

# Exploring creative tourist experience: A text-mining approach based on TripAdvisor reviews of a cooking workshop in Lisbon, Portugal

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**Abstract** | Creative tourists are known to appreciate gaining unique and memorable experiences while interacting with and learning from local people. The purpose of the current research is to conduct a case study of creative tourism in the context of Portuguese cooking classes by text-mining online reviews scraped from TripAdvisor. A series of text-mining analyses like frequency analysis and word cloud, sentiment analysis, word correlation, and topic modelling were conducted on 426 online reviews posted between 2014 and 2018. Our findings indicated that positive emotions, hedonic experience, authenticity, interaction with service providers, interaction with local people, and learning experience, which had been considered key elements of creative tourism in previous research, were indeed appreciated by online reviewers of the cooking class. Also, different types of value, including functional and emotional value, were identified in the cooking class experience. The study result offers business operators and destination marketing organizations directions in promoting creative tourism at the destination.

**Keywords** | Creative tourism, cooking class, text mining, sentiment analysis, topic modelling

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## 1. Introduction

"Creative" is becoming an increasingly frequent term used by policy-makers, media, and industrial practitioners, which helps develop an alternative strategy to solve social and economic problems. Examples include "creative industry" (Hutton, 2006), "creative cities" (Scott, 2006), "creative economy" (Waitt & Gibson, 2009), "creative class" (Florida, 2006), and not surprisingly "creative tourism" (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Not only does creative tourism represent an important phenomenon in creative industries, but also it is recognized as a niche segment in cultural tourism (Richards, 2018). It is worth noting that while traditional cultural tourism focuses more on tangible heritage, creative tourism indicates a shift to the intangible resources of local culture and a higher degree of tourist involvement with the destination (Richards, 2011).

Conventional tourism has typically been focused on seeing major sights and checking out attractions in destinations for a relatively limited time span (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991), not allowing for in-depth interaction with local people, local heritage or local ways of life. Furthermore, conventional tourism has led to exceedingly large numbers of tourists flocking to famous destinations, interrupting local people's life and eliciting anti-tourist attitudes (i.e., over-tourism) (Seraphin, Sheeran, & Pilato, 2018). In response to negative aspects of large-scale conventional tourism, a new wave of tourism called creative tourism has recently been proposed and practiced by pioneers.

It is acknowledged that creative tourism attracts different types of tourists compared to mass tourism and traditional cultural tourists. Creative tourism sheds light on tourists' demand for a unique and memorable experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Specifically, creative tourists no longer passively accept what the destination provides. They are looking for more engaging and interactive ex-

periences instead of packaged, standardized products/services and passive consumption, usually associated with mass tourism. Creative tourists are given more opportunities to actively participate in the interactions with service providers at the destination (Hung, Lee, & Huang, 2016). Importantly, creative tourists become value co-creators of their experience during the vacation (Tan, Luh, & Kung, 2014). The creative tourism experience enables tourists to develop their creative potential and skills and achieve self-realization and self-expression (Richards, 2011; Richards & Raymond, 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2006).

Notably, the existing studies on creative tourism are more supply-led from the perspectives of service providers and industrial practitioners (Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013), leaving the understanding of tourist experience from the demand side underexplored. Despite the tourists' increasing demands on a unique and memorable experience, and their critical role in value creation, the current research mainly focuses on the supply side to explain what the main components of creative tourism are and how could destination provide the appropriate products (Prentice & Andersen, 2007). Considering the active role of tourists as a value co-creator (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2014), especially when creative tourism highlights the exploration of tourists on local culture, activities, people, etc., more research is needed to understand how tourists feel, behave and experience on destination.

This study aims to understand the creative tourist experience using a cooking workshop (namely "Cooking Lisbon") in Lisbon, Portugal, as a case study. The concept of creative tourism has been practiced in several countries. In Portugal, under the scope of the CREATOUR project (Bakas & Duxbury, 2018; Duxbury, Silva, & Castro, 2019), some empirical practices have been established to support the development and innovation of tourism, culture and creativity in small cities and rural areas, such as Alentejo (Marujo, do Rosário Borges, & Serra, 2020) and Algarve (Cabeça, Gonçalves,

ves, Marques, & Tavares, 2020). However, empirical studies that investigate tourist experience in cooking classes in Portugal are still under exploration. We adopted a text-mining approach to explore the underlying themes in creative tourist experience based on the user-generated comments on TripAdvisor. The research outcomes help service providers and destination managers to understand the key components contributing to the memorable experience. Furthermore, it provides implications for strategically managing service providers' interactions with tourists for an engaged and authentic experience.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Creative tourism

Creativity is related to "the use of imagination or original ideas to create something" (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/creativity>). It has recently become an important component in tourism consumption and production in the "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). One of the significant applications is in cultural tourism, treating creativity as a solution to the serial reproduction of culture (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Consequently, this leads to the emergence of a niche market: creative tourism.

Richards and Raymond (2000) defined creative tourism as: "Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken" (p. 18). Individuals engaging in creative tourism tend to stay longer in destinations and come back more often than typical tourists, learning local ways of life, such as cooking, brewing, craft arts, music or dancing from local people.

Various approaches have been used to define

creativity, including the creative person, process, product and environment (Taylor, 1988). The current practices of creative tourism involve all of these approaches. Examples of creative tourism include traditional crafts and handicrafts, languages, gastronomy and cooking classes, perfume-making, porcelain painting experiences, drawing, sculpture, carving and photography, dance, folk music, etc. (Richards & Wilson, 2006). These practices can be found over the world, like in Spain (Aoyama, 2009), New Zealand (Raymond, 2007), Taiwan (Chang, Backman, & Huang, 2014), Canada (Lee, Wall, & Kovacs, 2015), Thailand (Walter, 2017), and Indonesia (Bell, 2015).

Noteworthy is that creative tourists are no longer straightforward consumers of experiences. Just being there is not enough to achieve a memorable experience; what distinguishes creative tourism from traditional cultural tourism is that it involves a higher degree of tourists' interactions and active participation with local culture (Richards & Raymond, 2000). They experience the authenticity of the destination by participating in hands-on workshops and learning courses like in arts, heritage, and local culture. Even though Raymond (2003) takes a broad approach by considering all ordinary tourists during the holiday as creative tourists as long as they are interested in learning about the local culture, this categorization is criticized for being too general and cannot distinguish ordinary tourists from those who are highly engaged and actively participated in the destination (Tan et al., 2014). Instead of being the mere receiver of pre-designed products, creative tourists are value co-creators, as they exercise creative potential and knowledge in the tourism experience they consume (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

A few empirical studies have attempted to understand the creative tourism experience. To start with, creative tourists are not homogeneous because there are bringing their subjective opinions and feelings to add to their creative experiences (Tan et al., 2014). Tan et al.'s study classifies

five distinct groups of creative tourists at creative tourism sites in Taiwan, China, including "novelty-seekers, knowledge and skills learners, those who are aware of their travel partners' growth, those who are aware of green issues, and the relax and leisure type" (p. 248). Chang et al. (2014) investigate creative tourists' consumption psychology aiming to satisfy tourists' needs for a memorable experience. They tested the effects of creative tourists' motivation, experience, and perceived value on revisit intention and found the on-site tourism experience is the most important driver to revisit intention, while the effects of motivation and perceived value are too small to be statistically significant. Similarly, Hung et al. (2016) investigate creative tourism experiences in pottery shops where tourists attend DIY creative activities. Their study also confirms the positive effects of creative experiences to revisit intention through the mediation of memorability. Specifically, the creative experiences contain a sense of achievement, unique learning, and interaction with instructors.

## 2.2. Gastronomy tourism and cooking classes

Tourists' interest in local food is growing (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2013), especially when food becomes a critical motive to visit a destination (Su, Johnson, & O'Mahony, 2020). Researchers have an increasing interest in gastronomy tourism studies (Kivela & Crofts, 2006) and food tourists (Jeaheng & Han, 2020). This new trend in tourist preferences offers destinations with a unique culinary tradition, such as Italy, France, Portugal, an opportunity to provide gastronomy retreats to international tourists.

Gastronomy tourism offers various tourism products, e.g., gastronomy tours, winery tours, farmers' markets, cooking classes, and local restaurants (Hjalager, 2003). Among those activities, the cooking class has a great potential to attract both gastronomy and creative tourists. Cooking

is a familiar task in our daily routines. Compared to other creative activities, which gear towards a relatively small number of aficionados (e.g., sculpting or performing arts), participating in local cooking classes involves significantly fewer resources (e.g., skills, effort, money) for most tourists (Walter, 2017). Learning to prepare local food under the guidance of local cooks is probably the easiest way for many tourists to connect with the local food culture (Suntikul, Agyeiwaah, Huang, & Pratt, 2020).

## 2.3. Perceived value

Perceived value has always been an essential construct in tourist consumption studies due to its predictive power to satisfaction (Lee, Yoon, & Lee, 2007; Narvekar & Dayanand, 2020) and behavioural intention (Meng, Liang, & Yang, 2011). Its importance is also recognized in creative tourism (Chang et al., 2014; Suhartanto, Brien, Primiana, Wibisono, & Triyuni, 2020). Perceived value is determined by comparing the sacrifices given up by and benefits received by the customer (Zeithaml, 1988). However, more and more researchers have proposed a multi-dimensional approach to capture the complexity of perceived value, for instance, using functional value and emotional values (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang, & Reisinger, 2015; Williams & Souta, 2009).

Specifically, functional value often considers as value for money (Zeithaml, 1988). It refers to the "perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity for functional, utilitarian or physical performance" (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991, p. 160). Tourists use functional value to evaluate if the performance or quality of the offerings (e.g., attractions, tours, activities, destinations) is worth the money. On the other hand, tourism experiences also generate emotional value, which is associated with the feelings and emotions caused by the offerings (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Service providers

need to understand the mechanism that leads to tourists' emotional values in the competitive environment, especially how to make tourists feel entertained, hedonic, pleasant, comfortable and relaxed (Eid, 2015; Song et al., 2015).

## 2.4. Text mining

This study aims to explore the creative tourist experience based on online reviews. With the development of internet technology and social media, online communities have become an important platform for consumers to express, exchange and share their consumption experience (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Pitta & Fowler, 2005). One example is TripAdvisor, an interactive forum between consumers and companies alike in the hospitality and tourism industries (<https://www.tripadvisor.com/>). This type of data (e.g., the postings and threads) is advanced hugely in quality and quantity and provides invaluable insights to companies and has been used to understand consumers' experience better (Carreiro, Paço, & Alves, 2020; Leite-Pereira, Brandão, & Costa, 2020). However, this large, unstructured data is difficult to analyze using conventional techniques and calls for a more sophisticated approach, such as text-mining (Ghose & Ipeirotis, 2011). The advantage of text mining is its ability to explore the unstructured and natural language text for knowledge discovery (e.g., patterns, relations) (Tan, 1999). It allows the textual data to be clustered, grouped, visualized and extracted for more implicit insights (Krallinger & Valencia, 2005).

Text mining on online reviews has provided significant insight in understanding customer experience in tourism and hospitality research (e.g., Berezina, Bilgihan, Cobanoglu, & Okumus, 2016; Claster, Pardo, Cooper, & Tajeddini, 2013; Guo, Barnes, & Jia, 2017). For instance, Berezina et al. (2015) showed an example of exploring online reviews from TripAdvisor.com using text mining.

Research shows that the text mining approach has great potential to understand the customer experience in hospitality and tourism studies.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Data collection

This study uses "Cooking Lisbon" as a case study, which wins the Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor in 2015 and 2016. Creative tourism in the context of cooking classes has been recently studied, using participant observation (Bell, 2015; Walter, 2017). However, the current study differs from the previous studies in that it explores tourists' experiences using a text-mining approach. "Cooking Lisbon" currently is the biggest cooking class targeting international tourists in Lisbon, Portugal. It has the highest number of postings on TripAdvisor in the category of "cooking lesson," also under the segment of creative tourism in Lisbon. "Cooking Lisbon" is a place "for sharing, happiness, talking, laughing, hands-on classes that you take you to unforgettable moments in Portugal" (<https://cookinglisbon.com/about/>). "It offers five different types of cooking classes: (1) a regular cooking class to learn traditional Portuguese dishes (3.5 hours, 70€), (2) a market tour and cooking class (5 hours, 85€), (3) a gourmet class to improve your cooking techniques (3.5 hours, 85€), (4) a vegetarian cooking class (3 hours, 70€), and (5) a pastry class to learn the secrets to make the Pastéis de Nata (egg tart) and other cookies (1.5 hours, 40€).

A total of 501 postings (since 2014) were accessed from TripAdvisor in August 2018, among which 426 were in English. All the English comments were scraped for text mining analysis (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015; Xu & Li, 2016). The final dataset contained 426 respondents, with their account name, comments, location, contribution,



the emotions behind the scene, i.e., the online reviews. Emotions refer to the "mental state of readiness that arise from appraisals of events or one's own thoughts" (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999, p. 184). Researchers have increasingly focused on the effect of emotions on consumer behaviour (Bagozzi et al., 1999), as well as in the context of tourism (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). The existing research has suggested that tourists' positive emotional reactions to tourism experience are significantly rela-

ted to post-consumption experiences, like satisfaction and behavioural intentions (del Bosque & San Martín, 2008; Hosany & Prayag, 2013).

The results were divided into negative and positive opinions (Ye, Zhang, & Law, 2009). It is not surprising that the negative words did not come up a lot, which is aligned with the rating result. Also, creative tourists tend to have higher satisfaction and behavioural intentions than conventional tourists.

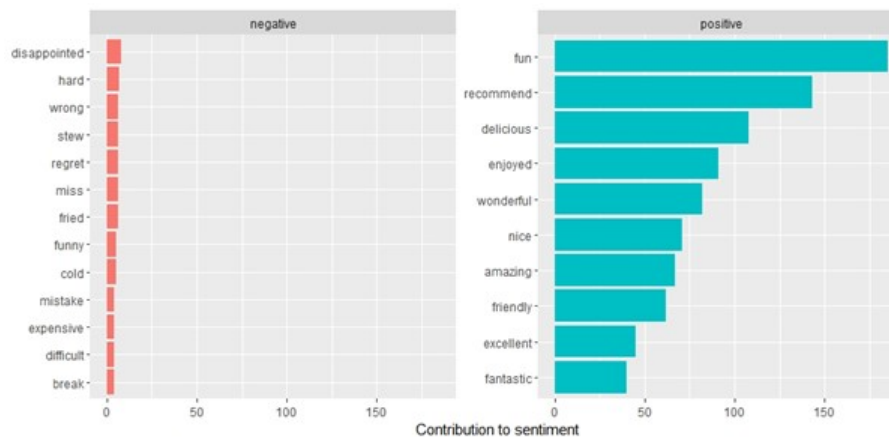


Figure 2 | Word contribution to the sentiment

Due to the limited numbers of negative words, our sentiment analysis thus focused on the positive emotion. These words related to positive affection can be divided into four categories. For starters, creative tourism activities were highly associated with hedonic values (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2018; Prebensen & Rosengren, 2016). Individuals participate in cooking lessons for personal enjoyment; words like "fun, enjoyed, wonderful, amazing, excellent," and "fantastic" fell into this category. Secondly, the word "delicious" was used to assess the dishes included in the class, aligning with the service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) and functional value (Lee, Lee, & Choi, 2011). The third aspect, as indicated by the words "nice" and "friendly," sheds light on the value creation between tou-

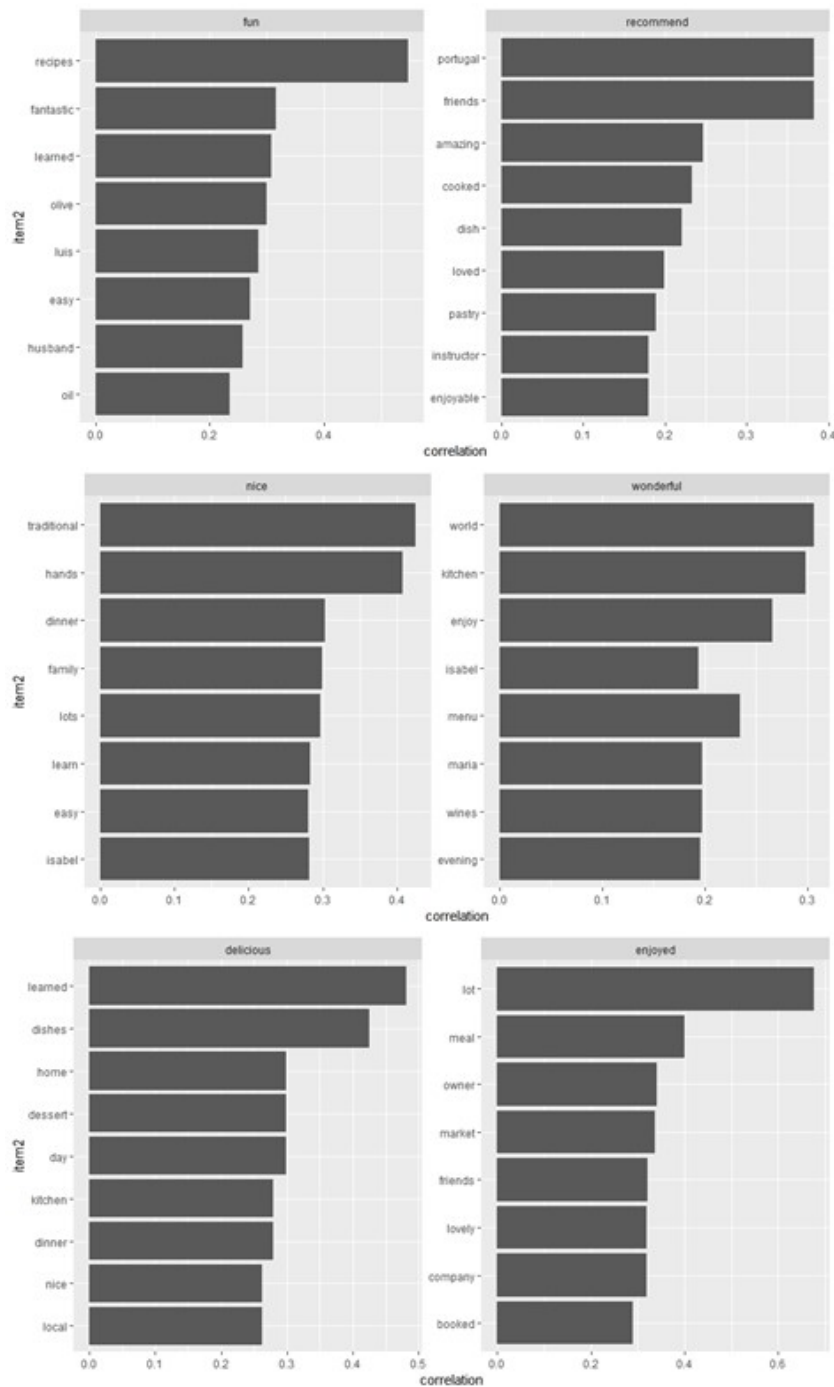
rists and employees in tourism experience encounters (Sørensen & Jensen, 2015). Lastly, the word "recommend" indicates the post-consumption experience, i.e., a high intention to positive word of mouth (Chang et al., 2014).

#### 4.4. Word correlation and bigram

To further explore the meanings behind the positive sentiment, we performed word correlation (Silge & Robinson, 2018) between words. Figure 3 displays how often each word occurs together with the top eight words in positive sentiment. For instance, the term "fun" was highly correlated to words like "recipes, fantastic, learned," indicating participants might consider cooking and learning

(how to cook) as fun experiences. Regarding the term "recommend," the results showed people consider the activities as local ("Portugal") and would highly recommend this experience to their "fri-

end." In addition, Figure 4 shows the visualization of the word correlation of all contents. Thus, various connections can be established.





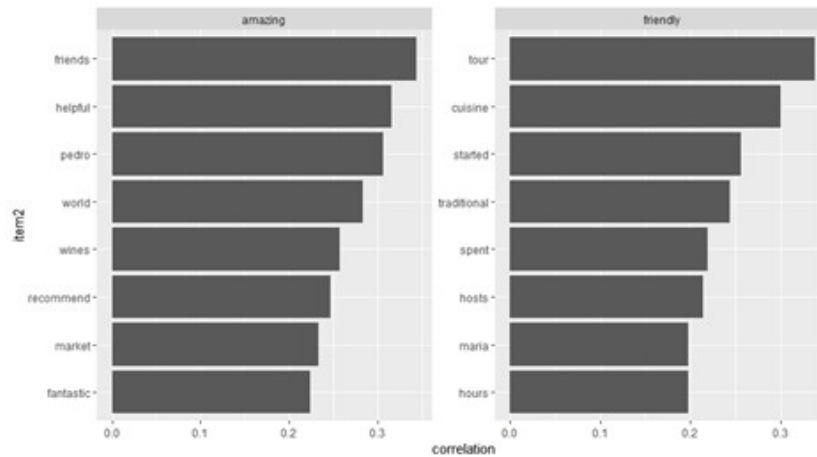


Figure 3 | The pairwise correlation



Figure 4 | Pairs of words (>.35 correlation of appearing)

#### 4.5. Topic modelling

Using Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA), topic modelling was conducted to identify some themes (Silge & Robinson, 2018). Worth noting that three words, "cooking,Lisbon,"and "class,"which were repeatedly mentioned among the participants and did not contribute to highlight the differences among the topics, were removed from the topic modelling process to avoid redundancy. Figure 5 shows the most common terms that appeared in each topic. The  $\beta$  ("beta) value indicates the per-topic-per-word probabilities of each term to the topic. For instance, the word "food"contributes the most to topic 2 compare

to others. Some words are commonly used in all topics, such as "wine,experience,chef,time,food, Portuguese,"and "fun"appeared in 3 to 4 topics. Although tasting local food has typically been included in conventional tourism, creative tourists are different in that they try to learn about local eating habits and culinary practices and meanings associated with these by actively communicating with food professionals residing in the destination. In addition, the appearance of some common words is not surprising; those are words that represent the most characteristics of creative tourism, in-depth interaction with local culture. Also, different from hard clustering approaches, some overlap regarding words in the topic model is considered as

an advantage as it is more likely to happen in the scenario of natural language (Silge & Robinson, 2018).

Besides, other terms that only appeared (once or twice) helped establish each topic's themes. Topic 1 highlights that tourists appreciated the fun they had with the chef while taking the class. Also, they enjoyed their authentic experience to explore the local market, which was considered fun, enjoyable, and recommendable (see words like "market,highly,enjoyed"). Topic 2 emphasizes on the evening dinner and the interaction with one cook ("Luis", "recommend", "evening", "delicious"). Topic 3 focuses on interaction with the local people ("meal", "local", "people"). Topic

4 sheds light on tourists' cooking learning experience, especially the most famous dessert "pastel de nata" or egg tart in English ("learn", "de", "cook", "pastry").

The results showed some critical elements in creative tourism: positive emotions, hedonic experience, authenticity, interaction with local service providers, interaction with local people, and novelty-seeking and learning experience. These outcomes are aligned with the four central elements in creative tourism: active participation, creative self-expression, learning experience, and a connected relationship with the local community (Duxbury & Richards, 2019).

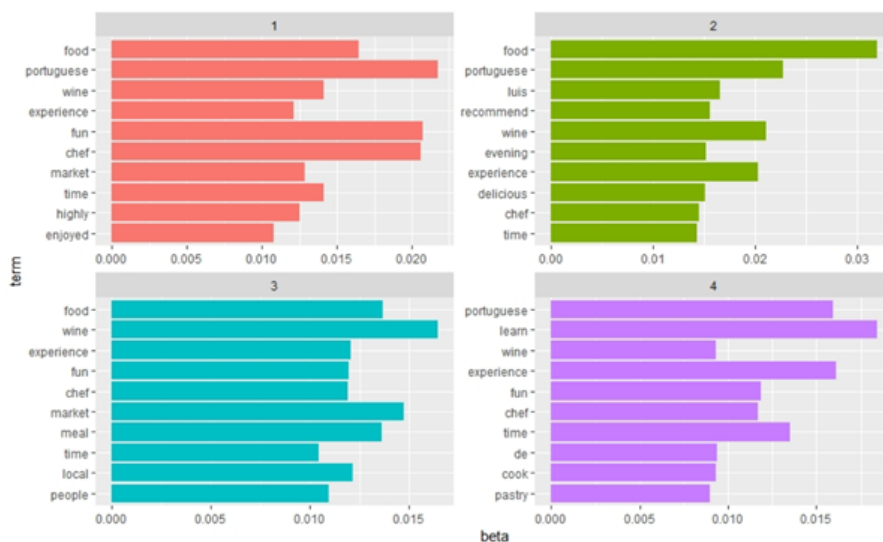


Figure 5 | The top 10 terms that are most common in each topic

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Discussion and implications

In the current study, we employed a text mining technique to explore creative tourists' perspectives to engage in typical creative tourism activity, namely, learning how to cook local foods while traveling to a destination. We analyzed online reviews of "Cooking Lisbon," a Portuguese cooking school

for international tourists. Our text mining was based on 426 TripAdvisor postings about Cooking Lisbon recorded between 2014 and 2018.

We found that reviewers frequently mentioned words, such as (cooking, class, Lisbon, food, Portuguese,) wine experience, chef, fun and time (five more words). Our sentiment analysis indicated four categories of words reflecting positive feelings: personal enjoyment (e.g., "fun,enjoyed"), descriptors of foods they cooked and enjoyed (e.g., "deli-

cious"), words describing positive interaction they had with chefs and other people they met in cooking classes (e.g., "nice,friendly") and words reflecting intentions of positive word of mouth (e.g., "recommend").

Findings from the topic modelling indicated that online reviewers of the cooking class indeed appreciated the positive emotions, hedonic experience, authenticity, interaction with local service providers, interaction with locals, and learning experience. Given that these words had been considered critical elements of creative tourism in previous research (Richards, 2011; Richards & Raymond, 2000), our findings corroborate existing literature on creative tourism. This study also provides directions to create a memorial experience for tourists in creative tourism, i.e., enhancing the functional and emotional value. Please note that tourists tend to be satisfied if the unique experiences generate functional and emotional values. (Lee et al., 2011; Song et al., 2015).

Regarding the functional value, efforts can be devoted to recipes, kitchen facilities, apron, wine, local ingredients, market tours, etc. Unlike cooking at home, cooking during travel is highly valued as entertainment, which arouses tourists' positive feelings or affective states. Thus, to enhance the emotional value, business operators should create an atmosphere when designing the cooking class, which makes a cooking class feel like a play or show performed by the tourists. It is necessary to avoid the perception of "completing a task" if service providers overemphasize the technical part of the cooking class.

To summarize, this study reveals essential factors for building a cooking class-focused creative experience and ways to establish the linkage between tourism activities and destinations. Practically, the study results offer directions for business operators in the food context and destination marketing organizations in creating a memorial experience and promoting a creative cooking class experience at the destination. Unlike typical res-

taurant experiences during travel, learning to cook local food is highly valued due to entertaining and informative, which arouses tourists' positive feelings or affective states. Tourists appreciate entertainment/fun alongside learning to cook local food from experienced local chefs and would not like straight educational instruction that is not fun.

## 5.2. Limitation of this study and suggestions for future study

However, the current study is not without limitations. We analyzed online reviews of one cooking school posted on a single review site due to the lack of data availability, as other cooking classes were all very small and had very few online reviews. Thus, our findings may not be generalized to other Portuguese cooking schools or cooking schools located in other destinations. Further research needs to explore similarities and differences in creative tourists' experiences while learning to cook local foods of destinations.

Second, although we assumed that online reviewers of a Portuguese cooking class would be considered creative tourists, this assumption may not be entirely valid. Reviewers who took a cooking class while travelling for the first time may not be considered full-fledged creative tourists. It is likely that conventional tourists gradually become creative tourists as they accumulate instances of partaking in creative tourism experiences over the years.

Furthermore, we could not compare seasoned creative tourists who had taken cooking classes in previous travels with less experienced creative tourists for whom this was their first time taking a cooking class while travelling. Seasoned creative tourists' experience of cooking classes may be more discerning and reflective, comparable to connoisseurs, than less experienced creative tourists. In-depth interviews are required in order to explore these differences between the two groups

of creative tourists. Also, considering the impacts of perceived value (functional and emotional value in the present study) on satisfaction behavioural intention, quantitative studies are needed to identify which value is the most significant in predicting post-consumption behaviour. In conclusion, our text mining of online reviews of a Portuguese cooking class indicates that tourists appreciated the hedonic experience, authenticity, interaction with local service providers, and learning experience, which are hallmarks of creative tourism.

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