

S'poreans less satisfied with public transport service: CSISG survey

By Qiuyi Tan / Hetty Musfirah | Posted: 04 September 2012 1713 hrs

SINGAPORE: Singaporeans are less satisfied with the public transport service compared to a year ago, according to the latest results from the 2012 second quarter Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG).

Some 2,300 people were surveyed on their public transport experiences by the Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University (ISES) between April and June 2012.

The study showed that commuters had significantly lower perceptions of quality in public buses and the MRT system.

Compared to 2011, commuters also had significantly higher expectation of taxi services this year but did not experience any improvements.

The MRT sub-sector suffered the largest drop in satisfaction, falling by nearly nine per cent to about 62 points.

Public buses did not fare better, falling about seven per cent to 61.6 points.

ISES Academic Director Marcus Lee said the scores are far from the national average for satisfaction levels, which is close to 70.

"Our satisfaction ratings are on a 0 to 100 scale. To give you some context, a company known for very good service like a very good hotel will score in the 80s," he said.

"The MRT system and buses are scoring in the low 60s. The national average is close to 70, so we are very far from the average satisfaction level in Singapore."

Assistant Professor Lee added: "What we found was that customer expectations have not changed year-on-year. Despite all that has happened, people still expect the same level of service quality, or commuting experience from the operators.

"But what has happened is that perceptions of what they're receiving has dropped significantly from the previous year."

Assistant Professor Lee said this has led to worsening customer satisfaction.

Bus arrival frequencies and bus punctuality continued to be rated the poorest among all



People waiting at the bus stop. (Photo: Hester Tan, channelnewsasia.com)

factors.

The widening gaps between expectations and perceptions of quality contributed to the significant decline in satisfaction.

The study also found commuters had a significantly higher expectation of Singapore's taxi service, possibly due to the fare hikes in December last year.

However, commuters' perceptions of taxis' quality level did not change.

Observers say operators have to work harder to raise satisfaction levels, but commuters' expectations also need to be realistic.

Chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Transport Cedric Foo said: "In any service offering, expectations are not a bad thing. For Singapore, which is famed for having efficient infrastructure, I would not fault commuters to have high expectations.

"However, their expectations should be realistic, because it is not possible for every single bus to be prompt, because sometimes traffic condition or weather condition prevent it to be so. By and large, we should work towards a level of service that is comparable or exceed other global cities in a realistic manner."

As for train services, Mr Foo said the Committee of Inquiry's report into last December's breakdowns has spelt out measures to improve service reliability.

Mr Foo said that if operators work diligently on those measures, he is confident that satisfaction levels will go up.

SMRT said the lower satisfaction levels with the public transport system may be attributed to the publicity surrounding the December MRT breakdowns and the inquiry which followed.

It said the increase in ridership due to the population increase could be another factor.

More trains have been added to the system over the past year, but there is still a limit to improve frequencies due to the constraint of the signalling system.

SMRT said operating hours, frequency and comfort are touchpoints which could have the greatest impact on MRT commuters' satisfaction, so it is working on improving these aspects as well as customer service and information dissemination.

The transport operator has also introduced several initiatives to raise bus commuters' satisfaction in recent months.

This include implementing the new service leaders' safety incentive where drivers will receive a certain monthly incentive amount if they have no accident record within that month.

Satisfaction levels with budget airlines also saw a drop of about 3 per cent.



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Overall, the transport and logistics sector saw customer satisfaction dropping to 68.3 points, a 2.4 per cent decline compared to last year.

The CSISG also surveyed customer satisfaction in the public and private education sectors.

Satisfaction in the public education sector fell by 4 per cent to 67.5 points, while the private education sector's fell by 7.4 per cent to 69 points.

The survey comprised a total of 11,807 responses -- including the 2,300 surveyed on public transportation -- about customer experiences in the public education, private education and transport and logistics sectors.

- CNA/wm