been waiting for. The magazine was able to take those up to date trends and explain them to the Spanish woman, knowing their specific desires and possibilities, how to adapt them to their own personal style, to update their look without loosing their personality. The magazine offered all types of ideas and tips on how to create your own dress inspired by the up to date French designer models, how to match the seasons colors, textiles and fabrics. It was the ultimate style guide that offered tips on how to not only dress for every occasion, but also for every type of job. For women to become a significant work force and their introduction in higher education were initiatives of modern society that Telva supported significantly. This social function a magazine undertakes has great significance in the evolution of, in this case, women's role in Spanish society.

Having correspondents around the world<sup>10</sup> was another strong point for the magazine. The Paris correspondent for Telva would report expressly on the latest runway presentations where the new collections of the large fashion houses would be presented every season; occupying an extensive editorial space dedicated only to these ultimate trends. This was a revolutionary feature for Spanish women's magazines, undoubtedly aided in attracting a wider audience and greater advertiser support. On the month the runway shows were held in Paris, the magazine was dedicated a large number of images, descriptions and other inspirational information on the latest designer collections. Having a correspondent to report specifically on this information definitely made other magazines be aware of the type of quality information Telva was trying to deliver to its reader.

Spanish brands soon became Telva's greatest advertisers; they were waiting for the perfect medium to deliver their message to specific audience groups. Businesses sought for a quality publication with faithful and devoted readers who had credibility in the contents delivered. Contemporary fashion brands began to trust Telva for their promotion. Telva did not only offer the reader conventional ads, but created great editorial spreads and advertorials as a creative way of promoting brands. The magazine

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<sup>10</sup> Since 1963, when its first number was launched, Telva had correspondents in: Paris, Rome, London, New York and Viena.

actually had great interest not only in pleasing the advertisers and readers but in spreading Spanish culture, its designers, brands and way of life. This vision is reflected in the magazine's way of treating certain topics with the intention of always highlighting associations to Spain or Spanish culture and furthermore with certain Spanish designers and brands.

What this accomplishes is far from the loyalty of the readers and advertisers - important for the publication - it anticipated the positioning of certain new Spanish designers and brands next to the traditional stylish French fashion houses. Not intending to establish a parallelism between them, but rather letting the reader know that quality Spanish fashion could also be of great esteem. At the same time, the closeness and empathy felt with the Spanish brands would traduce in letting the neighboring country's great designer houses fashion's seem as something more identifiable and friendlier rather than distant and detached. This could be understood as a type of unintentional but fruitful cobranding, produced by the magazine as a channel and not the brands as interested parts. The magazine begins to serve yet another role, that of promoting national brands and designers. This public support for national talent encouraged the designer's acceptance and bolstered their credibility.

In 1986 a massive entrance of international publishing groups took place in the country. By then, more than twenty years had passed since the launch of Telva. The magazine had established itself in the market, had gotten to know its readers, its advertisers and Spanish society to perfection. Solid relationships were established, but would that be enough to survive the introduction of Spanish editions of many foreign women's magazines<sup>11</sup>? What would Telva's strategy be? Would it survive to the abrupt strong competition?

On October 1988 in Telva's number 583, dedicated to the magazines 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Juan Kindelán, the magazines editorial CEO, wrote:

“Telva celebrates its first 25 years in the middle of an authentic revolution in the so called women's press market in Spain. Telva, which shared this long period with Ama and then Dunia, gives a merry welcome to the many foreign titles that have suddenly realized the qualitative and quantitative importance of the Spanish woman, breaking in news stands, like the new rich. The greetings are sincere and joyful, the reasons include, inter alia, it's precisely been during these months when Telva has reached the peak of its growth in all its history, surely spurred by the healthy competition.”

It is a fact Telva was forced, by the rise of the large international publishing firms and the growth in the consumption potential of women, to rethink and update its proprietorship, format and many of its contents to modern standards. Concurrently, other magazines, had not the same fortune, both Ama and Dunia - another Spanish

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<sup>11</sup> Some of the foreign magazines that launched spanish editions were: Vogue, Elle and Marie Claire.

women's publication launched before the arrival of the international firms - disappeared. Telva's transformation was significant, but the magazine was still able to maintain the essence of both its values and its Spanish origins. Not losing these differential traits was probably one of the main reasons its readers remained loyal to the "new" publication. The philosophy behind the magazine was key to create that intangible bond that linked it so closely to its readers. Telva placed great emphasis on reader identification, not only with its values and ideals, but also with its Spanish poise. This affection and attachment to its Spanish roots qualified the magazine to become the finest promoter for both national designers and brands. The magazine has narrated for almost fifty years the success stories of key protagonists of Spanish design. Thanks to this bond, Telva was able to present Spanish society with new national designers, fresh creativity and innovative brands, to demonstrate that the neighboring countries weren't the only ones capable of generating great trends and style.

The magazine has continued encouraging national design and creativity. Not pleased with half a century of the great support it has given inside the publication, twenty years ago it created the Telva Fashion Awards, a great initiative that every year recognizes an international designer and a national designer's work during the same ceremony. This is a significant challenge Telva has undertaken to support Spanish fashion through the years.<sup>12</sup>

To date, Telva continues to be the only contemporary upmarket fashion and style magazine that remains purely Spanish.<sup>13</sup> Since its creation, it sought to: understand its reader in times of change, particularly in women's roles in society; to provide quality contents that would stimulate both women's knowledge and entertainment; and to have a modern and vibrant appearance. The contents in the magazine don't vary much from the standard high-fashion magazine titles', the strategic distinction Telva has found, is not reduced to what the magazine talks about, but how it addresses these topics. The differentiation, since its beginnings, was found in its interest to have a special editorial approach that highlighted its values and its Spanish culture. The sudden and accelerated growth of the industry in the eighties presented a challenging situation for the publication. Nevertheless, despite its necessary reinvention, the magazine has learned that it will have its niche in the Spanish market if it does not betray its origins. Telva's loyalty to its Spanish roots has gained it constancy from both its readers and its advertisers, a virtue hard to acquire in the contemporary media market.

All the aforementioned traits were and still remain crucial for Telva, but besides its personal satisfaction, the magazine, since its beginnings has created an ambience of

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<sup>12</sup> Some of the winners of the Telva Awards are: The International designers Gianni Versace, Chirstain Lacroix, Giorgio Armani, Calvin Klein, John Galliano, Tom Ford, Donna Karan, Valentino, Carolina Herrera, Marc Jacobs, Ungaro, Manolo Blahnik, Christopher Bailey and the national designers Jesús del Pozo, Pertegaz, Custo Barcelona, Miguel Palacio, Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, Ángel Schlessler, Oscar de la Renta, Diane Von Furstenberg, Alber Elbaz.

<sup>13</sup> The only other originally Spanish upmarket women's magazine Woman has since October 2011, come to an agreement with the French publication Madame Figaró, for collaboration and provision of exclusive contents for the magazine and is now known as Woman Madame Figaró.



healthy competition. The development of a high quality modern product demanded that any other wishing to compete in the Spanish female press market, should incorporate high standards and quality in content, formal and graphic aspects. In this way, Telva has become one of the protagonists of the proliferation of modernity in Spanish women's press, but behind the search for constant improvement and renovation, lies a genuine interest for providing the Spanish woman with both superior and appealing national publications.

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