

Digital City Brands 2018

The Digital City Brand becomes the City Brand

DOTZON presents the second edition of *Digital City Brands*. After having introduced the study, which is based on key performance indicators, in early 2017, DOTZON further expanded and enhanced the data to display how cities successfully use their Digital City Brands. The Digital City Brand is the digital dimension of the City Brand and mirrors the “Digitalness” of a city.

However, the Digital City Brand is much more than a mere extension of the City Brand as it plays an important role in strengthening the emotional bond between a city and its inhabitants. The Digital City Brand provides a reliable local anchor that is opposed to a city’s constant changes and progressive digitalization. Even though the latter makes citizens independent of space and time, it causes a desire for belonging and localization at the same time. As a digital meeting place, the Digital City Brand has the power to satisfy these yearnings.

European capitals like Berlin, Paris and London were among the first to have their own Digital City Brands. Tokyo, New York, Sydney, Rio de Janeiro and other international metropolises soon joined this development. Today, most Digital City Brands have been well adopted by citizens, businesses and the city administration. City marketers appreciate them as a valuable tool for city marketing purposes and campaigns (e. g. www.visit.rio) and as a unique destination proposition in the global competition of places. For digitalization and smart city initiatives, Digital City Brands have become a meaningful tool as well.

The study *Digital City Brands* is based on an analysis of the currently 38 cities worldwide that have their own digital identity on the Internet, so-called city top-level domains (cityTLDs). Sources for the underlying data are eight parameters: The number of registered domain names, the annual sales volume, the number of active domain names, the number of domain names per 1,000 inhabitants, the number of pages per domain listed at Google, the gross domestic product per domain name, the number of domains listed in the Alexa Rank alexa.com and a comparison between the cityTLD and the national top-level domain (ccTLD). The figures used are all from public databases and local parameters specific to a city. They specify the strengths and assets of the cities.

Digital City Brands 2018 allows a head-to-head comparison of all cities with their own digital identities. The study shows that .berlin remains unchallenged at the top, followed by .tokyo in second place and .vegas in third place. This year’s newcomers in the TOP 10 are .moscow, .mockba and .amsterdam. However, last year’s number two, .hamburg, dropped down to eleventh and last year’s number eight, .wien, dropped down to 12th.

The following tables show the TOP 10 Digital City Brands. The comparison between years reflects the development of each city in the ranking.

Digital City Brands Ranking 2018

Digital City Brands Ranking 2018		Digital City Brands Ranking Comparison 2018 / 2017	
1	.berlin	1	(1) →
2	.tokyo	2	(5) ↗
3	.vegas	3	(9) ↗
4	.london	4	(10) ↗
5	.istanbul + .ist	5	(7) ↗
6	.koeln + .cologne	6	(4) ↘
7	.nyc	7	(3) ↘
8	.moscow + .moscba	8	(21) ↗
9	.amsterdam	9	(11) ↗
10	.miami	10	(6) ↘

Just like in 2017, **.berlin** scored the top of the ranking and defended its status as the best Digital City Brand worldwide. **.berlin** is managed by the Berlin-based company dotBERLIN and was the first cityTLD ever to be launched to the public. **.berlin** ranks good to very good in almost all categories. Nearly 55,000 domain names account for a turnover close to USD 2 million. A good result in the category “domain names per 1,000 inhabitants” combined with about 50 % of active domain names and a good number of high traffic domain names according to Amazon’s www.alexacom.com ranking platform ensure the top position.

<http://dot.berlin>

.tokyo, which is managed by the Tokyo-based company GMO, climbed up five positions to second place in 2018. The cityTLD counts 237 domain names listed in Alexa’s top one million websites and thereby more than any other cityTLD. It has more than 48 % of active domain names and counts 19 web pages per domain name at Google. The Tokyo city administration and Tokyo-based businesses have started to use **.tokyo** domain names quite intensively, which is one of the reasons for this success. Furthermore, with the fourth place in the category “geoTLD compared to ccTLD”, **.tokyo** is almost as popular as the country-specific domain extension **.jp**.

<http://hello.tokyo>

Third place winner **.vegas** made an even bigger leap as it was able to improve by nine places. With 30 domain names per 1,000 residents, **.vegas** ranked third in the category “domain names per inhabitants”, and with 57 % of active domains even second in the category of the active domain names. **.vegas** is also the most popular cityTLD by international standards: Its penetration in the city of Vegas is 365 % higher than the one of the national top-level domain **.us**.

<http://the.vegas>

In terms of domain name registrations and total turnover, **.london** leaves all other cityTLDs behind. With 85,298 registered domain names by the end of 2017, the operator London & Partners achieved a turnover of almost USD 2.5 million. With these very good results, **.london** managed the leap from

tenth place in the previous year to fourth place in 2018.

<http://domains.london>

The five leading cityTLDs also include **.istanbul** and **.ist**. Before their launch, the city of Istanbul decided to operate two top-level domains, each aimed at a different target group. While **.ist** is aimed at government and administration, **.istanbul** has a more promotional character for companies and location marketing purposes. Most of the 28 domains that are listed in the Alexa Rank are operated by the city administration. They provide for the third place in this category and are an indication that the new digital identities are very well received.

<http://nic.istanbul>

There's another couple in sixth place with Cologne's cityTLDs **.koeln** and **.cologne**. The couple has a good penetration of 29 domain names per 1,000 residents. The sixth place shows that a favourable price can contribute very well to a cityTLD's success. The city of Cologne uses the cityTLDs as well which contributes to their good position. Compared to the previous year, however, **.koeln** and **.cologne** lose two places, as other Digital City Brands have developed more strongly.

<http://dot.koeln>

Since its launch in 2014, **.nyc** has become the digital home for many New Yorkers. The cityTLD has the second highest amount of domain names in the Alexa Rank, which shows that those owning a **.nyc** domain name strongly promote it. Additionally, **.nyc** is 36 % more popular than the national domain extension **.us**, which is the second place in the category "geoTLD compared to ccTLD". However, only 39 % of the domain names are actively used and only six websites per domain name are listed in Google, which results in the 10th and 8th place in the corresponding categories. For this reason, **.nyc** fell by four places and is now ranked seventh.

<http://ownit.nyc>

The **.moscow** and **.MOCKBA** cityTLDs follow the same approach as Istanbul. They are the big winners of this year's ranking by managing to increase their rank from 21st all the way up to eighth. In order to meet the different communication needs of their target groups, they were launched in Latin as well as in Cyrillic: While the Cyrillic scripting language works well in Russian web browsers and e-mail programs, the Latin version is more common outside Russia. Many customers register domain names under both cityTLDs, bringing the total registration number up to 38,388 by the end of 2017, and **.moscow** and **.MOCKBA** to fifth position in the category "registered domain names".

<http://nic.moscow>

.amsterdam is also among the TOP 10 for the first time. Although not being a leader in one of the eight parameters, the cityTLD has good averages in most of the categories. The seventh place in the number of registered domain names, the second place in the category "domain names per 1,000 inhabitants" and a strong position compared to the ccTLD **.nl** form the basis for the good result.

<http://nic.amsterdam>

.miami is the best ranked cityTLD in terms of the penetration among the city's population and businesses: There are 44 **.miami** domain names registered per 1,000 residents. Additionally, the **.miami** domain has the highest rank when comparing it with the national ccTLD: It performs 570 % better than the national top-level domain **.us** and thereby leaves other cityTLDs far behind.

<http://nic.miami>



Summary

The results obtained in *Digital City Brands 2018* educate and support cities to learn from each other how to facilitate the advantages a cityTLD offers to the city. The dynamics of cityTLDs is also reflected in the growth rates: Within the last 12 months, the number of cityTLDs grew from 525,000 to 609,000, which is a constant upward development that stands in contrast to the stagnation of many other top-level domains .

Outlook

Digitalization, E-Government and Smart City will become the key drivers for the development of cities, and thus a major focus of the city administration and city marketing. The IT infrastructure of a cityTLD will play a vital role for the communication of cities towards their stakeholders and as a digital place branding tool.

Last year, cities have already started to deepen their knowledge and experience in the field of digital branding, and initiated a number of innovative projects like www.digital.nyc, www.welcome.berlin and www.visit.koeln. Next year, a number of new projects will supplement the already existing ones and thus serve as fresh role models for an even more frequent and intense use of the new communication possibilities. We expect more and more cities to catch up with this development so that next year's *Digital City Brands* will include a number of newcomers again.

Interested parties can order the detailed study (in German) via info@dotzon.consulting.

About DOTZON

DOTZON is an international management consulting dedicated to digital identities. Since 2005, companies, cities and organizations trust DOTZON as a reliable partner for the concept, the application and the operation of their own top-level domain. The DOTZON team is well connected and has a wealth of experience gained through cooperating with ICANN for more than ten years. DOTZON's specialists apply their knowledge to help their clients protect, establish and strengthen the digital identities of brands and companies. Since 2017, DOTZON annually publishes the *Digital City Brands* study.