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Singapore (The Straits Times/ANN) - Whether it is trains, taxis or plane trips, transport standards here have slipped in the eyes of commuters and travellers, who have rated them lower nearly across the board over last year.

Taking the biggest hit as a single category was Changi Airport, which saw customer satisfaction drop by 11.8 per cent.

National carrier Singapore Airlines also saw a dip of 5.7 per cent over last year. Fierce competition among international players and higher expectations from travellers were the main reasons for the lower scores by local aviation players, said experts.

The airport, considered a mode of transport as it is an aviation hub, scored 75.4 out of a possible 100 points. This was based on a survey of eight transport and logistics categories by the Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) at Singapore Management University.

To come up with the customer satisfaction index for this sector, the institute, which released its results yesterday, examined customers' expectations, their experience, and value for money.

Feedback was gathered from 7,250 locals, tourists and transit passengers from April to June.

Mr Jochen Wirtz, a marketing professor at the National University of Singapore whose research interests include customer satisfaction measurement, said the poorer showing could be because industry standards are moving up, and regional airports have upgraded in the past four years. "People's expectations are changing - what was great 10 years ago has become the standard today. Others are catching up," he added.

Nonetheless, Changi Airport was the top scorer out of all the categories, and SIA, with its 74.9 score, maintained top spot among the airlines.

Other airlines surveyed include Emirates, (73 points), Qantas (71.7 points), and SilkAir (71.4 points).

ISES director Caroline Lim said: "With the intensity of competition between airlines, it is very easy for them to emulate one another in areas (such as) entertainment systems (and) food and beverage."

Changi Airport and SIA also fared better than MRT trains and public buses, which have, for the past year or so, been hit with complaints of overcrowding and long waiting times during peak

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hours. The same goes for taxis, which customers say are scarce during peak hours and rainy weather.

The MRT system scored 59.7 points this year, down from 64.1 points. Public buses also dropped about two points to score 58.5, and taxi services dipped about four points to 63.2.

According to Mr Wirtz, having one thing go wrong could colour the commuter's entire experience.

"There is the halo effect. When important aspects of a service are bad, they colour the judgment of all the other aspects," he said.

Budget airlines showed a slight improvement of 1.2 per cent over last year to 68.3 points, while local postal services provided by Singapore Post showed a significant improvement, jumping 5.7 per cent over last year to 71.2 points.