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Digital Investor Attention and Herding Behaviour in the Indian Stock Market: A Neurobehavioural Finance Perspective

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Abstract

Investor herding is a significant behavioural effect in financial markets where under conditions of uncertainty, limited information and social influence, investors might flock to similar investment decisions. The rapid evolution of digital information environments opens up alternative possibilities to analyze collective financial attention as conventionally studied with market prices, trading volume and returns-based indices. In this study, we examine how the digital attention has shifted toward the idea of investor herding and other related concepts of investor psychology in the context of Google trends in India. Eight keywords were chosen for analysis: Herding, Investor Herding, Herd Mentality, Investor Sentiment, Market Sentiment, Follow the Crowd, FOMO and Loss Aversion, and were observed per month from January 2015 to December 2025. Descriptive statistics, low volume diagnostics, phase wise mean comparison, coefficient of variation, Pearson correlation, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) are included in the empirical analysis. These findings indicate for both Herding and FOMO that there was significant increase in digital attention across the study period. This gives the value of the search interest to be 45.909 and 43.636 respectively for Herding and FOMO. Herding has a high correlation with FOMO (r = .822), Market Sentiment (r = .721) and Loss Aversion (r = .663). The ANOVA results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the 4 study phases for all the keywords that are appropriate for inferential analysis (p < .001). There is no variability across the sample for Investor Herding and this variable is thus not subjected to inferential analysis. The results indicate an increasing digital focus on collective financial behaviour in India and its association with financially psychology-related constructs like FOMO, sentiment and loss sensitivity. The study brings together the new field of behavioural finance, digital attention analytics, and neurofinance, and highlights the need to view Google Trends as an aggregate measure of the digital attention that investors pay to a product or service, rather than a direct indicator of investor behaviour or neural activity.

Key words: ***Investor Herding, Neurofinance, Digital Attention, Google Trends, FOMO, Loss Aversion, Investor Sentiment, Behavioural Finance, Social Influence, India.***

1. Introduction

The traditional finance paradigm holds that investors process the information available rationally and make decisions to maximize their expected utility. Behavioural finance tests this theory with respect to cognitive limitations, emotions, social influence and systematic biases that can impact financial decisions. Herding plays a special role in this literature as investors might give up on making decisions on their own and just follow the crowd (Ganesh et al. 2019).

There are multiple ways in which herding can develop. Investors can learn from the choices of those around them, feel the pressure to make choices in line with the rest of the investors, copy the apparent winner in the market, or view collective behavior as being a wedge replacement for incomplete private information. As a result, herding is not only an informational phenomenon but also a social and psychological phenomenon. Herding behaviour of investor could also be due to the overconfident belief on the investor he/she is mimicking and could also be due to the loss aversion bias (Ganesh et al. 2022). A close connection between herding research and approaches in neuroscience to financial decision-making is provided by the argument that economic decision-making must not be understood without also considering the role of psychological and social factors, as put by Baddeley (2010).

The new digital information environments have brought new types of visibly noticed financial attention. Search engines enable individuals to actively seek information concerning financial assets, market conditions and behavioural concepts. Da, Engelberg and Gao (2011) introduced a new measure of investor attention, Google Search Volume Index (SVI), and showed that the frequency of searching on Google reflects an important aspect of investor information demand.

Following these studies, there has been subsequent research that has further cemented the relationship between search attention and financial behaviour. Hsieh, Chan and Wang (2020) established that Google Search Volume Index is an indicator of information demand of retail investors, and unveiled a positive relationship between retail investor attention and herding. Their study also confirms that the attention-herding relation can be different depending on the market conditions.

The international study of the relationship has also taken place. Wanidwaranan and Padungsaksawasdi (2022) find that the Google Search Volume Index (GSVI) of retail investors contributes to herd behaviour in 21 international equity markets. Their findings are especially relevant as it implies that readily available online information can help to facilitate inadvertent convergence in investor behavior.

A systematic review by Ayala, Gonzálvez-Gallego and Arteaga-Sánchez (2024) also shows that the volume of Google Search (GSV) is becoming more and more utilized in financial research. After examining 56 studies, the authors found that Google search activity has been used to examine investor attention, volatility, trading volume and stock market forecasting. Their review validates Google Trends as a source of digital financial information – not just descriptive Web-analytics.

The Indian context is also applicable. Google Search Volume Index is used in research to gauge investors' attention to Indian markets, and it has been found that the volume of searches has correlated with the outcomes of the financial markets. In this case, Indian IPOs show a positive relationship between the attention investors pay to an IPO, as reflected in the Google Search Volume Index, and initial returns.

The complimentary theoretical basis is provided by the neurofinance approach. Neurofinance is the study of financial decision making that is grounded in the interplay of neuroscience, psychology and economics. According to Sahi (2012), neurofinance is the new research area which seeks to comprehend the link between brain processes and the investment behaviour. Experimental studies also show that distinct neural mechanisms are involved in making financial risk-taking and risk-aversion decisions. The results from the fMRI study by Kuhnen and Knutson (2005) demonstrated that anticipatory neural activity, as measured by fMRI, was linked to later financial decisions, indicating that affective processes are related to rational investment deviations.

This makes herding a good candidate for a neurofinance-informed behavioural analysis. Social influences, attention, rewards and emotional reactions can interact to influence the way that people understand and react to other's behaviour. Baddeley (2010), in particular, associates herding and social influence with psychological and neuroscientific methods of economic decision making.

There are two related concepts of behaviour to which particular attention should be paid. The first is called Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) – the fear of missing out on a seemingly appealing chance. For this reason, FOMO can make people want to catch up with other investors who seem to have a winning investment story, since it looks like they are making money. The second is loss aversion, a key tenet of prospect theory which states that psychological effects of losses on the mind are greater than the psychological effects of gains on the mind (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

New studies have reinforced the correlation between FOMO and Google Trends. In a 2025 study, they created a Global FOMO Index based on Google Trends data, and showed that FOMO can be used as a financial-market attention index measured monthly.

Despite these advances, there is a lack of literature. As noted above, the existing literature has confirmed that Google search activity is a metric for the level of investor interest and has investigated the connection between search activity and market behavior and herding. The co-evolution of herding, FOMO, loss aversion, investor sentiment, market sentiment and social-conformity concepts in an Indian context are however comparatively ignored.

The present study aims to fill this void and explores 132 monthly observations obtained from Google Trends for India between January 2015 and December 2025. The study does not attempt to measure directly neural activity, but rather examines the

activity of the neural network as an aggregate behavioural signal from digital search, and attempts to explain the nature of this activity in the context of a neurofinance model.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study has five objectives:

1. To look at the temporal change in digital attention towards investor herding and associated behavioural concepts in India.
2. To quantify and compare the range of Google search activity for herding, sentiment and neurobehavioural terms.
3. To examine the relationships between digital attention toward herding, FOMO, loss aversion, sentiment and social-conformity concepts.
4. To find out if there are significant differences in digital attention throughout the study.
5. To explain the patterns of digital financial attention from a neurofinance perspective.

3. Research Questions

RQ1: What changes has there been in the attention of herding-related concepts in India from 2015 to 2025?
RQ2: Which of the concepts of behaviour show the highest variability in the amount of Google searches?
RQ3: How are the relationships between herding-related attention and FOMO, loss aversion and sentiment?
RQ4: Is there significant variation in digital attention during the four study phases?
RQ5: What does this digital-attention pattern mean from a neurofinance perspective?

4. Review of Literature

4.1 Herding Behaviour in Financial Markets

One of the main behavioral phenomena studied in financial economics is herding. Bikhchandani and Sharma (2000) differentiate between intentional and unintentional herding and point out that information cascades, reputational issues and compensation packages can explain this phenomenon. Their review shows that herding can increase correlated investor behaviour and lead to increased market instability.

The traditional empirical literature also has tried to separate genuine herding from movements in asset prices that are merely a reflection of the fact that investors react to the same information as independent investors. This distinction is key since investors' decisions are not necessarily psychologically similar.

However, from a behavioural perspective there is another explanation. Investors can see what others are doing and interpret this as information and thus strengthen collective decision-making.

Baddeley (2010) further develops this argument, bringing together social, psychological and neuroscientific views. Herding is thus not always a singular cognitive mistake but rather can manifest in the interplay of information processing, social influence and emotional reactions.

4.2 Investor Attention and Digital Search Behaviour

Behavioural finance has given rise to the concept of investor attention as investors are not able to process all the information available. Da et al. (2011) introduced the Google Search Volume Index, which is directly related to investor attention, and found that the volume of searching conveys information regarding retail investor attention.

Search data has the benefit of capturing information seeking in action. A search query is a conscious request to research on one or more specific topics, while passive media exposure is a random and unintentional exposure.

This feature has spurred researchers to use Google Trends for research in the financial markets. Ayala et al. (2024) systemically reviewed the literature to find an extensive literature base linking Google Search Volume Index to volatility, trading volume, returns and market forecasting.

But caution should be used when interpreting the data from the searches. Google Trends is an indicator of relative search interest and does not reflect the name of the individual searcher, the type of searcher or what they may be searching for. Thus, it would be advisable to consider search attention as an overall behavioral measure and not a direct measure of investor decisions.

4.3 Google Search Attention and Herding

More particularly for the present study the relationship between search attention and herding is relevant.

Hsieh et al. (2020) demonstrate that Google Search Volume Index can be used to represent information demand by retail investors and that retail attention is a positive determinant of herding. The evidence they provided offers a direct empirical sparring partner to explore the relationship between collective investment behaviour and digital information seeking.

Wanidwaranan and Padungsaksawasdi (2022) do this to 21 equity markets in the world and conclude that the Google-based attention of retail investors leads to a herd behavior. Their findings indicate that investors may make similar trading choices without even realizing it once they receive information from ubiquitous online sources.

The present study is different from these contributions in an important respect. Rather than measure attention based on search intensity for a particular security, it considers search attention to the concepts of behavior. The emphasis then moves to "How much digital attention is being directed towards the concepts associated with collective financial behaviour?".

4.4 Neurofinance and Financial Decision-Making

Neurofinance, as a new discipline, was born of the convergence of finance, behavioural science and neuroscience. Now, neurofinance is a fledgling branch of the science that aims to account for investment behaviour based on the functioning of the brain processes, according to Sahi (2012).

Experimental evidence that anticipatory neural activity relates to subsequent financial decisions comes from Kuhnen and Knutson (2005). They find that they have differentiated processes for risky and risk-averse choices, and that there are affective aspects that are important for financial decisions.

The relevance of neurofinance to herding is related to the social and emotional aspects of decision making. The psychological and sociological factors are important in economic decision making, and therefore social influence is a crucial factor in financial behaviour (Baddeley 2010).

The present research does not seek to determine neural activity based on Google Trends. Rather, a neurofinancial perspective is offered to explain the reasoning behind this increase in digital attention to social imitation, FOMO, sentiment and loss.

4.5 FOMO, Loss Aversion and Financial Behaviour

FOMO is the fear that someone is missing out on something that another person is taking part in. In the financial marketplace, FOMO can basically lead individuals to invest in well-known stories or replicate their investors' choices.

The 2025 Global FOMO study gives a particularly strong backing for the current approach, as a monthly FOMO index is built using Google Trends. The authors show that search-based FOMO has significant relations with financial-market outcomes.

A second behavioural mechanism is loss aversion. Prospect theory suggests that people, in general, feel the loss more intensely than equivalent gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). The mechanism might lead to even further recognition of market risk, negative sentiment and investor behaviour in uncertain times.

FOMO and loss aversion are useful behavioural constructs to examine the relationship between digital attention and collective financial behaviour together.

5. Research Gap and Contribution

Three main gaps are illustrated in the literature.

First, much of the literature targets the stock in the focus of investor attention, not the digital attention that the digital behaviour concept gets. Google Trends is an established proxy for the attention of the investors, but most of the literature is on the stock, not on the digital attention that the digital behaviour concept receives.

Secondly, there is a separation of the literature on herding and the literature on neurofinance. The former is concerned with the collective behaviour of markets, the latter with the psychological and neural processes that underlie financial decisions.

Third, there is limited research that focus on the co-evolution of herding and neurobehavioural concepts with the attention of the digital agenda in India.

The present study is unique in that it:

- creating a long time series of monthly digital-attention data (11 years); and
- discussing several behavioural theories under a single analysis; and
- differentiating between short-term and long-term memory; and

- measuring connections between herding and neurobehavioural notions;
- using ANOVA to determine if the attention changes across study phases; and
- Interpretation of results based on a behavioural lens with a neurofinance approach.

6. Conceptual Framework

The study hypothesized that the following conceptual relationship exists:

Digital Information Environment
↓
Search-Based Digital Attention
↓
Information Seeking and Social Influence
↓
Herding-Related Attention
↙ ↘
FOMO **Loss Aversion**
↘ ↙
Collective Financial Attention

The framework is intentionally conservative. It does not claim:

What is the connection between Google Search and Herding?How do Google Search and Herding relate?

In contrast, the suggested connection is:

Digital Attention → Observable Behavioural Signal

The patterns are interpreted with the help of a theory of neurofinance that provides insight into the social, cognitive and emotional mechanisms that might underlie those patterns.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

This study is an empirical study that employs quantitative approach with secondary digital data.

The data for Google Trends for India was taken from 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2025. The final data set consists of 132 monthly observations.

Google Trends offers relative values of search interest between 0 and 100. The data represent the proportion of searches for a given query over the given time and geographic area, not the number of searches. This is also in line with prior research in investor attention where researchers utilize the Google Search Volume Index (Da et al., 2011; Ayala et al., 2024).

7.2 Keyword Selection

The 8 following keywords were analyzed:

Category	Keywords
Herding	Herding; Investor Herding; Herd Mentality
Sentiment	Investor Sentiment; Market Sentiment
Social conformity	Follow the Crowd
Neurobehavioural	FOMO; Loss Aversion

The keywords were chosen to reflect the collective behavior, social influence, market emotion and psychologically relevant financial concepts.

7.3 Data Cleaning

The data was downloaded and included an observation from December 2014. The December 2014 observation has been excluded as the planned research period starts from January 2015.

So the final analytical period consists of exactly:

January 2015 – December 2025 = 132 months.

A low volume diagnostic was then performed.

The keyword Investor Herding had a zero for every month of the 132 month period. Because of its zero variance, values of the correlation coefficient with this variable and inferential tests like ANOVA are not meaningful. The exclusion of the keyword was therefore not considered an artificial manipulation of the data, but rather an inferential interpretation.

7.4 Analytical Phases

The 132 months were broken down into four sections:

Phase	Period	Number of Months
Phase I	2015–2017	36
Phase II	2018–2020	36
Phase III	2021–2023	36
Phase IV	2024–2025	24
Total	**2015–2025**	**132**

The ability to conduct a phase structure analysis enables a study to look at the system level and investigate whether digital attention has systematically changed over time, rather than focusing on month-by-month changes on an individual level.

7.5 Descriptive Statistics

Mean, median, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were calculated.

Coefficient of variation was calculated as:

The CV can be calculated as follows:CV = (Standard Deviation / Mean) × 100

As CV is sensitive to very small, extremely high CV values are interpreted with caution.

7.6 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to see how the monthly Google trends series were linearly related.

Correlation analysis is exploratory, and does not necessarily mean that there is a causal relationship between the variables.

7.7 ANOVA

To see if there were any differences between the mean search attention for each of the four study phases, a one-way ANOVA was performed on each individual keyword.

The hypotheses were:

H_1: The means for the four phases differ.

H_1: There is at least one phase that is very different from the other phases.

The level of significance was taken as 5%.

8. Results and Analysis

8.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Google Trends Search Attention

Keyword	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	CV (%)
FOMO	43.636	41.500	25.552	4	100	58.557
Loss Aversion	1.023	1.000	0.878	0	3	85.826
Investor Sentiment	1.098	0.000	2.695	0	21	245.372
Market Sentiment	13.341	9.000	14.406	0	100	107.981
Follow the Crowd	2.038	3.000	1.771	0	7	86.897
Herding	45.909	40.500	22.301	12	100	48.576
Investor Herding	0.000	0.000	0.000	0	0	N/A
Herd Mentality	4.841	5.000	3.174	0	14	65.564

Source: Author's computation based on Google Trends data for India, January 2015–December 2025.

The most notable mean is of Herd with 45.909 in the meaningful series, followed by FOMO with 43.636. There is also considerable absolute dispersion between the two variables.

The coefficient of variation (CV) is the highest for Investor Sentiment (245.372%). The magnitude, however, should not be taken as indicative of exceptionally high absolute volatility, since the mean for the magnitude is very small. The high CV is mainly due to the denominator effect due to low average search interest.

Investor Herding is not a valid data for inferential analysis because its variance is equal to zero.

8.2 Low-Volume Diagnostic

Table 2. Low-Volume and Data-Quality Assessment

Keyword	Zero Months	Positive Months ≤1	Non-Missing Months	Analytical Treatment
FOMO	0	0	132	Retained
Loss Aversion	43	49	132	Retained with caution
Investor Sentiment	96	0	132	Retained with caution
Market Sentiment	17	0	132	Retained
Follow the Crowd	50	0	132	Retained with caution
Herding	0	0	132	Retained
Investor Herding	132	0	132	Excluded from inference
Herd Mentality	30	0	132	Retained with caution

Source: Author's computation based on Google Trends data.

The diagnostic analysis shows that digital attention is not distributed equally among the behavioural concepts. There are limited searches on some terms, especially Investor Sentiment and Investor Herding.

The finding itself is analytically significant as a result due to the following reasons: Google Trends research should be treated explicitly with low volume keywords instead of treating all search terms as equally informative.

8.3 Phase-wise Evolution

Table 3. Phase-wise Mean Digital Attention

Keyword	2015–2017	2018–2020	2021–2023	2024–2025	Overall Change (%)
FOMO	13.139	33.722	65.639	71.250	442.283
Loss Aversion	0.139	0.861	1.444	1.958	1,310.000
Investor Sentiment	0.139	0.278	0.861	4.125	2,870.000
Market Sentiment	3.194	6.250	17.111	33.542	950.000
Follow the Crowd	0.611	1.694	3.000	3.250	431.818
Herding	22.778	39.194	59.889	69.708	206.037
Investor Herding	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	N/A
Herd Mentality	2.333	5.028	6.167	6.333	171.429

Source: Author's computation based on Google Trends data.

The phase-wise results show a strong shift in the focus of digital attention towards the theme of Herding and FOMO.

Herding rises from 22.778 during 2015–2017 to 69.708 during 2024–2025. The FOMO rises from 13.139 to 71.250 during the same time period.

Market Sentiment also jumps significantly from 3.194 to 33.542.

The pattern shows that the attention of public search in later periods is significantly higher for collective behaviour and sentiment, and psychologically salient financial concepts.

Changes in low volume variables should be treated with some caution given the large percentage changes. For instance, Investor Sentiment goes up 2,870%, but it's just 0.139 at the beginning. Thus, the absolute change in the phase is more informative than the percentage change itself.

8.4 Variability of Search Behaviour

Table 4. Coefficient of Variation of Digital Attention

Keyword	Mean	SD	CV (%)
Investor Sentiment	1.098	2.695	245.372

Market Sentiment	13.341	14.406	107.981
Follow the Crowd	2.038	1.771	86.897
Loss Aversion	1.023	0.878	85.826
Herd Mentality	4.841	3.174	65.564
FOMO	43.636	25.552	58.557
Herding	45.909	22.301	48.576

Source: Author's computation based on Google Trends data.

The relative search variability is found to be quite different as revealed by the coefficient of variation analysis.

The relative attention does not appear to be very stable, as indicated by a CV of 48.576%, with significant month-to-month variation. The CV for FOMO is 58.557% which has more relative variation.

The extremely high CV for Investor Sentiment is to be taken with a pinch of salt due to the low mean. Therefore the CV analysis is indicative of the difference between relative variability and not a measure of the intensity of behaviour.

8.5 Correlation Analysis

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	FOMO	Loss Aversion	Investor Sentiment	Market Sentiment	Follow the Crowd	Herding	Herd Mentality
FOMO	1.000	.735	.392	.667	.622	**.822**	.469
Loss Aversion	.735	1.000	.418	.647	.530	**.663**	.495
Investor Sentiment	.392	.418	1.000	**.817**	.244	.545	.206
Market Sentiment	.667	.647	.817	1.000	.493	**.721**	.340
Follow the Crowd	.622	.530	.244	.493	1.000	.577	.415
Herding	**.822**	**.663**	.545	**.721**	.577	1.000	.486
Herd Mentality	.469	.495	.206	.340	.415	.486	1.000

Source: Author's computation based on monthly Google Trends observations.

The strongest correlation involving Herding is with FOMO (r = .822). Herding is also significantly related to Market Sentiment (r = .721) and Loss Aversion (r = .663).

There is also a significant correlation between the FOMO–Loss Aversion (r = .735) and Investor Sentiment–Market Sentiment (r = .817).

These associations are theoretically meaningful as previous studies have correlated investor attention with herding and hypothesized that psychological and social factors play an essential role in financial choices (Hsieh et al., 2020; Baddeley, 2010).

However, the correlations should not be assumed to be causal relationships. They may be common changes in the digital environment of information, growing financial literacy, shifts in market participation or general knowledge about new terms in the world of behavioural finance or general reactions to market events.

8.6 ANOVA Results

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Across Study Phases

Keyword	SS Between	df	MS Between	SS Within	df	MS Within	F	p-value
FOMO	72,750.212	3	24,250.071	12,782.333	128	99.862	242.836	<.001
Loss Aversion	56.474	3	18.825	44.458	128	0.347	54.198	<.001
Investor Sentiment	279.261	3	93.087	672.458	128	5.254	17.719	<.001
Market Sentiment	15,821.756	3	5,273.919	11,363.903	128	88.781	59.404	<.001

Follow the Crowd	146.116	3	48.705	264.694	128	2.068	23.553	<.001
Herding	41,514.534	3	13,838.178	23,634.375	128	184.644	74.946	<.001
Herd Mentality	344.354	3	114.785	975.306	128	7.619	15.064	<.001

Source: Author's computation based on Google Trends data.

The results of the ANOVA test indicated that there is statistically significant difference between the four study phases in terms of their search attention.

For Herding, $F = 74.946$ with $p < .001$. So, the null hypothesis that the means of the two phases are equal is rejected.

The strongest F statistic ($F = 242.836$, $p < .001$) is for FOMO, suggesting a significantly greater difference in search attention over time.

There are also significant phase differences for Market Sentiment ($F = 59.404$, $p < .001$).

The descriptive evidence of these findings was strengthened by the statistical support that the attention towards behavioural and neurobehavioural financial concepts shifted significantly between 2015 and 2025.

9. Discussion

The findings indicate that there is an enormous shift in digital attention over the financial behavioural concepts in India from 2015 to 2025. The most noticeable is the parallel rise in Herding and FOMO interest. Herding rises from a phase mean of 22.778 during 2015–2017 to 69.708 during 2024–2025, while FOMO increases from 13.139 to 71.250.

This trend aligns with the existing literature, which validates the use of Google search habits as a proxy for investor interest (Da et al., 2011; Ayala et al., 2024). More crucially, the empirical evidence already found indicates that there is a positive correlation between search-based investor attention and herding (Hsieh et al., 2020; Wanidwaranan & Padungsaksawasdi, 2022).

This work builds on the previous research and examines searching for concepts of behavior as opposed to searching for securities as a proxy for attention.

This is especially true for the relationship between Herding and FOMO ($r = .822$). This strong connection implies that times with higher Digit Attention to Collective Behaviour also have higher Cognition of Opportunity Loss.

The result is theoretically consistent with a neurofinance interpretation. The financial decision-making process requires transactions in anticipation of affect, risk assessment, and social influence. Experimental evidence indicates that anticipatory neural processes are linked to financial decisions (Kuhnen and Knutson, 2005), and that social and psychological factors play a crucial role in economic decision-making (Baddeley, 2010).

At present though, there is no evidence that FOMO causes herding. The relationship can be attributed to both terms gaining salience during high financial uncertainty periods or when people are involved in the markets or talking about it online.

The positive correlation between Herding and Market Sentiment ($r = .721$) is also in line with the overall findings that Google search activity can be used to measure market sentiment, attention and uncertainty narratives, in line with previous literature. In the context of financial markets, for instance, Google search trends are found to have a large uncertainty element, according to Szczygielski et al. (2024).

An other interesting behavioural connection is the one between Loss Aversion and Herding ($r = .663$). An increase in the sensitivity to losses can make the decisions made by other investors more salient to a prospect-theoretic perspective. This is only a theoretical rather than causal interpretation, however, since the present study measures search attention rather than decisions.

The ANOVA results also lend support to the findings of the study. All seven variables will be used for inferential analysis and they demonstrate significant differences between the study phases ($p < .001$). This indicates that the rise in digital involvement isn't just ordinary month-to-month variations.

The findings thus suggest an emerging digital discourse on collective financial behaviour in India.

10. Theoretical Implications

The study has four contributions to the literature.

10.1 Digital Attention as a Behavioural Indicator

This study further supports the claims that Google Trends can serve as an additional financial attention indicator. This aligns with Ayala et al. (2024)'s thorough review of the literature.

10.2 The application of cognitive-behavioural concepts to herding.10.4 How cognitive-behavioural concepts can be applied to herding.

Based on the strong Herding–FOMO and Herding–Loss Aversion relationship, the analysis of collective behaviour could be fruitfully investigated with the analysis of emotionally salient concepts in addition to being an informational phenomenon.

10.3 - Bridging Behavioural Finance and Neurofinance

The study offers an empirical link between digital behaviour as observable and theoretical mechanisms in neurofinance. It does not measure neural activity, but rather illustrates that digital attention can be understood in the context of social influence, emotion and cognitive processing.

11. Practical Implications

11.1 Implications for Investors

As more people start to pay attention to Herding and FOMO, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between independent analysis and socially amplified investment narratives. The point of caution for investors is that the hype they get online might not necessarily be a sign of an appealing investment opportunity.

11.2 implications for Financial Institutions.

Digital-attention indicators could be integrated into a broader behavioural-risk monitoring framework by financial institutions. Attention shifts to herding and/or FOMO or sentiment-related ideas could be supplemental to financial information environment changes.

11.3 Implications for Regulators

During unusual periods of retail-investor attention, regulators may want to take into account digital search activity as an additional surveillance indicator. Do not use Google Trends as evidence of irrationality, manipulation and actual trading behaviour, however.

11.4 Implications for FinTech

Eliminating inconsistencies in investor education and risk communication is one area where FinTech platforms may be able to help. These applications should foster transparency and not using behavioural signals to push excessive trading.

12. Limitations

There are some restrictions to be noted.

First, Google Trends only shows the relative search interest, not the actual amount of searches. Therefore, the values cannot be interpreted as the number of investors searching for each term.

Second, the searchers can't be designated as investors. Search activity can be created by students, researchers, journalists or general public.

Third, Google Trends does not measure the neural activity. The neurofinance interpretation is thus a theoretical one and not a neuroscientific one.

Fourth, a few of the keywords have limited search volume. There are a lot of zero or near zero observations in Investor Sentiment, Loss Aversion and Follow the Crowd.

Fifth, Investor Herding had no variation in any of the 132 months recorded, so it is recorded as zero. It was rightly omitted from inferential analysis.

Sixthly, correlation does not equal causation.

Seventh, the study uses four periods for comparative purposes. ANOVA tests for differences in phase means, but does not determine which phase means differ. Post hoc comparisons should then be used for further analysis in the future.

Finally, Google Trends data are subject to search-engine normalization and keyword-definition effects. Results may differ if alternate search terms, topics or language-specific queries are used.

13. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies can strengthen this research in several directions.

First, Google Trends behavioural indicators could be combined with actual market variables such as trading volume, volatility, returns and liquidity.
Second, researchers could construct a composite Digital Herding Attention Index using multiple validated keywords.
Third, lagged regression or time-series models could examine whether changes in digital attention precede market behaviour.
Fourth, post-hoc tests following the ANOVA could identify the specific periods responsible for significant differences.
Fifth, future research could compare India with other emerging markets.
Sixth, researchers could combine Google Trends with social-media sentiment, news sentiment and retail-trading data.
Finally, a stronger neurofinance design could combine digital-attention data with experimental measures such as EEG, eye-tracking, physiological responses or neuroimaging. Such a design would allow researchers to move from a neurofinance-informed interpretation toward direct neuroscientific evidence.

14. Conclusion

This study examined digital attention toward investor herding and related neurobehavioural concepts in India using 132 monthly Google Trends observations from January 2015 to December 2025.
The results demonstrate a pronounced increase in digital attention toward Herding, FOMO, Market Sentiment and related concepts during the later study phases. Herding increased from a phase mean of 22.778 during 2015–2017 to 69.708 during 2024–2025, while FOMO increased from 13.139 to 71.250.
The correlation analysis provides the most distinctive finding of the study. Herding is strongly associated with FOMO ($r = .822$), Market Sentiment ($r = .721$) and Loss Aversion ($r = .663$). These relationships are consistent with literature emphasizing the importance of investor attention, social influence and psychological processes in financial behaviour.
The ANOVA results further demonstrate statistically significant differences in digital attention across the four study phases for all keywords suitable for inferential analysis.
The contribution of the study lies in bringing together Google Trends, investor attention, herding and neurobehavioural finance within a common empirical framework. Rather than claiming that search behaviour measures brain activity, the study treats digital attention as an observable behavioural signal and uses neurofinance to interpret the potential cognitive, emotional and social mechanisms underlying the observed patterns.
The findings therefore suggest that Google Trends can provide a useful supplementary lens for examining the changing digital environment surrounding collective financial behaviour. The evidence also supports a broader view of herding in which social influence, emotional salience and information-seeking behaviour may operate together.

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