Relationship between media planning and creativity in an environment of media hybridization and transmediality

Relación entre planificación de medios y creatividad en un entorno de hibridación mediática y transmedialidad

Amaia Paniagua-Iglesias
University of the Basque Country. Spain.
amaya.paniagua@ehu.eus

Ramón Martín-Guart
University of Girona. Spain.
ramon.martin@udg.edu

Joan-Francesc Fondevila-Gascón
Blanquerna-Ramon Llull University. Spain.
joanfrancescfg@blanquerna.url.edu A

Francisco Javier Pérez-Latre
University of Navarra. Spain.
perezlatre@unav.es A

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The importance of media planning in advertising is confirmed by its turnover, which in 2021 exceeded eleven billion euros, which is equivalent to 0.96% of Spanish GDP. However, creativity is the object of study that is most admired by both advertising professionals and students, giving this competition most of the credit for the success or failure of advertising campaigns. **Methodology:** The hypothesis is proposed that creativity does not have to be a competence that is limited to professionals who work in the creative and art departments of advertising agencies, but rather that it must be postulated as a transversal competence for different profiles and departments. It reflects on how, within the framework of media hybridization and transmediality and the extensions of the narrative universes as necessary brand discourses, the increasingly complex media planning is dealt with. As a methodology, a questionnaire (quantitative technique) has been carried out to academics and professionals dedicated to creative and art tasks, as well as those responsible for media planning. **Results:** The results support that, given the current increasingly complex and digitized media landscape, it is reasonable for media planning functions to draw on these creative skills from the early stages of the process to achieve, in this way, the campaign objectives, in a media ecosystem marked by liquid and multiplatform communication. **Conclusions:** However, the sector is not headed in this direction and agencies still follow excessively conservative processes and structures in a sector where technology is key to segmenting audiences and offering them a personalized message at the right time.

Keywords: Advertising creativity; Communication; Media; Media innovation; Media planning; Professional skills.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La importancia de la planificación de medios en la publicidad se confirma por su cifra de negocio, que superó en 2021 los once mil millones de euros, lo que equivale al 0,96% del PIB español. No obstante, la creatividad es el objeto de estudio que mayor admiración logra otorgándole a esta competencia la mayor parte del mérito del éxito o fracaso de las campañas publicitarias. **Metodología:** Se plantea la hipótesis de que la creatividad no tiene que ser una competencia que se limite a los profesionales que trabajan en los departamentos creativos y de arte de las agencias de publicidad, sino que debe postularse como una competencia transversal a diferentes perfiles y departamentos. Se reflexiona cómo, en el marco de la hibridación mediática y de la transmedialidad y las extensiones de los universos narrativos como discursos de marca necesarios, se trata la cada vez más compleja planificación de medios. Como metodología, se ha realizado un cuestionario (técnica cuantitativa) a académicos y a profesionales dedicados a tareas creativas, así como a los responsables de la planificación de medios. **Resultados:** Los resultados respaldan que, ante el actual panorama de medios de comunicación cada vez más complejo y digitalizado, es razonable que las funciones de planificación de medios se nutran de estas competencias creativas desde las primeras fases del proceso para alcanzar los objetivos de campaña, en un ecosistema mediático marcado por una comunicación líquida y multiplataforma. **Conclusiones:** Sin embargo, el sector no se encamina en esta dirección y las agencias aún arrastran procesos y estructuras en exceso conservadores en un sector donde la tecnología es clave para segmentar los públicos y ofrecerles un mensaje personalizado y en el momento adecuado.

Palabras clave: Competencias profesionales; Comunicación; Medios; Creatividad publicitaria; Innovación en medios; Planificación de medios.

1. Introduction

In the advertising industry, festivals like the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity held in France, the Ibero-American Festival of Advertising Communication SOL in Spain, the Clio Awards in New York, and the Ibero-American Advertising Festival FIAP in Buenos Aires, to name a few examples, are the events that garner the most attention. They were created with the primary goal of promoting creativity and identifying the best advertising campaigns, as well as contributing to the improvement of the profession. In this regard, creativity has traditionally been more highly valued than other services related to media planning and buying, which is defined as the process of selecting suitable advertising media to achieve the established campaign objectives

"Technology is and will continue to be a key component in the advertising industry to effectively segment audiences and deliver personalized creativity at the right moment."

(Carrero and González, 2008). According to the Spanish Association of Advertisers (2021), media planning and buying account for 52.9% of the advertising industry's business volume, in contrast to the 16.6% represented by full advertising services.

Additionally, the digital revolution that the advertising industry is currently experiencing (Yanover, 2007; Marín, 2010; Martinrey and Marín, 2011; Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2017b; Cuenca et al., 2022) and the consequent fragmentation of audiences (Martín-Guart, 2017; Papí-Gálvez, 2014) have radically transformed the media ecosystem in a short period of time. It is reasonable to think that creativity is not only a necessary competence in the creative process of a campaign but also from the very beginning of the conception and strategy of brand communication (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2018a). At this point lies the cornerstone of the present research, which starts from the hypothesis that there is a growing need to approach media work from the perspective of creativity as a cross-functional professional skill, rather than solely as an exclusive function of creative tasks. The research also explores the new transmedia narrative universe from the perspective of media planning as part of this evolution (Jenkins, 2008; Scolari, 2013). Media planning currently lacks sufficient creativity and innovation, and one of the contributing factors is the lack of integration of this discipline into the processes of creating and conceptualizing advertising campaigns. Phenomena such as multichannel and omnichannel messaging, which enhance the integration between content and channel as seen in native advertising (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2018b; Maestro et al., 2019; Danaher et al., 2020; Álvarez-Flores et al., 2021; Martín-Guart, 2022), invite us to reflect on whether the integration or involvement of media planners in the creative process would lead to better brand-consumer connections and, consequently, greater engagement and effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

2.   Objectives

The following objectives are proposed: (i) to identify the work processes in agencies and the functions of creative and media profiles; (ii) to analyze whether the knowledge of media, media channels, and advertising formats by creative profiles influences the development of creative concepts to a greater or lesser extent; (iii) to examine the competencies and skills that are necessary for creatives and planners to carry out their specific tasks and the perception that these profiles have of these abilities.

In this way, we aim to confirm or refute the convenience of integrating media professionals into the initial phases of the creative process to generate greater differentiation in advertising messages and thus achieve greater *engagement* with users, moving away from vertical procedures that relegated media planning to the final execution phase- budget distribution, negotiation, and ad space buying- rather than a strategic proposition. To achieve this, we will inquire about what the different professional profiles think, do, and how they deploy their competencies in relation to the subject of study. Specifically, we will study the current profile of the media planner, their functions and skills, their relationship with other departments in advertising companies, their involvement in the creative process, and finally, we will reflect on whether this profile has shifted from being more technical to being more cross-functional and strategic.

3.   Methodology

The methodology used in the research is mixed and sequential, allowing for the neutralization and elimination of biases associated with the use of a single, isolated methodology and seeking to delve deeper into the results obtained by applying one method followed by another (Gómez and Roquet, 2009; Creswell, 2009). Thus, after a review of the existing literature through the consultation of secondary sources, the quantitative method was employed by creating a semi-structured questionnaire administered online. This quantitative technique was complemented with open-ended questions to gather qualitative information with a prospective interest regarding communication professionals.

3.1. The questionnaire

The questionnaire, which has been shown to be a sufficiently validated and widely used technique in the field of social sciences (Kinnear and Taylor, 1989; Wimmer et al., 1996; Anguita et al., 2003), was prepared in Spanish using Google Forms and administered online, facilitating the collection and subsequent statistical analysis of the data. After directly sending the questionnaire to 40 professionals and researchers from reputable organizations and academic institutions such as Nestlé, Fortaleza, Havas Media, Carat, Mindshare, Avante Media, University of Barcelona, Ramon Llull University, University of the Basque Country, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, EAE, ESIC, McCann, Ogilvy, among others, 118 questionnaires were collected (a significant number considering the specialization of the sample) thanks to the "snowball effect," as recipients were asked to distribute it among their contacts related to the subject of study.The survey included closed or pre-coded questions with multiple-choice options and other open-ended questions that allowed respondents to express their opinions or knowledge about a certain phenomenon in their own words. For assessment, a five-level Likert scale model was used, ranging from "completely disagree" or "not at all important" (depending on the nature of the question), which was assigned an ordinal value of 1, to "completely agree" or "very important," with a value of 5.

Regarding the structure of the questionnaire, after a brief introduction and description of the study's purpose, the survey was structured into three sections: first, respondents were asked for their identifying information, as well as their roles and functions within the company; secondly, questions were related to their knowledge of media and advertising formats, as well as their opinion on the importance of integrating creative and media functions at an early stage of the advertising creation process; and finally, questions were about the competencies and skills of the professionals working there. The questionnaire concluded with a series of open-ended questions, which added a more qualitative methodological aspect, inquiring about the respondents' opinions on future challenges or trends in the industry.

The open-ended responses were refined through content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Shaw, 2003; Silverman, 2006; Gibbs, 2007) and tabulated using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software that is based on coding and the detection of nodes or concepts. The process is based on inductive logic that starts from experimentation and observation. It is an iterative process where, as coding of respondents' answers progresses, new nodes and ideas emerge, which are then refined and displayed in hierarchy maps.

3.2. Population and Sample

The questionnaire was carried out during the 2020-21 academic year and was analyzed and interpreted in 2022. The universe consists of the 110,500 individuals actively working in companies directly related to communication and advertising (source: Observatory of Advertising based on data from the Active Population Survey, INE, Spanish Association of Advertisers, 2021). The sample consisted of 118 professionals from the field of communication, including both industry professionals and academics from Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Seville, Valencia, and San Sebastián. This geographical distribution followed the distribution of agencies and billings managed, achieving a balanced sample reflecting the industry's reality.As a limitation of the study, it should be noted that the analysis sample is not representative of all Spanish advertising agencies or all professionals responsible for the field in Spain, as this universe could not be documented. However, it is a high-quality sample, allowing the results to be considered relevant to the industry's current situation. More than half of the respondents have been active for over 10 years (30.5% with 11-20 years of experience and 39.8% with over 20 years of experience). Regarding age, 77.1% of the respondents are between 26 and 55 years old. In terms of professional category, 23.7% of the respondents hold the position of Director/Partner/Founder of the company, 25.4% are Managers/Supervisors/Team Leaders, and 28% classify as Senior professionals.

In terms of the type of company (Table 1), 75% of the respondents work in advertising, media, and communication agencies, while the remaining 25% are involved in media and academic institutions. This provides a holistic view of the phenomenon. Regarding the activities they engage in (Table 2), notable functions include client service, accounts, and strategic planning, which contribute to a more comprehensive

understanding of the advertising process. Also significant are the activities related to negotiation, media buying and planning, as well as creative direction and art, which are ultimately the two main profiles under discussion in this study.

Table 1. *Type of company in which they carry out their activity.*

Type of company in which they work	Sample	Nº of answers	Percentage (%)
Media agency	27	33	23%
Creative advertising agency	27	33	23%
Media outlet	16	20	14%
University or academic institution	13	16	11%
Digital advertising agency	11	13	9%
Communication, public relations, and events agency	6	7	5%
Advertiser	6	7	5%
Performance marketing agency	3	4	3%
Others	10	12	8%
Total	118	145	100%

Source: Author's own work. N=118 respondents
(each respondent had the option to choose more than one option).

Table 2. *Activities carried out in the company.*

Activities carried out in the company	Sample	Nº of answers	Percentage (%)
Sales/Customer Services or Accounts	20	54	18%
Research and Strategic Planning	15	40	13%
Media Planning, Negotiation, and Buying	14	37	12%
Copywriting, Art and Design, and Related Activities	12	34	11%
Community Manager	9	23	8%
Production/Traffic	9	23	8%
Measurement (analytics and modeling)	8	22	7%
Innovation	7	21	7%
Academic and Research Activity	13	16	6%
Programmatic Advertising, Trading Desk, and Related Activities	7	17	6%
Others	4	12	4%
Total	**118**	**305**	**100%**

Source: Author's own work. N=118 respondents
(each respondent could choose more than one option).

4. Results

4.1. Transformation of the media ecosystem

The media ecosystem is undergoing radical changes and will never be the same again (Livingstone, 1999; Salaverría y García-Avilés, 2008; Van-der-duff, 2008; Flores-Vivar, 2009; Cabrera, 2010; Cardoso, 2011; Martín-Guart and Fernández-Cavia, 2012; Perlado-Lamo, 2013; Perlado-Lamo et al., 2019), so the advertising sector needs to adapt its processes accordingly. It was in the first third of the 20th century when advertising in Spain began to professionalize with the first studies in this discipline, the first technicians, and the beginning of advertising associations (Díaz, 2010). An evolution that has accelerated dramatically in the last 20 years with the emergence of the Internet and technologies (Jódar, 2010; Scolari, 2012; Pérez-Latre, 2013; Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2020), such as HbbTV (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2017a), which are acting as significant catalysts for profound transformations in the advertising industry, its structures, and work processes (Ahn, 2020; Lee and Cho, 2020). The expansion of social networks is also not only shaking up the media landscape and influencing the search for new business models but also affecting the entire value chain (Corredor-Lanas, 2011).

In Spain, the advertising sector generated a turnover of 19,190.8 million euros in 2019, representing 3.4% of the total services sector volume. The planning and sale of advertising space and time services accounted for 52.9% of the total, reaching 9,649 million euros, and secondly, full-service advertising agencies, which, although their main asset is creativity, include a wide variety of communication-related services such as promotions, packaging design, or a direct marketing plan (López-Lita, 2001), achieved a market share of 16.6% and 3,035 million euros (Table 3).

Table 3: *Business volume for advertising services (in millions of euros and percentage share)*

Business volume for advertising services (in millions of euros and percentage share)	2019	
	Total	**Percentage (%)**
Media agencies. Advertising space and time sales services	9.649	52,9
Full advertising services	3.035	16,6
Direct marketing	1.691	9,3
Advertising creation and design	362	2,0
Other advertising services	3.036	16,6
Other advertising-related services	288	1,6
Other activities and services	186	1,0
Total	**18.246**	**100**

Source: Author's own work with data from the Advertising Observatory 2021.

According to Infoadex (2022), advertising expenditure represented 0.96% of the Spanish GDP and amounted to 11,601.9 million euros (a figure lower than that reflected by the Advertising Observatory). The classification between controlled media with 5,440.9 million euros and estimated media, traditionally known as BTL or below the line, with 6,161 million euros, can be observed, with advertising investment in digital platforms surpassing that of television for the second consecutive year (Table 4).

Table 4: *Advertising investment by medium (in millions of euros and percentage share).*

Controlled Media Investment	2021	
	Total	Percentage (%)
Cinema	12,5	0,2
Newspapers	335,9	6,2
Sunday supplements	9,0	0,2
Exterior	289,6	5,3
Digital	2.482,2	45,6
Radio	415,4	7,6
Magazines	120,1	2,2
Television	1.776,2	32,6
Subtotal controlled media Investment	**5.440,9**	**46,9**

Estimated Media Investment	2021	
	Total	Percentage (%)
Sponsorship, patronage, social marketing, and CSR activities	372,6	6,0
Sports sponsorship activities	394,2	6,4
Point of sale animation	41,9	0,7
Yearbooks, guides, and directories	63,1	1,0
Branded Content	416,7	6,8
Door-to-door marketing/flyers	205,1	3,3
Catálogs	40,9	0,7
Trade shows and exhibitions	28,6	0,5
Influencers	93,7	1,5
Offline promotional games	7,8	0,1
Personalized mailing	1.463,6	23,8
Telemarketing	1.531,3	24,9
Point of sale advertising, merchandising, signage	1.424,0	23,1
Company publications: magazines, newsletters, reports	20,5	0,3
Offline advertising gifts	32,4	0,5
Offline loyalty cards	24,7	0,4
Estimated Media Subtotal	**6.161,0**	**53,1**
Total	**11.601,9**	**100**

Source: Authors own work with data from Infoadex 2022.

In this regard, according to Papí-Gálvez (2014), the landscape is changing and moving away from the traditional concept of media planning. The upward trend in Internet consumption is also reflected in its audience, which has doubled in 10 years, from a 42.5% penetration in 2011 to 84.3% in 2021 (Figure 1), surpassing television consumption for the first time, which stood at 83.3% (EGM, 2022).

The rapid emergence of the Internet has revolutionized the arena of communication and demands progress and adaptation from all stakeholders involved: advertisers, agencies, media, associations, and research institutes to meet the needs of an increasingly digital, social, and immediate sector (Pérez-Latre, 2011; Martín-Guart and Fernández-Cavia, 2012; Martín-Guart, 2014; Sánchez-Sánchez and Fernández-Cavia, 2018; Lee and Cho, 2020; Mafael et al., 2021; Rosengren and Campbell, 2021).

4.2. Liquid communication

This new media ecosystem is marked by liquid communication (Solana, 2012; Papí-Gálvez, 2015; Mönckeberg and Rojas, 2020), primarily driven by the online world and the various properties that this system favors in contrast to offline media communication. Factors such as media fragmentation, the speed of information distribution, message saturation, consumer empowerment, giving rise to the concept of the "prosumer" (Carmona, 2008; Sánchez-Carrero and Contreras-Pulido, 2012; Castrillo, 2014; Bednarz, 2022), are inherent in this complex and ever-changing scenario. It is at this point that advertising needs to stand out, be outstanding, and be appreciated as beneficial by consumers (Parreño et al., 2012). It has to be meaningful to users, both in terms of content (generating

Figure 1: *Annual evolution of penetration by medium (as a percentage of the Spanish population over 14 years old).*

Source: Author 's own work using *Marco General de los Medios en España* (2021).

interest, being current, remarkable, with high levels of creativity) and in terms of contact, that is, avoiding saturation and interruption (Madinabeitia, 2017). Liquid and flexible communication, within the framework of media planning, is interpreted as the requirement to create differentiated, personalized, and multi-platform messages to achieve greater engagement and connection between brands and consumers, to stand out among the more than 3000 advertising impacts a user receives daily, and to avoid the feeling that they are being bombarded with advertising that doesn't truly add value or relevance (Hudders et al., 2019).

Indeed, the perception that advertising messages lack interest and the simultaneous use of multiple devices by the same user highlights the urgency for better measurement, monitoring, and analysis of audience data. The goal is to provide the user with information they truly need at any given moment and through each communication channel, each with its own nature, technology, and narratives. The necessity of gaining a deep understanding of this customer journey is what places the customer at the center of the strategy (Hamilton et al., 2021; Tueanrat et al., 2021). Major companies in the sector, such as Alphabet, Meta, and Amazon, strive to trace each user's footsteps and apply their algorithms to adapt and provide solutions, even before the consumer can request them.

4.3. The mediamorphosis and the integrative function of the Internet in the media planning process

Mediamorphosis, or the evolution of media due to new social needs and rapid technological advancement, can be likened to Darwin's theory of evolution in which ancient forms generally do not die out but continue to evolve and adapt (Marín, 2010). In this sense, new media gradually emerge through the metamorphosis of old media, which stimulates reforms in advertising communication as a whole and necessarily in the professional area most closely related to media and their audiences, such as media planning. Technological advancement accelerates this process, and work processes will become increasingly dynamic, requiring the expertise of new professional profiles capable of delivering the advertising message to the right person at the right time and place (Benites-Valdivieso, 2019; Martín-Guart, 2022).

The terms "content" and "connection" have also become integral to the media planning process because media do not just act as transmission channels but also take on their own identity and vital importance in how they connect brands and users. Thus, new media and trends such as social networks, branded content, content marketing, native advertising, and influencer marketing are increasingly the result of the blending and fusion of media with content and creativity. In response to this reality, advertising and media agencies need to readjust their processes, structures, and organizational charts, as well as the professional profiles of those working there, under an integrative philosophy of offline and online strategies. The internet allows ideas to flow through
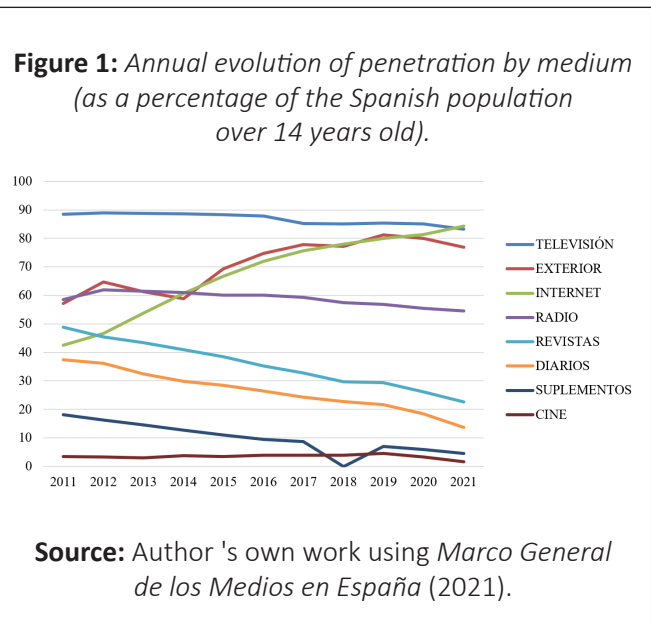
media, making communication processes more circular and flexible to the point that, in reality, the internet can be considered a metamedium (Solana, 2005; Corredor-Lanas, 2011; Papí-Gálvez, 2015; Humphreys, 2018). It is not enough to add the internet to the list of conventional media like television, print, outdoor formats, or radio; it is not just another medium, it does not behave like one, it is a parallel reality, a medium of media, a metamedium. Martín-Guart and Fernández-Cavia (2012) concur when they indicate that newspapers have their online versions, radio can be listened to on the internet, and television becomes interactive. The internet seems destined to blur the boundaries between traditional media, to transform them. Consequently, it is evident that the services provided by media agencies need to expand beyond planning and buying functions, and research, strategy, innovation, and especially analytics, become particularly relevant in all phases of the process. This is where the cornerstone of the present research lies, which starts from the hypothesis that there is a growing need to perform media work through the prism of creativity, as a cross-functional professional competence, and not solely as an exclusive function of the creative agency. Thus, different professionals must converge and move beyond their siloed tasks and departments in order to achieve a deeper understanding of audiences and how to reach them, both through cognitive-creative connections and tactical-creative tactics applied in the media.

4.4. A New Renaissance? Hybridization in Advertising Sector Profiles

It is necessary to reflect on the profile of the media planner, the technical knowledge, competencies, and attitudes required to perform their responsibilities in a new communicative landscape. This landscape implies that media agencies need to reshape their work processes, embracing digital and social channels and seeking increasingly disruptive solutions to differentiate themselves in a fragmented and advertising-saturated context (Martín-Guart, 2017). In this regard, there is a debate about whether the advertising industry is moving towards extreme specialization driven by new information technologies (ICT) or towards more cross-functional and strategic profiles capable of integrating research and analysis skills (Perlado-Lamo et al., 2019).

In light of the data presented, it is suggested that roles related to media planning become increasingly comprehensive, requiring cross-functional competencies, a high degree of self-learning, innovation, and creativity, all integrated into the overall strategy. Monge and Etxebarria (2017) already place the media planner profile within the area of strategic planning, alongside other profiles such as branding managers and public relations experts, thus positioning this profile as more strategic than technical, perhaps akin to the role of a planner. Martín-Guart (2017) compares it to a Renaissance artist, multidisciplinary, analytical, with a high degree of self-learning, innovation, and creativity. Corredor-Lanas (2010) highlights creativity, innovation, and technology as the hallmarks of the new advertising model.

In conclusion, the media planner requires training and technical knowledge in marketing, media structures, and classification. They must identify the industry's major technological trends and be experts in media negotiation, buying, analysis, and measurement. A global and strategic perspective is crucial, along with a deeper understanding not only of media but also of the market and the consumer. Moreover, creative thinking and innovation can be considered essential cross-functional competencies for a media planner to tackle the challenges of today's communication landscape, especially one heavily influenced by technology. Greater involvement of the media planning process in the initial stages of brand strategy development and campaign creation could lead to more creative and effective campaigns.

4.5. Functions and Processes in the company

As shown earlier, the emergence of the Internet as a medium has changed the way we work, necessitating a broader understanding of communication among various professionals. In this regard, 52% of the respondents confirm this (Table 5), as more than half indicate that the strategies they develop for clients are hybrid, regardless of the communication channel, whether online or offline.

"We have to move away from those stagnant departments where communication is lacking. We need to work as a team to build great campaigns."

In the academic community, which provides a more prospective view, this indicator reaches 85%, inviting reflection on whether these types of skills and work processes should be emphasized in undergraduate and postgraduate communication studies.

Table 5: *Develops aspects offline, online, or hybrid.*

Activities developed in the company	Professionals		Academics	
	Nº of answers	Percentage (%)	Nº of answers	Percentage (%)
Mostly offline aspects	26	24%	2	15%
Mostly Online aspects	26	24%	0	0%
Hybrid (where they develop strategies, creatives, and media plans for both the online and offline worlds)	57	52%	11	85%

Source: Authors own work N=118 respondents
(105 responses from professionals and 13 respondents from the academic community).

Regarding which departments should be present in the first meeting where the advertiser provides the brief with instructions for the campaign (Table 6), 53% of the mentions refer to the accounts and strategy teams. Here, there is no significant difference between the opinions of professionals and academics, although the latter place slightly more emphasis on the strategy areas (22%) than on accounts (19%). On the other hand, when asked whether it is important for creative and media planning profiles to work together from the initial stages of the creative process, almost unanimously, they consider it essential for these two groups to work in parallel. They believe that creatives should be familiar with media planning, and media planners should be aware of the creative project's concepts, with a rating close to 4.5 out of 5 (slightly lower among academics at 4.2). Subsequently, they were asked if they are implementing this in their company, and it is here that both groups score lower, with a rating of 3.1 among professionals and 2.8 among academics. It is surprising that, despite valuing and considering this integration between departments very positively, it is not regularly implemented in agencies.

Table 6: *Departments that should be present in the first briefing meeting.*

Departments that should be present in the first briefing meeting	Professionals		Academics	
	Nº answers	Percentage (%)	Nº answers	Percentage (%)
Accounts	75	28%	11	19%
Strategy or planner	66	25%	13	22%
Creativity	50	19%	11	19%
Media Planning	42	16%	9	16%
Content (community manager, Social media manager)	18	7%	7	12%
Production	16	6%	7	12%

Source: Author's own work. N=118 respondents
(105 responses from professionals and 13 respondents from the academic community).

4.6. Knowledge of Media and Format

All respondents consider general knowledge of media and formats to be very important in their daily roles, with a rating of 4.66 out of 5 (Table 7). When considering each of the media, digital is given the highest importance, above the average, with a rating of 4.75, followed by outdoor and television.

Table 7: *Importance attributed by each group to knowledge of media/formats according to the Likert scale[1].*

Media	All Respondents	Creatives	Planners	Academics
Overall average	4,66	4,61	4,74	4,54
Television	4,40	4,31	4,44	4,54
Radio	4,19	4,02	4,26	4,46
Newspaper	4,17	4,02	4,24	4,31
Magazines	4,14	4,00	4,19	4,38
Exterior	4,48	4,41	4,54	4,46
Digital	4,75	4,82	4,63	4,92
Cinema	3,82	3,63	4,02	3,62

Source: Authors own work elaboration. N=118 respondents.

All profiles highly value the need to know the media and advertising formats in which the campaign will be carried out, with the planners' group giving it the highest rating (4.74). In fact, it can be observed in the following graph how this group places more importance on all media, as the affinity index exceeds 101, except for the internet medium, to which the creative group assigns an affinity of 101.6 compared to 97.6 from the planners' group (the affinity index is the result of relating each group's rating to the general data of the total respondents). This index reaffirms the importance of digital communication and the need to tailor creativity to the format of each medium or platform, as well as the wide variety of online media and formats that directly influence the message, both in size and content.

Among the open-ended questions, there was also a consideration of whether there are significant differences in the assessment of different media

Figure 2: *Affinity index according to the groups of planners and creatives[2].*

Source: Author's own work. N=118 respondents (creatives=56, planners=49, academics=13).

and their causes. Respondents agree that it is crucial to have a good understanding of the media's structure and the advertising format possibilities they offer. In this regard, one of the responses from an academic

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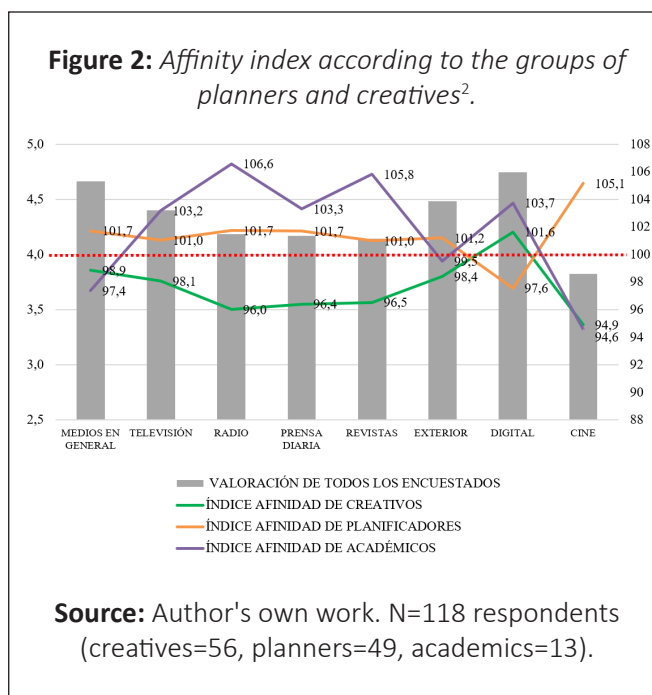
[1] Rating on a five-level Likert scale, where 1 means 'completely disagree/not important at all' and 5 means 'completely agree/very important.

[2] The affinity index has been calculated for the groups of planners and creatives in relation to the total respondents regarding the importance each group attributes to knowledge of media and formats. The formula applied to calculate the affinity index is: Rating given by the group / Average rating * 100.

stands out, emphasizing the dynamism of the media and stating that "the more dynamic a medium is and the more possibilities of uncommon formats it offers, the more knowledge is required for planning. Knowledge of the medium is always important, it's just that some media change less." Another respondent, a media planner, added that "digital and outdoor are the ones that require the most knowledge due to the variety of formats," and according to another media planning specialist, "television and digital are the media that require more specialization because they are really the broadest in terms of knowledge and are in higher demand by clients." The perspective of the creatives also aligns with this view. One of them mentioned that "in media like magazines, print, or radio, the formats are better known, while outdoor, television, and digital have more innovation and need to be understood better." Another creative added that "especially in digital, as it's where formats evolve the most, and many times creative agencies are unaware of the specifications, so when you receive the media plan, you're not quite sure about the type of ad it is."

In conclusion, digital media stands out as the medium that demands the most knowledge about sites, formats, technological possibilities, as well as numerous adaptations of messages and content. This aligns with the assessments reflected in Figure 2.

4.7. Competencies and skills of the advertiser

Taking into account the general opinion, three competencies stand out (Table 8): consumer knowledge (with a rating of 4.63 out of 5.0), communication skills for presenting projects to clients (4.61), and overall strategic planning (4.50). In last place is the competency related to specific software knowledge and technology-related skills. However, there are differences among the different groups: for creative profiles, consumer knowledge (4.59) is rated as the top competency, followed by communication skills for presenting projects to clients (4.55), and integrating creativity in different areas (4.53). As for planners, knowledge of media (4.67) comes first, followed by strategic planning (4.63), and in third place, consumer knowledge and communication skills are tied with a rating of 4.61. Finally, analytical skills for understanding results and implementing real-time improvements are highly valued by the academic community, with a rating of 4.85. With a more prospective view, academics are anticipating what the advertising industry is beginning to demand: project presentation to clients and analytical capabilities.

Table 8. *Assessment of competencies and skills by respondents using the Likert scale*[3].

Competencies and Abilities	All the respondents	Creatives	Planners	Academics
Strategic planning (global communication, not just media)	4,50	4,31	4,63	4,69
Consumer knowledge (analysis of insights and motivations)	4,63	4,59	4,61	4,85
In-depth knowledge of media (media structure and operation, as well as their main formats)	4,46	4,14	4,67	4,77
Digital Advertising/Marketing knowledge (SEM, SEO, email marketing, display advertising, programmatic advertising, …)	4,31	4,02	4,46	4,69
Knowledge of new technology-related competencies (AI- Artificial Intelligence, VR- Virtual Reality, Big Data, predictive models, voice search, Internet of Things, …)	3,83	3,75	3,80	4,23

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[3] Assessment on a five-level Likert scale, where 1 means 'completely disagree/not important at all' and 5 means 'completely agree/very important'.

Specific software knowledge (office tools, design, web page programming and optimization, …)	3,70	3,84	3,50	3,85
Analytical skills with the aim of understanding results and implementing real-time improvements	4,42	4,31	4,41	4,85
Fluent writing and content creation for presentations (written and audiovisual)	4,18	4,29	3,96	4,46
Creating, editing, producing, and developing graphic and audiovisual elements for presentations, social media posts, …	4,02	4,37	3,63	4,08
Communication skills for presenting projects and defending campaigns to clients	4,61	4,55	4,61	4,85
Integration of creativity into various areas of the company, not just in the creative concept development	4,30	4,53	4,02	4,38
Autonomy in decision-making	4,20	4,20	4,24	4,00
Self-directed learning and adaptability to changes	4,48	4,49	4,41	4,69

Source: Authors own work elaboration. N=118 respondents.

Another way to analyze and highlight the most relevant competencies within each group is by using the affinity index, which, as explained earlier, emphasizes those skills above the average (Table 9). For creatives, it's noteworthy that competencies related to the processes of creating, editing, producing, and developing graphic and audiovisual elements for different platforms, increasingly digital and social, have a high affinity index (108.9). This reflects the changing landscape where the roles of copywriters, designers, and producers are becoming more integrated. Creatives also value the integration of creativity into various areas and knowledge (105.4) and knowledge of specific design and web page creation software (103.8) above the average. On the other hand, planners value above the average the knowledge of media (104.7), a competency closely related to their profile. Following closely are competencies related to digital marketing aspects such as SEM, SEO, email marketing, display advertising, and programmatic advertising, with an affinity index of 103.5, along with strategic planning (102.9). Once again, similar to creatives, professionals in this field have acquired skills that are considered more attitudinal and are increasingly valuing procedural and technological competencies, which are closely tied to the digitization of the industry. Finally, the results from academics are more balanced across all competencies, which is logical since their role is to educate in all advertising disciplines. However, the affinity index for autonomy in decision-making is 95.2, 5% below the average. This can be understood as recent graduates may need supervisors to guide them in their professional tasks and decision-making.

**Table 9.** *Affinity of each group regarding the overall assessment of competencies and skills*[4].

Competencies and Abilities	Creatives	Planners	Academics
Strategic Planning (global communication, not just media).	95,9	102,9	104,3
Consumer Knowledge (analysis of insights and motivations).	99,2	99,7	104,7
In-depth Media Knowledge (structure and operation of media and their main formats).	92,8	104,7	107,0
Digital Advertising/Marketing Knowledge (SEM, SEO, email marketing, display advertising, programmatic advertising, etc.).	93,2	103,5	108,8

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[4] The formula used to calculate the affinity index is: Rating given by the group / Average rating * 100.

Knowledge of New Technology-related Competencies (AI- Artificial Intelligence, VR- Virtual Reality, Big Data, Predictive Models, Voice Search, Internet of Things, etc.).	97,8	99,1	110,4
Knowledge of Specific Software (office tools, design, programming, and web page optimization, etc.).	103,8	94,5	103,9
Analytical Skills to Understand Results and Implement Real-time Improvements .	97,7	99,8	109,8
Writing and Creating Texts Fluidly for Presentations (written and audiovisual).	102,8	94,9	106,8
Creating, Editing, Producing, and Developing Graphic and Audiovisual Elements for Presentations, Social Media Posts, etc	108,9	90,4	101,5
Communication Skills to Present Projects and Defend Campaigns to Clients.	98,7	100,0	105,1
Integration of Creativity Across Various Areas of the Company, Not Just in Creative Concept Development.	105,4	93,5	102,0
Autonomy in Decision-Making .	99,8	100,9	95,2
Autonomous Learning and Adaptation to Changes.	100,2	98,3	104,7

Source: Author's own work. N=118 respondents.

4.8. Challenges and Trends: Creativity and Technology

Facing the challenge of how advertising can become more creative and effective in the coming years, NVivo software was used to identify in a word cloud (Figure 3) the most relevant words for professionals, which are: advertising, creativity, and technology. Many of the respondents agree that technology will enable a better understanding of touchpoints with audiences, thus delivering more personalized advertising with content tailored to each user and channel. In this regard, one of the interviewees stated, "Today's technologies allow us to target a campaign to an increasingly specific target audience. Through our activity on social media and internet searches, we can pinpoint who, how, and when to target our communications and generate a direct and real impact. Advertising, through these new tools and media, is becoming more personalized and direct." Another respondent emphasized that "technology will enable advertising to be directed to individuals in an increasingly personalized manner, and it will also allow for more precise measurement of campaign results, making it more cost-effective every day." Lastly, we want to highlight what one participant mentioned regarding the future of advertising: "Measured, data-driven, and targeted advertising." In conclusion, technology has become an essential element for reaching the target audience with personalized messages.

Figure 3: *Word cloud related to respondents' answers.*

Source: Author's own work using the software Nvivo.

This qualitative analysis also allows us to present a hierarchy map of the competencies that the advertising sector will require in the coming years (Figure 4), with technological capabilities, personalized communication, and metrics as the most frequently mentioned nodes. Knowledge related to media planning, creativity as a cross-cutting competence, and brand-user interaction are other concepts that appear repeatedly. These results emphasize the role of media planners as strategists in a changing communication ecosystem driven by media digitization and technology.

Figure 4: *Hierarchy map of codes based on the coding of respondents' answers.*
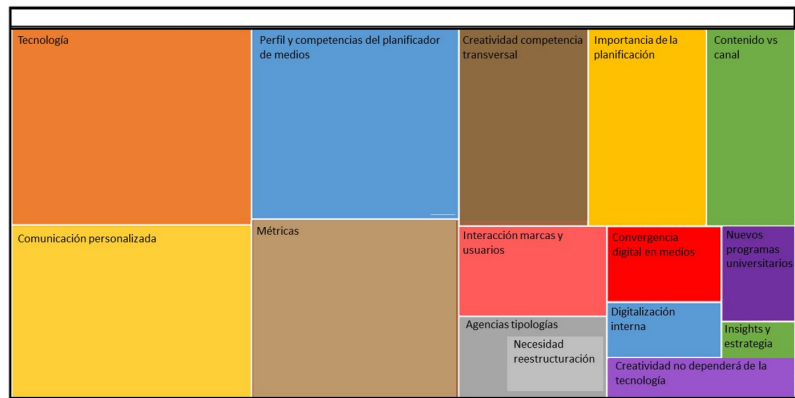
Source: Author's own work using Nvivo software.

It is important to highlight the statements of some of the interviewees who nuanced the role of technology in the advertising process. For one of them, "technology is one of the foundations of a campaign, and its strategic knowledge will be vital, as well as its intuitive application to go beyond what the data provides us. For this, it will be essential to combine experience and technology." In this regard, another participant adds that "with the shift from offline to online advertising, there is an increasing dependence on IT personnel. Communication, creativity, and effectiveness will improve to the extent that these tasks become the responsibility of experts and not just IT technicians." It should not be forgotten that "technology brings an improvement in metrics related to the target audience's interests and its automated processing for transmedia hyper-personalization and, technological advancement will be so significant that it will allow us, always through effective communication, to obtain more and more consumer information and create ad hoc creatives tailored to each user." This sentiment aligns with another participant who stated, "creative innovations will revolve around the interaction between each brand and/or product with its audience, digitally." In conclusion, there is no doubt about the crucial role of technology in delivering a personalized advertising message to consumers at the right time and place. However, it is essential that technology is guided by strategic knowledge and not just technical expertise.

Finally, other ideas also emerged, such as the importance of continuous training and, regarding the structure and typology of agencies, the fact that they are increasingly fragmented and have horizontal structures that facilitate the connection and integration of work processes across different departments. According to one of the creatives, "we have to move away from those stagnant departments where communication is lacking. We need to work as a team to build great campaigns. Campaigns are constructed through many factors and conditions: powerful creativity is useless without good design, and vice versa." Along the same lines, a respondent from the group of planners expressed that "interaction with the user and the ability to capture their attention to offer a relevant experience will be the significant change and advancement not only in the industry but also in the various brand ecosystems."

5.   Conclusions

The results are conclusive: technology is and will continue to be a key component in the advertising industry to effectively segment audiences and deliver personalized creativity at the right moment. To achieve this, it's crucial to understand the complete funnel and tailor creativity to each phase of the process while maintaining the DNA of creativity, which should evoke emotions and feelings, as ultimately, even though the goal is conversion, it's directed at individuals. To accomplish this, the industry asserts the need for an integrated model among different agency departments, applying creativity as a cross-functional competency and not just as part of the functions of the creative department. Both professionals with a more creative profile and

planners agree on this perspective. However, the industry is not currently fully embracing this model. The reasons for this lack of congruence may be attributed to the difficulty of changing agency organizational structures and work processes, as many agencies still adhere to traditional vertical departmental structures, which are, to some extent, still siloed (Álvarez-Flores et al., 2021; Martín-Guart, 2022).

The transformation of the media ecosystem, especially its digitization, makes it necessary to have knowledge of specific media and formats throughout the creative process, as these significantly influence the creativity of a campaign. Both creatives and planners agree on the importance of having a comprehensive understanding of media, as they serve as the points of contact with audiences, with a particular emphasis on digital media and television. In the case of digital media, this is due to the multitude of websites, platforms, and potential advertising formats that can be developed in such a fragmented and atomized medium. In the case of television, besides the usual formats, there are opportunities for special actions and advertising adaptations to the audiovisual and interactive content itself, such as HbbTV (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2017a).

Additionally, knowledge of the consumer, who is becoming increasingly empowered and social, and strategic planning are among the most demanded competencies. In this changing communication landscape, the media profile becomes a key component in bridging the gap between creativity, media, and analytics. A comprehensive understanding of the user is essential to adapt content to each medium in real-time, making advertising more effective. This, in turn, may inspire further research in this direction.Technology applied to advertising allows, for example, for creatives to adapt to each moment and place based on each user, known as dynamic creatives. However, it needs to be supervised and aligned with the overall campaign strategy, rather than solely relying on data due to the increased need for measurement and control of communication actions.

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS, FUNDING, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AUTHORS:

Amaia Paniagua-Iglesias
University of Basque Country/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea. Spain.

Professor of Commercial, Corporate, and Institutional Communication, Media Planning, and Digital Marketing at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication at the University of the Basque Country. She holds a degree in Advertising and Public Relations and has worked for 20 years in the media strategy and planning department of various advertising agencies. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral thesis on the digitalization process in advertising agencies, specifically in media planning.
amaya.paniagua@ehu.eus

Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3084-6088
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=E5hkLbkAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=ao

Ramón Martín-Guart
University of Girona. Spain.

Serra Húnter fellow and Ph.D. in Communication and recipient of a doctoral extraordinary award from UPF. He holds a degree in Advertising and Public Relations from UAB. He is a member of the CAS (Communication, Advertising & Society) research group at UPF and collaborates with the GREC group at Ramón Llull University on a project about interactive advertising on television. His research focuses on advertising and its effectiveness, media digitalization, and audience measurement. He combines academia with a 25-year career in leading advertising agencies such as Ogilvy and Havas Media, among others. He has published in high-impact journals such as Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, Revista de Comunicación, Historia y Comunicación Social, Cuadernos.info, as well as with EUNSA and Springer.
ramon.martin@upf.edu

H-index: 6
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2357-8844
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=qy6H2k4AAAAJ&hl=es
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ramon-Martin-Guart

Joan-Francesc Fondevila-Gascón
Blanquerna-Ramon Llull University. Spain.

He holds a Ph.D. in Journalism and Communication Sciences from UAB and Master's degrees in Communication Sciences, Communication Research, and Communication and Sports. He is a Full Professor at Blanquerna-Universitat Ramon Llull and serves as the principal researcher for the Research Group on Journalism and Digital Marketing and Broadband, as well as the Research Group on Innovative Monetization Systems for Digital Journalism, Marketing, and Tourism (SIMPED). He is also a researcher at the Observatory of Scientific Communication at UPF. He serves as the director of CECABLE and is the president of the Catalan Society of Communication at the Institute of Catalan Studies. He has published over 200 indexed scientific articles and has received numerous awards for his roles as a professor, researcher, manager, journalist, and writer.
joanfrancescfg@blanquerna.url.edu

H-index: 28
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6587-939X
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=i3n382EAAAAJ&hl=en
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joan-Francesc-Fondevila-Gascon
Academia.edu: https://blanquerna.academia.edu/JoanFrancescFondevilaGasc%C3%B3n

Francisco Javier Pérez-Latre
University of Navarra. Spain.

He is an Associate Professor and Academic Director of Postgraduate Programs at the Faculty of Communication at UNAV. He has served as the Director of Studies and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Communication at UNAV and as the Academic Director of the Institute of Media and Entertainment (IME) in New York. His research focuses on the humanistic foundations of communication, media management, social networks, and innovation. He has authored 11 books, 35 book chapters, and 80 scientific articles on communication published in prestigious publishers like Routledge and Springer and in journals such as the Journal of Media Business Studies, The International Journal on Media Management, El Profesional de la Información, Historia y Comunicación Social, Communication & Society, among others.
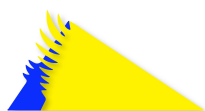perezlatre@unav.es

H-index: 21
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9844-3496
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=qE3oN_gAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=ao
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francisco-Perez-Latre
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