

THE EXPERT GUIDE IN SPANISH PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: ANALYSIS OF THEIR PRESENCE AND MANAGEMENT FOR SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

LA GUÍA DE EXPERTOS EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES PRIVADAS ESPAÑOLAS: ANÁLISIS DE SU PRESENCIA Y GESTIÓN PARA LA TRANSFERENCIA DEL CONOCIMIENTO CIENTÍFICO

Aída María De Vicente Domínguez. *Universidad de Málaga. Spain.*

Nereida Cea Esteruela. *Universidad de Málaga. Spain.*

Mireya Rocio Carballeda Camacho. *Universidad de Málaga. Spain.*

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ABSTRACT

The guide of experts is a directory of researchers from an institution who are willing to collaborate with the media and allows journalists to locate them autonomously in a short time. It is a communication tool that optimizes the media projection of the organization's intellectual capital, increasing the visibility, branding, and organization's intellectual capital, increasing the visibility, brand, and reputation of the institution. For this reason, its presence and management in Spanish private universities are researched. The objectives are to ascertain their presence or absence from the guide; identify the reasons that have slowed down their digital implementation; analyze their location, type of format, and languages; research how an expert is located; analyze the curricular data offered by the researcher; reveal the curricular data offered by the expert, and make known the methods for contacting the specialist. The methodology is based on content analysis and the study period is from February to June 2020. The results indicate a poor presence, although they are always located in the press rooms and their format is usually digital (not in pdf), allowing the search by name-surname or specialty, mainly only in Spanish, offering little curricular information on the researchers and always allowing contact by telephone or institutional e-mail through both direct contact and contact mediated by the communication office. It concludes with an overview of its implementation and an identification of the dysfunctions and



good practices detected for transferring scientific knowledge through this organizational tool.

KEYWORDS: organizational communication; journalism; expert guide; scientific dissemination; university; communication office; Internet.

RESUMEN

La guía de expertos es un directorio que agrupa a los investigadores de una institución dispuestos a colaborar con los medios de comunicación y que permite a los periodistas localizarles de forma autónoma en un corto espacio temporal. Una herramienta comunicacional que permite optimizar la proyección mediática del capital intelectual de la organización, aumentando la visibilidad, marca y reputación de la institución. En este contexto, se investiga su presencia y gestión en las universidades privadas españolas. Los objetivos son averiguar su presencia o ausencia; identificar los motivos que han frenado su implementación digital; analizar su ubicación, tipo de formato e idiomas; investigar cómo se localiza a un experto/a; analizar los datos curriculares ofrecidos del investigador/a; desvelar qué datos curriculares ofrecen del experto/a; y dar a conocer las modalidades para contactar con el especialista. La metodología se basa en un análisis de contenido y el periodo de estudio es de febrero a junio de 2020. Los resultados indican una escasa presencia, si bien, siempre se ubican en las salas de prensa y su formato suele ser digital (no en pdf), permitiendo la búsqueda por nombre-apellidos o especialidad, principalmente sólo en español, ofreciendo poca información curricular de los investigadores y permitiendo contactar siempre a través del teléfono o e-mail institucional mediante un contacto tanto directo como mediado por el gabinete de comunicación. Se concluye con una visión global de su implementación y una identificación de las disfunciones y buenas praxis detectadas para transferir el conocimiento científico mediante esta herramienta organizacional.

PALABRAS CLAVE: comunicación organizacional; periodismo; guía de expertos; divulgación científica; universidad; gabinete de comunicación; Internet.

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. INTRODUCTION

This research analyzes the presence and management or implementation of a media relations tool in the communication offices of Spanish private universities. This is the expert guide: a directory made up of the institution's specialists willing to collaborate with information professionals. A service that allows journalists to locate them, autonomously in the specific area they need and establish direct contact with the research professor in a short time.

A resource that is considered significant to analyze because the relationship with the media is a key area in every communication office. And the expert guide, to the university communication offices, allows them to manage the main demand requested by journalists: locate and establish contact with university professors and researchers. And it is that, as revealed by Repiso and Chaparro (2018), they are “the people in

charge of the university activity that the media echoes” (p. 87). Thus, this tool can help this sector to optimize various objectives that universities must meet, such as the one indicated by Rowe (2005): “place the academic knowledge they generate in the daily discourse of the media” (quoted in Repiso, Merino-Arribas, and Chaparro-Domínguez, 2016); or the one stated by Lascurain and Sanz (2009) “that scientists facilitate, transfer, and disseminate their knowledge” (p. 11). For this reason, Parejo (2015) considers this tool extremely useful as it provides transfer and revalues the image of the institution, reasons for which he warns that “it would have to become a priority for universities when drawing up their strategic plans” (p 534).

Specifically, this study analyzes their presence and management in the digital environment. Previous studies have addressed how university communication offices have adopted the classic media relations tools to digital media (press releases or press conferences, among many others). Or how they have implemented the emerging ones (social networks, podcasts, blogs, university radios and televisions, etc...). Take as reference some of the most recent studies: Cestino (2020); García-García (2018); Martín-González and Santamaría (2017); Pham et al. (2017); Simon (2016); Shields (2016); Valerio et al. (2015). However, the online adaptation to manage the demand for their intellectual capital with the media, such as the expert guide, has hardly been analyzed.

The first research works on the expert guide in Spanish universities were carried out by Palomares et al., (2003) who provided a proposal to create a university expert guide for translators. And Palomares and Accino (2003), who described the structure followed to create an expert guide for Translation (GET). It will be in 2005 when Rodríguez-Wangüemert and González-Afonso unveil pioneering data on the implementation of a printed expert guide, intended for the news media, in a Spanish university communication office: the Universidad de La Laguna. Later, Carrillo and Parejo (2009) analyze their presence in the virtual press rooms of Spanish public universities.

A variable also recently addressed by Romo, Espinosa, and Gómez (2020), bringing the sample close to the top ten Spanish universities in the Scimago ranking. Although, López-Hernández and Domínguez-Delgado (2018) describe how a web directory of expert sources of the Universidad de Sevilla was managed: but this website is not managed by a communication office, but is the result of a teaching innovation project whose database is not intended for the media but exclusively for the students of the Universidad de Sevilla to access reliable sources for their research work.

There is no data, so far, on its implementation in Spanish private universities. Only, a specific case study focused on the Universidad de Navarra (De Vicente and Sierra, 2020), and those collaterally contributed by Parejo (2015) since his study does not focus on these guides but on the level of adequacy of the press rooms depending on the tools he uses.

We now intend to provide the first data on how Spanish private universities have created this tool, which is considered by a panel of 27 experts made up of "heads and technicians of communication offices of public and private universities, directors of scientific culture units and communication associations, as well as practicing

journalists in the national media" (p.31), one of the main tools that every university communication office should have.

Useful data for those institutions that want to create an expert guide since "learning to manage the intellectual capital of organizations is revealed as one of the fundamental tasks that are being implemented in all competitive organizations" (Palomares et al. 2003: 234). And in the case of private universities, increasing their positioning is very necessary since they are organizations that are supported by their own funds.

2. OBJECTIVES

In this context, the main objective of communication is to research the expert guides in digital support in Spanish private universities. And the specific objectives are:

- Compute the presence and absence of the expert guide in Spanish private universities.
- Identify the reasons that have slowed the adaptation of this service to the digital environment.
- Analyze its location and type of format.
- Find out in how many languages it can be consulted.
- Research the consultation process to locate an expert.
- Identify the curricular data of the research teaching staff offered.
- Reveal what data they offer to establish contact with the selected expert.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used has been based on the following phases:

- Bibliographic review in national and international databases to check the viability of the subject under study, as well as the previously analyzed variables or approaches.
- The selection of the sample is obtained from the list of Spanish private universities provided by the Registry of Universities, Centers, and Own Titles (RUCT by its acronym in Spanish) of the Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities of the Government of Spain. For the study, all universities are selected except those that meet the following exclusion criteria: not having professors and, therefore, the absence of this resource is logical; they do not exist, although they are registered; or they are a center attached to a Spanish university. They are analyzed from February to June 2020.

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Table 1. Spanish private universities / year 2020

Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio	Universidad de Navarra	Universidad Internacional de Catalunya
Universidad Camilo José Cela	Universidad Vic-Universidad Central de Catalunya	Universidad Pontifica de Salamanca
Universidad de Deusto	Universidad Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús de Ávila	Universidad Ramón Llull
Universidad del Atlántico medio	Universidad Cardenal Herrera CEU	Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes
Universidad Europea de Canarias	Universitat Abat Oliva Ceu	Universidad Francisco de Vitoria
Universidad Europea de Madrid	Universidad San Pablo CEU	Universidad Fernando-Pessoa-Canarias
Universidad Europea de Valencia	Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir	Universidad Antonio de Nebrija
Universidad Europea del Atlántico	Universidad Internacional de Valencia	Universidad a Distancia de Madrid
Universidad Católica de San Antonio	Universidad de San Jorge	Mondragón Unibertsitatea
Universidad Pontifica de Comillas	Universidad Loyola de Andalucía	IE Universidad
Universidad Oberta de Catalunya	Universidad Isabel I de Castilla	Universidad Internacional de la Rioja.

Source: Registry of Universities, Centers, and Own Titles (RUCT)

1. The methodology used to research the presence of the expert guide is a binomial system (Yes/No). It can be found by displaying "expert guide" in the main search engine of the institution's website and the search engine of the virtual press room. If not, telephone contact is established with the office to confirm its absence as it could have another name or that search engines do not find this service.
2. To find out the reasons for the absence of this public relations resource, this question is sent via open reply email, up to three times. The last attempt is established through the telephone. The trust level of the analyzed cases is 95% and a margin of error of less than 10%.

To analyze the location, format, language, and localization system, the methodology used by Parejo (2015) in his doctoral thesis is taken as a reference, made up of 3 levels of adequacy: high (1), medium (2), and low (3) shown in table 1. Thus, the numerical code created to analyze this level in the adequacy of the location is: high (1) if it is in the press room; medium (2) if it is located in a vice-chancellor's office; and low (3) in case of being located in other sections. For the format, a high level (1) is granted if it is digital, a medium level (2) if it is a pdf dump, and a low level (3) if it is dumped from Excel. Although, to analyze the level of adequacy of the number of languages in which searches can be carried out, a high level (1) is given to those that allow locating an expert in more than 3 languages; medium level (2) to be able to search for them in more than two languages, and low level (3) if it allows locating the expert in only one language.

Likewise, the codes used to research the level of adequacy according to the location system, have been granting the high level (1) to the digital guides that allow locating them by name or surname and specialty; a medium level (2) for those that allow them to be located only by specialty, and a low level (3) for searches that are only possible by name and surname.

Table 2: Methodology to analyze the level of adequacy of the variables location, format, translation, and query system.

Location level	Location	Format	Translation	Query system
High	1.Press room	1. Digital	1. Three or more languages	1. Name, surname, and specialty
Medium	2. Vice-chancellor	2. pdf	2. two languages	2. Specialty
Low	3.Other sections	3. Excel tables	1. One language	3. Name and surname

Source: Own elaboration based on the methodology of Parejo (2015)

- To know the content provided by the expert, a double analysis is made. The first, aimed at researching whether the expert's research curriculum is provided through a binomial system (yes/no). And a second, to know the type of curriculum that is offered, analyzing through two options: personalized curriculum (the one that is written by the researcher) or indexed curriculum (providing access to the databases that collect and have their scientific production updated like Dialnet, Google Scholar, Orcid, etc). Giving the numerical value 1 to the personalized curriculum and a 2 to the indexed curriculum. As well as, to analyze if they contribute to the transfer activity of the expert, a binomial system is chosen (yes/no).
- The methodology to analyze the recovery system or final contact with the expert is structured by creating two categories: direct access (which allows the journalist to personally locate the expert) or mediated access (which needs to contact the university communication office to manage the contact). A 1 is awarded for direct access and a 2 for mediated access.
- Likewise, two options are established to analyze the type of direct access: institutional contact (provide the institutional telephone or email of the expert), or specific contact (give direct contact with the source, such as through a mobile phone). Giving a 1 to the institutional contact and a 2 to the specific contact. And to analyze the modalities of mediated access, the following codes are established: form (need to fill in the requested data through the platform) or telephone (the contact of the institution's communication manager is provided), granting the numerical value of 1 to the form and 2 to the telephone.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Presence and absence of the expert guide

The data resulting from the first objectives, to compute their presence and the reasons for their absence, reveal that only 33.33% of Spanish private universities have an expert guide in 2020, which indicates that it is little implemented in private universities since 66.67% do not have this service.

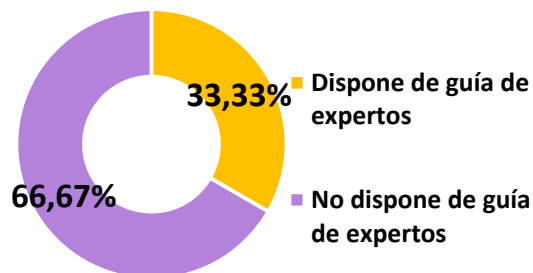


Chart 1. Presence of the expert guide in Spanish private universities

Source: Own elaboration

Results that coincide with those provided by Parejo (2015): "it is a tool that is not widely used among universities" (p. 479), although for experts its inclusion in virtual press rooms is highly valued. However, there has been a slight increase in its presence, since Parejo (2015) indicated that it was only at "a scarce 20%" in all Spanish universities" (p. 575) and the data obtained in 2020 indicate that it rises to 33.33%. Likewise, at the time of the study, it stands out that the Universidad a Distancia de Madrid (UDIMA) does have a printed guide sent to the media which is pending to be uploaded to the website, which will increase this data.

The reasons that explain the absence of this resource in Spanish private universities (66.67%) are: ignorance of this public relations tool; the constant changes in the teaching staff or the working circumstances of the teachers; doubts about data protection; having an internal guide or document; satisfaction with the method used to manage journalists' demands; to have greater control of the relationship of the experts with the media; consider that in this way they provide the most appropriate expert or that they gain both in efficiency and management agility; because the media like to call the office; that it is better to work on demand; inability to update it; it's easier for them to manage; not having the endorsement of the institution; that circumstances have made it necessary to prioritize other matters; not having a need because it is a small university and everyone knows each other; being in process or under study; there are no specific reasons, or not knowing.

And it is highlighted that the system used by universities that have not implemented the expert guide to meet the demands of the media is the classic system exposed by

Abramczyk (1990), who decades ago emphasized the need for press advisers in research centers to facilitate contact (cited in Moreno, 2004, p.160). But we highlight other significant practices that are used to increase the visibility of the institution using digital media:

- Sending a newsletter to the media with current proposals together with their best experts in this specialty.
- Sending a document identifying the specialties being researched at the university (without identifying them with specific experts).
- Sending them a list of the experts considered most significant by the institution's office.

4.2. Location, format, and number of languages

The results obtained on the location of the expert guide on the university website reveal that, in 100% of the sample, they are in the press rooms obtaining a high level of adequacy. In the previous study by Parejo (2015), it was revealed that some of the Spanish universities had it located in the office of the vice-chancellor for research. This implies a unification in the criteria to locate this resource.

The format used, according to the data obtained, has a high level of adequacy in 90.9% of the sample because they have created their software system, with their respective data storage, which is accessed by indexing the keywords in location search engines. Only 9.09% present a low level of adequacy by providing a dump in Excel with experts who want to collaborate with the media, which would respond to the so-called "facsimile model", a concept coined by Cabrera (2001). A model characterized by adapting in a simple and little elaborate way to the characteristics of the online medium together with the simplicity of the design.

The data on the level of adequacy according to the number of languages to consult the content of the expert guide reveal that 81.81% is a low level (can only be used in Spanish) compared to 18.18% who have a high level because it allows locating the experts in three languages (Spanish, English, and the native of that geographic area). This low level coincides with that obtained by Parejo (2015) since 96% of all Spanish universities that had an expert guide offered it in one language. Therefore, in general, this resource is not used to have a greater projection in the foreign press. However, it is emphasized that a single language can also increase internationalization in geographic areas that broadcast programs in Spanish. Take as a reference the expert guide from the Universidad de Navarra that managed to serve as a source for a program for Spaniards broadcasted in Bavaria (Germany).

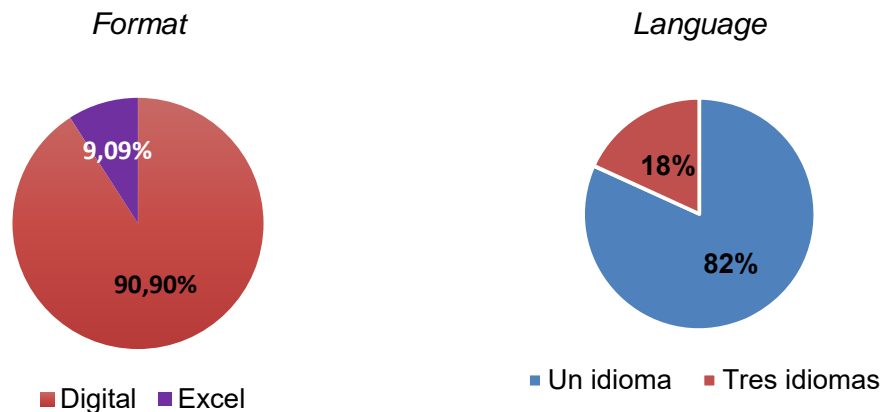


Chart 2. Format and number of languages to consult the Expert Guide

Source: Own elaboration

4.3. Location, content, and method to contact the expert

The experts' location system shows a high level of adequacy in 81.81% of the sample since it allows searching both by specialty and by the expert's first and last name; 9.09% have a medium level of adequacy because it only allows searching by specialty; and another 9.09% have a low level when fencing it only by name and surname, which would imply that the professional had previously identified the expert when the usual thing is that it is located by topic due to the lack of knowledge of specialists in a certain field. And it stands out that all universities specify in their search engine how to perform the search, minus 9.09% that corresponds to the implementation of a data dump in Excel.

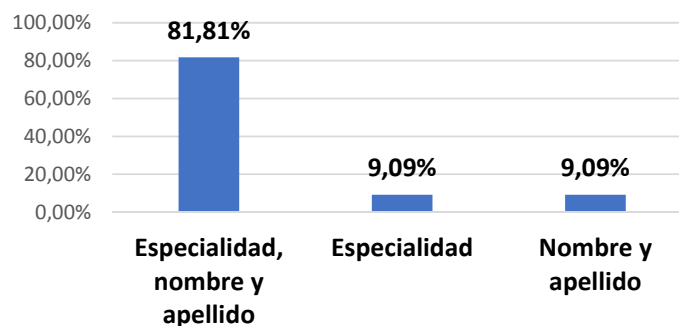


Chart 3. Expert guide localization system

Source: Own elaboration

The contents referring to the research curriculum indicate that only 45.45% of the universities under study provide this data, compared to 54.54% that do not offer data on their research activity. And of the 45.45% that expose it, only 15.15% exhibit a curriculum indexed through their research groups or various databases such as

Google Scholar, Scopus, Orcid, or Publons, among others. Likewise, they are also characterized by not inserting their scientific dissemination activity: only 27.27% show it, compared to 72.72% who lack this information.

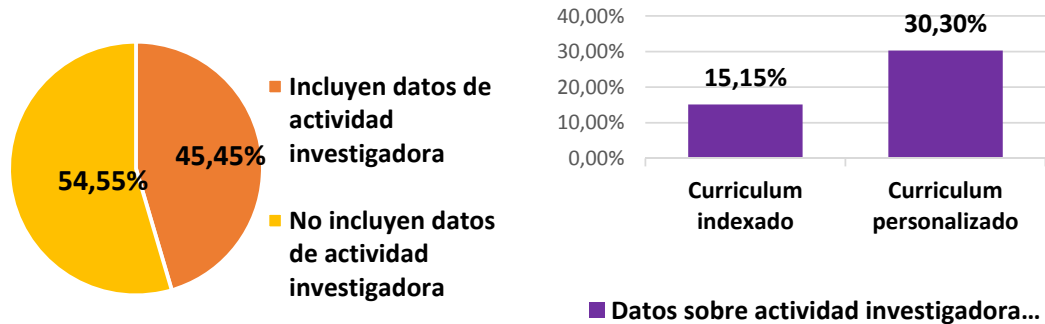


Chart 4. Data offered on the expert's research activity.

Source: Own elaboration

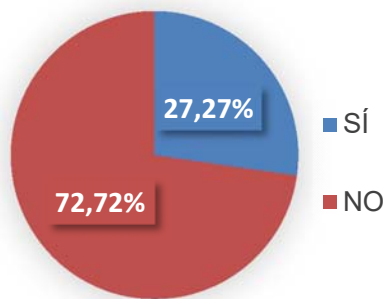


Chart 5. Data offered of the scientific transfer of the researcher

Source: Own elaboration

And the results indicate that 36.36% of the sample under study offers direct access, allowing the journalist to personally make contact with the expert. Although, in 100% of the cases an institutional contact is offered (the expert's institutional telephone number and e-mail) and in 20.77% it combines it with specific access (providing the expert's mobile phone number), which allows their location at any time slot.

And 63.63% of the sample opts for mediated access, making it necessary to establish contact with the communication office. And the results reveal that 18.18% do so using a form: instruct the journalist to fill out a form (name, media outlet, telephone, and e-mail are mandatory, and some optional observations) or (name, surname, media outlet, contact telephone, e-mail, subject, and description of the consultation); and 45.45% ask the journalist to establish contact with the office through a telephone number: although in only 27.27%, the head of the communication office provides a mobile phone along with the institutional e-mail and telephone number (18.18%).

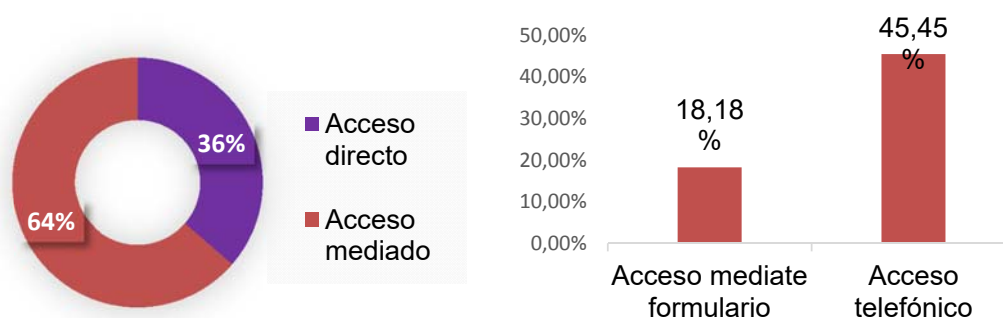


Chart 6. Mode of access to the expert

Source: Own elaboration

5. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the research has been to find out how Spanish private universities have implemented the expert guide in digital support. And from the global vision obtained, we conclude:

- Although experts consider the expert guide as one of the main tools that should be part of university communication offices, more than half of Spanish private universities lack this digital service. However, some of the reasons that explain its absence are: being in process, waiting to be uploaded on the internet, or being a future project. Causes that suggest an increase in the future in the analyzed sector, although not in its entirety. However, it shows how the university continues to invest to achieve a greater projection of the institution in the digital environment.
- The ignorance of this tool is another reason that slows the management of tacit knowledge, considered one of the great challenges of any competitive organization. This cause, together with those related to a future projection of its implementation, gives significance to the need to offer reference guidelines, such as those exposed in this research, to manage an expert guide in digital support and optimize the current ones.
- A management that consists of serving the interests of the external public to whom it is directed, journalists, and that in its global context is made up of good practices but also with deficiencies that hinder a better projection of strategic knowledge assets to increase the visibility, value, and brand of the university institution in the media.
- The initial adaptation of the search and access system, that is, how the journalist would search for this tool and easily access the resource, is correctly attended by all universities. They all locate it in the press room: the place they would access because that is where the relationship with the media is managed.

- In a second phase, once the resource of this service is located, the journalist needs an easy consultation process to search. A process that is practically well adapted in almost all universities because they explain to the user what keywords they should use to search. Although most of them allow locating the expert by name, surname, and specialty, in some, deficiencies are detected, such as allowing only to locate them by name or surname, which forces the journalist to know the expert beforehand. And it is that the usual thing is not to know the identities of the experts but to locate them by topic.
- The contents recovered by the expert also have deficiencies. There is a tendency not to identify the curricular data nor the dissemination activity of the expert, which hinders another of the journalists' needs to calibrate the degree of specialization of the source or to make a comparison between different sources to choose one or the other according to the topic and focus of the informative piece. A deficiency whose implementation would help to overcome another of the problems that hinder its implementation: the need to update the data. And it is that through indexed curriculum, their publications would always be updated.
- Future studies will analyze the presence of the expert guide in Spanish public universities; they will research the level of adequacy of this tool in the total calculation of universities in Spain, and they will analyze the presence of universities that have expert guides in the media.

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AUTHORS:

Aida María de Vicente Domínguez

Ph.D. in Communication from the Universidad de Granada. She has a degree in Journalism from the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and a degree in Humanities from the Universidad de Navarra. She specialized (Master's Degree) in communication management and scientific journalism, her main lines of research.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8085-5097>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=Uh-SVXEAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=sra>

Dialnet: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=2915954>

Nereida Cea Esteruelas

Ph.D. in Information Sciences at the Universidad de Navarra. Among her lines of research, the study of communication markets and the media economy, with special attention to digital media, stands out. In the professional field, she has worked at La Verdad (Grupo Vocento), La Economía (Grupo Intereconomía), El Mundo (Unidad Editorial). In the area of political and institutional communication, she was responsible for communication at the Murcia Chamber of Commerce and advisor to the Ministry of the Presidency of the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7733-9366>,

<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=1978623>

Mireya Rocio Carballeda Camacho

Degree in Audiovisual Communication from the Universidad de Málaga. She is a doctoral student in the Interuniversity Communication Program.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5269-2489>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=nJ-tb4wAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=sra>