

# 2018 Ask Afrika Orange Index: Be human

By  Danette Breitenbach

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The 17th Annual Orange Index Customer Service Awards saw Woolies Food take the top spot with Burger King and Woolies (Clothing) second and third were respectively.



Overall winner of the 2018 Ask Afrika Orange Index is Woolworths Food. Image supplied.

Belinda Botha, regional manager of Woolies Food, says it's about understanding the emotional needs of customers. "Today's customers have big expectations and to stand out you have to be different, but you have to fulfil their expectations." She adds that brands are operating in a volatile world and need to be on their toes constantly. "It's a competitive business and you never know what might happen, but the focus is always on the customer and what they want."

The Awards, which took place recently at The Venue at Melrose Arch in Johannesburg, is based on research conducted by Ask Afrika to understand customer needs. This year the company surveyed 165 companies to understand the customer service best practice across different industries and to understand what customers want.



## 2018 Ask Afrika Orange Index winners announced

10 Oct 2018



## Customer needs are changing faster

Customer service has become increasingly tricky as customer needs are changing faster. "Previously the customer needs cycle was two to three years. Today it is a 12-month cycle," explains Sarina de Beer, director: client experience at Ask Afrika.

What is also changing customer service is the amount of choice today's customers have, and this, she adds, has made customers, less loyal generally. This is driven by more channels, better access to information and convenience.

Expectations are also changing, as customers become more accustomed to better service. She adds:

*“ However, what it is really about is relationships, and this is where we are struggling. We need to have an authentic relationship with our customers. ”*

The customer experience measurement is not designed by customers so brands measure what they think is important to the customer. “Instead, we need to ask them what is important to them. Customers know what they want and have experience across industries, meaning that it is not good enough to stack up to our competitors in our industries, but also across all industries” she says.

## **Decline in emotional satisfaction**

The survey bears witness to this, with 92% of respondents stating that they stop purchasing from a brand after three or fewer poor customer experiences. Service levels have dropped from 91% last year to 81% this year, with service levels decreasing across all industries. “Brands have done a great job investing in technology to up their service levels, but in the process, they are dropping the ball on EQ and the soft issues,” says de Beer.

The survey shows a 10% decline in emotional satisfaction. “We realised that what is causing the drop in service satisfaction is that we are not getting emotional satisfaction right. We only measure the tactical stuff, but customer service is about more than just pressing the right buttons,” she explains.

It comes back to relationships.

*“ To get a loyal customer, it is about trust, reputation and relationships. Effort, empathy and emotion is needed if you want to create a meaningful experience for your customers. ”*

She acknowledges that the intensity across different industries is different and therefore require a different focus. “Know what matters to your customers to get it right, understand your assets and use your internal measures as leading indicators of trouble.”

## **ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH**

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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