S’poreans think firms not doing enough for social causes: study

By RACHEL AU-YONG

SINGAPOREANS say businesses aren’t doing enough to support social causes, a newly released study found.

Conducted by public relations firm Edelman, the study is the first of its kind to measure consumer attitudes around social purpose in Singapore.

Although nine in 10 Singaporeans believe companies ought to address social issues, only 30 per cent think businesses are living up to this expectation.

Those surveyed were most concerned with protecting the environment, improving the quality of healthcare, and having equal access to education.

“It is clear that societal attributes now play an important role in helping businesses build future trust and success,” said Bob Grove, managing director for Edelman Southeast Asia. “It is no longer just about operational factors.”

Addressing societal issues may provide companies with financial incentive too. Some 84 per cent of Singaporeans said they would buy the products and services of a company that actively supports a good cause.

If quality and price were the same, 54 per cent said that social purpose would be the most important factor in their purchasing decision – more than design, innovation or attractive pricing.

In fact, if costs were not a factor, Singaporeans would rather purchase more “societally-friendly” items. Seventy-nine per cent said they would drive a hybrid car over a luxury one.

Other findings include Singaporeans’ demands for the government to play the lead role in addressing these issues.

The results were released at the first-year anniversary event of the Asia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy, National University of Singapore Business School.