




## ASSESSMENT FORM BA-THESIS MEDIA STUDIES

Each of the following aspects must be a pass.

<b>Name of student:</b>	Helge Moes		
<b>Student number:</b>	11348801		
<b>Programme:</b>	Bachelor Media and Information		
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<i>Virtual Community on Social Media: a Case Study of the Digital Society School</i>		
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Dr.ir. Jaap Kamps	<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Second reader:</b>	Dr. Michael Karabinos	<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Michael</b>
<b>Date:</b>	June 25, 2021	<b>Grade:</b>	<b>9.0</b>
		<b>Comments</b>	
<b>1. Research set-up and framework</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Clarity of the research question and research design (relevant elaboration of sub-questions);</li><li>● Justification of the research question and set-up (points of interest: historical / theoretical / methodological framework, analytical perspectives, social relevance, working method)</li><li>● Limited (critical) representation of the research field (e.g. theories, methods, research findings)</li><li>● Degree of difficulty of the object/research.</li></ul>		<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The general topic on how (real-world) organizations are represented in, and expanded by, their presence in online media, and how this in turn creates a virtual community of a broader set of (real-world) stakeholders, is very relevant and interesting.</li><li>- The general problem and the specific case study of the digital society school (DDS) is very timely and relevant, and captured in clear research questions.</li><li>- The thesis follows a mixed methods approach, combining a case study of DDS, with stakeholder interviews, an extensive social media analysis, and novel heuristic evaluation from the user (or community member)'s point of view, inspired by UX analysis in usability studies.</li><li>- While a single case study has obvious limitations in generalizability, the depth and detail of a concrete case is a clear strength and fits the early, exploratory stage of our understanding of this phenomenon.</li></ul> <p><b>Points of improvement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Given the general problem motivating the thesis, the choice of DDS may feel unusual (as this is a rather small and relatively unknown organization, not particularly known for a vibrant online community). This is actually also a potential strength as the overwhelming number of organizations is an SME (there's only a "big 5" and billions of small organizations), and most traditional organizations are still in an early stage of fully embracing the opportunities of the online world (ironically, the corona pandemic did more to promote this than decades of experience in online platform dictating much of our daily, non-professional, lives).</li><li>- There is excellent awareness and discussion of the limitations of the study, which is an excellent exploratory study covering an amazing amount of ground covering multiple angles, and using effective qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A typical next step would be to formulate concrete hypotheses on particular aspects of the overall problem (rather than the holistic view of the case study), to be studied in detail in follow up research. With all the many interesting observations, is there any</li></ul>	



	aspect of the information sharing practices that stands out as worthy of more detailed follow up research?
<b>2. Implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Clear explanation of the methods used and / or the definition of the corpus;</li><li>● Quality of execution of research: depth / breadth;</li><li>● Clarity in the analysis of results;</li><li>● Originality in application theory and / or analysis;</li><li>● Conclusion and critical evaluation of the research: ties back to literature theoretical framework and relevance.</li></ul>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The thesis is embedded in a wealth of literature, even transcending media studies.</li><li>- The study design consists of three complementary studies, which are meticulously motivated and detailed in the thesis and appendixes. The study design is novel and reported in full detail, allowing for reproducibility and reuse for related research questions.</li><li>- Each of the three parts individually would already be an impressive thesis. The scale of each is impressive and essentially sufficient for publication (content analysis and interviews in the case study, 5 platforms in the social media analysis and 5 participants in the focus group/usability study).</li><li>- The qualitative analysis is strong and reveals great talent and dedication, the quantitative analysis may not have the most advanced statistical analysis but stands out by the impressive findings.</li></ul> <p>Points of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The case study takes center stage, which is a clear strength. And clearly the scope isn't warranting any sweeping generalizations or final conclusions. Still, a more detailed and critical discussion of the findings in light of the literature analysis and general problem would have been possible. In particular, it only takes one exception to break a general rule! E.g., some concepts may have been too vague to operationalize, or simply not understood by participants, or even completely outdated (it's clear why Rheingold talked about "virtual communities" in the 1980's when he first phoned in to text only bulletin-boards and was amazed he made online "friends" he never met in person -- but does this still work this way for Google-kids?). So is this challenging and contributing to the general literature on this topic, even suggesting ways forward?</li></ul>
<b>3. Organisation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Logical structure of argumentation (i.e. substantiation of conclusion regarding the structure of main and sub questions);</li><li>● Clear and coherent structure at thesis, chapter, section, paragraph and sentence level);</li><li>● Clear organization chapters.</li></ul>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The thesis is organized clearly and coherently, following the logical design of the study, and clear sub-questions for each chapter.</li><li>- The organization reveals a lot of effort and eye for detail, resulting in a very well-structured thesis.</li><li>- Very complete with additional information and analysis in extensive appendixes.</li></ul> <p>Points of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- It is customary to separate the study design (mostly in appendixes) and the results and analysis of the collected data. This is not only a stylistic choice, but helps bridge the general problem to the specific, pragmatic choices of the study design, and then next execute the design as introduced. Admittedly, when presenting only the case study, for example in a specialized journal where one can assume the reader is familiar with the topic and literature, a more integrated report is often used.</li></ul>
<b>4. Professionalism</b>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Well written revealing great talent, great effort, and great care.</li></ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>●Language use: academic writing style, appropriate language use (grammar, spelling, vocabulary, terminology, style);</li><li>●Application consistent / required referencing style (in text citations, bibliography);</li><li>●Clear design / cover page / attachments</li><li>●Relevance and effectiveness of tables / illustrations etc.;</li><li>●Required length;</li><li>●Evidence of independent scientific practice.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Very clear, detailed and careful discussion of the results and findings.</li></ul> <p>Points of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Only minor things: captions for figures and tables, some tables are raw exports.</li></ul>
<p><b>5. Independency (1<sup>st</sup> reader)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>●Responsiveness to feedback;</li><li>●Dependency on supervision;</li><li>●Punctuality.</li></ul>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The student worked very independently, and very limited coaching and structuring was sufficient to design, execute, and report on the study. Most guidance was given on shaping the study and the reporting of empirical research in the final thesis.</li></ul> <p>Points of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- None.</li></ul>
<p><b>6. Additional comments</b></p>	<p>Thesis thesis as part of MediaLab 118219058Y (30EC). Student is part of the honor's program.</p>