

# The Significance of Tourist Apps on a tourist experience



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## **1. Introduction and Problem Formulation**

Globalization processes and urbanization have a significance impact on the process of traveling around the world. People from different countries have an actual possibility to attend all the globe's corners if they have substantial amount of money. As a result, the popularity of international travels is growing dramatically. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2015), the number of international tourists in 2014 has reached the number of 1.128 billion while it was only 1.087 billion in the previous year. This tendency is operative in each region. Even though people are more willing to travel to North or South America than to Africa (a 7% increase in the number of international tourists in comparison with 2% increase), the trend definitely exists worldwide. In order to take advantage from this situation, companies from different industries come up with useful innovations which are aimed at helping people with their tourist experiences. Affordable international transport, inexpensive hotels and professional tourist agencies stimulate people to engage in the process of traveling. However, it is especially important to emphasize the significance of tourist apps that may assist tourists with hotels' booking, organizing, navigating, translating and even tipping (tradeforum.org).

It is shortsighted to consider the phenomenon of tourist apps as a miraculous recipe for modern tourists. Some researchers support an assumption that a high public demand in the industry of tourist apps is primarily reasoned by the effective marketing campaigns. Indeed, this point of view might have a grain of truth. While most of products are designed for fulfilling existing customers' needs, tourist apps often try to anticipate these needs and predict people's expectations in the fields of orienting, navigating and communicating in foreign countries. As a result, a lot of people may only use tourist apps because it is a popular trend that is supported

worldwide (Clack, 2015). Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that tourist apps might sometimes have a negative impact on tourist experience because they entirely take the “surprise effect” out of the process of traveling. At the same time, it is obvious that the “surprise effect” makes tourists consider their travels as exciting adventures which are positively different from the monotonous everyday life. So, the phenomenon of tourist apps is not as simple as it might seem to be. It is a complex research object which requires detailed investigation. (Clack, 2015)

Interestingly, even though the development of tourist apps industry is rapid, a little number of studies was made in the field of researching the influence of these apps on tourist experience. So, most of researchers who study this problem are forced to mostly rely on primary data which is gained from interviews, surveys or other empiric methods. (Alisha & Frew, 2014)

This paper is aimed at filling this research gap. The main research objective of the current investigation is to study the ways in which tourist apps influence tourist experience. It would be very interesting to observe how different tourist apps affect tourist’s experiences and to why certain people decide to use certain apps. Generally, tourist apps market is developing dramatically and the number of customers is constantly increasing. The main reason of apps’ popularity is that they satisfy a topical social demand which is certainly under increase. Even though globalization’s impact simplifies tourist experience, it is still hard for people to make right decisions while they are in foreign countries. Finding destinations, overcoming language barriers and paying respect to cultural peculiarities require an external help which can be successfully provided by tourist apps. Moreover, the fact that they are available on digital devices makes them especially useful as it is possible to use apps for dealing with immediate responses.

In order to observe which impact various tourist apps have on tourist's experiences, it was decided to focus on ten tourist apps which are widely used by modern tourists. The empiric methods of the research will allow us to analyze in details the usage of these apps by tourists. As a result, we will have enough ground to make far-reaching conclusions regarding the influence of tourist apps on tourist experience in the modern tourist industry. In order to observe how tourist apps can affect tourists, I have decided to have the following objectives:

1. To choose ten tourist apps which will be included in this research;
2. To provide detailed analysis of these apps;
3. To observe how popular the tourist apps are ( between respondents) and why they have been chosen
4. To determine the spheres in which tourist apps have the most substantial impact on tourist experience;
5. To analyse profound aspects of tourists' attitude toward tourist apps.

These research objectives indicate employing a mixed methodology. In our case, I will employ an instrument of surveys in order to see the popularity of the tourist apps and the significance of tourist experience's upgrades. Unfortunately, limited resources don't allow conducting a survey which would provide sociologically valid results. However, the sample of 200 respondents is expected to provide me valuable information, which will be used as a support of the qualitative data. Considering that requirements to respondents are not supposed to be strict, it will be relatively easy to collect respondents for online survey. More details regarding this topic will be presented in detail in the methodological section.

At the same time, qualitative methodology enriches the current study with personal cases and arguments that help to provide deep understanding of the problem under

consideration.(Pansiri , 2006). I interviewed seven respondents, who are inclined to use tourist apps in their travels on a regular basis, in order to learn how apps have upgraded their tourist experience. Interviews' results were useful for explaining tourists' motives, their preferences and behavior. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies reduces the number of research's limitations. As a result, this study presents valid and justified conclusions regarding the research problem.

The paper consists of five chapters. The first part is an introduction which is dedicated to the problem formulation. It gives a general picture on the problem and on the main research's path. A detailed justification of the research methods will be given in the second part on methodology. In particular, I will explain the choice of both interviews and surveys, describe the processes of data collection and data analysis, justify the principles of sample's formation and determine the research philosophy of the current study. This chapter will distinguish main limitations which are inherent for the investigation. The third part, Theory, is focused on how tourism research has dealt with apps and the tourism experience so far. The fourth chapter is the analytical part of the paper and it will contain data analysis of interviews and survey. Finally, the last chapter will summarize and discuss significant conclusions and provide recommendations for future researches in this scientific field.

The current study is expected to be important from both theoretical and empiric perspectives. Firstly, as stated above, it will fill the existing research gap as the problem of an impact of tourist apps on tourist experience is deprived of attention in the modern science. At the same time, as stated above, this problem is undoubtedly topical considering the number of apps which appear each year (ibtimes.com). In this case, the current investigation may be very helpful for other researchers because it may be used as a basis for further studies. It is especially

important to emphasize that, as this investigation uses a mixed methodology, its results might be simultaneously considered by scholars who conduct qualitative and quantitative researches. On the other hand, there is a possibility that results of surveys and interviews provided in this paper may be also useful for marketers who are planning marketing activities in the tourist apps industry.

## **2. Methodology**

As stated above, the current research is based on the mixed methodology. Primary data which is necessary for the investigation will be collected through the survey and interviews. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods seems to be a reasonable decision for this thesis as it simultaneously provides us with the justified correlations between variables and deep comprehension of the research phenomenon. All the operations regarding the empiric part of this investigation will be implemented in MS Excel.

### **2.1 Research Philosophy**

This study is based on the research philosophy of pragmatism as this philosophy is traditionally used for investigations with mixed methods (Hogue, 2011). As described by Tashakkori and Teddlie, “*Pragmatism has been hailed as the best paradigm for justifying the use of mixed-methods research*” (cited in Pansiri, 2006, P223).

Pansiri mention the fact that “*pragmatism has positioned itself as a contending paradigm*” (P223, 2006). Due to the fact that pragmatism is mostly focused on human acts (Gooney 2014), Powell declares that “*to a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving*” (2001, P884). Pragmatists don’t provide an emancipator concept as do analytical theorists, while they recognize the presence of an outside world separate of people’s minds and

beliefs, they decide to adopt explanation and interpretation that provides the best expected result.(Pansiri, 2006)

Taking into consideration that tourists' usage of tourist apps is crucial for the current research,the sphere of human acts seems to be central in our investigation B. Hall (2008) identifies three main ways in which a paradigm may be employed in studies with mixed research methods. The a-paradigmatic stance implies ignoring the issue of paradigm. The multiple paradigm stance infers the simultaneous existence of several paradigms. Finally, the single-paradigm stance which is usually represented by pragmatism may be picked if a researcher chooses one paradigm for both qualitative and quantitative methods. In our case, pragmatism is a single paradigm which is actually aimed at finding “*what*” and “*how*” of the research problem” (Creswell, 2013). Its main features (it is problem-centered and real world-practice oriented (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) are expected to allow us to achieve the main research objectives of the study by researching the spheres of tourist experience in which people tend to use tourist apps.

The main objective of the research is to study the ways in which apps upgrade tourist experience. Simultaneously, there are two specific clarifications which should be emphasized. Firstly, both survey and interviews will only include the questions about 10 specific apps. In my opinion, the focus on specific apps instead of conducting some general investigation will enrich our study and allow us to make conclusions about the concrete spheres in which tourist experience is upgraded the most. Secondly, our conclusions will be based on respondents' perceptions of their tourist experience. However, the survey is supposed to provide us with the relevant information about the usage of specific apps. So, subjective factors will be not crucial in our investigation.



## **2.2 Research Approach**

The choice of research philosophy has predetermined the choice of the research approach. In order to ensure research goals, I will use inductive approach in my investigation. The results of the interviews and the survey will be used for studying and better understanding of the phenomenon of tourist apps in the modern tourist industry. The main reason of the inductive approach is to “*allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies*”( Thomas 2006, P238) If the current research had been aimed at testing ground hypothesis, I could have employed a deductive approach. However, as stated above, it is not an option in our case. In accordance with the classification designed by Lewis, Thornhill and Saunders (2012), this study may be identified as an exploratory research. In other words, I will focus on several research problems in order to understand and explain the phenomenon of tourist apps in the tourist industry: the usage of apps in modern tourism, the spheres of tourist experience in which tourist apps are sought-after, and the significance of upgrading tourist experience by using tourist apps.

## **2.3 Research Strategy**

The following research paper will be based on a mixed methodology, which contains both quantitative and qualitative methods. The reason, while I have decided to combine the qualitative and quantitative research is because mixed together, they provide a better understanding of the problem in comparison with choosing just a single research strategy. The main reason is that a mixed methodology offers advantages that neutralize the disadvantages of

both quantitative and qualitative methods (Jick, 1979). For example, as the author explains, the qualitative research overweigh the fact that quantitative methods are inefficient in understanding the essence and circumstances in which people speak and also because of the low level of details which is gathered. On the other side, qualitative research is considered insufficient by the author because of the personal analysis made by the investigator and the problems in generalizing the findings into a broader category, due to the small number of participants.( Jick 1979).

J Onwuegbuzie declares that mixed methods research is “*formally defined here as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study*”(2004, P17). Therefore this research approach is a way of permitting the researcher to adopt various approaches in order to achieve a positive outcome. In this project I have decided to use Johnson and Onwuegbuzie’s mixed methods research model, which contains eight different steps: “(1) determine the research question; (2) determine whether a mixed design is appropriate; (3) select the mixed method or mixed-model research design; (4) collect the data; (5) analyze the data; (6) interpret the data; (7) legitimate the data; and (8) draw conclusions”(2004 p21).(for more info check appendix)

The qualitative interviews will “*enable theory to guide the early stages of research and to emerge at the end as a result of the research findings, and because they allow greater opportunity to spend time with our sources, our objects, and our data*” (Hannam& Knox, 2010, P175). The qualitative research will also provide me a better insight about the entire process and will allow me to get more diverse and detailed data. Following on, McGivern mentions that: “*Qualitative is about rich, detailed description, understanding and insight rather than*

*measurement [...] It aims to get below the surface, to get beyond the “top-of-the-mind”, rational response.”* (2006, p. 162). On the other side, the quantitative research methods will allow me to obtain numerical data and certain answers which can be used as a support for the qualitative material. At the end, having both research methods combined, I will hope to obtain a positive outcome and to answer my research question.

## **2.4 Sample**

The specifics of the current research infer a very wide target audience and the sample which composes 200 respondents. It was decided to set three key requirements for respondents:

- They should be between ages 23 to 65 years old;
- They should travel at least three weeks per year;
- They should use at least one tourist app per year during their travels.

The aspect of age is barely relevant in our case. Considering that tourist apps are a large industry, there are plenty of product for specific customer groups. So, people of any age can find apps which satisfy their needs in their travels. The requirement regarding travelling at least three weeks annually is an obvious indicator which allows us to understand whether a person is suitable for our investigation.

It is substantial to emphasize that the current research is not aimed at researching tourists' awareness of the general concept of tourist apps. The survey's target audience consists of those tourists who already use tourist apps in their travels. I will not measure the percentage of tourists who use tourist apps. Even though it is clearly important marketing information, this information is irrelevant for the current research. That's why I have added the requirement regarding the usage of at least one tourist app per year during respondents' travels.

Aside from the three requirements listed above, there are no other requirements for respondents. Demographic characteristics of gender, level of income, level of education and job status will not matter. At the same time, the questionnaire will still contain questions concerning age, gender, level of education and job status. Although the correlation between these demographic characteristics and respondents' usage of tourist apps will be not studied, it is important to ensure an even contribution of these characteristics. So, I will include the demographic part to the questionnaire in order to ensure the high validity of the survey's results.

In the case of interviews, demographic characteristics should be also contributed evenly. There is a possibility that specific characteristics may significantly influence interviewees' attitude to specific tourist apps. For example, middle-aged people are unlikely to use HostelWorld as it is mostly an app for students and other young people(own consideration). Ensuring an even contribution of respondents' demographic characteristics is an important objective which is necessary to achieve.

## **2.5 Survey**

The survey was designed on behalf of achieving the following research objectives:

- To determine the spheres in which tourist apps have the most substantial impact on tourist experience;
- To observe how popular the tourist apps are ( between respondents) and why they have been chosen

The questionnaire consists of several parts. In the first part I'll express gratitude for participating in the research and write the instructions for respondents. This part is believed to be a necessary component of a survey (Edwards et al.1996). The second part will be demographic. Although I pointed out above that demographic characteristics of respondents are not considered

relevant in the study, it is necessary to collect demographic information in order to ensure high validity of the results. For instance, if the majority of the respondents turn out to be students who are less than 24 years old, it may significantly work upon the results. So, I will try to maintain a relatively even distribution of the respondents' demographic characteristics.

The third part of the questionnaire will contain questions about the usage of specific tourist apps which are listed in the Table 1. I will use Likert's (1934) five-point scale in order to measure the popularity of these apps among the respondents. The fourth part will only contain the question about the degree to which tourist apps had influenced and affected respondent's tourist experience. Considering that each app upgrades a certain sphere of tourist experience, the popularity of these apps may be considered here as the popularity of certain spheres of tourist experience which are mostly upgraded by apps.

## **2.6 Interviews**

Using interviews is usually an effective mechanism of researching respondents' attitude to some phenomena. Therefore, interviews are "*the most common format of data collection in qualitative research*" (Jamshed, 2014, P87). In our case, interviews might be used for studying tourist's attitude towards tourist apps and their arguments regarding the advantages of some apps in comparison with others

However, it is believed that qualitative methods are effective for researching people's perceptions of products and brands (Flick, 2014). Therefore, interviews are expected to be an effective mechanism of studying tourists' perceptions of tourist apps. The interview will contain several open questions, which will be aimed at studying interviewees' perceptions of the process of upgrading their tourist experience with tourist apps. Generally, in our investigation, the survey will be primarily aimed at researching the actual usage of tourist apps by modern tourists while

interviews will be mostly focused on tourists' perceptions of the apps' usage in their tourist experience.

If both survey and interviews are effective, the combination of these two methods is expected to provide us with the deep comprehension of the ways in which apps upgrade tourist experience in the modern world.

## **2.7 Time Horizon**

Traditionally, scholars are inclined to distinguish between two options concerning the time horizon: longitudinal and cross-sectional (Blumberg, Schindler and Cooper, 2001). Cross-sectional studies are aimed at analyzing phenomena in a certain moment of time. They “*capture*” the state of variables and study it from different perspectives. In contrast, longitudinal investigations are usually designed in order to research the changes of variables over time.(ibid)

The current investigation is cross-sectional. All the research objectives belong to the same “*snapshot*” of real time. The process of tourist apps' development over time is not considered in this study. The research path of this investigation only implies the analysis of the current situation regarding tourists' usage of apps in their travels.

## **2.8 Choice of Tourist Apps**

The tourist apps industry is large. There are plenty of different apps designed for different tourists' needs. For example, Tipulator was created in order to help tourists with calculating tips in restaurants while abroad. At the same time, a lot of apps are complex and may simultaneously satisfy several tourist needs. For instance, TravelSafe Pro provides tourists with useful information about time zones, calculates exchange rates, responds to different threats and helps people to be ready for different emergencies. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to choose the best apps in the modern tourist industry. There are a lot of sites on the Internet which propose their

own lists of “Best Tourist Apps”. However, they don’t agree on many points regarding specific apps. Still, a lot of apps were listed on most of these sites. So, I have created the list of 10 apps which are often used by modern tourists in their travels.

<b>Name of app</b>	<b>Sphere</b>
TripAdvisor	Finding destinations
Instagram	Photo
Yelp	Finding entertainment
TripIt	Organizer
HimPunk	Booking
Kayak	Booking
PackingPro	Organizer
Onavo	Organizer
Uber	Transport
TravelSafe Pro	Safety

**Table 1. Tourist apps**

Surely, Instagram, Yelp and Uber are not exclusively tourist apps. These apps are widely used by many people for numerous aims. However, it evident that, due to their advantages, these apps are very convenient and popular among tourists. So, these apps may be considered as tourist apps in our case. Paying respect to the aspect of upgrading tourist experience which is an important research question of this study, it seems reasonable to include Instagram, Yelp and Uber because these apps have made an evident impact on the tourist experience of many people. In the appendix you can find a brief description of all ten apps.

## **2.9 Data Collection**

The processes of data collection differ in the case of the survey and in the case of interviews.

### **2.9.1 Data Collection in the Survey**

The process of data collection implies several stages. As claimed above, the sample infers the number 200 respondents. All the procedures regarding the data collection process will be implemented on the Internet. I will use the mechanism of WOM (word-of-mouth) for finding respondents in social networks. This method has a lot of important advantages (Jankovski, 2013). Random respondents often don't pay enough attention to the poll's questions and don't show any interest in final results. Simultaneously, if a person is asked to participate in a research by a relative or a friend, this respondent will be probably likely to be more cooperative. Of course, there is a certain chance that this decision might decrease the results' validity. However, as Nulty (2008) points out, this possibility is slight and respondents are not inclined to be less sincere in online polls than in regular polls. The questionnaire is designed with the help of Google Form, due to the fact that the questionnaires can be created here in a fast and convenient way.(own consideration).

In order to ensure the effective process of study's implementation, I will try to monitor the situation and ensure an even contribution of the respondents' demographic characteristics. I will also provide detailed instructions regarding the interviews. After the process of respondents' collection is successfully finished, I will transfer results from Google Form to MS Excel.

### **2.9.2 Data Collection in the Interviews**

I will choose about ten respondents which meet the general requirements:



- They should be between ages 18 to 65 years old;
- They should travel at least three weeks per year;
- They should use at least one tourist app per year during their travels.

In order to increase the results' validity, it is important to ensure an even contribution of respondents' demographic characteristics. These interviews won't be expert interviews. The qualitative empiric study of this research implies a standard customer interview. The factor of face-to-face interaction is supposed to make interviewees sincere as possible. While interviewees are answering my questions, I will make notes in the journal and I will also record the process of interview on my phone. After the interviews are successfully conducted, I will employ the method of content analysis for turning my notes and records into the qualitative data which will be used in the analysis chapter. This method is frequently employed by scholars in qualitative researches as it helps to highlight the main points in the documents (Mayring, 2000).

In order to check the questionnaire outlook and transcripts, please check appendix.

## **2.10 Limitations**

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is supposed to decrease the number of research's limitations. Thus, this study is deprived of standard limitations which are inherent for most empiric investigations. Most of limitations in our case are connected with the survey's sample. Firstly, the number of 200 respondents might be not enough from the sociological perspective. The target audience of tourist apps is wide, thus, the sample should have been much bigger. However, conducting a poll with a big sample requires huge resources. Therefore, it was resolved to choose a sample which is composed of 200 respondents. This

sample is expected to contain main trends of the target audience, although the statistical error will be clearly higher than 3%. -3

Secondly, the online form of our survey may also have a negative impact on the final results' validity. Some respondents may note that they meet the requirements, even though they actually don't meet them. Withal, a possibility exists that people will take the online poll less serious than they would have taken a regular poll. However, as stated above, this limitation is not significant.

### **3. Theory**

#### **3.1 Usage of Digital Apps by Tourists**

Unfortunately, it is barely possible to provide a detailed literature review which identifies different researches aimed at investigating the problem of tourist apps. Firstly, this research problem is modern and it couldn't have been investigated before. It is formally correct to claim that the first mobile apps were designed in the 1970s, an actual popularity of this phenomenon was noticed in the 2000s. In particular, the American Dialect Society has recognized the word "app" as "the word of the year" in 2010 (American Dialectic Society, 2011). Doubtlessly, the available evidence gives us a premise to state that the growth of apps' popularity was directly connected to the smartphones' development. Considering the information above, it seems logical that digital mobile apps have not received enough attention by scholars yet.

However, there are several investigations which should be mentioned here as they may be very useful for the current research. This chapter will group different studies based on their

purpose and research purpose. The first study, which I researched is designed by Grieve, Bendon and Hundson (2010) and has similar research goal and objectives with the current study. In particular, it analyzes tourist apps and provides a general picture on the issue of upgrading tourist experience with the help of mobile digital applications. The authors determined ten main groups of tourist apps in dependence on its functions which are as follows: transport planning, event listing, travel planning, accommodation planning, tour guidance, providing directional services, delivering attraction experience, organizing local information, tourist assistance and providing tourist information about specific companies. They also defined mobile application of social networks like Facebook or Twitter as tourist apps. In this case, this study is similar with the current one as it was also decided in the current investigation to include into research those apps which are not exclusively related to the sphere of tourism (ibid)

Another popular approach towards the classification of tourist apps' functions which is similar to the previous one implies distinguishing four main spheres in which mobile apps can be especially effective: simplification of the reservation process, improving access to local information, sharing experience and reducing costs (smartcities.info). Aside from listing the apps' functions, this investigation also contains the rating of tourist apps in Spain. Although this rating may be considered outdated now, it is still worth mentioning. The specific ranks of each app barely matter for our study. However, it may be useful to recognize the spheres of upgrading tourist experience. As it was found, reviewing restaurants, hotels and other tourist-related places turned out to be the main advantage of mobile apps in the sphere of tourist experience. All the three first places were taken by the apps which are based on visitors' and tourists' reviews (UberSpoon, Yelp, TripAdvisor). The second important domain is booking. In particular, Kayak and Booking.com were listed in top-10. All the other apps also had some components of either

the former or the latter function. Thus, a conclusion should be made that, in accordance with the investigation reviewed above, mobile apps are mostly used by tourists while planning their trips. (Grieve, Bendon & Hundson ,2010)

Grieve,Bendon and Hundson (2010) who also investigated the phenomenon of tourist apps have employed the research method of online survey for data collection. However, their data analysis part differs from the one in our research because they didn't use any mechanisms of finding a correlation between variables. The scholars found that Internet is mostly used by tourists for checking emails and searching for information about news and weather. Withal, purchasing tickets and tourism-related products is the most popular field of tourists' activities regarding tourist apps. It was identified that tourists prefer using mobile apps for planning and organizing domestic trips. At the same time, the aspect of roaming inhibits usage of mobile apps among tourists on international trips. In the case of international trips, people use mobile apps while seeking tourist assistance and company-specific information. In contrast, domestic travels entail using digital mobile applications for transport and directional services( *ibid*). Doubtlessly, this study is very useful for the current investigation and its results will be used in the discussion part of this paper.

Another study which might be used for the current research is focused on analyzing a connection between tourism and mobile revolution. J. Helen and H. Adrian (2013) have identified five fields in which mobile apps influenced the sphere of tourism. Firstly, mobile apps play an important inspiration role in modern tourism. Tourist experience of friends and acquaintances inspire people to travel. In line with this trend, a lot of mobile apps use sharing instruments for promoting tourist activities. In the field of planning, mobile apps are surely crucial. The mechanisms of intelligent search enable effective planning of any tourist activities.

Reviewing traveling information about hotels, countries or hotels and booking tickets are two main planning objectives which imply using mobile digital apps. In the sphere of booking, the growth of apps usage among tourists is stable. Helen and Adrian (2013) forecast that booking mobile apps will be far ahead of traditional booking services by the end of 2016. Generally, as authors claim, mobile apps have significantly upgraded tourist experience. Providing information about current locations, searching for directions and overcoming language barrier are just a few spheres in which tourist experience has been substantially upgraded by mobile applications. Also the fact, that more than half of the tourists, purchase the apps with 3 days prior to the travel or during the travel, reflects how significant tourist apps are in affecting en route decision-making. Finally, scholars also emphasize that interconnection between tourists is expected to become a decisive component of any successful tourist app in the future. As authors assume, people tend to believe other tourists more than travel agencies or reviews written by experts (ibid) .

In 2012, around 50% of tourists used to download tourist apps before going on vacation. The Traveler's Technology Preferences Investigation designed in 2012 is a sociological research which provided evidence of the fact that mobile apps are an obvious trend in modern tourism (O'Donnell, 2012). According to its surveys' results, Google Maps turned out to be the most popular mobile application among tourists. Moreover, finding destinations on the map was determined as the crucial tourist need which entails wide usage of tourist apps. Simultaneously, it was found that people frequently use apps for finding restaurants, transport and gaining knowledge on local weather. Withal, TripAdvisor which is included in the current investigation was determined as the most popular tourist mobile application aside from Google Maps. (O'Donnell, 2012)

### **3.2 Significance of mobile apps (studies)**

The study designed by Dickinson, Ghali and Norgate (2012) goes beyond traditional conclusions about the significance of mobile applications for modern tourism. The authors claim that mobile apps revolutionize the ways of tourists' thinking. With the help of apps, they can simultaneously perceive numerous information assets which are dynamically changing in concordance with the latest trends. As a result, mobile apps built on the basis of sharing instruments give tourists a possibility to keep up with the times and to take advantages from the digital world. In the sphere of specific functions, the scholars have also agreed on the crucial role of destinations apps. Destinations are the most topical problem among tourists while choosing apps before travels. This investigation also puts forward an important argument that mobile apps help tourists to avoid common mistakes connected with erroneous destinations, language problems, insufficient information from travel agencies, etc. Thus, the influence of mobile apps on tourists' experience is determined by the authors as univocally positive. Withal, it might be admissible to assume that tourist apps may have a negative impact on tourists' experience too. In particular, there is a possibility that such apps as TripAdvisor put the element of mystery out of travels that may be negatively perceived by some tourists. However, unfortunately, there is no currently available evidence to analyze this aspect of the current problem (Dickinson, Ghali and Norgate, 2012)

### **3.3 Scenarios and stages**

A detailed investigation dedicated to the effects of tourist apps on tourists' trips was conducted by D. Wang (2011). This study is unique as it summarizes the respondents' answers in

interviews and identifies five scenarios of upgrading tourist experience by mobile digital applications. Almost half of respondents used apps for ensuring good value and efficiency. In particular, they have found lower tickets' prices, lower hotels and avoided some common mistakes which might have led to unexpected financial losses. Apps like "*Flight Update Pro*" which reduce the level of uncertainty out of travels and help to reduce costs were determined by the scholar as the most significant tourist apps. Approximately 5% of respondents employed mobile apps for obtaining information about some places, cities and countries. As a result, they have visited more places and have enriched their tourist experience. Around 10% of the respondents valued tourist apps for contributing to the delightful trip. For instance, "*Air Traffic Control*" made the flights more fun and entertaining. As we see, this scenario implies the component of entertaining instead of objectively useful information like weather or currency rates. The fourth scenario reveals the value of sharing tourist information with friends and acquaintances. The number of 13% of the respondents who mentioned this scenario in the interview seems to be surprisingly slight. As concluded in the other studies reviewed above, the function of information sharing has always been considered a significant component of upgrading tourist experience by tourist apps. Thus, this number doesn't harmonize with the conclusions made by other scholars. The fifth scenario confirms one of the previous studies as it also determines inspiration as the crucial component of tourist apps. Approximately 5% of respondents have told that they only decided to go on a trip because they had been inspired to do so by mobile apps. Although all these scenarios are traditional for the similar researches, the numbers are a little unusual. In particular, it might seem surprising that almost half of the respondents have identified money economy as the crucial component of upgrading tourist experience with mobile digital apps (Wang, 2011).

The investigation conducted by D. Corte (2012) may be useful for the current research as it identifies four main types of tourism in dependence on the domains of tourist experience. These dimensions are as follows: immersion, absorption, active participation and passive participation. As a result, he has supported the idea of the four types of tourism: entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist. Accordingly, *“In sum, the entertainment dimension includes sensing, the educational one learning, the escapist on trying and doing, and the esthetic one being there”* (Petkus cited in Corte 2012, P327). Clearly, entertainment tourism entails using mobile apps which make the entire traveling process more interesting and entertaining. This statement harmonizes with the research conducted by D. Wang (2011) which has been reviewed above. Entertainment apps are not obligated to be objectively useful. In contrast, their main goal is to variegate tourist experience. Even if an app doesn't satisfy some topical tourist need, it may be considered useful because it enlivens the travels. (D. Corte ,2012). The educational tourism mostly requires information about something relevant to the travel. For example, information about museums, sights and attractions can help tourists to gain desirable knowledge. Doubtlessly, educational tourism is an opposition to entertainment tourism.( ibid).The apps used by people who are engaged in these two variations of tourism are expected to be different. The latter are supposed to mostly use informative apps which can quickly provide maximum information about specific objects, places or activities. The activities involved in esthetic tourism entail using apps similar to the educational tourism. For example, tourist guides in museums and reviews of sights may be equally useful for tourists who seek some knowledge and for tourists who want to savor the esthetic feelings in their journeys. Finally, escapist tourism is considered by the author as an form of active tourism. Thus, it is probably the most important variation of tourism for tourist apps' developers. Extremal tourist activities surely require various functions



from mobile apps like ensuring safety, preventing accidents and helping with first aid. In addition, escapist tourism also implies active traveling and attending various different places. Hence, popular traditional mobile apps like Uber or Yelp are supposed to be the most effective in the case of escapist tourism. (ibid)

### **3.4 Communication and tourist apps**

The study designed by A. Bethapudi (2013) is entirely focused on information communication technologies in tourism. The scholar has determined airlines, hospitality, tour operators, travel agencies and destinations as the key spheres for ICT in modern tourism. 86% of the respondents agreed that ICT can be considered as effective mediators in this industry. They significantly simplify the processes of communication between tourists and hotels or airlines. Surely, mobile apps play a decisive role in this process. Moreover, 97% respondents who were either owners or managers of tourist firms confirmed that ICT have helped them in promotion of their business. Hence, ICT and mobile apps are mutually beneficial both for tourists and for hotels' owners and airlines. However, it is relevant to recognize some apps which may have a negative impact on the tourist business. For instance, TripAdvisor may provide useful information for tourists and they might decide to organize their travel without the help of travel agencies. On the other hand, it might be also possible that reviewing some places or hotels on TripAdvisor may inspire some people to talk to the travel agents regarding a trip to the specific place. Thus, a detailed empirical investigation is needed in order to explain the influence of ICT and mobile apps on travel agencies. However, in the case of tourists, the overwhelming majority of authors tend to suggest that the influence is univocally positive (Bethapudi, 2013)

While researching the usage of tourist apps in the modern world, it is important to realize that effectiveness of specific apps is strongly dependent on the tourists' goals and circumstances of a specific trip. For instance, Uber will be clearly useless while travelling on a ship in the Atlantic Ocean while it might be extremely helpful for people who are visiting New York on business purposes. Therefore, it seems logical to consider how different types of tourism influence the specifics of upgrading tourist experience with the help of tourist apps (ibid)

Generally, mobile apps have a substantial impact on tourism in different spheres. However, it is very complicated to analyze all these spheres within the methodological philosophy of a single study. An article written by S. Rawal (2015) summarizes the global influences of tourist apps on tourist experience. First of all, mobile digital apps significantly improve the process of communication between products' providers and customers. In the case of tourism, it is much easier for a travel business to communicate with customer and to inform him about some changes in schedule or other conditions. At the same time, a customer also feels more secure because he gets full and timely information about his travel. Secondly, tourist apps make tourist activities more affordable. Numerous discounts and proposals from new travel agencies or hotels are now immediately found by tourists. Accordingly, the dumping strategy is much easier to use now because it is much easier to get to the customers (Rawal 2015)

Thirdly, mobile apps "open hotel doors" (Rawal, 2015). There is no need now for a tourist to waste plenty of time on hotels' choosing and booking. With the help of digital apps, one can filter the information and promptly find the best proposal on the market. Although there is a possible problem with reservations' cancellation which might be more evident in the case of mobile apps, it is obvious that mobile apps which specialize in booking will become even more popular in the future. The fourth significant influence of mobile apps on tourist experience is

connected with the services like HomeExchange or BlaBlaCar which allow people to substantially reduce travelling costs by cooperating with complete strangers. However, using such apps require a certain trust to a complete stranger. Hence, it is mostly used by young people who are less concerned about the corresponding risks. The fifth factor which was found by the author is the economy of time. Doubtlessly, it is the most significant advantage of mobile apps which are used for planning future travels. Some mobile apps have all the necessary information gathered in one place. Therefore, one doesn't need to search numerous data on the Internet. All the activities related to the sphere of travels' planning can be substantially accelerated with the help of certain mobile applications. (Rawal 2015). The sixth component of the aforementioned process of upgrading tourist experience with tourist apps implies using apps-organizers. Tourists usually take a lot of things with them while going on a vacation or on a business trip. Accordingly, it takes a lot of time to remember or pack everything and to use it properly while being on a travel. Some apps like PackingPro keep organized all the packing information and make it impossible for tourists to forget important things. Finally, the last innovation introduced by tourist apps is a new way to move from one point to another. With the help of specific transport apps like Uber, tourists don't need to worry about the fact that they are in a foreign city. Mobile apps strengthen the globalization processes and make the transport experience of tourists in different countries alike (Rawal, 2015)

### 3.5 Three stages service

S. Karanasios, C. Sellitto and S. Burgess (2015) suggest that the usage of mobile apps in tourism should be considered from the perspectives of pre-trip, during-trip and post-trip services. Herewith, while during-trip and post-trip services are similar, the pre-trip stage is unique and implies the need in specific apps which are not used on the further stages. This conclusion seems

logical as other authors mentioned above came to the similar inference. The pre-trip stage is mostly represented by planning apps. Tourists use searching and booking services for establishing all the details of their future trips, calculating the costs, scheduling main activities and organizing all the necessary details. In turn, during-trip apps are less informative. Surely, there are some apps which contain audio guides in museums or some other information about traveling activities. However, during-trip apps are usually associated with the maps' services or some entertainment applications. Withal, it is relevant to point out that sometimes mobile apps can be simultaneously used for planning the trip and locating something during the trip. For instance, Yelp is frequently used for reviewing the information about the hotel on the pre-trip stage and for finding this hotel on the during-trip stage. The during-trip stage also implies the popularity of apps which are used for savoring the best moment of tourist experience and sharing them with tourists' friends and acquaintances. (S. Karanasios, C. Sellitto and S. Burgess ,2015). Finally, the post-trip stage is probably the poorest stage from the perspective of mobiles apps. The authors suggest that most of tourists don't use tourist apps after the end of their trips. There are only two evident exceptions here which are connected with the sphere of sharing tourist experience and posting reviews. Such apps as Yelp or TripAdvisor are developing due to people who post reviews after attending the specific places. Thus, some tourists definitely use these apps after coming home from a trip. In addition, they can also use some services which can help them to share the best moments of their tourist experience with their relatives and acquaintances. For instance, one may post a lot of photos from the trip in a social network on the post-travel stage as he didn't have much time for this during the trip. Generally, as we see, there are not a lot of apps which may be used on all the aforementioned stages. In the case of the ten apps which are

included in the questionnaire, only Yelp may be an exception. All the other apps probably are not used by tourists during all these three stages (ibid).

#### **4. Apps description and reviews**

##### TripAdvisor

Obviously, TripAdvisor is one of the most popular tourist apps in the modern world. It is a global service with \$1,206,000 gross profit in 2014 and stocks which are traded at NASDAQ (Nasdaq.com, 2015). TripAdvisor is the largest website in the field of traveling. Accordingly, it is no wonder that the app of this site is very popular too. The main objective of the app is to help tourists with planning their travels by providing detailed information about flights, hotels, restaurants, etc. Like in the case with Yelp, reviews which are left by visitors at <http://www.tripadvisor.com> may have a tremendous impact on the popularity and profitability of restaurants and hotels. Great results of the service's expansion allow TripAdvisor to be present in numerous countries.

Tourists may use the TripAdvisor's app in order to find information which is necessary for their travels. Company's managers try to make this service universal. Thus, they add a lot of new features in the app and implement a lot of acquisitions. For instance, TripAdvisor has acquired GateGuru in 2013. The development of service's content is ensured by customers. They add reviews and information about new objects. In turn, the snowball effect ensures a rapid spread of this information. According to the statistics on the site, now the service operates in 45 countries (TripAdvisor.com). The current popularity of TripAdvisor gives us a ground to state that its app has significantly upgraded tourist experience of many people.

##### Instagram

Instagram can be considered as one of the largest successful Internet-projects in the modern world. It may be reasonable to claim that Instagram not only upgraded tourists' traveling experience, but also changed the lifestyle of many people. The survey designed by Clasen (2015) had shown that the majority of people between 13 to 25 years old exclusively use Facebook for going to Instagram. So, the tremendous popularity of this service is doubtless. Instagram has become an essential part of many spheres of human life including tourist experience.

However, in the case of tourism, the popularity of Instagram is probably even more obvious than in the case of other spheres of human life. People are inclined to use this app for savoring the most precious moments of their travels and sharing these moments with their relatives, friends and followers (instagram.com) .So, even though Instagram cannot be considered as an exclusively tourist app, it have strongly influenced the ways in which people travel and enjoy the sights.

### Yelp

Of course, the digital app of Yelp is one of the leaders in the apps industry. Like TripAdvisor, Yelp is a complex service which combines a lot of different functions. It is frequently used by tourists in order to choose a good restaurant, cafe, cinema or some other entertainment. Approximately 20% of the objects which are listed at <http://www.yelp.com> are restaurants, 23% are shopping objects and 11% are home & local services. The development rates of Yelp are impressive. The service had increased the number of reviews from 33.3 million in 2012 to 47.3 million in 2013 (LocalVox, 2014).

The app's interface and functionality are positively perceived by customers. The fact that reviews are written by regular people increases the trust level towards them. So, a lot of tourists

use the site and the app of Yelp in order to plan their travels from the perspective of visiting some specific restaurants, cafes, shops or some other entertainment places. The only problem of Yelp is its expansion (yelp.com). Unlike TripAdvisor, it still hasn't significantly succeeded in expanding overseas.(ibid)

### TripIt

While Instagram and Yelp cannot be considered as exclusively tourist apps, TripIt is an example of a tourist app which has become an essential component of many people's travels. Interestingly, this app is not even a complex tourist app. It is aimed at solving a narrow problem which is topical for many tourists (tipIt.com). The functionality of TripIt allows tourists to organize their email letters. It is well-known that tourists' emails usually contain a lot of crucial information about their travels including the departure time of the aircraft, phone number of the hotel, its address, etc. This information may turn out to be needed immediately in any time of a person's travel. At the same time, lack of time and a lot of unnecessary letters might make the process of finding necessary information very complicated.(ibid). TripIt is able to recognize confirmation letters and transfer them into a specific folder. Numerous advantages of this app have made it the winner of many nominations like "One of 10 Favorite iPhone apps" or "Best Travel Mobile App" relatively by PC Magazine and Webby Awards (MacWorld, 2015).

TripIt is an organizer app. Aside from recognizing confirmation letters and containing them into a specific folder, it may also alert tourists about some events connected with their travels, find the less expensive flights and monitor the process of traveling. If a tourist has TripIt, he possesses a calendar with the milestones of his travel. Interestingly, customers are even

allowed to download this app for free if they accept advertisements. Generally, app's great advantages make TripIt one of the best digital apps in the apps industry.(tripIt.com)

### Himpunk

Himpunk is a tourist app which operates in the field of booking. There are plenty of other apps which allow people to book flights and hotels online. However, Himpunk has an impressive speed which is valued by many tourists (Upbin, 2012). Customers choose this app over rivals because it gives them a possibility to save substantial amounts of money by booking "last minute" hotels and flights. Besides, app's interface is very simple and convenient. Himpunk has now a high rating on iTunes (four and a half stars) that is confirmed by numerous positive reviews (ibid). As Michaels (2013) point out, Himpunk is one of the best booking apps because of its intuitive searching which is integrated with the calendar, its connection with the current location and the so-called "Agony index". However, this app is also useful for planning travels. So, most people use it in a combination with apps which cover other spheres of tourist experience. (Upbin, 2012)

### Kayak

Kayak is a competitor of Himpunk. It was also designed for finding the cheapest flights and hotels. Even though some analysts think of Himpunk as a more convenient app, Kayak is more popular within tourists. It operates as an aggregator of the proposals. Using Kayak helps people to save up to 35% of the trip's budget. All the proposals on the site are divided into four groups: hotels, cars, flights and packages. Customers can use each category and choose a lot of different filters for making searching results useful and helpful. Of course, the factors of price and time are crucial in this case (Byrnes, 2015)



The interface of Kayak harmonizes with modern trends. Its minimalistic design doesn't distract people from the informative fields. On the contrary, app's developers have tried to place the focus of customers' attention on informative sections. While Himpunk has the factor of impressive speed, Kayak's main competitive advantage is convenience. Specialists emphasize the effectiveness of its searching process and suitable filters (Byrnes, 2015).

### PackingPro

The eloquence of this app's title is supported by the effective functionality. Traveling is always a very complicated process which requires paying attention to a lot of factors. In particular, people are forced to remember packing a lot of things. Packing Pro was designed in order to help tourists with this problem. Essentially, it is a detailed list of everything that should be packed by tourists including documents, accessories, clothes, etc. The unique features of Packing Pro make it especially helpful for those customers who travel regularly. The app may create several travels with separate lists of packing things. Thus, a person won't mix up things from different traveling bags (worldwideinsure.com)

It is considered that Packing Pro is one of the most successful tourist apps. Most of specialists and sites have given a high rating to the app. For instance, it has 4 out of 5 stars at worldwideinsure.com (2015). Unfortunately for many customers, this app is not free. However, the price of \$3 is barely an obstacle in this case because this service is really irreplaceable for many tourists. Aside from the features already stated above, Packing Pro allows customers to filter items by color, weight and send packing lists to their friends (Elwood, 2014). So, it is no wonder that a lot of tourists find this app extremely helpful (worldwideinsure.com).

## Onavo

This app differs significantly from all the other apps reviewed in this paper. Its uniqueness is connected with the fact that it is aimed at satisfying customer needs which were not recognized by rivals. At first glance, this app's goal is saving money that is common for many apps. For instance, GasBuddy and XE Currency help tourists to save their money by providing useful information about gas prices and currency rates. In contrast, Onavo is solely focused on the problem of the mobile data's efficient usage (Carthy, 2011). As is known, apps may cause substantial financial losses because of downloading some data in roaming. Onavo prevents this and conveniently organizes all the existing apps. In addition, it uses the instruments of shrinking data in order to optimize its usage. As Carthy (2011) concludes, Onavo is currently one of the most popular tourist digital apps. Although it was designed in 2011, the app is still extremely popular among tourists.

## Uber

Like Instagram and Yelp reviewed above, Uber is not specifically a tourist app. This mobile application provides a convenient taxi service in different countries and cities. One doesn't need to actually pay to a driver or consider the issue of tips because payments are conducted online. The obvious advantages of this service are cheapness and speed. Withal, there are some significant problems with ethics which make some customers concerned about Uber. (uber.com). Johnson (2014) identifies various scandals with the service and forecasts that this factor may negatively influence financial performance of the company. However, there is no compelling reason right now to put forward this argument. According to the financial documents, app's gross bookings have grown from \$2.93 in 2015 to \$3.63 in the first half of 2016 (Solomon, 2016). In the case of tourists, the popularity of Uber is caused by its convenience. There is no

need in finding taxi cabs in foreign cities or to worry about the meter's prices as Uber eliminates tourists' concerns and provides them with a fast and comfortable ride.

### TravelSafe Pro

TravelSafe Pro is a bright example of an app which focuses on satisfying wide range of customer needs in some specific group. App's developers have decided to choose the goal of ensuring tourists' safety as the crucial component of their product. With the help of this service, tourists gain a possibility to connect with the embassies, to call on emergency numbers and to respond to any threats.( Pretel, 2015). Unlike most of safety apps, this service is characterized by the ability to dynamically respond to the threats. Unfortunately, most of application's features are only available in the "pro" version. Nevertheless, the crucial features like emergency numbers are also available for free. Generally, the statistical data illustrates that TravelSave Pro is one of the most popular mobile applications among tourists (Pretel, 2015).

## **5.Analysis**

In this chapter of my paperwork, I will try to analyze, based on my material and theory, how and if different tourist apps, upgrade tourist's experience.

As stated above, the current research is based on the mixed methodology. In order to achieve the research goals, I have conducted two empirical studies: interviews and survey.

The interviews were conducted with seven respondents, which have provided responses that are diverse. For example, while the interviewee no. 4 thinks that tourist apps are just helpful devices:" *tourist apps are helpful devices, but I don't think they significantly upgrade tourist*

*experience. They just help sometimes, but this help is barely crucial*”(Robert, Interview 4) while the interviewee no. 6 argues that they are the new era in tourist industry which will eventually make all the tourist intermediaries useless: *“I am absolutely sure that there will be a time when nobody will need travel agents and other intermediaries due to tourist apps*”(Roberto, Interview 6) I will use interviewees’ responses in order to analyze the ways in which apps upgrade tourist experience in the analysis part. It would be interesting to see to what level, the tourist apps can improve tourist’s travel experience and how they do it, and what reason can be besides choosing a certain app. First of all I have decided to observe, based on my quantitative approach, how popular are this apps for the people and therefore I will be able see why they have been chosen, instead of any others.

### **5.1 Mean values and discussions**

Now I have considered important to analyze the mean values of the ten digital apps which were evaluated by the respondents regarding the frequency of their usage. The table below can be considered as a peculiar list of the digital apps’ popularity among modern tourists. . Furthermore I have decided to combine the findings of the table with the interviews in order to obtain a positive outcome for my research question.

<b>Digital app</b>	<b>Mean Value</b>
Instagram	3.86
TripAdvisor	3,71
Yelp	3.05

HimPunk	2.6
TripIt	2.37
Kayak	2.21
Onavo	2.19
PackingPro	2.03
TravelSafe Pro	1.97
Uber	1.86

(Appendix)

The mean value reflects the result of the survey, where the respondents can choose between the range of one and five. The fact that Instagram is being used very often by the respondents is barely reasoned by Instagram’s specific features for tourists. It may be admissible to claim that this app has become an “*organic part of life*”(Emil, Interview 5) for many people including tourists. Instagram allows them to capture and savor the most precious moments of their lives. At the same time, it seems logical that savoring memories is one of the most important objectives for any tourists. Generally, Instagram is a peculiar social phenomenon which has made a significant impact not only on tourist experience, but on any life experience of numerous people. The interviewee no. 5 states that:” *Instagram is a organic part of my life, I always use this at least once per day*”(ibid). The fact that the mean value of Instagram’s popularity in our study is the highest (3.86), supports the fact that Instagram has a certain impact on people’s social life.

In contrast with Instagram, TripAdvisor has been developed exclusively for tourists. Provided that it is barely justified to consider Instagram as a solely tourist app, the mean value of 3.71 makes TripAdvisor the most popular tourist app among our respondents. Its popularity

might be explained by app's distinctive features, universality and quality marketing campaign. Appreciation regarding this app, has also been shown by the Interviewee 4, Sumit, which declares that :*"There is a lot of relevant information on TripAdvisor about hotels, restaurants, basically everything you need, and yes, also user reviews which are pretty much objective"*(Robert, Interview 4)

The next tourist app with the third highest rating, Yelp (3.05), is also not a solely tourist application. Unfortunately, the quantitative methodology of the survey didn't allow us to learn respondents' perception of Yelp. As a result, it is impossible now to be sure whether they evaluated the role of this app in their tourist experience and not in their everyday life. However, it is obvious that the level of this app's popularity among our respondents is high. It is important to emphasize that both TripAdvisor and Yelp, which have the second and the third place in our list of apps' popularity, are based on the principle of customer-driven development. Ratings and reviews posted by regular users ensure the expansion of these projects and their usefulness for tourists. From our survey we can see that many respondents appreciated this two apps:*"TripAdvisor is like my mother, always tell which are the good places"*(Appendix, Survey),*"TripAdvisor book a perfect hotel for me"*(Appendix, Survey),*"only positive experiences with Yelp"*(Appendix, Survey). Even though it has a high popularity between the survey respondents and also some of the interviewed persons appreciate the advantages of using Yelp, Robert had a bad experience which kind of affected his travel experience in a negative way:*"I also don't like Yelp, it has a lot of lies and I am not sure whether some reviews are actually true. I had a bad incident with this site when I came to a restaurant with a high rating and it turned out to be a disaster"*(Robert, Interview 4).

Himpunk and Kayak, which have also received relatively high mean values (2.6 and 2.21 respectively), illustrate that booking services are very popular among modern tourists. However, despite this, Himpunk and Kayak have got much lower mean values than Instagram, TripAdvisor, Yelp and TripIt. This result can be explained by the fact that there are a lot of booking apps in modern tourism that have similar functional: *“Kayak is good for booking, although I don’t always use it. Sometimes it’s better to use another app, Priceline. To be honest, I like this app better”*(Andrei, Interview 2). In other words, it is possible that the overwhelming majority of our respondents use digital apps for booking tickets, although these apps are different.

Apps-organizers have demonstrated mean medium mean values, from 2.03 (PackingPro) to 2.37 (TripIt). Like booking apps, apps-organizers are also presented by numerous different variations with each one proposing some new features without any significant innovations. As a result, there is no one app which can cover all the organizing issues of a modern tourist. In this case, the aforementioned mean values seem to be high, especially in the case of TripIt which was determined as the fourth most popular app in our list. The interviewee no. 2 states that this app is entirely responsible for his organizing tasks:

*“This app has made major changes in my life which are connected with my experience as a tourist and it saved me a lot of time....Remember one time in Cuba, when I got lost and I managed to find the number of the hotel with TripIt..I even convinced my wife to use it”*(Andrei, Interview 2)

Finally, a low mean value of Uber (1.86) is one of the most surprising results of this survey. As is known, Uber operates in 58 countries now and its expansion is proceeding (Uber, 2016). Thus, there was a premise to assume that a lot of tourist would have liked to use Uber for

solving transport issues in unknown cities. However, the mean value of this app's popularity demonstrates that Uber is not popular among tourists. Maybe it is connected with the recent scandals with safety. Roland explains his personal reason for not having Uber anymore, as one of his choices: *"I used to be a regular customer of Uber in the past, but now I am not anymore, because of these scandals"* (Roland, Interview 1). Considering that tourists experience the challenges of unknown environments, they tend to pay a lot of attention to the aspect of safety. Accordingly, they may choose to pay more or to wait for a local transport because they consider these decisions as safer mechanisms than choosing Uber. The interviewee no. 1 points out that scandals are the main reason why he doesn't use Uber during his trips. On the other hand, Robert, declares himself as a big fan of Uber and states that: *"Uber always provides me with a ride to hotel, and even if I am not travelling, I am using it sometimes."* (Robert, Interview 4). With this mediatized scandals regarding Uber services, some people share different opinions regarding the safety of this application, in specially when you are in a foreign city or even country.

The mean values of the digital apps give us a ground for several important conclusions. First of all, it is relevant to emphasize that customer-driven apps like Instagram, Yelp or TripAdvisor are the most popular apps among our respondents. A customer-driven nature of digital applications harmonizes with tourists' desire to obtain relevant information about tourist attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. Besides, it helps to overcome a so-called advertising immunity which is inherent for many tourists nowadays. Secondly, tourists are more willing to use tourist apps before their trips than during traveling process. The high popularity's mean values of TripAdvisor, Yelp and booking apps supports this regularity. Maria, interviewed person nr 3. supports the idea of organizing some parts of his trip, before even starting it: *"I need*



*to have some knowledge about what is going on in my future vacation.. I am always checking suggested local restaurants, events that might occur or places that are worth visiting”*(Maria, Interview 3). Unfortunately, a limited number of digital apps which were incorporated in this study don’t allow us to make ground conclusions regarding the types of tourist apps which are the most popular among modern tourists. For example, there is no premise to claim that a low popularity of TravelSafe Pro among the respondents is mostly reasoned not by the app’s flows or insufficient promotion, but by the fact that tourists don’t need digital apps which ensure their safety.

## **5.2 Reasons for choosing certain apps**

While information about the tourist apps’ popularity and related discussions are important, the main research goal of this study is to determine how digital apps have upgraded tourist experience. Therefore, it seems logical now to start the next part of my analysis where I have decided to group all my findings based on what main reasons, the tourists experiences were changed or improved. First of all, the respondents were directly asked to evaluate how digital apps have upgraded their tourist experience. The mean value of 3.82 demonstrates that the respondents are familiar with this applications. Withal, this index doesn’t have a crucial importance for the study. There are several main reasons which I have decided to acknowledge, such as: organizational, booking reasons, financial reasons and safety reasons.

I was not able to categorize why the respondents have chosen TripAdvisor, because first of all it contains a large sphere of functions. The respondents have used this app in order to plan their travels, by getting different information regarding hotels, accommodation, organize their trip, to book different restaurants, hotels, to find entertainment etc....The company managers are

always trying to make this service universal, by adding a lot of new features in the app and by implementing a lot of acquisitions (tripadvisor.com). Following on, the interviewee no. 2, Andrei, argued that TripAdvisor has upgraded his tourist experience the most because this application has entirely replaced travel agencies for him: “ *Tripadvisor is great. I remember when I was younger and I was travelling with my family.. Every time we had to ask around for good restaurant or places worth visiting.....Now we have TripAdvisor*”(Andrei, Interview 2). All the functions which were conducted by travel agencies in the past like finding destinations, collecting reviews, learning experience of other tourists and communicating with hotels are now successfully performed by TripAdvisor. The interviewee 4 has expressed a similar idea:”*In particular, instead of going to the travel agencies and talking to travel agents, modern tourists can just use this app for collecting all the required information.This process is free and fast*”(Robert, Interview 4) As he stated, while other apps just supplement usual tourist experience with some helpful instruments, TripAdvisor is a complex tool which can entirely change tourist experience .

As we see, the sphere of trips’ organization is also important from the perspective of upgrading tourist experience with digital apps. The interviewee no. 1 shared his experience with PackingPro. In his opinion, this digital application has a substantial potential as it solves the problems which cannot be solved in other ways. Interestingly, as he explains, while the effectiveness of TripAdvisor is obvious, it still can be successfully replaced with traditional travel agencies or various Internet forums (see appendix).In contrast, there is no easy alternative to PackingPro. Surely, one may write everything he needs in a notebook or in some file, but the suitability of PackingPro, its focus on reminding and other useful features make this app extremely useful. Among our seven interviewees, the interviewee no. 1 was the only one who

tried PackingPro. However, his impressions about this app were exclusively positive: *"PackingPro is a great thing because it guarantees that I won't forget anything important. PackingPro is number 1 for me. I can replace TripAdvisor, but I cannot replace PackingPro..I was always forgetting important things, but now, my concern is gone"* (Roland, Interview1)... Also in the surveys I was able to get around 6 comments regarding the functionality of this app, comments such as: *"reminded me a lot of things", "usefull app when I travelled abroad", "saved me from a lot of stress"* (see Apendix)

As stated above, the functions of PackingPro can be replaced by some other instruments, although this replacement would be poor. Simultaneously, the functions of TripIt and Onavo are absolutely unique and cannot be replaced by non-app mechanisms. However, all the interviewees who used this app stated its effectiveness and usefulness and chose this app for it's organizational features. Withal, as the interviewee no. 3 claimed, despite the way in which Onavo simplifies tourists' problems connected with the undesirable uploads of digital data, it does not revolutionize tourist experience. Thus, it cannot be claimed that Onavo provides a new era in the tourist industry.: *"And Onavo is a way to save money. It doesn't revolutionize tourist industry, but it prevents tourists from undesirable uploads of digital data"* (Maria, Interview 3). Onavo is solely focused on the problem of the mobile data's efficient usage and organize and prevents all the existing apps, to cause financial losses because of downloading. From the 200 survey respondents, around 14 persons decided to slightly express their opinion regarding the features of this application. I have received comments, such as: *"saved me a lot of money", "definitely recommend it when you travel abroad", "good organizer"* (see survey Apendix)

The same arguments were applied to TripIt, As the interviewee no. 2 explained, the changes made by TripIt in his life are directly connected with tourist experience: *" TripIt is*

*responsible for all my organizing tasks. I cannot imagine my vacation without TripIt*”( Andrei, Interview 2). That’s why Andrei considers this app as a significant adjustment to her summer trips. At the same time, this opinion was not prevailing among respondents. The interviewee no. 1 didn’t agree with this view and stated that TripIt doesn’t solve any problems which are topical for him: *“TripIt is useless for me. I can live without it. Some functions may be helpful, but I really don’t bother to use them”*(Roland, Interview 1). Indeed, it may be admissible to assume that both TripIt and PackingPro address the problems of tourists’ insufficient memory. But if tourists have no problems with such thing, they will probably need neither PackingPro nor TripIt. It is interesting to observe how people have different opinions regarding the necessity of using certain apps.

All the three aforementioned apps can be determined as apps-organizers. TripIt organizes tourists’ emails, Onavo solves the problem of digital data and PackingPro provides complex guide to packing. All these functions have been specifically designed for tourists. As a result, there is a high correlation between the usage of these apps and the perceived degree of upgrading tourist experience with tourist apps.

The next chapter will refer to the apps, that have been mainly used due to their booking features. The interviewee no. 6 explained that he uses HimPunk instead of other similar services because it is faster and has less annoying ads: *“After testing several booking apps, I’ve decided that HimPunk is the best. In comparison with other apps, primarily Kayak which was also mentioned in your question, HimPunk is faster and has less annoying ads. These adds exhaust me.”*( Daniel, Interview6). Accordingly, although it was not mentioned by this interviewee, it seems logical to assume that annoying ads and a slower process of searching make Kayak a less effective booking app than HimPunk. Through the survey replies, I was also able to get some

positive feedback regarding HimPunk, such as: *“helped me to book a hotel in Costa Brava”, “found me a cheap hotel”*( Survey, Appendix).Etc.

The fact that correlation between the degree of upgrading tourist experience and the mean values of booking apps is slight may be explained by the specifics of booking services. Nowadays, digital apps are not the only way for tourists to book flights or hotels. In particular, they can also use tourist agencies or websites. Also Mircea, declares that: *“Himpunk I used to use because it simplifies all the procedures....but only when I am short of time.”*(Mircea, Interview 7).

As it was stated above, the low level of TravelSafe Pro’s popularity among respondents doesn’t give us evidence that safety is not among the tourists’ most topical concerns. Unfortunately, there was only one safety app in our list. In order to extend the conclusions regarding the sphere in which tourist apps are especially effective, it is required to conduct a survey with more safety apps. ...With the help of the survey I have managed to collect only 8 answers regarding the use of TravelSafe Pro, such as: *“ good app, but not lifechanging”, “gives you good info”*( Survey, Appendix) etc...Also the interviewee nr 3 stated his opinion regarding the use of this app: *“TravelSafe is good, it has some useful things for safety which is important for me as I am often travelling in some wild areas”*(Maria, Interview 3)..It is interesting to mention the fact that Maria, is not using apps very often : *“Very rare. I like travelling around nature, mountains, rivers – not big cities. So, I don’t need a lot of apps.”*(ibid). From her statements we can deduce the fact that TravelSafe Pro is an app used mostly in certain and specific conditions and therefore it’s popularity can be affected. Most of the tourist when they travel, probably don’t have high concerns regarding their safety and therefore using a safety app

might be not needed. The same idea is shared also by Andrei, :” *i don’t think you have to worry about safety too much in your vacation...relax*”(Andrei, Interview 2)

Related to safety, different people found themselves reluctant and insecure regarding Uber. As stated above all these worldwide scandals regarding it’s safety, had a negative impact on Uber’s popularity and many tourists decided to use an alternative method. Following on, only 8 repliers from 200 have stated that safety is one of the main advantages of using one of the tourist apps.

The financial aspect in my opinion, is one of the most important reason why different people have decided to use tourist apps and apps in general. Most of the apps are financially free and therefore are easy to be accesed by the people in need. Also the three of my interviews support the idea of an easy accessibility from a financial point of view:” *Most of them are free*”(Emil, Interview 5,). Also on question number 6 from the survey regarding the advantages of using tourist apps, the financial and time-saving answer has been answered the most. 57 respondents have opted for the financial advantage and around 95 have chosen the time-saving aspect as being the most important.

## **6. Conclusion and future research**

Generally, the survey’s results and interviews give us a premise to claim that digital applications have substantially influenced tourist experience. Most of these influences are connected with some narrow niches in which digital apps cover issues which were not covered before like in the case of Onavo, TripIt or PackingPro. At the same time, it is relevant to point

out that digital apps are also extremely useful for tourists on the planning stage of their trips.. Withal, it is definite that TripAdvisor is currently the most popular tourist app which has upgraded tourist experience the most. As a result, this app has received both the highest mean value of popularity, most related comments and also was the most appreciated and used app by the interview respondents. The effectiveness and usefulness of TripAdvisor is reasoned by the app's global focus, customer-driven development principles, and impressive marketing campaigns. At the same time, global popular digital apps like Instagram or Yelp, which are frequently used by our respondents, are not actually perceived by them as apps which have revolutionized their tourist experience. Although most of the questions in the questionnaire were indirectly connected with the questions incorporated in the survey, interviewees shared with me deep arguments on the effectiveness of specific tourist apps and the spheres in which their tourist experience was upgraded the most by digital apps. For instance, the interviewee no. 5 points out that the fact that most tourist apps are free is the most important factor why he uses the in the first place. This angle was not studied in the survey.

An important part of the conclusion can be actually taken from the transcript of the interview with the interviewee no. 2, Andrei. As he pointed out, he doesn't need apps to change his tourist experience, he only wants to simplify some formal processes like finding accommodations, booking and making sure that everything is organized properly in order to concentrate on enjoying attractions and getting most of his trips. He argues that such apps as TripAdvisor give her the ability to be spontaneous in his decisions. While she was forced to talk to travel agents and waste a lot of time of different procedures before, now he can access TripAdvisor, spend half an hour on learning relevant information about his trip and start his trip immediately( Andrei, Interview 2). This was just a simple example, but in other words, tourist

apps make the process of traveling faster by accelerating the planning stage of any trip. As the current study showed, this argument is crucial for tourists which using mobile applications in their traveling experience. After all the research that has been done, I personally consider the fact that, tourist apps are a great asset to any tourist, regarding the reason and purpose. Using a tourist app in your journey provides a lot of advantages such as time saving, financial advantages, entertainment etc. Of course the tourism industry is able to function without the use of digital app, but the process will be probably much slower and will involve much more difficulties that need to be addressed.

The study has several limitations which should be addressed. Firstly, we have included a limited set of digital apps to the list. Studying only ten apps is obviously insufficient for making far-reaching conclusions regarding the global trends in the tourist industry.

Secondly, the sample of 200 respondents is not representative from the sociological perspective. Although it helped in researching the problem under investigation, we can assume that a statistical error of our results was more than the standard number of 3% inherent for most of sociological surveys. Thus, in order to confirm the validity of our results, it is required to conduct another survey with a bigger sample. It should also ensure more even distribution of demographic characteristics among respondents. In our sample, most of respondents were represented by young people with a Graduate degree aged between 25 and 35 years old. It was hard to overcome such uneven distribution of demographic characteristics because I used the word-of-mouth mechanism for collecting respondents. In future research, it seems substantial to include more people between 35 to 65 years old in the survey.

The same argument can be applied to the interviews. All the seven interviewees were people aged between 25 and 35 years old with either Graduate or Master's degree. Although they



provided us with relevant information about the problem under investigation, the absence of interviewees with different demographic characteristics regarding the age and education degree create a certain risk that these results may have a low validity. In future research, it is advised to engage people with various demographic characteristics in order to make sure that eventual interviews' results are valid.

## **6. Appendix**

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## Interview Transcripts

a) Interviewee no. 1. Roland Gaetjens-27 years, male, employee, Graduate degree.

Do you like to travel?

*Yes, I enjoy travelling across the globe. This is actually one of my hobbies.*

How often do you travel?

*Around 30 days per year, depends on how much time I have available.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*Yes, I use them quite often*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*Yes, I use TripAdvisor, PackingPro and Instagram all the time and Yelp, HimPunk, Uber and Onavo from time to time.*

Why do you use these apps?

*I guess everyone is using Instagram nowadays. TripAdvisor helps me to plan my travelling. PackingPro is a great thing because it guarantees that I won't forget anything important. PackingPro is number 1 for me. I can replace TripAdvisor, but I cannot replace PackingPro. ..I was always forgetting important things, but now, my concern is gone. Regarding the rest of the apps... Yelp is great for choosing restaurants, HimPunk – for searching for tickets, Onavo – for saving money. I used to be a regular customer of Uber in the past, but now I am not anymore because of all these scandals.*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*TripIt is useless for me. I can live without it. And I have not heard about Kayak and TravelSafe.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*I think they just make everything simpler*

b) Interview 2- 29 years, male, graduate degree

Do you like to travel?

*Hard to say. I travel sometimes, when I'm on vacation, but not often.*

How often do you travel?

*Around a month per year.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*Yes, definitely.*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*Instagram, TripAdvisor, Kayak and TripIt.*

Why do you use these apps?

*TripAdvisor is great I remember when I was younger and I was travelling with my family.. Every time we had to ask around for good restaurant or places worth visiting.....Now we have TripAdvisor. It has everything I need including information about hotels, countries, showplaces. Before going on vacation, I always look at TripAdvisor. Of course, I take photos and post them on Instagram. Kayak is good for booking, although I don't always use it. Sometimes it's better to use another app, Priceline. To be honest, I like this app better. Finally TripIt is responsible for all my organizing tasks. I cannot imagine my vacation without TripIt. This app has made significant changes in my life which are connected with the tourist experience. Remember one day in cuba, when I got lost and I managed to find the number of the hotel with triplt. I even convinced my wife to use it*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*I don't need Uber on vacation. The same is with Yelp – why bother? I don't know what Onavo is, and why should I use Travelsafe?i don't think you have to worry about safety too much in your vacation...relax. I've heard something about HimPunk, I know it is similar with Kayak, but I've never tried it.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*They simplify the entire process. I want to simplify some formal processes like finding accommodations, booking and making sure that everything is organized properly in order to concentrate on enjoying attractions and getting most of his trips. This is what tourist apps are fore.*

c) Interview 3, Maria- 26 years old, female, Master degree

Do you like to travel?

*Yes, travelling is great.*

How often do you travel?

*Unfortunately, not very often. Around a month, maybe month and a half, per year.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*Very rare. I like travelling around nature, mountains, rivers – not big cities. So, I don't need a lot of apps.*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*Of course. I use Instagram, Onavo and TravelSafe.*

Why do you use these apps?

*You know why everyone is using Instagram – photos and stuff. TravelSafe is good, it has some useful things for safety which is important for me as I am often travelling in some wild areas. And Onavo is a way to save money. It doesn't revolutionize tourist industry, but it prevents tourists from undesirable uploads of digital data. I need to have some knowledge about what is going on in my future vacation.. I am always checking suggested local restaurants, events that might occur or places that are worth visiting*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*Yelp and Uber are useless for me because I prefer nature over cities. And I've never heard about the other apps on your list.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*I think apps should enrich tourist experience, make it more enjoyable. But people shouldn't use apps instead of discovering everything by themselves. Why do you travel at all if you use all these apps instead of finding everything by your own?*

d) Interview 4- Robert, 33 Male, employee, Master degree

Do you like to travel?

*Not very much.*

How often do you travel?

*A week, maybe two while I'm on vacation.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*From time to time.*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*I use TripAdvisor, Uber and TripIt.*

Why do you use these apps?

*There is a lot of relevant information on TripAdvisor about hotels. In particular, instead of going to the travel agencies and talking to travel agents, modern tourists can just use this app for collecting all the required information. This process is free and fast. Uber always provides me with a ride to hotel, and even if I am not travelling, I am using it sometimes.. And TripIt helps in organizing. I have a good memory, but sometimes you need to find something fast.*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*I don't like Instagram, I prefer Facebook. I also don't like Yelp, it has a lot of lies and I am not sure whether some of reviews are actually true. I had a bad incident with this site when I came to a restaurant with a high rating and it turned out to be a disaster. I don't know what other apps are.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*Tourist apps are helpful devices. But I don't think they significantly upgrade tourist experience. They just help sometimes, but this help is barely crucial.*

**e)** Interview 5 Emil, 29 years old, employee, Graduate degree

Do you like to travel?

*Yes, but not a lot.*

How often do you travel?

*Three weeks per year.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*Sometimes.*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*Yes, it happens. Sometimes I find Yelp, Instagram, TripIt and Kayak helpful.*

Why do you use these apps?

*Instagram is an organic part of my life, I always use this at least once per day. Other apps help me with something: Yelp with knowing which coffee and shop is better, TripIt with collecting all the relevant information about the trip, and Kayak with booking tickets. Most of them are free*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*TripAdvisor can be helpful, but I prefer travel agents. It's good to guarantee safety. It's the first time I've heard about KimPunk, PackingPro, Onavo and TravelSafe Pro. And Uber is useless during trips.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*They help tourists with some specific spheres of their trip. It's easy to live without them, but it's simpler to use them. Besides, they are free in most cases.*

f) Interview 6 Sumit, 33 years old, graduate degree

Do you like to travel?

*Yes, very much.*

How often do you travel?

*Very often. I am a freelancer. So, I can travel a lot. I think I travel half a year, maybe more.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*Yes.*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*I use all of them except Kayak and Packing Pro.*

Why do you use these apps?

*Such apps like Instagram, Yelp and Uber are very popular in the modern world. I think every tourist uses them – I am not an exception here. After testing several booking apps, I've decided that HimPunk is the best. In comparison with other apps, primarily Kayak which was also mentioned in your question, HimPunk is faster and has less annoying ads. These ads exhaust me. TravelSafe has all the numbers which are necessary if an accident occurs. TripIt and Onavo are always with me because they help me to save money and time. And also yeah, they are free to get*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*You know, I've never heard of this app, PackingPro. It sounds interesting, I'll look at it.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*Tourist apps provide complex decision of tourists' problems. They move all the travelling to a whole other level. They are like a new era in tourist industry. I am absolutely sure that there will be a time when nobody will need travel agents and other intermediaries due to tourist apps.*

**g)** Interview 7 Mircea, male, 28 years old, Graduate Degree

Do you like to travel?

*I'm not sure. I guess like most other people.*

How often do you travel?

*I don't know, maybe two weeks per year, maybe more.*

Do you use mobile apps during your trips?

*Almost never.*

Do you use any of the following apps: TripAdvisor, Instagram, Yelp, TripIt, HimPunk, Kayak, PackingPro, Onavo, Uber, TravelSafe Pro?

*Only TripAdvisor*

Why do you use these apps?

*Before going on a trip, I like to plan everything. And this site provides me with such possibility and also because I don't have to pay any money for TripAdvisor. Himpunk I used to use because it simplifies all the procedures....but only when I am short of time.*

What about the other apps? Why don't you use them?

*I've heard about most of them, but they can only inhibit my trip. My work is very complicated, and I need vacations for relaxing. I disconnect all the connections with the world and just relax.*

How, in your opinion, do tourist apps upgrade tourist experience?

*I am not an expert in this sphere. As I understand, they can accelerate a lot of processes, primarily booking and other things which are important on the planning stage of a trip.*