

Customer Service Segment of Customer Relationship Management in the Retail Banking Sector in Ireland



by Silas Bruno

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Abstract

Background- This research study is based on the customer service element of the CRM in the retail banking sector in Ireland. This research was interesting and worth searching for me to understand the efficiency of the customer service system of the Irish retail banking sector that effects CRM. Lack of competition in the Irish banking sector, monopoly and other complexities in the managing customer service excellence is the risk to CRM that could be severely affected the competitive position and financial soundness.

Aim/Objectives- Examining the importance of the efficient customer service or support for the customer relationship management in the context of gaining customers' loyalty and managing relationship with them in the long run for the financial stability.

Research Question→ This research study answered to the questions; such as RQ 1: How and to what extent can current customer service support utilised in the Irish retail banking sector ensure active customer relationship management?, RQ 2: How can changes in the market of Ireland have been affecting customer service support system of Irish banks and ultimately customer relationship management? and RQ 3: What are the required changes to be incorporated in the customer service support for the retail banking customers in the Irish banking sector and their effects on customer relationship management?

Methodology→ Under the primary and secondary search, this research study were collected data through conducting a survey with employees in Irish retail banking sector to access the knowledge of customer service, and accessed case studies of several Irish Retail Banks; namely Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Bank and KBC Ireland. Academic sources (books, journals and online articles) were also reviewed for gaining subject knowledge to address research objectives.

Findings and Conclusion- It has been analysed that the customer service system in the Irish banking sector has been considerably affected CRM. The key emphasises of Irish banking institutions to build and maintain customer relationship is on the quality of service provision as per their expectation. The advancements in the banking services are significantly focused by the management for the long-term effect of competitive position in terms of retention of the old customers and attraction of prospective customer for the high market share and profitability growth. However, banks in Ireland have faced complications in managing the effectiveness of banking service due to easy acceptance of IT-based services and existence of quasi-monopoly.

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List of Abbrivations

CRM	Customer relationship Management
E-CRM	Electronic Customer relationship Management
IT	Information technology
SAP	Systems, Applications, Products in data processing
ERP	Enterprises resource Planning

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Businesses position in the highly competitive and dynamic environment is not only based on the product or service offerings, but it is also influenced by the relationship management with the stakeholders, specifically customers (Peppard, 2000). The managing of relationship with customers is the crucial management concern for the manufacturing to the service sector or industry because it is directly proportional to the sustainable competitiveness. Customer relationship is the key determinant of the success with respect to maintaining and stimulating market share that relates to the sales and profitability growth (Coltman, 2007).

There are various elements of the customer relationship management, including customer service, automation of the work process, marketing, lead management and human resource management (Taylor, 2014). In the context of the same, this research study is focused on customer service in the retail banking sector of Ireland. In the retail banking segment, market position stability and competitiveness are vital business aspects that vulnerable to risks at the utmost extent due to market changes and new offerings by the existing and emerging service providers. The critical evaluation of the current service support in the retail banking sector of Ireland provides valuable insight into the service efficiency and innovation for customer relationship management (Onut, Erdem and Hosver, 2008). Thus, the intended aim of the research project is on exploring rigorous information on customer service support for the customer relationship management that integrates to the business development and competitive strength.

1.2 Background

The evaluation of the retail banking segment in concern of the particular element of customer service for the customer relationship management is the useful research because growing competition in this sector is induced the need for the improved customer service to build up and maintain relationship and competitive position (Onut, Erdem and Hosver, 2008). Thus, high competition in the financial sector raises management concern towards financial services efficiency, financial products quality and innovation that is directed towards meeting customers' need (Claessens, 2009).

Customer service element considerably affects customer relationship management as such; efficient customer service ensures meeting customers' expectations and makes them feel special in terms of superior service delivery and "brand experience" (O'Loughlin and Szmigin, 2005, p. 9). This eventually raises customer's loyalty with a particular product or service provider. The low switching costs to the customers in the highly competitive environment is one of the significant factors that foster need for the efficient customer service element of the customer relationship management (O'Loughlin and Szmigin, 2006). The efforts to deal with the intense competition in the banking sector are directly linked to fulfilling customers' needs through efficient customer service model, to sustain a strong relationship with them (O'Loughlin and Szmigin, 2005). This research study in specific of the retail banking sector of Ireland analyses various aspects of the customer service system that are important for the customer relationship management.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

Aim of the research study is to examine the importance of the efficient customer service or support for the customer relationship management in the context of gaining

customers' loyalty and managing relationship with them in the long run for the financial stability. Thus, this research study explores the importance of the element of customer service of customer relationship management to understand its effect on the retail banking institutions prospect in the Irish banking sector. This research analyses the effectiveness of the current strategies and courses of action adopted by the banks in Ireland for customer service support to ensure long term relationship management. The effectiveness of the customer service model in terms of the meeting customers' needs and maintaining higher sales trend along with market share is evaluated in this research study.

In order to accomplish research aim, this research has been progressing in the direction of the following research objectives; such as:

- To explore ways of managing customer relationship management in the retail banking sector of Ireland in specific to the element of the customer service support
- To identify the effectiveness that has been gained by the customer service segment of the customer relationship management in improving the services being given by the banks in Ireland
- To develop an understanding of the complexities in the Ireland banking sector in managing the effectiveness of the customer service support
- To identify the changes are to be needed in the current customer service support of Irish banks to positively affect the customer relationship management in Ireland banking sector
- To carry out a useful collection of data to justify the importance of the customer service support for the customer relationship management in the Irish banking sector

1.4 Research Questions

Answer to the following research questions in this research study provides in-depth knowledge of the customer relationship management in specific of the banking sector. The actions or strategies used by the banks in Ireland to maintain robust customer relationship management is going to be evaluated in respect of the retention of the current customers and attracting more customers to continue the sales trend.

RQ 1: How and to what extent can current customer service support utilized in the Irish retail banking sector ensure active customer relationship management?

RQ 2: How can changes in the market of Ireland have been affecting customer service support system of Irish banks and ultimately customer relationship management?

RQ 3: What are the required changes to be incorporated in the customer service support for the retail banking customers in the Irish banking sector and their effects on customer relationship management?

1.5 Research Significance

The results of this research study in specific of the customer service for the customer relationship management would be useful for different customer segments management in the banking sector; such as retail and corporate customers. This research will demonstrate the relationship of the customer service system and customers' loyalty that will lead to accomplishing the goal of robust customer relationship management (Bontis, Booker and Serenko, 2007). The direct proportional relationship of the chosen element of the customer relationship management with the sales and profitability growth and competitive position will be determined from this research. The results of this

research project would have real implications in the banking sector that indicates practicality and generalizability of the findings of this research study.

This research study will help to develop knowledge of customer relationship management in the banking context and also about customer service model or approaches used in the retail banking sector. The narrow context of this research study (customer service) would be useful to find a correlation between this element of customer relationship management and market position. Customer service is the benchmark to determine the extent to which existing service model of the retail banks in Ireland is productive and competent to uphold customers' loyalty and relationship (O'Loughlin and Szmigin, 2006). Besides this, learners and future researchers would use findings of this research study to extend search in the direction of the new element of the customers' relationship management; such as marketing and work automation. The results of this research study would be used to develop theoretical knowledge to develop subject understanding. This research can be used in future studies as literature evidence to support future research work in the context of the customer relationship management in the banking and financial sector.

1.6 Inductive Research Methodology

In this research study, data collection in particular of the customer service element of the customer relationship management in the retail banking sector of Ireland will carry out by employing mixed methodology. The application of the mixed methodology will extend the scope of gathering data by using various data collection methods. In this research project, secondary sources; such as books, journals, and Irish retail banks reports along with websites will be accessed to gain knowledge of the customer relationship

management in specific to the element of the customer service system. The effectiveness of the existing customer service system followed in the Irish retail banking sector is going to be evaluated to determine effectiveness in keeping customer relationship management. The secondary data collection will be required in this research study to support primary data collection in order to maintain the validity, reliability and authenticity of the information (Pajo, 2017).

In addition to this, primary data collection about customer service for the relationship management will be gathered using the survey method. Survey method will help to collect information for the descriptive statistics' analysis to determine the need for efficient customer service support for the customer relationship in the long run. The survey will help to access details of the existing customer service model from the large sample size, to ensure meeting customers' expectations to maintain trust and loyalty with the banking services. The deductive approach will be followed for the data collection to culminate results to address research objectives and questions (Creswell and Clark, 2017).

1.7 Research Organization

This research study will follow a linear process to address the research problem by giving a specific focus on the integration of the data. The glimpses of the different research activities or chapters are presented below:

Chapter 2: Literature Review – this research chapter will include a search of the different sources for the more and precise data of customer service support system and approaches used in the Irish banking sector in the context of the customer relationship management. This chapter will present comprehensive data in the context of the customer

relationship management in the banking context explored by the previous scholars to design the data collection process and conceptual framework.

Chapter 3: Methodology- Methodology will include a selection of the most relevant aspects in the alignment of the different layers of Saunders' Onion Model, and their selection will be specifically linked to the research objectives and questions. Data collection techniques within a mixed methodology will be presented with reasonable justification and explanation. This chapter in the context of the data collection and analysis will exhibit specific ethical considerations to avoid risks to the participants and society as a whole.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis- Descriptive data will be presented and analysed in this chapter to infer results that will address the research aim and objectives.

Chapter 5: Discussion – the finding will be discussed to address each research objectives and questions in the critical way to present various arguments and supportive evidence.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations- Summary of the key findings along with conclusion will be covered within this chapter. In concern of the future researchers, recommendations will be provided to help carry out research in the more focused area and in the new direction to explore a new segment of the customer relationship management.

Chapter 7: Reflection- this chapter will cover overall learning and skills development while doing this research project. The benefits and challenges faced in this project with overall improvement will present in this chapter using the Gibbs reflective cycle.

1.8 Summary

This research study is focused on customer service, which is one of the essential elements of customer relationship management in the retail banking of Ireland. Customer service system signifies the extent to which customers' needs are fulfilled in concern of the term relationship management that affects financial stability. This research seeks information of different approaches followed in the retail banks of Ireland for the customer services to maintain a relationship with them, to ensure sales growth and competitive position. The next chapter is the critical review of the academic studies about customer service and customer relationship management in the banking sector.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a literature review where various studies are being reviewed in a critical way to evaluate the customer service segment associated with the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in the retail banking sector in Ireland. In relation to above, it is reviewed that CRM refers to an approach incorporated within an organisation for the management of the interaction of a company' with its present as well as the highly profitable customers. CRM incorporates analysis of the historical data of a customer and the relationship of the customer with the company. CRM technique is required for the enhancement of relationships between the customers as well as businesses as it puts a specific interest upon the customer retention (Payne, 2012; Williams, 2014). Further, the concept of CRM arrived during the starting years in the 1970s when the need for developing a customer emphatic business was identified instead of developing a product emphatic business (MSG, 2019). CRM was first applied in the customer-centric sectors in the business, such as the banking sector (Williams, 2014). Computer-based CRM product was firstly developed in the year 1993 by Siebel Systems in 1993. Further, CRM products developed with the help of renowned software-based enterprise resource planning companies termed as SAP, Oracle and Navision. The software involved embedding of automated or prolonged customer service (Dempsey and Kelliher, 2017). Thus, in alignment to this the present literature review includes CRM and its related elements, interlink of the customer service and CRM, analysis of customer service element of CRM in the Irish retail banking sector, challenges and strategic solutions to stimulate customer service for effective CRM. The critical review of the studies covers

key arguments of the scholars that were explored in the context of the customer service and CRM, and also finds an existing gap in the studies to demonstrate the direction of this research study.

2.2 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in the Banking Sector

According to Payne (2012); Kirmaci (2012), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), is described as the ways through which business interacts with the customers. It is also a process by which the information of the customers is captured. CRM is the system that involves various technologies that help the business organisation to gather intelligence that is required to enhance the experience of service and support given to its customers. In the other context, Bhat and Darzi (2016) has added that it a process of efficiently using the information of the customers so that the requirements and needs of the customers are met adequately and it also helps in identifying new customers, and that will result into increasing profits and growth of the organisation. CRM plays a significant role in increasing the sale and revenues of the business. Customer relationship management is focused on making each customer feel that are essential for the organisation, and they can have a one-on-one relationship with the organisation.

In the views of Rai (2012), CRM is a way through which the customers can feel recognised and understood by the customer relationship manager. Through the process of customer relationship management, customer can feel that their needs, requirements and concerns are addressed by the company adequately and the company wants to deliver those products and services that are required by the customers most in order to meet their expected service demand. In the same context Valmohammadi and Beladpas (2014), has added that the process CRM also helps in enhancing the marketing experience of the

customers, and it also increases the market share of the company. Adding further, it is reviewed that within the CRM process, queries of customers are answered online through which the efficiency of the business gets improved. The process of CRM also develops customer base by adding new customers into it, engaging them in various online ways of business that can lead to an increase in the ratio of sales (Valmohammadi and Beladpas, 2014).

Further, according to the views of Hoffmann and Birnbrich (2012), managing relationship with the customers in the global context and making them feel that they are essential for the company is very crucial, in every sector of the service industry. The financial service industry is very turbulent and dynamic, and it has adopted various changes as per new rules and regulation such as management of the customer relationship, decrease in the transaction cost, increasing the speed of the digital services provided to the customers. Adding further, Hoffman and Birnbrich (2012), described that retail banking industry is required to invest highly in the efforts to create and develop to add value in the market, and the essential elements of creating added value are through developing and generating the long-term relationship with the customers. In the last two decades, the retail banking industry has significantly shifted its focus on making the banking services more digitalised like the use of mobile banking, and internet banking has increased a lot. The understanding and perception of the banks is dependent on the diverse experience of the customers with the services and employees of the banks (Hoffman and Birnbrich, 2012).

Moreover, it has been argued by the Khodakarami and Chan (2014), that CRM facilities banking sector to effectively use human resource and technologies available.

With the use of various techniques, the customer relationship management enables the retail banking to work better as it can facilities the staff to close the sales deals faster, making efficient call centre, simplifying sales processes and marketing, selling of cross sales products, providing customer service in a better way, identifying new customers and increasing the revenue of the bank. CRM helps in active dealing of the customers and fulfilling their all requirement from the banks and that lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty of the customers. This may result in getting more business that will ultimately increase the profit and turnover of the retail banking sector.

In order to support this Kennedy (2006), added that in Ireland the banking products and services are integrated, and they function through various branches and departments. The retail banking sector of Ireland is effectively using the E-CRM facility for satisfying the needs and requirements of the customers, and this is possible through predefining strategy, vision, mission and successful implementation of them for achieving the various business objectives of the banks. For implementing the E-CRM system in the country, the retail banking sector identifies the stakeholders, customers and employees, and after this suggestion is taken from the system users so that the whole IT design can be finalised and shortcoming can be eliminated (Kennedy, 2006). Further, Kennedy (2006) stated that Bank of Ireland Corporate Banking is the only corporate bank that has a specific CRM team that is fully dedicated to its corporate customers. Each customer of this bank is assigned a customer relationship management contact that works closely for providing smooth customer experience to all the customers and attracts opportunities that are available in the market for successful expansion and growth of the bank (Kennedy, 2006).

2.2.1 Ways of Managing CRM in the Retail Banking Sector

According to the views of Linoff and Berry (2011), in the retail banking sector, the effective management of the CRM is essential, and it directly impacts the business, its growth and its customers. If the retail banking sector is not providing proper CRM services to its customers that it may lose the customers and customers can easily switch to other banks and this way, the competitors will grow more effectively. The bank staff should put their full efforts while selling and offering the products and services of the banks, as they are not selling only products and services but they are also offering the reputation of the bank in the relationship which they have established with each and every customer. Due to this, Customer relationship management has to put additional efforts while incorporating the special values in their every offering of product and services to its customers. Therefore, the management of CRM plays a vital role in running the business operations of the banks effectively resulting in increasing overall turnover and profits of the banks.

In the same context, Madapusi and D'Souza (2012) have added that CRM is a customer-focused strategy of the business that integrates marketing, sales and customer care service for creating and adding value for the banks and its customer. For managing customer service management, the most effective method that is used globally is the implementation of ERP (Enterprise resource planning) technology. ERP is management software that helps the business to integrate the applications of the business, and it also automates other functions such as human resources and services that are dependent on the technology. Application of ERP plays a crucial role in optimising the internal procedure of the banks such as business process re-engineering, and supply chain management that

is related to the external procedure of the banks integrating with the IT (information technology) solutions to the process of CRM can be implemented successfully.

In the other context, Payne (2012) has added that customer segmentation on the basis of customer database also helpful in managing the CRM in the retail banking sector. The needs and requirements of the customer can be met with a proper understanding of the behaviour pattern and demographics of the customer. Due to this, the Retail banking sector should be more focused on investing highly on in the analytics and penetration of the customer database of existing and new customers. A comprehensive database of the customer will facilitate the retail banking sector in better understanding the needs and requirements of the customers, and that will help the bank to develop the products as per the requirement of the customer and offer them proper services. The data related to the customer of the retail banking sector about their behaviours and requirements will help the CRM to identify the most profitable customers, and it will also help in developing the potential customers and finding the new opportunities available in the market. So, in the context of CRM, the database is one of the important resources that help in achieving the profits and growth through leveraging behaviour patterns of the customers. For collecting the adequate data, it is essential to create such an internal environment in the bank that every employee is properly committed in the collection of the customer data that is available that helps in decision-making processes also.

In another context, Rababah, Mohd and Ibrahim (2011), have added that one of the crucial ways to operate CRM in the retail banking sector is adopting automation. With the help of automation, leads can be generated and managed carefully in the retail banking sector, such as automation helps in entering the data of leads most effectively so that it

can be optimised properly. However, for proper utilising automation, it is important that CRM should automate data entry and lead management successfully as manual entry of each and every of the customers is a very time-consuming and complicated process and it can also result into errors. So, the productive CRM will use progressive profiling in which the necessary data of the customer is collected such as web behaviour, emails, information and social media presence of the customers. After this, CRM will automate every data, and that will lead to converting into a sale if adequate information is shown at the correct time.

2.3 Customer Service in the Banking Sector

According to the views of Chen, Yu-Chih Liu, Shin Sheu and Yang (2012), customer service can be defined as the way in which the company takes care about the need of their customers by providing them with a quality of services, and meet with their expectations to achieve the organisational goals. In the context of the Banking sector, customer service in the bank can be known as the essential aspect that may include quick response to the complaints and questions of the customer on time. Furthermore, interacting with the clients through telephone, mail and also face to face meeting has also be done for increasing the engagement of the customer with the bank (Chen *et al.*, 2012). However, as per the views of Bultum (2014), that the banking sector cannot provide various kinds of services to its customers because of inability to establish branches at different countries and also not be able to facilitate their business transaction in various cities. Therefore, the banks have preferred a branch of their local city for facilitating the transactions to its customers (Bultum, 2014). It is determined by Klaus and Nguyen (2013), retail banking sector provides services which are customer-oriented in nature. The services of the retail

banking sector may include, offer necessary investments products, accepting deposits of the customers, making business loans, and some other services which are related to the investment that provides for, retirement and educational planning (Klaus and Nguyen, 2013).

On the other hand, it is evaluated by Proenca and Rodrigues (2011), the retail banking sectors are designing their financial products, which are a very costly and time-consuming process. Retail banks are not providing any products; therefore, the customers are giving preference to the net banking that stimulates convenience in the banking services along with time efficiency. Moreover, customers are more attracted towards such services which are related to the mutual fund rather than the services provided by the retail banking sector. As a result, it is decreasing the operational efficiency of the bank and may also lead to reducing the involvement of the customer towards the branch bank (Proenca and Rodrigues, 2011).

As per the views of Tesfom and Birch (2011), in the retail banking sector, the technologies may help to continue the way of handling personal and business finance. Customer service plays an essential role in increasing the operational efficiency of the bank. In relation to this, the banking sector provides the quality of services to its customers by giving useful information regarding the finance, saving account, and benefits of investments. The bank interacts with their customer by clearly defining all the aspects of the banking that is related to determining the best loan products, protecting against from the identity theft, and guide customer to utilise online banking (Tesfom and Birch, 2011).

However, in the views of Ivanauskiene, Auraskeviciene, SkudienE and Nedzinskas (2012), the complaints which are made by the customers because banks are

not providing the relevant information regarding the financial transaction, and accounts. The bank sectors are offering poor bank services which are related to long waiting time, service failures, not keeping promises and poor system quality (Ivanauskiene *et al.*, 2012). It is evaluated by Medberg and Heinonen (2014), customers are not aware about the product and services of the banking sector; therefore, the banks are providing the current knowledge about the services and products. The banks understand that it is the responsibility to provide high-quality services to their customer and keep them familiar with the offering of institutions. Furthermore, checking and saving options, tax planning, individual retirement accounts, and financial planning are some of the offers which are provided by the bank to their customer for securing their future needs. Moreover, banks are also guiding their customers about the business, personal, auto and home loan facility, which may help to increase customer satisfaction (Medberg and Heinonen, 2014).

On the contrary, it is determined by Hoffmann and Birnbrich (2012), some banks are pursuing the fraud activities that may include fraudulent transactions and providing false information to their customer about the product, policies, and services. Banking fraud may lead to damage the customer relationship because it broke the trust and confidence of the client towards the services of the banks. Moreover, it also negatively affects the goodwill and fraud activities, becoming a hindrance for attracting new customers. In addition to this, when the banks are providing correct information, then it also affects the customer loyalty and change behaviour of customer towards the particular bank sector (Hoffmann and Birnbrich, 2012).

2.3.1 Significance of Customer Service of CRM for Service Efficiency

In the views of Herterich, Uebernickel and Brenner(2015), customer service is a useful source of which helps in increasing the positive experience of the client and impact the growth and efficiency in a positive way. In this regard, it is determined that CRM is the most substantial competitive advantage for service efficiency in businesses. In relation to this, it can only be achieved by when the organisations are providing the excellent quality of services to their customer that is related to offering relevant information and keep their personal records safe. In addition to this, CRM has supported to increase the efficiency of the work process and also helps to increase growth and productivity (Herterich, Uebernickel and Brenner, 2015). According to the views of Cleveland, Papadopoulos and Laroche (2011), customer segmentation can help the retail banking sector to understand the behaviour of the customer more accurately. Through the customer segmentation, the retail banking sectors are more likely to interact with their customer, and they provide them with that product and services which they want to adopt. Customer segmentation also refers to the age, gender, marital status, and income level of the client by which the banks are offering services according to their comfort and preference. Therefore, customer segmentation services can help to increase the efficiency of the retail banking sector and maintains a long term relationship with the customer (Cleveland, Papadopoulos and Laroche, 2011).

However, as per the views of Bach, Jukovic, DumiCIC and Sarlija (2014), the customer service segmentation is significant aspect for the retail banking sector but to applying the process of segmentation in the banks also be a challenge. It means that there are many kinds of customer who may have their own needs, therefore, for the fulfilment

of those demands the banks have to understand the different types of behaviour which have an issue for the retail banking sector. As a result, it can lead to reducing efficiency and decreasing the level of customer satisfaction (Bach *et al.*, 2014).

It is determined by Kotarba (2016), customer services segmentation helps to gain more profound knowledge about the customer preference and discovering the value for each segment. In this regard, when the retail banking sectors understand the demand of their client, therefore it may support the growth and efficiency of the bank. Customers are more likely to prefer a particular kind of banking sector, and also they get a positive experience. In addition to this, the retail banking sectors are also getting the advantage of maintaining a healthy and long-lasting relationship, and it increases the trust towards the services and products of the bank (Kotarba, 2016). On the other hand, according to the views of Nguyen and Mutum (2012), it is understood that customer service segmentation increases the satisfaction of the customer but is finds to be difficult for the retail banking sector that which kind of services has been preferred by the client. Furthermore, the behavioural segmentation of the customer is complex processes where the banks are not always easily understand, and that can result in decreasing the amount of customer, and banks are failing to maintain long term relationship with their clients (Nguyen and Mutum, 2012).

As per the views of Lahteenmaki and Natti (2013), the efficiency of the retail banking sector is increasing by focusing on the customer beliefs, values, interest, priorities, emotions and lifestyles. The alignment of the banking strategies with these aspects are being assured meeting customers' expectations by the retail banking sector that leads to increases in the motivation level of the banks towards the behaviour of the customer. It is

also a psychographic segmentation that supports to understand the characteristics and behaviour of customer that can help to identify the target customers in a bank easily. As a result, it can lead to the increase the reputation of the retail banking sector and management of the ethical values of the customer with the services of the bank (Lahteenmaki and Natti, 2013). However, in the views of Alnsour (2013), technology can also lead to automate the process of working in the retail banking sector. The digital platform has offered benefits to the customers as they can access personal information anywhere and any-time using such platforms. In addition to this, it helps to save time and money of the customers as they can access easily, and this decreases the visitation to the retail banking institutions.

2.3.2 Complexities in Managing Customer Relations and Services in Customer Service Segment of CRM in Ireland based Retail Banking due to Market Changes

The managing of customer service in the retail banking of Ireland has been turning difficult because of complexities as a cause of market changes. inadequacy of bank competition is one of the major complications in the way of managing customer service in the Irish retail banking that stated by Omarini (2016); Quinn (2018). According to Quinn (2018) “quasi-monopoly” exists in the banking sector of Ireland as profits of banks than other banks across Europe are relatively higher along with the prevalence of low competition. The loans are available at higher costs in the country because of high market power. It has been analysed that lack of competition has been stimulated profit margins, but it may expose the risk of consumers’ switching towards new entrants. In concern of the competition, it is important for the banks in Ireland to focus more on the increased choice and costs reduction for consumers for relationship management. The increased

competition in the Irish banking sector has been accelerating the need for the customer service efficiency to deal with competitive pressure or threat of new entrants. Competition in Ireland banking would foster the need for the value-added services for customers, and thus, the effect of such market changes would in favour of customers' interests that positively impact on the CRM. However, findings of The Irish Times (2017) reflected that changes in the banking regulations or BASEL requirements as another complexity in managing customer service. The changes in the banking norms or Basel rules for the capital structure would induce the need for changes in the customer service or financial offerings. The significant effect of such changes on the capital has been considerably certain banking portfolios and segments. Although, Basel rules for the banking operations leads to manage risky and bad loans in concern of the capital drags that secure interests of the customers at a good extent.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

In the literature review, the conceptual framework represents the analysis of the literature in terms of the key theme and variables to enlighten a phenomenon. Besides, this framework presents connection and interlink between variables in pursuing of the data search and investigation. This framework in the research study makes people understand the research problem and base of the research question in the diagrammatic form to exhibit interlink between research variables. The main theme or variable of this research study is the CRM in the retail banking sector, which is considerably affected by various elements; such as work automation or digitalization in services, customer service system, people management and value-added services.

From these elements of CRM, the customer service system in Irish retail banking sector is investigated in terms of service efficiency to develop and sustain a strong relationship. Relationship management in the retail banking sector keeps investors' trust and maintains the flow of fund; thereby, effective customer service is the key to assure CRM. Within this theme, retail banking services for customers that leads to CRM in the underpinning of pertinent theories are presented to investigate the effect of customer service on the CRM. The effectiveness of service relates to the reputation of the banking institution because of the positive effect of the customer focus on bank performance. The below-mentioned figure of the conceptual framework showing interlinking of customer service and CRM is formed. A conceptual framework is not the summary of the literature review. It helps to establish the relationship between the key conceptual elements being reviewed in the literature. This conceptual framework is useful in assessing the customer service sector of CRM in the Irish sector. This framework highlights the interrelationship between the efficiency of the CRM systems in Irish banks as well as the quality levels of customer services. This framework has highlighted the elements like customer service, perception of the managerial unit and banking staff, customer expectations, CRM and customer attitude. The elements such as customer service and customer attitude are related as the enhanced customer service results in a positive customer attitude. Moreover, the framework also states that with the help of positive customer attitude, correct fulfilment of customer expectations, and positive perception of the banking staff towards customer services improve the CRM systems in Irish banks.

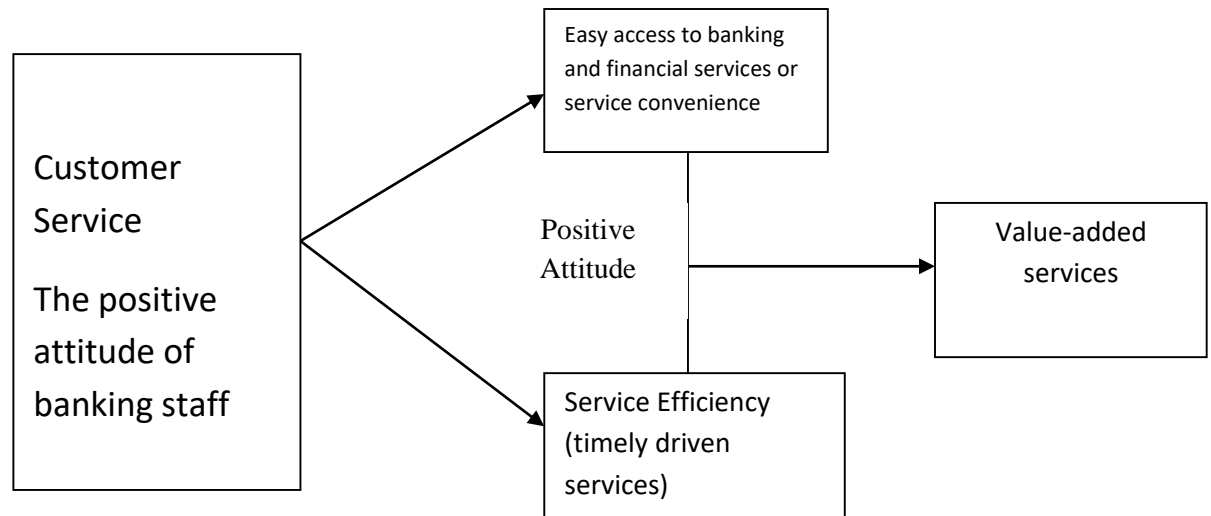


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework describing Inter-relationship among Customer Service, managerial perception and Customer Attitude

Source: (Kirmaci (2012), Hoffmann and Birnbrich (2012), Linoff and Berry (2011), Chen *et al.*, 2012; Nguyen and Mutum, 2012; Tesfom and Birch (2011), Herterich *et al.*, 2015; Cleveland *et al.*, 2011; Bach *et al.*, 2014).

2.5 Summary

It has been summarised in regard to the first research question that assesses the extent and the manner by which the present customer service support of the Irish retail banking sector assures an active management of customer relationship that CRM plays a vital role in the banking sector because of its relationship with reputation and customers' trust along with loyalty. However, CRM in the banking sector is not easy because it is not only possible through the offering of the financial products and services, but it is also important to match management perception with the customers' expectations. It has been reviewed that customer service element of CRM to match with customers' expectations must focus on service efficiency in terms of the time factor, value addition in services, service convenience and positive work attitude or behavior of staff.

Further in alignment to the second research question that evaluates the impact of the changes in marketing environment of Ireland on customer relationship management, it is summarised that service efficiency in specified markets is an important determinant of the CRM because of its wider significance in gaining and managing trust in the long run. Customer service efficiency indicates a management perception of attracting and retaining clients to sustain reputation and competitiveness. Besides this, review of the studies indicated the effect of intense market competition, changes in banking laws and automation on the customer service element of the CRM. Managing of the gap between existing banking services and market demands in the Irish banking sector is an important requisite to confront increased competition. It has been identified that in the Irish banking sector; lack of competition is the reason for the robust position in terms of high profitability or profit margins.

Adhering to the third research question that is aimed towards analysing the necessary changes to be made in the customer service support of the Irish banking sector, it is deduced that Irish banks should focus on intense competition to keep off effect on profitability because quasi-monopoly might not have longer existed. The changes in customer service in terms of increased choice are essential to be focused as a measure to sustain a relationship. The existing studies reviewed in this chapter are more focused on the CRM in the banking sector; not specifically on the customer service that is more vital for the maintaining reputation, competitive position and long-term relationship. In the context of this research gap, the next chapter is the methodology and methods that will reveal data collection strategy to collect topic related data to address research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Data collection is another important section in the research study that meets the requirement of collecting relevant and extensive data in the narrow context of the research topic (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). The exploration of the new knowledge and evidence in addition to the current findings of the scholars is the ultimate focus of the data collection. In the direction of the existing studies and constructed conceptual framework, data collection is initiated in search of gathering data to address research questions and conclude the extent to which customer service segment impacts CRM in Irish retail banking sector. The process of data collection in the intended direction of the research assures to the results validity, reliability and generalizability. The following chapter to address the need and significance of customer service for the CRM covers selection, description and justification of the applicable methodology aspects in the sequence of the research model of Saunders Onion. This is the quantitative-based research project and thereby, selection of research philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, data collection process and analysis are undertaken in the association of the same.

3.2 Research Model

Saunders Onion Model is used to present the research methodology and method in this research study. The application of Saunders' model assists to design research methodology in a coherent and justified way. It is because different layers of this model are interlinked with each other and thereby; selection of the methodology aspect in the first layer of philosophy is followed in the next layer of the research approach that supports the rationality of chosen aspect than other alternative aspects (Hackett, 2018). In

a sequence of the different layers, research methodology is designed in this research project that is shown below:

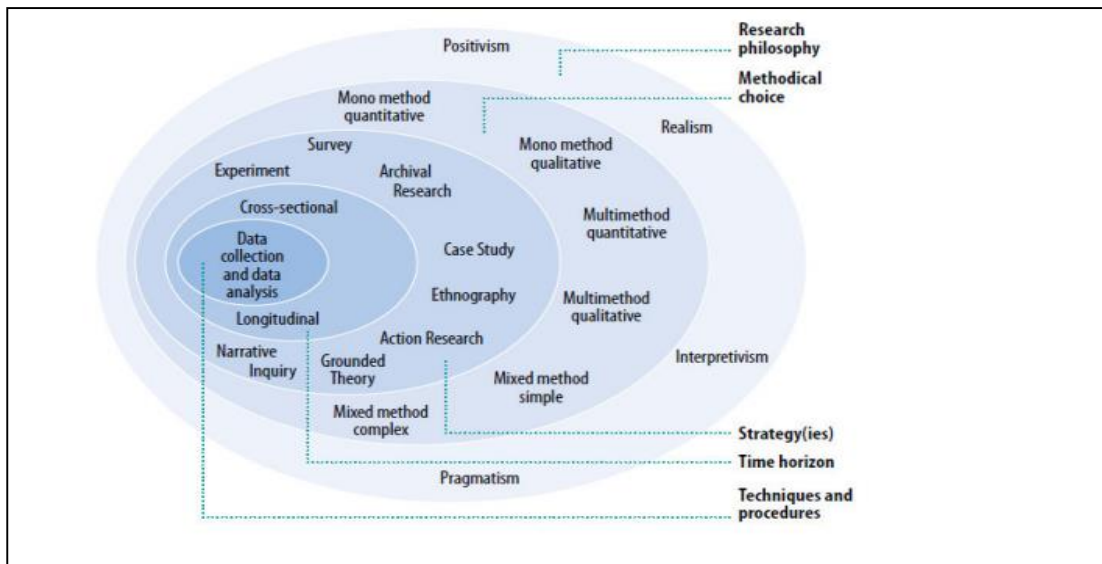


Figure 2 Saunders Onion Model

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

This section of the research model refers to the beliefs and assumptions, which are undertaken to collect data for the new knowledge exploration. The knowledge development is largely affected by the research philosophy because of assumptions and beliefs direct way of data collection, analysis and implication. In the research projects, research philosophies; namely positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism are commonly used as per the requirement of the data collection (Pajo, 2017; Leavy, 2017). In this research study, quantitative data is preferred to find a correlation between customer service and CRM on the basis of descriptive statistics, and thus, positivism is the applicable and preferred choice of the research philosophy. This philosophy is highly structured that emphasises on collecting data from large samples and thus, its selection is supportive in this research study that also accesses views of a large sample of employees.

In this study, interpretivism philosophy is considered less feasible because investigation in this philosophy is based on the qualitative research and small samples of the population for the depth knowledge. Pragmatism philosophy is also not fit with this research study because it believes in collecting data through multiple methods for qualitative and quantitative data. However, this research is considerably based on the quantitative research rather than qualitative for determining the effectiveness of customer service in Irish baking sector for the retail segment (Creswell, 2014).

3.2.2 Research Approach

In the research study, the research approach is the procedure or the plan for exploring data on the basis of the research nature or problem that is going to be investigated. The focus of the research is not limited to the collection of data about customer service, while interpretation and analysis of data in the spectrum of the research problem of customer service direct impact on the CRM, is significantly considered to access information in the narrow context of Irish retail banking sector. Research approach initiates with the broad construction to the narrow focus for the collection of pertinent data to reach a conclusion. Thus, the research approach is the “procedure of inquiry” to collect and analyse precise data to address research questions (Hair, 2015).

There are two ways to process data collection and analysis; such as deductive and inductive. Deductive approach usage in the research emphasises on the theory or hypothesis testing at the preliminary stage in evidence of generalising data, to specifically conclude and address the research problem (Wilson, 2014). However, the inductive approach is useful for theory development as the key focus is on broad generalisation by collecting specific data. Quantitative studies are mainly based on the deductive approach

for the specific data, whereas the inductive approach is applied in the qualitative studies to discover theories and ideas on the basis of limited and specific data (Hair, 2015). In this research study, the deductive approach is used to derive a specific conclusion on the basis of the extensive information available on the customer service element of the CRM. This is taken as a base to test the effectiveness of the existing customer service segment for retail banking customers in Ireland to good relationship management.

The availability of ample information on the research topic of customer service and CRM is also the reason for the chosen deductive approach to reach the specific conclusion in the narrow context of Irish retail banking. Moreover, the use of the deductive approach is also useful in this research study because it supports quantitative and descriptive statistics analysis to derive the significant or insignificant relationship between research variables (Creswell, 2014; Hair, 2015). In this study, the direct influence of different determinants of customer service; such as work automation, service efficiency, value-added services, positive attitude of banking staff and easy access of banking services, have been identified on the CRM using deductive reasoning. The key focus of this research study is not on theory development that is mainly in the inductive approach; thereby, it is not selected to examine the importance of customer service for the CRM (Hair, 2015).

3.2.3 Research Design

Research design in the research study indicates the process and method of data collection whether it is descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. The selection of the research design is based on the scope of the inquiry and accessibility of the data. Different research designs are used in research that provides insight into the research problem. The

descriptive design emphasises on the description of the facts explored in the qualitative or quantitative terms of the research problem, while explanatory design focus on the explanation of the research subject related aspects that have not broadly researched (Wilson, 2014).

An exploratory design is useful in research studies that focus on gaining topic knowledge and understanding. The importance of customer service segment for the CRM in this research is evaluated through using exploratory design for the increased knowledge. In this research study, multiple methods are going to be used, and thus, the use of exploratory design is supportive because of flexibility in accessing data from different data sources (Creswell, 2014; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). Besides this, use of exploratory design supports using secondary data sources to evidence primary data; such as in this research study, survey results from employees are also going to be supported by the literature evidence for the valid conclusions. However, the descriptive and explanatory design is not considered feasible to understand interlink of the CRM with the customer service in the banking sector because facts are not explored to gain an understanding of the research topic.

3.3 Methodical Choice

Different methodical choices are exhibited in the above-shown figure of Saunders Onion Model. From these choices, this research study has applied the choice of mixed methodology complex because it aids to explore detailed evidence to understand the importance of customer service element of CRM. Within mixed methodology, service offerings in Ireland retail banking sector are evaluated in particular of the CRM on the basis of customers' experience and perception, and on the basis of secondary information.

The use of the mixed methodology in this research study leads to identify the impact of customer service on the CRM in support of the primary and secondary data findings.

The access of Irish retail banks' reports is preferred in order to gain knowledge of the service offerings and information of the market share or sales growth, to determine the effectiveness of customer service to uphold financial strength and competitive position. However, the experience of customers about retail banking services is undertaken to determine service satisfaction. Altogether, experiences of the respondents along with Irish banks' report and academic sources (books and journals) are accessed to collect data, to address the effectiveness of the existing Irish banking services to hold customers' trust and loyalty for the CRM. Mixed methodology, in this research study, aids to gather ample quantitative data in the form of descriptive statistics and financial data of Irish retail banks.

3.4 Research Strategies

Under the mixed methodology, data collection in this research study has been undertaken using survey and case study or literature search method. These strategies are chosen because it aligns with quantitative data collection that is the preference of this research project. Survey strategy in this research study is chosen because it is a less complex and less time-consuming process of collecting ample data from the respondents (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). The survey makes it possible to access opinions and perception of customer service of the number of employees in the Irish retail banking sector because of less time consumption in the survey process.

The format of the close-ended questions in the survey is not taken much time of the respondents and also helps to find an aspect largely supported by the respondents due

to the standard format of the questionnaire and thus, it is given preference to collect views of the majority respondents (Hammond and Wellington, 2012). In this research, employees' views in terms of the effectiveness of the customer services of the Irish banks are easily identified through a survey questionnaire. Besides this, quantitative data collection via survey strategy in this research study gives scope to apply statistical analysis method that is useful to deduce relevant findings to address research objectives and questions (Pajo, 2017).

Survey strategy for the data collection in this research is not only useful to find majority views that specify to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the existing strategies, but it is also useful to determine the correlation between research variables; such as customer service and CRM. The interview can be used for the primary data collection in this research for the detailed evaluation of customer service and its effect on the CRM, but it is not preferred as this method does not support gathering quantitative data and access of large samples. This method lacks in finding a correlation between variables that significantly needed in this research study to determine the importance of effective customer service to positively impact on the CRM.

Secondary data collection is carried through using literature search and case study method to develop knowledge of Irish retail banking sector, customer satisfaction index and competitive position. Under literature search, academic sources are reviewed to find determinants of customer service in the banking sector and extend customer service links to the CRM. In the case method, customer service in the Irish retail banking sector is going to be analysed using cases of certain banks in relation to the financial strengths and market share. The inclusion of secondary data in this research is undertaken to underpin

employees' perception of customer service for the CRM that meets customers' service expectations. The use of secondary data in this research is preferred to derive a specific conclusion on the basis of the supportive evidence (Goodwin, 2012). The use of survey method with a case study in this research study leads to gather relevant and sufficient information to address the significance of customer service for the CRM to sustain competitiveness. The combination of the primary and secondary data in this research study ensures relevancy and credibility of the findings (Hammond and Wellington, 2012).

3.5 Data Collection Process and Data Analysis

The data collection process in this research study initiated with the selection of the appropriate sample population that is employees working in the Irish banking sector, to access perception of the management of varied banking services and service delivery. In the sample population, the selection of the fifty employees is initiated through using purposive and random sampling. The purposive sampling strategy is used to justify the selection of employees to address research objectives and questions. This sampling considers characteristics of the chosen sample population to specifically address the research problem (Ary *et al.*, 2018). In this research study, employees' working in Irish retail banking sector are chosen for a survey to get their views about customer service. In addition to this, employees' selection is also made through using random sampling strategy. It is because the application of random sampling in this research avoids partiality issue that negatively affects the authenticity and originality of the research information (Pajo, 2017).

The chosen sample is limited to 50 employees because of the issue of accessibility of a larger sample of employees' working in Irish banking because of time concern. The

questionnaire for the survey is developed in specific of the main themes and variables of the literature review and research objectives using close-ended format. Likert scale is used for designing questions to collect employees' views for customer service in the specific context of service efficiency and related determinants. The testing of the questionnaire is also performed in this research study under the process of pilot survey within which responses for the five employees are collected at the initial level of the survey. This testing is carried to determine the extent to which the questionnaire is understandable in an intended way because it affects research results and analysis thereof.

Survey results analysis is carried out in this research study by using statistical software of SPSS within which descriptive statistics and chi-square tests are applied for the hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistics are useful to reach at the end findings on the basis of majority views, while chi-square tests are useful in this study to find the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Creswell, 2017). Overall, the significance of the customer services and its effectiveness in Irish retail banking sector is determined evidently on the basis of quantitative results.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The consideration of the ethical issues at the beginning of the data collection and analysis is the crucial necessity of the research study because it defines probable issues and solutions for the same. Ethical considerations in the research study assure interest of the respondents and learners or future researchers are considerably valued by abidance with the standard norms of the ethics. The issues related to the ethics in the primary and secondary research both are considered in this research study.

At the beginning of the survey process, employees' consent is taken in this research study to assure conducting a survey with the interested participants, who can share relevant and true information. The undue pressure on the employees to share their experiences about customer service might be imprecise because of lack of interest in the survey process. Besides this, employees are not delimited to complete a survey after the consent if they do not survey worthwhile. The withdrawal of consent is deliberated in this research study in concern of avoiding any inconvenience to the participants (Oliver, 2010).

The selection of the employees' in this research study is performed in a fair way to prevent the issue of inequality. Research participants' selection is initiated as per the purposive sampling and then using a random sampling strategy. The issues due to personal intervention are limited in this research study in abidance of the equality consideration (Miller *et al.*, 2012). Another ethical consideration valued in this research study is the authenticity and originality of the information. For this, this research is truly presented descriptive statistics results with literature evidence support to reveal true and original data accurately (Loue, 2007).

Purpose of this research is to add new knowledge in the context of the retail bank segment to help further researchers to understand the importance of effective customer service for the CRM. In the context of the secondary data, this research study is reflected proper citation and referencing to the information from the academic sources and the banks' reports to ensure the credibility of the research results. Overall, the entire data collection and data presentation in this research have been followed by ethical requirements to maintain the value of this research study.

3.7 Limitations

The use of survey method can limit the collection of the detailed data in this research study, which is one of the limitations of considering quantitative data collection. The use of interview would also be preferred to collect detailed data of customer service to find an effect on the CRM. Another limitation of this research study is the difficulty in the accessibility of employees of the Irish banking sector. The access of view of more employees would lead to clarify management perception of customer service specifically for the retail banking customers. Views of the managers and customers would also be preferred for the data collection, but complications in analysing views of different sample populations could be a limitation.

3.8 Summary

The research methodology is designed as per the different layers are given in Saunders Onion Model that maintains coherency in the entire procedure of data collection. From the research aim of evaluating customer service segment of CRM to the basis of quantitative information, positivism philosophy is selected as it emphasises on the structured process of data collection through accessing large samples. In integration of this, deductive approach is applied for the specific conclusion based on theory testing. Mixed methodology for data collection is preferred under which survey and secondary search both are undertaken to gather quantitative data. Employees' in the Irish banking sector are approached for the survey by making their selection using purposive and random sampling strategy. The responses of the 50 employees are taken by processing survey with them in concern of the accessibility issue. Statistical software (SPSS) is applied to the quantitative data collected through survey methodology for determining the

relationship between customer service and CRM in the banking sector. In following to this, the next chapter is findings and analysis that will present and analysed descriptive statistics to find the effect of customer service and related determinants on the CRM in the banking sector of Ireland.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on transforming the response collected from the participants through the survey into meaningful statistics into the present a meaningful conclusion in the research. This research utilised a survey method as a primary data collection tool to analyse the perception of the banking professionals regarding the customer relationship management (CRM) in the retail banking sector of Ireland with specific preferences to customer service segment (Bryman and Cramer, 2009). A total of 50 employees from the Irish banking organisations have filled a survey questionnaire including demographic and Likert scale questions. The responses collected on the questionnaire has been accumulated on an Excel sheet and analysed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a powerful statistical package, which incorporates in-built functions to conduct frequency analysis, pie-charts, and statistical tests. Regarding this, the current research utilised a descriptive and statistical analysis approach to fulfil the research objectives effectively.

4.2 Survey Findings

4.2.1 Demographic Questions

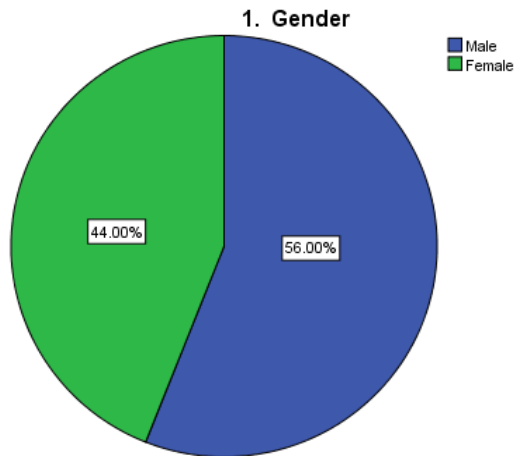


Figure 3 Gender

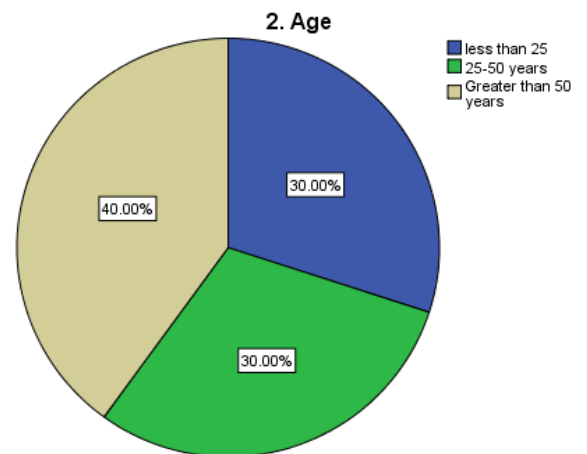


Figure 4 Age

3. How much experience do you have in Irish banking sector?

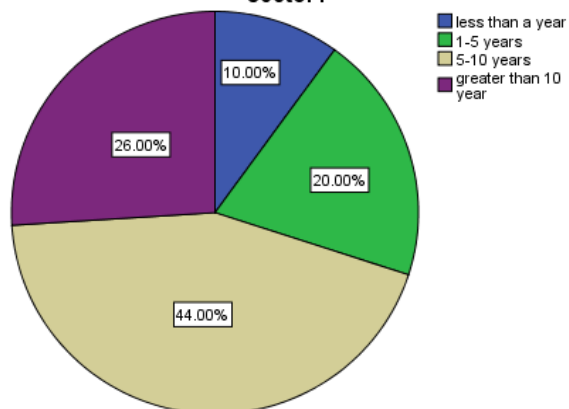


Figure 5 Experience

4. Educational Qualification

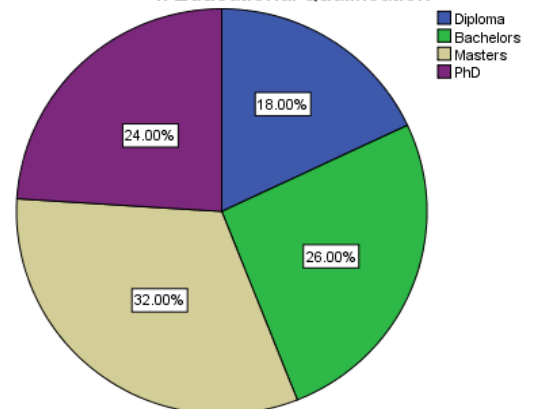


Figure 6 Education

Figure 3 displays the demographic information of the participated in the survey. It has been analysed that 56% are male participants and 44% are female participants,

describing that a large percentage of males have participated in the survey rather than the females.

Figure 4 reflects the ratio of participants from each age-group who have participated in the survey. It has been examined from the survey data that a total of 50 respondents took part in the survey, out of which 40% are of greater than 50 years, 30% aged between 25-50 years and the remaining group of 30% lies in the age-group of below 25 years. Further, figure 5 indicates the experience of respondents in the retail banking sector. It has been observed that majority of the respondents have an experience of 5-10 years showing respondents possess a great professional experience in retail banking. Figure 6 is shown information about the educational qualification of the respondents, which indicates the majority of the respondents have completed their bachelor and masters.

4.2.2 Analysing Participants Response regarding Customer service and CRM in the retail banking sector of Ireland

Effectiveness of banking staff on CRM to fulfil customer demand and requirements

Table 1 Effectiveness of banking staff on CRM to fulfill customer demand and requirements

5. Do you think that Irish banks are focused on CRM to satisfy the needs and requirements of the customers?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Disagree	7	14.0	14.0	30.0
	Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	38.0

	Agree	9	18.0	18.0	56.0
	Strongly agree	22	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 demonstrates the proportion of respondent who agreed efficacy of Irish banks in CRM to fulfil customer's requirements. It has been explored from the above that 44% of the respondents have strongly agreed to the fact and 18% have agreed. Further, a total of 30% of the respondents have disagreed to the statement. The survey results reflected that a cumulative total of agreed respondents is greater than disagreed participants. In support to this literature findings also demonstrated that CRM is a way through which customer feel privileged as the organisation is focused on identifying the products and services required by the customers and deliver them to the customers (Herterich, Uebernicketel, and Brenner, 2015).

5. Do you think that Irish banks are focused on CRM to satisfy the needs and requirements of the customers?

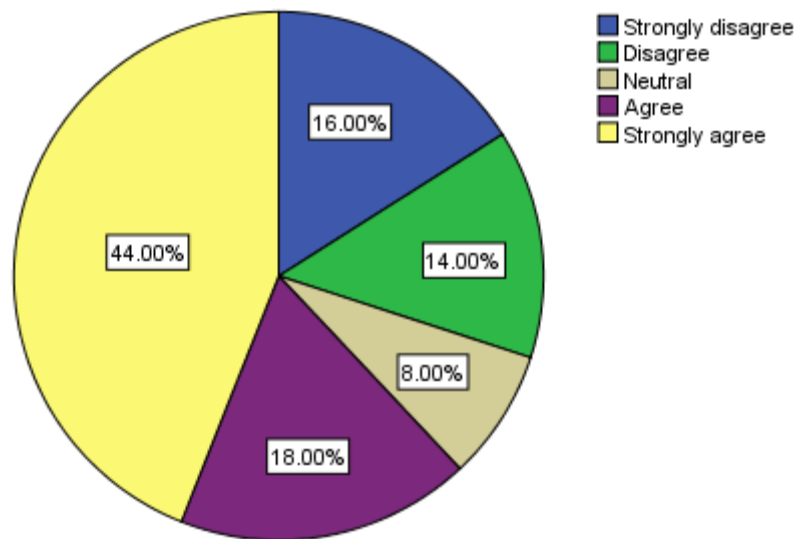


Figure 7 Effectiveness of banking staff on CRM to fulfill customer demand and requirements

Importance of CRM to gain a competitive advantage in the Irish banking sector

Table 2 Importance of CRM to gain a competitive advantage in the Irish banking sector

6. Do you think that customer relationship management (CRM) is crucial to take a competitive advantage in the Irish banking sector?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Disagree	5	10.0	10.0	38.0
	Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	46.0
	Agree	8	16.0	16.0	62.0
	Strongly agree	19	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Table 2 illustrates the significance of CRM to take a competitive advantage in the Irish banking sector. For this regard, a group of 50 respondents have provided their responses that have been presented in Table 2. In reference to survey outcomes, a higher response rate has been recorded for the agreed respondents. Further, it is also supported by the literary evidence that CRM helps the employees to make the processes of call centres more efficient and to provide better services to the customer. Moreover, literature data also depict that CRM help to identify new customer segments and increasing the sales revenue, which in turn is beneficial to gain a competitive advantage in the future (Hoffmann and Birnbrich, 2012).

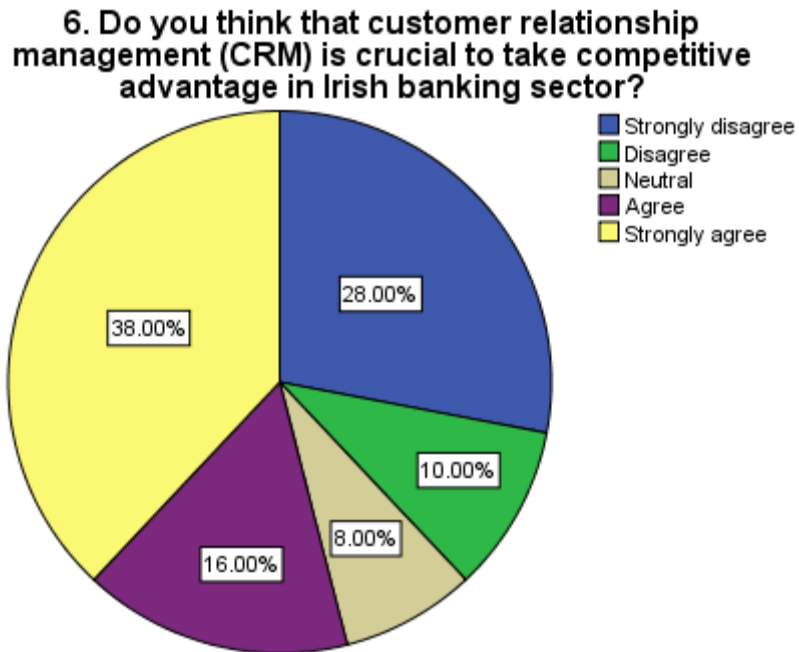


Figure 8 Importance of CRM to gain a competitive advantage in the Irish banking sector

Chart 6

CRM to increase customer traffic and business sales

Table 3 CRM to increase customer traffic and business sales

7. Do you agree with the statement, “CRM help to develop a significant customer base by adding new customers through the various online platform that adds business sales and profit.”					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Disagree	11	22.0	22.0	42.0
	Neutral	7	14.0	14.0	56.0

	Agree	7	14.0	14.0	70.0
	Strongly agree	15	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

Table 3 indicates the significance of CRM to increase the sales and profit of banks. Regard to this, it is identified that a total of 30% of the respondents are strongly agreed and 14% are agreed. On the other hand, 20% of the participants are strongly disagreed with concern. It is worth to note that the cumulative percentage of agreed respondents is 44% (14%+30%), which is just 2% higher than disagreed respondents. Further, literary findings also reflected that CRM techniques are focused on active dealing of customers and fulfilling customer demands on an urgent basis, which help to enhance customer loyalty also attract new customers. Moreover, e-CRM also help to add new customers through promoting banking products and services using various social media platforms that are beneficial for the growth of retail sector banks of Ireland (Hoffmann and Birnbrich, 2012).

7. Do you agree with the statement, "CRM help to develop a significant customer base by adding new customers through the various online platform that adds business sales and profit."

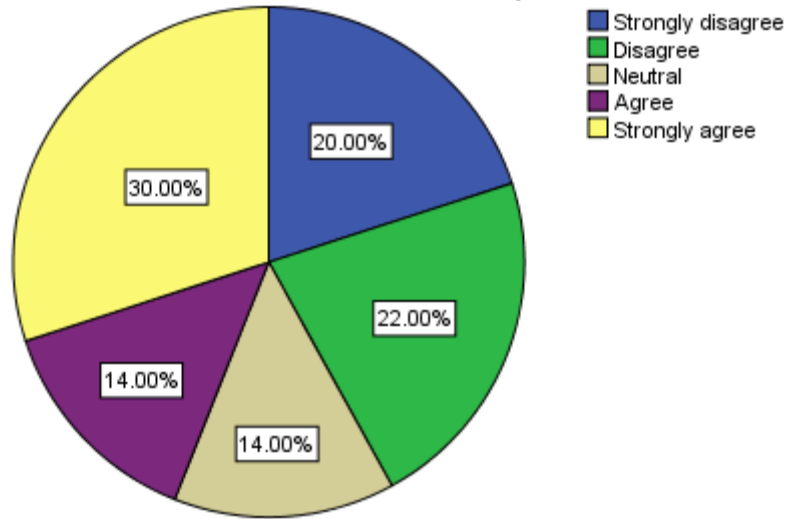


Figure 9 CRM to increase customer traffic and business sales

Chart 7

Utilisations of Information Technology by the staff to better customer servicing

Table 4 Utilisations of Information Technology by the staff to better customer servicing

8. Do you think that your organisation is using information technology to build strong relationships with the customers"?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Disagree	10	20.0	20.0	32.0
	Neutral	6	12.0	12.0	44.0
	Agree	12	24.0	24.0	68.0
	Strongly agree	16	32.0	32.0	100.0

	Total	50	100.0	100.0	
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Table 4

The above table reflects the perception of participants regarding the role of information technology in establishing a strong relationship with the customers. In this context, it has been identified that 32% of the respondents said that they are strongly agreed to the statement, and 24% of the respondents said that they are agreed with the statement. The response presented in the above frequency table reveals that the majority of the survey participants strongly prefer information technology to build and maintain a strong relationship with the customers. On a similar point, it is also evident from literature outcomes that IT solutions help to simplify the customer service processes. Moreover, effective use of information technology also helps the bank employees to fulfil the customer demand on an early basis, influence the customer's relationship with an organisation (Khodakarami and Chan, 2014).

8. Do you think that your organisation is using information technology to build strong relation with the customers"?

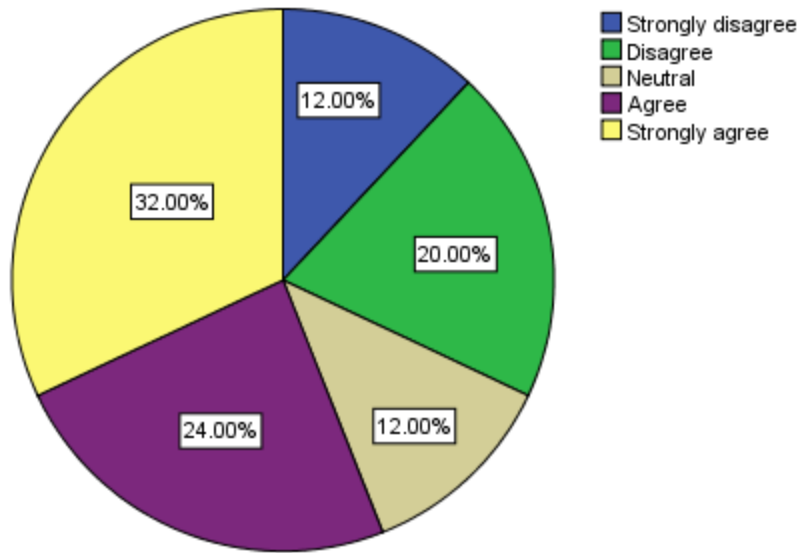


Figure 10 Utilisations of Information Technology by the staff to better customer servicing

Strategies utilised by employees for managing customer service in Retail Banking

Sector

Table 5 Strategies utilised by employees for managing customer service in Retail Banking Sector

9. In your opinion, what strategies are most effective in managing customer service in Retail banking sector?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	E-CRM	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Enterprise resource planning	13	26.0	26.0	46.0

	Automation of banking services	12	24.0	24.0	70.0
	Customer Segmentation	7	14.0	14.0	84.0
	Data analytics	4	8.0	8.0	92.0
	Cloud computing	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The above table depicts the participant's response reading the strategies used by them to manage customer demand in the retail banking sector of Ireland. Regard to this, it is analysed that Enterprise resource planning is considered as crucial for 26% of the respondents. ERP is referred to as management software that is used the banking organisations to automate the internal processes such as supply chain management and business process re-engineering. Further, the viewpoint of previous authors also reflected that ERP is a crucial method the customer relationship management in the retail banking sector. Further, a total of 24% of the respondents have chosen automation of banking services, and 20% of the respondents have chosen e-CRM. Regard to this, literary evidence suggested that automation help the banking staff to generate the leads and responding to the customer queries and concerns. Moreover, manual data entry is more time consuming, and it incorporates the chances of errors. Therefore, it is crucial for the banking staff to automate the complicated lead generation processes in order to minimise the chances of errors (Kirmaci, 2012).

The survey responses presented in the above table also depicts that customer segmentation, cloud computing, and data analytics are the practical techniques that are

utilised Irish banks in the current time to maintain a large volume of data generated from the transactions made by the customers. Furthermore, customer segmentation is also helping the banking staff to fulfil customer demand and preferences adequately.

9. In your opinion, what strategies are most effective in managing customer service in Retail banking sector?

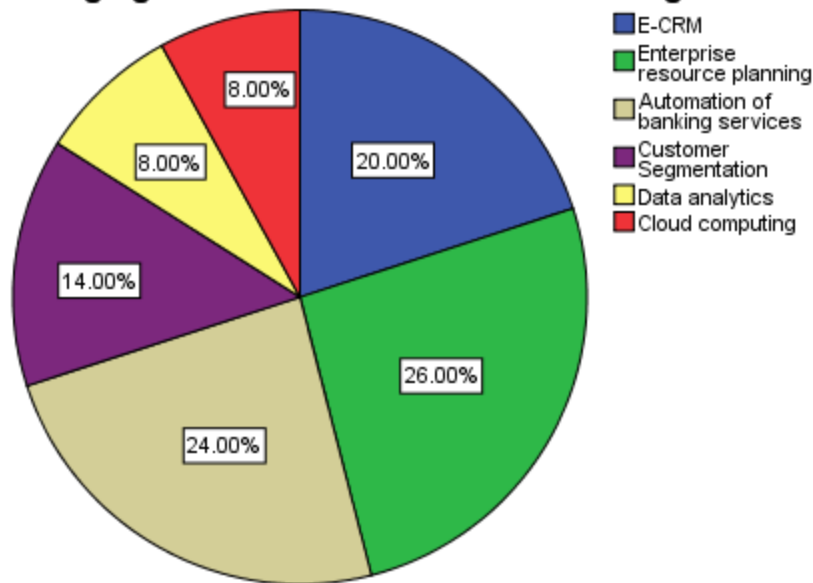


Figure 11 Strategies utilised by employees for managing customer service in Retail Banking Sector

Role of e-CRM to establish one-to-one communication with the Customers

Table 6 Role of e-CRM to establish one-to-one communication with the Customers

10. Do you think that effective use of e-CRM helps Irish banks to establish one-to-one communication with the customers''?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Disagree	9	18.0	18.0	34.0
	Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	42.0

	Agree	10	20.0	20.0	62.0
	Strongly agree	19	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

The above table reflects the opinion of respondents regarding the significance of e-CRM to maintain one-to-one communication with the customers. In this regard, it has been examined that a total of 38% of the strongly agreed to the fact, and 20% are agreed. Further, it is also identified from the literature outcomes that e-CRM is effectively utilised by the banking sector of Ireland to understand and fulfil customer's demand and choices (Klaus and Nguyen, 2013).

10. Do you think that effective use of e-CRM helps Irish banks to establish one-to-one communication with the customers"?

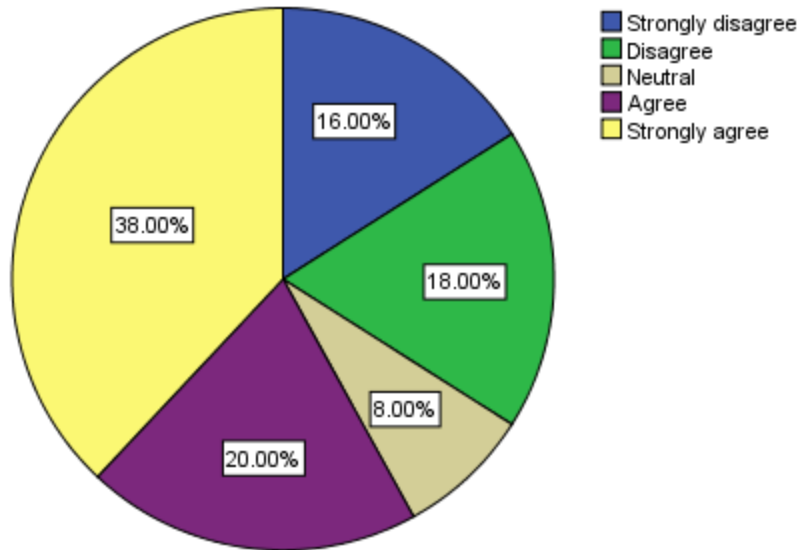


Figure 12 Role of e-CRM to establish one-to-one communication with the Customers
Effective use of Technology to automate the customer service in Retail Banking Sector

Table 7 Effective use of Technology to automate the customer service in Retail Banking Sector

11. Do you think that effective use of technology help to automate the customer service and processes of the retail banking sector"?"					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Disagree	6	12.0	12.0	26.0
	Neutral	9	18.0	18.0	44.0
	Agree	12	24.0	24.0	68.0
	Strongly agree	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 7

Table 7 present the outlook of respondents regarding the effectiveness of technology for automating customer services and process in Irish retail banking sector. Regarding this, Table 7 highlight that out of 50 sample participants 32% of respondents are strongly agreed and 24% of the total participants are agreed. On the other hand, the proportion of the total number of disagreed participants is only 26%, which is comparatively low as compared to agreed respondents. Further, it is also mentioned by the previous authors that banking staff should be focused on integrating modern technologies to automate customer services in retail banking. In this regard, ERP is considered as the most common techniques utilised in Irish banks to optimise internal banking processes and human resource services (Kotarba, 2016).

11. Do you think that effective use of technology help to automate the customer service and processes of retail banking sector"?

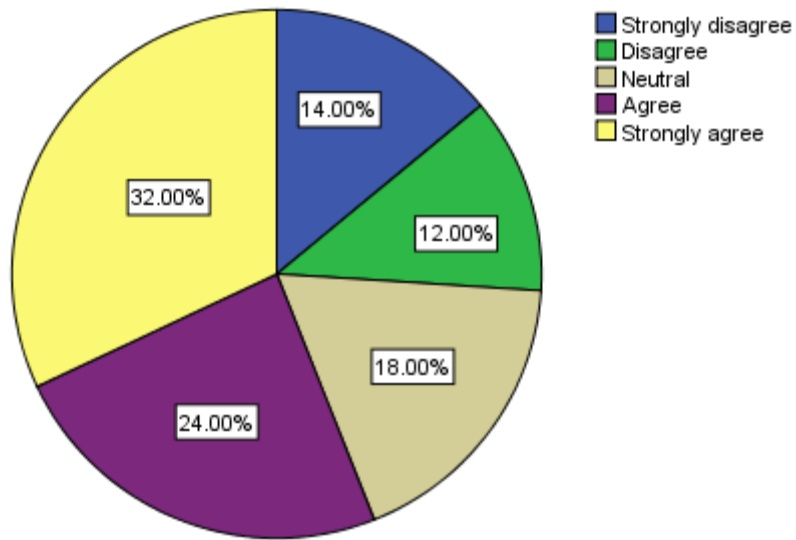


Figure 13 Effective use of Technology to automate the customer service in Retail Banking Sector

Quality of services in the Irish banks

Table 8 Quality of services in the Irish banks

12. Do you agree with the statement "Irish banks are providing quality of services to the customers by providing them with the crucial information regarding saving account, finance, and investments benefits"?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
	Disagree	7	14.0	14.0	36.0
	Neutral	6	12.0	12.0	48.0

	Agree	4	8.0	8.0	56.0
	Strongly agree	22	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 8

Table 8 demonstrates the views of the survey participants as to whether Irish banks provide quality of services and information regarding finance, account, and investment or not. Regarding this, a total of dissatisfaction rate is 36%. On the contrary, survey findings also highlight that 44% of the respondents are strongly agreed to the statement and 8% are agreed. Hence, findings of the survey reflect that quality of services is so much efficient in the Irish banking sector. The literature findings suggest increased competition and personalised services are the reason behind the effective customer services in the Irish banking section. Moreover, there is increased competition among different retail banking organisations due to which, banks are focused on improving their service quality with the use of effective technology (Lahteenmaki and Natti, 2013).

12. Do you agree with the statement “Irish banks are providing quality of services to the customers by providing them with the crucial information regarding saving account, finance, and investments benefits”?

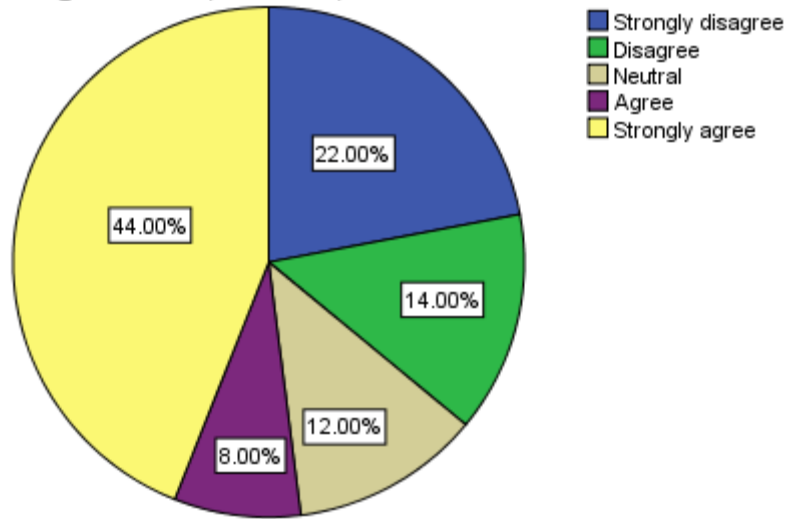


Figure 14 Quality of services in the Irish banks

Training provided by the banks to employees regarding CRM

Table 9 Training provided by the banks to employees regarding CRM

13. Do you think that your organisation has provided effective training for customer service agents to enhance customer satisfaction?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Disagree	7	14.0	14.0	26.0
	Neutral	7	14.0	14.0	40.0
	Agree	14	28.0	28.0	68.0
	Strongly agree	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 9

When a total of 50 respondents have been asked, whether their organisations are providing effective training for customer service agents to influence CRM or not. In this regard, more than 50% of the participants are strongly agreed. The survey findings exhibit that majority of the respondents perceive that their organisation is providing adequate opportunities to the employees to find out better ways to improve customer relationship management, which is essential to enhance customer satisfaction.

13. Do you think that your organisation has provided effective training to customer service agents to enhance customer satisfaction?

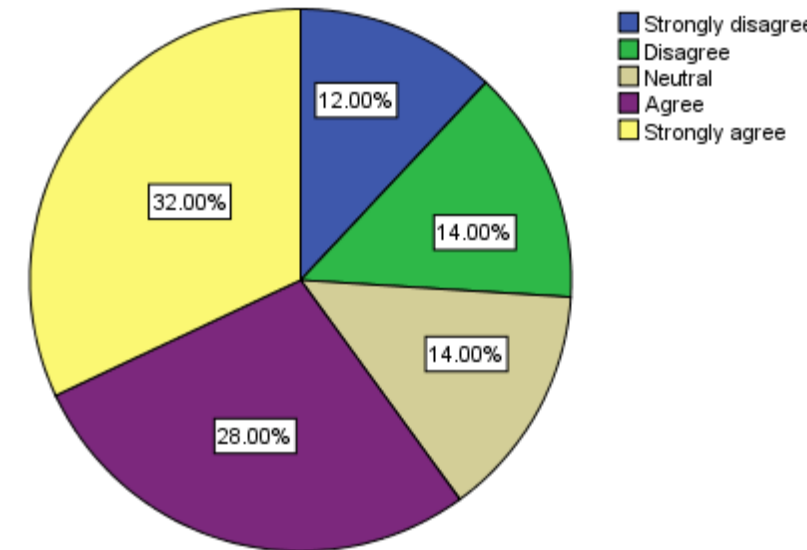


Figure 15 Training provided by the banks to employees regarding CRM

Use of Technology to Reduce Service time

Table 10 Use of Technology to Reduce Service time

14. Do you agree with the statement “e-CRM system help to reduce the time in serving each customer, which help to build customer confidence”?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Strongly disagree	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Disagree	9	18.0	18.0	32.0
	Neutral	9	18.0	18.0	50.0
	Agree	12	24.0	24.0	74.0
	Strongly agree	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 10

Table 10 describes the opinion of respondents regarding the requirement of e-CRM to reduce the waiting time and service delivery time in the Irish banking sector. In this regard, represents presented in the above table highlight that a large group of survey respondents are agreed with the statement that e-CRM system should be put in place to reduce the service time required to service each customer. Further, similar evidence has been collected from the argument made by previous researches who have suggested that e-CRM system is more efficient and faster in handling customer queries and concerns as compared to the traditional manual system. Therefore, retail banking organisations in Ireland are focused on adopting e-CRM to build consumer confidence (Linoff and Berry, 2011).

14. Do you agree with the statement “e-CRM system help to reduce the time in serving each customer, which help to build customer confidence”?

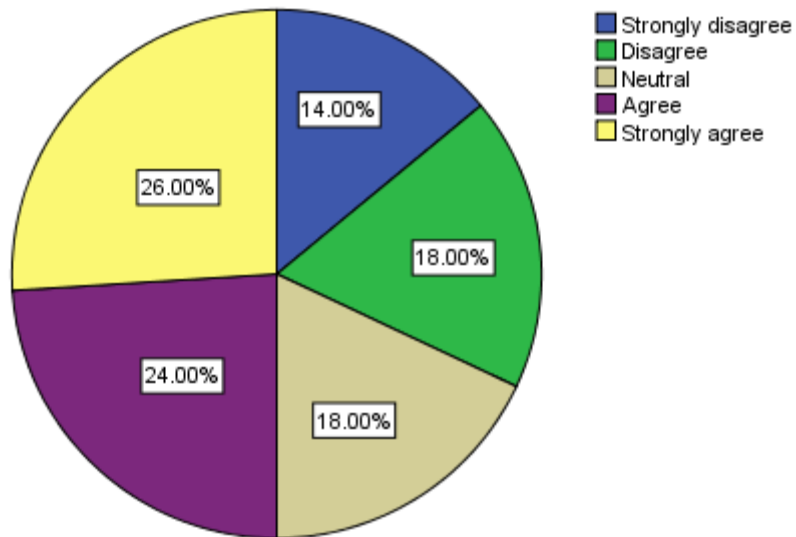


Figure 16 Use of Technology to Reduce Service time

Focus of banks to conduct a customer survey to improve customer services

Table 11 Focus of banks to conduct a customer survey to improve customer services

15. Do you think that your organisation conducts a customer survey on a regular basis to improve customer servicing?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Disagree	9	18.0	18.0	32.0
	Neutral	6	12.0	12.0	44.0
	Agree	14	28.0	28.0	72.0
	Strongly agree	14	28.0	28.0	100.0

	Total	50	100.0	100.0	
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Table 11

Table 11 illustrate that Irish banking organisations conduct customer surveys on a regular basis to understand customer demand and preferences. On this concern, a total of 28% of the respondents are found to be strongly agreed. Furthermore, the outcomes of previous researches also reflected that customer surveys help to identify changing customer demand and needs. Further, customer surveys are also beneficial for the bank employees to analyse the changes they need to adopt in their system to increase customer satisfaction (Lahteenmaki and Natti, 2013).

15. Do you think that your organisation conduct customer survey on regular basis to improve customer servicing?

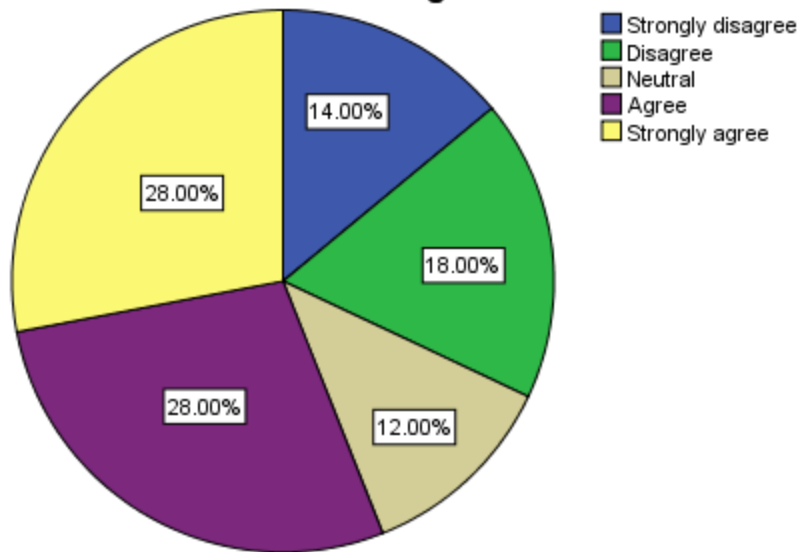


Figure 17 Focus of banks to conduct a customer survey to improve customer services
Complexities faced by the employees in managing customer service in Irish retail banking sector

Table 12 Complexities faced by the employees in managing customer service in Irish retail banking sector

16. According to you, what complexities do you face in managing customer service in the retail banking sector of Ireland?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Increased competition	16	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Increased cost associated with the loan	23	46.0	46.0	78.0
	Lack of customer confidence	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 12

Table 12 reflected the complexities faced by the bank staff in managing customer servicing in the retail sector banks of Ireland. In this regard, it has been examined that, 32% of the respondents perceive that increased competition is a major hindrance for the Irish banks in the current time. Further, it is also analysed that the increased cost of the loan is also a problem for the banking professionals in Ireland. Due to which, it became difficult for banking professionals to retain customers and maintain customer loyalty. For this regard, literature findings suggested that the banking professionals should adopt a positive attitude and focused on enhancing their services with the use of technology to sustain in the competitive business environment (Linoff and Berry, 2011).

16. According to you, what complexities do you face in managing customer service in retail banking sector of Ireland?

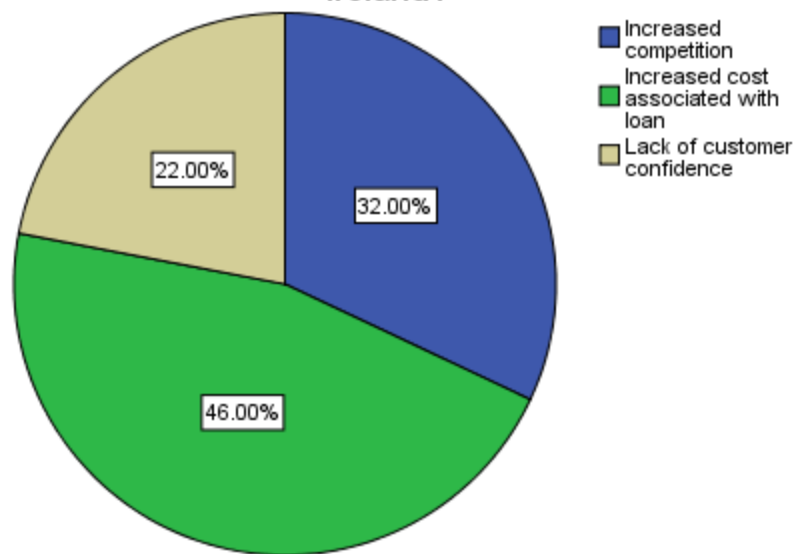


Figure 18 Complexities faced by the employees in managing customer service in Irish retail banking sector

Elements to improve customer service in Retail banking sector of Ireland

Table 13 Elements to improve customer service in Retail banking sector of Ireland

17. According to you, what are the crucial elements to improve customer service in the retail banking sector of Ireland?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive attitude of staff	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Ease of access to banking and financial services	12	24.0	24.0	54.0
	Service Efficiency	9	18.0	18.0	72.0
	Value-added services	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 13

Table 13 reflected that it is crucial to improve customer service in the retail banking sector of Ireland. For this regard, various measures should be adopted by customer service agents and banking professionals. It is identified from the above frequency table that majority of the respondents (30%) perceive that the positive attitude of staff is essential to fulfil customer confidence. Further, 24% of the respondents think that ease of access to banking services is crucial to attract more customers. A total of 28% of the respondents think that value-added services should be provided by the banks to gain customer attention. Apart from this service efficiency is also considered by 18% of the respondents. Thus, the survey outcomes reflect that all elements presented in the above table should be incorporated by the banks to retain the customers for a long time.

17. According to you, what are the crucial elements to improve customer service in retail banking sector of Ireland?

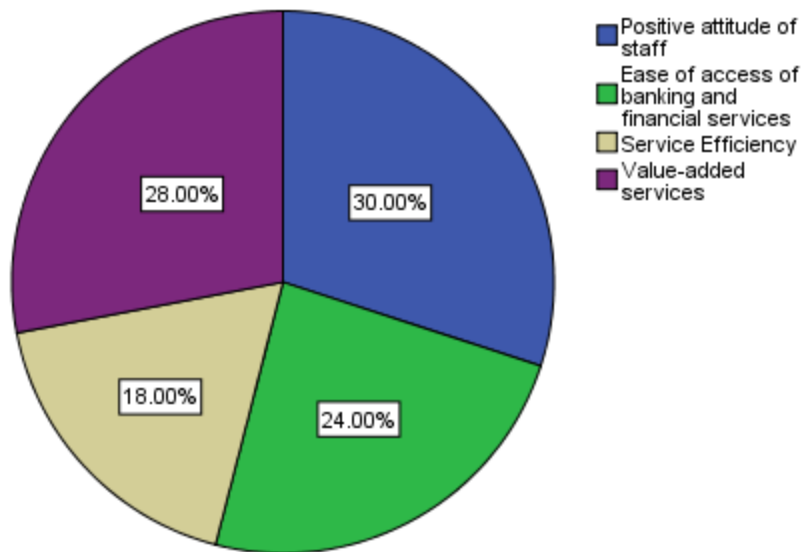


Figure 19 Elements to improve customer service in Retail banking sector of Ireland

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

In order to analyse the customer service segment of CRM in the retail banking sector of Ireland, three research hypotheses have been structured. Since the variables included in the research hypotheses have been measured on a nominal scale (categorical variables). Therefore, a chi-square test is a suitable choice to test the significance of research hypotheses as mentioned below. For this regard, a chi-square statistic is calculated from SPSS, and the associated significance value (p-value) is compared with the pre-specified level of significance. In this regard the current research, alpha is set as 0.05 (5%). After obtaining the value of p, if it is obtained less than 0.05, then the null hypothesis has to be rejected; otherwise, the researcher has to accept the null hypothesis.

Table 14 H1: The current customer service is significantly utilised in the Irish retail banking sector to ensure customer relationship management.

The current customer service is significantly utilised in the Irish retail banking sector to ensure customer relationship management.			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly disagree	5	10.0	-5.0
Disagree	9	10.0	-1.0
Neutral	5	10.0	-5.0
Agree	7	10.0	-3.0
Strongly agree	24	10.0	14.0
Total	50		

Table 15 Test Statistics

Test Statistics	
	Hypothesis 1: The current customer service is significantly utilised in the Irish retail banking sector to ensure customer relationship management.
Chi-Square	25.600
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 10.0.	

Hypothesis 1 has been incorporated in the research to examine the significance of customer services provided by the bank professionals in order to ensure customer relationship management. The results of chi-square tests have been presented in the above table. Table 1 demonstrates the observed and expected frequency count of the respondents regarding the statement. It has been identified that the value of expected N is the same for all Likert scale variables. Table 15 illustrate that the value of test-statistic is 25.6 at 4 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value is 0.00. The sample data provide evidence for the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of H1 as the p-value of the test is less than 0.05. It can be determined that Irish banks are focused on effectively utilising customer services to ensure customer relationship management.

Table 16 H2: Customer segmentation plays a crucial role to understand customer behaviour in the retail banking sector of Ireland.

Customer segmentation plays a crucial role to understand customer behaviour in the retail banking sector of Ireland.			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly disagree	5	10.0	-5.0
Disagree	11	10.0	1.0
Neutral	5	10.0	-5.0
Agree	8	10.0	-2.0
Strongly agree	21	10.0	11.0
Total	50		

Table 17 Test Statistics

	Hypothesis 2: Customer segmentation play a crucial role to understand customer behaviour in the retail banking sector of Ireland.
Chi-Square	17.600
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.001

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5.

The minimum expected cell frequency is 10.0.

Table 16 indicate the responses provided by the participants regarding the significance of customer segmentation to analyse customer behaviour. In order to analyse this, a chi-square test statistic is calculated. It has been identified that $\chi^2(4) = 17.6$, $p = 0.01$. The outcome of the test mentioned in table 17 illustrate that the p-value is less than 0.05; thus, it can be assured that there is no enough against H2 from the evidence collected from sample data. Thus, it can be said that customer segmentation could be a crucial element to analyse customer behaviour in the retail banking sector of Ireland.

Table 18 H3: CRM help to develop a significant customer base by adding new customers that adds business sales and profit.

CRM help to develop a significant customer base by adding new customers that adds business sales and profit.			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly disagree	5	10.0	-5.0
Disagree	8	10.0	-2.0
Neutral	5	10.0	-5.0
Agree	5	10.0	-5.0
Strongly agree	27	10.0	17.0
Total	50		

Table 19 Test Statistics

Test Statistics	
	Hypothesis 3: CRM help to develop a significant customer base by adding new customers that adds business sales and profit.
Chi-Square	36.800
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 10.0.	

The above-mentioned research hypothesis has been utilised to the importance of CRM to build a significant customer base. The response collected from the survey participants regarding this have been tested for the hidden trend or relationship using a chi-square test. The outcome of test show that $\chi^2(4) = 36.8$, $p=0.00 < 0.05$. Since the p-value for the test is less than the pre-fixed level of significance. Thus, it can be said that H3 is true, and it should be accepted with a 95% level of confidence. From the results of statistical tests, it could be determined that CRM help to build significant customer traffic, which in turn help to increase the business profits.

4.4 Summary

It can be summarised from the survey evidence that CRM plays a significant role in the Irish banking sector to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, customer service could be improved by utilising information technology, ERP, customer survey, and customer segmentation. Further, the survey findings also reflected that banking staff should adopt a positive attitude towards the customers and should provide them with value-added services in order to sustain in the competitive business environment.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter covers interpretation and discussion of the findings exhibited in the above chapter in support of the case studies of different banking institutions of Irish retail banking. The evidence of survey, literature search and case studies are presented in this chapter to reveal the impact of customer service on the CRM. The complications in managing the effectiveness of customer service and the required changes for CRM are also discussed in this chapter. Overall, discussion on the key facts of customer service in the Irish banking sector in this research study is directed towards addressing research objectives and questions.

5.2 Discussion- Primary and Secondary Data Analysis

5.2.1 Discussion of Key Facts of Survey

It has been analysed from the survey evidence that majority of the respondents perceive that retail banks in Ireland are focused on satisfying customer demands and requirements in order to maintain a better relationship with the customers. Regarding this, the agreement rate has found out to be slightly less than 50%. Further, it has been identified that banks are focused on understanding customer demands to enhance their satisfaction level. Literature data also suggest that it is crucial in the financial service industry to adopt various changes such as utilisation of digital services, decrease in the transaction cost, and adoption of new rules made by the government. For this regard, retail banking firms or Ireland has invested in the technology to maintain a long-term relationship with the customers (Al-Refaie, Tahat, and Bata, 2014). It is further evaluated from the survey outcomes that CRM is an essential element to take a competitive

advantage in the banking sector of Ireland. The retail banking organisations have switched towards mobile and retail banking to provide quick response to the customer queries. CRM helps banks to feel the customer privileged as they think that banks are quite concerned about their demands.

It is evident from the findings of primary data that the firms, which are focused on customer relationship management, can attract a large number of customers, which in turn help to increase business profit and sales. The findings of secondary data also evidenced that it is very difficult to increase the customer base for the banks in the competitive business era. Moreover, it is also difficult to retain existing customers. As customer retention is associated with customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. Due to this, banking organisations in Ireland are focused on utilising information to identify and fulfil customer demand. It is evaluated from the evidence collected from the literature that CRM is accepted by the banks in Ireland to manage the interaction of banks with the key stakeholders such as clients, customers, and sales prospects. It influences banks to make the use of digital technology to synchronise and automate the business processes, customer service, and technical support. The goal of retail organisations behind adopting CRM is to attract and win the confidence of new customers and to retain the customer base (Mang'unyi, Khabala, and Govender, 2017).

It has been identified that retail banks in Ireland are focused on utilising various strategies to provide efficient services to the customers. For this regard, survey findings highlight that the retail sector banks in Ireland most commonly employ E-CRM and enterprise resource planning. E-CRM help the banks to collect consumer data regarding their transactions and most frequently used services of the banks. Moreover, the e-CRM

strategy also provides a complete picture to the bankers so that they can effectively deliver personalised services to the banks that are beneficial to gain lifetime trust of the customers. It is further evaluated from the primary responses that CRM help the Irish banks to maintain one-on-one communication with each customer. On the same context, literature findings depict that CRM makes it easy for the banks to highlight customer data, product purchasing trends, and engagement channels. The marketing team of Ireland banks are focused on discovering customer engagement opportunities to enlightening customer experience (Sivaraks, Krairit, and Tang, 2011).

It is identified from the survey findings that e-CRM help to reduce the service time of the customer, which helped the Irish banks to gain customer confidence. With the incorporation of e-CRM strategies, bankers are spending more time in strengthening customer experience rather than collecting and scrutinising customer data. It is further examined from the survey findings that Irish banks conduct a customer survey at frequent time intervals in order to understand customer requirement. Furthermore, banks are also providing training of e-CRM training to the staff so that they can manage and retain the customers. Primary and secondary data findings highlighted that increased competition and increased cost of the loan are the major issues for the Irish banks to handle the customer service. For this regard, bankers should adopt various measures such as value-added services and a positive attitude of the staff (Khare, 2010).

5.2.2 Discussion of Key Facts of Case Studies of Irish Retail Banking

Bank of Ireland

Bank of Ireland (BOI) focuses on the easiness in the accessibility of banking services by the customers and thus, it adopts changes in the current services as per the

market demands. The phone service for customer queries at BOI is switched to digital channel as an initiative of offering "innovative digital offerings". The access of information turns effective for Bank of Ireland customers because of various options including 365 online, personal banking and automated services (Reddan, 2017). However, automated or digital service of BOI that totally constrains phone inquiries is the complex issue in the effectiveness of customer service because “vulnerable and elderly customers” are not flexible with digital options. Customer service of BOI should serve customer queries through multiple ways including digital and phone options along with customer desk at the bank in similar to the other leading banking institutions in Ireland; such as Allied Irish Bank, Ulster Bank, TSB and KBC (Reddan, 2017).

Besides this, BOI restrictions to withdrawal and deposit amount over the counter in 2015 were good initiatives towards stimulating service efficiency via digital technology, but it was opposed by the customers. In this context, the effectiveness of customer service is managed by the bank through the provision of branch staff assistance or support to the customers, so that they can easily use technology-based solutions (Reddan, 2017). Customers at BOI are served by operating trading segments and support division that fosters a strong relationship with the customers (Bank of Ireland, 2019). It has been indicated that the management of BOI has a significant concern to brilliantly and professionally serve customers through technological transformation and value-added offers. Such transformation leads to deepen the relationship with the existing customers and also extends reach to the new customer base that positively affects the growth of BOI in the Irish banking sector (Investor Day 2018 transcript, 2018).

The changes in the customer service of BOI in the alignment of the market demands and developments help the operations teams to ensure smooth service experience that ultimately supports the growth and expansion of the bank (Bank of Ireland, 2019). The goal of transformation of BOI through extending “multi-year transformation” is directly associated with improving customer service efficiency and with supporting continuity of growth in terms of the profitability (Investor Day 2018 transcript, 2018, p.1). The trusted relationship of BOI with the customers to serve their existing and emerging demand is the key contributor in the bank’s growth (Investor Day 2018 transcript, 2018).



Figure 20 Allied Bank of Ireland

(Source: <https://group.aib.ie/content/dam/aib/investorrelations/docs/our-customers.pdf>)

Allied Irish Bank (AIB) is another case of the leading banking institution in Ireland that considerably value customers’ interest. Customer-centric operations or customers’ first is the brand value of AIB in the Irish banking sector in order to serve customers need. The key focus of the bank's operations is to serve financial needs with service efficiency to assure giving superior experience. AIB's Customer Experience Programme in Ireland has been commenced to access customers' feedback to improve service choices and their

accessibility. The focus of such a programme is to foster interaction with the customers, to meet their expected needs. Besides this, AIB also utilized "tailored offerings" along with personalised services to fulfil individual customer expected demand for the remarkable experience of customers that supports relationship management (AIB, n.d.).

It has been analysed that AIB in Ireland has been sustaining growth and competitive position through processing service delivery using a customer-centric approach that supports relationship management. For personalise banking experience to the customers, agreement of AIB with Boxever (personalisation platform) is one of the good examples. The bank has signed this contract to fulfil changing or dynamic financial products or service expectations of the customers (FinTech Futures, 2019). AIB's aim behind signing a contract with Boxever is to serve "one-to-one personalisation" that uphold long term relationship with the customers. This has indicated the agile approach of AIB to manage changes in the existing services as per the market demand aids the employees to serve customers with a unique experience that fosters their relationship (FinTech Futures, 2019). It has been deduced from the evaluation of AIB's service delivery that key focus of the bank is to develop and maintain a strong relationship with customers by serving their individualised and emerging demand as per the market situations and advancements. This indicates that customer service is the key factor that eventually focused on CRM and sustainable competitive position in the industry. The adoption of the changes in the existing service provision supports the bank's growth in terms of holding market share and profitability growth as a whole.

KBC Ireland

In the Irish banking industry, KBC has built its brand position and name as "a Digital-First Customer Centric Bank" (GlobeNewswire, 2017). In the Irish banking sector, KBC is the leading competitor or frontrunner with respect to innovative service for the customers in the market (Manning, 2019). This service of KBC for the customers in Ireland banking sector contributes to attaining 10% or more market share because it allows customers to access various digital differentiators (GlobeNewswire, 2017). The accessibility of KBC banking service for customers is not constrained by the time, while it is available for 24/7. Besides that, easy investment process for the customers is also a unique service offering of KBC that aid customers to start making an investment in the profitable ventures (GlobeNewswire, 2017; Manning, 2019).

This growth strategy of KBC in the market of technological advancements helps to endure growth in the industry. The personalised and advanced banking service for the customers aids KBC Ireland to keep the loyalty of the existing customers and also stimulates attraction of the potential retail customer. The digitalisation service of KBC in Ireland gives affluent service experience to the customers as such digital transformation in the banking sector lessens the gap between the service provider and receiver. The collaboration of KBC with the customers' in the market through digital channels gives extensive scope to gain knowledge of the changing interests of customers that further support following the customer-centric approach (GlobeNewswire, 2017). This helps to achieve customer satisfaction and builds a relationship as a result. The network of Omni channel is adapted by KBC to increase banking service accessibility by wider customer mass. The changes in the existing distribution network of KBC as per the changing behaviour of customers have significantly promoted relationship (KBC, 2019).

It has been analysed that service delivery in a customer-centric way helps to render satisfying services to the target customers, which builds and maintains trusts in terms of quality of service offerings. It has been discussed that customer relationship in the competitive environment of the banking sector is considerably affected by the determinants of satisfaction and trust. Thus, inefficient customer service and lack of trust stimulate risk of sales and profitability decrement due to market share loss. Differentiation in service offerings of KBC than other competing banking institutions in the Irish banking affirms CRM. The banks structured planning and analysis as per the customised needs assist to meet customers' demand in an efficient way. The evaluation of the different case studies of Irish banks in the context of the customer service and CRM have been indicated aligned practices and changes in the existing service delivery of the banks to meet customers' demand. The banks in Ireland have been focusing on giving remarkable experience to the customers to keep good association over the long run. The cases of Ireland banks have revealed that addition in the existing services and switch towards a customer-centric approach are positively influenced CRM. In evidence of the case studies, it has been discussed customer experience builds trust with the banking services that foster loyalty and relationship at the end outcome. Overall, it has been discussed that differentiation in the service provision in the banking sector that sustains customers' satisfaction is an important aspect of the CRM.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The aim of the undertaken study was to examine the importance of efficient customer service in customer relationship management and to gain customer loyalty in the retail sector banks of Ireland. For this regard, this study utilises survey as primary data collection tool and literary information as a secondary data collection tool. The study findings deduce that CRM is a process that influences communication between businesses and customers. Moreover, the study finding also reflects that CRM helps to fulfil customer demand and requirements. CRM help to enhance the marketing experience of the customers as the queries and concern of the customers are solved by the bank employees through an online platform.

Due to the dynamic nature of financial services, the retail banks of Ireland are focused on reducing the transaction cost and adopting digital technologies to enhance customer satisfaction. In a similar regard, the results of hypothesis 1 shown that Irish banks more focused on improving customer services to ensure better customer relationship management. The review of different case studies of Irish retail banks is indicated positive perception and concern of management towards stimulating flexibility and accessibility of banking services for the customers. The digitisation in the banking customer service is the good initiate of Irish banks to influence CRM, but lacks effective execution and implementation is important else it could negatively affect CRM. Staff assistance to the customers, particularly “vulnerable and elderly customers” in using digital services is a good way to flourish such changes in an effective way. It can be concluded that customers’ expectations and management perception both are to be aligned

in the process of new service offerings or changes in the existing services to effect on the CRM.

Moreover, retail banks of Ireland are also utilising E-CRM to fulfil consumer needs and desires. Further, it is also identified that retail sector banking organisations of Ireland have utilised various measures such as ERP, information technology, customer segmentation to develop an understanding of consumer behaviour and demographics. It is also evident from the outcome of hypothesis 2 that customer segmentation plays a significant role in analysing customer behaviour in retail banks of Ireland. It has also been generalised that customise service offerings in the retail banking keeps a strong association of the banking management and customers, which is the key to customer satisfaction and relationship in the long term. Service management is directly proportional to the customers' satisfaction and retention; and thus, it has to be an important concern for the banking sector. Customer trust is one of the significant factors that severely affected due to ineffective customer service. This has been ultimately affected sales and profitability of the banking institutions because robust CRM indicates the concern towards customers' interests that motivates their long-term relationship with a particular banking organisation in Ireland.

It is evident from the study findings that CRM help the employees of retail banks to keep track of data of historical records of the customers. The retail sector banks of Ireland have adopted automation to optimise manual data entry processes, which takes a lot of time and hence reduce customer satisfaction. The retail sector banks of Ireland are focused on providing adequate information to the customers regarding tax planning, savings accounts, and loan facility to increase customer satisfaction. The complications

in accessing various banking services by the customers are essential to be focused by the Irish banking institutions because recent advancements in the banking services pose a threat to the quasi-monopoly. The lack of competition in the Irish banking sector is a serious concern for the banking sector development because it has been obstructed growth in terms of the new banking services. The extent of competitive threat in the industry would have a direct link with the research and development, and thereby, it can be concluded that customer service development is to be stimulated in respect of the increasing market share.

In a similar regard, it is also identified from the hypothesis 3 that CRM helps the banks to maintain a significant customer base, which in turn increase business sales and profitability. It is identified that increased competition and lack of effective leadership are the major threats for the banks behind the inconsistencies of the banking services. For this regard, Irish banks have produced technological advancement to aid flexibility in customer services. It is recognised from the study findings that customer relationship management helps the retail banks to gain consumer trust and effective management of the fund. It is also identified that service effectiveness is positively related to customer satisfaction and service efficiency. Therefore, Irish banks should be focused on ease of service efficiency, value-added services, and ease of customer services. CRM is primarily based on the service efficiency element, and thereby, customised service provisions in concern of changing customer demand and technology advancements are essential management concerns. The customer service element of CRM assures maintaining high market share and profitability growth.

6.2 Recommendations

The integration of management perception with the customers' changing demand is the suggested course of action for the retail banks in Ireland. Management perception for customer service if it aligns with customers' expected service demand would lessen the gap in the effectiveness of customer service that manages a relationship with the existing customers and improves the relationship with the new customers. Service efficiency would be promoted through balancing customer expectations and management perception that is related to the positive word of mouth and sustainable competitive position. Customer service in retail banking would also be improved through effective market research and continuous learning of the employees from the outlook of relationship management (Dibb and Meadows, 2001).

Market research would provide knowledge of customers' demand, while continuous learning of employees' in the direction of emerging customers' demand would help the employees to meet customers' satisfaction. For the service efficiency, it is important to manage learning and training of employees' in the subsequent direction to avoid inconvenience in access of banking services by customers that deal with issues like negative perception and dissatisfaction from banking services. The integrated training system with the market would ensure serving customers with the utmost extent that plays a crucial role in the customers' attraction and retention (O'loughlin and Szmigin, 2005).

Besides this, retail banking institution in Ireland is also recommended to make customers aware of the benefits of changes in the existing services to sustain their confidence and trust. The review of the case studies of different banks exposed the issue of "vulnerable and elderly customers" lack agreement with the entire digital service

offerings. Digital service offerings of the banks in Ireland without effective promotion and professional planning would negatively affect customers' trust and might be the reason for their switching to the other service providers. The replace of the existing services completely should be progressed through efficient planning instead of mere replacement as per the market demand. The meeting of the individualised service demand is the motive of the banking institutions and thus, changes in the existing customer service for the CRM should be focused (Heinonen, 2007). Overall, Irish retail banking institutions are recommended to manage changes in the current system as per the change model of Kurt Lewin, which is the three-stage model, including unfreezing, change and freeze. This would be effective to prevent the consequences of unplanned changes for the customers and employees as a whole (O'loughlin and Szmigin, 2005).

6.3 Future Recommendations

This research study has covered good knowledge of customer service and CRM in the retail banking sector of Ireland. Future researchers can cite this work in their studies based on the subject of CRM in which customer service is the key element of meeting customers' expected service demand. The new directions that would be used by future researchers to explore more information on the subject are suggested as follow:

Qualitative Data Collection - Survey was conducted in this research along with SPSS analysis, which is the quantitative analysis. Future researchers to add more information would use qualitative data collection and analysis technique that would help in-depth understanding of the research subject. In the similar research, interview method would be an appropriate choice for the future researchers that would help to flourish detailed discussion on the customer service element of CRM. The interactive discussion

in the interview method would help to find effectiveness and flaws in the customer service of banking organisations along with associated reasons because of more scope of discussion for collecting data. Moreover, the interview data collection method in this research would help to explore new policies and initiatives of the Irish retail banking sector for customer service and relationship management as a long-term effect. Thus, interview with the concerned sample population and respondents in the future research would give exposure to carry the discussion on the various aspects. The analysis will be performed using thematic analysis to discuss critically and present a number of key aspects to derive a valid conclusion. The use of different theories of CRM and marketing would be incorporated with qualitative data collection in the process of collecting detailed data (Wilson, 2014).

Comparative Study – Another recommendation for future researchers to explore and examine the effect of customer service on the CRM is to conduct a comparative study. A comparative study can be conducted to examine the effect of different elements of CRM on the bank's competitive position and growth. This research study was limited to the single element of the customer service and thereby; inclusion to the various elements of CRM in the future study would extend the scope of exploring more data, and identification of the significant or insignificant relationship of customer service with CRM. Moreover, the comparative study would conduct in respect of customer service effectiveness for CRM in the retail banking sector and other service sectors; such as healthcare and hotel or restaurant.

Chapter 7: Reflection

I have conducted a research study to examine the customer service segment of customer relationship management in the retail banking sector of Ireland as a part of the academic contribution. After the successful completion of the research, this section is dedicated to reflecting the knowledge development process and challenges that I have faced throughout the research process. This section helps me to evaluate my strength, weakness, and skills that I have developed throughout the entire course of action. Along with this, this section also introduces the readers regarding the cautions they have to take before starting a research project and also regarding the knowledge they will develop from the research project (Dodd and Sundheim, 2011).

For this regard, a Gibbs model has utilised to present a research reflection in a systematic manner with the incorporation of five steps description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan as illustrated in figure 1.



Figure 21 Gibbs Model of Reflection on Learning

Description

In order to successfully complete a research study, a researcher has to develop a proper knowledge and understanding of searching, structuring, academic writing, data collection methods, and critical analysis processes. In order to initiate the study, I have given enough time to review the previous researches. In order to gather real-time information regarding the research topic, I have conducted a primary study within the employees of retail sector employees of the banks. For this regard, I have identified a target population in order to share their knowledge in our research. From the target population, we have selected a sample of respondents to participate through simple random sampling and taking their consent. In this research project, I have first time conducted an interview, so I was not aware of the structuring of the questionnaire and scales to be used in the questionnaire. I have searched the questionnaire prepared by the previous researcher on CRM and customer services and updated myself with the Likert scale items that I have used in my questionnaire. After collecting the quantitative data from the survey participants, I have utilised Statistical software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences for frequency and graphical analysis of the data. It was quite difficult for me to learn new software; for this regard, I have studied statistical tools and functions from various SPSS tutorial available online. Further, I have critically gathered secondary information from the case study of various banks to analyse their approach of CRM and customer service.

Feelings

After the accomplishment of this research study, I have realised that the research helped me in enhancing my academic knowledge and skills. I have learned to web

searching operation in order to collect essential information regarding the research topic. This represents help me to develop my academic skills as I have learned to write research objectives, literature review, research methods, analysis and conclusion. On the other hand, this research also helps me learn time management skills, which would help me in my future. Time management played a crucial role in aiding my work efficiency and increased my confidence regarding this project (Forsyth, 2013). However, I have faced some challenges at the initial stage in interpreting and analysing the perspectives of different academicians and survey participants. But as I was concerned regarding the quality of my work, so I have spent more time to work on my weak areas and polishing the desired skills.

Evaluation

I have not only gained theoretical knowledge from the research while I have also learned about various aspects of customer relationship management and strategies to improve customer services. This project helps me in understanding the importance of effective services for customer relationship management in retail sector banks of Ireland. In the literature review of this dissertation, I have understood the viewpoint of various authors regarding customer relationship management. I have also updated my knowledge regarding the tactics used by the banks for customer loyalty and customer relationship management. I have also investigated the difficulties experienced by the bank employees and managers in effective service management in the retail sector banks of Ireland. I have also proposed some measure of effective management of customer services with the help of a conceptual framework.

I have also gained significant information regarding the research methods used in academic projects to generate meaningful findings regarding the research study. On conducting the research, I gained significant learning of research methods and came to know of its crucial role in deriving meaningful findings in the research study. In the undertaken research, mixed research methods have been incorporated by using both the qualitative and quantitative data. Apart from this, I have also collected significant information regarding the selection of suitable research design, approach, method, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations (Martin and Wallace, 2016).

Analysis

Through the response of the survey participants, I have analysed that CRM is crucial in the banking sector to gain customer trust and loyalty. Further, it is also analysed that employees of Ireland banks are focused on matching customer demand and needs regarding financial products and services. Moreover, they are also focused on adopting various technologies to decrease the service time and to provide personalized services to customers. This research is proved to be beneficial in overcoming my weakness and growing diverse proficiencies. I have regularly stepped forward my typing speed as the overall word count of the dissertation is 20000. I have also flourished my academic skills regarding the formatting, editing, and presenting the content in an academic dissertation. I have also improved my vocabulary to a greater extent.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude at the end of the research that this research helped me in growing my personal and professional skills that are beneficial for my future endeavours. Moreover, this section of the dissertation helped me in identifying my strength, weakness,

and challenges that I have gone through during the entire research work. Thus, I would now focus on my weak areas and attend various training and seminars to add efficiency and quality in my future academic work.

Action plan

In future, I would like to work on examining the role of technology for the improvement of customer service in retail sector banks of Ireland. This research helps retail banks in analysing digital tools that help them in improving their service quality. I would like to conduct the interview among the customer support managers to examine their views regarding the use of modern techniques for improving customer services.

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Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

1. Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

2. Age

- a) less than 25
- b) 25-50 years
- c) Greater than 50 years

3. How much experience do you have in Irish banking sector?

- a) less than a year
- b) 1-5 years
- c) 5-10 years
- d) greater than 10 year

4. Educational Qualification

- a) Diploma
- b) Bachelors
- c) Masters
- d) PhD
- e) Other professional qualifications

5. Do you think that Irish banks are focused on CRM to satisfy the needs and requirements of the customers?

- a) Strongly disagree

b) Disagree

c) Neutral

d) Agree

e) Strongly agree

6. Do you think that customer relationship management (CRM) is crucial to take competitive advantage in Irish banking sector?

a) Strongly disagree

b) Disagree

c) Neutral

d) Agree

e) Strongly agree

7. Do you agree with the statement, "CRM help to develop a significant customer base by adding new customers through the various online platform that adds business sales and profit."

a) Strongly disagree

b) Disagree

c) Neutral

d) Agree

e) Strongly agree

8. Do you think that your organisation is using information technology to build strong relation with the customers"?

a) Strongly disagree

b) Disagree

c) Neutral

d) Agree

e) Strongly agree

9. In your opinion, what strategies are most effective in managing customer service in
Retail banking sector?

a) E-CRM

b) Enterprise resource planning

c) Automation of banking services

d) Customer Segmentation

e) Data analytics

f) Cloud computing

g) If other, please specify

10. Do you think that effective use of e-CRM helps Irish banks to establish one-to-one
communication with the customers"?

a) Strongly disagree

b) Disagree

c) Neutral

d) Agree

e) Strongly agree

11. Do you think that effective use of technology help to automate the customerservice
and processes of retail banking sector"?

a) Strongly disagree

b) Disagree

- c) Neutral
- d) Agree
- e) Strongly agree

12. Do you agree with the statement “Irish banks are providing quality of services to the customers by providing them with the crucial information regarding saving account, finance, and investmentsbenefits”?

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Neutral
- d) Agree
- e) Strongly agree

13. Do you think that your organisation has provided effective training to customer service agents to enhance customer satisfaction?

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Neutral
- d) Agree
- e) Strongly agree

14. Do you agree with the statement “e-CRM **system** help to reduce the time in serving each customer, which help to build customer confidence”?

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Neutral

d) Agree

e) Strongly agree

15. Do you think that your organisation conduct customer survey on regular basis to improve customer servicing?

a) Strongly agree

b) Agree

c) Neutral

d) Strongly disagree

e) Disagree

16. According to you, what complexities do you face in managing customer service in retail banking sector of Ireland?

a) Increased competition

b) Increased cost associated with loan

c) Lack of customer confidence

d) Others, Please Specify

17. According to you, what are the crucial elements to improve customer service in retail banking sector of Ireland?

a) Positive attitude of staff

b) Ease of access of banking and financial services

c) Service Efficiency

d) Value-added services