

RELACIONES PÚBLICAS Y NEUROCOMUNICACIÓN COMO HERRAMIENTAS DE MEJORA DE LA IMAGEN DE MARCA DE LOS PERSONAJES PÚBLICOS

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND NEUROCOMMUNICATION AS TOOLS FOR IMPROVING THE BRAND IMAGE OF PUBLIC CHARACTERS

Almudena Barrientos-Báez. *Escuela Universitaria de Turismo Iriarte (ULL). España.*

almudenabarrientos@iriarteuniversidad.es

David Caldevilla-Domínguez. *Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.*

davidcaldevilla@ccinf.ucm.es

RESUMEN

El presente artículo sobre las Relaciones Públicas (RR.PP.) en el ámbito personal tiene la finalidad de esclarecer y profundizar sobre la labor que ejercen en los personajes famosos o públicos. Se detallarán las posibles y distintas estrategias que se pueden llevar a cabo para gestionar la imagen pública de un individuo desde el marco de la neurocomunicación. A través de diferentes ejemplos se contempla demostrar cómo la labor de las RR.PP. ha ido evolucionando a través de las nuevas herramientas que han ido conquistando el mercado, como Internet. Así pues, se detalla la importancia que las redes sociales han ido cobrando en esta profesión, puesto que son estos medios los que hoy por hoy se deben controlar, manejar o manipular para gestionar de forma global la imagen pública de un personaje famoso. Se aluden a casos llevados a cabo tanto fuera como dentro de España para comparar las distintas formas de gestión de imagen que predominan en este mercado globalizado. Por otro lado, se desarrollan ciertos aspectos como la impresión y gestión de impresión más allá de una celebridad, como recurso que una marca personal debe planificar desde el uso de técnicas derivadas de la neurocomunicación. Así mismo, se desarrolla la evaluación de una campaña de RR.PP. con el objetivo de esclarecer un aspecto poco conocido de dicha profesión, no sólo por su dificultad sino también por su metodología algo abrupta.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Comunicación; imagen personal; personaje público; neurocomunicación; relaciones públicas.

ABSTRACT

This research on Public Relations (PR) in the personal field has the purpose of clarifying and deepening the work carried out in famous or public figures. The possible and different strategies that can be carried out to manage the public image of an individual from the framework of neurocommunication will be detailed.

Through different examples, it is contemplated to demonstrate how the work of PR has evolved through the new tools that have been conquering the market, such as



the Internet. Thus, the importance that social networks have been gaining in this profession is detailed, since it is these media that today must be controlled, managed or manipulated to globally manage the public image of a famous person.

Cases carried out both outside and within Spain are referred to compare the different forms of image management that predominate in this globalized market. On the other hand, certain aspects such as printing and printing management are developed beyond a celebrity, as a resource that a personal brand must plan from the use of techniques derived from neurocommunication. Likewise, the evaluation of a PR campaign is developed with the aim of clarifying a little-known aspect of said profession, not only because of its difficulty but also because of its somewhat abrupt methodology.

KEYWORDS: Communication; personal image; public figure; neurocommunication; public relations.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Personal image is an important asset in the brand and reputation management of a public figure. In the same way that many companies allocate income to their corporate image, public figures, politicians, artists and actors invest in the management of their own image (Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2007).

For this management, there are many and varied marketing strategies to develop a personal image campaign. The aim is to create a strong and consolidated brand based on a previously developed identity. As with any PR campaign, prior research is carried out to gather relevant data, in order to find out where the personal brand is and where it is heading. Subsequently, with the necessary data collected, the objectives that the individual whose brand is being managed can be applied.

Once the research has been carried out, it will be followed up and possible strategies will be implemented. Therefore, aspects such as impression will be dealt with, ranging from the way of dressing to non-verbal gestures, since any type of message can be decisive for image management. Finally, the possible ways of evaluating the results of a public image campaign are detailed. Normally, the evaluation focuses on the treatment of content, so that attention is paid to what has been said, where it has been said and who has been affected by the messages sent.

As a practical implementation, different campaigns are developed for the improvement of public images, such as that of the golfer Tiger Woods or the cyclist Lance Armstrong, whose image was discredited. Likewise, the cases of artists who have undergone a radical change of image, such as the singer Britney Spears or the woman who was once a Disney girl, Miley Cyrus, are also presented.

Finally, two cases are developed. An older one referring to the image of a politician and, as a comparison, a more current case referring to the image campaign carried out for the designer John Galliano.

1.1. Personal Image

Companies often spend part of their revenues on improving their corporate image so that the perception of the company in the consumer's mind is the one to which the company aspires. This perception is the mental image that the consumer has of the company. Whether it is Beyoncé as a singer or Brad Pitt as an actor, they are interested in having a positive image, as well as being perceived as a hard-working woman who has reached the top of the music industry in the case of Beyoncé or as the child of promise who has become a renowned actor in the film industry. These perceptions we hold are derivations of different PR actions that underpin the basis of personal image enhancement campaigns or an interest in maintaining the image that has been achieved.

The author of the book "Public Image, a social engineering", Joan Costa, defines public image as: Mental images that the spectator society, i.e. the passive society, accumulates and uses to elaborate its behaviours and to orientate its reactions in everyday life in the field of consumer economy and mass culture (Costa, 1992, p. 14). The same author of the book recognises the idea that the public image is not born but is made, develops, fades, reappears, evolves and undergoes changes and new situations.

However, public image goes beyond women and men of spectacular appearance, people must be composed of different elements beyond physical features. A flawless physical appearance with an empty mind, without personality, is no good. On the contrary, a prodigious mind with a careless or dirty appearance is also useless" (García, 2/08/2011. Personal image, a very important communicative asset to take care of).

A public image campaign is carried out in the same way as other types of PR campaigns, except with some variations required by the client. Thus, there are some previous steps before the implementation of any campaign. Many companies do not have an exact process or strategy for each client. Cotres, a company specialised in corporate communications and PR of the Aira Group, has provided information on the process of developing a public image campaign.

Cotres considers each client unique and requires different strategies to be targeted.

1. The first step will always be to talk to the client
2. Know their objectives
3. How they want to be seen
4. What image they have at that moment
5. Investigate whether there is any previous work, either positive or negative.

The company considers that it should generally work primarily digitally, using positive news and articles to position the client on various websites and especially on online news sites.

Forbes magazine published on 18 May 2012 how with 6 key steps, some of the world's most influential women had reached the pinnacle of their careers. Among them was Giselle Bündchen who started as a Brazilian model among others, to become the highest paid model in the world.

1. First of all, according to Forbes magazine's strategy, you have to be the best at what you do.
2. Next, within that field you have to be known for that particular something that sets you apart from others.
3. Leveraging your strengths and not overlooking them is really what will help you stand out.
4. Once you have achieved these first 3 steps, turn your personal image into business.
5. Once you have established your personal brand as a business, don't go into areas you can't handle, i.e. don't try to be a singer if you don't have the talent.
6. Finally, social media should be used to maintain your personal brand. It is important to interact with the public, but you should always be aware of what you say and post on the Internet. Do not make certain mistakes that can become a very powerful weapon for your image.

The brand must be strong and know who they are and what they can offer. To do this, the personal identity of the brand must be established. Once established what the brand is for and what it does, you have to make it known. Subsequently, the brand will be promoted through the media to reach the user (target) who is most likely to be interested in its message. Once the public has become aware of the existence of the brand, it will be the consumers themselves who will seek out what the brand offers (neuromarketing and not invasive techniques or surveys).

Miley Cyrus, like Justin Timberlake, began their careers as "Disney kids". Once that stage of their lives was over, Miley Cyrus tried with the Disney child image to continue in the music industry as a pop singer. However, the line that the singer was following was not bringing her any success, so the young girl decided to make a radical change to her image. After numerous personal scandals of the Disney singer, in her new video clips and concerts, a large number of international and national newspapers echoed her drastic change of image, as did the newspaper 20minutos in Spain: Miley Cyrus did not manage to raise The album "Can't Be Tamed" (2010) was considered a failure in sales and her subsequent film adventures did not get the expected result either. Cyrus broke off her working relationship with her long-time manager, Jason Morey (14/09/2013. 20minutos. 9:11h)

It seems that behind the change of image that the singer had made was her new manager Larry Rudolph who had also worked with other artists who had been catalogued as doomed to failure, such as Britney Spears. Thanks to the new actions of this American manager, both artists had raised the tone of their work, using their sensuality and turning their image around.

1.2. Marketing strategy for a personal image campaign

Personal branding is sometimes much easier to establish than company branding. After all, if you believe in your talent, your skills and your ability, it is easier to sell it, since the image is created, you just have to make business out of it. To do this, you have to be a professional in your sector, and of course an expert in your field. There are many strategies to enhance or maintain the image in the personal sphere, however, there is one factor that must be clear before carrying out any kind of image campaign, and that is identity.

1.2.1. Identity

Before managing the public image of any individual, certain aspects must be clear so that there are no communication errors. Therefore, the PR agency meets with the client and investigates important aspects of the client's personality, both current and past, in order to know where to focus the campaign. First of all, the identity of the person has to be very clear, what limits and clarifies who they are. To this end, there are certain questions to ask before managing identities (L'Etang, 2009, cp. 90-91):

1. Who am I?
2. What makes you who you are, and why?
3. What has influenced your identity in the past?
4. What recent and current influences are affecting and have affected your identity?
5. How do we communicate our identity to others?

Once these questions have been asked, it is clear to the individual which aspects define him/her and which aspects limit him/her. Sometimes it is important to carry out a SWOT analysis to find out the extent of the individual's personality.

L'Etang (2009), author of books on communication and professor of PR at the University of Stirling, believes that a clear and distinct identity produces lifestyles, creating social difference. It is lifestyles that consumers often want to emulate, and which make certain audiences choose one character or another.

Lifestyle can be assumed to be the consequence of individual choice and is used in government rhetoric to promote certain forms of behaviour (L'Etang, 2009, p. 313).

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Once the customer research has been carried out, the starting point is already in place, so the objectives represent the goal the client wants to reach. It is essential that PR objectives are measurable, although no professional can guarantee specific results without making promises that are not always easy to keep.

Sometimes there can be confusion between the client's objectives, the strategy and the PR plan. This can be cleared up with the following metaphor:

- Objectives: I want to go there
- Strategy: I will go this way
- Plan: I will go by car, I will need petrol and it will take me two hours to complete the journey (Rojas Orduña, 2005, p. 85).

3. CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

Within a public image campaign, there are certain aspects that do not require as much emphasis in other types of campaigns. In this case, impressions, the messages that are conveyed, the relationships established with other characters, and above all, mass media control must be taken into account. It is the media that shape public opinion and set trends, so a public figure or celebrity must know how to handle them and take advantage of them.

The difference between organizations or individuals that need to spend a lot of money to become known and those that are recognized without large investments largely lies in the strategy of their communication (Rojas Orduña, 2005, p. 87).

3.1. Impression

First and foremost, managing the impression of the individual is essential as these factors will determine the public's opinion of them, affecting both politicians and celebrities. It is not just physical features, gestures, movements, or looks that are elements of a person's personal image, but also their lifestyle and way of being, which differentiate them and encompass the magnitude of their entire image. The first impression is important to take care of; after all, it is the initial image that is perceived. It is our clothing, hairstyle, and smile that transmit information about our inner self without saying a word (neurocommunication). This first impression can persist or be reinforced depending on the person's subsequent behavior.

García Gómez, director of *Soluciones Específicas*, a communication and marketing company, considers these four factors as fundamental for maintaining coherence when conveying any message:

1. Physical conditions: outward appearance.
2. Voice, tone, and modulation
3. Gestures
4. Attire

Debra Benton, author of "How to Sell Your Own Image," considers the first impression as the cornerstone of an individual's personal image. Therefore, she explains techniques necessary for creating and maintaining favorable impressions.

1. Engage your whole physical person to express yourself. People believe what they see and remember what they have seen. Physical presence is the foundation upon which your credibility will be built. Therefore, you should act slowly, controlled, and intentional.
2. Set the stage by physically determining the environment to respond to an intention determined in advance.
3. Show people what you mean by coordinating words and actions. You must demonstrate what you want to say through intentional gestures and appropriate nonverbal communication.
4. Do not let distractions affect you. Inanimate objects should not control the situation.
5. Conserve resources by eliminating harmful actions, ineffective things said or done.

6. Do the opposite of what most people do. This does not mean wearing a flashy suit, as excessively eccentric behavior would be remembered unfavorably.
7. Be flexible. Depending on the situation, you should be outgoing or reserved, or whatever the situation requires.
8. Prepare to repeat the rehearsed gesture for a while. Once you get used to acquired habits, you will feel comfortable with them.
9. Remember the four-minute rule. It does not take more time to make a favorable impression (Benton, "How to Sell Your Own Image," 1992, pp. 31-38).

It is clear that your way of dressing is important, but it is not the act of dressing itself that "determines" you; it is the brand of clothing you wear, the color combinations, and the style you choose for a particular moment. There is no worse mistake than not wearing appropriate attire according to the required dress code. These elements can determine a mistaken or accurate idea of personal image. For example, José Manuel Soria, former Minister of Industry in the Spanish Government, decided to shave his mustache to avoid both negative and positive comparisons or similarities with former Spanish President José María Aznar.

We associate the image of each individual with predefined values and judgments that pass through our mental filter and result in a psychological judgment that determines whether we trust that person or not.

Therefore, a famous figure who is constantly bombarded with the actions they take leads consumers to form many psychological judgments about them. To redirect public opinions in the desired direction, a comprehensive personal image marketing strategy is necessary to channel all perceptions. Maintaining an image may also require a large team, as impression management is a constant task. Jacquie L'Etang, in her book "Public Relations: Concepts, Practice, and Critique," provides a classification of celebrities based on their impression management:

1. Ascribed celebrity: celebrity acquired through blood or inheritance, either real or as a result of political or business connections.
2. Achieved celebrity: meritocratic celebrity acquired through individual skills, such as sports stars, musicians, writers, successful artists, and entrepreneurs.
3. Attributed celebrity: celebrity that arises from repeated exposure in the media, for example, newspaper columnists or guests on talk shows like Oprah Winfrey or Javier Sardá.
4. Celestoids: celebrities who attract extensive media attention due to scandals, pseudo-events, or participation in reality TV shows, like participants of Big Brother. However, their celebrity status can be short-lived if not managed properly.
5. Celeactors: fictional characters that garner media attention and become cultural reference points, like Shrek's ogre, whose celeactor status also overlapped with the achieved celebrity of footballer Wayne Rooney, nicknamed Shrek.

L'Etang shares some essential information tools in her work "Public Relations: Concepts, Practice, and Critique," which she extracted from the British group, *The Profile Group*:

- Agenda: planned events in art, politics, film, media, trade, fashion, and institutional relations for the coming years.
- Entertainment news: provides daily planning of celebrity promotions and events in the world of entertainment.
- Online entertainment news: the latest updates on movie premieres, launch parties, celebrity photoshoots, opening nights, celebrity interview opportunities, previews, concerts, press conferences, and fundraising activities.
- Red pages: information about over 7,000 celebrities, including agents, publicists, and involvement in campaigns.

3.2. PR Plan or Program

Once the client's identity has been defined and their impression managed, the strategy is already in motion. In this step, the timescale and resources to be used for implementing the communication strategy are decided. The tactics are the actions that PR professionals will take, utilizing appropriate tools such as press releases, meetings with authorities, institutional advertising, events, online communication including social media, among many other instruments (Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2014).

Some tactics may include:

- Preparing clients for participation in a televised debate
- Managing one-on-one interviews with specialized journalists
- Conducting a series of meetings with industry analysts
- Organizing a press conference

Many celebrities use interviews with journalists as a tactic to improve their public image. A clear example of this was the interview between Lance Armstrong and Oprah Winfrey following the doping scandal involving the athlete in 2013. The Wall Street Journal details the entire process behind Armstrong's image recovery in an article. Armstrong admitted to using drugs to enhance his performance... In Hawaii, Armstrong spent time with Winfrey, who had previously interviewed him and supported him.

3.3. Implementation

In this phase, the plan is expanded with the resources that have been decided upon, taking into account the time allocated for each phase. It is important not to neglect small details at this stage, as some seemingly trivial aspects can gain importance and undermine the proposed program. Therefore, in terms of budgeting, many authors like Octavio Isaac Rojas consider it important to allocate a portion for possible unforeseen circumstances, to be able to utilize them when needed.

A well-known case is that of fashion designer John Galliano, who made the mistake of making certain anti-Semitic remarks in a public place, leading to his suspension by the fashion brand Dior, for whom he worked, and being accused of making anti-Semitic insults. Dior stated through its president, Sidney Toledano, that the suspension reflects their policy of "zero tolerance for any anti-Semitic or racist words." (El Mundo. 25/02/2011)

To restore his image after these statements, the designer admitted to having a serious alcohol addiction and publicly apologized. In this way, the focus of attention was diverted as the designer entered a rehabilitation center.

3.4. Monitoring

This step is conceived as the phase of preserving all the work previously done. In this way, it is observed whether the resources have been used correctly, if the social media messages are causing the desired impact, or if the interview conducted with the journalist has been done within the agreed-upon timeframes. Thus, with this monitoring, the evaluation of the results will be carried out. However, monitoring must be done continuously to prevent any type of budgetary or image-related unforeseen events.

3.5. Evaluation

Public image campaigns, like other PR campaigns, face the challenge of quantifying results. The main purpose of an evaluation is to determine if the objectives set at the beginning of the campaign have been successfully achieved. Authors like L'Etang consider content analysis as the research method most associated with media evaluation. It involves analyzing what is reported and what is not, as well as how what is reported is described. Content analysis, according to the author, is used to analyze newspapers, magazines, audiovisual media, and websites.

3.6. Repairing a Negative Image

It is important to be transparent, acknowledge the problem, apologize, and offer a solution or something new. Kate Moss, the famous English model, went through a similar case in 2005 when she was accused of being addicted to cocaine. As a result, many fashion companies, such as Chanel, decided to terminate their contracts with the model. However, her recovery was imminent, and she returned to the catwalk stronger than ever. How did she do it?

- The Phoenix Effect: How to Recover After a PR Disaster, the Tiger Woods Way

Michael Michalowicz is an American author of several business books and a columnist for business sections in newspapers like The Wall Street Journal and digital forums like American Express's "Open Forum." He is the CEO of Provendus Group, a company that helps individuals with potential failures and strives to turn them into market leaders. In 2013, Michalowicz published an article titled "The Phoenix Effect" about the image rebuilding of athlete Tiger Woods. In the article, he details the steps taken during the image reconstruction and how to revitalize a brand that has been damaged. The following is a translation of the original English article.

In November 2009, during Thanksgiving weekend, the famous golfer Tiger Woods had a car accident that no one could forget, especially Americans. On Friday, November 27, 2009, the golfer crashed his Cadillac into a tree. He was immediately taken to the hospital and discharged on the same day without any injuries. That day marked the beginning of his decline, as he was caught in a spiral that would last for years until his full recovery.

The golfer's brand, "Tiger," once considered clean, humble, and honorable, was severely damaged by this incident, and many sponsors decided to turn their backs on him. Accenture, a technology services and consulting company, was the first to withdraw their support, followed by the American brand Gillette. Many other companies also ended their sponsorships. Newspapers like El Mundo echoed the scandal: "Given the circumstances of the past two weeks, after careful consideration and analysis, the company has determined that he is no longer the right representative for its advertising," Accenture said in a statement (Jonas, 13/12/2009, El Mundo).

The scandals surrounding his accident, his wife, and his infidelities contributed to the disintegration of the Tiger brand and the loss of sponsors, making it seem like the brand was coming to an end. However, Tiger Woods managed to leave that setback behind and return to the golf circuits to regain his position as number one. In 2012, he was declared the best golfer of the year, ranking number one in the FedEx Cup playoffs. He was also able to rebuild his personal life and even secure sponsors like Rolex in 2011. "Rolex is convinced that Tiger Woods still has a long career ahead of him and possesses all the necessary qualities to continue being a reference in the history of golf," commented the company (October 6, 2011, Marketing Director, Tiger Woods).

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the golfer managed to "get back in the game" using the same tactics that any company or brand would apply to resurface. He followed specific and relentless steps that many believe he should have taken earlier.

1. First and foremost, it is crucial to publicly acknowledge the mistakes. Denying the obvious would be catastrophic, and transparency is the best weapon. This step was also followed by other athletes like Lance Armstrong. A few months later, Tiger Woods admitted his guilt through his website.
2. Leave the old ways behind. To recover a damaged image, it is easier to start fresh and be reborn. Leaving behind negative behaviors is the best way to undergo a successful makeover. In Tiger Woods' case, he had to abandon his frenetic social life.
3. Reconstruction. He started working with a new coach and mastered a new swing. He also committed to stable relationships and built an image of personal stability.
4. Choose a specific factor. When a public figure's image is tarnished, the mistake is often trying to repair everything at once. There is too much at stake to regain it all immediately. Therefore, it is smarter to choose "something" in particular and focus on it. In Woods' case, he decided to improve his game and focused on the putting stroke, which is crucial in longer golf courses known as the putting green. By doing so, he could regain his leadership in the game and climb up the ranks again.
5. The team lifts a superstar. Nothing can improve your public image more than joining an established brand with confidence and reputation. If a recognized brand trusts the famous person, consumers will as well. In this regard, Nike continued to support Tiger Woods despite controversial advertisements, and Rolex also endorsed him in 2011.

Furthermore, actions speak louder than words. In addition to his official statements on his website, the successful golfer decided to make a public declaration on television. Demonstrating transparency, he appeared in Florida two months after the incident in front of the cameras, pleading for forgiveness and asking the public to believe in him again.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the treatment of public image in notable figures, it can be concluded that it largely depends on the individual's personality, which means that each person would require a particular approach if "everyone is unique."

The public image of a famous figure is constantly under scrutiny, and any comment, gesture, or message can lead to countless prejudices against them. The individual must be aware of the risks of being a public figure and manage their image with the help of a professional. Many believe that Miley Cyrus has lost control of her career and has allowed her desire for fame to overpower her. However, it should be noted that the singer's entire image change is a PR campaign to transform her image and, of course, increase sales. In this case, the emphasis has been placed on the artist's sexuality in order to achieve more sales and, above all, more followers. This "sexuality" strategy has both negative and positive aspects. Just as it will attract many followers, it will also attract many detractors. Such strategies would not work for every famous figure, confirming that each individual requires personalized assistance. Market segmentation.

Furthermore, when analyzing the cases of Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong, it is evident that there were many similarities in both trials. The fact that Tiger Woods was unfaithful to his wife does not affect his playing ability, swing, or decrease his number of holes, but it was a personal matter that caused the world's top golfer to lose his status. It is the importance of the "personal" aspect that leads PR campaigns aimed at cleaning up one's image to always begin with an apology using tools that emerge from neurocommunication. Both Woods and Armstrong made the initial decision to apologize officially through statements and then present their apologies in the media, either through an official event or, in the case of the cyclist, a tough interview that revealed the athlete's "vulnerability." It is interesting how everyone seeks apologies to be able to revive their brand, while in Europe, the strategy of transparency is not as common as distraction. Attempting to conceal information through another scandal or trying to make the public forget it.

The functions of PR in the personal realm are much more challenging to establish than in an organization. One misstep can lead to the definitive downfall of the brand, as the brand is an individual and is linked to their personal life but should not affect their professionalism. Being a media figure requires constant vigilance over one's actions. However, there are certain professional fields, such as the music industry, where drugs or politically incorrect behavior are not grounds to consider the individual unprofessional. Communication through digital platforms should be managed under the lens of emotional intelligence and persuasive techniques prevalent in discourse.

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AUTHORS

Almudena Barrientos-Báez

Professor at the Iriarte University School of Tourism, affiliated with ULL (University of La Laguna), and at the European University. Master's degree in Protocol Management, Production, Organization, and Event Design - Communication area - (UCJC) and Master's degree in Hotel Management (University of Girona). Bachelor's degree in Tourism (EUTI-ULL) and Teaching (University of Valencia). She is part of the DEBATv project, Televised Electoral Debates in Spain: Models, Process, Diagnosis, and Proposal (CSO2017-83159-R), an R&D project.

almudenabarrientos@iriarteuniversidad.es

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9913-3353>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=jUHZsfIAAAJ&hl=es>

David Caldevilla-Domínguez

Bachelor's and Doctoral degrees in Information Sciences (Audiovisual Communication from the Complutense University). Graduate in Teaching (University of Zaragoza). Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information Sciences of UCM (Complutense University of Madrid). Teaching at: Complutense University, European University of Madrid, IED, ESERP, and IPAM (Porto, Portugal).

davidcaldevilla@ccinf.ucm.es

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9850-1350>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=wVd-AnwAAAAJ&hl=es>