

# Keeping up with changes to keep customers happy

*Group creates differentiated experiences, while prioritising customer feedback and needs*

TIARA HAMARIAN  
 tiarabtemh@mediacorp.com.sg

**SINGAPORE** – A few years ago, Mr Edward Chia, co-founder of Timbre Group, noticed a subtle change among its clientele — the young music-loving patrons had grown into baby-toting young parents, albeit still music lovers.

Hence the creation of Saturday Social BBQs at Timbre @ Gillman, where music-loving parents can enjoy acoustic music with their beers, while their kids are kept entertained with drumming workshops and a play area with games and tents.

Timbre, which began with one outlet at The Substation, now has five outlets with different themes.

“We felt by having different venues, we could actually create certain differentiated experiences with different music targeting customers at different life stages. That way, they can all enjoy Timbre,” said Mr Chia.

At an industry forum organised by the Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) at SMU last month, Mr Chia, who delivered a keynote speech and was part of a panel discussion, said keeping customers satisfied today means making them part of a “multi-dimensional experience”.

For example, Mr Chia and co-founder Danny Loong thought their patrons, being fans of live music, might also be interested in picking up music skills. They set up Timbre Music Academy in 2010, which later branched out to Junior Academy of Music by Timbre for children. The

### Customer feedback

● The ISES Industry Forum was held on Nov 26, together with the release of the results of the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore for the Tourism and Food and Beverage industries (Q3).

group also runs two large-scale festivals — Beerfest Asia and Timbre Rock&Roots — that see thousands turn up annually.

It occasionally surprises customers — in November 2010, Hong Kong musician Robynn Yip switched to performing in Mandarin during a set at Timbre, to the surprise and delight of the audience.

The success led to the launch of SWITCH by Timbre, a bilingual live music outlet. “If we hadn’t tried, then we wouldn’t have been certain this was what some locals wanted,” Mr Chia told TODAY.

Underlining Timbre’s efforts is customer feedback. “It’s so important for customers to give feedback whether good or bad. It’s a good practice ... and it benefits both parties,” he said.

The group runs a cloud-based online feedback system, which alerts Mr Chia whenever a customer leaves negative feedback. This allows the group to “turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one”.

“There have been times when we are able to locate the customer, find out what happened and perform certain service recovery. It gets our staff a bit edgy but it encourages them to be more alert,” Mr Chia said.

The group has invested close to S\$250,000 in iPad menus and online feedback technology.

Mr Chia says customer service for the eight-year-old brand is a “work in progress” and he hopes to introduce customer loyalty programmes.

“As the professionals, I think we are the proposers, proponents and curators of the music content and experience we churn out for customers,” he said. “Then we ask our audience if that is what they want and like, or if they have other suggestions. Their feedback is a major part of the process.”



Saturday Social BBQs at Timbre @ Gillman. Parents can enjoy acoustic music and beer, while their children take part in drumming workshops. PHOTO: TIMBRE