

# Move Over Google Street View, India Has WoNoBo

By [Nikhil Pahwa](#) on Oct 15th, 2013 |  1 Comment



While Google is struggling to roll out its Street View project in India, facing **issues with permissions for the service**, and now facing a challenge for Google Maps **from Survey of India**, **WoNoBo** has been launched today as what appears to be the most impressive and promising product startup I've seen from India in the seven years that I've been covering this industry in India.

WoNoBo (A. N. Virtual World Tech Ltd) is a mapping platform that offers a 3D view of cities, similar to street view, and has been incubated with a \$35 million investment over the last few years by BSE listed mapping company **GENESYS**. The key difference between Street View and WoNoBo is the extensive amount of mark-up that WoNoBo has – there are placeholders to point towards businesses and different types of businesses (theaters, eateries, houses, chemist etc), as well as city guides, stories and walking tours.

GENESYS has, since 1995, been working largely in the overseas market as a GIS outsourcing company, working for Bing (Microsoft) & NAVTEQ, mapping UK as a part of their millennium mapping project. GENESYS does work like imagery acquisition, photogrammetry, remote sensing, data conversion among other things.

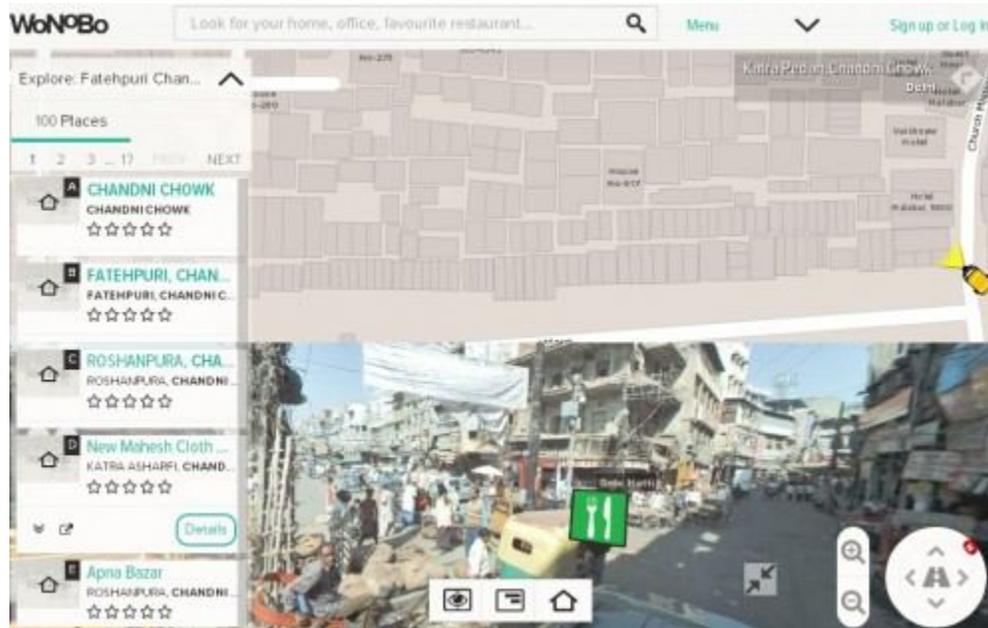
GENESYS MD Sajid Malik told MediaNama there's been a shift from B2B to B2C in the GIS industry in the last few years due to churn and uncertainty in the industry, with B2C mapping businesses leading the way. WoNoBo marks GENESYS' entry into the consumer space, and as per its 2011 annual report, much of the business' free cash went into WoNoBo.

We spoke with Malik and also WoNoBo's Zaki Ansari (previously with Rediff and UTV) & Lindsey Pereira. Here are some notes from the interaction:

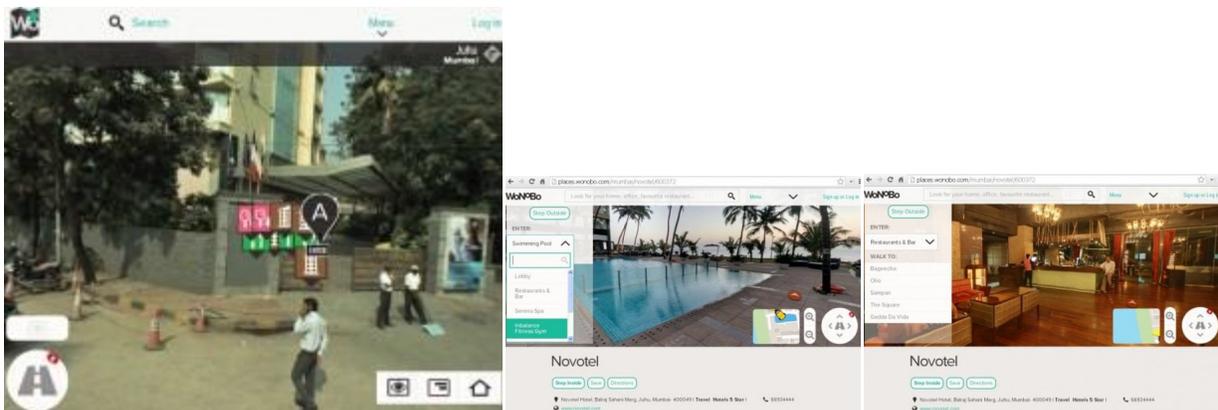
- **Cities covered:** 54 cities of India, which covers 70% of the urban economy of India. However, in the beginning, 12 cities are being launched, and 20 more being launched a few weeks later.

- **Points of Interest:** 10 million points of interest have been tagged, across cities, and homepages have been created for them, of which 4.5 million are commercial establishments. Frankly, it's a brave vehicle

that enters Fatehpuri, Chandni Chowk in Delhi (great falooda and paranthas if you're interested) during the daytime, and WoNoBo has it:



- **Inside maps:** They have 2000 and counting interiors. Take a look at Novotel in Mumbai, for which the interiors have been included in WoNoBo.



- **Directions and routing:** WoNoBo has both directions on the maps part of the product, as well as on the panoramic view, but when we tried it, it appears that the directions part needs work. We tried searching for a route from Costa Coffee in 7 Bungalows, Versova to Tulip Star in Juhu. Initially, it showed two options for Tulip Star: the first option did not work for us and kept asking us to add a place to provide directions, while the second option worked fine. Given that these are early days for an otherwise spectacular service, this should be ironed out over time.

- **Guides:** There are guides available for the entire city, and while users can create their own guides, an initial set of guides has been created by WoNoBo editors. [An example is here](#), for food in Delhi, called Delhi Belly.

- **Walking Tours** are being launched in partnership with the Government of India, as a part of the Incredible India campaign, where select curators have created walking tours along with printable maps (pdf) for the tour. For example, here is a walking tour by film critic [Raja Sen for Connaught Place](#) and a [heritage walk in Goa](#). Below is a screenshot of [Salman Khan ka Bandra](#).



- **Stories:** are essentially blog posts related to specific areas that users can add. We noticed that news stories are being [published on WoNoBo](#), specific to certain locations.

- **WoNoBo App:** We did see the demo of an Android mobile app which is yet to be launched. This is critical for WoNoBo, since the maps interface on mobile is tricky, and it needs to get elements like image compression and rendering across different devices right. The primary usage of maps is on mobile, and the recent Google Maps update is fantastic.

- **Regulatory issues:** Malik told us – “We have all the permissions from the Ministry of Defence for all the sensitive areas, but its not covered. We’ve worked with them. There is a need to take permissions both at a city level, and at a central level. It’s fairly complex. We have, for the new Map Policy, it’s vague in its interpretation. What we typically do is that whatever map data we create, we get it whetted by Survey of India. You need to go through the process of getting it cleared with them.”

We checked and noticed that neither India Gate nor the Red Fort in Delhi show up on the 3D view.

- **Updating content:** Malik said ‘ “We, at any point in time, will not have content that is more than 6 months old, and for certain places will not be updated very frequency. So frequency of updates will depend on a schedule”. Ansari likened it to crawling strategies by search engines, depending on recency of changes in points of interest.

- **Business models:** One clear model is around business listings, but the initial focus is around user adoption. Once there is adoption, monetization follows.

- **Raising Funding?** “The business is CAPEX heavy,” Malik said. “In this industry, unless you don’t have data of a critical mass, you don’t attract the kind of network economics that you need. We have 70% of the urban economy, and now we have the mass. We will be looking at raising funding at some point in time, but there is no tearing hurry. We are around 2,000 people in GENESYS, and at one point in time, we had more than 1000 people engaged in WoNoBo.”