Instagram affordances among post-pregnant body advocates

A mixed methods study of post-pregnant women’s motivations behind their use of Instagram, and the emotional affordances that can be identified through their activeness

Linda Singh
ABSTRACT

Objectification of especially women have often been mentioned in connection to discussions concerning negative body image wherein individuals have been claimed to evaluate their body and look based on standardized societal ideals (Nash:2015, Hodgkinson, Wittkowski & Smith:2014). Studies have also shown that newspapers, magazines, and movies routinely present post-pregnancy bodies as something temporarily that women should strive to improve (Breda et al.:2015, Roth et al.:2012, Williams et al.:2017). Although, it has been stated that social media can work as a supportive and inspirational tool for this specific group of women (Baker & Yang:2017, Jarvis:2017) as well as platform of expression where users can shape and spread their own beauty standards (Cwynar-Horton:2016a, Guha:2014, Earl & Rohlinger:2018).

Women’s thoughts of their post-pregnancy bodies in connection to the motivations behind their bodily exposure on social media platforms have not yet been examined, even though it has been claimed that this group is particularly vulnerable to body image concerns due to social media representations (Coyne et al.:2017). As a contribution to the field of post-pregnant body advocates affordances of Instagram, this paper has focused on Swedish post-pregnant women that have posted images of their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage (mum tummy) and/or #mammakropp (mum body). By applying affordance theory’s suggestion that environments afford different affordances for individuals, this paper has asked 94 post-pregnant women how they feel about their bodies and what they think of societal body ideals, as well as examined their motivations behind their use of Instagram with the aim to identify prominent emotional affordances. Here, objectification theory, comparison theory, postmodern feminism, and feminist reflexivity were used as supporting theories in the analysis of the data which was conducted through a mixed methods survey.

The main findings have been that Instagram is seen as a platform that enables its users to experience emotional affordances of 1) criticism and comparisons, 2) inspiration and support and 3) acceptance, where post-pregnant body advocates are using the affordances primarily to visualize average post-pregnancy bodies, challenge standardized body ideals and get inspired or inspire other women into re-thinking the notion(s) of their post-pregnancy bodies.

What this paper further has contributed with is a greater understanding of post-pregnant body advocates experiences of their own bodies, a broader perspective on post-pregnant body advocates thoughts of societal ideals, a more profound comprehension behind post-pregnant body advocates motivation(s) behind their use of Instagram, and new knowledge to the field of emotional affordances among Instagram users.

Keywords: post-pregnant women, body advocates, Instagram, affordances, affordance theory, emotional affordances, objectification theory, feminist reflexivity, comparison theory, postmodern feminism, survey, mixed method
## TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1. PURPOSE .................................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS ......................................................................................................................... 2
   1.2. NOTES ..................................................................................................................................................... 2

2. CONTEXT .......................................................................................................................................................... 2
   2.1. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING ....................................................................................... 2
   2.1.1. HASHTAG ACTIVISM ............................................................................................................................ 4
   2.2. INSTAGRAM ............................................................................................................................................... 5
   2.3. FEMINISM ................................................................................................................................................ 5
   2.3.1. FOUR WAVES OF FEMINISM ................................................................................................................. 6
   2.4. POST-PREGNANCY BODIES IN SWEDISH MEDIA OUTLETS ............................................................... 7
   2.4.1. #MAMMAMAGE AND #MAMMAKROPP ON INSTAGRAM ............................................................... 8

3. LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................................................................... 10
   3.1. BODY IMAGE AND OBJECTIFICATION OF THE FEMALE BODY .............................................................. 10
   3.2. MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS: EFFECTS ON BODY IMAGE AMONG POST-PREGNANT WOMEN ............ 11
   3.3. SOCIETAL POST-PREGNANCY BODY IDEALS: “THE YUMMY MUMMY” .............................................. 13
   3.5. QUESTIONING OF SOCIETAL IDEALS: BPM ............................................................................................ 14
   3.6. POST-PREGNANT WOMEN’S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SUPPORTIVE TOOL ............................. 16

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .................................................................................................................... 18
   4.1. OBJECTIFICATION THEORY .................................................................................................................... 18
   4.2. SOCIAL COMPARISON THEORY ............................................................................................................... 19
   4.3. FEMINIST REFLEXIVITY ......................................................................................................................... 20
   4.4. POSTMODERN FEMINISM ........................................................................................................................ 21
   4.5. AFFORDANCE THEORY .......................................................................................................................... 22
   4.5. SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .......................................................................................... 24

5. METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................................................. 25
   5.1. RESEARCH APPROACH ............................................................................................................................ 25
   5.1. CHOICE OF METHOD ................................................................................................................................ 26
   5.1.1. SURVEY ................................................................................................................................................ 26
   5.2. IMPLEMENTATION OF METHOD ............................................................................................................... 28
   5.2.1. CONSTRUCTION OF SURVEY ............................................................................................................... 28
   5.2.2. TEST GROUP ....................................................................................................................................... 29
   5.3. LIMITATIONS WITH METHOD .................................................................................................................. 30
   5.4. COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION OF DATA ........................................................................................ 31
   5.5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ................................................................................................................... 31
   5.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ..................................................................................................................... 32

6. FINDINGS ....................................................................................................................................................... 33
1. INTRODUCTION
Objectification of especially women has often been lifted in connection to discussions concerning body image where individuals have been claimed to evaluate their body and look based on standardized societal ideals (Elmadağı:2016, Nash:2015, Hodgkinson, Wittkowski & Smith:2014). The idealization of bodies has been stated to not only affect women in general but especially young women, pregnant women and post-pregnant women (Coyne et al.:2017, Hopper & Stevens Aubrey:2016). Previous research has stated that media tends to focus on celebrity’s post-pregnancy bodies where the celebrity's thinness and ability to quickly "recover" to their former body shape are idealized (Nash:2015). Although, research has also shown that a notion of that body ideals is socially and culturally constructed might provide a basis for self-evaluation where individuals can be able to identify potential and useful strategies to reduce psychosocial distress connected to their body image (Moradi & Huang:2008). The previous years increased use of social networking sites have further been claimed to provide opportunities and affordances for people to, individually as well as collectively, create and spread their own beauty standards which have led to shifts in beauty definitions within the Western society (Cwynar-Horton:2016a, Guha:2014, Earl & Rohlinger:2018).

1.1. PURPOSE
Characteristics of a platform can be seen as affordances since they enable certain practices. An understanding of platforms affordances is essential since this can help identify leverages or resistance that people are applying to achieve specific goals (Cho et al.:2017). With Instagram's enormous scope, its 1 billion users worldwide (Statista:2018), and the various affordances that the platform facilitate, numerous hashtags have been created, spread and re-posted by individuals worldwide the past years. This paper will focus on Swedish post-pregnant women that have posted images of their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp. In contrast to previous research connected to Instagram use though — where researchers often have focused on the visual and/or the textual content of the posts — this paper will place its emphasis on user experiences in order to identify prominent emotional affordances behind the respondents use of Instagram, as well as examine how the respondents are
experiencing their post-pregnancy bodies, what they think of societal body ideals, if they are getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram, and why they have chosen to visualize their bodies on Instagram. Since these aspects have not been examined in connection to studies of post-pregnant body advocates previously, the findings from this paper might shed light on this groups use and their emotional affordances of Instagram.

1.1.1. Research Questions

RQ1. Which motivational factors can be identified among post-pregnant women that have visualized their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp on Instagram?

RQ2. Which emotional affordances can be identified in post-pregnant women’s use of Instagram?

1.2. Notes

Worth mentioning at the beginning of this paper is that the respondents will be named respondents, body advocates, and post-pregnant women throughout the paper. The term post-pregnant refers to the time after pregnancy, and post-pregnancy body refers to bodies that have gone through pregnancy.

2. Context

This section provides a foundation of the papers focus areas with aspects related to social networks and social networking, hashtag activism, Instagram, feminism, and post-pregnant bodies in Swedish media outlets.

2.1. Social Networks and Social Networking

Social media has been described as online communication platforms that through their technical functions, enables people to upload and share content in various forms;
images, videos, blog posts, podcasts, and texts. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as:

[...] web-based services that allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Boyd & Ellison (2007)

This description highlights the networking feature of SNS, with a distinction between the site and its users. Thus, while the term social networks refer to the technical features of platforms and the various affordances these can offer their users, the term social networking relates to users’ interactions with — and use of — the affordances provided by these platforms (Boyd & Ellison:2007). Although, not all platforms provide the same affordances. While Facebooks all features are available in both smartphones and computers, Instagram users can only access all the platforms features through their cellphones where some are non-present on computers (such as direct messages). Some sites are also limited to specific groups such as Dogster (an online community for dog owners), Tinder (an online dating app for, mostly, singles) and Mypraize (an SNS for Cristian’s). Social networking sites are however usually referred to online platforms that are built for, and based on, user-generated content (UGC) such as Facebook and Instagram wherein users are participating in the creation of the content of the platform by uploading, sharing and communicating messages online (Lewis et al.:2014).

According to Lewis et al. (2014), social media have changed the world "through the transformation of relationships, the information flow, affective expressions, social influence" as well as "altered the very structure of our social fabric" where civic engagement is pointed out as one of the most prominent features behind social networking sites (Lewis et al.:2014). SNS have also opened online societal spaces for especially suppressed groups such as people of color and women (Fotopoulou:2016) and been used by numerous activist groups where feminists have stood in the forefront (Mendes et al.:2018). The previous years increased use of social networking sites have further been stated to provide opportunities and affordances for people to, individually as well as collectively, create and spread their beauty standards which have led to shifts in beauty definitions within the Western society (Cwynar-Horton:2016b, Guha:2014,
Earl & Rohlinger:2018). Platforms such as Twitter have, according to adjunct professor in journalism Jess Weiner, helped suppressed societal groups such as women to feel that they are more in control over their beauty definitions since they "are becoming less reliant on outside sources and are finally defining it for themselves" (Weiner cited by Kelly:2014).

2.1.1. HASHTAG ACTIVISM

Just as the name indicates, hashtag feminism is a niche form of digital activism that gather activist content with the use of hashtags (#) followed by one or several keywords. The practicing of activism through hashtags have been examined by several scholars who have highlighted that it might have the ability to operate in several discourses where it can be especially useful when it comes to lifting and revealing sensitive topics in the society such as sexual assault or beauty representations (Clark et al.:2008). Several social movements have been formed during the past years due to hashtag activism where #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter probably are two of the most known within Western society today. Even if these specific hashtags have emerged from two different ideologies (feminism and racism) they both became catalysts for online and offline conversations where they worked as mechanisms for protests in various forms such as offline demonstrations and online riots (Mendes et al.:2018).

Hashtag activism has been criticized for having a temporary nature where trending hashtags easily can be misused and though lose its context (Donegan:2018). Some have also claimed that hashtag spreading might not be enough to get a wider cross-sectional audience engaged, which often is needed to achieve actual changes in society. Pallavi Guha (2014), for instance, writes in connection to the hashtag #Nirbhaya (meaning fearless in Hindi) which was spread worldwide after a fatal gang-rape in Delhi, India in 2012, that hashtag activism can be influential on its own but that all hashtags are more or less dependent on traditional media in order to result in societal change. Here, Guha states that if it was not for the fact that the hashtag #Nirbhaya was picked up and further spread by the Indian media (and other International media) the campaign would not have become as political as is turned out to be. Although, if it was not for the hashtag's presence and re-posting on social media in the first place, issues connected to rape in
India might not have been such a crucial discussion topic in India and other countries in the first place (Guha:2014).

2.2. INSTAGRAM

The social media platform Instagram has since its first appearance in the digital world 2010 seen a constant growth in users and surpassed 1 billion monthly users by June 2018 (Statista:2018). A report from 2017 that measured how 3088 Swedish citizens are using the Internet showed that 53% of people over 12 years old are using Instagram. The platform is in comparison to Facebook, with a user rate of 74%, Sweden's second most used social media platform. It is also the social media that globally has 1) the fastest growth rate among adults and 2) the fastest growth rate from previous years measures (Davidsson & Thoresson:2017). With its free content and various features (stories, editing, direct messages) it has also provided numerous of opportunities for individuals who want to inspire others or get inspired, get linked to like-minded, share their experiences or form communities based on shared interests (Leadem:2018).

2.3. FEMINISM

The objectification of women has been met by criticism from many parts of the society in the last century where feminism in many cases has been pointed out as resisting oppression. Rooted in the late 1800s from the French word femme (women) combined with the suffix ism (political position), feminism can be described as "a political position about women" (Woods & Fismer-Oraiz:2016). However, there are several definitions of the term where some scholars define it as a grouping of ideas and beliefs (Freedman:2001) and other as a movement to end sexism and oppression (Hooks:2000). What has been claimed to be the core in feminist movements is the active resistance towards cultural beauty standards and ideals regarding the female gender (Feltman & Scymanski:2017). Additionally, Woods & Fismer-Oraiz (2016) have stated that being a feminist does not have to mean that individuals are feminine. Instead, feminism should be seen as an ideology of how women define and express femininity. Within this context, researchers have argued that feminism does not just happen - it is a process based on achievements from individuals who seek to challenge dominant practices.
within a society that are sustaining social practices, ideals and attributes (Hooks:2000, Woods & Fixmer-Oraiz:2016).

2.3.1. FOUR WAVES OF FEMINISM

There have been three identified waves within Western feminist movements throughout history. The first wave started in America during the mid-1800s and lasted until the early 1900s where women gathered in various movements to primarily gain societal and political power where the main concerns were placed around women's right to vote, gain an education, receive better working conditions and to receive extended marriage rights and property laws (Kroløkke & Sørenson: 2005, Ealasaid:2013).

The second wave started to form after World War II in America and was later spread to other Western countries. Here, women mainly focused on societal patriarchy, violence against women, domestic abuse, women's reproduction rights, and inequalities in the workplace as well as between genders. These fundamental concerns were in many cases never fulfilled (issues connected to patriarchy is for instance still a societal issue even 50 years after the second wave started) which is why the third wave’s — 1990 to ongoing — main focuses have been concentrated on the failures of the second wave. Other topics were also added to the second waves key concerns such as intersectionality (inclusion of races, classes, cultures), questioning of media representations of women, words used to describe women in literature and media as well as questions regarding sexual identities (Dorey-Stein:2018, Kroløkke & Sørenson: 2005, Ealasaid:2013).

In recent years, a new form of feminism has emerged due to the rise of social media where its most prominent feature is the use of online technologies. Many researchers and activists have called this the fourth wave feminism which claims to be an upgraded version of the third wave’s feminist movements. The fourth wave, in contrast to the third which primarily focused on the failures of the second wave, came to include individuals of all ages, cultures, and genders by uniting them on and through social media platforms (Gustafsson:2017, Ealasaid:2013, Landin:2017, Zimmerman:2017).
2.4. POST-PREGNANCY BODIES IN SWEDISH MEDIA OUTLETS

In 2015, psychology student Mackenzie Pearson wrote, in the Odyssey article "Why girls love the dad bod", that she believes that a dad bod is a "nice balance between a beer gut and working out" and that "it is not an overweight guy but it isn't one with washboard abs, either". Pearson further stated that women love dad bods to feel better about themselves since "We want to look skinny and the bigger the guy, the smaller we feel" as well as "...dad bods don't meal prep every Sunday night so if you want to go Taco Tuesday [...] he’d be totally down with it" (Pearson:2015).

Pearson's deliberation of the dad bod was internationally criticized from especially women who claimed that the term reinforces gender inequalities since it implies that it is ok for men to not worry about their bodies while women, primarily through media representations of female bodies, are expected to care for her utterly appearance at any time (Underhill:2016). It has also been argued that men with so-called dad bods are more valued for their inner qualities while women cannot eat whatever she wants if the man does not eat whatever he wants (Moylan:2015).

Pearson's tribute to the dad bod has influenced discussions connected to the term *mom body* in Sweden where concerns regarding societal ideals have been lifted in both traditional media and on online communication platforms from authors, celebrities and civilians. Swedish radio hostess Kitty Jutbring argued for example, in an interview conducted in connection to Pearson's article, that the psychical pressure that is placed on women after pregnancy leads to distress and anxiety and that societal notions of female bodies imply that "The mom body needs to be restored, lose weight, change and be reduced" (Lundin:2015).

Although, and despite the criticism, the term *mum body* have been used mostly in a positivistic way in Swedish media outlets the past decade where magazines directed towards mothers have stood in the forefront when it comes to the terms spreading. The magazine Mama, Sweden's largest online magazine for women with 300.000 weekly visitors (Mama:2019), has published several articles connected to it with headlines such as "Mighty mum tummy – 3 women that inspires us"(Olovsson:2018) and "6 readers of their mum tummies: "Fantastic tummy, I am so proud of you!" (Carlgren & Nylén:2018). The magazine has also established an own category for the term on their
website called Mammakroppen (mum body) where interviews with post-pregnant women are mixed with critical articles concerned with societal views of body ideals and the contrast these ideals have in connection to how a body actually might look after pregnancy (Fig. I).

![Image](image.png)

**Fig.1.** Image from the article “Here is my mama body” (Mama:2017)

One site that also has contributed to the spreading of the term "mum bod" is the website Mammamage which is primarily concerned with a post-pregnancy related issue called diastasis recti, a common affliction that can lead to psychical issues such as urine leakage and back illness. As a way of spreading information to this affliction, a recurrent online social media campaign called Mamatummyday was created in 2014 where post-pregnant women were encouraged to post images of their pregnancy- and post-pregnancy bodies under the hashtag #mamatummyday on the 25th of April. More than 2,000 images have been uploaded since the hashtags beginning (May:2019) and the campaign has primary received positive attention in Swedish media with headlines such as "Make a rebellion- for the mum tummy's equal value" (Aftonbladet/Wigren:2019), "The revolt of the mothers – to the common injury" (Expressen/Camitz:2019) and "Why you should show your belly at Mamatummy Day" (MåBra/Sandberg:2017).

### 2.4.1. #MAMMAMAGE AND#MAMMAKROPP ON INSTAGRAM

The images connected to the hashtags #mammamage and #mammakropp, which have been used by the participants in this paper, might have been influenced by the discussions mentioned above where several images related to Mamatummyday is
present in the feed connected to especially #mammamage. As of today, more than 35,000 images have been connected to #mammamage and almost 8,000 to #mammakropp (June:2019).

The images presented above have all been posted on Instagram by the participating women, described as respondents, in this paper (Fig. II & III). As noticed in these images, the hashtags are primarily used to visualize post-pregnancy bodies and/or body parts. Even if this paper has not been interested in analyzing them — it is more interested in understanding the motivations behind them — a visualization of them might provide the reader of this paper a deepened background of the topic.
3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents previous research related to the papers research area where body image, objectification of the female body, media representations of post-pregnant bodies, societal post-pregnancy body ideals, and post-pregnant women's use of social media are counted for.

3.1. BODY IMAGE AND OBJECTIFICATION OF THE FEMALE BODY

The term body image refers to a person's perception of their psychical self and the feelings and thoughts that arises from this perception (Breda et al.:2015, Neagu:2015). The concept of body image has been studied in a broad sense the past decades where researchers have claimed that negative feelings toward the individual body might lead to negative psychological functions that directly affect a person's life quality (Badero:2011, Moradi & Huang:2008).

Several aspects have been identified in the contribution of body image such as geographical aspects, family bonds, lifestyle choices, and societal ideals. The latter have in many cases been pointed out as one of the most prominent causes behind a negative body image where some researchers have argued that body image can be seen as a reflection of preoccupations and cultural obsessions (Bartky:1988) that is established and spread by media outlets and through celebrity representations (Neagu:2015). Thus, when images of specific body shapes are presented as something normal and attractive, societal ideals are created and when these ideals can't be matched, distress arises among individuals that feel a need to conform to them (Breda et al.:2015, Nash:2015, Hodgkinson, Wittkowski & Smith:2014). Laura Mulvey (1975), perhaps one of the most mentioned feminist film critics in modern history, has with her deliberation of "the male gaze" or just "the gaze", argued that sexualization of the female gender origin most and all from the media sphere where men are portrayed for their attributes (such as funny and intelligent) while women are presented fore and most for their look. According to Mulvey, the objectification gaze progress mostly through peoples encounters with visual media that mainly highlight female bodies (Mulvey:1975).
Even if a lot has changed within the Western society regarding the notion of gender since Mulvey's paper "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) was published - especially in Sweden where gender-specific maternity leave was replaced with the term parental leave in the mid 70s (Swedish Institute:2018) - more recent studies do connect to Mulvey's thoughts regarding the male gaze. It has for instance been observed that female actresses’ performances in modern films are not as prominent as the males where the female body is objectified in a broader context than the male body (Ahmed & Abdul Wahab:2016, Murphy:2015, Habib:2017).

Other studies connected to the objectification of bodies have also come to include men in their studies, claiming that especially younger men are experiencing changes in their body image when they are exposed to images of muscularity or trimmed bodies (Moradi & Huang:2008). Although, several researchers have argued that women, in general, are more worried about their physical appearance than men (Fredrickson & Roberts:1997, McKinley:2011, Rollero & De Piccoli:2017).

3.2. MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS: EFFECTS ON BODY IMAGE AMONG POST-PREGNANT WOMEN

The female body goes through a tremendous transformation during, as well as after, pregnancy which affects the mother in several ways, both physically and psychologically. Many known factors have been identified in the construction of pregnant and post-pregnant women's well-being. Besides common physical disorders such as pelvic, high or low blood pressure and sickness during pregnancy, studies have also shown that psychological pressure due to societal body ideals can be related to negative emotions among pregnant and post-pregnant women (Breda et al.:2015, Nash:2015, Hodgkinson, Wittkowski & Smith:2014, Williams et al.:2017). Since magazines and other media outlets long been seen as purveyors of life with their creation of market needs, they have also contributed to the construction of accepted identities and ideals. Not only have them been claimed to indirectly tell the reader what to feel about certain aspects, they have also been stated to imply how readers should behave, act and look to not fall out of standardized norms (Clark et al.:2008, Nash:2015).
In "Women's experiences of their pregnancy and postpartum body image: a systematic review and meta-synthesis" (2014), Hodgkinson et al. examined how psychical changes after pregnancy might impact women's body image. Here, the authors concluded that body image can be seen as a product of socially constructed ideals and that women perceived pregnancy as a transgression of these ideals. The participants in the study saw their postpartum bodies as projects that had to be worked on in order to get them back to their “normal” shape with feelings of distress and fear as a result (Hodgkinson et al.:2014).

Similar results have been reported in connection to post-pregnant women’s affection of media portrayals where it has been claimed that when media routinely presents post-pregnancy bodies as something temporarily that women should strive to get rid of, women are affected by it in a negative way (Breda et al.:2015, Coyne et al.:2017, Roth et al.:2012) where feelings of grief and disappointment have been identified (Williams et al.:2017). The lack of everyday women's post-pregnancy bodies in media might also contribute to the construction of unachievable ideals, which leads to distress and anxiety (Coyne et al.:2017). Even if it has been stated that women, in general, don't return to their former body shape after pregnancy and that the majority of women never will have the same body type as they had before they got pregnant (Williams et al.:2017), magazines are continuing to fill their pages with images of "perfectly toned" post-pregnancy bodies (Litter:2013).

Authors of the paper “‘Bouncing back: How Australia's leading women's magazines portray the postpartum body’" (2012) stated for example that the Australian media portrayed childbearing bodies of celebrities that had "quick recovery's" without mentioning how the celebrities worked to lose their weight or tighten their bodies. The paper concluded that the Australian media in general encouraged new mothers to "bounce back" to their pre-pregnancy body as soon as possible by repeating terms such as “slim”, “toned”, and “trimmed” without mentioning how the visualized women trained or eat (Roth et al.:2012). For women who have gone through pregnancy, and thus might have received commonly after pregnancy marks such as stretch marks or varicose veins, societal beauty ideals are hard — and perhaps impossible — to identify with (Breda, Lehmann Schumann & Arshad:2015).
While some researchers have stated that media representations in general are seen as re-touched or unreal in the eyes of post-pregnant women (Williams et al.:2017), others have lifted issues connected to Roth, Homer & Fenwick's study on Australian media representations of post-pregnancy bodies. Williams, Christopher & Sinski (2017) did for example, after in-depth interviews with 38 post-pregnant women, conclude that women partly unconsciously compare their bodies negatively with those of celebrity mothers which make them feel a pressure to "get their body back" (Williams et al.:2017).


One of the most appreciated cover images of celebrity weeklies, according to Times journalist Angela McRobbie (2006), is the so-called "yummy mommy" — a female celebrity that within a limited time after pregnancy has managed to go back to her former body shape (McRobbie:2006). A yummy mommy can, according to Litter (2013), be seen as a socially constructed type of person(s) that gain her social force through repeated exposure on various media platforms, and that often is paraphrased as a desirable creature that possesses strong attractiveness (Williams et al.:2017).

The origin of the term yummy mummy can be traced back to the beginning of the 21st century wherein Western gossip magazines started to publish images of celebrity mothers which were described in terms of 'hot', 'well-groomed', 'toned', 'fit' and 'sexually attractive' (Karisma Kapoor:2013). Headlines like these have been claimed to affect post-pregnant women in a high degree where Woodward, in Identity and Difference (1997), defines motherhood as a "subject to social, economic and ethnic contexts" in which she argues that people understand motherhood through especially cultural representations where societal norms and ideals can be seen as shapers of identity wherein women compare themselves to portrayed and visualized ideals (Woodward:1997).

Although, as lifted by Nash (2015), there has been a change in views of motherhood the past decades, partly due to the increased use of social media that trough, for example, blog posts have shown that post-pregnancy bodies do exist outside standardized body norms. Social media platforms have, according to Nash, not only
made average post-pregnancy bodies visualized in the society but also become a forum for discussion and criticism wherein (mostly) women have been able to challenge normalizing tendencies through their photographs and textual content (Nash:2015).

3.5. QUESTIONING OF SOCIETAL IDEALS: BPM

Women and contemporary feminists have long criticized societal body ideals where the focus on utter appearance is claimed to partly be created due to aspects similar to those lifted by Woodward (1997) and Nash (2015). Several actions have been taken in order to questioning, challenging, and discussing these ideals, and many movements have been formed in connection to them (Feltman & Seymansi:2017, Liimakka:2017). One of the most recently formed movements that have had a significant impact within the societal debate concerning body and beauty ideals is the body positive movement (BPM) with its use of body activism (Elmadağlı:2016). Within this context, body activism can be defined as visual messages by individuals that through their engagement with the term are seeking to challenge standardized ideas of how bodies (should) look like (Elmadağlı:2016.)

Body positivity as a movement (BPM) is a relatively new social phenomenon that, despite its young age on social media, has extensive previous research related to it (Elmadağlı:2016) as well as more than 9, 5 million Instagram posts connected to it (Fig. IV). Within the field of body positivity, different genders and bodies in all shapes
are included; fat, thin, old, fit, disabled, and hairy (Alysse:2016, Cwynar-Horta:2016a).

Even if body positive movements in general embraces all body shapes and sizes, one of the Western societies most recognized hashtag and Instagram account connected to the BPM today is the anti-thin-body-ideals social media campaign #effyourbeautystandards, created by feminist, plus-size model and mother Tess Holliday (Fig. V). In one of her posts, Holliday describes being body positive as:

My relationship with my body is a journey, not a destination. I appreciate & honor what’s it has done for me, & the life it brought into the world. I couldn’t give a *** if you find me attractive or if my body offends you.

Tess Holiday (2015)

Since #effyourbeautystandards first appearance on Instagram in 2012, the hashtag has been applied to numerous of Instagram posts by women from all over the world and has today more than 3,8 million posts connected to it (May:2019). Several articles have been published in connection to Holliday's action towards society's thin body ideals where Telegraph writer Bryony Gordon states that "Holliday is not just at the forefront of the plus-size movement — with her brave posts on social media, she has in many ways created it" (Gordon:2016).

Fig. V. Print screen from the account of @tessholliday, creator of the hashtag #effyourbeautystandards (April:2019)
In connection to Holliday's Instagram campaign, The Washington Post writer Julia Carpenter also writes that "You'd think that, between the filters and the #fitnessgoals and the celebrity-grams, Instagram would make an unfriendly place to talk about body acceptance [...] Instagram has actually long played host to an enthusiastic movement for body positivity" (Carpenter:2015).

Although, the body positive movement has also been met with criticism. Here, authors, scientists, journalists, and individuals have claimed that idealizing fat bodies and overweight is the same as glorifying an unhealthy lifestyle where obesity is portrayed as something normal and where health risks connected to obesity are placed in the shadows (Muttarak:2018, Cwynar-Horta:2016a). The BP movement has also been accused for just representing a few individuals where its primary target group is plus-sized women and other marginalized female groups. Thus, individuals that can be placed under other categories such as societal attractive (e.g., classified as societal normative based on their appearance), women with sizes under US size 20 as well as men are more or less left out from the movement (Dastagir:2017, Hurlock:2017, McGuire:2015).

Despite the criticism against fat acceptance movements, researchers seem to agree upon the notion that body advocates, in general, seeks to make "real-life" bodies visible to empower people "through the idea of body positivity and acceptance" (Elmadaglı:2016). Here, social media have been claimed to provide body advocates a platform of acceptance where they can re-negotiate beauty ideals and visualize marginalized bodies that earlier have been under-represented in media outlets and the overall societal sphere (Cwynar-Horta:2016a).

3.6. POST-PREGNANT WOMEN’S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SUPPORTIVE TOOL

Even if researchers mostly have been interested in medias effect on post-pregnant women's body image, an extensive amount of research connected to post-pregnant women’s use of social media as a tool for sociality have been conducted. "In Competition or Camaraderie?: An investigation of social media and modern
motherhood" (2017), Kathlyn Jarvis explores how mothers are using social media in order to distinguish negative and positive outcomes. After interviewing new mothers, e.g. women who recently have given birth, Jarvis concludes that even if the respondents experienced stress in connection to their social media use while claiming that it stole much time from the family and enabled unfavorable comparisons, social media was overall seen as a positive tool for support, connection, and information (Jarvis:2017).

Additionally, a recently conducted study by Baker & Yang (2018) was interested in examining if social media be a supportive tool for post-pregnant women. By examine survey answers from 117 post-pregnant women, Baker & Yang concluded that even if the primary support were claimed to come from the current partner (92%), 84% of the respondents saw social media as a tool for social support. Similarly, in "How does social media impact the postpartum depression experience" (2016), Connie Marie Stringfellow uses findings from a survey answered by 103 post-pregnant women that suffered from postpartum depression in order to identify potential impacts that social media might have on this affliction. Stringfellow concludes that social media had a positive impact on more than half of the respondents, where information seeking and community building were seen as two of the primary areas of interest where 36% of the respondents ranked information on social media as a significant source of knowledge and 41% mentioned community building on social media platforms as a contributing aspect when it comes to their overall well-fare (Stringfellow:2016).
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to gain a greater understanding of post-pregnant women experiences of their post-pregnancy bodies, the intentions behind their choice of visualizing their bodies on Instagram, and the affordances that might be afforded for them by their use of Instagram, theories, and aspects related to objectification of female bodies as well as resistance towards patriarchy and societal ideals have been applied. Here, objectification theory, feminist reflexivity, social comparison theory, postmodern feminism, and affordance theory supports the dissertations academic aim.

4.1. OBJECTIFICATION THEORY

Objectification theory, first coined and described by Barbara L Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts in "Objectification Theory: Towards Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks" (1997), is built around the understanding that sexual objectification of women's bodies make women internalize an observer’s perspective of their bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts: 1997). In "Objectification theory and psychology of women: A decade of advances and future directions" (2008), Moradi & Huang reviews the past decades research on objectification theory where they state that advanced literature of women's psychology has elucidated links between women's feelings of their selves and their bodies, their socio-cultural experiences and mental health outcomes (Moradi & Huang:2008). Within this context, bodies exist and are constructed through socio-cultural discourses and practices where the society in general, and the media in particular, often places more emphasis on women's bodies than on their abilities. This "socializes women to internalize an observer perspective upon their body" (Rollero & De Piccoli:2017), a process known as self-objectification which makes women think and treat themselves as objects that are to be evaluated primarily by their look and appearance (Moradi & Huang:2008, Feltman & Scymanski:2017).

Body image disturbances caused by societal norms and ideals have a broad range of research connected to it where researchers have identified social pressure from the fashion industry and media outlets as forceful triggers behind a notion to follow certain body shape ideals (Badero:2011, Coyne et al.:2017, Mendes et al.:2018). Here, media portrayals of female bodies have been claimed to be the most significant cause behind
self-evaluation which often is followed by feelings of low self-esteem, a higher degree of anxiety and/or a reduced body image (Moradi & Huang:2008).

4.2. SOCIAL COMPARISON THEORY

First proposed by social psychologist Leon Festinger (1954), social comparison theory suggests that individuals possess a drive to gain accurate evaluation of the individual self where a vital source of knowledge of the self is gained through comparisons to others (Festinger:1954). This theory has been claimed to be particularly important in social studies since comparisons affect several mediators of behavior such as expectations, self-esteem, and feelings of fairness and status (Locke:2003).

Comparison theory propounds that individuals are more likely to compare themselves to those that are seen as similar to themselves. When comparisons are made to those that are seen as equal in some aspects, a horizontal comparison has taken place. When a person compares oneself to someone who is seen as superior or better in some way, an upward comparison has been made. A downward comparison, on the other hand, occurs when comparisons are directed to those that are seen as inferior to oneself (Festinger:1954, Locke:2003). Previous research has claimed that horizontal comparisons are more common when individuals are placing more value on experiencing interpersonal solidarity than interpersonal status (Locke:2003). It is further claimed to be one of the three comparisons that are the most neutral way to gain information about the individual self. Upward and downward comparisons can, on the contrary, be both positive and negative for individual’s self-esteem and body image. Upward comparisons can be positive in that way that a person can gain a will to improve themselves or perform better but negative in that way that a person can feel worse about themselves (Wood:1982). Downward comparisons to individuals that are seen as not as good as oneself in some or several aspects are in turn claimed to be made in order to protect and/or maintain self-images since they often increase positive feelings of the individual self (Mullin:2017).

Even if Festinger's theory is more than 50 years old, several recently made studies have examined social comparisons among individuals to understand the connections between individual’s wellbeing and their social media use. Here, researchers have
stated that online upward social comparisons often leave individuals with negative feelings of themselves (Vogel et al.:2014(1), Vogel et al.:2015(2)) where low feminist beliefs might intensify negative body images and/or self-esteem (Feltman & Scymanski:2017.) Others have suggested that up-ward comparisons are more common on platforms such as Instagram where people encounter a large number of images which enable several comparisons within a short amount of time. Since Instagram provide their users with image filters and other "make-up" features, it is also a site where upward comparisons are claimed to be more common (Mullin:2017). On the contrary, Meier & Schäfer have in "The positive side of social comparison on social network sites: How envy can drive inspiration on Instagram" (2018) argued that the process of comparison also can elicit motivation and positive reactions in users’ self-presentations. By examining how social comparisons and envy on Instagram can be related to inspiration, the authors concluded that both upward and downward comparisons could provide users with new ideas, which in turn motivates them to improve their selves.

4.3 Feminist Reflexivity

Scholars have stated that a feministic mindset might lead to a more positive body image among women due to feminisms critical standpoint against societal ideals. In "Instagram Use and Self-Objectification" (2017), Feltman & Szymanski states that feminist beliefs may "bolster a woman's ability to dismiss cultural standards of beauty and appearance-focused thoughts and behaviors — even when these women are exposed to experiences in which these variables are especially salient.” Though, by adapting feminism's rejection of societal ideals and standards, women can direct her focus towards their inner ability's in a higher degree (Feltman & Szymanski:2017.)

Critical awareness of female objectification has been studied from several directions where Hesse-Biber et al. (2006) examined eating disorders among young women and argued that for women to avoid body disturbances they need to challenge the patriarchal structure that is based on thin ideals. In order to control their body and mind, women need to adopt a "re-visioning of femininity" where social action towards media portrayals of bodies are claimed to be one solution since "reclaiming and
reframing what power means for women is crucial and needed to break down the mind/body dichotomy [...] by applying a critical perspective to the media" (Hesse-Biber et al.:2006). Halliwell & Dittmar (2005) did a similar study where they stated that focus on self-improvement "may reduce the negative effects on upward social comparisons on some aspects of body image.” Thus, women who identify with feminist beliefs might adopt a critical perspective on physical representations which makes them become less likely to compare themselves to others and can thus avoid being (negatively) affected by societal ideals (Feltman & Scymanski:2017).

4.4. POSTMODERN FEMINISM

The postmodern feminist theory is grounded in postmodernism where the main focus has been placed on notions concerned with that there is no universal truth about the world. According to postmodernism, it is instead individuals experiences of the world and the language they are using to describe it that can be seen as central (McRobbie:1993). Even if the essentialism in postmodern thinking has been criticized for hindering political action with the argument that if identities are fluid they cannot be communal, it has been argued that this is why postmodernism is especially important for feminist theory since genders are socially constructed due to dominant and powerful discourses in the society (Ratcliffe:2006). WOOD

Feminists have long discussed this aspect where it has been argued that the way gender is viewed is based on societal power structures in that particular culture at that specific time (Mulvey:1975, McRobbie:1993). Within postmodern feminism, media outlets and stakeholders are seen as powerful actors when it comes to the construction of gender roles and the portrayals of them, a notion that has come to be one of the prominent factors behind the criticism towards the media from not only postmodern feminists but also from feminists in general (Woodward:1997, Ratcliffe:2006). According to cultural theorist Angela McRobbie, postmodernism can be seen as a concept for understanding social change (McRobbie:1993) where one contemporary primary concern has been the objectification of the female body. Here, internet have been claimed to provide open spaces for those who seek to question this notion where some have argued that computers "is an evocative object that causes old boundaries to be renegotiated"
(Turkel:1995) while others have stated that a postmodern feminist approach can be identified by its insistence of equality rather than its focus on oppression. By adopting postmodern feminist beliefs, it might encourage individuals to not only identify these structures but also to renegotiated them through their own visual and narrative language (Ratcliffe:2006).

4.5. AFFORDANCE THEORY

First coined by psychologist James Gibson in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979), affordance theory aims at explaining relations between the environment and the actors where the emphasis is placed on visual perception and the understanding of perceptual functions' role in how humans — and animals — adapt their actions to their environment. Here, Gibson frames his theory through an ecological approach when claiming that humans (and animals) are inevitably intertwined with their environment and that all species depend on their environment for their survival which has made them learn to adapt to prevailing conditions (Gibson:1979).

According to Gibson, objects such as substances, animals, and places provide different affordances that offers both benefits and life but also injuries and death. The perception of them is therefore crucial for species survival where the interpretation of an object is based on the object’s usefulness - its affordances - for that specific species. However, affordances are at the same time independent from the individual's ability to perceive it and will not change. Instead, it is the individual who suits the affordance(s) based on his or her needs, and since all species are unique, an object (or environment, or an animal, or an individual) may not afford the same affordances to all. The richest affordances are however provided by humans and animals due to their ability to interact with each other where behavior is claimed to afford behavior. By describing humans and animals as reciprocal, Gibson states that all social behaviors are based on interactions — sexual behavior, fighting behavior, economic behavior, cooperative behavior — since they all “depend on the perceiving of what another person or other persons afford, or sometimes on the mic-perceiving of it.” (Gibson:1979).
Even if affordance theory was established within and for the psychiatric field, it has been proven useful in numerous researches that have explored how technology functions can be better designed as well as in research connected to understandings of relations between social practices and new technologies. During the past decade, the theory has been especially applied within computer science due to its emphasis on relations between objects and actors (computers and humans) where investigating affordances of a specific platform have been claimed to facilitate understandings of users’ motivations and goals (Cho et al.:2017). Here, it has been stated that the theory can expand from functional affordances to emotional where Park & Lim (2018), while investigating the concept of *emotional affordances* in connection to online learning environments, writes that “all affordances play triggering roles that could lead to a certain action (e.g., physical responses) or to certain reactions (e.g., emotional responses) among the users.”

This extension of the theory is interesting to consider since this paper is more interested in investigating experiences than actions. Hence, this paper will build some of its understanding of the theory based on Park & Lim’s (2018) description of emotional affordances above but also with Norman & Ortony’s (2003) definition in “Designers and users: Two perspectives on emotion and design”. Here, it is stated that products are configurated and designed to facilitate certain affordances for its users where interactions with products can “generate affective responses and that the psychical affordances of products are often also emotional affordances”. As an example, the authors are mentioning a replica of The Eiffel Tower that might have little intrinsic value but high emotional affordances as a memento. It is also stated that products are claimed to induce emotions through their symbolic significance rather than through their psychical attributes (Norman & Ortony:2003). By keeping affordance theory as it is described by Gibson (1979) while combining it with the emotional aspect suggested by Park & Lim (2018) and Norman & Ortony (2003), it might facilitate the understanding of how the respondents are experiencing their use of Instagram and the various emotional affordance that might arise due to their use. When applying the theory of emotional affordances to this study, the “object” described above will be seen as Instagram and its “construction” as Instagram’s features.
4.5. Summary of Theoretical Framework

For this paper, objectification theory has been used to explore the respondent’s experiences of visualizing their own bodies and their feelings when viewing other bodies on social media. It has further been suggested that objectification theory can be seen as a critical paradigm in research on female psychology where it can be especially useful in cross-studies (Moradi & Huang:2008). Thus, by understanding postmodern feminism beliefs that have been concerned with the social construction of ideals — where it has been suggested that sexual objectification might be a consequence of this construction — an adoption of feminist reflexivity might lead to a greater understanding behind the respondents activeness and their choices of being visually present on Instagram. Since previous scholars further have stated that comparisons to others might trigger both positive and negative emotions, social comparison theory can be of use in terms of identifying how comparisons to other bodies are affecting the respondents. Additionally, the motivational aspect(s) behind the respondent’s activeness might be better understood through the lens of affordance theory and the concept of emotional affordances that seeks to explore which possibilities for actions a specific environment afford individuals. Thus, by investigating the motivations behind the respondents use of the platform and the hashtags they have applied to their posts, certain affordances might be identified.
5. METHODOLOGY
This paper consists of quantitative and qualitative data conducted from a survey. Thus, a mixed methods has been used in order to get close to the research questions which have been interested in understanding what post-pregnant women think of societal body ideals, if they are getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram, how they are experiencing their post-pregnancy bodies, why they have chosen to visualize their bodies on Instagram, as well as identifying emotional affordances through their use of Instagram.

This chapter will present the paper’s research approach, choice of method, implementation of the method, construction of survey, choice of respondents, distribution of survey, limitations as well as the ethical considerations connected to the study.

5.1. RESEARCH APPROACH
A mixed method focuses on collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data with the standpoint that this enables a greater understanding of a research problem (Fink:2000). The purpose of this paper has been to examine questions connected to experiences. Quality in this context is referring to studies wherein the researcher is investigating characteristics within a phenomenon in contrast to a quantitative approach that primarily seeks to quantify data (Fink:2000, Widerberg: 2002). The advantages behind the use of a qualitative approach have been claimed to be that this allows the researcher to achieve a broad description of a research phenomenon through individuals experiences of it (Hedin:1996, Fink:2000). The choice of using a qualitative approach has been that it is claimed to allow the respondents to freely discuss aspects connected to the research topic. By giving the respondents the possibility to elaborate their answers, an opportunity for deeper investigating has been provided (Lokman:2006, Michell & Jolley:2013).

The study has further taken an epistemological approach, whereas the participants have been seen as the source of knowledge. It is based on a phenomenological understanding where the emphasis has been placed on the participants experiences of
a phenomenon, in this case, their thoughts of their post-pregnancy body and their activeness on Instagram, and not on the contradictory aspects in their different answers. This has meant that the study has been open towards their knowledge, thoughts, and understandings, where the researcher’s presumptions of the investigated subject have been placed aside (Kvale & Brinkmann:2009).

5.1. CHOICE OF METHOD

The choice of using a mixed method has been based on the notion that quantitative data neglect essential aspects of people's lives. Meaning structures cannot be conceived simply through quantitative research since this approach is used to quantify data based on questions such as *How many...?* Thus, experiences among individuals are more likely to be understood through questions that start with a *Why...?* (Fink:2000). A quantitative approach can though be useful to reveal patterns that through a qualitative approach can be examined more closely (Singer & Couper:2017). While quantitative research, in general, is used for data sampling, qualitative studies are built around description, explanation and interpretation where the researcher is especially interested in people's views of reality and/or their experiences of certain aspects where the truth is seen as objective and ever-changing due to individual’s different knowledge, background and experience (Hedin:1996). By mixing quantitative and qualitative data, potential miss out of context behind certain answers could be avoided. The chosen method did also allow data that consisted of both numbers and words to broaden the study and thus gain a deeper perspective of the prominent aspects connected to post-pregnant women’s thoughts of their bodies, societal ideals and their experiences of using Instagram for visualization their post-pregnancy bodies.

5.1.1. SURVEY

A survey is a method where respondents answer a set of pre-written questions. There are primarily two types of response options in surveys; closed-ended questions (quantitative) and open-ended questions (qualitative). A survey with closed-ended questions allows the respondent to select one or several pre-written response options while an open-ended question allows the respondent to freely discuss the question
without interference from the researcher (Persson:2016). For this paper, a survey with a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions have been used. This is according to Singer & Couper (2017) an effective method for establishing the validity of the closed questions as well as allowing the respondents to clarify their answers while it also gives the researcher qualitative data connected to the research topic. Persson (2016) further states that closed-ended questions in many cases are easier to answer than open-ended since the respondents do not need to formulate their thoughts. The risk of losing respondents due to boredom or laziness can therefore be avoided. Pre-written options might further facilitate the understanding of the questions and thus be perceived as less strenuous. For the researcher, closed-ended questions do however demand a relatively high level of pre-understanding of the investigated topic since both the questions and the response options should be closely related to the research area (Persson.2016).

The advantages with surveys have been claimed to be that they can reach a large number of people within a short amount of time. The respondents can also choose when and where to fulfill the survey, which gives the respondents more freedom than scheduled one-to-one interviews (Bryman:2008). Surveys can also provide a large amount of quantitative data that can be placed in a broader context and/or work as a base for qualitative studies concerned with certain aspects in the answers (Singer & Couper:2017). Bryman (2008) also states that respondents in surveys have a short and impersonal relation to the researcher, which could lead to more honest answers.

The negative aspects related to surveys are often claimed to be the increased risk of bias in answers due to technical issues such as limited internet connection. It is also not possible for the researcher to ask follow-up questions if the respondents have not left any contact information. The researcher can in connection to this neither be sure that the intended individual is the one who has fulfilled the survey (Bryman:2008). This aspect could be avoided in this paper since all respondents that were contacted through Instagram Direct Message replied after finishing the survey; some with a longer text message, some with thumbs up and some by liking the message that was sent to them.
5.2. IMPLEMENTATION OF METHOD

Several of the advises given by Andreas Persson in "Questions and Answers about question construction in survey- and interview studies" (2016) have been followed. To facilitate the understanding of the questions, Persson (2016) lists a few essential aspects that a researcher should be aware of when formulating questions for surveys and interviews. Since individuals think, act, and feel differently due to various circumstances (age, cultural- and social background), no question can be seen as "the perfect question." While one respondent easily understands one question, another may not understand it at all. This might be avoided by making sure to keep the questions relatively short (but not too short since this can make them even more confusing) and closely related to the research focus. It is also vital to ensure that all questions serve a purpose. If they are useless for the paper's purpose, it is thus better to exclude them since every question takes up time for the respondent. The advice to present several response options to not miss out of essential data have also been applied to this study (Persson:2016). All the aspects mentioned above has been considered and applied to this paper.

5.2.1. CONSTRUCTION OF SURVEY

Before constructing the questions for the survey, a deeper pre-understanding related to post-pregnant women’s body image and use of social media were gained since these topics lie close to the paper's area of interest. Thus, several articles and previous research that was seen as relevant were read. This did, however, lead to several pre-assumptions concerning the topic; that post-pregnant women, in general, have a negative body image, that social media affects post-pregnant women negatively, and that social media enables them to gain a community feeling. Due to this, I decided early in the process to keep these pre-assumptions apart from the study and thus focus on formulating objective questions connected to these aspects instead of collecting data that either reject or support them.

With Persson's (2016) paper in mind together with the gained knowledge of the field as well with my received knowledge of the field, I started to formulate the questions in an interview guide (see Appendix: Survey questions.) Both the questions and the pre-written response options were based on previous research connected to body-

The survey consisted of 15 questions. Five of them were background questions (respondents age, number of children, age of children, which social media platforms they are using, and how often they are using them). Two allowed fixed answers (yes/no/not sure), six allowed multiple answers based on pre-written options together with an "other" alternative where the participants could elaborate their answers. Two questions were fixed (yes/no/not sure) with a required explanation (See Appendix: Survey questions).

5.2.2. TEST GROUP

To gain accurate interpretations, it is essential to make sure that the questions in the survey are easily understood (Persson:2016). Following the advises given by Nixon et al (2002), who claims that pre-testing of questions in surveys are crucial in order to eliminate misunderstandings and discover inaccuracy's "before it is too late", the survey's questions were tested before they were sent to the respondents (Nixon et al.: 2002). The test group consisted of two post-pregnant women that both were active on social media platforms. Even if they did not use hashtags themselves, they were still seen as relevant and appropriate for the cause. After the test persons had conducted a test-version of the survey, separately and at different times, they gave feedback on the survey’s technological features, the questions, and the response alternatives. The feedback and the inputs were then corrected and applied to the final version of the survey.

5.2.3. Choice of respondents

To find relevant respondents that could contribute with relevant and valuable knowledge for this paper, a search for the hashtags #mammamage and #mammakropp where made on Instagram. Here, all posts that had been posted during April 2019 under both hashtags were counted. The search resulted in 1131 posts connected to
#mammamage and 151 posts connected to #mamnakropp. The posts from this first selection did, however, turned out to be connected to several aspects of parenthood with images of children, food, workout sessions, quotes, health businesses. Thus, the search results had to be narrowed down in order to find respondents that could be useful for the study's purpose. The posts under each hashtag were therefore categorized based on their visual content where the emphasis was placed on finding posts in which the accountants had posted images of their bodies (full bodies and/or body parts). Marketing ads/posts and pregnant bodies were not included.

This limitation resulted in 240 posts connected to #mamnakmage and 38 posts connected to #mamnakropp. These posts were further analyzed in order to distinguish unique accountants since some of them had posted several images under one or both hashtags during the period. The analysis resulted in a total of 147 unique users. They were all seen as relevant respondents for the survey.

5.2.4. Distribution of survey

To construct a survey that easily could be posted as a link via Instagram's function "direct message", an account was registered on the web-based survey platform Survio. The base package was free and had everything needed for the paper which primarily was the functions to 1) easily construct a survey, 2) get access to basic statistics of the respondents answers and 3) sort answers based on individual respondents. The survey was then distributed as a link to the 147 women, that were identified in the previous selection step, via Instagram Direct Message together with an explanation of the purpose of the paper. 94 respondents fulfilled the survey within the given timeframe. The results from the survey are presented under Findings.

5.3. LIMITATIONS WITH METHOD

A fundamental notion within qualitative research is that reality can be perceived in different ways by different individuals. This has been claimed to be important when it comes to analyzing qualitative data. Since the researcher has constituted the research topic as well as formulated the questions based on presumptions and previous knowledge of the topic, it is crucial to keep these separated from the participants
answers (Fink:2000). Thus, a neutral and objective approach has been adopted in both the construction phase as well as throughout the analysis.

The disadvantages of using a survey turned out to be the loss of potential follow-up questions. The respondents were anonymous in this paper which made it impossible to contact those who had left short and/or unclear answers, an aspect that could have contributed to a greater understanding of the respondent’s answers.

The allowance of open-ended questions did also turn out to be time-consuming when it came to transcription and decoding the respondents answers in order to place them within the analysis.

Aspects connected to differences and/or similarities due to gender, cultural background, or geography was not investigated but could have provided an even greater understanding of the motivational aspects in the respondent’s answers.

Worth reflecting on as well is that more respondents probably would have increased the study's credibility since it would have provided more research material. This was not an option for this paper due to time constraints and word limiting. Additionally, the answers given from the 94 respondents were sufficient since they, in most cases, were extensive, vivid, and detailed.

5.4. COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

The quantitative and the qualitative data from the survey questions Q1-Q8 were placed into Excel and then implemented in diagrams to establish an overview of the results. The last two questions demanded explanations (Q9 and Q10), which resulted in a large amount of qualitative data. In order to understand these answers, distinguish themes, and categorize them, they were first coded based on keywords and categorized under themes in Excel. The most prominent themes were then placed into context together with relevant theories in the analysis.

5.5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY
Reliability in research is concerned with the quality of the measured data and its trustworthiness. One of the key features in research methods is that the work should be conducted by someone else and provide the same result (Persson:2016). This aspect can be tricky in qualitative studies due to the influence of the researcher who interpret the data based on personal presumptions and previous knowledge. It is thus of importance to test the research's reliability to spot potential weaknesses due to the influence of the researcher (Heale & Twycross:2015). According to Heale & Twycross (2015), a higher degree of reliability can be achieved through accuracy in the data transcription. This aspect has therefore been taken under consideration by reducing and correcting wrongness during data collection and data transcription as well as by testing the survey in a pilot study before it was sent to the respondents. The advices given by Persson (2016) has further been followed where the emphasis has been placed on the construction of the survey’s questions, the use of appropriate language, and the aim to host an honest approach towards the respondents.

In turn, validity in research refers to how well the questions measure what they are intended to measure. This paper has had this particular aspect in mind in turns of keeping the survey questions and the response options close to the research purpose. Thus, the questions have all been related to aspects concerning post-pregnant women’s thoughts and experiences of their bodies, societal body ideal, and their use of Instagram.

5.6. Ethical Considerations

When it comes to ethical aspects related to this paper, the most vital part to consider has been to construct the research with consent from the participants. In order to do so, the advises that Michelle Byrne gives in her article "The concept of informed consent in qualitative research" (2001) were taken under consideration before the questions were sent to the respondents. Hence, the purpose of the research was clearly stated when the respondents was contacted where I highlighted why I wanted to investigate the subject, that the answers from the survey will be used as material for this paper and that the participants would be anonymous (Wilson:2013).
6. FINDINGS
The survey consisted of 10 main questions and five (5) background questions (See Appendix: Survey questions). The questions were all based on previous research connected to post-pregnant women’s body image, women’s thoughts of societal body ideals, and women’s use of social media. A total of 94 respondents fulfilled the survey. The findings from the survey will be presented under headings connected to the research area. The fixed questions that allowed one response option is marked (F), the multi-response options are marked (multi), while the open-ended option “other” are marked (open-ended). Q9 and Q10 had fixed answers with explanations marked (F + Explanations).

6.1. Background information of respondents
40% of the participants in the survey were between 31-35 (n=38). 31% (n=29) were 25-30, 14 were 36-40 (15%), 6 were 18-24 (7%), 4 were 41-45 (4%), 2 were 46-50 (2%) and 1 were 56 or older (1%).

51% (n=48) of the respondents had 2 children, 35% (n=33) had 1 child, 8% (n=7) had 3 children, 4% (n=4) had 4 children and 2% (n=2) had more than 5 children.

Most of the respondents had children of ages 1-2 (30%) and children under 1 (24%). 20% had children of ages 7 or older, 16% had children of ages 3 to 4, and 10% had children of ages 5 to 6.

Since the respondents were found on Instagram, all of them (n=94) answered that they are active on this platform. The question allowed multi answers where 39% (n=69) also answered that they use Facebook, 5% (n=9) blogs and 2% (n=2) Twitter. 1 respondent wrote that she also uses YouTube under the option “other”.

To the question concerned with how often the respondents are using social media, 92% (n=84) answered that they are using the platform daily. 5% (n=4) answered a few times a week, while 2% (n=2) claimed to use social media a few times a month. 1 (1%) respondent answered once a week.
6.2. Experiences and feelings of the individual post-pregnancy body

When asked if the respondents’ bodies had changed after pregnancy, 95% (n=89) answered yes, 2% (n=2) answered no while 3% (n=3) was not sure (Q1: Table 1). To the question if the respondents were satisfied with their post-pregnancy bodies 47% (n=42) answered yes, 33% (n=29) answered no while 19% (n=18) answered that they were not sure (Q3: Table 1).

The follow-up question concerned with how the respondents experienced that their bodies had changed after pregnancy, 71% (n=67) answered that it had changed negatively while 25% (n=23) answered that it had changed positively. 4% (n=4) answered that they were not sure or that they did not experience any change (Q2: Table 1.1).

6.3. Body image after pregnancy

When asked if the respondents had experienced any changes in their body image after pregnancy, 30% (n=41) answered that they were less satisfied with their bodies and 13% (n=18) that they were more satisfied with their bodies. 18% (n=26) stated that they had gained lower self-esteem, while 26% (n=38) answered that their self-esteem had increased (Q4: Table 3).
The alternative “other” was answered by 13% (n=19) of the respondents where 4 answered that they experienced their body image as similar to before pregnancy, 4 claimed to be more comfortable in both the body and life after pregnancy, 3 stated that they were less satisfied since they had not gone back to their pre-pregnancy body yet. 2 answered that they were less satisfied with their bodies the first years after pregnancy, while 2 claimed that they were not satisfied with their body’s appearance but proud over what it had achieved. 1 wrote that she wants to be satisfied but feel a pressure to follow certain body ideals, 1 claimed to have become looser and softer in skin, 1 wrote that she was overall satisfied with her body but bothered about the belly’s appearance postpartum while 1 answered that she had received diastasis recti post-pregnant (Q4.1: Table.3.1).

Table 3.
Q4: Have you experienced any changes in body image after pregnancy? *(multi)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More satisfied w. body</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less satisfied w. body</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better self-esteem</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower self-esteem</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1.
Q4.1: Other experiences of changes in body image? *(open ended)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received diastasis recti</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall bigger, softer and looser in skin</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied due to societal ideals</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bothered by the belly’s appearance</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less satisfied the first years after pregnancy</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud over what the body has achieved</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to get back to my pre-pregnancy body</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More comfortable with my body and life</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as before pregnancy</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4. Viewing other bodies on Instagram

To the question if the respondents are getting affected when they are viewing other bodies on Instagram, 50% (n=47) answered that they got affected positively while 27% (n=25) answered that they got affected negatively. 14% (n=13) answered that they were not affected, while 9% (n=8) was not sure (Q5: Table 4).

When asked in what way(s) they are getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram, 27% (n=45) answered that they compare themselves to others, 24% (n=41) answered that they got more inspired, 16% (n=27) that their self-esteem increased, 14% (n=24) experienced reduced self-esteem and 4% (n=6) stated that they got less inspired. 8% (n=13) answered that they did not get affected while 7% (n=12) choose to answer the “other” option (Table.4.1). Here, 1 respondent wrote that she thought it was annoying that focus often lies on utterly characteristics rather than on inner. 2 felt inspired to work out when she witnessed trimmed bodies while 1 answered that it makes her think of how she looks but does not see anything negative about it. 1 answered that she felt bad about herself when viewing thin/norm/workout bodies since those make her feel ugly. 2 wrote that they felt better about themselves when witnessing body positive accounts since those provide variety while 1 answered that she was more worried about her 12-year-old daughter well-fare in this question since she had noticed that her daughter gets negatively affected of it (Q6: Table 4.1.). 4 respondents left a dot (.) in the answer field.

Table 4.
Q5: Do you get affected when you see other bodies on Instagram? (F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, positively</th>
<th>Yes, negatively</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1.
Q6: In what way(s) are you getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram? (multi)

- Get less inspired
- Other
- I dont get affected
- Reduced self-esteem
- Increased self-esteem
- Get more inspired
- Compare myself to others

4%
6.6. Motivations behind the use of Instagram and hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp

Since this paper has been interested in understanding affordances connected to post-pregnant women’s use of Instagram, Q8 asked the respondents why they are using the platform were multiple response options were possible. Here, 24% (n=51) answered that they are using Instagram to waste time, 21% (n=44) used it for inspiration, 20% (n=43) to get updated, 15% (n=32) to get linked with like-minded while 16% (n=33) used it to influence and/or inspire others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get inspired</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get linked with like-minded</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To influence/inspire others</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get updated</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To waste time</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Q7: Why are you using Instagram? (multi)

To the option other, which was answered by 4% (n=8) of the respondents, 1 wrote that she wants to have a place where she can write down her thoughts while 1 claimed to use it as a buy and sell platform, 1 used it as a private photo album while 1 wanted to keep in touch with friends abroad. 1 described it as a good way to keep in touch with friends that are not so familiar, while 1 answered that she enjoys the humoristic side of social media platforms (Q7: Table 5).

When asked why the respondents have chosen to post under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp, 35% (n=44) answered that it was in order to visualize how an average post-pregnancy body look like, 28% (n=35) claimed that it was in order to challenge standardized societal body ideals, 21% (n=26) to get linked with like-minded, 8% (n=10) to get more followers and 5% (n=6) to increase the reach of their account. The option “other” was answered by 3% (n=4) where 1 wrote that she wanted to show others how proud she is over her body and how beautiful pre-pregnancy bodies can be. 1 stated that she wanted to inspire others to be proud of themselves no matter the body’s
size or look while 2 wanted to not only inspire but also to help and support other women (Q8: Table 6).

Table 6.
Q8: Why have you posted under #mammamage and/or #mammakropp? (multi)

- To visualize an average post-pregnancy body
- To increase the accounts reach
- To get more followers
- To get linked with like-minded
- To challenge standardized body ideals
- Other

6.7. Thoughts of Instagram, hashtags and societal body ideals
Q9 was interested in examining if the respondents believed that posts on Instagram could be a contributing factor when it comes to how we are viewing societal ideals wherein 72 % (n=68) answered yes, 19 (n=18) no and 9% (n=8) that they weren’t sure (Q9: Table 7).

Q11 asked the respondents if they believe that hashtags be a contributory aspect when it comes to changes in how we are viewing societal body ideals. Here, 86% (n=81) answered yes, 9 % (n=8) no while 5% (n=5) wasn’t sure (Q11: Table 7).

Table 7. Q9 and Q10

- Q9: Do posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals?
- Q10: Can hashtags such as #mammamage and/or #mammakropp contribute to a change in how we are viewing societal body ideals?
These questions (Q9 and Q10) did also demand explanations (Yes, please explain /No, please explain/ Other, please explain) without any pre-written response options which resulted in a large amount of qualitative data. The answers to each question were thus first categorized based on key themes and then summarized in a diagram to distinguish and establish prominent aspects and themes (Table 7.1. and Table 7.2). Since several of the answers were highly elaborated, some were categorized under several categories.

To the question concerned with if the respondents believe that posts of bodies on Instagram platforms contribute to how we look at societal ideals (Q9), 30% (n=44) wrote that posts on social media primarily contribute to a maintaining of societal body ideals while 23% (n=33) stated that these posts present a fake reality with re-touched images and/or unnatural body positions. 20% (n=29) mentioned that posts on social media platforms creates a feeling of community between the users, 19% (n=28) answered that posts can contribute to a positive view of societal ideals if they are used from a body positivistic standpoint while 8% (n=12) discussed that they might lead to negative effects on especially vulnerable individuals who might be young and/or have a low self-esteem (Q.9.1: Table.7.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.1. Q.9.1. Prominent thoughts connected to if post’s of bodies contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals (open ended)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintains established body ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents a fake reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive when used body positively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative effect on vulnerable individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.2. Q10.1. Prominent thoughts connected to if hashtags can contribute to a change in views of societal body ideals (open ended)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can criticize societal ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizes normal post-pregnancy bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When used body positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates community feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked if the respondents believe that hashtags such as #mammamage and/or mammakropp (Q10) can contribute to a change in how we are viewing societal body ideals, 45% (n=69) claimed that they could contribute due to their visualizations of
average post-pregnancy bodies. 29% (n=45) implied that they could since they can criticize societal body ideals while 14% (n=22) claimed that they could if used by a body positive approach to inspire, engage and support. 12% (n=18) mentioned that the use of specific hashtags links individuals to each other, which facilitates feelings of togetherness (Q.9.1: Table.7.2).

**Main findings**

71% of the respondents answered that their bodies had changed negatively after pregnancy, and 30% that they were less satisfied with their bodies post-pregnant. Although, 26% claimed to have received better self-esteem post-pregnant. 50% of the respondents did also state that they are getting positive affected when they are viewing other bodies on Instagram where 27% answered that this affection was due to a comparison to others and 24% that posts of other bodies made them feel more inspired.

When asked why the respondents are using Instagram, 21% stated that it was to get inspired and that their primary motivation behind posting images of their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp was to visualize an average post-pregnancy body (35%) followed by the motivation to challenge standardized societal ideals (28%). The question concerned with if the respondents believe that posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal ideals, 72 % answered yes where 38% stated that posts contribute to a maintaining of societal body ideals. Additionally, when asked if the respondents believe that posts connected to #mammamage and/or #mammakropp can contribute to a change in the viewing of societal ideals, 86% answered yes were 45% mentioned that these posts are visualizing how average post-pregnancy bodies might look.

These findings indicate that this specific focus group (post-pregnant women active on Instagram) are motived to visualize their bodies even though most of them claimed to be less satisfied with their bodies post-pregnant. The qualitative answers from Q9 and Q10 are therefore particularly interesting to examine further since they might provide a greater understanding of Instagram’s affordances for the respondents as well as the motivational aspects behind their activeness.
7. **Analysis**

The questions in the survey have been related to previous research connected to body image after pregnancy and body image in relation to media portrayals of bodies, as well as to women’s use of social media platforms. This paper has been particularly interested in the respondents use of Instagram, and the emotional affordances that can be identified through their use of the platform.

The analysis section has been divided under headings based on three prominent themes (affordances) that arose from the respondents answers — *Instagram as a platform for criticism and comparisons, Instagram as a platform for inspiration and support and Instagram as a platform for acceptance* — where the quantitative and qualitative data is analyzed in connection to the paper’s theoretical framework. Since the respondents answers in most cases were vivid and detailed, the different theories are lifted and discussed in connection to all three affordances.

7.1. **Instagram as a Platform for Criticism and Comparisons**

This section will discuss the findings from the questions that were concerned with the respondents thoughts of societal body ideals (Q9) and the affection that the respondents claimed to experience when they are viewing other bodies on Instagram (Q5).

7.1.1. **Recurrent portrayals, fake realities, and re-touched bodies**

The majority of the respondents mentioned societal body ideals in a negative and critical sense in connection to especially Q9.\(^1\) were several of them lifted how recurrent visualizations of retouched bodies on Instagram creates a false reality:

- I believe that we see very "fake" pictures which show bodies more advantageous than they are in reality. (age 36-40, 3 children)

- It is usually a re-touched, and straightforward reality displayed which create unattainable body ideals. (age 26-30, 1 child)

- The pictures are fake. And perfect - no one looks like that. (age 31-25, 2 children)

\(^1\) Q9: Do you believe that posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals?
In these answers, a distinction between the mentioned object and the respondent’s reality can be observed where retouched images are claimed to create fake realities in which bodies are presented from an advantageous perspective. Previous research has stated that women commonly identifies images in media outlets as retouched (Williams et al.:2017) and that the ability to see them as “fake” can be linked to an objective and critical approach towards them rather than comparisons to them (Feltman & Szymanski:2017). None of these respondents reported that they got affected by the observed portrayals. Instead, they viewed them objectively with the simple conclusion that they are fake and that portrayals like these lead to unattainable ideals. This has been observed in previous studies where postmodern feminism, for instance, has stated that recurrent portrayals of certain body types in media outlets create ideals that only is real in that sense that they are socially constructed (McRobbie:1993).

A critical tone towards body portrayals as lifted by the respondents above, could also be distinguished in connection to Q5^2 were the respondents mentioned celebrities and influencers in their answers:

I don’t get affected. In addition, most Instagram celebrities are operated. Thus - impossible body ideals. (age 31-35, 2 children)

Newly redeemed/relatively newly redeemed mothers (so-called influencers) tend to beautify not only their bodies but also life with children, this is not how a see motherhood. (age 18-25, 1 child)

It's just one type of look/body that gets to be seen and receives many likes. The influences that are most popular has extreme makeup and fixed and edited images. (age 36-40, 1 child)

Ideals with stylish well-crafted bodies get a lot of positive feedback, while some "ordinary mother" often gets chopped negatively. (age 36-40, 2 children)

Similar to the respondents cited earlier, these women did also discuss “fake realities” while lifting beauty operations, a beautifying of motherhood, and extreme make-ups where influencers were claimed to not only create but also obtain standardized portrayals of bodies. Here, one wrote that influencers that have “one type of body” are

^2 Q5: Do you get affected when you see other bodies on social media platforms?
the ones that get most likes while others claimed that repeated portrayals of retouched images by influencers create impossible ideals while images of “ordinary mothers” are receiving negative feedback.

It has been stated that images of celebrities, such as influencers, often lack context which leads to feelings of inadequacy among the viewers. When background information regarding the visualized body’s appearance are left out, such as workouts and eating habits, women see these images as unachievable with feelings of guilt and shame of their own body as a result (Roth et al.:2012). One respondent connected to this aspect when lifting post-pregnancy bodies average appearances after pregnancy and stated that women need to turn their head towards the reality and understand that bodies change after pregnancy and that societal body ideals is nothing but physical ideas:

The idea of a maternal body that is automatically slimming down during breastfeeding, or that the stomach falls in at ones, that one gets firmer breasts, the skin changes, stretch marks and everything on the inside there is something that must be realized. We are all different and we are not able to live up to the ideals that exist physically, and we must be better and stop trash-talking to ourselves, as if we failed. (age 36-40, 2 children)

Thus, not only did this respondent mentioned unrealistic notions of bodies physical change after pregnancy, she also implied that in order to understand that bodies portrayed in magazines and media outlets might be unrealistic and lack context, women need to reject notions that make them feel as if they have “failed” if they cannot fulfill them. Without placing a feminist label on this respondent, it could be suggested that her statement goes hand in hand with feminist beliefs and especially with the concept of feminist reflexivity that has suggested that an adaption of feminist beliefs might provide a base for self-evaluation and criticism towards societal ideals and beliefs (Feltman & Szymanski:2017).

While most of the respondents discussed body ideals in connection to other women, or to the society in general, some did also lift aspects connected to men’s notions of female bodies:
I hope people realize that everyone is different and beautiful regardless. That people get better self-esteem. And that men also realize and accept women’s bodies regardless of size and form. (age 25-30, 2 children)

I want to show that you are not perfectly perfect, that you have to fight after pregnancy and the toddler years. Men who believe that their women should be the same as before should get themselves a thinker and women should see and feel that they are not alone. (age 36-40, 3 children)

Mulvey’s theory of the “male gaze” are more or less based on how patriarchal structures objectifies women wherein both women and men have learned to see women as objects, and wherein women have been thought to see themselves as submissive towards these structures (Mulvey:1975). The respondents quoted above oppose these structures were an aim to change and challenge them can be identified. By owning the portrayals of their bodies, as suggested by feminist reflexivity, these women believe that critical thinking and objective understanding of the reality enable a form of self-control where women can be in charge of their body’s visualizations and thus also the objectification of them (Ratcliffe:2006). As one of the respondents stated: “Men who believe that their woman should be the same as before should get themselves a thinker”. Thus, post-pregnant body advocates might, through their portrayals return the male gaze, self-construct their messages, and visualize their bodies based on their own conditions.

7.1.2. Body pressure and upward comparisons

Negative emotions caused by societal body ideals can be noticed in the answers connected to the questions concerned with the respondents thoughts of societal body ideals, as lifted in the previous section, but also in connection to the respondents body image. Here, 71% answered that their bodies had changed negatively after pregnancy were 30% claimed to be less satisfied with their bodies post-pregnant. Body pressure from the society was mentioned several times in connection to especially Q6³ and Q9⁴:

 Thin waist? After a pregnancy? My goodness, we all want to have that, but especially after children, that is not easy. It can be hard to look at

³ Q6: In what way(s) are you getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram?
⁴ Q9: Do you believe that posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals?
images like these when you know that you are far from being there. (age 26-30, 1 child)

Body ideals at the moment is that you should be strong, exercise strength training and preferably run bikini fitness. And then it is important with a hefty booty. There are thousands of clips with exercises on how to get a nice big butt together with a narrow waist. (age 25-30, 3 children)

You are so fragile when you have given birth and the pressure to lose weight is so great! (age 31-35, 2 children)

In these quotes, two of the respondents did particularly lift how recurrent portrayals of certain body types affect them as mothers, and that these portrayals were seen as stressful where one wrote that “It can be hard to look at images like these when you know that you are far from being there” and another that “the pressure to lose weight is so great!” The pressure to conform to societal body ideals have been claimed to affect individuals on several planes where feelings of inadequacy among especially post-pregnant women have been identified (Breda et al. 2015, Nash:2015). A contributing factor behind these negative feelings among post-pregnant women has been linked to comparisons. Even if the majority of the respondents in the previous section indicated that they see body portrayals on social media as “fake” and “unreal”, without mentioning any particular personal effects caused by them, 27% of the respondents did answer that they are getting affected in a negative way when they are viewing other bodies on Instagram. When analyzing the answers to Q6, it is, once again, implied that unreal realities facilitate a skewed image of reality where comparisons to others are seen as unavoidable:

You are getting affected, the pictures are often not even real and you know that but are getting affected anyway. (age 41-46, 2 children)

It is unavoidable not to get affected when you are normally pumped with images of narrow and re-touched models that is shown as a “norm.” (age 31-35, 2 children)

You compare yourself to others and get a skewed image of how an average body look in reality. (age 31-35, 3 children)

One of these respondents is mentioning that she, despite that she knows that images might be re-touched, are getting affected by them. Comparisons such as the one
described in the first quote can also be noticed in other answers where it is stated that it is “unavoidable not to get affected” since norm images are being “pumped” and that comparisons to others lead to a skewed image of how an average body look.

One reason behind post-pregnant women’s sensitivity to ideals have been linked to media outlets constant portrayals of constructed beauty ideals wherein post-pregnancy bodies often are being left out (Clark et al.:2008). Drawing on comparison theory, it has further been argued that individuals strive to gain accurate evaluations of themselves, which mainly is done through comparisons to others. When comparisons to those that are seen as superior to oneself, or better in any way, an upward comparison has been made. This type of comparison is claimed to often lead to negative feelings of the individual self with reduced body image and lower self-esteem as a result (Festinger:1954, Vogel et al.:2015). The respondents answers above indicate a high degree of upward comparisons were societal body ideals are seen as the norm and where the respondents are claiming to get negatively affected by these normative portrayals. Thus, just as objectification theory suggests, objectification of the female body through portrayals of bodies on Instagram did for some respondents lead to self-objectification followed by negative feelings of the individual body. Although, the degree of affection when viewing other bodies on Instagram might depend on who you are and who you are comparing yourself to, as one of the respondents implied:

Images on social media can be inspiring if the bodies you see are not 20-year-old well-trained influencer girls who may have had 1 child but regained their body quickly”. (age 36-40, 2 children)

For this particular respondent, images of young “well-trained influencer girls who may have 1 child but regained her body quickly” was not seen as inspiring. This might be due to the distinction that the respondent has drawn between her and the girl she is describing. Previous studies have stated that people tend to identify with those that are seen as equal where the most horizontal comparisons can be made with neutral and/or positive outcome as a result (Festinger:1954). This respondent was older (between 36-40) than the girl she described (“20-years-old”) which indicates that a horizontal comparison probably has not been made. A slight of jealousy can also be noticed in her description, which indicate that this 20-year-old girl is seen as somewhat superior to herself. Thus, it can be interpreted that this respondent did not see this girl as similar to
herself where is why she differenced herself from the young girl and therefore could not get inspired by her.

7.2. Instagram as a Platform for Inspiration and Support

Upward comparisons often lead to negative feelings of the individual self. As seen in the previous section, comparisons to other bodies on Instagram were described as unavoidable and negative by several of the respondents. Although, comparisons to others does not have to result in negative outcomes. The answers to Q5 did show that the majority (50%) of the respondents became positively affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram. This section will discuss the findings from the questions that were concerned with the reasons behind the respondents use of Instagram (Q7), and their motivations behind their posts connected to #mammamage and/or #mammakropp (Q8).

7.2.1. Downward and horizontal comparisons

When asked why the respondents are using Instagram, 21% answered that they want to get inspired, and 16% that they want to inspire others. In the qualitative answers to Q7, some respondents wrote that viewing images of those that were seen as similar made them feel better about themselves:

"You can see other pictures and recognize changes in others, such as my stretch marks on the stomach, it is good to be able to see that others have been much worse and that they have faded so you don't have to be ashamed of your own. As well as to see that they are normal! That very many get them." (Female, 31-35, 2 children)

"I get most affected when I see someone posting pictures with "beauty flaws", folds and wrinkles. It feels so wonderful!" (Female, 36-40, 3 children)

"I become happy to see others who also proudly show off their maternal bodies!" (Female, 26-30, 1 child)

---

5 Q5: Do you get affected when you are viewing other bodies on social media platforms?
6 Q7: Why are you using Instagram?
As seen in the first quote, comparisons to others that were seen as equal, or somewhat inferior, made this respondent appreciate her own tummy’s stretchmarks since “it is good to be able to see that others have been much worse” so that “you don’t have to be ashamed of your own”. The respondent in the middle did not lift comparisons per se but mentioned aspects that can be related to recognition when she wrote that seeing other maternal bodies with “beauty flaws” such as wrinkles, made her feel “wonderful”. This aspect could also be noticed in the last quote where the respondent seemed to have applied a horizontal comparison to those that — just like herself — proudly visualizes their maternal bodies where this horizontal comparison was claimed to make her happy.

7.2.2. Inspiration and motivation

When asked in what way(s) the respondents are getting affected when they are viewing other bodies on Instagram, 24% claimed to get more inspired. When asked why the respondents are using Instagram, 21% stated that they sought to get inspired, and 15% that they wanted to get linked to like-minded. Here, 16% also stated that they sought to impact other women to inspire them into re-thinking the notion of their (post-pregnancy) bodies:

I want to show how proud I am of what my body can do. It is so cool! To show others how fine this is. (age 31-35, 3 children)

I want to inspire others to be proud of themselves regardless of size or appearance. (age 31-35, 2 children)

To show the difference, how narrow and "perfect" I was considered by many before pregnancy and show others that it is not gold and green forests just because the child is out. (age 26-30, 1 child)

Even if the majority of the respondents in the quotes above were using a positive tone with an indication that their motivations behind their portrayals were to inspire others, a re-occurring aspect can (once again) be linked to societal body ideals where a division between social body ideals and the respondent’s bodies are made. This can be especially noticed in the last quote where the respondent describes her pre-pregnant body as “narrow” and “perfect”, a description that goes in line with previous studies description of societal body ideals (Roth et al.:2012). This respondent does however
also imply that the change of her body postpartum can be visualized on Instagram which might shed light on the fact that the body goes through a transformation after pregnancy.

In contrast to the answers given in previous sections, bodies in the quotes above are discussed from an inside perspective in a greater sense with descriptions such as “I want to show how proud I am off what my body can do!” and “To dare to proudly show my body and inspire others”. Drawing on feminist reflexivity, it can be suggested that these women’s focus on their own bodily experiences, rather than on other bodies appearances might have bolstered their ability to dismiss societal standards (Hesse-Biber et al.:2006) which have made them feel more comfortable with, and in, their own bodies.

When reading into the answers to Q8, it can further be argued that women are more driven to visualize their bodies when they have a designated target group. By directing posts towards individuals that are seen as equal (e.g., other post-pregnant women), some respondents felt that they could drive motivation and through this elicit positive reactions (Meier & Schäfer:2018). This can be especially noticed in the answers from two of the respondents who writes that they have used #mammamage and/or #mammakropp to reach out to other post-pregnant women:

To dare to proudly show my body and inspire other mothers. Me myself have become so inspired and happy when I have seen others who dared to do so! (age 41-45, 1 child)

I want to give other post-pregnant women a positive reaction and normalize that all bodies are normal and beautiful no matter what! (age 26-30, 2 children)

Here, horizontal comparisons are indicated to not only reward others and the individual self with feelings of inspiration and happiness but also to extend a notion that “all bodies are normal and beautiful no matter what”. The aspect of solidarity between the respondents and other Instagram users were mentioned several times:

I have only received positive feedback, and it has made me so happy and proud of the sisterhood. (age 18-25, 1 child)

Q8: Why have you posted under #mammamage and/or #mammakropp?
When you get comments, you become happy to see that some sometimes cheer on you and writes that you should "keep up the good work. (age 36-40, 1 child)

Women need to be better at supporting each other and enjoying ourselves. (age 41-45, 2 children)

I believe that hashtags like these can create a feeling of community and togetherness. (age 26-30, 2 children)

I am so glad to feel that I can be accepted for who I am and how I look. #mammakropp have helped me get a lot of new friends and lot of new self-confidence. (age 41-45, 2 children)

As seen in the quotations above, aspects of “togetherness” and “sisterhood”, are lifted. These affordances have been observed in previous studies connected to women’s use of social media where it has been stated that SNS can provide women platforms of solidarity (Baker & Yang:2018), “digital sisterhood” (Fotopoulou:2016), and community feeling (Stringfellow:2018) in which women can turn to each other for support and inspiration. When reading into the quotations above, it does seem that the use of #mammamage and #mammakropp — on platforms that are seen as affordable for support and inspiration— allow women to replace self-objectification with positive feedback which not only could help the respondents to gain new friends but also increase their self-confidence.

7.3. Instagram as a Platform for Acceptance

When asked why the respondents have chosen to post images of their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp, 45% answered that it was to visualize an average post-pregnancy body followed by 29% who sought to challenge societal body ideals. This section will mainly discuss the findings to the question concerned with the respondents thoughts of societal body ideals (Q9), their motivations behind posting images on Instagram (Q8), and if they believe that hashtags such as #mammamage and/or #mammakropp can contribute to changes in views of societal body ideals (Q10).
7.3.1. Acceptance through representations of real bodies

As noticed in previous section, Instagram is seen as a platform of criticism and solidarity. It is also seen as a useful medium when it comes to spreading of alternative body ideals, as this section will discuss. In connection to Q10\(^8\), some of the respondents implied that inclusion of different bodies in the media sphere might lead to more accepting views of bodies with positive feelings as a result:

More varied bodies contribute to more varied and accepting views. (age 25-30, 1 child)

Just seeing one type of body can never be good. We all have different conditions. (age 31-35, 2 children)

If you see more "real" bodies, self-esteem and self-confidence can increase. (age 36-40, 4 children)

It can hopefully change the view of (even mine) that every body looks different and that the body usually changes after pregnancy. (age 31-35, 1 child)

We need to see more images of real bodies so we can understand that we all are different. (age 21-25, 2 children)

This understanding lies close to the concepts of body acceptance and body positivity where researchers have stated that a diverse visualization of body types might lead to changes in how bodies and beauty are defined (Cwynar-Horta:2016a, Weiner cited by Kelly:2014). Two of the respondents in the quotes above are in connection to this also stating that an increased visualization of “real” bodies can lead to changed when it comes to notions of societal ideals. Although, the question concerned with how a “real” body actually look like and how a “real” body can be defined is hard (perhaps impossible) to answer, where different individuals would have different definitions of it. If asking postmodernists, they would probably answer that there are no “real body” besides the natural body itself and that notions of body appearances are culturally and socially constructed (McRobbie:1993). Drawing on the discussions from the previous section — where influencer and celebrity bodies were described as “fake” — it can

---

\(^8\) Q10: Do you believe that hashtags such as #mammamage and/or #mammakropp contribute to a change in how we are viewing societal body ideals?
however be suggested that bodies that don’t conform to societal ideals are seen as “real” in the eyes of some of the respondents. Thus, as suggested by the respondents above, inclusion of body types that oppose societal body ideals in the media sphere might not only lead to more varied portrayals of female bodies but also to a greater societal acceptance of different body appearances.

7.3.2. Self-acceptance through a body positive approach
Body positive accounts have been described as effective when it comes to visualizations of marginalized bodies where an aim to re-negotiate feminine norms and beauty ideals as well as to empower people “through the idea of body positivity and acceptance” have been noticed (Cwynar-Horta:2016a, Elmadağlı:2016). When reading into the answers to Q8\(^9\) and Q9\(^{10}\), body positivity was mentioned several times by some of the respondents:

The impact (of Instagram) is generally negative due to prevailing norms. At the same time, there are many body-positive accounts that seem to have a huge and positive impact on many users. (age 46-50, 3 children)

I believe that all media where you see bodies, advertising, etc. have an influence on body ideals, mostly negative, but there are also many good examples such as body positive activists. (age 36-40, 1 child)

I believe that body positive accounts can affect people to see female bodies in a positive way. (age 18-25, 1 child)

Whether or not it (Instagram) is positive depend on which accounts/images you are following. Body-positive accounts can have a positive effect on women according to me. (age 36-40, 2 children)

Even if two of the respondents quoted above are stating that media portrayals in general affects individuals negatively, all of them are mentioning that body positive accounts can provide positive affections since they “can affect people to see female bodies in a positive way” where one of the respondents had noticed that accounts connected to body positivity have had “a huge and positive impact on users”. As seen in the last quote

---

\(^9\) Q8: Why have you posted under #mammamage and/or #mammakropp?

\(^{10}\) Q9: Do you believe that posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals?
though, which also were lifted by one respondent under 7.1.2, affection might be based on who you are, who’s body you are viewing and which accounts that you are following. Aspects of individual self-love in connection to affordances provided by Instagram users were lifted by other respondents as well, especially in connection to Q6\textsuperscript{11} and Q9\textsuperscript{12}:

I am convinced that everyone is affected. But if one feels good about oneself then it is easier to keep the distance. (age 36-40, 2 children)

Whether it contributes positively or negatively depends on the type of person you follow. Only follow people who make you love your body. (age 41-46, 2 children)

These answers can be interpreted as suggesting individuals to make horizontal comparisons in order not to get negatively affected when using Instagram. To deliberately follow individuals that can elicit positive reactions, as stated by one of the respondents as well as in previous research, might elicit feelings of self-love and acceptance (Meier & Schäfer:2018). In this context, it is further interesting to lift the fact that using Instagram is an individual choice, as is the use of the technical functions afforded by the platform. Features such as “like” and “follow” are all crucial parts of SNS that have been built most and all for interaction (Boyd & Ellison:2007, Lewis et al.:2014). This aspect does also mean that users deliberately can choose which accounts to follow. Thus, to only follow accounts that can elicit positive reactions and feelings of the individual self, as suggested by one of the respondents, can be seen as a crucial advice when it comes to self-love in connection to individuals social media use. Even if the flow on Instagram was described as “pumped with images of retouched bodies” by one respondent earlier, it is at the end up to every individual user to make sure that the content in their flow is seen as affordable for the individual self.

\textsuperscript{11} Q6: In what way(s) are you getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram?
\textsuperscript{12} Q9: Do you believe that posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals?
8. DISCUSSION
Post-pregnant body advocate’s thoughts of their bodies and the motivations behind their body exposure on social media platforms have not yet been examined. As a contribution to the field of Instagram use among body advocates, this paper has examined post-pregnant women’s experiences of their bodies, their thoughts of societal body ideals, and investigated the motivations behind their body portrayals connected to the hashtags #mammamage and #mammakropp. Since affordances have been claimed to be important when it comes to identifying leverages or resistance that individuals are applying to achieve certain goals (Cho et al.:2017), the paper has also sought to identify prominent emotional affordances connected to the respondents use of Instagram.

By applying a mixed methods survey, the paper has analyzed quantitative and qualitative data from 94 respondents, where the chosen theories turned out to be useful for distinguishing elements of oppression and resistance — two opposite affections that previous studies have linked to social media use among, especially, post-pregnant women (Moradi & Huang:2008, Feltman & Scymanski:2017). Here, objectification theory, feminist reflexivity, social comparison theory, and postmodern feminism were used in order to answer the research questions.

RQ1. Which motivational factors can be identified among post-pregnant women that have visualized their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp on Instagram?
The answers to the question concerned with the respondents motivations behind the visualizations of their bodies under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp varied, where the majority of the respondents stated that they sought to visualize an average post-pregnancy body (45%) followed by a will to challenge standardized body ideals (29%). Here, concepts linked to postmodern feminism and feminist reflexivity could be distinguished where the respondents stated that to change notions of how bodies (should) look, standardized notions need to be questioned, discussed, challenged and rejected. Here, some of the respondents stated that visualizations of different body shapes might lead to more accepting views from both men and women and that especially women should support and inspire each other. By using hashtags,
the respondents felt that they belonged to a community where not only similar thoughts and values could be shared but also similar bodies, that through comparison theory could be interpreted as positive outcome for the respondents wellbeing.

Since all respondents had visualized their bodies through their open Instagram accounts with the use of hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp, and though made themselves open towards different forms of feedback, comments and judgments, one of my presumptions was that these women were more or less satisfied with their bodies. Quite surprisingly, 71% of the respondents answered that their bodies had changed negatively after pregnancy, where 30% of the respondents claimed to be less satisfied with their bodies post-pregnant. Hence, drawing on these findings it can be stated that the post-pregnant body advocates examined in this paper posset a drive to visualize their bodies – even though almost half of them claimed to not be satisfied with their bodies post-pregnant. This indicates that women are willing to put themselves up for external observation and that they through their activeness on Instagram, and with the use of Instagram affordances such as hashtags, believe that they not only can challenge societal ideals but also inspire other women to be more comfortable with and within their post-pregnancy bodies.

**RQ2. Which emotional affordances can Instagram provide post-pregnant women?**

Affordance theory aims at exploring relations between environment and actors. Within this context, Gibson (1979) argues that affordances can be found everywhere and in everything (objects, environments) even if they may not be useful to all individuals. It is the individual who suits the affordance based on what it affords her (Gibson:1979). As an extension to Gibson’s ecological approach, it has further been argued that emotional affordances are based on symbolic significances rather than on physical objects (Norman & Ortony:2013). Drawing on affordance theory’s suggestion that environments afford different affordances for individuals due to their uniqueness, this paper has been interested in examining which emotional affordances that can be identified in post-pregnant body advocates of Instagram. Three prominent themes arose from the findings in the survey which all could be interpreted as the respondents emotional affordances of Instagram;
1) *Criticism affordances and comparison affordances*

Instagram afford all their users a platform in which they can connect to, and interact with, others. Some of the platform's affordances enable following of accounts, searching for keywords or hashtags, liking posts, to mention some. When reading into the respondents' answers, it could be noticed that Instagram also afford them a platform of criticism and comparisons. Criticism affordances have in this paper been noticed in relation to the respondents' experiences of recurrent portrayals of body ideals in the platforms feed, which were claimed to maintain certain notions of societal ideals. The emotional affordances that the respondents made use of when viewing other bodies on Instagram could be distinguished in their critical description of societal beauty- and body ideals and their discussions of influencers and celebrities. It could also be noticed in their distinction between their own bodies and the bodies of, for instance, influencers which were described as “fake”. Although, not all respondents made a distinction between their bodies and the bodies they viewed. Here, a high degree of comparisons could be identified where some of the respondents adopted aspects related to upward comparisons in which they compared their bodies to others that were seen as superior to themselves. This aspect has been framed as the comparison affordances, which just as critique, are grounded in a recurrent visualization of certain bodies that have been uploaded by other users on Instagram.

2) *Inspiration affordances and supportive affordances*

Other respondents described their use of Instagram in mostly positive terms where feelings of solidarity and togetherness could be distinguished. Here, the *inspirational affordances* can be described as the respondents use of Instagram’s features of connectivity, and the emotions that these features afford. By using the technological features of Instagram, some of the respondents reported that they were afforded to get linked to like-minded, which made them experience feelings of solidarity and togetherness. This emotional affordance turned also out to be closely linked to the *supportive affordances* which enabled users — to not only get linked to like-minded – – but also to find support through Instagram’s features of commenting and liking.

3) *Acceptance affordances*

When asked why the respondents are using Instagram, most of them answered that they sought to get inspire were several claimed that they also want to inspire others.
The majority of the respondents stated that they decided to post images of their bodies on Instagram in order to visualize an “average” and “normal” post-pregnancy body. Their motivations behind their use of Instagram turned out to have different motivations connected to it where some claimed to feel better about themselves when they viewed images of others that had bodies that were seen as similar or slightly inferior to their own. Others lifted societal ideals while claiming that recurrent visualizations of marginalized body types on Instagram, such as post-pregnancy bodies, might lead to more accepting views of bodies in the society. There were also those that claimed that individuals could improve their self-acceptance by following Instagram users that advocates body positive accounts. These answers could all be framed as acceptance affordances in which the respondents claimed to use Instagram to not only visually negotiate beauty ideals through their own images but also to get linked to others that were adopting similar approaches.

9. CONCLUSION

The findings from this paper support previous research that have stated that hashtags can be seen as catalysts for conversations of sensitive topics (Mendes et al.:2018) where they have been claimed to be especially useful for suppressed groups in the society such as females (Clark:2016) and in this paper, post-pregnant women. It has also supported research that have concluded that gathering of content under specific hashtag(s) can provide individuals an open space for communication (Gerbaudo:2017) where a community feeling can be achieved (Fotopoulou:2016) and where sharing of images might empower users to feel that they can control sociocultural aspects associated with their identities and experiences (Clark:2016). The paper has also proven that upward comparisons can be harmful to individuals with negative feelings as a result (Festinger:1954, Vogel et al.:2014) while downward comparisons can work as the opposite and thus increase positive feelings of the self (Wood:1982). The paper has further supported research related to feminism where it has been stated that feminist beliefs can be useful for women since it can provide them with a critical thinking of societal ideals and standardized structures that in one way or another objectifies the female body (McRobbie:1993) and that a rejecting of societal ideals can be made through their own visualizations (Ratcliffe:2006).
What this paper further has contributed with is a greater understanding of post-pregnant body advocates experiences of their own bodies, a broader perspective on post-pregnant body advocates thoughts of societal ideals, a deeper comprehension behind post-pregnant body advocates motivation(s) behind their use of Instagram, and new knowledge to the field of emotional affordances among Instagram users.

10. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ON FUTURE RESEARCH

Emotional affordances is a concept that, at the moment, has limited research to it, especially in the field of social media use. This paper can, therefore, be seen as a pilot study for the concept, where the concept has been framed as affordances of criticism, comparisons, inspiration, support, and acceptance by Instagram users. As stated by affordance theory, behavior affords behavior (Gibson:1979). As seen in this paper, different Instagram accounts afford different emotions. Here, it has been suggested that women — in order to improve their welfare in connection to their use if Instagram — deliberately should choose to follow those accounts that afford positive emotions. A suggestion on future research is thus to study the concept of emotional affordances in connection to social media use where it could be more developed and broadened through an inclusion of, for example, different genders or different societal – and cultural groups.

There was an opportunity to analyze the answers individually on the platform where the survey was constructed. This could have elucidated links between the time that has passed since the respondent had their last child in relation to their feelings of their bodies, age of respondents in relation to their thoughts of societal body ideals, to mention some. I did not investigate these aspects since it partly had not been doable due to time constraints and word limit, and partly since it would have resulted in a different study. It is thus an approach that can be suggested for future studies.

Further, the respondents in this paper have all posted images of their bodies on Instagram under the hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp, an aspect that makes it easy to label the respondents as body activists. Although, posting images of your body does not automatically turn you into an activist. Even if the practice of activism could be observed in the findings from the survey, where 28% that stated that
their primary motivation was to challenge societal body ideals through their images, most of the respondents had other motives. Here, some sought to visualize their post-pregnancy body to inspire others to be proud of their (post-pregnancy) bodies while others simply stated they wanted to show off their body in order to visualize how an average post-pregnancy body looks like. Due to this, as mentioned at the beginning of the paper, I decided to label the respondents as body advocates. The activism aspect was not investigated further in this paper, even if I do believe that it is interesting to consider in future research, especially since this paper showed that 71% of the respondents claimed to be less satisfied with their bodies post-pregnant. Hence, if women claim to be dissatisfied with their post-pregnancy bodies, why do they make themselves open for feedback — both positive and negative — from other users?

All respondents in this paper were Swedish women. Since post-pregnancy bodies have been visualized to a high degree in Swedish media outlets the past decade, and where the term “mammakropp” has been framed within a positive context in various articles and magazines, this aspect might have facilitated the respondents activeness on Instagram. A similar study on post-pregnant body advocates in a country were post-pregnant bodies are considered more marginalized might have provided different results.

It also needs to be addressed that the respondents in this paper had posted under two specific hashtags, #mammamage and #mammakropp, which might have limited the study. Even if the answers provided by the respondents were more than sufficient, an inclusion of post-pregnant body advocates that had posted under other hashtags as well — or not used hashtags at all — might have resulted in different findings.

Lastly, this paper has not interpreted the respondents posts based on its visual and/or textual content. A content analysis of the visual and narrative content in the respondents posts could contribute to interesting findings in future research on post-pregnant body advocates use of social media platforms. An analysis of post-pregnant women’s posts could also strengthen and broaden the aspects of motivation, oppression, criticism, inspiration, comparisons, and motivation that this paper has touched upon.
11. APPENDICES

11.1. SURVEY QUESTIONS

Background
Your age?
How many children do you have?
How old are your children?
Which social media platforms are you active on?
How often do you use social media?

Body image
Q1: Have your body changed after pregnancy?
Q2: If yes, in what way(s) have your body changed?
Q3: Are you satisfied with your body after pregnancy?
Q4: Have you experienced changes in body image after pregnancy?
Q4.1: Other experiences of changes in body image

Viewing other bodies on social media
Q5: Do you get affected when you see other bodies on social media platforms?
Q6: If yes, in what way(s) are you getting affected when viewing other bodies on Instagram?

Motivations and causes behind use of Instagram and hashtags #mammamage and/or #mammakropp
Q7: Why are you using Instagram?
Q8: Why have you posted under #mammamage and/or #mammakropp?

Thoughts of Instagram, hashtags and societal body ideals
Q9: Do you believe that posts on Instagram contribute to how we are viewing societal body ideals?
Q10: Do you believe that hashtags such as #mammamage and/or #mammakropp contribute to a change in how we are viewing societal body ideals?

11.2. IMAGES SOURCES

Fig. I. Image from the article “Here is my mama body”

Fig. II. #mammamage
13. REFERENCES

13.1. PRINTED SOURCES


13.2. ACADEMIC ARTICLES


13.3. ELECTRONIC SOURCES

WHO Regional Office for Europe. 81. 


Chittal, N. (2015). How social media is changing the feminist movement. MSNBC. 

http://hdl.handle.net/10315/32785 (accessed 2019-05-16)

Dastagir, EA. (2017). Body positivity is everywhere, but is it for everyone? USA Today. 


Gordon, B. (2016). 'Eff your beauty standards': Meet the size 26, tattooed supermodel who is changing the fashion industry. Telegraph. 
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/ (accessed 2019-05-16)


(accessed 2019-05-16)