

AUG 2017

.brands Industry Report

Everything you need to know about .brands

A NEUSTAR REGISTRY SOLUTIONS EXCLUSIVE

neustar[®]

www.registry.neustar

What is a .brand?

Over 550 of the world's largest brands now have their own piece of internet real estate.



It's time to end the search, and start connecting

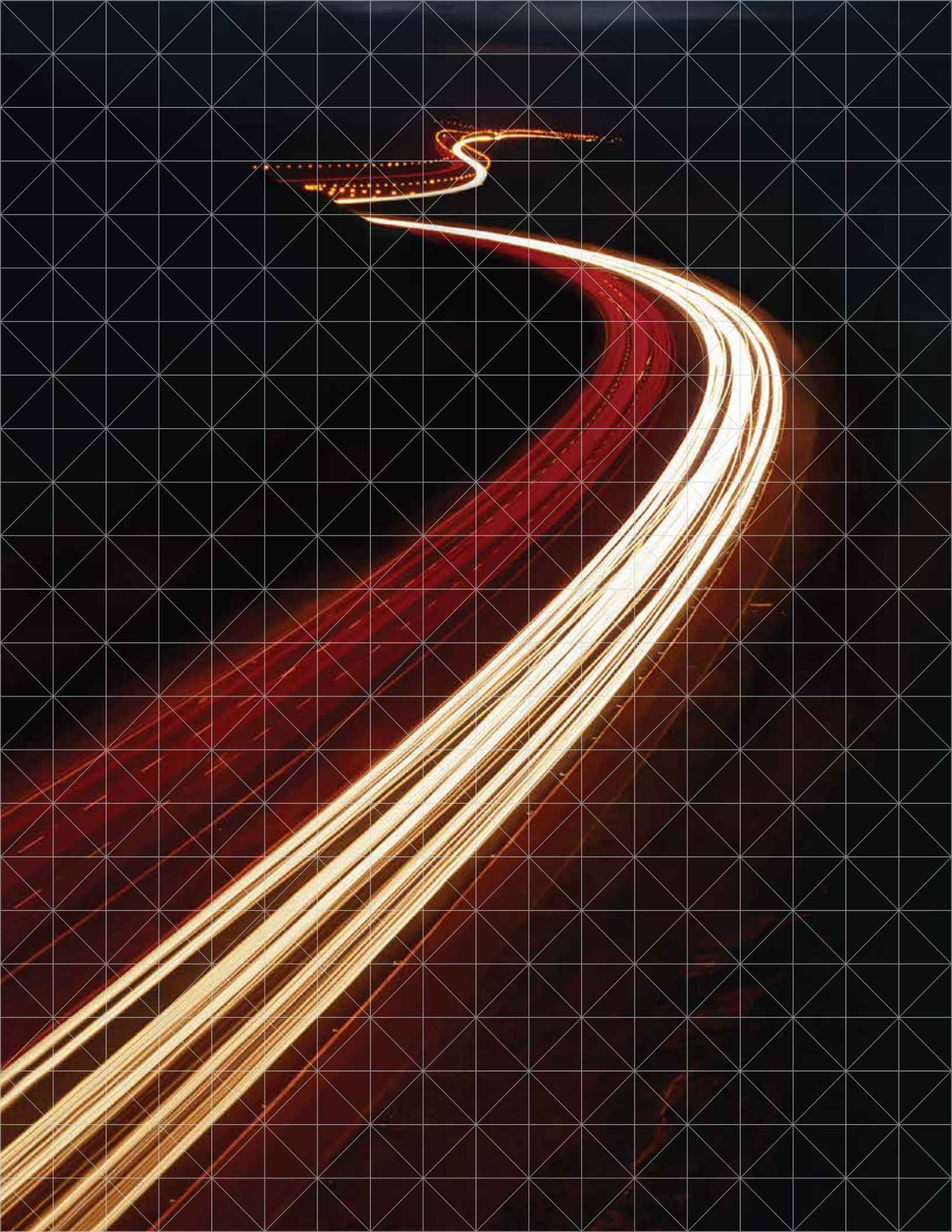
.brand

The future for a connected world

www.makeway.world

Table of contents

Foreword	05
<hr/>	
Introducing the .brands Industry Report.	
By the numbers	06
<hr/>	
A snapshot of growth, usage and industry sector representation in the .brands space, using global data. See how the industry is evolving and who's leading the way.	
Showcase: If it's good enough for Google...	09
<hr/>	
A look at how one of the world's most ubiquitous brands and powerful tech players is using its .brand TLD to align key initiatives with the future of its organization.	
Showcase: Highlights	10
<hr/>	
See some of the best examples of .brand usage from recent months, across all industry sectors and from significant organizations all over the world.	
Insights: .brand vanity URLs & SEO	13
<hr/>	
Major League Baseball's Matt Dorville explains how the emergence of .brand TLDs and changes to Google's algorithm has created an exciting new SEO strategy for brands.	
Insights: How to use your .brand in advertising	17
<hr/>	
Find out how a rethinking of 'marketing 101' could help maximise audience understanding, recall and action when using .brand domains as advertising calls-to-action.	



INTRODUCTION

Foreword

Hello and welcome to the first .brands Industry Report.

With the significant growth across the .brands industry, now is as vital time as ever to shine a light on the momentum that is building around this global movement.

As a company, we at Neustar are thrilled to be driving this innovation. From our own experience with our .neustar Top-Level Domain (TLD), through to our work with an incredible range of clients globally, we are exceedingly fortunate to be part of this journey towards a more intuitive and efficient web.

Nothing that has been achieved so far has been an easy feat, and we are always respectful that implementing a .brand TLD is not without obstacles.

However, the handful of pioneers who were the first to move in this space have now been joined by more and more major organizations – to the point where we now see more than half of the world's .brand TLDs being actively used which is an incredible achievement.

This report is a snapshot of .brand activity – a digest of the must-know news, valuable advice and biggest use cases of recent months to give you a taste of the .brand industry in just a few pages.

We truly believe that .brands are an opportunity to disrupt the current trajectory, take back control of the online experiences we provide and create the new online behavior we all crave from our customers and audiences.

There is so much we could share about the industry, but we hope this report will give a valuable snapshot of some of the key events to inform and inspire your .brand project. As always, we value your feedback, so please let us know what you'd like to see.

Thanks for reading, and for being part of the digital branding revolution.



Tony Kirsch

Head of Professional Services – Neustar

tony.kirsch@team.neustar

By the numbers



14% growth

7631

Total domains



12% growth

5090

Total domains in use



14% growth

13.3

Average number of domains per .brand



11% growth

3408

Redirecting domains



15% growth

1688

Resolving domains

The growth rates above indicate change in the first half of 2017. This year the .brands space has been characterized by a shift to .brand domain usage, with a strong increase in domains in active use including resolving and redirecting domains.



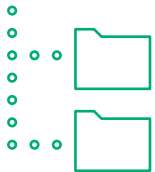
42%

of total .brand domain names being used are from the banking, finance and insurance sectors



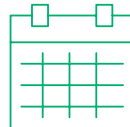
27

new companies have begun using their .brand so far in 2017



85

brands have more than one .brand TLD

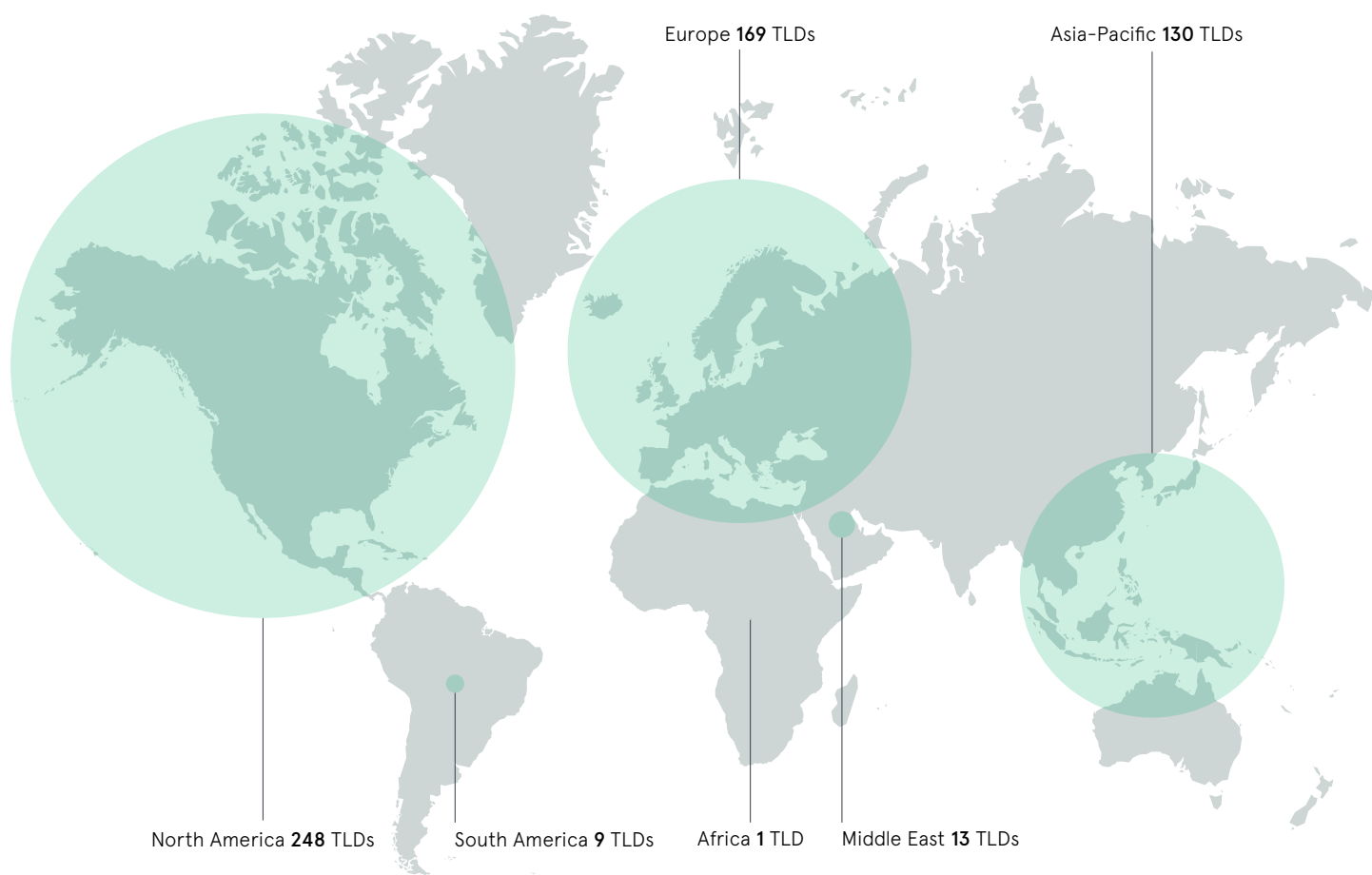


15

months until projected opening of application period for new .brand TLDs

While it is diversifying, the .brands space is led by a few pioneering sectors as shown above. Recent discussions within the domain name community suggest the fourth quarter of 2018 is an achievable date for another round of TLD applications.

Where are .brand TLDs located?



Where are the active .brand domains coming from?



39%



18%



17%



4%



4%



4%



3%



2%



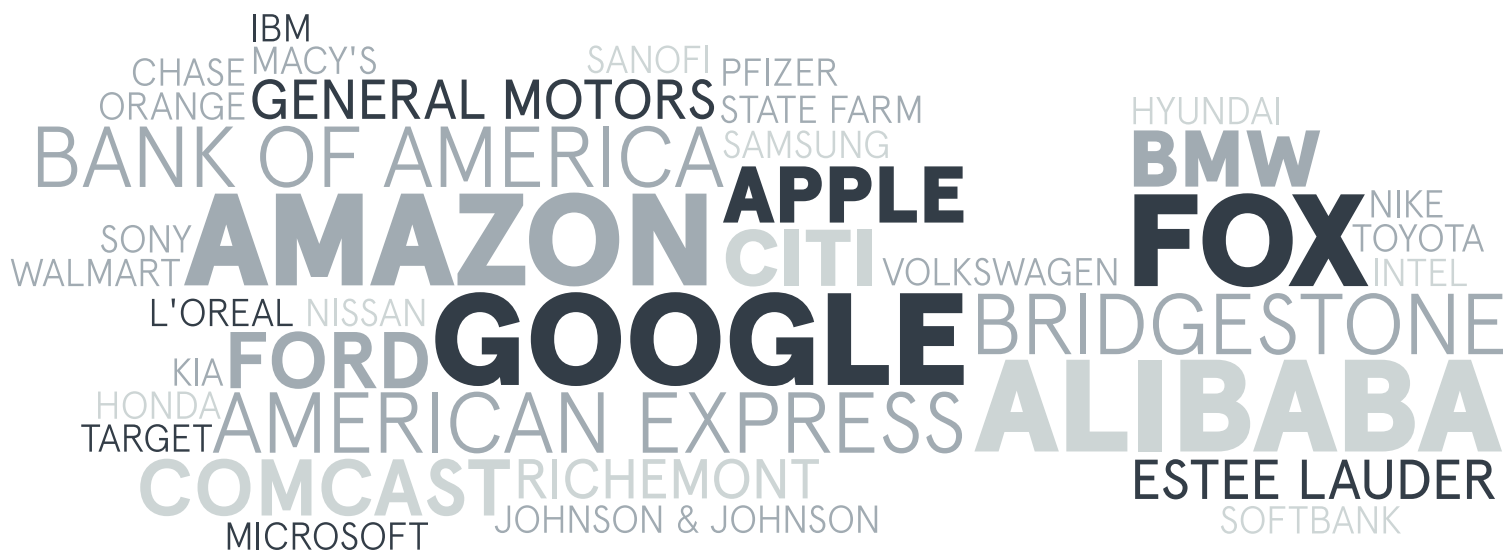
2%



1%

All other countries 6%

.brand owners by advertising spend

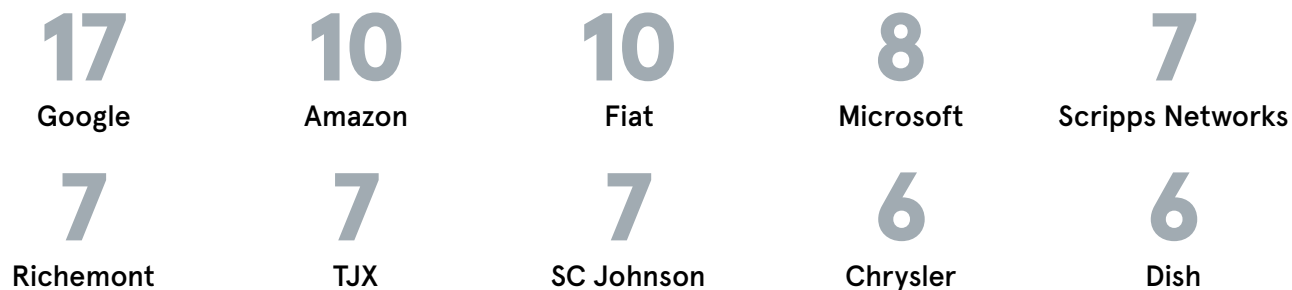


Source: World's Largest Advertisers (December 2016) (<http://adage.com/datacenter/globalmarketers2016>)

Top 10 sectors by number of registered domain names in use



Brands with multiple .brand TLDs



.BRAND SHOWCASE

Showcase: If it's good enough for Google...

Last year, Google's initial efforts with .google included an April Fools' prank at www.com.google, a TLD information hub at www.registry.google and its new domain name registration service at www.domains.google.

Recently, we've seen even more significant uses emerge. Google's design cooperative can be found at www.design.google, and information on its artificial intelligence research and projects is now at www.ai.google. You can even find its blog at – you guessed it – www.blog.google.

If you want to see the AI projects that Google is investing in – you can check out www.gradient.google. Google even supported the US Pride celebrations through its site at www.pride.google.

But what does this mean for other .brands?

Google's scale and profile have great power in drawing attention to the .brand space. It's fair to say it is one of the most innovative global companies, and its use of .google for these new activities, in addition to its 101 TLD applications to ICANN back in 2012, sends two strong messages:

1. When launching something that is important to your company, your .brand should be a part of the equation; and
2. Simple and meaningful URLs are the perfect way to promote your idea/product/promotion and your brand each and every time.



Showcase: Highlights



home.deloitte

A geo-targeted redirect to Deloitte regional sites worldwide.



careers.ford

A redirect to Ford's global careers & jobs portal.



skin.swatch

An eye-catching microsite for a new Swatch product.



drive.bmw

A shortcut to BMW's global homepage.



motionsonic.sony

A microsite about Sony's Motion Sonic project.



store.microsoft

A redirect to Microsoft's online software & hardware store.



government.cisco

A microsite on how Cisco supports government & communities.



womens.afl

A site for AFL's historic women's football league.



bgov.bloomberg

A site about Bloomberg's government service.



safeguard.hsbc

A landing page for HSBC's 'Safeguard' security services.



aquos.sharp

A new address for Sharp's global website.



fukui.canon

A new homepage for Canon sub-brand Fukui.



sport.leclerc

A sport-focused online store from French retailer E.Leclerc.



claims.allstate

A redirect to the claims section of Allstate's website.



summit.audi

A microsite for the 2017 #AudiSummit in Barcelona.



facebook.audi

A shortcut to Audi's company Facebook Page.



kt.cern

A site from CERN's Knowledge Transfer Group.



wearetennis.bnpparibas

A newsfeed-style site on the French Open tennis tournament.

.brand insights

Advice and guidance for your .brand

Insights: .brand vanity URLs & SEO

Link building is a valuable part of any SEO strategy.

The release of .brand TLDs, combined with recent changes announced by Google, mean that a vanity URL strategy may be the key to that much needed SEO boost for the companies that have these exclusive .brand assets.

Major League Baseball's Matt Dorville shares his perspective on how to use vanity URLs within your .brand TLD to really drive your SEO ranking.

How vanity URLs & a .brand could supercharge SEO

Vanity URLs are generally shorter, customized URLs that complement rather than replace a brand's main homepage URL and are designed to be easier to remember and provide simplicity in their approach.

Typically, you'll see these being used to help the customer get to the landing page for a particular product or promotion. Using a simple 30x level redirect, the user is carried to the final destination they are seeking, often a piece of content deeper within the website.

For example, yankees.com is one of Major League Baseball's best known URLs and the homepage of the New York Yankees. Many would be surprised, however, to hear that yankees.com is actually a vanity URL and we host the site's content at <http://newyork.yankees.mlb.com/> for strategic reasons.

At MLB, we see this as a win-win.



The yankees.com address is far easier for people to remember and type in – giving the customer a fast and easy way to access the Yankees content. And for us at MLB, it gives us the benefit of increasing the volume of links toward newyork.yankees.mlb.com and allows us to rank well in search.

Do users care that the browser bar shows a different domain to the one they typed in? Not in my experience – they just want to reach the content as quickly and easily as possible.

In the past, while vanity URLs were frequently seen as a viable strategy for generating quality links, there was often conflict with this decision. Many SEO managers tended to shy away from vanity URLs, as each vanity URL redirect resulted in a loss of around 15 percent of the link strength.

However, changes to Google combined with the continued global emergence of .brand TLD usage opens up a new strategy that shows great potential.

In 2016, Google Webmaster Trends Analyst, Gary Illyes, announced that 30x redirects no longer lose PageRank, which was a significant shift in the underlying algorithm.

For .brand owners – those with no limitations to what names they can register within their own extension – this is interesting. With vanity URLs now transferring link strength as much as a direct link to the site, the opportunity to use a vanity URL strategy with your .brand is now squarely back in focus.

In addition to the ease of use for customers trying to access the exact landing page or part of a site that they're looking for, vanity URLs are also an excellent way of establishing a social connection with the customer and generating links.

With Twitter feeds now showing up in search engine result pages and social now an excellent and widely understood method of amplifying content and links, vanity URLs provide a wonderful opportunity to spur social involvement, amplify and extend reach for links, and build traffic and discoverability around a marketing campaign.

Broadcasting links on social media leads to serious amplification of campaigns, which then turns into backlinks as those links either hit a news source or possibly blogs that write content about the campaign.

Vanity URLs using .brands are a simple and highly effective method of getting your customers to where they want to go, as well as giving your SEO a boost that won't be easily replicated by your competitors.

Whenever an organization does a marketing campaign, it really should pair itself with a great SEO campaign. But it's often difficult to achieve your goals from a marketing standpoint as well as a SEO standpoint.

That's where vanity URLs open doors. Using vanity URLs with your .brand allows:

- » the marketing team to get the URL with the product name they want,
- » the development team to avoid a lot of work getting the consumers there, and
- » SEO to gain strength both on the landing page for the campaign as well as use the link building to strengthen the entire site.

Looking further ahead, as the biggest brands in the world fight to re-establish direct relationships with their customers wherever possible, the ability to use a vanity URL strategy to allow customers to type in <anything>.brand vanity URLs to find the content they're seeking is a very interesting one.

Consumers will still rely on search to navigate the ever expanding amount of content on the web. However, the use of vanity URLs within .brand TLDs in the coming years is going to be a significant opportunity to garner excellent growth in both long term and short term SEO as well as increasing highly valuable direct type-in traffic in the future.

Matt Dorville is Major League Baseball Advanced Media's Content and SEO Strategist. He is widely regarded as a leading global SEO expert and develops SEO strategies for MLB.com, NHL.com, and all 61 ball clubs within MLB as well as for Major League Baseball Advanced Media's partners both domestic and internationally.



.BRAND INSIGHTS

Insights: How to use your .brand in advertising

One question we're asked frequently is about just how to represent .brand URLs to maximize audience understanding, recall and action when used in advertising or promotional material.

The short answer is that there are a number of ways to do this. These include including the full 'www' in the address, including 'http:/' in the address, using 'domain only' labels such as registry.neustar, using symbols such as a cursor or computer icon, using a search bar illustration or symbol, and written instructions such as 'find us at...' or 'visit our website...'

The process for selecting the right approach for you can be boiled down to two key factors: the advertising medium and the desired customer behavior.

Medium

As a marketer, you'll be aiming to select the best possible medium, or range of mediums to execute your campaign with the maximum impact. Specifically for a .brand, one of the most obvious factors to consider is whether the domain will be spoken aloud (e.g. radio), read visually (e.g. print, digital), a combination of spoken and read (e.g. television) or clicked (e.g. social media).

Audio media relies on clear information that can be processed easily. Its other unique feature is that audiences are often unable to take immediate action – such as hearing a radio ad while they're driving – making recall a very important factor. The call to action (CTA) needs to be simple enough that a listener can remember and follow instructions at a later time.

In this instance, a combination of a CTA such as "find us at" or "visit our website at", followed by a domain with or without the 'www' can be a simple way to convey the message.

Visual media allows for more options of presentation with the introduction of symbols. However, when presented in a visual format such as a print or digital ad, too much text is likely to drive designers mad and the aesthetic appeal of the CTA becomes much more important. In this medium, simple is better and for this reason, we tend to favor the www or the use of a symbol that would clearly indicate a digital CTA.

Click based presentations of domains can be overshadowed by rich image previews which tend to be more attractive to the user than a URL. However, we strongly believe that where possible, the .brand should be presented to reinforce its usage and build consistent and potentially subconscious awareness of the .brand itself.



Desired customer behavior

Regardless of the creative execution of your advertisement, there will be an objective tied to it that outlines a key behavior you want audiences to take once they've been exposed to the ad.

One important question when using your .brand to convey a message is: do I want my audience to react immediately, or will recall of the domain for later use be required? The former is likely more applicable for example in digital ads where you want someone to click through – whereas recall may be more important for traditional advertising methods such as radio or television where the brand may be hoping that the client recalls the message, or acts at a later time.

It's not (yet) an exact art

While some of this sounds like Advertising 101, the nature of new technologies is that they require rethinking the 'old rules' to make sure they still fit with the tools and the audiences of today. The advantage .brand owners now have is that this is a namespace they control entirely; meaning they can easily create 'backup' domains to cover mistypes or incorrectly-recalled domains.

More importantly, regardless of the medium or the domain – these brands can begin to reduce their reliance on third parties such as social or search for their traffic, by creating CTAs that get people directly where they need to be and build more meaningful connections with customers.

That's a goal well worth pursuing if you ask us.

Definitions

We, us and our means any or all of the Neustar Inc. group of companies, their related entities and their respective officers, employees, contractors or sub-contractors.

Disclaimer

This document is subject to copyright and as such, this document (or any part of it) may not be reproduced, distributed or published without our prior written consent.

This document has been prepared and presented in good faith based on our own information and sources which are believed to be reliable. We assume no responsibility for the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the information contained in this document (except to the extent that liability under statute cannot be excluded). This document is for editorial, descriptive and non-commercial purposes only and we claim no affiliation with or endorsement by the organizations listed.

To the extent that we may be liable, liability is limited at our option to replacing, repairing or supplying equivalent goods or paying the cost of replacing, repairing or acquiring equivalent, or, in the case of services, re-supplying or paying the cost of having such re-supplied.

Trademarks Notice

Any of our names, trademarks, service marks, logos, and icons appearing in this document may not be used in any manner by recipients of this document without our prior written consent. All rights conferred under law are reserved.

All other trademarks contained within this document remain the property of their respective owners, and are used only to directly describe the products being provided by them or on their behalf. Their use in no way indicates any relationship between us and the owners of those other trademarks.

About Neustar

Every day, the world generates roughly 2.5 quadrillion bits of data. Neustar isolates certain elements and analyzes, simplifies and edits them to make precise and valuable decisions that drive results. As one of the few companies capable of knowing with certainty that is on the other end of every interaction, we're trusted by the world's great brands to make critical decisions some 20 billion times a day. We help marketers send timely and relevant messages to the right people. Because we can authoritatively tell a client exactly who is calling or connecting with them, we make critical real-time responses possible. And the same comprehensive information that enables our clients to direct and manage orders also stops attackers. We know when someone isn't who they claim to be, which helps stop fraud and denial of service before they're a problem. Because we're also an experienced manager of some of the world's most complex databases, we help clients control their online identity, registering and protecting their domain name, and routing traffic to the correct network address. By linking the most essential information with the people who depend on it, we provide more than 11,000 clients worldwide with decisions—not just data.

More information is available at

www.home.neustar

