

## TOURISTS SATISFACTION FOR THE TURDA SALT MINE

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*Abstract: This study examines tourist satisfaction at the Turda Salt Mine, a prominent attraction in Romania known for its unique underground amusement park and historical significance. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research analyzes visitor feedback to assess satisfaction levels across various aspects, including accessibility, cleanliness, guided tours, and overall experience. Findings indicate high satisfaction with the mine's distinctive features and recreational offerings, such as the underground Ferris wheel and boating on the subterranean lake.*

**Key words:** *Turda Salt Mine, tourist satisfaction, visitor experience*

### INTRODUCTION

The Turda Salt Mine, located in Transylvania, Romania, exemplifies a successful transformation of an industrial site into a major tourist attraction. [3,13] Originally established in the 17th century for salt extraction, the mine ceased commercial operations in the early 20th century. [11] Recognizing its historical and cultural value, local authorities initiated a comprehensive restoration project, reopening the mine in 1992 as a tourist destination. [3] Further renovations in 2008 expanded its offerings, integrating modern recreational facilities with the mine's historical ambiance. [2,6,10] Today, the Turda Salt Mine is renowned for its unique underground amusement park, featuring attractions such as an underground Ferris wheel, mini-golf courses, bowling alleys, and boating on a subterranean lake. [4,5] These features, set against the backdrop of the mine's cavernous chambers and salt formations, create a distinctive visitor experience that blends history, leisure, and wellness-the saline air is also touted for its therapeutic properties. Despite its growing popularity, there is a relative scarcity of empirical research focusing on visitor satisfaction at the Turda Salt Mine. Understanding tourists' perceptions is crucial for several reasons. It aids in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the attraction, informs strategic planning and resource allocation, and enhances marketing efforts by highlighting aspects that resonate most with visitors. [8,9]

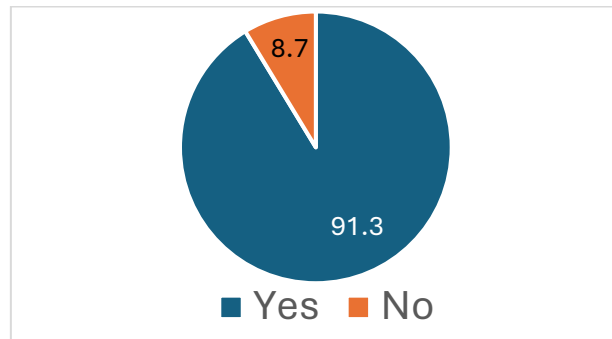
Understanding tourists' perceptions is vital for several reasons. It provides valuable insights into what attracts visitors to the site, as well as areas that may require improvement. Gathering feedback can help local authorities and operators optimize the visitor experience, ensuring that the mine continues to attract tourists and meet their evolving expectations. [14,15] Additionally, visitor satisfaction data can support marketing efforts by highlighting the aspects of the mine that resonate most with guests, ultimately contributing to its long-term success as a premier tourist destination. [1,7,12] The growing interest in the mine's history, architecture, and recreational offerings underscores its potential to not only serve as an educational resource but also as a hub for entertainment and wellness. By focusing on visitor satisfaction, the Turda Salt Mine can continue to evolve, offering a dynamic experience that appeals to a broad range of tourists from around the world.

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

This study aims to fill the research gap regarding this tourist destination by examining tourist satisfaction levels at the Turda Salt Mine across various dimensions, including accessibility, cleanliness, the quality of guided tours, and overall experience. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, the study analyzes feedback from visitors to assess their satisfaction and provide actionable insights for improving service quality. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on tourist satisfaction in heritage and underground attractions, offering practical recommendations for the Turda Salt Mine and similar destinations worldwide.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

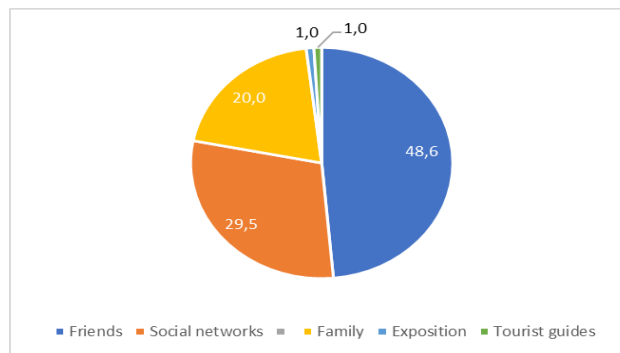
Figure 1 indicates that the overwhelming majority of respondents, 91.3%, answered "Yes," suggesting that they have visited Turda Salt Mine at least once before. In contrast, a small percentage, 8.7%, answered "No," indicating they have never visited the site.



**Figure 1. Previous Visits to Turda Salt Mine**

*Source: own calculations*

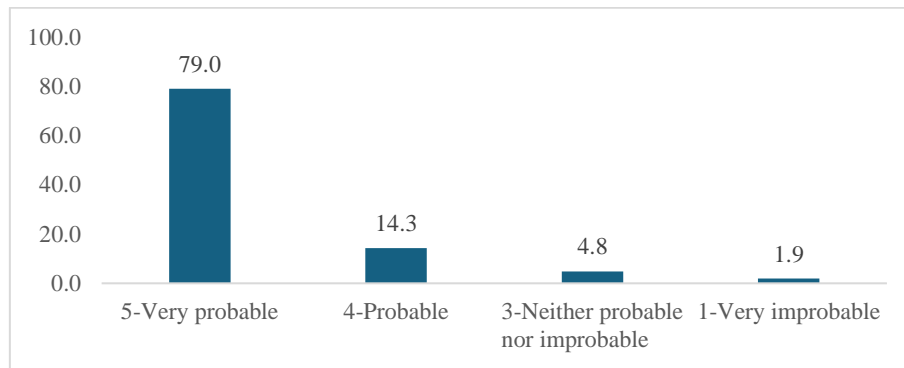
This suggests that Turda Salt Mine is a popular destination among the surveyed group, with most participants already having prior experience visiting the location.



**Figure 2. Sources of information**

*Source: own calculations*

Figure 2 shows that most people rely on friends (48.6%) and social networks (29.5%) for tourism information regarding the Turda Salt Mine, highlighting the importance of personal recommendations and digital platforms. Family (20%) also plays a notable role, while tourist guidebooks and exhibits have minimal influence.



**Figure 3. Likelihood to recommend**

Source: own calculations

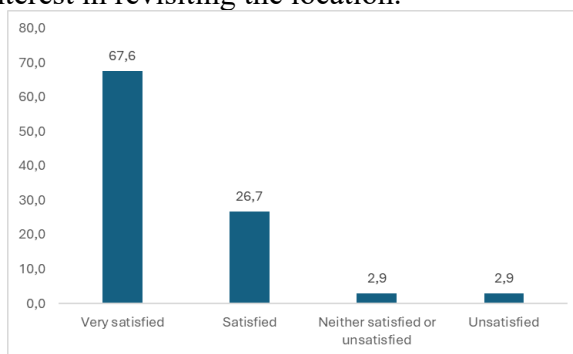
Figure 3 indicates overwhelmingly positive experiences associated with the touristic objective, with 93.3% of respondents either "very probable" or "probable" to recommend the Turda Salt Mine. Negative responses are negligible, demonstrating high satisfaction with the experience.



**Figure 4. Intention to return to Turda Salt Mine for a future visit**

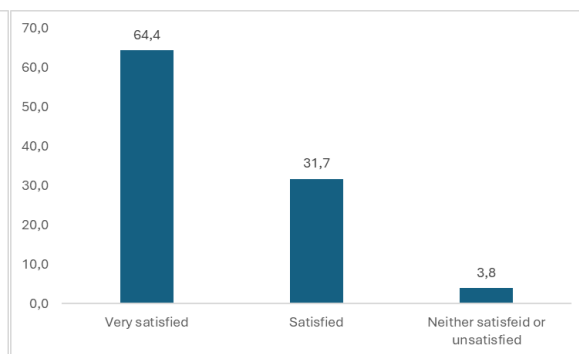
Source: own calculations

Figure 4 chart demonstrates respondents' intentions to return to Turda Salt Mine for a future visit. The data reveals that 100% of participants answered "Yes," indicating unanimous interest in revisiting the location.



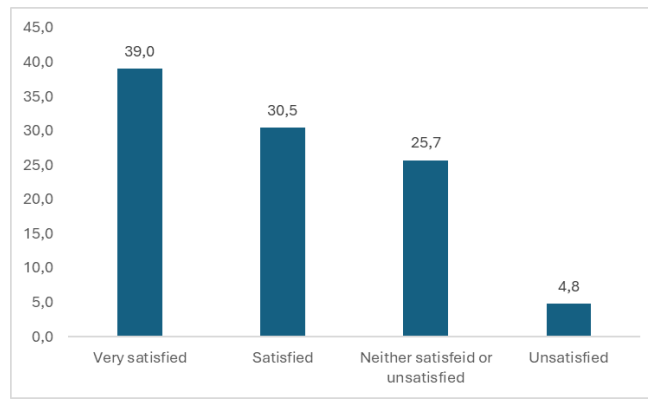
**Figure 5. Satisfaction for recreation**

Source: own calculations



**Figure 6. Satisfaction for cleanliness**

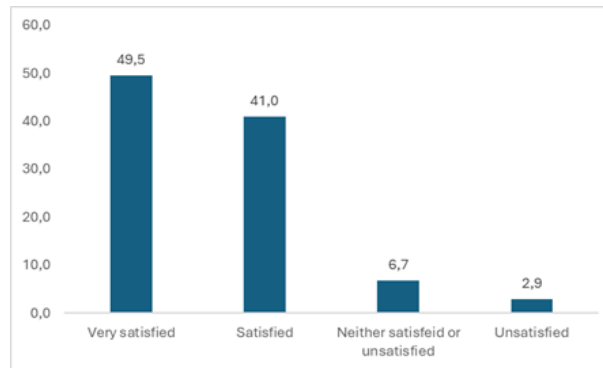
Figure 5 and 6 indicate high satisfaction with the Turda Salt Mine, with 94.3% satisfied with recreational activities and 96.2% satisfied with cleanliness. Most respondents were "very satisfied" (67.6% for activities and 63.8% for cleanliness). Neutral and dissatisfied responses were minimal, emphasizing overall positive visitor experiences and cleanliness as a key strength.



**Figure 7. Accessibility of the Salt Mine for People with reduced mobility**

Source: own calculations

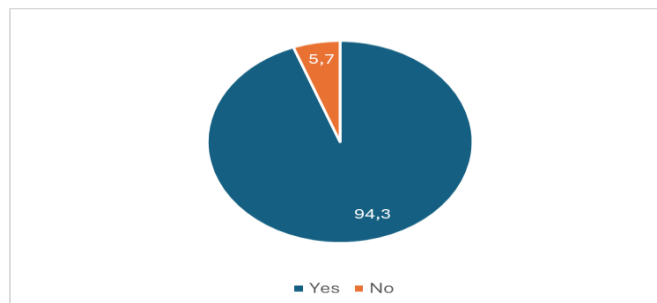
Figure 7 shows that most respondents rated the Turda Salt Mine as accessible for people with reduced mobility, with 39% giving it the very satisfied score and 30.5% rating it satisfied. Only 4.8% found it not accessible. Overall, accessibility is perceived as poor.



**Figure 8. Respondents response to the following statement "Did you use the guides or informational panels?"**

Source: own calculations

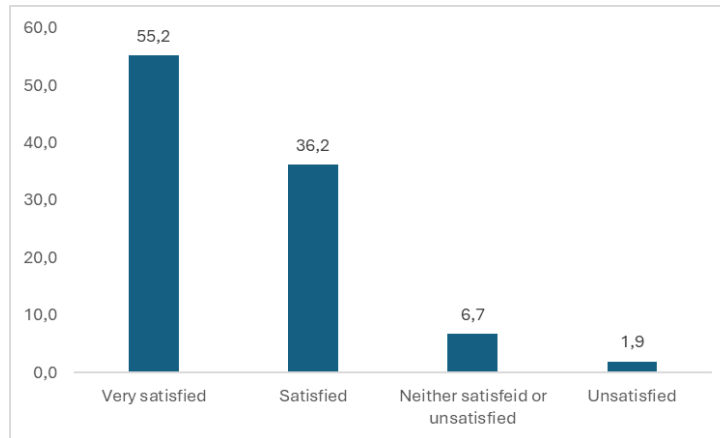
Figure 8 shows that most respondents were satisfied with the clarity of information provided by guides or panels. 49.5% rated their satisfaction as very satisfied and 41% indicating a high level of satisfaction. Only a small percentage (6.7% rated neither satisfied or unsatisfied and 2.9% rated unsatisfied) expressed moderate or low satisfaction. Overall, the feedback is very positive.



**Figure 9. Respondents response to the following statement "Do you think the information provided by the guide or the panels was sufficient"**

Source: own calculations

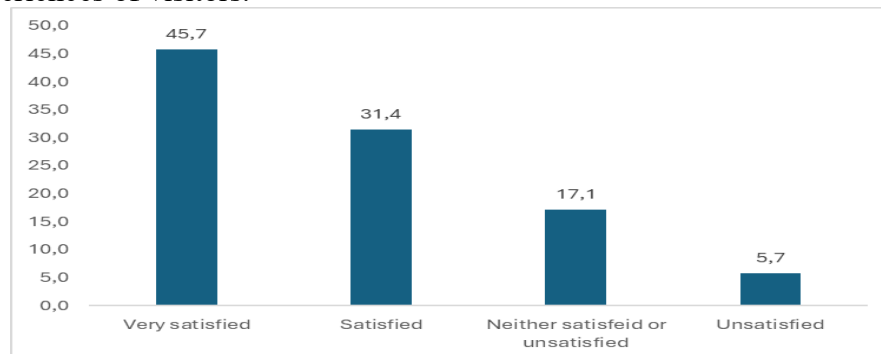
The pie chart shows that 94.3% of respondents found the information provided by guides or panels sufficient, while only 5.7% considered it insufficient. This indicates a high level of satisfaction with the information offered.



**Figure 10. Respondents response to the following statement "How accessible did you find Turda Salt Mine in general"**

*Source: own calculations*

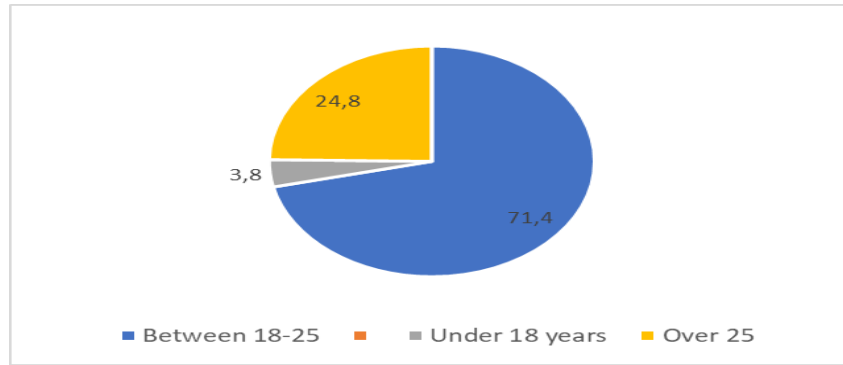
Figure 10 indicates a high level of accessibility at Turda Salt Mine, with 55.2% of respondents satisfied with the overall access to the site. The majority of respondents were satisfied, while neutral and dissatisfied responses were minimal, highlighting the generally positive experiences of visitors.



**Figure 11. Respondents response to the following statement "How do you evaluate the prices at Turda Salt Mine in relation to the services provided"**

*Source: own calculations*

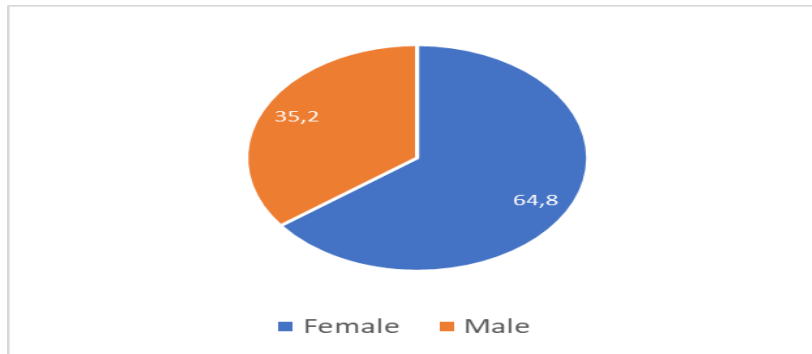
Figure 11 evaluates how respondents perceive the prices at Salina Turda in relation to the services offered. The majority, 45.7%, rated the prices with a score of very satisfied, indicating high satisfaction. Following this, 31.4% gave a score of satisfied, while 17.1% rated it as neither satisfied or unsatisfied. Only 5.7% gave a score of unsatisfied. These results suggest that most participants believe the prices are reasonable and align well with the services provided.



**Figure 12. Age groups of respondents**

*Source: own calculations*

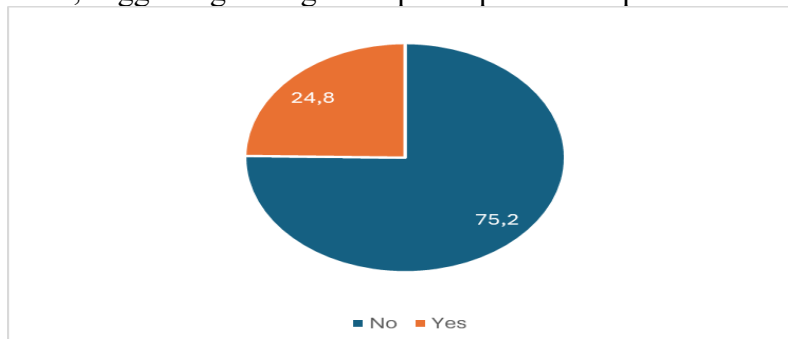
Figure 12 illustrates the distribution of age groups among respondents. The majority of participants, 72.4%, are between 18-25 years old. A smaller percentage, 24.8%, are over 25, while the least represented group, at 3.8%, consists of those under 18 years. This suggests that the survey primarily targeted young adults, with limited representation from teenagers and older adults.



**Figure 13. Gender of respondents**

*Source: own calculations*

Figure 13 represents the gender distribution of respondents. A significant majority, 64.8%, are female, while 35.2% are male. This indicates that the survey was predominantly completed by women, suggesting their greater participation compared to men.

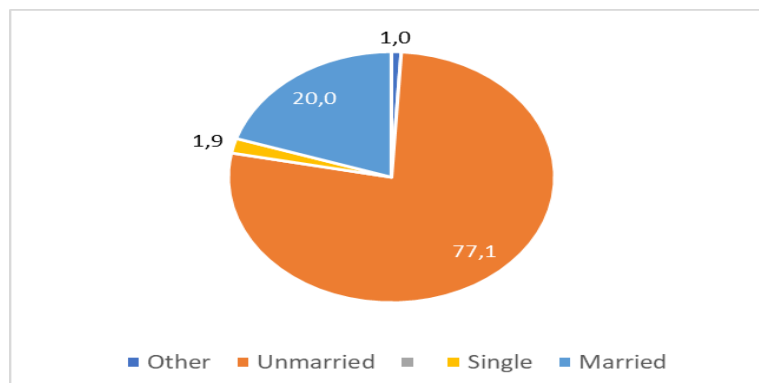


**Figure 14. Respondents with Children**

*Source: own calculations*

Figure 14 answers the question "Do you have children?" and presents the responses as a pie chart. The majority of respondents, 75.2%, answered "No," while a smaller proportion,

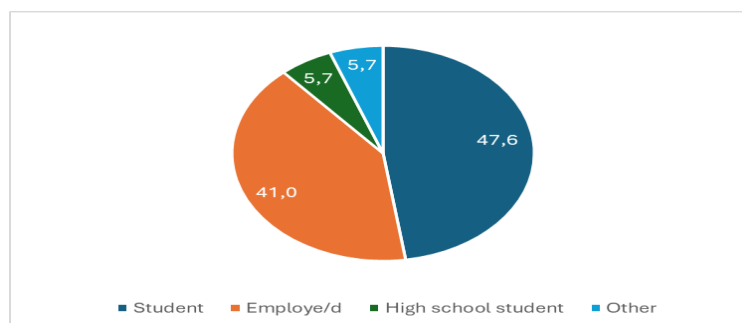
24.8%, answered "Yes." This indicates that the majority of the surveyed population does not have children. The data suggests a significant difference between the two groups.



**Figure 15. Civil status of the respondents**

*Source: own calculations*

Figure 15 illustrates the marital status of respondents. Married: This is the largest group, comprising 77.1% of the respondents. Unmarried: The second-largest category, making up 20.0% of the total. Other: A very small fraction, representing 1.9% of respondents. Single: This is the smallest category, with only 1.0% of the total. Figure shows that most respondents are married, while a small minority fall into the unmarried, single, or other categories. This highlights a strong prevalence of married individuals in the surveyed population.

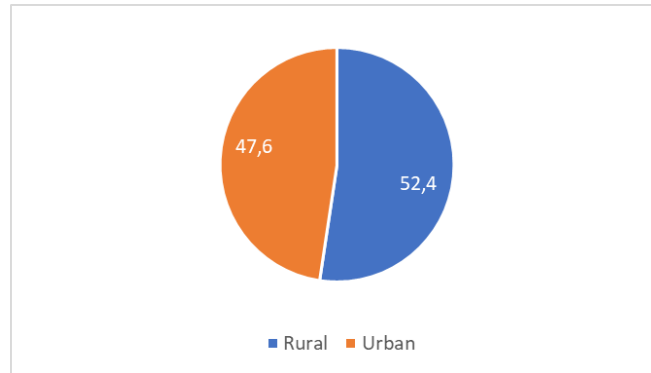


**Figure 16. The respondents occupation**

*Source: own calculations*

Figure 16 presented showcases the distribution of individuals' occupations. Other: This category accounts for 5.7% of respondents. High School Students: They represent another 5.7% of the participants, showing a minimal presence in the dataset. Employed: This is a significant category, comprising 41% of respondents. Students: The largest group, making up 47.6% of the total participants.

Overall, the graph indicates that the majority of the respondents are either students or employed individuals, while high school students and others constitute a small fraction. This suggests a demographic leaning towards younger and working-age populations.



**Figure 17. Respondent location**

*Source: own calculations*

Figure 17 answers the question "Where do you live?" and shows the distribution between rural and urban areas. According to the data, 52.4% of respondents live in rural areas, while 47.6% reside in urban areas. The difference is relatively small, suggesting a nearly equal split between rural and urban populations in the surveyed group.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Turda Salt Mine provides an outstanding visitor experience, consistently exceeding expectations. Visitors report high levels of satisfaction, particularly with the variety of recreational activities available and the cleanliness of the site. With minimal instances of dissatisfaction, the mine has proven to be a top destination, with a strong likelihood of visitors recommending it to others. This suggests that the attraction not only meets but often surpasses the expectations of those who visit, making it a highly favorable and enjoyable place for both leisure and exploration.

With minimal instances of dissatisfaction, the Turda Salt Mine has proven to be a reliable and highly regarded destination. The overwhelming likelihood that visitors would recommend the site to others underscores its widespread popularity and positive reputation. This feedback not only reinforces the mine's status as a must-visit attraction but also serves as a testament to its ability to meet and exceed the expectations of its diverse audience consistently. As the mine continues to draw visitors from around the world, it remains an exemplary model of how historical sites can be revitalized to offer both educational value and modern entertainment. Ultimately, the Turda Salt Mine stands as a shining example of how cultural heritage, innovation, and customer satisfaction can come together to create a lasting and impactful tourism experience.

These findings can aid Salina Turda's managers, local authorities, tourism operators, and researchers in refining services, allocating resources more effectively, and shaping marketing strategies. However, the study's validity is limited by its relatively young and predominantly female sample, reliance on self-reported data, and focus on a single site. Future research should broaden demographic diversity, employ qualitative methods, compare similar attractions, and explore socio-economic or environmental impacts to gain a fuller understanding of visitor satisfaction and heritage site management.

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