Key Competencies of ENTRY-LEVEL MARKET RESEARCH ANALYSTS: A Mixed-Method Approach
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Vedran, Brendan, Wai Seng, and Paul
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Executive Summary

Overview

The Canadian market research industry is currently in a state of change, with technological advancements and expanding reach. As this change happens, so do the key competencies of market research analysts. But little research has been done on this topic.

Triangulated Approach. This study aimed to address this need, using a triangulated method:

1. **Job Posting Content Analysis**: 138 postings from market research companies
2. **Online Survey**: 69 market research employers, 38 research analyst students
3. **In-Person Interviews**: 15 market research employers

Two Lacunae. Literature review presents two lacunae:

1. **Methods**: Many past studies use surveys, surveys and interviews, or job postings, none do all three together
2. **Topic**: Previous studies focus on competencies and important skills, but do not apply this to market research

Combining these methods together and applying it to market research fills these two gaps.
Key Findings

Top 5 by Employers

**Technical Skills**

- Professional Writing, 76%
- Research Ethics, 73%
- Data Management, 66%
- Qualitative Research, 63%
- Survey Design, 58%

**Computer Skills**

- Excel, 90%
- Word, 82%
- PowerPoint, 78%
- Outlook, 55%
- SPSS, 44%

**Soft Competencies**

- Written Communication, 94%
- Time Management, 90%
- Listening, 87%
- Problem Solving, 86%
- Teamwork, 86%

**Personality Traits**

- Curious, 89%
- Ethical, 87%
- Motivated, 87%
- Enthusiastic, 86%
- Conscientious, 86%

Note: The percentages indicate the proportion of employers who indicated these competencies as either very important or mandatory in the survey.
Points of Divergence

**Employers** vs **Postgrads**

**BIG PICTURE: OVERALL COMPETENCIES**

- Employers significantly value **soft over hard competencies** for entry-level Market RA positions.
- Postgrads put significantly **more weight on hard competencies** than employers.

**IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS: MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES**

- **73%** for **Research Ethics**
- **52%** for **Project Management**
- **83%** for **Conscientious**
- **55%**
- **34%**
- **53%**

*Note: The percentages indicate the proportion of employers and postgraduate students who indicated these competencies as either very important or mandatory in the survey.*
Two Sides of Market Research

Supplier-Side VS Client-Side

“Default” Entry-Level Position—Supplier Side. No consensus on what constitutes entry-level Market RA job, but this study shows clear indicators the “default” Market RA position to be on the supplier side.

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS: MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

- Secondary Research: 30% vs 50%
- Professional Writing: 88% vs 56%
- Online Survey Tools: 28% vs 50%
Conclusion & Recommendations

“Soft” Side Matters. Entry-level market RAs should emphasize soft skills and traits on their resumes, during interviews and networking sessions, in particular: communication skills, curiosity, enthusiasm, conscientiousness, and being ethical. Postgraduate RA programs and career centres should continue to convey their importance, too.

Project Management a Must. Project management is very important; it is something employers are increasingly looking for, even in entry-level hires. Research project management courses are key for entry-level market RAs to kick-start their careers.

Being Ethical. Students should understand the importance of research ethics more than they currently do.

Supplier-Side Career Point of Entry. Most entry-level Market RAs will start their career on the supplier side; client-side research usually requires few years’ of experience. Thus, supplier side required competencies are crucial for career entrants.

The Role of Market Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) Widely Recognized. Vast majority of employers and future job seekers are familiar with the role of MRIA; still, more outreach required as postgrads not as familiar with CMRP as employers.

Market Research is, After All, Business. What is “statistically significant” may not be “business significant”. Market research is not academic research so research practices are bound by business realities in which the organization exists. In addition, career progress often encompasses and requires business development skills.
Research Plan

Abstract

As the Canadian market research industry has grown, so has the importance of understanding the key competencies of market research analysts. And yet, there is little prior research on this question. With the emergence of college based postgraduate programs for research analysts, this is an optimal time to map the perspectives and perceptions of employer and students on this topic. This study explored the perspective of industry experts through a triangulated approach of job posting content analysis, online surveys, and qualitative interviews. In addition, we administered the survey to research analyst postgraduate students for a comparative analysis of how their expectations match up. The findings identified several key competencies according to employers, with several differences between client and supplier side companies, as well as areas of mismatch between students and employers’ expectations.
**Statement of Significance**

Times are changing. Canadian society is bracing for the next big retirement wave of baby boomers. The old way of doing things may be going with them, as technological advancements are finding practical application in the field of market research (Shugan, 2004). This brings new challenges for employers as they implement strategies for matching labour supply with company needs. And growth prospects for the market research industry in North America are good, with a job growth rate that is outpacing the total economy in both the United States and Canada (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; Government of Canada, 2015; Job Bank, 2015).

As such, there have been stronger voices advocating for market research analyst positions to become a designated occupation. This can be seen in the introduction of the sector-specific designation, Certified Market Research Professional, issued by the Market Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA, 2015). The need for such a certification reflects a lack of clarity on what the standard role of a market research analyst is, and what it’s key competencies are.

The advent of big data jobs is likely to continue this trend. Some market research experts see impactful reporting, technology, and data management as some of the biggest challenges for the industry in the future (Murphy, 2015). These challenges present a need to better understand how these changes in the industry are reflected in the key competencies of market research analysts. Another complicating factor that is characteristic of the market research industry is a dichotomy between client and supplier side research. Client side research focuses on research primarily for a company’s own purposes, while the supplier side focuses on providing research for other companies (clients). This division might present differences in how each side views the key competencies of research analysts, especially since the client side of the industry is mostly made up of separate organizational units that only larger companies with well-developed HR management functions would have.

Another response to the changing industry is the introduction of new and innovative postgraduate programs for training market research analysts in Ontario colleges such as Humber, Algonquin, and Georgian (Galt, 2012). As these programs are still fairly new, and are pioneering new ground in developing curricula, gauging the industry standards for key competencies of research analysts could help inform future development. It also raises the question of
what the students’ expectations are, and whether they match up with the views of employers. Identifying any gaps in understanding between the two will help students better prepare to enter the field knowing what is expected of them, and colleges to better help them do it.

Based on this picture of the changing and growing industry, several key stakeholders for this research can be identified: market research employers, students in postgraduate research programs looking to enter the field, and educational institutions. By better understanding the key competencies of market research analysts, employers can begin to standardize roles, students can better understand how to prepare for a career in market research, and educational institutions can improve their curricula by tailoring it to industry needs.

**Aims and Objectives**

This study aims to provide a better understanding of the key competencies of market research analysts this modern era of change. It also aims to identify areas where postgraduate training programs can improve curriculum by measuring gaps in understanding between employers and postgraduate research students.

The objective of this study is to address these aims by answering the following questions:

1. What are the key skills and traits that market research employers and experts value for new hires?
2. What level of education and experience to employers look for, and why?
3. Is there a difference among employers in how they see these questions based on whether they are in the supplier or client side of the industry, or on individual characteristics?
4. Is there a difference between employers and postgraduate research analyst students in how they see these questions? In other words, where are the gaps for students in understanding what is expected of them when entering the industry?

**Research Design**

**Methods**

In order to best inform our research questions, a triangulated, mixed-method approach was employed. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods, we aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, and corroborate the results obtained from different sources to improve the validity and reliability of the findings.
Following from this, we conducted online surveys (a quantitative method) and in-person interviews (a qualitative method) for this study. In addition to these traditional methods, an online job posting content analysis was conducted.

Tools/Instruments

Content Analysis. Information from thousands of publicly available online job postings including the company names, company locations, job titles, job descriptions and required qualifications were automatically scripted from the Internet using a web data extraction tool, Easy Web Extract 3.2.

Online Survey. Participants were given a questionnaire through Q-Fi Solutions online platform. They were asked to answer questions about their opinions, attitudes, and behaviours regarding important skills and traits for market research analysts, using predominantly 5-point Likert scales. Questions on skills were framed as how important it was, while education and experience were framed as how valuable they are, and traits were framed in terms of desirability. The scales ranged from “Not important/valuable/desirable at all” at 1, to “Mandatory” at 5, for all types of competencies. Some additional questions were asked, as well as demographics.

Two versions of the survey were administered, one for employers and one for students. The student version had all the same questions, with slight modification of some question wordings to reflect their different perspective, and they received different demographic questions. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a hard copy version. See Appendix for the full questionnaires. The results were coded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS.

In-Person Interview. The interviews were semi-structured, with a guide utilized to help the researchers cover all topics relating to the most important skills, traits, and qualifications for market research analysts. In addition to these topics that corresponded to the survey, participants were asked why those competencies are important, and to identify any areas they thought were lacking in entry level market research analysts and applicants. The interviews were free-flowing and open ended, allowing for tangential lines of questioning and elaboration of points of interest to the researcher.

The interviews were audio recorded with a combination of a digital audio recorder and the Smart Voice Recorder smartphone app, and coded using QDA lite text miner software.
Procedures

Content Analysis. Job postings were collected from market research company websites and two popular online job search engines, LinkedIn and Indeed, between November 2015 and January 2016. We searched for relevant job openings within Canada using the keywords "market research" and "research analyst." We did not collect any internal job postings that were not accessible to the public. We carefully examined the job ads collected, deleting duplicate and irrelevant job ads whose description of duties did not sufficiently match our definition based on guidelines from the United States Department of Labor and Canadian NOC code. In order to emphasize entry level positions, both management positions and jobs that explicitly required at least five years of work experience were excluded from the sample. At the end of this process, we had a sample of 138 job postings for the analysis.

Online Survey. Our target population for the online survey was high level decision makers and experts in Ontario market research companies: people who either had influence on hiring analysts or were familiar with what is looked for. Due to the difficult access to this population, a convenience sample was sought. We created a sampling frame of 229 contacts based on publicly available sources such as the MRIA member directory, Quirk's, Manta and Greenbook market research company databases. In addition, contacts found during the online job posting collection were included in the sampling frame. Survey participation was recruited using cold-calling with this database of contacts. This strategy was employed to increase response rate.

After an initial 20 employers recruited this way, our recruitment strategy was adjusted to increase sample size in a shorter time frame. We expanded our sampling frame to 378 by adding data scraping from LinkedIn profiles to add new contacts. From this new list, any previous contacts who had not been cold called, in addition to the new contacts, received a cold email inviting participation. For the postgraduate student population, we recruited classmates in person and sent the survey to their email.

In-Person Interview. We conducted 15 in-person interviews with industry insiders. Participants were recruited during the initial cold-calling for the survey recruitment. In addition, upon completion of the online survey, were given an option to volunteer their names and contact information to volunteer for the interview. Given physical restraints, only respondents in the Greater Toronto Area were recruited. All interviews were conducted by two researchers to
ensure accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

**Justification for Methods and Tools**

In our literature review, there were several studies that used job posting analysis (reference), and studies that surveyed differing perspectives of employers and students (reference). There is not a single study that triangulates findings between job posting analysis, surveying key stakeholders, and qualitative interviews. This triangulation is the first of its kind for market research that we are aware of. Because we don’t have studies on this topic in the field of market research, our attempt was to get something that is more objective than just a single method.

**Content Analysis.** These days, due to the use of applicant tracking software, it’s become increasingly important to have keywords on your resume that match those used in online job postings (Hcareers, 2015). This could be a specific skill, a value or personality attribute, or a key qualification. Because applicant tracking software is likely to use the same keywords, more matches on the resume makes it more likely to be picked up by the software and sent down the line (Samuels, 2013). Therefore, we decided that a content analysis of job postings would yield useful data for assessing the key competencies of market research analysts according to a certain perspective of employers.

**Online Survey.** We used online survey as opposed to an intercept survey for several reasons. First, our population was hard to reach, due to the limited number of market research employers in Ontario, and online is better for this. Second, given our limited resources, the online method allowed for an easier and more cost effective way to achieve our ambitious targets. Third, it’s easier to use for participants, and faster.

An online survey method can also bring with it a risk of duplicate answers if distributed as an open link. For this reason, we chose to use an email campaign with unique links so that each respondent could answer only once. Another benefit of this is that it allowed targeted deployment to our specific profile of participants.

The core questions of our survey, such as the divisions of hard and soft skills came from business and competency studies done for other industries but within the underlying denominator of business studies (Gorter & Rietveld, P. 1996, Gabric & Mcfadden, 2001, Behrenz, 2001, Cappel, 2002). The items on the hard skills questions were derived from internal Humber document that compiled skills students had learned through the RAPP placement program (Sorbera, Skills Honed,
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2016), as this was the clearest source of such a list for market research analysts.

Trait and soft skills items were primarily developed based on study done by Gabric & Mcfadden (2001) given its sector similarity and internal consistency of the items within each factor of the study. Besides general similarities in business aspects, conceptual similarities between the two studies and pre-tested questionnaires presented good foundation for developing soft skills and personality traits list. Finally, due to our temporal sequence of methods and the rationale to use survey after job posting analysis but before interviews, the main idea was to rely on academically sound and internally valid items with which the instrument would be able to provide backbone research data that would inform our research question.

We used separate sources for the soft skills and traits because these are transferrable skills applicable to other fields, and thus the lists used in previous competency studies were relevant.

Supporting questions were added to attain additional information in order to develop a full competency framework for market research analysts. This included items regarding college research analyst programs and CMRP designation. In addition to this, a question on what job titles were applicable to the role was used to help clarify what terms encompass this job, given lack of definition from NOC code and inconsistent job duties across industry.

Finally, we added a question about hiring practices of employers and application practices of students, and a general question on career progression factors. These were secondary supporting questions given the focus of the topic on recruitment and selection of entry-level people.

In-Person Interview. We conducted our interviews after the content analysis and survey methods, in order to directly interact with the target population and ask the “why” questions around the results we got in the other two methods. In addition to this, we hoped to find insights that would emerge naturally in the semi-structured approach. We used semi-structured interviews because according to Bernard (1988), it's best used when there is little chance of getting more than one opportunity to interview someone, as was the case with our elite population.

The only knowledge we had specifically related to market research came from an internal Humber source. Given this unique situation, with extensive body of knowledge with regards to information on competencies and factors in general, and overall awareness of competency framework models as tools for comprehensive HR management on one
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side and almost no information about the same concepts within MR industry, the choice of method triangulation lend itself as the optimal solution; to put it simply, what “we know” or expect to know (i.e. expectations on top competencies, top factors, global relationships), we will try to confirm or further explore, and what we do not know at all, i.e. are there any emerging themes specifically relating market research, what makes it different from general business studies, we will seek to explore using grounded theory and naiveté. In that sense, combination of research methods will provide unique solution to this unique research problem.

Limitations

Content Analysis. We do not know the degree to which the job postings reflect actual preferences or hiring behaviours. It cannot be determined who wrote the postings and with what authority and knowledge. In addition to this, our criteria for including a job posting in the sample was fairly arbitrary and subjective in whether it seemed like it was describing a true market research analyst or not. Given that one of the goals of the study was to help define this, we had to beg the question in order to create our sample. In general, we did so by matching a majority of classic market research job duties to the job posting.

Online Survey. As with any self-report survey, we cannot be certain to what degree their responses indicate their true feelings. And even if it does reflect true feelings, to what degree those feelings indicate true behaviour, because of the “say-do” gap (BEworks, 2015).

Because of our use of a convenience sample, we do not have external validity and therefore cannot generalize to the overall population of market research employers. However, this population is quite niche and we believe we have a diverse sample with representation from various corners of the industry, and so some insights can still be gleaned from this.

Given complexity of population variables, our attempts to control for the effects of demographic segmentation may not have covered all bases, and there could still be confounds. This is an initial attempt at a study such as this. One possible additional variable to consider in the future would be size of the company, but for us we deemed this too difficult to define and instead aimed for a diverse sample from various sized companies.

In-Person Interview. Given how busy employers tended to be during the day when we interviewed them, they could have been incentivised to give shorter answers so as to not take up too much time. Most seemed more than willing to go
on at length, but some treated questions with more brevity.

A possible confound in this method is the relationship between market research community and Humber college. Our role as students may have affected their responses, especially with regard to value of colleges and the skills they know we are learning. They may have wanted to sugar coat things so as to not disappoint or discourage us as research analyst students.

**Assumptions**

We have an assumption of honesty in our participants. The only reason we see any responses would be untruthful is speedster participants, and the few that were suspected of that (based on speed and repetition of answers) were cleaned out of the data before analysis. We also assume a certain level of correlation between what the respondents indicate in the survey and report in the interview, and how they behave, though we acknowledge this may not always be the case. We also make the assumption of a common understanding of language with regard to industry terminology, and definition of different skills.

Although our results are not statistically generalizable, we assume it is a good description of the niche market research community in Ontario. We do not assume normality in the population or sample, and so nonparametric statistical tests were used.

In developing our survey, we assumed that research in other industries had relevant questions to base our questionnaire items on for market research. We also assumed that our internal Humber document was the best available source of survey items for hard skills.

**Major Risks**

The risks to participants were minimal. Any risks were associated with divulging private information and unwanted exposure of participants’ personal information. This information was not asked for: questions that were asked resembled topics that employers would likely feel happy to discuss publicly. If personally identifiable information was volunteered at any point, that information was anonymized and not published.

Beyond ethical risks, there was a big risk of not contacting enough employers. They were a difficult to reach population, with many prominent members of the market research community, and so reaching what we considered the minimum sample of 50 was not a guarantee. And we did not have another option for this, we needed their responses for this study. This was part of the reason for triangulation, so that if any
methods failed, we would have others to fall back on. Gladly, this problem did not arise, and we exceeded our minimum sample goals on all three methods.

**Literature Review**

A preliminary literature review analyzed the topic from two perspectives: applied management studies focusing on general recruitment behaviours of employers, as well as from the industry-specific perspective. Analysis of the former points to a disproportional focus on job applicants' perspective, with little having been done on employer-focused research (Larsen & Phillips, 2002; David, 2005; Celani & Singh, 2011). Behrenz (2001, p. 255) states that “we find many examples of studies analyzing job seekers search behavior, but few examples of the corresponding analysis of the recruitment behavior of employers.” Likewise, Gorter, Nijkamp & Rietveld (1996, p. 1463) note that “imbalances in the labour market have, in a large number of studies, often been analysed on the basis of supply side indicators,” and that “much less attention has been paid to demand side indicators.” So, while there is extensive research relating to employability of job seekers, much less can be said for the employers' perspectives. This study aims to address this imbalance by focusing primarily on the perspectives of the supply side, namely hiring decision makers.

An overview of literature focusing on industry-specific perspectives reveals that there is virtually no research on hiring decision-making for the market research industry in particular. Even when studies focusing on sector-specific job seekers perspectives are included, none of them focus on market research; rather, more traditional industries such as hospitality (Tesone & Ricci, 2005) and health (Mathwig, Clarke, Owens & Gramet, 2001) are usually the focus.

Studies focusing on industry segmentation between small and medium size businesses (Davidson, 2011) might provide some additional insights as to what employers might look for in market research, which is comprised of a multitude of small and medium size businesses. Similarly, occupation-specific surveys of occupations comparable to market research analysts (Selig, 2014; Radley, 2014) reveal some trends and patterns. However, both occupation-specific surveys and studies focusing on small and medium size enterprises, lack direct applicability in the sector-specific context of the market research industry.

Central to the research topic is the conceptualization and operational definition of the term "market research analyst." This study will primarily explore the key competencies of market research analyst positions at the entry level.
Therefore, it is necessary to have a clear operational definition of both “entry level” and “market research analyst” we must also operationalize the term "entry-level."

Another aspect of this conceptualization is the job title itself. This will provide clarity by linking job titles, job duties, and job tasks into a concept that will be our operational definition of a market research analyst.


However, these definitions are somewhat broad and static. This is particularly the case with the Canadian National Occupation Classification (NOC) which merged market research analyst job titles and duties with other similar jobs under NOC code 4163 (Business development officers and marketing researchers and consultants). Using NOC as a guide, it might be interesting to see to what extent is there overlap between what employers define as job titles and key tasks and what national standard include under the joint category of NOC 4163. Any differences would indicate a need for policy-makers to introduce more clarification and standardization of the term and the occupation itself.

Our triangulated approach will also include secondary data analysis. This heightens the need for precise operational definitions. The analysis of job postings would resemble occupation-specific surveys (Selig, 2014; Radley, 2014) that primarily focused on job titles as a criteria for analysis. However, these studies reveal that focusing solely on job title as the key term for analysis is not always a precise way to find the jobs under study, and therefore close equivalents needed to be included.

Thus, our definition of the term “market research analyst” will rely on national standards (i.e. Canadian NOC, US Department of Labor) during the process of secondary data analysis, but the primary data collection participants will not be constrained with by these definitions. Secondary data will not be constrained either; rather the initial definition will be used to match patterns that include industry, job duties, and job title to define a "perfect" match. But our data collection will also include job postings that do not perfectly match job titles or job duties, rather a high degree of overlap will be sufficient.

While early applied economics studies point to the importance of hard skills as a predominant factor in hiring decision-
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making, recent studies emphasize soft skills and personality traits as crucial aspects affecting employability of candidates (Fulgence, 2015). Indeed, Nilsson & Ellström (2012) talk about a shift from technical vocational competencies towards defining employability in the broader context of behavioural and soft competencies. In the specific context of the market research industry, it will be interesting to see whether this holds true, given the tremendous changes market research industry has been experiencing with the advent of big data analysis and new technologies, which are mostly related to teachable hard skills.

What constitutes overall skill factors, for example whether soft skills are separate from personality traits or considered a unified category, is not unanimously agreed upon in business literature.

After reviewing competency frameworks, we had limited basis, which is a limitation but also an opportunity to develop one. In other words, MR is not a regulated (designated) occupation, in Canada government labour information does not recognize the occupation as distinct, i.e. having exclusive National Occupational Classification (NOC) Code. On the other hand CMRP (Certified Market Research Professional) certifications initiated by Market Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) do provide some basic insights into what might in the future become fully standardized and regulated field with standardized career path, job competency models, and transparent competency-based recruitment, training, and promotion strategies and policies. At the moment, our study is aiming to contribute to the expansion of the knowledge by addressing the lacunae relating to key competencies of market research professionals as the first step towards that goal.

Finally, many past studies have compared the perceptions of students and employers, and sometimes other groups as well (Posner, 1981, Gabric & Mcfadden, 2001, Robinson, 2006, Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008, Massie, 2009). Also, studies have dealt with job posting analysis as (Radley, 2014, Maceli, M. 2015), but we haven’t found a single one that combined all three mentioned methods in one study. Interestingly, based on literature review, it would seem that surveys, interviews, and job posting (content) analysis are indeed preferred methods for analysing questions surrounding competencies and hiring, which makes a lack of a single study that would use all three of them to triangulate the findings that more interesting. Therefore, we have located lacunae from the methodological as well as industry perspective.
Job Posting Content Analysis

Frequency Counts

Technical Skills. The top 5 frequently mentioned technical skills in the job postings were quantitative research skill, survey design skill, data management skill, qualitative research skill, primary research skill and project management skill.

Computer Skills. The top 5 frequently mentioned computer skills in the job postings were Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, SPSS and SAS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Skills</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Research</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Design</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Management</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Research</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Top 5 frequently mentioned technical skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computer Skills</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Excel</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft PowerPoint</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Word</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 Top 5 frequently mentioned computer skills

Soft Skills. The top 5 frequently mentioned soft skills in the job postings were written communication, verbal communication, teamwork skill, problem solving skill and independent working skill.

Personality Traits. The top 5 frequently mentioned personality traits in the job postings were responsible, motivated, technical, curious and creative.
Summary. The most common important competencies according to frequency in the job postings were effective communication, in both written (67%) and verbal (61%) form. The only other very frequent competency was proficiency with Microsoft Excel (62%).

Personality traits were seen less in job postings than other methods, indicating that job posting are more of a hard skill screening stage, before the application process starts to focus on soft skills and traits.
Analysis of Client Side vs. Supplier Side

Differences between client and supplier side were tested for using a chi-square test for independence, with the following results. Out of 138 job postings for the analysis, 48 of them were from supplier side companies and 90 of them were from client side companies.

Finding 1: Supplier side companies required candidates to have proposal writing skill and survey design skill more often than did client side companies. On the supplier side, 25% postings asked for proposal writing skill, compared to 8% of client side companies. The 17% difference was in the chi-square test indicating that supplier side employers look for proposal writing skill more often, $X^2 (1, N = 138) = 7.821, p < .05$. For survey design, 50% of supplier side asked for it compared to 29%
of client side postings. This 21% difference was significant, indicating that supplier side companies look for survey design skill more often, $X^2 (1, N = 138) = 6.309, p < .05$.

**Finding 2:** **Client side companies required candidates to have data management skill, Microsoft Access, SQL more often than did supplier side companies.** On the client side, 41% of postings asked for data management skill, compared to 23% of supplier side companies. This 18% difference was found to be statistically significant, indicating that client side employers required candidates to have data management skill more often than did supplier side employers, $X^2 (1, N = 138) = 4.568, p < .05$.

For Microsoft Access, 20% of client side companies asked for it in their job postings as compared to 6% of supplier side companies. The 14% difference was found significant in the chi-square test, indicating that client side employers required candidates to have Microsoft Access skill more often than did supplier side employers, $X^2 (1, N = 138) = 4.587, p < .05$.

For SQL, 23% of client side postings asked for this skill, and just 8% of supplier side postings. The chi square test found this 15% difference to be significant, indicating that client side companies favour SQL skill more than supplier side, $X^2 (1, N = 138) = 4.748, p < .05$.

**Summary.** Supplier side researchers, given the nature of their work, considered proposal writing skill and survey design skill more important than client side. On the other hand, client side researchers whose roles might also involve a lot of analytics responsibilities working with internal corporate data were required to have data management skill and working knowledge of Microsoft Access and SQL more often.
Survey Report

Survey Question Analysis

Job Title

Question: In your opinion, what job titles(s) best describe(s) an entry-level market research analyst position? Please check all that apply:

Question Details

A total of 108 completed responses were received, of which 70 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 70 employer responses, 66 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in an MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

As per Figure 6, the top 5 frequently used job titles by employers for entry-level market researchers were:

1. Research Analyst (46%)
2. Market research analyst (36%)
3. Junior research analyst (34%)
4. Junior market research analyst (33%)
5. Research associate (30%)

Student Responses

As per Figure 6, the top 5 prevalent job titles perceived by students for entry level market researchers were:

1. Entry-level market research analyst (74%)
2. Entry-level research analyst (65%)
3. Entry-level market researcher (55%)
4. Junior market research analyst (53%)
5. Junior research analyst (50%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Postgraduate Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Analyst</td>
<td>Entry-level Market Research Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Research Analyst</td>
<td>Entry-level Research Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Research Analyst</td>
<td>Entry-level Market Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Market Researcher</td>
<td>Junior market Research Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Associate</td>
<td>Junior Research Analyst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 Comparison of preferred entry-level job titles Employers vs Students
The bottom 3 job titles perceived by students for entry level market researchers were:

1. Market researcher (18%)
2. Research associate (24%)
3. Marketing research analyst (26%)

**Key Findings**

There is a discrepancy between what students and employers perceived to be the preferred job titles for entry-level positions. Employers seemed to prefer more generic titles without “entry-level” and/or “junior” additions, whereas students expected these descriptors in the job titles.
Technical Skills

**Question:** In your opinion, how important it is for prospective entry-level market research analysts to have the following technical skills?

**Question Details**

A total of 109 completed responses were received, of which 71 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 71 employer responses, 67 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

**Employer Responses**

Referring to Figure 7, the top 5 technical skills as seen by employers for entry-level market researchers were professional writing skills, research ethics knowledge, data management skill, quantitative research skill and survey design skill.

- 76% of employers reported that professional writing skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 73% of employers wanted prospective entry-level research analyst employees to have a certain level of research ethics knowledge
- 66% of employers reported that data management skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 63% of employers reported that quantitative research skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 58% of employers reported that survey design skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers

**Beyond this**

- Majority (52%) of employers regarded project management skill as a very important skill
- Employers valued primary research skill (55%) over secondary research skill (39%)
- 31% of employers wanted prospective employees to have office administrative skill
- While 76% of employers reported that professional writing skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers, only 21% of them explicitly looked for proposal writing skill
- Employers valued quantitative research skills (63%) over qualitative research skills (31%)
- Program evaluation was rarely seen as very important by market research employers
32% of employer respondents did not understand what the term “Knowledge Translation” meant.

**Student Responses**

Referring to Figure 7, the top 5 technical skills as seen by students for entry-level market researchers were quantitative research skill, data management skill, professional writing skill, professional presentation and survey design skill.

- 92% of students believed that quantitative research skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 87% of students believed that quantitative research skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 84% of students believed that professional writing skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 79% of students believed that professional presentation skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers
- 76% of students believed that survey design skill is a very important skill for entry-level market researchers

*Figure 7 Comparison of top technical skills Employers vs Students*
Students generally understood what technical skills were expected by employers for entry level market research positions. However, there were two skills which students might have overlooked:

- Only 55% of students realized the importance of research ethics knowledge as compared to 73% of employers
- Only 34% of students realized the importance of project management skill as compared to 52% of employers.

**Key Findings**

While both employers and students agreed on the top 5 most important skills - professional writing, data management, quantitative research, and survey design - the relative importance of these skills is different; employers gave stronger preference to professional writing over quantitative and database management skills. Interestingly, the biggest discrepancy presented research ethics; employers considered it one of the top 5 skills whereas students saw it as one of the least important skills among offered choices.
Computer Skills

Question: In your opinion, how important it is for prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to have the following computer skills?

Question Details

A total of 109 completed responses were received, of which 71 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 71 employer responses, 67 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 8, the top 5 computer skills as seen by employers for entry-level market researchers were Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Outlook and SPSS.

- 90% of employers reported that Microsoft Excel was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.
- 78% of employers reported that Microsoft PowerPoint was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.
- 55% of employers reported that Microsoft Outlook was a very important skill for entry-level researchers.
- 44% of employers reported that SPSS was a very important skill for entry-level researchers.
- 37% of employers want their workers to have some experience using online survey tools.

Out of 18 computer skills given in the survey, 12 of them were barely seen as very important by employers, all of which had less than 20% of employers indicated the importance.

Beyond this

Students Responses

Referring to Figure 8, the top 5 computer skills as seen by students for entry-level market researchers were Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, SPSS and online survey tools.

- 92% of students believed that Microsoft Excel was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.
- 92% of students believed that Microsoft Excel was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.
84% of students believed that Microsoft Excel was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.

84% of students believed that Microsoft PowerPoint was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.

76% of students believed that SPSS was a very important computer skill for entry-level researchers.

61% of students believed that learning how to use online survey tools was very important for entry-level researchers.

Generally speaking, students slightly overrated the importance of computer skills, particularly in SPSS, online survey tools, Microsoft Access, and Microsoft, with which the proportion of students who believed these skills were very important exceeded the proportion of employers who reported likewise by over 20%. There was one specific computer skill, Microsoft Outlook, which was among the top computer skills on employers’ list might have been overlooked by students. Only 40% of students realized the importance of Microsoft Outlook as compared to 55% of employers.

**Key Findings**

There is a convergence regarding what is viewed as top computer skills. Microsoft Office Suite in combination with SPSS and online survey tools presented top choices for both employers and students.

---

**Employers**

- Microsoft Excel: 90%
- Microsoft Word: 82%
- Microsoft PowerPoint: 78%
- Microsoft Outlook: 55%
- SPSS: 44%
- Online Survey Tools: 37%
- Infographic Tools: 18%
- Data Mining software: 16%
- Microsoft Access: 11%
- Tableau: 11%
- SAS: 9%
- STATA: 9%
- Microsoft Project: 7%
- R: 7%
- SQL: 7%
- Visual Basic: 7%
- nVivo: 1%
- Python: 1%

**Postgraduate Students**

- Microsoft Excel: 92%
- Microsoft PowerPoint: 84%
- Microsoft Word: 84%
- SPSS: 76%
- Online Survey Tools: 61%
- Microsoft Outlook: 39%
- Microsoft Project: 37%
- Microsoft Access: 34%
- Data Mining software: 29%
- Tableau: 26%
- SAS: 24%
- SQL: 21%
- Infographic Tools: 21%
- R: 16%
- nVivo: 16%
- Tableau: 16%
- Visual Basic: 16%
- Python: 13%
- STATA: 13%

*Figure 8 Comparison of top computer skills Employers vs Students*
Soft Skills

Question: In your opinion, how important it is for prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to have the following soft skills?

Question Details

A total of 109 completed responses were received, of which 71 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 71 employer responses, 67 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 9, the top 5 soft skills as seen by employers for entry-level market researchers were written communication skill, time management skill, listening skill, teamwork skill and problem solving skill.

- 94% of employers reported that written communication skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 90% of employers reported that time management skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 87% of employers reported that listening skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 86% of employers reported that teamwork skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 86% of employers reported that problem skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.

Beyond this

- Not only written communication but also verbal communication was very important to employers. 85% of employers reported that verbal communication skill was a very important soft skill
- 78% of employers expected prospective employees to have the ability to work independently in some capacity
- Soft skills in general were very important to employers. Out of 15 soft skills given in the survey, 10 of them were reported very important by the majority of employers.
- Negotiation/conflict-resolution, global awareness, leadership were generally not expected in entry-level market researchers, all of which had less than 30% of employers indicated the importance.
Students Responses

Referring to Figure 9, the top 5 soft skills as seen by students for entry level market researchers were time management skill, verbal communication skill, written communication skill, organization skill and problem solving skill.

- 87% of students believed that time management skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 87% of students believed that verbal communication skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 87% of students believed that written communication skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 84% of students believed that organization skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.
- 72% of students believed that problem solving skill was a very important soft skill for entry-level researchers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Postgraduate Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Working Independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Independently</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating Diversity</td>
<td>Appreciating Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Functional Perspective</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following Structured Method</td>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling Ambigious...</td>
<td>Handling Ambigious...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation/Conflict-...</td>
<td>Negotiation/Conflict-...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
<td>Cross-Functional Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Following Structured Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students generally understood the importance of soft skills in entry-level market research positions and quite aligned with employers’ expectation. 29% of students did not understand what the term “Cross-Functional Perspective” meant. Students viewed that teamwork skill, cross-functional skill and following structured
format/method were not as important as did employers, all of which had been reported around 15% less important in terms of students’ rating compared to employers.

Key Findings

Written communication, time management and problem solving presented points of convergence between employers and students. Conversely, listening and teamwork appeared to be given a higher value by employers than the students.
Personality Traits

Question: In your opinion, how desirable it is for prospective entry-level market research employees to have the following personality traits?

Question Details

A total of 109 completed responses were received, of which 71 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 71 employer responses, 67 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 10, the top 5 personality traits as seen by employers for entry-level market researchers were curious, ethical, motivated, enthusiastic, conscientious and responsible.

- 89% of employers reported that they wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be curious.
- 87% of employers reported that they wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be ethical.
- 87% of employers reported that they wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be motivated.
- 86% of employers reported that they wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be enthusiastic.
- 83% of employers reported that they wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be conscientious.
- 83% of employers reported that they wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be responsible.

Majority of employers wanted prospective entry-level market researchers to be curious, ethical, motivated, enthusiastic, conscientious, responsible, flexible (73%), persistent (72), rational (68%), self-confident (66%), creative (65%), personable (65%), and methodical (58%). Some personality traits were rarely seen as desirable by employers in their market research employees were conventional, extrovert, controversial, aggressive, worldly, risk-taking and conforming, all of which had less than 10% of employers expressed their interest. In extreme cases, 44% of employers stated that they had no desirability at all to the aggressiveness and 55% of them disliked the controversial personality type.
Student Responses

Referring to Figure 10, the top 5 personality traits as seen by students for entry-level market researchers were responsible, motivated, curious, enthusiastic and flexible.

- 84% of students believed that employers wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be responsible.
- 84% of students believed that employers wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be motivated.
- 82% of students believed that employers wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be curious.
- 79% of students believed that employers wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be enthusiastic.
- 79% of students believed that employers wanted prospective entry-level market research analyst employees to be flexible.

Students generally saw the big picture of the market. They understood what personality traits employers loved to see and what employers did not want to see in entry-level market researchers. However, they obviously underestimated the desirability or overlooked the importance of certain personality traits as compared to employers’ viewpoint.

- Only 53% of students believed that conscientious was a very desirable personality traits compared to 83% of employers, a huge discrepancy.
- 66% students as opposed to 88% of employers realized that ethical was a very desirable personality traits.
- 48% of employers wanted prospective employees to have sense of humor whereas only 24% of students realized its desirability.
- Only 21% of students believed that prudent was a very desirable personality traits compared to 42% of employers.
### Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

**Key Findings**

Being curious, motivated and enthusiastic were seen as top traits by both employers and students.

On the other hand, being ethical and conscientious were the points of biggest discrepancy among top traits; employers saw them as crucial whereas students did not perceive them as such.

![Figure 10 Comparison of top personality traits Employers vs Students](image-url)
Previous work experience

Question: In your opinion, how important it is for prospective entry-level market research employees to have previously gained the following types of work experience?

Question Details

A total of 108 completed responses were received, of which 70 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 70 employer responses, 66 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 11:

- 26% of employers reported that past paid employment experience was very important for job seekers looking for entry-level market research positions
- 23% of employers reported that past unpaid placement or internship experience was very important for job seekers looking for entry-level market research positions
- 14% of employers reported that past volunteering experience was very important for job seekers looking for entry-level market research positions

Employers regarded past paid employment experience as the most valuable prior work experience, following by paid placement experience and unpaid placement experience. However, past work experience, regardless of whether it’s paid or unpaid, a formal employment or a placement, literally had equal value to employers for entry-level market research positions. Volunteering was reported as the least valuable and it seemed to be significantly less valuable to employers compared to other forms of work experience.

Student Responses

Referring to Figure 11, similar to employers, students believed that past paid employment experience (45%) would be the most valuable experience, following by paid placement experience (37%) and unpaid placement experience (24%). Volunteering (13%) was perceived to be the least favorable experience. Unlike employers, students believed that past paid
experience, both formal employment and placement/internship were much more favorable to employers than unpaid experience, primarily unpaid placement.

**Key Findings**

While giving slight preference to paid experience, employers did not seem to differentiate a lot between relevant unpaid and paid experience. On the other hand, students perceived relevant paid experience as much more important than unpaid one. Both groups agree on the very little value of general volunteering.

![Figure 11 Comparison of importance of previous experience Employers vs Students](image-url)

**Figure 11 Comparison of importance of previous experience Employers vs Students**
Education Level

**Question:** In your opinion, how important it is for prospective entry-level market research employees to have the following levels of formal education?

**Question Details**

A total of 108 completed responses were received, of which 70 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 70 employer responses, 66 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

**Employer Responses**

Referring to Figure 12:

- 67% of employers suggested that completing a bachelor’s degree was very important for someone who want to start a career in the current market research industry
- 49% of employers suggested that completing a college diploma was very important, the best alternative for a bachelor’s degree
- 30% of employers suggested that a postgraduate certificate was very important
- 29% of employers suggested that a postgraduate diploma was very important
- 23% of employers suggested that a master’s degree was very important
- Only 6% of employers suggested that a doctorate was very important

**Student Responses**

Referring to Figure 12:

- Only 29% of students believed that a college diploma was a good alternative in substitution for a bachelor’s degree as compared to 49% of employers.
- 76% of students believed that bachelor’s degree was very important to have; in comparison with employers it might be stated that students placed higher importance to a bachelor’s degree
- 58% of research analyst postgraduate students at Humber College believed that a postgraduate certificate was very important to land a career in the market research industry whereas only 30% of employers showed agreement on this
- 13% of students believed that Master’s Degree was very important; a percentage much less than those of employers
Key Findings

Both employers and students had very similar views on what constituted the most important levels of education for entry-level market research analysts.

The only major difference presented was the relative order of importance between postgraduate certificate and college diploma; for employers, college diploma was interpreted as more important than postgraduate certificate; for students the opposite was true.

![Figure 12 Comparison of importance of different levels of education Employers vs Students](image-url)
Education (Academic Discipline)

**Question:** In your opinion, which academic disciplines are the most desired for prospective entry-level market research employees? Please check all that apply.

**Question Details**

A total of 108 completed responses were received, of which 70 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 70 employer responses, 66 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

**Employer Responses**

Referring to Figure 13, the top 5 academic disciplines as seen by employers for entry level market researchers were marketing, statistics/mathematics, psychology, business/commerce and sociology.

- 81% of employers reported marketing as a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 77% of employers reported statistics/mathematics as a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 74% of employers reported psychology as a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 73% of employers reported business/commerce as a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 67% of employers reported sociology as a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers

**Beyond this**

- Majority (54%) of employers reported communication were desirable for entry level market researchers in the current market.
- 43% of employers reported that economics was a desirable academic discipline
- 39% of employers reported that anthropology was a desirable academic discipline
- 33% of employers reported that political science was a desirable academic discipline
- Other academic disciplines given in the survey, such as English/literature, computer science, history, philosophy, geography, and physics/chemistry/biology were
relatively less desirable in the current market research industry.

**Student Responses**

The top 5 academic disciplines as seen by students for entry level market researchers were marketing, statistics/mathematics, business/commerce, psychology and economics. Referring to Figure 13:

- 87% of students believed that marketing was a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 84% of employers believed that statistics/mathematics was a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 84% of employers believed business/commerce was a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 63% of employers believed psychology was a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers
- 63% of employers believed that sociology was a desirable academic discipline for prospective entry-level market researchers

Majority of students believed that academic disciplines such as marketing, statistics/mathematics, business/commerce, psychology, economics, sociology, communication were desirable for entry level market researchers, which quite aligned with employers’ expectation in the current market. However, 50% of students believed that computer science was a desirable academic discipline to market research employers whereas only 23% of employers reported its desirability in the current market research industry.

**Employers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Discipline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics/Mathematics</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
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**Postgraduate Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Discipline</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics/Mathematics</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>Sociology</td>
<td>63%</td>
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</table>

*Figure 13 Comparison of importance of different academic disciplines Employers vs Students*

**Key findings**

There is a high degree of convergence between employers’ and students’ perceptions about most important academic disciplines. Top 5 was the same for both groups; only the relative importance within the top was different.
Marketing and statistics/mathematics were mutually agreed as the most relevant top 2 disciplines. The remaining three - psychology, business, and sociology – were seen as almost equally important by employers. Conversely, students reported much stronger preference for business than for psychology or sociology.
Postgraduate Programs

Question: Humber, Algonquin, and Georgian colleges currently offer market research post-graduate certificate programs. In your opinion, how valuable is it for prospective entry-level market research analysts to have completed any of these certificate programs?

Question Details

A total of 107 completed responses were received, of which 69 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 69 employer responses, 65 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 14, among market research post-graduate certificate programs being offered in Ontario, Georgian research analyst graduate program was regarded as the most valuable program, followed by Humber and Algonquin. However, there barely existed any significant difference in preference for any specific programs:

- 49% of employers reported that candidates who completed the Humber’s Research Analyst Postgraduate Program were very valuable to them
- 44% of employers reported that candidates who completed the Algonquin’s marketing and business intelligence program were very valuable to them
- 54% of employers reported that candidates who completed the Georgian’s Research Analyst Postgraduate Certificate were very valuable to them

*Figure 14 Employers’ preference for research analyst postgraduate programs*
Key Findings

This question focused on the employers’ rankings of the Ontario-based research analyst programs recognized by the MRIA as valid for postgraduate path to CMRP designation. Employers expressed strongest preference for Georgian graduates followed closely by Humber graduates, with Algonquin reported as the least preferred program of the three offered.
CMRP Designation

**Question:** The CMRP (Certified Marketing Research Professional designation) was introduced by MRIA (Market Research Intelligence Association) to certify a standardized level of knowledge and capability in marketing research theory and practice. Are you familiar with the CMRP designation?

- Yes
- No

**Question Details**

A total of 107 completed responses were received, of which 69 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 69 employer responses, 65 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

**Question Responses**

Referring to Figure 15, 93% of employers reported they were familiar with the CMRP designation, and 74% of students at Humber’s research analyst postgraduate program reported likewise. In short, MRIA’s CMRP designation was widely recognized. However, there is still a discrepancy between the level of familiarity with CMRP between employers and students.

**Key Findings**

Large majority of employers were familiar with the CMRP as well almost three-thirds of all surveyed research analyst postgraduate students. However, given that 26% of students were not familiar with the CMRP there are still opportunities for further promotion.

![Figure 15 Comparison of familiarity with CMRP designation Employers vs Students](image-url)
Hiring/Job Search Strategies

Question 12 (for employers): How often do you rely on the following strategies to hire entry-level market research analysts?

Question 12s (for postgraduate students): How often would you rely on the following strategies to apply to market research jobs?

Question Details

A total of 107 completed responses were received, of which 69 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 69 employer responses, 65 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 16:

- Referrals were the most popular strategy for employers looking for qualified entry-level market research analysts. 65% and 62% of employers reported that they often relied on external referrals and internal referrals to recruit prospective employees, respectively.
- 29% of employers reported that they often relied on their company career websites to recruit prospective employees.
- 25% of employers reported that they often relied on online job boards to recruit prospective employees.
- Other hiring strategies provided in the survey were rarely used by employers to recruit prospective employees, with no more than 20% of employers relied on them frequently.
- Employers used referrals twice as often as online job advertisement to find new hires.

Student Responses

Referring to Figure 16:

- Online job advertisements were the most popular sources for students to find opportunities. 79% of students relied on company career websites and 71% of them relied on online job board to find opportunities.
- 60% of students relied on both internal and external referrals to find opportunities.
- 37% of students relied on social media to find opportunities whereas only 12% of employers reported that they often used this medium to find new hires.
- Students might have relied on online methods of job application too much,
such as company career websites, online job boards, social media.

**Key Findings**

Employers and students reported the same top 5 hiring (employers) and job search (students) strategies, but their relative order of importance within top 5 is very different. Employers gave noticeable preference to referrals - external and internal - over any other hiring strategy while students did somewhat similar with online boards and company website. In general, employers expressed very strong preference to referrals as a means of job search strategy.

![Figure 16 Comparison of reliance on different hiring/job search strategies Employers vs Students](image-url)
Career Progression Factors

Question: In your opinion, how important are the following factors for the career progressions of entry-level market research employees towards more senior roles?

Question Details

A total of 107 completed responses were received, of which 69 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 69 employer responses, 65 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

Employer Responses

Referring to Figure 17, the most important factor for the career progressions as seen by employers was soft skills, followed by personality traits and work experience. Technical skills and computer skills were the least important for career progression among factors.

- 84% of employers reported that soft skills were the most important factor for the career progressions of entry-level market research employees towards more senior roles
- 74% of employers reported that personality traits were the most important factor for the career progressions of entry-level market research employees towards more senior roles
- 71% of employers reported that work experience were the most important factor for the career progressions of entry-level market research employees towards more senior roles
- 58% of employers reported that computer skills were the most important factor for the career progressions of entry-level market research employees towards more senior roles
- 57% of employers reported that technical skills were the most important factor for the career progressions of entry-level market research employees towards more senior roles

Student Responses

Referring to Figure 17, students slightly underestimated how important soft skills (76%), personality traits (66%) and work experience (53%) played in career progression of entry-level market researchers towards more senior roles while slightly overestimated the importance of computer skills (68%) relative to employers’ expectation.
### Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

#### Postgraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
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<td>Personality Traits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
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#### Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Soft Skills</td>
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<td>Personality Traits</td>
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<td>Work Experience</td>
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<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
<td>57%</td>
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</table>

*Figure 17 Comparison of relative importance of factors for career progression Employers vs Students*

#### Key Findings

Both employers and students agree on the crucial importance of soft skills for career progression.

However, employers also gave noticeable preference to traits and experience over other factors whereas students saw computer skills and traits as second most important factors.
Career Progression Timeline

**Question: In your opinion, what is the average time it takes for entry-level market research analysts to progress to more senior roles?**

1. Less than six months
2. More than six months, but less than a year
3. More than a year, but less than two years
4. More than two years, but less than three years
5. Other (please specify) _____________________

**Question Details**

A total of 107 completed responses were received, of which 69 responses were from market research employers/professionals and 38 responses were from the postgraduate students of research analyst program at Humber College. Of those 69 employer responses, 65 of them were obtained from our online surveys while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy surveys administered in the MRIA private event. All 38 student responses were obtained from our online surveys.

**Employer Responses**

- Only 7% of employers reported that it generally took within a year for entry-level market research analysts to get promoted to more senior roles.
- 32% of employers reported that it generally look between one to two years for entry-level market research analysts to get promoted to more senior roles.
- 49% of employers reported that it generally look between two to three years for entry-level market research analysts to get promoted to more senior roles.
- 12% of employers selected the “Other” option

**Student Responses**

- 13% of students expected that it generally took within a year for entry-level market researchers to get promoted.
- 47% of students expected that it generally took between one to two years for entry-level market researchers to get promoted.
- 26% of students expected that it generally took between two to three years for entry-level market researchers to get promoted.
- 13% of students selected the “Other” option

**Key Findings**

In general, students thought they were ready for a promotion sooner than employers did. Almost half of all surveyed
employers saw the period between two and three years as the time for the first promotion; on the other hand, very similar proportion of students (47%) expected the first career progression to happen sooner, in the period between one and two years.

*Figure 18 Comparison of opinions regarding career progression of entry-level Market RAs Employers vs Students*
Demographic Questions – Employers

Job Title

**Question:** What best describes your job title? Please circle all that applies

- Owner
- CEO/President
- Vice President
- Project Manager
- Senior Researcher
- Research Analyst
- Other (please specify)  _______________________________________

**Question Details**

A total of 69 completed responses from employers, 65 of them were obtained from our online survey while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy survey administered in the MRIA private event.

**Question Responses**

Only a total of 16% of market research professionals surveyed were not in management role. Specifically, 4% of respondents were project managers, 9% of respondents were senior researchers, and 3% of respondents were research analyst.

*Figure 19* Demographic Question: Job Title (Employers)
Sex

Question: What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other/Prefer not to say

Question Details

A total of 69 completed responses from employers, 65 of them were obtained from our online survey while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy survey administered in the MRIA private event.

Question Responses

Out of 69 respondents, 47 (69%) of them were male and 22 (31%) of them were female.

Figure 20 Demographic Question: Sex (Employers)
Work Experience

Question: How many years of experience do you have working in the market research industry?

- < 1 year
- 1~2 years
- 2.1~5 years
- 5.1~10 years
- 10+ years

Question Details

A total of 69 completed responses from employers, 65 of them were obtained from our online survey while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy survey administered in the MRIA private event.

Question Responses

- 80% of respondents had over 10 years of experience working in the market research industry.
- 13% of respondents had 5 to 10 years of experience working in the market research industry.
- Only 7% of respondent had less than 5 years of market research industry experience.

Figure 21 Demographic Question: Experience in the market research industry (Employers)
Client/Supplier Research

**Question:** Market research can be segmented based on primary users of market research services. According to that division, which type of research does your organization provide?

- Client side market research
- Supplier side market research
- Both client and supplier side market research

**Question Details**

A total of 69 completed responses from employers, 65 of them were obtained from our online survey while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy survey administered in the MRIA private event.

**Question Responses**

Out of 69 respondents, 16 (23%) of them reported they provided client side market research, 43 (62%) of them reported they provided supplier side market research and 10 (15%) of them reported they provided both client and supplier side market research.

*Figure 22 Demographic Question: client vs supplier side market research (Employers)*
Primary/Secondary Research

Question: Market research can be divided into primary and secondary research. According to that division, which type of research does your organization provide?

- Primary market research
- Secondary market research
- Both primary and secondary market research

Question Details

A total of 69 completed responses from employers, 65 of them were obtained from our online survey while 4 of them were obtained from our hard copy survey administered in the MRIA private event.

Question Responses

Out of 69 respondents, 34 (50%) of them reported they provided primary market research only, 32 (46%) of them reported they provided both primary and secondary market research and only 3 (4%) of them reported they provided secondary market research only.

![Figure 23 Demographic Question: primary vs secondary market research (Employers)](image-url)
Participation in Hiring

**Question: Have you hired or participated in hiring a market research analyst?**

- Yes, in the past year
- Yes, but not in the past year
- No

**Question Details**

This question was asked in the online survey only. A total of 65 completed responses from employers.

**Question Responses**

Out of 65 respondents, 21 (32%) of them reported they had hired or participated in hiring a market research analyst in the past year, 30 (46%) of them reported they had hired or participated in hiring a market research analyst in the past but not in the past year, and 14 (22%) of them reported they had never hired or participated in any hiring practices.

*Figure 24 Demographic Question: hiring in the past year (Employers)*
Demographic Questions – Postgraduate Students

Related Work Experience

Question: Have you worked in a market research related job either currently or in the past?

- Yes
- No

Question Details

Students were all invited to complete the online survey and a total of 38 completed responses from students.

Question Responses

Out of 38 respondents, majority of students (33/87%) had never worked in a market research related job while only 5 of them (13%) had some experience working in market research related field.

Figure 25 Demographic question: prior experience in a market research related job (postgraduate students)
Sex

Question: What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other/Prefer not to say

Question Details

Students were all invited to complete the online survey and a total of 38 completed responses from students.

Question Responses

Out of 38 respondents, 14 (37%) of them were male while 24 (63%) of them were female.

Figure 26 Demographic Question: Sex (postgraduate students)
Job Search Plans

Question: Upon graduation, are you planning to look for work as a market research analyst?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Question Details

Students were all invited to complete the online survey and a total of 38 completed responses from students.

Question Responses

Referring to Figure 27, out of 38 respondents, 23 (61%) of them planned to work as a market researcher, 5 (13%) of them did not plan to work as a market researcher, and 10 (26%) of them had not fully decided on their future career plan at the time being surveyed.

Figure 27 Demographic Question: Plan to work as a market research analyst (Students)
### Tables

**Figure 28 Importance of Technical Skills in Perspective of Employers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
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**Figure 29 Importance of Technical Skills in Perspective of Postgraduate Students**

<table>
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### Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

#### Figure 30 Importance of Computer Skills in Perspective of Employers

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<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
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#### Figure 31 Importance of Computer Skills in Perspective of Postgraduate Students

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## Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

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**Figure 32 Importance of Soft Skills in Perspective of Employers**

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**Figure 33 Importance of Soft Skills in Perspective of Postgraduate Students**
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<td>11.3%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliant</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
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<td>14.1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Compromising</td>
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<td>32.4%</td>
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<td>4.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fearless</td>
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<td>25.4%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conforming</td>
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<td>31.0%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-Taker</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldly</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
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<td>1.4%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Extrovert</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
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<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 34: Desirability of Personality Traits in Perspective of Employers*
### Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

#### Table 1: Desirability of Personality Traits in Perspective of Postgraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Not desirable at all</th>
<th>Somewhat desirable</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
<th>Very desirable</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Rational</td>
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<td>21.1%</td>
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<td>21.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ethical</td>
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<td>13.2%</td>
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<td>36.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personable</td>
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<td>26.3%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent</td>
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<td>18.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>26.3%</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Confident</td>
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<td>7.9%</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
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<td>28.9%</td>
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<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldly</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliant</td>
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<td>21.1%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extravert</td>
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<td>42.1%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionist</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Humour</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudent</td>
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<td>44.7%</td>
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<td>15.8%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk-Taker</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearless</td>
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<td>23.7%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforming</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial</td>
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<td>34.2%</td>
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<td>10.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 35 Desirability of Personality Traits in Perspective of Postgraduate Students*

#### Table 2: Importance of Work Experience in Perspective of Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid employment</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement/internship (paid)</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement/internship (unpaid)</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 36 Importance of Work Experience in Perspective of Employers*

#### Table 3: Importance of Work Experience in Perspective of Postgraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
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<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid employment</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement/internship (paid)</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement/internship (unpaid)</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 37 Importance of Work Experience in Perspective of Postgraduate Student*
Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Diploma</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
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<td>7.1%</td>
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</table>

Figure 38 Importance of Formal Education in Perspective of Employers

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
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<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Diploma</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<td>26.3%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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<td>21.3%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
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</table>

Figure 39 Importance of Formal Education in Perspective of Postgraduate Students

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
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<th>Somewhat valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Very valuable</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Humber’s Research Analyst</td>
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<td>15.9%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Program</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Algonguin’s Marketing and Business Intelligence Program</td>
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<td>13.0%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian’s Research Analyst Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
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</table>

Figure 40 Value of Research Program Providers in Perspective of Employers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
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<td>Career Fairs/Events</td>
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<td>20.3%</td>
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<td>4.3%</td>
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<td>24.6%</td>
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<td>5.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Referrals</td>
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<td>15.9%</td>
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<td>17.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruiters</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-hiring</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-Ins</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 41 Recruitment Strategies Used by Employers
Figure 42: Job Seeking Strategies Used by Postgraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Fairs/Events</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Career Website</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Recruitment</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Referrals</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Referrals</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Job Boards</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Ads</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiters</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-hiring</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-Ins</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 43: Importance of Factors for Career Progression in Perspective of Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical skills, not including computer</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft skills</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality traits</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 44: Importance of Factors for Career Progression in Perspective of Postgraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical skills, not including computer</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft skills</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality traits</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Analysis

Demographic Summary

In total 107 surveys were completed:

- 69 employers:
  - 47 males, 22 females
  - 43 supplier side, 16 client side, 10 both
- 38 students:
  - 14 males, 24 females

Summary of Employers’ Key Competencies

For the purposes of the descriptive analysis, we focused on which competencies were rated as either very important or mandatory on the Likert scale. We felt that this was the best way to identify the most crucial competencies of market research analysts, because these are the skills that are actively sought, whereas skills and traits seen as “important” as opposed to “somewhat important” is not as relevant a distinction, since neither are seen as actually needed. The summary statistics below describe the percentage of responses that indicated this combined very important and mandatory category.

Technical Skills. The top 5 technical skills indicated as very important or mandatory by market research professionals were:

- 1. Professional writing skill (76%)
- 2. Research ethics (73%)
- 3. Data management (66%)
- 4. Quantitative research skills (63%)
- 5. Survey design (58%)

Also worth mentioning, project management was regarded as a very important skill by majority (52%) of employers. In general, employers valued primary research skills (55%) over secondary research skills (39%), and quantitative research skills (63%) over qualitative research skills (31%). While 76% of employers reported that professional writing skill was a very important skill, only 21% of them looked for proposal writing skill in particular.
**Computer Skills.** The top 5 computer skills indicated as very important or mandatory by market research professionals were:

1. Microsoft Excel (90%)
2. Microsoft Word (82%)
3. Microsoft PowerPoint (78%)
4. Microsoft Outlook (55%)
5. SPSS (44%)

The only other highly rated skill was online survey tools at 37%. Out of 18 computer skills given in the survey, 12 of them were had less than 20% of employers indicate its importance. In order words, employers in general only expect entry-level research analysts be able to work proficiently with Microsoft Office Suite and some working knowledge of SPSS and a survey tool would be sufficient for the entry-level roles.
Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

Soft Skills. The top 5 soft skills indicated as very important or mandatory by market research professionals were:

1. Written Communication (94%)
2. Time Management (90%)
3. Listening (87%)
4. Teamwork (86%)
5. Problem Solving (86%)

In addition to written communication, verbal communication (85%) was rated very important to employers. Employers also generally rated the ability to work independently as very important (78%). In other words, employers want excellent communicators who are capable of working both collaboratively and individually. In general, employers appeared to weigh soft skills more heavily than other types of skills. Out of 15 soft skills given in the survey, 10 of them were reported as very important or mandatory by the majority of employers.

Personality Traits. The top 5 personality traits indicated as very desirable or mandatory by market research professionals were:

1. Curious (89%)
2. Ethical (87%)
3. Motivated (87%)
4. Enthusiastic (87%)
5. Conscientious (86%) / Responsible (86%)

Beyond these, a majority of employers wanted entry-level market researchers to be flexible (73%), persistent (72%), rational...
(68%), self-confident (66%), creative (65%), personable (65%), and methodical (58%). Traits that were rarely seen as desirable by employers were conventional, extrovert, controversial, aggressive, worldly, risk-taking and conforming, all of which had less than 10% of employers considering it very desirable. In extreme cases, 44% of employers rated being aggressive as not at all desirable, and 55% of them felt this way about being controversial. In summary, market research employers are looking for curious, motivated and enthusiastic individuals with high ethical standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Desirability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Independently</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating Diversity</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Functional Perspective</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following Structured Method</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling Ambigious...</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation/Conflict...</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 47 Importance of Soft Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Desirability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confident</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personable</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodical</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Humour</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 48 Desirability of Personality Traits**
Analysis of Expectations of Students Compared to Employers

For each competency, we tested the difference between employers and students’ expectations using chi-square tests for independence on the collapsed categories used descriptively above. In addition to this, we used independent samples Mann-Whitney U-tests to test for differences between the entire distribution of overall ratings, which also measures differences between the lower end of the rating scale.

Finding 1: Students Undervalued Project Management Skill. Only 34% of students believed that project management skill was very important for entry-level market research analysts as compared to 52% of employers. Although this 18% difference was not found significant in the chi-square test, the Mann-Whitney U test examining the distribution of student and employer responses fully without collapsed categories showed that there was a significant difference between students and employers, $U = 943.5, p = .01, r = 0.247$. Overall, students thought that project management skill was less important for entry-level market research analysts than did their potential employers.

Finding 2: Students Undervalued Research Ethics. Only 55% of students believed that research ethics was very important for entry-level market research analysts as compared to 73% of employers. While the chi-square test found no significant difference, the overall difference in ratings was significant according to the Mann-Whitney U test, $U = 1020, p = .045, r = 0.194$. This suggests that students do not
put enough weight on research ethics as per employers’ standard.

**Employers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Ethics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>N = 69</th>
<th>Mean Rank = 58.22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Postgraduate Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Ethics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>N = 38</th>
<th>Mean Rank = 46.34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 50 Research Ethics - Importance*

**Finding 3: Students Overvalued Computer Skills.** Thirteen out of 18 computer skills in the survey, including Microsoft Access, SPSS, and online survey tools, were overvalued by students. Both Mann-Whitney U tests on overall ratings and chi-square tests on the collapsed categories showed that these 13 computer skills were significantly overvalued by students when compared to employers, at the 0.05 level (See Appendix for details.)

**Finding 4: Students Undervalued Teamwork and Listening Skill.** Only 68% of students considered teamwork very important for entry-level market research analysts as compared to 86% of employers. The 18% difference was found significant in the chi-square test indicating that students valued teamwork skill significantly less than their prospective employers, $X^2 (1, N = 109) = 4.702, p < .05, \phi = 0.208$. The Mann-Whitney U test examining the whole distribution confirmed this difference, $U = 1049.5, p = .04, r = 0.197$

Meanwhile, 76% of students compared with 87% of employers rated listening as very important. The chi square test did not find this difference to be significant, but in the Mann-Whitney U test, the perceived importance of listening skill was perceived to be significantly less for students than for employers overall, $U = 1071.5, p = .043, r = 0.193$. 
Finding 5: Students Overvalued Leadership Skill. 47% of students believed that leadership was a very important skill for entry-level market research analysts whereas only 23% of employers agreed. The 24% difference was found significant in the chi-square independence test, $\chi^2 (1, N = 109) = 7.112$, $p < .05$, $\phi = 0.255$. The Mann-Whitney U test examining the whole distribution was also significant, $U = 955.5$, $p = .009$, $r = 0.251$. 
Finding 6: Top Traits Employers Wanted More from Students. There were certain personality traits that employers highly valued overall more than students expected according to a series of Mann-Whitney U tests.

These traits were curiosity, $U = 979, p = .016, r = 0.230$, enthusiasm, $U = 947.5, p = .012, r = 0.249$, conscientiousness, $U = 596.5, p < .001, r = 0.443$ and ethics, $U = 761.5, p < .001, r = 0.351$. 
Employers vs Postgraduate Students

**Figure 55** Top personality traits (Curious) - Importance

**Figure 56** Top personality traits (Enthusiastic) - Importance

**Figure 57** Top personality traits (Ethical) - Importance
Comparison of Supplier Side and Client Side Employers

As with the employer-student comparison, we tested the difference between supplier side and client side employer expectations for each competency. Again, we used chi-square tests for independence on the collapsed categories, and independent samples Mann-Whitney U-tests to test for differences between the entire distribution of overall ratings.

Finding 7: Supplier side employers considered research ethics and professional writing more important. On the supplier side, 81% of employers reported that research ethics was very important for entry-level market researchers as compared to 56% of client side employers. The 25% difference was found to be significant in the chi-square test indicating, $X^2 (1, N = 59) = 3.889, p < .05, \phi = 0.257$. The Mann-Whitney U test examining the distribution of employer responses fully also found a significant difference, $U = 199.5, p = .020, r = 0.306$.

For professional writing skills, 88% of supplier side employers rated it as very important whereas only 56% of client side employers reported likewise, a 32% difference. The chi-square test indicated $X^2 (1, N = 59) = 7.426, p < .05, \phi = 0.355$. The Mann-Whitney U test also found a significant difference, $U = 153.5, p < .001, r = 0.450$.

![Figure 58 Research Ethics – Importance](image-url)
Finding 8: Supplier side market research employers placed more importance in written communication. While the chi square test did not find a significant difference in the collapsed categories, the Mann-Whitney U test examining the distribution of employer responses indicated that the importance of written communication skill was greater on the supplier side, $U = 227$, $p = 0.023$, $r = 0.295$.

Finding 9: Supplier side employers wanted candidates to be more adventurous, caring and personable. Chi-square did not find a significant difference, but the Mann-Whitney U tests indicated that supplier side employers favour more than client side candidates who are adventurous, $U = 177.5$, $p = 0.045$, $r = 0.277$, as well as caring, $U = 216$, $p = 0.044$, $r = 0.269$, and personable, $U = 215.5$, $p = 0.041$, $r = 0.273$. 
Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

Figure 61 Adventurous, personable, and caring - Importance

Figure 62 Adventurous, personable, and caring - Importance

Figure 63 Adventurous, personable, and caring - Importance
Finding 10: Client side employers desired self-confidence more. On the client side, 88% of employers reported that self-confidence was a very important personality trait for entry-level market research analysts as compared to 60% of supplier side employers. This 28% difference was found to be significant by the chi-square independence test indicating the desirability of self-confidence was significantly greater for client side employers than for supplier side employers, \( X^2 (1, N = 59) = 3.904, p < .05, \phi = 0.257 \).

Additional Findings

In addition to these primary analyses, we tested for differences between male and female employers, and between employers who have hired recently and those who have not. The same statistical tests were used to find any differences.

Finding 11: Male employers desired aggressiveness than female employers. The independent samples Mann-Whitney U test examining the distribution of employer responses showed that male employers desired aggressiveness significantly more than females, \( U = 308, p = .046, r = 0.248 \). This indicates that although aggressiveness was not generally seen as a desirable personality trait in entry-level market research analysts by employers, male employers did somewhat value aggressiveness more than females.

Finding 12: Employers who hired entry-level market research analysts in the last year rated SPSS skill as more important than those who had not. Among employers who hired in the last year, 62% reported SPSS as very important, compared to 32% of those who had not. This 30% difference was found to be significant by the chi-square test, \( X^2 (1, N = 65) = 5.2989, p < .05, \phi = 0.286 \). The Mann-Whitney U test comparing the full distributions.
corroborated this finding, \( U = 259.5, \ p = .017, \ r = 0.309. \)

**Finding 13:** Employers who hired entry-level market research analysts in the last year say research ethics as being less important than those who had not. Only 52% of employers who hired entry-level research analysts in the last year regarded research ethics as a very important, compared to 80% of employers who had not.

This 28% difference was found to be important, compared to 80% of employers who had not. This 28% difference was found to be significant by the chi-square independence test, \( X^2 (1, N = 65) = 5.0708, \ p < .05, \ \phi = 0.279. \) The Mann-Whitney U test was also significant, \( U = 262.5, \ p = .008, \ r = 0.336. \)
Importance of Factors Overall

We explored the general importance of hard skills (including technical skills and computer skills) versus soft skills (including soft skills and personality traits) as overall factors.

By examining the total number of skills and traits reported as either mandatory or very important by employers in the survey, 33% of total counts from employers were related to technical skills whereas 67% were related to non-technical skills. A chi-square test of goodness of fits indicated that hard skills and soft skills were not equally required by employers, $\chi^2 (1, N = 2468) = 288.63, p < .05$. This indicates that employers significantly valued soft skills over hard skills as key competencies for entry-level market research analysts.

The results show that the students were generally aware of the importance of soft skills, aligning with employers’ general expectation. For example, 40% of total counts from students were related to hard skills whereas 60% of them were related soft skills. A chi-square test of goodness of fits indicated that hard skills and soft skills were not equally important to students, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1481) = 61.99, p < .05$. However, a chi-square test of independence indicated that students put significantly more weight on hard skills than employers regarding general competency of entry-level market research analysts, $\chi^2 (1, N = 3949) = 19.08, p < .05$.

Summary

The most basic expected finding was that employers would prefer soft skills over hard skills as key competencies in general, and this is what we found. Our novel overall finding was that research analyst students have a diverging view of what these competencies are, mainly by overvaluing hard skills, and undervaluing some key soft skills like research ethics and project management, and some traits like curiosity and conscientiousness. This is not to say that students thought these competencies were not important, they overall rated them quite highly—just not as highly as employers.

There were also some large differences between client and supplier side employers, with those on the supplier side valuing research ethics and writing skills more than those on the client side.

While employers valuing research ethics and ethical personality more than students expected present a common theme, especially on the supplier side, interestingly, this emphasis is not present in employers who have hired entry level analysts in the last year. It appears that it is primarily supplier side employers who are more “old school” and have not hired recently that
emphasize this so much. Employers that hired recently also highly valued SPSS skill in comparison to those that hadn’t.

Finally, the overall factors that employers find important are soft skills over hard skills. Students recognize this to a certain degree, also placing importance in soft skills over hard skills, but to a lesser degree, in particular overvaluing hard skills (and especially computer skills) compared with what employers are actually expecting.
Qualitative Report

Development of Interview Guide

The interview guide consisted of two components:

**Basic structure as a follow-up to survey.** Questions were developed and based around the structure of our earlier survey questionnaire, with closed-ended quantitative questions being modified into open ended qualitative questions to probe more deeply into preliminary quantitative findings.

**Additional component aimed to provide framework for emerging themes.** In addition to this, we added a question about whether applicants generally have the skill being discussed. We also added a question about the relative importance of overall competency categories like soft skills, hard skills, and personality traits. Additional probes were used in a free-flow conversational style used around main items to capture emerging topics.

Generally, the qualitative component of our study has been designed from the start of the study as a supplement to the quantitative, giving the “why” part to “what” of our quantitative findings. In that sense, our position did not change; we knew we would use interviews as an open ended supplement to the survey. What did change was the use of probes that were informed by insights from our survey and job posting analysis methods.

**Justification of Methods and Tools**

A semi-structured interview approach presents the optimal method to address the research question being asked for several reasons:

- The research seeks to uncover subjective experience and meanings employers ascribe to key market research analyst competencies but within the formalized pre-defined competency factor framework (i.e. hard skills, computer skills, soft skills, and personality traits).
- The researched population are hard-to-reach busy professionals that represent the elite of the market research industry. It would be extremely difficult and even counterproductive to organize focus groups given for such a population.
- Structured interviews would not inform the research question in its entirety as the study seeks to both explore pre-defined expectations as well as naturally (organically) emerging themes.
- Unstructured interviews would not provide needed framework to address
themes constructed through literature review

Qualitative Analysis

Process

Based on the preliminary results from other two methods, our approach to coding and analysis changed, as a reflection of what we learned from these other methods. We expected certain themes to emerge based on the results from the survey and content analysis (most of the interview subjects had done our survey earlier). So, the focus for the interview became the “why,” which led to emerging themes.

Three stages of content analysis

The process mostly followed the logic of summative content analysis (Berg, Lune, & Lune, 2004). Stage 1 included word count of raw interview data. To prepare this data, we removed the “stop words” (frequently-used but unimportant words, such as “the,” “and,” or “but”), as well as words that were repeated often in the interviews but without any meaning for the research (e.g. “thank,” “you,” “question” etc.). In addition, all words that had frequency less than 10 were removed. Furthermore, the data reduction process included merging of identical words in capitalized and lower case form (e.g. “research” and “Research”), as well as different stems with the same meaning (e.g. “research” and “researching”). The result of stage 1 is shown below.
Stage 1 produced results that were used as support for stage 2, which included reading through all the interviews by two researchers in order to explore and include latent meanings and themes that are present in the data. Upon completion of reading, the two researchers coded the interviews simultaneously in the same room by hand, collaborating on deciding themes, as well as independently coding several of the same interviews in order to achieve a high level of inter-coder reliability. The initially developed list of codes was reduced based on collapsing of same/similar codes previously agreed upon by both researchers. The final steps of Stage 2 involved the two researchers discussing key concepts relating to themes and codes, both in terms expected as well as naturally emerging themes. After this, in order to save time and resources (after the inter-coder reliability has been established) only one of the researchers approached further code reduction while keeping the main ideas of all major themes in mind. Stage 3 consisted of assigning reduced codes to.
interviews, this time using presently the most powerful qualitative software in the world, Provalis QDA Miner. The process of coding was guided by two different approaches (categories) to the qualitative content analysis:

**Analytic Categories.** Based on literature review and previously administered quantitative research methods, expectations about relationships among factors as well as relative importance of individual competencies were used as items/categories in the process of coding. The expectations about the relationship between soft and hard skills, relative importance of major competencies such as communication skills, SPSS, Excel and similar major themes were used as coding guidelines.

As this concept primarily sought to confirm previously developed ideas, it somewhat resembled quantitative methods as it relied primarily on word counts, frequencies and their qualifying determinates. Thus, codes used were either factors (e.g. “Soft Skills,” or “Hard Skills”), competencies (e.g. “curiosity,” or “communication”) or their qualifiers (e.g. “important,” or “mandatory”) and their incidence in the population of job seekers (e.g. “applicants have them,” or “applicants don’t have them” etc.).

Using an advanced system such as QDA Miner, it was possible to code the same sections of text multiple times using these different codes, thus making provisions for multidimensional coding of the same concepts (e.g. competency, importance of competence, incidence of competence). This way, approximately 60-70% of interview questions data was categorized using the similar principles applied when administering the survey (i.e. descriptive statistics using nominal and ordinal levels of measurements).

**Grounded Categories.** By using best practices and principles of grounded theory approach, naturally emerging themes were coded under separate umbrella “Different MRA perspectives.” To put it simply, all relevant naturally emerging topics that did not fall under predefined expected themes (confirmatory approach) were coded as separate sub codes under this umbrella. Emerging themes were therefore independent from other methods of analysis.

This approach represented the central part of the qualitative research analysis, answering the “why” question as it used organically emerging codes and grounded theory principles to determine key findings. Confirmatory approach to coding resembled a quasi-hypothesis testing model, whereas the exploratory aspect largely relied on principles of grounded
theory in research that had no preconceived expectations.

**Results**

**Analytic Approach.** Following this, the results of the analysis were divided into two broad categories: confirmatory and grounded theory/exploratory. Confirmatory results are presented by a combined coding that sought to determine the most important competencies as well as overall factors. In order to do that multidimensionality, combined codes were used. The formula used to create multidimensional codes is as follows:

\[
\text{Code } X \quad (\text{e.g. a competency or a trait}) \quad \text{BY} \quad \text{Level of Importance } Y \quad (\text{only qualification as the most important taken in consideration}) \quad \text{EQUALS} \quad \text{New multidimensional variable } Z \quad \text{measuring both aspects of a phenomenon}
\]

By using this approach, two types of multidimensional compound codes were created:

1. Competency BY Importance (most important only)

   By using this approach, two types of multidimensional compound codes were created:

   1. Competency BY Importance (most important only)

   2. Trait BY Importance (most important only)

   How the results match up with expectations for the confirmatory approach are represented in the following chart:
Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

% of Codes

- SPSS: 11%
- Curiosity: 10%
- Excel: 8%
- Powerpoint: 8%
- Communication Skills: 4%
- Business Orientation: 4%
- Project Management: 4%
- Passion: 4%
- Work Ethic: 3%
- Team Playing/Teamwork: 3%
- Personality: 3%
- Analytical/Analytic Skills: 3%
- Accountable: 2%
- Personal Rapport: 2%
- Attention to Detail: 2%
- Enthusiasm: 2%
- Data Synthesis: 2%
- Willingness To Learn: 2%
- Client/Interpersonal Skills: 2%
- Professional Presentation: 2%
- Writing Skills: 1%
- R: 1%
- Data Manipulation: 1%
- Sense of Data: 1%
- Python: 1%
- Research design: 1%
- Presentation Skills: 1%
- Multitasking: 1%
- Passion for Business: 1%
- Basic Maths/Stats/Quant: 1%
- Basic Qual/Quant: 1%
- Creativity: 1%
- Research Ethics: 1%
- Independent Thinking: 1%
- Problem Solving: 1%
- Loving Data: 1%
- Outgoing: 1%
- Flexibility & Time Management: 1%
- Persistence: 1%
- Conflict Resolution: 1%
- Conscientiousness: 1%
- Being Rational: 1%
- Taking Direction: 1%
- Listening: 1%
- Quantitative Skills: 1%
- EQ: 1%
- Interpersonal: 1%
- Aggressive/Tenacious: 1%
- Basic Market Research: 1%

% of Cases

- SPSS: 93.30%
- Excel: 73.30%
- Powerpoint: 73.30%
- Curiosity: 53.30%
- Communication Skills: 33.30%
- Business Orientation: 26.70%
- Project Management: 26.70%
- Work Ethic: 26.70%
- Team Playing/Teamwork: 26.70%
- Passion: 26.70%
- Personality: 26.70%
- Accountable: 26.70%
- Personal Rapport: 13.30%
- Analytical/Analytic Skills: 13.30%
- Attention to Detail: 13.30%
- Enthusiasm: 13.30%
- Data Synthesis: 13.30%
- Willingness To Learn: 13.30%
- Client/Interpersonal Skills: 13.30%
- Writing Skills: 13.30%
- R: 13.30%
- Data Manipulation: 13.30%
- Sense of Data: 13.30%
- Python: 13.30%
- Research design: 13.30%
- Presentation Skills: 13.30%
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- Independent Thinking: 13.30%
- Problem Solving: 13.30%
- Loving Data: 13.30%
- Outgoing: 13.30%
- Flexibility & Time Management: 13.30%
- Persistence: 13.30%
- Conflict Resolution: 13.30%
- Conscientiousness: 13.30%
- Being Rational: 13.30%
- Taking Direction: 13.30%
- Listening: 13.30%
- Quantitative Skills: 13.30%
- EQ: 13.30%
- Interpersonal: 13.30%
- Aggressive/Tenacious: 13.30%
- Basic Market Research: 13.30%

Figure 68: Combination Chart – Competencies seen as most important by code and case frequency
The results indicate that the most important competencies mentioned in the semi-structured interviews are SPSS, curiosity, Excel, PowerPoint, and communication skills. This finding confirms our expectations from the previous methods. Data reduction and combined multidimensional variables demonstrate what the most sought after competencies are. In addition, further analysis sought to determine what the relationship is between factors. For the purposes of this analysis, computer skills and hard skills were collapsed to create combined hard/tech (teachable) skills factor. The results are shown below.

![ Combination Chart – Competencies seen as most important by code and case frequency ](image)

The chart indicates that soft skills and traits have much higher level of importance for entry-level MRA than hard skills. This finding represents a significant insight into perspectives of the interviewed employers and a relevant insight for job seekers, while confirming the expectation about the relationship between factors.

**Exploratory, grounded approach.** Several key themes emerged in the analysis of emerging themes. The first one relates to different aspects of perceiving soft skills and personality traits with respect to their importance. Here are the major findings:

**Lack of clarity about distinction between soft skills and traits.** In cases where interviewees did not see the difference between the two, they were mostly seen as interconnected, interchangeable and, generally, inseparable. For example:

“It’s probably 50-50 between hard and soft, if not maybe 60-40 towards soft, because soft skills can’t really be taught, because soft skills are about personality...”
And, similarly, in another case, when asked about soft skills and traits:

“I think that they are quite linked. (...) So, putting them in a situation where they need to work with people is where their soft skills come out. How someone cooperates with others, how their emotional intelligence comes out. (...) Are they curious? Are they interested in what they are doing?”

**Importance of soft/sales skills for career progression.** While most agreed that first promotion happens between 2 to 3 years, different career paths emerged as a topic. However, the key themes here is the crucial importance of soft skills (sales) in the context of surviving and thriving in the industry:

“I have done junior design, data collection, weighting, analysis, report writing. I have done all of that. I have worn all those hats. So I have done the sales aspect as well.”

Furthermore, sales/soft skills became an important theme, especially for the supplier-side career progression:

“So the better thinkers, the better writers, the better doers. So in the end...and this always scares people...they have to be able to at some point develop business. Meaning they have to be able to develop a relationship with the client or develop their own relationship with new clients so the business keeps coming back. (...) I think research is really business.”

“Well the most successful people are those who are able to take their clients and build it into something where the client wants to come back. Like I mean it really is about customer satisfaction. If they are not satisfied then they wouldn’t come back. If they don’t come back then you really don’t have much work to do. You know that’s the reality. I have worked with people who really don’t want to do business. But, the problem is that when they do that is they stall and they get stuck. They can’t really go any farther because they are not generating any revenue for the company.”

**Soft skills/traits as undervalued factors which needs to be given more attention.** Directly related was the observed perception that soft skills/traits are not treated at the same level as hard skills, and that they should be:

“If I have to come out with a conclusion I would say that 80% of terminations are due to the lack of soft skills. In a company you can send people to learn hard skills.”

And, regarding soft skills and personality:
“No. I don’t see them a lot, I really don’t. It’s because they don’t think they’re valuable, they don’t emphasize them, they don’t project them, they don’t put’em on their resume or talk about it in job interviews. I’m often as much interested in finding out that they breed orchids, as well as that they know SPSS, because that shows someone who has a real life, as well.”

**Soft skills and traits as key differentiators between applicants.** Because of the perception that everyone must have (or indeed has) the same basic hard skills as “entrance” requirement:

“Yeah well it’s like NASCAR, all those cars are the same. They’re all Toyota’s on the outside, and on the inside they’re hyper powered machines, but they’re all powered exactly the same and they all have exactly the same tuning. (...) So they all have the same car, so it comes down to who’s the better driver. And that’s kinda what hiring research applicants is like, they all have the same technical skills, so you hire the one that’s the better driver. Who can use them the best.”

And, another example:

“Q: So what I am hearing is that you need hard skills to get in but, you need soft skills to stay in.

A: Yeah, pretty much that’s a good way of summarizing. You are absolutely right.”

**Enthusiasm (trait) trumps technical knowledge (hard skill).** When directly comparing two candidates, one with superior technical knowledge, the other passionate about research, the latter will most likely get the position:

“So you don’t always get somebody that’s 100% in every area, so.... ...I look for the soft skills, I look for a personality that kind jumps a little bit, and somebody that I can see the enthusiasm for the role, and enthusiasm for the industry and the business. I want people to really like what they’re doing when they’re here, because if people like what they’re doing, then they’re going to do a better job, in my opinion.”

Besides this key theme that emerged through different perspectives, other relevant findings relate to several topics:

**“Business significant” vs. statistically significant research.** Market research is not “just” stats. it’s business first and foremost. So findings and analyses are only as relevant as the business “bottom line” for the client for whom the project is done:
“There has been a phrase that one of my colleague made ‘it’s business significant versus statistically significant’ and making the data make sense. We work really hard on our team on our presentations. There has been quite a focus on that in the past few years to make sure that we are getting up there to do a presentation we are able to distill the big volume of all the analysis into the ‘so what’ and the ‘now what’ for our business partners.

Basic vs. specialized entry-level MRA (market research analyst). This theme challenged idea that most entry-level MRA positions have more-less same required duties and competencies. As one of the interviewees indicated when asked about required skills of a “basic” versus a specialized entry-level MRA:

“…. but for a basic analyst, probably SPSS. And then, if you’re doing data visualization things like Tableau but that’s kind of another specialty.”

Big vs small market research company. Different size companies offer different experiences and roles, and therefore different competencies that could be developed for each career choice:

“…I mean I’ve been around the block for a while, and I’ve seen a lot, I would recommend any research analyst to ideally start in a smaller organization, understand the nuts and bolts from top to bottom, how things work. Because you don’t get that in a larger organization…”

And, strong praise for smaller supplier-side organizations as places to start one’s career:

“…but starting at some smaller organizations you really understand something basic…

... You’re probably gonna be involved a lot more in actual presentations at smaller organizations, as a research analyst, much more exposed to those things. You’ll actually probably be a lot more operationally functional, and understand how things work if you start at a smaller organization. I personally think for any research analyst to succeed you really need to start at a smaller organization. Not a two-person shop, but one that’s 5 to 10, to really get exposed to all aspects of the business.”

Project Management as both hard and soft skill. Interestingly, some interviewees saw project management skills as primarily teachable (hard) skill:

“It’s something that can be taught. Absolutely, it can be taught. I learnt it.”

While some saw it as soft skill:
“It’s an interesting question. I think that there are disciplines where it’s taught. Like there is the project manager designation. So I think are and you can be taught ways to think or frameworks to use to manage a project. So, I think it’s a bit of both. (...) Some people just have their heads in the clouds a bit.

**Supplier vs. Client.** One of the most important findings aside from importance of soft skills and traits is the notion about differences between supplier and client side market research. This theme emerged many times. It starts with the hiring process, where client-side does not usually even hire entry-level analysts:

“So I think it depends on what you are recruiting for. So at (major client-side research organization) we don’t tend to recruit for people at very junior levels (...) but, we do tend to recruit for people because of the way we are structured... (with experience) ...about five years.”

And, another client-side feedback:

“...we don’t generally hire entry level people. The reality is the people who we bring in have typically five years’ market research experience. Often it’s on the supplier side but, not always.”

Additionally, the issue of competencies required emerged and it was stated that supplier side is more emphasizing hard technical skills:

“It’s a different situation and also our supplier partners are doing much of the number crunching for us. You need to be able to understand what’s coming out of that and the analysis that has been done to make sure it passes the sniff test. But, we are typically not doing that ourselves in house.”

In certain ways, it could be said that the key differentiation between supplier and client is the level of direct exposure to all stages of research as opposed to synthesizing and interpreting findings:

“So, on the client side I will just do a caveat here. We often have our suppliers do a lot of the technical work so it wouldn’t be as crucial in our business (...). That being said the student has to have enough knowledge to make sense of data tables. To understand what the analysis is actually saying.”

And:

“I think that it’s different client side versus supplier side. On the supplier side which is why some people prefer it you become central to the organization. Meaning you create the product. On the client side there are other product which we trying to help the organization build
and develop. It’s a very different orientation I think.”

Summary of Findings

The qualitative portion of our research revealed very important findings that can be divided into two major groups:

Confirmation of previous findings.
Employers indeed give preference to soft skills, and, very importantly, personality traits over hard skills (as long as the basic hard skills are present) when considering candidates for entry-level MRA positions. By essentially quantifying qualitative data using advanced qualitative program QDA Miner, we have mostly confirmed expectations about importance of both top individual competencies from two other research methods (communication skills, curiosity, being ethical) as well as factors (soft skills and traits more valued than hard skills for entry-level MRA).

Naturally emerging themes. This provided “why” insights about soft skills and traits and their importance as well as completely new themes that presented additional findings to round out the picture of this underexplored industry and the competencies required to enter.

First: It was established that soft skills and traits are often confused and treated as one category. This explains why sometimes different relative importance are ascribed to soft skills and traits, even though they combined always turn out to be much more important than hard skills.

Second: Soft skills, even though key differentiators among candidates, this importance is often not understood by applicants, and so they should be trained in educational institutions, as they are also crucial for career breakthrough.

Finally, the most important finding for job seekers: some employers would give preference to a candidate with less superior technical skills but more passion than the other way around.

Other topics that emerged include the important differentiation between categories of market research companies: big vs small, supplier vs. client, and how it relates to the basic or specialized market research analyst role. Client-side rarely hires entry-level MRA, is more focused on synthesizing findings than actual research, and often “relies” on supplier side to do the training.
Final Analysis

Hiring Methods Analysis

In our survey, we asked employers what kind of hiring strategies they employ most frequently, including using online job boards and company career websites. Given our job posting analysis, we decided to look at how important this was with regard to our results in each method. We again used chi-square test of independence and Mann-Whitney U test to look at this.

Among students, 79% used company websites to apply to jobs often or always, whereas only 29% of employers reported they relied on their company websites to look for candidates. The difference was found to be significant by the chi-square independence test, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 107) = 25.704, p < .001, \phi = 0.490 \). The Mann-Whitney U test was also significant, \( U = 1932, p < .001, r = 0.483 \).

In addition, while 71% of students mainly applied jobs through online job boards, only 25% of employers considered online job postings as an effective way to find qualified candidates. The difference was found to be significant by the chi-square independent test, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 107) = 22.820, p < .001, \phi = 0.462 \), and the Mann-Whitney U test, \( U = 1963, p < .001, r = 0.502 \). These results showed that students have relied on online methods of job application too much where referrals were the most prevalent method used by employers to look for prospective employees twice as often as online job advertisement.

![Figure 70 Hiring Method (Online Job Boards) – Importance](image-url)
Key Competencies of Entry-Level Market Research Analysts: A Mixed-Method Approach

**Figure 71** Hiring Method (Online Job Boards) – Importance
Summary

Many findings that were confirmed across different methods, including:

- There is no consensus on job titles for market research analysts
- There are more supplier side jobs that are pure research analyst, but more client side jobs of all types such as analytics.
- Communication skill among the most important in all three methods
- Soft skills and traits emerged as more important than hard skills in all three methods
  - Though, job postings emphasized mainly communication, other common soft skills and traits like curiosity weren’t as emphasized
- Generic entry level market research analyst positions would be at small to medium size supplier side MR company.
- Entry level client side jobs might be called market research analyst but are really quant heavy analytics based jobs not directly doing market research.
- The basic toolkit of market research analysts at the entry level is PowerPoint, Excel, Word, and usually SPSS.

Recommendations and Insights

College curricula for training research analysts should put more focus on training transferable soft skills. While the nature of a college program is that it will tend to mainly focus on technical skills, this should not be the only goal. Colleges should also continue with project management courses, and possibly expand them, as it is something employers are looking for, even in entry-level hires.

Research students and other people entering the field of market research should emphasize soft skills on their resume. While basic computer software like MS Office is seen as mandatory, it’s also assumed, and no one will be impressed by it. They should understand that everyone that is competitive for a job will have similar hard skills that are a baseline requirement, and they need to go beyond that into the domain of soft skills and traits. Your resume should stand out in soft skills and personality traits as much as possible—even though this usually requires a job interview or networking to convey, the resume can only achieve so much here.

During job interviews, and while networking with potential employers, students should emphasize passion for research and curiosity, rather than focusing on
advertising your hard skills. Employers don’t care as much about that, because they can be taught. They want someone who is enthusiastic, conscientious, and ethical.

Students should understand the importance of ethics more than they currently do— it is absolutely paramount. There are no shortcuts in good research, and an unethical mindset would be one of the worst things an entry level analyst could have in the eyes of employers.

Having said that, students must understand that business is not academia, and what is statistically significant may not be business significant. In business, research is about telling a story and generating actionable insights, not just reporting the pure science of what was found.

While computer skills were overvalued by students when compared with employers, SPSS in particular was valued by employers who have hiring recently, so this is something good to master in addition to developing soft skills, depending on your research focus, of course.

For employers, there should be better communication to students and entry level applicants on what they are looking for, whether that is through job postings, or other recruitment strategies. Employers need to be clear in the job description, job title, and job duties as to what position they are actually looking for, since there is currently great confusion in terms between research analysts, data analysts, research managers, and business analysts.

Given the disconnect between employer hiring strategies (internal) and student application strategies (job boards), both students and employers would benefit from a more developed system of job fairs and networking events that help bridge the gap between anonymous applicants to a quasi-internal process where employers can put a face to the name.

The role of MRIA and its CMRP designation as a testament of knowledge and capability in marketing research is fairly known to research analyst postgraduates. However, there seems to be room for further quality promotion of benefits that starting to work towards CMRP early in career could bring to market research analysts.

Finally, the recommended career path for entry level analysts is to start at a supplier side company of small or medium size in order to build various skills. Then with progression they can move to bigger supplier side companies in more senior roles or join the client side.
Evaluation

This study was conducted with a deductive method. While we had some expectations of what we would find a general sense based on literature review (for example, that soft skills would probably be more valued), we did not structure our research based on a positivist hypothesis testing model. We did shape our survey questions based on a basic groundwork of expected competencies that would have the potential to be seen as important, and sought to corroborate certain findings within the context of market research, and so this method had a positivist bent. But overall, we used an open exploratory approach. This is especially true with the job posting analysis and the qualitative interviews, where there were no assumptions built into the data gathering process, and they were coded in an open-ended manner to capture anything that emerged from those analyses.

Our epistemic assumptions straddle two different schools of thought. On the one hand, our methods rely on self-report from participants (or for the content analysis, the generation of the job posting by a person at some point), and so in one sense it can’t be denied that we are working in an individualist framework, relying on their subjective sense of what they know and their opinion to investigate the question. On the other hand, there are objective facts to be known about subjective opinions. Respondents really do believe something about the questions that they are answering, even if we cannot necessarily measure it objectively. Furthermore, we do believe that there is a strong relationship between the self-reported information from our respondents and their true behaviour in the real world. So in that sense, we do assume a certain kind of realism.

We also assume a correspondence theory of truth, in that our data does match reality, at least in principle. That reality is one of what respondents’ intentions and beliefs are in that moment of answering the question. It is not necessarily the reality of how those answers correspond to behaviour in a perfect way, because we also acknowledge what behavioural economics tells us about human rationality. Research has shown that survey answers do not always correspond to real world behaviour because it engages different cognitive processes, known as the “say-do” gap in psychology (BEworks, 2015). However, having said this, we expect a high degree of correlation between what employers report as being the key competencies they look for in candidates, and what they act on. The reason for this is that we expect responses to our survey generally, and our interviews especially, engage the same “system 2” rational and deliberative thinking (BEworks, 2015) that employers would engage when
evaluating candidates. And we believe that any intangible cues that employers might act on that would potentially be missed by a self-report would be in the domain of personality traits, and since our results emphasize personality traits already, it seems unlikely that there would be a disconnect there.

We believe we have arrived at a reasonable approximation of the truth in this study. In order to increase the validity of the results, we used mixed methods, with a quantitative survey, a qualitative interview, and a content analysis with both qualitative and quantitative elements. By using this methodological triangulation, in a temporally sequential way our results build on each other to explore, confirm, and expand our findings. In addition, we had triangulation of sources (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999) regarding the theoretical framework of key competencies by surveying and comparing employers and students.

However, given our non-random convenience sample, we cannot necessarily generalize these results beyond our sample. Given our hard to reach population and good response rate to a very broad survey invitation, we believe our sample is representative to some degree, though this is not possible to determine. Our use of inferential statistics therefore must be understood with this caveat that we are inferring only to our sample, not Ontario market research employers in general. Similarly, with our content analysis, we believe we sampled a high proportion of existing job postings in the collection period, that while not random, should represent research analyst job postings to some degree as well. Therefore, external validity has not necessarily been achieved, but we feel. For our interviews, we were mindful to include participants from both client and supplier side, of both sexes, and from companies of various sizes and prominence, in order to get as many perspectives as possible, and we believe we achieved this with fifteen interviews in a difficult to access population. Given all of this, we evaluate our study as having good internal validity, but more controls may be needed in future studies to confirms this.

This framework led us to develop two types of recommendations. One type, though not based on a hypothesis, was quasi-positivist in that it confirmed previous ideas. The other was more tentative as it emerged organically in an exploratory way, based on constructivism. This dichotomy is also reflected in how the work is situated in the literature, with some research being corroborated, and new areas explored to serve as the basis for future confirmatory and expanding research.
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Researchers

Project Manager

Vedran Tintor

With experience in research, marketing, and business analysis acquired in Europe and Canada, Vedran has demonstrated excellent project management and research skills in different projects. He holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the University of Zagreb, Graduate School of Business as well as Career Consulting college diploma from George Brown College. Vedran’s professional interests include market, organizational, and human capital research. Currently he is completing a postgraduate Research Analyst program at Humber College.

Researchers

Brendan Beckett

Brendan learned research while earning his BA in psychology at York University. Having taken courses in journalism, he brings experience with interviewing and written knowledge translation, and his experience in psychology has given him experience with research reporting. He brings a skeptical and scientific approach to projects, and enjoys finding patterns in data. Currently he is completing a postgraduate Research Analyst program at Humber College.

Wai Seng Pun

Wai Seng worked as a data analyst in a fast growing IT company in Toronto. He had over three years of experience in data analytics and data mining experience. He specialized in quantitative data analysis and has track record of success developing analytical approaches to meet business requirements. He holds a Bachelor of Mathematics in Actuarial Science from the University of Waterloo. Currently he is completing a postgraduate Research Analyst program at Humber College.

Paul Reich

Paul has extensive experience in sales and customer service experience in a variety of industries. He is currently a market research professional at Decision Point Research in Toronto. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Waterloo and a postgraduate certificate in PR from Mohawk College. Currently he is completing a postgraduate Research Analyst program at Humber College.