Framing and Shaming:
A case of opinion leadership and climate change communication in a social media era

A frame analysis of the Swedish Instagram account Aningslösa influencers

Rebecca Larsson
Malmö University
Media and Communication Studies:
Culture, Collaborative Media, and the Creative Industries
Faculty of Culture and Society, School of Arts and Communication
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Supervisor: Margareta Melin
Examiner: Erin Cory
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Picture from Aningslösa influencers Instagram profile
Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the opinion leaders behind the Swedish Instagram account Aningslösa influencers frame and represent climate change. I use framing theory (Benford and Snow, 2000) to examine the use of frames as a meaning-making tool. Furthermore, social representations theory is applied in order to gain insight of how Aningslösa influencers anchor and objectify an issue. While the main focus of this study is content produced by Aningslösa influencers, previous research on the concepts of framing, opinion leaders and climate change communication are included to deepen my understanding and place this study within a context. Through a qualitative frame analysis of 327 print screens of posts from Aningslösa influencers Instagram profile, I identified that they engage in core framing tasks (diagnostic, prognostic and motivational) as presented by Benford and Snow (2000). The identified frames include shaming influencers traveling conduct (diagnosis), highlighting the need for reducing travels by airplane as part of one’s lifestyle (prognostic), and by promoting direct effects of such lifestyle changes (motivational). Based on the frame analysis, I found that Aningslösa influencers further anchor climate change through making use of everyday experiences and hence, in relation to emotions of individual and collective guilt. Moreover, Aningslösa influencers objectify climate change by personifying influencers as climate villains and as clueless citizens. Through these findings, I conclude that Aningslösa influencers mirror general assumptions about climate change in Sweden but serve as intermediaries of new ideas, information and opinions. Even if this study draws on a specific case, the inductive analysis of Aningslösa influencers content demonstrates the ability of the framing approach when aiming to portray how a specific issue is made sense of through particular frames that package salient events and hence, offer specific interpretations of an unfolding phenomenon in contemporary social media settings.

Keywords: Aningslösa influencers, framing, opinion leaders, influencers, climate change, shaming, Instagram, anchor and objectify
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1. Introduction

The debate about travel’s impact on the climate has become increasingly heightened in Sweden in recent years and thus, given rise to new words such as flygskam (flight shame) (Språktidningen, 2018) and tågskryt (train brag) (Språktidningen, 2019). In parallel with more Swedes starting to question airplanes as means of transport, the anonymous Instagram (IG) account Aningslösa influencers (Ai) (translates into Clueless influencers) became a social media phenomenon in early December 2018, targeting and tailoring the traveling debate towards a specific group, namely influencers¹. Ai refer to themselves as opinion leaders, with the aim to raise awareness about influencers unsustainable traveling habits and the normalization of taking the airplane across the world in search for the perfect IG picture (Aningslösa influencers, 2019). Based on notions that the lines between who is an opinion leader and who is an influencer are blurred in a social media era (Nisbet and Kotcher, 2009) means that one can refer to an influencer as an opinion leader and the other way around. As such, this thesis concretizes opinion leaders simply as stakeholders, with many followers, that agitate and synthesize issues based on their own beliefs, values, and ideas. Therefore, the combination of opinion leaders, a heightened climate debate in Sweden (European Investment Bank, 2019) and IG serving as a tool creating, sharing and organizing information (Hochman and Manovich, 2013:1), make out interesting and current areas to explore.

The purpose of this thesis is to identify frames, approached through a qualitative frame analysis, from the perspective of a particular opinion leadership case. Specifically, explored here is how Ai, through IG, frame issues related to climate change. In this paper, a framing analysis is used to inductively identify frames and systematically set out the ways in which Ai manifest their opinions and messages. This is not a question of the experience of those who are framed as unsustainable travelers on Ai’s IG account, nor is it an analysis of the effects of Ai’s opinion leadership, but rather an analysis of how climate change is represented along with the persons who are featured, through an empirical sample of content produced by Ai. As such, one will gain in-depth insight in how opinion leaders can convey messages and raise awareness about a particular issue in contemporary social media society through the use of frames, from the perspective of climate change communication. Thus, this case allows for analysis within the context of opinion leaders, climate change communication and framing as Ai provides insight into many of the unique characteristics of small-scale opinion leadership in the digital environment. The choice of focusing on one specific case, without comparison, is chosen because I want to provide a first step exploration in this type of communication, which may potentially be valuable in future framing research.

¹ In this study, the term influencer is used to refer to those who Aningslösa influencers target through their Instagram account. Aningslösa influencers define an influencer as a famous person with more than 20,000 followers on Instagram.
1.1 Aningslösa influencers

The focus of Ai for this study is based on the notion that they have gained a large extent of followers (approximately 60,000) through their IG account and have therefore become topic of debate in Sweden. As anonymous opinion leaders, Ai steps away from the more traditional and conventional environmentalist efforts and thus communicate with citizens directly through IG. Notwithstanding, this thesis does not attempt to analyze whether or not Ai fits the characteristics of opinion leaders nor does it aim to investigate the effect of their opinion leadership. It does however explore how Ai communicate climate change and will therefore attempt to place them in a context. Based on previous research, this study locate that Ai holds a somewhat influential role in that they have received much media attention, have a lot of followers and have become part of the Swedish climate debate (cf. newspaper articles about them: Hultquist, 2019; Jönsson and Eriksson, 2019; Karlsten, 2019; Rosengren; 2019).

Issues related to climate change and sustainability are not new topics of debate. Neither is the notion that airplanes cause major carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions. However, what particularly stands out in the way Ai communicate is their choice of methods, driven by making travel’s effect on climate change more visible and draw attention to the many Swedish influencers that are present on IG. They believe that the combination of targeting famous people, scientific information and applying a sense of humor provides a form of communication that is approachable and entertaining (Aningslösa influencers, 2019).

The way that Ai operates begins with contacting the specific influencer and posting a question on the individuals IG account regarding if the specific influencer has reflected upon the environmental impact of their traveling habits. If a response is left out and the debate is not taken directly with the influencer and his/her followers, Ai use available content from the individuals IG account to re-post the picture by the influencer (from a specific travel) through their own IG stories without concern about copyright. By both encouraging those who make good choices and those who are the villains, Ai add captions, hashtags and scientific data to the IG story post to make their statements. Ai saves their IG stories as highlights, making them available to anyone. Using IG for opinion leader activity and targeting a specific group of people to raise awareness about unsustainable traveling makes Ai stand out in the climate debate. Furthermore, these are aspects I find intriguing and meshing with current societal trends in Sweden in terms of expectations of civic sustainable choices (Ministry of the Environment, 2018), the popularity of influencers (Freberg et al., 2011) and increased IG use (Davidsson, Palm och Mandre, 2018).

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

Traveling around the world is not a new phenomenon. However, posting on social media about one’s travels is a trend that continuously increases (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016:95). As social media has grown to become a large part of people’s everyday life, a parallel push for greener forms of consuming, living (Ministry of the Environment, 2018) and traveling (Resiabarometern, 2018), in relation to rising concerns for the environment in
Sweden (European Investment Bank, 2019) offer new areas of exploration. Despite increased concern about climate change (European Investment Bank, 2018) and rising trends of traveling sustainably among Swedes, traveling around the world is still a top priority (Resiabarometern, 2018) and deficient awareness about the real risks of climate change is still a fact (European Investment Bank, 2018). Moreover, in the research carried out by the Swedish travel agency Resia in 2017, concerning Swedes traveling habits, it was established that issues concerning the climate did not particularly make people travel less. Findings even showed that increasingly more women aspired to travel to the Maldives because of hype in social media and the overload of IG pictures on a paradise beach (Resiabarometern, 2018). The increased role of IG in people's everyday life and the aspect of inadequate climate change mediation serve as new spaces and perspectives for the role and communication of opinion leaders. The challenge, in terms of delivering messages to the public about climate change, is to overcome the “Pandora’s box” of framing the problem in a relatable and straightforward manner (Nisbet and Kotcher, 2009:338). Hence, with social media being a debated powerful lens in terms of engaging the public and people striving for social change (Schäfer and Taddicken, 2015), often related to communicating issues regarding climate change and sustainability (Hestres, 2015:194), it has given rise to a new discourse identified as “social media for social change” (Schäfer and Taddicken, 2015:960). Based on these reasons, the case of opinion leadership in contemporary media environments and framing of climate change communication needs particular analysis.

The overview of existing research and literature concludes that framing analysis is most commonly used when examining news coverage. Much of the research and discussion on framing has therefore tended to take place in relation to large-scale political and media campaigns. However, in-depth studies specifically focused on one case, are fairly limited. Moreover, there is a dearth of scholarly research concerning specifically framing and social media, particularly IG. In the cases when these phenomena have been combined, analysis has focused on visual framing and concepts such as self-identification or gender (e.g., Lewallen, 2016; Holiday et al., 2016; Pegoraro, Comeau and Frederick, 2017; Elinzano, 2018). A reason for the small number of researches and the lack of other perspectives than visual could possibly be connected to the newness of this medium and the notion that IG is foremost a visual sharing platform. This correlates to why there is a larger extent of existing research on framing in regards to Facebook and especially Twitter that are more textual-based platforms. However, this thesis steps away from the visual aspect of IG as Ai mainly produces textual content, meaning that it is possible to apply more traditional framing schemes. Thus, frame analysis is applicable in this case as this thesis focuses on what frames can be identified in Ai’s climate change communication. Using IG allows for individuals to share reflections of their realities, which makes out the crux of frame analysis. Hence, to address the knowledge gaps as stated above, this paper has three main goals: 1) to address smaller-scaled opinion leadership, taking a more in-depth approach to coverage of climate change by analyzing Ai’s use of frames in their communication; 2) attempt to locate the identified frames within the core framing tasks as presented by Robert Benford and David Snow (2000): diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing (2000:615); and 3)
apply social representation theory in order to analyze the way Ai anchor and objectify climate change to draw conclusions based on Ai’s role in the Swedish climate change debate. As such, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What frames can be identified in Aningslösa influencers Instagram communication?

**Sub-question:** Does Ai’s Instagram communication demonstrate examples of **prognostic**, **diagnostic**, and **motivational** framing, and, if so, how are they expressed?

**RQ2:** How does Aningslösa influencers anchor and objectify the issue of climate change in terms of social representation?

### 1.3 Outline of the thesis

The following structure of this thesis begins with a review of key studies related to the issue explored. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework within the context of this thesis, which applies framing theory and social representation theory. In chapter 4, the applied methodology is presented and how the methods are used in this study. This includes the approaches used, data and sampling process and the analytical framework. Lastly, this chapter concludes the internal validity of the study and the ethical considerations. Chapter 5 presents the findings in terms of the qualitative framing analysis. The analysis will be presented in two parts. The first research question concern how Ai frame climate change and whether or not Ai engage in core framing processes, which is answered through a qualitative framing analysis of a content sample from Ai’s IG profile, guided by framing theory (Benford and Snow, 2000). The second part of the analysis expands on the frames identified in the first part of the analysis. The aim of the second research question is to analyze, based on the identified frames, the way that Ai manifest their opinions and messages through anchoring and objectifying a social issue. Chapter 6 provides a discussion about the findings and draws concluding remarks regarding Ai’s role in the Swedish climate debate and lastly, suggestions for further research are presented.

### 2. Previous Research

This chapter reviews studies related to the topic explored in this thesis. It combines studies of framing analysis in communication research, past research on framing and climate change communication and lastly, of opinion leaders in modern-day society and their role in communicating climate change. A review of previous studies on frame analysis in both communication research and particularly climate change communication research is important to understand what has already been done in this field and to gain an understanding of how framing and climate change conveyance has evolved over recent decades. Moreover, a selected review of opinion leaders in a social media environment is key because this thesis includes the concept of opinion leadership, characterized by the use of social media for communicating climate change and thus, helps to place Ai in a
relevant research area. Through this review, the case of Ai can be placed in a context that justifies the approach to the issue and the selection of methods, summarize prior research and how this study is linked to it, as well as to demonstrate that my research contributes with something new.

2.1 Framing analysis in communication research

Framing as a concept has its roots in the field of psychology, sociology, and linguistics, which is today applied in various disciplines (Benford and Snow, 2000). In the communication discipline, framing generally refers to the way in which media and the public represent a certain issue or topic (Reese, 2001). In the early work from 1974 by Erving Goffman, framing is described as a method, allowing individuals to apply interpretative schemas to categorize and interpret information encountered in day-to-day lives (Lindekilde, 2014:9). A frame, therefore, allows its users to locate, perceive, identify, and label events to guide actions, which is described by Entman (1993:52). The notion of sense-making and framing being conceptually compatible is found in the definition of Gamson and Modigliani (1989) who state that frames are the central, organizing ideas for “making sense of relevant events” (1989:3). Like the concept of framing, sense-making suggests that we actively construct the world, commonly utilizing already assembled vocabularies or schemas (ibid).

Matthew Nisbet (2009) provides extensive insight of the topic of framing and communication, specifically in terms of claiming that framing is an “unavoidable reality of the communication process” (2009:15) and unframed information does not exist. However, van Gorp and Vercruysse (2012:1275) argue that from a constructivist perspective, framing makes out a process that is only partially conscious from the perspective of the person who creates the message. This is based on the notion that every culture consists of a collection of symbols and various world-views, applied by its members as a set of tools that attribute meaning to different events and issues that they are faced with (ibid). Hence, when communicators frame a message, they link a topic based on the common ground within a specific culture, such as values and shared narratives (ibid). This does not mean that the communicator is aware of the long-term effect of their messages by continuously repeating them but every association between an issue and a broader social phenomenon certainly generates new perspectives from which reality may be perceived (ibid). This emphasizes that frames exist beyond people’s minds (ibid). Similar for Benford and Snow (1992), the concept of a frame “refers to interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one’s present or past environment” (1992:137). Moreover, for Lasse Lindekilde (2014), discourse and frame analysis belong to the same backbone of analytical frameworks “and both cast an interpretive perspective on the social interaction that constitutes social movement activity, with inspiration from hermeneutics and phenomenology” (2014:3). Both approaches focus on interpreting and meaning-making in communication, many times related to various types of advocacy. However, frame analysis highlight the strategic and deliberative aspects of language usage, how
established objects or issues are framed, rather than looking at how texts combined with the production and recipiency bring an object into being as done in discourse analysis (Lindekilde, 2014:9).

The multifacetedness of framing has resulted in loose definitions and conceptual overlaps, leaving scholars with incomplete understandings of framing (D’Angelo and Kuypers 2010:2). This overreach has led to studies showing little consistency in existing framing categories, presenting a challenge for researchers and aptly resulted in many self-identifying framing categories (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010:2). Even if these aspects often have been seen as weaknesses in the heterogeneity of approaches to framing, scholars such as D’Angelo (2002) highlight that frame analysis is useful because it can be employed through various disciplines and theoretical models, offering a unique way to understand complex phenomena (D’Angelo, 2002:882).

Bringing us back to the notions of Entman (1993), frame analysis is presented as mainly serving four purposes in the context of media and communication research; “to define problems, to diagnose a cause, to make value judgments, and to suggest remedies” (1993:52). Moreover, distinct framing devices that help to arrange experiences and tools used to make sense of events or issues include metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, descriptions, arguments, and visual images (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Entman 1993). While communication framing has mainly been used to explore news coverage, applied to the view of journalists, opinion leaders, recipients, communicators, and the media/text, there is a dearth of scholarly research as pertaining to framing and the analysis of social media content. In the light of new communicative tools that are fast and personalized, the conceptual understanding of framing has undergone changes, which has raised questions concerning if new narratives can be studied using traditional means of framing (Schäfer and O’Neill, 2017). By narrowing the discipline, one may produce valuable contributions to the current communication field. Hence, stepping away from media outlets doing the framing, social media allows for exploring other stakeholders that speak directly to the public, thus circumventing traditional media (ibid). Frame analysis in this work means to explore social media content in terms of climate change communication as a way to locate how Ai makes sense of a relevant issue. More specifically, by analyzing the strategic and deliberative aspects of language usage to understand how established issues are framed, as put forward by Lindekilde (2014). As such, exploring how opinion leaders in social media settings do framing on their own.

2.2.1 Framing in climate change communication

Various experiential, ontological and epistemological characteristics of climate change have led it often being claimed as the ultimate wicked problem (Moloney et al., 2014:1). In recent years, studies analyzing news media and online portrayals of climate change have become more common due to the increased coverage of the issue (Schäfer and Schlichting, 2014:148). Based on the notion that framing, in a broad sense, refers to the communicative process of sense-making, emphasizing parts of reality while de-emphasizing others, studies have accordingly analyzed what the general perspective of climate change is and which claims, demands, and responsibilities derive from it (Nisbet,
Such research has taken different analytical shapes, applied different methods and explored various countries and different media (e.g. Kenix, 2008; Shehata and Hopmann, 2012). Notwithstanding, scholars have attempted to build shared conceptual denominators based on previous framing literature. Schäfer and O’Neill (2017) connect that such denominators tend to follow the constructivist tradition of framing as brought forward by previous scholars (e.g. Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). To exemplify, common frames related to climate change and assigned labels have been identified by Jang and Hart (2015) that include: The risk is present (“real” frame), The potential consequences of the risk (“impact” frame), How to handle the risk (“action” frame) (in Ross and Rivers, 2019:5). However, based on the notion that the aim with communicating climate change varies depending on the stakeholder, framing analysis of climate change communication has often taken a hermeneutic-qualitative approach instead, aimed at reconstructing topical frames rather than verifying already existing frames (Schlichting, 2013). With the over-reliance on news aggregators in framing analysis foci, Schlichting (2013) pushes for climate communication and framing to expand beyond the breadth of commonly examined media. The rise of social media certainly makes out interesting cases for climate change communication, hence, presenting a new concern for climate framing researchers (Schäfer and Taddicken, 2015). Allied work exploring climate change communication on social media has been carried out but they tend to be limited to content examination of mainly Twitter coverage and these studies have in many cases not applied framing theory (e.g. Kirilenko, Molodtsova and Stepchenkova, 2014; Pearce et al., 2015).

Mike Hulme (2009) put forward that how we conceive climate change tells us something about other ideas and values that we hold. The type of climate communication employed by a stakeholder then suggests one’s understanding of climate change. Hence, whenever we talk about climate change, we frame it, either if we are aware of it or not. To exemplify, in the Swedish context, communicating knowledge and information related to climate change is considered a key aspect in efforts trying to reduce emissions and in order for adaptive activities to be carried out (Ministry of the Environment, 2018). As put forward by Ulrika Olausson (2011) in her study on comprehensiveness and embeddings of social representations about climate change among Swedes, she emphasizes that current research on Swedish climate reporting has demonstrated a focus towards national and individual responsibility in terms of mitigation, while climate change is framed as an ongoing threat to human life and society. Olausson (2011) moreover claims that the meaning-making of climate change among Swedes has almost reached the point of becoming “a taken-for-granted interpretative framework beyond rational questioning” (2011:296). The point that 95% of Swedes in 2018 were convinced that climate change will affect us is one manifestation of this and the notion that 78% of the people believed that they can contribute in mitigating climate change is another one (Naturvårdsverket, 2018).

As stated by Nerlich, Koteyko and Brown (2009:6), climate change communication tends to follow similar patterns of aiming to raise awareness, motivate engagement and understanding among the public and promote behavior change. However, these aspects take different shapes and are framed differently depending on the stakeholder (ibid).
Going back to Olausson (2011), this aspect correlates with the notion that climate change is commonly framed as a threat to both human life and society and thus it has become an almost taken-for-granted ideology in Sweden. However, when stakeholders who strive for social change communicate, different approaches may be taken into tactics depending on what the desired outcome is. In terms of climate change communication, Neil Gunningham (2017) put forward an example of an approach that has been identified more and more in recent years, namely a “shame and blame” constituent in mobilizing publics in the mitigation of climate change. Shaming “can be deployed to promote new norms and values, rather than simply to reinforce old ones: by forcing audiences to confront moral contradictions…” (Seidman 2015 in Gunningham, 2017:8) and thus, serve to “disclose information about an identified person… which either seeks to induce shame in that person, or at least express a judgment that the person ought to feel ashamed of themselves” (Rowbottom, 2013:1). To frame the issue of climate change in such a way would then function as a way to justify a certain course of action and dramatizes stakeholders cause for communication (Gunningham, 2017).

The literature on frame analysis of climate change provides little guidance on the methods for analyzing frames, however, the notion that framing has gained momentum in communication disciplines provides some guidance for exploring social media content (Schäfer and Taddicken, 2015). For example, Linda Hon (2015) serve as a valuable source to for this thesis for two reasons: (1) She provides thorough guidance in applying framing theory to social media communication by illustrating a narrow case in the context of a social movement, hence, demonstrating an approach that is applicable when exploring other types of social media content, such as done in the case of this thesis. (2) She carries out a qualitative frame analysis based on inductive frame identification through a systematic categorization schema that this thesis apply. These aspects are further expanded upon in the methodology chapter. As such, these points helped in shaping and performing my frame analysis, with focus on the exploration of how texts, events, objects, and situations are attended to in order to convey meaning in a social media setting. Drawing on these notions, the study of framing is key in developing an understanding of how climate change is made sense of today and ultimately to research how it is responded to.

2.2 Opinion leaders and social media communication

Since Ai refers to themselves as opinion leaders, this is the term used in this thesis, and thus requires exploration. As stated by Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2018), opinion leaders can be referred to as individuals with influence on the decision making of others as well as their attitudes and behaviors. This concept has its foundation in the classic argument from 1948 by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, who state that opinion leaders collect information from the mass media to then disseminate that information directly to other members of society via word of mouth, a process referred to as the two-step flow model (Nisbet and Kotcher, 2009:329). This concept was later expanded upon and described as a multistep flow of communication in which ideas are spread in different steps with various degrees of influence between communicators (Schäfer and Taddicken,
At this point, opinion leaders were described as politically engaged, having vast knowledge and were trusted sources of information within their specific social network (Weimann, et al., 2007; Turcotte, et al., 2015).

In a digital era, scholars have debated whether the two-step flow of communication still makes sense and if the role of opinion leaders still are relevant. Specifically, because media outlets now can target audiences directly without having to rely on opinion leaders, described as a one-step communication process (Bennett and Manheim, 2006). Yet, while the case might be that individuals are more physically separated today and that the two-step flow model might not be as relevant, the role of opinion leaders has on the contrary been argued to be even more important in facilitating exposure of information and disseminating information from various directions in today’s digital landscapes (Turcotte et al., 2015). Particularly, social media is often seen as a tool for facilitating nuanced mediated-interpersonal communication over wide distances, providing spaces for leader-follower interactions (Schäfer and Taddicken, 2015). Characterized by voluntary public participation, numerous news outlets and information sources (van der Merwe and van Heerden, 2009), the way that opinion leaders reach out to their followers has also changed as "the new opinion leaders no longer rely on personal acquaintance, direct communication, and intimate contact" (Weimann, 2016 in Walter and Brüggemann, 2018:3). It has been argued that in today’s social media settings, "opinion leadership is not an innate characteristic, but rather ordinary individuals turn into an opinion leader by gaining lots of followers (people who follow his/her activity or opinion)” (Teramoto, Inoue, and Saito, 2015:16). Not denying the role of opinion leaders, they rather put forward that the way an opinion leader today develop differs as they now depend on likes (receivers clicking the like button) (ibid), amount of followers (Zhang, Zhao, and Xu, 2016:6) and hashtags (ibid:3) to actually become influential and get their message across. Compared to face-to-face settings, communication through social media sites typically involve a larger audience and communicators can more cautiously create their messages, driven by more thoroughly selected content (Walther, 2007).

Drawing on the ideas of Song et al., (2007), opinion leaders are intermediaries of new ideas, information and opinions, but they do not necessarily hold formal positions of power or prestige as they rather serve as connective communication tissue, disseminating complex issues to societal groups. This aspect is rather enhanced by social media as it serves as a gateway for breaking down the complexity of certain contexts and facilitate discussion around the specific topic (Vraga et al., 2015), climate change being one example. Science communication scholars have suggested the importance of social media as a tool for engaging the wider public in reviewing and critically assess scientific research and in terms of providing more transparency to scientific processes, as publications and research data can be open to the public (Anderson, 2017). Hence, some research on the relationship between social media use and climate change communication has suggested positive impacts, even in terms of individuals gaining greater knowledge of climate change and a space for discussing issues with others, however not free from climate change skeptics (ibid).

Victoria Carty (2018) emphasize digital media's and social media’s role in allowing civil society to make their voices heard, to create their own user-generated content, reach
masses, mobilize publics around a particular issue and distribute messages without the filtering of mainstream media, corporate gatekeepers, campaign managers, the police and so on. This aligns with Nisbet’s and Kotcher’s (2009) comparison between bloggers as opinion leaders in a digital era. Bloggers can serve as either agitator that spark discussion and attention about climate change or synthesizer that gather and make sense of news, complex scientific reports and so on. As opposed to other Internet users, bloggers tend to consume online news to a greater extent and are early adopters of content creation and sharing technologies. Bloggers not only contribute to placing climate change on the agenda for their followers but also the media agenda, hence, engaging in digitally enhanced multi-step flow of agenda setting (Nisbet and Kotcher, 2009:341). In even more recent settings, influencers and particularly social media influencers have risen as a profession and third-party endorsers that shape the audience’s attitudes through sites like IG (Freberg et al., 2011:3). Hence, influencers and opinion leaders operate through similar processes, arguably further blurring the lines of who can act as an opinion leader today.

Drawing on the literature, opinion leaders inevitably are taking part in the social media sphere to interact with the public. As an outcome of digital and social media, anyone can create content and make their voices heard and can, therefore, influence others. As such, the lines between an opinion leader and other types of influential stakeholders are becoming extensively blurred since they perform similar tasks but perhaps for different reasons. As opinion leaders, like any influential person, will attempt to shape public opinion about a specific issue through steering people towards frames of reference that favor their own positions, there is a need for exploring how opinion leaders communicate through social media and frame a complex issue such as climate change (Vraga et al., 2015). Particularly, based on the personalization that presents itself through social media use also allows for opinion leaders to reduce the psychological distance between the person and climate change, making issues more concrete (ibid). An evolving framing landscape in terms of climate change communication as described in the literature certainly makes social media platforms proper lenses for using a framing approach to empirically and conceptually explore opinion leadership communication and issue representation. As such, this thesis adopt the notion that opinion leaders depend on a large extent of followers to get their message across and they agitate and synthesize complex issues reflecting their personal ideas and values.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework of this thesis. Since the purpose of this study is to explore the framing of climate change, rather than effects of opinion leadership and communication, I have chosen to adopt theories that touch upon how texts, events, objects, and situations are attended to in order to strategically shape messages and convey meaning. Framing theory is applied to uncover the first research question, following Benford's and Snow’s (2000) definition of framing as described in section 3.1. For the second research question, I draw on social representations theory to understand the relation between Ai and the anchoring and objectification of climate change in their
communication. It is, however, important to note that the way framing is used in this thesis cannot be used to study how opinions are created or affected among the public.

3.1 Framing theory

The concept of framing is closely tied to agenda-setting theory in the sense that both theories put a focus on how media shape the public’s attention towards a particular issue, hence, setting the agenda (Jasperson et al., 1998). The traditional agenda-setting concept “attempts to explain only why one issue becomes more important than another issue in the public’s mind; it does not explicitly focus on the nuances of coverage within an issue” (ibid, 1998:206). Framing theory, however, is more concerned with the presentation of issues, which creates a frame for that information (de Vreese, 2005:53). As such, framing is argued to be the second level of agenda-setting theory (ibid).

Based on the notion that audiences rely on frames to make sense of issues (Nisbet, 2009:15), attempting to understand what frames and the way frames are used by Ai will lay a plausible foundation for future comparison of social media framing and for exploring audience’s interpretations and views of such frames. As pointed out by Entman (1993), “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (1993:52). Building on this, from the perspective of leaders, advocates, and social movements, research suggests that in framing an issue they “identify problematic conditions in society and frame them in ways to effect desirable social changes” (Hallahan et al., 2008:3). As such, they engage in agenda-building activities and use frames in order to “mobilize support, build coalitions, manipulate symbols, make claims, typify problems, seek publicity, or gain access to the public policy agenda” (ibid). Benford and Snow (2000) have evoked the notion that people who advocate, therefore, engage in the core framing tasks, that satisfy different needs depending on the stakeholder: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing (Benford and Snow, 2000:615). Diagnostic framing refers to pointing to the issue of what needs change, while also attributing who or what is to blame for the problem (ibid). Prognostic framing refers to suggesting what needs to be done to solve the problem in question (ibid, 617). Motivational framing refers to a call to arms for action (ibid). Through such core framing tasks, communicators develop specific themes (Hallahan, 1999:224) and “are developed and deployed to achieve a specific purpose” (Benford and Snow, 2000:624).

Exploring whether Ai performs such core framing tasks as presented by Benford and Snow (2000) in their opinion leadership in order to frame an issue, one can further gain insight about how Ai anchor and objectify the issue in terms of raising awareness and building a case around it. As indicated by Marková (2017), frames are not always verbalized and only implicitly present, yet identifiable since they guide sense-making processes (Marková, 2017) and further since unframed information does not exist (Nisbet, 2009). Thus, I view frames as being shaped by different framing devices, such as keywords, catchphrases, examples, and the use of language in order to present an issue.
Furthermore, I see frames as transformative depending on the context, although constantly shaped by underlying assumptions of those who frame an issue and those who interpret the frames.

Because of the multifacetedness of framing, a comprehensive understanding of framing theory has been difficult to generate. This is often connected to the aspects that many researchers have developed their own unique set of frames that are specific to a particular issue, which has made it difficult to “make any connection to the broader theoretical or conceptual issues of framing” (Borah, 2011:256). When developing issue-specific frames, it is therefore important to try to tie those into broader concepts of framing theory. This can be done by approaching how the examination of such frames contribute to the development of frame analysis, or being clear in explaining the origin of the issue-specific frames while describing how they are conceptualized and operationalized in the particular study (ibid). Keeping these deficiencies in mind when doing an inductively approached qualitative frame analysis, framing theory serves as valuable when exploring opinion leadership activities and frames to grasp the meaning-making efforts that legitimate such activities (Benford and Snow, 2000). In attempting to approach the first research question, framing theory guide the understanding of how the identified frames provide meaning through selective simplification, by providing a particular perspective climate change. Based on my reading of the literature on frames and framing, I will in this thesis define framing as construction of meaning, as put forward by Benford and Snow (2000) that “denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction” (2000:614).

3.2 Social representation theory

The theory of social representations, first formulated by Serge Moscovici (2000), offers an approach for studying how the media and its citizens construct societal and political issues in modern-day society. Representation denotes “the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language that enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events” (Hall, 1997:3). Furthermore, Birgitta Höijer (2011) distinguishes that “social representations are about processes of collective meaning-making resulting in common cognitions which produce social bonds uniting societies, organizations, and groups. It sets focus on phenomena that become subject to debate, strong feelings, conflicts and ideological struggle, and changes the collective thinking in society” (2011:3). Since this thesis focuses on the content of Ai and how they represent a particular social issue, the choice of applying social representation theory has its foundation in aiming to establish an in-depth understanding and connect my findings to already established assumptions about particular issues. By this, I mean that in approaching RQ2, drawing on social representation theory, this thesis analyzes how Ai makes sense of climate change and the image they construct in terms of how it is represented in their content, i.e. how they make it concrete.

This paper locates itself among the small number of studies using social representation theory in relation to framing analysis. However, according to Höijer
social representations are embedded in communicative practices and the role of media in the growth of social representation has long been emphasized. Two fundamental communicative mechanisms, anchoring and objectification, are posited by the theory. Anchoring means that “new ideas or phenomenon are related to a well-known phenomenon or context” (Höijer, 2011:7) and anchoring mechanisms include for example naming (giving an unfamiliar issue a more well-known face) and emotional anchoring (refers to the communicative process when a new phenomenon is attached to well-known emotions) (ibid, 7-9). Objectification is to make something that is unfamiliar into something concrete, i.e. a type of materialization of abstract ideas by representing the ideas as a concrete phenomenon (ibid). In Moscovici’s (2000) notion, objectifying is more of an active process than anchoring, which takes place rather automatically. Objectification mechanisms include emotional objectification (strong emotional components in communication) and personification (objectifying through linking an idea or phenomenon to specific persons) (Höijer, 2011:13). By studying how Ai anchor and objectify climate change, one can specify communicative mechanisms to gain understanding and to some extent explain the way in which Ai elaborate and communicate their social realities and ideas about for example social responsibilities.

As mentioned earlier, it is my interpretation that Ai mirror current trends in their opinion leader activities such as influencers, increased IG use and expressions of civic responsibility in terms of climate change mitigation. Hence, Ai represents already established phenomena in Swedish society. Ai, therefore, make out an interesting case in terms of allowing the researcher to observe concepts such as science and everyday knowledge meet and new social representation may emerge. The social in social representation is meant to emphasize the ways in which representations emerge through social interactions and communication between individuals and groups (Moscovici, 2000). Moreover, Moscovici states that “from the dynamic point of view social representations appear as a ‘network’ of ideas, metaphors and images, more or less loosely tied together” (Moscovici, 2000:153).

However, Moscovici makes distinctions between how collectively shared social cognition must be in order to actually qualify as social representation: hegemonic representations, emancipated representations and polemic representations (Höijer, 2011:5). Hegemonic representations are shared by most and “prevail in all symbolic or affective practices” (ibid). To exemplify, climate change conceived in Sweden as a threat to human life and society (European Investment Bank, 2018) is an example of hegemonic social representations. Emancipated representations are connected to subgroups who create their own versions with “a certain degree of autonomy with respect to the interacting segments of society” (Höijer, 2011:5). One example could be how Ai represents aspects of influencers lifestyles as unsustainable. Such representation may partly be complementary and the public may pick up ideas of both and combine with their own experiences (Höijer, 2011:5) of both climate change and influencers role in mitigation. Lastly, polemic representations, forms by subgroups based on a disagreement or social conflict when not shared by society as a whole. As put by Smadar, “They express rivalry or incongruity between representations” (2003:6.4), which can correlate with the way Ai refers to airplane emissions being a major climate thief, which most likely will
result in contradictions as others may consider, for example, the meat industry to be a bigger threat to the climate. The classification of social representations in these terms are rather vague. Ideas and social thinking are often heterogeneous and complex, they are multifaceted (Höijer, 2011). However, social representations in their complexity can be seen as *cognitions in communication*, which simplifies the concept of the theory, meaning that it presupposes some collective cognitions (social representations) but it also means that individuals or groups can produce social representations through communication (ibid, 6).

Like any other theory, social representation theory is not free from shortcomings, the most common argument being that the theory is too vague and broad, a “catch-all term” (Voelklein and Howarth, 2005:7). Despite noted shortcomings, in applying social representations theory, one can provide valuable contributions to media research. Even more profoundly, social representations theory is a prominent approach in exploring social phenomena and as a system that describes and explains them (Höijer, 2011:14). For empirical research, there is rather little guidance on the implementation of social representation theory even if several methods have been used in relation to the theory. For such reason, Höijers’ (2011) study serve as key guidance for this thesis, mainly because she emphasizes the conceptual analytical level and link this to an empirical application, in relation to media communication and climate change and different levels of meaning-making.

### 4. Research Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology applied in this study is presented. My thesis uses qualitative methods through a case study and a frame analysis, that are explained in section 4.1 and 4.2. The selection and collection of data will be described as well as how the empirical data has been analytically approached in attempting to answer the research questions. Moreover, the limitations of the approach are discussed together with the ethical considerations encountered in this study.

#### 4.1 Qualitative research

This case study locates itself within a constructivist framework in the sense that it relies on interpretative explanations that do not try to provide true or false definite answers. Rather, I seek to supply reasonable explanation to a specific phenomenon. Principal to such methodology is the role of meaning (values, beliefs, and sentiments) in the understanding of social realities (van Gorp and Vercruysse, 2012). Specifically, this research sets out to explore a new issue, which stems from a personal interest and curiosity for how Ai make sense of climate change and communicate it through their content. In comparison to quantitative analysis, qualitative research methods rely on interpretations rather than on measurements (Gillespie and Toynbee, 2006). When it comes to Ai, I pose the questions of *what* frames can be identified and *how* do they anchor and objectify the issue of climate change. These formulations give grounds for most appropriately describing my research as exploratory. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) allude to
exploratory research as a study intended to discover and gain insight about a topic of interest and the research questions, therefore, tend to begin with “What” or “How”, which substantiate my choice of research purpose. I chose to do a case study since the purpose is to explore a specific topic and a case study can generate an empirical analysis that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context” (Yin, 2014:14). Hence, it can offer additional insights to already existing research and fill research gaps. The focus on one specific case does not yield particularly generalizable results (ibid). It does, however, provide an example of how opinion leaders communicate in a social media setting and what type of framing such opinion leadership is susceptible to, thus contributing to existing research.

4.2 Qualitative frame analysis

Frame analysis is a common approach used for exploring environmental communication, particularly in studies focusing on the communicative aspects of climate change. Using framing as a methodological strategy requires “constructing and processing discourse or characteristics of the discourse itself” (Pan and Kosicki, 1993:57). In terms of this study, frame analysis, as a form of qualitative analysis, serves the purpose to identify frames through the communication content produced by Ai.

Framing at its core is a fundamentally constructivist concept, since the “perception and communication always contain combinations of selection and salience or persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion” (Schäfer and O’Neill, 2017:3). Narrowly concretized, frames allude to the interpretive packages used “to contextualize events by manipulating metaphors, catchphrases and images in order to prioritize some events over others” (Wasike, 2017:9). Frames tend to be placed within two categories: generic and issue-specific frames. The generic frames are considered as standard broad themes that are often limited to conflict, human interest, economic impact, responsibility and morality (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). When using a deductive approach, one involves such predefined generic frames and verify their occurrence. However, in terms of approaching RQ1, this thesis adopts a qualitative approach to frame analysis and the identification of frames will be done inductively. Since this thesis investigates content through a social media platform that is rather unexplored, this allows me to attempt to reveal more issue-specific frames while also placing them within the core framing tasks as presented by Benford and Snow (2000). The rationale behind this approach draws from the knowledge that many scholars has “reinvented the wheel” several times instead of relying fully on previous generalizable typology (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010:46). Issue-specific frames are more subjective, more flexible and can vary depending on the content that is analyzed (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). However, building on previously established conceptualizations of framing theory and relying to a large extent on previous framing research, as well as building on personal experiences, is deemed necessary in order to bring credibility to the inductively identified frames in this study. Keeping in mind that an issue-specific approach to the study of frames generates degrees of issue-sensitivity, which makes generalizations and comparisons limited (Hertog and McLeod, 2001:150-151), it is deemed an appropriate approach in terms of an unexplored case as Ai.
Moreover, trying to locate the identified frames within the core framing tasks certainly provides further validity for the findings.

Having collected the content material, it has been repeatedly observed, while I have made thorough notes and thereafter decided on the frames based on the sample. The progress of conducting an inductive framing analysis is not straightforward (van Gorp and Vercruysse, 2012). It is key for me as a researcher to keep in mind that mental constructs may interfere with the identification of a frame (ibid), specifically as the identification depend on my interpretation. In monitoring such interference, I have taken a systematic approach that encompasses four phases introduced by Wimmer and Dominick (2006), in which I have continuously looked over and compared the material (in van Gorp and Vercruysse, 2012):

- Comparative assignment of incidents to categories (or frames);
- Elaboration and refinement of categories/frames;
- Searching for relationships and themes among categories/frames; and
- Simplifying and integrating data into a coherent theoretical structure.

Moreover, in the nature of qualitative frame analysis and in terms of my research problem, I seek to capture the meanings embedded within the text, which would not be possible if using deductive measures through quantitative analysis (Reese, 2007:10). I use qualitative frame analysis here to fulfill two main goals. Firstly, to establish the prevailing frames which underline Ai’s communication, holding examples of practice up for scrutiny and linking to core framing processes. Secondly, to analyze the activities in terms of social representation, the anchoring and objectifying of climate change, and to situate these activities within a wider discourse of climate change communication. The empirical data and the collection process, that lay the foundation for analysis, is explained in the next section.

4.3 Data and collection process

Ai’s IG posts make out the empirical content for analysis. The sampling consist of every post from the representative actor posted within a time frame, namely between January 2019 - March 2019. Since Ai is a current and ongoing phenomenon, which started in December 2018, the time period examined for this study is one month after the account was established, until the end of March 2019 as it is the most current content available when this research began. Such a time span allows for identifying potential frame transformation or if some frames have become further manifested over time. Hence, for the scope of this study, the posts collected were deemed sufficient in terms of identifying recurrent characteristics and themes. Frame analysis tends to handle more units of analysis as the technique refers to samples and not whole texts, with the aim to identify core framing elements (Lindekilde, 2014). Each post (a total of 327 print screens) was examined and analyzed using an interpretative perspective rather than quantitatively coding units of analysis. Such an approach of textual analysis (keywords, captions, hashtags, use of language and tone) “enables a researcher to decipher the overarching themes based on the sum of mini-messages... The analysis is systematic and invokes a
broader process of critical reflection on various interpretations of messages and ideological streams embedded in the text” (Hon, 2015:3). The way that the primary data is explored and how the categorization scheme is set out is explained in detail below.

4.4 Analytical framework

Building on a similar analytical framework that was set out by Hon (2015), this process began by reading and looking into all of Ai’s posts from the selected time frame, from most recent to oldest. Keywords and phrases (captions), language use and tone, were observed in the process of reading and re-reading the posts. Most of the posts contained some sort of information about the specific influencers latest travels and CO2 emission statistics, hashtags and characterized by a humoristic tone. The posts were then examined for particular frames emerging inductively within and across the posts, and to identify if posts within a specific frame adhere to one or more of the core framing processes (diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational). As the process evolved notes were taken frequently. A categorizing scheme was created progressively in order to place the collected posts under what I distinguished as the most adequate frame. As a next step, the post were categorized under the suitable core frame task, as done in similar categorizing processes (see Hon, 2015). The primary categorization framework was then analyzed, reanalyzed and altered in which some posts were moved around and eventually placed under other categories. I was then able to properly develop descriptions of all features represented in the various posts (note that some posts exist under several categories).

Sample posts were lastly selected for the analysis chapter, which was done by distinguishing the most frequently representative and/or most interesting examples that can illustrate and support the specific frames and fit within the description of the core framing process.

4.5 Internal validity and ethical considerations

Qualitative research has the disadvantage of uncertainty in terms of what the findings of the selected samples analyzed actually can disclose about general or specific propensity in for example media or social structures (Schäfer and O'Neill, 2017). Notwithstanding, qualitative methods, such as frame analysis can generate an in-depth understanding of particular cases. In terms of qualitative frame analysis, two major issues have been highlighted by researchers, namely reliability and validity (ibid). In terms of validity, the main threat of inductively identifying issue-specific frames in a qualitative frame analysis is to “reinvent the wheel” instead of contributing to the verification of already existing frames and hence generating results that are hard to replicate (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010:46). Thus, there is the risk of getting stuck in offering a superficial analysis absent from the meaning behind it. In inductive research like this, however, I am not interested in predefined theoretical categories as such, but rather in what the data in its own tells me. As stated by Lindekilde (2014), even when an inductive approach is taken on, it is important for the researcher to be explicit about procedures and to document them. As such, for this study, I have attempted to overcome these challenges by creating a
In terms of social media data, there are some ethical considerations to keep in mind when carrying out this research. One of the biggest concerns with using data from social media is the extent to which the specific data is public or private. However, whether or not content is public or private is determined by the user, hence, those who are the creators of whatever is produced on social media platforms hold varying standpoints in relation to their production and consumption of information (Lindekilde, 2014:7). On this note, since the data collected for this study is produced by individuals (Ai), human subject considerations are necessary to keep in mind (ibid). However, since the object of study, namely the content produced, derives from an IG account that offers openly accessible data, I argue that the producer(s) of Ai is not of offensive risk of vulnerable to the concern of privacy.

5. Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the empirical material collected and categorized through the analytical tools of framing theory. First I will present my inductive findings through the qualitative frame analysis. Based on Ai’s content, I have acknowledged that Ai demonstrates examples of prognostic, diagnostic and motivational framing processes. The figure below outlines the core framing processes and demonstrate examples of how each task plays out in Ai’s content. Within these framing processes, I put forward the most prevailing frames identified in Ai’s communication, which include the shaming frame (diagnostic), the lifestyle change frame (prognostic) and the direct effects frame (motivational). As these frames have been inductively identified based on my interpretations, these are further explained in each section. Lastly, drawing on my findings from the qualitative frame analysis, I present my analysis of how Ai anchor and objectify climate change to then be able to discuss and draw conclusions regarding Ai’s role in communicating climate change.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framing Task</th>
<th>Diagnostic</th>
<th>Prognostic</th>
<th>Motivational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>What is the identified issue?</td>
<td>What are the strategies for solving the issue?</td>
<td>What are the rationales for motivating action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Climate change as an outcome of CO2 emissions caused by airplane travels</td>
<td>Promote taking the train, reduce travelling by airplane, influencers not to normalize unsustainable travelling through their Instagram accounts</td>
<td>CO2 emissions need to be reduced now or climate change will become an even greater threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Function and Examples of Ai’s core framings tasks*

### 5.1 Diagnostic framing

Diagnostic framing refers to highlighting what the issue is, while also pointing to who or what is to blame for the problem (Benford and Snow 2000:615). Based on this and on the notion that Ai expresses that influencers traveling behavior is an issue because it contributes with vast CO2 emissions, the activity of *shaming* was noted as the prominent part of the diagnostic framing process. Building on previous literature, shaming is here referring to “disclose information about an identified person… which either seeks to induce shame in that person, or at least express a judgment that the person ought to feel ashamed of themselves” (Rowbottom, 2013:1). Even if Ai does not expose private information that would presumably hurt the specific influencer, it is my perception that shaming activities take place on various levels throughout the main framing tasks. Within the core of the shaming aspect, I interpret it as a way that Ai informs about what they consider being unsustainable aspects of influencers lifestyles, leaving it up to the influencer, the followers of the influencer and the followers of Ai’s own account (the recipients of the information) to decide for themselves how to react. Moreover, within the informational aspect of shaming, I argue that Ai also criticize influencer’s conduct. I base this on the notion that the issue of unsustainable traveling is certainly a question of morality, which will most likely be a subject of both agreement and disagreement depending on the stakeholder. Since Ai offers their opinions and interpretations of a particular issue, which exists in the core part of an opinion leaders role in disseminating ideas and information, they arguably open up for a debate about moral standards in their communication. For these reasons, I refer to the identified diagnostic frame as *the shaming frame*. Even if the shaming frame is presented as its own frame in the diagnostic framing process, the shaming aspect is identified as characterizing both aspects of the prognostic framing and the motivational framing. While prognostic and motivational frames exist, I claim shaming as dominant while the other identified frames are more
secondary. For such reason, the core framing tasks are connected in the sense that they all interlink with the shaming frame but on different levels. This will be further developed in each section.

5.1.1 The shaming frame

Based on my interpretation of Ai’s content, shaming is arguably evident in the name of the account (referring to influencers as clueless). The cluelessness reference does, in my opinion, indicate that influencers need to be informed about the extent of CO2 emission that their traveling causes because it is an extensive issue according to Ai. Hence the shaming frame is identified as permeating the underlying assumptions of the strategic ways in which Ai strives to raise awareness, namely to voice their criticism towards influencers traveling behavior and hence, inform the public about why this is an issue.

In terms of diagnosis, I identified the shaming frame as most obvious in posts that were directed at influencers in terms of a) referencing how much the current individual has traveled by airplane across the world within a specific time frame (e.g. the last year or last six months), b) demonstrating, with the use of scientific data, the amount of CO2 emission that a specific trip, or several, made by the influencer has caused, and c) taunting influencers who claim to compensate for traveling much by making other sustainable lifestyle choices. These aspects are further developed below.

The posting of public exposure (naming), and the condemnation of a specific behavior (shaming), certainly require reliable information that verifies such exposure and condemnation. Ai present in their content that traveling sustainably by airplane corresponds to a maximum of 0.4 tonnes CO2 per year (Aningslösa influencers, 2019). Within this presented CO2 framework, Ai publicly posts the number of trips a particular influencer has done by airplane and thus, how much CO2 emission these trips have caused (see figure 2). Such acts can be referred to as both criticising and informative. The informative aspect correlate to simply letting the influencers and the public know how much CO2 emission certain traveling distances by airplane causes, which is seen in post 1: “Sweden - Miami - Costa Rica - Cuba - and home again, 3.8 tonnes CO2 per person” and in post 3: “New York in September, Costa Rica in November, now Sri Lanka, 3.0 tonnes CO2”. However, when referencing that a specific trip (post 4) that cause 3.4 tonnes of CO2 emission per person “takes up nine people’s travel budget” and stating that the specific influencer “flies 67 more times than the average person in the world” (post 2), somewhat informative, but the criticising aspect is evident. Such statement not only indicates that the influencer has contributed to vast CO2 emissions but also indicating who suffers in such a scenario, namely the number of others who could have traveled instead of one specific influencer. Hence, in my opinion, such approaches by Ai indicate that the influencer should feel ashamed of this behavior.
The aspects of informing and criticising as described above, take place of several levels. I have noted that Ai tends to cite the number of followers that a specific influencer has. It is my interpretation that this information include two aspects: 1) straightforwardly, Ai criticize influencers for using their large platforms to promote unsustainable acts and, 2) more underlying, to indicate that the followers of the influencer are also to feel ashamed by liking (clicking the like button) influencers traveling pictures and hence contribute to the acceptance of these aspects of the influencers conduct. As expressed by Ai in their content, influencers normalize “taking trips just for fun” by posting about it on IG (Aningslösa influencers, 2019). However, the aspect of normalizing certain behavior would not be possible if the influencer was not encouraged by its followers, I base this argument in my own assumption that social media influencers create content to keep their followers intrigued. Drawing on this notion, I perceive that Ai holds the assumption of influencers carrying social responsibility to some extent in a social media era, and should, therefore, be held accountable for certain aspects of their lifestyles. However, one may conclude such argument by stating that Ai indicates a bigger issue than only influencers traveling habits, rather it is a collective criticism with its foundation in discontent of aspects that many Swedes value and also normalize today. The examples in figure 3 demonstrate posts where the number of followers is included. To specify, referencing that an influencer has “2 million followers” (post 1) or “400 000 followers” (post 4), is thus a way of criticizing both influencers and their followers, once again indicating that they should feel ashamed of such conducts.
It is key to note that in post 8, Ai includes a reference to the influencer going to “the dictatorship in Dubai” through a sponsored travel. This post does, in my opinion, carry different aspects of shaming. Firstly, that Ai highlight that the influencer travels to a dictatorship and promotes it. Secondly, that it is a sponsored trip, which simply means that the influencer receives something for going there from perhaps a company. Thirdly, by including the number of followers of the influencer it once again demonstrate the shaming of the followers for acceptance. These aspects expand on what I perceive as Ai’s collective discontent in that many stakeholder normalize these aspects of conduct, in this case those who sponsor trips and once again, the followers. This type of shaming was found in some posts produced by Ai, although not most recurrent within the shaming frame.

Having demonstrated how Ai inform about and criticize influencers conduct as part of the diagnosis, there is furthermore a discovered link between that Ai reference influencers as clueless and using humor, or being ironic, when conveying their messages. Building on framing theory by Benford and Snow (2000), the aspect of using humor and irony, as I interpret it, can serve as a way to further construct meaning to Ai’s climate.
change communication and to make a rather complex issue entertaining and approachable. To exemplify, Ai brings focus towards the way some influencers climate compensate, an aspect of their content that I perceive as a strategic move to indicate and justify their expressed opinion about the cluelessness of influencers. The so-called “influencers guide to climate compensation” is exemplified in figure 4.

![Shaming frame examples](image)

**Figure 4: Shaming frame examples – the compensators (five postings).**

The tone in these posts is identified as ironic and taunting. As such, I interpret that the compensating actions expressed by these influencers are considered by Ai as trivial and contradicting. More specifically, this tone indicates Ai’s critical approach towards these influencers. Basically, I perceive it is being a strategic act to claim that these compensations are not enough in comparison to the major emissions caused by influencers extreme traveling behaviors. In the two linked posts (11) in figure 4, Ai expresses that the influencers guide towards climate compensation involves “traveling to an endangered island, post about climate change in your IG story when you get home, Done!”. In similar lines, post 12 states “Fly for 10-25 tonnes CO2 per year, pick up plastic at the beach, Done!”. Based on these posts, the perceived assumption is that Ai does not consider it to be enough for an influencer to fly across the world numerous times per year and then claim to compensate by “turning off the lights at home” (post 13), “expressing worry in a lifestyle magazine about the climate” (post 14) or “marrying a environmental expert” (post 15). Such use of language does, in my opinion, re-enforce the aspect of making out influencers as clueless and hence, using the shaming frame to even ridicule those influencers who claim to make up for traveling unsustainably.
Based on these interpretations, I would claim that the shaming frame indicates a sense of “we know better” as Ai position influencers as those who are unaware while Ai themselves appear as knowing better. By emphasizing these aspects of influencers behavior, I argue that the shaming frame is a way of both informing clueless individuals and thus, criticize influencers and those who contribute to the normalization of influencers conducts, indicating that they should feel ashamed of certain choices. Based on these aspects of diagnostic framing, i.e. pointing to the interpreted issue is (unsustainable traveling), as well as who (clueless influencers) and what (ignorance) is to blame for the problem, the prognostic framing is likely to center around individual initiatives rather than for example policy or legal solutions. The prognostic framing process is presented below.

5.2 Prognostic framing

Prognostic framing refers to the advocated potential solutions to the issue and how such solutions ought to be carried out (Benford and Snow, 2000:617). In this case, the correspondence I have identified between the diagnostic and prognostic framing is that both concrete and more informal solutions to the issue is present in Ai’s content, however, reasonable strategies to tackle the issue are rather limited and not straightforward. Having analyzed the way that Ai communicates solutions and strategies to the issue of influencers unsustainable traveling behavior, I have found that Ai expresses the need for lifestyle changes. To quote Ai, “We don’t have time to wait for political action and technical breakthroughs” (Aningslösa influencers, 2019), a statement that, in my opinion, indicates that the issue needs to be tackled privately and rapidly through active sustainable choices. Ai’s approach to indicate the need for lifestyle changes and private action may also be seen as a way to appeal to people’s desire for wanting to do good. Within this desire for social change, the shaming frame prevails as characterizing certain aspects of the prognostic framing. Even if the prognosis is harder to locate than the diagnosis, the identified frame is referred to as the lifestyle change frame and serves as a rather overarching secondary frame, characterized by Ai’s highly critical standpoint towards influencers conduct and their discretion of influencers social responsibility.

5.2.1 The lifestyle change frame

Presenting and encouraging ways to plan travels by train instead of taking the airplane suggests tactics of how one can choose to live. On the one hand, influencers are encouraged to engage in climate change mitigation as they are key players who, in Ai’s opinion, should engage in fighting the climate threat. On the other hand, depictions of influencers as clueless and representations of their unsustainable traveling behavior imply that they are doing something wrong and therefore need to change aspects of their lifestyles, at least from the perspective of traveling. This interpretation means that there are different positions within the lifestyle change frame. However, the overall prognosis identified is that climate change must be dealt with by changing the attitudes and behavior of individual citizens, rather than by legislation and policy change for example. In the
diagnostic framing the concern seems to be to criticize influencers for their conduct but also to inform, not only influencers but the influencers’ followers and Ai’s own followers, that airplanes as a means of transport is a threat to the climate. Hence, the prognostic framing concerns that actions must be taken now if something is to change, more directly from the perspective of influencers as having an influential role in society in Ai’s opinion, but also from the perspective of the public to put pressure on such stakeholders. Drawing from the posts by Ai, post 16 provides an example when Ai expresses actions they believe ought to be taken in order to address the issue, through a quote by a professor in engineering, science and environmental studies in Sweden:

Since science about climate change and the causes have existed for a long time, we need to understand the types of response and everyday denial that makes the greenhouse effect is not taken seriously, even though we have the consequences right in front of us (Ai, post 16 – own translation).

It is my interpretation that for Ai, the use of such quotes is to further point to the cluelessness and even ignorance of individuals. The reference to denial and not looking at the consequences we have in front of us is certainly not limited to influencers but it dramatizes the urging risks of climate change within this context. Hence, the concept of “we” does put emphasis on society as a whole and thus, influencers are included in such an equation to do something privately about an issue that they themselves are part of.

**Figure 5:** Lifestyle change frame examples – solutions (four postings).

Building on this, the need for individuals to take actions that prevent further CO2 emissions and for influencers not to promote unsustainable acts are highlighted. However, such statements are mere indications of what is required. More direct solutions that are put forward by Ai are to choose the train instead of flying or simply only travel by airplane when no other alternative exists. Post 17 proposes a concrete guide for where one can turn to plan a journey by train. Based on this post, I locate the lifestyle change frame within a strategic process of Ai attempting to make individuals understand that there are alternative choices and that it is an easy aspect to change of one’s lifestyle. As put forward by Benford and Snow (2000), as stakeholders provide particular perspectives of an issue,
they simplify and condense “aspects of the world out there” (2000:614) for different reasons. In terms of tackling climate issues related to traveling, proposed solutions will most likely come in different shapes and forms depending on the stakeholder. Hence, whether Ai’s proposed solutions are valid solutions remains outside the scope of this study. Rather, I can argue that the lifestyle change frame concludes recommendations offered by Ai, demonstrating the strategicness of Ai’s communication. The combination of concrete solutions and quoting experts statements as a way of urging for needed changes in behaviors and attitudes are aspects I see as being part of Ai’s attempt to impact desirable social changes.

Post 18 in figure 5 indicates what Ai considers that influencers should do but are not doing. They do not refer to the risks of climate change but rather encourage that influencers should use their platform to inspire for sustainable ways of living rather than taking the airplane to the Maldives and from there post 24 Instagram pictures (post 18). In my opinion, this portrays as encouragement of lifestyle change from the perspective of the influencer that has numerous followers, and hence, has the potential to steer many people in another direction. The aspect of encouraging influencers to use their platforms to promote sustainable living can be seen as an offering of a solution to the issue as presented in the diagnostic framing process.

In post 19, Ai puts forward one of the influencers that have traveled by airplane the most during 2018. They state that the influencer “needs some encouragement to change her lifestyle”, which verifies the part of the prognostic framing that encourages the role of the influencers’ followers and hence, the followers of Ai to put pressure on these stakeholder. However, shaming in the shape of criticizing is highly present in this post. Even if all the aspects presented above fit within a lifestyle change frame, I withhold that the prognosis in relation to the diagnosis is not particularly straightforward. As such, even when promoting encouragement in a way such as in post 19, it carries once again the ironic tone and rather seem as a taunt of the influencers ignorance than as an encouragement or solution. The exposure and condemnation of the particular influencer as being the potential winner of having done most travels within a year is, in my opinion, an obvious critique than anything else. Notwithstanding, having identified the suggested issue (diagnosis) and the solutions to go about the issue (prognosis), the motivational framing will be necessary in order to motivate for efforts to pave the way for desirable social changes. This part of the core framing tasks is further analyzed in the next section.

5.3 Motivational framing

Motivational framing refers to a call to arms for engaging in action (Benford and Snow, 2000:617). Attending such framing task essentially give rise to the development of an agency constituent, through the use of appropriate vocabularies of motive (ibid). Benford (1993b) has identified four generic vocabularies of motive: vocabularies of severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety (Benford and Snow, 2000:617), in which the latter three rationales have been identified in Ai’s communication. It is my perception that the motivational framing of Ai centers around promoting engagement in climate-related action among influencers and thus, the influencers followers and Ai’s own followers on
Instagram. In connection to the diagnostic and prognostic framing, the main motivational aspect identified in Ai’s communication concerns that influencers should attempt to overcome the targeting as clueless and being portrayed as “villains” by becoming aware and take responsibility. By this, I mean, the underlying assumption by setting out influencers as an oblivious group and by highlighting levels of ignorance, may motivate for behavior and attitude change. As such, I refer to the identified motivational frame as the direct effects frame targeted at motivating stipulated efforts that generate direct effect, although not free from aspects of the shaming frame.

5.3.1 Direct effects

Having analyzed the content of Ai, the direct negative effects are expressed as the outcome of traveling by airplane and contributing to CO2 emissions, but direct positive effects are the outcome of taking the train instead or by simply reducing one’s traveling by airplane. The word “direct” entails that something happens fast and that it is a straightforward task. The direct effects frame call for, based on the assumption that climate change is happening now, the need to take active sustainable choices that are effective in terms of reducing CO2 emissions (efficacy). In the examples in figure 6, post 22 demonstrates such aspect of efficacy, presenting direct effects of private climate choices (amount of CO2 emission per year) by drawing on scientific data. The data informs how much non-emitted CO2 will be saved by not going on a trip by airplane to Thailand in comparison to for example waste sorting in one’s home. Post 21, once again with a humoristic tone, presents what an individual can do in terms of benefitting the climate, while putting it in contrast to actions that are outside the scope of individual means, such as “develop electric aircraft that carry more than ten passengers”. However, what one can do in terms of effective action that will have direct effect in terms of reduced CO2 emissions, according to Ai, is to avoid traveling by airplane when it is not needed and reduce one’s consumption behavior. Also, with a sense of humor, ironically referring to themselves by stating that one can “shame and expose celebrities on Instagram” as one way to take effective action.
5.3.2 The shaming frame in motivation

Even if the direct effects of individual active sustainable actions are expressed, I argue that aspects of the motivational framing demonstrate examples of the shaming frame. Particularly in terms of urgency. Post 20 demonstrates such an example in which Ai states that the specific influencer traveling to Miami and The West Indies three times in 15 months “mean that we have consumed air travels as if we have 18 globes” and amplifying the statement with “There is no planet R”. Post 23 similarly states that “We must reduce emissions from our traveling by 85%, going to Thailand once a year increases emissions by 200%”, which indicate the urgency of the issue but at the same time discloses information that seeks to express judgment about this influencer.

Another step of the direct effects frame includes the motivational aspect of propriety. Those influencers who make sustainable traveling choices are noted in Ai’s communication as accepted behavior. I see this as part of the encouraging call to arms for action, namely that others can be inspired to follow such a path when they see that it is possible. However, I argue that this aspect of the direct effect frame also correlates with the shaming frame, most directly in terms of Ai making distinctions between those who make good choices and those who make bad choices.
Promoting those who make sustainable traveling choices and using phrases to describe such persons as “a true role model” (post 24) and “a true influencer” (post 27), demonstrate such distinctions between a good and bad influencer. In post 28, Ai states that the specific influencer is still able to create content for Instagram despite not traveling around the world several times a year. In post 29, Ai brings forward Yoga influencers who have expressed that they will carry out yoga retreats in Sweden rather than abroad, and they mention that other Yoga influencers should, therefore, be inspired by the same sustainable path. Since Ai makes clear that individuals can make choices that have direct positive effect as well as choices that directly affect the climate negatively, the shaming frame is, in my opinion, apparent when Ai places the negative versus the positive. To specify, even if it serves as a way to motivate the bad to do good, it thus indicate that one can be “rewarded” by becoming a true role model, meaning that the bad influencers should be ashamed if they do not follow same paths as the true influencers. This aspect, does in my opinion, make out the underlying aim of Ai’s communication, for influencers to become aware (not be clueless) and hence, make active and effective sustainable choices that may, in turn, have larger societal impacts. To conclude, based on this analysis, Ai motivates as a call for action that can work as an incentivize for influencers, to bring forward the desire among influencers to avoid perceived negative effects, such as contributing to vast CO2 emissions and as being seen as clueless and a villain.
5.4 Anchoring and objectifying climate change

What has been established through previous research is that climate change is complex and thus need to be communicated to the public in an uncomplicated manner (Nisbet, 2009:15). In approaching the second RQ, based on the frame analysis, I suggest that Ai communicate climate change in a sense that is rather simple and not particularly different from general assumptions in Sweden about climate change. By this, I mean that they frame a complex issue but place it in a relatable context, partly because many people follow influencers lives through social media and partly because many people in society travel by airplane and can thus relate. The key disclosures in Ai’s content are that the scientific claim of the risk of climate change is verifiable and it is expressed as urgent. Climate change is moreover human-induced based on certain aspects of individual living, which needs to be addressed rapidly. As these aspects are maintained, Ai signifies why action is needed now and that it should start with the individual because such acts are efficient. Based on the readings by Höijer (2011), I draw on the notion that stakeholders can create social representations by placing objects, persons, and issues in a familiar context. With such notion, it is my interpretation that social representations can be challenged or changed, leaving space for stakeholders who aim to establish social change to reconstruct social representations in terms of own beliefs as long as they mesh with other groups beliefs of society. Hence, attempting to understand how people construct and represent climate change is arguably important as it is part of stakeholders’ framing process of sense-making (cf. Benford and Snow, 2000). Also because it provides insight in the way that Ai expresses their understanding of realities through frames. More specifically, if frame structures may influence the formation of social representation to some extent, and since opinion leaders commonly aspire to change behavior and attitudes among the public as they establish meaning of salient issues and events through framing, it is of value to analyze how Ai anchor and objectify climate change to potentially be able to study effects of such framing.

Found in previous research is that climate change is already an issue of public concern in Sweden (cf. Olausson, 2011; Naturvårdsverket, 2018; European Investment Bank, 2019) and that various stakeholders have a role in shaping such social representations (Höijer, 2011). It is therefore my interpretation that when stakeholders who strive for social change, their representation of issues will mirror systems of opinions, knowledge, and beliefs that are most likely particular to a culture, a social category, or perhaps a group. This thesis does not argue that Ai particularly anchor and objectify climate change in ways that are completely unfamiliar or that does not mesh with Swedes beliefs about climate change. Rather, Ai places climate change in a more personalized and approachable context. The personalization and approachability are found partly in the use of Instagram, in which Ai communicate without particular mainstream media filters. Personalization is also found in the influencer aspect, which contributes to making climate change more personally relevant to specific audiences. By this, I mean that since influencers already have an established network through their social media channels and reach out to large amounts of people, Ai makes it personal in the sense that they target those who serve as inspirations for groups of people, and that people
may have connective relations with. Hence, shaming someone that already carries some societal influence is likely easier through social media as it allows for personal transgressions to become more visible and these can spread at a fast pace.

anchoring means that new ideas or phenomena are placed in relation to an already established phenomenon or context (Höijer, 2011). Eventually, unfamiliar ideas that are anchored can become well-known ideas (ibid). In such scenario, the concept of naming demonstrates a way to position a new phenomenon in the context of a well-known one (ibid). To exemplify, naming can mean to label the complex phenomenon of climate change as weather, which would place climate change in a context that many know as part of people’s everyday experiences (ibid). However, labeling climate change as weather may be misleading since not all weather are effects of climate change (ibid). In the process of anchoring climate change in a familiar interpretative framework, naming is not particularly identified per say in Ai’s communication. However, Ai makes use of everyday experiences by placing the issue of climate change in a familiar context, namely traveling. Referencing traveling as a major contributor to climate change may not be an unknown phenomenon. However, it arguably places some abstract and intangible risks about climate change in a known and comprehensible character. Moreover, even if CO2 emissions are maintained as a core issue of traveling by airplane in Ai’s content, I have noted that consequences of climate change are not particularly present. This may have something to do with the assumption that Swedish society already has a certain awareness about the threats related to vast CO2 emissions and therefore it may not be necessary to name climate change in other ways.

The interpreted use of frames in Ai’s communication, phrases such as “there is no planet R” (Figure 6, post 20), demonstrate a dramatic dimension and correlate with the comprehensiveness and embeddings of social representations in Sweden that climate change is an ongoing threat to human life and society (cf. Olausson, 2011; Naturvårdsverket, 2018). Hence, such dimensions further anchor the issue of traveling by airplane within existing media reports related to the threats of CO2 emission and global warming for example, that has already shaped interpretations and knowledge among Swedes. However, the naming or classifying of influencers as clueless carry a somewhat critical strain. Höijer (2011) argues that some types of naming and classifying can be “loaded with preferences, suffused with affection or dislike” (Höijer, 2011:8), an aspect that, in my opinion, is very transparent in Ai’s reference to influencers. As such, naming and classifying straightforwardly reveals Ai’s preferences and critical stance towards parts of influencers lifestyles. Hence, such anchoring is most likely to be both contested and consented in the public and may or may not contribute with a new perspective of looking at influencers conduct.

From the perspective of emotional anchoring, which refers to the communicative process in which a new phenomenon is connected to well-known emotions (Höijer, 2011), is in this case anchored as an issue to worry about. Based on the identified framing processes, feelings are expressed by maintaining that climate change is urgent and a threat. More specifically, stating that “we don’t have time to wait for political action and technical breakthroughs” (Aningslösa influencers, 2019), arguably place this specific phenomenon in connection to well-known emotions of others in society. Namely that we
are facing a threat that we should be worried about. Based on previous research, it was noted that 78% of Swedes believed that they can contribute to mitigating climate change (Naturvårdsverket, 2018). Building on this, I argue that Ai anchor familiar emotions about the individual responsibility that many feels in society. However, they target responsibility towards stakeholders that they consider not demonstrating such feelings about their own mitigation responsibility.

Objectification transforms an unknown issue into something concrete (Höijer, 2011). Such materialization of abstracts ideas, as described by Moscovici (2000), is hard to locate in Ai’s expressions. I argue that placing CO2 emissions in relation to airplane travels does objectify a rather abstract phenomenon. However, this is not something unknown. Rather, Ai informs about an issue as if those in society supposedly already know that airplanes cause CO2 emissions and affect the climate negatively. As such, based on my assumptions, Ai does not objectify climate change in terms of providing concrete anecdotal evidence of climate change. However, Ai rather objectifies through personification as a way of concretizing the issue at stake. Through personification, the phenomenon of climate change is linked to specific persons (Höijer, 2011), in this case being influencers who have established networks in society and are well-known within their networks. As stated by Höijer (2011:13), personification is a rather common discursive mechanism in media as an effort to draw attention to specific issues and events, both negative and positive. However, such effort tends to include a famous person as spokespersons who personify climate-friendly behavior (ibid). Even so, in the case of Ai, a majority of the influencers they expose rather personify non-climate-friendly behavior, while a small part of influencers being personified as role models and true influencers. Exposing individuals who in Ai’s opinion personify non-climate-friendly behavior thus place the issue of climate change related to traveling in a concrete context, while also serving as a basis for Ai’s judgment of influencers lifestyles and Ai’s own ideas about social responsibility.

Based on the frame analysis, I found the underlying assumption of holding influencers accountable for cluelessness and ignorance is an attempt to evoke influencers to feel ashamed. Building on the notion that human consciousness is intentional and moreover targeted towards objects or issues and other humans (Marková, 2017:365), I argue that Ai has particular intentions by objectifying climate change through personification. One may argue that by representing influencers as climate villains and as clueless might serve as a way to encourage influencers to overcome such representation. Such argument thus suggests that Ai anchor climate change in emotions of individual and collective guilt. The anchoring and objectifying of climate change as described above can most likely be connected to Ai’s perceived reality based on experiences, an aspect that Marková (2017:365) explains as including imagination, judgments, emotions, self- and other-awareness and interactions. Whether or not influencers who are framed in Ai’s content feel guilt or are ashamed is not explored in this thesis, however, it is my interpretation that it is an emotion that Ai attempts to provoke. Whether or not Ai’s use of identified frames and representations affect influencers attitudes and behavior, whether it affects people’s perception of influencers role in society and whether the public’s perception of their own responsibility in terms of traveling behavior is affected, therefore
serve as possible future aspects to explore. In the discussion below, I will discuss my findings based on the frame analysis and the analysis of how Ai anchor and objectify climate change, and thereafter draw conclusions about Ai’s role in climate change communication.

6. Concluding discussion

Based on the frame analysis, I argue that climate change is framed in a way that mirrors the general assumption of climate change in Sweden and hence, demonstrates underlying ideas and values of Ai. Such finding correlates with the notion of van Gorp and Vercruysse (2012) in that when stakeholders frame, they communicate issues based on common grounds within a specific culture, such as shared narratives and values. Whether the identified specific frames are intentional or unintentional, it is my interpretation that Ai applies strategic methods in order to fulfill their aims of effecting and changing individual behaviors and attitudes towards their own role in climate change mitigation, specifically in terms of traveling habits.

Every core framing process, as presented by Benford and Snow (2000), was identified as expressed in Ai’s IG posts during the time period examined. Through such establishment, I was able to identify ways in which Ai communicate the issue of climate change. I conclude that my findings of Ai demonstrates (a) a diagnostic framing process expressing the issue of CO2 emissions being largely caused by airplane travels, with the focus of informing and criticising (shaming) influencers traveling habits that contribute to such emissions and thus, hurt the climate. Also by demonstrating the role of the followers of these influencers in contributing to the normalization of such behavior. (b) A prognostic framing process centered on highlighting the importance of individual action-taking to tackle the issue, by presenting other ways of traveling as a concrete solution and to reduce their vast traveling habits as part of their lifestyles. Also by promoting that influencers should not encourage unsustainable traveling through their platforms and hence, highlighting the collective responsibility (e.g. followers of influencers) of contributing to the acceptance and normalization of such conduct. (c) A motivating framing process focused on the direct effects of sustainable and unsustainable individual choices and hence, motivating for engagement in climate-related action by making distinctions between the true role models and the climate villains.

Although different frames are described, the shaming frame is established as the dominant frame in Ai’s communication. This aspect is found in the repetitive use of language, i.e. Ai repeatedly indicates the same way of framing and the same frames that make their case. This conveys the impression that Ai communicates in a strategic and deliberative way in order to achieve specific desired purposes. This argument correlates with the notions of Benford and Snow (2000), namely it is possible to identify strategic efforts of communication when communicators develop specific themes, such as key messages of communication (2000:624). More specifically, the shaming aspect dramatize Ai’s cause for communication and seem to serve as a way to mobilize publics in the mitigation of climate change. However, such approach may be used to heighten a debate and get their message across, to spark some direct attitude and behavior changes.
However, the lack of concrete solutions to the issue as identified in the diagnostic framing, does indicate that long-term establishment of social change, although desired, may not be the primary focus of Ai’s activities today.

Based on previous research, it was established that climate change communication tends to follow similar patterns, namely to (1) raise awareness; (2) promote engagement and understanding through public and community participation; and (3) motivate behavior change (Nerlich, Koteyko and Brown, 2006). Based on my findings, I assert that Ai treats climate change as a familiar concept, as they make several assumptions of awareness of their audiences and that people already have an awareness about what climate change is and what the consequences are. However, Ai raises awareness about the issue of travel’s contribution to CO2 emissions by placing it in the context of clueless influencers. It can, therefore, be considered as a way to raise awareness about a bigger issue than just unsustainable traveling in the sense that they question influencers role in society and the acceptance of influencers conducts among their followers. Moreover, they promote engagement in the sense that they establish a network through the use of IG, allowing for large numbers of followers. Hence, Ai allows for community participation in a setting where they can convey their messages and provide the public with an understanding of what in their opinion is a distinct issue. Lastly, Ai promotes behavior change simply by encouraging individuals to think twice before taking the airplane. Also, Ai encourages influencers to become more aware and take more mitigation responsibility while also attempting to motivate others not to contribute to the normalization of such lifestyle. This correlation arguably validates that there might be effective ways of communicating climate change-related issues and that such ways are still make sense in social media settings.

Based on the frame analysis, I interpret the way that Ai represents the issue of climate change as being driven by anchoring in terms of making use of everyday experiences and connecting the issue to well-known emotions, and objectification through personification. While the anchoring in Ai’s communication may be a rather automatic process based on such narratives and values, I argue that the objectification is a much more active process in that they specifically place the climate change debate in regards to traveling in the context of influencers conduct. As put forward by van Gorp and Vercruysse (2012:1257), when stakeholders frame and thus represent an issue in a certain way within a broader social phenomenon they generate new perspectives from which reality may be perceived. Based on this notion, the repetitive use of frames and drawing on my understanding of how Ai anchor and objectify the issue of climate change, I perceive Ai’s communicative process of sense-making as having its foundation in more or less established ideological constructs. These constructs include that climate change is a threat to both humans and society, climate change is largely human-induced and individuals in society need to both be held accountable but also take action and responsibility. Although Ai’s content is directed at influencers, it is not limited to these stakeholders. I interpret the opinion leadership of Ai as a call for action on a collective level that requires individuals to make better lifestyle choices. As such, I do not argue that Ai attribute blame towards influencers for being the only contributors to CO2 emissions nor is it my perception that this is the message that Ai aspires to convey. Rather,
I argue that their way of communicating is an effort as opinion leaders to disseminate a complex issue and placing it in a familiar context by using a humoristic tone and by drawing attention to a group that they are critical towards. Whether it is morally right for Ai to decide that behaviors of influencers are susceptible to shaming remains outside the scope of this study. However, throughout the analysis, questions have come to mind regarding whether or not the role of shaming is the right approach in terms of reaching their informal goals. It certainly leaves space to question whether a more neutral provision of information without a condemnatory tone would be sufficient to inform people.

In sum, the analysis of Ai’s content demonstrates the ability of the framing approach when aiming to show how an issue is given meaning through specific frames that package salient events and hence, offer distinct interpretations of a phenomenon (cf. Benford and Snow, 2000). Not only does my findings demonstrate this case of climate change communication correlate with common means of communicating such an issue but also that Ai represents climate change in a way that connects with Swedish citizens assumptions and how such issues are framed in Swedish news media (cf. Olausson, 2011). As such, one can argue that even if Ai communicates climate change in a way that collides with widely accepted principles, their opinion leadership yields new perspectives by personifying climate change in relation to influencers, which could potentially become part of everyday cognition and discourse as social representations. However, it is my interpretation, based on the realization that in order for social representation to reconstruct, it requires a process of constant repeating. As such, whether these frames are effective in contributing to shaping social representations or behaviors remain outside the context of this thesis and would thus require the inclusion of public perception, other than my interpretations. The concluding remarks drawn are, therefore, located in the way that Ai promote new perspectives and moral visions. Particularly by raising questions about previously rather unchallenged traveling behavior of these influencers, to some extent stigmatizing accepted behaviors of rather powerful actors. In presenting scientific evidence (CO2 emission data), Ai does report on climate change and hence, contribute with illustrative examples to the heightened debate in Sweden about travel’s impact on the environment. For such reason, Ai may be concluded as intermediaries of new ideas, information, and opinions, framing information directly to their followers, serving as “mediators between the sphere of science and the public sphere” (Brüggemann and Engesser, 2014:400 in Walter and Brüggemann, 2018:6).

This study centered around exploring a new form of opinion leadership on social media and thereby looking into a phenomenon of the social world. Since this study has been carried out on an interpretative basis, I cannot make statements or provide general knowledge about the concept of opinion leaders in social media settings as a whole. Based on previous research, I argue that opinion leaders have an impact on how the public makes sense of and furthermore discuss received information about climate change. Even if I cannot make statements about how this influence would disclose or how it would affect people, the findings presented in this thesis can be expanded upon to explore the audience’s interpretations, to see whether these framing messages about climate change strike a chord with the general public or not.
Furthermore, in this study, I demonstrate how Ai’s make sense of climate change and represent the issue. However, more knowledge is needed to understand the consequences of such framing processes. As such, I suggest that future research on opinion leaders focuses on the consequences of framing climate change. Such research could attempt to examine the interplay between communication approaches through social media platforms and audiences predispositions. I base this on the notion that communication processes are not static but rather dynamic (Benford and Snow, 2000) and such perspective would thus be interesting. Overall, I argue that the configuration of digital opinion leadership and social media framing require more attention in order to further measure current effects and influence of opinion leaders as well as to make future comparisons of framing.
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