How and where our marketing students propose to innovate: The case of Final Year Projects (FYPs)

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Abstract

We analyze the 2014-2017 innovative direction of FYPs in the area of Marketing and Market Research in the UNED using a mixed methodology which is both qualitative (involvement-based observation) and quantitative (factorial, multivariate, cluster and regression analysis).

The TFGs analyzed present an innovative component which is in line with the average level of the Spanish industry as a whole (16% tackled marketing planning or research into products and services of medium and high intensity in R & D). Also, the segmentation of the sample into conglomerates has made it possible to distinguish homogeneous innovative directions for the equipment goods industries, agri-food, microelectronics and related industries, hospitality, health and social services and the textile sector.

When analyzing the variables which define academic quality, we emphasize that when the project presented obtains solid conclusions and has a clear practical application, a well presented TFG is then highlighted, including its presentation and drafting. Thus, the university tutors should boost the innovative direction of the proposals and make the FYP a teaching instrument for innovation in marketing matters.

Keywords: marketing, innovation, final year project.

JEL codes: M31, D24, A22.

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ISSN 0212-1867 / e-ISSN 1989-3558
© ESIC Editorial, ESIC Business & Marketing School
DOI: 10.7200/esicm.159.0491.1i
http://www.esic.edu/esicmarket
如何让我们市场营销学的学生改革创新：学士毕业论文案例

Gema Juberías Cáceres
Jesús Manuel Plaza Llorente

文章摘要
文章通过混合、定性（通过观察研究参与者）及定量（因素分析、多变量分析、聚类分析及回归分析）的方法，分析2014至2017年国家遥距教育大学（UNED）在商业及市场研究范畴的学士毕业论文的革新方向。被分析的毕业论文显示，其创新元素跟整体西班牙工业的中位数是有着密切关系的（其中16%是针对中高科技研发服务及产品的营销规划或研究）。与此同时，样本通过聚类方式进行分割，让我们可以辨别在资本品工业、农业食品工业、微电子及同类工业、餐饮业、卫生保健业、社会服务业及纺织业中的同类革新方向。

决定性变量的学术分析强调，当发表的论文能获得坚定的结论和清楚的实际应用时，便能突出毕业论文的良好应用，包括其发表及撰写。如此，论文辅导员便需要在论文开题报告中加强创新的引导，以学士毕业论文作为教学工具，推动市场学各方面的创新。

关键词: 市场营销、创新、学士毕业论文。

JEL 分类号: M31、D24、A22。
1. Introduction

In the presentation of the meetings held by the Revista de Educación Universitaria (Journal of University Education) (RED-U) in November 2016, it was stated that, after their application in the universities over the course of several years, the Final Year Project (FYP) and Master's Degree Project – termed generically Final Projects (FPs) - had succeeded in dissipating some initial doubts, at the same time as giving rise to new questions concerning the work of the teaching staff. The interest and international debate arising as a result of FPs-FYPs derives, in general, from the fact that it is considered as a final milestone in the curriculum, its main objective being to provide students with integrating learning experiences that will offer the possibility of benefitting from an educational experience of excellent educational value, overcoming the fragmentation of the curriculum and closely allied to the practical application and content of the professional employment they will embark on.

If the FPs-FYPs typologies are to be different in terms of the concept and nature of what they produce, the most widely accepted opinion is that, through doing them, students should have the opportunity to develop a learning potential which is different from what the rest of the subjects in their degree course have given them. So, what approaches should we take to unleash this potential, and more specifically: does the FYP serve to motivate undergraduates’ interest in doing projects and taking other innovative initiatives?

In the case researched in this article, we look precisely into the innovative guidance provided by a sample of FYPs from the Marketing area that have been observed during their working process and analyzed in terms of their content. This sample considers two basic directions: sales planning and market research. In the first area, Planning is used as a tool for developing the FYP, related to some aspect of professional practice in marketing. In the second area, basic research or research applied to marketing products and services, this has enabled the student to tackle more complex techniques applied to the search for knowledge, either linked to their own immediate professional work, or referring to a postgraduate academic perspective.

In this article, we analyse the experience in FYPs in the Marketing and Market Research knowledge area, which are taught in the degree courses in Tourism and Business Administration & Management (ADE in its Spanish acronym) at the National University of Distance Learning (UNED in its Spanish acronym). Among

(1) The authors of this paper thank the students of the UNED matriculated in the FYP for their competence and the quality of the comments they make through the queries and messages they formulate. Without them, it would be impossible to improve the teaching given in the subject, course by course. Some of their testimonies, taken as excerpts and suitably anonymized, are part of the qualitative research carried out here. In parallel, the authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the article for their comments and proposals, which have also contributed to their improvement. We would also like to recognize the Vice-Rector for Research and Internationalization and the Department of Business Economics and Accounting at the UNED for their assistance in disseminating the results of this research.
the approaches to analysis that could have been adopted, the authors of this research have opted to assess two of these. The first will attempt to answer the question: to what extent do the FYPs done by students at the time of graduation reveal a potential for innovation, following generally accepted classification systems? The second will respond to: what improvements should be introduced into the process of preparing the FYP, with a view to enhancing its innovative content, both from the point of view of teaching and learning, and introducing innovative practices into the subject and the production of the FYP by the students. If, in the work of Freire et al. (2015) the assessment of the teaching and learning process implicit in the FYP was done from the perspective of the students, in this research we would like to show the other side of the coin; that is, FYPs seen from the perspective of the teacher staff and, more specifically, from the perspective of the figure of FYP tutors in their role as facilitators.

Due to their characterization and objectives, the four FYP areas referred to in this paper can be grouped into two categories. The first corresponds to lines 11 (Tourism) and 21 (BAM) that propose to draft a Marketing Plan. The second category refers to lines 12 (Tourism) and 22 (BAM) where the FYP is tackled through Marketing Research. We will therefore work on a partial sample of the universe of FYPs that are produced in the Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences at the UNED, whose research could provide circumstantial evidence that could guide the behaviour of FYPs in the subjects researched into and shed light on possible developments that could be the subject of future research into marketing training (Fenollar, Cuestas and Román, 2008, García Martín, 2010), along with additional approaches to the one followed here.

This article is structured according to the sections that are outlined below. This first one, which is an introduction, is followed by one that lays down the objectives of the research. The third section is devoted to the background and review of the literature. The fourth section defines the methodology used and in the fifth the qualitative results of the work are presented. The sixth section presents the quantitative results before setting out the conclusions reached and the bibliography.

2. Objectives

After four successive courses of implementing the FYP on the degrees courses in Tourism and BAM at the UNED (Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences), as a first objective, it is proposed to assess the aspects of innovation contained in the works presented. The aim of the teaching orientation is to answer three questions: what is the innovative content of the FYPs presented in marketing and market research? Can we make the FYP an innovation learning tool? And, as a consequence of the above, in what way should we, if necessary, adapt our role as tutors of the FYP in marketing subjects?

In contrast, from the perspective of the learner, we shall try, as a second objective, to establish whether the choice of the subjects and their handling by the students in
their FYPs, tells us something about whether this graduation project is perceived by its authors as an option or opportunity linked to innovation in its broadest sense or if, on the contrary, it is reduced to being simply a procedure associated to the very fact of completing the degree course.

The business area, in general, and the tourism areas in particular are enormously competitive and dynamic in our current social and economic environment (Carbonell and Rodríguez Escudero, 2010). To a large extent, this competitiveness must be linked to Schumpeterian “creative destruction” and the implementation of innovative initiatives on products, processes, the introduction of technology, and changes in the structures and forms of trade. In this regard, and in the areas researched here, this article sets out, as a third objective, to find out to what extent the most innovative sectors and businesses in the economy and the technology leader sectors are attracting the attention of students, through the FYPs they embark on when completing their degree courses to graduate.

3. Background and review of the literature

As a result of this work of linking the FYP, as part of the curriculum, to the phenomenon of innovation, it is advisable to set down a conceptual framework that will enable us to mark out the boundaries of the chosen field of research. In order to do so, we shall firstly consider the FYP curriculum in the literature and, secondly, define the scope of the innovative FYP concept in marketing. In order to accurately contextualize the environment for research into the content and innovative practice of FYPs, this section ends with a brief (but not exhaustive) review of the situation of innovation in Spain and its relationship with teaching and university research.

3.1. Consideration and curricular content of the FYP

In the research by Freire et al (2015), five aspects were assessed: 1) support elements in terms of information, training and tutoring available to prepare the FYP; 2) procedures for assigning topics and tutors; 3) contribution of the FYP to the acquisition of professional skills; 4) perception of the dedication required to prepare the FYP; and 5) the assessment process involved in the FYP.

In summary, and with regard to the first of the points mentioned on the available support elements, the drafting and defence of the FYP was aimed at developing skills specific to Information Literacy - in the sense of Bruce (2003) - regarding access to and the assessment, organization and use of information in an effective way for learning, problem solving and decision making. In addition, the completion of the FYP should enable students to develop creative skills to face up to new restrictions or constraints (Capozzi et al., 2011).
As regards the second aspect, on procedures for assigning topics and tutors, in the case we are researching into in the UNED, the procedure for assigning topics and tutors also responds in general terms to a model that we can consider canonical, due to its repeated application in universities and degree courses. This is the case of the one described in the works of Bonilla et al. (2012), Escobedo et al. (2012) and Freire et al. (2015). The main stages that make up this procedure are: 1) manifesting the preference for the particular subject area for the FYP by the student at the time of enrolling in the subject, 2) distribution of students between the available subject areas and 3) assignment of a tutor to each student.

The third point, regarding the (expected) contribution of the FYP to the students’ acquisition of skills in marketing and market research is set out in the Course Guide and Teaching Guidelines that serve as a reference for the students, as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Curricular learning outcomes of the Final Degree Project (FYP). UNED Planning and Commercial Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course guide FYP line</th>
<th>TFG Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree in Tourism.</strong></td>
<td>Acquisition of practical knowledge in tourism applications so that the results of learning enables students to understand, develop and undertake tasks related to different aspects of the tourism sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lines 11 and 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree in Administration and Management (BAM).</strong></td>
<td>The student must be aware of - and able to interpret - business situations, take decisions on specific problems, acquire skills of applying reasoned solutions to specific problems, and plan and carry out an orderly process of gathering, handling and analyzing information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lines 21 and 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lines 11 and 21</strong></td>
<td><strong>Drafting a marketing plan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placing the student in the real position of reflecting over and documenting a marketing plan to tackle creating a new company (tourism) (which could be the one that the student wishes to embark on), launch a new product or service onto the market (tourism), or reorient or reposition a brand in the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lines 12 and 22</strong></td>
<td><strong>Marketing research techniques</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is intended that students should be familiar with and develop the use of research techniques used in researching into tourism as a commercial phenomenon and the tourist markets. Specifically: 1. Learning how sales research is carried out in practice. 2. Becoming familiar with the methodological design of a commercial research project. 3. Becoming familiar with the use of bibliographic databases. 4. Understanding how to obtain the necessary data to do commercial (tourism) research. 5. Being familiar with existing statistical software programmes applicable to marketing analysis techniques (tourism).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: in house, from the National University of Distance Learning (UNED). Final Degree Project (FYP). Course Guide and Teaching Guidelines.
As regards the fourth of the points, on the **perception of the dedication needed to complete the FYP**, the hypotheses contrasted by Freire et al. (2015) point out that, undertaking the FYP requires significant dedication on the part of both the students and their tutors. This fact is shared in this research. Finally, with respect to the assessment process, mentioned as the fifth point, needed to complete the academic programme of the FYP, the criteria of our research extends the content of this final phase of the FYP, based on the peculiarities involved in distance learning and the procedure in two stages of assessment of the FYP, as set down by the UNED: assessing the intrinsic content of the project and its written defence in the face-to-face exam.

### 3.2. Innovation and Innovative FYP concepts in Marketing

For the purposes of this paper, we have adopted the definition and scope of Marketing as set out in the Oslo Manual (OECD, 2005, p. 46), which defines innovation as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, form of commercialization or new method in the practice of business organization, labour organizations or external relations. In this sense, the science of Marketing is extremely dynamic nowadays, with the offer of new proposals that create or enhance existing products and services (Drucker, 1986), both in terms of the expansion of space for business and in the transactional rotation between alternative business approaches (Rodríguez et al., 2015). More specifically, this same Oslo Manual refers to Marketing (No. 88, p. 31) as a group of theories aimed at discovering consumer behaviour, exchanges in the market between buyers and sellers, and the rule-based approach of these phenomena, establishing as a framework for marketing analysis the mix that make up the 4Ps: Product, Price, Promotion and Place, and the academic research into these subjects corresponding to the JEL Codes (AEA, 2017): M3, M30, M31 and M37.

After establishing the concept of Innovation and defining the innovative sphere of Marketing, we defined **Innovating FYP in Marketing** as: “the graduation projects (FYP) produced by students on marketing subjects as part of the curricular content of the degree course which, due to its focus, content or development, shares the characteristics indicated by the OECD’s Oslo Manual when describing innovation and innovative practice”.2

Also, and as will be explained more extensively in the Conclusions, the preparation of this paper has enabled its authors to expand what we term as “the Dialogue between Marketing and Innovation”, understood as the set of processes that enable feedback between the two disciplines, based on the traditional concept of Marketing from the Industrial Economy - active market listening (Lin et al., 2010) - as an immediate trigger for the innovative process (Vorhies and Harker, 2000), aimed at maintaining a competitive business advantage (Weerawardena, 2003, 2011).

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2 Vid. Oslo Manual (OECD, EU, EUROSTAT; 2005), Chapter 3: “Basic Definitions”.
Following Medrano and Olarte (2011) who pointed to the need to better define the concept of *Innovation in Marketing*, we particularize this concept to group within it the developments that, linked or not to technological progress (technical progress), enable us to apply the Conceptual Framework of Marketing (the 4Ps) in a new or improved way to specific commercial environments in the industrial sectors (Utkun and Atilgan, 2010), services or those belonging to the business domain itself (Rivero et al, 2009, 2010). In a twofold way, and within the concept of *Innovation Marketing*, we group the initiatives aimed at selling new or improved products or services that incorporate attributes more effectively and broadly, in a more novel way, or more intelligently, and as these involve more ambitious value proposals for customers, they require introducing more cross-cutting, creative or sophisticated marketing capabilities.

3.3. Overview of the current situation of innovation in Spain and its relationship with the University

The situation of innovation in Spain in relation to higher education has been highlighted in the literature that is periodically produced by national and international organizations. On a recurrent basis, the annual reports of the OECD stress various recommendations, from which we select three for the purposes of this paper. The first of these refers to *attributing greater importance to applied research and technology transfer to companies in assessing the research system*. In the second recommendation, the OECD requests that *the use of computers be increased [information and communication technologies] in scientific education and, particularly, in mathematics*. Finally, the third recommendation requests tackling *an assessment to better fit the education on offer to the business demand, with joint funding of training projects that are promoted by companies and could have public support where they could be most useful*.

In the perspective pointed out by the three above recommendations, the promotion of innovative FYPs in marketing matters would have to introduce a profile applied to solving the problems of some organisation using the tools provided by the management and quantitative processing of the information available, while at the same time approaching the formulation of real solutions (as a response to real problems), identified in institutional or business areas, in line with some initiatives already underway (Álvarez, 2017).

As can be seen, the OECD recommendations and the possible inferences that were made from them are an integral part of the debates taking place in our universities on the fit between university education and social demand and the degree of academic excellence required. In this sense, the data provided by the *2015 Survey on innovation in companies* by the Spanish Statistics Office (INE), indicates that 28.5% of Spanish companies with 10 or more employees were innovators between 2013 and 2015, although organizational and marketing innovations represented a higher percentage (23.7%) than those of product and process (12.8%). These percentages,
as indicated in the 2015 report of the Economic and Social Committee (CES, 2015), are still lower than the Community average.

Thus, in 2015, 34% of Spanish companies could be classified as innovative, compared to 49% for the EU average, far below the 67% in the German case. Consequently, we can affirm that there is still some way to go in Spain in order to make changes in the offering of professionals trained in innovation who, after going into the production system, can produce greater competitiveness for the products and services we offer, a task that also falls to the university as an institution. For the purposes of this research, the above data indicates that it seems justifiable that we should ascertain to what extent our students reveal some concern over these issues. These should be shared with the lecturers when proposing, guiding and evaluating the FYPs presented by the graduates at the time of entering professional practice with their degree under their arm.

4. Methodology

In this research we use a mixed methodology: both qualitative (Involvement-based observation) and quantitative (statistical analysis), to provide elements of a factual nature which can be contrasted. Whenever we work on a specific case - that of FYP planning and sales research in the UNED - our conclusions will necessarily have a scope limited to the case that is presented.

4.1. O Involvement-based observation

Following Duverger (1972, pp. 330), observation-involvement\(^3\) consists of examining a group considered as a community in itself. Its objective is to capture the social and cultural reality of the group by including the researcher within the group studied, which should enable him/her to obtain the data they intend to capture, as a consequence of their participation in community life and the observation of everything that occurs around them (Maestre, 1976, pp. 19 and 56). In this way, and in the sense pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), the observer (tutor of the FYP in our case) is also an active part of the event being observed (the production of the FYP), this being characterized by the complexity of the environment which the agents involved are interacting in (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

As documented support we have the flow of emails exchanged between the tutor and the students, telephone conversations (not transcribed), as well as the set of

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(3) “It has been said - and rightly so - that Observation is the most primitive and at the same time the most modern procedure” (Ander-Egg, 1974). Following the categories set out by this author, the observation in this research is characterized by being structured, involved, undertaken in a team, and coming from real life.
texts which form part of the actual draft of the FYP (proposals and FYP presented), produced over the course of the stages of its preparation: 1) proposed by the student and approval of the idea by the tutor, 2) tutoring in the preparation of the FYP, 3) approval of the FYP for written defence, 4) written defence of the FYP in the on-site examination and, 5) assessment and communication of the result to the student.

4.2. Statistical analysis

Based on the documentation accrediting the proposal and completion of the FYP over the course of four academic years from its implementation at the UNED (2014 to 2017), the information contained in 131 FYPs has been systematized using the 15 variables described below in the Table 2:

Table 2. FYP Characterization variables in marketing subjects (UNED 2014-2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES V(x)</th>
<th>VARIABLES V(x) CHARACTERIZATION OF VARIABLES AND CODING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FYP Identification Block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>1. Order number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>2. Academic year: year in which the on-site examinations take place in June (2014 to 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3</td>
<td>3. Degree to which the FYP corresponds: ADE (1) or TOURISM (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>4. FYP line: ADE (21 and 22); TOURISM (11, 12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and technological intensity block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>5. Main scope of the research in industrial organization (L00) which it belongs to or which the FYP is mainly related with (AEA, JEL Code). This variable defines the FYP’s belonging to a specific field of industrial or company business that is the subject of academic research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>6. Economic sector of business which the FYP is related to (CNAE, Class, 4 digits), according to classification of RD 475/2007 of April 13, which approves the CNAE-2009 (Official Gazette of 28 April). This variable indicates the economic business area which the content of the FYP provides value to, as well as indicating its own scope of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>7. Sector-based technological level of the FYP subject matter, in the “Classification of the OECD (2001). Table 2 of the methodology note in INEBASE-Science, technology and research (02)”. For the purposes of this paper, code 22 is added for Common Services in Low Level Technology sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block: Academic quality of the FYP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8</td>
<td>8. Degree of definition of objectives laid out in the FYP: Likert scale of 1 (non-existent), 2 (scarce), 3 (intermediate), 4 (high) to 5 (very high).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How and where our marketing students propose to innovate...

Table 2. (Continuation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES V(x)</th>
<th>CHARACTERIZATION OF VARIABLES AND CODING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V9</td>
<td>9. Process of knowledge, clarity and methodological structuring identified in drafting the FYP: same Likert scale as for variable (8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10</td>
<td>10. Richness, clarity and operability achieved by the conclusions and possible recommendations of the FYP: same Likert scale as for variable (8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11</td>
<td>11. Drafting the FYP: order, presentation ad format of the FYP. Same Likert scale as for variable (8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12</td>
<td>12. Approach and applicability to the commercial or professional field identified in the FYP: same Likert scale as for the variable (8).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administration section

| V13            | 13. Student gender: Female (1), Male (2).                                           |
| V14            | 14. Grade awarded to the FYP by the subject lecturers: from 1 to 10.               |
| V15            | 15. Descriptor. Keyword that identifies the FYP with its content, orientation or focus. |

Source: in house.

The data obtained from research into the variables V3 to V12 have been applied, setting out the results in the corresponding section.

5. Process of preparing the FYP and qualitative results

5.1. Timeline for the FYP

Considering average periods of duration for each stage in the production of the FYP, its complete process takes 16 weeks, distributed as indicated in the chronogram appearing in Table 3:
Table 3. Drafting the Final Year Project (FYP) at the UNED. Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Week/Stage</th>
<th>F(3)</th>
<th>F(4)</th>
<th>M(1)</th>
<th>M(2)</th>
<th>M(3)</th>
<th>M(4)</th>
<th>A(1)</th>
<th>A(2)</th>
<th>A(3)</th>
<th>A(4)</th>
<th>M(1)</th>
<th>M(2)</th>
<th>M(3)</th>
<th>M(4)</th>
<th>J(1)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order of weeks</td>
<td>1w</td>
<td>2w</td>
<td>3w</td>
<td>4w</td>
<td>5w</td>
<td>6w</td>
<td>7w</td>
<td>8w</td>
<td>9w</td>
<td>10w</td>
<td>11w</td>
<td>12w</td>
<td>13w</td>
<td>14w</td>
<td>15w</td>
<td>16w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Drafting and approving the proposal</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxx</td>
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| 2. Tutor-led production of FYP | 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Source: in house.

Over the course of each of the five stages of the FYP, the university tutor has acted as an observer to describe and interpret each of these, identifying patterns of approach to the FYP by the different students. In the following points the results obtained in the qualitative research for each stage are commented on, along with their description.

### 5.2. General idea of the FYP, students’ proposals and approval

At the time of making their proposal students have had access to the Course Guide and the Teachers’ guidelines so they are able to summarise their proposal on 1 or 2 sides of a page (as requested), following the orientation of a rough index and content for the FYP, indicated in Tables 4 and 5.
Despite the information provided to the student, expressions such as: *I am a little lost and don’t know where to start* are frequent in the first contact with the tutor, in line with what was pointed out by Todd et al. (2004) with respect to the disorientation of some students when facing this course subject. In this regard, these two testimonies are revealing:

*I am very pleased to have received this guidance for developing the subject of the FYP as it is the part of the Degree course that I liked the most, but I am quite lost ... I don’t know how to start or where ...
.../...*

*I’m a bit lost with the FYP. I have read the teacher’s guide. Do I have to present a working model or approach for it to be accepted and then I start working? Is there a deadline for this? And as regards starting work, I am also a bit lost, I don’t know how exactly to approach the subject. Marketing research techniques are something that is already clearly defined, and I would like to be able to do something a bit different.*
Generically, this situation is estimated at representing around 10% of the cases analyzed here, half of which (5%) correspond to situations of paralysis (*I don’t know what to do, I need help*) and the other half to cases where the student contacts the tutor to reaffirm their idea, usually solid and already worked out, or to consult procedural questions:

_I’m writing to you simply because I don’t know what the schedule is for interaction and when to start working on the FYP, as well as whether or not I have to propose an idea for that marketing plan myself (I may have one) or if you have already assigned it, or how to go ahead._

Table 5. FYP content guidelines. Marketing Research Techniques (Line 12 of Tourism Degree and Line 22 of the BAM Degree)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Affidavit of authorship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Executive summary in Spanish and English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Introduction: goal and objectives of the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Review of the literature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Methodological design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Hypothesis to be tested and variables used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Results obtained in field work. Tabulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Analysis and interpretation of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Conclusions. Mention of aspects that could be addressed by future work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On other occasions, there are situations contrary to those described, as there is no doubt about what to do or how. Looking at the profile of the average student at the UNED, they combine their academic work with a wealth of professional experience and the problem is not one of uncertainty but rather of capitalizing on the knowledge they already possess:

_I have been working in a purchasing department for 15 years. But my question is: could I use this knowledge to write my FYP, adapting it to the requirements of the UNED?_
Also, the student can make the FYP a test bank to rehearse their next professional challenge or validate a business project they are considering, in line with Pérez, al., (2016):

> You see, one of the lines of the FYP consists of writing a marketing plan and I would like to know if the company the plan is to be written for is assigned by you or we can choose freely. I mention this to you because, together with my business partner, 10 years ago we shared a small business providing services for companies in the tax, employment, accounting and legal fields. My question is: Do you know whether this could be done on my business? In this sense, this would benefit us since we have never done a marketing plan, and as we are very small, this could open more doors.

The main criterion for the approval of the proposals is that of internal consistency, based on content with a minimum quality in the statements and the appreciation by the tutor of the objectives intended by the project.

5.3. Tutoring the FYP for drafting

Once the proposal has been approved and communicated to the students, in approximately 50% of the cases, the tutor telephones or emails the students. In most cases, these consultations are of a methodological nature and rarely subject based; this constitutes an indication that the student’s proposal has defined reasonably well the work to be done:

> I don’t know if there is a deadline for delivering the main outline, as right now I am working very hard and I need to organize my timetable to be able to find any available time to move forward with the project.

It is in this phase that students develop mainly their drafting and written communication skills (Rowley and Slack, 2004) while also introducing additional elements such as graphics, charts, infographics, logos and even emoticons into the FYP (Greenbank et al, 2008). The intensity with which students make use of these additional elements is greater as the Marketing Communication variable develops, depending on the nature of the particular marketing plan (lines 11 and 21) or marketing research techniques (lines 21 and 22) adopted in the FYP.

But doubts may arise and, with them, anxiety. At some point the initial scheme of development proposed for the FYP becomes complicated. The situations that appear are very varied, but there are two that predominate. The first is manifested as disorientation in the face of possible alternatives, when enough practice has not yet been acquired in decision-making:

> Could you help me a little on this topic, please? Or point me in the right direction? I’m a little lost and I really do not want to miss the deadlines.
The second situation concerns the doubt about their own abilities that, in the
majority of cases, is always got over with an additional effort of reflecting, study
and documentation:

What is expected of the project, if we can choose one of the market
research techniques and develop it, or must we name all of them? What
does “Real Marketing Research through the use of multivariate or econo-
metric statistical techniques” mean? I understand that it should not have
in-depth content on statistics, right? ... I don’t know ...

5.4. Approval of the FYP for written defence

The approval of the FYP for its written defence in the on-site examinations by
the UNED comes once tutor has verified the following aspects: 1) the match of the
project submitted with the proposal approved, 2) the inclusion in pdf format of the
FYP of the original scientific authorship certificate required, 3) the intrinsic quality
of the project, in line with the Academic Guide and 4) the adequacy of this for the
rules of presentation set down in the Guide.

Having verified the previous points, the FYP tutor communicates the approval
of their project for written defence in the on-site examination personally by email to
each student. In general, at this point the relationship between the student and the
FYP tutor ends, except for a request for some additional explanation or spontaneous
comments that, in the end, enable us to assess the approachability of lecturers that
can be achieved in distance learning settings:

Hello, I have sent the document twice. I hope you can reply to me if
you have received it. Thank you for everything again, I have enjoyed it a
great deal. With the help and efficiency I got, everything was made more
fun.

5.5. Written defence of the FYP in the Face-to-Face Tests

Given that the FYP is a subject in the regular degree course curriculum, the cor-
responding on-site examination is part of the general UNED exam calendar in the
standard exams (June) or re-sits (September or December).

5.6. Assessment of the FYP and notification of the qualifications obtained

After the on-site examination, the final result for the FYP is communicated by
email to each student. This qualification is the result of weighing up, firstly, its
content, production, fit of the project presented with the Teaching Guide and consistency with the initial proposal approved.

Secondly, the quality of the written defence of their work by the students is taken into consideration. This should reflect an in-depth knowledge.

6. Quantitative Results

Summarized in Table 6 below are the quantitative results obtained from analyzing 131 FYPs presented in lines 11 (23 cases), 12 (13), 21 (46) and 22 (49), all of them belonging to the Marketing and Market Research knowledge area, between 2014 and 2017. The resulting clusters from the cluster analysis have been grouped following the terminology for technical change sector models used by Pavitt (1984): suppliers, Scale Intensives, Specialized Suppliers and science-based.

In order to isolate the influence of the FYP within the Tourism Degree (36 cases) out of the total sample (Degrees in Business Administration and Management and Tourism) the same tests were run (exploratory correlation analysis, principal components, cluster K means and regression) for the fraction of the FYP sample corresponding to the BAM Degree (95 cases).
Table 6. Summary of quantitative results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test (using IBM-SPSS software)</th>
<th>FYP within Degrees in BAM and Tourism (total sample: 131 cases)</th>
<th>FYP within Degree in BAM (partial sample: 95 cases)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory analysis of the Pearson correlation for the variables of environment and technological intensity (V5 to V7).</td>
<td>For the FYPs analyzed, the bilateral correlation for these variables is not significant and, when it is, its value is less than 30%.</td>
<td>For the FYPs analyzed, the bilateral correlation for these variables is not significant and, when it is, its value is less than 50%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory analysis of the Pearson correlation for the FYP academic quality variables (V8 to V12).</td>
<td>They appear as very significant correlations (1%): Knowledge process followed (V9) and Production (V11) (72%) and Production (V11) and Practical applicability (V12) (66%).</td>
<td>Aparecen como correlaciones muy significativas (1%): Proceso de conocimiento seguido (V9) y Ejecución material (V11) (73%) y Ejecución material (V11) y Aplicabilidad práctica (V12) (66%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Components Analysis (PCA) for the FYP academic quality variables (V8 to V12). (KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement). (Bartlett’s sphericity test).</td>
<td>The set of academic quality variables of the FYP is explained by a single principal component, which groups 57.8% of the variance, with KMO of 0.8 and Bartlett significant. The variables best explained by the Component are those of production (V11, 0.89) and the knowledge process followed (V9, 0.84).</td>
<td>The set of academic quality variables of the FYP is explained by a single principal component, which groups 55.5% of the variance, with KMO of 0.74 and Bartlett significant. The variables best explained by the Component are those of production (V11, 0.90) and the knowledge process followed (V9, 0.84).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cluster K analysis means for environment variables and technological intensity (V5, V6 and V7): definition of FYP conglomerates (% of cases) that group projects of planning and commercial research in the BAM activities indicated, according to the sectorial technological level indicated, according to the (INE-ISIC) classification. Clustering of the conglomerates according to Pavitt’s taxonomy (1984).*

**Supplier dominated**
- Cluster of hospitality and accommodation (24%): products and services of technological level equivalent to that of the food industry.
- Cluster of health and social services (14%): projects linked to promoting services for children, the elderly and disabled, at the average technological level of the manufacturing industry.
- Cluster linked to the marketing textile products (14%).
  **Specialized suppliers**
- Cluster of research and promotion of products and services within the capital goods industry (36%).
  **Science-based**
- Cluster linked to marketing digital technologies and microelectronics in the electrical, rail and transport equipment and material industry (12%).

**Supplier dominated**
- Cluster of research and promotion for products and services belonging to the agri-food value chain (30%).
- Cluster of hospitality and accommodation (22%): products and services of technological level equivalent to the industry of plastic derivatives.
- Cluster of health and social services (13%): projects linked to promoting services for children, elderly and disabled, at the average technological level of the manufacturing industry.
- Cluster linked to marketing textile products (18%).
  **Science-based**
- Cluster linked to marketing digital technologies and microelectronics in the electrical, railway and transportation equipment and materials industry (17%).
Table 6. (Continuation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test (using IBM-SPSS software)</th>
<th>FYP within Degrees in BAM and Tourism (total sample: 131 cases)</th>
<th>FYP within Degree in BAM (partial sample: 95 cases)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of the capacity shown in the FYP to draw conclusions (V10): multivariate regression (V8, V9 and V11 as regressors). (DW: Durbin-Watson statistic).</td>
<td>The projects in which conclusions of quality (V10) are extracted significantly (1%) are those that present better production (V11), with a non-significant global model and DW of 1.52.</td>
<td>The projects where quality conclusions (V10) are reached to a significant degree (1%) are those that are better presented (V11), with a non-significant global model and DW of 1.46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of the practical applicability of the FYP (V12): multivariate regression (V8, V9 and V11 as regressors). (DW: Durbin-Watson statistic).</td>
<td>The projects where greater practical applicability is appreciated (V12) are significantly those that present better production (V11). For them, the weighting of the regressor is less than proportional (0.81), with ordinate at the origin of 1.078; significant (1%) and DW of 1.50.</td>
<td>The projects where greater practical applicability is identified (V12) to a significant degree are those that are better presented (V11). For them, the weight of the regressor is less than proportional (0.81), with ordinate at the origin of 1.1; significant (5%) and DW of 1.53.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: in house.
7. Conclusions

The Dialogue between Marketing and Innovation is seen as dual, as Innovation in Marketing and Marketing for Innovation. In the first of the possibilities, the Conceptual Framework of Innovation (theory of technical change, agents and innovation categories) is applied to the improvement in Marketing techniques and strategies while, in the second case, we study how to persuade customers of the greater value offered by new or improved products and services, using the Conceptual Framework of Marketing (the 4Ps). In this study it has been possible to verify the existence of this dialogue by researching into how our students in the UNED between 2014 and 2017 have tackled the phenomenon of innovation since they completed their Final Year Project (FYP) (131 cases) in the subjects of Planning (69 cases) and Commercial Research (62 cases), the Degrees of BAM (95 cases) and Tourism (36 cases). From this conceptualization of the Dialogue between Marketing and Innovation, a broad line of academic research has opened up for future studies to explore how this interaction occurs, in what situations and with what results.

In response to the questions that were formulated in the introductory part of this paper and its objectives, firstly it is concluded that the FYPs presented by the undergraduate students contain an innovation component in line with the average level of the industry as a whole, as regards Spanish producers of marketable goods and services. Of the 131 cases considered, 16% did marketing planning or research on products and services of high and medium-high intensity in R & D, belonging to categories 1 to 10 of the INE-ISIC classification, in Pavitt’s science based sectors (1984).

As a result of the segmentations of the total sample - and partial sample of FYP of BAM - by conglomerates, we have been able to distinguish up to six homogeneous clusters from each other and differentiated from the rest. Four of them, those of the agri-food value chain (30%), hotel and catering business (24-22%), health and social services (14-13%) and the textile sector (14-18%), correspond to Pavitt’s category of Supplier-dominated Sectors, where the predominant strategies are cost leadership and price competition. Additionally, their main source of innovation, apart from actively listening to the market, comes from the technology incorporated through tooling and processing equipment, their business structures coming under the category of SMEs.

A fifth group of FYPs centred on the capital goods industry (36%), under Pavitt’s category of Specialized Suppliers. These projects were characterized by developing differentiation strategies based on the design and brand image of the product, which make knowledge their main competitive weapon, together with technological surveillance and the management of industrial property (patents) and commercial property (brands). Finally, the sixth of the FYP clusters identified was the group dealing with the commercialization of microelectronics within the category of electrical, railway and transport material and equipment (12-17%), in Pavitt’s category of Science-based sectors. This group was very active in running their own R & D or under contract with technology centres or institutes and, due to the nature of
the products or services they commercialize, they predominantly developed highly segmented or niche strategies.

Based on the above results, related to the sector of products and services dealt with in the marketing FYPs, and their level of innovation – as regards railway and transport material, the highest level, and the furniture industry, the lowest - it is also concluded that innovation clearly appears in the approach to students’ undergraduate projects. With highly realistic approaches, it was seen that they are also oriented in a diverse way to the economic sectors which, in practice, will contribute unequivocally to greater individual competitiveness for the industrial or service sectors, as well as to the global resilience of Spanish production.

In addition, the analysis of the variables that define the academic quality of the FYPs, shows that, when the projects presented obtain solid conclusions from their analyses and when the students make the effort to seek their own practical application or, directly, they work with real situations and professional orientation, these factors appear linked to good practical application of the FYP, including presentation and drafting. Thus, the student who does a good project, is careful to deal with all aspects.

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How and where our marketing students propose to innovate...


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