Role of Universal Acceptance in the Growth of Indic Internet and Language Technology Sector of India

In this era of digital transformation, Voice, Video and Vernacular have emerged as the three most important pillars of Digital India. With vernacular being one of the crucial components of digitisation in India, there is a need to take the Internet beyond India's English speakers by supporting all 22 official Indian languages.

If we talk about India, our nation is among the top three global economies in terms of the number of digital consumers. The existing digital ecosystem could contribute up to $500 billion of economic value, but the potential economic value for India could be as much as double that amount if digital technologies are used to unlock productivity, savings, and efficiency. With the evolution of the digital ecosystem in the country, India since 2020 have launched its Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) in 8 Indian Language (Kannada, Oriya, Assamese, Sanskrit, Santali, Kashmiri, Sindhi and Malayalam, further enquiring greater importance, both as a matter of convenience for customers as well as a means of expanding the reach and scope for businesses.

What is Universal Acceptance?

Universal Acceptance (UA) is a fundamental requirement for a truly multilingual and digitally inclusive Internet. It ensures that all domain names, including new long top-level domains (TLDs) like .engineering or .technology, Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) like .भारत and internationalized email addresses are treated equally and can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. Technically, they must accept, validate, store, process, and display all domain names equally, consistently, and correctly.

People of different languages who do not understand English or any other language can easily be connected to the Internet. We watch movies in our language and enjoy it. Similarly, through Universal Acceptance, we can understand and enjoy the Internet in our language. The success of the Universal Acceptance initiative is crucial to the user's satisfaction and ability to use several domains. It has become a fundamental requirement for the Internet to enable multilingual paradigm in which users can navigate through the entire Internet in their languages from around the world. It also unlocks the potential of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) to promote the development of innovation and creativity in the domain name industry.

Why do we need it?

Language shapes the understanding and thinking of an individual and is closely related to their culture and background. People speak their native languages and can understand the matter easily in their languages, thus the Internet must have linkages with the local (i.e. local languages). Further, to keep pace with this new domain world, new applications must be built and old applications and

software must be updated. Universal Acceptance makes sure that Internet-enabled applications work well no matter the identity (domain name, email address, etc.) that the user chooses. Universal Acceptance is important step to get billions of users online using their own unique identifications.

Until Universal Acceptance is achieved, it is not possible to provide a consistent and positive multilingual experience for all Internet users. Statistics show that the majority of the population in India is not English and Hindi-friendly, and language is a big barrier to including them in the digital world. To overcome this, Universal Acceptance is the key to allow people to have a medium to communicate in their preferred regional language, to bridge the Digital Divide and to achieve the goal of an inclusive Internet to shape our digital future. To transform ourselves into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy, it is vital to develop and nurture a multilingual Internet ecosystem that allows the majority of the population of the country to make the best use of the Internet in their native languages.

Making your website/software UA-ready:
Universal Acceptance is when all domain names and email addresses are treated equally, which means if a user has an email ID in Hindi or Tamil or any other non-English language, it must be accepted, validated, processed, stored and displayed properly, and should not reflect any rejection or error.

I would like to encourage all the readers here to make your products, which may be a website, software, or an app, UA-ready and to enable your business to accept new customers and opportunities that target new segments of potential customers. I believe that registering an IDN and getting an email address for your company in your preferred language is the way forward. Visit https://uasg.tech/ for more information.

As FICCI-ILIA also works for the sustainable development of the Indic Internet and Language Technology Sector of India, FICCI-ILIA, with the support of ICANN, has launched the India UA Local Initiative. The prime objective of this initiative is to promote Universal Acceptance in India so that more people can come online and leverage the Internet in their local languages. For more details please visit: http://www.ficci-ilia.in/universal-acceptance.html

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