

Thumbs up for 3 out of 5 sectors

Air transport, land transport and public education notch significant upticks in Q2. **BY NARENDRA AGGARWAL**

CUSTOMER satisfaction is improving in some of Singapore's most important sectors. New findings from the Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University show that the public education, air transport and land transport sectors have registered significant increases in consumer satisfaction.

Releasing the findings of the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) for the second quarter of 2016, the institute said that statistically significant upticks in customer satisfaction were seen in the air transport, land transport and public education sectors from 2015.

Meanwhile, the logistics and private education sectors, which were the other sectors covered in the second quarter survey, did not record any statistically significant change from the year before.

"Satisfaction scores are determined by overall satisfaction, ability to meet expectations and similarity to ideal. When a sector does well in the CSISG, it means that their performance in any one or a combination of these areas has been noticed by consumers," says Neeta Lachmandas, executive director of the institute.

Within the land transport sector, the Mass Rapid Transit System and taxi services sub-sectors registered statistically significant increases in CSISG scores. For the Mass Rapid Transit System sub-sector, the improvement is led by an increase in the perceived overall quality and perceived value drivers.

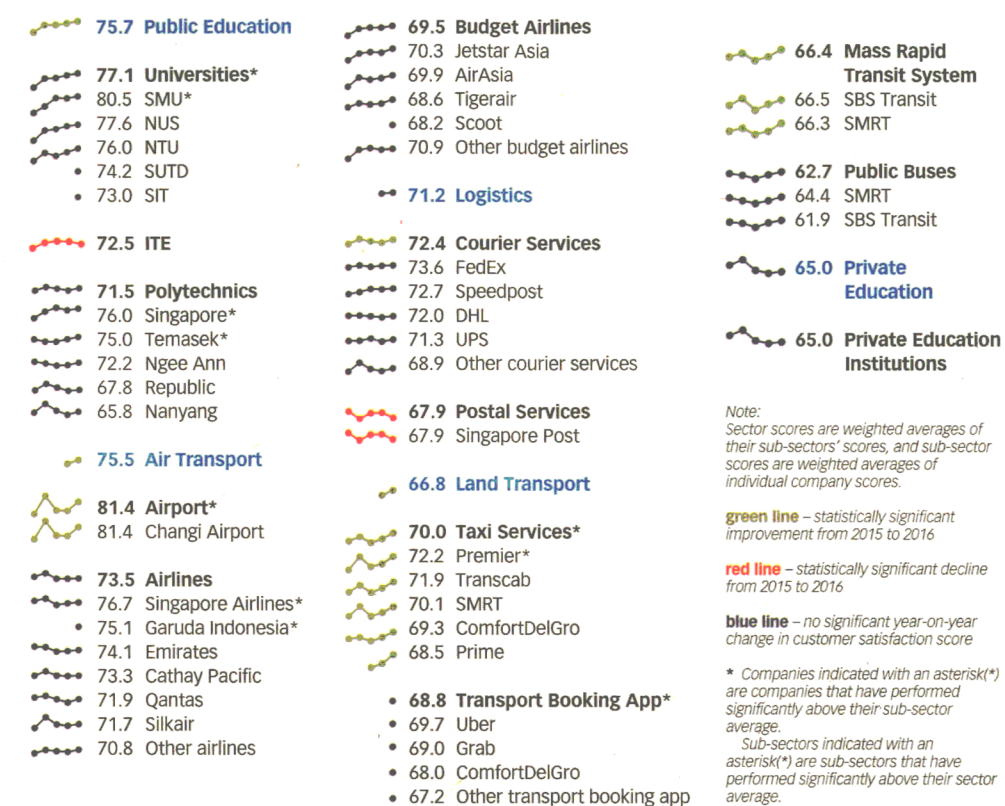
"Based on the CSISG data, train reliability and helpfulness of staff were key drivers of perceived quality," says Ms Lachmandas. "The operators appear to be working in the right direction through initiatives such as adding more trains as well as replacing train signals and sleepers. They have also stationed customer service personnel at the train stations during peak hours. From the scores, it would appear the rise is a reflection of these efforts."

Noting that there has been an increase in the availability and adoption of transport booking apps in Singapore, the Institute of Service Excellence made a move to include this new sub-sector in the survey for the first time this year.

Ms Lachmandas says: "Despite the competition, transport booking apps and taxi services do work hand in hand to enhance the overall public transport options available to commuters. The competition would have potentially helped to push taxi operators to address key pain points. One example of this can be seen in how some taxi providers have enhanced

CSISG Q2 2016 scorecard

Air transport, land transport, logistics, private education and public education



Note: Sector scores are weighted averages of their sub-sectors' scores, and sub-sector scores are weighted averages of individual company scores.

green line – statistically significant improvement from 2015 to 2016

red line – statistically significant decline from 2015 to 2016

blue line – no significant year-on-year change in customer satisfaction score

* Companies indicated with an asterisk(*) are companies that have performed significantly above their sub-sector average.

Sub-sectors indicated with an asterisk(*) are sub-sectors that have performed significantly above their sector average.

Source: Institute of Service Excellence at SMU (ISES)

their booking apps by adding more payment options in light of the competition. Ultimately, we see this disruption as a good catalyst for improvements in the sector.

"From the findings, we saw that security measures and usability are key drivers for these apps. Taxi operators with booking apps as well as new app entrants could potentially focus on these areas to raise satisfaction."

As for the air transport sector, three sub-sectors were measured: airport, airlines and budget airlines. The sector improvement was led by a marked increase in the customer satisfaction score for Changi Airport at 81.4 points, up 6.28 points or 8.4 per cent.

Interestingly, tourists' satisfaction scores for budget airline exceed that of locals and this is driven by higher ratings given for expectations, quality and value. To locals, the ability of the airline to accommodate their needs is rated more importantly than cleanliness of the cabin as well as food and beverage options. For tourists, the cleanliness of the cabin as well as food and beverage options were top attributes that positively impact perceived quality.

Says Ms Lachmandas: "While locals value these two attributes as well, the most important attribute remains the ability of the airline to accommodate to their needs. We see here that locals appear to value the human interaction element of their budget airline experience beyond functionality and hygiene factors."

"Budget airlines may want to continue maintaining the cleanliness and comfort of the cabin as well as the range of food and beverage options available. To improve satisfaction scores with locals, budget airlines will do well to pay attention to the human interaction aspects of the flying experience."

Significantly, Jetstar Asia is tops in the budget airlines category with a score of 70.3 points.

As for land transport, the CSISG survey shows that getting commuters to their destination efficiently is key to improving perceived quality.

Reliability of trains is the top attribute with the highest impact on perceived quality. This is followed by helpfulness of staff and train frequency. From the study data, it appears that commuters value effective-

ness and efficiency when it comes to public transport. They are most satisfied when they are able to move efficiently from point A to point B.

"To raise satisfaction scores," Ms Lachmandas says, "operators will have to continue to work on factors that will help maintain or even raise the reliability of trains. For buses, comfort of the ride is cited as the top factor with the greatest impact on perceived quality. Following this is the helpfulness of bus captain and clarity of bus route information. It can be inferred bus captains exert a considerable degree of influence on commuters' perception of quality."

To enhance satisfaction scores, it would make sense to pay attention to training and developing bus captains who serve as key service ambassadors and influencers of perceived quality. For taxis, payment process and taxi drivers' road knowledge are important attributes in driving perceived quality scores.

"Given that a statistically significant increase in score has been noted for all taxi operators surveyed in the CSISG, it appears that the operators have done well in the areas that mat-

ter to commuters," adds the ISES executive director.

No statistical change was noted for the logistics and private education sectors. That said, the courier services sub-sector saw an increase in satisfaction score that is largely led by an uptick seen in courier services for business use as well as local use.

In the education sector, a statistically significant increase in satisfaction was registered for the public education sector and student support services was ranked as the top factor leading to higher satisfaction levels. Key student support services are offering counselling, career advice and financial assistance. This means that students are looking for institutions of higher learning to provide more than just a great learning experience.

Chen Yongchang, head of research and consulting at ISES, says: "Generally, student support services in terms of counselling, career advice and financial assistance as well as quality, dedication and mutual respect exhibited by teaching staff were found to be key quality drivers impacting upon satisfaction ratings for the education sector."

The latest ISES study shows that while public education has improved significantly, with universities leading the pack, private education providers are lagging behind.

The CSISG 2016 second quarter study was done between April and July 2016.

Jetstar flies to the top

FOR Jetstar, the customer has always been at the heart of everything it does. Understanding customers' needs and experience along the journey helps the budget airline enhance their travel experience while they continue to enjoy low fares. Jetstar came in at the top among budget airlines.

Says Barathan Pasupathi, CEO, Jetstar Asia: "For a long while, we have been looking at customer experience and customer satisfaction results in the rear-view mirror. Airlines and other businesses alike have been relying on lagging indicators days or weeks after a customer's experience.

With new innovative platforms, mobile solutions and new processes, we will embark on an almost real time feedback from customers. This will enable us to study and analyse leading indicators and segments of the customer experience to effectively approach key areas for attention and realignment."

"From ticket to tarmac, we have enhanced our website, pioneered an online virtual assistant service, delivered seamless check-in kiosks and bag-drop solutions. While on board, our crew's passion for our customers is key as they focus on providing care and comfort to our customers which have received international acclaim."