



A strategic tool in banking: customer relationship management

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Abstract : Banking industry has gone through many changes and challenges from period to period. Globalization and rapid increase in competition has point out the banks to be more productive and profitable. Banks should concentrate on relationship management with customers in order to redrawn them. The most distinct objective is to get customers integrity for the bank. CRM is used as the most economical tool to improve banking and make positive impact on its performance and satisfy customers more effortlessly. CRM creates a feel of comfort for the customers in this high tech environment. 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 an integrated effort to identify, maintain, and build up network with individual customers and to continuously sustain the network for the mutual benefit of both sides through interactive, individualized and value added contacts over a long period. 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 procure new customers but also to regain their existing customer. The paper focuses on the role of customer relationship management in banking and its bounce on the success of banks.

Key Words: Customer Relationship Management, Banking, Customer Atonement, Customer Retention

Introduction:

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. 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 an extensive approach for creating, sustaining and expanding customer relationships. It is said to be the cure-all of marketing blues. It has emerged into a major corporate Strategy for many organizations. It is uptight 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 adequately manage relationships with their customers. It provides a combined view of customers to everyone in the organization. With the intensified competition, companies realized that they have to treat their customers with respect and loyal.

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Czepiel (1984) reported that, the cost of retaining a current customer was one-fifth the cost of winning a new customer. The true CRM strategy and solutions can help securely, reliably and consistently.

The work of CRM is to:

- ❖ Pleasure of the customers every time they interact with your business by privilege them with anytime, anywhere, and any channel access to accurate information and more personalized service.
- ❖ Reach the customers more effectively, increase customer holding 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 stresses that attracting new customers should be viewed only as a common step in the marketing process. Thus he proposed relationship marketing as attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships. Another important fact of CRM is customer selectivity. As several research studies have shown not all customers are equally profitable for an individual company.

A good CRM strategy is of basic 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 customer's 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 & Atul Parvatiyar (1995), "The Evolution of Relationship Marketing", International Business Review, Volume-1V, Number- 3, September. "Suggests that an alternate paradigm of marketing to be developed 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 start from the customer's point of view."

Kalyani Menon and 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." Adrian Payne and Pennie Frow, "A Strategic Framework for Customer Relationship Management", Journal of Marketing, "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.

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 behaviour. 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 behaviour 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.

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 banks 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 behaviour 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.

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 behaviour. But buying habits are sometimes difficult to understand. Therefore companies always want to gain some insight about customer behaviour and habits in order to better control this behaviour. Having an impact on customer behaviour 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 more efficient, simplify marketing and sales processes.

Conclusion:

Customer relationship management plays a vital role for competition in the banking industry. 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. Today's customer faces range of choices in products and services. Each customer has a specific behaviour and their buying habits are sometimes difficult to understand. The banks always wanted to gain insight of consumer behaviour 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:

One of the major challenges to be experienced during implementing CRM is resistance to change. CRM is gradually accelerating and is definitely considered as a viable proposition by banks in improving the services to their customers. 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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