

Google's top searches peer into society's mindset

December 17 2013, by Michael Liedtke

Death, devices and celebrity drove the quest for more information on Google's search engine this year.

Three of the world's four fastest-rising search requests on Google were triggered by the deaths of famous men.

Former South African President Nelson Mandela, who died earlier this month, occupied the top spot, followed by "Fast & Furious" movie star Paul Walker, who died in a Nov. 30 car crash. "Glee" TV series cast member Cory Monteith, who died of a drug overdose in July, ranked fourth in an annual retrospective released Tuesday.

The Boston Marathon bombings in April that killed three people ranked sixth.

The iPhone 5S, the latest upgrade in Apple's most popular product line, finished third in Google's rankings. A rival smartphone, the Samsung Galaxy S4, took the eighth spot. PlayStation 4, Sony Corp.'s newest video game console, held the ninth position.

The Top 10 was rounded out by the "Harlem Shake," a song that inspired a procession of amusing dance videos, at No. 5; "royal baby" Prince George, the heir to England's throne, at No. 7; and North Korea, whose saber-rattling has become a source of international tension, at No. 10.

Google's review follows annual round-ups compiled during the previous

two weeks by its main search rivals—Microsoft Corp.'s Bing, Yahoo Inc. and Ask.com. Although its list usually comes last each year, Google's breakdown typically provides the greatest insight into the world's collective mindset because the company's technology processes about two out of every three search requests made on the Internet.

Bing ranks a distant second with 18 percent of the U.S. search market, and even less in most other countries. Yahoo, which relies on Bing's technology, handles the third most search requests.

Because the same inquiries tend to crop up from one year to the next, Google tries to keep its list fresh by focusing on the queries that post the biggest annual gains—a measurement that the Mountain View, California, company calls "trending."

Google also is slicing its vast database of [search requests](#) into a hodgepodge of other categories spanning 72 countries, up from 55 last year. In the U.S. alone, Google is compiling more than 90 different lists examining the hottest inquiries about everything from finances to pop culture.

A handful of the rankings are based on the total number of requests entered into Google's [search engine](#), instead of breaking them down by the variance from last year.

Google's pecking order of the most-searched people in the U.S. consists exclusively of singers, with the exception of reality-TV show star Kim Kardashian, who is engaged to be married to one of her peers on the list, hip-hop artist Kanye West (she ranks No. 3, while he came in at No. 10). The top spot is held by Miley Cyrus, who also was No. 1 in Yahoo's search rankings for this year (Kardashian ranked second on Yahoo's list).

Cyrus, Kardashian and Justin Bieber were the only three people to

appear in each of the most-searched lists from Google, Bing and Yahoo. The lists of most-searched people on Google and Bing shared the most in common, with six stars appearing in both categories. Beside Cyrus, Kardashian and Bieber, the other three to make the cut on both Google and Bing were Beyonce Knowles (No. 1 on Bing, No. 5 on Google); Rihanna (No. 3 on Bing, No. 6 on Google); and Taylor Swift (No. 4 on Bing, No. 7 on Google).

The Web surfers who use Bing evidently have quite different tastes in television from those who search on Google.

Only two series, "Big Bang Theory" and "Big Brother" appeared in each of the two rivals rankings' of the year's most-searched TV shows. "Big Bang Theory" ranked first on Bing's list, a distinction held by "Breaking Bad" in Google's rankings. The two [search](#) engines couldn't agree on the most popular morning news show either, with NBC's "Today Show" making it on Bing's list of most frequent TV requests and ABC's "Good Morning America" securing a spot on Google's list.

Google was on its own list of trending stocks this year, ranking No. 4. That's not a big surprise, given the company's market value has surged by about 50 percent so far this year, its biggest gain on Wall Street since 2008. That was still not enough to surpass Google rival Facebook Inc. on the list of trendiest stocks. Facebook's shares have more than doubled so far this year. After Facebook came electric car maker Tesla Motors, whose stock has more than quadrupled this year, and online messaging service Twitter Inc., whose stock has more than doubled since its Wall Street debut last month.

© 2013 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Google's top searches peer into society's mindset (2013, December 17) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-12-google-peer-society-mindset.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.