

# VANITY URLS



# ABSTRACT: AD MEASUREMENT

Accurately measuring outcomes and the effectiveness of ads is key to building and optimizing sustainable media campaigns. It is imperative that a brand can accurately determine what worked, what didn't, and where to invest advertising dollars for the highest ROI.

While there are several different methods to attribute performance there isn't a one size fits all attribution methodology. This is due to inherent nuances and differing consumption behavior across media. For accurate and holistic attribution, it is a best practice to implement as many measurement methods as reasonably possible. The goal of such an approach is to ensure that all performance signals are pointing in the same direction and learnings from one methodology can be used to inform, supplement, optimize, others.

One such method, Vanity URLs, can be a key attribution marker for most all forms of media, no matter the consumption method. Vanity URLs provide exceptional capabilities for measuring and optimizing a campaign and can be a key indicator of performance when used in tandem with other measurement approaches.

# DIRECT VS. INDIRECT

Holistic measurement consists of two types of attribution approaches that rely on one another to provide the clearest picture:

## DIRECT

An attribution approach that measures activity on a one-to-one basis. This means that a response can be directly attributed to an ad placement.

These tracking mechanisms (Telephone numbers, vanity URLs, promo codes, QR codes, and unique clicks) are unique to campaigns, and advertisers can be certain that activity can be attributed to specific ad placements.

## INDIRECT

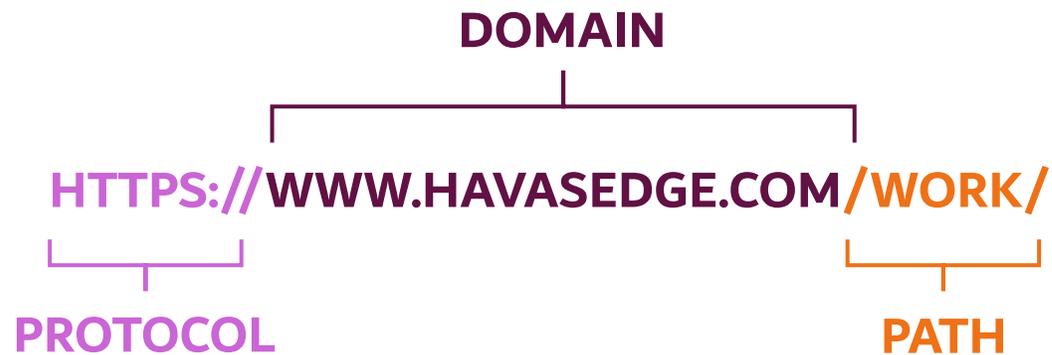
An educated projection created using mathematical models that identifies the hidden and overall impact of a campaign.

These projections are often informed and improved upon by the direct measurement signal. And are used to supplement direct measurement methods for a holistic perspective.

# WHAT IS A VANITY URL?

A **VANITY URL** is a direct measurement approach that uses a custom URL designed to help potential visitors remember and find specific pages on a website. Often a successful vanity URL is one that is readable, descriptive, and easy to remember. Vanity URLs redirect users and assists in tracking and measurement, especially for offline advertising.

A **URL** is a mechanism used by browsers to retrieve published resources on the Internet. It stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is the web address of an online resource such as a web site or document.



- **PROTOCOL** – declares how your browser should communicate with the web server. The most common http or https.
- **DOMAIN** – the unique reference that identifies a web site on the internet.
- **PATH** – refers to a file or directory on the web server. This is typically where the unique portion of the Vanity URL lives.

**VANITY DOMAINS** can also be used in a similar fashion, but typically just the path is customized with a code that identifies the ad or influencer that brought them to the site. Vanity Domains should be explored if it is a common or ubiquitous website where browser autofill may prevent respondents from typing in the vanity URL.

# HOW THEY WORK

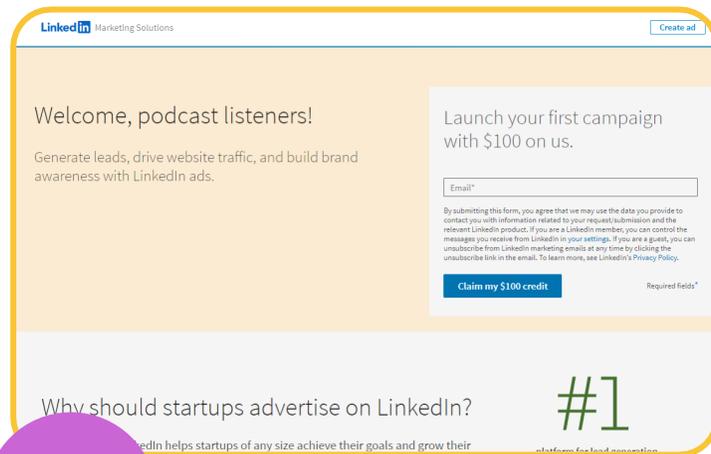
Vanity URLs typically redirect to other longer URLs that provide more information and helps with tracking. Vanity URLs are used instead of the longer versions because they are much harder to remember and type in:



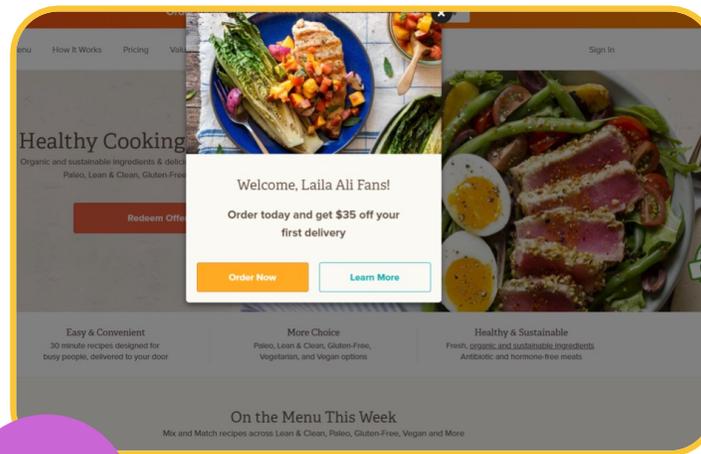
# VANITY URLS: CUSTOMIZED USER EXPERIENCE

While most vanity URLs redirect to the home page (or another page already created on the site), Vanity URLs provide the opportunity to customize landing pages for stronger conversion on site. Listeners, watchers, and followers often have strong affinity for the hosts and influencers and a personalized landing page helps add to the user experience.

## CUSTOMIZED LANDING PAGE EXAMPLES



GOOD



BETTER



BEST

# VANITY URLS: BEST PRACTICES

- A unique vanity URL should be created for each placement. More granular tracking provides more data and allows for better media optimization.
  - Typically, the format follows [www.advertisersite.com/showcode](http://www.advertisersite.com/showcode)

AD PLACEMENT	VANITY TRACKING URL	AD PLACEMENT	VANITY TRACKING URL
Influencer A	<a href="http://www.advertisersite.com/influencera">www.advertisersite.com/influencera</a>	TV STATION X	<a href="http://www.advertisersite.com/tva">www.advertisersite.com/tva</a>
Influencer B	<a href="http://www.advertisersite.com/influencerb">www.advertisersite.com/influencerb</a>	TV STATION Y	<a href="http://www.advertisersite.com/tvb">www.advertisersite.com/tvb</a>
Influencer C	<a href="http://www.advertisersite.com/influencerc">www.advertisersite.com/influencerc</a>	TV STATION Z	<a href="http://www.advertisersite.com/tvc">www.advertisersite.com/tvc</a>

- URL should be case insensitive.
- In the case of multiple different creatives with the same station / influencer, the path in the URL should be the one that the station or host usually uses since listeners have familiarity with it. (AKA the path should not change between integrations)
- To strengthen the direct signal and improve attribution accuracy, incentivize the utilization of the vanity URL. Most common incentive is a promotional discount when utilizing the vanity URL. Typically, the larger that the offered discount is, the stronger the direct signal will be.
- If the advertiser's site accepts promo codes, the Vanity URL should match what the promo code is.
- For verticals with longer purchase consideration windows Vanity URLs can be used to provide early purchase indicators and allows for earlier campaign optimization.
  - Vanity URLs are the preferred direct method (over promotional codes) because it gives more visibility into upper funnel activity such as sessions as well as conversion rate insight.

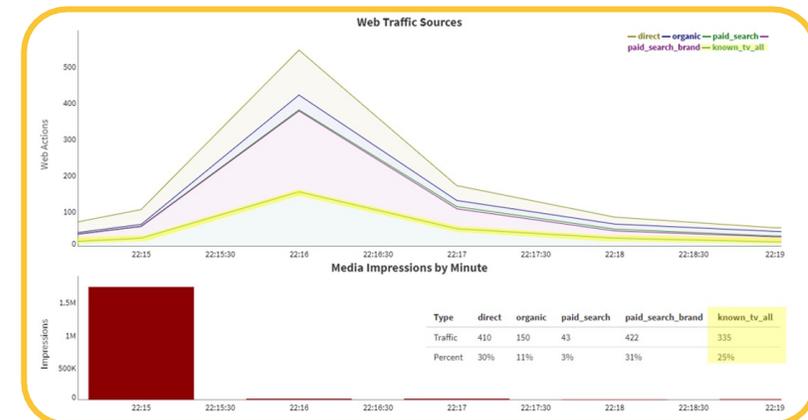
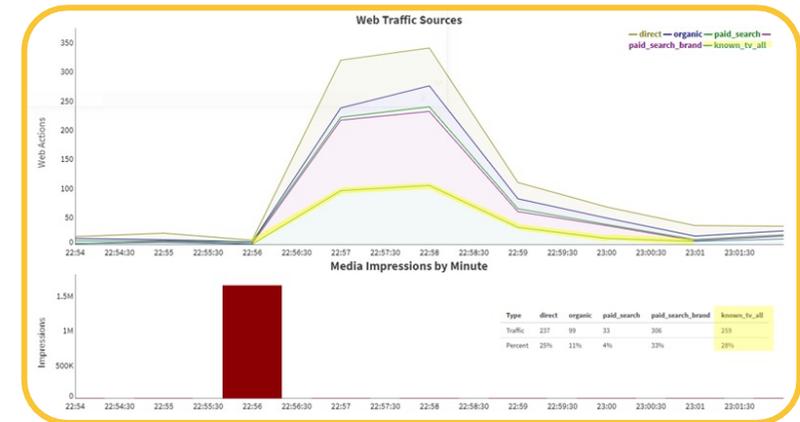
# STRONG PURE SIGNAL & DIRECTIONAL PROXY

Despite not capturing all the actions that are created by an ad placement, Vanity URLs serve as a strong directional proxy of ad response.

**PURE SIGNAL** – Since Vanity URLs are unique to an advertising campaign, we can be confident that activity can be attributed back to specific ads. When a respondent is exposed to an ad digitally or offline, they can either click on a link directly or enter a Vanity URL from memory. This is highly variable based on several factors, but typically vanity URL's can account for 15-40% of the projected response, and the balance of the responses can be projected based on indirect measurement methods (lift over baseline, post-checkout survey, etc.)

**RESPONSE PATTERNS** – The channels that are most likely to be impacted by attribution breakage (Direct, organic, and paid search) response patterns closely resemble vanity URL's markers. This helps corroborate the pureness of the Vanity URL signal when performing a holistic measurement.

- As seen in the examples below, the shape of the Vanity URL response (highlighted in yellow and labeled 'known\_tv\_all') closely resembles the shape of direct, organic, and paid search response.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brian Kim is the Director of Data Science and Modeling at Havas Edge. With over 14 years of working in the advertising industry, Brian has developed a mastery of data analytics and attribution. His personal mantra (or as he likes to say “battle cry”) is to “manage by the numbers.” Brian’s analytic, numbers driven approach to partnerships has branded him as a source of truth for many of the businesses he works with.

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