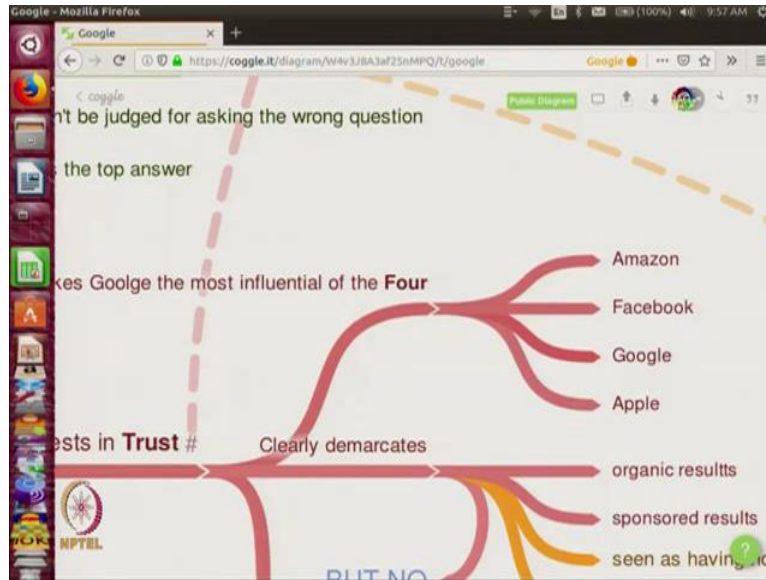


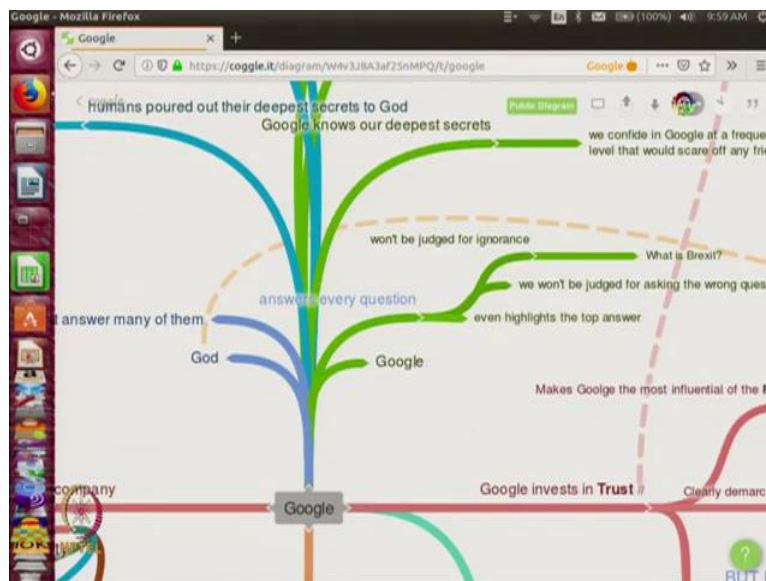
Text, Textuality and Digital Media
Professor. Arjun Ghosh
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.
Lecture 29
Scott Galloway: Google

(Refer Slide Time: 0:36)



Galloway in his book 4 discusses, four very influential corporates of the modern internet era. Amazon, Facebook, Google and Apple. And he says, Google is by far the most influential of these four. And today we are going to take a look at how Google operates and how Galloway actually, speaks of it. To understand what are the effects of some of these platforms on our lives today.

(Refer Slide Time: 1:07)



And very interestingly Galloway compares Google to be a kind of a modern day God. He says, you know just as God heard, God is someone who is omnipresent everywhere and he or she hears people's prayers. I mean people can pray to them to pray to God, at any point of time. Similarly, one can search on Google at any point of time. And where as you know God heard all the prayers but did not answer many of them. Google has an answer to almost every question.

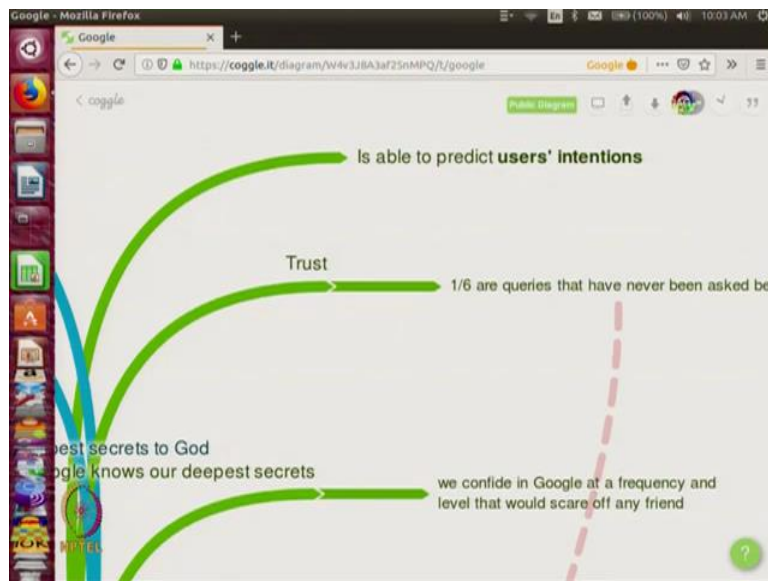
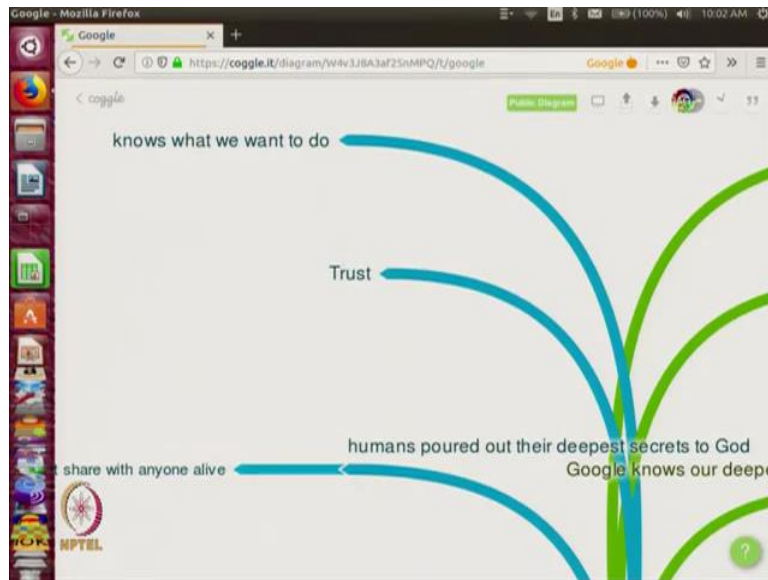
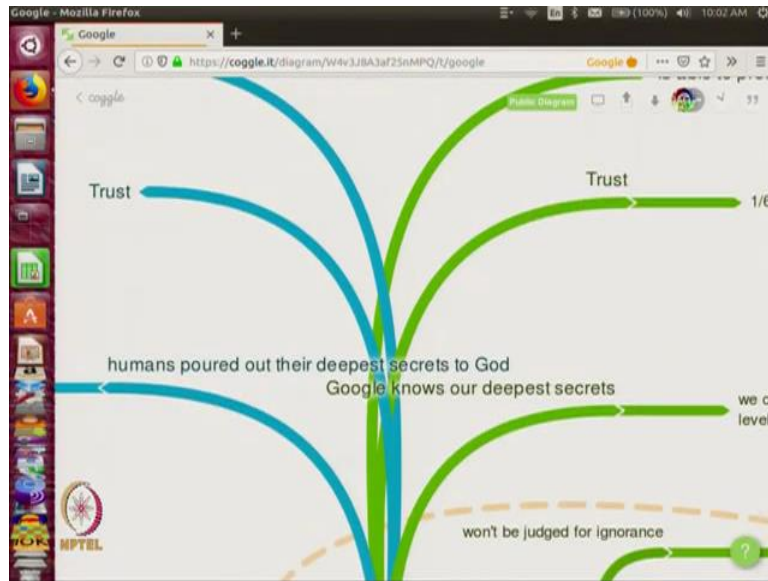
He is very interested in the evolution of search engines before the coming of Google. There would be search engines which would allow readers to go on ask questions, and they would be given answers where there would be other search engines which would only take in keywords but Google has a certain kind of algorithm which answers every question.

And interestingly whereas with God there is a certain kind of fear that God might be judging for the kind of things that you ask, what Galloway says is that Google will not judge anybody. But of course research has moved on from Galloway's text, one of the risks of research on the internet is that this is such a fast changing and fast moving world that some of the conclusions that you might reach might alter with the changes in operation or finding out more information.

So, we now know that Google might actually judge people and track people. Certainly it is possible through artificial intelligence to be able to track people and put them into certain categories and that is something that I am going to talk about later on, in the lecture. But for now, let us stay with what Galloway says and what Galloway says is true because it is true in terms of the fact that for most users they would not realize that Google may also be judging them on the face of it. Google does not judge anybody. But what we realized is that if we are signing in to the search engine it of keeps maintaining a record of what are the various kind of things people are, each person is sort of, searching at any point of time.

And so, for example if we ask a very frivolous kind of a question or like, what is Brexit? Nobody is going to tell us that you do not know what is Brexit. So you would not be judged for asking the wrong question, Google will still give a certain answer. So usually God is someone to whom humans poured out their deepest secrets and somethings, thoughts, which they do not share with anyone who is alive. And Google also tends to know our deepest secrets because the first thing that we do is we have, and he says that research shows that people confide in Google at a frequency and a level that would scare any friend.

(Refer Slide Time: 4:52)

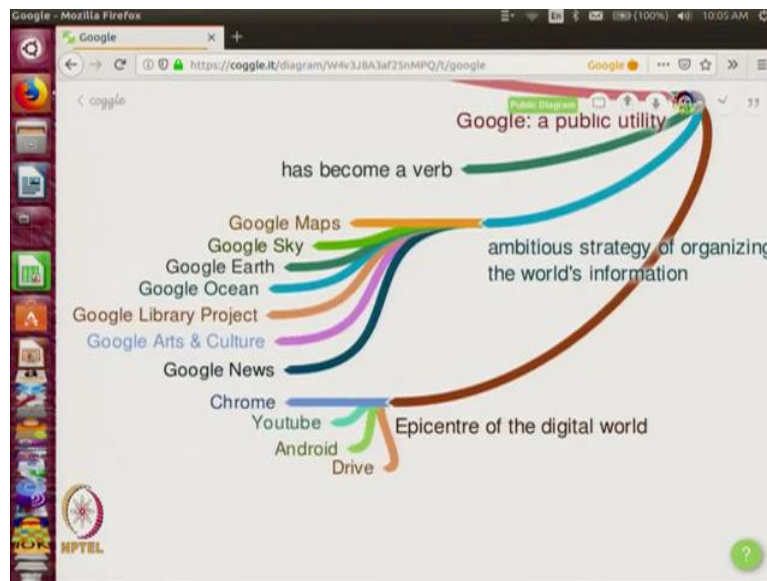


And so there is a certain degree of trust that is there. People trust God. And people also tend to trust Google. So and they did trust Google precisely to find the answer to their questions and says one out of every six queries on Google are queries that have never been asked before. So it shows that people have all kinds of questions and even questions which they are not able to find an answer from anywhere. They trust Google to do that.

And it says that God tends to know what we may do in the next few moments , what our deepest desires are, and Google also knows and is able to predict users intentions through the kinds of algorithms that Google has and that is something that Google really makes use of.

So there is a very interesting way to put it, the kind of power that Google has over users, in the modern world. Almost everybody has a Google account and uses Google, perhaps because of android phones really. Android is as is distributed by Google, and Google has information on a set of users which is larger than any country. Perhaps some of these corporate houses like Facebook and Google are more powerful than most countries of the world. So what are the implications of this kind of functioning on human, life human existence.

(Refer Slide Time: 7:00)



He says that Google, as a form is very different from the other company that he is discussing in this book which is Apple. He says Apple is a luxury goods company but Google presents itself as a public utility, in fact Google has become a verb used to say, let us Google it up, let us just google it and you get to know a certain thing. By the way I would like to also suggest that Google is not the only search engine that is around which works very well. There are other alternatives to it. And so Google is not the only way to do search but for a vast majority of the world's internet users, they would know that there is any other way to search the internet other than Google.

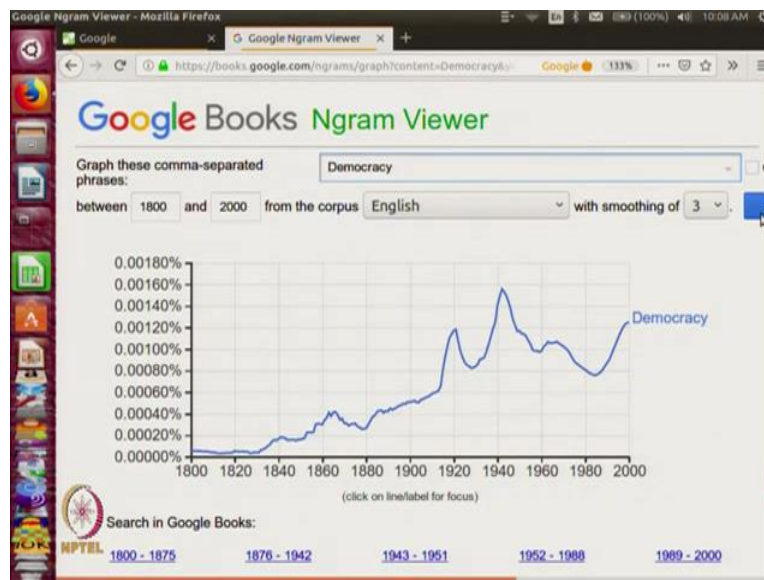
That is the kind of omnipresence, that Google has and look at the kind of products that that Google has. They have an ambitious strategy over organizing the entire world's information. In fact one of the things that Google does is to convert the everything in the world into information into data. Really you have Google Maps which is, people now do not ask each other for directions, do not ask chaiwala or paanwala to find directions anymore.

People just go on to navigation and look for the navigation and by and large they work very well. They also give you traffic information which the chai walla or paanwala may not be able to provide. So that is constant flow of data that that is generated from its users and tracking each form and everything.

And then Google Sky, so Google is on earth and Google is in the sky. You can, if you go to Google Sky you will see the way the various stars and satellites and the moon are placed in the sky from particular locations.

There is the Google Ocean Project which tries to map out the ocean floor. The Google Library Project or Google Book which today is able to convert a huge section of books which are out of print, books which have been published, the entire collection that is on Google is mind boggling. And, the fact is that users may not be able to look through these books for free. But Google has access to it and therefore, Google is able to throw up the kind of search results which can be unparalleled in the world for anything and it is converting and the possibility of the kind of usage of this knowledge of human output through the ages through the centuries is immense. Pitfalls of it are there, of course, mostly the books that are being published are in English or in the European languages. It has not really picked up in the form of other Non-European languages.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:41)

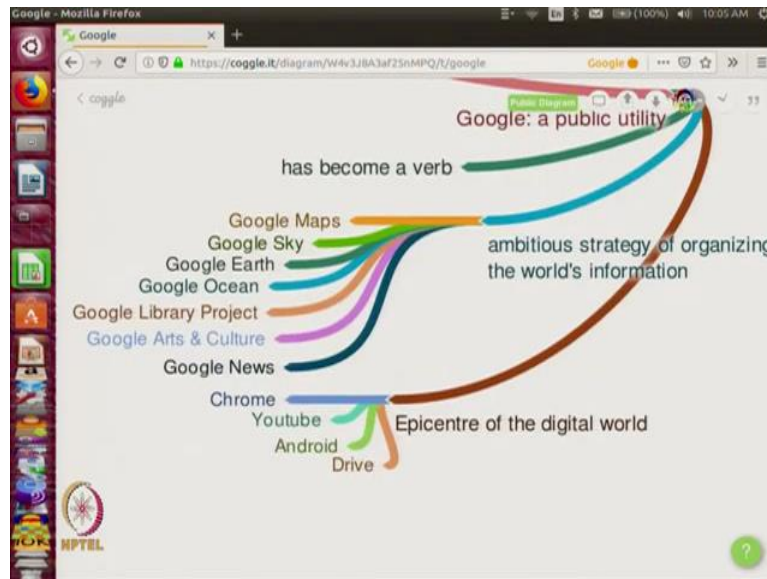


But one of the things that I did sort of demonstrate in the course of this lecture is the Google engrams platform which is able to search through multiple books across the centuries and throw up a result as to what are the important words, or run through the various terms and you can run experiments. And at any point of time, Google is really looking at and reading through and within the press of a button reading through this is a search that I instantly conducted.

So let us say we want to search the presence of the term democracy and how it has occurred across the world, it shows up a result and we very clearly see that it is from the 1830s that the word democracy really comes out and starts getting used and the spikes that we see are just around the two world wars when in democracy, where they need an urge for democracy or

discussion around democracy really goes. But there is of course a dip at around the turn of the century in the 1990s and that would be interesting to look up.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:08)



So, what it is doing is that presents Google with this huge ability to search through and this is just, Google is just throwing up the search results without actually making the content of the books published. The ability to be able to really tailor make its projections is extremely powerful.

There is the Google Arts and Culture Project which documents museums, the Google News which is able to throw up news collected from multiple sources is very interesting platform, where if you are logged in, it will look at the kind of news stories that you are interested and send you notifications on your phone, on your browser and will throw up a list of news stories that are supposed to be more relevant to you. The implications of this, we will discuss in a later lecture, but for the moment that is tremendous amount of power that gives Google to be able to customize new stories to specific readers which allows it to mould people's views if possible you know.

And it is at the epicentre of the digital world. Various other kinds of tools which are there, the Google Chrome browser. The browser is increasingly becoming the most popular browser worldwide and therefore is able to collect a lot of data on user activities. The number of videos which are added on to YouTube every second worldwide is just humongous.

And almost every smartphone. The large number of smartphones, the cheaper smartphones, use Android which is a Google device and so therefore Google has access to all the data, all

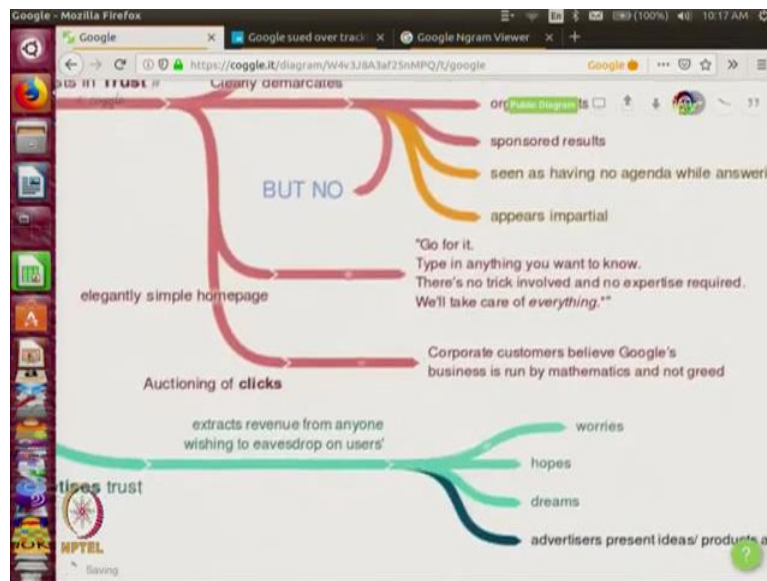
the behaviour of peoples when they are using their phone where they are going, what they are doing, on all their devices. It is something that Google has constant access to.

And of course, Google Drive, it gives you. And the fact is that some of these applications work so well and are so seamlessly very well engineered, which leads to a certain kind of user base. I am not saying that, Google is the only source of good products, it might be producing some of the best products, but it is not the only source of good products. Given that it is a public utility of course; Apple does also produce very good products but it is a more premium sort of product. So, what we realize is that for each of these particular services, you have you can have alternatives.

For example, Open Street Map could be a very good alternative to Google Maps but it is just the coming together of all these applications for the user, which is becoming very important. I mean the seamlessness with which you are able to deal with it, the fact that you can move from one particular record. So if you have Google Docs and you have Google Drive and you have Google Form, you can connect these together you can connect your Google Form to Google Maps, or the calendar to Google Maps.

In fact I have not even listed all the various applications that I hear, which are numerous. And there are many other applications which are still at the beta stage, which is at the experimental stage. And so the point is that this is almost that bardy grip or tie. The bard, when told stories, they could pull out new things more effective things for every audience. And Google is perhaps a modern day bard, a very giant bard, who is able to leave these kind of applications around to every user. And, it is in the connectedness it is the whole is more than the sum of the parts, that is what Google really becomes.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:19)



And how we also invest in, and here he clearly talks about in terms of the research results and the advertisements, Google says that invests in trust. When you search on Google, Google will make a clear distinction between organic results and sponsored results which are ads and which are not.

There is a certain algorithm through which Google works, it tracks the order of the search is on the basis of a certain logic. Certain search results show up as the top 10, which makes it interesting for us to see because if on Google certain search results become the top 10 then, they tend to remain the top 10 because they are the most visited ones. But there are other ways that we will calculate this than the more number of sites which are linking to specific sites. The number of clicks it gets, it collects data all on how long a certain viewer is landing on a page or scrolling through that page.

And so, and Google is seen as having no agenda while answering queries. It is an algorithm which is agnostic to ideology or other kinds of biases and it is seen as having no real agenda. And it appears impartial. But of course we need to constantly have this rider that with Google they there have been cases. If you follow the news you will find that there you see that kind of notifications that keep coming moment one gets on a certain site and everything.

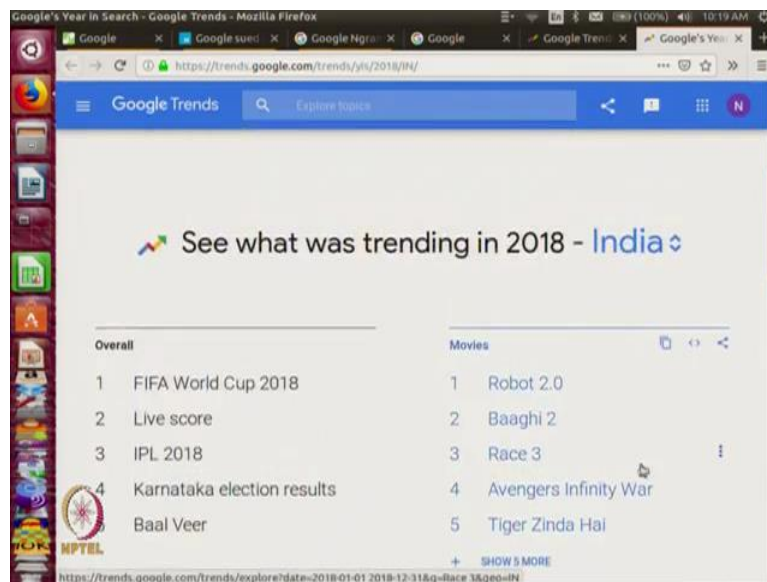
So constantly the mind gets exercised, something that Carr was talking about. And you see that immediately, I was distracted from this lecture while even lecturing, but pardon me for that for the moment but I thought that was a very good demonstration of distracted reading.

So we find that you know this trust can be a little bit of a question mark because if you are trusting merely Google's ability to search, pull out the most relevant searches. That is one

kind of trust, but the other kind of trust is with whether Google is protecting our use of privacy. And, we find that Google is collecting data. Sometimes it can be collecting data without the consent of people, if news stories are to be believed. And we also see that the Google homepage is the most simple and elegantly simple home page, there is no clutter, there are no images no nothing.

This is a very simple page just inviting the reader the user to sort of put in their question typing anything that you want to know. And that is there but what Google also does is that when you start searching for something, Google also does, try to predict what one is searching for. So when I search it gives these search prompts and it is being able to do this because it is tracking what everybody else is searching.

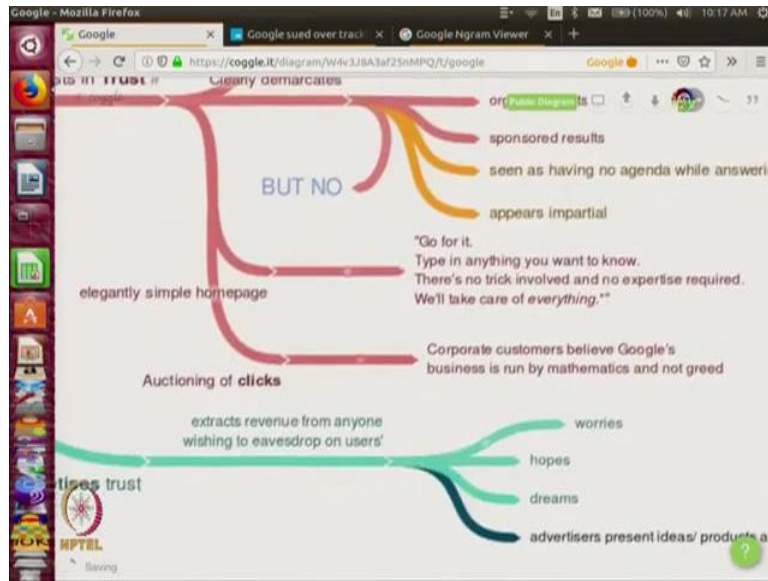
(Refer Slide Time: 21:17)



In fact, if you go to Google Trends. You see I don't use Google as my default search engine all right. So we can see what are the top things that the world has been searching. And it gives a visualization of the data and a whole lot more, this is the world data. You can also customize this to a specific country.

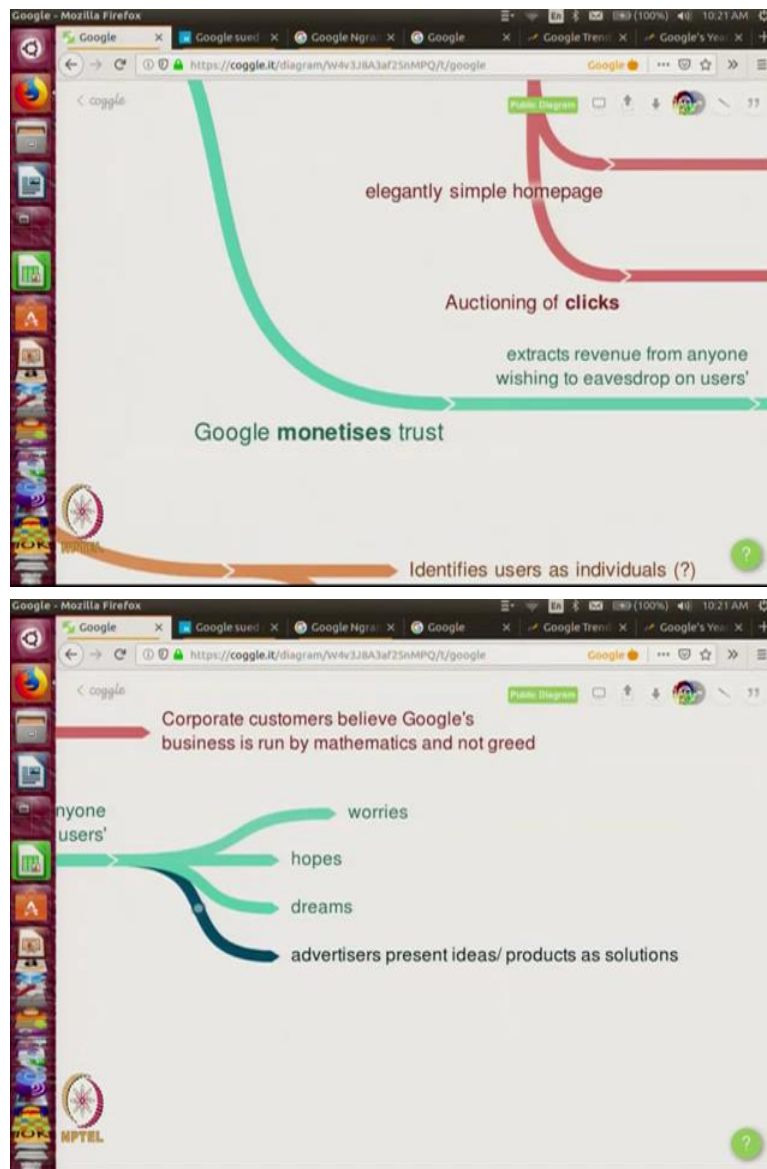
And if we look at India. We can see exactly what India has been searching for in the past 24 hours. So you can see what has been the most important things that people have searched for in a particular year. In 2018 these were some of the things people in India was searching for. And Google is of course collecting all this data and helps it produce better and better results.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:48)



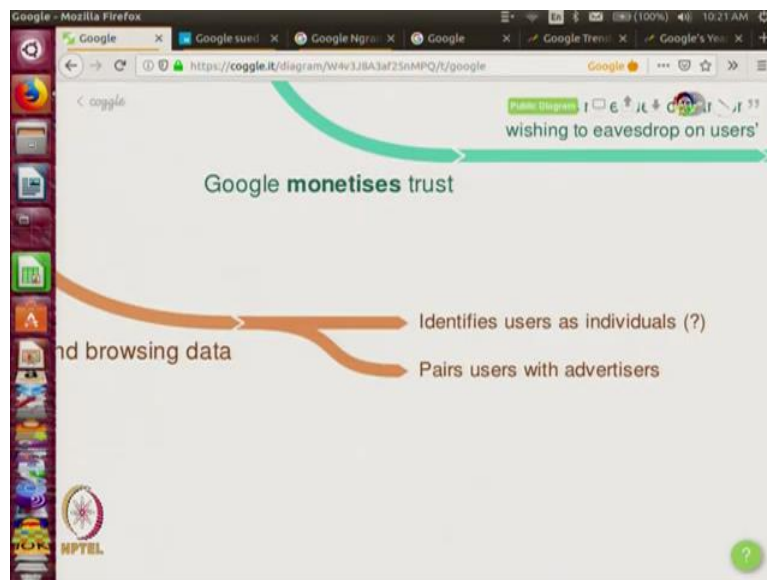
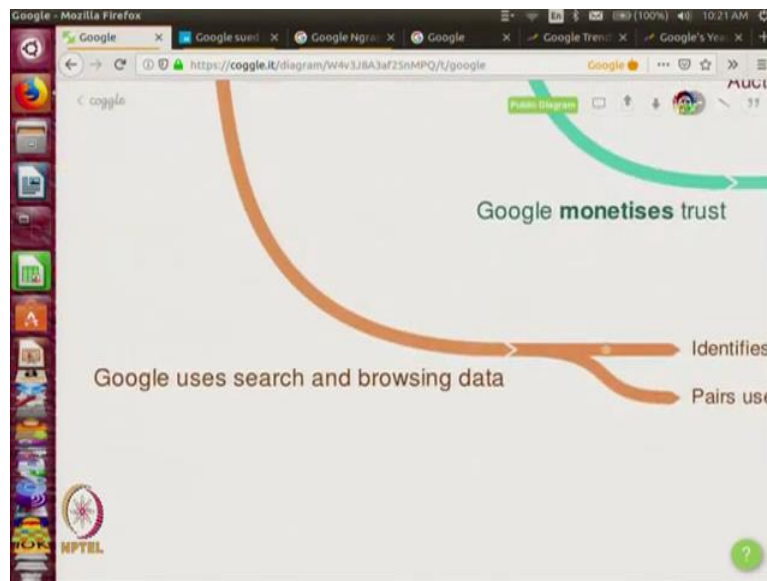
But also gives it a lot more power because it is then using all this information to sell Google ads. Google advertisements and Google also in this invests in trust among the corporate customers, you know because corporate customers who are buying Google ads believe that Google as business is run by mathematics and not by greed and basically if you are paying for something you will get the results that you are looking for.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:15)



So when an advertiser, the way they advertise is, looks at a certain dashboard, or a certain interface of the Google ads, they can sort of customize, I want to target my ad to people who are interested in buying toys for their 6-year-old children and Google should be able to figure that out, who are the people who are looking for toys who have been searching for toys who have been visiting sites of toys because from Google Chrome they are getting that information. And it sort of monetizes that information, it extracts revenue from anyone who wants to use that user data. The hopes and worries of the users, the dreams, and advertisers then present these their products as solutions to all that.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:10)



And one other point about when Google is using the searching and browsing data it identifies users as individuals, I mean or does it identify users as fake sort of identities and the identities of desires and identities with whom then they are pairing certain advertisers.

So what would that do to issues of uniqueness, identity, individual the individual who is. What kind of individual is the individual of the digital era? Is the individual of the digital era a different individual than the individual of the print era? Because we did discuss the fact that print and capitalism sort of gave rise to individualism and a growth of individualism.

So, and what are the long term results of this kind of ways of operating of these large corporate houses. We discussed Google today but some of these processes through which

larger corporate houses, the kind of data that they collect, and the kind of applications that they provide produce.

Let us say Amazon, it began as a co-operative house which sold books but now virtually everything it sells. And the way it is, it tries to monetize people's desires and they are able to throw up certain results. So when you look at a certain product it will constantly keep advertising, you can see that advertisement on when you are visiting some other site as well. And it will keep on saying you have purchased this here there are other alternatives to this.

People who bought this also bought certain other products, which means kind of information that they have, either paired with their commercial goals. And, though Amazon is not a public utility, but some of the mechanisms through which these companies actually operate even, Netflix, or any other entertainment, on line entertainment platform, what they do is the kind of movies that you watch they will try to understand what your taste is and try to target you with that, and then advertise. Advertisers also use this information to target a certain kind of advertisement to that particular user.

What is this doing to us as individuals, whether it is reducing their individuality their unique identity to a certain kind of market groups. Or politically what are the political implications of this kind of sustained operation is something that is a matter of research. And only as this very fast moving ecosystem of the online world moves on, we will be able to gain more and more understanding of how the internet really pans out in the future.

KEYWORDS:

Scott Galloway, Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Social Media, Search Engine, Algorithm, Android, Privacy, Database, Applications, Google Ads, Google Chrome, Data, Sponsored