

SURVEY SHOWS DROP IN F&B AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES

Tourist satisfaction falls sharply in two key sectors

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SINGAPORE – Amid a slump in visitor arrival numbers, tourist satisfaction levels have fallen sharply for the food & beverage (F&B) and tourism sectors, showed survey results released yesterday.

The 2014 third quarter Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) results showed that customer satisfaction for the tourism sector

fell by 7.3 per cent to 69.1 out of 100 points compared to the previous year, while satisfaction for the F&B sector declined by 6.5 per cent to 65.8 points.

The quarterly survey by the Singapore Management University's Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) was held between June and September. It collected a total of 8,600 unique responses about customer experiences in the F&B and tourism sectors.

ISES Director Caroline Lim said the decline in satisfaction levels could

be due to higher tourist expectations. Data from other surveys show that the profile of tourists here has changed over time, from budget travellers to sophisticated ones who are willing to spend on luxury brands and high-end accommodation, said Ms Lim.

“They could be having a different benchmark when it comes to service experience and because of that, they could have evaluated their experience very differently from tourists who were visiting and frequenting Singapore.”



The decline in satisfaction levels could be due to higher tourist expectations, as data from other surveys show that the profile of tourists here has changed over time, from budget travellers to sophisticated ones who are willing to spend on high-end goods and accommodation.
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Two out of three sub-sectors in the tourism sector registered sharper declines in customer satisfaction. The attractions sub-sector fell by 9 per cent to 72.6 points, while the hotels sub-sector dropped by 10.4 per cent to 69.4 points — its lowest score since 2009. The travel & tour services sub-sector also saw a decrease in its customer satisfaction score.

Both the tourism and F&B sectors scored lower ratings for reliability among tourists, which was one of the key factors that contributed to the decline in satisfaction. For example, tourists said they were not able to get their bills quickly and accurately at restaurants. The fall in customer satisfaction levels in the F&B sector was largely due to the problems faced by a manpower crunch and the lack of proper training for new employees who are expected to learn on the job.

All five F&B sub-sectors — restaurants, cafes & snack bars, bars & pubs, food courts, and fast food restaurants — scored lower ratings in the survey. Two of the sub-sectors, restaurants and cafes & snack bars, fell by 10.5 per cent to 64.1 points and 6.8 per cent to 66.2 points respectively, pulling down the overall F&B sector's score. Analysis showed that tourists gave poorer year-on-year ratings on factors that had a significant impact on their perceptions of quality, such as cleanliness, food quality, ease of reservation, staff responsiveness, and time taken to receive the right order.

Commenting on the survey results, Ms Choo Huei Miin, director of Visitor Information & Experience at Singapore Tourism Board (STB), said they were a timely reminder that tourism players need to continue to pursue service excellence to cater to increasingly discerning visitors. “STB is committed to helping industry stakeholders raise their game through grant schemes and incentives.”

Recent regional events such as the political unrest in Thailand, the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, and the abduction of Chinese tourists in Sabah have taken a toll on Singapore's tourism industry. Between June and September, visitor arrivals dropped by 6 per cent to 3.6 million, the steepest on-year decrease in five years.