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Analysist Verbal Cultural Aggression in Islam Makhachev's UFC Fight on the UFC YouTube Channel

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Abstract

This study explores the forms and functions of verbal cultural aggression in digital communication surrounding Islam Makhachev's UFC fight on the Ve Chain 322 YouTube channel, the organization's official channel. Combat sports match often become a platform for expressing identity, where cultural boundaries, beliefs, and citizenship collide in virtual public spaces. Using a qualitative approach and Digital Discourse Analysis (DDA) methods, this research examines hate speech, cultural stereotypes, and religious sentiments in the comment sections of key Makhachev fight videos. The findings indicate three main patterns of this verbal aggression: a West-versus-non-West identity polarization, negative labeling based on religion, and symbolic dehumanization through internet slang. This aggressive behavior not only represents fan fanaticism but also serves as a tool to legitimize cultural dominance and as a form of ideological resistance among users. This phenomenon proves that UFC YouTube comment sections act as a platform for cultural competition that widens social divides online. The study concludes that there's a need for better digital literacy and content management that's more sensitive to the complexity of cultural narratives in the global sports industry. Theoretically implication, these results expand Digital Discourse Analysis by showing how online sports fandom mirrors worldwide geopolitical and religious conflicts. Practically implication, this research underscores the pressing necessity for better digital literacy among international sports fans, as well as culturally aware algorithmic moderation and content management tactics to reduce online toxicity on global combat sports platforms.

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi wujud dan fungsi agresi budaya verbal dalam komunikasi digital seputar laga UFC Islam Makhachev pada kanal YouTube Ve Chain 322, kanal resmi organisasi tersebut. Pertandingan olahraga tarung sering kali menjadi tempat pengekspresian identitas, di mana batasan budaya, keyakinan, dan kewarganegaraan saling berbenturan di ruang publik virtual. Dengan menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode Analisis Wacana Digital (AWD), riset ini meneliti ujaran kebencian, stereotip kultural, serta sentimen keagamaan dalam kolom komentar video-video penting pertarungan Makhachev.Temuan riset mengindikasikan tiga corak utama agresi verbal tersebut: polarisasi identitas "Barat melawan non-Barat", pelabelan negatif berbasis agama, dan penurunan derajat kemanusiaan secara simbolis menggunakan bahasa gaul internet. Tindakan agresif ini tidak hanya merepresentasikan fanatisme pendukung, tetapi juga menjadi alat untuk melegitimasi dominasi budaya serta bentuk perlawanan ideologis antar-pengguna. Fenomena ini membuktikan bahwa kolom komentar YouTube UFC berperan sebagai ajang kompetisi budaya yang memperlebar jurang pemisah sosial di dunia maya. Studi ini menyimpulkan perlunya pemahaman digital yang lebih baik dan penataan konten yang lebih peka terhadap kerumitan narasi budaya dalam industri olahraga global. Implikasi

secara teoritis, temuan ini memperkaya Analisis Diskursus Digital dengan mengungkap bagaimana penggemar olahraga online mereproduksi ketegangan geopolitik dan agama global. Impliaksi secara praktis, penelitian ini menyoroti kebutuhan mendesak untuk meningkatkan literasi digital di antara penonton olahraga global, serta strategi moderasi algoritma dan manajemen konten yang sensitif budaya guna mengurangi toksisitas online pada platform olahraga bertarung internasional.

Kata Kunci: *Agresi Verbal; Budaya; Kajian Wacana Digital.*

INTRODUCTION

In combat sports, particularly boxing and mixed-martial arts, often become arenas for sharp verbal jabs and intense psychological skirmishes. In today's digital age, watching these high-stakes competitions is remarkably easy, especially with UFC bouts streamed on YouTube. Arivianto et al. (2025) note that the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is the world's largest MMA organization, famous for staging contests among fighters skilled in a range of disciplines, including boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai, wrestling, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Inside the octagon, competitors aim to win through knockout (KO), technical knockout (TKO), submission, or decision.

Mukhamadiev (2018) explained that a few days before the match starts, there are usually several stages that fighters have to go through before they begin competing, ranging from the weigh-in to the press conference. The weigh-in is the process of measuring body weight a day before the fight takes place. Meanwhile, the press conference is one way to promote the match. The goal is to make the fight more exciting.

Aridhona and Setia (2022) stated in this press conference session that there is usually a tradition or culture of verbally attacking each other called verbal aggression. Verbal aggression behavior is the act of cursing, mocking, and belittling in a way that can hurt other people's feelings. There are several fighters who like to practice this behavior, from boxing legend Muhammad Ali to one of the most iconic MMA fighters, Conor McGregor. There's also Sean Strickland, known as a no-filter fighter, and Dillon Denis, who once angered Khabib Nurmagomedov's team with his sharp comments. Digital media platforms like YouTube have the power to construct the image of public figures according to their preferences. In this case, the image of the fighters is built and shaped by the UFC's YouTube account. Building an athlete's image is very important in this sport, because an athlete's image can affect marketability, sponsorship opportunities, and the overall reputation of the UFC.

This study uses three theories: digital discourse theory by Rodney H. Jones, which includes elements of text, context, action, and interaction analysis; verbal aggression; and the theory of spectacle culture developed by Guy Debord (in Kellner, 2012). Spectacle culture is a culture whose society is filled with spectacles, where politics, entertainment, news, and other social life are dramatically packaged to attract public attention. In the context of verbal aggression on social media, Rohmawati et al. (2024) state that it is very appropriate to use digital discourse analysis, which indeed focuses on the development and linguistic issues, ranging from language use on social media to verbal aggression. Furthermore, verbal aggression as part of communication is a human interaction activity involving one or more people, usually with a certain purpose. Specifically, Androutsopoulos (2015) emphasizes that

digital discourse analysis also highlights the future direction of language and digital communication. So, according to Zappavigna (2021) on digital discourse analysis theory, discourse is not only shaped by the media but also by user interactions like comments, likes, shares, and more.

Some previous studies on digital discourse analysis (DDA) were conducted by Ramadhani and Nurhaqiqi (2026) with the title "Digital Discourse Analysis of Speech Acts in the Content 'Ngobrolin Goblok secara Komprehensif' on YouTube Channel @Felix Siauw," which found that Ustad Felix applies an educational communication strategy to guide his audience to be more critical and rational. Mahesi & Chairil (2026) looked at the spread of the song 'Backburner' on the TikTok platform through interactions and actions on the content, reflected in features like likes, comments, and shares, showing emotional engagement with the music. On the other hand, in the analysis of ideology and power, narratives related to patriarchy, representation, and social practices in content using the song 'Backburner' were identified. A study by Putri and Suksmawati (2025) raised the issue of Gibran Rakabuming Raka's political reputation construction through the #LaporMasWapres program on Instagram using digital discourse analysis, finding that Gibran's political reputation is not only produced unilaterally but also negotiated through public support and resistance on social media. From the Spectacle Culture approach, a study by Muhammad & Simatupang (2026) focused on the practice of trash talks or verbal aggression carried out by UFC fighters during press conferences and UFC sports media, finding that the performance is entertaining, combining psychological tactics, entertainment, and self-promotion. Additionally, Urazovich (2021) studied the rudeness strategies used by Conor McGregor and Floyd Mayweather, finding that the rudeness strategies were deliberately done to promote fights and make the matches more.

The strength of this study is that it takes an in-depth look at digital discourse analysis across various platforms (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram) and the culture of spectator phenomena (UFC trash talks) using an empirical approach. However, its weakness is that the research still focuses on individual speech tactics, local audience responses, or commercial entertainment, without connecting the systemic impact that spreads across fields. As for the current research gap, there hasn't been a study that combines digital discourse analysis with the dynamics of social media interactions in the context of verbal aggression in the public sphere or communication ethics in sports, especially boxing.

The focus of this study will only construct netizens' verbal aggression through their comments during Islam Makhachev's press conference as a Muslim fighter to be analyzed on VeChain 322's YouTube account as a spectator culture outside the octagon, up to how those comments are constructed and their forms when the press conference session takes place. According to Ashari (2026), communication plays a very important role in building relationships and identity, showing how someone wants to be perceived by the public. Islam Makhachev was born on October 27, 1991, precisely in Makhachkala, Dagestan, Russia. He is a professional MMA fighter as well as a Sambo martial arts practitioner. He joined the UFC in 2014, and after his first loss, he achieved a series of impressive victories. He was

crowned UFC Lightweight Champion in 2022 after defeating Charles Oliveira and is now considered the best Pound-for-Pound (P4P) fighter under the guidance of Khabib Nurmagomedov (wikipedia, 2025).

There is something new in this research, which is that most studies only discuss media framing of athletes or the role of social media in shaping an athlete's appeal. There hasn't been a study that focuses on netizens' comments on Islam Makhachev's fights as the research object. Additionally, according to Moon and Oh (2024), modern researchers prefer to study how media shapes an athlete's image, rather than perceptions of the athlete. The aim of this study is to analyze the UFC YouTube account, specifically the public comments in the form of verbal aggression during press conferences of fighter Islam Makhachev on the UFC YouTube account.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a Digital Discourse Analysis design from Rodney H. Jones et al. (2015), which integrates analysis of text, context, social action, and computer-mediated interaction, and specifically accommodates the analysis of verbal aggression phenomena on the official UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) YouTube channel. The primary data source is the comment section on the official UFC YouTube video of Islam Makhachev's fight titled The VeChain 322: Della Maddalena v Islam Makhachev Pre Fight Press Conference, including comment text, emojis, hashtags, reply thread structures, as well as digital interaction metadata (number of likes and top comments) that are in either Indonesian or English (considering the global and Indonesian UFC audience).

Data collection was carried out using digital documentation techniques with the following stages: data scraping using the YouTube Data API v3 (or web-based scraping software) to systematically download comments and supporting metadata from specified videos (Suryadi & Syb'a, 2023); data cleaning by filtering out spambot comments, advertisements, and comments that do not contain relevant text/multimodal content until a final corpus of 500-1,000 analysis units was obtained; digital 118ataloguing, which involves storing data in a structured format (spreadsheet) based on comment ID, text/emoji, upload time, number of likes, and thread correlation indicators. For data analysis, the Discourse Triangulation technique (Jones et al., 2015) was used to interpret digital text findings by connecting them to the global sociocultural context and UFC sports industry dynamics. Besides that, the validity of digital qualitative data is ensured through triangulation of data types by combining linguistic text analysis, visual/multimodal elements (emojis), and platform interaction metadata. Below is a table operationalizing the research procedure based on the DDA method of Rodney H. Jones et al. (2015) and the stages of data collection and analysis:

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Procedures

Procedure Steps	Sub-Procedure/ Work Steps	Operational Components/ Objects of Analysis	Data Output
Data Collection	Digital Scraping	Pulling comment data and metadata using YouTube Data API v3 (or software web scraping) from video The VeChain 322: Della Maddalena v Islam Makhachev Pre Fight Press Conference.	Raw data consists of all comments, reply threads, likes, and interaction structures.
Data Cleaning	Filtering & Selection	Selecting and deleting spambot comments, ads, and irrelevant text/multimodal content. Filtering comments in Indonesian and English	The final clean corpus amounts to 500-1,000 units of analysis.
Digital Cataloging	Data Structuring	Organizing data into a structured spreadsheet based on criteria: Comment ID, Text/Emoji, Upload Time, Number of Likes, and Thread Correlation.	A structured comment database matrix ready for analysis.
DDA Analysis)	Integrated DDA Framework	Text: Linguistic analysis, hate speech, and internet slang	Map of verbal aggression patterns and user interactions in the comment section.
		Context: The text's relation to geopolitical/religious issues.	
		Social Action: Practices of verbal aggression/legitimization of dominance.	
		Computer Interaction: Use of emojis, hashtags, reply threads, and top comments.	
Data Validity	Data Triangulation Data & Discourse	Data Type Triangulation: Combining linguistic text, visual/multimodal (emoji), and platform interaction metadata.	Valid, reliable research findings,
		Discourse Triangulation: Linking textual findings with UFC sports industry dynamics and the global sociocultural context.	

Source: Research Data

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the phenomenon of verbal culture aggression that occurs in the comment sections of social media, particularly on the official UFC YouTube platform with

the title The VeChain 322: Della Maddalena vs Islam Makhachev Pre Fight Press Conference, as a discursive battleground for global viewers in the context of professional combat sports (UFC).

This study explores viewers' comments through digital discourse analysis (DDA) by Jones, Chik, & Hafner (2015) on Verbal Aggression (Baron and Byrne, 2005) and Spectacle Culture by Debord (2021) on the UFC YouTube Account (The VeChain 322: Della Maddalena vs Islam Makhachev Pre Fight Press Conference). In digital discourse analysis, it focuses on the concepts of text, context, and social interaction, while verbal aggression (VA) is analyzed through internal and external factors. Internal factors include behavior patterns, bias attribute, narcissism, and also ego. Pambayun & Saragih (2024) state meanwhile, external factors include feelings of frustration, direct provocation, exposure to violence through media, sexuality, stimuli, and also situational factors. As for the culture of viewing with dimensions: Viewing as a main commodity, Pseudo-Event, the loss of the audience's role (audience alienation), and artificial reality (hyperreality) in conflict, which is arranged in this table.

Table 2: Digital Discourse Analysis Matrix (Text, Context, and Social Interaction Concepts)

Analysis Level	Digital Discourse Elements	Textual Findings & Characteristics of Netizen Comments	Pragmatic Analysis of Discursive Meaning
Level (Text Structure & Diction)	**Use of Harsh Word Choices & Emphasizing Identity**	Rude words, derogatory terms based on country/culture (for example: belittling the lifestyle traditions of Islam Makhachev or Della Maddalena, or stereotypes about the boxer's community).	Netizens' comments on this UFC video serve as a tool to dehumanize the enemy and assert the superiority of their own group (in-group favoritism) among New Yorkers
Netizen Comment		**@zezeison** I'll start off with the first question. How does it feel to feel here in New York?	
		@NeomorphLV426 Islam talking like he's gonna come out and stand with Jack, if he does then he's going out like a light.	
	Multimodality & Simbol System	The massive use of capital letters (ALL CAPS), repeated exclamation marks, and expressive emojis (fire emoji,	The netizens in the UFC video give an emotional emphasis (digital vocal tone), tend to be

Analysis Level	Digital Discourse Elements	Textual Findings & Characteristics of Netizen Comments	Pragmatic Analysis of Discursive Meaning
		skull, country flags, or animals) in the UFC fight between Makhachev and Maddalena	provocative, with a clear visual message.
Netizen Comment		**@TheOriginalLoso** 18:44 GAAAHDAMN	
		@SomeDudeInTheChat "If you blahblahblah, will you then be considered blahblahblah???" Every UFC Reporter/Journalist	
	Religion Lexical & Ideologic	The use of religious terms that are misused or made into jokes to provoke the anger of opposing groups.	Netizens are shifting the realm of professional boxing (UFC) into a fight of religion and moral values among netizens (viewers).
Netizen Comment		**@Jons_broken_toe** Great press conference held in Gaza	
		@rudyleal2579 Incoming greatest female fight ever of all time	
Level of Discursive Practice & Technology	**Intertextuality & Contextual Adjustments**	Netizens quote snippets of sentences from previous press conferences, past disputes, or memes circulating on TikTok/Instagram.	Netizens create ongoing narratives (transmedia storytelling) that keep amplifying hatred outside the official UFC press conference spaces.
Netizen Comment		**@kukhtiyayev1** I miss the old shit talking days on ufc press conferences	
		@5683love-p9s Pride FC was better	
	Algorythm & *Engagement Economy*	The most controversial comments that get long replies end up at the top (Top Comments).	The UFC channel algorithm prioritizes conflict and aggression because it generates higher watch time and engagement
Komentar		**@johnnyweekend**	

Analysis Level	Digital Discourse Elements	Textual Findings & Characteristics of Netizen Comments	Pragmatic Analysis of Discursive Meaning
Netizen		Reporter: How does it feel? **18 replies**	
		@lawnprinter300 First dude literally asked the same 2 questions to 5 different people lmao great journalism. **7 replies**	
Level of Socio-Cultural Practice	**Regional and racial separation**	The narrative of 'East vs. West,' 'Conservative vs. Liberal values,' or international sports rivalries.	Netizens revealed that the fighting sports arena has become a space for expression and an escape from the unresolved political and cultural tensions of the real world.
Netizen Comment		**@alanlangley7246** NEW YORKASTAN	
		@alexgonzalez8954 Why US support a guy from Dagestan ??????	
	The Buzz About Negative Masculinity	Judging a man's greatness based on physical dominance, aggressiveness, and the need to completely overpower his opponent.	Netizens have a culture of verbal violence as a standard for recognizing masculinity within the UFC fan community.
Netizen Comment		**@Wewhosee-im3ii** "I don't lose my belt to anyone, i just coming to get second one"	
		@kennyb846 JDM AND ISLAM STAREDOWN WAS AS REAL AS IT COULD BE	

Source: Research Data

Table 3: Forms of Verbal Cultural Aggression in Netizen Comments

Category of Verbal Aggression	Discourse Indicators & Netizen Language Patterns	Example Comment	Motives & Impact on the Digital Community
Aggression on Cultural Identity	Using racial and national stereotypes to belittle the dignity of fighters and their supporters	**@shakhzodgayratov5905** jdm is the best boxer?? r u kidding??1 :D **@maruchan458** It's nice seeing Islam being appreciated in America, whenever he's in America, he usually gets ignored because everyone wants to talk to khabib.	Motive: Viewers in New York create a clear boundary between being American (in-group) and outside the US (out-group) Impact: Reinforces sentiments about the presence of foreigners globally.
Aggression Against Religion and Beliefs	Attacking the beliefs, religious symbols, or moral values held by the fighter	**@XXX-yx2xi** Islam deserves this crowd reaction and to have them on his side this time. After always getting booed in the press coneferences for his previous fights	Motive: Using sensitive issues to provoke emotional anger in opponents. Impact: Leads to attacks on digital values. Islam Makhachev or Della Maddalena's secular background as a target for insult
Aggression at the Fighter's Appearance & Dehumanization	Mocking someone's body, fighting style (wrestling/striking), and dehumanizing them by comparing the fighter to certain objects or animals.	**@FakeGyllenhaal** 34:36 1½ nose was present on that stage **@bojevnim** Jack is dressed like he's going fishing after the press	Motive: To remove recognition of athletes' professionalism. Impact: Turning appreciation of sports into a playground of mockery without ethical limits.
Flame wars & Provoking Between Fans	Direct attacks between netizens in the reply threads that are no longer about the fighters, but instead insult other netizens'	**@mohanad0408** this is unbelievable 29:14 what kind of question is that!!! **@Jons_broken_toe** Crowd is a typical representation of New	Motive: Netizens intentionally seek local discourse dominance in the comment section. Impact: Creates a toxic

Category of Verbal Aggression	Discourse Indicators & Netizen Language Patterns	Example Comment	Motives & Impact on the Digital Community
	personalities.	Yorkers	communication environment to take down their opponents.

Source: Research Data

Table 4: Analysis of UFC Press Conferences as the Creation of a "Spectator Society"

Element of Debord Theory	Manifestation at the UFC 322 Press Conference	The Role & Response of Netizens in the Comment Section	Implications of Media Capitalism
Entertainment as the Main Commodity	The UFC held a press conference with a grand stage setup, commercial sponsors (VeChain), and media questions designed to provoke conflicts.	**@deestroyer1885** These UFC pressers are the most depressing spectacles in sport **@Marika-z5s** Conference absolutely boring. What's happen dana? 0 entrteinment.	Netizens' aggression boosts traffic, views, and sponsor value. Hatred is directly converted into financial gain (monetization of outrage).
Pseudo-Event	Heated interactions, face-offs, and trash talks between Makhachev and Della Maddalena are set up to create a dramatic personal feud narrative.	**@bornapenic5022** This had potential to be one of the most entertaining press conferences in a long time with 6 top 10 ww and reporters blew it with absolutely boring questions **@Bicissippi** Wtf, I'm Russian and I support Islam, but Jack Della is a hell of a fighter and a great guy-champ deserves respect.	The disappearance of the line between pure sports competition and manufactured commercial drama (media dramaturgy).
The Loss of the Audience's Role (Audience Alienation)	Viewers lose their critical role as sports fans and are pushed to become fanatic participants in symbolic drama.	**@TreyParker23** Just realized the co main is Magnum vs Bullet **@bruv6036** BORING REPORTERS!!! SAME SHITTY ASS QUESTIONS EVERY	The audience is focused on the battle of fake identities, while the business exploitation behind the show

Element of Debord Theory	Manifestation at the UFC 322 Press Conference	The Role & Response of Netizens in the Comment Section	Implications of Media Capitalism
		TIME!! THEY ALREADY REPLIED TO ALL OF THOSE DURING MEDIA DAY! GIVE THE MIC TO THE FANS	goes unnoticed
Artificial Reality (Hyperreality) in Conflict	Verbal conflict on stage creates a much bigger conflict in the digital world that feels more 'real' than the physical fight itself.	**@andyalton4583** VeChain title is wack. **@pathan6038** These pressers are too sophisticated. Miss old days with OG bad boys of UFC.	The reality of sports has shifted from the spectacle of UFC boxing to a battle of symbolic consumption and discourse attacks.

Source: Research Data

In the table above, the results of the analysis through digital discourse surrounding mixed martial arts can be explained. Interaction among netizens in the comment sections is not just about supporting the sport; it has shifted into a complex arena of identity contestation, with a few aspects illustrated as follows:

1. Ethnocentrism and geographical stereotypes, where labels are used regarding the fighters' origins (for example, comments about the Dagestan/Russia vs. Australia regions). Here, the fighters' origins are interpreted narrowly. Netizens often label the background of certain regions, reducing the meaning and role of fighters from Dagestan/Russia or Australia into racialized comments to associate their culture with a certain level of fierceness or lifestyle,
2. Commodification of religion & ideology with the use of religious symbols or terms provocatively to put down opponents or assert moral/physical superiority. Besides geographic aspects, the commodification of religion and ideology also becomes a key instrument in this debate,
3. Profane texts & elements of physical insults, where the use of harsh language (insults), mockery of fighting performance, and jabs at lifestyle appear. This dynamic is worsened by the widespread use of profane texts and elements of physical insults. Verbal attacks no longer focus on technical sports analysis, but are filled with harsh words (insults), ridicule of fighting performance inside the octagon, and personal jabs targeting athletes' lifestyles,
4. The pattern of digital discourse dynamics (in-group vs. out-group) shows that the comment sections are sharply divided into two camps. Communication doesn't run interactively or constructively, but rather turns into mutual attacks (flaming),

5. Ethnic categorization based on figures, where fanatical spectators turn individual sports rivalry into a symbol of cross-cultural or broader identity battles,
6. Freedom and anonymity on YouTube speed up and expand the formation of verbal aggression without the direct constraints of social norms.

The Construction of the UFC Entertainment Industry in Spectator Culture

This study, through digital discourse analysis, explains that the presence of social media features, such as anonymous accounts, comment sections, and algorithms, makes it easier and wider to spread hate speech and culturally-based conflicts on the internet. As mentioned by Banani and Febriyanti (2024), they stated that viewers, especially men, have a specific privilege (male privilege) in using social media, building discourse on YouTube with complex texts. Specifically, boxing, which according to Dumitriu (2018) is not just an arena to fight for the championship, has already become a commodification of emotion by entertainment industries like the UFC, which is very popular among boxing and hardcore sports enthusiasts. So, the phenomenon of "comment wars" on the internet is not a coincidence, but deliberately created to explode sensational narratives to trigger viewers' emotions and anger.

Besides that, the creation of money-making machines (monetization) from conflicts in the digital ecosystem through arguments and debates on platforms like YouTube UFC VeChain 322 is deliberately exploited. Debord (2021) states that the higher the level of aggression and user participation in the comment section, the greater the financial gain for platform owners and content creators. Verbal aggression, such as debates among netizens in the UFC comment section, shows that the entertainment industry consciously uses cultural and identity differences to spark discussions, which ultimately lead to economic profit through monetization.

Kellner (2012) stated that normalizing hate speech for entertainment, where insulting each other is seen as normal and natural when wrapped as entertainment or a form of support in boxing, according to Pambayun (2021), shows a decline in digital literacy and communication ethics, as well as weaker ethical awareness and critical thinking skills among the public when interacting in the global digital public space. Similarly, the simplification of cultural identity (essentialism) occurs through stereotypes, where a fighter is recognized as representing an entire cultural, ethnic, or religious group unilaterally. Androutsopoulos (2015) explains that the main impact of this situation widens social divides (polarization) in real life due to ongoing emotional conflicts that are constantly triggered and maintained online.

Basically, the YouTube comment section for UFC 322 is no longer a place for healthy discussion; instead, it has become an arena for netizens to attack each other's identities to fuel conflicts that are perpetuated for the entertainment industry's gain. Muhammad and Simatupang (2026) point out that pre-fight press conferences don't just serve as a way to promote the match, they've been distorted into a catalyst for digital warfare in the comment section. The verbal cultural aggression that pops up shows that sports discourse is often hijacked by geopolitical and cultural identity narratives condensed through hate rhetoric online.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research provides an important foundation for the advancement of digital communication studies, discourse analysis, and sports sociology through the following key points: Theoretically, expanding Digital Discourse Analysis (DDA) Theory: This study stretches the boundaries of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which usually examines conventional media, into the realm of digital conversations that are collaborative, interactive, and based on user-generated content. The findings affirm that interactions in social media comment sections are not just spontaneous emotional outbursts, but rather complex discourse structures that both reflect and perpetuate ideologies as well as geopolitical and cultural conflicts in real life. This study deepens the understanding of verbal violence by linking it to aspects of religious and cultural identity. These symptoms prove that fanaticism in the sports world during the global era is no longer just about physical competition in the arena, but has expanded into a medium for expressing social prejudice, anti-religious sentiments, and ethnocentrism, all packaged symbolically through digital narratives. Identity Formation and Marginalization (The Othering) in the Virtual Realm: The analysis strengthens identity politics theory by showing how 'Othering' labeling works through the division between Western and Non-Western camps. Sports figures like Islam Makhachev are used as representations of certain group identities (Caucasus/Muslim), which sparks spontaneous ideological splits among global audiences.

Practical impact, various findings in this research provide concrete recommendations for policymakers and industry players in managing cyber conversation spaces:

1. For digital platform providers and content producers (UFC), where YouTube administrators and sports organizations like the UFC need to upgrade their automated content filtering mechanisms. The filtering system should not only target obvious bad language but also be sensitive to subtle sarcasm, internet slang, and hidden discrimination based on ethnicity or beliefs.
2. Managing an inclusive community, as an international promoter, UFC has the obligation to formulate stricter community rules to curb the spread of hate speech on their official platforms. This is important to maintain a conducive digital ecosystem free from negative atmospheres for a diverse audience.
3. For regulators and media policymakers, where educational programs and public policies should prioritize understanding ethics in cross-cultural communication. Internet users need to understand that cultural attacks in cyberspace have real psychological consequences and can worsen social conflicts globally.
4. For netizens (social media users), this research serves as a reflection for online communities to be wiser in responding to sports content. Differences in the origins or backgrounds of athletes should not be used as reasons to bully or demean someone in digital public spaces.

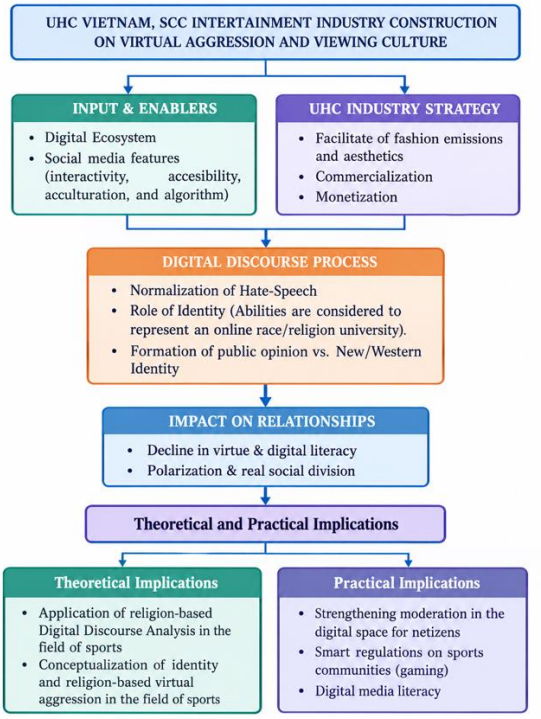


Figure 1. Conceptualization of Spectator Culture and Verbal Aggression through Digital Discourse Analysis

CONCLUSION

This study is prompted by the rise of identity battles and verbal violence in digital spaces, especially in the comments section of YouTube UFC VeChain 322, which discusses the Muslim fighter from the Caucasus, Islam Makhachev, against Della Maddela. The global sports industry, which ideally should bring society together, often shifts into a platform for spreading social prejudice, Islamophobic sentiments, and ethnocentrism that trigger polarization. By applying the Digital Discourse Analysis (DDA) method, this research found that cultural verbal aggression appears in three main patterns: identity division between 'Western vs. Non-Western' groups, negative stigma based on beliefs, and demeaning language through internet slang. This aggressive behavior not only reflects sports fandom fanaticism but is also used as a tool to assert cultural dominance and ideological resistance among netizens.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes by expanding the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis into the realm of interactive digital texts, while also redefining sports fanaticism as a tangible expression of cross-national identity politics. Practically, this research provides an in-depth understanding of hidden hate speech patterns on sports-themed social media. As a recommendation, digital platform managers along with the UFC are encouraged to update content filtering technologies to be more sensitive to cultural and religious aspects, and to tighten community rules. The government is also advised to enhance cross-cultural communication education in society. Meanwhile, for future researchers, it is recommended

to apply mixed methods or study the psychological impact of cyberbullying directly on athletes and fan communities.

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