

Nigeria embraces 'three word address' innovation

LAGOS, Nigeria: Nigeria is the third country in Africa to adopt the innovative 'what3words' digital address system to increase the number of homes it can deliver to and improve delivery services in preparation for the take-off of Nigerian ecommerce.



Bisi Adegbuyi and Chris Sheldrick

Nigeria's postal service, NIPOST, has just announced its adoption of the innovative global addressing system [what3words](https://what3words.com/). Nigeria is the seventh country to adopt what3words, and the third in Africa. The system is already being used for mail deliveries in Mongolia, Sint Maarten, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Tonga and Solomon Islands. Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and its most populous country with approximately 184 million inhabitants. It has the seventh largest population in the world.

Nigeria's poor addressing system means that only 20% of its inhabitants receive mail at home: 79% of homes and businesses cannot receive deliveries to the door, and the remaining 1% receive their mail using one of the 478,000 P.O. boxes throughout the country. A postcode system does exist, but only 5% of mail gets properly addressed with the postcode, hampering the efforts of NIPOST to improve its quality of service.

Addressing the solution

Determined to improve this situation, NIPOST has set itself the ambitious target of increasing home delivery to 70% within the next two years and 90% by 2020 through the 'Mail for Every House Initiative' (MEHI), and has adopted what3words to help it achieve these goals. The innovative global addressing system has divided the world into 57 trillion 3m x 3m squares, each with a unique three word address. It means that every home and business in Nigeria has a simple and accurate address that is easy to remember and to use. For example, the three words, 'bracelets.hesitations.mutes' refers to the exact 3m x 3m square at the entrance to the main post office in Nigeria's capital, Abuja.

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what3words is an innovative global addressing system. It has divided the world in 57 trillion 3m x 3m squares, each with a unique three word address. Three word addresses are easy to remember, and to share via email, text or over the phone.

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Available in 14 languages, with many more currently in development, what3words is used in over 170 countries by governments, postal services, logistics companies, emergency services and NGOs, as well as individuals. It is more accurate than traditional street addresses, simpler than landmark-based directions, and easier to remember and communicate than GPS coordinates. The system has built-in error detection and is available through a free mobile app and API integration. The system even works offline, without a data connection.



“We are very pleased to be collaborating with what3words as an addressing solution with huge potential to unlock opportunities,” said Bisi Adegbuyi, Nigeria’s postmaster general. “Better addressing is a key to NIPOST’s agenda, which aims to transform, innovate, and deliver more services to more people all over the country”.

Ecommerce potential

Young people make up 62% of Nigeria's population, and this is reflected in the significant increase in cross border ecommerce in the country; 53,612 parcels and packets were handled in 2016 (about 200 per day) which is up 70% since 2014. The ecommerce market is currently worth \$12 billion, but there is still huge potential for growth. With improvements to infrastructure, innovation around payment systems and a reliable addressing system, Nigerian ecommerce could be set to take off at an incredible scale.

"With a rapidly growing ecommerce ecosystem, Nigeria is a very exciting country to be working with," said Chris Sheldrick, CEO and co-founder of what3words. "Postal services have a critical role in building a strong economy and NIPOST are firmly focused on the future, and are taking steps to modernise and grow their capacity and range of services."

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