Brand journalism in Spain. Profiling the brand journalist

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Abstract

For many years brand names have been using techniques such as branded content or content marketing in an effort to establish new relationships with their customers. Another more current method is known as brand journalism, and it is quickly becoming an excellent way for brand names to attract customers and maintain their loyalty through new channels. In the United States and some European countries for example, this tendency is coming to the forefront, while in our country its implementation is still limited, with only a few examples worth mentioning.

In light of the absence of investigations that analyse the characteristics and singularities of brand journalism in a wider perspective, this paper seeks to carry out a theoretical approach to brand journalism through a qualitative methodological triangulation combining diverse methods. It will also study this journalistic figure in the United States and Spain, analysing some cases in our country and finally it will assess the possibility of implanting specific university training. By doing so, we understand we are giving a global vision of this tendency that at present, figures as an option for producing quality content for brand names and at the same time as a growing employment opportunity in the current labour market.

Key words: brand journalism, corporative communication, new content, Spain, professional profiles.

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1. Introduction

Businesses play an important social role nowadays, underscored by the growth in information and communication technologies and the web 2.0. The line that once separated the brand name from the public has become increasingly blurred, replacing the need for publicity with that of connectivity. This means brands are becoming more human and look to befriend the consumers, forging a commitment where concepts such as honesty, sincerity, coherence and emotions take on deeper meaning.

Brand names have moved from an era of transactional marketing to one of relational marketing, where clients are now seen as people. Without doubt, the theses behind the Cluetrain Manifesto (Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger, 1999) have now come into their own. It is worth noting that this Manifesto began by asserting that «market places are conversations», followed by the statement «market places are made up of human beings, not demographic sectors». This brilliant proposal explaining the new concept of brand-customer relationships, orientated towards developing engagement, underlines the importance of recognising and understanding human beings in order to recognise and understand the consumer.

In this context, brand names have deployed new methods to connect to and to consolidate the relationship with their public. The object of these strategies is not to sell, because sales would be the natural response and consequence of a job well done (Lang, 2015). Instead, they aim to offer their public an added value, something truly relevant and appropriate that strengthens the company´s values and philosophy and improves their reputation both on and offline.

So, for some time now, brands have been developing techniques in their digital communication strategies such as branded content or content marketing based on the slogan «content is king», an idea that Bill Gates already defended in 1966. Or more recently, brand journalism, a reality that is slowly becoming popular and more established in countries like the United States -although for now- with a less relevant presence in our own country. However, it is a sought after employment option with an optimistic future projection, which makes it more interesting within the ecosystem of present day media. For this reason, in this article we will focus on the analysis of this latest communicative tendency.

2. Methodology

Brand journalism is not a new phenomenon although it is a relatively recent one and scarcely considered in the academic field. We have yet to discover any widely reaching or profound studies analysed from the prism of scientific rigour that take into account the characteristics, consequences and distinctive features of this tendency within the world of communication where disciplines such as publishing, newspapers and marketing, among others, intermingle. For this reason we have chosen as our first and most basic objective, that of investigating a theoretical approximation regarding the origin and concept of brand journalism as well as its development and evolution from the United States to Europe, and especially, in Spain.

Secondly, a meticulous analysis of the figure of this new communication professional, the brand journalist, with its corresponding educational profile, abilities and aptitudes, is crucial. As well, we will consider the possible advantages of integrating specific teaching into the academic curriculum of Communication and Information Sciences, which would respond to a growing demand for labour in the current market. So, we find ourselves with the challenge of studying a phenomenon found in an area that has gone mainly unnoticed by science, is contemporary and is ever-changing. For this reason, we must adopt an open approach which will allow us to understand the reference framework through methodological integration.

We have opted for qualitative methodological triangulation combining diverse methods, in this way minimising the biases and inherent methodological flaws associated with each strategy to be able to visualise the problem from different angles and in this manner, enhance the validity and consistency of the findings (Okuda Benavides and Gómez-Restrepo, 2005). Firstly, we proceeded from the necessity of using the methodology for the literature review through a search for information, followed by an organization and analysis of our findings.

On the basis of Yin´s definition, we adapted the study to cases that formed «empirical research that studies a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the limits between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident» (1994: 13). We will focus on the profound and exhaustive study of multiple cases of successful brand journalism in Spain using a descriptive, explicative and evaluative perspective, attempting to answer questions such as 'how?' and 'why?', in a specific context. Meanwhile, to answer exploratory questions such as 'what?' we have resorted to the use of an open-ended question survey (table 1) and a flexible pre-code which is a sampling from three communication professionals that work in corporations that implement brand journalism in our country: Coca-Cola, Eroski and BBVA.

Table 1. Open-ended question survey.

Questions
How and why did this brand journalism project come about?
What are the objectives?
How has it evolved over time?
How many people work on the editing team in Spain?
What is their professional/academic profile?
In your opinion, what are -or should be- the characteristics of a brand journalist?
How have customers responded to this project?
Finally, what are your next challenges in this field?

3. Origen and development of brand journalism: a conceptual approach

From the beginning of this decade, so-called brand journalism has come into its own as a means of communication between brands and the general public. In fact, between 2011 and 2012, large corporations around the world created information web portals that since then have managed to reach unprecedented visitor rates and popularity equal to that of prestigious and consolidated media outlets. Some solid examples of this are technological webs such as *The Network* (owned by Cisco), *CMO* (Adobe) or *Freepress* (Intel), financial webs like *The Financialist* (Credit Suisse), *Openforum* (American Express), or business webs like *Businesswithoutborders* (HSBC) or general information webs like *Coca-Cola Journey* (Coca-Cola).

This phenomenon is not exactly new, since many companies have been using blogs or other online social outlets for some time as a direct and disintermediated way of connecting with their public and creating links that are more than just transactional. In 1994 Balasubramanian already referred to hybrid messages as any corporate attempt to pay for influencing audiences with a commercial goal using communications that do not project any commercial appearance. These contents must be «able to incorporate the commercial message without being intrusive». To achieve these results, it is fundamental to maintain a «balance between the brand (its identification) and the content (the presentation of the information or entertainment that provides the consumer with a positive experience)» (Aguilera Moyano, Baños González and Ramírez Perdiguero, 2016).

In the same way, producing company magazines has also been a common strategy for developing external communication, together with press releases, memoirs, brochures, etc. However, Barciela states (2013, 24th February), brand journalism has almost nothing to do with company magazines as we have known them:

> We are seeing information portals that are accessible worldwide (written in English), offering information similar to and even superior to traditional publications, updated daily, with excellent design and with first class collaborators and editorials.

Content quality is one of the keys to earning customer loyalty and reaching that sought after engagement with the public. In brand journalism, brand names find an excellent opportunity to «set up a participative, bidirectional, continuous and pleasant connection under the standards of acceptance and enjoyment with their targeted public» (Rodrigo Martín, Sánchez de la Nieta and Hernández, 2014: 1.622).

3.1. Definition and characteristics of brand journalism

The birth of brand journalism should be situated in the United States, although determining an exact date or even founder is not an easy task. In a sense, many companies had already been practising brand journalism for some years, even

before the concept was invented. But theorists and professionals from this sector have searched for the milestone in the history of publishing, marketing and journalism, where we can begin to talk about brand journalism, per se.

There seems to be some consensus that the founder was Larry Light, former director of marketing for McDonald´s, when in 2003 he began a successful campaign to save the floundering company from its noticeable decline. At that time, Light decided they had to reinvent the concept of their brand, experimenting with brand journalism through which they managed to communicate in a more direct way with the customers of McDonald´s that the company had changed for the better, that its food was healthy and that they were working on measures of corporate social responsibility (Bull, 2013). Another sector however, situates Mike Brown as the earliest founder of brand journalism around the year 1983 when he took over the communications at IBM and hired a dozen journalists to explain their brand in another way. (Campo, 2015).

In any event, brand journalism came to light as part of the strategies of commercial communication based on the idea of Balasubramanian´s hybrid message. A postmodern interpretation of this concept according to Aguilera Moyano, Baños González and Ramírez Perdiguero (2016), would allow us to identify these messages as those which successfully combine a commercial message which favours the brand with a non-commercial content which is not orientated towards sales (transactional marketing) but towards the user´s experience (relational marketing).

Basically, brand journalism is a discipline based on the creation of «means of communication» within a brand or non-informative company. As Foremski, former journalist for the *Financial Times* and editor for *syliconvalleywatcher. com* said «every company is a media company» (2012). In this way, companies have developed web pages or blogs where they share information about events or affairs that are not necessarily related to their company. This modality goes hand in hand with content marketing but here companies attempt to show themselves in a more rigorous and honest light. In fact, Foremski himself is convinced that «the term «brand journalism» is used by corporate PR and PR agencies to confer a higher status to the content marketing they produce» (2015).

The nature of brand journalism requires showing how principled, credible, relevant and pertinent content will reinforce the brand´s reputation. Here we can find an element that positions this approach somewhat further away from the already mentioned branded content, whose objective is orientated towards enhancing the notoriety and affinity of the brand by generating thematic content. This does not point to mere sponsorship, but to a recreational nature that appeals more to emotion, to humour, to art, etc. Despite this, brand journalism does position itself closer to *infotainment* using «new technological resources and transmedia narratives successfully, (…). And seeking the virality of their contents, including elements that facilitate this and tools that bolster their presence in social networks» (Rodrigo Martín, Sánchez de la Nieta and Hernández, 2014: 1.617).

It would seem that more and more the idea of a type of brand communication that is less intrusive and disruptive and more useful and entertaining, is taking hold. Thus, the classical «push» communication is loosing sway to the

growing «pull» of «attraction, mutual knowledge and dialogue» (Ramos, 2006). This coincides with the logic of the also notorious «inbound marketing», whose goal is to attract customers by providing value, through the use of varied digital actions such as SEO, participation in social networks, web analytics or the aforementioned content marketing among others. In the end, brand journalism is presented to us as a new way for brand names to connect with their audiences where they combine «elements of traditional public relations, marketing, corporate communication and 360 degree communication, virality and crowdsourcing» (Rodrigo Martín, Sánchez de la Nieta y Hernández, 2014: 1.622).

To be able to comment on its characteristics we should undertake to distinguish between the two models of brand journalism: one based on the concept of «owned media» (Pino, 2014) where the presence of the brand is constant and visible in the design as well as in the contents; the other where the brand is minimally embodied or with an inexistent appearance and is positioned under «independent media brand» (Navarro Lozano, 2014). In any case, this communicative practise should correspond more to a transparent exercise than to an independent one, since it will only win over the public´s confidence through sincerity and honesty.

Customer loyalty is fundamental in this brand journalism that, however, should not make direct reference to the brand, and if they do, the ratio should be five independent news items to each brand news item (Foremski, 2015). Credibility will be the main tool in making the public´s trust possible, and for this reason, brand names tend to resort to their knowledge and real experiences (know how) to build up this information. We should remember that the purpose of this strategy is to consolidate and improve the brand´s reputation in the medium and long term, outperforming a notoriety whose reach may only be timely or short-lived (Fernández García, 2016).

4. Professional profile of the brand journalist

It is clear that the logic and function of brand journalism places it in close proximity to corporate and entrepreneurial communication, geared towards new tendencies in public relations and the generation of «engagement» between brands and clients. However, defining the curricular profile of this professional is quite complex as he is halfway between journalism, publicity and marketing. In this sense, there is already sufficient scientific literature as well as authors and experts that situate themselves on one side or the other.

In the last few years, especially after the peaking of the financial crisis, journalists have found career opportunities and even self-employment in business and/or institutional communication. Indeed, by 2012, 41% of employed journalists worked in the professional field of communications in companies (APM, 2014 16th of December). Therefore, it seems quite obvious that professional journalists have been taking on the role of heading corporate communications in contrast to maintaining strictly journalistic roles. In the forum titled «Tendencies in Global Communication» celebrated in 2014 by the Association of Directors of Commu-

nication (Dircom) and the Associated Press of Madrid (APM), the then director of APM, Carmen de Riego, stated that «journalism is communication but not all communication is journalism». In this sense, the president of Dircom, José Manuel Velasco, commented that «the frontiers between journalism and corporate communication are becoming blurred», which provokes a broadening of the concept of communication in itself (Dircom, 2014 30th of April).

It is all about publicity strategies based on editorials. In this manner, we can verify how in this type of communication many of the assumptions and requirements demanded by journalistic work are met. But we should also contemplate the vast differences concerning their goals, which have provoked diverse sectors to reject the concept of brand journalism.

For Rodrigo Martín, Sánchez de la Nieta and Hernández «brand journalism looks to use the professional journalists´ abilities to publish interesting stories aimed at specific, and often specialised, audiences» (2014: 1.614). That being said, they defend the idea that it is not and cannot be journalism, since these writings do not contain a series of distinctive features of this discipline, although it can be considered that it is really «a perfectly legitimate commercial strategy that can benefit from the narrative abilities and specialised knowledge of professional journalists to reach optimum effectiveness» (1.615). We will now briefly go over the main arguments wielded by these authors to clearly and authoritatively distance brand journalism and place it squarely in the field of publicity, public relations and marketing. In the first place, the discipline under study cannot and should not attempt to stand alone since it deals with self- serving commercialism and should not be presented as journalistic news as such. In the second place, it is not, nor does it pretend to be objective, since it is not an impartial presentation of information nor does it balance voices and perspectives. As well, its commercial purpose is fulfilled by vying for visibility, but among its priorities we will not encounter public service interests.

However, as brand journalism is basically a journalistic task, we come across a large number of professionals among the members of these work groups who have been trained in the journalistic environment. And although the purpose of this article is not to debate the suitability of calling this practise journalism, it is also true that in the resulting contents of brand journalism we can find qualities common to rigorous journalism: transparency, variety, honesty, informative interest, editorial policy (differentiated opinion), accessibility and the utmost impartiality (Millán, 2017; Gomes Franco e Silva and Cruzat, 2016; Aparicio, 2015; Carreras, 2015).

For the Mexican journalist Carlos Sánchez the potential controversy over calling this dynamic communication «journalism», as well as the possible customer deceit involved, could be solved by a simple warning within the information portals of the brands where it clearly states «The content you are about to read was made possible by the sponsorship of product X, but this media, or the editors or the director guarantee standards of truth and professionalism» (Sánchez Hernández, 2016 9th of March).

In general, as we have seen, journalists are the professionals who most proficiently carry out and engage in the tasks typical of brand journalism. Neverthe-

less, Barciela points out that webs «are managed in their day to day by journalists. And, by the best», in brand journalism «the underlying strategy comes from above» (2013:128). That is, although the journalists are the ones ultimately entrusted to develop, update and manage the information web portals of the brands, the approach to be used is determined by the marketing and communication strategies according to company objectives and «branding objectives» and its mid and long term strategic guidelines.

5. Case studies: brand journalism in Spain

Brand journalism landed on European shores shortly after doing so on the American continent, and is now beginning to timidly appear in a handful of companies that opt for this new type of communication. For example, some Spanish or Spanish based companies have seen and understood the benefits of applying brand journalism in their business goals, and some are embarking down this new path, like the web sites —in digital magazine format- of BBVA, Telefónica, Red Bull, Idealista, Coca-Cola and Eroski.

Although we can situate the «boom» in brand journalism between the years 2011 and 2012 (Barciela, 2013 24th of February), in our country we can find an existing case, that of Eroski, with a date anterior to the ones cited. *Eroski Consumer* (http://www.consumer.es/) is an information product about consumption directed at employees and clients that began online in 1998 and also circulates a printed version. The most famous example of the aforementioned magazines is *Coca-Cola Journey* (https://www.cocacolaespana.es/), a digital magazine produced by Coca-Cola, but there are other equally as interesting: Red Bull and its monthly magazine *The Red Bulletin* (https://www.redbulletin. com/int/es), also in paper version, which addresses themes of culture, sports, entertainment and lifestyles; the real estate portal Idealitsa, with *Idealista News* (https://www.idealista.com/news/), which is a cybernetic space containing information content related to housing and economics, or *Espacio Fundación Telefónica´s* web (https://espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com/), that looks to share information about culture and new technologies. Lastly, we will highlight the case of BBVA, which in 2016 launched *bbva.com* (https://www.bbva.com/es/, whose goal is to inform from the Group´s global web about corporative reality and set forth its ideas about certain issues that affect its interests in multiple locations, allowing «the voice, purpose and communications of BBVA to reach its main interest groups without intermediaries» (BBVA, 2016 22nd of September).

All these examples have a common denominator: they offer specialised content that is written and edited in journalistic format, to attract the attention of its target audience. We will now briefly describe the initiatives created by Coca-Cola, Eroski and BBVA, as examples of entities that apply brand journalism in our country.

5.1. *Coca-Cola Journey*

Coca-Cola Journey global (http://www.coca-colacompany.com/), the official site of Coca-Cola was first launched in the United States in November of 2012, although its history goes back several decades, since *Journey* was an internal magazine that the company published between 1987 and 1997 (Coca-Cola España, 2016 28th of October). Once the project was recovered, now online, the Spanish edition appeared in November of 2014. For this to occur, Estefanía Gil, Communication Project Manager at Coca-Cola Iberia, explains that it had to undergo a process of adaptation. From the primitive corporate website, a new one was created with a more visual and clearly informative format. In under five months, the already existing news content was reconditioned into different journalistic genres and a team of journalists under the direction of the company´s External Communications and Relations Department. Later work began on two different facets. On the one hand, «long-term» editing, that is to say the development of contents about themes such as sport, environment or culture planned for the long-term, as well as content about Coca-Cola itself. On the other hand, «short-term» more routine projects, about the activities and daily work of the company.

Broadly speaking, we can say that *Journey* is a magazine that tells stories about Coca-Cola directed at customers, fans, employees and the company´s other interest groups through a series of intentions:

> Coca-Cola Journey is about getting the stories behind the Coca-Cola brand —our stories— to reach the people. We want you to discover everything about our more than 100 years of history, get to know our social and environmental initiatives, learn more about our marketing strategies and publicity campaigns and to be able to transmit the passion for what we do (Coca-Cola España, 2016 28th of October).

With that being said, according to Gil the goal is for «*Journey to be a kind of loudspeaker for all the activity at Coca-Cola and its contents are in line with the business and company goals*».

We can quickly appreciate some of the aspects of the *Coca-Cola Journey* website, like its homepage and main menu (figure 1). The design is very visual and apart from the homepage button it also contains sections such as «Brands», «More than a drink», «Nutrition», «Coca-Cola» and «Blog» where this multinational publishes a wide range of information related to health and the environment and tells a series of stories about its different products, although with notable space for Coca-Cola itself. Through the numerous contents of *Journey*, Coca-Cola´s brand journalism delivers a series of benefits which in Estefanía Gil´s opinion allows them «to position themselves proactively and promote conversation around issues that are strategic in showing that, as their slogan says, Coca-Cola is much more than a drink».

As for professionalizing this activity, more specifically if we keep in mind a possible profile from brand journalism, in Coca-Cola´s case there are more than a dozen people that work on *Journey*, a third of which do so by producing content. It is a heterogeneous team made up of experts and professionals from various

Figure 1. Cover of *Coca-Cola Journey* 3rd of April of 2017.

Source: https://www.cocacolaespana.es

fields: journalism, publicity, marketing, web analytics, SEO, design, audiovisual, photography and computer graphics, among others, as well as specialists in branded content strategies.

By using and taking advantage of the techniques, formats, narratives and procedures of media, this human workforce succeeds in passing on Coca-Cola´s message to its users, attaching considerable importance to communication based on data. According to our interviewee, a professional or brand journalist should meet a series of requirements, based on specific functions about what the ideal brand journalism discipline should be:

> Applying new measuring and listening tools to compliment editorial work and optimise results. Incorporating engagement, recurrence, qualified traffic and other KPIs that define success nowadays in corporate communication as the media have come to learn.

Finally, we wanted to know what the experience is like for the users as well as the challenges that the company has raised about its brand journalism project. In general, the users have come away with a better image of Coca-Cola and its different products and they feel part of an iconic brand that has followers from all over the world. We should not forget, for example, that during the first 6 months that Journey was published here in Spain, 2.106.470 pages were seen

Figure 2. Eroski Consumer homepage from 3rd of April of 2017.

Source: http://www.consumer.es

by 919.227 single users and reached thousands of followers in social networks (314.000 fans in *Facebook*, 105.000 followers on *Twitter* and 27.000 subscribers to *YouTube*) (Coca-Cola España, 2015 14th of May). As to the next challenges, *Journey* is contemplating the path of innovation, seeking to become a more and more interactive publication and more accessible to the public, subject to more native contents and to perfecting its strategies.

5.2. Eroski Consumer

The case of *Eroski Consumer* is different from Coca-Cola´s, although both began as corporate magazines which later diversified their format, this project having its origin in the Eroski Foundation. It is a cybernetic magazine which deals with topics such as nutrition, health and the environment among others. In keeping with the interview maintained with María Hoyos, assistant director of *Eroski Consumer,* this project «was born with the intention of offering 360 degree information, comprehensive information with the possibility of including it in the different reports that are published in social networks and in commentaries».

Therefore, the aim is to inform the citizens, and to do this *Eroski Consumer* relies on the collaboration of and is supported by journalists, academics and experts from diverse fields of consumer interests, that explain issues at hand and their possible findings.

Eroski Consumer´s webpage presents different sections where a great many articles are published daily that contain useful information for its users: nutrition, health, food safety, infants, the environment, pets, solidarity, economy, technology, home improvement, education and web TV. In each of these sections there are different tabs with relevant areas where specialised journalistic and visual content can be found. On the homepage as well there are various added features, such as subscriptions to electronic newsletters, the option of reading the magazine in numerous languages, access to social networks or consulting past editions, for example.

In keeping with Hoyos´information, the editorial team is made up of about 15 people, the majority of these professionals with university studies and most with degrees in Social Sciences and Communication Sciences, with varied specialisations, doctorates or master´s degree. The majority are journalists specialised in nutrition, although some are experts in the varied topics the web deals with, as well as designers, bloggers, programmers, etc.

Our interviewee´s opinion about a possible profile for the brand journalist is that their main characteristic «is working for a brand, working in creating content whose purpose is for the company´s brand to be perceived as positive».

Another important aspect of the case study of *Eroski Consumer* is the participation and feedback from the users, which is satisfactory according to María Hoyos´comments, with about 200.000 visits a day and an average of 6 million visitors a month.

Finally, *Eroski Consumer* seeks to continue down the path of specialisation and content segmentation, especially when referring to well-being and sustainability, as well as fomenting participation in social networks, creating awareness and maintaining communication with their users.

5.3. Bbva.com

In the above lines we commented that *bbva.com* came into existence in 2016 in order to report on the different activities and corporate reflections from the BBVA Group. The person in charge of answering our question was Noemi Fernández Castro, from the BBVA Corporate Communication Department, who justifies —in a very changeable communicative environment— the introduction of this group into brand marketing.

> A new scenario of opportunities and challenges is opening up here, where the disintermediation in terms of communication is well within the reach of brand names, where integrated content is unseating publicity and brand marketing is emerging as a key element for positioning contents. Informing and entertaining is no longer exclusive property of mass media communication.

The goals of *bbva.com* are to create prominent and practical contents which are interesting for their users from the point of view of informative satisfaction, to achieve greater visibility so that they are ideally positioned in online browsers and search engines and lastly, to begin the journey towards the process of disintermediation in corporate communication.

Figure 3. Homepage of bbva.com 5th of April, 2017.

Source: https://www.bbva.com/es

The BBVA webpage, in keeping with the corporate identity of the group, presents a very carefully crafted appearance which facilitates the reading and focuses the attention of the user. In the upper left hand corner we can find some highlighted sections intended for shareholders and investors, together with corporate information and some events and activities to bear in mind. On the other hand, on the upper right hand side, as well as offering a search option, we can access an initial homepage where the group offers relevant and detailed information about itself, divided into various sections: highlights, themes, social media, press, your interests, sponsorships, corporative information, other Group websites and BBVA financial information.

In spite of being a recently implemented project, the editorial team from *bbbva. con* is made up of over 80 people that are coordinated in ten countries, where they welcome journalists, experts in social networks, SEO and web analytics, as well as economists.

As to the characteristics that a brand journalist should have, our interviewee claims that «he should offer quality content that can be relevant for the users, especially in those where the company has an authoritative platform from which to voice their opinions». The contents also must be agile enough to allow «stakeholders» —BBVA´s groups of interest— ease of access.

In this first year of the project´s trajectory the results have been considerable, having multiplied by 25 the traffic of the old press room, publishing more than 3.000 of their own contents and obtaining more than 41.600 indexed URLs from the search engine Google.

Lastly, future challenges set out by this group lean towards growth and innovation. On the one hand, by creating interesting content that aspires to understand its public in-depth and at the same time strengthening its positioning on the internet and its capacity to anticipate constant changes in the communication world.

6. *University training for brand journalists*

In spite of being a modality with little importance in our country, brand journalism is a sought after job option in other nations with possible prospects in the labour market. In fact, some corporations have widened their professional teams in the last few years to include those which contribute experiences from media to create content for these brands.

In light of a plausible future vision for the communication sector, with an evident crisis in recent years, we wish to pose the need for university training for brand journalists, in order for them to acquire certain theoretical and practical notions to be able to develop this option in the labour market.

In this sense, either through workshops, courses, master´s degrees, postgraduate classes —even having the option of subjects or part of them, depending on the syllabus—, the possibility of teaching brand journalism should contemplate some critical aspects:

—The brand´s world (history, goals, mission, vision, values and corporative culture).
—Media related design, writing and innovation.
—Content creation.
—Analysis and participation of the designated public.
—Measurement and control of results.
—How to plan brand journalism.
—Successful cases.

As of today, there are scarce initiatives in Spain for university training of brand journalists, as we have been able to verify on the internet. In general, they are basically limited courses, panel discussions and seminaries where this theme is approached as central. Here we could highlight the second edition of the Specialised Online Course «Branded content: methodology and strategic management», at the School of Journalism and Communication of Unit Publishing, celebrated between the months of April and June in 2017, but again brand journalism also appears in other courses and in masters from nationally prestigious universities and centres, though in a secondary role.

To sum up, our investigation has detailed the visible and existing lack of university training. When it comes to brand marketing, time will tell if future teaching is necessary.

7. *Conclusions*

With these lines we have examined a new tendency in the area of communication that is of particular importance to large national and international corporations, but has not provoked enough analytical curiosity in the university scene. For this reason we should value this investigation which attempts to respond to some of the questions about brand journalism and especially, the brand journalist; the one in charge of telling stories for brands.

With brand journalism, the brand journalists and companies who have adopted this discipline have gone from merely informing about acts and events they carried out to telling stories about them. The brands themselves are the communication, as it is no longer so much about selling products or specific services. To this effect, the brand journalist should meet a series of requirements, the same as in other professions. So, he should be a trained person and above all, with the initiative to report as he would in media, but instead, doing so for a company if we understand that with these projects the brand names show themselves to the public as authentic means of communication. Last but not least, as a final result they seek to forge a connection with the users, creating necessary interaction.

Far from the existing debate about the question at hand, that is, if instead of brand marketing the activity carried out is really content marketing or corporate journalism, the truth is that brand journalism contains a series of mixed features from publishing, journalism and marketing, among others, conferring vital importance to content, with a notable rise all over the world. As we have analysed in the cases of Coca-Cola, Eroski and BBVA, the results obtained by these entities in just a few years with their respective brand journalism projects are highly successful and this is due mainly to the quality of the contents, more powerful than any marketing tool, benefiting from a series of advantages and obtaining the desired engagement.

Lastly, although brand journalism is more extended in the United States and other European countries, we believe it will become more and more relevant in Spain, and for this reason we consider the necessity of specific university studies about this reality, based on the importance of brand names and the social roles they have recently acquired due to the new information and communication technologies.

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