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Digital Vector of Marketing Specialist Research Training

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Abstract. In this paper, the authors analyze the labor market requirements for marketing specialists in order to understand what skills they need to develop for successful functioning in the era of economic space digitalization. Research methods of sociology, such as questionnaires and content analysis, were chosen as methods to achieve this goal. The authors obtained data that indicate that the skills relevant to jobseekers in the labor market include tough professional skills associated with the digitalization of marketing activities, including understanding how to work with Big data or what are Python and R programming languages, as well as a range of soft skills, from teamwork to communication with clients. The conclusions reflect the results of the study and emphasize the need for timely adaptation of universities' educational programs to new market requirements. Also, the research results form the basis for the design of programs of additional professional education. The novelty of the materials presented in this work is confirmed by the identified structure of research competencies of a marketing specialist, taking into account the received primary empirical data on the changing requirements of employers to job seekers in this area. The results obtained make it possible to determine promising directions for further research. Constant monitoring of the actual requirements of employers allows us to identify trends in the modification of professional tasks and outstrip the demands of the labor market by changing the content and methods of training.

Keywords: marketing specialist, research competencies, graduates, job functions, employer requirements, skills, digital technologies.

Research area: Social Structure, Social Institutions and Processes; Economics.

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Цифровой вектор исследовательской подготовки специалиста по маркетингу

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Аннотация. В данной работе авторы анализируют требования рынка труда к специалистам по маркетингу, чтобы понять, какие навыки им нужно развивать для успешного функционирования в эпоху цифровизации экономического пространства. В качестве методов для достижения данной цели были выбраны исследовательские методы социологии, такие как анкетирование и контент-анализ. Авторами были получены данные, которые указывают на то, что в число навыков, актуальных для соискателей на рынке труда, входят как жесткие профессиональные навыки, связанные с цифровизацией маркетинговой деятельности, включая понимание того, как работать с Big data или что такое языки программирования Python и R, так и целый ряд мягких навыков, начиная с умения работать в команде и заканчивая навыком налаживать коммуникацию с клиентами. Выводы отражают результаты исследования и делают упор на необходимость своевременной адаптации образовательных программ вузов к новым требованиям рынка. Также результаты исследований формируют базу для проектирования программ дополнительного профессионального образования. Новизна материалов, представленных в данной работе, подтверждается выявленной структурой исследовательских компетенций специалиста по маркетингу с учетом полученных первичных эмпирических данных о меняющихся требованиях работодателей к соискателям вакансий в данной сфере. Полученные результаты дают возможность определить перспективные направления дальнейших исследований. Постоянный мониторинг актуальных требований работодателей позволяет выявить тенденции видоизменения профессиональных задач и опережать запросы рынка труда посредством изменения содержания и методов обучения.

Ключевые слова: специалист по маркетингу, исследовательские компетенции, выпускники, трудовые функции, требования работодателей, навыки, цифровые технологии.

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Introduction

The problem of convergence of the labor market and the sphere of personnel training has always been and remains relevant. In order to

ensure a timely response of the training system to changes in labor market requirements, since 2013, the development and regulation of the application of professional standards has been carried out

(Resolution, 2013). This activity is aimed at improving the quality of labor resources and achieving their competitiveness in the national and international labor markets.

It should be noted that the content of the professional activity of a marketing research specialist is undergoing significant changes, which are largely due to the rapid introduction of modern digital technologies in various spheres of life and production. Information technologies penetrate deeply into all spheres of public life, changing the behavior models of all market actors, which requires new methods of studying target audiences and communicating with them (Simonova, 2021). These changes are reflected in the following:

- growth in the number of Internet users. First of all, this applies to young people and the economically active part of the population;
- high growth rates of the e-commerce market;
- building up digital potential by Russian companies: the share of cloud service users organizing the storage and processing of corporate data has grown 1.5 times over five years to 28,1 % (Internet, 2021);
- active implementation by companies of customer relationship management (CRM) systems, in the software environment of which detailed data about each client and the history of relationships with him (purchases, discounts, special offers, participation in promotions, etc.) are accumulated (Skorobogatyh, 2016), thus, CRM systems are becoming an effective tool for retaining customers;
- development of Internet promotion technologies (high-tech marketing model, partnership programs, Internet activism, testimonials, gamification, alternate reality games), application of methods to stimulate sales on the Internet;
- the emergence of new directions, methods and tools in research activities – analysis of website usability, analysis and optimization of advertising campaigns on the Internet, analysis of statistics in web analytics systems, etc;
- wide application of mixed (qualitative-quantitative) research methods, measurement of consumers' involuntary reactions to marketing stimulus with the help of special equipment (electroencephalography, eye-tracking systems)

and software. Cognitive neuroscience techniques such as gaze tracking and biofeedback are making a huge contribution to understanding conscious and subconscious consumer reactions (Ababkova, 2022)

Today, there is a widespread use of the Machine Learning tool in solving various marketing problems (assortment planning, planning promotions, purchasing management, etc.). The market stimulates the integration of IT technologies into various types of professional activities and the emergence of new professions at the junction of different fields of activity: Big Data analyst, Data Scientist, data researcher, data processing specialist, etc. Sorting and analysis of data from different sources based on special algorithms allow you to reveal hidden patterns and generate ideas. University graduates, new specialists and analysts, having competence in the field of information technology, solve important business problems in a short time and with a high level of accuracy and reliability (Petrova, 2020).

These changes had a critical impact on such a field of professional activity as marketing research and caused a revision of the competencies of a marketing research specialist who graduates from universities.

Further, the paper will present the requirements for marketing professionals with an emphasis on research skills and competencies; the methods used in the research are described; its main results are presented and conclusions are formulated on what should be paid attention to when designing educational programs in order to ensure the successful exit of a marketing specialist to the digital format of the market.

1. Theoretical framework

Many researchers note the importance of assessing the professional competencies of specialists by not only the employers' community, but also the scientific community. So, in particular, E. Giddens writes that "rationalization of action, in all the variety of circumstances of interaction, is the principle by which the generalized "competence" of actors is assessed by others" and connects the competence of social actors with the concept of rationalization introduced by him (Giddens, 1999; Ksenofontova, 2014)

Research competence is formed, first of all, as the skill of working with information, which specializes in a certain scientific field, which as a goal has the expansion of opportunities for the student's professional participation in academic life (Shapoval, 2019). Currently, in the context of the widespread use of digital technologies, research competence is considered in a system of competencies that reflect skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, media literacy, and communicative competence. All of them are focused on the ability to understand and interpret information presented in various forms: text, symbolic, video and audio messages. The interpretation of information understanding can be based on the model of understanding a complex message by A.R. Luria, which consists of three elements: understanding of individual units; understanding connections and structure; understanding of the whole (Luria, 1979).

In the structure of competence, the authors rely on the concept of highlighting such elements as motivational, cognitive, procedural and reflective components (Zdanovich, 2012). Research competence is formed in practice, it is based on an activity approach, which emphasizes the procedures and techniques used in research activities (Savenkov, 2004):

- ability to observe;
- skill of problem formulation;
- skill of formulating hypotheses;
- ability and skill to conduct experiments;
- skill of interpretation and definition of concepts.

In the set of necessary skills of a researcher, there are abilities and proven techniques demanded by the research cycle that allow formulating a problem, choosing a research strategy, planning, predicting results, analyzing and evaluating the research data obtained, doing the necessary work with information, demonstrating skills in preparing research reports, preparation and presentation of results, publication of scientific results.

V.D. Shadrikov calls these operations meta-intellectual processes, along with the indicated ones, he notes the importance of goal-setting, decision-making, control, self-

reflection, interpretation, proof, modeling (Shadrikov, 2014).

The essential aspects of the training of researchers are the creative component and the motivational one. The creative process implies the creation of a new product, obtained, on the one hand, from the uniqueness of the individual, and on the other, conditioned by the material, events, people and circumstances of life (Russian, 2018). Among the motivational aspects of the study is the curiosity and cognitive activity of students, which should be integrated with the mandatory parameters for mastering research activities, clearly spelled out in the educational program, including a curriculum balanced from the standpoint of theory and practice.

If we talk about such skills of researchers as skills to integrate, coordinate and organize, then they also seem to be critically important for a marketing specialist (Dühring, 2017).

2. Methods

The aim of this work is to analyze the labor market requirements for university graduates – future marketing research specialists. Among the tasks, we can mention the conduct of sociological research, which made it possible to identify the elements of the graduate's research competencies that are in demand by the market, as well as the formulation of the problem of taking these changes into account in the universities' educational programs.

The following research hypothesis was formulated: due to changes in the market demand for marketing research, the training of marketing specialists is undergoing an adjustment in the direction of expanding the range of research functions that involve the use of digital technologies.

We used the following research methods: 1) a survey of employers conducted at Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University in order to reveal how satisfied they are with the quality of education of university graduates whom they employ. The sample size of employers is 68 experts representing companies and organizations responsible for personnel selection. The period of the survey was from May 1 to May 21, 2021. The employer questionnaire was posted on the LimeSurvey service (Raz-

inkina, 2021); 2) content analysis of documents (professional standards); 3) analysis of the vacancies of specialists posted on national and regional job search sites; 4) analysis of employers' reviews.

First, the requirements of employers to university graduates were studied (using the example of SPbPU), and then professional standards and vacancies were analyzed.

At the stage of studying professional standards (Professional, 2019), generalized labor functions, labor functions and requirements for qualifications (necessary skills) are highlighted as categories of content analysis.

At the stage of studying vacancies as a category of content analysis, the names of professions, job responsibilities and skills (necessary skills) are determined. The sample included 600 current vacancies, in the text of which marketing research was indicated as duties or required skills. The research period was September 2023.

Geography of research: vacancies in the cities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Saratov, Perm, Rostov-on-Don, Ufa, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk were accepted for analysis.

Studying vacancies, we set ourselves several tasks: 1) study the demand in the labor market and trends in its change; 2) study of the most demanded professional competencies;

3) study of the qualitative parameters of the demand for narrow-profile specialists.

The methodology uses a systematic analysis of the problem of training a marketing specialist, which makes it possible to analyze research competence as fundamental for the formation of a graduate's labor function.

3. Results

At the first stage of the research, we studied the requirements of employers for university graduates (using the example of SPbPU).

When answering questions about employers' satisfaction with the level of theoretical and practical training of graduates, as well as their communicative qualities, the following answers were received (Fig. 1–3).

An analysis of the responses of employers' representatives shows that most of the respondents are mostly satisfied with the level of theoretical training of graduates (74%), 63% – with their communicative qualities, 57% – with the ability for systemic and critical thinking, 53% – with the ability to self-organization and self-development, 51% – the ability of graduates to team work and their leadership qualities, 47% – the ability to develop and implement projects, and least of all employers – 43% – are more likely satisfied with the level of practical training of graduates. Also, employers noted the importance of having such a competence

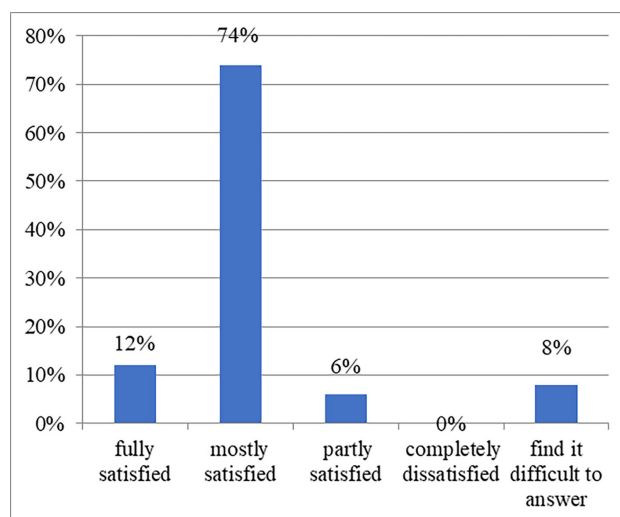


Fig. 1. How satisfied are you with the level of theoretical training of graduates? Compiled by the authors

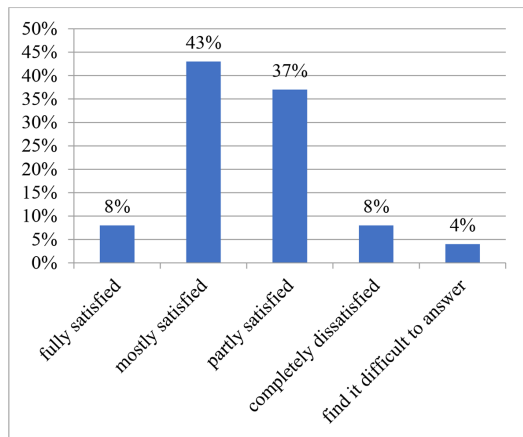


Fig. 2. How satisfied are you with the level of practical training of graduates? Compiled by the authors

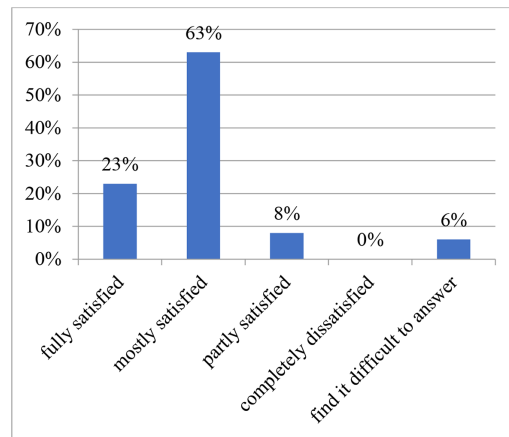


Fig. 3. How satisfied are you with the communicative qualities of the graduates? Compiled by the authors

as customer focus. This is due to the fact that a large number of enterprises are introducing into practice the elements and technologies of a customer-oriented approach (Melnikova, 2020; Rechkova, 2017).

The answers to the open-ended question about the additional knowledge and skills required for graduates in employment confirmed the orientation of employers towards the practical orientation of education, the inextricable link between theory and practice, noted the importance of project-based skills and professional training, taking into account communication skills and the ability to work in a team.

The results of the study confirmed the importance of the professional environment as a condition for the formation of the competencies necessary for a specialist. According to such researchers as K. A. Tatarinov, innovative competencies of job seekers are now becoming relevant for the labor market. Also, among the relevant competencies, it includes a focus on finding non-traditional solutions, a willingness to redefine problems and the perception of new opportunities in the market (Tatarinov, 2019). Some authors point out the importance of developing students' communication skills, preparing graduates for the future after graduation, for relations with employers, taking into account all the factors that can lead to inequality in their further career advancement (Grant, 2021).

The employers' survey results using the example of their assessment of the SPbPU graduates' competencies were supplemented with an analysis of the competencies and labor functions of a marketing specialist, which allows us to look at the problem of labor market requirements for applicants from the other side – to identify a request for a research orientation, which is fundamental for working in a digital space. So, we have selected approved professional standards and draft documents, including the group of classes 2431 and 2421 according to the All-Russian classifier of occupations (specialists in advertising and marketing, analysts of management systems and organization) (Russian 2018; Russian 2020; Professional, 2019). According to the results of our study, it was revealed that the draft professional standard “Sociologist: specialist in fundamental and applied research” includes the profession of an advertising and marketing specialist, but contains only one generalized labor function related to the area of interest to us (Conducting marketing research on the elements of the complex marketing, code B). At the same time, labor functions, the necessary knowledge and skills are described in a very generalized way. For example, the necessary skills for the labor function Organization of marketing research on the elements of the marketing mix and processing of its results (code B / 02.6):

- analyze large volumes of information and databases about the marketing environment of the organization;
- use methods of forecasting sales of products and markets;
- work with specialized programs for collecting and managing marketing data and forecasting, etc. (Professional, 2019).

The same results were obtained based on the results of studying the professional standard "Marketer" approved in 2018 (Russian, 2018).

In 2020, the industry professional standard "Marketing Research Specialist in the Food and Processing Industry" (Russian, 2020) was approved. In the professional standard, the labor functions of a specialist include analysis and forecasting of commodity markets and markets for factors of production in the field of food and processing industries based on the operation of a marketing information system; creation of the marketing information system of the organization. In our opinion, such a range of tasks to be solved is more typical for the heads of departments (divisions) of marketing research.

In general, the considered professional standards give an idea of the content of a specialist's work and can be used, for example, as templates in the preparation of job de-

scriptions. But when designing educational programs, it is necessary to have information about the current areas of marketing research, about modern methods of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data (Artamonova, 2015; Artamonova, 2016). Also, the professional standard should become the root structure, "which leads to branching, concretization and further detailing of certain types of activities" (Agafonova, 2021). The market requires profiling of knowledge, as evidenced by the results of the analysis of current vacancies.

The conducted content analysis of vacancies showed that the largest share of the sample (31,2 %) was made up of the vacancies of a marketing analyst, followed by vacancies of a marketing research manager (specialist). The distribution of occupations included in the sample is shown in Fig. 4.

As can be seen from the graph in Fig. 5, almost half of the analyzed vacancies contain requirements for programming skills in Python or R. Also, some vacancies (14 % of the sample) have requirements for proficiency in tools for processing large data arrays (SQL, ETL tools, BI tools, Big Quer, Q research software, etc.) The data obtained indicate that an increasing number of employers expect candidates to have skills in working with Big Data.

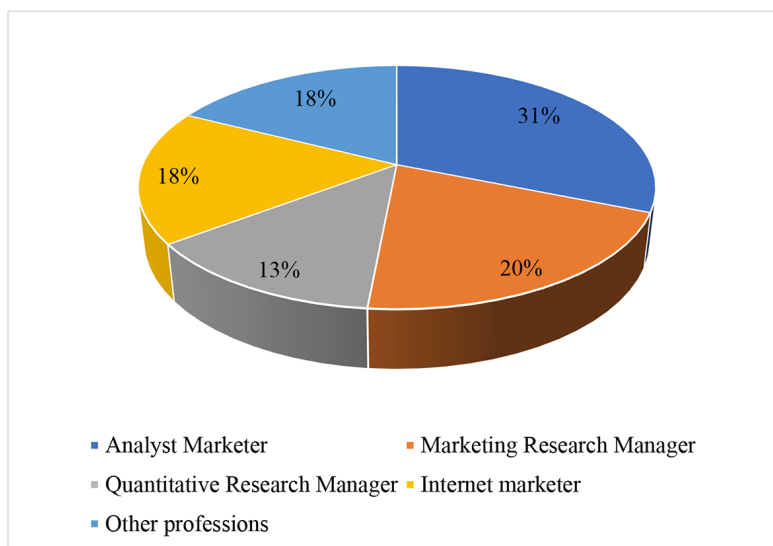


Fig. 4. Distribution of professions included in the sample (search for vacancies by keywords "marketing research") Compiled by the authors



Fig. 5. The list of the most in-demand skills based on the results of the vacancies' analysis (frequency) Compiled by the authors

An understanding of digital marketing tools (or additional education, experience in digital marketing) is required from candidates in 72 % of cases (432 vacancies).

The focus on digitalization is confirmed by the data of other authors. In particular, M.A. Simakina denotes the following list of skills for studying the future Internet marketer from Netology. Among the skills that are in demand, she includes the ability to draw up a marketing strategy; conduct market research; promote a product or service on the Internet; work with analytics; manage team and resources (Simakina, 2020).

Further, based on the requirements for candidates set out in job descriptions, we summarized the content of job functions in several relevant professions in the field of marketing research (in some cases, an additional sample was formed). We have obtained the following results (Table 1).

On the one hand, we can talk about the existing specialization within the framework of the studied professional activity. On the other hand,

small companies cannot afford to maintain a full-fledged research department and are looking for a specialist in the labor market with rich experience, capable of conducting both qualitative and quantitative research, as well as having minimal programming skills and working with big data arrays. We also noted the emergence of hybrid research methods. Despite the fact that the study of consumer behavior and attitudes is traditionally attributed to a qualitative type of research, speaking of the Customer Experience research, we record a large number of quantitative methods of data analysis (calculating the customer satisfaction index – CSI; customer loyalty indices – NPS, CLI; customer effort index – CES; word of mouth index – WoMI; consumer protection index – Customer Advocacy – CA; building a correlation model between loyalty and customer experience, etc.). The same applies to studies of habits and preferences (U&A Studies). Most experts consider these studies to be of a quantitative type, at the same time, focus groups and in-depth interviews are often used at the stage of data collection.

Table 1. Requirements of employers for marketing research specialists

Job title	Required skills
Quantitative Research Specialist	<p>selection and combination of methods to achieve research objectives; detailed planning of research and budget stages; development of a recruiting strategy for respondents; collection and analysis of marketing information about the market and its participants; monitoring and analysis of adjacent markets to determine their impact on the main markets of presence; analysis of the company's sales by product, segment, sales channel; analysis of the company's customer base; programming research questionnaires with setting up complex survey logic in systems: Oprossio, Survey Monkey; carrying out calculations, building models, assessments and forecasts, conducting analytics based on field data; short-term and long-term market forecasting and determination of the company's market share; calculation of market capacity and volumes; clustering, classification, time series analysis; correlation analysis; tracking of advertising, regular customer surveys, audits of advertisements on TV and radio; Life Time Value (LTV) forecasting; development of processes for the systematic collection, storage, analysis and active use of information and statistics; analysis and visualization of the collected data and materials; analysis of reports of studies carried out by other organizations; preparation of research reports, as well as development of recommendations for marketing campaigns / product launches</p>
Qualitative Research Specialist	<p>consumer research (consumption habits, purchase decision drivers); analysis of functional and emotional factors that influence purchasing decisions; study of the level of satisfaction and unmet needs; collection and analysis of trends in customer experience quality management (monitoring of competitive activities in the field of Customer Experience, monitoring trends in Customer Experience, tracking significant brand associations); identification and systematization of problems in the field of Customer Experience (analysis of data obtained from various sources to assess the quality of Customer Experience, investigation of one-time cases of requests or customer feedback, monitoring and structuring problems in Customer Experience); development of recommendations for prioritizing efforts on identified problems; U&A (Usage and Attitude) research on various topics; ethnographic research; conducting research on needs, forming customer stories; building CJM; ability to work with software platforms CJM, JTBD, Gains / Pains / Jobs; testing concepts / prototypes; testing advertising materials and brand identity, brand health tracking; Shop Along research; conducting focus groups (including online); conducting in-depth interviews.</p>
Data Analyst	<p>programming skills (Python, R, Tableau); work with data arrays; development of algorithms for solving business problems; building machine learning models; proficiency in SQL, ETL, BI, Big Query tools; prototyping and development of reports and Dashboards; formation of SQL queries; knowledge of the principles of databases; documenting the analytical (visual) part of DWH; data warehouse management (extracting data from external sources, transforming and cleaning data according to business needs; loading processed information into a corporate data warehouse); optimization of the data architecture of the tool / platform; user interface design.</p>

Compiled by the authors.

In general, it can be noted that the emergence of complex qualitative and quantitative methods in practice requires either the training of universal specialists or the organization of teamwork in the design and implementation of marketing research.

4. Discussion

According to a number of authors (Mozgovaya, 2021), classical quantitative studies (surveys using large samples) are becoming a thing of the past. Contrary to popular belief, there is a high demand for quantitative research specialists in the market. To check this contradiction, we studied the vacancies of these specialists in more detail in terms of job responsibilities and required skills. The results of the analysis showed that the majority of employers understand by quantitative research the analysis of market growth rates, sales dynamics and forecasting (short and medium term) of market development. We also noted that employers include mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods for collecting and analyzing data (for example, U&A Studies, UX research, brand health tracking, etc.) in the functionality of a quantitative research specialist. Sample design and questionnaire design skills were featured in only two vacancies.

Also, experts predict a change in the professional composition of research departments in companies and the emergence of IT specialists in them (Artamonova, 2015; Artamonova, 2016). Our research fully confirms these forecasts.

According to experts, the focus of research on the customer experience is becoming increasingly important in many markets due to the high level of competition. Indeed, customer or user experience research is important according to 22,5 % of employers.

Also, in order to identify newly emerging requirements and competencies, it is necessary to track trends in the Internet marketing and digitalization market. Examples are the assessments by market specialists of the demand for

new technologies in the field of modern marketing. For example, in forecasts of marketing development, the leading ideas are: 1) personalization; 2) predictive analytics; 3) voice search; 4) interactive video content; 5) virtual, augmented and mixed reality; 6) mobile payments; 7) the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies, etc.

Conclusion

All of the above confirms that it is necessary to constantly monitor the labor market and adapt educational programs for basic and additional professional education.

The obtained generalized descriptions of labor functions can be used to build / refine the competence models of specialists, to design the variable part of educational programs. In this regard, we consider a series of expert interviews to identify trends in the field of marketing research to be a promising area of research. Also, a group expert interview will help clarify the portrait of a future marketing research specialist.

Studies show that there are a number of professions that require specialized research skills (internet marketer, sales manager / commercial director, new product development manager, purchasing / supply specialist, business development manager, brand manager, etc.). An in-depth analysis of this issue will allow in the future to design programs of additional professional education

In general, it can be noted, based on the results of the research, that the requirements for marketing specialists clearly show an orientation towards the digital vector of the development of the profession and the ability to implement research functions. For example, an increasing number of employers expect candidates to have skills in working with Big Data and an understanding of digital marketing tools. Obviously, the requirements for applicants, in turn, modify the approaches to training a specialist in this area.

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