SINGAPORE: The next time you're about to criticise someone for giving you bad service, think again -- you may have been too demanding or impatient.

From customers to communications experts, they all say you need to return a smile or thank you.

Giordano shop manager Cady Lee greets customers when they enter the shop and acknowledges their leaving.

But customers often just ignore her.

And it is worse when she encounters difficult ones.

Said Ms Lee, "This customer wanted to try out pants in the fitting room; he said he wanted a black pair, so we got a black for him. But after he tried he said he wanted a white pair and he kicked up a very big fuss. He was apparently shouting across the store, saying that he actually wanted a white one and not black."

She says a simple 'thank you' and a smile are all she is hoping for in return.

Said Ms Lee, "The comments and compliments from customers actually motivate me and give me a job satisfaction. That makes me want to come to work every day, feeling happy, feeling smiley, and spurs me on to give very great service to every customer."

When you ask someone to rate the service standard in Singapore, the answer is almost always a 'poor'.

That is the reason the government is working towards helping to improve the service culture in Singapore.

But customers, too, have a part to play.

Said regular shopper Suzan Koa, "It's a two-way street. From a customer point of view, even though you're paying, you still have to respect the service staff; you still have to treat them like a human being. You shouldn't lord over them like a king or queen. So it takes two hands to clap if you want good service."

Experts say when you walk into a shop, your tone of voice and attitude also makes a huge difference.

Said Michael Netzley, Professor of Corporate Communication at the Singapore Management University, "The first thing that you can do is to have a positive and polite attitude, by simply being polite and making yourself the kind of person that other people like to talk to and interact with. Second of all, you can get in the habit of flashing a smile when you say thank you and both of those can go a long way towards making someone feel very good about their job."

So if you are looking for good service, be a reasonable customer first. - CNA/ct