

DOMAIN NAMESPACE AUDIT

Perplexity AI

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Demonstration Namespace Audit · Public Data Sources

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perplexity AI built its namespace reactively. Every significant domain move it has made - acquiring perplexity.com, weathering a trademark lawsuit, picking up os.ai - was a response rather than a plan.

The cost so far: a competitor redirecting Indian traffic to Google Gemini for the price of a domain registration. Two years of trademark exposure on a risk the company had been explicitly warned about. A .com acquisition that happened quietly, after the fact, with no public acknowledgement.

No single incident was fatal but the pattern is a problem. Companies that fix namespace issues case by case will likely keep having them.

INFRASTRUCTURE SNAPSHOT	
Primary domain	perplexity.ai (Dec 2022) → perplexity.com (acquired ~Jul 2024, inferred from WHOIS)
Notable acquisitions	os.ai - acquired July 2025 from Dharmesh Shah via equity deal, redirects to Comet browser
Active incidents identified	3: India redirect, trademark exposure, .com gap plus product namespace risk (comet.com held by AI competitor)
Governance	No public evidence of defined ownership, renewal policy, or internal accountability.
Priority actions	Priority actions

1. CURRENT DOMAIN INVENTORY

Based on publicly available records, Perplexity AI operates the following domains. Internal governance details like registrar accounts, renewal schedules, ownership assignments are not publicly documented.

Domain	Status	Since	Notes
perplexity.ai	Active - primary	Dec 2022	Original domain. Launch and primary operations.
perplexity.com	Active	~Jul 2024 (inferred)	Acquired after launch. No public announcement. Date inferred from WHOIS nameserver change: domaincontrol.com → Cloudflare (matching Perplexity's stack) recorded Jul 2024.
os.ai	Active	Jul 2025	Acquired from Dharmesh Shah (HubSpot co-founder) via equity deal. Redirects to Comet browser. comet.com is not owned by Perplexity – held by Comet ML, an AI observability platform.
os.ai perplexity.in	Fixed post-incident	—	Exploited Dec 2025: redirected to Google Gemini during Airtel India push. Now redirects to perplexity.com. Acquired after the incident, not before it.

Governance Assessment

There is no public evidence of a domain governance policy at Perplexity. No defined internal owner, no documented renewal process, no stated framework for acquisition decisions.

The acquisition of perplexity.com was unannounced officially. When companies acquire infrastructure assets strategically, they usually announce it. When they acquire reactively, they don't.

2. RISK ANALYSIS - THREE INCIDENTS

Each incident below is documented separately. The pattern across all three is the same: the risk was visible in advance, the response came after the damage.

Incident 1: The India Redirect - December 2025

!	<p>Cost to attacker: approximately \$5 Domain registered: perplexity.in · Redirect target: Google Gemini · Timing: during Airtel India expansion push</p>
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There is no evidence that Perplexity registered defensive ccTLDs for any of their target markets. Whether that was deliberate policy, operational oversight, or simply never addressed is not publicly documented. The outcome is the same either way.

Registering and parking perplexity.in - even redirecting it straight to the primary domain - costs the same \$5 - \$10 as the attack. Skipping country-code domains without stress-testing it against adversarial behaviour left a gap that took three minutes to exploit.

The attack landed at the worst possible moment: right as Perplexity had announced a partnership with Airtel to expand in India, one of their highest-priority growth markets. Users searching for Perplexity in India were handed directly to a competitor. The attacker needed a credit card and five minutes.

perplexity.in now redirects to the main Perplexity site. The fix confirms the pattern rather than resolving it. The domain was acquired after the incident became public and not as part of any planned defensive registration. The next market on their growth list is presumably not yet covered.

Incident 2: The Trademark They Declined to Buy - 2023 to 2025

Sep 2023	Perplexity Solved Solutions (PSS), an HR software firm with a federally registered “Perplexity” trademark since 2017, offers to sell. Perplexity AI declines.
Jan 2025	PSS files trademark infringement lawsuit seeking to bar use of “Perplexity” and “Perplexity AI”, claim damages, and force transfer of all brand domains.
Jul 2025	PSS’s lawyers withdrew, citing an irreparable breakdown with their client. The court gives PSS until September to find new counsel.
Oct 2025	Judge Corley dismisses the case and enters default against PSS. Perplexity AI wins but not because their position was clean - because their opponent fell apart.

Perplexity won. But a funded plaintiff with the same trademark registration would have been a different story. The warning came in September 2023. The lawsuit arrived in January 2025. Two years of exposure on a risk that had been explicitly surfaced and declined.

Incident 3: The .com Gap

Perplexity launched on perplexity.ai in December 2022. WHOIS history for perplexity.com shows a nameserver change in July 2024 - from GoDaddy infrastructure to Cloudflare, which matches Perplexity’s stack. That is the most reliable public signal of when the domain transferred hands. No announcement was made.

The gap: approximately 18 months operating on .ai without controlling the .com. For a company growing at Perplexity’s pace during that period, that is 18 months during which anyone who registered perplexity.com could have redirected it, sold it to a competitor, or used it to impersonate the brand.

One detail worth noting: .ai is not a generic top-level domain. It is the country code for Anguilla, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean.

AI startups have adopted it as a convention, but it carries the regulatory and governance constraints of a ccTLD - a detail that matters when building for global scale and when your primary market, as in the India case, has its own ccTLD expectations. This is what reactive namespace management looks like. The problem gets fixed, but quietly, after the fact, with no evidence it was part of a deliberate sequence. The timing gap between launching on .ai and acquiring .com is unknown because the company never acknowledged the acquisition.

For comparison: OpenAI launched on openai.com. Anthropic launched on anthropic.com. The .com was infrastructure, not an afterthought.

The Missed PR Opportunity

Upgrading from a non-.com domain to an exact-match .com is a legitimate news event. Notion built coverage around its transition from notion.so to notion.com. HBO generated press cycles with the acquisition of max.com ahead of its rebrand. Featured.com announced its move from terkel.io and used the domain acquisition as a credibility signal to investors and enterprise buyers.

Perplexity acquired perplexity.com at a moment when every technology journalist in the world was writing about them. The acquisition - done quietly, with no announcement - generated zero coverage. The same move, announced deliberately, would have been free earned media: a maturity signal, an investor signal, and a story about a company serious enough to back its brand with infrastructure.

The cost of silence: not just a missed PR cycle, but a pattern signal. Companies that don't announce domain acquisitions usually didn't plan them.

3. COMPETITIVE NAMESPACE COMPARISON

How Perplexity’s namespace compares to its direct competitors across four dimensions: primary domain, .com status, strategy, and notable strategic moves.

Company	Primary domain	launch on .com	Strategy	Notable moves
OpenAI	openai.com	Yes	Strong - proactive upgrades	Acquired chat.com for \$15M (2024). chatgpt.com as product domain.
Anthropic	anthropic.com	Yes	Deliberate	Clean split: anthropic.com (company) + claude.ai and .com (product). Deliberate.
Google	gemini.google.com	No	Workaround	gemini.com not owned by Google - held by Gemini Trust Company (Winklevoss crypto exchange, NASDAQ: GEMI) since 1994. Subdomain strategy is a workaround, not a solution.
Perplexity	perplexity.ai → .com	No - acquired later	Reactive	perplexity.in exploited Dec 2025. Trademark exposure 2023–2025. os.ai acquired Jul 2025.

The sequence matters. OpenAI and Anthropic started on .com because the .com was treated as non-negotiable infrastructure. Perplexity started on .ai and backfilled. That sequence - .ai first, .com later - is increasingly common among AI startups, and increasingly risky as they scale.

4. PRIORITISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Five actions, ordered by urgency and cost-to-fix ratio. The first two are immediate. The rest are structural.

#	Priority	Action	Timeframe	Cost
1	Immediate	<p>Register and park ccTLDs for all active and target markets</p> <p>Priority: .in, .uk, .de, .fr, .jp, .br, .au. Redirect each to perplexity.com. Defensive infrastructure, not a brand decision. The India incident cost \$5 to execute.</p>	This week	< \$2,000/year
2	Immediate	<p>Assign an explicit domain owner internally</p> <p>Not a team - a named person accountable for inventory, renewal schedule, and acquisition decisions. The perplexity.in incident happened because no one was watching. Ownership creates care.</p>	This week	\$0
3	30 days	<p>Audit defensive registrations - brand variants and misspellings</p> <p>Common misspellings, hyphenated variants, phonetic alternatives. Cross-referenced against existing trademark landscape. One-time audit with quarterly monitoring thereafter.</p>	30 days	< \$5,000

#	Priority	Action	Timeframe	Cost
4	60 days	<p>Define the os.ai / Comet namespace strategy and address the comet.com gap</p> <p>Perplexity named their browser product “Comet” and built it on os.ai. comet.com is not theirs - it is held by Comet ML, an AI observability and MLOps platform operating in the same industry. Anyone typing comet.com lands on a direct AI competitor. This is the .ai → .com mistake repeated with a product name: acquire the clever domain, overlook the obvious one.</p> <p>If Comet is a genuine product line, comet.com needs to be evaluated and either acquired or worked around explicitly. If it’s exploratory, park os.ai intentionally and define the boundary. Either way, the decision needs to be on record before the product scales.</p>	60 days	Strategic
5	Quarterly	<p>Set a trademark monitoring cadence</p> <p>The PSS case shows that declining to engage with trademark risk does not make it disappear. Quarterly monitoring for new applications in key jurisdictions, with a clear decision process when conflicts emerge - before they become lawsuits.</p>	Ongoing	< \$500/yr

5. THE COST QUESTION

The perplexity.in incident was a \$5 attack on a company valued at several billion dollars. The trademark lawsuit required legal defence for nearly two years on a risk they'd been explicitly warned about. The .com acquisition - whatever it cost - was paid after the fact, not budgeted as part of launch infrastructure.

What namespace quality is actually worth

Jannick Malling, co-CEO of fintech company Public.com, documented what happened when they upgraded from hellopublic.com to public.com: digital ad conversion improved 2–3x. Offline marketing - billboards, TV - improved by 50–100x. The mechanism is simple: a domain name people can remember and trust at a glance performs everywhere that a forgettable one fails quietly.

The CEO of Dave, a fintech app, put the trust dimension more directly. On their previous domain, TryDave.com: “People are trusting us with their finances and TryDave just didn’t give me the same confidence as Dave.com.” After upgrading, user sign-ups climbed. The domain was doing negative work before the change.

A CFO-grade method for quantifying this is the Relief-from-Royalty approach - the same methodology used by companies like Cars.com in SEC filings. The logic: if you didn’t own the domain, what would you pay to license the brand value it carries? On a .ai domain, that royalty equivalent runs roughly 0.5% of branded revenue. On a .com, closer to 1.5%. For a company at Perplexity’s revenue scale, the gap between those two rates is not a rounding error.

The total cost of the five recommendations above: under \$8,000 in year one, under \$2,500 annually thereafter. The defensive registrations cost less in a week than most companies spend on a single legal consultation.

Companies like Perplexity can clearly afford to fix their domain strategy. The question is whether they’ll do it before the next \$5 problem becomes a million-dollar one.

All data in this report is drawn from publicly available sources, including domain registration records, court filings (Perplexity Solved Solutions, Inc. v. Perplexity AI, Inc., Case 3:2025cv00989), and press coverage. This report was prepared as a demonstration audit. Figures and timelines have been verified to the extent possible through open-source research.