

Advertising and public relations degrees: profiles and the glass ceiling in the Spanish labour market

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Abstract

According to data from the Spanish Association of Advertising Agencies, 90% of management positions in communication companies are occupied by men. However, the percentage of women studying communication degrees in Spanish universities, and specifically bachelor's and master's degrees in advertising and public relations, is higher than that of male students. This study evaluates the gender perspective taught in advertising and public relations degrees in Spain, to determine whether society demands this female vision of communication, PR, advertising and institutional and corporate activity. Furthermore, it gathers opinions on the role of women in the structure of communication companies. Based on triangulation, the methodology combines a content analysis of university syllabi, a questionnaire for students or graduates, and a panel of experts made up of academics teaching degree courses in advertising and public relations and communication practitioners. The results point to adequate and constantly (r)evolving training, in which skills and curricula meet the professional environment. Factors such as crisis, digital progress, the expansion of new work formats and the new role of the consumer require multidisciplinary teams with transversal skills – where women have a significant role to play.

Keywords: advertising; gender; glass ceiling; job placement; university; women

Resum. *Titulacions de publicitat i relacions públiques: perfils i sostre de vidre al mercat de treball espanyol*

Segons dades facilitades per l'Associació Espanyola d'Agències de Publicitat, el 90% dels llocs directius de les empreses de comunicació estan ocupats per homes. No obstant això, el percentatge de dones que cursen graus de Comunicació i, concretament, graus i màsters de Publicitat i Relacions Públiques a les universitats espanyoles és superior al dels estudiants masculins. Aquest estudi avalua la perspectiva de gènere que es dona a les titulacions de Publicitat i Relacions Públiques a Espanya per determinar si la societat exigeix aquesta visió femenina de la comunicació, les relacions públiques, la publicitat i l'activitat institucional i corporativa. A més, recull l'opinió sobre el paper de la dona en l'estructura de les empreses de comunicació. A partir de la triangulació, la metodologia combina una anàlisi de contingut dels plans d'estudis, un qüestionari per a estudiants o titulats, i un panel d'experts format per acadèmics del Grau de Publicitat i Relacions Públiques i per professionals. Els resultats apunten a una formació adequada i en constant (r)evolució, en la qual les competències i els plans d'estudis s'ajusten a la realitat professional. Factors com la crisi, el progrés digital, l'expansió de nous formats de treball i el nou paper del consumidor requereixen equips multidisciplinaris amb competències transversals, on les dones tenen un paper important.

Paraules clau: publicitat; gènere; sostre de vidre; llocs de treball; universitat; dones

Resumen. *Titulaciones de publicidad y relaciones públicas: perfiles y techo de cristal en el mercado laboral español*

Según datos de la Asociación Española de Agencias de Publicidad, el 90% de los puestos directivos de las empresas de comunicación están ocupados por hombres. Sin embargo, el porcentaje de mujeres que estudian carreras de Comunicación y, en concreto, grados y másteres de Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas en las universidades españolas es superior al de los estudiantes varones. Este estudio evalúa la perspectiva de género que se da en las titulaciones de Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas en España para determinar si la sociedad demanda esta visión femenina de la comunicación, las relaciones públicas, la publicidad y la actividad institucional y empresarial. Además, recoge la opinión sobre el papel de la mujer en la estructura de las empresas de comunicación. Basada en la triangulación, la metodología combina un análisis de contenido de los planes de estudio, un cuestionario para estudiantes o graduados, y un panel de expertos formado por académicos pertenecientes al Grado de Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas y por profesionales. Los resultados apuntan a una formación adecuada y en constante (r)evolución, en la que las competencias y los planes de estudio responden a la realidad profesional. Factores como la crisis, el avance digital, la expansión de nuevos formatos de trabajo y el nuevo papel del consumidor exigen equipos multidisciplinarios con competencias transversales, en los que la mujer tiene un papel relevante.

Palabras clave: publicidad; género; techo de cristal; puestos de trabajo; universidad; mujeres

1. Introduction

1.1. Glass ceiling

In recent decades, women have multiplied their presence in the workplace (Flego and Ortega, 2020). Nevertheless, their role differs significantly from that of male colleagues in terms of equality. The report *Gender Diversity in Senior Positions and Firm Performance: Evidence from Europe*, published by the International Monetary Fund (Christiansen et al., 2016), shows that in 600 large European companies, women held only 19% of senior positions. Even less are the 4% of female CEOs in these companies. These figures reveal a clear shortfall from the 40% target set by the European Commission for 2020, which, in 2021, has still not been reached.

This scenario, daily articulated in the work teams of most industries, is also true in the business field of advertising. Communication is a profession where the scarce presence of women in managerial positions stands out (Caro et al., 2007).

Many researchers have studied the situation of women in managerial roles in Spanish communication. Recently, various studies have addressed the issue, explaining the situation as due to certain specific characteristics of the advertising industry, such as the fact that in creative services departments the dominant culture is highly masculine (Nixon, 2003). Moreover, some authors identify additional organisational barriers in the advertising industry: demanding and irregular working hours, which do not favour work-family balance (Mallia, 2009); the lack of activities for supporting women (Klein, 2000); the lack of female role models in creative leadership positions (Pool, 2001); and the lack of policies to support work-family balance (Martín, 2007).

In the 21st century, undergraduate students doing university degrees relating to advertising and public relations are predominantly female (Corredor and Farfán, 2010). Meanwhile, according to research by the General Association of Advertising Companies (2000), the profile of managers in agencies was already predominantly male at the beginning of the current millennium. Despite the evidence (Hernández, Martín and Beléndez, 2008), there is also a glimpse of change (Melgar, 2019).

In Spain, the report published by Martín (2007) in collaboration with the Spanish Association of Advertising Agencies is notable in its gender perspective. According to this study, women represent 56% of the advertising labour market; and the departments with the highest proportion of women are production (56%), research (63%), accounts (72%) and public relations (83%). However, women only represent 33% of creative staff, and are barely found in the positions of art directors (33%) or copywriters (40%). This study also shows that men occupy 90% of top management positions while women remain in middle management positions.

The main consequences of this gender division of labour are wage differentials and unequal job opportunities for female advertising executives.

Women were paid 10 to 25% less than men in the advertising industry in 2005, and women in senior positions earn only 70% of the average salary of men (Farris, 2005). Moreover, female executives tend to be lower paid, which can lead to a pay gap between male-dominated (creative) and female-dominated (account services) advertising departments (Ocaña and Luque, 2007).

In this regard, there are two additional problems in the advertising industry. First, a lack of equal representation of men and women in print and broadcast advertising, and the transmission of gender stereotypes that legitimise and perpetuate gender inequalities and discrimination (Simancas-González, 2019). Second, a vertical and horizontal segregation of personnel in advertising agencies based on gender (Martín-Llaguno and Navarro-Beltrá, 2015), with men dominating management positions and creative departments, which are the most prestigious ones (Alvarado-López and Martín-García, 2020; Montes and Roca, 2016).

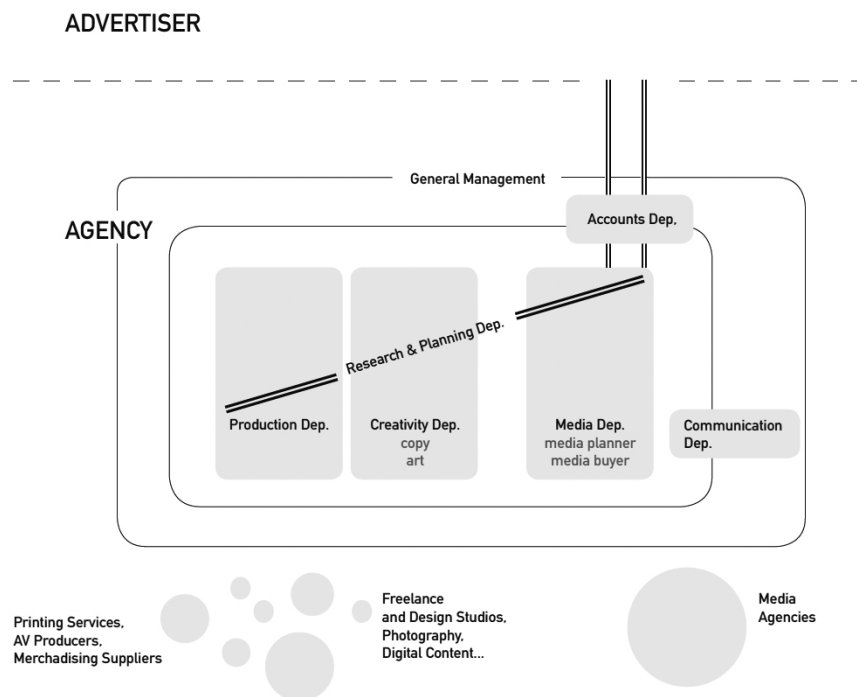
Thus, single, white men between 25 and 35 years old rule the advertising industry (Cuneo and Petrecca, 1997). Consequently, the standards of advertising creativity are masculine and discriminatory (Cadwalladr, 2005). To challenge this situation, the association #MujeresCreativas was founded in Spain, as an “open, independent and collaborative platform (...) that works for visibility and equal opportunities in the sector” (Melgar, 2019).

As the website <www.masmujerescreativas.com> states, in Spain most advertising graduates are women, but in the creative departments of agencies, only 20% are women; of the country’s creative directors, only 14% are women; among chief creative directors, the figure drops to 1%. And yet 80% of buying power is held by women (Jiménez-Marín, Simancas-González and González-Oñate, 2022).

1.2. New professional profiles in the field of communication

The advertising communication business has always been (and will always be) in constant revolution. We must add the arrival of the digital revolution and the expansion of online media, which have led to a new media scenario in which these act as essential catalysts for profound transformations in the advertising industry (Corredor-Lanas, 2011). The arrival of the internet into the advertising business brought revolutionary changes. It affected the organisational structures of advertising agencies and advertiser companies. It has also influenced consumers and how they relate to brands (De-Salas, Martínez and Roca, 2019).

It is essential to know what the advertising system requires from the workplace in order to respond to the challenges posed by the current professional scenario. For this purpose, and given that it is not easy to design a unique organisational chart model that applies to all advertising agencies, a map is proposed as an alternative to the traditional organisational chart (Palomo-Domínguez, 2022):

Figure 1. Basic map of advertiser-agency relations

Source: Palomo-Domínguez (2022).

Diversity is a hallmark of today's advertising agency: diversity in its specialisation, and diversity in its structures, whether larger or smaller, where outsourcing of services is frequent. Also, flexibility, since the typical division of departments in an agency is clear but not fixed, including accounts, strategy, production, media and creativity.

This new scenario calls for multidisciplinary teams with transversal skills, new knowledge that is constantly updated, skills directly related to the digital world and, above all, a new vision when it comes to an understanding of the relationship between brands and society (Gutiérrez and Recalde, 2018). The demonstration of professional skills is key to the competitiveness of agencies (Sánchez-Moreno, 2019). The so-called professional talent (technical skills and abilities) is what currently provides differential value in the results offered by agencies. Problem-solving profiles and constructive feedback skills have become values demanded by companies that do not only belong to the advertising business (Castellblanque, 2006).

Moreover, according to the InfoAdex report (2020), for the first time, digital media occupies the leading position by volume of investment, with an overall growth of 8.8%; and a higher volume of advertising investment com-

pared to previous years. So digital media generated 38.6% of the total investment in 2019.

This increase in investment in digital media by advertising companies has driven the demand not only for new professional profiles but also the transformation of current ones that include new skills and areas of expertise (Carretón-Ballester and Lorenzo-Sola, 2016; Hernández, 2010).

1.3. The discipline of advertising and PR in Spanish universities

Against this backdrop of new and future profiles, the role of efforts to train future professionals in their passage through universities, business schools and creative schools is key. University studies in the European Higher Education Area (EEES) focus their teaching on models that concentrate on problem-based learning, project-based work, network teaching or the skill-oriented teaching model. However, the rhythms of business and academia are very different. There is a gap between the training received and the demands of the professional environment.

Additionally, the presence of women is very limited in university curricula. This lack of female role models becomes a lack of knowledge of primary cultural references and the social undervaluing of women (Carretón-Ballester and Lorenzo-Sola, 2018). As a result, there is no education in equal opportunities; and inequality and discrimination against women are fostered (López-Navajas, 2015).

Regarding university communication studies, the effective incorporation of the gender perspective is still not guaranteed (Elías-Zambrano, Barrientos-Bueno and Ramírez-Alvarado, 2022). Although regulations and legislation oblige the curricula to include content that enables the acquisition of skills around equality (Fernández-Galarza and Postigo-Sánchez, 2016), the effective incorporation of the gender perspective is not certain.

2. Objectives

The work-family balance of people with degrees related to communication, especially female graduates, is very complicated in practical terms, which makes very evident the glass ceiling for women to ascend to top management positions in communication companies (Jiménez-Marín et al., 2022; Caro et al., 2007). From a gender perspective, faced with the prominence of eminently male management staff in communication companies, several questions arise:

RQ1. Does the advertising business require a more female approach?

RQ2. Is a radical transformation of the curricula necessary to achieve equality in the private communication sector?

RQ3. Are there an increasing number of female managers?

RQ4. Should equality in the private communication sector be enforced?

The present research approaches the professional and academic situation by analysing communication studies (advertising and public relations) at university level. It also focuses on students and practitioners to contribute to the advancement and possible improvement of academic performance and competitiveness.

Based on scientific literature and previous scientific works, this study attempts to confirm the following hypotheses:

- H1: The exercise of advertising activity in Spain calls for greater involvement of advertising profiles exercised by female roles.
- H2: There is no need for a radical transformation of university curricula for the degree course in advertising and public relations, but there is a need for a more comprehensive adaptation to the gender perspective.
- H3: Women are gradually and progressively reaching managerial positions in communication companies, so advertising activity is becoming more feminised.

The objectives that lead on from these hypotheses are as follows:

- O1. To evaluate the adequacy of the training received on degree courses in advertising and public relations in Spain, paying attention to those specific subjects with a gender perspective, to confirm if the syllabus meets the demands of the professional advertising sector.
- O2. To determine whether society demands a more female vision both in the communication industry itself and in the advertising and institutional and corporate communication it produces.
- O3. To find out opinions regarding the current role of women in communication companies, on equality, and its possible obligatory nature in the private sphere of communication.

3. Methodology

The research takes a mixed methodology approach based on triangulation (Yin, 1989). First, a quantitative-qualitative content analysis describes the curricula of communication studies at Spanish universities (Silverman, 2016; Igartua-Perosanz, 2006; Krippendorff, 2004). Next, a mass questionnaire (Martínez, 2002) investigates the opinions of students and graduates of communication degrees. To complement this, a Delphi study (Gideon, 2012) gathers the opinions of experts (academics and communication professionals) on the results obtained in the two previous phases, the content analysis and the questionnaire (see Table 1).

Table 1. Research methodology employed

	Technique	Corpus/profile of interviewees	Objective
PHASE 1	Content analysis	Syllabus of degree in Advertising and Public Relations	Objective 1
PHASE 2	Survey	Graduate students and teaching and research staff	Objective 2
PHASE 3	Delphi	Advertising professionals	Objective 3

Source: Own elaboration from Sanz-Marcos, Jiménez-Marín and González-Oñate (2021).

3.1. Phase 1: Content analysis

The first phase begins with an analysis of the syllabi of degree courses in advertising and public relations. For this, an exhaustive documentary review was carried out of all the syllabi of public and private university institutions in Spain that offer such courses. This review included all the degree courses found through the university degree search engine on the ANECA website (*Libro Blanco. Títulos de Grado en Comunicación*, 2005), accessed in 2022. The syllabi of 28 Spanish universities were reviewed: One in Alicante, six in Barcelona, one in Cádiz, one in Cantabria, one in Castellón de la Plana, one in Girona, one in the Balearic Islands, six in Madrid, one in Málaga, two in Murcia, one in Navarra, one in Pontevedra, one in Seville, two in Valencia, one in Valladolid, and one in Vizcaya. The documentary review was carried out in February 2022 and referred to the study plans for the 2021/2022 academic year.

An earlier analysis of communication subjects in Spanish MBAs by Matilla, Cuenca-Fontbona and Compte-Pujol (2018) inspired the instrumental design of the content analysis. The research questions included the following variables:

- Province where each centre is located.
- Name of the university, and type (private or public).
- Name of the subjects relating to creativity.
- Number and percentage of ECTS credits assigned to each subject.
- Type of subject (compulsory or optional).
- Year in which it is taught.

These criteria were applied to all the syllabi published on the websites of the different universities, following the pattern of analysis in the study by Sanz-Marcos et al. (2021).

3.2. Phase 2: Quantitative surveys

A multi-response questionnaire (Martínez, 2002) evaluated and determined whether society demands a more female vision both in the communication industry itself and in the advertising and institutional and corporate communication it produces. The sample included graduate students of degrees in advertising and public relations, and teaching and research staff. The survey

was carried out using the Google Forms platform, and SPSS software was used for data mining. The questionnaires were completed between 15 January and 15 February 2022. A total of 327 questionnaires were filled in, of which 279 were valid. The questionnaire, consisting of eight closed multi-response questions, was structured according to thematic blocks (Sanz-Marcos et al., 2021), as follows:

- Current employment situation.
- Skills developed.
- Estimation of the difference in training between male and female students.
- Incorporation into the world of work.
- Assessment of equality in communication companies.

The student sample was selected according to the following criteria:

- Graduates who are already incorporated into the labour market as active employees in the advertising sector, either employed or self-employed.
- Workers in the advertising industry with higher education in fields different than communication degrees: administrative, legal, accounting, etc.

Additionally, given that teaching staff play a crucial role in students' understanding and training, the survey included 25 lecturers and research staff. As with the questionnaire for graduates, this was carried out using the Google Forms platform and subsequently analysed using SPSS software. The fieldwork occurred between 16 February and 15 March 2022. The criteria for sample selection were full-time teaching and research staff teaching on degree courses in advertising and public relations.

The questionnaire for teaching staff included 10 closed, multiple-choice questions based around three thematic blocks linked to the propositions highlighted by the studies discussed above:

- Block 1: Respondent profile.
- Block 2: Assessment of the curricula of the degree course in advertising and public relations.
- Block 3: Assessment of the glass ceiling in the activity of advertising.

3.3. Phase 3: Delphi

After completing phases one and two, a panel of experts was consulted (Linstone and Turoff, 2002). The experts belong to the following Spanish advertising or PR agencies or platforms: C de C (E1), Más Mujeres Creativas (E2), Dircom Andalucía (E3), El Ruso de Rocky (E4) and McCann Erickson (E5).

The criteria for selecting the experts was based on two fundamental concepts: their affinity with the subject of study, and their reputation in the professional field.

The panel was consulted electronically and included:

- A report, based on the results obtained in the previous phases.
- An open-ended questionnaire, with questions aimed at demonstrating and justifying these results, thus requiring a direct intervention of the participants.

The experts' responses were divided into verbal categories using Dimensions software, and the interview data were transcribed according to thematic areas. The results were presented by thematic category to address the questions being analysed. Each expert's contribution was identified using quotation marks, and linked to a code previously assigned to each person, for anonymity and data protection. This code appears in brackets, where the E refers to the term expert, followed by the number corresponding to that person, according to the sequential order attributed.

4. Results

4.1. Content analysis

A total of 28 curricula from public and private universities in Spain were analysed, along with their related subjects (compulsory or optional). The total population of teaching subjects was 1,568. Of these, only 19 universities (and curricula) were included in the analysis, as they are the only ones that explicitly address the gender perspective and the glass ceiling in their syllabi and teaching.

After analysing the respective curricula documents (teaching programmes and projects) for all the subjects that make up the 240 credits of the degree courses in advertising and public relations, five universities were found to devote the most significant weight to gender issues: Ramón Llull-Blanquerna University, the University of Malaga, the University of Seville, the University of Alicante and the University of Cadiz. These data confirm some of the issues raised by Gómez-Colell et al. in 2016.

The analysis revealed that the terms most frequently used in the teaching programmes and projects regarding this topic were "gender", "stereotypes", "glass ceiling" and "discrimination".

It should be noted that there are hardly any differences between the type of institution (public or private).

Regarding the number of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) of the subjects that address the topic of advertising from a gender perspective, no significant differences are found: 100% of these subjects have six ECTS. This result could be considered to be predictable, since

six is the mode value; in other words, the most frequent number of credits per subject at Spanish universities.

Regarding the typology of these subjects, most of them are optional subjects. These data, at the very least, indicate that this is a subject which, as it is not a compulsory course, can be assumed not to have an impact on the student's training in terms of obtaining their degree.

4.2. Survey

The results indicate that the 279 valid respondents (out of a total of 327 respondents, of which 48 were invalid) come from a wide variety of universities:

Table 2. Universities

Academic institution	Graduates
University of Alicante	47
Pompeu Fabra University	32
King Juan Carlos University	29
University of Seville	28
Jaume I University	17
University of Malaga	16
Complutense University of Madrid	14
University of Cadiz	13
Autonomous University of Barcelona	10
University from País Vasco	10
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	10
University of Vic	9
University Camilo José Cela	9
Cardenal Herrera-CEU	9
University Católica de Murcia	8
University of Salamanca	7
University of Valladolid	6
University of Girona	5

Source: Own elaboration.

The data show that 38.71% (108) of those surveyed were employed in the advertising sector at the time the survey was carried out. Of these 108, 89.8% are employed by others, leaving 10.2% as self-employed or freelance.

In this sense, the skills obtained during training and professional development included the following skills: digital skills (approximately 70% or 195 respondents), account management (20% or 56 respondents), production (3% or 8 respondents) and media planning (3% or 8 respondents). Other skills such as purely commercial activities, administration and economic management, documentation, product design, graphic design, event organisation and teaching make up the rest of the skills developed during the job.

The evaluation block regarding development of the gender perspective during university training, as evaluated by the respondents, reveals that approximately 5% (14) consider that the subjects dedicated to knowing and breaking the glass ceiling are “sufficient”, 31% (88) “acceptable” and 63% (177) “insufficient”.

The results also showed that the 25 teaching staff are employed at the institutions shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Lecturers or professors

Academic institution	Teaching staff
Jaume I University	4
University of Alicante	4
Pompeu Fabra University	3
University of Cadiz	3
Complutense University of Madrid	3
University of Seville	3
King Juan Carlos I University	1
University of Malaga	1
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	1
Pompeu Fabra University	1
Ramon Llul University	1

Source: Own elaboration.

The second section, aimed at evaluating the study plans of the degree courses in advertising and public relations, shows that the teaching methodology is mostly considered insufficient. More specifically, 80% of the academics consulted point out that the gender perspective was only implemented very recently and “it is still an issue to be developed”. 12% (three respondents) consider that the current treatment of the gender issue in the curricula is adequate, while 8% (two respondents) consider that the current treatment is already “excessive”.

The third block presents a solid position. None of the respondents stated that the glass ceiling is a minor issue and that the university should not deal with it. The 25 teachers surveyed stated the need to address inequality in university education to a greater or lesser extent.

4.3. Delphi

Those consulted on university training show a certain deficit in training in equality and gender perspective. In fact, the experts point out that:

This issue should not only correspond to the university even if it is a university task. (E2)

This must be worked on from the bottom up, from school. (E1)

[and] in society itself. It must be talked about, and awareness must be raised about how difficult it really is for women to access management positions. (E5)

They also said that:

The day we stop talking about it, it will be that the glass ceiling does not exist. (E3)

Nevertheless, it is a reality that we women advertisers face every day. (E4)

Sometimes people look the other way because until now there was no data and we worked on conjecture; but now there is no excuse: we are many more women trained in communication and strategic skills, and we are still fewer. (E1)

All the experts agree that this issue requires global visibility, not only in the university:

Remember the campaign of the runner and the heels? That's how it is. It is our daily reality. (E4)

From a male point of view, it was almost unquestioned until a few years ago. We went to work, we got to high positions quickly, and we ordered in a vertical way. It is the clear image of *Mad Men*. But this is not so publicly tolerated today, although it is still done. Women's assertion of their rights is fundamental. (E2)

It is notable that entrepreneurship or self-employment emerges from the experts' opinions, without being suggested by the researchers in this study:

For a woman, although less and less, it is much more complicated than for a man. But, as women tend to be more resolute, they leave and set up on their own when they see that their morale is being affected. And that is why there are more and more clear communication management companies led by women and made up almost entirely of women. They are more decisive and, if they see that there is a problem for their promotion, they look for it on their own. (E5).

Self-employment is increasingly an option. Women, and since teleworking has become so popular, are starting to decide that they do not want to go down when they can do perfectly well (or better) in an employed job in a company where they do not get promoted. So many go off and set up companies, start-up or become self-employed and find their own clients, but now, working under their own rules. They start to be in charge. (E3)

All the experts point out the main qualities of women working in the communication industry:

They are decisive. (E1)

Women... multitasking. (E2)

I think that women communication professionals are more empathetic with the person in front of them, and that makes them better in this profession. (E3)

Women tend to be more tireless than men in their efforts, which does not mean that they put in more hours. What's more, I think (I don't know, I don't have real data) that they are more efficient because they do the same thing using fewer resources (starting with their time). (E4)

[Women] are starting to be so aware of their capabilities that they don't put up with any kind of nonsense. But, this situation is right now: ten years ago, they didn't get promoted and had no personal life, and they kept holding on until they exploded and gave it all up; today they don't. Today they get tired of holding on and giving up. Today they are tired of putting up with it and want to continue doing what they like, what they were trained to do, but under their rules. So today these women are tired... And they set up the Club de las Malasmadres. (E5)

Concerning the training received by Advertising and PR students, all the participants say that they are unaware of the actual training situation in this sense. However:

I have a slight (ironic) suspicion that this subject is not dealt with very much in universities. Suppose a student in the first year of her degree learns about the reality of the job market that awaits her and has the critical spirit and the capacity for information that students have nowadays. Do you think she won't put up a barricade? (E2)

It is also interesting to note that, when talking about the concept of equality, all five experts are in favour of its existence; however, their opinions vary when considering a mandatory gender equality rate in private institutions:

That there should be more women in communication companies, of course; that they should lead more, of course; that I think there are few of them, of course. But that they should be forced to do so... I'm not so sure. (E1)

It may be that this equality may even go against them because there are many more women than men with degrees. It would be a question of looking at the numbers and even seeing how to draft this possible legislative point that would make it compulsory. But, I don't know; I would have to compare and look at examples of countries where this has worked: does Sweden or Norway have such an obligation in the private sector? (E4)

5. Conclusions

The data obtained in the different stages of this study offer an inspiring starting point: the need to deal with the gender perspective in a transversal manner and to become aware of the current direct or indirect discrimination in the workplace.

Concerning the first objective, which aims to evaluate the adequacy of the training received, the research concludes that there are few subjects in which the gender perspective is included in the syllabi and teaching projects (which does not mean that it cannot be dealt with in the classes).

The optional nature of the subjects where the gender perspective is dealt with proves that the entire syllabus (240 ECTS, four academic years) can be completed without dealing with concepts such as the glass ceiling or female roles in the structure of advertising.

Regarding the second objective, to find out whether society demands a more female vision, both in the communication industry itself and in the advertising and institutional and corporate communication it produces, the trend observed among students, teachers and professionals emphasises that, as a professional society becomes more educated and more female, there is also a need for more managerial positions with women in those roles.

Regarding the third objective, to find out the opinion on the current role of women in communication companies, on equality and on its possible obligatory nature in the private sphere of communication, it is clear that there is almost a need to have more women in management and leadership positions in communication companies, so that equality can exist.

The results of this triple methodology study demonstrate a certain efficiency in the sector regarding incorporation into the marketplace. As already advanced in previous studies (Sanz-Marcos et al., 2021), there are hardly any unemployed people in the sector, and graduates in advertising and public relations in Spanish universities are mainly women (Alvarado-López and Martín-García, 2020). However, considering all of the above, the practice of advertising activity in Spain calls for greater involvement of women in the industry. A radical transformation of the university curricula for the degree course in advertising and public relations is not necessary, but a more notable adaptation to the gender perspective is required. Since female profiles are gradually and progressively reaching managerial positions in communication companies, communication, advertising and PR activity are becoming more feminised.

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