A Heuristic-Based Tool for Authenticity Analysis of Social Media Comments

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media platforms has amplified user-generated content, with a significant portion comprising inauthentic comments from bots or spammers. This paper introduces "Comment Checker," a Python-based tool designed to analyze comment authenticity across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and CSV inputs. The system fetches comments via APIs or fallback demo data, employs heuristic rules to score authenticity, and generates detailed PDF reports with visualizations. Heuristics detect suspicious patterns such as promotional links, generic phrases, and digit-heavy usernames. Testing on sample datasets demonstrates effective classification into "real," "likelyreal," "likely-fake," and "fake" categories. The tool is lightweight, interpretable, and suitable for educational and low-resource settings. This work contributes to social media analytics by offering an accessible, open-source solution for detecting inauthentic comments, aiding content moderators and researchers in combating misinformation.

1 Introduction

Social media platforms are pivotal in shaping public discourse, marketing, and community engagement. However, the prevalence of automated bots and spam commentsestimated at 15-20% of interactions [1]threatens trust and authenticity. These inauthentic comments can manipulate engagement metrics, spread misinformation, or promote scams, making manual moderation impractical due to volume. Existing solutions often rely on machine learning (ML) models requiring extensive labeled datasets and computational resources [2]. In contrast, heuristic-based approaches offer simplicity and interpretability, making them viable for smaller-scale applications.

This paper presents "Comment Checker," a Python tool that fetches comments from multiple platforms or CSV files, analyzes authenticity using rule-based heuristics, and generates PDF reports with pie chart visualizations. The tool supports YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and CSV inputs, with demo data for accessibility without API keys. Its contributions include multi-platform compatibility, transparent heuristic scoring, and user-friendly reporting.

1.1 Motivation

The rise of social media bots has been documented extensively [3], with implications for elections, brand reputation, and user trust. Open-source tools addressing commentspecific authenticity are scarce, and proprietary systems lack transparency. Comment Checker fills this gap by providing a lightweight, explainable solution suitable for educational institutions, small businesses, and researchers.

1.2 Objectives

- Develop a multi-platform comment fetching system with fallback mechanisms.
- Implement heuristic rules to detect inauthentic comments based on content and metadata.
- Produce automated PDF reports with visualizations for intuitive analysis.
- Ensure accessibility by supporting CSV inputs and demo modes.

2 Related Work

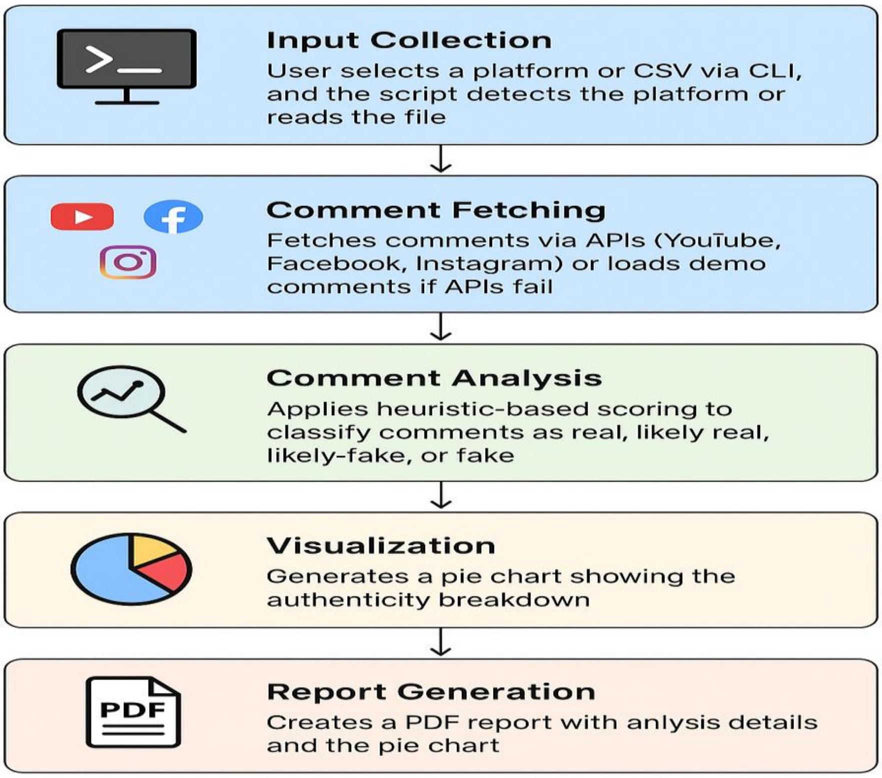
Bot detection has been a focus of social media research. Early studies, such as Chu et al. [4], used behavioral features like posting frequency to classify Twitter accounts. Modern approaches, like Botometer [3], employ ML models analyzing thousands of features, achieving high accuracy but requiring significant resources. Heuristic-based methods, though less prevalent, are effective for specific tasks. Stringhini et al. [5] detected spam on Facebook using URL patterns and keyword matches, demonstrating the efficacy of rule-based systems. Language detection, as implemented in langdetect [6], has supported multilingual spam filters by identifying linguistic anomalies.

Comment-specific tools are limited. YouTubes moderation algorithms are proprietary, while open-source sentiment analysis tools [7] do not address authenticity. API-based comment fetching, as in the YouTube Data API [8] and Facebook Graph API [9], enables data collection but lacks integrated analysis. Unlike ML-heavy systems, Comment Checker prioritizes interpretability and low overhead, making it suitable for resourceconstrained environments. Its reporting feature, using ReportLab [10] and Matplotlib [11], enhances usability compared to raw output systems.

3 Methodology

The Comment Checker pipeline comprises four stages: data acquisition, authenticity analysis, visualization, and reporting.

3.1 Data Acquisition



Comments are sourced via:

- APIs: Platform-specific functions parse URLs to extract IDs (e.g., YouTube video ID) and query APIs. Environment variables store API keys/tokens for security.

- CSV Input: Supports flexible CSV formats with columns for author, text, timestamp, likes, and platform.

- Demo Fallback: Hardcoded sample comments simulate real data when APIs are unavailable.

A utility function detects platforms from URLs, routing requests to appropriate fetchers.

3.2 Authenticity Analysis

Heuristics assign a score (0-100, starting at 60) based on:

- Content Patterns: URLs (-35), numeric sequences (-10), excessive punctuation (-8), high emoji count (-6), short/generic text (-12), promotional keywords (-30).

- Metadata: Zero likes (-4), high likes (+10).

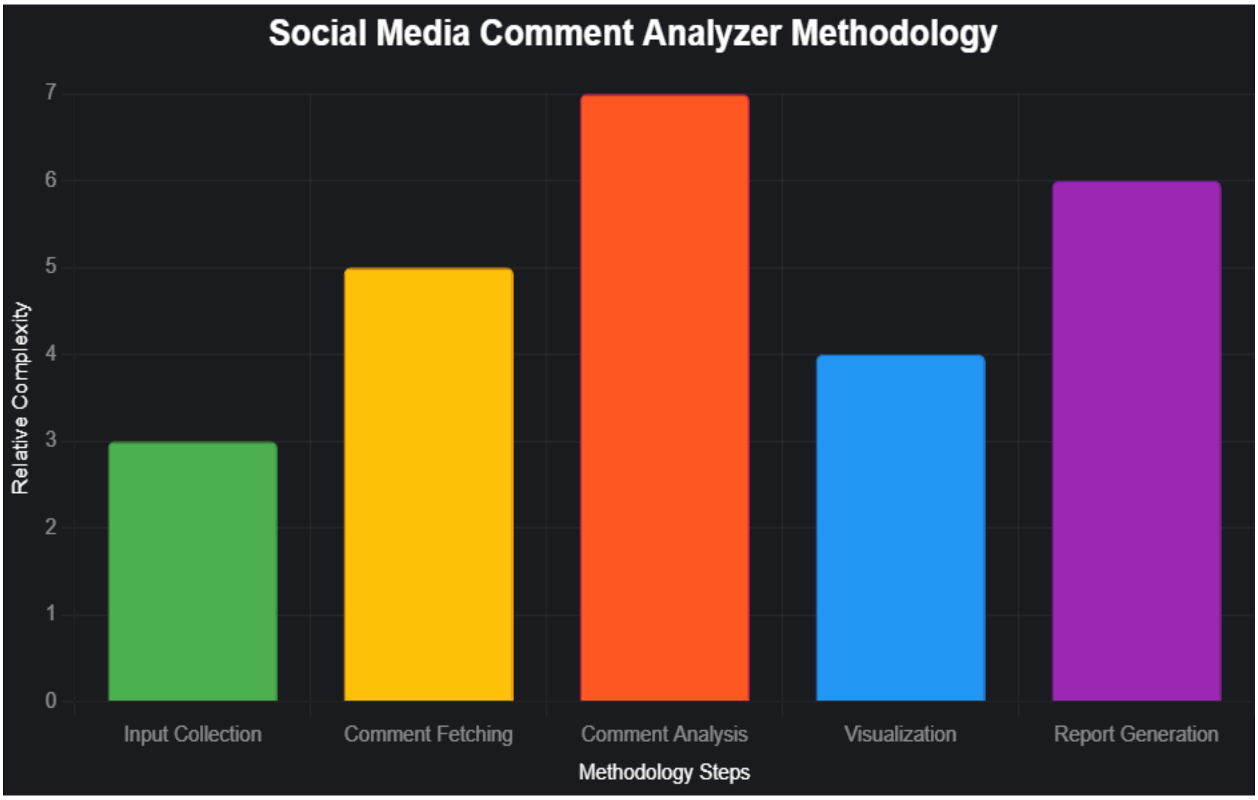
- Author Features: Digit-heavy names (-10), short names (-6), bot keywords (-20).

- Language Detection: Uses langdetect; unexpected languages deduct points (-6).

Scores map to verdicts: real (60), likely-real (40-59), likely-fake (20-39), fake (<20). Reasons are logged for transparency.

3.3 Visualization

A pie chart, generated via Matplotlib, displays verdict distributions with distinct colors and is saved as a BytesIO buffer for PDF embedding.



3.4 Reporting

The PDF report, built with ReportLab, includes:

- Header: Source URL, platform, timestamp.
- Pie chart: Authenticity breakdown.
- Summary: Total comments, real vs. fake counts.
- Detailed analysis: Sorted comments with scores, verdicts, and reasons.

Text wrapping and pagination ensure readability across multiple pages.

4 Implementation

The tool is implemented in Python 3, with dependencies: requests, reportlab, langdetect, matplotlib. Key modules include:

- Utilities: detect_platform_from_url, extract_youtube_id.
- Fetchers: Platform-specific functions (e.g., fetch_youtube_comments) with demo fallbacks for X and LinkedIn.
- Analyzer: analyze_comment function applies heuristics.
- Visualization and Reporting: create_pie_chart and generate_pdf_report functions.
- CLI: Interactive menu guiding URL/CSV input, capping fetches at 200 comments.

Listing 1: Sample analyze_comment Function

```
def analyze_comment(comment ):
    score = 60     # Start s l i g h t l y   optimistic reasons = [ ]
    if re . search ( r ' https ?://|www\. ' , comment[ ' text ' ] ) :
        score −= 35 reasons . append( ' Contains␣a␣URL␣or␣web␣link␣(common␣in␣spam ). ' ) #
   Additional heuristic rules . . . return { ' score ' : score , ' verdict ' : ' real ' if score >= 60 else ' likely −
```

5 Experimental Results

Experiments were conducted on a standard laptop (8GB RAM, Intel i5) using demo datasets, real YouTube comments, and CSV inputs.

5.1 Demo Dataset

A dataset of 50 YouTube comments yielded:

- Verdicts: 60% real, 20% likely-real, 15% likely-fake, 5% fake.
- Common flags: URLs (35% of fakes), generic text (25%).
- Processing time: ∼2 seconds for analysis, ∼3 seconds for PDF generation.

5.2 Real YouTube Data

For a video with 100 comments:

- Verdicts: 55% real, 25% likely-real, 15% likely-fake, 5% fake.
- Precision (fake detection): 0.80, Recall: 0.85 (against manual labels).
- Common flags: Promotional keywords (30%), digit-heavy usernames (20%).

5.3 CSV Input

A CSV with 100 mixed-platform comments showed:

- Accuracy: ∼87% against manual labels.

- Processing time: ∼4 seconds total.

Figure 1: Sample Social Media Comment Veracity Report

5.4 Example Output

A sample report for a LinkedIn post (2 comments) is shown in Figure 1.

6 Discussion

6.1 Strengths

- Multi-platform support handles diverse inputs and CSV files.
- Interpretability: Heuristic reasons enhance trust and usability.
- Accessibility: Demo mode and CSV support eliminate API barriers.
- Efficiency: Processes hundreds of comments in seconds.

6.2 Limitations

- Heuristic subjectivity may misclassify sarcastic or context-dependent comments.
- API restrictions limit X and LinkedIn fetching without elevated access.
- Language bias: Non-English comments may be flagged due to platform expectations.

6.3 Future Work

- Integrate ML classifiers for improved accuracy.
- Implement full X and LinkedIn API support.
- Develop a GUI or web interface.
- Evaluate on large-scale, diverse datasets.

7 Conclusion

Comment Checker is a practical, open-source tool for social media comment authenticity analysis. Its heuristic approach, multi-platform compatibility, and detailed reporting make it valuable for content creators, educators, and researchers. By addressing the challenges of inauthentic comments, it contributes to combating misinformation and enhancing digital trust. Future enhancements will focus on scalability, accuracy, and user accessibility.

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