

1 Executive Summary

The UMTS Forum has already held some initial discussions concerning the relevance of a Mobile-specific Top Level Domain (M-TLD). However, opinions were divergent and it has been recognised that the basis for a sound decision regarding a new TLD is missing. In this context, a study has been commissioned to explore the topic in more detail and provide a solid basis for discussion and decision-making.

The study - based on interviews and discussions with major interest holders in a M-TLD plus analysis by Theron - has led to the following theses:

1. Most players within the IT industry have not yet investigated and understood the relevance (if any) of a M-TLD. Some key players are in favour of a M-TLD or at least find interest in the concept assuming that underlying issues can be resolved.
2. The majority of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) are reluctant to favour the concept of a M-TLD because the benefits have not yet been sufficiently identified.
3. Those MNOs that have a more positive attitude mainly see the benefits in marketing-related topics. They position a M-TLD as a key/additional vehicle to develop the emerging mobile broadband communication market.
4. User awareness of mobile broadband communication and services is very limited. The potential relevance of a M-TLD is not understood by the end-user. A M-TLD could help providers in educating the consumers about mobile broadband communications.
5. Any new M-TLD must provide sufficient differentiation from other market players, whilst allowing competition between the various 3G players.
6. Any application of a new M-TLD, for example like the “closed shop” scenario, must not violate relevant competition laws.
7. The investment in a new M-TLD is only justified if this TLD offers additional value to its users, which cannot be substituted easily by other players or does become obsolete with changing technology, e.g. introduction of 3G or 4G.
8. Examples of advantages of a M-TLD include guaranteed Quality of Service (QoS), easy roaming and the provision of location-based services. The UMTS Forum members themselves (and other relevant groups, e.g. the GSM Association) must verify the advantages, i.e. product attributes to be used as a basis for building a TLD.

9. A new M-TLD should be open to all market players who guarantee an agreed specific additional value to applicants of this TLD. A code of conduct could be introduced as a suitable instrument for safeguarding this promise to the customers (consistency of code of conduct with competition law has been assumed but not yet been verified).
10. Any ISP or other market participant who accepts the code of conduct and the service characteristics behind this code can offer/use the M-TLD, irrespective of whether they are a MNO or not.
11. Application and implementation of a M-TLD would require some financial resources (less than 3m €). However, broad support from players from within the MNO-community and the Internet and vendor world would be required (timing has to be considered)
12. It is assumed in this study that ICANN retains control over the TLD name allocation process and TLDs continue to be the prime method of searching and navigating the Internet.

As requested by the UMTS Forum, the following report does not propose a solution nor recommend a specific approach to deal with the TLD topic. The report gives tutorial information on TLDs, provides insight into the arguments brought forward by market participants, and tries neutrally but critically to review all the statements made. UMTS Forum members have to decide on the basis of the analyses provided which steps to take next.