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Positive and negative risk in adventure tourism discourse: adrenaline hunting in "arctic Lapland"

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Abstract: 'Risk' is typically thought of as something negative, and as something that should be avoided at all cost: risk characteristically has to do with the probability of an unwanted event occurring. However, risk may also be seen as something positive, even energizing, as in the context of financial markets or gambling. Voluntary risk taking has typically been approached through the concepts 'action' and 'edgework'. In this study, both negative and positive aspects of risk are explored in the context of adventure tourism. The focus is on how risk is discursively constructed in adventure tourism websites for Sápmi, centring on destinations in Sweden (Kiruna), Finland (Rovaniemi) and Norway (Tromsø). Our primary material from the booking platform *Adrenaline Hunter* amounts to 12,000 words. The findings show an ambivalence between negative and positive aspects of risk, but in a scalar sense, ranging from "soft" to "hard" types, with a negotiable awareness of how relative what counts as "extreme" may be. The theoretical suggestion is that positive aspects of risk need to be taken seriously for a fuller understanding of the very concept of 'risk' and of the workings of risk discourse.

Keywords: positive and negative risk; tourism; adventure; edgework; responsibility; ambivalence

1 Introduction

Risk involves two core elements: *adversity* (referring to something unwanted) and *potentiality* (referring to things that may, but need not, happen). Characteristically, thus, risk has to do with the probability of an unwanted event occurring (Hansson 2018). 'Risk' is typically thought of as something negative, as something to be avoided.

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However, there are also positive aspects of risk, which will be explored in this study from the perspective of adventure tourism, representing a type of risk management with potentially positive outcomes. There is a need to develop the study of risk discourse more generally (cf. Ädel and Östman 2023), and, since existing research into risk discourse is strongly focused on negative aspects of risk, there is also a clear need to add further perspectives in order to gain a fuller understanding of risk.

The general societal backdrop for the present study is the notion of 'risk society' as a key concept in the social sciences, developed for example by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1999). Societies are increasingly organised around their responses to risk, including their orientations to responsibility, which take shape in discourse (cf. Ädel and Östman 2023). The specific focus on adventure tourism is justified by the increasing popularity of adventure tourism world-wide (Janowski et al. 2021) and the ensuing marketization of adventure.

The starting point for the present study is linked to the quotation in (1), from the site Adventure Sweden (2022).

(1) *You may feel a few butterflies in your stomach the first time walking out on a frozen lake*

For a Scandinavian, the very idea of walking on a frozen lake is a very mild variant of risk taking – certainly not "risky" to the extent that one would have butterflies in one's stomach. But once it is recognized that risk can be seen as something rather positive, as in this *butterflies in your stomach* example, it also becomes clear that risk can be used strategically, by creating the illusion that something that may not inherently involve high risk is contrued *as* risky and likely to produce even more adrenaline than mere butterflies.

In this study, both positive and negative aspects of risk are explored in adventure tourism. The novelty value for research is the concept of positive risk, which naturally has to be seen in relation to the more common aspect of negative risk. The study explores adventure tourism websites for Sápmi, referred to as "arctic Lapland" on tourism sites. The linguistically oriented research questions can be formulated as follows: (α) What would a semantically and pragmatically informed definition of positive risk look like? In answer to this question, we propose a general risk scenario model based on previous studies. Through analyses of adventure tourism, we then investigate (β) the extent to which a general risk scenario model is appropriate to account also for positive aspects or risk. Concomitantly and concretely, we investigate how established models of risk need to be revised so as to fit our material. In our qualitative analysis of the data, we further investigate (δ) what broader themes linked to risk are present in the material. The analysis uncovers themes that are

linked to risk, attempting to understand how a sense of 'positive risk' is created in tourism material inviting adventure-prone visitors to Sápmi.

After the literature review covering different aspects of risk discourse and the concepts of adventure tourism and responsibility in Section 2, the locations and material for the study are introduced in Section 3. Section 4 showcases and illustrates the findings of the study, and further generalizations and implications conclude the study in Sections 5 and 6.

2 Literature review

2.1 Risk and risk discourse

The notion of 'risk discourse' has recently been introduced as an important tool in discourse analysis and pragmatics, where the definition of risk discourse is that it "refers to information, advice and opinions that, explicitly or implicitly, deal with text types, topics and issues concerned with matters of risk and related concepts (such as security and safety), whether synchronously or asynchronously communicated, and involving both experts and lay people" (Ädel et al. 2023: 15). The definition may initially seem cumbersome, but there are good reasons why – as an all-encompassing definition – it has to be this way: (i) text types, topics and issues refer to the fact that risk discourse may have a relatively narrow or broad scope; (ii) risk discourse refers to communication taking place in real time as well as asynchronously; and (iii) it is an acutely needed expansion of the World Health Organization's definition (WHO 2020) of risk communication as referring "to the exchange of real-time information, advice and opinions between experts and people facing threats to their health, economic or social well-being", since risk discourse clearly also has to be seen as applicable to "laypeople".

Risk as the probability of an unwanted event occurring clearly predominates in discourse studies related to risk (e.g., Ädel et al. 2022; Ädel et al. 2023; Crichton et al. 2016; Zinn 2010), not to mention in public perceptions of risk. But the concept of risk also has positive connotations. The present study takes a closer look at these positive risks – and in particular at how positive risk is drawn on in adventure tourism material.

A simplified Frame Semantic description of the roles that influence the semantics of the concept of 'risk' is given in Figure 1 (Cf. Ädel et al. 2023: 6; also see Fillmore and Atkins 1992; FrameNet 2024 on 'risk').

The present study focuses specifically on the semantic role of Gain in risk discourse (cf. Figure 1), i.e., the gain an agent is hoping for in taking a risk.

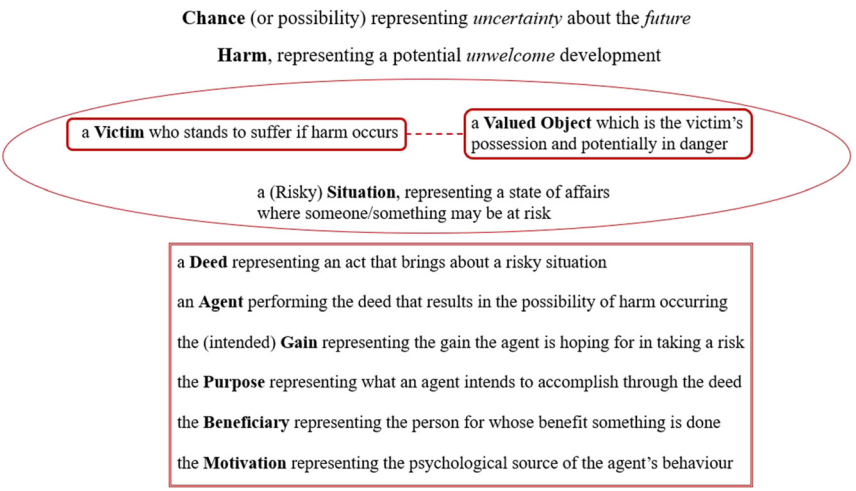

Figure 1: An overview of semantic factors influencing people's understanding of the concept of 'risk'.

2.1.1 Positive aspects of risk

In addition to – even in direct contrast to – the HARM aspect of risk, risk may be seen as something positive and energizing, as in the context of financial markets (cf. Giddens 1999), in gambling, or in attempting to achieve something never-done-before (like climbing the top of a mountain). And there is scope for developing future research on risk discourse beyond economics, gambling and mountain climbing.

Voluntary risk-taking activities have been approached through concepts such as 'action' (Goffman 1967) and 'edgework' (Lyng 2014). Based on sociological analysis, Goffman (1967) categorised as action different types of voluntary risk-taking, such as involvement in gambling, crime, dangerous occupations and sports. The Goffmanian term 'action' is used in contrast to a situation when there is "no action" (Goffman 1967: 149). Goffman promotes a view of action that values "self-determination, risk-taking and fatefulness" (Shalin 2016: 19). He states that "[w]herever action is found, chance-taking is sure to be" (Goffman 1967: 149). Those who have a preference for action, Goffman writes,

> have a more or less secret contempt for those with safe and sure jobs who need never face real tests of themselves. They claim they are not only willing to remain in jobs full of opportunity and risk, but have deliberately sought out this environment, declining to accept safe alternatives, being able, willing, and even inclined to live in challenge (Goffman 1967: 182).

Action-prone people, thus, actively reject comfort zones in favour of uncertainty.

Goffman is referred to in the work by Lyng (2009), who uses the term 'edgework'. A key question in the study of edgework is how risk is understood by those who practice extreme sports, have dangerous occupations, or are involved in various risky activities, which are also often stigmatised (cf. Hicks 2018). A central idea in edgework is that risk-taking straddles boundaries between "life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, and sanity and insanity" (Lyng 1990: 855). One specific aspect of edgework is the role of knowledge or *expertise* in being able to balance these boundaries. This also applies to the related notion of 'rush', defined as "the simultaneous experience of thrill and flow associated with the successful performance of an adventure activity at a high level of skill" (Buckley 2012: 963). Edgework, too, highlights that risk-taking may "lead to pleasure and self-fulfilment" as participants push themselves "towards the limits of uncertainty" (Hicks 2018: 132).[1]

From the perspective of Figure 1, the notions of action and edgework both stress that there is no GAIN without HARM. The concept of action highlights the element of MOTIVATION to explain one's "psychological source" for seeking action, while the edgework concept stresses the role of expertise, not included in the figure (although see the revised Figure 5). Even if the term 'action' need not be essentialised, the picture that is presented in Goffman's work is a dichotomous one, based on two very different personality types, with strong preferences for either 'action' or 'no action'. 'Edgework' is not used in a dichotomous way, but it is nevertheless applied as a tool for understanding a specific group of people – those who have a strong orientation to acting on the edge. A fruitful way forward is (a) to consider such notions in a complementary way, including both a plus pole (as in 'action') and a minus (as in 'no action') pole, and (b) to see them as preferences on continua that individuals may have or may wish to construct for themselves to different degrees in different contexts.

2.2 Responsibility

An additional concept of central relevance in the discussion of risk is that of 'responsibility'. We have argued elsewhere that an understanding of the concept of responsibility is needed to inform our understanding of discourse about risk and risk scenarios (Ädel et al. 2023: 31). Responsibility is an intricate notion, in relation to which a number of distinctions need to be made (cf. Östman and Solin 2016; Ädel et al. 2023; Lakoff 2016). A basic distinction is the two-fold one between moral and legal responsibility on the one hand, and between individual and collective responsibility

1 The concept has also been applied to down-to-earth activities such as language learning (e.g., Hicks 2018).

on the other. These relational pairs may in turn support finer distinctions, e.g., for professional responsibility we can say that (i) there are *legal* requirements for how to practice a profession, and there are *moral* preferences or conventions for how to uphold the role of that profession; and (ii) for a given profession, some responsibilities will be *collectively* assumed, while others will be based on *individual* choices. This also holds for other roles than professions.[2] In tourism contexts, such roles will primarily be those of VISITOR and GUIDE. Legal and moral responsibilities for the adventure tourism industry have been much debated for example in New Zealand, where there are detailed national regulations for adventure activity operators, including certification and regular safety audits (see worksafe.govt.nz).[3]

The distinction between moral and legal responsibility is evident in the contrast between *being a responsible tourist* versus an adventure tour company *accepting responsibility for an accident involving a tourist*. This ties in with the distinction between responsibility as "reliability" and as "blame". For further elaboration, see Figure 2, which presents the key factors involved in the negative "blame" and the positive "reliability" senses of responsibility.

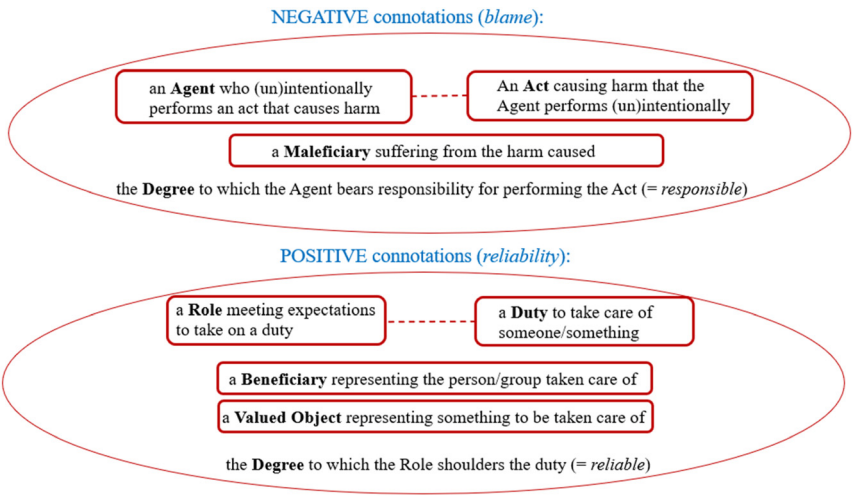

Figure 2: Factors influencing the understanding of the concept of "responsibility", divided into the negative blame sense (top) and the positive reliability sense (bottom) (Figure 2 in Ädel et al. 2023).

2 On the intricate relationship between roles and responsibilities, see Sarangi 2016 on medical discourse.

3 https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/adventure-activities/.

Proper attention to positive risk will have repercussions for our understanding of the very concept of responsibility. By gaining a better understanding of risks, we also get closer to understanding responsibilities. We may at least to some extent be in charge of avoiding or encountering risks, but responsibilities have to be negotiated – they are not simply taken or avoided. In this sense, the notion of responsibility is inherently ambiguous to an even greater extent than risk.

2.3 Adventure tourism

Terms as well as definitions for the phenomenon of 'adventure tourism' abound. Key definitions from the tourism literature are presented in (a)–(d).

(a) Adventure travel: "A trip or travel with the specific purpose of activity participation to explore *a new experience*, often involving *perceived risk or controlled danger associated with personal challenges, in a natural environment or exotic outdoor setting*" (Sung 2004)
(b) Adventure tourism "characteristically needs professional skills or physical exertion, and has some amount of risk" (Soorooshian 2021)
(c) Risk tourism: "specific activities that involve the potential for physical injury and death and require participants to develop competencies with which to overcome the risks associated with those activities" (Holm et al. 2017)
(d) Adventure tourism "can be applied to adventure sports as well as travel, and ranges from extreme sports such as base jumping, to more gentle pursuits such as hiking and cycling" (McKelvie 2005)

The definition in (a), involving the exploration of a new experience with perceived risk/controlled danger in the exotic outdoors, is a good fit for our study. Note also the mention of *skills* in (b) and *competences* in (c). Tourism work has referred to the skilled/unskilled ends of the adventure tourism spectrum (Buckley 2012) and expertise is an important factor for understanding the motivations of adventure tourists. The boundaries between tourism and sports are not always distinct, as illustrated in (d).

Adventure tourism is sometimes classified as 'Special Interest Tourism' (SIT) (e.g., Holm et al. 2017), based on the idea that some individuals are especially interested in destinations where it is possible to pursue special (i.e., exceptional/unique) interests. In early categorisations, the notion 'SIT tourists' referred to eco-

tourists and sports tourists, but more recently anyone engaging in some kind of risk activity is included in this group (Holm et al. 2017).[4]

Two points raised in tourism research about adventure are of special relevance here. One is that adventure is scalar. Activities have been classified as ranging from soft to hard (Williams and Soutar 2005), and tourists have been classified as ranging from risk-adverse to risk-prone (Torres et al. 2022), as well as belonging more or less to the skilled versus unskilled end on a scale of expertise (Buckley 2012). Just as an activity can be more or less "risky", it can also be more or less "adventurous", since the visitor may be variously "skilled" at managing risk and adventure. The second point is that an adventure is culturally constructed, which is nicely illustrated in the quote that

> One person's adventure may be another's backyard stroll and what might be considered as passive tourism in one culture might be considered the peak of adventure in another (Sulaiman and Wilson 2018: 2).

This feeds into the point about the novelty value of an activity, and it captures the reaction a Scandinavian might have on encountering the text in (1) on an adventure tourism site.

Previous work on tourism that relates to risk has found that risk tends to be construed as "an exclusively negative outcome that is to be avoided by tourists and eliminated by the industry" (Yang et al. 2018: 34). There is thus a branch of tourism research that deals with risk and safety perception (e.g., Seabra et al. 2013; Lepp et al. 2011), linked to the 'image' that is associated with a specific destination (For a discourse-based study on place branding, see Lam 2018). Destinations perceived as risky need to manage this circumstance well in promotional contexts, or potential tourists may be deterred from visiting. Behavioural change has also been associated with tourism in the sense that "travellers are more risk-prone" and take risks which they normally would avoid. The tourist has been described as 'displaced' and thereby "more susceptive to hedonism and loss of normal responsibility" (Eitzinger and Wiedemann 2007: 911). There is also important critical work in tourism studies which explores the social and political issues linked to the global adventure tourism industry (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2019).

Research on adventure tourism in pragmatics and discourse analysis is largely non-existent. There is work on the travel advisory (Firkins and Candlin 2016), but the purpose of travel advisories is not to promote tourism, but rather to make risk assessments and exert control, as these are issued by governments. The one study that is directly relevant to risk and adventure is that of Imboden (2012). In this work,

4 Casino gambling has also been seen as a SIT segment (McCartney 2022); cf. Goffman's notion of gambling as 'action'.

aspects of the Scandinavian context were studied specifically from a risk perspective, as the author compared data from the official tourism websites for Sweden and Switzerland. Any kind of adventure framing was found to involve a "strong emphasis on safety, control and comfort" (Imboden 2012: 321). However, the study focused solely on the negative aspects of risk and the material was general tourism data rather than SIT.[5]

3 Data and methodology

The material for this study is specifically geared toward adventure and "adrenaline hunting". Based on a list of the "19 Best Travel Websites for Adventure Tours" (Tourscanner 2022), *Adrenaline Hunter* ranked at the very top (#3) among "Websites to Book Adventure Tours Worldwide". We selected this website as it was possible (in the autumn of 2022) to do a search by regions. The very name of the platform also directly addressed the questions we were interested in. When we collected the material in 2022, the booking platform was called *Adrenaline Hunter*, but it has since changed its name to *Manawa* (manawa.com), illustrated in Figure 3.

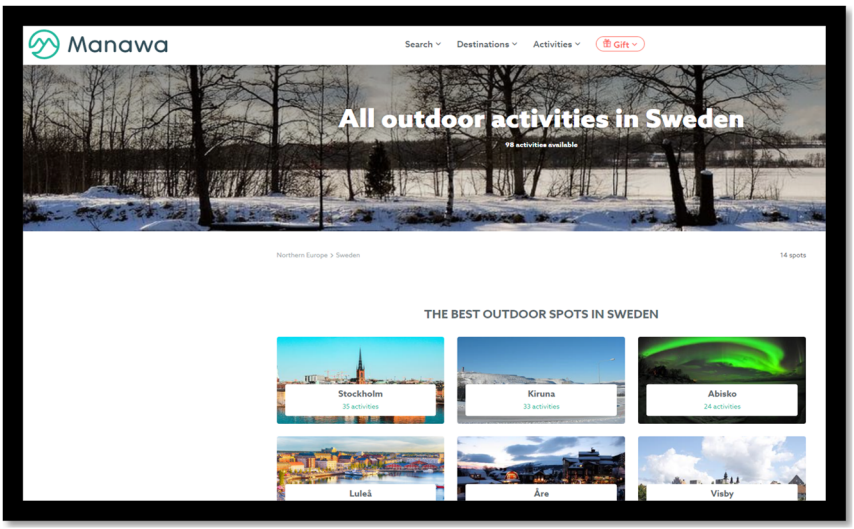

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Manawa (ex-adrenaline hunter) platform.

5 Cf. example (18) from *Visit Sweden*.

Website material was collected for three key Lapland destinations in three countries: Kiruna (Sweden), Rovaniemi (Finland), and Tromsø (Norway), thus creating a sample representing three relatively equivalent destinations (the largest towns) in the three Scandinavian countries included in Sápmi. Figure 4a shows the location of Sápmi in northern Europe, while Figure 4b has the selected destinations marked in red. The complete text for these three towns was included in the material. The activities advertised (e.g., snowmobiling, reindeer sledding and dogsledding) were seldom set in these towns; most of the tours promoted took place outside of the towns. The material amounts to 12,000 words.

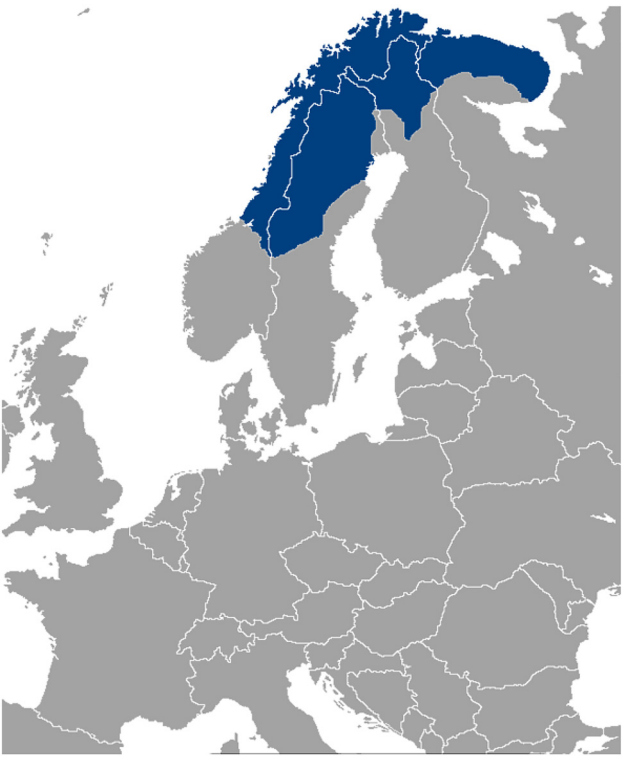

Figure 4a: Map showing Sápmi in blue (edited version of Rogper in English Wikipedia; transferred from en.wikipedia to commons, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/ w/index.php?curid=53461).

Figure 4b: The three destinations marked on a map of the Nordic countries (edited version of Stefan Ertmann, CC BY-SA 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/ licenses/by-sa/2.0>, via Wikimedia Commons).

4 Data analysis

The texts in our dataset follow a highly specialised format (cf. 'discourse pattern', Östman 1999) by opening with all-caps headings that give a quick overview of the

activity advertised, such as "SENSATION LEVEL: Chill"; "FITNESS LEVEL: Everybody welcome"; "DURATION: 6 h".

In this section, we will present and exemplify four key risk-related themes that emerged from the data. These are: (a) expertise in the GUIDE and not in the VISITOR; (b) the important role of equipment; (c) risks linked to uncontrollable nature; and (d) the ambivalence between negative and positive aspects of risk.

4.1 Expertise in the GUIDE and not in the VISITOR

The literature on adventure tourism, extreme sports and work on edgework often stresses the importance of expertise for participants (e.g., Buckley 2012; Lyng 2014; see also Goffman's (1967: 153) discussion of *skill* and *knowledge* in relation to action).

In our material, we also find that, through the right kind of expertise, risk can be managed and HARM will be less likely to occur. However, it is not the visitor who is expected to possess expertise, but this role is given to/present in the guide. The expertise of the guides is very much foregrounded, as in examples (2–4; underlining added, also in subsequent examples). A key message is that it is the task of the guide to keep the visitor safe – with danger lurking under the surface.

(2) *The knowledgeable guides of the Aurora Alps will be there for you every step of the way. Moreover, they will even help you drive your own team of dogs!*
(Tromsø_Self-drive dog sledding day excursion)

(3) *The guide will teach you how to bathe in the Finnish style, you will be able to release all your strains.*
(Rovaniemi_Sauna experience with the Northern lights)

The framing of the visitor as supported and taught by the guide and not needing specific skills shows that the target audience for these tours is broad. Thus, the definition cited in (b) in Section 3 is not a perfect match in this context since "professional skills" are not needed by the visitor but are supplied by the guide. The definition in (c) mentions that competencies (to overcome risks) may be developed, but we can see in (2) that it is presented as a positive feature of the dog-sledding adventure that the guide will help with the driving; hence, visitors need not develop their competencies.

(4) *The skippers and guides have great knowledge and a lot of experience to keep you safe and comfortable while cruising. The team and community consist of a diverse collection of international adventurers and industry professionals.*
(Tromsø_Arctic sailing safari)

In (4), we see how the positive connotations of responsibility are foregrounded, with the guides clearly taking on the duty to take care of the visitor. The example illustrates how commercial adventure tourism may enable people to experience outdoor adventure activities "as a passenger", without personally having to learn the skills necessary (e.g., through tandem parachute jumping; Buckley 2012).

The tour providers sell their product through appeals to ethos – through positive connotations of being trust-worthy (cf. Figure 2). Risk and responsibility are closely intertwined, and also closely tied to *trust*. At a basic level, visitors have to trust themselves and their abilities and/or skills in taking a positive risk, and by trusting someone else, one relies on others' responsibility for their action. In the present material, trust appears above all in the presentation of the tour providers and their guides.

4.2 The important role of equipment

Like expertise, equipment is also presented as a tool to manage risk. The visitor can minimize HARM with the right type of equipment. Consider the following examples:

(5) *Upon arrival, you will be directed to the equipment room, where you will be provided with warm clothes and shoes for the day*.
(Tromsø_snowmobile excursions)

(6) *clipping into state-of-the-art snowshoes that will help you navigate the snowy terrain*
(Rovaniemi_Snowshoeing in Lapland)

As we see in (5) and (6), *gear* and *equipment* play an important role for many of the adventures on offer. Adventure tour companies show that they have expertise and take responsibility for the visitor by explicitly stating that they provide the equipment needed.

The use of specialised equipment is at times presented as making the adventure possible in the first place.

(7) *this scenic experience is suitable for groups of friends and families alike thanks to the use of a specialised Arctic drysuit – a high quality floating rescue suit that covers your whole body and keeps you warm and dry*.
(Rovaniemi_Ice floating under the Northern lights in Lapland)

In (7), describing "ice floating", we find an example of a *rescue suit* ("a specialised Arctic drysuit") used for an activity suitable for the whole family. It was originally designed for a clear HARM situation, but is used for GAIN here.

Example (8) refers to equipment that is not needed.

(8) *Sunglasses are not required or necessary to perform this activity*.
(Tromsø_Morning dogsledding excursion)

With no need for sunglasses, the prospective visitor can conclude that the activity is especially low risk, suitable for visitors at the softer end of the adventure scale.

4.3 Risks linked to uncontrollable nature

An aspect of risk inherent in any activity in nature is that natural phenomena like the weather cannot be controlled. This means that the adventure tour company is not able to guarantee a successful adventure that works fully according to plan. Something unwanted may occur. Some companies try to compensate for this so as to provide guaranteed success, as in (9): the visitor should not be disappointed if the arctic sailing safari results in no fish; fish soup will be served regardless!

(9) *On this trip, we will explore the depths of the fjords, spot wildlife, and even try our luck at fishing at one of our best fishing spots. If no fish takes the bait, no fear! Hot fish soup will be served onboard no matter how successful the fishing expedition goes*.
(Tromsø_Arctic Sailing Safari)

It is only in relation to the weather and solar activity that most companies clearly signal that there are no guarantees. In hedging the GAIN element, they may be seen as acting responsibly.

(10) *Northern Lights sightings are subject to weather conditions and solar activity so therefore they are not guaranteed*.
(Rovaniemi_Northern Lights Snowmobile Safari)

(11) *The duration of the tour can vary from 6-9 hours, depending on the weather conditions*.
(Tromsø_Northern Lights Tour)

What we see in (10)–(11) is that neither blame nor responsibility is taken on by the tour organiser. But an element of risk is highlighted, while the responsibility (as blame) for this is assigned to the weather.

In (12), we find a very rare example of vague risk framing linked to an animal.

(12) *The Alaskan huskies are very friendly but love to run so it's important that you can control them throughout the day*.
(Tromsø_Full day arctic dog sledding expedition)

This is in connection with the dogs, that are portrayed as being *very friendly* with a *but*-construction indicating that they may be difficult to control (*they love to run*). Risk is highlighted, even if it is not made explicit what will happen if the dogs are not controlled. Here, it is the visitor who is assigned some responsibility, namely to develop the skills necessary for controlling the dogs.

Even if unwanted risks are mentioned explicitly relatively rarely, there are suggestions that visitors may potentially worry about specific aspects of the adventure – the risk of being cold, for example, is illustrated in (13).

(13) *Don't worry about being cold! We have thermal suits and boots waiting for you in the van. Nevertheless, do remember to dress properly*.
(Tromsø_Northern lights tour)

Here, we also see how it is the right equipment (clothing) that will prevent the possible HARM from occurring.

In terms of responsibility, the tour provider and the visitor are portrayed as having a shared responsibility to ensure appropriate clothing. In other parts of the material, though – as in (14) – the visitor is expected not to be concerned about the cold to the extent that an explicit reminder (e.g., of what kind of clothes to wear) is deemed necessary. Some expertise is needed to be able to follow this directive.

(14) *Please dress appropriately as temperatures can reach lows of –30°c*.
(Rovaniemi_Snowmobile Safari)

4.4 The ambivalence between negative and positive aspects of risk

What we have seen is that the dataset displays an ambivalence between negative and positive aspects of risk. In addition to the original name of the site (*Adrenaline Hunter*), which should put potential visitors in the mood for adventure, we see how being "off-track", "in the wild" and "closer to nature" add risk to the activity, but this is counterbalanced by descriptions of admiration and marvel. For the visitor, nature forms a risky backdrop (where HARM may occur), but it is also a place for inspiring awe and for relaxation (representing GAIN) – as in (15).

(15) *A truly authentic experience, the Camp in which you will stay has no access to roads or electricity. You will stay in one of our two yurts, and fetch water from a small stream nearby. This is the perfect escape from everyday life, and offers you a time of peace and quiet in the midst of Norway's untouched and formidable nature. Embrace nature to the fullest and find solace in its generous natural gifts.*
(Tromsø_winter kayaking)

In this manner, the visitor is constructed both as a VICTIM who stands to suffer if harm occurs, but most of all as a BENEFICIARY, who stands to gain from the risky situation. The explicit mention of the "escape from everyday life" in (15) calls to mind Goffman's (1967) notion about action involving a rejection of the ordinary. However, while Goffman frames it as a rejection of "those with safe and sure jobs", in (15) it is framed as safe and secure through word choices like *peace and quiet* and *find solace*.

The aspect of ambivalence comes to the fore in situations where instances of positive and negative risk occur simultaneously, as illustrated in (16), from a BBC travel article (Palfrey 2023).

(16) *Inspired by the notion of a safari where the focus is on oneself, I decided to head for a sauna under the stars, which, due to a lack of running water on camp, serves as the only way to wash. En route, I was delighted to see a few fluorescent curls of the aurora flicker overhead.*
Rather than snatching for my phone, I opted to simply watch, my neck craned towards the sky. The serenity of the moment, however, was quickly shattered by a shout from Kerry somewhere in the distance.
"Watch out for the bears!"

That is, positive risk is not to be equated with a general feeling of well-being; there is always some aspect of negative risk lurking in the background for an instance to be seen as "risky" in the first place.

Our data show that adventure tourism is not about achieving a *balance* between positive and negative risk, but what is important is the *combination* of the two. They can be combined with different weightings, depending on the framing, destination, target group, etc. The *Adrenaline Hunting* material is clearly targeting visitors who are not extreme risk-takers, but the site falls at the relatively soft end. This is supported by the fact that expertise is often not required in the visitor and that families and children are mentioned as participants for some of the activities, as evident in the formulations about SENSATION LEVEL and FITNESS LEVEL noted above. As an illustration of how negative risk could have been more foregrounded, see the blog text in (17), which also supports our earlier observation about the central role of equipment.

(17) *Someone who not only expects excellent performance from their gear but demands it. This garment is made for those going to remote, wild, and difficult places, where enduring the conditions can spell the difference between success and failure.*
Sometimes even the difference between life and death. For that person, the price of this jacket is completely justified and well worth every penny.
(Extract from https://adventureblog.net/)

Here we see that risk is a point of reference in equipment sales for adventure tourism – and that the equipment's role in *reducing* risk is a selling point. There is clearly scope for future critical studies on adventure tourism discourse from the perspective of economy and marketization.

In contrast to the "hard" risk illustrated in (17), and in order to give a fuller picture of adventure tourism, we include an example from general, non-Special Interest Tourism. In the official tourism website for Sweden, *Visit Sweden*[6] (the same material that Imboden 2012 is based on), we find very few examples that can be linked to risk. Some examples refer to risk and safety, as in (18), where HARM is presented as avoidable through the expertise of the GUIDE.

(18) *Sure, it might sound a bit scary, but with the guided tours offered by Green Trails you'll be in safe hands.*

Other examples present adventure on a scale of options the visitor may choose from, through wordings such as *if you prefer a softer adventure*.

5 Discussion

In our analyses, we have found that the risk scenario is much informed by a strong element of ambivalence: If we manage to overcome the potentiality of a negative risk, it may become a positive risk. And, for a positive risk (as in gambling), there is always the possibility that the activity may turn into a negative risk-taking. Our use of the word *ambivalence* is to indicate that there are no clear boundaries between when the positive or the negative is in effect. Still, we can naturally expect GAIN to have a relatively heavy weighting by virtue of the material itself being marketing discourse. The very notion of 'risk' can be used strategically – especially so in discourse types such as promotional adventure tourism. It is noteworthy also that the word *risk* itself is not used at all in the material, but potential elements indicating HARM are presented through other discourse means.

6 visitsweden.com.

Our major theoretical point based on the analyses is to stress the importance of the positive aspects of risk, and thereby give more equal weight to positive and negative risk in future studies on Risk Discourse. The positive/negative dimensions also connect with the fact that risk is a relative, discourse-constructed concept, as noted by Sarangi et al. (2003). To this effect, we are suggesting a reworking of Figure 1, which we used to serve as an illustration of the prototypical negative side of risk. The model in Figure 5 attempts to integrate the positive risk scenario. At first glance, this may look like atypical risk, but it is through analyses of atypical, peripheral, marked cases that a better understanding is gained of what is prototypically seen as unmarked. In the revisited risk scenario in Figure 5, the factors HARM and GAIN are given more equal weighting by being presented next to each other.

The exclusively negative VICTIM framing is also countered with a positive BENEFICIARY "who stands to gain from the risk". This is marked with AMBIVALENCE in the figure's dotted green box. The BENEFICIARY and the GAIN are typically highlighted in advertising, to create positive images in the potential visitor's mind. Further, VENTURE is included as an abstract concept that represents an act that brings about a risky situation, e.g., dog sledding in our adventure tourism material. The SETTING represents specific risks leading to harm and/or gain in a Risk scenario, for example having to do with nuclear plants and chemical factories, or nature and natural phenomena. The SETTING is especially important in a tourism context, where the destination plays a crucial role; indeed, also extreme tourism activities are often associated with specific, iconic sites (Buckley 2012). This is also in line with the 'displacement' idea often brought up in adventure tourism research (cf. Section 2.3).

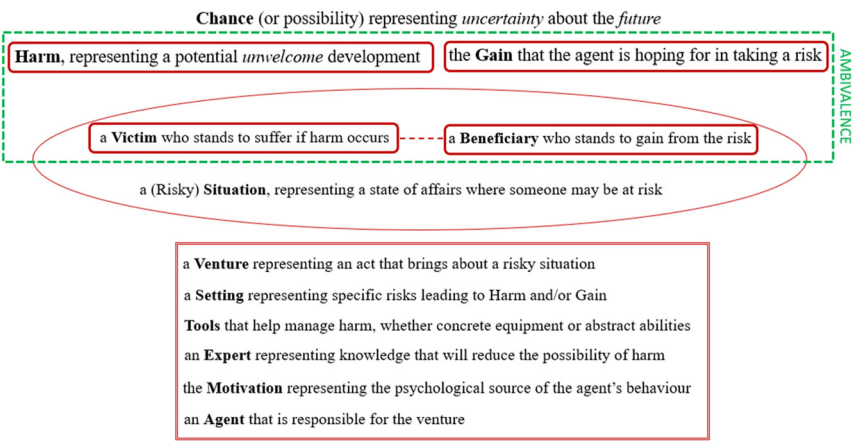

Figure 5: A comprehensive risk scenario.

Another key element of the Risk scenario generally and adventure tourism more specifically involves Tools that help to manage, counter and possibly downplay (negative) risk. This includes anything from emergency handles and fire trucks to climbing equipment and special cold-weather clothing. Tools may also be abstract, including abilities and skills for dealing with risk. Another key element is an Expert representing knowledge that will reduce the possibility of harm and increase the chance of gain. This may be the visitor, or – as in our material – a guide. In a risk communication context more generally, it could be the World Health Organisation. Further on, an Agent arranges the venture; this may be an organization like an adventure tour company, representing the key participant who is responsible for the venture. However, the Agent may also be the individual adventurer not relying on others to organise the adventure. The visitor may be influenced to participate in the venture through varying Motivations. There is a range of different motivations in an adventure tourism context (Buckley 2012).

Given the way in which the risk scenario has been informed by our analysis of positive risk, there is a need to revisit the very definition of Risk Discourse. A key aspect that was missing from our previous definition (cf. Section 2.1) can be summarised in terms of *framing*. Frames have informed our thinking from the outset, through the Frame Semantic analysis of 'risk'. At this point, however, we also see how a broader understanding of framing presents a useful structure for the understanding of positive and negative risk. While frame semantics is about mapping and making sense of experience through coherent schematisations or semantic patterns, we suggest that we also need a way of describing the "weighting" of risk as more or less positive or negative in a given discourse.

Framing is about selection and salience, often referred to as foregrounding/backgrounding: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient" (Entman 1993: 52). In a risk scenario, we can choose to foreground Harm (e.g., through our awareness that the ice of a frozen lake is meltable and breakable) and Gain (e.g., through "butterflies in our stomach") to varying degrees. This is linked to a further issue in the original definition of Risk Discourse, viz. that it presented risk in a rather static and dichotomous way, failing to view risk as scalar. The addition of "whether framed as relatively negative or positive risk" makes the following, revised definition of Risk Discourse more accurate and complete:

> Risk discourse refers to texts, whether spoken, written or signed, that are concerned with matters of risk and related concepts (such as security and safety), whether involving experts and/or lay people, whether explicitly or implicitly dealt with, whether synchronously or asynchronously communicated, and whether framed as relatively negative or positive risk.

6 Conclusions

We find that 'adventure' is a highly relative concept, as we illustrated in Example (1), which attempts to market walking on a frozen lake (which is an everyday activity for many Scandinavians) as an "adventurous" or "extreme" experience for an audience that is not too familiar with snow and ice. In relation to the risk scenario in Figure 5, we describe GAIN as something the agent "is hoping for" in taking a risk. Successful advertising material can also support the potential visitor's imagination in ways that appeal to GAIN scenarios. We can confidently say that definition (a) of adventure tourism *is* a good fit for our material, not least because it stresses the novelty value that seems so important for adventure and an adventurer. Presenting an activity as a new experience for the potential visitor (but not for the experienced guide) is key in our material – and this is likely a common feature of tourism discourse targeting potential visitors; the literature on tourism marketing and brand positioning often stresses the importance of difference or uniqueness (Morrison 2013).[7]

Goffman also comments on the relativity of risk:

> […] different individuals and groups have somewhat different personal base-lines from which to measure risk and opportunity; a way of life involving much risk may cause the individual to give little weight to a risk that someone else may find forbidding (Goffman 1967: 157–158).

As mentioned in Section 2.2, Goffman's thinking about 'action' (and 'non-action') focuses on populations and personality traits and lifestyle in a rather essentialist way, portraying these as inherent. But what we see in our adventure tourism data is rather an "offer" of relative 'action' to very broad populations. At least in this context, 'action' should not be reserved for a relatively extreme minority. Research from tourism studies also supports this, as people are more risk-prone when taking on the role as visitor. A report from 1990 published by the British Medical Association reflects as follows on varying approaches to risk depending on context:

> Nobody sincerely believes that all recreational activities can be made free of risk. Indeed, some degree of risk is manifestly one of the attractions of many kinds of recreation, and it is clear that people in general are prepared to accept far higher levels of risk in recreation than they would be at work, say, or as the result of the operation of a nearby industrial facility. (BMA 1990: 146)

In this study we have in particular wanted to diversify the concept of risk and stress that we are not faced with a clear dichotomy of positive versus negative risk, but the concept of risk is much more dynamic. This finding needs to be taken into account in future studies on Risk Discourse.

7 Uniqueness is linked to destination by comparison to other destinations. The related concept of 'novelty value', however, needs to be constructed from the perspective of the potential visitor.

We have also shown the importance of extending the concept of 'positive risk' beyond gambling, sports, and the finance sector. It is highly relevant also in what is nowadays regarded as fairly everyday activities, like tourism. By acknowledging this move (of the definition of 'positive risk'), we have also been able to suggest a more focused understanding of the concept of Risk in discourse studies. We thus hope that this study will inspire others to undertake further studies on adventure tourism in pragmatics and discourse analysis, where it is clearly understudied.

In our theorisations and analyses, we have remained with the concept of Risk without delving into related concepts, such as potential antonyms. We may note that other researchers have chosen to study Risk by comparison to Resilience "as two interrelated dimensions in our anthropocene era" (Bevitori and Johnson 2022: 565). Such a comparative perspective is clearly relevant when studying climate change as a site for "the struggle over meaning" in newspaper discourse – or indeed when approaching the adventure tourism industry critically based on its economics and class character (MacCannell 1999), or when discussing what sustainability tourism might be (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2019). But, as we have shown, the concept of risk is sufficiently complex to merit in-depth semantic and pragmatic mapping by itself. Also, given the framing possibilities offered through not just negative risk but also positive risk, antonymic or opposing perspectives may easily be constructed.

Our study is limited in that it has considered only verbal aspects of adventure tourism data, but there is bountiful visual information accompanying the verbal data on websites like *Adrenaline Hunter*/*Manawa*. We see it as a promising avenue for future research to study the visual framing of positive and negative risk. This would also help remedy the general lack of investigations of Risk Discourse from a comprehensive multimodal perspective (see Nguyen 2022).

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