

Research on International Students' Perceptions of University Marketing Strategies (Part II)

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Abstract

The main objective of the case study was to conduct research to identify international students' perceptions of the Romanian higher education market, as well as the marketing elements that universities use to attract international students. The present work explored three specific aspects: The conceptual framework in which the scientific approach was launched, setting forth the standards to ensure research questions' definition (Part I); The method applied in the approach of the empirical scientific work, relying on systematic data collection, observation, and experimentation to test hypotheses representing the core of a theory (Part II); Interpretation of the results of the scientific approach, conclusions and proposals for improvement (Part III). Part III will be presented in the next HMM issue.

Keywords: Higher Education Market, University Marketing Strategies;
International Students' Perceptions

JEL Classification: I23; M31; M37; D11; D83

Part II: The method applied in the approach of the empirical scientific work

In the empirical scientific work, the data processing method chosen was the survey, and the research and data collection instrument was an applicative questionnaire, built in English, with a total of 18 questions. The purpose of the research was to identify the attractiveness of the international study market in Romania, but also the Marketing elements identified by international students who promoted study programs in Romania and thus reached interested students.

2.1. Sample and data collection for the scientific paper

The data were collected through an online application questionnaire such as Google Forms, and the data were centralized in a statistical form using Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint programs to graphically highlight the results of the questionnaire.

The application questionnaire was distributed through the Facebook platform, on official groups made up of current and former students who have studied and continue to study in Romania. The

total number of respondents was 113, thus forming a solid data base from which pertinent conclusions can be drawn.

2.2. Questionnaire structure

The questionnaire consists of a total of 18 questions. Within the questionnaire, 3 questions were open-ended, designed to allow respondents to indicate their country of origin, country of residence, and another alternative option they had to study in another country, to the detriment of Romania.

The remaining 15 questions were questions with grid-type answers, with multiple answers or with a single answer, as well as questions with answers designed to measure the respondents' degree of appreciation of aspects related to the Romanian study market, but also to Romania in general.

2.3. Analysis of data obtained from the application questionnaire

Presentation of the structure of the age categories present in the sample.

1. What is your current age?

113 răspunsuri

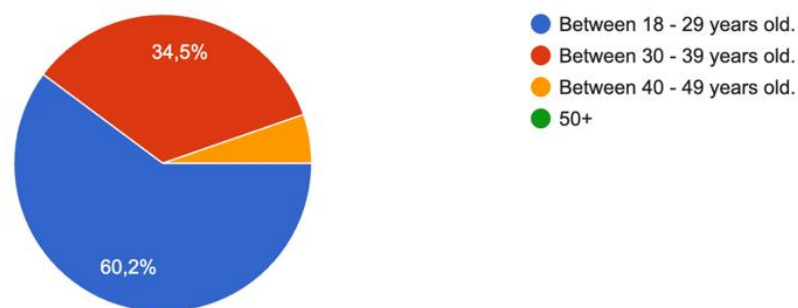


Figure 2.3.1. Distribution of respondents by age category

From figure 2.3.1. it can be seen that the vast majority of respondents, 60.2%, are between 18 and 29 years old, but also that 34.5% of respondents are in the age category between 30 and 39 years old. A very small percentage of 5.3% of respondents are in the age category between 40 and 49 years old. No respondent of the application questionnaire was over 50 years old.

(Objective 1)

Graphical presentation of respondents by country of origin.

2. What is your home country?

113 răspunsuri

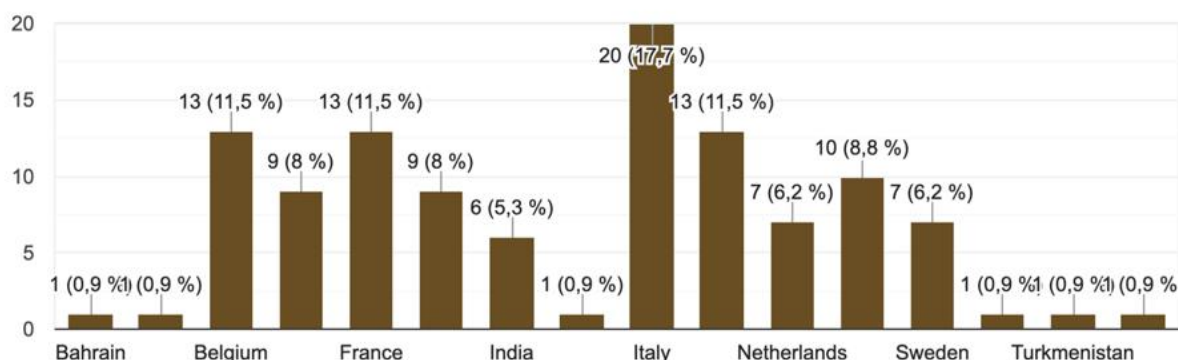


Figure 2.3.2. Graphical distribution of respondents by country of origin

From figure 2.3.2. we can see that the country of origin of the respondents of the application questionnaire is part of both the European Union and certain countries outside the European Union.

Among the countries of origin mentioned by the respondents are the following: Bahrain, Belgium, France India, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Iran, Denmark, Syria, Turkmenistan Vietnam, Japan and Bangladesh.

Classifying the respondents according to country of origin, Italy ranks first with a percentage of 17.7% (20 respondents), followed by Belgium, France and Japan with an equal percentage of 11.5%. (Objective 1)

Graphical presentation of respondents by country of residence

3. What is your current residence country?

113 răspunsuri

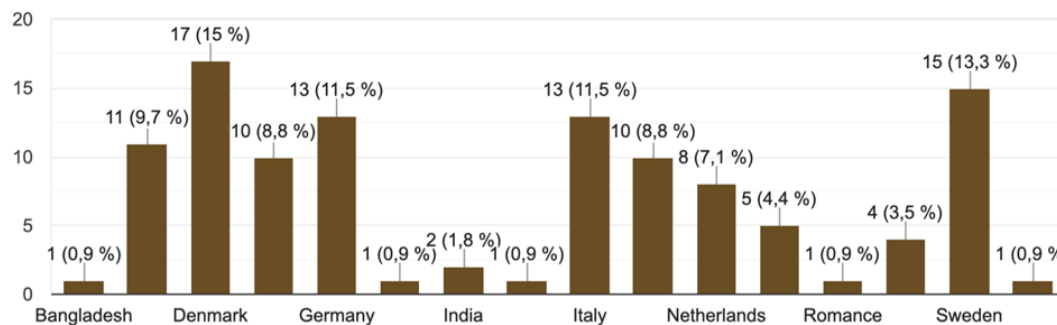


Figure 2.3.3. Graphical distribution of respondents by country of origin

Many of the countries listed by respondents as countries of origin are also found in the open-ended answer of the country of residence.

On the same note, we find countries such as: India, Germany, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Japan, Pakistan, but also Romania this time.

A total of 6 respondents wrote in one form or another that their country of residence at the time of completing the questionnaire is currently Romania. Among the current countries of residence of the respondents, Denmark is in large numbers with a percentage of 15%, Sweden with 13.3%, Germany with 11.5% and Italy with 11.5%. (Objective 1)

Graphical presentation of the respondents in relation to the level of appreciation towards Romania.

4. From a scale of 1 to 5, how much did you/do you enjoy Romania?

113 răspunsuri

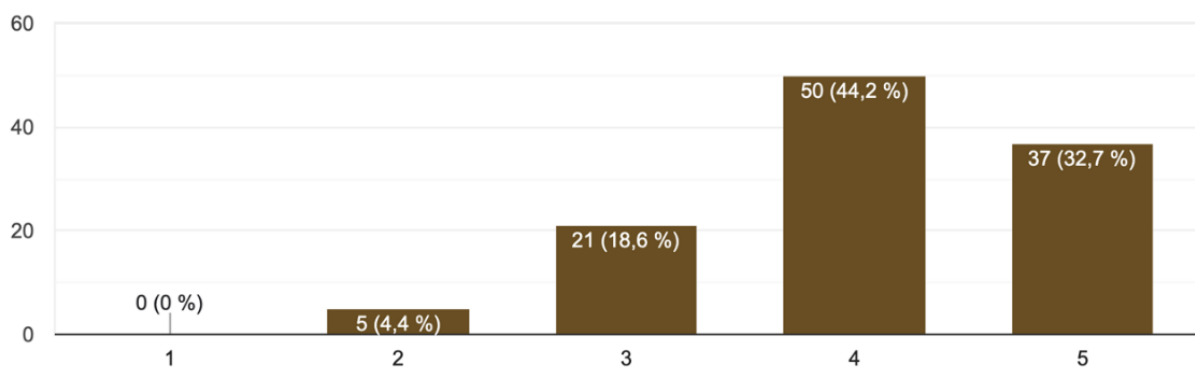


Figure 2.3.4. Graphical distribution of the respondents in relation to the level of appreciation towards Romania

In the graph above, we can see that the vast majority of respondents voted with a high score for their experience and appreciation of Romania.

Of the respondents, 44.2% voted with the indicator 4, and 32.7% voted with the indicator 5. Only a very small number voted with an indicator of 2, representing only 4.4% of the sample, while 18.6% leaned towards the indicator number 3. The total number of respondents with a pleasant and positive experience is 87, totaling a percentage of over 70% of the questionnaire respondents. (Objective 2)

Graphical presentation of respondents in relation to the level of study costs in Romania.

7. From a scale of 1 to 5, how expensive do you think it is to study in Romania?

113 răspunsuri

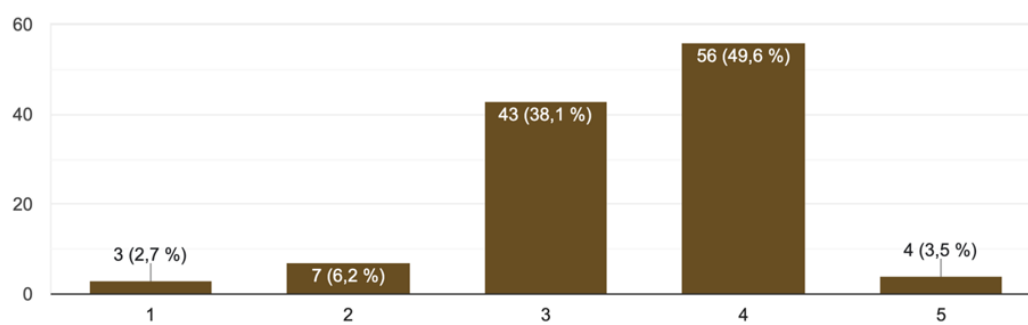


Figure 2.3.5. Graphical distribution of respondents in relation to the level of study costs in Romania

A considerable percentage of respondents, 49.6%, find Romania to have quite high study costs, while 38.1% of them are neutral in relation to costs. More precisely, they do not assess the cost of study as high or low.

A very small number of respondents, a total of 10, assess the cost as low or very low, and a total of 4 respondents as very high.

This discrepancy in the assessments of the respondents may be given by the financial capacity of each individual, but also in relation to their country of origin or as an assessment of the study offer. (Objective 3)

Graphical presentation of the respondents in relation to their assessment of the relationship they had with their professors.

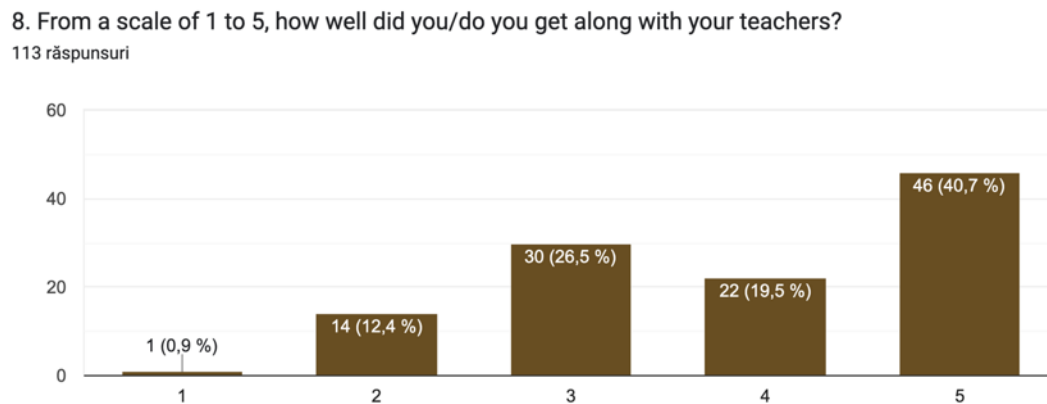


Figure 2.3.6. Graphical distribution of the respondents in relation to their assessment of the relationship they had with their professors

More than 50% of the students rated their relationship with their professors with a positive grade of 4 or 5. 40.7% of them got along very well, and 19.5% of them got along well.

On the other hand, we can see that 12.4% of the respondents did not have a good relationship with their professors, while only one respondent did not have a good relationship with their professors at all.

A percentage of 26.5% classified the relationship they had with their professors as normal, without tending towards a particularly good or less good relationship. (Objective 3)

Graphical presentation of the respondents in relation to their appreciation of the curriculum taught at the chosen university program.

9. From a scale of 1 to 5, how informative did you/do you find the curricula at your university program?

113 răspunsuri

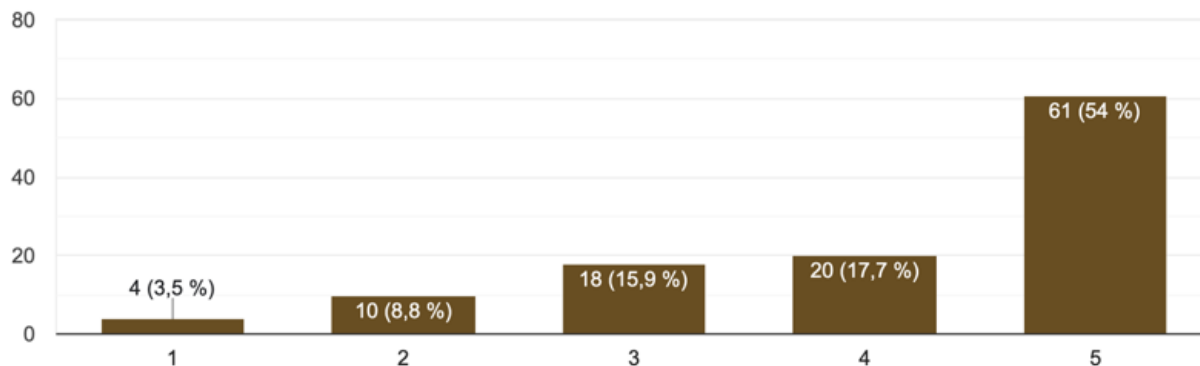


Figure 2.3.7. Graphical distribution of the respondents in relation to their appreciation of the curriculum taught at the chosen university program

A very important analysis, and a timely response that attests to the educational quality present on the Romanian market. We can see that over 60% of students rated the quality of their studies as good or very good. 54% of respondents gave a score of 5, while 17.7% gave a score of 4.

On the other hand, a small number of respondents gave scores of 1 and 2 to studies in Romania, totaling 14 respondents. (Objective 3)

Graphical presentation of the motivating factors that contributed to choosing Romania as an optimal choice to follow a study program.

11. What motivated you to come to study in Romania?

113 răspunsuri

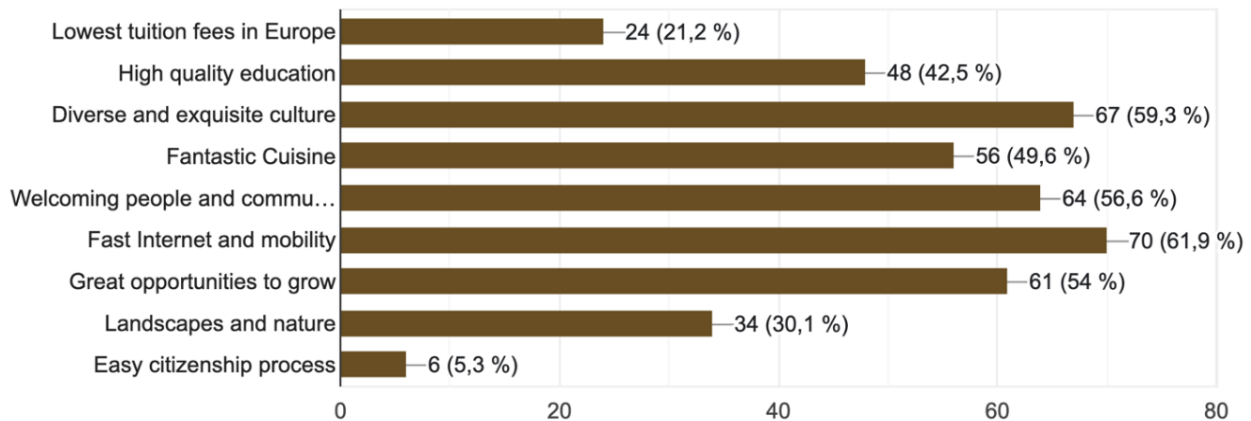


Figure 2.3.8. Graphical distribution of the motivating factors that contributed to choosing Romania as an optimal choice to follow a study program

The question allowed multiple answers from respondents, precisely in order to be able to appreciate and classify their importance in the decision-making process.

We can see that the top 3 reasons that respondents took into account are: High-speed Internet, selected by 61.9% of respondents; Diverse and unique culture, selected by 59.3% of respondents, but also the population and communities in Romania being very open, selected by 56.6% of respondents.

At the opposite end, factors such as the nature and views of Romania, the costs of study, and the process of obtaining citizenship contributed the least.

The motivating factors related to growth opportunities are not to be neglected either, with 54% of respondents appreciating this aspect, nor the exceptional Romanian gastronomy, selected by 49.6% of respondents. (Objective 4)

Graphical presentation of marketing strategies used by universities and perceived by respondents to attract international students.

18. What marketing strategies did you notice the University has used to attract you, as an international student?

113 răspunsuri

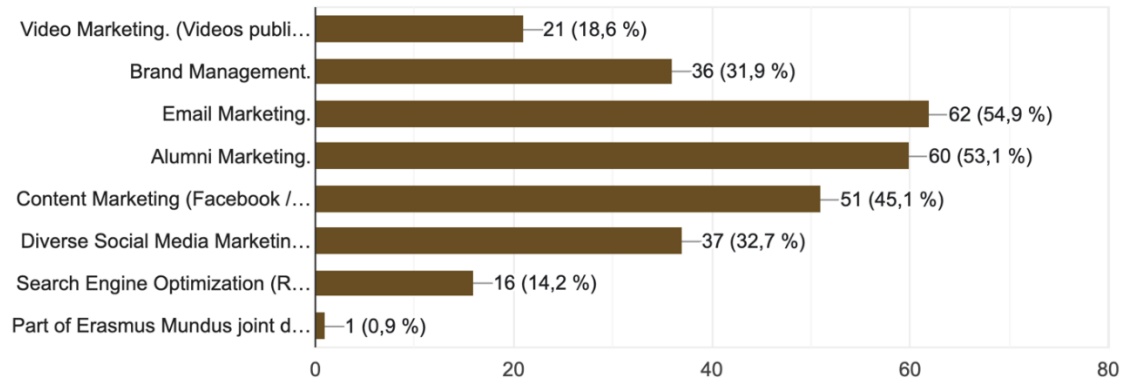


Figure 2.3.9. Graphical distribution of marketing strategies used by universities and perceived by respondents to attract international students

The wide range of options that a university has at its disposal to continue to promote itself and attract international students is found in the graph above.

As such, the main objective was to identify the marketing elements that students observed being used by universities to promote their programs and attract students to enroll.

In first place is email marketing campaigns, selected by 54.9% of respondents, and in second place is Alumni marketing.

A consistent mix is the presence in the online environment, through the management and promotion of Social Media pages, but also of the marketing content distributed with the aim of promoting the university and programs. A number of 45.1% of respondents found marketing content to be present with the aim of attracting students, and 32.7% observed an active presence on Social Media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and others.

The importance of SEO in indexing university websites cannot be ignored, with 14.2% of respondents managing to identify Romanian universities using search engines. (Objective 5)

Graphical presentation of respondents in relation to the main source through which they learned about Romanian Universities.

6. How did you come across the university?
113 răspunsuri

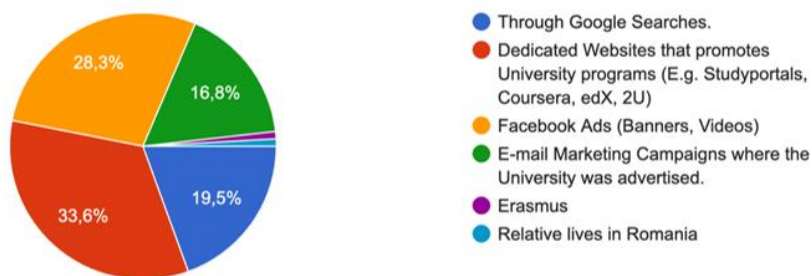


Figure 2.3.10. Graphical distribution of respondents in relation to the main source through which they learned about Romanian Universities

The online presence of Romanian universities has a strong weight and the same can be seen from the respondents' answers. In first place are educational portals such as Studyportals or Coursera, with a percentage of 33.6%. These are followed by promotions through the social media platform Facebook with a percentage of 28.3%. A total of over 50% of respondents therefore admit that due to the fact that universities have a footprint in the online environment, it helped them find the university in Romania at which they chose to study. (Objective 6)

Graphical presentation of respondents in relation to the experience they had in Romania.

13. How easy has it been for you to navigate daily life in Romania (e.g., transportation, shopping, language)?
113 răspunsuri

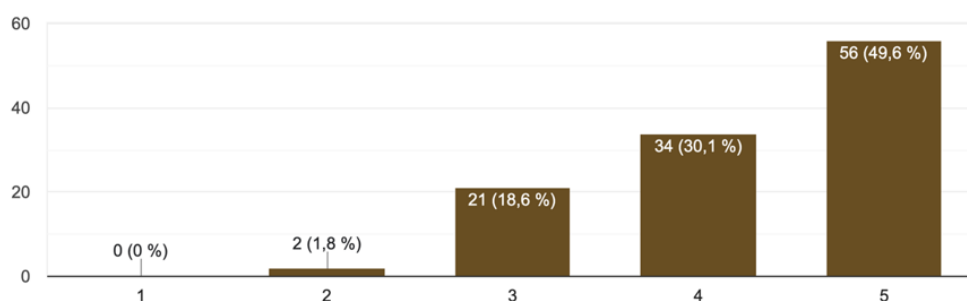


Figure 2.3.11. Graphical distribution of respondents in relation to the experience they had in Romania

A considerable number of respondents answered with the code 5, at a percentage of 49.6%, finding life in Romania to be very easy to manage.

30.1% of them answered with the code 4. Without a doubt, the vast majority of respondents found life in Romania accessible, mobile and not at all difficult to manage.

Graphical presentation of respondents in relation to the application and enrollment process at a University in Romania.

14. How was your experience with the application process for the university?
113 răspunsuri

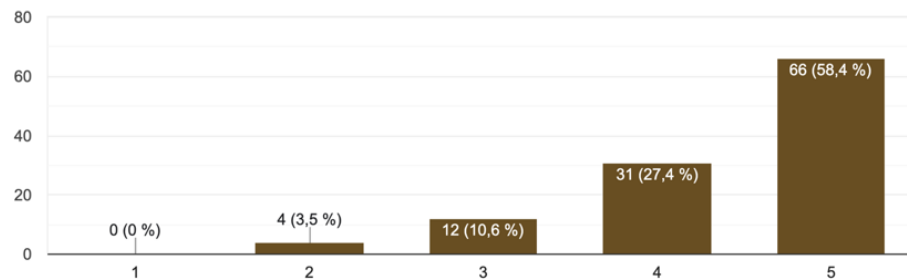


Figure 2.3.12. Graphical distribution of respondents in relation to the application and enrollment process at a University in Romania

58.4% of respondents found the process of enrolling in a Romanian university to be very easy, and 27.4% of them find it easy.

A very small number of 3.5% of respondents identify it as difficult.

We can say that more than 80% of the respondents of the questionnaire found the process of applying and enrolling in a Romanian university to be relatively easy, both in terms of requirements and necessary information.

Graphical presentation of the respondents in relation to the cultural differences between Romania and their country of origin.

15. From a scale from 1 to 5, what would you rate the cultural differences between Romania and your home country?
113 răspunsuri

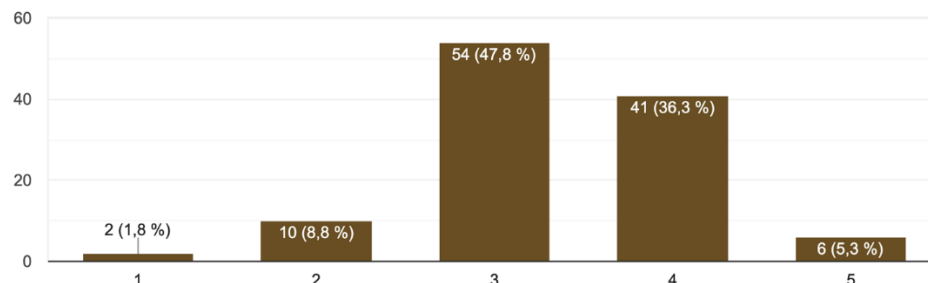


Figure 2.3.13. Graphical distribution of the respondents in relation to the cultural differences between Romania and their country of origin

It is observed from the graphic distribution that a percentage of 36.3% of respondents find cultural differences between Romania and their country of origin, while 47.8% are in the middle.

Only a small percentage of them, 8.8%, do not find major cultural differences, and 5.3% find a lot of cultural differences.

Important aspects that also denote Romania's capacity for inclusion of different ethnicities, and the presence of different cultural elements that help international students feel at home.

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