

# World Leaders on YouTube

## Executive Summary



Source: Public YouTube profiles

YouTube is the second biggest search engine in the world, with more than 1 billion active monthly users and 500 hours of video uploaded on the platform every minute. Set up on February 14, 2005, YouTube is one of the most established social networks.

In light of these impressive statistics, it is no wonder that over the past decade 340 heads of state and government and the foreign ministries of 148 countries, representing 77 percent of all United Nations (UN) member states, have set up channels on the video-sharing platform.

Rather than using it as a social network, YouTube is primarily used as a video repository by governments.

Governments use YouTube to broadcast speeches live, publish the weekly activities of the office holder and even funny skits; politicians have created their own channels to post election clips or to engage with their subscribers with live Q&A and Google hangout sessions.

The White House and U.S. President Barack Obama dominate the YouTube rankings. The White House has the most subscribers and most interactions; Barack Obama has the most video views, the highest average views, likes and interactions per video.

Both channels have a combined following of 1.2 million subscribers, more than a third of the total 3 million subscribers of all channels studied in this report. They have posted more than half of the 130 videos with more than 1 million views and nine of the top 10 most watched videos with more than 5 million views. With 550 million video views, these two channels account for nearly half of the total 1.25 billion video views on all governmental channels.

Surprisingly, the BarackObama.com channel which served as the U.S. president's campaign channel in 2008 and 2012 is dormant and has not posted a video for three years.

Among the 340 channels analyzed in this study by leading strategic communications and global public relations firm Burson-Marsteller, 75 have been dormant for more than one year and eight have never posted a video. Only 33 channels are verified by YouTube, including the inactive channels of

Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

## The Most Subscribed

The White House is the most popular government organization on YouTube with 682,790 subscribers, closely followed by Barack Obama with more than half a million subscribers, ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (315,000 subscribers), the British Monarchy and the Vatican, each of which have more than 140,000 subscribers. The average number of subscribers of all the channels is less than 10,000.

Obama was the first world leader to upload a video to YouTube on September 14, 2006, before the platform was acquired by Google. The campaign team of the then Senator of Illinois posted a [recording](#) of his CNN interview with Wolf Blitzer on the Federal Spending Transparency

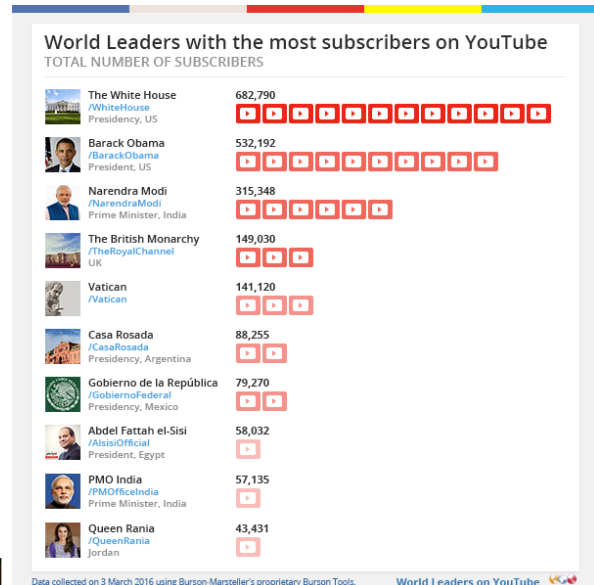


Barack Obama on Federal Spending Transparency Bill



Prime Minister.

The State Department, the European Commission, the UK Foreign Office, the British Monarchy and even Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei posted their first videos in 2007 when YouTube was mainly watched by a younger audience. Buckingham Palace shared a video about the royal [Garden Parties](#), which has been watched 200,000 times, and the Foreign Office shared a riveting [advert](#) encouraging viewers to take out travel insurance.



Bill. This clip has been watched 21,000 times. By Election Day on November 4, 2008, his team had posted more than 1,800 videos on the campaign channel which went silent after his re-election in 2012.

Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi was the second world leader to post a [video](#) on the platform on November 8, 2006 when he was still Mayor of Florence. He was followed in early 2007 by Malcolm Turnbull, then Australia's Minister for the Environment and Water and now



Convegno sulla "città wireless"





In 2008 the Swedish Foreign Ministry posted its first video, a press statement by the former Swedish Foreign Minister with his Latvian counterpart. At the end of March 2008 Jordan's Queen Rania made a splash with a [video](#) designed to break down stereotypes about the Arab world, which has been viewed more than 1.8 million times.

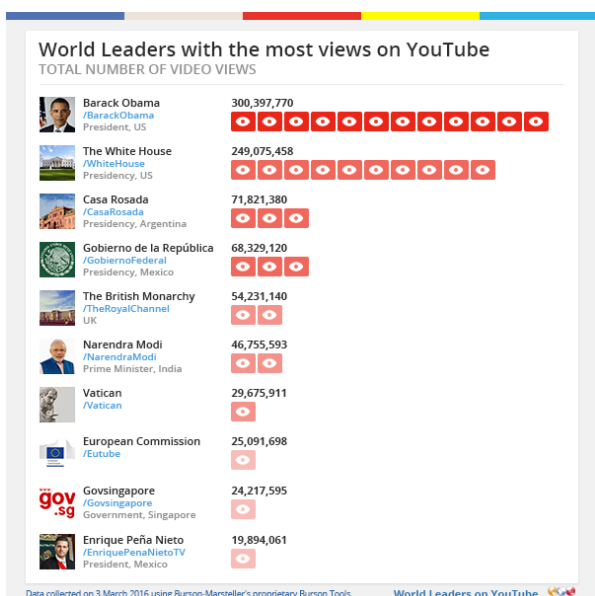
Most of these videos were shot in the old 3:4 video format, were limited to 10 minutes and have a grainy, low-quality look, as if from another era. Over the past decade there have been significant improvements to the platform:

users can now livestream on YouTube and upload full HD quality videos without any time limits.

### The Most Watched World Leader

All world leaders combined have posted 198,617 videos that have been watched 1.25 billion times. Barack Obama and the White House channels total more than half a billion video views combined. The channel of the Argentinian Presidency, the Mexican government and the British Monarchy complete the top five list with more than 50,000 total video views each.

The average number of views for each video is



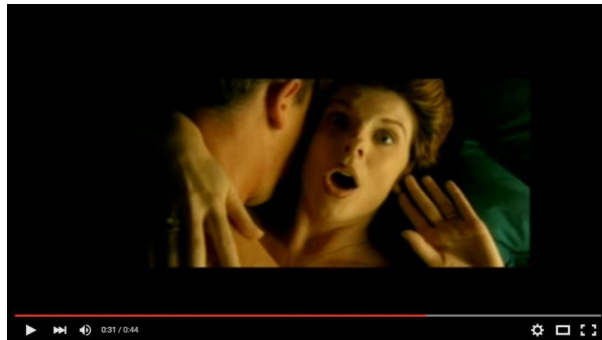
only 373 but there are 130 videos that have been watched more than 1 million times and more than half of these have been posted by Barack Obama and the White House. Eleven videos have gone viral with more than 5 million views each.

Senator Obama's dance moves on the on The Ellen DeGeneres Show on October 30, 2007 is still the most watched [video](#) of any world leader, with more than 13 million views. His "Thank You" speech in front of his campaign staff after his re-election on November 8, 2012 is the second most watched [video](#) with 9.3 million views. Four other Barack Obama videos make it into the Top 10 list of the most viewed videos.





The European Commission scored a viral hit with a 44-second [clip](#) to promote European films. The sexually explicit trailer, including sex scenes from European films, has 9.3 million views and an age restriction on YouTube. A similar [trailer](#) for the most romantic scenes from European cinema has been viewed 1.1 million times. The White House's [video](#) of President Obama delivering an emotional and tearful statement on the shooting in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012 is the fourth most watched video. His [statement](#) on the death of Osama bin Laden and the [footage](#) of his surprise walk to the Department of the Interior are also among the most viewed, with 7.1 and 5.9 million views respectively.



Film lovers will love this!

European Commission III  
 ✓ Subscribed 34,452

9,308,366

of Prince William and Kate Middleton on April 29, 2011, the first of its kind on YouTube, has become the British Monarchy's most watched YouTube [video](#) with 2.8 million views. The six-minute [clip](#) of Kate Middleton walking down the aisle and the eight-minute royal [wedding vows](#) have each been viewed more 2.2 million times.



The Wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton

The British Monarchy III  
 ✓ Subscribed 149,155

2,866,665

## Average Video Views

Barack Obama's campaign team has made the most efficient use of YouTube. Each video posted on the BarackObama.com channel has been viewed more than 100,000 times on average. Jordan's Queen Rania comes close with 98,000 average views. The British Monarchy, the French government, and Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi average more than 50,000 views each, despite the latter two having posted only 26 and 63 videos respectively.

## Video Interactions

The White House and Barack Obama total 5.9 million interactions (likes, dislikes and comments) on their videos, more than half of the 9.8 million interactions received by all the channels in the study.

Barack Obama and the White House have received on average 750 and 583 interactions respectively on each of their 3,000 and 6,300 videos. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Poland's President Andrzej Duda and Guatemala's President Jimmy Morales make it into the top five in terms of average interactions per video, but they have each posted fewer than 100 videos.

## Most Liked World Leader



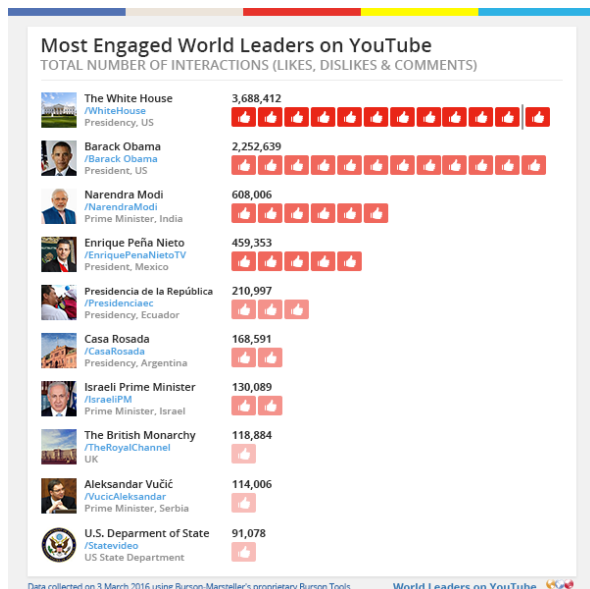
The YouTube Interview with President Obama



3,689,978

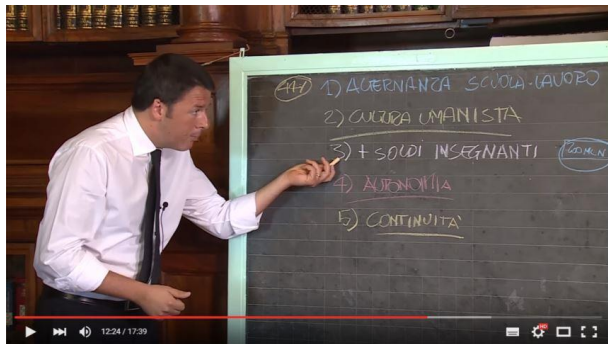
## The Most "Disliked" World Leaders

YouTube is the only social network which features a dislike button and the videos from world leaders have collected 1,758,474 thumbs down. In absolute terms, the videos of the White House and Barack Obama have received the most dislikes with 469,463 and 365,055 negative ratings respectively, with an average disapproval rate of 18 percent and 22 percent, respectively.



The videos of the White House and Barack Obama have received the most thumbs up with 1.6 million likes each. India's Prime Minister is in third place with more than half a million likes on his 5,555 videos, well ahead of the Presidency of Ecuador with a total of 150,000 likes.

The most liked video of any government is the YouTube [interview](#) with President Obama and a host of YouTube creators posted on the White House channel on January 22, 2015, with 71,920 likes and 3.6 million views.



La Buona Scuola (clip integrale)



attracted 18,000 negative votes.

Viewers are divided in their appreciation of the archive [footage](#) posted by the Polish government, showing former Prime Minister Donald Tusk and current President of the European Council singing a Christmas carol on national TV in 1996.

It comes as no surprise that many governments and leaders have decided not to display the like and dislike counts on their videos. Furthermore, since YouTube comments are notoriously negative, some governments have decided to disable comments all together on their videos. The comment function has been disabled on 22 percent of all analyzed videos.

However, the majority of channels have left the comments open, leaving their moderation to the up and down vote of the YouTube community. The White House has become by far the most engaged YouTube channel with 1.5 million comments, six times as many as Barack Obama (244,900 comments). The Presidency of Ecuador is in third position with less than 50,000 comments. The median average amount of comments on each channel is only 33.

Ten channels have an average disapproval rating of more than 60 percent including Chile's President Michelle Bachelet, the Greek Prime Minister, the Polish Premier and the President, as well as the Ukrainian presidential channel.

The Ukrainian conflict seems to have spilled over onto YouTube. The New Year's [address](#) by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on December 31, 2015 received 16,000 thumbs down and only 1,100 likes in what seems to be a concerted trolling campaign. The very scholarly video [explanation](#) of Italian Prime Minister's education reform in front of a blackboard has



Donald Tusk w programie "Szansa na sukces"



## Examples of Engagement

Quite a few world leaders have used YouTube to engage directly with their constituents. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte used his YouTube channel to answer selected questions fielded via Twitter on January 13, 2011.

The White House and the U.S. State Department organized their first Google+ hangout in early 2012 and both have organized regular video chats with administration officials on the platform. Google+ hangouts allow for live two-way video conversations with up to eight participants. Once the live broadcast is finished the video is then hosted on YouTube for those who have missed the broadcast.



Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used Google+ hangouts during their respective election campaigns in 2012, fielding questions from supporters. A number of world leaders have followed suit including President [Barack Obama](#), Colombian President [Juan Manuel Santos](#), German Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) and Malaysia's Prime Minister [Najib Razak](#). The European Commission regularly organizes Q&A sessions on its EUTube channel.

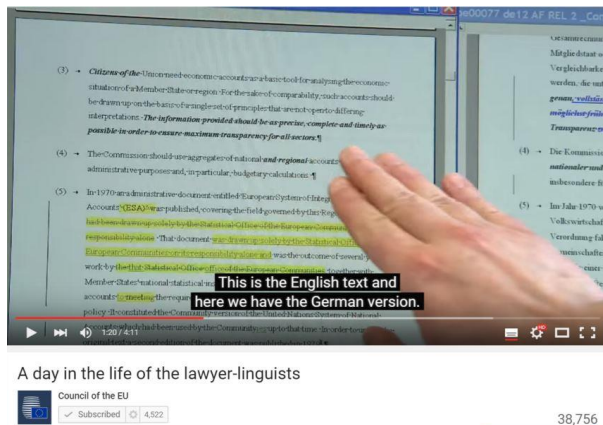
Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg used her YouTube channel to [reply directly](#) to U.S. comedian and talk show host Stephen Colbert, who had asked Norway to contribute USD \$100 million to help educate girls.





## Languages & Subtitles

The Vatican has set up 10 different language channels for its Papal broadcasts on YouTube in English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Lithuanian, Polish, Slovenian, Chinese and Vietnamese. The German Foreign office has separate YouTube channels for its German, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese videos. The latter has only 100 subscribers and 4,900 views as YouTube cannot be accessed in mainland China and produces videos dubbed in the respective language of each audience.



discoverability since the closed captions are indexed by YouTube's search engine.

The Brazilian presidential channel occasionally subtitles [video](#) statements by Dilma Rousseff in Portuguese. Selected [videos](#) from the 2014 Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) were subtitled in English and in French, and the Kremlin previously captioned [statements](#) by former President Dmitry Medvedev in English to be understood by a global audience.

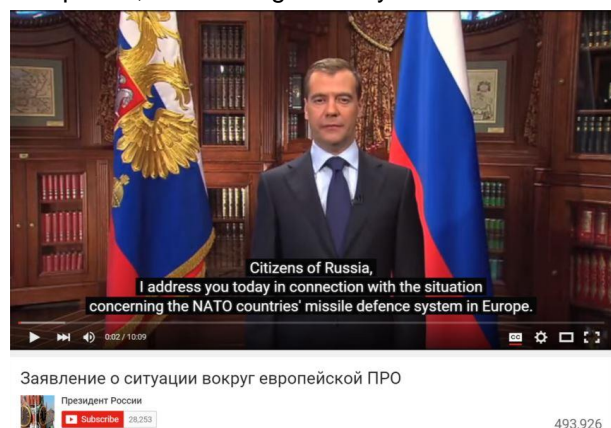
Only 15 channels, such as the channel of the UK government, Israel's Prime Minister's Office and the Russian Foreign Ministry, have created a branded watermark that displays in the lower right-hand corner of each video and very few use video cards to promote other videos or to link back to their website. Finally, some governments have not turned off the monetization option on their videos and display pre-roll ads, generating a small profit.

## Channel Design

There is little sign that much love goes into the design of governmental YouTube channels and not everyone seems to have read the YouTube playbook about getting the most of the platform. Forty-nine channels do not have a custom URL. Barack Obama, along with 90 other channels, does not have a header picture and 23 channels do not even have an avatar. However, channel design is less important on YouTube since very few viewers will actually go to the channel page and generally only watch the video. However, more than half of all the channels reviewed have set up a channel trailer, to feature four of the most salient videos which often auto play. Two-thirds of the channels have created playlists which help promote their videos. The Government of Grenada has created more than 500 playlists, often containing only one video. The presidential communications channel of the Philippine President boasts 290 playlists and the UK Foreign Office is in third place with 131 playlists.

The European Council consistently translates its most important videos into the 23 EU languages, with 23 different sets of subtitles. However, the most efficient way to reach a foreign audience is to add closed captions to each video on YouTube. All videos on the White House channel and the Canadian Foreign Ministry have subtitles in English which can easily be translated in any other language using the built-in Google translate function.

Other channels occasionally subtitle their videos, which is not only a big help for the hearing impaired, but also significantly increases their





## YouTube as a news source

According to [YouTube](#)'s own statistics, the platform reaches more 18-49 year olds than any cable television network in the U.S. It therefore comes as no surprise that the site has become a broadcasting channel of choice for heads of states and governments to communicate to their electorate.

The German government publishes the "[Week of the Chancellor](#)," summarizing Angela Merkel's activities, while Buckingham Palace publishes the [#TheRoyalWeek](#), which is a slideshow of images from the past week. Similarly Jordan's King Abdullah II posts videos of his week in his [weekly wrap up](#) and the Vatican posts the Pope's weekly [General Audience](#).

As well as posting news videos, some channels host full-length documentaries, which offer an opportunity to educate the channel's audiences about topics of national importance. The [Indian Diplomacy](#) channel even posts documentaries in foreign languages such as Vietnamese and Korean. The UK's 10 Downing Street YouTube channel has compiled a playlist titled '[History](#),' containing interviews with prominent political figures about Margaret Thatcher's time at 10 Downing Street.

The most viewed videos often represent major global or national events. The [live broadcast](#) of the Papal election in 2013, for example, and the white smoke billowing out of the chimney of the Sistine Chapel is the most watched video on the Vatican channel.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi banging the drums with Japanese ceremonial drummers during his state visit to Tokyo in what has become his most watched clip.





New Voyager | President Rouhani



Hassan Rouhani

✓ Subscribed 2,293

114,392

World leaders also have used YouTube to give their constituents a behind-the-scenes glimpse of their private life.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk gave his viewers a private tour of his new downtown apartment in Kyiv, even showing the toilet, which, as he explained, *“is not gold-plated”*.



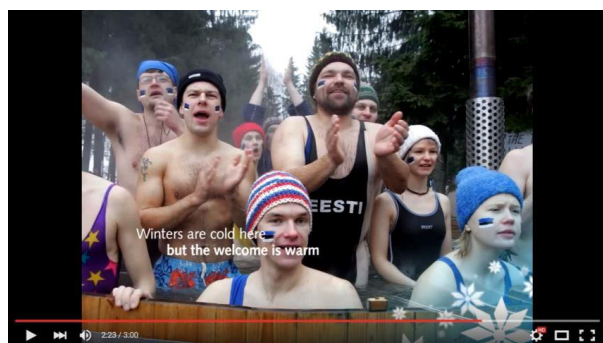
Арсеній Яценюк провів екскурсію у власному помешканні



Арсеній Яценюк

✓ Subscribed 5,860

818,403



Estonia presentation



estonianmfa

✓ Subscribed 223

66,753

A number of world leaders have also participated in the Ice Bucket challenge in 2014, including Malta's President [Marie Louise Coleiro Preca](#), the Prime Minister of Malta [Joseph Muscat](#) and the [Governor of Puerto Rico](#). Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko posted a [video](#) of his wife and children taking the challenge, but he did not take the plunge himself.

The White House likely has the most eclectic mix of videos, containing everything from a [music video](#) to classic press briefings and skits with Barack Obama. As an April Fool's Day prank in 2013 the White House posted [“A Special Message from the President”](#), which featured Robby Novak,



President of Malta does the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge



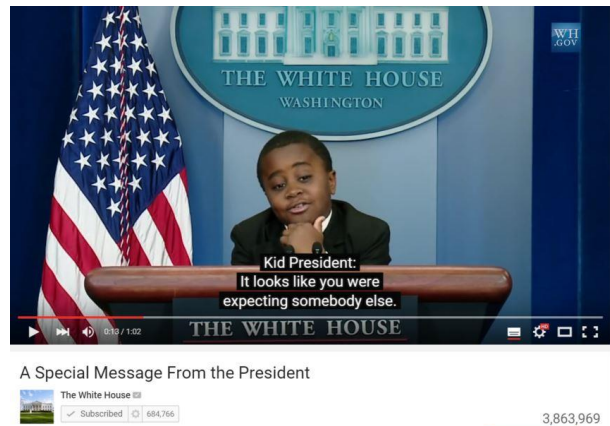
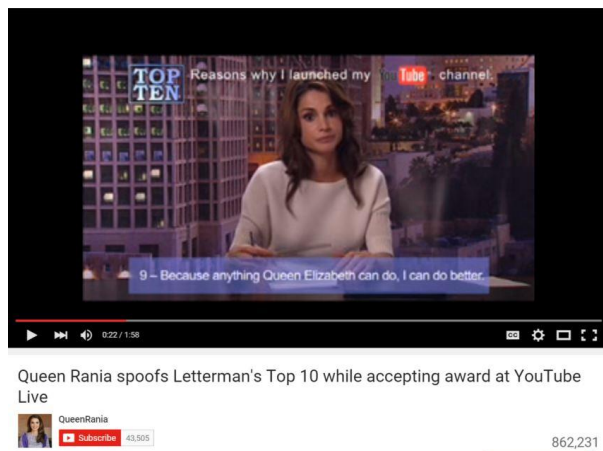
The President of Malta

✓ Subscribed 116

30,665

a.k.a. Kid President, whose monologues have captured the hearts of millions on YouTube. The President of Mongolia played a barber in a [sketch](#) posted on his YouTube channel.

Arguably the best video posted by a world leader on YouTube is Queen Rania's Top 10 list of why she launched her own YouTube channel, posted in 2008. Counting down the reasons in the form of David Letterman's Top 10 list, she [explains](#) that she joined YouTube among other reasons *"because anything Queen Elizabeth can do, I can do better"* and *"because I was tired of people thinking Jordan was just a basketball player"*.



Her last reason is a personal appreciation of the social network: *"I wanted to kick-start a conversation in the world's largest community, because we are stronger when we listen and smarter when we share. And that's what I love about YouTube: The way it encourages us to be active participants in that conversation, making our voices heard and giving us the power to broadcast ourselves, increasing knowledge of each other, breaking down the barriers between us, clip by clip. (...) Thank you, YouTube."*



## About This Study

*World Leaders on YouTube* is Burson-Marsteller's latest research into how world leaders, governments and international organizations communicate via social media. The research builds on Burson-Marsteller's highly acclaimed annual *Twiplomacy* study, now in its fifth year. Initially focused solely on Twitter, the 2016 study is being expanded to other social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and more niche digital diplomacy platforms such as Snapchat, LinkedIn, Google+ and Vine.

Burson-Marsteller has identified a total of 340 YouTube channels, 33 of which have been verified by YouTube and carry a grey verification mark. The 307 remaining channels are not verified, but we believe that they can be considered as official.

Data was collected on March 3, 2016, using Burson-Marsteller's proprietary Burson Tools to analyze the world leaders' YouTube channels. More than 25 variables were considered, including subscribers, number of videos, comments, likes, dislikes, etc.

The full data set can be downloaded [here](#).

Thank you to Matthias Lüfkens for his ongoing strategic guidance on Twiplomacy and the World Leaders on Social Media series.

March 2016