SERVICE standards in Singapore are not far behind South Korea and the United States, although there is still room for improvement.

The nation scored 68.7 out of a 100 in the first ever national customer satisfaction survey, compared with 72 and 75 for South Korea and US respectively.

Acting Manpower Minister Gan Kim Yong, who revealed the findings of the inaugural Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSI-SG) during the launch of the Customer Satisfaction Index for Singapore (CSISG) on Monday at the Singapore Management University (SMU), set this new target for all service companies and workers - score above 70 per cent within the next three years.

Developed by the Institute of Service Excellence at SMU, the CSISG takes into account satisfaction levels across eight key economic sectors.

It also looks at how elements such as customer expectations and the quality of products or services, influence customer satisfaction.

In Singapore's case, the tourism industry had the highest customer satisfaction scores, followed by education and transport sectors.

The study also found that tourists taking part in the surveys rated Singapore's service standards higher than Singapore citizens and permanent residents.

The CSISG also dispelled another belief that Singaporeans are the worst when it comes to complaining - the country only scored a national average of 6.3 per cent for complaints, compared to 14 per cent in the US.

National customer satisfaction indices are widely used in countries such as US, Korea and Sweden, where companies use the index to benchmark themselves against their competitors and market leaders and to improve their business.