

UBA, Google roll out Wi-Fi hotspots in Nigeria

The United Bank for Africa (UBA) has collaborated with Google and an ISP partner to launch Google Station in 11 UBA branches in Lagos State as part of plans to roll out 200 stations in the country. Google Station, a platform for providing free, high-speed Wi-Fi hotspots in public places, began in Lagos 2018 and extended to Abuja in December in partnership with Backbone Connectivity Network.



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“It is an interesting platform which will ultimately benefit everyone. It is a win-win for everyone. Customers will have ease of doing businesses, especially with the growing use of smartphones-, and the 52 million Nigerians who have otherwise been financially excluded will now have access to data through this collaboration and can carry out their transactions with ease, according to UBA’s executive director and group chief executive officer, Chuks Nweke.

Nweke, expressed UBA’s excitement over the collaboration, adding that the move will go a long way to present opportunities far beyond the imagination of both organisations.

“Interestingly, SMEs, who previously had challenges with funding can now do other things which they couldn’t achieve before, such as accounting services and others. Also, UBA recently launched an educational app, and so, students will be able to use these Google Station platform to carry out their necessary research from the comfort of their homes, it is an awesome opportunity with benefits for everyone which we are presenting to our customers in line with our customer first philosophy.

Group head, marketing, UBA, Dupe Olusola, said in addition to the 11 locations, the organisations are looking to expand beyond the shores of Nigeria to other African countries where UBA operates. She added that by the collaboration, the initiative will help ease the burden off customers while also presenting them with opportunities to excel beyond boundaries.



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This Google-powered initiative would allow customers access to internet connectivity within the 11 branches and its environs, thereby facilitating their day-to-day businesses and activities, while ensuring unhindered connectivity, the bank said during the launch at the bank's headquarters in Lagos.

The 11 branches where the hotspot will be located are: UBA Bank Road, 810-811 Bank Road, Daleko; UBA Matori, 21 Fatai Atere street; UBA Surulere, 152 Ogunlana Drive; UBA Allen, 13 Allen Avenue, Ikeja; UBA Tisco Plaza, Alausa; UBA Apapa, 11-13 Warehouse Road, Apapa; UBA Marina, 55 Marina, Lagos Island; UBA HQ, Broad Street, Marina; UBA Lekki Admiralty; UBA Oke Arin and UBA Aspamda Plaza, Trade Fair.

She noted that the challenges of financial inclusion which the USSD platform has not been able to solve will be eased through the Google Station, as the financially excluded will now be able to access the internet and enjoy the services provided free of charge.

Google Station is a set of tools to roll-out Wi-Fi hotspots, and aims to provide fast and reliable Wi-Fi in more places where more people spend time, such as bus stations, shopping malls, airports and public transit stations.

Specifically, the Wi-Fi service is available free of charge and partners leverage Google Station's business model, which enables venues, system integrators, businesses and ISPs with access to fibre to setup, maintain and monetise their Wi-Fi networks.

Google Nigeria's country director, Juliet Ehimuan-Chiazor noted that the institutions remained focused on providing internet services to users for free.

She said, "With the help of our partners, we are offering high-quality internet access in heavily-trafficked areas like airports, markets, malls and bus stations throughout the country, especially in areas where there were no internet connections before.

"Even with the amazing progress on expanding mobile internet, we are finding that public Wi-Fi remains a crucial step in getting free, high-quality internet to everyone," she explained.

Josh Woodward, director, product management, who spoke generally on the benefits of the high-speed Wi-Fi hotspots in public places, said the collaboration will aim to solve a basic need and allow customers access to connectivity to assist them in their day-to-day businesses and activities.

He said: "Deploying Google Station in collaboration with UBA and 21st Century is an important step to connecting the next billion users. As a result of the locations enables us to be up-and-running in no time. Even more, their Wi-Fi signal ensures connectivity to Google Station hotspots so users can do a lot of things online and be constantly connected.