



"This (manpower crunch) is a very real issue as people are our most important asset," says Mr Hunghanfoo, citing Ray Kroc's famous "none of us is as good as all of us".

## McDonald's tops the fast-food field with record score

**The key, says its Singapore MD, lies in understanding changing customer preference to provide better service**

**By Chan Yi Wen**

yiwenc@sph.com.sg

@ChanYiWenBT

"Our business is never just about providing quick meals. It's always been about you – your tastes, your lifestyle, your choices. And we'd like to keep it that way, with you lovin' every moment of it."

McDonald's Singapore seems to be walking the walk. Because customers here are lovin' it. In the latest Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG), McDonald's Singapore scored the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the fast food restaurants sub-sector, beating counterparts such as Burger King and KFC.

Customer satisfaction for McDonald's stood at 71.6, surpassing the subsector average of 69, while satisfaction for Burger King and KFC stood at 69.6 and 67.9 respectively. The 2014 score also represents a marked improvement of four basis points from the year before, representing the highest score achieved by McDonald's since the study was launched in 2007.

A customer satisfaction landmark measure jointly developed by the Institute of Excellence at the Singapore Management University and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency, CSISG tracks customer satisfaction in eight economic sectors.

First established in the United States in 1955, and which expanded to Singapore in 1979, McDonald's has 120 outlets here today, employing over 8,000 people. Each month, McDonald's serves over six million customers here.

Robert Hunghanfoo, managing director of McDonald's Singapore, told *The Business Times* that it's important to understand changing customer preference in order to provide better service. To move in trend with customers' lifestyle changes, McDonald's employs multiple means to understand its customers. These include in-store feedback forms, customer service hotlines, emails, online and Facebook.

Last year, McDonald's started "Social Listening", to capture customers' emotions at the point of engagement with its brand. "It gives great insights to customers' needs," said Mauritius-born Mr Hunghanfoo, who took up his current post in July last year.

Through customer feedback, McDonald's has been better able to cater for increasingly health and time-conscious customers.

Last year, the company introduced the "Delight 500" menu, offering more healthy food items at 500 calories and under, such as a Wholegrain McWrap, and provided the option for customers to swap their sides for a garden side salad. The response has been encouraging. The number of customers opting for the garden side salad

has been increasing, and demand for the McWrap has exceeded McDonald's projections by 20 per cent.

Mr Hunghanfoo has been with the McDonald's family for the past 26 years. His journey with McDonald's began in 1977 when he took up a part-time job while pursuing his undergraduate studies in the UK. To date, he has taken up various positions at McDonald's in five continents.

Given Singapore's efficiency, he notes that many challenges inherent in other countries aren't present here. Still, like the rest of the rest of the food and beverage sector here, McDonald's Singapore must grapple with the manpower crunch.

"This is a very real issue as people are our most important asset," Mr Hunghanfoo said, citing Ray Kroc's famous "none of us is as good as all of us".

The business legend associated with McDonald's wild success, Mr Kroc was a huge proponent of teamwork, knowing that his company would only succeed if it had the support and dedication of the workers behind it. And Mr Hunghanfoo intends to keep Mr Kroc's legacy alive.

"As such, we invest seriously in our efforts to train our people and provide them various career growth opportunities. We also look into raising productivity through innovation so that the roles of our staff can be more streamlined and customer-oriented," Mr Hunghanfoo said.

Its efforts have been recognised. Last year, McDonald's was acknowledged for "Best Mature and Re-employment Practices" and "Best Recruitment Strategies" at the HRM Awards 2014. Its customer service manager, Mohammad Saiful Kassim, also beat 1,900 other awardees at the 20th Annual Excellent Service Awards to clinch the prestigious SuperStar Award.

McDonald's has also adopted a cashless payment system at all its restaurants in Singapore and piloted the Dual Point and Self-Ordering kiosk system at its Suntec City branch. It has proven to be win-win for both the customer and the company.

"Cashless payments speed up the ordering process for the customers and relieve the company of the extra manpower required to manage the cash," Mr Hunghanfoo explained.

While McDonald's has made significant strides in raising customer satisfaction over the past year, it is not resting on its laurels. It continually monitors customer habits and caters for changing preferences. "Changing habits is a gradual journey," Mr Hunghanfoo said.



A quarterly series brought to you by the Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University (ISES). Featuring findings from the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore, it also reveals insights on leadership and strategy from industry leaders, particularly in leveraging customer satisfaction as a competitive advantage.

ises.smu.edu.sg