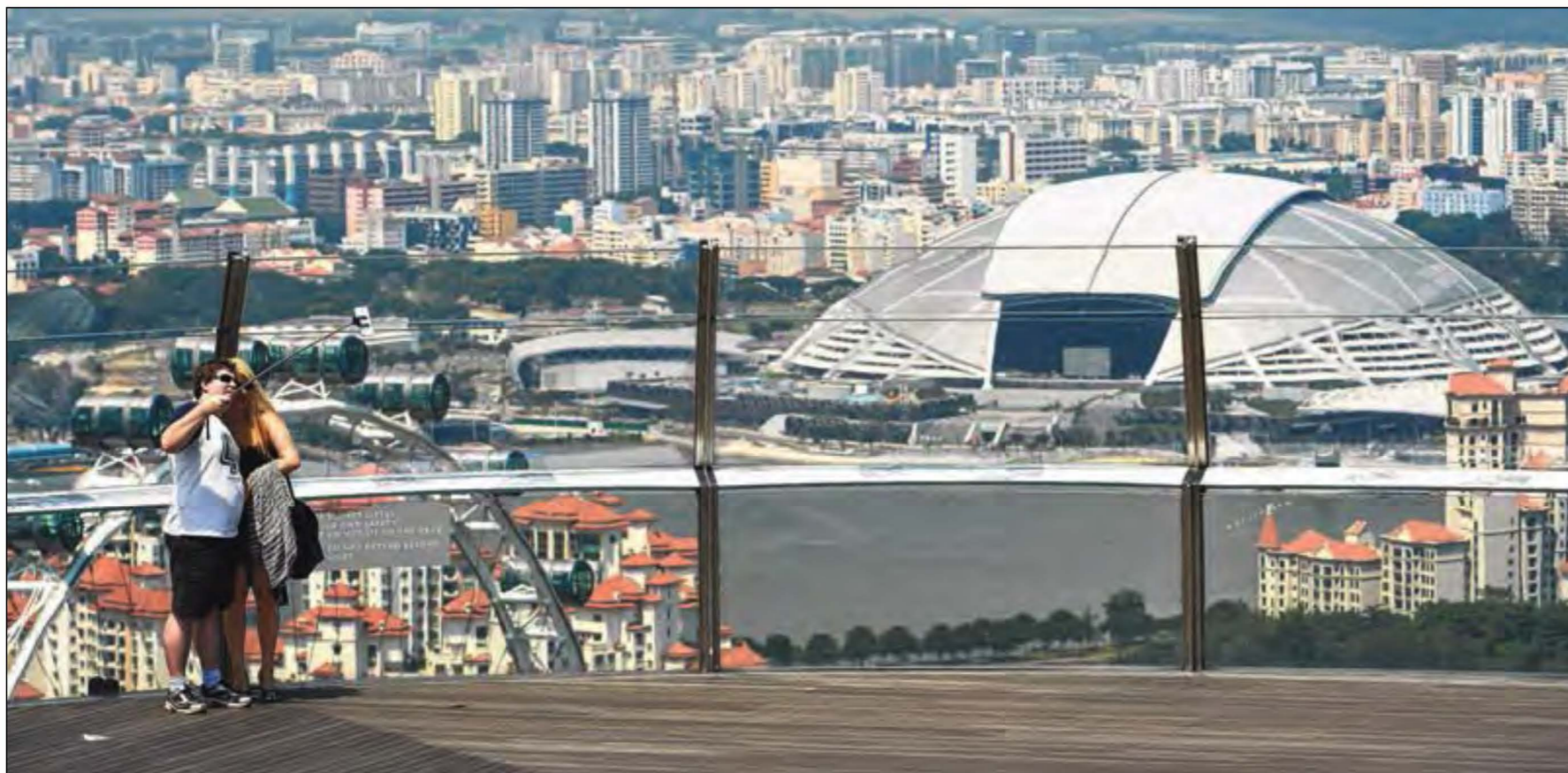


More tourists unhappy with hotels, restaurants

Lower satisfaction scores attributed to labour crunch and high expectations



Tourists taking a selfie at Marina Bay Sands' SkyPark. The tourism sector saw its score drop 7.3 per cent from last year. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

By OLIVIA HO

MORE tourists are unhappy with restaurants and hotels here, the latest Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore has found.

The annual survey by the Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) saw a significant drop in consumer satisfaction for the food and beverage (F&B) sector to 65.8 points from 70.3 last year – the lowest since 2011.

The institute's director, Ms Caroline Lim, said the manpower crunch, as well as higher tourist expectations, led to the decline.

"Services, being people-intensive businesses, have had to cope with the manpower crunch and there has been much radical redesigning of business models," she said.

"These lower scores could be a case of correction as companies transition to new business models, with consumers taking time to adapt to new norms in how service is delivered and experienced," she added.

While the satisfaction of Singapore residents remained lower than that of tourists across the board, more tourists were displeased with service aspects such as restaurant cleanliness, or the wait for the food or bill.

Restaurants and cafes suffered most in the F&B sector. Restaurant ratings dropped 10.5 per cent to 64.1 points. Bars, foodcourts and fast-food restaurants, which are less dependent on service, saw little change.

Mr Daniel Sia, founder and exec-

utive chef of Dempsey restaurant-bar The Disgruntled Chef, said tourists may have higher expectations due to the profusion of review websites like TripAdvisor, as well as social media.

The tourism sector also saw its score drop 7.3 per cent from last year to 69.1 points.

Attractions and hotels had significantly lower scores. Hotels, in particular, declined 10.4 per cent to 69.4 points, their poorest performance since 2009.

Ms Yasemin Tecmen Stubbe, founder of YTS Hospitality Marketing, estimated that hotel rooms in Singapore have increased by 25 per cent since 2011, but the supply of trained labour has not kept pace.

"You get new employees in but you may not have enough time to train them."

"Operational excellence depends a lot on training."

Ms Lim said: "It is timely for businesses to review their operating model."

She suggested they could have more self-service elements to combat staff shortages.

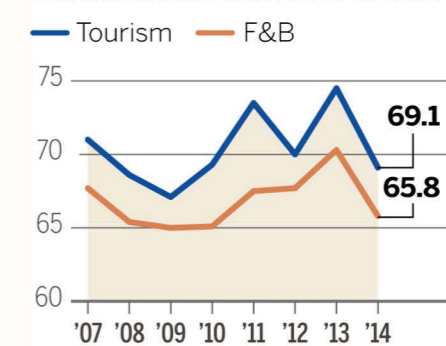
The results were based on 8,600 interviews done between June and September this year, 4,850 with residents here and 3,750 with tourists.

Started in 2007, the index from the ISES of the Singapore Management University reports customer satisfaction across nine economic sectors here, measuring up to three sectors each quarter.

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Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore results

Consumer ratings for F&B and tourism sectors from 2007 to 2014



Source: INSTITUTE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE

ST GRAPHICS

HOTELS FARE POORLY

■ Attractions and hotels had significantly lower scores. Hotels, in particular, declined 10.4 per cent to 69.4 points, their poorest performance since 2009.

■ The supply of trained labour has not kept pace with the estimated 25 per cent increase in hotel rooms since 2011. Hotels may not have enough time to train new employees.