

# France



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## A MARKET DRIVEN BY VERY STRONG LOCAL BRANDS

In France, as elsewhere, the Covid-19 pandemic shook the bottled water market, which was marked by the resultant periods of lockdown and the impact on the sales channels. However, unlike the Benelux, where Spadel benefited from a sharp increase in sales in supermarkets and hypermarkets following the closure of the hospitality sector (hotels, restaurants and cafés), French consumers turned more to click&collect or cash&carry. According to the analyses of the IRI international data processing institute, this resulted in a considerable acceleration of the transfer of sales in traditional stores (-1.6% in volume and -3.3% in value for water as a whole) to take-away sales (+30%, most recent figures available). At the same time, and again right across the French bottled water market, ‘out of home’ (hospitality and on the go), dropped by virtually one third (-30%).

In this dual national landscape, driven strong local brands very widely sold in supermarkets and hypermarkets in the Alsace region, Spadel France avoided such extremes: further to the various lockdowns linked to the health crisis, out-of-home sales fell by 30%, but those made via domestic channels rose by 1.5%, limiting the fall in volume in 2020 to just -2.6% compared with 2019.

## A TARGETED, OPTIMISTIC MESSAGE

It has to be said that neither the Wattwiller teams nor the Carola teams downed tools during this very strange year, in particular as regards communication.

Wattwiller, which recorded sales growth of +5% in 2020 and whose sales have risen by +22% since 2017 (despite the regulation of special offers ratified by the États généraux de l’alimentation (France’s National Food Conference) and applied the start of 2019), benefited from a particularly effective television campaign during the first spring lockdown and a message in the press and on digital media about the brand’s carbon neutrality and natural purity.

Carola, which traditionally records one quarter of its sales out of home, especially in the hospitality sector, was harder hit by the lockdowns and the obligation to introduce teleworking. The brand did, however, benefit from the general interest among consumers in organic and local products. In addition, a new campaign on

packaging was created, highlighting the brand’s local dimension (‘Fortement pétillante et carrément à l’Est’, ‘Où est-ce qu’on peut buller ici ?’ (Very sparkling and straight from the East’, ‘Where can you get bubbles here?’), as well as its commitments and positive actions in its preferred region. To give an example of this, during 2020 Carola again became a partner of the Strasbourg Racing Club and activation actions such as the ‘Carola Fraîch Tour’ or the ‘Bredede Challenge’ went ahead, albeit adapted to the circumstances of the health crisis.

For Carola, the year 2020 was also marked by the switch from PET packs to recycled plastic film and by the highly symbolic sale of its old Hôtel des Thermes, better known as Villa Carola, to the Town of Ribeauvillé.



## CARBON NEUTRALITY ACHIEVED

It should be noted that this message focusing on the local and natural aspects is based primarily on concrete facts. Spadel France undertook or continued several initiatives in the context of its corporate social responsibility (CSR). Carola and Wattwiller are among the first brands in France to have attained total carbon neutrality. The reduction in the carbon footprint was maintained on the sites and in the packaging in line with the Source of Change programme. Positive biodiversity actions were taken around the two sources. Meanwhile, particular attention was paid to guiding staff, ensuring their safety and overseeing their activities in the context of the health measures (working from home where possible, safety-aware behaviour and equipment on the sites, frequent communication, temporary layoffs without loss of salary, etc.).

For 2021, and in a Covid context that seems set to last for a large part of the year, Spadel France undertakes to maintain the growth of its two brands. In fact, the company is riding the wave of the favourable and significant trends in favour of local, healthy and natural products, not to mention the attention paid to brands committed to CSR. At the same time, it plans to continue the transformational Source of Change programme on packaging (in particular recycled plastic), the improvement of staff satisfaction and optimal operational performance in all departments.



## THE IMPOSING VILLA CAROLA CONVERTED INTO A CONGRESS CENTRE

In December 2020, Spadel France officially sold Villa Carola to the Town of Ribeauvillé. This superb building stretches across 530 m<sup>2</sup> above ground, divided among three levels, in addition to 140 m<sup>2</sup> underground, and boasts a garden covering about 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> that includes a tennis court. Built around 1890 as a hotel (the Hôtel de Carolabad, which had 30 rooms), it was converted into a hospital during the First World War before becoming the residence of the manager of Carola in 1918. Now, having been finally abandoned in the 1970s and stood empty since then, the premises will shortly undergo major and essential renovation work. The new owner is planning to convert the emblematic building into a centre that will host congresses, conferences and family events. In the deed of purchase, Spadel France and the Town of Ribeauvillé reached a specific agreement to preserve the impluvium.



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