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GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL CONCEPT: TRACEABILITY IN THE AUDIOVISUAL CREATIVITY OF ADVERTISING STUDENTS

Jesús López-González [1]: Abat Oliba CEU University, CEU Universities, Spain.
jlopezgo@uao.es

Alfonso Freire-Sánchez [2]: Abat Oliba CEU University, CEU Universities, Spain.
freire3@uao.es

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[1] **Jesús López-González:** Doctor of Humanities, director of studies in Marketing and Commercial Management at the CEU Abat Oliba University, accredited as a reader by ANECA, with six years of research and award for the best research article by the Film Academy and Flix-Olé.

[2] **Alfonso Freire- Sánchez:** Doctor of Communication, Head of Department at Abat Oliba CEU University; he is certified as a full professor by ANECA and as an associate professor by AQU, with a six-year research term and awarded the prize for best research article by the Film Academy and Flix-Olé.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The inclusion of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) into creative education has encouraged an analytical confusion between the current use of these tools and the broader presence of formats and aesthetics drawn from digital concepts. **Objective:** To distinguish between formats and aesthetics, and to examine their relationship to the use of references, creative autonomy, and faculty evaluation. Methodology: A qualitative, retrospective, and longitudinal case study was conducted on 16 projects completed by first-year Advertising and Public Relations students over the course of three academic years. A matrix of 12 categories was designed, four tabular records were reviewed, and two complete assignments were analyzed. The findings were interpreted descriptively. Results: Although the faculty members were unable to determine what type of generative tool was used or at what stage, the results show that the digital concept plays a central role in 14 of the 16 cases. Nine projects repeated recognizable formulas, six reformulated their references, and one proposed an innovative solution. The seven cases of reformulation or innovation received an "excellent" rating, while the nine cases of repetition ranged from "good" to "passing." Discussion: The appearance of the final product is not sufficient to prove the use of AI; however, the debate should focus on creative distinction and the ability to explain and present their work. Conclusions: It is proposed that, to increase algorithmic literacy in advertising, process traceability, a declaration of tools used, and an evaluation capable of distinguishing between technological use and creative judgment should be incorporated.

***Keywords*:** generative artificial intelligence, higher education, creativity, advertising, digital concepts, artificial intelligence literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Does the problem start before the prompt?

A significant part of the university debate on generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tends to frame its integration as a binary opposition: working with artificial intelligence or without it. This distinction, however, is insufficient for analyzing students' creative processes because it focuses on the presence of a specific tool rather than on the sequence of decisions through which a project is developed.

Research on creativity has shown that the generation of an idea or creative concept develops iteratively through operations such as problem definition, searching for and combining knowledge and references, suggesting alternatives, and then evaluating, selecting, and executing them (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). From an advertising perspective, creativity can also be understood as an activity distributed among individuals, teams, documents, and elements that intervene and acquire different functions throughout the process (Anjo & Tureta, 2022). More specifically, in the field of advertising and audiovisual creation, this perspective necessitates considering mediations that appear before, during, and after interaction with a generative tool. Among these is the briefing, understood in this study as the strategic assignment that defines the communication problem and provides the creative team with objectives,

target audiences, requirements, and constraints from which to begin working (Freire Sánchez, 2017). In advertising, this function allows the strategy to be translated into guidelines for subsequent creative development (Storey & Smit, 2007). Brainstorming also plays a role, understood as a phase or technique of divergent ideation through which team members generate and relate possible solutions before proceeding to their evaluation and selection (Freire Sánchez, 2017). Added to these elements are previous audiovisual references, negotiation among team members, technical and time constraints, the possibilities and conventions of the platforms used, and the production and editing tools.

Within this framework, the research analyzes the intensive integration of GAI in advertising training and, specifically, in the production of audiovisual works through three related dimensions: the traceability of generative mediation, understood as the degree to which the intervention of AI in the process can be documented; the observable digital imaginary, referring to the presence and reworking of visual, narrative, and cultural repertoires linked to the digital environment; and transformative autonomy, understood as the team's capacity to select, reject, combine, and modify its materials according to its own intentions. These three levels make it possible to analyze the extent to which GAI plays a role and how it relates to the development of ideas, the choice of theme, narrative coherence, originality, and creative decisions in the projects.

1.2. Creativity and Co-Creation

To understand the structure introduced above, it is relevant to begin with the concept of creativity as defined by Boden (1998) as the ability to generate new, valuable, and surprising ideas within a space of possibilities that can also be explored or transformed. Students can use or adapt a reference to give it a different intention, or modify the rules that determined its original functioning. Wahl et al. (2022) and Nah et al. (2023) place this relationship in the field of human-machine collaboration, insofar as the tool provides search, combination or answer, while the subject retains the responsibility to select, discard, justify and guide.

Recent research on university students shows a predominantly instrumental use of GIA (Alexeeva-Alexeev & Comesaña-Comesaña, 2025; Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2025; Chan & Hu, 2023; Ortega Rodríguez & Pericacho Gómez, 2025), concentrated on tasks involving ideation, organization, explanation, or writing support. There are also concerns about reliability, authorship, and dependency, since an immediate response can resolve a brief, but it can also provide a solution before the student has clearly formulated the problem they want to solve. On the other hand, individual benefits do not guarantee collective diversity, as Doshi and Hauser (2024) argue, for whom the use of GAI can improve the perceived quality of some stories, but can also reduce the diversity of the whole, since the generated content comes from similar sources, imaginaries and audiovisual references.

This paradox directly affects advertising education, which, in conjunction with other professions in the sector, has always benefited from the teamwork inherent in advertising agencies, event organization, and protocol. In this sense, the effectiveness

of a proposal is insufficient if several assignments converge on the same aesthetic, tone, and conceptual framework. Therefore, pedagogical criteria must consider both the quality of each individual result and the range of approaches the group is capable of developing.

1.3. Digital Concept and Platform Grammars

Regarding the digital concept, Mager and Katzenbach (2020) describe it as a space where technologies, expectations, interests, and promises are produced and contested. Formal resources also allow us to anticipate which content may be current, readable, and shareable according to prevailing trends. As Manovich (2013) points out, software shapes the possibilities for content production, selection, and editing. Scolari (2018), in turn, states that every interface enables some actions and makes others less visible. Applied to audiovisual practice, this framework allows for an understanding of why students adopt solutions from social networks, even when they do not use GAI. Therefore, and in accordance with Cupido Navarro and Suárez Lantarón (2022) and their recognition of social media as an integral part of the university student's academic experience, a comparative injustice arises from the normalization of social media use versus the anomaly of AI.

1.4. Algorithmic Literacy and Traceability

Artificial intelligence literacy cannot be reduced to the instrumental mastery of tools or the ability to formulate effective instructions. Long and Magerko (2020) define it as a set of competencies necessary to critically evaluate AI systems, interact and collaborate with them, and use them appropriately in different contexts. Along similar lines, Ng et al. (2021) distinguish four complementary dimensions: knowing and understanding AI, using and applying it, evaluating and creating with it, and recognizing its ethical implications. From this perspective, prompt management is only one of the competencies involved: literacy also requires recognizing the system's limitations, critically assessing its results and biases, and understanding the consequences of incorporating its responses into academic or professional practice.

In this study, this literacy is linked to the traceability of the creative process. The concept of traceability generally refers to the preservation of sufficient information to reconstruct processes and decisions and subsequently relate them to the results obtained. The OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2024) explicitly links traceability with accountability and highlights the need to document relevant data, processes, and decisions to enable subsequent analysis of an AI system's responses. Explainability and traceability refer to different aspects, since the former provides insight into why an algorithmic system has produced a particular result, while the latter involves preserving the evidence necessary to reconstruct the process that led to that result.

In a creative school subject, this literacy also requires reconstructing the chain of decisions, such as what problem arises, what tool intervenes, what choices are accepted and which are rejected, and what transformations the team makes. The final appearance of an audiovisual assignment does not demonstrate what system was

used or with what intensity, nor does it allow one to distinguish between a generated image, an archive image, a manual composition, or an aesthetic learned from platforms.

Based on this unique characteristic not reflected in previous literature, this study analyzes the intensive use of GAI in advertising training and its specific application in audiovisual projects at three levels: documented generative mediation, the observable digital concepts, and the autonomy with which the team transforms its materials. In this analysis, the aim is to examine how these repertoires influence the way ideas take shape, the choice of subject matter, narrative coherence, originality, and creative decisions in audiovisual practices. The answer is constructed from a corpus of 16 projects carried out over three academic years in an introductory course of the Advertising and Public Relations degree. The study's contribution lies in offering a framework for evaluating the degree of critical appropriation that students demonstrate when transforming digital references generated by GAI into audiovisual narratives and projects.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. General Objective and Specific Objectives

The overall objective is to analyze, from a traceability criterion, how the documented use of GAI, the presence of the digital imaginary and creative autonomy are articulated in 16 first-year audiovisual projects of Advertising and Public Relations and of the double degree in Advertising and PR with Journalism.

This objective gives rise to four specific goals. The first distinguishes between evidence that allows for attributing the use of GAI and evidence that merely identifies digital repertoires. The second aims to verify whether the digital concepts appear across the projects and how it materializes, through what formats, framing, rhythms, and archival resources. The third seeks to demonstrate the application of GAI through criteria such as digital aesthetics. And the final objective aims to show the degree of originality of the assignment in relation to the intensity of GAI presence in the audiovisual practices carried out by the students.

2.2. Research Questions

RQ1. What evidence allows documenting the use of GAI in projects and in what phases of the process can it be placed?

RQ2. What presence do the repertoires of the digital concepts have and through what operations of repetition, reformulation or innovation are they appropriated?

RQ3. What descriptive associations appear between type of appropriation, creative autonomy, and teacher evaluation?

RQ4. What methodological and pedagogical adjustments arise from the detected traceability limitations?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design and Context

This research adopts a qualitative, retrospective, and comparative case study approach, delimited by an introductory course in the Advertising and Public Relations degree program and by the same type of audiovisual project carried out in three consecutive academic years, first semester (September-December). The case is examined through a temporal comparison between three successive cohorts, which serve as units of contrast within a common teaching context. This strategy allows for the observation of continuities and variations between courses without assuming a longitudinal design of following the same students. The methodology used is similar to directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012), which starts from theoretical categories on creativity, digital concepts, and agency or participation in the project, but reviews their adequacy to the concrete evidence and modifies those that cannot be sustained.

The context was a first-year course in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations taught at a Spanish university [3]. The projects were developed during the 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 academic years (all in the first semester, from September to December). They all belong to a comparable audiovisual practice within the same teaching framework and taught during these academic years by the same professors.

3.2. Corpus, Selection and Unit of Analysis

The documentary corpus consists of 16 projects identified as EV1-EV16: six from the 2023-2024 academic year, five from 2024-2025, and five from 2025-2026. The selection is intentional, based on document availability. The presented project corresponds to the final assignment for the Film, Narrative, and Audiovisual Culture academic subject, entitled "Social Project," in the form of an advertisement for a social cause. Students create this project after receiving instruction in the theoretical foundations of filmmaking and advertising. The assignment is carried out through free association among students, with each group consisting of between four and eight participants, accounting for 25% of the course's total grade.

The teaching assignment is based on each group freely choosing a social cause. The aim of the exercise is to accurately reflect this social cause through an audiovisual assignment of no more than three minutes in length. The submission format is .mov or .mp4, and it must adhere to the conceptualization of the literary and technical scripts previously developed during academic tutorials. For the 2025-2026 academic year, the assignment focused on the theme of mental health, and there were no restrictions on duration.

[3] The name of the University where the study was conducted has been omitted to ensure the anonymity of the manuscript.

Students must create the audiovisual assignment using their mobile phones and, preferably, with the Adobe Premiere Pro editing software. The license for this software is provided by the institution.

The roles played by each student are in line with the team management criteria established by the group itself. The entire process is supervised by the two professors teaching the course through group tutorials held during class hours throughout the project period. The process, from ideation to final presentation, lasts four weeks, occupying the entire second month of classes.

The selection criteria included only completed projects that were recorded in the provided analytical matrices and received an academic grade. Projects that were not submitted, lacked sufficient information, were incomplete in their work and narrative coherence, and were not valid for reconstructing the study's main variables were excluded. The corpus does not represent the entire statistical population of the cohorts and was not selected based on performance; Table 1 below describes the unit of analysis.

Table 1

Description of the Unit of Analysis

Academic Year	Evidence	Duration	Number of Students
2023-2024	EV1	2:04	7 students
2023-2024	EV2	2:41	7 students
2023-2024	EV3	2:51	7 students
2023-2024	EV4	1:20	7 students
2023-2024	EV5	2:36	7 students
2023-2024	EV6	2:51	8 students
2024-2025	EV7	2:40	4 students
2024-2025	EV8	2:48	4 students
2024-2025	EV9	1:35	7 students
2024-2025	EV10	2:54	4 students
2024-2025	EV11	1:12	5 students
2025-2026	EV12	18:28	4 students
2025-2026	EV13	9:38	5 students
2025-2026	EV14	8:18	7 students
2025-2026	EV15	7:41	5 students
2025-2026	EV16	6:09	6 students

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

3.3. Instrument and Operational Definitions

The analysis matrix is inspired by Torrance's divergent thinking (1974) and a recent adaptation to the analysis of creativity assisted by generative images (Gil-Ruiz & Domínguez-Lloria, 2025), it is a book of qualitative codes to describe formal and narrative decisions.

Regarding the documented use of GAI, it is only considered confirmed when there is a team declaration, process file, prompt, metadata, or specific contextual evidence. Digital aesthetics do not count as evidence, since, although obvious in some student

projects, they cannot be proven. The digital concept is encoded from visible repertoires described in the matrices: social networks, YouTube, archives, street interviews, lifestyle content, live broadcasts, filters, and other grammars specific to digital platforms. Table 2 summarizes the 12 categories used.

Table 2

Matrix of Categories, Operational Definitions, and Minimum Evidence

Category	Operational Definition	Core Values	Minimal Evidence
C1. Role of the digital concept	Presence and degree of centrality of digital resources in the construction of the audiovisual assignment.	Central, complementary, unused.	Identification of digital and integrated references and analysis of the making process.
C2. Digital references used	Types of formats, sources or digital resources used as a reference or audiovisual production material.	Social media videos, social media interviews, YouTube, digital archive, audiovisual composition, reports, lifestyle, filters, others.	Identification of resources, formats and sources present in the audiovisual project.
C3. Thematic selection	Main theme of the assignment.	Open category.	Synopsis, audiovisual content and project description.
C4. Formal treatment and audiovisual language and AI	The way in which digital and GAI references are incorporated and transformed within audiovisual development.	Conventional, more innovative, innovative.	Shots, editing, visual structure, image processing, and audiovisual resources.
C5. Type of appropriation of the digital repertoire	Degree of transformation of the digital references used in the final project.	Repetition, reformulation, innovation.	Comparison between the digital models used and the final result obtained.
C6. Discursive coherence	Relationship between theme, digital resources, narrative structure and overall meaning of the audiovisual story.	Limited coherence, medium coherence, high coherence.	Integration of materials, narrative continuity, and relationship between form and content.
C7. Narrative development	Development of characters, conflict, central theme, or story evolution.	Without character development or conflict, limited development, precise development, common thread.	Integration of materials, narrative continuity, and relationship between form and content.
C8. Dominant audiovisual resources	Visual elements and formal resources predominant in the development of the assignment.	Without character development or conflict, limited development, precise development, central theme.	Analysis of the story, characters, conflict, and narrative progression.
C9. Function of the digital concept in the structure	The degree to which digital resources influence the development of the narrative.	Structural, instrumental, not applicable.	Relationship between digital resources and narrative
C10. Autonomy with respect to digital role models	Level of formal and creative independence from recognizable models from the digital ecosystem.	Low autonomy, limited autonomy, medium autonomy, medium-high autonomy, high autonomy, very high autonomy.	Ability to transform references, make one's own decisions, and move away from recognizable elements.
C11. Level of innovation	Degree of differential contribution in the form, content or audiovisual treatment.	Limited innovation, medium innovation, high innovation, very high innovation.	Formal experimentation, treatment of content, and divergence from digital conventions.
C12. Final evaluation of production	Overall grade for the assignment based on the instructor's evaluation.	Pass, Good, Excellent.	Final evaluation.

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on Torrance (1974), Hsieh and Shannon (2005), Schreier (2012) and Gil-Ruiz and Domínguez-Lloria (2025).

3.4. Analysis Procedure

First, a record was created for each case, including course, role of digital resources, topic, type of appropriation, autonomy, and grade. Autonomy categories were grouped into three levels to facilitate comparison: low, when the matrix indicated less independence, limited autonomy, or little autonomy; medium, when medium autonomy, some autonomy, or medium-high autonomy appeared; and high, when high or very high independence and high or increased autonomy were reported. A course-by-course cross-sectional comparison was then conducted, and absolute counts and percentages were calculated.

3.5. Ethical Considerations and Data Protection

No names, still images, or any information that could identify the students are included. To respect intellectual property rights, the students' videos are not publicly published and their use is restricted to the requirements of the scientific publisher of the journal *Vivat Academia* to demonstrate the validity of the study.

3.6. Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Manuscript

The editorial review of this manuscript was conducted using ChatGPT from OpenAI, specifically the GPT-5.6 Pro model used in 2026. Its purpose was to support linguistic review, normalization of tables, and internal checking between citations and references to ensure that all consulted articles and reports appeared in the bibliography. It was also used to translate the manuscript's abstract into English. The tool was not used for the collection, documentation, coding, or analysis of student projects, nor for data processing or the structuring and writing of the manuscript. The system operated without internet access to avoid openly sharing data, reducing errors, inaccuracies, biases, and unverifiable content.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As it can be seen in Table 3, in the 2023-2024 academic year, four of the six assignments place artificial intelligence or digital concepts as a central element, one uses it in a complementary way, and the other does not report any use. Social media appears as the dominant visual reference: videos, interviews, live broadcasts, reports, and audiovisual compositions influence the choice of shots, the camera's frontality, and the expository structure. The themes are concentrated on the environment, solidarity, social media addiction, mental health, and disability. Regarding the evaluation of the productions, EV1 receives an excellent rating despite a central use of digital references. EV4 and EV5 achieve particularly high results. EV2, EV3, and EV6, with the pass or good ratings, show greater repetition of formulas and less development of characters and conflict.

Table 3

Compliance with Variables for Assignments in the 2023-2024 School Year

Variable	EV1	EV.2	EV.3	EV.4	EV.5	EV.6
C.1.	Central	Central	Central	Complementary	Unused	Central
C2.	Social Media Videos	Social Media Interviews	Social Media	AV Composition	AV Composition	Social Media Reports
C3.	Environment	Environment	Solidarity	Social Media Addiction	Mental health	Disability
C4.	Conventional (plans, educational social media)	Conventional (interviews and social media resources)	Conventional (social media shots)	More innovative (AV language)	Innovative (AV language)	Conventional (social media monitoring)
C5.	Reformulation	Repetition	Repetition	Reformulation	Innovation	Repetition
C6.	Coherence, social media integration	Limited coherence and social media application	Forced consistency and social media application	Clear consistency without social media	High consistency without social media	Limited consistency with social media
C7.	Without character development or conflict	It only displays content	Character and conflict vague	Developed character and conflict	Character with conflict	Character and conflict vague
C8.	Close-ups, frontal shots, and educational	Medium shot, street interview	Close-ups, frontal shots, lifestyle	Close-ups, frontal shots, medium shots	Close-ups, frontal shots, medium shots	Close-ups, resources, and filters
C9.	Structural	Structural	Structural	Instrumental	Not applicable	Structural
C10.	Less autonomy	Less independence	Limited autonomy	High independence	Very high independence	Little autonomy
C.11.	Little formal innovation, but plenty of thematic innovation.	Limited formal and thematic experimentation.	Limited innovation in theme and form.	High formal innovation.	Very high formal innovation.	Limited innovation in form.
C12.	Excellent	Pass	Pass	Excellent	Excellent	Good

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Adapted from Gil-Ruiz and Domínguez-Lloria (2025) according to Torrance (1974).

Table 4 summarizes the fulfillment of variables in the 2024-2025 academic year, and as it can be seen, all five assignments of evidence demonstrate a central use of artificial intelligence or digital concept. The themes are more varied (identity, obsessions, social media addiction, creative block, and harassment), although the formal solutions maintain a high dependence on resources from social media: close-ups, simulated interactivity, character tracking, lifestyle aesthetics, and frontal exposure. The originality category shows a predominance of repetition: four assignments are classified as repetition, and only EV9 appears as a reformulation. Regarding the evaluation of the productions, EV9 receives an excellent rating. EV8 passed. EV7, EV10, and EV11 achieve a very good rating.

EV9 applies social media language to a more coherent audiovisual narrative. EV8 exhibits little autonomy and weak coherence. EV7, EV10, and EV11 achieve notable results, although they do not completely break free from highly recognizable formal conventions.

Table 4

Compliance with Variables for Assignments in the 2024-2025 School Year

Variable	EV7	EV.8	EV.9	EV.10	EV.11
C.1.	Central	Central	Central	Central	Central
C2.	Social Media Videos	Social Media Reports	Social Media Videos with AV Language	Social Media Tracking and Lifestyle	Videos and social media language
C3.	Identity	Obsessions	Social Media Addiction	Creative block	Harassment
C4.	Conventional (shots, interactivity, lifestyle)	Conventional (shots)	Innovative (social media language applied to AV)	Conventional (shots, situations)	Conventional (tracking, shots, interactivity)
C5.	Repetition	Repetition	Reformulation	Repetition	Repetition
C6.	Precise consistency with social media	Not very consistent with social media	High consistency and social media implementation	Precise consistency with social media	Remarkable consistency with social media
C7.	Character and conflict development is vague.	Character development and forced conflict	Well-developed character and conflict	Character and conflict development lack precision	Proper character and conflict development
C8.	Close-ups, interactivity	Close-ups, tracking shots	Close-ups, lifestyle	Situations, shots, lifestyle	Tracking, shots, situations, resources and filters
C9.	Structural	Structural	Structural	Structural	Structural
C10.	Average Autonomy	Little autonomy	Very high autonomy	A certain degree of autonomy	Medium-high autonomy
C.11.	Little innovation	Very limited innovation	Very high innovation	Limited innovation	Medium-high innovation
C12.	Good	Pass	Excellent	Good	Good

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Adapted from Gil-Ruiz and Domínguez-Lloria (2025) according to Torrance (1974).

During the 2025-2026 academic year, as in Table 5, a significant shift occurs: while all the assignments maintain a central use of digital references, the focus shifts much more towards mental health. EV12, EV13, and EV14 employ archives, YouTube references, and digital examples in a more elaborate manner; all three assignments are classified as reformulations and receive an excellent rating. EV15 and EV16, despite sharing the same theme, receive a good rating. These last two pieces of evidence revert to more conventional approaches based on social media maps, street interviews, and testimonial resources, exhibiting less independence and more limited coherence.

Table 5

Compliance with Variables for Assignments in the 2025-2026 School Year

Variable	EV12	EV.13	EV.14	EV.15	EV.16
C.1.	Central	Central	Central	Central	Central
C2.	Diversity of digital sources YouTube (archive, references)	Representation of digital examples YouTube (archive, references)	Digital sources (archive, references)	Social media videos (flat shots)	Social media videos (street interviews, shots)
C3.	Mental health	Mental health	Mental health	Mental health	Mental health
C4.	Innovative (reinterprets archival images)	Innovative (new readings of archival sources)	Innovative (new interpretation of archival references)	Conventional (social media testimonial)	Conventional (social media interview)
C5.	Reformulation	Reformulation	Reformulation	Repetition	Repetition
C6.	Coherent narrative with abundant use of references	Solid story with a very remarkable image archive	Coherent narrative with diverse use of archive	Inconsistency due to the mixing of social media with the archive	Limited consistency with social media
C7.	Central theme	Central theme	Central theme	There is a character, but the development is imprecise.	There is no clear development
C8.	Chopped edit with image collage	Editing with quick cuts and image examples	Accelerated editing with plenty of examples	Social media shots with archive	Medium and American shots typical of social media
C9.	Structural	Structural	Structural	Structural	Structural
C10.	High independence	High autonomy	High autonomy	Low independence	Average independence
C.11.	Innovation in content	Innovation in storytelling and content	Innovation in content presentation and storytelling	Innovation that is imprecise in form and aesthetics	Limited innovation in form and aesthetics
C12.	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Adapted from Gil-Ruiz and Domínguez-Lloria (2025) according to Torrance (1974).

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the technological centrality of social media was the formal matrix, and creative quality was not linear. This first year suggests that digital concept can function as a fertile stimulus when subjected to narrative criteria, while its adoption as an aesthetic template tends to impoverish the work. The 2024-2025 academic year, on the other hand, is distinguished by narrative repetition. The pattern of the year indicates that technological centrality had become normalized, although it was not yet accompanied by sufficient critical appropriation in most projects.

Furthermore, in the 2025-2026 academic year, a reformulation of the narrative through the digital archive is evident. The 2015 and 2016 cycles revert to more conventional forms based on social media footage, street interviews, and testimonial resources, with less independence and more limited coherence. An internal comparison of the cycle reveals that the subject matter alone does not determine quality. What distinguishes the highest-rated assignments is the way they construct a coherent narrative, organize archival materials, and avoid relying solely on digital

clichés in their portrayal of mental health. For greater clarity of the results, Table 6 classifies each assignment of evidence based on the use of AI, originality, autonomy, and the rating received.

Table 6

Summary of Results

Course	Evidence	Use of AI / Digital Concepts	Originality	Autonomy	Qualification
2023-2024	EV1	Central	Reformulation	Less autonomy	Excellent
2023-2024	EV2	Central	Repetition	Less independence	Pass
2023-2024	EV3	Central	Repetition	Limited autonomy	Pass
2023-2024	EV4	Complementary	Reformulation	High independence	Excellent
2023-2024	EV5	Unused	Innovation	Very high independence	Excellent
2023-2024	EV6	Central	Repetition	Limited Autonomy	Good
2024-2025	EV7	Central	Repetition	Average autonomy	Good
2024-2025	EV8	Central	Repetition	Little autonomy	Approved
2024-2025	EV9	Central	Reformulation	Very high autonomy	Excellent
2024-2025	EV10	Central	Repetition	A certain degree of autonomy	Good
2024-2025	EV11	Central	Repetition	Medium-high autonomy	Good
2025-2026	EV12	Central	Reformulation	High independence	Excellent
2025-2026	EV13	Central	Reformulation	High autonomy	Excellent
2025-2026	EV14	Central	Reformulation	High autonomy	Excellent
2025-2026	EV15	Central	Repetition	Low independence	Good
2025-2026	EV16	Central	Repetition	Average independence	Excellent

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As can be seen in Table 6, a total of 14 assignments show central use of digital resources, one uses them in a complementary way, and one shows no use. This confirms that first-year audiovisual creativity develops in constant contact with digital resources. Second, centrality does not equate to creative maturity. When students reproduce frontal shots, quick interviews, filters, network compositions, or lifestyle structures without transformation, the assignment tends to lose narrative complexity. Third, originality appears to be linked to the capacity for reformulation. The excellent examples from 2025-2026 show that the same digital resources can lead to different results if students transform them into archives, contrasting elements, symbolic material, or narrative structures. And fourth, teacher evaluations support the importance of autonomy. Projects with greater formal independence and better narrative coherence receive higher ratings, even when they make intensive use of digital resources.

Therefore, GAI and platforms do not act as substitutes for the creative process, but rather as a repository of materials that demands selection, discarding, ethical distance, and meaningful assembly. This interpretation aligns with Wahl et al. (2022), who places artificial intelligence as a support for co-creation, and qualifies the more

optimistic views on the automatic generation of ideas (Girotra et al., 2023), since an abundance of possibilities does not guarantee sound judgment.

Therefore, the pedagogical question cannot be framed as a simple opposition between human creativity and technology. The difference lies in how the process is managed: students need to learn to recognize when a digital reference expands the narrative and when it confines it to a recognizable formula.

This discussion confirms the need for a creative ethics applied to the classroom. Generative artificial intelligence, social media, and platform-based audiovisual concepts are not neutral elements. They propose rhythms, forms of visibility, hierarchies of attention, and models of representation. For this reason, advertising education should not be limited to teaching tools. It must teach how to interpret the cultural models that these tools convey. The everyday creativity championed by Craft (2012) and the critical thinking strategies outlined by Goodsett (2020), Muñoz Martínez et al. (2025), and Yang et al. (2008) offer a coherent educational framework: audiovisual practice can become a space for ethical exploration when it requires students to justify their sources, explain their decisions, and assume symbolic responsibility for their images.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The research stemmed from a question about the impact of GAI and the digital concepts on the audiovisual creativity of advertising students. The specific impact of GAI, however, cannot be determined with the same level of evidence. The first conclusion is that a digital aesthetic does not prove generative use. The second is that originality does not depend on working without references, but rather on the manipulation of those references. In Advertising and Audiovisual Communication, it is normal for students to seek references, but it is essential to reflect on them, choose influences or inspirations, and not let GAI fulfill that role. In this corpus, six reformulations and one innovation received an excellent rating, while the nine cases of repetition of pre-existing patterns and references received grades ranging from good to pass, since the capacity for reflection and originality are elements that help students acquire skills and achieve learning outcomes.

Similarly, creative autonomy is not taught through blanket prohibition nor through uncritically celebrating the tool. In this sample, the results are associated with the need to expand repertoires, justify decisions, document the process, and separately evaluate instrumental competence, narrative coherence, and source transformation. The GAI can act as a support, a shortcut, or a tool that standardizes processes by drawing from the same source of data and concepts, identifying which of these functions it performs in each case and leaving an analyzable record.

Similarly, the results suggest the importance of designing traceability before collecting data. A retrospective form cannot reliably reconstruct a process that was never documented. Therefore, it is proposed that briefings include *usage* statements, intermediate versions, reference sheets, coding criteria, and ethical review, which would allow students to develop criteria regarding their own use of GAI. Thus,

rather than determining whether technology generally improves or impairs creativity, the results of this research demonstrate the need to address an educational context that already operates within a digital framework and incorporates AI tools into teaching and learning processes.

Based on this study, some contributions and recommendations can be drawn for both teaching and future research. Firstly, regarding teaching, any creative activity that allows for GAI should include a brief and standardized statement of use. This statement should include the tools, AI model or version, date, work phase, purpose, and prompts. The statement should be explained before the activity and not added as an unforeseen requirement at the end.

The rubric should separate at least three dimensions: technical mastery, communicative coherence, and critical-creative autonomy. The mere presence of a tool should not, in itself, add or detract from the score. What is being assessed is the ability to justify its use, verify its results, transform materials, and take responsibility for the final decisions.

It is advisable to incorporate into project feedback a discussion about the references used, in which students can identify what they keep, what they discard, and what they eliminate from what they have generated with AI (text, image, audio, etc.). This practice could allow for discussion of stereotypes, homogenization, biases, and the representation of sensitive topics.

Regarding future research, product analysis, process tracing, and interviews or focus groups should be combined. Only this triangulation will allow for determining whether students use GAI to brainstorm, implement, or review; whether they perceive it as collaborative or authoritative; and what relationship exists between instrumental competence, critical judgment, and diversity of outcomes.

6. DATA AVAILABILITY

For reasons of privacy and to protect the image of the students, the complete audiovisual archives are not made openly available. Anonymized matrices, the codebook, and audited descriptions of the available assignments may be provided to the journal for evaluation purposes, provided that the ethical and institutional basis for access has been confirmed.

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Authors' Contributions

Conceptualization: López-González, J. **Methodology:** López-González, J. and Freire-Sánchez, A. **Software:** Freire-Sánchez, A. **Validation:** López-González, J. and Freire-Sánchez, A. **Formal Analysis:** López-González, J. **Data Curation:** López-González, J. **Drafting- Preparation of the Original Draft:** López-González, J. and Freire-Sánchez, A. **Drafting, Revision, and Editing:** Freire-Sánchez, A. **Visualization:** López-González, J. and Freire-Sánchez, A. **Supervision:** López-González, J. and Freire-Sánchez, A. **Project Management:** Freire-Sánchez, A. **All Authors Have Read and Accepted the Published Version of the Manuscript:** López-González, J. and Freire-Sánchez, A.

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AUTHOR(S)

Jesús López-González
Doctor of Humanities (UAB). Winner of the Best Scientific Article Award at the 2nd FlixOlé-URJC Spanish Film Research Awards. Collaborating researcher on the Comenfutures research project at CEU Abat Oliba and the Greenshooting project at Pompeu Fabra University. Audiovisual producer and director with 15 years of experience in the audiovisual sector and as an international volunteer. He has also served as an associate professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Open University of Catalonia, and the International University of Catalonia. He is accredited as a lecturer by ANECA, with a six-year research term. He is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Business at CEU UAO, where he directs the Marketing Management and Sales Management programs. His main areas of research are transmedia narratives and the social and solidarity economy.
jlopezgo@uao.es
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5847-5197
Google Scholar:
https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=fXVEBQMAAAAJ&hl=es
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jesus-Lopez-Gonzalez-3
Academia.edu:
https://independent.academia.edu/ChusL%C3%B3pezGonz%C3%A1lez

Alfonso Freire-Sánchez: Doctor of Communication Sciences, advertising professional, and director of the Department of Communication at CEU Abat Oliba University. He was awarded the Prize for Best Scientific Article at the FlixOlé-URJC Awards for Research in Spanish Cinema (2023), the Ángel Herrera Prize for Excellence in Teaching (2014), the GoliAD Andreu Barrabino Prize for Alumni Achievement, and the prize for the best teaching innovation project (2017). He holds tenured status from ANECA and is a full professor accredited by AQU. He has also participated as a member of the research team on the R&D&I project "Visibilizando el dolor" (Making Pain Visible) (2018-2022). His research focuses on mental health narratives in the creative industry and the interdisciplinary analysis of film, video games, literature, and advertising. He has published more than 50 articles in scientific journals, authored six monographs, co-authored three books, written some thirty book chapters, and supervised four doctoral dissertations.
freire3@uao.es
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2082-1212
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=zReiVosAAAAJ&hl=es
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alfonso-Freire-Sanchez?ev=hdr_xprf
Scopus: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57204866041
Academia.edu: https://uao-es.academia.edu/AlfonsoFreireS%C3%A1nchez

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