

# Quality of Radio Advertising in Spain: The Impact of Professional Profiles and Work Dynamics

*Calidad de la publicidad radiofónica en España: el impacto de los perfiles profesionales y las dinámicas laborales*



**María Fitó-Carreras.** Lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the International University of Catalonia (UIC). PhD in Communication. Graduate in Law from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Her line of research is the study of advertising in the audio medium. Advertising producer specializing in radio and podcasting. Member of the Consolidated Research Group (2021 SGR 01243) AINA (Analysis of Audio-visual-textual Narrative Identity).

International University of Catalonia, Spain

mfito@uic.es

ORCID: 0000-0002-0500-4006



**Montserrat Vidal-Mestre.** PhD in Communication Sciences, Master's in Corporate and Institutional Communication Management, Master's in Audiovisual Postproduction and Graduate in Political and Administrative Sciences. Lecturer at the International University of Catalonia, the Open University of Catalonia and the University of Barcelona. Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at UIC Barcelona. Her line of research focuses on audiovisual, corporate and brand communication and narrative.

International University of Catalonia, Spain

mvidalm@uic.es

ORCID: 0000-0001-6144-5386



**Alfonso Freire-Sánchez.** PhD in Communication Sciences (UAO CEU). Award for Best Scientific Article at the 2<sup>nd</sup> FlixOlé-URJC Awards for Spanish Film Research. Ángel Herrera Award for Best Teaching Work (2013-2014). Senior Lecturer in Communication. He was a member of the research team (2018-2022) of the R&D&I Project Visibilizando el dolor: narrativas visuales de la enfermedad y storytelling transmedia [Making Pain Visible: visual narratives of disease and transmedia storytelling] (VISIBILIZÁNDOLO). He is currently the Director of Advertising and PR Studies at the Abat Oliba CEU University. The results of his research have been published in SJR, JCR and SPI. The main thematic lines are mental health narratives in the creative industry; audiovisual imaginaries and narratology.

Abat Oliba CEU University, Spain

freire3@uao.es

ORCID: 0000-0003-2082-1212

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## Abstract:

For decades, the professional and academic sectors have questioned the quality of radio advertising, with no consensus on the elements that drive it. This consideration has not taken into account the source of advertising production, which can be external or in-house. To this end, this study attempts for the first time to compare the different theories regarding the deterioration of radio advertising from the perspective of the medium, with the aim of unifying the causes. The mixed methodological triangulation by means of a literature review, in-depth interviews with the advertising production teams of four radio groups (Ábside Media, Atresmedia, Grupo Godó and Prisa) and a survey allowed us to identify how the professional profiles involved, the work dynamics and the causes of this creative crisis are integrated into the business organizational structure. Among the main findings that affect the quality of advertising productions, we highlight the lack of sufficient human resources in advertising production teams and the low support they receive, the absence of information in the creative briefings and the system of online recordings with voice-over artists.

## Keywords

Radio advertising; advertising creativity; radio professionals; advertising quality; spot.

## Resumen:

*Hace décadas que el sector profesional y el académico cuestionan la calidad de la publicidad radiofónica, sin que exista comunión respecto a los elementos que la motivan. Esta consideración no ha tenido en cuenta la fuente de producción de la publicidad, que puede ser externa o del propio medio. A estos efectos, este estudio propone por primera vez confrontar las diferentes teorías sobre el deterioro de la publicidad radiofónica desde la perspectiva del medio, con el objetivo de unificar la pluralidad de causas. La triangulación metodológica mixta, a través de una revisión bibliográfica y de entrevistas en profundidad a los equipos de producción publicitaria de cuatro grupos de radio (Ábside Media, Atresmedia, Grupo Godó y Prisa), que se completan con una encuesta, permite identificar cómo se integran los perfiles profesionales que intervienen, la dinámica de trabajo y las causas de esta crisis creativa en la estructura organizativa empresarial. Entre los principales hallazgos que inciden en la calidad de las producciones publicitarias, destacamos la escasez de recursos humanos en los equipos de producción publicitaria y el bajo respaldo que reciben, la ausencia de datos consignados en los briefings creativos o el sistema de grabaciones online con locutores.*

## Palabras clave:

*Publicidad radiofónica; creatividad publicitaria; profesionales de la radio; calidad publicitaria; cuña.*

## 1. Introduction

In 2024, the year of the centenary of radio, the medium is immersed in a context marked by digitalization and a decline in the effectiveness of conventional advertising (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2017; Núñez-Gómez et al., 2022). However, the traditional radio spot remains the predominant advertising format for transmitting a brand's message (Pedreño-Santos and García-Madariaga, 2022). Radio, "historically used as a lever for the creation of the sound identity of brands" (Fitó-Carreras et al., 2024, p. 83), has undergone intense changes in the processes and roles in its production, which at times have been blurred and kept hidden from academia. Despite the sector's transformation, the spot remains the main asset, as it has been since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, in 1946, in the Radio Barcelona tariffs, the general word-based advertisement –the origin of the current spot– became the star format of radio advertising (Balsebre, 2002). It currently accounts for 93.5% of the programming, followed by the mention with 5.6% and the microspace with 1% (Asociación Española de Radiodifusión Comercial [Spanish Association of Commercial Broadcasting], AERC, 2023).

However, references to the lack of creativity in radio advertising messages and the absence of innovation are a constant theme that has been repeated for decades, both in the professional and academic sectors (Rodero, 2008; Barbeito-Veloso and Perona-Páez, 2008; Piñeiro-Otero, 2010; Espinosa and Vico, 2016; Fajula-Payet et al., 2021; Pedreño-Santos and

García-Madariaga, 2022; among others). This perception starts with the overestimation of other media compared to radio by advertisers and planning agencies (Vázquez-Gestal, 2001). With the arrival of television in homes in the 1950s, radio became known as “the Cinderella media” (Rodero, 2009, p. 99) or the media’s poor relation (Morillas and Martín, 2008), and brands started to invest only their surplus budget or a negligible amount in relation to their total advertising investment (Balsebre et al., 2006). Regarding the limited quality of radio advertising messages, academia has pointed over time to a wide range of causes, including the lack of university training of professionals in audio advertising production or the inadequate adaptation of advertisements to the radio language (Rodero et al., 2011).

A review of the literature on the phenomenon shows that most academic research is oriented towards conclusions that remove from the equation the origin of production of radio advertising, which can be produced by creative agencies or by the media outlet itself through specialized advertising production teams. Therefore, there is a need to understand in depth the deterioration in the quality of radio advertising from the production perspective of the medium in order to compare the main causes highlighted by academia with the reality of its professionals and systematize them. To address this issue, we turned to the advertising production teams of four private radio corporations in Spain. Although their work includes the production of various advertising formats such as spots, mentions and microspaces among others, this study focuses mainly on the radio spot due to its representativeness. This methodological design also makes it possible to identify the profiles that make up the advertising production machinery in the radio company and their work routine, providing answers to an area that to date has been scarcely explored in the academic field. This is a novel approach that lacks precedents, which is why this study presented a challenge.

## 2. Radio advertising

The role of radio throughout its hundred years of life as a means of information and entertainment (Arribas et al., 2018; Rodero and Blanco, 2020), as well as its strategic value for the creation of the sound identity of brands, is undeniable. Along with television, it is one of the traditional media that enjoys the most credibility (Montaña-Blasco et al., 2020; Pedreño-Santos and García-Madariaga, 2022; Harliantara et al., 2023). For Barrio-Fraile et al. (2022), this consideration is closely related to the fact that radio has weathered economic crises better than other media. However, since 2012, radio’s audience figures have fallen, with a loss of 14% of listeners (AIMC, 2023) and its revenues falling by 40% (Infoadex, 2023). This is taking place in a context of digital media convergence in which traditional radio coexists with new media and spoken audio consumption channels such as audio streaming platforms, the most prominent of which is the podcast. Faced with this diverse offer, radio must position itself to maintain its identity and the ability to compete with other media and platforms (Moreno-Felices et al., 2021).

With regards to radio as an advertising medium, only 27% of brands choose radio as their advertising medium, which represents 9% of their total investment (AERC, 2023). At a strategic level, according to the IFI Radio report on the awareness of radio advertising based on frequency, it is the most effective medium for generating short-term responses (Neuromedia, 2023). It is also a more cost-effective medium both in terms of planning campaigns and producing advertising formats. At the production level, radio advertisements can have a dual source of production. On the one hand, those created by

advertising agencies and, on the other, those created by the media itself through specialized teams, the latter being the focus of this research. Regardless of the source of production, advertising messages on the radio generate the most credibility among audiences (Rodríguez de Mier and Martín-García, 2019) and are perceived as more relatable and less intrusive (AERC, 2023).

For authors such as Critchlow et al. (2022) and Misra and Dwivedi (2022), the inherent characteristics of radio are highly effective in influencing passive consumers. Firstly, radio is the only medium that allows listeners to comfortably perform parallel tasks while listening to it in the background, making it unavoidable to listen to advertising formats involuntarily (Harliantara et al., 2023). And secondly, it is the medium that offers a greater feeling of intimacy between the broadcaster and the listener, becoming “a very personal medium that speaks directly to you” (Rodero, 2020, p. 4). Moreover, the AERC’s media advertising effectiveness study (2023) revealed that radio generates the greatest spontaneous and highest quality advertising recall. These characteristics play an important role in the effectiveness of radio advertising. However, the key is to create attractive messages that attract the audience’s attention (Pedreño-Santos and García-Madariaga, 2022).

As mentioned above, the spot is the main advertising format in the radio medium. In general terms, it is a short, pre-recorded message (Ortiz and Marchamalo, 1994), independent of the programme content (Betés-Rodríguez, 2004) and constructed using elements of audio language such as words, music, sound effects and silence (Pereyra et al., 2019). Its main objective is to convey the brand’s message in order to persuade listeners to consider purchasing or contracting the products or services it advertises (Perelló-Oliver and Muela-Molina, 2013). Despite its short duration –currently the most common is between 20 and 30 seconds– and the apparent simplicity of the message constructed solely through sound, the creation of the spot requires the involvement of professionals with multidisciplinary profiles, such as advertising copywriters, scriptwriters, linguists, voice-over artists and sound technicians. Traditionally, Spanish radio stations incorporate these profiles in their staff (Vidales and Sobrino, 2011). For Balsebre et al. (2006), the challenge of the copywriter is to “build in the collective imagination of the radio audience a certain aesthetic value through sound rather than the meaning of the word” (p. 110). However, these same authors consider that the voice-over artist “constructs in the collective imagination of the radio listeners a certain aesthetic value through the sound of the word” (p. 110) by reading the script written by the advertising scriptwriter. The quality of the final product and, consequently, the persuasive effectiveness of the format could depend on the correct execution of each phase of the production process carried out by media professionals, from creative conception and scripting to recording and editing.

Radio spots are perceived as monotonous and uniform because they follow static narrative schemes and very simple structures (Muela-Molina, 2008) and lack creativity, since they are more informative than creative and are “practically reduced to the name of the product or establishment, its address, telephone number and some other relevant aspect that probably already appears in another previous or subsequent message” (Vázquez-Gestal, 2001, p. 1). These assertions are complemented by a wide variety of issues that have been highlighted by academia over the last decades (see Table 1).

For Fajula-Payet et al. (2021), the stagnation of radio advertising is a reflection of the stagnation of generalist broadcasters’ programming. The authors add that, despite the fact that we are living through a boom in sound and experimentation with

new formulas of interaction between brands and audiences, the spot has reinforced its dominant position as the main advertising format.

**Table 1. Issues highlighted by academia regarding the quality of radio advertising**

<i>Perception of radio</i>	
Undervaluation of the medium. Brands only invest surplus budget.	Vázquez-Gestal (2001) Rodero (2009)
Advertising agencies treat radio as a subsidiary medium.	Balsebre et al. (2006) Morillas and Martín (2008)
<i>Structure and professional profiles</i>	
Lack of training of professionals at the university level.	Rodero et al. (2011)
Most local radio stations do not have a marketing or creative department in their organization.	Vives Radio in Espinosa-Mirabet and Vico-Blanco (2016)
Restrictive staff cuts experienced by many broadcasters.	Espinosa-Mirabet and Vico-Blanco (2016)
Copywriters do not know radio because they do not even listen to it.	Claudio Martínez in Morillas and Martín (2008)
Advertising producers do not take into account the very characteristics that make radio a medium with a high power of suggestion and persuasion.	Vázquez-Gestal (2001)
The time spent creating advertising texts for radio is minimal and almost non-existent.	Morillas and Martín (2008)
<i>The message</i>	
Lack of creativity.	Rodero (2008) Perona-Páez and Barbeito-Veloso (2008) Piñeiro-Otero (2010) Espinosa and Vico (2016) Fajula-Payet et al. (2021)
The messages are not adapted to the uniqueness of radio language.	Rodero et al. (2011)
They only focus on words.	Alonso et al. (2004)
The music only serves an ornamental, background function. Use of pre-existing music over the original music, which is more expensive.	Vázquez-Gestal (2001) Espinosa Mirabet and Vico-Blanco (2016)

Recording with the same voices.	Muela-Molina (2008)
Sound effects are rarely ever used.	
Similar duration for most of the spots (predictable rhythm).	
More informative than creative.	Vázquez-Gestal (2001)
Adaptations of television spots.	
Huge similarities between advertisements of different brands belonging to the same sector.	Perelló-Oliver and Muela-Molina (2013)
Repetition of messages decreases audience interest.	Harliantara et al. (2023)

Source: prepared by authors

### 3. Method

The main objective of this work is to compare and group the theoretical causes behind the low creativity of radio advertising highlighted by academia over the last decades. Specifically, it focuses on the production of spots produced by the medium itself through its own teams, thereby distinguishing between materials produced by external advertising agencies that are independent of the radio company's machinery. The other advertising formats produced by the medium are also discriminated against, such as mentions or microspaces, since the spot is the format most marketed by radio. The methodology will also make it possible to identify the professional profiles involved in the radio advertising production process and its dynamics.

To address the main objective, a quantitative and qualitative methodological triangulation is proposed that includes a literature review, in-depth interviews and a number of surveys of active radio advertising production professionals. The literature review allowed us to gather the reasons why academia considers that radio advertising shows quality levels below the creative possibilities of the medium (see Table 1).

Individual in-depth interviews were carried out with the heads of the advertising production teams of four private radio groups in Spain: Grupo Cope (Ábside Media), Atresmedia Radio (Atresmedia), Prisa Radio (Grupo Prisa) and Godó Strategies (Grupo Godó). This professional category was used because they have a broad perspective of the work carried out by the team in each stage of the production process and the results obtained. The radio groups, which are included in the General Media Study (EGM), were selected on the basis of their positioning in the audience and advertising market (Robert-Agell and Bonet, 2023) and for being the most attentive in terms of strategies for maintaining their position (Fernández-Sande and Gallego, 2018). These groups have regional stations to serve the advertising needs of the local market. Due to the multiple locations in which the advertising production teams operate, the interviews were conducted in their office headquarters: Grupo Cope, Atresmedia Radio and Prisa Radio, in Madrid; and Godó Strategies, in Barcelona. As regards to the provision of advertising

production services for the selected radio stations, Grupo Cope, Atresmedia Radio and Prisa Radio serve advertisers in the Community of Madrid, while Godó Strategies does so in Catalonia.

We consider semi-structured in-depth interviews to be the most appropriate method for delving into a phenomenon that cannot be observed directly. The participating interviewees describe what is happening in the field of interest, “their meanings, perspectives and definitions; the way they see, classify and experience the world” (Taylor and Bogdan, 2008, p. 204). Furthermore, the method is based on the richness of the word, is structured around an in-depth concept and is of an explanatory nature (Martínez-Rodríguez, 2000), aspects that are key to achieving the research objective. The interviews were conducted based on a script of questions based on a prior literature review. Specifically, it was divided into 4 blocks: 1) Advertising production team, to address integration in the organization, the professional profiles and the assigned tasks; 2) Production process, where the phases, times and collaboration between the different departments are analysed; 3) Perception of the quality of the team’s advertising production, to determine the level of satisfaction with the results obtained and the effectiveness of the work as a whole; 4) Proposals for improvement, aimed at identifying possible changes or adjustments that optimize the process and the final quality of the product. In order to respond to the nature of the method, the interviews were carried out “under conditions of flexibility and freedom to order the questions and develop new ones that arise from the verbal content of the interviewee as well as from the interview situation itself, as well as giving the interviewee freedom to answer them in their own terms” (Gaínza, 2006, p. 230). Interviews were conducted between February and March 2024, with an average duration of 30 minutes, and were recorded for subsequent transcription and coding.

Finally, a survey, created using the Google Forms platform, was sent to the rest of the professionals who formed part of the production teams in the selected communication groups, totalling 12 participants (6 copywriters, 6 sound technicians), including the team heads, who had been previously interviewed. All participants submitted their responses within the established deadline, providing qualitative and quantitative data that allowed us to carry out an exhaustive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. For Abundis-Espinosa, this method is suitable for those studies that require “people’s opinion or perception, either to simply identify and explain the causes of a problem or to make decisions in order to solve it” (2016, p. 184). Moreover, information can be quantified, graphed and interpreted.

The survey consisted of a total of 13 closed and open questions, organized into the following blocks: 1) Demographic data; 2) Professional profile: task/s in the team, years of experience and training; 3) Radio consumption habits; 4) Perception of the quality of their work; 5) Production process, and 6) Proposals for improvement. In relation to the question on the perception of the quality of radio advertising, a Likert-type rating scale was used (Osinski and Bruno, 1998), which offered the following response options: very satisfied, satisfied and dissatisfied.

#### 4. Results

The analysis of the results obtained through interviews and surveys allowed us to identify a series of particularities in the four radio groups that require prior attention in order to understand the results related to the main objective of the research. These particularities focus on the way in which advertising production teams are integrated into the company's organizational structure, the tasks performed by the professional profiles participating in the process, which vary from one group to another, and the production process itself.

##### 4.1. Integration of advertising production teams into the business organization

Advertising production teams are integrated into specialized companies that manage advertising of the groups' radio stations. Of the four radio groups studied, the exception is Grupo Godó, whose production team forms part of Godó Strategies, the advertising marketer for all of the group's media, including press. At a second level, within the company's organization, the teams depend organically on the sales, programs or marketing department, depending on the group. The teams also have different designations.

The main function of advertising production teams is to create advertising formats to be broadcast on radio stations managed by the companies to which they belong. The production includes campaigns planned both at a national network level and at a regional level, in the territories where their headquarters are located (Madrid and Barcelona).

**Table 2. Integration into the organization and title**

Communication group	Ábside Media	Atresmedia	Grupo Godó	Prisa
Company	Grupo COPE	Atresmedia Radio	Godó Strategies	Prisa Radio
Number of stations	4 (Cope, Rock FM, Megastar and Cadena 100)	3 (Europa FM, Melodía FM and Onda Cero)	2 (RAC1 and RAC105)	7 (Cadena SER, Los 40, Dial, Los 40 Classic, Dance, Urban and Radio Olé)
Territory covered	Community of Madrid	Community of Madrid	Catalonia	Community of Madrid
Departmental dependency	Sales	Programs	Sales Special actions	Marketing and Creativity
Denomination	Creativity	Advertising production	Creativity and advertising production	Marketing and Creativity

Source: prepared by authors



#### 4.2. Professional profiles and task performed

In all groups, two distinctive professional profiles can be observed in the context of the advertising production process. Firstly, the copywriter or creative advertising editor and, secondly, the sound technician or director. Regarding the first profile, its main function lies in the creative conception of the campaign and the subsequent writing of the script. However, it is evident that their dedication goes beyond the mere advertising creation process, as they also take on administrative tasks inherent to the activity, such as the management of music reproduction licenses, preparation of reports for the General Society of Authors (SGAE), maintenance of recording databases, invoicing and also the supervision of the department's budget and expenses. Typically, the position of copywriter is not usually combined with other tasks within a company. In contrast, multitasking is a common characteristic of a sound technician. In addition to being in charge of studio recordings with the voice-over artists and editing the materials, and in some cases advertising scheduling and other administrative tasks related to music licenses and planning the contracting of voice-over artists, 60% combine these responsibilities with the technical control of live programmes or recordings of programme contents for the stations, among other functions.

In terms of demographics, 67% of advertising production team professionals are over 50 years old, the average being 48.23, with an average experience of 20 years. 58.3% are men and 41.7% are women. In terms of academic education, 67% have specialized studies in advertising. Of these, 80% consider that the knowledge acquired in the academic field has been applicable in the performance of their occupational activity, but where they have learned the most is in the professional field through their mentors and teammates. Regarding radio consumption habits, 66.7% of the advertising production professionals surveyed listen to the radio daily, 22.2% occasionally, and 11.1% never listen to it.

**Table 3. Professional profile and roles**

Company	Grupo COPE	Atresmedia Radio	Godó Strategies	Prisa Radio
<b>Profiles</b>	Copywriters 2 Technicians 2	Copywriter 1 Technician 1	Copywriter 1 Technician 1 (external)	Copywriters 2 Technicians 2
<b>Roles Copywriter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creative proposals for commercials</li> <li>- Copywriting, conventional advertising and special tasks</li> <li>- Production of recordings</li> <li>- Direction of recordings</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creative proposals for commercials</li> <li>- Copywriting, conventional advertising and special tasks</li> <li>- Production of recordings</li> <li>- Not covered</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creative proposals for commercials</li> <li>- Copywriting, conventional advertising and special tasks</li> <li>- Production of recordings</li> <li>- Not covered</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creative proposals for commercials</li> <li>- Copywriting, conventional advertising and special tasks</li> <li>- Production of recordings</li> <li>- Direction of recordings</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> </ul>

<b>Sound technician</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Searching for sound resources</li> <li>- Editing</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> <li>- Scheduling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Searching for sound resources</li> <li>- Editing</li> <li>- Not covered</li> <li>-No covered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not covered</li> <li>- Searching for sound resources</li> <li>- Editing</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> <li>- Scheduling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Searching for sound resources</li> <li>- Editing</li> <li>- Administrative management</li> <li>-Not covered</li> </ul>
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Source: prepared by authors

### 4.3. The production process

In general terms, the dynamics of the production process is homogeneous in its execution in all the communication groups analysed (Figure 1). However, specific peculiarities were observed in some of the four phases into which the production process can be divided:

#### a) Information gathering:

When advertisers require advertising production services, the sales representative responsible for the sale provides a creative briefing to the copywriter based on information collected directly from the client or through their agency. For all the radio groups, this document constitutes the fundamental guide for carrying out the production. Generally, the briefing includes two categories of data: on the one hand, the format contracted by the advertiser and the deadlines for delivery of the material and, on the other, the campaign objective, the characteristics of the product or service to be advertised, the mandatory elements of the communication (the mandatories) and, in the best of cases, an analysis of the advertiser's competition, among other relevant aspects.

#### b) Creativity:

Based on the information provided in the briefing, the advertising copywriter produces an initial draft. In certain cases, the text of the spot is provided directly by the advertiser. In these cases, the advertising copywriter merely reviews the content and suggests improvements to the client.

#### c) Recording:

Once the text has been written and the advertiser's approval has been obtained, the spot is recorded with the voice considered most appropriate for the project in terms of gender, age, tone and style. In all groups, the voice-over artists do not form an organic part of the advertising production teams. Specifically, in Grupo Cope and Atresmedia Radio, they form part of the radio staff and for them the recording of advertising is a complement to their main activity. Prisa Radio combines recordings with voice-over artists from the station and external freelance voice-over artists, while Godó Strategies only works with external ones.

Regarding the frequency of the recordings, they are usually daily and in person (Table 4). In this regard, Prisa Radio and Godó Strategies are unique. In the former, the recordings with voice-over artists are hybrid, combining in-person and online recording sessions, while in the latter case, they are exclusively online. When recordings are carried out remotely, the voice-over artists receive the text by email and proceed to record it autonomously, following the instructions provided in the text. They make the recordings in their own home studios, which are mainly equipped with a computer, an external sound card and a microphone, in the voice-over artist's home environment. In the case of in-person recordings, the sound technician usually directs them, following the instructions given by the copywriter in the text, providing the voice-over artists with instructions about tone, style, speed, rhythm, emphasis and intonations or pronunciations, among other things.

**Table 4. Advertising production frequency, mode and average**

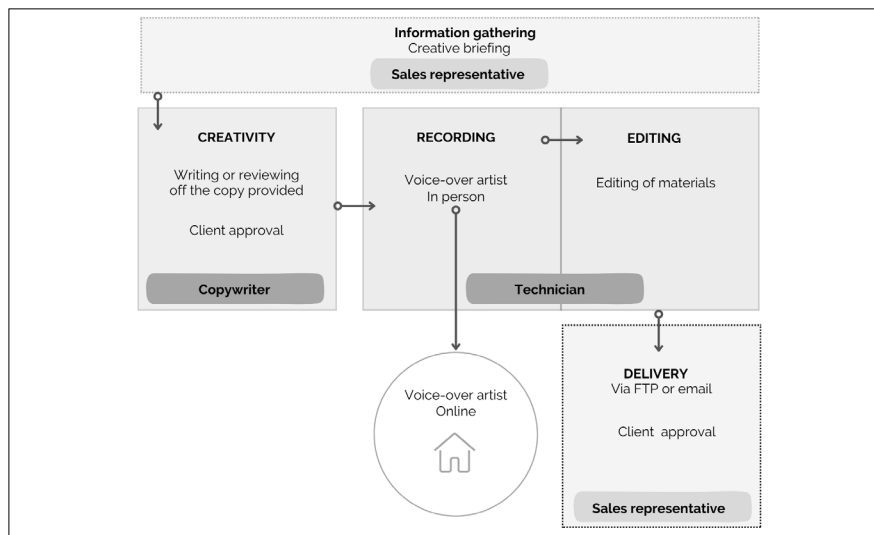
	<b>Ábside Media Grupo COPE</b>	<b>Atresmedia Atresmedia Radio</b>	<b>Grupo Godó Godó Strategies</b>	<b>Prisa Prisa Radio</b>
<b>Daily recordings</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Mode</b>	In-person	In-person	Online	Hybrid
<b>Daily average spots</b>	15-20	0-5	10-15	20-25
<b>Average high demand</b>	50-70	5-10	30-40	50-70

**Source: prepared by authors**

*d) Editing:*

Once the recording with the voice-over artists has been completed, either in person or online, the sound technician edits the spots. This task includes locating the necessary resources for editing, such as music or sound effects, and proceeds to delete unwanted parts, combine the audio tracks (mix), master the final result and register the material. They then send it to the salesperson, who forwards it to the advertiser for final approval.

**Figure 1. Infographic of the radio advertising production process**



Source: prepared by authors

#### 4.4. Perception of the quality of advertising productions

When asked about the perception of the quality of the spots produced by the production teams, of the three options offered by the rating scale –very satisfied, satisfied and dissatisfied– 44.4% of the respondents were very satisfied (highest rating), 44.4% were satisfied (medium rating), and 11.1% were dissatisfied (lowest rating). Those who said they were satisfied attribute this to correct management and execution, highlighting the professionalism of the human team. In contrast, those who are dissatisfied attribute it to the lack of creativity in the script due to the client’s conservatism, understood as the fear of taking risks with more innovative proposals. Regarding the creative result, 11.1% consider that they never produced creative spots; 77.8%, almost never, and 3%, always.

However, a cause was identified in the participants’ comments that extends throughout the entire production process, which according to the professionals is the main issue that hinders them from obtaining better produced products. Specifically, they attribute this to the low budget invested in production teams. On the one hand, the lack of staff prevents them from qualitatively coping with the volume of work they are subjected to. In this respect, the cases of Godó Strategies and Atresmedia Radio stand out, both of whose teams consist of just a single person. In the case of Godó Strategies, this individual is responsible for the production of network advertising at the regional level and production at the provincial level, the latter from five regional commercial delegations (Barcelonès, Girona, Tarragona, Catalunya Central and Ponent). However, in the case of Atresmedia Radio, the copywriter occasionally takes on the production of network advertising and usually regional production, which

corresponds to the Community of Madrid. The same dynamic applies to the cases of Grupo Cope and Prisa Radio, although in these groups the team has two copywriters.

The lack of productive force means that 60% of copywriters spend less than fifteen minutes writing the script, and technicians spend an average of fifteen minutes editing the advertising message (75%). The production teams of all the radio groups in the sample alluded to the burden of the administrative tasks inherent to the activity, which take up part of their working day and prevent them from dedicating sufficient time to productions to ensure the required quality. Moreover, the lack of budget prevents them from accessing more qualified voice-over artists. In this regard, one of the participants stated that “we can have good voices, but not all voice-over artists have the ability to dramatize, which detracts from the brilliance of the production”. This perception, shared by half of the production teams, prevents them from diligently meeting production needs and they are forced to record with the available voice-over artists.

There are also obstacles that come from the advertisers and agencies themselves. In the case of the former, “it seems that clients are afraid of creativity. They don’t take advice, they reject great work and we end up producing mediocre spots”, as one of the copywriters pointed out. Along the same lines, “the advertiser does not take any advice at all, for example, on the benefit of having a jingle, which is especially important for the awareness and recall of campaigns, or on the tendency towards excess information”. Regarding the role of agencies, one of the interviewees said that “they have very little knowledge of radio in terms of creativity and production, not so much because of their ability, but because radio production yields little economic return”.

These third-party derived obstacles are complemented by those originating from within the company itself, specifically from sales representatives. In this case, there is a perceived lack of support from sales teams when it comes to defending the creativity of productions, as they accept all the clients’ suggestions to the detriment of the final product: “salespeople only think about reaching the budget, we think about the quality of our work”, said one copywriter. Furthermore, one of them added that “the creative briefings provided by the sales department sometimes do not contain the necessary information to carry out the production from the material, which is insufficient. This forces us to search for information on our own, which results in a considerable waste of time”. These considerations lead to unnecessary repetitions of productions. Moreover, 66.6% of sound technicians question the creations they receive for recording: “Every day we come across texts that are too long and do not fit the contracted duration. In these cases, you have to cut the text and often you don’t know where to start [...]. I get the feeling that I put together the same spots every day, they are one hundred percent informative and zero creative”. Another technician stated: “I constantly find errors in copies: incorrect information, spelling mistakes [...]. I understand that we are all overwhelmed, but if we paid more attention before deeming a text acceptable and sending it to be recorded, we would avoid repetitions that waste a lot of time”.

With regards to the process, both copywriters and sound technicians believe that outsourcing recordings, which means that voice-over artists work remotely without real-time supervision, affects the quality of productions. This situation makes it impossible to adequately provide the necessary instructions on the tone, purposefulness and rhythm of the speech, as well as ensuring the correct pronunciation of certain terms, among other issues. One of the technicians explained that when the recording is done remotely and more than one voice-over artist is involved in the spot, “no matter how much the track levels are equalized and instructions are provided in the copy, it ends up being noticeable that the voice-over artists have not recorded it

together in the studio, since the intonation is completely different". All the radio groups were forced to record online during the COVID-19 lockdown period and the voice-over artists were forced to set up their own recording equipment at home. With the exception of Prisa Radio and Godó Strategies, the radio groups resumed recording advertising in person in their professional studios. 82% believe that being in person facilitates communication with the voice-over artist and, therefore, improves the quality of the final result.

Finally, when asked what aspects could contribute to improving the quality of radio spots, they indicated the need for more human resources and a bigger budget to access a more versatile and higher quality portfolio of voice-over artists to respond to the specific needs of the productions.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Despite the peculiarities observed in the production dynamics of each of the communication groups examined, there is consensus regarding the causes behind the poor quality of radio advertising. The following table shows the verified issues, those not observed and those ruled out, the latter being only three out of the twenty.

**Table 5. Verification of the issues highlighted by academia**

Issues	Result
<i>Perception of radio</i>	
Undervaluation of radio. Brands only invest surplus budget.	Not observed
Advertising agencies treat radio as a subsidiary medium.	Not observed
<i>Structure and professional profiles</i>	
Lack of training of professionals at the university level.	✗
Most local radio stations do not have a marketing or creative department in their structure.	Not observed
Restrictive staff cuts experienced by many broadcasters.	✓
Copywriters do not know radio because they do not even listen to it.	✗
The time spent creating advertising texts for radio is minimal and almost non-existent.	✓

Advertising producers do not take into account the very characteristics that make radio a medium with a high power of suggestion and persuasion.	✘
<i>The message</i>	
Lack of creativity.	✔
The messages are not adapted to the uniqueness of radio language.	✔
They only focus on words.	✔
The music only serves an ornamental, background function.	Not observed
Use of pre-existing music over the original music, which is more expensive.	Not observed
Recording with the same voices.	✔
Sound effects are rarely ever used.	✔
Similar duration for most of the spots (predictable rhythm).	✔
More informative than creative.	✔
Adaptations of television spots.	Not observed
Huge similarities between advertisements of different brands belonging to the same sector.	✔
Repetition of messages decreases audience interest.	Not observed

**Source: prepared by authors**

One of the factors that most influences the low quality of advertising production on the radio is the scarcity of human resources required to carry out daily tasks, an issue already highlighted by the media planning agency Vives Radio (Espinosa-Mirabet and Vico-Blanco, 2016). The restrictive staff cuts at many radio stations, referred to by Espinosa-Mirabet and Vico-Blanco (2016), have yet to be reversed, leaving positions unfilled in the production teams of the radio groups in the sample.

The lack of staff results in overburdened teams that do not have the necessary time to develop more creative, elaborate products. Creative copywriting, the basis on which the effectiveness of productions is based, is scarcely worked on (Morillas and Martín, 2008), as is the time invested in editing the spots, which is minimized. This task, carried out by the sound technician, is limited because this profile is versatile and multifunctional, which coincides with the observations of Vidales and Sobrino (2011) in their study on the new professional profiles of radio.

Regarding the lack of training, it was observed that the majority of professionals have specialised studies in advertising, marketing, communication and sound, and recognise that the knowledge acquired in their academic education is useful in carrying out their activity. Thus, the lack of training of professionals at the university level, highlighted by Rodero et al. (2011), is in contrast with the results obtained in this study. The lack of creativity is not so much due to the lack of training or creative abilities of the professionals, but to the lack of resources of the teams. While creative agencies have large teams and can therefore invest more time in radio productions, in radio the time dedicated to each production is reduced to a minimum. However, this does not necessarily mean that creative agencies' productions are of a higher quality. The perception of radio as a subsidiary medium (Balsebre et al., 2006) and, consequently, the low budget invested in it (Vázquez-Gestal, 2001; Rodero, 2009) directly affects the quality of agencies' productions, which also have a lower budget compared to advertising campaigns in other media, especially in the audiovisual media. Furthermore, we agree with Claudio Martínez's statement in Morillas and Martín (2008), which states that most agency copywriters do not have a deep knowledge of radio. In contrast, through our analysis, it is confirmed that radio copywriters listen to it daily and experience it. This familiarity with the medium can provide a more intimate, authentic understanding that is often not found in external agencies.

In the field of advertising agencies, Alonso-González et al. (2004) highlight the need to provide the technical team that finalizes the spots in the last phase of production with greater recognition and importance and with greater communication with the copywriters in order to make the appropriate instructions with the aim of correctly executing the preconceived idea. In radio, in most cases, copywriters do not have enough time to supervise the recording and subsequent editing of materials, their instructions being limited to those they set down on paper. This issue is exacerbated when recordings with voice-over artists are carried out online. However, this study, carried out in the same medium, allows us to confirm that, as happens in the advertising agency environment, the effort invested in all stages of the production process is biased by "the intrusion of the client in the development of the creative work, believing themselves to be experts in communication" (Roca, 2007, p. 179). This is manifested in the imposition of their ideas on how the final product should be or questioning the decisions taken by the creative professionals.

Regarding the perception of advertising production team professionals with respect to the quality of advertising messages, there is evidence of broad satisfaction with the work they do. This satisfaction is not based so much on creativity, but on the belief that each production reflects the joint effort of the team. However, this corporatist discourse is in contrast with the internal criticisms expressed, some of which include claims that the salespeople do not adequately defend the production team's work to the client, or do not provide the necessary information in the briefing for the correct execution of the production. Comments also arise from sound technicians regarding the work of copywriters with respect to the low creativity of the texts, their vagueness and their excessive length.

As can be seen, the comparison of the theories on the deterioration of radio advertising in our study allows us to identify new causes in the current advertising production process, which can be summarized as follows:

Online voice recordings prevent the direction of voice-over artists in real time. The lack of feedback directly affects the interpretive and emphatic quality of the voices, as well as their homogeneity, when the narrative of the spots requires more than one voice for its construction.



1. Creative briefings often omit essential information to achieve the production objective efficiently.
2. Greater support is needed from the sales team to defend the work of the advertising production teams.
3. This research has allowed us to unify and update the range of issues that lead to the poor quality of radio advertising produced by the medium itself through its specialized teams. Moreover, we have identified how the production teams are integrated into the organizational structure of the radio groups, the professional profiles involved in the production process and the work dynamics.

However, this research is not without limitations, especially with regard to the subjectivity inherent in the analysis carried out, which is based on the perception of the employees of the selected communication groups. Moreover, it was carried out in the context of private radio and, as such, it would be interesting to extend it to regional public radio and local radio.

Despite the limitations mentioned, it is concluded that the lack of personnel and, consequently, the absence of quality time to devote to productions mean that the elements of sound language are not being fully exploited, which prevents more qualitative advertising from being obtained. In addition, we have noted that there is a perception in the four radio groups that the company underestimates the advertising production teams. Therefore, it is necessary to review these structures to strengthen them, give them an identity within the organization and, especially, to value the work of a team that is shaping the advertising campaigns, which are configured as one of the main sources of financing for the medium.

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## 7. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and surname
Conception and design of the work	Maria Fitó-Carreras
Methodology	Maria Fitó-Carreras, Montserrat Vidal-Mestre and Alfonso Freire-Sánchez
Data collection and analysis	Maria Fitó-Carreras, Montserrat Vidal-Mestre and Alfonso Freire-Sánchez
Discussion and conclusions	Maria Fitó-Carreras, Montserrat Vidal-Mestre and Alfonso Freire-Sánchez
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Maria Fitó-Carreras, Montserrat Vidal-Mestre and Alfonso Freire-Sánchez

## 8. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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