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SENIOR VISITORS, JUNIOR ENTHUSIASM: ANALYSIS OF VISITORS' QUESTIONNAIRE¹

ABSTRACT

The basic idea of the paper is to analyse opinions, requests, suggestions and impressions about the Viminacium Archaeological Park. For a better understanding of visitors' impressions and comments, a questionnaire was made for foreign (English speaking) visitors from cruise ships, in order to improve the general touristic offer. All answers were transferred to statistical charts and the results gained through this analysis will be presented in this paper.

Keywords: Viminacium, tourists, Archaeological Park, visits, analysis, questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION¹

Just seven years ago, an Archaeological Park was established within the area of the archaeological site of Viminacium. During 2003, following field works, the large city baths and the northern gate of the military camp were protected with a construction made of laminated wood and so-called French tents. Also, part of the Pirivoj necropolis, with the mausoleum, was protected in the same way.² Within this

construction is the Viminacium underworld, with tombs which contain original frescoes, as well as copies of those now kept at the National Museum of Požarevac.³

After Viminacium was identified as a tourist destination and Archaeological Park, all the necessary facilities were established: infrastructure, staff, security etc. After that, a tourist itinerary was defined in which three protected objects were included: *porta praetoria* – the northern gate of the military camp (Golubović and Tapavički-Ilić 2012: 71), *thermae* – the Roman baths (Golubović and Tapavički-Ilić: 70) and the Mausoleum with underground fresco painted tombs (Golubović and Tapavički-Ilić: 71-72; Anđelković 2012: 1-6.). After finishing the building of the *Domus Scientiarum* – the scientific and research centre, this was also in-

¹ The article results from the project: *IRS, Viminacium, Roman city and military camp – research of material and non material culture of inhabitants using the modern technologies of remote detection, geophysics, GIS, digitalization and 3D visualization (no 47018)*, funded by The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia.

² More about Viminacium Archaeological Park in: Maksin et al. 2011: 331-339; Golubović and Tapavički-Ilić 2012: 67-73; Tapavički-Ilić 2013: 315-326; Golubović and Korac 2013: 65-74.

³ More about fresco presentation in the Viminacium underworld in: Anđelković 2012: 1-6.

Sex

■ male ■ female

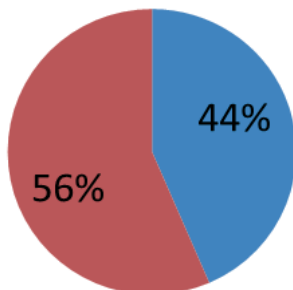


Chart 1

Occupation

■ retired ■ still working

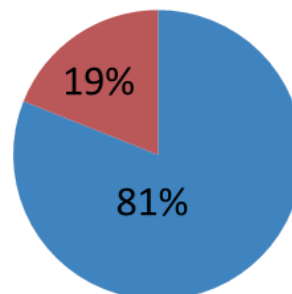


Chart 2

Age

■ <30 ■ 30 - 60 ■ >60

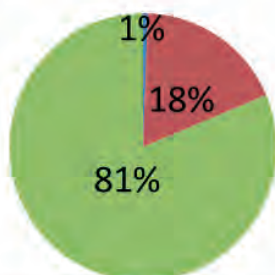


Chart 3

Education

■ basics ■ high school ■ college ■ university

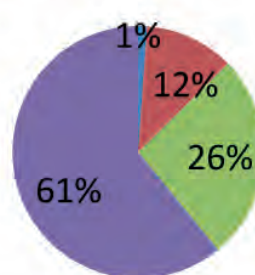


Chart 4

How often do you travel

■ < once in a year ■ once a year ■ >once in a year

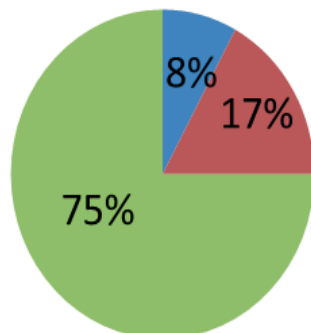


Chart 5

Accompanied by

■ family ■ friends ■ colleagues ■ alone

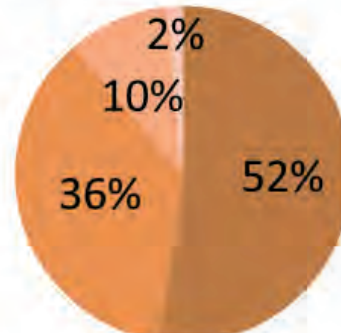


Chart 6

cluded in the tourist itinerary. (Nikolić 2012: 66-68; Golubović and Tapavički-Ilić 2012: 73; Golubović and Korać 2013: 71.)

VIMINACIUM VISITS

According to research in 2006, the profile of visitors to Viminacium was as follows: 35% were children's excursions, 25% different group visitors, 20% individual visitors, 19% travellers on cruises, while only 1% were individual foreign visitors. Since 2007, and the arrival of early official visitors to Viminacium, their number has been increasing rapidly. During 2007, 50,000 people visited Viminacium. In the same year, from the Danube port, visitors came from 12 American, 35 Danish, and 47 Dutch cruise ships. During 2008, Viminacium was visited by around 65,000 visitors, out of whom 55,000 came via the mainland and 10,000 by ship. Already in 2009, the number of visitors had grown to around 72,000, with 55,000 by mainland and 17,000 by ship. In 2011, Viminacium was visited by 75,000 tourists. Of these, 15,000 arrived by ship.⁴ (Maksin et al. 2011: 340.) The same trend continued in 2012, with 15,000 out of a total of 75,000 tourists coming via the Danube. During this time an average of one ship per week arrived with a group of between 120 and 150 tourists from English-speaking areas.

ENGLISH SPEAKING VISITORS

Large cruise ships, (Viminacium has an agreement with Uniworld and Viking companies) with tourists from English-speaking areas, travel along the Danube for between two and four weeks. For instance, the Uniworld company offers two cruises: Eastern Europe Explorer, a 15 day cruise from Vienna to Bucharest, and the Grand European Explorer, a 29 day cruise from Basel to Bucha-

⁴ We would like to thank our colleague Emilija Nikolić, who provided all this information to us from the T-PAS socio-economic study.

rest, with two extraordinary ships: River Countess and River Duchess. They cruise through seven or ten countries and include visits to capitals and cultural monuments. Although there is an accent on historic and political changes in Central and Eastern Europe in these cruises, organizers also point out historical and archaeological monuments and ruins. Those who are fans of architecture and archaeology will enjoy spectacular structures and ancient ruins.⁵

This means that, before booking, every tourist is informed about the cruise schedule, so that they know exactly what to expect. While travelling through Serbia, these ships stop only in Belgrade, Viminacium and Donji Milanovac.

For the purpose of this paper, a questionnaire was designed for the season of Spring/Summer 2012 and filled out by 180 persons. The questionnaire was composed according to the tour which included visits to the Roman baths, the Mausoleum and the Domus Scientiarium.

ANALYSIS

The first part of the questionnaire was optional and it aimed to provide basic information about the visitors. There was an almost equal number of men and women in the tours (Chart 1), most of them were retired (Chart 2), they were of certain ages (Chart 3) and majority of them had a university degree (Chart 4).

The second part of the questionnaire included questions about their previous travelling experience. This information helped us to understand with which archaeological sites they could compare this visit to Viminacium. Here they were allowed to mark more than one answer. Most of them travelled more than once a year (Chart 5) and more than half of them travelled accompanied by family (Chart 6). 97% of the examinees had travelled to Europe before (Chart 7) and they visited

⁵ More information about this cruise at the site: <http://www.uniworld.com/Plan-your-Cruise>

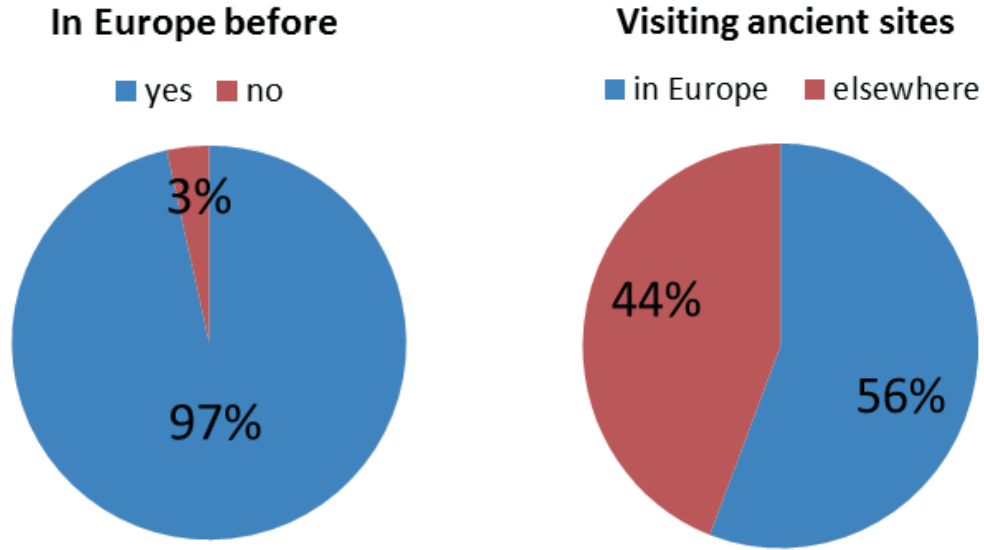


Chart 7

Chart 8

ancient sites both in Europe and elsewhere (Chart 8). Tourists from the US mostly visited ancient sites in South America – Mexico, Peru etc. Lots of them travelled to China, Egypt or Tunisia. When it comes to Europe, the most visited sites were Pompeii, Ephesus and Hadrian’s Wall.

The rest of the questions were regarding Viminacium, with the aim of discovering their impressions, to help us improve future visits.

Most of the visitors had never been to Viminacium before, and most of them would like to return to the Archaeological Park too, prefer-

General impressions about Viminacium

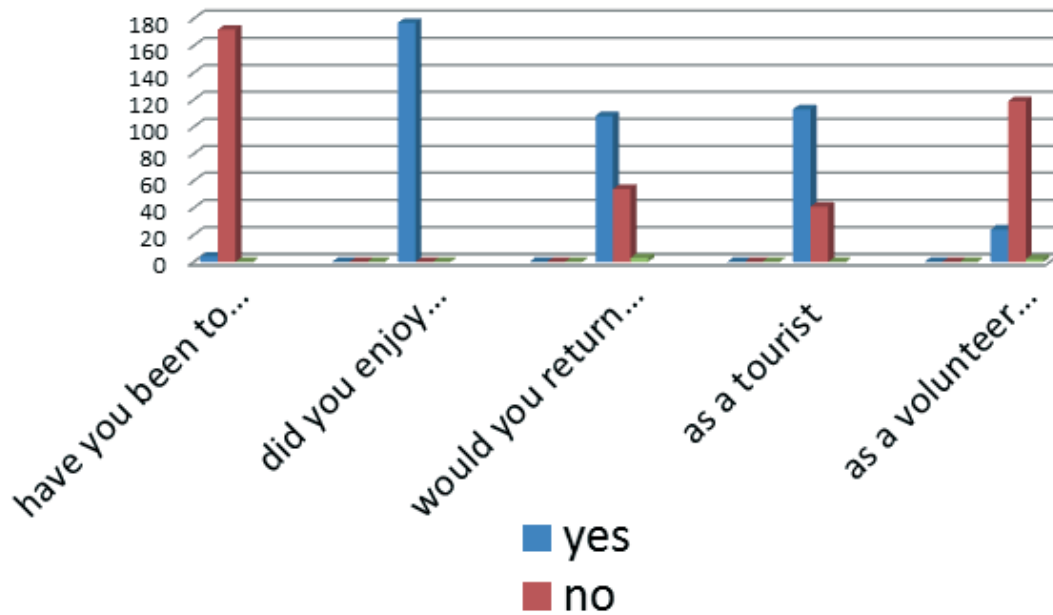


Chart 9

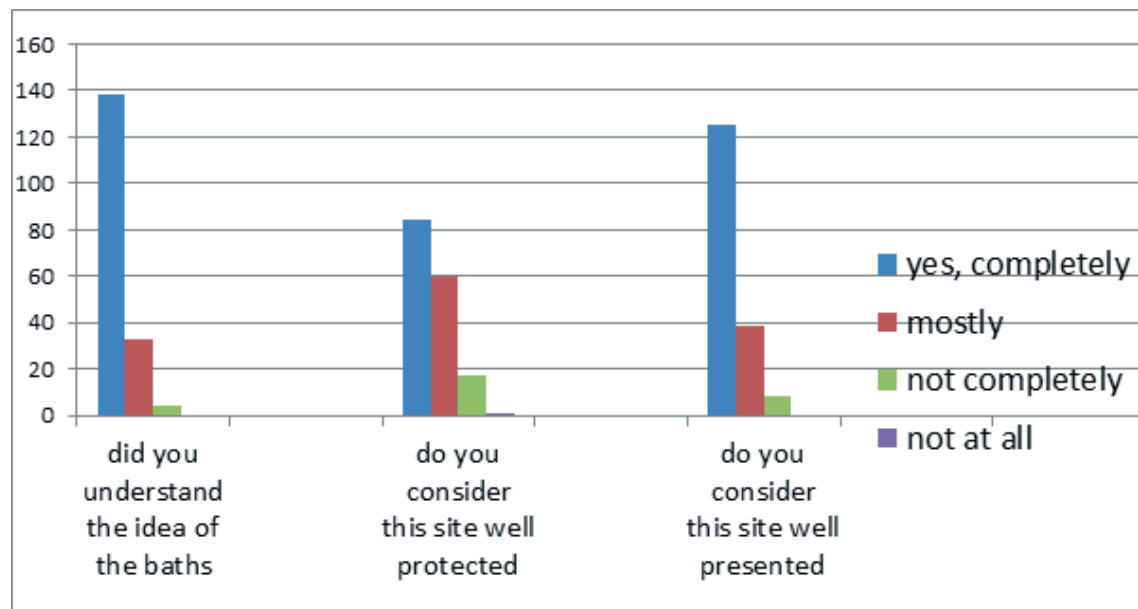


Chart 10

ably as tourists rather than as volunteer archaeologists, most probably because of their ages. The general impression is that all of them enjoyed the visit (Chart 9).

Other questions were directed toward specific points of interest included in the tour. These questions were created in order to indicate that the Archaeological Park of Viminacium is a well-protected and well-presented tourist destination in terms of world heritage. Also, it was important to know what moments of the tour were the most important ones regarding their impressions: archaeological remains, reconstructions, explanations of the expert guides or, at some points of the tour, costumed staff.

Regarding the Roman baths, most of the visitors agreed that they understood the concept of the *thermae*. The majority of examinees considered that the site is well-protected and well-presented and most of their impressions were based on the explanations of the expert guides (Charts 10 and 11).

During the visit to the Mausoleum, most of the visitors understood the idea of the Mausoleum, and majority of them considered the site to be well-protected and well-presented. Their impres-

sions were based on the explanations of the expert guides as in the previous case (Charts 12 and 13).

A visit to the Viminacium underworld is specific because there is a sort of theatre implied, where costumed staff-members greet the visitors and an ancient Charon, dressed in black, leads them through dark corridors to the entrances of the tombs with frescoes.⁶ The majority understood the idea of the underworld, considered the site well-protected and well-presented (including the idea of frescoes presented within the tombs). Still, due to either their age or health problems, some of the visitors were not able to go through dark passages, which most of the visitors thought represented an exciting experience. It is interesting that only 4% of them based their impressions on costumed Romans and the Charon, while more than half of the examinees still thought that the most important contribution to their impressions were the explanations of the expert guides (Charts 14, 15, 16 and 17).

Domus Scientiarium, as a replica of a Roman villa, provides real Roman design and an authentic atmosphere to the visitor, with all additional contents. There is a kitchen with Roman food, a library, a museum and a gallery space and a large

⁶ More about this in: Andelković 2012: 1-6.

Your impression is based on

■ archaeological remains ■ reconstructions ■ explanation of the expert guide

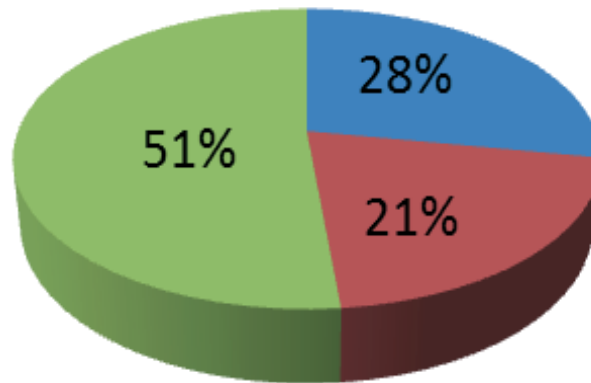


Chart 11

open air atrium surrounded by rooms where guests may stay. Thus visitors preferred the central atrium, and thought that the Domus was inviting enough for them. They were interested in tasting Roman

food and considered that the ancient atmosphere was well revived. Most of them were not interested in dressing like Romans (possibly because of their age) and said that they would not be interested in

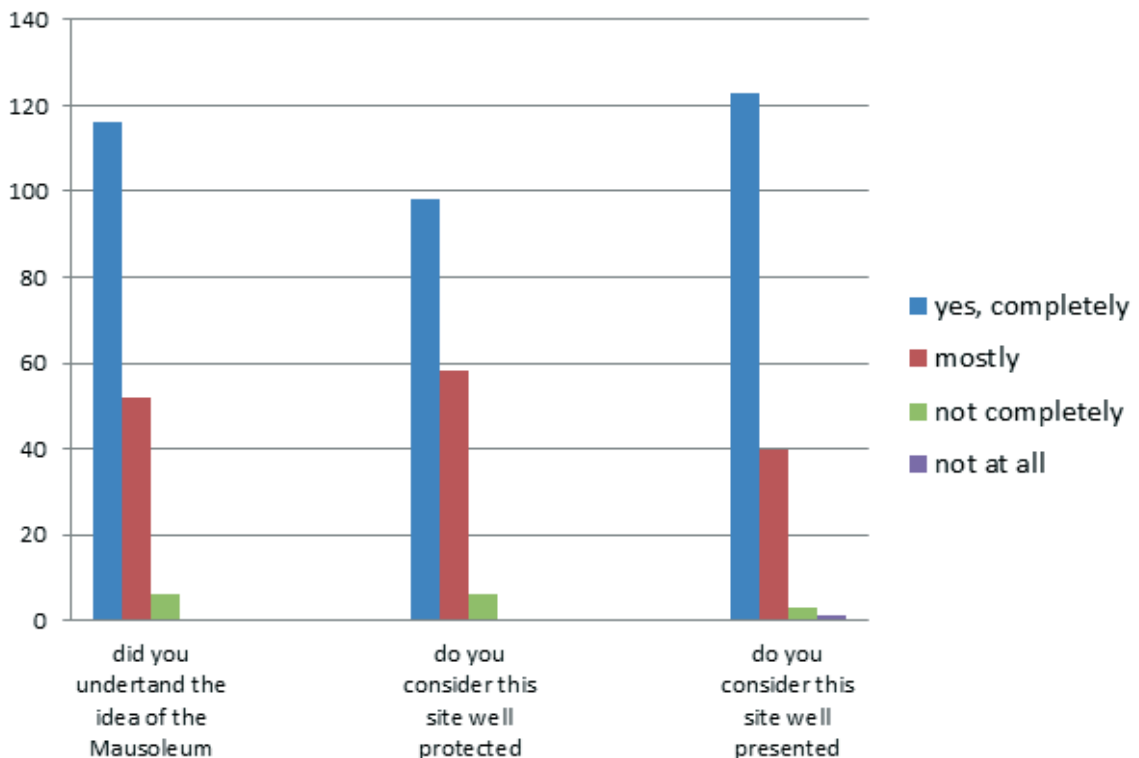


Chart 12

Your impression is based on

■ archaeological remains ■ reconstructions ■ explanation of the expert guide

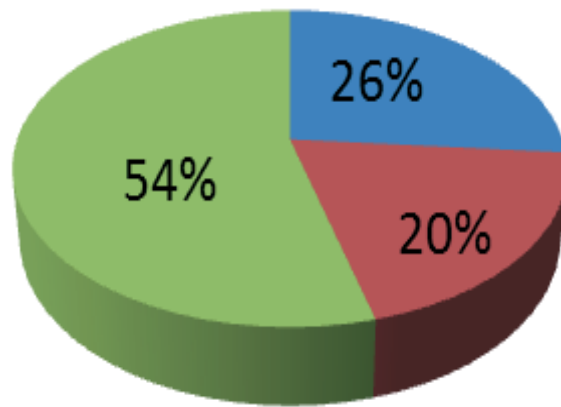


Chart 13

staying at the Domus, giving pollution in the air (from nearby thermal power plant) as an explanation. This is a big problem for Viminacium, as the bad smell of the coal mine is a potentially large factor in visitors refusing to come to the park and stay

in the Archaeological scientific-research centre, especially those who suffer from asthma or allergies (Charts 18 and 19).

Next to the Roman tavern, where guests are greeted with wine and ceramic shards bearing

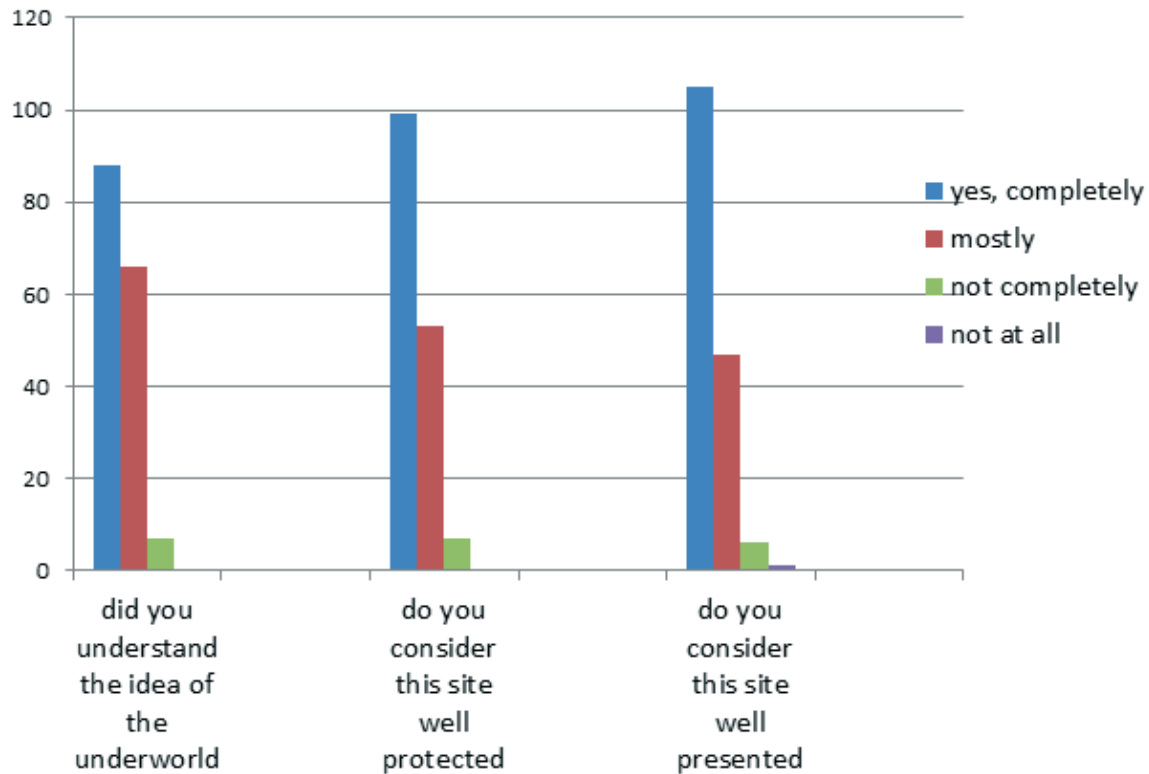


Chart 14

Your impression is based on

- archaeological remains
- reconstructions
- explanation of the expert guide
- Charon and costumed Romans

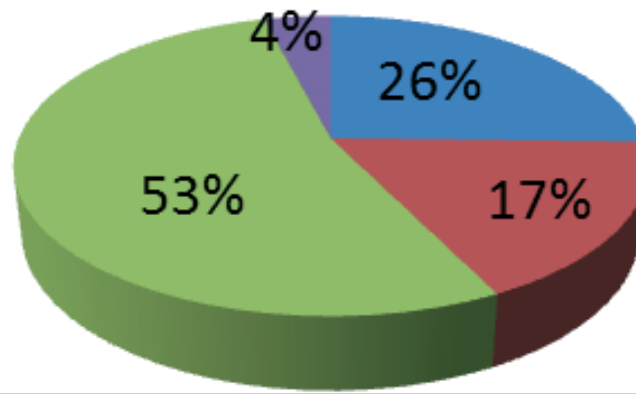


Chart 15

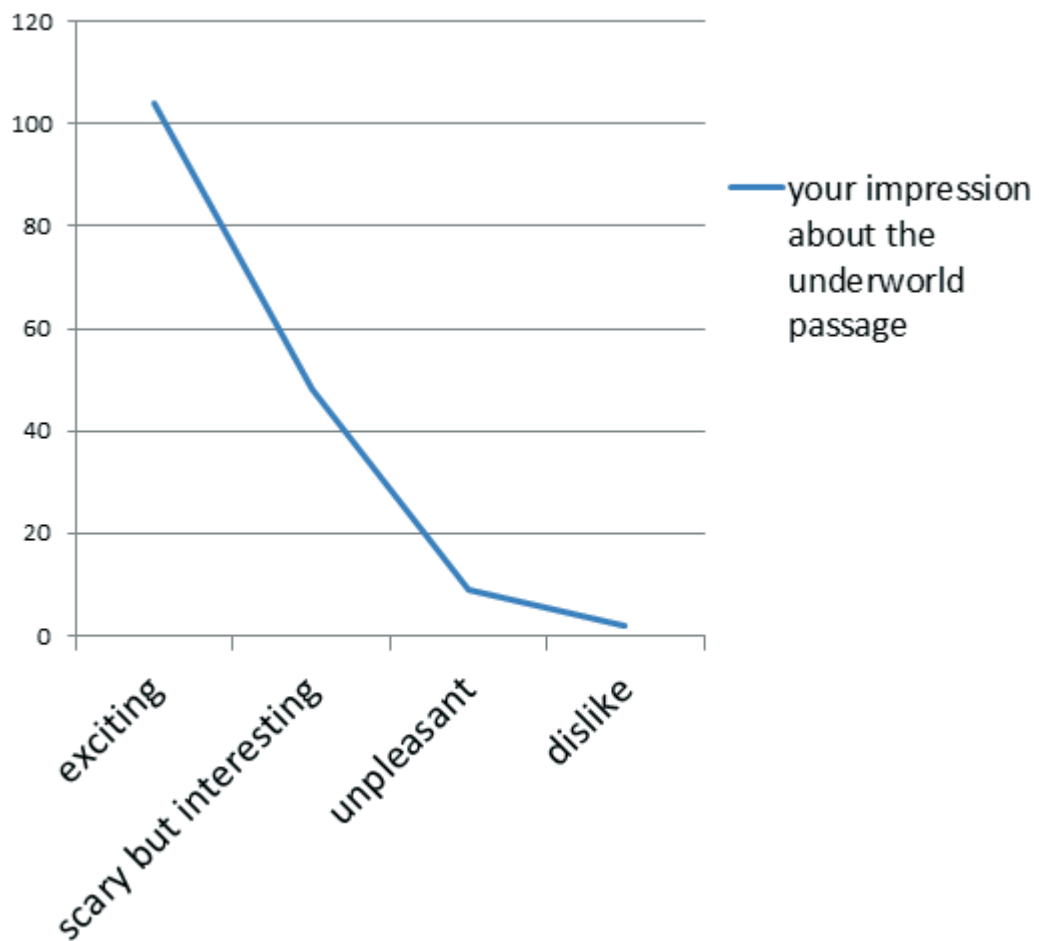


Chart 16

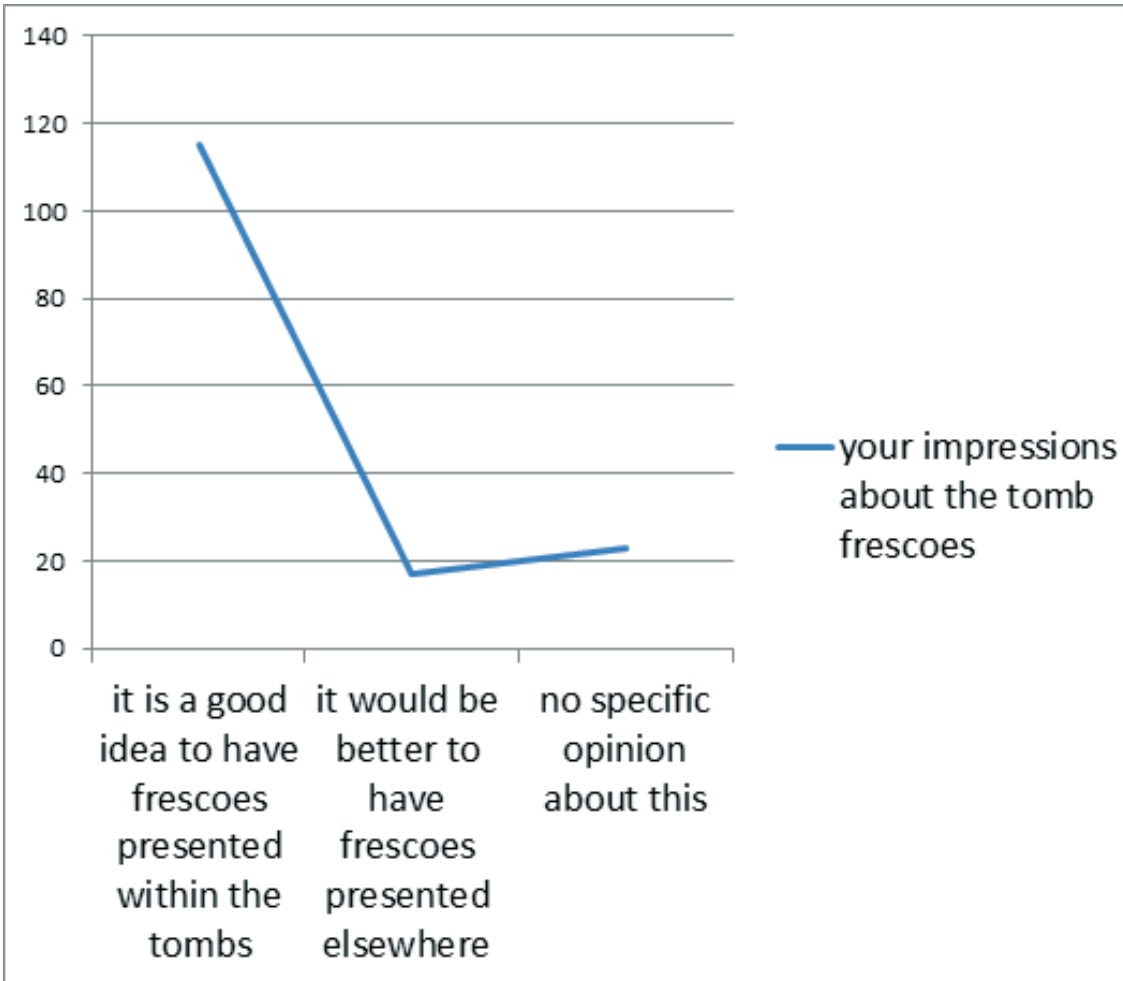


Chart 17

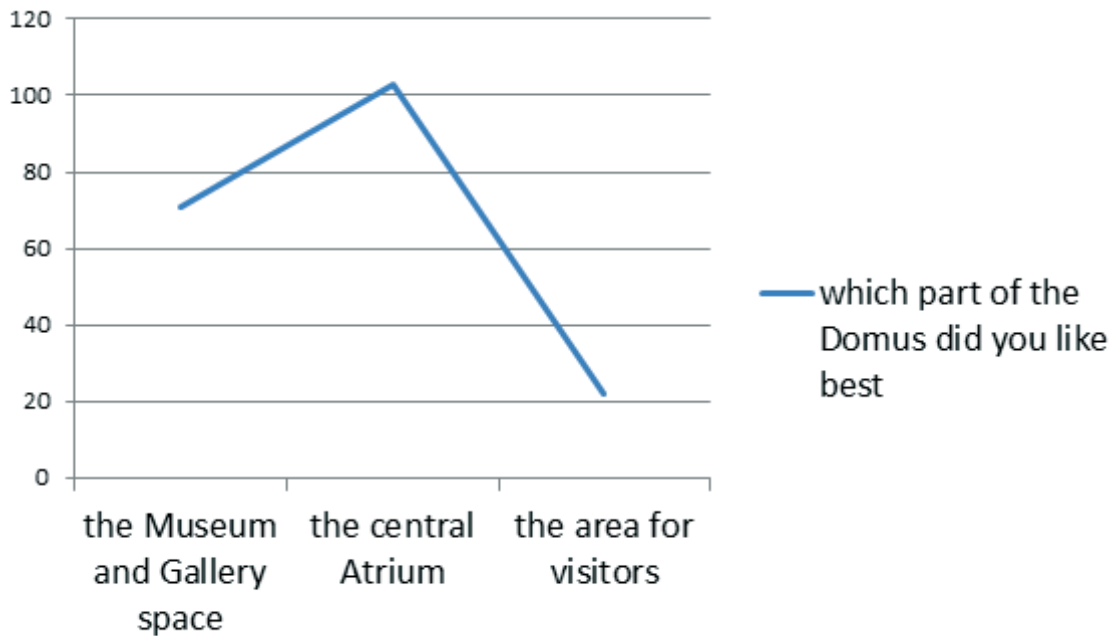


Chart 18



Chart 19

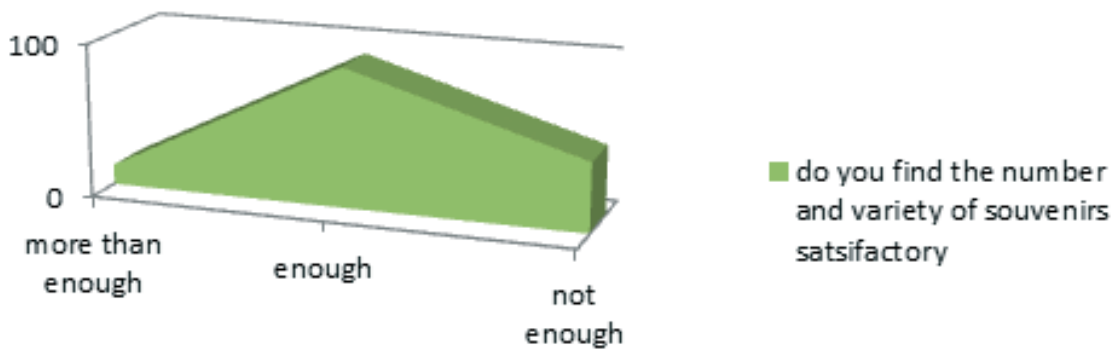


Chart 20

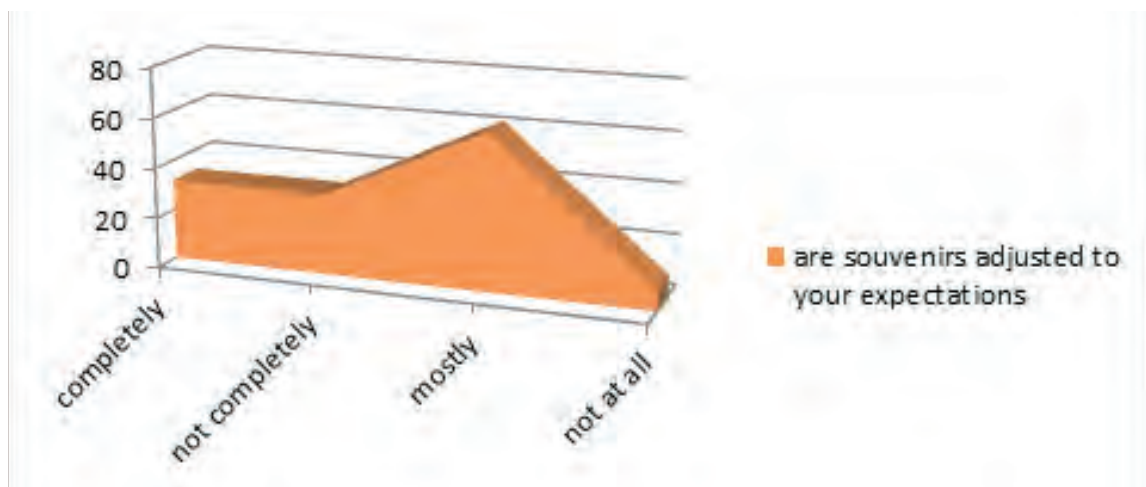


Chart 21

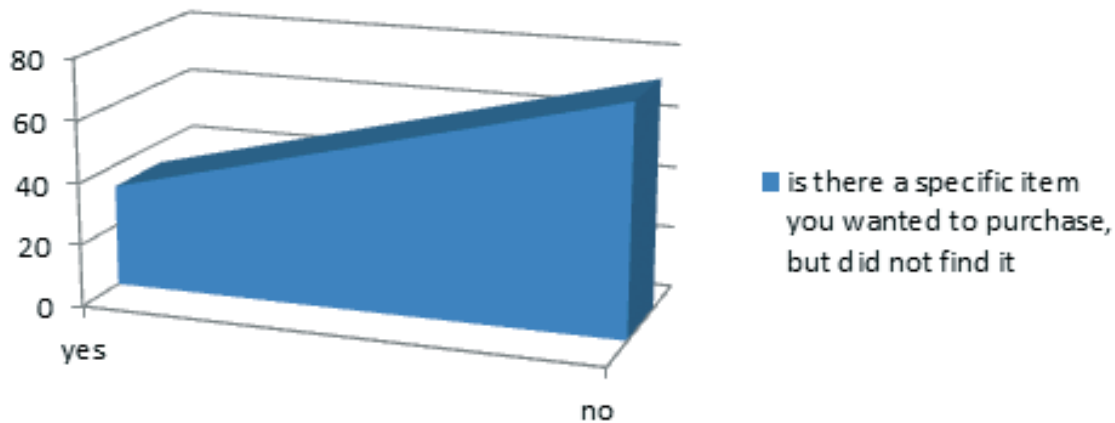


Chart 22

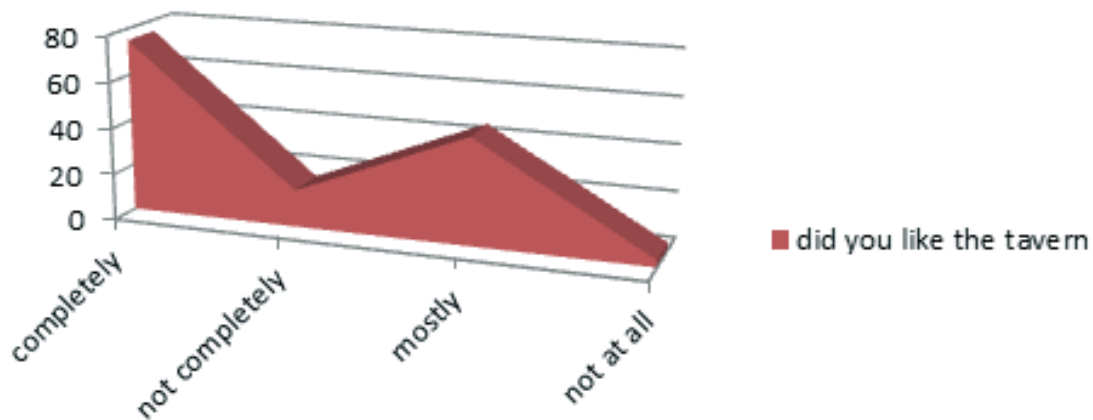


Chart 23

hand-written Latin quotations, there is a souvenir shop. Most of the visitors found that the number and variety of souvenirs is satisfactory enough, and that souvenirs were mostly adjusted to their expectations. They also said that there was not a specific item which they wanted to purchase that they could not find in the souvenir shop. The majority of the visitors liked the tavern and they were impressed with drinking wine from replicas of Roman cups, as well as with the Latin inscribed ceramic shards (Charts 20, 21, 22, 23, 24).

As well as the questions, the visitors were also asked to add comments. Some comments are as follows:

Some of the visitors wished to go and see the open pit and this industrial complex and others were interested in the whole process of archaeological

excavation and wished to see a presentation of all its phases. Noticeable is a wish of the visitors to see more antique structures presented.

Other comments included recommendations and suggestions to improve the range of activities on offer at the park, tied to additional souvenirs like multimedia, educational guides, models of the park, posters of frescoes, etc. Some also regarded physical elements to make sight-seeing for elderly persons easier, as well as videos which could be shown to visitors with walking difficulties who were not able to see some parts of the park.

Much praise was given to the educated and pleasant guides. The whole presentation of the park was rated very highly, as both an educational experience and a perfect way to preserve history.

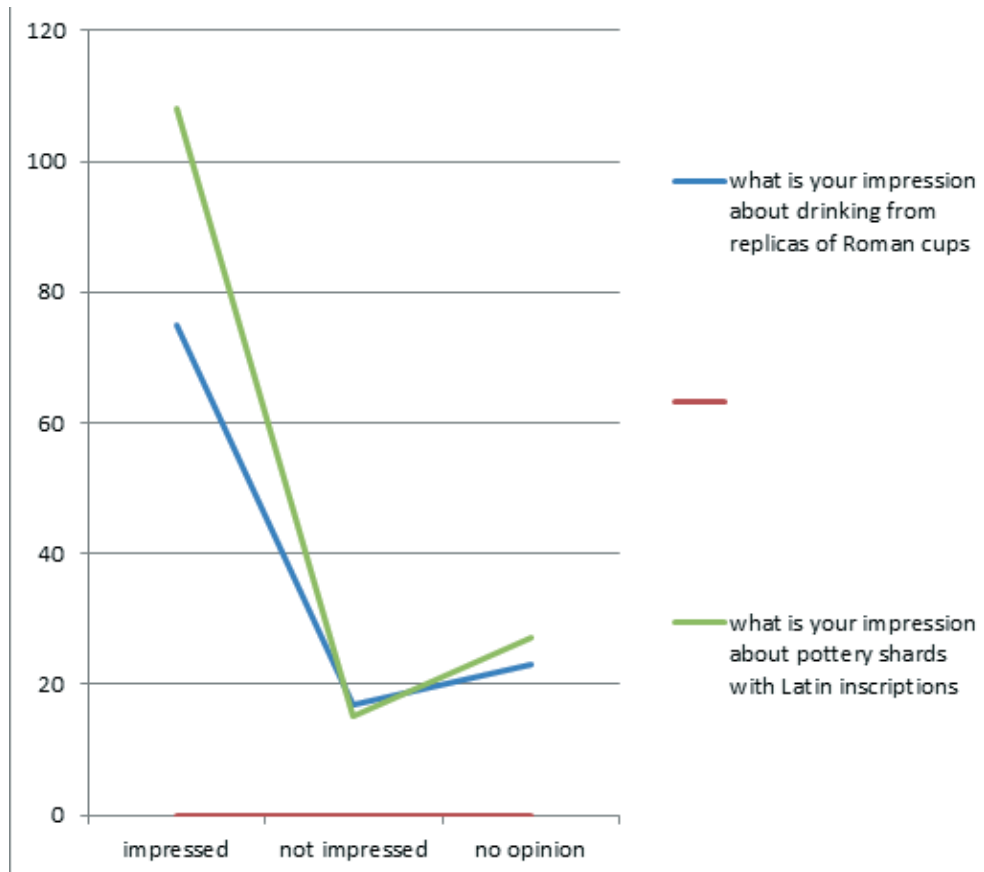


Chart 24

Impressions about Viminacium are mostly influenced by

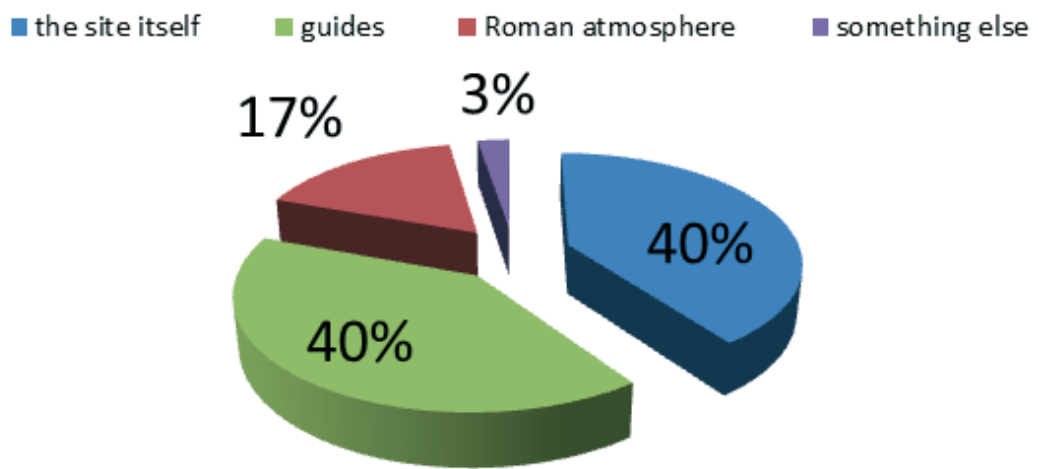


Chart 25

CONCLUSION

Most of the visitors from cruise ships had already been to some other archaeological sites or parks and this makes their answers and comments even more valuable, especially considering the fact that they mostly visited already well-known sites such as Pompeii or the Egyptian pyramids. They favourably compared the “new born” Archaeological Park of Viminacium with these gigantic world heritage sites.

If we look back at the analysis and charts of the visitors’ impressions of the Roman baths, where 51% of examinees stated that their impression was based on the explanation of the expert guide, at the Mausoleum 54% stated the same and for the Domus Scientiarum 53% confirm that same fact, it can be concluded that this was the greatest factor which influenced their good impression and acceptance of the Archaeological Park of Viminacium. At the end, the final question related to their general impression of the site and the Viminacium Archaeological Park, when 40% of the examinees stated that their impression was based on the site itself, while a further 40% stated that it was based on the guide’s explanations (Chart 25). It seems that the guide is an ambassador or a direct reflection of the Archaeological Park, and it is, therefore, most certainly important to have well-educated and motivated people for this position.

Also, considering everything said in the comments, although many of them think that a great job is being done at the Viminacium Archaeological Park, the work is not yet finished. It is like a living organism which has to evolve together with the visitors and their needs and requests. That is why it is important to hear the public’s voice in order to improve the general and specific activities of the Archaeological Park. It is also important to specify two different approaches, for domestic and foreign visitors, since they react in diverse ways. That is why this questionnaire and the analyses were completed.

The dialogue with the public is the most secure way of understanding specific needs, requests and demands, in order to apply them in the touristic itinerary of the Viminacium Archaeological Park. This is of special importance, if we bear in mind that Viminacium and Serbia, with its great number of ancient sites, are becoming part of the European and World heritage and Archaeological tourism through new projects, such as Itinerarium Romanum Serbie or Danube Limes Brand (Golubović and Korać 2013: 72).

Since the Viminacium Archaeological Park consists of objects, modern service facilities and communication that connects them, as well as cultural and entertainment shows for its presentation to the viewer i.e. visitor, the people and the area where the park is located are all of great importance. All of these are basic factors of emotional design in forming an Archaeological Park.⁷ Also, this questionnaire, and the analyses performed on it, showed that visitors’ emotions are one of the most important elements in developing Viminacium as an Archaeological Park, whose insufficient number of remains are supplemented by successful presentations, lectures and the atmosphere etc. The overall experience makes the perception and interpretation of the Park facilities equally important and accepted.

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⁷ More about this in: Nikolić et al. 2011: 259-268.

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Links:

<http://www.uniworld.com/Plan-your-Cruise>

REZIME

**STARIJI POSETIOCI
MLADALAČKOG DUHA:
ANALIZA UPITNIKA POSETILACA**

Ključne reči: Viminacium, turisti, arheološki park, posete, analiza, upitnik.

Arheološki park Viminacium razvija se poslednjih osam godina u turističku destinaciju, koju posećuju domaći i strani turisti. Pored ekskurzija, stručnih ili individualnih poseta, arheološki park Viminacium posećuju i turisti sa brodova – kruzera koji plove Dunavom. Među ovim turistima, sa engleskog govornog područja, tokom 2012. godine sprovedeno je istraživanje putem upitnika. Rezultati dobijeni ovim ispitivanjem prezentovani su u radu u vidu analiza i tabela koji statistički odgovaraju dobijenim odgovorima. Cilj ovakvog istraživanja bio je da se na specifičnom primeru (stariji turisti, sa izvesnim iskustvom poseta arheološkim parkovima u svetu) stekne uvid u impresije, utiske, sugestije, komentare i slično, o arheološkim ostacima i pratećim elementima koji čine da arheološki park Viminacium jeste i bude prijemčiv ovoj vrsti posetilaca. Zaključak analize ovog upitnika pokazuje da prezentacija i interpretacija arheološkog parka Viminacium odgovara emotivnoj reakciji posetilaca, ne samo na arheološke ostatke, već i na prateće elemente kao što su rimski duh i atmosfera tokom obilaska, prezentacije, animacije itd. Najveći utisak na ove turističke ostavili su obrazovani i elokventni vodiči, za koje oni smatraju da su podjednako važan faktor u prezentovanju arheološkog parka, koliko i sami arheološki ostaci. Sugestije i komentari dobijeni u ovoj analizi, pomoći će usavršavanje i unapređenje u organizaciji budućih poseta i života samog Viminacijuma kao turističke destinacije.