

The liberalisation of the Internet

A new report called 'The Liberalisation of the Internet' explores how the Internet will change as a result of it being liberalised and the effect this will have on businesses and consumers

Overview

In 2010, the geography of the Internet is set to expand significantly, as the body that oversees the structure of the Internet, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), will liberalise the market for domain name extensions (e.g. the .com or .co.uk part of the web address), so that anyone can apply to operate an extension (e.g. .hotel or .london)

The motivation behind this move is to increase choice (for consumers and businesses), promote innovation and spur competition

The report was carried out by **The Future Laboratory** on behalf of domain name registrar **Gandi.net**

The research included a quantitative survey of 1,000 average Britons, and a quantitative survey of 50 e-commerce managers from large high street businesses and 50 e-commerce managers from SMEs online

The potential internet landscape after liberalisation



Key Findings

Business

Businesses use their websites to sell products and services (70%), to show their products and services (53%), to describe the company (44%) and manage their brand and identity (36%)

66% of businesses surveyed are unaware that the structure of the Internet is set to change so dramatically next year, meaning they are unprepared

Nearly a third of SMEs are unhappy with their current domain name and 28% complaining that they have had to settle for second best

Businesses seem to see the branding opportunity, with a massive 81% stating that liberalisation will be innovative, 75% stating it will be advantageous, and 66% exciting when launching a campaign online

But businesses have reservations. They believe liberalisation will be expensive (61%) and challenging (75%) for e-commerce; and make communication with customers more confusing (60%)

“66% of businesses surveyed are unaware that the structure of the Internet is set to change so dramatically next year, meaning they are unprepared”

Businesses do see the pros and cons of domain name liberalisation however, with 92% of them agreeing that the Internet will become localised; but 77% think it will become out of control and full of pointless domain names. 57% think it will become easier to navigate; but 59% say it will become an expensive place to do business on ■

Consumer

People use the internet for communication (92%), finding out about things (77%), shopping (75%), banking (67%), and social networking (46%). 10% of people self-publish their own content on the internet

60% of consumers agree that the liberalisation of domain name extensions will change the way they use the Internet, but not for the better

The sceptical amongst them believe that the Internet will become full of pointless domain names (for 65% of the people polled), messy and confusing (57%), too complex to navigate (46%) and out of control (41%)

Consumers are most suspicious of extensions linked to porn and religion. A massive 84% of consumers think .sex is dodgy, and two thirds think .god is suspect

The Internet experience is ruined by spammers (for 82% of consumers) website touts and phishing sites (81%), domain squatters (65%) and advertisers (56%)

“60% of consumers agree that the liberalisation of domain name extensions will change the way they use the Internet, but not for the better”

Consumers are unclear about who should be responsible for regulating the Internet. 18% believe ICANN should take control, but an equal number believe it is website server hosting companies' role; 13% want the British government to regulate and 12% think it's society's role ■