

# Engaging the public to rebuild trust

By Francis Kan

AFTER a series of high-profile breakdowns on Singapore's train network earlier this year, commuters were understandably upset with public transport operators here.

Yet, in the quarter before the massive July 7 disruption of the North-South and East-West lines that left some 250,000 passengers stranded for over three hours, customer satisfaction with the operators was on the rise.

Indeed, according to Q2, 2015 Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG), taxi services, public buses and MRT trains all showed an improvement of around 2 per cent in their customer satisfaction scores.

Overall, the MRT system that comprises SMRT and SBS Transit trains registered a 3.7 per cent increase in their customer satisfaction score at 62.0 compared to the same period in 2014. However the report noted that the survey period concluded prior to the July 7 disruption of the MRT network, which may since have negatively impacted commuter satisfaction.

The CSISG study by Institute of Service Excellence at the Singapore Management University (ISES) also found that when commuters were satisfied with government intervention in the transport sector, this had a significant and positive impact on overall customer satisfaction.

"This observation suggests that customer satisfaction with our public transport operators is more multi-faceted and improving satisfaction will take more than reliable trains and frequent buses," said academic director of ISES and assistant professor of marketing (practice) Marcus Lee.

He urged both the operators and the regulator to rebuild trust in the public transport system by emphasising competence, benevolence and integrity in their engagement with the general public.

"Without the periodic reminder that the policies and operational decisions made on behalf of all commut-

ers are done so in our best interests, we would be leaving it to each commuter to fill in the blanks when something unexpected happens," he said.  
 "For example, if it takes unexpectedly long to recover from a train fault, is the operator inefficient, or is the operator being meticulous in their recovery processes because their first priority is commuter safety?"  
 In response to the CSISG results, transport group SMRT said that it would work hard to improve its service excellence efforts. The operator's customer relations team was recognised with three awards at

## Public verdict

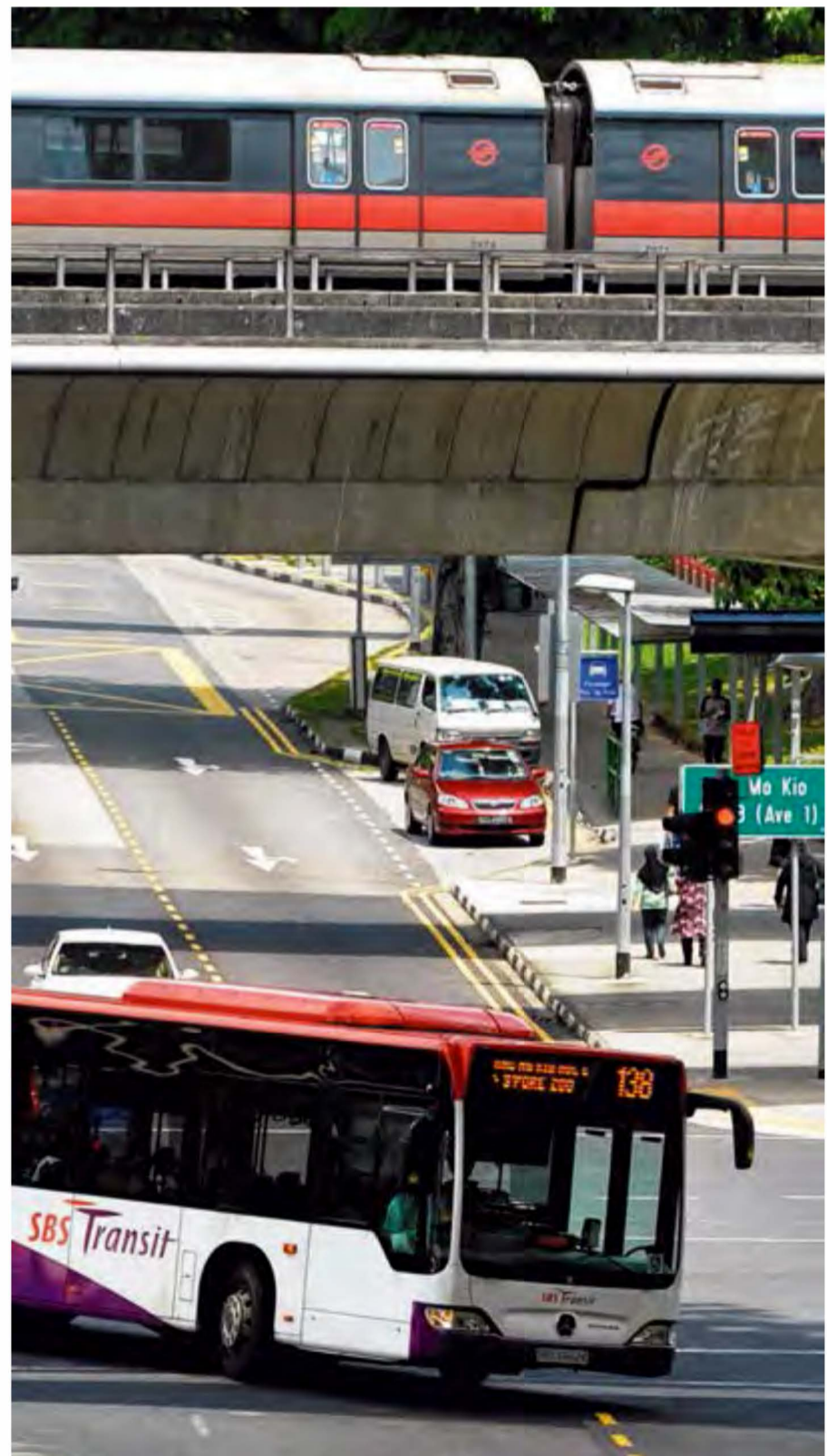
		Satisfaction with LTA's intervention of public train/bus systems	
		LOW SATISFACTION	HIGH SATISFACTION
Consumer's perception of SMRT/SBS Transit working in their best interests	HIGH TRUST	50.0	67.1
	LOW TRUST	26.2	54.3

Source: Institute of Service Excellence

the recent CCAS Contact Centre Awards 2015.

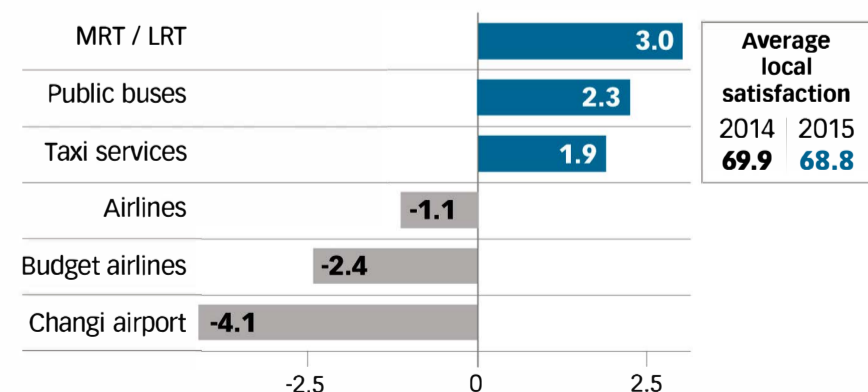
"This is a credit to the contribution of each SMRT department in addressing feedback from commuters speedily and sincerely, and in attending to their needs as they journey with us," said Patrick Nathan, vice-president for corporate information & communications at SMRT.

"Our commitment to service excellence is a cornerstone of the multi-year, multi-project effort in renewing our North-South East-West Lines to achieve better levels of safety, reliability, convenience and comfort for our commuters."



## How they fare

Y-o-y changes in satisfaction



Source: Institute of Service Excellence