

## Analysis of Spectator Behavior in Matches on UFC YouTube Account

Adam Barqi Ramadhan<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Raja Abdallah<sup>2</sup> Khaerudin Imawan<sup>3\*</sup> Abdul  
Jalil Hermawan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Communication Science Study Program, Gunung Jati Swadaya University, Cirebon. Email  
adamramadhan829@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Communication Science Study Program, Gunung Jati Swadaya University, Cirebon. Email  
rajaabda897@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Communication Science Study Program, Gunung Jati Swadaya University, Cirebon. Email  
khaerudin.imawan@ugj.co.id

<sup>4</sup>Communication Science Study Program, Gunung Jati Swadaya University, Cirebon. Email  
Abdjaltea@yahoo.com

**\*Corresponding Author: khaerudin.imawan@ugj.co.id**

**Abstract.** This study examines audience behavior in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) matches broadcast on the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) YouTube channel. This theme was chosen because of the growing popularity of the UFC and YouTube's potential as a platform to reach a global audience. The study aims to identify the characteristics of viewers and content on UFC YouTube accounts, analyze audience interaction and engagement during broadcast MMA matches, and find out the motives or motivations of viewers in watching MMA matches on UFC YouTube. The research method used is qualitative, with a content analysis approach and observation of audience behavior in the YouTube comment column. The New Media Theory is a conceptual framework to understand this phenomenon. The results of the study show that UFC content on YouTube offers a variety of materials such as match highlights, full shows of the event, and exclusive content that appeals to global fans. Audience interaction in the comments section reflects intense engagement, including technical analysis of the match, emotional support for the fighter, and discussions between fans. The main motivations of spectators include interest in the sport itself, entertainment, inspiration, and support for favorite fighters. This research provides valuable insights into sports media consumption behavior in the digital era and the potential of online platforms in developing a sports fan base.

**Keywords:** Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), YouTube, UFC, audience motivation, behaviour

---

### INTRODUCTION

YouTube is an important stage around the world for the spread of socially empowered media dissemination. As per public insights, more than 48 hours of video content were transferred consistently, and 3 billion perspectives were created consistently. To complement the content transmission/consumption insights, YouTube interacts seamlessly with major internet-based informal communities like Facebook, Twitter, and

Google+ to work with off-site deployment. It is mentioned that 12 million clients have connected their YouTube accounts with no less than one online social network for automatic sharing (Mirjam Wattenhofer, Roger Wattenhofer, and Zack Zhu, 2021). What's more, YouTube fills as a notoriously one-man informal community, associating registered clients through memberships that notify supporters of social updates and content from purchased clients.

UFC is one of the popular YouTube accounts among mixed martial Arts (MMA) lovers and has been watched 7 billion times, it also has 17.5 million subscribers broadcasting pre and post-championship activities. In addition, the increased use of social media and interactive platforms during UFC events is also attracting attention, as it creates new opportunities to measure and analyze audience reactions in real-time. The UFC is a relatively new sports organization. UFC is a combat sport and belongs to a group of sports commonly called "Mixed Martial Arts" (MMA). The UFC stages of a fight between two existing competitors allow for punches and kicks and the use of wrestling techniques to try to defeat their opponents. In the last three decades, the UFC has emerged as a dominant force in MMA and combat sports (Watanabe, 2012). Forbes magazine estimated the value of the UFC brand to be over \$1 billion in 2008 (Miller, 2008). The UFC's power has arrived through controlling the MMA segment in the sports industry and its ability to compete with more established sports. Previously, the UFC had pay-per-view (PPV) buyouts and revenues equivalent to professional boxing and wrestling (Sceflo, 2005; Stein, 2006).

Extreme sports such as boxing, wrestling, or other martial arts that are aired and explicitly intended for adults contain sadistic scenes and excessive violence without censorship. Extreme sports spur spectators' adrenaline and are dangerous because they have a fairly high risk (Rhamdani, Febry, 2021). The shape of this ring is also one of the characteristics of MMA matches. Bakri (in Wibisono 2018) said that the application of an octagon ring with an iron net surrounding the ring aims to create an extreme impression on the audience so that it is as if the fighters are fighting in a cage and cannot escape before someone becomes the champion. In MMA fights, athletes or fighters must master the techniques of attacking. The techniques that must be mastered are hitting or kicking, throwing the opponent's body with slam techniques, pressing/locking the enemy with Jujitsu techniques, and defensive techniques by dodging and blocking attacks. It is a basic technique that MMA athletes or fighters must master. The striking technique in the

standing position adopts martial arts from Muay Thai by using all the movements in Muay Thai for fighting techniques, such as knees and elbows. The MMA technique in the down-attack position, called ground, adopts Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, which immobilizes or incapacitates the opponent because it is considered more effective in free fights (Hakim, 2015). In addition, other essential factors of MMA for fighters are increasing strength, cardio, conditioning, speed, and accuracy. So this caused some aspects of society to complain about the brutality of the fight. Sometimes, the audience is also horrified when one of the fighters loses a knockout (KO) because he fell due to a punch or kick from the opponent. However, for martial arts and extreme sports fans, brutality in combat is one of the unique and entertaining values (Rhamdani, February 2021).

The content introduced by the UFC YouTube account made a view and response for the viewers. The motivation of YouTube live-streaming viewers includes wanting to meet the needs of information and entertainment facilities and the desire to communicate through commenting on the content, both with insulting and degrading intentions (Thomas et al., 2019). Therefore, as researchers, we aim to identify the characteristics of viewers and content on UFC YouTube accounts, analyze audience interaction and engagement during MMA matches broadcast on UFC YouTube, and find out the motives or motivations of viewers in watching MMA matches on UFC YouTube.

## **LITERATURE**

In the previous study on audience motivation, the title of Vice Indonesia Audience Motivation with Viewing Attachment was written by Mahardika and Safira using an online survey method of 100 respondents who were viewers of Vice Indonesia video content on YouTube. The study's results using a questionnaire used to measure the variables of motivation and attachment to watching proved valid and reliable. It was found that there was a significant correlation between viewing motivation and attachment to watching Vice Indonesia content, where the higher the motivation, the higher the attachment. As much as 26% of viewing attachment can be explained by motivational factors, while the remaining 74% are influenced by other factors that are not studied. These findings highlight the critical role of motivation in driving audience engagement but also point to the need for further exploration of other factors that influence viewing engagement. This study concluded that motivation is related to a person's attachment to watching Vice Indonesia

video content on YouTube. However, motivation is not the only factor that influences it; there are still other factors that play a role.

There is also a previous study entitled *The Influence of Binge Watching Motivation on Audience Behavior* written by Elsa Indah Libriani, Poppy Ruliana, and Kresno Yulianto. A quantitative survey method was used, and an online questionnaire was distributed to 105 students who used Iflix. The data was analyzed using the SEM (Structural Equation Model) technique. The study results show that the motivation of pleasure, practicality, and self-escape positively influences the attitude of using, the intention to continue using, and the desire to recommend Iflix services to others. Meanwhile, the motivation of the favorite for the character/character also has a positive effect on the attitude of using and the intention to continue using the service. However, it does not affect the behavior of recommending the service to others. On the other hand, social influence motivation was found to positively affect attitudes towards using and recommending services. However, it did not significantly influence the intention to continue using Iflix services. This researcher concluded that motivation for fun, practicality, self-escape, penchant for characters/characters (for attitudes and intentions to use), and social influences (for attitudes and recommendations) influence binge-watching behavior among Iflix viewers.

MMA and UFC itself Sergiu Vlad Stan created a study titled *Strategic Management in Sports: The Rise of MMA Around the World – The Evolution of the UFC*. The research method he uses is quantitative, then the author analyzes the evolution of MMA and UFC from a strategic management perspective, assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through SWOT analysis. With this method, the researchers found that Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) have experienced rapid development in the last 25 years. The sport has evolved from a brutal fight to a globally recognized sport. The UFC plays an essential role in the growth of MMA by implementing effective management strategies. This strategy includes strong branding, safety standardization to protect fighters, increasing the number of events to expand reach, and developing training infrastructure to improve the quality of athletes. Through these efforts, the UFC has defeated boxing's popularity, attracted more pay-per-view viewers, and offered more exciting fights for martial arts fans. The conclusion is that the UFC has become the world's leading MMA organization by implementing effective strategic management, including branding, safety standardization, increasing the number of events,

and developing training infrastructure. However, there are still challenges to be faced to promote MMA as a major sport worldwide, such as negative perceptions of violence and a lack of local competition. Overall, the study provides insight into the evolution of MMA and UFC and the management strategies that other sports organizations can implement to promote their businesses globally.

In the previous study entitled *An Analysis of Spectator Motives in an Individual Combat Sport: A Study of Mixed Martial Arts Fans*, which was written by Seungmo Kim, T. Christopher Greenwell, Damon P.S. Andrew, Janghyuk Lee, and Daniel F. Mahony. The descriptive statistics method is used to assess the audience's demographics, experiences, preferences, and motives. One-way ANOVA is used to test gender differences in motivation. The researchers found that the highest motives of MMA spectators were sports interests, drama, aesthetics, socializing, violence, subordinate achievements, worship, escape, national pride, and economic factors. Men tend to be more strongly motivated by sports, economic, and violent interests. For men, the predictors of media consumption are sports interest, subordinate achievement, and national pride. Meanwhile, for women, the predictors of media consumption are sports and drama interests. Respondents were generally educated young men with above-average incomes, defying the perception that MMA only attracts a lower-class audience. Most of the audience was first exposed to MMA through word of mouth and the reality show "The Ultimate Fighter." As a result, interest in the sport became the primary motive, suggesting that MMA was accepted as a legitimate sport. The drama and aesthetics of fighting techniques also intrigued the audience, while violence was not the most powerful motive. There are differences in motives based on gender. Understanding motives is essential for attracting and retaining fans. Word of mouth and reality shows effectively introduce new sports to the audience. This research expands the understanding of spectator motives in individual and emerging new sports.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative research method. The research method aims to disclose an event, circumstance, and facts of a phenomenon that exists and occurs during this research to present accurate data for this purpose. Qualitative research methods are used to analyze and describe an existing phenomenon and the object of research on social activity, views or perceptions, and people's attitudes in groups and individuals (Sugiyono, 2018, p. 213).

The New Media Theory is a theory developed by Pierre Levy, who stated that new media is a theory that discusses the development of media. In the new media theory, there are two views, and the first is the view of social interaction, which distinguishes media according to their proximity to face-to-face interaction. Pierre Levy views the World Wide Web (WWW) as an open, flexible, and dynamic information environment that allows humans to develop new knowledge orientations.

Fleww (2002, 2005a) defines new media as a combination of the 3Cs: computing and information technology (IT), communication networks, and digitized information content. This combination results in a new C formula called *convergent*. Media convergence is a combination of computing, communication, and media content.

After all the necessary data has been collected, the researcher will then conduct a study of the language expressions in the comment columns on the content of the UFC's YouTube channel to determine the quality of the content.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study not only illustrate how new media affect behavior and perception but also highlight how it creates new spaces for public participation, collaboration, and resistance. By understanding new media theory, this research provides valuable insights into the ways in which technology is changing the way we interact, communicate, and understand the world in this digital age.

### **Identify Spectators and Content on UFC Accounts**

UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) is the world's leading professional mixed martial arts (MMA) organization. Through its YouTube channel, the UFC presents a variety of quality content that attracts global MMA fans. The main content offered is the highlight of the fight, with intense moments such as knockouts and submissions. In addition, there are full shows of the event, exclusive content such as documentaries and interviews, and archives of iconic fights of the past. This channel serves as entertainment and an effective promotional tool to build enthusiasm ahead of upcoming events. By reaching a global audience online, the UFC has managed to solidify its position as a professional MMA mecca in the eyes of fans worldwide.

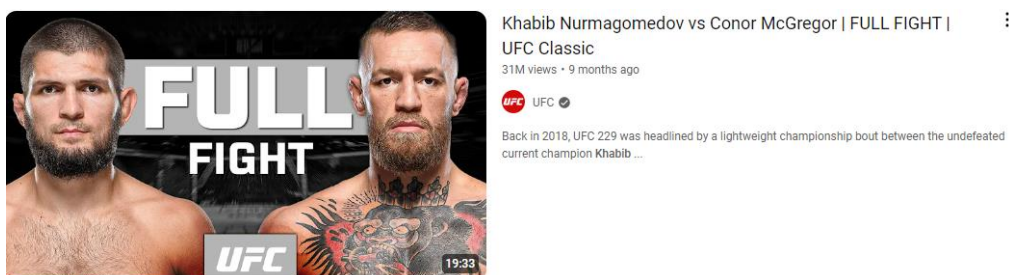
Based on this research, it can be seen that through the YouTube platform, the UFC has expanded its reach and attracted more fans by presenting access to high-quality content that reflects the actions and heritage of this organization. This effort aligns with the concept of new media in communication theory, which has two main views. From the perspective of social interaction, the study results show that the presence of the UFC on YouTube reflects the characteristics of the World Wide Web (www) as an open, flexible, and dynamic information environment, as stated by Pierre Levy. The presented content allows fans to develop a new orientation about this mixed martial arts sport. Meanwhile, from the perspective of social integration, the study's findings reveal that the UFC's efforts to present quality content on YouTube are a ritual for fans to create a society or fan community. Through this platform, they can share their interest and passion for mixed martial arts and strengthen social integration among fellow fans.



Figure 1: UFC YouTube Channel (Source: YouTube.com)

The UFC YouTube channel was created on March 4, 2006, and has a total number of subscribers of 18 million and has uploaded 16,000 videos.

From the many pieces of content created on UFC YouTube, we selected one entitled "Khabib Nurmagomedov vs Conor McGregor | FULL FIGHT | UFC Classic."



*Figure 2: UFC YouTube Channel content*

In the UFC YouTube content, the fight that took place at UFC 229 was the largest because there were 2.4 million pay-per-view purchases for UFC 229, which is the highest number in the history of UFC 229, far behind the second largest event, namely UFC 264 which only sold 1.8 million PPVs. The Khabib vs McGregor duel is spectacularly awakened and has a background full of drama. The fight took place at UFC 229 in October 2018 in Las Vegas. McGregor, a former UFC lightweight champion, returned to the cage after a two-year absence from the sport, while Khabib was the lightweight champion at the time.

Before the fight, there was a series of incidents and hatred between the two fighters and their teams. McGregor launched an attack on the bus transporting Khabib and his team in Brooklyn, New York, months before the fight, resulting in injuries to several fighters. When the fight finally took place, Khabib managed to control the fight and dominate McGregor most of the time. Khabib forced McGregor to surrender via chokehold in the fourth round, defending his UFC lightweight world title. However, controversy ensued after the fight when Khabib jumped over the fence and attacked McGregor's team members outside the octagon, while Khabib's team members attacked McGregor inside the octagon.

The incident caused a massive uproar in the UFC community and led to sanctions from Dana White, the UFC president, against both fighters and their team members. This makes the fight between Khabib and McGregor one of UFC history's most controversial and heated fights. As researchers, we then look at and analyze some of the audience behavior, both in comments and in the content of Khabib Nurmagomedov vs. Conor McGregor | FULL FIGHT | UFC Classic.

**Spectator Behavior During MMA Matches on UFC Youtube**

The UFC, the world's leading MMA organization, has brought the live viewing experience to digital screens through the YouTube platform. This phenomenon has created a unique opportunity to observe spectators' behavior while watching matches in real time. How do these live viewing dynamics affect UFC fan reactions and interactions?

From the tense moments leading up to the start of the fight to the climactic moments inside the octagon, the behavior of the UFC's live viewers on YouTube reflects intense engagement. They watch and react instantly to every punch, kick, and submission attempt. Their enthusiasm can be seen from the surge in chat activity, expressive emojis, and spontaneous comments reflecting their emotions. The study will delve into various aspects of this live spectator behavior, including how they anticipate the match's outcome, respond to changes in momentum in duels, and express tension during critical moments. By analyzing these behavioral patterns, we can better understand how digital platforms have transformed the UFC live viewing experience and the impact it has had on audience engagement in the sport of MMA



*Figure 1: Audience behavior on the UFC YouTube channel*

The UFC between Khabib Nurmagomedov and Conor McGregor in October 2018 at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas was not only a spectacle on the screen but also created an incredible atmosphere for the spectators present in person at the venue. This live viewing experience provides a unique perspective on MMA fan behavior in one of the most anticipated duels in UFC history. From the moment the arena doors open to the final seconds of the match, the behavior of spectators at the venue shows an intensity rarely seen in other sporting events. The deafening cheers as the two fighters enter the arena, the waves of cheers that echo, and the collective reaction to every action inside the octagon all create an immersive experience that can only be experienced by those who attend in person.



*Figure 2: Audience behavior on the UFC YouTube channel*

When Khabib Nurmagomedov defeated Conor McGregor by submission in the fourth round, euphoria instantly exploded in the T-Mobile Arena. The spectators who were present immediately felt an overflowing excitement, as if they had just won the fight. As the referee stopped the match, the arena was filled with deafening shouts of joy. Many spectators jumped from their seats, cheered, and hugged each other with the people around them, even with strangers. Waves of excitement swept across the arena, creating an incredible party atmosphere. The audience sang, chanted Khabib's name, and performed spontaneous victory chants. Khabib's supporters, especially those from the same background as him, felt immense pride. They expressed this pride by waving flags, wearing supporting attributes, and sharing moments of happiness with fellow fans.

Many spectators felt they had just witnessed a historic moment in the world of MMA. They captured this moment with photos and videos, wanting to remember forever that they were part of this great event. This collective joy creates a strong bond among the spectators, even among those who did not know each other before. The atmosphere in the arena became a mixture of celebration and amazement. Spectators shared stories about key moments of the match, analyzed Khabib's strategy, and praised his abilities. Their pride is not only for Khabib's victory but also for the fact that they are first-hand witnesses of a fight that will go down in UFC history. Even after the match ended and the crowd began to leave the arena, the spirit of victory remained felt in the air. Spectators continued to discuss the match with great enthusiasm, celebrating Khabib's victory, and felt a deep sense of satisfaction at having been a part of this incredible moment in the world of sports.

## MMA Match Viewer Behavior in the UFC Youtube Comment Column

While euphoria still filled the T-Mobile Arena, news of Khabib's victory quickly spread worldwide through various media channels. Within minutes, match highlights are uploaded to online platforms, including YouTube. Viewers who could not attend immediately accessed these videos and were enthusiastic about watching the critical moments of the fight. On YouTube, the comment column of the Khabib vs McGregor match video was immediately flooded with reactions from online viewers. Those who watched the match through a glass screen also felt turmoil and emotions similar to the spectators in the arena. Passionate comments sprang up, reflecting online viewers' various motives and emotions.



*Figure 1: Viewers' Motivational Comments on the UFC Channel*

Khabib's fans expressed their pride and joy through positive comments. They praised Khabib's grappling technique, mental endurance, and convincing victory. These comments are often accompanied by emojis of Khabib's home country's flag or symbols of victory. On the other hand, McGregor's supporters also actively commented, some acknowledging Khabib's superiority, while others tried to defend their idols or find excuses for his defeat. The debate between these two fan camps creates a lively and sometimes heated discussion in the comment section. This phenomenon is in line with the observation of Khaerudin Imawan (2019), who stated: 'People do not think ethically and the facts of behavior become uncontrollable when the fingers try to cross the virtual boundaries quickly. A room is considered unlimited.' This statement illustrates how anonymity and the

speed of interaction in virtual spaces can encourage audiences to express their opinions without the ethical restrictions that typically exist in face-to-face interactions.

Many online spectators are motivated to share their technical analysis of the match. They discussed the strategies used, key moments, and speculation about the future of both fighters. These comments show the depth of their knowledge and enthusiasm for MMA.



*Figure 2: Viewers' Motivational Comments on the UFC Channel*

Few also use the comment column as a forum to express their emotions. Some expressed admiration for both fighters' sportsmanship (or lack thereof), while others shared their personal experiences while watching the match. This phenomenon shows how MMA matches are a spectacle and a catalyst for online social interaction. Through YouTube comments, online viewers create virtual communities, share experiences, and extend the euphoria of the game far beyond the time limits and venues where the matches take place.

*Enter 1x*

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the motivation and behavior of spectators in consuming Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) match content presented by the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) YouTube account. The UFC is the world's leading professional MMA organization. It presents quality content such as fight highlights, total event reviews, exclusive content, and archives of iconic fights of the past through its YouTube channel. These contents serve as entertainment and an effective promotional tool to build audience enthusiasm ahead of upcoming events. The study results showed various interactions and involvement from the audience in the comment column, such as debates, jokes, compliments, and mutual motivation. The motives of the audience include interest in the sport itself, seeking entertainment, looking for inspiration, and supporting their favorite fighters. One of the attention-grabbing content is the fight between Khabib Nurmagomedov and Conor McGregor at UFC 229, which became the biggest fight in UFC

history and the highest pay-per-view sales record. This research provides insights into the behavior and motivation of viewers in consuming MMA content on YouTube, as well as the importance of understanding the audience's motivations for attracting and retaining fans of the sport. This finding also opens up opportunities to further explore similar phenomena in other sports developing on social media.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alfano Utomo, M Ardian Andadinata, Doan. (2023). *Analysis of the quality of youtube content based on the comment column of Baim Paula's youtube channel*.
- Andrew Kim, Minhong Kim, Steven Salaga, and James J. Zhang (2022). *Impact of social Media on intention to purchase pay-per-view and event attendance : The case of the Ultimate Fighting Championship*
- Andrew Kim. (2019). *Social media influence on purchase intention with the mediating effect of fan identification: the case of ultimate fighting championship*. Bandung: Alfabeta
- I.E King, & N. King. (2024). *Power in mixed martial arts (MMA) : a case study of the ultimate fighting championship (UFC)*
- Imawan, K. (2019, March). Instagram as the Dispute Arena of Personal Branding of Local Head Candidates in West Java Province at 2018. In *International Symposium on Social Sciences, Education, and Humanities (ISSEH 2018)* (pp. 132-138). Atlantis Press.
- Jason M. Londo, Isaac D. Swensen, Glen R. Waddel (2022). *Effect of violent media content : Evidence from the rise of the UFC*.
- Karman, K. (2013). Research on the use of media and its development now. *Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 17(1), 93-112.
- Kim, S., Greenwell, T. C., Andrew, D. P., Lee, J., & Mahony, D. F. (2008). An analysis of spectator motives in an individual combat sport: A study of mixed martial arts fans. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 17(2), 109.
- Libriani, E. I., Ruliana, P., & Yulianto, K. (2020). The Effect of Binge Watching Motivation on Behavioral Involvement. *Bulletin of the Indonesia Communication Scholars Association*, 3(02), 144-153.
- Lubis, Citra Maulida (2019). *The Conversational Structure of Khabib Nurmagomedov in Conversation : Systematic Functional Linguistic Analysis*.
- Mahardika, B. A., & Safira, M. R. (2023). THE MOTIVATION OF VICE INDONESIA AUDIENCES WITH THE ATTACHMENT TO WATCHING. *Journal of Creative Economy and Digital Business Management*, 1(3), 448-461.
- Nicholas M. Watanabe. (2015). *Sources of Direct Demand : An Examination of Demand for the Ultimate Fighting Championship*, Virginia University.
- Nova, S. P., & Firdaus, M. (2018). *The effectiveness of communication of the Telegram application as an information medium for employees of PT. Pos Indonesia (Persero) Pekanbaru City* (Doctoral dissertation, Riau University).
- Rhamdani, Febry (2021). *The impact of student behavior through violent shows on MMA One Pride*. Other thesis, Riau Islamic University.
- Stan, S. V. (2019). Strategic management in sports. The rise of MMA around the world—The evolution of the UFC. *Ovidius University Annals, Economic Sciences Series*, 19(1), 540-545.

- Sugiyono. (2018). Quantitative, Qualitative, and R&D Research Methods.
- Thomas Dewo, Bonardo Marulitua, Ester Krisnawati (2019). *Analysis of Hate Speech Discourse in Ligagame E-Sport Tv Youtube Live Streaming*.
- Tiara Rahmani, Husen Fahmi (2015). *Opinion of Mix Martial Arts White Tiger regarding the Ultimate Fighting Championship sports broadcast*.
- Wattenhofer, M., Wattenhofer, R., & Zhu, Z. (2012). The YouTube social network. In Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 354-361).
- Zembura, Pawel (2013). *Success of Mixed Martial Arts Video Topics on Youtube*