Involvement of stakeholders in the creation of the Advertising Degree in Universidad Europea. Intertwining the professional sector into the academic context

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Abstracts
[ES] Introducción. El objetivo principal es sentar las bases para la creación de un nuevo grado en publicidad que se adecue a las necesidades del sector. **Metodología.** Para conseguirlo, se ha llevado a cabo una investigación cualitativa con la aplicación de distintas técnicas como la revisión documental, un panel de expertos y cuestionarios con los *stakeholders* más representativos. **Resultados y conclusiones**. Se valida la hipótesis de partida por lo que se sientan las bases para un nuevo grado atendiendo a los siguientes puntos: se consolida la estructura de un grado con dos itinerarios: estrategia y creatividad; se revisan las asignaturas y los contenidos para adecuarlas a las nuevas necesidades; se amplía la internacionalización; se refuerza la educación dual y se refuerza el claustro incluyendo más profesionales.

[EN] Introduction. The main goal is to establish the grounds for creating a new degree in advertising that best meets the sector's needs. **Methodology.** We performed a qualitative research using different techniques such as documentary research, expert panel and questionnaires to the most representative stakeholders. **Results and conclusions:** the initial hypothesis is validated, therefore we set the grounds for a new degree in advertising, considering the following stages: we consolidate the structure of a degree with two itineraries: strategy and creativity; there is a review of subjects and contents to adjust them to the new needs; internationalization is extended; dual education is reinforced, as well as the faculty staff by including more teaching professionals.

Keywords
[ES] Grado de publicidad; *stakeholders*; plan de estudios; Universidad Europea.

[EN] Degree in advertising; stakeholders; study program; Universidad Europea.

Contents

1. Introduction

The implementation of CIT and the fast evolution of 2.0, with the proliferation of different channels and platforms, new usages by users and consequently a fragmentation of the audience, have led to changes in the labor market of communication, marketing and advertising. Digital transformation is influencing in companies' processes and flow charts. Advertising and communication consultancy agencies needed to adjust their organizational structures, services and professionals to new media. Specialized companies emerged, the digital agencies that, after the burst of web 2.0, they are assuming more and more relevant positions due to the increase of advertisers' digital investment, especially due to the boom of social media and mobile telephones. Due to the increasing demand, new services oriented to meet clients' communicational needs of are being offered, urging to seek experts in these areas of knowledge.

The digital revolution also imposed new game rules to companies and institutions. It is becoming more and more compelling to incorporate qualified staff who adequately attends to the publics' demands in the different communicational spaces, which entails a challenge when seeking professionals with the needed capacities and expertise. Large corporations, used to work with agencies or full-services communication consultancy companies that managed their communications in an integral manner, have witnessed how the multiplication of channels has caused a diversification of communication services towards specialized companies or outsourcing collaborators (freelances), complicating the intangibles management even more.

The new professional roles have appeared and are under a constant evolution sheltered by 2.0 in the areas of communication, journalism, advertising and marketing, united more and more by inbound marketing or brand content but with different needs and objectives. In the study performed by Inesdi, *Top 25 profesiones digitales 2016* [1] (Top 25 digital professions), 68% of job posts were offered in the field of digital marketing and social media, with the 'digital marketing manager' as the most demanded profession with 34% of job posts. The 'community manager' remains in second place, although reduced 3% compared to the previous year. Likewise, there outstand the 'digital

communication specialist' and the 'digital manager' as increasingly demanded professions. Among the trendsetter professions for the following years, the study reveals the figure of the 'chief culture officer', a person responsible for adapting the company's philosophy to the digital transformation, modifying its corporate culture to facilitate the digitalization process, without losing the firm's essence and coherence.

We are facing a new communicational reality, very different to the one experienced before the bursting of the social web, where the most important transformations do not rely in the use of the different communicational tools, but instead in a way of thinking and doing that is quite distinct, featured by knowledge.

Corporate communication is undergoing changes in all its processes and organizations and collaborators (consultancies and agencies) are experiencing it more intensely. However, university students are not being educated about this digital mutation with the speed demanded by involved stakeholders.

> "Professionals (including teaching as well as corporate communication professionals) show an evident concern about knowing how to adapt to the future and are aware they must do so. The difficulty lies in how to do it and overcoming the fact that individuals move at a (faster) pace than the pace of the educational system proceedings (which are heavier), thus producing a cognitive dissonance." (Molina and López, 2015: 63).

This situation is also dealt with by other authors. Corredor and Farfán, after a study about professional profiles in advertising, concluded that the education received by students in the Faculties of Communication is not the most adequate to incorporate to the labor market (Corredor and Farfán, 2010). In that same sense, Vivar confirms that professionals of digital communication do not have an institutionalized *corpus* of academic competencies and the market is the responsible for training and updating professionals for their tasks performance (Vivar, 2011). On his part, Aced states that professionals learn to use tools in an self-didactic manner, since there is no theoretical compendium they could rely on and where the rules are written on a rolling basis (Aced, 2010). Lastly, Castelló emphasizes that due to the development of interactive advertising actions and the burst of Social Media Marketing, it is mandatory that universities undertake a constant review of market trends in order to adapt the degree's contents (Castelló, 2012).

In the report *Formación, empleabilidad y nuevas profesiones* (Education, employability and new professions) [2] a general landscape about the Spanish labor market is provided regarding the digital economy. Among conclusions we can highlight that large companies are undergoing a digital transformation process that entails changes in the modification of staff hiring, hunting for new profiles with digital competencies and more flexible, innovative and creative behaviors. Regarding employee's education, it should be more practical and oriented to the company's needs. At this point, we find two differentiated models: the more general-oriented education, which purpose is to achieve an integral education of the student instead of adapting to business demands and, on the other, a private specialized education that is more oriented to companies, because its smaller size and bureaucracy allows it to be more flexible. The large companies state they have difficulties to find digital professionals because

these are rather scarce profiles and are rather hard to attract, since they prefer enriching projects instead of working in large-sized companies.

Considering the aforesaid, the most recent study performed by Reason Why [3] about the knowledge of advertising agency's interns is noteworthy. It points out that the graduates incorporating to the labor market do not have the knowledge needed to perform their tasks in agencies.

According to Sánchez Pozo (2008) we believe the usual mechanisms used to elaborate study programs so far are not useful and it is necessary to offer an educational plan that meets social needs.

Universidad Europea, considering this panorama, has promoted the creation of a new Degree in Advertising based on the Stakeholder or Interest-Groups Theory in order to contribute to a more honest reality and beneficial for everybody. Said theory was systematized for the first time by R. Edward Freeman, where he argues that any individual or interest group on which an organization depends for its survival might affect or be affected by the achievement of business objectives (Freeman, 1984, p.24). Later, many authors of reference have also delved into this matter and in its different typologies (Goodpaster, 1991; Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Clarkson, 1995; Mitchell, Agle and Wood, 1997; Lozano, 1999; Phillips, Freeman and Wicks, 2003; Sison, 2008; Lozano, 2009). A noteworthy aspect is that there is no generalized consensus about stakeholder's classification; therefore, the identification of interest groups in the creation of the new degree has been a much harder task.

A study performed by Gaete (2011) served as baseline to conclude that the stakeholders with the greater level of convergence in universities are the employees, clients, shareholders, governs, suppliers and the local community. Within this group, we have selected employees, clients and future suppliers as stakeholders with greater influence to develop the new degree. Namely, the staff of professors as the ones best acquainted to the study program, as well as the students' educational needs; *alumni* [4] due to their knowledge about the University, study programs and their weaknesses and advantages and the professional environment; and the professionals of the sector due to their deep knowledge of it.

2. Method

Although Universidad Europea is the Spanish university with the maximum score in employability in the international rating "QS Stars" [5] and 60% of its professors are professionals actively working in advertising and marketing agencies, this study aims to respond the following hypothesis: before an ever-changing and complex communicational reality and considering the current labor demands linked to new types of communication companies, it seems necessary to adapt the Degree of Advertising in Universidad Europea, an update that requires the point of view of all stakeholders of greater influence.

Therefore, it is essential to involve all participating stakeholders such as students, professionals of the sector and scholars.

The following main objective is deduced from the hypothesis:

Objective 1: To stablish the grounds for the creation of a new degree in advertising that meets the sector's needs.

We define the following secondary objectives:

Objective 1.1.: To analyze the adjustment to the professional reality, of every educational module belonging to the current advertising study program of the Universidad Europea.

Objective 1.2.: To assess the adjustment of competitor's study programs to the new professional profiles demanded by the market, besides the incorporation of subjects of digital and/ or technological nature.

Objective 1.3.: To review the tendencies established by non-regulated education.

Objective 1.4.: To assess the suitability of the education received regarding professional performance by graduated students.

In order to achieve objectives suggested in this research, we used a qualitative methodology relying on different techniques: open-ended questionnaires to approach the subjectivity of perceptions, two expert panels and a documentary research.

The work process was as follows:

Table of research stages in the methodological strategy

	Functions	Stakeholder analyzed	Objectives
Stage I	Internal documentary research	Scholars	objetivo 1.1
Stage II	Documentary research of competitors	Competitors	Objective 1.2 and Objective 1.3
Stage III	Questionnaire design	Alumni/ professionals	Objective 1.4
Stage IV	Conclusions	all	Objective 1
Stage V	Configuration of expert panels	Professionals	Objective 1

Fig.1: Table of research stages in the methodological strategy.

Before offering further detail about the methodological rationale, it is worth mentioning that two expert panels were conducted, the former (which will be explained thoroughly later in this same section) composed by scholars, was done in the beginning of the research and in a recurrent manner during the whole process (leading stages I, II, III and IV). The latter composed by professionals, held at the end of the complete process (it will also be explained further later in this section) and involved stage V.

Initially, we performed an exhaustive documentary review of all study programs of reference institutions teaching Advertising and Public Relations countrywide (Spain) as well as internationally (classifying and differentiating by geographical zone: Europe, North-America, South-America, Asia and Oceania) to achieve secondary objectives 1 and 2 proposed in this study.

Regarding the studies in our country, the documentary analysis was delimited, on the one hand, by university studies (degrees) offered, both by Spanish public and private universities in the academic year 16/17, according to study programs published on their websites; and also, private non university entities that offer specialization and portfolio courses. This review was done following the classification suggested by *IVIE* and *Fundación BBVA* (http://www.u-ranking.es/analisis.php).

We reviewed study programs from 38 national university institutions: 5 in Andalusia, 1 in Aragon, 3 in Castile-Leon, 9 in Catalonia, 1 in Navarre, 4 in the Valencian Community, 1 in Galicia, 1 in Balearic Islands, 1 in Canary Islands, 1 in the Basque Country, 8 in the Community of Madrid and 2 in the Region of Murcia; as well as the review of the educational offer of 6 advertising or portfolio schools.

On the other hand, we also performed a documentary analysis, emphasizing on international university studies. This review included the classifications from different rankings considering the difficulty to compare across the different regulations that govern university studies across different countries and continents: Ranking QS University Report Communication & Media Studies, UNIVERSIA Laboratorio de Internet del CINDOC (CSIC), THE (Times Higher Education) 2017, Business Insider / Linkedin.

In this case, due to the great number of entities, a sample of universities was selected using the following criterion: institutions that appear in the three rankings of reference chosen and with an homogeneous number of the different geographical areas. Therefore, we reviewed the study programs of 5 North-American institutions, 5 European institutions, 1 Australian and 4 Asian institutions.

Once stages I and II were completed, we continued with the next stage, designing two types of questionnaires (for *alumni* of the degrees in Advertising and Public Relations and for working professionals) to meet objectives 3 and 4, respectively.

In order to gain knowledge about the following issues from *alumni* of the degree in Advertising and Public Relations and the degree in Advertising Communication of Universidad Europea de Madrid, we selected a sample of 28 graduate students who were already incorporated to the labor market (some of them as employees and others as entrepreneurs, to comprise every possibility of access to said labor market):

    A.   Current working status.

    B.   Competencies to be developed from the study programs.

    C.   Education missed when incorporating to the working environment.

    D.   Modules of knowledge considered indispensable for professional activity.

    E.   Contribution of languages in university education.

The sample was selected following these criteria:

-   *Alumni* incorporated to the labor market as employees.

-   *Alumni* working as entrepreneurs (who launched their own business in the advertising sector).

- *Alumni* with different performance profiles in advertising (copy, account executive, brand specialist, art director, communication director, market researcher, events planner, community manager, graphic designer, SEO manager, packaging designer, marketing responsible).

In order to analyze the opinion of professionals-employers who incorporate new professionals to the workforce and to analyze the adjustment of the education to the post's demands, we selected a sample of 13 professionals and designed a questionnaire including the following areas:

    A.   Improvement areas of Advertising interns incorporating to the labor market.

    B.   Main competencies a graduate in Advertising must have.

C. Professional roles with greater projection and employability.

This sample was selected following these criteria:

- Actively working professionals.

- Professionals incorporating interns, at some point.

- Professionals performing all sorts of tasks within the advertising work environment (creative director, strategic planner, account director, account executive, graphic designer, audiovisual producer…).

Once these three stages were completed, we continued with stage IV and V of the methodology.

First expert panel. In order to analyze the current situation in-depth and elaborate a study program adjusted to the actual needs of employers in the advertising field, we involved professors (in advertising) teaching in the graduate's studies in Advertising Communication of Universidad Europea and configured an expert panel with the following responsibilities in its corresponding stages (figure 1):

First stage: to perform documentary analysis of the study programs valid today countrywide.

Second stage: to perform a documentary analysis of study programs valid today internationally.

Third stage: to elaborate questionnaires involving employers and *alumni*.

Fourth stage: to analyze questionnaire's results and obtain the first findings to design a study program.

Fifth stage: to compare these findings with the recommendations and contributions of the professional expert panel.

These expert professors met every 15 days, from January 2017 until July 2017.

Second expert panel. To compare the conclusions of the scholar's expert panel and stablish a consensus about the study program suggested, we invited (in July 2017) 6 actively working professionals of the sector with different posts and roles inside the advertising practice: creative director, creative and content strategy director, creative executive director, responsible of new business development and media, strategic planner and account general director. This meeting, led by the Vice-Dean of marketing and communication, followed the working scheme below with the responsibilities as follows:

1. Presentation of academic objectives as well as objectives of professional abilities development of the new study program to be designed.

2. Assessment of competencies and knowledge considered indispensable for professional profiles of the business sector by experts.

3. Prospective group dynamic in order to obtain findings about companies and organizations needs regarding the profile of new graduates, considering the current situation of companies and organizations internationally, which grants a general overview of graduates' context of practice and the kind of professionals that compose it.

4. Finally, we seek consensus in findings among participants.

As a result of consensus, we presented a study program that included the recommendations of all stakeholders in the advertising area to *Fundación para el Conocimiento Madrid I+D* (Foundation for Knowledge Madrid R+D).

3. Results

We used different methodological stages in order to analyze and obtain results to establish conclusions and draft a new study program that could be more adapted to the needs of the advertising sector compared to the previous one.

3.1. Stage I, internal documentary research.

This stage involved a thorough analysis of the study program according to the different areas of knowledge and reviewing subject by subject. Professors analyzed different issues such as the adjustment of contents proposed in every subject to the current status of the sector, (basic, transversal and specific) competencies developed in each one of them and the adjustment of technological tools and contents. We obtained the first conclusions from this early analysis, supported by the report on title accreditation as well as the recommendations and improvement plans stablished in every academic year. We observed that some of the subjects of the study program from 2008 were still up-to-date, although they required a more technological orientation. However, others should disappear considering that their contents and competencies were obsolete and did not adjust to the professional practice.

3.2. Stage II, documentary research of competitors.

This stage involved the thorough analysis of study programs, both study programs corresponding to university degrees (national and international), as well as private schools of specialization and/ or portfolio. We decided to include these considering that in the advertising sector, it is feasible to work without having a university degree. Often these schools entail a mandatory step to access the professional sector.

The first analyses showed that the degree's study programs, in the case of Spanish universities, are mainly theoretical and follow the concept of "university", understood as universal knowledge. Especially, in the case of public universities, most of contents observed were utterly theoretical and often distanced from the professional sector. Overall, the case of the study programs of Universidad Francisco de Vitoria were worth mentioning, which implemented the modification of the degree in 2014 considerably updating contents (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, 2014). However, we detected deficiencies regarding the subjects related most with the advertising sector.

In the case of portfolio schools, we observed that the courses were oriented towards specialization and professionalization. The main characteristics analyzed of these study programs are structured in two axes: on the one hand, the teaching periods of these study programs are lower and concentrate into six months (depending on the school and specialized program); and on the other, the subjects' contents are absolutely flexible, complying with minimums to adapt to the moment. Furthermore, this second axis is benefited by the fact that all teaching professors are also actively working professionals, allowing them to offer a steadily updated content and know where and who needs interns anytime in order to increase job placement.

In the following table we can observe a comparison of the situation in both cases in terms of advantages and drawbacks offered by both, that were considered when analyzing subjects' contents.

VS

UNIVERSITIES	SCHOOLS
Offer titles	Offer job placement
More general-oriented knowledge	Specialization
Slow and laborious when implementing change	Flexible, fast-paced and adapted to the sector
Teaching-oriented professors	Professional-oriented professors
Young and inexperienced students	Adult students with clear ideas
Several years duration	More intense and short courses

Fig.2: Table comparing advertising studies in universities vs. portfolio schools.

Likewise, some of the international entities were analyzed for different reasons. On the one hand, in our search for excellence, we needed this review as a mean of tendencies analysis. On the other, because internationalization is one of the values of UE philosophy.

From this detailed analysis we concluded that international entities value the development of interdisciplinary competencies in creativity and strategy. In the same way they outstand, the business dimension needed for future graduates of the degree in Advertising, as well as the development of competencies such as entrepreneurial spirit and innovation. We observe that, in these study programs, the subjects targeted to develop communicational skills gain relevance and theoretical subjects focused to understanding the origin of communication (persuasion, multicultural, global, etc.) increase in relevance. In addition, from this documentary review, we concluded it was necessary to include contents related with data management and its analysis (big data and visualization) in the future study program.

3.3. Stage III. Analysis of the sector, questionnaire design.

3.3.1. Analysis of results obtained from surveyed professionals employers.

The main objectives of this questionnaire aimed to gather information about the following issues:

A. Areas of improvement of Advertising intern students incorporating to the labor market.

B. Main competencies a graduate in Advertising must meet.

C. Professional roles with greater projection and employability.

Analyzing the improvement areas, we realized that the two main problems detected in interns are quite related with the theoretical concepts and their application into practice. Most part of interviewed professionals concluded that these interns were not aware of the internal functioning of advertising

processes, and lack of a specific training about the responsibilities involving each one of said processes and the departments they interact with. Likewise, they evidence a noticeable lack of habit when it comes to advertising-like thinking, by adapting creativity and strategy to the advertiser's needs and resources.

Fig.3: Deficiencies or weaknesses detected in interns

Likewise, we noticed that the following four weaknesses: performing internships in their area of knowledge, autonomy, impatience and the lack of realism when facing work, curiously corresponded to personal competencies and abilities, instead than to theoretical concepts. This reinforced the idea promulgated in Bologna about evaluating not only the level of theoretical knowledge, but also the competencies obtained in each one of subjects. These competencies structured around three axes based on the Tuning process: disciplinary, instrumental and attitudinal (Montero, M, 2010). And in this last group we identified the greatest incidence in the case of professionals-employers.
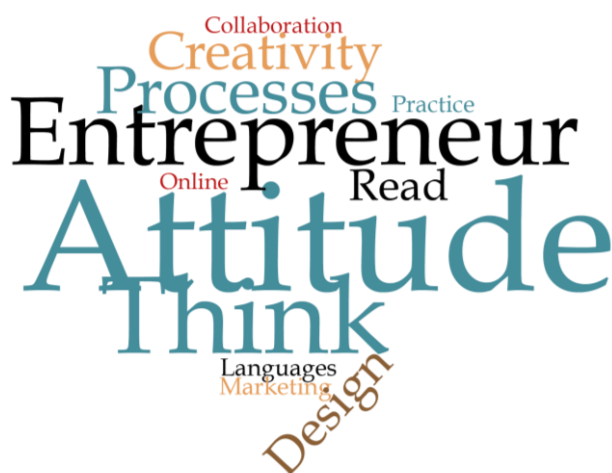

Fig.4: Attributes or competencies required for interns

The analysis of questionnaires showed that competencies were prioritized again over theoretical knowledge on marketing, languages, the online world in all its modalities and expertise in design programs.

However, it was also noticed that some highly demanded items had a greater relationship with the theoretical issue. Again, there emerges the need of having the capacity to think advertising-like and to be acquainted with the working processes and the responsibilities of every position.
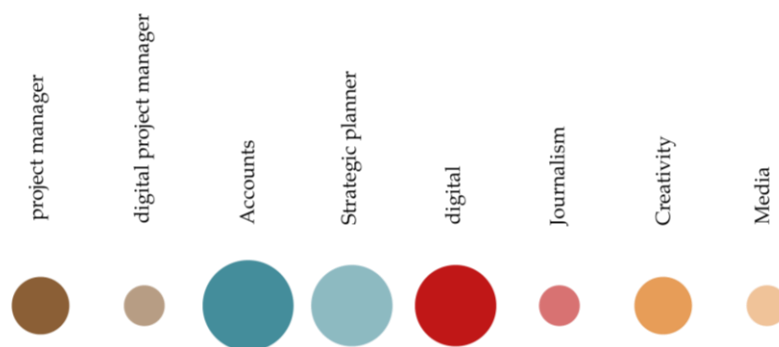
Professions or specializations with higher employability index in the advertising sector.

Fig.5: Professions or specializations with higher employability index in the advertising sector.

In order to better address the sector's demands we analyzed the roles with higher employability. Considering the opinion of interviewed professionals, we confirmed that the accounts department is still one of the main focus of job placements, as well as strategic planning (planner). Likewise, the boom of the digital was emphasized as one of the greatest specializations in the sector. This coincides with the report elaborated by Randstad Professionals published in January 2017, which states there is an increasing need of professionals specialized on big data, business intelligence and IoT (internet of things) [6] (Randstad, 2017).
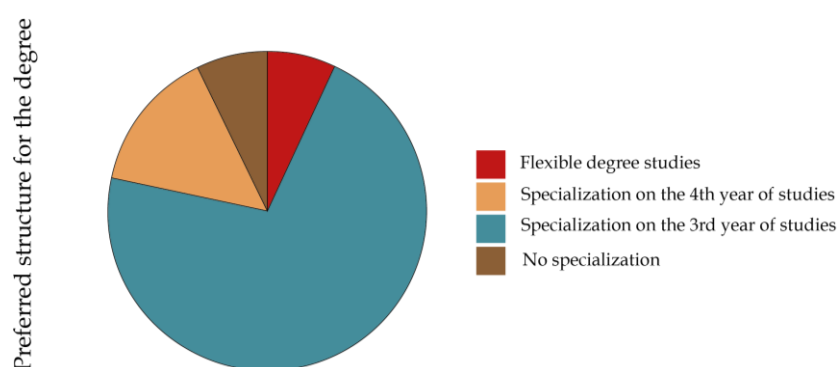

Fig.6: Structure preferred by professionals for the creation of a degree

There is a huge debate in the different forums of the sector about the dichotomy between what Concha Wert, director of the Creatives Club, calls thinkers and doers. And overall, between the liquid professionals Daniel Solana talks about, paraphrasing Zygmunt Bauman (multidisciplinary adaptives),

and concrete specialists. In the case of Universidad Europea, we already had degree studies with two specialization itineraries. Furthermore, in the documentary review and in the analysis of the different degrees both national and international, we confirmed this was a tendency.

Therefore, four possible degree itineraries were stablished:

a) A degree offering two differentiated itineraries from the third academic year: one in Advertising Creativity and another one in Strategy/ Advertising management.

b) A degree offering two differentiated itineraries from the fourth academic year: one in Creative Advertising and another one in Strategy/ Advertising management.

c) A degree without specialties with a more general-oriented/ integral education.

d) Free proposals from professionals.

Analyzing this issue, we observed that 85.7% of interviewees considered as absolutely necessary a first part of general-oriented and common content for all students and a second part of specialization in the different fields or areas of the profession. However, 71.42% inclined for a specialization in the third academic year, keeping the two first years for general-oriented education and the two last years focused on creativity or strategy.

It is worth mentioning that 7.14% of interviewees suggested, if circumstances allowed, to generate a flexible degree that enabled a much more customized education.
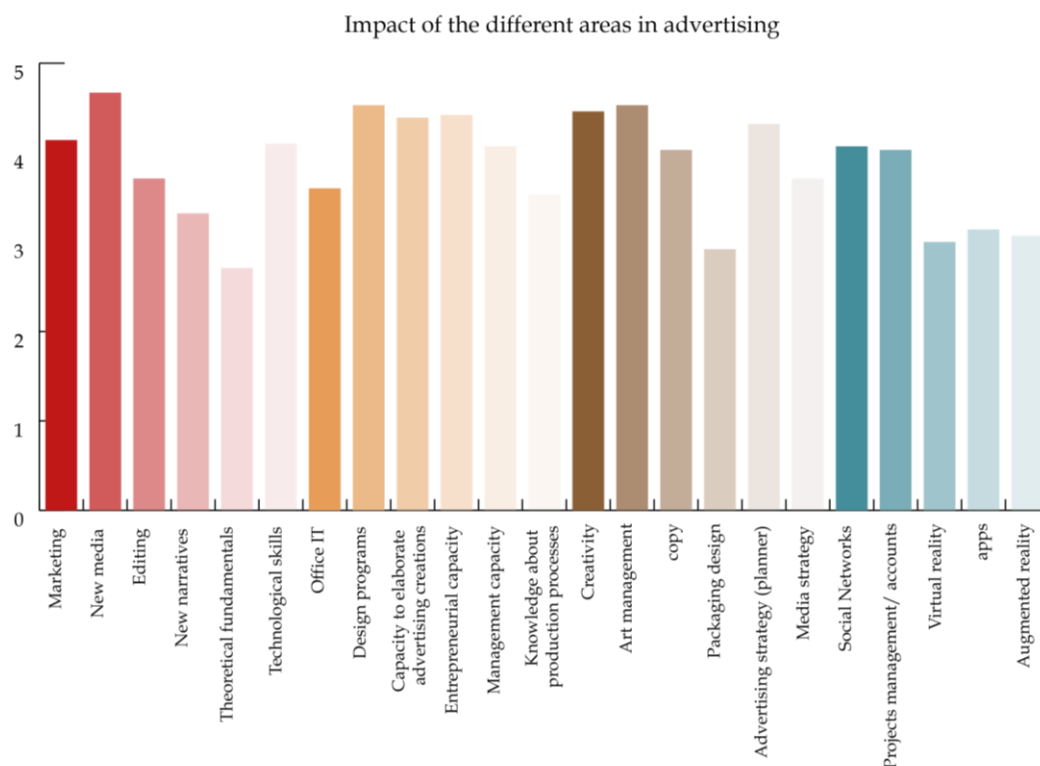

Fig.7: Relevance of the different areas in advertising

The most significant data obtained about the different areas with more relevance on advertising refer to the theoretical issue. With a score of 2.71 over 5, the Theoretical Fundamentals were considered one of the least relevant issues in advertising by far. Something contradicting conclusions obtained in earlier issues about attributes and deficiencies detected in interns.

Supporting this paradox, there is the fact that the sector scored the learning of design programs and art direction 4.53 out of 5 or knowledge of new media a 4.67 out of 5.

3.3.2. Analysis of results obtained from surveyed *alumni*

In the moment of the study to set the grounds for a new degree we especially considered the opinion of actively working professionals who were former students in the UEM. Their view gathers market's requirements and their perception about the degree or bachelor studies.

Fig. 8: What would you change in your education

Therefore, the first investigations structured on identifying the deficiencies or lacks in their education and what issues they would change or improve. The three most relevant arising themes were: the need for more practical subjects or with a theoretical content much more applicable to the professional environment, more specific; a greater specialization in the field each one developed in; and, naturally, a greater focus towards the digital world, in all its modalities. Something that was equally detected in documentary reviews and the competitors' analysis.
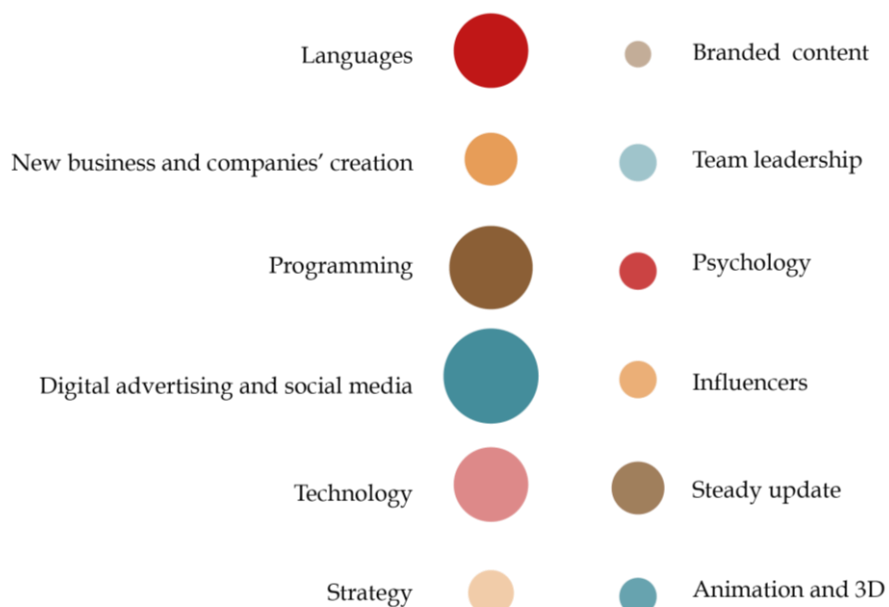
Fig. 9: What knowledge will be needed the next years

We investigated about the future of the sector and the knowledge needed to practice the advertising profession in any of its facets. We observed that most of it should be related to the digital environment and social media. Something that confirms the opinion of interviewed professionals, who ensured that the professions with higher employability in the sector were built around the digital.

Likewise, education in languages was considered an essential issue in education, at least during the studying period. And considering that, internationally, many foreign schools or universities teach part of their degree in English, we delved into the issue by inquiring about the language used to teach in the degree studies.
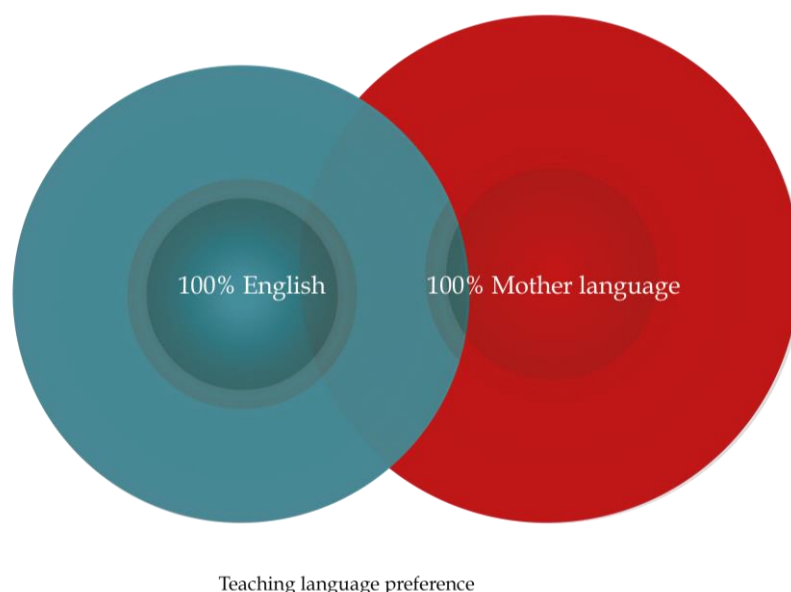
Teaching language preference

Fig. 10: Language of the degree studies

Although most responses seemed to tip the scales towards teaching a degree 100% in the mother language, the truth is that the difference between both stances was not substantial, there was only a difference of 14% between them.

Since the teaching of a second and even a third language is absolutely necessary, we also investigated about the need of having international stays in order to implement knowledge and contribute to the linguistic development of every student (as well as widening vital experiences, something that is very necessary in the professional future also).
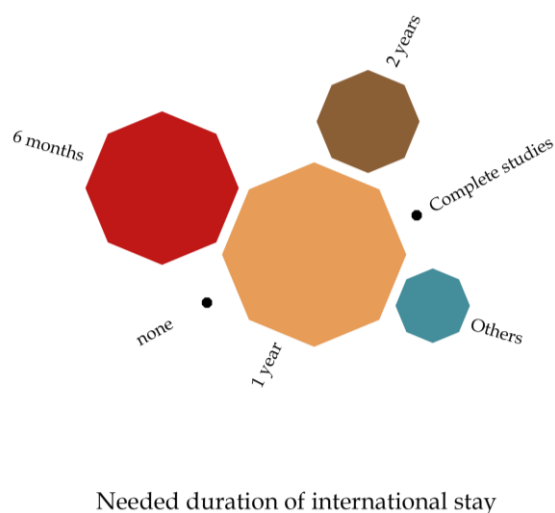

Needed duration of international stay

Fig. 11: Duration of the international stay

The majority's proposal included international stays of a period between 6 months and one year, preferably the latter. In order to settle the language and ensure a steady and enriching experience.

3.4. Stage V. Analysis of results obtained from expert panels

A schematic draft of the degree design was elaborated after the conclusions obtained on stage IV, which was subjected to the assessment by a new expert panel of professionals-employers. In general, conclusions were quite positive. Experts coincided that both structures as well as subjects proposed had a great relevance. And the adjustments and assessments offered as improvement, focused mainly in the positioning of specific subjects in different courses in order to adapt best to the student's intellectual maturity.

The main reflection suggested by these professionals is that it is essential for the profession that schools and universities delve into the knowledge of the type of advertising agencies currently in the market and the work flow processes in each one of them.

Despite the specialization from the third course, they considered of great relevance to pay attention to the transmedia education regarding two basic pillars: advertising production and 360° strategy and creativity. Professionals concluded that this education must be offered to all students, in the higher courses, independently of the specialty selected.

Regarding subjects' specific contents, there was a special emphasis in offering students all tools needed in the digital environment in order to implement the profession. As well as a deepening in the big data, data analysis and processing, and also the graphic representation and visualization of data. And, naturally, in the research of tendencies applied to all fields of the profession and adapted to each one of the disciplines.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Considering the characteristics introduced and developed in the study programs, methodology and competencies, the degree in advertising aims to gather the necessary attention to humanistic and transversal subjects of the European faculties, comprising large areas of knowledge, together with the more practical view in the education of communication professionals in the American faculties, where empiricism grounds their training.

In addition to these academic reasons, we should add other ones of scientific nature. The complexity of the society of knowledge requires not only rigor in professional's education, but also studies that can explain the persuasive communicative processes using specific and suitable methodologies. Likewise, experimentation must lead, in our area of knowledge, to the construction of innovative models in the creation of advertising messages, the use of communication tools, media studies or analysis of impacts. Therefore, the new advertising degree, must integrate advertising tasks with the global environment of creativity and strategy where the graduate will practice the profession, with competency and labor projection.

The first stage of the study offered the following conclusions: the structure of the 2008 study program, with two specializations (creativity and strategy) was still valid and seemed to be the perfect backbone to offer the optative possibilities. Subjects like Creative Thinking, Persuasive Communication or

Advertising Strategy (among some of them) are still necessary to educate future professionals. However, it seems necessary to include further technological content in a transversal manner in many of the subjects and include new ones educating for the new roles of the professional sector (digital marketing or usability design).

In the second stage of the study we focused in achieving two objectives. On the one hand, to analyze competitors and the suitability of their study programs. And on the other, to analyze tendencies in the non-regulated education and oriented towards specialization. We obtained the following findings:

- Many study programs of the remaining universities were not updated and had a noticeably theoretical load with scarce practical application. Therefore, we considered it was necessary to keep that distance we already reached with the incorporation of the Degree of 2008, and to keep betting on the applied theory.

- The main advantage of the non-regulated education of schools of professional specialization or portfolio schools emerges from the combination of two essential issues: that they are flexible and fast when it comes to modifying subjects and masterclass contents and that professors are professionals. This means they are steadily being updated and as a consequence, progress jointly with the sector's evolution. Therefore, we conclude it was necessary to keep having a very close link with the business sector and continue to supervise the content and update of every subject on an annual basis.

- And from the analysis of the international study programs we conclude it was necessary to continue influencing in the teaching of competencies related to creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

In the third stage of the study we aimed to analyze the adjustment of education received to professional performance. Hence, from surveyed professional employers and *alumni* we obtained the following conclusions:

- Considering these deficiencies identified by professionals about contents regarding advertising processes and teaching about 'advertising thinking', to conceptualize adequately and structure creative ideas in an optimum manner, we deduced that the theoretical education, especially when it is closely related to its practical application in the professional world, is not only absolutely necessary but also one of the current scarcities of our educational model. Nevertheless, the theory should always be applicable.

- Regarding the assessment of study program's internships by professionals, it was quite paradoxical that the sector considered it was necessary for students to do internships in each one of the departments before their internships inside the company. Thus, we concluded that it was necessary to grant a greater relevance to the work in the Faculty's laboratories. And also, to keep implementing and improving dual education.

- We observed that professionals granted attitudinal competencies an even higher value than academic education, therefore we concluded they should be reinforced across the degree studies. Moreover, we considered we should emphasize on the following: positive attitude, entrepreneurial capacity and enthusiasm.

- The professional sector insisted especially about the digital environment, especially everything related to SEO, SEM, augmented reality and virtual reality. This was the reason why this issue was

considered for profiling the first draft of the new degree, because digital contents are transversal and impact several disciplines in the advertising sector.

This was reinforced by the assessments of *alumni*, because we concluded that we not only needed to reaffirm the two years of common subjects and the two years of specialization, but we also should review the subjects taught as well as the content of some eminently digital subjects already in the program in order to update them to the current context. In such a way to avoid detriment of necessary subjects to cover the deficiencies detected in interns regarding the advertising-thinking capacity and the development of the sector and advertising processes.

- When suggesting the new degree, we were aware that the teaching in English as well as the mandatory international stay abroad (between 6 months and a year) gained a fundamental tenor and should be considered in the new study program and its application.

- The proposal of creating a flexible degree with an adapted and personalized teaching was a very relevant clarification, although quantitatively low. Therefore, we considered it when generating optative subjects (both in quantity as well as in content).

We can conclude that, although professionals seek recently graduated individuals who are more focused in the concept of 'thinkers', with reflexive abilities and wider and universal knowledge, the profession requires 'doers'. Namely, it is necessary that the new degree not only educates professionals able to generate ideas, creators, but they also must have at least the minimum abilities to be able to produce said ideas with a certain elegance. This is something we must keep in mind when creating the new study program.

Finally, after the expert panel in the fifth stage, we formalized academic itineraries adjusted to the sector's professional needs obtained from the findings mentioned earlier:

Mention 1: Creativity. This itinerary emerges as a response to the resolute demand of creative professionals in the global sphere of advertising. Creativity understood as the individuals' skills that allow them to offer original, intelligent and imaginative responses. Creative skills determine the possibility of offering noticeable proof of originality in the acts of an individual. It is one of the basic pillars of a successful advertising communication. Therefore, our degree will work and develop the creative personality depending on the combination of its characteristic features. Creativity will be conceived from the laboratory perspective, creativity 360º, including ability and behavior, paying attention to activities such as invention, elaboration, organization, composition, planning, etc. The concept of creativity will be understood through the immersion in the new artistic tendencies in advertising from the perspective of persuasive and conscious communication. Conceptually, we will perform an academic and competencies task educating creative individuals, who are not content with paralyzing the world, with freezing it and stabilize it, but instead that they could be able to face the unknowable future of advertising communication with confidence; that they could be certain enough about their perception as to be able to improvise in a situation that never existed before. We will approach the spheres focusing the education of the professional specialized in advertising creativity using all kind of platforms, from conceptualization in storytelling and visualization of the advertising idea until its adjustment and integration to the different media.

Mention 2: Strategy. This itinerary emerges as response to the resolute demand of strategist professionals in the global sphere of advertising. Strategy understood as the ability to investigate, analyze information and with it, be able to define the fundamental axes of communication campaigns,

offering short, and also middle and long term brand strategy solutions, in media planning, and that serve as backbone for the prolonged development and the present and future positioning of an account and a brand, in the fulfilment of strategic objectives for said brand suggested by the advertiser. And be able to do it in all kinds of organizations, public and private, profit-oriented or not. Of course, the deductive application of the digital strategy includes a necessary and pioneering concept of strategy laboratory as a reference to the systemic ability for integrating all aspects of communication, both in its intangible nature as well as in its functional and digital business relationships, and the ability to stablish constructive neuromarketing dialogs with the different stakeholders of advertising, both in-house and external.

The incorporation of these itineraries, and the subjects included therein, involve the incorporation of subjects specialized in the professional sector and in which we understand a greater level of specialization is needed, besides being subjects reflecting the demand of professionals in the sector.

Likewise, we suggest a global view of the degree in Advertising as an expression of the integrating, global and recognizable value of all disciplines related to the advertising area, and there outstand 6 thematic spheres present in the degree proposal:

A) Fundamentals on communication and advertising: educates a professional with a wide theoretical background, that allows the individual to be competent in the persuasive field of any advertising environment.

B) Technologies of communication and advertising: the professional is trained in order to know technologies, allowing the individual to quickly learn and assimilate changes produced in this area, easily coping with the different persuasive environments.

C) Advertising strategy: the professional is educated with a global brand criterion, is able to elaborate strategic media plans, and with a strategic view of all his or her decisions.

D) Advertising creativity: the professional is trained in creative and divergent thinking, allowing the individual to learn and assimilate the keys of advertising production.

E) Marketing: the professional is educated on a wide marketing-like theoretical background, allowing the individual to assimilate and apply marketing basics, and the new neuromarketing tendencies.

F) Corporate communication: a professional is trained on communication management and integral communication, deriving in the professional management of the different forms of Public Relations and events.

With this degree we aim to respond the challenges of the society described earlier and with which we also intend to reinforce the new knowledge being generated in the business environment, through the technological innovation and the development of new formats and advertising communication formulas adapted to this new society.

All these conclusions are synthesized in the operational model of working procedure for the creation of a new study program shown on figure 12. Its purpose is to serve as inspiration and guideline for other entities in order to cope with the involvement of stakeholders in the design of a new Degree in Advertising.
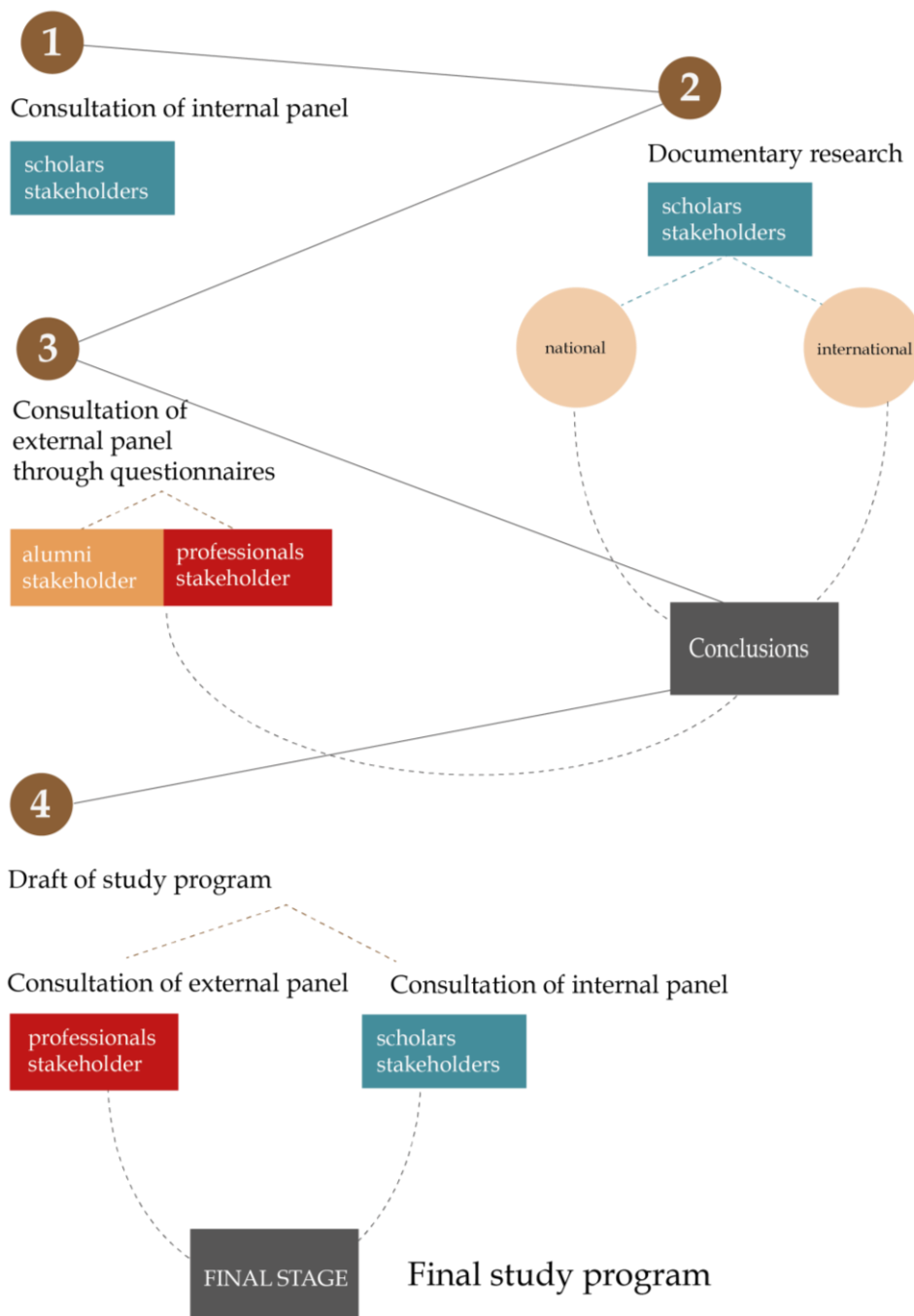
Figure 12: Assessment procedure for a new study program.

5. Notes

[1] In this study, there is an analysis of the 25 most demanded professions currently in Spain. INESDI (2016). *Top 25 profesiones digitales 2016*. Author. Retrieved on November 27, 2016, at http://www.inesdi.com/descargas/Top-25-Profesiones-Digitales-2016.pdf

[2] Published in 2016 and elaborated for *Asociación Española de la Economía Digital* (*Adigital*), the Social European Fund and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. Retrieved on April 3, 2016, at https://www.adigital.org/informes-estudios/formacion-empleabilidad-nuevas-profesiones-espana/

[3] Website about tendencies and research about Marketing, Advertising, Business and Technology.

[4] *Alumni* are former students who graduated in Universidad Europea and who are part of the institutions' former students group, formed as a club to share experiences, keep in touch and enjoy different advantages offered by the institution.

[5] The ranking of universities *QS World University Rankings®,* elaborated by the consultancy agency Quacquarelli Symonds was published for the first time in the year 2004 and it is updated annually. The index measures academic reputation, employability reputation, professor-student's ratio, professor citations score, ratio of international students and ratio of international professors.

[6] Term coined by Kevin Ashton to refer to the fact that daily objects can be connected with Internet.

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