

Dining out: Patrons happier with quality

Satisfaction with value also up; but ISES says consumers have lowered expectations

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People are happier with the quality and value when eating out, but they also have lower expectations.

Those are the findings of the Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

ISES said the food and beverage industry scored better in the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore this quarter than in the same period last year.

Details such as the amount of time one waits for a seat at an eatery contribute to improved per-

ceived quality and value for the industry.

ISES said satisfaction rose 4.4 per cent in comparing the two periods.

Releasing the findings yesterday, ISES said other factors that contributed to the perceived quality of the eateries include ability to accommodate special requests and ability of staff to explain the menu.

Mr Nicholas Ng, 27, outlet manager for rooftop bar Loof, said service has improved because customers are helping themselves. "Patrons use devices to order, which frees up staff to attend to customers and interact with them."

Mr Chen Yongchang, head of research and consulting at ISES, said while food quality is important for the food and beverage sector, "the data is telling us that service elements are also important in driving satisfaction".

Despite the uptrend, ISES' executive director Neeta Lachmandas cautioned the industry that consumers lowered their expectations. She said there was a dip in expected quality among consumers, "particularly in food courts, bars and pubs, as well as cafes and snackbars".

This refers to expectations that consumers may have based on reviews they have read or a past experience. "In the long run, this is not good for the industry. No good brand has built itself on people having low expectations," she said.

Mr Loh Lik Peng, 44, director of Unlisted Collection, which runs a stable of restaurants including Salted & Hung, Pollen and Esquina, said he was "intrigued" by the lower expectations.

"It is not necessarily negative. Expectations may have changed because people know about the manpower crunch," he added.

Coffee chains Starbucks and Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, and sandwich chain Delifrance took top spots for the cafes and snack bars sub-sector. Fish & Co, Boon Tong Kee and Din Tai Fung came out tops in the restaurants sub-sector.

The tourism industry also performed better, with an increase of 2.4 per cent in satisfaction during the third quarter this year, compared with the same period last year.

Satisfaction across attractions, hotels, travel and tour agencies, and online travel agencies was surveyed, with Sentosa and Marina Bay Sands ranking the highest in the attractions and hotel categories respectively.

The study for the third quarter was conducted between July and October this year. A total of 8,563 surveys were completed, among locals and tourists.

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