

# Customer experience within the medical aid industry

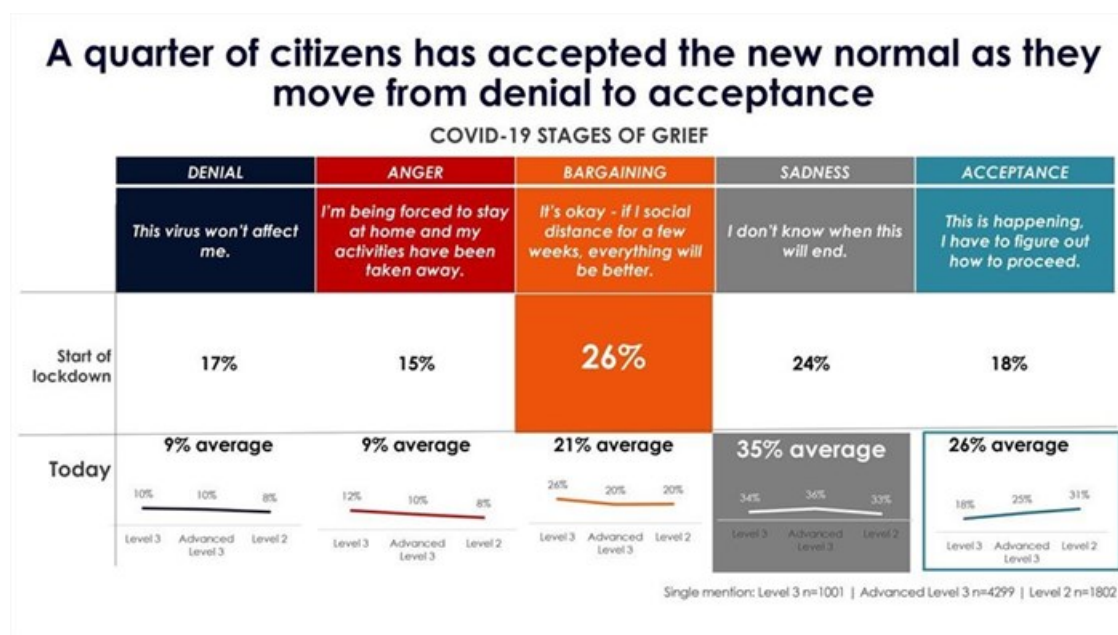
By [Sarina de Beer](#) and [Dr Amelia Richards](#), issued by [Ask Afrika](#)

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The Ask Afrika Orange Index® is at the forefront of service benchmarking since 2001 and is the broadest, independent and most widely referenced service excellence benchmark in South Africa. The benchmark has been tracking customer experience, and the changing trends and expectations since 2001. The 2020 measurement offers insight into consumer behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic within the local South African context. A national representative sample of 16,786 interviews with South African consumers enable a comparison of service performance across 26 industries, ranking 159 companies.



The impact of Covid-19 has been felt and experienced on many levels. Lockdown meant a strain on food security, household finances, chronic health issues and the depletion of emotional wellness among South Africans. By 2021, many South Africans have been touched personally by Covid-19 with either having lost someone to the disease or known people that contracted the virus. South Africans are constantly navigating through the different stages of grief specified in the Kübler-Ross model, with a quarter of citizens accepting Covid-19 as part and parcel of the new normal.



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As an industry, pharmacies took the lead with four pharmacy brands in the top 10 overall ranking. The medical aid industry was thriving and performing above the Ask Afrika Orange Index® benchmark, displaying a positive response to the market. Both these industries as a collective showed a 14% increase in customer satisfaction, 9% for pharmacies and 4% in the medical aid industry.

## Biggest industry shifts

Pharmacies and medical aid companies have seen the biggest improvement in service, whereas Telecommunications and Internet Service Providers have shown the largest decline.



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BestMed performed exceptionally well, winning the medical aid industry and ranking 13th overall in 2020. BestMed has also outperformed competitors, with an 11% difference between BestMed and the poorest performer in the industry.

With a longitudinal view, BestMed has been improving their service from 2018, celebrating an 6,24% increase in satisfaction scores from 2019 – 2020.

Key to a winner's status is good performance on different service constructs. The Ask Afrika Orange Index® measured customer satisfaction around the following service constructs:

- **FCR – First call resolution**
- **Trust**
- **Customer effort**
- **Fairness**
- **Reputation and;**
- **Emotional satisfaction**

Within the medical aid industry first call resolution (FCR) remained a strength when it comes to customer service compared to emotional satisfaction, which is still a challenge for most industries and brands. BestMed shared the first place with regards to emotional satisfaction with Medihelp and in 2020 BestMed was the leader of the pack with regards to being a trusted medical advisor.

Customers expect a consistent service experience across channels or service platforms albeit digital and/or human. In 2020, BestMed managed to achieve 80%+ satisfaction levels for services across their service touchpoints.

Looking towards the future building a loyal customer base among medical aid members, key loyalty drivers are trust, relationship building, the reputation of the company and CSR initiatives to give back to the community it serves. Within the midst of the traumatic Covid-19 pandemic, emotional satisfaction remains crucial, especially in the medical aid industry where members rely on their medical aid to be the trusted and supportive advisor during difficult times.

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*Social research decisions are required around HIV/Aids and more recently, Covid-19. Educational and early childhood development, fair-trade shopping, media and financial research are some of the areas we love to work in. NGOs, public- and private sector clients choose to work with us to get the pulse of the nation.*

*Besides being **decisioneers** in brand and customer experience research, Ask Afrika is well known for creating some of the most useful, go-to industry benchmarks, including the Ask Afrika Orange Index®, the Ask Afrika Icon Brands®, the Ask Afrika Kasi Star Brands and the Target Group Index (TGI). Ask Afrika's knowledge of brands is extensive. The Target Group Index (TGI) survey, which measures psychographics, service, products, media and brands, has been used by the majority of the top 50 advertisers and media owners in South Africa for nearly two decades.*

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