

# .brand

Think global, act local:  
Geo-targeting & your .brand



# Summary.

Today's consumer is smart. They're bombarded every day with information and advertising from all over the world, and more and more they're looking to signals of trust and familiarity when choosing who to do business with online. Not surprisingly, it's more important than ever to deliver a local experience for consumers within the increasingly-global, digital realm.

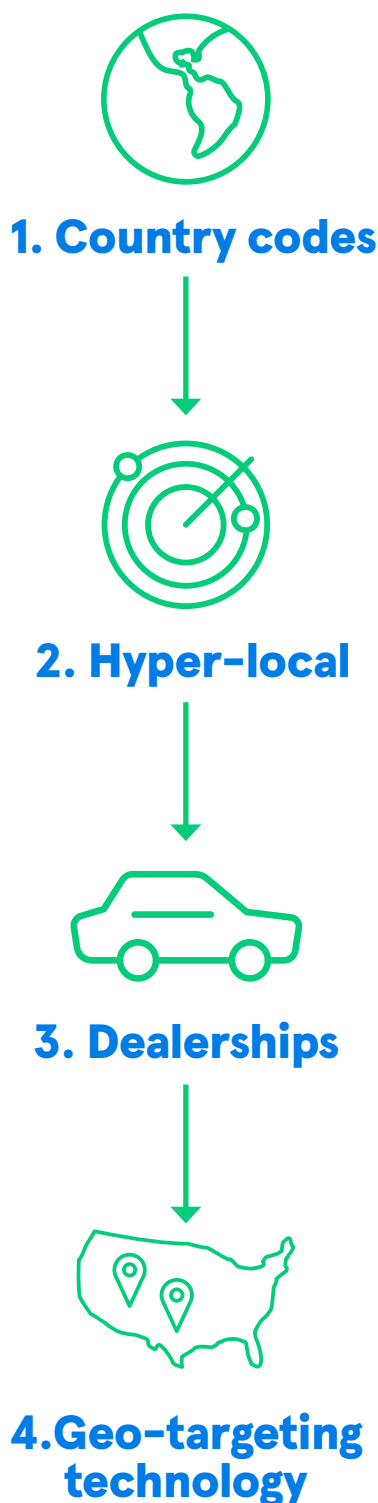
Since the introduction of .brand Top-Level Domains, many have seen them as a great opportunity to create a more personalized customer experience and therefore deepen connections between brand and consumer.

The increased flexibility and ability to create domains specific to a location or region has created a world in which a global brand can now reach customers on a local level, leading to a better customer experience and strengthened brand loyalty.

So what are the options available for marketers to consider when using their .brand for local marketing?

We analyze some existing techniques below.

# Current approaches



## 1. Country codes

A number of organizations use two-character country codes with their .brands to create location-based navigation for customers. For example, the materials handling equipment provider Linde uses [es.linde](#) for its site for Spain. Some of Linde's two character sites are stand-alone landing pages or sites with dedicated content, while others (such as [ca.linde](#)) redirect to an existing regional site. This flexibility helps provide new, consistent representation for countries previously without a dedicated domain, while utilizing existing sites and content to save time, effort and duplication of material.

The vast majority of global internet users are accustomed to using these country-based, two-character codes when visiting websites, and this helps customers to understand fairly intuitively what the domain is and form a level of expectation that the content will be regionally based.

Others that utilize this type of approach include the German manufacturer ACO and pharmaceutical company Stada, and French construction brand Weber, to name a few.

*Note: Although two-character country codes are short and highly recognizable, brands should be aware that there are five two-character codes that are currently restricted and may not be registered: AU, EC, EU, EP, and UN.*

## 2. Hyper-local

MMA is an insurance brand headquartered in France, which already has around 1,750 domains registered in its .brand. Primarily these domains represent specific regional locations, such as [antibes.mma](#), and given the large volume of domains, the vast majority have been set up as redirects rather than individual landing pages with dedicated content.

This provides MMA with an excellent and low cost opportunity to provide its consumers with domain names that associate specifically to the location, and the brand.



### 3. Dealerships

The Volkswagen Group uses localized domains within two of its brands – .audi and .seat. These consist of dealership names, such as [leipzig.audi](#). Although not strictly geographic locations, automotive dealers are highly localized and this could be considered a 'quasi-geographic' approach since they often include a town or city as part of the name.

Automotive dealerships are typically privately owned businesses, so this approach is a great way to bring consistency across the retail channel and bring all the independent dealers together under the brand banner. So far, dealer locations seem to be restricted to the respective native markets of Audi (600+ mainly in Germany) and Seat (400+ mainly in Spain), however this is an approach that could be rolled out globally, creating cohesiveness in the brand around the world.

### 4. Geo-targeting technology

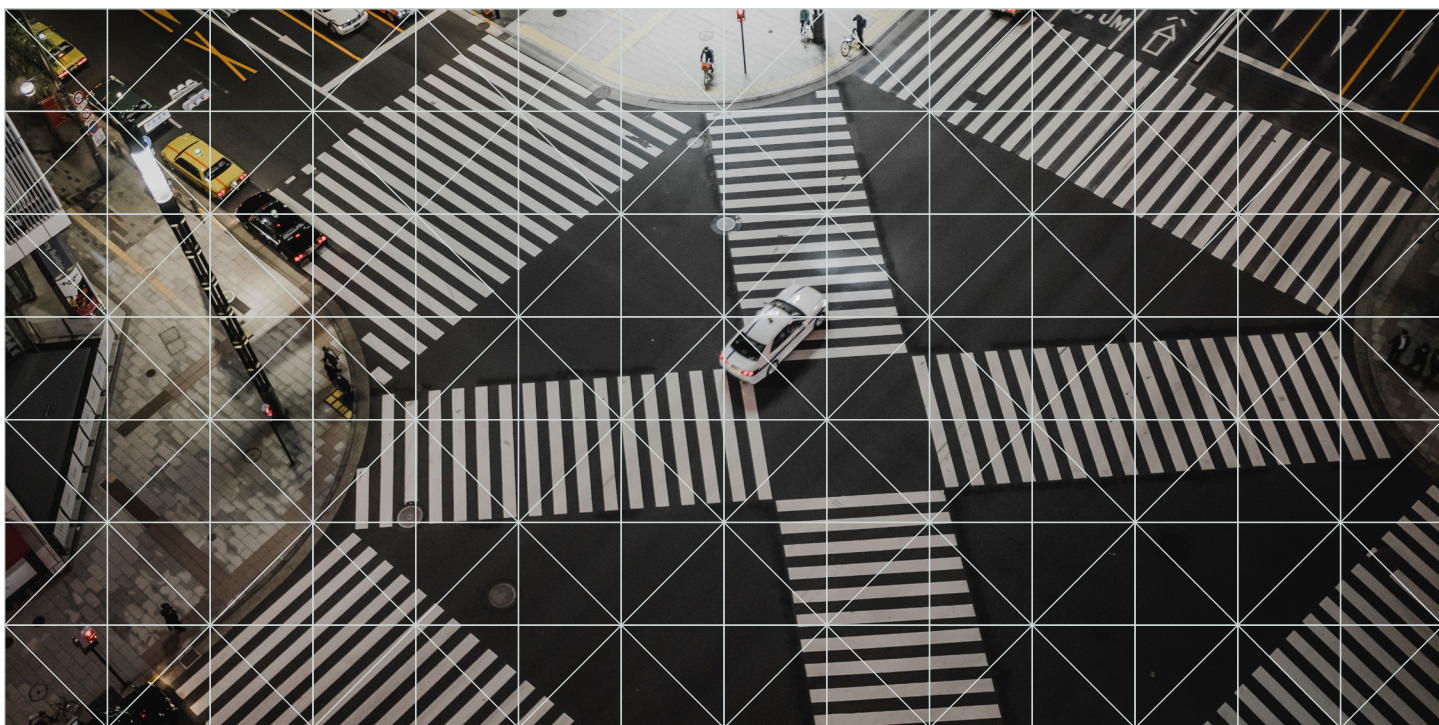
Much geo-location can be automated using tools most organizations have already in play. If you want to serve up different content based on a user's location, then brands can engage technology-based solutions that use traditional DNS, Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) or even some Content Management Systems (CMS) to direct traffic.

For example, if an insurance brand wants to promote its car insurance product, then it will likely want to send users in different countries to different landing pages since regulations vary regionally. This is a process most consumers will already be familiar with, dealing with a wide array of global brands.

Applying this strategy to a .brand could mean greater simplicity in advertising – for example, a single domain name can be created for a product or service, which then uses geo-targeting technology to allocate visitors to the most relevant regional site. This removes the need for endless regional variations on a single domain and allows for a streamlined, globally recognizable call-to-action for your offering.

For example, Deloitte has created the domain [home.deloitte](#), which employs geo-targeting to take visitors to an appropriate regional homepage. This means they can use the term 'home' just once, and still have it work globally without needing to register multiple words and phrases to use in different regions.

And as the famous tagline from international banking giant HSBC has stated for years, URLs like these allow businesses to finally 'Think Global and Act Local' with each domain name.



# How to choose the best method for you

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**To determine the best approach for your organization, consider what your goals are.**

- **Local identity** – Providing customer facing agents with a dedicated local site helps the customer know (or at least think) they're dealing with a local representative. The MMA model of using town names may be a good approach here.
- **Consistency in branding** – Bringing franchises, independent operators and local representatives together on your .brand can create a consistent representation of your brand while bringing differentiation that your competitors can't match unless they too possess a .brand. This can be seen in the Audi and Seat model of dealership names.
- **Trust and recognition** – Using two-character country codes will likely bring additional trust and respect from users within that country, even if the brand is global. Consumers are accustomed to these types of domains in many countries and are often likely to be more comfortable doing business or purchasing online when the digital experience is tailored to their local needs. The approach taken by Linde among others may also bring SEO benefits by using redirects to deeper site content, rather than microsites for each country.
- **Simple, global calls-to-action** – The approach of using technology to direct traffic based on the user's location is arguably under-utilized by .brands so far. For example, a .brand domain using a product or service name can be created and marketed globally, using geo-targeting technology to then direct visitors to the most relevant local site. This allows for a single product name or sub-brand be used across multiple countries or continents.



## Supporting a truly global brand

**The good news for those with a .brand is that you now have another range of options for putting your .brand to use and making it relevant to local users.**

As an additional bonus, most of the approaches outlined here can sit happily alongside other uses of your .brand that support your organization's goals. A .brand domain can create a chance for a streamlined global web strategy that 'feels' local but is consistent across borders; presents an opportunity to truly differentiate from non-.brand competitors; and increases simplicity so your customers can find what they want irrespective of where they are in the world.



