

ADDRESSING THE UNADDRESSED

How a startup is revolutionizing the world of trade

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Imagine trying to navigate in a place without addresses. Though it may sound unfamiliar to some, but this is the reality for millions of consumers in emerging markets, effectively barring them from e-commerce. Fetchr, a Dubai based startup, has taken on the considerable task of making shipping as simple as online shopping for the millions who do not have addresses. By connecting local businesses and global brands, Fetchr aims to promote e-commerce on an international level.

The vast majority of international trade still uses traditional logistical methods of moving products through fixed addresses systems, centuries old passageways like the Suez Canal, and the vast majority, near 90% of products in the world, are currently being moved as they always have been; by ship. Though tested and true, these avenues have difficulty reconciling issues of translation, infrastructure, poor mapping, and city planning. Fetchr's model is able to overcome traditional logistical issues by using GPS coordinates instead of addresses through their app, available now on iOS and Android devices.

Fetchr currently ships in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, delivering packages for 30 AED, roughly 7.5 euros. With e-commerce in the Middle East and North Africa doubling since 2011 to \$15 billion USD in 2015, according to a PayPal survey, the ability to deliver packages smoothly is becoming increasingly crucial to ecommerce businesses and their bottom line. About 20% of that \$15 billion USD represents orders made from a smartphone, a trend Fetchr is staying ahead of by treating cellphones like addresses.

Currently, the shipping market is dominated by companies such as DHL or FedEx, with Amazon and Ebay making notable strides in the last few years. However, as countries that originated from the West, they have been slow to acknowledge the reality of shipping for their international customers, where shipping addresses are a frustration for both delivery driver and recipient. Other cultural boundaries too have not been understood, such as how women in Saudi Arabia don't typically answer the door to male delivery men. Fetchr, as a company whose design is rooted in providing solutions, employs husband-and-wife teams for deliveries. In Dubai, 30% of Fetchr drivers are women.

Fetchr's ability to fully operate outside traditional routes also signifies huge potential for growth in emerging markets. In developing regions fixed addresses can range between confusing and non-existent, and many postal systems are corrupt and inefficient, making something as simple as ordering a book online impossible for billions of people around the world. Fetchr is able to overcome bureaucratic inefficiencies by taking advantage of GPS tracking technology that has become ubiquitous in today's smartphones, creating a delivery service that is so simple no address is required.

By completely removing the need for an address, Fetchr is able to provide the most simple shipping solution. There is no longer any need to wait at home for your package to be delivered; by using your cellphone as your address, Fetchr is able to deliver the package to their customer's hands as quickly as possible.

In places like the Middle East, where there are no addresses, Fetchr is able to provide a solution to businesses and consumers alike. "We're trying to address the unaddressed," says Co-founder and Creative Director Joy Ajlouny.

Not only does it simplify these issues for consumers, but it helps international businesses as well. "What ecommerce companies don't understand when they're shipping from Europe or the U.S. is that it's not actually difficult to get the products to the airport," says Idriss al Rifai, Founder and CEO of Fetchr.

"The critical part is the last line, how to actually provide a better customer experience and how to make sure the package is gonna get delivered as fast as possible. And that's exactly what we do, we take care of that last line, creating more value for your customers so they're gonna buy again on your website." Fetchr creates a win-win solution for problems posed on all sides of the logistical spectrum.

The lack of formal city mapping is not only present in the Middle East, but remains ubiquitous throughout emerging markets across Africa, Asia, and South America as well. Though Fetchr only operates in three countries to date, they hope to expand to 12 more in the next 6 months, including Qatar, Morocco, Indonesia, Nigeria, and South Africa. "There are no limits," says Al Rifai, "and we're trying to go as fast as possible."