

Customer satisfaction highest since 2007

Retail sector chalks up best score since index's launch

By **TEH SHI NING**

SINGAPORE'S shoppers are happier with retailers than they have been since 2007, according to the latest Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG).

Despite retailers' fears that their lack of manpower following tighter foreign labour policies could hit service standards and customer satisfaction, the Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University (ISES) yesterday gave the retail sector its best score since the index was launched in 2007.

Its satisfaction score hit a high of 72.2 out of a possible hundred, 3 points up from a year ago.

The info-communications sector also managed to achieve a record score of 67.7 points, 1.7 point up from a year ago.

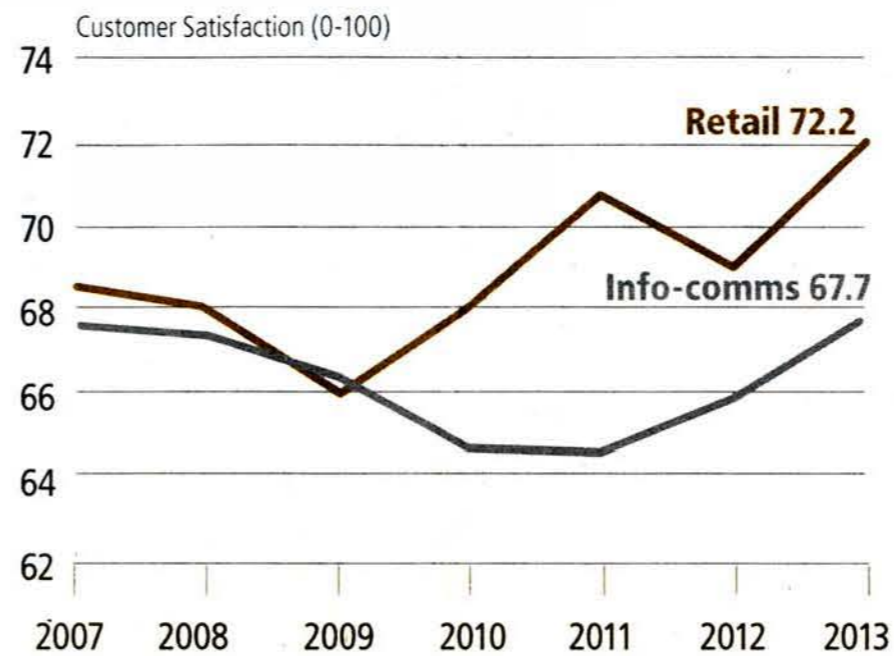
Retail and info-communications are the first two of eight sectors for whom ISES measures customer satisfaction over the course of each year.

Face-to-face interviews with Singapore residents at their homes and tourists at Changi Airport's departure hall collected over 7,600 responses on 649 companies in the two sectors between January and April. Companies for whom there were more than 250 responses were also individually scored.

"The significantly higher customer satisfaction levels reflect efforts invested by the service providers in overall customer experience and keeping up with customer expectations," said ISES director Caroline Lim.

The large improvement in retail's overall score was led by the more satisfied customers of department stores, furniture stores, petrol service stations and su-

Happy shopping



Source: Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore

permarkets. All four segments notched up record scores on the latest index.

"Our data suggests that the manpower crunch doesn't mean that customer satisfaction would suffer," said Ms Lim. This is possible if companies adopt

customer-centric strategies, and know what their customers' needs and expectations are.

Ikea is an example, which has marketed its largely self-serviced set-up as an experience for families, she said. Ikea stood

out in this round of results. Its customer satisfaction score of 75.5 surged 8.1 points from a year ago and beat the retail sector's overall score.

As for the infocommunications sector, the three dominant telcos here has managed to raise customer satisfaction to a record high also. Despite no significant change to customers' satisfaction with mobile services, the broadband segment scored a 3.3-point improvement to a high of 67.5 points.

SingTel topped both the sub-sector charts of mobile and broadband for the first time since 2007. But M1, which had the most satisfied customers a year ago, saw satisfaction among its mobile customers fall significantly.

This was probably because the survey period coincided with the serious three-day disruption to M1's 3G service in January this year, said Marcus Lee, ISES academic director.