How to easily sample video comments from YouTube

There are several options for sampling video comments from YouTube. In the following, we will briefly introduce three of them:

1. YouTube Data Tools
2. Webometric Analyst
3. Tuber for R

1. Using YouTube Data Tools is arguably the easiest method for sampling video comments from YouTube. However, you need to provide each video id separately, and using the tool takes a bit more time because it always creates additional files you do not need for the analysis of the video comments. You should prefer this method when you only want to sample a **small number of videos** and want to **code them manually.**

2. Webometric Analyst is a more complicated method, but it saves time if you need to download a larger number of video comments. You should prefer this method when you want to sample a **larger number of videos or want to sample repeatedly**, want to **code manually,** and have a **Windows** installation. NB: Webometrics Analyst only collects up to five replies to comments.

3. Tuber for R is the most difficult to use method (especially if you are not very familiar with R). You should prefer this method **independent of the number of videos** if you want to **analyze comments automatically** (for example in topic models). NB: Tuber for R only collects up to five replies to comments.

Obtaining an authentication code

If you want to use Webometric Analyst or tuber[1], you need an authentication code from YouTube. The code is generated as follows:

1. Create a Google account (in case you do not already have one).
2. Login.
3. Open this webpage and follow the steps in case you need a code for Webometric Analyst.
4. If you need a code for tuber, follow the same steps until you are asked to create an API key.[2] Create an OAuth Client-ID instead. Alternatively, use our instruction video.

[1] However, in a Tweet from Feb 28th, 2019, the developer of YouTube Data Tools, Bernhard Rieder, informed users that it might be better if they use their own API credentials because YouTube has introduced a new API compliance review which might lead to changes in the app (see https://twitter.com/RiederB/status/1101134494713737219).

[2] As the Tweet from the YouTube Data Tools developer illustrates, there is always the risk that APIs change or are closed altogether. In light of the cutback of the Facebook Graph API in 2018, Deen Freelon even argues that computational research might (have to) enter a "post-API age" (see https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/56f4q/).

Using YouTube Data Tools

(also see footnote 1 on the previous page)

1. Open YouTube Data Tools in any web browser.
2. Scroll down and launch the *Video Info and Comments* module.
3. Input the Video ID from the YouTube video you want (e.g., DcJFdCmN98s)
4. Wait until the results files are displayed.
5. Download the file ending with "[...]comments.tab".
6. Change the file extension from ".tab" to ".txt".
7. Open the file in a simple text editor (e.g., Notepad).
8. Mark all the text, copy it, and paste it into Excel or SPSS. Do not open the file directly in Excel or SPSS, or the emojis will be replaced by unreadable symbols.

Using Webometric Analyst

1. Download Webometric Analyst.
2. Open the program.
3. In versions before 4.2, select the *Classic* interface (default).
4. Switch to the tab *YouTube*.
5. Insert your API Key (see above) in the yellow form field.
6. Open a simple text editor and create a text file (.txt) with all the video IDs you want. Separate the IDs with Returns. Do not put too many IDs in one file (especially if the videos have a large amount of comments) or the download of the comments could take extremely long.
7. Click on the button *Get YouTube Comments for List of Video IDs* (it's in the lower middle of the program screen).
8. You will be asked for a text file containing the video IDs. Choose the file you created in step 6.
9. You will be asked for a text file in which the results will be saved. Choose a name or just use the default setting.
10. Open the text file in a simple text editor (e.g., Notepad).
11. Mark all the text, copy it, and paste it into Excel or SPSS. Do not open the file directly in Excel or SPSS, or the emojis will be replaced by unreadable symbols.

Using Tuber for R

1. Download and install RStudio.
2. Download the R script from our GitHub repository and run it.