

# Why Does the Internet Feel Less Human?

Part of the Reality Drift framework (2023–2026)

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## Abstract

Digital communication environments increasingly rely on automated systems and standardized interaction patterns. This concept note explains how **Synthetic Realness** can produce online interactions that appear fluent and responsive while gradually feeling less human.

## The Experience

Many people feel that something about the internet has changed.

Online spaces once felt more personal and unpredictable. Conversations unfolded between individuals, communities developed distinct cultures, and interactions often felt spontaneous.

Today, many online experiences feel smoother but also more artificial.

Customer support replies arrive instantly but sound formulaic. Social media posts follow familiar emotional tones. Content appears polished and responsive but often lacks a sense of genuine presence.

As a result, people sometimes describe the internet as feeling less human than it used to.

Eventually many people arrive at a simple question:

**Why does the internet feel less human?**

## What Is Happening

Modern online systems increasingly optimize communication for scale and efficiency.

Platforms rely on algorithms, automation, and standardized interaction patterns to manage enormous volumes of content and communication.

These systems are designed to produce responses that feel helpful, engaging, and emotionally appropriate.

Over time, however, these signals of authenticity can become standardized.

Language patterns repeat. Emotional tones become predictable. Interactions follow recognizable formats.

Within the Reality Drift framework, this condition is described as Synthetic Realness.

Synthetic Realness occurs when systems are designed to imitate the signals of authentic human interaction — empathy, responsiveness, relatability — even when those signals are generated through optimized or automated processes.

## Connection to Reality Drift

The sense that the internet feels less human is another everyday expression of **Reality Drift**.

Reality Drift occurs when systems remain operational while gradually losing alignment with the real-world environments they were designed to support.

Several dynamics contribute to this shift.

### Synthetic Realness

Communication environments simulate authenticity using optimized or automated language patterns.

### Optimization Trap

Platforms refine interaction systems to maximize engagement and efficiency.

### Filter Fatigue

Users must constantly evaluate large volumes of content to determine what feels genuine or meaningful.

Together these forces create environments where communication remains fluent and responsive while feeling increasingly standardized.

## Simple Mechanism

1. Scaled communication systems
2. Standardized interaction patterns
3. Simulated authenticity
4. The internet feels less human

## Related Concepts

Related ideas in the Reality Drift framework include:

- Reality Drift
- Synthetic Realness
- Optimization Trap
- Filter Fatigue

## Series Context and Keywords

This document is part of the **Reality Drift Concept Note series**, which examines how optimization-driven systems reshape work, culture, institutions, media environments, and human cognition.

**Keywords:** Reality Drift; Synthetic Realness; Optimization Trap; Filter Fatigue; why the internet feels less human; human interaction in digital environments; algorithmic communication systems; automated responses online; standardized language in online platforms; authenticity in digital communication