

Skills and professional profile of community managers in the media: commitment to Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

Competencias y perfil profesional de los gestores de medios sociales en los medios de comunicación: apuesta por la automatización robótica de procesos (RPA)

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RESUMEN

Introducción: los medios sociales, en concreto las redes y las aplicaciones de mensajería instantánea, se han convertido en un canal habitual para que los medios de comunicación distribuyan noticias. **Metodología:** después de comprobar las presencias en este tipo de plataformas de las televisiones, las radios, los periódicos y los diarios digitales más consumidos en España (n = 35), se utilizaron técnicas cualitativas y cuantitativas para examinar el perfil de los profesionales encargados de la gestión de redes y aplicaciones sociales en esos medios de comunicación, así como para comprobar, a partir de una relación elaborada mediante revisión de literatura científica, cuáles son las competencias disciplinares, profesionales, académicas y específicas que los profesionales consideran más necesarias para desarrollar su actividad. **Resultados:** los resultados confirman preferencia por las redes sociales frente a las aplicaciones de mensajería instantánea para la distribución de contenidos, que *community manager* es la denominación más común para referirse a los gestores de medios sociales, que todos ellos cuentan con formación relacionada con Comunicación y que las competencias a las que conceden mayor importancia son las específicas y profesionales. **Discusión y conclusiones:** la competencia más valorada por los profesionales es el dominio de los medios sociales, una competencia específica de este perfil, pero se detecta que la segunda más importante resulta la utilización de herramientas y mecanismos de automatización para la gestión de redes, lo que pone de manifiesto la convivencia en las redacciones del talento humano con tecnologías de automatización de procesos (RPA).

PALABRAS CLAVE: medios sociales; tecnología; *community manager*; perfil profesional; competencias; automatización; robótica.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Social media, specifically networks and instant messaging applications, have become a common channel for the media to distribute news. **Methodology:** after verifying the presences in this type of platforms of the most consumed televisions, radios, newspapers and digital newspapers in Spain (N = 35), qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to examine the profile of the professionals in charge of the management of social networks and applications in those media, as well as to check, from a report prepared by reviewing scientific literature, what are the disciplinary, professional, academic and specific competencies that professionals consider most necessary to develop their activity. **Results:** the results confirm preference for social networks over instant messaging applications for content distribution; community manager is the most common name to refer to social media managers and all of whom have studies in Communication; and the competencies to which they attach the greatest importance are the specific and professional ones. **Discussion and conclusions:** the competence most valued by professionals is the mastery of social media, a specific competence of this profile, but it is detected that the second most important is the use of tools and automation mechanisms for network management, which highlights the coexistence of human talent with robotic process automation (RPA) technologies in the newsrooms.

KEYWORDS: Social media; technology; community manager; professional profile; skills; automation; robotics.

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1. Introduction. 2. Skills to social media management. 3. Objectives and hypothesis. 4. Methodology. 5. Sample. 6. Results. 7. Discussion and conclusions. 8. References.

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introducción

Technology has changed the ways of producing and distributing information to the point that sometimes it is the technologies themselves that manage the creation of news (Lewis & Westlund, 2015). As new work routines and new content distribution platforms (Ufarte, 2019) have been incorporated into the communicative ecosystem, new professional profiles (García-Santamaría & Carretero, 2014) trained with new skills and attitudes have also become necessary.

Since its popularization in Spain in the mid-2010s, the impact of social media, initially of social networks and later also of instant messaging apps, has been generating job opportunities related to web 2.0 and real-time web (Sánchez & Méndez, 2013) due to the direct impact of the monetization of the Internet value chain (content, online services, enabling technologies, connectivity, and the user interface) (Pérez, 2011). Even earlier, in 2008, it was warned that traditional information professionals were on the way to extinction because their tasks had been taken over by other profiles or because their function had ceased to be necessary due to changes in routines (Scolari et al., 2008).

Professional profiles in the field of communication are forced to be constantly recycled to meet the needs of audiences made up of increasingly more digital natives, more specialized information, diverse cultures in a globalized world (Martín-Antoranz et al., 2019), and with risks of reproducing hoaxes (Román San Miguel et al., 2022). Since the assumption of versatility in newsrooms as an essential factor in the exercise of the profession (Salaverría & Avilés, 2008; Salaverría et al., 2010), new technologies and the consolidation of new news distribution channels, especially social media (Martínez-Sanz & Arribas-Urrutia, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020), have been stimulating the incorporation into newsrooms of different professional profiles, now fully consolidated (see table 1). The emergence of these profiles covers three fields of knowledge: (1) telecommunications, (2) systems engineering and computing, and (3) the communicative dimension itself linked to the generation of content (Cárdenas, 2017; Ortiz et al., 2021) developing new types of culture (Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2007).

Table 1. New professional profiles fully consolidated in the newsrooms

New professional profile	Other names	Functions
Versatile journalist	Journalist/ multimedia writer or multitasker	Ability to develop different languages for different media.
Community manager	Digital Reputation Manager/Feedback Manager	Manage contact with the audience and create online content for it.
Content manager	Content curator/content manager/content editor/research editor/web content editor	Responsible for managing all digital information (social networks, web, videos, etc.).
Social media manager	Social media strategist/social media editor	Responsible for coordinating the entire social media strategy.
Search engine optimization (SEO)	SEO Technician	Optimization of web pages to achieve a greater reach of the online audience.
Interactive designer	Graphic Designer/Web Designer/Information Architect	Present information in a more visual, interactive, and simple way.

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Marques-Hayasaki et al. (2016).

In another research carried out three years later by Sánchez-García and his team (2019), three of the profiles identified by Marques-Hayasaki et al. (2016) were once again acknowledged as predominant journalistic profiles (community manager, versatile journalist, and content manager) and data journalists are added (see table 2). It is now discovered that the rest of the emerging profiles (social media manager, SEO manager, and interactive designer) are not yet predominant in newsrooms.

Table 2. Academically and professionally accepted journalistic profiles

Predominant emerging profiles		Not predominant emerging profiles	
Community manager	Professional who mediates between the organization and the user in social media. It focuses on the management and dynamization of the social network channels of a media outlet or office to achieve the link between the public and the brand.	Interaction designer	They carry out creative and design work on interactive documentaries (webdoc) and generate emerging profiles in gamification and e-reputation.
Multimedia journalist	Versatile journalist capable of producing content for different media, platforms, and formats. They have multiple multimedia and digital skills and integrate into multidisciplinary teams that assume complementary functions.	Head of corporate reputation or chief reputation officer (CRO)	Directs the communication strategy and brand image.
Data journalist	A journalist who manages databases to convert them into information that explains realities using their own multimedia narratives.	Traffic analyst or social media strategist/analyst	Analyzes market trends in social media, collects quantitative and qualitative data from Internet users, interprets them, and translates them into reports for strategic decision making.

Content editor	A journalist who finds, organizes, filters, presents, and shares digital information focused on a thematic area that gives meaning and adds its own value to a media outlet or a brand.	Expert in web positioning/search engine optimization (SEO)	It is responsible for ensuring that a webspace appears in the first positions within the results of a search engine.
		Digital documentalist	Hybrid profile that is a journalist or collaborates with journalists to manage the documentary quality of information, which reinforces the verification and transparency of the information.
		Blog manager or chief blogging officer (CBO)	Responsible for creating, maintaining, and managing a corporate blog.
		Usability expert	It acts as a filter between the engineer or web developer and the user to include elements of multimedia functionality.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Sánchez-García et al. (2019).

Community manager, therefore, continues to be the most common denomination to refer to the professional in charge of managing social media. Its functions lie in listening to the audience, researching and monitoring through online dialogue, assessing all kinds of opinions, studying and analyzing the reputation of the competition, actively participating in the social network, and creating content (Sixto, 2018). However, in the review of the academic literature (see table 3) other profiles are located that, although they do not exclusively focus on social network management, can also develop part of their activity on this type of platform or whose functions can be partially assumed by community managers.

Table 3. Professional profiles that develop their activity in social networks

	Professional profiles	Bibliographic references
1	Community manager	Marques-Hayasaki, Roca-Cuberes & Singla (2016); Cárdenas (2017); Sánchez-García <i>et al.</i> (2019); Pérez & Micó (2020)
2	Multimedia/multitasking/multi-skilled journalist/cyberjournalist	Marques-Hayasaki, Roca-Cuberes & Singla (2016); Sánchez-García <i>et al.</i> (2019); Calvo (2019)
3	Mobile journalist	Fernández (2019); Pérez & Micó (2020)
4	Fact-checker	Ufarte & Manfredi (2019)
5	Social media manager	Marques-Hayasaki, Roca-Cuberes & Singla (2016); Cárdenas (2017); Pérez & Micó (2020)
6	Narrative specialist	Pérez & Micó (2020)
7	SEO Technician	Marques-Hayasaki, Roca-Cuberes & Singla (2016); Cárdenas (2017); Sánchez-García <i>et al.</i> (2019); Pérez & Micó (2020)
8	Chief of audiences	Calvo, 2019; Pérez & Micó (2020)
9	Data analyst	Cárdenas (2017); Pérez & Micó (2020)

Source: Own elaboration.

Journalistic versatility reaches its maximum expression in the management of social media. Whoever is in charge of this task encompasses functions of the multimedia journalist because they know how to tell stories rigorously and with the ability to connect with the audience, they are interested in te-

chnology and are very agile in the production of content (Calvo, 2019), but, also, know how to write for digital news formats and has knowledge of video and audio editing (Caminero & Sánchez-García, 2018). Community managers are also mobile journalists (Salzmann et al., 2021) because they are highly trained to produce multimedia content with a phone and with apps without underestimating the accuracy of the information since one of their uses is also that of a tutorial (Barrientos-Báez, et al., 2017). Hence, the person in charge of social media must also act, in part, not only as a specialist but also as a fact-checker since it is precisely on social networks where hoaxes and misinformation spread more easily, especially through Twitter and Facebook (Vizoso et al., 2018).

Telling stories on networks also implies being a specialist in narratives, especially in transmedia (Larondo, 2020; Rampazzo & Peret, 2017), to be able to adapt the story and capture the attention of the community of followers (Cantero de Julián et al., 2020). This implies analyzing the behavior of users both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view (Pérez & Micó, 2020), for which skills in organic positioning and a direct relationship with the SEO technician are required to guarantee that the information is easily indexable by search engines (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). Although it is necessary for community managers to assume certain SEO notions, the technical specificities transcend their competencies since the SEO expert advises the editors and the community managers about the optimization of content, reviews the publications so that they are optimized, and discovers business opportunities in the form of new services (Lopezosa et al., 2020). It is evident that the main objective of the community manager is to maintain a stable connection between the medium and its community and, therefore, it also acts as an audience manager (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018) who detects behavioral trends to increase the size of the community, moderates and encourages participation, and promotes subscriptions. In recent years, the profile of the community manager has been increasingly related to digital marketing tasks, customer service, and influencer management (Mañas-Viniegra & Jiménez-Gómez, 2019) and with the new way of carrying out public relations campaigns (Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2020).

The community manager should execute the strategy previously designed by the social media manager (Sixto, 2018), although, as can be seen from the literature review, this reality seems to continue to be a utopia in the media. As both professional figures consolidate, a commitment should be made to differentiate between who designs the strategic plan for digital media and controls the strategy from analysis and research, and who materializes that strategy in the newsroom. Although it is confirmed that the social media manager is a profile that is already fully integrated into news companies, no previous research has been found that has studied the skills of this professional profile in the media and that a priori seems to act as multimedia and versatile journalist but whose functions are not limited to the production of content but, above all, to its distribution and exploitation.

On the other hand, the use of artificial intelligence in the different phases of news production is already a common practice among the most prestigious international media (Marconi, 2020; Newman, 2019) and it has already been proven that its use facilitates the work of journalists, although it always requires editorial supervision (Tejedor-Calvo et al., 2021). However, there are no studies that specifically analyze how the automatic generation of journalistic texts for digital media, especially for social media, affects the work routines of community managers. Consequently, in this work we identify what type of professional profile is managing social media in the main Spanish media; we propose a list of disciplinary, professional, academic, and specific skills required for this type of profile; we check to what extent they are acquired by professionals, and we also research the possible incidence of artificial intelligence in the automation of content for social networks. The research allows, therefore, to obtain an x-ray of social media management in Spain in terms of professional skills and routines. The results are structured in three sections: (a) presence of the media in social media, (b) description of the professional profile in charge of managing social media, and (c) necessary skills for this new professional profile.

2. Social media management skills

Managing social media in a media outlet necessarily involves skills unknown until recently. *The White Book on Communication Degrees* published by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) in 2005 and currently in force, establishes that information and communication professionals must have the following skills: (1) ability and skill to express oneself with fluency and communicative effectiveness; (2) ability to read and analyze specialized texts and documents; (3) abi-

lity to collect, organize, analyze, and process information; (4) ability and skill to search, select, and prioritize any type of source or document; (5) ability to understand standard format news production in English; (6) ability and dexterity to communicate with the specific language of all traditional and new media; (7) ability and skill to present reasoned ideas; (8) ability and skill to use computer systems and resources; (9) ability to use technologies and techniques in news and communication; (10) ability and dexterity to perform basic journalistic tasks; (11) ability to experiment and innovate through knowledge and use of applied techniques and methods; (12) ability to conceive, plan, and carry out innovative communication projects; (13) understanding of data and mathematical operations performed and currently used in the media; (14) ability and skill to design formal and aesthetic details; and (15) basic ability to communicate in other neighboring languages.

All the skills indicated by ANECA are still necessary for any professional, also for those who manage social media but, in this case, technology has modified the ways of searching for information and constructing the message, and has substantially expanded the channels of presentation and dissemination, so the journalist is asked for talent and good humanistic training but also technological skills (López-García et al., 2017) such as, for example, continuously evaluating commercial and technical associations to ensure that they respond to the best interest of the organization (Thurman, 2015), to be aware of the social network, interact with social, technological, and educational networks, and engage in critical consumption (McArthur, 2016).

Cruz (2020) explains that the comprehensive definition of a professional profile is made up of specialized cognitive skills (specialized scientific or academic training, constitutive knowledge, work procedures, and procedures for gestation and obtaining knowledge), personal and social skills (development of autonomous, personal, and labor management and relationship with others), ethical competencies (conscience, values, criteria, and actions of a professional), and meta-competencies (development of activities related to the metaknowledge of a task, that is, what is learned from the resolution of certain problems and labor dynamics). By specifically analyzing the skills of communication professionals, Ventura et al. (2018) identified four groups of competencies based on those established in the *White Book* (2005): (1) disciplinary, (2) professional, (3) academic, and (4) specific. The researchers found that the most valued disciplinary skills were those related to ICT and digital and interactive communication, especially to applying specific software and using new technologies. Among the professional skills, they discovered that autonomous learning and adaptation to changes were the most relevant, while the search for and management of information was the most valued academic skill, and adaptation to technological and business changes the most outstanding specific skill.

Taking into account the general skills that may be considered necessary for a communication professional (Cruz, 2020), following the skill distribution model proposed by Ventura et al. (2018), as well as other similar models (Roca-Cuberes & Ventura, 2017; Schena et al., 2018), and based on the compilation of skills expected of a communication professional for the 2020-2030 decade (Marta -Lazo et al., 2018; Martínez-García & Navarro, 2019; Marques-Hayasaki et al., 2016; López & Rodríguez, 2019; Pérez & Micó, 2020), we propose a list of competencies that should be acquired and mastered by the professional in charge of managing social media (see table 4).

It should be clarified that specific competencies include mastery of digital process automation mechanisms through software programs since indications of automated processes for the preparation of information in newsrooms have already been detected (Túñez-López et al., 2021). If algorithms are beginning to replace journalists in the production of news, or at least to coexist with them (Arcila et al., 2020; Wölker & Powell, 2021), it is foreseeable that this situation will also be reproduced in the social media management of media outlets. Optimization platforms such as TweetDeck, Hootsuite, SocialFlow, or Dogtrack are already increasing the possibilities of content distribution and help predict user behavior, so it is considered that, at least, the option of training in this competence in the short or medium-term should be considered.

Table 4. List of skills of the community manager in a media outlet

Competencies			
Disciplinary	Professional	Academic	Specific
Know how to express themselves correctly orally and in writing	Know how to prepare, write, and edit news	Know how to search for documentation and manage information in a digital environment.	Capacity for analysis, synthesis, and critical judgment
Understand the digital changes of the media	Know how to search, select, and prioritize sources	Know how to adequately present research results orally, in writing, digitally, or in audiovisual format	Dominate social media
Know about specialized journalism in its different genres	Understand local, national, and international news	Critically understand and interpret a complex communicative environment	Find information, news, and sources on social networks
Know how to use the different audiovisual narratives	Create content for different supports and control the continuity of the narrative discourse through them	Ability to adapt to organizational objectives and culture.	Publish content on more than one platform and select the content for each of them
Know statistical information	Master the different media and modalities such as written text, video, or photography	Structure complex knowledge in a coherent manner and know how to interrelate it with other disciplines	Measure the online impact of the news produced
Know audience metrics	Broadcast news in real-time	Know how to deal with large databases and find stories within them	Update the media outlet's website
Have programming knowledge	Gather information to write informative articles		Moderate comments on social media
Know how mobile technology works	Write opinion pieces		Act in a socially responsible manner as a member of a community
Know HTML language and specific software	Conduct interviews		Focus on the specific needs of the audience
Have basic notions of photography and video	Take pictures		Analyze online information to determine its quality and credibility
Know search engine optimization (SEO) techniques	Check data quality		Adapt to the style and structure of the digital medium
Have design knowledge	Edit images, videos, and audios		Carry out verification processes based on techniques born with the use of new technologies
Know web analytics	Make charts and infographics		Track trends on social media
Correct use of their own languages and English applied to the sector	Teamwork		Use social media automation tools like TweetDeck, Hootsuite, SocialFlow, or Dogtrack
Know and design communication strategies	Design strategies for different social networks		Report quantitative and qualitative information about user behavior

Know professional ethics and deontology	Have journalistic criteria		Nurture and maintain relationships between the media and readers both on the web and on social networks
Know about advertising and marketing	Execute and think about different ways of telling stories		Be agile in content production
Know the structure and functioning of a communication department	Search, select, and systematize any type of document in a database		Know how to manage time and organize tasks
	Design the communication plan: objectives, target audiences, strategies, and budget control		Have skills in graphics editing and animation
	Learn autonomously and adapt to changes		Have creativity and the ability to innovate
	Analyze the structures, contents, and styles of television and radio programming		

Source: own elaboration.

3. Objectives and hypothesis

In this research, two fundamental objectives are established.

O2. Find out what kind of professional profiles are responsible for the management of social media in the media.

O3. Know the disciplinary, professional, academic, and specific skills most valued by these professional profiles to successfully develop their work activity.

However, to achieve the above objectives, it is essential to first solve a correlational objective without which the research would lack validity:

O1. Identify the social media presence of the main Spanish media outlets.

Based on the literature review, the following starting hypotheses are established

H1. The professionals who manage the social media of the media in Spain are journalists, generally with specialization studies in corporate communication.

H2. The necessary skills to manage the social media of a communication medium are acquired through specialization courses or training.

H3. To manage social media, knowledge of infographics or visualization, computer science, and graphic design is required.

4. Methodology

The methodology of this research is based on a mixed model that brings together descriptive, qualitative, and quantitative techniques. Descriptive research was used to explore the situation and the phenomenon, that is, the new professional profiles born with the evolution of information technologies, specifically social networks and instant messaging services.

It would not make sense to research the professional profiles without first ascertaining the existence of social networks in the media to be analyzed (see table 6). For this reason, the research began with a

tracking of the profiles on social media based on the widgets published by each medium on its website, but a manual tracking of possible presences that might not appear on the corporate websites was also carried out. To evaluate each of the presences, three testimonial factors were taken into account: (1) social network; (2) number of followers; (3) constant and recent activity that proves that it is an active profile.

Once the existence of social networks in all media was verified, quantitative and qualitative techniques were combined to solve the study problem. As a methodological instrument, a structured questionnaire designed in Google Forms was used, in which purely quantitative questions were combined with others of a qualitative nature since the combination of both methodologies allows obtaining a complete and detailed vision of the analyzed phenomenon (Betrián et al., 2013). On the one hand, the relevance of quantitative techniques is justified by the fact that they are structured research works that seek to measure established variables previously designed and, therefore, allow the specification of aspects closely related to the objectives of the research (Bericat, 1998). On the other hand, qualitative techniques are adequate because their objective is to obtain data that allow an aspect to be described, instead of measuring it, and they seek to delve deeper to obtain information on motivations, thoughts, and attitudes (Bolívar, 2001). In the latter case, two tools were selected to find out the respondents' assessment of a series of professional skills and abilities: the open question model (Blanco, 2011) and the Likert scales (Wigley, 2013).

The questionnaire was structured in two large blocks. In the first, both open and closed questions are formulated to determine the profile and training of communication professionals in charge of social media. The second section seeks to catalog the competencies that professionals consider necessary to satisfactorily carry out their work and is subdivided into 65 items organized into four sections (see table 5) corresponding to disciplinary competencies -knowledge- (18 items), professional competencies - know-how- (21 items), academic skills (6 items), and specific skills (20 items) established in table 4 after the review of the scientific literature (Cruz, 2020; Marta-Lazo et al., 2018; Martínez -García & Navarro, 2019; Marques-Hayasaki et al., 2016; López & Rodríguez, 2019; Pérez & Micó, 2020). For the responses, a rating system inspired by the Likert scale was established (1 = not at all; 2 = little; 3 = average; 4 = quite a bit; 5 = a lot) because it allows knowing the opinion of the respondents simply and offers the ability to relate questions easily (Hartley & Betts, 2010).

Table 5. Structure of the questionnaire.

Block 1	
1	Degree (Options: Journalism, Audiovisual Communication, Marketing, Advertising, and other)
2	Specialization studies (e.g, Master's degree in digital marketing, community management course...) (Open question)
3	What department do you belong to? (Open question)
4	How would you define your current job position? (Options: multimedia journalist, mobile journalist, fact-checker, community manager, social media manager, narrative specialist, SEO professional, audience manager, data analyst, and other)
5	How important is social media to the media outlet you work for? (Likert scale)
6	Do you dedicate your work activity only to social media? (Options: yes/no)
7	Do you design and coordinate the media outlet's social media strategy? (Options: yes/no)
8	If your work activity is focused on social media, are you exclusively dedicated to one social network? (Options: yes/no)
9	If the above is an affirmative answer, which one? (Options: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitch, LinkedIn, and other)
10	What social media do you spend the most time on during your workday? (More than one can be selected) (Options: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitch, LinkedIn, Telegram, WhatsApp, and other)
11	How many total hours do you spend on social media in your workday? (Options: 0-2, 2-4, 4-6, 6-8, more than 8)

Block 2	
Sección 1	Disciplinary skills (18 items)
Section 2	Professional skills (21 items)
Section 3	Academic skills (6 items)
Section 4	Specific skills

Source: own elaboration.

The survey was sent privately on June 22nd, 2021 through Facebook Messenger and also by email to the respective departments in charge of social media management. Anonymity was guaranteed in the responses and all people who work with social media were asked to answer since most of the questions refer to individual issues such as qualifications or the amount of time dedicated to working. On June 28th and July 13th, 2021, two reminders were sent to those media outlets that had not responded. All data collected was obtained between June 23rd and July 16th, 2021.

5. Sample

For the selection of the sample, only the audience criterion was taken into account, so that the 10 media outlets of each format (television, radio, press, and digital press) with the largest audience in Spain were selected (see Table 6). The set amounts to 35 media outlets since, in the case of digital newspapers, only five media outlets were analyzed because the rest of the 10 most read (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*, and *La Voz de Galicia*) are also among the printed newspapers with the largest number of readers. For the extraction of the audience data, the 1st wave of 2021 of the General Media Study (EGM) of the Association for Media Research (AIMC) was taken as the main reference, although to make a selection of 10 media outlets/formats it was necessary to complete and contrast the data with other reference sources such as Kantar Media or the Center for Sociological Research (CIS). In the case of television channels, it was necessary to complement the data from Kantar Media published in Barlovento Comunicación because since 2015 the Mediaset group abandoned the EGM and, therefore, its audiences do not appear in the rankings of the AIMC study. In the case of digital newspapers, it was necessary to resort to *Study number 3305 of the CIS, Effects and consequences of the coronavirus (III)*, which includes the audiences of digital newspapers in December 2020 since the EGM does not have a specific ranking for digital newspapers, but for Internet sites.

Table 6. Most viewed television channels, most listened to radio stations, most read newspapers, and most consulted digital newspapers in Spain in 2021

	Television	Radio	Newspapers with print edition	Digital newspapers
1	Telecinco	Cadena Ser	<i>Marca</i>	<i>Eldiario.es</i>
2	Antena 3	Cope	<i>El País</i>	<i>Elconfidencial.com</i>
3	La 1	Los40	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>La Razón</i>
4	La Sexta	Onda Cero	<i>As</i>	<i>20 minutos</i>
5	Cuatro	Cadena 100	<i>La Vanguardia</i>	<i>Okdiario.com</i>
6	La 2	Cadena Dial	<i>ABC</i>	
7	Tv3 (Televisión de Catalunya)	RNE	<i>La Voz de Galicia</i>	
8	Canal Sur Tv	Rac1	<i>El Correo</i>	
9	TVG (Televisión de Galicia)	Europa FM	<i>Mundo Deportivo</i>	
10	ETB (Euskal Telebista)	Kiss Fm	<i>El Periódico</i>	

Source: Own elaboration with data source from EGM (2021), Kantar Media (2021), and CIS (2020).

6. Results

6.1 Media presence on social media

The Spanish media outlets have an average of between 5 and 6 active profiles on social media (see

figure 1). The sports press is the one that bets the most on social media as a distribution channel since both *Mundo Deportivo* and *As y Marca* have 7 different profiles, among which are innovative proposals such as Twitch channels with programming and quite active TikTok accounts.

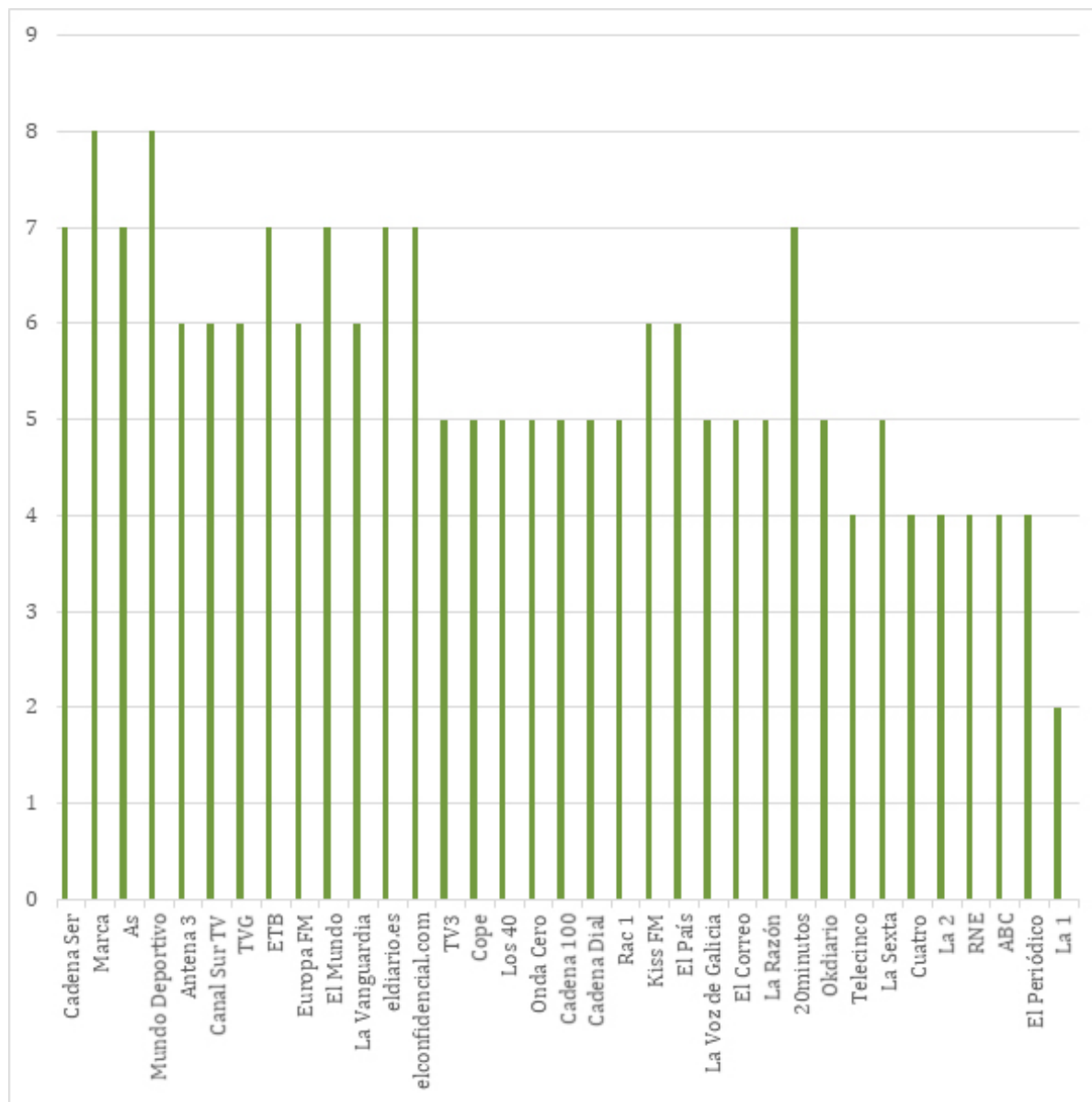


Figure 1: Number of media outlets' presences in digital media.

Source: Own elaboration.

The most used social networks are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (see figure 2) given their high power of immediate propagation and their ability to adapt to all topics (Carrasco Polaino & Villar Cijurano, 2021). Where fewer presences are located is in the most innovative networks such as TikTok (7 television networks, 5 radio stations, and 5 newspapers) or Twitch (3 sports newspapers, 1 radio station, and 1 general newspaper). In both networks, it is observed that the accounts have few followers, so it can be deduced that they are profiles that are not very consolidated or recently created. As for instant messaging apps, they are used by just over a third of the media (34.28%), although much more Telegram (31.48%) than WhatsApp (2.85%). On the other hand, there is no coincidence between the media outlets with the largest audience and those with the most presence on social networks, however, social media are very important for all media outlets (4.25 points out of 5).

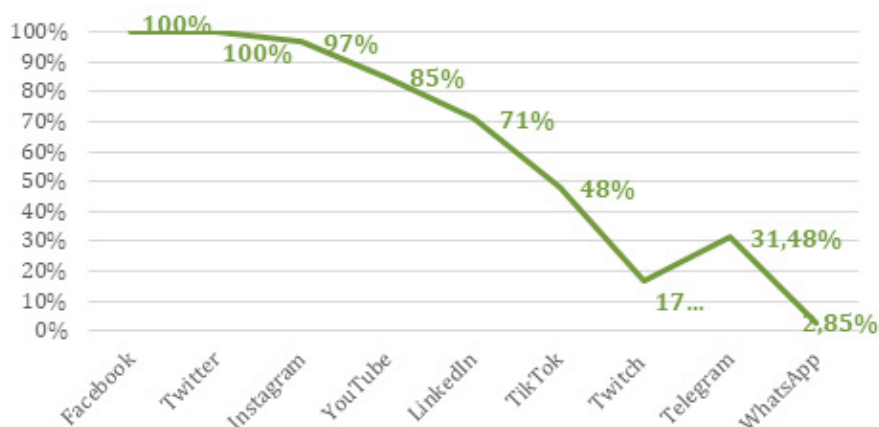


Figure 2: Use of social media in Spanish media outlets.

Source: Own elaboration.

6.2 Professional profiles in charge of social media management

All the professionals who are in charge of managing social media in the Spanish media have training in Communication and the majority (70%) are journalists (see Figure 3). 45% of professionals do not have any specialization studies, while 50% have completed one of the following studies (5% claim to have obtained their specialization self-taught): (1) Community management course, (2) Postgraduate degree in branded content and transmedia storytelling, (3) Master’s degree in digital journalism, (4) Master’s degree in film editing and cinematography, (5) Master’s degree in digital marketing, (6) Master’s degree in commercial management and marketing, (7) Master’s degree in Sports Journalism, (8) Master in Multimedia Journalism, or (9) Master in Professional Multimedia Journalism.

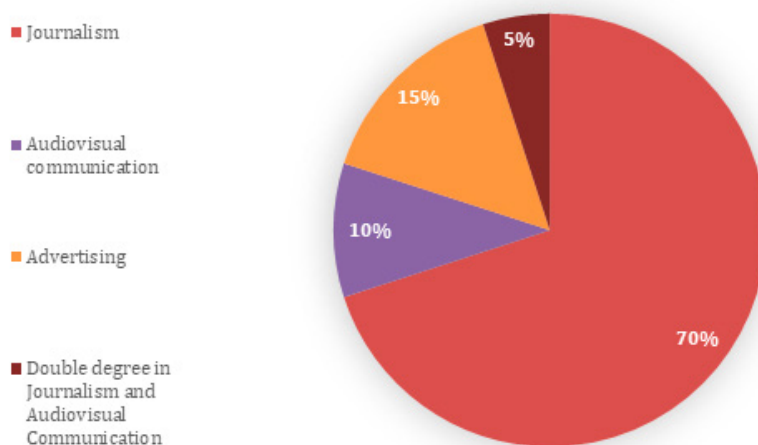


Figure 3: Academic training of professionals who manage the social media of the media outlets.

Source: Own elaboration.

When asked about the name of the job figure they occupy in their companies, the results are basically divided into three categories: community manager (35%), multimedia journalist (30%), and social media manager (25%). Other professional profile options included in the literature such as multimedia journalist, mobile journalist, fact-checker, narrative specialist, SEO professional, audience manager, or data analyst were ruled out. However, other minority options not cataloged in any previous study were recorded, such as networker (5%) and responsible for projects, participation, and social networks (5%).

Only 25% of these professionals carry out their activity in a specific social media department, while the rest (75%) work in various departments without it being possible to establish any common pattern, but

casuistries derived from purely business decisions (Sports Section, Internet Department, Audiovisual Extension Area, Digital Department, or Department of Marketing and Communication). This data fits with the fact that 65% of those surveyed combine the management of social media with other tasks and with the fact that 70% of professionals are not only responsible for generating and distributing content, but are also required to perform design and strategy functions. Although only 35% dedicate their work activity solely to the management of social media and networks, 50% dedicate between 6 and 8 hours a day to this task (see figure 4) and, even, 15% are diagnosed as claiming to dedicate over 8 hours a day.

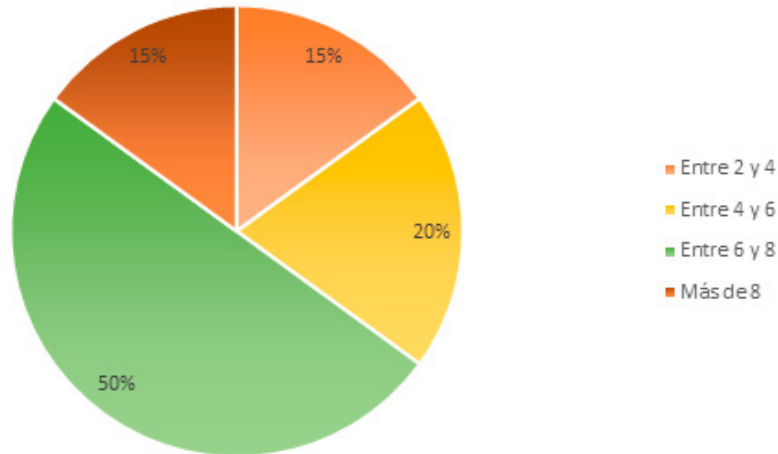


Figure 4: Hours spent on social media during the workday.
Source: Own elaboration.

Work dedication is not limited to a single social network, but rather all professionals manage several accounts at the same time. Instagram (80%) is the network to which they dedicate the most effort, followed by Twitter (75%) and Facebook (65%), which coincides with the networks in which the most media presences are registered (see Figure 2). TikTok emerges strongly above other more established networks such as YouTube or LinkedIn (see figure 5) and an instant messaging app, Telegram, is the priority option in 5% of cases.

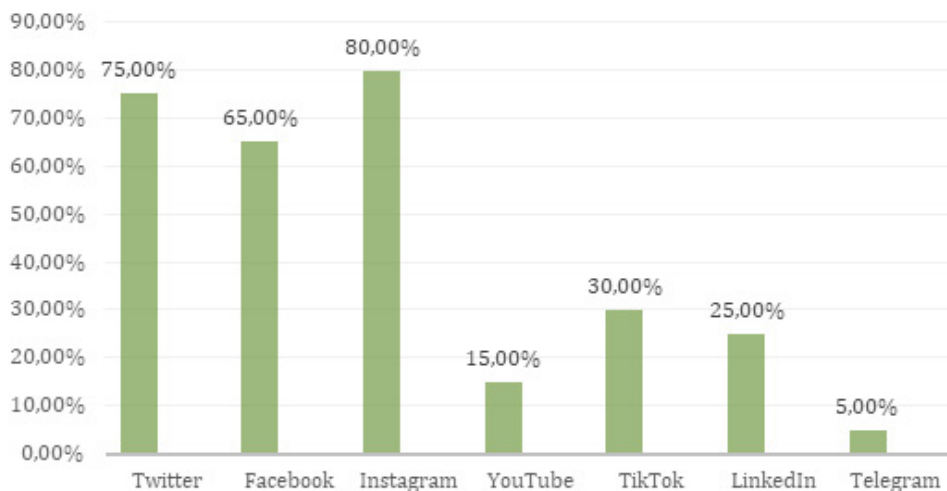


Figure 5: Priority social media for media outlets.
Source: Own elaboration.

6.3 Competencies of community managers

In the first place, regarding disciplinary competencies, those that professionals consider most important to develop their work are related to oral and written expression, journalistic ethics and deontology, and professional recycling to master the changes technology and digitization introduce (see table 7). Computer skills and statistical knowledge are relegated to the bottom.

Table 7. Disciplinary competencies ordered from most to least important according to the assessment average

Disciplinary competencies		
1	Know how to express themselves correctly in writing and orally	4,55
2	Know professional ethics and deontology	4,50
3	Understand the digital changes of the media	4,45
4	Know and know how to use the different audiovisual narratives	4,25
5	Correct use of their own languages and English applied to the sector	4,20
6	Know and design communication strategies	4,00
7	Know about advertising and marketing	3,95
8	Know the structure and functioning of a communication department	3,95
9	Know how mobile technology works	3,90
10	Have basic notions of photography and video	3,90
11	Know search engine optimization (SEO) techniques	3,80
12	Have basic knowledge of audience measurement	3,35
13	Have design knowledge	3,35
14	Learn about specialized journalism in its different genres	3,25
15	Have knowledge in web analytics	3,00
16	Have basic knowledge of statistics	2,75
17	Have basic programming knowledge	2,35
18	Have basic notions of HTML language and specific software	2,25

Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of professional skills, the ability to work in a team, create content adapted to different platforms and guarantee the transmedia narrative continuity of the news story stand out, as well as the understanding of current affairs in all geographical areas (see table 8). Among the least valued professional skills are those related to the visualization of information (photographs, graphics, and infographics) and the ability to write journalistic texts in opinion genres.

Table 8. Professional competencies ordered from most to least important according to the assessment average

Professional competencies		
1	Teamwork	4,65
2	Create content for different platforms and control the continuity of the narrative discourse through them	4,60
3	Understand local, national, and international news	4,55
4	Design strategies for different social networks	4,40
5	Execute and think about different ways of telling stories	4,40
6	Learn autonomously and adapt to changes	4,35
7	Broadcast news in real time	4,30
8	Know how to prepare, write, and edit news	4,25

9	Master the different media and modalities such as written text, video, or photography	4,25
10	Have journalistic criteria	4,15
11	Know how to search, select, and prioritize sources	4,00
12	Edit images, videos, and audios	3,95
13	Check data quality	3,95
14	Search, select, and systematize any type of document in a database	3,95
15	Design the communication plan: objectives, target audiences, strategies, and budget control	3,80
16	Gather information to write informative articles	3,70
17	Analyze the structures, contents, and styles of television and radio programming	3,35
18	Conduct interviews	3,35
19	Take pictures	3,25
20	Make charts and infographics	3,25
21	Write opinion pieces	2,50

Source: Own elaboration.

None of the academic competencies is among the 10 most valued of the group, but neither is it among the 10 least valued. The most important for professionals are the search and management of information in digital environments and the critical understanding and interpretation of complex communicative environments (see table 9). As least valued is data treatment for the elaboration of informative stories.

Table 9. Academic competencies ordered from most to least important according to the assessment average

Academic competencies		
1	Search and manage information in a digital environment	4,20
2	Critically understand and interpret a complex communicative environment	3,80
3	Properly expose research results orally, in writing, digitally, or in audiovisual format	3,80
4	Ability to adapt to organizational objectives and culture	3,75
5	Structure complex knowledge in a coherent manner and know how to interrelate it with other disciplines	3,60
6	Know how to deal with large databases and find stories within them	3,40

Source: Own elaboration.

It is the group of specific competencies (see table 10) where the best-valued competency of the whole set is located, that is, the ability to master social media, an ambitious item that includes technical mastery of the different platforms, knowledge of the specific language of each of them, and the management of user communities. In the second and third positions are two competencies directly related to the first since the aptitude to use social network management tools and the ability to adapt the contents to each platform and carry out a multi-platform distribution are highly valued. Among the least valued are issues related to information technology or the visualization of information, but also the ability to carry out fact-checking processes. However, none of these competencies is among the least valued when analyzing the whole set (see table 11).

Table 10. Specific competencies ordered from most to least important according to the average

Specific competencies		
1	Master social media	4,90
2	Use social media management tools like TweetDeck, Hootsuite, SocialFlow, or Dogtrack	4,70
3	Publish content on more than one platform and select the content for each of them	4,65
4	Have creativity and ability to innovate	4,65

5	Know how to manage time and organize tasks	4,60
6	Be agile in content production	4,60
7	Focus on the specific needs of the audience	4,45
8	Act in a socially responsible manner as a member of a community	4,40
9	Track trends on social media	4,35
10	Measure the online impact of the produced news	4,30
11	Analyze online information to determine its quality and credibility	4,30
12	Adapt to the style and structure of the digital medium	4,30
13	Moderate comments on social media	4,15
14	Nurture and maintain relationships between the media and readers both on the web and on social networks	4,15
15	Capacity for analysis, synthesis, and critical judgment	4,10
16	Find information, news, and sources on social networks	4,10
17	Report quantitative and qualitative information about user behavior	4,05
18	Carry out fact-checking processes based on techniques born with the use of new technologies	3,70
19	Have skills in graphics editing and animation	3,65
20	Update the media website	3,40

Source: Own elaboration.

When analyzing all the competencies (65) as a whole, the best-valued group is that of specific competencies (4.27 points), followed by professional competencies (3.95 points), academic competencies (3.75 points), and, lastly, disciplinary competencies (3.63 points). Of the four categories, six of the ten most valued competencies belong to specific competencies, three are professional competencies, one is a disciplinary competency, and no academic competency is recorded (see table 11). Mastery of social media and the use of network management tools (specific skills) are on the podium of the most valued skills, followed, in third place, by teamwork (professional skill). On the opposite side, two competencies related to computer and programming knowledge top the list, followed by the domain of journalistic opinion genres. Of the 10 least valued competencies, five belong to disciplinary competencies and five to professional competencies.

Table 11. Most and least valued skills by community managers

	Most valued skills	Typology		Least valued skills	Typology
1	Master social media.	Specific	1	Have basic knowledge of HTML language and specific software	Disciplinary
2	Use social media management tools like TweetDeck, Hootsuite, SocialFlow, or Dogtrack	Specific	2	Have basic programming knowledge	Disciplinary
3	Teamwork	Professional	3	Write opinion pieces	Professional
4	Publish content on more than one platform and select the content for each of them	Specific	4	Have basic knowledge in statistics	Disciplinary
5	Have creativity and ability to innovate		5	Have knowledge in web analytics	Disciplinary
6	Create content for different platforms and control the continuity of the narrative discourse through them	Specific	6	Make charts and infographics	Professional
7	Be agile in content production		7	Take pictures	Professional
8	Know how to manage time and organize tasks	Disciplinary	8	Know about specialized journalism in its different genres	Disciplinary

9	Know how to express themselves correctly in writing and orally	Professional	9	Analyze the structures, contents, and styles of television and radio programming	Professional
10	Understand local, national, and international news	Disciplinar	10	Conduct interviews	Professional

Source: Own elaboration.

7. Discussion and conclusions

All the most consumed media outlets in Spain use social media as content distribution channels (objective 1), although clear supremacy of social networks over instant messaging apps is detected. Presence on networks that we can already consider classics such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram predominate, although there are also cases of more innovative proposals on Twitch and TikTok, especially among the sports press. The management of these social media in media outlets is carried out by professionals with studies in Communication (objective 2), mainly journalists. This circumstance should be valued very positively since the same does not happen in other areas and business sectors (Sixto, 2018). Hypothesis 1 is partially confirmed since most of the managers are journalists with specialization studies, but these studies do not correspond to corporate communication *stricto sensu*, but disciplines linked to multimedia journalism and digital marketing. Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed since the data reflect the interest of these professionals in improving their skills. Half have completed specialization courses or postgraduate training related to their professional activity, while self-taught learning is residual.

Although the use of social networks for content distribution can be categorically corroborated, it is surprising that only a quarter of the most consumed Spanish media outlets have a specific social media department. Its management is usually combined with the performance of other tasks and, in fact, 30% of professionals consider themselves multimedia journalists, although the majority admits dedicating the entire working day to networking. The most common name of the professional profile in charge of this task continues to be community manager, although it is discovered that social media manager is the usual one in 25% of cases. This finding would allow changing this profile from non-predominant to predominant in the list of emerging profiles identified by Sánchez-García and his collaborators (2019).

The most valued competence by professionals to successfully carry out their work activity is mastery of social media (objective 3), something to a certain extent predictable, although the most relevant discovery of this research has to do with the importance that professionals give to training to manage mechanisms of automation processes in social networks, an item that they value with 4.70 points, only 0.20 points below the dominance of social media in general. It was decided to incorporate this competence in the list of specific competencies because, in some previous studies, the use of algorithms and automation processes for the production of news in newsrooms had already been verified and it was thought that indications could be detected in the management of social media. However, the data is conclusive: process automation is a reality in social media management, just as it is in the production of news for other digital platforms (Tejedor-Calvo et al., 2021), and the ability to master automation platforms, a requirement that community managers consider essential. Due to the characteristics of the management platforms that currently exist, it is robotic process automation (RPA), that is, a technology based on computer apps that allow the automation of digital processes through software programs and that, for the time being, affects content distribution more than production so that it allows processing and scheduling publication times and carrying out multi-platform dissemination of the same content. The automation features most valued by social media managers in the media are the following:

1. TweetDeck: post scheduling; management of several Twitter accounts simultaneously; control of notifications, messages and mentions; establishment of filters of interest for monitoring news; enhancement of social interaction, and increased speed of responses.
2. Hootsuite: Post scheduling and synchronization; attention to user queries; collaborative management of several team members; network monitoring with the integration of Google Analytics and Facebook Insights; crisis monitoring; and metric reports.
3. SocialFlow: automation of link shortening and tagging in *Google Analytics*, *Omniure*, and *Co-remetrics*; automation of key pieces of the social publishing process; increased content distribution; user behavior analysis; real-time optimization; testing of potential messages with the active audience

before publication; and algorithmic assurance that the message is delivered at the right time when users are online, and interacting with related content.

4. Dogtrack: comprehensive network management and exclusive messaging services for the media; distribution; smart automation; social tracking and analytics; and social community management.

This diagnosis of the coexistence of professionals and automation mechanisms highlights the use of robotic process automation (RPA) technologies for news distribution systems and circumscribes human intervention to the production of content and the choice of the most suitable dissemination channels. Due to the technical peculiarities of the systems that currently exist for the automation of certain routines, we cannot refer to comprehensive automation of processes or robotic automation, since this would require a complete application of artificial intelligence (AI), something that only happens in the interpretation of user behavior data, but to RPA with intelligent automation functionalities. In any case, the score given to this competence is consistent with the fact that the following ones most valued by professionals are directly related to the ability to carry out multi-platform distribution of content, creativity, innovation, agility in production, or weather management.

Community managers also point out that a good professional must be able to work as a team and, thus, be able to control the narrative coherence between the different platforms used by the media outlet for the dissemination of news. Therefore, we cannot confirm hypothesis 3 since professionals not only do not consider that a good community manager should have knowledge of computer science, information visualization, or graphic design but also interpret that these are some of the skills less relevant to their work activity because they must be assumed by other professional profiles specialized in these matters.

Active professionals understand that the competence of a social media manager is based, above all, on their ability to create content and take care of the community since it is verified that distribution is entrusted to RPA, hence computer skills do not arouse interest and bet on skills related to the communicative and journalistic fields. However, a preference for specific and professional competencies (how-to-do) over academic and disciplinary competencies (know) is also diagnosed, which indicates that professionals consider that skills are more relevant than concepts for good development of professional practice. Despite the limitation of the sample, the data is representative and interesting for the scientific community because it analyzes the most consumed Spanish media. As future research, we propose to check if these trends are still maintained, extend the study to other geographical areas, or carry out comparative studies between the predominant profiles in the different platforms.

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