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THE EVOLUTION OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE AND ITS IMPACT ON BANKS

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Digital transformation in the business world is occurring at a high speed these days. The main concern of many organizations worldwide is integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into their relationship management. This integrative strategy is primarily aimed at satisfying customers' needs and attaining their loyalty to achieve higher revenues and thus profits. This paper is a literature review on customer relationship management (CRM) and its beneficial impacts on banks due to its digital transformation into electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM). The usefulness of e-CRM to banks stems from reduced routine work across bank branches. Huge customer information data storage and easy access through digital assistance provides banks with the capability to assess their needs and attend to them instantly. On the other hand, advanced technologies allow customers a new experience with their banks. This experience entails convenient interaction, faster response, time-saving, cost reduction, security, and trustworthy relations with the bank.

Keywords: CRM; e-CRM; digital transformation; banks; banking sector

Introduction

Many organizations across the world have already shifted their strategies to implement a customer-centric approach as a replacement to the older product-centric marketing approach in order to develop and sustain a long-term relationship with valuable customers (Sheath & Parvatiyar, 1995; Porter & Heppelmann, 2015). Transactional management is not being replaced by customer relationship management. CRM has shifted organizations' management from the product-oriented approach to the customer-oriented mindset. This movement is fortified by the international trend of digital transformation. Digital platforms provide customers with an alternative means of purchasing unrelated to physical distance and geographical boundaries. Thus, customers now can carry out their purchases anywhere and anytime.

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Banking sector, being an early adopter of such new technologies, has made a significant change in the way of doing business. Online banking is used nowadays on a global scale. Banks have realized that banking is not about money and transactions alone, it is also about incorporating technologies into daily transactions, thus attaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. This implies, inters alia, that e-CRM, with its advanced technological toolkit, and is of vital necessity for achieving this end.

This paper provides an overview of CRM, its origin and evolution, in the context of digital transformation and its effect on organizations and how it has resulted in the rise of e-CRM. The author will also shed light on major classifications, limitations and benefits of e-CRM in the banking sector specifically.

CRM: Origin and Evolution

During the past two decades, marketing has undergone fundamental transformations. From the transactional approach that aimed to increase sales regardless of sustainability during the 1990s, we have later witnessed a new focus on customer loyalty and retention (Sheath & Parvatiyar, 1995; Porter & Heppelmann, 2015). Marketing witnessed a shift towards business to business and business to customer markets, with less reliance on middlemen. A product of the previous, industrial era, middlemen were believed to be essential for mass production (Sheath & Parvatiyar, 1995). According to them readopting of the relationship marketing, which used to prevail before the industrial era, will benefit organizations through cost reduction, quality increase, efficiency and effectiveness enhancement, and better adherence to customers' needs directly.

As a term, relationship marketing was first introduced to marketing literature back in 1983 by Leonard Berry (Berry, 1995; Babu, 2016). The definition given by Berry for relationship marketing was "attracting, maintaining and, in multi-service organizations, enhancing customer relationships" (Berry, 1995: 1). L. Berry emphasized that marketing process should not be limited to attraction of new customers but should rather be focused on maintaining a strong relationship that will transform apathetic customers into loyal ones.

On the foundation of relationship marketing emerged the concept of customer relationship management (Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014; Babu, 2016). Most of the definitions given for CRM were based on such conceptual ideas as company-customer relationship, customer retention, and value augmentation. Some authors quote Seth and Parvatiyar (2001) who have defined CRM as "a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer" (Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014: 2; Babu, 2016: 4; Samsudin, 2011: 5; Makandar et al., n.d.: 1).

According to Seth and Parvatiyar, major organizational functions such as marketing, sales, customer service and supply chain are integrated to attain efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling the customer value. Ziliani & Leva (2016) pinpointed that the key elements in an organization that contribute to a successful CRM are strategy, management support, organizational structure, and human resources. They also noted that companies should motivate and actively engage employees in CRM so as to achieve effective performance in all the areas related to CRM.

CRM Features

The major features that characterize CRM are customer needs, customer response, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer retention, customer complaints, and customer service (Juneja, 2020). An organization should know what the customer needs to effectively adhere to it and create a long-term commitment.

Responding to customers' queries intelligently also enhances this life-long relationship. A major feature in CRM and an important strategic goal of any organization is customer satisfaction. Winning customers' satisfaction increases the bond with them. Satisfied customers are more prone to become loyal ones. Customer loyalty is crucial for CRM and is also an indicator of business success. As long as the needs of these loyal customers are fulfilled, the strategy of customer retention will prevail, and the probability of organization's growth will increase. In order to maintain this growth, an organization should define a clear CRM process that will promptly attend to the complaints of dissatisfied customers. Finally, organizations, through CRM, should ensure that the service provided to customers is well defined and is of required quality.

These features explain the continuous management of company-customer relationships at all touchpoints. Because of the importance of customers, companies are assuming a more customer-centric than product-centric trend in their applied strategies, tools, and technology to achieve efficient and effective CRM (Seth & Parvatiyar, 2001).

CRM and IT

With the increased importance of information technologies for organizational structures, an additional aspect was introduced into the definition of CRM which involves two approaches to define CRM, namely, management and information technology approaches (Samsudin, 2011). The first relates to recognizing, gaining, and retaining customers. While the latter approach deals with the tools and system design to support the implementation and fulfillment of the first approach. Following Samsudin (2011), Tangaza et al. (2018) considered CRM as a process of bringing together the relationship marketing strategies and information technology to improve customers' and stakeholders' value.

CRM technology, according to (Babu, 2016), is divided into three systems. Analytical CRM system evaluates and understands each customer by analyzing behavioral trends existing in the internal data warehouse. Operational CRM system provides solutions for marketing and sales automation, along with call centers, to increase the efficiency of all related processes. Collaborative CRM system coordinates the flow of information within the organization and also with external stakeholders such as suppliers and distributors. This is facilitated through the use of social networks, email, telephone, and any other means to increase productivity and accessibility.

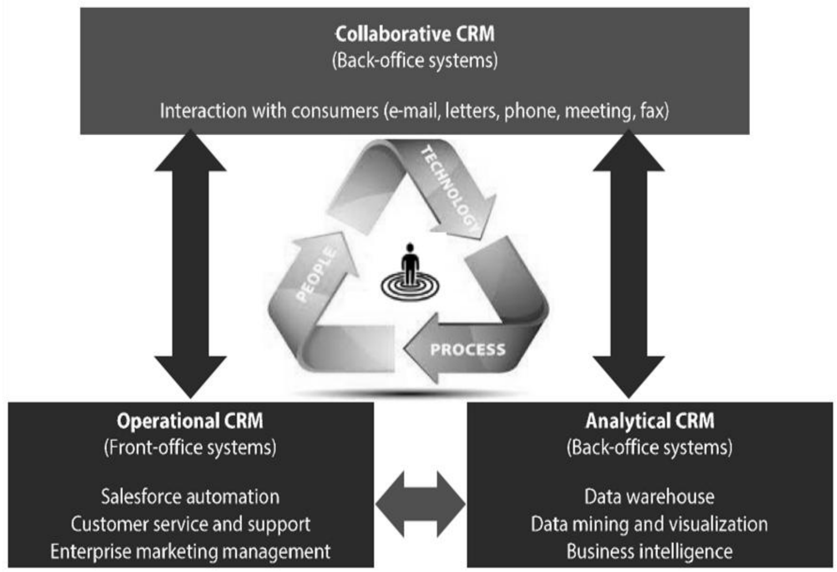

Figure 1 - CRM Landscape
(Source: Infosys, 2018)

Digital Transformation Adaptation

Digital transformation, as the integration of digital technologies into business activities, has become vital for success and continuity of businesses worldwide (Aiello et al., 2016). To attain sustainability and a competitive edge, companies need to define appropriate processes and procedures to make this transformation happen and to modify employees' work culture accordingly.

According to (Aiello et al., 2016), digital transformation leads to a new organizational culture, which is commonly known now as e-culture. The latter is characterized by processes, practices, and customer relationships, all enabled by digital media and digital infrastructure. The core technologies for digital transformation are mobile phones, cloud technologies, data storage, and social networks. The latter encourage communication with different stakeholders like customers, suppliers, partners, and employees. Mobile phones increase productivity and collaboration among employees and also provide customers with easy access to organizations/business sites. Cloud technologies promote quicker business response. Finally, huge data storage is becoming part of an organization's decision-making process due to the availability of abundant information related to customers' behavioral patterns.

Quoting Harvard Business School study carried out back in 2015, Aiello et al. (2016) specified the following business areas that are impacted by technologies: improvement of customer service; enhancement of productivity; development of new business models; deployment of new products and services; growth in revenues. The main advantage achieved from digital technologies, according to Aiello et al. (2016), is strengthening of the organization's competitive position. While the factors that might impede digitization of businesses concern the lack of skills and resources, absence of own digital strategy, lack of awareness with respect to the latest technologies, and resistance to change on the side of management and/or employees.

De La Castro et al. (2014) specified five elements necessary for the success of a bank that wants to become digital. First, a bank should implement smart management of information that offers customers special attention. Secondly, a bank should adopt a strategic approach in providing customers with expected cross-channel experience.

Third, a bank should be aware that the costs of not adopting digital banking would be too high, arising from opportunity loss, customer attrition, and a shortage in attaining new clients. Fourth, in transforming digitally, a bank should strategically choose digital options that best suit it. Fifth, the implementation process should balance between customer values and the bank's own values. That is — between customer loyalty, convenience, relevance, interaction, and mobility, on the one hand, and bank's profitability, loyalty, operating efficiency, market expansion, and risk mitigation, on the other hand.

E-CRM Evolution in Banks

CRM in Banks

Bank branches play a major role in providing customers with its products and services. It is within their strategic objective to create long-term relationships with customers. The proximity of a branch to a customer's home and/or office is a major factor in choosing a certain bank. Nowadays, bank customers are not only attracted to a bank because of the products and services provided, but also because of the personal experience they get from the bank. With the introduction of the Internet into the banking system, customers can choose whatever bank they prefer and engage in banking transactions from anywhere through online platforms. Technological insurgence and competitive pressures inevitably lead banks to become more customer-centric rather than product-centric, consequently leading to the growth of CRM in the financial services arena (De La Castro et al., 2014).

Before effectively implementing CRM, banks should first address two issues. First, the type of information the bank needs to have about its customers, and second, the bank's decision on how to utilize this information further on (Jindal, 2017). Effectiveness of its implementation in the banking sector is not connected to the installed software as such, instead, according to (Jindal, 2017) it is based on six requirements as follows:

There should be a customer-focused structure, a well-defined assessment of customers, a long-term value appraisal of customers, an optimization of profit from each customer relationship, own know-how on attracting and retaining best customers, and finally, marketing operations that will result in the highest return on investment.

The easy flow of information to customers resulting from technological advancement and the internet age is strengthening the position of the general public and thus is putting additional pressure on banks. This situation is compelling banks to seek long-term customer relationship management by formulating the strategies that integrate marketing with information technologies (Abu Shanab, 2015). With technology, a bank can make use of its huge database warehouse so that to efficiently interact with its customers and provide them with better product and service experience (Latimore, 2018). Bank data contains information about the behavioral patterns of customers such as banking relationship, payment trends as well as various external data related to the sites mostly visited by customers, etc.

In an HBR article, Porter & Heppelmann (2015) emphasized that there is a major shift in the functions of businesses, mainly product development, IT, manufacturing, logistics, marketing, sales, and after-sale service resulting from technological advancements. The article goes on to state that new functions to manage the huge amount of data collected are emerging using data analytics tools. These analytics tools are descriptive, diagnostic, predictive, and prescriptive in their nature. The descriptive tools review products' condition, environment, and operation. Diagnostic tools inspect the reasons for reduction or change in products' performance. Predictive tools reveal the patterns that signal imminent events. Prescriptive tools find the ways to provide better outcomes or rectify glitches. Porter then continues to stipulate that the so-called "smart products" and the huge available data generated are creating new customer relationships and new business models related specifically to product usability and customer satisfaction.

The major challenge the banks are facing within the digital economy is maintaining a persistent profitable and growth environment. When attaining profitability and sustainable growth, banks should embrace a customer-centric business approach, provide its customers with online channels, and benefit fully from digital information (De La Castro et al., 2014).

E-CRM in Banks

The ongoing digital evolution in the banking sector has made customers channel independent, thus removing the necessity of middlemen as such (Nitescu, 2015; Al-Rfouh, 2019). As companies started using the internet and electronic communication technologies to connect with their customers, CRM was transformed into e-CRM. From a traditional CRM that focused on personal connection in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty, e-CRM has shifted the approach to the use of information and communication technology in pursuit of attaining the same goals as CRM did (Abu Shanab, 2015). This paradigm shift in the business arena is the result of integrating the internet in every facet of today's commerce.

Businesses worldwide are investing heavily in the digital transformation process, mainly investing in cloud, mobility, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, robotics, and increasingly in DevOps and edge computing. In 2020 alone, spending on ICT amounted to $4.3 trillion (Businesswire, 2020). Banks worldwide were forecasted to spend $387 billion on IT in 2019 (Hrushka, 2019). The main aim of banks' enormous investment in IT is to build a new bank-customers relationship experience through automated processes and online banking (Al-Rfouh, 2019). This new way of conducting business that evolved in banks involves mobile phones, online banking, ATMs and POSs. Nitescu (2015) wrote that the customer relationship with banks is no longer about transactions, it is about connecting to their daily lives.

Technological advancements enabled banks to utilize online monitoring and data mining in customer needs identification process, and also, with e-CRM, provided means to retain them (Bezhovski & Hussain, 2016). To provide better services to customers and increase loyalty, e-CRM facilitates fast communication and interaction with customers wherever they are and 24/7. Abu Shanab (2015) stated that e-CRM is helpful to both companies and customers. It helps companies to increase their competitive advantage, thus enhancing profit growth, minimizing costs, and widening companies' knowledge of the market. On the customer side, e-CRM boosts customers' loyalty and expands customer services. E-CRM is an effective web-based company-customer interactive application that consists of "hardware, software, applications, processes and commitment of management practices" to gather information about customers' needs and finding ways to provide them (Dhingra & Dhingra, 2013; Abu Shanab, 2015).

E-CRM Classification

E-CRM can be classified into two basic types: operational and analytical. Operational e-CRM is the use of tools like websites, e-mail, mobile phones, fax, and other, more complex technological means, like customer communication centers and voice reaction systems, to interact with customers with reduced or no human interaction. Analytical e-CRM is making use of technology to benefit from the huge amount of gathered data about customers (Maroofi et al., 2012; Dhingra et al., 2013). The main aim is to gather the maximum information about customers' behavioral patterns so as to generate business opportunities and address their needs.

Research Design

This research has been based on a case analysis, since the initial hypotheses are well understood.

Sample size

Effective sampling is extremely significant for any sort of data analysis. Very little tests may result in low research performance, whereas excessive sampling can waste both time and energy.

In our case, the study was carried out with 60 employees of a bank and 30 bank clients.

Analysis of Data

Managers and decision-makers must be trained to utilize mathematical data processing tools and approaches in order to make good strategic decisions. Quantitative data is gathered for this study. The obtained data was then examined in SPSS.

Data analysis was done through frequency and percentage distribution. The number of the respondents who selected a particular solution has been identified. This was done for the research-related issues in both schools. Different views were expressed by customers and bank staff.

The data collected were assessed from the standpoint of editing, classification and tabulation so that logical words and descriptions may be assessed and are well understood. In addition, the technique of linear regression (OLS) was utilized. This method helped the researcher to identify the reasons for the relationship between customer experiences and the bank's effects.

Validity and Reliability Analysis

Validity and reliability analyses have been conducted to study whether the data are valid or not. Each variable has been considered in order to detect whether there is any bias in variables.

If the coefficient is 0.5 to 0.7 (see the matrix above), it means that overall, the results are true and reliable. And if the coefficient is smaller than 0.5, the results would not be accurate or reliable. Our results can be explained on the basis of this rule as follows:

For the efficiency indicator the results are accurate as they are 0.765, that is over 0.7.

The score of 0.811 (also over 0.7) has been obtained for organizational alignment indicator, which implies that the data for this parameter is also accurate.

Table 1 – Component matrix
(made by the author)

Component Matrix	
	Cronbach Alpha
	I
Performance	0.765
Organizational Alignment	0.811
CRM Technology	0.803
Customer Retention	0.863
Customer Acquisition	0.868

The score of 0,803 (again, above 0,7) shows that for the CRM application component the data is accurate.

The consumer satisfaction indicator received 0.863 (above 0.7), thus, its results are also accurate.

The consumer retention vector got 0.868, greater than all other factors and also above than the 0.7 threshold.

Regression Analysis

Table 2 – Dependent variable: Bank Performance
(made by the author)

Model	Unstandar-dized	Coeffi-cients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.890	262		3.390	.001
Organizational Alignment	352	.105	325	3.355	.001
Acquisition	.242	.107	246	2.253	027
CRM Technology	.356	.124	.266	2.870	.005
Retention	324	.116	217	2.793	047

When the margin of error is smaller than 5%, the regression rule specifies that the alternate hypotheses (H1) should be discarded. Referring to the above table, it can be noted that “Organizational Alignment” scored the P value of 0.001 at T-test3. of 355 and the Beta of 0.325. Acquisition scored the P Value of 0.027, the T-test of 2.253 and the Beta of 0.266. CRM Technology scored the P-Value of 0.005, the T-test of 2.870 and the Beta of 0.266. Finally, Retention scored the P-Value of 0.047, the T-test of 2.793 and the Beta of 0.217. Thus, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected while H1 is accepted.

Further, the following equation has been introduced:

$$Y = A + BX1 + BX2 + BX3.$$

Or in our case:

Bank Performance = 0.001 + 0.325 Organizational Alignment + 0.246 Acquisition + 0.266 CRM Technology + 0.217 Retention.

This means that:

- For every 1 unit increase in organizational alignment, the bank performance will be affected by 32.5 units.
- For every 1 unit increase in acquisition, the bank performance will be affected by 24.6 units.
- For every 1 unit increase in CRM Technology, the bank performance will be affected by 26.6 units.
- For every 1 unit increase in retention, the bank performance will be affected by 21.7 units.

Thus, the following can be validated:

H10: There is no relationship between organizational commitment and customer satisfaction (rejected).

H11: There is a relationship between organizational commitment and customer satisfaction (accepted).

H20: There is no relationship between acquisition and customer satisfaction (rejected).

H21: There is a relationship between acquisition and customer satisfaction (accepted).

H30: There is no relationship between CRM Technology and customer satisfaction (rejected).

H31: There is a relationship between CRM Technology and customer satisfaction (accepted).

H40: There is no relationship between retention and customer satisfaction (rejected).

H41: There is a relationship between retention and customer satisfaction (accepted).

Pearson Correlation Test

Based on the above table, the following relationships can be highlighted:

- All the construct variables listed in the table have positive associations.
- The correlation and maintenance are good to solid, as there is an estimate of 0.573 in the Pearson Coefficient.
- The relation between satisfaction and acquisition is favorable to moderate since the Pearson coefficient is 0.571.
- Alignment with acquisition is optimistic because there is a predictor of 0.460 in the Pearson coefficient.
- The relationship between technology and retention is favorable to moderate since the Pearson Coefficient has a 0.370 predictor.
- The relation between satisfaction and retention is favorable to moderate after a 0.346 predictor is demonstrated in the Pearson coefficient.

- Among retention and acquisition there are significant drawbacks, as the Pearson Coefficient has a 0,300 predictor.

Table 3 – Pearson Correlation Test results
(made by the author)

		Satisfaction	Acquisition	Technology	Alignment	Retention
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.571..	0.100	.259•	.346••
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.339	0.012	0.001
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Acquisition	Pearson Correlation	.571..	1	0.187	.460..	.3oo··
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.070	0.000	0.003
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Technology	Pearson Correlation	0.100	0.187	1	.256•	.310··
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.339	0.070		0.013	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Alignment	Pearson Correlation	.259•	.460..	.256•	1	.573"
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012	0.000	0.013		0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Retention	Pearson Correlation	.346••	.3oo··	.310··	.573..	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.001	0.003	0.000	0.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100

All other correlations between the variables in question are positive but rather weak.

Key Findings

The study has been aiming to investigate the impacts on business performance in the banking sector through Customer Relationship Management. Further analysis has been made on the user retention rate and CRM's impacts on customer retention.

The study has found that, if customer loyalty is very strong, the bank's capacity to hold its clients is closely proportional to the degree of their satisfaction. This proves there is a relation between these two variables. The researcher thus concludes that "consumer interaction and customer loyalty" have a significant relation.

Our findings then show that CRM framework acceptance, organizational cohesion, customer engagement and retention also have a strong correlation. The regression analysis suggests the margin of error of less than 5% and therefore proves the alternative hypothesis that "CRM systems have a positive effect on customer loyalty and retention", with the null being discarded. Both variables thus have a meaningful relationship.

Moreover, our study results agree with the CRM-based literature sources from different countries. These other studies have also shown that improvement in consumer satisfaction, loyalty and retention helps with boosting banks' productivity and efficiency.

Our research results have also shown that CRM has a large impact on the bank's profitability as it is viewed as a way of keeping consumers up-to-date on the new offers of the bank.

The results indicate that the bank uses a routine contact approach to maintain innovative goods and services for its clients. It is part of the CRM loop that draws customers to the bank.

To affirm the above findings, 81% of the respondents have indicated that they know all of the services their bank provides. This ensures that the bank provides services to its clients effectively and easily.

At the same time, customers have complained about wasting sometime in the banking hall in queues. They explained this long waiting time by the insufficient number of support desks available. Compared to the numbers of consumers and the number of bank employees that are servicing them, the result shows a disproportionately large number of customers on a daily basis, and this disproportion is obviously causing delays.

To sum up, the organizational results of this study are measuring bank performance and customer retention ratios in their correlation. Our survey has therefore found that the success of the banking industry as such is closely linked to customer relationship tactics which, in its turn, is predetermining customer satisfaction.

Research Limitations

Although there are many advantages of having e-CRM as proved above, there are also limitations and concerns related to using CRM in banking. We would like to mention some of these concerns below.

In an effort to provide convenient and flexible banking services to their customers in the age of digital transformation, banks are providing them with digital transaction platforms, in addition to mobile banking. While many consider that digital banking, unlike traditional banking, is wearing out bank-customer relationship, the banks' key objective in this regard is to ease transactions and provide customers with instant interaction with their bank working 24/7 and anywhere, thus creating a stronger bond with its clients.

Other factors that might affect customer relations negatively, as a result of adopting digital transformation in banks, are demographic factors like age, education, income, disability, and accessibility to the internet. Generally speaking, usual web users tend to be younger, educated and financially well-off.

There are also some security concerns related to online transactions and operation failures due to the increasing number of data corruption and network issues (Bezhovski & Hussain, 2016). This can be demotivating from the customer perspective and may lead to the situation when customers start losing confidence in the bank's ability to maintain operations. Moreover, this may create bad reputation for a bank, thus, the latter will be losing its customers.

Contribution to Banking Practice

The ability of banks to dig into the available customers’ behavioral data will enable them, through e-CRM, to enhance the quality and efficiency of communication with their customers. This will lead to higher service consistency, better customer relationship, and thus increased retention of customers.

Technology, customers, and processes are becoming, with the use of digitization, the three elements that ensure the success of banking functions. Abu Shanab (2015) emphasized on the importance of e-CRM in the banking sector by stating that it increases profitability through customers’ retention, cost reduction, and valuable interaction. Customer retention is a main factor for a company’s profit growth, a 5% increase in retention leads to profits going up in the range from 50% to 100% (Bezhovski & Hussain, 2016).

Dhingra & Dhingra (2013) considered customer interaction and satisfaction as the major advantage of using e-CRM by banks. They also noted other advantages, namely, convenience of time and location, increase in speed and accuracy of transactions, reliable employees, existing new information technology, and the trust in the services provided.

By adopting new technologies, banks increase their competitive edge and improve their relationship with customers. E-CRM in banks, through accessing available customers’ historical data to provide them with better products and services, will strengthen customers’ loyalty. As mentioned before, e-CRM enables customers to interact distantly with their banks through internet communication platforms and devices.

In his study, Abu Shanab (2015) emphasized that the elements of relationship quality, namely, customer satisfaction, commitment and trust, are positively related to relationship outcomes, which are customer loyalty, retention and the willingness to recommend. Al-Damour & Khawaja (2017) also found that there is a positive relationship between bank performance and the adopted e-CRM system in addition to the quality and reliability of data collected about their customers.

Recommendations

This research has demonstrated the positive partnership between CRM management and consumer satisfaction. However, CRM must still be revised for a more personal approach to consumers rather than relying exclusively on technology.

In order to effectively utilize, message, and collect consumer data, marketing managers must improve the already existing CRM guidance. These instructions must be tied to pure CRM objectives and supervised by the corresponding managers.

Continued preparation of customer support for a constructive and long-term relationship with customers is the key and also the most essential asset for any bank.

CRM's major advantage is that, regardless of the financial background, every customer is recorded in the archive anyways. This eliminates a big part of the overall operating expenditures. Consumer support has thus to be focused on the customers that tend to switch banks rapidly, thus contributing to the already intensive competition between banks in today's world.

Conclusion

Digitalization has made a great impact on the way global businesses are conducted these days. Digitalization of CRMs in particular will have a great impact on customers in the banking sector primarily through the use of online and/or mobile banking. With the easier access to information online, customers are becoming more demanding and fast moving, therefore, they can easily change banks if their demands are not met. Therefore, it would be most beneficial for all businesses, and banks in particular, to shift from the transactional approach to a customer-centric approach since the latter serves to match customers' needs and achieve their loyalty (De La Castro et al., 2014).

Despite the limitations already indicated in this paper, successful banks are the ones that can adhere to this change and adopt e-CRM using online platforms and ICT (Nitescu, 2015). Increased concentration on strengthening customer relationship will help with decreasing costs and boosting revenues. The study by Bezhovski & Hussain (2016) vividly showed that a 5% increase in retention leads to extra profits ranging from 50% to 100%, and such a growth would be obviously more than simply essential for the growth of any company (or bank).

Digital channels' adoption is an inevitable choice for any bank that plans to increase its profitability and retain customer loyalty at the same time. Therefore, it is essential to complement customer satisfaction and higher efficiency with the use of digital channels. Introduction of digital channels in a bank's operations must involve efficient cyber security tools that would reduce the limitations indicated above.

According to the evidence presented in this paper, we can infer that the benefits from the implementation of e-CRM by banks and other business organizations outweigh the described limitations. It is imperative and highly recommended that banks adopt e-CRM, else they run the perils of losing customers due to competition from other banks. Therefore, within today's digital markets, banks cannot continue functioning traditionally, instead they are forced to adopt digitally. In this transformational process, advanced technologies and customers' data availability provide banks with an almost panoramic view on customers' needs. Introduction of e-CRM would surely help with achieving a bank's strategic goals in part of customer satisfaction and client loyalty, thus enhancing bank's competitive position overall.

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