



## **CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT: A STRATEGIC TOOL IN BANKING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Banking industry has gone through many changes from time to time. Globalization and rapid increase in competition has emphasized the banks to be more productive and profitable. Banks should strongly focus on relationship management with customers in order to retain them. The ultimate objective is to get customers loyalty for the bank. CRM is used as the most efficient tool to improve banking and make positive impact on its performance and satisfy customers more efficiently. CRM creates a feel of comfort for the customers in this high tech environment.*

Shani and Chalasani (1992) define relationship marketing as an integrated effort to identify, maintain, and build up network with individual customers and to continuously strengthen the network for the mutual benefit of both sides through interactive, individualized and value added contacts over a long period.

The paper focuses on the role of customer relationship management in banking and its impact on the success of banks.

***Key Words: Banking, Customer Relationship Management, Customer Satisfaction.***

### **Introduction:**

CRM is a comprehensive approach for creating, maintaining and expanding customer relationships. It is said to be the cure-all of marketing woes. It has developed into a major corporate Strategy for many organizations. CRM as a strategy used in competitive

environments that combines the information, system, policies, process, and employees of an enterprise as an effort to attract and retain profitable customers.

It is concerned with the creation, development & enhancement of individualized customer relationships with carefully targeted customers and customer groups resulting in maximizing their total customer life time value.

It is an overall business strategy that enables companies to effectively manage relationships with their customers. It provides an integrated view of a company's customers to everyone in the organization. With the intensified competition, companies realized that they have to treat their customers with respect.

Customers have a lot more choices and they do not have to be loyal to any company. Companies are now trying to figure out ways to manage customer relationships effectively, not only to acquire new customers but also to retain their existing customer. **Rozerberg and Czepiel (1984)** reported that, the cost of retaining a current customer was one- fifth the cost of winning a new customer.

Customer relationship management (CRM) as a strategy includes the entire organization from front office to back-office.

It is a commitment that makes to put customers at the heart of the enterprise. The true CRM strategy and solutions can help securely, reliably and consistently. The work of CRM is to:

- Delight the customers every time they interact with your business by empowering them with anytime, anywhere, and any channel access to accurate information and more personalized service.
- Reach the customers more effectively, increase customer retention and enhance customer loyalty by offering them opportunities to up-sell and cross-sell at lower cost.
- Improving business performance by providing customers with the ability to access more information through self-service.

**Berry (1995)** stresses that attracting new customers should be viewed only as an intermediate step in the marketing process. Thus he proposed relationship marketing as attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships. Another important facet

of CRM is customer selectivity. As several research studies have shown not all customers are equally profitable for an individual company (**Storbacka 2000**).

A good CRM strategy is of vital importance in the retail sector. The reason behind this is increasing competition and now customer retention and loyalty is just as important as customer acquisition. Relationship with the customers increases the longevity of the customer. A successful strategy can enable the company to get a bigger share of customers' wallet. The relationship marketing enables the company to search for new aspects of the customer's existence.

Another reason driving this renewed interest in CRM within the retail sector is the shift in the power to customers and customers has been started treating as a king. Better-informed customers are more aware of alternatives, and become more informed of services and products, customer expectations rises and changes, and their sophistication increases too.

### **Customer Relationship Management in Banking Industry:**

One industry best studied for CRM implementation is the Indian Banking sector, which has the highest growth potential. Competition and globalization in banking services are forcing banks to be productive and profitable. To retain high net worth individuals, banks should focus strongly on relationship management with customers. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as the name suggests, the primary focal point is placed on the customer. The key objective is to increase customer value over time by increasing customer loyalty. In general, CRM is a more efficient automated method used to connect and improve all areas of banking business to focus on creating strong customer relationships. All forces are coupled together to save, improve, and acquire greater business to customer relationships. The most common areas of banking that are positively affected include marketing, sales, and customer service strategies. Banks are adopting CRM to converge people, process and products more effectively to embark on the true relationship banking— with the end result of accelerating the business momentum.

## **Literature Review:**

**Barry Biederman (1986)**, "Is Relationship Banking Really What You Offer", ABA Banking Journal, August. "Expresses that banks that are able to pull together all the elements will be well on the road to relationship banking."

**Jagdish N Seth & AtulParvatiyar (1995)**, "The Evolution of Relationship Marketing", International Business Review, Volume- IV, Number- 3, September. "Suggests that an alternate paradigm of marketing to be develop that is more process rather than outcome oriented and emphasizes value creation rather than value distribution."

**Debby Hopkins (2005)**, "The Customer is the Priority", The Banker, Volume-155, Number- 949, March. "Suggests online banking because it gives them the ability to look at their accounts every day. Banks are spending a lot of time focusing on risk management right now, with the challenge of customer data privacy and identify theft. Everything what bank thinks should starts from the customer's point of view."

**Kalyani Menonand Aidan O'Connor**, "Building Customers' Affective Commitment Towards Retail Banks: The Role of Crm in Each 'Moment of Truth'", Journal of Financial Services Marketing", Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 157, 2007, "The retail banks need to focus more strongly on components of their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategy that will generate customer affective commitment and lead to an increase in customer retention, share of wallet, and advocacy."

It is suggested that affective commitment is generated during' moments of truth' or episodes of interpersonal interaction between customers and bankers. As shown in social psychology, effective interpersonal interactions are a function of the assertiveness and affiliation demonstrated during the interaction.

Applying this to retail banking, bankers should mine their databases to identify customers in terms of their levels of profitability and longevity, and should deliver levels of assertiveness and affiliation appropriate to each customer. Testable research propositions are developed regarding how affective commitment might evolve during a customer ' s tenure with a retail bank, when bankers should deliver assertiveness and/or affiliation to customers of differing longevity and profitability, and how these strategies to increase affective commitment will impact retention, share development, and advocacy.

Overall, the call is to complement the emphasis on the use of high-tech CRM strategies that generate huge databases with a more high-touch strategy that will indicate to bankers how to interact with each individual customer.

**VineethaRajshekharand MihirDash**, "A Comparison of Relationship Marketing in Public and Private Sector Banks in India", Alliance University - School of Business ,April 10, 2012, "The findings of the study indicate that Relationship Marketing in both public sector and private sector banks has to go a long way to go to become effective. There was found to be a significant gap between expectations and perceptions in the Bonding, Communication, and Conflict-handling aspects of Relationship Marketing. Further, Communication and Conflict-handling aspects were found to be significant drivers of overall Customer Satisfaction."

**Adrian Payne and PennieFrow**, "A Strategic Framework for Customer Relationship Management", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Oct., 2005), pp. 167-176, "The authors develop a conceptual framework for customer relationship management (CRM) that helps broaden the understanding of CRM and its role in enhancing customer value and, as a result, shareholder value. The authors explore definitional aspects of CRM, and they identify three alternative perspectives of CRM. The authors emphasize the need for a cross-functional, process-oriented approach that positions CRM at a strategic level. They identify five key cross-functional CRM processes: a strategy development process, a value creation process, a multichannel integration process, an information management process, and a performance assessment process. They develop a new conceptual framework based on these processes and explore the role and function of each element in the framework. The synthesis of the diverse concepts within the literature on CRM and relationship marketing into a single, process-based framework should provide deeper insight into achieving success with CRM strategy and implementation."

**BhartiWadhwa**, Symbiosis International University, Pune,NOIDA Campus, **AnubhaVashisht** Symbiosis International University, Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, "E-Banking an Initiative for Customer Relationship Management Vis a Vis SBI", January 8, 2013, "Findings of the study reveals found that people in the age group of 20-30 prefer e-banking. People above 40 years of age prefer branch banking as they

find it easier and they have been banking this way for years. While analyzing the benefits of modern banking system using CRM and traditional banking system we the researchers found that the e-CRM practices have in lot many ways simplified the life of the customers. The modern banking system has been found to be time savvy, cost effective and easy to access to the customers. However customers do have security issues in mind. Customers have rated SBI high on Trust and Service quality.”

#### **Significance of CRM in banking industry is as follows:**

1. CRM assists bankers in understanding the customers, their needs, wants, motives, likes, dislikes, taste and performances.
2. It facilitates in identifying an organization's target to satisfy their customer and focusing on the best one which helps the firm to optimize their sales & revenue.
3. It maximizes customer satisfaction & boosts customer loyalty which builds long term relationships.
4. It provides appropriate training and development to the employees who offer scope for the growth and continuous improvement to the staff.
5. It also helps the key functionalities of the bank which includes marketing, sales, research and development, services, lead, and opportunity management.

CRM came into existence because of the increasing competition in marketing environment and technology. The idea of CRM assists organizations to gain insight about the customer's behavior. Every bank needs to maintain data and information about the customer; therefore they should have basic CRM technology to serve the customers. CRM is needed by a bank to increase their profitability by reducing costs. By increasing customer value through smarter marketing using customer data, CRM software, applications, system or technology is a must have for every bank (**Aihie and Bennani, 2007**).

The reason of CRM adaption in modern business scenario is the change in Indian banks from profit centric to customer centric. The banks need CRM to survive as it is not possible in today's environment to ignore customer and their expectations. CRM is needed because of ever changing technology and highly competitive banking sector in India.

Banks required to apply CRM to create a base upon which relationship with the customers could be effectively managed that could then be turned to value proposition.

With the changing environment in India, banks require a different attitude towards the customers by pursuing a smarter introduction of CRM that suits the bank.

The industry has managed to gain a vital position in economic developments. For years it has been playing a significant role of creating opportunities for employment and making important contributions to the economy.

The Indian banks have been facing many problems of lack of modern delivery and marketing techniques in the emerging economy. Banks are constantly looking for various ways to improve their service and to increase customer base. CRM provide the opportunity for them to do so. CRM is also important for the banks to bring together relationship of IT and marketing strategies to create profitable and long term relationships with bank clients.

The importance of CRM can be assessed by evaluating CRM that provides enhanced opportunities to use data and information to understand the customers and create value. In Indian banking sector, the idea of CRM application is based upon gaining insight into customer behavior and the customer value as mentioned by **Hussain (Hussain et al. 2010)**, CRM is important for banks in order to respond effectively to the needs of the customers. The importance of CRM can be studied by identifying the bank's most profitable customers and prospects. CRM is a comprehensive approach to cater, maintain and expand customer relationships. It is important for banks to use CRM strategy that aims to understand, anticipate, manage and personalize the needs of banks' current and potential customers. The present day CRM includes developing customer base which persuades banks adequately attend to increase customer base by all means (**Xu and Yen, 2008**).

The recommendations by existing clients to others develop client base. If the base increases, the profitability also increases. Hence the bank has to implement lot of innovative CRM to capture and retain the customers (**Buttle, 2008**). There are many other reasons why CRM is important. Many banks have used CRM tools to acquire more customers and to improve relationships with them.

Competition and increased regulation made it more difficult for banks to stand out from the crowd. However, the development of CRM gave proactive banks access to technology that helped them improve customer retention by using customer feedback to offer conveniences.

For many customers, a strong banking relationship is as vital as any other business relationship they maintain. This gives banks an advantage in that customers want the

benefits of a solid relationship. Customer relationships are becoming even more important for banks as market conditions get harder.

Competition is increasing, customers are becoming more demanding and the life-cycles of products and services are shortening dramatically. All these forces make it necessary for banks to intensify the relationship with their customers and offer them the services they need with the channels they prefer.

The banks have to create trust, establish customer care, support and create regarding its important services which are required to keep regular relationship with customers.

#### **Gaining the Benefits of a CRM:**

CRM ensures banking industry to take full advantage of their customer relationships and capitalize on the market dynamics.

#### **Gaining sales:**

In today's competitive environment, where maximizing growth is a bank's priority, sales momentum is essential. For this, banks need to focus simultaneously on improving integrated channel distribution strategies to get the right product, to the right client, at the right time which increases the value and return from CRM investments that have been incurred.

#### **Acquisition of new customers:**

CRM helps a bank to target on the right customers, classified on the basis of value they give to the bank. For this, the bank need to target on the right segment which enables the bank to identify, target and capture new customers.

#### **Retention of existing customers:**

Customer retention can be achieved by enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty, improving problem resolution, and creating the ability to identify and save "at-risk" customers.

#### **Increasing the profitability through customer relationships:**

Increasing revenues requires improving the product and reducing sales and service costs. On the revenue side, the bank's CRM solution should use customer intelligence to target specific offers and manage marketing campaigns for a high likelihood of acceptance. On

the cost side, better channel management, CRM integration will help increase the efficiency and effectiveness of sales and service.

#### Improving distribution and channel management:

To win profitable customers and build long-term relationships with them, banks need to have the right insight, products and services for the right customer at the lowest possible cost.

#### **Various factors affecting CRM:**

- ***Technology:*** To a greater extent, success of Customer Relationship strategy depends on the choice of the software. Towards this, bankers should identify domain enterprise, implied costs, and relationship with the vendors as factors for selecting vendors. Banks can enhance customer service by leveraging on technology.
- ***Attitude of employee:*** Any organization success or failure depends on its employees collectively. Frontline executives in bank should thoroughly understand their job and should treat their customers in the best possible way. Their behavior and attitude towards customer will only decide the retention of existing customers and attracting the new one. A well behaved and polite employee plays an important role in maintaining good relations with customers. Employees need to demonstrate certain service traits such as putting on pleasing attire.
- ***Employees' satisfaction:*** In order to satisfy the customer, banks first need to make their employees satisfied. A satisfied and self-motivated employee can give better service to the customers. High rewards and good relationship with the employer can also motivate the employee to satisfy the customers to their full extent.
- ***Trained employee:*** Properly trained employee can perform their job in the most effective way. They have the complete knowledge about the products and services provided by the bank so that they can provide complete information to their customers which ultimately lead to long term and good relationship with customers. Banks require intelligent people to use intelligent tools. Thus, proper training allows employees to deliver the lifetime value of the customer.
- ***Processes:*** Today's customer is short of time and feels uncomfortable when the process involved in getting the product or service is lengthy and cumbersome. The customer wants very simple processes to get his work done. The processes for any

product or service should be at the minimum. Frequent back references and repeated information and excessive documentation dissatisfy the customer. The processes devised for getting the services should be very customer friendly, easy to understand and complete in order to provide good customer service.

- **Market studies:** Market study is effective tools to judge the behavior of customers and their response to present standard of services. It also helps to understand future trends and requirements as needs of the customer's keeps of changing with change of times. Market research gives way to innovations in products and services. Effective market strategy results in satisfied customer.

#### **The Impact/Effects of CRM on Bank performance:**

The influence of CRM has a great impact on banking. A healthy business environment is important for the banks to take advantage from the CRM (**Bennani, 2007**). CRM can help the bank provide better and improved customer service, make business process especially sales and marketing more efficient and assist in selling services more effectively if it is managed properly. Banks applies CRM in order to analyze information with minimum discrimination. It helps the banks to access information from variety of sources.

CRM application delivers many benefits to the banking sector. CRM improves information and increases knowledge management. It reduces costs of transaction and increases its speed and reliability. CRM tools can be used for effective external communications and service quality. Banks have now realizes that CRM can increase information and lead to efficient processes and better performance.

The employees when trained on CRM can deal with their customers more efficiently and solves problems more professionally. Through CRM banks can obtain in-depth view of each customer and pinpoint areas where better services are needed. CRM system can be used to plan and target the strategies for better customer services. There are different aspect of CRM which are directly interrelated which each other including front office operations; direct interaction with customers.

CRM gathers customer data that can be used in facilitating better customer service which results in satisfied customers and profitable business. It provides assistance to the bank management in deciding their future course. At the same time, it is also valuable for bank's advertising and marketing planning. This leads more responses to advertisement and a more effective marketing campaign. There is a direct relation between CRM and bank performance. The bank performances and profitability improves directly with the

implementation of CRM technology. It can be said that banks using CRM systems have greater levels of performance.

The effects of CRM expand the business as it is capable of handling enormous amount of important data. It ensures success and satisfied customers better than before. CRM enables banks to effectively manage the opportunities. It helps managers to assign and track the activities of various members. Thus improved transparency leads to improved efficiency. CRM can help in strategy formulation to vanish operational inefficiencies of the bank. Banks also use CRM to create incentives and produce more business from existing customers.

Efficient management of customer relationships promotes the growth of organization. With fewer resources bank creates a climate of trust for the customers. Banks with CRM application can lead to profitability, cut costs and reduce risks.

Innovative Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategies and cutting edge software can help to a great extent in achieving the desired results. To provide customized services, banks are opening personalized area which provides all the required financial needs of a customer. However, there is more to Customer Relationship Management (CRM) than just managing customers and analyzing their behaviors. Banks are well aware that their success is predominantly dependent on the CRM strategies adopted by them.

Service providers have recognized that good CRM binds customers with the organization for a longer term, resulting in increased revenues. With customers' expectations becoming even more competitive, banks are coming up with a wide range of new products and services every day. The challenge is for the banks to work towards ensuring that customers prefer their products and services over that of competing brands.

The key to develop and nurture a close relationship with customers is by appreciating their needs and preferences and catering to their requirements. Leveraging on IT, to appropriately analyze and understand the needs of existing customers better, to ensure customer satisfaction, and exploring the possibility of cross-selling products to gain a competitive advantage are the other issues drawing attention and interest.

Today's knowledgeable customer is challenging the Indian banking industry to redefine itself. Customers face a growing range of choices in the products and services they can

buy. They base their choices on their perception of quality, value, and service. Each customer has a specific behavior. But buying habits are sometimes difficult to understand.

Therefore companies always want to gain some insight about customer behavior and habits in order to better control this behavior. Having an impact on customer behavior means being able to change their perception about the product or service and to establish a relation between the company and its clients. Thus in this current competitive scenario, for a bank to survive competition, succeed and make profit, there is hardly any option but to learn from and actively respond to consumers' needs.

Banks are offering retail products that need to reorient their strategy from a product-centric to a customer-centric approach to attract and retain High Net-Worth Individuals (HNI) and profitable customers as well.

The battle of the banks, for gaining a greater slice of the market share, is taking on a new dimension. In the current scenario, banks are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the high growth expectations. In order to reach their top lines, banks are in pursuit of newer ways and means of achieving organic growth through strategies that enable acquisition of new customers and retaining the loyalty of the existing customers.

Success of a bank's strategy towards customer acquisition will depend on its ability to develop customer insights and translate these into effective operating models. Ensuring a good customer experience at every customer touch point is the cornerstone of a successful growth strategy. A good customer experience will drive customer acquisition and promote customer retention, which translates into increased profits. This, in other words, is the hallmark of a successful CRM strategy. Emphasis on CRM arises on account of the challenges confronting retail managers managing to sustain and achieve growth and profits.

Bankers are conscious of the relative costs of acquiring new customers. As top management emphasizes on "delivering results", most bankers resort to customer grabbing, rather than customer cultivation and creation, with the result that "customer churn" is the call of the day. Incidentally, bankers are fully aware that losing the existing customer and acquiring new customers is an expensive affair. Moreover, it acts as a drain on the existing resources of the bank, which can be better employed for growth initiatives. Therefore, the challenge for the banks is to retain and deepen the profitability of the existing customer relationships.

Banks can gain a competitive advantage from CRM by becoming low-cost players in the market, achieving operational efficiency and maintaining customer loyalty. The ability to predict the products that customers are likely to purchase over a period of time, increased productivity of managerial executives, sales and customer service staff, and streamlining of business processes are some of the benefits banks obtain by taking to successful management of their customer relationships. Through correct implementation and use of CRM solutions, banks gain a better understanding of their strongest and weakest areas and how they can improve upon these. In order to achieve better insight on CRM, it is essential to consider all of its components.

In all, CRM techniques, applications and systems, banks can provide better customer service, increase customer revenues, discover new customers, sell products more effectively, help sales staff close deals faster, make call centers more efficient, simplify marketing and sales processes.

### **Conclusion:**

The banking industry in India has undergone changes during last decades including customer service. Customers today demand universal banking which is possible only if CRM is implemented in true way. Customer relationship management plays a vital role for competition in the banking industry. Today's customer faces range of choices in products and services.

Each customer has a specific behavior and their buying habits are sometimes difficult to understand. The banks always wanted to gain insight of consumer behavior and habits in order to control them in a better way. In such situation, only those banks can survive and grow which compete successfully to win new customers and keep the existing ones by building lasting relationship with its clients alongside improving their performance by increasing revenue and productivity.

Effective CRM can improve the performance of their employees and increase the customer satisfaction. Successful integration or adaption of CRM in the banks may not be as easy as it looks like. Banks need to know how successful is the CRM system working for them, how does it impact the performance of the departments and its operations. They need to evaluate the worth of CRM strategies.

The ultimate purpose of the CRM is to improve performance and to assess how well the bank needs are met by CRM implementation.

### **Suggestions:**

CRM is gradually accelerating and is definitely considered as a viable proposition by banks in improving the services to their customers. One of the major challenges to be experienced during implementing CRM is resistance to change. To get it work, organizational structures have to be changed to suit customer need and high commitment is required in those who are implementing it. Banks have to plan strategies to cater better services to its customers and enhance their satisfaction level. Employees' skill should be enhanced through continuous and updated training programs. Service culture is to be developed among staff so that customer service should become the main motto for them.

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