hyprlocl EQ

October 2025

gut sense from ground zero

INDIA'S 1ST WAVE OF AI USERS

≈14 min read (up to 28 min if you deep dive)

In this issue: 10 signals for AI to serve its people better, in India and beyond

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Why India's 1st wave of AI users matter for businesses

The bulk of conversation today is around users learning how to use AI - this EQ is about what AI must learn from its 1st wave of local users in India, for anyone interested in building or applying it for their business.

India is one of the world's fastest growing AI markets, with high adoption rates across sectors. BCG reports that this is its defining moment on the global AI stage - "fuelled by rising enterprise tech investments, a thriving digital ecosystem, and a robust talent base". The government is fuelling this momentum with its ₹10,372-crore IndiaAI Mission for shared computing, accessible in local languages via the BHASHINI platform, with an updated DPDP Act governing data.

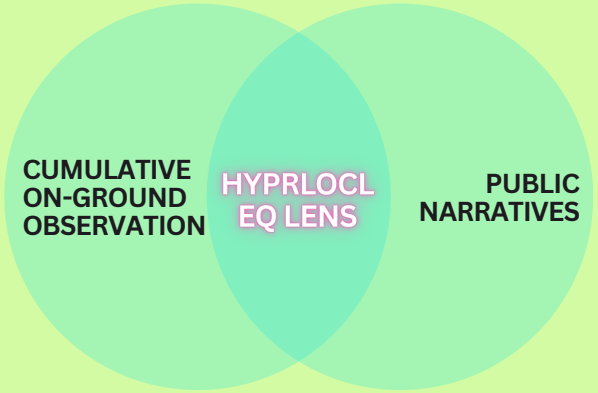
More significantly, India is a stress-test and blueprint for AI tomorrow - to test use-cases at scale and export solutions worldwide. It is home to the planet's largest Millennial, Gen Z and Alpha populations - digital native generations that will shape the future of the world and of AI. Not only large in numbers, they come from a diversity of ethnic communities, social classes, regional languages and local realities here. Together, they represent a microcosm of the complexities that AI will meet in the many locals it is moving into, here and beyond.

Our read on India's 1st wave of AI users can translate to other mobile-first, fast-growing, high-context markets too - South Asia, Southeast Asia, MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America. What must AI learn to belong - and be used at scale - in a world that is more local for it than ever before?

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

This EQ synthesises hyprlocl's cumulative learnings from on-ground with public narratives to arrive at an independent, anonymised lens on India's 1st wave of AI users.

Observing AI users, across genders, age-groups, socio-economic classes, and Indian Metros



Ongoing desk research into news, public data sources and organic social-media narratives about AI

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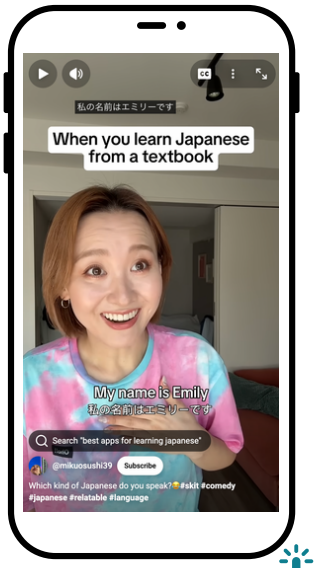
TONE & CREDIBILITY ARE SOCIAL TABLESTAKES



#1 Tone speaks louder than facts and words in high-context cultures

Implication for AI:
How it shows up - shifts from warm to authoritative, modulates and mirrors - is crucial to communicating effectively, feeling familiar, and being trusted - enough to be forgiven for fumbles!

Benchmark notes:
Perplexity is valued for citations by default - but most prefer the companionable **ChatGPT**, despite knowing it is not as updated / accurate. This is its biggest win over **Meta AI** and **Gemini** too. **Copilot** can feel inconsistent in chattiness and citations.

> ***Listen to what is meant instead of what is said.***
> *- Erin Meyer, The Culture Map (2014)*

#2 Trust is low in the system - rooted in you, me and "known names"

Implication for AI:
Be a beacon, not an oracle - surface "people like us" and sources we know, be transparent on where answers come from and when they were updated - be relatable and credible.

Benchmark notes:
Perplexity's upfront citations lower doubts fastest, fueling its massive India push via Airtel. **ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot** citations can feel relatively locally disconnected. "Everyone is on WhatsApp" can be an edge for **Meta AI** via social graph verification.

> ***We need to restart, reimagine and move to new age networks fundamentally designed on a user centric architecture rather than a system centric one... to demonstrate high trust, low-cost networks.*** *- Dr. Pramod Varma, Co-Founder, FIDE, APN News, 28 Oct 2024*

PRIVACY & MEMORY ARE SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

> ***Who's afraid of 'Big Brother' watching when I've got Mummy*** 😅 **-** Delhi, 28 yo man

#3 Privacy is about social face and safe space in societies based on social surveillance and moral policing

Implication for AI:
Go beyond compliance. Protect personal image and safety, not just 'data' - be as socially alert as Indian women! Assume shared devices, kill 'wrong window moments', keep sensitive details discreet by default, signal safe practices!

Benchmark notes:
Standalone apps can cue relatively safer, separate spaces. **Meta AI** can feel socially risky - the flip side of "everybody is on WhatsApp", reinforced by recent regulatory scrutiny.

#4 Memory is manners - forgetting small stuff makes people feel forgotten, more so if they need to be frugal!

Implication for AI:
Memory must be common courtesy - not a premium perk. Remembering personal details, preferences and history says "you see me" - and lowers energy tax on daily use. Basic recall on - visible and editable!

Benchmark notes:
Meta AI stands out for its free memory and usage. **ChatGPT's** memory is now broadly available (with richer paid controls) and adds to its 'knows me' vibe. Others lag on this.

> ***We're making ChatGPT Go freely available for a year to help more people across India easily access and benefit from advanced AI.*** *- Nick Turley, VP & head of ChatGPT, Hindustan Times, 28 Oct 2025*

> ***I was faced with the extraordinary capacity of Indians not only to memorize endless Sanskrit texts, but also to keep that memory securely stored and be able to call it up without the slightest effort...*** *- The stupendous powers of memorization in the Indian tradition, Victor Mair, Language Log - U-Penn*

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LITERACY IS VERNACULAR & AUDIO-VISUAL

> ***Over half (~ 57 %) of urban internet users prefer consuming content in regional languages.*** - India's internet users to exceed 900 mn in 2025, driven by Indic languages, Business Standard, 16 Jan 2025

#5 English is limiting, multilingual is not enough - locals think in vernaculars, blending and bending languages!

Implication for AI:
Not speaking vernacular is a cognitive injustice to its people. To see the world like them - AI must be fluent in mash-ups like Hinglish / Tamlish, desi slang, mixed metaphor, lakhs / crores...!

Benchmark notes:
ChatGPT handles Hinglish texting well. Others can feel formal / translated - **Meta AI** supports Hindi, **Perplexity** supports Hindi and Bengali, **Gemini** supports 9 Indian languages, **Copilot** remains English-first.

#6 Text feels 'dumb' - voice and visuals carry rich non-verbal cues that work harder than the written word

Implication for AI:
Rich-media integrated intel - NO text dumps! Think voice notes, emoji, bullet points, tables, expandable 'read more' text, linked sources, images, videos and maps.

Benchmark notes:
Meta AI's voice notes are a favourite feature. **ChatGPT's** voice notes are improving. **Perplexity's** compact tables stand out. Others are missing out for now.

> ***Typing feels imported. Voice notes, ironically, feel more indigenous.*** - Why Everyone In India Is Sending Voice Notes Instead Of Texts, 25 Aug 2025, News 18

> ***Good response to City Police WhatsApp number in Nashik, but 30% messages comprise greetings*** - The Times Of India, 3 Jun 2025

COLLECTIVE THINKING, CO-AUTHORED DECISIONS

> **60% of young India's purchases influenced by short video and social media: Moj survey** - E4M, 31 Mar 2023

> **WhatsApp users will be able to add custom message while forwarding content** - The Hindu, 28 Nov 2024

#7 Personal networks are the native intelligence processors in phone-first markets where WOM and forwarding are BIG

Implication for AI:
Source 'personal social intel' - build in ways to think together, highlighting patterns from relatable circles to land answers and make them stick.

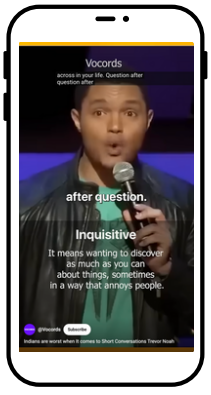
Benchmark notes:
For now, benchmarks enable sharing, but not collective thinking. **Meta AI** can be best placed to do this given its base across WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook.

#8 Decisions are co-authored in collective cultures where choices must feel like "ours", not yours / mine

Implication for AI:
Don't rush to close 'perfect plans' - people want to discuss, decide and own plans together. This means offering options, considerations, comparisons - and enabling group participation.

Benchmark notes:
For now, most push a 'best answer' - but feel most useful when they show alternatives, trade-offs, comparative tables. **Meta AI** can be best placed to act here via group chats.

> ***Choose right: Joint decisions are what bring a family closer*** - India Today, 27 Sept 2025



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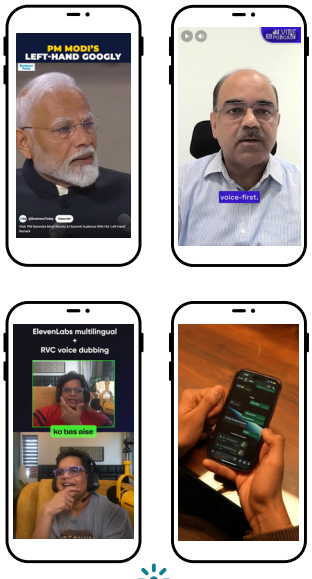
LOCAL UX·UI: LIVE TODAY, EVOLVING TOMORROW



> ***It is not the meaning we get from its words, it is the meaning known to the one who sees.*** - Velcheru Narayana Rao, Text and Tradition in South India

#9 The instinctive UI in oral and visual cultures is to -> say it, see it, share it

Implication for AI:

Fully embrace the hyper-connected smart screens it lives on: Digest messy voice inputs 'like a person' -> provide audio-visual rich summaries -> seamlessly sharable across platforms.

Benchmark notes:

For now, most model written cultures. **Meta AI's** Hindi and English voice notes are loved as a counterpoint to this model, as are **Perplexity's** image and source integration - but none nail the full flow.

#10 AI must lead with human instinct in markets with systemic gaps and hurdles

Implication for AI:

AI will not only need to think on its feet - it must accept that it needs to learn from, and lean on its ingenious local users, who are the real experts at finding ways to "make things work" when the system doesn't.

Benchmark notes:

Fact is, AI does not have all the data in such markets which are still digitizing - so the smartest AI will be the one that says, "let's figure this out together " (ref: BHASHINI Bhasha Daan)

> ***What would it look like to center poor and marginalized people while challenging Big Tech in an AI age? Most of all, it would require a shift away from treating people merely as end-users, data sources, and testing grounds for AI, but as its owners and producers.*** - India as the 'AI Use Case Capital of the World', Tech Policy, 5th May 2025

> ***I saw Odisha farmers using AI-powered tools to predict weather patterns, choose crops, and reduce disease risks. I'm looking forward to seeing how much better those tools have gotten in the short time since.*** - Bill Gates, Gatesnotes, 14 Mar 2025

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hyprlocl EQ is a TL;DR of our gut sense on people and cultures that will shape businesses on ground.

Each issue stitches together what we're seeing across projects, public data, social media, popular culture and everyday life - into strategic signals from them.

Use it to sense where people and culture are heading - and what you need to consider to truly resonate with them.

To explore these insights further, hyprlocl offers **EQ Briefings, Brainstorms** and **Workshops** - culturally incisive, perspective-shifting, ground-up deep dives into these profiles - in addition to **bespoke investigations** on them.

If you are thinking of them, think of us.

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COMING SOON...

- *Issue #2: Woke to Gen Z in India*
- Issue #3: "Six-seven" insights on Gen Alpha in India
- Issue #4: Women entrepreneurs, the real unicorns of India

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