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***SMART TOURISM: INVESTIGATING MOBILE APP INTEGRATION FOR ENHANCED
TOURIST EXPERIENCES IN TURKESTAN***

Abstract. At present, travel is commonly seen as a personalised encounter rather than choosing pre-arranged vacation packages. The emergence of new technologies and the broad availability of 5G connections have revolutionised the way travellers use smartphone applications to seek assistance in planning, navigating, and accessing local attractions at their selected locations. The swift advancement of mobile apps in the corporate domain confers a distinct advantage, particularly in relation to data, over competitors in the market. The increasing population of technologically proficient travellers, with 93% of potential visitors utilising smartphones on a regular basis, highlights the auspicious prospects for enterprises. This study centres on the utilisation of mobile applications in the Turkestan Region, investigating both domestically created and multinational apps to provide a thorough understanding of how technology enhances the travel experience.

Through the analysis of readily accessible secondary data, our objective is to ascertain the precise attributes that need to be integrated into applications in order to fully leverage the region's inherent advantages. This research examines the viewpoints of app users and suppliers, with the goal of satisfying the changing requirements of future enterprises, hotels, cultural heritage sites, and government bodies. Furthermore, its objective is to provide direction to city branding managers in creating applications that have functionalities that are in line with the distinct preferences of end users and the distinctive attributes of the area.

Keywords: smart tourism, personalized travel experience, travel app, tech-savvy, data - driven decisions

Introduction

The prevalence of technology and the widespread use of electronic devices, especially smartphones and tablets, have permanently changed the way people travel in modern times. As people go about their everyday routines, the availability of technology has become essential to their experiences. This is especially applicable in the tourism industry, as travellers currently depend on a variety of mobile applications to not only search for information but also to view travel products

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and services using captivating mediums like video clips and graphical drawings [1].

Our research in Turkestan aims to understand the complex connection between smart tourism and the incorporation of mobile applications, enhancing the experience for visitors who are experiencing this historically significant region. The tourist sector in Turkestan, renowned for its abundant cultural assets and historical importance, is on the verge of a technology revolution that has the potential to transform the way travelers interact with and experience the destination.

Technology is quickly becoming an essential component of everyday life in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan leads the technological revolution in Central Asia with 91% of its people linked to the internet, and 71.6% accessing it via mobile phones. The growing interconnectedness is not only molding the manner in which individuals engage with information but also impacting their inclinations and actions [2]. The nation has made remarkable progress in its technical infrastructure, thanks to a substantial increase in investments from major multinational technology companies. Yandex, the dominant search engine in Kazakhstan, and Huawei, a significant participant in the telecoms industry, have made significant financial commitments to the country's technology sector. The influx of technical investments is facilitating Kazakhstan's development as a prominent technology center in the area [3]. As we explore the details of Kazakhstan in relation to our research on smart tourism and mobile app integration, it is crucial to comprehend the distinct technical environment of the nation. The significance of matching our study with the unique tastes and technical dynamics of Kazakhstan is highlighted by its tech-savvy population and the growing presence of global tech organizations in the country.

Nevertheless, when we explore the particular details of Turkestan, we acknowledge the need of adapting to the surrounding circumstances. The mobile applications that are popular in internationally recognized areas may not perfectly match the specific complexities of Turkestan. Adapting our approach is essential, recognizing that the needs and preferences of individual travelers, including safety, access to resources, connection, transportation, and secure housing, may vary from the typical choices observed in popular tourist sites.

Our research aims to investigate how mobile applications might surpass the expectations of travelers in Turkestan, considering the significant role of technology in several aspects of life, including the tourist business. The focus is on modifying and improving the user experience by integrating certain characteristics that align with the unique properties of the region, satisfying the needs of both end-users and the Turkestan tourism environment.

Literature review

The significant influence of technology on the travel sector can be traced back to the 1960s, when the emergence of the Internet ushered in a period of profound change. An important advancement during this period was the rise of Global Distribution Systems (GDS), which established the basis for the online travel sector. GDS enabled smooth integration between service providers, such as hotels and airlines, which contributed to the growth of online travel agents [4]. This cutting-edge technology enabled users to conveniently access a variety of travel services through a unified touchpoint or platform. Significantly, within the aviation business, this progression reached its peak with the establishment of multi-billion-dollar corporations such as Amadeus, as seen by the 2023 data.

The travel business is primarily influenced by major participants in the global technology applications sector, with the United States and China taking the lead. Collectively, they account for over 70% of the income earned in this vibrant economy. The fact that a substantial majority of

worldwide travelers downloaded the Booking.com app in the previous year is evidence of the broad acceptance of travel applications. This application, well known for its exceptional lodging services, emerged as the frontrunner, with Airbnb, a key participant in the sharing economy platform, and Expedia following closely after [4].

In the middle of this technological transformation, client requirements have emerged as a major focus. Modern travelers, armed with smartphones and other technological gadgets, want a smooth and tailored experience throughout their trip. Integrating technology not only simplifies the booking process but also improves the whole travel experience [5]. With the growing reliance of customers on mobile applications for trip planning, booking, and navigation, the travel industry is obligated to adapt to these changing tastes. This entails ensuring that technology improvements not only meet but also surpass client expectations [6].

The advancement of technology has introduced a new era of smart tourism, where locations utilize smart city principles to improve the entire experience for tourists. The Smart Tourism Destinations (STD) concept is derived from the advancement of Smart Cities and leverages the incorporation of pervasive sensing technologies and social elements inside destinations. This strategy methodology seeks to cater to the requirements of travelers prior to, during, and subsequent to their journeys, enhancing the competitiveness of destinations. The framework prioritizes using the combined benefits of technology and social factors to enhance the overall visitor experience in a complete manner [7].

Within the framework of Kazakhstan, digital technologies have a crucial influence on the development of the tourist industry. Nevertheless, persistent obstacles in the tourist and hospitality industries include constraints in marketing techniques, subpar infrastructure quality, and a scarcity of specialists. Utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) is crucial for addressing these difficulties and promoting the growth of the tourist industry. However, there are significant deficiencies in the accessibility and visibility of internet services in rural regions, leading to a digital divide that is mostly centered in major centers like as Almaty and Astana [8].

Ramazanova M. et al. performed a qualitative analysis to examine the influence of information and communication technology (ICT) on the tourist industry in Kazakhstan. The study primarily examines internet accessibility and business-related factors, but it also sheds light on the current digital inequalities, particularly in areas that are not major metropolitan hubs. The limited availability of internet connectivity and the specific demand for tech-savvy persons aged 18-35 to visit as tourists emphasize the existing constraints in fully using mobile applications for destination management [8].

Garkavenko V. and Tiberghien G. provided insight into the process of digitizing Kazakhstan's tourist industry. They focused on the remarks made by government officials, the implementation of digitization projects in different parts of the country, and the overall direction towards establishing a contemporary and competitive tourism market. The writers highlight the significance of spreading ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and discuss the issue of unequal access to digital resources inside the country. They stress the necessity of coordinated efforts to promote digitalization [9]. Natocheeva N. et al. explore the role of digital technology in fostering the growth of the tourist business. The survey acknowledges the change in traveler tastes, highlighting a transition from pre-packaged choices to independent tourism, which requires direct communication between businesses and travelers [10].

Dickinson J. et al. examine the effects of smartphones and mobile applications on tourism,

finding the elements that influence the usage of cellphones when travelling. The research acknowledges the crucial role of mobile applications in influencing the visitor experience, by offering up-to-date information, customized services, and creative methods of exploring sites [11].

In the present research, Wang D. et al. investigate the use of smartphones while travel, specifically examining the underlying motivations, environmental circumstances, and cognitive beliefs that influence this behavior. The study highlights the beneficial influence of mobile devices on the feelings of inspiration, enthusiasm, and overall self-assurance when travelling [12].

Technologically, the use of Quick Response (QR) codes, augmented reality, and context-aware apps is becoming a popular trend in the creation of mobile tourist applications. These technologies improve the visitor experience by providing novel methods to explore sites [13]. Within the context of provider viewpoints, the crucial elements for improving customer experience and establishing a competitive edge are emphasized to be the joint endeavors of tourist stakeholders and the use of mobile apps. The significance of human capital, leadership, social capital, and innovation is highlighted as the fundamental basis for a smart tourist destination.

Ultimately, the literature analysis highlights the significant impact of mobile applications on smart tourism, demonstrating a scenario where technology and tourism intersect to offer enhanced, tailored, and inventive travel experiences. The next sections will go deeper into the unique context of Turkestan, scrutinizing consumer, technological, and provider viewpoints in order to comprehend the influence and promise of mobile applications in this historic area.

Methodology

This study involved evaluating the applications that were most often utilized, taking into consideration the number of downloads and recommendations acquired from platforms such as TripAdvisor and community support channels [4]. Our examination of travel applications uncovered the existence of local applications, such as 2Gis and Yandex.kz, as well as two global applications, specifically Google Maps and Booking.

The study technique encompassed gathering primary data sets and use publically accessible community channels to determine the most worthwhile and beneficial applications for visitors in Kazakhstan. More precisely, when it comes to the historical territory of Turkestan, we highlight the need of adjusting techniques to suit the distinctive circumstances of the city.

Discussion of results

The implementation of alert systems, namely those available on social media platforms, significantly contributes to the attractiveness of Socratic places in the Turkestan region for users. Upon analyzing the statistics depicted in figure1, it is evident that TikTok emerged as the predominant app in Kazakhstan in 2023, with a remarkable 9.56 million downloads. It was closely followed by Telegram and Kaspi.kz. This research emphasizes the potential of marketing campaigns to attract attention and gather substantial data about potential consumers on these widely used platforms [14].

Travelers who wish to visit Socratic locations priorities essential factors. Within the worldwide travel sector, advancing travel apps not only transform this procedure each year but also provide trusted suggestions and secure guidance derived from thorough data analysis.

Discerning travelers who prefer to travel independently prioritize key factors like safety, accessibility to resources, connection, movement options, and reliable accommodations. Examining

the top 10 applications in the travel and local category, as shown in figure 2, uncovers a range of service platforms for buying tickets, hiring vehicles, and requesting taxis.

Yandex Navigator, Aviata.kz, Easy Route Map, and Google Earth are prominent options in the realm of travel apps, highlighting the significance of navigation, planning, and tailored suggestions [14].

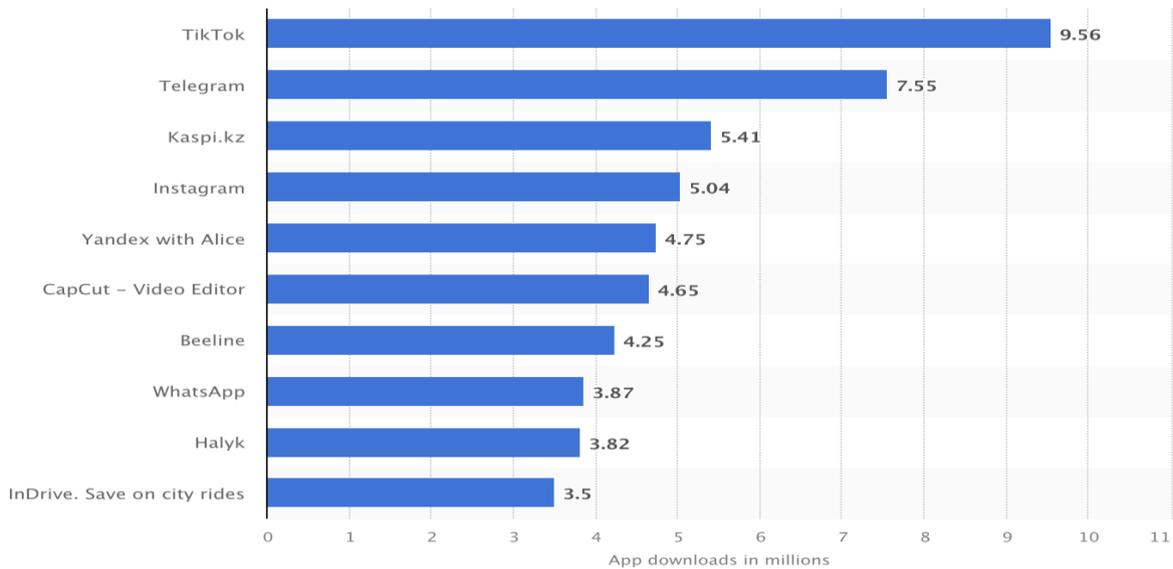


Figure - 1 – Most downloaded popular apps in Kazakhstan, 2023

Note - Compiled by the authors.

In order to fulfil expectations, our objective is to emphasize significant aspects of the Turkestan area as a destination, such as prominent tourism hubs, cultural landmarks, and historical sites, which are currently not well represented in existing applications.

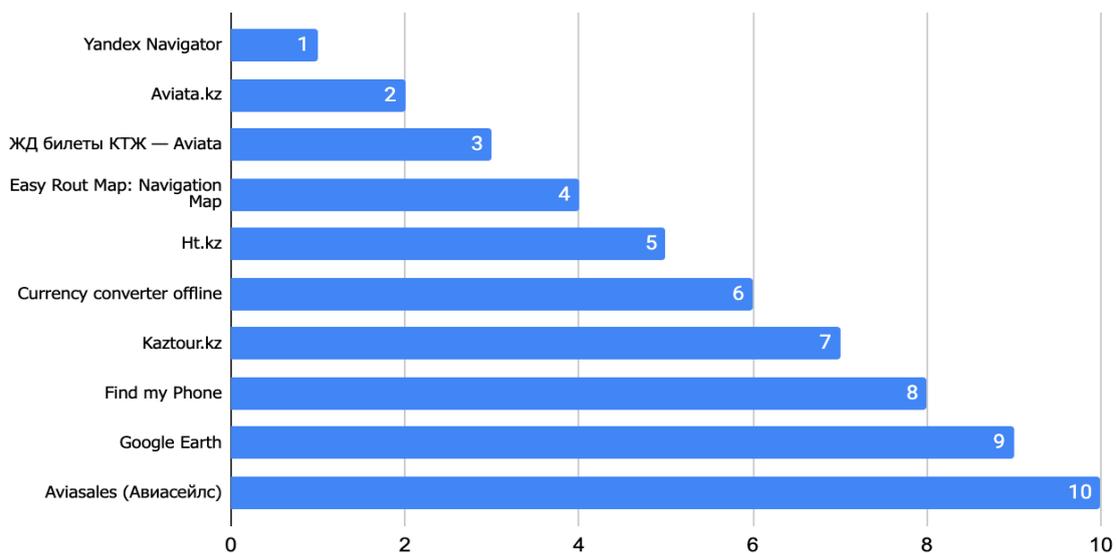


Figure - 1 – Most downloaded apps for travel and local category in Kazakhstan, 2023

Note - Compiled by the authors.

Even basic transit providers like Yandex do not have the capability to reach remote locations. To ensure a safe and secure travel experience, tourists may want to be aware of locations that offer comprehensive facilities for accommodation and sightseeing. In this regard, applications such as

Google Maps and Booking fall short, as they do not indicate the locations of tourist attractions with available lodgings, making it impossible for tourists to launch their own trip plans to these areas [15]. The fundamental reason for the scarcity of information on Socratic places in their early stages is the lack of knowledge among people regarding their location and the limited access to information about the destination and its environs.

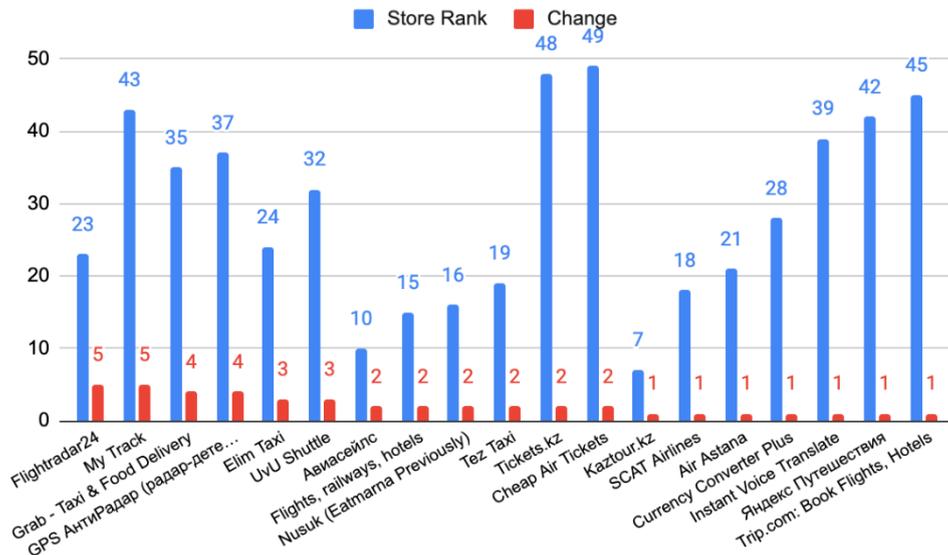


Figure - 3 – The popular travel apps getting positive demand, 2023

Note - Compiled by the authors.

Examining the demand and conversion rates of foreign and local apps, as depicted in figure 3, uncovers unexpected facts. Out of the applications seeing favorable improvements in demand, 32% are local, suggesting that apps from Turkey, Russia, the USA, and Malaysia are the most prevalent internationally. Economic factors have an impact on demand for local applications that focus on transportation, such as Tez Taxi and Elim Taxi, particularly in industrial areas like Astana and Almaty [9]. Furthermore, the presence of local applications offering tour packages, specifically focusing on the attractions in the Turkestan area, serves to emphasize the considerable potential for expansion within this particular market sector.

To summaries, the research highlights the necessity of adopting a targeted development strategy for local applications in the Turkestan region, specifically to cater to underserved and distant areas. Given the government's dedication to improving connectivity throughout Kazakhstan, it is a favorable time to prioritize the advancement of applications with improved navigation capabilities, secure place suggestions, and efficient commuting functions for regional locations (Figure-4).

The lack of world travel applications specifically designed for international travelers poses a significant risk of missed possibilities for the region.

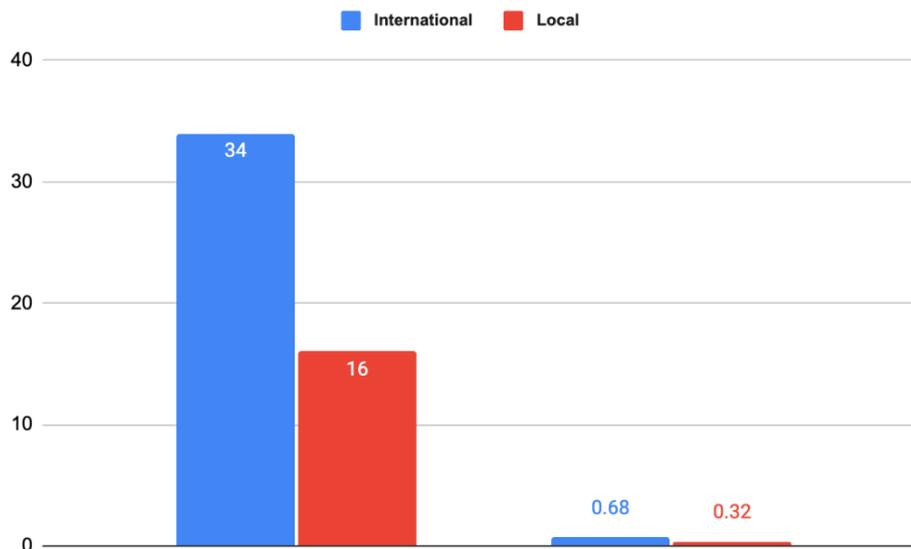


Figure - 4 – International & Local apps converse rate, WebSimilar, 2023.

Note - Compiled by the authors.

Therefore, it is crucial to allocate resources towards developing local infrastructure and applications that cater to the fundamental requirements of foreign individuals travelling alone. This strategic emphasis has the potential to enhance the overall expansion and appeal of the Turkestan area within the global tourist industry.

Conclusion

Turkestan stands out as a captivating focal point in the realm of smart tourism, where the integration of technology changes the trip experience. Our investigation of the dynamic convergence of smart tourism and mobile apps in this historically significant area uncovers subtle complexities that are essential for many stakeholders. The interdependent connection between technology and tourism serves as a crucial catalyst in transforming tourist experiences. Turkestan, known for its abundant cultural heritage, offers a unique setting that requires a thoughtful integration of technology to cater to the particular needs of discriminating travelers.

As we explore the consequences of our research, a unique and intricate pattern emerges, combining the elements of scholarly study with real-world implementation. The academic community acquires a detailed comprehension of the complex correlation of smart tourism, mobile apps, and the distinct attributes of Turkestan. Concurrently, the pragmatic aspects of this research offer assistance to governments, marketing experts, travel industry suppliers, and technology developers. It acts as a fundamental plan, guiding towards a future when Turkestan's importance in smart tourism is not just a result of technology integration but a proof of a harmonious combination of cultural wealth and technical progress.

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SMART TOURISM: ТҮРКІСТАНДАҒЫ ТУРИСТІК ТӘЖІРИБЕНІ ЖАҚСARTУ ҮШІН МОБИЛЬДІ ҚОСЫМШАЛАРДЫ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯЛАУ БОЙЫНША ЗЕРТТЕУ

Аңдатпа. Қазіргі уақытта саяхат алдын ала дайындалған туристік пакеттерді таңдаудан гөрі жеке тәжірибе ретінде қарастырылады. Жаңа технологиялардың пайда болуы және 5G байланысының кең таралуы саяхатшылардың өздерінің таңдаған локацияларындағы жергілікті көрікті жерлерге саяхатты жоспарлау, навигация және оларға қол жеткізуде мобильді қосымшаларды қолдануы революцияға әкелді. Корпоративтік саладағы мобильді қосымшалардың жылдам дамуы, оның ішінде деректерге қатысты алып қарайтын болсақ, нарықтағы бәсекелестікте белгілі бір артықшылықтарды қамтамасыз етеді. Әлеуетті келушілердің 93%-ы технологияны меңгерген тұрақты түрде смартфондарды пайдаланатын саяхатшылар, олардың санының артуы бизнес үшін жаңа мүмкіндіктер туғызады. Бұл зерттеу технологияның саяхат тәжірибесіне қалай ықпал ететінін жақсырақ түсіну үшін отандық және халықаралық қосымшаларды зерттей отырып, Түркістан аймағында мобильді қосымшаларды пайдалану мүмкіндерін анықтауға бағытталған.

Жалпыға қолжетімді қосымша деректерді талдау арқылы зерттеу мақсаты аймаққа тән артықшылықтарды толығымен пайдалану үшін қосымшалардың біріктірілуі керек нақты сипаттамаларын анықтау болып табылады. Бұл зерттеу болашақ кәсіпорындардың, қонақүйлердің, мәдени мұра нысандарының және мемлекеттік органдардың өзгермелі талаптарын қанағаттандыру үшін қосымшаларды пайдаланушылар мен провайдерлердің перспективаларын зерттейді. Сонымен қатар, қала бренд-менеджерлеріне түпкі пайдаланушылардың бірегей қалауларына және аймақтың сипаттамаларына сәйкес келетін функционалды қосымшаларды құру бойынша ұсыныстар беруге бағытталған.

Кілт сөздер: ақылды туризм, жеке саяхат тәжірибесі, саяхат қосымшасы, саяхатшылар, деректерге негізделген шешімдер

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SMART TOURISM: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ МОБИЛЬНЫХ ПРИЛОЖЕНИЙ ДЛЯ УЛУЧШЕНИЯ ТУРИСТИЧЕСКОГО ОПЫТА В ТУРКЕСТАНЕ

Аннотация. В настоящее время путешествия чаще воспринимаются как индивидуальный опыт, а не выбор заранее организованных туристических пакетов. Появление новых технологий и широкое распространение 5G-соединения

революционизировали способ использования путешественниками мобильных приложений для поиска поддержки в планировании, навигации и доступе к местным достопримечательностям в выбранных локациях. Быстрое развитие мобильных приложений в корпоративной сфере придает определенное преимущество, особенно в отношении данных, перед конкурентами на рынке. Увеличивающееся количество технологически грамотных путешественников, 93% потенциальных посетителей которых регулярно используют смартфоны, подчеркивает перспективы для предприятий.

Это исследование сосредотачивается на использовании мобильных приложений в регионе Туркестан, изучая как отечественные, так и международные приложения для более полного понимания, как технологии содействуют опыту путешествий. Через анализ публично доступных вторичных данных, нашей целью является выявление конкретных характеристик, которые следует интегрировать в приложения для полного использования преимуществ региона. Это исследование рассматривает точки зрения пользователей и поставщиков приложений с целью удовлетворения изменяющихся требований будущих предприятий, отелей, объектов культурного наследия и государственных органов. Кроме того, его целью является предоставление рекомендаций менеджерам городского бренда для создания приложений с функционалом, соответствующим уникальным предпочтениям конечных пользователей и особенностям региона.

Ключевые слова: *умный туризм, персонализированный опыт путешествий, туристическое приложение, технически подкованные путешественники, решения, основанные на данных*