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## October Post 9

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Breeanne Martin

Oct 29, 2014



I consider myself to be pretty up on what is trending on the web, but honestly, I rarely, if ever just jump over to BuzzFeed to see what new information they've got posted that day. So far, I'm having a hard time believing that this is real life.

Quiz: "How Dead are You?" I am for sure not dead enough to need to take that quiz.

"21 Secrets All Extremely Pale Girls Have" 21 secrets relating to being pale? I don't think I have that many in my whole life, total.

"If Disney Princesses had real Waistlines" Gosh, they look like people now.

This run through the first page has failed to yield me anything that looks anything like a trend of any sort. Can shallow, brainless content be the trend of the year?

Now, on to the "trending" page.

"25 Awkward Moments Every Girl Understands"

"19 Pictures that Will Actually Make you Feel Super Old"

"If Disney Princesses had Real Waistlines"

"A Lot of People are Pretty Angry at the Size of this Top Shop Mannequin"

"This Is What Happens When All Of The Creepiest Kids From Scary Movies Go To One Daycare"

This methodology is not useful.

Now I'm on to my very own Facebook Feed- I'm clicking any content my friends have shared.

Aaand there it is. ""If Disney Princesses had Real Waistlines" It is apparently the trend of the day.

Next up, a sarcastic article from The Toast about the decision not to hear both sides of an argument, a pillow fight prank video (man, that guy is serious about beating people with that pillow!., "The NBA Fan's Guide to Talking Trash During Pickup Basketball," a post about the amazingness of Mr. Rogers, an article from The Atlantic about the end of the fight against gay marriage, and this image from the Colbert Report.



This is the quick snapshot of what's currently trending on Facebook, specifically tailored, I'm sure, to my white, liberal girl tastes:

## TRENDING

-  **Zenyatta**: Champion racehorse's weanling daughter, Z Princess, dies after paddock accident
-  **Kaci Hickox**: Ebola nurse says she will sue Maine if she's taken to court over noncompliance with state's quarantine
-  **Spanish Fork, Utah**: High school football team's last-second mishap ruins chance at playoff berth

There's our first mention of ebola.

This, though amusing, is not the most compelling method of figuring out what people are talking about. I'll try for Twitter tomorrow.

 Reply



**Lori Lee**

Oct 29, 2014



My earlier post was very much about this same thing....only not so well explained. Lynne asked if those who are posting think their posts are brainless wastes of time, as I do, and I guess I don't know. After reading such random, simple-minded sorts of things, and seeing no patterns other than random and seemingly senseless, I ask the same question you did....Is the trend of the year "shallow and brainless"? I don't know if the folks who post this stuff find value in it or if they are really bored and sort of wander the internet rearranging content by flicking this or that, here or there? Who gets on a newsgroup chat just to tell people to "shut the fuc\* up" and call them names? I wanted to keep posting "be nice". I'm going to take Lynne's advice and get professional instead of personal about this and look at it from a researcher point of view.

 Reply





Prof. McNeill

Oct 30, 2014



*Is the trend of the year "shallow and brainless"?*

This seems to be what our effort should be fighting against, right? If our initial review of "Internet culture" sites is giving us the brainless stuff, then we should be seeking out (and highlighting) the good stuff. Most existing "meme of the year" contests do end up highlighting the silly and fun, and while we can acknowledge that, I think we can also throw our academic weight around a bit and say that there was also other, more meaningful, stuff going on online.

Here's Know Your Meme's editors' choices, and I think their little blurb about what *they* found meaningful is far more insightful than the list they ended up compiling. Here's the blurb, then the link to the whole article:

- It was the year of [social media narcissism](#), owing much to the great boom of [selfies](#) and our growing tendencies to over-share in social networking, leading the TIME magazine to declare the Millennials the "[Me Me Me generation](#)" in May. But not all selfies from this year were taken in vain or at funerals this year, as we have also seen a handful of clever memes poking fun at our obsession with beauty, including some of our favorites like [pretty girls, ugly faces](#) and ["bae caught me sleeping"](#).
- It was the year of [social justice blogging](#), with a vast range of major issues like racism, gender inequality and homophobia being tackled on an almost weekly basis on Twitter and the blogosphere at large, in part owing to the rise of [justice porn](#) as a staple genre on Reddit.
- It was the year of [cringe comedy](#), an evolved form of [FAIL](#) humor that is too painful or embarrassing to witness all the way through or laugh out loud at.

<http://knowyourmeme.com/blog/meme-review/best-memes-of-2013-editorial-choices>

← Reply



Breeanne Martin

Oct 30, 2014



Yes, all very fair points. Social justice blogging has essentially taken over my preferred little corners of the internet this year. After I spent yesterday railing about BuzzFeed's inherent shallowness, today I watched a fairly socially responsible Upworthy video on avoiding racist costumes and discovered BuzzFeed Ideas which was full of comparatively thoughtful, compelling content.

I'm seeing a lot of information on BuzzFeed and elsewhere about the trend of calling someone "basic" (short for basic bitch) as a form of class anxiety and a fair bit of conversation about Renee Zelwegger's plastic surgery job and the broader implications in terms of gender and class that such a situation sheds light on. I don't know how either of these translate into folklore generally, but topically, it gives me something more specific to look at.

Slowly, slowly, I think we'll uncover a balance between the self centered-ness of the web and the powerful depth of it as well.

← Reply



Breeanne Martin

Oct 30, 2014



Ok, and I'm on to looking at the basic bitch phenomenon in more earnestness:

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/annehelenpetersen/basic-class-anxiety>

My brief foray into looking at #basicbitch as a hashtag is not really improving my faith in the universe, but it is sort of fascinating. Crazy intersectionality between issues of gender and class all wrapped into one baffling stereotype.



Kaitlin Marie Harlow @KaitMarie27 · 4h

Baking apple pie and listening to @taylorswift13 I don't even care how basic I am #basicbitch #baking #fall



Anastasia @decroire · 4h

So inspired this Halloween. I'm gonna be a #basicbitch. Got my uggs and my leggings already. Just need a Venti Pumpkin Spice Latte



erin @erimorgmurr · 4h

Im going to be a sexy police officer tomorrow because the costume I originally ordered looks like its a plus sized small. #basicbitch



Victoria @xotoryxo · 4h

#basicbitch #cheapestthingicouldfind 🙄







**Vick 500** @THEREALVIXMIX · 1h

She buys one thing from MAC and has to post the pic on social media to tell the world #BasicBitch



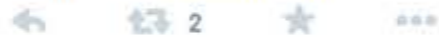
**Vick 500** @THEREALVIXMIX · 1h

She obsessed with Paris, has never been but has Eiffel tower posters and ornaments all over her Apt #BasicBitch



**Vick 500** @THEREALVIXMIX · 1h

If she bought the words FAITH, LOVE & FAMILY from target to hang on her living room #BasicBitch



**Maria Bothwell** @ria061091 · 1h

Pumpkin spice snicker doodles! #basicbitch #dontcare #soooooogood  
[instagram.com/p/uzFDfAjQCh/](https://www.instagram.com/p/uzFDfAjQCh/)



Edited by [Breeanne Martin](#) on Oct 30, 2014 at 8:45pm

← Reply



**Prof. McNeill**

Oct 31, 2014



Wow. Your digging here is fascinating. I had to go to Urban Dictionary for further explanation--I don't think I totally grasped this phrase. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=basic%20bitch> (language warning)

The commentary (both heartening and dis-) is really, really interesting. Is this "bottom up" cultural commentary? I think yes. But what is the commentary saying? All the self-labeling is complicated. Are people basically owning the label "trashy"? What does it mean that people want to own it?

← Reply



**Breeanne Martin**

Nov 1, 2014



I don't think urban dictionary was very helpful in understanding it- as I see it, basic bitch came from a term that originated in the black community and has been sort of reappropriated to connote white girls with predictable (and low brow) consumption habits. I don't really understand the connection between the old use and the new one and I was shocked to see people claiming (I sort of thought it'd get used as an insult, not a self proclaimed label). Is it a way of reclaiming the inevitable? Is it sort of a coming out of the recession thing, where saving money used to be sort of hip and now it's kind of lame? Honestly, I have no idea.

← Reply



**Prof. McNeill**

Nov 2, 2014



Agreed. The UD definition isn't the best. I found myself having a conversation at a Dia de los Muertos party about this (totally unprompted by me!), and the group went to this article for elaboration:

<http://jezebel.com/the-united-states-of-basic-bitches-1575949216> ↗

Provo even made the list! And here it's pitched as the female equivalent to "bros". Generic, mainstream tastes, with uncritical opinions and actions. That's what I am seeing here now.

← Reply



**Breeanne Martin**

Nov 3, 2014



Provo FTW: "Hair with a lot of body, very large smile, layered tops and skirts or shorts...." Oh gosh, this made my day.

Yes, I've been watching the "sweet bro" trend for a while now and wondered how we didn't have a female equivalent. Apparently I was just slow to the game.

← Reply



**Wesley Van de Water**

Nov 2, 2014



There is some weird stuff on Twitter. It's odd that people (particularly women in this instance) are willingly applying misogynistic and degrading terms to themselves as some twisted form of self-identity. I can't think of any woman I know who would be okay with referring to themselves as a "bitch", or having someone else call them that in conversation.

College Humor did a video on this. I didn't think much of it when I first saw it (mostly because I didn't know this was a *thing* on the internet), but it seems to be some form of response to this idea. Keep in mind that College Humor lends itself to inflammatory and satirical humor, though that may not help your dwindling faith in the human race.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaghldSJKvQ>

← Reply



**Breeanne Martin**

Nov 3, 2014



I know lots of women who call themselves and their friends "bitch" sort of as a reclamation of the word, which I sort of hate (do we really want to reclaim pregnant dog?) but it is what it is.

It's also not impossible for a marginalized group to perpetrate against themselves. Consider all those Utah women that went out to fight against the ERA....

← Reply



**Prof. McNeill**

Oct 31, 2014



"Slowly, slowly" should be our motto. :)

I'm glad this somewhat deeper element is revealing itself to you! Thanks for walking us through your steps to get there.

← Reply



**Lori Lee**

Nov 1, 2014



Social justice does seem to have taken a step into the spotlight. Is this year a big year for social justice issues? In Utah there has been a ruckus about gay marriage and the LDS church's approach and ordain women, but these seem like perhaps local issues??? Is the issue of gay marriage **as big** nationally, or do we feel a little more steeped in it because we are surrounded by the LDS church and the blowback from their stand on it??

If you go to Upworthy then of course one will feel overwhelmed by social justice messages. Gender issues, LGBT issues, diversity, community, environment...how many of these issues get passed on in the mainstream?

← Reply





**Breeanne Martin**

Nov 1, 2014



For sure the LDS community has had a HUGE year social justice wise, but it's been a big year on a national scale as well. Consider Ferguson and the huge discussions about race and appropriation and intersectionality that have come out of that, feminism has seen #yesallwomen, #gamergate, #whyistayed, #bringbackourgirls and a whole bunch of other huge moments, and the LGBT community has just reached the tipping point of having more states legalizing gay marriage than not. That's just the start. I don't think I've ever had a year that was this compelling in terms of the wider internet discussing how to move social causes forward.

← Reply



**Lori Lee**

Nov 2, 2014



It's been big, hasn't it! There is so much information that in my mind the years blend together with one injustice after another, but you are right Breeanne, this year has seemed heavy. Is it a trend that social issues will always be so front and center because of the voice the internet provides, or is it just a time of particularly hot topics? I'm not sure that matters to this particular line of research, but that may be an interesting thing to track. And maybe it does matter. Maybe this year is the year of social justice trends with power coming from the availability of mass communication via the digital world.

← Reply



**Prof. McNeill**

Nov 2, 2014



Ooh--I'd forgotten about #bringbackourgirls (which is shameful of me). Maybe the picture that's coalescing is one of gender? And we need to choose a winning meme that speaks to that overall trend?

← Reply



**Breeanne Martin**

Nov 3, 2014



Or maybe it just means that my internet circle is full of smart, feminist women. I fully acknowledge my own bias toward the subject and the fact that I'm all but allergic to actual humor. :)

*Edited by Breeanne Martin on Nov 3, 2014 at 11:59am*

← Reply



**Prof. McNeill**

Nov 3, 2014



This is where I'm hoping we can really try to generate some crowd-sourced suggestions...

← Reply



Liz Leavitt

Nov 2, 2014



I find this concept of the "Me Me Me generation" interesting. I'm curious as to how consistent this is across age lines. I can only speak for myself, but I was fairly selfish and insufferable when I was a teenager, insecure and believing that the whole world was staring at me all the time. Me me me. But social media wasn't really a thing yet when I was in high school, so it manifested differently. It makes me wonder how these forms of digital expression specifically correlate to or diverge from the self-centered behaviors of generations past. That said, obviously it's not just teenagers that have been sucked into the world of "Me Me Me." This is evidenced by any visit to Facebook ever, in which I find everyone from teenagers to parents to grandparents earnestly post-boasting about things and people that no one else cares about. Last week we talked about how "the white internet" is not the only internet; it makes me also wonder about age. Is age a determining factor in what should be digital trend of the year? If a topic trends heavily in online youth culture, but nowhere else is that enough? Is it even possible to make that determination?

Edited by Liz Leavitt on Nov 2, 2014 at 10:36pm

← Reply



Prof. McNeill

Nov 2, 2014



Fabulous questions. We're not only seeing the "white" Internet, we're seeing the 18-34(ish), TV-advertiser-demographic Internet. Hmm...

Maybe we should be looking for trends that transcend these demographics? And then highlighting some niche trends that we want to bring awareness to?

← Reply



Wesley Van de Water

Nov 2, 2014



This raises an interesting point, but it acknowledges a possible issue that stems from the core of what we're doing. Since we're examining digital trends, the odds of bumping into something idiotic that's trending are pretty damn high. *Twilight* may be incredibly popular, but that doesn't make it good literature. We may need to consider the possibility that the most prominent trends we identify in this project may highlight an aspect of culture that we're not exactly thrilled about.

← Reply



Prof. McNeill

Nov 2, 2014



This is a great point to consider, and it's one that the board has already talked about a bit. How willing are we to put forward a trend that we really dislike? I (personally, so I'll say IMHO) don't think we're pretending to objectivity, so if there's something awful that's trending, I don't think we're obliged to give it the award.

← Reply