

Please cite the Published Version

Steadman, Chloe  and Millington, Steven  (2025) (Dis)ordering atmospheres: A sensory ethnography of a seaside pier. *Marketing Theory*. ISSN 1470-5931

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931251364055>

Publisher: SAGE Publications

Version: Published Version

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(Dis)ordering atmospheres: A sensory ethnography of a seaside pier

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Marketing Theory
2025, Vol. 0(0) 1–25
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DOI: 10.1177/14705931251364055

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Abstract

Atmospheres have long been considered a controllable marketing tool, arising through the deployment of multisensory design tactics in consumption spaces. Whilst atmospheres are increasingly recognised as unstable and vulnerable to unpredictable events, the tensions which might arise between atmospheric order and disorder is less understood. We therefore explore fluctuations between ordering and disordering atmospheres by drawing on Sennett's theories on designing disorder and a sensory ethnography of a British seaside pier. Based on sensory participation, soundwalks and videowalks along Blackpool's North Pier, we reveal the open and closed qualities of the space and how that shapes how the pier feels, drawing on Sennett's open forms: porosity, synchronous forms, punctuated moments, and incomplete forms. In doing so, we contribute insights into the challenging balancing act between ordering and disordering atmospheres in consumption spaces. We also call for greater consideration of how some disorder might generate richer and more diverse atmospheric experiences.

Keywords

Atmosphere, atmospheric design, disorder, order, seaside pier, Sennett, sensory ethnography

Introduction

In this paper, we explore the dynamic tensions and interplays between the ordering and disordering of atmospheres in consumption spaces. Amidst the affective (Preece et al., 2022) and sensory (Pink, 2015) 'turns', academic research into atmosphere as a 'spatially extended feeling' (Böhme, 2014: 8) is intensifying (Steadman and Coffin, 2024). This re-energised attention is taking place amidst wider concerns about the sanitisation of places (Edensor, 2024a; Edensor and Millington, 2018), in addition to growth in the 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) to reestablish qualities of sensory distinction.

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Atmosphere has long been an important concept studied within marketing (Steadman and Coffin, 2024), where it has traditionally been theorised as a controllable ‘marketing tool’, involving the considered manipulation of material and sensory qualities of consumption settings (Kotler, 1974). This notion is captured through a range of concepts, including ‘atmospherics’ (Kotler, 1974), ‘atmosphering’ (Woodward and Swartjes, 2024), ‘designing’ (Steadman and Coffin, 2024), ‘producing’ (Edensor, 2015), ‘performing’ (Paiva, 2024), ‘staging’ (Bille et al., 2015), ‘installing’ (Thibaud, 2014), and ‘curating’ (Hracs and Concha, 2024) atmospheres. There are some subtle differences. Paiva (2024) suggests ‘designing’ atmospheres refers to substantial spatial transformations, whilst ‘staging’ atmospheres involves more subtle and low-cost sensory interventions in place. Whereas Thibaud (2014) contends ‘installing’ atmospheres involves inflecting an already existing atmosphere, rather than ‘imposing’ a brand new one. Yet, these terms all broadly converge on human intervention in space to influence atmospheric experience, whether in shopping malls (Healy, 2014), casinos (Lynch et al., 2020), coffee shops (Kuruoğlu and Woodward, 2021), markets (Hracs and Concha, 2024), football stadia (Edensor, 2015), or festivals (Woodward and Swartjes, 2024). Subsequently, the above literature suggests atmospheres are to some extent under managerial control, and we deploy the term ‘ordering’ atmospheres when referring to intentional atmospheric design to influence the feel of place.

Atmospheres, however, are ‘uncertain, disordered, shifting’ (Anderson, 2009: 78). There is therefore growing recognition – within and beyond marketing to fields such as human geography, philosophy, tourism, and urban studies – of how atmospheres can be punctuated by unpredictable events, behaviours, and sensations (Edensor, 2024b; Goulding, 2023; Silva et al., 2025). This signals their inherently disorderly qualities and that atmospheres are never fully controllable; as Paiva and Sanchez-Fuarros (2021: 393) remind us, ‘the force of atmospheres, while inescapable, might be unpredictable’. Yet, despite recognition of atmospheres’ in-between quality (Böhme, 2014), much existing discussion gravitates towards one pole or the other, whereas dynamic tensions and interplays between atmospheric order and disorder are less understood. We argue it is important to enrich understandings about such dynamics to unsettle longstanding theorisations of atmosphere as a controllable marketing tool, and to ensure a balance is struck between designing safe, yet exciting, consumer experiences in marketing practice (Hracs and Concha, 2024).

Consequently, we investigate the following research question: How do fluctuations between ordered and disordered atmospheres configure and reconfigure the feel of consumption spaces? We investigate this question by drawing on Sennett’s (2018, 2020) theories on designing disorder and, in this paper, we use ‘disorder’ to denote those unpredictable atmospheres less ordered by management. However, we are not seeking to simply tell a story of disorder. Sennett (2020) calls for the ‘loosening’ of place through introducing ‘productive’ disorder to encourage serendipitous activity and creative improvisation within space. His work thus provides a valuable conceptual framework through which to interrogate the inherently disordered nature of atmosphere (Anderson, 2009), as well as dynamics between ordering and disordering atmospheres.

We apply Sennett’s ideas to a sensory ethnography of a British seaside pier. Whether it be for languid promenading or the thrill of the waltzers, an array of sensory delights makes piers irresistible ‘emotional magnets’ (Sircus, 2007). But piers are also located in the exposed unruly zone between land and sea, where atmospheric qualities are less amenable to managerial control, thus rendering seaside piers a ripe context for investigating dynamic tensions in atmospheric (dis)order.

(Dis)ordering atmospheres through design

Whilst atmospheres cannot *themselves* be designed, the material and sensorial attributes of consumption environments are routinely manipulated to evoke a particular feel (Goulding, 2023).

Urban designers, architects, event organisers, marketing, and retail managers are all involved in a process of ‘tuning places’ (Paiva, 2024) to affect how consumers think, feel, and behave. This might involve decisions about the spatial location of a store (e.g. in a particular neighbourhood or city), in-store spatial layout and sensory qualities (e.g. music, décor, and lighting), merchandising, and employees (e.g. demeanour and uniforms) (Hracs and Concha, 2024). Such decisions are encapsulated by Kotler’s (1974) notion of atmospherics as a ‘marketing tool’, with this seminal work inspiring numerous studies into the manipulation of a singular sense (Turley and Milliman, 2000) or multiple sensory stimuli (Spence et al., 2014), such as the production of ‘atmospheres of seduction’ in Starbucks stores through homely furnishings, coffee bean aroma, and ambient music (Biehl-Missal and Saren, 2012).

This is epitomised by the ‘Gruen Effect’, named after the Austrian designer of shopping malls. Whereas Gruen’s intention might have been to manufacture places where people felt comfortable and safe to experience ‘the magic of the mall’ (Goss, 1993), subsequent mall designers deliberately lull consumers into a state of ‘involuntary vulnerability’ through engineering a comfortable temperature and sheltering consumers from the elements (Healy, 2014). Similarly, airports are designed to elicit orderly and calm atmospheres to ensure efficient mobilities, safety (Adey, 2008), and reduce flying anxieties (Kotler, 1974). Navigating passengers through this confluence of high security and distracting consumerism involves deployment of sensory and material cues to facilitate how people negotiate austere security halls, perfumed duty-free shops, and long treks to departure gates, without unplanned disruption (Adey, 2008). Meanwhile, the spatial features (e.g. themed design) of ‘therapeutic servicescapes’, such as the Lourdes Pilgrimage, are ‘orchestrated’ to ‘create an atmosphere conducive to emotion shifts’ and encourage emotional release (Higgins and Hamilton, 2019: 1249).

Recent research explores the intentional deployment of disorder as a way of confronting people with the unexpected, unfamiliar, or overwhelming. Such tactics are adopted in casinos to encourage patrons to linger and gamble for longer, where the labyrinthine ‘hazy floor plan’ and ‘swirling lights and sounds’ make exit difficult and entice people to follow never-ending trails of discovery to the ‘next delight wait[ing] just around the corner’ (Lynch et al., 2020: 197). Consumers may seek this ‘sensual alterity’ as an escape from everyday mundanity, where some experiences are designed through their unfamiliar atmospheric qualities to jolt consumers from habitual routines, as with dining in the dark (Edensor and Falconer, 2015). This ‘sensory defamiliarisation’ may also have a political agenda, as in the case of public art installations to encourage critical encounters with place (Edensor, 2024a).

However, atmospheres can never fully be tamed (Goulding 2023; Paiva, 2024) or simply ‘forced on a situation’ (Thibaud, 2014: 56). Atmospheres are always-becoming (Anderson, 2009), can spill out to affect unintended people and places (Paiva and Sanchez-Fuarros, 2021), and be perforated by unpredictable weather, events, or behaviours (Edensor, 2024b). As Larsen and Patterson (2025: 6) suggest, ‘atmospheres are not always sensed as orderly’. There is therefore some recognition of how planned and unplanned atmospheres might co-exist. In football stadia, ‘mood management’ – as an example of ordering atmospheres – was initially deployed to design out unruly atmospheres and unpredictable fan behaviours to address issues with social disorder, safety, and hooliganism (Hill, 2016). The sedation of disorder, however, has resulted in recent attempts to re-energise matchday atmospheres via staged interventions such as pumping music into the ground to build pre-match excitement (Edensor, 2015). Yet consumers are not dupes who passively accept management’s atmospheric conditioning but ‘often actively participate in making them’ (Sumartojo, 2024: 163) and can resist overly contrived atmospheres (Edensor, 2015). Even then, management might find their efforts undermined by ‘atmospheric disruptions’ emanating elsewhere driven by processes

beyond managerial control (Steadman et al., 2021). Delving into the terrain of tourism, Paiva and Sanchez-Fuarros (2021) further examine how management cultivate ‘premium’ atmospheres for tourists in the city of Lisbon; yet, as a result, unplanned atmospheres leak into neighbourhoods to negatively disrupt the ambience for residents.

Yet, extant marketing theory arguably does not go far enough to explore the dynamics arising between atmospheric order and disorder in consumption spaces, despite atmospheres possessing an ‘in-between’ quality and existing in a ‘relation of tension’ (Anderson, 2009: 80). Furthermore, less understood is how atmospheres unfold where the potential for disorder is not only greater, but also an inherent quality of the space, as much existing research takes place in enclosed retail and service environments designed to establish comfortable, yet soporific, experiences, where atmospheric qualities are predictable and unchallenging (Edensor, 2024a). Ultimately, there is a need to unpack how fluctuations between ordered and disordered atmospheres configure and reconfigure the feel of place to advance theorisations of atmospheric control and design. Consequently, we now outline how Sennett’s theories on designing disorder can help explore such dynamics.

Enabling theory: Sennett’s (dis)ordered spaces

We extend Richard Sennett’s ([1970] 1996) notion of designing disorder into the realm of marketing theory and atmospheric design. Following contemporaries Jane Jacobs and Henri Lefebvre, Sennett’s ([1970] 1996) concept of disorder challenged modernist planning. Brutalist architectural forms, concrete highways, and rigid zonal planning restrictions created regimented, yet alienating, places which eradicated opportunities for serendipitous social contact and produced ‘blandscapes’ characterised by ‘tactile sterility’ (Edensor, 2024a). Sennett (2020: 23) contends overdetermined planning is driven by ‘a regime of power which wants order and control’, but this can lead to stifled environments. These concerns continue to resonate. Minton’s (2012) critical account of urban regeneration argues excessive regulation and surveillance sanitises town and city centres. Similarly, Edensor and Millington (2018) draw attention to how efforts to revitalise places can result in over-regulated, sensory sterile, disenchanted ‘non-places’.

Sennett ([1970] 1996) therefore suggests places can recapture experiential qualities of serendipity and discovery through looser, more open and less determined forms of placemaking, which he refers to as designing disorder. His idea of an ‘open city’ comprises such features and enables spontaneous activities and munificent social interaction and negotiation (Sennett, 2018), thereby creating an atmosphere of tolerance towards difference and the unknown (Sendra and Sennett, 2020). The open city is flexible and adaptable, empowering users to reconfigure space according to multiple needs and desires, contrasting with a singular, top-down or predetermined design (Sennett, 2018).

Evolving through an iterative process of *seed planting*, hyperlocal interventions grow in scale or spread to colonise an entire city (Sennett, 2018). Sennett argues disorder can be encouraged through four ‘open forms’. First, Sennett (2018) argues spaces should comprise permeable borders encouraging social exchange, with this *porosity* enabling multiple activities and sensations to flow between realms, encouraging mingling, merging, and a blurring of the inside and outside (Fariman, 2023). Second, *synchronous forms* allow for diverse activities to happen simultaneously in the same space to ensure it is in continuous use (Sendra, 2015), in contrast to planning practices which sought to prevent such messy confluences of uses through zoning practices (Sennett, 2018). Third, Sennett (2018: 212) suggests ‘it is possible to give a space character by punctuating it just as one would a piece of writing’. These *punctuated moments* may encompass monumental landmarks, but also prosaic features such as a particular corner or bench; everyday markers which imbue a place with

character and provoke physical disjuncture or emotional jolts (Fariman, 2023). Fourth, *incomplete forms* provoke creative interaction or improvisational discovery with a space in unanticipated ways, rather than imposing a pre-designed or finished agenda (Fariman, 2023; Sennett, 2018). Ultimately, these open forms convert ‘...urban surface into a productive atmosphere’ (Sendra, 2015: 834-835) by stimulating a ‘disordering of senses’ (Sendra et al., 2020: 135) to unsettle familiar situations and places. This infuses spaces with feelings of vibrancy, inclusivity, and spontaneity, in accordance with theorisations of atmosphere as spatially extended feelings (e.g. Böhme, 2014).

Importantly, by disorder, Sennett does not refer to unbridled chaos. Rather, he advocates for design decisions which stimulate ‘certain kinds’ of disorder to loosen overly rigid and controlled environments (Sendra and Sennett, 2020). He thus envisages an interplay between ordering and disordering, whereby porosity creates ‘liminal space... at the limits of control’, whilst incomplete forms are not the ‘enemy of structure’ (Sennett, 2020: 31). Given his emphasis on urban design to foster more generative place experiences, Sennett’s concepts are valuable for theorising the interplay of order and disorder within atmospheric design – a key strand of marketing theory about atmosphere (Steadman and Coffin, 2024). We thus draw on his work to theorise atmospheric (dis) order on a British seaside pier.

Context: The British seaside pier

British seaside resorts were once saturated in atmospheric abundance. As places to soak in recuperative waters and embrace invigorating air, 19th Century resorts attracted salubrious visitors desiring engagements with nature, as generative of embodied and affective transformations (Grant et al., 2024), and early examples of place marketing draw attention to the ‘tonic air’ at the British coast (Ward, 1998: 59). The subsequent history of the seaside is defined by the arrival of working class families escaping the everyday drudgery, pollution, and orderly regimentation of industrial cities (Webb, 2005), seeking the carnivalesque, hedonistic, fun, glamorous, and romantic ambiances of the seaside (Edensor and Millington, 2018). The decline of seaside towns in the 20th Century, however, is well-documented, as holiday makers sought sunnier destinations overseas (Chapman et al., 2021; Jarratt, 2015), with resorts increasingly described as ‘marginal’ or ‘left-behind’ (Shields, 1991). Yet not all resorts are in perpetual decline and many sensory qualities of the seaside prevail, whether ‘bare feet on a hot pavement, boarding houses on rainy days, barnacles under the pier, donkey rides, sticks of rock... the atmosphere everyone recognises but few can define’ (Lindley, 1973: sleeve notes).

Alongside donkey rides, deck chairs, and sticks of rock, piers are iconic features of the British seaside (Chapman et al., 2021); yet, despite nascent research into the atmospheres of seaside promenades (Edensor and Millington, 2018) and amusement arcades (Lineham, 2024), piers have been overlooked. Since 1814, over 100 were constructed in the UK, although about half have been lost to neglect, storm, or fire damage (Chapman et al., 2020). Typically comprising a long deck made up of wooden planks sticking out over the sea, piers enable consumers ‘...to be transported ever closer to raw, untamed nature’ (Gray, 2006: 201) more safely than going out onto the sea itself, thus offering a sense of disorder:

Visitors attracted to the sea, but repelled by its danger, could promenade along the pier in complete safety and still enjoy the frisson of excitement caused by the proximity of the waves below (Pearson, 2002: 5).

Although many were planned as jetties for visitors to board pleasure cruises, swelling visitor numbers meant these functional qualities quickly gave way to more leisurely promenading and

frivolous consumption (Chapman et al., 2021). Despite suggestions piers symbolise the decline of the British seaside (Urry, 2002), pier managers have always been involved in ‘attuning space with desire’ (Gray, 2006: 49) and transforming piers into the ‘architecture of amusement’ (Adamson and Dale, 1977) by accommodating live entertainment, shopping, eating, drinking, dancing, palm reading, fishing, playful gambling, and funfairs. Piers therefore continue to attract visitors into their unique ambiances.

Unusually, three piers – North (1863), Central (1868), and South (1893) – remain standing over the Irish Sea in Blackpool, North West England, with North Pier our focus (see video). The original design by Eugenius Birch established an unadorned structure affording leisurely walks over the sea. The pier was subsequently extended to accommodate sea cruises, embellished with Italianate shopping kiosks, and widened to house an ornate Indian Pavilion (destroyed by fire in 1938) (Adamson and Dale, 1977). Today North Pier accommodates a Venetian carousel (added in 1991), several eateries, the Bloom Bar, an amusement arcade, visitor train, and one of the last remaining pier theatres (Chapman et al., 2020) (Figure 1). North Pier, however, is classified as a heritage pier and is Grade II listed, which affords protection from major alteration (ibid). Compared to South and Central Piers, North is therefore a relatively uncluttered place.

With only a single entrance and exit point encouraging linear perambulation to the end and back, the pier might be dismissed as a closed space. However, the preservation of heritage and safety must balance with the need to evolve the pier’s entertainment attractions (Chapman et al., 2021). This ordering of atmospheres through design must also be achieved within a space precariously positioned between land and sea, subject to the everyday effects of aeolian and salt-water attrition and the lurking dangers of fire or inclement weather (Chapman et al., 2020), imbuing the pier with some disorderly qualities. Under a constant state of both erosion and renewal, a pier is never still. These fluctuating qualities thus render the seaside pier a ripe context for exploring dynamics of atmospheric (dis)order.

Our sensory ethnography

Atmospheres are challenging to research due to their intangibility and instability (Anderson and Ash, 2015; Michels, 2015). Yet, given atmospheres are intimately related to sensory experience, sensory ethnography is valuable (Sumartojo, 2024), with Vannini (2024) presenting ‘atmospheric’ as a defining attribute of sensory ethnography. Sensory ethnography involves ‘self-consciously and reflexively attending to the senses throughout the research process’ and turning to the sensuous body in knowledge production (Pink, 2015: 7). Consequently, adopting sensory ethnography, our study involves sensory participation, soundwalks, and videowalks conducted on North Pier 2021–2024.

Sensory participation

Sensory participation involves researchers attuning to the multiple embodied sensations shaping their experiences of place (Pink, 2015) by researching *in* atmosphere (Sumartojo and Pink, 2019), since atmospheres are ‘felt from inside, within, and not in analytical distance’ (Pink et al., 2014: 353). Sensory participation draws on the researcher’s body as a ‘site of knowing’ (Pink, 2015: 27), which is valuable as atmospheres are ‘sensed as a force *upon* bodies’ (Hurst and Stinson, 2024: 169; original emphasis).

Adopting sensory participation, we visited North Pier 10 times spending typically 60–90 minutes per visit. However, during fieldwork we also explored Blackpool Promenade and the other two piers to ‘zoom out’ and compare their ‘atmospheric compositions’ (Michels, 2015). On our first fieldwork



Figure 1. A visual map of North Pier.

trip, for instance, over 8 hours we walked three miles from Starr Gate along the Promenade, South and Central Piers, through to North Pier. Fieldwork thus involved walking to and from, underneath and along North Pier and spending time in its different spaces and outlets, spanning different times, days, and seasons. Walking is an embodied, rhythmic and sensual practice which brings bodies into ‘conversation’ with environments (Yi’En, 2014: 213), including their atmospheres. As Wunderlich (2008: 129) observes, ‘while moving through space one unavoidably touches and feels the environment with the entire body’. Walking thus helped tune into our shifting ‘material, sensory, and affective surroundings’ (Sumartojo, 2024: 160). Subsequently, our adoption of walking methods aligns with Kowalewski and Bartłomiejewski’s (2020) notion of an ‘attentive’ or ‘mindful’ walk; as Vannini (2015: 323) notes, ‘wanderings are also wonderings’.

We took fieldnotes in situ on the pier and on journeys to and from Blackpool to create a ‘thick description of atmospheric experiences’ (Hill et al., 2022: 123). Fieldnotes captured our memories and anticipations, placemaking interventions, multisensory qualities, and visitor activities. Given photographs can bring atmospheres to life by enabling viewers to empathetically imagine others’ multisensory experiences (Pink, 2015), we also took over 400 photographs. As Sumartojo and Pink (2019: 39) assert, ‘researching atmospheres always involves an autoethnographic engagement with our own experience’. Hence, the focus on our own experiences of North Pier proved invaluable for researching its atmospheres and for collecting sufficiently rich data (Goulding, 2023).

Soundwalks

Soundwalks help challenge the predominance of the visual in qualitative inquiry (Patterson and Larsen, 2019). Moving through and listening intently to the sounds of place, soundwalks attune the researcher to multiple bodily sensations, but especially foreground the sonic environment (Pink, 2015). Given sounds influence the ‘affective tonality’ of place (Di Croce, 2023), sonic methods are considered valuable for researching atmospheres (Hurst and Stinson, 2024). Soundwalks were conducted at the beginning and end of each fieldwork visit to ascertain any sonic changes over time. We used a Dictaphone or smartphone Voice Memos app, recording the changing sounds when walking the length of the pier. On later visits, we began to overlay in-the-moment verbal reflections of the other senses impacting the pier’s atmospheres (e.g. smells of fudge) to capture the multisensory qualities of the pier more fully. Shorter clips were also taken of any particularly potent sounds shaping the pier’s atmospheres (e.g. chattering starlings). Ultimately, soundwalks foregrounded a sonic landscape often ‘...hidden, fleeting, beyond or at the periphery of everyday awareness’ (Gallagher and Prior, 2014: 271), with our soundclips providing useful sensory reminders of our experiences during analysis.

Videowalks

Finally, videowalks were employed. As Pink et al. (2014: 365) suggest, video recordings constitute ‘a trace or the route that we take through the atmosphere as we move’. Hence, videos capture the sense of a body moving through a multisensory environment and pre-reflective embodied experiences of place (Hill et al., 2014). In this sense, videos are materials which ‘can go forward’ (Sumartojo, 2024: 170), for ‘...atmospheres do not leave us: they linger’ (Hurst and Stinson, 2024: 184). Usually at the start and end of each fieldwork visit, we journeyed the full length of the pier using a smartphone camera to capture its shifting atmospheric qualities. Shorter video clips were also taken of any particularly affectively-charged features (e.g. crashing waves). Our use of videowalks therefore aligns with Kozinets and Belk’s (2006) concept of ‘autovideography’. Whilst videos initially seem to prioritise sight and sound, they helped elicit embodied memories of the original multisensory encounter when revisited during data analysis (Pink, 2015).

Data analysis and dissemination

To analyse our fieldnotes and multisensory data we deployed thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Whilst early stages of analysis identified more surface-level ‘semantic’ themes in an inductive way, such as ‘disruption’, ‘weather’, and ‘sounds’, later stages involved greater engagement with theoretical literature, whereby we refined our themes more deductively through the ‘latent’ categories of Sennett’s four ‘open forms’ (ibid), which are the four themes presented in this paper.

However, it is difficult to represent atmospheric experience in traditional scholarly outputs (Pink, 2015). To transform findings into an ‘ethnographic place’ (ibid), we immerse readers in the pier’s atmospheres through sensuous descriptions, photographs, sound, and video clips to ‘enliven’ multiple sensations (Vannini, 2024). Yet, in practice a hybrid approach is often struck between the representational and non-representational (Hill et al., 2014). Indeed, being reflexive is central to sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015; Vannini, 2024), with ‘sensory reflexivity’ important (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2024). Since people ‘land’ in atmospheres in different ways (Preece et al., 2022), we were thus sensitive to our contrasting positionalities, given the second author has been a frequent visitor over several decades, whilst the first author did not regularly visit North Pier until fieldwork.

We now explore tensions of atmospheric (dis)order on North Pier in relation to Sennett’s ‘open forms’: porosity, synchronous forms, punctuated moments, and incomplete forms.

Atmospheric (dis)order on North Pier

Porosity and atmospheric exchange

Unsurprisingly, coastal resorts exist because of people’s desires to be near the sea (Canniford and Shankar, 2012) and piers afford an opportunity to get even closer. The atmospheric qualities of coastal waters, with their visually stimulating mesmeric churn and rhythmic splashes, function as a ‘particularly powerful force’ (Broch, 2021: 163) enticing people onto piers. At a distance, North Pier is the epitome of sturdy Victorian engineering. A stroll on the structure, however, exposes us to the pier’s *porosity*. The main deck is unsheltered and exposed to the elements, whilst a constant breeze flows in from both sides, bringing an occasional sea spray. The wooden decking creaks, with ominous gaps revealing glimpses into the darker uncanny world of seaweed and molluscs, squally pools and aquatic detritus (Figure 2). Occasionally a pungent aroma of algae rises. Unlike an enclosed shopping mall, the pier’s porosity enables ‘...an open flow between the inside and outside’ (Sennett, 2018: 218) and ‘active zone of exchange’ (ibid: 220) between visitors and the feel, sight, smell, and sound of bracing salty sea air and churning waters, echoing how atmospheres themselves have been described as ‘porous’ (Steadman et al., 2021). As Author 2 observes, ‘North Pier provides the affordances of what a pier is supposed to do... A place to see, hear, and smell the sea’ (Author 2 fieldnotes, summer, weekend afternoon).

Whilst mechanistic and cacophonous family attractions on Central and South Piers drown out any chance of hearing breaking waves, North Pier affords closer engagement with the sights, sounds, and smells of the sea and its wildlife (see video). These sensations are especially pronounced in the morning, before the attractions open (see video). Aeolian chimes emanate from the pier’s structure, susurrating waves break around the supporting struts, crooning birds and an ionised salty sea air surface and combine to elicit a relaxing atmosphere. Indeed, people ‘...often are pulled toward water for its calming effect’ (Broch, 2021: 168), where sounds of nature can become ‘a lullaby that gives humans a respite’ (ibid: 174) from the sensory overload of the metropolis (Edensor, 2024b):

The North Pier ambience is very different early in the morning and feels very calm. Without the artificial sounds of the traditional carousel which is not yet in operation... I am noticing the sounds of nature... I can hear the sounds of the wind blowing, the waves gently breaking either side of the pier, and the loud squawking of seagulls. It sounds familiarly like the seaside... (Author 1 fieldnotes, summer, weekend morning).

North Pier’s atmospheric charge is intensified through unsettled or stormy weather during which the ‘luring potential’ of the sea (Broch, 2021) heightens. On one visit, a tempestuous wind emits a

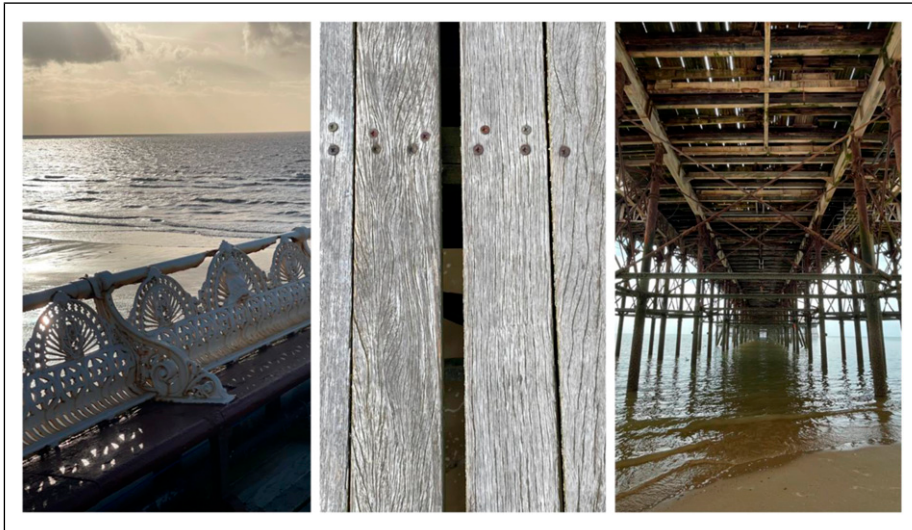


Figure 2. The pier's porous structure.

high-pitched screech as if a banshee is wailing angrily around the pier, exerting an unrelenting force on visitors' bodies ([see video](#)). Nature is not 'an inert stage' but 'an active collection of...forces' which can draw people into nature-infused spaces ([Grant et al., 2024: 2](#)). Rather than repelled by inclement conditions, therefore, like other visitors we were drawn to the frisson of crashing waves ([see video](#)), seeking the thrill of disorder as the pier becomes a more unpredictable, precarious, and intensified place, with the atmosphere cinematic:

Like others, we were drawn to the dramatic scene of the crashing waves either side of North Pier today. There is a continuous stream of people walking briskly down the pier... It's surprisingly busier than yesterday... It seems the loud crashing waves have the power to draw people onto the pier... The pier has a dramatic and ambient film quality to it today (*Author 1 fieldnotes, autumn, weekday afternoon*).

The sonic and visual spectacle evokes awe but strips away any sense the pier might offer protection. Alert to the visceral power of the sea, our bodies tremble in the wind and rain. A 'murmur of unease' ([Broch, 2021](#)) wells up as we walk more cautiously to negotiate the now slippery boardwalk. Spray from thunderous waves and the rain-sodden deck attune us to the potential dangers of slipping – or even falling into the sea. We 'notice a big gap underfoot' which makes the first author 'leap to one side, scared of falling through to the sea' (*Author 1 audio notes, autumn, weekday afternoon*). Several visitors impishly jump up and down on the planks to test whether they will drop into the sea, generating a further murmur of disorder. This fleeting sensation of peril, however, is precisely what has attracted us onto the pier. Piers were always something other than places for dandy promenading and instead somewhere to also experience the thrill of being close to the untameable waves below ([Pearson, 2002](#)).

There are limits, however, to the pier's openness. The pier represents a 'membrane' that is 'neither totally sealed nor totally exposed' ([Sennett, 2018: 220](#)). Wrought iron railings offer a semblance of sturdy protection, although parts are so rusty you feel they may snap, just before an intense gust launches you into the brown waters below. Fencing and warning signs restrict visitors

from venturing fully to the end. Occasionally, the pier is entirely closed when inclement weather threatens. During our final visits, we observed greater emphasis on safety and control, with a proliferation of signs warning visitors to be cautious (Figure 3), following a safety review after a woman fell from Central Pier in 2024 (Parkinson, 2024). In this sense, reminiscent of the mood management of football stadia (Hill, 2016), North Pier is becoming a more closed, ordered and controlled space which threatens to dilute the seaside's historically carnivalesque atmospheres (Edensor and Millington, 2018) by discouraging unplanned or disorderly behaviours given 'atmospheres are forceful' (Bissell, 2010: 272) and visitors goaded to behave more carefully:

We soon spot new safety notices on almost every post running either side of the pier cautioning visitors to watch their step... It made me more aware of some of the larger gaps between the wooden planks as I looked underfoot, providing me with a glimpse of the murky waters below, and it caused me to walk a bit more carefully... It made the pier feel like a more restrictive and monitored space (*Author 1 fieldnotes, summer, weekday afternoon*).

Consequently, North Pier functions as a porous 'membrane' which, like a sponge, enables a flow between the inside and outside, yet retains its shape and function for enabling people to safely walk over the sea (Sennett, 2018); for if it was totally open visitors might simply plunge into the murky waters below. This porosity enables productive exchanges between humans and nature which produces relaxing or thrilling atmospheres. However, some pier attractions create a more impermeable boundary between visitors and the natural ambiances that have often lured them onto the pier in the first place, as we now reveal.

Synchronicity and atmospheric conflicts

Over the years, seaside piers have accumulated multiple leisure and entertainment activities, as owners seek to extract additional commercial value (Chapman et al., 2021). The pier thus aligns

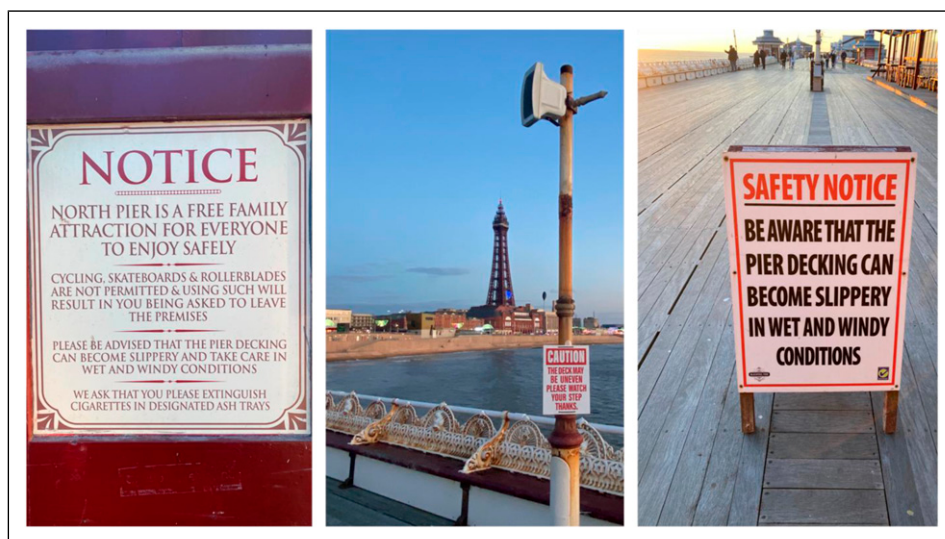


Figure 3. Safety notices on the pier.

with Sennett's (2018) concept of *synchronous forms*. Whilst much less cluttered compared to Blackpool's other piers, North Pier offers an arcade, carousel, theatre, visitor train, children's rides, bouncy castle, and the Bloom Bar. Sometimes, there is a playful interplay between intentional atmospherics and the inherent properties of spaces. Woodward and Swartjes (2024: 45), for example, illustrate how a music festival in a forest utilises coloured spotlights to highlight trees, whilst streamers placed in the forest canopy rustle with the wind to co-produce 'an ever-changing sense of atmosphere'. Yet, if not carefully considered, as Sennett (2018: 211) cautions, synchronous space can evoke '...a spatial experience both stimulating and disorientating', as we see on North Pier.

An atmospheric 'tipping point' (Anderson and Ash, 2015) occurs as the attractions wake up for the day. Conflicts soon surface between the atmospheric charms of nature and manufactured sensory qualities, which begin to 'disrupt' (Steadman et al., 2021) the atmospheric experience. This happens as the atmospheric affordances of the attractions begin to overpower the sensations of nature, eliciting sensory distraction or 'disorientation' (Preece et al., 2022). One example is the bouncy castle located at the end of the pier (Figure 4). When deflated, the horizon reemerges and the head of the pier reclaims its status as the most logical place from which to observe incredible synchronised aerial displays of a murmuration of starlings, as the sun boils away into the Irish sea (see video), generative of a calming, yet wonderous, atmosphere. However, at busier times, we encountered a relentless mechanical drone of air being pumped into the inflatable, which rises to create a less permeable boundary (Sennett, 2018) between visitors and nature (see video):

Early morning, nature dominates. Around 10.30 am, however, the music from the carousel starts up and cycles constantly all day... I become aware of a trundling squeak, and turn to see the inflatable slide attendant wheeling a mop and bucket up the pier... The large inflatable is rising, blocking the view of the horizon, its industrial pump, a jarring presence, now completely displaces both the natural sounds and view (*Author 2 fieldnotes, summer, weekend mid-morning*).

The pier head is also home to Bloom Bar (Figure 5). As we walk towards the bar, distant beats leak out of the space; we immediately sense how 'the atmosphere's shifted quite a lot, it's a lot louder

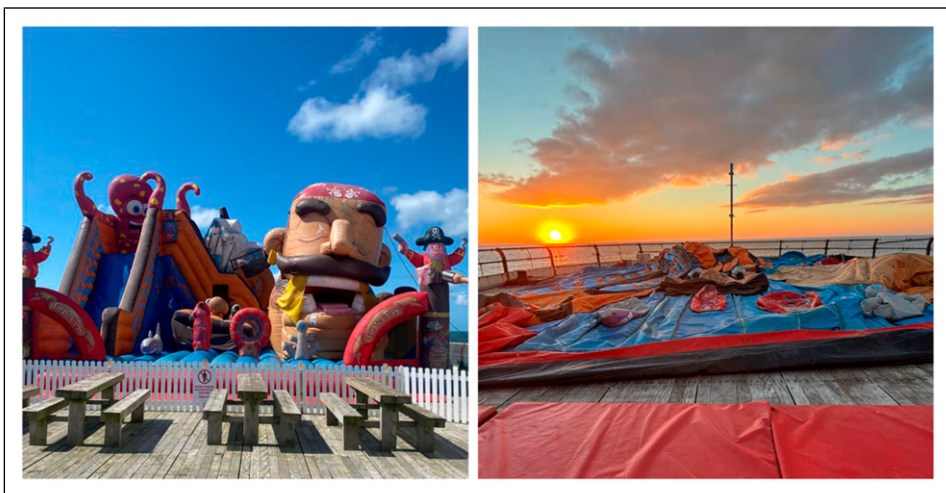


Figure 4. The bouncy castle.

than the other side' (*Author 1 audio notes, summer, afternoon*). Inside, the thumping music feels overwhelming (see [video](#)), with the ambient qualities of the natural surroundings becoming entirely 'subsumed' ([Anderson and Ash, 2015](#)). Attempts by bar management to manufacture an all-day party atmosphere provoke uncomfortable embodied sensations given our 'bodies thrum with the sounds of the world around them' ([Patterson and Larsen, 2019: 112](#)). Below, for instance, we see the first author's body shift from a state of calm when first entering the pier, to tensing up from the strong intensity of sonic vibrations passing through her body as she approaches Bloom Bar:

I feel the sense of calm pass through my body, as my shoulders... relax downwards. As we walk down the North Pier, I can hear seagulls, children playing on the beach below, dogs barking, traditional seaside music... And then, at the end of the pier, the deafeningly loud music pumping out of the Bloom Bar, which causes me to cringe in pain from the vibrations moving through my eardrums. It is way too loud and out of keeping with the rest of the pier, which has a much more relaxing atmosphere... (*Author 1 fieldnotes, summer, weekday late afternoon*).

Subsequently, the sensory qualities of Bloom Bar conflict with the tranquil ambiances foaming elsewhere along the pier, redolent of a 'dissonant sonic ecology' which can produce disorientating affects ([Larsen and Patterson, 2025](#)). The music is imposing and lacks sonic porosity ([Sennett, 2018](#)) given '...music is something you cannot escape in here. You are just stuck with it' (*Author 1 fieldnotes, summer, weekday evening*). Like the bouncy castle, therefore, the loud music functions as an impermeable boundary separating visitors from the sounds of nature churning just outside the window:

I can see a group of starlings darting outside of the window and crashing waves, but I cannot hear them over the music... Every time there is a break in the music between tracks, we crane to hear the waves breaking, which provides some relaxing respite... Only to become disappointed again a few seconds later, as the music pumps through the speakers once again (*Author 1 fieldnotes, autumn, weekday evening*).



Figure 5. The Bloom Bar.

A traditional organ player (see video) used to occupy a looser bar space, adapting songs for the crowd and doing shoutouts, thus enabling the co-production of atmospheres and a more ‘consonant sonic ecology’ (Larsen and Patterson, 2025). Now uncomfortably positioned elsewhere on the pier, the jaunty organist has been displaced by DJs who appear to passively cycle through digital playlists, seeming insensitive to consumers’ moods. Sounds, however, can make ‘...social actors feel either emplaced or dislocated in space’ (De la Fuente and Walsh, 2022: 136). Reflecting the ‘forceful’ nature of atmospheres (Bissell, 2010), the overwhelming noise in Bloom Bar can ‘flush’ people it is not designed for out of that space ‘by affects of discomfort’ (Kuruoğlu and Woodward, 2021: 123), following that ‘sound moves bodies’ (Patterson and Larsen, 2019: 113) – in our case, quickly out of the bar:

Bloom Bar never relaxes and so its guests can’t either. We make it less than ten minutes before the music becomes overwhelming... The vibrations from the music spread across the room and into my ear drums. It’s painful. One woman is bobbing her head along to the music, but others seem a bit annoyed and finding it difficult to have conversations. Author 2 gets too irritated with the music volume after a few minutes and motions us to sit outside... (*Author 1 fieldnotes, autumn, weekday evening*).

Consequently, the above reveals a certain level of atmospheric mismanagement due to an apparent lack of sensitivity to the ‘thresholds’ and ‘tipping points’ (Anderson and Ash, 2015) of the conflicting atmospheres infusing and dispersing across the pier. This signals a delicate balancing act is needed between ordering and disordering atmospheres, whereby synchronous spaces require some coordination, rather than total disorder (Sennett, 2018). One remedy perhaps for the sensory overwhelm of Bloom Bar, is to punctuate the space with opportunities to pause and reflect, now discussed.

Co-punctuating atmospheres of reflection

The seaside has long been a place to reflect and remember loved ones (Jarratt, 2015) and heritage piers afford time for ‘...quiet relaxation and contemplation’ (Chapman et al., 2021: 541). We thus felt a palpable shift in the atmosphere when entering North Pier immediately after visiting Blackpool’s other more sensorially chaotic piers. There are a series of mnemonic placemaking objects along the pier which *punctuate* the space (Sennett, 2018), encouraging visitors to pause and reflect (Fariman, 2023). Owners have intentionally attempted to consolidate the pier’s heritage status and generate seaside nostalgia by strategically introducing classic deckchairs, bunting, and a seaside carousel (Figure 6), the latter of which resembles one of Sennett’s (2018) ‘exclamation marks’ by adding emphasis and character to the space by offering a particularly nostalgic kinaesthetic experience for both children and adults (Spence, 2022). Furthermore, a series of heritage interpretation boards function as ‘quote marks’ provoking visitors to reflect on the meaning of the space past and present (Sennett, 2018). They celebrate pier architects and an array of mainly 20th Century mass entertainers who performed on the pier, with notable homage to glove puppet Sooty who was purportedly ‘born’ there (Figure 7), reflecting how piers provoke ‘...people to reflect on themselves, other places and other times’ (Gray, 2006: 201).

However, there are also opportunities to spontaneously co-create the pier’s reflective ambiances, as characteristic of open space (Sennett, 2018). Memorial benches are located along each side of the main deck (Figure 8), where people can formally display a commemorative gold plaque after paying a fee. We also observed active and communal rituals whereby mourners would tearfully leave

photos, messages, teddy bears, flowers, and wreaths, almost reminiscent of a funeral service. In these moments, we found ourselves enveloped in an affective pocket of reflection with others who, like us, slowed down their mobilities, jolted from one realm to another, fun to empathy, given memorial benches can encourage fleeting contact between strangers (Karpf, 2025). Memorial benches can thus be described as a ‘period mark’ disrupting the linear flow of the space (Sennett, 2018):

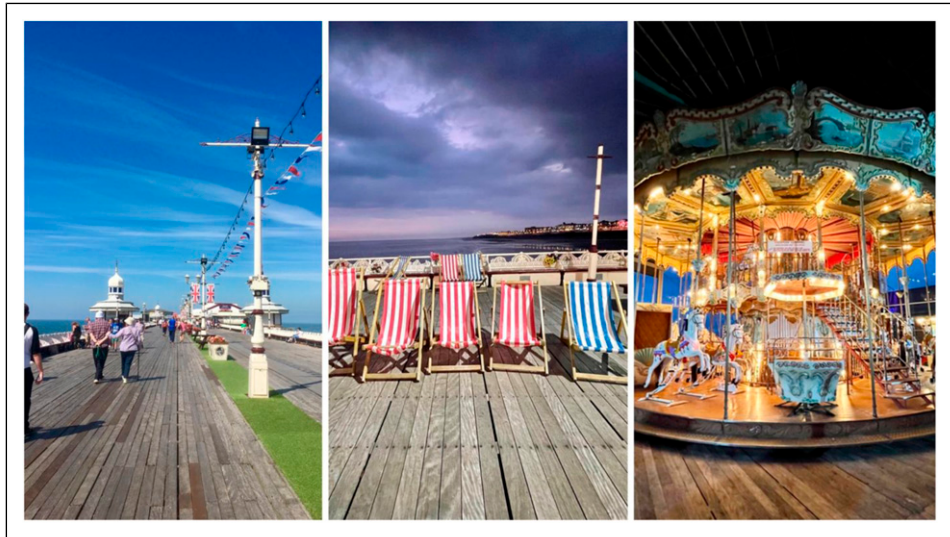


Figure 6. Placemaking recalling the traditional seaside.



Figure 7. Mass heritage placemaking features.

There are fresh memorials on the memorial benches today, including a large display for a young guy... which draws me towards it... It's making me feel a bit uneasy... It also draws the attention of other visitors... to gaze at the photo and read over some of the messages. They also seem quite moved... (*Author 1 fieldnotes, autumn, weekday evening*).

The memorial benches enable consumers to personalise and co-design the space, which can generate atmospheres of belonging and feelings of home (Steadman and De Jong, 2022), in this case as part of a broader context in which '...grief, mourning and remembrance are experienced in and mapped upon physical spaces' (Maddrell, 2016: 166). Similarly, we also observed how North Pier is a place Borraz (2019) might describe as a site of pilgrimage for consumers seeking to symbolically display material emotional markers. We found hundreds of love locks attached to the metal fencing at the end of the pier; objects symbolising both love and loss (Figure 9). These unsanctioned emotional displays reveal how open space affords spontaneous behaviours not intended by management (Sendra and Sennett, 2020). However, during our final few visits, we observed fewer memorial displays and most of the love locks had been removed, with signs installed prohibiting this behaviour:

Other than an old woman leaving some bright blue flowers on the pier today, I didn't notice any of the usual memorial displays... The lack of locks and memorial displays, potentially as a result of the signage, makes the pier feel emptier, more managed, less empathetic, and devoid of that personal touch it once had (*Author 1 fieldnotes, summer, weekday afternoon*).

Although it is likely their removal was necessary to avoid comprising the structural integrity of the fencing, management appears to be designing out such unplanned behaviours, with a felt 'tightening' of the space (Tani, 2015). This smoothing of disorder, however, necessarily involves a thinning of atmospheric abundance, with North Pier beginning to feel like a more controlled, ordered, and less homely place. We see above, however, when consumers are afforded greater opportunities to co-create a space, more productive atmospheres can surface, as we also see with North Pier's photo stand-ins, which are now explored.



Figure 8. Memorial bench display.



Figure 9. Leaving locks on North Pier.

Unfinished frames and atmospheric delight

Echoing how atmosphere ‘is not a finished object but... a process of becoming’ (Thibaud, 2014: 64), seaside piers are inherently dynamic, unfinished, and ‘risky structures’ (Chapman et al., 2021). Adding to their dynamism, piers have continuously evolved their attractions to meet changing consumer demands for the experiential (Chapman et al., 2021). By their very nature, therefore, seaside piers are evocative of Sennett’s (2018) *incomplete forms* and North Pier is no different. Its sturdy yet rickety structure is ensnared in a never-ending process of maintenance and repair, with rusty ironwork, broken benches, flaking wood, and hotchpotch of wooden planks, materialities in continuous flux (Figure 10).

As well as the pier’s unfinished structure, several photo stand-ins are positioned along North Pier, each depicting images of seaside past in the style of Donald McGill’s saucy postcards (see Clissold, 2023) (Figure 11). They invite consumers to complete these unfinished frames through their playful and spontaneous interactions (see video) with these placemaking objects and other visitors, given objects can ‘provoke openings for imagination’ (Yi’En, 2014: 214) and incomplete forms encourage creative engagement and discovery (Sennett, 2020):

Another group of older women excitedly notice the large North Pier photo frame... and are drawn towards it for a photo opportunity. Laughing. One woman is dramatically performing for her group of friends, loudly pretending to be Punch and Judy. “That’s the way to do it” and “Naughty, naughty, naughty”, she repeats several times with her head through the picture of Punch, performing as the character. A group of guys stop to observe this spectacle and, like me and her friends, seem amused by it (Author 1 fieldnotes, summer, weekend mid-morning).

The photo stand-ins are therefore one example of where management have incorporated subtle design features which ‘make atmosphere easy’ (Steadman et al., 2021: 148) by enabling consumers to finish the designs through their creative, playful, and spontaneous engagements. There is thus a ‘...playfulness between controllable and uncontrollable factors that make up atmospheres’

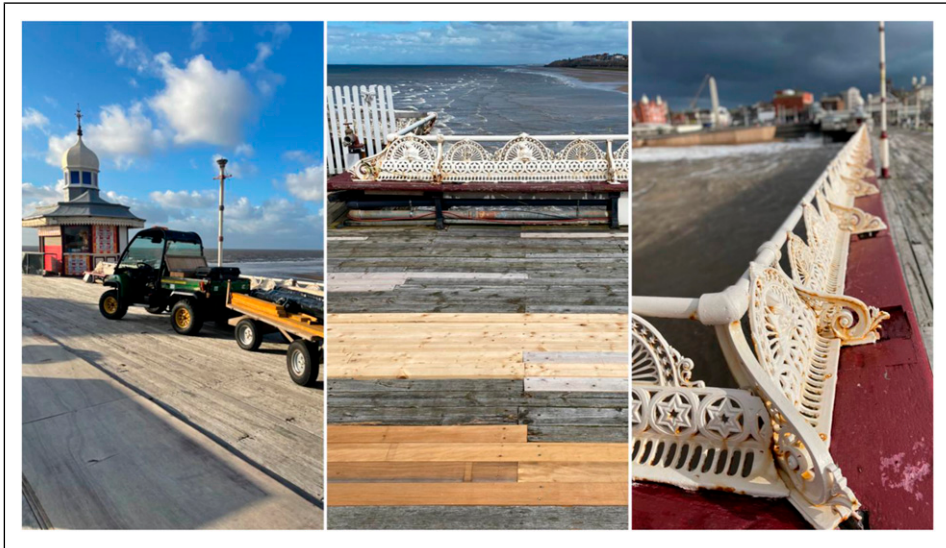


Figure 10. The pier's dynamic materiality.



Figure 11. The photo stand-ins.

(Woodward and Swartjes, 2024: 47) since, although consumers cannot change the images depicted, they can decide how to interact with the frames. As ‘atmospheres emerge from the configuration of design... with our experience of it’ (Sumartojo, 2022: 559), we therefore observed pools of atmospheric delight bubbling up through visitors’ humorous, and sometimes performative, interactions with the stand-ins:

The stand-ins... draw groups of people in, young and old. They become temporarily activated through 'staged' performance; the organisation of who goes behind and who takes the picture in a moment generative of merriment and playful engagement... Enabling adults to inhabit childhood, inviting role reversal whereby old might become young, thin becomes fat (*Author 2 fieldnotes, summer, late afternoon*).

Consequently, atmospheric delight can surface when consumers are involved in co-creating the pier's design through interacting with incomplete forms. As [Hracs and Concha \(2024: 15\)](#) concur, '...bodies are not merely caught in affective atmospheres but active participants who... co-produce market experiences'. This reaffirms literature suggesting atmospheres are co-produced between humans and non-humans (e.g. [Edensor, 2015](#); [Woodward and Swartjes, 2024](#)), whilst supporting [Sennett's \(2018\)](#) contention working with open forms should involve co-production. Yet, as seen above, the pier in some ways is becoming a more closed, managed, and sanitised space. We therefore observed dynamic tensions arising between atmospheric order and disorder, which we further tease out in our conclusions.

Conclusions

Conventional marketing theory considers atmosphere as a controllable 'marketing tool' ([Kotler, 1974](#)) and this continues to influence research ([Steadman and Coffin, 2024](#); [Turley and Milliman, 2000](#)). Emergent literature both within and outside of marketing, however, draws attention to the fluidity of atmospheres, recognising how atmospheric intensities wax and wane through unfolding and sometimes unexpected events (e.g. [Anderson, 2009](#); [Edensor, 2024b](#); [Paiva and Sanchez-Fuarros, 2021](#); [Silva et al., 2025](#)). Moving beyond such polarised discussion, however, this paper investigated fluctuations between atmospheric order and disorder. Through a sensory ethnography of a British seaside pier, we extend [Sennett's \(2020\)](#) call for greater attention to disorder in urban design and planning into theorisations of atmospheres in marketing theory. We argue this is critical to recognising the dynamic interchanges, tensions, and co-existence of ordering and disordering affects in (re)configuring the feel of consumption spaces.

On Blackpool's North Pier, we revealed the value of consumption spaces designed in a looser, less determined, and more open way. Multiple atmospheres and sensations flow through the pier's porous borders ([Sennett, 2018](#)), enabling productive exchanges between humans and an incessant reconfiguration of sights, sounds, and smells of the sea, weather, and wildlife. Whereas such affects might combine to elicit leisurely atmospheres, at other times their intensity and disorderly qualities produced a captivating jeopardy. Furthermore, the informal practice of leaving memorials and locks for loved ones elicited reflective atmospheres of belonging, whilst the half-finished photo stand-ins enabled playful engagement, generative of frivolity and conviviality. We also found, however, openness and synchronicity can engender atmospheric conflicts, as in the case of North Pier's sensorially overpowering attractions producing disruptive and disorientating affects. We therefore found too much ordering of atmospheres by management through dissonant design decisions, or trying to overtly influence consumer behaviours such as the increased presence of warning signs, can lead to a closing of spaces, diluting the atmosphere.

Subsequently, atmospheres have been described as possessing an 'in-between' quality, fluctuating somewhere in-between subject and object, humans and objects, space and emotion ([Anderson, 2009](#); [Bille et al., 2015](#)). As [Böhme \(2014: 8\)](#) (original emphasis) suggests, '...atmosphere is vague, it is indefinite, it is a totality which tunes the whole site... it is essentially *in between*'. Through engaging with Sennett's notions of disorder and open forms, our main

theoretical contribution lies in theorising and providing empirical evidence of how atmospheric design and experience are situated ‘in between’ order and disorder, rather than atmosphere ever being fully controllable or uncontrollable, thereby unsettling notions of atmospheres as a ‘marketing tool’ (Kotler, 1974).

Relatedly, the disorderly qualities of atmospheres have typically been understood by academics and marketers alike as a challenge to overcome to produce pleasurable, comfortable, and profitable consumer experiences (Steadman et al., 2021; Turley and Milliman, 2000). Indeed, much focus in extant literature attends to more enclosed and controllable consumer settings such as shopping malls, restaurants, and retail stores (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Conversely, the generative potential of encounters with disorder have been neglected. Yet, we see how the pier’s qualities of porosity, synchronicity, punctuation, and incomplete forms together create a more open environment affording multiple sensory opportunities and diverse atmospheres, which in other enclosed consumption environments become foreclosed by managerial design (Steadman and Coffin, 2024). We therefore argue paying greater theoretical attention to disorder enables useful conceptualisation of how order and disorder combine to produce atmospheric experiences, alongside the transformative effects of both under and over-managed environments, as atmospheres can ‘tip’ (Anderson and Ash, 2015) too far in either direction. This is not to uncritically accept disorder as inherently positive (Fariman, 2023), but rather we posit disorder is a valuable concept through which to theorise the dynamics between atmospheric order and disorder.

Moreover, Sennett’s open forms provide a novel and alternative theoretical framework to explore atmospheric design in other consumption settings. For example, Hracs and Concha (2024) reveal atmosphere may be ‘curated’ by market managers, yet unexpected atmospheres arise during the market event. We argue Sennett’s framework can extend this analysis. For instance, by enabling interrogation of the connections between the ‘temporary and permeable space [s]’ (ibid: 10) characterising market design and the multiple social or multisensory exchanges this arrangement might enable (*porosity*). Whilst we might concur the distribution of diverse traders and ‘micro-areas’ across markets elicits ‘variety, discovery and surprise’ (ibid: 9), Sennett provides a critical avenue to explore how this multiplicity might also be generative of atmospheric clashes and disorientation (*synchronous forms*). Whereas Sennett might recognise ‘unique’ stalls, ‘aesthetic elements’, and ‘magic’ trader performances (ibid: 12) as exclamation marks adding character to a place, his framework encourages us to acknowledge other means of punctuation, such as *quote marks* to provoke deeper and reflective qualities and *period marks* which disrupt the flow (*punctuated moments*). Finally, Sennett enables us to extend how people co-produce atmosphere in the context of street markets through measures which invite interaction and adaption to both the format and layout of markets (*incomplete forms*).

Consequently, there is scope to extend future investigation of atmospheric (dis)order across a range of other consumption spaces sharing properties of the pier. Open environments which are also susceptible to unplanned, yet generative, atmospheric disruption, but where over-management and predetermination might nullify their sensorial qualities. In the UK, for example, closer attention to (dis)ordered atmospheres is pertinent in efforts to revitalise town and city centres; places subject to intentional placemaking interventions to re-enchant dispirited high streets, but also influenced by fluctuating weather conditions and unpredictable events disrupting the planned atmosphere (Silva et al., 2025). This further research would not only build on literature surrounding atmospheric design and experience; but also extend and enrich broader theoretical debates about the experience economy and ongoing concerns over the disenchantment of spaces (Edensor and Millington, 2018) to ensure more of the places we consume – and consume in – offer more vibrant atmospheres.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the reviewers and special issue editors for their advice in improving our manuscript.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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