

What skills and competencies are required of marketing graduates in the Spanish business-to-business sector? A content analysis of listings on online job portals

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Abstract

Objective. The new scenarios arising from globalisation and the development of information and communication technologies have obliged marketing to adapt to a more complex, ever-changing and highly uncertain environment. That adaptation has, in turn, made it necessary to review the conditions of engagement of professionals in the sector. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the skills required in business-to-business (B2B) job vacancies for marketing graduates at (national and international) companies based in Spain, with international links and, therefore, forming part of the globalised market. **Methodology.** Employing the desktop research technique, an analysis was performed on the listings posted on the leading job portals in Spain. Following this, a content analysis was conducted on the data collected from the listings, quantifying and classifying the job requirements appearing in them. **Results.** The importance of social media in relation to technical skills, the relevance of a good proficiency in English as regards meta-skills, the requirement of digital marketing knowledge and expertise with respect to conceptual marketing knowledge, and a strong correlation between the experience and salary variables were observed. **Limitations.** There is scant specific literature on marketing job requirements in the B2B sector. **Practical implications.** This study is particularly valuable insofar as it provides universities, business schools and higher education centres knowledge of the latest marketing skills and competencies required in the B2B sector.

Keywords: B2B marketing; university education; professional profile; recruitment; skills and competencies

Codes JEL: M53

1. Introduction

As a result of phenomena like globalisation and digitisation, plus the economic crisis commencing at the end of 2007, companies and organisations have undergone profound internal

changes with a view to adapting to dynamic environments, in which there is a high level of uncertainty. New environments have emerged and new solutions are required, all of which calls for professionals with the ability to meet these new challenges.

Although this phenomenon has been approached from different perspectives, as will be seen further on, very few studies have focused exclusively on the skills set currently required of marketing professionals in the business-to-business (hereinafter B2B) sector.

The changes brought about in the macro-environment by the aforementioned developments have given rise to a series of opportunities, one of the most relevant being internationalisation, as evidenced by Spain's export figures, which increased by 50 per cent from 2008 to 2018 (ICEX, 2019). In this connection and according to Manuera and Rodríguez (2012), there are many economic activities in which competition is now global and there is no turning back. It is not for nothing that the number of Spanish exporting companies increased from 101,395 in 2008 (ICEX, 2010) to 204,196 in 2018 (ICEX, 2019). Adapting to this new state of affairs implies implementing profound changes in companies at all strategic levels. To this end, they now have a powerful tool at their disposal: technology. However, this also involves new challenges both for organisations as a whole and for each one of their components: human resources.

Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to identify the changes that are taking place in the field of marketing and, more specifically, in the skills set required of its professionals, for the purpose of enabling organisations to implement more competitive strategies in the new global and digital environment. An additional objective is to examine the relationship between the experience that B2B marketing companies require of job candidates and the salaries that they offer them.

2. Theoretical framework

The marketing sector has experienced important changes since the first decade of the new century. Its activities are being developed increasingly more in new business environments. To this should be added the effect that the new information and communication technologies (hereinafter ICTs) have had on the sector. ICTs have revolutionised the way in which the sector works with respect to marketing actions and to their analysis and measurement. Thus, just as the environment and the tools have changed, so too have the skills and competencies required of marketing professionals. Furthermore, the rate of change generated by the technological revolution, with the Internet as the main communication channel, is 10 times greater than that produced by any other previous technological innovation, including the telegraph, the telephone and television (Ferguson, 2018).

The introduction of ICTs in the business world has resulted in unprecedented transformations that have affected all areas of organisations and all the tasks undertaken by them.

Unsurprisingly, the areas of activity that have been most influenced by the changes brought about by ICTs are those of marketing and communication.

Nonetheless, these phenomena are not new. The changes in the market in terms of the growing importance of variables like technology, globalisation and localisation had already been detected by authors such as Kotler and Keller back in 2006. At the time, this led to the advent of new behaviours, opportunities and threats for companies. Consequently, former transaction marketing became relationship marketing (Santesmases, 2007).

One of the problems arising from this rapid evolution has to do with the level of training of marketing students and whether or not this is sufficient to meet the new challenges.

The lack of correspondence between the university curriculum and current market requirements has always been seen as a matter of course. This was scientifically demonstrated in 2010 when Pefanis and Harich performed a study on the level of training of students recently graduated in subjects like marketing, economics and finance and the extent to which it adapted to the requirements of the labour market. These two authoresses demonstrated that the skills and competencies required by the market did not correspond to the knowledge acquired by graduates at university. When taking into consideration that, traditionally, universities have always lagged behind the market as regards the adoption of innovations, it should be assumed that the differences detected at the time still prevail today, or are even more marked insofar as technological progress is unremitting. As with marketing objectives, professional requirements have also changed.

In light of the foregoing, it may be assumed that the sudden change in the way in which companies do business with each other has had a direct impact on the skills and competencies required of marketing professionals. The market is now demanding new marketing skills or, in other words, new competency requirements in all areas. The B2B sector also needs new management models, involving new professional skills (Arroyo and Tovar, 2012) that are crucial in a business environment based on the relations between raw material suppliers and the sales network formed by manufacturers and vendors. It is a question of identifying the skills on which these relations are based. However, and before going into further detail, what is understood here by skills in the labour market should be qualified. According to different authors, one might say that skills are the sum of the different personal traits that all workers should display: the ability to accept new challenges; previous knowledge in order to meet them; and possessing the skills required to undertake specific tasks (Leefflang, [Dahlström](#), Verhoef, & [Freundt](#), 2014; Royle & Laing, 2014). To these personal characteristics could be added a person's attributes in relation to an organisation's requirements for performing a task or activity.

While there are plenty of studies focusing on the analysis of the skills currently required of marketing professionals, in general, and in the mass consumer market, in particular, there is still a worrying lacuna in the academic literature as regards the B2B sector. Indeed, the very few studies in this regard are rather outdated, owing to the fact that most were performed at a time when the changes brought about by new technologies, globalisation and relocation had not yet affected the market to the extent that they do now.

Back in 2003, Kotler claimed that B2B marketing activities like ecommerce were 10 times more important than they used to be in the B2C sector. It was thus possible to see that the previous digitisation experiences of companies would have an important and fundamental impact on future investment in the B2B sector (Bigné, Aldás, Andreu & Ruiz, 2007).

In the same vein, Kreindler and Rajguru (2006) interviewed 120 top performing salespersons and 200 of their customers, with a view to improving the efficiency of selection processes. Considering that there is a connection between marketing and selling, observed in growth strategies (Chernev, 2011), their findings indicated that the specialised knowledge and problem-solving skills of the salespeople interviewed were generally customer-centric. At the same time, they stressed how important it was that salespersons should have a broad knowledge of the company and its target audience.

But in a relationship market, suppliers should also be analysed, something that both of these researchers realised. In the questionnaire administered to them, the supplier respondents did not place the same value on specialised knowledge and problem-solving skills, aspects that they believed were less important to their customers. They also believed that professionalism was grounded in aspects such as flexibility, integrity, reliability, reaction capacity, respect and impartiality (Kreindler & Rajguru, 2006, p. 7). To these should be added a series of aspects that help to create value for companies operating in the B2B sector: R&D, manufacturing, marketing, distribution and logistics, post-sales service and customer service (Seoane, 2005). This author also classified IT solutions in three major groups: operational (ERM, PRM, SCM, KM, ERM, CRM), tactical (data warehouse, analytical CRM) and strategic (EIS, datamining) (Seoane, 2005).

Regardless of the results obtained, which indicate that there are differences of opinion and that, ideally, a balance should be struck between them, what is interesting here is to identify the variables employed by the authors to analyse the highest expected requirements. These were as follows: social skills; communication; empathy; a willingness to listen; and presentation skills. As already noted, to these variables should be added those of specialised knowledge and problem-solving skills. In this study, they were all necessary requirements for marketing professionals in the B2B sector.

At present, the use of the Internet has enhanced and improved corporate relations. The introduction of ecommerce has been accompanied by a number of gradual changes implemented by organisations by using the Internet for creating value that helps to build customer loyalty. Investment in B2B marketing involves creating digital platforms and the existence of human resources capable of working with them.

This development in digitisation processes and the evolution of web-based commercial activities led to other studies focusing more on the analysis of skills and competencies relating to the use of digital technology and tools, including outcome measurement using tools adapted to the new metrics, brand management in digital environments and analytical skills (Leeflang, et al. 2014).

So, it is possible to conclude that communication skills, specialised knowledge and problem-solving skills can be basic requirements for marketing professionals in the B2B sector. To these should be added aspects pertaining to digitisation and relationship marketing skills. The same conclusion was reached in a study that, on the basis of in-depth interviews conducted with marketing professionals working at internationalised companies, mostly belonging to the B2B sector, analysed the competency requirements that they considered to be necessary for pursuing a career in this field. Its finding indicated that social and communication skills were also important, while highlighting the value that digital skills had for marketing (García & Echegaray, 2018).

These digital marketing skills had been analysed in a previous study in which seven key competencies were identified: ‘corporate communication principles’; ‘excellent client engagement skills’; ‘futuregazing, foresighting and futureproofing facilitated by using blogs, online discussion forums and digital networking’; ‘research’; ‘measurement, monitoring and evaluation refining current metrics for a best practice model’; and, lastly, ‘technological knowledge/overview, e.g. SEO, mobile apps, 3d animation, video editing, website development, digital platforms, code writing’ (Royle and Laing, 2014, p. 75).

In addition to these marketing skills required in the B2B sector, associated with both the new virtual and face-to-face environments, there are those that are globally required in marketing in general and which, therefore, should not be overlooked: skills and competencies pertaining to marketing research and product development (McNally, Durmusoglu, & Calantone, 2013) and those associated with the tasks normally undertaken by product or brand managers occupying specific positions of responsibility (Wroblowska, 2016). As to product managers, the research conducted by Foxize School (2014), on the basis of 38 interviews with marketing professionals in Spain, emphasised the importance of aspects like creativity, leadership, digital skills, flexibility, empathy and the ability to work in liquid organisations. In a very similar study to the

one performed here, focusing of the Czech job portal Jobs.cz, in which 56 marketing job opportunities were analysed, the conclusion reached was that the most relevant skills in that market included holding a graduate degree, having a good knowledge of technical disciplines, proficiency in English as a foreign language and being able to demonstrate job experience in marketing or in positions similar to that being offered (Wroblowska, 2016).

Lastly, and in relation to social media, a study performed in the Basque Country in 2019, which analysed their use by B2B company directors, revealed that they employed them to keep tabs on their competitors, to search for experts in specific fields, to resolve technical issues and to monitor suppliers (Núñez, 2019). This study coincides with others performed previously by researchers like Gallardo and Ramírez (2003), cited in Bigné et al (2007, p. 127), who contend that ‘experience in the use of technology enables companies and their employees to be in a better position to surmount the costs of change and to adapt to it’.

As has been observed in this section, the skills profile of B2B marketing professionals has not yet been fully defined and, on many occasions, research in this regard is several years old and it can even be claimed that it was performed at key moments in the transition towards technology adaptation. For which reason, this study aims to determine the skills set that the market currently requires of B2B marketing professionals, at a moment when the introduction of new technologies is already playing a decisive and leading role in marketing activities and, more specifically, in the so-called ‘relationship marketing’.

3. Research objectives

To perform this study, a general objective, plus several specific ones aimed at contributing to meet this, were established. The general objective was to define the professional skills and competencies required of marketing graduates in B2B job listings posted on the main job portals in Spain (Infojobs, Infoempleo, Monster and Laboris), in addition to the correlation between the job experience required and the salary offered.

An analysis was performed on such requirements in the five Spanish autonomous communities (regions) making the greatest contribution to the national GDP at market prices in 2018 (INE, 2019), and also with the highest turnover in the industrial market in 2017, according to the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2018), namely, Catalonia, Madrid, Andalusia, the Valencian Community and the Basque Country.

On the basis of this general objective, several specific research objectives were established:

- To identify the requirements appearing in marketing job vacancies in the B2B sector, posted on Spain's leading job portals, with respect to technical skills, meta-skills and conceptual marketing knowledge.
- To define the correlation between the experience required of candidates and the salaries offered in marketing job vacancies in the B2B sector, posted on Spain's leading job portals.

4. Research hypotheses

The research was based on three hypotheses formulated in accordance with those aspects that appeared to be the most significant during the background analysis and which can be summarised as follows:

H1: Skills relating to digitisation are and will be central to B2B marketing, given the impetus of new technologies and globalisation.

H2. Communication skills stand out in the skills profile of marketing graduates owing to their transversal character.

H3. The greater the job experience required is, the higher the salary will be or, in other words, there is a directly proportional relationship between the experience required and the salary offered.

5. Methodology

The mixed methodology employed in this study involved a series of stages that, as a whole, contributed to meet the established objectives.

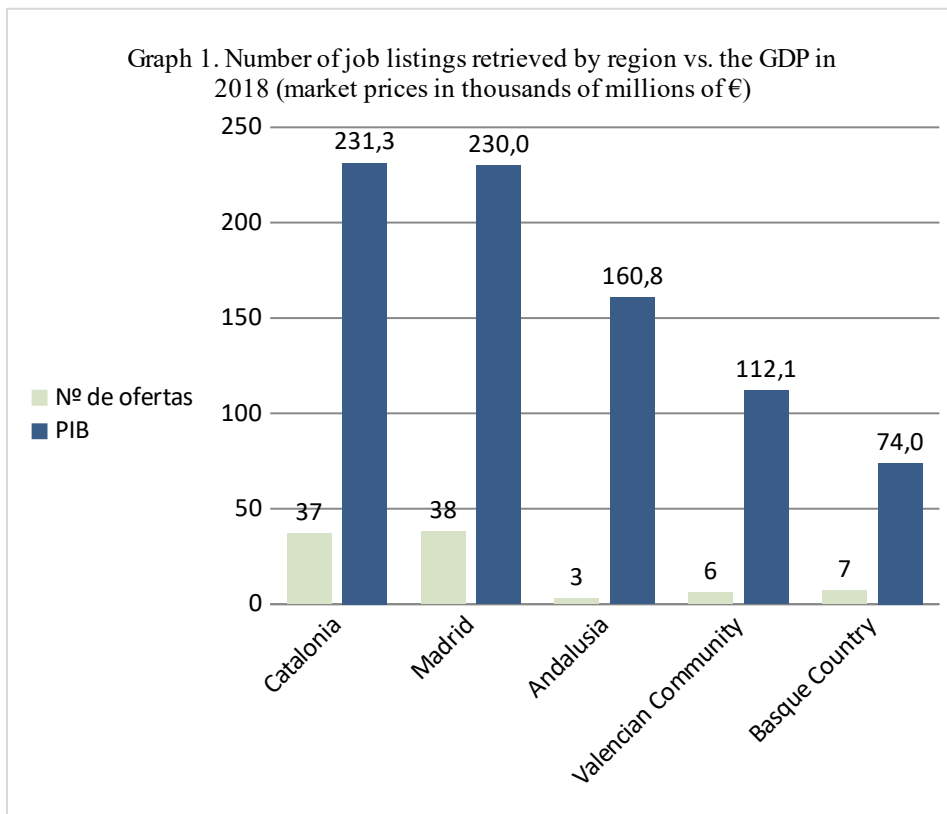
The aim of the first stage was to review and analyse the literature, with an eye to taking an initial approach to the most relevant aspects of the requirements that B2B companies expect marketing professionals to fulfil.

Following this, the second methodological stage of the research was developed using the desktop research technique, in order to create a corpus of B2B marketing job listings posted on Spain's leading job portals for its subsequent analysis.

Subsequently, the third stage involved conducting a content analysis for the purpose of classifying, segmenting and labelling all the collected data, which were then quantified for the purpose of establishing the value that B2B companies place on these different skills categories and on the items included in each one of them.

In short, the research procedure involved a mixed methodology combining qualitative (data collection and classification) and quantitative (data quantification) techniques.

Data collection was carried out using a dual process: on the one hand, the search was restricted to the autonomous communities of Madrid, Catalonia, Andalusia, the Valencian Community and the Basque Country, owing to the fact that, as already noted, they are the Spanish regions with the highest level of economic activity.



After selecting the five autonomous regions for the reasons stated above, the research focused on the four most popular job portals and, therefore, more likely to offer the largest number of B2B marketing job opportunities. Thus, from December 2017 to April 2018 the job listings posted on the portals Infojobs, Infoempleo, Monster and Laboris (see Table 1) were retrieved. These listings were then filtered and the duplicates eliminated, resulting in a final sample of 91 valid job listings.

Table 1. Portals used for the search and the total number of job listings

PORTALS USED FOR THE SEARCH	TOTAL NO. OF LISTINGS RETRIEVED IN THE FOUR-
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	MONTH PERIOD
• Infojobs	63
• Infoempleo	20
• Monster	6
• Laboris	2

Source: own elaboration.

The filtering process, guaranteeing the suitability of each and every one of the job listings before being included in the sample, was performed in accordance with four criteria. The first only affected the selection of the job vacancies in the five aforementioned autonomous communities. Secondly, one of the job requirements should be a graduate or Bachelor's degree in marketing. Thirdly, those listings in which a graduate or Bachelor's degree in marketing was valued but not obligatory were also included in the sample. And, lastly, the aim of the fourth criterion was to guarantee that all the job vacancies had to do with the B2B sector, this being stated in the listing's text or in the information offered on the corporate website of the company in question.

The keyword 'marketing' was employed to run searches on the aforementioned job portals. As already noted, the collected data was filtered and then used to perform a content analysis.

After creating the sample of job listings, the data obtained was then classified, segmented and labelled with a view to determining the relevance of each one of the required skills.

In order to perform a content analysis on the selected job listings, the websites of all the companies were reviewed in search of information matching the categories and items included in the worksheet. To this end, the category to which the companies belonged, according to the National Classification of Economic Activities (CNAE) code, was analysed for their subsequent classification in terms of the type of marketing in which they were involved, namely, B2C or B2B.

According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is a research technique for objectively, systematically and quantitatively describing clear content of communication. Therefore, content analysis possesses the necessary aspects of objectivity and systematisation, generating explicit research rules applicable to all units of analysis (Krippendorff, 1990; Andreu, 2000).

The use of the content analysis technique in this study pursued a dual objective described by Bardin (2002, p. 22): a 'heuristic' role that enriches exploratory hesitation and increases the propensity to discover, it is a content analysis 'for seeing'; and another role of 'evidence' that

confirms or not the hypothesis and which corresponds to a content analysis ‘for proving’. These two roles can coexist in a complementary manner.

According to Barden (2002, p. 23), in content analysis there are no ready-made worksheets, but merely a number of basic ones. In this research, the basic worksheet derived from a study performed by Pefanis and Harich (2010), whose purpose was to collect data for an analysis very similar to the one performed here. It was necessary to modify the worksheet owing to the changes that have occurred in the sector’s competency requirements. Thus, the initial categories established by the authoresses (portal, company, job listing, geographical area and years of experience) were respected, as were the general categories (technical skills, meta-skills and conceptual marketing knowledge). This worksheet was adapted according to the results of the content analysis, including new items as these appeared in the analysis of each job listing. To these were added the ‘salary’ item insofar as it is of unquestionable importance in job vacancies of this type.

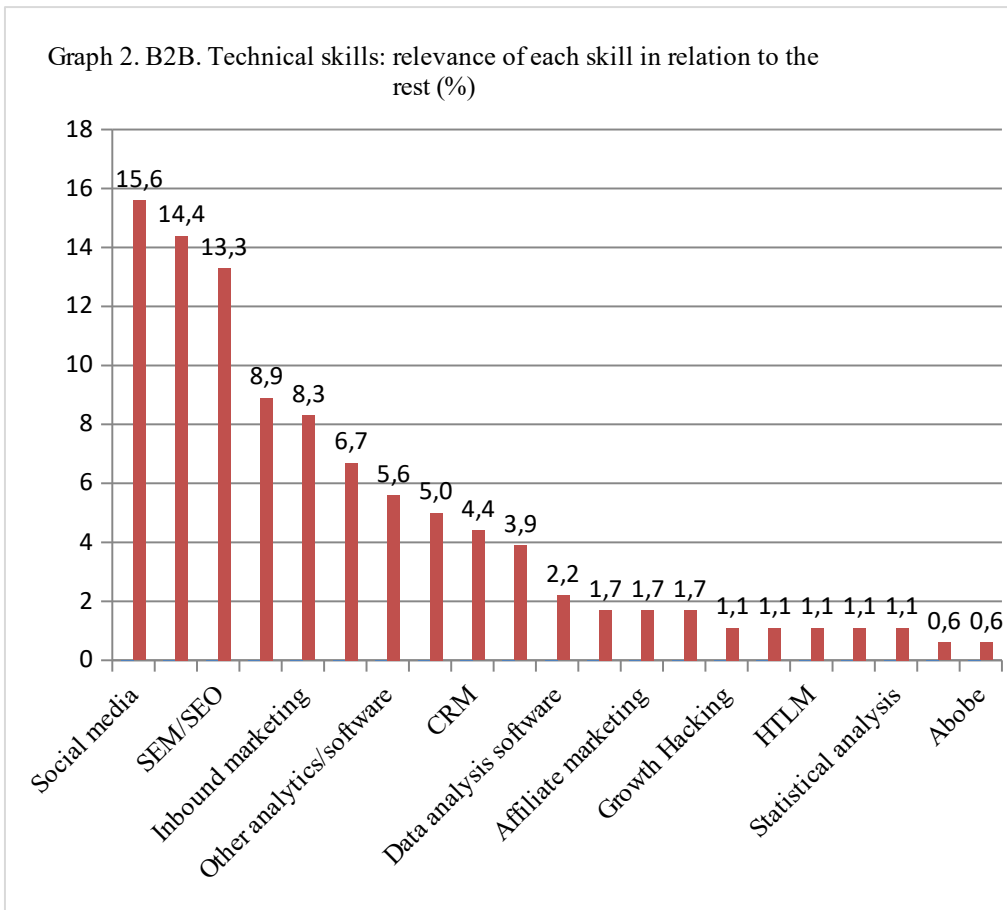
In short, the study was qualitative as regards the search for information and qualitative with respect to the classification, ordering and aggregation of the data collected or, in the words of Igartua (2006), a vast quantity of data sorted by category and aggregated in terms of these. Ultimately, this study is similar to those whose objective has been to analyse supply, in this case job vacancies.

6. Research results

As already observed in the methodological section, the data analysis focused on four categories: technical skills, meta-skills, conceptual marketing knowledge and the experience/salary correlation.

6.1. Technical skills

As can be seen in Graph 2, a total of 21 skills were detected in this category. Obviously they were not all as equally important for companies. Accordingly, social media, MS Office skills and search engine optimisation and marketing (hereinafter SEO and SEM) were, in this order, the skills most sought after by companies, all exceeding 10 per cent of the total, meaning that they stood out in the category as a whole.



Conversely, the least relevant skills also in terms of the frequency with which they appeared in the job listings accounted for 10 items with a very low demand that in no case exceeded 2 per cent of the total. Skills such as statistical analysis, data mining, CMS, HTML, affiliate marketing, growth hacking, Google AdWords, Photoshop, Adobe and WordPress could be regarded as having a token presence.

Between both extremes, there was a group of eight skills of varying importance, from e-mailing (8.9 per cent) to data analysis software (2.2 per cent).

In light of the data provided in Graph 2, it can be observed how the two skills most sought after by companies as regards digital marketing were social media and SEO/SEM. The relevance of these two skills was much greater than that of others such as inbound marketing, e-mailing, affiliate marketing and Google Analytics, and even more so in case of mobile marketing, which was conspicuous by its absence.

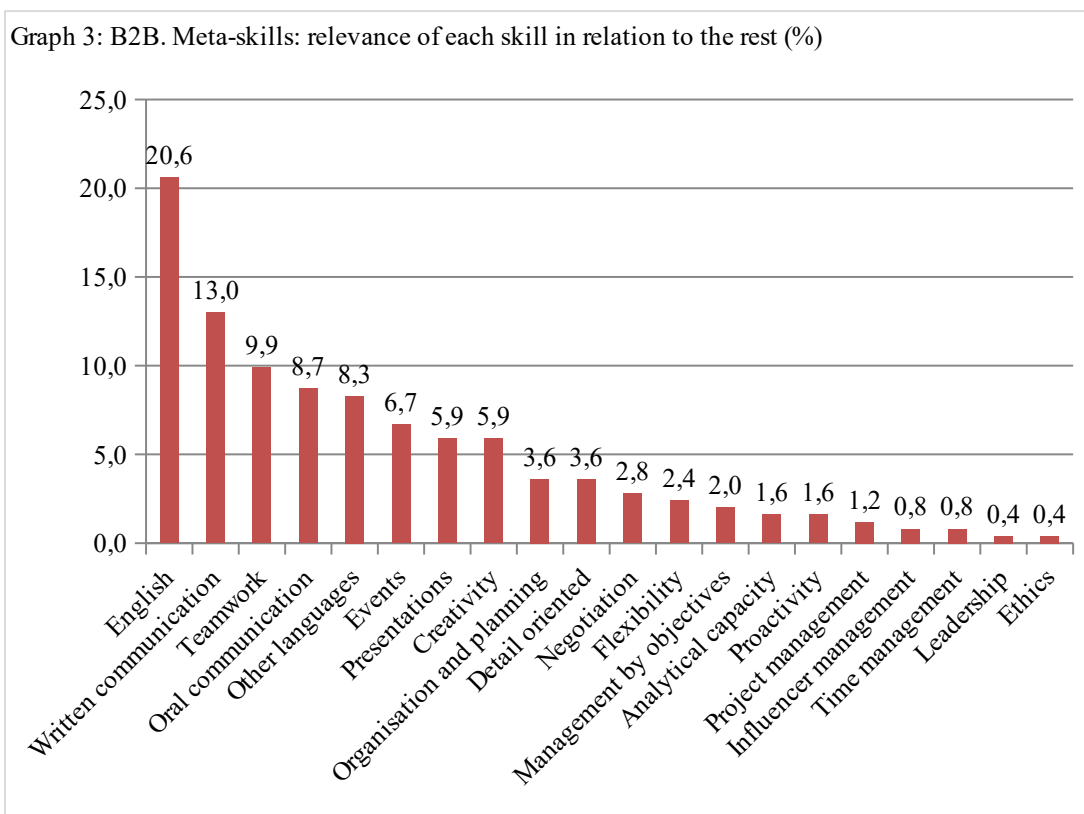
Similarly, it should be noted how MS Office skills were the second most required, due to the fact that managing the connection between desktop apps and the services provided by different operating systems, like Microsoft Windows, IOS, Mac OS X and Android, is extremely useful for companies.

With respect to the set of eight skills mentioned above, situated between the most and least sought after, it can be observed how the needs of companies involved three very different fields, the most important being digital marketing with four skills: Google Analytics, other analytics/software, inbound marketing and e-mailing. This was followed by data analysis, including data analysis software, database analysis and CRM. While the third and last field was that of graphic design.

6.2. Meta-skills

As shown in Graph 3, a total of 20 skills were detected in the meta-skills category, the most important of all being English (20.6 per cent). The most sought-after skills set included, in addition to English, written communication, teamwork, oral communication and other languages, in this order.

In light of the results, the first deduction that can be made was the huge importance of language skills; of the five skills four were language-related. Indeed, these four skills represented 50 per cent of the set of 20 meta-skills.



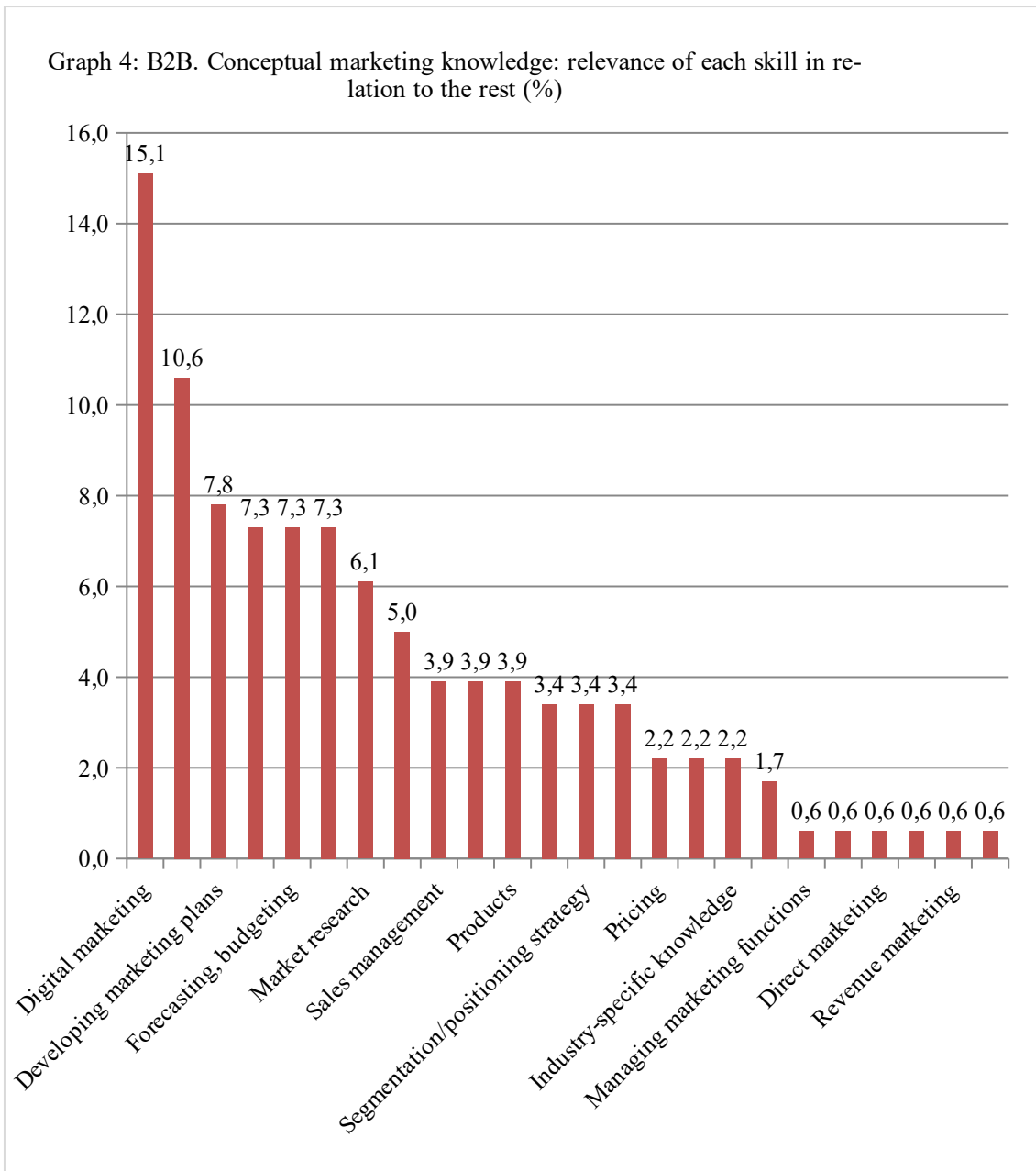
Likewise, the skills least appreciated by companies were influencer management, time management, leadership and ethics. It is not that surprising to find skills of this type at the bottom of the list, for in previous studies they also occupied low or middling positions (Pefanis & Harich, 2010; García & Echegaray, 2019). Even though none of them obtained a value of

over 0.8 per cent, for which reason they can be considered to be of negligible importance, the appearance of influencer management in the set should be highlighted, owing to the fact that it is a skill that will be in much greater demand in the future.

Between both ends of the scale, there were 11 skills of middling importance, from the ability to organise events to project management. This set was divided into two distinct parts: on the one hand, a group of four skills, i.e. negotiation, events, project management and presentations, with interpersonal intelligence (empathy, communication, cooperative work, etc.) as a common denominator (Gardner, 2011). The purpose of these skills, representing 16.6 per cent of the total, is none other than to adapt to an external and social medium. On the other hand, the remaining skills are closely related to inner abilities, including creativity, detail orientated, management by objectives and a high level of proactivity and flexibility towards corporate requirements.

6.3. Conceptual marketing knowledge

As can be seen in Graph 4, this category included 24 skills. For its analysis, it was divided into three groups in order of importance as ranked by the companies making up the sample.



The first of the three groups was formed by two skills (digital marketing and ad campaigns) which, with values over 10 per cent, stood out from the rest. This points to the value that companies currently place on the digital environment versus the rest of skills included in this category. Indeed, just as digital marketing requires theoretical and practical knowledge of digital technology, so too do most of the skills relating to ad campaigns. Thus, in the job listings selected it was possible to detect a growing interest in online advertising (affiliate marketing and e-mailing), without prejudice to more conventional advertising techniques such as media campaign management (press, radio, TV, etc.). In this sense, there were statistically significant differences between the value placed on digital marketing (15.1 per cent) and on developing marketing plans (7.8 per cent), a skill included in the second group.

The second group included 12 skills, namely, developing marketing plans, selling, budget planning, business management, market research, product/brand management, sales management, customer management, products, communication strategy/plan, segmentation/positioning strategy, and supplier management. In this second group, it is important to note the growing importance of the area of sales, represented by business management, customer management and, of course, selling per se, accounting for 18.5 per cent of the skills falling into this category.

Lastly, the third group was formed by 10 skills with a lower profile, which in no case exceeded 3 per cent of the total. In this group, those skills relating to distribution, such as trade marketing and merchandising, apparently awakened little interest.

The scant importance given to some of the communication skills like public relations and direct marketing was also noteworthy.

6.4. Experience/salary correlation

In view of the results shown in Table 2 and Graph 5, it is possible to make a number of considerations. First and foremost, they point to wage rates substantially lower than those reflected in the reports released by the consultancy firms Michael Page (2018), Randstad (2018) and Hays (Dottle, 2018). Thus, while in this study there were no job vacancies carrying a salary of higher than €45,000, those mentioned in the aforementioned reports were much higher. According to Randstad, for instance, the highest wage bracket was €98,500-120,000, which either indicates that salaries in the B2B sector are much lower than those in its B2C counterpart or that the job vacancies carrying the highest salaries are not posted on online job portals.

Table 2. Experience/salary correlation by number of job listings and by percentage

Salary offered (€)	Experience							Total	(%)
	Not required	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	< 5 years		
>10,000	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2.2
10,000-20,000	3	4	6	2	1	0	0	16	17.6
21,000-30,000	0	5	3	4	1	3	0	16	17.6
31,000-45,000	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	5	5.5
Unspecified	11	11	6	16	4	4	0	52	57.1

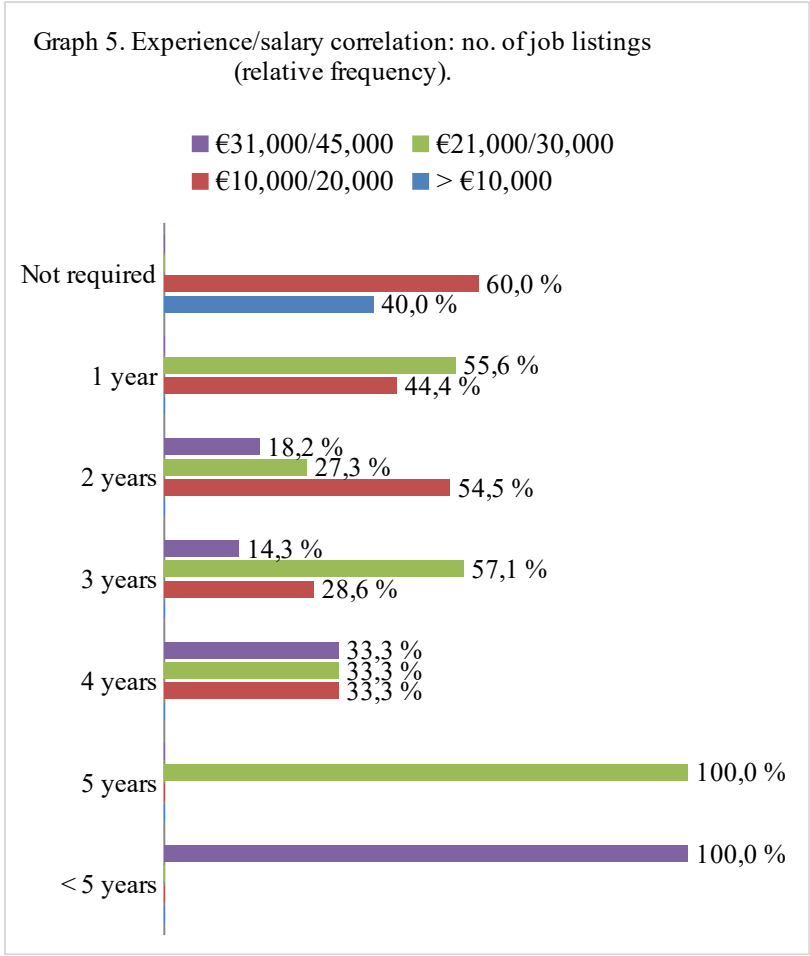
Total	16	20	17	23	7	7	1	91	100.0
(%)	17.6	22.0	18.7	25.3	7.7	7.7	1.1	100.0	

Source: own elaboration.

Another significant conclusion that can be drawn from the data has to do with the fact that the job vacancies for graduates fresh out of university, represented by those requiring a year of experience or none whatsoever, accounted for 39.6 per cent of the total.

Moreover, as set out in the third research hypothesis, there was a direct correlation between the highest salaries and those job vacancies requiring more experience. In view of the results shown in Graph 5, 100 per cent of the listings requiring five or more years of experience offered higher salaries of between €21,000 and €45,000.

To conclude, three significant aspects emerged from the analysis. Firstly, the most frequent job listing offered a salary of between €10,000 and €20,000 in exchange for two years of experience. Secondly, if the salary variable is examined separately, the most frequent salary offered fell into the two central wage brackets: €10,000-20,000 and €21,000-30,000. Lastly, considering the experience factor independently, three years of experience was the most commonplace.



7. Discussion and implications

Taking into account the general objective of our research and in view of the results presented above, we have arrived a number of conclusions.

With respect to the technical skills category, those skills relating to digitisation are clearly gaining ground. Thus, the first five digital skills by order of importance—i.e. social media, SEO/SEM, e-mailing, inbound marketing and other analytical software (see Graph 2)—accounted for 51.7 per cent of the 21 skills falling into this category. Likewise, when considering the first 10 skills, six are related to digitisation, while the remaining four have to do with those appearing in the twentieth century that, far from being obsolete, continue to be very important. This coexistence between new and ‘old’ skills corroborates the findings of previous studies, such as those performed by García and Echegaray (2018, 2019).

Even though digital skills (influencer management) only had a token presence in the meta-skills category, this was not the case in the conceptual marketing knowledge category, in which skills like digital marketing and ad campaigns very significantly accounted for 25 per cent of the total. All in all, we can claim that the first research hypothesis has been borne out by the fact that

those skills relating to digitisation are being included increasingly more as B2B marketing job requirements. Accordingly, this is an aspect that, progressively, should be taken more into consideration in the university education of future marketing graduates.

Perhaps the most relevant conclusion that can be drawn from the transversal skills—meta-skills—category is the value placed on communication skills. Thus, of the 20 skills identified five were communication-related—i.e. English, written communication, oral communication, other languages and presentations—which, moreover, accounted for 56.5 per cent of the total. So, this skills set now carries some weight in the job profile of marketing graduates. However, the importance of communication skills is even greater, since they are not only to be found in this category, but also, perhaps more indirectly, in those of technical skills—i.e. social media and e-mailing—and conceptual marketing knowledge—i.e. communication strategy/plan, public relations and direct marketing—albeit with lower percentages in this category, except for communication strategy/plan. All this confirms the second initial hypothesis, according to which communication skills occupy a very important place in the job profile of marketing graduates, given their transversal character.

We should not overlook the value that the B2B sector places on the meta-skills category, whose 20 skills were the most sought after by companies (see Graph 3), as can be seen by the fact that they were required 253 times in the sample of job listings as a whole. Meta-skills were followed at a considerable distance by technical skills (180 times) and conceptual marketing knowledge (179 times).

In relation to the third category, conceptual marketing knowledge, the scant importance given to the skills set relating to distribution—i.e. trade marketing and merchandising—should be stressed, in contrast to the value placed on the digital environment, represented by digital marketing, ad campaigns, affiliate marketing and e-mailing, among others.

If scant importance was given to distribution, this was not the case with selling, which was well-represented by skills such as business management, customer management and selling per se, accounting for 18.5 per cent of the total.

Table 3 shows the skills set required of B2B marketing professionals comparatively with the results obtained by García and Echegaray (2019) as regards the mass consumer market. The results reveal a number of interesting aspects.

The B2B sector has a greater interest in meta-skills than its B2C counterpart, in light of the skills required by the latter, plus others like teamwork and oral communication.

Unlike its B2C counterpart, the B2B sector downplays the importance of skills relating to conceptual marketing knowledge, including only two of them in the ‘top 10’.

Likewise, similarities in the technical skills required can be observed in both markets, each sharing four. This means that the skills making up this category would be the most sought after by companies operating in both markets.

Table 3. Comparison between the skills profiles of the B2C and B2B sectors. The 10 most sought-after skills by order of importance

B2C		B2B	
English	M	English	M
Social media	T	Written communication	M
Marketing plan	C	Social media	T
SEO/SEM	T	Digital marketing	C
Digital marketing	C	MS Office	T
MS Office	T	Teamwork	M
Ad campaigns	C	SEO/SEM	T
Written communication	M	Oral communication	M
Google Analytics	T	Ad campaigns	C
Specific knowledge of the sector	C	E-mailing	T

M = meta-skills; T= technical skills; C = conceptual marketing knowledge

Source: own elaboration on the basis of García and Echegaray (2019)

Another of the aspects that we have addressed in this study has to do with the experience/salary correlation, which can be summed up by two significant facts.

First and foremost, that 39.6 per cent of the B2B job vacancies for marketing graduates posted on Spain’s four leading job portals required a year of experience (see Table 2) represents an important market share easily accessible to those fresh out of university, who have very little job experience. This means that the barriers to the labour market for these graduates can be overcome, which largely disproves the old cliché about the need for plenty of experience to obtain a job.

Secondly, we have been able to observe a direct experience/salary correlation, for those listings requiring more experience also offered the highest salaries. Thus, 100 per cent of the job listings requiring five or more years of experience carried salaries in the two highest wage brackets, namely, €21,000-30,000 and €31,000-45,000. None of the listings requiring this amount of experience offered salaries lower than €21,000. All considered, the third research hypothesis, according to which the greater the job experience, the higher the salary, has also been substantiated.

Nonetheless, our study has a number of limitations. The first is the fact that the literature on the object of study is still thin on the ground. Additionally, given the growing importance of social

media, we believe that it would be convenient to analyse the phenomenon precisely from this perspective for the purpose of obtaining more comprehensive results.

On the other hand, we detected significant differences between the salaries offered in the listings posted on the job portals analysed here and those appearing in the reports of the leading consultancy firms in the field of human resources throughout the study time frame. Needless to say, it would be interesting to analyse this discrepancy, which is an even more attractive prospect considering that most online job listings come from human resources consultancy firms.

The study that we have performed here on the B2B sector has allowed us to gain further insights into the competency requirements in this specific case, an aspect that has not been analysed to date, describing their differences and similarities to those required in the B2C sector. Our contribution may help to improve the training and education of those marketing professionals aiming to pursue a career in this sector. Similarly, it may also contribute to improve the training and education provided by those universities and business schools that decide to include a B2B marketing module in their study programmes, thus leading to a differentiation between specialities: one aimed at the mass consumer market and the other at the industrial sector, in this case B2B.

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