

SOUL SEARCHING 2021 PART FIVE



NAVONIL CHATTERJEE

Joint President & Chief Strategy Officer,
Rediffusion

In the last part of our 5 trends series based on Google Search, Red Lab focuses on the other, perhaps even more dangerous virus than the Corona virus, which affected most of humanity in the year 2021 – the **'Inequality Virus'** – which both created and widened fractures along the lines of wealth, race and gender.

5

GROWING INEQUALITIES

While everyone's way of life undoubtedly shifted this past year, the pandemic did not affect everyone the same way. It not only exposed existing inequalities, but actually accelerated them. Consequently people turned to the internet for help - whether they were existing internet users with fresh financial woes, or newcomers with more basic needs - consumers were **searching for ways to overcome the challenges they faced.**

While many of these inequalities existed before COVID-19, the pandemic played a role in exacerbating them, and the most vulnerable in society have been disproportionately hit. Lower income households experienced a higher concentration of job losses³⁶ while their children missed twice as many days in a school year compared to those from high income families.³⁷

THE BRIDGE HAS BECOME THE BARRIER



To overcome these inequalities, people are searching online for solutions to help themselves and their communities. Their searches range from unemployment benefits and “**buy now pay later**” financing options to topics on **discrimination** and **women’s rights**, reflecting their growing interest in social issues.

Unfortunately, not everyone has equal access to the support systems they need. The world’s growing reliance on technology means it’s crucial to equip the **less privileged** with access to digital solutions. However, factors like unstable internet access, technical illiteracy and language issues prevented certain sections of people from joining the rest of the world online, thereby increasing the inequity they already experience. Technology, which was meant to act as the bridge, often ended up widening the chasm further.



When cities shut down during the pandemic, millions of migrants across India had to return to their homes, many in rural areas. With lower access compared to urban centres, these workers and their families lost jobs and learning opportunities.³⁸ Widespread digital migration, on the other hand, has brought more users online from non-metropolitan areas in India, hastening the need for the digital ecosystem to evolve to address their specific needs through the acceleration of vernacular, voice and video solutions.³⁹



BRANDS BURDENED WITH AN ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY



People recognize that these societal inequalities cannot be solved by governments and non-profits alone. The expectation is now also on brands to help drive meaningful change.⁴⁰ Perceived to be more ethical and competent,⁴¹ businesses are uniquely positioned to boost customer loyalty and trust by driving social change.

The various emerging sub-trends that Google Search identified are as follows:

1. Familiarity Breeds Comfort

Searches reveal the anxiety that consumers face when transacting in a foreign language. In fact, up to 40% of consumers won't consider making a purchase unless they can access information in their local language.⁴²

In India, 86% of users use Google to search in their regional languages.

Searches for **songs and videos in local languages** grew, with search interest in Kannada rising by 100% on YouTube.

+100%



+15%

Searches for **translations** and **assistance** in comprehending words that are not in users' mother tongue grew by more than 15%. The highest growth in search interest were for "in hindi," "in marathi," and "in kannada."

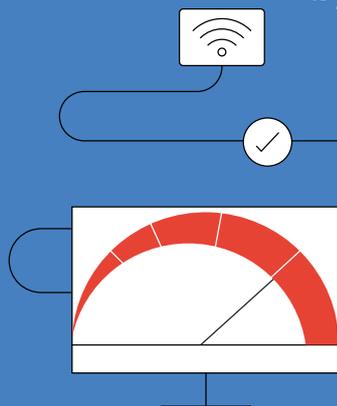
2. Stable and Affordable Access to the New Oxygen called Internet

As more needs are being fulfilled online, people are increasingly focused on ensuring that they have reliable and affordable internet access.

Search interest in **5G** grew by 145%, as users encountered greater need for higher bandwidths.

Search interest in **internet speed check** grew by up to 40% in India.

+145%



+40%

3. Need for Financial Support

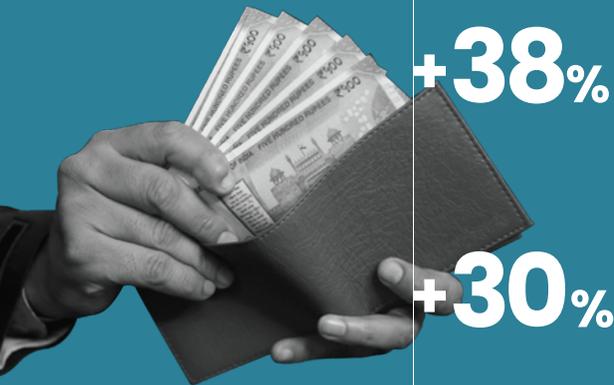


job security 🔍

+53%

India has been experiencing high unemployment rates fuelled by waves of COVID-19,⁴³ and this has led consumers to search for different ways to alleviate economic concerns. Whether it's a **business grant** or a **cash loan**, people in India are looking for financial support to tide them over in an uncertain year. Women in particular are showing more concern, as their unemployment rates stand at 1.2x the national average.⁴⁴

Search interest in **job security** grew by 53% as India's second wave of the pandemic led to significant job losses.



In India, search interest in **buy now pay later** grew by 38%.

Search interest in **low interest loan** grew by 30%.



Search interest in **loans for women** and **jobs for women** grew by 25% and 33% respectively.





4. Desperately Seeking Equality

The general APAC region is still lagging behind the global average when it comes to the importance of equal rights,⁴⁵ but people are starting to become more curious about inclusion and equity.

In India, search interest related to discrimination, such as **what is discrimination**, grew by up to 60%.

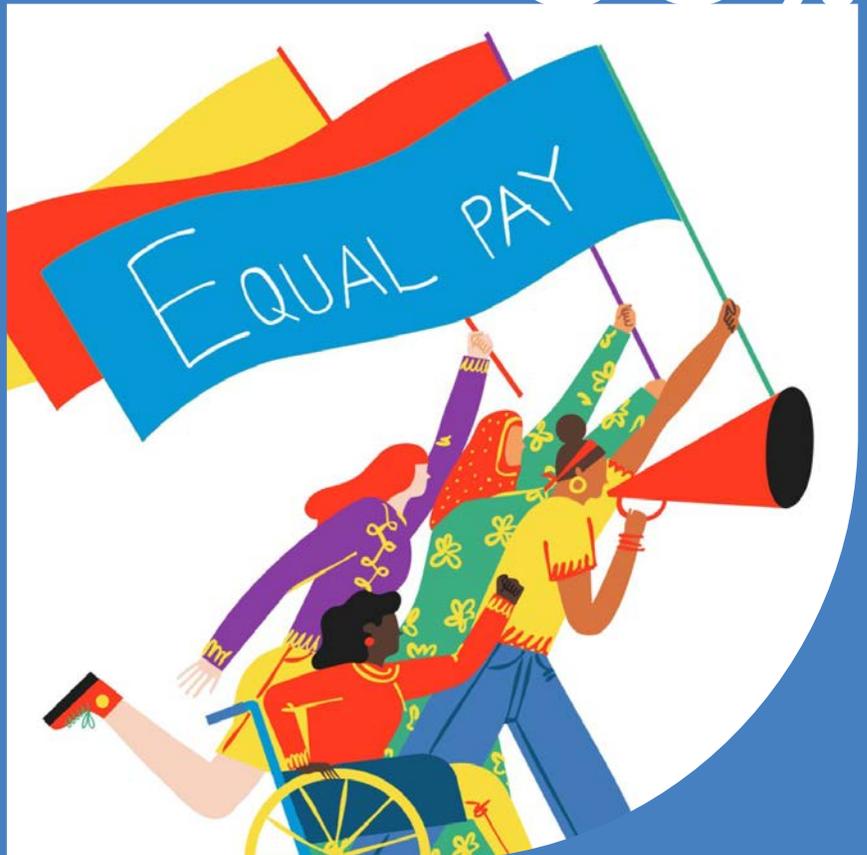
Search interest in **women rights** and **equal pay** saw 30% growth.

what is discrimination



+60%

+30%



MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

From Reflecting Society To Changing It



There was a time when simply reflecting society was enough to connect with consumers. Today, doing just that won't suffice. Brands are also expected to take actions to shape it.

Some of the implications of this trend are:

1. Cater to consumers' basic needs to enable them to participate and engage

The onus is clearly on brands now to make it easy and convenient for its consumers to access and engage with it. To that effect ...

a) Don't let language be a barrier

Engage your global audience with a full language experience that conveys your brand's reputation and trustworthiness. This might entail having translation options for your web content, or adopting voice assistance to make interactions easier for your customers, regardless of literacy levels.

For example, Apna, a professional networking platform, enables job seekers to interact in their





first language and in turn, build up their confidence. More than half of its users opt for vernacular languages when searching for opportunities and growing their networks. The app is currently available in 11 Indian languages across 28 cities.



Google Meet has launched live translated captions to help video calls be more global and inclusive. This equalizes information sharing, learning and collaboration.

b) Help close technical, financial and accessibility gaps



Not all users will have the same digital savviness levels, especially as more new users come online. Indeed, many new internet users still struggle with basic tasks.

For example, in India, 73% of users ask for help in getting their phones set up.⁴⁶

73%

Therefore tracking your engagement metrics and monitoring drop-off points is key to enriching your user experience. In the quest for operational efficiency and digital transformation, brands need to ensure that they are not leaving some of their customers behind.

For example, Goodbudget, a budgeting app, offers free educational resources like online courses, podcasts and even a forum for consumers to learn more about money management.





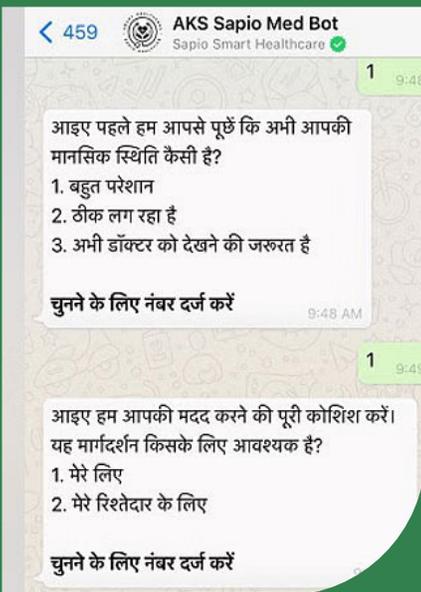
2. Take a Bigger Stand

Consumers are drawn to brands that focus on the “we” over the “me.” While 63% of consumers surveyed were more attracted to “**brands that focus on making the world a better place,**” only 37% said they preferred “**brands that focus on making me a better person.**”⁴⁷ The same survey found that 86% of respondents expect brands to act beyond their product or business,⁴⁸ suggesting that people are increasingly looking for brands that focus on contributing to society and the rest of the world.

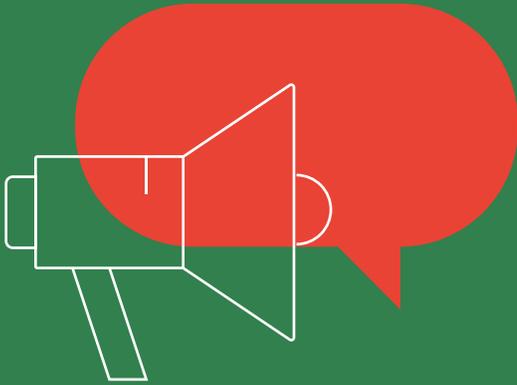
a) Stand for something bigger than profits

It's time to redefine success in business and build for a more inclusive and sustainable economy. Brands need to speak up and act beyond their traditional business boundaries, for both consumers and employees.

Sapio Smart HealthCare, a division of the government advisory firm Sapio Analytics, has created an artificially intelligent and empathetic chatbot to assist rural users with medical consultations. The AKS Sapio Med Bot is part of the organization's broader plan to create a comprehensive and accessible healthcare ecosystem.



b) Build inclusive marketing strategies that benefit both people and your bottom line



Consumers are 4.5x more likely to buy from a brand if it addresses human rights, and 3.5x more likely if it takes on economic inequality.⁴⁹ As marketers, we are in a unique position to drive authentic and meaningful change, and it starts with the teams we build and the stories we tell.

For example, **Miss Piggy Banks** caters to young millennials, especially women, who want greater access to financial advice. Launched in 2020, the India-based company makes investing less complex and more interesting for its users, including first-time investors, by offering them easy access to financial experts.



THE FAMOUS FIVE

Here's a quick re-cap of the 5 Big Trends from 2021 as thrown up by Google Search results:

1. Digital Is The New Mainstream
2. Lives Re-examined
3. Bridging Distances
4. Truth Seekers
5. Growing Inequalities

Our advice to brand owners and custodians?

Recognize them.

Internalize them.

Ride on them.

Sources:

Google Trends, India, Sep 1, 2019 - Aug 31, 2020 vs. Sep 1, 2020 - Aug 31, 2021, unless indicated otherwise

36. IMFBlog, "The Future of Asia: What a Difference a Year Can Make," March 17, 2021.
37. UNESCO, UNICEF and The World Bank, "What have we learnt? Overview of findings from a survey of ministries of education on national responses to COVID-19," 2020.
38. UN News, "Bridging Asia-Pacific 'digital divide' vital to realize tech benefits," Aug. 18, 2020.
39. IAMA/Kantar, ICUBE 2020 Report, 2020.
40. Edelman, Trust Barometer Special Report, 2021.
41. Edelman, Trust Barometer Special Report, 2021.
42. CSA Research/Kantar, Can't Read, Won't Buy, 2020.
43. National Statistical Office, Periodic Labour Force Survey, India, 2021.
44. National Statistical Office, Periodic Labour Force Survey, India, 2021.
45. GWI Q2, 2021.
46. Google commissioned Ipsos Research Private Limited (India), IN, n=1981, 18-45 years, Dec. 2020-Jan. 2021.
- 47, 48, 49. Edelman, Trust Barometer Special Report, 2021.

A REPORT BY



**Rediffusion
Consumer Lab**

redi#usion

MUMBAI (Corporate)

1801 Lotus Corporate Park, Goregaon East, Mumbai - 400063

Ph: +91 22 49311000, +91 22 49312000

KOLKATA

10 Wood Street,
Kankaria Estates,
Elgin, Kolkata - 700016

Ph: +91 33 44066262, +91 33 22871232

BANGALORE

22, Vaswani Ashton Woods,
Bellandur Post,
Bengaluru - 560103

Ph: +91 98100 96634

CHENNAI

1st Floor, Prakash Building,
14, Deivasigamani Road,
Royapettah, Chennai - 600014

Ph: +91 44 28113426, +91 44 28113427

DELHI

Mogae House,
112, Udyog Vihar Phase IV,
Gurgaon - 122015

Ph: +012 42345598

