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## THE FEATURES OF USING DIGITAL SERVICES IN TOURIST TRIPS BY CITIZENS OF KIROV REGION (BASED ON THE RESULTS OF 2022 SURVEY)

**Abstract.** The article presents the research results of using digital services by residents of the Kirov region during tourist trips. The relevance of the research is caused by the increasing role of digitalization in the tourism sector and the necessity to study changes in consumer preferences under modern conditions. A population survey was used as the main research method. The sample size was 1,384 people. The results were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics and Microsoft Excel. The analysis of the survey results was carried out by separate target groups identified by professional characteristics. The frequency of using digital apps, the general attitude to them, their using during sightseeing activities and when organizing independent travel were determined. The features of using digital services for booking accommodation, navigation in the tourist space were revealed. The results of the research prove that the frequency of using digital services by residents of Kirov region in 2022 has not changed significantly. Basically, residents of Kirov region turn to digital services when booking transport services (the official website of Russian Railways), for navigation (Google Maps and Yandex Maps), accommodation reservations (Avito). Only 20% of respondents have heard about virtual excursions, but do not plan to use them in the future, preferring to traditional excursions. The virtual tours are also not in demand. At the same time, it should be noted the high level of respondents' appeals to social networks – more than 90% of respondents in each segment. According to respondents, social networks and official websites of organizations are the main source of reliable information. The practical importance of the research is expressed in obtaining up-to-date and reliable information about the using digital services by residents of Kirov region, which can be used by executive authorities and businesses.

**Keywords:** tourist-recreational needs, consumer behavior, Kirov region, survey method, digital economy



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### **ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПРИМЕНЕНИЯ ЦИФРОВЫХ СЕРВИСОВ В ТУРИСТСКИХ ПОЕЗДКАХ ЖИТЕЛЯМИ КИРОВСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ (ПО РЕЗУЛЬТАТАМ ОПРОСА НАСЕЛЕНИЯ В 2022 ГОДУ)**

*В статье изложены результаты исследования особенностей применения цифровых сервисов жителей Кировской области во время туристских поездок. Актуальность исследования обусловлена повышением роли цифровизации в функционировании сферы туризма и необходимостью изучения изменения потребительских предпочтений под влиянием современных условий. В качестве основного метода исследования применялся опрос населения. Объем выборки составил 1384 человека. Обработка результатов осуществлялась с помощью программы IBM SPSS Statistics и Microsoft Excel. Анализ результатов опроса осуществлялся по отдельным целевым группам, выделенным по профессиональному признаку. Была определена частота использования цифровых приложений, общее к ним отношение, их применение во время экскурсионной деятельности и при организации самостоятельных путешествий, выявлены особенности применения цифровых сервисов для бронирования жилья, навигации в туристском пространстве. Результаты исследования доказывают, что частота применения цифровых сервисов жителей Кировской области в 2022 году существенно не изменилась. В основном жители Кировской области обращаются к цифровым сервисам при бронировании транспортных услуг (официальный сайт РЖД), для навигации (Google. Карты и Яндекс. Карты), бронирования жилья (Avito). Лишь 20% опрошенных слышали про виртуальные экскурсии, однако не планируют пользоваться ими в будущем, отдавая предпочтение традиционным экскурсиям. Также остаются не востребованными и виртуальные туры. В то же время, следует отметить высокий уровень обращений респондентов к социальным сетям – более 90% опрошенных каждого сегмента. Именно социальные сети и официальные сайты организаций, по мнению респондентов, являются основным источником достоверной информации. Практическая значимость исследования выражается в получении актуальной и достоверной информации о применении цифровых сервисов жителей Кировской области, что может быть использовано органами исполнительной власти и бизнесом.*

**Ключевые слова:** туристско-рекреационные потребности, поведение потребителей, Кировская область, метод опроса, цифровая экономика



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### Introduction

Digital transformation covers all structures of modern society, including influencing the change in the structure of the tourist market and improving the efficiency of tourism development in general [6,7,10]. The development of digital services, the active using tourist marketplaces, augmented reality and big data technologies, artificial intelligence, chatbots, contributes to further changes in the tourist market. The share of independent travelers is growing, approaches to building loyalty systems are changing, more attention is paid to the personalization of tourist products [2,3]. Special attention is paid to the development of digital services to increase the availability of tourist services for people with disabilities [4]. It is also worth noting the using digital technologies by the third-age population abroad (on the example of Finland and Japan) [13].

Digitalization contributes to improving the efficiency of the realization of tourist and recreational potential, forming a special information space and increasing the availability of consumption of tourist and recreational services [9]. However, there is a significant disparity in the dynamics and efficiency of digitalization processes. For example, in some regions there is a discrepancy between the using cultural/tourist resources and digital technologies [12]. The COVID-19 pandemic had a special impact on the acceleration of digitalization processes, as a result of which people's attitude to the using digital services changed [11].

Summarizing the consequences of the impact of digitalization, a number of authors note three main directions:

1) to build relationships with customers, in order to find ideas, test services and attract new customers.

2) to build partnerships, including with suppliers of tourist services.

3) the using digital technologies to achieve the efficiency and speed of creating and providing a tourist product [5].

On the other hand, there is an opinion that the importance of digital services in general is greatly exaggerated and needs additional

research. In this research the authors with a survey method evaluate the features of using digital services by residents of the Kirov region in the post-pandemic period. We consider that the research results will reveal the importance and relevance of digital services for different categories of consumers and can be in demand from both the tourism business and regional tourism administrations.

### Methodology and methods

A survey method was used to study the features of the using digital services in tourist trips by residents of the Kirov region. The survey was conducted remotely using the Google-forms aggregator in June-August 2022. The database of responses was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics and Microsoft Excel. A total of 1,384 residents of the Kirov region were interviewed. Considering that the volume of the general population is 1138200 people, the confidence probability was 99,7%, and the confidence interval was 4%. Such characteristics of the sample indicate a high level of representativeness. Also, the representativeness of the sample was ensured by observing the proportions of the professional structure of the respondents. However, for some professional groups, the number of respondents turned out to be less than 50 people, and it was decided to exclude them from further analysis. This is justified, since the objectives of the research were not to build a rating of the using digital services, but it was important to analyze separately for each target group.

The final distribution of respondents by target groups is as follows:

- 1) unemployed (19,7%);
- 2) non-manufacturing business, service, consumer services (10,8%);
- 3) education (8,7%);
- 4) industrial production (7,0%);
- 5) healthcare (4,7%);
- 6) wholesale and retail trade, real estate business (3,7%);
- 7) sports, tourism, recreation and entertainment (3,6%).

The main aspect of the research is to

identify the frequency of using apps, services and websites for organizing independent travel of the population.

Almost all respondents did not change the frequency of using apps in 2022, that is, traditionally considering the restrictions on access of some aggregators (more than 90% of respondents in each segment).

The structure of the questionnaire involves the research about features of the using digital services in four blocks:

1) the frequency of using app, trust in one or another source of information about tourist apps;

2) booking accommodation. Concerns the issue of using services such as Yandex.Travel, OneTwoTrip, ostrovok.ru, tutu.ru, hotels, su-tochno.ru, hotellook.ru, 101hotels.com, Avito, Booking.com, Airbnb, Tripadvisor and respondent's service.

3) using navigation services. The main aggregators for the analysis was the Yandex Maps, Google Maps, 2GIS, maps.me and nakarte.me. The first two are the most recognizable, 2GIS currently has more functionality. Maps.ME is a free app for mobile devices based on the free geographical map OpenStreetMap. nakarte.me combines all kinds of cartographic services.

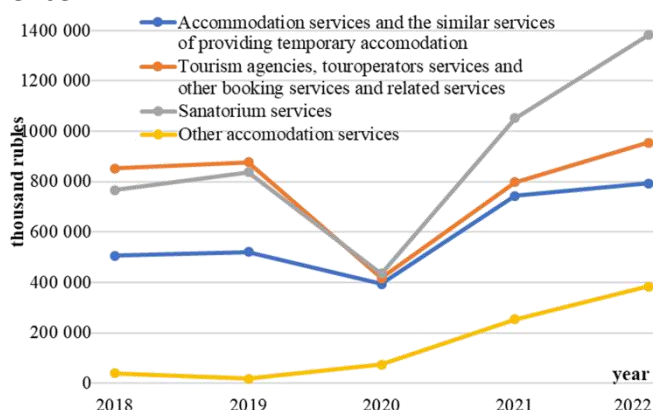
4) using apps that provide sightseeing services and guided tours. izi.TRAVEL a more versatile aggregator, since it is an aggregate, primarily for guides who can design and lay out their product and for tourists who, without a special search for a guide, can listen to the tour online or by downloading in advance. Tripster which is a platform for those who want to offer author excursions. Avigid is also not the most famous unit, but it includes many functions: from the sale of excursions to the sale of tickets.

The Kirov region, although it does not belong to the recognized tourist regions of our country, but in recent years has demonstrated stable growth in the main indicators of the tourism sector (Fig. 1).

Moreover, the regional government, in connection with the upcoming anniversary of the city

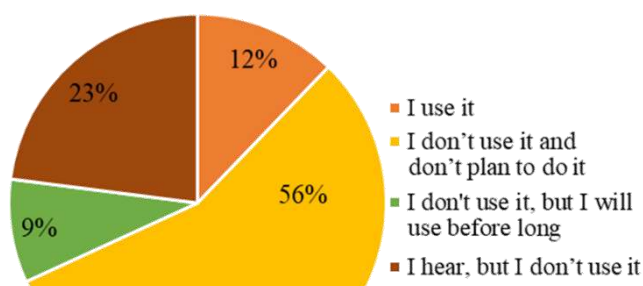
of Kirov, has set an ambitious goal to attract more than a million tourists in 2023. Identifying the features of the digital behavior of potential tourists is an urgent scientific and practical problem in this regard.

Let's consider in the segments the main differences from the traditional features of preference.



*Fig. 1 – Sales volume of tourist and recreation services of regional tourism and recreation system enterprises of the Kirov region*

**Unemployed.** The main members of this category are students of higher educational institutions. More than 60% of respondents note the majority of the proposed aggregators as unused and unplanned for accessing them in the future (Yandex.Travel, Onetwotrip and others). The most popular option of all means for booking accommodation facilities is Avito (Fig.2).



*Fig. 2 – The average value for the using aggregators for booking accommodation facilities of an unemployed, %*

Trusted sources of information about tourist offers are official websites and official apps (71,7% of respondents), as well as more than 90% of respondents trust the organization of



recreation official websites of tour operators and travel agencies.

The most used services are Yandex Maps (69,9%), 2GIS (55,2%) and Google Maps (68,1%). Less popular aggregator options nakarte.me and maps.me, which respondents do not plan to use in the future.

More than 70% of respondents do not use and do not plan to use in the future izi.TRAVEL, Avigid, Tripster, but more than 10% of respondents in this segment have heard of such aggregates.

The respondents also proposed new aggregators, the study of the using which can be carried out in future scientific papers. This is the official website of Travelata travel agency (online tour store), the websites of tour operators. It is also noted that many adequate and familiar aggregators have left the market.

**Non-manufacturing business, service, public amenities.** The frequency of using app among respondents in this segment has not changed since 2021.

Already more respondents are aware of certain services. This is marked by the fact that employees of this segment not only use them to organize their travels, but also work with these aggregates and apps as part of their professional activities. The most popular service is also Avito. This may indicate that the majority of respondents book housing not in collective accommodation facilities, but in the apartment rental market.

In the average values, you can notice a similar situation – respondents do not use most of the apps and services and do not plan to use them. Despite this, the percentage decreased by 10% compared to the non-working segment, and awareness of certain aggregates increased.

Regarding the purchase of tickets for events, respondents prefer official websites (56,4%) and related services (22,8%) (Fig. 3).

Of the aggregators of excursion support, Tripster is more recognizable, then there is izi.TRAVEL among respondents.

Russian Railways is the leader in the transport services.

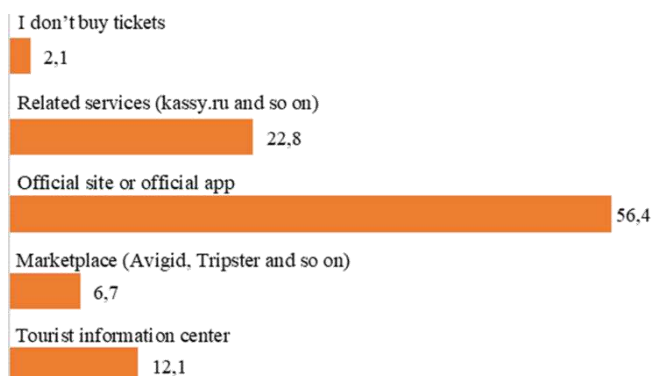


Fig. 3 – Sources of purchase of tickets for the segment of the service sector, service, and consumer services, %

The most popular option in navigation services was Yandex Maps (63,1%), on the second place among Google Maps users (55%) and 2GIS (53%).

In average values, you can see that the use and ignoring of navigation services is almost the same.

Virtual tours for respondents to a greater extent do not have relevance and popularity (Fig. 4).

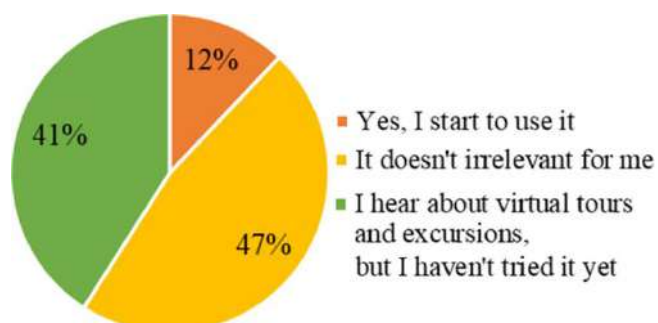


Fig. 4 – Relevance of virtual tours for respondents of the segment of the non-manufacturing business, service, consumer services, %

**Education.** The most noticeable difference in the using services for booking accommodation is that Avito is already used by a smaller number of respondents (Fig. 5). On the second place in popularity Tutu.ru (19,2%).

Buying tickets on the official website or through the official app is also a leading option (70%). The most trusted sources are also the official websites of tour operators and travel agencies (73,3%).

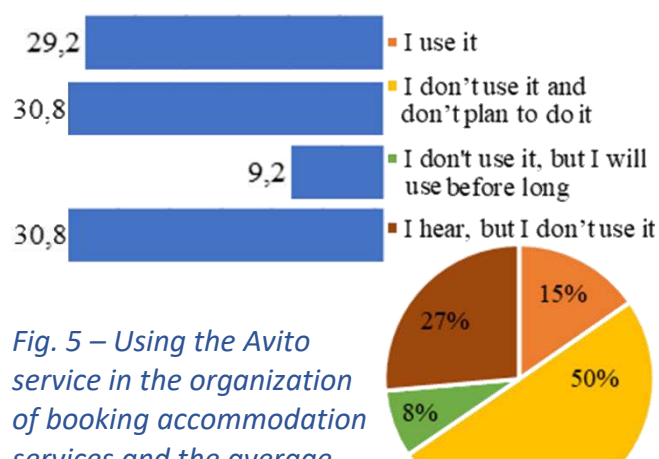


Fig. 5 – Using the Avito service in the organization of booking accommodation services and the average value for the using aggregators for booking a segment of non-manufacturing business, service, consumer services

Yandex Maps, Google Maps, 2GIS are traditional leaders in the navigation choice aggregators.

1/6 of respondents in the education segment prefer to use guided tour apps. This applies to Tripster apps and izi.TRAVEL. The situation is similar for transport. Railway is again a priority among respondents (80%).

**Industrial production.** On average, 60% of respondents do not use the services in general. Onetwotrip is the most unpopular service among respondents by popularity. The priority is the same as in the previous Avito and Booking segments. Yandex Maps, Sutochno.ru 101hotels.com – the most famous (Fig. 6).

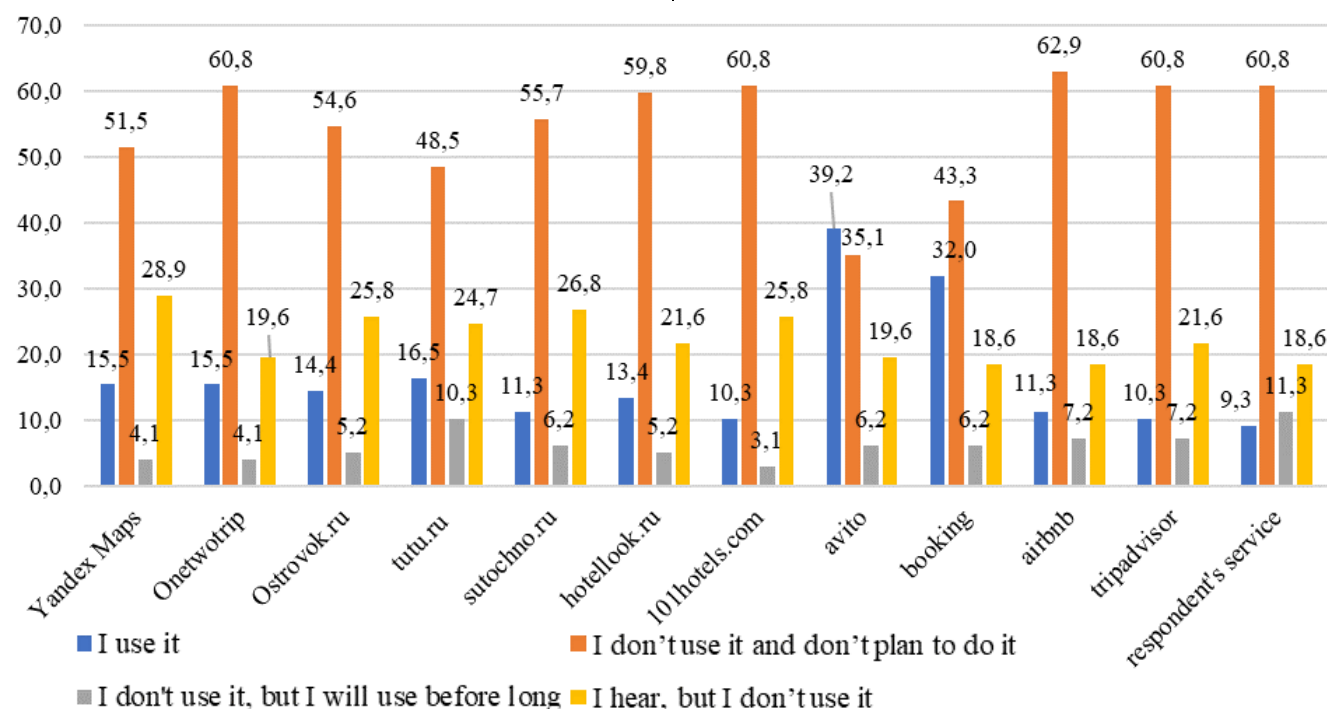


Fig. 6 – The using aggregators for booking accommodation facilities of the industrial production segment's respondents

Yandex.Maps (60,8%), Google.Maps (40,5%) and 2GIS (52,6%) are in demand for online maps.

Equally, each excursion service is not used by the respondent – izi.TRAVEL (69%), Tripster (69%), Avigid (67%).

Booking of transport tickets is traditionally carried out by respondents through the Russian Railways service, followed by air transport and the corresponding aggregator, Aviasales (Fig.7).

**Construction.** By analogy, Onetwotrip, Avito and Booking are the most used. Sutochno.ru (46,3%) is one of the most promising, since it began to be used more often after the restrictions of Booking, Airbnb and Hotels.com.

Half of the respondents in the construction segment have heard about virtual tours, and only 34% of respondents consider it irrelevant, 51% of respondents plan to try such a format of a tourist offer in the future.

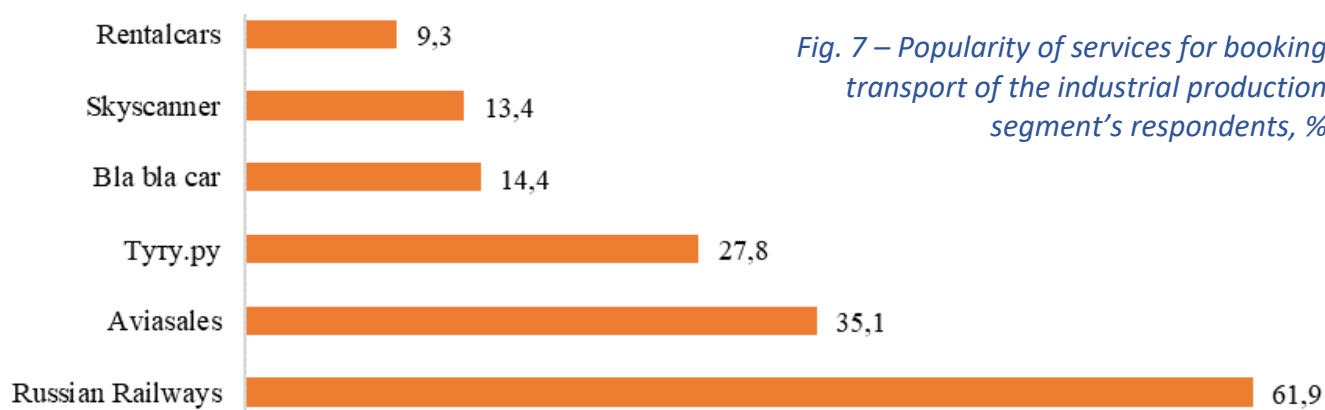


Fig. 7 – Popularity of services for booking transport of the industrial production segment's respondents, %

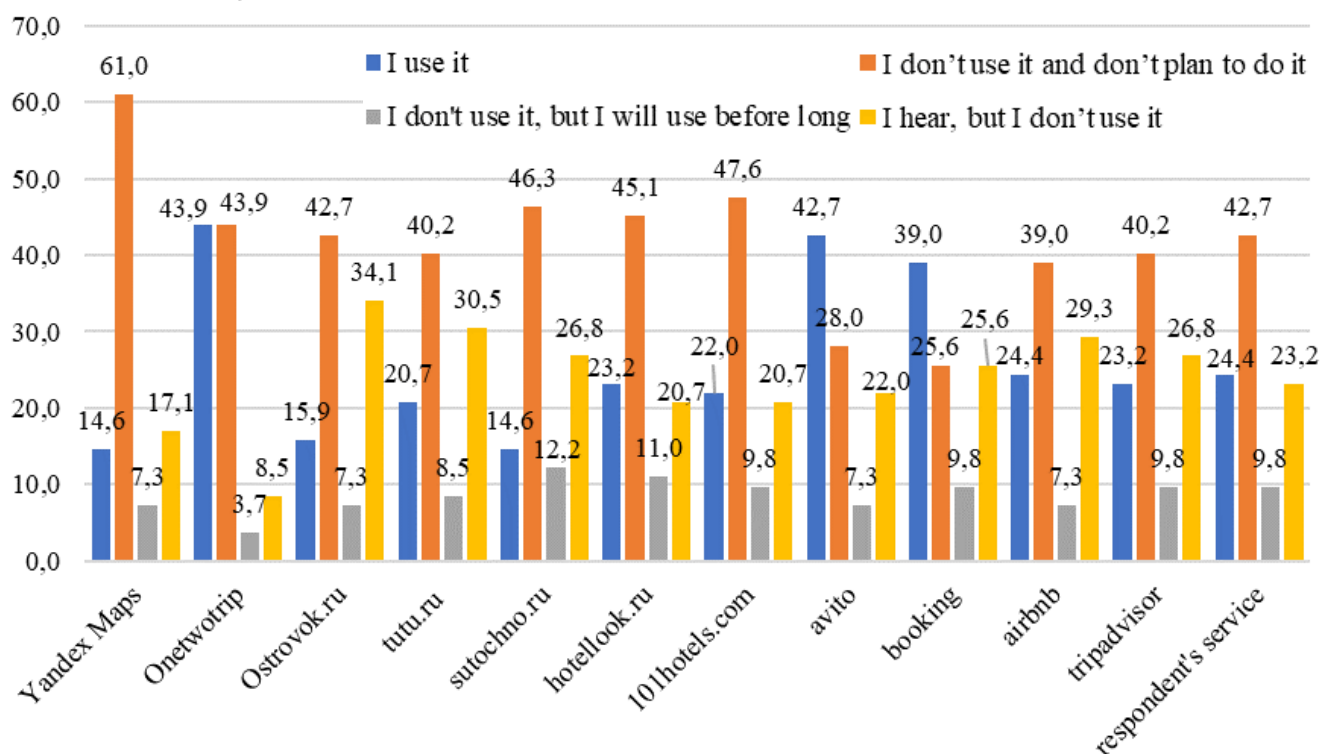


Fig. 8 – Using aggregators for booking accommodation facilities for the construction segment, %

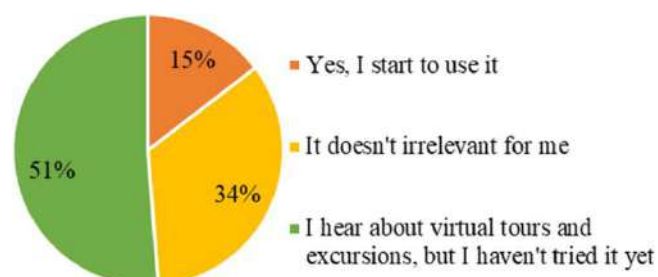


Fig. 9 – Relevance of virtual tours for respondents of the construction segment

Unlike other segments, respondents of the construction segment use the service more than others nakarte.me (37,8%). On the other hand it is these Google respondents.maps (48,8%) are also in the leaders in popularity of use (Fig. 10).

izi.TRAVEL still the most unpopular, Avigid is the most used among respondents of the construction segment.

**Healthcare.** Similar booking results as for the previous groups. The leader in the most frequent use is the services that have left the Russian tourist market, but offer reservations in other countries, Booking and Airbnb (Fig. 12).

Yandex.Maps, Google.Maps, 2GIS traditional leaders in the navigation choice aggregators.

Within the framework of excursion support websites and apps izi.TRAVEL – the least popular service, despite the ease of use and a large range of free services.

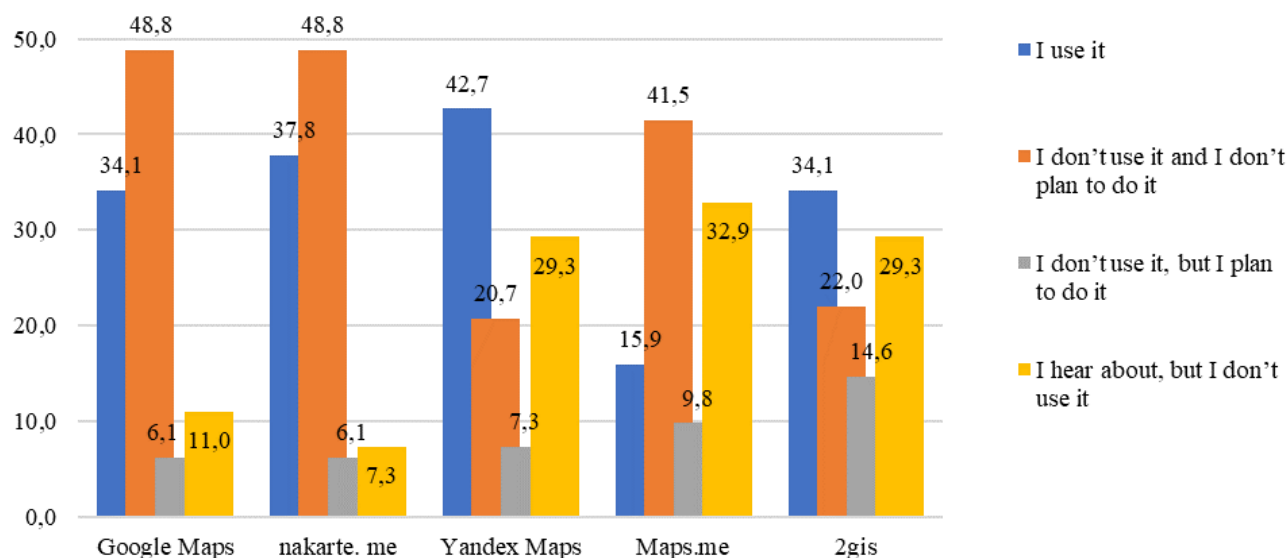


Fig. 10 – Using cartographic and navigation services of the construction segment

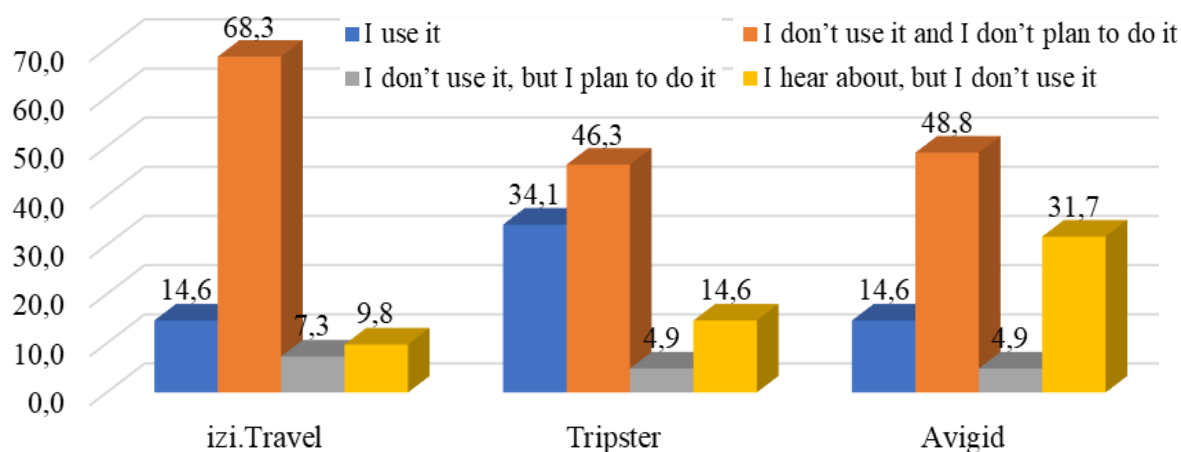


Fig. 11 – Popularity of aggregators for excursion support of the construction segment

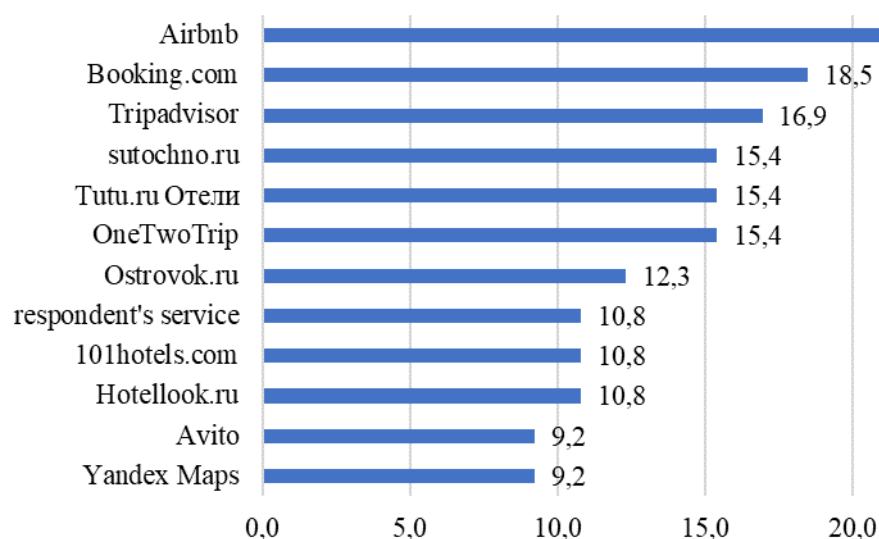


Fig. 12 – The proportion of healthcare respondents choosing certain services for booking accommodation, %

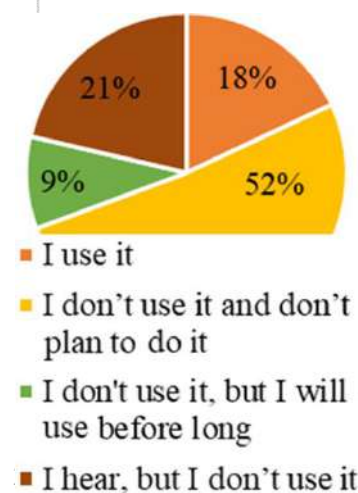


Fig. 13 – The average value for using aggregators for booking of wholesale, retail, real estate business segment's respondents



**Wholesale and retail trade, real estate business.** This segment differs in that more than half of the respondents do not use booking aggregators, but only a fifth (18%) use them.

Respondents of the wholesale, retail, and real estate business segment practically do not plan to use these or other aggregators at all more than respondents of other segments.

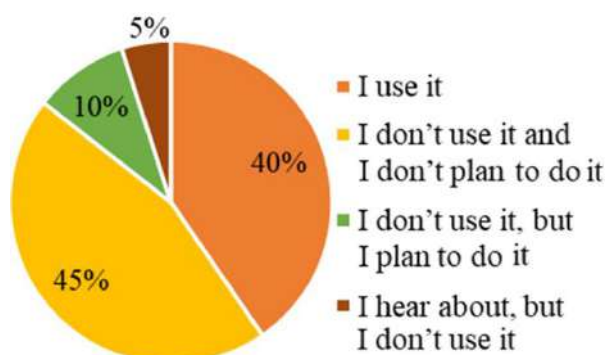


Fig. 14 – The average value for using navigation aggregators of the wholesale, retail, real estate business segment's respondents, %

Considering excursion apps and services, we can also observe similar trends. 68% of respondents do not use and do not plan to use.

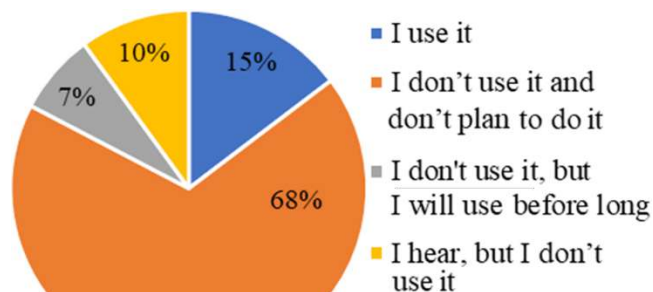


Fig. 15 – The average value for using excursion aggregators of the wholesale, retail, real estate business segment's respondents

With regard to transport services, railway transport and ticket booking on the corresponding website (app) are in the first place among respondents.

Traditionally, Russian Railways is the leader in transport booking options.

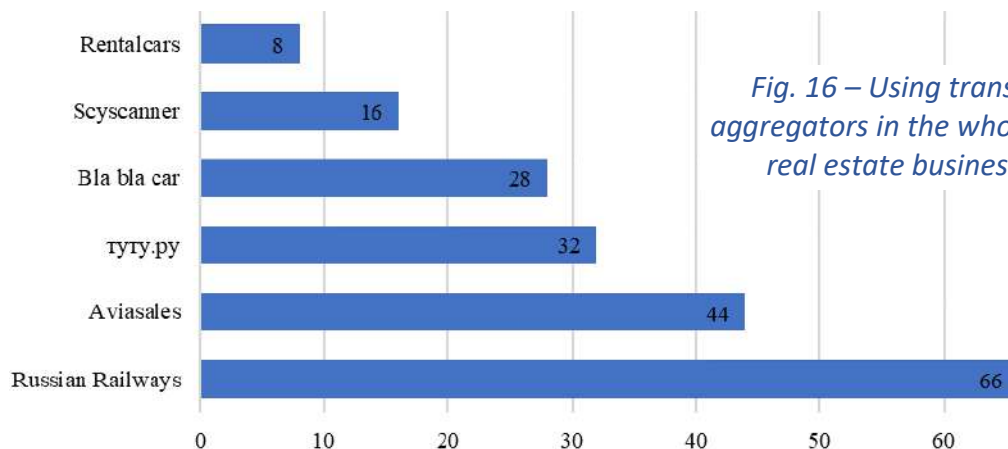


Fig. 16 – Using transport services aggregators in the wholesale, retail, real estate business segment, %

**Sports, tourism, recreation and entertainment.** Respondents have an increased percentage of awareness about certain housing booking services, but the average percentage of their use is equal to the average percentage of responses from respondents in other segments (for example, Ostrovok services, hotelook.ru, tutu.ru – 31.5% of respondents).

Yandex.Maps, Google.Maps, and 2GIS are traditionally the most used services. Despite the fact that nakarte.me they are used for organizing

amateur trips, this service is the most unpopular and unused (Fig. 18).

Despite the great unpopularity, it is possible to single out the least used of the guided tour services (izi.TRAVEL), the most used (Tripster), the most famous (Avigid) (Fig. 19).

#### Discussion and Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in conditions of self-isolation and other mobility restrictions, there was an increase in using digital services to meet tourist and recreational needs all over the world [1, 8].

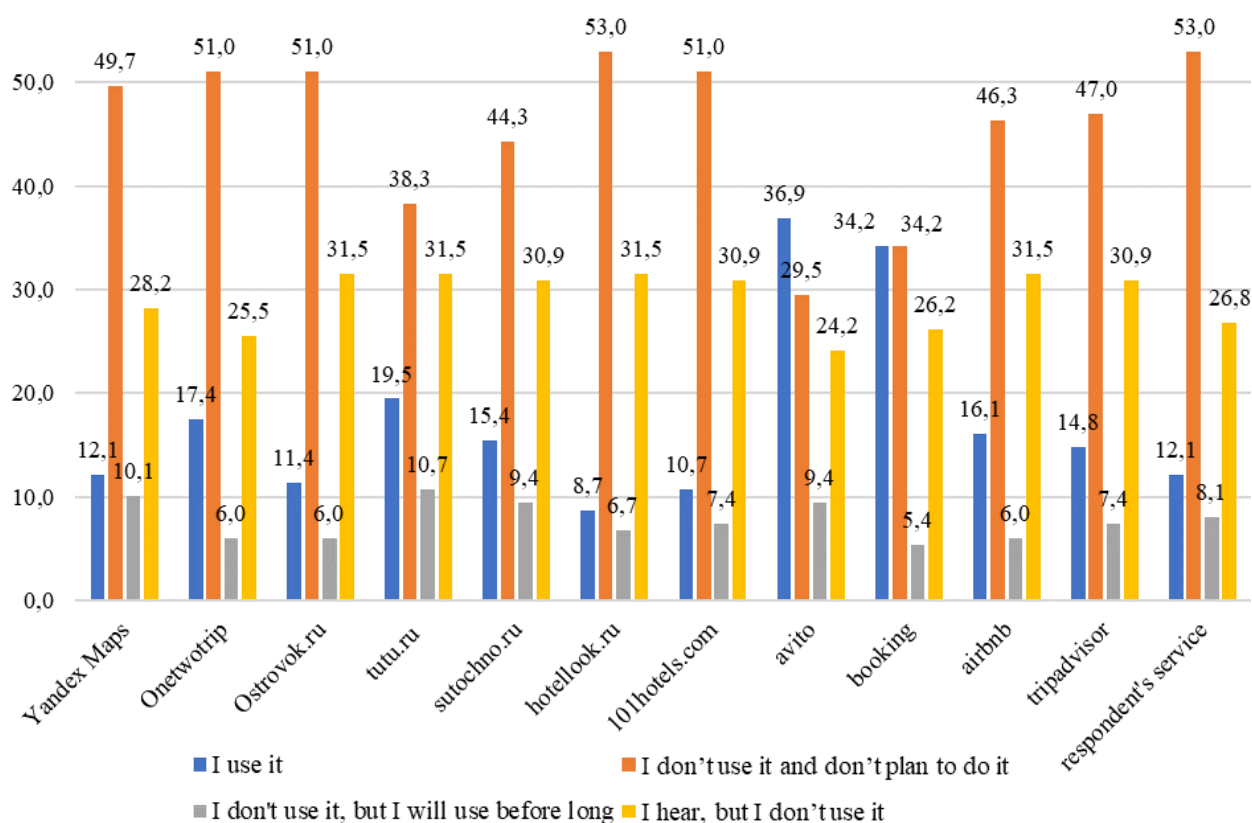


Fig.17 – Using aggregators for booking accommodation facilities for the segment of sports, tourism, recreation and entertainment, %

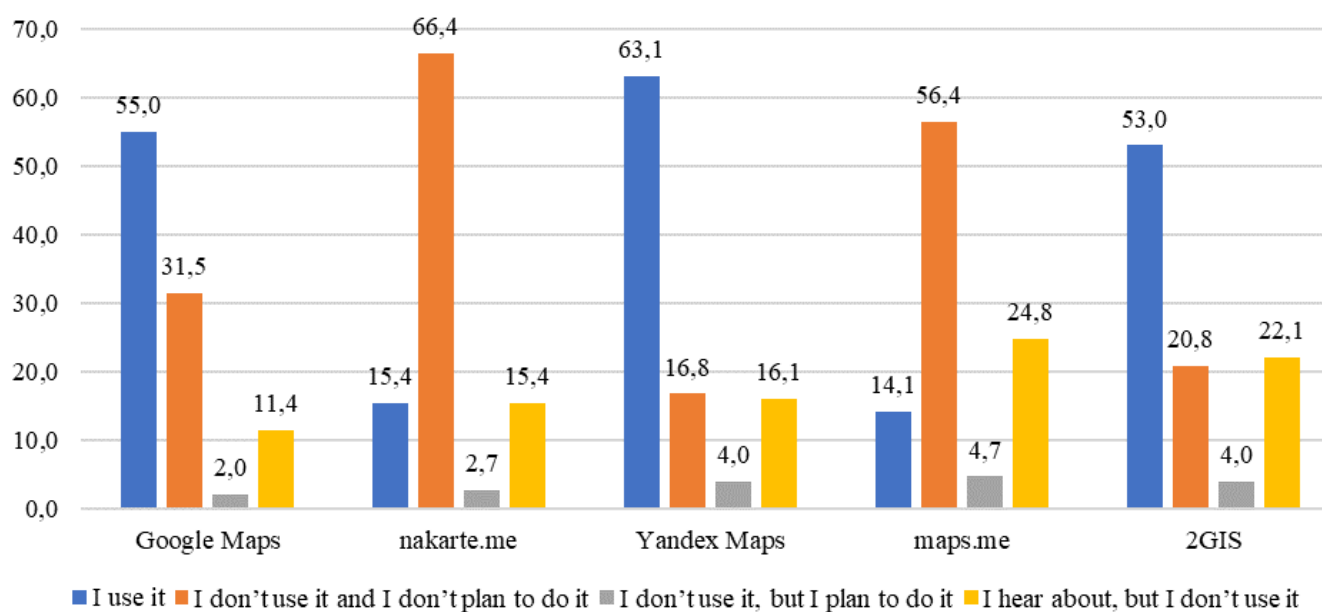
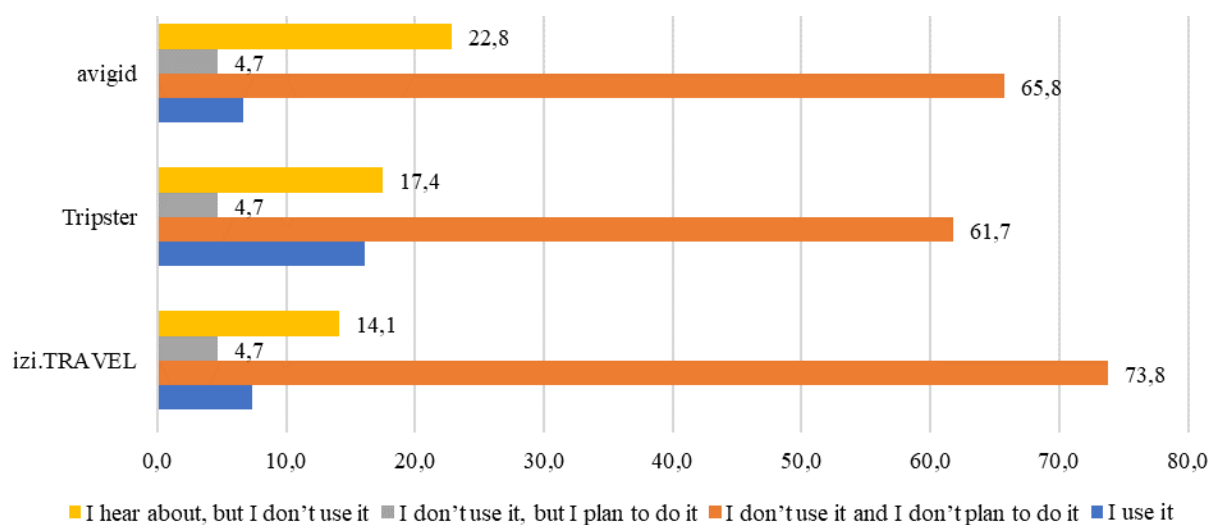


Fig. 18 – Using cartographic and navigation services of the segment of sports, tourism, recreation and entertainment, %



*Fig. 19 – The popularity of aggregators for excursion support of the segment of sports, tourism, recreation and entertainment, %*

Residents of the Kirov region also began to more intensively master digital technologies [11]. After the restrictions were lifted, the deferred demand was fully manifested and the tourist flow almost recovered to pandemic values. Based on the purpose of this study, we conducted a study of the features of using digital services in the post-pandemic period. The main results look quite controversial and go against the general trends of digitalization of the economy. Firstly, the frequency of using apps and websites of tourist organizations in 2022 did not increase compared to 2021. Secondly, preferences for using digital services to obtain the services of travel service providers have not changed. Most respondents prefer to travel by train and use the official website of Russian Railways to book tickets. Preferences in the using navigation services have not changed either. The majority of the population chose Google.Maps and Yandex.Maps. Thirdly, despite the appearance of marketplaces most consumers trust only the official websites of tour operators and travel agencies, the official websites of travel service providers (museums, galleries, theaters, etc.). Fourth, the expectation that demand for virtual tours and excursions will increase after the pandemic has not been justified. Only 1/5 of the respondents in each segment have heard about excursion units, but they do not plan to use them in the future. This trend suggests that the majority

of respondents are really used to traditional guided tours. Participation in virtual tours is not attractive for most of the respondents. Which indirectly confirms the thesis about the prospects of their implementation only in relation to low-mobility categories of citizens. It can be concluded that residents of the Kirov region are conservative consumers who trust traditional technologies and services in general. It is possible to assume and identify the reasons for the traditionality in the minimal using services:

- 1) lack of digital literacy;
- 2) lack of awareness about tourism apps;
- 3) the low level of development of digital technologies, which does not allow you to form a full-fledged tourist experience.

Similar results were obtained in previous researches, which proves a high level of traditionalism in the minimal using new aggregators of excursion support and a tendency to familiar services.

Thus, the research reveals the peculiarities of the consumer behavior of tourist services, the risks of using digital services in connection with the consequences of the pandemic and the aggravation of the geopolitical situation. Also as part of future research it is possible to analyze the respondents' need for other, newer apps and services that have become relevant in the post-pandemic period. In further research, it is planned to expand the list of services used and those that

have recently appeared on the market. For example, these include apps of tour operator companies, translator apps, currency conversion apps and many others.

The results of the research may be in demand by business representatives who are

engaged in the development of digital services, tourist organizations to improve the effectiveness of marketing communication. Executive authorities can use the data obtained to adjust regional documents of territorial planning and management of the tourism sector.

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