



## Master's Thesis Evaluation Form

Student's name: Daria TSYMBAL

Thesis title: Media framing of the Norilsk oil spill

Name of the supervisor: Jan MIESSLER

Name of the opponent: Jan BALON

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis? Please give your reasons for the suggested grade in detail below.

1. *Does the author show understanding of one or more theories, and use theory to generate a hypothesis or to make the problem area more understandable.*

Comments:

The underlying issue of Daria Tsymbal's thesis is a question whether the contemporary Russian media handle inconvenient events in a similar way as their Soviet predecessors in the time of Chernobyl nuclear plant meltdown. Although Norilsk oil spill is a similar kind of event, the situation is not the same: various Russian media organizations are now in various different positions in relation to the centre of power in Kremlin while the availability of foreign news has changed the journalistic field and forced the authorities to handle information about environmental crises in a different way. Therefore, there are two levels to look at: first, how does the current Russian government handle the crisis; and second, how much do different kinds of media organization differ in their coverage of the crisis and does their coverage seem to reflect their relationship to the government?

The thesis uses a specific approach called Situational Crisis Communication Theory in combination with framing, a more traditional methods used in communication research. Given the topic, both approaches are well chosen, well explained and used in a productive way.

2. *Is the research question articulated clearly and properly? Is the research question sufficiently answered in the conclusion?*

Comments:

The main research question - "How does media ownership and closeness of the media to the government influence the framing of Norilsk Oil Spill?" (p. 8) - reflects the core of the issue and is answered in the conclusion (pp. 53-54) in a way implying that the proximity to the centre of power may indeed lead to a less critical coverage of the (environmental) crisis and its consequences, even though this could have been formulated in a more explicit way.



3. *Is the thesis based on relevant research and literature and does it accurately summarize and integrate the information?*

Comments:

The literature review starts directly with accounts on mediatization of environmental events before covering more general issues such as framing or the Situational Crisis Communication Theory. The literature is presented well and with focus on relevant issues, the scope of the quoted works is wide and usually well-chosen. However, the author does not really explain her theoretical choices, e.g. why she uses particular theories or concepts and not others. This may be linked to the author's general style - going straight to the point without explaining too much where and why she is going to - but still, readers should be provided with more guidelines. Overall, however, the theoretical choices themselves do make sense.

4. *What is the quality of the data or the other sources? Are the sample method, data collection and data analysis appropriate?*

Comments:

The material for analysis has been selected reasonably and the analysis itself has been executed correctly. The quantitative approach has its limits but it is a legitimate methodological choice for this kind of problem and allows for making conclusions and formulating answers to the research question.

5. *Are the findings relevant to the research question? Are the conclusions of the thesis based on strong arguments?*

Comments:

The findings are directly related to the research questions. The conclusions are meaningfully supported by the findings.

6. *Are the author's thoughts distinguished unambiguously from the borrowed ideas?*

Comments:

The quotations and paraphrases are clearly signposted.

7. *Is the thesis containing original/innovative research (in terms of topic, approach, and/or findings)?*

Comments:

The topic is relevant and timely, the methodological approach is innovative in its use of Situational Crisis Communication Theory and standard in its use of framing, the findings are not surprising given what is already known about contemporary Russian media landscape.



8. *What is the quality of style and other formal requirements?*

Comments:

The style is concise, sometimes it would be good to focus more on making sure that the reader follows what is going on and why. The text contains some unusual formulations that seem to be a result of imperfect proofreading, but they do not prevent understanding.

9. *Are there any other strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, which are not included in the previous questions? Please list them if any.*

Comments:

10. *What topic do you suggest for the discussion in the thesis defence?*

Comments:

How much do the conclusion confirm or contradict the reputation of the Russian media being subordinated to the Kremlin?

11. *Declaration that the supervisor has read the result of the originality check in the system: [ ] Theses [12%] Turnitin [11%] Original (Urkund)*

Supervisor's comment on the originality check result:

The antiplagiarism software only highlights quotations that are clearly and properly signposted.

Overall assessment of the thesis:

*(Please, state clearly whether the thesis is or is not recommended for a defence and write the main reasons for the recommendation).*

The thesis is recommended for the defence. It deals with relevant topic using an innovative framework of Situational Crisis Communication Theory, it is well executed and it supports its conclusions with sound evidence.

Proposed grade:

*(A- B: excellent, C-D: very good, E: good, F: fail)*

B - excellent

Date: September 10, 2021

Signature: Jan MIESSLER