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## The contribution of Spanish account planners to advertising effectiveness

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to establish the account planner's role and contribution in the creation of effective communication strategies for advertisers. Account Planning was born in 1968 in two advertising agencies in London, within the media and marketing context of that period. In the present circumstances, characterized by consumers' protagonism and the need of an integrated communication, the account planner has acquired a more prominent role as the protector of the consumer. The account planner works to assure that commercial communication is based on in-depth research about the consumers and their characteristics. Thus, account planners add value to advertisers' success because they are in charge of conducting correct brand positioning and effective communication strategies, focused on in-depth consumer knowledge.

These theoretical reflections are more relevant when applied to the empirical study of the contemporary situation of account planners working in Spain, where Account Planning is a recent discipline. It was in the early 1990s when the first advertising agencies adopted this function for the first time, however, in less than 20 years account planning has become a key department in commercial communication. The empirical study is based on a survey applied to professional of account planning working Spain.

**Keywords:** Account Planning; advertising; consumer; effectiveness; communications strategy; media planning.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. Account planner's role in achieving effective business communication. 3. Application to the Spanish reality. 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliography. 6. Notes.

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### 1. Introduction

Today advertisers demand advertising agencies a cost-effective communication, where efficiency is crucial and mistakes are not allowed. In this scenario, account planning helps advertising meet its objectives and, based on the premise that effectiveness is the alignment of objectives that always seek for a change in consumer behaviour, it is also the discipline that protects the consumer. In the words of Ramon Ollé,

"[...] Today only few professional doubt that planners add value to advertisers and their organizations, that we are the representatives of efficiency, an indispensable part of the process of reflection, and fewer and fewer are the companies that still think they can work without a planner" (Ollé, 2009:3).

Also authors like Kelley and Jugenheimer see advertising effectiveness as a main contribution of their work (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2006: VII). This idea is also reflected in several studies and perhaps the most important of them is the one made in 2003, at the University of Georgia, by Margaret Morrison and Eric Haley in which they asked 345 planners how they evaluated their work and how it should be assessed. These authors concluded that planners believe that the success of their work depends primarily on their relationship within the agency, but also, secondarily, on the effectiveness of the communication they develop. Therefore, the search for advertising effectiveness is the basis for the evaluation of their work (Morrison and Haley, 2003: 13-15).

For its part, the professional association of Account Planning in the UK [1], in a 1986 document which for the first time defined the discipline, emphasized the traditional evaluation criteria for advertising effectiveness as the primary way to measure the success of planners' work, which is the communication campaign itself (D'Souza, 1986). The later must have very clear objectives and the role of the planner is to guide the advertiser to get them. Basically, it is about establishing whether the consumers have noticed the brand that has tried to communicate with them, whether they have seen it and remembered it, whether they know the brand wants to establish a relationship with them, and the extent to what the message has managed to perform the action that was foreseen in the objectives (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2006:120). The media and advertising markets, and the consumer have all significantly evolved since the birth of Account Planning forty years ago [2], and accordingly the role of the planner has also changed in order to adapt to these changes (White, 2008: 22). Planners have always worked to get to know consumers, but now planners must adapt themselves even more to the consumers who have more power (Rudder, 2001: 26). This discipline is more important than ever because the development of the information age has increased the need for the integrated management of consumer information (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2006: 10) because the business challenge for

advertisers and agencies is to understand and address the needs of consumers (McIlrath, 2002: 17-18). Thus,

“Sending a coherent message based on a marketing and media strategy is increasingly necessary to achieve an effective communication in the current environment characterised by media fragmentation and consumers’ increasing power. Therefore, today, the competitive advantage of companies has as a core the fundamental understanding of the consumer. This profound knowledge should be the starting point in planning a coherent strategy to establish a long-term commitment between company and consumer” (Sánchez Blanco, 2009: 8).

Thus, in an integrated marketing environment, agencies are moving towards marketing and communication multidisciplinary environments. In this sense, the planner expands its scope by putting the consumer at the centre of marketing, which meets the needs of businesses and clients (Zambardino and Goodfellow, 2003: 433). The planners have great potential for the planning and management of Integrated Marketing Communication (Zambardino and Goodfellow, 2003: 424) that makes them leaders of the process of strategic integration, which is responsible for getting the best of the teams specialized in each communication tool (Lukas and Walker, 2008: 279). Planners’ deep understanding of consumers enables them to know where, and through what kind of communication, consumers can be effectively found.

Therefore, the account planner plays a crucial role in the process of achieving effective communication campaigns for advertisers due to four main reasons:

1. Today the centre of marketing communication is the consumer. With the continuous evolution and hybridization of the existing media channels the consumers have become the axis, the ones we must know and investigate in depth so that communication is effectively directed to them.
2. The account planner is the integrator of the different elements of marketing communications that enables the advertiser to send an integrated communication to the consumer because the planner is the one who knows the consumer in depth. We need to promote systems that manage consumer knowledge (McDonald and Wilson, 2002: 120) and Account Planning is the only systematization that has been developed and is being effective in business communication, through a strategic vision of the relationship between the brand, the media and the consumer (White 2004: 50).
3. Because of the development of the consumer and the media, we need to reach the consumer through different points of contact and to do so we need to know it in depth. Currently, companies require a profile that incorporates media planning and brand management (Zambardino and Goodfellow, 2003: 432), that is, a communication planning focused on the consumer. The planner is the one responsible for conducting global research on the current consumer.
4. Planners have evolved and expanded their scope of action, and they are no longer focused on conventional advertising. On the other hand, advertising agencies must change to have the consumer at its core.

The structure of this article begins with a review of the functions currently performed by the account planner to ensure effective business communications. This analysis applies these previous four points to the reality of Spanish account planners.

## **2. Account planner’s role in achieving effective business communication**

### **2.1. The account planner as an advocate of the central role of consumers in commercial communication**

Consumer knowledge and a marketing strategy led by an integrated communication is a competitive advantage for companies. This is because the new market is driven by consumer understanding and the development of communicative proposals that need to add value and be more efficient than those of the competition (Kitchen and Schultz, 2000: 18), because it is evident that putting the consumer at the centre of work is more effective (Humby, 2004: 119).

Since the 1990s the Integrated Marketing Communication has been developed to place the consumers at the centre and make sure that the different elements of marketing communication send consumers a coherent message and that the communication is efficient. This theory tries to combine, integrate, and create a synergy between the elements of communication. The novelty is the strategic integration to reach consumers and other audiences. Strategically oriented integrated communications can help the business move forward in the highly competitive world of the XXI Century (Kitchen, Brignell, Li, Spickett Jones, 2004: 20-28).

So therefore, media neutrality is increasingly important, and this means that the integrating element of commercial communication is no longer the media, as it was the case before especially with television that dominated all media plans, but the consumers, and that the media have to be useful to access the consumer effectively and at the same time, we must have in-depth consumer knowledge available. It is therefore about developing a holistic plan, through marketing functions, which define how the brand will communicate with consumers. Faced with media fragmentation, the ways to connect with consumers multiply and only an account planning of the mix of media will provide an effective communication with consumers (Crosier, Grant Gilmore, 2003: 4).

“Advances in information and communication technologies have incorporated new tools and forms of intermediation and interactivity that are reshaping the media space” (Campos Freire, 2008). In this sense, companies have to ensure

that consumers are involved in the marketing process through a dialogue that, thanks to this interactive technology, allows reaching each consumer cheaply and steadily during a long-term. This is how planners will try to get the loyalty of consumers (Godin, 2000: 12-13). But to develop actions oriented to consumers, the first step is to take care of the needs to connect with them and differentiate the company/brand from the competition (Fauconnier, 2006: 37). Therefore, in this context is important to thoroughly research on consumers and get a 360-degree vision of them. This is about understanding consumers completely in order to know what relationship they have with the brand, what are their interests, preferences and buying habits, and develop an effective market segmentation to reach the target audiences (Yeshin, 1998: 11).

Changes in the media and consumer environments lead us to work towards a holistic communication, which must consider all contacts that consumers have with brands before making a plan. The budget decisions are made after analyzing the ROI of each medium. In the past it was enough only to see the return of the mass media but today the variety of contacts is much broader. These days it is essential to have insights of all contacts of the brand with consumers, based on in-depth research. This way, the budget can be established in an effective manner (Harrison, 2008: 26) and advertisers can profit.

Thus, the account planner enters in the media process and analyses the visible tendencies (Connolly, 2008: 37), to get to know the consumer in all areas, both in attitudes towards certain categories or brands, and regarding the ways they use their time and the other things of their lives that get their attention (Morgan, 2002).

Understanding consumers' processes is fundamental to communication planning because it is vital to design communication that intercepts people in the critical moments of decision. These considerations have led to the increase of direct research, based on the observation of consumer behaviour, both within the stores (accompanied shopping) and their homes and communities (ethnography). Although they do not reveal the mindset of consumers, they get close to the reality of people in the use of brands and media (White, 2004: 39).

However, the planner is the professional engaged in researching the consumer and making it stay at the centre of the process of business communication.

## **2.2. Planners' role in communications strategy development**

Of the two schools that created the discipline in 1968, the most relevant now is the school more focused on the strategy that went beyond the advertising barriers. This view argues that it is necessary that the media and marketing departments work together to better serve customers since both of their strategies are focused on the consumer. This position was put into practice at the agency J. Walter Thompson by Stephen King, who in this sense seems to be the professional who set the clear precedents for the ideas of Integrated Marketing Communication.

On the one hand, in 1988 this professional spoke of the growing complexity of marketing in the 1990s. He mentioned that there would be more services, that consumers would demand a wider variety of products and services, and that it would be more necessary to communicate with them, that the media would be fragmented, and that there would be more opportunities for one-to-one interactive marketing. In this environment, it would be more difficult to coordinate everything and a company would have to communicate with only one voice. Thus, all aspects of its brand would be unified in order to propose a consistent and unique brand personality, beyond the mere coordination (King, 1988: 66). On the other hand, this vision had already been promoted before, because in 1973 King referred to the successful brands as those meeting these three characteristics:

1. Are relevant to the needs, desires and tastes of consumers. The branding has to be in the hands of people whose main focus is on the consumer.
2. Exhibit a coherent totality: all brand elements are interrelated. To coordinate this there should be one person responsible for ensuring the totality, and a team that leads the brand's project, rather than a division of responsibilities in departments.
3. Promotes a unique blend that appeals to the senses, reason and emotions and is unique in the minds of consumers (King, 1973: 24-31).

These ideas are the essence of integration and of a good communication strategy.

The role of the planner is no longer focused only on improving creativity, which is a subject expanded by Pollitt, the other precursor of the discipline, although it remains important because agencies must demonstrate their creative value. Now, the account planner must adapt to the current environment. In particular, the planner works on the analysis of market and consumers, on the development of advertising and branding, on the evaluation, and on the identification of the possibilities of every discipline of marketing communications in a strategic manner (Baskin and Pickton, 2003: 421).

## **2.3. Communication Planner: brand and media planning**

In his configuration of the account planner as the combination of the skills from both the marketing and media planning departments, King believed that a team would be better balanced and would produce better results. Bond and Kirshenbaum even suggested a system called "Account and Media Planning" to position the media in the first place (Bond and Kirshenbaum, 1998: 167) because, although the decisions about the media are often taken at the end of the

creative process, King decided they should be done first, integrated with market and consumer analysis. He wanted to emphasize that the media planning and advertising planning is the same work, the same process designed to achieve the best communication planning (Rimini, 2007: 87).

In this sense, account planners are in charge of building and maintaining brand equity through a communication that is coherent with the brand's values. The account planner works so that the company can be differentiated from its competitors and the only way to achieve so now is through branding (Crosier, Grant, Gilmore, 2003: 4). They have always taken care of the brands, but nowadays account planners acquire more importance because it is harder to reach consumers (Gonsalves, J., Goodlad, N., Sinnock, M., Murray-Burton, G., Murphy, G., 2008: 20). In addition, the proliferation of brands, the media fragmentation, the increasing competition, the increasing costs of introducing new products, and an increased accountability for profitability have made companies to notice more the value of brands (Keller, 1998: 31-34). Account Planning works to achieve brand positioning and therefore, is the discipline best suited to unite all the elements of the brand's communication in its positioning.

As the consumer advocate, the account planner is involved in all the facets of the brand strategy and its reflection in marketing communication. Thus, transferring the positioning strategy to the advertising and media strategy is vital for the brand (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2006: 3).

Many planners have called themselves brand guardians (Hackley, 2003: 452) because they help the company to cultivate its brand personality, which should be understood within and outside the company because it is a differentiating value (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2006: 64). In this sense, King had already spoken about brand planners in 1988.

Following Ollé, we have gone from the unique selling point to branding because "managing a brand nowadays is being able to link a series of meanings and values to our offer" (Ollé, 2005: 122). The USP is the only-rational concept and branding unites it with the emotional values of the brand. In fact, today brands increasingly differ less and less from each other (*The Commoditization of Brands and Its Implications for Marketers*, 2008) and thus is necessary to have a branding strategy so that the company "has a very clear appealing power, a set of relevant and indisputable meanings that gain a space not only in the head but also in the hearts of our consumers" (Ollé, 2005: 124). In this sense, in order to gain the attention of consumers, brands have to engage them through actions based on experience (Gonsalves, J., Goodlad, N., Sinnock, M., Murray-Burton, G., Murphy, G., 2008: 20). A strong brand has to inform, seduce and differentiate itself, and to achieve this it requires a good brand manager, who is the account planner (Ollé, 2005: 124-125).

In short, in a mature market where brands can be hardly differentiated from each other, the planner has an important task. As Etxebarria points out:

The planner is a specialist in the brand and its development, and seeks new strategies to delineate the work of communication in a logical line with the product and the company, and with criteria of temporal continuity. On the other hand, the planner takes a holistic view of communication and a conception of agency work aimed at achieving the objectives demanded by the customer. In all this work, the planner makes decisions on important aspects such as product or brand positioning, the use and coordination of communication techniques, and always in collaboration with the advertiser and the agency's account department (Etxebarria 2005: 118-119).

Account Planning was created with the purpose of helping to build powerful brands for the benefit of the customer's business. Today, if these roots are not forgotten, the discipline will be a driving force of modern marketing (Murphy, 2008: 21).

#### **2.4. The varied disciplines where the planner performs its work**

In 2008 Account Planning celebrated forty years of existence, during which it has become a function that exists not only in advertising agencies but also in the marketing departments of the advertisers, in direct marketing agencies, in design, branding and public relations consultancies, media agencies, etc. (Baskin, 2008: 39). In the last ten years, the majority of the most important agencies specialized in direct marketing, sales promotion or design and consultancy (White, 2008: 23) have begun to have a planning department or provide its services directly (Griffiths, 2002: 45).

The account planner works to create a great idea that can lead the brand strategy through all forms of communication, externally for consumers and internally for employees (Ryan and Montague 2007: 143). By participating in other areas besides advertising, planners add value differently because they are specialized. Griffiths identifies six types of planners in charge of some aspects in particular:

1. In charge of the brand: In charge of tasks related to the reputation of the brand.
2. In charge of the close relationship to consumers: they have to worry about getting consumers involved with the brand, within an environment where the first thing to get is their attention.
3. Interactive Planners: they acquire functions, thanks to technological developments, in interactive communication.
4. In charge of the channels: they perform the analysis of the media and communication channels to establish relationships with consumers. Here we must highlight the possibilities offered by social networks.
5. In charge of the data: effective use of CRM and other databases.
6. In charge of the content: they have a new role thanks to consumers spending so much time creating and consuming user generated content, and marketers should consider how to take advantage of it

(Griffiths, 2008: 24).

After this theoretical overview highlighting the significant role of the account planner as the protagonist of the development of an effective consumer-oriented communication strategy, this article will analyse how the initial four points are concretized in the Spanish professional reality in order to establish whether the Spanish account planners perform that role in the process of developing effective communication campaigns for advertisers.

### 3. Application to the Spanish case

#### 3.1. Universe and sample

The universe under study was all planners working in Spain. All the information was facilitated by the Account Planning Association of Spain (hence APAS), but it should be noted that there is no official census about the number of professionals in this field. Furthermore, this analysis faced another difficulty because this discipline under study is difficult to define due to, among others, these circumstances:

1. There are agencies that exercise the functions of account planning from other departments but without calling it so. This can occur because, at the end, what matters is that the philosophy is applied, that the abovementioned tasks are carried out, and that consumer interests are watched over, without taking into account only the department that performs such activities. However, this does not prevent us from stressing that the figure of the planner adds significant benefits to advertisers agencies and other companies where they are beginning to work, and that their increasing evolution, has been and continues to be a recognition to their work.
2. There are planners who work on a freelance basis [3].
3. As we have seen, there are other companies that are increasingly hiring planners, not just conventional advertising agencies, but also non-conventional media agencies, brand consultant agencies, media agencies, etc.

The APAS, established in 2006 and currently with approximately 150 members, emphasises that not all planners are active and that there is a large group of professionals from agencies (the Account and Creativity Department), academics, students and other professionals that have not yet found work as a planner. In this sense, it is necessary to stress that, therefore, the number of planners that constituted the object of study was lower, but in contrast the study also sought to reach others that were not partners. Finally, 62 responses were received, 50 were members of the association and 12 were not, and thus at least over a third of the members were represented in the study. Of these, 37 had a position of responsibility within the discipline (chief Account Planning officers) and 25 were part of the department (they were planners). This finding is interesting because the examination of results highlights the most representative differences among these profiles.

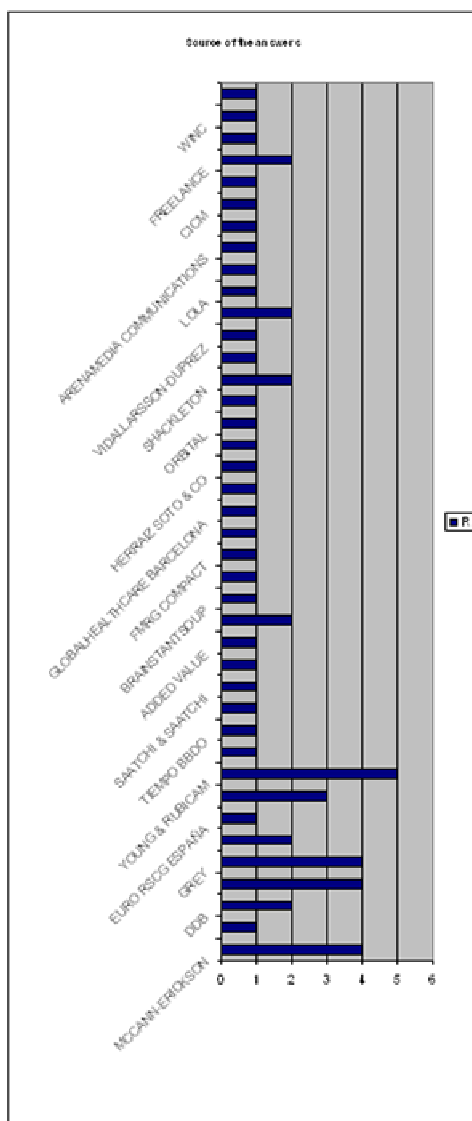
The ranking of agencies by managed investments, performed annually by the Infoadex [4], shows that of the top 16 agencies, 14 have responded, which corresponds to 87.5% of the most important advertising agencies in Spain, and from this data we can draw the first interesting conclusion: the best Spanish agencies have account planners.

On the other hand, there has been a wide representation of other smaller advertising agencies that also provide very important conclusions. In addition, the study has been enriched with the opinions of three brand or marketing consulting firms (Added Value, Futurebrand and WINC), four media agencies (CIMC, Initiative, Arena Media Communications and Carat/Aegis Group), a person responsible of an advertiser's marketing and communication, and two freelancers.

In this way, the theoretical idea is concretized because nowadays the variety of places where the planner can work is growing since it has been specializing in new disciplines. It is sensed that this trend grows, since the study has the presence of large and small advertising agencies, media agencies, brand and communications consulting firms, a representative of an advertisers' marketing department, freelance planners, a point of sale marketing agency, interactive agencies, etc.

The following table shows the companies that participated in the study:

Graph 1



Source: own calculations using data from the study.

### 3.2. Methodology: survey

Account Planning is a fairly recent discipline in Spain [5] and there is no analysis of its situation. In the international context, there has been a survey [6] but it was based on functional aspects such as educational level and salaries, that are irrelevant issues for this study, which aimed to provide a reflection on the work of the planner in an environment dominated by a “powerful” consumer, a media revolution, and the demands of communication integration to achieve efficiency. And there has not been an approach similar to this study.

Thus, since the study was aimed to characterise the state of discipline it was decided that the best way to achieve so was by surveying a large number of planners. Therefore a self-administered questionnaire survey was chosen as methodology (Pedret, Sagnier and Camp, 2000: 196). The questionnaire was developed over two months and passed through various filters and adjustments of experienced professors. Before sending it to the professionals, the questionnaire was tested by several planners whose contributions improved the questionnaire in terms of form and content. There were several steps to access the sample. The most important was to obtain the support and collaboration of the APAS, whose secretary mailed the questionnaire to all the partners.

Secondly, the study used a probabilistic method called snowball sampling, which as Fernández Nogales explains:

“Consists in requesting participants of one’s own sample to identify other possible new elements belonging to the target group to be part of the sample. This procedure is appropriate for highly specialized and small populations that are difficult to identify” (Fernandez Nogales, 1999: 131).

After having made these clarifications on the methodology, now let’s examine the relevant data related to the planner’s

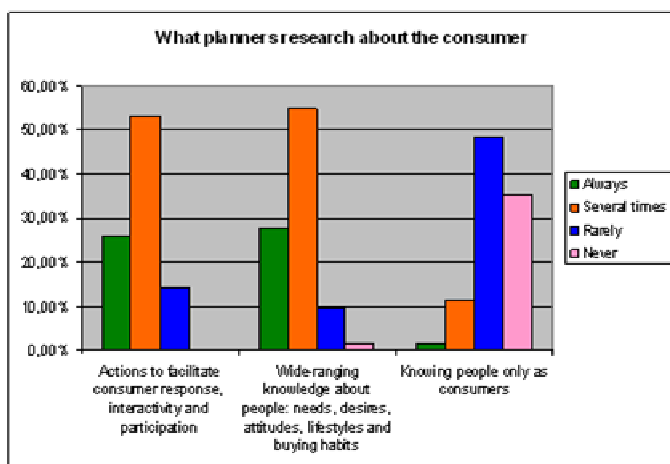
role in achieving communication effectiveness along these variables, which have been developed theoretically:

- Wide-ranging research on the consumer.
- Role in the communication strategy.
- Participation in decisions about media planning.

### 3.2.1. What planners research about the consumer

If consumers are the centres of marketing today, the planner must know them in depth. The following graph shows what planners research about the consumer [7], and highlights that most of them work to get to know the consumer fully as a person, not just as consumers of a product or a specific brand.

Graph 2



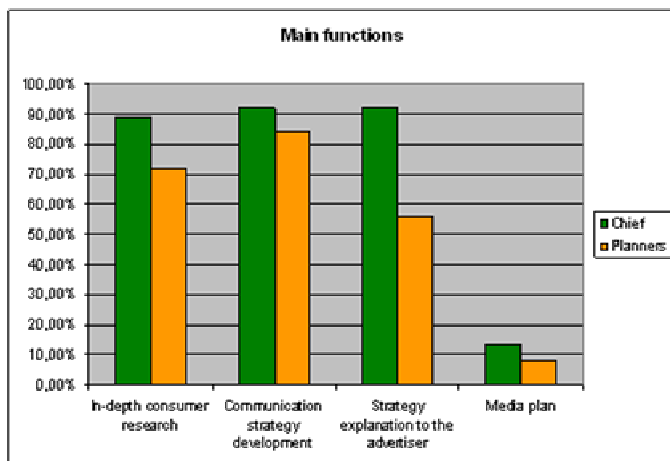
Source: own calculations using data from the study.

### 3.2.2. Planners' role in the communication strategy

The relationship of the Spanish account planner with the communication strategy can be gathered when analyzing the answers given by professionals to questions asking what their roles and contributions within their companies.

Firstly, the questionnaire asked planners the extent to what they performed the following activities in their daily work [8]. To highlight the opinions of the two types of planners (in chief positions and simply planners) we made a comparison between chief planners and planners, whose share is 37 managers and 25 planners. Graph 3 highlights their roles in the development of communications strategies and here it is interesting to note that the two types of planners agreed on the importance of their tasks.

Graph 3



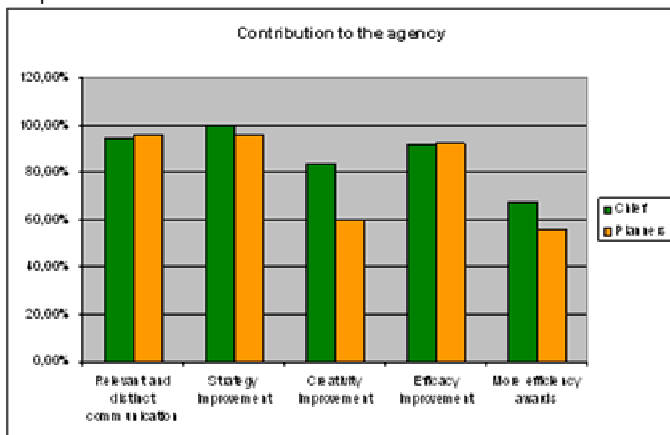
Source: own calculations using data from the study.

To strengthen the results about their functions, planners were asked to state what they believe the contribution of their

work was [9].

Graph 4 lists the options and results. As in the previous section, we compare the opinions of planners with and without chief positions.

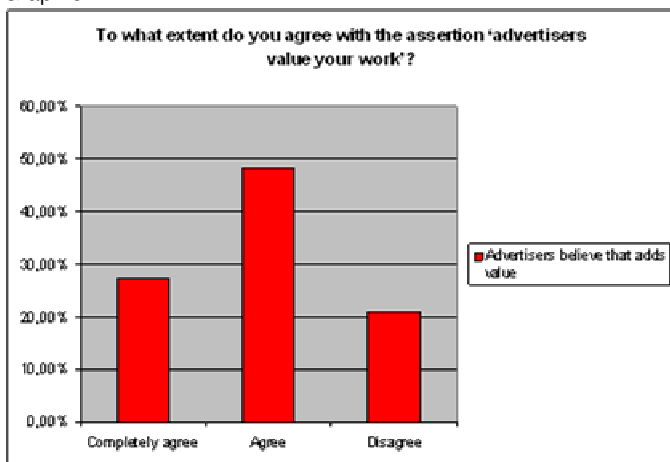
Graph 4



Source: own calculations using data from the study.

In this sense, of all results exposed above it is interesting to highlight that the planners currently working in Spain are indeed involved, and in an outstanding manner, in the development of the communication strategy that as we have seen is focused on in-depth consumer research and helps the advertiser to carry out an effective communication (see the percentage of planners who answered "Efficacy improvement"). They were also asked if they believed advertisers valued their work [10] and, as we can see in graph 5, they do believe so.

Graph 5



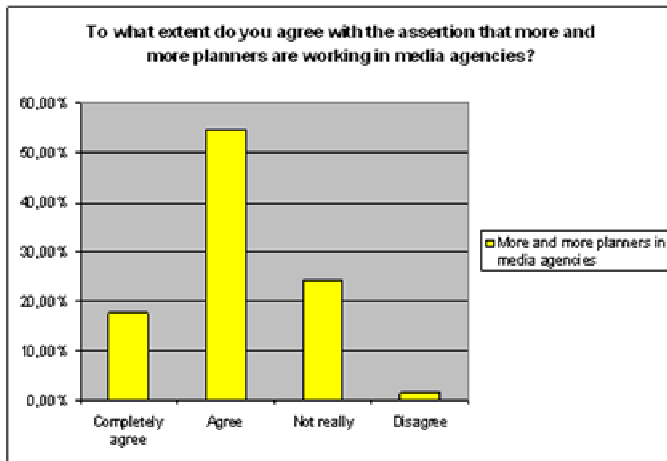
Source: own calculations using data from the study.

### 3.2.3. Participation in decisions about media planning

According to their answers about functions, planners do not have much responsibility in relation to media planning. Moreover, graph 6 highlights their view that there are more and more planners in media agencies, which is an interesting idea that strengthens the theoretical hypothesis raised before [11].

Graph 6





Source: own calculations using data from the study.

#### 4. Conclusions

As a summary we can highlight six key findings:

- The work of the account planners today involves, necessarily, ensuring advertisers' effective communication because thanks to their function as consumer advocates they work to get to know consumers deeply and guide the brand to connect with those consumers that, at present, are more powerful and more difficult to find.
- In the day to day work, account planners operating in Spain are responsible, above all, for the development of communications strategies and undertaking in-depth consumer research. Thus, we understand that, without underestimating their participation and collaboration in the creative work, the strategic vision prevails because they are also integrated in the decision-making about the communication strategy.
- Planners' involvement in media planning is little. However, it seems that they do feel that their work, the communication strategy based on consumer knowledge, and the media planning are very similar and related because there is an increasing number of planners at media agencies and that the role of the planner makes sense in media agencies. This is understandable because it is the same consumer they need to know in order to orient a communication strategy according to consumer particularities, and it is the same consumer they need to find so that the campaign connects with it at any point of contact the brand has with people.
- Regarding the contribution of planners' work, there are aspects importantly related to achieving effective communication (improve the strategy, produce a relevant and distinct communication and contribute to a more efficient communication) and to consumer knowledge integration in the agencies and in the advertisers, which helps improving and making more efficient their work.
- The importance and evolution of Spanish account planners' work has led to the expansion of their presence across a wide range of businesses, not just advertising agencies, which is the area that originated the discipline.
- Based on the previous study, it is clear that today the role of the account planner increasingly acquires more relevance because it adds an important value to advertisers, which operate in an environment that demands the search for communication efficiency and profitability, which is subsequently based on a deep understanding of the consumer.

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## 6. Notes

[1] Account Planning was born in London in 1968 and *Account Planning Group UK* (APG UK), established in 1979, is the first professional Account Planning association and the first reference for the dissemination of the discipline.

[2] The discipline was born in two London agencies in 1968: in J. Walter Thompson with Stephen King and in Boase Massimmi Pollitt with Stanley Pollitt.

[3] In fact, although it is not very representative, two freelance planners answered the questionnaire.

[4] Published by *Anuncios* on 28 September, 2008. Available at <http://www.anuncios.com/inversion-publicitaria/mas-anuncios/1028854009501/media-planning-mccann-erickson.1.html> (Consultation date: 09/29/1908).

[5] As Ollé points out: "The massive introduction of planners in the agencies has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Over time, what began as a function performed by a single person in the agency has become a team's work. In this sense, agencies have gradually been trusting the planning, driven by the quest for efficiency and the need for more sophisticated communication strategies for their clients. At present, most of the top 10 agencies have Account Planning departments (Ollé, 2005: 116).

[6] It has been undertaken over the past four years by Heather LeFevre, a planner from Hungary. The last results form 2009 can be consulted online at: <http://royalsocietyofaccountplanning.blogspot.com/2009/08/heather-lefevres-yearly-planning-survey.html> (4 November, 2009).

[7] The question was: "With what frequency do you implement the following? Always, many times, few times, never".

1. Looking for consumers in the possibilities offered by new technologies such as blogs, social networks, mobile phones, video games, because they control these technologies.
2. I try to specialise in different elements of marketing (direct marketing, interactive marketing, sales promotion, etc.) to provide an integrated service to the advertiser.
3. In the agencies we are innovating ways to attract the attention of the current consumer.
4. I aim to surprise the consumer in a complex media environment through the use of new tools such as guerrilla or

viral marketing.

5. My work is aimed to turn consumers into prescribers of the brand.
6. I carry out actions that facilitate consumers' response, interactivity and active participation.
7. I work to understand people completely by examining all the points of influence of the brand in their lives, needs, desires, attitudes, lifestyles, and buying habits.
8. I only need to understand people as consumers of specific products.
9. I try to understand consumers individually and offer to them personalized actions to keep a long-lasting relationship with them. Could you explain how you do this? Specify.

[8] The question was: "To what extent do you perform the following tasks in your daily work? Very frequently, enough, little or nothing". I conduct in-depth consumer research.

- I develop the communication strategy for the advertiser.
- I am responsible for communicating the strategy to advertisers.
- I design the media plan.
- I conduct quantitative research.
- I conduct qualitative research.
- I collaborate with the creative team to enhance their creativity with my research.
- I perform content, elements, and websites management functions.
- I collaborate on integrated campaigns and contribute in the interactive marketing.

[9] The question was: "Regarding the contribution of your work to the agency, to what extent do you believe you do the following? Very much, somewhat, little or nothing":

- I help developing a relevant and distinct communication.
- I improve the strategy.
- I enhance creativity.
- I improve the effectiveness of campaigns.
- I help the agency to be more involved with the consumer.
- I help the agency to be more united.
- I am the base to provide better service to advertisers.
- I make sure a procedure will be followed to get in consumers' minds.
- I attract new customers.
- I make my agency has more creative awards.
- I help my agency to get more efficiency awards.
- I integrate consumer knowledge in the work of advertisers.
- I integrate consumer knowledge in the work of the entire agency.

[10] The question was: "To what extent do you agree with these statements? Very much, to some extent, little or nothing".

- Account Planning is an established discipline in advertising.
- Advertisers do not appreciate being offered the service of Account Planning.
- Advertisers believe Account Planning adds value.

[11] The question was: "To what extent do you agree with these statements? Very much, to some extent, little or nothing".

- I should be responsible for media planning, but this is done by the media agencies.
- The work of the planner makes sense in the media agencies because they are the ones that do the most consumer research.
- The media are neutral, equal, what matters is reaching the consumer.
- The media are simple tools for reaching consumers.
- There is an increasing number of planners in media agencies.

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