Tasting Tunnocks Teacakes: Accidental Atmospheres in Scottish Food Tourism

Falconer, E.

Dr Emily Falconer

Senior Lecturer in Sociology

University of Westminster

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Abstract

This chapter merges together a critical analysis of the *The Food Tourism Strategy* (2021) with theories of accidental, 'porous' (Steadman et al 2021) or 'collateral' atmospheres' (Paiva and Sanchez 2020), in order to explore the embodied and affective experience of taste as reflective, relational and deeply embodied in social histories and social stratification. By taking a closer look at the embodied experience of consuming Tunnocks products within Scottish tourist spaces, this chapters continues my interest into *Space, Taste and Affect: Atmospheres that shape the way we eat* (Falconer 2021) and questions how affective atmospheres afford other experiences which were not originally intended or designed. This chapter argues that by becoming more attuned to the multiple ways atmospheres of consumption are co-produced and leak beyond the margins of corporate design, we can understand how the experience of taste is deeply determined by spatial, temporal and social affects.

Introduction

This chapter is based on a sensorial autobiographical account of my experiences of food consumption during a visit to the Scottish Hebrides in Spring 2022, and how these affective moments reveal a multifaceted relationship with childhood memories of taste whilst holidaying in rural Scotland. This chapter builds upon social theories of affective atmospheres and place-making from marketing literature, cultural geographies and sociology, through merging a critical analysis of the *The Food Tourism Strategy* (2021) with theories of accidental, co-produced' (Edensor 2012), 'Porous' (Steadman et al 2021) and 'collateral' atmospheres' (Paiva and Sanchez 2020), in order to explore the embodied and affective experience of taste as reflective, relational and deeply embodied in social histories and social stratification. A particular focus on a very iconic product that has becomes enmeshed in a sense of Scottish national identity and a post-modern play on nostalgia- Tunnocks products (teacakes, caramel wafers) emerged as a key theme in this exploration. By taking a closer look at the embodied experience of consuming Tunnocks products within Scottish tourist spaces, this chapters continues my interest into *Space, Taste and Affect: Atmospheres that shape the way we eat* (Falconer 2021) and questions how affective atmospheres afford other experiences which were not originally intended or designed. I use the term *taste* as both gustatory perception and the socio-cultural markers of taste as a subject of judgement, aesthetics and distinction, maintaining that these two definitions are always interconnected.

Finally, this chapter therefore employs theories of ‘desiring disgust’ within the tourist experience and demonstrates how atmospheres are co-produced through this complex sociological relationships with the abject , tourist theories of escapism and the ‘tasting the other’.

Space, Taste Affect and ‘Collateral Atmospheres’

The ‘affective turn’ in social and cultural geographies, as well as the wider social sciences, has highlighted the importance of embodied and emotional experiences with space and place as felt assemblages, enabling bodies and moods to flow and be ‘affected’ by human and non-human sensory influences. Understanding the role of *atmospheres* has thus been a preoccupation in the study of affective geographies (Thift 2009, Anderson 2009). Atmospheric design- and namely what atmospheres can make bodies *do and feel (and in turn consume)*- has been a key interest into research into urban planning and architecture, as well as commercial spaces of leisure and tourism. The production and consumption of atmospheres has been of interest to marketing literature, where Kotler (1974) first coined the concept of atmospheres as a ‘marketing tool’. In its simplest form, atmospheres as a marketing tool describe ‘the conscious designing of space….to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability’ (1974: 50). Kotler described atmospheres that speaks to a conscious aesthetic arrangement in spaces of retail, for example the carefully crafted ‘chaos’ of an antique shop, which creates a sense of ‘hidden treasure’ (52). An atmosphere is not created by visual organisation alone, but rather forms a multi-sensual experience for the consumer. The antique shop, for example, may also have a fusty smell of old books and fabrics, background music played on an old gramophone, a silk upholstered chair that affords the consumer to sit down or touch the fabric. Indeed Kotler argues that the visual, aural, olfactory and tactile dimensions of atmospheric production are as important as the product itself. Although Kotler briefly acknowledges the ‘busy’ or ‘depressing’ atmospheres of restaurants, he claims that the ‘fifth sense, taste, does not apply directly to atmosphere. An atmosphere is seen, head, smelled, and felt, but not tasted’ (1974: 51). Along with others (Spence and Piqueras-Fiszman 2014), I challenge the assumption taste itself cannot be shaped by affective atmospheres. Spence and Piqueras-Fiszman have written on the multisensory ‘science’ of dining, where the shape and size of plate, tempo of restaurant music, weight of cutlery, feel of the tablecloth all influence our appraisal of the restaurant meal. Atmospheres, they argue, are key to the experience economy, where these multi-sensual affects are carefully designed to focus flavour perception, or to ‘trick’ you into feeling more (or less) satiated through psychological methods. That atmospheres can be manipulated to attract or discourage certain clientele has also been used widely in marketing and consumption studies to create ‘soft policies of exclusion’ (Thorn 2011).

Spaces of consumption can therefore be curated by designers to create the 'right' atmosphere to attract the intended clientele (see Steadman and Jong's 'ambient power' dynamics of Craft beer festivals, 2022). Concha's (2021) research into Pop-Up street food markets in London exemplifies that certain visual aesthetics, music, lighting and materials (such as rustic wooden benches, cocktails in old jam jars, kitchen utensils hanging from the ceiling) are used to differentiate 'tasteful' versions of food from what is perceived as lower quality, fast food counterparts. As is often the case, classed power dynamics underpin the curation of commercial atmospheres in such spaces. Political geographers have argued that affective experiences are always seeped in social, cultural and historical contextualisations (Tolia-Kelly 2006). Prior experience and classed habitus (Bourdieu 1984) are carefully folded into the mix of what multi-sensual atmospheres make us feel and do, whether they draw us in or evoke hostility. The Pop-Up street food markets are subtly designed to filter out consumers, attracting a certain 'type' of middle class, young urban consumer for whom food markets and certain cosmopolitan tastes are a source of fashion as well as spaces to eat, drink and socialise.

More recently, atmospheres have been 'rethought' in marketing literature to expand atmospheric production as confided to a controlled, singular environment (such as the bounded space of a restaurant), and rather imagine a more 'spatially and temporally porous theorisation' (Steadman et al 2021: 135). These theories argue that marketing design has previously neglected what happens *beyond* the boundaries of the controlled space, demonstrating 'how places of consumption have porous or leaky boundaries that are permeable to other spatialities and temporalities' (2021:149). Whilst the use of atmospheric design has been employed by producers and urban planners to target certain consumers and create particular affordances, other social geographers argue that affective atmospheres are almost always co-produced by both producers, tourist providers, visitors and consumers alike, where they elicit a multitude of often unpredictable affects and behaviours (Edensor 2012).

Edensor's research into the affective atmospheres of the Blackpool illuminations draws 'attention to the convivial, nostalgic, expressive, sensuous, playful, and sometimes reflexive engagement with illuminated space (is) crucial to the coproduction of atmosphere' (2012: 1119). Visitors play out memories of their own childhood holidays to Blackpool, children dance (or conversely cry, throw tantrums) in the middle of the light shows rather than watching from the side-lines, the atmospheric mood can change from excited anticipation to boredom, from frustration with the sea-wind blowing their hot chips out of their paper bag, to ambivalence, all co-produced by both the illuminated spaces and the visitors themselves. In contrast to Concha's study of the street food markets above, Edensor argues that co-production allows for 'spatial experience removed from the affective manipulations of capital, design culture, and more intensive spatial regulation' (2012: 1119). These engagements can be celebrated as highlighting the agency of otherwise powerless consumers when it comes to spatial regulation, yet other researchers have warned that unintended atmospheric consumption can also work

to promote disadvantages. Paiva and Sanchez (2020) have most recently coined the term ‘collateral atmospheres’ to include the multitude of ways atmospheres are co-produced. They in part agree with the concept that atmospheric production plays with memories, social identities and taste preferences of potential consumers through attuned immersive spaces, yet also seek to ‘expand the literature on atmospheric design, staging, and performance by introducing the concept of collateral atmospheres to describe the ‘other’ atmospheres that emerge in the spaces and times beyond produced atmospheres’ (2020: 392). These ‘Other’ atmospheres can be thought of as a ‘spatial overflowing’, turning attention towards what happens at the spatial and temporal boundaries of atmospheric production and consumption. Like Edensor (2012), Paiva and Sanchez assert that atmospheres cannot really be ‘designed’, as it’s only possible to create the material and performative conditions that allow atmospheres to organically emerge. Whether these conditions result in the atmospheric affordances intended is beyond the control of producers: ‘There is always something that escapes, some unanticipated body, activity, or reaction that interferes with the planned atmosphere’ (2020: 394). Collateral atmospheres, therefore, can become a site of identity and power struggles when these two worlds collide, and atmospheric production ‘leaks into other spaces and times’ (2020: 395).

This chapter is particularly focused on affective atmospheres, especially those which can be thought of as accidental, ‘porous’, ‘collateral’ or co-produced, relating to food, taste and consumption. Developing earlier insights into the affective turn and the role of food and emotion in tourist studies (Falconer 2013) and the atmospheric, sensual ‘experience economies’ of London’s dining scenes (Edensor and Falconer 2014), my most recent work into *Space, Taste and Affect* (2021) focused on moments where embodied experiences of taste and place are significantly shaped by complex combinations of material, sensual and symbolic affective atmospheres. I argue (2021: 10) that ‘food and consumption studies- a growing area of focus in sociology, geography and the humanities- has not been as attuned to the affective turn as one might have been expected given that taste, as we have seen, is highly sensual, deeply cultural, environmentally determined and seeped in social histories, divisions and distinctions’. The production and consumption of atmospheric design are common discourses in the promotion of the hospitality industry and food tourism, but a scholarly critical analysis of how atmospheres relate to *taste* remains limited. Atmospheres are crucial to the experience of taste; as certain spatial environments, soundscapes, smellscapes, weather, ambience, materials, décor and other people transport us ‘back’ to sensory childhood memories and enable us to create new imaginaries, pull us in, or in contrast elicit feelings of disgust or aversion. *Space, taste and affect* employs disciplines of sociology and social geography to move ‘beyond psychoanalytical approaches to taste, association and memory to reveal how atmospheres are integral to the deeply classed, social and cultural aspect of ‘taste’ as a form of distinction’ (2021:1). At the heart of any social analysis into taste is Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of *Distinction* (trans 1984) which argues that taste in its multiple forms acts as symbolic marker of habitus, social stratification and at its worse symbolic violence. LeBesco and Naccarato coin the term ‘Culinary

Capital' to analyse how taste is never fixed, yet determined by shifting cultural landscapes as it 'interacts with any number of prevailing values and ideologies' (2012: 16). There is significant room, therefore, to understand atmospheric tastes as moving beyond the material and affective to incorporate the histories and socio-politics of societal interactions (and inequalities) more broadly. In other words, becoming attuned to how atmospheres shape the way we taste and eat can expose underlying questions of identity, social power dynamics and our relationship to space and place. This chapter seeks to bring together studies of Space, taste and affect with theories of accidental or 'collateral atmospheres' through a case study of the Tunnocks caramel wafer and teacake.

A Note on Methods

The empirical data for this chapter derives from sensory ethnography, policy and discourse analysis, and observational fieldnotes. The Sensory 'turn' in academia has called for refreshed methodological demands. Sensory ethnography is a reflexive, embodied methodology that incites the researcher to become attentive to- and guided by- the sensory world beyond 'watching and listening' (Pink 2015). An autobiographical, sensory account of a tearoom in the Inner Hebrides brings together atmospheric and embodied knowledge of the space. Fieldnotes observed comments and discussions with tourists and Scottish nationals 'returning' to Scotland, and these anecdotal stories were analysed within a similar framework. When researching embodied relationships, atmospheres and affective affinities, it is the role of the researcher to learn to become attuned to the sensual within narrative data (May and Lewis 2020). Finally, critical discourse analysis was used to attain data from the *TripAdvisor* and *Tunnocks* websites, as well as *The Food Tourism Strategy* (2021).

Tasting Tunnocks on Tour: The Scottish Food Tourism Agenda and the 'Collateral' affects of the Tunnocks Imaginary

We arrive on the Isle of Eigg in the middle of a sea-storm, horizontal rain lashing against the windows of the Caledonian McBrayne Ferry. The swell from the sea made the crossing from the port of Mallaig precarious, and we waited with baited breath to see if the captain was able to pull the boat safely into the small island pier. Eventually we alight from the boat on foot, and trawl our luggage to the islands' only public tearoom overlooking the pier to avoid the worst of the rain. Inside a welcoming scene awaits; the clink of teaspoons, wafts of baked potatoes and the warm peppery spices of haggis, wooden tables overlooking floor length windows with a view of stormy waves. The tearoom is warm and humid, the air thick and damp with condensation from rain-soaked cagoules from the hikers, camping gear and wellies strewn across the back of unused chairs to air. Wet dogs dry off under the tables, adding to the rich smell of dampness, coffee and chip oil. Celtic fiddle music plays out across the café, married

perfectly with the dramatic scenery from the misty windows. The menu is familiar, comforting whilst also clearly designed to attract an interest from those who may be new to 'Scottish' cuisine- jacket potatoes with haggis, haggis and cheese paninis, haggis Macaroni cheese. There are some sweet things on offer to accompany hot mugs of tea; a wicker basket on the counter holds packets of Mackay haggis flavoured crisps and a selection of brightly coloured red and silver foil wrapped products which have become iconic to Scotland and beyond: Tunnocks caramel wafer biscuits and Tunnocks teacakes. Just perfect, I think, as I scoop up two caramel wafers and take them over the till. Opening the coloured foil wrapping feels like a timeless ritual; a rite of passage to return to Scottish summer holidays. The sweetness of the toffee sparks an instant blood sugar rush, and I suck the sticky wafer out of my teeth like I have done a million times before. We cradle our mugs of tea and chew the wafers looking out to sea, folding the foil wrapper into a tiny envelope, and rub our toes together to keep the chill out of our sodden socks inside our boots. We smile, it is 'good to be back'! (Sensory autobiography, Isle of Eigg, Inner Hebrides, June 2022).

The relationship between spatial environment and taste in the above vignette is part of my own story of childhood sensory associations, yet can paint a broader picture of how the richness of atmospheres and what they can make us do, feel and ultimately consume. I have many childhood and adolescent memories of family holidays to the Scottish Highlands and North East (where my grandparents lived), the Hebridean islands and the Western Isles. Lupton (1996) argues that nostalgia recreates a fictional past when it comes to foods, a past which comes to life every time they eat the product. Food nostliagia is tied in with emotions of security, love, nourishment, family (or conversely evoke feelings of shame, disgust). My memories of Tunnocks confectionary, alongside other 'car snacks', such as crisps, chocolate bars and cartons of sweet juices allow me to re-imagine travelling the back of the car in the wet and windy North of Scotland. The crispy foil wrappers are still a source of deep sensory satisfaction, to spread out thinly and then fold neatly into shapes. These embodied memories are deeply intertwined with their atmospheric qualities: the air is damp, the car in motion, the scenery misty, dramatic and often majestic, limbs are stiff from sitting too long. For the Tunnocks experience to be re-lived decades later must also take on affective and embodied memory: 'Such memories are not aroused through viewing alone, but the body must be sensually immersed in order to act as an instrument of recollection and medium of developing meaning' (Everette 2009: 347).

However, the taste of Tunnocks as deeply associated with shared meanings of imagined Scottish national identity, space and place are not confined to my own personal anecdote of atmospheric association. Rather, these products have become to be known as a powerful representation of Scottish national identity, popular culture and collective nostliagia. Tunnocks began as a small family company in Uddingston, Scotland in 1895, where a Tunnocks Tearoom still operates. As the business expanded, the Tunnnocks family created products that would have a longer shelf-life than fresh cakes, and began

to produce its most famous products: The Caramel Wafer (layers of dry wafer, caramel and a thin layer of chocolate) and The Teacake (soft, sweet marshmallow on a biscuit layer, chocolate covered). The company expanded into factory mass production; and now these household products can be found in almost every major supermarket in the UK, and Tunnocks has become a successful major transnational corporation with global reach (by 2019 Thomas Tunnock Ltd's turnover exceeds £60 million in annual sales[1], sells in over 40 countries and is especially popular in the Middle East). Despite the global mass production of these confectionary products, their branding image remains strongly linked to Scotland and representations of national identity post-modern play on nostalgia. Their iconic packaging is reminiscent of the Pop-Art movement, with garishly primary colours of red, yellow, silver and gold foil wrappers. Regardless of its place amongst leading global brands, Tunnocks is still deeply attached to Scottish national pride. Teacakes and Wafers are sold alongside Scottish tourist souvenirs in gift shops in stations and airports, next to tartan kilts and fridge magnets. This 'Taste of Scotland' is as mythical as the Loch Ness Monster, and as I will shortly argue had very little connection with the 'Natural larder' of Scotland's land, seas and agricultural production. In addition, Tunnocks branded symbolism has taken on a Warhol-like popularity that transcends the confectionary itself, and the Teacake wrapper is now printed on a wide range of merchandise including aprons and clothing, gift cards, framed art, mugs, coasters, umbrellas and jewellery. A giant Image of the Teacake was sported at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014, and have featured in multiple art exhibitions. Interestingly, the brand has additionally taken a role in Scottish politics, with Scottish Nationalist Party First Minister Nicola Sturgeon commissioning a Tunnocks wedding cake, and former First Minster Alex Salmond claiming that when hosting political figures and media partners "There were no oysters. All you get at Bute House is a cup of tea and a Tunnock's caramel wafer."[2] Edensor claims collective familiarity can trigger imagined feelings of national identity and belonging. He states 'there are different ways of knowing besides the cognitive and it is important to acknowledge the embodied, habitual, unreflexively way of knowing one's place and the things which belong within it' (2002: 106). The over-exposure of Tunnocks as linked to Scottish national imagination plays a significant role in how the *taste* of the product can be contextualised. A provoked, imagined nostalgia is evident in the discourses surrounding the Tunnocks Tearoom in Uddingston, where visitors on the online site *Tripadvisor* celebrate 'stepping back in time'. Here, tasting the products *within* this ambient space takes on a different characteristic to eating the same product elsewhere. The tearoom acts as a food tourist site offering a timeless, 'authentic' taste of Tunnocks in its natural habitat, echoing Everett when she argues 'Although food tourism sites are promoted as places offering authentic and embodied multisensual experiences of local food, they are increasingly becoming 'themes' spaces undergoing perpetual re-imagining and manipulation (2009: 342).

[1] https://www.tunnock.co.uk/products/
[2] https://foodanddrink.scotsman.com/food/10-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-tunnocks/

Whilst the design of Tunnocks as a national institution has been fully embraced by the tourist industry on one hand, the atmospheric reflections of eating Tunnocks caramel wafers in a soggy Hebridean café tell a different story to the ambitious imaginations of those in the Scottish Food tourist industry who (indirectly) promote the consumption of atmospheres within a particular agenda. *The Food Tourism Strategy* (2021) is a vision set out by the Scottish Tourism Alliance in partnership with the Scottish Government. In essence, it sets out an action plan to make Scotland a globally recognised food tourism destination by 2030. The agenda is centred on showcasing Scotland's 'Natural larder', where 'quality' food produce, such as fresh and smoked fish and seafood, ethically farmed meat and game, artisan cheeses and products made from grains (for example oatcakes, shortbread, whiskey) are connected to the land, sea and waters of (largely rural) Scotland. It seeks to promote 'the history, heritage and culture behind what is grown, harvested, prepared and consumed in a particular area' (2021:10). Their focus on sustainable food supplies emphasises close connections between 'local' food producers, agriculture and consumers. The Strategy boasts attractive photographs of fresh langoustines, oysters and scallops, outdoor markets overflowing with coloured vegetables in baskets, animals in sunny green fields, and 'local' producers: a baker holding a tray of shortbread, farm workers in muddy wellies outside stone houses, clutching a bunch of soiled leeks. Consumers are shown enjoying fresh lobsters together, with blue sky and scenes of the harbour (towers of lobster catchers, fishing boats) strategically framing the background, or sampling smoked fish pates and jams at a variety of curated food festivals and market events. One repetitive theme of the strategy is the focus on 'Taste of Place', where 'memorable eating and drinking experiences that bring to life the story behind the food of a specific geographical area'. Here the material, natural and local all contribute to an experience of taste beyond the taste buds themselves, mirroring the scholarly literature into food tourism, space, taste and affect. Atmospheres are implicit in the accompanying images; while the document is digital or in brochure form, the reader is invited to imagine the feel of the land, sea, the fresh smells of raw, natural produce. All images are of attractive, inviting rural scenes or open-air food festivals, divorced from urban or factory-based manufacturing or branded mass-produced products such as Tunnocks. The 'Taste of place' is therefore strictly prescribed to exclude any foods or consumption rituals that may contaminate the image of Scotland as a bountiful, 'natural larder'.

The link between food tourism and atmospheric design through what Dean MacCannell famously coined as 'Staged Authenticity' (1973) is nothing new; food tourist studies have highlighted the multifaceted experience of embodied consumption beyond the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990). Everett's (2009) study into Scottish food tourism has long highlighted how the Scottish landscape is experienced through multi-sensual ways. She argues 'Like tourism, food consumption should be treated as an encounter that flirts with space and contributes to a postmodern landscape saturated with meaning and diversity (Crouch 1990), demanding a place in the rapidly shifting nature of tourism studies' (2009: 340). Everett's research focused on the Outer Hebrides and Isle of Aran as part of the 'Taste of Scotland'

marketing campaigns. Here tourists can indulge in a hugely sought after 'Natural experience in overly processed world' (2009: 342) as they are invited to immerse themselves in the artisan production of whiskey, cheese and fish by touring (and sampling) 'working' distilleries, dairies and smokehouses. Designed to capture tourist desires, the distilleries offer semi-staged experience of whiskey production, where samples are provided on top of enormous oak barrels, and a simulated recording of a re-created crofters voice and the trickling of a mountain stream is played out on speakers. Short film screenings of the landscapes, and invitations to sift the barley grain through your fingers is included in the tour. Everette asserts that this intimate encounter and sensory immersion is key to the atmospheric 'staging' of authenticity.

This example of romanticised connection between the rural Scottish landscape and artisan food production is precisely what the *The Food Tourism Strategy* have in mind as they set out their vision for 'rich storytelling' and sustainable, 'local' production. Places are 'brought to life through rich stories that celebrate regional differences' storytelling make the experience of food tourism more engaging and meaningful' (2021:16). *The Food Tourism Strategy* briefly mentions that a 'diverse' and at times 'unexpected' range of food stories are welcome in building a strong narrative of a vibrant national food culture, yet any stories that paint a different picture than those that connect to the 'natural larder' of rural Scotland do not appear to align. In contrast, the stories collected in my observations of Scottish food tourism by Scottish nationals living elsewhere, atmospheres and Tunnocks rarely included connections to 'natural food, and rather played with how the 'taste' of factory-produced Tunnocks took on sensual alterity when returning to Scotland:

> I just have to eat Caramel wafers when I come here (Inner Hebrides)- there is just no contest. It's what we always had as kids, and part of coming here is remembering tramping about the hills in my wellies with my Grandad, and hoping he had remembered the Caramel bars in his rucksack. We would sit on rocks and eat them at the summit (Julie, 44, originally from Livingston, residing in London)

> When I get off the train in Edinburgh Waverly and hear the first Scottish accent in the newsagent I think 'I'm here!' and I always get a Tunnocks wafer or Teacake with whatever I'm buying. I kind of forget that they are a bit rubbish now as an adult, there isn't much actually chocolate on the wafer really is there? It's a bit greasy. I kind of regret it after the first bite but still wolf it down! (laughs). I have a bit of a love-hate relationship with them I suppose, but I still always buy one immediately when I land (Kevin, 25, originally from Edinburgh, studying in Durham)

This form of 'storytelling' follows my own ethnographic vignette of the damp tearoom, reflecting both the personal (childhood memories), and collective (shared meanings) affordances of where tastes *belong.* The experience of taste is thus spatially determined by atmospheric qualities- the *sound* of the

first Scottish accent from leaving the train to the *feel* of the Inner Hebrides. These anecdotes play with spatial and temporal imaginaries, where the participants engage with the atmosphere and how it makes them consume Tunnocks in accidental ways (ie, not intended by Scottish tourist industry or the design of Edinburgh Waverly station itself). Significant importance is given to the taste of Tunnocks as the taste of *place and time*- which challenges the agenda of *The Food Tourism Strategy* as celebrating the 'natural', local and artisan rather than the overly processed. Importantly, that Tunnocks are heavily processed (arguably low quality, poor nutritional) globally mass-produced products are evident in the reflexivity of the above quotes. Julie, now in her forties, reflects that she would not usually eat this type of food, and prefers dark chocolate which has been heralded as having lower sugar and greater health benefits. It is the affective space of the rural Scottish islands- alongside her story- which pulls her back in to Tunnocks being the 'right' taste for the time and place (indeed there are no such tangible connections between the Hebrides and Tunnocks per se). Similarly, Kevin, a student studying at Durham University, feels like he has returned home as he enjoys what is otherwise a disappointing aversion to the 'greasy' chocolate flavour of Tunnocks. Possibly used to the wider range of high-quality chocolate available, Kevin questions his 'love-hate' relationship with these nostalgic tastes yet, like Julie, perseveres with embodying these consumption rituals as it is what the atmospheric space *makes you do.* Returning to Kotler, he argues that atmospheres are only relevant to retailers, rather than manufacturers and wholesalers, as they have 'little control over the atmosphere of the retailing establishments where the final goods are bought' (1974: 52). Yet here we see that consumers of Tunnocks create their own spatial and temporal rituals of consumption, removed from the point of retail (a train station news outlet, a petrol service station). These practices rather follow the more recent evolution of atmospheric design in marketing, where 'scholars have increasingly sought to understand how all consumption is emplaced in more-or-less obvious ways' (Coffin and Chatzidakis 2021: 44). Furthermore, it has long been argued that tourism entails 'escape attempts' from the social routines of everyday life, and thus intense experiences of sensory alterity are a fundamental aspect of touristic practice (Edensor and Falconer 2015). This can include consciously engaging with tastes that are anticipated to stimulate disgust, or even discomfort (bloating, blood sugar spikes), as well as pleasure, all part of temporarily experiencing 'The Other' (Falconer 2013). For Julie and Kevin, who are already far enough removed from the original setting (childhood, where no 'better' confectionary products were on offer) the experience of being pulled back into the affective space shapes the taste of Tunnocks as simultaneously familiar and novel, comforting and sickening. Steadman et al argue that both past memories and future anticipations can 'flood into any consumption experience and environment' (2021: 149). The accidental, or collateral imaginaries of taste that are continually co-produced through a combination of affects, shared meanings, discourses of national identity and social histories signal that the 'Taste of Scotland' is far more complex than *The Food Tourism Strategy* would like to promote.

‘It's so bad it is Excellent’ : Desiring disgust and atmospheric consumption

> ***It's so bad it is Excellent***
>
> A tea bag suspended in a mug of lukewarm water in a Tunnock's branded mug, genuine UHT milk, a stale pancake and a slice of crumby tasteless cake. Décor is passé 80's ; plastic seats , formica table tops , garish paint scheme and a few bits of Tunnock Family memorabilia. They should maybe think of donating to the National Trust as a time capsule (Tunnocks Tearoom, Uddingston, *Tripadvisor*, Reviewed 6 December 2014)

The above extract from the online review site *Tripadvisor* is an interesting example of the multidimensional layers inherent in desiring disgust and atmospheric consumption. This review is once again referring to the Tunnocks tearoom in Uddingston, with the title leading ‘*It’s so bad it is Excellent’*. Whether the reviewer’s true experience of the cafe is positive or negative remains blurred, as they play with a post-modern, ‘post-tourist’ (Urry 2002, Edensor 2008) reflexive irony that is seeped in notions of disgust, desire and rich atmospheric description. Attuned to the visual, environmental and felt affects of the café space, the reviewer describes the materials (plastic seats, garish paint scheme) alongside provocative language designed to provoke aversion and distaste- lukewarm tea, stale and tasteless cake. Their final comment that the tearoom should be donated to the National Trust as a ‘time capsule’ indicates that experiences of disgust can be tolerated- even desired- as part of the *experience* of ‘the Other’ so sought after in tourism. There are many examples in tourist studies where unpleasant, disgusting, painful or risky encounters are sought out in order to ‘get closer’ to a perceived authenticity, achieve and maintain a cosmopolitan identity (Molz 2006) or experience sensual alteration that differs to the mundanity of everyday life (Edensor and Falconer 2015). Being concurrently both attracted to and revolted by the Tunnocks tearoom combines an embodied reaction (disgust) with a reflexive *knowing* (eating Tunnocks in its original, timeless ‘authentic’ setting is *what you do here*) that privileges those tourists with high degrees of Culinary capital (Le Besco and Naccarato 2012). De Jong and Varley agree that ‘[d]uring travel, food and eating are mobilised as material cosmopolitan symbols, through which consumption presents opportunity to both transgress and reinforce one’s own cultural norms (2017: 214). Their research shows similar findings of those who transcend class and cultural capital boundaries through ‘desiring disgust’ in the example of the Deep-fried Mars Bar. This cuisine (a chocolate Mars bar dipped in beer batter and deep fried in chip oil) has taken on a global reputation as being synonymous with Scottish food and consumption practices. De Jong and Varley follow its progress through the ‘embarrassment’ of the Scottish Food tourism industry- who again wish to promote foods and practices which privilege middle-class health discourses and ‘natural’ Scottish produce- to how it has become part of a tourist desire for an embodied experience of disgust. The Deep-Fried Mars bar is perceived as a ‘gastronomic adventure’, to be added to the list of embodied tourist experiences

for middle class travellers who are able to transcend classed boundaries of disgust. De Jong and Varely claim: 'Middle class identity and 'tasting place' replies on embodied knowledge and embodied cultural capital 'that enables Individuals to distinguish 'good local food' from 'bad global food; a process that works to enact a certain social position' (2017: 213). This privileged form of 'tasting the other' without the stigma of poor health choices is deeply embedded in classed notions of habitus and Bourdieu's theories of *absolute* choice. Following the work of Ahmed (2002) and her social metaphor of 'stickiness', I have argued that 'those who embody privilege can travel freely. They can occasionally enjoy the pleasurable tastes of cheap, 'dirty' fatty food as 'experience tourism' (Falconer 2013) without these components 'sticking' or threatening to contaminate their classed identities with social disgust' (Falconer 2021: 5). The affective push-pull desire of consuming Tunnocks and related products (The deep fried Mars-bar, the soft drink *Irn Bru)* 'offers a moment of transgressive possibility' (De Jong and Varley 2017: 220) for the Scottish tourist who wishes to return to momentary embodied and affective encounters with space and time, for the purposes of sensual alterity and a post-tourist nostalgia.

Conclusion

The Scottish *Food Tourism Agenda* (2021) promotes an image of food tourism in Scotland which celebrates 'natural' pleasures, close connections to geographical, seasonal agriculture and 'local' food producers which ultimately privilege middle class cultural consumption through official food tourism promotion. This promotion speaks to tourist desires for a 'natural experience in overly processed world' (Everette 2009: 342) through 'special' delicacies such as fresh and smoked seafood, high quality meats and cheeses and jams. Atmospheric design underpins this agenda, through concepts of 'staged authenticity' Scotland's natural and coastal landscapes are promoted as the perfect setting in which to consume the 'taste of place'. However, this agenda does not allow for the emergence of 'other' tastes that have come to be associated with Scottish landscapes 'accidentally', through 'atmospheric porosity' (Steadman et al 2021), which reveal a far more complex relationship with space, taste, national identities, social class, and temporality. Global, mass produced and processed confectionary such as Tunnocks indeed holds a place in the promotion of Scottish tourism, but directory contradicts the Food Tourism agenda. De Jong and Varley (2017: 220) conclude 'there is a danger that 'national cuisine' becomes essentialised and valued a means through which to increase the tourist spend- rather than for example, a messy holistic and sensorial experience facilitating a myriad of classed, gendered, aged, raced encounters that provide an entry point to the complexities of cultural foodscapes'. Consumers always have their own stories to tell, and *where* and *how* these products are consumed permeate beyond the boundaries of controlled spaces of food tourism production and consumption. Tunnocks are eaten in the back of damp cars, or on windy train platforms, rather than within boundaries of food festivals, markets, leisure or retail spaces. Still embedded with atmospheric meaning and affordances, perhaps

these fluctuating locales can be imagined ‘post-places’, inspired by an ‘afterglow’ memories, representations and imaginaries of what came before (Bitterman et al 2020). Ultimately, by offering an unorthodox analysis of food tourism, this chapter aligns with the most recent bodies of thought in marketing theory which conceptualises the consumption of atmospheres as beyond the boundaries or control of any singular space or time. By becoming more attuned to the multiple ways atmospheres of consumption are co-produced and leak beyond the margins of corporate design, we can understand how the experience of taste is deeply determined by spatial, temporal and social affects.

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