



Fact versus Fiction

As with any revolutionary change, a spirited discussion has developed surrounding the value of **.travel** and the viability of its success. The **.travel** critics have spoken and the debate is not only understandable...but welcomed.

There are those who allege that **.travel** is just a *money grab* by a couple of opportunistic entrepreneurs. Others see the **.travel** initiative as a welcomed answer to an increasingly chaotic Internet that rewards only companies that can afford to staff and maintain substantial IT departments. Who's right? The facts below suggest that the launch of **.travel** will rank among the most important milestones in the evolution of the global travel and tourism industry.

Here's why.

First, **every serious competitor – as a matter of course – is obliged to take a dispassionate, long term view of the future of their industry.** Tomorrow will hold advancements over today, and indeed will presage progress achieved yesterday. Consider Google and how many innovators came before it in the online search sector. It would be absurd – in a world where the only constant is change – to cling to the belief that the future holds no new innovators in search. Such a thought reminds us of the statement made by the head of the U.S. Patent Office in the 1930's when he commented that everything patentable had already been invented. Whether one chooses to believe it or not, innovation will continue to drive change in every aspect of our industry.

Considering the crucial role the Internet now plays in the travel industry, one is also compelled to consider the future of the Internet. As such, **the second argument is that the single most important development vis-à-vis the future of the Internet is the expansion of the name space** (i.e., the addition of new top level domains or "TLDes"). As part of its Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Commerce, ICANN (the body responsible for the integrity and stability of the Internet) approved the so-called test bed of seven new top level domains in 2000 to explore the viability of the introduction of two very different types of TLDes: generic and sponsored. Based on the experience gained over the four years that followed,

ICANN refined its thinking about sponsored TLDs further in 2004 declaring that the defining aspect of a “sponsored” over “generic” TLD would be that the sponsored TLD is restricted to use by its community or constituents, whereas the generic TLD would be available to any and all comers. The ICANN community (members of the six constituencies and supporting organizations that participate in the on-going debate that determines the future of the Internet), supported this sponsored round of name space expansion because sponsored TLDs held the potential of ridding the Internet of the insidious ills of cyber-squatting and domain name speculation, while creating a 100% accurate WHOIS database, a cornerstone of the Internet that has been one of the most vexing problems since its inception.

The Internet of tomorrow will consist of a vastly expanded names space from what we know today. The “.com box” is now being sorted out and the next step in the logical expansion is an exclusive TLD for the largest industry in the world, **.travel**. While it may seem strange today, and to some appear unnecessary, from ICANN’s perspective **.travel** is the first of the next generation of TLDs (which may in the not-too-distant future also include top level domains such as “.xxx” and “.finance” in which all entities that have anything to do with those sectors will be registered). **.travel** heralds what many in the ICANN community refer to as Internet 2.0.

The third compelling point is the fact that **captains of the travel industry, in conjunction with over 120 travel industry associations and a multitude of government tourism commissions from around the world, are all actively participating in – and promoting – .travel**. One would have to look long and hard to find another travel trade initiative in the history of the industry wherein such a venerated group of individuals has unified in support of a global movement. In point of fact, such collaboration on the part of so many respected industry leaders and tourism ministries has never happened before. This leaves one to the conclusion that either every respected individual in this leadership group is making a huge mistake – or – they have grasped the vision and understand the value **.travel** will bring to the industry as a whole, and to their organization specifically.

Fourth, **if this is simply a money grab, why isn’t the .travel Registry selling everything it possibly can?** Specifically, why isn’t **.travel** selling advertising on www.directory.travel along with keywords, position placement, optimization, etc. like Google does? Wouldn’t it be logical that a company focused on making a quick buck would put more banners and pop up ads on their site than Times Square has billboards? Or use any other conceivable way to monetize the opportunity?

The fact is the **.travel** Registry eschews all of these commercial temptations by design. Revenues will be generated solely from the sale of domain names. Why? Tralliance, the company authorized to administer the introduction of **.travel**, clearly understands its responsibility as the steward of a global good. Over the last four and a half years it has dedicated itself to building a universal framework that supports the smallest to the largest members of the travel industry, to not only create a level playing field for all but, more importantly, bring the entire industry into the game. The Registry’s mission of representing every bona fide travel and tourism entity online to expand the breadth and depth of offerings available in the online

marketplace serves not only travel consumers around the world, but indeed, every authenticated industry member as well.

A fifth important assertion is that **on no account will any company with a vested interest support something it may view as a threat to its share of the market.** Business is competitive and the status quo – or entrenchment – will always be preferred by those that control a marketplace. Consider Forrester Research's prediction that \$172 billion in online travel transactions will change hands in 2005. Without asking how much of those revenues your company will claim, we both know the answer. Unless yours is one of the four companies that control 97% of the U.S. online travel market, your share this year will be negligible, particularly compared to what it will be in the new era of **.travel**. This may clarify why many of the big online players in the industry disparage the need for **.travel**.

The **.travel** Directory will become – over time – an online catalogue of virtually every travel and tourism product or service available in the world. This free service will enable both consumers and travel agents to expeditiously find exactly what they are looking for. It will also enable travel service suppliers to generate high-quality leads in the most cost-effective manner possible. The **.travel** controlled vocabulary directory, by its very nature, will ensure that only those entities that match all selection criteria are returned as results (i.e., a 100% results match to queries). Algorithmic search engines do not have this capability. As a result, Tralliance predicts that online revenues from the sale of travel services will display as much as a ten fold increase in less than a decade. And, more importantly, these revenues will benefit the full spectrum of the global travel and tourism industry as opposed to the handful of companies who are the primary beneficiaries of the billions of dollars being transacted online today.

And lastly in support of **.travel**, is the fact that **.travel has been entered into the A root of domain name system.** In other words, **.travel** will become part of the core of the Internet and be with us as long as the Internet exists. Over time, as the global travel industry completes its migration into this exclusive online space – and as the nations of the world claim their **.travel** place names – what may seem foreign today will become a natural part of our industry tomorrow.

Taking a long-term view, it would clearly be inappropriate to dismiss **.travel** because a specific company has yet to register its domain name(s). Both mom and pop businesses and major industry players are registering their domain names every day.

Logic dictates that sooner or later, even those who argue against the initiative today will become **.travel** registrants tomorrow.

Tralliance Corporation, the **.travel** Registry

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