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"FOR EXPLORERS BY EXPLORERS": A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF CRUISE TOURISM IN NORWAY

Constanze Ackermann-Boström
Uppsala Universitet
constanze.ackermann_bostrom@edu.uu.se

Susanne Mohr
Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet[1]
susanne.mohr@ntnu.no

Abstract
The Norwegian company Hurtigruten operates ships cruising along the Norwegian coast and has played an important role in tourism for over a century. This article provides a multimodal discourse analysis of the website advertising Hurtigruten's most popular journey, drawing on a critical tourism studies approach. It aims to answer the question as to what central themes emerge in tourism discourse on Norway, targeted at an international audience. Central characteristics of tourism discourse (Dann 1996), i.e., strangerhood, conflict, authenticity, and playfulness, are shown to be crucial in the analysed material. The paper discusses the notion of authenticity as a performative strategy in the promotion of Norwegian cruise tourism. One central aim of this paper is finding out what and how the notion of "authentically Norwegian" is advertised. The results imply that these topics, and especially the notion of authenticity, are aligned with general tourism imaginaries, which are similar globally.

Keywords: tourism, Norway, discourse analysis, multimodality, computer-mediated communication

1. Introduction

Tourism plays an important economic role in the Nordic countries and is high on the agenda of the Nordic Council (The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers 2021). In Norway, for instance, tourists spent 194 billion NOK on tourism in 2019 and it created 7.4%

[1] The authors are listed in alphabetical order: both have contributed to the same extent to data collection, analysis and write-up of this article.

of total employment (SSB 2022). Especially in the summer, the extensive Norwegian coastline attracts many tourists wanting to see the fjords and the midnight sun above the Arctic circle. Germans and tourists from the neighbouring Scandinavian countries form the largest group of travellers (Haukeland & Jacobsen 2016). While many of them travel by car or caravan, tourism on cruise ships, including the famous Hurtigruten cruises, is also popular. This is in line with the general popularity of cruise tourism, which is the fastest growing tourism sector worldwide (Petrick & Durko 2016). Established in the nineteenth century to transport goods along the coast, Hurtigruten maintain daily traffic along the coast up to Kirkenes in northern Norway, transporting cargo and, importantly, passengers. The black, white, and red ships hence play an important role in Norwegian everyday life, with tourists from the ships roaming the streets from Bergen in the south to Hammerfest in the north. It is this importance that warrants an analysis of the discourses around cruise tourism in general and Hurtigruten in particular.

In our research both online and offline, we noticed large differences in the discourses marketing Hurtigruten to local and international tourists—and while intriguing, an investigation of these differences is beyond the scope of this article, which provides a first overview of discursive practices used in advertising Hurtigruten tourism. In this first step, we focus on international tourists as a target group, addressed in English as the most frequently used language in tourism worldwide. An analysis of discursive strategies used to advertise tourism to Norwegian (and potentially other Scandinavian) travellers is a future area of research we would like to delve into.

Besides the particular relevance for the Nordics and Norway as outlined above, tourism is an intriguing object of scientific analysis for sociocultural researchers in general, given that it has been claimed to be a key identity source for members of late modern societies (Thurlow & Jaworski 2003). This alludes to the fact that many people come into contact with tourism at some point in our lives, either as tourists travelling to a holiday destination or as “the toured”, living in a destination visited by travellers. Further, tourism accounts for the largest movement of people across cultural boundaries (Lett 1989), given that it is one of the “human consequences” of globalization (Bauman 1998). From a sociolinguistic point of view, it hence produces interesting linguistic contact phenomena in highly diverse cultural and linguistic spaces, created as travellers take their languages

with them offline and online (Thurlow & Jaworski 2011, 2014). Besides the phenomena that emerge in language used by tourists, language and discourse about tourists and tourism are equally interesting from a sociocultural point of view and have been the focus of many sociolinguistic studies into tourism (see e.g. Thurlow & Jaworski 2003, 2010; the contributions in Held 2018; or Storch & Mietzner 2021, to name but a few examples on various contexts). They illustrate the different strategies employed to advertise destinations, their culture, and their people to tourists. This includes discourses about tourists—where, for example, in postmodernism, "tourist" carries the connotation of "a dilettante life of fun in the sun and hedonism ad libitum in placeless destinations where the 'other' [is] cheerfully ignored in favour of the unbridled pursuit of individualism sans frontières" (Dann 2002:6). These discourses and conceptualizations also play an important role in our analysis of the discursive construction of Norwegian cruise tourism, as we show in the following.

Against the sociocultural backdrop described above, this article presents a multimodal discourse analysis[2] (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996) of online discourse related to Hurtigruten, focusing on the ways in which cruise tourism and Norway/Norwegian culture is portrayed to tourists. In that analysis, we occasionally touch upon the discursive construction of the tourist, or rather, as Hurtigruten call them, "explorers". The analysis is based on data from the official Hurtigruten website ("global version", i.e., the .com version) outlining the "classic roundtrip voyage",[3] a 12-day trip from Bergen to Kirkenes and back. The data consists of the descriptions of the stops along the way, including the accompanying pictures. The data is particularly interesting because (i) it makes travel routes (and discourses) traceable, (ii) it affords the possibility of comparing various national regions and the discourses about them with each other, and thus (iii) it enables us to draw conclusions on the discursive portrayal of a whole country and its culture. Given that Hurtigruten is claimed to be an "authentic" way of travel (Hurtigruten 2022a), we are also interested

[2] Tourism discourse is inherently multimodal (Thurlow & Jaworski 2011), hence it is important that we also consider pictorial means of meaning-making in our analysis. Due to copyright restrictions, we can only describe the pictures that are used on the website instead of including them in the following.
[3] See https://global.hurtigruten.com/destinations/norway/classic-round-voyage-bergen-kirkenes-bergen/?_hrgb=2.

in finding out what is advertised as "authentically Norwegian". In line with our critical tourism studies perspective (for an illustrative example of a study in this paradigm, see Storch & Mietzner 2021), we discuss the notion of authenticity as a performative strategy. For this, we deem ourselves ideally equipped, given the fact that neither of us is Norwegian (even though one of us has been living in Norway for a couple of years) and we hence view the material from an outsider's point of view. We do acknowledge that a Norwegian perspective on this matter is important too, and have received some insights from discussions with Norwegian colleagues.

In the following, we set the scene by providing some theoretical background information on tourism discourse, specifically tourism discourse online as it is pertinent to the study at hand, as well as tourism and language in the Nordics. We subsequently outline our data and methods, followed by a discussion of the main themes emerging in our data. The article finishes with a conclusion and outlook on further possible research.

2. Tourism discourse online and offline

Language and/in tourism can be approached from different theoretical angles within linguistics. On the one hand, it can be analysed from a language for special purposes or language for business point of view (see e.g. Ruiz-Garrido & Saorín-Iborra 2013). On the other, it can be investigated from a sociolinguistic point of view, with an emphasis on promotional and performative aspects (e.g. Dann 1996). We, given our critical tourism studies approach, draw on the latter paradigm and are interested in tourism discourse as defined by Thurlow and Jaworski (2010:256) as "language and communication in tourism as global cultural industry", which in turn contributes to the creation of tourist spaces (Thurlow & Jaworski 2014).

The issue of tourism as an industry, an economic sector, deserves some further elaboration. It is "the single largest trade in the world" (Thurlow & Jaworski 2010:187) and hence contributes to language being commodified and recontextualized under global capitalism (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010:256). Further, tourism is tightly connected to place-marketing processes and often understood as a catalyst for "attracting investment, creating employment and promoting regional economic growth" (Hall 1997:63). Lichrou and colleagues (2008:35) show that (multimodal) narratives are productive tools for tourism destination marketing by "highlighting the intangible

dimension of place and marketing's role in the creation of the place's symbolic meanings". This is often problematic and the linguistic, and general, effects of tourism and tourism discourse can be harmful to destinations and their inhabitants. Storch and Mietzner (2021:11) refer to the ruination by, of and with tourism as "tourination"—a process that describes the change to places and communities brought about by tourism (discourse) worldwide.

As language is commodified in and for tourism, as well as for its promotion, it "tries to persuade, attract, and seduce through images, written texts, and audiovisual means (that is, through multimodal discourse)" (Ruiz-Garrido & Saorín-Iborra 2013:2), and this is what we focus on in this article. Dann (1996) stipulates four characteristics of tourism discourse that were subsequently explored by other researchers: (i) authenticity, (ii) strangerhood, (iii) play, and (iv) conflict perspectives. Tourist attractions are discursively constructed both offsite (e.g. guidebooks, travel programs) and onsite (e.g. information signs, guided tours) and function thus as a source of information and anticipation, often linked to stereotypical, allegedly "authentic" images of the tourist attraction. As Dann (1996:1) points out, the impression of authenticity of a tourist site is an important feature in tourism discourse in order to attract (non-local) tourists. The second feature of tourism discourse is strangerhood or the presence of differentiation. According to Dann (1996:15–17), touristic sites are promoted by highlighting the delicate balance between on the one hand strange, unknown, and different places and on the other hand, familiarness to tourists in order to make them feel secure. Thus, tourists can be "explorers" in the unknown without risking harm. Consequently, touristic travelling becomes a playful act (see (iii) above), transforming tourists into actors who get engaged in touristic spectacles consisting of touristic artefacts (such as souvenirs) or entertainment events (e.g. shows, excursions). Many times, these touristic spectacles are constituted by conflict perspectives (see (iv) above) that, according to Dann (1996:29), often build upon thematic dichotomies, for example between wilderness and civilization, amplifying the discourse of otherness.

These strategies, in turn, contribute to the creation of tourism imaginaries (Salazar 2012:864) as "socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings" of tourist spaces and the local populations. More easily put, they are seductive images and discourses about peoples and

places, given that tourism is part of the image production industry (Harvey 1989). Tourism imaginaries are a central issue of interest in our article too, and several of the themes that emerged in our data contribute to the creation of Nordic/Norwegian tourism imaginaries, as we show in Section 5.

Language choices play an important role in tourism discourse and for the creation of tourism imaginaries. English, for instance, is usually interpreted as a sign of mobility and international orientation, as illustrated by Mohr's (2020, 2021) work on language choices in tourism in Zanzibar. Local and indigenous languages, on the other hand, are often used to exoticize destinations and provide authenticity, as demonstrated by Salazar's (2006) investigations into language use among Tanzanian tour guides. This once again emphasizes the central role (perceived) authenticity plays in tourism discourse and tourist spaces.

In online tourism discourse, similar processes and dynamics to those described above are at play. English has been shown to be the predominant language used in online spaces and local languages are rather used to indicate (minority) group membership (see e.g. Mohr 2022). This is interesting, given that potentially, languages also travel with tourists through the mediasphere (Thurlow & Jaworski 2014), in that, for instance, a Spanish tourist might write a social media post in Spanish in Greece. In this article, we are not concerned with language choices, motivations for them, and the result of these choices. Hence, we focus on how Norway and Norwegian culture are advertised in the most frequently used language in offline and online tourism, i.e., English.

3. Tourism and language in the Nordics

Tourism is a significant part of the economy in the Nordic countries as it is not only a source of revenue but also creates new job opportunities, as outlined in the introduction. It is therefore no surprise that tourism is a prioritized issue in the Nordic countries with specific plans for Arctic tourism, cruise tourism, and sustainable tourism, as well as specific ideas for tourism in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers 2021). Especially in regions suffering from depopulation and unemployment, tourism can be an important economic sector, creating new jobs and thus providing new economic perspectives to the local population (Almstedt et al. 2016; Heller 2017).

The northern part of Norway is an example of such a peripheral and sparsely populated area that is often portrayed as a form of hinterland (Paulgaard 2008; see also Eriksson 2010) which appears backwards and unmodern as compared to urban, modern regions. According to Paulgaard (2008:52), the people living in the northern parts of Norway are also often described "as less civilized, more outdated, wilder, more authentic and even more magical and natural than people who live in the centre". However, in tourism discourse the idea of what is considered hinterland and backwards in other contexts is transformed and becomes desirable and marketable, and consequently moves from a peripheral to a central position. This is hinted at by notions such as "authentic", "magical", and "natural", as discussed by Paulgaard (2008). These emphasize the centrality of concepts such as authenticity in tourism discourse (see Section 2).

As "[t]ourists are attracted by [what can be portrayed as] newness, strangeness and exotics […] and what can be called the otherness of places, regions or countries and the life of people living there" (Viken & Müller 2006:3, as cited in Keskitalo 2017:35), tourism marketing also plays upon colonial discourses of civilized Western society. Otherness, as Bhabha (1994:67) points out, becomes "at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity".

The opposed positioning of the modern south and the unmodern, even archaic, north of Norway reproduces colonial discourses. In fact, Müller (2013) argues that tourism in the Artic regions needs to be understood from a historical perspective, linking the colonization of the North Calotte—the regions of Norway, Sweden, and Finland located north of the Arctic circle—to today's touristic journeys as they build on the imagination of the Arctic as a "dream destination". The colonial discursive practices of "exploring" and "conquering" the Arctic become apparent when looking closer at how the Arctic is portrayed in tourism discourses. As Keskitalo (2017) points out, tourism discourses enhance the opposition between rural and urban, nature and industry, old-fashioned and modern, thus highlighting the Arctic environment as unspoiled and authentic as well as linking the indigenous populations, like the Sámi, to these spaces. In a Nordic context, by constructing a connection between the Sámi community and their culture to nature and rurality, for example, tourism discourses on the one hand reproduce a homogenizing view of the Sámi anchored in colonial discourses (see also Fonneland 2017), as

also shown in the analysis later on. On the other, Sámi representations in tourism discourse also "give an impression of the Sami that perpetuates their image as radically different from Norwegians" (Olsen 2006:37) and presents them as "an exotic contrast to modernity that seemingly has not changed for hundreds of years" (Niskala & Ridanpää 2015:6). What is more, these discourses also erase other (indigenous) communities such as, for example, the Kvens, thus portraying the Arctic as a culturally and linguistically homogenous region (Keskitalo 2017). At the same time, tourism also functions as a form of neocolonial practice, bringing "new" languages to the Arctic that become "traces of global flows" in the linguistic landscape and consequently "create an international space of mobility, which is multilingual beyond the traditional linguistic diversity" (Pietikäinen et al. 2011:296).

4. Methods and data

The general approach applied in our study is ethnographic in nature, inspired by some of the points made by, for instance, Leppänen and Kytölä (2017) about online or digital ethnography; that is, applying common tools of ethnography to studying online discourses. The most important point for the study at hand is the identification of situated meanings (Crowley & Chun 2022). In line with general multimodal discourse analytic principles (e.g. Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996), our aim is to analyse online communication as drawing on multiple semiotic resources for making meaning. Further, when starting this study, we anticipated a "third wave CMC" design (Leppänen & Kytölä 2017), which looks into interconnections between online and offline discursive practices. These types of analyses have been suggested in order to account for contemporary patterns of communication in which online and offline discourses are intertwined (Blommaert 2019; Leppänen et al. 2020). We hence collected some offline data from linguistic landscapes and observations in ports of call and on board a Hurtigruten ship for a larger project on tourism discourse in Norwegian cruise tourism. In this article, however, we focus on online tourism discourse first. Taking online discourse as point of departure takes advantage of the fact that "identity" work is central there (Leppänen et al. 2015), and that it is usually linked to "authenticity", which is one of the central notions to be focused on here.

In the following, we provide information on the Hurtigruten company and its touristic offers (Section 4.1), the classic roundtrip

voyage that was the object of study here (Section 4.2), and coding and analysis (Section 4.3).

4.1 Hurtigruten Group and its touristic offers

The Hurtigruten Group consists of three different brands: Hurtigruten Expeditions, Hurtigruten Norwegian Coastal Express, and Hurtigruten Svalbard. They have been an "AS", i.e., an *aksjeselskap*, a Norwegian stock-based company, since 2021. They describe themselves as "the world's leading adventure travel group, offering unique small-ship and land-based adventures from pole to pole—and anywhere in between" (Hurtigruten 2022b). Their mission statement reads:

> *We aim to be the undisputed global leader in sustainable, inspirational adventure travel—a catalyst for change towards a greener travel industry. In doing so we provide safe, unique, active and sustainable travel experiences that create lifelong memories for our guests. (Hurtigruten 2022b)*

This self-portrait as a company mainly invested in travel and adventure is interesting, given the company's beginnings focusing on the transport of goods and people: transport services along the Norwegian coast, especially northwards of Trondheim, were unreliable, which caused captain Richard With to establish a regular sea link between Trondheim and Hammerfest with his steamer DS *Vesteraalen* in 1893 (Hurtigruten 2022c). The service operated weekly and was expanded to Bergen and Kirkenes later. It was called *hurtigruten* 'the fast route' (Hurtigruten 2022c). Today, the daily service operates 7 ships and has 34 ports of call. Hurtigruten mention that the ships "still carry freight and guests along the coast of Norway" along "the world's most beautiful voyage": the classic roundtrip (Hurtigruten 2022c).

The company has grown steadily over the years, with more ships and more destinations worldwide, and headquarters in Oslo and London. They now operate "a fleet of custom-built expedition cruise ships, exploring over 250 destinations in 30 countries worldwide". The provision of expeditions is the main purpose of Hurtigruten Expeditions as "the world's largest expedition cruise line" (Hurtigruten 2022d). Hurtigruten Svalbard is "the unmatched destination company for the Svalbard archipelago, bringing people to experience the many marvels of High Arctic nature on Spitsbergen all year round" (Hurtigruten 2022e). With its longstanding local history,

Hurtigruten Norwegian Coastal Express is uniquely focused on transporting cargo and people within Norway. Given our interest in discourses on Nordic and Norwegian tourism, we hence focus our analysis on this brand and specifically the classic 12-day roundtrip voyage that is promoted by Hurtigruten as their "signature route" and "loved since 1893" (Hurtigruten 2022f).

4.2 Data: The classic roundtrip voyage

The data for our study was retrieved from the Hurtigruten website, specifically the global version of the page advertising the 12-day classic roundtrip voyage (Hurtigruten 2022f). It is part of "The Original Coastal Express", which offers various trips of differing length, starting at around 7 days.[4] The offers are described against the background of a picture of several very (stereo)typical red and white, wooden, Scandinavian houses right at the water's edge (Hurtigruten 2022f). This picture emphasizes the "Norwegianness" of this particular Hurtigruten brand and the trips.

The journey starts in Bergen and ends in Bergen, with a turning point in Kirkenes and 34 ports of call altogether. Most of the ports that are visited by night northbound are revisited by day southbound. Table 1 shows an itinerary of the trip.

Day	**Main ports visited**
Day 1	Bergen
Day 2	Florø–Molde
Day 3	Kristiansund–Rørvik
Day 4	Brønnøysund–Svolvær
Day 5	Stokmarknes–Skjervøy
Day 6	Øksfjord–Berlevåg
Day 7	Båtsfjord–Berlevåg
Day 8	Mehamn–Tromsø
Day 9	Tromsø–Stamsund
Day 10	Bodø–Rørvik
Day 11	Trondheim–Ålesund
Day 12	Ålesund–Bergen

Table 1: Itinerary of the classic roundtrip voyage.

Besides the experience on the ship, there are several excursions on offer, to be booked separately, and the website promises "24h of daylight under the Midnight Sun" in Arctic Norway in the summer,

[4] On the occasion of its 130th anniversary, Hurtigruten offer several special voyages in addition to their usual portfolio.

and "maximiz[ed] chances of seeing the Northern Lights in the winter" (and a Northern Lights promise between 26 September and 31 March every year) (Hurtigruten 2022f).

For the purpose of data collection, we copied the descriptions of the 12 days (except for the indication of the time in port) and the pictures accompanying these descriptions, and collected them in an MS Office Word file. Both authors coded the data as outlined in the following section.

4.3 Coding and analysis

As outlined above, our general analytical approach was oriented on multimodal discourse analysis, as suggested by, for example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) and applied by other researchers operating within an (online) ethnographic framework (see e.g. Leppänen & Kytölä 2017). In our coding,[5] we concentrated on both content-related issues, like emerging themes, and structural issues, such as adjectives as modifiers, of the discourse. Our approach was hence largely inductive. Both authors coded the data separately and we discussed our results jointly afterwards.

Two large themes emerged, namely "contrast between urban life and nature" and "exotification and mystification". The first could also be interpreted as two themes since the concepts are so different. However, in our analysis, it was especially the contrast of these two concepts that was intriguing, which is why we combined them in one category. This is further elaborated in Section 5.1. Several sub-themes making up these categories emerged, i.e., last/northern frontier, liminality, exploring and explorers, wilderness and pristine nature, mystic places. Some of these could be categorised under either "contrast between urban life and nature" or "exotification and mystification" since they are intertwined. We categorised them as both. An example of this type of multicategorical discourse is provided in (1).

(1) Near the entrance of Kjøllefjord village, look out for the striking, building-like rock formation Finnkirka, an ancient sacrificial site […] (Hurtigruten 2022f)

[5] The coding was implemented manually in MS Office Word due to some problems with the collaboration functions of the qualitative content analysis tool NVivo.

In this example, the village Kjøllefjord is mentioned, along with a building-like rock formation (in itself a contrast of urban life and nature), which is then described as an ancient sacrificial site, making it a mystical, exotic place.

On the structural level, we paid special attention to adjectives and adjective combinations as property descriptors. The results of our analysis is presented and discussed in the following section.

5. Results and discussion

In this section we present the results of our multimodal discourse analysis. We focus on the two main themes identified in the data: the contrast between urban life and nature, and a combination of exotification and mystification. These fall into Dann's (1996) strategies of the language of conflict for the first, and authenticity and strangerhood for the latter.

5.1 Urban life versus nature

Much in line with the contrast between southern and northern Norway pointed out by Paulgaard (2008), a general contrast regarding the description of more southerly ports of call, up to Trondheim, and those in the north can be observed. The southern cities are described with more reference to urban and city life, while the descriptions of the northern cities, and especially those above the Arctic circle, focus on concepts like nature, wilderness, and pristine landscapes.

Example (2),[6] on the description of the southernmost port of call, Bergen, illustrates the focus on urban life in the south. It is accompanied by pictures of Bryggen, a series of former Hanseatic commercial buildings, thus emphasizing the focus on urban life.

(2) Your **voyage** starts in Bergen, the **second largest city** in Norway […] Bergen **boasts architecture** influenced by prosperous 14th century German trading organisation, the Hanseatic League. […] visit the **UNESCO-listed** wharfs of the colourful **Bryggen** district […]

Bergen is not only presented as the "second largest city in Norway", it is also discursively linked to the "Hanseatic League", a Medieval pan-European network that dominated the maritime trade in the north and Baltic Seas between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. It thus

[6] Words that are central for our analysis are in bold.

positions Bergen as an international Norwegian city with historically important European roots. Even though the Hanseatic League does not exist anymore, highlighting Bergen's Hanseatic history contextualizes the city within Europe at large and caters to even more tourist groups. The historical importance of the city is emphasized by mentioning that Bryggen is a UNESCO world heritage site, which at the same time attests to the "quality" of the city and its sites. Besides the emphasis on Bergen's urban character (e.g. "second largest city", "architecture") the choice of "voyage" instead of "journey" is interesting here, as the rather archaic choice of words emphasizes the discourse of exploring and, in extension, frames the tourists as explorers.

The second example focused on urban life stems from the description of Trondheim. It is accompanied by pictures of, for example, Nidaros cathedral.

(3) Trondheim "**city** of kings and palaces" […] Founded by **Viking** king Olav Tryggvason in 997, Trondheim today is **Norway's third largest city** and a mix of historic buildings and a buzzing student population. […] A must-see site of the city is Nidaros cathedral […] the old city bridge Gamle Bybro […] mark[s] the entrance to the old **Hanseatic district** of Bakklandet […] The neighbourhood's colourful wooden wharves propped up on stilts by the river's edge **now house trendy eateries**.

As in Bergen, the Hanseatic League is mentioned in the description and linked to Trondheim as "Norway's third largest city". Trondheim is multimodally presented as a centre of power and dominance by referring to it as the "city of kings and palaces", and accompanied by a picture of the Nidaros cathedral, combining semiotic signs of state and church power. Another contrast made in this text is that between old and new, with reference to the Vikings or the old city bridge on the one hand and a "buzzing student population" and "trendy eateries" on the other. These dichotomies emphasize Dann's (1996) strategy of conflict, while underscoring authenticity, or Norwegianness, at the same time—the Vikings are a central part of Norwegian history and closely associated with Norwegian culture by many tourists.[7] What is

[7] This is emphasized and catered for by Hurtigruten in a lecture on the Vikings, given on board the Hurtigruten ships and attended by one of the authors when travelling to Northern Norway.

transported here is hence a rather traditional or stereotypical picture of Norway and Norwegian culture.

While Bergen and Trondheim are presented as "colourful"—that is, vivid and diverse urban spaces—emphasizing the portrayal of the southern parts of Norway as modern and civilized, our next example demonstrates the change in discursive focus on nature, wilderness, and pristine landscapes further north, and especially above the Arctic circle (see also Paulgaard 2008). It is taken from the description of day 6 of the journey, taking the tourists to Øksfjord, Berlevåg, and the North Cape. It is accompanied by a picture of the sun setting over the sea at the North Cape.

(4) Norway's **Northern frontier** (Øksfjord–Berlevag) […] Kvaløya: In summer, the island has herds of **reindeer** migrating here in their thousands. […] At the top of Europe: We arrive at Honningsvåg […], portal to the **North Cape** where a globe monument marks **the top of continental Europe** […] **Sámi heartlands** […] look out for the striking, building-like **rock formation** Finnkirka, an ancient sacrificial site once used by the **indigenous Sámi**. You can join an optional excursion to meet local Sámi, learn about their life reindeer herding, and listen to *joik*[8] **folk songs**.

Apart from the emphasis on nature (e.g. "reindeer", "rock formation"), the discursive construction of this part of Norway as the northern "frontier" is interesting here. Several elements refer to or are superlatives, a common strategy employed in tourism discourse (Dann 1996). This includes "Northern frontier" and "the top of continental Europe". Combined with mentions of the indigenous population and their traditions, this is an illustrative example of "Othering" (Bhabha 1994), describing the northern parts of Norway as an unknown that is a different and strange space (see also Dann 1996). The frontier theme is also highlighted by the accompanying picture of a sunset signifying the end of the day and symbolizing that what lies ahead on the journey is unknown and possibly dangerous.

This Othering is underscored by positioning this part of Norway as "Sámi heartland" as well as by word choice and font here, with "*joik*", referring to the traditional form of song in Sámi music, being one of the few non-English words used in these descriptions and italicized, emphasizing its "exotic" nature. At the same time, the Sámi

[8] Italics in the original.

word and the mentioning of Sámi culture and traditions underscore the authenticity of these experiences in the Arctic. Finally, this example also shows the tendency described by Keskitalo (2017), maintaining that in the Arctic, nature is usually linked to the indigenous population. Example (4) is also relevant with regard to the second theme identified in our data, namely exotification and mystification, and is hence taken up in Section 5.2.

Example (5) is similar to the previous one with regard to its focus on nature. It is taken from the description of the journey through Rørvik and Bodø, cities which are also above the Arctic circle (it is noteworthy that this description comes from the return journey, crossing the Arctic circle from north to south). The accompanying picture that is interesting in this case is that of a mountain in the Seven Sisters mountain range, which is also referred to in the text.

(5) Bodø–Rørvik "a landscape of trolls" […] We then **cross over** the Arctic Circle just after breakfast. **Commemorate the moment** with a tradition of tasting a spoonful of good ol' cod liver oil! […] landscape of the **Seven Sisters mountain range** […]

Like in example (4), the short description of this leg of the journey focuses on nature by highlighting the "seven beautiful mountains" in "a landscape of trolls" and consequently erases Bodø and Rørvik as urban spaces semiotically. While both Bodø and Rørvik are important administrative, economic, and educational centres in their respective regions, this national significance is not mentioned, as tourism discourse focuses on the promotion of unique, enjoyable, and often pristine places. Focusing on landscape and nature but also mentioning traditions, this relates to Dann's (1996) playfulness and authenticity categories, linking this leg of the cruise to a recreational and enjoyable experience.

The references to maritime border crossing rituals—e.g., "commemorate the moment with a spoonful of good ol' cod liver oil"—also have a colonial touch, emphasize the theme of the northern frontier and explorer discourses, and exotify the location, which correlates with Dann's (1996) conflict strategy. These references also transform the travelling tourists into actors, imaginative sailors on a fictive exploratory voyage. On board, these rituals are celebrated immensely, generating a playful spectacle (Dann 1996), involving large parts of the crew and eliciting many photos and videos filmed by

the tourists, as observed by one of the authors on their cruise from Trondheim to Tromsø. This is, besides the turning point of the journey in Kirkenes, which is discursively pointed out (see also example (6)), one of the main changing points of the trip.

The last example in this section (example (6)) stems from the description of day 7 of the journey, when the ship travels between the towns of Båtsfjord and Berlevåg. This leg of the journey is described as "Norway's Eastern Edge" (Hurtigruten 2022f).

(6) **Next door neighbours**
By the time we reach **Kirkenes** after breakfast, you'll have travelled **further east than St. Petersburg and Istanbul.** […] Located just a few miles from the **Russian border**, Kirkenes has many influences from Norway's neighbour; from **road signs in both Norwegian and Russian, a monthly Russian market, and the WWII Russian Monument.**
Journey's turning point
Kirkenes is where your Norwegian coastal cruise **changes direction** and the ship heads south.

As the description "Norway's Eastern Edge" implies, this example is particularly intriguing with regard to frontier, as well as Othering discourses (Bhabha 1994) that link the description of Kirkenes to what Dann (1996) describes as conflict strategies in tourism discourse. These Othering discourses, in some respects, also relate to the nature vs urban life distinction discussed in this section. Kirkenes, for instance, is described as a place located even "further east than St. Petersburg and Istanbul", a strategy employed to exotify these places. At the same time, Kirkenes is described as a hybrid urban space (see the reference to road signs in both languages) (Bhabha 1994), where Norwegian and Russian civilization meet. In that way, the Arctic wilderness is tamed by both Russian and Norwegian culture. The bilingual road signs in Norwegian and Russian are semiotically contrasted with a picture of sled dogs, representing nature. These also emphasize the recurring theme of authenticity (Dann 1996), construing Kirkenes as truly Russian.

5.2 Exotification and mystification

As we mentioned earlier, the themes in tourism discourse in our research data are interlinked. In this section, we focus on the themes of exotification and mystification as discursive strategies promoting authenticity and strangerhood, while sometimes drawing on the other

common strategies in tourism discourse (see Dann 1996). Exotification specifically has been commented on in much research on tourism (see e.g. MacCannell 2013), given that tourists are generally in search of difference and the "Other". Mystification is closely related, given that tourists have been claimed to be attracted to the traditional and heritage, which often also relate to folklore, legends, and myths (MacCannell 2013; see also Kølvraa 2015 on the relation between mythical narratives and the past).

Example (7) illustrates how both themes—the urban–nature contrast and exotification and mystification—are employed in an intertwined way in order to discursively create a distinction between southern and northern Norway. In this example, the contrast between urban life and nature is maintained (see Section 5.1, example (4)), while highlighting exotification and mystification as well.

(7) Norway's **Northern frontier** (Øksfjord–Berlevag) […] Kvaløya: In summer, the island has herds of **reindeer** migrating here in their thousands. […] At the **top of Europe**: We arrive at Honningsvåg […], portal to the North Cape where a globe monument marks **the top of continental Europe** […] **Sámi heartlands** […] look out for the striking, building-like **rock formation** Finnkirka, an ancient sacrificial site once used by the **indigenous Sámi**. You can join an optional excursion to meet local Sámi, learn about their life reindeer herding, and listen to *joik* **folk songs**.

We showed in example (4) how the use of terms like "frontier" and "top of continental Europe" together with the photo of a sunset discursively create an image of an (imaginary) border that the ship is reaching during this leg of the journey. The text describes the town of Honningsvåg as the "portal to the North Cape", creating a mystifying atmosphere, as (magic) portals often lead to unknown spaces. Here, the unknown space is specified as "Sámi heartlands" where the "indigenous Sámi" live. Together with the double mentioning of reindeer—"reindeer migration" and "reindeer herding"—as well as the link to an "ancient sacrificial site", the Sámi are not only linked to Artic nature (see the discussion of example (4)), they are also portrayed as pagan, implying a certain sense of primitivism and backwardness. This is in line with what Olsen (2006), Fonneland (2017), and Niskala and Ridanpää (2015) have pointed out about Sámi portrayals in tourism discourse. The highlighting of the Sámi, the nomadic life, and the *joik* tradition also functions as a sociocultural

symbol of the "strange" that may satisfy the tourists' longing for experiencing something new and unknown (Ruiz-Garrido & Saorín-Iborra 2013), thus relating to Dann's (1996) conflict and strangerhood perspectives.

At the same time, the focus on the Sámi erases other autochthonous groups, like the Kven, semiotically from this area (see Keskitalo 2017). Interestingly, Honningsvåg is part of the Nordkapp municipality, which is not a Sámi administrative area like other municipalities in northern Norway, despite being promoted here as "Sámi heartland". The attempt at heterogenizing Norwegian society by mentioning the Sámi in fact homogenizes them: the exotifying portrayal of the Sámi as reindeer herders living in the north of Norway ignores the fact that reindeer herders today are in fact a minority among the Sámi, and many have migrated to urban spaces as a consequence of the Norwegianisation process (Minde 2005).

Taking up example (5), the description of the landscape near Bodø and Rørvik is further described in example (8):

(8) **The tale** goes that seven beautiful **troll** princesses, […] got caught out as the sun rose, turning them into the seven beautiful mountains you see today.

Here, the place marketing highlights the mystic history of the mountain range, referring to a folk tale that the mountains once were seven troll princesses that were turned into stone by the sun. From a postcolonial perspective, one can argue that the sunlight here functions as a "dewildering actor" (see Bhabha 1994; Loomba 2015 on colonial discourses), making the formerly dangerous trolls that were roaming in the north less dangerous, yet intriguing, by turning them into rocks and turning the northern space into a calm and peaceful region. This is in line with Edensor's (2001) point about exoticism of tourist destinations that needs to be attenuated so as not to scare tourists.

Elaborating on the area around Kirkenes (see example (6)), mystification is brought up again, as shown in example (9).

(9) Back in Vardø, you can visit the solemn **Witches' Monument** and the star-shaped Vardøhus Fortress, built in 1737. The **northernmost fortification** of any kind, it remains a part of the military to this day.

Mention of the Witches' Monument here is a very apparent sign of mystification, linking the mystical past of Vardø to the present. Reference to Vardøhus is also interesting, since it directly relates to the Othering and frontier discourses mentioned in the discussion of example (6). Forsvarsbygg (2020) describes this fortress as "the world's northernmost fortress" and "Norway's border post to the East" (own translation from Norwegian), thus demonstrating Dann's (1996) conflict strategy. As the fortification is part of the Norwegian military today, the fortress is not only an important touristic site but also representative of the Norwegian state.

Example (10) is from day 8 of the journey, when the ship travels from Mehamn to Tromsø, the "Paris of the North", as the city likes to promote itself (Oseid 2019). This name was chosen due to the city's "relative sophistication compared to the rest of rugged Norway" (Oseid 2019: n.p.). This is emphasized in example (10) by pointers to classical concerts at the Arctic Cathedral, possibly the most well-known architectural site of Tromsø, which is also featured in the pictures accompanying the first stop in Tromsø on day 5 of the journey. In that description, Tromsø is also referred to as the "Arctic exploration capital" (Hurtigruten 2022f), which emphasizes its importance in (northern) Norway (see also example (11)).

(10) **Midnight magic**
We dock at Tromsø just before **midnight**. There are also optional excursions for a midnight **boat ride** around the city or a candlelit classical **concert at the Arctic Cathedral**.

Example (10) clearly refers to mystification by invoking midnight, the "witching hour" in folklore and hence a time of mysteries. At the same time, it refers to the frontier discourses that are underscored in relation to Tromsø: as the "gateway to the Arctic" (Hurtigruten 2022f, see also example (11)) and close to the Arctic Circle Monument, which is also shown in one of the pictures accompanying this entry, Tromsø fulfils an important role. Midnight itself is a "frontier" concept in a broader sense, given that it marks the beginning of a new day. This context is hence another example of Dann's (1996) conflict strategy.

The mystic character of the city is further underlined by pictures of the Northern Lights (accompanying example (11)), which make the experience in Tromsø "magical", as mentioned in example (10). This is enforced by Hurtigruten themselves, as they maintain a website on myths and legends around the Northern Lights (Hurtigruten 2022g), providing Norse, North American, and European myths and legends on the phenomenon. The mystical status of the Northern Lights and the fact that there is a Northern Lights guarantee during some months further underscores the importance of this phenomenon for an authentic journey in Dann's (1996) sense, for certainly no journey to/through Scandinavia can be authentic without having seen the Northern Lights.

The last example is from the fifth day onboard, when the ship travels from Stokmarknes to Skjervøy passing Tromsø. It relates to many of the things that were discussed above as well, for example referring to Tromsø as the "gateway to the Arctic".

(11) **Gateway to the Arctic**
We then sail to the **historic Arctic exploration capital** of Tromsø where you'll have four hours to **explore the city or join an optional excursion**. Take your pick from the **many shops and restaurants** in the city centre**,** including Mack Brewery and **favourite local watering hole Ølhallen pub**. There are also **trendy cafés** plying delicious cinnamon buns and where **baristas create innovative coffee art**.

This example illustrates the close connection between the two overarching themes identified in the data. While the mystical character of Tromsø was elaborated on in relation to example (10), here, urban life is focused on again (e.g. "shops and restaurants", "trendy cafés", "coffee art"). This is authenticated with some local, Norwegian flavour with the phrase "favourite local watering hole" and by mentioning its Norwegian name, "Ølhallen". The use of the local language in this instance is, as shown for other tourist destinations (e.g. Salazar 2006), an important strategy to emphasize the authenticity of a place (Dann 1996). The orthography of the word, with the iconic Scandinavian <ø>, might add to that, conveying what has been referred to as a sense of "Nordic Cool" (Strandberg 2020).

At the same time, the tourists are framed as explorers who can discover, and potentially tame, this mystical place by embarking on a

journey through the "gateway to the Arctic" and into a potentially dangerous space. Reference to the local pub as a "watering hole" invokes images of safaris and travels to other "exotic" places, where animals gather to drink. The narrative of exploration and explorers is central in Hurtigruten's promotion of this particular and similar journeys (see Hurtigruten 2022a–f). This is certainly an example of exotification but, especially with reference to tourism, it is not exceptional, as MacCannell (2013) also suggests in maintaining that the word "tourist" often has a negative connotation, while others, such as "traveller", or even better "explorer", do not. This takes us back to our title and the general framework of our article, which we comment on again in the next and final section.

6. Conclusion and outlook

The provided multimodal analysis of discursive strategies used online to advertise the 12-day classical voyage offered by Hurtigruten, one of Norway's most emblematic ways of travelling but also one of its main attractions in itself, yielded several interesting results. We identified two broader themes that are frequently drawn upon: the contrast between urban life and nature, and exotification and mystification, emerging both from the text and from the pictorial material accompanying it. These themes are in line with some of the general tropes that have been identified in tourism discourse elsewhere (e.g. Salazar 2006; Thurlow & Jaworski 2011, 2014; Storch & Mietzner 2021) and in discourse surrounding the Arctic (e.g. Eriksson 2010; Keskitalo 2017) or Arctic tourism (e.g. Müller 2013; Niskala & Ridanpää 2015). These broad themes also reflect the discursive strategies identified by Dann (1996): authenticity, strangerhood, conflict, and playfulness, as outlined in our analysis. Besides these broader themes, several sub-themes also emerged as central: the northern frontier and thus liminality, wilderness and pristine nature, mystic places and explorers. All of these emphasize certain neocolonial tendencies which are present in most tourism discourse regardless of the context targeted: that is, Othering by exotification of places, people, and cultures (Bhabha 1994; Loomba 2015) but also authentication by erasure of diversity and an (exaggerated) focus on "traditional", local culture in performed imaginaries (Salazar 2006, 2012). All of them have been shown to play an important role for the commodification of language and culture in these contexts (Heller 2017), and also in Scandinavia in particular (see Strandberg's 2020 study into "Nordic Cool" transmitted via writing systems). It seems

almost absurd that what tourists perceive as "authentic" in these contexts—focusing on the imaginary of a homogenous mainstream culture and language, and masking heterogeneity—is in fact a performance and anything but in line with lived reality.

By looking at the ways in which Norway and Norwegianness are portrayed discursively to tourists by Hurtigruten, we have also gained some insights into the discursive construction of the "tourist" as the main target group of the discourse. This target group is hardly ever referred to as "tourists", let alone addressed as such. Instead, they are framed as "explorers", in accordance with Hurtigruten constructing themselves as a company of explorers—hence the slogan "for explorers by explorers", as some of the Hurtigruten journeys are advertised online. The fact that the term "tourist" is frowned upon in contemporary society, especially by other tourists, was mentioned in the beginning of this article (see also Dann 2002) and is also emphasized by MacCannell (2013:9). He draws on Lévi-Strauss (1968), who, interestingly, also refers to his own journeys as "expeditions". The depiction of a country as worth exploring, wild, and exotic is hence neither new nor unique nor specific to the Norwegian context. It is rather the combination of this trope with the abovementioned themes that creates Norway's image online. A related question that remains and cannot be answered by the results obtained from this study is whether and how far Hurtigruten are part of "Norwegianness" in the discursive construction of communal identity (Kølvraa 2015)—both for Norwegians and tourists. The iconic black, white, and red ships do play an important role in Norwegian everyday life and an investigation into their importance for locals and tourists would be an intriguing route for future research.

Given that this is a case study with a qualitative purview and conducted by foreigners naturally results in some limitations and opens up lines of future research. We mentioned in the beginning that our perspective as foreigners was helpful, as it allowed us an outsider perspective similar to tourists, which Norwegians would not have had. At the same time, questions such as the centrality for Hurtigruten in Norwegian society require a Norwegian perspective. Some of the general limitations of qualitative studies apply, such as results not being generalizable to all tourism discourse on, in this case, Hurtigruten products or even cruise tourism or Norwegian tourism in general. Expanding our analysis to other Hurtigruten journeys and/or possibly other media such as printed brochures, would provide a better

and more general overview and remains to be targeted by future research. Similarly, a comparison of the tourism discourse observed here, concerning cruise tourism, with tourism discourse from mainland Norway could be worthwhile. We have started data collection in several Norwegian touristic centres and hope to relate it to the findings yielded in this study. Ultimately, a comparison with tourism discourse on other Scandinavian and Nordic tourist destinations and possibly in other target languages than English could be a fruitful area for further work.

Finally, an investigation into the production and perception of the texts would be interesting, interviewing the authors of the texts about their intentions on the one hand, and international tourists about their feelings towards the images conveyed in these texts on the other. Insights into different tourist groups would be interesting in this regard, as one of the authors already observed huge differences between tourists of different nationalities on board one of the ships. Altogether then, a lot remains to be explored with regard to tourism discourse and imaginaries, and the commodification of language in tourism in Norway.

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