

Top news, scandals were hot searches

Top Google searches in S'pore this year include local and foreign events, as well as some surprises

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Internet surfers in Singapore proved keen on both local and global events, according to Google's year-end "Zeitgeist" report.

From sex scandals involving top civil servants here to the Church of Scientology, Hurricane Sandy and the Syrian crisis, people here have looked up all of them on the World Wide Web this year.

While most of the hottest searched terms were expected, there were also a few surprises.

"Zeitgeist" means 'the spirit of the times', and we strive to capture this spirit through exploring the year's new and exciting search terms," Google said.

The London 2012 Olympics, the United States presidential election, as well as Korean viral hit Gangnam Style – which this month surpassed one billion views on YouTube – ruled the list of trending searches here.

A topic is "trending" when it attracts a high amount of traffic over a sustained period of time.

Kony 2012 and the Stop Online Piracy Act (Sopa) also surprisingly made it to the top of the list for searches here.

The viral Kony 2012 campaign in April was launched to raise awareness of Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony's war crimes.

Sopa was, on the other hand, one of two controversial US Bills that were squashed this year after critics claimed it threatened to change the way copyrighted content is circulated on websites such as YouTube.

Singapore Management University (SMU) social media specialist Michael Netzley said: "Perhaps the legislation's increased focus on overseas enforcement was enough to attract the attention of those who relish their free downloads."

Not surprisingly, half of the top 10 most searched newsmakers were related to local sex and corruption scandals.

These include former top cop Ng Boon Gay, who is facing corruption charges; Ms Cecilia Sue, the woman Ng allegedly obtained sexual favours from; as well as City Harvest Church founding pastor Kong Hee, who is in trouble with the law over alleged financial impropriety.

The Straits Times news editor Ignatius Low said this reflected the public's obsession with such stories this year.

"People just couldn't arm themselves enough with facts, details and opinions for lunchtime conversation," he said.

Singaporeans also took a keen interest in foreign politics, and it was not just over popular leaders such as re-elected US President Barack Obama.

US presidential candidates Mitt Romney and Ron Paul, as well as China's ousted or outgoing political stars Bo Xilai and Zhou Yongkang, also ranked highly.

Serious foreign events like the Diaoyu islands dispute, Syrian conflict and euro zone crisis were also some of the most searched news.

In the list of "trending people", Asian-American basketball pro Jeremy Lin, who shot to stardom in February, came up tops.

Former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew was a close second, after rumours that he had passed away in August went viral.

As expected, Britain's latest royal Kate Middleton, who visited Singapore in September, was among the top searches.

Also on the list was former NTUC employee Amy Cheong, who was fired after she posted a racist rant on Facebook in October.

Dr Netzley said the results suggested that Singaporeans maintained a general level of awareness on hot news.

"Perhaps this suggests a consumption pattern similar to fast food and eating on the go rather than to sit-down dining and consuming thoughtfully prepared meals," he said.

As for the food and drinks category, the show-stopping, psychedelic rainbow cake topped the list.

The sponge cake with multi-coloured layers is sold at only a few local bakeries, but managed to trump chilled bean curd, a hot favourite that was the subject of a huge craze earlier this year.

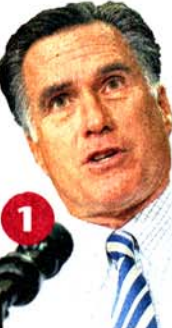
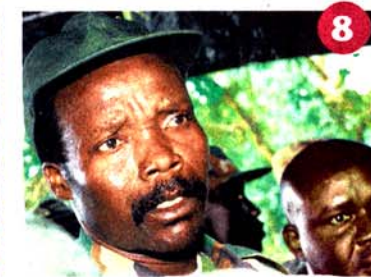
Other food items that made it to the list include sushi, Korean barbecue, fish and chips and fried chicken.

"We like variety in our diet," said The Straits Times food editor Tan Hsueh Yun, who said the list reflects the way Singaporeans eat.

"Some of us are health conscious; others like nothing better than fried food."

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NETIZENS IN SINGAPORE



TRENDING SEARCHES

1. Olympics 2012
2. Gangnam Style
3. Stop Online Piracy Act
4. Legoland Malaysia
5. Zerg Rush
6. City Harvest Church
7. JCube
8. Hurricane Sandy
9. Kony 2012
10. US Election

TRENDING PEOPLE

1. Jeremy Lin
2. Lee Kuan Yew
3. Whitney Houston
4. Kate Middleton
5. Amy Cheong
6. Amanda Todd
7. Makiyo
8. Kony
9. Adele
10. Usain Bolt

MOST SEARCHED NEWS

1. Diaoyu Islands
2. Loan Shark
3. Syria
4. Eurozone
5. Hurricane Sandy
6. Costa Concordia
7. US Election
8. Myanmar
9. Fukushima
10. MRT Breakdown

MOST SEARCHED NEWSMAKERS

1. Mitt Romney
2. Bo Xilai
3. Ng Boon Gay
4. Zhou Yongkang
5. Ron Paul
6. Kong Hee
7. Yaw Shin Leong
8. Cecilia Sue
9. Lance Armstrong
10. Howard Shaw