

The Importance of Marketing Research in Shaping the Entrepreneurial Culture

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Abstract

In the Romanian economics higher education, considering the way the degree programmes offered are structured and carried out, the aim is for the students to acquire the appropriate professional and transversal competences, thus enabling their employment on the labour market or the development of their own business. Marketing and entrepreneurial culture can contribute to increasing the students' motivation to be constantly creative, bold, able to launch and manage successful businesses.

The objective of this paper is to present the collaboration between a professor and a student in terms of conducting marketing research in the context of an evolving entrepreneurial culture. The results of the research show that the idea of setting up a "low-cost" travel agency, in the context of an increasing demand for minimalist travel, represents an opportunity that can be turned into a successful business.

Key words: marketing research, tourist behaviour, minimalist travel

J.E.L. classification: M 21, M 31, Z 31

1. Introduction

The Marketing Research discipline is present in the curriculum of several bachelor's and master's degrees in economic higher education. The experience accumulated in over 32 years of teaching activity within the Faculty of Economic Sciences - "Ovidius" University of Constanta has shown that students are tackling with growing interest the participation in the activities carried out within the courses and seminars related to this discipline, precisely because they are becoming aware of its role in their training as entrepreneurs. Students' participation in projects aimed at supporting entrepreneurship, as well as their openness to accessing international study mobility and internships contribute to the development of their entrepreneurial culture, alongside the activities/disciplines in the curriculum.

In this paper we have presented a case study in which marketing research was used to test whether an idea can represent a market opportunity and can be harnessed into a successful business.

2. Theoretical background

In the specialized literature, in almost all the publications, the specialists (theoreticians and practitioners) focus on the marketing mix and marketing research. For the companies, regardless of their size and object of activity, marketing research is a complex tool, useful in a multitude of situations encountered in their activity: from creating and testing a product/service, identifying the target market segment, assessing the capacity and segmentation of the market, to researching needs/wants, buying and consumption behaviour, as well as making forecasts (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015, pp.101-127, Cătoi and Teodorescu, 2004, pp.13-17; Boier, 2003).

Marketing research is used in any situation in a company's activity, with the aim of providing scientific support for decision-making (Cătoi, 2002, pp.31-35).

Entrepreneurship is tackled as a way of working and living. In any country, entrepreneurship (represented by the small businesses) is considered the engine of the national economy, due to its ability to create new jobs, its contribution to generating income (reflected in the gross domestic product, national income) and its contribution to raising living standards. The concept of entrepreneur is thought to have originated in 17th century France and it referred to a person who was starting a new business or a new way of doing business (Mariotti and Glackin, 2012, pp.4-6). An entrepreneur is the person able to identify an opportunity and start a business. Moreover, it is believed that "a skilled entrepreneur can shape and create an opportunity where others see little or nothing at all or see either too early or too late" (Mariotti and Glackin, 2012, p.4). Management specialist Peter Drucker states that a business, in order to be considered entrepreneurial, must "exploit the changes in the world" (Mariotti and Glackin, 2012, p.13). From the aspects presented we can notice that there is a close interdependence between marketing/marketing research and entrepreneurship.

3. Research methodology

The case study is represented by direct research, namely a selective survey, conducted from April 1 to April 9, 2022 on a sample of 64 people (Jupp, 2010, pp. 117-119; Plăiaș, 2008, pp. 130-148). The primary data collection was carried out with the help of a questionnaire with 22 questions, disseminated through Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp social networks. Classical statistical-mathematical methods were used to process the information, and the graphical representations were automatically generated by the "Google Forms" survey management software.

4. Findings

For the descriptive part of the research, we have chosen to present the types of questions in the structure of the questionnaire, the methods used in processing the answers and the interpretation of the obtained results.

➤ At the beginning of the questionnaire, identification questions were formulated.

The following data resulted after processing the answers:

Table no. 1 Distribution of respondents by age group:

18-25 years	26-29 years	30-40 years	40+ years
78.1%	4.7%	3.1%	14.1%

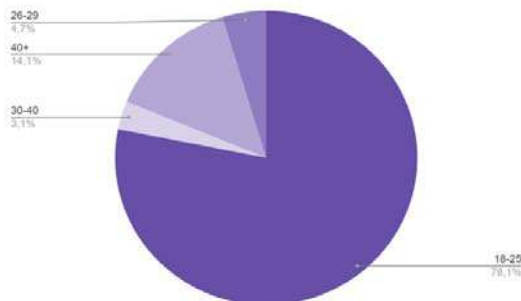
Source: Authors' own research

Table no. 2 Distribution of respondents by activity:

Student	Employee	Freelancer/ self-employed	Others
48.4%	46.8%	1.5%	3.1%

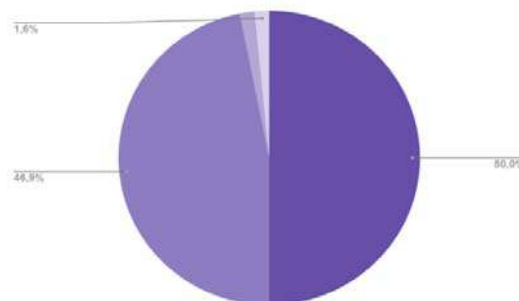
Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.1 Graphical representation of the structure of the sample by age group



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.2 Graphical distribution of the structure of the sample by activity



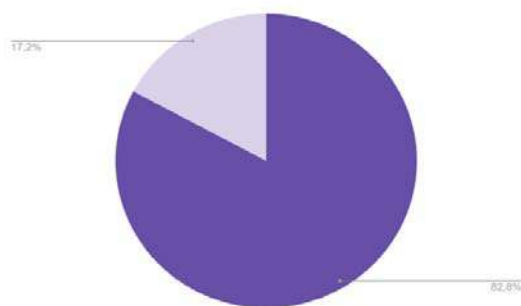
Source: Authors' own research

Table no. 3 Distribution of respondents by primary residence

Urban environment	Rural environment
82.8%	17.2%

Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.3 Graphical representation of the sample's structure by primary residence



Source: Authors' own research

One can notice that, in the structure of the sample, people in the 18-25 age group predominate (with a presence of **78.1%**), they are students (**48.4%**) or employees (**46.8%**) and they live in urban areas (**82.8%**).

➤ The next set of questions was aimed at collecting information on travel habits.

Table no. 4 Distribution of respondents by frequency of trips abroad

Monthly	Every 3 months	Every 6 months	Annually
1.6%	18.8%	26.6%	53.1%

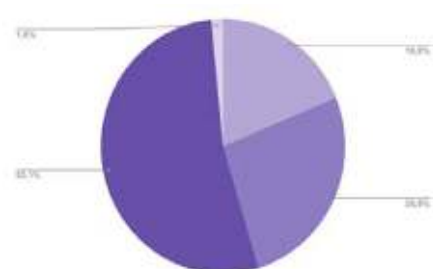
Source: Authors' own research

Table no. 5 Distribution of respondents by purpose of travel abroad

On holiday	Visiting relatives and friends	Leisure travel	Business travel and for other professional reasons
45.3%	6.3%	39.1%	9.4%

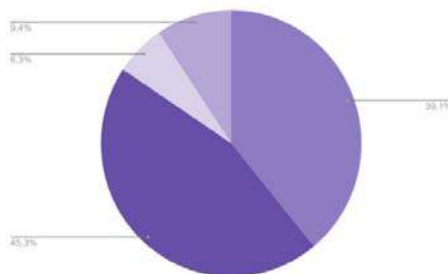
Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.4 Graphical representation of the structure of the sample by frequency of trips



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.5 Graphical representation of the structure of the sample by purpose of travel



Source: Authors' own research

Table no.6 Distribution of respondents according to how they make/carry out trips abroad

Travelling alone	With a partner	With the family	With friends
23.8%	19%	23.8%	33.3%

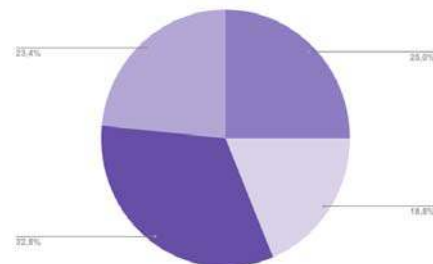
Source: Authors' own research

Table no.7 Distribution of respondents by duration of the trips abroad

3 days, 2 nights ("City Break")	<1 week	>1 week
28.5%	61.9%	9.5%

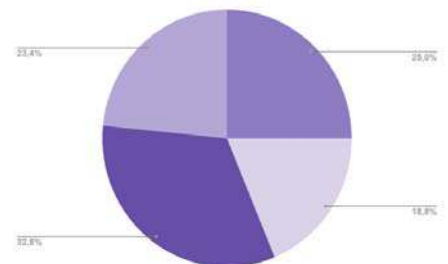
Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.6 Graphical representation of the sample by how they make/carry out trips abroad



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.7 Graphical representation of the sample's structure by duration of the trip



Source: Authors' own research

After centralizing and processing the answers, we notice that the sample is dominated (53.1%) by people who travel abroad annually, 26.6% take two trips per year, 18.8% travel once every 3 months and only 1.6% mentioned that they take monthly trips abroad.

In terms of motivations, holiday (45.3%) and leisure travel (39.1%) predominate, while business travel and for other professional reasons (9.4%) and visiting relatives/friends (6.3%) are present in smaller proportions.

Travelling is mainly done with friends (33.3%). To the same extent (23.8%), some people in the sample prefer to travel alone, whereas others travel with their family. There are also people (19%) who prefer to travel with their partner.

In terms of duration, trips of up to one week are preferred (61.9%), followed by "City Breaks" (28.5%), while trips longer than a week make up 9.5%.

➤ Another set of questions was aimed at gathering information on how the respondents perceive the planning of a trip abroad and the difficulties encountered on this occasion.

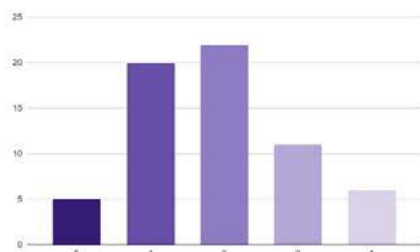
Table no. 8 Distribution of the respondents' assessment of the degree of difficulty in terms of planning a trip abroad

Not at all difficult	Slightly difficult	Neither	Difficult	Very difficult
5	20	22	11	6

Source: Authors' own research

After processing the answers, using the "Semantic Differential" method (with five levels), the value **3.11** resulted, which corresponds to a **modest** level of difficulty.

Figure no.8 Graphical representation of the assessment of the degree of difficulty in terms of planning a trip



Source: Authors' own research

Table no.9 Distribution of the respondents' assessments according to the level of stress generated by planning a trip abroad

Very low	Low	Neither	High	Very high
12	12	20	12	8

Source: Authors' own research

The responses were processed using the "Semantic Differential" method and the resulting value was **3.12**, indicating a **modest** level of stress.

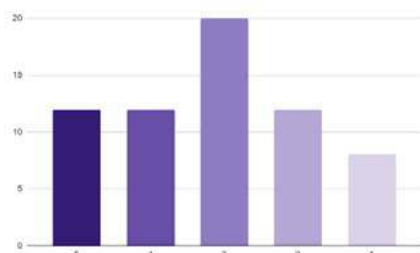
Table no. 10: Distribution of respondents' assessments of the costs involved in planning a trip abroad (purchase of plane tickets, booking accommodation and transport to and from the airport).

Less/Not expensive	Somewhat expensive	Neither	Expensive	Very expensive
1	8	18	24	13

Source: Authors' own research

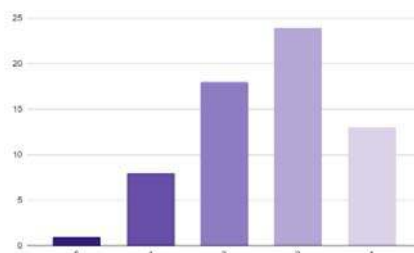
After processing the responses, using the "Semantic Differential" method, a value of **2.53** resulted, meaning that the costs of planning a trip are considered **expensive**.

Figure no.9 Graphical representation of the assessments of the level of stress generated by planning a trip abroad



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.10 Graphical representation of the assessments of the costs of a trip



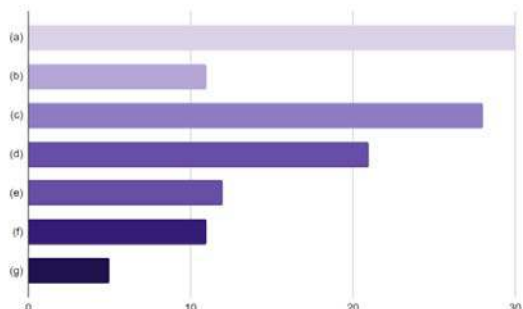
Source: Authors' own research

Table no.11 Distribution of the share of the difficulties faced by the respondents in relation to travelling abroad

Avoiding tourist traps (taxis' overcharge, high food prices for tourists, etc.)	46.9%
Finding affordable restaurants/cafes	17.2%
Deciding the size of the budget	43.8%
Planning the itinerary	32.9%
Buying plane tickets	18.8%
Language barrier	17.2%
Using smartphone maps	7.8%

Source: Authors' own research

Figure no. 11 Graphical representation of the share of the difficulties related to travelling abroad



Source: Authors' own research

The respondents consider that there is a **modest** level of difficulty related to planning a trip (the calculated value being **3.11**) and the stress (**3.12**) generated by planning a trip abroad. Buying plane tickets, booking accommodation and transport to and from the airport are considered **costly (2.53)**.

The issues that respondents feel they face the most when travelling abroad are the high prices/fares for certain tourist services (**46.9%**); deciding the size of the budget (**43.8%**); planning the itinerary (**32.9%**); buying plane tickets (**18.8%**); finding affordable restaurants/cafes, but also the language barrier (**17.2%**), and to a lesser extent (**7.8%**) the use of smartphone maps.

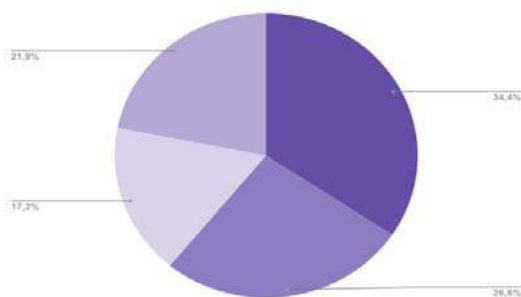
➤ The next set of questions in the questionnaire was aimed at providing information regarding the structure of the expenses in the budget allocated for a trip and aspects related to respondents' buying behaviour.

Table no. 12 The share in terms of the size of different types of expenses in the structure of the budget allocated for trips abroad

Buying plane tickets	21.9%
Accommodation	34.4%
Meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner)	17.2%
Souvenirs	0%
Local trips and tourist attractions	26.6%

Source: Authors' own research

Figure no. 12 Graphical representation of the size of the different types of expenses in the structure of the budget allocated for trips abroad



Source: Authors' own research

Table no.13 Distribution of the responses regarding the time of the purchase of the plane tickets.

1 month before the trip	3 months	6 months
45.3%	40.6%	14.1%

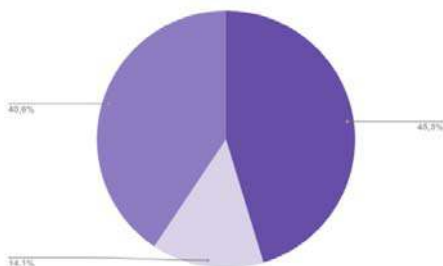
Source: Authors' own research

Table no. 14 Distribution of respondents in terms of the habit of taking out an insurance policy for travelling abroad

YES	28.1%
NO	71.9%

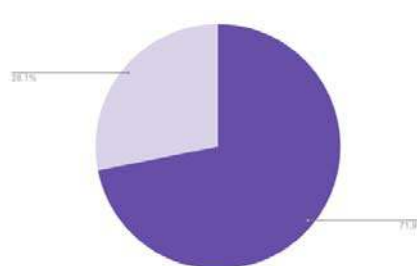
Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.13 Graphical representation of the answers regarding the time of the purchase of the plane tickets.



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.14 Graphical representation of the sample in terms of the habit of taking out an insurance policy



Source: Authors' own research

One can see that the respondents allocate the largest share of their budget for travelling abroad to accommodation expenses (34.4%), then for local trips and tourist attractions expenses (26.6%), followed by expenses for plane tickets (21.9%) and expenses for meals make up a share of 17.2%.

Most of the respondents (45.3%) purchase airline tickets one month before the trip, 40.6%- 3 months before and only 14.1%- 6 months before.

Moreover, 71.9% of the respondents do not have the habit of taking out an insurance policy for travelling abroad.

➤ The last set of questions in the questionnaire was aimed at gathering information on the respondents' perceptions regarding the involvement of a travel agency in organizing a minimalist trip abroad.

Table no.15 Distribution of respondents in terms of the habit of using the services of a travel agency when planning a trip abroad

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	For every trip
36	17	7	2	2

Source: Authors' own research

The responses were processed using the "Semantic Differential" method and the resulting value was **1.7**, which shows that the services of a travel agency are **rarely** used.

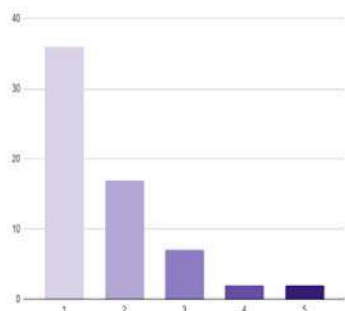
Table no. 16: Distribution of the respondents' assessments regarding the level of the costs of using the services of a travel agency, in relation to the budget allocated for a trip

Not at all expensive	Less expensive	Neither	Expensive	Very expensive
2	6	18	27	10

Source: Authors' own research

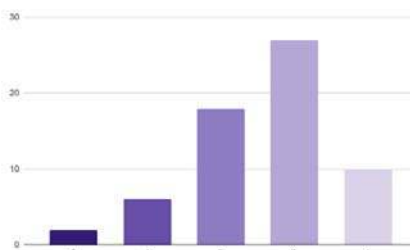
After processing the responses, using the "Semantic Differential" method, a value of **2.37** was obtained, which shows that the services of a travel agency are perceived as **expensive**.

Figure no.15 Graphical representation of the structure of the sample according to the habit of using the services of a travel agency



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.16 Graphical representation of the assessments of the respondents regarding the level of the costs of using the services of a travel agency



Source: Authors' own research

Table no.17 Distribution of the respondents' assessments regarding the level of efficiency of the services of a travel agency

Ineffective	Somewhat effective	Neither	Effective	Very effective
7	8	30	14	3

Source: Authors' own research

The responses were processed using the "Semantic Differential" method and the resulting value was **2.96**, which shows that the level of efficiency of a travel agency's services is rated as "**Neither**", i.e., less significant.

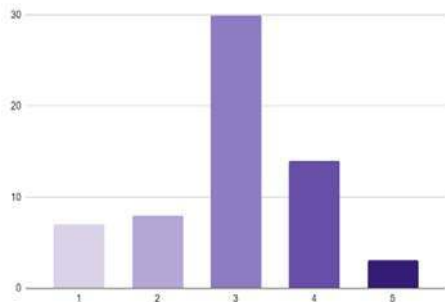
Table no. 18 Distribution of the respondents by intention to travel abroad more often

Yes	Yes, but can't afford it	No
50%	48.4%	1.6%

Source: Authors' own research

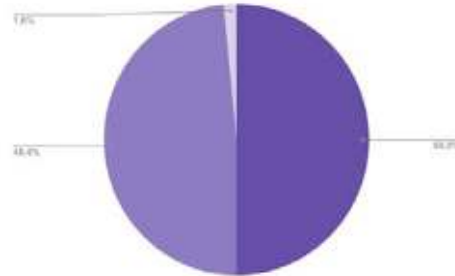
After processing the answers, one can notice that **50%** of the respondents intend to travel abroad more often, but also that a similar proportion (**48.4%**) is represented by respondents who intend to travel more often but cannot afford to do so. Only **1.6%** of the respondents do not want to travel more often.

Figure no. 17 Graphical representation of the respondents' assessments regarding the efficiency of the services of a travel agency



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no.18 Graphical representation of the respondents' intention to travel abroad more often



Source: Authors' own research

Table no.19 Distribution of respondents according to their opinion on the concept of minimalist travel (travelling using only the items that fit inside a backpack)

Very good, I use the method	46.9%
I've never heard of it before	6.3%
I am willing to try the method, if arguments are presented to me	39.1%
Do not use it, it is not effective	7.8%

Source: Authors' own research

One can see that currently **46.9%** of the respondents have a good opinion regarding the concept of minimalist travel and use this form of travel. At the same time, a significant share (**39.1%**) of respondents said they would be willing to try this form of travel if presented with the arguments. There are other categories of respondents who do not use minimalist travel: some because they do not consider it efficient (**7.8%**) and others because they have not yet heard about it (**6.3%**).

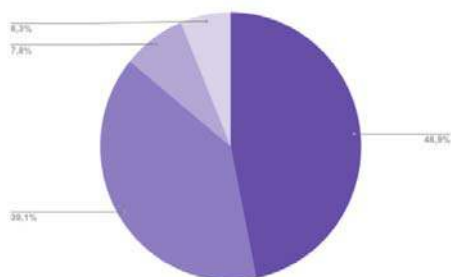
Table no.20 Distribution of respondents according to their intention to stay in a hostel in order to save money while travelling

Yes	35.9%
No	14.1%
Maybe, it depends on the state of the hostel (cleanliness, location, etc.)	50%

Source: Authors' own research

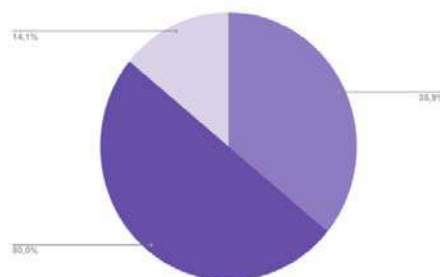
Currently, **35.9%** of the respondents are willing to stay in a hostel, and **50%** would stay if the hostel provided them with a level of comfort according to their wishes. There is also a **14.1%** share of respondents who are not interested in saving money during their trip and do not agree to stay in a hostel.

Figure no. 19 Graphical representation of the opinion of the respondents about the concept of minimalist travel



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no. 20 Graphical representation of the respondents according to their intention to stay in a hostel



Source: Authors' own research

Table no. 21 Distribution of the respondents according to their willingness to try the services offered by a new "low-cost" travel agency for taking a minimalist trip

Yes	60.9%
No	9.4%
Maybe	29.7%

Source: Authors' own research

One can note the high share (**60.9%**) of respondents who said they were interested in using the new "low-cost" travel agency, but also the temptation from a significant share of respondents (**29.7%**) to try working together with such an agency. Only **9.4%** of the respondents rejected the idea of trying the services offered by a "low-cost" type of agency.

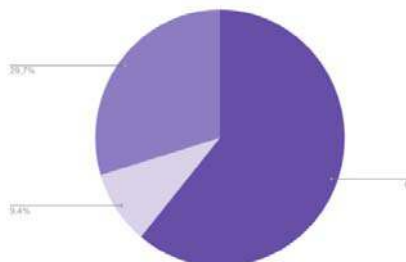
Table no. 22 Distribution of respondents according to their willingness to pay a fee to a "low-cost" travel agency for planning a minimalist trip (suggestions on restaurants/cafes, information on public transport, tourist attractions and ticket prices, etc.).

Yes	48.4%
No	10.9%
Maybe	40.6%

Source: Authors' own research

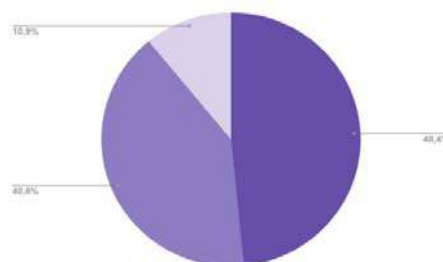
The answers to this question confirm the information obtained from the previous question. One can notice that approximately **89%** of them are willing to do so, some definitely (**48.4%**) and others possibly, in the future (**40.6%**). There is also a share of **10.9%** of respondents who refuse to pay such a fee.

Figure no. 21 Graphical representation of respondents according to their willingness to try the services of a "low-cost" travel agency



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no. 22 Graphical representation of respondents according to their willingness to pay a fee to a "low-cost" agency for planning a minimalist trip



Source: Authors' own research

5. Conclusions

The results of this research show that travel agency services are currently perceived as being costly and not very efficient, which is why the respondents rarely use such services when planning their trips.

The tourism market, as a whole, but also in terms of its two dimensions, actual and potential, is on a rising trend.

The demand for minimalist travel, expressed by a niche market, made up predominantly of young people, eager to go abroad on holiday more often, is also growing.

One can notice a growing interest in using the services of a "low-cost" travel agency, as well as an increasing willingness to pay a fee to a "low-cost" travel agency for planning/preparing and carrying out a minimalist trip, so that the potential/future tourist can reduce wasted time and stress, but also gain greater satisfaction through more efficient advice and organization of the holiday, whether they choose to spend it with friends, family or alone, over a period of 3 or more days.

These aspects, resulting from marketing research, represent an opportunity for developing a successful business within a "low-cost" travel agency.

6. References

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