UX Playbook for Indian Languages
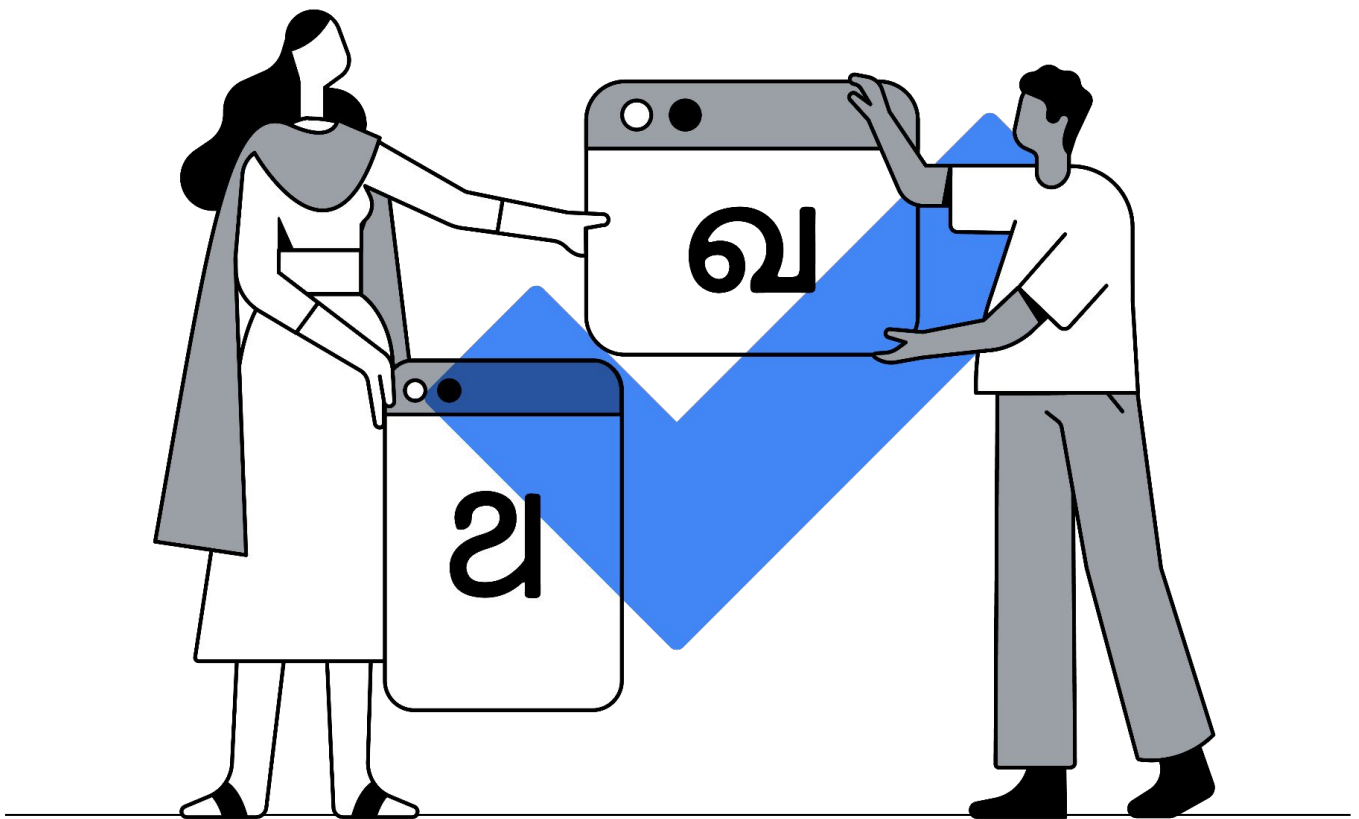
Building relevant experiences
for Indian language users

Think with Google

India's linguistic digitality is now online

98%
of Indian internet users use the internet in an Indian language **either exclusively or with English**

45%
of local language users prefer **accessing content exclusively** in regional languages.
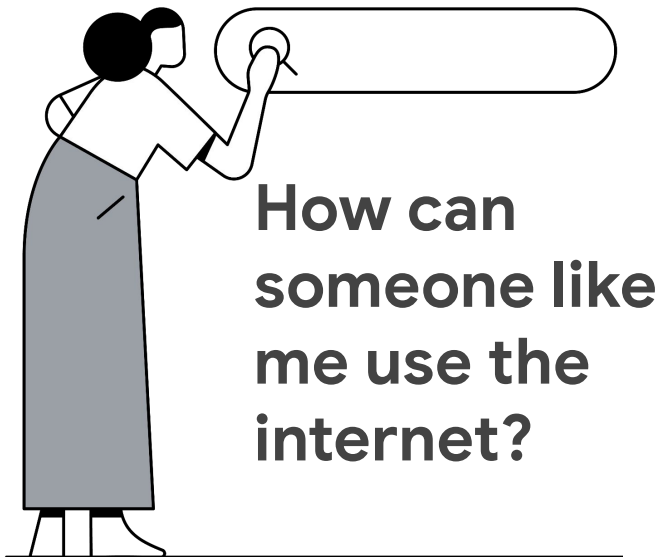
63%
of local language users would prefer **reading exclusively** in regional languages.

Think with Google

Advertisers are missing out on a big opportunity **by not building** for Indian language users

How can someone like me use the internet?

> "**Typing in Hindi is difficult**, even though we studied it in school.... The matras and all is difficult for me to write."

> "**I am not that educated.** Maybe that's why I cannot get it even though it is in Tamil. I should stick to the 3 apps I know."

> "I will ask my friends or neighbours before I fill up anything on the internet. **I do not want to make a mistake.**"
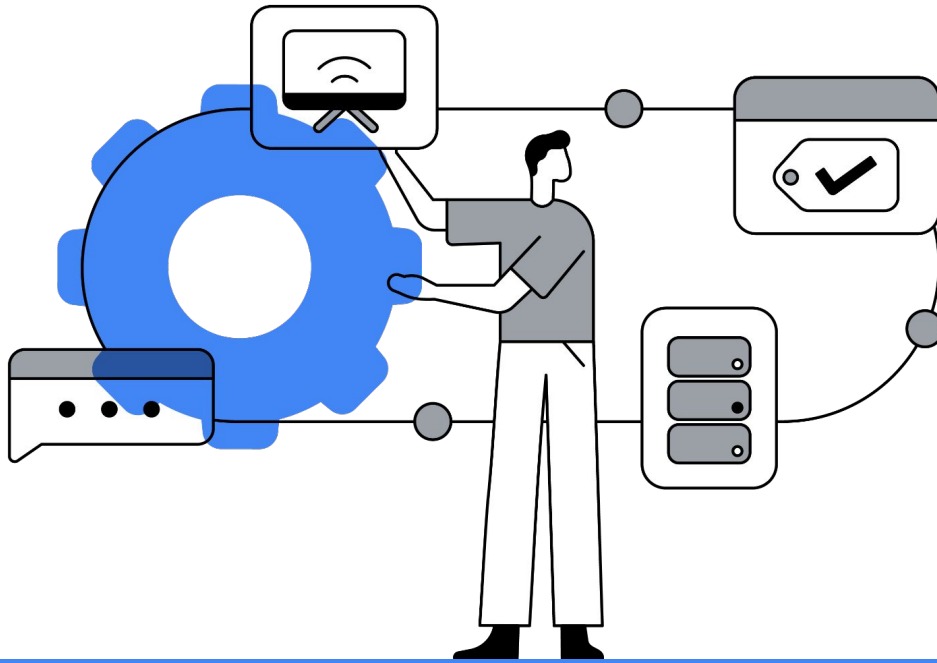
> "If you search for an item, in english you will get 10 pages, but in hindi, only 5... **why should I not get ALL information in my language?**"

Users are **delighted** to explore more when the content is **available in their preferred language**

When an English website is available in their preferred language, users **gain the confidence** to navigate without assistance and **explore more than just basic tasks**

" Oh.. This site is in Hindi. I can clearly understand what to do.. I can do it on my own.. **I will tell my friend to try it now and book a class for her kid.**

" All description of the washing machine was in Tamil. I could understand what all the features was. This was very good. **Earlier, you would only look at picture and choose (when in English) but now it is in Tamil and it is very helpful.**

Think with Google

However, lack of critical UX features on Indian language sites leaves users **dissatisfied and frustrated**

> I did everything right. But still I have **only 34 options of dresses just because I searched in Tamil!** I know in English you get 1000s options.

> **I can understand the keywords but not exactly what they are trying to say in the reviews.** So now, I will go to YouTube and check out some reviews of this phone. I will check for Tamil reviews and then come back on the site and buy.
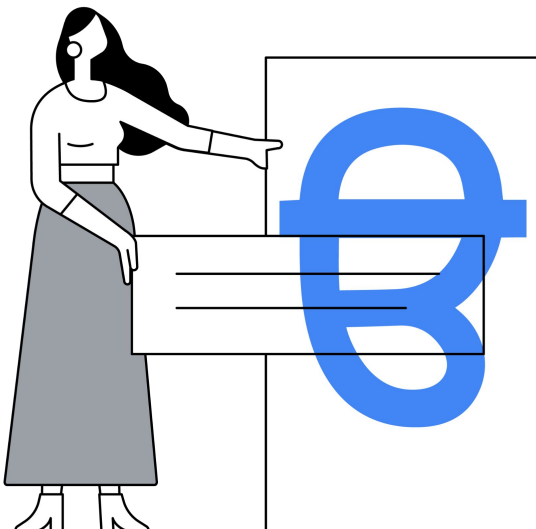
Brands which invest in building relevant experiences for Indian language users, see **better business outcomes**

HDFC Mutual Fund leverages an **end to end Vernacular Journey** on Discovery & Search

THE CHALLENGE

- HDFC Mutual Fund is one of India's largest mutual fund managers.

- They were looking at expanding their reach beyond metros & non-english speaking users and hence decided to leverage Vernacular Ads.

THE APPROACH

1 Google Team helped with translated & transliterated keywords/ Ads copies.

2 HDFC Mutual Fund built a quick easy hindi landing page for the users.

3 The call center was briefed to ensure the calls were directed to the Hindi speaking agents to provide a seamless vernacular experience.
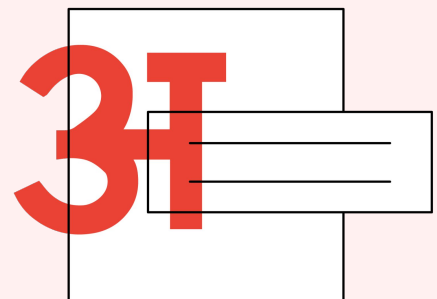
> Experimenting with Vernacular Ads has helped us reach people in Tier 2 & 3 cities. Communicating with this important segment of our Target audience, in their native language, has yielded outstanding results for us so far.

Shyamali Basu, Executive Vice President & Head- Product, Marketing and training at HDFC Mutual Fund

THE JOURNEY

- **HINDI KWs**
- **HINDI ADs**
- **HINDI Landing Page**
- **HINDI Call Centre Exec.**

THE RESULT

2x
Incremental Conversions (Discovery)

40%
Lower CPAs (Discovery)

2.2x
Higher Impression Share (Search)

21%
Lower Cost per Click (Search)

Ad · mutualfund.hdfcfund.com

SIP क्या है? | SIP के लाभ | अपनी निवेश योजना बनाएं | दीर्घकालिक में धन बनाएँ

मात्र 500 रुपये प्रति माह से अपनी SIP शुरू करें. SIP के साथ वित्तीय रूप से खुद को अनुशासित करें और अपने वित्तीय लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करें

UX principles for building apps and sites for Indian language users

1 Use conversational language

2 Build digital confidence

3 Make key information easily discoverable
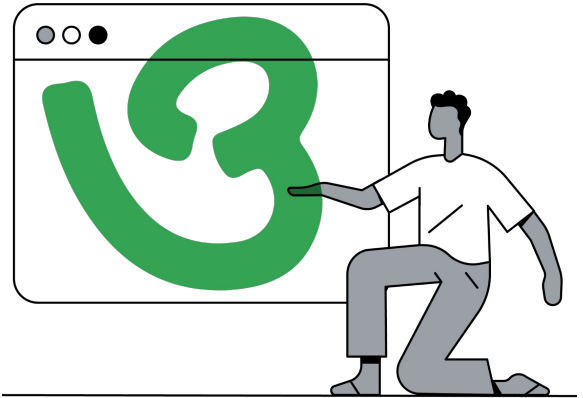
4 Be visual forward

5 Prioritize voice

1.

Use Conversational Language

Why this principle?

"I understand Hindi well, but not every time I am able to understand the **use of typical hindi words like taral (liquid) here. I have not heard of this word since school. No one understands these anymore.**"

Female - 22, Kanpur

Most of the users read and speak in colloquial language. Literal translations of complex words are not easily understood

"The calendar here has numbers in Hindi. I do not think that it i necessary. **We are not used to reading numbers in Hindi. English is fine**"

Male, 33 - Kanpur

Numerals in Indian languages are difficult to read.

I can do everything so far as it was all in Telugu. **But this last page is in English.** I usually fill forms myself. **Now, I have to take someone else's help.** This should also have been in Telugu.

Male, 49 - Vijayawada

Any untranslated content is likely to break users' flow and can lead to user frustration and site abandonment.

Think with Google

TIP #1

Use colloquial language and explain domain-specific terms

- Not everyone understands academic language. Use colloquial, commonly-spoken language.

- Transliterate domain specific or technical terms when the concept is complex and no colloquial translations are available.

- Identify the most frequently used terms on your website, and translate thoughtfully.

- Avoid using standalone acronyms and codes.

- **PRO TIP: Build a translation glossary**

---

1. Avoid Academic Translation

ORIGINAL: Edit Booking

❌ WRONG: बुकिंग संपादित करें

✓ RIGHT: बुकिंग बदलें

---

2. Use Colloquial Language

ORIGINAL: Get Quote

❌ WRONG: प्रीमियम का कोट पाएँ

✓ RIGHT: जानें कि प्रीमियम कितना होगा

---

3. Avoid Acronyms

ORIGINAL: View TVC

❌ WRONG: TVC देखें

✓ RIGHT: टीवी विज्ञापन देखें

💡 **TIP #2**

Be comprehensive

Remember to translate ALL essential information on the page, including:

- Images
- Error messages
- Customer reviews
- Sort and filter by options
- Call-to-action (CTAs)

- Chat interfaces
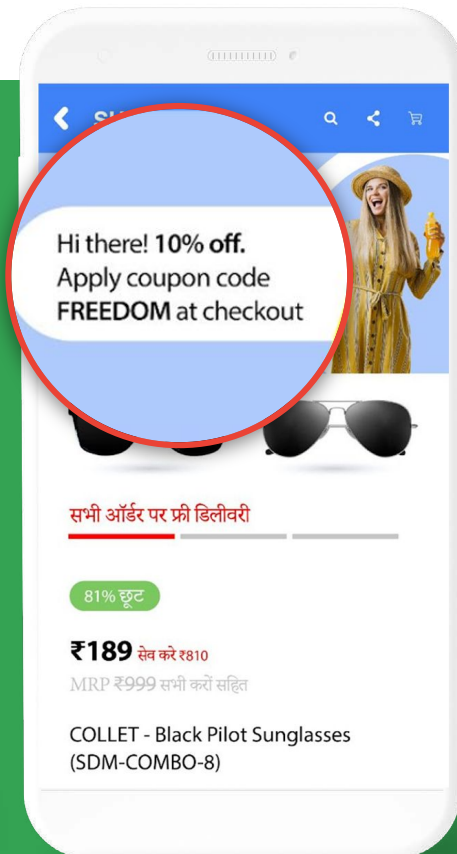- Menus
- FAQs
- Terms & Conditions

❌ **Don't**
Show error messages in English

❌ **Don't**
Leave out important text on images

Think with Google

💡 **TIP #3**

Avoid mixed scripts

- Keep to a single language script.

- **Exception:** Brand names can be retained in English. Common acronyms and technical terms may be left in English and their meaning can be offered in brackets.

1. Maintain a single script	**ORIGINAL:** ❌ **WRONG:** ✅ **RIGHT:**	**Use oil to stop hair fall** Hairfall को रोकने के लिए oil लगाये बालों को झड़ने से रोकने के लिए तेल लगाये
2. Retain brand names in English	**ORIGINAL:** ❌ **WRONG:** ✅ **RIGHT:**	**Search on Youtube** यूट्यूब पर खोजें YouTube पर खोजें
3. Provide meanings of acronyms	**ORIGINAL:** ✅ **RIGHT:**	**EMI** EMI (आसान किस्त)

TIP #4

Use English numerals

**Most users are familiar with English numerals.
Avoid using Indian languages for numerals.**

- Localize in Indian currency and use Rupee symbol (₹)

- Localize numbers to Lakh/Crore instead of using Million / Billion

- Use 12 hr format, unless you are in the travel business

- Avoid abbreviation of the numbers e.g. ₹15k

---

1. Use English numerals

ORIGINAL:

❌ **WRONG:**
✓ **RIGHT:**

> **Your OTP should have 4 digits**
> आपके ओटीपी में ४ अंक होने चाहिए
> आपके ओटीपी में 4 अंक होने चाहिए

---

2. Localise to lakhs instead of hundred thousands
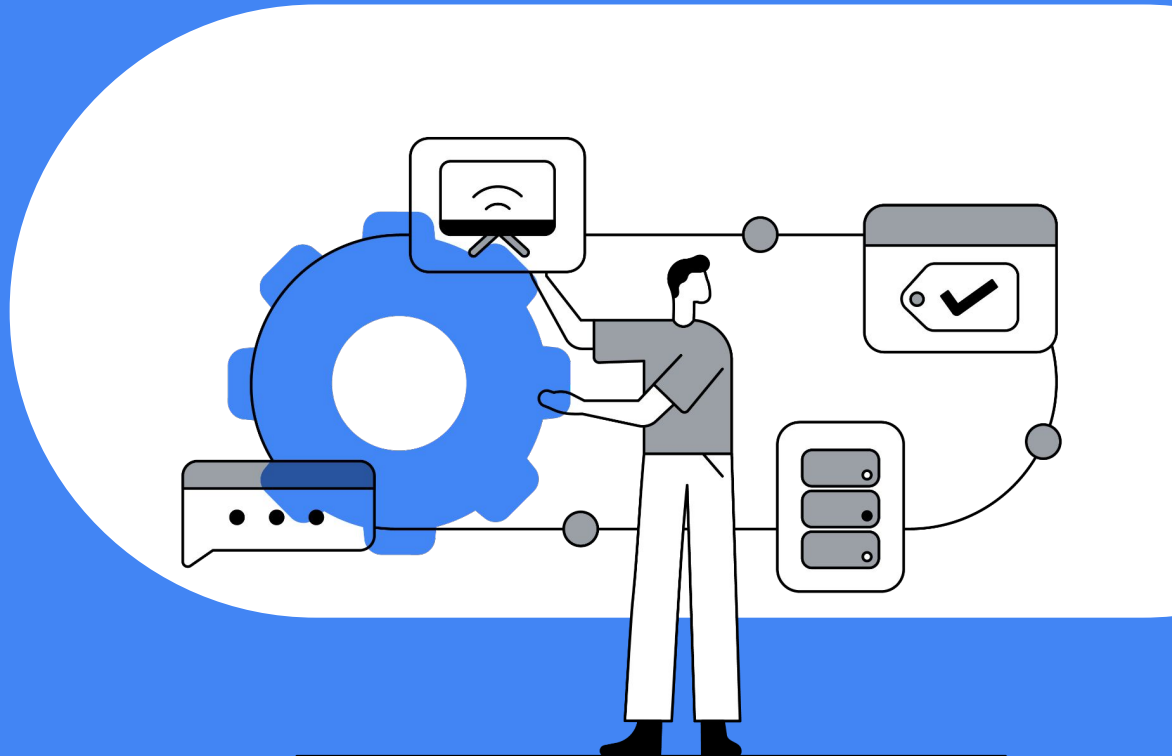
ORIGINAL:

❌ **WRONG:**
✓ **RIGHT:**

> **120,000Rs**
> एक सौ बीस हजार रुपए (₹ 120,000)
> एक लाख बीस हजार रुपए (₹ 1,20,000)

Think with Google

2.

Build Digital Confidence

Why this principle?

Filter is something hi-fi. I don't understand. They are showing options (to filter buses) by AC/Non-AC and arrival and departure timings. **I don't understand why they have given these options. I don't know why they have given the reset option here**

Female - 22, Indore (in context of bus booking experience)

Users may be confused by online processes that differ significantly from the 'normal' offline way of doing things.

There is too much to read, and **I could not see "Cart mein jode, it was not clear**, I thought the pic of cart is the option to add the shampoo in the cart

Male, 33 - Kanpur (in context of shopping on e-commerce site)

The lack of orientation cues can confuse and demotivate users enough to abandon critical conversion tasks.

I have never booked online. So I do not know how they will be okay with the ticket you have booked online. What will we show at the station? **Will this be enough to board the train? How can I be sure?**

Female, 33 - Vijayawada (in context of train booking experience)

Digital accounts, e-tickets and online payments can be unfamiliar concepts for users.

Think with Google

💡 TIP #1

Provide visual tooltips for better discovery and comprehension

- Users with low digital literacy are reluctant to try out new features. Highlight important features early on using tooltips.

- To aid discovery and comprehension of key features, support tooltips with relevant visuals.

- Consider using voice or video hints to educate users about key features and next steps.
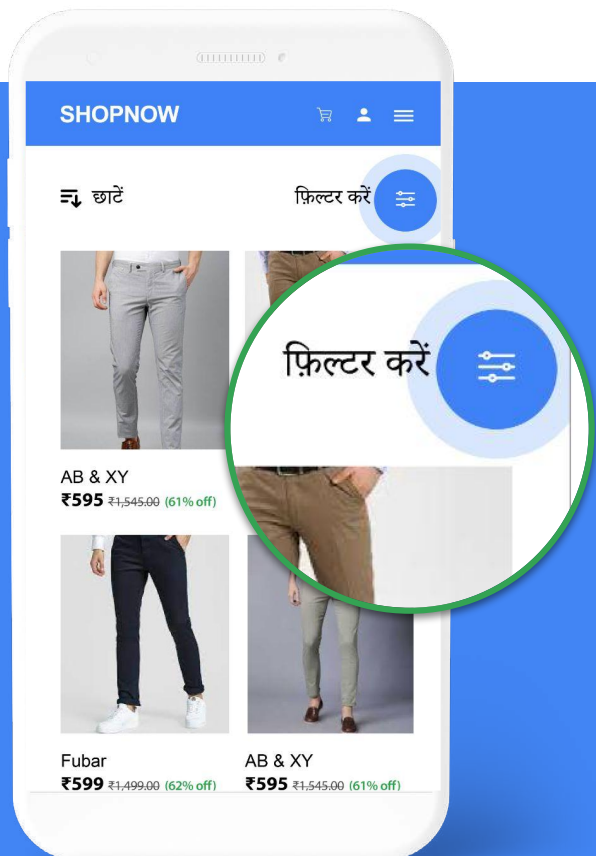

✓ **Do**
Introduce complex features with 'Try it Now' hint
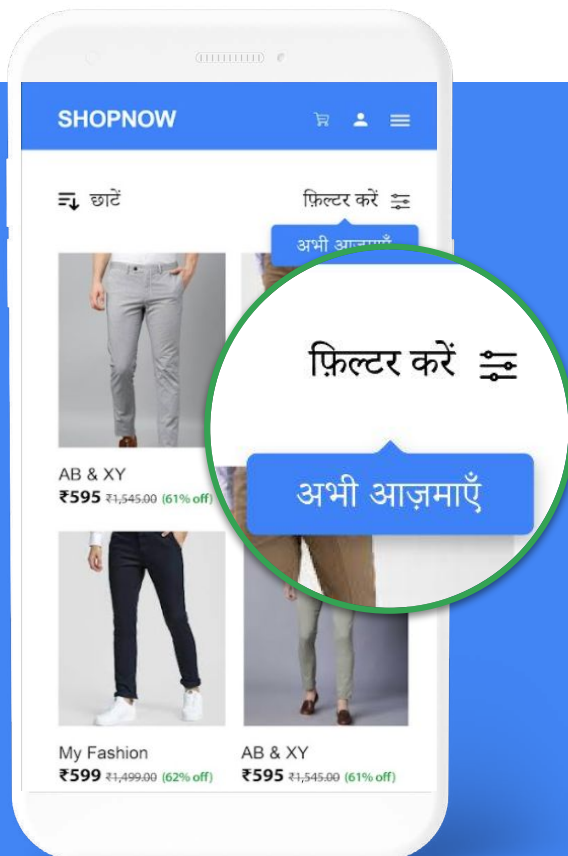
✓ **Do**
Use subtle animations to draw attention to tooltips

TIP #2

Support discovery rather than forcing users to search

- Search can be intimidating to users if they are not familiar with relevant keywords. Enable users to browse products and services across dimensions such as price, brands and others.

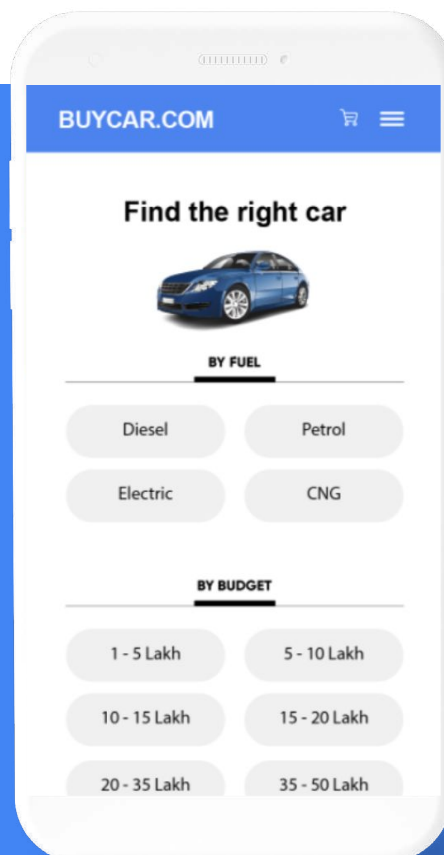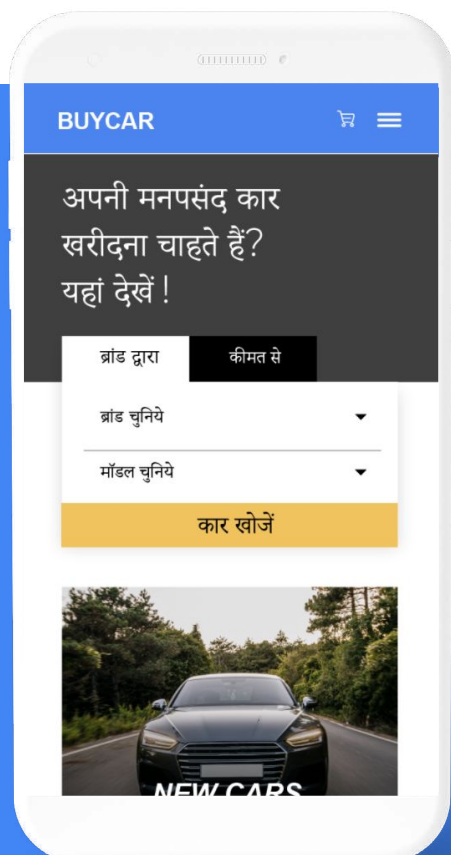- Showcase the breadth of your offerings through curated experiences.

Don't
Do not offer Search as the only option for product discovery

Do
Enable users to browse products across relevant dimensions

BUYCAR

अपनी मनपसंद कार खरीदना चाहते हैं? यहां देखें !

ब्रांड द्वारा | कीमत से

ब्रांड चुनिये

मॉडल चुनिये

कार खोजें

NEW CARS

BUYCAR.COM

Find the right car

BY FUEL

Diesel | Petrol

Electric | CNG

BY BUDGET

1 - 5 Lakh | 5 - 10 Lakh

10 - 15 Lakh | 15 - 20 Lakh

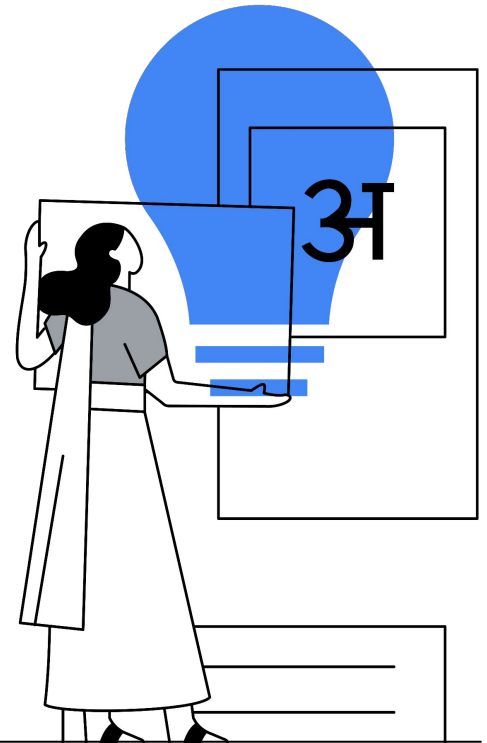20 - 35 Lakh | 35 - 50 Lakh

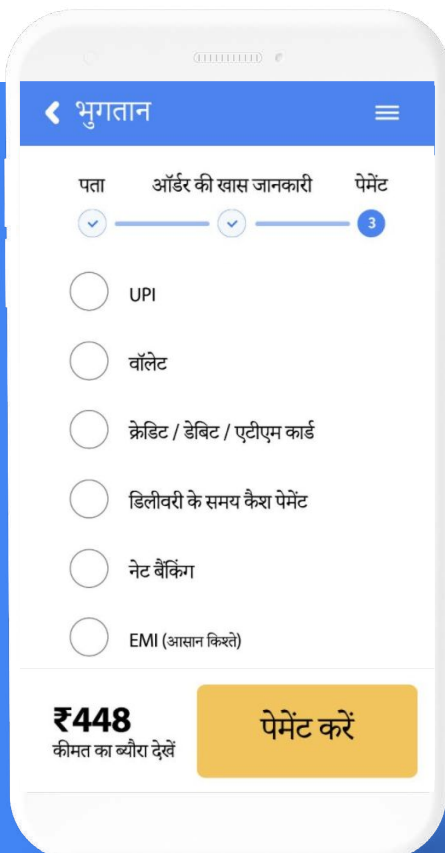Think with Google

💡 TIP #3

Make it clear to users where they are and how far they have to go

- Users feel anxious if they do not know which step of the process they are on.

- Allow users to track progress by indicating the number of steps needed to complete the process.
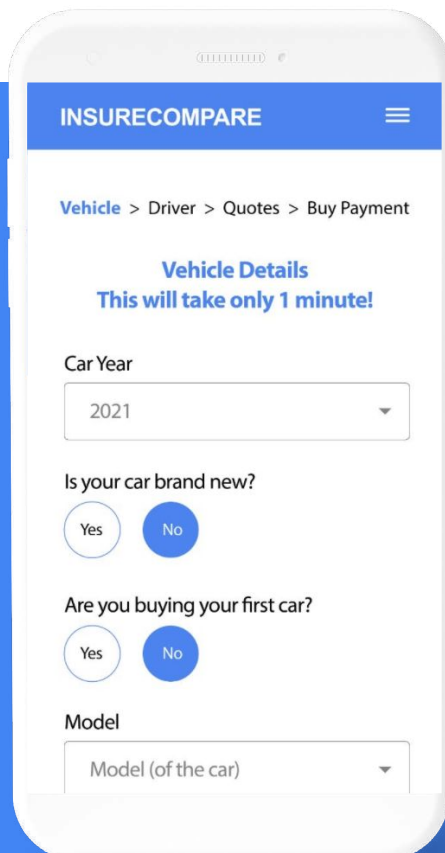
✅ **Do**
Use clear placement cues

✅ **Do**
Use breadcrumbs

❮ भुगतान ☰

पता — ऑर्डर की खास जानकारी — पेमेंट

UPI

वॉलेट

क्रेडिट / डेबिट / एटीएम कार्ड

डिलीवरी के समय कैश पेमेंट

नेट बैंकिंग

EMI (आसान किश्ते)

₹448
कीमत का ब्यौरा देखें

पेमेंट करें

INSURECOMPARE ☰

Vehicle > Driver > Quotes > Buy Payment

Vehicle Details
This will take only 1 minute!

Car Year

2021 ▾

Is your car brand new?

Yes   No

Are you buying your first car?

Yes   No

Model

Model (of the car) ▾

Think with Google

TIP #4

Offer help via call and chat

- Ensure that help is approachable and instantly available. Having help a call away gives users the confidence to transact online.

- We found that most Indian language users preferred calling over chatting, because chat applications are usually in English, don't support voice and require users to type in English.
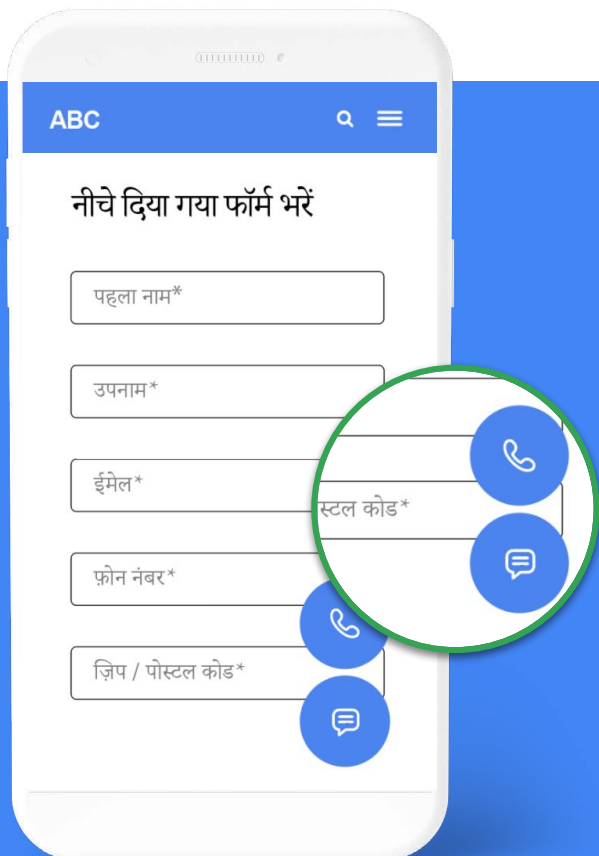

✗ Don't
Do not offer chat as the only way to seek help

✓ Do
Allow users to choose their preferred way to seek help, including calling

TIP #5

Offer cash-on-delivery and UPI as possible payment options

- UPI and cash-on-delivery are the most preferred payment modes. Trust in other online payment methods remain low.

- Credit card related offers are often irrelevant for Indian language users.

- Users are sensitive to language quality on the payment page because they fear they might misunderstand something.

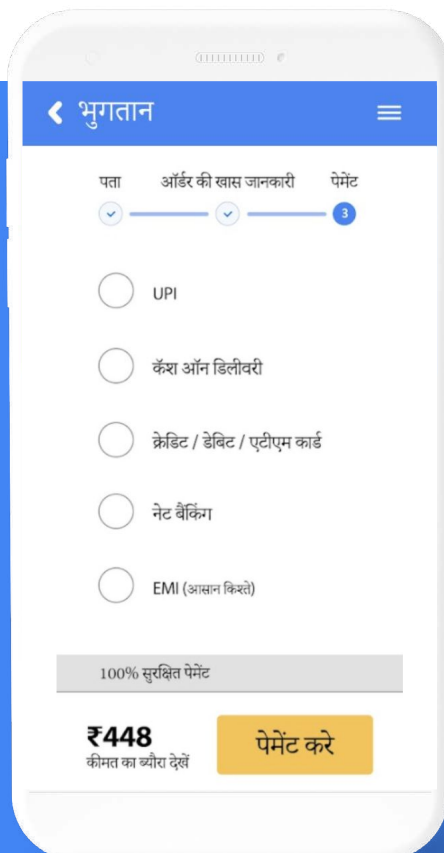- Users prefer to read terms & conditions pages and expect technical terms such as auto-renew to be explained clearly.

Don't
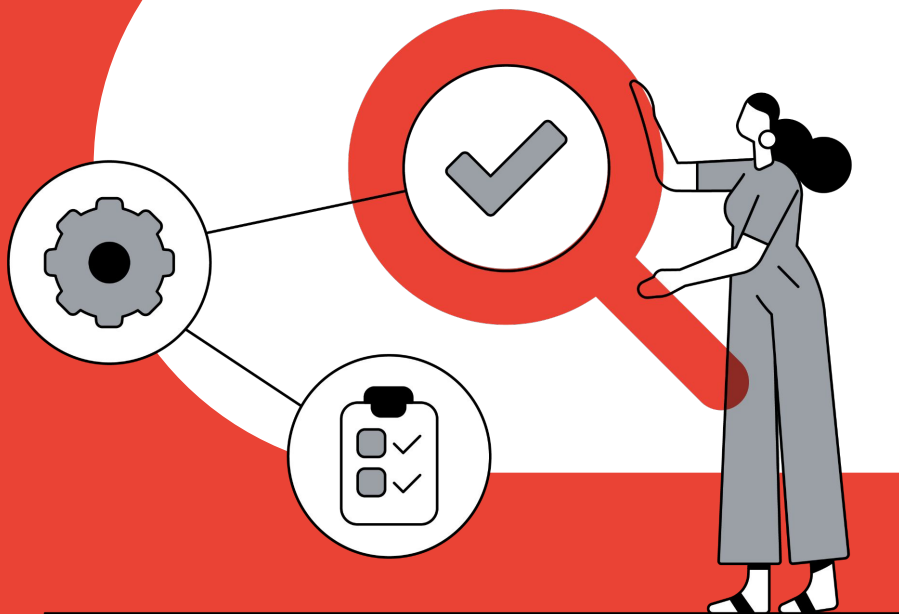Credit and debit card only payment and offer options may alienate Indian language users
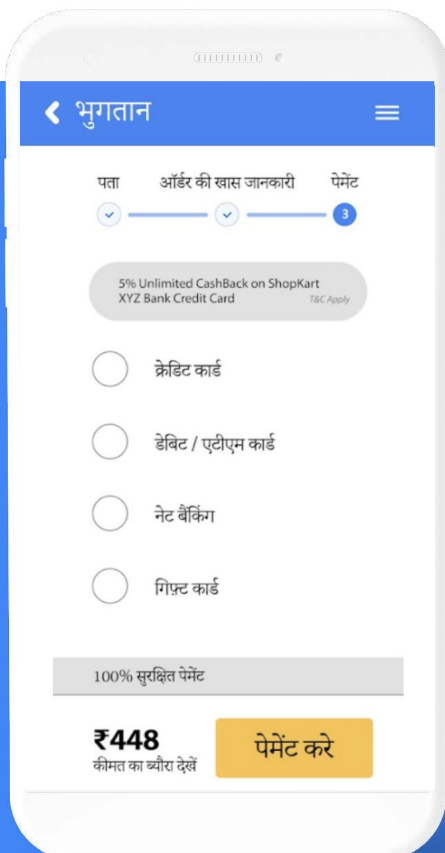
Do
Provide Indian language user friendly payment options
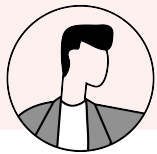

Think with Google

3.

Make key information easily discoverable

Why this principle?

What is the meaning of this complete protection? **I don't know the details of the same. I think we will be able to see it only if we give it our details. I am not able to scroll anything too over here.**

Male - 29, Vijayawada

Information-poor landing pages fail to engage & convert users.

I actually quite liked these small image models that can be scrolled. It shows many variants that are available. **I just wish we also had the price along with it, even a price range would do. So, here only I will have an idea of which model I want to look for and get information in detail.**

Male, 46 - Madurai

Users are unlikely to spend time on a page where the information that they care about is not immediately noticeable or understandable.

Will you read these paragraphs? **"No. I don't. Mostly, I only read the headings and read the paragraph only rarely when I feel something is very important."**

Male - 21, Chennai

Users don't read online--they scan for keywords to decide whether and how deeply to engage with a page.

Think with Google

TIP #1

Provide helpful information upfront

- Provide relevant information such as product demos, process related videos, and FAQs before showing a lead generation form.

- Explain key technical terms. For example, an insurance site should explain terms such as third party and comprehensive insurance.

Don't
Ask for personal details without sharing useful information

Do
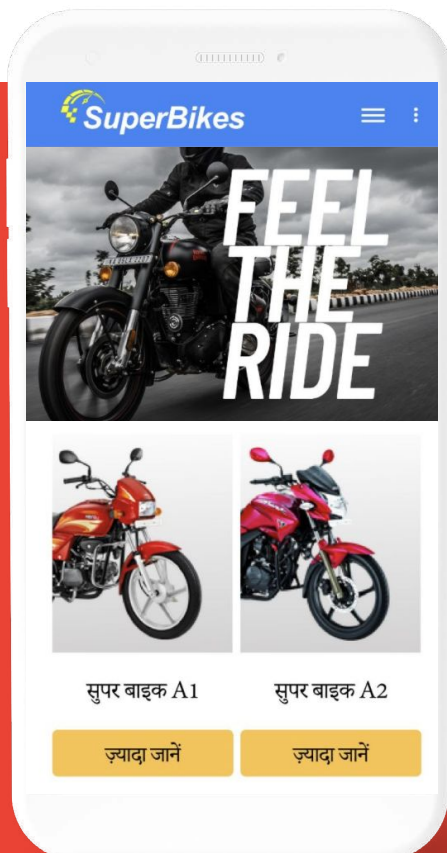Offer information before asking users to share their details
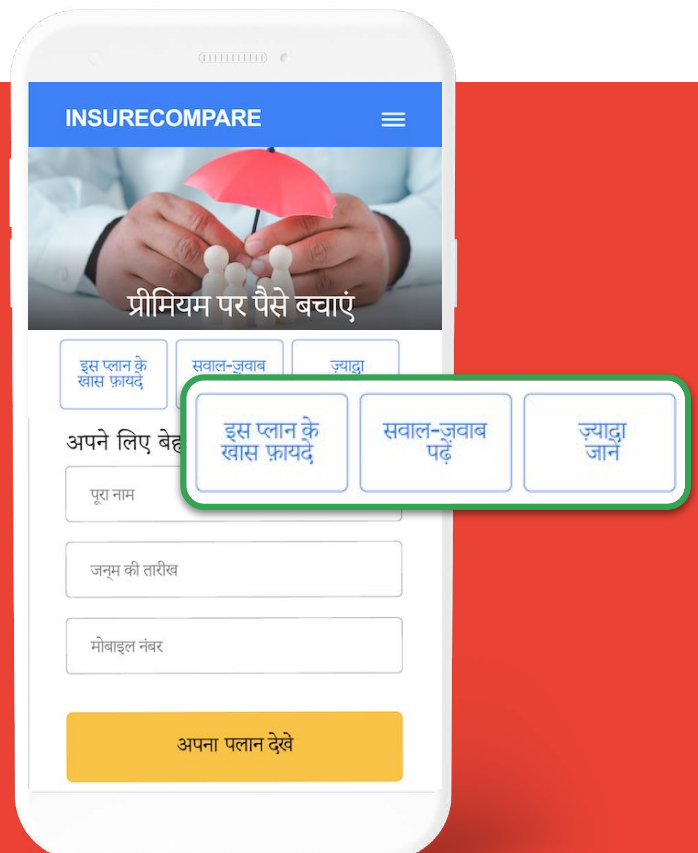
TIP #2

Surface and prioritise information that's key to decision making

- Users care for different information through different stages of their journeys. For example, at the shortlisting stage:

○ When shortlisting bikes, users look for price, mileage and EMI
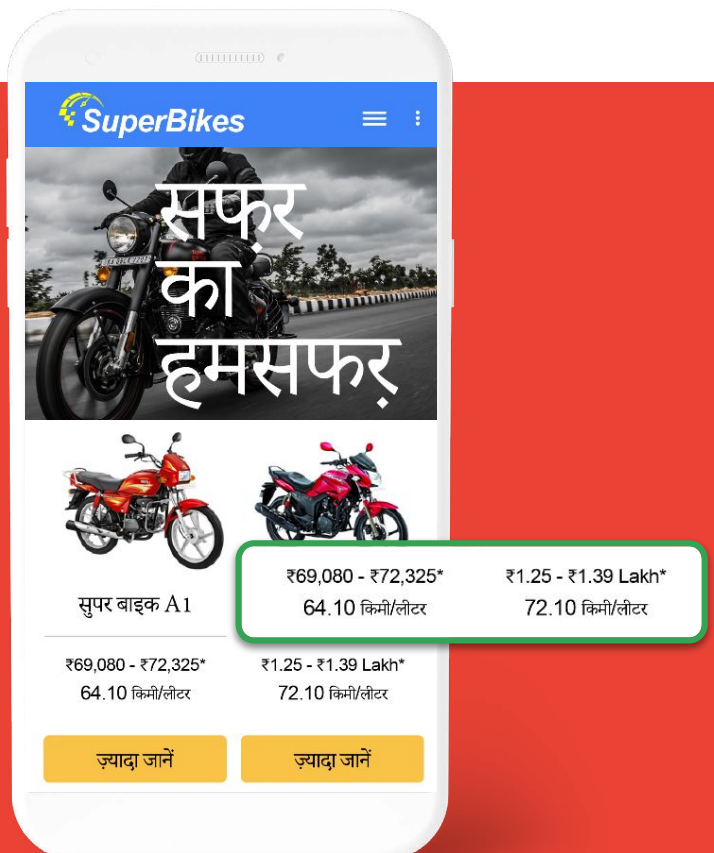○ When shortlisting mobile phones, users look for RAM, storage, and screen size

---

✗ Don't
Leave out valuable info
such as price

✓ Do
Make price and key information
obviously noticeable

SuperBikes

FEEL THE RIDE

सुपर बाइक A1　　सुपर बाइक A2

ज़्यादा जानें　　ज़्यादा जानें

SuperBikes

सफर का हमसफ़र

₹69,080 - ₹72,325*　　₹1.25 - ₹1.39 Lakh*
64.10 किमी/लीटर　　72.10 किमी/लीटर

सुपर बाइक A1

₹69,080 - ₹72,325*　　₹1.25 - ₹1.39 Lakh*
64.10 किमी/लीटर　　72.10 किमी/लीटर

ज़्यादा जानें　　ज़्यादा जानें

Think with Google

TIP #3

Make information easy to scan

- To make information scannable:

  ○ Use short bulleted points, not long, dense paragraphs
  ○ Chunk test using realistic images or icons as anchor points
  ○ Start each chunk or bullet point with the most important keywords

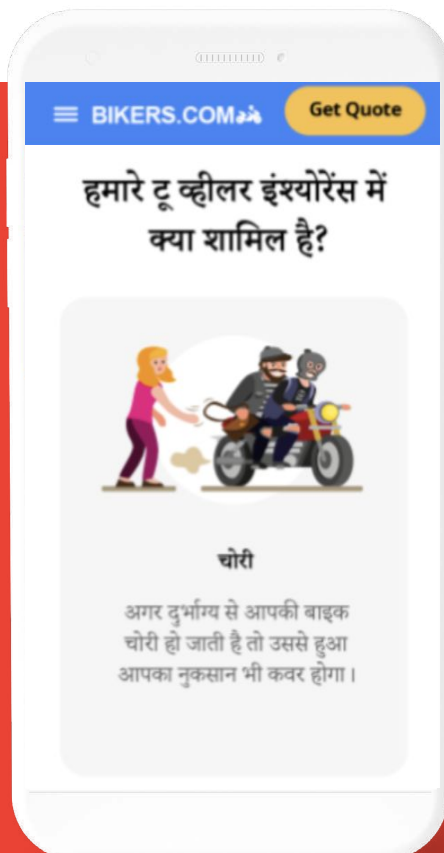- **PRO TIP:** Follow Material Design Guidelines for writing text

---

✗ Don't
Present text as long, dense paragraphs

✓ Do
Chunk text into 'bite-sized' portions and use realistic visuals or icons as anchor points

Think with Google

4.

Be visual forward

Why this principle?

Don't know how to change the car to bike option. (On probing Moderator) - can you try to click it on the three lines on the right hand side top corner. (Participant) yes, now I can see, we have car, bike health etc. If you had not been around, I would not know how to move beyond this

Male - 33, Chennai

Users do not understand abstract icons or standalone symbols.

We can understand the color. **When they say misty blue as moodupani blue, it sounds silly., I will take as blue only.They can write it in English or better show through an image.**

Male, 33 - Coimbatore

Text is missed or harder to comprehend, when not supported by visuals.

There are three icons here and this is all the information I need for filling the form - **Call, WhatsApp, Location of dealer (all icons) are all easy to understand. Even if I did not read the rest of the page, this alone gives me enough idea to fill the form.**

Male - 39, Chennai

Self-explanatory visuals break through the clutter and draw attention to information that's crucial to decision making.
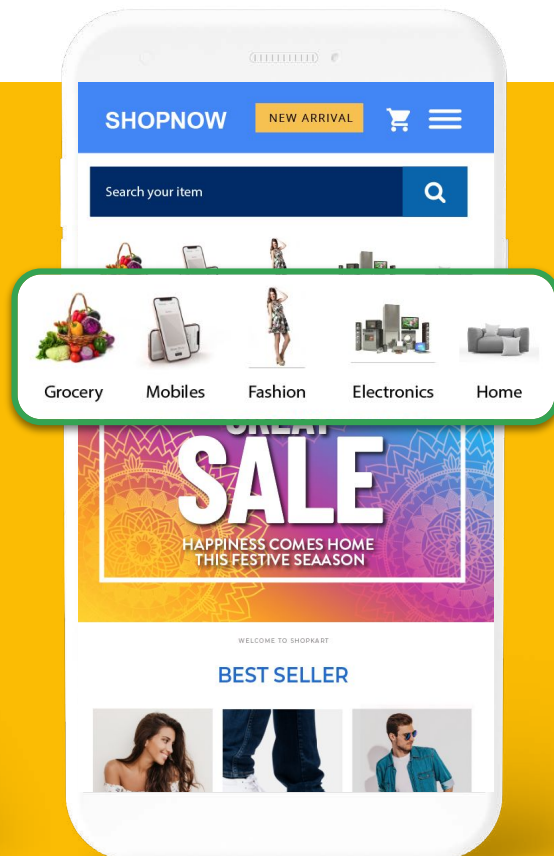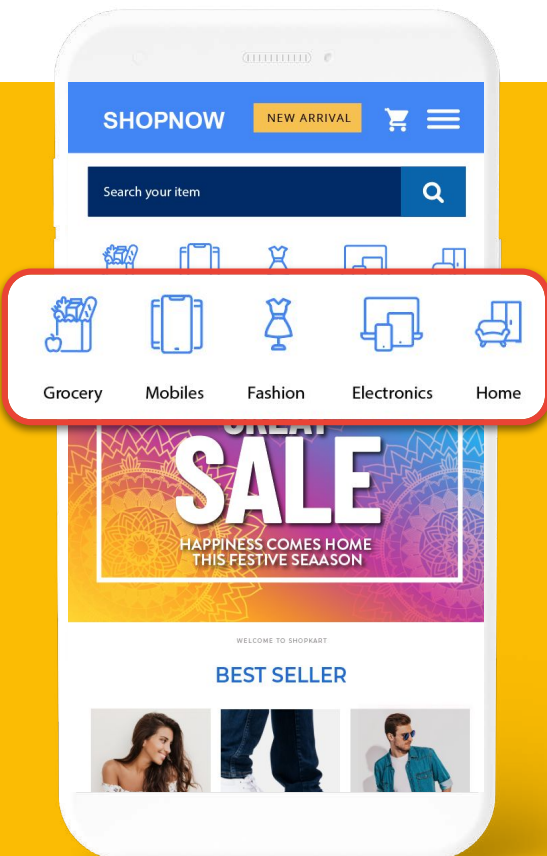
Think with Google

TIP

Avoid abstract icons, use realistic visuals

- Standalone symbols or icons that are too abstract don't always translate culturally and can be confusing.

- Visuals that are based on real-life actions and semi-abstract visuals communicate best.
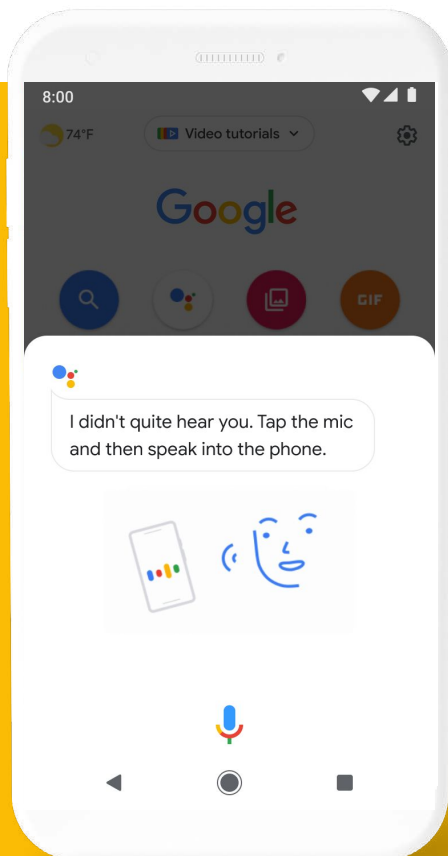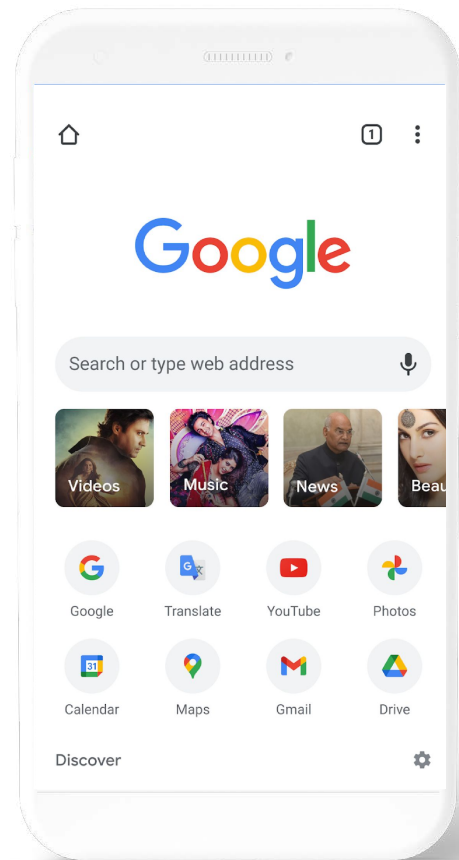
Don't
Use abstract icons

Do
Use realistic visuals

Think with Google

# Examples of real-life actions and semi-abstract visuals

Google Chrome

Photographic imagery accompanying text in query tiles helps ensure comprehension, and also makes it easier and faster to see the range of queries one could try
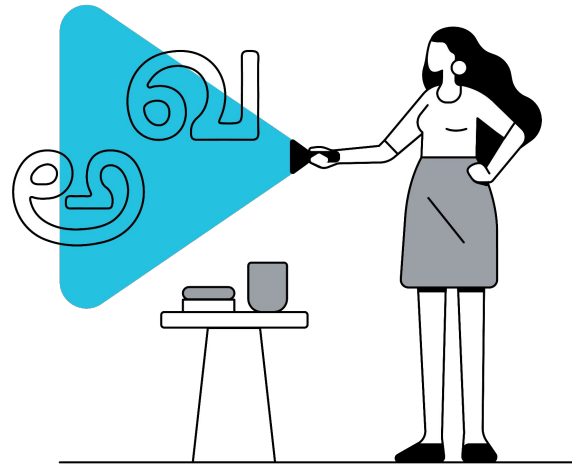
Google Assistant

Google Assistant uses realistic, photographic imagery rather than symbolic or metaphorical icons

Think with Google

5.
Prioritize voice
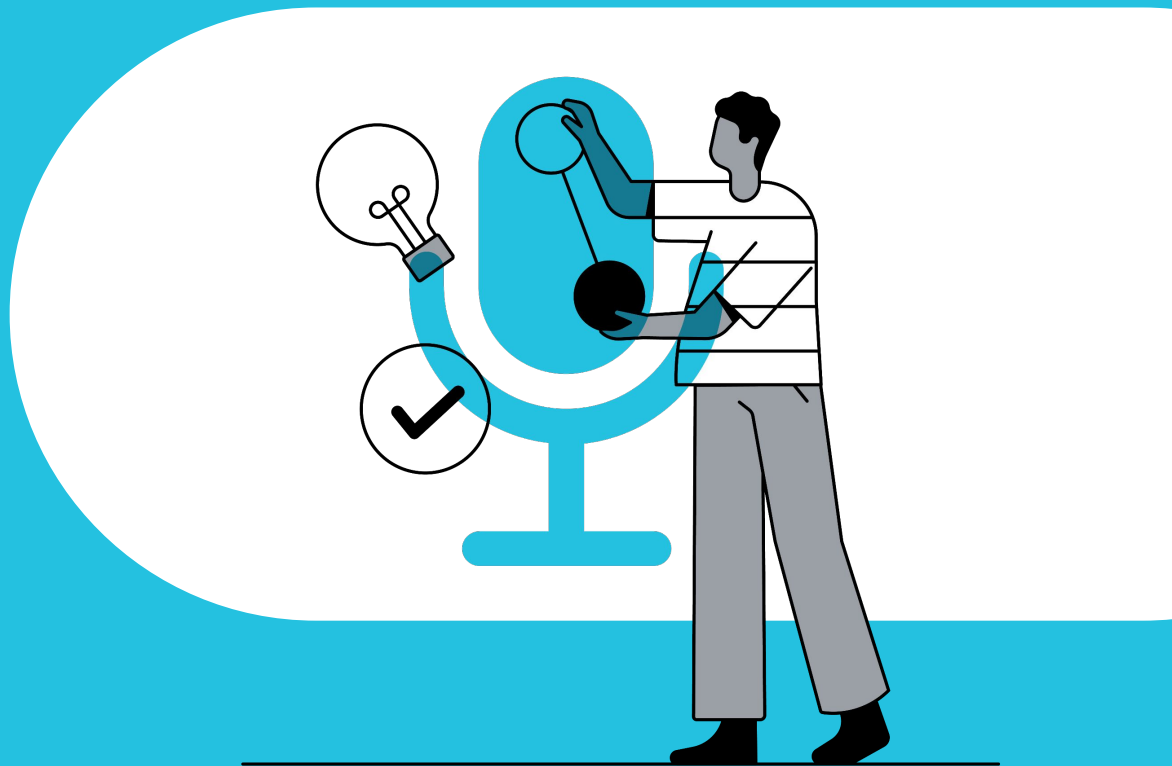
Why this principle?

Typing in Hindi script is little difficult for me. Sometimes the matras, vowels, and spellings I am not sure of...we learnt it so long ago in school.

Female - 22, Nagpur

Typing in Indian languages is hard, even for users fluent in those languages.

I searched for Baccho ke kapde in English letters... It did not show me any suggestions while typing... **I had to type the whole thing"**

Male, 35 - Kanpur

Autocomplete is an inconvenience when it doesn't recognize transliteration.

I typed it out in Hindi. And it all turned up errors in red. **I can type in English. I know the address but will take slightly more time"**

Female - 22, Jaipur

Systems that force English input can disappoint and alienate Indian language users.
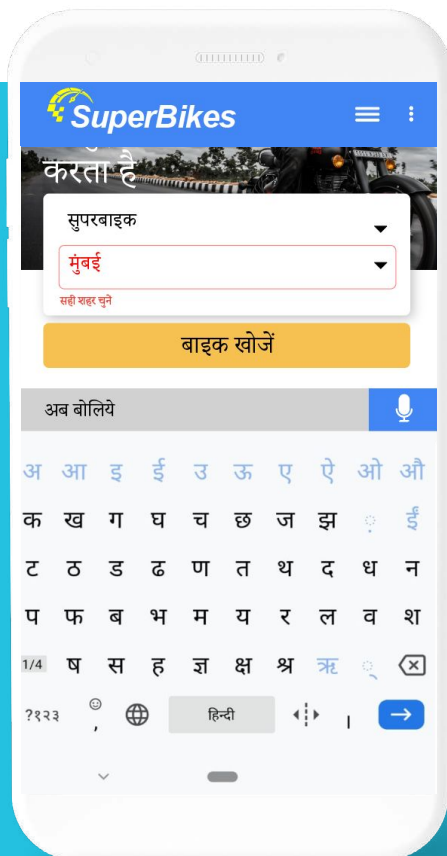
Think with Google

TIP #1

Accept voice. Where user input is essential, provide easy alternatives.

- Besides voice, use autocomplete to minimize typing, geolocation to capture addresses, and scan to text for user inputs.

- To illustrate; if English input is required for issuing travel tickets or to capture address details, allow users to scan in details from easily accessible sources, e.g. PAN/Aadhaar cards, driving license, and others.
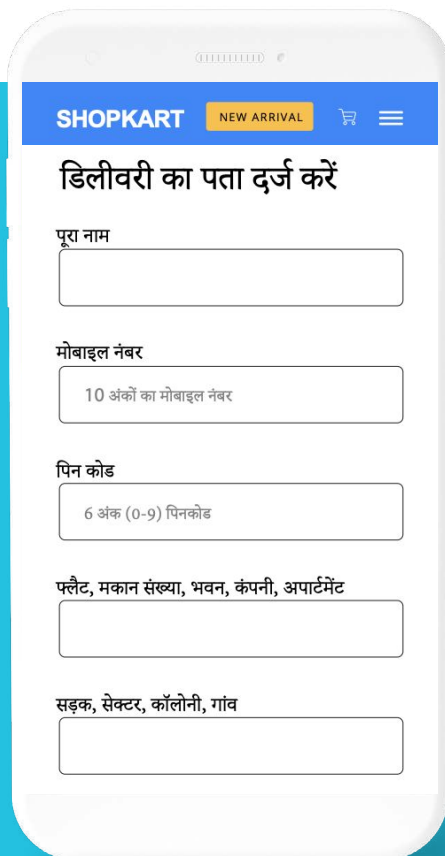

Don't
Don't discard the input submitted through voice

Do
Allow users to scan in address details

SuperBikes

करता है

सुपरबाइक

मुंबई

सही शहर चुने

बाइक खोजें

अब बोलिये

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ ओ औ
क ख ग घ च छ ज झ ई
ट ठ ड ढ ण त थ द ध न
प फ ब भ म य र ल व श
1/4 ष स ह ज्ञ क्ष श्र ऋ ⌫
?१२३ हिन्दी

SHOPKART NEW ARRIVAL

डिलीवरी का पता दर्ज करें

पूरा नाम

मोबाइल नंबर

10 अंकों का मोबाइल नंबर

पिन कोड

6 अंक (0-9) पिनकोड

फ्लैट, मकान संख्या, भवन, कंपनी, अपार्टमेंट

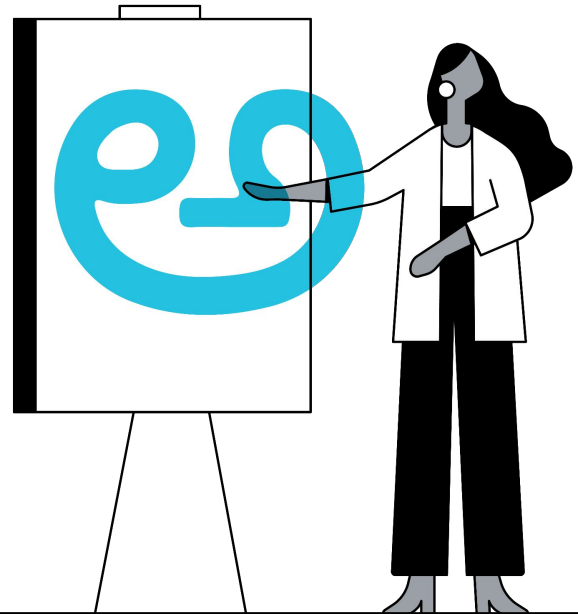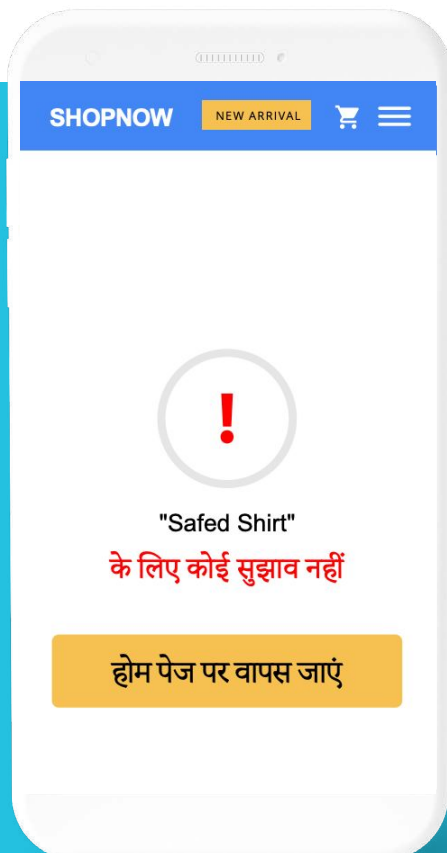सड़क, सेक्टर, कॉलोनी, गांव

Think with Google

💡 TIP #2

Autocomplete should support transliterated input

- Users can use transliterated text (e.g. Hinglish) for typing. Autocomplete is an inconvenience when it doesn't recognize transliteration.
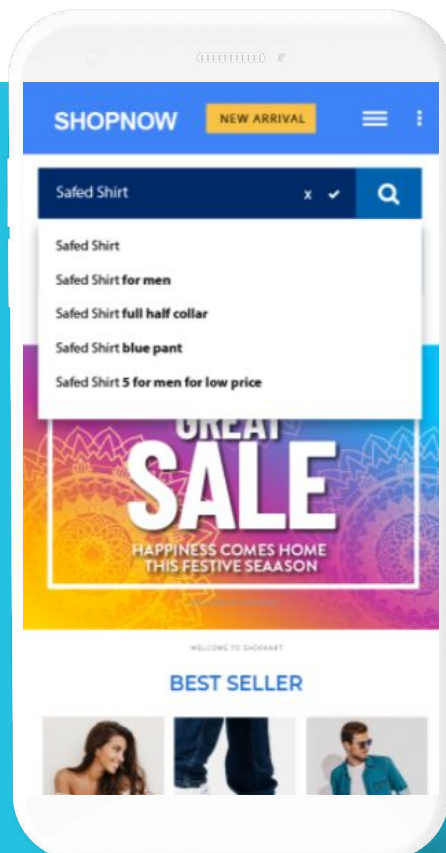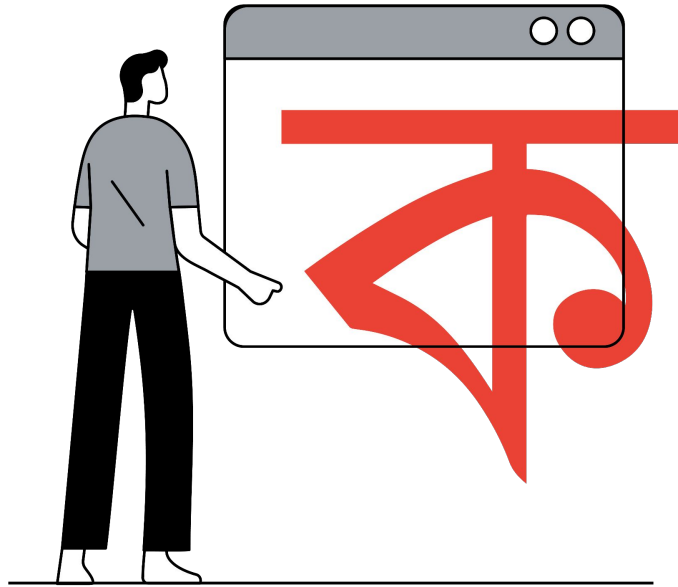
❌ **Don't**
Sites is not showing autocomplete for Hindi input

✅ **Do**
Autocomplete should support transliterated text

SHOPNOW NEW ARRIVAL 🛒 ≡

!

"Safed Shirt"
के लिए कोई सुझाव नहीं

होम पेज पर वापस जाएं

SHOPNOW NEW ARRIVAL ≡ ⋮

Safed Shirt   x ✓ 🔍

Safed Shirt
Safed Shirt **for men**
Safed Shirt **full half collar**
Safed Shirt **blue pant**
Safed Shirt **5 for men for low price**

GREAT
SALE
HAPPINESS COMES HOME
THIS FESTIVE SEAASON

WELCOME TO SHOPMART
BEST SELLER

Methodology

Research design (getting up close with indian language users)

PHASE 1
PRE-TASK DIARY

3 days of pre-task information collected via digital diary **to get a good sense of their digital usage** and **typical areas of interest on the internet**
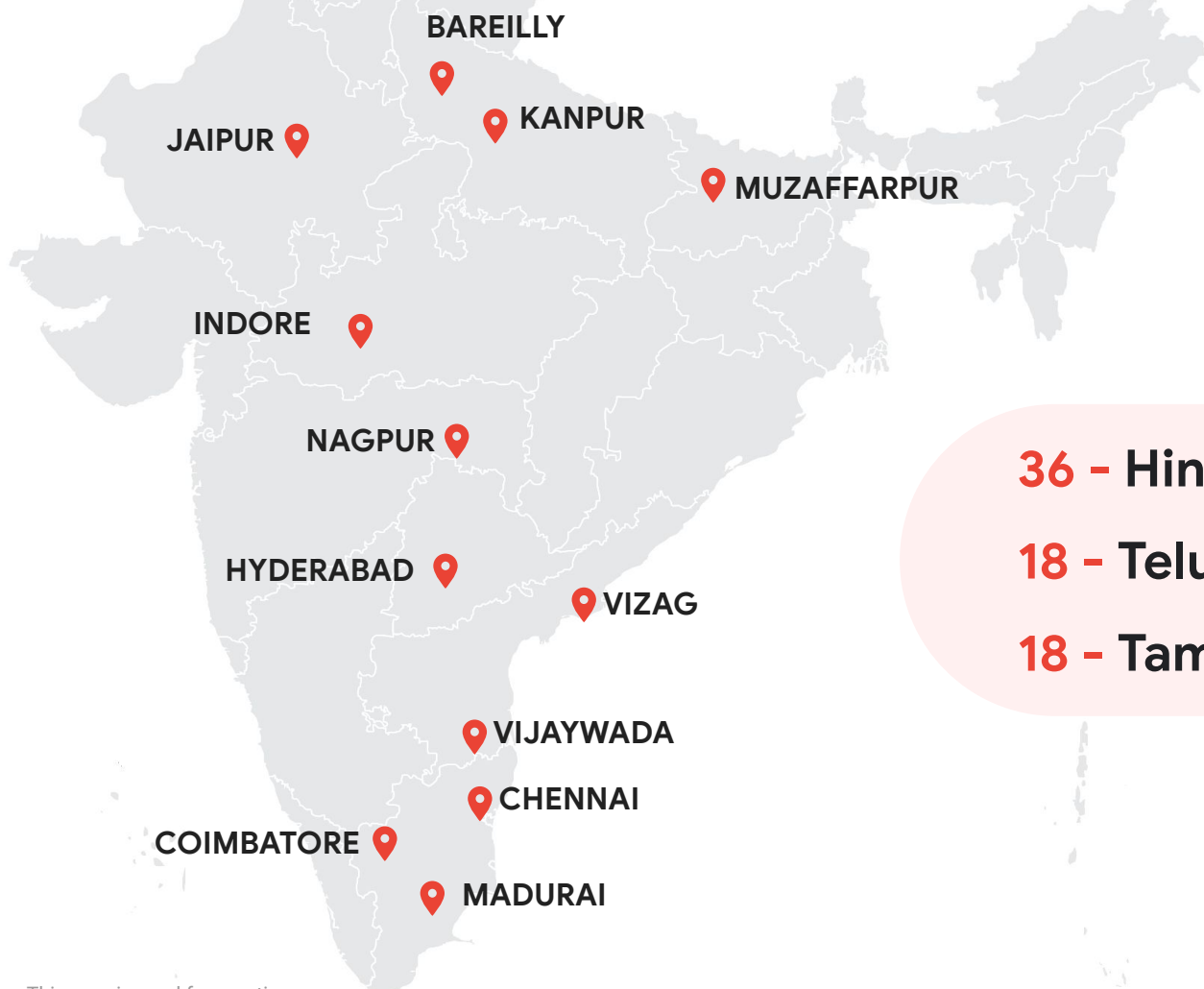
PHASE 2
USABILITY TESTING

Digital **1-on-1 Depth Interviews** with the respondent **to capture their real time interaction** with Indic sites of their interests in terms of **language, navigation, conversion & challenges** around them
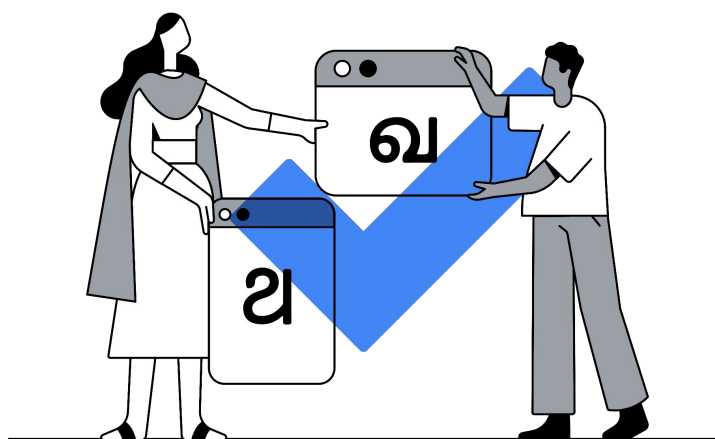
PHASE 3
INSIGHTS INTO PLAYBOOK

Glean out data and sitting through an **elaborate iterative process** with a team of key stakeholders & researchers **to surface key challenges and solutions**

Sample Design and Target Group

- Smartphone Users - Own personal smartphone and use multiple times in a day

- Uses Google Search in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. Predominantly uncomfortable with English search options

- Intender for the category recruited for - Mix of serious intender (looking to buy in the next 3-6 months) vs casual intenders (interested in the category)

- Those who shop online with or without assistance from family members

- Non-rejecters of exploring new apps

BAREILLY

KANPUR

JAIPUR

MUZAFFARPUR

INDORE

NAGPUR

36 - Hindi

HYDERABAD

VIZAG

18 - Telugu

18 - Tamil

VIJAYWADA

CHENNAI

COIMBATORE

MADURAI

Disclaimer: This map is used for creative representation only, and is not intended to be used for reference purposes.

UX Playbook for Indian Languages

Think with Google