

Rethinking readiness

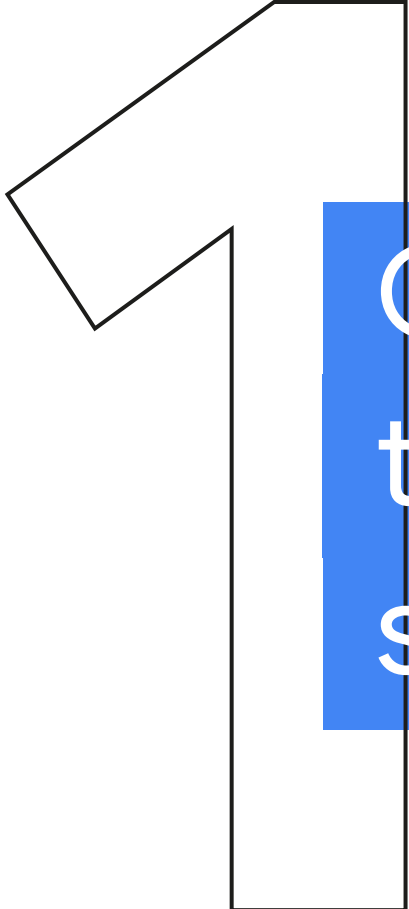
5 retail trends every marketer
should know for the year ahead

We're in a time of change like no other.

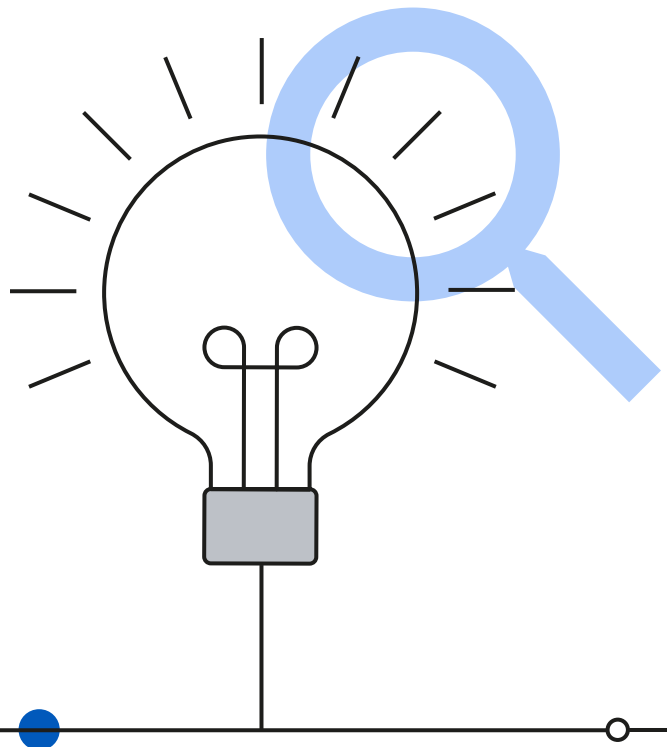
Gradual shifts in consumer behaviour [have accelerated](#), with many brands left scrambling to adapt to unpredictable shifts in demand. Consumers are shopping online more than ever before, and finding new ways to do it. Every day, we're faced with urgent decisions, and forced to make them in conditions of scarcity and uncertainty.

The key question at the start of a new year is: which of these behaviours will sustain in 2021? We've analysed thousands of retail Search trends from 23 countries¹ across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa on Google Trends to identify five key consumer trends that we predict will continue into 2021 and beyond.

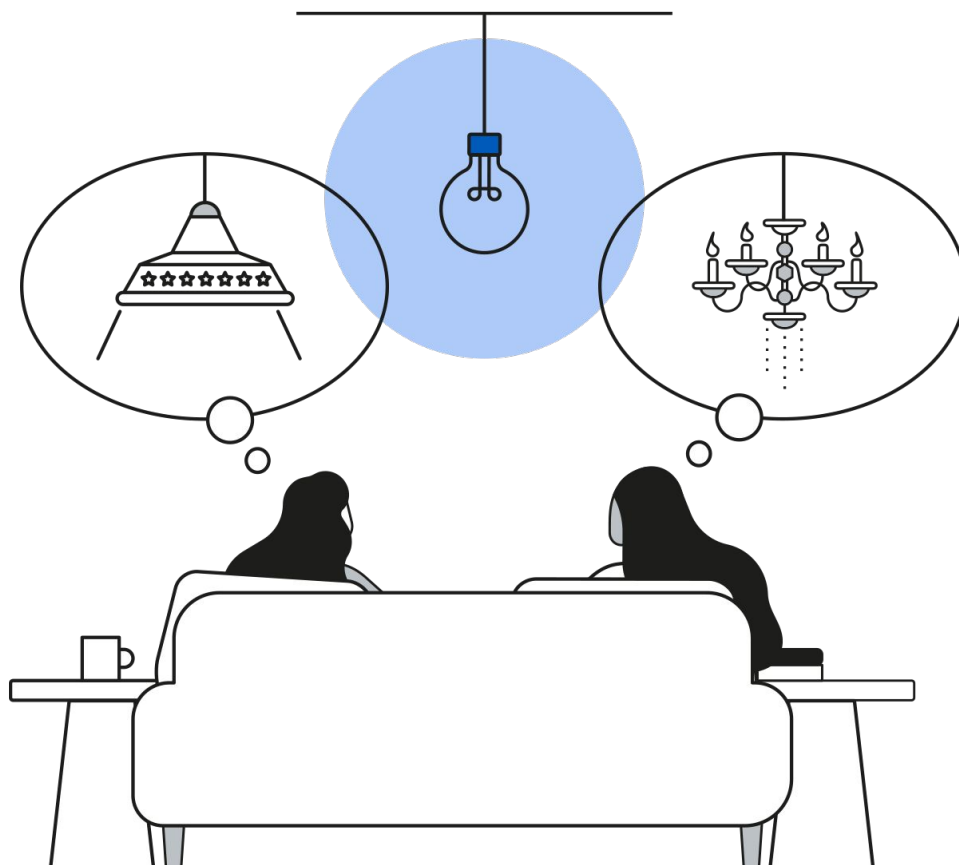
¹ Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UAE, Ukraine, United Kingdom.



Consumers are
taking window
shopping online



As continuing lockdowns make in-store browsing difficult in many countries, consumers are looking for alternative ways to get the window shopping experience. Global Search interest for 'ideas' paired with terms such as 'home decor' or 'DIY' spiked early in 2020, and consumers are continuing to browse online to look for inspiration.

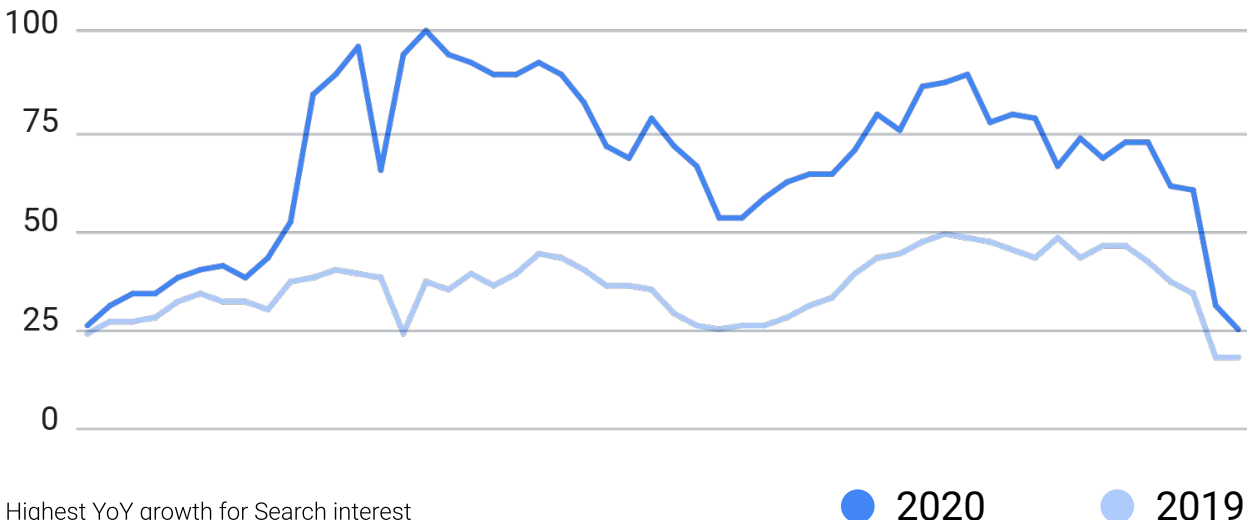


'design', Kenya **500%** peak growth²

'how-to', UAE **200%** peak growth²

‘идеи для’, (‘ideas for’), Russia **70% peak growth**²

As the purchase journey is changing, people are moving from searching for specific products to actively seeking inspiration online. While physical stores will reopen and the majority of consumer spend is still expected to be in-store over the next five years, this new online window shopping behaviour is set to continue, leaving consumers more open to changing brand preferences as they are exposed to alternative options.



Key takeaway

Show up when customers are exploring

The decision-making journey is becoming more complex as consumers continually add and then refine their options in the 'messy middle' of the online purchase journey. The approach to consider should be the same for retailers big and small: ensure brand presence online so your product or service is strategically front of mind while your customers explore.

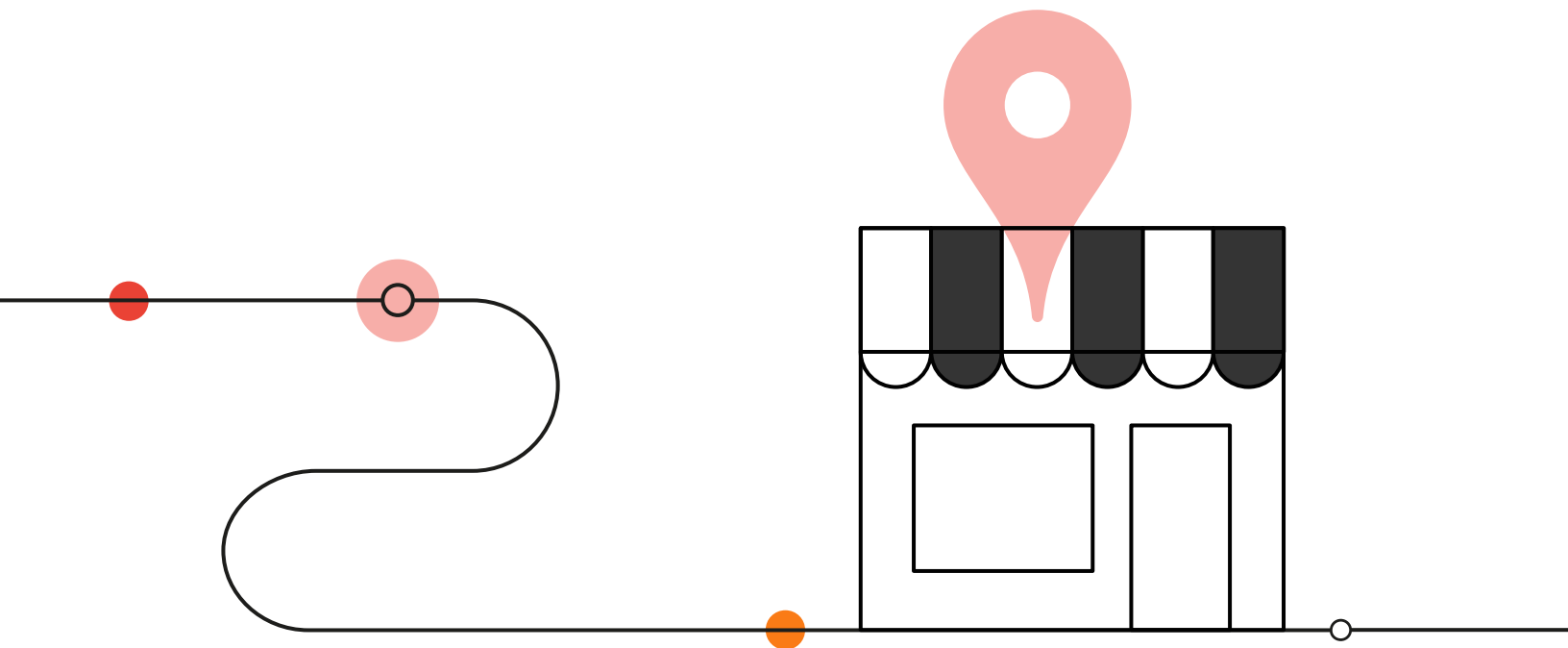
“Whether a business is large or small, an established or new brand, it will need to ensure it is not only discoverable, but gives consumers enough information — and inspiration — to nudge them towards a purchase”

Jonny Protheroe,

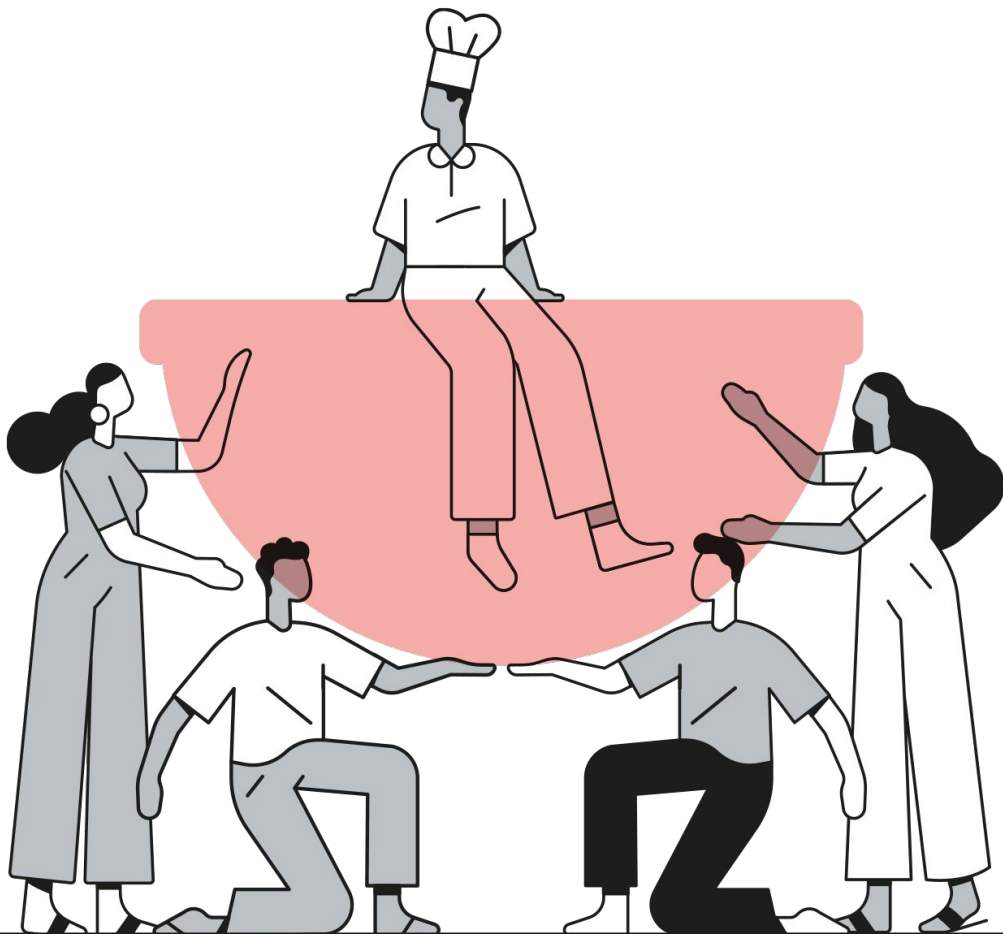
Market Insights EMEA, Google



Consumers are
carefully
considering who
they buy from



[‘Near me’](#) (shopping) searches remained strong throughout the last year — partly prompted by convenience, but also by a drive to support businesses that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Campaigns such as the U.K. government’s [Shop Local Week](#) and France’s [click and collect drive](#) reminded people of the need to support these businesses.



Q 'ethical brands', worldwide **300% peak growth**²

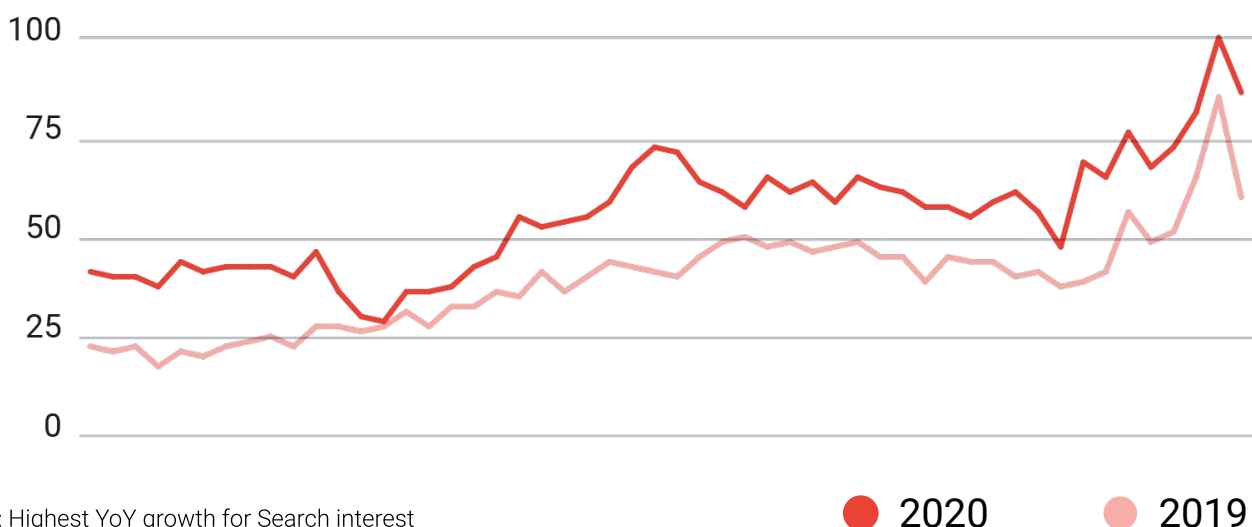
'sustainable fashion', the U.K **100% peak growth**²

'stores near me', South Africa **200% peak growth**²

'in der nähe', ('nearby'), Germany **200% peak growth**²

Consumers are increasingly aware of who they're buying from and consciously decide who to support. In addition to shopping more with local and small businesses, Search interest has increased for terms such as 'black owned business' and 'sustainability'. With consumers distrustful of empty virtue signalling, however, brands need to find authentic ways to incorporate social and environmental issues into their everyday work.

Q Google Search interest for 'near me', consumer electronics, worldwide



² Source: Highest YoY growth for Search interest in a single week. 2020 vs. 2019. Google Trends.

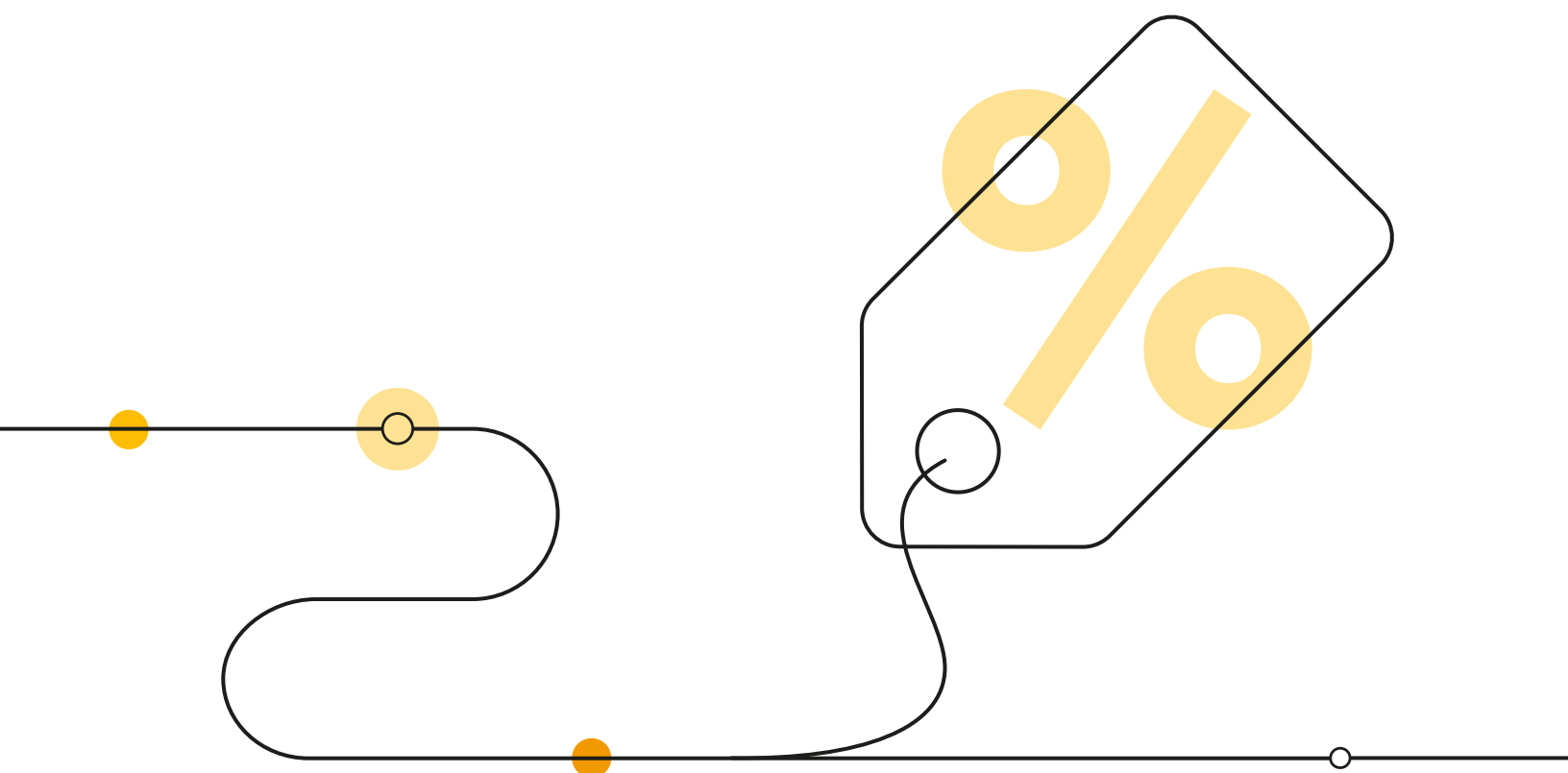
Key takeaway

Stand up for what you believe in

It's increasingly important for brands to be part of the conversation. While talking authentically and consistently about how your brand tackles these issues is key, talk also has to be backed by action.

What this means for 2021

With localism continuing to rise, and issues such as systemic inequality and sustainability becoming even more important as we begin 2021, it's important to find authentic ways to demonstrate what your brand stands for, and innovative ways to include consumers. For example, go beyond point-of-sale donations, and give customers the option to donate reward programme points to local nonprofits.



With people facing economic uncertainty, many are increasingly seeking out deals as they shop. This has led to a rise in Search interest for terms such as 'best' (consumer electronics) and 'promo code' (food & drink). Searches around [retailer name] + 'discount' have also risen, often in the late stages of the purchase journey after window shopping online.



Q 'online satış', ('online sales'), Turkey **100% peak growth²**

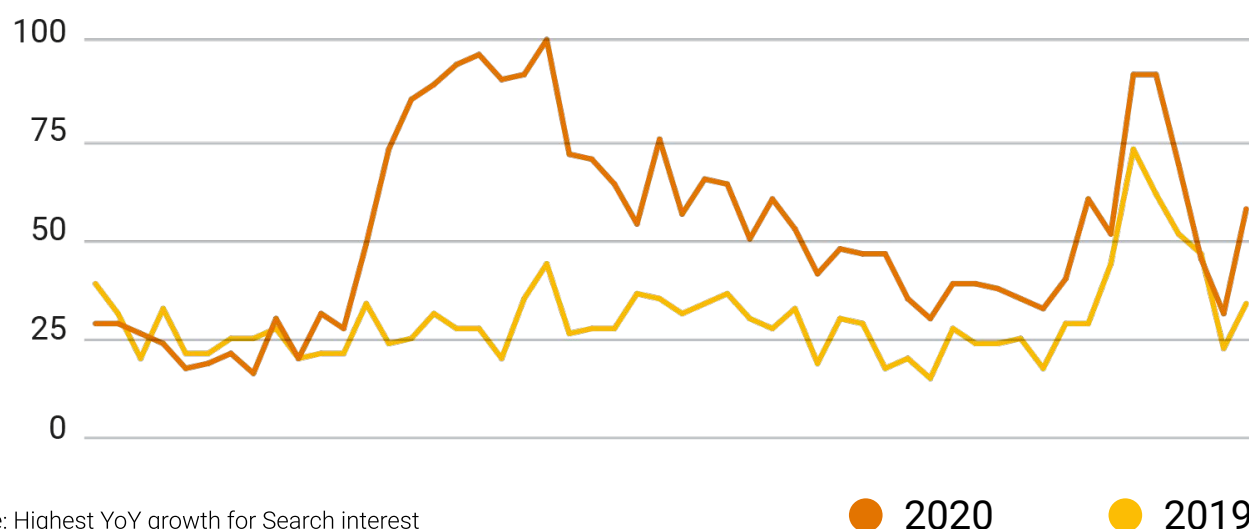
'migliori cuffie', ('best headphones'), Italy **100% peak growth²**

'bedst i test', ('best in testing'), Denmark **100% peak growth²**

'slevovy kod', ('discount code'), Czechia **200% peak growth²**

With comparisons only a click away online and promotional codes frequently available, discounts are becoming an expectation as much as a nice-to-have for online shoppers. And, as consumer expectations prove fluid across categories, expect to see consumers searching for discounts even in product categories where promo codes haven't traditionally been offered.

Q Google Search interest for 'promo code', home & garden, worldwide



² Source: Highest YoY growth for Search interest in a single week. 2020 vs. 2019. Google Trends.

Key takeaway

Offer added value to savvy shoppers

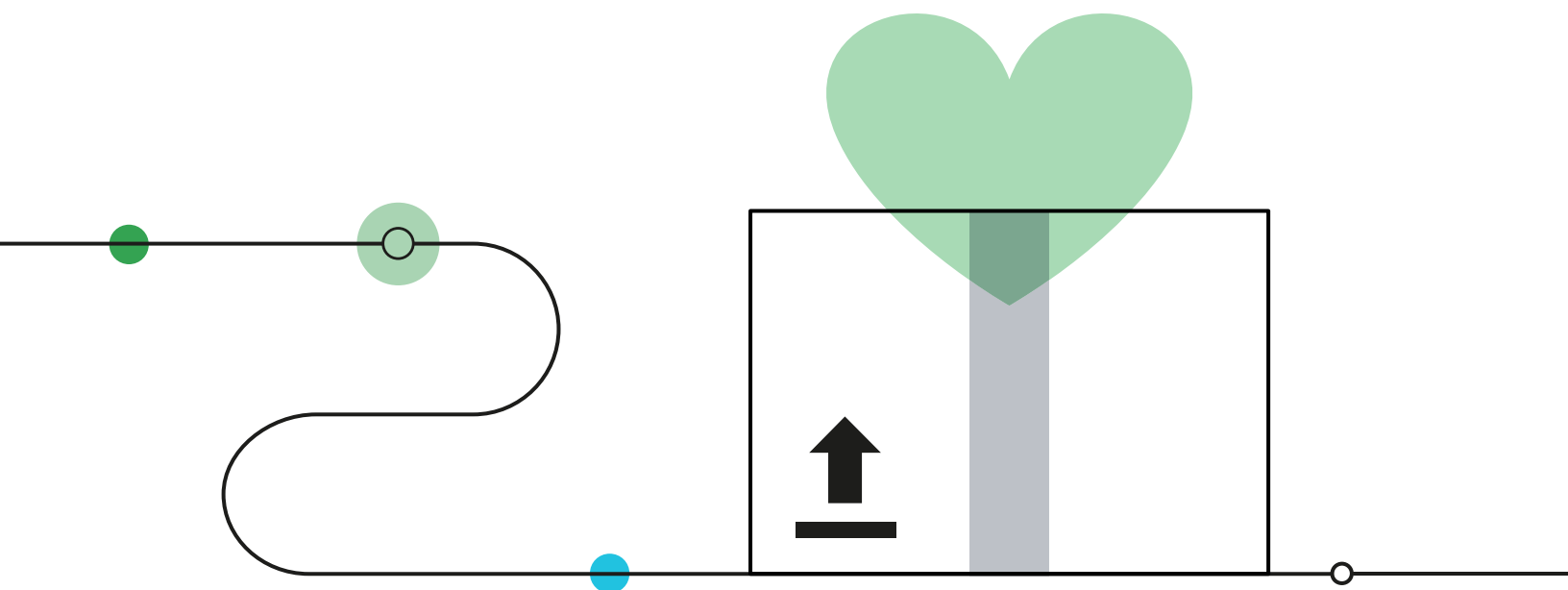
Make offers easy to find to streamline consumer decision-making. Also consider well-established behavioural biases such as [the power of free](#), particularly in the current climate. As online decision-making becomes even more complex, incentives like this can help consumers make their final decision to buy.

“As consumer expectations continue to be fluid, discounts won't be the only consideration — improved service, customer support, response time, and availability will be key across brands and product categories”

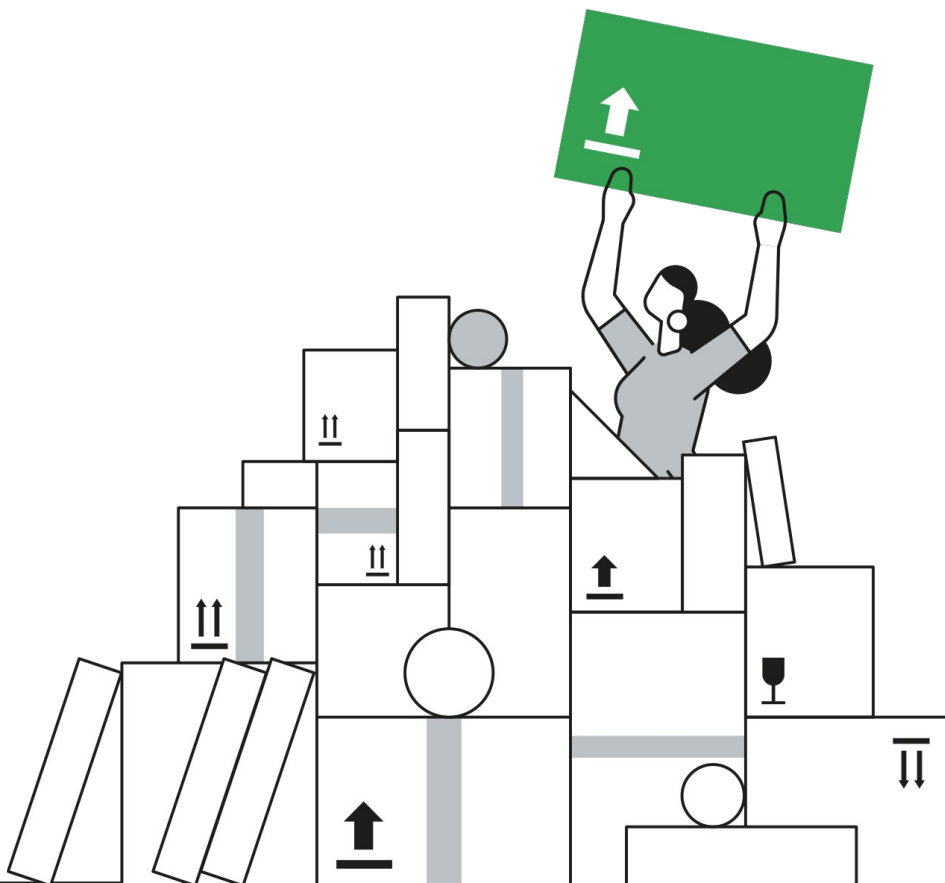
Debadeep Bandyopadhyay,
Market Insights EMEA, Google



Consumers
expect extensive
delivery options
for everything



Search interest for 'delivery' within expected categories is rising, with food & grocery [increasing by over 50%](#) at the end of 2020. But consumers are also increasingly expecting the same doorstep service for more niche items, including gifts and leisure items. Search interest in delivery options for 'dumbbells', 'balloons', and even 'compost' has seen a sustained increase.



Q 'sushi a domicilio', ('sushi delivery'), Spain **400% peak growth**²

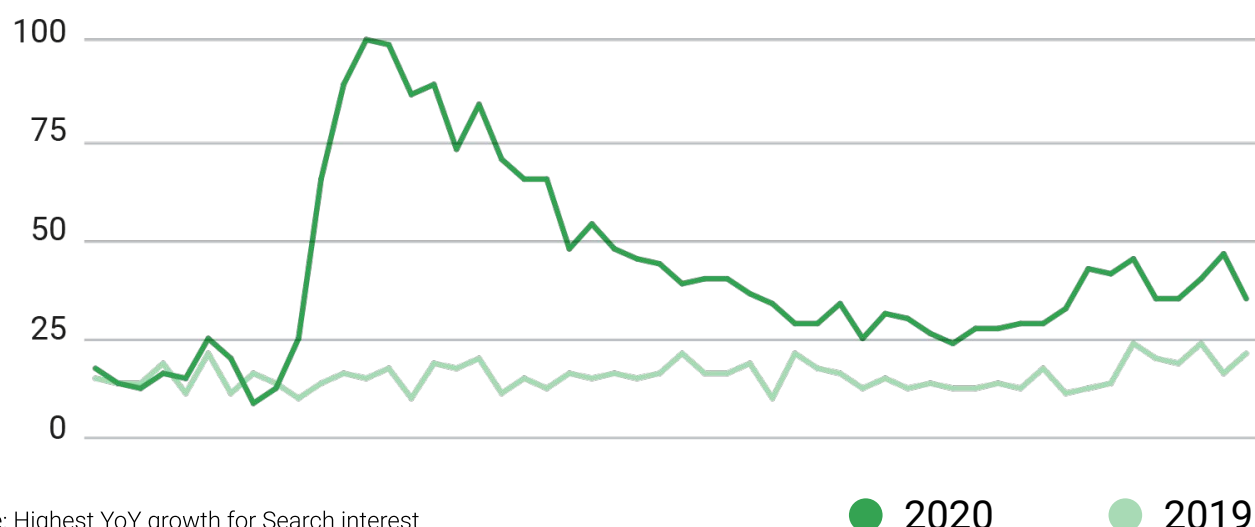
'משלוחי פרחים', ('flower delivery'), Israel **1000% peak growth**²

'livraison chocolat', ('chocolate delivery'), France **1000% peak growth**²

'vivaio consegna a domicilio', ('nursery home delivery'), Italy **1000% peak growth**²

Fluid consumer expectations across categories mean that brands are pivoting to serve new needs. For instance, restaurants are selling DIY meal kits, local pharmacies are delivering doorstep prescriptions, and lifestyle brands are creating personalised gift boxes. The baseline to meet these consumer expectations is offering a combination of delivery and curbside pick-up options.

Q Google search interest for 'delivery', 'pick up', 'curbside', beauty & fitness, worldwide



² Source: Highest YoY growth for Search interest in a single week. 2020 vs. 2019. Google Trends.

Key takeaway

Meet shifting consumer expectations

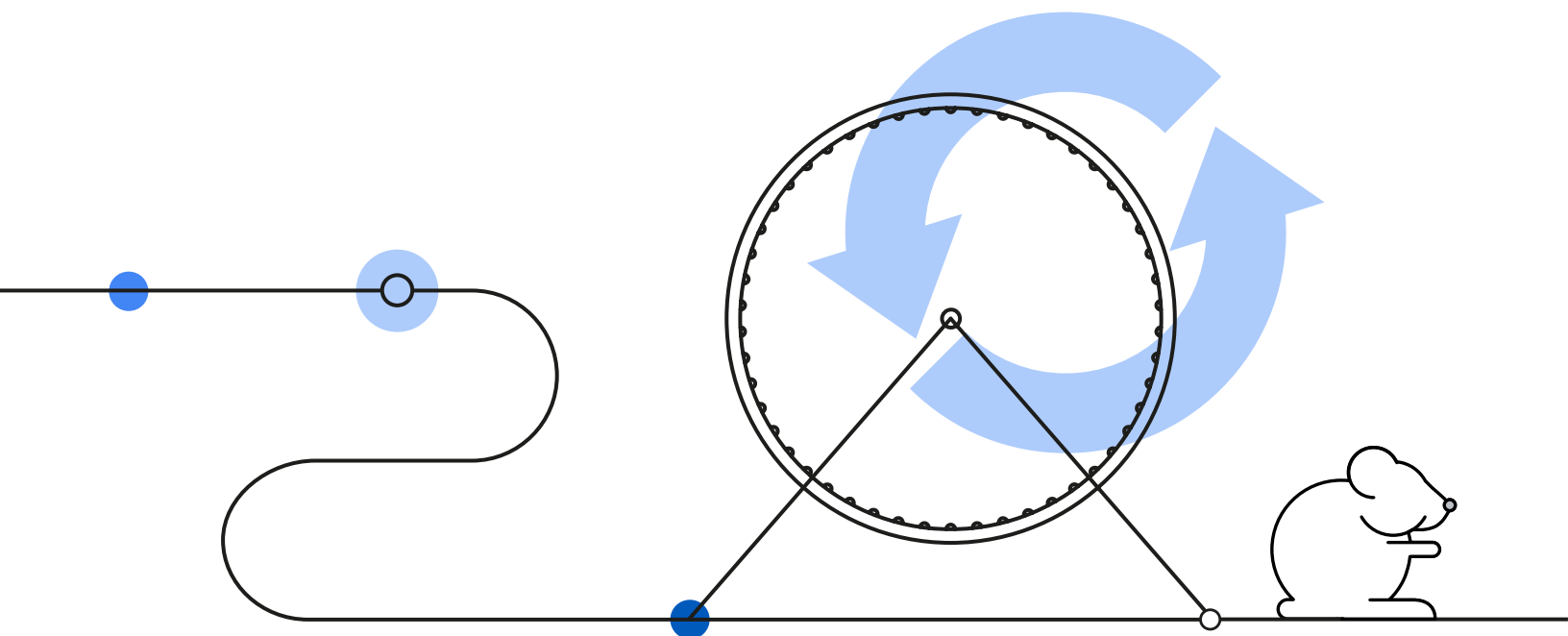
Users now expect their interactions with every brand to mirror the experience they receive from well-established, delivery-focused services. To meet these shifting needs, consider offering next-day delivery, allocated time slots, and easy pick-up for returns.

What this means for 2021

To easily evaluate your retail website and assess your delivery options, you can use Google's [Grow My Store](#) tool. With restrictions continuing, investing in alternative delivery options — such as local collection lockers — is a smart way to stay ahead of future needs, while highlighting convenience and safety for workers and consumers.



Consumer demand will remain dynamic



With lockdowns and uncertainty continuing across the globe, consumer needs will remain unpredictable. Search interest in ['toilet paper'](#) surged early in 2020 and then decreased. However, other trends, such as ['loungewear' overtaking 'smart casual'](#), have sustained. Brands will need to continue to keep pace with, and react to, this shifting demand.



Q 'poele a bois', ('wood stove'), France **70% peak growth**²

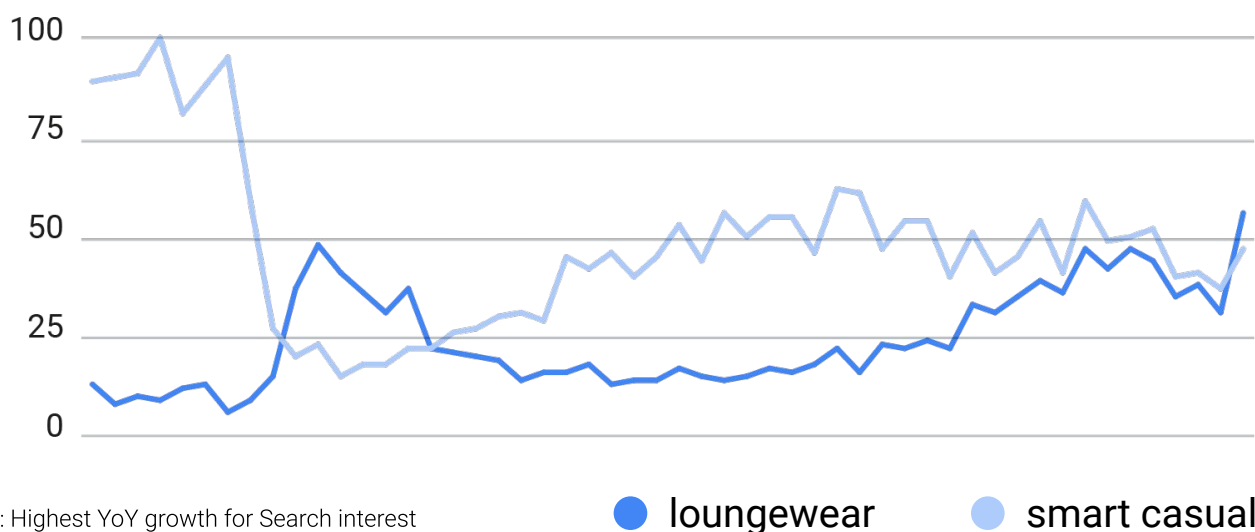
'electric scooter', Netherlands **100% peak growth**²

'hd smart led tv', Turkey **1000% peak growth**²

'kühlende kissen', ('cooling pillows'), Germany **1000% peak growth**²

As demand shifts over time, people will break long-established patterns and form new ones. In 2021 we predict that many of these new consumer needs will remain important. For example, businesses will continue to embrace a more fluid home-working culture and so consumers will increasingly invest in home luxuries to make their workspaces more comfortable.

Q Google search interest for 'loungewear' vs. 'smart casual', worldwide, 2020



² Source: Highest YoY growth for Search interest in a single week. 2020 vs. 2019. Google Trends.

Key takeaway

Let data inform your product strategy

With spikes in demand remaining unpredictable, use insights from [Google Trends](#) and [Rising Retail Categories](#) to stay ahead.

Also consider automation tools such as [Smart Bidding](#), which can help you keep pace with both large and small shifts in demand in real time.

“The longer the pandemic and restrictions continue, the more new consumer habits will become entrenched — meaning that investing in measures to respond will pay off in the long term”

Pablo Pérez,

Market Insights EMEA, Google



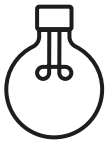
How to be ready for 2021

Key shifts in consumer behaviour will persist as needs continue to shift rapidly. Every business — big or small — has to balance the need for long-term planning with responding in the moment to changes in demand. With that in mind, our key recommendations are:

Be ready for 2021

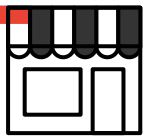
2021

1



Show up throughout the purchase journey with clear information on products, availability, and offers.

2



Give shoppers a reason to support you by making your stance on sustainability, local ties, or key issues clear – and find authentic ways to follow through.

3



Nudge customers over the line by offering extra value for loyalty, especially as searches around [retailer] + 'discount' rise.

4



Offer a range of delivery or collection options to make the purchasing experience as convenient as possible.

5



Prepare for rapid, short-term shifts in demand with automated tools, while adapting to longer-term changes in the consumer landscape by considering your overall digital strategy.



Think with Google