



Master's Thesis Evaluation Form

Student's name: Weronika Machala

Thesis title: The portrayal of womanhood and femininity on social media. A qualitative case study of selected content on TikTok.

Name of the supervisor: PhDr. Lenka Vochocová, Ph.D

Name of the opponent: Mgr. Marie Heřmanová, Ph.D

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.*

The thesis focuses on the portrayal of femininity on social media, specifically TikTok. For this purpose, the author chose to build on the theories of Simone de Beauvoir, Donna Haraway and Judith Butler. While I think that these concepts are appropriate for the topic of thesis and the author demonstrates a good understanding of them, I also think that the theoretical part is somewhat broad and vague and it needs more robust references to academic literature. The mentioned writings and theories have been extensively studied, applied, criticized and this section should serve as a literature overview and therefore provide a broader critique of the discussed theories and approaches. It would have perhaps been more useful to narrow the literature to one concept (either Butler or Haraway would have worked great) and provide a more detailed critique and application, including a clear explanation of why this particular concepts helps with the chosen research question.

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

The research questions are appropriate and sufficiently answered in the conclusion. However, the research questions are only relevant to the last part of the thesis (the case study) – the literature overview communicates with the research questions only in a vague and very broad sense, see above.

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

The author references a variety of academic sources and demonstrates a sufficient knowledge of current academic knowledge on the topic. There are some recent studies (published in 2023/2024) that deal directly with the notion of femininity on TikTok (for example Sykes 2024) that could have been included as well (but as this is very dynamic field of research, it is possible that some of it was published after the thesis was completed). However, as mentioned above, I think a process of “streamlining” of the theoretical part into a more



focused and therefore detailed overview would have been helpful. I am not entirely convinced by the comparison between new and old types of media included in the theoretical part – if the thesis focused solely on social media and explored the appropriate literature on the topic of gender representation on social media (with Butler and Harraway as the main theoretical background), I think it would have made the arguments clearer and more persuasive.

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

The author includes a dataset as an appendix of the thesis – the dataset is appropriate, the chosen method (multimodal analysis) is also appropriately chosen regarding the type of data (video content from TikTok) and the qualitative approach. It is up to debate if the dataset is sufficiently big (40 videos) – I think it works well within the structure of the thesis as it is, where the empirical analysis is only the last part (case study), used as an illustration of the discussed topic, it is not central to the thesis (I think it could have been, see my main comment in the overall assessment).

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

The findings are relevant and have a clear connection to the proposed research questions. The conclusion discusses mainly the findings from the case study and brings some interesting observation, that could definitely serve as a basis for further research (for example, the significant difference between the analysed hashtags, as they seem to represent almost opposing notions of femininity).

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

The author quotes sources according to the standards of academic work and the structure of the thesis makes it clear what are their own findings and what are arguments based on literature.

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

The thesis contributes to the growing body of research on the representation of femininity on social media and the connection between social media communication and gender performativity. While the findings are not necessarily innovative, they are original and present and interesting contribution to the research field.

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

The language of the text is somewhat confusing, there are many incomplete sentences (missing verbs etc.). The text is readable, but it could certainly use another round of proofreading.



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

I have one comment on a specific sentence/paragraph (that however, in my opinions, illustrates other such instances in the theoretical part of the thesis). On page 12, the author states: *what they {Butler, Harraway and Beauvoir} see as a traditional view is one where femininity is seen as a construct based questionable biological markers and shared „woman“ needs and experiences. Additionally, it can be based on cultural or biological confinements and limitations.* – I think the definition of traditional womanhood needs references in literature. I would assume that traditional (as opposed to performative and constructed) would mean rooted in gender essentialism, i.e. femininity is *not* constructed via culture, it's something we are born with, it's inate, „natural“ – it is gender essentialism that Beauvoir, Butler and Harraway are deconstructing. I think that this could have been central to the analysis as the difference between content posted under the hashtags “femininity” and “womanhood” illustrates this tension in a very interesting way.

However, since the theoretical part lacks focus, this is not explored in more detail – it is a missed opportunity to make a connection between the theory and the analysis.

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

Could the author expand on their findings in terms of discussing the differences in content posted under the two hashtags? Are there any theories as to why “womanhood” seems to represent the notion of community and empowerment, while “femininity” denotes mostly manipulative performance of gender essentialism? (I have my own theories, but would very much like to hear what Weronika Machala thinks about this, based on her analysis).

Overall assessment of the thesis:

Weronika Machala's thesis presents a contribution to a highly dynamic field of research on the representation of femininity on social media. The research questions follow this topic to the platform TikTok, and the empirical part relies on multimodal analysis of TikTok content. The overall topic, the research questions and the methodology are appropriately chosen and executed. The thesis has a logical structure.

The language of the text is however not always comprehensible, and the thesis contains many incomplete or nonsensical sentences, some paragraphs read as “fillers” that could have been edited out. However, the text fulfils the formal requirements for a master thesis.

My main critical comment is the focus of the theoretical part and, consequently, the connection between the theory and analysis. As mentioned above, the theoretical part is rather long and lacks concrete focus on particular concepts and authors. The inclusion of the comparative aspect of old and new media doesn't really add anything new to the discussed topic (the representation on femininity on TikTok). If this comparison is included, then questions such as how is the representation of femininity in media influenced by the distinction between legacy media (created by gatekeepers and professionals) and social media (based on user generated content) should have been answered. In other words, what is different when women are talked about in the media and when they talk about themselves using media? These questions are not answered and in this context, the inclusion of the



comparative aspect feels redundant and included at the expense of a more robust empirical analysis.

Proposed grade:

C – very good

Date: 29.1.2025

Signature: