



Domain Names in Retro Branding

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A recent [article](#) by Rob Walker in *The New York Times* describes how some companies are bringing dead brands to life. However, it makes no mention of domain names, a major component of a brand's IP.

Below I outline some of the domain name issues that retro branding needs to take into account.

Domain names are the face and protectors of an IP. You don't buy a car and then think about protecting it; when you buy a car, whether new or used, you factor in the cost of getting car insurance. When you contemplate buying IP, domains must be a key factor in the calculation.

Interestingly, Underalls, one of the dead brands referenced in the article, has its ".com" domain name as a parking page. Another mentioned brand, Nuprin, has no site for the corresponding ".com." Moreover, the owner of the brand Salon Selectives owns the brand's ".com". However, the brand's singular spelling, SalonSelective.com—not a typo nor the main brand name—is not owned by Salon Selectives. In the Internet age, such spelling variations are a must for protecting an IP.

When acquiring IP, you need to factor in domain names if you want to estimate the IP's value. The article points out the

difficulty of measuring such value. The value of a brand can be estimated, as the essay points out, through analyzing focus groups¹ and forums. However, this can introduce an estimation bias, as people can be framed into believing that they recognize the brand, thus making the technique unreliable. Another technique is to search news groups for mentions of the brand. But dead brands typically are not discussed in forums. A better solution is using pay-per-click (PPC) data from Google's AdWords. With the [PPC methodology](#) at least a lower bound on the value of the domain name can be established.

Nevertheless, the presence of domain names that incorporate a brand can have a favorable impact on prolonging brand recognition. Thus, in some cases, avoiding legal action against the use of your brand in domain names can add value. ■

¹ Stephen Brown, et. al., "Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning," *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 67 (July 2003), 19–33, <http://www.nd.edu/~jsherry/pdf/2003/Teaching%20Old%20Brands%20New%20Tricks.pdf>.