Feeling activism: Emotionalized and visual-based strategic communication within environmental small-scale activism on social media

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October 2018 | Revised Version
In memory of my aunt ‘Tante’ Uta.

Thank you for everything!

† 17.08.2018
Abstract

This master thesis aims to understand whether the connection of visuals and emotions on social media can be utilized by activists to increase awareness of environmental issues. In particular this thesis discussed if emotional visual content about environment activism on social media increases recipient’s emotional awareness and small-scale activism, when embedded in visual framing communication. The work is based on theories like affective visual framing, affective intensity, stickiness and grab, which define the dynamics of emotions online and the merits that come with it, when used for strategic communication. In combination with visual communication on social media and the emotional impact of visuals, environmental imagery develops power for social transformation. Analyzing the organization Greenpeace and the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation for their emotional strategic communication on Instagram, the research uses mixed-methods to gather data about reception of emotional visuals. A questionnaire collects data about broad responses to images and seven in-depth interviews focus on deeper motivations and opinions behind the emotional reaction. The research reveals that first of all emotions are generated by emotionally framed visual contents. These emotions also lead to an emotional awareness of environment issues. Nevertheless, small-scale activisms was neither increased by emotional content nor by general emotional awareness. Solely short-term interest in activism could be identified.

Keywords: social media, environment activism, affective visual framing, emotions online, strategic communication, framing theory, imagery, social transformation

Word count: 20,917 words
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1. Introduction

Emotions – one of the main driving factors in our everyday life both concerning individual decisions and social behavior have now more than ever a decisive role in the digital world (Lindgren, 2017). Generally our everyday life has become more digital and borders between virtual and face-to-face communication have blurred – social media have become “familiar arenas and habitats for people of all generations to spend significant parts of their lives” (Svedmark, 2016). Because of this omnipresent incorporation of media in our environment, we use it as additional tool to deal with feelings: we choose digital content suitable to our emotional state or share content to display personal experiences.

In my thesis I would like to find out whether this connection of emotions with social media can be used by activists, namely environment protectors, to evoke a certain affect, in this case emotional awareness in the media user’s constitution and most importantly individual activism following to this awareness. Because of the advanced state of digital media, communication using this tool must be conducted by professionals who use specialized strategies to distribute a certain message: strategic communication. Originally used as tactics for corporations to influence stakeholders in their own interest (Greenberg, Knight and Westersund, 2011), strategic communication shifted to become a potent instrument for influencing public opinion and policy, leading to shaping society and culture (Banks 1995 in Ciszek, 2017). With its influential insights strategic communication should be used by activists of any kind to increase public awareness towards sensitive topics and to generate public change (Ciszek, 2017). Considering this, the question of how to incorporate classical strategic communication into activism arises. In the theoretical part of my thesis I am going to illuminate this issue and use the the theory of affective visual framing as approach within my empirical work.

By conducting a research, I aim to understand how to combine imagery strategic communication (visual framing) on social media with emotions to improve activists’ communication impact. The research question for my empirical work is introduced below:

Does emotional sensitive content about environment activism on social media increase the recipients’ emotional awareness and small-scale activism, when embedded in strategic ’visual framing’ communication?
To answer this question I conduct a mixed-method research, which includes a questionnaire and interviews. With the questionnaire I want to understand the reception of different Instagram posts on a broader scale so that I can derive from this knowledge and compare the outcome from my in-depth interviews. It is structured in five main categories and is based on self-evaluation by the participants. The interviews are semi-structured and aim to understand opinions, attitudes and emotions evoked by certain emotional visual contents on Instagram. During the research I use the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and Greenpeace as two exemplary organizations that use emotionalized visual content and that frame their contents to facilitate the reception of the message. After collecting the data I am going to analyze it, using coding. With in-vivo and descriptive coding I wish to understand meanings and patterns in the corpus and develop themes and finally categories.

**Thesis structure**

The first two chapters of this thesis introduce the reader to the topic environment pollution and climate change, environmental activism and social change and gives background knowledge about the relevance of this topic and the contribution to the field. Additionally I define activism for this thesis.

Chapter three is the literature review that combs through and reviews previous studies of online activism and social change, as well as the power of images for social transformations. Additionally the theory of framing and its use for strategic communication is presented.

Chapter four presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. It starts with the immersion into visual framing and affective visual framing, continues further to emotions online, how they function on social media and how they can be utilized for strategic communication. Following, visual communication and the connection of visuals with social media is discussed. Additionally I try to identify environment imagery on social media. In the end of chapter four I knot together all thematized theories and verbalize my research objectives that derive from the theoretical framework.

Chapter five describes the methodology and research design applied in this thesis. The main method of study, interpretive textual coding analysis, is introduced, as well as data collection through a
questionnaire and interviews. Limitations, ethical considerations and the outcome of the analysis are discussed in the end of the chapter.

Chapter six provides the findings, analysis and discussion based on the collected and coded data. Furthermore a visual analysis of the Instagram feeds of the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and of Greenpeace is given at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter seven provides the conclusion of the study. In this chapter, the research question is answered as far as possible, based on the analysis in chapter six. In the end, further research interests in this field are presented.
2. Background

2.1. The Problem – Environment pollution and climate change

About environment pollution

When people are talking about environment pollution and climate change they usually do not have in mind how extensive the whole issue actually is. Over the last centuries more and more causes and negatively impacted areas had to be added to the consideration of the issue. Since environmental problems and climate change shifted into media, politics and society’s ’hot’ topics, it seems to be on its historical peak – ”a planetary crisis” takes place, so the the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation (LDF) on their website about the development, that converges climate change, unprecedented deprivation of biodiversity, accumulating health problems of humans due to toxic environment and many other disastrous outcomes (Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, 2017). Concrete numbers show, that since 1970 earth has already lost one-third of it’s wild lands, 50% of all vertebrate land animals became extinct, one-third of the world’s coral reefs have perished and another third are expected to die out by 2030. In addition, global warming contributes to destroying the intricate balance of our flourishing planet, by destroying arctic ice that leads to higher sea levels, extreme weather and species extinction (Greenpeace, 2018). While all this happens, people, agencies and governments still haven’t realized that not only our planet’s health is in danger, but first and foremost the health of our own species, humans (World Wildlife Fund, 2017).

When talking about environment pollution one has to take the different areas of contamination, namely air pollution, soil pollution and ocean pollution into account. Many antecedents, most commonly human behavior, effect more than one kind of pollution and creates a variety of complex entanglements of problems.

Climate change

Agriculture is one of them and a key cause for the increase of air and soil pollution and hence climate change. It generates 24% of all global greenhouse gas (2016 in total 36183 MtCO₂), a percentage that can only be exceeded by electricity and heat production (25%) (EPA, 2014). Fertilizer overuse (50% of used fertilizer ends up in the atmosphere or local waterways), animal farming (1kg of lamb meat produces 17 kilos of carbon emission,1kg of beef produces 13 kilos of carbon emission) and land cleaning – cutting forests removes plants that absorb carbon and most
land cleaning happens in behalf of growing animal food – are all human made and yet solvable problems (Bellarby, Foereid, Hastings and Smith, 2008). The growth of these already high numbers result in our biggest problem of modern times: global warming. And with it other inescapable radical events take place.

**Arctic**

With the warming of our planet the Arctic ice slowly starts to melt and determines higher sea levels. This is an occurrence that not only threatens the 13 million people and the incredible wildlife that lives in the Arctic but also endangers people all over the world, since it affects weather and rises the probability of natural disasters, such as tsunamis, droughts and hurricanes – happenings that already occur more and more at this day and age (UN Environment, 2018). Knowing climate change as a reason for the endangerment of the Arctic, it also is a consequence of melting ice – both factors develop to a downward spiral, where one induces the other. By reflecting the sunlight, Arctic ice functions as air condition for our planet and keeps it cool enough. With increasing temperature more ice melts and the planet, especially the oceans absorb sunlight which heats the earth significantly (Greenpeace, 2018). As a result not only the downward spiral accelerates but the oil under Arctic water and ice becomes increasingly accessible for the oil industry. Suddenly former under the frozen Arctic hidden oil grows to be an attractive source and temps big companies to exploit the planet even more (Greenpeace, 2018).

**Oceans**

Our planet’s oceans do not only play a role in natural climate regulations, they also provide half of the world’s oxygen supply, secure jobs, enjoyment and food for billions of people (Oceana, 2018). And yet only 3% of all oceans are formally protected, which leads to overfishing, commercial whaling, pollution and with it the endangerment of more than 3 million people that depend on the oceans and coastal ecosystem to secure their livelihood (Oceana, 2018). Destructive fishing has led to a loss of at least two-thirds of fish population. About 25% of all sharks and rays, for example, are critically endangered and approximately 100 million are killed each year (Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, 2017). This causes difficulties for bio-diversity and economy, because not only rare marine wildlife is about to extinct (i.e. only 100 remaining Individuals of the West Pacific grey whale) but the vanishing of fish threatens more than 260 million jobs in the fishing industry and other products and services around oceans, that generate at least $ 2.5 trillion each year (World
Wildlife Fund, 2017). Ocean litter through plastic and oil spills only aggravates these problems. It is astonishing that only a small fraction of pollution actually happens on sea. The biggest impact, about a half of all ocean pollution, have land activities, such as sewage, industrial and agricultural runoff, garbage dumping and chemical spills (Greenpeace, 2018). The fastest growing threat however is plastic. Each year approximately 12 million metric tons of plastic in a variety of shapes enter our oceans and entangle animals like turtles and seabirds or get eaten by fish and whales, leading to starvation and death (Greenpeace, 2018). This way plastic even enters the food chain and ends up in the seafood that people eat. Threatening our oceans means threatening marine wildlife and human health (World Wildlife Fund, 2017).

**Forests and Wildlife**

The threats humans, animals and nature have to face through pollution of the oceans aren’t limited to the marine world only. The forests on our planet are suffering equally, to an extent that we already lost half of global forest land (Greenpeace, 2018). The Amazon, for example, is our planet’s largest rain forest, at least for now, and lost at least 17% of its forest cover in the last half century. Talking about the remaining half of global forest cover, observations show that only 20% of it is still intact. Specialists expect that the future global loss of forest sums up to 23 million acres forest area every year, if no measurements are applied (Greenpeace, 2018). Reason for this immense loss of forest is human activity. Whether agribusiness – number one cause for deforestation – illegal logging, mining or the building of roads destroys the forests, the consequences of these activities are huge and devastating for climate, wildlife and even human rights, since about 1.2 to 1.7 billion people in the world depend on forest for their livelihood (UN Environment, 2018) and 300 million people, especially in developing countries, live in forests (World Wildlife Fund, 2017). In addition our forests and grasslands are the last chance to avert catastrophic climate change, because they absorb carbon from the atmosphere and release oxygen. Sadly only 15 % of land globally is formally protected (Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, 2017).

With the destruction of our forests, eight out of 10 species that live on land, loose their habitat. The WWF’s 2016 Living Planet Report states that global population of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles declined by 58% between 1970 and 2012, a development that is about 100 to 1000 times higher than nature originally intended (World Wildlife Fund, 2017). Besides deforestation, urbanization and the displacement of natural environments, as well as poaching are the main reasons fo this rapid downward movement (Joshi, 2017).
2.2. Relevance and contribution – The need for environment protection

“Environmental activism: Activism with the aim of protecting the natural environment, especially from the harmful effects of human activity.” – This definition of environmental activism by the Oxford Dictionary shows right away what environment protection is about and by what environment pollution of any kind is caused: humans. The root of the problem most likely goes back to the development of the anthropocentric idea of humans and their rights: The human species was and still is seen as the master and owner of the earth and other living beings or even inanimate elements are in service for human intrinsic needs (Joshi, 2017). Through the industrialization this human-centric view of the world became dangerous, because humans developed devices and techniques to use the planet even better and more efficient. The so called environment management of forestry is a good example for this phenomenon: more trees were planted but not for the benefit of nature but rather for the profit that could made out of these trees through processing, i.e. paper, furniture, fuel etc.

This information motivated me to contribute to this field of study. In the last few years my personal interest and sensitivity for the topic grew, mostly because of animal abuse in the meat and dairy industry. After a certain time my urge to become active and to change my personal behavior as well as society’s behavior increased and spread over to all kinds of environmental protection issues. Becoming a main driving force for many actions in my life I wish to contribute to this on an academical level as well.

2.3. What is activism? – Definition for this thesis

As already defined before, environmental activism is defined by the aim of protecting the natural environment, including plants, oceans, land, air, animals and humans. The previous chapter allow us to understand the problem and urgency of environment protection, but to actually discuss the topic in this thesis, it is necessary to define the term “activism” and to narrow down the core meaning for the following work. Since environmental activism is a really broad issue, I decided to investigate only a fraction of it, namely, as Maynard defines it in her study about activism across the life course, circumstantial activism (Maynard, 2017). Besides circumstantial activism, Maynard also discusses dormant and embedded activism – further states of being active – but the former constitutes of small-scale behavior that is important in the particular moment. Applying this on environmental activism, small-scale or circumstantial activism could be bringing a bag to the
grocery store, riding the bike instead of taking the car, using reusable water bottles and coffee cups, avoiding disposable items, buying recycled products, minimizing water usage etc.

Having understood the meaning of small-scale environmental activism for this thesis, it is important to establish the concept of activism as a dynamic, temporal and spatial process, whose importance is emphasized by Maynard (2017). Since this thesis aims to understand how small-scale activism of individuals can be affected and increased – which means changed – the concept of activism being moldable has to be considered as premise.

The reason for focusing on small-scale activism merely derives from the size of this thesis and the likelihood of occurrence within the investigated target group. Small-scale activism, in comparison to activism in the general sense, appears more often in everyday behavior and in a broader area. Additionally, it seems to be much more probable that emotional visual framing on social media influences individuals in rather small magnitude that impacts opinions, actions and behavior only step by step instead of giving a life changing impulse to become a ‘big-scale’ activist. For that reason and the feasibility of my research I decided to focus on small-scale activism for my thesis and empirical work.
3. Literature review

3.1. Activism online and social change

The main object of activism is to evoke some kind of social change, whether it concerns political situations, human right issues or the environment. Ciszek even declares activists as producers of strategic communication in order to reach social change, arguing that activism, PR and communication for development and social change (CDSC) are rather intertwining forces than counteractive (Ciszek, 2017). Using these forces, all kinds of campaigners and professional communicators can profit and build up discussions to influence public opinions and interests. Somerville and Aroussi argue that there is no big difference in organizations’ or activists’ goals of establishing meaning within a certain audience (in Ciszek, 2017), only the content of this meaning varies. Activism in the LGBT movement is a good example for displaying the opportunities that the combination of activism with strategic communication brings forth: being a new field of research in social sciences, activists managed to establish the topic sexuality and gender in society and to mobilize people on a transnational level (Ayoub, 2017 in Ciszek, 2017). According to Alwood (2015) LGBT activists actually did influence the public opinion and provoked social change with the help of strategic communication, especially public relations as a key factor, even though they had no professional knowledge about how to implement necessary measurements (Ciszek, 2017).

One reason for the enforcement of this social change is what Castells (2015) calls ‘networked social movements’. Due to the fast establishment of social media, people were given platforms that expanded power and space to express themselves and their opinions. Thus, vertical hierarchies of former powerful opinion leader were erased and ‘spaces of autonomy’ were born (Castells, 2015 in Lindgren, 2017). Matter of these movements is the disregarding of political parties, mainstream media, leadership in its traditional understanding and formal organizations with the aim to avoid holistic ideologies and excessive beliefs (Lindgren, 2017). These spaces allow the participants to connect with each other without being controlled by organizations or even the government. They can coordinate, discuss and agree liberally and do not have to agree on any other subject than the one they are discussing online (Lindgren, 2017) – this is what is meant by non-holistic ideology. The rapid viral spread of ideas and images of activism is the perfect ground for movements to start off from being ‘only’ online to going ‘into the streets’ (Benett and Segerberg, 2012 in Lindgren, 2017). Research under the subject of digital activism shows that Castells cyberoptimistic approach
to social media, namely that it can be used to make the world a better place, is eligible and necessary to contribute to social movements and change (Lindgren, 2017). Strategic communication is no new phenomenon in the field of media communication, as well as activism is not new in the field of social science. But the combination of these two disciplines with social media and emotions on this channel is quite new and this field that has only been partly researched. Emotions have always been an important factor of the affects of social media but still haven’t been considered for a long time in the field of digital media research. Since the affective turn the importance of emotions while using and experiencing different contents shifted into researchers’ focus. However, some scholars focus on online strategic communication in the field of activism, NGOs or social change movements but not on the combination of theses strategies with emotional contents and its potent to involve audiences. Some of the works in the field of strategic communication activism are presented below.

3.2. Emotional impact of visuals – power of images for social transformation

Gregg and Seigworth (2010) define affect as 'visceral force' that differs from conscious knowing, and that can contribute to mobilize people towards movement, being small-scale activism or other social movement (Pröitz, 2018). Even though there is limited empirical research on the role of emotional impact of pictures online in relation to connective actions (Pröitz, 2018), some older studies have shown that decision making can be based on an 'image' of a situation instead of its 'objective' (Holsti, 1962 in De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García-Matilla, 2016). A good example for the power for emotional impact and transformative power of images is the photography of Aylan Kurdi taken in 2015 by the Turkish photographer Nilüfer Demir. The picture shows a three-year-old boy who drowned in the abortive attempt to escape Syria on a full raft boat. It is one of the most spread and most seen social photojournalistic documents in recent years and had an immense impact on social media. The image not only triggered various international media outlets like newspapers, that printed the picture on their front pages but especially set off an avalanche on social media (De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García-Matilla, 2016). The case study of De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García-Matilla (2016) about the power of this photograph shows, that the keywords 'Syria', 'refugees', 'immigrants' and 'Aylan' trended extremely on Google searches. Soon the big happenings about this photography and the abuses it addresses went offline and started many different initiatives and campaigns. Some of them are a Spanish campaign to collect signatures to take in more refugees, or the undertaking of an Egyptian magnate (Naguib Sawiris) to buy an
island, name it ‘Aylan Kurdi’ and shelter between 100,000 and 200,000 Syrian refugees there and
Angela Merkel who announced a refugee program that allows to take in more than 800,000 people
in Germany (De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García-Matilla, 2016). But not only the content of the
photography itself is remarkable but especially the artistic composition allowed the image to
become iconic (Prøitz, 2018). Iconic images are, according to Hariman and Lucaites (2003),
‘moments of visual eloquence that acquire exceptional importance within public life’ (Prøitz, 2018).
At this point I am not going to go deeper into this case study, since it already shows that iconic
images, when fulfilling certain criteria, change public opinion and mobilize action (Hariman and
Generally some criteria for images have to be met, as above mentioned, to elicit emotional effect on
the beholder. Arroyo and Gómez (2015) explain that moral response to visuals is more integrative
when the same shows real people dealing with conflicts (De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García-Matilla,
2016). Additionally proximity of the shown event to the viewer’s cultural and personal background
plays a crucial role in affectivity (Dahmen and Morrison, 2016; Spratt, Peterson and Lagos, 2005 in
Prøitz, 2018). In other words, the closer the content of an image is to an individual, be it emotional,
cultural, religious or other and the more ‘sympathizable’ it is, the more emotional reaction with the
chance of mobilization is in place. With this dimension of affection given by images, a foundation
for true holistic comprehension and response of the displayed content is laid (Hariman and Lucaites,

3.3. Framing as form of strategic communication

“It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it” (Frank Luntz, 1997 in press in Scheufele and Tewksbury,
2017). Frank Luntz was one of the pioneers, when it comes to actually using the framing theory as a
strategic tool for creating a campaign (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017). He generated his
knowledge about the changing impact of messages when they are formulated differently through a
research of Republican campaign messages in 1997 in the US (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017).
Luntz could identify that some expressions and phrases seemed to be more effective on people’s
attitudes and he also caught that this effectiveness is not due to changes in contents but rather
different styles of presentation (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017).
Framing, as other theories that are related to framing like agenda-setting and priming, can be a type
of strategic communication, when drawn from Hallahan's, Holtzhausen’s, van Ruler’s, Verčič’s and
Sriramesh’s (2007) definition: “Strategic communication emphasizes deliberate communication
activities by members and leaders to advance an organization’s mission” (Ciszek, 2017). In her article about activist strategic communication for social change, Ciszek not also discusses this understanding of the same, but also identifies activists as creators of strategic communication in order to reach social change and further development, which I am going to discuss further in the following chapters (Ciszek, 2017). But what exactly is framing and what has to be considered in order to create ’framed’ communication?

Rooted in psychology and sociology framing starts from the premise that it is of great importance ’how’ an issue is depicted in media, because it can influence ’how’ the issue is understood by the recipients (Pan and Kosicki, 1993 in Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017).

Thus, if used as communication strategy, it is in media gatekeepers’ responsibility to organize and display the events and issues they cover in a certain way to provoke a certain intended interpretation (University of Twente, 2017). The University of Twente (2017) gives a description on their website in easier words: “Frames influence the perception of the news of the audience”. The fundamental idea for the sociological approach of framing was laid by Goffman in 1974 when he published his book ’Frame Analysis’ in which he discusses the ground rules of the theory. He and other scholars proceed on the assumption that individuals are not able to understand the world and their environment to the full extent and that they constantly struggle to find an interpretation of their experiences of life to understand and integrate themselves in the world around them (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017). To do so in an easier and more effective way, individuals subconsciously apply schemata to process and classify new information and eventually interpret them meaningfully (Goffman, 1974). These schemata are ’primary frameworks’ (Goffman, 1974), abstract notions that help the audience to structure and read social meaning out of a message (University of Twente, 2017). Therefore, framing very often occurs regardless of a sender’s intention, since the frameworks are applied by the recipients.

However, combined with the logic of strategic communication, frames – for this thesis – are understood as different styles of presentation that professionals apply deliberately to the information they are going to send out, so that it resonates with already existing schemata in the audience’s constitution (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996 in Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017). Because of this, it is possible to communicate extremely complex issues to unexperienced audiences, such as lay people and thus framing quickly developed to be an invaluable tool in the communication and advertisement field (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017).

Today’s framing theory also derives from the assumption that the spot of effect is the description, presentation or label given to the presented content – it asks for ’how’ we think about the message
rather than ‘whether’ we think about it (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017). But when understanding the frame of a message as a suggestion for connection with another concept in the recipient’s memory (Price and Tewksbury, 1997 in Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017), it also implies that the individual has to have an existing concept available that his mind can connect with the perceived message. If no such construct is present in the beholder’s constitution and no further concept is provided in the shown message, the frame will be without effect (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017). The audience’s involvement with the content’s topic, the knowledge and the existing concepts are thus decisive for the strength of the framing impact (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2017).

Framing, generally, is a complex process that involves many different actors, such as the sender (i.e. a media professional) and the recipient (i.e. social media user). As mentioned before, the understanding of a framed message depends on the beholder’s engagement and constitution and meaning is created only through the interplay of preexisting concepts, the message itself and the framing tools. It is important to understand that framed messages and the framing tools differ from the frame itself and especially do not necessarily induce the anticipated comprehension. If we, as an example, want to mediate the message ‘Stop eating meat’, there are different ways of framing this message. One opportunity is to use a ‘human health’ frame and to emphasize positive health effects that occur when someone relinquishes meat. Another possibility is the use of an ‘animal right ethics’ frame that highlights the negative circumstances of animal farming. However we decide in this example, tools to produce these frames are needed. Utilizing ‘stories’ as framing tool for a ‘human health’ frame could lead to displaying a happy healthy vegetarian family in their backyard, or, when using the ‘metaphor’ tool for framing ‘animal right ethics’ the outcome could be humans in animals places on a meat farm.

When trying to examine the impact of framing and emotions on communication for activism, literature shows that research usually only focuses on either emotions online or strategic communication in the field of activism but rarely on a combination of both. Therefore I am going to discuss emotion’s importance in the world of media and social media and try to explain the necessity of utilizing ‘emotionalized’ visual frames for environment activism communication in the following chapters.
4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Affective visual framing

Visual framing

The beforehand discussed framing theory can now be developed further by considering visuals and images as communication channel and the charging of the same with emotions. Affective visual framing deals with messages that are communicated though pictures, graphics and videos etc. and that are framed to evoke a certain emotional reaction.

The need for investigating visual framing derives from the fact that images have obvious properties to influence processing and interpretation of a message, which can lead to persuasion of a beholder’s opinion and also behavior (Domke, Perlmutter and Spratt, 2002; Messaris and Abraham, 2001 in Krause and Bucy, 2018). One reason therefore is that individuals, when hit by the stimulus of a visual, participate in an interactive process, in which the visual impulse, the viewer’s preexisting knowledge and his situation entangle (Krause and Bucy, 2018) and thus create personal relevant meaning. Given that visuals have such power when it comes to influencing individuals, they can serve as the perfect starting point for framing, when making use of the right tools. Metaphors, depictions or symbols are those tools that try to capture the core of an issue graphically and enable the recipient to identify problems and causes, evaluate them morally and think of solutions. This way complex issues are easier to understand and to remember than other subjects (Entman, 1991 in Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). In other words “visual framing involves making a certain perspective more salient than another, which then influences viewers’ perceptions based on perspectives presented in those frames; ultimately, these influenced perceptions in turn influence behavior” (Sontag, 2018).

Visual framing and environment activism

When applying visual framing on environment activisms communication, the manifold chances become visible. With the help of visual framing, understanding of environmental issues by providing a frame can be facilitated (Lakoff, 2010 in Krause and Bucy, 2018) and complex issues, especially environmental concerns, can be simplified, since they tend to lack understanding and visibility for the public lay audience (Hansen and Machin, 2013 in Krause and Bucy, 2018). Additionally visuals not only reinforce dominant themes that have the ability to guide the
beholder’s interpretation but also provide wealthy descriptive information that distinctively exceed the amount of textual information (Messaris and Abraham, 2001; Powell et al., 2015; in Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011).

A main characteristic of environmental communication thus is the use of “well-trodden frames of reference” (Hansen and Machin, 2013 in Krause and Bucy, 2018) that is necessary for individuals to recognize certain environmental problems due to the beforehand mentioned lack of knowledge when it comes to this field of expertise. A problem that emerges by this is the unpredictability of the effect of framed visuals, since images have the capacity to foster multiple interpretations and the meaning of environmental images is not only shaped by the message characteristics created by the media professional (i.e. content, framing tool, frame) but especially by the individual differences within the audience (i.e. level of education, social status, values and political opinions) (Krause and Bucy, 2018). This phenomenon of one message carrying more than one meaning is referred to as polysemy (Hall, 1080 in Krause and Bucy, 2018).

**Affective visual framing**

Having understood the concepts, opportunities and concerns of visual framing, another interfering factor is added in this paragraph, namely emotions. According to Krause and Bucy (2018) recent research has shown that emotions, especially when integrated into visual framing, have the capability to convey a certain (intentional) interpretation as well as provoke the formation of a specific opinion. Reasons for this attitude mediating role is the given that a certain emotional state is reflected in how preferences towards an issue (that is displayed by an image) are built, when information is processed during that particular emotional state (Kühne and Schemer, 2015). Shortly said, emotions that the viewer is experiencing when receiving a visual impulse influence the interpretation of the same and consequently build a pursuant opinion.

Not only the mood is crucial for the emotional outcome of a framed visual stimulus but also the attitudes that are formed prior to the message exposure, because a different relationship between the message and the recipient is given. In this connection I am referring to the previous chapter that deals with existing concepts of an issue in the beholder’s constitution before receiving a message regarding this explicit issue. In a study of Maehr, Watts, Hanratty, and Talmi (2015) about selective perception when evaluating images, the authors could identify that supporters and opponents of wind turbine technology reacted differently to visuals due to their prior attitudes. While supporters experienced more positive feelings to the shown materials, opponents were emotionally excited.
instead. Another considerable factor here is that the level of emotional response to a message not only derives from certainty and a clear opinion about the issue presented (supporter and opponent) but also from uncertainty and lack of knowledge – “a positive event accompanied by a high degree of uncertainty might lead to hope or curiosity, whereas a negative event surrounded by uncertainty might lead to fear” (Ellsworth, 1994 in Krause and Bucy, 2018).

Decisive for environment activism communication that utilized emotional visual framing is that the closeness of an issue predetermines the strength of the emotional response. A study about visual representation of the Gaza Conflict in 2009 by Branter et al. (2011) has found that visual ‘human interest’ framing elicited more emotional reaction compared to ‘political’ framing. Accordingly, the participating individuals responded stronger to depicted victims of the conflict (i.e. Palestinian civilians) than to displayed political figures.

For this study, affective visual frames refer to perspectives and opinions made salient, through depictions of actual circumstances, causes, consequences and criticism of environment pollution and activism, with the aim to communicate environmental issues and elicit an emotional reaction leading to behavioral changes.

**Opportunities and considerations of affective visual framing**

The biggest opportunity given by affective visual framing is the persuasive power not only referring to emotional persuasion but also behavioral changes. The viewers’ focus can intentionally be led to a certain side of an issue (i.e. consequences of war instead of purpose of the war) and thus specific emotions are made more salient (i.e. horror instead of pride) (Sontag, 2018). Emotions that in the end have the capacity to influence decisions and actions, which I am going to address in the following chapter.

One key component to transform emotion into action is the possibility of assimilation of the individual with the shown content. According to Tesser (1988) an individual can be positively influenced by the success of someone who is similar. If content is shown in a tangible and attainable way, viewers may adapt their behavior from the depicted messages (Sontag, 2018).

The way positive visual frames evoke positive emotions, negative visual frames usually have the opposite effect and elicit negative response (Sontag, 2018). Even though this is an obvious causality, it is necessary to understand the importance of this fact, since media professionals, especially in the area of environment communication, have to consider the emotional connection an
individual makes with an issue due to visual frames. Provoking only negative emotions may tire the recipient or discourage him from engagement with environmental issues, while arousing only positive emotions might distort the actual circumstances and problems of environmental problems. I am not going to deepen this topic at this point, since it would go beyond the constraints of this thesis.

4.2. Emotions online

Affective intensity, stickiness and grab

Emotions have always been an important factor of the affects of social media but still haven’t been considered for a long time in the field of digital media research. Since the affective turn – the growing awareness of feelings and emotions – the importance of emotions while using and experiencing different contents shifted into researchers’ focus (Clough and Halley, 2001 in Lindgren, 2017). Emotions generally are a key factor within communication not only for exchange of information and social connections but also to form norms and the feeling of collectivity. According to Lindgren (2017) social media enables us to participate in discussion groups and communicate, it enables us to be a part of a social community and thus motivates us to share and circulate content. And all these encounters, so Lindgren, are about feeling intensities or ‘sensations’ between people through platforms, images, videos, texts and sounds. This is the reason why our decisions for contents are driven by certain affects of social media and the need for those affects (Lindgren, 2017). People are looking for an ‘affective jolt’, so Paasonen, and this desire is so urging that it pulls them on different sites, networks and discussion platform. ‘Affective intensity’ is the word she uses to identify this fueling emotional phenomenon in digital media use (Paasonen, 2015 in Lindgren 2017).

But according to this theory only the people who seek for an emotional reaction in a certain area (i.e. environment protection) visit the channels in these areas (i.e. Greenpeace website). To avoid a partial view on this topic we need to pay attention to possible retroactive consequences caused my social media. Does social media ‘catch’ the viewers? Does it evoke emotional reactions without someone looking for ‘affective intensity’?

At this point I would like to introduce the phenomenon of ‘stickiness’ by Sara Ahmed (Lindgren, 2017). Online objects that are shared and circulate socially are sticky, because of their saturated affective loading. Sticky contents can stick to other things/contents online, such as videos, pictures,
hashtags, etc. Ahmed explains that the degree of stickiness of a content is measured by the amount of replies, comments, shares or likes. This theory shows that there definitely is an emotional reaction to social media contents and that the content is even shaped through the affective impact. In other words, social media is an arena where affect is both activated in the user’s constitution and expressed by the user (Lindgren, 2017).

The huge difference between affect of social media and classic mass media is that contents on social media have a much more visceral character, since contents are not only chosen –like a movie on DVD – but browsed through, searched, bookmarked, clicked, commented, downloaded, uploaded, rated and much more (Senft, 2008). This enlarges the user’s involvement and shifts the reaction from being rational and intellectual to emotional and – depending on the genre of content – bodily felt. To give an example, Paasonen refers to her case study about online porn (2011) and explains that the content ‘moves the bodies of those watching’ (Lindgren, 2017). Senft identifies this kind of engagement as ‘grab’, which is characterized by spectatorship and participation within digital society (Senft, 2008).

This knowledge can be used to intervene between the process of expression and activation of affect. Contents can be actively transformed into sticky contents (loaded with emotions) with the aim to intentionally activate a certain emotional reaction at the recipient and to ‘grab’ his or her constitution.

**Emotions as strategy**

When we are now considering to utilize the aforesaid theories of ‘affective intensity’, ‘stickiness’ and ‘grab’ to incorporate emotions into communication strategy, the question about the implementability arises. In their study about persuasive marketing, Yang and Smith (2009) examine how ad creativity can affect cognition and affect and thus lead to purchase and viewing intentions. Even though environmental activism does not aim to make people purchase something, the intentions of activists are still similar to corporations’ goals: persuasion and emotional reaction. To translate ads into positive affect, the contents have to provide divergent stimuli, so Yang and Smith.

Basing this theory on Finger and Mook (1971), Hunt (1963) and Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1992) define the act of novelty seeking, incongruity seeking and variety seeking as divergent stimuli, which have to be given within the content to satisfy the beholders desire for divergence and to consequently lead to positive affect (Yang and Smith, 2009). This theory is only partly applicable on social media strategies but also gives space to adjust the idea. Since seeking for incongruity,
novelty and variety has no further definition it can be applied to every individual, to every time and to every genre, such as social media. It develops with society and changes with every novel discovery, but never looses it’s importance nor meaning. In other words incongruity in, for example, mass media ads might was understood differently 20 years ago than incongruity is understood now in Instagram posts, but the importance for generating affect in both cases is the same. The more likely critical problem with this theory is the focus on positive affect (Yang and Smith, 2009). Taking this theory out of marketing science it makes sense for the authors to write solely about positive affect and effects on their sales figures instead of all kinds of emotional effects. In environmental activism however, it is necessary to focus on all kinds of emotions, including sadness, shock, desperation, etc., since these emotions come along with the topic and can be used as motivational mobilizer. How these affects can be incorporated in strategic communication is part of the objective of this thesis and will be discussed in the following chapters.

4.3. Visual communication

Continuing from last chapter, one must recognize that it is difficult, almost impossible to say if a picture is generally emotional or not, because emotion is one of the most subjective factors of the human constitution. But when an individual perceives a picture as emotional, it happens immediately, without knowing why and without being able to influence this reaction. The difficulty that stands behind this power of imagery is that researchers and other professionals can only guess what the promising factors and requirements for emotional reactions are.

Social media and images

As we have already discussed in prior chapters, the world becomes increasingly digitalized and the focus within digital media points to social media, our everyday life companion that allows us to receive and send content in new, more liberal ways (Lindgren, 2017). With it the environment activism landscape and the way images of this field are perceived has changed, enabling the growth of awareness when it comes to understanding magnitude and gravity of the same (Wang et al. 2017). Reasons therefore are the opportunity to easily share contents on social media and thus participate in the content production, such as camera phone images that are taken by the user himself (Pearce et al., 2015; Schäfer, 2012 in Wang et al. 2017). Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are just some examples for platforms of rapid and widespread circulation (Prøitz, 2018). Especially
Instagram as visual social media platform is crucial for the significance of images online: about 80 million photos are shared every day and 3.5 billion photos and videos are ‘liked’ daily (Meeker, 2016). This indicates a significant shift from textual information consumption to visual information experience, an alteration that occurs protuberantly in the younger generation (Prøitz, 2018). Prøitz argues that the immediacy and co-presence given by social media enables young people to socialize, debate and exchange ideas, no matter what socio-economic background they may have (2018). This especially counts for visually evoked emotions: according to Gibbs (2012), social media and images operate as intensifier for affect, leading to palpable reactions when particular images and emotions become connected (Prøitz, 2018). Images on social media thus have large power to direct our attention towards problems and prompt intense emotions (De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García-Matilla, 2016), especially when they are viewed repeatedly (Prøitz, 2018). In his article about visual social media and affectivity, Prøitz (2018) discusses one important – and for this thesis crucial – question that derives from the prior identified insights: how do we synthesize these central aspects of emotional reaction on social media with actual engagement in activism? Aiming to answer this question within the current work, I am going to approach this issue in the following paragraphs.

Environment imagery on social media

Polar bears became the popular icon for environment protection, especially in the area of climate change, in the 2000s. According to Daphne Christelis, Head of Photo & Video at Greenpeace United Kingdom (A Corner, 2017, personal communication), “people could relate more easily to an animal than just to ice, especially a big well known species like a polar bear. Polar bears brought the issue to life, giving people something to emotionally connect to. Now we are focusing more on images of people and how climate change is affecting their lives” (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). Christelis emphasizes the importance of emotionally loaded pictures and how the content that triggers affect shifts from polar bears or animals to impacted humans.

The two most striking reasons that speak for using images within environmental communication is that the consequences of environment pollution of any kind are mostly visually prominent in our everyday lives. This way, it makes more sense to 'show' the gravity of impact than enumerate numbers and texts (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). Additionally, Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. (2017) underline, that the images should rather depict bad results of pollution to physical environments than their causes or solutions. They argue that the same are less present in the daily
routine and thus not as visual and relatable to the public. But when showing the impact of, i.e. climate change, content producers tend to only show politicians, scientists, protesters or other public figures, when depicting climate change on humans at all (O’Neill, 2013; Smith and Joffe, 2009 in Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). This stresses a striking and problematic issue of environmental imagery, when a wider public is targeted for engagement: the absence of humans stories (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). Chapman et al. (2016) explain that showing politicians and protesters in environment images is quite ineffective and alienating and does not create an emotional reaction at all (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). Even though focus groups manifested peoples’ preference to look at sincere and credible pictures, there are still some NGOs that publish pictures of staged protests or happenings to attract big media attention (Wozniak et al., 2016 in Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). It is astonishing that there is such a big discrepancy between campaigners – professionals in the field of media communication – and researched public perception. People in leading positions should be mindful about the urgency of beneficial usage of environmental imagery and need to consider how crucial emotional public perception is decisive for communicating values and engagement within society (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017).

One step further from showing the ‘right’ contents in images is the participation of the public in image construction. Zhang and Barr (2013) argue that the process of creating such images and personally witnessing the changes in the environment is as important, if not more so, than simply being exposed to an image (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). This statement is highlighted by a review of Chinese environmental NGOs, that found that the public is encouraged by the NGOs to create their own images of environment change (Zhang & Barr, 2013). By doing so, participants are empowered as individual content creators, they take ownership of the issues, recognize themselves in the topic and thus contribute to identify priorities of the community concerning the subject of environmental protection (Hergenrather et al., 2009 in Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017).

When incorporating this kind of participatory environmental imagery into the increasingly image-focused digital landscape, as discussed above, those images can have a pivotal role in generating public engagement and movement (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017).

4.4. Adaption of theoretical framework

The three previous sections thematized visual framing as form of strategic communication, emotions online and accompanying merits when it comes to visual responses, and the role and chances of social media as communication channel. For my research I aim to combine these
theories and try to investigate the interplay of the same, as shown in the figure below (figure 18). Emotions have, as discussed before, the capacity to influence individuals’ opinions and might lead to corresponding actions and behavior, not only online but also offline. They function as key driving force for the choice of contents and motivate the recipient to participate in content creation. Combining the power of emotions with another vigorous communication tool, named visual framing, might facilitate the persuasion of the viewer when it comes to sensitive and important environment issues. Visual frames give the shown contents context that make it easier for the viewer to receive the same. They not only simplify the reception but make one perspective of the shown content more salient. If these frames are now loaded with emotions the persuasive power might be stronger than without affective meaning. To elevate the effectiveness of this communication strategy, I target to understand the dynamics of emotional visual framing on a promising platform like social media, here Instagram. Like mentioned before, social media gives the user the possibility to not only receive content but to participate in the creation of content and emotions. Due to concepts like ‘stickiness’, ‘grab’ and ‘affective intensity’, users’ involvement with an issue increases, which not only reinforces emotional reactions to contents but also facilitates the effect of visual framing.

In my research, I therefore examine the interplay between the characteristics of visual framing, emotions and social media, strength and weakness of the combination and ultimately the capacity to transform emotional response to actions within activism and behavioral change.

Figure 18: Diagram of integrated theoretical framework
5. Methodology

5.1. The organizations – Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and Greenpeace

For my empirical work within this project I chose two organizations that campaign for environment protection: Greenpeace and the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation. I specifically picked these organizations, because Greenpeace is very popular and known as trustworthy source of information in this field and the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation is credible because of its famous founder and environment activist Leonardo DiCaprio. He is known as the United Nations Messenger of Peace for Climate Change and has received the 2014 Clinton Global Citizen Award. I explicitly focused on the authenticity while choosing the organizations, because I wanted to avoid that the participants in my study question whether a post and the content is true or not. Additionally, the two organizations differentiate in their style of communicating and I saw a good opportunity to investigate which approach causes more positive emotional response. The paragraphs below introduce the two organizations:

Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation

“The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation (LDF) is an environment protection organization based in the United States and was founded 1998 by the famous actor Leonardo DiCaprio. He is the United Nations Messenger of Peace for Climate Change and has received the 2014 Clinton Global Citizen Award. The mission of the LDF is to protect the world’s last wild spaces and to suggest and implement new measures that rebalance nature and human behavior. Nowadays the LDF has more than 50 million followers, combining every media channel of the LDF and of Leonardo DiCaprio himself. The foundation focuses particularly on public campaigns, grant making and media activism to distribute awareness towards all the sensitive and important issues environment protection contents. LFD has six different program areas – Wildlands Conservation, Oceans Conservation, Climate Change, Indigenous Rights, Transforming California, and Innovative Solutions (The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, 2017) to which the individual can conduce through donations.” (Reiprich, 2017)

Greenpeace
“Greenpeace as well is an international environment protection organization which focuses on peaceful protests, creative communication and campaigning to expose global environmental problems and to offer solutions to reach for a greener and peaceful future. The organization was founded in 1971 a handful of determined and passionate activists, who leased a fishing vessel to protest against U.S. nuclear testing off the coast of Alaska at the Amchitka Island in Alaska. Today Greenpeace has more than 2.8 million members, who individually contribute to the organization (i.e. volunteer work) and has offices in more than 50 countries all over the world. There are seven different major campaigns that Greenpeace carries out – Saving the Arctic, Protecting Forests, Fighting Global Warming, Protecting Our Oceans, Living Toxic-Free, Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Defending Democracy (Greenpeace USA, 2017). The difference to LDF is, that Greenpeace works more in the field and takes action on a more individual based level, such as investigations and protests, while the LDF focuses on action on the bigger business and governments.” (Reiprich, 2017)

5.2. Data collection – research design

As described above I aim to answer the research question ‘Does emotional sensitive content about environment activism on social media increase the recipients’ emotional awareness and small-scale activism, when embedded in strategic ’visual framing’ communication?’ Since I am observing a social psychological phenomenon on an individual level, I decided to use interviews as main method, because it is a promising method to obtain data when it comes to motivations, emotions and opinions. Before conducting seven in-depth interviews, I perform a short quantitative questionnaire to get an overview of the status-quo of emotional reactions to visual-based, ’emotionalized’ and framed contents. The purpose of the survey is to detect common reactions as well as common dissonances and phenomena within these reactions. Gathering this kind of quantitative data allows me to understand the most frequent emotional feedback to certain affectively framed visuals. In addition this method contributes to investigate the participants’ existing awareness of environmental issues and their involvement, which is crucial to evaluate reactions. Since I couldn’t gather enough participants for the questionnaire (only 55), the outcome is not significant enough to draw conclusions. I rather use the collected information as indicator for certain tendencies in the researched field and as gateway to create my interview guideline.
During both the questionnaire and the interviews, I show Instagram pictures of the two above mentioned organizations. They function as framed visuals that trigger emotions. I particularly chose this platform, because in comparison to other relevant social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter, it mainly focuses on communication on a visual level. Kevin Systrom, co-founder and CEO of Instagram states: “As a result, Instagram has become the home for visual storytelling for everyone […]” (Instagram.com, 2018). It therefore provides the optimal basis for analyzing visual contents on social media and it’s emotional effects.

It is relevant to analyze the mentioned Instagram feeds before conducting the questionnaire and the interviews, because the results help to understand the different possibilities of displaying the same issue. The outcome underlines the importance of frames and emotionally loaded meaning. The analyzed organizations thus represent two different strategies of communicating and utilizing framing tools and frames.

With the analysis an overview of tonality, visual language, composition and contents of the posts can be given, all pointing to certain visual and emotional style of communication.

5.3. Questionnaire

Questionnaire sampling and setting

Social media research, especially when combined with a field like environmental activism is a recent and urgent topic. Due to all the changes in the world and all the increasing threats by environment pollution, scholars, media professionals and activist as well as every human on this planet have to find a better way to spread awareness and to mobilize people. Since all this is directed towards the future it comes naturally that the upcoming generation – and with this I mean young people from 18 to 35 – is most responsible for introducing a change. Founded on this I choose to focus on sampling my participants based on their age and of course by the premise that they use social media. For this reason I posted an open request to participate in my study and to fill out my questionnaire on Facebook and shared it on my personal page, as well as in groups I am a member of and on the department’s Facebook page. This way I could make sure that every participant uses at least one social media platform, namely Facebook. Since I had problems with gathering enough participants I decided to let everybody fill out the questionnaire, also people that are younger or older than the defined target group of 18 to 35 years, and select the relevant
individuals afterwards. This way I gathered 50 sets of data out of 55 completed questionnaires, that fit into the specified sampling group.

**Questionnaire structure**

To understand how more people, other than my interviewees, emotionally experience different contents on social media I implemented a self-report questionnaire. The survey is structured in 5 main sections that ask for self evaluation in different areas.

Part one collects general information, such as age, gender and occupation. This information allows me to classify the participants according to socio-demographic factors. It also gives indication about who or ’what kind’ of people are generally interested in participating in a research about emotional environment protection.

The second segment addresses the participants’ character and asks for a self evaluation about their emotional constitution. This is done with a five-step scale of possible answers (very much like me – very much unlike me) to several statements. In other words, a statement is given and the participant is requested to tick whether this statement is very much like him (answer 1), like him (answer 2), neutral (answer 3), unlike him (answer 4) or very much unlike him (answer 5). The statements and the structure for this section are gathered from a scientific survey of character strength by the ’VIA institute on character’. The institute is a non-profit organization, established in 2001 and is a global leader in research about science and practice of character (Via character, 2018). Putting a focus on the general characteristic constitution of the participating individuals, I can make reason about how many of the same consider themselves as ’emotional’ or more ’rational’ which is important to know in order to value the outcome of the last section which is about the actual emotional reaction to visuals. It means that the more emotional a person sees himself, the stronger he will react to the shown contents, while more rational people may respond less. Knowing about the self assessment of the participants’ characters prevents of wrong conclusions, since it identifies possible relationships between the character and the reactions to the shown posts.

With the third part I aim to identify participants’ attitude and knowledge of environmental issues. Here, again, are given statements that can be answered with three choices, ’yes’, ’neutral’ and ’no’, for the first six statements and ’always’, ’sometimes’ and ’never’ for the eleven last statements. The latter focuses on small-scale activism that participants already practice. This section helps to understand the starting point of the individuals’ activism and already existing involvement with environmental issues.
Stage four of the questionnaire addresses attendants’ behavior on social media, used platforms, their frequency of usage and their impression of social media. The questions about platforms and rate of usage are presented in a multiple choice structure, while the information about attitude and impression is gathered the same way as in the other sections, by using statements and the five answer options 'very much like me' (answer 1), 'like me' (answer 2), neutral (answer 3), 'unlike me' (answer 4) or 'very much unlike me' (answer 5). This part allows me to understand how the emotional default for social media can be estimated and how intense the participants generally use social media. Identifying the former is crucial for the study, because the emotional attitude towards social media may interfere with emotional impacts of the shown contents. When somebody, for example, has a really negative mindset towards the platform Facebook but then sees content that he really agrees on, this might triggers ambiguous emotional reactions.

The survey’s last section thematized concrete visual examples and asks the participants for their emotional opinion. For this, five posts from different environment organizations have been chosen that address five different problematic areas of environment pollution. The first picture shows a single tree standing on a field where there used to be a forest (deforestation), the second visual depicts 300 Thai villagers in canoes building a circle around the headline 'break free' (fossil fuels, see example picture in previous chapter), the third post displays a flooded house with the headline 'This is not bad luck. This is climate change and we need to act.' (climate change), image four shows two seals, one of them being a baby seal, taking a sunbath on Finnish man-made snowbanks (global warming and extinction) and the last picture exposes a dead rotten albatross, whose stomach is filled with a lot of different plastic items (plastic in nature and oceans). All emotional reactions to the posts can be given by ticking statements, such as 'It’s sad’, 'It’s inspiring’ or 'It makes me nostalgic’ etc. (in total 17 answer choices) in a multiple choice manner. The participants can pick as many answers as they wish. The last section is the core of the questionnaire and gives a quantitative insight in emotional reception of environmental contents which allows me to compare my results from my qualitative method interviews with those from my quantitative research part.

One additional explanation concerning the pictures in the questionnaire has to be given at this point. The pictures are not only chosen from the two organizations Greenpeace and the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation but also from WWF, since the above discussed merits of authenticity are not relevant for the questionnaire. The aim here is to solely ask for the emotional reaction to general environment activism visuals on social media. Since WWF also occurs frequently on social media – so the likelihood of seeing their posts in real life is quite high – I didn’t want to exclude their
pictures, especially since they contribute a different visual language that is useful for examining general visual communication in activism.

5.4. Interview

Interviews are a well known and common method within qualitative research. One crucial aspect of interviews is, that the situation of the interview itself reproduces social interaction. According to Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003) this factor is very important when a researcher wants to expose social phenomena. The optimal situation of an interview is, so Mason, when it develops to a loose conversation in which two individuals discuss a mutual interest (Morris, 2015). Another reason that makes interviews useful for investigating motivations, emotions and opinions is the use of language during the interview. Researchers such as Malinowski emphasize the power of language to illuminate actual meaning behind the words and to understand the interviewees actual point of view (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003).

Due to these reasons I decided to do seven in-depth interviews, since I want to examine how individuals react to different kinds of visual impulses on social media.

Sampling the interviewees

(Sampling is) “the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives.” – this is Gentles’, Charles’, Ploeg’s and McKibbon’s definition for sampling in qualitative research (2015).

Referring to this definition, the factors for setting the sampling group have to be chosen wisely and in regard of the research questions. Suiting to the sampling for my questionnaire I narrowed down the age limit of possible participants for my interviews to 20 to 30 years. Since the topic of social media and environment protection is a recent one and one that addresses the future, I aimed to interview people that are old enough to be in the middle of making decisions that impact the environment, in a positive or negative way, and young enough to have fully understood the different platforms and concepts of social media.

Another premise for individuals to be interviewed, was the participation in the questionnaire, because, as explained above, I refer to the questionnaire in one of the questions during the interview. To guarantee both factors I thus posted a request to send me a personal message if an individual is willing to be interviewed and if the age limit applies on the Facebook page, that I have
created just for the purpose of my master thesis. Seven people replied and offered to participate. Five of them are students in different fields, one of them is a law clerk and one participant already works. After having the first interview, I decided to use the given as trial run for the following interviews, since it was very unstructured, chaotic and didn’t lead to proper results (thus I do not count it as interview in the end). I interviewed five students (24, 24, 25, 25 and 27), one law clerk (29) and one individual working as a key account manager (29).

**Interview setting and role of the interviewer**

According to Legard, Keegan and Ward the interview venue has to be “conducive to concentration“, which means that the setting has to be adjusted to the interviews purpose and to the interviewees need and comforts (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003). After having picked the interviewees I asked for time and place for the interview. Since I conducted all the interviews during a stay in Germany, all interviews were held within a timeframe of a week. Because of the circumstance that the interview was meant to be held in English, which is uncomfortable for some of the participants, I decided to let the participants choose the venue. When investigating motivations, emotions and personalities it is crucial for the outcome that the interviewee feels comfortable during the conversation. Otherwise he or she won’t be completely honest or hold back information. This is the reason why three of the seven interviews were held at the participants’ homes in the evening, one interview was conducted at the participant’s university, also in the evening after having studied and three took place in a familiar café that was chosen by the interviewees. All participants seemed to feel comfortable and a focused, yet relaxed and open conversation about their emotional response to environment activism content on social media could be made.

Before conducting an interview, the researcher also has to think of some issues concerning his role in the interview. Legard, Keegan and Ward explain that interviewers are themselves research instruments that necessarily have to have personal and professional qualities. Key requirements are the ability to listen (to hear, digest and comprehend; ability to decide where to probe further), clear and logical mind (think quickly to distill the essential points) and a good memory (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003).

Depending on the interview approach (structured, semi-structured, unstructured) the researcher has to decide whether he wants to play an active role during the interview, with the danger to strongly influence the participant and to distort the results, or whether he wants to be the passive questioner. However the researcher chooses, to be an active or passive role, the most important part of all is to
create a comfortable relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The success of the whole interview relies on this ability, since interviews are used to discover motivations, feeling and meanings behind the words (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003). The interviewee will probably not share his experiences in a vulnerable situation if he does not feel completely safe.

**Interview structure**

For my interviews I chose to have a semi-structured framework, since I needed some specific questions to be answered, but the ‘conversations’ thriving from these questions should be completely open and evolving. A key feature for interviews in the combination of structure and flexibility. The researcher should always have his research question and main idea of what he wants to explore in his mind, even if the interview is unstructured. It is helpful to write an interview schedule or topic guide, so that all issues to be covered will be remembered. But still, to permit the interviewee to give free and subjective responses, the interview should be sufficiently flexible. This way new paths and hypotheses of the research can be discovered (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003). In order to have the full benefit of my interviews I created a topic guide during a trial interview that is based on the questionnaire and it’s results. The topic guide covers the following subjects:

1. Introduction and explanation about my topic and the interview.
2. Interviewee’s self evaluation regarding awareness towards environmental issues.
3. What are the interviewee’s sources of information? Which channels does he/she use?
4. How involved is the interviewee with the topic environment activism?
5. Is the interviewee sensitive towards commercials, ads, posts, pictures?
6. Does the interviewee remember any images from the questionnaire that was implemented 2 weeks ago?
7. The interviewee is asked to choose a picture that explicitly triggers him/her emotionally from both the LDF’s and Greenpeace Instagram feed. – Why did the interviewee choose this picture?
8. Does the interviewee rememberer other pictures than the chosen ones from the Instagram feeds?
9. Which Instagram feed does the interviewee find more appealing and why?
10. What is the interviewee’s small-scale activism?
11. Does the interviewee consider to change his/ her behavior after this interview?
12. Example by the interviewee about encountering environment pollution in his/her personal everyday life.
While conducting the interviews, this guide allowed me to stay structured and yet have an open conversation like talk about the interviewee’s attitudes and emotional reaction to social media contents.

With the topics 1 to 5 I aim to get to know the interviewee better and to understand his or her individual opinion about environment pollution, protection, and social media. It has a similar purpose as the first chapters in the questionnaire, but within the interview it is even more crucial to get to know the interviewee to understand his or her default situation when it comes to emotional reaction to environment protection online. Additionally, this introduction gives the participant the opportunity to adjust to the situation and to familiarize with the style of conversation. Since I conducted my research in Germany, all the participants for the interviews are German, but six of the seven interviews were held in English. Thus the interviewees needed some time to get used to talking English, which the first part enabled them to.

Questions 6 to 9 address concrete emotional reactions to visuals. While the sixth question asks if the participant can remember any of the images from the questionnaire – to investigate which picture is the most memorable and impressive – part 7 is more interactive and encourages the interviewee to choose a picture that triggers him or her emotionally in the certain moment. By having the interviewee choosing a picture out of many choices, I can identify the visual factors that distinguish it from other images and also learn which emotion is seemingly activated the easiest in the participant’s constitution. At this point the conversation evolved and I could ask further questions about the reasons to choose this particular picture. These questions were improvised and suiting to the respective individual. With question 8 I try to investigate which visuals got stuck on the interviewee’s mind on a subconscious level. This as well indicates which factors are decisive to make a picture remarkable so that it stays in the participant’s head. I refer to the conscious level of reception with question 9, which evaluates which Instagram feed is more appealing to the individual and why, the one of Greenpeace or the one of the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation. By asking this question I actually ask the participant ‘secretly’ what he or she thinks is a better way of communicating to social media users.

The topics 10 to 12 function as conclusion and closure of the interview and try to lead the interviewee to further thoughts about environment pollution and solutions for it. This part serves less the collection of data for my research but more the mobilization of the participants for the future. However, question 11 addresses changes of behavior due to having seen all the images during the interview and in the questionnaire. The question thus enables to verify if the theoretical
hypothesis applies on the particular cases. In other words, this question shows if the individuals really intend to change their environmental small-scale activism, because of having experienced all the emotions that were transmitted though the images that utilized visual emotionally framed messages.

5.5. Method of analysis

Coding

“A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2016).

Coding is a well known method to analyze text-based data such as interview transcripts, participant observation filed notes, journals, documents, literater etc. Enabling the researcher to link data with the idea standing behind it, coding is a crucial tool to understand and systemize different meanings (Richard and Morse, 2013). Based on this I used coding as method to analyze my data set gathered through my seven in-depth interviews. I focus on an interpretive textual approach, since I am looking for opinion, meanings and emotions the individual has concerning ‘emotionalized’ content on social media in the field of environment pollution and protection.

In the first step I transcribed the interviews. I mainly focused on text based codes, but sometimes also interpret long pauses or laughter when they seem to contribute to the understanding of the meaning.

In the next step I started with the first cycle of coding and decided to apply in vivo and descriptive codes. Thus I could summarize the primary topic and build a solid foundation for the next cycles of coding (Wolcott, 1994).

During the second cycle of coding I searched for similarities within the different codes and applied pattern-coding to the data. By doing this I could organize the corpus but also start attributing meaning to the organization.

Finally, I generated themes out of the codes that could finally be ordered in four different categories. The different coding categories and themes can be found in the Appendix.
After having coded the interviews as explained above, four main categories showed: ‘Consciousness’, ‘Emotional reaction’, ‘Personal connection’ and ‘Action’. In the following chapter ‘Analysis’ I am going to display the different subcategories and meanings for each category.

5.6. Ethics and limitations

Although the methods allow the researcher to explore many different meaning and experiences of a person and the connection social phenomenon, it has limitations or weaknesses that have to be discussed.

Limitations of interviews

One limitation that occurred during the research was one that refers to the sampling process: self selection-bias. It thematizes the fact, that only those individuals participated, whether it was the questionnaire or the interview, who were actually willing to talk about environment protection, their role in it and especially their emotional reaction to it. There is a possibility that there may be a correlation between having 'the right' emotional reaction and the 'appropriate' behavior and the readiness to share information about this.

Another problematic factor was the lack of time. Individuals could be interviewed only once which leads to the fact that the researcher is dependent on the participant’s experience, memory, reflection and self evaluation. This way the interviewee is enabled, consciously or unconsciously, to construct the world he wants the interviewer to see. This limitation correlates strongly with the self-selection bias and can only be avoided by verifying participants’ statements by adding an observation research or by interviewing a third person about the respective individual (Morris, 2015).

Interviews are highly time-consuming. The preparation and implementation of the methods demands for high-maintenance and organization in advance: Finding participants that fit to the sampling criteria, arrange meetings with every interviewee and in the end transcribing the whole interview requires a lot of effort and can, if some of these steps are outsourced to professionals, be expensive (Morris 2015).

The biggest limitation, however, is that data and insights collected in interviews can not be generalized (Morris 2015) and are only veritable in the context of the participants itself.

Limitations of questionnaires
One big limitation of questionnaire within quantitative studies is the tentative character. When open requests for participation are published, people do not feel addressed and, if not involved in any way with the interviewer or the topic, most likely do not participate. Using professional help by involving research companies can be quite expensive and is out of reach for many younger researchers, i.e. students doing their theses without any resources. Since, for studies like this one, at least 100 individuals have to participate to make a quantitative research significant, this limitation poses a big problem that threatens the overall outcome of the empirical work.

Another difficulty is the occurring Hawthorne effect. It is defined as the problem in research that individuals change their behavior when knowing that they are being observed (Adair, 1984). Even though the questionnaire was anonymous, participants may have changed their answers and reactions, because they knew about the importance of the research. This limitation correlates with the above mentioned problem about the positive conducted self-presentation in order to please the researcher, him- or herself or to fit into social norms.

**Ethics**

Considering ethical issues while preparing my research I realized that activism, especially environment protection with all its factors, is a highly relevant and sensitive topic, because it affects everybody in society. While conducting the interviews I have to make sure that asking questions about the participant’s personal opinion, emotion, motivation and behavior is not understood as accusation of ignorance or disinterest in the topic itself. Not caring for environmental issues is sometimes understood as socially reprehensible. To obtain honest and authentic data it is important to give the interviewee a feeling of understanding and security during and after the research. Additionally the anonymity of the participants has to be guaranteed.

5.7.
6. Analysis

6.1. Emotional visual strategic communication on social media – Visual analysis Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and Greenpeace

**Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation on Instagram**

Analyzing the Instagram feed of the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation (LDF) it becomes clear that the media professionals of this organization have a specific color code in mind. They present the page in natural colors, such as brown, green, white, beige and blue and often these colors are utilized in light saturations. It makes the impression that LDF adjusts the colors of the pictures to this guideline when possible (see picture 1).

The prevailing type of picture totals to professional photography, even though some snapshots are displayed as well, the majority of visuals has a high professional standard and composition. In addition, almost no amateur pictures or collages are visible on the feed, as against reposts from other environment organizations. The visual language’s focus seems to lie on ’aesthetics’ of images. The purpose is to show the beauty and diversity of nature and certain moments rather than being explicitly informative (see picture 2).
Due to the many reposts on the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation’s Instagram page there is no creative corporate consistency present besides the before mentioned color code. Even though the motives resemble each other, there is no logo, no specific setup or composition traceable.

Having a look at the contents on the LDF’s Instagram feed, it is clearly recognizable that the most often shown content is animals, their habitats, wild lands and other nature in general. These visuals are predominantly professional pictures and show healthy and beautiful animals. Moreover, negative consequences of environment pollution is shown only rarely and when people are depicted, then only activist and helpers on site, for example indigenous people or animal keepers (see picture 3).

One factor that stands out is that not many pictures on the feed are informative only by their visual language. The pictures’ contents are usually put into context by the textual headlines and explanations under/next to the posts and headlines, slogans or statements are almost not present in the visuals. Obviously LDF focusses on on showing beautiful and aesthetic images instead of providing as much information with their pictures as possible. The communication strategy seems to target the emotional and subconscious level of individuals’ constitutions. The pictures are mostly harmonic and no controversial stimuli are offered through the visuals only. Often the texts belonging to the visuals give context and thus create a cognitive dissonance to make people think (see picture 4).

All in all, one receives the impression of a compassionate tonality that persuades through emotions, identification and connection of animals to people. Almost no criticism or empowering call to action is addressed on the analyzed Instagram feed (see picture 5).

**Greenpeace on Instagram**

Having a look at the Instagram feed of Greenpeace it gives the impression that no intended color code is present. There are, nevertheless, many pictures about the Arctic and the ocean with the result that blue and white are the most dominant colors. In general the color palette seems to be randomly chosen, depending on the content of the picture, without being adjusted to a predetermined style guide (see picture 7). In addition the type of picture varies as well.

There is a mixture of professional photography snapshots, behind-the-scenes-photos, amateur photographs and collages on Greenpeace’s feed and the focus of those visuals lies on the ’practicability’ of the same. The general purpose is to show certain content and information rather than displaying an aesthetic image (see picture 8). There are of course photographs, especially the
professional ones, that do not prioritize ‘practicability’, but the overall impression points in that direction.

When it comes to composition and image structure there is no creative or corporate consistency visible, except for some posts, that address certain campaigns such as the ‘protect the arctic’ campaign or the ‘make something week’ (see picture 9).

The contents of Greenpeace’s posts contain pictures of the negative effects of environment pollution, i.e. plastic swimming around in the oceans or deforestation. Also people are depicted, people that are involved with environment pollution and protection in different manners. This involves activists and protesters, affected people such as indigenous people but also celebrities who use their popularity to support the organization (see picture 10).

Other imagery that is also present, but not as dominant as the first two mentioned, are relevant things, such as statues, ships of the Greenpeace fleet or collected plastic. Moreover, animals in their natural habitats are shown. It is important to point out that these pictures are not shocking or showing miserable situations for the animals but mostly depict them in a happy and healthy state.

Many of the pictures presented have a title, headline or slogan incorporated in the picture, other have statements of celebrities or important people of public life (see picture 7). Providing information within their pictures in form of headlines seems to be the main part of Greenpeace’s communication strategy. But not only textual elements provide context, also controversial or stimulating contents give knowledge about a situation without explaining it through words (see picture 11).
Throughout the whole investigated feed the organization uses a criticizing tonality, when it comes to thematizing causes of environment pollution. Even though some pictures are composed in a provocative manner towards politicians or big companies that are responsible for several pollution problems (see picture 12), many other images contain a call to action.
The message of the examined Instagram feed becomes perspicuous after having dealt with the different visual aspects as done above. Greenpeace displays itself as part of the big movement for environment protection. They imply that they and all people in the world need to struggle a fight against 'the enemies', which are governments, politicians and big companies. Greenpeace does not accuse people and their behavior of being the reason for environment pollution but rather tries to positively motivate individuals to help and change.
Over-all, the emotional tonality is positive, strong, energetic, powerful, active, empowering, collective and demanding (for change).
The timeframe of the investigated posts ranges from 22. December 2017 to 23. April 2018.

6.2. Questionnaire results and tendencies

As already explained, 55 people filled out the questionnaire. 50 people fit into the sampling group and 5 people trespass the age limit. The average age lies by 28 years and the spread of age is shown in the age histogram (figure 1).
In addition 38,2% of the participants are male and 61,8% are female. The occupation varies strongly but the most given answer is 'student’ with the frequency of 26 (mode).
When it comes to the participants’ self evaluation about their character it becomes clear that statements about positive emotional attributes, such as loving animals, experiencing beauty, being kind and expressing love have a high frequency on the answers 'very much like me’ and 'like me’.
The graphs (figures 2,3 and 4) show that the frequencies for 'very much like me’ are higher than 22 in all the three examples and that the values 'unlike me’ and 'very much unlike me’ are either not existent, so nobody gave this answer, or they are very low.
Another interesting visible trend is, that the statements about expressing the own opinion, standing up for own beliefs and showing when being angry have a much more equal spread of answers. The answers 'neutral’, 'unlike me’ and 'very much unlike me’ are more present than in other statements’ replies (figures 5 and 6).
These two findings indicate that the participants obviously evaluate themselves as emotional and empathetic but tend to generally be more careful when it comes to expressing own ideals. One
could assume that participants do not want to negatively attract attention, even though when they are representing their own opinion, but rather stay quiet in order to fit into norms and expectations. Given answers in the third section of the questionnaire about the participants’ attitude and knowledge about environmental issues show, that individuals see themselves as aware when it comes to environmental problems (48 answered ‘yes’ to the statement ‘I consider myself being aware of environment pollution and activism issues’ and 7 answered ‘neutral’). It is interesting to see that two questions in this section, that specifically ask for activism in this area are largely answered with ‘no’ or ‘neutral’. The statement about being vegetarian or vegan was 9 times answered with ‘yes’, 7 times with ‘neutral’ and 39 times with ‘no’. One could argue that eating habits do not necessarily coincide with environmental issues, but since 48 persons claim to be aware of environmental issues they should know about the correlation of both.

Another statement that had striking answers was the statement ‘I have a membership in an organization that supports environmental activism’ (figure 7). Here as well, participants answered more frequent with ‘no’, even though they have understood the problems and urgency of environmental pollution. From this chapter one can learn, that there tends to be a dissonance between being aware and having the according behavior.

In the same section, the questionnaire addresses already existing small-scale activistic behavior. From eleven statements only 4 have been answered with ‘always’ more than 30 times. These were the statements ‘I use trains, busses, walk or bike instead of using the car’ (35 times ‘always’, 15 times ‘sometimes’ and 5 times ‘never’), ‘I bring my own bag to the grocery store’ (33 times ‘always’, 17 times ‘sometimes’ and 5 times ‘never’), ‘I use reusable water bottles and coffee cups’ (30 times ‘always’, 19 times ‘sometimes’, 6 times ‘never’) and ‘I switch off the light when I leave my apartment’ (47 times ‘always’, 7 times ‘sometimes’ and 1 time ‘never’). These measurements of environment protection are common and thus more implemented in more daily routines than other more specific ones, which also reflects in this questionnaire. The graphs 8 and 9 show that more specific activism statements have a broader distribution of answers.

The chapter about user behavior regarding social media and attitudes towards social media reveals, that 54 out of 55 participants use Facebook, 45 participants use YouTube, 39 have an account on Instagram, 24 have Snapchat, 21 visit Pinterest, 20 participants are on LinkedIn, 10 use Twitter and less than less use Google+, WhatsApp, Slack, Jodel, myspace, tumblr and reddit. Graph 10 shows how much time the participants thinks he spends ‘on average’ on social media. The result of the ‘questions’ about the personal attitude of the individuals towards social media are really interesting and give an insight in people’s relationship with the media. Apparently social media is a transporter
of emotions, since the statements about sadness and happiness were predominantly answered with ‘very much like me’ or ‘like me’. (‘Social media sometimes makes me laugh’ – 22 times ‘very much like me’ and 27 times ‘like me’ and ‘Social media sometimes makes me sad’ – 16 times ‘very much like me’ and 24 times ‘like me’). This information is crucial for my following empirical part, because it verifies that the participants understand social media as transmitter of emotions. Since I base my whole hypothesis on emotional reactions to social media contents, this outcome empowers my idea for the following work. In addition to social media being subconsciously understood as emotional transmitter, participants receive the same as positive, or at least neutral. The statement ‘Social media is positive’ was answered only 3 times with ‘very much like me’, 18 times with ‘like me’ and 28 times with ‘neutral’. And still, one really interesting outcome gave new information: 40 out of 55 participants think that social media is exhausting (figure 11).

The main function the participants see in social media is the social and political update that is provided, as well as being connected to other people. The statement ‘I get updated through social media’ was answered 38 times with ‘very much like me’ or ‘like me’ and the statement ‘Social media connects me’ was answered 47 times with ‘very much like me’ or ‘like me’. In addition the answers to the statement ‘Social media inspires me’ have a tendency towards endorsing the statement (with 45 individuals answering ‘very much like me’, ‘like me’ or ‘neutral’) but however the participants are relatively neutral when it comes to being influenced by social media. The distribution of frequencies to the statement ‘Social media influences my decisions’ is quite balanced and the most abundant value is ‘neutral’ with a number of 19 (figure 12).

The final section investigates participants’ reactions to concrete visuals. Out of 17 possible choices 7 answers have a frequency of at least 10 for the first visual (picture 14).

The bar graph (figure 13) shows the 7 most popular answers. It is interesting to see, that besides the prevailing negative associations with this pictures, such as ‘It’s sad’ or ‘It makes me anxious’ also two more positive connections were made. ‘It makes me nostalgic’ indicates that participants think about beautiful forests and wish for them to ‘come back’. Nostalgia describes the longing for something already experienced, that is absent at the moment, in a positive way. ‘It’s calling to action’ is a statement that is more actively positive. It indicates that the emotions in the picture are transmitted in a manner that it activates peoples’ need for undertaking a change.

The second image (picture 13) directly addresses activism. Here only 4 answer choices reached more than 10 frequencies, which gives the indication of a clearer visual language, so that the intentional message is easier to understand (figure 14). Obviously the answers polarize stronger when it comes to this post. The four answers ‘It makes me hopeful’, ‘It’s inspiring’, ‘It’s calling to
action’ and ‘It’s motivating me’ are all future oriented statements. The ‘spirit’ of this picture is more about what is going to happen in the future and what still can be changed rather than focusing on negative and already happened consequences that can’t modify anymore. This seemingly reaches the beholder and gives a more distinct emotion.

For the third visual (picture 16), five answers reached more than 10 picks. As you can see in the graph (figure 15), four out of 5 statements that were given as response to the picture are connoted negatively. Sadness, anxiousness and shock are additionally three emotions that refer to being powerless, being rigid or or helpless. In contrast to the picture before, this picture obviously shows negative consequences of environment pollution that can’t be changed in the moment or with the next small-scale action by the beholder and no solutions are provided either. Anger, on the other hand, is a negative emotion that is associated with activity and power. When anger is felt it mobilizes the individual emotionally but maybe also physically. The statement ’It’s calling to action’ is the only positive formulated choice of answer for this image. In this case, the literal call to action in the headline advocates mobilization to change the current situation of climate change to the better. This direct approach though the connection of the shocking picture with the headline probably reaches the individual and generates an active feeling (23 times ’It’s calling action’).

Picture number four (picture 17) contents of two seals, one of them a baby, and has four answer statements that reached a higher frequency than 10 (figure 16). All four statements are positive and express good emotions. While ’It’s cute’ and ‘It makes me happy’ are situational expressions of emotion, because they refer only to this particular moment, been hopeful and inspired addresses future behavior, as already explained above. Nevertheless, the image obviously does not appeal to the participants in a mobilizing way.

The final post contents a picture of a dead Albatros with plastic in his stomach (picture 18). A broad palette of answers reached a higher frequency than 10.

Five out of the seven statements verbalize negative and powerless emotions (figure 17). As already thematized before, being sad, being shocked, finding something gross, being anxious and being desperate are in the moment felt emotions that are associated with passiveness. The picture is very graphic and maybe ‘paralyzes’ the individuals mind, because it is so overwhelming. The fact that more answers are picked than at the other images is an indicator for the uncertain and diverse emotions that are generated through the picture. The statements ‘It makes me angry’ and ‘It’s calling to action’ both describe a felling of initiative, one in negative way, because it focuses on the deficiencies, and one is positive, because it thematizes the moment of acting for change.
All in all one can conclude that pictures that show subtle content such as the seals, indeed evoke emotions but do not mobilize the beholder. This also counts for neutral images, that can’t be put into context without a headline, like the single tree. The results of the questionnaire show that there is a tendency that the more drastic the picture is, the broader the emotional reaction becomes. This implicates that the emotional reaction to these pictures is not as clear and identifiable. According to this research the most distinct emotional reaction could be achieved by depicting activism and people that are affected by environment pollution and fight against it. Additionally the outcome shows that those pictures also elicit the most mobilizing emotions, such as being hopeful, inspired and motivated.

6.3. Interview results

Throughout the seven conducted interviews 4 main coding categories could be identified.

Consciousness

The participants are generally conscious about their own situation, whether they have knowledge about environment issues or not. In case they do not know anything they are able to verbalize their lack of information.

Most of the participants are able to sum up some causes and consequences of environment pollution (codes: ‘identifying supposed source of problem’ and ‘identifying consequences of environment pollution’), if the information is actually true or not is left out on this point. The relevance of these coding subcategories lies within the ability of the participant to recognize present problems and to contextualize them within a broad field of expertise.

All interviewees, without exception, understand that humans are the reason for the rapid increase of pollution (code: ‘-Identifying humans as source of problem’), almost every participant gives examples for solutions that could be implemented easily (i.e. Participant A: “I think it's such a shame that our civilized world isn't capable of ,first of all, getting rid of plastic and second of all finding an alternative packaging.”).

Some interviewees (participant F, D and E) immediately understood that the visuals that this study addresses, aim to elicit an emotional response (code: ‘Consciousness about the fact that content targets an emotional reaction’). They verbalized that they understand the tactics of the organizations and that they are supposed to feel a certain emotion. In some interviews (with participant F and D),
this led to consciousness about the dissonance between the participant’s actual emotional reaction and the intended emotional reaction (code: ‘Conscious about own dissonance’ i.e. Participant F: “And I had kind of a dissonance between 'Oh it's beautiful and oh damn'. I felt bad for liking the picture somehow, because I knew that everyone would expect me to not like the picture, you know what I mean?”).

**Emotional reaction**

During the experiment of picking posts on the Instagram feeds, I could identify a very broad palette of emotional reactions. Like expected before – due to the theoretical framework – negative pictures always evoked negative emotions (i.e. participant D: “It's very devastating, I think, because it's a small boy in a middle of a polluted water pond or sea, I don't know what it actually is. And he looks quite unhappy.”) (except for one case, participant F, as mentioned before).

Positive pictures, however, caused several levels of emotional reaction, since they are embedded in a rather concerning context. Participant F, for example, talks about her emotional response to picture 23: “I have pity for this little baby elephant. It's very cute. But it's also pity, a lot of pity, because it's obviously sick, isn't it? I feel sorry for the elephant. And I want to cuddle it”. This shows that even though the interviewee sees the cute elephants, cared for and sleeping under a blanket, she experiences two ambiguous emotions, pity and cuteness, because she is able to contextualize the seen content and suspects that something bad happened before. This phenomenon appears several times during the seven interviews and shows how crucial the prior existing knowledge, opinion and general concept of an issue is for the emotional outcome of affective visual framing.

The emotional response codes can roughly be divided into the three categories positive, neutral and negative.

Positive emotions (code: ‘Reaction “trust”’ or ‘Reaction “happiness”’ etc.) were felt when the participants saw a picture that displayed something cute, like happy penguins (i.e. participant P: “I picked the picture of those two penguins, because it projects a feeling of innocence and happiness.”). It’s important to mention, that the experience of positive emotions was not exclusive but rather mixed with other, sometimes neutral or negative, emotions (as explained above).

Neutral emotional responses, like ‘Reaction “confusion”’, ‘Reaction “surprise”’ or ‘Reaction “no feeling”’, appeared when the participant couldn’t anticipate his/her reaction to a visual (participant
F: “But I have no idea what, it's something about whales, obviously.” answering the question why the picture 24 evokes positive emotions).

Negative emotions, like ‘Reaction “anger”’, ‘Reaction “guilt”’ or ‘Reaction “hopeless”’ are direct responses to a negative picture (i.e. participant A: “And this is a picture where I really do feel anger and it makes me sad because I know those poor animals, they didn't do anything wrong and it's just our doing that they have rubbish in their natural habitat.”), or secondary responses to a positive picture (i.e. participant A about picture 25: “Not immediately. maybe even a bit happy, because I like elephants and looking at them. I think in the context of also knowing that it's this LDF, shows the other side that it's not only a picture of the elephant because he looks nice, but because there is one meaning to his endangerment. So I'm not super happy.”)

**Personal connection**

This category sums up participants’ utterances about the connection of environment pollution, activism and themselves.

It is interesting to learn, that every interviewee can connect the issue to the human race itself but not everybody includes himself as a source of problems (i.e. participant F: “Yeah. I wasn't thinking that we need to change something. It was rather like 'Ok, it's not a very good situation. Someone else could take care of it'. I'm a bad person ((laughs)). It's kind of indifferent.”). This not only derives from a lack of knowledge but in two out of the seven cases out of defiance and intransigence (participant F and S). An immediate personal connection and identification with the shown visuals, however, was not very present in any interview. Merely participant F and participant P could identify or felt deeply personally connected to what they saw (i.e. participant P: “Yes on a smaller scale. Having had pets I kind of feel like I know that feeling.” about picture 6).

One participant even denied all possible connections to environment pollution. In the interview with participant F, I could identify codes like ‘No connection to me’, ‘Not my fault’, ‘Not my problem - someone else’s’ and ‘No interest’. Having investigated her utterances and opinions, I have the hypothesis that her strong counterpose to the visuals and the issue itself derives from feeling accused by the same. In her interview she verbalizes that she is “not very sensitive towards these kind of manipulations” and that some visuals are “polemic”. By using negative words like these, it becomes clear that there has to some kind of negative concept of environment activism in her prior constitution.
Action

Asking questions about environment activism, every interviewee immediately starts to list all the small-scale actions he or she does, even though this has not been the question. Without having any background knowledge in behavioral psychology I could imagine that this is a reaction to position oneself and to clear the own consciousness. However, this happened a lot in the beginning of the interviews and every participant refers to their ‘positive’ actions when talking about other subjects. In the end of the interviews almost every participant considered to incorporate more small-scale actions in his/her every day life, but it is striking that nobody had a concrete example for these actions. The formulation of the activism intentions always remained on a very vague and indifferent level.

6.4. Analysis and discussion

In this thesis I aim to understand different factors of emotionally framed visual content. After having gathered and coded the data from seven qualitative in-depth interviews and analyzed 55 questionnaires, I try to answer my research question:

Does emotional sensitive content about environment activism on social media increase the recipients’ emotional awareness and small-scale activism, when embedded in strategic ‘visual framing’ communication?

Based on this research question I structured the discussion in three main parts that address different dimensions of the same. First of all, I discuss whether the emotionally framed visuals actually elicit emotional reaction, in other words if they are understood as emotional visual content. Secondly, I will proceed with the interpretation of the data referring to emotional awareness that is created by the appearance of emotional reactions. In the last step, I thematize whether emotional reactions to content and emotional awareness lead to small-scale activism, based on the collected data in my research.

Emotional visual content

In the previous part of this thesis I already discussed Wang, Corner and Chapman (2017) who identified the absence of human stories within environmental images as a striking problem to trigger emotional reaction. Additionally Chapman et al. (2016) explain that showing politicians and protesters is quite ineffective and alienating when it comes to emotionally influencing people. These
two empirical findings towards emotional imagery and emotional messages within pictures could also be found in this research. Asking the participants to pick pictures from two organizations’ websites the choice always involved animals or humans but never politicians or activists. The pictures showed people who were affected in a certain way or animals in certain difficult or natural situations, in both cases the visual told a story. The questionnaire, though, illuminates a quite contrary theory. One shown post in the questionnaire displays activists fighting against dirty energy (picture 13): This visual has the clearest, most positive and motivating choice of answers (figure 14). The shown journey or circumstance in the picture clearly affected the participants and triggered not only emotions but especially interest and curiosity to learn more about the background.

An interesting fact about the interviewees’ choices of pictures is that they didn’t necessarily pick positive emotional pictures but also visuals that elicited negative feelings, such as sadness or devastation. Indeed every interviewee picked one picture they responded to positively, on the first level, with emotions of compassion, happiness or the feeling of cuteness and one image they reacted to with negative feelings such as sadness, shock or feeling pity. This outcome indicates that no matter what emotional frame is applied to a picture, the content can be either positive (in the sense of focusing on good things of environment protection) or negative (in the sense of focusing on bad consequences due to environment pollution) to evoke emotions. But comparing the interplay of different emotional responses to positive visuals and to negative visuals, the questionnaire showed that reactions to negative pictures are much more complex. Positive pictures in the questionnaire (picture 13 and 17) evoked only 4 emotions at the same time, which do not vary much in their meaning (i.e. “It’s cute.” and “It makes me happy”, “It makes me hopeful” and “It’s inspiring” figure 16). Negative visuals, however, got five to seven different emotional responses (figure 13, 15 and 17).

Another factor that came across during the analysis of emotional visual content was the lack of closeness. Some participants (i.e. participant F) didn’t see their responsibilities to change behavior, because they couldn’t make any connection between themselves and the issues displayed in the pictures. Indeed almost all of the chosen and shown images show scenarios that are either geographically far away or just do not occur in the everyday life of a person living in the western world (i.e. the polluted water pond, picture 11). According to Zhang and Barr (2013), it is necessary to create some kind of ownership of the issue to help the recipient identify and recognize himself with it (Wang, Corner, Chapman et al. 2017). This obviously did not happen through the utilized
pictures and if not influenceable by emotional stories about animals or affected people, which most likely generate emotions like compassion and more, people that are more focused on cognitive reception of images can’t identify with the viewed contents and can’t integrate them in their field of relevance. This correlates with tendencies that could be found in the questionnaire results. Participating individuals considered themselves as being very aware of environmental issues but actually lack of deeper knowledge and the capacity to make connections between striking circumstances. This specifically showed in the contradiction of the results to the statement ‘I consider myself being aware of environment pollution and activism issues’ (48 answered ‘yes’, 7 answered ‘neutral’) and ‘I have a membership in an organization that supports environmental activism’ (41 answered ‘no’, figure 7), as well as ‘I am vegetarian or vegan.’ (39 answered ‘no’). These findings indicate that environment issues that are thematized on social media are too far away to actually urge the user to plunge into them.

While interviewing the participants, one additionally striking finding could be observed. One participant (participant F) felt extremely attacked and offended by the contents, even though they didn’t aim for a clear confrontation or accusation. The reason for this feeling is the consciousness about the strategic goal of the organizations that showed the contents. In other words, the participant knew that she was supposed to react in a certain way and interpreted a direct message from the ‘author’ of the content and not a message from the content. In this situation, not only the applied frame caused the negative feelings of the interviewee (i.e. disapproval, insecurity, guilt, social pressure, attacked and accused, anger, offended and no feeling due to self protection) but also the message itself. The feeling of accusation and anger could derive from the participant’s awareness that her behavior and disinterest in the issue is socially not approved and ethically indefensible, but instead of allowing somebody, the authors, to remind her of that, she blocks the emotional reaction and intervenes with other emotions coming from her own dissonance. Since this is not a thesis in the field of psychology I have to let this hypothesis rest at this point. Nevertheless this reaction has to be considered when creating contents for environmental awareness, even though the idea highly depends on individual constitutions and subjective state of minds.

Emotional awareness

One phenomenon that I already discussed above is the fact that the individuals in my study generally knew which emotional reaction was expected from them and when their reaction and
opinion was inappropriate or socially not acceptable (i.e. participant F ‘I’m a bad person’). The consequence is that the affected individuals may be aware of the problematics of environment pollution, emotionally and cognitively, but they start to defend themselves quite easily and distance themselves from the issue (i.e. code: ‘Reaction “insecure”’ and ‘Reaction “justification”’), because it is uncomfortable to be in such a personal dissonance.

Some outcome that advocates for increasing emotional awareness of recipients of emotionally framed visuals is that the images generally elicited emotional reactions, be it the shown ones in the questionnaire, the chosen ones by the participants or the remembered ones from the Instagram feeds during the interview. They were either remembered because the participant could remember the feeling they had while looking at it, or chosen because they generated an emotional reaction in general. The crucial point is that when we talk about emotional awareness, we do not necessarily deal with negativity or positivity. First of all, awareness means attention, emotionally caused attention and it is unimportant if the attention is charged with negative or positive connotation. Thus emotional awareness also refers to reluctance to environment activism, the same way it refers to support of environment activism. This indicates that the awareness effectively increases, because of emotionalized contents.

Overall participants are aware of the issues in the sense that they have understood most of the details, urgency and threats of environment issues, more exact the participants evaluate themselves as being fully aware (i.e. participant D: “I think I'm aware of quite a few issues (…)” and ‘yes’ 48 times to the statement ‘I consider myself as being aware of environment pollution and activism issues’ in the questionnaire). Some interviewees name sources of environment pollution during the interview and others mention solutions for the problems. They do so predominantly in connection with their own behavior, which implies that the participants have understood their personal involvement in the improvement of the environment. Yet the coding results in the category ‘personal connection’ show that some participants in fact consciously connect humans and both environment pollution and environment protection but do not really understand their personal and individual impact. Even though the participant mostly lack the understanding for personal involvement, they still recognize that humans and their behavior are entangled in the whole issue. This awareness causes emotions, since the participants of both methods are able to broadly contextualize what they are shown and to find relevance for themselves. This also argues for an increase of emotional awareness when receiving emotionally framed visual contents on social media about environment issues.
Interesting is, as evaluated before, that individuals know about the strategies of organizations and understand that they are supposed to feel something (i.e. participant F: “Even though I know it's a really controversial issue and all the trees got chopped down I thought that the picture itself was beautiful.”). This information is not new, but instead of focusing on the knowledge about a certain reaction, I would like to concentrate on the awareness of being supposed to feel something, anything. Even though the participants do not know what is ‘emotionally’ anticipated from them, they know that some kind of reaction in general is expected. Without talking about positivity, negativity or particularly charged emotions, this already has the potential to either deter individuals from dealing with environment protection, because they get the feeling of not being able to decide themselves, or it increases the general involvement, because the topic stays present in the individuals’ constitution due to the cognitive dissonance they experience.

Taking a step back to the emotional factor of awareness, one can see that the manifold emotional reactions (coding category ‘emotional reaction’) to the contents could not only increase awareness but also pose a problem to longterm strategic communication. Experiencing strong, sometimes confusing emotions over and over again, can lead to a deadening of emotions, because the beholder has experienced these reactions several times. On the other hand the frequent experience of certain emotions can guide to an emotional branding of the impacted organization. This, unfortunately is another topic that I can’t discuss in this thesis.

Emotional awareness is something that is highly subjective and can’t be generalized. Even though an organization tries to implement a certain emotional image in their communication, individuals are way too different when it comes to receiving messages and emotional reactions not only depend on the shown contents but also on other circumstances that are far out of the organizations’ reach. Earlier in this thesis I discussed the importance of preexisting knowledge, constructions and opinion (Krause and Bucy, 2018), which showed to be more crucial for the outcome of emotionally framed visuals than expected. There can not be designed one generally valid frame to create a specific emotional awareness. This also showed in the codes and themes of the research. Some participants understood Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation’s communication as more emotional, because it allegedly told more stories (i.e. participant P). He thus likes this Instagram feed more. Other interviewees liked Greenpeace’s style of communication better, because they apprehended it as more emotional when it comes to triggering emotions that lie outside the participants’ comforts.
zone (i.e. participant D). This may derive from the theory that contents that provide divergent stimuli translate more into positive affect that those with regular information (Yang and Smith, 2009). Participant D seems to react more sensitive to this kind of communication strategy. The problematic that is posed by this individual and non-generalizable affective visual framing and its reception is that there are no promising factors for mobilizing individuals. It is clear that emotions are caused, but what is the framework to generate emotions that lead to activism and mobilization in the area of small-scale environment protection?

**Small-scale activisms**

The study showed that in some cases emotionalized visual contents and the reaction to it, indeed led some participants to think about further actions, such as looking information up (i.e. participant D: “I'd stay on the small-scale but maybe do even more stuff, like trying to use less plastic, em...wasting less paper, buying more stuff that's without palm oil, maybe that's something that would help. But I have to read some stuff.”) or changing every day behavior like driving the car (i.e. participant P: “And one thing that's probably a big thing for me would be driving my car, so trying to reduce that”). But when talking about emotions that lead to activism we also ask the question what kind of emotions do so. Here we are talking about three different levels, the first one is the intended emotional reaction, factors that are incorporated in visuals and frames with the aim to elicit a specific emotion when looking at it. The second level is the factual individual emotional reaction, which does not necessarily align with the intended one. And finally, we need to consider the factors within these factual emotional reactions that trigger the need to activism. I would like to draw on the second level of emotions and investigate if the factual emotional reaction has to be negative or positive. The definition of negative and positive is quite dangerous in this context, since emotions are this subjective that they can be perceived differently. Nevertheless, I use the common understanding of experiencing positive emotions, such as happiness and freedom an from the general idea of experiencing negative emotions like anger or sadness.

The study shows that there is a tendency towards negative emotions. This is caused by the fact that not only negative visuals elicit negative affect but also positive ones. As discussed before positively framed pictures often evoke positive emotions on the first level, but after being put into context of environment pollution, ambiguous and even negative emotions surface. A proof for this multiple level reaction is that it can only be identified in the interviews, where I talked to individuals and
asked targeted questions to dig deeper in their constitution and not in the questionnaire in which participants only answered according to their first spontaneous impression.

In addition the codes in the category ‘Action’ show that activism was mostly mentioned in the context of negatively experienced pictures (i.e. participant P “So that would probably one thing I would be interested now in researching.” referring to the, according to him, sad picture of the white rhino). One reason for that could be that the wrongs, injustices and grievances are emotionally tangible in the moment of reception, which leads to an intrinsic and instinctive need to help and change behavior, or at least the intention to do so.

A problem that showed during the research and that does hinder activism caused by emotional reactions is the omnipresent media. Due to the high stream of emotional pictures coming from every area and the subsequent over-reception of the same, individuals might become detached from emotional contents. The research indeed showed that some of the participants were disconnected from the overall issues at some point, because they were not caught by an emotional message anymore. Thus they didn’t see any reason to care for environment protection or to increase their small-scale activism.

The disconnection from the contents not only happens on the emotional level but also on the cognitive level which, in combination, completely hinders activism in the discussed form. The interviewees sometimes couldn’t find a connection, because the visuals depicted foreign surroundings or alienating situations they couldn’t identify with. On base of this disconnection, participants didn't feel responsible for environment pollution and didn’t see the necessity for action.

One final insight has to be discussed before finalizing this thesis with the conclusion chapter.

In chapter 4.1 Affective visual framing, I introduced the theory of polysemy, which connotes that one message carries more than one meaning. During the research I could detect that the polysemy of visuals can hinder the strength of a message, because in combination with the distinctive view the recipients have on environment activism, the core message is often put into a negative context. This can finally deter media users from involving with an issue any further or even accuse the recipient of being guilty for not acting in a huge gesture to protect the environment.
7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary

Investigating the data based on the research questions I could find out that when it comes to emotional visual content, pictures need to tell a story and show animals or humans that are affected. Emotional visual content can be both, positively or negatively connoted. In general the participants felt a lack of closeness to the pictures and some pictures can be misinterpreted and lead to feeling accused.

When focusing on emotional awareness, the research showed that the participants are aware, cognitively and emotionally. However, individuals know that they are supposed to feel something and sometimes even know what they are supposed to feel. This leads to either resistance towards the issue and emotional awareness or an increase of awareness due to presence in the individuals’ minds, caused by the cognitive dissonance. Emotional awareness is generally individual and subjective and can’t be generalized. There’s no framework guideline for eliciting emotional awareness. This exacerbates mobilizing individuals to activism.

Overall, the coded data revealed that responses to emotionally framed content on social media leads to some sort of activism. Doing so, negatively felt emotions enable the need to become active better than positive emotions and yet some individuals might intervene and do not allow the emotions to show, because they evoke personal dissonance. As a result the affected individuals experience negative thoughts about the sender of the content (i.e. organization). The research also revealed the detachment from emotional content in general, because of over-reception and excessive media flow poses a problem, when it come to mobilizing audiences in the field of environment activism. Another reason for disconnection from the topic can be contents that do not allow to identify with it on a cognitive level. The shown scenarios and surroundings often are foreign and thus alienating.

7.2. Conclusion and further research

Finally I would like to take a look at my research question again and see if, with my analyzed data, I can answer it.
Does emotional sensitive content about environment activism on social media increase the recipients’ emotional awareness and small-scale activism, when embedded in strategic ‘visual framing’ communication?

First of all, yes, emotional visual content on social media can increase recipient’s emotional awareness. The study showed that both cognitive awareness about the topic, facts and background info and emotional awareness, emotional reaction and connection to the issue was present, even though some participants were not conscious about that fact. Especially the emotional awareness seemed to increase with the reception and discussion of the content. Emotional awareness also includes the consciousness of the inevitable self-involvement with environment pollution and protection, which only some participant inhere.

But in order to develop emotional awareness, the participants have to have reactions to emotional visual contents. During the research it became clear that the reaction to the shown images is manifold and diverse. Both negative and positive connoted emotions appeared and even more complex feelings developed during the process of discussion during the interviews. It was interesting to learn that emotional reactions not only derive from contents but also from the applied frames. The way some participants were talked to, not what was talked about, aroused strong emotional reactions in some cases. These findings indicate that, yes, strong emotional reactions to emotionalized visual contents utilizing the affective visual framing theory can be experienced.

Concluding I aimed to understand if the presence of emotional rations and the overall emotional awareness translate to small-scale activism. The empirical research showed that even though some participants developed interest based on emotional visual contents, the emotional reaction did not suffice to encourage activism. Maybe the wrong emotions were evoked, maybe the right emotions arouse but were not strong enough. This is a question I can’t answer at this point. But, referring to the research question, small-scale activism could not be increased by emotionally framed visual content on social media.

**Further research**

Being able to only generate interest and not activism, emotional visual content on social media only covers short term strategies for emotional online communication. It would be interesting to learn about factors that convert this short-term effect, namely interest in activism, into long-term effects, for example an actual change of behavior like not using the car anymore. If factors for a long-term solution can be found, how can one prevent blunting from emotional contents?
Additionally it could be of interest to study if a higher frequency of receiving emotional contents increases the emotional reaction to the same even more and if it is possible to establish an affective branding with this higher frequency. Maybe not only the intensity of frequency but also the duration of frequency, meaning long-term exposure to certain contents, impacts possible branding.

Finally I think it is very interesting and important to research if the personal connection to the contents increases, if the images show closer surroundings and situations that are even more relatable. This refers to depicting landscapes and problems that are geographically close but also emotionally close so that individuals can easily identify with it. Maybe the willingness to change behavior and impact environment protection also grows with a higher personal connection.
References


## Appendix

### Coding table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consciousness</strong></td>
<td>-Understanding the issue and its importance</td>
<td>The interviewee talks about facts and topics concerning environment pollution and protection and understands the importance of the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Background knowledge</td>
<td>The interview talks about further information, he or she believes are true. The information isn't necessarily right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Analyzing content</td>
<td>The interview consciously analyzes shown content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Conscious about not knowing</td>
<td>The interviewee understands that he/she doesn’t have the full overview of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-No knowledge</td>
<td>The participant has no knowledge about the certain discussed topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Identifying supposed sources of the problem</td>
<td>The participant mentions supposed sources of environment pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Identifying consequences of environment pollution</td>
<td>The interviewee names visible and invisible consequences of environment pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Identifying humans as source of problem</td>
<td>The participant identifies humans as source of environment pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Identifying solutions</td>
<td>The interviewee mentions possible solutions for the problem of environment pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Identifying nature as positive</td>
<td>The participants defines nature as being positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Consciousness about the fact that content targets an emotional reaction</td>
<td>The participant is aware of the aim of the interview and that pictures and commercials try to emotionally influence him/her.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Conscious about own dissonance</td>
<td>The interviewee identifies his/her own dissonance between own opinion and another element.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Conscious about uniqueness</td>
<td>The interviewee understands the uniqueness of a situation in a shown picture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reaction</td>
<td>Reaction “justification”</td>
<td>The interviewee feels the need to justify his/her behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “offended”</td>
<td>The interviewee feels offended by shown content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “anger”</td>
<td>The participant is angry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “attacked - accused”</td>
<td>The interviewee feels addressed and attacked by shown content or questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “insecure”</td>
<td>The interviewee isn’t sure about his/her reaction or opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “apology”</td>
<td>The participant is sorry for something.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “disapproval”</td>
<td>The participant doesn’t like what he/she sees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “social pressure”</td>
<td>The interviewee feels social pressure because his/her opinion doesn’t align with social norms.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “guilt”</td>
<td>The participant feels guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction “devastated”</td>
<td>The interviewee feels devastated by shown content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Reaction “hopeless”</td>
<td>The participant is hopeless.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “scared”</td>
<td>The participant feels scared due to the shown visuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “sad”</td>
<td>The image makes the participant sad.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “annoyed”</td>
<td>The participant is annoyed by contents, organizations and the topic itself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “restriction”</td>
<td>The interviewee fields reminded of own restrictions in his/her life.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “reluctant”</td>
<td>The interviewee is reluctant towards organizations that try to convince him/her of something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “undiscerning”</td>
<td>The participant is undiscerning concerning shown contents and general conditions involving environment pollution and protection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “accusing”</td>
<td>The interviewee is accusing humans of not behaving right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “proud”</td>
<td>The individual is proud of what he/she does for environment protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “confidence”</td>
<td>The participant is confident about what he/she is saying.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “trust”</td>
<td>The participant thinks the visuals transport the feeling of trust.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “familiarity”</td>
<td>The individual thinks that the shown content is familiar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “connection”</td>
<td>The individual feels a strong connection to the people or animals shown in the pictures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “curiousity”</td>
<td>The participant is curious to learn more about the shown content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Reaction “appreciation”</td>
<td>The interviewee looks for appreciation by the researcher or society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “amusement”</td>
<td>The individual is amused by a situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “amazement”</td>
<td>The participant feels amazed by the pictures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “beautiful”</td>
<td>The interviewee finds something beautiful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “happiness”</td>
<td>The participant feels happy because of shown contents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “positive”</td>
<td>The interviewee can’t define what the emotional reaction is, but it is positive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “freedom”</td>
<td>The participant feels freedom transported through visuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “admiration”</td>
<td>The interviewee admires something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “cuteness”</td>
<td>The participant finds something cute.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “compassion”</td>
<td>The participant shows compassion towards animals and other people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “relief”</td>
<td>The interviewee feels relieved after having understood more context of a difficult situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “enthusiasm”</td>
<td>The participant is enthusiastic about environment protection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “excitement”</td>
<td>The interviewee is excited about the shoes content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “optimism”</td>
<td>The participant is optimistic about future situations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “careful”</td>
<td>The participant is careful with his/her opinions and utterances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “ambiguous”</td>
<td>The participant doesn’t know what to feel. His/her emotions are confused.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “overwhelmed”</td>
<td>The participant is overwhelmed by shown pictures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “honesty”</td>
<td>The participants feels talked to in an honest way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “innocence”</td>
<td>The individual feels innocence of animals in a picture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “surprise”</td>
<td>The interviewee is surprised by his reaction or the content of a visual.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “confusion”</td>
<td>The individual is confused by his/her own emotions and the information he/she gets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “no feeling”</td>
<td>The interviewee has no emotional reaction towards the shown topics or questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-self protection</td>
<td>The interviewee pushes emotions away due to self protection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Reaction “no feeling - self protection”</td>
<td>The interviewee doesn’t feel anything in order to not feeling too much and get hurt. He/she does that out of self protection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal connection</strong></td>
<td>-Human involvement</td>
<td>The interviewee understands that humans are impacted by environment pollution or that humans have an impact on environment pollution and protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Connection to society</td>
<td>The interviewee identifies the connection of himself and the society with the topic environment pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Personally involved</td>
<td>The participant directly connects the topic to himself/herself and understands that he/she is involved in environment pollution and protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>The interviewee can identify with content he/she sees in the visuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection about himself</td>
<td>The participant reflect about himself/herself and his/her position within environmental issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally relevant story</td>
<td>The interviewee reads a story from the shown contents and understand them as positive and personally relevant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No involvement</td>
<td>The interviewee doesn’t think that he/she is very involved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No connection to me</td>
<td>The participant doesn’t see any connection of the topic to himself/herself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not my fault</td>
<td>The participant thinks, that environment pollution is not his/her fault and that he/she has no responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not my problem - someone else’s</td>
<td>The interviewee verbalizes that it is not his/her problem, therefore he/she doesn’t have to do anything about it, but it is someone else’s task to change things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>The participant is not interested in the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Personal activism</td>
<td>This theme addresses all mentioning about actions and measurements that the interviewee already does. It also deals with behavioral activism that the interviewee considers doing in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive behavior</td>
<td>The interviewee mentions his personal positive behavior when it come to supporting environment protection through small-scale activism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Plans of activism</td>
<td>The participant plans to become active in different ways to support environment protection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

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Figure 3: Express love bar graph
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Figure 5: Angry bar graph
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Figure 7: Organization circle diagram
Figure 8: Fair trade circle diagram
Figure 9: Straws circle diagram
Figure 10: Time circle diagram
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Figure 13: Answer Forest bar graph
Figures 14: Answer Canoes bar graph
Figure 15: Answer Climate change bar graph
Figure 16: Answer Arctic seal bar graph
Figure 17: Answer Ocean and wildlife bar graph
Figure 1: Age Histogram

Figure 2: Beautiful things bar graph
Answer to statement: I can express love to someone else.

- Like me: 19
- Very much like me: 29
- Very much unlike me: 1
- Neutral: 4
- Unlike me: 2

Figure 3: Express love bar graph

Answer to statement: I enjoy being kind to others.

- Like me: 20
- Very much like me: 34
- Neutral: 1

Figure 4: Being kind bar graph
Answer to statement: I clearly show when I am angry.

- Very much like me: 11
- Like me: 20
- Unlike me: 11
- Neutral: 12
- Very much unlike me: 1

Frequency

Answer to statement: I must stand up for what I believe even if there are negative results.

- Neutral: 19
- Very much like me: 11
- Like me: 23
- Unlike me: 2

Frequency

Figure 5: Angry bar graph

Figure 6: Beliefs bar graph
Figure 7: Organization circle diagram

Figure 8: Fair trade circle diagram
Answer to statement: I reject using straws.

Figure 9: Straws circle diagram

Answer to: How much time do you spend on average on social media per day?

Figure 10: Time circle diagram
Answers to first visual: Forest

Figure 13: Answer Forest bar graph
Answers to second visual: Canoes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It makes me hopeful&quot;</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's inspiring&quot;</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's calling to action&quot;</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's motivating me&quot;</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures 14: Answer Canoes bar graph
Answers to third visual: Climate change

- "It's sad": 24
- "It's calling to action": 23
- "It makes me angry": 17
- "It makes me anxious": 16
- "It shocks me": 16

Figure 15: Answer Climate change bar graph
Answers to fourth visual: Arctic seal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's cute</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me hopeful</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me happy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's inspiring</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16: Answer Arctic seal bar graph
Answers to fifth visual: Ocean and wildlife

Figure 17: Answer Ocean and wildlife bar graph
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Picture 24: Whale Greenpeace
Picture 25: Elephant LDF black and white
Picture 1: LDF colors

Picture 2: LDF aesthetics
Harmony

Leonardo DiCaprio shared an Instagram post about the escalating problem of human-elephant conflict in the Amboseli ecosystem. The conflict leads to premature elephant mortality in the region, threatening the well-being of elephants. STE and other conservation partners have made strides towards improving rangers' patrol strategies to better counter Tim's crop raiding patterns. Find out more about these strategies and the latest in the March issue of the Monthly Trumpet available on their website.

Photo: @ryan.wilkie.photos

Compassion

Leonardo DiCaprio shared another Instagram post about the threat to lions in certain parts of Africa. The post highlights different threats to lions, such as poaching and trade, which are currently poorly understood. The growth of the Asian market for these products poses a growing threat to lions.

Photo: @leonardodicaprio
Picture 6: Sudan

Picture 7: Color Greenpeace
A year ago today, Greenpeace made a promise — we will #RESIST. We promised to resist hate, bigotry, and fear; to protect the air, water, and climate we all share; and to rise up and defend those most vulnerable to social and environmental injustice. We put that promise on display for the world to see, hanging a massive, hand-painted banner of resistance on Donald Trump’s fifth day as president of the United States.

On the anniversary of this bold action, we

Gefällt 13.908 Mal

25. JANUAR

Kommentar hinzufügen ...

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“This is a unique opportunity for us to make history and move a step forward in defense of our oceans.”

Javier Bardem

“They exist to protect these waters, which provide invaluable refuge to marine wildlife.”

Alejandro Bedoya

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Martin Luther King Jr.

“We’re bringing the fight against climate change straight to the fossil fuel companies that knew about its effects & intentionally misled the public to protect their profits.”

Bill de Blasio

New York City Mayor
Picture 10: Protesters
Picture 11: Controversial content

Picture 12: Provocation
greenpeace 300 villagers took to the water in Don Kham Puang Island in Thailand to protest dirty energy yesterday, and it looked amazing from the skies.

Keishatalt: Awesome
arleutami: Respect!
ngme92: 
jd_photography_official: awesome
_ramasetya: Great!!
llana: wn @kromnutt

Gefällt 6.778 Mal
17. MÄRZ 2017
Kommentar hinzufügen ...
Picture 16: Climate change

Picture 17: Arctic seal
Picture 23: Elephant LDF

A ten-day old baby elephant lies covered in blankets after being rescued from the Ewaso river in Samburu National Reserve. The tiny calf was spotted running up and down the opposite bank of the river vocalizing loudly, its family nowhere to be seen. It then jumped into the crocodile infested torrent and began to swim. Staff from nearby Elephant Bedroom Camp risked their lives by leaping into the river after the baby began struggling against the strong currents. With the help of Save The Elephants and Nasuluu rangers, the calf, aptly named Ewaso, was airlifted to @f.e.s.c.u.e in the Mathews Range where it is reported to be doing well. Our STE teams in the field will continue to search for the mother in the hope she can one day be reunited with her calf. Photos @janewynyard

Gefällt 28.564 Mal
22. NOVEMBER 2017

Kommentar hinzufügen ...

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Picture 24: Whale Greenpeace

Whales are increasingly at risk from microplastics in the oceans, according to a new study. Species such as whale sharks and basking sharks, which feed through filtering seawater for plankton, are ingesting the tiny particles of indigestible plastic which are swimming in oceans around the world. Some of these species have evolved to swallow hundreds or even thousands of cubic metres of seawater a day, but taking in microplastic can block their ability to absorb nutrients, and may...

Gefällt 13.229 Mal
5. FEBRUAR

Kommentar hinzufügen ...

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Picture 25: Elephant LDF black and white