

SERVICE STANDARDS

Tourists not quite as impressed this year

Satisfaction index dips as their idea of high quality service 'may have changed'

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SINGAPORE – Tourists were less satisfied with service standards in Singapore this year than in previous years, driven by what they felt was unsatisfactory service at hotels.

In the latest customer satisfaction index conducted by the Singapore Management University's Institute of Service Excellence (ISES), the score for the Republic's tourism sector dipped from last year by 3.5 points to 70 points on a 100-point scale.

The scores were derived from drivers such as perceived quality, customer expectations and perceived value.

In its sixth year, the survey — con-

ducted between June and August — received 8,968 responses for satisfaction levels in the food and beverage (F&B) and tourism sectors.

In the tourism sector, satisfaction levels for tourists fell to 72.6 points from 77.8 points last year. In contrast, locals' satisfaction levels rose to 70.2 points from 68.4 points last year.

The hotel sub-sector registered the largest decline, dropping 4.4 points (5.9 per cent) to 70.1 points, despite the addition of the five-star hotel Marina Bay Sands to this year's survey.

In particular, the clarity of directions in hotels, food quality, room amenities, ease of reservations and the check-in process received poorer ratings from tourists this year.

ISES Academic Director Marcus Lee said that tourists' idea of what is considered "high quality service" may have changed. The key for businesses was not to over-deliver on service — a conventional strategy which compa-

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nies tend to adopt — or try to lower expectations, but to simply understand customers' needs and wants.

Said ISES Director Caroline Lim: "What the good or the high-performing companies did was they matched what customers were expecting."

Meanwhile, the F&B sector saw a slight overall increase of 0.3 points in customer satisfaction levels to 67.7, a change the ISES said was not "statistically significant".

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As such, Ms Lim suggested that improving these services to increase satisfaction can be an alternative to increasing productivity rather than

* SCORES AT A GLANCE ...
● Tourism sector
Hotels: 70.1 (-4.4 points)
Attractions: 72.6 (-2.8 points)
Travel agencies and tour operators: 68.5 (-3 points)
● F&B
Restaurants: 68.2 (-0.3 points)
Fast food restaurants: 68.2 (+0.6 points)
Cafes: 67.2 (-0.6 points)
Bars and pubs sub-sector: 69.4 (+2.4 points)
Food courts: 68.4 (+2.2 points)

re-training workers or investing in machinery. "With the manpower controls, businesses are facing challenges in day-to-day operations or increasing generation of revenue," she explained.

"They can work towards increasing satisfaction. Increased satisfaction leads to higher consumption and higher revenue, which in turn translates to higher productivity."