

Where did the consumer go?

There is growing concern that the Singapore consumer and his counterpart the tourist have both stopped spending, and this has shopkeepers worried. 2013 was supposed to be a year of continued spending, but locals kept their wallets well and truly shut. Particularly hard hit were in areas such as sales in the furniture, electronics and apparel categories, which actually declined.

Such belt tightening was already foreshadowed in consumer sentiment surveys which showed consumers intended to cut back on discretionary spending. That would have been OK if tourist spending were able to make up the shortfall, but it didn't.

The only exception

According to the Singapore Tourism Board, 2013 tourism receipts were forecast to increase 2.2-6.5% YoY. However, the latest figures released by the STB showed that overall tourism receipts fell 6% YoY in 1Q13, compared to a 13% YoY increase in the corresponding period in the previous year. Tourist spending fell across almost all categories including sightseeing, entertainment, accommodation and shopping. The only exception was in the F&B category, showing that more come to eat than shop. Problem is, there may



have been an overall increase in tourists but there was a fall in business travellers to Singapore over the same period.

If the numbers continue to run the same when they are fully counted sometime in 2014, then 2013 could mark the first year that tourist spending fell since the financial crisis of 2009.

Toughest year for retailers

OCBC analyst Lim Siyi noted that weaker currencies in neighbouring ASEAN countries such as Indonesia were also a factor in lower tourist spending. Facing both rising costs and falling sales growth, 2014 is shaping up as the toughest one in half a decade for Singapore's retailers.

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STARTUP WATCH

Liquidate invoices



ApexPeak, co-founded by **Gakim Solomons**, offers invoice-discounting services to small and medium-sized businesses, allowing these businesses to liquidate their invoices earlier than expected through third party invoice sales.

The usual 90-day process can be done within 5 days maximum. ApexPeak raised about SGD 2.3M SGD.

Viable 3D printing



Pirate3D aims to make 3D printing affordable at USD \$347. According to the company's Chief Executive "Pirate," **Cap'n Roger**, "The consumer 3D printer we are producing is affordable and easy-to-use. This is different from current consumer 3D printers which are more novelty gadgets." A US\$482,000 funding was received through Red Dot Ventures and US\$1,438,000 was raised through its Kickstarter campaign.

Physical Dropbox



Vault Dragon, founded by **Tseng Ching Tse**, offers a physical "Dropbox" that can be managed through web and mobile apps. It charges 45 cents a day for a standard box.

Vault Dragon has showed promise, being chosen as one of the Top Ten Best Startups by Joyful Frog Digital Incubator who also serves as the business' major investor. It currently has 115K total funding.

SINGAPORE BUSINESS REVIEW EVENT

Learn helpful tips from Singapore's best restaurateurs

The last installment of SBR's Eminent Speakers Series for 2013 highlighted the success stories of Singapore's best multi-restaurateurs. Some of them have opened new restaurants in the last three years while others are seen starting new concepts in the future.

More than 50 up and coming restaurant-owners learned from the success stories behind Deliciae Hospitality Management, Creative Eateries Group, and Osvaldo Group of Restaurants as shared by their founders, Olivier Bendel, Anthony Wong, and Osvaldo Forlino.

The panelists shared their views on the latest trends and innovations in the food and beverage industry as well as the business scene here and abroad. They discussed the challenges they have overcome and the opportunities in those obstacles that led to their successes.

SBR will be organizing four more Eminent Speaker Series in 2014.

For more photos from the event, visit sbr.com.sg

