

Publication: The Straits Times Online
Date: 11 May 2020
Headline: What makes customers happy?

What makes customers happy?



The annual survey by the Singapore Management University's Institute of Service Excellence helps businesses track customer satisfaction levels and compare them with those of their competitors

Customer satisfaction matters for any business in any industry, especially when you want to stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Happy customers are more likely to be returning customers. They may also share positive experiences with your brand with family, friends and even strangers through social media. It is no secret that word-of-mouth marketing, through credible reviews that people trust, has value for business growth and brand reputation — whichever medium it takes.

Then comes the question: Do you know what truly makes your customers happy?

A promotional graphic for the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSiSG). At the top, it lists industry sectors: Info-communications | Retail | Air Transport | Land Transport | Food & Beverage | Tourism | Finance & Insurance | Healthcare. The central logo features a stylized 'CSiSG' with a gold swoosh above it, and the text 'Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore' below. Below the logo, it states 'Latest Customer Satisfaction scores All 8 industry sectors All 173 brands and companies'. A dark blue button with white text says 'LEARN MORE'. At the bottom left is the SMU logo and 'Institute of Service Excellence'.

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The Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University recently released the 2019 full-year results of the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) study, which showed that satisfaction in Singapore’s consumer services has continued to improve across most industries.

The study also delved deeper to reveal four key insights on what customers in Singapore look out for, and what businesses should consider to build a lasting relationship with customers.

1. CUSTOMERS VALUE EMPATHY

Fulfilling customer empathy goes beyond creating products that fit into the ecosystem of their lives. It is also important for frontline staff to build rapport with customers when interacting with them in person or over the phone.

For instance, customers want you to actively listen and acknowledge their distress when their tech devices crash and lose important data. They also want to feel assured that you will do your best to meet their requests. Doing so helps them feel understood and respected.

Top 5 Drivers of Perceived Quality for:			
	Mobile Telecom	Broadband	PayTV
Increasing Impact on Perceived Quality	Has your best interest at heart	Has your best interest at heart	Makes you feel assured that your needs will be taken care of
	Makes the effort to understand your needs	Makes you feel assured that your needs will be taken care of	Provides prompt service
	Makes you feel assured that your needs will be taken care of	Makes the effort to understand your needs	Has your best interest at heart
	Mobile data speed	Innovative and forward-looking	Innovative and forward-looking
	Provides prompt service	Internet data speed	Variety of channels that interest me

Legend: Service-related Quality Attribute

In the mobile telecom sector, the CSISG study found that service-related attributes, such as feeling understood and assured by staff, rather than product-related attributes, had the largest impact on how well a customer perceived service quality.

Similar findings were also revealed about airlines. Aspects such as the level of friendliness or empathy of the staff and cabin crew were valued most by passengers on flights.

2. YOU NEED TO EARN YOUR CUSTOMER’S TRUST

One of the most important aspects of customer experience is trust. Gaining your customer’s trust will earn you loyal customers who will eventually help your business grow. On top of showing empathy and respect, customers are more likely to trust you if you are confident, knowledgeable and genuine in the service you provide.

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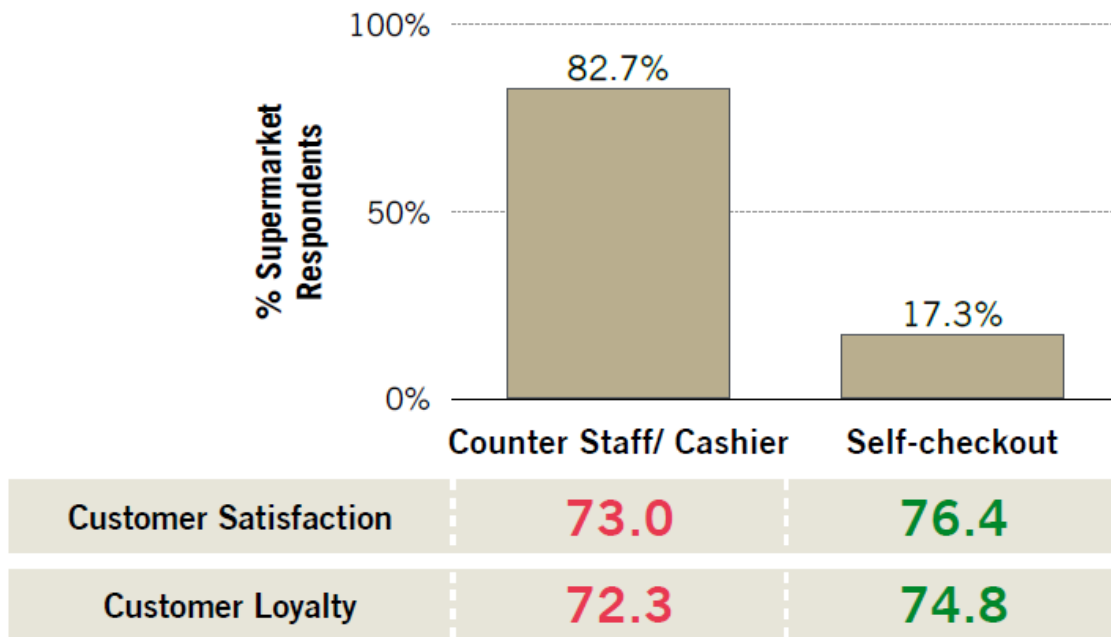


A good example is reflected in the CSISG study's analysis of point-to-point transport service. It found that passengers gave a higher score to taxis than private hire cars, based on common attributes such as the "helpfulness of driver" and "driver road knowledge". Such aspects were important to the passengers as they made them feel safe on their journey.

3. CUSTOMERS DON'T MIND A LITTLE INDEPENDENCE

Even though the adoption of tech solutions has helped raise productivity, some businesses may have held back in fear of a negative impact on their customers' experience.

Take self-service kiosks in supermarkets and fast-food chains for example. Though seemingly an effective solution to counter manpower shortage issues, it is uncertain if customers would be entirely acceptable of this change — placing orders and bagging groceries on their own.



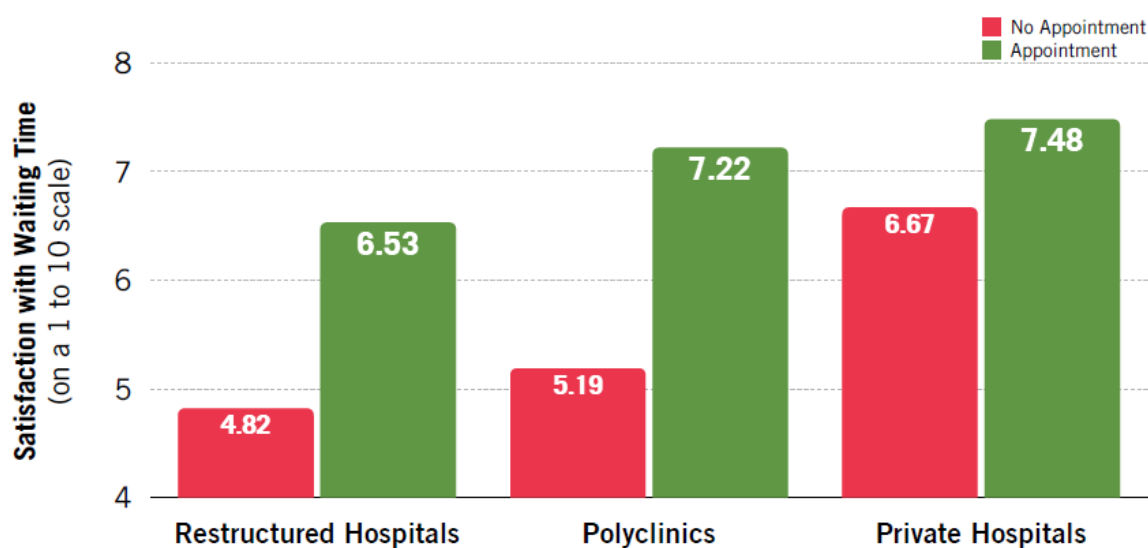
Findings by the CSISG study regarding customer satisfaction levels towards this new introduction should alleviate those concerns. The data indicated that self-service resulted in more satisfied customers: Supermarket shoppers who used the self-checkout machines gave an average satisfaction score of 76.4 points, while those who checked out through the cashier averaged a substantially lower 73.0 points.

Over the years, an increasing proportion of supermarket shoppers has also been found to use self-checkout frequently. This means customers are accepting such self-service technologies and are also more satisfied with the option.

4. TIME IS PRECIOUS TO CUSTOMERS

Perhaps self-service technologies also won customers over with shorter waiting times as they do not like to waste precious time. So response times play a large role in customer satisfaction and eventually customer retention.

In the healthcare sector, long perceived waiting times have been a perennial issue. It was revealed by the CSISG study that “waiting time” or “waiting experience” was the most important driver of patient satisfaction.



However, the study also revealed that making appointments was effective in reducing perceived waiting times.

Customers want to be able to plan and schedule their day. Knowing how much time they need to set aside for a medical appointment, or when they need to be home to receive a delivery, will help them do so.

GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IS KEY TO BUSINESS GROWTH

These lessons are just some of the key findings from the annual CSISG study, which can be applied to businesses across multiple industries with regards to improving service quality.

At the end of the day, strong customer relationships will help to drive customer loyalty and sustain profitability in the long run.

Companies that are not measured by the CSISG can receive customised reports and consulting opportunities that are offered by the Institute of Service Excellence for a fee.

ABOUT THE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX OF SINGAPORE (CSISG) STUDY

What is the CSISG study about?

The CSISG is an annual study developed by the Institute of Service Excellence (ISE) at SMU, which hopes to promote service excellence.

How is the study conducted?

The institute's research is on customer perceptions of their experiences and their subjective judgments of their satisfaction level. Respondents are selected for an interview if they had recent experiences with some of Singapore's biggest service providers and brands. The CSISG uses a methodology that has also been adopted in several other countries.

Which sectors do the study cover?

Retail, info-communications, air and land transport, food and beverage (F&B), tourism, finance and insurance and healthcare.

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A total of 29,670 surveys were completed for the CSISG 2019 study. Earlier, the information and retail sectors were measured in the first quarter between January and April 2019. This was followed by the air transport and land transport sectors in the second quarter. The F&B and tourism sectors were measured in the third quarter, while the finance and insurance and healthcare sectors were measured in the fourth quarter.

In total, the CSISG 2019 study yielded 29,670 completed questionnaires from Singapore citizens, permanent residents and departing tourists at Changi Airport. A total of 671 distinct entities were measured and 173 entities received published scores.

Visit the Institute of Service Excellence's website for more information on the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore study. [View scores and ranking of the study here.](#)