Analyzing Reddit Discourse on Ubisoft and *Assassin's Creed Shadows*: A Sentiment Analysis Approach

Abstract

This study examines community sentiment towards Ubisoft and its recent release, Assassin's Creed Shadows, by analyzing user-generated content on Reddit. Utilizing the PRAW (Python Reddit API Wrapper) library, data were collected from relevant subreddits over a six-month period, resulting in a dataset comprising 651 posts and 45,331 comments. Sentiment analysis was conducted using the VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) tool to assess public opinion. Findings indicate that overall sentiment is moderately positive, with notable discussions surrounding certain controversies. The release of Assassin's Creed Shadows appears to have influenced public perception of Ubisoft, as reflected in the sentiment scores.

Introduction

A. Background

Ubisoft is a prominent French video game developer and publisher, established in 1986 by the Guillemot family. [1] The company is renowned for several successful franchises, including Assassin's Creed, Far Cry, Watch Dogs, and Just Dance. The latest installment in the Assassin's Creed series, titled Assassin's Creed Shadows, was released on March 20, 2025 [1].

Set in feudal Japan, the game introduces two protagonists: Naoe, a kunoichi (female ninja), and Yasuke, a samurai of African origin. The release of Assassin's Creed Shadows has sparked discussions among gaming communities, particularly on platforms like Reddit. Topics of debate include the game's historical setting, character representation, gameplay mechanics, and Ubisoft's business practices, such as the implementation of microtransactions.

B. Research Problem

The gaming community's perception of Ubisoft has fluctuated due to various controversies and business decisions. Understanding these perceptions, especially in the context of new game releases, is crucial for analyzing the company's reputation and the broader implications for the gaming industry.

C. Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Analyze Reddit discussions to assess public sentiment towards Ubisoft and Assassin's Creed Shadows.
2. Identify prevailing themes and topics within these discussions.
3. Evaluate the impact of *Assassin's Creed Shadows* on Ubisoft's reputation over the past six months.

D. Research Questions

1. What is the general sentiment of Reddit users towards Ubisoft and *Assassin's Creed Shadows*?
2. What are the main themes and concerns expressed in Reddit discussions about Ubisoft and the game?
3. How has the release of *Assassin's Creed Shadows* influenced public perception of Ubisoft?

Methodology

This study utilized the Python Reddit API Wrapper (PRAW) to collect data from Reddit. Posts and comments were extracted from the following subreddits: r/ubisoft, r/videogames, r/assassinscreed, r/Games, r/gaming, r/pcgaming, r/PS5, and r/Gamingcirclejerk. These communities were selected due to their relevance to discussions about Ubisoft. To ensure the relevance of the collected data, specific keywords were used during the scraping process. These included "Ubisoft," "Assassin's Creed Shadows," "AC Shadows," "Samurai," and "microtransactions." The data collection covered a six-month period, resulting in a dataset comprising 651 posts and 45,331 comments.

The collected data were organized into dataframes to facilitate analysis. Preprocessing steps were applied to clean the text data, which involved removing stopwords, punctuation, numbers, and other elements not pertinent to the analysis. This preprocessing aimed to enhance the quality of the data for subsequent analysis.

For sentiment analysis, the study employed the VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) tool, which is a useful method for analyzing social media text. This approach enabled the assessment of public sentiment towards Ubisoft and its products, particularly focusing on discussions surrounding "Assassin's Creed Shadows.

Data Exploration

To assess the distribution of posts across various subreddits (figure 1), an analysis was conducted on the collected dataset. The subreddit r/assassinscreed contributed the highest number of posts, followed by r/ubisoft and r/gaming. This distribution aligns with the thematic focus of these communities; r/assassinscreed, dedicated specifically to the Assassin's Creed franchise, naturally contains more discussions related to the series. In contrast, broader gaming communities like r/gaming, r/pcgaming, r/PS5, and r/Games, despite having larger subscriber bases, have fewer posts pertaining specifically to Ubisoft or Assassin's Creed. This suggests that niche subreddits

centered around specific game franchises or developers may give more concentrated and relevant discussions for targeted analyses.
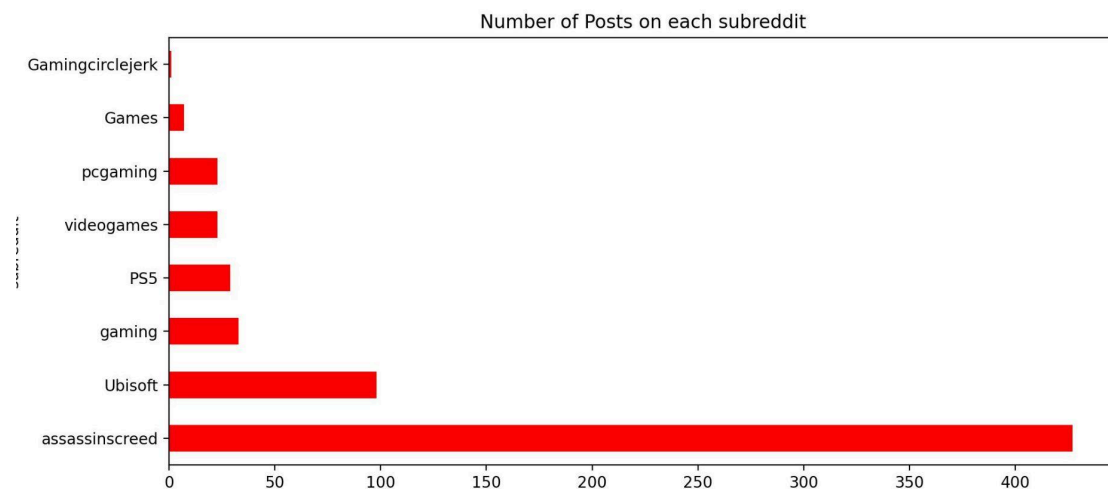

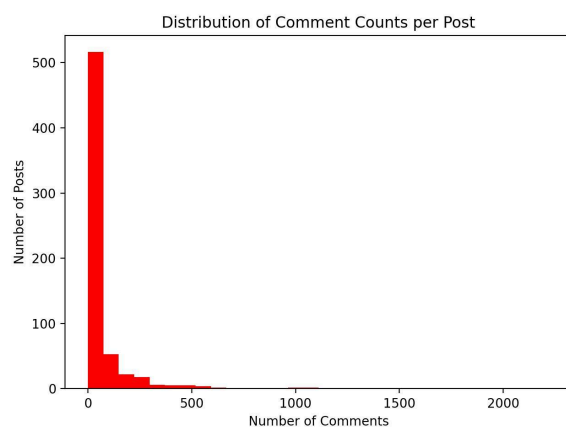*Figure 1: Distribution of posts across various subreddits*

Figure 2: Distribution of comment counts per post

An analysis of comment distribution across Reddit posts (figure 2) reveals that the majority of posts garnered fewer than 100 comments, with most receiving under 500. However, a subset of posts attracted over 1,000 comments, indicating heightened community engagement. Upon closer examination, it was observed that six out of the seven most-commented posts were directly related to Assassin's Creed Shadows (figure 3). This suggests that discussions surrounding this particular title created significant interest and interaction within the Reddit community.

Figure 3: Posts with more than 1000 comments
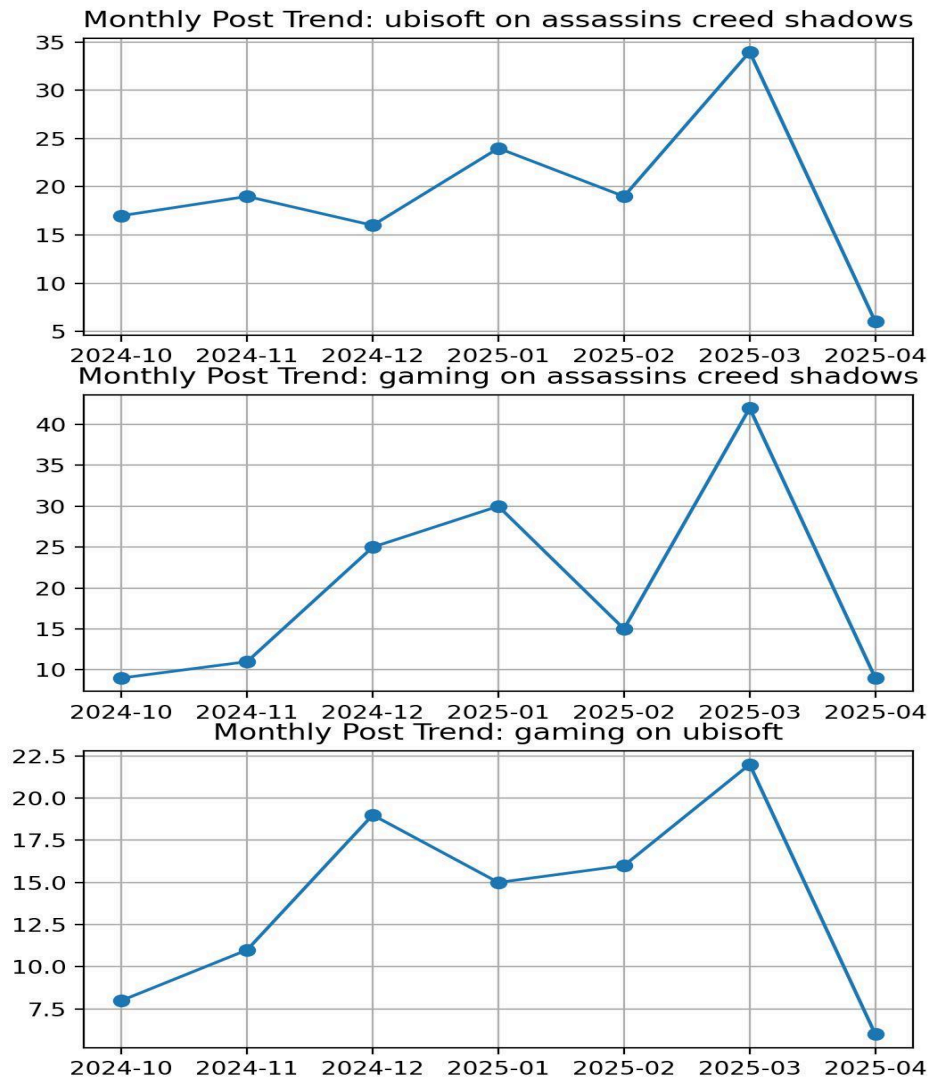
Figure 4: Monthly post trends

An analysis of monthly posting trends on Reddit subreddits r/ubisoft and r/gaming revealed a significant increase in posts during March 2025 (figure 4). This spike corresponds with the release of *Assassin's Creed Shadows* on March 20, 2025. The heightened activity suggests that the game's launch generated substantial interest and discussion within the Reddit community, reflecting its impact on Ubisoft's visibility and engagement among users. The distribution of posts across all subreddits, when analysed, shows a similar increase in posts about the game.

Figure 5: Posts mentioning Assassins Creed Shadows

Figure 6: Subreddits mentioning Assassins Creed Shadows

Controversies

One of the most commented-on Reddit posts—garnering over a thousand responses—centered on the inclusion of Yasuke, a Black samurai, 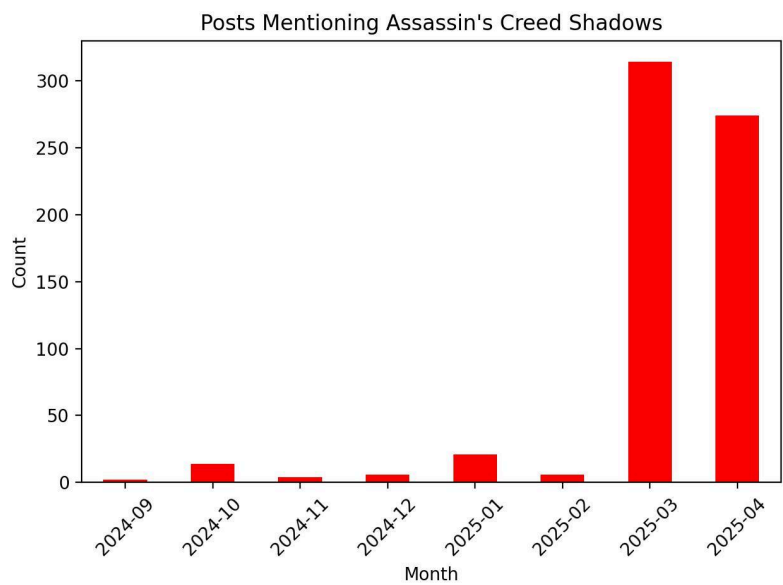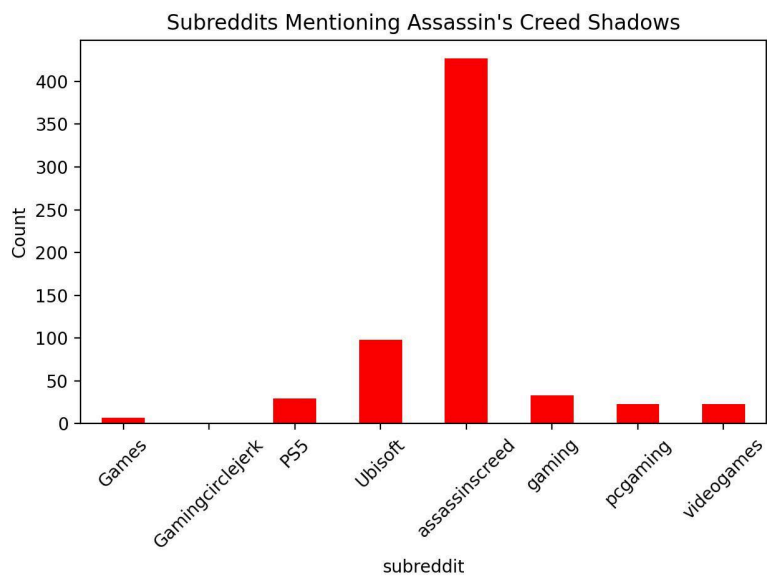as a playable character in *Assassin's Creed Shadows*, which is set during Japan's Sengoku period. This creative decision sparked considerable debate. Some critics argued that featuring a non-Japanese protagonist in this historical context was culturally insensitive, particularly concerning depictions of sacred Shinto sites. Japanese officials and religious leaders expressed concerns over the portrayal of real-world shrines, stating that certain scenes in the game were disrespectful to their traditions [6]. Various online critics also viewed the inclusion as a political statement catering to Western audiences [7]. To visualize the language prevalent in controversial discussions, a word cloud was generated from Reddit posts and comments pertaining to the inclusion of a Black samurai character in *Assassin's Creed Shadows*. This visualization highlights the most frequently used terms, offering insights into the community's focus areas and sentiments (figure 7).
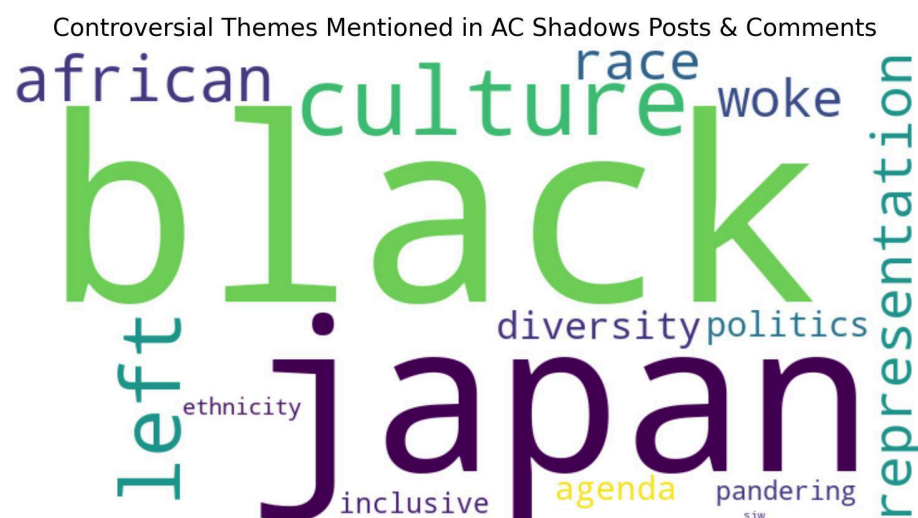
Figure 8: Controversial themes in the discourse surrounding the game

Text Preprocessing and Data Cleaning

To prepare the textual data for analysis, several preprocessing steps were applied to make sure the data remained consistent and to enhance the quality of the data. These steps are crucial in natural language processing (NLP) tasks to reduce noise and standardize the text.

Lowercasing

All text was converted to lowercase to maintain uniformity. This step ensures that words like "Ubisoft" and "ubisoft" are treated identically, preventing duplication in analysis due to case sensitivity.

Punctuation Removal

Punctuation marks were removed from the text. Punctuation often does not contribute to the semantic meaning in NLP tasks and can introduce noise, so removing them helps to focus on the actual words.

Tokenization

The text was split into individual words or tokens. Tokenization is an important step in NLP that breaks down text into smaller, manageable units, making further analysis like frequency counts or sentiment assessment easy.

Stopwords

Commonly used words that do not carry much semantic meaning, known as stopwords (e.g., "the," "is," "and"), were removed. Removing these words helps to reduce noise and helps in focusing on more meaningful words in the document.

Lemmatization

Using lemmatization, words were reduced to their base form. For example, "running" becomes "run." This process helps in normalizing the text, making sure that different forms of a word are considered as a single item.
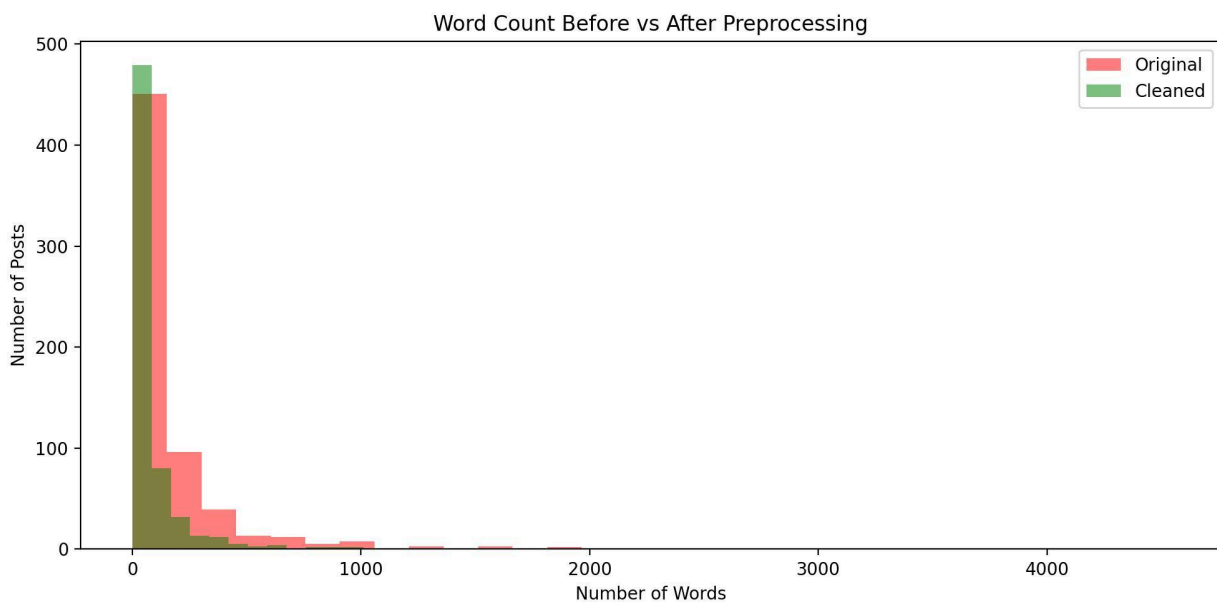

Figure 9: Word count before and after preprocessing.

Analyzing word counts before and after preprocessing reveals distinct patterns in the post texts(figure 9). For posts with fewer than 100 words, preprocessing led to an increase in word count. This is likely due to tokenization, where contractions and compound words are split into separate tokens. On the other hand, posts with more than 100 words experienced a decrease in word count after preprocessing, mostly because stopwords and punctuation were removed. These changes highlight how preprocessing can differently impact texts based on their initial length.
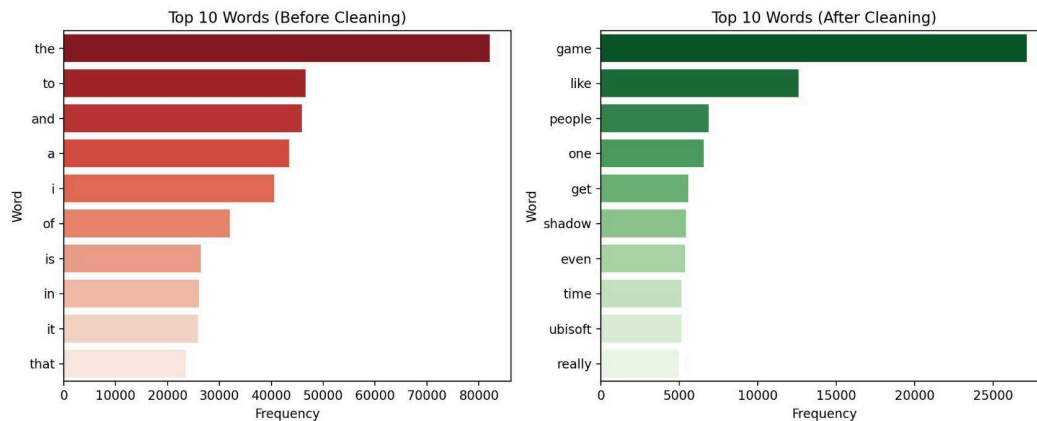
Figure 10: Top 10 words before and after cleaning post texts

An analysis of the most frequent words before and after text preprocessing (figure 10) reveals a significant shift in word prominence. Initially, common words such as "the," "to," "a," "that," and "it" dominated the dataset. These terms, known as stopwords, are prevalent in the English language but typically carry minimal semantic weight, offering limited insight into the content or sentiment of the text.

Post-preprocessing, the top words shifted to more content-specific terms like "shadows" and "ubisoft." This change results from the removal of stopwords during preprocessing, allowing words with greater informational value to surface. By eliminating these common but less meaningful words, the analysis can focus more effectively on terms that convey substantive information, thereby enhancing the understanding of the underlying themes and sentiments within the text.

Analysis

Count based Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis using the count method involves simply counting the number of positive and negative words in a text and then using the difference of these counts to determine the overall

sentiment. This basic approach doesn't take into account word context, punctuation, negations, or modifiers. In contrast, the VADER method uses a specialized lexicon with weighted scores and adjusts for intensity, emoticons, and punctuation. Due to this, VADER can capture nuances and subtleties in sentiment much better than the count method, making it more accurate—especially for informal or colloquial language often found in online discussions.

The sentiment score calculated using the count method generally reveals positive sentiment on posts and mixed sentiment for comments. This shows that users tend to express more favorable opinions when creating posts. It also suggests that users tend to be more negative in comments.
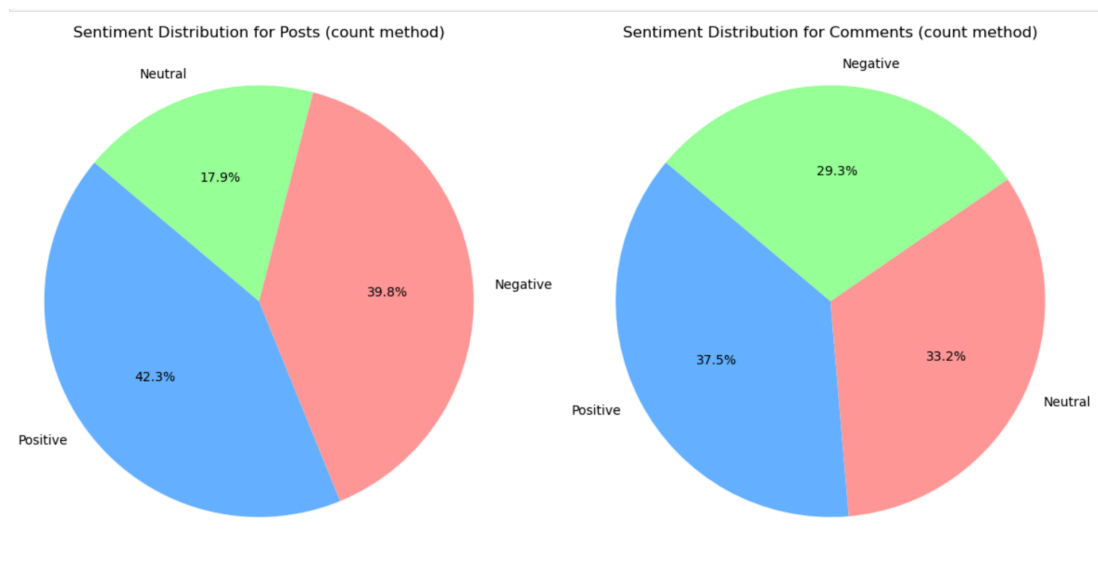
Figure 11: Pie chart of Sentiment analysis scores(count) on posts and comments

Vader Based Sentiment Analysis

VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) is a sentiment analysis tool that was created to capture the sentiments reflected in social media posts and comments. It uses a lexicon of words that has ratings for their sentiment intensity and has rules to account for punctuation, capitalization, degree modifiers, and negations to calculate the overall sentiment of a given text.

In the context of analyzing Reddit posts and comments, VADER can effectively classify each entry as positive, negative, or neutral. For instance, a comment like "I absolutely love this game!" would likely receive a high positive score due to the presence of strong positive words and punctuation. On the other hand, a statement such as "This update is terrible..." would be assigned a negative score. Neutral comments, which lack strong emotional language, would fall in the middle of the scale.

Each post in the dataset was given positive, negative , neutral and compound scores depending on the number of positive, negative and neutral words in each post. The compound score determined if the sentiments expressed in the posts were net positive, net negative or neutral. Since the number of comments were huge, a separate dataset for comments was created.
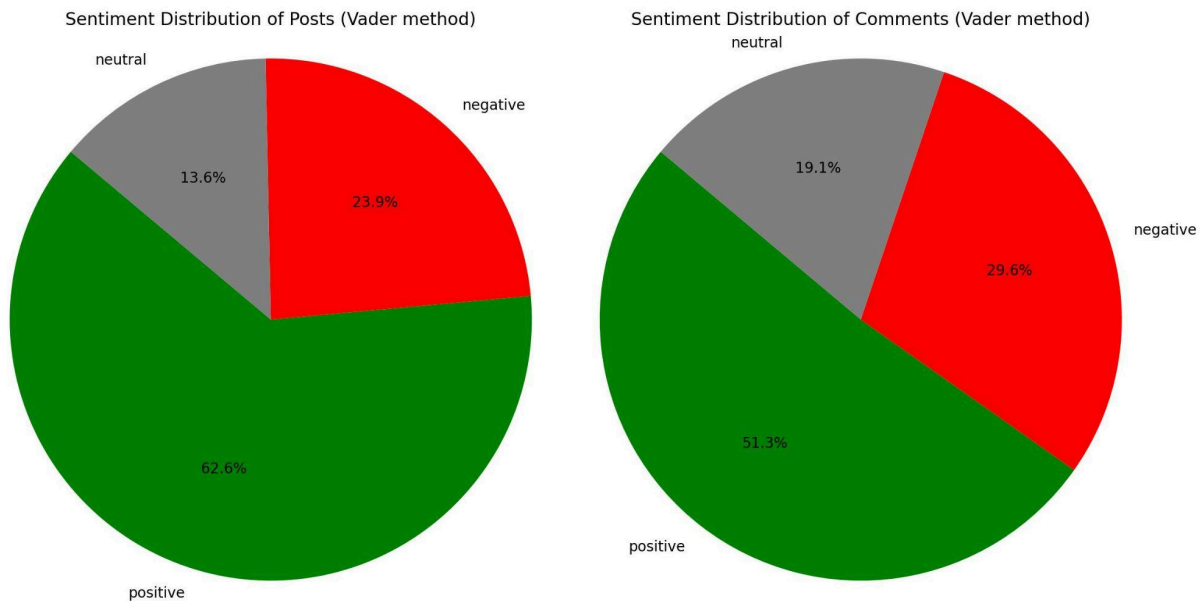
Figure 11: Pie chart of Sentiment analysis scores(vader) on posts and comments

The sentiment analysis of Reddit posts and comments reveals distinct patterns in user sentiment across these two content types.

Posts: A significant majority of Reddit posts exhibit a positive sentiment. Specifically, 62.6% of the analyzed posts are positive, while 23.9% are negative. This indicates that users tend to express favorable opinions or share positive experiences when creating posts.

Comments: In contrast, comments display a more balanced sentiment distribution. Approximately 51.3% of comments are positive, with a higher proportion of negative and neutral sentiments compared to posts. This suggests that while users often respond positively, there's a greater tendency to express criticism or neutrality in discussions.
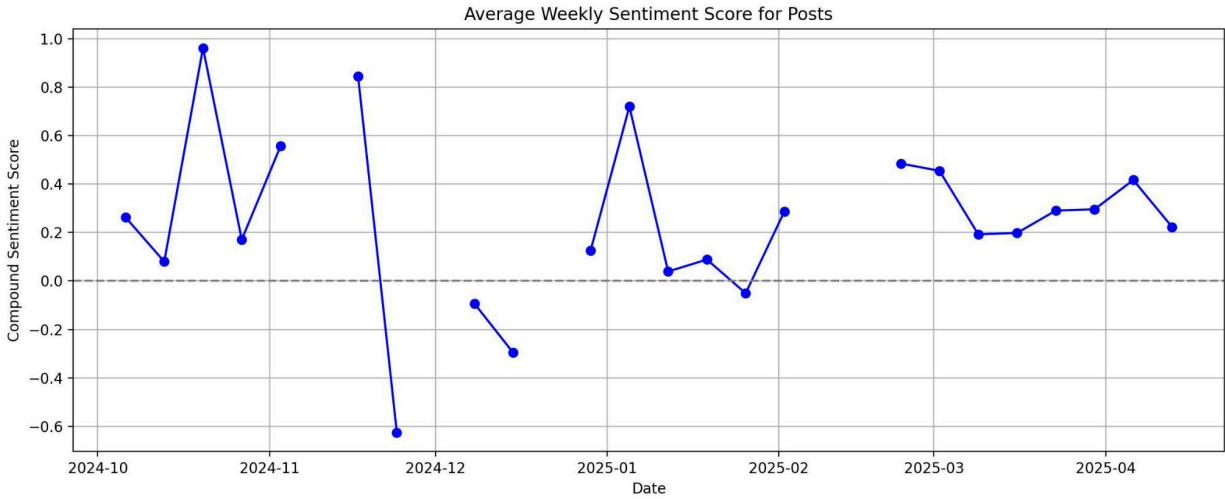
Figure 12: Average Weekly Sentiment Score for Posts
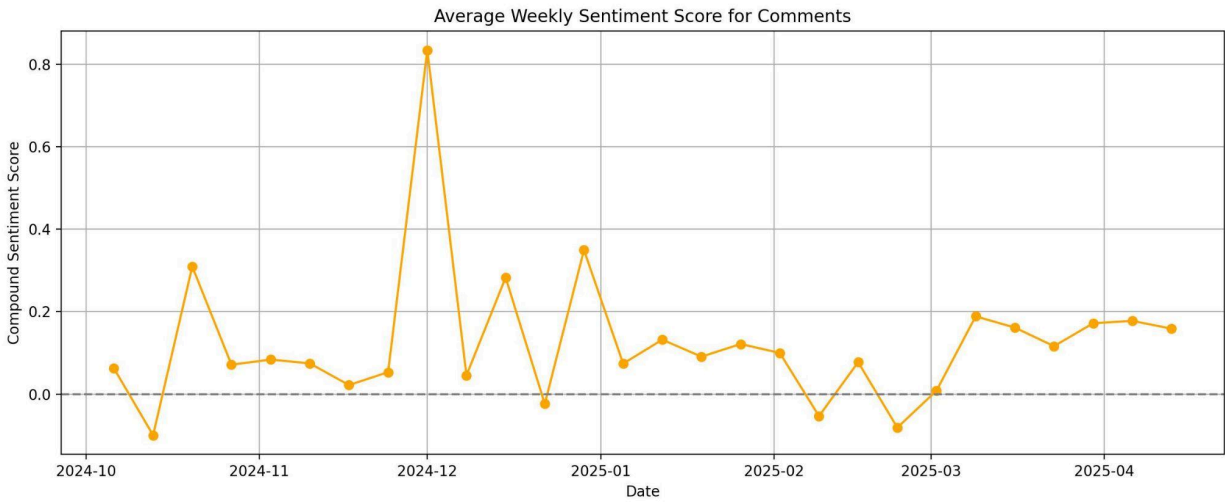
Figure 13: Average weekly sentiment score for comments

When we look at the weekly average score trend, there is an interesting spike in December of 2024 for both posts and comments and then a steep fall. December has various global holidays, such as Christmas and New Year's Eve. This is because on December 11, 2024, the creators of Assassin's Creed Shadows posted 'Ask me Anything' on the r/assassinscreed. Even Ubisoft itself noted an "increasingly positive Assassin's Creed community" during this period [8]. Independent observations

corroborate this positive tone – for instance, a media analysis of Ubisoft's December 2024 developer AMA found that "almost every comment is surprisingly positive" [9] about the changes being made to Assassin's Creed Shadows, suggesting fans appreciated the extra polish and improvements.

Figure 14: Positive words from comments December 2024

Figure 15: Negative words from comments December 2024

This positive lexicon in the community discourse reveals enthusiastic fan perceptions. The frequent use of words like "want", "good", and "better" suggests that players were voicing strong desires and expectations for a high-quality experience, as well as acknowledging improvements over past titles.

When the top positive posts were examined, they mostly contained critical reviews which were generally positive while the top negative posts were mostly complaints about the game's mechanics and problems with performance in expert difficulty mode.

Topic Modelling

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is a method that can help us find hidden themes in a collection of documents. In this project, LDA was applied to Reddit posts and comments to discover the main

topics people discussed. The model works by assuming that each document (post or comment) is made up of a mix of topics, and each topic is a mix of words. By analyzing which words often appear together, LDA identifies groups of words that represent these topics. This helps us understand the common themes in the discussion without manually reading every post.

```
Topics in Posts:
Topic 1:
friend unlocked stealth horizon properly yellow broken eagle place picture

Topic 2:
turn fully bro follow right background kinda kingdom ingame light

Topic 3:
corner asian friend sequel unlocked friendly interact nah failed forgot

Topic 4:
insane finding hater member ninja value puzzle sad add say

Topic 5:
run cover progression legit moment given yes tied ready animus

Topic 6:
friend legit empire far loved motion ready stats civilian yes

Topic 7:
friend corner picture asian legit storyline evil artifact topic ready

Topic 8:
freedom recommend typically loot asian bother bayek little genre surrounding

Topic 9:
period say mirage result praise ign scene action apple unlocked

Topic 10:
set assassin word trailer reason offensive problem developer quickly black
```

Figure 16: Topics discovered through LDA modelling (posts)

The LDA topic modeling (figure 16) of Reddit posts revealed ten distinct themes. Topic 1 centers on gameplay features and visuals, with users discussing unlocking stealth mechanics and in-game imagery in a social context (e.g., referencing friends and specific visual cues such as "eagle" and "horizon"). Topic 2 appears to relate to game dynamics and setting, highlighting aspects such as environmental background and in-game "kingdom" elements. Topic 3 focuses on narrative and sequel elements, with mentions of character interactions and unlocking content, though some posts express mixed success or frustration. Topic 4 includes strong emotional language—such as "insane" and "hater"—indicating that some users have intense reactions, possibly due to perceived shortcomings in gameplay or design. Topic 5 discusses progression and technical mechanics, referencing terms like "cover" and "Animus," suggesting attention to how the game advances and rewards players. Topic 6 is characterized by discussions about the overall game experience, including narrative elements (e.g., references to an empire or civilian aspects) that users respond to positively. Topic 7 revisits narrative and cultural elements, with posts mentioning Asian influences, key artifacts, and storylines related to Ubisoft's signature style. Topic 8 highlights themes of freedom and loot, along with specific comparisons to earlier titles through references to Bayek, indicating discussions about genre and gameplay style. Topic 9 seems to focus on action and visual scenes, with users praising cinematic moments and unlocked features. Lastly, Topic 10 directly addresses controversy,

with users critiquing trailers and expressing concerns about offensive elements, particularly in relation to the portrayal of Black characters. Together, these topics offer a comprehensive view of the diverse opinions and discussions among the community regarding Ubisoft's latest release.

```
Topics in Comments:
Topic 1:
yasuke character people japanese black japan naoe samurai like saying

Topic 2:
game assassin story creed like quest people think want care

Topic 3:
hate ubisoft content removed free exactly action activity tbh criticism

Topic 4:
review comment post reddit question subreddit rule dialogue specifically concern

Topic 5:
game ubisoft player people sale steam year probably play million

Topic 6:
game like feel really world play better good shadow open

Topic 7:
want option use talking point sure try add youre cool

Topic 8:
game time playing good like ive fun really played yeah

Topic 9:
valhalla odyssey shadow origin story like game hour mode combat

Topic 10:
make enemy dont lol like think thing hope assassination people
```

Figure 18: Topics discovered through LDA modelling (comments)

The LDA analysis of Reddit comments revealed 10 different discussion themes. Topic 1 centers on character representation, highlighting names like Yasuke, samurai, and cultural terms. Topic 2 focuses on narrative and quest design, while Topic 3 shows criticism toward Ubisoft. Topic 4 involves meta discussions about reviews and subreddit rules. Topic 5 is about commercial aspects such as sales and platform activity. Topics 6 and 8 reflect positive feedback and personal enjoyment during gameplay, Topic 7 consists of casual suggestions about game options, Topic 9 compares the game with others in terms of combat and story, and Topic 10 discusses enemy mechanics and assassination features.

In order to gain a closer look at Topic 1 posts, the top positive and negative posts within topic 1 were explored (figure 19).

```
Title: Tackling the sales and player data discourse for Shadows.
Compound Score: 0.9874
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Use Special K for better performance in AC Shadows!
Compound Score: 0.9803
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: PSA For NVIDIA Users re: Fix for Performance Issues/Instability
Compound Score: 0.9742
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: A post celebrating AC Shadows' PC Performance
Compound Score: 0.9741
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: PSA: AC Shadows can be played on Xbox Cloud gaming even if you only have Gamepass ultimate and Ubisoft+
Compound Score: 0.969
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Assassin's Creed: Shadows will not require the Ubisoft Connect standalone launcher when purchased through Steam.
Compound Score: 0.9428
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: DLC content for two user accounts
Compound Score: 0.9001
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: On Pc do you need the premium version to play shadows tmr?
Compound Score: 0.875
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Over 3 million players! Also 2nd highest Day 1 sales revenue in Assassin's Creed franchise history, biggest Ubisoft Day 1 ever on Play
Station Digital Store, best community ever with over 40 Million hours already played. Justice is forged in the Shadows! | Source: official AC
Instagram profile
Compound Score: 0.875
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Some opinions from you guys please
Compound Score: 0.8481
```

Figure 19: Topic 1 top positive posts

The topic 1 positive posts all show very high positive sentiment, with compound scores ranging from 0.848 to 0.987. They focus on performance improvements, sales and player data, and announcements about gameplay and platform benefits. For example, some posts celebrate strong performance and sales records, while others offer advice for better in-game performance and highlight news about compatibility (such as playing on Xbox Cloud Gaming or avoiding certain launchers). Overall, these posts suggest a high level of satisfaction and hope in the community regarding the performance and success of the game.

```
Title: Why have ubisoft used GAME uk for their collector's edition of AC Shadows?
Compound Score: -0.7906
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Assassin's Creed Shadows sells more copies in 1 week than Star Wars Outlaws did in 3 months
Compound Score: -0.5994
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Does cancelling my Ubisoft + subscription immediately after buying it still allow me to play the games for a month?
Compound Score: -0.5584
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: FPS cap always 1 number higher in every recent AC games, including Shadows.
Compound Score: -0.5423
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: AC Shadows no longer available for pre-order?
Compound Score: -0.4867
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: NZ trick to download AC shadows earlier
Compound Score: -0.4019
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Assassins Creed Shadows Collectors Edition - limited stock back in at GAME (UK)
Compound Score: -0.0772
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Assassin's Creed Shadows: Ubisoft deep dives into PS5 Pro updates
Compound Score: 0.0
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Assassin's Creed Shadows had a sales split of 73% on console and 27% on PC, was Ubisofts biggest ever day 1 launch on Playstation stor
e
Compound Score: 0.0
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Title: Video Game Photo's I've Taken Since 2017 (362 Pics over 25 Games) [OC]
Compound Score: 0.0
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Figure 20: Topic 1 top negative posts

The topic 1 negative posts in this set generally exhibit negative sentiment, with compound scores ranging from approximately -0.79 to -0.4. In particular, posts questioning Ubisoft's marketing choices and product availability—such as the use of GAME UK for a collector's edition or concerns over pre-orders and subscription policies—receive notably low scores. Some posts also express criticism about technical aspects like FPS caps. A few posts show neutral sentiment with a compound score of 0, indicating mixed or ambiguous reactions. Overall, these sentiment values suggest that, unlike the highly positive posts seen in other topics, the community displays significant dissatisfaction and concerns regarding Ubisoft's decisions and product offerings in this context.
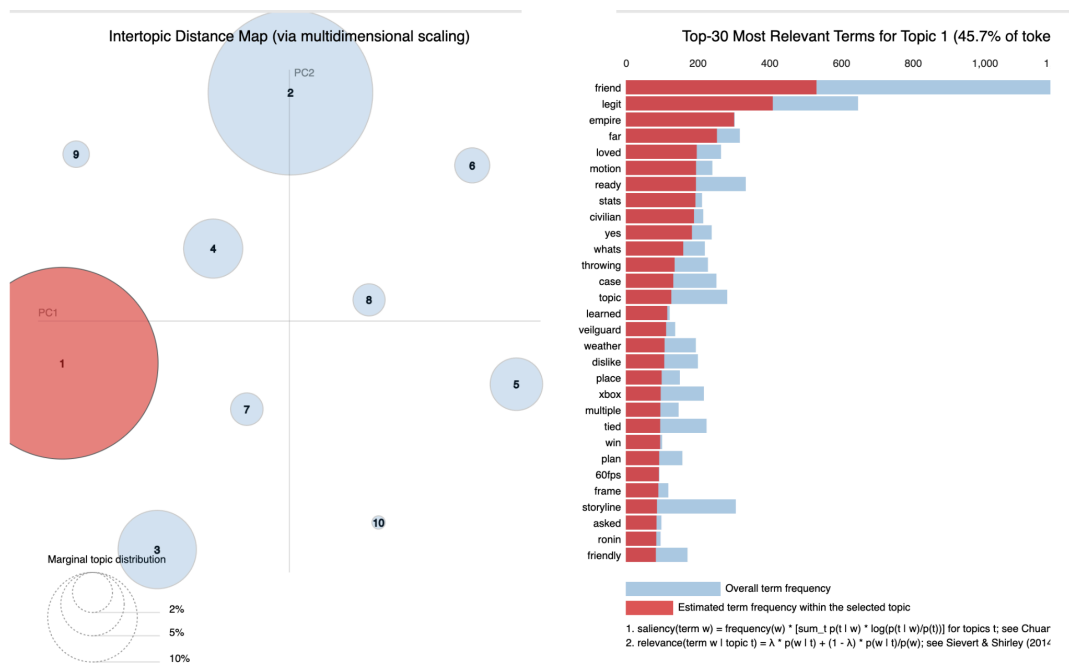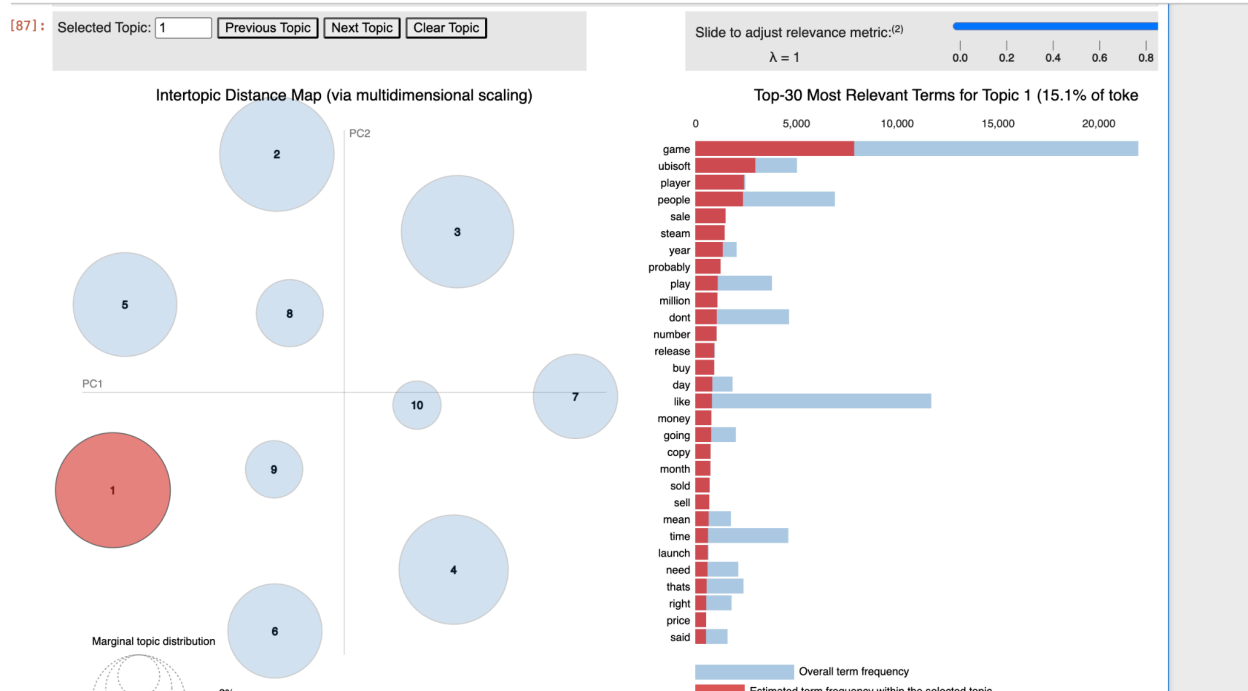

Figure 21: Intertopic distance mapping for posts

Figure 21: Intertopic distance mapping for comments

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of Reddit posts and comments, the overall community sentiment toward Ubisoft and Assassin's Creed Shadows appears to be predominantly positive, especially in the posts where the majority of discussions express enthusiasm about gameplay updates, improvements, and technical performance. However, the comments reveal a more mixed sentiment, with a noticeable proportion of negative feedback and criticism, particularly regarding aspects such as game difficulty, casting decisions, and specific in-game mechanics.

The topic modeling analysis, using LDA, uncovered distinct themes in both posts and comments. The posts predominantly feature discussions about quality-of-life improvements, technical performance, and game progression, while the comments focus on character representation, narrative elements, and issues related to Ubisoft's design choices. The intertopic distance mapping indicated that although topics are generally distinct, there is some overlap, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the discussions.

Overall, these findings suggest that while there is strong positive support and excitement surrounding Ubisoft's new release, there are also controversies and criticisms within the

community. This nuanced sentiment landscape shows both areas where Ubisoft is succeeding and aspects that may require further attention. Future work could explore these dynamics further by correlating sentiment trends with specific game events or updates.

REFERENCES

1. [1]M. Bertz, "Ubi Uncensored: The History Of Ubisoft By The People Who Wrote It," Game Informer, Dec. 06, 2011.
https://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2011/12/06/ubi-uncensored.aspx
2. T. Kaur, "We Need To Start Being Angry About Microtransactions Again," TheGamer, Mar. 04, 2025. https://www.thegamer.com/assassins-creed-monster-hunter-wilds-angry-microtransactions/ (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
3. V. Blake, "Ubisoft's formula – tried and true, or time to change?," NME, Nov. 09, 2020.
https://www.nme.com/features/ubisofts-formula-tried-and-true-or-time-to-change-2812353 (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
4."The Lens: Should Ubisoft apologise to Japan for Assassin's Creed Shadows?," Young Post, Apr. 13, 2025.
https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/your-voice/article/3306097/lens-should-ubisoft-apologise-japan-assassins-creed-shadows (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
5."Assassins Creed Shadows Wiki," Assassins Creed Shadows Wiki, 2025.
https://assassinscreedshadows.wiki.fextralife.com/Assassins+Creed+Shadows+Wiki (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
6. M. Montanaro, "Assassin's Creed Shadows Faces Backlash in Japan Over Shrine Depiction, Politicians and Temple Priests Blast Ubisoft for Cultural Disrespect," That Park Place, Mar. 14, 2025.
https://thatparkplace.com/assassins-creed-shadows-shrine(accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
7. L. Russell, "'Assassin's Creed Shadows' and How 'DEI' Became Gamergate 2.0's Rallying Cry," WIRED, Aug. 16, 2024. https://www.wired.com/story/assassins-creed-shadows-dei-gamergate (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
8. J. Broadwell, "Assassin's Creed Shadows delayed to March 20 - ESPN," ESPN.com, Jan. 09, 2025.
https://www.espn.com/gaming/story/_/id/43347030/assassins-creed-shadows-delay-march-20-2025 (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).
9. S. Cichacki, "Ubisoft Did a Reddit AMA About 'Assassin's Creed Shadows' and Dropped a Bunch of New Info That Has Me Cautiously Optimistic," VICE, Dec. 11, 2024.
https://www.vice.com/en/article/ubisoft-did-a-reddit-ama-about-assassins-creed-shadows-and-dropped-a-bunch-of-new-info-that-has-me-cautiously-optimistic/ (accessed Apr. 16, 2025).