



INSIGHTS IN ADVERTISING Usefulness and future in Spanish advertising agencies

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ABSTRACT

This research clarifies the concept of “insight”, by compiling the definitions given so far and helping to define it, differentiating it from other similar concepts, and observing the future of this tool in the advertising profession. The methodology followed is qualitative, with a detailed literature review on the subject and a Delphi Panel with 20 professionals from the advertising sector, experts in strategic planning, providing relevant data on the object of study. The results show the complexity of the term when defining and using it in different Spanish advertising agencies, despite its importance. A new definition is also proposed that enriches the study. Additionally, the research shows the differing opinions among the respondents regarding the future of insight as a tool, with some experts believing it will remain just as relevant, others suggesting that the way it is used will change, and still others predicting it will disappear.

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1. Introduction

The main objective of this work is to delimit the concept of “insight”, compiling the information that exists on the subject, including definitions, similar concepts, types, perspectives... elaborating our own definition and contrasting it with the opinion of selected experts in strategic planning.

The aim is to contrast the information gathered in the literature review with that collected in the expert panel, to strengthen the research and have a more comprehensive view on insight, its role in the day-to-day operations of agencies, and its future in the profession.

This research gathers the expert opinion of 20 professionals in strategic planning in Spain on each of the reviewed questions, in order to understand from their point of view and from the reality of their work what an insight is for them and other issues surrounding the term.

This term, seemingly straightforward, is used every day in advertising agencies, it's a frequently used term among advertisers, and it's studied in universities, yet it remains difficult to define, as it's not common to find two people who explain it in the same way; others even confuse it with similar concepts. This study delves into the available literature to compile and observe the different definitions that have been given for insight, ultimately extracting our own.

2. Referential Framework

2.1. What is an Insight?

The term insight originates from psychology, and many authors have provided their definitions in this field. In fact, there are numerous paths to connect with the target up to the moment of insight, and this often does not imply that it is poorly defined, but rather that not everyone is stimulated by the same things. That is, individuals may vary their inclinations and problem-solving abilities, leading them to identify solutions differently. If empirical studies verify that insight is the creation of a new network in the consumer's mind, we will have reached the verification stage of our own insight (Schilling, 2005).

However, focusing on the field of advertising and marketing, a variety of definitions from authors and industry professionals have been reviewed. Despite the differences, two main terms have emerged that professionals use to describe an insight: truth and motivation. Tables 1 and 2 use these two terms to classify the definitions into two groups, although, as can be seen, the underlying idea remains consistent across all of them.

Table 1. Definitions where insight is described as a truth

<i>Insight = truth</i>
Term in the English language used to denote any truth about the consumer whose inclusion in an advertising message enhances its notoriety, authenticity, relevance, and persuasiveness in the eyes of said consumer (López, 2007).
For the Leo Burnett agency: they are the perceptions, images, experiences, and subjective truths that the consumer associates with a type of product, with a specific brand, or with their consumption situation. They are a mixture of rational and unconscious components, real and imagined, lived and projected, which are often deeply rooted in the consumer's affective components (López, 2007).
A universal truth that the consumer does not verbalize, but with which they do identify (Sebastián et al., 2020b).
An <i>insight</i> is a truth about a constantly changing perception; it's an elegantly distilled revelation. It captures a deep understanding of what is really happening. It's knowledge that scratches beneath the surface of the what in search of the why. It reveals a truth that we instantly recognize but hadn't seen until that moment. Jeremy Bullmore summarizes it quite fondly as: an <i>insight</i> is like a refrigerator because the moment you look inside, the light turns on (Sebastián et al., 2020b).
Revealing truths and/or subjective experiences of the consumer that are relevant to them, based on deep motivations. When employed in persuasive communication, they reinforce the bond between the brand and the consumer, connecting with them on a personal level (Castelló y Pino, 2019).
A universal, internal, absolute truth shared by a group of individuals. It's an underlying experience that explains how the consumer thinks, feels, or acts, serving as a catalyst for creativity and

innovation in communication. It connects with people's reality, generating empathy and dialogue with them, and mobilizing them (Castelló & Pino, 2019).
Fresh and revealing human truths that generate opportunities for innovation, branding, and actionable communication for companies (Quiñones, 2013).
David Halter: "I'd say that an <i>insight</i> is a disturbing truth that changes how we see things and sheds a new light on a product, a category, etc." (Swift, 2020).
Bridget Angear: "An unspoken truth that sheds new light on the problem. I think we probably got it from somewhere else so won't claim it but it helps us push for new, interesting ways to unlock a problem" (Swift, 2020).
Revealing truths and/or subjective experiences of the consumer that are relevant to them, when employed in persuasive communication, they reinforce the bond between brand and consumer, connecting with them on a personal level. These are non-evident experiences that explain how the consumer thinks, feels, or acts (Castelló & Pino, 2019).
Héctor Saracho defines it as: knowledge of a clear and profound universal human truth that connects with the key audience (Sánchez, 2019).
Human truths and delving into what is felt but not said (Insights, 2018).

Source: Own elaboration based on the indicated references, 2024.

Table 2. Definitions where insight is described as a motivation.

<i>Insights</i> are the true motivations that drive us to buy something as consumers. (...) In sensory marketing, it's widely used to truly understand why customers buy and what are the primary reasons that make them feel good, which even influence the way consumers think or act. The good thing about knowing them is that they generate opportunities for new products, strategies, and communication when the company is aware of them, although this is not always the case (Misiego & Morena, 2015).
An <i>insight</i> is a consumer motivation that drives them in a compelling way because it is a part of them. Our dreams, our fears, and our desires sneak into our purchasing and consumption decisions without us realizing it (Casabayó & Martín, 2010).
An <i>insight</i> is a deep motivation of the consumer that has a great mobilization capacity. <i>Insights</i> are profound motivations that connect with consumers as individuals. Additionally, they create points of contact, relevant links between a brand and the consumer (Ayestarán et al., 2012).
Solana defines <i>insights</i> as needs, psychological motivations, social attitudes, or behavior patterns that serve as the basis or lever to elicit a purchase decision from our target audience (Castelló & Pino, 2019).

Source: Own elaboration based on the indicated references, 2024.

All these definitions given by authors who know and study the advertising sector lead to questioning when insight really began to have such an impact, or rather, what made them think it was so important. Hackley (2003) explains that there was a need for a person within the agency to be the voice of the consumer, as it was necessary to have a more thorough understanding of them. The problem lay in how to get the account teams to take on that work and implement it effectively. Gradually, it was integrated into the entire advertising process, and today, advertising agencies frequently seek insight to solve advertising problems. However, not all insights are the same, as some experts believe not all are of high quality; to be good, they must include certain attributes of originality, relatability, utility, and vision (Parker et al., 2018).

This is why many other authors define insight without talking about truth or motivation (as observed in the previous definitions), although many similarities can be seen, as they also speak of the connection with the consumer, relevance, experience, feeling, or inspiration. Linares is one who speaks of connection when defining an insight: a true and relevant experience for the consumer. Insights aim to connect with the deepest part of the consumer, always considering them as a person (Ayestarán et al. 2012).

One of the experts surveyed by Sebastián et al. (2020b) considers insight as something that makes the viewer think, "What a truth!", it's a positive or negative feeling that connects with a reality of people. Some authors talk about insights in relation to the connection they have with brands. Martínez (2011) defines insight as a kind of attitude or belief that dwells in the minds of consumers regarding a brand, product, or service and adds that it's a vision that the consumer has about a brand, structured on

cognitive and emotional elements, containing conscious and unconscious aspects, and determining consumer behavior towards it.

Blackwell et al. (2006) define insight as knowledge of consumers' expressed or tacit needs and realities, which affect the decisions they make about life, brands, and products. It's a combination of facts (consumer or sales data) with intuition, resulting in an insight that can lead to a new product, innovation, or new communication plan.

Swift (2020) considers an insight as a new way of seeing a situation, without forgetting that it has to be something where your brand has legitimacy to speak about it. Not all insights lead to an idea, and he clarifies that the idea must arise from the insight and solve it, which is not the same as showing it. Cuesta (2012) states that an insight is a fresh and non-obvious understanding of the beliefs, values, habits, desires, motives, emotions, or needs of the customer that can become the basis for a competitive advantage (p. 46). For Vázquez, an insight is a *déjà vu*, in the sense that it puts the consumer in front of something they already knew (Álvarez, 2012). This understanding of insight is also similar to what was proposed at the beginning of this section: a familiar surprise.

Borrowing Lisa Fortini's example, an insight is the Sweet Spot of consumers, that place in the minds of consumers where a connection is made between a consumer insight and a brand insight (Fortini, 1992). Some professionals also refer to insight as a tension (Sebastián et al., 2020b).

The analysis in this section demonstrates the importance that insight hold today within advertising agencies, as they provide indisputable value when designing communication strategies to connect with the target audience. Castelló-Martínez (2019), corroborates this: consumer research is the foundation in defining persuasive communication strategies that serve communicative objectives and include a surprising and memorable creative concept for the target audience, for example, using insight.

This is why insight is a key strategic resource for connecting with the consumer. It is a human truth, as many experts have noted, that contains an inherent tension that a brand, through its attributes, benefits, etc., can resolve. Research conducted by some authors revealed that providing insight generated more emotional than functional appeal, especially when a strong insight was provided. It is not the same to work with a strong insight, a weak one, or an unprepared one (Parker et al., 2021).

Other studies go further and highlight that insight is a creative element to be considered in branded content strategies and an essential element in 21st-century creative strategies (Llorente-Barroso et al., 2022).

Despite decades of study, experts still have doubts about the process and understanding of insight—that mechanism by which a person experiences that "Aha!" moment. However, the conclusion reached by most experts is that insight is a truth, experience, motivation, illusion, need, fear, etc., that are important to the target audience and strengthen the bond between the brand and the consumer.

Once the concept of insight is defined, different classifications offered by various authors can be found, including strategic and tactical insights (Castelló & Pino, 2019), consumer and product insight, and emotional and cultural insights (AEA & Scopen, 2018;2019). Active and human insights as well as passive and external insights are also identified (Sebastián et al., 2020a). Therefore, many professionals are reluctant to provide a classification of insights, as they consider it would be an oversimplification of reality (Castelló & Pino, 2019; Sebastián et al., 2020b).

Most authors affirm that if a brand is supported by a good insight, regardless of its type, it achieves greater visibility for the consumer. Agreeing on these aspects and knowing what is important, the next question we would ask is, what is not an insight?

2.2 What is not an insight?

Many professionals agree that in the last ten years it has been a term widely used in advertising agencies as one of the most common tools for planners. But before being called insight, as seen in the previous section, it may have been called other names such as universal truth, finding, consumer truth, desires, motivations, or needs (Sebastián et al., 2020b). Today it is often confused with other terms also used in marketing and advertising (Álvarez, 2012), such as: positioning, benefit, reason why, slogan or claim, tagline, data, observation, consumer desire, purchase motivation, purpose, values, personality, experience principles, trend or fashion.

Álvarez (2012) also mentions other concepts that he considers can be confused with insight, such as the creative concept, creative execution, or storytelling. Other authors like Cuesta (2012, p.50) explain what they believe should not be considered an insight:

- It's not a behavior, what is done, but why it's done.
- It's not the justification for a product benefit.
- It's not merely descriptive.
- It's not a passing fad; they endure over time.
- It's not exclusive to a brand. The success of communication not only lies in the proper identification of the consumer insight but also in combining an attractive brand offering and a relevant and differential combination.

Quiñones (Insights, 2018) also distinguishes insight from oversight: what people do but don't always tell, and foresight: tomorrow's trends that we don't always see today.

2.3 Relevance and Future of Insights in Advertising

Insights hold significant value in advertising. Agencies must observe data, distill information, and extract these *insights*, which are valuable and exclusive, allowing creativity to be driven in the right direction (San Román, 2018) and enabling the design of appropriate marketing strategies (Martínez, 2011).

The primary value that *insights* bring, according to many experts, is the opportunity they provide brands to connect with their consumers. For example, Roberts (2004) explains that achieving a deeper connection with the consumer is done by considering the strength and value of *insights*. He considers them to be what helps to learn about the consumer and their inner life (Roberts, 2004). An *insight* helps us understand the new values and priorities that the individual is developing regarding material things (Sánchez, 2019). According to Cristina Kenz (Reason Why, 2019), Vice President of Marketing at Danone for Southern Europe and President of the Efficacy Jury 2019, *Insights* are the kings of the food chain. With a good *insight*, the strategy shines, creativity sharpens, and a campaign can multiply its effectiveness. She also reflects on the leap made in obtaining data and *insights* through research and segmentation, which is reflected in a tailored media plan and messages impacting communication ROI and the effectiveness of pieces (IPMARK, 2019).

Finding that connection with consumers allows for the creation of innovative communication strategies compared to the competition and more relevant to the consumer. This is supported by several authors such as Quiñones (2013), as he mentions that an *insight* not only helps to sell but also to connect with people, helping to innovate, position brands, or communicate based on offering emotional meaning with more value than a simple product. For Ayestarán et al. (2012), Working with *insights* enhances the strategic process because it allows us to find new solutions to the challenges posed by brands, thus avoiding using strategies already used by the competition. Cuesta (2012) also talks about innovation and mentions that a strong *insight* can help a brand establish a relationship with its target audience and connect with them, helping to propose new solutions that revolutionize the market.

But one of the main virtues of *insight* is its ability to lead to action when used correctly in a strategy and, therefore, to help achieve more effective advertising. Sánchez (2019) states that *insight* helps achieve that group of people who identify with it to empathize with the brand, listen to it, understand the message, and if it achieves its goal, it will lead them to action. Castelló & Pino (2019) speak of effectiveness and express that strategies based on *insights* help brands to attract, connect, retain, and build consumer loyalty through relevant, original, memorable, and affective communication, as *insights* are an important source of inspiration that helps effectiveness in creating persuasive communication.

What does the future hold for *insights*? Today, they are undoubtedly valuable for making relevant communication, but some experts consider the term somewhat overrated because good communication actions can be carried out that are not based on *insights*, and it should not be overlooked that the product or service must be useful to the consumer. Nonetheless, research on *insights* will be complemented by new techniques such as neuromarketing that help validate the effectiveness of their use in communication (Castelló & Pino, 2019).

Some opine that *insight* is becoming just another tool amidst all those that are beginning to be available in the profession and helping to provide a more comprehensive view of audiences and how they behave: data analytics, user experience mappings, consumer journeys, anthropological studies... (Sánchez, 2019). It seems that, being such a subjective term, not only is its definition complex, but there are also diverse opinions about its value and use, as well as the future that awaits this tool.

This is why some authors explain that the term *insight*, being linked to planning, will also be uncertain for the future, as planning itself is an uncertain discipline. As agencies innovate with new functional

roles aimed at unlocking consumer perceptions and creative opportunities within the digital advertising environment, it will bring about a change in the entire process (Beede, 2020).

3. Objectives and Methodology

3.1. Objectives

For this study, the following objectives have been established:

- Clarify the definition of *insight*. The aim is to help define the term through an initial compilation of the definitions given so far, as well as to establish the differences between what is and what is not an *insight*, and what experts in the field think about it.
- Observe how *insight* is used in advertising agencies. The goal is to examine how *insight* is used in the day-to-day operations of the advertising industry through the perspective of those who work with it: the planners.
- Understand the possibilities that *insights* have in the future according to industry professionals.

To this end, the research aims to answer the following research questions:

To achieve these objectives, this article aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is an *insight*?

RQ2: What importance and use does *insight* have in advertising agencies?

RQ3: What future does *insight* have in advertising campaigns?

3.2 Metodology

Given the characteristics of the study, the Delphi panel has been considered the most appropriate method for extracting conclusions about what concerns this research, as it allows maintaining the anonymity of participants, controlling interactions, and delimiting the study in time (Cabero & Infante, 2014). This method has allowed for collecting group judgment through rounds of questions without one person's opinion influencing others, and at the same time, it has allowed for obtaining consensus on the issues raised.

A total of 20 experts in the advertising sector have been included since it is an adequate number to conduct thorough research and obtain reliable results (Delbecq et al., 1975; Gordon, 1994; López, 2018; Ludwig, 1997). Since the selection of experts is a decisive phase for the quality of the results, the selection has been assessed based on background and professional experience on the topic, effective communication skills, and availability and commitment to collaborate (Hsu and Sandford, 2007; López, 2018; Luna et al., 2006). Under these criteria, directors of strategic planning who work or have worked in Spanish advertising agencies with a experience between 5 and 10 years have been selected. Their experience, knowledge of the topic, prestige in the sector, and willingness to collaborate in the study have been considered.

Regarding the questionnaires, it has been decided to conduct two waves, as it can be considered sufficient to achieve consistency among the opinions of the group (Luna et al., 2006), avoiding prolonging the process and risking that some panelists abandon due to the high time involvement (López, 2018). Regarding the type of questions, the recommendation of the experts has been followed: A first wave with more open questions, so that the obtained information is richer.

A second wave, based on an analysis of the responses from the first wave, in which the questions are more closed, multiple-choice, or alternative, favoring the possibility of ranking or comparing to improve the quality of the results (Hsu and Sandford, 2007; López, 2018; Luna et al., 2006; San Eugenio et al., 2013). In Table 3, the topics addressed in the questionnaire and their connection with the research questions are shown.

Table 3. Correlation between Research Questions and Questionnaire Topics

Research Questions	Questionnaire guide
What is an <i>insight</i> ? (RQ1)	How would you define an <i>insight</i> ? Do you believe there are different types of <i>insights</i> ? Could you provide an example of each? What characteristics would you say an <i>insight</i> should have? And what would you say is NOT an <i>insight</i> ?
What importance and usage do <i>insight</i> have in advertising agencies? (RQ2)	What evolution have you observed in the use of the term <i>insight</i> in advertising in recent years? Does it have the same prominence now as when you started working in the industry? In your team, how much importance is given to <i>insight</i> from different departments? When any of these departments talk about <i>insight</i> , do you think they usually use the term correctly or confuse it with others?
What future does <i>insight</i> have in advertising campaigns? (RQ3)	What do you think the future holds for <i>insights</i> ? Today, <i>insight</i> holds great relevance and value in advertising, but would you say it's sufficient? Should we go further?

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

4. Analysis of Results

Below are the results obtained in the two waves of questionnaires, following the order of the questions posed to the experts.

4.1. How would you define an *insight*?

Upon reviewing the definitions provided by each of the respondents, many common points have been identified. Firstly, as reflected in Table 4, the majority refer to *insight* as a truth, similarly to what has been observed in previous studies already reviewed. In some cases, they also add that it is a universal truth or one shared with a broad community of people, a nuance that seems relevant to highlight.

Table 4. Definitions provided by respondents where *insight* is described as a truth.

<i>Insight</i> = Truth
It's a truth with which the target audience identifies, but it's not obvious, and it makes you think... "damn, how did they come up with that" or... "it's true, that's happened to me too" (Expert 16).
A consumer truth that's there but not everyone has seen (Expert 12).
A revelation, a truth that helps you see things differently, from another perspective you hadn't considered, the understanding of why people do what they do or why people say what they say (Expert 1).
An <i>insight</i> is a relevant truth about the consumer that hasn't been exploited yet (Expert 1).
A clear finding that reveals the truth about a behavior or cultural situation, for example. In business terms, it leads you to consumer habits or trends (Expert 20).
A collective and intangible truth derived from the way people think, feel, or act (Expert 7).
Universal truths for the target audience capable of becoming creative and innovative ideas (Expert 17).
It's a profound truth, based on very human learning. It's not an observation or a conclusion; it's something that goes beyond (Expert 10).
Like a revealed truth, shared by the target audience, not necessarily evident, which is insightful and reveals an explanation of why the target audience does what it does, thinks what it thinks, or says what it says (Expert 15).
A social, cultural, product, or category truth that helps reflect on or question something (Expert 18).
A consensual truth, a daily social agreement about a phenomenon (Expert 5).

A universal and recognizable truth that has the power to unite people (Expert 2).
In its purest essence, an <i>insight</i> is a finding, a discovery about human nature (about perception, attitude, or behavior). The way to express it should be like a “revealing truth”, as Mr. Leo Burnett said: An <i>insight</i> is what people didn't know they already knew about themselves ... or as they call it at Stanford University, an <i>insight</i> is “A Familiar Surprise” (Expert 14).

Source: Own elaboration based on responses from experts in the Delphi panel, 2024.

In other cases, *insight* is referred to as a revelation, a surprising reaction to a finding, something that has also been seen in studies reviewed prior to this questionnaire.

Table 5. Definitions provided by respondents where *insight* is described as a revelation.

<i>Insight</i> = Revelation
Something you didn't know you knew, and that you share with a large number of people (Expert 9).
Something you don't know, but you know it as soon as you hear it... and you say... wow! That's true! (Vivek Kuchibhotla, quoted by Expert 11).
Wow, damn, it's true and I've never thought about it like that! (Expert 8).

Source: Own elaboration based on responses from experts in the Delphi panel, 2024.

Finally, some also refer to *insight* as something that explains consumer behavior, why they do what they do, ultimately, what their motivations are.

Table 6. Definitions provided by respondents where *insight* is described as a motivation.

<i>Insight</i> = Motivation
No definition convinces me. It's a device that allows demonstrating knowledge of the consumer, launching it into the creative execution stage (Expert 4).
I always define <i>insight</i> as a “trigger”. It's a phrase that, when you hear it, immediately sparks ideas, approaches, possibilities. I think the best way to define <i>insight</i> is by the effect it has on the creative, the client, or even the consumer. I believe fundamentally it's something that is capable of explaining to you, with a novel and unexpected perspective, the consumer's motivation. That is, the reason <i>why they do what they do</i> (Expert 6).
For me, <i>insight</i> is that fact that deeply makes you understand a behavior of the target or an attitude. But I also believe it's the moment when dots connect and everything makes sense. Sometimes it's talked about in isolation, but I think it also has that role of matching with other things you've seen throughout the research, and you're able to see how everything is interconnected (Expert 3).

Source: Own elaboration based on responses from experts in the Delphi panel, 2024.

It is relevant to note that some definitions mention *insight* in more than one term. For example, several authors describe it not only as a truth but also as a motivation. In the second round of surveys, participants were presented with the definition formulated in this study based on the reviewed sources to determine if they agreed with it or suggested modifications. Here the definition adjusted, considering some comments provided by the experts: An *insight* is an absolute truth about the consumer, something they feel or think consciously or unconsciously, expressed explicitly or not, explaining the reason behind an attitude or behavior. It creates a tension that is resolved in the advertising message innovatively, surprising the consumer, making them feel immediately identified and generating a sensation of “That's so true, I never saw it that way!”. This establishes an emotional connection with the receiver, which can help increase brand preference or consideration, thereby motivating them and achieving greater business effectiveness.

4.2. What evolution have you observed in the use of the term *insight* in advertising in recent years? Did it have the same prominence now as when you started working in the sector?

One of the most recurring responses observed is that the term is indeed used more than before, but in many cases, it is misused, losing its value because everything is called an *insight*. There is confusion about what it really is, and many believe they are constantly discovering *insights* when in reality, they are not, and cannot identify it. The term has become overrated, often turning it into a stereotype, a presentation. Respondents like Expert 20 affirm that *insight* has always been and will be key, but it has become so overused that it has lost its meaning and is confused with data or facts. Expert 7 considers it

a semantic trend in the industry, and Expert 9 agrees with all these statements, saying that it has become a term that has been debased, shifting from being a specific vehicle for specific communication to being a reasoning or justification for a creative idea. Expert 2 asserts that it should be a tool in the process that makes life easier instead of complicating it.

Other respondents also provide different perspectives. Expert 11 comments that as long as people continue to have new motivations, *insights* will be inexhaustible. For Expert 12, connecting with the consumer still holds the same importance, but now *insights* face the challenge of blending well with the context, as there are more touchpoints. Expert 6 has observed that *insights* from data are beginning to be discussed, although from their point of view, they are more findings than *insights* because they do not explain human motivation.

Expert 17 considers that *insight* has always been the great catch-all term in advertising that no one can define exactly, but it is the holy grail of good creativity. And now it is also of innovation. Expert 15 comments that, from their point of view, there is more awareness now compared to 2005. Before, it might have been more known to those directly involved in its use, planners/strategists, and creatives, but now there is much more naturalness, and even professionals working in marketing, but not from advertising, delve into it. In the case of Expert 5, they affirm that *insights* have lost importance, as they have become just another tool for planners because they fall short. Expert 18 comments that *insight* now has a much broader role, not used so much to reflect a daily situation but rather to detect a social or cultural tension in brands and enable them to do something relevant around them.

4.3. How important is insight in your team from different departments?

In general, there is greater consensus in the responses given for the planning and creative departments, with both attaching high or very high importance to *insight*. It has been more challenging to see a consensus on the accounts and client departments because depending on the case, the importance they give to *insight* is either very high or none, so it is not possible to draw a common conclusion in this regard.

4.4. When any of these departments talks about insight, do you think they usually use the term correctly or confuse it with others?

Except for two exceptions, all respondents agree that the term is misused and confused with others regularly. One planner comments that it is used correctly, and another says it is not possible to generalize because it depends on each case, person, and department.

The contribution of Expert 19 on this issue is interesting, as they mention that they usually talk about universal truths, considering that *insights* are rarely found, and it is a term that is used subjectively and often not so. They comment that it is difficult to find an *insight* in every briefing made.

What is relevant to note is that three of the respondents agree that the planner's role, despite the confusion about the term, is to ensure that everyone speaks the same language, explain and argue, and have a common language, which, as Expert 20 affirms, is necessary and uncommon in advertising. Expert 14 identifies the decline in the level of preparation of professionals in both agencies and clients over the last 10 years as one of the reasons why the definition of an *insight* is no longer so clear.

4.5. What characteristics would you say an insight must have?

After reviewing the responses, these are the main characteristics that experts have attributed to *insights*:

- Mobilizing, generating interest.
- Simple, inspiring, empathetic.
- Surprising, revealing, unexpected.
- Shared by the target audience to a large extent.
- A universal truth, an irrefutable fact.
- That the audience identifies with it.
- Explaining an attitude or behavior.
- A hidden truth, deep, very emotional, rooted in the innermost aspects of people or a defined segment.
- Emotionally touching the audience.

- Unique, original.
- Real. It must be true, not what we believe people want.
- Strongly connected to the brand and the product being worked on.
- A tension, something to be solved.
- Timeless.

4.6. And what would you say is NOT an insight?

In general terms, what the experts have most often pointed out as not being an *insight* are:

- A piece of data.
- A fact.
- Something obvious.
- Tangible or quantifiable information, extracted from market research.
- An observation of behavior (instead of the reason behind that behavior).

To a lesser extent, but still relevant, it has been mentioned that an *insight* is not:

- Anything other than a commonplace.
- Conventional.
- Stereotypical or general.
- A description of behavior or custom.
- A description of trivialities and common concepts.
- A consumer quote.
- A quality description.
- Abstract or overly specific information.
- An anecdote.

4.7. What do you think the future of insights will be? Today, insight has great relevance and value in advertising, but would you say it's enough? Should we go further?

Although the responses to these types of questions are diverse and it's difficult to find a consensus, three perspectives on the future of *insights* have been identified: those who believe it will remain the same, those who think it will remain important but will evolve or require changes, and those who believe it's a passing trend or not as important. Below are each of these perspectives:

They will remain the same:

- I don't think it should go further, as for me it is something very human, deep. Consequently, it is something timeless (Expert 10).
- *Insight* will always be highly relevant (Expert 11).
- They will continue to be useful as they are for a long time because it is something as human as life itself (Expert 13).
- It will remain the same for quite some time (Expert 19).
- I believe it is not something that can be eliminated from the creative process, as it is a truth, an anchor to reality. So, even if it is not visible, it is always in that initial reflection, because it is part of thinking. I think it will always be there, and it will even take more shape thanks to data, which are great sources of *insights* if you know how to read them well (Expert 2).
- They will always be necessary; perhaps the word will die, but the need to search for motivations to be relevant will not die (Expert 14).

They are still important, but we need to go a little further, change, or change the way we work with them:

- They cannot disappear from the work table. If we seek to empathize, seduce consumers, we have to show that we know them. Perhaps if the future of consumer economics (including advertising) is left in the hands of mathematical algorithms, the *insight* (which cannot be anything other than qualitative) may be sidelined. That's the way we're going (Expert 4).
- They have to play between the profound-transcendental and the ephemeral-transient, not just staying in the classic first field. Planners must be more agile in observing and guiding (Expert 15).
- We need to go further and train teams in their detection (Expert 17).

- It's no longer enough to emotionally connect with consumers. There's a trend towards social trends and cultural movements that will support the brand (Expert 1).
- It will always be important to have a new and different vision. We must incorporate new data tools so that planners can inform their intuition (Expert 6).
- It is the key, but it always helps to exercise the mind to think and observe (Expert 20).
- They will continue to be valuable as long as they are powerful, current, and accompanied by great creative execution. New forms of behavior and trends will open up new *insights* (Expert 9).
- They will continue to be key to telling good stories, although fewer stories are being told in advertising now. Communication is much bigger now, and *insights* are no longer at the center (Expert 5).
- The *insight* of the future is tensions. I would say we still need to change our mindset to see it that way (Expert 18).

It will pass as a trend or is not as important:

- It's a passing trend; not all campaigns can be so ingenious (Expert 16).
- The important thing is to find good ideas (Expert 8).
- There's a lack of rigor, listening more, being less arrogant about what we think we know about consumers. Changing the way things are done is more important than the *insights* themselves (Expert 3).
- The future of *insights* will depend on industry trends (Expert 7).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Around 30 definitions of *insight* from the reviewed literature have been collected, in addition to the 20 new ones provided by the expert panel surveyed. There are many ways to refer to an *insight*, but the term most used to describe an *insight* is as a truth, followed by a motivation and a revelation.

On the other hand, characteristics of an *insight*, what it is not, and the terms with which it is often confused have been gathered from both the reviewed literature and the surveyed experts. In conclusion, all these terms are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Characteristics, what it is not, and terms with which *insight* is often confused.

Characteristics of an <i>insight</i>	What is not an <i>insight</i>	Terms confused with <i>insight</i>
Close Simple Familiar Innovative Universal Useful Authentic Relevant Strategic Lasting Time-flexible Mobilizing Revealing Original True Unexpected Surprising Inspiring	Behavior Descriptive Passing trend Exclusive to a brand Fact Something obvious Tangible information Observation Conventional Stereotype Description of quality Justification of a product benefit	Positioning Benefit Reason why Slogan Claim Tagline Data Observation Consumer desire or confession Purchase motivation Purpose Values Personality Motto Experience principles Trend Fashion

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

During this extensive review of the meaning of the term and its boundaries, it has been observed that some authors establish different typologies of *insights*. Up to ten different classifications have been collected throughout the study, without obtaining a consensus among the surveyed professionals. After all the reviewed information, a self-provided definition has been contributed to this study, reflected in

figure 1, which, along with all the studied material, addresses the first research question: What is an *insight*?

Figure 1. Definition of *insight* provided in this research.

An insight is an absolute truth about the consumer, something they feel or think consciously or unconsciously, expressed explicitly or not, explaining the reason behind an attitude or behavior. It creates tension that is resolved in the advertising message in an innovative way, surprising the consumer, making them immediately identify with it and generating a feeling of "That's so true, I've never seen it that way before!". This establishes an emotional connection with the recipient, which can help increase brand preference or consideration and, thus, mobilize them and achieve greater effectiveness in business terms.

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

This extensive investigation has achieved its first objective: defining the concept of *insight* by gathering information from various sources, including definitions, similar concepts, types, perspectives, and developing a proprietary definition. This definition was then contrasted with the opinions of 20 experts in strategic planning. The collection of over forty definitions highlights the challenge in defining this term and reaching a consensus. However, despite the diversity in definitions, no contradictions were found. This indicates a common underlying understanding of *insight* among authors and professionals, even though they may express it differently. Nonetheless, there appears to be a lack of clarity in its usage, as noted by the respondents who stated that the term is often misused and confused with other concepts.

Regarding the existence of different types of *insights*, while the literature suggests their presence, the study found difficulty in reaching a consensus among the experts. Not only did they fail to provide a uniform classification, but many also argued against the notion of distinct types of *insight*, suggesting that such classification might not be necessary or feasible. Some experts emphasized the dynamic and subjective nature of the advertising field, suggesting that not all aspects can be strictly defined and classified.

The second objective, concerning the use of *insight* in advertising agencies, was addressed through the responses of the experts. While the majority indicated that *insights* are not properly utilized and often confused with other terms, some acknowledged the diversity in practices among agencies, individuals, and departments, making it challenging to generalize about their use.

Finally, the third objective, exploring the future of *insights*, revealed diverse perspectives among the respondents, ranging from continuity to obsolescence. These opinions were consistent with findings from the theoretical framework of the study, indicating that *insights* may continue to play a fundamental role in campaigns or evolve as an integral tool.

As for the study's limitations, while the sample size was rigorous and the conclusions drawn were valuable, the diverse and subjective nature of responses made it difficult to generalize findings. Therefore, achieving consensus on many issues was challenging due to the varied situations present in the advertising sector, as explained by the respondents.

For future research, expanding the panel to include experts from other departments such as accounts, creativity, and advertisers would provide a more comprehensive understanding of *insights* and their significance. Additionally, conducting this research in advertising agencies across Ibero-America could offer *insights* into regional differences, if any, in the perception and utilization of *insights*.

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