Lives reexamined

2

Following the sudden disruptions of the pandemic, Malaysians emerged in 2021 with a realization that some changes weren’t temporary after all. This prompted a sense of introspection and a reevaluation of their values and lifestyle choices. As a result, Malaysians looked for more comfort and ease in their lives, and shifted their focus to the things that matter most to them.

As Malaysians try to embrace new unknowns in their lives, they're reexamining their lifestyle choices and the comfort of established routines. The pandemic has resulted in significant shifts in consumers' priorities as they focus more on spending time with loved ones and their own physical and emotional wellbeing.

In 2021, two in five Malaysians began exercising more, and 65% of respondents surveyed made healthier changes to their diet.[2] Indeed, holistic wellbeing is predicted to be a key focus for people in 2022.

Searches are showing how people take stock of their lives and assess whether their choices align with what truly matters to them. Evidence of this shift is seen in the “Great Resignation,” a global trend where a significant number of people are leaving their jobs voluntarily. In 2021, 61% of Malaysian workers reported planning to find new jobs.[3] The same study found that Malaysians now prioritize better pay, greater recognition, and more career development opportunities.

Such significant, widespread shifts in life priorities among consumers should be studied closely by brands. The changing core values and priorities of people are often a strong indicator of how they will behave as consumers. But it's not just customers that businesses need to care about. Given how many people are reassessing their careers in Malaysia, employee satisfaction and wellbeing should be top priorities for attracting and retaining top talent.

As people spring-clean their lives, there's a window of opportunity for businesses to reconnect and convince. How can you persuade your customers and employees to continue to make your brand a part of their new lives? How will you show the value your brand can bring to their newfound priorities?

SEARCHES

Acceptance of a blended life

Even as restrictions ease, it seems a blended way of living is likely to remain. Signs point to a semi-remote future of work. According to Accenture, APAC is readier than other regions to adopt a hybrid working model. Searches in Malaysia reflect this adaptation to a more flexible future as people begin taking charge of their own time and space, particularly at home.

People are upgrading their homes as they accept a more permanent blended way of work and life. Search interest in indoor bicycles grew by 25%, and search interest in electricity saving rose by up to 60% as people look for longer-term ways to lessen the toll of stay-at-home life on their electricity bills.

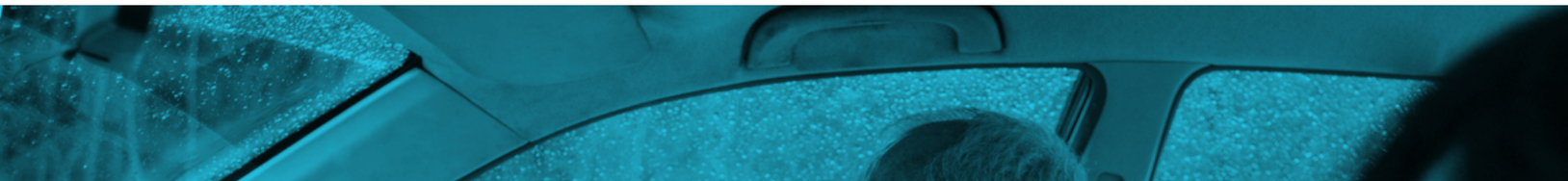
Reevaluation of finances

We see people changing the way they look at their finances. While some looked for ways to put their savings to work through investments, others searched for deals, discounts, and ways to stretch their dollar. Ahead of 2021's holiday season, most shoppers planned to either buy less or hold off on buying gifts until they were on sale, due to COVID-19's impact on their finances.

Searches for deals have grown in Malaysia with search interest in redeem code increasing by 310% and search interest in voucher rising by 25%.

+35%

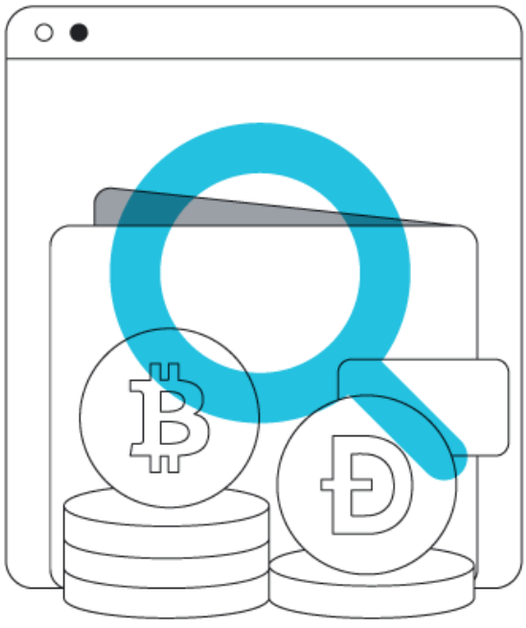
Search interests in investments have grown, with 35% increase in how to invest 15% rise in what is stock and 25% growth in unit trust



As people look for more economical ways to get around the high costs of owning a car, search interest in car share grew by 55%.

+150%

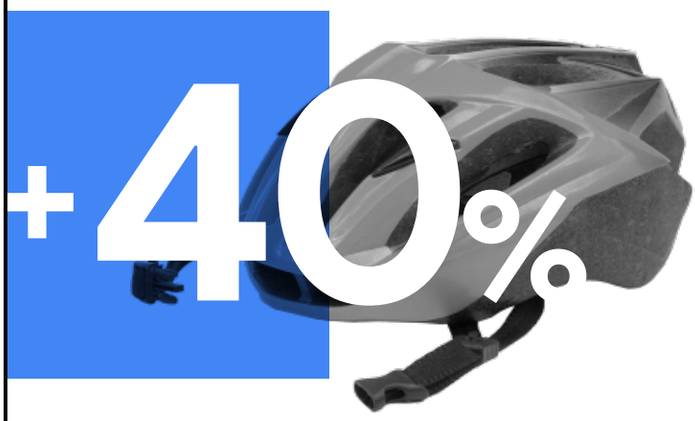
Search interests related to cryptocurrency, including bitcoin price and dogecoin rose by 150%.



Quality time with loved ones

Malaysians have placed more value on spending time with their families, and some even see it as more important than being financially secure or successful. This is echoed in their searches online, with consumers looking for moments of quality time with their loved ones.

Search interests in relationship with family grew 40% and family activity rose 30%.



Search interest in vacation grew by 50%, including search interest in family travel

Search interest in pets grew more than 40% as people seek to add furry family members to their household.

+40%

+110%

Search interest in dine in increased by 110% as pandemic restrictions eased and Malaysians looked to treat themselves and their loved ones to a nice meal out.

Self-care, introspection, and the

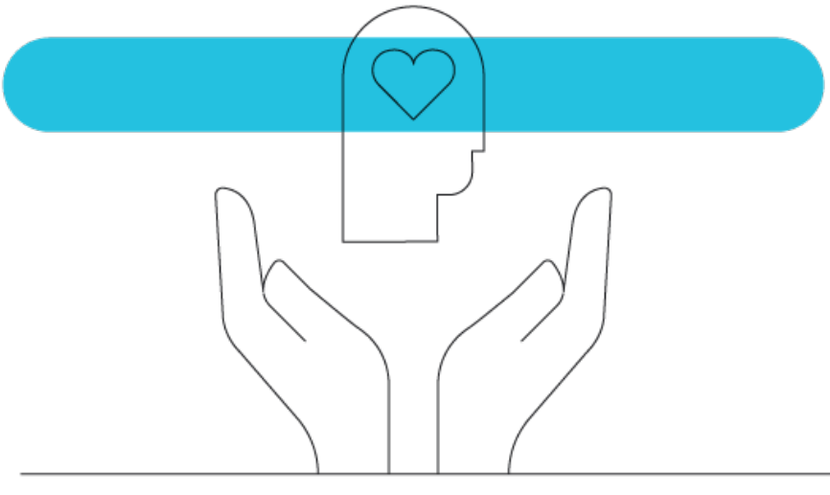
reevaluation of lifestyle choices

Malaysian consumers today view wellness through a broader lens, valuing physical, emotional, and mental health. As people reevaluate their lifestyle choices, we see introspection and consideration for holistic wellness playing a bigger role in their decision-making processes.

Search interest in flexible jobs has grown by more than 25%, and search interests in how to resign and resignation email increased by up to 20%.

+25%

+115%



Searches related to self-awareness and self-care, including search interests in mental health journal self love and self improvement grew by up to 115%.

+125%

Search interest in wellness including mental wellness and meditation music rose by up to 125%.

As Malaysians seek ways to manage their mental health, search interests related to mental health , for example, anxiety simptom (anxiety symptoms) and psychologist near me grew by up to 35%.

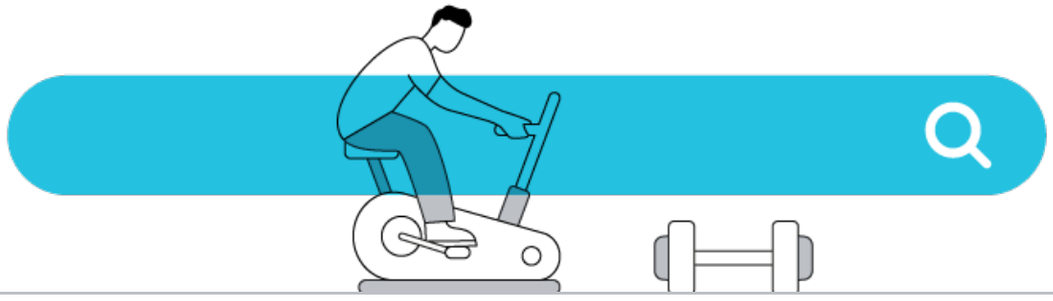
+55%

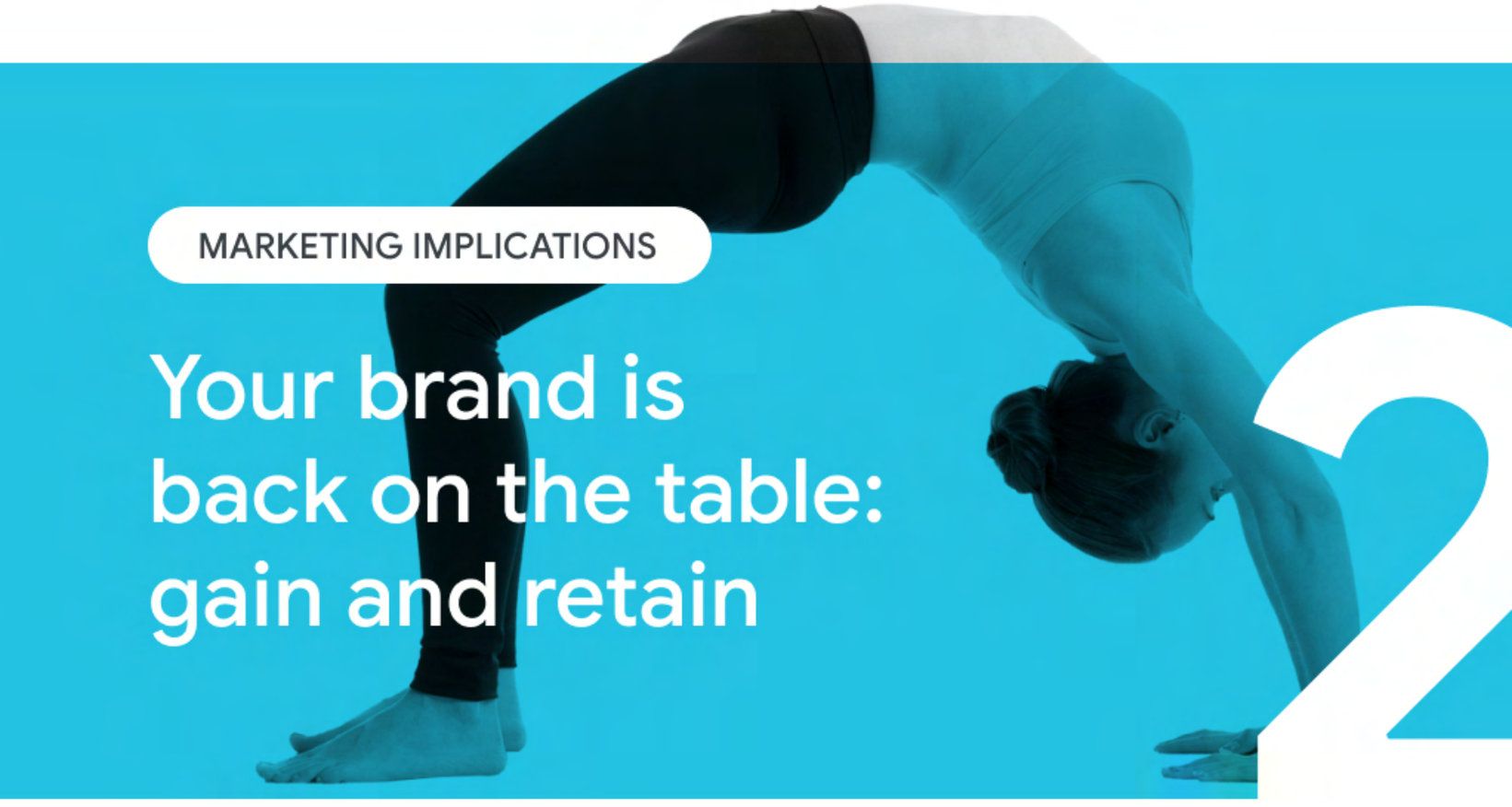
People are prioritizing quality over price, with search interest in terbaik untuk (best for) rising by 55% while search interest in paling murah (cheapest) declines.

Search interest in vitamins grew by up to 30%.

+120%

Search interests related to exercises and home workouts, such as stationary bicycle home gym and senaman (exercise), grew by up to 120%.





MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Your brand is back on the table: gain and retain

2

From reactive behaviors and short-term solutions, to a greater acceptance of our new blended lives, searches show that people are emerging from the pandemic with updated priorities. As people reevaluate their choices, **brands and businesses should also be updating how they show the value they can offer**, not just externally to their customers, but also internally to their employees.

Simon Kahn
Vice President, Marketing for Google APAC

"The next decade will be defined by a state of accelerated disruption. In order to enable people in the region to achieve better, more equitable outcomes in the face of increasing disruptions, businesses need to stay curious and cultivate a desire to understand what works and, more importantly, what doesn't to uncover and refine an understanding of users' true needs."

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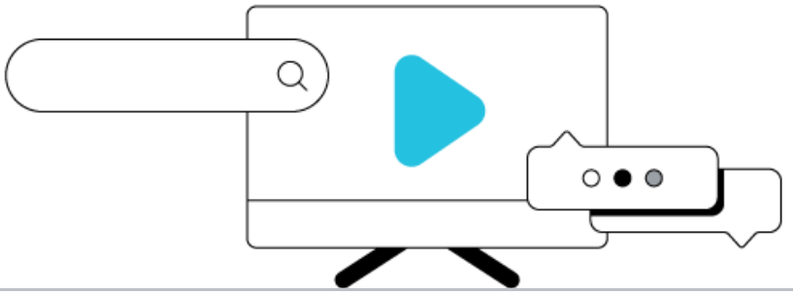
1 Ensure your brand makes the list as consumers reevaluate their options

Today, as shoppers look for the brands that best align with what they need and value, up to 75% are buying from newly discovered brands rather than familiar ones. As consumers look to be empowered and confident about their purchase decisions, Search ranks as a top touchpoint for providing them with relevant and helpful information.

1

Tap into the power of Search and automation to grow your brand's discoverability.

Fifteen percent of queries every day are brand new searches. By broadening your keyword match type to Broad Match with Smart Bidding, you're able to automatically adjust your campaigns to capture the different ways consumers are looking for your products, and act on new opportunities as they arise.



When consumers research, they don't always have a specific product in mind yet. Responsive Search Ads can put your product in the spotlight with personalized ads that are relevant to the shopper. For example, KFC Malaysia managed to boost direct orders by 40% using responsive search ads to create the most relevant combination of ad copies and improve overall ad effectiveness.

Mindvalley, a global education company based in Malaysia, wanted to further optimize its Search campaigns. It used automation tools to increase budget flexibility across different keywords and multiple campaigns, and become more agile and responsive to seasonal changes in consumer demand. It successfully netted a 28% increase in ROI and 2X leads and sales conversions.

2

Create data-driven marketing cycles to keep up with evolving needs.

An adaptable advertising strategy allows you to act on what matters most to consumers in the moment, and adopt a test and learn approach for sustainable optimization.

Rising Retail Categories and Google Trends show you what the world is searching for at both a local and global level.

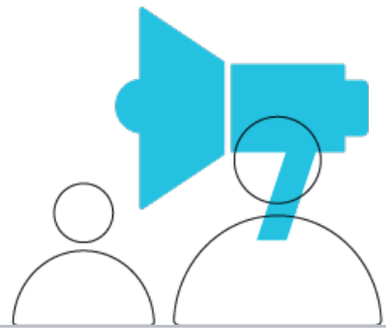
With the new Insights Page in Google Ads, you can forecast and capture demand with insights tailored to your ads business and identify product offering growth opportunities.

An example in the region is how leading online travel agents in Indonesia weathered 2021's uncertainty by catering to evolving consumer needs with new products that went beyond their core travel offerings. The new launches included Traveloka Eats (food vouchers and delivery), Paylater (installment payment program), Tiket Homes (house rental), and Tiket To-do (recreational activities).

2 Use direct-to-consumer strategies to own your brand presence and experiences

Consider owned, direct-to-consumer channels (a brand.com and app property) that can enable you to build a bespoke brand presence and experience, and showcase your brand values and consumer offerings without compromise. They also give you the freedom to experiment and evolve your platforms to make your brand stand out even more.

After implementing app deep linking, Indosat's myIM3 Search ads campaign saw 2X traffic to its app. The campaign also increased conversion rate by up to 2.5X, decreased cost per acquisition by 53%, and increased ROAS by 43%.



3 Don’t overlook your internal stakeholders

During times of reevaluation and change, attracting and retaining top talent becomes ever more critical to ensuring sustainable business growth.

1

Prioritize building a diverse and inclusive workforce that will not only help to attract and retain top talent, but also increase innovation and profitability.

2

Recognize the importance of purpose beyond pay.
Nurture your employees as internal stakeholders and representatives of your brand.

To encourage employees to find their unique purpose and build a workplace where people enjoy their work and are engaged, Unilever Sri Lanka ran a series of "Discover Your Purpose" workshops. The sessions combine e-learning with personal connections to challenge personal growth.

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.

2. Herbalife Nutrition, AU, HK, ID, JP, KR, MY, PH, SG, TW, TH, VN, Asia Pacific Health Inertia Survey 2021, n=5,500 consumers 18+, 2021.
3. Employment Hero, MY, Employee Movement and Retention report, 2021.