Local Language Internet Users in India

A Report
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1. Executive Summary

The use of the Internet in India continues to grow rapidly. India features among the top 2 countries of the world in terms of internet user base. However, English continue to be the key language dominating Internet in India. This trend is changing though and the usage of Internet in local languages is witnessing some sort of growth amongst both the urban and rural users.

- As of December 2015, number of local language internet users in India was around 175 million. Of these, urban India accounted for 105 Mn and rural India accounted for 70 million.

- Penetration of local language internet users at an all India level is 50%. Rural India witnessed a penetration of around 60% while it is 45% in urban India.

- Urban users of local language were largely from small metros, non-metros and smaller towns and rural users are from lower SEC groups - R2, R3, R4,R5

- Internet users prefer to use local language for social networking & online communication and for accessing News (especially local news).

- Lack of Internet in local language has been a key barrier to the adoption of Internet amongst the Internet non owners. To get these Internet non owners into the Internet bandwagon, the local language will play a very critical role. As a matter of fact, about 53% of Internet non owners have indicated that they will start using the Internet if it has content available in local language.

- Between 2013 and 2015 the number of local language users in India has grown at CAGR 34%. Going by this growth rate another 60 million local language internet users are likely to be added by the end of 2016.
2. Local Language Internet Users in India

The use of the Internet in India is set to grow rapidly. As of December 2015, there are about 351 million active Internet users in India of which Urban India accounts for 234 million, while close to 117 million users are from rural India.

Given the diversity that exists within the country, the India’s Internet market will have a uniquely Indian flavour, making local content development and innovation particularly important.

As of December 2015, India had about 175 Million Internet users who also accessed Internet content in local language. Of these, urban India accounted for 105 million and rural India accounted for 70 million.

3. Penetration of Local Language Internet Users

Amongst all Internet users in India, 50% of these users also accessed Internet in local languages other than English language. This is a fairly high number in terms of sheer usage and indicates the intention to create and consume local language content. A higher usage of local language was observed
in Rural India where the penetration was at 60% while the penetration was 45% for urban India.

4. Trends in adoption of Local Language Internet & future

Between 2013 and 2015 the number of local language users in India has grown at CAGR 34%. Going by this growth rate another 60 million local language internet users are likely to be added by the end of 2016.

5. Profiles of the Local Language Internet Users - Urban

Smaller towns definitely drive the local language adoption with a higher proportion of Internet users in these town classes using local language on the Internet for some reason or the other.
Interestingly, there is no significant difference between genders with respect to local language usage on Internet indicating that the preference of using local language is largely gender agnostic.

By age segments, majority of these users belong to higher age categories 24 years and above.

By SEC group higher number of users from urban India belongs to SEC B and C.

6. Profiles of the Local Language Internet Users – Rural
In rural India, the usage of local language internet seems to be much more prevalent. Apart from a relatively low 46% penetration in R1 segment, all other SEC segments show a high penetration of local language Internet.
Unlike urban, there does exist a much wider difference by gender in terms of adoption of local language in rural India. Also, higher age group continue to drive local language adoption with higher adoption observed amongst the 31 years and above age segment.
7. Applications used in local languages

Communication is by far the biggest driver for usage of local language on Internet. This includes both social media apps and Instant messenger apps. Since the Internet usage is also driven by social networking and IM, there does seem to be a correlation between the Internet usage drivers and the local language drivers. The usage of local language in these applications is not limited to text but also includes video and music too.

Users also prefer to use local language applications to send E-Mails and to view online advertisements. It is therefore important for businesses that engage into digital communication of their products and services to showcase the same in local language.

Mostly these local language Apps are accessed in handheld devices – be it communication, reading news, searching or sharing emails.

8. Local Language Internet- a key motivator for internet non users

As India moves towards getting its next 200 Million users, it will be the local language that will drive adoption of Internet. Internet non users definitely believe that local language will
drive them to adopt Internet in the near future. More applications and higher awareness will be the key to driving local language usage and, thereby, get a larger set of the non-Internet population on the Internet bandwagon.

9. Way forward

Burgeoning smartphone and mobile internet usage in smaller towns and rural areas, and the potential for regional/localized apps are likely to offer a positive push in number of local language internet users in India in the coming days.

Among those who currently don’t use internet, around 53% have indicated that if internet contents are available in local languages, it will be a key motivator for them to start using an internet in the future.

Thus internet usage in local languages offers a bright prospect in future.
About IMRB International and IAMAI

About Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)

The Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI] is a young and vibrant association with ambitions of representing the entire gamut of digital businesses in India. It was established in 2004 by the leading online publishers, and in the last eleven years has come to effectively address the challenges facing the digital and online industry including mobile content and services, online publishing, mobile advertising, online advertising, ecommerce and mobile & digital payments among others.

Eleven years after its establishment, the association is still the only professional industry body representing the online and mobile VAS industry in India. The association is registered under the Societies Act and is a recognized charity in Maharashtra. With a membership of nearly 200 Indian and MNC companies, and offices in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, the association is well placed to work towards charting a growth path for the digital industry in India.

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About IMRB International

ETech Group | IMRB (a specialist unit of IMRB International) is a research based consultancy offering insights into IT, Internet, Telecom & Emerging Technology space.

Our continuous link with industry and a constant eye on the pulse of the consumer ensures that we can decode the movements of technology markets & consumers. To our clients we offer an understanding of the present market environment and a roadmap for the future.

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