Malls score with customer-first drive

BY NG KAI LING

ASK anyone working in VivoCity where the nearest washroom in the mall is, and he should be able to point you in the right direction.

This is one of eight service standards that everyone working in VivoCity is expected to meet, as part of its service excellence initiative.

Beyond greeting and thanking customers with a smile, they are also expected to speak politely and respond promptly to any request.

Since the mall embarked on the Customer-Centric Initiative (CCI) – promoted by productivity champion Spring Singapore – in 2007, it has received more compliments than complaints, it said.

The four-year-old mall, owned by real estate firm Mapletree, also recently came up tops among six CCI malls in a study on customer satisfaction.

The others are 313@Somerset, Centrepoint, Hougang Mall, Jurong Point and Raffles City Shopping Centre.

Retail and food and beverage (F&B) shops in these malls scored better than the sectors’ average on the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG). The retailers scored 69.4, higher than the sector’s average of 68.2. The F&B outlets scored 69.2, compared with the sector’s average of 65.1. Overall, VivoCity had the highest satisfaction rating of 70.1.

“This shows that CCI implemented at the mall level can more effectively raise the collective service level in the entire mall,” said Minister of State (Trade and Industry, and Manpower) Lee Yi Shyan yesterday at a signing ceremony for eight malls to take part in the second survey.

The pilot study, commissioned by Spring Singapore, was conducted in September and November last year. It was done by the Singapore Management University’s Institute of Service Excellence (ISES), based on the same methodology it used for the CSISG.

ISES interviewed more than 10,200 shoppers in the six malls on whether they were getting good value for their money, the quality of the malls’ service or product, and the service at the concierge, among other things.

The eight malls in the second study, to be done by the year end, include Ion Orchard and Paragon.

Ms Ina Se, senior manager of advertising and promotions for Paragon, said it is timely to take part in the study to track its performance and benchmark itself against other malls.

There are 21 shopping malls under CCI. Launched in 2005 by Spring Singapore, it provides firms with funding of up to 70 per cent in areas such as the hiring of service consultants or conducting mystery shopping audits.

VivoCity general manager Chang Yeng Cheong said: “Shopping is no longer just going to a shop to buy something, you want an experience. The survey is important. We have been able to get input from our customers so that we can improve.”