

# Fall in tourist satisfaction, study shows

Higher expectations make it tougher for hotels and attractions

By **JESSICA LIM**

OVERALL tourist satisfaction with hotels and attractions in Singapore has fallen for the first time since 2009.

But this, in turn, stems from tourists' higher expectations, which means the hotels and attractions are finding it more difficult to make their customers happy.

This is the conclusion drawn by the Singapore Management University's Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) from its third-quarter survey on customer satisfaction released yesterday.

The study - modelled on those done in the United States, South Korea and at least 10 European countries - produced a score of 72.6 out of 100 for tourist satisfac-

tion. This is a fall from last year's Q3 score of 77.8.

On the other hand, satisfaction from the resident population went up from 68.4 to 70.2.

The overall customer satisfaction index for tourism is 70 out of 100, down from last year's 73.5.

This is the first drop since 2009, when it was 67.1.

Even hotels such as The Ritz Carlton, Shangri-La and Mandarin Orchard, known for their high standards, fared worse than in previous surveys. Attractions like the Singapore Zoo and Jurong Bird Park also lowered the sector's overall score.

ISES academic director Marcus Lee called it a statistically significant fall. "It could be that the economic climate of the countries

from which tourists come has improved. What we offer them may seem less impressive in comparison," he said, adding that people are more well-travelled now.

"Another reason could be Singapore's brand. The F1 and the two integrated resorts have positioned (the country) as an upmarket location, and tourists may be expecting more as a result."

The study also revealed several of the tourists' bugbears. At hotels, they felt clarity of directions was lacking and food quality was inferior. They also found access to attractions could be better, and felt that the standards of amenities could be improved.

ISES also released the customer satisfaction index for the food and beverage sector, which

showed a slight improvement. The overall score was 67.7 points, up from 67.5 last year.

The study, which involves face-to-face interviews, polled 6,557 respondents this year. Of this number, 4,065 were Singapore residents interviewed in their homes and 2,492 were tourists at Changi Airport.

Ms Monika Milko, a tourist from Poland and a guest at Victoria Hotel in Bugis, said she was "expecting much, much more".

"The pictures on the hotel website were nicer. The rooms are very small with no view, and it is quite dirty," said the 30-year-old, who paid \$127 a night. "Isn't Singapore supposed to offer high quality?"

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