

Redefining competences and professional profiles of the audiovisual communicator in the digital ecosystem

Hacia una redefinición de las competencias y perfiles profesionales del comunicador audiovisual en el ecosistema digital



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Abstract:

The digital transformation of the audiovisual industry, as well as changes in the creation, distribution and marketing of content, have resulted in the need for people with new skills and professional profiles. However, the acquisition of such individuals is still not specifically stated in the current curriculums of the Audiovisual Communications Degree. After presenting the inception and development of this degree programme, as well as the effects of the technological convergence on this ecosystem, this article presents the results of a discussion group interview composed of specialists with acknowledged professional experience who also have a substantial amount of confirmed teaching experience. Their reflections allow for the identification and description of profiles, competencies and professional areas demanded by the contemporary market in which technological qualifications are simply not enough without the knowledge of the narrative bases on which stories are built.

Keywords:

Audiovisual Communication; University; Degree; Competencies; Skills and abilities; Digital consumption.

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Resumen:

La transformación digital de la industria audiovisual y de sus lógicas de creación, producción, distribución y comercialización de contenidos ha generado la necesidad de nuevas competencias y perfiles profesionales cuya adquisición no se contempla todavía de forma expresa en los planes de estudio vigentes del Grado en Comunicación Audiovisual. Tras exponer el origen y evolución de esta titulación, el artículo presenta los resultados de la entrevista a un grupo de discusión integrado por especialistas de reconocida trayectoria que, además, acreditan una amplia experiencia docente: sus reflexiones permiten identificar y describir los perfiles, las competencias y las áreas profesionales exigidos en un mercado donde la cualificación tecnológica no resulta suficiente sin el conocimiento de las bases narrativas sobre las que se construyen las historias.

Palabras clave:

Comunicación Audiovisual, Universidad, Competencias, Destrezas y habilidades, Consumo digital.

1. Introduction

The standardization of the Internet as a vehicle for access to information, entertainment and audiovisual entertainment is restructuring the traditional logic of creation, production and distribution of communication companies, which have gone from serving a small number of markets with millions of recipients to facilitating personalized and interactive consumption to millions of individual markets. As a result of digital convergence, viewers and listeners have now become users who participate in intensive exchanges with traditional and rising media through devices and channels increasingly closer to their spaces and interests.

This framework has led to a redefinition of the media, their mediations and even their mediators, the specialists who develop the activities of an industry in which new processes and routines have been introduced that require training often linked to technological developments that might not be guaranteed by university educational programs, which until now have accredited the qualifications of the graduates. The impact of digitization has been particularly decisive in the field of Audiovisual Communication, a degree with a current academic direction that requires a review of its subjects, content, and above all, of the competencies contained in the current curriculums.

1.1. Evolution of education in Audiovisual Communication: profiles and competencies

University level education in Audiovisual Communication was implemented in Spain in 1971 when the Ministry of Education and Science approved the first Faculties of Information Sciences at *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* and *Universidad de Navarra*.

Until that time, the educational benchmarks in communication -though not specifically in the audiovisual field- were represented by the School of Journalism of *El Debate* (1926) and la *Escuela Oficial de Periodismo*, the Official School of Journalism (1941), which were dependent on the National Delegation of Press and Propaganda. After these, the thematically closer Official School of Cinematography and the Official School of Broadcasting and Television later emerged (Jones, 1998).

In the new faculties, the audiovisual area was not an independent discipline, but rather it was part of one of the three branches of Information Sciences: Journalism, Visual and Auditory Image Science, and Advertising and Public Relations. It would be Organic Law 11/1983 of August 25th that would establish the first step for the division of the disciplines into three degree programmes, and Royal Decree 1427/1991 of August 30th, finally authorized the Degree in Audiovisual Communication. From 1993 onward, various universities incorporated this curriculum into their academic offering: this is the case of the University of Valencia-*Estudi General* and the *Pompeu Fabra* University, followed by the University of *Salamanca* and *Ramón Llull* in 1994, *SEK* University in 1997, and the universities of *Nebrija*, *San Pablo CEU* and Barcelona in 1998.

Education in this area faced a new adaptation in 2007 when the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) came into effect, which involved the redesign of the structure of degrees into three levels (degree, master's degree, and doctorate), the introduction of ECTS as a homogenous teaching unit load, and the reduction of the educational period from five to four years. With regard to the audiovisual sector, the universities had to face new challenges, which as Alberich, Guarinos and Mañas (2009) point out, implied positioning the university as the main professional training centre of the industry and thus contributing to the improvement of labour market conditions, which favoured the interweaving of teaching and research to support this discipline academically.

In this phase of creation and renovation of the academic offer in Audiovisual Communication, the *Libro Blanco de los Títulos de Grado en Comunicación* (White Paper of Communication Degrees) (ANECA, 2005: 227-228) defined four professional categories as resulting from the acquisition of the title: 1) director, screenwriter and audiovisual producer; 2) producer and audiovisual manager; 3) production design and visual/sound postproduction; 4) researcher, teacher and expert in visual studies.

This reduced range aroused some critical voices that observed a poor and not very up-to-date competency record with regard to the reality of the sector (Bartolomé and Aiello, 2006). In fact, the Sectorial Training Board for Employment in the Audiovisual Sector (*Mesa sectorial de formación para el empleo del sector audiovisual*), promoted by the Employment Barometer of the City of Madrid (2010), maintained that even in the middle of the analogue era, 44% of employers questioned warned of the need for training, and 22% observed a deficit of professionals prepared for the challenges of the moment.

The ongoing consolidation of the digital consumption and production environment has exacerbated this lack of concordance between university education and the work requirement of the environment. Besalú-Casademont, Schena and Sánchez-Sánchez (2017) explain that there is a wide range of opinions on the competencies that an Audiovisual Communication professional should acquire, and for this reason it would be advisable to focus the debate on whether the university has to

constantly introduce new skills based on the continuous and irreversible transformation of the environment, or whether it must bet on general and attitudinal skills that allow future professionals to adapt to changes.

In any case, the offer of Degrees in Audiovisual Communication has multiplied in Spain during recent years. According to the Spanish Registry of Universities, Centres and Qualifications (*RUCT*) of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 45 titles related to this professional field are being taught in the current academic year of 2018/19:

Table 1: Academic offer of degrees in the audiovisual field

TITLE	UNIVERSITY	NO.
Degree in Audiovisual Communication	Universities of: Extremadura, Illes Balears, Mondragón, Antonio de Nebrija, Autónoma de Barcelona, Cardenal Herrera-CEU, Carlos III de Madrid, Católica San Antonio, Complutense de Madrid, A Coruña, Alcalá, Barcelona, Burgos, Granada, Málaga, Murcia, Navarra, Santiago de Compostela, Sevilla, Vic-Universidad Central de Catalunya, Vigo, País Vasco, Europea de Madrid, Europea del Atlántico, Europea Miguel de Cervantes, Fernando Pessoa-Canarias, Francisco de Vitoria, Internacional de Catalunya, Jaume I de Castellón, Miguel Hernández de Elche, Pompeu Fabra, Pontificia Comillas, Pontificia de Salamanca, Ramón Llull, Rey Juan Carlos, Rovira i Virgili, San Jorge, San Pablo-CEU, Valencia (Estudi General) y Politécnica de Valencia	40
Degree in Cinematography and Audiovisual Media	Barcelona	5
Degree in Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts	Rey Juan Carlos	
Degree in Audiovisual Communication and Multimedia	Europea de Madrid	
Degree in Communication and Audiovisual production	Salamanca	
Degree in Audiovisual Media	Pompeu Fabra	

Source: created by the authors from information available in the *RUCT*

Growth in the number of degrees and the resulting increase in the number of students and graduates seems to respond to the contemporary dynamics of the audiovisual environment at the international level: a process of reconversion is under way and is being accelerated by the impact of digital technology, the boom in video services on demand, the unprecedented increase in consumption, and at the same time, the change of habits and routines with regard to accessing leisure and entertainment.

In this sense, the European Union considers the audiovisual sector as a strategic area of key growth for economic, social and cultural development, and since 1991 has maintained the MEDIA program –in 2014 it became a subprogram of Creative Europe– for the purpose of promoting the audiovisual industry of member countries (Creative Europe, 2018).

In Spain, the recovery of the sector that began in 2014 seems to have been consolidated: the Economic Report on the Telecommunications and Audiovisual Sectors (*Informe Económico Sectorial de las Telecomunicaciones y el Audiovisual*), published by the National Commission of Markets and Competition (*Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia*) in 2017, shows an economic growth rate of 7.3% last year, reaching a turnover of 4,135,000,000 euros. These data are based on a 7% growth in commercial revenues as well as an increase of 10.1% in revenues from the subscription of audiovisual content by (CNMC, 2017: 176-189).

With regard to the latter indicator, it is worth noting that the scope of pay television already reaches nearly a third of the population (28.5%). As will be explained later, this is a trend that is decisive in the restructuring of the creation and production processes in this field, and therefore, in the skills necessary to take on new responsibilities.

Therefore, we are faced with a scenario of renovated professional logic that suggests a reformulation of the demands that graduates of Audiovisual Communication must face today. This article aims to identify these new profiles based on the description of the contemporary environment and the experience of those who are already facing the challenges of technological and cultural convergence: an attempt will be made to determine what competencies are required for the current ecosystem in order for the catalogue to serve as a basis for future academic reviews on the planning of university studies of Audiovisual Communication degrees. Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

- Describe the evolution and current state of the audiovisual industry at the international level and in Spain.
- Outline the most outstanding milestones in the audiovisual industry as an effect of digitization.
- Recognize the catalogue of professional profiles demanded by the industry.
- Assess whether the coexistence between classic profiles and new professional roles is effective.
- Systematize the necessary professional skills in this new environment.
- Identify new professional roles and future trends.

The acceleration of the migration of the media system toward the digital environment and the professional effects of this change explain why the studies that until now have analysed higher education in the field of communication in Spain and the competencies that it provides do not describe the profiles generated in the contemporary ecosystem of convergence. These studies mostly have a generalist scope and refer to classic disciplines without specifically delimiting the contents and subjects of Audiovisual Communication.

After the emergence of the European Higher Education Area, various investigations addressed the renovation of studies in Communication Sciences from a general perspective: those of Sierra (2010), Sierra and Cabezuelo (2010), Vivar (2011), Ortiz Sobrino (2012), and Perlado and Rubio (2012), among others. More recently, Perlado and Saavedra (2017) have analysed official degrees and master's degrees in Communication, including the Audiovisual Communication Degree, although the objective was to detect the importance of the area of communication management in the curriculums.

Civil i Serra (2018) reviewed the degree offering in Communication in order to design a strategic plan in relation to the proposed programs. Miguel (2018) inquired about the range of degrees in journalism, publicity/public relations, and audiovisual communication in order to identify the digital competencies introduced; his research compared the job offers to the reality of competencies of the educational studies by focusing attention on the teaching guides of the subjects,

and within the audiovisual area he highlighted the imbalance between the professional profiles that were demanded in digital editing, production and programming and the skills enhanced at the university. Other transversal areas that were not completely dealt with included digital creativity, digital design and community management.

Along the same lines, Navío Navarro, González-Díez and Puebla-Martínez (2018) tried to confirm whether the curricula in communications empower students in competencies directly related to the increasingly demanded roles of Community Manager and Social Media Strategist.

Also linked to the audiovisual environment are the investigations of Heredero and Reyes (2016), who argue that a versatile professional is needed who is capable of controlling all phases of creation, and who can also give shape to an idea in a project in order for it to be presented to possible financiers; he or she must also dominate the presence in networks that will be used for the promotion of the company's products and the loyalty of its audience. Lastly, Guarinos and Sedeño (2013) concluded that the professional must control the emerging formulas of narrative construction based on the transmediality of discourse.

1.2. The audiovisual industry in the digital environment

The consolidation of the Internet as an extensive window for the consumption of information and entertainment has fostered a new scenario for the communication business in which the industry has been forced to renew its analogue routines, redefine its traditional processes of creation and commercialization of audiovisual content, and even reinvent its business model.

In an environment of digital consumption characterized by timelessness, ubiquitousness, connectivity, multi-modality and interactivity in the relationship between creator and user (Siemens, 2008), new dynamics are imposed today in which not only is the value, originality and treatment of content important, but also its adaptability to new devices and supports.

In fact, the most relevant and decisive change in the contemporary media ecosystem is the consolidation of the smartphone as a massive device for online consumption. Though originally conceptualized as a more or less elitist instrument that can also be used to support management in political and economic areas (Canavilhas, 2013), the mobile phone has spread with such force on a global scale that figures regarding its possession and use determine planning and communication strategies at the informative, persuasive and commercial levels.

According to the report entitled Mobile Global Data Traffic (*Tráfico Global de Datos Móviles*) 2016-2021, by 2021 there will be more mobile phones worldwide (5.5 billion) than current water supplies (5.3 billion), and bank accounts (5.4 billion), and the exponential increase in users, smartphones and Internet connections at home (Internet of Things, IoT) will make it possible for the exchange of mobile data to represent 20% of IP traffic compared to 8% in 2016 (Cisco VNI Mobile, 2017).

The omnipresence of mobile phones is especially important in our country, which in 2016 became –together with Singapore– the country with the greatest number of intelligent terminals per inhabitant in the world: 92% of its citizens had at least one of these devices, 4% more than in 2015 (*AEDE*, 2016). Similar figures show that half of Spanish adolescents between 15 and 24 years of age already spend from 90-100% of their time on the mobile network, according to the report entitled The Digital Society in Spain (*La Sociedad Digital en España*, Fundación Telefónica, 2017). This study also reveals

how the use of messaging applications has grown by 394% in the last year due to the increase in access to services that merge communication with entertainment (YouTube, Netflix, Instagram and Facebook, among others).

The mediatisation of mobiles –the habit of mobile first– is altering, on one hand, the traditional types of discourse: information in its different forms, fiction, music and advertising (Fernández, 2014); but in addition, it is influencing the guidelines of diffusion, increasingly oriented to a multi-platform concept that is attempting to reach digital users who are away from analogue receivers; for example, radio stations are betting on news coverage through simultaneous broadcasting over the air, web, social networks and mobile alerts (Orrantia, 2018). In short, the new communicative ecosystem is showing evidence of the union of traditional journalistic methods and those of the electronic media, and digital technology thus provides a horizon of communicative options unimaginable not long ago through the use of numerical coding of the signals by which the virtuality of image and sound is reinforced (Bandrés et al, 2004).

The progressive migration to the consumption of audiovisual content on digital devices cannot be considered massive, since two clearly differentiated types of audiences still coexist: those who actively use the new technological means, sometimes subject to very short life cycles, and those who continue to use alternatives that are in decline or in danger of extinction. “The first has become universal within the younger audience and describes those technological uses as signs of generational identity that are defining future trends” (Díaz Nosty, 2018: 33).

In any case, the appearance of new platforms, supports and channels has significantly lengthened the exposure time to an increasingly wide and varied offering: of the 354 daily minutes that we dedicated to the media in 1997 (5 hours and 54 minutes), we increased this number to 388 minutes ten years later (6 hours and 27 minutes), which represented an increase of 9.3%; however, in the nine years that followed, there was an increase of 15.3% to 447 minutes (7 hours and 27 minutes) in 2016.

Table 2: Average media consumption time 1997-2016 (in minutes)

	Dailies	Magazines	Radio	TV	Internet	Cinema	Total
1997	15.0	5.7	100.2	231.2	—	—	354.1
2007	16.8	3.1	111.6	222.1	31.8	1.3	388.1
2016	9.5	2.1	103.6	223.1	107.7	0.7	447.3

Source: Ten years that changed the media (*Diez años que cambiaron los medios*), Fundación Telefónica

If this media attention time were extended over a year, it would reach a total of 113 days (about four months), and projected over a life span of 85 years, this would mean that an individual with a normal life expectancy would spend more than 26 years consuming media content. This figure clearly shows the growing citizen immersion in audiovisual environments and the push of an industry that could reach as many as 600 daily minutes of activity in 2025.

Much of this increase in time dedicated to media consumption is explained by the emergence in the Spanish market of OTT (Over The Top) services such as Netflix, Amazon or HBO, which offer of their own content and affordable subscription fees have multiplied the figure of subscribers to these platforms.

According to the Household Panel (*Panel de Hogares*) collected by the National Commission of Markets (*Comisión Nacional de los Mercados CNMC*), in the fourth quarter of 2017, Spaniards were already spending almost the same amount of time watching audiovisual content on TV as on other screens (smartphone, tablet and computer): an average of three hours a day on the traditional receiver versus two and a half hours on portable devices. The ratio is reversed in the age range of 16 to 24 years: here the combined consumption of computer, tablet and mobile stands at 4.7 hours, more than double (2.2) the time spent watching television.

The market of streaming audiovisual platforms could be the main driver of the industry worldwide in the coming years: according to the British company Digital TV Research Ltd, the number of subscribers to video on demand services will increase to 409 million users by 2023, when customers will exceed 775 million users worldwide (*El Periódico*, 2018).

Considering the annual investment of these companies in their own fiction - Netflix alone has committed 8 billion dollars in 2018 (*El Economista*, 2018), their local production strategy and the forecast that the European Commission will impose a minimum quota of 30% of European content, the looming labour horizon might be pervaded by the need for current and future professionals of Audiovisual Communication who are able to carry out increasingly specialized feats and tasks.

A sector with similar opportunities is the audio industry, where the nearly century-long monopoly that had been led by Hertzian radio was broken due to various factors, one of which was the emergence of native online stations in the digital environment (according to the First Certified Directory of Radio Online in Spain - *Primer Directorio Certificado de la Radio Online en España* - published in 2017 by the Spanish Association of Radio Online - *Asociación Española de Radio Online*, more than a thousand entities are already operating). Another factor is automated music platforms (a market that in the first six months of 2018 added 229.5 million subscribers worldwide with income of 3.5 billion dollars (IFPI, 2018)). Still another factor is creators and aggregators of podcasts, an industry that reached 314 million dollars in revenue in 2017 in the USA, 86% more than the previous year (IAB, 2018), as well as audiobooks, which experienced sales growth of 22.7% on a global scale in 2017 to reach 2.5 billion dollars.

Options in sound consumption have multiplied, but also the demands for their design and distribution: digital devices—mostly screens—favour the creation of new languages and narratives (in these supports the audio is first seen and then heard) for the purpose of attracting the attention of younger audiences accustomed to interaction with suppliers, exchanges with peers, cross-media enjoyment, and transmedia experiences, which are habits that nowadays determine the conceptualization, technological development and commercialization of communicative products (Pedrero and Herrera, 2017).

This commitment to developing stories that emerge on one channel then branch out to adjacent ones (television, radio, podcasts, music, film, videogames, comics, and social networks) clearly demonstrates the huge transformation in the access and consumption of audiovisual content established in the current digital environment, as well as the implications that such change implies at the cultural, sociological, economic, and educational levels.

Within the previously described context of macro data, algorithms and robotic learning, as well as transmedia production and multi-media diffusion, the competencies of an audiovisual communicator do not end with the creative or productive process (an objective preferred until now by academic training), but instead they expand toward facets and areas of specialization with new and constantly renewed skills.

2. Methodology

The first part of this research focuses on a descriptive study based on secondary sources that help to contextualize the phenomenon studied and to recognize the keys that explain its transformation. The references have been used, on one hand, to explain the evolution of studies in Audiovisual Communication, and on the other hand, to delimit the situation of the audiovisual industry and its adaptation to the digital environment.

Next, an *ad hoc* qualitative investigation is presented by using a discussion group; with this methodology, the articulation of different positions and attitudes of the participants, the exchange of information, and the orientation of the discourse regarding the reality to be investigated can be achieved (Canales y Peinado, 1995). This technique has allowed us to explore the professional profiles in Audiovisual Communication generated in the current ecosystem, to review its status, and to announce future trends.

The structure of the discussion group was based on two concurrent variables. Firstly, a selection was made of currently active professionals in the audiovisual field with a career path equal to or greater than eight years, in addition to teaching experience of not less than four years in educational programs related to communication; in the first case, seniority was considered relevant in recognizing how the market has evolved with digital expansion, thereby allowing for a comparison of the two scenarios; in the second case, an attempt was made to guarantee greater closeness between the professional world and academia so that the experts summoned might have mastery over the concepts of 'professional profile' and 'general and specific competencies'. Furthermore, that they might also know the nature of the degrees offered at Spanish universities.

In addition, it was ensured that different professional roles were represented among the participants in the group to create areas of professional development in the audiovisual field and to assure that most of the profiles were integrated. It should also be noted that the qualitative sample did not pursue a statistical representation, but structural instead, because the objective of the study was to understand the social meanings and relationships with the phenomenon investigated, not the extrapolation of data to the statistical setting, as in the case of the quantitative sample (Rubio and Pearl, 2015). Given that the discussion group consisted of experts, we present here a brief biography of the participants:

Table 3: Experts who compose the discussion group

Field	Name	Professional profile	Years of professional experience	Teaching area	Years of teaching experience	Code
Scriptwriting	Itziar Bernaola	Scriptwriter and director of news and documentary series	12	Non-fiction scriptwriting	10	I1
Directing	Adrián Blanco	Director of series and films (Siete vidas, Buscando el norte ...)	19	Directing	7	I2
Production	Rocío Gago	Producer of series (Vis a Vis, Los hombres de Paco ...)	17	Production	5	I3

Artistic direction	Saida Santana	Artistic director of audiovisual projects and actress	15	Artistic and creative directing	9	14
Photography	Amaya Hernández	Visual artist and photographer	8	Directing photography	5	15
Editing	Jesús M. González	Editor	11	Editing	9	16
Postproduction	Alejandro Priego	Post production specialist	8	Postproduction	5	17
Sound	Sergio Testón	Post production sound technician / Remixer	11	Sound postproduction	4	18
Digital and 3D animation	Gonzalo Martín	Expert in 3D and virtual reality	15	3D modeling and editing	11	19
Transmedia narrative	Miguel Oliveros	Visual artist and video creator	8	New narratives	5	I10
Multimedia content	Francisco Sierra	Area Director of Antena 3 Multimedia	25	Digital Communication	10	I11
Virtual communities	Antonio García	Social media coordinator for Atresmedia	10	Social network management	4	I12
Podcasting	M ^a Jesús Espinosa	Project Manager Podium Podcast (Prisa Radio)	11	Radio innovation	4	I13

Source: created by the authors

As can be seen, the discussion group was composed of various professional profiles and consisted of thirteen members. The discussion was organized around three core topics that were formulated by using the following research questions:

- Q11: Since implementation of the digital environment, what new professional profiles have been established in the field of audiovisual communication? Do these new profiles coexist with traditional ones?
- Q12: What competencies are assigned to these new professional profiles?
- Q13: What new tasks are incorporated into these professional profiles? What innovative areas have been implemented, or that you believe will emerge?

3. Results

3.1. Redefinition of professional profiles

Nearly all of the experts interviewed during this research agreed that the new professional opportunities in the audiovisual sector are directly linked to the digital scene; they assured that the technologies of production and distribution already allow for the multiplication of content, and moreover, that these are being designed by keeping in mind greater spectator involvement.

The experts identified new and distinct professional profiles that have emerged since the consolidation of the digital environment, and pointed out three very specific roles:

Designers, programmers and developers of applications and software

Specialists in digital marketing and new audiovisual platforms

Developers of virtual scenarios and 3D designers

In the experience of the participants, the audiovisual ecosystem requires professionals who are masters of knowledge in the new digital parameters; who seek to constantly update the technological aspect, but at the same time understand the interests of the current consumer and spectator.

Curiously, it is relevant to point out that about half of the experts do not use the term 'spectator' any longer to refer to the audience; now the protagonist is the user: this is an active individual who undoubtedly participates in the creation of the proposed stories.

Consensus was obtained in admitting that development of this immersive narration requires creative professionals who are interested in a more human technology, and who are capable of giving depth to virtual reality, 360° scenarios, and the most advanced 3D techniques:

“The so-called ‘real’ images have their days numbered. At most, these will know how to relate to the thousands of virtual images that emerge from 3D programs. Thanks to this situation, specifically in the audiovisual industry and in the artistic scene, there has been an emergence of 3D designers, 3D animators, 3D and VFX illuminators, experts in rigging and character FX... These are highly qualified people who are capable of dedicating hours and hours to achieving a movement or a specific texture in a character” (I6).

Experts who come from more technical areas assumed that the incorporation of programmers and developers of applications into audiovisual projects is natural. These profiles cannot be separated from the creative aspect and must combine their purely IT knowledge with a deep knowledge of narrative resources, as expressed in I10. At the same time, I7 states the following:

“The profile of the programmer is more than necessary in the videogame industry: writers, designers, programmers... they work hand in hand. However, the role of game designer is becoming increasingly important in television newsrooms and also in production companies that are leaders in complex and far-reaching projects”.

The professionals linked to the major communication groups also mentioned the appearance in the audiovisual sector of roles assigned to digital marketing: experts from the renovated audiovisual business who understand the importance of different methods for reaching a hyper connected audience; they are in charge of developing, together with figures such as the Community Manager or the Social Media Strategist, efficient strategies for social networks and/or different digital platforms. This is the reasoning of I5:

“Universities will need to incorporate subjects into their curricula that provide the future professional with knowledge about the management of the audiovisual business. The romantic spirit of the creator must not clash with strategies originating from digital marketing: If what we want is for our work to be seen and reach a certain audience, it is essential to know the behaviour of the spectator, the whims of the industry”

The interviewees also agreed on attributing a prominent role to editing and postproduction professionals: Although these roles are consolidated in the audiovisual industry, the increase in content and new narratives designed for smartphones and other portable devices requires more professionals trained in these areas.

Reflection on the redefinition or renovation of professional profiles ended with another timely question: Do the roles associated with the digital environment coexist with those that had already existed in the analogue environment? Most experts agreed that traditional, professional categories still exist, but they need a direct reorientation toward the digital scene:

“Let’s think about the scriptwriter: this is a profession that is not going to end. However, a screenwriter today needs to be much more versatile, faster than before; they need to understand that their story can be released to everyone, that they no longer have 70 minutes to develop it. They only have 20... Or that the project is no longer financed by a television company, but by a dairy or an energy company” (I5).

3.2. *Redefinition of competencies, skills and abilities*

The new professional profiles are leading to the development of new competencies: in addition to pointing out the capabilities and aptitudes that the audiovisual communicator should possess in the current ecosystem, the discussion group experts warned of the importance that companies currently place on this qualification, regardless of whether or not it is provided in the curricula in force under the White Paper of Communication Degrees (*Libro Blanco de los Títulos de Grado en Comunicación*).

In this book, competencies are grouped into four large blocks: disciplinary, professional, academic and specific, and experts agree that professional and specific competencies are those that are most highly demanded today.

Practical work, mastery of tools, permanent updating and a transversal vision of the audiovisual business are the values most closely associated with these new profiles. Regarding professional competencies, respondents pointed out the importance of knowing the programs and tools for immersive and participative narratives, with special attention to projects that work in virtual environments and 3D imaginary spaces.

These techniques are no longer a “fanciful adornment” of certain filmmakers, but have become part of the so-called “new sensory communication”. Interviewee I10 confirms that 3D modelling is frequently used in augmented reality for television (to create, for example, simulations of holograms), also points out the presence of these tools in acts of political communication and events of all kinds. The same applies to the language of programming and the evident consolidation of skills associated with the field of graphic design:

“Almost all of my project colleagues already have the capacity to tell stories, but they also have to demonstrate solid knowledge of creative programming, design techniques using immersive and interactive graphic environments. Editors as well as post-production specialists must know how to raise audio and video to a new level. That is why we work so closely together with writers, artists, producers, and engineers” (I11).

For those taking on the new roles, it is also essential to understand and dominate the specific mechanisms of digital communication. Several experts agreed in pointing out that the competencies associated with the production and distribution of content in digital media, and more specifically in social networks, should not be linked exclusively to

professionals in journalism and/or advertising, but that audiovisual people must also position themselves to be leaders in other profiles such as Social Media Analyst, Community Manager, Chief Blogging Officer and Search Engine Optimizer (SEO):

“Television has multiplied its power thanks to the emergence of social networks, an example of which is adjoining platforms and alternative channels of audiovisual consumption on the Web. Therefore, in newsrooms, more people are hired with a wide range of viewpoints, versatile and transversal: that is to say, they master these codes” (I1).

Two of the participants, because of their connection with the field of sound, consider that the audiovisual sector still has a lack of creative audio experts: Professionals should be hired who are capable of developing new radio products, taking advantage of the strength of digital broadcasting, and broadening narrative and commercial possibilities. In this sense, the emergence of the podcast as a consumer format on demand, chosen to reproduce the habit practiced with video platforms, calls for increasingly specialized professionals:

“I think the profiles most in demand will have to be related to specific characteristics: project managers, storytellers, sound environment designers, experts in branded content, developers, programmers of apps, and experts in analytics and user experience. The more static profiles that do not have versatility and knowledge in these areas (ideation, production, development, sales and dissemination) will find it more difficult to enter the labour market” (I13).

After presenting this compilation of professional skills, the experts affirmed with striking unanimity that companies are increasingly interested in highlighting those profiles with a deep and purely humanistic background; general cultural knowledge is valued, with dominion of the classic narratives considered a given, as well as solid training in the field of visual and aesthetic composition. For the interviewees, what is significant is the necessity to adjust the mastery of new technologies and the understanding of new narrative formulas to a robust education in other human knowledge of an artistic/philosophical nature:

“Any communication professional must know and be clear about what they want to tell and how they want to tell it, assuming that honesty in the story is always paramount. The digital age allows for everyone to participate in the construction of stories, but not everyone knows how to play in the right key, nor do they all provide exact data to generate new creative content” (I4).

“The creation and existence of the audiovisual professional’s own digital hallmark is very important; knowing that you have attitudes and skills that go beyond your professional work allow you to consolidate very personalized digital and authorial environments” (I12).

In short, the experts agreed on the suggestion to redevelop the Audiovisual Communication curricula to find a balance that allows students to acquire new professional skills - more than necessary for the development of the profession - while maintaining and even recovering content and basic knowledge of the Humanities.

3.3. Transformation of professional areas

Finally, and in response to the third area of research, the participants in the discussion group evaluated the transformation that the professional areas of the audiovisual sector have experienced since implementation of the digital model, and they discussed the consolidation of the new tasks incorporated into this field.

It should be noted that among all of the points discussed, this is the one that caused the most disagreement because of the fact that even though it is recognized that the new professional areas have emerged in connection with the consolidation of social networks and new business models (especially VOD platforms), the experts evaluated this situation with prudence - they have not yet been consolidated - depending on their area of specialization.

In any case, the new professional opportunities seem to be related to the change of habit in the access and consumption of content, which in turn has led to the revision of business models that must be based on three basic principles: versatility, innovation and being transversal.

For this reason, and faced with the task of having to master new digital tools, more and more experts are demanding practical work based on the values of quality, creativity, truthfulness and independence:

“Among the tasks these new profiles will be expected to carry out are those linked to the domain of ample expressive and technical skills: people capable of developing personal and professional skills typical of a globalized world, extremely dynamic and in perpetual change [...] But we cannot forget that these professionals must also reinforce their theoretical knowledge, acquire an important cultural background, and develop skills of leadership and empathy” (18).

4. Conclusions

The digital transformation in which the audiovisual industry is currently immersed has generated a new scenario of professional demands and challenges upon which the methods of creation and production, distribution channels and business models are being redefined. Even the nature of the recipients, whose position as passive spectators and listeners in the analogic environment, has evolved to that of users who actively consume the leisure and entertainment offering of the contemporary ecosystem.

The impact of technology on the processes of generation and distribution of content determines the qualifications required by the agents who participate in this environment: the hybridization of languages, the mediatisation of mobile phones, the immediacy of access, and the personalization of content have all led to the emergence of profiles with multiple competencies and skills.

The experts consulted for this research coincide in their opinion on highlighting the opportunities involved in adapting to the digital model and the consequent reorientation of roles in the industry: professionals are needed who are capable of designing stories with a global vision, and in whom the techniques of narrative development are combined with the possibility of adapting multi-support and commercial projection to new business models.

The evolution of indicators regarding the penetration, growth and expenditure in the audiovisual industry, as well as data on content consumption, media exposure and access to new platforms and video on demand services, foretells a work horizon full of opportunities for current and future professionals in this sector.

Although the digital scenario suggests a greater need for ingenuity and technology, the commitment of the creator to the essential values of any story is still necessary: suggestive stories, well defined, that provide convenient keys for interpretation and help us in understanding our social and cultural environment.

In order to adapt university education to the audiovisual market, it seems necessary to take into account the following conclusions:

- When the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) came into force, it altered the structure of university degrees, forcing them to establish a more effective connection with the labour market. In this regard, Audiovisual Communication studies, which are inevitably linked to technological change, require permanent and critical updates in line with the new digital environment.
- The consolidation of a scenario in which knowledge of big data, the design of algorithms and robotic learning are increasingly important, together with transmedia production and multi-media dissemination, require the revision of the professional competencies of the audiovisual communicator, which now must combine the classic creative, productive skills with others belonging to new fields of specialization.
- The new professional profiles coexist today with traditional roles, although the latter are being influenced by the standardization of the digital ecosystem. For the moment, a certain complementarity can be seen between creators and audiovisual narrators who have already been working in analogic media with those who come from more technical fields (programmers and developers).
- The need for audiovisual projects to be conceptualized using marketing strategies as a base, while at the same time linking them to social networks and transmedia projection, is also clear, and competencies in the Digital Marketing and Social Media fields are essential for this task.
- The introduction of technology and dissemination support based on voice interfaces and the increasing reach of digital audio in creative and advertising oriented terms - thanks to the growth and popularization of the podcast format – prescribes the concession of a greater presence of competencies related to sound in Audiovisual Communication curricula.
- In summary, the three major professional areas that have developed since the implementation of the digital ecosystem are the following: a) design, programming and development of applications and software; b) digital marketing and the management of audio and video platforms oriented, above all, to online exploitation; and c) FX visual effects, virtual scenography/character design, scenarios and 3D atmospheres.

While this study requires continuity in order to address in a more detailed manner how to incorporate the new professional skills into the curricula, it can be affirmed that future graduates of Audiovisual Communication degrees must demonstrate their ability to adapt to the changes imposed by technology and the new consumption habits, their control over the narratives that makes the current scenario possible, and their overall vision of the new digital business models.

Therefore, it seems to be a pressing issue to reformulate the current curricula of undergraduate degrees in Audiovisual Communication, which are being called upon to incorporate a set of subjects that allow for the acquisition of these new professional competencies, while at the same time maintaining, and even trying to promote, basic skills and knowledge of the Humanities.

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