

Superpowers, Soft Power and Smart Analytics

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Abstract

As a testimony to this growth of the ‘soft power’ culture fueled by progress in information technology, the present work presented Google Search Trend Results of three countries – Russia, China and India, all three member of the BRICS and often visualized as the past, present and future superpowers respectively. The time period of 2012-2016 was chosen for the analysis, and search trend data from 13 other countries (USA, UK, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Vietnam and Turkey) are chosen, owing to various factors such as internet penetration, representative of American, Latin American, European, Australian, West, South, East and Southeast Asian perceptions, and population among the world’s top 20. On comparing Russia, India and China among global search trends between 2004 and 2016, it is seen that India clearly leads the other two nations by a significant amount, possessing a steadily increasing trend over the years. Overall, it is clearly evident that India leads by example in establishing the “Soft Power” Culture on the global platform. Apart from its own population of 1.2 billion, clearly a lot of expectant eyes and hearts are set to welcome India as the next Superpower, in the dawn of an era characterized by culture, soft power, fueled by rapid advancement and progress of information technology, with reduced violence and muddled borders, and advancing human civilization to the next level. Jai Hind!

1. Introduction

The Human species might not match the physical prowess of the tiger or the elephant or might not have the sky and sea navigating capabilities of the bird or the fish, and while the species lags behind in such physical capabilities, humans have more than made up for it in intellectual capabilities. It is through sheer brain power that humans have conquered land, sea, air and even set out to explore space. With these Herculean achievements, it is now imperative to turn towards solving more pressing problems internally, such as poverty, healthcare, unemployment, corruption and establishing world peace.

One consequence of the intellectual prowess in humans is that over the years, as civilizations have grown and developed, humans have mastered and become adept at handling and processing information - the current information technology with exploding amount of information being generated and processes every single day is a testimony. A beautiful and touching example of man’s brilliance in information technology was observed in the recent devastating torrential rains and floods in Chennai, India during December, 2015. Social media such as Facebook and Whatsapp, and text messaging along with telephone calls were put to good use in spreading live updates of rain and flood status in various locations of the city, sharing emergency helpline and control room numbers, rapidly and efficiently organizing information regarding relief and rescue needs and availabilities, regarding food, clothing, medicines and other important necessities. The efforts earned praise for their dexterity, efficiency and flawless

organization.

As the era of information technology progresses steadily, the world shrinks and borders become more muddled and obscure. It is now possible for a person with good internet connection to ‘virtually’ visit tourist sites such as Rome, Giza, Paris, Agra and the Great Wall of China, without leaving the cozy confines of one’s home. Similarly, conventional definitions of power such as military prowess and political influence become muddled, and the era of dominance using culture and soft power has set in. This can be seen every year on January 26th, when in Rajpath, New Delhi, the Indian Republic Day Celebrations are held in pomp and splendor, with India showcasing missiles, tanks, and rhythmic march pasts and fly pasts with remarkable alignment, while also highlighting in tableaux, the unique cultural features of its various states and ministries.

As a testimony to this growth of the ‘soft power’ culture fueled by progress in information technology and being conceived and written on January 26th, 2016, the 67th Republic day of India, the present paper explores popularity and perception of three countries of the world – Russia, India and China, on the basis of Google search trends from 2012-2016 by internet users of various countries around the world.

The rationale behind choosing the three countries Russia, India and China, all belonging to the BRICS - a group of developing and major national economies representing approximately 40% of the world’s population with a combined Purchasing Power Parity Gross Domestic Product (GDP-PPP) of nearly US\$30 Trillion, is as follows:

1. During the Cold War period after World War 2, Russia, in the form of USSR was clearly one of the world’s superpowers, along with the USA, keeping alive the democracy-communism polarization, and proving an equal match for the USA in various aspects, including space travel, science research and diversity of culture. Today, however, Russia is a democracy and has lost much of its area to new countries formed in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, but is still a major player in events of the international stage, such as the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, and battling the terrorist ISIS. However, with a barely stable economy and a subdued military presence, Russia is no longer seen as the formidable superpower the USSR used to be.
2. If, in the current times, there is one country that can equal the might of the USA, in terms of development, economy, military prowess and infrastructure, it ought to be China. With a civilization that goes back thousands of years, China had steadily grown and progressed since ancient times, hardened by the recurring invasions by Mongols, Japanese and other neighbors. While most countries have switched from communism to some form of democracy, China is a living example of the success of communism, reinforced by adaptations to technological advancements and globalization. Being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has clearly been prominent on the global stage for quite some time now.
3. With a population of a young average age of 2 years, charting the highest economic growth rate in the world, the second most populous country in the world, India is all set to emerge as the next superpower of the world. With an increasingly strong military presence and regional prominence in the South and Southeast Asian stage, and a diaspora extending from America in the west to Pacific Islands such as Fiji in the east, it is no surprise that India has been switching to faster gears in recent times, when it comes to development and progress. The India-Africa summit hosted in New Delhi in 2015, attended by every single African Head of State, is a clear example

of India's growing importance on the global platform. Needless to mention however, is the Indian soft power, bolstered by Indian Culture, Cuisine, Custom, Costume and Spirituality, clearly the oldest in world history. News about German Universities facing hardships in meeting the demands for Sanskrit courses, and the International Yoga Day celebrated with splendor, even in countries such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, are clear examples of Indian Soft Power.

The search period is set to 2012-2016, since this period adequately covers the most recent events and a stable period of social networking and internet technology, to enable an efficient assessment of public perception of the above mentioned countries, seen as the past, present and future superpowers of the world. In each case, the countries perception is assessed by the Google Search trend results for the country names ('India', 'China', 'Russia') as keywords, and the trends are observed across 2012-2016 timescale. The users and search results from fifteen nations organized into three 'sets' as listed below are used in the present work. In addition to a timescale based analysis, a region based analysis is also explored, covering the first level country subdivisions of the following countries.

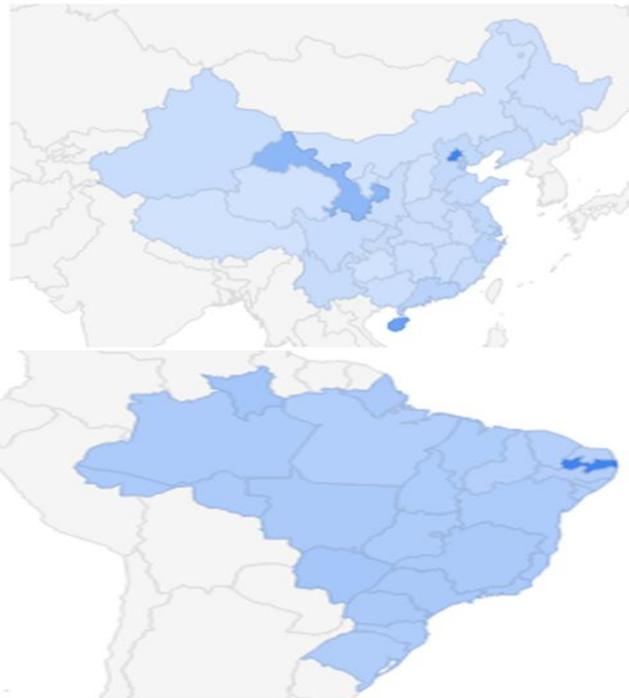
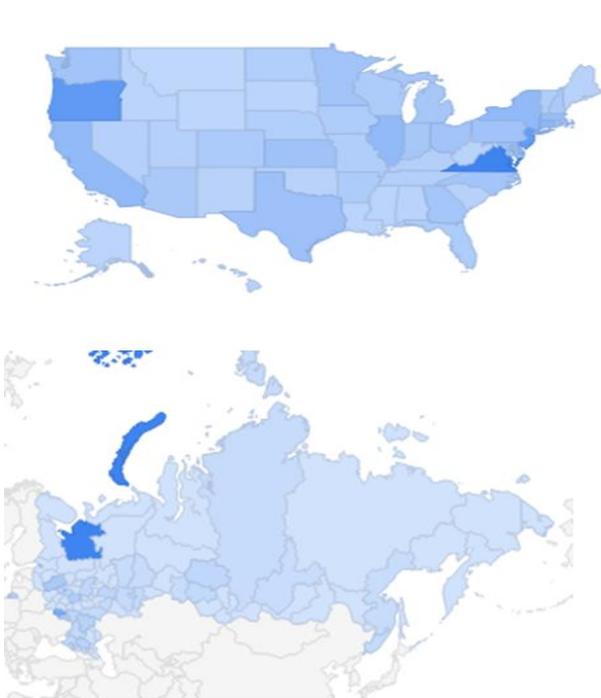
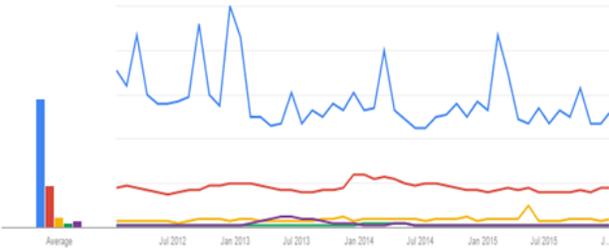
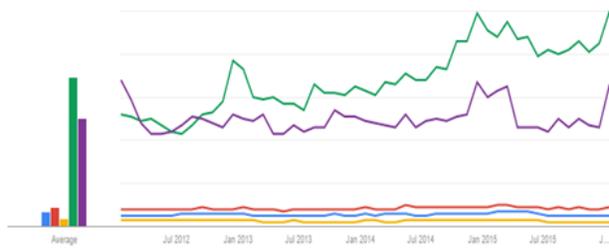
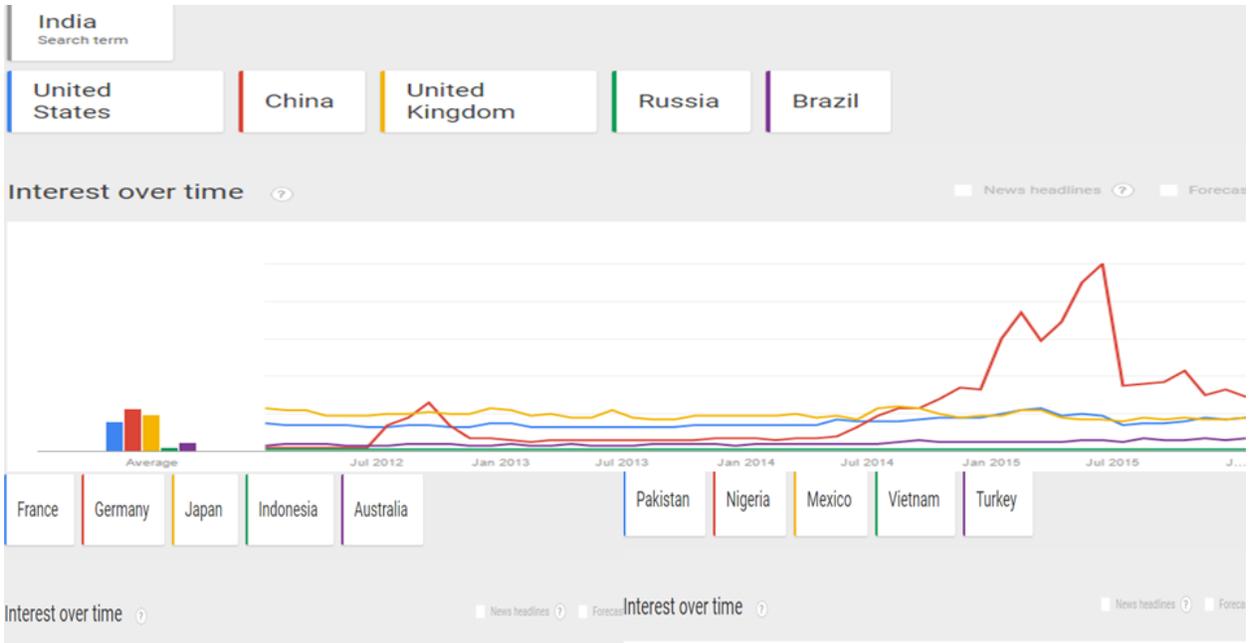
1. The first set comprises the United States of America, the United Kingdom, China, Brazil, India and Russia. In this set, country perceptions of the three nations Russia, India and China, among each other are assessed, along with perception from BRICS co-member Brazil. The UK and USA are representatives of English Old World and New World perceptions respectively.
2. The second set comprises France, Germany, Japan, Australia and Indonesia. While France and Germany are representatives of Europe, Japan and Indonesia represent perceptions along East and Southeast Asia respectively. Australia, while linguistically 'English', represents a unique perception of the three nations from the 'Down Under'.
3. The third set comprises Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Vietnam and Turkey. These countries are listed among the top 20 populous nations of the world, and represent the next-gen powers in their respective regions of South Asia, Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and West Asia respectively.

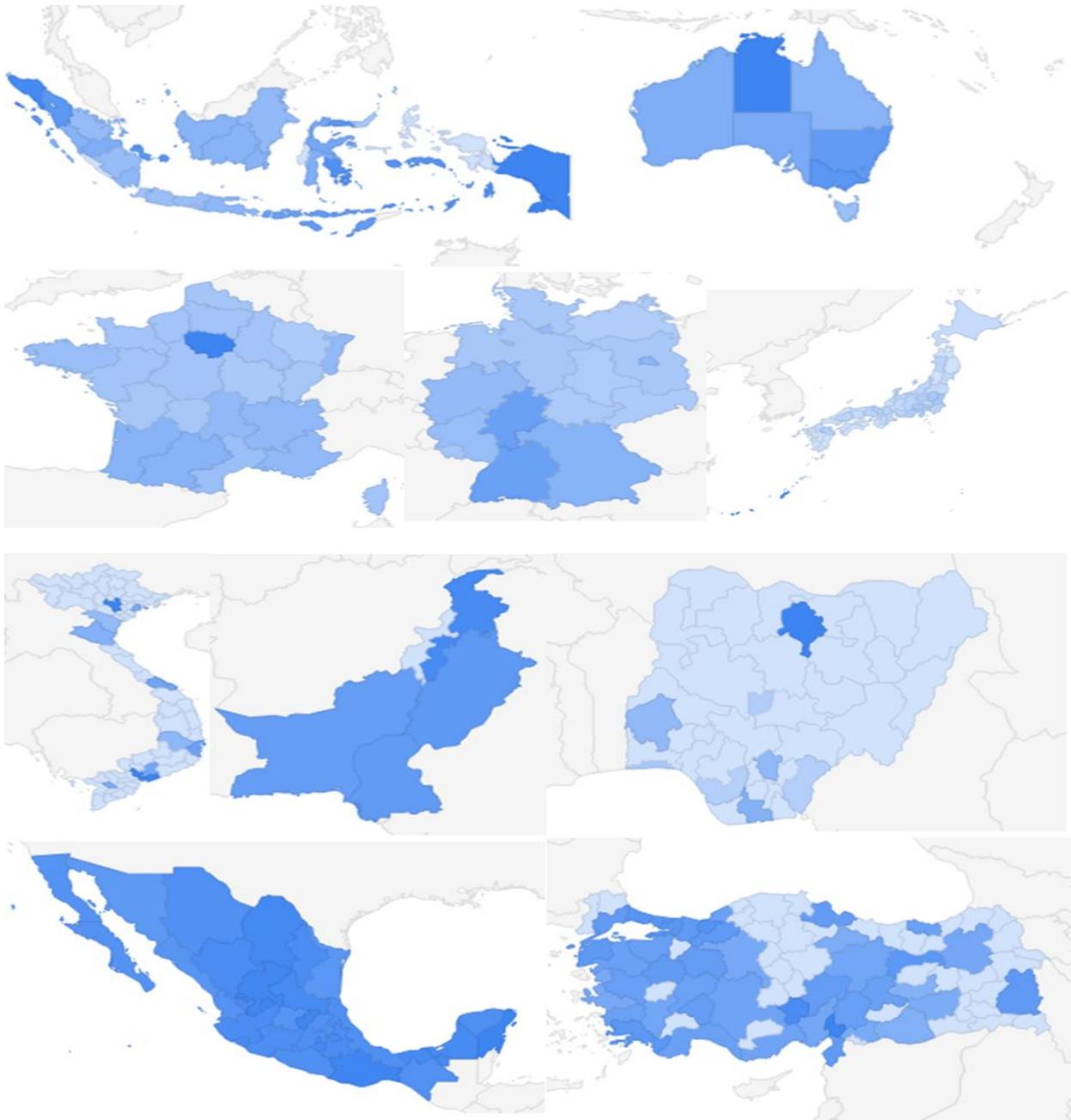
2. Trend Results and Discussions

In this section, the Trend search results for the abovementioned nations are provided with inferences and discussions.

A. India

The trend search results for India are illustrated as follows.





The inferences from these results are summarized as follows:

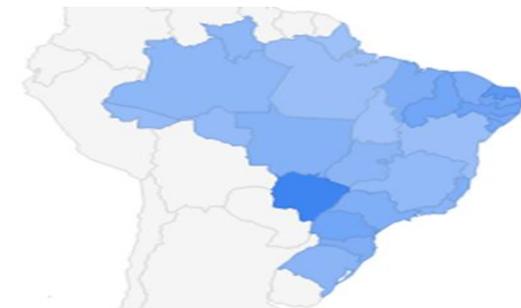
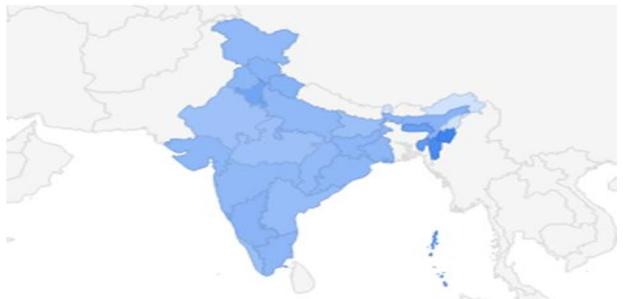
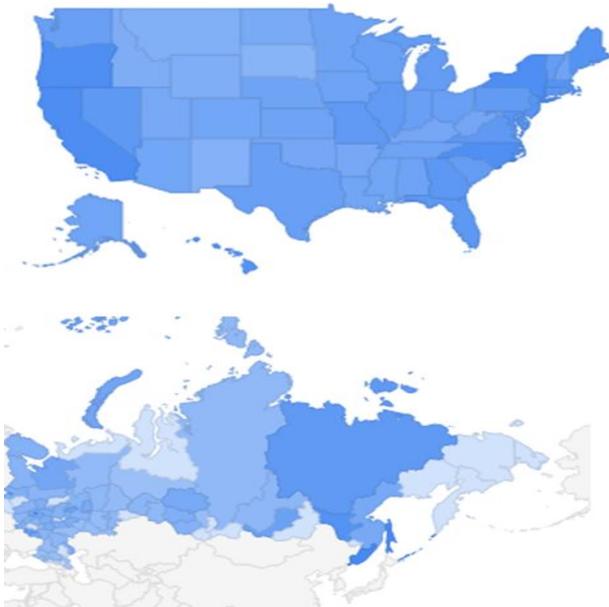
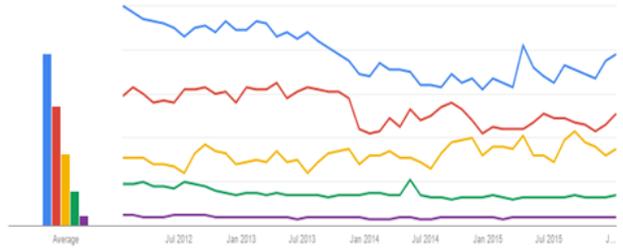
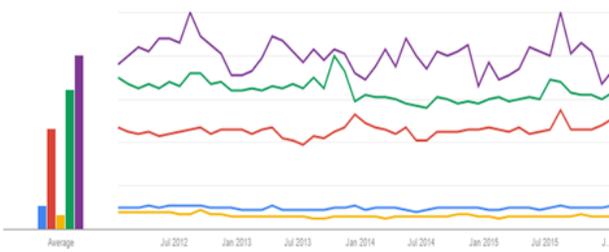
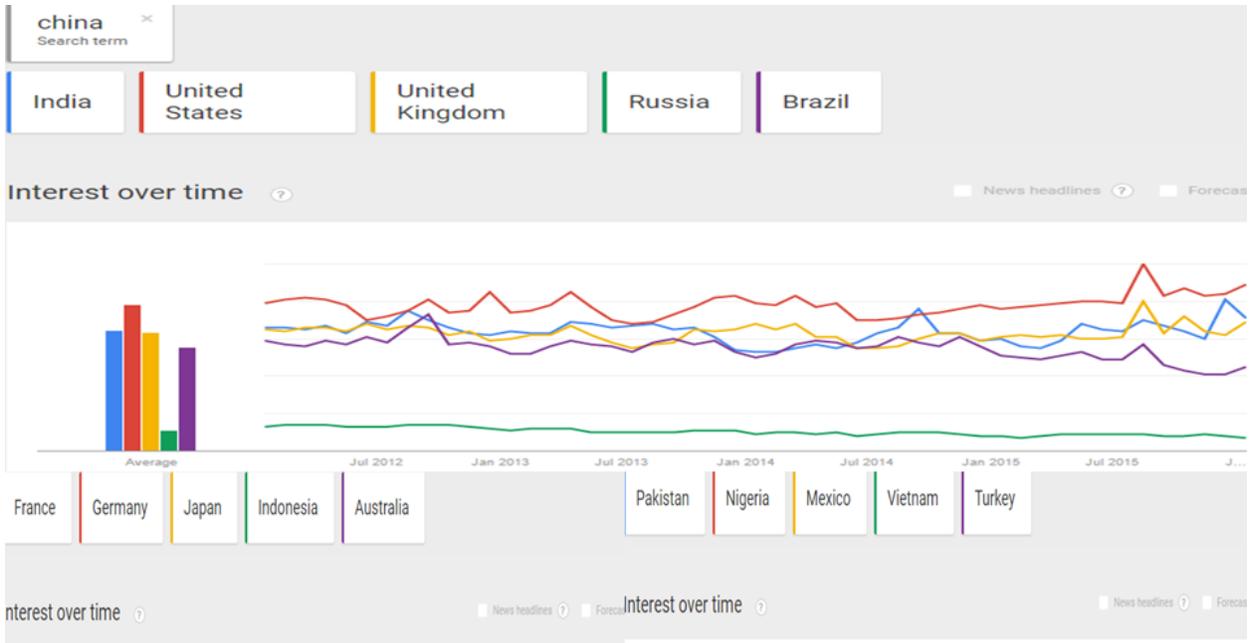
1. Search trends for India have remained fairly constant for most countries, with the exception of China and Indonesia. While Indonesia shows a steady rise over the years, probably owing to increased Indian presence in Southeast Asia, Chinese trends showed a surge in early to mid 2015, dropping off to a higher-than-previous stable value.
2. Clearly India's popularity among the English speaking countries of USA and UK are much higher than in countries such as Russia and Brazil, owing to the fact that India itself speaks English and is well conversant with USA and UK, engaging in economic and cultural partnerships.

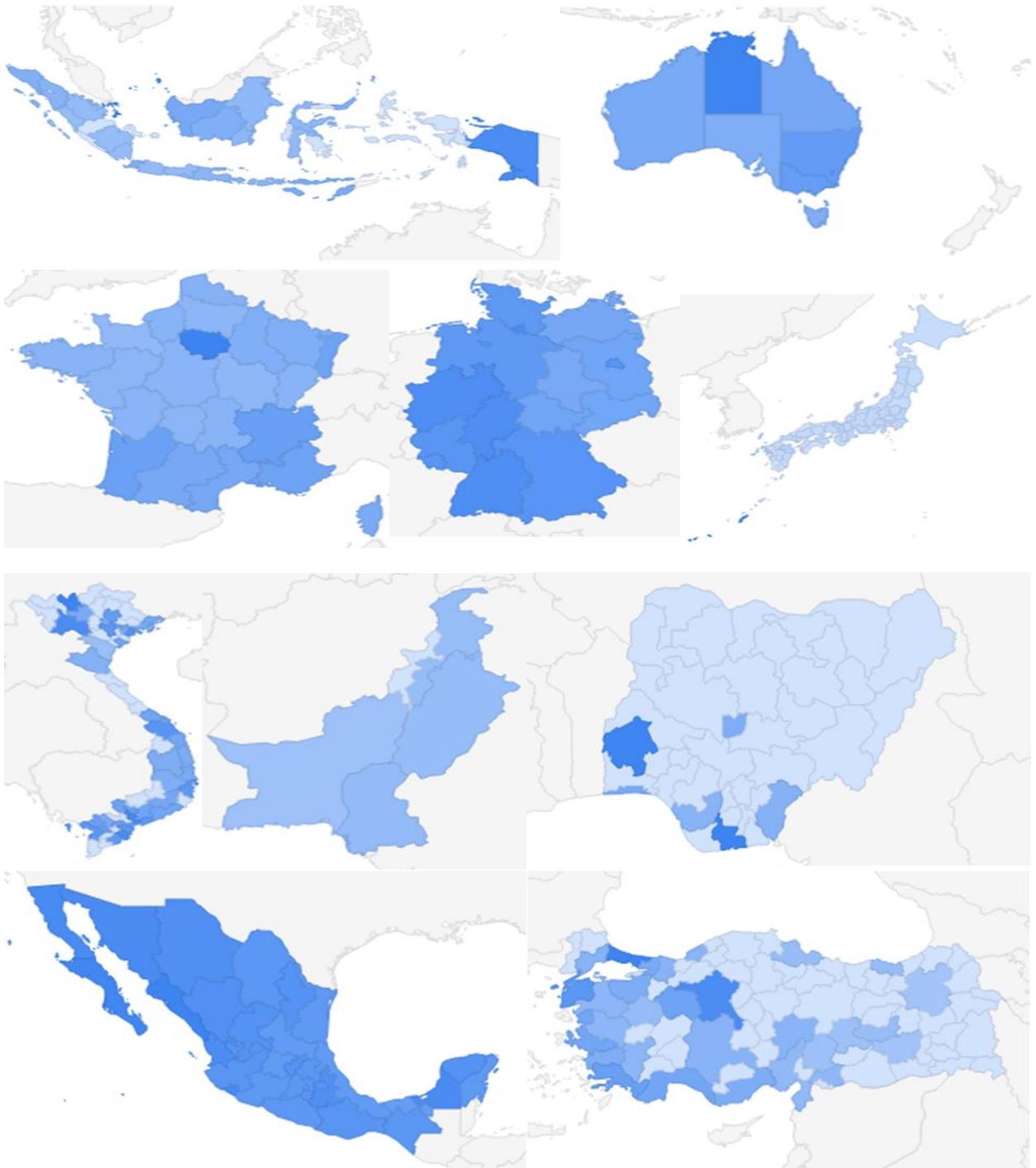
3. Similarly, Australia, being an English speaking country and hosting a significant Indian diaspora has strong perception of India, while Indonesians are culturally aligned with India as they have been for hundreds of years.
4. France and Germany, being non-English speaking nations do not record significantly high search trends of India.
5. India's neighbor to the west, Pakistan has close military and political connections with India, apart from sharing many aspects of common culture and cuisine. This connection is indeed obvious in Pakistani search trends.
6. Among the other nations, it is indeed surprising to see Nigerian trends dominant over Vietnamese, Mexican and Turkish trends, and stems from the fact that a Nigerian diaspora does exist in India, and being the most populous English speaking countries in Asia and Africa, the duo do share economic and cultural interests.
7. In the US, popularity of India can be seen in both the West and East Coasts, peaking in Oregon, Virginia and New Jersey, with least trends seen in the Rocky Mountain states. The Chinese capital Beijing as well as Hainan island, along with Gansu show increased popularity for India.
8. In Russia, areas of maximum Indian popularity are Arkhangelsk and Kursk, with a general increase in trends along the southern republics. Brazil shows more or less uniform trend results, except for Paraiba on the eastern extreme of the country.
9. In Indonesia, Papua, Aceh and Maluku show high trend results, among other provinces recording significantly high Indian popularities. In Australia, Northern Territory records highest trend results.
10. The Ile-de-France region in France, and the Hesse and Baden-Wurttemberg regions in Germany record highest Indian popularity trends, with a generally high trend results seen in the southern parts of both countries. Trends are pretty uniform among Japanese Prefectures.
11. Disconnected pockets in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Ba Ria-Vung Tau provinces record highest Indian popularities in Vietnam, while unsurprisingly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan regions of Pakistan are foremost. While southern Nigerian states show high popularity of India, Kano in the North stands out in search trends.
12. Quintana Roo in the Mexican Far East, as well as Osmaniye and Nigde Provinces in South Central Turkey exhibit highest trends in their respective countries.

From the trend results, it is seen that in general, popular perception of India is prevalent in English speaking countries, all of which have regular and frequent political and economic interactions with India, owing to linguistic connectivity. However, with India increasingly prominent in economic and cultural contexts, these trends are set to change in the near future.

B. China

The trend search results for China are illustrated as follows.





The inferences from these results are summarized as follows:

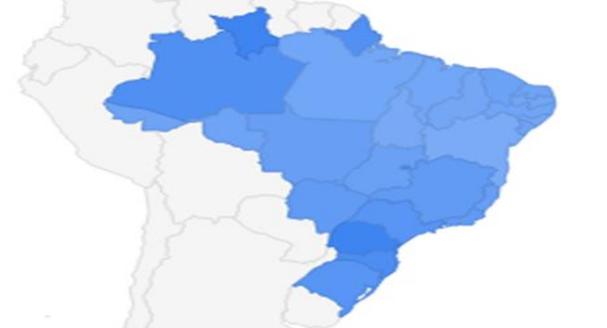
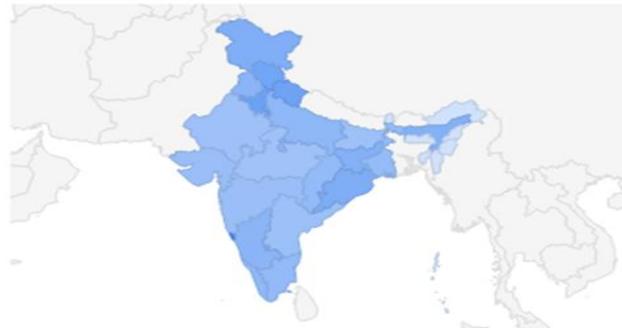
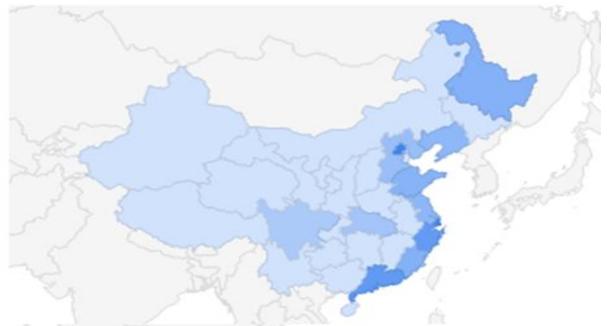
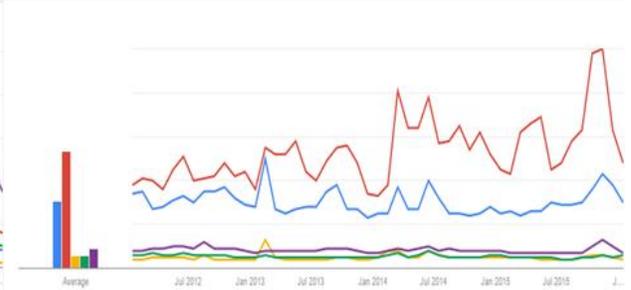
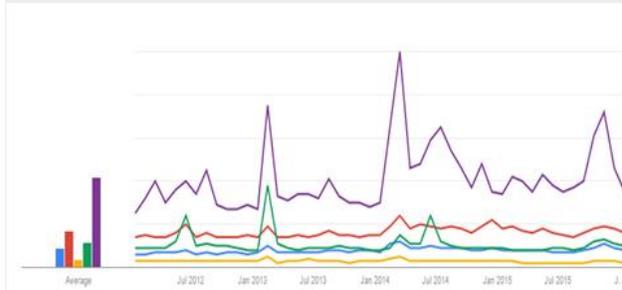
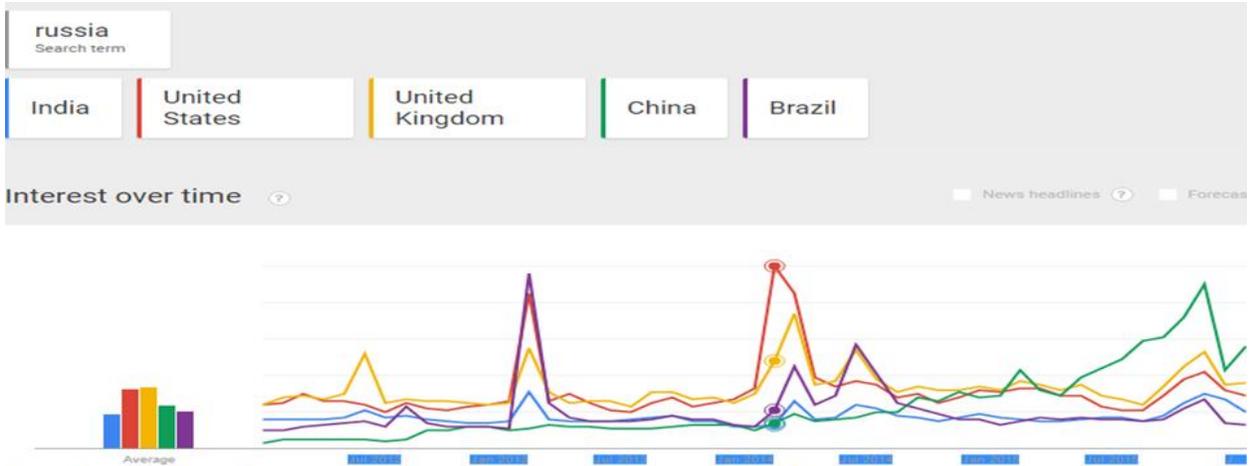
1. Search trends for China are constant for most countries, with the exception of Pakistan, which shows a slightly decreasing trend.
2. China is popular among most set 1 countries, irrespective of language, with the exception of Russia.
3. Among set 2 countries, France and Japan are the only ones showing decreased trends, whereas

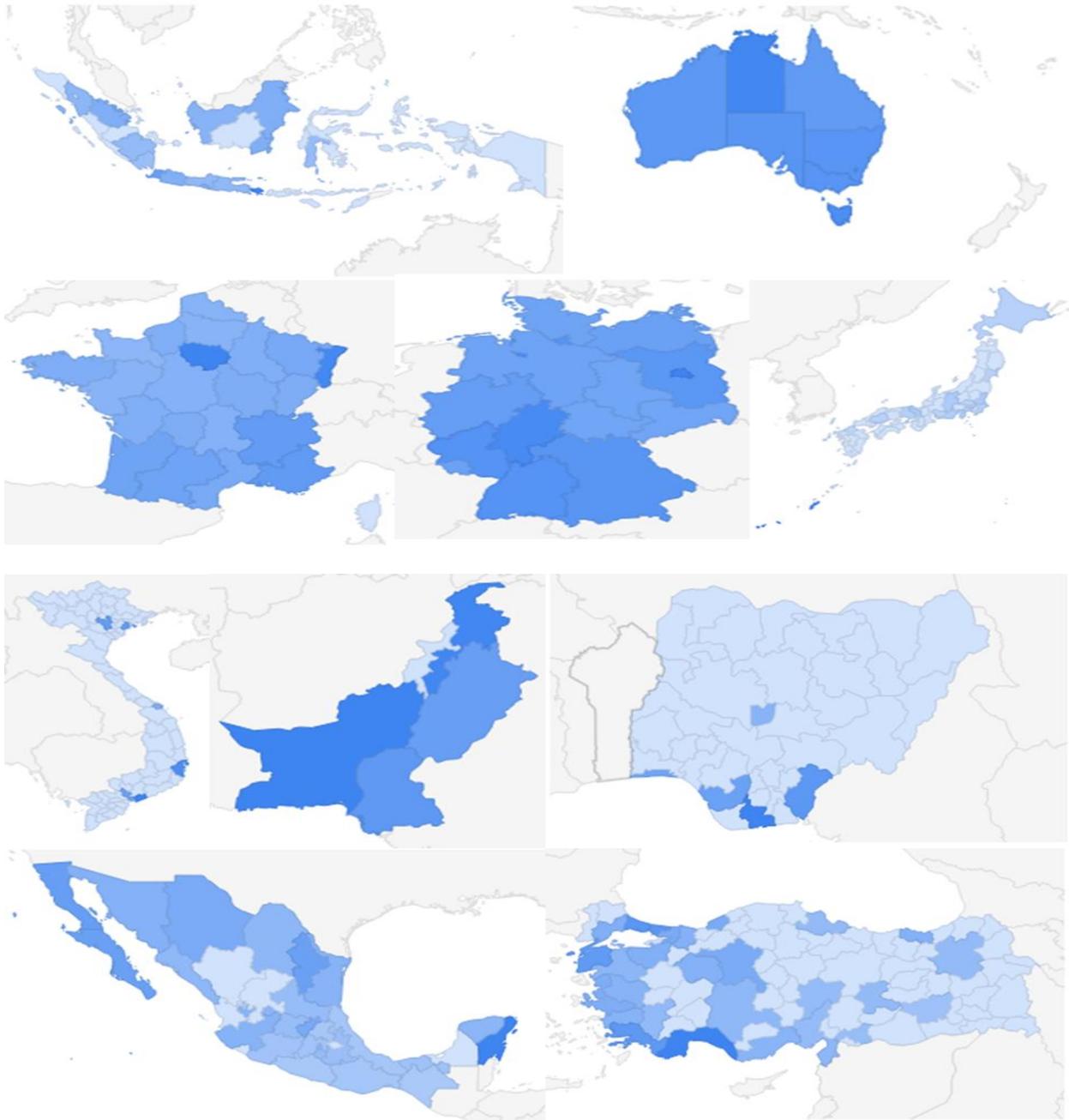
- Australia shows a high trend of Chinese popularity, probably owing to business ties.
4. Set 3 countries show stratified trend search results, with Pakistan, having geographic, political and economic ties with China standing out far above the rest, and Nigeria, representing Chinese-African economic relations, coming second.
 5. In the US, popularity for China can be seen mostly in the Eastern States, with New York and District of Columbia emerging forerunners. Northeastern Indian states such as Manipur and Mizoram, sharing cultural and linguistic ties with China, top in India's Chinese popularity trends.
 6. In Russia, Siberian republics such as Sakha, Sakhalin, Amur and Primorsky clearly exhibit high trends, with only Moscow exhibiting higher popularity for China. Mato Grosso do Sul leads Brazilian trends, with pockets of high Chinese popularity seen in the Eastern provinces.
 7. In Indonesia, Papua and the Riau islands record highest trends. In Australia, Northern Territory, followed by ACT Canberra, records highest trend results.
 8. The Ile-de-France region in France, and the Canton de Schaffhausen, Hamburg and Baden-Wurttemberg regions in Germany record highest popularity trends, with a generally high trend results seen in southern France and Western Germany. Okinawa, closest to China among the Japanese prefectures, emerges unsurprisingly as forerunner in Chinese popularity trends.
 9. Lao Cai province in Northern Vietnam, sharing a border with China records highest trends, whereas trends in Pakistan are pretty uniform. Rivers and Oyo regions of Nigeria exhibit highest trends.
 10. Trends in Mexico are uniform, whereas major cities Ankara and Istanbul record highest popularity trends in Turkey.

From the trend results, it is seen that Chinese popularity trends have a largely political basis, with the capital regions of most countries topping the respective trends. A general perception of the Chinese language as tough to learn might contribute, atleast in part, to such trend observations, where a "soft culture" prevalence is overtaken by political popularity.

C. Russia

The trend search results for Russia are illustrated as follows.





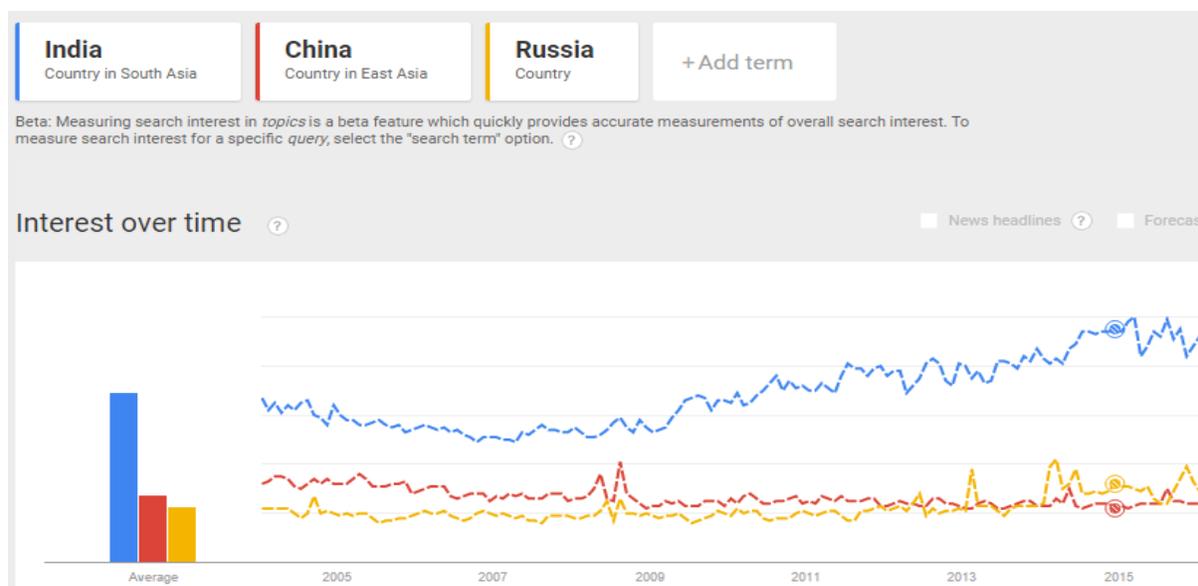
The inferences from these results are summarized as follows:

1. Search trends for Russia can be broadly grouped into two categories – those such as Brazil, US, UK, Australia, Nigeria and Pakistan, that show fluctuating trends, and others that are fairly constant.
2. Russia is almost equally popular among most set 1 countries, with US and UK showing slight leads, whereas the recent increase in Chinese trends is noteworthy.
3. Among set 2 countries, Australian trends stand out, followed by a consistent Germany, with Japan showing decreased trends.

4. Set 3 countries show stratified trend search results, with Pakistan and Nigeria to a greater extent standing out.
5. In the US, popularity for Russia is fairly uniform, with the only prominent leader being Russia's neighbor to the east, Alaska. In China, leading trends are clearly seen along the eastern coast with major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai included. Heilongjiang, neighboring Russia, also shows a high trend.
6. In India, trends of Russian popularity are highest in northern states such as Uttarakhand, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The northern Brazilian provinces, including Roraima lead trends in Brazil.
7. In Indonesia and Australia, trends are fairly uniform with Bali and Banten, as well as ACT Canberra recording highest trend results in their respective countries.
8. The capital regions of Ile-de-France in France, and Berlin in Germany record highest popularity trends, with a generally high trend results seen in eastern France and southern Germany. Okinawa, among the Japanese prefectures, stands out clearly as the forerunner in Chinese popularity trends.
9. Ba Ria-Vung Tau as well as Khanh Hoa provinces record highest trends in Vietnam, while Balochistan is the forerunner in Pakistan. Southern Nigeria, led by Rivers and Cross River States exhibit highest trends.
10. Quintana Roo in Eastern Mexico leads the trends, whereas Antalya along with most of western Turkey record highest popularity trends.

From the trend results, it is seen that unlike Indian and Chinese trends, Russian trends are distributed geographically, without restricting to capital or English speaking regions alone. This might be part of a legacy Russia had established over the years, while being a superpower vis-à-vis the US.

Finally, a comparison of the search terms pertaining to the three countries, worldwide are presented for the time period from 2004 to 2016.





India	100	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Nepal	32	<div style="width: 32%;"></div>
United Arab Emirates	27	<div style="width: 27%;"></div>
Oman	27	<div style="width: 27%;"></div>
Qatar	26	<div style="width: 26%;"></div>
Bangladesh	20	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>
Bolivia	19	<div style="width: 19%;"></div>



Hong Kong	100	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Cambodia	90	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>
Vietnam	82	<div style="width: 82%;"></div>
Singapore	73	<div style="width: 73%;"></div>
China	52	<div style="width: 52%;"></div>
Indonesia	46	<div style="width: 46%;"></div>
Bangladesh	44	<div style="width: 44%;"></div>



Russia	100	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Kyrgyzstan	51	<div style="width: 51%;"></div>
Kazakhstan	50	<div style="width: 50%;"></div>
Belarus	49	<div style="width: 49%;"></div>
Uzbekistan	46	<div style="width: 46%;"></div>
Ukraine	41	<div style="width: 41%;"></div>
Moldova	40	<div style="width: 40%;"></div>

From the results, it is evident that India has maintained a huge, steady lead over Russia and China in Search Trends over the entire time duration of 2004-2016. Even more prominent is the fact that over and above the lead, Indian search trends are steadily increasing. On the other hand, Russian and Chinese trends intersect each other quite a few times, with Russia maintaining a slight lead over China, as of January 26, 2016.

In the region wise results, apart from self-popularity of the three nations, India is most popular among its neighbors such as Nepal and Bangladesh, as well as in countries like UAE, Oman and Qatar, which have a significant Indian diaspora. China is most popular among most East and Southeast Asian nations, all of which share significant Chinese cultural influences. Russia is most popular among its neighbors in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, most of them former Soviet states. Among the three nations, the geographical diversity of Indian Search Trends is commendable, and stands

testimony to the “Soft Power” Culture that India is building and leading the world by example.

3. Conclusion

The present work presented Google Search Trend Results of three countries – Russia, China and India, all three member of the BRICS and often visualized as the past, present and future superpowers respectively. The time period of 2012-2016 was chosen for the analysis, and search trend data from 13 other countries (USA, UK, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Vietnam and Turkey) are chosen, owing to various factors such as internet penetration, representative of American, Latin American, European, Australian, West, South, East and Southeast Asian perceptions, and population among the world’s top 20. From the results it is seen that over the time duration, most search trends are fairly constant, with India most popular among the English speaking nations, Chinese popularity largely determined by political ties and relations, and Russia exhibiting a mixed distribution of dominant search trends. On comparing Russia, India and China among global search trends between 2004 and 2016, it is seen that India clearly leads the other two nations by a significant amount, possessing a steadily increasing trend over the years. India is popular over a wide geographical range covering sub-continental neighbors as well as countries with significant Indian diaspora, while China is popular among East and Southeast Asian nations, and Russia is popular among its neighbors in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Overall, it is clearly evident that India leads by example in establishing the “Soft Power” Culture on the global platform. Apart from its own population of 1.2 billion, clearly a lot of expectant eyes and hearts are set to welcome India as the next Superpower, in the dawn of an era characterized by culture, soft power, fueled by rapid advancement and progress of information technology, with reduced violence and muddled borders, and advancing human civilization to the next level. Jai Hind!

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