Truth seekers

4

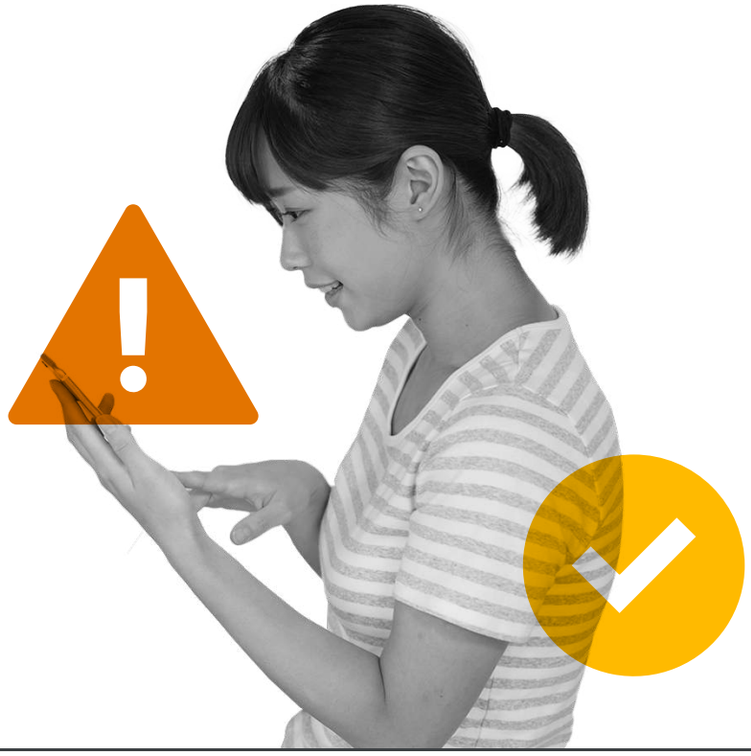
With online misinformation and data breaches on the rise, consumers are more skeptical than ever. **Wary of**

being misled and savvier about their choices, they're also more proactive about finding trustworthy sources, using Search to fact-check claims, scrutinize brand values, and ensure authenticity from the brands they choose to engage with.

In 2021, the pandemic further exposed the dangerous consequences of misinformation, spurring governments across the region to enact “fake news” laws. At the same time, the public has become more aware of the spread of false information, with 86% in APAC expressing worries about fake news.[33] Consumers, especially Gen Zers, are now more conscious about the mix of both facts and misinformation that can be found online.[34] People are not only savvier about what they see on the internet, but are also willing to proactively seek out accurate information on their own terms.

Searches reflect these growing anxieties, with consumers looking for ways to guard against the increasing pervasiveness of fraud and scams. As data breaches reached an all-time high in 2021,[35] searches related to privacy also continued to rise alongside people's growing concerns about their digital safety.

With truth-seeking behaviors becoming more of a consumer habit, we see shoppers willing to invest more of their time and resources to ensure the choices they make align with their value systems and beliefs. Rising searches for sustainable practices and ethical shopping reflect how consumers have a lower tolerance for being misled, and are setting the bar higher for brands, holding them closely accountable for any claims that they make.



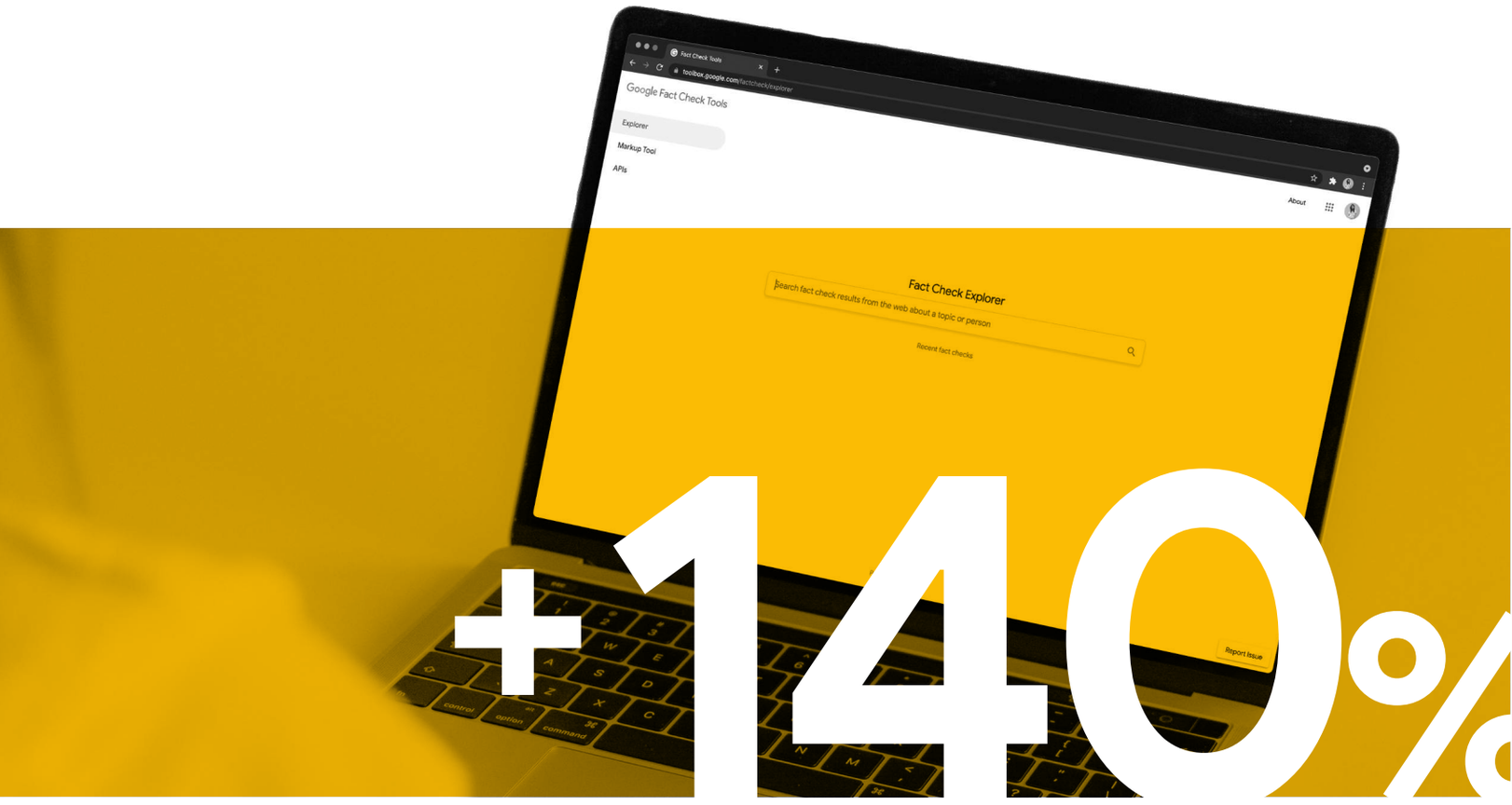
Consumers today don’t just check the list of ingredients on a label, they want brands to be accountable and transparent at every step of their value chain, including sourcing, production, and corporate sustainability policies. Regardless of how much they trust a brand, consumers across all age groups will conduct extensive research prior to making their purchases.[36] Instead of simply hoping that brands will be true to their word, consumers now expect brands to take proactive steps towards earning and keeping their trust.

This means that for brands, getting ahead of transparency, focusing on authenticity, and ensuring two-way continuous communication with their customers has become more important than ever.

SEARCHES

Fact-checking, fighting fraud, and protecting privacy

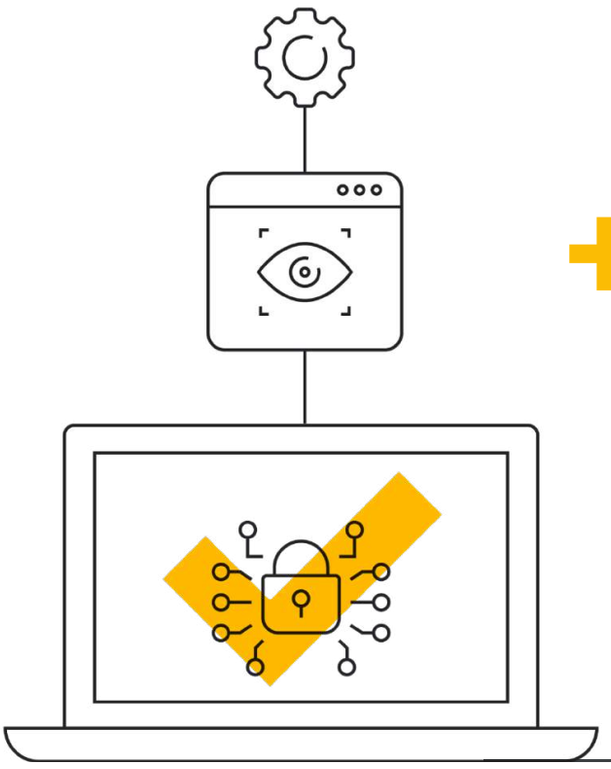
Searches show consumers increasingly concerned about misinformation and privacy, especially compared to pre-COVID times.[37] In 2021, 87% of APAC consumers say it is now more important to find a trusted source of information, compared with before the pandemic started.[38]



Many APAC countries have seen an increase in search interest related to misinformation, fact-checking, and fake news like is it true, menyanggah (debunk), legit and fact check with up to 140% growth coming from the Philippines, India, Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia.

+35%

Searches about frauds and scams have grown by up to 35% in India, Vietnam, Taiwan, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. Indonesia saw an 80% rise in search interest in fake vitamins as people become less willing to compromise on quality when it comes to their health and bodies.



+40%

Interest in Information Privacy has grown by more than 40% in Hong Kong.

Savvier value systems

As consumers grow more entrenched in their belief systems, they're making sure that the brands they choose also share the same higher purpose. Searches are continuing to rise for topics like sustainability and ethics, while more than half of the consumers have stopped buying products or services that have a negative impact on the environment and society.[39]

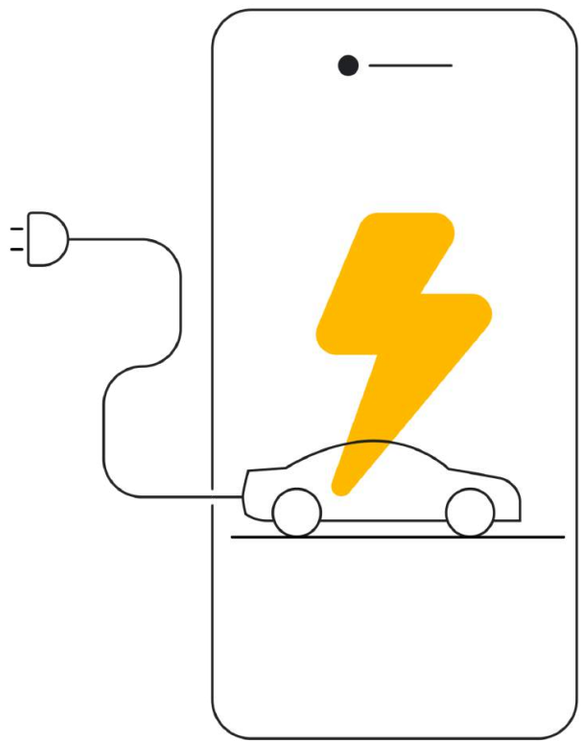
Ethical practices are increasingly important to consumers, with search interest in fairtrade growing by 15% in India, cruelty-free growing by up to 65% in New Zealand and Indonesia, and South Korea showing increasing concern for 멸종 위기 동물 (endangered animals) with 50% growth in searches.

+25%

Interest in sustainability continues to see more than 25% growth across Asia,[40] with **recycling** growing by up to 25% in Hong Kong and South Korea, カーボン ニュートラル (carbon neutral) growing by over 1950% in Japan, **environmentally friendly** and **biodegradable** growing by more than 15% in Indonesia, and the Philippines seeing more than 85% growth in search interest in **renewable resources**.

+70%

Searches for electric cars and bikes have increased across APAC, with India, Singapore, New Zealand, Pakistan, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan all seeing more than 70% growth.



Consumer demands for reassurance

Consumers today expect to be reassured along their shopping journeys. Authenticity is a key issue on marketplaces for 31% of shoppers surveyed,[41] and we see increasing searches for delivery tracking and official stores of popular brands.

As demand for authenticity increases, there has been up to 80% growth in customers searching for a brand's official store in countries like Pakistan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, and Singapore.

+80%

Hong Kong saw 15% growth in search interest in 評價 (reviews).

+15%

With an increase in deliveries, delivery tracking has become more essential. We see a 75% increase in search interest in delivery tracking in India, and Malaysia has the highest concentration of searches for **delivery tracking** in the world.

+75%

MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Trust as brand equity

Rising misinformation and record-breaking data breaches have put consumers on high alert, sharpening their values and lowering their tolerance for anything misleading. As a result, **trust is now a brand's most important asset**. Customers expect

proactive transparency and authenticity at a minimum.

> **Edelman**
> Trust, the new brand equity
>
> "Brands need to be for the people, and guided by the people. Why? Because brand trust ranks higher than brand love."

1 Act intentionally and respectfully to protect people's privacy and earn trust

When users have clear choice and control over their data, they're happy to share it with businesses they trust. However, just 30% of APAC marketers have a dedicated strategy to communicate with consumers about data privacy.[42] It's time to consider how you can prioritize your users' privacy concerns to earn their trust.

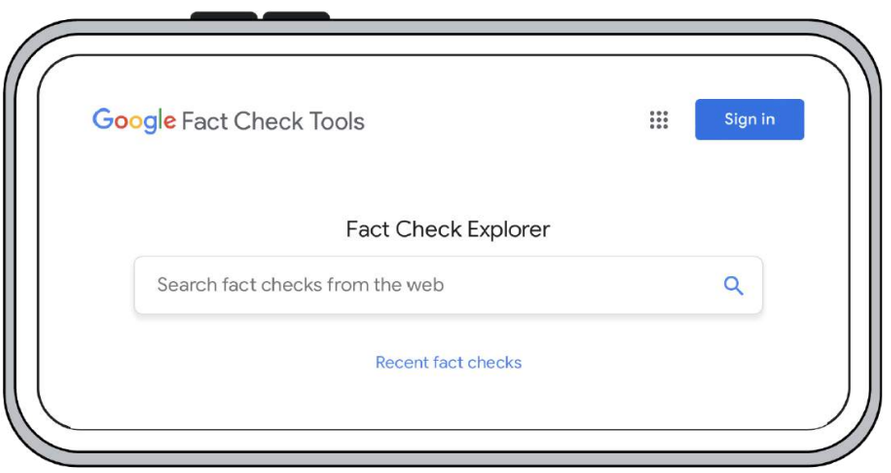
Use first-party data responsibly and effectively to find the right balance between privacy and the personalized interactions that consumers prefer.
Check out our marketer's playbook for privacy to deliver performance in a privacy-safe way and learn what industry leaders across APAC think about the region's key data privacy trends and how to create a privacy-first ecosystem.

2

Prepare your digital ads ecosystem for a future without third-party cookies.
Explore privacy-preserving strategies that fuel continued business growth by allowing companies to reach people with relevant ads and measure results without needing to track people across the web.

3

Educate and empower your customers to protect themselves against misinformation, scams, and fakes.
With 68% of online shoppers in Southeast Asia rating "guarantee of product authenticity" as very important,[43] consider ways you can offer them this needed reassurance.

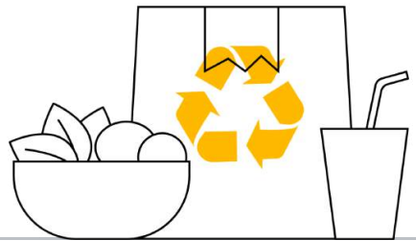


In 2021, Google launched the About This Result feature, which provides details about a website before users visit it, including whether the source is trusted and whether a user's connection to the site is secure. Google's Fact Check Explorer also helps counter falsehoods and reduce misinformation online.

2 Hold your whole business accountable and get ahead of the conversion

When it comes to building trust, brands cannot afford to cut corners. As consumers feel increasingly empowered to hold brands accountable to their claims, earning and keeping trust requires consistent, authentic, and proactive communication.

Consider the full implications of your company values on every part of your value chain.



Since April 2021, Singapore-based SaladStop has been listing the carbon footprint of its meals, making it the first restaurant chain in Asia to do so. The labels, which are displayed on the brand's menus, take into account farming practices, land usage and water wastage, among other factors.[44]

Expand the definition of what it means to be sustainable by considering the carbon footprint of your digital actions. Through Google Cloud Carbon Footprint, you can take action to evaluate and reduce the footprint of your carbon workloads.

Sources:
All Google Search data points included in this report are from Google Trends, Sep 2019 - Aug 2020 vs. Sep 2020 - Aug 2021, unless otherwise indicated.

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