# Push for Web Addresses in Era of Search, Apps

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BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — In the early days, you typed in a domain name address to reach a website. Then came the ability to reach websites directly through a search engine. The mobile

era brought us phone apps for accessing services without either.

Yet the organization in charge of Internet addresses is pushing a major expansion in domain name suffixes. At least 160 suffixes have been added since October to join the ranks of ".com," ".org" and scores of country-specific ones such as ".uk" for the United Kingdom. Hundreds of other proposals are being reviewed.

Why bother in this mobile-heavy era?

"Finding what you need on the Web will take many paths," said Fadi Chehade, head of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

Even if you're using search, domain names might make search engines smarter, Chehade said in an interview at the Mobile World Congress wireless show, which ended Thursday in Barcelona, Spain.

For instance, a search engine might be able to classify something as a dating site because it carries the suffix ".dating." Before, it would have to infer from text on the site, and search results might inadvertently include general discussions on dating.

Likewise, a search engine might favor restaurants ending in ".berlin" when you're looking for food options there, rather than bloggers discussing what they ate during visits to Berlin.

He said domain names will also be useful for marketing and branding:

— An Internet address is easier to include on a business card or advertisement.

— Companies can give different services distinctive addresses, such as "sales.samsung" and "repairs.samsung," so that customers don't have to hunt for that on the main website.

— Neighborhoods can form around suffixes such as ".berlin" and ".tokyo." Restaurants, florists and transit systems would use city suffixes rather than a generic ".com." There are so many sites already under ".com" that getting an easy-to-remember name is difficult. With some of the new ones, congestion isn't a problem.

There have been nearly 2,000 proposals for new domain names, though about 150 have been withdrawn for various reasons. More than 1,000 have been approved and are either in the system already or are awaiting signed contracts between their backers and ICANN. More than 600 are being held up because of multiple bids for the same suffix.

The ones in the system include ".dating," ''.berlin" and ".tokyo." Samsung's new suffix is in Korean, one of 18 additions to use non-English characters. Others include ".cab," ''.ceo," ''.dance," ''.futbol," ''.mango" and ".sexy."

Chehade said websites using these suffixes could start appearing in April.

Jay Sullivan, chief operating officer of the group behind the Firefox Web browser and operating system for phones, said the new suffixes might push even more people to search.

Right now, he said, people can often guess whether a site ends in ".com" (if it's a business) or ".org" (if it's a non-profit organization). With lots more to choose from, he said, it will be harder to guess and easier to use a search engine.

Greg Sullivan, marketing director for Microsoft's Windows Phone business, said people have indeed gravitated toward search and apps when using phones. But he said there will always be a need for domain names because some companies have built businesses around the moniker.

He said phones will adapt as their users adapt.

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