

'Apping' SA's awesome SMEs

 By Leigh Andrews

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You can be part of the new [Awesome South Africa app](#), designed to promote local business.

South African business just got a huge boost in the form of an app that's available for iOS and Android devices. Entrepreneur and developer of the app Brandon Wilson explains that with his background as a tourist guide, he often heard tourists use the term 'awesome' to describe the country.



Brandon Wilson

And so the app is called 'Awesome South Africa', with the main intention to promote local products, services and establishments, as well as your specific specials, promotions, news and events in real time.

Even better? The basic listing is free (but you'll pay to promote your business through an annual subscription fee). Wilson calls this the antithesis to 'group-buying' sites as it's not built on a parasitic model where commission is taken on each booking made through the app. As part of their intention of helping businesses thrive, your business gets to cut its marketing budget drastically by not printing copious amounts of pamphlets, brochures and cards, instead achieving more through mobile alone, which can be changed dynamically any time you like.

These are guaranteed to reach consumers actively in your area as they can narrow the search location and even chat to the shop's front desk to make reservations upfront through the app - a boon to tourists and an excellent lead-generation tool.

It's all about assisting businesses that do not have access to the big budgets available to the big players.

Wilson confirms that Africa has the largest amount of SMEs globally, a figure that's expanding daily with the advent of mobile and tech merging all the time. It's certainly no secret those businesses in Africa are ready for next-level marketing and showcasing their products and services to a wider audience is what's on the cards now.

Wilson tells us why the 'Awesome South Africa' app is the ideal way to do so...

1. Why are apps getting so much focus at the moment?

Wilson: Mobile phones are fast becoming the 'PC of Africa'. Apps provide a native experience to their users through their "always available" status. With today's fast-paced and busy lifestyle, that's seen as being efficient.

The user interface of an app is also better than that of a mobisite and the user experience is far superior, allowing for better monetisation and revenue.

2. How can apps be better used for business?

Wilson: For businesses, apps provide you with a direct line of communication and a 24/7 connection to users. They're also a great way to send notifications, offers and any other new information when need be directly to users. Overall, it offers a seamless, professional experience and allows for greater selling and up-selling.

Apps specifically designed for small businesses also let you reach the scale and usage metrics a mobile site can never do. In addition, traditional marketing methods tend to be inundated with spam, but an app is user-centric or -initiated and thereby more engaging.

3. How does the Awesome South Africa app promote SMEs in particular?

Wilson: The promoting and marketing of any business usually comes with high costs. Luckily social media platforms and apps like Awesome South Africa make it easier financially for SMEs to spread the word about their business and what they have to offer on a much broader platform for much less. The ability for SMEs' catalogues and newsletters to be readily on display for anyone to view on mobile is also very powerful.

They can do so by uploading their specials, promotions and news on events, as well as directing users to their business websites, online catalogue PDF documents or even online web ticketing companies.

4. What's response to the app been like so far?

Wilson: We are at almost 20,000 downloads and have close on 50,000 establishments listed on the app. For accommodation alone we have 18,000 venues, with roughly 4,500 restaurants listings and 2,800 'things to do in South Africa'. We also have potential telemarketing and media companies interested in selling advertising to the companies already listed on the app and exciting partnerships with the likes of [Trivago](#) and other international web platforms looking to collaborate with us in South Africa. In addition to these, African states such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria, Botswana and Namibia as well as Dubai in the United Arab Emirates are looking to replicate the app with localised content.

We've also had approaches from some leading social media platforms with a total acquisition agenda for the app, but it is our contention that a company with a clear pan-African strategy is the right fit for this model.

It's certainly a big deal - watch out, continent, 'awesome' things are coming your way!

The cute animated intro video below tells more - budget and the fact that animation is the flavour of the day drove the

creation, but they'd love to create a full-blown commercial too...

For more on Awesome South Africa, download it onto your mobile through the [Google Playstore](#) or [Apple iTunes](#). You can also visit the [official website](#) and follow them on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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