

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Cai Qingyun

Thesis title: Sang culture: a pessimistic subculture in the Chinese Cyberspace

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Miessler Jan

Affiliation: KMS IKSŽ FSV UK

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Methodology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Thesis structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific):

The thesis generally follows the approved research proposal.

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	A
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	B
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	B
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	C
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	B
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	B

COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems):

The thesis deals with Sang subculture, a recent Chinese phenomenon characterized by resignation and pessimism displayed in various forms by Chinese youth on social platforms. The spirit of this subculture went against official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) current ideology with its emphasis on positive attitude required from the population. The research questions (p. 35) therefore ask about significance of the Sang subculture on the Chinese internet, about framing of this subculture by CCP's organ People's Daily and, comparatively, about discourse dealing with Sang subculture on Zhihu, a leading Q&A online forum in China.

The thesis introduces a wide range of relevant literature, including both classic accounts and more contemporary works. It does a very good job in covering the academic and media debate about the phenomenon of the Sang culture. In theoretical part, the author highlights five theories she intends to use, but does not really explain her choice nor what is the relationship between these theories: are they compatible or do they contradict each other?

Regarding methodology, the thesis uses a combination of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and qualitative content analysis (QCA). As qualitative content analysis is quite a general term, the combination of CDA and QCA that the author says she uses (p. 39) should be explicitly explained.

Nevertheless, the actual analysis is executed well. It manages to identify relevant issues and links them meaningfully with the theories from earlier parts. The whole thesis thus makes best sense to the reader when looking back after finishing it.

As the topic is interesting and the academic debate about it in China is likely to be impacted by the official ideology, the thesis provides a contribution to academic knowledge, with certain limitation that the author herself acknowledges.

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	C
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	B
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	A
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	B
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	C
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	B
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	A

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):

The structure of the thesis could be improved. For example, the concept of subculture is explained already in the Introduction and in fact, the whole chapter provides context and theoretical background which is not ideal. However, this is more an exception, and the reader will usually find things in their expected places.

Some formulations could be done better (p. 21: “97 literatures are found by searching the keyword ‘Sang culture’”), but overall, the text is easy to follow and stylistic or grammar errors are rare. Although the author provides a lot of references throughout the text, paraphrasing of the other authors’ ideas should be done with greater care. Otherwise, the formal aspects of the thesis are good.

4. OVERAL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis’s strengths and weaknesses):

The thesis introduces the phenomenon and the academic and media debate about it well, and the analysis of the Chinese discourse about the subculture is also executed well. What is missing are some links and explanations for some of the author’s choices, especially regarding the theoretical framework.

5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	In theoretical part, please explain the reasons for choosing these particular five theories and not others.
5.2	How exactly does the combination of CDA QCA work in this thesis?
5.3	
5.4	

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis’ URKUND score.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	The parts highlighted by the software usually have references, although the author should have done a better job with paraphrasing.
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6. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

A excellent

B very good (above average but with some weaknesses)

- C** good (average with some important weaknesses)
D satisfactory (below average with significant weaknesses)
E marginal pass (meeting minimal requirements)
F not recommended for defence

If the mark is an “F”, please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

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Date: September 5, 2022

Signature:

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer’s behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.