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Fado, urban popular song, and intangible heritage: perceptions of authenticity and emotions in TripAdvisor reviews

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Intangible cultural heritage, such as music, often becomes the symbol of urban spaces. One example is fado, a music genre that originated in Lisbon, Portugal. With the increasing prominence of fado as a cultural heritage, an increasing number of tourists are attracted to fado shows. In this context, this study seeks to answer the following research question: “How do emotion and authenticity relate to visitors’ overall satisfaction in fado venues?”. Based on mixed methods research (descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and content analysis), 2653 TripAdvisor reviews of four fado venues in Lisbon were analyzed. We conclude that although both authenticity and emotion are highly associated with overall satisfaction, lack of authenticity was not markedly associated with dissatisfaction. The most recent fado house is perceived as the most authentic one.

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Introduction

Nowadays, urban tourism has become one of the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry. On the one hand, there is a heightened interest in discovering historical and cultural resources that are concentrated within one place; on the other hand, the allure lies in the genuine authenticity of these places and the profound emotions experienced by visitors during their exploration (Castela, 2018).

Music genres, as intangible resources, have the potential to play a significant role in shaping the brand image of a destination (Zarrilli, 2022). Recognized in 2011 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, fado has become a reference for Lisbon. It was in Lisbon, at the end of that century and the beginning of the 20th century, that Fado started to be sung, heard, and experienced in places like taverns, restaurants, and cultural and recreational societies (Rosal, 2018). Fado houses, once spots where locals gathered have transformed into places of devotion for national and international tourists (Henriques et al., 2021) who seek tradition and “unique” experiences (Mendonça, 2012).

Fado is sung by *fadistas*, i.e., fado singers wearing black attire, whose way of singing delves deep into themes of loneliness, nostalgia, pain, and longing, demonstrating its authenticity (Collins, 2022). On typical fado nights, silence reigns. The fado singer is sovereign, and the audience is silent while listening to the songs. Only applause can break this moment (Rosal, 2018).

The meaning of the lyrics, sung exclusively in Portuguese, takes a back seat for tourists. The sadness in the voice, the countenance, and the non-verbal gestures assume the main role, and it is through them that the exchange of emotions between *fadistas* and the audience is established. However, in a fado house, it is not just the music that moves the customer to visit it. It is a combination of gastronomy and fado (Henriques et al., 2021),

Research in this area mainly focuses on the importance of the musical show itself for the quality of customer experience and not on the other components of fado houses, such as gastronomy, authenticity, and emotions, which also affect the perception of the overall experience. Hence, it is important to understand how the individual emotions and the perception of authenticity experienced when visiting a fado house are valued by visitors and how these feelings lead to satisfaction among tourists.

This topic is relevant not only because authenticity is one of the main reasons that drive heritage tourists to visit certain places (Gonzalez, 2008; Park et al., 2019)—especially in a context where the massification of tourism in large urban centers has, in some instances, led to the erosion of authenticity (Ritzer, 1983; Bryman, 1999)—but also because authenticity and emotions are differently interpreted and felt by each tourist (Olsen, 2002; Yolal, 2016). Therefore, the present study aims to analyze how emotion and authenticity related to the fado experience influence personal satisfaction from the perspective of visitors to the most famous fado venues in Lisbon. The study was designed based on the following research question: “How do emotion and authenticity relate to visitors’ overall satisfaction in fado venues?”

To answer the research question, this study first presents the theoretical framework applied, namely, the relationship between tourism and fado and the link between authenticity and emotions. The third section presents the results of a content analysis of TripAdvisor reviews of four fado venues. We finish the article by deriving conclusions on the role of authenticity and emotions on the overall satisfaction of fado venue visitors.

Literature review

Fado. The word fado, from the Latin “Fatum”, has as synonyms fate, destiny, luck, fortune, and fatality (Nery, 2012). Although the musical roots are debatable, it seems to be consensual among

researchers that fado was born in Lisbon during the 19th century (Elliott, 2010). The relationship between fado and its birthplace is essential to understand its genesis (Holton, 2006). Lisbon coexists in symbiosis with fado, which celebrates the city and its typical old quarters through the lyrics of the countless songs in its honor (Gray, 2011). Fado was first sung by sailors, merchants, fishermen, prostitutes, and unemployed people, called *fadistas*, in taverns, brothels, and prisons (Nielsen et al., 2009). It is believed that the black mourning shawl worn by fado singers is a tribute to Maria Severa, a gypsy singer whose romance with the Count of Vimioso broke the barriers of social hierarchy and introduced fado to the Portuguese aristocracy (Castro-Smyth, 2014). Fado is far more than a simple musical expression. Fado emerges as a metaphor that captures the unique soul of Portuguese culture (Nielsen et al., 2009). For *fadistas*, genuine fado is an emotional experience shared between musicians, singers, and the audience, performed through music and body language in an intimate setting (Simpson et al., 2021). Fado lyrics are presented in the form of poems and usually address passion, loss, pain, lovelessness, nostalgia, and “saudade” (Shepherd, 2011). The Portuguese word “saudade” is a centerpiece of fado and defies a literal translation. It evokes a profound sense of permanent loss and irreparable lifelong damage (Simpson et al., 2021). Fado is usually performed solo by a singer (male or female), accompanied by an acoustic guitar and the unique Portuguese guitar, a pear-shaped lute with 12 wire strings (Mendes et al., 2013). During the show, complete silence reigns, echoing only the voices of the *fadistas* overflowed with feeling and the sound of guitars. This silence is not only a mark of respect for the performance but also serves to accentuate the inherently dramatic nature that fado carries within it (Holloway, 2020). Fado was spread by emigrants who took the songs with them when they left the country, looking for better living conditions. This reinforced fado’s image as a Portuguese identity symbol (Mendes et al., 2013). The uniqueness of fado has propelled it onto the international stage, with performances by famous *fadistas* around the world, such as Amália Rodrigues, the greatest fado diva, and more recently, Mariza, among many others (Zarrilli, 2022).

Tourism and Fado. The convergence of tourism and fado occurred when the professional circuit expanded from taverns and cafés to the emergence of dedicated fado houses in the 1930s and 1940s. The 1927 legislation defined the *Casas de Fado* as the ideal space to listen to this traditional Lisbon music (Nery, 2012). The first fado houses to open doors were: Solar da Alegria (1928), Salão Artístico de Fados (1933), Retiro da Severa (1936), Adega Mesquita (1938), Adega Machado (1939), Café Luso (1941), and the last three are still active (Museu do Fado, 2022). The tourism boom that took place in Portugal in the middle of the last century coincided with the period of the greatest expansion of the fado industry and fado houses. Fado houses are establishments that provide a unique dining experience where customers can indulge in local gastronomy while immersing themselves in the melodies of fado (Gray, 2020). The official recognition by UNESCO in 2011 of fado as “Intangible Cultural Heritage of the World” increased tourist interest in this musical expression as a cultural activity and not just as entertainment (Gray, 2007). Fado, born in the slums of Lisbon as a means of expression for the most disadvantaged, and elevated to a national symbol, has gained the status of a cultural and tourist symbol (Zarrilli, 2022). The notoriety of fado drives many of those who visit Lisbon to attend a performance in one of the emblematic fado houses located in the historic quarters (Gray, 2007). This perfect synergy between the fado houses and the charming old quarters serves as the main

ingredients that attract tourists, thus guaranteeing the economic livelihood of the establishments and leveraging the local economy (Madeira et al., 2021). Additionally, when the cradle quarters of fado experience a decline in the number of tourists, the local commerce, including the fado houses, tends to suffer, a phenomenon that Guimarães (2022) defines as retail gentrification. Tourism and fado are mutually dependent, thus bringing together different social actors (tourists and fado singers) in a certain physical space (Holloway, 2020). The relationship between the public, the artists, and the music scenario, where the “echo” of words throughout Lisbon and its old quarters can be heard, highlights the spatial and imagery of the city that Elliott (2010) called “fadolandscape”. This urban “soundscape”, where tradition, heritage, and *fadistas* converge, helps visitors to perceive a sense of place (Henriques, 2021).

Authenticity and tourism. Authenticity is as an attribute, a projection of attributes, or an existential state (Wang, 1999). It is the perception of each consumer of the genuineness of each product or service provided based on a fantasy or a connection with the past (Park et al., 2019). Thus, authenticity focuses on what is real, as opposed to what is false, copied, or reproduced in the same way as the original, but without being unique (Canavan and Camley, 2021). Authenticity can be interpreted in two ways: (i) related to an object, place, event, or heritage, or (ii) related to true self, being one’s true self, or being true to one’s essential nature (Zhang and Lee, 2022). Along with the first theories on tourism arose the need to clarify the role of authenticity in tourist experiences (Rickly, 2018). In this regard, MacCannell (1973) presented the “staged authenticity theory”, stating that the search for authenticity in the tourist experience was doomed to inauthenticity since tourism had been transformed into a commodity and a small lie. The lack of authenticity in tourist experiences promoted by mass tourism gave rise to designations such as MacDonalization (Henriques et al. 2021) and Disneyization (Bryman, 1999). On the other hand, the concept of authenticity in tourism remains subject to various interpretations, primarily because the perspective of tourists must be taken into account (Olsen, 2002). For example, a tourist experience may not be exclusive as it is offered to thousands of visitors and yet have traces of authenticity (Yolal, 2016). Hence, it is tourists who perceive experiences and gives them meaning, so what is inauthentic for some may not be for others [28]. Authenticity is often regarded as a potent driving force that motivates heritage tourists to choose specific destinations, perhaps more so than for other forms of tourism [8]. Cultural and heritage tourists are interested in having authentic experiences that encompass these two components, ranging from the monuments and old quarters to the ethical origins and customs of people who are culturally different (Gonzalez, 2008). Thus, authenticity should be seen as the individual perception of any form of heritage, material or immaterial, since both forms can convey values of genuineness (Su, 2018).

Fado experience and authenticity. Music, as cultural heritage, helps to define the uniqueness of places, as it links inhabitants, visitors, and places of origin (Zarrilli, 2022). In the tourism context, flamenco in Spain, tango in Argentina, reggae in Jamaica, and fado in Portugal can offer immersion opportunities in local culture through music and allow visitors to live authentic and unique experiences (de-Miguel-Molina and Boix-Doménech, 2021). Fado, as a musical expression, is used to offer tourists an “authentic” view of the Portuguese working-class lifestyle (Elliott, 2010). Hence, fado as intangible heritage contributes decisively to the cultural identity of the city and its neighborhoods (Daly et al. 2021). The authenticity of fado resides in the unique feelings it

conveys, and the word *saudade* stands as the quintessential embodiment of Lisbon’s nostalgic identity, present in each of the typical old streets (Holton, 2006). Belief in fate and the understanding of sadness and grief as part of the human condition contributed to the establishment of a strong sense of national identity (Castro-Smyth, 2014). The distinctive experience of fado owes much to the idyllic space where it takes place through an alignment of factors such as the folk kitsch decoration, the architecture, the performance, and the intimacy of the *fadistas* with the audience, which are characterized as fado memorabilia (Henriques et al., 2021). Fado houses are, in addition, typical restaurants which offer gastronomic experiences based on Portuguese regional cuisine (Guimarães, 2022). Gastronomy is associated with the cultural legacy of a place, so tourists often seek gastronomic experiences that they classify as exotic, considering their food background (Jang and Ha, 2015). Nevertheless, there is another type of fado experience that cannot be ignored, focused only on the show, usually in theaters or other show venues (Elliott, 2010). This experiential aspect is more explored by *fadistas* when they reach a reputation that allows them to fill large concert halls and, more recently, in daily concerts aimed at tourists (Holloway, 2020). The positive or negative feedback from the fado experience translates into reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor, where customers expose their perception of the show (de-Miguel-Molina and Boix-Doménech, 2021).

Emotions and tourism. Emotions are an integral part of the human being that can be defined as affective reactions of short duration in relation to certain stimuli (Prayag and Del Chiappa, 2021). Emotions can be externalized through the experiential process to which each person is subjected daily (Nasution et al., 2014). Emotions are an essential component of the tourist experience, strongly influencing the assessment of the destination (Hosany et al., 2021). In that sense, satisfaction with the places visited, and the experiences lived decisively influence the favorable opinion of visitors regarding the destination and its attributes (Wei et al., 2019). In the travel context, emotions are affected by sensory components, such as smells, sounds, tastes, touches, and visual aspects, which influence tourist’s emotions and memory (Mayer and Coelho, 2021). Although there is an inclination of discourse toward positive emotions, not all experiences are positive (Kim et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the same event, several emotions can be triggered, which can be contradictory or mixed emotions (Berrios et al., 2017). Moreover, one’s emotions toward a destination and its heritage are a personal interpretation influenced by personal beliefs, cultural and generational values, among others (Cohen et al., 2014). For example, visiting an old and decaying quarter can elicit a range of emotions: for some, it evokes feelings of purity; for others, of discomfort and degradation (Steinbrink, 2012). That is, if the tourist establishes a positive connection with the local heritage and culture, the experience is memorable, although the opposite is also valid (Lee, 2015). Among the strongest emotions related to tourism is the feeling of nostalgia, usually evoked by the connection to the past and to material and immaterial heritage (Prayag and Del Chiappa, 2021). In the context of the fado experience, the past and the present are intertwined, and while the tangible heritage is expressed in each street where this music was born, the intangible heritage is reflected in the lyrics, in each performance, and in the scenic space of each venue (Elliott, 2010). Nostalgia and *saudade*, which are associated with Portuguese identity, set the tone for each fado venue, evoking different emotions within the audience (Holton, 2006). In fado venues, this combination of sensations is reinforced in most cases by local gastronomy (Henriques et al., 2021). Local music and indigenous cuisine are strongly related to

emotions in a tourism context, as they reinforce the identity traits of the place's authenticity (Zarrilli, 2022).

Methodology

The fado performing venues and data collection. This study concerns four fado venues in Lisbon (three fado houses and one theater with a fado show). Totally, 2653 TripAdvisor reviews (corresponding to 234,059 words) were collected and analyzed. We gathered all available reviews for each establishment at the time of data collection. The choice of fado venues was determined by four criteria: (i) location in the most touristic quarters of Lisbon (Alfama, Chiado, and Bairro Alto), (ii) prestige of the fado show, (iii) scope of fado experience (in fado houses and theater), and (iv) the classification on TripAdvisor, the platform where customer reviews were collected. Hence, the following fado houses were chosen:

Café Luso. In its present location, in Bairro Alto, Café Luso (CL) opened its doors in 1941, located in the old cellars and stables of Palácio Brito Freire, which withstood the 1755 earthquake. The history of CL is intertwined with the history of fado, such as the number of fado singers who performed there. Among all of them, the diva Amália Rodrigues stands out, who recorded one of her albums in CL. The majestic marble columns, together with the arching structure of the vaulted ceilings, in cobblestone and brick, bestow a sense of nobility and rusticity upon the space while creating a unique acoustic environment. Fado performances take place in the noble area of the venue, in the center of the room: the curtains are closed, and the light intensity is lowered to help create an intimate atmosphere between musicians and customers (Museu do Fado, 2022). The restaurant offers Portuguese food, with an average price of 70 euros per person (TripAdvisor (2022a).

O Faia. Located in Barroca Street, in the emblematic quarter of Bairro Alto, this fado cult space was inaugurated by two fado singers in 1946. Their son, Carlos do Carmo, who grew up among guitars and *fadistas*, would become one of the most emblematic voices of fado. Carlos do Carmo later managed it until 1980 when he decided to sell it. In 2012, the year it turned 65, O Faia (OF) was renovated with more up-to-date decor and a signature cuisine menu, which revisits the classic Portuguese dishes, with an average price of 60 euros per person (TripAdvisor, 2022c). In

addition to Carlos do Carmo, some of the most iconic voices of fado performed at OF (Lojas com História, 2022).

Mesa de Frades. Mesa de Frades (MF) only opened in 2006 in an old chapel in Palácio Rosa, a 19th-century building decorated with beautiful tiles, quickly becoming a reference in the fado scene. It became a chapel for fado singers. Despite defending a certain purism, the “new old fado” and its new performers are promoted. The building has extraordinary natural acoustics resulting from its ecclesiastical past. Located in the corner of the famous Rua dos Remédios, in Alfama, behind discreet green doors, it is a meeting point for *fadistas* who live here and watch their colleagues perform. Carminho, one of the new fado stars, sang at MF, as well as other voices which, according to experts, represent the present and future of fado (Museu do Fado, 2022). The gastronomic offer is based on Portuguese cuisine, with an average price per person of 60 euros (TripAdvisor, 2022b).

Fado in Chiado. Fado in Chiado (FC) has been held at the small venue Theatro Gymnásio in Espaço Chiado since 2009. It presents daily fado shows to tourists. During the show, images related to the fado and the “must-sees” of the city are projected to involve the audience in the spirit of the fado. According to the organization, FC was born out of a cultural gap in Lisbon, which is to democratize Fado and allow the audience to simply watch the show without having to pay for a meal. As a show, admittedly for tourists, the privileged location in the most upscale quarter of the city, Chiado, is not a coincidence (Visit Lisbon, 2022). A ticket for a show at Fado Chiado costs 19.50 euros (Fado in Chiado, 2022).

Data analysis. Concerning data analysis, this study adopted a mixed methods approach. NVivo 1.6.1 was used to code data. Reviewers were coded as cases, close-ended items (fado house, gender, nationality, and 1–5 rating) were coded as case attributes, and comments were created as codes through content analysis. All comments were translated into English before data analysis.

IBM SPSS Statistics 28 was used for analyzing close-ended items (descriptive and inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and Kruskal-Wallis H). The statistical significance level was set at 0.05.

After that, we carried out a content analysis to provide a detailed account of specific themes within the dataset (Fig. 1)

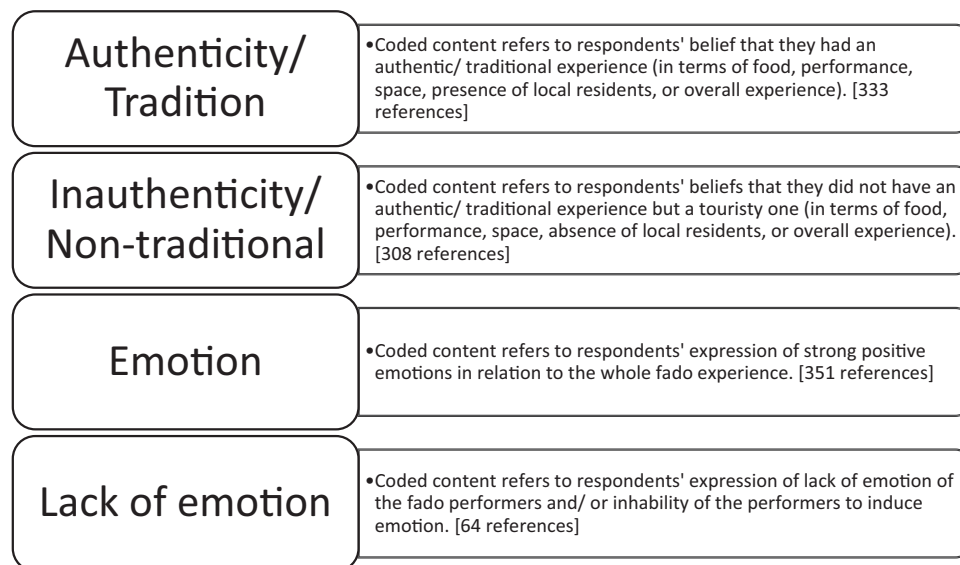


Fig. 1 Coding structure of the thematic analysis. Four main themes were identified in the TripAdvisor reviews to fado houses.

instead of making a description of the whole dataset. After an initial analysis of the dataset with NVivo Auto Code and Word Frequency Query functionalities, it was concluded that emotion and authenticity were relevant themes in the dataset. Hence, the themes depicted in Fig. 1 served as analytic categories (Lune and Berg, 2017). During the coding process, our focus was on manifest rather than latent content (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). After coding 20% of the whole dataset manually, the NVivo Auto Code Wizard was used to code the remaining data based on existing coding patterns. The resulting codification was manually reviewed to remove content incorrectly coded and further ensure the reliability of the coding process. We coded explicit content, which means that we did not detect implicit references to authenticity and emotion. When coding emotion, we focus on clearly positive and negative emotions, which means that less intense expressions of emotions were left out. We conducted descriptive statistics of the codes obtained in content analysis, as well as qualitative analysis of the contents of each theme. The number of references for each code was included in Fig. 1. During the write-up phase, emphasis was given to comparing customers who were either satisfied (4 and 5-star ratings) or dissatisfied (1 and 2-star ratings) in relation to the themes analyzed.

Results

Sample characterization. Most reviewers in the sample were male (44.5%) (Table 1). There is a statistically significant difference between reviewers in terms of gender by fado house. Male reviewers prevailed in all fado houses, and the gender gap was the widest in OF. CL and MF had the highest proportion of reviewers whose gender was not revealed on TripAdvisor. FC, which was not a bar/restaurant but rather a concert hall, had a slightly greater proportion of female reviewers as compared to the remaining houses.

On average, only 5.8% of the reviewers were from Portugal. These results suggest that the fado houses are mostly sought by foreigners. The percentage of Portuguese reviewers was highest in MF, while it was much lower in the remaining houses. Reviewers' most frequent country of origin was Brazil (15.6%), closely followed by those of undisclosed nationality (15.0%) and the USA (12.5%). Their distribution across fado houses was not equal. Reviews concerning FC and OF were mostly written by Brazilian, followed by US reviewers. In CL, reviewers from Italy and France were the most frequent. In MF, most reviews were written by individuals of undisclosed nationality (21.59%), followed by Portuguese individuals (11.66%). FC and OF were the fado house where satisfaction was highest while dissatisfaction was lowest. In

MF, satisfaction levels were only a bit lower, while dissatisfaction was comparably higher. In these three houses, satisfaction levels by far surpassed dissatisfaction levels. However, the opposite pattern was observed in relation to CL, where very dissatisfied reviewers exceeded very satisfied ones. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the satisfaction score between the various fado houses (Table 1). Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the four fado houses, controlling for Type I error across tests by using the Bonferroni approach. The results of these tests indicated a significant difference between CL and the remaining Fado houses ($p = 0.000$).

Authenticity and tradition. MF, the Fado venue, which gathered more Portuguese reviewers, was also perceived as the most authentic and traditional one. It was the only venue where reviewers mentioning Authenticity and tradition exceeded those mentioning the theme of non-authenticity/non-traditional. In contrast, CL was perceived as the least authentic (Table 2). Gender differences in the evaluation of authenticity were not very visible. There were differences in terms of perceptions of authenticity according to nationality (with Portuguese, Brazilians, and Italians perceiving greater authenticity than, e.g., Americans and the French), which suggests that culturally closer cultures might perceive greater authenticity in the experience (with Spain being an exception)—however, caution is needed in the interpretation of these results. On the one hand, nationalities were not equally distributed across fado houses; on the other hand, there were sharp differences between the four fado houses concerning the perception of their level of authenticity. We do not have enough data to further disaggregate our data by more detailed subcategories, which would allow us to understand how nationality truly influences perceptions of authenticity. Authenticity is strongly and positively associated with satisfaction. Two-thirds of those who believed that they had an authentic, traditional, or “local” experience rated their experiences as 4 or 5. Practically no one referred positively to the authenticity of the place while rating the experience as 1 or 2—the few exceptions recognized or praised the authenticity of the place while complaining about other aspects such as the quality of the food, service, or price:

Wonderful Fado that takes your breath away, wonderful traditional atmosphere that enhances the authenticity of the place. The service is one of the worst I've ever witnessed, in a hurry, not flexible and they don't seem like they don't want to satisfy you in any sort of way (...). (MF, male, Egypt, 2-star)

Table 1 Sample characterization.

	Gender			Nationality	Rating				
	Female	Male	no info		Portuguese	1	2	3	4
CL	110	134	133	14	77	43	82	104	71
	29.20%	35.50%	35.30%	3.71%	20.40%	11.40%	21.80%	27.60%	18.80%
FC	157	185	62	22	11	6	45	126	216
	38.90%	45.80%	15.30%	5.45%	2.70%	1.50%	11.10%	31.20%	53.50%
MF	126	165	112	47	34	23	35	115	196
	31.30%	40.90%	27.80%	11.66%	8.40%	5.70%	8.70%	28.50%	48.60%
OF	484	696	289	71	34	54	161	452	768
	32.90%	47.40%	19.70%	4.83%	2.30%	3.70%	11.00%	30.80%	52.30%
Total	877	1180	596	154	156	126	323	797	1251
	33.10%	44.50%	22.50%	5.80%	5.90%	4.70%	12.20%	30.00%	47.20%
Test	$\chi^2(6) = 63.917, p = <0.001$			Assumptions of the Chi-square test not observed	$H(3) = 250.606, p = 0.000$				

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2 “Authenticity/Tradition” and “Emotion” by gender, main nationalities, and Fado venue.

	Authenticity and tradition	Lack of authenticity and tradition	Emotion	Lack of emotion
References	333	308	351	64
Cases	256	244	283	45
	Percentage of cases		Percentage of cases	
FC	41%	59%	75%	25%
CL	15%	85%	74%	26%
MF	82%	18%	92%	8%
OF	33%	67%	91%	9%
Male	57%	43%	82%	18%
Female	57%	43%	91%	9%
Undisclosed	38%	62%	88%	12%
1	2%	98%	20%	80%
2	6%	94%	17%	83%
3	22%	78%	36%	64%
4	47%	53%	88%	12%
5	83%	17%	100%	0%
Brazil	71%	29%	90%	10%
Portugal	67%	33%	75%	25%
France	47%	53%	87%	13%
Italy	61%	39%	94%	6%
Spain	44%	56%	88%	12%
USA	44%	56%	83%	17%

Source: own elaboration.

Another reviewer highlighted the authenticity of a singer as the only positive aspect of the whole experience:

A real character who enhances the establishment and gives it a touch of authenticity. (OF, female, undisclosed country, 1-star)

In the code “Authenticity/ Tradition”, those who were satisfied with their experience (i.e., who rated it as 4 or 5) highlighted the authentic, typical, and non-touristy nature of the establishment. They praised the “true Fado” and the opportunity to envision “real Lisbon”. They mentioned the authenticity of several elements, from the music and the atmosphere to the food:

Listening to good fado, tasting a good wine, in the cold of January, nothing is more typical in Lisbon, I love it!!!! (FC, female, Brazil, 5-star)

Here is the best fado in Lisbon. No kitsch but "real". (CL, male, Germany, 5-star)

We felt transported to a real Portuguese home, with the simplicity and wonderful taste of that food. (MF, male, Brazilian, 4-star)

Many of these reviewers also emphasized how the place being frequented by locals was a mark of authenticity:

Also, a lot of locals were there and that said something about the authenticity. (MF, male, China, 4-star)

There was a table of Portuguese fado fans here, who cheered the singers enthusiastically. (OF, undisclosed gender, Thailand, 4-star)

I think we were the only tourists, the establishment was full, but it felt like all the people were Portuguese. (OF, undisclosed gender, France, 4-star)

Concerning the theme of lack of authenticity, it is noticeable that 46% of those who stated that the establishment was touristy or lacked authenticity were nonetheless satisfied/ very satisfied with their experience; however, it is noticeable that among the “very satisfied” this percentage is smaller (14%) than among the “satisfied” (32%). These data suggest that if a tourist values authenticity and recognizes the place as authentic, they are very likely to rate their overall experience positively. However, lack of authenticity may not necessarily be seriously detrimental to the experience if it is felt that other attributes/ elements of the experience compensate for it:

It’s more of a tourist place rather than authentic Portuguese cuisine, but that didn’t make our dinner any less delicious! (CL, female, Russia, 4-star)

It certainly isn’t the classic, authentic way (which would be in a dark restaurant), but it lets you focus on the music, which is performed by legit, real-deal local fado stars. (FC, undisclosed gender, 5-star)

Obvious tourist address but nice fado dinner show. (CL, female, France, 4-star)

My husband and I went to this restaurant fully knowing it was touristy, but we enjoyed it immensely. (OF, female, USA, 5-star)

Some reviewers who visited FC (which offers the lowest entry prices without dinner included) mentioned that despite this place lacking some authenticity, it was nonetheless preferable to other “tourists traps” and “rip-offs”:

We didn’t want to pay big bucks from basic (or even bad) dinner in the trap because the most important thing was to hear fado. Fado at [FC] was a pleasant and different experience, although it’s not authentic the real deal. (FC, male, Finland, 4-star)

Of course, it was an international tourist [show] but if you are unsure about the fado clubs and don’t want to pay much more you can try [FC]. (FC, male, Turkey, 4-star)

For other reviewers, the lack of authenticity was heavily detrimental to the experience and left the feeling that they had experienced a “tourist trap”:

It seemed like a tourist factory in the worst taste. (CL, female, Spain, 1-star)

Ah, and when we told Portuguese people that we had spent an evening at the [CL], they laughed at us.... (CL, undisclosed gender, France, 1-star)

DON’T GO INTO THIS TOURIST TRAP!!! (CL, undisclosed gender, France, 1-star)

A combination of factors such as large quantities of tourists, excessive prices, low-quality food, poor performances, and loss of the characteristics specific to fado were underlined by many as heavily negative:

What clearly affected the calm atmosphere were the masses of tourists (felt like three buses) and partly also the behavior (standing up while singing) and a photographer who took photos of everyone and then sold them dearly. (OF, undisclosed gender, Australia, 1-star)

The waiters were rude, the atmosphere touristy (with a busload of tourists filling the front tables), the food substandard and vastly overpriced. (CL, female, USA, 1-star)

There were brief moments of fado which were good, but the overwhelming impression was of a cheap, badly performed tourist show. (CL, male, Ireland, 1-star)

Interestingly, the same type of distortions to the typical show – such as having tourists sing along – were evaluated differently by different individuals:

I can see how it can be considered tacky or touristy, as they have you singing during part of the show, but all in all, it was easily accessible, had good talent, and [there] was information displayed in multiple languages. (FC, male USA, 4-star)

Then there were the clap-along songs which are not typical of FADO at all and loved by tourists who don't understand. (OF, undisclosed gender and nationality, 1-star).

Emotions. Results concerning emotion were more positive than those concerning authenticity. While reviewers had been relatively well distributed between those mentioning authenticity (51%) and lack of authenticity (49%), there were significantly more reviewers highlighting emotion (86%) than lack of emotion (14%). Undesired emotions evoked by the fado atmosphere were residual. However, some comments referred to a “lack of emotion”. Hence, we coded for this theme whenever the reviewers felt that the fado show did not evoke the expected feeling of longing and nostalgia (Elliott, 2010).

Men (12%) were slightly more likely than women (11%) and those of undisclosed gender (9%) to highlight emotion (particularly lack of emotion) in their comments. However, women and those of undisclosed gender were more likely than men to comment favorably on the emotions elicited by the experience, while men were more likely to comment negatively on this theme. Although we cannot derive a definite conclusion on the role of nationality in the perception of emotion due to the limitations previously mentioned, we notice a very different pattern compared to the one observed for authenticity. Italians, followed by Spaniards and Brazilians, were far more likely to comment on emotion than on lack of emotion. In contrast, the Portuguese were the most represented among the main nationalities analyzed to comment on the lack of emotion. The fado houses that had a greater proportion of comments highlighting desired emotion were OF and MF.

Highlighting the emotions felt is strongly and positively associated with star ratings. In all comments rating the establishment with five stars, only desired emotions were highlighted. In contrast, only a few reviewers who rated the establishment negatively (mostly due to lack of service quality or low-quality food) highlighted emotions positively:

The singing and atmosphere of the place was magical, but the food and wine spoiled everything. (CL, male, UK, 1-star)

Wonderful Fado that takes your breath away, wonderful traditional atmosphere that enhances the authenticity of the place. (...) The service is one of the worst I've ever witnessed, in a hurry, not accommodating, not flexible and they don't seem like they don't want [sic] to satisfy you in any sort of way. (OF, male, USA, 2-star)

Those who highlighted emotions positively and were satisfied with their overall experience emphasized different aspects of

emotion. For many of these reviewers, the emotions triggered made the evening become “unforgettable” and “memorable”:

Had a most memorable evening here because the Fado is just superb, the music and the voices just ripped through your soul. (OF, female, Australia, 4-star)

A memorable night in Lisbon, with impeccable service, very good food and an unforgettable show with very good singers and musicians singing love, sadness, disagreements... (OF, male, Brazil, 4-star)

Three of the four artists returned for sets of 3–4 songs each. It was absolutely magical. We left, after a most memorable evening, just shy of 2 am. (OF, undisclosed gender, Canada, 4-star)

“Magical” is an adjective frequently used by reviewers to characterize their experiences:

On our evening there were two interpreters: an older gentleman and then a young lady, with a magical voice and a great charisma, so that the spirit of fado got right under your skin - bravo! (MF, male, Germany, 4-star)

We got an experience of a lifetime that was beyond our wildest expectations. Lonely Planet describes the place as magical, but that description falls short. (MF, undisclosed gender and nationality, 5-star)

The element most emphasized in the comments referring to emotion were associated with Fado itself, i.e., the music, the singers and their voices, the guitar, and how these elements evoked strong and deep emotions:

The fame is deserved: exceptional artists who know how to vibrate the strings of the soul with unique sounds and voices. (OF, male, Italy, 4-star)

The music is entrancing, the songs seem to permeate your entire being with emotion. (OF, male, Hawaii, 4-star)

Extremely talented musicians and singers. That gave me the creeps. (FC, female, UK, 5-star)

Traditional and exceptional in Portugal. Although this song may sound depressing to some people, to others it speaks from the heart. (FC, undisclosed gender, Greece, 5-star)

A gentleman, whose name I do not remember, and it is a pity, I assure you, delighted us with some magnificent songs, to the point of giving goosebumps, literally. (MF, male, Spain, 5-star)

But when the musicians and singer began, we were captured by the emotions and intensity of the songs about lost love, lonely sailors, and poor working people. This was truly a highlight of our time in Portugal! (MF, male, USA, 5-star)

From the most current fados, to closing with traditional songs, the singers take turns and manage to transmit feelings that dose nostalgia, pain, and joy. (FC, male, Brazilian 4-star)

The immaculate voices of the singers accompanied by those melodic guitars was unforgettable. (MF, male, Turkey, 5-star)

Since the first song I cried, the fado is beautiful, it deserves the title of World Heritage. (FC, female, Brazil, 5-star)

Many customers felt that such emotions were transmitted despite them not understanding Portuguese:

The singers all had wonderful voices and even though we couldn't understand the lyrics, the emotions were plain to see. (OF, male, USA, 4-star)

The music was very good, even though we don't speak a word of Portuguese the singers manage to convey really deep emotion and it was entrancing. (OF, male, UK, 5-star)

Our waiter came by and described the meaning of the songs, which was helpful, but it was really not necessary, because they sang with such strong emotion that we could feel their passion even though we didn't know the language. (OF, female, USA, 4-star)

The atmosphere was also an important element that triggered such emotions, in particular, the use of candle lights in MF:

The lights in the rooms were dimmed and candles were lit, making the moment more enchanting. (MF, female, Brazil, 4-star)

Her powerful voice, their beautiful guitar playing, and the candlelight bouncing off the walls was magical! (MF, female, undisclosed nationality, 5-star)

I cannot describe what it feels like to be in this space, with the wall *azulejos* [typical Portuguese tiles] still depicting Christian scenes, the singers feeling your heart with emotions and with a glass of wine in front of you! (MF, female, Romania, 5-star)

Although the atmosphere and the music were the aspects that triggered emotions the most, other elements were also highlighted by some reviewers:

The combination of place, cuisine and fado guarantee an unforgettable evening. (MF, male, Italy, 4-star)

In contrast, there were few comments on lack of emotion, and no such comment was detected for customers rating the establishments as 5 stars. Most comments on the lack of emotions were by customers who rated the fado venue as 3 stars. Satisfied reviewers (4-star rating) who expressed their disappointment with the lack of emotion praised other aspects of their experience, such as the food or the service:

Quality service in a pleasant setting (you can listen to the artists and not the hubbub of tourists). A good introduction to Fado, it just lacks a little emotion. (FC, male, undisclosed nationality, 4-star)

[...] The food was excellent. [...] The service was outstanding [...]. The reason for the 4 stars is the Fado was not as good as the Fado we heard in Porto. [...] My friend and I both found the Fado lacked the emotion we had heard. But, I'm not an expert. (OF, male, USA, 4-star)

Dissatisfied customers criticized the lack of emotion more heavily:

We really did not find the soul of traditional fado! (OF, undisclosed gender and nationality, 2-star)

In some comments, the perception of inauthenticity intersected with the theme of lack of emotion, in particular, the lack of nostalgia:

Somebody (a lady) was shouting her grief whilst making movements as if she was Michel Jackson and after 3 songs she paused. More people came in; it was like a circus. After 30 min another shouting performance and again a pause; more people coming in. I have heard fado many times, but this was without any charm or emotion in a circus. (MF, undisclosed gender, Portugal, 2-star)

Okay performance, but very average. The tragic, the soul, the pain, and the nostalgia of Fado were missing. The show was made for tourists and the artists were not emotionally present. (FC, female, undisclosed nationality, 2-star)

Some reviewers compared their experiences of fado with previous experiences they had with other musical styles:

I did not realize how emotional is Fado until I experienced it. It is very Portuguese like tango is in Argentina or flamenco in Spain. (OF, male, undisclosed nationality, 5-star)

These comparisons were not always positive:

There seemed to be no involvement on the part of the artists, unlike the flamenco show I saw in Barcelona in a similar setting, where things felt much more genuine. (FC, male, USA, 1-star)

Discussion and conclusions

Fado is a Portuguese type of urban popular music, recognized since 2011 as the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2022). The international recognition gave fado greater prominence, thus arousing the curiosity of tourists when visiting Lisbon (Henriques et al., 2021). This notoriety, in addition to its unique character, has converted fado into one of the main attractions in Lisbon today (Elliott, 2010). This investigation intended to analyze the experience of fado with a focus on emotions and authenticity perceived by tourists who visit fado venues in Lisbon. Reviews of visitors to fado venues were collected on TripAdvisor. Three fado houses with different profiles were chosen: CL, where the Diva Amália Rodrigues performed; OF, which was owned by the greatest male Fado voice, Carlos do Carmo; and MF, which, albeit more recently has become a meeting point of famous *fadistas* and an incubator for new singers. It should be noted that all the fado houses analyzed are strategically located in the most typical neighborhoods of Lisbon, and therefore also in the most touristic ones. The buildings where the fado houses are located are also all centenary and classified as municipal heritage. The architecture of these structures, along with the surrounding streets, enrich the immersive process of the fado holistic experience. Finally, FC was chosen to represent another type of offer on a theater stage without including any gastronomic component.

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this work is that the studied places differ in terms of star rating. Higher overall ratings are directly linked to the emotions felt and the perception of authenticity. Those visitors who highlighted the intense emotionality of their fado experience (associated with feelings of nostalgia and melancholy) also had a higher level of overall satisfaction. The fado music itself and the elements associated with it were the main triggers of such intense emotions. Lack of emotion was a minor theme, absent among the most satisfied customers.

Concerning Authenticity/ Tradition, the perception that one had an authentic, traditional, and local experience was strongly associated with satisfaction. The authenticity of the music, atmosphere, and food was positively praised by many satisfied customers. However, the perception of a lack of authenticity was not markedly associated with dissatisfaction. This suggests that in the face of inauthentic experiences that tourists are able to acknowledge as such, other compensatory elements might still render the overall experience satisfactory (e.g., quality food, good singers, etc.). Nonetheless, among the very satisfied tourists, only a few highlighted how they had inauthentic experiences—thus showing that the perception of inauthenticity might detract from optimal experiences. In the future, the lack of authenticity and the saturation of some fado houses may lead to a decline in their number of visitors, in particular when dissatisfaction levels become more visible in TripAdvisor star ratings. However, the existence of compensatory elements (e.g., good food and show) might slow down this process. A limitation that constrains our ability to interpret our findings is that many tourists certainly did not realize that they had an inauthentic experience or indeed enjoyed its touristification—yet, we have no data that allow this analysis. This fact can be explained by the tourist's lack of perception of what is or is not genuine or what the tourist accepts as genuine (Daly et al., 2021). That is, tourists might prefer their version of authenticity rather than the real one (Canavan and McCamley, 2021).

A surprising finding is that although FC displays a show admittedly for tourists, it is not the venue that gathers the most comments on non-authenticity. In contrast, CL, one of the most emblematic Fado houses, gathers the most negative comments on authenticity. The justification for this dissatisfaction might be linked to the quality of the gastronomic offer versus the menu price. In fact, CL is the most expensive venue. A low price-quality ratio might evoke the perception of being in a “tourist trap”. Moreover, the large size of this establishment, which accepts groups of more than 100 tourists, contrasts with the smaller size of the other fado houses, where the encounter between artists and spectators is more intimate (Gray, 2011). Such large numbers of tourists might increase the perception of being in a “tourist factory”.

As far as MF is concerned, it is the most recent fado house. However, it was the house that gathered the greatest proportion of comments on Authenticity/ Tradition. This can be explained by the greater presence of local people in the audience, which for the tourist, is a sign of authenticity. The small size of the place, as well as its former function as a chapel, may also explain the high proportion of positive comments on emotion (Gray, 2007).

Finally, OF is the venue most associated with positive emotion, albeit it is perceived as the second least authentic. This finding can be explained by the de-characterization of the space during the last refurbishment. While it gained more of a gastronomic atmosphere, it may have lost some of the essence of a fado house (Henriques et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the performers seem to be able to convey the emotions of fado, possibly as a result of the quality of the show (Gray, 2020).

In short, the results reveal that the most recent fado venue performs best in terms of both perceived authenticity and emotion. These findings suggest that “authentic” does not necessarily mean old. Newer places may nonetheless be the guardians of the traditional values, rather than older places which succumbed to the temptation of mass tourism. Hence, due to the phenomenon of touristification, which gradually took on the glamor of the most iconic fado houses (where great fado singers like Amália or Carlos do Carmo performed), the experience became more “massified” and less personal. This new reality, in the eyes of visitors, is interpreted as more

touristic and less genuine. Thus, from the visitor's perspective, the perception is that, regardless of the quality of the show, the gastronomy and history of the oldest and, therefore, more famous fado houses do not convey feelings of authenticity, as they are frequented almost exclusively by tourists. These findings suggest that new places that respect tradition but at the same time are innovative have a competitive advantage, as they manage to please both locals and tourists alike (Zarrilli, 2022). In other words, fado has gained new fans and new interpreters looking for authentic spaces, which in a way, represent the humblest places where the song began instead of fancy places (Gray, 2020; Holloway, 2020).

This study contributes to the understanding of how the perception of authenticity and emotions are intertwined with satisfaction in the fado experience. Both academics and practitioners can benefit from the findings of this study pertaining to the importance of authenticity and, in particular, emotions for a satisfactory fado experience. The finding that many visitors perceived a lack of authenticity but nonetheless remained satisfied points to the complex nature of tourism experiences, where personal, situational, and product factors influence overall satisfaction (Matzler et al., (2008)). This is in line with Pearce and Moscardo's (Pearce and Moscardo, 1986) findings that individuals have different needs and preferences concerning authenticity. Our study also counters the notion that “old” equates “authentic”.

Despite our unique findings, we acknowledge this study's limitations. Firstly, there was a high proportion of reviewers with undisclosed nationality and gender, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn on the role of nationality and gender in mediating satisfaction in fado venues. Secondly, many individuals visit fado houses but do not leave comments on TripAdvisor. Hence, we have no information as to what extent the experiences of these individuals differ from the experiences reported in the reviews analyzed. Finally, we only analyzed explicit references to authenticity and emotions—hence, subtle references to these constructs were not analyzed. Particularly when coding emotions, our focus on clearly positive and negative emotions meant the exclusion of less intense emotions.

Future studies could seek to identify the predictors of satisfaction in fado houses. Moreover, it would be interesting to evaluate how experiences in fado houses affect tourists' assessment of their overall experience in Lisbon and/or in Portugal. Another possibility for future studies would be to try to understand how fado house owners, managers, performers, and staff regard their own role in the creation of the fado tourism product.

Data availability

The datasets analyzed during the current study are available in the Harvard Dataverse repository: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/UFNZBM>. These datasets were derived from the following public domain resources: TripAdvisor—*Café Luso* (Retrieved from: https://www.tripadvisor.pt/Restaurant_Review-g189158-d4025213-Reviews-Cafe_Luso_Fado_Food-Lisbon_Lisbon_District_Central_Portugal.html). TripAdvisor—*Mesa de Frades* (Retrieved from: https://www.tripadvisor.pt/Restaurant_Review-g189158-d1950252-Reviews-Mesa_De_Frades-Lisbon_Lisbon_District_Central_Portugal.html). TripAdvisor—*O Faia* (Retrieved from: https://www.tripadvisor.pt/Restaurant_Review-g189158-d1633357-Reviews-O_Faia-Lisbon_Lisbon_District_Central_Portugal.html). TripAdvisor—Fado in Chiado (Retrieved from: https://www.tripadvisor.pt/Attraction_Review-g189158-d6981124-Reviews-Fado_in_Chiado-Lisbon_Lisbon_District_Central_Portugal.html).

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Author contributions

IC: Investigation, project administration, supervision, writing-original draft, writing-review & editing; AM: Data curation, formal analysis, methodology, resources, validation, writing-original draft, writing-review and editing; AM: Data collection, resources, writing-original draft, writing-review & editing, corresponding author; SL: Data collection, conceptualization, investigation, resources, validation, writing-original draft, writing-review and editing; TP: Data collection, writing-conclusions and contributions, writing-review.

Ethical statement

This study was granted exemption from requiring ethics approval; the reason for this should be the data used was taken from public domain resources present in the TripAdvisor networks of each restaurant: (a) it is impracticable to obtain consent due to the quantity and accessibility of contacts of the Author of the comments in TripAdvisor; (b) there is no known or likely reason for thinking that participants would not have consented if they had been asked because they write their opinion in a public site, and there is sufficient protection of their privacy, and (c) the authors have anonymized their case report so that it does not include any potential identifiers.

Informed consent

All responses are completely anonymous. No personal identifying information or IP addresses was collected. All analysis of data responses is completely anonymous. Data collection took place over the years 2021/2022, and all the comments on TripAdvisor of each Fado house were collected until March 2022.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Additional information

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