UiT The Arctic University of Norway

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Ski guiding and risk management

A qualitative study on Nortind educated ski guides

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Master's thesis in Tourism Studies, REI-3910, November 2023

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Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Bente Heimtun. I deeply appreciate your honest and constructive feedback provided throughout this project. Thank you for dedicating your time and expertise to help me complete this thesis.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the informants for generously sharing their valuable stories and insights on how they approach their work as ski guides. Without your knowledge and contributions, this thesis would not have been possible.

Many thanks to all my colleagues who engaged passionately in discussions on the topic of this thesis.

To my family and friends, I am thankful for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout this process.

Most importantly, I owe my partner an immense thank you for your unconditional support.

Michael Wenseth

November 2023, Bodø

Abstract

Avalanche fatalities claim lives in Norway each year. Yet, there is limited research on how ski guides ensure safety and manage risks on behalf of their clients. By studying how ski guides, educated through The Norwegian Mountain Guide Association (Nortind), manage this, I seek to fill this gap. The study is based on seven semi-structured interviews, supplemented by my autoethnographic reflections on being a ski-guide. Combined, these two methods have allowed me to tap into ski guides practices, thoughts, and strategies for ensuring safety. The thesis draws on literature on risk and safety in adventure tourism and guiding, and performance theory. I identified four partly overlapping themes. Theme one addresses the importance of planning and pre-tour meetings in managing clients' expectations as crucial components of a successful ski tour. Theme two shows the significance of gaining clients' trust. Theme three explores how the ski guides perform safety and manage risk. Theme four unpacks how the ski guides create good experiences as a tool to avoid exposing clients to unnecessary risk. A tread in all themes is how the guides constantly work on impression management to adapt to clients' preferences, skills, and perceptions of risk, ultimately facilitating safe and enjoyable adventures. An understanding of how professional ski guides navigate avalanche risk is beneficial for prevent future avalanche accidents for recreational skiers as well as professionals.

Keywords: Ski guides, avalanche terrain, Goffman, risk management, safety.

1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my qualitative research project, which unpacks the practices of seven ski guides educated through the Norwegian mountain guide association (Nortind). My focus will be on how they perform safety on behalf of their clients. Ski guiding is part of adventure tourism, and can be understood as "guided commercial tours where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity which relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialized sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients" (Buckley, 2006, p. 75). The subsequent section will first introduce the background and reasons for this topic. I will then address existing research to tease out research gaps before introducing my research questions. I end this chapter by providing an overview of the thesis structure.

1.1 Background and rationale

> "Hi, I have a client who wants to ski something long and steep tomorrow, are you up for it?". The request was a specific mountain and a long and sustained couloir, and the avalanche danger was considerable. My initial thought was "no", but I needed the work and agreed to meet up with the client. I quickly managed to convince him to join me for a trip in less exposed terrain. We headed out early morning, with clear skies and facets glittering in the surface, slowly melting in the rising sun. The client was fit, showed good climbing skills and generally good energy. After six hours we came over a steeper section to see the summit for the first time. As I saw the slope, I knew immediately that it would be a bad idea to ski up there due to ongoing loading of fresh snow. After failing to talk my client out of skiing that slope, I dug a snowpit to illustrate to him the avalanche danger, which finally convinced him that turning around was the smartest choice. The skiing down was fantastic at moderate angle, yet he struggled to get into his flow and enjoy it due to his lack of skiing ability.

This situation, I experienced a couple years back. I was still under education to get my diploma as a professional ski guide through the Norwegian mountain guide association but already had extensive experience as an adventure guide. Even though I had a three-year collage education in outdoor sports and guiding, I had been holding back guiding ski tours in avalanche terrain due to the complexity of evaluating avalanche hazard. The last few years, however, I have combined a fulltime job as ski guide, finishing my diploma in ski guiding and

this master thesis project. The situation above was the first thing I wrote in relation to this project, and it became the starting point of what I wanted to investigate. Through this project, I therefore hope to increase my own understanding of how ski guides interact with clients to facilitate safe adventures.

My study aims to explore ski touring which takes place in or close to avalanche terrain. Ski touring requires special skis that allow guides and clients to climb uphill comfortably to transition to alpine skiing downhill. The activity of recreational ski touring has seen a huge increase in the number of participants over the last decade in the western world (Landrø, 2021; Mannberg et al., 2021). The Norwegian coast is especially well suited for this activity, with spectacular fjords, mountains up to 2000 meters above sea level, and a lot of precipitation often leading to high snow depths and easy access to numerous mountains from public roads. Ski touring is done in or near terrain prone to avalanches (Landrø, 2021; Stewart-Patterson, 2014) and hence is not without risk.

Recreational skiers die every year in avalanches in Norway (Horgen, 2017). In recent years, the media attention therefore has increased (Horgen, 2017; Landrø, 2021). Despite the unfortunate fact that 69 individuals have lost their lives in avalanches associated with recreational skiing in Norway since 2008 (Varsom, n.d), the annual average increase in fatalities remains relatively small (Horgen, 2017). However, in recent years, over 50 per cent of avalanche fatalities have tragically occurred in Northern Norway, with the region in and around the renowned Lyngen Alps bearing the significant brunt of these incidents (Varsom, n.d). Unfortunately, the region sees days like in March 2023, when four people lost their lives in three different avalanches (Meirik, 2023). Still, accidents and fatalities varies greatly from year to year, as does the actually avalanche danger due to different weather and snow stability (Landrø, 2021). It is also worth noting, that the statistic does not consider the growing number of skiers.

The increased interest in ski touring has also led to higher demand for ski guides (VisitNorway, n.d). "A ski guide's job is to take recreational skiers into avalanche terrain" (Løland & Hällgren, 2022, p. 1), and as the latter section showed, that involves certain risks. Norwegian regulations do not prohibit anyone from calling themselves ski guides if they always follow what is considered best practice (Eikje et al., 2019; Løland & Hällgren, 2022). In Central-European countries, North America and other mountainous countries, however,

there are formal demands for certification to guide clients. Here, it is required that the guide is educated through IFMGA's (International federation of mountain guide association) minimum standards (IFMGA, n.d.). Through the organization Nortind (*Norske Tindevegledere)* (Nortind, n.d), Norway is a member of IFMGA and offers the full mountain guide program, and as of 2019, also a ski guide education. The lack of formal certification requirements in Norway, however, may change as the current government explores the options for more formal regulations in relation to education on guides (Regjeringen, 2021).

1.2 Adventure and ski guides

In this section, I will explore what we know about ski guides way of performing safety and negotiating risk on behalf of clients. I will do this by giving a brief review of existing knowledge. As research on ski guides still is rather limited, I have turned to what we know about adventure, nature and mountain guiding which also concerns clients' safety.

Cater (2006) argued that adventure tourism companies who managed to lower the actual risk and simultaneously increased levels of thrill, were the most successful. Buckley (2012) emphasized the importance of the adventure guide as the narrator of the client's actual safety as well as perceived safety. van Riper et al. (2016) explored the connection between guide-client and how it affected adventure tourists' experiences. By studying the level of trust established in whitewater guides and how they managed client's perception of risk, this study showed that some participants did not enjoy the activity without trusting their adventure guide and proper pre-tour meetings (van Riper et al., 2016). Røkenes and Mathisen (2017) argued for the importance of adventure guides abilities to anticipate, comprehend, and address the diversity in individuals' perceptions and relationships concerning risk and safety. Through reflexive autoethnography Løvoll and Einang (2022) formulated the term 'transparent guiding', to capture a vital skill for nature guides in managing groups in risky environments.

One of the most comprehensive studies on ski guides was done by Stewart-Patterson (2014). In this study, data was collected over two full winters in Canada. It revealed that even though the guides were well trained and had analytical tools to help them make decisions, intuition always played a role in their final decisions. The challenge with intuition and avalanche terrain, however, is that one can get positive feedback on a decision, even though you were seconds from a fatal accident, due to the lack of near miss feedback. Another study, which was based on GPS tracks from heli-ski guides (Hendrikx et al., 2015) studied which terrain

certified ski guides in Alaska used. Even though the data material was limited, the trend was that the heli-ski guides did not choose easier terrain on days with higher avalanche danger. This could be understood by the nature of heli-skiing, which allows to easily move to other sectors of a mountain area where they know the avalanche problem is less likely to be as exposed (Hendrikx et al., 2015). Another study done by Thumlert and Haegeli (2018) tracked professional ski guides for two winters to learn which terrain was acceptable to ski under different avalanche conditions.

For me, as a professional ski guide, recreational skier and a student tourism researcher, it is exiting that there is a growing body of research being done at the Center of avalanche research and education (CARE) at UiT The Artic University of Norway. At Care, researchers have studied decision making in avalanche terrain (Mannberg et al., 2021) and have evaluated when it is safe enough to ski (Landrø, 2021). They have also explored decision making in groups and other relevant aspects. However only one of these studies are primarily concerned with ski guides. Løland and Hällgren (2022) explored the ways in which ski guides made sense of the conditions, clients and other factors when deciding where to ski, the planning phase of a guided ski tour was their main topic. Based on the same data, Løland et al. (2023) recently published an article addressing how the ski guides continued to update themselves on all the information they obtained in the planning phase.

Even though there have been multiple attempts to design avalanche decision making frameworks, the fact is that if one decide to ski a slope at 30-degree angle or more, there will always be uncertainty in the evaluation of snow stability (Landrø, 2021). Balancing this uncertainty, human emotions, clients wishes and skills, will makes my study relevant for our knowledge on what ski guides do to produce safe adventures. Løland and Hällgren (2022) stated that more research is needed in the field of behavior in avalanche terrain and how ski guides actually decide where to ski. As Løland et al. (2023) also emphasized there is still limited research done on what ski guides actually do when at work. The increased popularity of ski touring (Landrø, 2021) makes my research topic relevant.

1.3 Research question

Based on this review on existing knowledge and gaps, I therefore aim to explore how Nortind educated ski guides manage and negotiate risk and safety on behalf of their clients. I specifically ask:

1. How do ski guides educated through Nortind perform safety in avalanche terrain?
2. What do these ski guides do to manage and negotiate clients' perceptions of risk?

The intention with my thesis is to contribute to extending the knowledge of how ski guides perform safety. Ideally my role as an insider in the field will help broaden the understanding of the ski guides actions.

1.4 Thesis structure

The remaining of the thesis has the following structure: A literature review is presented in chapter two. I start with an overview of literature related to risk and safety in adventure tourism research. I then turn to literature on guiding and risk management, with a specific focus on ski guiding. Lastly, I discuss performance theory and how it has been used in tourism research.

In chapter three, I elaborate on my methodological considerations along with questions of philosophy of science. My choice of a qualitative research design is also discussed in relation to data collection done though semi-structured interviews and autoethnographic data. I also explain how I analyzed the data by using thematic analysis. I end this chapter by discussing ethical considerations and the limitations of my study.

In chapter four, I present and discuss my findings. Four themes emerged through the analysis. In theme one how the ski guides prepare and conduct pre-tour meetings is presented. Theme two address how they manage their impressions to gain client's trust. In theme three how the ski guides perform safety is the topic. And theme four how they create good experiences.

Finally, in chapter five I conclude and summarize findings to answers my research questions.

2 Literature review and theoretical framework

In this chapter I will discuss existing literature on adventure tourism related to risk and safety. Then I will unpack the literature related to guiding in general and the more specific literature pertaining ski guiding. I will also explore performance theory through Goffman's dramaturgical approach and how it has been used in the field of tourism studies.

2.1 Risk and safety in adventure tourism

When entering the academic field of adventure tourism, it quickly becomes apparent that this is not a narrow and specific field of study. There are multiple connections between adventure tourism, nature-based tourism, and more (Rantala et al., 2018), challenging a study in this field. There is no agreed upon definition of adventure tourism (Buckley, 2006; Taylor et al., 2013), but it is widely acknowledged that it is about commercial guided activities which require some skills by participant, and that the outcome will vary greatly, depending on the client's participation (Taylor et al., 2013). Along with other parts of tourism it claims to have different values and ethics as opposed to mass tourism (Cater, 2006). Risk is something closely associated with adventure tourism (Buckley, 2012; Cater, 2006; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012; Røkenes & Mathisen, 2017), whether it is real or perceived. Typical for adventure tourism is that participants pay a guide to deal with risk management (Cater, 2006).

Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow was one of the first used in studies linking risk and leisure activities that previously was considered of less value, such as mountaineering and chess in this example (Cater, 2006). The theory of flow suggests that when performing an activity were "the skill required and the challenge inherent in an act, positive feedback occur in terms of satisfaction" (Cater, 2006, p. 318). This positive feedback came in the experience of a state of 'flow'. This can be seen as an attempt to explain peoples need or surge to partake in adventure tourism.

In the early days of adventure tourism research, it was argued that risk was one of the key motivations for people to buy adventure tourism products and services (Cater, 2006; Walle, 1997). It was assumed that people had a need to expose themselves to risk, explained by sociology literature on the evolution of humankind and todays risk-free and mundane lifestyles. Walle (1997), however, disagreed with the notion that risk was the primary motivation for adventure tourism activities and suggested that self-actualization was the main motivation. Walle argued that insight could be gained by participating in these activities, and

hence suggested the insight-model. The insight-model argues that "adventurer seeks fulfillment via the process of gaining insight" (Walle, 1997, p. 269). More than anything the author argued that the discussions on outdoor adventure tourists' motivations was to narrow. To fully understand the phenomena, one needed to take a more holistic approach, and to include that people come from different cultures and have diverse motivations.

Weber (2001), however, argued that the insight model did not get the full picture and that previous studies had focused too much on outdoor adventure recreation in their understandings of adventure tourism. In her article, reviewing literature on adventure tourism, she claimed that there was a mismatch between researcher and marketers' idea of what adventure tourism is and what the consumers believe it is. She further discussed that explaining tourists' motivation from risk-seeking and insight model was too narrow and suggested a shift toward "individuals' perception of adventure" and how this approach would benefit both the theorizing and practical implications of adventure tourism (Weber, 2001).

A study done by Pomfret (2006) explored clients participating in mountaineering activities and how they experienced this activity in relation to several factors. She argued that the way adventure tourism companies market themselves was essential in relation to attracting the "right" tourist. This was exemplified by referring to the divide between "soft" and "hard" adventure, where "soft" adventure required little to no skills and experience prior, and "hard" hence required that the tourist had some skills and knowledge about activity. She also claimed that there was a connection between tourists' earlier experiences and their perception of risk. This distinction between soft and hard adventures could help tourism managers and marketers target their adventure products and services better (Pomfret, 2006).

Another study that was concerned with adventure tourists' motivation and risk was Cater (2006). He asserted that tourists aspire to successfully accomplish activities in unfamiliar situations such as adventure tourism activities. In terms of motivation (Cater, 2006) argued that tourists are not really interested in taking real risk, rather they seek thrill and excitement. In relation to adventure tourism companies, he noted "this requires a 'balancing act' between managing actual risks on one hand, whilst simultaneously maintaining optimum thrill levels on the other" (Cater, 2006, p. 324). It is in this regard that adventure tourism companies need to minimize the actual risk but maximize the thrill, excitement and in the end the experience for tourists to become successful.

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Buckley (2012) study supported in large parts Cater (2006) theory that thrill is a more suitable way of understanding adventure tourism experience. He argued that rush might be the most important factor for tourists participating in adventure tourism, and that rush is a combination of thrill and flow (Buckley, 2012). Rush from an activity is however not available for everyone, and "an element of elitism" (Buckley, 2012, p. 967) is present. This means that only those with enough skills to perform the activity can experience this rush. Rush is length sensitive and can be experiences in minutes to hours at the time.

In this section I have reviewed literature in relation to risk and tourists' motivation for participating in adventure tourism activities. We know that adventure tourism activities include some physical risks. According to research this risk is not the main motivation for participating in adventure tourism, but the thrill and excitement is what tourists seek (Buckley, 2012; Cater, 2006). In my analysis I utilize this literature to better understand how the ski guides manage risk on behalf of their clients. I believe understanding the motivations for people's participation is valuable in understand what the ski guides do.

2.2 Guiding and risk management

As the previous section shows tourists' motivation for participating in adventure activities is varied. In this section, literature pertaining guides roles in managing these risks and experiences is explored. First, I will present and discuss literature on adventure guides and risk management. Then, I will address literature on ski guiding. What separates adventure guides from a tourist guide, is the specific skillset needed to perform the activities that they guide (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013), a ski guide necessarily need to be a decent skier to physically perform ski guiding.

Mackenzie and Kerr (2012) explained how tourists perceived risk in adventure tourism. They referred to three types of risk associated with the activities, the physical, social, and emotional risk. They argued that the physical risk in adventure tourism is 'managed' by the guide. There is a considerable risk of physical injury as the tourists mainly seek the perception of risk, and thrill and fear is what they actually seek (Buckley, 2012; Cater, 2006). Mackenzie and Kerr (2012) argued that this is key in selling adventure tourism products: commodification of risk which at the same time considerably reduce the actual risk involved. They argued that their study only partly supports previous studies suggesting that adventure tourists seek fear and thrills, and that participants in their study wanted "a challenging, yet safe experience in which

they felt protected from risk" (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012, p. 139). In summary their study concluded that when guide fail to gain participants trust, they blocked the chance of maximizing the experience in adventure tourism contexts. The tourists wanted the guides to manage safety on their behalf and paid them to do so.

In a later study, Mackenzie and Kerr (2013) identified a lack of research on tour guides own experiences as the tourist experience had been the most researched. Recognizing that many adventure guides work seasonally and often in different parts of the world they set out to explore how this affected the guides stress and emotions. They argued that "adventure guiding requires high levels of emotional labor" and it might "occur in employer – guide relationships, in addition to guide – client's interaction" (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013, p. 11). This again can lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and burnout (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013). To prevent this, they suggested that in addition to "technical skills, guides develop a robust psychological skill set that enables them to regulate emotions and cope with a range of motivational states, stressors and negative emotions" (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013, p. 11).

Other studies has explored emotional labor amongst guides. Heimtun (2016) and her study on Northern lights guides showed that guides engaged in emotional labor in six partially interrelated methods. The guides in her study "enacted emotional labor to varying degrees in order to lower, enhance and distract tourists' emotions" (Heimtun, 2016, p. 237). Another study concerned with emotional labor was done by Mathisen (2019) as she argued that the guides ability to handle their own emotions is vital in co-creating tourists' experiences as best as possible. By exploring how the guides storytelling can be an expression of their emotions, she adapts the notion of surface and deep acting to explain this. Surface acting might be viewed as "pretending to feel certain emotions" whereas deep acting is "modification of a guide's emotions" (Mathisen, 2019, p. 70). Her findings implicate that guides who engage in deep acting, which means telling stories that are personal and related to their life have a better chance of managing their emotional labor, lowering stress, and increasing their well-being (Mathisen, 2019).

Noting that previous research was preoccupied with the tourists' experiences, motivations and perceptions of risk, Clinch and Filimonau (2017) explored adventure tourism instructors' perceptions of risk and how they manage it. Even though the study revealed multiple good risk management strategies and some decision-making processes that the industry would

benefit from incorporating, the instructors called for more and better training to ensure clients safety (Clinch & Filimonau, 2017). One example was the wish for better training in dealing with groups with participants with different skill levels, when it came to skillset and preconditions for participation.

Røkenes and Mathisen (2017) study on adventure guides roles in balancing perception of risk and safety is very relevant to my study. Drawing on the work of motivational reasons for participating in adventure tourism, the authors aimed to broaden the understanding of tourists' perception of risk and safety while participating in guided trips. Interviews with tourists was developed into four types of adventure tourists in terms of risk and safety: "the mother hen", "the fun hunter", "the follower" and "the adrenalin seeker" (Røkenes & Mathisen, 2017). The authors argued that the guides' ability in reading and dealing with these types determined if there was value co-creation or value destruction. They further suggested three strategies for guides to improve "the value-creation potential for the individual in heterogeneous groups" (Røkenes & Mathisen, 2017, p. 24). The first strategy was *individualization* which relates to how guides divide groups, and to what extent their emotional labor is used. The second was *improve resources* and how the guides taught their clients about their perception of risk, which again would lead to greater value co-creation. The third was *expanding the tour goal* which meant that guides might have to change the plan to negotiate real risk and make sure their clients are safe. "All three strategies showed that it was essential to shape the tour around tourists' perception of risk and safety" (Røkenes & Mathisen, 2017, p. 25). They further emphasized that to what level the guide managed these strategies would determine the satisfaction and mastery of the activity the clients participated.

Løvoll and Einang (2022) suggested the term "transparent guiding" as best practices for nature-guides. Data from autoethnography and focus groups interviews with guides formed the basis for the discussion. They argued that transparent guiding can be viewed as a leadership style. To practice transparent guiding, guides needed in-depth knowledge of the natural environment, abilities to read weather and conditions, and manage to see all these details in relation to the group (Løvoll & Einang, 2022). By developing a knowledge of knowing when to share which information with clients, this leadership style could improve trustworthiness, risk, and safety of trips.

A study on 18 British mountain guides (IFMGA) focused on the non-technical skills that the mountain guides themselves perceived as the most important to safely perform mountain guiding with paying clients (Irwin et al., 2023). Six non-technical skill categories were identified "situation awareness, decision-making, leadership, teamwork & communication, task management, cognitive readiness" (Irwin et al., 2023, p. 10). The authors argued that little research had been done on non-technical skills of this group of guides.

In this section I have reviewed literature related to adventure guiding and risk management. Literature pertaining perception of risk (Clinch & Filimonau, 2017; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012; Røkenes & Mathisen, 2017) and emotional labor (Heimtun, 2016; Mathisen, 2019) was reviewed and discussed. And how adventure guides leadership style as transparent guiding (Løvoll & Einang, 2022) and guides soft skills (Irwin et al., 2023) can increase safety. This literature will be utilized in the analysis and discussion to enhance our understanding of how the ski guides in my study deal with clients perception of risk.

Figure 3: Skier in Lofoten. Photo: Private

2.3 Ski guiding

The largest and most comprehensive study conducted on ski guides was by Stewart-Patterson (2014) on heli-ski guides in British Colombia. Heli-skiing takes place in the same terrain as ski touring, but rather than walking up the mountain, one is transported by helicopter. The study primarily focused on how ski guides made decisions in avalanche terrain on commercially guided trips. How they assessed snow stability, inclination measurement and other physical factors in determining if a slope is prone to avalanches. However, it is impossible to say with certainty that a slope is a 100% safe to ski (Landrø, 2021). Based on this the ski guides decision making skillset is based on some analytical tools and intuitive, which is filled with uncertainty (Stewart-Patterson, 2014). The result showed that even though the ski guides gathered a lot of information from analytical tools, intuition always played a role in the decision process and the ski guides often made decision based on pattern recognition (Stewart-Patterson, 2014). The way in which ski guides used intuition in the decision-making process was hence the focus of Stewart-Patterson (2014) study. "Misleading and inconsistent feedback loops of the nature impact and bias the decision" (Løland & Hällgren, 2022, p. 2), which is what Stewart-Patterson (2014) argued.

Hendrikx et al. (2015) employed GPS to monitor the movements of professional heli-ski guides. As previous research had focused on accidents and close calls related to ski guiding and avalanches, this study aimed to learn from real-time data (Hendrikx et al., 2015). This was done to understand how these guides selected terrain that best balanced the expectations of clients with safety considerations. The findings was a bit surprising as they did not indicate that the guides changed their terrain choice considerably according to the prevailing avalanche danger. Hendrikx et al. (2015) explained this in part based on the factors they measured related to terrain, but probably more important how easily a heli-ski guide can change their terrain choices due to the use of helicopters. This allowed the guides to move to areas "where the instability may be shallower and more easily managed, or possibly nonexistent" (Hendrikx et al., 2015, p. 41).

Another study on ski guides' choice of terrain was Thumlert and Haegeli (2018), as they highlighted that the knowledge of professional ski guides is tacit, making it challenging to learn from them. By also using GPS tracking, they collected data on professional ski guides terrain management. As terrain choices are complex the aim of mentioning these studies was

mainly to illustrate what type of research have been done on ski guides, rather than the actual results. Both the mentioned studies show clear implications for practice.

Drawing on one year of ethnographic data on professional ski guides, Løland and Hällgren (2022) explored how ski guides in the planning phase decided where to ski. Løland is himself an IFMGA certified mountain guide and hence had unique access to the ski guides. Acknowledging previous research and the way they sought objective answers to questions of avalanche safety, they adopted sensemaking theory to better understand how ski guides arrived at certain decisions, such as where to go skiing. "In difference to the avalanche literature's focus on reducing uncertainty by collecting information and making accurate decisions, sensemaking focuses on reducing ambiguity by reciprocally referring to the past, to find a plausible (rather than accurate) explanation in the present" (Løland & Hällgren, 2022, p. 4). They elaborated and anchored the choice of approach with the environment the sensemaker is situated: avalanche terrain. They found two different cues that the ski guides use to decide where to ski, social and ecological embeddedness, which can be explained as the way the guides familiarize with the clients and the prevailing conditions. "The answer to the question of where to ski is, therefore, a matter of reciprocally aligning *who* (guides and clients) to *what* (ecological conditions), to determine *where* to ski (the trip)" (Løland & Hällgren, 2022, p. 11).

Based on the same theoretical approach and ethnographic data in Løland and Hällgren (2022), Løland et al. (2023) explored "how do ski guides update their past sensemaking?" (Løland et al., 2023, p. 1), in the mountains. Figure 2 illustrates the process of how updating in the mountain is a continuous process for the ski guides, and which three main findings their analysis provided (Løland et al., 2023, p. 6).
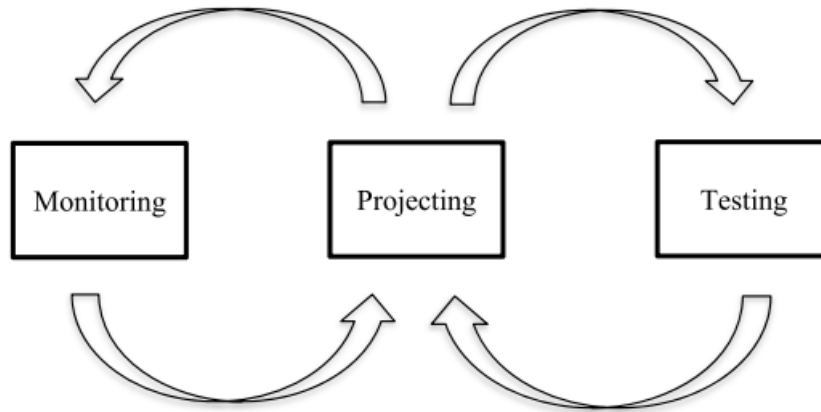
Figure 4: "The updating process"

Monitoring refers to the strategies of observing both ecological and social cues. The ski guides did this by paying "attention to details that may help in advancing understanding of the situation to provide a safe and memorable event" (Løland et al., 2023, p. 4). Testing can be done in relation to both testing the snow, by digging a snowpit and do a stability test. The other way of projecting is simply that the guide share their thoughts with clients and/or a co-guide, to see if some of them are "making the same sense" (Løland et al., 2023, p. 6) as the guide is. As the first two ways of updating in the mountains help the guides arrive at reasonable explanations. When the situation does not make sense by the first two strategies, they "make inference with about the future" (Løland et al., 2023, p. 6), which the authors called projecting. The ski guide do this by anticipating and postponing. Trying to project the outcome of their actions the guides frequently questions their decisions. "Updating is a continuous struggle for control" (Løland et al., 2023, p. 7), and the ski guides postpone and question their every call trying to be in control.

The literature on ski guides show that the guides are very dependent on their intuition to help make decision in avalanche terrain (Stewart-Patterson, 2014), and that other studies have tried to learn from ski guides terrain choices by using GPS technology (Hendrikx et al., 2015; Thumlert & Haegeli, 2018).The two articles (Løland & Hällgren, 2022; Løland et al., 2023), fundamentally challenges the traditional way of understanding traveling in avalanche terrain, at least academically. By viewing ski guiding as a process rather than certain decision-making points, I do believe they open up for a broader understanding of what is actually going on in the when ski guides decide where to ski and whether it is safe enough.

2.3 Guiding as performance

To further understand what ski guides' do and how they perform safety, I adopted performance theory to utilize in the analysis. In this section I will present literature relevant to address that research question.

Especially Goffman's dramaturgical theory proved relevant. In *The presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Goffman (1959) theorizes human interaction and how individuals communicate and perceive each other. To explore this, he employs the conceptual framework of a theatrical performance to scrutinize the dynamics of individual interaction in everyday life. Viewed through the lens of the dramaturgical metaphor, individuals assume diverse roles and enact performances that align with distinct occasions and contexts (Chen, 2018; Edensor, 2001). By modifying, adjusting, or adhering to the parameters, which encompass potential norms regarding appearance, demeanor, and spatial organization, individuals communicate varied information (Goffman, 1959). The performance may serve to manifest one's identity, affirm or negotiate a relationship, or establish the parameters of a given situation. "Interactive people are metaphorized as actors playing their roles on the social "stage", which is divided into a frontstage and a backstage" (Zhu & Xu, 2021, p. 2). In my thesis the ski guides are the main actor, and the focus is on the front region where the guides interact with their clients. The following section will present literature related to Goffman's dramaturgical approach, which I find relevant to my study. Literature related to tourism studies and most relevantly guiding as such are the focus, as it later is used in the analysis to better understand how the ski guides perform safety.

"The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards" (Goffman, 1959, p. 110). These standards are divided into two; in my case, the way the ski guide treats his clients, the other how the ski guide behaves when in physical reach of his clients, but not engaging with them. It is within this front-region or stage that the actor is driven by the "urge for 'impression management'" (Edensor, 2001, p. 60) and only when in the backstage can an actor recharge and prepare for the next performance. Impression management will vary greatly depending on the amount of practice the actor has (Edensor, 2007).

Impressions from an actor will hence be given off in two different ways, according to Goffman (1959, p. 14) it is "the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*". The initial aspect concerns verbal symbols or their alternatives, which the actor can openly employ solely for the purpose of conveying the specific information known to be associated with these symbols by himself and others. The second aspect encompasses a diverse array of actions that in this case the clients can interpret as indicative of the ski guides intentions, with the assumption being that these actions were carried out for motives beyond the information conveyed through them. Zhu and Xu (2021, p. 2) summarize is well: "impression management refers to the process by which people actively manage impressions given to direct or potential audiences through role performance on a certain stage in order to guide the interaction in a direction they want".

According to Goffman then, people does not randomly perform but "Goffman spoke of interaction order to highlight that interaction in public places is socially ordered through behavioral codes of proper and respectful behavior" (Larsen & Meged, 2013, p. 90). What is deemed a norm depends on the social setting and the actors present when the interaction takes place. Being that my study only contains data from one actor, the ski guide, I believe it is most relevant to focus on which impression they are concerned with giving off.

Even though Goffmans' dramaturgical approach is over 50 years now, it continues to demonstrate its utility in elucidating recently emergent social phenomena within contemporary societies. The metaphor of performance "is extended to study tourism and has raised debate on tourist practices, tourist identity, and tourist space" (Chen, 2018, p. 109). The first to introduce the notion of performance in tourism studies was Dean MacCannell in 1973 (MacCannell, 1999). He used Goffman's' concept of front/ backstage to explain his concept of "staged authenticity" within the context of making sense of tourism. Multiple studies in tourism has since been inspired by Goffmans' concepts (Edensor, 2000, 2001; Larsen & Meged, 2013; Rosenberg et al., 2021; Urry & Larsen, 2011) in trying to understand tourism, and more specifically the interaction between guide and tourist.

It is in the ski guides best interest to be able to give the clients the impression that they are though well of, that the ski guide trust them. At the same time, I do believe it is fair to say that the ski guides are just as concerned with getting the clients to trust them, think of them as

competent and someone who is in control of their well-being. I will now turn to literature related to tourism studies.

Guiding services generally take place in Goffmans' described frontstage, were guides "often have to perform at a specific moment to ensure that the service is informative, pleasurable and memorable to those consuming them" (Larsen & Meged, 2013). Understood through Goffman (1959) the stage where the actor performs is filled with "stage props", which is physical objects belonging to that specific stage. "A mobile stage provides a circumstance for tour guides to dynamically perform their roles and manage their impressions; however, few studies have empirically explored how this happens" (Zhu & Xu, 2021, p. 2). Edensor (2000) distinguished between an enclavic and heterogeneous space to explain how performance is affected by different stages. The enclavic being a fixed and formal space, with clear expectations on how the actor may perform, were as the heterogeneous space is informal and might invite for more non-touristic performances (Edensor, 2000). I believe that the ski guiding that are explored in my study takes place in an enclavic space, as the ski guides work as narrators of what the clients experience.

Larsen and Meged (2013) describes a guided tour as something that fits well within Goffmans' impression management, were the guide is expected to perform to the tourists in a way that "please, seduce or entertain, especially visually" (Larsen & Meged, 2013, p. 91). They elaborate, "the guide can be seen as performer that need to be able to read his audience and use charm, humour and wit to enact entertaining tales" (Larsen & Meged, 2013, p. 92). They further argues that guides always performed with "well-rehearsed" scrips, but that skilled guides manages to adapt their performance accordingly to the ever changing audience. The audience, being the tourist is a vital part of this performance and co-create the guided tours along with the guides (Larsen & Meged, 2013). They continue to argue that "tourists can be said to perform both in and out of tune with guide's script and the interaction order of guiding more broadly". They anchor this in Goffmans' interaction order which views the tourist and the guide as mutual performers in co-production on experiences.

The tour guides in Zhu and Xu (2021) study have to deal with multiple roles and they argued that Goffmans' theory provides a well-suited framework for examining how "tour guides manage their multiple roles with potential conflicts" (Zhu & Xu, 2021, p. 2). The "Tourists are indispensable co-creator (of the guiding) of guided tours" (Larsen & Meged, 2013, p. 89).

They continue to argue that "tourists can be said to perform both in and out of tune with guide's script and the interaction order of guiding more broadly". They anchor this in Goffmans' interaction order which views the tourist and the guide as mutual performers in co-production on experiences.

"To some extent the service encounter is always an asymmetrical power relationship" (Larsen & Meged, 2013, p. 91). Possible power conflicts in this setting is usually related to authority, which a guide must have over his clients for a given amount of time (Larsen & Meged, 2013). As a guide that authority can not be obtained or compared to that of a teacher and is less institutionalized. I believe that this issue is not inherently associated with ski guiding, as the prominent risk in traversing avalanche terrain tend to overshadow it. And the potential consequences of disregarding the guide's instructions can be life-threatening, in contrast to other described guided tours.

This chapter has reviewed literature relevant for my research topic. I began with presenting literature related to motivations for participation in adventure tourism. Then a review of literature on risk and guiding came after. To be more specific on the topic of ski guiding the most relevant literature was presented next. In the end I have utilized performance theory and especially Goffmans dramaturgical approach. The literature will be used in the analysis and discussion chapter. In the next chapter I account for my choice of method along with methodological considerations.

3 Methodology and methods

In this chapter I will explain the thesis' philosophical underpinnings, and my choice of method. Discussions around data collection, analysis and ethics will be addressed.

3.1 Paradigms and philosophy of science

"Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105), before choosing a specific research method, I will therefore first reflect on the underpinnings of my project. I thereby seek not to oversee the philosophy of science in my work, as it is claimed many researchers do (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Moses & Knutsen, 2012). By including both philosophical concepts and empirical research, I aim to conduct a high standard social research project (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

A paradigm can be understood as "the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). Which paradigm one relates to will vary dependent on the institution or geographical belonging of the individual (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified four prevailing paradigms in qualitative research: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism. Moses and Knutsen (2012) later presents to major paradigms or methodological positions in the social science: positivism and constructivism. As Moses and Knutsen (2012) way of describing the topic resonates with me, I choose to explore the difference between the two positions they present. What separates these two positions is the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions they argue. The following section addresses these questions.

The ontological distinction involves constructivists' doubt regarding the positivist's assumption of an objective reality. "What is the world really made of?" (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 4) is an ontological question a researcher must address. In the positivist position one believes "that there is a Real World [...] out there, independent of our experience of it, and that we can gain access to that World by thinking, observing and recording our experience carefully" (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 8). This ontological view can also be considered as objectivism (Clark et al., 2021). This real world hence exist independent of humans as social actors, and there is nothing we can do to affect reality, we can simply observe it. In the constructivist position one believes that reality is what the observer sees, and reality can only exist through the actors' interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). I agree with most

constructivist that there is a real world out there, but one has to separate the physical and social world. The social world is created through human interaction and language over time (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). Given this perspective, constructivists contend that acquiring an understanding of these socially constructed realms necessitates alternative approaches compared to those employed in natural sciences. This leads to the question of epistemology and how I think about knowledge production (Moses & Knutsen, 2012).

"What is knowledge?" (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 4) is an epistemological question. In the positivist position one is greatly concerned about uncovering the absolute truth, meaning that I as an researcher and the phenomenon I research "are assumed to be independent entities" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Ideally the researcher does not affect the object being studied and one obtain objectivity. In the constructivist position, Moses and Knutsen (2012, p. 201) argues "the truth isn't just out there. Knowledge about the social world is always knowledge-in-context; it is socially situated and has consequences". In the constructivist position one is satisfied with getting closer to towards reasonable explanations, and by acquiring more knowledge on a phenomenon that helps increase the total understanding of it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The last question separating the two positions is the question of methodology, which is how I as a researcher approach gaining the desired knowledge. The constructivist perceives the world through the lens of social construction. To reveal the socially formed patterns that constitute the world, researchers within this paradigm employ methods that enable the exploration of these patterns (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). Even though the two competing paradigms build on different set of beliefs, they can still apply the same method (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). They further argues "thus the focus of their inquiry (constructivists) is just as often the inquirer as it is the particular object of inquiry – because it is here that the roots of these patterns lie buried" (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 201).

In this section I have presented the two methodological foundations of naturalism and constructivism, mainly based on Moses and Knutsen (2012). I am inspired by the constructivist position, and this has guided the way I deal with the questions on ontology, epistemology and methodology. In the following section I explain my choice of method.

3.2 Qualitative methods

The idea for the topic and what I wanted to investigate about ski guides was how they perform safety and negotiate risk on behalf of their clients. Working with multiple research questions in relation to the topic, helped guide me in my choice of method (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003). Early in the process with my project I decided that I wanted to use a qualitative method. Qualitative methods are often related to a constructivist position in terms of philosophy of science (Clark et al., 2021). It also considered a good method to access data of the researched own spoken words and the meaning they attach to their experiences (Clark et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2016). After a short discussion on my choice of method I will discuss my data collection process, pilot study and sampling.

I did not start my project from a theory or theoretical framework, I simply began with a group of people that I wanted to study. Qualitative method is generally associated with an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research (Clark et al., 2021). My intention was to investigate the participants lived experience with little to no assumptions of what I would find (Patton, 2002). But as the study went on, I adopted a more abductive approach, which is not unusual and has gained increasing popularity (Clark et al., 2021). This approach allowed me to go back and forth between theory and my empirical data, in what became a more challenging phase than I imagined, which I will get back to in (3.3).

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is a much-used method of collecting empirical data in qualitative research (Alvesson, 2011; Charmaz, 2006; Clark et al., 2021; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Kvale, 2006). Interviewing a group of people can be a good method "to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (Patton, 2002, p. 340). Semi-structured interviews serve the purpose of exploring diverse experiences and individual perspectives that are relevant to addressing my research questions (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Interviews can be used in both qualitative research like mine and quantitative survey interviews, depending on the structure and development of questions (Clark et al., 2021).

I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with ski guides as my main source of data. It allowed me to have conversations and discussions with the interviewees. The main goal of my semi-structured interviews was to gain data that reflected the experiences of the ski guides,

while still being aware that these experiences have been reflected upon by the guides (Roberts, 2020), when I went on to the analysis process.

3.2.2 Autoethnography

This past winter I worked full time as a ski guide in Northern-Norway. It became a habit to discuss my project with colleagues, and I also started to write reflective notes. As a complement to the interviews, these notes adds auto-ethnographic data to the study. Auto-ethnography is according to Anderson and Austin (2012, p. 131) "particularly well-suited for the field of leisure studies" and it has "considerable untapped opportunity". Auto-ethnography as opposed to ethnography "allow" for the researcher as a complete member of the researched and emotionally embed the feelings of the researcher (Anderson & Austin, 2012; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013). By including evocative auto-ethnographic data "to facilitate emotional identification with the participant's experiences" (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012, p. 131) the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the interactions and performances embedded in the qualitative interviews.

3.2.3 Interview guide

As I started to prepare for the interviews, a project description with an interview guide was submitted to *Sikt* (Sikt, n.d.). The project got approved and smaller changes was made to the interview guide to make sure I asked well thought trough questions (See Appendix C). Developing the interview guide would help me guarantee that every ski guide interviewed follows the same fundamental lines of questioning (Patton, 2002).

I spent time making sure I had open-ended questions that would allow the informants to share their reality, but still on the topic of my study (Clark et al., 2021). I hoped to create an atmosphere for the informants which seemed more like a conversation, hoping this would make it easier for me to ask follow up question where it felt natural (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). What I eventually ended up with is more what Patton (2002) call the general interview guide approach. This involves addressing a couple themes that is to be explored in the interview. Not long before the I was about to do my pilot interview, I figured that making a preparatory note could help to get the informants into the right mood (See appendix B). As I knew all the informants prior to the interviews, I figured this would work. The idea behind this was that I wanted to get straight into the stories the ski guides had from their work. I was

also afraid that the interview setting would be awkward, and figured getting them to prepare would set them in the right state of mind. The next section I discuss my pilot interview.

3.2.4   Data collection

A pilot interview gave me the chance to test the interview guide, preparation note and see if the structured I had planned would work in relation to my research questions. Being a novice researcher, this felt as an important step to increase my skills as an interviewer (Clark et al., 2021). The pilot went better than expected and the preparation note worked out great. I felt that the interview got into a good rhythm straight away, and the informant had read and reflected on the preparation note, which led to him talking about situations at work immediately. The pilot interview later proved to be one of the most successful interviews and was included in the data analysis.

I conducted six more interviews. As I live in the town Bodø in Nordland County, traveling around to interview my informants was not an option, as they are spread out in Norway. After conducting the pilot interview face-to-face, I was worried that online interviews would not produce the same conversational feeling. This was lucky not the case. Collecting qualitative interviews with the help of technological communications has become a common way of doing interviews. (Clark et al., 2021). An uncertainty with video interviewing is connection and video quality. On that note, out of the five interviews done using video conference, I experienced a brief moment of disconnection in only one of the interviews. All interviews were done in Norwegian and only phrases used in the findings chapter were translated to English. The quotes are translated in the best possible way to not lose its meaning. Might be worth mentioning that all but the pilot interview was done straight after the winter season, this was strategically to make sure ski guiding was in the front of the mind of everyone. All participants agreed on the letter of consent (see appendix A) and data was stored according to the Sikt's regulations (Sikt, n.d.).

3.2.5   Sampling and research participants

In qualitative research purposive sampling is a normal way to gather informants, "a form of non-probability sampling involves strategically selecting information-rich units or cases" (Clark et al., 2021, p. 377). Being that I am a certified ski guide through *Nortind*, I had access to these guides through collegial and personal relationships with many of them. The number

of guides connected to the Nortind association is still quite limited, and without having an exact number I would guess there is around 150 associated guides. One of the reasons for

To assure anonymity as promised upon requiting the informants and according to Sikt (Sikt, n.d.) regulations, pseudonyms have replaced the informants' real names. As the community of ski guides associated with Nortind is rather small I share limited information about them. As the Table 1 show, three of the guides are full time employees in guiding companies, and four of them are freelance ski guides. Even though more and more guides get full time positions, freelance or part-time work is still very common in the industry. All my informants are male.

Table 1: Interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Employed/ freelance	Years of ski guiding experience
Paul	40-45	Freelance	15-20
Jim	40-45	Freelance	5-10
Marcus	40-45	Freelance	10-15
Alex	30-35	Employed	5-10
Kurt	35-40	Freelance	1-5
James	40-45	Employed	10-15
Adam	30-35	Employed	5-10

3.3 Data analysis

I used thematic analysis in this project. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) in data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This is a suitable way to conduct an analysis to a researcher who relates to a constructivist methodological position and " is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis can produce "a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus" (Clark et al., 2021, p. 537). The analyze followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six phases. The interviews were all transcribed manually and a total of 90 pages of transcripts was analyzed. Some notes and memos were written straight after the interviews, while transcribing and the coding process, suggested as a good way to start interacting with the data by Charmaz (2006).

I did a variation of line-by-line coding as Charmaz (2006) refer to as a vital part of analyzing interviews and as Braun and Clarke (2006) has as their phase 2 in the process. Even though a time-consuming task the coding process made sure I really got familiarized with the data. After coding every line, I went on to see if any themes emerged. This process was incredibly challenging, and I spent weeks going back and forth at this stage. When trying to write the analysis I quickly realized that this was not the right way going forward. To help me in my analysis I was recommended by my supervisor to look for a theoretical framework in which the data might be analyzed, hence the study turned more abductive (Clark et al., 2021). Performance theory, inspired by Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach caught my attention, and was familiar from previous assignments in the master's program.

Going back to my data I tried to review them in the light of Goffman's separation of front- and backstage performances. After much work I ended up with four themes: "preparation and pre-tour meeting", "guides impression management", "performing safety and risk management" and "creating good experiences", all considered as frontage performances. I could still use the initial coding done to begin with, but to make sure I did not miss anything important I re-read all my data.

My auto-ethnographic data was implemented in the analysis, hopefully working as a bridge between the reader and my informants. These notes were everything from notes on my phone taken after a day's work or unformal conversation with colleagues, to longer notes in word documents at my computer. In the notes I found many facets directly related to the themes that emerged from the seven interviews.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Multiple ethical questions have been addressed in the process of writing this thesis. Firstly, the standardized and mandatory task of following the universities' rules of data management was done. All the interview files were stored digitally in password encrypted data storage approved by the University for storing data. After transcribing, double checking the transcripts up against the recordings, they were all deleted immediately. The transcripts of the interviews are still stored in the Microsoft office package.

 A project description and interview guide was submitted to Sikt (Sikt, n.d.) (former, *Norsk senter for forskningsdata)* and got approved in December 2022. As part of this work, I made some considerations in relation to selection of informants and anonymity. To keeping the

informants anonymous no exact ages, locations and companies are mentioned. Additionally, I have made sure to leave out names of mountain areas and other information that could make it possible to identify any of the informants.

One question in relation to ethics that has gained much attention in this thesis is my relation to the informants and my own role as a ski guide. I personally knew all the informants before the interviews, and some I consider close friends. Ellis (2007) discuss this as a delicate balance, and one should be very careful in this process. I thought of this both in relation to the aim of the research questions and in how much details I share from the interviews in my analysis. To make sure I did not compromise my personal relations I spent a fair amount of time making sure the questions never were about what guides do wrong, or were it goes wrong. If anything, I wanted to document what these ski guides are good at, and then theories this so that they and other guide professions can learn from it to further develop their skillsets. Being that this guide community is quite small I have not shared information other than the fact that the guides are associated to Nortind and that they operate in Norway. This off course does limit the number of possible guides, which I made sure to disclose in the letter of consent.

3.5 Limitations

The qualitative interviews conducted in this study is limited by the number. I do believe that the findings in this study reflect to some extent what ski guides educated through *Nortind* do to perform safety. To gain further insight in what the ski guides do, ethnography would probably be a well-suited method, as it allows for real-time observations. There could be differences as to which part of Norway the guides work, as six out of seven informants primarily operate in Northern-Norway. Another limitation is gender, this study only includes male ski guides. Attempt were made to interview a couple of female ski guides, but this was not possible due to xx. I do not have an exact number, but I am sure Nortind members are over 90 per cent male. Although impossible for me to say how female ski guides perceive their jobs, it is fair to assume that they apply many of the tools to perform safety as male ski guides, when educated through Nortind. Client's point of view on what they believe ski guides do to enhance their safety and deal with their emotions would have given a more holistic view on the phenomena.

In this chapter I have introduced my methodological standpoint and my method for this research project. Practical and academic reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews as

my main source of data collection have been discussed. How I conducted and applied thematic analysis was also accounted for. In the following chapter I present my analysis, findings and discussion.

4 Guides front stage performances: findings and discussions

In this chapter, I will present and discuss my findings, based on the four partly overlapping themes that emerged through the thematic analysis: 1) planning and pre-tour meeting, 2) ski guides impression management to perform trust, 3) performing safety and risk management and 4) creating good experiences. I will discuss the four themes based on literature presented in Chapter 2 when teasing out how ski guides performed safety in avalanche terrain, what they did to manage and negotiate clients' perceptions of risk and how they increased safety by gaining clients' trust.

4.1 Theme 1: Planning and pre-tour meeting

In this section, I will present and discuss what the ski guides believed was important in their preparation to go ski touring with clients. Drawing on my knowledge of their Nortind qualifications, I was interested in how the guides felt about and how they did their pre-tour meetings with clients. I will start by reflecting on some of my own experiences.

The role of a ski guide is multifaceted and inherently intricate, defying standardized descriptions (Stewart-Patterson, 2014). Within the community of guides, to which I belong, a common practice when performing ski guiding is termed "onsight guiding". This type of ski guiding happen due to either clients' preferences for exploring new terrain or the logistical constraints that precluded ski guides from familiarizing themselves with the location prior to the excursion. As a ski guide, I have found myself leading clients in a mountain range or area I have not previously visited. This can pose a formidable challenge, compounding the array of stressors that already permeated the intricate decision-making processes that transpire in outdoor guiding. Hence thorough preparation is necessary.

During my initial tenure as a ski guide, I invested extensive hours in preparatory endeavors before each ski tour. My preparatory rituals entailed consultations with colleagues, perusal of available guidebooks, and meticulous scrutiny of the trip's staring point. Before some tours, I even embarked on nighttime reconnaissance of select portions of the route to prepare myself for the forthcoming guiding responsibilities. This, however, frequently resulted in sleepless nights and a self-perceived decline in my efficacy as a ski guide. Luckily, I now have a more comprehensive set of tools and wealth of experience, which have diminished these challenging aspects of the profession. Still, I have remained committed to rigorous pre-trip preparations, to ensure that I possess a well-defined understanding of the challenges ahead,

encompassing route selection, snow conditions, and, notably, the unique attributes and requirements of the group I am entrusted to guide.

Unpacking my ski guiding practices, it has become evident that even within the seemingly unstructured realm of ski guiding, where the primary objective is to ensure the safety and satisfactory of my clients, I adhere to a certain script, akin to what Larsen and Meged (2013) posited that the tour guides do. Although the context and inherent risks of a guided ski tour differ significantly from the sightseeing tours examined in their study, there are discernible parallels in the existence of a structured interaction order that also ski guides seek to uphold.

The ski guides in my study, were clearly concerned with being well prepared, transparent, and proactive in their approach. This became apparent in several ways, like Alex's reflections on guiding a group which was more risk tolerance than the average group: "if you end up in a situation like that, then you are already too late to handle it". He elaborated:

> Ultimately, the decision on the extent of our risk tolerance is something we determine well before we are in the situation. If we have done thorough preparation, it becomes much easier to manage when we are out in the field, having already established clear boundaries on what we permit and do not permit.

As an experienced ski and mountain guide James have taught numerous people in avalanche courses and different educational institutions. When addressing the planning phase, he stated that:

> The most important tool is planning, I mean, if you are prepared for the day, and you make conscious choices about what kind of terrain you can allow yourself to be in and what kind of terrain you do not want to be in … you never have all the answers if your clients askes you left or right. The final decision is always made out in the mountain. But fundamentally, a lot depends on how well you prepare. I can easily see the difference between well prepared skiers and not when I teach others.

All the ski guides talked about the significance of good planning and how to start off a guided ski tour with new clients. This finding resonates well with Stewart-Patterson (2014) where the ski guides spend a lot of time planning and preparing before meeting clients. Here, the ski guides worked with heli-skiing, which for obvious reasons requires some logistical planning that the ski guides in my study do not have to worry about. Other studies such as Løland and

Hällgren (2022) found that the ski guides almost seemed obsessed in the process of planning. The guides had "an overwhelming use of maps in electronic and/or paper format to make sense of the terrain, end ecological processes. Guides often sit on and off, for hours discussing routes and plausible trips" (Løland & Hällgren, 2022, p. 10). After some years as a ski guide, I can confirm that this is the situation. Spending hours with the map is an essential part of the preparation, before meeting the clients, and when you finally meet them for the first time. Indeed, the pre-tour meeting emerged as a pivotal component within the ski guides established routine and working framework.

I will now delve into several narratives shared by the ski guides on pertaining to these meetings. These accounts shed light on the timing and methodologies of these gatherings, illustrating their role in setting the stage for successful trips. However, they also brought to the fore instances where guides found themselves uneasy due to either the lack of time to conduct such meetings or their unpreparedness for it.

As an example, Marcus, who is an experienced ski guide almost got nostalgic when addressing the pre-tour meeting and how important he thought it was: "To sit down with the group and talk to the group the evening before. And just having, like, asking everyone what their names are and what their skiing background is, there is something about that.". The pre-tour meeting seemed like a vital part of getting to know clients which I can relate to. When skiing uphill it can be quite challenging to get to know all the clients as they are mainly walking in the tracks behind the guide (as illustrated in figure 3 below). Typically, as a guide you would not decide who walks straight behind you, unless there is a particular reason. Often the most talkative and/or concerned clients would prefer to walk straight behind the guide, both to get to know you, and to be updated on the decisions being made up front.

Figure 5: The author with a group in Lyngen Alps. Photo: Johan Bunner

Paul provided interesting insights into how he worked in the mountain. He emphasized the importance of the pre-tour meeting many times, especially in relation to choosing the right terrain "this is where the pre-tour meeting is such a valuable tool". Asking people about their skills and wishes could be a simple way to plan for the upcoming days of skiing. But it still was difficult to know at what level their skiing skills really was. Paul and I discussed this. I talked about a group of German skiers this past winter, who described themselves as mediocre skiers. Hence, I planned a super easy trip for the next day. As the day went on, I quickly realized that they were in fact skilled skiers. However, compared to other skiers in their favorite ski resort in Austria, they considered themselves mediocre. In this case, they were happy with easy terrain as they had no need to expose themselves for avalanche danger. I did have a proper pre-tour meeting with them, and they had a beautiful week of skiing. This shows the value of having sat down and have a proper pre-tour meeting, an as Paul adds: "We kind of use the first day to set some prerequisite and expectations in relation to what, what the next days will bring". By having that meeting before the first day of skiing, makes it easier to choose the right trip and terrain.

To Kurt, not having the chance to have a proper pre-tour meeting before venturing out into the mountain, felt like you missed an opportunity to create the best possible experience for his clients. Clarifying clients' expectations and wishes prior to a trip was important to him. He shared an experience from last winter, working with a bunch of other ski guides. The setting was like a ski festival, which often is synonymous with lots of people, little time for preparation and logistics related to transport. He was working alongside another guide with a group of 12 clients, which ended in a short day of skiing were the whole group turned around early. Even though the clients seemed happy, Kurt did not seem satisfied with the work:

> Michael: How do you think you could have prevented that situation?

> Kurt: I think it, it is often about preparation, right? However, in (destination xx), we had none of that. You essentially receive a group without any prior planning. Your trip is also predetermined for you, and all you can do is make the most of it.

Marcus shared a similar experience at a festival job: "In this case the clients where blissfully ignorant of what we had planned, there was never a pre-tour meeting together with the guest related to the plan for the next day". Both Marcus and Kurt experienced a loss of control over the script and their impression management. As we recall from earlier, impression management is vital for guides as this is essential for the guides performance (Larsen & Meged, 2013). The disruptions of the pre-meeting script might have caused Kurt to change his performance, as the first meeting with his clients was on the parking lot and not somewhere quite the night before the actual trip. Both guides downplayed the situations in the interviews, "It ended up being a good day" (Marcus), but it clearly bothered both.

Marcus also talked about how he liked to lower people's expectations, and how the pre-tour meeting was a good place to do this. He elaborated: "Well, it is very rare that clients say, 'no, that looks boring,'. I do not think I have experienced that. It is perhaps more common that two suggestions are presented by me, and they lean towards one". Marcus simply presented two options, which he believed were very safe trips. By doing this he talked about lowering stress for himself. Giving the clients the chance to choose, he avoided discussions about unrealistic objectives for a given day, thereby enabling himself to avoid terrain with avalanche hazard and clients lack of skills.

Adam talked about the need for a pre-tour meeting for making sure that the guide and clients shared the same idea of what was going to happen, and for making sure that he was responsible if something happened. He also claimed that "it can feel a bit banal at times" and "it becomes just a ting one has to do". But he later talked about the benefits of being true to one's way of doing things and how it eventually could lead to better decisions while skiing. As I had spoken to a couple of the other guides before Adam, I asked him if he had experiences situations where there was no time for a pre-tour meeting. Adam had: "There is simply to many other noises around, so it kind of creates a momentum which makes it hard to hold the group back, they just want to get going". Noises came from other groups, cars at the parking lot and eager clients wanting to be on their way up the mountain. This loss of control, or again, loss over the script was a stressor to Adam.

As a ski guide, I can relate to much of what the informants shared when talking about the planning and pre-tour meeting. In the interview with Kurt, I told him about a situation where I had gotten a group of clients on a short notice and did not have time to have a proper pre-tour meeting. Having your rhythm broken, I honestly believed affected the quality of my work that day. I said: "And there I stood the first day, thinking, there is something missing, this is a setting I am not used to". As I can only guess the other guides motivation for this job, for me, having the time to relax and enjoy the scenery and skiing together with my clients is vital. And with little preparation this became harder. Often this would lead that I "take it down a notch" in relation to terrain choice and other matters.

The exact location of the pre-tour meetings did not seem to be important, still a quiet place where the guides could have a private conversation with their clients was preferred. The idea behind the meeting was that professional ski guides did not simply offer guide services, in the sense of leading the way, and then having the clients blindly follow. Rather the idea was that through inviting the clients to participate, they became co-creators of the tour (Rokenes et al., 2015), increasing their value and experience of hiring a ski guide (Nortind, n.d.).

The findings in this section align with van Riper et al. (2016) which argued that having proper pre-tour meetings is a great way for guides to increase trust and influence their client's future risk-perception. "People don't know what to expect" according to Marcus, and hence ski guides need to take the opportunity to steer these expectations in the pre-tour meeting. Both increased safety and the clients' experiences. As the van Riper et al. (2016) was most

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concerned with how clients felt safer after proper pre-tour meetings, I would argue that my data indicates that this also applies to the ski guides. The ski guides felt more comfortable with the clients and their choices of where to ski, when they had the chance to speak to clients prior to the trip.

Regarding Løland and Hällgren (2022), there were some interesting parallels to my results. Also, the ski guides in my study, socially embedded themselves to make sense of their clients. Having a proper pre-tour meeting with clients to figure out their goals, expectations, risk tolerance and wishes (Løland & Hällgren, 2022) was considered a norm among the studied group of guides. This aligns with my guides, which is not surprising as the guides in both studies were educated through Nortind.

The ski guides used pre-tour meeting to control the interaction order, and to make sure they were in charge of the script, just as the guides in Larsen and Meged (2013). The strategy used by Marcus of presenting two different trips, based on what he knew about his clients, could explain this need to stay in control of the script. Another facet of this, is the ability to manage clients expectation through proper pre-tour meetings. As for the guides in Heimtun's (2016) who worked with the unpredictable Northern Lights, my ski guides also deliberately lowered client's expectations. They did this both to increase clients' satisfaction and for safety reasons, as I will get back to in the following themes.

Drawing on my own experience as a ski guide, I can readily empathize with the experiences recounted by the interviewed guides, both the positive and the challenging aspects. I am intimately familiar with how I prefer to orchestrate pre-tour meetings. As I mentioned in the personal story, I recounted in Chapter 1; I firmly believe that the outcome of that situation might have taken a different course had I not engaged in a pre-tour meeting with the client. By attentively listening to the clients' desires, aspirations, and past experiences, I gained valuable insights into his expectations. Furthermore, by offering my candid assessment of the prevailing condition, I believe we arrived at a mutually satisfying arrangement that left both parties content with the decision.

In this section I have explored the ski guides need for preparation and their reflections around the pre-tour meeting. The findings was discussed in relation to existing literature on adventure tourism and ski guiding and I have demonstrated alignments. In addition to this, I have also illustrated that ski guides are concerned with managing expectations and setting the stage for

safe adventure, and that they conduct pre-tour meetings to control the script (Goffman, 1959). The interaction order is hence dependent on the pre-tour meeting for the guides to feel that they are managing the stations as they deem best.

4.2 Theme 2: Ski guides impression management to perform trust

The ski guides cared a great deal about how their clients perceived and interacted with them. After reading the transcripts numerous times, trust, or how the guides managed their impressions to gain clients trust emerged as a theme. It might sound a bit strange that people pay for a ski guide's service without trust in the guide's competence. However, as a young ski guide, I experienced having clients and even working with other guides who did not have trust in my competence and decision making. In this section I will present some of the stories and scripts the guides used to gain trust and later how this led to easing the guides decision making process. Most informants addressed this; some went more in depth than others. Paul openly shared his inner thoughts with me, which is where I will start.

Paul reflected on an experience while guiding a group on a ski and sail trip a few years ago. This is a concept where one uses a sailboat as transport and accommodation, the guide normally lives with the clients onboard. From one tour, Paul shared how during the third day of their excursion, the group of six encountered challenging weather conditions and high avalanche risk. To ensure safety, Paul's plan was to ski within the forested area, away from the more hazardous terrain above the three line. However, one of the clients, who displayed considerable skiing skills, appeared drawn to a specific slope. Paul had also recognized the slope and "wanted to ski there as well". Despite the client and his own enthusiasm, Paul recognized that skiing on that slope would be unwise due to the presence of avalanche danger. Understanding the potential risk involved, Paul made the decision to prioritize the groups' safety and redirected their path, firmly stating "Not today".

Recognizing the one client's enthusiasm for the slope, despite the hazardous conditions, Paul had a one-on-one conversation with him. In this conversation, Paul acknowledged the client's appreciation of the slope's allure but explained: "You are right, that slope does look magical. However, with the high winds and numerous unknown factors today, I cannot confidently assure your safety if we were to ski there.". Although the client was described as understanding and receptive to reasoning, Paul still felt uneasy about not yet gaining this client complete trust.

Prior to the trip, this group had already expressed their concerns about safety, which provided some reassurance to Paul when making the decision where to ski. In this situation, it might have been tempting for him to accommodate this client's desire to ascend and ski the slope while the rest of the group waited. Paul acknowledged at first that, it may have seemed like a viable option, with the thought that everything would likely go smoothly. However, almost immediately, Paul confronted the uncertainty, questioning, "But what if something went wrong? How would I have handled the situation?" This highlights the guide's responsibility and the potential consequences of an unforeseen avalanche or other risks associated with skiing that slope. Paul gained this groups trust by considering that a potential accident would ruin that trust.

Paul is clearly concerned with maintaining the clients trust and avoid accidents. What he did could be similar to the three strategies of how guides handle heterogeneous groups, as suggested by Røkenes and Mathisen (2017). Paul managed *individualization* by acknowledging the client's wish to ski a certain line. Paul *improved resources* by being open about his own perception of risk. He addressed the avalanche conditions and his uncertainty with it and let the clients participate in his decision-making. And lastly, Paul *expanded the tour goal* strategy right from the beginning, by suggesting they ski in lower elevation, rather than going for a summit. I would argue that these strategies were not used by the guides to choose and conduct trips according to the client's perception of risk, as Røkenes and Mathisen (2017) suggested, but they help guides build trust with their clients.

Paul continued to talk extensively about how he gained clients trust, having them trusting him with making decisions on their behalf. Paul struggled to find the words in this part of the interview but tried to explain how he gained trust through displaying his knowledge in a humble way. When talking about how conditions can change at a given point of a trip he explained "These are factors people don't look at or take into consideration, while we (ski guides) have the opportunity to predict those things to a much greater extent". Paul continued "but you have to bond with the group, to gain a common understanding of the environment we are currently in". Thus, building and establishing trust clearly proved vital to Paul to facilitate for a safe and enjoyable skiing trip. Moreover, getting the clients to understand the reasoning behind his decisions was important. I can relate to this, simply making decisions on other people's behalf, when the consequence of failure potentially is fatal, is a huge

responsibility. As a guide you are obligated to inform your clients of the hazards ahead, even though you have a group of enthusiastic clients who just wants to ski "that" beautiful looking slope of powder. Hence, gaining your clients trust, to make safe decisions was key.

Paul also recalled a different situation where a guest unexpectedly asked about the safety from avalanches in their current location. Initially, Paul was taken by surprise by the question as the terrain seemed harmless. However, upon seeing the genuine fear in the guest's face, which clearly perceived the situation as dangerous, Paul quickly turned around to assess the surroundings again. Realizing that there was indeed no risk of avalanches, Paul reassured the guest by confidently stating that they were completely safe. This simple reassurance was sufficient to ease the guests concerns, and she proceeded with her activities, searching through her backpack. The latter situation displayed a sort of complete trust in the guide. As Paul explained it, she did not show signs of insecurity before or after the episode, but clearly the client had perceived the situation as dangerous. The stories shared by Paul has shown in depth how he works with gaining trust and using that trust to perform safety.

Marcus talked about the value of having an easy first day to get to know the group, gain their trust and set the expectations for the upcoming days of ski touring:

> Well, I think that when you meet new clients and you are in an area where you can do some familiar things, or set the standard, you do not need to set the bar extremely high on the first day you meet new clients, both for your own sake and for the clients'. They may not necessarily have any expectations since they do not know what to expect, unless you sit down with them, create an itinerary, show them the map as one ideally should do.

The situation Marcus described was from a job in which he had little time for preparation, and a proper pre-tour meeting was difficult to conduct. He added that he could not remember any negative reactions from clients about this strategy. This shows how Marcus managed the script and his impression management, which originated from a wish to produce safe and good adventures. When having little time for preparation, Marcus chose easier terrain, thereby familiarizing himself with the group. Moreover, as a guide he needed to trust his clients, which was something other informants also spoke of. Marcus could do more challenging trips with clients, but it has to be done the "right" way. He argued, that taking clients into avalanche terrain "is something that can be arrange with a guide in a customized manner

through a dialogue that begins in advance" as opposed to just meeting a group in the parking lot, and then figure things out on the fly. Having the chance to familiarize with the group members personalities and skills seemed crucial for Marcus, before bringing clients into avalanche terrain. Again, the meeting before the trip itself was mentioned as important part of the ski guides way of establishing trust. This pointed to the overlapping of the identified themes.

I instantly think of intuition and pattern by as Stewart-Patterson (2014) who found this to be a vital part of how the ski guides made decisions in avalanche terrain. The way Marcus talked about bringing clients into more challenging terrain was probably based on prior knowledge and experience with other groups and which level of trust he felt was necessary to have enough margin of error. Again, I would like to add the notion of scripts and how the ski guides felt uneasy if a situation did not play out according to the script.

Alex felt he always had people's trust from the beginning. He liked to ski in steep terrain, and most clients who hire him knew this, hence: "there is never a doubt that I am more extreme than the participants". Alex thought this made it easier for him than for other guides in gaining client's trust. He kept coming back to this, as I continued to probe for different experiences. A common situation I have experienced multiple times, is that clients want to ski something steeper, but that I did not feel comfortable with the snowpack or other factors, which led to me choosing an easier option. Alex has also experienced this: "Well, even if I do not do it, there is a reason for it. I think people who are on a trip with me go around with the thought that, uh, what we are doing is the best we can achieve.". It seemed as if he felt that his reputation eased his decisions on where to ski. It is important to recognize the clients' feelings of getting value for their money. This notion amongst the clients that we were doing "the best" possible trip was an interesting factor in the equation, and will vary a lot, based on the clients' preconception of what they were about to participate in. As Alex and I discussed later, some people were simply just happy to be skiing in Northern-Norway and did not care if we skied this or that mountain. On the other hand, other clients compared the current trip with others on the other side of the valley, or even just 100 meters to the left of where we were. It all came down to customer satisfaction and making sure that your clients got value for money.

I can relate to this in so many ways. I had multiple groups the last winter in which I gained their trust right from the beginning, which made arguing for what was the best option today so much easier. As I said during the interview with Alex:

> I believe that if you are perceived as more risk-seeking than them, it becomes easier to engage in less extreme activities with them, and they feel that it is exciting enough. I do not know why; it is one of those strange psychological things.

"Right now, I do not trust in you as a guide" Adam recalled one of his clients said in the pre-tour meeting. "Well, that took me by surprise, but did give us the chance to talk about it" was Adam response to this direct message. The skepticism apparently came from a previous experience with guided trips, where the client had not felt safe enough. Adam said multiple times he was glad this came up the night before the trip. It gave him the chance to address the uncertainty and figure out what made the client so skeptical, and possibly a bit scared as well.

> Michael: Were you extra careful then?
>
> Adam: Well, it did make me a bit more conscious, and I was informed the evening before, so I was somewhat prepared. I did spend extra time, even though I usually involve the clients in route finding and what we are doing and what precautions we should take for that particular day. But on that day, there was indeed that extra, extra focus, and I spent a lot more time on it, which did help. But I have never had anyone say so honestly that they did not trust me.

The whole situation was solved by Adam by not neglecting the client and by making sure everyone felt seen and taken care of. By being transparent and sharing his knowledge, he gained their trust. The result of this became a nice day out skiing with a group of six clients and ended in them booking him for a whole weekend next year.

Getting a chemistry with clients, getting them to like you is important for their trust building, according to Marcus. Being an experienced ski guide, he had multiple returning groups every year. He described it as almost being out skiing with friends sometimes. Still, he was the one with the final word in terms of route finding and judging avalanche safety. James mentioned similar dynamics: "it is much easier if people like you" and for that to happen, you should "try to avoid being someone other than yourself". James added that a huge advantage in terms of gaining trust was having clients over multiple days. Then the guide had the time to really

get to know people and get them to "follow" your ideas and plans, according to James. Not only was this relevant for building trust, but it could also be important for guides to avoid fatigue and increase stress. Mackenzie and Kerr (2013) argued that the guide – client interactions involve emotional labor, which eventually can lead to issues regarding safety. I believe there was a connection between questions of trust and safety in the way my ski guides performed safety. If a guide felt that the clients trusted him, he would have more energy to spend on issues related to evaluating risk and safety.

Alex also explained how the clients needed to gain his trust rather than the other way around. As he is known to be guide for skiing steep lines, he claimed that this risk-seeking behavior was not something a client can just buy. They needed to "earn" his trust over days before he would bring them out into steeper terrain. I do not think this was unique for Alex, but he was the one to voice this. I also get confidence in my clients by having them over multiple days, seeing how they move on their skis, how they handle their gear and how they ski. Most importantly, my confidence is based on if they follow my instructions or not. I have had good, capable skiers in good physical conditions, which I have not brought to avalanche terrain, simply because I did not trust them. However, I can just as easily think of the opposite. One of the last days of this season, I took a group of people straight into avalanche terrain of a summit, without ever seeing them ski before. A combination of the way they walked uphill, other guides who had them on trips before and really good conditions made me feel perfectly comfortable with that decision.

The guides shared willingly their ways of gaining trust with their clients, and even how the clients gained their trust. In the examples shared by both Paul and Adam, they emphasized the importance of being transparent as a ski guide. By teaching the clients what you as a guide are paying attention to in terms "of danger signals along the way, they develop a more focused and flexible mindset, which is necessary to cope with dangerous situations." (Løvoll & Einang, 2022, p. 101). I do believe that my ski guides in many ways performed transparent guiding as Løvoll and Einang (2022) describes it.

The ski guides spend a lot of energy on gaining their clients' trust, and trust in their clients. According to Mackenzie and Kerr (2012, p. 133): "His expertise, humor, and thorough responses created a sense of trust and confidence that convinced us to register for the trip". The appearance of the guide and his impression management clearly played a vital role for

their decision to sign up for this trip. The same is the case in my study but understanding it from the ski guides' point of view, not the clients.

In this section I have showed what the ski guides believe was important to gain clients trust, and why it was important. Reciprocal trust between ski guides and clients can lead to safer adventures as the guides have more energy to concentrate on becoming ecologically embedded, as argued by Løland et al. (2023)

4.3 Theme 3: Performing safety and risk management

Performing safety on behalf of paying clients is a responsibility I highly respect. As introduced in Chapter 1, ski touring is associated with avalanche risk and other hazards. It is therefore important to address the uncertainty guides feel when taking clients in avalanche terrain. I expressed this in my interview with Paul when we spoke about making decisions out in the field:

> What I think enables a guide to make good decisions is that we delay the decision as long as possible, because we want as much information as possible. Whereas clients may sometimes want you to say, 'yes, we are going up that mountain today'. But then you learn methods to suggest that maybe reaching the summit doesn't have to be the goal for that day. Safe and good snow conditions is a classic selling point. But I do feel the pressure sometimes to deliver a summit experience or be confident when I present the plan.

Making that final decision on whether or not a certain slope is safe to ski or deciding on an object for the day could be challenging and colored by the wish to satisfy your clients. Sitting behind the desk writing this, I find it fascinating that I still struggle with these questions, since it is obvious that you first and foremost want to bring everybody down safely. But having the wish to satisfy your clients, and the rush of adrenaline that skiing great snow can give you, I know there will never be situations where I can be a hundred percent objective. In the following section, the informants' experiences, and strategies on performing safety and managing risk is the topic.

Overlapping with theme one, Paul highlighted the significance of thorough preparation, including having meaningful discussions with clients before the trip. This preparatory work played a crucial role in facilitating the decision-making process when faced with challenging

conditions or situations where one or more clients might not be capable of handling a certain task. They might not be good enough skiers or able to follow instructions on where it was ok to ski and not. In such instances, Paul explained that rather than explicitly stating that a client was unable to perform the task, he opted to express discomfort with the situation. Rather than telling a client that they were not good enough for a certain task, Paul managed their emotional expressions and presented a more socially acceptable reason for the decision. By doing so, Paul maintained a cohesive group dynamic while prioritizing safety and the comfort of all participants. Paul shared one situation where he and another guide had a group of skiers, with one participant clearly not capable of skiing the slope they had planned. In order to avoid a situation in which he demoralized the client in front of the group he took him aside and told him: "Judging from how you have skied so far, you are actually not good enough to join the next section, but we will give you the opportunity to say yourself that you do not want to join the next part" and added "but you cannot join". They then went back to the group and decided. The situation worked itself out nicely, according to Paul.

Jim also highlighted the importance of preparation as part of avoiding situations were clients' desires and demands did not align with their skills and prevailing conditions. The initial meeting with a new group was vital and "when you meet them and explain the conditions, if we talk about snow, you use your knowledge about the different avalanche problems and explain why today is the day to avoid a specific exposure or slope". The clear confidence in his approach suggested there may be valuable insights regarding the way Jim interacted with clients and effectively communicated safety considerations. It indicated a level of expertise and trust in his own decision-making process. The interaction style and the ability to convey information and build understanding with the clients played a relevant role in creating a positive and safe guiding experience.

Both Paul and Jim were projecting what Løland et al.'s (2023) ski guides also did. Paul ws anticipating what was going to happen if that client was allowed to continue skiing and took action. But just as the ski guides in the Løland et al. (2023) study, Paul also doubted the decision and postponed if for as long as possible. Jim used his knowledge and ability to anticipate how the conditions would be, to be proactive and open with his clients, saying already in the pre-tour meeting what would be possible and not to ski.

One strategy Jim used to mitigate risk was to take the focus away from risk-taking and specific objectives. He did this by gaining their trust through good conversations and bonding over common interests. Making sure people had a good time and enjoyed themselves was an effective tool, according to Jim. What he essentially did, was to take control over the script, and steer client's expectations, rather than letting them build up expectations he or the trip could not meet. Jim gave an example of a client this winter, which he identified as a potential risk-seeker, but by getting along with him and making sure he felt seen, he never even asked questions about where and what they were skiing.

> It is quite easy, that is what happened with (group in location xx), right? Because we got into some topics that interested both of us, and then it is like the client completely forgets where we are going, he just follows along, and he enjoys himself. Afterwards, he thinks it is great because he had a nice trip. It is quite easy to achieve in ski guiding because you spend a lot of time with the clients, and you are close to them in a way. It quite different from, for example, climbing. And of course, if there are questions about why we are going here or not, then you have to be proactive. (Jim)

This was a good example of how building trust with a client could be a very effective tool for managing clients' expectations and risk willingness. I would argue that this can vary a lot depending on which type of personality the guide has.

Jim was often preoccupied with not being caught off guard by his clients. He mentioned situations were clients suddenly started questioning the terrain, snow stability or ask questions that he was not prepared to answer, due to him being preoccupied with other matters. This could be a situation where the clients lose faith in the guide, if I cannot answer quickly and good enough, Jim claimed. Having this in mind while enjoying yourself was about being smart, he added. I related to this, and talked about working fulltime or parttime as a ski guide as a major difference in this regard. As I have felt this to be easier when I work outdoors all winter long, as opposed to working part-time. It is argued by Løvoll and Einang (2022, p. 106) that: "In transparent guiding, the ability to stay ahead of your guests by assessing weather signals, terrain, the guests themselves, and so on, is absolutely essential". Jim forgot to stay ahead and updated, and claimed this could happened more often earlier in his career. Transparent guiding is something that is emphasized a lot during the Nortind education. But

this ability or situational awareness that is required when ski guiding can only be achieved through training, according to my experiences as a ski guide.

On a job this winter, Jim said he had marked a point on the map for a trip he was doing as a crucial section, which might require some extra safety measurements. In this and other instances, he strategically planned his breaks so that he could go a bit ahead of the group to assess the terrain and snow stability. Jim argued for this method: "I believe it can be smart" and adds "it gives me a little breathing room" and that allowed him to make his decision without the influence of the clients wishes. Jim claimed that people are normally so preoccupied with their food and drinks that they did not even notice that he was three minutes ahead of them. This tactic was not uncommon, yet my ski guides to different degree expressed that they were influenced by the guests wishes.

Moreover, when it came to snow stability, terrain management and so, as a guide you wanted to judge that as objectively as possible. If you had six clients right next to you on their toes, eagerly to ski down a slope, it could be hard to say no, even though your professional judgment says so. The alternative as Jim also presented was to bring the group in on the decision making. He discussed the topic a bit with himself and claimed that experience in the field and knowing your clients was an important factor in how transparent he chose to be. But if he did not have a "feel" for the group, he believed it was easier to just make the risk assessment by himself. Larsen and Meged (2013) addressed this in relation to how tourists' and guides performed together to co-create guided tours. When Jim got the feeling that including the clients in the decision, they would perform outside the script for that given day. I also believe Jim was interested in maintaining an impression in front of his group, by actively giving himself the space to make the decision by himself, he made sure to maintain a certain impression for his group, as other studies also have indicated (Zhu & Xu, 2021)

James, an experienced ski guide addressed how he performed safety in avalanche terrain, and explained how he used intuition and how he shared his opinion with clients:

> James: I have had several occasions where I have turned back. I have told the clients that we are going to do something, and in the end, I say no, and change my mind. So, I have turned back several times based on gut feeling, but I have never skied something based on gut feeling, there is a difference there.

Michael: But when you have turned back based on your gut feeling, have you just been straightforward about it with your clients?

James: Yes, and I probably did not do that the first few years (of guiding) because I was not confident enough. But over the years, I have become., it does not happen often anymore, but I have become more confident in just saying, 'okay, I have been doing this for so long, and when you feel that things are heading in the wrong direction, you have to listen to that.' And people respect that.

When James said "skied something" it was related to skiing in avalanche terrain. This response to what one could call gut-feeling was also explored by Stewart-Patterson (2014, p. 259), here the ski guides "turned to more conservative choices when they experienced general feelings of uncertainty and low levels of confidence". This was also addressed in Løland et al. (2023) which indicates that ski guides should listen to intuition when something "feels off". I have experienced the same myself multiple times. In the story I shared in the Chapter 1, I failed to talk my client out of skiing a slope with words, and had to dig a snow pit to convince him that it was unwise to ski the last part up to the summit. Today I believe I have more experience and words to describe my gut-feeling, just as James told me.

Alex emphasized how much easier it was to make the right decision out in the mountains when he had a clear idea of what the day would bring based on the pre-tour meeting: "And if one has done good preparations, it is so much easier to deal with decision making in the mountain, when there is an agreement on what is ok and not" between the guide and the clients. I have experienced how having a plan that everyone agreed upon ahead of the trip, but when in the outdoors the group dynamics changed, in particular when the clients' skills differed greatly. This then eventually affected my route choices and decisions. Alex shared how he dealt with groups with different wishes, skills and so on, giving an example of a group of six:

> I use humor to lighten the situation, but often I just tell people straight out "Yes, you could have gone down there (steep section), and I could have done it, but here we are now, if you want to do that specific slope you got to come back and book me for a private trip". And people normally accept that. But if people want to do something I don't want to do, I always have, hm, yes manage to kind of say "no, we are not doing that" and people accept that, kind of.

Alex smiled when telling me about how he handled these situations and appeared confident. He was not scared of what impression the client had of him, if he could safely take the whole group through the day. Personally, I have found such situations uncomfortable.

Another way of dealing with clients of different skill levels could be embarrassing, according to Paul. Moreover, he also talked about this as a challenge both in relation to safety and also for securing satisfied customers. Paul linked this to transparent guiding: "The most difficult part of transparent guiding is when you have one group member who clearly lacks the necessary skill level". Telling clients that they were not good enough might ruin the guide's impression management and come across as rude. Hence Paul used different strategies to avoid such confrontations:

> It is difficult to solve these situations, because then I just have to take it upon myself and say that 'no, today I am not feeling it, I don't want to do it' (skiing a slope). And then I often feel guilty on behalf of the rest of the group, and I feel bad about lying to them.

He was, thus, faking a bad feeling to avoid telling the weaker client that he/she was slowing down the group or disenabling them of maximizing the skiing potential. Another strategy he used was:

> I ski further than necessary, and there are no breaks when it would actually have been appropriate to have one. So, I make sure to wear that person down a bit. When I see that they are getting close to hitting the wall, I start talking about, 'what do you think about tomorrow? I was thinking about going to that summit over there: it looks really nice'. And that breaks them a bit, and they just say; 'No, I am satisfied with today'".

In one sense, Paul was cruel toward his client, in another, the pressure he felt towards delivering a good experience to the other five clients in the group made up for this strategy.

Jim claimed that in situations where he felt the risk was too high, this was due to him and not the clients wishes. "I feel that when they have hired a guide, they expect to have extraordinary experiences and that I need to push the limit a bit further." In my experience, feeling this pressure from clients is not that uncommon. One reason Jim mentioned was related to the clients' equipment, the way they talked about themselves or other non-verbal factors. Before he finished his guide certification, this was a bigger problem than now, but after getting the

ski guide diploma he felt more confident. Jim then shared a story about a situation he had a couple of years ago. They were on their way over a mountain, when one of the clients slipped and slid a couple hundred meters down a gully. The client stopped and was unharmed, and Jim managed to bring the rest of the group safely down and gathered the group. "It went well, and the clients took it with a smile. But it did not go well, that was not ok, it was way over the top". Jim was clearly stunned by the whole situation. But he expressed gratitude now, seeing that everyone was ok, it became a valuable learning experience for him as a guide in creating good experiences.

James argued that the key to making safe decisions was in the preparation and having a good system to arrive at the correct decisions. This was related to the general way of making decisions as a professional ski guide in Norway, where we pay attention to a set of certain criteria, to be able to simplify this complex decision making (Landrø 2021).

In this section I have shared how the ski guides performed safety in avalanche terrain. As mentioned, theme 3 overlap with theme 1 and 2 in regards to how the pre-tour meetings and trust building affects safety in the mountain. All the ski guides emphasized the importance of good preparation and pre-tour meetings, as a vital part of allowing themselves to have the best possible chance of creating safe ski tours. Having the trust of clients also provided them with confidence to concentrate on the prevailing conditions rather than being too focused on creating social connections.

The analysis also provided data which underpins the findings in Løland et at. (2023), I relation to how the ski guides anticipated what would happen both to the conditions and clients. I would argue that I have more data on the social aspects of the anticipation and that the ski guides were very observant as to avoid getting into challenging situations later in the day or that week. By being proactive and telling clients that their either are not skilled enough for a specific task or that the conditions are too risky, they performed safety.

4.4 Theme 4: Creating good experiences

Creating memorable experiences is the cornerstone of any guide's work. For ski guides, this task involved a delicate balance between accommodating the clients' preferences and skills while considering the current conditions and safety, thus theme 4 overlaps with theme 3. While there may be more dimensions to this topic than my research has uncovered, it was clear that guides hold varying perspectives on what constitutes a good or unforgettable

experience. In this section, I will share some insights from the informants regarding how they went about crafting exceptional experiences and what they believed was crucial in achieving that goal.

This theme emerged consistently in my interviews, when we discussed handling people's risk tolerance which often led to conversations about managing expectations and creating positive experiences. Also here, I can relate to what the guides shared, and we talked about. Essentially, effective management of people's expectations, coupled with successful pre-tour meetings, significantly reduced the likelihood of conflicts with clients regarding their desires and wishes for the ski tour.

Marcus talked about how he liked to present the trip to the guests:

> I believe it is a fine balance in a way, to put all the cards on the table right away. You can sit down with a map an tell them about the possibilities on a mountain, different variations, but I do believe, or I prefer at least, to have a simple option which is safe, a low-risk alternative you can say. Or a type of trip that I can do with low shoulders and then step it up during the trip.

This is an example of how a guide withhold information form clients in order to manage their expectations, which was voiced in many of the interviews. In a way one of the easiest ways to manage people's expectations was to "undersell" the trip you were about to do. This did not mean that the guide withhold all the possibilities that a specific trip might contain. At the same time, Marcus described a common thing which was to keep as many options as possible open and having multiple choices from in the planning phase, and sort of extending the planning phase into the trip itself. Løland and Hällgren (2022) mention this as a part of ski guides routine in deciding which terrain to ski in. The northern lights guides in Heimtun's (2016) also undersold the trips prior to departure on their tours. The ski guides in my study hence followed similar scripts. Not only was it smart to create good experiences, but it was probably preventive in avoiding committing to a certain terrain, on a day where the ski guide might be uncertain about the avalanche conditions.

"I have never experienced clients being dissatisfied", Marcus said, referring to what he believed was a sort of recipe for a good experience. He explained that almost no matter what the clients expected before a trip, he felt quite confident he could give them a good

experience. It did not have to include steep or exposed terrain. Rather it was the search for powder snow that was the holy grail of ski touring. When Marcus was able to find powder snow, at a low enough terrain angle that his clients could ski with confidence, he never had any complaints.

Jim talked a lot about how he liked to take the focus away from exposed skiing, and how conversations were essential in creating trust and building a good relationship with his clients. Further he argued that getting that connection with clients helped create good experiences. A tool he used was to teach the clients a thing or two underway. The transfer of skills and knowledge simultaneously increased the clients' experiences. Also, the way the guide used element of surprise, enriched the experiences, he argued:

> I am a fan of having good conversations with clients. Not necessarily about risk or no risk in terms of what we should or should not do, but having a good conversation where we just flow up the mountainside, enjoy the hike, and focus less on what to do or not to do. Instead, we are just out there, having a good time, and getting great experiences with the people we are on the trip with.

This takes me back to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (Cater, 2006). Jim voiced this theory multiple times during our interview. Having guided with him, I have seen this played out. Using his social skills to connect with clients on a personal level, he managed to control the performance and thereby creating good experiences for his clients. The flow he talked about was about speed, adrenaline, or anything extreme. It was the flow of simply being out Kurt talked about how exposing clients and himself to avalanche terrain could lead to a sense of mastery that they would not be able to achieve on their own. To Kurt, it was important to facilitate for such experiences. Further he added that hitting the sweet spot in terms of challenging your clients and creating a good experience was about to "push the clients just through that self-imposed barrier they have, then they will leave that trip with a sense of mastery they would have never achieved on their own.". This again could lead to the clients choosing you as their guide the next time they were looking to go for a ski tour. He also talked about "just being out there" and how this in many cases was enough for his clients.

Adam introduced some interesting ideas about the use of time, and the increase in risk when things take longer than expected. A very well-known fact for guides, yet not mentioned by any of the others. "More does not always give a better experience or memory of the day, it

can rather tip it over" making the clients too tired and so forth. I related Adam here and gave some examples from this past winter's guiding in (destination xx) during incredible conditions of powder and stable snow. I shared how I had to hold back because I got too enthusiastic, the group was not skilled enough to ski what I wanted to do.

As for all the other guides, Adam talked about the planning phase and first meeting with new guests. His general impression was that the clients were aware of avalanche risk and did not want to take much risk. One client commented in the orientation meeting "we do have kids and family at home and are going home to them again. We are concerned with not taking too much risk and exposure for uncertainty". Cater (2006) argued that people participating in adventure tourism is actually interested in thrill and excitement, rather than the actual risk. This resonates well with what Adam said his clients are interested in, which is good skiing with friends, in beautiful nature.

Marcus shared that last winter he got a request from a lady, who wanted to order a surprise trip for her boyfriend. Through the booking process he got to know them a bit better:

> I asked about their skiing experience, and how much they had skied this winter. And they had skied over 30 days this winter, skied a lot from lifts and been to the Alps. As I could read out of our correspondence, these guys were good skiers, or at least above average.

The lady further told Marcus that her boyfriend liked steep skiing and it would be nice if they could do something in the steeper section, and she was also set to join the trip. Upon arrival the boyfriend learned about the surprise, and Marcus talked to them both the night before to doble check that they were ready. Marcus had gotten quite motivated by the request as the avalanche conditions were favorable and fairly stable. He had planned an interesting trip for them: they would walk up in easy terrain and then assess something steeper from the top. The clients were interested.

They ski up the mountain and ended up skiing down a steep couloir (narrow steep slope) on the other side of the mountain. Halfway down the slope the lady slipped, fell, and did not stop till the end of the slope. She lost both her skis (which they later found) and the fall looked bad. Regardless, she was totally fine afterword, to Marcus's big surprise. This situation led Marcus to reflect upon his choice of route and own motivation as a ski guide:

And it is a bit like, okay, if she had gotten injured then, would it have been a poor choice to ski there, from my perspective as a guide? In away? Starting with that premise, with two skilled ski clients and after discussing it thoroughly throughout the trip, and not committing to any particular route but choosing to go ahead with it.

This story shared by Marcus, I believe is very much related to creating good experiences, but also how the ski guides are driven by their own motivation.

Løland et al. (2023) addressed how ski guides made sense of snow and avalanche conditions, and balance this with the clients, to arrive as sensible decisions. They discussed how ski guides postponed making decisions deliberately, to have as much information as possible to make the decision that makes the most sense (Løland et al., 2023). This pinpointed what Marcus was doing in this situation, as he had multiple options. He claimed that he did not feel any pressure from the clients as they seemed happy with whatever he suggested. He asked himself the question "is it worth it?", if anything seriously happens to any clients and explained the accident by him wanting to ski that couloir more than the clients. Marcus asked himself the question, "And then I think about who these trips are for? Is it for yourself? Or is it for the group? Is it for the clients, those who are paying for your services?" A good reflection in relation to how different guides tried to opt their services from day to day in relation to snow quality, exposure, and experience. He then described what normally brings happy clients.

An important reason why some of the informants worked as ski guides was their own joy of skiing, something that Vold (2015) also found. This could, however, make some tricky situations where a guide was supposed to be friendly, show happiness while always paying attention to safety and exposure, as well as creating good experiences. This situational awareness can vary based on the guides experience and competence level (Stewart-Patterson, 2014).

Marcus and I talked about how important it was to have variation and choose trips that the guide sincerely wanted to do. Marcus talked at length about this. He felt that most days at work should contain low risk skiing. As this allowed for low stress in the long run. At the same time, he expressed the need to sometimes be able to "step-it-up" and do some "real" snow evaluation and ski something steeper. Marcus described how the goal in terms of group management could be to achieve such a good bond with the clients that he almost felt as if he

were just skiing with friends. This was said in the context of having a good time at work and keeping motivated.

In this section I have showed examples of how the ski guides created good experiences. By creating genuine relationships with clients through conversations the ski guides increased the clients' levels of success in relation to completing physical tasks, such as skiing a slope. This created good experiences, and I would argue also safer trips. One reason being that they skied mostly easy terrain, but also by not having the clients on their limit, they avoided accidents not related to avalanches as well. However, some of the ski guides talked about challenging clients as a way of creating mastery which led to good experiences.

Conclusion

The purpose of this master thesis was to contribute to our understanding of how ski guides perform safety and negotiate risk on behalf of clients. Seven ski guides educated through Nortind participated in semi-structured interviews. The two partly overlapping research questions were developed to investigate their practices. First, the thesis asked how the participants' performed safety in avalanche terrain. Second, it asked how the guides balanced the client's perception of risk when in, and close to avalanche terrain. In this conclusion, I will first answer these two questions. As they partly overlap, I will then discuss these answers in some more detail and reflect upon my own journey as a ski guide and researcher. I end this conclusion by suggesting other avenues for research.

Regarding my first research question, the ski guides performed safety in avalanche terrain by thoroughly prepare themselves and make sure they conducted proper pre-tour meetings with clients. Hence, they utilize tactics such as gaining clients trust, to make sure they could control the script and make decisions that increased safety when needed. The guides chose easier terrain not only when avalanche conditions were high, but also when they did not feel in control of the interaction order. By working proactively throughout a day's work, the ski guides were projecting (Løland et al. 2023), and consequently avoided getting into challenging situations.

The answer to what these ski guides did to manage and negotiate clients' perceptions of risk, was also related to their constant work in gaining clients' trust. Trust proved to make dealing with clients' perceptions of risk easier if they ended in situations where the clients' seemed scared. When clients wanted to ski something the ski guides did not feel comfortable with, this trust also helped them make better decisions. Some of the ski guides, therefore, argued that risk could increase clients' experiences, when handled properly and did not lead to them getting scared.

My ski guides, including myself, were greatly concerned with preparation and setting the stage and making sure the interactions followed the scripts they/we considered to be the best for any given day or week of skiing. They were thorough in preparation work and gathering information about clients. This aligns with Løland & Hällgren's (2022) notion that ski guides embed themselves socially to better understand how to adapt to the prevailing conditions and clients in the planning phase. I and my guides were further disturbed if we could not conduct

pre-tour meetings according to our usual standards, and this led us to choose easier terrain, especially the first day with a new group of clients. Drawing on Goffman (1959) concept of performance and scripting, I would argue that this knowledge enhances our comprehension of how ski guides operate and attempt to shape the guiding performance. This can be contextualized within the existing literature on adventure guiding, particularly within the domain of ski guiding. As Larsen and Meged (2013) also argue, tour guides spend a great amount of energy staying in charge of the script. My findings pointed towards the same tendency amongst ski guides. This underpins the importance of the ritual with pre-tour meetings as a vital part of Nortind ski guides' way of working which enabled us to produce safer ski tours in avalanche terrain.

An important part of the ski guides' framework is projecting. Løland et al. (2023), therefore, suggested this as a method ski guides use to update themselves on previous sensemaking. My findings support these findings and add to this thinking. I and my ski guides also anticipated what would happen later on a ski tour and used our soft skills to deal with clients' expectations and skills (Irwin et al. 2023). This way we worked proactively to avoid getting into unwanted situations.

In relation to terrain management, my ski guides spoke little of this when sharing how they managed people's perception of risk, and the actual safety. Choosing the right terrain seemed secondary to getting to know the clients and their skill levels. Terrain choices were made when the ski guides had a clear understanding of their clients and of course in relation to the avalanche conditions. Being transparent guides, as Løvold and Einang (2022) argued, was important to the ski guides in my study. By being transparent towards which terrain it was acceptable to ski on a given day, they gained client's trust and produced better experiences.

My findings have also illustrated how some of the ski guides actively changed the objective of the tour, as also suggested by Røkenes & Mathisen (2017). These ski guides did this to achieve two things. First, they wanted to take the focus away from summits or slopes that they believed were not safe enough to ski that day, due to avalanche hazards or clients lack of skills. Second, they wanted to manage clients' perception of risk. By changing the focus to easier terrain, good snow for example, they avoided putting their clients in situations where they knew they would fail and/or not facilitate for a good experience.

The ski guides managed their impressions to gain clients' trust. Different strategies were used, such as building genuine relationships with their clients. Vold (2015) explored how nature guides was concerned with creating a feeling of "us" and how guides and clients co-created the guiding experience. As my data only have the perspective of the guides, it is not possible to argue whether the clients got the same feeling of "us", but I have clearly showed that the ski guides were very focused on getting the clients to trust them. I would argue that the ski guides used this trust to better facilitate safer adventures and that it was vital in managing and negotiating their clients' perception of risk.

To gain clients trust was not something I anticipated would become such an important part of this thesis. When asking the informants how they dealt with clients with different levels of risk acceptance, I thought we would get more into terrain choices, the skills of the clients and avalanche conditions. Throughout this project, I have, however, reflected a lot on the data related to trust and ski guiding. It has become clear to me that, getting clients' trust is one of the most essential aspects of producing safer ski tours. This insight has allowed me to spend more energy on evaluating avalanche hazard, terrain management and predicting what will happen, rather than having to argue with clients about my choices. I have therefore, even more sought, to build trust through proper preparation, pre-tour meeting and being transparent with clients.

Since conducting the pilot interview in January 2023 my head has never stopped thinking about this project. Through a full season of working with numerous clients and fantastic skiing, I have definitely increased my understanding of my own job. I believe this has been the biggest strength and weakness of this research project. I am an insider in the field of study. This has enabled me to access data through interviews and auto-ethnography that is probably not accessible for many other researchers, and it has contributed to rich data on the topic. However, I am a novice researcher, and I truly believe that with more experience and a better understanding of what this project would be like, I could have made a better design and conducted an analysis which would have been even more nuanced. In the end, arriving at this conclusion is probably part of the growth one hope to gain from a master thesis project.

Research on ski guides is still rather limited. As the activity of ski touring has seen great increase over the last few decades, more research on ski guides is needed to provide also recreational skiers with more tools to make safer decisions in avalanche terrain. I believe

interviewing can only provide a certain amount of knowledge in this highly practical activity, and hence more ethnographic studies such as Løland & Hällgren (2022) and Løland et al. (2023) is needed to provide data that shed light on other aspects of the phenomenon. Research on how the clients experience the ski guides way of dealing with their perceptions of risk is also needed.

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Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet
"Skiguiding and risk management"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvordan ski guider håndterer risiko på vegne av betalende gjester. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med denne studien er å bidra til å øke kunnskapen om hvordan ski guider håndterer risiko på vegne av sine gjester. Gjennom kvalitative intervjuer med sertifiserte guider håper jeg dette master prosjektet vil kunne bidra til dette. Grunnen til at du blir spurt om å delta er din bakgrunn som ski-tindevegleder gjennom Nortind.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Norges arktiske universitet (UiT) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Deltakelse i denne studien innebærer en samtale rundt ditt virke som ski guide. Dette for å kunne forstå hva som skjer i konkrete situasjoner hvor du som guide tar avgjørelser på vegne av dine gjester. Lengden på intervjuet vil avhenge av hvor mye du ønsker å dele, men ikke lengre enn 2 timer.

Det vil bli gjort lydopptak av intervjuet og lagret i henhold til NSD (Norsk senter for forskingsdata sine forskrifter (for mer info se www.nsd.no). Du kan når som helst trekke deg fra studien.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Kun jeg som student vil ha tilgang på opplysningene. Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil jeg erstatte med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?
Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 15.nov.2023. Lydfilene fra intervjuet blir slettet ved prosjektslutt. Anonymiserte og transkriberte versjoner av intervjuet vil bli lagret til 2025.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra UiT har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Norges Arktiske universitet ved Bente Heimtun nås på e-post bente.heimtun@uit.no
- Vårt personvernombud: Sølvi Brendeford Anderssen, tlf: 776 46 153, e-post: personvernombud@uit.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost personvernttjenseter@sikt.no eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Michael Wenseth

E-post: mwe062@uit.no

Telefon: +47 452 15 505

Prosjektansvarlig

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Forberedelse til intervju «Skiguiding and risk management»

Formål

Målet med denne studien er å undersøke hvordan skiguider håndterer gjester av ulik risikovillighet i eller nærme skredterreng. Gjestenes opplevde risiko er også et interessant tema som jeg håper vi får en samtale rundt.

Før intervjuet

Før selve intervjuet håper jeg du kan ta deg tid til å tenke over følgende:

- En gruppe som du har guidet, der du tenkte på dem som mer risikovillige enn den gjennomsnittlige gjest. For eksempel en gruppe som ønsket å kjøre en linje/et heng eller gå en eksponert rute, selv om du mente/argumenterte for at det ikke var forsvarlig den gitte dagen.

- En gruppe som du har guidet, som hadde lavere risikovilje enn den gjennomsnittlige gjesten. Det kan være så mangt, men eksempelvis en gruppe som hadde irrasjonell frykt for snøskred på plasser hvor dette er helt usannsynlig.

Jeg håper dette kan innby til en spennende samtale om hvordan vi som guider håndterer våre gjesters risikovilje og deres opplevelse av risiko.

Intervju guide

Introduksjon

- Kort presentasjon av meg selv og prosjektet.
- Informasjon om intervjuet, anonymitet og tidsplan.

Spørsmål 1: Kan du fortelle om en gruppe/ situasjon der du følte at gjestene var risikovillige? Ta meg gjerne med fra start til slutt.

Tema 1	Forberedelse før fysisk møte
Spørsmål 1	- Eget firma eller freelance? - Hvilket fjellområde? - Hvilken informasjon ga du/dere gjester når de bestilte denne turen? - Skriftlig/ muntlig? - Og hva ble diskutert?

Tema 2	Første møte med gruppe, før turstart
Spørsmål 1	- Kan du fortelle meg om ditt første møte med denne gruppen? Kjente du gruppen fra før? - Var det noe med gruppen du bet deg merke i med en gang? Hva? Hvorfor? Personlige egenskaper, gruppedynamikk, mål for turen?
Spørsmål 2	- Gjennomførte du et ferdråd? - Kan du gjenfortelle i grove trekk hva som ble sagt? - Gruppens ønsker, ferdigheter osv? - Opplever du dette som utfordrende?

	• Hadde denne gruppen mye spørsmål angående terrengvalg, skredfare?
Spørsmål 3	• Va var din oppfatning av gruppen på dette tidspunktet? Risikovillighet, ferdigheter, kunnskap? • Hva tror du deres tankesett var før dere begynte turen? • Din generell oppfatning av dine gjesters risikovilje?
Spørsmål 4	• Husker du hvordan skredfaren, været og de generelle forholdene var? • Noe som talte for/ imot diverse varianter?

Tema 3	Turstart, underveis
Spørsmål 1	• Hvordan introduserte du ASSS og kameratredning? • Kjøreplan for dagen? • Samsvar mellom din plan og gjestenes forventinger? Vanskelig spørsmål, men tenkte du på dette? • Kan du beskrive turen, dine tanker underveis og ting du bet deg merke i?
Spørsmål 2	• Oppstår det noen situasjoner underveis hvor du tenker at det begynner å nærme seg nok? • Er det noe tidspunkt hvor du tenker at det blir reelt farlig? • Presser gruppemedlemmer på for å få kjøre en fjellside? • Hvordan håndterte du dette?
Spørsmål 3	• Følte du at gjestenes opplevde risiko stemte med den faktiske risikoen de utsetter seg for? • Annen ordlegging: Tror du gjestene oppfattet skredfaren som like seriøs som det du gjorde? • Hvordan formidlet du dette? • Mangel på kunnskap, formidling eller hva kan grunnen være tror du?
Spørsmål 4	• Bestemmer du deg for å snu, endre planen eller hva skjer videre?

Tema 4	Etter tur, refleksjoner
Spørsmål 1	• I hvilken grad tror du risikoen i seg selv er en årsak til at folk ønsker å være med på guidede skiturer?
Spørsmål 2	• Hva er dine refleksjoner rundt den nevnte turen? • Føler du selv at du kunne gjort noe annerledes? • Hva gjorde at det gikk bra?

En ny situasjon?

Bakgrunnsinfo hvis tid, og passende:

	Bakgrunns informasjon
	Personlig bakgrunn
	• Navn, alder, hvor bor du, familie status.

Tema 1	Bakgrunn
Spørsmål 1	
	• Hva gjorde at du ville bli ski – tindevegleder? • Hvor mange år har du guidet? • Har du en annen utdanning fra før eller hatt jobb i annet yrke?

Tema 2	Arbeidshverdag
Spørsmål 1	• Arbeider du for et fast firma? • Evt hvordan er din arbeidshverdag fordelt? • Hvilke aktiviteter guider du i dag? • Hvor guider du primært?

Slutten av intervjuet

- Takk for at du tok deg tiden.

- Hvis du kommer på noe du har glemt å si, ta gjerne kontakt.