

## Kuwait sees biggest decline in overall customer satisfaction since 2010

## Service Hero celebrates brands committing to service excellence

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In its efforts to foster a culture of service excellence where both brands and customers thrive, Service Hero, the company providing the region's only consumer powered customer satisfaction index, today celebrated the country's best performing service providers at the Kuwait Service Hero Customer Satisfaction Index Awards 2021 held virtually.

Besides overall country winners, the top three brands were nominated for the awards across each of the 16 industry categories on Service Hero's Customer Satisfaction Index.

In her welcoming remarks at the awards ceremony, Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, President of Service Hero, shed light on marked shifts seen across many aspects of life in 2020 in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, noting that the ability of brands to offer the best customer experience despite challenges held the key to resilience in the times of unprecedented uncertainty.

She added that new market realities and consumer behaviors brought about by the global health crisis highlighted the importance of loyalty in ensuring the survival and prosperity of businesses.

## Nurture

Abu-Ghazaleh said: "A year that was marred by Covid-19, 2020 witnessed businesses facing unprecedented disruptions that altered consumer behavior radically. The pandemic challenged their operating models and put their ability and commitment to satisfy customers to the biggest test ever. As brand affinity tends to play a significant role during crises, the brands that nurture a culture of excellence and focus on building customer loyalty have the prospect of surviving and thriving in the next normal. While some companies were agile and quickly adapted to the changes and responded to new customer needs and expectations, others were slow or reluctant to act as evidenced by a substantial drop in customer satisfaction in Kuwait."

"The sweeping and far-reaching shifts in consumer behavior make the Kuwait Service Hero CSI Awards 2021 special as we endeavor to honor the best-performing brands that showcased remarkable commitment to service excellence in the face of profound uncertainty. I would like to congratulate the winners who serve as a shining example to other businesses in Kuwait," she added.

At the Kuwait Hero Awards 2021, Cheesecake Factory won first place among the top three brands with the highest scores for overall customer satisfaction in Kuwait.

Boubyan Bank and Qatar Airways took home second and third places, respectively. The Service Hero Kuwait Customer Satisfaction Index 2020 winners and nominees across

## Alshaya brands shine at '21 Service Hero Awards

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Two leading international brands operated in MENA by Alshaya Group have once again topped the pyramid of customer service in MENA by winning 2021 Service Hero Awards, the region's only consumer-powered customer satisfaction index.

At a virtual awards ceremony, The Cheesecake Factory won the overall award for best customer satisfaction in Kuwait. In addition, the brand was recognised as the best service provider in the Casual Dining category in both the UAE and Kuwait. The Kuwait winner in the Clothes category was American Eagle. Both brands are past multiple award winners and this year's wins reflect their ongoing commitment to deliver excellent service and always offer a positive customer experience.

Jeff Kellen, Vice-President-Casual Dining, Hospitality Division at Alshaya said: "We know that customers expect fantastic service when they come to dine at The Cheesecake Factory so delivering a great customer experience every time is our number one priority. This is the second time that The Cheesecake Factory has won at the Service Hero awards and it is a real testament to the team's dedication - we are delighted to see their commitment and consistency of delivering their service promise recognised."

Steve Parkinson, Vice-President, Apparel Division at Alshaya said: "This is a great result for the American Eagle team. The brand is known for its youthful, stylish, and great value ranges but in a competitive marketplace great customer service really makes the difference. It is great to see the team recognised for their consistent hard work and win a valued Service Hero award for the seventh time in the last 11 years."

Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, Service Hero President said: "These awards celebrate top performing companies that have succeeded in understanding their consumer's needs, and more importantly, were able to reflect that understanding by delivering a customer-focused, unique and differentiated service. It is great to congratulate The Cheesecake Factory and American Eagle Outfitters once again for their achievements."

Service Hero is an independent consumer powered assessment focusing on service quality. The Service Hero Index, which has operated since 2010, gathers views from more than 20,824 respondents

across 16 categories in the UAE and Kuwait. Service Hero makes annual awards to companies who provide outstanding customer service in several categories. The categories include cafés, casual dining, fast food, new car sale, car service, clothes, electronics, home furniture, retail banks, Islamic Banks, ISP, mobile operators, private hospitals, regional Arab airlines, and supermarkets. Each industry category was measured on a ten-point scale across eight service dimensions: reliability, speed, product quality, staff quality, value for money, location, call center and website quality.

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Cheesecake Factory First Place Kuwait



Cheesecake Factory Kuwait



American Eagle Kuwait

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in customer satisfaction, marking the biggest slump since 2010. It fell from 75.1 in 2019 to 70.6 on a 100-point scale.

| #  | Category        | Winner         | Nominees              | Nominees                      |
|----|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Casual dining   | Cheesecake     | P.F. Chang's          | Mais Alghanim                 |
| 2  | Islamic         | Boubyan        | Warba Bank            | Ahli United Bank              |
| 3  | Airlines        | Qatar Airways  | Emirates              | Kuwait Airways                |
| 4  | Fast Food       | Papa John's    | Subway                | Domino's Pizza                |
| 5  | Café            | Caribou        | Costa Coffee          | Starbucks                     |
| 6  | Retail banks    | NBK            | Ahli Bank of Kuwait   | Gulf Bank                     |
| 7  | Supermarkets    | Saveco         | Lulu Hypermarket      | City Center                   |
| 8  | Delivery apps   | Deliveroo      | Taw9eel               | Talabat                       |
| 9  | Clothes         | American Eagle | Max                   | H&M                           |
| 10 | Furniture       | Home Center    | IKEA                  | Abyat Megastore               |
| 11 | New Cars        | Chevrolet      | Toyota                | Honda                         |
| 12 | Electronics     | Best           | Eureka                | X-Cite / Alghanim Electronics |
| 13 | Hospitals       | Royale Hayat   | Dar Al-Shifa Hospital | Al-Seef Hospital              |
| 14 | Car service     | Toyota         | Chevrolet             | Lexus                         |
| 15 | Mobile Operator | Zain           | Ooredoo               | STC                           |
| 16 | ISP             | Ooredoo        | Zain                  | STC                           |

A decline in satisfaction leads to decreased brand affinity and loyalty which in turn results in lower consumer consumption which is particularly important during a time of crisis. To put this into perspective, the service sectors listed on the Customer Satisfaction Index represent 35% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) or KWD 3.2 billion.

Of the 16 industry sectors, local brands, cafes, and casual dining recorded the best performance in delivering satisfaction.

Internet service providers (ISPs), mobile operators, and car service brands were ranked lower on the index.

Each industry category was measured across 11 service dimensions, which are reliability, speed, product quality, staff quality, value for money, location, app, delivery, call center, website quality, and complaint resolution.

Reliability received the highest rating for customer satisfaction at 76.8 points, followed by location at 76.6, while value for money was ranked the lowest at 64.8.

In terms of impact on overall satisfaction, apps had the second highest effect rate at 25% after reliability, which topped with a 32% impact.

Apps emerged as a key factor leading overall satisfaction for the first time in the survey's history thanks to the fast adoption of digital shopping during the past year.

With consumers increasingly choosing online shopping over in-store purchases, brands are now required to have robust digital platforms with reliable delivery to sustain the business.

The survey shows that there was a significant shift in the way people interact with brands. While in-store visits saw a 19% drop in Kuwait, online services grew a whopping 40% and now comprise 35% of consumer interactions in the country.

For some categories, more than 60% of their transactions are on apps such as banks, ISPs, telecoms, and delivery apps.

The Index was derived from 20,824 validated assessments by consumers spanning both male and female genders and a broad range of age, nationality, and education lev-



Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, President of Service Hero

els.

Kuwaitis accounted for 29% of respondents in the survey and other Arab nationalities at 38%, while non-Arabs constituted the remaining demographic.

Customers most satisfied with brands were non-Arabs, women, and those who hold a diploma and are aged between 18-29. Meanwhile, Kuwaitis, men and those who completed a master's degree or higher and are aged 40-49 had the lowest satisfaction rate.

## Ceremony

At the awards ceremony, the winners presented pre-recorded videos showcasing their efforts to ensure service excellence in line with Service Hero's concept of the 'Trinity of Excellence,' which identifies how strong 'Leadership' is, how much 'Heart' the team has behind building customer wow, and what systems are in place to convince the 'Mind.'

The winning brands highlighted how they prioritize their efforts in 2020, including strategic direction, employee motivation and resource optimization, despite all the restrictions they faced to offer the best customer experience, how they instilled enthusiasm and the passion in the team to serve while working from home and facing other operational challenges, and how they ensured

that sales did not marginalize quality of service.

Based in Kuwait, Service Hero is the only consumer powered customer satisfaction index in the Middle East.

The company is a member of ESOMAR (European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research) and adheres to the global organization's principles and guidelines for self-regulation and ethical practice.

Service Hero is overseen by an Independent Advisory Council to assure results that are impartial, objective, and accurately reflect consumers' preference, making the company's findings a credible benchmark that offers transparent and relevant insight for companies.

It is comprised of academics and business professionals representing leading institutions and corporate establishments in Kuwait and the UAE, including the American University of Kuwait, Australian College of Kuwait, Gulf University for Science and Technology, Abu Dhabi University, and Zayed University.

Since 2010, Service Hero has measured around 330,000 validated consumer assessments covering more than 600 private sector companies.

## DGCA's new building a qualitative leap in civil aviation: Services min

Building characterized by wonderful architectural facade

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): The Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) new building is a qualitative leap in modernizing the infrastructure of the aviation sector in the country, said Minister of State for Services Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Dr. Abdullah Marafi Wednesday.

In a statement on the sidelines of the building's inauguration ceremony, in the presence of the DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, the minister affirmed that the building will provide an appropriate and advanced environment to serve the civil aviation employees.

The building is characterized by a wonderful architectural facade, very advanced in design and construction, and it is one of the modern buildings in the country, he added.

Furthermore, the minister expressed his appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of this project, whether workers in the civil aviation, the contractor implementing the project, the consulting office and all relevant government agencies.

For his part, DGCA spokesman Saad Al-Otaibi stressed that the new building will achieve a qualitative leap to develop the general performance in the civil aviation and provide the appropriate environment for the employees with greater efficiency and higher productivity.

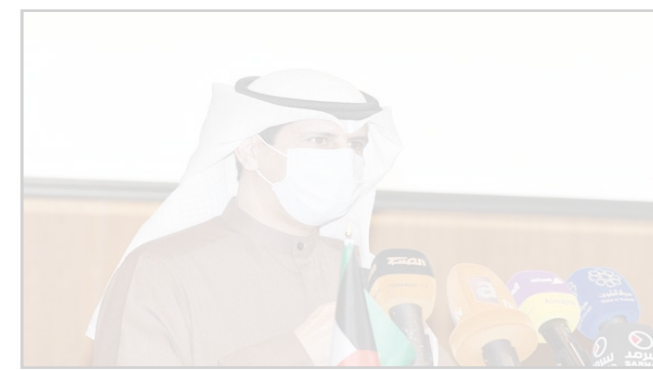


The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) new building.

KUNA photos



Dr. Abdullah Marafi



Saad Al-Otaibi



Minister of State for Services Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Dr. Abdullah Marafi with DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah at the inauguration ceremony of DGCA's new building.

## TGS features Sheikhha Souad

Our next episode of The Guest Show on Radio Kuwait International English Station will feature Sheikhha Souad J. Al Sabah. Sheikhha Souad is a renowned fashion designer and the first Kuwaiti to be awarded the Arab Women's Award for Fashion. In 2002, Sheikhha Souad launched her unique designs blending Culture, Design and Art. She combines vintage and modern fabrics to create her own unique signature pieces. Sheikhha Souad is credited with the 'resurgence' of the traditional kaftan in Kuwait. A versa-

tile and gifted artist, Sheikhha Souad was awarded the Fashion Designer of the Year Award at the first Arab Woman Awards Kuwait presented by the ITP. Sheikhha Souad has also published a coffee table book that showcases her own designs and some pieces from her private collection of vintage pieces. In The Guest Show, Sheikhha Souad talks of her journey with Sirdab 6 and Seen, her work with her vintage collection, and Kuwaiti fashion and her deep and abiding love for India.



'The Guest Show' poster

Radio Kuwait International English Station