POLITICAL COMMUNICATION DURING THE EARLY DEVELOPMENTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF SWEDISH PARTY LEADERS' INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS

ALICIA ALEXANDERSSON

ELISE FRELIN

Political Communication During the Early Developments of the Coronavirus Crisis: A Quantitative Study of Swedish Party Leaders' Instagram Accounts

Abstract:

In light of the evolving Coronavirus crisis, this thesis aims to study the political communication of Swedish party leaders. Through a content analysis of 419 Instagram posts from January 31th to April 14th, 2020, we conclude that there was no strong relationship between important dates and developments in the Coronavirus crisis and the frequency of published posts. The crisis communication by the Prime Minister has however seemingly been successful. Party leaders continued to post party political content during the examined time period, meaning that that party politics did not seem to prevent crisis communication. Negative statements about other parties or politicians was associated with a higher number of likes, most party leaders did however not publish much negativity. Most party leaders shared also important non-political information, which was not associated with a higher number of likes. Lastly, we found that rationality, rather than displays of emotions, seem to have been most prevalent in the party leaders' posts.

Authors:

Alicia Alexandersson (24130)
Elise Frelin (24081)

Tutor:

Patric Andersson, Associate Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy

Examiner:

Henrik Glimstedt, Associate Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy

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Contents

1.　Introduction

During the spring of 2020, a novel Coronavirus named COVID-19 changed the world. Canceling everything from flights to job arrangements and graduation ceremonies, the new virus had an impact on the daily lives of hundreds of millions of people. Politicians from all corners of the globe have been communicating with their voters, more or less successfully, in light of the evolving scenario. That political communication process, as it played out on Instagram during the first months of the pandemic, is an exemplification of our research focus; political communication during a time of crisis. This study examines how Swedish party leaders communicated during the spring of 2020 and how COVID-19 manifested itself in Swedish mainstream party leaders' Instagram accounts during January 31th to April 14h. The examination was completed through a content analysis of the posts published by the nine selected accounts. The contribution of this study is therefore threefold: preserving the zeitgeist and developments during an unprecedented and unique crisis, increasing the scholarly knowledge about the use of Instagram during a crisis as well as providing further insights into Swedish political communication.

1.1.　Background

The purpose of this section is to provide useful background information to be able to further our literature review and discussions. Firstly, we define political communication and highlight some recent obstructions to the process. Secondly, we give background information on COVID-19 and compare it to the 1918 Influenza in order to provide historical context. After this, the political background of Sweden is summarized and lastly, the use of social media in Sweden is detailed.

1.1.1.　Defining political communication

The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences defines political communication as an "interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media, and the public. The process operates downward from governing institutions toward citizens, horizontally in linkages among political actors, and also upward from public opinion toward authorities" (Norris, 2015). The emergence of social media has altered this process dramatically (Alperin et al., 2018; Klinger & Svensson, 2014; Oskarsson & Strömbäck, 2019). Big data has been a driver of developing political communication as Facebook and other platforms allow for data-driven personalized marketing. One company which has specialized in the usage of this technology is Cambridge Analytica (Alperin et al., 2018). Cambridge Analytica rose to prominence as it became public knowledge that the company had accessed personal data from millions of people and their friends using a Facebook quiz (Elger,

Scheneble, Shaw, 2018). Such collected data can be used to "microtarget" voters with specific messages (Hegelich et al., 2018). Cambridge Analytica are reported to have been employed by the Leave Campaign in the Brexit Referendum in 2016 and by Donald Trump's campaign in the US election in 2016 (Mayer, 2018). This has raised concerns on issues such as big data security and election integrity (ibid). Future scholarly discussions on political communication, especially those who analyze elections, are bound to approach these subjects.

1.1.2. COVID-19 and other pandemics

On December 31th 2019, China informed the World Health Organization (WHO) of a new kind of disease with pneumonia-like symptoms which had been spreading across the Wuhan region since earlier that fall. It had then been identified as a new type of Coronavirus (WHO, 2020a). WHO declared the new Coronavirus a "public health emergency of international concern" on January 30th 2020 (WHO, 2020b). The first Swedish case of the new virus, later named COVID-19, was confirmed on January 31th (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020a). The Swedish government classified COVID-19 as a "disease that is dangerous to society" on February 1th (Krisinformation, 2020).

On March 11th, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020b). The first death in Sweden due to COVID-19 occurred on the same day (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020c). Community transmission of COVID-19 in mainly Stockholm but also other major metropolitan areas, meaning that there were domestic cases of COVID-19 without connection to travel, was announced by the Swedish Public Health Agency on March 16th (Folkhälsomyndigheten Sverige, 2020). Spreading continued to increase, which was followed by government restrictions to movement and everyday life (Ödman, 2020). Over 1000 deaths had been reported by the Public Health Agency on April 9th 2020 (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020c). However, in this case Sweden has taken a less strict approach compared to other European countries like the UK (Public Health England).

There have been concerns in Sweden regarding the consequences of COVID-19 such as economic repercussions as well as the sustainability of the public healthcare system. The government, headed in this matter by Minister of Finance Magdalena Andersson, have promised stimulus packages for affected businesses and sectors but the effects of these have yet to be evaluated (Ministry of Finance, 2020). Sweden's strategy to combat COVID-19 focuses on isolating risk groups, e.g. people over the age of 70, while still allowing businesses and restaurants to remain open (Öhman, 2020).

Parallels have been drawn between the new Coronavirus and the so-called Spanish Flu, which plagued the world during the aftermath of the first world war. Wrongly attributed to Spain, this flu proved particularly deadly to those between the ages of 20

and 40, unlike COVID-19 which, in April 2020, had almost exclusively killed older people (The Economist, 2020). The 1918 Influenza came in three distinct waves, the second one being the deadliest on a global scale (Taubenberger & Morens, 2006). A virus moving at such speed in several waves was unprecedented at the time (ibid). The developments of 1918 and onwards might therefore be a valuable information source for scientists and politicians alike who struggle to make sense of the present day spread of COVID-19, even if patterns of life and movement are different to those of 1918.

1.1.3.   Political background in Sweden

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy which holds general elections every four years (Swedish Institute, 2018). Since the general election in 2018, the government consists of the Social Democrats and the Green Party which collaborates with the Centre Party and the Liberals in some issues (ibid). Annie Lööf, the Centre Party leader, was on parental leave during the spring of 2020 (Annie Lööf, 2020).[1] The following table displays the party leaders of the eight parties which were represented in the Swedish Parliament in 2020 (Swedish Institute, 2018).

Table 1. Party leaders in the Swedish Parliament in 2020, with their roles and party affiliations

Politician	Role	Party
Stefan Löfven	Prime Minister	Social Democrats
Isabella Lövin	Vice Prime Minister	Green Party
Per Bolund		Green Party[2]
Annie Lööf		Centre Party
Nyamko Sabuni		Liberals
Jimmie Åkesson		Sweden Democrats
Ulf Kristersson		Moderates
Jonas Sjöstedt		Left Party
Ebba Busch		Christian Democrats

As of March 2020, the Coronavirus and its handling has increased the trust in the Prime Minister and the government as a whole; in fact, the current government has never had higher approval ratings (Novus, 2020). Approval of the government's strategy to combat the Coronavirus, led by the Agency of Public Health, as well as a general increase in faith caused by the crisis explains this development (ibid). Outside of the government, Ulf Kristersson saw the highest increase in trust levels (ibid).

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[1] Her replacement was Anders W Jonsson, who did not have an active Instagram account at the time of data collection.
[2] The Green Party has a dual leadership, shared between Bolund and Lövin.

1.1.4. Use of social media in Sweden

The internet penetration, meaning the number of people with internet access, in Sweden is among the highest in the world (Internetstiftelsen, 2019, p. 109). Up to 95% of Swedish households use the internet occasionally, while 98% have access to the internet (ibid). Of those who use the internet, 83% use some type of social media (ibid). All mediums are used on a daily basis by the Swedish population; 51% use Facebook daily, 41% use Instagram daily, 24% use Snapchat daily, and 7% use Twitter daily (ibid).

1.2. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a descriptive as well as explorative study of Swedish party leaders' communication during a crisis. More specifically, this entails a content analysis of the Instagram posts by the Swedish party leaders of all parties represented in the Swedish Parliament between January 31th and April 14th, 2020. The ambition of our study is to possibly identify patterns and methods behind political communication on Instagram in a time of crisis, adding to the unexplored research area. Also, the study aims to provide more insights into Swedish political communication generally, looking further into crisis communication as well as identified trends of personalization.

The research questions guiding this thesis are as follows:

What patterns and methods can be identified in political communication during crises?

How did Swedish party leaders personalize during the early developments of the Coronavirus crisis?

1.3. Limitations

Social media has effectively changed political communication all over the world, making all kinds of platforms interesting for researchers. However, this thesis examines only Instagram. The examined Instagram posts were uploaded between January 31th and April 14th, 2020 by the Swedish party leaders of all parties represented in the Swedish Parliament at the time. Any conclusions are therefore based on Sweden and on the examined time period.

1.4. Expected contributions

Given that the data set of this thesis was collected during an evolving crisis, it contributes to the understanding of political responses to the management of the Coronavirus in Sweden. This thesis also serves to document and preserve the zeitgeist that surrounded the spring of 2020, making it a snapshot of history. The use of Instagram during a crisis lacks substantial scholarly examination, and this study helps shed some light on this, using COVID-19 as a unique example. This study also provides further insights into Swedish political communication through Instagram, another research area which lacks substantial examination. Instagram is the second most used social media in Sweden, which further underscores the need to further explore its effects on political communication.

Furthermore, a deeper knowledge about Instagram behavior and communication in general and especially in a crisis could be relevant for marketers in all sectors, yet acutely relevant for political marketing actors. One could expect that other crises will arise in the future, especially seeing the rise of both fake news and disinformation in all social media (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). Using this backdrop, the added understanding of the current crisis and ensuing communication may be a valuable roadmap in the future. Moreover, the Coronavirus and subsequent crisis was and is of course extraordinary and unexpected, but marketers could always face crises and uncertain situations, forcing them to take action to try to alleviate tensions. Understanding how Instagram might play a role in that process is important, especially seeing how social media's importance can be expected to continue to grow in the future.

2. Literature review

The literature review aims to provide insights into previous research conducted in similar and adjacent research areas. Firstly, we review the literature in our direct research area, political communication on Instagram during a time of crisis. Given the uniqueness of the Coronavirus crisis, there is no previous research on this issue specifically. Secondly, research in historical political communication in Sweden is outlined with a particular focus on crisis communication, exemplified by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004. Lastly, we explain how Instagram works as a platform, how it has been used in political communication and the use of Facebook and Twitter in politics.

2.1. Political communication on Instagram during a time of crisis

Political communication on Instagram in a time of crisis is an unexplored research area (López-Rabadán & Doménech-Fabregat 2018). A database search with the keywords "'political communication' 'Sweden' 'Instagram' 'crisis'" in relevant databases[3] does not produce any results pertinent to this study. However, one adjacent study reports on the independence crisis in Catalonia in Spain. López-Rabadán and Doménech-Fabregat examined ten Spanish politicians' actions on Instagram from June 2017 to April 2018 and found that during this prolonged time of crisis, the posted content demonstrated more emotionality than rationality (López-Rabadán & Doménech-Fabregat 2018). However, the purpose of this study was to explore the mediatization of Spanish politics and not to examine the use of Instagram during a crisis (ibid), which might challenge the significance of these results. Essentially, the examined time period is the main connection to Instagram behavior in a time of crisis. The authors could have chosen a different time period to study the mediatization of Spanish politics, and thereby not been able to comment on the use of Instagram during a crisis. Also, as the study observes the political context in Spain, the transferability of these results could be questioned.

2.2. Historical political communication in Sweden

Sweden's election process and parties have throughout the twentieth century centered around ideology and strong party cultures. In fact, party cultures have been more prominent than individual politicians (Nord, 2001). Furthermore, the number of Swedish voters that report being undecided or willing to change their vote during an election campaign has increased dramatically since the 1940s (Strömbäck, 2008). The number of voters who identify themselves with a particular party as well as general

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[3] Emerald, Sage Publications, Google Scholar.

trust in politicians saw a decline in the same time period (Nord & Strömbäck, 2008). This development has worked in parallel to the growing importance of political marketing and PR in elections worldwide, including in Sweden, since the 1980s (Nord, 2001; Kavanagh, 1995; Newman, 1994). Moreover, due to ideological shifts during the same time period, the Swedish media landscape diversified and both public service and commercial media became a part of the voters' media consumption, which also affected political communication. News media has been vital in Swedish political communication historically (Nord & Strömbäck, 2008). This makes the shift to a diverse media climate significant.

In order to further explore historical Swedish political communication, it might also be useful to know how Swedish politicians have reacted to earlier crises. One such example is the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, which killed over 200 000 people and caused enormous property and economic damage (Britannica). Roughly 20 000 Swedish tourists were in the area at the time and in 2006, 543 Swedish citizens were either dead or missing, making Sweden a country strongly affected by the natural disaster (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006). In a time of crisis, people tend to depend on news media for information and updates from the government or other authorities (Graber, 2005) This was also the case in the Swedish aftermath of the tsunami.

In studying this outcome, Nord and Strömbäck (2006) found that the large majority of the Swedish public trusted the media coverage on the tsunami crisis, no matter how the news were communicated. Many were also critical of the actions of the Swedish government. Respondents thought that the government had acted too slow, with insufficient measures and that it had failed to understand the magnitude of the crisis. The Foreign Minister at the time even went to the theatre on the eve of the disaster, which the public thought signaled disengagement and indifference. The public was however pleased with the response from travel agents and aid organizations (Falkheimer, 2009; Nord & Strömbäck, 2006).

Ostensibly, the Swedish people desired strong and immediate action from the government but most feel like they did not receive that (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006). There has been speculation that this blame on the Swedish government had an impact on the Swedish general election in 2006, where the party that governed during the crisis was voted out (Rubin, 2017). The Swedish government has changed and adapted media efforts and communication processes following the heavy criticisms after the tsunami crisis. The role of "state secretary of communication" and the "crisis management coordination secretarial" have been established (Falasca & Nord, 2013). However, these implementations could be a response to a more complex social media and news climate, rather than a response to the tsunami crisis specifically.

2.3.   The mechanisms behind Instagram

When investigating the usage of Instagram, it is crucial to understand how the platform itself works. Instagram, launched in 2010, is a platform where users share pictures which other users can like and comment on in their self-generated feeds (Russman & Svensson, 2017). Some things can be said of the algorithms that rule the content, despite them not being public (Cotter, 2018). In 2016, Instagram stated that feeds were to become increasingly personalized to individual users and show content based on what the algorithm predicts the user will like to see (Instagram, 2016). Algorithms do therefore play a vital role in a user's online experience (Bucher, 2012; Cotter, 2018). They have the power, through algorithmic ranking systems, to decide what kind of content receives attention on Instagram as well as to dictate and stimulate user behavior and norms because of this process (Bucher, 2012).

2.4.   Political behavior on Instagram

There has been less research conducted focusing on Instagram compared to Twitter and Facebook, especially in the field of political communication (Filimonov, Russman, Svensson, 2016; Russman & Svensson, 2017). In Sweden, the "strategic use" of Instagram was examined ahead of the 2014 general election through a data set of 220 posts from some of Sweden's mainstream parties[4] at the time. The study concluded that Swedish parties tended to use Instagram for broadcasting rather than mobilization in the weeks leading up to the election (Filimonov, Russman, Svensson, 2016; Russman & Svensson, 2017). However, it is also crucial to note that only one of the Swedish parties used Instagram very frequently and most accounts posted moderately. The frequency of posts did nonetheless increase as the date of the election drew closer.

Furthermore, the analysis of the 2014 data set displayed a tendency towards personalization, as the parties posted much content featuring their top candidates. (Filimonov, Russman, Svensson, 2016). Also, Filimonov et al.'s research on Instagram ahead of the election 2014 is in line with research on user motivations on Instagram, which demonstrates that most Instagram users follow political leaders for information gathering/guidance or social utility (Parmelee & Roman, 2019).

Politicians' behavior on Instagram outside of campaign or election times demonstrate personalization (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). Ekman and Widholm (2017) stipulate that much content has been posted with the purpose of strengthening the "public persona" of Swedish politicians, rather than pushing political messages. However, there were

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[4] Vänsterpartiet (Left Party), Socialdemokraterna (Social Democratic Party), Miljöpartiet (Green Party), Moderaterna (Moderates), Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats), Folkpartiet (Liberals) and Feministikt initiativ (Feminist Initiative).

still persisting differences between different party afflictions (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). These findings also aid in evaluating the political communication in Sweden historically.

Furthermore, the number of heads of government who have turned to personalized forms of visual communication has increased worldwide (Flicker, 2013; Krogstad & Storvik, 2010; Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). Through a content analysis analyzing posts during one year after Justin Trudeau became Prime Minister of Canada, it could be concluded that Trudeau's Instagram activity focused on cultivating a positive personal image (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). Another user of personalized visual communication, Donald Trump, has used his Instagram account to push adversarial and negative political messages in line with his presidential agenda (ibid).

2.5. The political use of Facebook and Twitter

The rise of social media has changed political communication, both in Sweden and elsewhere (Klinger & Svensson, 2014; Oskarsson & Strömbäck, 2019). Facebook and Twitter have also increased personalization in political communication, as they increase focus on the individual politician rather than a party (Cöster & Dahlberg, 2019; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013). This might seem counterintuitive in a party-centred system like the Swedish or Norwegian one, but increased personalization can be observed over time in these systems too. The Swedish politicians who were the most active on social media before 2013 tended to be younger and less established (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014). In Sweden, politicians have tended to be more active on Facebook than on Twitter. This could be because Facebook has a higher number of users and the platform is used by more demographic groups (Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014). Twitter was found to be more tailored to those voters who had an earlier interest in politics (Grunsell & Nord, 2012).

All Swedish mainstream parties[5] had Twitter accounts ahead of the general election in 2018. The coalition of left leaning parties[6] were more active and published more tweets during an examined week before the election (Hedman & Narayanan, 2018). Even though Swedish politics have been moving towards more personalization, tweets regarding the election tended to focus on party issues and not individual politicians (ibid). Ahead of the 2018 election, Swedish parties used Twitter as a way to communicate with journalists and Facebook for communication with core voters (Grusell & Jungselius, 2018). This corresponds with the findings of Grunsell & Nord (2012) that Twitter had been employed as a platform for the already interested. Seeing

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[5] Other parties like Alternative for Sweden and Feminist Initiative campaigned in the general election but were excluded from the data.

[6] Left Party, Social Democrats and Green Party.

that only 7% of the Swedish population use Twitter on a daily basis, this is seemingly understandable.

Colliander et al. (2017) found however that Swedish politicians can use Twitter to share both professional and personal tweets to attain both voting intention and voter attention (Colliander et al., 2017). On Facebook, money is better spent on interaction with existing followers instead of trying to gain likes and new followers (ibid). Also, the use of social media to consume news ahead of the Swedish 2018 election increased while more traditional news consumption through TV and morning newspapers decreased, suggesting a shift in how voters consume news (Oskarsson & Strömbäck, 2019).

Outside of Sweden and Scandinavia, Barack Obama's 2008 US Presidential campaign was an early account of social media campaigning that worked successfully (Grunsell & Nord, 2012; Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014; Vergeer, 2013). Generally, Twitter has historically been used as a tool for information spreading, not mobilization, during election campaigns (Jaidka, Ahmed, Cho, 2015; Jungherr, 2016). This follows the usage patterns found in Sweden (Dimitrova et al., 2014; Jungherr, 2016). Specifically, Twitter in Sweden has been found to increase political participation but not alter political learning (ibid). Younger candidates and opposition politicians have been more likely to interact using the medium. Still, the correlation between electoral performance or reputation and Twitter activity has been and continues to be scholarly debated (Jungherr, 2016).

3.   Method

The purpose of this section is to outline the method used to explore Swedish party leaders' communication during the early developments of the Coronavirus crisis. Designed to describe our actions in a chronical order, we first disclose some of our methodological considerations. Secondly, we explain the selection process in terms of deciding which accounts to study. After that, the data collection process is outlined and some limitations to the performed method are described. Lastly, we discuss the study's reliability and validity.

3.1.   Methodological considerations

Given the explorative and descriptive nature of this study, we saw no merit in forming hypotheses. Partially because there were no clear and strong indications of what one might be, based on the literature review. Also, we did not want to taint the explorations or the descriptions with our personal opinions, which could become the case. Through the usage of hypotheses, we could also risk falling for confirmation bias and only be looking for patterns in our analysis which would fit the hypotheses (Nickerson, 1998). Given the unique nature of our data set, we felt that this was an unnecessary risk to take. After some consideration, we reached the conclusion that any use of hypotheses would not add anything to the study.

We considered several different courses of actions to explore Swedish party leaders' use of Instagram. Before we finalized our research questions, we contemplated conducting a content analysis similar to the one performed on Justin Trudeau's Instagram (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). We also considered using a qualitative method and conducting interviews with party representatives to learn more about their Instagram practices. However, once the Corona-situation worsened, any method that involved either meeting people in person or taking time from experts or politicians became impossible. We decided to make the best of the situation and study the Coronavirus responses instead.

3.2.   Selection of accounts to study

Sweden has a party-centered system where people vote for parties and not people, which could be an argument for examining parties' Instagram accounts instead. However, since Instagram is arguably a channel for personal marketing, we thought it was of value to further how individual politicians use it. When selecting which politicians to study, it was deemed relevant to focus on the eight parties in the Swedish Parliament. Also, because this study aims to examine individual politicians, the party leaders were deemed most relevant to include. It was considered important that the

different politicians in this study were comparable, which motivated selecting to study only party leaders who all hold the same position. However, it is still possible that the studied accounts were not wholly operated by the individual party leader but rather a member of their staff, but we did not explore this possibility any further.

The Instagram accounts that were analyzed are, organized from largest to smallest representation in the Swedish Parliament in 2020; stefanlofven (Stefan Löfven), kristerssonulf (Ulf Kristersson), akesson.jimmie (Jimmie Åkesson), annie_loof (Annie Lööf), vansterpartiet (the Left Party)[7], buschebba (Ebba Busch), nyamkosabuni (Nyamko Sabuni), isabellalovin (Isabella Lövin) and perbolund (Per Bolund).

During the examined time period, the amount of Instagram posts published by these accounts were 419, making this the number of observations in this study. The following tables provides more details of the selected accounts.

Table 2. Number of coders, followers and Instagram posts in 2019 and 2020 per analyzed Instagram account

Politician	Number of coders per politician	Number of followers on Instagram[8]	Number of posts between Jan 31st and April 14th 2019	Number of posts between Jan 31st and April 14th 2020
Stefan Löfven	32	80,200	39	76
Isabella Lövin	22	9,030	4	41
Per Bolund	25	4,190	5[9]	34
Annie Lööf	15	87,700	102	24
Nyamko Sabuni	20	9,970	0[10]	30
Jimmie Åkesson	31	92,800	21	68
Ulf Kristersson	25	63,600	95	53
Left Party	25	56,600	130	53
Ebba Busch	23	131,000	76	40
Total number of coders	40	-	-	-
Total of posts	-	-	472	419

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[7] Jonas Sjöstedt did not have a personal Instagram account at the time of the study. The Instagram account of the party that he is the party leader of, the Left Party, was chosen to examine instead, thus making sure that all parties were represented.

[8] Number of followers on May 3rd 2020.

[9] Per Bolund was not a party leader at this point of time.

[10] Nyamko Sabuni did not have an Instagram account at this point of time.

3.3.   Construction of the content analysis

We decided to use a content analysis to analyze the named accounts as the method is appropriate for observing the same objects during a period of time (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 305). A content analysis is also arguably a transparent research method (ibid), which we thought was appropriate given the unique nature of our dataset. However, constructing an objective coding scheme is a complicated task (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 308). We are aware of this drawback and have therefore constructed our coding scheme in accordance with the eight steps of R. Weber. See further explanation below. Noteworthy is also that a content analysis cannot be used to explain or answer any "why" questions (ibid). We have taken this aspect into account, as our purpose and research questions do not aim to explain but rather to describe. Two studies were taken as inspiration when designing the content analysis. A study of Swedish politicians' use of Instagram (Ekman & Widholm, 2017) and a study of Justin Trudeau's Instagram use (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019) both employed content analyses with pre-specific categories for coding. Ekman & Widholm (2017) constructed a number of different categories to cover many areas, which was deemed appropriate for the explorative purpose of this study. The coding scheme was created in Qualtrics and sent out as a survey.

In order to make the coding scheme as neutral as possible, the eight steps of R.Weber were employed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.290). These serve the purpose of preventing rater bias, and entail careful definitions of categorizes, the testing of them and assessing the quality of the test codings until the coding scheme is clear. Skalski, Neuendorf and Caijas (2017) also point to the importance of testing a coding scheme before putting it in use (Skalski, Neuendorf, Caijas, 2017). For example, through our process, the different words or events to be coded were explained through examples in order for the coder to understand what they referred to (see Appendix B). A test version of the coding scheme was also sent out before the real coding commenced. This was meant to ensure that uncertainties and issues could be resolved and used to improve the quality of the categories and thereby the coding.

When creating a coding manual, vital aspects are to make categories mutually exclusive and exhaustive, while having clear instructions (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.303). These aspects were all taken into consideration during the construction of the coding scheme. Instructions were posted on each slide in order for the coder to be able to read them during the completion of the survey, if necessary. It was also possible for the respondent to move back and forth in the survey to be able to correct potential mistakes. In order to make the questions mutually exclusive, most questions asked for only one piece of information and included only yes or no answer options. Categories were used to cover all potential kinds of posts that could appear in a content analysis

in order to be exhaustive. In total, the coding scheme ended up consisting of 24 questions for each Instagram post.

On January 31th, the first confirmed case of the Coronavirus in Sweden was communicated, which was a woman in Jönköping that had recently arrived home to Sweden from the affected Wuhan region in China (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020). Because this event made Sweden affected by the Coronavirus too, we chose that as the start date of the data collection. Given that the time for this study was limited, the chosen end-date for data collection was April 14th, which was a month before the final deadline of this thesis. COVID-19 related posts could still be posted after this time, but in order to allow time for the analyses we decided that it was a necessary and appropriate limitation.

It was deemed of the utmost importance to ensure objectivity and avoid bias during the categorization of the published posts. Therefore, we decided not to code ourselves, but to let that be done by people who were unfamiliar with the thesis. The respondents were promised anonymity and remained so during the study. Even if it would have been possible for us to find out which respondent coded which posts, we did not do so. As all respondents were Swedish speaking, the survey was conducted in Swedish in order to facilitate smooth communication. The posts' URLs were included in the survey, which the respondent clicked on to access the posts. As Skalski, Neuendorf and Caijas (2017) recommend, we also saved the posts as PDFs to make sure that the posts were preserved for the duration of the study, in case the user would delete a post (Skalski, Neuendorf, Caijas, 2017).

In order to decide which post should be in which survey, a randomization was carried out. This was achieved through a numbering of all posts and then using a randomizer[11] in order to place the different posts into different surveys. After the completed construction of the surveys, they were distributed to family and friends, people who were deemed trustworthy and that we believed would answer seriously. Seeing as the survey was rather complex and long by design, we wanted to ensure serious and complete answers. However, to ensure participation, we wanted to encourage our respondents by promising that for every recorded response, we would donate 5 SEK to charity.

3.4. Collecting data

Due to the set time constraints, the surveys were distributed in two rounds, the first one was sent out to friends and family containing 321 Instagram posts from January 31th to March 28th. The second round was distributed to the coders with posts from March 29th to April 14th, also adding the posts in which respondents had recorded a

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[11] Google's number randomizer, asked to randomly choose.

wrong answer for the control question. Please see further explanation below. The instructions of the second round of surveys contained minor clarifications compared to the first. (See appendix B for the survey) Round one contained 40 surveys with eight or nine posts per survey and round two contained 31 surveys[12] with four or five posts per survey. In total, 40 different coders assisted in the data collection.

The respondents were asked to answer questions about what they saw, heard or read in the posts. By design, the questions were constructed with objectivity in mind and as the questions asked for descriptive information, we hoped to avoid personal feelings or interpretations affecting the outcome. If the respondent had problems knowing whether a person in a picture were a politician, they were encouraged to find out. This is because the surveys were intended to code what a post actually depicted, not to examine the respondents' knowledge. Also, some questions included an option of responding "do not know" in order to not make the respondent guess. Each post was coded once, as all 71 surveys contained different posts and were handed out once each. This could be considered a drawback. However, additional codings of the same post should have yielded the same results as the questions asked for descriptive information.

3.5.   Limitations of the chosen method

At the time of data collection, Instagram allowed users to post stories[13], which disappeared after 24 hours (Instagram, 2020a). We did not include these in our data collection, drawing upon the mode of operation in one of our inspiration studies which did the same (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). It was also possible to publish multiple photos in a single post (Instagram, 2020b). We asked respondents to only analyze the first photo, in case their survey featured a post with multiple photos. However, it is possible that Instagram algorithms could mix the order of photos in multiple photos posts, which would mean that the noted "number of people" in a photo did not always match what we saw when we opened the same post. We decided not to hold this against respondents, in case it happened, and accepted their responses if the noted number of people matched any photo in multiple photo posts.

Still, there will always exist a risk of human error. The respondents may have misread the instructions, unconsciously let biases affect their answers or been too tired to perform the survey thoroughly. In order to have some indication that our respondents provided serious answers, a control question was used. The respondents were asked to provide the number of likes for each post. However, the number of likes is a dynamic measurement that could change after some time as people can delete their like or like a post some time after it was published. We did not anticipate that a considerable

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[12] 30 surveys contained four to five posts, and one survey contained one post.
[13] Stories could either be in the form of a video or photo.

amount of users would alter their likes, but we have to consider the possibility. Therefore, we decided to accept a coding if the number of likes noted was within a five percent margin of error at the time of our control. For example, if a respondent had noted 1000 likes on a post, it would have to have between 950 - 1050 likes at the time of our control for the survey to be accepted.

3.6.   Reliability and validity

Reliability relates to the study's measures and if results could be repeated (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 41). An important distinction is that our data set is not a sample, it is a population. It would have been a sample if we had only selected a number of posts or if only some party leaders had been observed during our time period. That is, the population would be the same if anyone were to repeat our study, as it consisted of public Instagram posts that anyone could have collected during our specified time period. Also, a high reliability implies a lack of random errors (Esaiasson et al., 2007). One such random error that could have occurred, and thereby have damaged the reliability of our study, would be if the party leaders deleted some posts, which would alter our population. In order to mitigate this risk, we saved PDFs of all the published posts in order to preserve them.

Moreover, the performed codings could possibly be different if they had been completed by different people, which challenges the study's reliability. In order to maintain inter-observer consistency and thereby improve the study's reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 304), we designed the questions to ask for descriptive information. We do therefore not have any reason to believe that the codings had been different if we had employed different respondents. However, some questions were arguably partially subjective, which meant that we had to both trust our respondents to provide as objective answers as possible and take this into account in the analysis.

Observing the integrity and credibleness of a study are important components of validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43). Firstly, considering credibility, which questions if the results of our study are believable (ibid). One could argue that the believability of our results can be challenged, given the unexplored nature of the research area and how this study's results contradict the one study which observed a time of crisis on Instagram. Our study will therefore have to serve as a point of comparison in the future and a first attempt at examining crisis communication on Instagram, rather than presenting a complete answer presently. Also, it is possible that the results of the contradicting study were not transferable to a Swedish context. Focusing on transferability, one could ask if our findings would apply to other contexts (ibid). A similar study in a comparable country has not been conducted, to our best understanding, and there is therefore nothing for our study to corroborate. However, if more studies were to be performed in similar contexts, the possibility could arise in the future. Again, our study could serve as a point of comparison rather than an exact transfer, as political contexts might differ. Related inquiries surface when discussing

dependability, which calls into question if our findings could apply at other times (ibid). If other crises arise in the future in similar political contexts, that possibility could present itself. Lastly, one could question the confirmability of the results, meaning the objectivity (ibid). This aspect is improved through us not performing the content analysis ourselves.

4.   Results

In this section, the results from the content analysis of the chosen politicians' Instagram accounts are presented. The results consist of frequency analyses on the collected codings and the results of a Mann-Whitney U-test.[14] Posts are divided into Coronavirus related and unrelated to aid in analysis and discussion. Lastly, we summarize what characterizes both categories of posts and what kind of posts that statistically get a higher number of likes. It is also worth mentioning that only a selection of the collected data is presented here. Some categories of coding, e.g. the presence of international politicians or presence of politicians from the same party, were omitted[15] in the interest of maintaining salience and precision throughout the analysis.

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[14] The Mann-Whitney U-test is a non-parametric test which was used to compare the two groups 'Present' and 'Absent' and their mean rank in terms of number of likes to see if the difference is significant in a 95% confidence interval. The data used is assumed to not follow a normal distribution, hence the non-parametric test (Lærd Statistics, 2018).
[15] See appendix B for all surveyed categories.

4.1. Timeline detailing the Corona-related and unrelated posts

Table 3.1. Frequency over total number of Corona related posts on Instagram per analyzed account during the examined time period

	Stefan Löfven	Isabella Lövin	Per Bolund	Annie Lööf	Nyamko Sabuni	Jimmie Åkesson	Ulf Kristersson	Left Party	Ebba Busch	Total
1/31-2/2*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/3-2/5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/6-2/8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/9-2/11	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2/12-2/14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
2/15-2/17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/18-2/20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/21-2/23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/24-2/26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2/27-2/29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3/1-3/3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
3/4-3/6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
3/7-3/9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
3/10-3/12**	6	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	2	14
3/13-3/15	6	1	1	0	2	3	1	1	2	17
3/16-3/18***	5	3	3	2	4	5	2	1	3	28
3/19-3/21	3	2	0	0	0	4	4	0	2	15
3/22-3/24	5	2	2	1	1	4	2	1	2	20
3/25-3/27	4	2	3	1	2	3	2	3	2	22
3/28-3/30	3	1	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	11
3/31-4/2	5	3	2	1	2	6	3	3	2	27
4/3-4/5	2	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	0	12
4/6-4/8	5	1	1	0	1	3	1	2	1	15
4/9-4/11****	4	1	1	0	1	2	3	1	1	14
4/12-4/14	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	5
Total	**55**	**19**	**17**	**7**	**17**	**35**	**24**	**16**	**20**	**210**

* Sweden's first case of Corona 1/31 and the government declared Covid-19 as a disease that is dangerous to the society on Feb 1st.

** On March 11th WHO declared Covid-19 as a pandemic and Sweden's first death connected to the virus occurred

*** March 16th community transmission was declared

**** Sweden reached a death rate over 1000 people connected to the Coronavirus on April 9th

Table 3.2. Frequency over total of posts about the Coronavirus in specific dates

	Stefan Löfven	Isabella Lövin	Per Bolund	Annie Lööf	Nyamko Sabuni	Jimmie Åkesson	Ulf Kristersson	Left Party	Ebba Busch	Total
1/31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3/11	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	7
3/16	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	10
4/9	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	5

Note: The dates correspond with the selected dates in table 3.1.

In table 3.1, the posts, dated Jan 31st to April 14th 2020, are presented in intervals of three days in order to make the data as coherent and understandable as possible. Table

3.2 shows a close-up on specific dates related to the development of the Coronavirus. Jimmie Åkesson was the first leader to acknowledge the Coronavirus on Instagram.

Table 4. Frequency over total number of non-Corona related posts on Instagram per analyzed account during the examined time period

	Stefan Löfven	Isabella Lövin	Per Bolund	Annie Lööf	Nyamko Sabuni	Jimmie Åkesson	Ulf Kristersson	Left Party	Ebba Busch	Total
1/31-2/2*	2	0	1	1	0	3	2	0	2	11
2/3-2/5	1	3	1	1	2	1	4	5	2	20
2/6-2/8	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	3	2	10
2/9-2/11	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
2/12-2/14	2	1	2	2	0	6	3	6	2	24
2/15-2/17	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	4
2/18-2/20	3	1	4	1	1	3	3	2	2	20
2/21-2/23	2	2	1	2	0	2	0	1	0	10
2/24-2/26	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	2	0	9
2/27-2/29	3	2	2	1	2	1	3	0	1	15
3/1-3/3	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	7
3/4-3/6	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	17
3/7-3/9	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	8	2	23
3/10-3/12**	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	7
3/13-3/15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3/16-3/18***	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3/19-3/21	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	7
3/22-3/24	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
3/25-3/27	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
3/28-3/30	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
3/31-4/2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
4/3-4/5	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4
4/6-4/8	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	4
4/9-4/11****	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
4/12-4/14	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	21	22	17	17	13	33	29	37	20	209

* Sweden's first case of Corona 1/31 and the government declared Covid-19 as a disease that is dangerous to the society on Feb 1st.

** On March 11th WHO declared Covid-19 as a pandemic and Sweden's first death connected to the virus occurred

*** March 16th community transmission was declared

**** Sweden reached a death rate over 1000 people connected to the Coronavirus on April 9th

The amount of posts unrelated to the Coronavirus decreased during the examined time period. In the period between March 13th and March 18th, no non-Coronavirus related posts were posted but 45[16] posts were published about the virus in the same period. After March 18th, the amount of posts unrelated to the Coronavirus increased compared to the week before but decreased compared to the period before that. The change is rather telling; from an average of publishing 4.3[17] posts per day unrelated to

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[16] 17 posts were published about the Coronavirus in March 13th to 15th and 28 posts were published about the Coronavirus between March 16th and 18th, see table 3.1.

[17] A total of 180 posts divided by 42 days, during the period Jan 31st to March 12th.

the virus between Jan 31st to March 12th, to publishing an average of 0.9[18] posts per day not about the Coronavirus in March 19th to April 14th.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage over total of posts during the examined time period

	Corona related posts		Non-Corona related posts		Total posts during the time period	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	55	72.4	21	27.6	76	18.1
Isabella Lövin	19	46.3	22	53.7	41	9.8
Per Bolund	17	50.0	17	50.0	34	8.1
Annie Lööf	7	29.2	17	70.8	24	5.7
Nyamko Sabuni	17	56.7	13	43.3	30	7.2
Jimmie Åkesson	35	51.5	33	48.5	68	16.2
Ulf Kristersson	24	45.3	29	54.7	53	12.6
Left party	16	30.2	37	69.8	53	12.6
Ebba Busch	20	50.0	20	50.0	40	9.6
Total	210	50.1	209	49.9	419	100.0

Note: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly

Table 5 displays the number of posts published by each examined account during the chosen time period. In total, 419 posts were published during the chosen time period; 210 were about the Coronavirus and 209 were not about the Coronavirus.

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[18] A total of 29 posts divided by 33 days, during the period March 19th to April 14th.

4.2. Number of likes

Table 6. Min, max, mean and standard deviation over number of likes connected to Corona related posts and non-Corona related posts

Corona related posts	Nb of posts	Min	Max	M	SD
Stefan Löfven	55	1,385	12,692	3,172	1,646.5
Isabella Lövin	19	159	526	291.4	84.0
Per Bolund	17	98	501	210.1	114.1
Annie Lööf	7	1,229	6,874	4,142.7	2,140.7
Nyamko Sabuni	17	184	674	356.8	108.4
Jimmie Åkesson	35	2,343	15,054	6,846.4	3,384.8
Ulf Kristersson	24	1,076	4,008	2,463.3	932.0
Left Party	16	1,486	5,688	3,286.5	1,340.0
Ebba Busch	20	1,466	8,483	4,512.3	1,650.0

Non-Corona related posts	Nb of posts	Min	Max	M	SD
Stefan Löfven	21	1,468	6,520	2,844.8	1,498.9
Isabella Lövin	22	161	643	337.8	112.3
Per Bolund	17	75	568	209.3	120.9
Annie Lööf	17	1,675	31,539	10,998.2	9,352.3
Nyamko Sabuni	13	169	739	409.3	173.8
Jimmie Åkesson	33	1,706	19,125	8,546.8	4,435.9
Ulf Kristersson	29	1,026	4,580	2,773.2	1,007.0
Left Party	37	928	7,297	2,329.1	1,315.1
Ebba Busch	20	1,818	29,102	7,285.7	6,087.2

The mean of number of likes of Stefan Löfven and the Left Party are higher in their Corona related posts. Per Bolund has roughly the same mean number of likes in both kinds of posts. The standard deviation is also higher in Stefan Löfven and the Left party of their Corona related posts, compared to their unrelated posts.

In appendix A, figures 4.1 through 5.3 display boxplots over the distribution of likes for Corona related and non-Corona related posts.

4.2.1. Mann-Whitney U-test

In order to see if it exists any significant difference in number of likes between the groups in each categories, a Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted. The following table displays the results.

Table 7. P-value and U-value for the difference in number of likes between the groups in each category

Corona related posts		
	p-value	U-value
Features the Party leader	0.007*	2525.5
State agencies	0.122	3884.5
Party politics	0.275	4984.0
Negative statements	0.000*	776.0
News media	0.987	2619.5
Social media	0.398	1918.0
Family members	0.083	1294.0
Private events	0.029*	2527.0
Important non-political information	0.005*	4167.0

Non-Corona related posts		
	p-value	U-value
Features the Party leader	0.271	4411.0
State agencies	0.414	2217.5
Party politics	0.000*	3714.5
Negative statements	0.178	2203.0
News media	0.934	2585.0
Social media	0.051	1240.5
Family members	0.000*	1058.5
Private events	0.000*	2837.5
Important non-political information	0.000*	2128.0

Note: * significant, p-value < 0.05

The table compared the different groups 'Present' and 'Absent' in each of represented categories, which will be detailed further below. For the category, family members, the 'Don't know' answers were excluded from the analysis, due to the small number of posts containing 'Don't know' answers.

4.3. Features of party leaders

Table 8. Frequency and percentage over number of posts featuring the party leader

| | Corona related posts | | | | Non-Corona related posts | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	55	100.0	0	0.0	19	90.5	2	9.5
Isabella Lövin	18	94.7	1	5.3	20	90.9	2	9.1
Per Bolund	13	76.5	4	23.5	9	52.9	8	47.1
Annie Lööf	5	71.4	2	28.6	11	64.7	6	35.3
Nyamko Sabuni	17	100.0	0	0.0	11	84.6	2	15.4
Jimmie Åkesson	23	65.7	12	34.3	13	39.4	20	60.6
Ulf Kristersson	20	83.3	4	16.7	26	89.7	3	10.3
Left party	3	18.8	13	81.3	13	35.1	24	64.9
Ebba Busch	15	75.0	5	25.0	17	85.0	3	15.0
Total	169	80.5	41	19.5	139	66.5	70	33.5

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly

Note 2: Present and absent means if the politician is visible or not in the posts

Table 8 exhibits the frequency and percent of the number of posts which feature the politician who owns the Instagram account. For the Left Party, this category consists of the pictures or videos where Jonas Sjöstedt was visible. The frequency of portraying oneself in the picture was generally higher in posts about the Coronavirus than in unrelated posts.

As showed in the Mann-Whitney U-test, the Corona-related posts that featured the party leader got a statistically significant higher number of likes. The difference in the non-Coronavirus related posts was not significant.

4.4. Mentions of state agencies

Table 9. Frequency and percentage over number of posts that name one or more state agencies

	Corona related posts				Non-Corona related posts			
	Present		Absent		Present		Absent	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	21	38.2	34	61.8	4	19.0	17	81.0
Isabella Lövin	7	36.8	12	63.2	7	31.8	15	68.2
Per Bolund	7	41.2	10	58.8	0	0.0	17	100.0
Annie Lööf	1	14.3	6	85.7	0	0.0	17	100.0
Nyamko Sabuni	3	17.6	14	82.4	3	23.1	10	76.9
Jimmie Åkesson	10	28.6	25	71.4	3	9.1	30	90.9
Ulf Kristersson	2	8.3	22	91.7	2	6.9	27	93.1
Left party	0	0.0	16	100.0	3	8.1	34	91.9
Ebba Busch	9	45.0	11	55.0	5	25.0	15	75.0
Total	60	28.6	150	71.4	27	12.9	182	87.1

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent means if state agency is represented or not in the posts

The frequency of state agencies being named in the two different categories is shown in table 9. State agencies are more often named in Corona-related posts compared to unrelated posts.

The Mann-Whitney U-test resulted in no significant difference in number of likes, neither for posts related to the Coronavirus or unrelated posts.

4.5. Party political rhetoric

Table 10. Frequency and percentage over number of posts that contains party politics

	Corona related posts				Non-Corona related posts			
	Present		Absent		Present		Absent	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	19	34.5	36	65.5	13	61.9	8	38.1
Isabella Lövin	9	47.4	10	52.6	14	63.6	8	36.4
Per Bolund	8	47.1	9	52.9	12	70.6	5	29.4
Annie Lööf	5	71.4	2	28.6	3	17.6	14	82.4
Nyamko Sabuni	9	52.9	8	47.1	8	61.5	5	38.5
Jimmie Åkesson	13	37.1	22	62.9	13	39.4	20	60.6
Ulf Kristersson	10	41.7	14	58.3	20	69.0	9	31.0
Left party	13	81.3	3	18.8	26	70.3	11	29.7
Ebba Busch	9	45.0	11	55.0	14	70.0	6	30.0
Total	95	45.2	115	54.8	123	58.9	86	41.1

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent says if party politics is presented or not in the posts

More non-Corona related posts referenced party politics compared to the Corona-related posts.

In the Corona-related posts the difference in likes between present and absent was not significant, however, in the non-Corona related posts the difference was, with absent of party politic scoring a higher number of likes.

4.6.   Negative statements about other parties or politicians

Table 11. Frequency and percentage over number of posts that contains negative statements about other parties or politicians

| | Corona related posts | | | | Non-Corona related posts | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	1	1.8	54	98.2	3	14.3	18	85.7
Isabella Lövin	0	0.0	19	100.0	0	0.0	22	100.0
Per Bolund	0	0.0	17	100.0	2	11.8	15	88.2
Annie Lööf	0	0.0	7	100.0	0	0.0	17	100.0
Nyamko Sabuni	0	0.0	17	100.0	0	0.0	13	100.0
Jimmie Åkesson	12	34.3	23	65.7	8	24.2	25	75.8
Ulf Kristersson	0	0.0	24	100.0	6	20.7	23	79.3
Left party	2	12.5	14	87.5	6	16.2	31	83.8
Ebba Busch	2	10.0	18	90.0	4	20.0	16	80.0
Total	17	8.1	193	91.9	29	13.9	180	86.1

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly

Note 2: Present and absent says if the posts are expressing negativity towards other politician or parties or not

Table 11 demonstrates that expressed negativity directed at other politicians and parties was less common in posts related to the Coronavirus compared to unrelated posts. All of the accounts displayed fewer negative posts when related to the Coronavirus; Jimmie Åkesson was the only exception.

Being negative towards other politicians and parties showed a significantly higher number of likes than not being negative in Corona-related posts. In the non-Corona related posts, there was no significant difference.

4.7. Mentions of news media or social media

Table 12.1. Frequency and percentage over number of Corona-related posts which refer to news media and social media

| | News Media | | | | Social Media | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	5	9.1	50	90.9	1	1.8	54	98.2
Isabella Lövin	2	10.5	17	89.5	3	15.8	16	84.2
Per Bolund	4	23.5	13	76.5	0	0.0	17	100.0
Annie Lööf	1	14.3	6	85.7	1	14.3	6	85.7
Nyamko Sabuni	1	5.9	16	94.1	3	17.6	14	82.4
Jimmie Åkesson	9	25.7	26	74.3	5	14.3	30	85.7
Ulf Kristersson	3	12.5	21	87.5	3	12.5	21	87.5
Left Party	2	12.5	14	87.5	5	31.3	11	68.8
Ebba Busch	2	10.0	18	90.0	2	10.0	18	90.0
Total	29	13.8	181	86.2	23	11.0	187	89.0

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent says if the posts are representing news media, social media or neither

Table 12.2. Frequency and percentage over number of posts which are unrelated to the Coronavirus and refer to news media and social media

| | News Media | | | | Social Media | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	0	0.0	21	100.0	0	0.0	21	100.0
Isabella Lövin	2	9.1	20	90.9	1	4.5	21	95.5
Per Bolund	4	23.5	13	76.5	4	23.5	13	76.5
Annie Lööf	1	5.9	16	94.1	2	11.8	15	88.2
Nyamko Sabuni	2	15.4	11	84.6	0	0.0	13	100.0
Jimmie Åkesson	7	21.2	26	78.8	2	6.1	31	93.9
Ulf Kristersson	3	10.3	26	89.7	3	10.3	26	89.7
Left Party	7	18.9	30	81.1	4	10.8	33	89.2
Ebba Busch	3	15.0	17	85.0	2	10.0	18	90.0
Total	30	14.4	179	85.6	18	8.6	191	91.4

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent says if the posts are representing news media, social media or neither

Table 12.1 displays posts published about the Coronavirus, while table 12.2 shows posts not about the Coronavirus, both as they relate to posts published about news media[19] and social media. References to news media were more common in Corona-related posts than in unrelated posts, the difference was however very small. The relationship was the opposite for social media mentions; social media was more frequently referred to in non-Corona related posts. Overall, referencing to social media was less frequent compared to references to news media.

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[19] The survey mentioned only "media" and exemplified using "news articles, mentions of journalists and newspapers." In order to clarify in our results and discussion, we use "news media" instead.

There was no significant difference in number of likes between absent or present of news media or social media, independent of Corona or non-Corona related posts.

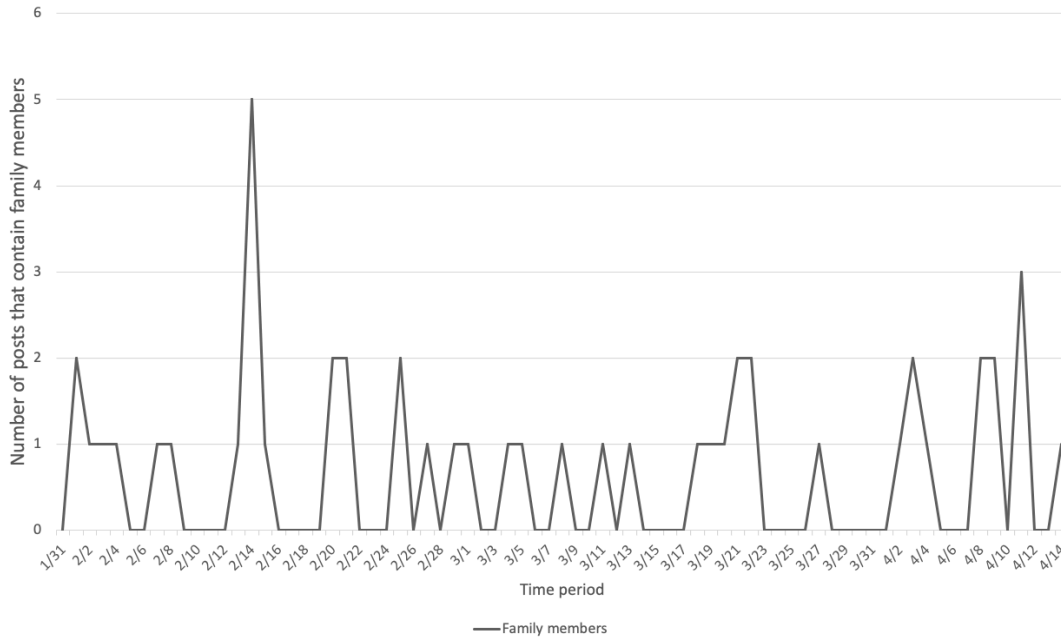## 4.8.   Mentions of family members or private events

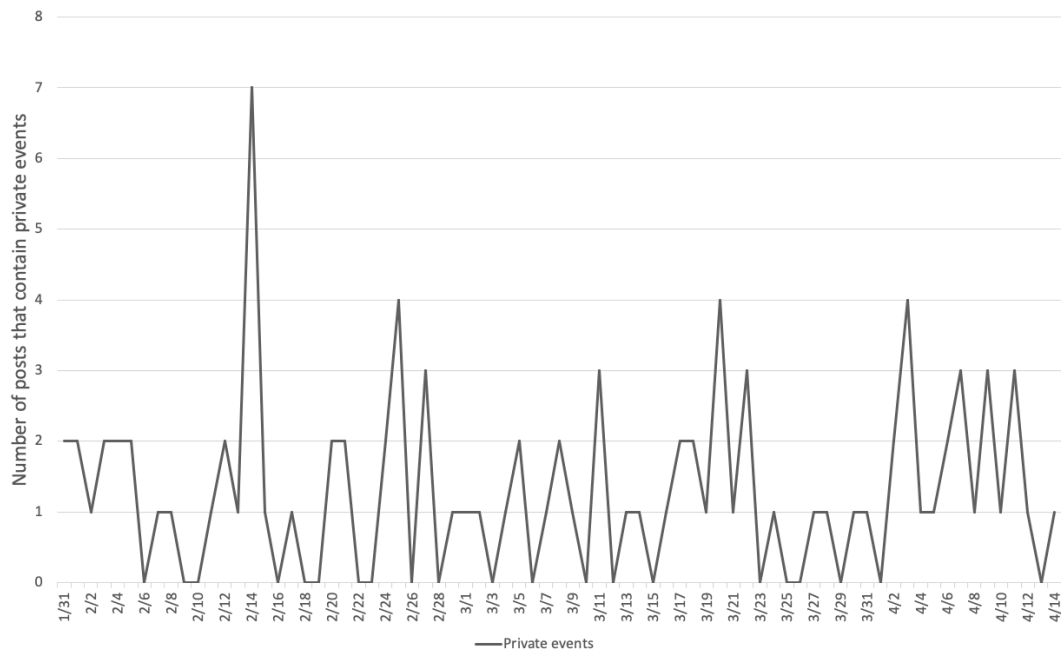**Figure 1.** Frequency of total number of posts containing family members during the examined time period

Figure 2. Frequency of total number of posts containing private events during the time examined period

The frequency of published posts related to family members or private events is roughly equally distributed through the time period, with spikes centered around holidays like Valentine's day on February 14th.

Table 13.1. Frequency and percentage detailing the number of Corona related posts that portray family members, pets, relatives or close private friends or private events

| | Family members | | | | | | Private events | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Don't know | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	4	7.3	50	90.9	1	1.8	7	12.7	48	87.3
Isabella Lövin	1	5.3	18	94.7	0	0.0	3	15.8	16	84.2
Per Bolund	0	0.0	17	100.0	0	0.0	1	5.9	16	94.1
Annie Lööf	2	28.6	5	71.4	0	0.0	3	42.9	4	57.1
Nyamko Sabuni	0	0.0	17	100.0	0	0.0	3	17.6	14	82.4
Jimmie Åkesson	2	5.7	33	94.3	0	0.0	5	14.3	30	85.7
Ulf Kristersson	5	20.8	19	79.2	0	0.0	8	33.3	16	66.7
Left party	1	6.3	15	93.8	0	0.0	1	6.3	15	93.8
Ebba Busch	3	15.0	17	85.0	0	0.0	7	35.0	13	65.0
Total	18	8.6	191	91.0	1	0.5	38	18.1	172	81.9

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent says if the posts are portraying family members, private events or neither

Tabell 13.2. Frequency and percentage over the number of unrelated posts that portray family members, pets, relatives or close private friends or private events

| | Family members | | | | | | Private events | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Don't know | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	2	9.5	19	90.5	0	0.0	3	14.3	18	85.7
Isabella Lövin	1	4.5	20	90.9	1	4.5	2	9.1	20	90.9
Per Bolund	1	5.9	16	94.1	0	0.0	6	35.3	11	64.7
Annie Lööf	12	70.6	5	29.4	0	0.0	14	82.4	3	17.6
Nyamko Sabuni	0	0.0	13	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	100.0
Jimmie Åkesson	3	9.1	28	84.8	2	6.1	10	30.3	23	69.7
Ulf Kristersson	6	20.7	22	75.9	1	3.4	11	37.9	18	62.1
Left party	1	2.7	36	97.3	0	0.0	5	13.5	32	86.5
Ebba Busch	4	20.0	16	80.0	0	0.0	7	35.0	13	65.0
Total	30	14.4	175	83.7	4	1.9	58	27.8	151	72.2

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent says if the posts are portraying family members, private events or neither

Table 13.1 details the frequency and percent of the Corona-related posts which contain family members or private events. In the table, the category "family members" also contains pets, relatives and close private friends. Family members and private events are more common in posts unrelated to the Coronavirus.

The Mann-Whitney U-test demonstrated that no matter if the posts are about the Coronavirus or not, there is still a significant difference between number of likes for

private events, as these posts score a higher number of likes if private events are present in the posts. For the category family members, it only showed a significant difference for the non-Corona related posts, were the number of likes was higher for the posts containing family members.

4.9. Important non-political information

Table 14. Frequency and percentage over number of posts which contain important non-political information

| | Corona related posts | | | | Non-Corona related posts | | | |
| | Present | | Absent | | Present | | Absent | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Stefan Löfven	45	81.8	10	18.2	9	42.9	12	57.1
Isabella Lövin	16	84.2	3	15.8	10	45.5	12	54.5
Per Bolund	12	70.6	5	29.4	5	29.4	12	70.6
Annie Lööf	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	0.0	17	100.0
Nyamko Sabuni	7	41.2	10	58.8	2	15.4	11	84.6
Jimmie Åkesson	13	37.1	22	62.9	0	0.0	33	100.0
Ulf Kristersson	10	41.7	14	58.3	3	10.3	26	89.7
Left party	4	25.0	12	75.0	7	18.9	30	81.1
Ebba Busch	8	40.0	12	60.0	3	15.0	17	85.0
Total	121	57.6	89	42.4	39	18.7	170	81.3

Note 1: Due to rounding, the numbers do not add up to 100% exactly
Note 2: Present and absent means if the posts are containing important nonpolitical information or not

Important non-political information was a prominent feature of Corona-related posts. Differences between the accounts do however remain large. Every party leader published less important non-political information in their posts unrelated to the Coronavirus. Both Annie Lööf and Jimmie Åkesson did not publish any posts with important information in their posts unrelated to the Coronavirus.

The difference in likes between posts containing important information and those without is significant in both types of posts, where the number of likes is significantly higher if the posts do not consist of important non-political information.

4.10. Characteristics of posts

Lastly, figure 3 summarizes the make-up and characteristics of the Corona- and non-Corona related posts published by all accounts. It should be understood as such; out of 210 Corona-related posts, 169 posts featured the party leader, 60 posts named a state agency and so on. For example, a Corona-related post tended to feature the party leader, party politics as well as important non-political information. A non-Corona related post was likely to present the party leader, party politics and family members and/or a private event.
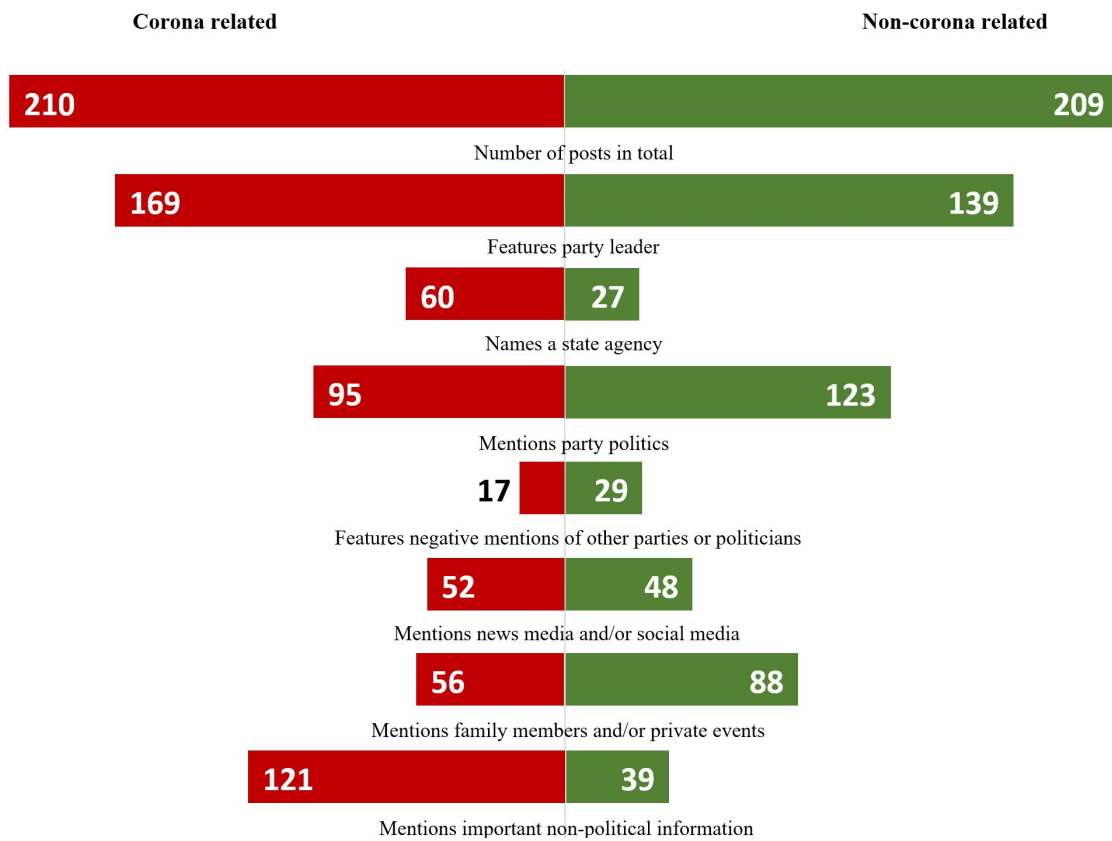
Figure 3. Characteristics for different posts related to the Coronavirus and unrelated posts

Following is a summary of the results of the Mann-Whitney U-test. The Corona related posts which received a significantly higher number of likes did not feature the party leader, used negative statements about other politicians or parties, mentioned a private event, and/or did not state any important non-political information. Unrelated posts which did not express party political rhetoric, featured private events and/or family members, and/or did not mention any important non-political information statistically gained more likes.

5.   Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this paper is to examine Swedish Party Leaders' actions during a time of crisis, using the manifestation and effects of the evolving Coronacrisis as an example. In our discussion, we first underline and discuss some important findings in our results, while simultaneously considering our results in comparison to our literature review. After this, we present conclusions and some suggestions for practical use. Lastly, we review the limitations and some possible criticisms of our study. Important to note regarding our analyses and conclusions is, again, that they pertain only to our study yet could potentially support the empirical findings of future scholarly research.

5.1.   Discussions of results and correspondence with literature review

This section is organized based on the themes we found to be the most critical in the literature review, namely crisis communication and personalization. Circling around these themes, we discuss the results of our study and their correspondence with the previous literature.

5.1.1.   Crisis communication by Swedish party leaders on Instagram

In a time of crisis, people tend to depend on news media for information and updates from the government or other authorities (Graber, 2005). We would argue that this has changed as the importance of social media has grown and that voters consume more news through social media today (Oskarsson & Strömbäck, 2019). During this crisis, the government could communicate itself directly to the public rather than having to do it through the news media. Having previously used Instagram to inform and broadcast to voters earlier, one could expect that party leaders should have been able to do the same with crisis communication. The timing of the party leaders' posts is therefore of interest to us.

We note that the posts which mention and discuss the Coronavirus generally increase as the examination period continues, most likely due to the increasing amount of COVID-19 cases and deaths in Sweden. Easter and other bank holidays were included in the last week of the examination period, which could possibly explain the sudden decrease. The appearance of posts which are unrelated to the Coronavirus decreased sharply after the middle of March, possibly indicating the increased severity of the situation. Even though the first case of the Coronavirus in Sweden was verified on January 31st (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020a), the Coronavirus was not mentioned in the politicians' Instagram accounts until more than a week later. On Feb 1st, the Swedish government classified the Coronavirus as "an illness that is dangerous

to society" (Krisinformation, 2020). Nonetheless, no party leader commented on that in an Instagram post. One of the dates with the most posts, March 16th, corresponds with the declared community transmission announcement from the Swedish Public Health Agency (Folkhälsomyndigheten Sverige, 2020). March 11th, the day of the first Swedish death due to COVID-19 and when WHO declared the virus a pandemic (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020b; Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020c), caused a lower number of Corona posts, compared to the week after. Other days with many Corona related posts, March 22th and April 2nd, do however not correspond to an important announcement. One could imagine the party leaders continued discussing the virus and the seriousness of the situation, even in days without announcements from the Swedish Public Health Agency. However April 9th, the day of 1000 deaths having occurred due to COVID-19, did not achieve as many posts as the previous intervals. We therefore conclude that there is no clear correlation between important developments in the Coronavirus crisis and the party leaders' frequency of Instagram posts.

The Prime Minister stands out as the one who consistently published the most posts featuring the Coronavirus, possibly due to his role. He posted close to twice as many posts as in the same time period in 2019. The Prime Minister's account was the only one of two to experience a higher mean of likes on Corona-related posts. The Left Party also had a higher mean of likes on Corona-related posts. All other party leaders, except Per Bolund, have a lower mean of likes on non-Corona related posts than related posts. Per Bolund has roughly the same mean of likes. This development could point to an increased number of followers of the Prime Minister's account, but as we do not have access to that kind of data, we cannot be certain. However, as the Prime Minister's account has not employed the methods the data identified as driving forces for a higher number of likes, that could indicate that the account has gained followers. Also, the algorithmic structure of Instagram could have caused the Prime Minister to be more prominently featured in other users' feed, especially given his increased number of posts. Increased exposure due to Instagram's algorithms to users who do not follow the Prime Minister could explain why the Corona-related posts reached more users and therefore received more likes.

Nonetheless, the higher mean of number of likes could point to an approval of the Prime Minister's performance. The increased trust in the Prime Minister as well as the government (Novus, 2020), alongside increasing likes and frequent posting on the Prime Minister's Instagram account, seems to point to an initial success in crisis communication. Ulf Kristersson also experienced higher levels of reported trust by the Swedish public but has a lower mean of likes in Corona related posts compared to unrelated posts and has a lower frequency of posts compared to 2019. Instagram has therefore seemingly been a tool effectively used by the Prime Minister. We do therefore conclude that the initial response to COVID-19 seems to have been viewed

more positively by the Swedish public than that of the tsunami crisis in 2004, which was deemed insufficient (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006).

Our data demonstrates that roughly one third of all party leaders' posts which are about the Coronavirus also mention a state agency, with some exceptions. Stefan Löfven mentioned state agencies most frequently. This could possibly be because the Prime Minister had more interactions with state agencies in both forming strategies for the Swedish government's action and legislative proposals. Ulf Kristersson and the Left Party are on the other side of the spectrum and named agencies in very few either Corona or non-Corona related posts. As Instagram has been a tool for communicating information to voters, one could have expected the party leaders to name more state agencies to pass on important information.

The results demonstrate that in the posts which did not mention the Coronavirus, the number of references to party political rhetoric was roughly 60%. Party political rhetoric was present in roughly half of every posts that mentioned the Coronavirus. One could have expected this number to be lower, as given the seriousness of the situation, it could be argued that party politics should be set aside. The high number of mentions of party political rhetoric could possibly be because the Coronavirus was at the center of the political discourse at the time of examination; there might not have been much discussion room for other policy issues. For example, the government did put regulations in place for the purpose of stimulating the economy, rather than having implemented them with ideological motivations. It is possible that these regulations would not have been argued for in a "normal" political climate. Instagram posts which addressed these regulations could have been considered party political by survey respondents, even though they did not address any issue that the government would have argued for in a non-Corona political context.

The amount of negative referencing to other parties' politics is rather low in Corona-related posts, meaning that most party leaders do not post negative views of other parties when referencing the Coronavirus. A noteworthy exception is Jimmie Åkesson, who criticises other parties in roughly one third of his Corona-related posts. There is more negativity towards other parties posted in non-Corona related posts, Jimmie Åkesson being the exception again. The low amount of criticism could possibly be the party leaders trying to exhibit rational, rather than emotional, behavior. Possibly, one could also argue that negative statements are inappropriate during a time of crisis. However, negative statements about other parties or politicians in Corona-related posts gained a higher number of likes, which could indicate that followers approve of some negativity.

Important non-political information appears to be a critical feature of Corona-related posts. Both the government party leaders as well as the party leaders of the

collaboration parties[20] are found to have posted around 70%, with the exception of Nyamko Sabuni who featured important information in less than half of her posts. Both the Prime Minister and the Vice Prime Minister were found to have the most posts with important information, which possibly could be explained by their roles. Important to note, as this is one question which could arguably contain a subjective assessment by the survey respondent, is that respondents could have interpreted any Corona-related information coming from the Prime Minister or any other party leader as important, no matter what the post actually said. That could explain the Prime Minister and Vice Prime Minister having a higher frequency of posts containing important information than other party leaders.

The literature review indicated that previously observed Spanish politicians during a time of crisis posted more emotional rather than rational content on Instagram. Our data set seems to indicate the opposite in a Swedish context. Important to note is therefore that there might be cultural and political differences between Sweden and Spain. In Corona-related posts, Swedish party leaders' posts reference state agencies, important non-political information and few negative statements about other politicians, which are arguably displays rationality rather than emotionality. Furthermore, family and private events, which could suggest emotionality, are largely missing from Corona-related posts and, to a lesser extent, non-Corona related posts. Several possible explanations exist, for example, the party leaders could be avoiding criticisms aimed at the government after the tsunami crisis in 2004. Also, by putting up a rational front, the party leaders could appear to be taking strong action.

5.1.2. Prevailing trends of personalization

Ekman and Widholm (2017) alongside Filimonov et al. (2016) agree that Swedish Parties have used Instagram to promote individual candidates, thereby furthering personalization processes. Content has been posted to promote and strengthen the "public personas" of candidates and to inform rather than mobilize voters (Ekman & Widholm, 2017; Filimonov, Russmann, Svensson, 2016). Our data collection demonstrates similar trends, even during a period of crisis. Out of the 210 posts that were related to the Coronavirus, a large majority of all party leaders' posts featured the party leader in the picture. The lowest noted presence was the Left Party, where Jonas Sjöstedt featured in only 18.8% of all posts. This could possibly be explained by the fact that Jonas Sjöstedt did not have a personal Instagram account at the time of data collection. The Left Party's account could feature less personalization than the other party leaders' accounts, simply because it is not a personal account. All other party leaders' presence on Instagram corroborates earlier results of ongoing focusing on individual politicians on the platform. It also demonstrates that this process continued during the developments of the Corona-crisis. However, it is interesting that Corona-

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[20] Collaboration parties to the government are the Center Party and the Liberals.

related posts which featured the party leader received a statistically significantly lower number of likes. That could point to followers disapproving of personalization during a crisis.

Another aspect of personalization is arguably the featuring of family members and private events in posts. In the posts which touched on COVID-19, a large majority featured neither family members nor private events. An exception is Annie Lööf, who was on parental leave during the examined time period which could explain her focus on family and private events. In the non-Corona related posts, both family members and private events are more heavily featured compared to the Corona-related posts. The mentions of both family members and private events is however consistently rather low throughout the whole examined time period. One could argue that this development has a rather simple explanation; politicians might not feel that it is appropriate or that it could appear insensitive to showcase their family or a private event during a crisis, similar to criticisms directed at the Foreign Minister during the tsunami in 2004. If this argument were to be true, the number of published posts containing family and/or private events should continue to decrease as the crisis progresses. As we have not examined posts published after April 14th, we cannot be sure.

The party leaders might not want to connect their families to reports on the virus, but instead showcase them when possible in a more positive light, similar to Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's use of Instagram (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). Nonetheless, one could argue that as the mentions of family or private events is consistently rather low during the examined time period, there is no conscious choice behind it. Possibly, Swedish party leaders just do not want to share too much of their private lives on Instagram. However, non-Corona related posts with mentions of family members and both kinds of posts containing private events gained a statistically higher number of likes. Annie Lööf, Ulf Kristersson, and Ebba Busch, the party leaders who feature their family and private events the most, could possibly be strategically using this to gain a higher number of likes on their posts.

5.1.3. General comments on the political use of Instagram

Another interesting aspect of the results is the low connection between the party leaders' Instagram posts and other posts on social media or news media. Corona-related posts make reference to other social media and news media in roughly every fifth post, except for Jimmie Åkesson's and Per Bolund's more frequent references to media and the Left Party's more frequent mentions of social media. Given the importance of Facebook in communicating with voters (Grusell & Jungselius, 2018), one could have expected party leaders to make more references through their Instagram accounts to Facebook posts or other kinds of social media. Also, as voters have started to consume more news through social media rather than through

newspapers or television (Oskarsson & Strömbäck, 2019), it is remarkable that politicians are not making more use of their Instagram channels in sharing and commenting news. Mentions of news media or social media did not bring a significant higher number of likes compared to not mentioning, which could possibly explain why party leaders were reluctant to post this kind of content. It is however possible that the party leaders used the stories function in Instagram to comment on and share news but as we did not examine the stories, we cannot be certain.

5.2.   Conclusions and implications for practical use

The main conclusions, which only pertain to our dataset, are summarized as follows:

- There was no clear correlation between announcements from the Swedish Public Health Agency in the Coronavirus crisis and the party leaders' frequency of Instagram posts; the number of posts continued to increase even in periods without announcements.
- The Prime Minister's account was one of two to see a higher mean number of likes of Corona-related posts compared to unrelated posts. Combined with a high frequency of posts and high levels of reported faith, the initial crisis communication by the Swedish Prime Minister on Instagram has ostensibly been successful.
- Party leaders did not frequently name state agencies during the examined time period.
- The party leaders continued posting party political content during the examined time period, meaning that party politics did not seem to deter crisis communication. However, it is possible that posts were considered party political by survey respondents, even though they did not address any issue that a party would have argued for in a non-Corona political context.
- Criticism of other party leaders or parties was largely missing from the posted content in both Corona-related and unrelated posts, Jimmie Åkesson's account being the exception. Negative statements in Corona-related posts was however associated with a higher number of likes.
- During the examined time period, most party leaders shared important non-political information. Posting important information is however not associated with a higher number of likes.
- Rationalism, rather than emotional content, seems to have been prevalent during the examined time period.
- Party leaders are frequently featured in both Corona-related and unrelated posts, which is arguably evidence of the occurrence of personalization processes even during the crisis. Being featured in a Corona-related post was nonetheless associated with a lower number of likes.

- Most party leaders avoided posting about private events or family members, largely in both Corona-related and unrelated posts. Featuring family members was however an indication of a higher number of likes in non-Corona related posts, and posts about private events achieved a higher number of likes, no matter if the post was Corona-related or not. Annie Lööf, Ulf Kristersson and Ebba Busch could be strategically posting much content of their family members or private events to gain likes and personalize their feeds.
- Party leaders could more proactively use Instagram posts as a way of sharing or commenting news or other social media entries.

These conclusions provide insights as to the use of Instagram for political communication during a crisis, an area in which there is a dearth of research. Also, these conclusions help document and preserve the developments of the Coronacrisis in Sweden. Lastly, these conclusions help shed light on Swedish party leaders' crisis communication and personalization.

Making recommendations for practical use of our results is a complicated task, especially given how our conclusions could only be expected to pertain to our data collection which describes one selected period in time. We would therefore like to emphasize that the following recommendations are speculative based on the patterns that we saw in our data, but we do not know that they are representative as there are no previous studies, to our knowledge, that can corroborate our results. Also, one should note that these recommendations are based on the assumption that the crisis communication has been successful, but one could argue that this could change as the situation continues to evolve. It could be considered too early to evaluate the crisis communication.

Based on what the party leaders published, marketing actors, especially in political marketing, should make sure to communicate frequently and rationally in a time of crisis. Naming authorities does not seem to be of great value, but posting important non-political information seems to be. Highlighting party politics does not seem to preclude communication during a crisis, but criticisms of other parties should be avoided. Private content, like family members or social events, should be limited. Continuing to feature a party leader or another important figure seems beneficial. However, if the focus is to gain likes, actors should avoid posting important non-political information but should mention private events in any kind of post. When addressing a crisis, actors should not feature themselves in posts and should express negativity. In posts unrelated to a crisis, mentioning family members and avoiding political issues are recommended strategies. Nonetheless, these implications are based on only the analyzed data.

5.3. Limitations and criticisms

Following are possible limitations and criticisms to the performed study, which are divided in theoretical and methodological aspects.

5.3.1. Theoretical limitations

It is important to keep in mind that all data as well as theory comprised in this study are a part of a relatively new area of interest to researchers. Seeing as the research area is unexplored, especially in a Swedish context, more substantial research over a longer period of time is needed to be able to provide more rigid or general conclusions. Also, given the differing political and cultural context all over the world, the results of this study cannot be generalized to apply all over the world. Results in studies like ours might only be generalized in similar countries, e.g. Scandinavia, but even then, persisting differences in political systems might preclude such comparisons.

Another important point to note is that our results are not congruent with the one study that had, however with a different purpose, studied politicians during a crisis. This calls into question the significance of our conclusions, but also further underscores that more scholarly attention should be paid to this area of political communication.

5.3.2. Methodological limitations

The risk of confirmation or author bias is ever present, especially when exploring such a complex and sometimes personal area such as politics. To limit this risk, we organized discussion in line with trends found in the literature review, thereby inhibiting our potential personal biases from altering the focus points. Also, we decided to let the coding be completed by people unfamiliar with the thesis. As 40 different respondents helped us code the different posts, there is likely a mix of both political and party affiliations among them, which helped limit any effects of possible personal opinions.

All data has to be evaluated knowing that the respondents were contacted based on their relationship to the authors. This could arguably constitute a form of convenience sampling, meaning that we chose the respondents and that we cannot be sure that their codings are representative (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 190). We cannot be completely certain that the coding would be the same if another method of choosing respondents had been employed. However, as the questions by design only asked for descriptive information, we do not have any reason to believe that there would be any difference. Questions which could arguably be more subjective inquired if the post mentioned party politics, negative statements about other parties or non-political important information. We deemed that the questions served a purpose and trusted our

respondents to keep an objective mindset. However, the arguably subjective nature of the questions is worth keeping in mind.

The time constraints placed on the study are another limitation. Following the developments of the Coronavirus for a longer period of time would have been of obvious interest to us to be able to document more and possibly draw stronger conclusions with a larger set of data. Also, knowing the number of followers lost or gained could have provided an interesting aspect in the discussion. Another possible course of action could have been to focus solely on the text attached to the Instagram posts, or perhaps analyze the body language or angles used in the photographs. We could also have included Facebook and Twitter as well, and possibly have compared the crisis communication across the platforms. However, as with all bachelor theses, the chosen limitations were deemed necessary.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix A - Boxplots detailing each party leaders' number of likes
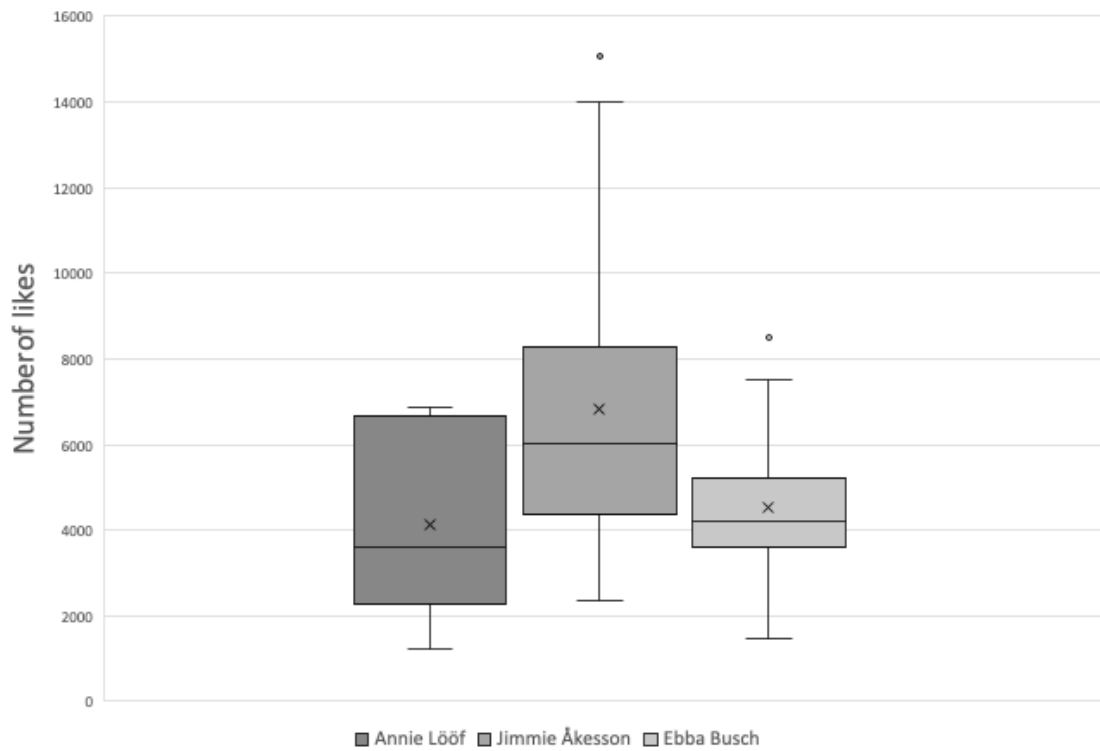

Figure 4.1. Boxplot over the distribution of likes for Corona related posts
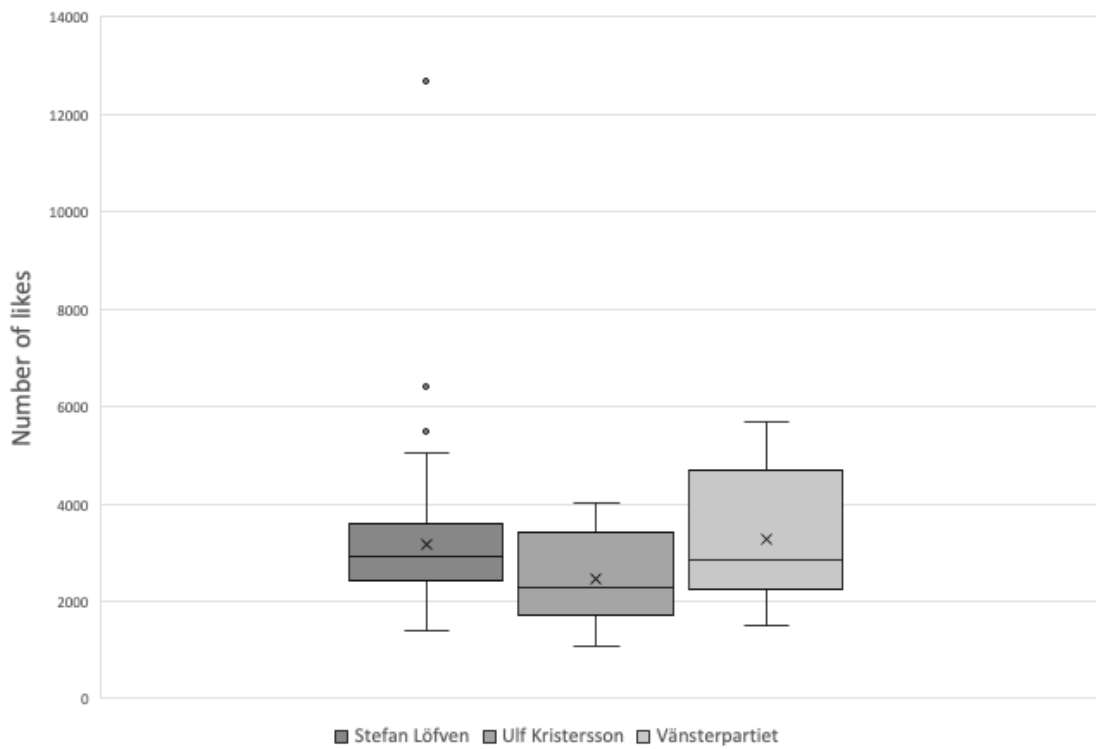
Figure 4.2. Boxplot over the distribution of likes for Corona related posts
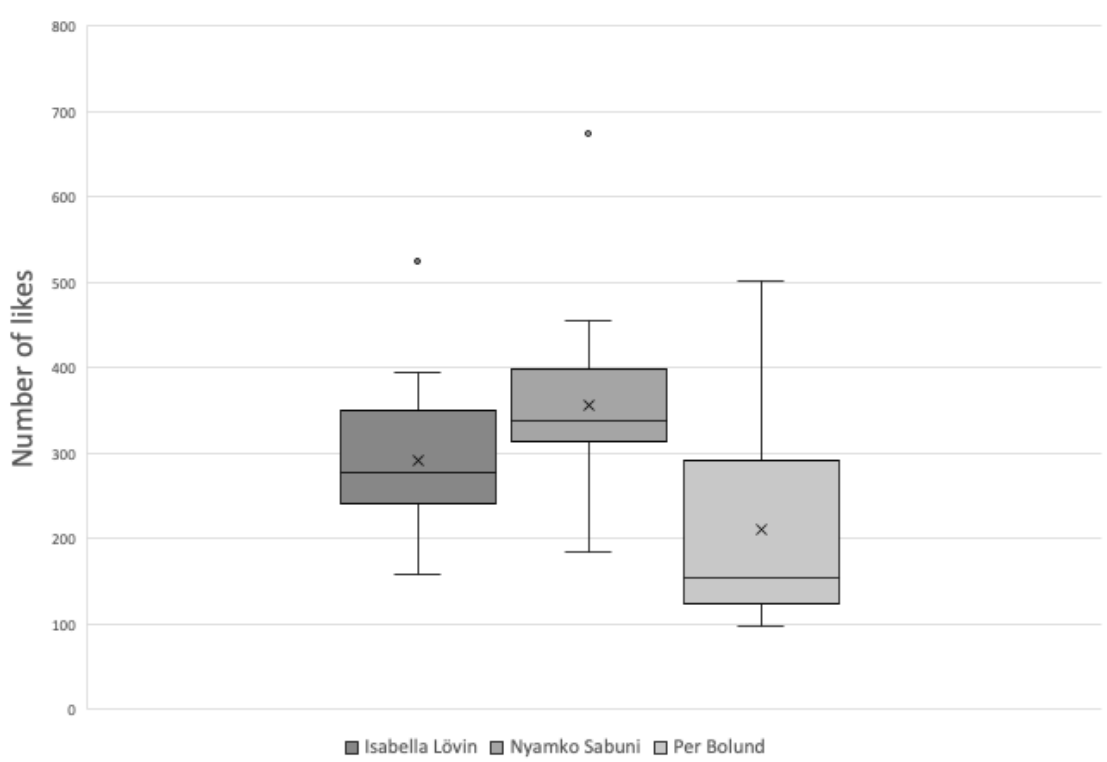

Figure 4.3. Boxplot over the distribution of likes for posts related to the Coronavirus
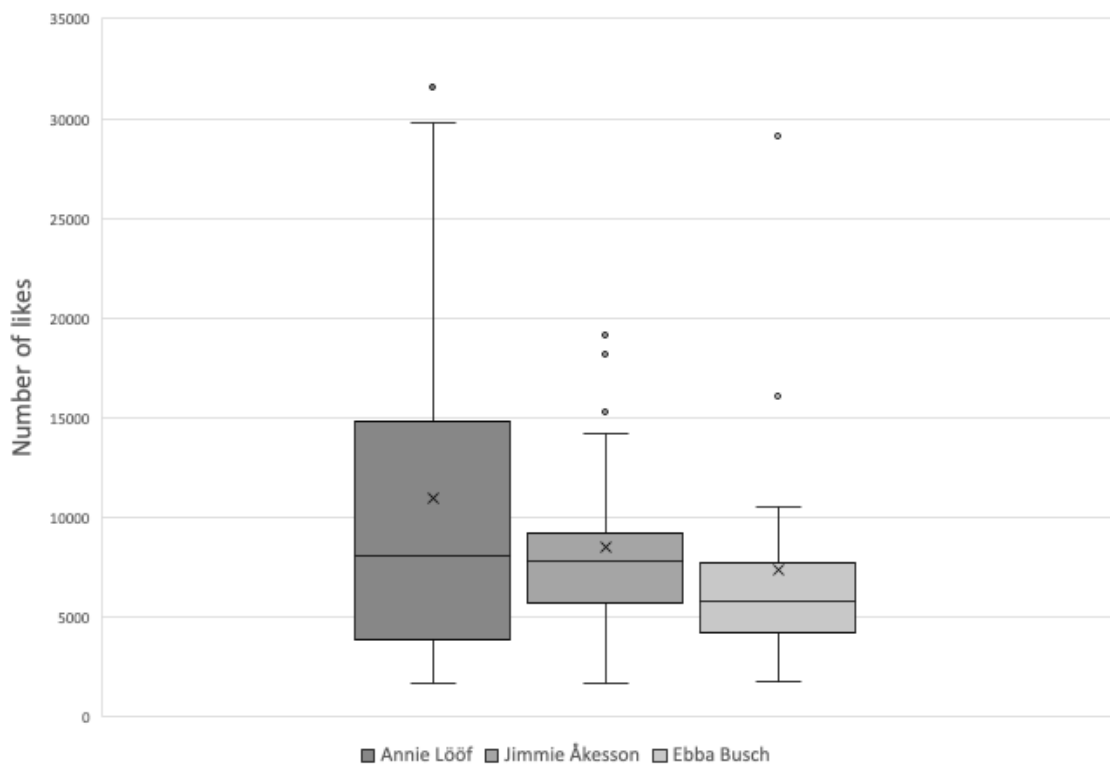
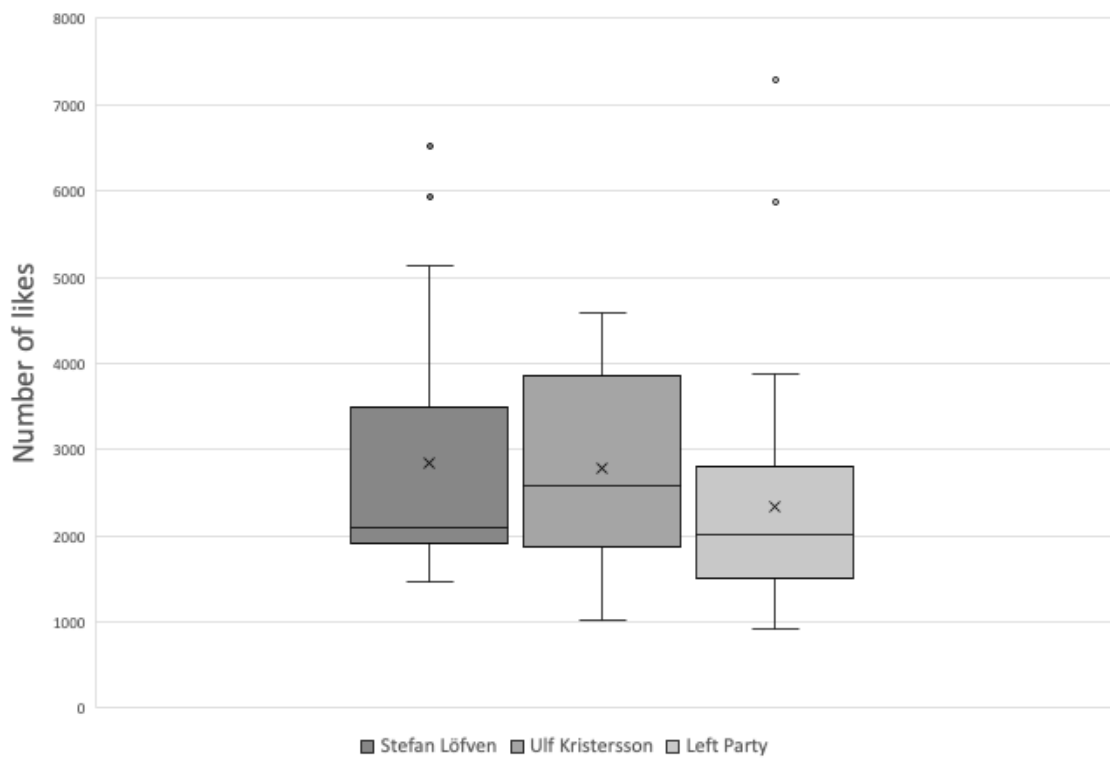**Figure 5.1.** Boxplot over the distribution of likes for posts not related to the Coronavirus

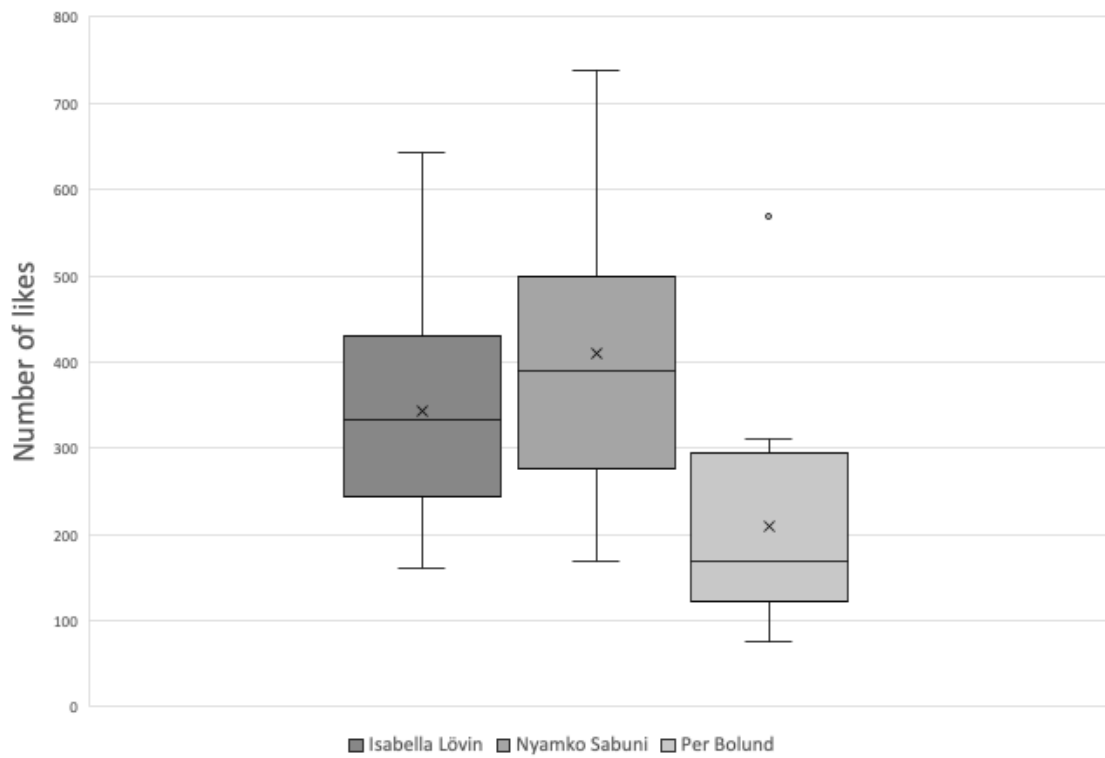**Figure 5.2.** Boxplot over the distribution of likes for posts not related to the Coronavirus

Figure 5.3. Boxplot over the distribution of likes for posts not related to the
Coronavirus

7.2. Appendix B - The distributed coding scheme

Hej!

Tack för att du är med och hjälper oss i vårt kandidatexamensarbete, det är väldigt värdefullt för oss. I vårt kandidatexamensarbete ska vi analysera hur partiledare och språkrör från riksdagspartierna agerar på Instagram och för att lyckas med det behöver vi din hjälp!

Du ska i denna enkät få analysera 4-5 inlägg från olika politikers instagramkonton. Du kommer att få ta del av olika instagraminlägg som du sedan ska svara på frågor om. Det kommer ta cirka 20 minuter att slutföra denna enkät.

Du ska svara på frågor utifrån vad du ser, hör och läser i de olika inläggen. Alla resultat kommer att redovisas anonymt och vi ber dig att svara utifrån den kunskap och perception som du själv har. På nästa sida finns vidare instruktioner.

Det är viktigt att du läser frågorna noggrant och slutför enkäten. Du ta en eller flera pauser om du vill, enkäten är inte tidsbegränsad.

Som tack för hjälpen skänker vi också 5 kr per genomförd enkät till barncancerfonden.

/Alicia & Elise

→

Inlägg 1

Klicka här för att komma till instagraminlägget.

Ovan är instagraminlägget som du ska analysera utifrån nedanstående frågor. Tryck på länken så att du kan ha inlägget framför dig under tiden du svarar på frågorna.

Läs följande instruktioner **noga**:

- Besvara nedanstående frågor utifrån **hela** inlägget dvs. bild eller video och text.
- Vissa inlägg innehåller fler än 1 bild/video, analysera då bara den bild/video som kommer när du trycker på länken till inlägget. *Dvs. bläddra ej bland inläggets bilder.*
- Scrolla högst upp i listan till höger om inlägget för att komma till inläggets text. Kommentarer ska EJ analyseras.
- Är inlägget en video, analysera då bara filmen fram tills dess att den är slut, dvs klicka ej på "fortsätt titta" när filmen stannat.
- För att se antal gilla-markeringar vid en video så klicka på antal visningar, då får du upp hur många likes inlägget har fått.
- Hör inlägget till Vänsterpartiet är det Jonas Sjöstedt som hamnar i fokus och benämns som partiledare under nedanstående frågor.
- Datum hittar du i mindre ljusgrå text under antal gilla-markeringar.
- Du kan däremot söka upp olika namn/taggar som dyker upp i inläggen för att se personens titel och/eller tillhörande parti för att kunna svara på frågorna enklare.
- Du kan ta hur många pauser du vill under tiden

Innan du börjar vill vi bara ge dig följande information:
Jonas Sjöstedt är partiledare för **Vänsterpartiet**
Ulf Kristersson är partiledare för **Moderaterna**
Annie Lööf är partiledare för **Centerpartiet**
Stefan Löfven är partiledare för **Socialdemokraterna**
Ebba Busch är partiledare för **Kristdemokraterna**
Nyamko Sabuni är partiledare för **Liberalerna**
Jimmie Åkesson är partiledare för **Sverigedemokraterna**
Isabella Lövin och **Per Bolund** är språkrör för **Miljöpartiet**

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Antal gilla-markeringar på inlägget (**OBS!** EJ antal visningar):

Datum när inlägget publicerades:

Antal personer som visas i bilden/filmen: *(De som räknas som personer är de som du kan se delar eller hela ansiktet av alternativt hel-/halvkroppsbilder, bak- eller framifrån, som tydligt ska vara en person. E.x om Ebba Busch lägger upp en bild på hennes barn bakifrån)*

Syns partiledaren som äger kontot på bilden?

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Vad är det för typ av bild?

○ Professionellt tagen bild   ○ Film

○ Bild ej tagen av professionell fotograf   ○ Annan

○ Selfie (kan vara fler än 1 på bilden)

Handlar inlägget om Corona/Covid-19? *(Ex. tar upp åtgärder gjorda p.g.a Coronaviruset)*

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Nämns, syns eller blir någon statlig myndighet representerad i inlägget? *(Ex. Folkhälsomyndigheten, Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB), polisen eller liknande)*

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Handlar inlägget om att framföra politik som partiet står för/driver?

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Innehåller inlägget andra svenska politiker som tillhör samma parti som ägaren av instagramkontot? *(Ex. att Ebba Busch nämner kristdemokraternas partisekreterare)*

○ Nej   ○ Vet ej
○ Ja

Innehåller inlägget andra svenska politiker som **INTE** tillhör samma parti som ägaren av instagramkontot? *(Ex. att Annie Lööf lägger upp en bild med Nyamko Subani)*

○ Nej   ○ Vet ej
○ Ja

Innehåller inlägget andra svenska **partier** som partiledaren **INTE** är medlem i? *(Ex. Isabella Lövin nämner regeringen i sitt inlägg)*

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Innehåller inlägget internationella politiker eller partier? *(Ex. att Jonas Sjöstedt nämner Tysklands förbundskansler Angela Merkel)*

○ Nej   ○ Vet ej
○ Ja

Uttrycker sig inlägget negativt om andra partier eller politiker?

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Innehåller inlägget partipolitiska event? *(Ex. partikongress, torgmöten etc.)*

○ Nej   ○ Ja

←   →

Innehåller inlägget någon form av media? *(Ex. nyhetsartiklar, nämnanden av journalister eller tidningar)*

◯ Nej   ◯ Ja

Refererar inlägget till eller handlar inlägget om någon form av sociala medier? *(Ex. refererar till annat instagraminlägg eller post på annan social media)*

◯ Nej   ◯ Ja

Innehåller inlägget en eller flera kändisar? *Om personen kan klassificera sig inom fler än 1 kategori, välj då det alternativ som stämmer bäst in på personen.*

☐ Nej   ☐ Atlet

☐ Skådespelare   ☐ Kulturell profil

☐ Artist   ☐ Kunglighet

☐ Influencer   ☐ Annat

Innehåller, refererar eller handlar inlägget om personliga/privata eller vardagliga händelser och berättelser? *(Ex. handla på mataffären, familjemiddagar eller förlossningsberättelser)*

◯ Nej   ◯ Ja

Porträtterar/handlar inlägget om någon familjemedlem, husdjur, släkting eller nära privat vän, såsom make/maka, barn eller syskon?

◯ Nej   ◯ Vet ej

◯ Ja

Innehåller inlägget "vanliga" människor såsom arbetare, barn eller äldre? *(Ex. människor som **ej** klassas som politiker eller kändisar)*

◯ Nej   ◯ Vet ej

◯ Ja

Innehåller inlägget allmänna **samhällsevenemang och -dagar** såsom Pride, Internationella kvinnodagen, strejker osv.

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Innehåller inlägget samhällsviktig information som ej är partipolitisk och som alla bör ta del av?

○ Nej   ○ Ja

Handlar inlägget om den ideella sektorn?

○ Nej   ○ Ja

←   →

If you want the coding scheme in English, or want to access the unpublished data, feel free to contact us through either 24130@student.hhs.se or 24081@student.hhs.se.