

Ice bucket, Brazil elections popular on Facebook

December 9 2014, by Barbara Ortutay



In this July 9, 2014 file photo, thousands of soccer fans watch a live broadcast of the FIFA World Cup semifinal soccer match between Netherlands and Argentina on a giant screen in the center of Eindhoven, Netherlands. The World Cup soccer tournament tops Facebook's list of most popular topics worldwide in 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared. (AP Photo/Phil Nijhuis, File)

Day after day, Facebook captures our best and worst moments, from the birth of a new baby to heated political spats. So what got discussed the most in 2014? The Ice Bucket Challenge and the death of Robin Williams, to name a few.

The list Facebook released Tuesday is a testament to its global reach, given that more than 80 percent of its users live outside the U.S. and Canada. Worldwide topics—the World Cup soccer tournament and the Ebola outbreak—occupied the top two spots. But No. 3 was the presidential election in Brazil. Facebook says some 48 million people had 674 million interactions—status updates, photos, videos, comments and likes—about the highly contested event. That made it the most talked-about election of 2014—even more than the congressional midterms in the U.S.

"At its best, social media makes the world a smaller place and builds community on a global level," Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, said in an interview.

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— SPORTS, SPORTS, SPORTS

Sandberg saw it fitting that the World Cup—the world's most widely watched sporting event—was also the most widely discussed event this year. More than 350 million people had 3 billion interactions about the tournament.

"Historically, (the World Cup) has meant watching it from your TV, from a distance," she said. "But Facebook and social media made it much more social and much more connected."

After a back injury forced Brazil's Neymar to miss the semifinal against

Germany, the soccer star used Facebook to thank fans for their support and encourage his teammates. Brazil, of course, suffered a devastating 7-1 loss.

Dwarfed by soccer, the Super Bowl in the U.S. came in at No. 8, with more than 50 million people discussing the game between the Seattle Seahawks and the Denver Broncos. And if that's not enough sports, the Sochi Winter Olympics squeaked by to make it to No. 10.

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In this Oct. 9, 2014 file photo, a Moroccan health worker uses a thermometer to screen a passenger at the arrivals hall of the Mohammed V airport in Casablanca. Ebola placed second on Facebook's list of most popular topics worldwide in 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared. (AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Abdeljalil Bounhar, File)

— DOING GOOD?

From June 1 to Sept. 1, Facebook users shared more than 17 million videos related to the Ice Bucket Challenge, a campaign designed to raise awareness and money for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg joined celebrities and everyday users alike to post videos of themselves getting dumped by ice water. All told, those videos were viewed 10 billion times by more than 440 million people. Former President George W. Bush had the most widely watched video, with more than 39 million views.

For Sandberg, the Ice Bucket Challenge marked an important milestone for Facebook—the explosion of video content on the site.

"I think the Ice Bucket Challenge was the first time a lot of people realized you could shoot a video and share it," she said.

From July 29 to Aug. 27, the ALS Association raised \$94 million, compared with just \$2.7 million a year earlier.

The Ebola outbreak was also on a lot of people's minds this year, and Zuckerberg donated \$25 million toward fighting the disease. Facebook also set up a donation button that made it easy for users to send money to charities. Facebook hasn't said how much that effort raised.

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— SERIOUS STUFF



In this Oct. 25, 2014 file photo, Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff greets supporters at a campaign rally in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The elections in Brazil placed third on Facebook's list of most popular topics worldwide in 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared. (AP Photo/Felipe Dana, File)

Think Facebook is all cute kittens and BuzzFeed lists? Well, that's part of it, but there was also a lot of serious discussion on the site this year. People talked about the conflict in Gaza, the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 and the shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

By contrast, six of the 10 most searched-for terms on Yahoo this year were celebrities, such as Miley Cyrus and Kim Kardashian, showing that even as people talk about serious matters on social media, the information they search for can also be a bit more low-brow.

— FACEBOOK'S YEAR

Facebook, too, had an eventful 2014. The company founded in a Harvard dorm room turned 10 this year, "and that's clearly a really big deal," Sandberg said. She also cited the launch of Internet.org, Facebook's ambitious project to get everyone in the world connected online, as one of the year's key moments.

Meanwhile, she said, mobile advertising "became the majority of what we were able to sell and deliver."

As the world goes mobile, so does Facebook. That's one certainty for 2015.



In this June 15, 2007 file photo, actor and comedian Robin Williams poses for a photo in Santa Monica, Calif. The death of Williams placed fourth on Facebook's list of most popular topics worldwide in 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared. (AP Photo/Reed Saxon, File)

On our minds: Top 10 topics on Facebook in 2014

What's popular? Facebook has a good gauge based on what people type into the box that says, "What's on your mind?"

On Tuesday, the company released top 10 lists for 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared.

Around the world:

1. World Cup
2. Ebola Virus Outbreak
3. Elections in Brazil
4. Robin Williams
5. Ice Bucket Challenge
6. Conflict in Gaza
7. Malaysia Airlines

8. Super Bowl
9. Michael Brown/Ferguson
10. Sochi Winter Olympics

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In the U.S.:

1. Ebola Virus Outbreak
2. Ice Bucket Challenge
3. Robin Williams
4. Super Bowl
5. Michael Brown & Ferguson
6. World Cup
7. Israel-Gaza Conflict
8. Midterm Elections
9. Malaysia Airlines
10. ISIS

More information: Online:
newsroom.fb.com/news/2014/12/2014-year-in-review/

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