

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

<b>Student Matriculation No.</b>	<b>Glasgow</b> 2486717 <b>DCU</b> <b>Charles</b> 47459870
<b>Dissertation Title</b>	#CartelTikTok: How Drug Cartels Utilize Social Media

<p><b>Word Count Penalty</b> (1-15% over/under = 1gr point; 15-20% over/under = 2 gr points; 20-25% over/under = 3 gr points; more than 25% over/under = 0 fail)</p> <p><b>Word Count:</b> 22,562 <b>Suggested Penalty:</b> no penalty</p>		

### JOINT GRADING (subject to agreement of the external examiner and approval at Joint Exam Board)

**Final Agreed Mark** : A3 [20]

### DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

Assessment Criteria	Rating
<b>A. Structure and Development of Answer</b>	
This refers to your organisational skills and ability to construct an argument in a coherent and original manner	
• <i>Originality of topic</i>	Excellent
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Excellent
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Excellent
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Excellent
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Very Good
<b>B. Use of Source Material</b>	
This refers to your skills to select and use relevant information and data in a correct manner	
• <i>Evidence of reading and review of published literature</i>	Very Good
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Excellent
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Very Good
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Excellent
<b>C. Academic Style</b>	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	Excellent
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Excellent
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	Excellent
• <i>Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?</i>	Yes
• <i>Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)</i>	Yes
• <i>Appropriate word count</i>	Yes

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### ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

#### **Reviewer 1**

This is a fantastic dissertation on a timely topic that lacks attention from scholars working in International Relations and Security: how transnational crime organisations (specifically cartels) use TikTok. The dissertation is very well grounded in relevant contextual and theoretical literature on transnational crime organisations, social media and security studies, especially vernacular security studies. The author's ability to identify gaps and critique contemporary state of the art literature is very impressive, and at a level beyond what I would expect from a masters student. The dissertation draws upon a cutting edge methodology that is again engaging with innovative work in the field and applying it to a new topic so as to contribute to knowledge around how cartels use TikTok. In terms of both digital ethnography and visual content analysis, the project is rigorous and consistent.

By engaging with such an impressive set of data - 250 TikTok videos - the dissertation provides an important empirical contribution, that provides a detailed and rich study interpreting the content of cartel TikToks. The findings are clearly presented, and the discussion chapter really highlights the significance of the data analysis. Figures and tables are used appropriately to highlight key points. Overall, this is an outstanding dissertation, and there are only two minor areas for improvement:

- 1) the author could make a much better use of page numbers in references.
- 2) the argument about cartels not being political could be better phrased, as much literature on corporations and on political economy highlights how private companies are inherently political.

These are however, minor points, and in sum, this dissertation is very well written and a delight to read. It engages with security studies in a critical and constructive way, and draws upon extensive original empirical analysis to provide a contribution to knowledge. This is beyond what I would expect from a masters dissertation and the author should be proud of such an achievement.

#### **Reviewer 2**

The dissertation presents an original and very interesting insight into the phenomenon of narco-influencing. Specifically, it examines the ways in which two major Mexican narco-cartels use social media. The goal of the paper is clearly defined, relevant and very interesting.

The author appropriately places the problem in the disciplinary context of studying the relationship between social media and security with a specific focus on organized crime.

Methodologically, the research is based on digital ethnography and visual content analysis. The analysis itself is very well done and feels robust and convincing (particularly after reviewing the appendix with codes). I also appreciate that the author devoted a large space to the interpretation of visual themes. While being very well-contextualized, the results offer not only a deep insight into the functioning of the two specific cartels, but provide valuable information that could be generalized to similar actors (criminal organizations).

From an overall point of view, I consider the research to be excellent. The topic is well established in the disciplinary literature and the empirical analysis is based on a solid methodological foundation. Last but not least, the author has utilized a rich resource base and has crafted a dissertation that is a pleasure to read from both in terms of substance and form.



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