CSC Dot Brand Insights Report

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Executive summary

The number of activated .BRANDs increased by a modest 2% over the past calendar quarter while the total number of active .BRAND domains (defined as domains that resolved to content) exceeded its three-year peak of 74% to hit an all-time high of 76%. This tells us that .BRAND owners are hard at work activating their .BRAND domain names as they are registered.

.BRAND owners are also increasingly registering domain names. The domains under management (DUM) count across all .BRANDs has steadily climbed by an average of 5.7K domain names each year. Insurance companies are the most active among .BRAND owners, leading by a dramatic 200% when compared to its closest sector, automotive, tires, and other vehicles.

The Top 10 activated .BRANDs by DUM count is different compared to the Top 10 .BRANDs by resolving domains. The latter list gives us a better clue as to who are truly using their .BRANDs.

We'll be reporting on more Alexa-related statistics from this month on, as Alexa ranking is a good indicator of the popularity and traffic flow to .BRAND domains.

About.google consistently ranks first among all .BRAND domains ranked in Alexa, and at the count of 11 ranking domain names in Alexa, *.canon* has the most number of .BRAND sites with high volume of web traffic.

About.google regularly ranks in the top two among all .BRAND domain names ranked in Alexa. We feature *about.google* in our new segment, Dot brand domain story, where we uncover the story behind the domain and share a prank from leadership in its introduction of .google to the world.

One of the biggest hurdles for .BRAND owners is not knowing how to begin activating their .BRAND. We share our playbook that lays out the milestones common to every successfully activated .BRAND. Read In focus: The dot brand activation playbook.
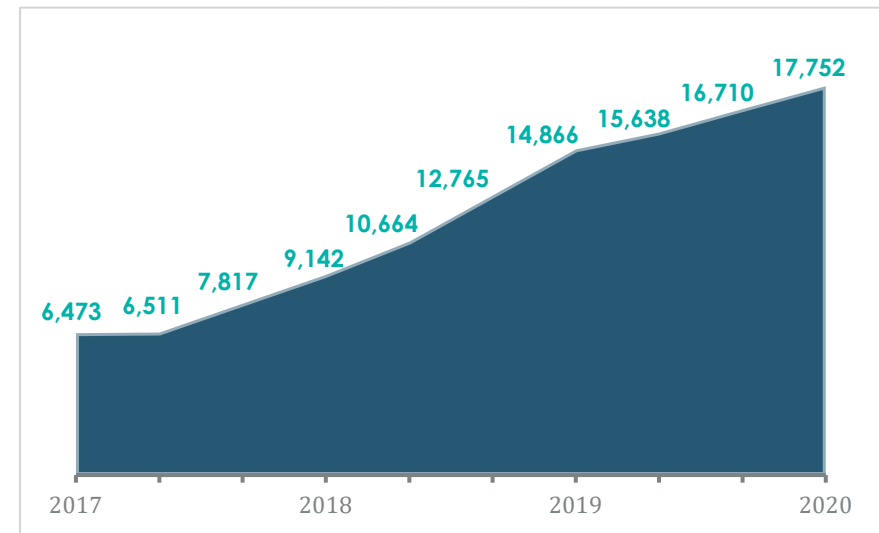
Number of activated dot brands | **190**

Growth in DUM across all dot brands over time

Top 10 activated dot brands by DUM

Rank		TLD	#Registrations		Industry
1 Last report: 1	→	.dvag	3,574	+457	Insurance
2 Last report: 2	→	.mma	1,640	-1	Insurance
3 Last report: 3	→	.audi	1,340	+4	Automotive, tires, other vehicles
4 Last report: 4	→	.allfinanz	971	+94	Finance and money
5 Last report: 5	→	.seat	683	+10	Automotive, tires, other vehicles
6 Last report: 6	→	.neustar	655	+8	Internet services
7 Last report: 7	→	.mini	611	--	Automotive, tires, other vehicles
8 Last report: 8	→	.crs	587	+9	Associations and clubs
9 Last report: 9	→	.gmx	473	--	Internet services
10 Last report:10	→	.aco	313	+9	Construction, engineering, equipment

The number of activated .BRANDs saw a modest increase by 2% to 190. In the Top 10 activated .BRANDs by the number of DUM, all .BRANDs remained unchanged since the last report. We observe a steady growth in .BRAND DUM over time.
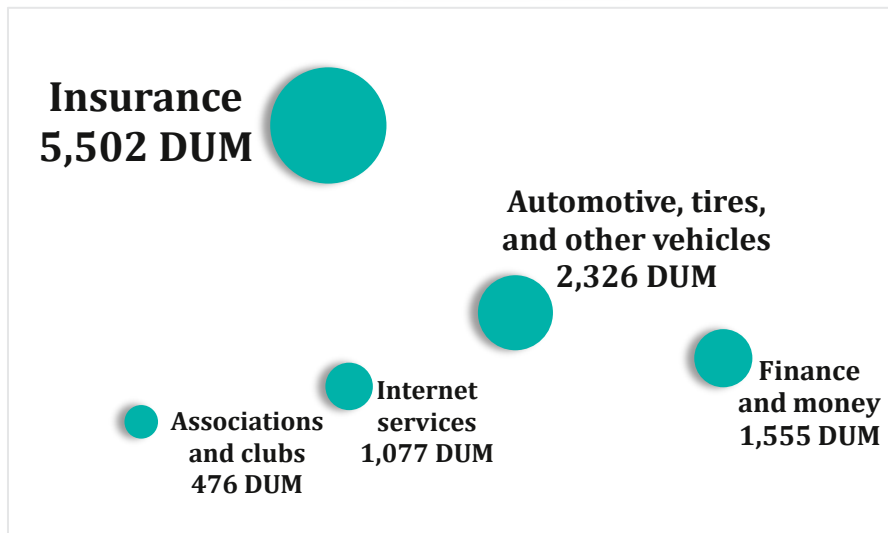

Chart values: 2017: 6,473 · 6,511 · 7,817 · 9,142 · 10,664 (2018) · 12,765 · 14,866 (2019) · 15,638 · 16,710 · 17,752 (2020)

Activated dot brands

.BRANDS that have registered five or more domain names in their respective .BRAND top-level domain (TLD).

DUM

The number of **d**omain names **u**nder **m**anagement.

Top 5 active industry sectors by DUM

**Insurance
5,502 DUM**

**Automotive, tires,
and other vehicles
2,326 DUM**

**Finance
and money
1,555 DUM**

**Internet
services
1,077 DUM**

**Associations
and clubs
476 DUM**

Among the Top 5 active industry sectors by the number of DUM, insurance leads dramatically by over 200% when compared to its closest sector, automotive, tires, and other vehicles. This great disparity is largely due to .dvag and .mma, who occupy the first two spots on the chart, Top 10 activated .BRANDs by DUM. The DUM count of .mma alone, in the second spot, already triumphs that of third placed .audi. Most of .mma and .dvag's domain names are used in compliance management, i.e., .mma affords one .BRAND domain name per agency office and .dvag empowers its employees with each of their names in .dvag.

Use cases

Dealership management

Dealership management systems are created specifically for car dealerships in the automotive industry and large equipment manufacturers. These systems often contain software that caters to the needs of running a dealership, such as in finance, sales, parts, inventory, and administration. An automobile manufacturer, such as Audi, can bundle centrally managed and autonomously hosted websites for each of their dealers—along with the online marketing tools and analytics on deals that most of these systems also support. For example, Audi fans can rely on advice from trusted dealers such as **gehlert-freiburg.audi** or **loehr-worms.audi.**

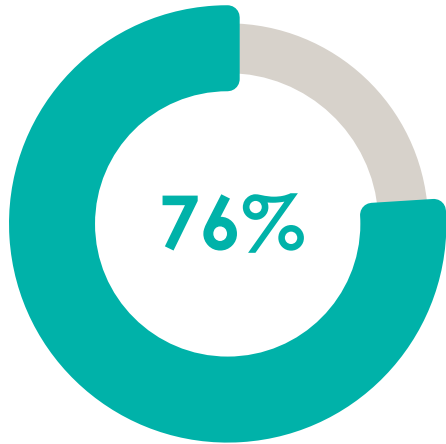### Quicker navigation with vanity URLs

Neustar provides corporations with enterprise solutions for accessing marketing intelligence, risk intelligence, communications, and cyber security. Its sitemap at **home.neustar** logs over 4,900 unique pages, average for an enterprise website. Yet, Neustar has created more than 600 .neustar domain names that redirect to specific subdirectories or pages in *home.neustar*. These vanity URLs help Neustar's visitors get to where they want to go quickly, such as **about.neustar** and **contact.neustar**, so that they can spend more time learning from those pages and engaging with Neustar, rather than on the searching for these pages itself.

Resolving dot brand domain names

76%
+2% since last report

76%

The number of .BRAND domain names that resolve to meaningful content inclusive of redirects increased by 2% since our last report. More .BRAND domains are being used as they are being created in their various name spaces. Also, as there are more domain names being created in every calendar quarter since 2017, here is an expansion of use of .BRAND domain names.

Top 10 dot brands by resolving domains

Rank	TLD	#Resolving	%Resolving	Industry
1	.dvag	3,527	99%	Insurance
2	.mma	1,621	99%	Insurance
3	.audi	1,241	93%	Automotive, tires, other vehicles
4	.allfinanz	964	99%	Finance and money
5	.seat	565	83%	Automotive, tires, other vehicles
6	.neustar	542	83%	Internet services
7	.crs	412	70%	Associations and clubs
8	.gmx	396	84%	Internet services
9	.aco	289	92%	Construction, engineering, equipment
10	.lamborghini	226	94%	Automotive, tires, other vehicles

Resolving domains

.BRAND domain names that resolve to meaningful content, including those that redirect to existing websites using 301 and 302 redirects. For an accurate representation of the level of activation in .BRAND domains, we have omitted NIC.TLD and testing domains.

We are the *business* behind business®

Trend in the number of resolving domains
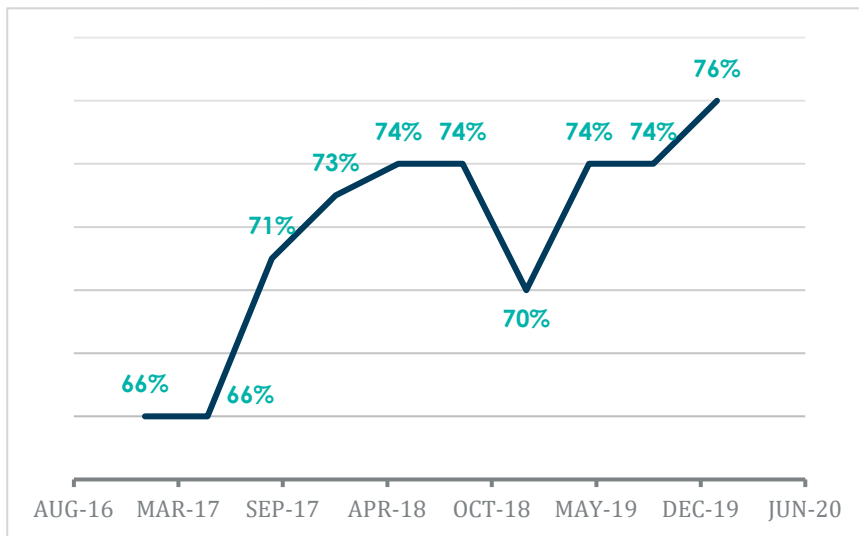
As we predicted in our last report of 2019, the year 2020 will bring higher peaks. .BRANDs adoption is expected to rev up throughout the year as the industry receives further news of the Round 2 .BRAND application framework from ICANN. The number of resolving domains hit a new three-year high, 76% of the total .BRAND domain names resolve to active content. Percentages were derived from data one month after the end of each calendar quarter.

Top 10 dot brands by total number of domains ranked in Alexa

Rank	TLD	Total domains in Alexa	Highest ranked domain name in Alexa	Industry
1	.canon	11	creativepark.canon	Manufacturing
2	.google	10	about.google	Internet services
3	.yandex	5	eda.yandex	Internet services
4	.sbi	4	sbiyono.sbi	Finance and money
5	.sharp	4	jp.sharp	Electronics
6	.sap	3	corp.sap	Enterprise services
7	.abbott	3	pointofcare.abbott	Health and pharmaceuticals
8	.apple	3	experience.apple	Consumer goods
9	.bnpparibas	2	mabanque.bnpparibas	Finance and money
10	.brother	2	creative.center.brother	Enterprise goods

Active domains with an Alexa ranking (high-traffic sites)

80

Dot brand domain	Current Alexa ranking	Registration date
about.google	1,118	06 Aug 2018
oui.sncf	2,557	26 May 2017
banco.bradesco	5,770	28 Sep 2015
mabanque.bnpparibas	6,762	19 Jan 2015
logistics.dhl	7,641	06 Sep 2016
sbiyono.sbi	8,814	19 Aug 2017
blog.google	11,940	12 Aug 2016
home.kpmg	15,357	13 Dec 2017
creativepark.canon	18,714	03 Dec 2018
jp.sharp	30,259	21 May 2018

The Alexa Top 1M is a listing of the million most popular sites on the web based on traffic, and has been commonly used by the domain industry for many years. E.g., Google.com is ranked #1 and YouTube.com is ranked #2.

Dot brand domain story

ABOUT.GOOGLE

Alexa ranking: 1,118
Most significant source of traffic: search

.Google delegated on September 15, 2014 and the first .google domain name was introduced as a prank. Google frequently inserts jokes and hoaxes into its products to celebrate April Fools' Day. So in 2015, Google created **com.google** on March 31 as a mirror image, alternative version of Google Search for use on April 1, 2015 only. It now redirects to Google.com.

Meanwhile, the team formulated a more serious plan to use .google domains. First, they quickly concluded that Google.com shouldn't be moved, as the entire ecosystem that is Google search depends on it. Second, they realized that .google was an ideal platform to showcase Google's corporate values, separate from its ever growing suite of products and services. So they created **design.google** (February 29, 2016), **environment.google**, **families.google** (both October 25, 2016), and **pride.google** (May 22, 2017)—and more followed.

About.google was a successful migration from its original home at Google.com/about. 76% of its incoming traffic is derived from search as there is a link to it on Google.com itself.

Do you need advice on your dot brand?

Request a CSC .BRAND strategic analysis.

In focus

The dot brand activation playbook

Your .BRAND: ownership equates to authority

When your organization obtained the right to operate your very own top level domain, you were a pioneer in your industry. Your .BRAND ensures that you, not another company, are the rightful owner of your brand to the right of the dot.

For example: .JCB is owned by the JCB card from the payments industry in Japan, not the heavy construction vehicle manufacturer from the U.K.

.SBS is owned by Special Broadcasting Service in Australia, not the Seoul Broadcasting System from South Korea or SBS Bank in New Zealand.

Exert your authority: fly your .BRAND flag

By using your .BRAND, you'll take it to the next level, where it has limitless potential to strengthen your brand equity, streamline and consolidate your brand's online presence and internal workflows, and provide you with an alternative platform that is uniquely yours.

Here are six crucial steps common to every .BRAND owner who has succeeded in activating their .BRAND.

1. Commit to owning and using your dot brand

"To the extent that, when our CEO, Jeremy Darroch, decided that our corporate work site should be moved off of sky.com, he made an executive decision that came down to myself and my team very, very quickly to say, 'I want to use our .sky top-level domain for our new corporate website.'"[1]
- Dawn Shackleton, head of Online Brand Protection, Sky Technology at Sky (.sky)

The board and management levels have to commit to owning and using the .BRAND. If there's been a change in leadership since the .BRAND was delegated, it takes setting up a task force to review just how beneficial the .BRAND can be to the organization before the leadership is convinced that the .BRAND should stay on in the organization's portfolio.

Once a consensus has been formed to stay in the game, there has to be a concrete determination from the top of the organization to bottom to keep the .BRAND within the corporation's portfolio to be used in the most productive manner.

2. Form a team to figure it out

"Cross-functional collaboration could involve people from management, technical, marketing, internal communications, and legal teams. The .BRAND should not be the sole responsibility of any one particular department; you need the right mix of cross-functional talents."
– Kate Kahle, head of Editorial Content Development, CERN (.cern)

A team comprising members from management, legal, marketing, tech, and security should be set up with the objective of using the .BRAND in ways that make sense and fits with the vision of the organization.

The team has to identify the organization's overall direction and goals, gaps, current ways of doing things, and if some of these ways should be changed to address those gaps, and how.

The team also has to address the burning questions in everyone's minds. Some of the common ones are, "will we lose search equity?," "can we abandon defensive domain names?," and "can we use our .BRAND for email?"

A plan of action should be presented to the organization's executive members and board. If the plan is unsatisfactory, the team must have the authority to go back to the drawing board and rework ideas until an agreeable plan results.

3. Set the right tone internally

"Every now and then, we will have to remind internal teams to think about using HOME.SAXO or .SAXO domain names whenever they needed to create marketing or if they conceived anything new and public-facing. Old habits of using the national language top level domain is a difficult one to change."
- Ian Semey, senior global webmaster, Saxo Bank (.saxo)

Sharing a strong early adopter or major use case within the organization is a great way to get everybody else within the organization on board with using the .BRAND.

These strong use cases can be external facing, revenue generating, or internal facing. An example of a strong external facing use case is **blog.google** and an example of a strong revenue generating use case is **oui.sncf**.

As for strong internal facing use cases, some organizations build an internal wiki on their .BRAND while some use it for recruitment so that the .BRAND is visible to new hires and existing staff.

As we are creatures of habit, most departments within the organization will fail at first to assimilate the new .BRAND into their everyday operations. Expect an uphill task akin to a rebranding exercise, as internal departments need to know of the new .BRAND and how to use it.

Better yet, put in place an internal policy for using the .BRAND for future domain requests. In addition, some organizations integrate the .BRAND together with their overall domain portfolio so the business has the holistic view of how the .BRAND fits with the existing portfolio and can be guided into using the .BRAND on any internet or SEO-related projects.

4. Hypothesize, test, track

"Do an audit ahead of the migration to make sure your SEO basics are covered - make sure all old links continue to work, at first with 302 redirects and then eventually moving over to 301s. Make sure to set up similar URLs, monitor 404s on the old domain for a while; be mindful of updating the canonicals, hreflang tags (if relevant), XML sitemaps, and robots.txt, and do a lot of sweating and finger crossing."
– Christina Yeh, Product Strategy and Marketing lead, Google (.google)

As the team forms their strategy for their .BRAND, it makes good sense to test out their hypothesis and track the results of their tests. Testing will help the team put their theories to practice, reveal any flaws or potential missteps in their plans, and better prepare them for migration or any other work change.

Besides testing how the framework fits with the organization's current structure and the technicalities of the .BRAND implementation plan, other testing mechanisms—such as surveys—can be helpful in gauging the receptiveness and readiness of your target audience towards your .BRAND. If the target audience tells you they get it and they're not confused if they see your .BRAND website, this gives the team confidence that their strategy is on the right track.

However well prepared, there will be certain aspects that were not considered in the planning and testing that will rear their ugly heads in implementation. Engaging the right teams and having the same people involved from the start to the end of each project will ensure that problems are quickly nipped in the bud.

5. Formulate way(s) that work

"We weighed the advantages and disadvantages to moving everything. On internal systems, software, networks, and infrastructure where saxobank.com was hard-coded and their uses were not public-facing, we opted not to move them to .SAXO. Also for content that did not have a high flux rate or required to be changed regularly but were operational or compliant in nature, we did not choose to move these as well. We decided on a guideline—legacy items that were running on IT systems, not used by marketing or crawled by search engines, would stay as they are and not be moved to .SAXO."
- Ian Semey, senior global webmaster, Saxo Bank (.saxo)

Each .BRAND owner will probably have their unique strategy for deployment of their .BRAND. Having guidelines and principles in place enable a certain level of understanding of implementation strategies across the organization.

Besides, the guidelines should also include which team(s) should be responsible for cases that do not fall into any of the categories pre-identified by the guidelines.

6. Create policies and centralize management

"Anyone from within the organization could apply for a .CERN domain name for themselves. A Top Level Domain Board would then decide on the merit of each application against the policy criteria. We had to evolve the internal registration policy as we encountered issues over time. We also had to modify the set of criteria by which we assessed and qualified .CERN domain name applications."
– Kate Kahle, head of Editorial Content Development, CERN (.cern)

For multinational organizations with operations spread throughout the globe, or even for corporations whose operations primarily take place within a large country such as Australia, it may make sense to centralize management of the corporation's intellectual property. This includes the .BRAND, which is usually classified as a domain name asset.

The team has to create a registration policy that outlines domain nomenclature specific to region, product, service, marketing campaigns, and promotions; reserved names, annual registration fees if applicable, and ways in which outlying departments and business units can apply for a domain name.

Other policies that are just as crucial could be related to the use of the domain names by dealers, affiliates and resellers, and use of the domain names across different geographic locations, since these may have to adhere to local or national internet policy, for example, Chinese internet laws.

As teams evolve over time, policies should as well. A living and breathing document will ensure continuity of the use and improvement of the .BRAND across the organization over time so the .BRAND consistently fits with the organization's greater strategy.

Conclusion

Your .BRAND is an important digital asset that should grow with your organization over time. The .BRAND steering committee should remain in place beyond successful implementation, when the .BRAND has been woven seamlessly into the operations of the organization. The team's efforts and policy making do not stop with the implementation of the .BRAND, and the .BRAND should be greenlighted as a go-to rather than the legacy generic .com or country code top level domain, such as .uk.

No matter where you are right now in the .BRAND journey, for the many ways your business can benefit from your .BRAND, email us at dotbrand@cscglobal.com.

References
[1]Quote by Dawn Shackleton extracted from session notes of the ICANN66 GNSO – (RySG) BRG Community Session at Montreal, Canada: Montreal – GNSO - (RySG) BRG Community Session

About CSC

CSC supports companies that are making significant investments in their security posture by exposing blind spots that exist within fundamental internet assets such as domain names, DNS, and digital certificates. By leveraging our proprietary security solutions, CSC secures companies from cyber threats to their digital assets, helping them avoid devastating revenue loss, brand reputation damage, or significant financial penalties as a result of policies like GDPR. Along with internet assets, CSC protects online brands that are being exploited via counterfeit websites, fraud, and IP violations, and helps monitor and mitigate this, providing enforcement and advisory services to protect many of the world's largest brands.

Contact us at **cscdigitalbrand.services.**