

OPPONENT'S REVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION THESIS

Doctoral candidate: Mgr. Jakub Sedláček

Title: Big Social Data and the Study of Celebrity Fandom

Supervisor: doc. PhDr. Dino Numerato, Ph.D.

Opponent: prof. Peter Mikuláš, PhD.

The topic of thesis is chosen appropriately, relevant, and adequately reflects the current requirements of theory and practice. The design, but above all the quality of the implementation of the work has the potential to enrich the analysed issues not only at the national but also at the global level. The thesis also demonstrates that sociology belongs to the main and inseparable parts of the so-called celebrity studies.

The structure of the thesis is good, Sedláček consistently proceeds from the general to the specific, while his authorial handwriting and informed knowledge of the literature used can be felt from the text. The author's maturity is also evidenced by the responsible editing, both text and the graphic design of the work.

The theoretical elaboration of the topic is very precise. The author draws on a reasonable amount of literature of adequate quality as well as of massive quantity, with focus on international sources. In relation to the conceptualization of celebrity, I note that the doctoral student has used a wide range of approaches, which leads to the creation of a plastic image of celebrity as an evolving cultural phenomenon. Chapter 1.3 also discusses the anchoring of celebrity issues in the social media environment. At this point, it was also desirable to (at least briefly) introduce the discourse of micro-fame, or the transformation of traditional (mass media) modes of fame. It was also appropriate to conceptualize the term influencer already in this section, so that it would be clearly grasped in the following sections, when the author returns to it repeatedly.

Other parts of the theoretical treatment are also of a very high standard. The author has incorporated all topics with a stronger affinity to methodological issues, such as the challenges and limits of big data research, so after the theoretical part the reader already has a wide range of information on critical approaches to research.

Section 1.4. Platforms of Celebrity is a bit divergent, as Sedláček analyses the nature of several social media in connection to celebrity, but in the following sections he only deals with the Facebook platform. Given the large scope of the thesis, it was appropriate to focus this section only on the platform that was later part of the research, although it should be stressed that the scope of the thesis is within the range of the guidelines resulting from the Opatření děkana FSV UK č. 18/2017.

I have almost no reservations about the factual quality of the information presented. A more minor remark, rather at the level of possible discussion, is the labelling of social media platforms as "social networks" by Sedláček. It is more accurate to call these entities as SNS (social network services), as social networks are expressions resulting from these services.

I highly appreciate section 2.3 Epistemological Questions, which perhaps most explicitly demonstrates the author's competence in the critical construction of sociological research.

The PhD student chooses a procedure in which he not only correctly elaborates big data research in connection with the roles of celebrities or their fandoms, but also establishes his own method for data prediction, which he refers to as "lift buckets". I conclude that the choice of methodology was appropriate given the aims of the thesis; their actual elaboration is of an excellent standard. As a result, the quality of the results far exceeds the general expectations arising from the medium of dissertation thesis. Also, the thesis provides an innovative methodological tool that has the potential to enrich theory and practice.

I consider it a certain methodological shortcoming that there is little emphasis in the thesis on the time of the research implementation, or I did not find the explicitly mentioned framing myself. Also, the tables and graphs should also contain time data, as these are crucial for the interpretation of the data obtained.

The aims of the thesis are articulated well, and the research questions correspond appropriately with them. However, with a research design set out in this way, I would also expect to generate hypotheses that are not stated by the PhD student. The results are very varied and form a base that is so rich that its interpretation is beyond the scope of the dissertation. Perhaps it would have been appropriate to think of a more addressed solution to the sub-problems, rather than defacto substituting the work of the whole research team. In particular, one can point to Figures 43 and 44, which could serve as a solid basis for an independent scientific study. However, little space is devoted to the interpretation of the results contained therein by the PhD student. Certainly, trying to interpret the results in detail does not reflect the aims of the thesis

- nevertheless, it is a pity that a number of really interesting results are commented on by the PhD student without a deeper pause on their deeper substance.

In terms of contribution to the development of theory and practice, I assess this work as extremely fruitful. In addition to a good theoretical and methodological elaboration, I highly appreciate the author's effort to present and test his own methodological approach or inventiveness.

I am convinced that the assessed thesis is a valuable contribution to the social sciences and that the PhD student demonstrates in it the ability to adequately construct a scientific text and to elaborate advanced scientific research.

Questions

1. You state that the data encoding was done manually. How long did this procedure take you and what were the biggest problems you encountered during data encoding?
2. The data obtained provide a number of interesting insights into the communication behaviour of top-fans in relation to individual celebrity profiles (e.g., Fig. 61). For example, it is remarkable to look at the fans of Karel Gott's profile, which e.g. are above average willing to engage in disinformation discourse, are pro-Putins, and in particular, incline towards the topic of Christianity. How can this particular variant of the research be interpreted?

After its successful defence, I propose Mgr. Jakub Sedláček to be awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.)

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