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Title:

Crisis communication in the time of COVID-19 - leadership in Scandinavian countries

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Abstract

Our dissertation explores a content analysis of social media data posted by the Scandinavian Prime Ministers on Facebook and Twitter in the times of COVID-19. Through this, we created the following research questions: How have the Scandinavian Prime Ministers' used social media during the COVID-19 outbreak to communicate with their citizens? Furthermore, to what extent can we discuss a common Scandinavian approach to adopting social media as a tool in the Prime Ministers' crisis communication during COVID-19?

We created these research questions to help us understand the intersection between crisis communication and social media.

The social media posts were examined in the terms of Boins five frame functions on persuasive narratives. Which include; A) Offering a credible explanation of what happened, B) Offering guidance, C) Instilling hope, D) Showing empathy, E) Suggests that leaders are in control. Along with Weber's ideal types on authority.

Our analysis revealed two significant findings, one a similarity between how the Prime Minister of Norway has had a similar approach to both the Prime Minister of Sweden and Denmark when adapting social media as a tool in their crisis communication during Covid- 19. Second, we observed few differences between the Swedish and the Danish Prime Ministers' way of implementing social media in their crisis communication throughout the pandemic.

We conclude our dissertation that all three Scandinavian Prime Ministers have adopted social media differently during the times of COVID-19, emphasizing on different key factors to make sense of the crisis. In other words, we see no common Scandinavian model for crisis communication.

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Introduction

There is no definite definition to what a crisis is, and it can vary greatly depending on the topic of interest in a research project. A widely used definition in the social sciences was presented by Charles Fritz (1961:655). He defines a crisis as: "An event, concentrated in time and space, in which a community, or a relatively self-sufficient subdivision of a society, is exposed to severe danger and incurs such great losses concerning its members and infrastructure that the social structure is disturbed and the fulfillment of all or some of the basic functions of society are hindered" (Engen et al., 2016). While some define it like this, Arjen Boin defines it as the following: "critical junctures in the lives of systems – times at which their ability to function can no longer be taken for granted" (Boin et al., 2016). Further in our dissertation, we will apply Boin's definition of crisis. It points to the threat to a system regardless of time and space, like in Fritz`s definition, where crisis management can be interpreted as handling irregularity and unwanted events such as natural disasters. In the matter of a global crisis like COVID-19, where the threat varies across national borders, it is therefore essential to have as broad of a definition as possible.

However, the way we perceive crises has changed drastically over the past decades. New threats and the complexity of the ones already existing are ever-changing and developing. This development also applies not only to us as the public and how we communicate but also to how leaders communicate during crises. How one collects, processes, and disseminates information addressing the crisis are the key features of crisis communication. Being able to communicate in the right way during and after a crisis, either if it affects a firm, organization, individuals, or a government, can determine the overall outcome of the situation and the impact of those affected. For leaders to make sense of a crisis, crisis communication is used as a tool that includes collecting and processing information for crisis team decision-making and creating and disseminating crisis messages to people outside of the team and the public (Coombs et al., 2010).

On the 31st of December, Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province. During the first few months of 2020, it became clear that the unknown disease was in the same family as the SARS virus from 2002 and was later named SARS-CoV-2, also known as COVID-19. After a few months, the virus had spread to different parts of the world; on the 11th of March 2020, more than 118,000 cases in 114

countries had been discovered, and WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, which they define as "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" (WHO, 2020). At this point, it was, therefore, crucial that the world leaders would set effective public health measures in motion to limit human-to-human transmission. The government adopted effective crisis communication, and awareness, measures, and restrictions were mediated through various media channels to prevent the spreading of the virus.

Leaders worldwide adapted social media to rapidly and directly communicate news and statements on COVID-19 with the public. In a crisis, social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook function as an effective tool, reaching out to billions of people at the same time. Among those who adopted social media were the leaders of the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are characterized by a similar political structure, considering they are all unitary states and are all constitutional monarchies. They are described as highly democratic and have a similar welfare approach with common traits on equality, economic prosperity, employment, housing, health, social security, education, and these issues' achievements (Fritzell, 2001).

Despite the countries' many similarities, the different leaders have shown different approaches to crisis communication, using Twitter and Facebook various functions to communicate with their citizens. Our work will investigate the current Prime Ministers of the Scandinavian countries, Erna Solberg, Stefan Löfven, and Mette Frederiksen's way of adapting social media to communicate during the pandemic.

Reason of choice

During the Covid- 19 pandemic, social media has become a defining tool in most people's lives to communicate and interact with others as social distancing has been incorporated in our daily life to prevent the spreading of the virus. The continuous digital development and the increased use of social media by the common public have made it necessary for public actors to reorganize their communication strategies.

Just as technology has evolved during the past decade, so has the way we use social media. Social media platforms such as Twitter had the purpose as a microblogging platform when it first launched back in 2006 and is now widely used for various purposes, including news distribution and consumption (Mitchell & Page, 2014). Using social media, as an online news

distributor in a situation such as a pandemic, open up for two-way communication where the recipient can not only read but also interact and share the content being published with other users. The increased use of social media platforms to share news, from both official news outlets and private users, has made it possible to share health-related content to billions of people in under a second, easy to access at any given time. Therefore, social media has been a crucial tool for these actors, such as the health sector and the different governments, to spread messages on Covid- 19 in addition to the traditional media.

As a part of the recipient group, the increased use of social media and how one uses social media to communicate messages to the public has been interesting to observe during the past year. Most importantly, how the world leaders have done precisely this. When a crisis such as the Covid- 19 pandemic occurs, effective and clear communication between those in charge and the public is significant to make sense of an uncertain situation.

At the beginning of 2020, the Covid- 19 was something unknown to all of us. It became a challenging start to the new year, with different fields working together, figuring out how to handle the unknown virus and control the crisis.

However, how did they use social media to do exactly this?

Research question
Considering COVID-19 is an ongoing crisis with still limited research, we created the following research question that we aim to answer throughout our dissertation.

RQ1: How have the Scandinavian prime minister's used social media during the COVID-19 outbreak to communicate with their citizens?
RQ2: To what extent can we discuss a common Scandinavian approach to adopting social media as a tool in the Prime ministers' crisis communication during COVID-19?

With these research questions, we aim to gain knowledge and information on the Scandinavian leaders' use of the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook and which strategies they have endorsed for communication purposes through these platforms in particular, and if one can talk about a common Scandinavian approach.

Contextualisation

In this section, we describe the context we have based our research and research questions on. It will also help understand what circumstances have affected the different results and observations that may have originated from and the other way around. However, this will not be included as a direct factor in our research.

The quality of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish health care services is high compared with many other European countries. Almost all Scandinavian hospitals are public and run by regional health enterprises with quite a large degree of autonomy. They are taxation-based- and administered, with every citizen having equal access to services at any time necessary, due to the Scandinavian welfare model (Fritzell, 2001). The welfare these Scandinavian countries provide to their citizens also includes economic safety agreements, which were implemented throughout the time period to support businesses that had to close down due to lockdown measures and to those who lost their work due to the pandemic. The Norwegian public administrative body, under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, Lånekassen, provides loans and grants for Norwegian pupils to make education accessible to anyone. During the pandemic, they have offered additional grants and loans for students who have lost their part-time job or a drop in income due to the pandemic (Lanekassen, 2020).

However, if we look past the countries' many similarities, the pandemic has affected them differently, and their response has differed. On the 26th of February 2020, Covid- 19 confirmed to have spread to Norway. The number of cases increased rapidly during March, thereby necessitating several safety measures to achieve physical distancing to be introduced on the 12th of March to increase the spreading of the virus. The first death related to COVID-19 was reported on the same day. Most confirmed cases traced to outside Norway were Norwegian tourists returning from Austria and Italy (Aftenposten, 2020; VG, 2021). As of the 9th of May 2021, Norway has performed over 5 330 000 tests, reported over 115 410 reported cases, and a total of 767 deaths (FHI, 2021). In addition, on the 5th of May, a total of 1 779 600 million vaccination doses have been distributed (FHI, 2021).

In addition to Norway and many other European countries, Sweden has had a somewhat different response to the Covid- 19 virus. Stefan Löfven has, unlike most countries, pursued an approach emphasizing the economic effects of the pandemic, only implementing lenient

restrictions such as social distancing measures banning only large gatherings and travel restrictions, while restaurants and bars have kept open. Later in December 2020, Löfven announced new and tougher restrictions and social distancing measures, including recommending the use of face masks in public transportation and a lockdown of all non-necessary public services (The local, 2020). The Prime Minister later passed on a new pandemic law allowing lockdown measures (Nordlund, 2021). As of the third of May 2021, Sweden has reported over 1 007 792 reported cases and a total of 14 173 deaths (WHO, 2021).

Denmark, however, has had a similar approach as Norway and development of restrictions and lockdowns. On the 11th of March 2021, Prime Minister Frederiksen announced significant restrictions. As well as the Norwegian Prime Minister, Fredriksen, implemented strong restrictions measures such as limiting all travels and other measures to practice social distancing. Frederiksen was, as Solberg, among the first European leaders implementing lockdown measures on the 13th of March (Metro, 2020). This action was taken 15 days after a case of Covid- 19 as discovered in Denmark in February (TV 2, 2020). Today, Denmark has performed 4 775 903 tests against the virus, reported over 257 505 cases and a total of 2495 deaths (SST, 2020).

Clarification of concepts
Timothy Coombs – Situational crisis communication theory

During a crisis, organizations and institutions tend to make their reputational situation worse. However, through research, it is possible for these actors to rely on tested methods rather than speculations and what-ifs on the best communication strategies. One of the most central people in crisis communication theory is Timothy Coombs, with his theory on situational communication theory.

A crisis will always, no matter the outcome, be a negative experience, where stakeholders and the ones affected seek understanding of the crisis and to attribute someone a responsibility. Was the organization the root of the crisis, or was it simply an accident? This attribution of responsibility is the core and what shapes situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007).

SCCT is based on two parts, the first being the general type of crisis your organization is encountering. Coombs divided such crises into three different sub-categories, here we will focus

on a crisis that Coombs defines as accidental; where there is still minimal responsibility, but there are other factors that contributed to the crisis (example in video; weather). The third and last type is the preventable crisis; where the organization is judged as fully responsible and at fault for the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Based on this SCCT recommends a base response that reaches across all types of crisis composed in two parts: The first is to help people prevent further harm – you need to provide information to your stakeholders that they can use to protect themselves from the crisis. The second response is to help people cope psychologically through correct information and tell people what you as an organization will do to prevent another crisis or further harm. Under this category, the expression of sympathy is central (Coombs, 2007).

As responsibility increases, an organization must respond in kind. However, suppose you are in a preventable crisis with complex aftermaths such as death. In that case, you need to make sure that you are accommodative and focus your response on helping the victims and taking responsibility beyond the base responses (Coombs, 2007).

Facebook

Facebook is a social media and blogging platform which can be accessed from devices with Internet connection, such as computers, tablets and smartphones from all over the world. After registering, users can create a profile with information about oneselves where one hey can post text, photos and multimedia which is shared with any other users that have agreed to be one's "friend", or, with a different privacy setting, with any reader. Organisations, public personalities and corporations can also create Facebook pages where the audience can like and follow the page, and be updated on news and announcements from the organisation (Britannica, 2020). Facebook said that it had 2.8 billion monthly active users as of December 2020. According to statcounter, a web traffic analysis website, approximately 67.8% of the Norwegian population uses the platform, while 80.27% of the Swedish population and 63.07% of the Danish population (Statcounter, 2021).

Rational choice theory

Rational choice theory is primarily used in social sciences and economics. One of the central figures here is Adam Smith, one of the first economists to establish the foundation for rational choice theory. RCT states how individuals use calculations to make rational choices and achieve

outcomes aligned with personal interests. Within the current limitations, the actor will choose the option that gives the best outcome, given their wishes and perceptions. "Best" in the sense of what the possible actor believes is the most efficient means to satisfy their wishes. And not because of tradition, habit, or the right way: not because one was confused, but because the choice was deliberately willed. In other words, methodological individualism (Scott, 2000). An example on RCT could be the well renowned prisoner's dilemma used in game theory presented by A.W. Tucker. Here two prisoners have the opportunity to shorten their sentence if they surrender the other party. Through rational choice it will always pay off to surrender to the other. However, if both act rational the overall situation will become irrational. This shows the conflict between individual and group rationality (Kuhn, 2019). This dilemma is also relevant when discussing leaders in a crisis. should one act in a way that benefits one's individual reputation and situation or for what is the best for the collective.

Selfie

A selfie can be described as a modified self- portrait, a photograph usually taken with smartphones or tablets, which may be held in the hand, with the camera lense pointing towards your face. Selfies has become a common term as social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram were launched as micro blogging platforms with functions such as being able to share photographs with your digital social network. Selfies are often casual in nature, or are supposed to look casual, in addition to press photos which are characterized by a more formal nature (Cambridge, 2020).

Social media

Social media refers to websites and applications designed to allow people to communicate and share information or content quickly, efficiently, and in real time, unlike how traditional media work. When referring to social media, one often refers to the applications such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as social media, but these are social media platforms. However, these platforms are most used as applications on your mobile device, which makes it more accessible for the user (Cambridge, 2020).

Twitter

Twitter is an American microblogging and social networking service on which users post and interact with messages known as tweets, limited to 280 characters of each post. In addition to characters, you can also post snippets and pictures. Registered users can post, like and retweet

tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users can access Twitter through its website or its application. The social media platform was launched in July 2016 and of the third quarter of 2020 187 million daily users worldwide (Britannica, 2020). While the social media platform is heavily used in the US, it is less used in the Scandinavian countries. According to statcounter, a web traffic analysis website 7.08% of the Danish population uses the platform, while 6.21% of the Norwegian population and 5.76% in Sweden is using Twitter (Statcounter, 2021).

Disposition

The thesis will further continue with a theory chapter where we will explain key theories that build around our research question. We will in this chapter refer to various factors in experience that may have an impact on the understanding of risk and hence attitudes to general armaments. Furthermore, we will present a method chapter that describes in more detail the procedure and the research design of the thesis.

Then we will present the informants and the empirical data, before we analyze this. Finally, we will answer our research questions stated in chapter ... based on our observations and findings.

Theory

We have, up until now, briefly clarified the terms of crisis and crisis communication. In this chapter, we will dive deeper into the concept of crisis communication and introduce the readers to Boin et al. five frameworks on persuasive narratives as a tool in crisis communication. In addition, we will also review Max Webers' three ideal types of authority. The implementation of crisis communication theories such as Boins frameworks and Coombs, as mentioned in the clarification of concepts, and practicing these, prepare a leader for a possible crisis. Social media and communication through platforms like Twitter can reach millions of people in a split second.

With the potential of such large crowds, it is clear that this comes with great power and responsibility, especially for leaders with a broad following. An example where such power has been abused was how former President of the USA Donald Trump encouraged his voters to riot against the election results in the 2020 presidential election, leading to the storming of capitol hill on January 6th, 2021 (Fuchs, 2021). Britannica defines communication as; *"Communication the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols"* (Gordon, 2020). The constant and ever-changing technological development has adjusted the way that

we define and perceive communication. Traditional media such as TV and radio have gained less influence, and social media has taken their place. The rise of social media has made it easier for organizations and leaders to control the spread of information. They are able to share statements and information without the influence of a critical press as it would be through traditional media such as television. When talking about crisis communication, it can be useful to adopt a communication model like David Berlo's model on traditional and classical linear explanation on communication with "Source – message – channel – receiver." Here the source and the receiver communicate through messages and channels. Adopting this model, which includes the term channel, allows us to include social media in the definition of communication, which is relevant to our dissertation (Berlo, 1960).

Such as the concept of crisis, crisis communication can be defined in several ways. However, as we stated in the introduction, we have chosen to use the definition that explains crisis communication as the process that includes collecting, processing, and disseminating information to address a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Timothy Coombs and Sherry Holladay portray the importance of how one, as a leader, should communicate with their peers and the public and adapt the communication to the situation (here: the crisis). The process of crisis communication especially applies to organizations and actors that are central when dealing with a crisis and serves as a tool where leaders can get input from the public.

Crisis communication gives people the opportunity to protect themselves (depending on what type of crisis) and sometimes saves lives. The dissemination can take the form of news alerts, press conferences, medical tips, posts on social media, etc. How and what information is disseminated will vary according to which crisis one is facing and which organization or state is experiencing it. Regarding COVID-19 - a national and internationally striking health crisis - there is a need for nationwide information dissemination where various channels are used. This contrasts with, for instance, a local natural disaster such as flooding, where SMS notifications are sent out to the people affected (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

Meaning & sense making – Boin et al.

Before leaders or organizations can initiate effective crisis communication, a thorough understanding of the crisis needs to be established. It is therefore crucial for those involved to have a common understanding of how one can make sence of the situation. To give a picture

on how the leaders post on their social media through the pandemic benefit from Arjen Boins theories on sensemaking. The five frameworks that Boin presents help us understand how meaning making by leaders during a crisis can be successful (You & Yu, 2019). By making use of the theory to code the posts we aim to analyse the Prime Minister's Facebook and Twitter posts and later we aim to use what we have discovered through characterizing these posts according to Boins frameworks to compare and draw conclusions from our findings.

Boin et al. explain that leaders and policymakers try to impose their definition and understanding of a crisis that best fits what they describe as a triangular relationship between political actors, the mass media, and the citizenry. Each of these "corners" of the triangle sends, receives, and perceives information about the crisis (Boin et al., 2016). If leaders fail to manage the meaning-making process, other actors will find a way to do so. This can create immense damage in controlling the public's information and the chance of a rise in conspiracy theories and false information spreading.

In terms of crisis communication sense-making is about disseminating this understanding of the crisis to the people and to help them also gain this understanding. Boin et al. explains that the best way for leaders to create meaning-making is by using persuasive narratives, personal and organizational credibility and providing effective risk communication. Throughout our research and discussion on the Scandinavian leaders we have chosen to only focus on the frame functions under the persuasive narratives to analyze the social media posts. The five frame functions recommended to be included are; A) Offering a credible explanation of what happened, B) Offering guidance, C) Instilling hope, D) Showing empathy, E) Suggests that leaders are in control (Boin et al., 2016). How we interpret these frames in our dissertation is showcased in the following table:

Table 1: Frame functions used to characterize the Scandinavian leaders posts on social media concerning COVID-19.

Frame functions	Interpretation
A: Offering a credible explanation	Concerns how the leaders and policymakers offer information concerning the status of the crisis

B: Offering guidance	Leaders and policymakers present ways that people can avoid spreading of the virus through using masks, having good hygiene etc.
C: Innstilling hope	Focuses on spreading positive and hopeful messages and statements for a successful problem-solving and a virus free future
D: Showing empathy	Empathizing with people and groups affected extra by the virus such as healthcare workers, people who have lost loved ones etc.
E: Suggests that leaders are in control	Leaders show that they have a strong role in the crisis management

Weber's ideal types of authority

We have, up until now, discussed the importance of leaders performing effective crisis communication when a crisis such as the Covid- 19 pandemic occurs (Coombs, 2007). However, for crisis communication to be effective, leaders such as the Scandinavian Prime Ministers must have authority so that the public will follow the restrictions put in action. To understand how the leaders perform authority and how it is legitimated, we will use sociologist Max Weber's theory on authority types (Gerth, Mills, & Weber, 1959).

Weber proposed in 1958 a theory of authority that included three ideal types. In his book "The three types of legitimate rule," he presents his three types of authority: legal-rational, traditional and charismatic. These are ideal types that help us understand how authority is legitimated. Through implementing Weber's ideal types, we aim to compare and discover similarities between how the Scandinavian Prime Ministers perform authority and gaining legitimacy, which is a crucial factor to understanding how they communicate, make meaning, and show a sense of control during crises (Boin et al., 2016). We aim to make use of Weber's ideal types when trying to understand and uncover the prime minister's leadership styles and ways of communicating with the public and draw lines between the three types of authority and the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish prime minister sense-making (Boin et al., 2016).

The first type of authority is *legal-rational*, which takes form through laws. This ideal type of authority is practiced through bureaucracy, where the actors are elected or appointed. It is not

the actor who upholds authority, but through the laws who choose them. The second type of authority is *traditional*, in which the rules and established authority are legitimated through the "tradition" of the law or the actor. The third type of authority takes form through *charisma*; here, the authority is legitimated through the person and their status or achievements.

Methodology

In our dissertation, we have performed a method of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; p. 45). A qualitative content analysis was performed to identify how the Scandinavian leaders have used social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Content analysis has mainly been used as a quantitative research method, with text data coded into explicit categories and then described using statistics (Morgan, 1993). However, this method recently has been discovered to be useful when analyzing qualitative data and quantitative data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1278). We have used content analysis to identify common patterns on the Scandinavian leaders ' posts during the pandemic through the collection and examination of empirical data (in this case, Facebook posts and Twitter messages).

COVID-19 has proven to be a complex and extensive crisis, as of this we chose to limit our study to the Scandinavian countries' leaders, representing Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. In addition to limiting our study to Erna Solberg, the current prime minister in Norway, Mette Fredriksen, the current prime minister in Denmark, and Stefan Löfven, the current prime minister in Sweden, we chose to only include posts from Twitter and Facebook due to these platforms frequency in use.With the Prime Minister's Facebook and Twitter posts as our objects of research we aim to compare and draw lines between the Scandinavian leaders' way of using social media as a tool in crisis communication. Apart from the three countries' similarities in social structures, the similarities between the Scandinavian languages has made it possible for us to access and collect all documents without language being a barrier in the process of our research.

We collected all the Facebook and Twitter posts published by the Scandinavian leaders throughout March 2020 to January 2021. We further examined our data and filtered out the parts that are not relevant to our research. The deriving data then composed of Facebook and Twitter posts mentioning Covid- 19 or topics related to COVID-19. In the process of collecting data, we decided to divide the time frame we were researching into different periods. Having

the three lockdowns put in place by the leaders during the period March 2020 to January 2021, we decided on the following periods; the middle of March- the middle of April, mid-August-mid-September dece and mid-December-mid January. However, this process was only beneficial to us when collecting the data because it gave us an overview of the development of their sense-making throughout the whole period of time while finding development in their crisis communication on the social media platforms. The Latter later showed not to be the case and will not be considered a relevant factor and not be considered further.

In order to answer our research questions, we will use a theory about crisis communication sense-making. Boin et al. explain that the best way for leaders to create meaning-making is by using persuasive narratives, personal and organizational credibility, and providing effective risk communication. First, we used Boin et al. five frameworks for persuasive narratives to code each Facebook and Twitter post collected. Then we analyzed and coded each post with colored labels, where each post could be categorized with several labels according to Boin et al. five frameworks; A) Offering a credible explanation of what happened, B) Offering guidance, C) Instilling hope, D) Showing empathy, E) Suggests that leaders are in control (Boin et al., 2016).

We had the opportunity to use various analytical data programs such as Nvivo, with coding functions, where the data program codes the data and captures pieces of the data that fall into a specific category, which in this case would be Boin et al. five frameworks. However, we decided to code the data according to each framework manually, which gave us the advantage of a broad, however thorough, view of the posts. We labeled each framework with a color showcased in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Frame functions labeled with colors to characterize the Scandinavian leaders posts on social media concerning COVID-19.

Boins five framefunctions	Coding lables
Offering a credible explanation	
Offering guidance	
Instilling hope	
Showing emphaty	
Suggests that leaders are in control	

Finally, we could code Facebook and Twitter posts including words or slogans such as "Alt blir bra" in Norwegian and Swedish, meaning "all get well," which we characterized as indicating hope were labeled with a blue tag. Facebook and Twitter posts mentioning government restrictions, explaining how one can practice social distancing to prevent the spreading of the virus were labelled with turquoise and orange tags. Twitter and Facebook posts including information about upcoming press conferences, life streams of the press conferences and links to the broadcasting of press conferences make up a great share of the Twitter and Facebook posts analyzed. However, the press conferences will not be examined as an independent variable, categorized under offering a credible explanation and offering guidance, coded with a turquoise and orange tag.

When we were done coding our data, we could analyzed the content more thoroughly. From this process, we discovered findings relevant to our research question and were able to draw lines to other literature that we had collected prior to and during our research. We looked at already existing research and articles relevant to our research question and used the combination of various keywords such as "crisis communication," "social media," "leadership," "leadership roles," "crisis management," "authority," and "Covid- 19". We mainly used the search engines "Oria" and "Google Scholar" when searching for theories and research articles. Using keywords such as these, we found other research conducted about Covid- 19 in relation to the other keywords. In addition, we also searched for literature from authors that were already known to us from previous courses such as "Traditional sociological perspectives," "New sociological perspectives," and "Crisis and Societal security" or recommended by our thesis advisor.

In order to get a broad understanding of the country's ongoing situation and put our findings into context, we also looked at various reports from the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish government and health department on death rates and infection rates considering the pandemic. Additionally, we used relevant online articles and news articles from Scandinavian news distributors. We also benefited from a significant number of global statistics from Statista presenting statistics of the Scandinavian countries' usage of Social media in which we were able to identify correlations between our findings and social media usage in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

Analysis & discussion

Our analyses revealed two significant findings, one a similarity between how the Prime Minister of Norway has had a similar approach to both the Prime Minister of Sweden and Denmark when adopting social media as a tool in their crisis communication during Covid- 19. Second, we observed few differences between the Swedish and the Danish Prime Ministers' way of implementing social media in their crisis communication throughout the pandemic. We will in this section discuss our observations as described continuously against the theory to present and compare our findings. As of this conclusion, we will in this chapter present the empirical data we have gathered from the Scandinavian countries' leader's social media platforms. In the presentation of the analysis, we will begin with addressing the leaders separately in the light of Boin et al. five frameworks for persuasive narratives. After that, we will use a comparative design to investigate further if the Scandinavian leaders have the same approach to crisis communication or have used social media differently.

Erna Solberg

It is clear that social media has been used rapidly by the Scandinavian leaders during the pandemic. As mentioned in the method chapter, Twitter is less used in Scandinavia. However, Solberg has turned to the platform to communicate news and updates with the Norwegian public considering Covid- 19. Their first post regarding COVID-19 was posted on the 24th of March, twelve days after Norway went into its first lockdown and thirteen days after WHO declared the virus a pandemic. Their personal Twitter account is mostly used for less formal posts, for instance, sharing how the workday has changed after the national measures have been implemented. Other personal statements shared are to give thanks to the people for partaking in work against the virus. Most of the posts mentioning COVID-19 are in an international context where the Norwegian Prime Minister shares updates regarding international relations and meetings with other world leaders. This can give the public a sense of hope by uniting beyond national borders, but it also illustrates that the leaders are in control (Boin et al., 2016). An example of these conversations was illustrated in the following post:

I had an excellent meeting today with Taoiseach @MichealMartinTD on current issues in the cooperation between Ireland and Norway, in particular #UNSC, @EUgreendeal, energy and the fight against #covid19

Twitter post, 28th of January, 2021

However, the prime minister's official Twitter account, @Erna_solberg, has not been used as the primary sender to disseminate information related to the pandemic. The account linked to the prime minister's office @statsmin_kontor, which seems to be run by a second party, is more diligently used in posts regarding the virus. The posts are formal and informative, and for the most part, are used to share further the work that the Prime Minister is doing in the management of COVID-19. The account has been specifically used to share links to press conferences and the Norwegian Prime Minister's statements. An illustration of such statements is given in the following post.

Prime Minister @erna_solberg and Minister of Health and Care @BentHHoyre will be holding a press conference at 14.00, where they will inform about new measures to fight the coronavirus. Follow the press conference here (...)

Twitter post, 12th of March, 2020

As previously stated, approximately 67.8% of the Norwegian public uses Facebook than 6.21% at Twitter (Statcounter, 2021). This is also reflected in the Norwegian Prime Minister's posting. Throughout the pandemic, Solberg has taken to Facebook to communicate directly with the public regarding the virus. Since the 12th of March, 2020, when the most comprehensive measures since the world wars are implemented, and Norway goes into complete lockdown, Solberg has been updating and communicating with the public daily. The lockdown happened rapidly, and it was a need for efficient communication with the public to prevent confusion, panic, and distrust. The press conference where these measures are implemented is broadcasted live on Facebook to ensure that the information is accessible to everyone. Here they offer a credible explanation and guidance as a way to keep the infection rates low (Boin et al., 2016). All through the pandemic, the press conferences are broadcasted live on the Prime Ministers Facebook page. This is showcased in the following post:

I am holding a press conference on new corona measures at 14:00. We must be prepared for that today we will implement the strongest and most restricting measures we have had in Norway in peacetime.

Facebook post, 12th of March, 2020

A further key aspect of Solberg's posts on Facebook and offering guidance is showing empathy and gratitude towards the Norwegian people. They share frequent posts solely dedicated to giving thanks. As early as the 14th of March, 2020, only two days after the beginning of the lockdown, they post a video with a speech showing empathy with the effects that the measures are going to have on our daily lives and the importance of unity by keeping a distance (Boin et al., 2016). In these posts, they speak to the nation as a whole. Except for essential workers, there is no societal group that gets highlighted more than others. Posts like these show themselves several times through the pandemic. Through their posts, they also point out the importance of trust between the people and the government. This trust could be strengthened through frequent updates and press conferences, but it could also be strengthened through emotional updates. They demonstrate this when they state the following:

Dear all. In times of crisis, we understand how dependent we are on each other. What unites us is more important than what divides us. This is not the time for "I". This is the time for "we".

Facebook post, 20th of March, 2020

We promised early on that if we were able to knock down the virus, we would open up again as soon as possible. In the face of strict measures, the Norwegian people have shown us confidence and patience. Now it's our turn to keep the promise we've made. Therefore, will the government today present a strategy and a plan for how we will reopen Norway before the summer. A plan to take back our everyday life.

Facebook post, 7th of May, 2020

In times of crisis, it can be challenging to unite an entire nation and ensure that everyone affected feels heard and seen. Throughout the pandemic, the Norwegian Prime Ministers adopted several initiatives to answer as many questions and worries from a broad spectrum of

the public. One of the initiatives is a question and answer, where they answer the public's questions from the comment section on their Facebook. By hosting such events, they offer a thorough explanation directly to the people whom it concerns rather than the press and other media doing it (Boin et al., 2016). Such initiative happens several times during the pandemic. They also take time to comment back to people under their daily posts. Further, this can also strengthen the trust between the public and the government by being accessible and personal. Another initiative that Solberg has taken to use is hosting separate press conferences for children. Children are a demographic that is highly affected by the pandemic. However, they are often forgotten in the actual conversation. Here the children are offered a credible explanation of the measures that affect them (Boin et al., 2016). The importance of inclusion is showcased in the following post:

> Guri, Kell Ingolf and I invite you to a new press conference for children. We recently received several hundred good questions, and we look forward to answering even more. You can watch the press conference here at noon.

> Facebook post, 15th of April, 2020

Through the time of COVID-19, there have been constant changes in the infection rates. During times with a decrease in cases, Solberg's posts consist of personal touches like pictures and videos on different trips. During the pandemic, they initiated a separate initiative called "Erna cam," where they post a video blog from their daily life and work tasks during the crisis. However, as the infection and death rates increase, they become more formal. The posts also switch to a more economic focus during these times, emphasizing the high unemployment rates. The differences in the Prime Ministers posts during calmer times and the formal posts during the times where infection rates are increasing is illustrated in the following post:

> Every year in August, the government meets to talk about the state budget. I made a little movie about this. Join the inside!

> Facebook post, 31st of August, 2020

The most important thing for the future will be to create more jobs and include more people into working life. Together we will get Norway through the crisis. Here is my speech to the Conservative Party's national meeting.

Facebook post, 11th of September, 2020

Throughout the pandemic the slogan "everything will be fine" grew as a way of describing the unity and strength within the Norwegian public. The slogan was seen written on walls, t-shirts, flags etc. The phrase was also used by the Norwegian Prime Minister in their speeches, but not in their posts. The slogan is often used as a way of instilling hope for å virus free future (Boin et al., 2016). The strength of the Norwegian public is often reflected in the national feeling and the Norwegian culture itself. Solberg has advocated for using nature, which is heavily rooted in the Norwegian culture. They emphasized this when they stated the following:

Do you go for a small walk every day? Norwegian outdoor life has a campaign to get people out into the fresh air. It can be a stroll in the neighborhood, a quick ski trip or a cup of coffee in the sun. Minister of Climate and Environment Sveinung Rotevatn challenged me, I forward the challenge to the Minister of Finance and Conservative Deputy Jan Tore Sanner. Are you up for the challenge, Jan Tore?

Facebook post, 9th of February, 2021

Stefan Löfven

As the Norwegian Prime Minister, the Swedish Prime Minister has also turned to Twitter to communicate news and updates to the Swedish public considering Covid- 19. The Twitter profile has the handle @SwedishPM, with the Swedish coat of arms as the profile picture and a picture of the Prime Minister as the cover photo. The account appears to represent the Swedish government as a formal institution, not the prime minister himself. However, they are the person representing the government and their politics to the public. As well as the Twitter profile itself, the content being published on the Prime Minister account is also very impersonal and formal. Most of the content is regarding international events, such as the post published on the 30th of March, 2020 where they stated the following:

> I just spoke to UN Secretary-General @AntonioGuterres and thanked him for his leadership. #COVID19 is a global threat that can only be met with global cooperation. Sweden will continue to contribute. I also expressed my support for the SG`s initiative for a global ceasefire.

> Twitter post, 30 March, 2020

Along with thanking Antonio Guleres, the prime minister also emphasises that COVID-19 is a global pandemic and that it must be met with global cooperation. Conversations like these were held rapidly through the first month of the pandemic. In the early times of a crisis the public is filled with a lot of fright and uncertainty. Ergo, by sharing this information with the public the prime minister shows a sense of control (Boin et al., 2016). As well as showing that they are in control, cooperation between borders can also give the feeling of unity and hope (Boin et al., 2016).

Löfvens use of Twitter mostly consists of content like the post just stated. In addition to posting about international events and relations, the Swedish prime minister has been using Twitter to convey information on COVID-19 with the public. However, throughout March 2020 until January 2021, the platform has been particularly used to announce press conferences, with active links leading to recordings of the conferences, but with no additional text. There is also an update at the end of December, 2020 where Löfven presents the news regarding the vaccine through a speech. Apart from this, Twitter is mostly used for notifications regarding the press conferences. Through these press conferences the prime minister offers credible explanations to common questions the public might have considering the pandemic (Boin et. al., 2016). The press conferences also offer guidance on what one can do to prevent spreading of the virus and other restrictions (Boin et. al., 2016). These Tweets are showcased in the following way:

> Press conference at 16.00 together with Minister of Social Affairs Lena Hallengren and Sweden's vaccine coordinator Richard Bergström:

> Twitter post, 20th of August, 2020

As with Twitter the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven has also taken to Facebook to communicate with the public during the pandemic. While on Twitter, they posted a lot on international relations, Facebook was more so used to communicate directly with the Swedish citizens. When a crisis hits, efficiency and quick handling are essential. Löfven posts about COVID-19 as early as March 2nd, 2020, where they state the government's concern on the spreading of the virus to Sweden and the potential measures that could be implemented. They

are already here offering the public a credible explanation, but through showing that the government is watching the situation carefully this early in the management process, they are also suggesting that the leaders are in control (Boin et al., 2016). This is showcased in the following post:

> (...) Today, the Government Offices' crisis management council met. In connection with the meeting, I called the Minister of the Interior Mikael Damberg and the Minister of Social Affairs Lena Hallengren, as well as the Directors General of the Police Authority, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), the Swedish Public Health Agency, and the National Board of Health and Welfare. The purpose of the meeting was to get a current picture of the authorities' work and ensure that they have everything they need to perform their tasks. Today, the Public Health Agency announced that the risk of infection in Sweden increased from low to moderate. Today, the Swedish Transport Agency has also decided to revoke the traffic permit for Iran Air temporarily. This means that direct flights between Sweden and Iran will be stopped. It is important that the government and all relevant authorities prepare to handle a higher risk of infection spreading. We are prepared and ready to act quickly if the situation changes (...)

> Facebook post, 2nd of March, 2020

Further, through the early days of the crisis, after the risk for COVID-19 is considered high also in Sweden on March 10th, Löfven tries to motivate the people to follow the measures and stay hopeful (Boin et al., 2016). Their posts seem very personal and emphatic with societal groups that are extra affected by the crisis. They state that we as a society and community should put the weakest first, not the people with the largest wallets. One of the groups often mentioned is the old and ill, which have been the majority of infection and death rates worldwide. An example is illustrated the following post:

> (...) Now that we have entered a situation where the risk of the general spread of infection in the country is very high, measures need to be taken to protect risk groups throughout Sweden. Therefore, a particular assignment is given to the National Board of Health and Welfare to produce and disseminate information to all staff in, for example, elderly care, LSS, and assistance activities. We know that the level of knowledge about infection control in different activities can vary. This is one of several decisions we will make to protect risk groups. The government is constantly ready to make more decisions to ensure that our authorities have the resources and mandate required to deal with the outbreak.

> Facebook post, 11th of March, 2020

However, even though they portray themselves as very empathic, the measures implemented in the Swedish society are optional to follow, with the following tactic on herd immunity that was chosen out of economic purposes (Jung et al., 2016). This could put the lives that earlier stated at risk. In other words, the Swedish Prime Minister has chosen a much more rational way of managing the crisis with the state's economic balance as the main priority (Kuhn, 2019).

All through handling the crisis, a critical factor in Löfvens posts has been their priority on consecutively posting informative updates. This comes in the form of, for instance, short summaries from the formal press conferences aired on TV. This is a way of making sure that most of the public gets a hold of the information they are trying to share. In a complex crisis where daily life gets flipped upside down through measures such as closing down society and not seeing the ones we love, it can get tough and confusing, especially for the youngest. An initiative that Löfven used to include that demographic was through a separate press conference for children, where they were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the pandemic. This is an excellent way of offering guidance to parts of the public that is also heavily affected but rarely get the opportunity to partake in the conversation (Boin et al., 2016). Children have also been one of the societal groups that have been Löfven overall priority. This has been illustrated in the following posts:

> Today I got to do something a little different but essential: A press conference for our younger audience on the occasion of the coronavirus. It turns out that children share the same concerns and have the same thoughts as many adults. The children's questions concerned health care, school, and how families should manage their livelihood (...)

> Facebook post from March 19th, 2020

> (...) During the crisis, the government has, among other things, contributed money to the non-profit organizations' important work with children in vulnerable situations. The Children's Ombudsman has been commissioned to support authorities in their work to spread information and knowledge about the pandemic to children. They must also analyze the consequences for children and collect and account for children's own experiences of the pandemic. The government is also investing SEK 2.2 billion this year to promote mental health and counteract mental illness and suicide - where children are a vital target group (...)

> Facebook post from March 25th, 2021.

When a complex and global health crisis happens, much responsibility lies with individuals to follow advice and measures. It is therefore essential for leaders to acknowledge the public's efforts to obtain trust and motivation. Regardless of the national measures being optional to follow in the Swedish society, the Prime Minister shows much gratitude towards the public for following their advice. By adopting this way of posting, Löfven shows empathy and a sense of hope that through cooperation and unity, Sweden will beat the virus (Boin et al., 2016). Through emotional posts, they also shift from the earlier mentioned rational management to a more charismatic leadership style (Kuhn, 2019; Gerth et. al., 1958). This was showcased when they wrote the following:

> (...) All over our country, people help their neighbors shop, volunteer for an association, or contribute somehow. When it is at its most challenging, our unity and solidarity are the strongest. Thank you to all of you who help others in a difficult time. Each of us must now continue to take responsibility. We all must do our part in protecting the groups at risk who suffer the most, especially the elderly. The authorities' general advice must be followed, stay at home with the slightest symptoms, keep your distance from your surroundings, and not expose yourself or others to unnecessary risks. The corona crisis will last a long time; we must think for months and not weeks. However, we will get through this crisis - together.

> Facebook post from 27th of April, 2020

Mette Frederiksen

As mentioned in the previous chapter there is no "personal" account linked to the Danish prime minister. Instead, they use the account @statsmin, connected to the Prime Miniesters' office, which seems to be led by a second party that passes on their messages and notifications. This account consists of primarily formal posts with formal documents signed by the prime minister. The information and use of language in these documents are also just as formal. Their account has been chiefly used for informative updates throughout the pandemic, especially regarding upcoming press conferences. Twitter is, in other words, not the leading platform for personal communication during the pandemic. Their main intention is to share information shortly and consistently.

> (...) The Prime Minister's Office calls together a press conference in the Mirror Hall in the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesday 11 March at 20.30 about COVID-19 in Denmark.The Prime

Minister's Office calls for the media to send only one journalist or correspondent per media to limit the number of people present in the Mirror Hall (...)

Twitter post, 11 March, 2020

All through the pandemic the Danish Prime Minister has been diligently using Facebook as a platform to communicate with the public. In the early days of dealing and posting about the crisis, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen talks about the importance of unity and working together as a collective, which can eventually create a sense of hope within the public (Boin et. al., 2016). They do this through statements with photos (selfies), often from their own home. This is a way of keeping a close connection with the public and showing that the virus affects us all, even the Prime Minister. At the beginning of the outbreak in Denmark, there was a need to react quickly and effectively, considering this is an extraordinary situation that the current Prime Minister has never dealt with. This led to the first restrictions on March 6th, before the immense outbreak of the virus in Denmark. This was showcased through a statement where they announce that larger events are getting canceled, and a website has been launched dedicated to informative updates on the virus and the upcoming restrictions (Boin et. al., 2016). The stated is showcased in the following post:

(...) The health authorities have made new recommendations for how we should interact with each other. I know there are probably many of you who have questions about the new measures. Therefore, all the authorities' information about coronavirus has been gathered on a website: www.coronasmitte.dk. The measures will affect us all. It will make everyday life more difficult for many of you. And events you have been looking forward to may be canceled. But already now we have seen many examples of us standing together and showing unity and helping each other to contain and prevent the coronavirus. Thank you!

Facebook post, 6 March, 2020

Further they display a very realistic view of the future, and does not hide from the fact that there will be even more restrictions and effects on social life. These effects start showing themselves on March 11th when the toughest measures yet are implemented. With the measures implemented, they direct a lot of their attention toward empathy and strengthening the unity of the public (Boin et. al., 2016). This continued to play an important role all throughout the management. In relation to Coombs theory on situational crisis managements, expressing sympathy is sentral while sharing informative updates and offering guidance through social media, however this was met by criticism from the public which according (Coombs, 2007). A

possible reason behind this observation could be that a lot of people found their focus on unity too emotional, and that they were focusing more on saying the right things rather than doing the job needed. The criticism found its form of comments under the Prime Ministers Facebook posts. One of the posts that received such comments was on January the 25th with a photo of themself where they wrote the following:

> Good morning. I went for a run as it was still dark and the snow was falling from the January sky. Soon there is only one winter month left and spring begins. We are moving towards brighter times. We need that. I know it's hard for everyone now. Good Monday.

> Facebook post, January 25, 2021

Most of the comments that were written stated that they are being too bright and positive in their posts comparing it to the actual handling of the crisis, and that their encouragement are empty words. This perception of a leader being emotional is one of the most common stereotypes in relations to women as leaders. This has been showcased in several researches, for instance Virginia Schein`s paradigm on "think manager - think male" (Schein, 1973). Through the usage of empathy and encouraging statements all through the management of Covid they have marked themself as a rather charismatic leader, where their status as a leader is legitimated through them as a person (Gerth et. al, 1958). In relation to their criticism this status is threatened, which can further weaken the trust of the public. However, according to Coombs`s theory on SCCT that focuses on how in situations where there are complex aftermaths such as death, an organization, or in this case a leader, needs to respond in kind. In this type of crisis emotions like empathy are expected, and usually helps build back trust (Coombs, 2007).

During the times with low infection rates Frederiksens posts are more personal talking about events happening in their daily life such as wedding anniversary etc. and COVID-19 is less mentioned. However, as the infection rate increases their posts shift to more formal and strict. This can indicate that the leader is in control (Boin et. al., 2016). To showcase this the phrase "the dance with covid" started being used. During the fall of 2020 and the second wave of the virus this started to become a frequent slogan by Frederiksen to describe the situation, and the work they are putting in to fight Covid. The Prime Minister as a leader at these times is showcased in the following post:

Dear All. A few words about corona. The infection is at a high level. The number of hospitalized patients has increased. The Serum Institute warns that we are on the verge of something that could develop into a second wave. This time is important. We must follow the authorities' recommendations. Keep your distance, use hand sanitizer, use your masks. But it takes more than that. The Serum Institute says it clearly: "We need to be prepared for the fact that we need to cut back social contacts in the autumn so that we see fewer people and we see them in smaller groups."That is why today we present new measures for the Copenhagen area. And of course, we are keeping a close eye on the nightlife. Because we can not continue with the partying in Copenhagen, I hope you will see the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health and the Elderly as we have seen recently.Autumn and winter will be different. Like the rest of 2020 has been. We are in the process of the dance with corona. And there is no indication that it will be easy.Take care of each other.

Facebook post, 15 September, 2020

A health crisis like COVID-19 can be a scary experience for many, and it is therefore important that leaders adopt strategies to make sure that most parts of the public's concerns are heard and to prevent chaos. Frederiksen instigated several initiatives for this, including separate press conferences for children. This is a way of including parts of the public who are also heavily affected by the crisis but often forgotten in the conversation. Frederiksen also hosts live broadcasts on their Facebook where they answer the questions from the comment section. Again this is a way to include everybody, and is less formal than their usual press conferences where the large media channels are the ones asking the questions. Both of these initiatives are examples of strengthening the trust and the feeling of democracy in the management process. These initiatives can also function as a way of offering guidance but also showing empathy by consoling directly with the public (Boin et al., 2016)

Discussion

Our analysis shows that there are notable differences between the Prime Ministers' use of social media throughout the time period March 2020 to January 2021. Despite the many common traits the Scandinavian countries have, Solberg, Löfven, and Fredriksen have had different approaches both when it comes to handling the crisis and the way that they have posted on Facebook and Twitter during the crisis.

Our findings have shown that the leaders have been using the different platforms in different ways during the pandemic. We have discovered that Fredriksen has had a different agenda when using Twitter to share information with the Danish public than Solberg and Löfven have had. In contrast to Solberg and Löfven, who have posted regular updates on Twitter, Fredriksen has used Twitter to exclusively share formal documents signed by themselves, announcing upcoming press conferences. As stated in the discussion section, the Swedish prime minister has primarily used the platform to update the public about international events considering COVID-19. In similarity with Löfven, the same type of content was observed on the Norwegian Prime Ministers' account. Solberg and Löfven have both, as mentioned in addition to Facebook, been using Twitter to share and update information about Covid- 19. However, these updates are related to covid- 19 in an international context and are also written in English. A reason for this might be that Solberg and Löfven use Twitter for mainly an international agenda, updating other world leaders on the situation in their countries while at the same time showing their followers that they are and working together against the virus.

However, the second account linked to the Prime Ministers Office shows similarities with the Danish Prime Minister's way of using Twitter, where the posts contain active URL links to the Norwegian government's website where they share information and official documents related to the pandemic. The reason why Fredriksen has decided to limit the Twitter usage to only sharing formal documents and has not made use of Twitter as much as the other Prime Ministers could be that they want to share as much information as possible with the public. While Twitter has a limited character function, Facebook allows one to post as many characters as one would prefer, which could lead to a more credible and thorough explanation of both the crisis and restrictions (Boin et al., 2016). In addition, we observe that the audience base on Facebook is much more prominent in which people with connections to Denmark make up most of this base, while 63.07% of the Danish population uses Facebook, only 7.08% uses Twitter. This observation illustrates that Fredriksen, through sharing COVID-19 related updates on Facebook, gets the necessary information out to the most people affected by the crisis.

Firstly, our findings suggest that Facebook has been used more rapidly to communicate with the public than Twitter throughout the pandemic. However, this is not the only factor that differs between the Scandinavian leaders. Second, our findings show that Twitter has been used to post informative updates, while the Prime Ministers have used Facebook and its functions to share multi mediums such as videos, live broadcasts, pictures, animations, and URL links with the public. In particular, we observe that the Danish prime minister regularly shares "selfies" on

Facebook. The majority of Fredriksen's updates on Facebook include some form of multimedia in addition to a greeting, a hopeful quote, or information. They take form in either a selfie, video, or a picture of themselves, such as them cleaning windows and other things of casual nature. In contrast to the Danish prime minister, we have, through our findings, observed that the Swedish Prime Minister had shared pictures from photo ups and of a more formal nature in addition to informative text and greetings. By performing a comparative analysis of the three Prime Ministers' Facebook posts, we discovered that Solberg has used multimedia similar to Fredriksen and Löfven, with a combination of casual and formal photos.

Both Solberg and Fredriksen have, in addition to sharing informative updates offering guidance through text, they have also held live streams on Facebook where they answer questions and interact directly with the public through the comment section. They have also shared animations showing the necessary restrictions illustrating using facemasks and keeping distance in an easily understandable way. In the light of Boins' five frameworks, both Solberg, Löfven, and Fredriksen perform to offer both guidance and credible explanations through the utilization of facebook's multimedia functions, however in various ways but at the same time, they show that they are in control (Boin et al., 2016).

Regarding Boin`s five frameworks on persuasive narratives, we have observed the most differences in terms of posts regarding the emotional approaches "Instilling hope" and "Showing empathy," especially on Facebook.

We find that both the Norwegian and- Danish Prime Ministers have emphasized the importance of unity within the public through our research. Throughout the crisis, both Frederiksen and Solberg created slogans as a "trademark" for the hope of a brighter future and to further manage the virus. Solberg – "alt blir bra." These words were seen painted on items such as walls, flags, and t-shirts. Fredriksen regularly used the slogan- "dansen med corona." The prime minister used slogans such as these to describe the management of the crisis. These kinds of slogans were not observed in any of the posts published on Löfvens Facebook page.

We benefit from using a coding method to sort and label our data throughout collecting the data. From analyzing the coded data, we collected numbers of the frequency of posts categorized with Boins two frame functions; showing empathy and instilling hope in the time period, the beginning of March till the middle of April 2020 (Boin et al., 2016). According to our findings presented in figure 1, Löfven has shown the most empathy in his posts, however

as mentioned earlier, this is not reflected in the actual management considering Sweden's tactic on herd immunity, and all the measures implemented have been voluntary. Löfven will start his posts by saying how Covid has taken many lives, but this is often used as just a phrase referencing his posts regarding economic issues or unemployment rates. He also often mentions how the weakest in the society should be prioritized instead of the people with the largest wallets.

Coombs describes a response where helping people cope psychologically through correct information and tell people what you as a leader will do to prevent another crisis or further harm, as a vital part during complex crises (Coombs, 2007). Under this theory, the expression of empathy is central (Boin, 2016). Through their posts, the Swedish Prime Minister has expressed gratitude towards the Swedish public and the importance of unity. However, this does not correlate with the actual management happening in Sweden. Through the pandemic, the management focus has been way more economical through strategies such as herd immunity and optional measures (Jung et al., 2020). This differs very much from the Norwegian and the Danish Prime Ministers, where their posts seem to have reflected the management. How the Scandinavian Prime Ministers have showcased themselves as "emotional" is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 1. *The frequency of the Prime Minister's Facebook posts relating to Boins two frame functions; showing empathy and instilling hope in the time period the beginning of March till the middle of April 2020.*
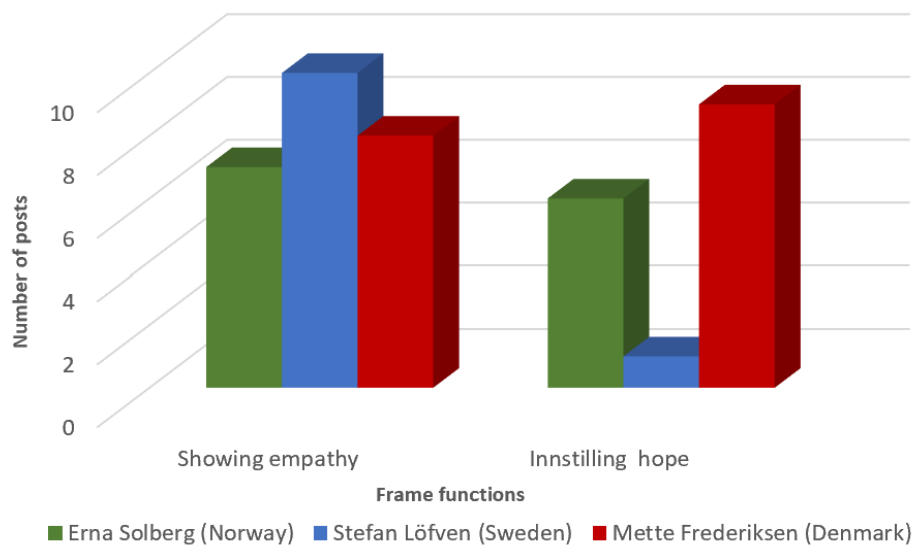

While the Danish Prime Minister portrait an emphatic and charismatic leadership style showing similarities to Weber's third ideal type of where the person shows and gains authority through

their status and achievements, we observe that both the Norwegian and Swedish prime minister has a more formal and bureaucratic leadership style similar to Weber's first ideal type of authority; legal-rational. This is also reflected in their posts focusing on economy, emphasizing on various economic effects the pandemic has had on the Swedish society.

Through being rational one makes decisions that most benefit oneself. Acting upon what one believes benefits the country in a situation such as COVID- 19, making the decisions predicted to be the most efficient. From analyzing the posts including economical, we find that frequency of such posts is much higher on the Swedish Prime Minister Facebook posts, than the Norwegian and Danish Prime ministers posts shown in *Figure 2*. While, Solberg has had a similar economical focus as Lövfen, however, not so frequent and not as the main focus of their crisis communication, Fredriksen have had little focus on the economic factors alone, but always included it as a factor when showing empathy towards those who have lost their jobs (Boin et al. 2016).

Figure 2. The frequency of the Prime Minister's Facebook posts including economical traits in the time period August and September.
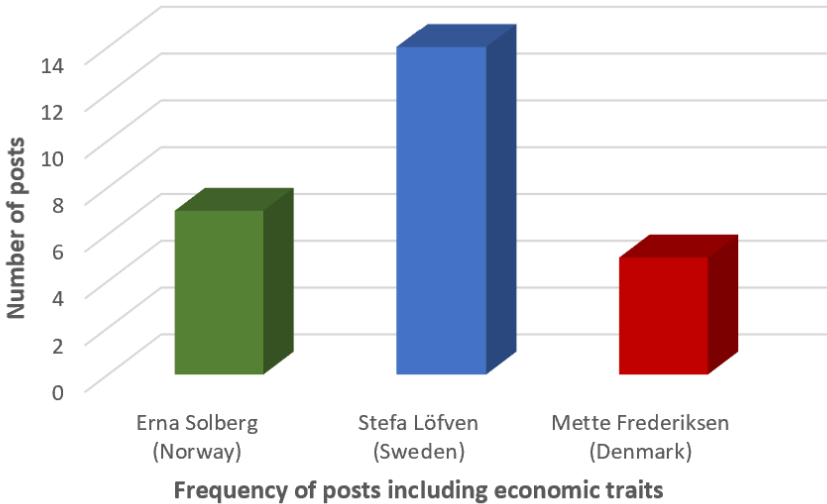
When the leaders aim to show that they are in control through sharing multimedia, quotes, informative updates, and motivational posts, they aim at the same time to gain the reader's trust. In an uncertain time, such as the COVID-19, trust between those in charge and the public is vital. While the Danish Prime Minister gains trust through being empathic and charismatic, both the Norwegian and Swedish Prime Ministers have gained trust from the public being more

formal and having a more bureaucratic leadership style similar to Weber's first ideal type of authority; legal-rational. Regardless of each situation, citizens follow their government, and have a high trust. This trust could be linked to the common welfare system that all of the Scandinavian countries are built on, where solidarity and trust is a two-way street and the sense of personal risk is reduced (Dahlen & Skirbekk).

Conclusion

This dissertation used a sentiment and qualitative content analysis of our data consisting of Facebook and Twitter posts related to the Covid- 19 pandemic that was declared back in March 2020 during the time period March 2020 until January 2021. Our research has analyzed the importance of leaders performing effective crisis communication when a crisis such as the Covid- 19 pandemic occurs and how the Scandinavian leaders have adapted social media to do this and prevent further spreading of the virus (Coombs, 2007) . Through using Boin et. al five frameworks to categorize our data were further, able to discover patterns in the three Prime Ministers way of posting on social media. Our findings show that there are many similarities between the Sandinavian leaders performing effective crisis communication, showing both empathy, instilling hope, offering guidance, informative updates and showing that they are in control (Boin et. al. 2016). Additionally, one can not talk about a common Scandinavian approach on adapting social media as a tool in crisis communication. The measurements and restrictions put in place by the leaders have shown to be effective and perceived as legitimate to the public, which is crucial for the communication to be effective. From this finding we can draw lines to Weber's types of authority, which helps us understand exactly this, but also that their actions, in this context putting measurements in action, is also legitimated through the core value of trust.

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