This document is the first edition of the French Domain Name Industry Report. It was written in September 2007.

The statistics presented were obtained from various sources: extraction of non-confidential information from the AFNIC database, public information sites, and opinion surveys. The authors would like to thank all of the people who provided them with information that was useful for the implementing of this observatory.

This study was carried out within the framework of a research contract between AFNIC and INT from July to September 2007. Newer information could not be taken into account in this version of the observatory.
AFNIC is a non-profit association (under the law of 1901) founded in December 1997 at the initiative of public authorities to manage the .fr and .re domains. These two Internet top level domains are for French territories (France and Reunion Island).

AFNIC’s members include individuals and legal entities. Its Board of directors is composed of ten members, five of whom are appointed by public authorities (two by INRIA for historical reasons, two by the Ministry of Industry and one by the Ministry of Research). The other five members are elected from among the registrars (two), users’ representatives (two) and the International College (one).

The conditions for the attribution of .fr domain names, defined in a document entitled “Naming Charter”, were initially quite restrictive. Over time, AFNIC made efforts to make these rules more flexible while trying to protect the French domain from problems that affected the other more open domains, particularly in terms of infringement of the rights of third parties. The two main steps in this process of easing of the rules were the elimination of the obligation of proving the right to a name to be able to register it, while maintaining the identification of the holder ex post facto (May 2004), and also the opening to individuals (June 2006).

At the same time, AFNIC reduced its fees from 15 euros in 2002 to 4.8 euros in 2007. As of October 1, 2007, the .fr domain had more than 915,000 domain names including close to 260,000 registered by individuals.

As registry of the .fr and .re domain names, a member of several international professional organizations, AFNIC is in a privileged position to grasp and report on the characteristics and major trends of the market for domain names in France and abroad:

- It is a neutral and independent organization,
- Its expertise on these subjects is acknowledged and its “signature” a mark of credibility,
- It is in contact with all actors on the French market,
- It is in constant contact with its counterparts abroad.

For this reason, AFNIC can legitimately aim to become the coordinator of a platform for pooled monitoring, to allow all parties to benefit from the results of studies that they could not have considered doing individually.
Why have a French Domain Name Industry Report?

There are already various information services for domain names, but these have a worldwide and
generalist vision and cannot access the specific data of the registries or undertake in-depth analyses of the
various markets.

AFNIC wanted to undertake this process for the benefit of the market players themselves, as well as the
public authorities and the Internet development organizations in France.

The general goals of this report are to:

- provide a reliable picture of the market and its actors,
- provide keys for the analysis of the determining factors of the market and its trends,
- contribute to promoting and obtaining recognition for this market and its specificities from private
  and public actors,
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the market and make recommendations for the registry
  and/or the registrars.
This report is structured in seven sections corresponding to the major fields of analysis of the market for domain names:

- The contexts
- The .fr domain names
- The holders of the names
- The registrars
- The technologies
- The uses
- The market trends and outlook

Each section is itself composed of a certain number of chapters, which report on the corresponding market indicators. For each chapter, we specify the sources of information and the analysis methods used.

In general, the following sources of information were taken into account in this observatory:

- data from the AFNIC database, processed and assembled with various computer programs;
- public information distributed by various organizations (INSEE, ARCEP public information sites, etc.);
- the results of the opinion survey already done by AFNIC.

The report ends with a table of contents, the list of the tables, figures and references used as well as a glossary of the acronyms used in this document.
A context of strong growth

The national markets for domain names are closely linked to use of Internet and thus the presence of computers in households in each country. In France, more than one household out of two now has a PC and there were more than 30 million individual Internet users in 2007. This growth is mostly due to the development of ADSL access and the unbundling of the local loop. France is still behind however with respect to the average for developed countries in terms of Internet access per capita.

On the world level, the generic domain .com is still very dominant on the market with more than 60 million domain names registered and annual growth of 30%. A few national domains are also very strong because of liberal registration conditions and a very active domestic market (Germany and United Kingdom). The France ccTLD is still behind in terms of the number of domain names registered per capita, but this situation is changing because of the recent modifications of its registration guidelines (elimination of the right to names in 2004 and opening to individuals in 2006).

The more restrictive conditions that had previously been in effect led French citizens to choose the generic domains. Today, .com and .fr are the two domains that are leading the growth in the number of domain names registered in France.

Furthermore, geographic breakdown studies indicate that France has about 2% of the domain names registered for the generic domains, as well as 3% of Internet hosts and 1% of Web servers.

A naming space that is still only moderately saturated

In October 2007, the French domain had more than 900,000 domain names, mostly registered on the first level (directly under .fr). The two modifications of the AFNIC Charter in 2004 and 2006 significantly increased the demand, increasing the annual growth rate from 12% to 44% over the course of a few years. While individuals currently control only one third of the names, they are contributing significantly to the development of the French market. They now register one out of every two new names in .fr.

Most holders of .fr domain names have only one domain name under this ccTLD, regardless of whether they are individuals or legal entities. A few isolated owners have several thousand names. These are mostly “domainers” who manage portfolios of names that they intend to resell on the second market or that they use for the traffic that they generate.

The analysis of the structure of the registered names indicates that the .fr domain is currently much less saturated than the gTLD’s, especially .com. The most commonly used length is eight characters in .fr whereas holders of the generic TLD’s must choose slightly longer names (ten characters). It comes as no surprise that an analysis of the characters used reveals frequencies close to those of the French language. We observe greater use of hyphens however (30% of names), far ahead of the use of numbers. Hyphens are used as separators to make domain names from sequences of elementary characters, the most widely used of which are “france”, “mairie” (town hall) and “immobilier” (real-estate). We also note that 8% of the words in the French dictionary have already been registered in .fr (but 70% of the most common words), one municipality
name out of four and 60% of the names of the main French companies. These figures are however well below those for the .com domain which is much more saturated for these various criteria.

**Name owners: young and urban**

The geographic location of holders of .fr domain names shows great disparities between departments. Predictably, the most populous departments are in the lead: for example, the Île-de-France has 40% of the domain names registered in France by individuals and companies. Conversely, the rural departments have the lowest rates for domain names registered per capita and per company. Less than 2% of the legal entity owners are located outside of France (holders of trademarks covering French territory).

The age pyramid for holders of .fr domain names shows a median age of 35, well below that of the general population due to the lesser use of Internet by senior citizens. We also see the impact of historical events on demographics (World War and baby-boom).

**Registrars’ market in the process of structuring**

In mid-2007, close to 1,000 registrars of .fr domain names belonged to AFNIC. After strong growth until 2001, and then in a more limited way with the abandoning of the right to names in 2004, the market now seems to be in a structuring process. The geographic locations of the registrars again show a strong predominance of the most populous French departments. 12% are located abroad, mostly in Europe.

A study of the 30 top registrars of .fr domain names revealed the services most commonly offered (name alone or pack including Web hosting), and the range of prices in effect. The range observed (from 6€ to 110€) corresponds to the differences observed in terms of market (individuals, SME’s or large companies) and added-value services (legal services, referencing, etc.), a situation that is all the more interesting given that the rates charged by AFNIC for the .fr names remain on the same order as those for most of the comparable ccTLDs.

The market of the registrars of .fr domain names appears to be quite deconcentrated in the sector of legal entities, with the number one actor holding only 15% of the market share. It is much more concentrated for individuals (25% for the number one). We also observe a large number of registrars who manage very limited portfolios (just a few names). Most registrars have an essentially professional clientele. Conversely, some of the largest registrars have an exclusively general public clientele.

The overall change on the French market for domain names has involved various fluctuations: after a phase of regular concentration until 2003, the abandoning of the right to names led to a deconcentration with scattering of market share between the actors on the market. The opening to individuals in 2006 had an inverse effect: several new large actors appeared on this new market, amassing large domain name portfolios and leading to a reconcentration of the market.
On the world level, only 1.5% of the ICANN accredited registrars are located in France. By number of names registered, they are behind the main actors on the market. Furthermore, the world market for the generic domains has a level of concentration between actors that is very close to that of the French market for the .fr domain.

The “second market” is becoming more and more dynamic, a phenomenon that is still emerging in France but which is playing a role in the growing consciousness of actors of the intrinsic value of certain domain names that can rightly be considered as assets of their holders.

**DNS servers**

Analysis of the AFNIC database indicates that a large majority of the .fr domain names have only two DNS servers in their configuration, often those defined by default by their registrar. Conversely, the domain servers present in the database have highly varied characteristics. Half of them manage only one domain name, while on the other hand the DNS servers of the main registrars contain several tens of thousands of records.

These observations lead us to recommend to holders of domain names that they diversify the DNS servers and networks on which their domain names depend technically.

**Mostly professional use**

A study based on a random sample of 1,000 .fr domain names revealed the use of the names on the Web. The sites associated with French domain names are mostly professional (one name out of two), while personal sites are ten times less numerous, a consequence of the more recent opening to individuals. Some names also correspond to holding pages (17%) or pages of sponsored links (6%) also called “parking pages.” The professional sites cover a wide range of business activities including computer services and other services for businesses, tourism and leisure, the media. The health and home sectors are also very present. 20% of the sites redirect the address to another Web site.

.fr seems quite well placed in terms of real use with respect to other domains such as .eu (60% of sites active including 5.6% personal sites under .fr versus 54% including 2.8% personal sites for .eu).

In terms of perception of domain names, opinion surveys carried out on behalf of AFNIC revealed various significant points. The .fr domain still has a particular image for French citizens: they consider that it should keep a close link with France and its underlying values, and be associated with the French language and they appreciate the security provided by the competent jurisdiction of French courts in the event of disputes. Furthermore, Internet users are now aware that individuals can register .fr domain names, even if the details of the procedure are still poorly known (lack of knowledge of AFNIC and registrars, of eligibility conditions or the notion of trusted space).
In legal terms, a gradual set of procedures were implemented by AFNIC in order to handle possible disputes regarding .fr domain names, from verifications of compliance done by the registrar itself to classic legal proceedings, or arbitration and mediation procedures. It is interesting to note that the proportion of complaints from French structures to the WIPO for the generic domains is five times greater compared with the proportion of generic names registered in France. This could indicate that French companies, more than their foreign counterparts, have opted for a policy of fewer registrations and litigation in the event of nuisances.

**Outlook**

While the domain name market in France taken as a whole is still less developed than in other countries, there is a clear trend towards growth in the years ahead, and this should benefit the .fr domain given its privileged image in the eyes of French Internet users, who associate it with the French language, belonging to the French Internet community and the proximity of the publisher of a site and its visitors. The .fr domain cannot be ignored, has become easy to access and is managed with constant attention to the protection of the personal data of individual domain name holders and the rights of third parties, and for these reasons it should continue to grow in France. This trend should accelerate because of the increase in the rates for the generic domains (2007-2012), which will give .fr a structural competitive advantage in terms of price in a way that was not the case until now.

.fr enjoys enviable advantages for the continuation of its development in a rapidly expanding market, stimulated by the growing maturity of users. While consolidating its legal and organizational foundations, the public authorities have an opportunity in the months ahead to reinforce this dynamic and to give .fr and its actors the means to occupy a place of reference in the world Internet context.
Chapter 1

General data for the “Internet” context in France

Data sources: Médiamétrie, Journal du Net, ARCEP, INSEE.

This chapter presents an overview of Internet use in France.

Computers in households

The number of PC’s in homes has been increasing steady for many years: close to 55% of households now have computers according to Médiamétrie. The number of households with Internet access is increasing in parallel: at the beginning of 2007, more than 45% of households had access, and more and more households are now buying computers and getting Internet access at the same time.

By way of comparison, in 2005 France was in the bottom half of OECD countries for the rate of presence of PC’s and Internet access in households. The number of PC’s in households is a factor that strongly influences the Internet penetration rate and thus the use of domain names. The number of Internet users in France was 30.6 million in June 2007 according to Médiamétrie (French people 11 years old or older who connected to the Internet during the past month).

Internet Access

The number of homes with Internet access (low-speed and high-speed) reached 15.9 million in the first quarter of 2007 according to ARCEP. The number of high-speed access accounts exceeded low-speed accounts in the fourth quarter of 2004, and it is now high-speed that is responsible for the overall growth of Internet in France, with growth on the order of 30% per year.

The following figure is taken from the report “Outlook for communications of the OECD, 2007 edition”. It represents all fixed Internet access forms (not including mobile telephony), including both low-speed (commutated) and high-speed access, and allows for observation of the diversity of Internet access technologies used in all OECD countries (Figure 1).

With regard to the total number of fixed Internet subscribers per 100 inhabitants, France was slightly behind at the end of 2005 with respect to the average for OECD countries: 21.2 subscribers for 100 inhabitants versus 24.5. It is ahead of the countries of Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece), but far behind The Netherlands, Germany and the United States for example.
With regard to high-speed however, in 2005 France was slightly above the OECD average: 17.7 high-speed access subscribers per 100 inhabitants versus 15.3, with strong predominance of ADSL technology. Internet on cable is not highly developed in France compared with countries such as Canada, The Netherlands or the United States. Fiber optic access was practically non-existent at the time in France, although it was already developing steadily in Denmark, South Korea and Japan. For the whole OECD zone, ADSL technology was in first place (63%), ahead of cable (30%) and other forms of access (7%).


**Figure 1 – Number of fixed Internet access subscribers per 100 inhabitants in December 2005 in the OECD countries, by access technology**
Internet use

An INSEE survey of May 2006 revealed the main uses of Internet users in France (Figure 2). These uses are mostly the search for information (77% of Internet users seek information on goods or services), communication tools (73% use E-mail), practical services (on-line banking, e-commerce) and leisure (music, videos, games).

These average values hide broad disparities relating to age however. The 15-19 year-old age group makes much greater use of instant messaging systems (62%) and forums (41%) than the general population. They are also more adept at downloading music or films (60%) and games (34%). There are also disparities related to sex and social milieu.

Figure 2 – Main Internet uses in France
Chapter 2

General data of the “Domain names” context in the world


The purpose of this chapter is to provide statistical data on the use of domain names around the world (all domains), as well as for Internet hosts and Web servers.

Use of various domains around the world

The following figure represents the classification of the main generic domains and the main ccTLD’s as of September 2007. The statistics used were compiled by AFNIC from the official sites of the registries and approximated in certain cases.

This classification shows that the generic domain .com is far ahead with more than 62 million domain names (Figure 3). The .de (Germany) and .net (generic) domains follow with respectively 11 and 8 million names, while .cn (China) is catching up with .net. We then have the .uk (United Kingdom), .org (generic), .info (generic), .nl (Netherlands) and .eu (Europe) domains. Some of the ccTLD’s are very dynamic and are doing as well as the gTLD’s (.de, .uk, .nl and more recently .cn due to a very aggressive pricing strategy).

The .fr domain was in 15th place in this classification in September 2007 with close to 900,000 names registered, with strong growth since the opening to individuals in June 2006.
The following figure is taken from the 2007 report of the OECD on the outlook for communications⁵. It presents a classification of ccTLD’s as a function of the number of domain names registered per 1,000 inhabitants for the OECD countries in July 2006 (Figure 4). Five domains are at the head of the classification with more than 100 names registered per 1,000 inhabitants: .dk (Denmark), .de (Germany), .nl (The Netherlands), .ch (Switzerland) and .be (Belgium). The .fr domain was in 25th place in this classification in July 2006, with 9 names registered per 1,000 inhabitants. One year later, following the opening to individuals, this ratio was slightly less than 14 domain names per 1,000 inhabitants.
Figure 4 – Number of domain names per 1,000 inhabitants in July 2006, by ccTLD for the OECD countries

The generic domains have had varied growth according to the statistics of the site Zooknic. After a slight drop due to the bursting of the Internet bubble in 2001-2002, the .com domain enjoyed spectacular growth, rising from 20 to 60 million domain names in five years. The other generic domains have had more moderate growth. We should also note the temporary impact of promotional campaigns, such as the one for the .info domain at the end of 2005: most of the names offered free of charge were not renewed at the end of the promotion period.

The 2007 OECD report on the outlook for communications presents the average annual growth, from 2000 to 2006, of the number of domain names for the ccTLD’s of the OECD countries. With 36% annual growth, the .fr domain is in 8th place out of the 31 countries of this classification, behind Belgium, Canada, Sweden, Spain, Poland, Greece and Finland (Figure 5). So while .fr is not one of the biggest domains today, its growth places it among the most dynamic domains, a trend further reinforced since June 2006 with its opening to individuals.
Figure 5 – Average annual growth in registrations of domain names by domain between 2000 and 2006, for the OECD countries

Breakdown between generic domains and national domains

The average breakdown for the OECD zone indicates that the .com domain is greatly dominant with about half of the market for domain name registrations. The ccTLDs represent on average 30% of the names registered in each country. The other generic domains split the remaining 20%.

Observation country by country reveals highly contrasted situations. The .us domain is very little used in the United States, as Americans have historically used mostly the generic domains. In some other countries, the proportion of generic domain names is higher than the OECD average: Turkey, Canada, Spain and France. In France, over a period of several years, users were choosing mostly the generic domains because of the relatively closed nature of the .fr domain. Conversely, countries such as Belgium and Slovakia use almost exclusively their national domains rather than generic names.

We also see that, with the exception of the United States for historical reasons, the countries that have the highest numbers of domain names per capita are mostly countries where the ccTLD is preferred with respect to the generic domains: Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, etc.
Geographical breakdown of domain names

The Ipwalk site offers estimations for the geographic distribution of generic domain names around the world. Slightly less than two thirds of domain names are thought to be registered in the United States (62 to 64%). After it, the next countries are Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada and China (between 3 and 6% of generic domain names per country). France is just behind, with about 2% of generic domain names (Figure 6).

This 2% figure shows that French actors have not gone far in adopting a logic of optimizing their presence on the Internet via domain names. This situation will not last long however. The modest size of the French market with respect to comparable countries should expand in the years to come as users become more aware of the advantages that they can obtain from the registration and use of domain names.

Figure 6 – Breakdown of generic domain names by country (according to Ipwalk)

Internet Hosts and Web Servers

Domain names are used to identify Internet hosts. This is equipment using the IP technology with a name in the DNS system, mostly servers (Web servers, mail servers, etc.) and network equipment (IP routers, etc.).
The ISC site (Internet Systems Consortium) publishes a regular estimation of the number of Internet hosts by domain. The methodology used involves consulting the DNS system to find the domain associated with each of the possible IP addresses (with optimizations to reduce the number of addresses used). It should be noted that these estimations are probably underestimated, in that the presence of more and more numerous firewalls on the Internet prevents the identification of certain hosts by means of the methodology adopted.

Contrary to the statistics on domain names, here it is the .net domain which is most prominent, with 37% of hosts, versus 17.5% for the .com domain (Figure 7). The .net domain is very widely used by network operators who use it to identify their equipment (routers, E-mail gateways, DSL equipment, etc.). One single .net domain name can thus be used to identify thousands of pieces of equipment managed by an operator, whereas one .com domain name will be used for example for a single Web server hosting the associated site.

The .fr domain is in sixth place with 2.7% of Internet hosts, behind .jp (Japan), .de (Germany) and .it (Italy). This rather good position shows that the .fr domain is used by a certain number of French operators or access providers to identify their equipment.

The site Security Space\(^9\) publishes a set of statistics on Web servers around the world: software used, implementation of the SSL protocol, technologies implemented (JavaScript, Flash, etc.), Web design tool used, etc. It also presents a breakdown of Web servers as a function of the domain used. This time, the .com domain is clearly in the lead, with close to 44% of the Web servers around the world. It is followed by the .de and .net domains, as in the classification of the domains according to the number of names registered. The .fr domain is in 13th place with 1.1% of the Web servers around the world (Figure 8).
We see here that the weight of .fr in terms of the number of servers is lower than the proportion of domain names registered in France; this could be linked to the formerly limited growth of .fr, relatively little used for naming servers.

Figure 8 – Number of Web servers by domain (according to Security Space)
Second part: The .fr domain names

Chapter 3

Evolution of the .fr domain names

● Data source: AFNIC.

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistical data on the use of .fr domain names: evolution of the top level and the various sub-domains, breakdown between individuals and legal entities in particular.

Top level domain and sub-domains

The .fr naming zone managed by AFNIC includes several types of domains:

● The top level domain .fr, corresponding to domain names located directly under the root (for example “afnic.fr”).

● The descriptive second level domains, corresponding to domain names located in a sub-domain of the .fr domain (for example “afnic.asso.fr”). The existing descriptive sub-domains are asso.fr (associations), com.fr (sub-domain for free use), tm.fr (trademark holders), nom.fr (family names), presse.fr (press publications) and prd.fr (research and development programs).


The AFNIC statistics\(^\text{10}\) show that a very large majority of the domain names are registered directly under the .fr domain (97.5%). The sub-domains that follow are asso.fr, com.fr and tm.fr, with 5,000 to 7,000 names each (Figure 9).
Breakdown by sub-domains of .fr domain names registered as of September 1, 2007

Directly under .fr
867,991

asso.fr
7,020
com.fr
6,221
tm.fr
4,742
nom.fr
1,318
Other descriptive domains
237
Sector sub-domains
2,503

Figure 9 – Breakdown of .fr domain names by sub-domain
The two successive phases of changes in the naming guidelines for the .fr top level (from May 11 to 14, 2004 for the elimination of name rights, then June 20, 2006 for the opening to individuals) had a substantial impact in increasing the number of domain names registered directly under the domain (Figure 10). As of September 1, 2007, there were 867,991 top level domain names registered in the AFNIC database.

![Change in the number of top level .fr domain names (directly under the .fr domain)](image)

**Figure 10 – Evolution of the number of .fr top level domain names**

**Individuals and legal entities**

.fr domain names can be registered by individuals and by legal entities (companies, associations, public organizations, etc.). Until June 2006, individuals could only register .fr domain names as sub-domains nom.fr and com.fr. The first level is now open to adult individuals who have an address in France.

The breakdown between the two types of holders shows that most of them are legal entities: at the end of August 2007 there were more than 640,000 domain names registered by legal entities, for slightly less than 250,000 names registered by individuals. Individuals thus own about 28% of the .fr domain names. This percentage is increasing however: since the opening to individuals in 2006, half of the registrations of new names have been made by individuals (Figure 11).
Figure 11 – Percentage of .fr domain names registered by individuals in 2007 (total and creations)

Operations on the .fr domain names

The rate of renewal of the .fr domain is around 85%, with a temporary drop in July 2007 due to the non-renewal of names registered one year earlier at the time of the opening to individuals. For the first half of 2007, the AFNIC database noted on average 32,000 creations of new names per month, as well as 2,800 changes of registrars and 1,600 transmissions between holders.
Chapter 4

Number of domain names per holder

Data source: Extraction from the AFNIC database on August 31, 2007 (distribution of the number of names recorded per individual and per legal entity).

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistics on the number of .fr domain names recorded by holder, for each type of holder (individuals and legal entities).

Individuals

A large majority of the individuals who own .fr domain names have only one name in this TLD (83%). A small number of them (10%) have 2 .fr domain names, and the registering of three names or more is much rarer (less than 2% own more than 5 names). The average number of names per individual holder is 1.5 names (Figure 12).

Figure 12 – Number of .fr domain names per holder for individuals
Legal entities

The distribution of the number of names per holder for legal entities is very close to that obtained for individuals: the average is 1.6 names (versus 1.5) and the percentage of holders who have only one .fr domain name is 87% (versus 83%). Only 2% of legal entities have more than 5 names, as for individuals (Figure 13).

Figure 13 – Number of .fr domain names per holder for legal entities

Evolution

The number of names registered per holder has been growing steadily, more so for individuals due to the more recent opening. For all names, the ratio thus rose from 1.57 to 1.61 between March and August 2007, i.e. holders now have 1.61 .fr domain names on average.
Chapter 5

Lexicographical structure of .fr domain names


The goal of this chapter is to provide statistical data on the lexicographical structure of the .fr domain names present in the AFNIC database (length of names, frequency of characters, presence of hyphens and numbers), as well as on the proportion of various types of names present in the database (words of the French language, names of municipalities and companies).

Length of .fr domain names

The following figure represents the distribution of the lengths of .fr domain names present in the AFNIC database (top level only, without the suffix “.fr”). The most frequent length is 8 characters and the average is 11.25 (Figure 14).

The minimum length is 2 characters. All of the 620 combinations of length 2 allowed by the AFNIC guidelines (“number number”, “number letter” and “letter number”) were reserved at the end of July 2007 (except for one, which was registered again at the beginning of August).

The maximum size authorized by the guidelines is 63 characters (not including suffix). There are 36 .fr domain names of this length present in the database (the 10 combinations “000...000” to “999...999”, and the 26 combinations “aaa...aaa” to “zzz...zzz”).
Figure 14 – Lengths of .fr domain names

The following table allows for comparison of the lengths of .fr domain names and those of French words, calculated from the list of French words published by Christophe Pallier (Table 1). The .fr domain names can be much longer, when they combine several terms using hyphens for example. The average length is thus higher in the domain names than in the words of the dictionary (11 versus 10). However, the most commonly used length is 8 characters for .fr names but 10 for French words. For French words, the minimum is one character (“a”, “à” and “y”) and the maximum 26 (“anticonstitutionnellement” and “oto-rhino-laryngologistes”, counting the hyphens).

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<th>Variations of the lengths of French words</th>
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Table 1 – Comparison of the variations of lengths of .fr domain names and French words
Comparison with the generic domains

The site Zooknic provides a distribution of the lengths of the names in the generic domains .com/.net/.org, based on a sample of names from 2001\textsuperscript{12} (Figure 15).

The average length is rather close in the various domains. However, the most common length is 8 characters for .fr names, 10 for .com names in 2001 and 11 for .com names in 2006 (Table 2). It seems that this length increases with the level of saturation of the domains, when it becomes necessary to choose longer names to find ones that are available. It is possible that the lengths of the names will thus increase on .fr as it develops, although this domain is now much less saturated than .com.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most frequent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Comparison of the variations of the lengths of .fr and .com/.net/.org names
Frequencies of characters in the .fr domain names

The following figure allows for comparison of the frequencies of the characters in .fr domain names and French words, calculated from the list of French words of Christophe Pallier already cited\textsuperscript{11} (Figure 16). This comparison is based solely on letters (not including numbers and hyphens) and accented letters were replaced with their unaccented equivalents in the French words.

It appears that the letters have frequencies that are quite close between the .fr domain names and the words of the French dictionary, which is logical. The list of French words used contains all of the plurals and all of the conjugated forms of the verbs, which explains the greater frequency of “s” and “z” in the French words. Conversely, the character “o” has a higher frequency in .fr domain names. This could be due to the use of English words in .fr domain names (the character “o” appears more often in English than in French, on the order of 7% versus 5%). It is also partly linked to the frequent use of the set of characters “oo” on the Internet (Joomla, Google, Wanadoo, Yahoo): there are proportionally ten times more domain names containing this set of characters than French words (1.4% versus 0.14%). The rare letters also seem to be used more often in .fr domain names (“y”, “x”, “j”, “k”, “w”), which could be due to the use of English terms and to the desire for originality in the creation of new names.
Use of hyphens and numbers in .fr domain names

Hyphens are very widely used in .fr domain names (Figure 17): more than 30% of the names contain them, often just one (in about 25% of cases). Numbers are used much less often (about 5% of names), with a balance between the use of one or two numbers.
Numbers are sometimes used in domain names to indicate years. The year 2007 is logically the most common, followed by 2000, which is still emblematic. For future years, 2012 is prominent because of the upcoming French presidential elections and the summer Olympic Games in London (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 – Number of .fr domain names containing the years 2000 to 2015 (in July 2007)
Sub-chains of characters used in the .fr domain names

The following figure presents a classification of the mostly widely used sub-chains in .fr domain names (Figure 18). By sub-chains we mean chains of characters that appear as components of .fr domain names, separated by hyphens (for example, “hotel-a-paris” is composed of three sub-chains). The overall classification shows linking terms (articles: “le”, “la”, “du”, “des”, conjunctions: “et”, prepositions: “de”, “en”, isolated letters: “a”, “e”, “i”), generic terms (“mairie”, “immobilier”) and geographical terms (“france”, “paris”).

![Top 30 sub-chains used in .fr domain names]

Figure 18 – Main sub-chains used in .fr domain names

Search from various dictionaries

In the continuation of this analysis, we study the proportion of words from various sources that were registered as .fr domain names on the date of extraction from the AFNIC database:

- Words from the French dictionary;
- the names of French municipalities;
- the names of French companies.
The dictionary words used can contain characters that are forbidden in .fr domain names (accented characters, spaces, punctuation, etc.). We test different variants of the words taken from the dictionaries:

- words as is;
- words replacing accented characters by their unaccented equivalents (for example: “chateau” for “château”);
- words with elimination of special characters (space, period, apostrophes, etc.) or replacing them with hyphens. For example, for the company Sanofi Aventis, we test two names, “sanofiaventis” and “sanofi-aventis”;
- words with replacement of both accented characters and special characters. For example, for the town of Pont-l’Évêque, we test two names “pont-leveque” and “pont-l-eveque”.

The proportions of words that are registered as .fr domain names after replacement of accented characters give an estimate of the potential market in the event of future implementation of international names (IDN) in .fr.
Proportion of French words registered as .fr domain names

We use three lists of French words:

- the list of French words of Christophe Pallier, containing 336,531 words (with plurals and conjugated forms of verbs in all tenses)\(^\text{11}\). It should be noted that conjugated forms of verbs have little chance of being registered as .fr domain names (names such as “referencassions.fr”);
- the Dubois-Buyse orthographic scale, containing 3,725 commonly used words, which all adult French speakers supposedly know (progressive acquisition between primary school and high school)\(^\text{13}\);
- the list of the most frequent words in the written French language, by the Ministry of National Education, containing 1,364 of the most frequently used words\(^\text{14}\).

The results indicate that, for the complete set of about 300,000 words of the French language, 8% are registered in the form of .fr domain names. This figure rises to 70-75% for the most frequent words. The words for which transformation of the accented characters was necessary represent a significant share, on the order of 15 of 30% of the whole (Figure 19).

![Figure 19 – Proportion of French words registered as .fr domain names](image-url)
Proportion of the names of French municipalities registered as .fr domain names

This study is based on three lists:

- the list of all the municipalities in France (Metropolitan and overseas), obtained from the Wikipedia encyclopedia\(^{15}\) (more than 36,000 municipalities for 34,000 unique names after elimination of duplicates);
- the list of municipalities of more than 2,000 inhabitants, according to the site LEXILOGOS (4,700 names of municipalities, from the population census of March 1999);
- the list of the postal codes of all of the municipalities in France, also from Wikipedia (about 6,000 postal codes).

The results indicate that one municipality name out of four is registered as a .fr domain name, with this figure rising to one out of two for the largest municipalities. Names of municipalities have been protected by AFNIC since 2005. Only the municipalities in question can register the corresponding names. Of the names of municipalities registered in the AFNIC database, about 20% had transformation of accented characters. Only 3% of postal codes were registered (Figure 20).

---

**Figure 20 – Proportion of names of French municipalities and postal codes registered as .fr domain names**
Proportion of names of French companies registered as .fr domain names

This study is based on three lists of companies:

- the list of the 40 companies of the CAC 40 index\textsuperscript{17};
- the list of the 100 largest French companies according to their revenues in 2006, according to Wikipedia\textsuperscript{18};
- the list of the 1,485 top French companies according to their revenues in fiscal 2006, published by the site “LExpansion.com”\textsuperscript{19}.

The results indicate that all of the CAC 40 companies reserved their names in the .fr domain, which was expected (and they have certainly reserved many other forms of their company names and their trademarks, in .fr and in other domains). More than 8 companies out of 10 among the 100 top companies in France have also done so, and 60% of the 1,500 top companies. Of these, about 15% of them modified accented characters contained in their real names to make them valid domain names (Figure 21).

![Figure 21 – Proportion of names of French companies registered as .fr domain names](image)
Chapter 6

Localization of individual holders of .fr domain names

- Data sources: Extraction from the AFNIC database on June 30, 2007 (geographic breakdown of domain names of individuals), INSEE statistics.

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistical data on the rates of penetration as a function of geographical area (domain names per 1,000 inhabitants).

Number of .fr domain names attributed to individuals

As AFNIC guidelines require that individual holders of names have a physical address in France, the database only contains addresses located in France (99.86% in Metropolitan France and 0.14% overseas).

The national average is about 2,200 domain names per department, but with wide disparities between the departments (close to 40,000 names for Paris, less than 150 for the Lozère). We observe high concentrations of holders of names around the major cities: Paris and its region, Lille, Rouen, Metz, Nancy, Strasbourg, Rennes, Nantes, Angers, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Annecy, Lyons, Grenoble, Montpellier, Nîmes, Marseilles, Toulon, Nice, etc. The eight departments of the Île de France region alone have close to 40% of the domain names registered in France by individuals. Conversely, the rural departments make up the last quartile.

Overseas departments and territories have their own territorial domains (Guadeloupe: .gp, Guyana: .gf, Martinique: .mq, Mayotte: .yt, New Caledonia: .nc, French Polynesia: .pf, Reunion Island: .re, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon: .pm, Southern territories and French Antarctica: .tf, Wallis-et-Futuna: .wf). According to the charters for these domains, residents can register names in these domains as well as in the .fr domain.

The department of Paris accounts for close to 17% of the individual holders of .fr domain names, far ahead of the others. The top 10 departments include five departments of the Paris region, and the departments of the other large French cities: the Rhône (69), the Bouches-du-Rhône (13), the Alpes-Maritimes (06), the Nord (59) and the Haute Garonne (31).

Number of .fr domain names attributed to individuals per 1,000 inhabitants

The following maps show the number of domain names registered by individuals compared with the population of the department, in names per 1,000 inhabitants. The populations of the departments are taken from INSEE estimations as of January 1, 2005\(^2\), and various sources for overseas territories (INSEE, Overseas Ministry, Wikipedia).
The national average is 2.6 names per 1,000 inhabitants, again with major disparities between departments (from 18 for Paris (75) to 1 for the Meuse (55)). The same concentrations as in the first maps are present, but new departments appear in the first quartile (more than 2.8 names per 1,000 inhabitants). These are departments that are less populous but where .fr domain names have been in strong demand from individuals with respect to the population: the Pyrénées-Atlantiques (64), Savoie (74), the Drôme (26), the Vaucluse (84) and Corsica (2A / 2B). The departments of the Southeast quarter of France are mostly above the average in terms of the number of names per 1,000 inhabitants (Figure 22).

Figure 22 – Number of .fr domain names registered by individuals per 1,000 inhabitants (Metropolitan France)
The overseas departments are all in the last quartile: less than 1.6 .fr domain names registered by individuals per 1,000 inhabitants (Figure 23).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Number of .fr domain names per 1,000 inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Pierre and Miquelon</td>
<td>less than 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadeloupe</td>
<td>1.6 to 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinique</td>
<td>more than 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Guiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayotte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna Islands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Pierre and Miquelon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadeloupe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinique</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>French Guiana</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayotte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna Islands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Pierre and Miquelon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadeloupe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Guiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayotte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna Islands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AFNIC

Figure 23 – Number of .fr domain names registered by individuals per 1,000 inhabitants (Overseas)

The top 10 departments for the number of .fr names for individuals per 1,000 inhabitants indicate that the department of Paris (75) is still far in the lead (18 names), followed again by the Hauts-de-Seine (92) and the Rhône (69). It contains five Paris region departments. Some departments that were not in the top 10 for the absolute number of names registered appear here: the Bas-Rhin (67), the Hérault (34) and the Essonne (91), where registrations by individuals are increasing rapidly (between 4.5 and 5 names for 1,000 inhabitants).
Chapter 7

Localisation of legal entity holders of .fr domain names

- Data sources: Extraction from the AFNIC database on June 30, 2007 (geographical breakdown of domain names for legal entities), INSEE statistics.

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistical data on the rates of penetration as a function of the geographical areas (domain names per 1,000 companies).

Number of .fr domain names attributed to legal entities

The AFNIC guidelines imply that legal entities registering a .fr domain name must have their main office or an establishment located in France or be holders of a trademark registered in France or an EU or international trademark targeting French territory. A large majority of legal entity holders of .fr domain names are located in France (98.6%). Among the companies located abroad (holders of trademarks covering France), they are mostly located in Europe (70%) or in North America (27%), only 3% of them are in other regions of the world (Figure 24).

Figure 24 – Top 10 countries for .fr domain names registered by legal entities
The national average is about 5,900 names per department, again with large disparities between the highly-industrialized departments (20% of the names are located in Paris and 39% in the Île-de-France as a whole) and the rural departments (less than 0.1% in the Lozère (48) and in the Creuse (23)). The breakdown by department for legal entities is very close to the corresponding breakdown for individuals. Only the department of the Loire appears in the first quartile for legal entities (more than 1,000 names in the department), although it did not appear for individuals.

For overseas departments, Reunion Island is in the first half of French departments for the number of .fr domain names registered by legal entities, with more than 3,000 names. Martinique and Guadeloupe follow, with about 1,300 and 1,100 names.

The departments of Paris (75) and the Hauts-de-Seine (92) are at the top of the Top 10 departments for legal entities, as was the case for individuals. We also find the other departments present in this classification, in a different order.

**Number of .fr domain names attributed to legal entities per 1,000 companies**

The following maps show the number of domain names registered by legal entities per 1,000 companies, by department. The number of companies per department comes from the INSEE statistics as of January 1, 2004 for the “I.C.S.” field. This economic field designates all commercial sectors of industry, construction, commerce and services, and does not take into account certain economic sectors (agriculture, financial services, administration, associative activities and rental of real estate).

The national average is 179 legal entity names per 1,000 companies (to be compared with the average of 2.6 individual names per 1,000 inhabitants). We find large disparities between departments, the first (the Moselle (57) with 644 names per 1,000 companies) doing 20 times better than the last one (Guadeloupe with 29 names). Furthermore, several departments appear in the first quartile (more than 125 names per 1,000 companies) although they were not in it for the gross number of legal entity domain names: the Indre-et-Loire (37), the Loiret (45) and the Côte-d’Or (21) (Figure 25).
Figure 25 – Number of .fr domain names registered by legal entities per 1,000 companies (Metropolitan France) on June 30th, 2007

Number of .fr domain names registered by legal entities per 1,000 companies
(Metropolitan France)

AFNIC

Figure 25 – Number of .fr domain names registered by legal entities per 1,000 companies (Metropolitan France)
The results for overseas territories only concern the four departments for which statistics on the number of companies were usable (Figure 26). These departments are all in the last quartile (less than 125 names for 1,000 companies).

**Figure 26** – Number of .fr domain names registered by legal entities per 1,000 companies (Overseas)
Chapter 8

Characteristics of individual holders of .fr domain names

Data sources: Extraction from the AFNIC database on July 10, 2007 (years of birth of individual holders) and on July 31, 2007 (first names of individual holders).

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistical data on individual holders of .fr domain names.

Age of individual holders of .fr domain names

We consider in this study the age as of January 1, 2007. The average age of the holders is 37 ½. The median age is 35: there are as many holders over 35 as there are under 35.

The comparison of this age pyramid with that of the general French population (metropolitan and overseas departments, men and women)22 shows that the historical events have the same impact on both curves: the deficit of births linked to the Second World War and the baby boom that followed from 1946 to 1973 (33 to 60 years on the curve). The oldest events (1st World War) are not visible on the curve of holders, because of the lesser use of domain names by senior citizens (Figure 27).

There is also a “line of inversion of percentages” at 48 years of age: below, the holders of .fr domain names are proportionally more numerous in their age range than the general population, above, the order of the percentages is inverted.
The holders of .fr domain names are on average younger than the general population, by about ten years for the average age and the median age (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual holders</th>
<th>Adult population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>154 008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum age</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>49 197 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 – Comparison of the ages of individual holders of .fr domain names and the French adult population

The breakdown of individual holders by age range in September-October 2007 indicates a predominance of people aged 18 to 34 (45%), followed by the 35-50 age range (38%), with few people in the older age ranges (less than 20%).
Chapter 9

Registrars

Data sources: Historical data of the AFNIC (change in the number of registrars from 1996 to 2007) and extraction from the AFNIC database on June 30, 2007 (breakdown of registrars by country and by department).

The goal of this chapter is to provide information on the registrars of .fr domain names: number, change over time and geographical breakdown.

Number of registrars of .fr domain names

The registrars of .fr domain names choose to join AFNIC in option 1 or option 2. The option 1 registrars pay a higher annual membership fee but the costs per operation are lower: this option is better for large registrars who manage many .fr domain names. This is the option chosen by most registrars who target the market of individuals.

At the end of June 2007 there were a total of 979 registrars. The number of registrars increased very rapidly until the end of 2001. Their number then dropped off for several years after the bursting of the Internet speculation bubble. Since the opening to individuals in June 2006, there has been a structuring of the market. Some small registrars, for example, have become dealers associated with registrars managing larger portfolios of names, thereby reducing the total number of registrars.

Localization of registrars of .fr domain names

The following figure indicates the breakdown of the registrars by department (Figure 28). The national average is about eight registrars per department, with big disparities. The first quartile is composed of the 24 departments that have more than eight registrars: once again the departments with the largest French urban areas (Paris and the Île-de-France, Lyon, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Nice, Toulouse, Nantes, Lille, Montpellier, Strasbourg, Rennes, Orléans, Mulhouse, Nîmes, Lorient, Annecy). Paris alone has 20% of the registrars of .fr domain names, and the eight departments of the Île-de-France more than 40% of them. Conversely, 19 departments have only one registrar, and 11 have none (Cher (18), Haute-Marne (52), Haute-Saône (70), Loir-et-Cher (41), Lot (46), Lozère (48), Nièvre (58), and overseas Mayotte, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna Islands).
Figure 28 – Breakdown of registrars of .fr domain names (Metropolitan France)
Overseas, there are six registrars on Reunion Island, five in Martinique, and one in Guadeloupe, in French Guiana and in Saint Pierre and Miquelon (Figure 29).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Number of registrars per department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Pierre and Miquelon</td>
<td>less than 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadeloupe</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinique</td>
<td>5 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Guiana</td>
<td>more than 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayotte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna Islands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 29 – Breakdown of registrars of .fr domain names (Overseas)

AFNIC

Figure 29 – Breakdown of registrars of .fr domain names (Overseas)
Among the registrars of .fr domain names, about 12% are located outside of France, essentially in Europe: only 3% are located somewhere other than geographical Europe (Figure 30).

Figure 30 – Breakdown of registrars of .fr domain names outside of France
Chapter 10

Typology of services offered and prices

- Data source: Internet Sites of the 30 main registrars of .fr domain names in number of names (visits in September 2007).

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistical data on the services offered by the main registrars of .fr domain names and the prices in effect. The corresponding information was gathered in September 2007 from the Web sites of the top 30 registrars in terms of the number of .fr domain names managed.

Services offered by the registrars

The registrars’ services differ in many ways. Firstly, the number of domains offered for registration is highly variable. Some only offer the main ones: the generic domains .com/.net/.org/.info/.biz, .fr and .re (Reunion), and frequently also the .be (Belgium) and .mobi domains (mobile equipment). Other registrars have a wider offer of several dozen domains. A few claim that they can register in all available domains (about 250).

About three offers out of four include Web hosting services. It is sometimes included in the basic offer of registration of the domain name (space provided from 1 MB to 1 GB) and very often offered in the form of an additional service that is invoiced separately. Likewise, an E-mail space is sometimes included in the basic offer (in 20% of cases, space provided from 10 MB to 2 GB). Most offers also include Web and E-mail redirection services associated with the registered domain name.

The other services found in many offers are the providing of a Webmail and anti-virus / anti-spam associated with the E-mail addresses based on the domain name, Web page creation tools, as well as referencing services for Internet sites put on line.

Several registrars also offer an anonymous Whois service, allowing clients to not show their personal contact information in the Whois directories of the domains offered in order to avoid having them captured by spammers.

Some registrars offer professional portfolio management services oriented to major accounts: audit and search for anteriority before registration, oversight and surveillance after registration, legal service and recovery in cases of cybersquatting, etc.
Prices of registrars

The prices mentioned on the sites of the registrars have varying formats: by year or by month, with or without VAT, etc.

The rate used in this study corresponds to the base rate for the acquisition of the domain name alone (a minimum hosting service is sometimes provided free of charge with the name). It does not take into account possible reductions (for volume) or temporary promotional campaigns (reduction for the first year).

Among the 30 sites analyzed, some do not give information about the prices they charge, so they do not appear in this study (seven registrars, which target mostly large companies and give quotes upon request).

Just as for the range of services, the range of prices is very broad, from 6€ to about 110€.

The diversity of the prices is due to the market segments targeted (general public, SME’s, large companies) and the added-value services that may be associated with the domain name in the form of a “package” (hosting, legal services, etc.).

Furthermore, about half of the registrars analyzed offer discounts depending on the duration of the registration and/or the number of names purchased (particularly for domain name dealers).
Chapter 11

Analysis of registrars’ market

Date sources: Extraction from the AFNIC database on June 30, 2007 (number of domain names by type of holder and by registrar), Dot and Co (statistics on ICANN accredited registrars).

The goal of this chapter is to analyze the market for registrars on the .fr domain and on the generic domains, using various econometric indexes (HHI and CR indexes) and Lorentz curves.

Number of .fr domain names per registrar

Of the 979 registrars of .fr domain names, almost all (940 registrars) manage domain names registered by legal entities and only 417 manage names registered by individuals. On average, a registrar manages about 650 legal entity names and 250 individual names. There are however wide discrepancies among the various registrars.

Market for individuals

The number one registrar handles more than 25% of the names (about 60,000), the next ones have about 15% of the overall market. Conversely, there are about 350 registrars out of 417 who manage less than 100 names and even 250 who manage less than 10 names.

The following table indicates the value of the indices of concentration associated with the market for Individuals (Table 5). The “Cri” type indices (Concentration Ratio) represent the total market share of the “i” first actors of the market. Here the number one actor represents one fourth of the total market (CR1), the first four have two thirds of the market (CR4) and the top ten close to 90% of the market (CR10).

The HHI (Herfindahl-Hirschman Index) is calculated as the sum of the squares of the market shares of all of the actors of the market. It varies between 0 (very competitive market) and 1 (monopoly situation) and is used by the competition authorities to analyze the possible consequences of mergers and acquisitions. The HHI index is equal to 0.13 on the market for individuals, which corresponds to a market that is not very concentrated (0.1 to 0.18).
Indices of concentration for the market for .fr domain names registered by individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of registrars</th>
<th>417</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of domain names</td>
<td>230,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indices of concentration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR1</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR4</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR10</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHI</td>
<td>0.1342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 – Indices of concentration for the market for .fr domain names registered by individuals

**Market for legal entities**

The number one actor on this market handles 14% of the names (about 90,000), the next ones, around 6%. Conversely, there are about 600 registrars out of 940 who manage less than 100 names and 150 less than 10 names.

The indices of concentration show that the market for legal entities is much less concentrated than the market for individuals (Table 6). The “Concentration Ratio” type indices are all lower: CR1 at 14% versus 25%, CR4 at 33% versus 66% and CR10 at 55% versus 87%. Likewise, the HHI index is 0.04 on the market for legal entities, versus 0.13 on the market for individuals: this suggests that the market being studied is not very concentrated (HHI less than 0.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of registrars</th>
<th>940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of domain names</td>
<td>626,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indices of concentration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR1</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR4</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR10</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHI</td>
<td>0.0436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Indices of concentration of the market for .fr domain names registered by legal entities
Total market (individuals and legal entities)

The indices of concentration on the whole market are rather close to those calculated on the market for legal entities alone, indicating a market that is not concentrated (Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall market for the .fr domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of registrars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of domain names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indices of concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 – Indices of concentration of the overall market for .fr domain names (registered by individuals and legal entities)

Breakdown of the market between individuals and legal entities

Most registrars have an essentially professional clientele, with a few individuals. Conversely, some registrars have a clientele composed exclusively or almost exclusively of individuals, including some registrars which have the largest volumes.

The following figure shows the main .fr domain name registrars in volume (number of names managed), with the breakdown between the individual / legal entity markets. We see that the top registrars in volume are mostly present in the market for individuals (Figure 31).
Evolution of the market for .fr domain name registrars

The indices of concentration all had a peak at the end of 2000, which seems to be linked to the promotion campaign for the second level nom.fr in December 2000 (free domain names for one year). The main actors of the market seem to have benefited from the effects of this promotion, increasing their market shares with, as a direct consequence, an increase in the overall market concentration. Merger-acquisition mechanisms between market actors could also have been involved. A large share of the free names were not renewed, leading to a return to the normal level of the various concentration indices observed.

The market then became progressively more concentrated until the end of 2003. The easing of the registration conditions in May 2004 (elimination of the right to names) led immediately to a process of deconcentration of the market. Conversely, a process of reconcentration was observed with the opening to individuals in June 2006, due to the arrival of new actors targeting the general public and managing large domain name portfolios. The indices have been constantly progressing since that time: there are now concentration levels analogous to those observed at the beginning of the 2000’s but with other actors in competition.
The continuation of this chapter is devoted to the ICANN accredited registrars. It is based on statistics published by the Dot and Co. Company.

The following graph shows the breakdown between countries of the world for the ICANN accredited registrars (Figure 32). North America has the lion’s share (more than 80% of the registrars are based there); France is in fifth place with 13 accredited registrars (1.5% of the total).

**Figure 32 – Breakdown of the ICANN accredited registrars by country**

The breakdown of generic domain names (.com, .net, .org, .biz, .info, .name, .coop, .pro, .mobi) as a function of the country of the registrar again puts the United States far ahead (close to two thirds of the names). The proportion of the names managed in France is again on the order of 1.4% of the total of the generic names (Figure 33).
Figure 33 – Breakdown of generic domain names according to the country of the registrar

The indices of concentration for the world market for generic domains are also almost identical to those observed on the market for the .fr domain: CR1 18% versus 15%, CR4 41% versus 42%, CR10 identical at 61% and HHI identical at 0.06 (Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World market for generic domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of registrars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of domain names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of names per registrar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indices de concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 – Indices of concentration of the world market for generic domain names
Chapter 12

Data on DNS servers

Data sources: Extraction from the AFNIC database on July 31, 2007 (number of domains per server) and on August 16, 2007 (number of servers per domain).

The goal of this chapter is to provide statistics on the DNS servers that appear in the registrations of .fr domain names: total number of servers, number of servers per domain name and number of domain names per server.

The AFNIC database contained 25,626 different DNS servers at the time of the extraction.

Number of DNS servers per .fr domain name

The distribution of the number of DNS servers associated with the .fr domain names shows that a very large majority of the names (close to 86%) indicate only two DNS servers in their configuration, two being the minimum that is required. Some names indicated three servers (12%), and more complex configurations are very rare. The maximum number of servers is 9, and the average is 2.17 servers (Figure 34).

Furthermore, many domain names use the default configuration provided by their registrar, so many identical configurations appear in the fr zone with regard to the associated DNS servers. The study showed that the 886,166 domain names existing at the time of the extraction use only 18,906 different configurations in terms of DNS servers.
Figure 34 – Number of DNS servers per .fr domain name
The following figure shows the breakdown of the number of .fr domain names managed by DNS servers present in the AFNIC database. Close to half of the servers manage only one .fr domain name and about 13% manage two. On the other hand, close to 18% of the DNS servers manage more than ten domain names: these include in particular the servers of the registrars toward which the domain names of their clients are directed by default (Figure 35).

It is important to note that healthy management requires the diversification of the DNS servers used to host the domain names of a portfolio of names. The results obtained within the framework of this study show that this diversification is not yet optimal in the case of .fr domain names.
The domains most commonly used by the .fr name servers are the three domains .net, .com and .fr, in very similar proportions (Figure 36).

Figure 36 – The main domains used in the names of DNS servers
Chapter 13

Use of .fr domain names on the Web

- Data sources: Random extraction of a sample from the AFNIC database on June 30, 2007, manual navigation on the sites associated with the domain names of the sample.

The purpose of this chapter is to supply statistical data concerning the use of .fr domain names on the Web: type of site (professional site, personal site, holding pages, etc.), sector of activity in the case of professional sites and URL displayed for the site (identical or site redirected to another URL).

A random extraction of 1,000 .fr domain names from the 831,482 names present in the AFNIC database on June 30, 2007, was done (use of the pseudo-random function integrated in Microsoft Office Excel and elimination of duplicates). A manual analysis was then done on the 1,000 domain names of the sample by visiting the Web sites associated with these names (between August 15 and 23, 2007). The URL's used for the tests were made by prefixing the domain name .fr with the chain of characters “www.”. The statistics presented below are calculated from this sample of 1,000 names and do not claim to be representative of the entire fr zone.

It should also be noted that of the 1,000 names of the random extraction of June 30 2007, 22 were no longer in the AFNIC database on July 31 2007 (2.2 % of names not renewed).

Types of Internet sites associated with .fr domain names

- No response from the server: the Web server associated with the domain name does not exist, does not respond to the Internet browser or sends back an HTTP error code of type 403 (Forbidden), 404 (Not Found) or 410 (Gone).
- Site temporarily closed: a message on the site indicates that it is temporarily closed.
- Site empty: the server responds, but the Web page comes back empty. This could also mean a site built from a content management platform but for which the real content has not been created (only the formatted content of the management platform is sent).
- Service provider holding page: the site is parked with a registrar, a hosting provider or a specialized operator while awaiting the loading of the real contents.
- Sponsored links (“parking”): the site uses commercial links allowing for remuneration as a function of the clicks by visitors (Pay Per Click), for example those proposed by Google (AdSense) or Yahoo! Search Marketing or the services of the Sedo and NameDrive platforms (NDParking).
- Name for sale: the domain name is offered for sale through a second market exchange platform for domain names.
- Under construction: a message on the site indicates that it is under construction.
• Professional site: the site is of a professional nature (companies, associations, public organizations, but also individuals working freelance).

• E-commerce: the site has functionalities for on-line purchasing or redirects to an associated site for on-line purchases.

• Personal site: the site is of a personal nature (personal blog, family site, community site, photo site, game site, etc.).

• Blog: the site is in the form of a blog.

• Type unknown: the type of site could not be determined as one of the preceding forms. If this is the case, it is usually because the contents of the site are protected by a password.

The classification of the random sample of 1,000 .fr domain names as a function of the type of site indicates that professional sites represent almost half of them (46%). These professional sites are mostly showcase type sites because only 7% have e-commerce type functions. The personal sites are far behind (less than 5%), a result of the recent opening to individuals in June 2006. The service provider holding pages account for 17% of the domain names studied and 6% are “parked” and directed to sponsored links (only about 1% of the names of the sample were for sale on the second market). There was no response from the associated Web server for 16% of the names and about 5% were under construction at the time of the visit (Figure 37).
Sector of activity of the web sites associated with the .fr domain names

A classification was done as a function of the sector of activity for the professional sites. The sector of activity was identified manually during the Web site visit and not by using the INSEE codes of the holders of the domain names. The figure below presents the classification obtained for the 1,000 names of the random sample. Some sectors of activity are very present on the French Web: services (IT or other), tourism and leisure, culture and the media, health and beauty services, homes and real estate, etc. Pornographic sites represent only 0.8% of the sample (Figure 38).
The study also revealed the referencing strategies based on domain names. One on-line tourism site appeared six times in the 1,000 domain names analyzed, with each of the names improving the referencing on specific key words. Statistically, the same site could be using hundreds of other domain names over the entire .fr zone for the purpose of referencing.

**URL’s displayed by Web sites associated with .fr domain names**

In the case of active sites, the study also analyzed the URL’s (Uniform Resource Locator) displayed. The URL displayed corresponds to the URL that appears on the home page of the Web site, the links within the site can then direct Internet users to URL’s using another domain name.

The following figure summarizes the results obtained for the Web sites associated with the domain names of the sample (Figure 39). In almost 80% of the cases, the Web sites associated with the .fr domain names use a URL identical to the domain name studied (*no redirection*). In the other cases, the site is redirected to another domain name in .com (10%), .net (5%) or .fr (4%).
Comparison between Internet sites associated with the .fr and .eu domain names

An analogous study was done in 2007 by the EURid registrar for the .eu domain, on a random sample of 1,000 domain names\textsuperscript{25}. We compare below the results of our study with those for the .eu domain. The EURid study used 1,000 .eu domain names with which an active Web site was associated, while our study on the .fr domain was for a random sample of 1,000 names, some of which were not associated with any Web site (about 16\% had no response from the server). To do this comparison, we calculated the percentages solely for the .fr domain names associated with active Web sites (838 names).

The following figure allows us to compare the types of sites associated with the .fr and .eu domains, according to the two random samplings studied (Figure 40). The statistics are generally very close, with the exception of a few details. The sites that are parked or directed to a holding page, and also the pornographic sites, have exactly the same frequencies in both domains. The .fr domain contains slightly more professional sites and personal sites, and slightly fewer sites under construction, which can be explained by the comparative youth of the .eu domain (end of 2005 – beginning of 2006). There are more names for sale in .eu than in .fr: the second market for domain names is more developed on the European scale than on the French scale, and the “domainers” were better able to take advantage of the recent opening of .eu than they were for .fr, which is much older.
The “parking” phenomenon is difficult to compare because the available data for .eu do not make a distinction between “parked” names (directed to contextual links) and names directed to the holding pages of service providers. We followed this grouping to allow for the comparison, with figure 37 above presenting a breakdown between parked names and holding pages in .fr (with a reference group of 1000 names versus 838 active names in figure 40 below).

**Figure 40 – Comparison of the types of Web sites associated with .fr and .eu domain names**
Chapter 14

Perception of .fr domain names

- Data sources: AFNIC/20 Minutes (March 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the main results of an opinion survey done on behalf of AFNIC, concerning the perception and uses of domain names in France:

- Image survey done by the newspaper “20 Minutes” for AFNIC from March 12 to 25, 2007, on a panel of 800 respondents who are part of the “20 Urban Panel” program. This panel includes mostly young respondents (75% are under 34 years of age), working people in higher job categories (CSP+) (55%) and students (36%) and who are from the largest French urban areas (Paris, Lyon, Lille, Nantes, Toulouse, Strasbourg, Marseilles, Bordeaux).

AFNIC/20 Minutes Survey 2007

The following figures summarize the main results of the survey done by the newspaper “20 Minutes” in 2007, with a panel of readers.

Use of .fr domain names (Figure 41)

The respondents of the “20 Minutes” panel are mostly aware that individuals can register .fr domain names (63%) but only one out of four was able to cite names of registrars. Some of them had already registered a domain name, for personal reasons (42%, 10% for the .fr domain) or professional reasons (14%). The .com domain remains the favorite (70%), ahead of .net and .org. However, of the respondents who had registered a name in a domain other than .fr, 20% had eliminated them or redirected them to an .fr domain name.
Figure 41 – Use of domain names (AFNIC/20 Minutes survey, 2007)
Perception of the .fr domain (Figure 42)

The .fr domain continues to have an image for French people that differs from that of the other domains, even if this has decreased since the opening to individuals (42% versus 64% one year earlier). About one respondent out of three considers that it is important to use an .fr domain name rather than another domain. The members of the panel consulted would choose an .fr domain name in order to express a particular feature, a pseudonym or their identity (in analogous proportions) or to be identified by e-mail addresses that are more original or more representative of their personality.

Figure 42 – Perception of the .fr domain (20 Minutes survey, 2007)
Values associated with the .fr domain (Figure 43)

For the respondents, the .fr domain is above all associated with the French language (80%), as well as values linked to the notion of national community (belonging 48%, proximity 36%). It also makes them think of the values of the French Republic (liberty, equality, fraternity), as well as other values with positive (originality, conviviality, humour, closeness) or practical connotations (availability, diversity).

![Values associated with the .fr domain (AFNIC/20 Minutes survey 2007)](image)

**Figure 43 – Values associated with the .fr domain (20 Minutes survey, 2007)**
Chapter 15

Disputes regarding domain names in France

- Data sources: AFNIC and WIPO.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide statistical data on disputes involving domain names in France: disputes on the .fr domain and on other domains when one of the two parties is in France.

Disputes regarding .fr domain names

Disputes regarding .fr domain names can be handled by various methods, in a gradual manner:

- Possibility for a third party to contact AFNIC which transmits the request to the registrar involved, who must then contact his customer to see if he carried out an anteriority search before registering the disputed name (article 31 of the Charter).
- Ex post facto verification of compliance of the domain name with the terms of the Charter, at the request of a third party, without lifting of anonymity (article 17 of the Charter).
- Lifting of anonymity of the contact information of the holder of a domain name due to a legal decision.
- Blocking by AFNIC of domain names for a blatant violation of the Charter (article 23).
- Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) by technical decision, administered by the Arbitration and Mediation Center of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
- Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) by recommendation on line, administered by the Paris Mediation and Arbitration Center (CMAP).
- Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) by mediation, administered by the Forum des droits sur l’internet (Internet Rights Forum - FDI), in the case of .fr domain names registered by individuals (site: mediateurdunet.fr).
- Legal proceedings before the court of competent jurisdiction.

The details concerning these various procedures are available on line on the AFNIC site27.

On June 30 2007 out of 857,517 .fr domain names in the AFNIC database, there were:

- 1,379 names blocked by AFNIC, 98% for legal entities and 2% for individuals,
- 27 names involved in an alternative dispute resolution procedure, 52% for legal entities and 48% for individuals.

While ADR type procedures for legal entities seem to be rather stable over time, those for individuals began after the opening to individuals in June 2006 (in December 2006 for the WIPO and in May 2007 for the CMAP). Orders for the lifting of anonymity, which have also been in use since the end of 2006, seem to have become more frequent since Spring 2007.
UDRP type disputes handled by WIPO

The following results are from the statistics provided by the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Centre for UDRP type procedures (Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy). They are only for procedures of this type brought before this organization, keeping in mind that disputes regarding the various domains can also be handled by other procedures and by other organizations, such as the Paris Mediation and Arbitration Center for the .fr domain or the NAF (National Arbitration Forum), CPR (International Institute for Conflict Prevention and Resolution) and ADNDRC (Asian Domain Name Dispute Resolution Centre) for the generic domains.

The following figure shows the changes in the number of domain names involved in a UDRP procedure handled by the WIPO for several domains. Most of the names involved are from the .com domain, which is logical since it is the number one domain in terms of the number of domain names registered. It is followed by the .net and .org domains. We have also seen that disputes increased steadily in 2000, just before the bursting of the Internet bubble. After several years of calm, there was an upturn in 2005 (Figure 44).
The number of disputes in the .fr zone seems low in the preceding graph. However, if we consider the number of domain names involved in a UDRP procedure of the WIPO in 2006 per 100,000 domain names registered, the .fr domain is in an intermediary position, behind .com but ahead of the other generic domains.

This situation reflects the importance attached by the owners to the control of their names in the various domains: the .com and .fr names, more sought after by cybersquatters, are thus more likely to justify recovery actions than other less valued domains such as .biz or .info.

The following figures show the classification of plaintiffs and defendants involved in UDRP procedures handled by the WIPO between 1999 and 2007, as a function of their countries of origin (Figures 45 and 46). The United States is far in the lead. France accounts for about 10% of the plaintiffs and 3% of defendants: it seems that French companies are more often victims than perpetrators of cybersquatting type acts.

This figure of 10% of complaints from French structures for disputes regarding generic domains is to be compared with the 2% of names registered in France in these same domains. The contrast reveals the fact that French companies tend to undertake dispute actions rather than implementing defensive registration policies. In corollary, while they register fewer names than their foreign counterparts, they tend to be more vigilant regarding infringement of their trademarks through domain names.
Figure 46 shows that while French actors are less frequently defendants as opposed to plaintiffs, their place in disputes as defendants is still higher than the proportion of the names registered in France in the generic domains. This discrepancy suggests the existence of a certain number of cybersquatting “professionals” in France.

Figure 45 – Main countries of plaintiffs involved in WIPO procedures
(from 1999 until August 2007)
As for languages used in UDRP procedures handled by the WIPO, English is largely dominant with close to 91% of cases. Only 2% of UDRP procedures use French.

Figure 46 – Main countries of defendants involved in WIPO procedures (from 1999 until August 2007)
Chapter 16

Market trends and outlook

The goal of this chapter is to offer an analysis of the trends and outlook for the domain name market in France and especially for the .fr domain.

Main trends

The most striking phenomenon on the market for domain names in France is its strong growth, especially for .fr since its opening to individuals. .fr is at the top of the domains that had the strongest growth in 2006 (+66%), on the global level, along with .es (Spain, +70%), .ru (Russia, +61%), and .at (Austria, +50%).

There is definitely a “catch-up effect” in the .fr domain, partly linked to individuals’ access to this resource, which was complicated until 2006 and also the low saturation of .fr compared to other domains such as .com.

The growth observed represents more than a mere “adjustment” however: the overall development of Internet use by the French population and the emergence of new practices which, like Web 2.0, are encouraging Internet users to have identifiers on the Internet to be both producers and consumers of content. This goes along with the rather competitive nature of the market for domain names in which the low concentration of actors benefits end user customers in terms of attractiveness of services and prices.

While the domain name market in France taken as a whole is still less developed than in other countries, there is a clear trend towards growth in the years ahead, and this should benefit the .fr domain, given its privileged image in the eyes of French Internet users, who associate it with the French language, belonging to the French Internet community and the proximity of the publisher of the site and its visitors. The .fr domain cannot be ignored, has become easy to access and is managed with constant attention to the protection of the personal data of individual domain name holders and the rights of third parties, and for these reasons it should continue to grow in France. This trend should accelerate because of the increase in the rates for the generic domain registrars (2007-2012), which will give .fr a structural competitive advantage in terms of price in a way that was not the case until now.

Outlook

As of 2009-2010, it is likely that new TLDs will appear on the Internet. These could include domains of a local or cultural nature that would have a coverage within the .fr perimeter. The “City-TLD”, such as .paris, or “Geo-TLD”, such as .bzh (for Brittany) – if they were introduced – would certainly be in interaction with .fr. The example of the introduction of .eu in 2006 showed that these new domains are complementary rather than in competition with the existing domains. This remains to be confirmed in practice however.
Over the same time scale, the registration of domain names is likely to undergo a real “cultural revolution.” Until now this was seen as a simple means of access to the Internet included in a “presence pack” or as a necessary evil to avoid a multiplication of disputed registrations concerning a company’s trademarks. This change will likely be based on a stronger perception of domain names as creators of value for their holders, either through the spontaneous traffic that they bring to the web sites toward which they are directed, or because they have a sometimes considerable intrinsic value, regardless of how they are used. From the “cost factors” that they are today, domain names perceived as intangible assets could gradually come to be considered “profit factors,” and this change could profoundly modify the registration strategies of both companies and individuals.

Furthermore, the contours of the domain name market are particularly fluid today and the future could bring a market that is very different from the one we see today. Technology changes are likely to emerge, accompanying the development of new uses (RFID, digital identity, IDN, etc.) and encouraging users to develop more and more elaborate management strategies for their “identities / identifiers.”

The actors of the French market, registrars first and foremost, are still of modest size in many cases. The potential arrival on a broadened market of new uses of world naming actors, on-line searches, or even software publishing, could shake up the existing situations. One of the stakes in the development of .fr remains the development, dynamics and the accompaniment of this distribution network which is connected to France, and close to small businesses and to French Internet users.

The legal context in which domain names and the actors present on this market are evolving remains unstable. While the jurisprudence has confirmed both the necessity of respecting the rights of third parties and the legitimacy of the .fr registrar imposing this observance in extreme cases, the regulations have not yet been finalized, and the procedure of application of the decree of February 6 2007 has not yet been completed.

This decree reinforces the protection of holders, especially local communities and public services. While it is perfectly legitimate with regard to the serious expectations of new actors, this new regulation brings with it a double risk that .fr is now confronted with:

- that the regulation could hinder the development of .fr and lead users and registrars to favour the generic TLDs. Paradoxically, the regulation itself would then become useless;
- that of legal uncertainty, in terms of regulations and above all in terms of jurisprudence, both for users and for the registry as long as the conditions for its designation remain unclear.

.fr enjoys enviable advantages for the continuation of its development in a rapidly expanding market, stimulated by the growing maturity of users. While consolidating its legal and organizational foundations, the public authorities have an opportunity in the months ahead to reinforce this dynamic and to give .fr and its actors the means to occupy a place of reference in the world Internet context.
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**Glossary**

**ADR**
Alternative Dispute Resolutions

**ADSL**
Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line

**AFNIC**
Association Française pour le Nommage Internet en Coopération

**ARCEP**
Autorité de Régulation des Communications Électroniques et des Postes - The French Telecommunications and Posts Regulator

**ccTLD**
country-code Top Level Domain

**CMAP**
Centre de Médiation et d’Arbitrage de Paris - Paris Mediation and Arbitration Center

**DNS**
Domain Name System

**FDI**
Forum des Droits sur l’Internet – Internet Rights Forum

**gTLD**
generic Top Level Domain

**ICANN**
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

**IDN**
Internationalized Domain Name

**INRIA**
Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique - French National Institute for Research in Computer and Control

**INSEE**
Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques - National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies

**INT**
Institut National des Télécommunications

**IP**
Internet Protocol

**OECD**
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

**Registry**
Entity (association, company, etc.) in charge of the management of the database of domain names of a TLD or IP addresses for a defined region.

**RFID**
Radio-frequency identification

**SME**
Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

**TLD**
Top Level Domain

**UDRP**
Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy
**URL**
Uniform Resource Locator

**Whois**
Service allowing for search in the databases of registries in order to obtain information about a domain name or an IP address.

**WIPO**
World Intellectual Property Organization