

Creative vertigo: the spin of the ICANN branding revolution

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The word [gTLD](#) has been added to the hard-core lexicon of global branding. Why is this new spin causing vertigo to some? Before you say anything else like "what?", just hold on. It makes no difference whether you already are an expert on gTLD or not. It's in your face and we will all have to cope with it for a long time, so deal with it.

On the Internet today, from around the world, there are over 10 000 articles on ICANN's gTLD platform with a pro and con analysis, ranging from 'marketing, branding, naming and global cyber image expansion issues' all the way to how it will 'destroy big brand management'. The sooner you can articulate the topic, the faster you will enjoy the ride.

The dizzying questions

- What would you do if your industry sector world became overpowered by new global gTLDs?
- What precise calibration can you apply today to determine the long-term future of your name identity?
- What action plan can you activate if your name identity were unsafe to carry the marketing load?
- Why are too many or too few name identities considered necessary in your organisation?
- Where are the opportunities on new global digital platforms to increase customer touchpoints?
- Who are the real beneficiaries if there are disfunctionalities in your brand names?

To start, if these subjects are still not on the agenda, then obviously digital spinning and new platforms are going to hit the fan and eventually shake down your old trees.

As an overview, the current 200 million domain names are stretched to serve two billion online users. Both of these numbers will double to cope with the increasingly e-commerce hungry population of seven billion. Last century marketing and branding models all over the world will not be able to hide from these digital storms, being caused by huge additions to online and mobile users the world over.

Some limitations

A gTLD is simply a new powerful domain name platform to create limitless nets for customer touchpoints. Like any other innovation, it has some limitations and may not fit each and every model.

Nevertheless, guesswork on this branding lexicon and casual chatting about its role, without understanding of its

functionality and the global marketplace, would easily become a proof of lack of education. To have bold opinions, it is important to have full orientation; half knowledge is the worst kind of knowledge.

On 12 January 2012, the world's largest branding revolution will begin, as ICANN will start accepting gTLD applications. A [White Paper](#) has been issued recently at [AARM](#) to provide some in-depth perspective to the marketers of the world.

Coalition for Responsible Internet Domain Oversight

In the meanwhile, to keep with the advertising tradition, the advertising associations of the world under the leadership of ANA have now finally branded their front as Coalition for Responsible Internet Domain Oversight ([CRIDO](#)), a logo-slogan-based violent opposition campaign against gTLD.

Their jingling opposition is based on fear mongering, lack of skills on nomenclature issues, and fear of massive digital shifts towards new platforms. Their ambiguous search for the justification on the value of the gTLD programme points to their own confusion about digital compression of a name identity on a global horizon. The majority of their members seriously lack the transparency in their own name brands to accommodate global expansion.

Unfortunately, gTLD platform will not work for the thousands of established big brand names as their name-structuring is too cumbersome to fit cyber name management demands. This opposition is a double-edged sword, as the more opposition they raise on mythical grounds, the more visible the limitations of their name.

Inevitable game-changer

The gTLD is an inevitable game-changer and is no different from what earlier domains did to old established sectors. Irrespective, any last century name without a proper name evaluation report may never discover how to recalibrate for the next generational digital demands. Denials to these facts will only prolong the agony and eventually sink old brand names.

History allows revolutionary steps of human effort to climb up much higher on the ladder of innovation. Higher advancements shouldn't be hindered with a sudden fright of vertigo. Gutenberg's 'moveable type presses' dispersed knowledge; Netscape's world-first free browser created the first Internet revolution; today's portable computer devices are shattering old models.

These innovations have given well-grounded and deeply rooted sectors discomfort. It's no longer important what ad agencies think; what's important is whether or not they can step up to the new heights of global naming complexities and stop dwelling in creative vertigos.

Heavyweights from the 'adult industry'

Keeping the same tempo, a consortium of heavyweights from the 'adult industry', with an antitrust lawsuit against ICANN, claim their existing adult megabrands are threatened by the expected strangulation from the newly approved XXX gTLD of ICM registry.

They are right. This could happen, and this claim further endorses the hidden powers of a gTLD. It also exposes limitations of last-century-naming and how their 'print media age dependency' of the 'glossy-centerfold-era' is being challenged by upcoming free-flow digital video platforms with massive customer touchpoints via cyber name management.

The books needed to discuss this subject matter in detail and outline tactical nomenclature strategies have not yet been written. However, it is a sophisticated game, demanding bold manoeuvres and cyber-savvy skills. There will be many other similar fights among various consortia controlling major sectors of the global consumption over cyber access and market domination via name identity.

A great disaster

Let's say, on the other hand, what will happen if the US Department of Commerce were to order a halt to this revolutionary project? Firstly, the sudden stoppage to gTLD would crush the credibility of ICANN beyond repair and, secondly, provide sought after substance to rest of the Internet stakeholders outside the US to hand over future decisions to either a UN body or simply break up the Internet. All that would be a great disaster.

While ad agencies would declare victory, brand owners, in the largest majority, would hardly have little or no idea about what just happened. Most CMOs of the world are still trying to figure out what this is all about.

However, the global volume and demand of ecommerce activity for second-generation types of domain name platforms will create intercontinental shockwaves. Multilingualisation of domain names alone is a new frontier, where hundreds of millions of non-English domain names will dwarf dominating western name brands.

Trying to protect

Any victory declared by CRIDO would be short-lived, as the future is relentlessly headed for creation of new cyber name brands for global ecommerce business names. In fairness, CRIDO is trying to protect the US and western brand names from an eventual onslaught of more powerful and creative names emerging from the rest of the world.

What will happen come January, when there are global ground-breaking stories about the winners and losers of the gTLD race, with exciting new branding models appearing on the global scene? The probability of this happening is slim.

The real big event will happen when all of the expected 1000-3500 gTLD applications go online in accordance to the transparency promised by ICANN. This massive race will become open to the public and visible for competitive posturing. What would this do to all the opposing ad agencies? Will they all form a new branded front in support of gTLD? Why not? They're the gatekeepers of US\$400 billion dollar global advertising expenditures.

The creative vertigos

Irrespective, wherever there are cameras and spotlights, there are always stars. These big image-expansion games for the highly innovative marketing teams will provide the best showcase of market domination via name identity.

The biggest question is not how much this is going to cost your organisation, but rather why would you strive to achieve this gTLD status of exclusive ownership? The answers are most probably hidden in your corporate vision, your name identity's elasticity and its cyber mandates and lastly intellectual sophistication to cope with global marketing challenges.

Whatever happens, a gTLD game is a sophisticated manoeuvre of name-identity expansion. Not every major name brand identity or its corporate model could pass the acid test for approval and suitability, hence, all the creative vertigos in the name of a new branding lexicon called gTLD.

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