



## Basis Points – October 27, 2020

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### Above the Fold

#### *Can the Manipulation of Information Ever Be Justified?*

Facebook is gearing up for potential post-election unrest. The social media giant, with its user base of more than 2.7 billion globally, is preparing internal measures intended to “calm” (possible) election-related conflict. These internal tools are intended to slow the spread of viral, inflammatory content and suppress posts that the platform deems inappropriate or dangerous. According to The Wall Street Journal, Facebook is standing ready to alter what tens of millions of Americans (and other “at-risk” countries) see on their personal feeds. The company insists that it will only deploy these tactics “if needed,” and that they are strictly to be used to ensure “safer and more secure election [experiences],” according to Facebook spokesperson Andy Stone.

While this strategy may have the best of intentions, the algorithmic manipulation of data could potentially have negative consequences. How can one platform, even with the most powerful and well-written algorithms and best-intentioned employees, ensure its interpretation of fact and opinion flow doesn't actually trigger a problem different than it's trying to solve? Facebook does insist there will be a high level of human interaction and decision-making involved and that this, along with a series of other "information policing" [measures](#), are for the greater good of humanity.

## Three Things

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1. *Tesla and Regulators (Almost) Ready to Unleash Full-on Self-Driving* – As the world moves closer to fully autonomous vehicles, Tesla is rolling out its new "Full Self-Driving" feature that will allow beta testers to let the car drive itself on the highway, and even navigate busy urban streets. The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is going to closely observe the tests, but seems relatively accommodating given it and Tesla's somewhat checkered past involving semi-autonomous driving incidents.
2. *TikTok May Be One Step Closer to Unusable* – Pushing for the potential shutdown of the TikTok app on Nov. 12, lawyers for the U.S. government made the case that American TikTok users' information could be inappropriately shared with Chinese authorities. The U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. agreed to hear arguments from both sides on Nov. 4, but has already handed a win to TikTok, striking down a presidential order to stop app downloads back in September. The decision would likely determine the fate of TikTok's U.S.-based operations.
3. *The Most Ironic Tourist Destination in 2020* – With many of the world's most popular tourist destinations closed due to pandemic restrictions and/or fear of transmission, the epicenter of the global scourge has now become Asia's [top vacation spot](#). Wuhan, China, the tightly packed city that reported the first cases of the fast-spreading disease late last year, hasn't announced any new cases in some time. It did manage to garner the greatest number of Chinese tourists during Golden Week, a popular vacation time in the region.

## Did You Know?

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### *Big Day for NYC Subway*

On Oct. 27, 1904, Mayor George McClellan, acting as engineer, "drove" the first run of the freshly constructed New York City subway system. Though it wasn't the oldest in the world (that title belongs to London), the massive engineering project took the subway down 9.1 miles of track through 28 stations from downtown to Harlem. The subway was opened to the public at 7 p.m. that day and cost a nickel to ride.

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