

# CHANGES IN THE COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR LEADERS IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY: FORECASTS AND ASSESSMENT OF THEIR REASONABILITY

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## Abstract

The relevance of the research on changes in the requirements for the managers' competence in tourism and hospitality aroused from the urgent companies' need for new skills of employees, which are necessary not only to change the way of fulfilling current job, but also to support and to be accepted by the employees significant changes in the companies' business priorities. The aim of the study is to assess the forecast and validity of changes in the requirements for the leaders' competence in tourism and hospitality. To achieve this goal, the authors of the study used comparative analysis methods of regulatory legal documents, analytical, synoptical and other materials, methods of classification, systematization and generalization of the data obtained, methods of expert assessment, as well as methods and technologies of heuristic modeling and foresight. The authors of the article systematized the genesis of approaches to assessing the most significant competencies of managers in the future. Taking into account the analysis of the software skills transformations in the future professions and their demand in tourism and hospitality, the process of specialists' interaction in the formation and promotion of hotel products in the context of digital transformation was modeled. Based on an expert survey, significant requirements for the managers' knowledge in tourism and hospitality enterprises have been ranked, which can be used by hotel management in the training development and development programs for middle and senior managers. The materials of the article may be used by the owners and managers of tourism and hospitality companies and other organizations, educational organizations that train personnel in the direction of tourism and hospitality.

**Keywords:** Competencies, hotel management, tourism, hospitality, foresight, digital transformation.

## INTRODUCTION

Much has always been said and written about the fact that the skills of university graduates and the skills available to candidates in the labor market do not meet the requirements of employers (Martin, 1993; Lisitzina et al., 2015; Masalimova & Shaidullina, 2016; Solomon, 2017; Yumatov et al., 2017; Zaitseva et al., 2017; Shaidullina et al., 2018; Tastan & Davoudi, 2019) however, after the pandemic start, the problem of a shortage in at least some personnel (Parminder, 2021) became more urgent and therefore for a while they began to write less about the need for changes in the training system for the modern economy (Skolkovo, 2021).

A McKinsey (2021a) study published in October 2021 noted that virtually all companies are now in extreme need of new employee skills. These skills are needed not only to change the way the current job is done, but also to support and accept significant changes in the companies' business priorities. McKinsey's global survey found that 69% of respondents have doubled their workforce development efforts since the pandemic start and are seeing clear benefits. An additional 71 to 90 percent of organizations surveyed that have implemented a large-scale software skills transformation noted that staff development had a positive impact on the ability to implement company strategy, employee productivity and satisfaction, and the employer brand. (Getting skills transformations right: The nine-ingredient recipe for success, 2021).

Thus, it is obvious that the study of changes in the requirements for the company leaders competencies in the current and long-term period is extremely relevant, including in tourism and hospitality - the sectors of the economy most affected by the consequences of the corona virus pandemic due to a sharp decrease in demand and because of the borders closure between countries and the restrictions introduction on internal tourism travel (Job Market Report, 2021).

## Method and Materials

The methodological basis of the study was formed by the general scientific principles of the systemic, process, structural and dialectical approaches to the study of organizational and methodological support for the system of training scientific and managerial personnel for tourism and the hospitality industry at the federal and regional levels. In addition, the study used methods of comparative analysis of regulatory legal documents, analytical, synoptical and other materials, methods of classification, systematization and generalization of the data obtained, methods of expert assessment, the method of preferences vectors, methods of complex analysis. To develop scientifically based practice-oriented mechanisms for predicting the transformation of research and management skills, changes in the labor market and the emergence of demand for new technologies for organizing and managing the activities of tourism and hospitality enterprises, methods and technologies of heuristic modeling, as well as foresight, were used.

## Results and Discussion

### 3.1. The Main Goals of Companies in the Field of Personnel Management

In a study implemented by the Skolkovo Business School (2021), at the end of 2020, among representatives of Russian companies with more than a thousand employees, along with such urgent management tasks as ensuring the personnel effectiveness in a remote (distance) work format, as well as the implementation of safety measures and the preservation of the employees' health, the most important task is to train and develop personnel in accordance with the changes and challenges that have been taking place in the global economy over the past two years.

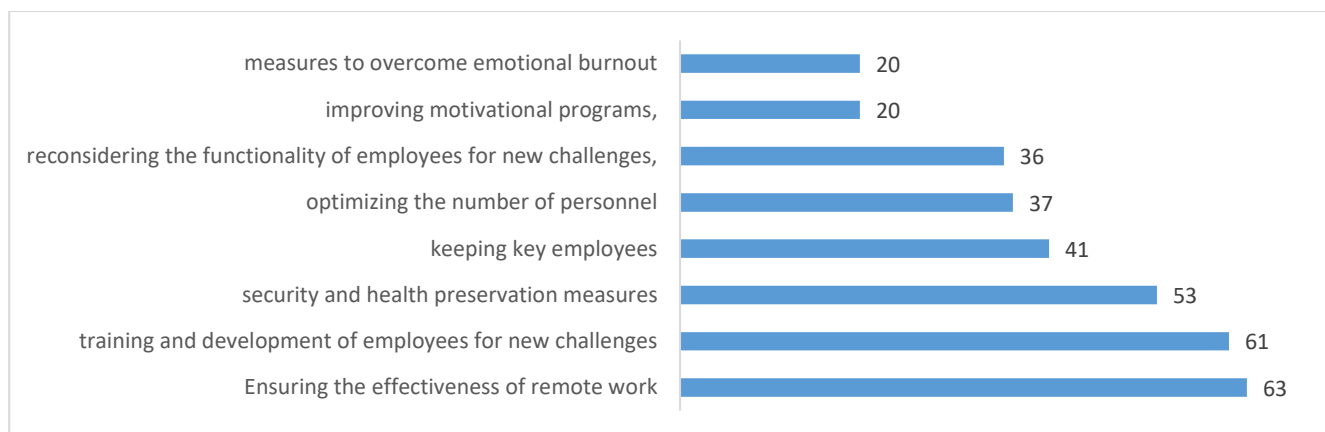


Figure 1. *The most urgent tasks in the field of personnel management for 2021 and subsequent years (Skolkovo, 2021)*

In addition, many heads of HR departments or divisions involved in employee development in the companies surveyed identified retaining key employees, optimizing the headcount, and revising employee job responsibilities in connection with the changes in their HR management tasks for 2021 and subsequent years. - 41%, 37% and 36% of respondents answered this way, respectively. All these areas of activity in personnel management are in one way or another related to the improvement of the personnel qualifications or their retraining (Forbes, 2021). In order for such activities to have a strategic focus, it is necessary to understand which competencies of employees will be in demand in the future, and which may lose their relevance. And first of all, it is necessary to pay attention to the competencies of those who manage the functional areas of the companies' activities, that is, to the knowledge and skills of modern company leaders - from line managers to top management.

The transition of employees after the pandemic start to remote work led to the need for a sharp development of digital competencies for all personnel categories, which, as is already obvious by the end of 2021, will be in demand for a long time. So, from the majority of employees in almost all companies, the following competencies are now required: digital competencies; self-organization skill in the workplace; willingness to undergo online

training; the skill of controlling and organizing remote work of subordinates; the ability to organize and control work according to the project principle; regularly updated specialized professional and technical skills.

### 3.2. Evolution of Approaches to Defining the Company Leaders' Competencies that will be Most in Demand in the Future

In many countries all over the world, scientists from various scientific fields, from sociology and pedagogy to economics and personnel management, are engaged in the study and development of forecasts on which company leaders' competencies will be most in demand in the future. Among many studies, we highlight several (Lefebvre et al., 2013; Fazlollahab, Shirazi & Porramezan, 2015; Dahlman, Mealy & Wermelinger, 2016; Kononiuk et al., 2017; Szpilko & Widelska, 2019; Kozłowska & Sacio-Szymańska, 2020) which emphasize the skills and abilities that determine managers' ability, on the one hand, to catch weak signals indicating changes, both in the internal and external company environment, and on the other parties, to implement a systematic, holistic approach to managing companies' development.

Let us consider four approaches to assessing the most significant managerial competencies in the future, which were reflected in the scientific works in the period from 2008 to 2021 (Figure 2).

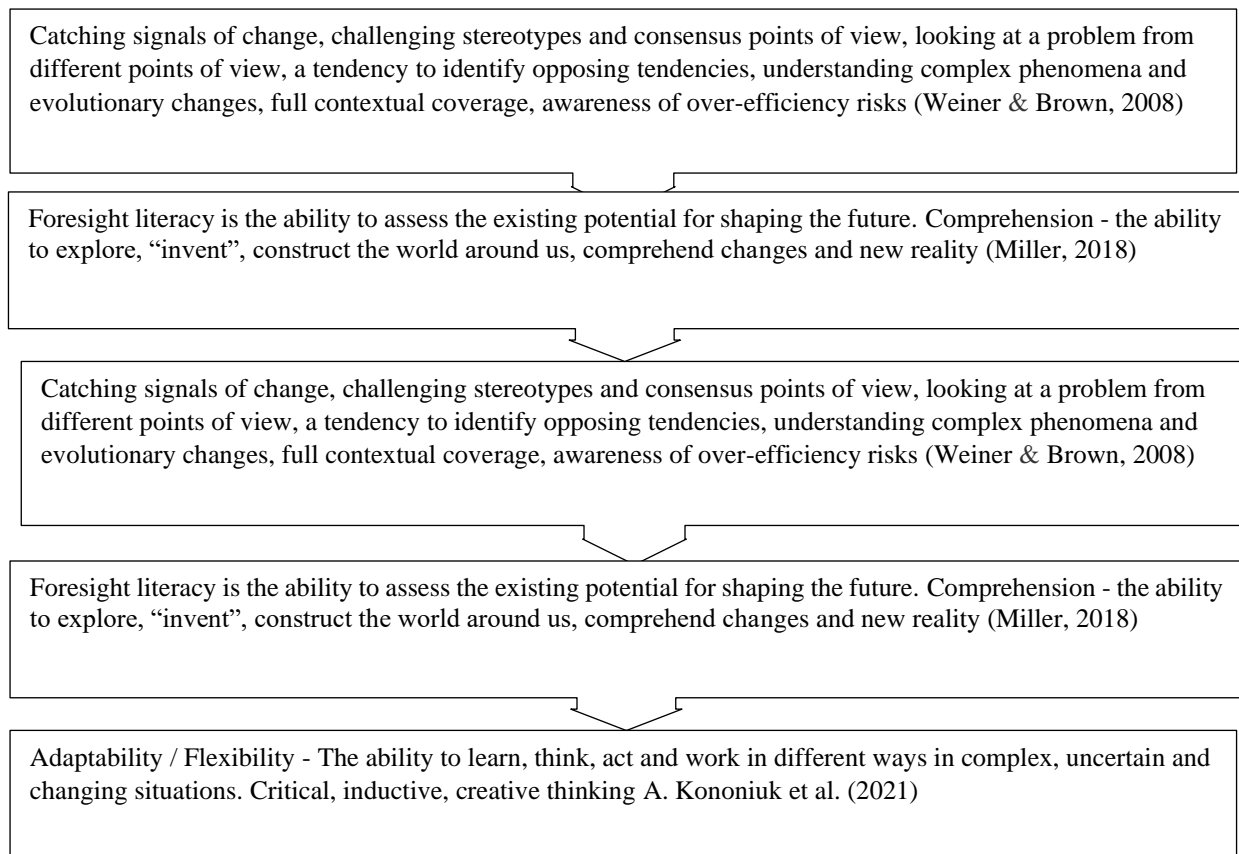


Figure 2. *Evolution of approaches to assessing the most significant managerial competencies in the future (compiled by the authors based on the materials shown in the figure)*

E. Weiner and A. Brown (2008) emphasize that in the future a leader will definitely have to be able to challenge stereotypes and consensus points of view, to consider emerging problems from different points of view, that is, to have well-developed critical thinking. Also, these authors talk about the need to understand the risks of excessive efficiency, which was later written by R.L. Martin (2019)

J. Ratcliffe and L. Ratcliffe (2015) point out the need for an iterative approach in management, in which the implementation of any strategic or tactical measures is implemented in parallel with the continuous analysis of the results obtained and the adjustment of subsequent measures. The main thing in this approach is the adaptation of the adopted management decisions in accordance with how they affect all aspects of the company's activities (holistic approach).

R. Miller (2018) notes such an important competence of the future leaders as the ability to assess the existing potential of a company to shape its future, and this future of the company will be “invented” by themselves, meaningfully develop. R. Miller (2018) calls this skill

foresight literacy. If we recall the classical definition of foresight, which B.R. Martin (1993) gives as “systematic attempts to assess the long-term prospects of science, technology, economy and society in order to determine strategic directions of research and new technologies that can bring the greatest socio-economic benefits”, then it becomes obvious that foresight literacy of company leaders means organizing constant research and identifying trends in various fields of activity, as well as using available research on forecasts in the development of the company professional activity type.

In the latest of the analyzed works by A. Kononiuk et al. (2021), published after the onset of the pandemic, the emphasis is again, as in the work of J. Ratcliffe and L. Ratcliffe (2015), on adaptability, but in contrast to the situation in a relatively calm year of 2015, in 2021, the whole world realized that the viability and sustainable development of companies depends on how prepared they are to respond to uncertainty and constantly changing situations, and above all in the environment. In addition to the importance

of company leaders' critical and creative thinking, these authors note the importance of inductive thinking, which is understood as "the ability to combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (including identifying the relationship between seemingly unrelated events)". Also A. Kononiuk et al. (2021) distinguish such an important competence of the future leaders, as "the ability to explain the different nature of the information, the ability to communicate with others for the interpretation or explanation of the information meaning and use of its possibilities". The emergence of such competence among the important competencies in the model "Competences required for future-oriented professional activity" developed by these authors is explained in our opinion by the fact that in conditions of a massive flow of various information that comes to each person through a multitude of information distribution channels, the ability to perceive information exactly in the context as the source of information intended, whether it is an advertising message to potential consumers or a task by a manager to a subordinate.

It is quite obvious that with general approaches to assessing the most significant competencies of managers in the future, there is still a certain industry specificity, which should also be taken into account.

### 3.3. Professions of the Future: the Likelihood of their Appearance and the Demand for Tourism and Hospitality

It is well known that tourism all over the world provides an opportunity for economic growth in regions, historical cities, rural areas, creates new jobs, including in small and medium-sized businesses, and stimulates the development of more than 50 related industries. Tourism accounts for 3.2% of world GDP, and taking into account the multiplier effect - 9.4%; the number of people employed in the tourism industry of the total working population is 7.6%. For example, in the Russian Federation more than 2 million people work in tourism, and in the summer, holiday season, their number rises to 4-5 million, and by 2030 the number of people employed in the tourism and hospitality industry is projected to grow to 4.7 million people.

At the same time, the current situation in the Russian labor market for tourism and the

hospitality industry is characterized by an acute shortage of both managerial and workforce. This situation began to form in mid-2021, when employees who were laid off in hotels, travel agencies and catering establishments left for any other industry where they could get, considering it as temporary employment. However, after it became clear that it is the service sector and, above all, tourism and hospitality enterprises that are most vulnerable in our country with an increase in the number of people with coronavirus (they were closed in the first place and already repeatedly), many of those who quit decided not to return to their previous place of work, or in any other enterprise in this field of activity. The situation is better only for those enterprises whose management throughout the entire period of the pandemic continued to keep in touch with former employees. The situation with foreign labor was also roughly predictable, so the competent owners of the restaurant and hotel business did not create any special illusions and held on to their staff and the number of Russian citizens. Thus, it is obvious that the solution of personnel problems in tourism and the hospitality industry is now shifted to the micro level - the level of individual enterprises, while all over the world there are large-scale studies of the provision in tourism and hospitality with personnel and the compliance of their competence with the requirements of employers.

The importance of tourism and hospitality for the economies in many countries explains the interest of scientists from different countries in researching the issues of personnel training and the formation of competencies demanded by employers. At the same time, many frontier studies are of purely applied importance and are aimed at studying the national characteristics and local specifics of the tourism and hospitality enterprises activities. An example is the study by P. Tavitiyaman, N. Weerakit and B. Ryan (2014) *Leadership for Hotel General Managers: Differences in Age, Education and Hotel Performance*, which examined the leadership qualities required by General Manager (GM) in Thailand's hotels. Or it is research devoted to certain aspects of managerial competencies, such as in the work of J.-Y. Yang and Y.-J. Park (2021), dedicated to the study of the emotional intelligence of hotel employees.

In Russia, an annual analysis of trends and big data is fulfilled, on the basis of which the forecast of new professions is built, the demand for which will grow. The results of these studies are reflected in the Atlas of the future professions. The latest published (Anisimov et al., 2021) Atlases of the future professions is based on taking into account the factors of active digital business transformation, the progressive transition to Industry 4.0 tools, the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors that have greatly changed not only Russian, but also the world economy. Of the 12 chapters of this Tourism and Hospitality Professions Atlas, the last chapter, Leisure Management, is dedicated. Leisure

careers of the future include an experience manager, a hospitality and tourism revenue manager, a sports manager, and a digital producer. Since a sports manager is engaged in the organizational support of athletes and sports organizations activities, in the framework of this article, this profession will not be given attention. Consider the remaining three professions in terms of profession mentions frequency in specialized media for 2014-2020, the number of mentions per year (Figure 3).

Impression Manager, Hospitality & Tourism Revenue Manager, Digital Producer, Agile Coach, Digital Marketer

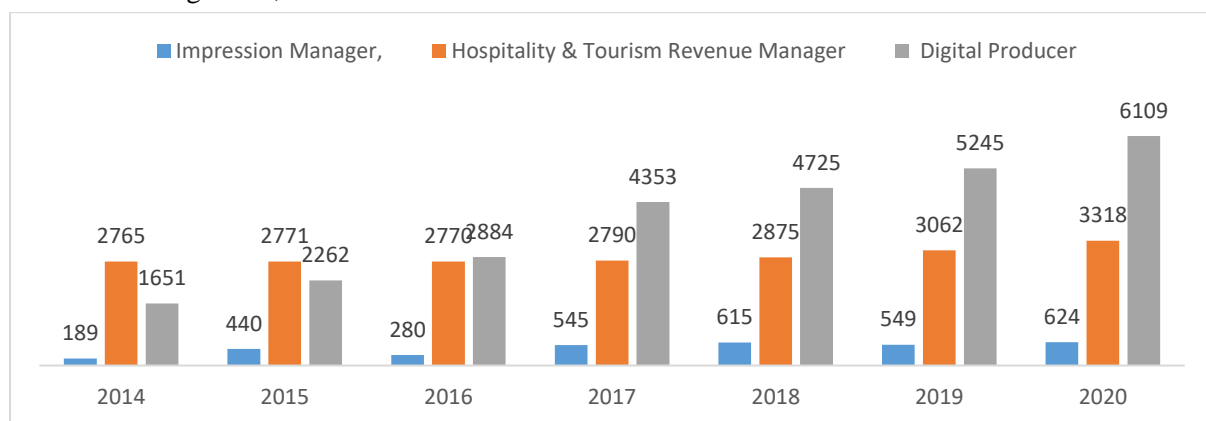


Figure 3. Dynamics of profession mentions in specialized media for 2014 -2020, the number of mentions per year (compiled by the authors according to N. Anisimov et al., 2021)

Figure 2 shows that the smallest dynamics of mentions for the profession "income management manager in the hospitality and tourism industry" - in 2020, this profession was mentioned in specialized media only 20% more often than six years ago. It should be noted that the relevance of this profession has objectively increased during the crisis due to the closure of borders and the introduction of restrictions for Russian tourists. Mentioned in 2020 of the profession of "impression manager" increased 3.3 times compared to the data for 2014, and the profession of "digital producer" - 3.7 times over the same period. However, there is neither the profession of "impression manager" nor the profession of "digital producer" in the staffing of hotels or travel companies, unlike the profession of "income manager" (for example, the staff of the Moscow hotel "Palmira" has the position of "manager on income and e-commerce").

Consider, further, how the authors of Future Professions Atlas defined the activities of a digital producer. In their understanding, it is a

specialist in the use of digital opportunities for the production of content about companies or their products (services) (mobile applications, video games, online courses, multimedia books, web series, etc.)). Among the basic skills and abilities of this specialist are indicated:

1. Skills in managing complex multi-platform digital projects;
2. Possession of modern techniques for creating digital products;
3. Understanding the entire content production chain for the digital environment;
4. Presentation skills, the ability to present content at pitches;
5. Knowledge of economic and legal aspects of media activities, skills in maintaining legal and economic documentation;
6. Understanding social media algorithms and their impact on digital content requirements.

Currently, in the hotel business, the activity on the formation and promotion of the hotel and tourism product is assigned to the marketing and sales department, in which part of a digital producer functionality can be performed by employees holding the positions of a sales manager, an e-sales manager, a promotion manager, a sales manager, internet marketer. In general, a survey by an expert of tourism and hospitality enterprises showed that there is no need for a digital producer position in the staff of hotels and travel companies, although some

of the experts did not rule out the possibility of attracting such a specialist on the basis of outsourcing or contracts for the implementation of individual projects. At the same time, the study on other sections of Professions Atlas showed the relevance of involving such specialists as an agile coach and digital marketer in the development of projects in tourism and hospitality. A brief functional of these specialists, their relationship is shown in Figure 4.

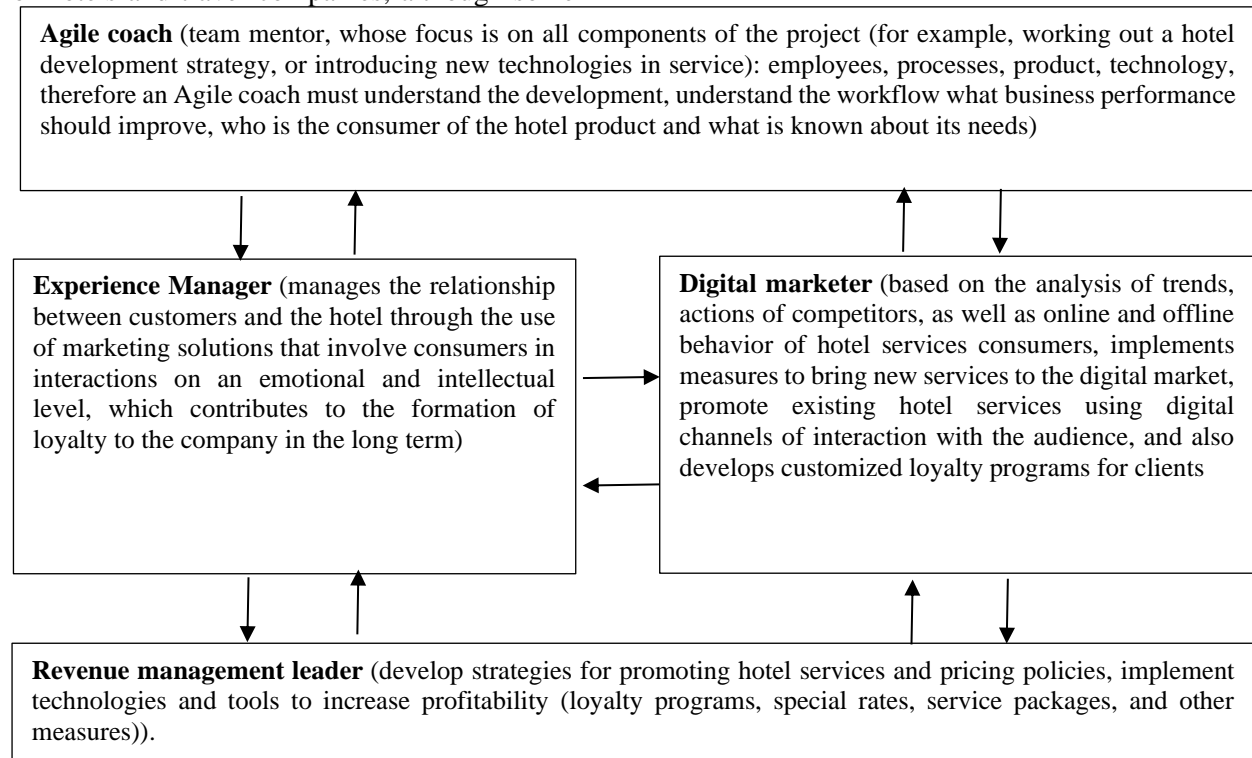


Figure 4. *Scheme of interaction of specialists in the formation and promotion of hotel products in the context of digital transformation (compiled by the authors)*

Indeed, in the face of ever-increasing competition for the consumer with a simultaneous growth of consumer experience and expectations, the traditional hotel and tourism product should change, both in terms of content (the use of environmentally friendly materials in the arrangement of a hotel room, contactless technologies for settling guests in a hotel, energy-saving technologies, and so on) and by the forms of its promotion using digital channels of interaction with potential consumers and regular customers. However, not all of the competencies indicated in the future professions Atlas were assessed by experts - representatives of tourism and hospitality enterprises as really important and promising.

### 3.4. Expert Assessment of the Requirements for the Competence of Managers in Tourism and Hospitality

To substantiate the requirements relevance for the leaders' competencies in tourism and hospitality, by professions "impression manager", "income management manager", "digital marketer", "agile-coach", several competencies were selected from those indicated by given professions in the Atlas of Future Professions.

In the course of this study, a survey was conducted by 10 experts - representatives of the top and middle level of Moscow hotel management. The task of the experts was to rank the indicators, i.e. consequently, experts

assigned a certain weight to each of these indicators. The more weight, the more significant (in demand among employers) this competence of middle and top managers.

Stage 1. Creation of an expert commission. Number of factors  $n = 8$ , Number of experts  $m = 10$

Stage 2. Collecting opinions of experts by means of a questionnaire survey. The survey was conducted in December 2021.

The experts evaluated the degree of significance of the parameters by assigning them a rank number. The factor, which the expert gives the highest mark, is assigned a rank 10. If the expert recognizes several factors as equivalent, then they are assigned the same rank number. Based on the data of the questionnaire, a summary matrix of ranks was compiled, which is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The results of ranking by experts - top and middle level management representatives of Moscow hotels; requirements for the managers' competence in tourism and hospitality according to the degree of demand from employers.*

Ranked indicators (requirements for the competence of leaders in tourism and hospitality)	№ Experts										Experts' consensus assessment.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Ability to holistically assess the situation in the hotel services market and in the company, to concentrate on the main things and to set priorities based on the company's long-term strategy	8	7	8	8	7	8	6	8	7	8	1
Ability to build a company's interaction with customers using modern digital means of communication	7	5	6	7	8	7	8	6	8	5	2
Broad professional horizons in the field of digital technologies as applied to the tasks of the hotel and tourism business	5	8	7	6	5	4	4	5	6	6	3
Possession of managing customer behavior methods in a digital environment	6	4	5	3	6	6	7	7	4	7	4
Understanding the features of various channels for promoting products in the digital environment	4	2	4	5	4	3	5	4	5	4	5
Possession of strategic management and marketing methods and tools	3	6	2	4	2	5	1	2	3	3	6
Possession of economic modeling methods and forecasting, risk management in conditions of uncertainty	2	3	3	1	1	1	3	1	2	2	7
Experimental Hypothesis Testing Skills in Consumer Behavior	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	8

Source: research by the authors of the article

Stage 3. Assessment of experts' opinions agreement degree was implemented by

calculating the concordance (agreement) coefficient using the formula (there are no associated ranks):

where  $S$  is the sum of the ranks sum deviations squares of each examination object from the arithmetic mean,  $m$  is the number of experts,  $n$  is the number of effects,  $W = 0.782$

Stage 4. Experts' decision. Since  $W \geq 0.5$ , the agreement of experts' opinions is positive, indicating a high degree of agreement of experts' opinions, the agreed ranking can be used in practice.

Thus, based on the research results conducted by the authors of the article in December 2021, it was substantiated that the most important competencies of leaders in tourism and hospitality are still the ability to holistically assess the situation in the hotel services market and in the company, to concentrate on the main thing and to set priorities based on the company long-term strategy. As the results of the last two years have shown, those companies that were able to remain faithful to the strategic development goals, retaining key employees, partners and consumers, were not only able to maintain their positions in the hotel services market, but even to improve their positions.

At the same time, possession of strategic management methods and tools and marketing was only in sixth position in the requirements ranking of managers competence in tourism and hospitality. Skills in digital technologies, the use of modern digital communication means, and customer behavior management in the digital environment were in the second - fifth positions. All this justifies the forecast for changing the requirements for the leaders' competencies in tourism and hospitality in terms of the hotel products formation and promotion in the context of digital transformation.

## Conclusion

At the end of the article, I would like to once again draw the attention of tourism and hospitality companies' owners and managers to the importance of a strategic approach to the competencies management not only of middle and top managers, but of all personnel. Due to the current tasks solution of eliminating the shortage of personnel, less attention is paid to the strategic tasks of developing the personnel composition in tourism and hospitality companies, about which much has already been

written, including B. Parminder (2021), and confirmed by the enterprises owners themselves.

All this, combined with the above-described tendencies towards a decrease in the general level of tourism and hospitality enterprises personnel qualifications, due to the qualified personnel migration to other industries, in the near future may lead to the fact that companies will not use dynamic tracking of "gaps" in the required and available workforce skills that are not engaged in creating a system of continuous professional personnel development, teaching them the skills of the future, will turn out to be uncompetitive due to a decrease in demand for goods and services.

The research results conducted by the authors of the article generally coincide with the study conclusions fulfilled by McKinsey company (McKinsey, 2021b) that now many companies, and not only in tourism and hospitality, are at a turning point in their development, when the application or non-application of a holistic approach to transforming employees skills depends not only on the success, but even the survival of companies in an environment of ever-increasing competition, on the one hand, and growing consumer expectations, on the other.

A special role in the formation of new educational programs based on the use of modern teaching technologies should be played by universities that train executive personnel for the country's economy (Semenova & Kačans, 2021), as well as educational organizations that implement advanced training and professional retraining programs for tourism and hospitality employees.

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