

## TOURISTS SATISFACTION FOR THE PRAID SALT MINE

REZMUVES ROBERTA-NICOLETA<sup>1</sup>, TRAILA MARIAN-OCTAVIAN<sup>1</sup>,  
ENACHE DANIEL<sup>1</sup>, PEȚ ELENA\*<sup>1</sup>, GORDAN MARIUS-IONUȚ<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Life Sciences „King Mihai I” from Timisoara,  
Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Romania

\*Corresponding author's e-mail: elenapet@usvt.ro

**Abstract:** *The Praid Salt Mine, a prominent subterranean tourist destination in Romania, attracts visitors globally due to its unique geological features and therapeutic microclimate. This study evaluates tourist satisfaction at the Praid Salt Mine to identify factors that enhance or detract from the visitor experience. Data were collected through surveys administered to tourists. The findings indicate high overall satisfaction, particularly with the mine's natural beauty and the health benefits of speleotherapy. The study recommends strategic enhancements in infrastructure, service quality, and informational resources to improve visitor satisfaction further. These insights aim to assist management in developing targeted strategies to elevate the Praid Salt Mine's appeal and ensure sustainable tourism growth.*

**Key words:** *customer satisfaction in tourism, impact of visitors experience in tourism, Praid Salt Mine*

### INTRODUCTION

The Praid Salt Mine, located in Harghita County, Romania, exemplifies a subterranean tourist destination that has garnered international attention. The Praid Salt Mine is a unique destination with historical and health-related attractions. [7] Known for its extensive underground chambers and tunnels, this salt mine has been used for centuries, providing valuable salt resources and serving as a therapeutic retreat. [6,7,12] Visitors can explore its vast caverns, learn about traditional salt mining techniques, and experience the mine's microclimate, renowned for its health benefits, particularly for respiratory conditions. [8,9,14] The mine allows visitors to explore natural salt caverns while benefiting from speleotherapy—a treatment involving inhaling salt-infused air to alleviate respiratory ailments. The mine's natural beauty and health benefits make it a unique tourist attraction as a (post-)industrial objective. [4,13] Due to its popularity, there is a continual need to assess and improve the visitor experience at the Praid Salt Mine and to compare the results to those of other attractions, in order to foster ideas exchange between managing organisations. [10,11]

Tourist satisfaction studies are essential for identifying strengths and weaknesses from the visitor's perspective. [2,3] Such evaluations can highlight areas where the mine excels, such as its natural allure and health offerings, and pinpoint aspects requiring enhancement, including infrastructure, service quality, and informational resources. [1,15] This study evaluates tourist satisfaction at the Praid Salt Mine to identify factors that enhance or detract from the visitor experience. The research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of visitor perceptions and expectations by collecting data through surveys administered to tourists. The findings will offer valuable insights for the mine's management, aiding in developing targeted strategies to elevate the attraction's appeal and promote sustainable tourism growth.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

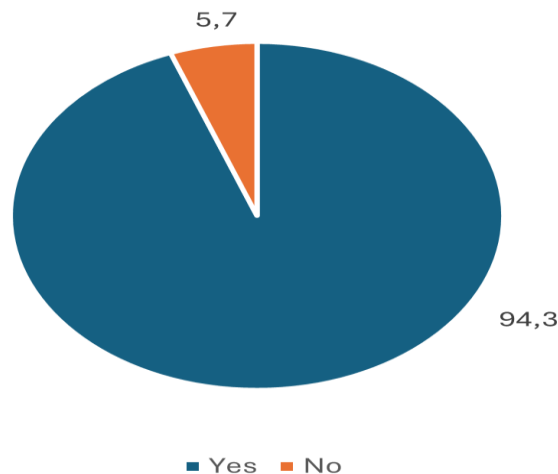
The study adopted a quantitative research approach to evaluate tourist satisfaction at the Praid Salt Mine. A structured survey methodology was employed to collect primary data directly from potential visitors, using Google Forms. The sampling method used was

convenience sampling, the questionnaire was uploaded to Facebook groups dedicated to obtaining responses to research surveys of undergraduates. The sample size is 70 respondents. The focus was on identifying key factors that influence the overall visitor experience, both positively and negatively. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no incentives were provided.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses from a questionnaire regarding visits to Praid Salt Mine.

- **94.3% of respondents** answered "Yes," indicating that the vast majority of those surveyed have visited Praid Salt Mine. Praid Salt Mine appears to be a very popular destination, with a high percentage of visitors.
- **5.7% of respondents** answered "No," suggesting a small number of the respondents have not visited this destination and did not participate further in the survey.

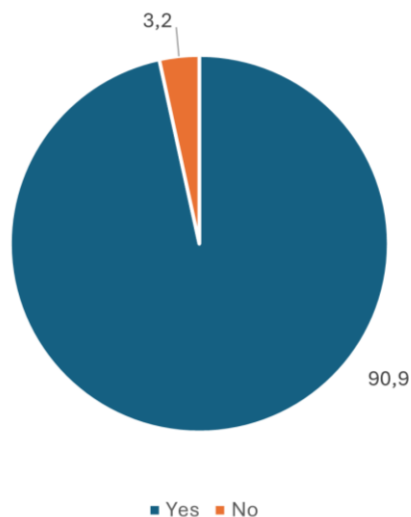


**Figure 1. Visitors to the Praid Salt Mine**

*Source: own work, 2024*

As reported in figure 2 regarding revisiting intentions, 90.9% of respondents answered "Yes" indicating a strong intention to revisit Salina Praid. This reflects a high level of satisfaction with their previous experience or a strong connection to the site. 3.2% of respondents answered "No" suggesting a very small percentage of visitors do not intend to return. This could be due to a variety of reasons, such as dissatisfaction, lack of interest in repeat visits, or other personal factors.

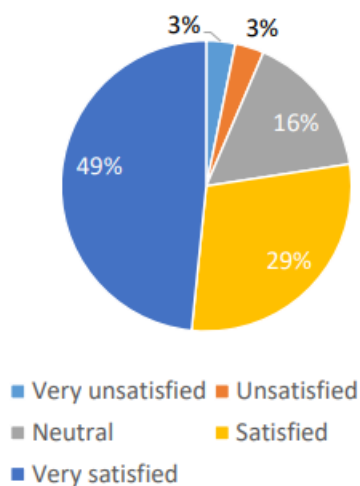
The overwhelming majority of visitors expressing an intention to return highlights the attractiveness and positive reputation of Praid Salt Mine. However, the small percentage of negative responses may present an opportunity to gather feedback and implement improvements to further enhance the visitor experience.



**Figure 2. Visitors return intention to the Praid Salt Mine**

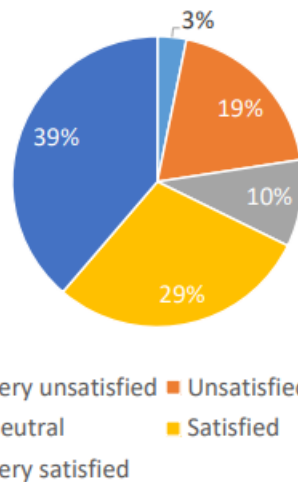
Source: own work, 2024

The charts in Figure 3 and 4 show that 78% of visitors to the Praid Salt Mine are satisfied or very satisfied with its entertainment and activities, while 16% are neutral and a small minority are unsatisfied. Overall satisfaction is high, with room for improvement to engage neutral and less satisfied visitors. 68% of respondents (satisfied and very satisfied) view the pricing positively, indicating general acceptance. The combined 22% of neutral or unsatisfied respondents suggests a need to review pricing or communicate the value of the experience more effectively.



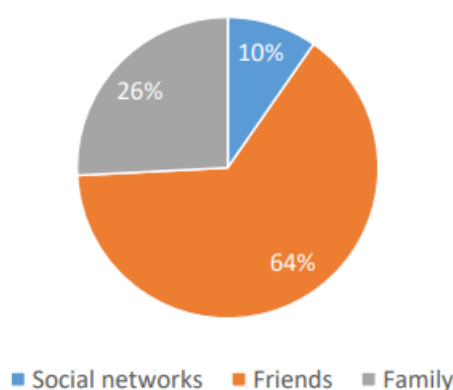
**Figure 3. General visitor satisfaction for the Praid Salt Mine**

Source: own work, 2024



**Figure 4. Visitor satisfaction for prices at the Praid Salt Mine**

Personal recommendations from friends and family dominate as the main sources of information about the Praid Salt Mine, accounting for 90% of the total. The relatively low impact of social networks suggests an opportunity to enhance the mine's online presence. [5]



**Figure 4. Sources of information regarding the Praid Salt Mine**

*Source: own work, 2024*

From a demographic perspective, 39.39% of the respondents are aged between 18 and 25, 29.61% are aged between 26 and 35, and the remaining 31% are aged between 36 and 45. 85% of the respondents live in urban areas, while the remaining 15% live in rural areas.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Praid Salt Mine is highly rated, with satisfied visitors and strong revisit intentions. Improving its digital presence and addressing minor issues can enhance growth. The majority of respondents reported positive overall satisfaction with both entertainment options and pricing, reinforcing the mine's existing appeal. At the same time, the research identified areas of potential refinement, notably in pricing clarity and expanded digital marketing strategies, which could broaden its reach to new audiences.

Personal recommendations currently drive most visitation, reflecting strong organic promotion. Strengthening online channels and social media engagement can amplify these personal endorsements, fostering a more robust and diversified visitor pipeline.

By continuously monitoring visitor feedback, management can implement strategic improvements, further elevating the attraction and sustaining its reputation as a premier post-industrial tourism and wellness destination. In this way, the Praid Salt Mine can continue to evolve, ensuring long-term success and relevance in an increasingly competitive travel market. As such, the intended recipients of this research are composed of the local authorities managing the Praid Salt Mine, as well as researchers in the field of tourism. Further research can focus on attempting to explore other components of visitor satisfaction, on comparing the results with other similar attractions, or on generating feedback from a more diverse demographic.

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