

New Profiles and Competencies in the Communication Realm. A Literature Review

Nuevos perfiles, nuevas competencias en comunicación. Una revisión de la literatura



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Abstract:

This study presents a literature review of the professional background of a graphic advertising communicator, the aim of which is to develop a profile of competencies for a professional university training programme. To carry out the review, the scientific databases Web of Science and Scopus were reviewed to find empirical evidence regarding the competencies needed, how they are measured, and how they are described. The categorisation of competencies identified in the literature follows the classification of the Colombian National Ministry of Education, which recommends dividing higher education competence into three categories: generic, transversal, and specific. The results show evidence of a changing labour market, in addition to indicating that universities are showing increased interest in researching their competency profiles to keep up with this dynamic situation.

Keywords:

Competence; communication; graphic design; advertising; skills; professional career.

Resumen:

Este trabajo presenta un análisis de literatura sobre el perfil laboral del comunicador gráfico publicitario, con fines a la conformación de un perfil de competencias para un programa formativo universitario profesional. Para su elaboración se revisaron bases de datos científicas (Web Of Science y Scopus) en búsqueda de estudios que arrojaran evidencia empírica sobre qué son las competencias, cómo se miden y cómo se perfilan. La categorización de las competencias identificadas en la literatura sigue la clasificación del Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, que propone dividir las competencias de la educación superior entre genéricas, transversales y específicas. Los resultados evidencian la movilidad del mercado laboral y la forma como las universidades incrementan el interés en investigar sus perfiles de competencias para estar acorde a dicha dinámica.

Palabras clave:

Competencias; comunicación; diseño gráfico; publicidad; habilidades; campo profesional.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary context, and specifically in the fields of higher education and the world of business, the concept of professional competence has become increasingly relevant due to the far-reaching changes and developments in society and the labour market. Vocational competence comprises a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities that enable individuals to perform their jobs effectively. In contrast to the traditional approach to education, which focuses on the

acquisition of theoretical knowledge, the vocational competence paradigm is directed at developing practical and applicable abilities that are crucial in specific, increasingly dynamic, and hybrid work environments.

The importance of professional competence in the knowledge society is revealed by the changing and accelerating nature of the modern world (Matošková et al., 2022). Current society is characterised by a constant flow of information and fast technological changes, which are factors that contribute to the rapid obsolescence of traditional knowledge (García et al., 2022). In this context, vocational skills not only enable individuals to adapt and learn continuously, but also foster problem-solving capabilities, innovation, and flexibility (Ivanova et al., 2022). Moreover, in a globalised and inter-connected world, such skills enable collaboration and effective communication between professionals from different cultures and backgrounds (Dziobczenski et al., 2018; Dziobczenski & Galeotti, 2017).

Professional competence plays a key role in driving economic growth and sustainable development. Highly competent professionals have a greater willingness to generate innovative solutions and improve productivity, which has a positive impact on social progress and general well-being (López-García, 2022). Furthermore, such competencies help reduce the gap between education and employment, as they focus on skills in demand in today's labour market, which increases employment opportunities and career success (du Toit-Brits & Blignaut, 2019; Rodríguez-de-Mier, 2022).

The emphasis on professional competencies in university education and the contemporary business world addresses the urgent need to prepare individuals to face the varying challenges of the knowledge society. These competencies provide the groundwork for individuals to thrive in a dynamic work environment (Morales Castillo & Varela Ruiz, 2015), and they foster adaptability (Keith & Collins, 2022), innovation (Perlado-Lamo-de-Espinosa et al., 2019), and collaboration (García-Guardia & Nuñez-Gómez, 2009), thereby playing a crucial role in the economic and social advancement of today's society (Clemente-Mediavilla & Antolín-Prieto, 2019).

In this framework, the idea of competence in the field of education and work performance has been the subject of multiple approaches and interpretations from a variety of academic perspectives. Although there is no absolute consensus on its definition, there is general agreement on its nature and purpose. According to Bunk (1994), competence refers to a set of knowledge, skills, and aptitudes necessary to undertake a specific profession. These professional skills are not only limited to theoretical knowledge, but also include the ability to apply them effectively in practical situations related to workplace activity (Ordóñez et al., 2021).

Competence-based training has been widely recognised as an effective educational and professional development strategy. According to Cejas et al. (2019), competence-based training focuses on teaching and learning for the purpose of acquiring skills, knowledge and abilities that improve performance and achieve the objectives of a specific organisation or institution. This approach is aimed at practical and applicable results, which translate into greater efficiency and effectiveness at work. This trend is gaining ground, which is why the suggestion has been made to consider competencies as capabilities in order for these terms to be more precise in their role as concepts that can lead to action (Gutiérrez-García & Sadi, 2020).

Various authors have highlighted the multi-faceted nature of competence. In this regard, it is noteworthy that competencies are grouped into different domains: knowing how to do; knowing how to be; knowing how to act; and knowing how to live

together (Morales Castillo & Varela Ruiz, 2015). These domains comprise technical knowledge and practical skills, as well as attitudes and values that influence responsible and effective performance in a variety of contexts and situations.

Casanova et al. (2018) proposed a broad and comprehensive definition of competencies, considering them capabilities and skills that lie within individuals and are developed over time, according to the influences and needs of the environment. This view underscores the relevance of integrating theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as positive attitudes that enhance the efficient implementation of related actions.

Just as definitions and concepts surrounding the idea of competence proliferate in the literature, the fact is that models and classifications more concerned with its application are also numerous. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has developed its own definition since the 1990s, classifying competence as the ability to use tools interactively, act autonomously, and function in heterogeneous groups in order foster effectiveness and adaptability in diverse situations (de Melo, 2021). In its 1996 Delors Report, UNESCO focused on learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be, and seeking a combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to perform tasks in different contexts (Diaz et al., 2021). Introduced in 1982, the Boyatzis Model highlights the technical, human, and conceptual competencies needed to influence job performance (Pacheco, 2021). In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, or SCANS, focused on basic performance competence with the aim of providing individuals with the skills and abilities needed to succeed in the workplace (Olivares et al., 2019) (see table 1).

Table 1. Classification of benchmark competencies

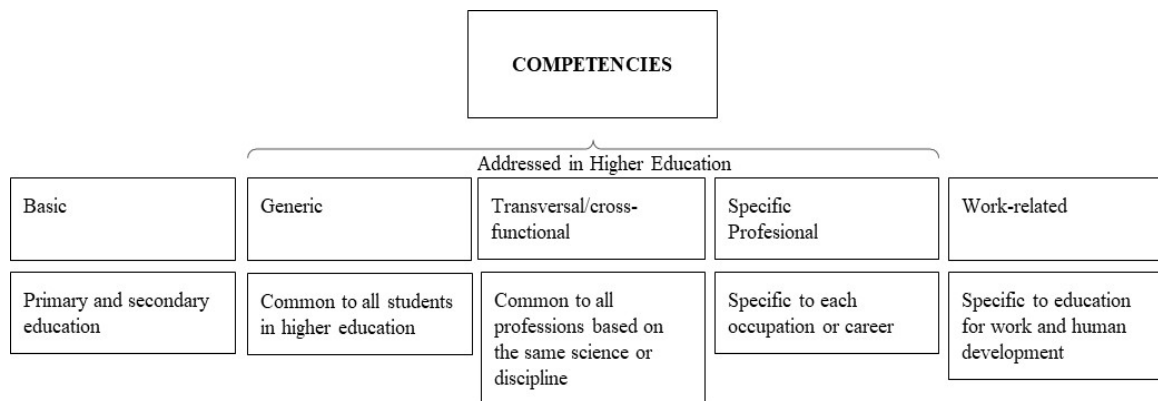
Organisation	Classification	Year	General approach
OECD	Interactive use of tools; Taking action autonomously; and working in heterogeneous groups.	1999	Competence as abilities and a willingness to take effective actions in a number of situations.
UNESCO	Learning to know; Learning to do; Learning to live together; Learning to be.	1996	Competence as a combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes for carrying out tasks in a variety of situations.
Boyatzis Model	Technical competence; Human competence; Conceptual competence.	1982	Skills and behaviours that influence people's work performance.
SCANS	Core competencies; Performance skills.	1991	The set of abilities and skills necessary for success in the workplace.

Source: prepared by the authors based on documentary research

For the National Education Ministry of Colombia (*MEN*), "Competence is an underlying characteristic of a person, directly related to his or her successful performance in a job position" (Ministry of National Education, 2014). Based on this premise, *MEN* established a categorisation according to which five groups of competencies are interlinked between primary and secondary education, higher education, and the world of work:

These refer to basic competencies that are necessary for a person to develop in society and in any field of work. They include skills related to communication, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, citizenship, and the use of ICT. These include generic, or transversal competencies, which are needed in a wide range of professions and occupations, as they provide tools for effective performance in a variety of situations. These competencies are further subdivided into the following categories: a) abstract thinking (critical reasoning, personal understanding, creative thinking, analytical thinking, and problem solving); b) the practical knowledge and competencies necessary for developing other skills that are more abstract, such as knowledge of the environment, communication, teamwork, quantitative literacy, information management, English, and ICT; and c) competencies that enable a person to develop other skills such as knowing how to learn and contextualise. Transversal or cross-functional competencies are present in nearly all professions and occupations, which enable learners to deal with diverse situations throughout their lives. Specific competencies are necessary for conducting a particular task in an occupation or profession, and they are classified into five levels according to their complexity and specificity. Finally, job-related competencies linked to the world of to perform specific functions in a work situation (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Competency model of the National Ministry of Education



+ **Abstract reasoning:** critical thinking, personal understanding, creative reasoning, analytical thinking, solving problems

+ **Knowledge and practical skills used to develop others that are abstract:** knowledge of the surroundings, communication, teamwork, quantitative literacy, information management, English, ICT.

+ **Facilitators for developing competencies:** knowing how to learn and contextualise.

Source: Unigarro Gutiérrez, 2017

It is important to specify that according to *MEN*, generic, transversal/cross-functional and specific/professional competencies are the domain of higher education and, consequently, the focus of this article. In the case of communication, one relevant source is the work conducted by the *Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Comunicación* [Colombian association of communication faculties] (*AFACOM*). According to this association, social communicators and journalists must develop several fundamental skills in order to carry out their profession effectively. These competencies are divided into four main categories: cognitive, communicative, socio-affective, and value-related. Furthermore, it defines competencies as the process “of creating, developing, and implementing knowledge, know-how, skills and abilities oriented toward solving problems through communication by means of analysing, reading, and interpreting contexts using specific languages for professional practice with social responsibility” (2004, p. 79).

The issue of competencies has generated a great deal of reflection and research, both in academia and industry. In communication, previous studies include those of Fuller et al. (2021) and Daoust-Boisvert (2022). In the academic field, research that stands out includes that of Casado et al. (2016), Barrio et al. (2016) and Moreno et al. (2017).

In the area of design, prominent work from academia can be found in Sumantri et al. (2022) and Keith and Collins (2022), and in the field of industry, the research of Weinstein (2018) is notable. In advertising, the works of Ordóñez et al. (2021), Miguel Zamora (2022), and Sánchez-Sánchez and Fernández Cavia (2018) should be mentioned from the academic perspective, while in industry the works of Ivanova et al. (2022), Omar et al. (2012), and Kovács and Zarándné (2022) are noteworthy.

In literature related to competence in communication, design and advertising, a wide range of approaches and investigative techniques stand out, which indicates an expanding field. It bears mentioning that according to the present research, competency models are not yet fully defined, neither in industry nor in academia (Gutiérrez-García & Sadi, 2020). However, despite this situation Spain is one of the countries that has conducted the most research on competencies and has offered a standardised classification (Casademont et al., 2017; Casado et al., 2016; Clemente-Mediavilla & Antolín-Prieto, 2019; Ordóñez et al., 2021; Sánchez-Sánchez & Fernández Cavia, 2018).

The study at hand presents an analysis of the professional competencies related to graphic advertising communication (Arango-Lopera & Viana, 2015), which are documented in the academic literature. As a hybrid profile, graphic-advertising communication integrates three fields: communication, graphic design, and advertising. Communication is widely seen as the episteme of exchanging meaning in the social sphere; advertising focuses on the persuasive realm, while the sum of both concepts comprises the idea of persuasive communication; finally, graphic design enables persuasive communication to be brought to visual design.

The main purpose of this paper is to show how the literature review offers a panorama of knowledge construction in this evolving field, while considering the competencies needed for professional training. Although the focus is limited to this specific area, the methodology employed makes a significant contribution to studies on competencies in the field of education, due to the authors having conducted a bibliographical review that has enabled them to obtain a broad and comprehensive profile. As a result, we offer an overall view of the skills and aptitudes that future professionals in this field must develop to successfully face the challenges of the workplace and help advance the discipline. The present study also highlights the

relevance of a literature review as a valuable methodological tool for exploring and delimiting the competencies needed to engage in academic training and successful insertion into the labour market.

2. Materials and methods

With the aim of identifying the professional competencies required to shape a solid professional profile, a literature review was conducted as the main approach. This method enabled the identification and description of key competencies. The search criteria was refined as the review progressed, ensuring an accurate and precise selection of relevant studies. Initially, three foundational categories were defined: social communication, advertising, and graphic design. Preliminary searches provided a large number of documents that required thorough screening (Arango, 2018; Morales, 2003). After completing this phase, in light of the recent publication of the manual entitled, “*ChatGPT as a Support Tool for Systematic Scoping Reviews: Integrating Artificial Intelligence with the SALSA Framework*” (Lopezosa et al., 2023), the ChatGPT tool was used to reconsider and optimize the search equations (see Table 2). This procedure yielded additional documents, many of which had already been assessed during the initial phase. Moreover, a complementary search for the *communication* category was conducted using the term “communicative competence,” which acknowledged that communication is considered both a professional field and an essential skill for all professions (Rizo García, 2019). The aim of this double search was to comprehensively address both meanings. The documents analysed cover the period from 2011 to 2023, in both English and Spanish, and were published in the Scopus database.

2.1. Search equation

Table 2. Search filtering process

	Category			
	Advertising	Graphic Design	Social Communication	Communicative Competence
Criteria	Search Equation Category ADVERTISEMENT	GRAPHIC DESIGN Search Equation	COMMUNICATION Search Equation	COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE Search Equation
Initial Search	892	2245	24118	5495
Open access	276	432	8160	1889
Delimitation by area	139	152	2489	817
Article	124	120	2186	700
Keyword-based exclusion	26	13	313	261

Analysed	19	13	7	12
ChatGPT: kw+scoping review	scoping review + advertisement	scoping review + graphic design	communication AND skills+scoping AND review	communication AND competence+scoping AND review
	11	17	10	16
Final corpus	21	14	23	
Selection percentage	2.13%	0.62%	0.03%	0.22%

Source: prepared by the authors

Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the search and selection process for articles in four categories: Advertising, Graphic Design, Social Communication, and Communication Competence. Each category includes the specific search criteria used, as well as the search equations applied. The initial results show the number of articles obtained in each category, followed by the number of open-access articles available. Next, the process of delimitation by area is described, along with the number of articles that were finally considered for analysis. To the extent that keyword-based exclusions were applied, and a more detailed analysis was conducted, a progressive reduction in the number of articles was observed at each stage. Finally, the number of articles comprising the final corpus in each category is presented, providing a clear overview of the selection and filtering process of the studies included in the following analysis.

3. Analysis procedure

The selected documents were organised into an Excel matrix in order to enable their handling and subsequent analysis. A codebook was developed to ensure accurate coding of key concepts, thereby allowing for a quick compilation of ideas, and manual coding was also carried out using the title level tool.

Each document underwent a two-stage reading (pre-review and in-depth analysis), and they were documented on an analysis sheet that included various fields of interest, such as definitions, type of research, research techniques, populations, and samples, as well as the sector of application (industry or academia).

Later, the skills and competencies identified through the research were extracted. To ensure a coherent and relevant classification, the proposal by the National Ministry of Education (*MEN*) was used, as it was considered the most suitable for the purpose of this research (National Ministry of Education, 2014; Unigarro Gutiérrez, 2017).

As some studies presented specific skills rather than actual competencies, a finding that was also identified by Fuller et al. (2021), these skills were compiled into lists and grouped under their corresponding competencies. The process of refinement underwent three rounds of review by the research group, and was additionally validated by the Programme Curriculum Committee, which acted as an expert panel to ensure the quality and validity of the process.

This methodology enabled a systematic analysis of the competencies identified in the literature review. The results obtained offer a comprehensive and well-founded overview of the skills required in the field under study, which provides a solid basis for future research and curriculum development. The involvement of the Curriculum Committee as an expert panel ensured the soundness and reliability of the findings, adding an additional level of credibility to the present scientific study.

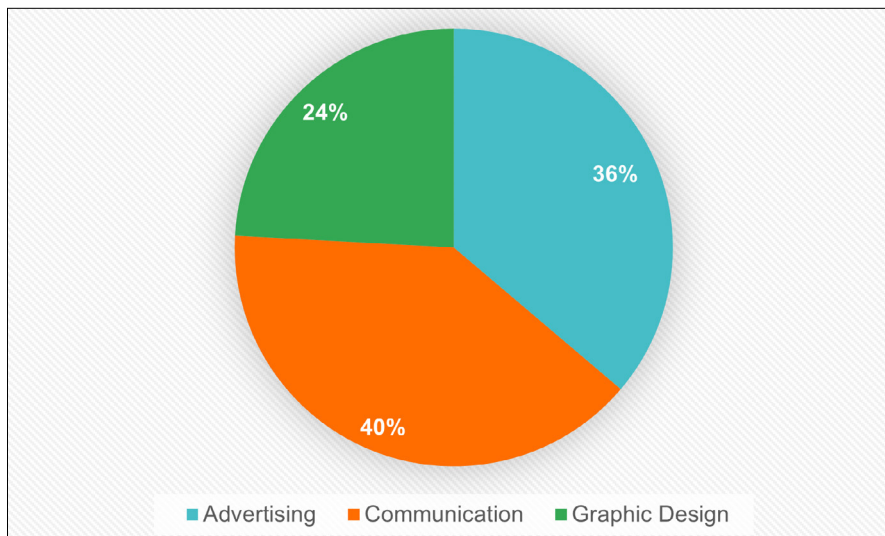
4. Results and discussion

The presentation of the results is divided into two parts. First, some relevant bibliometric indicators are described, providing a general overview of the sources for the identified competencies. In the second part, these competencies are presented. At the end of this section, some of the results are discussed in light of the study's main objective.

Overview of the publications analysed

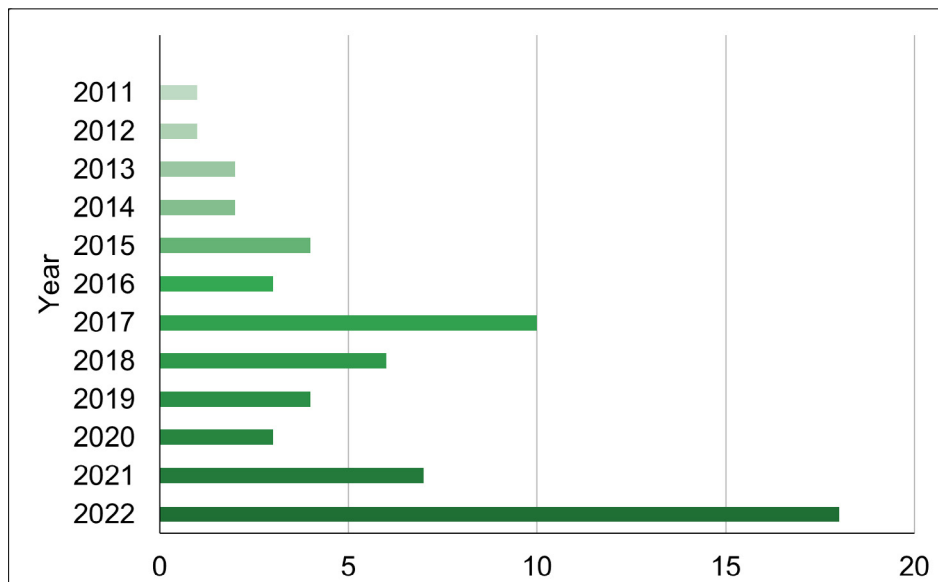
For the consolidation and analysis of the documents, the two initial entries in the category of communication were merged (communication and communicative competence), making this category the one with the highest number of documents (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. Documents analysed per category



Source: prepared by the authors

Regarding the years of publication, a steady growth in the number of articles was observed from 2011 to 2016, followed by a decrease in the period from 2018 to 2020. However, the years 2017 and 2022 stand out with a significantly higher number of publications, doubling the average of the previous years in both cases (see Graph 3).

Graph 3. Years when the articles were published

Source: prepared by the authors

The remarkable increase in publications in 2022 is a curious phenomenon. With sixteen articles published that year, the volume of publications nearly quadrupled the overall average of the sample (4.47 articles per year). Although none of the articles from that period explicitly addressed the pandemic, it is plausible to assume that the analysed corpus reflects a trend similar to what was observed in other fields of knowledge during those years: a general increase in the volume of publications, possibly due to an increase in the time available for tasks requiring concentration and low levels of interruption (Chapman et al., 2023).

4.2. Sectors

As the interpretation of the concept of competence varies according to whether it is approached from a business or academic perspective, it is essential to consider the sectors where the studies addressed in this review were conducted. The articles are mostly divided between academia and industry, with only a small percentage of studies having examined both sectors simultaneously (see Table 3). From the academic perspective, there is a pervasive trend in which researchers focus on the captive audience of students (Molares Cardoso, 2022)¹ and professors (Carballo et al., 2021). This approach enables access to data and provides a controlled environment for observing competencies in an educational setting. On the other hand,

¹ Daoust-Boisvert (2022) presents a paper on students with the largest sample (n=429), followed by that of Ivanova et al. (2022) with 318, and finally by Garcia et al. (2022), who carried out a study involving 125 students.

industry-focused research tends to put the focus on employers (Matošková et al., 2022; Rodríguez-de-Mier, 2022), in addition to employees (Lalueza Bosch & Creus, 2014; Weinstein, 2018), usually through interviews and surveys, but also via job offers examined by using content analysis (Kovács & Zarándné, 2022; Omar et al., 2012; Powers, 2021). These studies directly address the needs and expectations of the labour market, providing a clear picture of the competencies demanded by industry.

The studies analysed are based on the premise that there is a significant gap between the training provided to future professionals by universities and the real demands of the constantly evolving labour market (Clemente-Mediavilla & Antolín-Prieto, 2019; Farfán Montero, 2016; Ferrer-Mavárez et al., 2021; Macdonald, 2014; Monge-Benito & Etxebarria-Gangoiti, 2017; Ordóñez et al., 2021). This discrepancy highlights the need for greater alignment between the competencies developed in educational settings and the skills demanded in the professional sphere, as the former must ensure improved training so that graduates are capable of facing the challenges of today's labour market.

Table 3. Sectors to which the research was applied

Sector	Frequency
Industry	35
Education	19
Education/Industry	4
Total	58

Source: prepared by the authors

Some authors have even pointed out that although the professional community is adapting to the new demands of today's context, academic institutions show a certain resistance to change, which negatively impacts the alignment between university education and job demands in the commercial communication sector (Sánchez-Sánchez & Fernández Cavia, 2018). This imbalance presents a challenge both for graduates who might face difficulties when entering the job market, and for the workplace, which requires competent and up-to-date professionals.

Constant technological progress and the transformation of work processes have raised concerns about the gap between universities and the professional environment (Álvarez-Flores et al., 2018; Torres & Vivas, 2009). It has been pointed out repeatedly that this gap could lead to a mismatch between the academic content taught in classrooms and the professional reality that students will face upon graduation. As a result, university education might not be adequately fulfilling the current needs of industry, which highlights the importance of continuously updating the curricula in order to maintain the relevance and pertinence of higher education in a rapidly changing digital environment.

4.3. Competencies

As mentioned above, the classification of competencies is an intricate task. Frequent confusion between abilities and competencies makes it difficult to develop a clear taxonomy.

Additionally, the job profiles demanded by the market are subject to the dynamics of the labour market and the profit demands of company managers, which makes the merging of roles a common practice (Álvarez-Flores et al., 2018; Rodríguez-de-Mier, 2022).

In addition to the classifications of competencies presented in the introduction, which include those of organizations such as the OECD, UNESCO, and models such as SCAN and Boyatzis, the review has identified the following additional classifications (see Table 4):

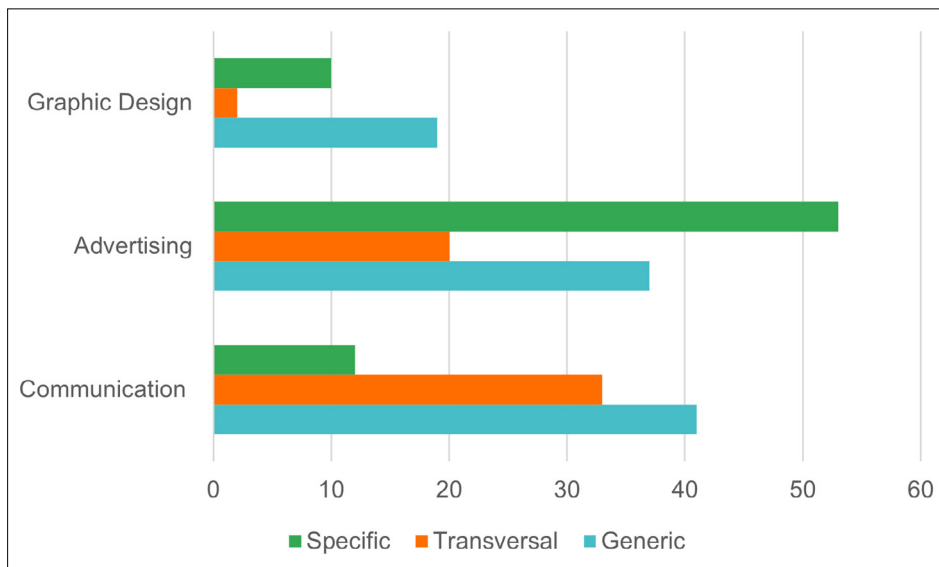
Table 4. Classifications of competencies found in the literature review

Proposed classification	Reference
Aneca (Spain): professional, cross-functional, specific and academic	(Sánchez-Sánchez & Fernández Cavia, 2018)
Conceptual, procedural and attitudinal; transversal, general, and specific	(Casado et al., 2016) Casado, M. C. G., Barrio, M. G., & García, S. Á. (2016)
Specialised cognition, personal and social competencies, and meta-competencies	(Cruz-González et al., 2020; López-García, 2022)
Instrumental, systemic, interpersonal.	(Rodríguez-de-Mier, 2022)
1) Conceptual design skills; 2) Project management skills; 3) Software skills; 4) Technical design skills	(Dziobczenski & Galeotti, 2017)
Traditional and digital	(Dziobczenski et al., 2018)

Source: prepared by the authors

For the study at hand, we will use the classification system provided by the National Ministry of Education (*MEN*), which regulates this topic in Colombia (Estrada et al., 2015; Unigarro Gutiérrez, 2017). To do so, we will focus on generic competencies common to all professionals, transversal/cross-functional, and specific competencies inherent to each professional profile. Firstly, the competencies identified in each study were extracted from all the articles. This process required an additional effort, due to the fact that competencies and abilities are not always clearly differentiated in the literature, as previously mentioned.

A total of 227 abilities and competencies were identified, which were later regrouped as shown below.

Graph 4. Overall distribution of competencies by category

Source: prepared by the authors

What is surprising is that *generic* competencies hold such a prominent place within the *communication* category. This highlights the difficulty of limiting this professional field to a specific set of basic competencies. This situation seems to reinforce the assumption that these professionals are required to “do it all”, and they are expected to master a wide range of skills as well. Moreover, this perception is exacerbated even further by the low level of specific competencies identified in this area. By contrast, in the *advertising* category, numerous specific skills have been observed, indicating that this field is more precisely defined and specialised.

4.4. Generic

As these competencies are common to all professionals, once again we find a broad list of skills such as “correctly using data and statistics” (Sánchez-Sánchez & Fernández Cavia, 2018, p. 237), “knowledge of the context” (Busuttil, 2022, p. 591), “obtaining and selecting information” (Benites, 2022, p. 6), and “creativity” (Carballo et al., 2021). To achieve a more comprehensive view, the reclassification proposed by Unigarro (2017) was used, which distinguishes between abstract thinking skills, practical knowledge and competencies for the development of abstract skills, and dynamic competencies that enable the development of other skills (see Table 5).

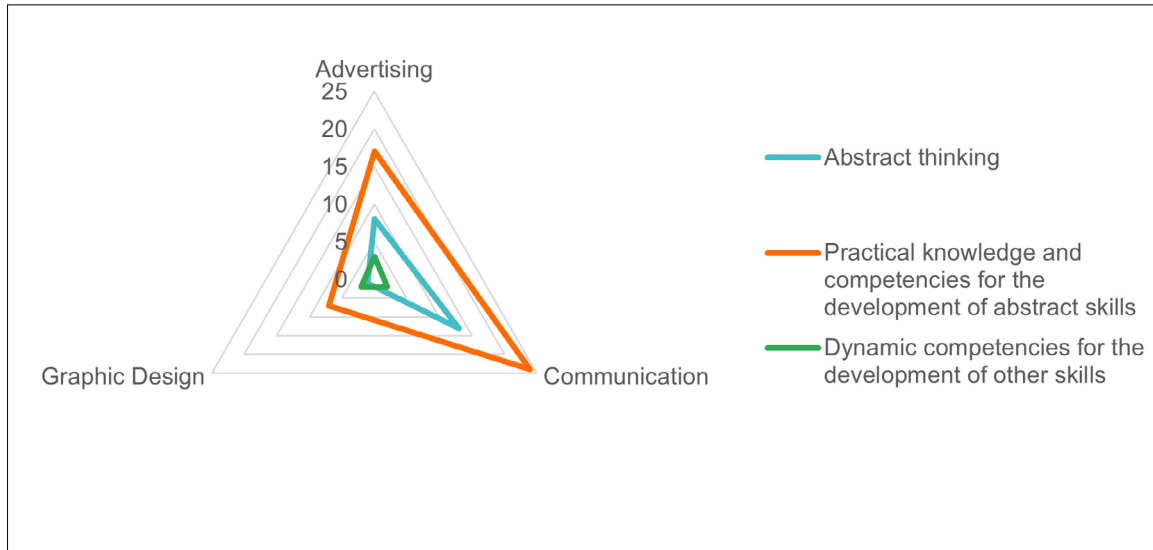
Table 5. Generic competencies in the three categories of analysis

Reclassification	Competencies	Advertising	Communication	Graphic Design
Abstract thinking	Critical thinking	2	2	0
	Personal understanding	0	0	0
	Creative thinking	4	3	1
	Analytical thinking	1	1	0
	Problem-solving	1	7	0
Practical knowledge and competencies for the development of abstract skills	Knowledge of the context	2	5	1
	Communication	4	3	1
	Teamwork	5	4	2
	Quantitative literacy	2	3	2
	Information management	0	3	0
	Second language ability	2	3	0
	ICT	2	3	1
Dynamic competencies for the development of other skills	Knowing how to learn	3	2	2
	Contextualizing	0	0	0
Total		28	39	10

Source: prepared by the authors

In being distributed across the categories, the overview of these generic competencies is shown in Graph 5.

Graph 5. Distribution of generic competencies across categories



Source: prepared by the authors

4.5. Transversal competencies

It is important to highlight that regardless of their specific areas of application, these competencies make up the common core of foundational knowledge shared by professionals within the same field. Just as in engineering, where there is a set of shared knowledge that is common to all profiles, whether civil, environmental, administrative, or computer science-related, transversal competencies in the field of communication must also show the features that unify all communication profiles, including audio-visual, corporate, graphic, digital, and others.

The initial list provided sixty-eight skills considered transversal competencies. Once aggregated, they displayed certain characteristics (see Table 6). It bears mentioning that according to what was found in the literature, these competencies should be common to all individuals undertaking education in communication studies, regardless of their specific profiles.

Table 6. Overview of skills in transversal competencies

Emerging (Reformulated) Competencies	Initial skills
Digital community management (social media)	Social Media Profile Development; Searching for and managing information in the digital environment; Creating videos for YouTube (streaming platforms); Web analytics; Knowledge and use of social media; Social networks; Content production and distribution; Persuasion; Managing multiple languages to address digital challenges; Creating content for diverse media and maintaining narrative continuity through them; and Media management.
ICT environment	Web content creation, website management, creating corporate blogs; WordPress; Knowing and applying specific software and new digital technologies to the sector.
Image management and production (still and moving images)	Photography; Video editing; Graphic element management; Searching, selecting, and systematizing any type of audiovisual document in a database; Editing sound and visual materials according to a given concept using necessary narrative techniques and technologies; Visual language and aesthetics.
Strategic communication management	Organizing and managing technical resources (production); Multichannel vision; Strategy; Strategic planning; Supporting intangible management; Strategic thinking; Communicating information effectively; Knowledge of management systems; Designing communication plans; Management of project management tools; Budgeting; Management knowledge applied to communication; Project management; Management of (production) teams; Understanding the political aspects of communication; Planning and managing information; Dissemination of (research) results.
Market orientation (the public, audiences, otherness)	Understanding and critically interpreting a complex communication environment (handling the communication setting); Understanding client needs; Client orientation; Negotiating skills; Relationship-building with stakeholders; Identifying client needs; Customer service; Client relations; Market trends.
Professional communication and expression	Communication skills (good oral or written expression in one's own language); Mastery of non-verbal communication; Understanding non-verbal communication; Ability to communicate in simple terms; Conceptualising communication ideas; Mastery of the communication process; Aesthetic sense; Persuasive techniques; Mastery of communication tools and tactics; Oral communication; Interdisciplinary knowledge applied to the creation of communication messages; Presentation skills; Rhetorical practice; Designing, developing, and supervising graphic elements, images, or texts creatively.

Source: prepared by the authors

At this point, a key finding is presented in the following paragraph, which could be relevant to competency profiles in the field of communication. Although the professional profiles and emphasis on communication vary from country to country, these six competencies could be considered fundamental in exercising the communication profession: in short, they encompasses the management of communities, which is linked to the rise of social networks and the development of clusters and configurations that are somewhat random, yet follow a common thread of shared interests (Han, 2014).

4.6. Specific

Table 7. Regrouping skills into specific competencies

	Graphic design (36 skills)	Advertising (11 skills)	Communication (11 skills)
Skills	<p>Competencies related to Creativity, Graphic design, and Conceptualization: Generating design ideas, Graphic Conceptualization</p> <p>Graphic Design Competence: Illustration, Layout, Typography, Photo Editing, Print Production, Pace, Thematic strength, Graphic focus, Graphic Style, Graphic Space, Depth, Colour Matching</p> <p>Digital design skills: Interactive design, Service design, Data-driven design, Data visualisation, Animation and special effects techniques</p> <p>Software competence and tools Software skills: 2D software (Adobe Suite, Corel Draw, etc.), 3D software (3D Studio, Maya, etc.), Coding skills (Java, PHP, HTML, CSS, etc.), 3D Modelling, Motion graphics, Web Development, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Web design Web layout, Web design,</p> <p>Presentation and Visual Communication Skills Dreamweaver, Keynote, Prezi</p>	<p>Communicative competence (persuasive): Writing advertising copy, Advertising products and services</p> <p>Marketing Competence Branding, Sales (customer service): Strategic competence Briefing skills Planning</p> <p>Art Direction</p>	<p>Audiovisual directing, production and post-production, Audiovisual production and post-production: Adjusting quantities and qualities of sound, light and colour during the creation process (sound design). Ability to recreate the sound environment of an audiovisual or multimedia project according to the intention of the text and the narration. Create and direct the comprehensive staging of audiovisual productions</p> <p>Journalistic and content writing. Journalistic writing: Fluently write texts, outlines, and scripts.</p> <p>Event Planning and Management Knowledge of media outlets Audiovisual knowledge, Journalistic flair, Knowledge of the editorial line, Analyse structures, content and styles of television and radio programming</p>

Source: prepared by the authors

A peculiar feature of this competency landscape is that in the case of graphic advertising communication, the specific skills emerge from three distinct fields –advertising, communication, and graphic design– each of which is a professional domain with its own specialised knowledge. Each of these fields provides its own set of specific competencies. When integrated, they encompass skills that are more closely related to audiovisual communication than to general communication (see Table 7). Nevertheless, some clear aspects stand out: firstly, there is a strong presence of software tools, which leads to the discussion of “proprietary” competencies. These skills can only be used with the exclusive involvement of patents and intellectual property, with a notable example being Adobe (Keith & Collins, 2022).

As for advertising, the development of communication campaigns is crucial, and especially their integration with marketing. Persuasive communication inherently involves the exchange of messages with the aim of influencing audience behaviour, including buying habits. With regard to communication, what stands out is that audiovisual content production is now a skill that is expected of all communication graduates, regardless of whether they are specifically trained in this area.

4.7. Final reflection

There is one constant complaint regarding generic competencies: although considered basic, they are usually not fulfilled upon entering university. This presents a unique challenge for the field of communication since competencies such as creativity and communication are inherently part of this body of knowledge. Consequently, in Colombia it is crucial to focus on the learning outcomes that students demonstrate at the end of their training, which suggests that defining specific performance levels for each competency is relevant.

Regarding transversal competencies, what stands out is the specific absence of creativity in the set of transversal skills used for professional training in communication, advertising, and design. This exclusion can be interpreted from several points of view. On the one hand, it could be argued that creativity is a fundamental skill that should be inherent to individuals dedicated to these disciplines, thereby making it a minimum requirement in their professional education. On the other hand, creativity might be considered just one part of a broader set of generic competencies, and its development could be viewed as essential in the comprehensive training of any professional.

By contrast, research seems to have found its niche within the strategic aspect of education in communication, advertising, and design. These disciplines tend to view research as a means to achieve specific objectives rather than an end in itself. In this sense, research is approached for specific purposes and is closely linked to strategic communication planning.

This perspective is in line with the applied and practical nature of these fields, where research is used to substantiate and reinforce strategies and decisions that have a direct impact on the target audience, public, or market.

Regarding specific competencies, it is advisable to evaluate each educational programme independently. In terms of training, what makes a programme specific is closely related to what sets it apart in the market through its graduates. However, this specific differentiation also requires a clear definition of how specific competencies are applied, developed, and articulated.

5. Conclusions

The classification of skills into competencies is a complex, analytical challenge that requires a thoughtful and detailed approach. While these terms may seem interchangeable, it is crucial to differentiate between the act of grouping related skills into broad competence categories and the precise definition of the competencies within those classifications. The initial grouping involves organizing related skills into broader categories that can be addressed collectively during the education of professionals. By contrast, defining competencies requires a detailed and specific description of the abilities, knowledge, and attitudes that professionals must have in order to perform a particular role effectively.

There is a clear interconnection between the components of the communication process and the competencies required of professionals in this field. For instance, the consideration of audiences, the public, and markets is a fundamental aspect in the design of marketing strategies. In this context, communication implies the ability to understand and meet the needs and preferences of the target audience. However, some critical competencies, such as inter-cultural awareness, may not be clearly identified within this classification. Despite their importance in communication, these competencies might be found in other learning contexts as well. For example, in the case of intercultural awareness, this is closely related to understanding and respecting cultural differences, which is essential for effective communication in a world that is increasingly globalized and diverse.

The evolution of competencies in the field of professional communication raises key questions regarding the point at which certain specific skills might become required, transversal competencies. A clear example of this is search engine optimization, or SEO. As this skill becomes increasingly common and essential in communication practice, it is necessary to assess when it will make the transition from being a specific competency to a fundamental requirement in the training of professionals in this field. Such a shift would reflect the standardization of certain abilities, setting a point at which previous specializations would become basic and indispensable competencies, or an essential measure of competent professional performance.

The research indicates that specific competencies manifest themselves more prominently in the field of audiovisual communication. However, a limitation in the scope of such studies is also evident, as communicative competence could not be addressed in contexts that are not strictly related to the social sciences. In this regard, one significant challenge is to conduct a broader and more comprehensive review involving the exploration of more than 25,000 articles in order to identify those that address communicative competence in professional settings. While communication is undeniably a fundamental skill for everyone, both in work and in social contexts, the lingering challenge is to specify the exact expectations of professionals in particular areas of communication. There is a lack of clarity in research descriptions regarding what is expected of professionals in terms of communicative competence, which makes it difficult to establish a differentiated standard for these professionals compared to other individuals who also need to communicate in their daily lives.

At the end of the day, the transition from specific skills to transversal competencies in the field of communication reflects the evolution of professional demands and the standardisation of skills that were previously considered specialized. This dynamic poses challenges in defining and delimiting distinct competencies for communication professionals, especially when faced with the complexity of covering all contexts where communicative competence is needed. In this process, communication as an essential skill, together with specific competencies, become intertwined in a constant redefinition of what is expected of professionals in this constantly evolving field.

The prominence of the digital realm in this entire shift is evident, as the issue is not merely about using new tools. In essence, the issue is about a language, a unique way of understanding the world, and a new dynamic that makes relationships more transversal, in addition to making such relations more horizontal. During the research period, no specific references were found regarding the role of artificial intelligence in transforming professional fields, nor its impact on the training of communication professionals. It bears mentioning that many of the skills mentioned in the studies had already included developments in artificial intelligence, the most well-known being AI applied to social media. However, as the chat version of GPT (Generative

Pre-trained Transformer), which was available for user interaction, was not launched until late 2022, no studies addressing this topic were identified in the time-frame of the present analysis.

Regarding the working methodology, it is essential to highlight that a systematic literature review played a key role in developing professional competency profiles in a precise and robust manner. This methodology provides a rigorous and reliable platform for identifying and analysing trends, advances, and current knowledge in a specific field. By applying this approach, it is possible to examine and evaluate multiple sources of information, such as empirical studies, theories, approaches, and existing practices with the aim of gaining a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the essential competencies required in a specific profession. The systematic review carried out in the present study has enabled a distinction to be made between generic and specific skills, as well as the identification of emerging skills, or those in the process of becoming standardized. Finally, this methodology has helped the authors validate the relevance of competencies in relation to the changing demands of the labour market, thereby ensuring coherence and suitability in the profiles of professional competencies.

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Discussion and conclusions	Brenda Meza-Rivera and Diana Catalina Londoño-Muñoz
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Brenda Meza-Rivera and Carlos Andrés Arango-Lopera

8. Conflict of interest

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

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