



ISSUE PAPER

THE NEW CORP TDLs

THE BRAND



afnic

ISSUE PAPER

WHAT IS A BRAND?

Long before the Internet, in the fifth millennium BC, Sumerian traders had developed a trademark system, consisting of a cylinder seal which was rolled on clay platelets to reproduce a pattern that identified a craftsman, an owner, or place of manufacture. The concept of the brand has radically changed since then and has been enshrined in law. Article L. 711-1 of the French intellectual property Code of Law provides that:

"A trademark, trade name or service trademark is a sign capable of graphic representation serving to distinguish the goods or services of an individual or corporate entity."

The law specifies what may constitute such a sign: names (words, combinations of words), audible signs (sounds, musical phrases) and figurative signs (drawings, logos, shapes, arrangements, combinations or shades of colors).



/// TRADEMARKS AND DOMAIN NAMES

In the 1980s, domain names under the .com, .fr or other TLDs appeared. Brands have tried to ensure that the domain name matches their brand name. Via the domain www.citroen.fr, users access the Citroën automobile manufacturer's website. But the two concepts are not similar. One notable difference is the fact that the domain name, unlike a trademark, cannot be audible or figurative. Another is the fact that a domain name is unique, unlike

the brand. Should polo.com link to the model of the Ralph Lauren clothing brand, to polo as a sport, to the car model of the Volkswagen brand or to the model of watch with the Piaget brand?

By the late 90s, the closeness was such that it had become common for a brand to have a domain name ending in .com.: Booking.com, salesforce.com, amazon.com.

These logos have changed and today no longer use the .com.



/// COMPANY NAMES AND DOMAIN SUFFIXES

In 2012, when ICANN decided to open the use of new names for generic TLDs (the .com is an example of a generic TLD, i.e. which is not linked to a particular country such as the .fr is with France), some companies have chosen to register their name where users usually find the .fr or .com suffix, that is to say to the right of the dot «.».

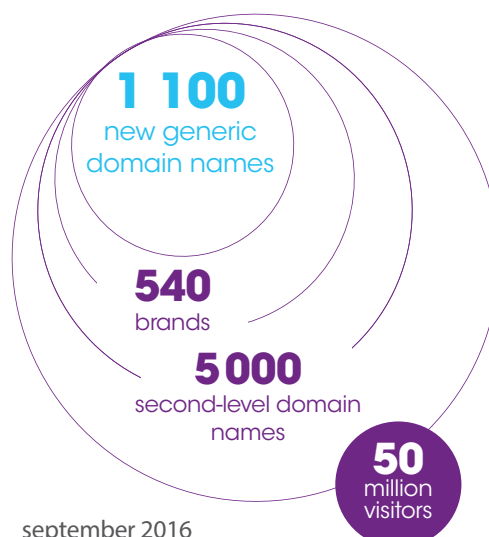
Internet suffixes, however, have generally been used to create domains that can be registered by third parties independent of the registry managing the namespace, such as «my-name.paris». The contractual framework and marketing opportunities were based the same logic.

But a brand like Sony wanted to keep its suffix closed and prohibit anyone from buying and operating a domain of the «my-name.sony» type. The contractual framework was the subject of many discussions between 2012 and 2014, resulting in the creation of a specific **addendum** in order to define what a brand is, and the specifics of managing a «closed» suffix versus an «open» suffix.

The marketing advantages are not obvious for a company, other than defensive registration. A company with its .brand can create many domain names for its own use. The paradigm on the internet today is to have a single site as big as possible. Search engines reference big sites better, and the technology is designed to manage content and analytics on a single domain. This paradigm is not without inconvenience, including navigational complexity, lack of clarity, and the need to use search engines.

Certain benefits and contributions of .brand domain names are quite clear:

- They increase security levels by limiting the risks of phishing and by making it possible to create local sites while avoiding the possible risks related to local domain name operators, which unfortunately do not all enjoy the same level of security as the under the .fr ccTLD.
- The possibility to reorganize one's domain structure consistently: the JCB credit card operator does not own jcb.com and uses global.jcb for its global site.



In terms of the image and communication of a brand to its customers - or fans - brands have implemented various strategies. After a little more than 18 months of operation of the first sites, we are starting to receive feedback and use cases. French brands are extremely well positioned, and illustrate the advantages of corp TLDs.

Below we illustrate some of these benefits:

- ▶ Establishing a brand in its region and history
- ▶ Highlighting its brand values
- ▶ Communicating more effectively
- ▶ Providing tools and support for the retail network
- ▶ Enabling clear and explicit surfing

/// THE MARKETING BENEFITS FOR A BRAND

ANCHORING A BRAND IN ITS TIME AND SPACE

A region and its history are essential for a brand. There are many examples of brands communicating the location and date of their creation.

Tiffany

Tiffany, for example, highlights the fact it was founded in New York in 1837.



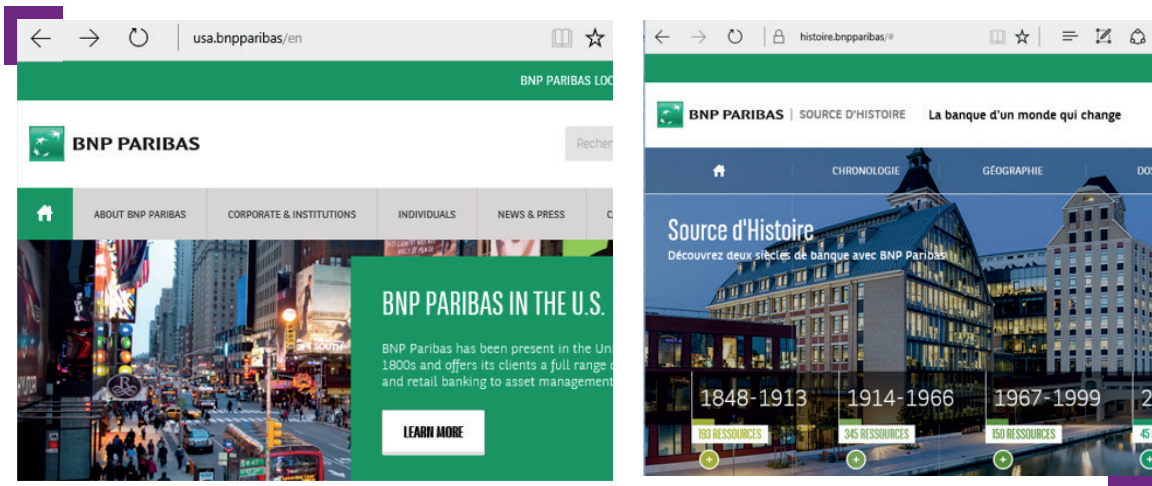
Domain names are vectors for this kind of communication:

Weck, for example, is an Alsatian vine growing company, and its domain name `weck.alsace` highlights the brand and its region. **Tiffany** uses the short URL, `TCO.NYC`.

Brand domain names can be much more specific: One of the values of **MMA**, the mutual insurance company, is its closeness to customers. Its proximity is reflected in more than 1,200 general agents and nearly 1,800 points of sale throughout France. The `.MMA` suffix allows each point of sale to have its own domain name. That in the village of **Montflanquin** in southwest France has its own domain name `montflanquin.MMA`. The brand extension is used here to reinforce the local hub.

much more specific

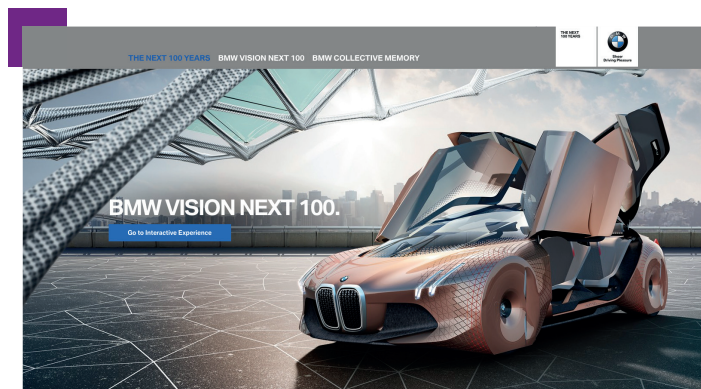
At another level, the USA, **BNP Paribas** website refers to the presence of the BNP Paribas bank in the US.



The temporal aspect of a brand includes its past, present and future. Storytelling is playing an increasingly important in marketing, strengthening the brand's mark over time. **Histoire.bnpparibas** allows the brand to situate itself in its time.

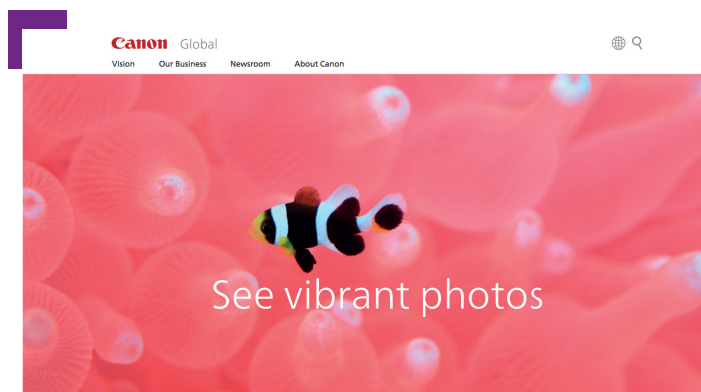
BMW

BMW promotes its 100 years of history, and especially the next 100, through the website **next100.bmw**.



Canon

Canon, in switching its canon.com website to **global.canon**, has repositioned its brand at a time when the camera market is under pressure from smartphones.

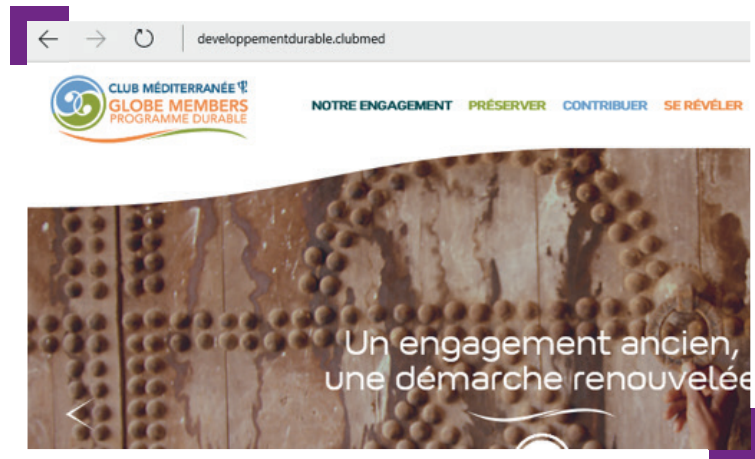


/// HIGHLIGHTING ITS BRAND VALUES

A brand conveys values and as such is a reference for its customers. Associating positive values and a brand within a domain name can be used to link the two proposals, thus becoming items that can be included in slogans.

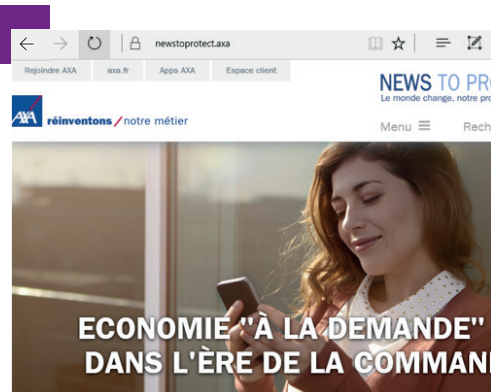
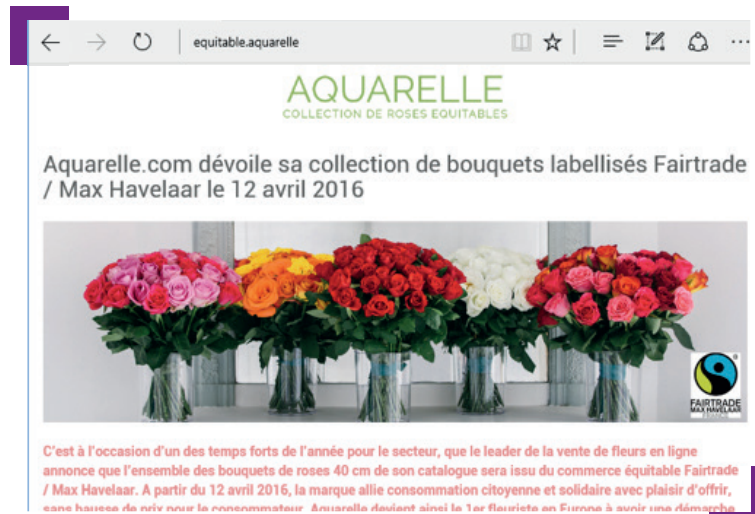
Club Med

Club Med focuses on sustainable development values such as the harmonious integration of its villages, and energy efficiency. This approach is emphasized with the domain `developpementdurable.clubmed`, and its English counterpart, sustainability. `clubmed`.



Aquarelle

Aquarelle, a leading brand in the online sales of flowers and bouquets, highlights values based on a fair working approach, and certifies its bouquets with the Fairtrade label. This approach is emphasized through the domain name `equitable.aquarelle`.



This association can also be made more indirectly, such as brands that provide a service or offer linked to their values. The **Axa** insurance company wants to anticipate its clients' risks and has developed a website designed to inform its customers of the risks associated with new technologies. The site is accessible under a very specific domain name - `newstoprotect.axa`. In so doing, Axa positions itself as a risk manager in general and not as a «simple» insurer.

/// COMMUNICATING MORE EFFECTIVELY

The physical communication of a brand includes items such as brand name, logo, design, price, packaging or color.

The **Leclerc** logo is the first brand logo that was designed with the brand extension in mind. This analysis of the supermarket chain's communication using domain names is applied in different ways by Leclerc:

Leclerc parapharmacy paper bags clearly display
the brand's domain names.

This form of communication can be used to instantly convey the message that the Leclerc online drugstore is open - making Leclerc the first brand to launch an online store under a .brand.

Leclerc has also started **playing with graphical concepts around the domain name**, as on the flyer below, distributed in supermarkets.

The lacreme.leclerc domain name redirects users to parapharmacie.leclerc, which is the trading area of the Leclerc parapharmacy.



The new domain names also enable new forms of creativity through the association of sub-brands with the main brand.



Special worlds can be applied to certain collections and sub-brands, while maintaining brand consistency through the first-level name. The **swatch** brand is both a transgression and a tribute to watchmaking standards, with mechanical watches partly made of plastic. The pop.swatch domain is used to keep that tradition alive by offering traditional content in a presentation, look and feel with a new domain name.

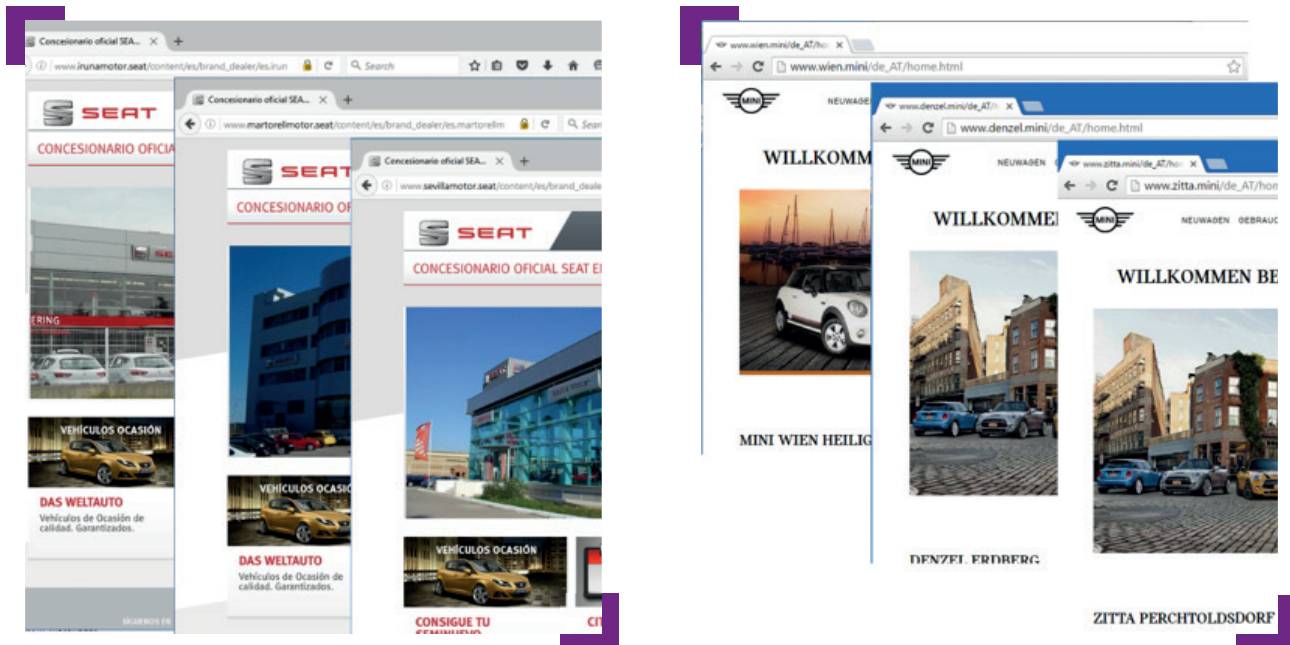
Each «block» of **WWW.POP.SWATCH** is of a different color. Those graphics would not have much meaning with a .com domain.

/// PROVIDING TOOLS AND SUPPORT FOR THE RETAIL NETWORK

Automotive brands are the first to have tried to use the new .brand domain names for their retail network. Car dealers are a strategic link in the automotive industry: they sell half of all the new vehicles sold by manufacturers while providing after-sales service and retailing spare parts. Despite their role as selective, exclusive retailers, dealers facing competition from proxies for sales and from independent garages for after-sales services.

It is therefore crucial for a car brand to develop its retail network. Domain names under a «.brand» corp TLD help strengthen the links between the brand and its retailers, by sharing the same domain.

The **SEAT** and **Mini** brands were deployed in pilot phases and geographic areas respectively limited to Spain and Austria, via a series of sites similar to those of their dealers, using domains such as `sevillamotor.seat`.



These sites can be used to make a graphic distinction, using a website «template», and a safe distinction, through the domain name, between authorized dealers and other resellers.

/// ENABLING CLEAR AND EXPLICIT SURFING

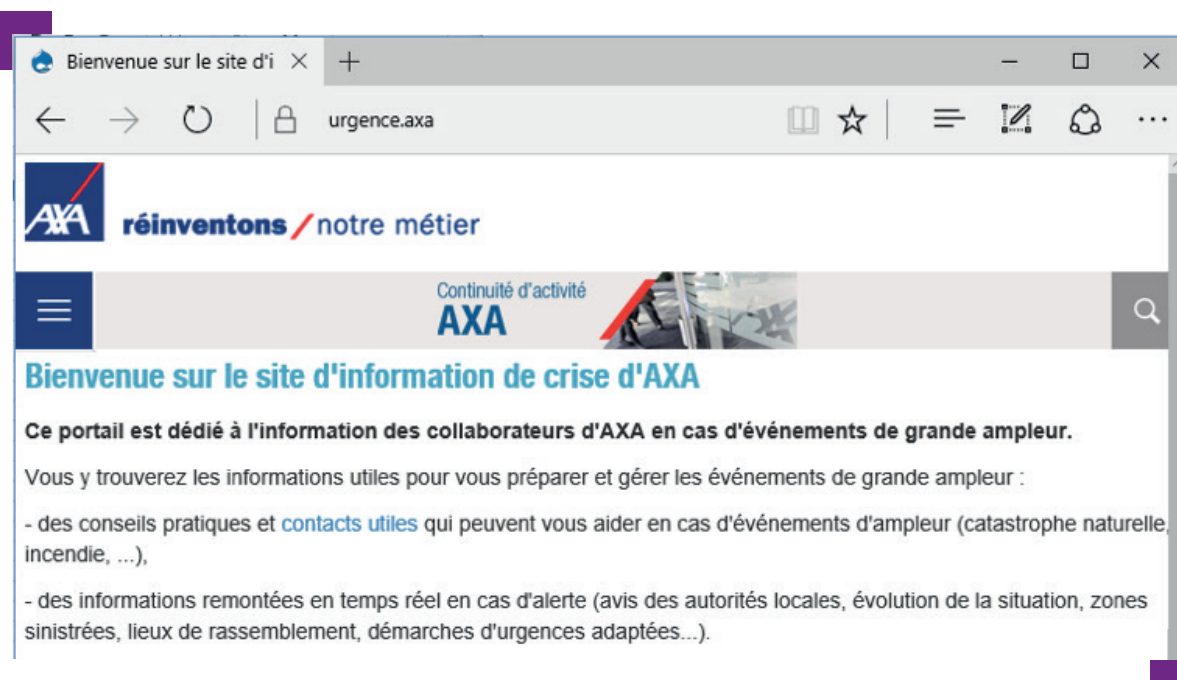
Domain names can be very explicit about the content made available to users during surfing, providing visitors with a better service. Indeed, the concept of «surfing» the web and browsing sites dates back to the early web. Most visits to a website now have a purpose, a goal

to learn about a product, obtain opening hours, or download a manual:

In short, users want to find what they are looking for directly and quickly. That's why they go to Google, hoping to have direct access to the content they want.

An explicit domain name sends a clear message to users, suggesting they will go directly to the right page. The domain name is therefore highly relevant for search purposes. Secondly, it may also reduce a brand's dependence on search engines.

Urgence.axa allows the brand to have a simple site, immediately accessible and extremely well referenced on an international keyword, which has a clear objective.



The [rapportannuel.axa](#) site was the first to use a new brand extension. It highlights the brand's relationship with its investors. Although it is no longer accessible today, it was a source of inspiration, 12 other brands now having an [annualreport.brand](#) domain name.

Many second-level names focus on recruitment. The concept of a surfing goal is highly evident in this case, users first and foremost looking for positions vacant within a company.

/// CONCLUSION

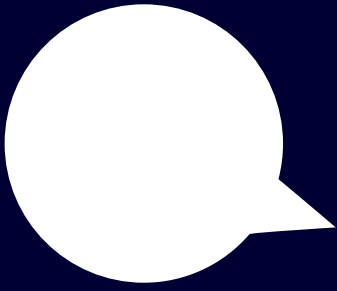
Domain extensions are in their beginnings, but many opportunities have already been tested and implemented by brands. The association of words with a brand and the resulting customer experience - together with the technical solutions for implementing both - can be used to consolidate brands, by creating closer links and stronger ties with customers.

French brands are at the forefront of these innovations with creative, intelligent and well implemented solutions,

and continue to deploy websites that benefit the user experience and help keep the brand in tune with its customers.

Guillaume Pahud est le fondateur de dot stories, plateforme d'activation des noms de domaines génériques en .marque. dot stories a lancé le programme de recherche dot brand observatory, analysant l'ensemble de l'activité des «point Marque», conseille un certain nombre de marques sur leur stratégie d'activation et de déploiement de leur nouveau nom de domaine, et a également développé un outil de gestion d'un TLD fermé, permettant d'optimiser la recherche des noms de deuxième niveau, de publier du contenu et d'agrèger les analytiques des sites au niveau nom de domaine générique.

www.dotstories.com



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About Afnic

Afnic is the French Registry for the .fr (France), .re (Reunion Island), .yt (Mayotte), .wf (Wallis and Futuna), .tf (French Southern Territories), .pm (Saint-Pierre and Miquelon).

Afnic is also positioned as a provider of technical solutions and services for registries and registrars. **Afnic** (the French Network Information Centre) comprises public and private stakeholders, including government authorities, users, and Internet service providers (Registrars). It is a non-profit organisation.



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