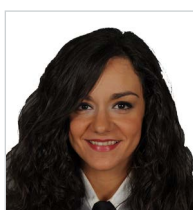


## Education for the management of social networks in communication degrees in Spain and its suitability for skills demanded by organizations

### *La formación para la gestión de las redes sociales en los grados de comunicación en España y su adecuación a las competencias demandadas por las organizaciones*



**Mariché Navío Navarro.** She works on different projects in the online communication and digital marketing sector, combining her teaching and research work with her professional activity. She holds a PhD, completed at CEU San Pablo University, a Master's Degree in Interactive Marketing & New Media (IEBS Business School), and a degree in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication, as well as a Degree in New Technologies (CEU-San Pablo). As a professor, she teaches different subjects regarding online communication, marketing and digital advertising within the Digital Communication Degree at CEU San Pablo University. In addition, she is a professor of several Master's Degree programs at this institution and at the Open University of Catalonia. In her business career, she is co-founder and director of startup companies such as Dygeat, Communitools.com and Funadtics.

Universidad CEU San Pablo, España  
mariajose.navionavarro@ceu.es  
ORCID: 0000-0002-3511-4505



**Laura González-Díez.** Full professor at the University CEU San Pablo of Madrid. PhD in Information Sciences from Complutense University of Madrid (UCM). Director of the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising of the Faculty of Humanities and Communication Science (since 2015). Main researcher with the emerging ICOIDI group (Research in Communication through Image and Design). Her research revolves around Digital Communication, the design of periodicals and the typographic evolution of Spanish newspapers and magazines. She has directed 11 doctoral theses related to these topics. In addition, between July 2015 and July 2017 she was Director of SAI-CA (Research Support Services - Audiovisual Centre) at CEU-San Pablo University.

Universidad CEU San Pablo, España  
design@ceu.es  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1209-8845



**Belén Puebla-Martínez.** Professor at Rey Juan Carlos University (URJC). PhD in Communication Science for the same University. Belen holds a Degree in Journalism (2005) and Audiovisual Communication (2007) from URJC. She is a specialist in the study of fictional Spanish television, media analysis, especially regarding the press and television, the study of analytical methods of research in social communication, teaching methodologies applied to teacher learning and to the analysis of social network use as a form of communication, as well as other lines of research.

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, España  
belen.puebla@urjc.es  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1481-4238

#### **How to cite this article:**

Navío Navarro, M.; González-Díez, L. y Puebla-Martínez, B. (2018). Education for the management of social networks in communication degrees in Spain and its suitability for skills demanded by organizations. *Doxa Comunicación*, 26, 127-143.

Received: 27/04/2018 - Accepted: 29/04/2018

Recibido: 27/04/2018 - Aceptado: 29/04/2018

#### Abstract:

The main objective of this research paper is to carry out a detailed analysis of the educational curriculum of social media management in communication degrees at Spanish universities within the framework of the EHEA, as well as to verify whether the curricular content and methodology meet the needs of the labor market linked to different job profiles related to community management. Regarding the research methodology used, three analysis techniques have been selected to achieve the proposed objectives and to verify the hypotheses, and for this reason we have used a methodological triangulation for the study in order to give validity to the results. These results have been grouped according to different criteria, from the specificity and nature of the subjects analyzed to the course in which they are taught. In this analysis, we have attempted to determine whether the subjects that include theoretical or practical contents regarding social media communication allow for the acquisition of the specific skills required for optimum employability of graduates in professions related to the management of marketing communications on these platforms. All of the above has led us to the main conclusion, which is that Spanish universities do not include specific subjects in social networks in a cross-curricular way in their degree programs. Furthermore, we must mention the fact that universities that offer specific subjects related to social networks do not adapt the design of these educational programs to the needs of companies in terms of the content they include and the skills they help their students to develop.

#### Keywords:

University-industry collaboration, university degree, communication, community manager, social networks.

#### Resumen:

*El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo principal realizar un análisis pormenorizado de la oferta formativa sobre la gestión de redes sociales en los grados de comunicación en la universidad española, en el marco del EEES, y comprobar si se adecúa en materia curricular y metodológica a las necesidades del mercado de los distintos perfiles laborales propios del community management. En cuanto a la metodología, se han seleccionado tres técnicas de análisis para la obtención de los objetivos propuestos y la verificación de las hipótesis, de tal manera que proporcionemos al estudio una triangulación metodológica que dé validez a los resultados obtenidos. Estos resultados se han agrupado atendiendo a diferentes criterios, desde la especificidad y carácter de las asignaturas analizadas hasta el curso en el que se imparten. En el análisis, se determina si las materias que incluyen contenidos teóricos o prácticos referidos a la comunicación en redes sociales permiten la adquisición de las competencias específicas necesarias para la óptima empleabilidad de los egresados en profesiones vinculadas a la gestión de la comunicación de marketing en estas plataformas. Todo ello ha permitido obtener como principal conclusión que las universidades españolas no incluyen materias específicas sobre redes sociales de manera transversal en los planes de estudios de sus titulaciones, a lo que se une el hecho de que las universidades que sí ofertan asignaturas específicas sobre redes sociales no adaptan el diseño de estos programas formativos a las necesidades de las empresas en cuanto a los contenidos que incluyen y las competencias que desarrollan en sus alumnos.*

#### Palabras clave:

*Relación universidad-empresa, título universitario, comunicación, community manager, redes sociales, social media*

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of the World Wide Web to the so-called web 2.0 allowed sites and instruments that were housed therein to possess an interactive layer (O'Reilly, 2005), something that was unknown until that time (García Estévez, 2012). This social dimension of the web in this second stage of development led users to interact with each other through virtual platforms, which generated interconnected social networks in digital environments. Among the most relevant types of sites in this web 2.0 environment were social media (Rodríguez Fernández, 2013), also called social networking sites (SNS) or social media, which were highlighted by the multidirectional communication they offered people (García Aretio, 2007). As pointed out by García Estévez (2012: 1), "The social web represented a before and after for the entire society in all spheres of life. From the most personal and intimate scenes to those of the professional and academic level". Institutions, immersed in this process of change, had to adapt to this new form of interrelation between individuals in order to respond to their social, economic, technological and communication needs (Huijboom *et al.*, 2009).

All organizations, both public and private, were faced with the need to adapt to a type of public that had not existed until then (Herrerros Laviña, 2013). These users looked for a *P2P*<sup>1</sup> relationship, from equal to equal, based on personal communication in which they felt that someone was listening (Redondo and Rojas, 2013). The new market, in which very different types of stakeholders<sup>2</sup> converged, required that these transactional relationships in connection with brands took place in the same channels in which the interested parties were found: social media and 2.0 platforms. Companies with more or less success began a process of transformation that exceeded the limits of external and internal communication (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger, 2008) in order to revolutionise the business model (Rodríguez Fernández, 2013) as well as the very notion of the marketing concept. In this context, organizations have become aware of the importance of being part of the virtual communities that surround their brands, and the discipline of community management has emerged, which is in charge of the creation, monitoring, management and analysis of social networks composed of these users (Moreno, 2014). Professionals such as social media strategists or community managers, among others, appear to satisfy the needs of brands in designing their communication strategies in social networks, or in implementing actions and managing conversations, respectively (Mejía, 2014). Now that we are in the beginning stage of this situation, the lack of experts covering these new vacancies in communications departments is resulting in many companies having to look for profiles such as those of journalists, publicists, and specialists in corporate communication or marketing, to give a few examples. Many others leave the management of their social media in the hands of interns; these internship positions are usually occupied by students of Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations, Audiovisual Communication, Marketing and Computer Engineering. However, in a short period of time, the concept of community management as a key element in the digital communication of institutions has resulted in the professionalization of the sector, and the demand for true experts in the management of social networks has started (Domingo, 2016). Thus, a multitude of courses, postgraduate degrees, and master's degrees have appeared in order to promote the professional training of these new communication professionals (Barrios Rubio and Zambrano Ayala, 2014).

At the same time, the university as a social institution has entered into a process of transformation that has continued to this day. On one hand, Spanish universities are immersed in a process of adaptation in order to be aligned with Europe policy within the framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Rué, 2007). On the other hand, higher education must satisfy new labour demands in the field of communication, as these professions require human capital with specialized knowledge (Universia, 2013). Moreover, the university as an institution faces new challenges regarding its teaching methodologies, as current generations of students, being digital natives, demand educational models that place them at the centre of a more open learning process (Adaime, Binder and Piscitelli, 2010) focused on the development of instrumen-

---

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation P2P refers to the peer-to-peer concept, or peer-to-peer network, which indicates computer networks where there are no permanent PC clients and servers but a set of nodes that act in the same way, or in other words, that work as both clients and servers with regard to the remaining nodes in those networks (Steinmetz and Wehrle, 2005). The use of this term has recently transcended the field of digital communication to include the tendency of users or consumers to trust in and be influenced more by the messages, recommendations and opinions that come from their peers or equals (within social networks) rather than by the messages emitted from companies and brands (Mootee, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Here we use the term stakeholder in the broad sense of the word proposed by Ed Freeman in 1983, which includes all groups and/or individuals upon which an organization depends for its survival, in addition to all of those groups and/or individuals who may affect, or who are affected by, the achievement of the objectives of that organization (IESE, 2009).

tal competencies (Díaz Barriga, 2008). Along these lines, this research aims to discover whether university undergraduate degrees in Spain adapt their curricula as well as methodology to the needs of the market regarding the different labour profiles of community management.

## 2. Definition of the research issue

The problem to be addressed in this research begins by first defining both theoretically and empirically the competencies and knowledge demanded by organizations in Spain for professional profiles specialized in the management of marketing communication through social media channels. Secondly, with regard to undergraduate studies, we intend to analyse the extent to which Spanish universities are capable of satisfying the demand for professionals by offering educational programs that respond to the needs of organizations and that adapt to the learning characteristics of the generations of students who currently access this type of study: digital natives in the context of the European Higher Education Area.

On the theoretical side, there are numerous publications that analyse the competencies, roles, tasks and skills of the different professional profiles that specialize in communication through social networks. However, we find a gap in terms of the specific definition of these jobs by working professionals from Spanish organizations that include these roles in their organizational chart. In this regard, existing investigations are based solely on the profile of the community manager in very specific regions, such as the *Comunidad Foral de Navarra* (Chartered Autonomous Region of Navarra) and *País Vasco* (Basque Country), both in Spain (Elorriaga, 2013), as well as in Guatemala (Tobar, 2015). In this way, it has been necessary to study the current professional requirements of companies in Spain when employing this type of communication professional, as this will determine the specific education required.

Within the empirical area, there is a large amount of research that has studied the influence of social networks on marketing communication. This interest is demonstrated by the existence of a vast amount of literature that covers many aspects of the topic, such as the background and consequences of this type of communication, uses of social media, persuasion, etc. These numerous perspectives still leave a gap when it comes to researching the academic education that these professionals require. However, we consider that at the present time, in order to satisfy the labour market demand for this type of work, many institutions offer courses in communication in social networks in highly diverse formats: masters and postgraduate degrees, monographic courses of varying academic loads, seminars, certificates, etc. In this heterogeneous ecosystem, we find a lack of published studies to mark the boundaries of the specific core content that any education in social network management should include in its curriculum. Furthermore, current Spanish universities are in a process of change resulting from their integration into the European Higher Education Area. In undergraduate studies, this transformation has led to the redefinition of programs and curricula for their adaptation to Europe standards (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2003). With this change, new undergraduate university degrees have emerged as a result of two factors: one, the harmonization of traditional education to the European university framework, and two, the response of higher education to the demands of the labour market that has arisen in recent years. Even though there are numerous publications that analyse this transformation of the Spanish university, we find a gap in the research related to its adaptation to the specific area of Communication degrees that have content for education in social network management.

Our need to carry out this research starts not only from the theoretical and empirical gap that currently exists, but also for an additional pragmatic reason. This type of teaching should not be viewed only as a number of specialized subjects to be taken into account as part of a Master's or Postgraduate Degree program, but as cross-curricular education in all curricula in the field of communication, given the presence and influence of social media channels in the professional fields under the umbrella of degrees in Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations, Audiovisual Communication, and of course, Digital Communication and Multimedia. This is mainly due to the fact that in the first place, this type of communication through social media has not yet reached maturity (Mejía, 2014), and second, the university system is still immersed in the redefinition of its role in the current context (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2010). Despite the lack of studies, many communication faculties in Spain already provide their students with education in social networks. These are either carried out as independent subjects dedicated exclusively to social media or as content included in broader subjects. In this way, from a practical perspective, it is important to resolve this gap in academic research in order to gain knowledge about the current programs of Spanish degrees in social networks. With this information, we can approach the educational reality of students who will be employed in the future as community managers or social media strategists, as well as in other positions, and determine the shortcomings of the Spanish university system in this type of education. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, there is a large amount of research for which the object of study is the social network in universities. This consolidated interest in determining the influence of social media on the university institution has resulted in publications that analyse the phenomenon from the perspective of the creation of virtual learning environments, multidirectional interaction of students, the perception of students and teachers regarding social learning networks, etc. However, with the exception of the communication by Balandrón and Correyero (2010) with regard to the profile of the community manager, research related to the creation and management of social networks as a specific subject of study in Communication degrees offered in Spain have not been found.

Therefore, in this investigation we start from the hypothesis that the Communication Faculties of Spanish Universities offer academic programs that do not respond to the demands of the current labour market regarding professionals who specialize in communication through social media.

### 3. Methodology used in the research

Three analysis techniques have been chosen in order to accomplish the proposed objectives and the verification of the hypothesis in such a way that we provide the study with a methodological triangulation that gives validity to the results obtained. The analysis has been carried out chronologically in the following order:

- Regarding the quantitative techniques employed, we used content analysis of academic and professional publications related to the definition of the roles and skills of the professional profiles of community manager and social media strategist. This research method allowed us to gain knowledge in two areas. Firstly, the ideal characteristics for these professional roles, and secondly, valuable information for the definition of the competencies that we will analyse using the research method that follows: in-depth interviews.

- With regard to the qualitative technique, we used in-depth interviews with professionals working in the field of social network communication in order to obtain a definition, from their perspective, of the competencies, tasks, roles, knowledge and skills that they as professionals require from those in charge of social media management. With this technique, we have been able to determine the demands of Spanish companies and organizations with regard to this type of professional.
- The quantitative technique used was content analysis of all the teacher's guides in the communication degrees in Spain regarding those subjects that include content in their curriculum that is either partially or completely theoretical or practical and related to social network communication.
- By doing so, our purpose was to determine the educational programs that were offered in the academic year 2016-2017 in all of the universities located in Spain, whether public or private, and whether they provided face-to-face or online education for educating professionals in social media communication. The objective was to determine subsequently the existing degree of adequacy between the programs offered and the organizational demands previously analysed.

**Figure 1. Methodology and research techniques used.**

Methodology	Research technique	Population under study	Sampling
Quantitative	Content analysis	Publications released between 2010 and 2017, in the Spanish language, related to the definition of the roles and skills of the community manager and social media strategist	85 publications on the profile of the community manager, 40 publications on the profile of the social media strategist
Qualitative	In-depth interviews	Professionals working in the field of communication through social media in Spain	11 professionals who worked in social media marketing in 2017
Quantitative	Content analysis	Of the 170 university degrees in the field of communication in Spain, subjects in the curriculum for the 2016-2017 academic year that included educational activities or theoretical content related to communication in social networks	413 subjects

Source: Author-created

To determine the roles and competencies that the scientific and professional literature currently establishes for professionals who are responsible for the management of communication through social networks, we decided to design a system of dichotomous categories in which the variable used was each of the roles or skills that can be attributed to the professional profiles of community manager and social media strategist, so that the category determined the presence or absence of that skill or role in the text being analysed.

For the in-depth interviews, we started by using a combination of various information from different sources, which allowed us to generate a set of open questions which would be responded to in a semi-structured way, depending on the progress of each of the interviews.

Regarding the chosen interviewees, the main reason for their choice was based on the view that in this research it was necessary to consider the different types of organizations that exist in Spain, not only from the perspective of the type of company according to size or business model, but also taking into account the fact that there are professionals of social

networks who perform their work in public institutions or non-government organizations. In this way, although we have not selected a representative sample of the universe, we tried to include the greatest variety of possible assumptions in order to avoid biased results.

For the content analysis of the teacher's guides we have considered that it should be focused mainly on analysing those specific subjects within the syllabus that promote the acquisition of the competencies deemed necessary for the performance of professional tasks in the field of marketing communication in social media. For this reason, instead of insisting on formal or structural aspects of the teacher's guides, the decision was made to use variables consisting of the specific competencies that have to be acquired by students in order to improve their employability in the sector, and for categories, the presence or absence of such competencies mentioned in the analysis units.

#### 4. Results

The information obtained from the fieldwork carried out is grouped according to different features.

##### 4.1. *Curricular subjects in communication degrees that include content on social media.*

Based on the curricula of these degrees, an analysis was made of a total of 475 subjects from all of Spain in which theoretical or practical content related to communication in social media were at least partially found in the curriculum of the subject. Of these, 412 had teacher's guides available, and for 16 of the subjects the guides were accessible but belonged to degrees in which the curricula did not offer all of these documents. On the other hand, a total of 47 subjects did not have teacher's guides available, so these could not be analysed, although according to the data offered on the web portals of these subjects, it is very possible that these guides included this type of content related to social networks.

##### 4.2. *Subjects with content regarding social networks according to their specificity*

In our opinion, one of the variables that most determined the adequacy of the educational programs offered in communication degrees in Spain in terms of social networks is the specificity of the subjects that include this type of content. Although many subjects include didactic units that are mainly theoretical regarding the influence of social media in current communication in a more or less succinct way, very few subjects with content that is completely related to social networks communication have been found. The latter, with complete content, are smaller in number than the former, with succinct content, and in this research we have named the ones that are complete as "specific subjects". This will allow us to assess the importance that Spanish universities give to this field, since the incorporation of specific subjects of this type in the curricula of communication degrees is, without doubt, a sign of the decisive role played by social media as a current channel of communication. Therefore, of the 413 subjects found throughout Spain where theoretical or practical content on social networks are included, only 20 have been classified as specific subjects, while the remaining 393 have not. Those categorized as specific subjects: a) include in their designation keywords related to social networks; b) have, regardless of their nomenclature, a percentage of theoretical content related to social networks that is equal to or greater than 40% of the total theoretical content of the subject; or c) are those that have, regardless of their nomenclature, a percentage of practical educational activities regarding social networks that is equal to or greater than 40% of the total number of educational activities

of the subject. Therefore, taking into account that 170 curricula have been analysed and that only 20 specific subjects have been found on social networks, which is only 12%, we can determine that in the Spanish university at the present time no educational training in social networks is considered necessary and transversal in the curricula of communication degrees. Therefore, the academic programs offered in this regard are not adequate, nor does it satisfy the business demands for social media professionals.

#### 4.3. Average percentage of theoretical content in social media of the total content of specific subjects on social networks

Of the 20 subjects we have considered specific according to the criteria presented, a total of 10 include theoretical content related entirely to communication in social networks. Of the remaining 10 cases, the proportion of this content is lower. At this point, we would like to offer a table with the 10 subjects considered specific to social networks according to the criteria mentioned in the methodology, but that have content that does is not completely related to this field of study:

Table 2. Specific subjects related to social networks with content that is not entirely related to this field of study.

Specific subject on social networks	% of content related to social networks in relation to the total
Digital technologies applied to Advertising	50,0
New technologies	50,0
Introduction to Multimedia Journalism	50,0
New Trends in Advertising Communication	50,0
New Technologies in Communication	46,7
New technologies	42,9
Theory and Structure of Digital Communication	40,0
New Technologies of Audiovisual Media	40,0
Digital Marketing, Social Media & Performance	30,0
Social Media I, PR 2.0	20,0

Source: Author-created

Of these 10 subjects, we have found that all are semester courses with 6 ECTS credits each, and in addition, none of their theoretical content exceeds 50% regarding social networks. Therefore, the number of study hours devoted to issues that are actually linked to communication in social media is insufficient for the acquisition of skills that future professionals of social media will need according to the demands of Spanish companies.

Taking into account all of the specific subjects related to social networks, we find that the average percentage of subjects dedicated to content on social media is 71%. However, in a few cases such as the Degree in Digital Communication at CEU San Pablo University or in the degrees in Audiovisual Communication, Publicity and Public Relations at Camilo José Cela University, this is sufficient for students to obtain an optimum education in the matters that we are investigating.



**4.4. Average percentage of practical content related to social media of the total amount of educational activities in the specific subjects related to social networks**

At this time, in terms of percentage, we will analyse the practical content that exists in the set of educational activities of the specific subjects. In this way, regardless of the number of ECTS credits, we find that 50% of these subjects are entirely related to communication in social networks, but in the rest of the cases the existence of this practical content is lower.

In this part of the investigation, we have found a great limitation that has prevented us from obtaining adequate results. This was a result of having used the teacher’s guides of the subjects as an analysis unit. The limitation was due to the fact that most of the subjects analysed do not specify the practical activities that are carried out in the subject, in addition to the fact that in some of these subjects practical activities are not taught.

The following table shows the three subjects with content entirely related to social networks, and of the 20 specific subjects found, the practical educational activities in the teacher’s guides of these three subjects are included:

**Table 3. Average percentage of practical content related to social media of the total amount of educational activities of specific subjects related to social networks.**

Specific subjects related to social networks	% of practical activities related to social networks of the total amount
Development and Management of Social Networks	100
Management of Virtual Communities	100
New Trends in Advertising Communication	57,5

Source: Author-created

**4.5. Subjects that include content related to social networks according to the course in which they are taught**

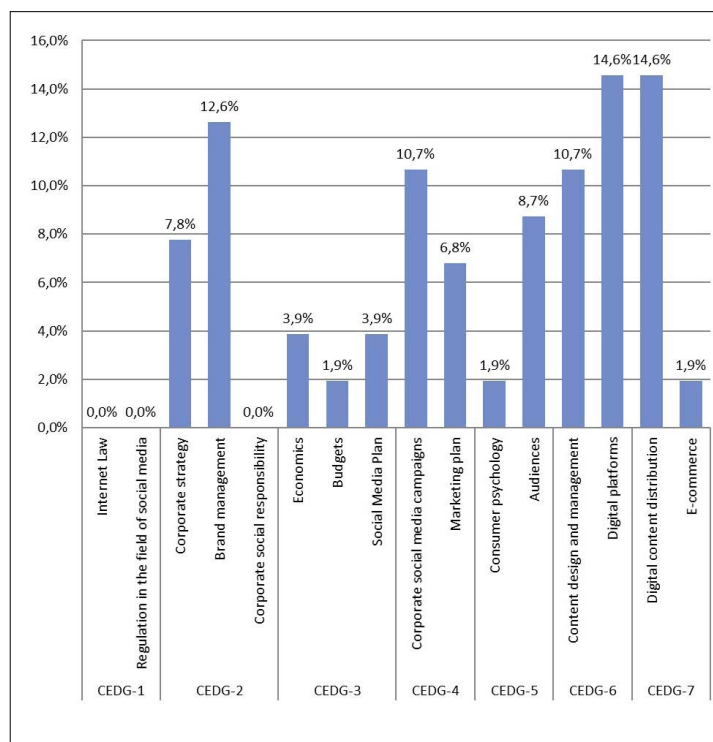
One of the research questions included in the approach of this study suggests that the specific course in which subjects are taught within a curriculum is an indicator of the degree of specialization of that subject. This fact results from the view that the more advanced the course is, the more knowledge the student who takes the subject will have, and therefore, the educational training imparted might be more specialized. Therefore, the question refers to the possibility that in order to allow for the optimization of teaching communication related to social networks, the subjects that include this content are to be taught in the final years of the degrees to which they belong. Of the 413 subjects in which all or part of the content is related to communication in social networks, it has been found that the majority are taught in the third year, followed by the second and then fourth year, which is an indication that the knowledge acquired in them could be more advanced.

**4.6. Acquisition of specific competencies related to disciplinary knowledge about social networks in the specific subjects on communication in social media**

Many of the research questions refer to whether or not students who study specific subjects on communication in social networks acquire a set of concrete competencies related to disciplinary knowledge about social networks.

This refers to a group of competencies that are defined in the White Paper for the design of university degrees within the framework of the digital economy –*Libro Blanco para el diseño de las titulaciones universitarias en el marco de la economía digital*– (2015), and in the case of disciplinary knowledge, they refer mainly to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge related to the subject of communication in social media. In the aforementioned work, each one of these distinct competencies are divided into a series of specific theoretical bodies of knowledge that have been analysed in this research in an autonomous and differentiated manner in order to define in the most precise way possible the real educational programs offered by Spanish universities with regard to social network communication through these types of subjects. Thus, if we focus only on the subjects that have been classified as specific, we obtain the following results related to the acquisition of competencies on theoretical knowledge of the social media discipline (CEDG –subject code label– in the White Paper for the design of university degrees in the framework of the Digital Economy).

Figure 4. Acquisition of CEDG competencies (Specific subjects related to Social Networks).



Source: Author-created

In the specific subjects related to social networks that were found, the acquisition of competencies concerning theoretical knowledge with regard to this discipline has been encouraged according to the following distribution:

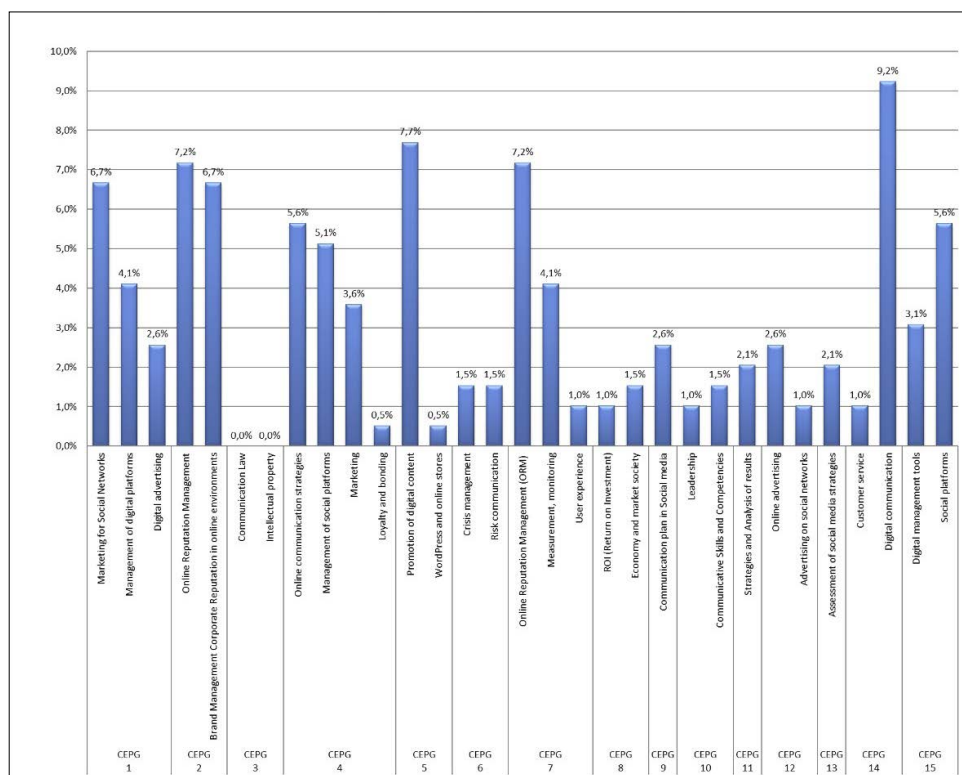
- Most of these subjects (15 of the 20 analysed) promoted theoretical knowledge of the different digital platforms that can be found on Internet, among which we find social media, social bookmarking, news aggregators, wikis, apps, etc.
- In 15 of the 20 subjects, theoretical understanding of the different types of tactics or strategies, channels and practices that can be used for the efficient distribution of digital content is promoted. However, no references have been found for the economic results of the effective diffusion of this content, nor for the analytical results.
- In 13 of the subjects, the acquisition of theoretical knowledge related to brand management is promoted, or in other words, education for the correct dissemination of values, positioning and characteristics that companies strive to associate with their brands in directing their efforts toward the target audience (Alonso González, 2015).
- In 11 of the subjects, content was found that promotes theoretical knowledge of strategies and tactics for planning, implementation and diffusion of corporate campaigns and product marketing in social media.
- In 11 of the 20 subjects, theoretical thematic units are included that contain key information and tips to promote the right design and management of content in order to capture and maintain the attention of the audience. This is not a high percentage if we consider that social media is a channel commonly included within the discipline of inbound marketing and goes hand in hand with content marketing. In the opinion of Spanish companies, social media professionals must have extensive knowledge regarding strategic planning and content management, and this is only noticeable in a little more than 50% of the subjects.
- In nine subjects, the student is taught the theory of understanding social network audiences, which are mainly studied from the perspective of behavioural changes that these have experienced as a result of the emergence of digital technologies specific to the web 2.0. There have not been many cases in which this knowledge is linked to the student's education in predicting behaviour and audience trends in relation to a particular product. However, subjects that promote knowledge about the segmentation of the target public have been found.
- Eight subjects are used to instruct students in the development of corporate strategies, or in other words, in theoretical knowledge for the approach, definition and planning of communication strategies related to both the value of a company's brand and the promotion of its products or services.
- Seven subjects are oriented toward teaching students how to develop a marketing or communication plan. In subjects that are more focused on operational marketing, reference is made to defining the characteristics of the variables of product, price, distribution and communication. In those more focused on advertising communication, emphasis is placed on the choice of channels for the communication of the advertising message to the target audience. In most of the subjects, reference is made to planning based on defining objectives, target audience, phases of strategy, and only occasionally on measurement of results. It is not an optimal percentage of subjects if we take into account the demand by Spanish businesses for social media professionals who know how to strategically develop the communication actions they carry out in social media.

- Only four of the 20 specific subjects analysed included content related to the creation of social media plans. This is a very low percentage given the need of companies for professionals from the social network sector who are capable of developing strategies using social media as their main channel. Therefore, in only four subjects are students trained correctly to perform the functions of the professional role of social media strategist, thereby leaving the focus of the remaining subjects only on enabling students to learn how to work as a community manager, who is not the person that defines, but rather implements, the strategy set by the first.
- Four subjects also include theoretical didactic units related to economics. In none of the subjects have we found content related to macroeconomics, microeconomics or financial matters. On the contrary, these topics focus on understanding how variables regarding the environment, organization charts, or strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a company influence the decision-making regarding communication.
- Two subjects have been found in which aspects related to consumer psychology are dealt with on a theoretical basis, while companies consider it essential for social media professionals to have extensive knowledge regarding the behaviour of their public in social networks in order to attract, persuade or foster loyalty by this sector.
- Only in two subjects have we found topics that deal with budgeting, which is a very low percentage that does not fulfil organizational needs in this regard, as it is necessary to know how to define the costs of activities in social networks so that this can be adjusted to the financial and technological resources of the company.
- Two subjects also dedicate part of their syllabus to e-commerce. We believe it is necessary to increase the amount of content in this regard due to the fact that the needs of Spanish companies indicate that one of main reasons they use social networks is to increase sales.
- No content related to the following topics have been found in any of the specific subjects on social networks:
  - Internet Law and regulation in the field of social media. Although this disciplinary knowledge is important in order for social media tasks to be carried out, most of the professionals interviewed did not consider this knowledge to be decisive in working as a community manager or social media strategist for the purpose of knowing the needs of the business in this regard.
  - Corporate social responsibility: This is neither included in the subjects nor viewed by currently working Spanish professionals as essential in order to work in social media.

#### *4.7. Acquisition of specific competencies related to practical knowledge regarding social networks in the specific subjects on communication in social media*

With regard to the acquisition of skills related to practical knowledge of the social media discipline (CEPG codes), we have found the following results:

Figure 5. Acquisition of CEPG competences (Specific subjects of Social Networks).



Source: Author-created

4.8. Acquisition of specific competencies related to the management of tools related to social networks in the particular subjects on communication in social media

The results obtained are as follows:

Figure 6. Content for learning how to use tools in specific subjects related to Social Networks

Tools	Nº	%
Social Network Sites	12	26,1%
Tools for the administration and management of Social Networks (Hootsuite, Tweetdeck...	4	8,7%

Tools for analysis and monitoring on Social Networks and the Web (Google Analytics, Fb Insights, Hootsuite...)	3	6,5%
Content Management Systems (Wordpress, Joomla, Drupal...)	3	6,5%
CRM o SCRM	1	2,2%
News aggregators and social bookmarking (Menéame, Delicious ...)	3	6,5%
Wikis	1	2,2%
Online platforms to create, store and share documents (Google Drive, Dropbox...)	2	4,3%
Online platforms to upload and share videos	4	8,7%
Online platforms for audio editing	2	4,3%
Online platforms for video editing	2	4,3%
Photoshop or similar image editors	1	2,2%
Indesign, QuarkXPress or similar layout tools	1	2,2%
Freehand illustrator or similar vector graphic design tools	0	0,0%
Premiere, Final Cut or video editing tools	2	4,3%
After effects or similar motion graphics tools	0	0,0%
Audition or similar sound editing tools	0	0,0%
Dreamweaver or similar web design programs	0	0,0%
Office software (Microsoft Office, Open Office ...)	5	10,9%

Source: Author-created

After analysing the content of the 413 subjects that were part of the curricula of university communication degrees in Spain in the 2016-2017 academic year, we have detected that the academic programs offered do not educate students in an optimum way in terms of competencies as well as theoretical and practical knowledge demanded by companies and organizations for the professionals who carry out roles related to marketing communication in social networks. Of the 413 subjects, only 20 can be considered as specifically focused on social networks, and furthermore, these 20 have shortcomings in the following competencies required by companies: budgeting, strategic communication planning in social networks, and knowledge of the public and audience.

On the other hand, the remaining non-specific subjects only educate students in generic knowledge about social networks, such as the influence that social networks have exerted on business communication or on the public, and as such, they do not provide adequate educational training for performing the tasks related to professional roles such those of social media strategist or community manager. Therefore, in light of these results, we consider the initial hypothesis to have been verified, which states that the Communication Faculties of Spanish Universities offer academic programs that do not respond to the demands of the current labour market regarding professionals specialized in communication through social media.

## 5. General conclusions

The results obtained from the analyses carried out regarding the different objects of study, as well as from the use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, have allowed us to make the following conclusions:

With regard to the academic programs currently offered in communication degrees in Spain, the following should be noted:

1. The current academic programs offered by Spanish universities in the area of undergraduate communication degrees in Communication Faculties are not responding to the demands of the current labour market with regard to the proper training of professionals specialized in social media communication. As such, these universities are not producing a work force capable of fulfilling the needs of business at the present time.  
In communication degrees in Spain, subjects with content related to social media do not have a curriculum designed according to the specific competencies that the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (*ANECA*) attributes to social media professionals in its publication entitled “White Paper for the design of university degrees in the framework of the Digital Economy” (*Libro Blanco para el diseño de las titulaciones universitarias en el marco de la economía digital*)
2. Spanish universities do not include specific subjects regarding social networks in a transversal way in the curricula of their communication degrees, even though this is a requirement that has been expressed by Spanish companies.
3. Those universities that offer specific subjects regarding social networks do not adapt the design of their curricula to the needs of companies in terms of the content they include and the competencies they develop in their students. Thus, there are significant shortcomings in the technical and professional knowledge in the use of tools, strategic communication planning in these channels, knowledge of social media audiences, analysis and interpretation of results, etc. Moreover, the time devoted to these subjects in terms of ECTS credits is insufficient for the acquisition of skills demanded by the labour market.
4. As a whole, non-specific subjects regarding social networks do not fulfil the needs of business for communication professionals in social media. Moreover, these subjects focus their content on a very generic explanation of the influence these channels have had on the public and communication, and they lack an approach that promotes the knowledge of its strategic use.
5. As a whole, the subjects that include content on social networks prepare students more for performing the tasks of a community manager rather than for carrying out the strategic functions of the social media strategist.
6. The location of universities influences the existence of specialized training in social networks. In general, the larger the city and community in terms of population, the more extensive the educational offering of programs related to social network communication.
7. Private universities in Spain offer more specialized and up-to-date education in social network communication than public universities, which suffer a greater standstill in terms of incorporating degrees related to communication and digital marketing.

8. In Spanish universities, the only study programs that often include education in communication through social networks as an independent subject within the curriculum are degrees in advertising, public relations, marketing and business communication.
9. In light of these conclusions, we believe it is necessary for teaching teams and researchers at Spanish universities to work on redefining their curricula in order to integrate specific transversal subjects that deal with communication in social networks into all degree programs in the field of communication. To carry out the design of these curricula, it will be necessary to approach the task by taking into account not only academic publications for this purpose, but to also focus on fulfilling the needs of Spanish companies in terms of roles, abilities, skills and knowledge that they demand from community managers and social media strategists.

## 6. Bibliographic references

Adaime8II8, I.; Binder, I. y Piscitelli, A. (comps.) (2010): *El proyecto Facebook y la posuniversidad: sistemas operativos sociales y entornos abiertos de aprendizaje*. Madrid: Ariel.

Alonso González, M. (2015): "Las redes sociales como canal de comunicación de las marcas de moda españolas. El caso de Zara, Mango y El Corte Inglés". *Index.comunicación*, v. 5, n. 1.

<http://journals.sfu.ca/indexcomunicacion/index.php/indexcomunicacion/article/view/177>

Balandrón, A. J. y Correyero, B. (2010): "La docencia en comunicación en el EEES ante los perfiles profesionales emergentes: el caso de los *community managers*". En J. Sierra, y F. Cabezuelo (Coords.). *Competencias y perfiles profesionales en los estudios de Ciencias de la Comunicación* (pp. 206-219). Madrid: Fragua.

Barrios Rubio, A. y Zambrano Ayala, W.R. (2014): "Formación de comunicadores 'transmedia' para el público de la generación digital", *Index.comunicación* v. 4, n. 1.

<http://journals.sfu.ca/indexcomunicacion/index.php/indexcomunicacion/article/view/109>

Díaz Barriga, F. (2008): "TIC y competencias docentes del S. XXI. Los desafíos de las TIC para el cambio educativo". En R. Carneiro, T. Díaz y J.C. Toscano, *Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, Metas educativas 2012: La educación que queremos para la generación de los bicentenarios*, (pp. 139-155). Madrid: Fundación Santillana.

Domingo, A. (2016): *La profesionalización del Community Manager*. Recuperado de <http://www.iedge.eu/antonio-domingo-la-profesionalizacion-del-community-manager>

Elorriaga, A. (2013): *El Marketing y las Redes Sociales. La figura del Community Manager en las empresas de la Comunidad Autónoma Vasca y la Comunidad Foral de Navarra* (Tesis Doctoral). Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea, Vizcaya.

García Aretio, L. (2007): *¿Web 2.0 vs Web 1.0?* Recuperado de <http://e-spacio.uned.es/fez/eserv/bibliuned:20094/web-2vs1.pdf>



- García Estévez, N. (2012): *Redes Sociales en Internet: Implicaciones y consecuencias de las plataformas 2.0 en la sociedad*. Madrid: Editorial Universitas.
- Herreros Laviña, P. (2013): *El poder es de las personas*. Madrid: Léeme Libros.
- Huijboom, N. et al. (2009): *Public Services 2.0: The Impact of Social Computing on Public Services*. Luxemburgo: Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Recuperado de <http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC54203.pdf>
- IESE Business School (2009): "La evolución del concepto *stakeholders* en los escritos de Ed Freeman". *Newsletter* nº 5–Otro punto de vista. Recuperado de [http://www.iese.edu/es/files/La%20evaluaci%C3%B3n%20del%20concepto%20de%20stakeholders%20seg%C3%BAn%20Freeman\\_tcm5-39688.pdf](http://www.iese.edu/es/files/La%20evaluaci%C3%B3n%20del%20concepto%20de%20stakeholders%20seg%C3%BAn%20Freeman_tcm5-39688.pdf)
- Levine, R.; Locke, C.; Searls, D. y Weinberger, D. (2008): *El manifiesto Cluetrain*. Barcelona: Deusto.
- McCarthy, E. y Brogowicz, A. (1981): *Basic marketing. A managerial approach*. Homewood, Ill.: R.D. Irwin.
- Mejía, J. C. (2014): *La guía del Community Manager. Estrategia, táctica y herramientas*. Madrid: Ediciones Anaya Multimedia.
- Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (2003): *La Integración del sistema universitario español en el Espacio Europeo De Enseñanza Superior. Documento-Marco*. Recuperado de [http://www.eees.es/pdf/Documento-Marco\\_10\\_Febrero.pdf](http://www.eees.es/pdf/Documento-Marco_10_Febrero.pdf)
- Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo (2015): *Libro Blanco para el diseño de las titulaciones universitarias en el marco de la Economía Digital*. Madrid: Cyan, Proyectos y Producciones Editoriales.
- Mootee, I. (2007): *Web 2.0 and the Marketing New 4Ps*. Recuperado de <http://idr.is/wen-20-and-the>
- Moreno, M. (2014): *El gran libro del Community Manager*. Barcelona: Gestión 2000.
- O'Reilly, T. (2005): "What is web 2.0", en: O'Reilly.com. Disponible en: <http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a//web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>
- Redondo, M. y Rojas, P. (2013): *Cómo preparar un plan de Social Media Marketing*. Barcelona: Gestión 2000.
- Rodríguez Fernández, O. (2013): *Curso de Community Manager*. Madrid: Anaya Multimedia.
- Rué, J. (2007): *Enseñar en la Universidad. El EEES como reto para la Educación Superior*. Madrid: Narcea Ediciones.
- Steinmetz, R. y Wehrle, K. (2005): *Peer-to-Peer Systems and Applications*. Nueva York: Springer.
- Tobar, M. E. (2015): *Características del perfil profesional del Community Manager en Guatemala* (Trabajo Final de Grado). Universidad Rafael Landívar, Guatemala de la Asunción.
- Universia (2013): *Ciencias de la Comunicación: cambios que está demandando el mercado laboral para los profesionales de esta área*. Recuperado de <http://noticias.universia.es/vida-universitaria/noticia/2013/07/17/1036863/ciencias-comunicacion-cambios-esta-demandando-mercado-laboral-profesionales-esta-area.html>