



Enjoyable: Apart from the quality of food, service-related factors such as staff courtesy, responsiveness and the ordering and reservations processes, have a significant influence on how satisfied a customer is. FILE PHOTO

Restaurant goers are quite happy

Index of customer satisfaction for F&B and tourism go up

By **TEH SHI NING**
 tshining@sph.com.sg

FOOD and beverage (F&B) outlet operators, who have been vocal about how tightened foreign manpower policies have crimped their ability to hire sufficient workers, can take comfort in the fact that this has not put their customers off.

On the contrary, the latest Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) for the F&B sector shows that patrons of restaurants and cafes are happier than ever.

Face-to-face interviews with more than 8,000 residents and tourists, conducted in August and September, showed that customer satisfaction levels for F&B, and tourism players such as hotels and attractions, have hit record highs since the CSISG was first compiled in 2007.

The F&B sector's satisfaction score rose to 70.3 points out of a possible 100, from 2012's 67.7 points, while the tourism sector's score was 74.5, up from 70 points last year. Both these scores were also above Singapore's national customer satisfaction score of 69.9 in 2012.

These results came despite higher expectations

on the part of customers, as well as the tight labour market these services sectors are up against.

"Despite the challenging labour market, customer satisfaction levels have not been negatively affected. This is a timely reminder that the drive for customer satisfaction can be achieved with resources besides increasing manpower," said Caroline Lim, director of the Institute of Service Excellence at the Singapore Management University. ISES compiles the index for nine economic sectors over the course of each year.

Its analysis shows that apart from the quality of food, service-related fac-

tors such as staff courtesy, responsiveness and the ordering and reservations processes, have a significant influence on how satisfied a customer is with the restaurant, fast-food outlet or food court.

"It is intuitively obvious for F&B businesses to focus on improving food quality and our analysis supports this notion, that food quality is the biggest lever to customer satisfaction. However, the savvy restaurateur also appreciates that customers do not consume their food in a vacuum, and that the dining experience plays a significant role in the overall satisfaction of customers," said Marcus Lee, academic director of ISES.