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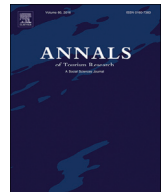
Typography and tourism places: The case of the English seaside resort

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This article examines tourism through the prism of graphic design, providing an analysis of the relationship between typography and popular English seaside resorts. Along Blackpool's, Brighton's and Scarborough's promenades, typefaces are observed, categorised, and mapped; additionally, we depict significant typefaces and discuss their characteristics. The research methods employed also provide a template to explore other typographical environments. The research findings reveal, for the first time, that certain combinations of typographical usage have become a distinct attribute of tourism design within the built environment of these resorts. Moreover, this is the rationale for a proposed typographic reference resource, enabling businesses and Destination Management Organisations to make better-informed design and marketing decisions.
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Introduction

This article explores the previously overlooked relationship between typography and tourism places - the coastal strips of English seaside resorts in particular. We observe, and systematically classify typefaces (Dixon, 2001; Baines & Haslam, 2002) within the built environment, before evaluating the significance of their selection and usage in tourism design. In other words, we want to see if typefaces are associated with these vacationscapes and, if so, assess their impact. We then consider how an improved understanding of typography can inform better design decisions for destinations and set an agenda for future research and practice, whilst offering specific recommendations.

Seaside resorts have been mass tourist destinations since the industrial revolution; as places of leisure and tourism, they contrasted with the places of industry that provided their customers; distinctive cultural practices and built environments developed further over time (Brodie, 2018; Ferry, 2013; Gray, 2006). In late-twentieth-century England, many of these resorts faced various challenges, including a loss of tourism infrastructure and visitor spending (Walton, 2000). Today, tourism destinations are increasingly looking to offer memorable and distinct experiences in a competitive and crowded marketplace; these include heritage experiences for example (Light & Chapman, 2022). At the same time, these resorts are often facing socio-economic chal-

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lenges and trying to regenerate or implement place-making strategies (Agarwal, 2002; Centre of Social Justice, 2013) – a process in which, we contend, graphic design (including typography) plays a vital role.

Typography can be considered from different perspectives, including history, place identity, cultural geography, sociology, and marketing. All are acknowledged in this article when they contribute to discussions on typography, however, the focus here is on design. More specifically, this topic is approached from a graphic design perspective, but it is framed by and informs the wider vacationscape and tourism design – both concepts are explored in the following section. So, we are considering a long-standing element of graphic design – one which plays a crucial and interactive role within marketing/communication but also in the physical structure of the built environment. The focus is on elements of design that can be observed at a destination and their visual contribution, using methodologies and approaches employed by practising graphic designers. Furthermore, this article is underpinned by both a literature and practice review of typography (Meggs & Purvis, 2006) and design-informed-tourism that impacts the visitor experience (Gray, 2006). The findings, in conjunction with the recorded case study evidence, contextualise the English seaside vernacular, which could be a valuable resource to resort businesses and Destination Management Organisations.

Literature and practice review

Tourism design

The concept of the vacationscape can be traced back to 1972 when Gunn suggested that the tourism industry needed to take a more customer-centred and comprehensive approach. The book, 'Vacationscape: Designing Tourist Regions', was the first to argue that a planned approach to tourism is essential - one based upon the complete requirements of tourists, which are far from uniform or simple. The essential message of the book is to build more effective tourism environments, or vacationscapes, through stronger design involvement (Gunn, 1972) and it laid the foundations for tourism design – an area which has evolved significantly in recent years (for a systematic overview of Tourism Design see Xiang, Stienmetz, & Fesenmaier, 2021).

Design is a flexible and wide-ranging concept; to some extent, the same is true of tourism design, which is usually concerned with the planning and management of visitor experiences. It can be considered a holistic and consumer focussed approach or a way of thinking and an important part of creating value in tourism (Xiang et al., 2021). The subsequent experience design should cover the full visitor journey within the vacationscape, especially the interactive elements of the experience. From architecture to business systems and from event productions to customer service training programmes, we can see tourism design activities being used to achieve a goal; often to increase the appeal of, and/or to sustain, tourism activities. Examples of more specific goals include encouraging creative industries as part of placemaking (Richards, 2020), deliberately designing for environmental sustainability within tourism (Dolnicar, 2020) and using technology to make destinations smarter through improved data collection and analysis (Williams, Rodriguez, & Makkonen, 2020).

Designed experiences can be stimulated by controlling how tourists interact with the physical, social and media elements of the destinations (Tussyadiah, 2014). Within tourism design, graphic design clearly deals with two of these elements - physical artefacts and media/marketing - both important touchpoints. It plays a key role as a highly visible and non-personal mediator of tourism interactivity (Tussyadiah, 2014; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009); shaping behaviour and the visitor experience, for example through shop frontages or printed guides. Several tourism scholars have not only considered design as a holistic and consumer centred way of approaching tourism but also as an 'applied art' (Tussyadiah, 2014, p. 456) by looking at the development of tourism facilities and considering elements of the (graphic) design environment. Examples include signage (Dann, 2003), boutique hotels (Strannegård & Strannegård, 2012) and website design (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008).

One essential element of Tourism Design and the Vacationscape is particularly relevant to this article – consistency, which is discussed here alongside authenticity. If the consumption environment is planned consistently and holistically, this can maximise the perceived value and meaning of those experiences (Agapito, 2022; Tussyadiah, 2014). This chimes with congruity theory, which suggests that consumers are more likely to look favourably upon a product when the environment is perceived as consistent (Agapito, 2022). This psychological theory dates back to the work of Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955, p. 42) who linked changes in attitude to a 'combined operation of a principle of congruity, a principle of susceptibility as a function of polarization, and a principle of resistance due to incredulity for incongruous messages'; in simple terms, the human mind responds positively to consistency. So, tourism/experience design can provide the platform to encourage positive emotional responses through coherent/consistent design elements (Agapito, 2022). Furthermore, these design elements, although often planned, can also be perceived as 'authentic' (see Rickly & McCabe, 2017). This is important because positive tourist experiences 'rely on tourists' acknowledgement of meaning, value and authenticity' (Agapito, 2022, p. 542). The constituent parts of place can be seen as elements of authentic tourist experiences, even those that might be labelled existential (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Furthermore, local identities can feed into and inform Tourism Design and, indeed, marketing (Jarratt, Phelan, Wain, & Dale, 2019; Kastenholz, Eusébio, & Carneiro, 2016). So, elements of place identity can inform a seemingly authentic, and consistent tourism design. Indeed, Gunn (1972) suggests that genius loci is an important force within tourism development; the distinctive culture and history of a locale can be seen as an asset within the vacationscape.

Despite some variation, English seaside resorts as a collective are instantly recognizable due to their distinctive features – not just in terms of their coastal settings and design but because of a particular set of cultural features which mean that place identity is perceptible (Jarratt, 2015). In particular, these settings have been associated with nostalgia (Jarratt & Gammon, 2016); it is facilitated through the seemingly old-fashioned or unchanging environment, which hosts memories of past visits. Nostalgia is an

idealised, selective, and therefore adapted reflection of the past one which can inform the present-day experiences; it does not only rely on personal memories but can be stimulated; one can experience a collective nostalgia, which might date back before one's earliest memory or birth (Hatherley, 2016). We shall go on to explore its role in design and typographic selection. Wang (1999) suggests that nostalgia or romanticism represent the ideal of the tourist's search for authenticity, which often underpins tourist motivation. This search for authentic experiences has the potential to inform tourism design (Rickly & McCabe, 2017), as does awareness of emotional reactions (Volo, 2021), such as nostalgia. As we shall discuss later in this article, seaside typography, perhaps the most reproduced form of seaside heritage, is influenced by and fits into nostalgia for the seaside - something which is becoming increasingly apparent in English seaside tourism. For example, Butlins have deliberately designed nostalgic elements into their coastal holiday parks, such as a giant deckchair at the entrance to their properties, and vintage theming design can be seen at Dreamland Margate (see Fig. 7), and at events such as the Vintage by Sea Festival in Morecambe – both in the physical setting and in marketing communications.

The English seaside resort and graphic design

Just as the visitor is influenced by their feelings, memories and experiences, the resorts are shaped by distinctive buildings and the sea itself, which dominate the somatic environment and therefore the visitor's experience. Design, in general, is, therefore, an essential element of creating a distinctive and memorable visitor experience, which might later be the subject of nostalgia. Perhaps this is most obviously seen through the architectural design of buildings and structures which make up the built heritage of the seaside. This is summed up by Gray (2006, p.7):

> At some point in their lives most people in Western societies have, in search of leisure and pleasure, holidayed in resorts by the sea. These experiences, together with a multitude of seaside images from postcards to films, and from novels to advertisements, leave people with complex memories and feelings about the seaside. The resort experience is frequently framed and conditioned by seaside architecture: the buildings and built form, the open spaces and design detail, which go to make up resorts.

Since the turn of the 20th century, posters, advertising, and printed travel guides have all promised a coastal utopia, an excursion to fresher air by sand and sea. Our experience of the seaside is informed by the multi-faceted discipline of graphic design, long used by resorts to identify and promote. Arcades, piers, and fairgrounds utilise familiar visual tropes which have evolved since the 19th Century. Inscribed, painted, or fabricated letterforms play a significant role in constructing the recognised 'image' and our experience of the seaside. Slesser (2019) describes Victorian piers as the image of the seaside where the 'myriad distractions proved an indefinitely adaptable backdrop to holiday disinhibition'. Natural and environmental themes would be used to promote the seaside at this time such as 'the horizon and wide-open sea views' used to suggest 'futurity'; space for visitors to lose themselves within a liminoid setting (Gray, 2006). We would later see an expansion of these ideals in the 1920s and 1930s with the glamour, functionality, and escapism of the Art Deco period (Wood, 2020).

Many English seaside resorts are synonymous with graphic representations of the towns and visual identities. The travel poster depicting *The Jolly Fisherman* on the beach of Skegness was commissioned by Great Northern Railway (GNR) in 1908, (https://www.heathrobinsonmuseum.org/whats-on/john-hassall-illustrator-and-poster-artist/) and with many examples of this productive period for seaside tourism, it has become one of the most recognised forms of resort advertising over the last century. GNR looked to appeal to a specific demographic with the bold, brash, regional designs depicting 'good, clean British fun' (Cole & Durack, 1992, p.21) in contrast to the stylised campaigns for British spa resorts and European destinations by artists and designers such as Roger Broders, A. M. Cassandre and the theatrical Toulouse-Lautrec, (Burns, 2020a). The GNR campaigns were designed to communicate and entice the working classes to day trip to Skegness and have become a 'place brand' for the resort to this day. Similarly, John Gorham's *'The English Riviera' identity* and poster series of 1982 still promotes the resorts of Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham as Britain's answer to the Côte d'Azur, (see: https://www.eyemagazine.com/blog/post/are-we-there-yet). Repeatedly appropriated, Gorham's minimal pictorial representation, coupled with the spatially set Gill Sans typeface, is both evocative of posters past and contemporary of the time. These graphic 'designs' form a distinct, and lasting connection with resorts and are a significant element of the vacationscape.

Lettering and typography at the seaside

At English seaside resorts, there is a multitude of legible and obscured signs informing and persuading us to engage, (see Fig. 1). Gray (1974, p.247) observes that 'lettering is omnipresent in our daily lives and takes a wide variety of forms; it involves two different types of reading behaviour: private and voluntary, public and involuntary'. Private and voluntary relate to selected reading matter: Books, guides, websites, and discreet information notices. Public and involuntary typographic messages are often in the form of neon signage, advertising, wayfinding, and design for leisure. Baines and Haslam (2002) define Lettering as a bespoke, idiosyncratic form of communication whereas typography is the means of implementing repeatable mechanical, digital components to visualise language, (see also Loxley, 2006 and Meggs & Purvis, 2006). Whether in public or private form, it is important to consider that letters are rarely used in isolation and independent of meaning (Gray, 1960 and 1974). In association with an architectural form, product, or message – letterforms are placed into an intended environmental context to communicate. Lettering, typography, ornamentation, and illumination can be simultaneously prominent and imperceptible within the visual tumult of a seaside resort, with graphic language intentionally or inadvertently informing genius loci (Baines & Dixon, 2003).

Fig. 1. Top left: Blackpool 'Golden Mile'; Top right: Brighton Palace Pier; Bottom Left: The Comedy Carpet, Blackpool. Andy Altman (Why Not Associates) Gordon Young, 2011 (See: https://gordonyoung.info/thecomedycarpet); Bottom Right: Scarborough Sea Front.

When the visual vernacular of the promenade is deconstructed, a typographic lineage becomes apparent; it consists of type-faces developed in the early 1800s by English type foundries (McNeil, 2017). These developments were led by typefounders Vincent Figgins and Robert Horne; new display typefaces such as Serifs (Roman), Fat Faces, Egyptian Slabs, Tuscans, and Antique typefaces (see Figs. 4 and 5) were fundamental to the impact of designs of posters and bills of the time. The Fat Face is typo-graphic expression in the extreme, (Baines & Haslam, 2002), an accentuation of the modern roman typeface, resulting in a letter-form that can dominate the printed (poster) page, the architectural facia. These bolder, striking typefaces were significant contributors in the explosion of information design in the early nineteenth century, (Morlighem, 2020), advertising theatres, pier shows, and circuses. In his survey of public lettering, Kinneir (1980) describes Egyptian slab typefaces as the 'letterforms of emphasis' displaying strength and clarity when applied to buildings of juxtaposing styles.

Inspired by European typographic innovation, the development of large typefaces by the American printers Darius Wells and William Leavenworth is significant in the design of English seaside resorts to this day. In the early 1800s both Wells and Leaven-worth embraced innovative technology to manufacture multi-use (wooden) large scale, typefaces (Kelly, 1969) and bespoke let-terforms, for clothing stores and travelling circuses (Meggs & Purvis, 2006, p.39). We can observe the influence of American 19th-century poster houses at the English seaside in the form of the widely used Antique, Clarendon, and Tuscan (Chromatic) typefaces (see Figs. 4 and 5). The Tuscan, in its many guises, remains a frequently used letterform at the English seaside with origins that can be dated back to 4th-century Roman inscriptions (Gray, 1986). Over time, we can observe that the seaside has co-opted let-terforms, typefaces, and decorative aesthetics to establish a mode of graphic communication that is repeatedly applied within En-glish resorts (Ball, 2019). An example of 'place' influencing graphic language and vice versa.

Lettering and its relationship to architecture and place are sometimes misunderstood and under-valued but it has been funda-mental to the identity and formation of seaside resorts. The lettering historian Nicolete Gray assesses the relationship in Lettering on Buildings (1960): while architecture and lettering have a 'utilitarian function' and formality, it is also the intention of designers to ensure any visual representations are 'pleasing, as well as useful.' Language and its representation are never without intention or meaning within the environmental context. In assessing the visual landscape of the seaside, we can draw parallels with re-search into the urban environment and the importance of the three-dimensional and illuminated sign. In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour (1972) observe that the modern view of 'form follows function' had been disregarded. In Las Vegas, communication overrides function, with an emphasis on the image and typographic representations that evoke emo-tional and symbolic associations; an environment where, "if you take away the signs, there is no place" (Venturi et al., 1972, p.18; see also Waller, 2011).

Harland's (2016) study into Graphic Design in Urban Environments provides a critical framework on how the discipline (and associative fields such as typography) contribute to the 'image' of towns and cities. In underpinning his argument that graphic design can be interpreted as a spatial practice, Harland cites Lynch's (1960) concept of imageability, which is widely referred to within urban and panning design studies, but less so in the fields of visual communication. Lynch explores the components of an urban landscape and how these parts form the identity, meaning, and structure of the place. In determining legibility and

reading of the city, urban structures can be seen as artistic objects that provoke sensory responses to our interaction with place. Familiar graphic 'objects' such as lettering, street names, wayfinding, and signs are all a significant part of the composite environmental image (Harland, 2016).

Henderson, Giese, and Cote (2004, p.2) identify 'six under-lying design dimensions: elaborate, harmony, natural, flourish, weight, and compressed' - as variables in the impression management of typefaces. The study explores the design characteristics of selected typefaces, and responses to the letterforms and explores the notion of type as a tool, which: 'affects perceptions of advertised brands, influence the readability and memorability of advertisements.' Memorability, recognition, association, and nostalgia are all key factors in formulating the seaside experience for visitors. Whilst the research undertaken by Henderson et al. (2004)) to determine corporate impression and meaning is most useful and valid in its attempt to rationalise typographic decision-making, the study lacks specificity in its contextual background and classification of the typefaces surveyed. In contrast, this article establishes a relationship between specific places and typefaces.

A relevant example of typographic practice (furthermore, one that employs nostalgia), is the Comedy Carpet at Blackpool, (see Fig. 1). Designed by Gordon Young and Why Not Associates (Andy Altman) in 2011, the permanent installation blurs the boundaries of graphic, urban design, and public art (see Sutcliffe, 2013). Harland (2016, p.7) describes the 2200msq typographic homage to seaside entertainment heritage as a 'type-typographic-graphic-urban design continuum' and how the vast physical piece has contributed to the image and representation of Blackpool. Young and Altman, created a layout consisting of jokes, punchlines, and comedy acts from yesteryear, using typography to visualise the voice, with differentiation, tone, and emphasis. The Comedy Carpet draws upon the typographic heritage of early playbills from the mid to late 19th and 20th-century theatre, and music hall posters resulting in a design of impact and associations distinctly synonymous with Blackpool (Sutcliffe, 2013).

Research through practice

Detailed historical analysis of the transitional developments in commercial typography since the early 1800s (Baines & Haslam, 2002; Morlighem, 2020), has informed our observed connections between typefaces and the English seaside, their relevance and impact. Our research findings have been articulated through exhibited practice, documenting the most frequently used typefaces and their mapped origins. *Resorting to type,* (see Fig. 2) an exhibition of lettering and typography at the seaside was shown in Margate, Kent, appropriately positioned metres away from the shore in the hub of the resort, (https://www.themargateschool.com/events/resorting-to-type). Based on the conventions of a 'type specimen' the exhibited designs outline the origins of a typeface (and its contemporary versions) in use along the promenade. *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot (1922) is used as a fragmented narrative which has significance to the place, as Eliot wrote part of the prose overlooking the shore at Margate. As with the *Comedy Carpet* – but not on the same scale – the connection to the community and visitors was important in facilitating debate regarding the changing visual landscape and its impact on resorts. The exhibition provided the visitor with historical and characteristic reference of the frequently used typefaces at the English seaside.

Fig. 2. Exhibited 'type specimen' designs as part of *Resorting to Type* exhibition at The Margate School Gallery in September 2021.
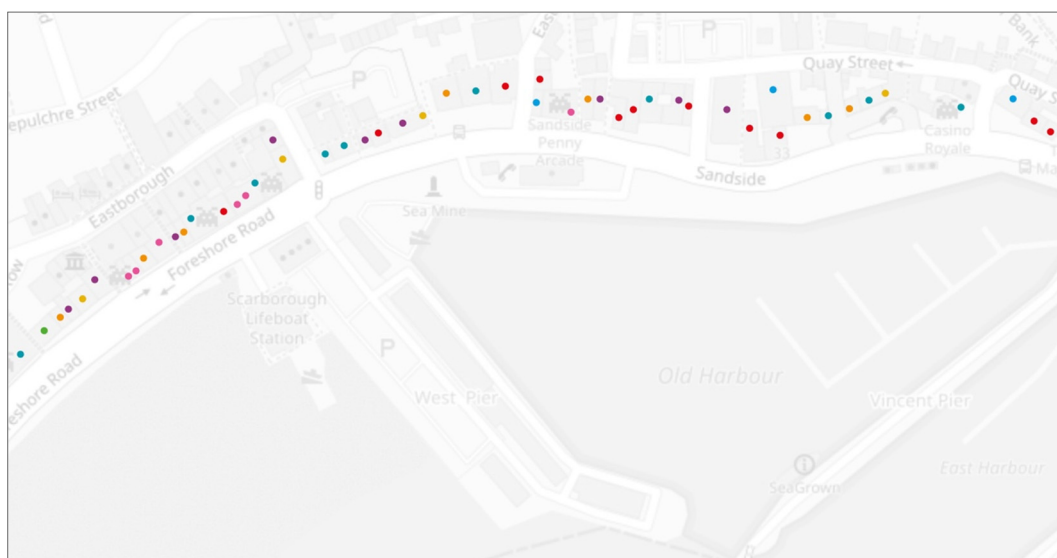
Case studies

Recently published studies on lettering and typography in the environment are relevant to this research, not just in terms of content but also (observational) methodology. Hall (2020) and Roberts and Reed (2021) in the respective *London Street Signs* and *Ghost signs, A London Story* document and detail examples of London's Street nameplates and faded advertisements within defined areas. The London Postal District provides the geographic boundary – and parameter for research – for Hall in his visual tour of the street signs of the capital. Roberts and Reed (2021) outline the rationale for the 'selection and text' within the study, with a 'reasonable distribution' across the city, and recognise that the selected examples were ultimately subjective. Notable, contributory studies in the field have also been produced by photographers: Ball (2019); Mander (2022); Parr (2018) and Williams and Shepherdson (2019), who have observed and documented the seaside with an honesty. More recently, *Ensuites Available* is a photographic study of hotel frontages in Blackpool providing further insight into the typographic landscape of the Lancashire resort (Horn, 2021).

Framework

The authors have undertaken multiple real-world case studies (Yin, 2018) to determine the usage of typefaces and their contribution to the coastal touristic built environment. The objectives were to determine whether an uncategorised (thus far) foundry of seaside typefaces exists - which fonts are frequently used at the coast. Multiple-case studies can provide researchers with data returns that are similar or contrasting in their results. It was anticipated that the three case studies undertaken in Blackpool, Brighton and Scarborough would result in a similar pattern of usage overall, but with some potential differences in the selection of specific letterforms or typefaces. Replication logic is applied here in repeating the observational exercises at three sites to strengthen findings. Due to numerous site visits and assessments, the authors were familiar with the sites and the potential for replication (Yin, 2018).

Visual documentation of built environments can be challenging due to the complexities of recording vast geographic areas within the potential limitations of a printed or digital page. Cultural geography research and, in particular, the visual representation of the built environment by graphic and urban designers informed the documentation process at the selected resorts (Noble and Bestley, 2005). Barnes's (2019) extensive research into the relationship between geography, graphic and urban design provides an insight into appropriate methodologies within similarly defined parameters.

Identifying a 'geo/graphic' approach Barnes (2019, p.5) outlines representation methods, which are informed by the theories, practices, and interplay of 'cultural geography, anthropology and graphic design'; an opportunity for researchers to engage the reader in creative forms of data analysis and visual representation of autoethnographic findings. The method used in this article plots the position of the signs (see Fig. 3 and appendix), the typefaces used (see Figs. 4 and 5) and their frequency (see Fig. 6) within the defined areas, this provides the reader with geographic and typographic context. The resulting visual mapping of the signs also simulates the 'graphical' illuminated lighting patterns synonymous with many English sea fronts, (see Fig. 3). Barnes (2019, p.5) outlines the relevance of a 'graphic design' method of documentation:

Fig. 3. Detail of case study documentation (map shown: Scarborough) – see appendix for full case study mapping of all 3 resorts: Blackpool, Brighton, and Scarborough.
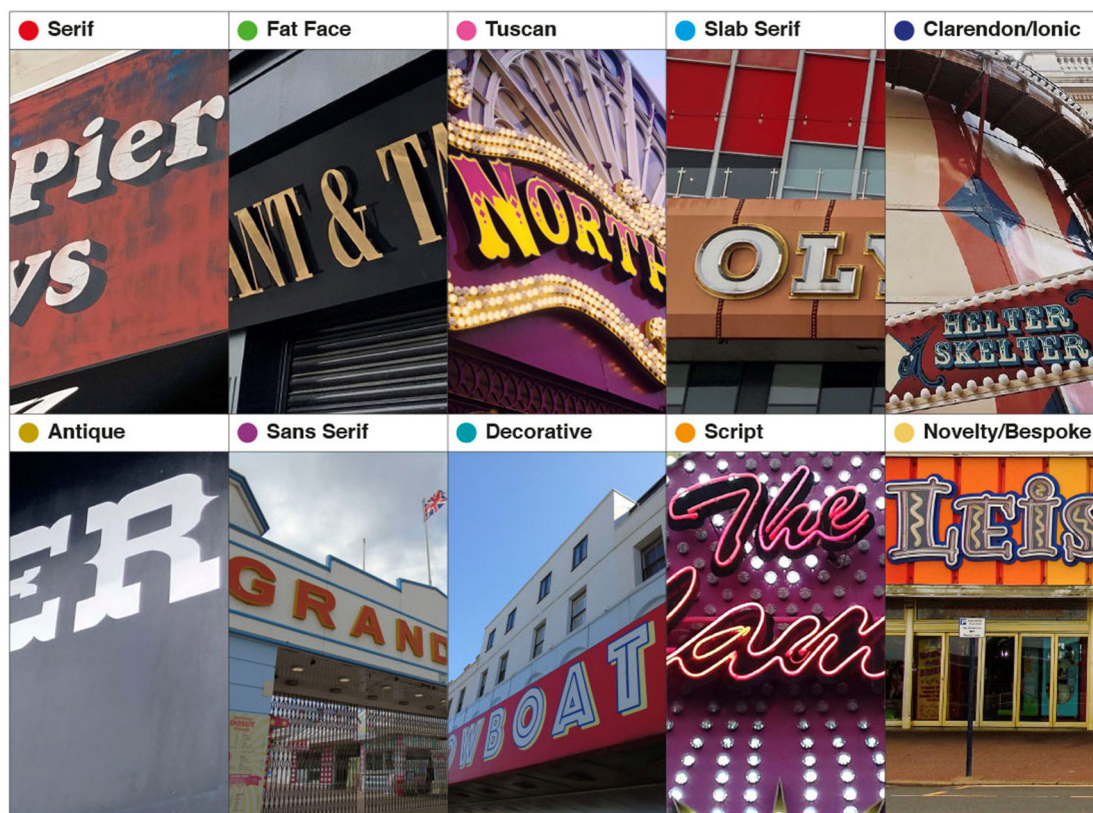
Fig. 4. Classification of typefaces associated with the seaside – pictorial references and links to colour-coding within case studies.

In the process of developing this re/presentation, graphic design is actively used both as a mode of inquiry and to develop a proactive space of communication and interpretation for the reader.

Typographic case studies

This article is concerned with the analysis of the resorts Blackpool, Brighton, and Scarborough from a design perspective. The case studies record the typefaces observed on the (defined) sea front areas of these popular English resorts. According to Visit Britain Scarborough is the most visited English seaside resort with the highest spending, followed by Blackpool and then Brighton (see Visit Britain, 2019 for breakdown of these numbers). So, all three resorts are well recognised and have been since the advent of mass tourism; they have a rich history and had a significant impact on the evolution of the English seaside holiday (Ferry, 2009; Gray, 2006). In setting the parameters for the multiple case studies, it is appropriate to assess the design and the interrelationship of facades within a congested area of attractions and retail. All three resorts have a concentration of sea-facing businesses – and signage – providing a consistent framework for analysis of the retail and tourist attraction design. Despite the similarities between these resorts, there are differences too (as there would be in any multiple case study involving settlements). Most obviously in terms of Geography – Blackpool is on the Northwest coast, Scarborough on the Northeast coast, and Brighton on the South coast of England. There is socio-economic and historical variation too; some other features of the resorts are mentioned below but for more detail see Brodie (2018), Ferry (2009) and Walton (2000). Yet these differences did not necessarily preclude commonalities in terms of typography and lettering.

As a resort, Blackpool, Lancashire, has self-proclaimed itself as the 'Vegas' of the North, emphasising its offer as a mecca for entertainment. It has more purpose-built attractions than other English seaside resorts and has benefitted from investment from Merlin Entertainments in recent years. The new Blackpool Museum, Showtown, (due to open in 2023) celebrates the resort through six themes: seaside, magic, shows, circus, illuminations, and dance, citing Blackpool's significant contribution to seaside holidays and entertainment in England. Aside from its Theme Park, Tower, Winter Gardens and three piers, the resort is famed for the Blackpool Illuminations, which first lit the Lancashire seafront in 1879 (Burns, 2020b; Ferry, 2009). This light show still attracts many visitors in Autumn and continues to lessen the impact of seasonality.

Brighton, East Sussex, is a popular resort but can also be described as a city by the sea, with a university and direct train link to London which is some 47 miles away. It attained city status in 2000 and is well known for its thriving cultural scene such as the Brighton Festival and Fringe events. It is best-known attractions are its two piers (one of which is ruined but is a much-

Classification	Example typefaces
Serif	Baskerville Caslon Open Face Cooper Black Windsor (shown)
FAT FACE	Bodoni Elephant – Big Figgins Thorne Shaded (shown) Isambard
TUSCAN	Gillés Classic Regular (shown) HWT American Chromatic Lettres Ombrées Ornées Zebrawood Regular
Slab Serif	HWT slab (shown) Rockwell Rockwell Shadow Thorowgood Egyptian
CLARENDON/IONIC	Caslon Ionic Clarendon Profil Rosewood (shown)
Antique	Buffalo Western French Antique Pepperwood Playbill (shown)
SANS SERIF	Caslon Sans Shaded Century Gothic Gill Sans (shown) Thorowgood Sans Shaded
DECORATIVE	Broadway Engraved Frankfurter (shown) Intro Inline Pin Ball
SCRIPT	Balloon (shown) Blitz Brush Script Candice
NOVELTY/BESPOKE	Bespoke lettering/brands Hybrid typefaces and letterforms Unclassified typefaces Mixed-media signage

Fig. 5. Classification of typefaces associated with the seaside.

photographed landmark) and The Royal Pavilion; an ornate former royal palace designed by John Nash and built for the Prince Regent during the early 19th century. Indeed, Brighton was famed for its royal patronage, which helped popularise this (early) resort and other seaside watering holes. The distinctive and exotic architecture of the Pavilion is a good example of the otherness of seaside architecture, which makes up part of its appeal (Jarratt, 2022).

Scarborough, North Yorkshire, can also rightly be considered as one of the older and better-established English seaside resorts. It has been attracting visitors since the 1620s on account of its spa and by 1660 Dr. Robert Wittie was extolling the virtues of sea-bathing at the resort (Brodie, 2018). By the middle of the 18th century, it was a popular spa and seaside destination, and, like other popular resorts, it saw a surge in tourism during the railway age i.e. the 19th century (Walton, 2000). Alongside Blackpool, it remains the most visited traditional English seaside resort today. Scarborough has long been associated with the fishing industry and its pier is an industrial affair when compared to the other case studies here; it is still used by the fishing industry as well as visitors.

Observed typefaces at the seaside				
Typeface Classification	**Blackpool**	**Brighton**	**Scarborough**	**Overall**
Serif	10	30	16	**56**
Fat Face	2	2	1	**5**
Tuscan	8	10	8	**26**
Slab Serif	3	1	5	**9**
Clarendon/Ionic	2	1	0	**3**
Antique	3	1	0	**4**
Sans Serif	11	14	10	**35**
Decorative	4	2	10	**16**
Script	3	6	7	**16**
Novelty/Bespoke	4	4	4	**12**
Total overall	**50**	**71**	**61**	**182**

Fig. 6. Observed typefaces within the case studies of Blackpool, Brighton, and Scarborough.

Consistent research methods were employed for each case study, sites which are clarified on the case-study maps, were the coastal strip or frontage in the town centres. The coastal areas not shown on the map i.e., beyond the boundary of the maps, were not surveyed, nor were areas away from the coastal strip or frontage. Within these boundaries, all of the seaside typographies on the frontages of businesses/establishments were recorded, classified, and mapped. Typically, these took the form of signage on a building – the vast majority of which homed tourism businesses, (see Fig. 4). These are persuasive and attention-seeking forms of typography (Harland, 2016). So, generic road or parking signage was ignored for example. If a plot on the front was vacant, it was not counted – this is because a high proportion of these were covered, partially covered, or undergoing restoration. It would be entirely possible for others to replicate this method as long as the area was well defined, and they could confidentially classify the lettering.

Site visits to these three resorts and the outlined (graphic) methodology have enabled the authors to record the typographic classifications that adorn the signs and facias. In establishing an appropriate classification system, we have considered practitioners who operate in related fields of practice and lettering and typographic research. Carters Steam Fair relies heavily on the traditional visual vernacular of the fairground to provide an authentic experience. Joby Carter, proprietor and expert signwriter, decorates and maintains the engines and rides. His recent publication (Carter & Rickard, 2020) outlines the classifications drawn upon when considering their typographic approach, including Roman, Clarendon, Ship, Playbill, Broadway, Curveside and Tuscan alphabets. Furthermore, observed categorised typefaces correspond with Dixon's (2001) description framework for letterforms, studies by Baines and Haslam (2002); Lewis (1962); Shaw (2017) and McNeil (2017). The diagrammatic study of the seaside resorts documents the classified typefaces through colour-coded systematic means corresponding to the classification tables and photographic reference. The authors are concerned with the categories/classification of typefaces (see Fig. 5) to assess the design characteristics (Dixon, 2001) and functionality of a typeface in the environment.

Within the defined areas, 50 signs were observed in Blackpool, 71 in Brighton and 61 in Scarborough. The case studies break these down into colour-coded categories (referenced in the table above) and show their location, (see Appendix).

Analysis and discussion

Seaside typefaces: the sign of a good holiday?

Based on the evidence of the three case studies, the Serif classification is the dominant category of typefaces. Familiar forms of the serif are prominent with retail and entertainment signage using typefaces such as Clearface, Baskerville and Times New Roman – letterforms we also see on storefronts on the high street and in rural settings. The seaside, however, is not homogenous in the same way some of our high streets have recently become, dominated by brand similarity, and limited independent choice, creating identikit towns – see the Clone Town Report (Simms, 2010); independent idiosyncrasies, within design and heritage, appeal to visitors at the seaside (Jarratt, 2022). At the resorts analysed, we can observe the frequent use of bolder, heavier 'weight' Roman typefaces which have the capacity the catch the eye and retain legibility. The letterforms function at a large (accentuated) scale and can often facilitate illumination or bespoke decoration. In particular, the Roman typefaces Windsor and Cooper Black were observed as popular selections for fascia designs to identify and promote hospitality, retail, and leisure, (see Fig. 6).

Windsor is an English typeface that originates in the transformative advertising period of the early twentieth century and was produced by Stephenson, Blake & Co around 1905. In his assessment of the old-style serif McNeil (2017, p.177) describes the 'long oval forms' of the typeface which 'made for attractive settings with high impact'. Displaying distinct influences of Windsor is Cooper Black, an American typeface designed by Ozwald 'Oz' Cooper in 1922. The typeface with its large, heavy curved serifs communicates a softer message when set large despite its heavyweight presence on the baseline, or on the sign. McNeil describes the attributes of Cooper Black as a typeface which is intended to be 'seen first, read second' – a typeface which looks like a contemporary sans serif (Garfield, 2010) due to the swelled serifs, softening any formality of the character. Cooper Black is a versatile typeface recurrently used at resorts for retail, product identity and visitor attraction design. As with many letterforms, cross-disciplinary connotations contribute to our recognition and reading of the 'tone' of a typeface. A typeface of light-hearted association, Cooper Black is a popular choice in the design of TV and film idents (and in particular comedy) travel and music industries. The typeface has a distinct, inherent connection to leisure and entertainment, an attribute fully exploited at the seaside, (see Figs. 4 and 5).

A typeface distinctly associated with the seaside – though lacking the frequency of the aforementioned serif or roman letterforms – is the Tuscan, and in particular, the Chromatic variant, (Shaw, 2017). The Tuscan displays an exuberance through its fork-shaped serifs (Gray, 1938, 1960 and 1986)– the bifurcation of the character itself portrays a playful flamboyance, synonymous with the entertainment and escapism of the seaside. Connections can be made with Tuscan letterforms and other distinctive facets of seaside design: ornate metal promenade railings, pier facades and painted fairgrounds all deploy decorative flourishes which evoke a sense of freedom and the carnivalesque. A popular choice with letterers and signwriters promoting fairgrounds, circuses, and early seaside amusements in the 19th century, Tuscan typefaces such as Gillé (see Fig. 1: Brighton Palace Pier), and Zebrawood (Shaw, 2017) continue to be popular typographic choices at the seaside in painted or illuminated form.

The examples of lettering and typefaces outlined here, intertwine with distinctive associations with place more generally. As outlined by Harland (2016) and Waller (2011), architectural forms and 'graphic objects', can consciously or sub-consciously bring place-related associations. The collective sensory attributes of the seaside, many of which are informed by the discipline of graphic design, combine to form a genius loci underpinned by traditions, identity, and locale (Barnes, 2019). Our tacit knowledge or prior experience of an environment – in this case, the English seaside – provide us with expectations upon our visit. The

personality of – or association with – a typeface is significant in terms of its placement at the seaside. Hall (2007, p.7) explains that 'signs are everywhere and formed through the society that creates them'. Dann (2003) observes how the visual tumult of 'signs' in the environment, can create a landscape of social control. Signs (and the language used) at the seaside have a persuasive tone – the voice of the arcade is loud, entertaining, and sometimes intrusive – depending on the participative interest, of the day-tripper. Barnard (2005, p.35) outlines the importance of connotation and the 'ideological' beliefs embedded in forms of graphic design and how the discipline – and we can include typography in this – 'is the interface between the individual and a culture'. Typographic communication – and signs – are active signifiers of a product or experience, but there is also a significant role to be played by the visitor or participant.

We can observe trends in the selection, usage, and application of typography at the resorts in question. Whilst many of the methods of communication are not unique in contrast to urban environments – such as town and city centres – there are thematic considerations made by seaside businesses and tourism organisations when determining the designed 'tone' of voice. We can observe established modes of design whereby the coexistence of interchangeable signs – using the typefaces recorded in this study – form the collective, interdependent promenade image. The English seaside becomes distinctive when strategists and designers reference its rich heritage value. This can be seen in some recent contemporary proposals to engage a wider demographic through regeneration strategies for Brighton, Margate, and Southend. So, typography is an essential element of these distinctive environments and has a significant role to play in terms of tourism design and communication.

Communicating the seaside

Urry (1995, p.149) describes how the 'image' of tourism destinations is constructed to communicate physically within the environment, but also through a proliferation of media forms. Within this construct is the unconscious interpretation of varied forms of aesthetics: "What is consumed in tourism are visual signs and sometimes simulacrum." Lynch (1960) describes our perception of a place as a partial experience, formed of fragmented elements that create a composite image. At the seaside this 'image' is dominated by shape, symbol, pattern and typography - sometimes illuminated. So, design is an important consideration and attribute in communicating a certain image, feel or tone. Indeed, there is a growing recognition of design for tourism and the agile mechanisms required (Fesenmaier & Xiang, 2016) to inform marketing communication. It is potentially a useful tool in the efforts to identify and communicate the offer of traditional resorts and to rally seaside tourism in towns which may require an economic boost.

Place branding has become an important strategic tool that allows destinations to differentiate themselves from the competition, (Polianskaya, 2019). Indeed, it is now accepted, that towns and city regions must project a positive brand image to facilitate investment and attract visitors (Marzano & Scott, 2009). Morgan et al., (2011:12) advocate that this positive image should be communicated to residents and visitors through 'the emotional power of a destination's tone'. With tone said to include 'a place's ambience, its physical fabric and character' along with 'the attitude of its people, its heritage, and narratives'. Typography is also an important as a part of that tone. In this case it is linked to the rich heritage and nostalgia of the seaside – which, alongside other factors, underpins touristic appeal (Jarratt & Gammon, 2016).

Recent rebrands of resorts, theme parks, and festivals sensitively acknowledge the nostalgic 'concept' of the English seaside in a contemporary context. Mindful of the impact of reappropriation, Hemingway Design and Johnson Banks's designs for both Margate's Dreamland Theme Park (see Fig. 7), and Blackpool Pleasure Beach (https://www.johnsonbanks.co.uk/work/blackpool-pleasure-beach) respectively, reference heritage value, whilst avoiding dated stereotypes (Fesenmaier & Mackay, 1997). In both visual strategies, visual tropes and typographic traditions are reinterpreted through contemporary typefaces designed for multimedia platforms. Not only is the 'Seaside Vernacular' a part of the history of these resorts, but it continues to contribute to their identity. This is perhaps most obvious through efforts to 'sell' the seaside, outlined here.

Fig. 7. Dreamland, Margate. Branding development by Hemingway Design, 2011. (See: https://www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk/projects/dreamland-margate)

Environmental typographic communication is not without its challenges. The seaside vernacular can often be a congested, pa-limpsest environment, with signs and fascia vying for the attention of the visitor, (see Fig. 4). Baines and Dixon (2003, p.101) cite the need for consideration and applicability of typographic selection 'typefaces are produced in unsympathetic materials used in a public lettering context at sizes far larger than they were intended'. Signs at the seaside interdependently form associative expe-riences, combining sights, sounds, and nostalgic associations, with the 'spatial structure' (Fesenmaier & Lieber, 1988). Successful and commonplace typefaces at the seaside are letterforms that have been designed to be read at scale and in three-dimensional form. The visibility and legibility of a sign in conjunction with appealing attributes such as colour, scale, illumination, and sound are fundamental to the success of a business at the seaside. As noted earlier in this paper a sign can contribute and be a significant 'part' of the place (Venturi et al., 1972).

Referencing the accentuated architectural vernacular of Nevada, a recent large-scale sign in the Lincolnshire resort of Skegness visually appropriates the famous *Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas* original. The £36,000, *Welcome to Fabulous Skeg Vegas* sign, (See: https://twitter.com/bbcbreakfast/status/1538552185755258884) funded by Skegness Raceway Stadium, has gained national cov-erage, and deemed a social media visitor draw for the resort. The sign simulates the concept of escapism through the recognised graphic attributes and design aesthetic whilst utilising humour (a familiar trait of the English seaside) in the syntagmatic arrange-ment. In assessing the referential value of the sign, Barnard (2005, p.26) refers to Saussure's unity of signifier and signified.

The signifier is the 'material vehicle' and the signified is the associated concept. Interdependent visual 'dimensions' such as ty-pography, image, and colour (Harland, 2016; Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2003) are all significant signifiers in the construct of the seaside vernacular.

Conclusion

This article establishes that there is a seaside vernacular, consisting of several typefaces (see Figs. 4 and 5); Serif, Fat Face, Tus-can, and others are as much a part of the seaside as the distinctive architecture and tourism businesses found along English prom-enades. Consideration of lettering, typeface and other visual representations is a part of place promotion and branding more generally, but the difference here is the typography is linked to a specific (type of) place (Baines & Dixon, 2005). For, at the En-glish seaside at least, lettering and typography can be seen as place-defined, and this presents an opportunity to consider the specificity when communicating with visitors both within the resort and through marketing material. Not only could the interpre-tation of the value of typography provide depth to a design proposal, but it would emphasise the heritage/traditions associated with these distinctive places - a valuable asset within the vacationscape.

Setting an agenda: future practice and research

The findings from this research could be useful to those involved in seaside tourism, wishing to select a form of visual lan-guage that will communicate and represent through lettering and typographic means – beyond selecting a familiar font or style deemed part of the zeitgeist. The authors believe there are infinite possibilities in using established categorised forms of ty-pography: Serif, Tuscan et al. and new adapted, evolving forms of lettering and type, reflecting the societal communication and culture (digital and interactive). We can evidence contemporary use of established typographic tropes within campaigns (Fesenmaier & Mackay, 1997) by Hemingway Design, (see Fig. 7) and True North's recent branding solution for *Showtown* Blackpool's first museum (see https://www.thisistruenorth.co.uk/projects/showtown).

It is unlikely that the seaside vacationscapes mentioned here are the only ones shaped by typography and lettering, indeed we have already referred to Las Vegas for example (Venturi et al., 1972). So, other typographical environments could be explored and analysed in order to inform tourism design. The methodology deployed here could be applicable in the analysis of associative urban areas such as, but not limited to: Art Deco, Art Nouveau and Victoriana design of arcades and municipal buildings. One such example is the Grade-II listed Victoria Quarter in Leeds, designed by the theatre architect Frank Matcham and built in 1900. Due to recent restoration and investment the shopping arcade has been termed the 'Knightsbridge of the North' contribut-ing to Leeds's contemporary image as a destination city of the north of England (see: https://www.yorkshire.com/view/attractions/leeds/victoria-quarter-892105). Along with the addition of key partners and investors such as Harvey Nichols and John Lewis – design and typography has played a key role in creating the 'place brand' of the district, and the city. Here we see for example the use of a consistent typeface for each store frontage inside the arcade – externally we see the usage of a Tus-can typeface adorning large over the entrances. Due to its 'offer', we can interpret an alternative value system attributed to some of the typefaces based on the 'conditions' of the environment, informed by 'morphological, social, visual, functional, and temporal' dimensions outlined by Carmona et al. (2003) as cited in Harland (2016, P.38). These differ from the distinctive and liminoid en-vironmental conditions we have observed along the promenade, emphasising the importance, and recognition, of typographic placement and context.

Design research and particularly studies into the relationship between graphic design, typography, and the built environment, has often lacked a detailed analysis of the impact of 'visual language' on tourism; perhaps these connections have fallen between the cracks between disciplines? In any case, there is little doubt that typography, and specifically, typefaces that are linked to par-ticular places, deserve more attention from tourism academics and those with an interest in marketing or branding places. Mean-while, artists, designers, and typographers have continually sought to create a visual experience, to identify, entice, and inform the day-tripper; further building on the character of the English seaside resort.

Recommendation – a typographical reference resource

English seaside resorts tend to host a wide range of individual businesses and organisations - all making their own typographical choices. As we know from the literature review authenticity and consistency, in particular, are important in tourism design (Agapito, 2022; Rickly & McCabe, 2017; Tussyadiah, 2014). Furthermore, the design language (typography) of the seaside has developed organically over many years, in a way which could be considered 'authentic', but it is used inconsistently; for example in terms of size, colour and placement - which makes this distinctive element of the vacationscape more difficult to recognise than it otherwise might be. With this in mind, it seems pertinent to consider how the use of the identified typefaces (from classifications described in this paper) and new derivatives may be integrated as part of a new strategy for coastal towns.

We propose a typographic reference resource, in digital form. This online resource can provide businesses (of all sizes), Destination Management Organisations and designers with access to a collection of typographic references and letterforms with an intrinsic association with the (English) seaside. The resource will provide examples and guidance, to allow the user to make an informed decision on the selection of typefaces. It would assist users to establish place specificity and heritage value when selecting a typeface to represent a place. This can provide a rationale for the usage of a typeface and allow for differentiation, dependent on heritage and the contemporary vision of a place, whilst avoiding uniformity. A typographic reference resource could inform toolkits, for example, sense of place toolkits (see Jarratt et al., 2019), but in particular destination brand guideline documents. It is important to emphasise that we are in no way suggesting any form of limitation in the consideration and selection of a typeface, at the coast or elsewhere, but rather we advocate more a considered approach to typographical selection.

We can refer to user interfaces of established online type foundries: see https://commercialclassics.com/catalogue/caslon_antique which shows how a typeface can be promoted whilst at the same time providing historical and contemporary context (Harmsen et al., 2020). The resource can allow the user to determine the 'voice' of the business, attraction, and/or place. We can reference and draw parallels with other archives which provide a repository for comparative fields of research. Such as the urban-graphic-object resource (see https://www.urban-graphic-object.org). This archive is overseen by the aforementioned Robert Harland; it documents and analyses the relationship between graphic design (typography included) and the urban environment. The Central Lettering Record at Central St Martins initiated by Nicolete Gray and Nicholas Biddulph is a collection of historical typographic references and type specimens; it documents the evolution of type design and application, with the archive now curated by Judy Lindsay. The digitised public lettering archive accompanies the physical collection at Central Saint Martins (see http://www.publiclettering.org.uk) (Baines & Dixon, 2003). More recently we can also reference the aforementioned Ghost Signs study (Roberts & Reed, 2021) where the reader can navigate the examples of faded signage in print and online – a visual tour of the London Boroughs explored. So, typographical online resources are not without precedent outside of tourism.

Some destination branding guides have considered typography alongside other important identifying factors such as colour palette, photography, and a suggested lexicon; this can be seen in a particularly thoughtful example: The Morecambe Bay Brand Guidelines (Marketing Lancashire and Cumbria Tourism, 2018, p.24). 'A place like no other' is how the design agency, True North described Blackpool when commissioned to design the identity for the town's new museum. Their identity for Showtown (https://www.thisistruenorth.co.uk/projects/showtown) uses a branding 'toolkit' with associative shapes, icons, and a colour palette that is evocative of the entertainment and showbusiness heritage of the town. The visual strategy aims to 'energise a place (the resort) and engage new audiences'; destination brands will function well if they allow for agile, creative approaches to tourism strategy and consider experience design, (Henderson et al., 2004; Stienmetz, Kim, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2020). With that in mind, our objective is for these findings from this article, and the subsequent reference resource, to be of use to businesses and place-makers in developing and reidentifying coastal towns. The signs of how relevant lettering and typography are to this environment have been visible for some time; one could say, characterising the seaside.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103490.

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