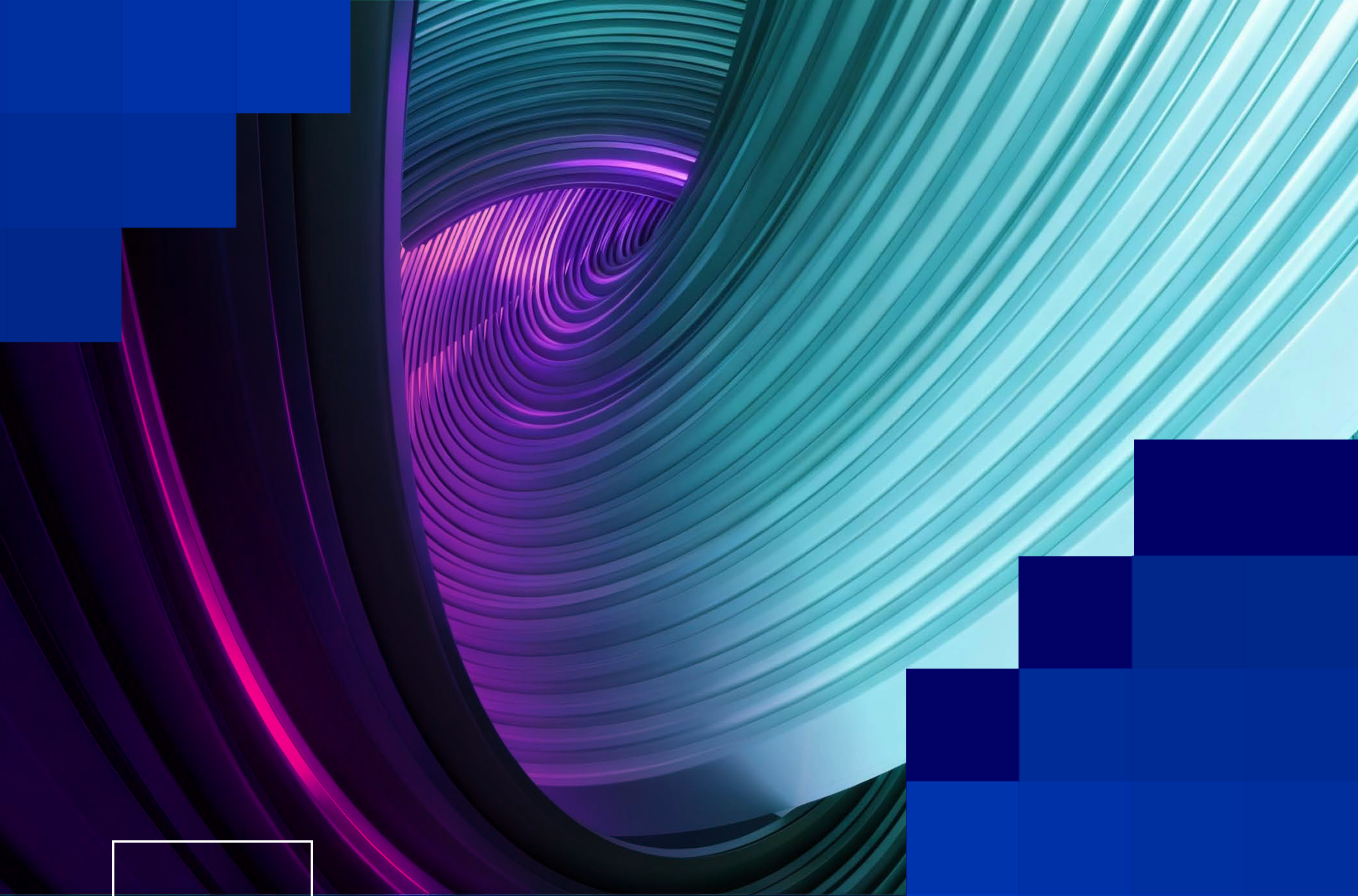


INDUSTRY SECTOR REPORT

MARKET UPDATE

# Diversified Industries

JUNE 2026

IE University Talent & Careers

# Executive Summary

Diversified Industries include the FMCG, Luxury, Retail, Automotive, Energy, Healthcare, Hospitality, Marketing, Industrial Products, and Sports sectors. It remains IE University's largest employment ecosystem, representing 35.2% of total placements in 2025. Despite modest overall growth, these industries are entering a period of deep organizational transition driven by AI adoption, geopolitical fragmentation, changing consumer behavior, and structural shifts in talent demand.

Companies are investing heavily in generative AI, predictive analytics, automation, and AI-enabled decision-making, but large-scale productivity gains remain uneven. Most organizations are still transitioning from experimentation toward enterprise-wide AI transformation. This shift is redesigning workflows, operating models, and talent structures across industries. These changes are affecting graduates seeking entry-level positions.

In a job market with declining entry-level positions, it is more important than ever for IE University to leverage, strengthen, and expand our existing employer partnerships to ensure successful career outcomes for our students.

↑ **1.4%**
YoY organic growth

**35.2%**
of IE total placements

**+5**
Industry verticals covered

# PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides an annual update on the state of the industry, key talent trends, employer landscape, and strategic recommendations for IE University's Careers team and academic stakeholders.

# 1. Industry Overview & Market Trends

The Diversified Industries Team represents IE University's broadest employer partnership division, covering FMCG, Luxury, Retail, Automotive, Defense, Energy, Industrial Products, Healthcare, Hospitality, Sports, Marketing Agencies, Market Research, and related sectors. Since the team focuses primarily on large multinational organizations, we increasingly observe common macroeconomic and technological trends impacting most sectors simultaneously.

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

It is impossible to create sweeping generalizations about the various sectors covered by this team. Clear trends like technological disruption, geopolitical instability, and changing demographics are impacting the corporate workplace on a global level. This report will first examine the macro-level trends and then review their impact on individual industries and the unique challenges they face.

The current landscape can best be described as one of "organizational transition." Companies continue to invest heavily in artificial intelligence, but most are still in the transition phase between experimentation and enterprise-wide productivity transformation. The future of work will require redesigning workflows, operating models, and talent structures to adapt to an increasingly AI-enabled business environment. This provides both opportunity and challenges for IE students, especially the youngest ones entering the workplace for the first time.

## KEY TRENDS ACROSS INDUSTRIES

### 1. AI Reshapes Organizations, but Large-Scale Productivity Gains Remain Uneven

Artificial intelligence is now embedded into the strategic priorities of nearly every multinational orga-

**AI MARKET IN THE PHARMA INDUSTRY**

nization. Companies across FMCG, Healthcare, Retail, Energy, Hospitality, and Marketing are implementing generative AI, predictive analytics, automation, and AI-enabled decision-making tools. Examples include:

- **FMCG:** Estée Lauder and Jo Malone London have launched the Jo Malone London Scent Advisor, an AI-powered digital experience designed to help customers choose fragrances.
- **Healthcare:** In the pharma industry alone, the AI market is projected to grow from more than $4 billion in 2025 to $25.7 billion by 2030 as companies are applying generative AI and machine learning to diagnostics, drug discovery, and clinical trial optimization.
- **Marketing Agencies:** WPP has shifted from a holding company with multiple autonomous agencies toward an AI-enabled operating model based on only a few key divisions.

Despite widespread implementation, large-scale productivity gains remain inconsistent. Companies are increasingly moving toward "agentic AI" operating models where AI tools support autonomous workflow execution. This transition is expected to accelerate organizational restructuring throughout 2026 and 2027.

## 2. Decline in Entry-Level Hiring

One of the most important labor market developments affecting IE University graduates is the structural decline in traditional entry-level opportunities. Large corporations increasingly prioritize smaller but more specialized graduate intakes, hybrid business-technology profiles, experienced lateral hires, and AI-enabled productivity improvements instead of headcount growth.

> According to a study by the Stanford Digital Economy Lab, workers aged 22–25 experienced a 13% relative employment decline between 2022 and 2025 in high AI-exposure occupations—particularly in software development, marketing, analytics, and business support functions.
>
> Stanford Digital Economy Lab, 2025

This trend is particularly visible in junior analytical roles, administrative and coordination positions, and technology-adjacent business functions. While IE University has not yet seen a drop in employment, data from advanced economies like the US and the UK confirm this decline.

### 3. Geopolitical Fragmentation

Geopolitical instability continues reshaping global business operations. Although the Middle East conflict may de-escalate by the time of publication, the global energy market is expected to remain undersupplied for months, resulting in higher energy prices, continued logistics disruptions, greater operational costs, and increased complexity in global supply chains.

At the same time, Europe's renewed defense spending and industrial policy shifts are reshaping the aerospace and defense sectors. Companies are awakening to a new world order where governments' interventions are clearly defining the winners and losers in the arena of global business.

## MARKET GROWTH & OUTLOOK

**Market Growth & Outlook**

| Sector | Key Developments |
| --- | --- |
| **FMCG & Retail** | Modest growth expected in 2026, mostly pricing-driven rather than volume expansion. Mature markets subdued; India, SE Asia, and LATAM driving consumption growth.<br>**In-demand profiles:** E-commerce & Digital Marketing |
| **Luxury** | Under pressure from slower Chinese consumption growth. Bain & Company estimates luxury sales could decline ~2% in 2026.<br>**In-demand profiles:** Digital Commerce, Experience Mgmt |
| **Energy & Industrial** | Demand continues increasing globally, driven by data center expansion, AI infrastructure growth, electrification, and industrial modernization.<br>**In-demand profiles:** Data Centre construction-related positions |
| **Healthcare** | Weight-loss drugs (particularly GLP-1s such as Wegovy, Ozempic, and Zepbound) are having ripple effects across healthcare well beyond obesity treatment.<br>**In-demand profiles:** Commercial strategy, digital healthcare management |
| **Hospitality** | Tourism in Europe continues to benefit from post-pandemic recovery and luxury travel demand. Heavy investments in Middle East could be impacted by geopolitical instability and soften growth.<br>**In-demand profiles:** Digital Commerce, Experience Mgmt |
| **Marketing Agencies** | Entering significant restructuring as generative AI automates creative production, market analysis, and campaign execution.<br>**In-demand profiles:** AI Transformation Lead, Marketing Automation |

# GLOBAL & REGIONAL INFLUENCES

## Europe

Mario Draghi's report, The Future of European Competitiveness, has called for a more interventionist, investment-led EU industrial strategy to close the competitiveness gap with the US and China. Europe's structurally high energy prices are seen as a major competitiveness handicap, which are only exacerbated by the recent conflict involving Iran. Draghi estimates the EU needs €750–800 billion in additional annual investment in the defense sector, roughly 4.5–5% of EU GDP, to remain competitive.

## Middle East

According to The Economist, even if hostilities ease quickly, Gulf oil production would not snap back immediately: full normalization would likely take six months or longer, particularly if infrastructure repairs, shipping insurance constraints, and security risks persist. Goldman Sachs similarly estimates Gulf producers could restore roughly 70% of lost output within three months and close to 90% within six months under a stable scenario.

## Asia-Pacific

Chinese electric-vehicle manufacturers continue to strengthen their global position even as domestic growth moderates, as intense competition and weaker consumer demand at home have forced companies to become more efficient, technologically aggressive, and export-oriented.

## Americas

Since the start of 2026, the U.S. labor market has shown resilience despite some volatility, with the economy adding approximately 162,000 net jobs through April according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# 2. Sector-Specific Insights

## FMCG, LUXURY & RETAIL

Consumer-facing industries continue navigating inflationary pressures and shifting consumption behaviors. A “K-shaped” economy is emerging in key markets, where premium and discount segments grow while the mid-market faces pressure. Direct-to-consumer models, personalization technologies, and data-driven retail strategies continue gaining traction.

Key examples of these trends:

- **FMCG Demergers:** Kraft Heinz explored breaking itself up after years of weak growth, reflecting investor pressure on diversified consumer portfolios; the company’s shares have dramatically underperformed since the 2015 merger.
- **Tobacco Expansion through Reinvention:** Philip Morris has done the opposite, expanding aggressively into smoke-free nicotine, with Q1 2026 revenue up 9.1% to $10.15 billion, driven by products like IQOS and ZYN.

## AUTOMOTIVE, DEFENSE, ENERGY & INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS

Government intervention—and in some cases the lack of it—is increasingly determining winners and losers in strategic industries. In defense, direct state action is creating demand almost overnight: Germany has plans to borrow €378 billion for defense between 2025–2029, a windfall that has transformed prospects for European defense manufacturers. By contrast, in automotive, the absence of intervention can be equally consequential: while the EU imposed tariffs on Chinese EVs, the UK did not, helping Chinese brands nearly double their UK market share to 9.7% in 2025 (around 196,000 vehicles sold), with EVs reaching a record 23.4% of all new car sales.

> Government intervention—and in some cases the lack of it—is increasingly determining winners and losers in strategic industries.

## FMCG, Luxury & Retail

**+9.1%**

Philip Morris — Q1 2026 revenue growth
**to $10.15 billion**

## Marketing Agencies & Market Research

**$13B**

Omnicom — proposed acquisition of IPG

## Pharma & Healthcare

**+25%**

California healthcare & social assistance jobs (2022–2026)

**>$350M**
Novo Nordisk oral Wegovy, Q1 sales

## Hospitality

**>50%**

Foreign trips forecast rise over the next decade

**20,000**
Lufthansa short-haul flights cut

## Automotive, Defense, Energy & Industrial Products

**€378B**

German defense borrowing (2025–2029)

**9.7%**
Chinese brands' UK market share

**23.4%**
EVs, share of new car sales (record)

## Sports

**~80%**
U.S. host-city hotels with bookings below forecast

**>500M**

FIFA World Cup 2026 ticket requests

## PHARMA & HEALTHCARE

Healthcare remains one of the most resilient growth sectors globally, driven by both breakthrough drugs and demographic demand. The GLP-1 boom has transformed pharma economics: Novo Nordisk's new oral Wegovy generated more than $350 million in first-quarter sales alone, underscoring how profitable obesity treatments have become. At the same time, ageing populations are reshaping labour markets. In California, healthcare and social assistance jobs grew 25% between 2022 and 2026, offsetting weakness in technology and other sectors, making healthcare a bigger engine of job creation than tech as of this year.

## MARKETING AGENCIES & MARKET RESEARCH

The marketing and communications industry is undergoing rapid restructuring as generative AI automates parts of creative production, media planning, and campaign execution. The shift is already visible in consolidation moves. Omnicom's proposed $13 billion acquisition of IPG reflects pressure to achieve scale and invest in AI-driven capabilities rather than traditional agency models.

## HOSPITALITY

Global international travel reached record levels last year, with foreign trips forecast to rise by more than 50% over the next decade, showing that even rising costs and political disruption have not dampened consumers' appetite to travel (just yet). Nevertheless, conflict in the Middle East and airspace restrictions are making international travel more expensive and less efficient in the short-term. Lufthansa recently cut 20,000 short-haul flights through October to manage soaring fuel costs.

## SPORTS

Sports remains one of the most commercially resilient sectors globally, but even mega-events are increasingly exposed to economic and political friction. The 2026 FIFA World Cup in North America is expected to be one of the largest sporting events ever, with over 500 million ticket requests, yet the hospitality response has been unexpectedly muted: an American Hotel & Lodging Association survey found that roughly 80% of hotels in U.S. host cities report bookings below initial forecasts, reflecting concerns over visa delays, high travel costs, and geopolitical uncertainty.

even rising costs and political disruption have not dampened consumers' appetite to travel (just yet).

# 3. Talent Landscape & Recruitment Trends

**Various reports from organizations like the World Economic Forum have discussed the skills that will be in demand in the future. While it is impossible to discuss each sector in detail, detailed below are the emerging skill clusters in demand across all Diversified Industries.**

## IN-DEMAND SKILLS

### Digital Competencies

- Data literacy and quantitative reasoning across business functions.
- AI and machine learning fundamentals applicable to business strategy.
- Digital marketing, CRM, and performance analytics.

### Human & Social Skills

- Critical thinking and complex problem-solving in ambiguous environments.
- Communication, stakeholder management, and cross-cultural collaboration.
- Leadership, emotional intelligence, and team effectiveness.
- Ethical reasoning and responsible decision-making.

### Strategic & Business Skills

- Financial modeling, scenario planning, and investment analysis.
- Sustainability strategy and ESG integration into business operations
- Project management and organizational change management.

> World Economic Forum, 2025: "The most future-proof skills are not purely technical. Rather, they combine technical fluency with distinctly human capabilities — creativity, ethical judgment, and social intelligence — that AI cannot readily replicate.
>
> (WEF, Creating Economic Opportunities for All in the Intelligent Age, 2025)

# EMERGING ROLES

### FMCG, Luxury Retail

**Digital Commerce Roles** – Hybrid commercial-digital professionals who combine brand management, e-commerce strategy, performance marketing, and customer analytics to drive omnichannel growth and direct-to-consumer performance.

### Automotive, Defense, Energy & Industrial Products

**Digital Engineering & Product Transformation** – Profiles spanning EV systems, battery technology, software-defined vehicles, digital twins, and connected industrial systems as traditional engineering becomes increasingly software-led.

### Pharma & Healthcare

**Healthcare Analytics** – Talent working across health data, digital therapeutics, remote monitoring, AI-enabled diagnostics, and data-driven patient care optimization.

### Marketing Agencies & Market Research

**AI-Enabled Creative Strategy** – Emerging roles blending brand strategy, generative AI tools, prompt engineering, and content automation to redesign creative production workflows.

**EMERGING ROLES · DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES SECTOR 2026**
Key emerging roles across the sector's core industry verticals

**FMCG, Luxury Retail**
→ DIGITAL COMMERCE ROLES

**Automotive, Defense, Energy & Industrial Products**
→ DIGITAL ENGINEERING & PRODUCT TRANSFORMATION

**Pharma & Healthcare**
→ HEALTHCARE ANALYTICS

**Marketing Agencies & Market Research**
→ AI-ENABLED CREATIVE STRATEGY

# RECRUITMENT PATTERNS

- **Overall hiring remains resilient, but uneven by sector:** While total recruitment activity continues to grow, supported in part by a relatively strong labour market in Spain, demand varies significantly by industry. For example, the Healthcare sector has seen a drop in MBA hiring while increasing their technical profile hiring.
- **Transformation-oriented profiles remain the most in demand:** Across sectors, employers increasingly prioritise candidates with strong digital literacy, data fluency, and comfort working alongside AI-enabled tools.
- **Recruitment cycles are becoming longer and more competitive:** Hiring processes are taking longer than in previous years, with many graduates now spending 4–5 months in active job search.
- **Internal retention is becoming financially more attractive than job switching:** For the first time in over a decade, wage growth for employees who remain with their current employer has outpaced that of those changing jobs, suggesting that in some markets, negotiating internally may offer a better near-term financial outcome than switching companies.

# GEOGRAPHIC HIRING TRENDS

- **Talent hotspots:** Hotspots include cities like Madrid, Mexico City, and Amsterdam. The Netherlands is increasingly emerging as a hub for senior and specialist talent, particularly in areas such as operations, supply chain, digital transformation.
- **Remote vs. on-site:** Most companies offer hybrid models.
- **IEU talent placement geography:** Spain now represents 41% of MBA hires in Diversified Industries, making it the most important employment geography for IE talent and reflecting the country's strong economic performance. In 2025, Spain grew by approximately 3.2% GDP, making it the fastest-growing major advanced economy in Europe.

**TALENT PLACEMENT GEOGRAPHY · DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIES SECTOR 2026**

Spain's share of MBA hires in the sector


**~3.2%**

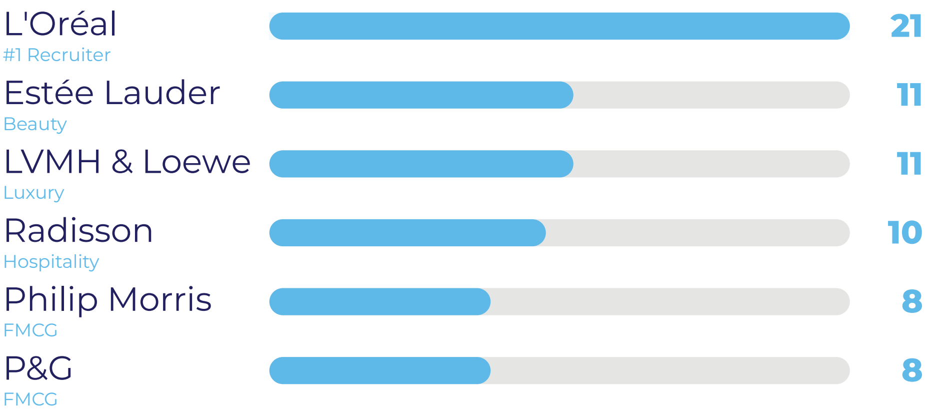
Spain GDP growth (2025)

# 4. Key Employers & Partnerships

**An overview of the main employers recruiting IEU talent in this sector, strategic partnerships, and alumni engagement data.**

## TOP EMPLOYERS BY VOLUME IN 2025

**IE BUSINESS SCHOOL**
**Top Consumer Recruiters 2025**




## KEY EMPLOYERS BY SECTOR

| Sector | Key Employers |
|---|---|
| **FMCG, Luxury & Retail** | AB InBev, Carrefour, Danone, Emma, Estée Lauder, Ferrero, Leroy Merlin, L'Oréal, Mondelez, Nestlé, Philip Morris International, Procter & Gamble, Red Bull, Suntory |
| **Luxury** | Armani, Chalhoub, Loewe, Luxottica, LVMH, Richemont |
| **Automotive, Defense Energy & Industrial Products** | Acciona, Airbus, BASF, Cemex, Emerson, Iberdrola, Louis Dreyfus, Qatar Airways, Repsol, Shell, Siemens, Signify, TotalEnergies |
| **Pharma & Healthcare** | Eli Lilly, GSK, Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, Sandoz, Roche |
| **Marketing & Market Research** | WPP, Graphite, Find Your Flow, Emzingo, IPSOS |
| **Hospitality & Leisure** | Radisson, Jumeirah, Marriott, Meliá |

# KEY PARTNERSHIPS WITH IEU

## Existing strategic partnerships

Uniqlo, Siemens, Suntory, Emerson, Cemex, Signify

## Recruitment agreements

In 2025, four MOUs were signed with recruitment components including El Sewedy Electric, Cox Energy, The Garage (KSA), Estée Lauder, and Chalhoub Group.

## Events & engagement

Our team organizes various sector-specific events including IE's Energy Day, Healthcare Day, Hospitality Day, and Luxury Day, in addition to 30+ individual company presentations and biannual MBA Talent Days and Career Forums.

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INDUSTRY
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FOR STUDENTS

# Diversified Industries

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