

Fast-growing SA martech firm eyes further international expansion

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Increased demand for data-driven location-based marketing spurs triple-digit growth for Social Places, a self-funded SA martech success story.

Marketers are under increased pressure to drive business growth, particularly in a challenging economic environment – it's one of the reasons spending on marketing technology (martech) has become a fundamental budget consideration for brands.

Martech data is used by organisations to drive new business, improve customer retention and communications, as well as assist with improving general operations.

Leading the martech boom in South Africa is Social Places, a company which uses a mixture of locally developed software and managed services to automate and optimise digital marketing and customer relationship management processes for multi-location clients.

Ashleigh Wainstein, director of Social Places, says, "Companies are seeing the benefit of using data analysis to drive all parts of their business, not only marketing strategies."

It's reflected in her company's exponential growth. Social Places, founded in 2013, has more than doubled its staff complement over the last year and now operates in 27 countries. Recurring revenue has increased more than 100% year-on-year and further rapid expansion is expected in the year ahead.

"We will also be offering our locally developed software in different languages for international markets. Previously we were mainly focused on food and retail franchises. But we are also growing our financial services and telecommunications portfolio because of interest expressed in the opportunities and insights our software affords them.

"Data-driven location-based marketing is becoming an important focus for businesses that want to consolidate and manage their activities and extract useful data from online platforms. We started the business by manually managing online listings and quickly saw the need for automation. We aggregated more than 1 million reviews in the last year – double the number from the year before," says Wainstein.

Social Places enables businesses to manage their listings on platforms like Facebook, TripAdvisor and Google Maps for example, and get categorised feedback from their clients which they can then use for operational and marketing activities.

"We consult with clients over strategy then we set up their listings, manage and aggregate their reviews from these listings into our dashboard and respond to them at scale - with a personalised touch," says Wainstein.

"For franchises we then develop local strategy roadmaps and use our technology to allow individual locations to tailor their messaging to be relevant to their target audiences on social media channels, at the same time helping the brand to approve content and remain in control of their intellectual property. Lastly, we put out targeted geo-located advertising around each of these stores with their custom messaging to drive foot traffic. Our clients typically see up to three times the engagement rate on their individual location pages vs their brand pages," she says.

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Social Places

Social Places is a MarTech company that specialises in location-based marketing and reputation management for multi-location and/or franchised brands.

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