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CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF ONLINE SERVICES IN BANKING SECTOR

– Student perspective from France and Finland



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TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU THESIS

Financial services is one of the first sector that started to use CRM and there are lots of research studies and theories regarding this concept. CRM field being wide, this research stays focused on the customer point of view, therefore, the data collection were conducted among students from France and Finland. The main purpose of this research is to state the expectations of students for a good online customer relationship.

The theoretical background starts from explaining why the customer interactions can be used as a basis for marketing to help banks to build profitable relationships with their customers. After reviewing the concept of relationship marketing, this chapter continues with a clarification of the roles of CRM and the attribution of a definition for this research. Finally, a description of customer experience is presented.

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative study was conducted. This method was suitable to study individuals' behaviour and it focuses more on understanding from the respondent's point of view. The case study method with structured interviews was selected to better understand the experience of interviewed students. In total nine interviews were realised: four interviews for France and five interviews for Finland.

In the chapter 4, each country was analysed first with information gathered from interviews and from the theoretical part. After this, the author used the analysis of each country to create a cross-cultural analysis. Finally, the research findings were presented in the conclusion along with a constructive answer for the research questions.

KEYWORDS:

Customer relationship management, relationship marketing, online banking, service marketing, customer satisfaction

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

CRM Customer Relationship Management

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the thesis

We cannot deny that we are now in our 2.0 phase and every transaction is getting more and more digitalized. The digital involvement in transactions is changing the way consumers behave towards their purchase. It is obvious that financial services have to follow this trend to ensure a great customer service as in France most of banking transactions are been doing through online and less and less people go to branches (My TF1, 2015). Moreover, it has been already ten years that the use of technology devices such as mobile phone, laptop and tablet for banking, payments and shopping keeps increasing which means banks need to keep improving their online banking services. A case study shows that 10% of the French population in 2015 own a bank account at a 100% online banking agency and 17% of French people foresee to open one. Online banking agencies are taking advantage on 2.0 phase and offer their customers fully digitalised services while traditional banks are about to lose their clients (La Tribune, 2016). If traditional banks want to retain their customers, customer relationship can be used as a strategy to retain their customers.

Unfortunately, France is a country where the population is not using much their online banking services compared to Finland. According to Eurostat in 2015, the online banking penetration in Finland is 86% but in France this is only 58% (Eurostat, 2015). Here, the biggest question that comes to our mind is how Finland has managed to implement such a great use of online banking. Also, these numbers could mean that French bank may have few tactics to learn from their Finnish counter parts in terms of online banking customer service.

At this point, it is important to emphasise on a particular type of generation called the Millennials and also called as the generation Y and generation Z. Millennials cover people born between 1980's and the year 2000 which means by the year of 2016, they are mostly between 18 and 35 years old. According to Wallop from

the Telegraph (2014), generation Y and Z were born with technology and their capacity of adapting to technological changes is considerable. What should be understood from this statement is that Generation Y and Z people prefer to use technology to make their life easier and to gain time. Thereby, this research concentrates on students aged between 18 and 30 years old from the Generation Y and Z, plus the terms 'young adults' and 'students' are used in this research to refer to the chosen segmentation.

An article from Le Monde affirms that in France, young adults (18-25) are the biggest users of online banking and as they do not deal with big amount of money by this age, they prefer to use online banking (Le Monde, 2012). Plus, in France, In order to provide good services and retain their young adult customers, many banks have implemented "low-cost" offers or special dealings such as free tickets for concert, cinema or even low-cost holidays (BNP Paribas, 2015). Young adults are profitable customers for the banks in the near future when they start their working life. So, banks have to develop simple online platforms that provide useful and suitable services for young adults to acquire and retain them. In addition to it, as penetration rate is quite low for French banking sector, the high quality of online banking services becomes even more important and generation y and z are likely to consider the online services quality as an important factor when choosing their bank.

Furthermore, from the author's point of view, banking sector should be scoped under services. In order to retain their young adults customers and build long-term relationships with them, relationship marketing and services marketing have to be implemented as a marketing strategy. While relationship marketing is a strategy and a concept, customer relationship management (CRM) can be referred as a tool in order to carry out the concept. From the author's knowledge and experience, the author believed that focusing on customer's point of view and collecting data among chosen segment will allow a better understanding of customer relationships.

1.2 Motivation

The reasons for choosing this research topic were several. With the most important one being, a customer oriented topic, the author have always enjoyed to think from the customer mind by taking into account customer needs and wants. The researcher had the opportunity to discover this field when he did an internship in London the year before for 6 months. The company that he worked for was a strategic marketing agency and hi role was Marketing Assistant. During this period, the main tasks regarding client work were primarily focused on Chopstix Noodle Bar, an Oriental fast-food restaurant, and he had the chance to reconsider Chopstix's social media plan. Considering Chopstix's customer profile was very important in conducting this social media plan. Except the social media plan, the author also had the opportunity to come up with his own ideas and improvements in the implementation of Chopstix's loyalty program and build CRM. As this project was held to the author only the last month of the internship he only had the chance to submit only the first version of it. Having customers at the foundation and also consider customer perceptions and their impact on all decisions was something very appreciated by the author.

The next important reason for choosing this research topic was it being a marketing oriented topic. As the author was doing an International Bachelor and marketing had been one of the important subjects of the field. Conducting a research focused in the marketing field would be the most obvious step for the researcher. Also, the author wanted to gain more insight into what marketing is about in a different perspective and pursue in this field further in his career.

The third main reason was the industry choice of this research topic. Banking sector stays one of the most dynamic and evolving sectors that the author have always been interested in. The researcher believed that from this research study he can gain more insight into what banking sector is and how this sector is managing its customer relationships. Furthermore, as being French and willing to get a job in France, the author wanted to relate this research study on his resume for further reference which is why, the studies are limited within France and Finland.

1.3 Research objectives and research questions

Financial services are one of the first sector that started to use CRM and there are lots of research studies and theories regarding this concept. This research study will not give an accurate implementation of CRM or explain how banks use this tool.

This research stays focused on the customer point of view and the data collection will be conducted among students from each country. The main purpose of this research is to state the expectations of students from the generation Y and Z for a good online customer relationship.

First of all, this research will try to explain the role of services marketing in the customer experience and the importance of implementing an effective relationship marketing if banks want to increase engaging customers and build long-term relationships.

Second, this research will continue to identify the involvement of customer relationship management in the customer retention.

Finally, thanks to the comparison between Finland and France, this research will be able to present an effective online customer relationship.

In order to achieve stated objectives, these research questions will be considered:

- How do relationship marketing and services marketing contribute to students' customer experience in online banking?
- How is customer relationship management involved in the retention of students from the generation Y and Z?
- What is a good online customer relationship for students from the generation Y and Z from France and Finland?

1.4 Thesis structure

In chapter two, the theoretical background of this research will be presented. In a first part, the concept of relationship marketing will be presented along with its benefits. Following the concept of relationship marketing, in the second part, the varying definitions of CRM will be reviewed. Finally, this chapter will be finalized with a description of customer experience.

Then, the methodology for this thesis will be presented in chapter three by giving further explanation on how the data was collected. After having discussed on the way the study for this research was designed, in chapter four, the data collected from interviewing 4-5 young adults from each country will be reviewed and analyzed.

Finally, the final chapter will be a conclusion of the research by comparing the theories and my findings. A constructive answer to the research questions will be driven.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are five main schools of thought that present different perspectives on customer relationships: Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) School, the Nordic school, the Anglo-Australian school, the North American school and the Asian school. Based on the purpose of this research, the author decided to give priority to the Nordic School and the Anglo-Australian school. Christian Grönroos is one of the main proponent of the Nordic School of thought and Adrian Payne is one of the main proponent of the Anglo-Australian school of thought. Most of this chapter is based on Payne and Grönroos work because their contributions support valuable perspective on customer relationships for this research study.

2.1 Relationship marketing

Banks are inevitably in service contexts which means the customer always has to interact with banks' employees who are the service providers. Depending on the type of activity, this service process can be continuous for a long period of time which leads to some form of corporation between customer and service provider: a customer relationship emerges. Thereby, the customer interactions can be used as a basis for marketing which will help banks to build profitable relationships with their customers. (Grönroos, 2000, 22; Rust et al., 1996, 382)

This part concentrates in understanding the role of relationships and the benefits from implementing an effective relationship marketing.

2.1.1 Definition and benefits

The term '*relationship marketing*' was first introduced by Leonard Berry in 1983 when the rapid growth in services marketing rose in the 1980s. Relationship marketing mainly focuses on building long lasting relationships with customers instead of acquiring new customers. This concept pretends that many customers prefer keeping one organization instead of switching (Zeithaml et al., 2009, 176). Thereby, the central idea of relationship marketing is to build trust on the part of the customer and commitment on the part of the service provider. (Richardson and al., 2015, 84-85) Plus, the reason why relationship marketing is important is

because 'acquiring customers is much more expensive than keeping them' (Stone and Woodcock, 1995, 9) and thanks to the use of information technology and CRM, relationship marketing have become more effective and efficient (Richardson et al., 2015, 84-85). But there is need to clarify why banks want relationships with customers and at the same time why customers want relationships with banks. The next two big paragraphs of this part explain the benefits for banks and the benefits for customers.

Benefits for Banks

The main reason for what banks want to build relationships, especially long-term relationships, is economic benefits. The key objectives of CRM and relationships are to better manage their customers by 'identifying, acquiring, satisfying and retaining profitable customers'. From the first being is economic benefits, getting new customers is expensive because it involves advertising and promotion costs as banks have to spend money replacing churned customers. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 28-30; Ward, 2004, 251) Another concept emerges from this point is customer lifetime value which consists in analysing the net present value streamed over the lifetime of a customer relationship. Studies showed that the profit from customers over time is considerable when they are retained and satisfied. (Payne, 2006, 151; Rust et al., 1996, 377)

Next, banks' employees can socialize and build relationship easily with loyal customers and it helps banks to have a better customer insight with clear understanding of customers' requirements and expectations. Thereby, it enables banks to provide appropriate services and offers. (Wellington, 2010, 120).

Over time, as relationships deepen, the central idea of relationship marketing becomes fruitful with the growth of trust and commitment between the parties. Commitment is an essential ingredient for the success of the relationship. If the service provider invests in the promising relationship and if the customer respond to it positively, by evolving the relationship between the two parties, the customer will become a loyal customer for a long period. Thereby, the loyal and satisfied

customer will not only tend to go to online banking agencies, but also acts as advocate by spreading a positive word of mouth about the particular bank's services and reducing acquisition costs. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 27; Wellington, 2010, 119)

Benefits for customers

In customer perspective, even if customers have the liberty in choosing whether they want to leave or not their current bank, if they get a great value for what they expect from their bank, they most likely remain loyal. The value is in terms of service quality, satisfaction, monetary benefits and online services making their life easier. Customers may want relationships with their bank to reduce their sense of perceived uncertainty in many forms. The first one form of uncertainty could be financial transactions and services complexity as thanks to relationship the customer can get answers to his questions and complex transactions that he may not understand. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 39)

The second is the recognition, customers may feel more respected and valued when the service provider recognizes them and is more familiar with the customers' name when exchanging online messages or even when having telephone contact. There is also psychological reasons as the customers may feel less stressed or less uncomfortable when interacting with a familiar person. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 39)

When the customer gets a more caring relationship with their bank, this may help them to feel more secured and build trustworthiness of the service provider. Trust and security are very important in banking industry. Customers having an account at a bank want to ensure that all their information are secured. Thanks to a valuable online relationship, customers can learn more about their bank, thereby, risks and doubts are reduced. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 26; Wellington, 2010, 123; Grönroos, 2000, 36)

Customers can also get special treatments such as extra services, special offers and dealings. They may also gain higher priority than other customers. (Grönroos, 2000, 36)

2.1.2 The Nordic School relationship management theory

There are five main schools of thought that present different perspectives on customer relationships: Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) school, the Nordic school, the Anglo-Australian school, the North American school and the Asian school. All the five school of thought cited above describe relationship management from their own perspective but we will put an emphasis on the Nordic school for this research study as it concerns Finland.

The Nordic School is a service-oriented marketing school of thought that emerged particularly in Scandinavia and Finland in the late 1970s with Christian Grönroos and Evert Gummesson. The key idea promoted by the Nordic school is that service plays a significant role in the relationship between service providers and their customers. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 49; Grönroos, 2000, 15)

Grönroos has defined relationship marketing as:

'Relationship marketing is the process of identifying and establishing, maintaining, enhancing [...] relationships with customers, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met, when this is done by a mutual giving and fulfilment of promises.' (Grönroos (1997), see Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 49)

The Nordic school developed a concept called 'Triplet of Relationship Marketing' describing three major characteristics of commercial relationships (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 49):

Interaction, this component is service-dominant as both, customer and service provider, while interacting exchange information and solutions.

Dialogue, communication between the two parties is important to ensure a valuable and profitable relationship. In online banking, there is still communication when interacting virtually.

Value, from the Nordic school's perspective, it is creating and delivering value from the customer perception but value creation requires efforts from both side which is the service performance.

2.1.3 Customer Relationship Life cycle

Banking industry is based on relationships. Therefore, it may be useful to view the development of a customer relationship in form of a life cycle. The life cycle is segmented into three stages which is illustrated in Figure 1 below. (Grönroos, 2000, 236)

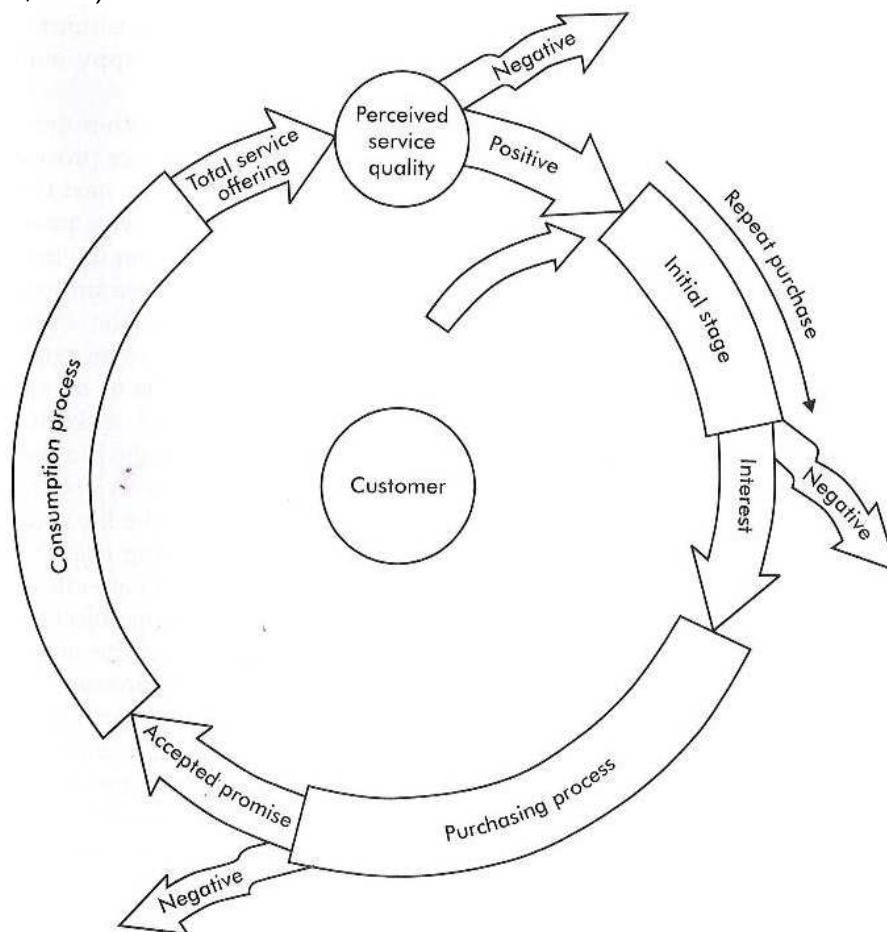


Figure 1. The customer relationship life cycle (Grönroos, 2000, 236)

The first stage is called the '*initial stage*'. A potential customer who does not know about the offerings and the services provided by a bank is in the initial stage of the life cycle. Once the customer feels that he could be satisfied by the bank's services, he moves into the second stage which is the '*purchasing process*'. During that stage, the customer makes the first contact with the bank and tries to find what he was expecting. Once he decides to try the service, he makes the first purchase and enters into the third stage, the '*consumption process*'. During this process, the customer is able to evaluate accurately the bank's performance and bring a judgement based on the perceived service quality. Finally, if the customer is satisfied with the perceived quality, the customer relationship would continue on a continuous consumption process until the customer is happy with the service offering. (Grönroos, 2000, 237-238)

2.2 Varying definitions of CRM

When we talk about customer relationship, the first word that comes to our mind is Customer Relationship Management. Customer Relationship Management, or CRM, is increasingly involved in various types of industry as a major element of corporate strategy for two main important reasons. The first one, thanks to new developed technologies, companies can target their customer segmentations more precisely. The second reason is traditional marketing is revised and improved with a more customer-focused strategies. (Payne, 2006, 4) However, for the purpose of this research, this term requires a better understanding and clarification in conducting this research study.

The expression "Customer Relationship Management" has been in use since the early 1990s. Since then, many IT consultants, marketers and academics tried to define accurately "Customer Relationship Management", few of them are presented in Table 1 but none of them has been clearly contested. Information technology (IT) companies have described it as software applications that are

used to support marketing, sales and service, relational database; but for others it could determine direct mail, a loyalty card scheme or even a call centre. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 3; Payne, 2006, 17-18; Varey, 2002, 144) From Table 1, we can notice that CRM does not have only one way of use and different type of industry can implement this tool.

<p>CRM is an integrated information system that is used to plan, schedule and control the pre-sales and post-sales activities in an organization. CRM embraces all aspects of dealing with prospects and customers, including the call center, sales force, marketing, technical support and field service. The primary goal of CRM is to improve long-term growth and profitability through a better understanding of customer behavior. CRM aims to provide more effective feedback and improved integration to better gauge the return on investment (ROI) in these areas. (The free dictionary, n.d.)</p>
<p>CRM is a business strategy combined with technology to effectively manage the complete customer life-cycle. (Smith (2001), see Payne, 2006, 19)</p>
<p>A comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer. (Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001), see Payne, 2006, 19)</p>
<p>CRM is about the development and maintenance of long-term mutually beneficial relationships with strategically significant customers. (Buttle (2000), see Payne, 2006, 19)</p>
<p>CRM is a strategic approach concerned with creating improved shareholder value through the development of appropriate relationships with key customers and customers segments. CRM unites the potential of IT and relationship marketing strategies to deliver profitable, long-term relationships. (Payne, 2006, 22-23)</p>
<p>The inherently interactive nature of the CRM system is capable of enabling marketers to implement effective customer retention strategies by monitoring, rewarding, and reminding them goods and services. (Varey, 2002, 143)</p>

Table 1. Some definitions and descriptions of CRM

In addition to it, the meaning of the acronym “CRM” is still debated but for most people it would mean “Customer Relationship Management” or others would use it as “Customer Relationship Marketing”. It is also often replaced by the terms ‘relationship marketing’, ‘customer relationship marketing’, ‘technology enabled relationship marketing’, or ‘customer management’. (Payne, 2006, 18)

From this part and from the Table1, the lack of clarity about CRM cannot be denied. This may be explained by the large involvement of various industries in its role and operations. Moreover, it also includes an emphasis on IT perspectives rather than its support in terms of building relationships with customers. How CRM is defined has a significant impact on how its role and use are incorporated by the company. It is also important to point out that the use of CRM is not just finding an IT solution to the problem of maintaining profitable customers. It is much more than that. Implementing successfully CRM involves the capability of analysing the use of CRM according to a profound corporate understanding of the nature of customer value, adding a high quality of operations and services management (Payne, 2006, 20).

In that point, in order to give a suitable definition due to this lack of clarity, it is required to identify further the important perspectives of CRM.

2.2.1 The CRM continuum – three perspectives of CRM

Based on various range of definitions and roles given by organizations to CRM, Payne and Frow (2005) presented a continuum in Figure 2 (see Payne, 2006, 19).

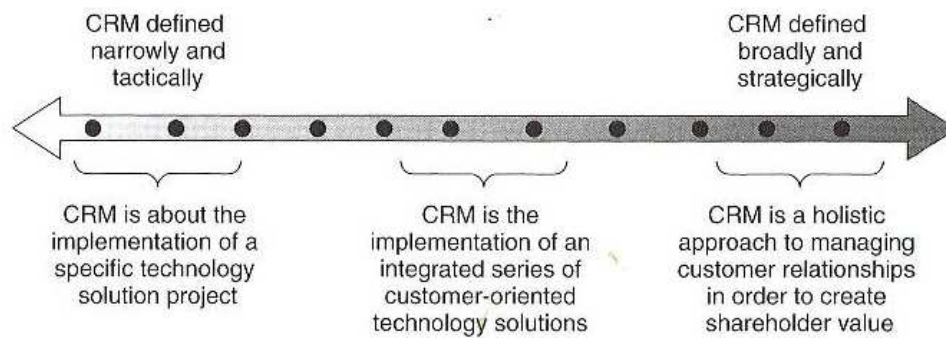


Figure 2. The CRM continuum (Payne and Frow (2005) see Payne, 2006, 19)

At one extreme from the left, CRM is defined as a software solution where IT component has a significant role. It is more viewed as an application rather than a strategic management approach that is why the use of CRM here is more tactical.

At the other extreme, companies use CRM to develop an effective and long-term relationship with their customers. This CRM's approach is more strategic and seeks to improve company profitability and customer service. CRM, viewed from a strategic perspective, is actually more customer-centric and has little to do with IT.

In the middle of these two extremes, other companies try to find a kind of bridge between the IT solution project and marketing strategies to reach the objective of managing relationships with profitable customers.

The strategic and the mixed approaches of CRM are the most approaches used by banks that mainly help them to provide better customer service, make call customer care centre more efficient, suggest cross sell products and discover profitable customers.

2.2.2 Three types of CRM

To continue with the CRM continuum, according to Buttle and Maklan (2015, 4), CRM can be classified into three main types: strategic, operational and analytical, as summarized in Table 2 and a further description below.

Type of CRM	Dominant characteristic
Strategic	Strategic CRM is a core customer-centric business strategy that aims at winning and keeping profitable customers.
Operational	Operational CRM focuses on the automation of customer-facing processes such as selling, marketing and customer service.
Analytical	Analytical CRM is the process through which organizations transform customer-related data into actionable insight for either strategic or tactical purposes.

Table 2. Types of CRM (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 4)

Strategic CRM

Buttle and Maklan (2015, 5) define strategic CRM as ‘a core customer-centric business strategy’ which means creating customer value is the mission from the heart of the bank’s corporate culture and business plan to the service delivery. As providing outstanding service to customers is at the heart of the banking sector, customer information are collected, shared and maintained across the main data server to enable employees have granted access to it. Banks are inevitably customer-centric, so they have to constantly adapt their service performance to customer requirements. Also, collecting valuable customer information enable banks to build long-term relationships with profitable customers.

Operational CRM

Operational CRM consists in automating and integrating all customer-facing business processes in domains such as marketing and service. This automating is operated by CRM software applications. (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 7)

Marketing automation concerns campaign management using customer-related data, such as purchase or research preferences and behaviours, through technology. Collected data helps banks to develop, execute and evaluate

targeted communications and offers (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 7-8). For example, it can be when a student looks for a student loan.

Service automation enables banks to handle inbound and outbound communications across all levels of channels thanks to an efficient management of service operations (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 10). For example, it could be through a call centre, website, online messaging services, chat box and online assistance. It helps to reduce service costs, improve online service quality and enhance customer experience.

Analytical CRM

Analytical CRM is also called analytic CRM. Buttle and Maklan (2015, 11) define analytical CRM as the process of 'capturing, storing, extracting, integrating, processing, interpreting, distributing, using and reporting customer-related data to enhance both customer and company value'. The whole process of analytical CRM is based on the customer information collected through banks' archives such as purchase history, payment history, loyalty scheme data or other service data. Therefore, analytical CRM has become an essential part of many CRM implementations as it helps enhancing the effectiveness.

2.2.3 A definition of CRM for this research

Due to the varieties of use and lack of clarity of this concept, any organization will benefit from embracing a proper definition of CRM to support their strategy and ensuring that this approach is integrated in an appropriate manner throughout their organization. After reviewing the different perspectives of CRM, for the purposes of this research study, the author choose first the definition given by Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001): '*A comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer.*' (see Payne, 2006, 19) CRM is '*a comprehensive strategy*' which means it is a core business strategy that aims to create and deliver value to profitable customers. The author's choice of the

definition clearly denotes that the IT aspect will not have an important impact for this research study.

As a second significant definition for this research, the description of CRM given by Buttle (2000) will be designated: *'CRM is about the development and maintenance of long-term mutually beneficial relationships with strategically significant customers.'* (see Payne, 2006, 19) This definition promotes the value of building relationships with the customers which will be an important part to be considered for the rest of the thesis.

In this research study, the aspects of CRM that will be highlighted are the strategic CRM and the operational CRM, precisely the service automation. At this point, after reviewing all aspects of CRM, the author wants to precise again that the purpose of this research is to state the expectations of students from the generation Y and Z for a good online customer relationship. As this research stays focused on the customer point of view, only the aspects of CRM that are valuable from the customer perspective will be used.

2.3 Customer Experience

The banking sector has inevitably chosen a service perspective as its strategic approach to handle the customer experience which means banks are in the necessity of building a valuable relationship with their customers. The previous part helped to understand the role of relationship marketing and to frame out accurately the term 'Customer Relationship Management'. This part will focus on the service perspective of banking sector and on how to manage customer experience. When analysing in the chapter 4, this will help to better understand interviewees' perception.

2.3.1 What is service marketing?

The term in its self is very broad to define as it concerns services. Businessdictionary.com gives the definition of service marketing: "the promotion of economic activities offered by a business to its clients. Services marketing might include the process of selling telecommunications, health treatment,

financial hospitality, car rental, air travel, and professional services.” (Business dictionary, n.d.) In our situation, banks have to interact constantly with customers which is turned immediately into service.

The services offered by banks are intangible performances provided for its customers that are simultaneously consumed at the time they are produced (Zeithaml et al., 2009, 4). For example, interaction between the customer and the service provider through the online messaging service or telephone conversation when more instructions about a service are needed. This type of service cannot be stored and it is not the same for every person because students may need more explanation or a different type of service depending on their situation.

Based on Grönroos (2000, 47), Zeithaml et al.(2009, 4-5), and Buttle and Maklan’s (2015, 190-191) descriptions of service, Table 3 presents the difference between services and physical goods:

Services	Physical goods
Intangible, cannot be seen, touched or tasted	Tangible, can be seen, touched or tasted
Produced, distributed and consumed instantly	Produced and distributed separately from consumption
Described as an activity or a process	Described an object
Produced in service provider-customers interaction	Produced in factory
Customer’s participation is required	Customer’s participation is not required
Cannot be kept in stock	Can be kept in stock
No transfer of ownership	Transfer of ownership

Table 3. Differences between services and physical goods

Several banks in competition try to gain the more customer as possible. Except pricings and other elements such as services offered or the brand image in the banking sector, the service quality will make the difference and distinguish within banks. Bank marketers would preferably offer a different service from competitors to attract customers and retain them. To ensure a high quality banking service, it is important to consider customer experience because customers expect '*desired and adequate service levels*'. (Lovelock et al., 1999, 20-22)

2.3.2 Customer experience

Buttle and Maklan (2015, 189) describe customer experience as follows: '*Customer experience is the cognitive and affective outcome of the customer's exposure to, or interaction with, a company's people, processes, technologies, products, services and other outputs.*' The cognitive impressions are about beliefs and thoughts whereas affective impressions are more feelings and attitudes, but both plays an important role in influencing the customer's future interactions with their bank and word-of-mouth intentions (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 189). Improving customer experience may reduce negative word-of-mouth and can also increase positive word-of-mouth what is very positive for the bank (Rust et al., 1996, 382)

The customer's perceptions of value and service quality can also be influenced by customer experience, therefore, this affects customer loyalty (Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 189). Quality is what customers perceive but it is necessary to emphasise on what is meant by service quality and why service quality is important in understanding customer experience (Grönroos, 2000, 62).

2.3.3 Perceived Service quality

To describe what it is meant by 'service quality', two main academic models will be reviewed.

The first one is developed by Grönroos, from the Nordic school, and identifies two components of service quality which appear in Table 4 with a small description (Grönroos, 2000, 63-64; Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 168).

Technical	The quality of outcome of a service performance => 'What?'
Functional	The quality of the performance of a service => 'How?'

Table 4. Grönroos model of service quality

Grönroos argued that service quality is a combination of 'technical quality' and 'functional quality' (Kandampully, 2007, 80). In the banking context, the functionality and different services provided on the website are considered to be the technical quality. In other words, it describes the velocity of the bank's website, how easy it is to use, the simplicity of the website's design and the services available. Whereas the functional quality is more about how the service providers or the bank itself give a positive and good accessibility online. In other words, it concerns keeping a virtual relationship and giving the customer the feeling that he is interacting with his service provider or bank by using the website.

The second model is a very influential model, *SERVQUAL*, established by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, from the North American school of thought. This service quality model identifies five core components: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness (Grönroos, 2000, 74-76; Kandampully, 2007, 88; Buttle and Maklan, 2015, 168).

Reliability represents the service provider's ability to perform service dependably and accurately which means in banking context banks has to be consistent in updating or validating transactions. *Assurance* is important in banking context as it concerns the security about data related to customers, trustworthiness, financial security and confidentiality. Next is *tangibles*, here in our case, it would be more all the facilities through the bank's website and the mobile application. *Empathy* concerns the caring personal attention that the bank or the advisor offers its customer. It can also be when the bank or the advisor understands the customers' needs. Finally, *responsiveness* represents the willingness to provide prompt

service by responding to mails quickly or messaging the customer when he requires help.

These two models enable a better understanding of what it is meant by 'service quality' and will help later to analyse how the service quality is perceived by young adults from each country.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology and Research design

When conducting a research project, there is a need to consider research strategies and choices. The author based his research on the deductive approach which consists in testing theories and ideas gathered in the literature review by using collected data (Saunders and Lewis, 2012, 108).

The purpose of this research is exploratory because the aim is to establish the expectations of students from the generation Y and Z for a good online customer relationship. The author can base the findings on qualitative or quantitative data. Based on the objectives of the research study and the previous experience of the researcher during its internship, in this research, qualitative data was used. Qualitative research is quite suitable to study individuals' behaviour and it focuses more on understanding from the respondent's point of view (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010, 105). The choice of a qualitative research enabled to represent and understand participants' opinion in the best accurate way possible whereas quantitative methods might have been limited and insufficient for this research.

For this qualitative research, a case study method with structured interviews was selected to ensure that it best answers the research questions and meets the research objectives. Case study was the method selected for this research because it is particularly useful and suitable when "investigation is difficult to study outside its natural setting and also when the concepts and variables under study are difficult to quantify" (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010, 109). In the case of this research study, the main reason was to have an in-depth study about opinions and experiences of young adults with their banks through online.

The author had the choice between three types of interviews: structured interviews, semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Saunders and Lewis, 2012, 151). For the purpose of this research, the selection of structured interviews was an accurate choice to conduct an efficient comparison between the two countries. Plus, even if it was structured interviews, interviewing enabled the

author to ask additional questions to find out further details or to explore the objectives in more depth.

The case study method and structured type interviews allowed the author to ensure a better comparability between each participant and each country. This research involves many questions in regards to the main services that participants use on bank's online platforms, how satisfied they are, the special offers or dealings that students can benefit from it, the type of relationship that participants have developed with their bank/banking adviser and how they would feel if they had a completely virtual relationship with their bank. The best way possible to get answers to these questions was to conduct face-to-face interviews or at least by a telephone call. The meeting would give the author the ability to better understand participants' point of view and their feelings regarding their experience.

The structured questions of the interview were designed based on the literature review and the research objectives. The main purpose of this research is to state the expectations of students from the generation Y and Z for a good online customer relationship.

Four students from France and five students from Finland were interviewed. In order to achieve stated purpose, these following elements (Appendix 1) were asked to each participant from each country:

- Questions 1-2: Participant overall background and satisfaction with their bank
- Question 3: Frequency of use of online banking services and visits to physical branches
- Questions 4-5: Main online services that participants use or useless/to be improved
- Question 6: How do they log in their online account and how secure do they feel
- Question 7: Relationship with their bank/banking adviser

- Questions 8-9: Advertisements or suggestions using information related to the participant and any special services for young adults/students
- Question 10: How they would feel if they had a completely virtual relationship with their bank

Due to the variety of answers and nature of the information gathered, the data was summarized and divided into categories based on the questions and the literature review. The data was analysed participant by participant within each country, then, followed by an overall analysis. Since this research involves two countries, France and Finland, this type of research can be placed into the cross-cultural category (Ghuri and Gronhaug, 2010, 218).

3.2 Research trustworthiness: Credibility, Dependability, Transferability, Confirmability

The trustworthiness of this research study should be evaluated in terms of validity, reliability, generalizability and confirmability (Ghuri and Gronhaug, 2010, 226-227).

Regarding credibility, in total, nine interviews were recorded and transcribed accurately by the author in order to conduct this research. The author made sure that no confusion was left during the interview. Due to the length and the variety of information gathered, the whole transcript will not be presented as part of this research.

This research ensures the dependability as the data collected by the researcher stays reliable. The result obtained by the researcher is consistent and logical. The same conclusions will be established, if someone else gets the data collected by the researcher.

From the author's point of view, the theory produced by this study cannot be generalized as many factors are involved such as the city, the age, the activities

and the experience of the participant. This study is based on nine interviews and the conclusion is established by analysing all elements related to the participant.

Finally, the author participated throughout the whole process of this research but was detached enough to make the stated observations. This research study stays objective and the results are confirmed.

3.3 Data collection

A total of nine interviews were done for this research: four interviews for France and five interviews for Finland. In order to get the opportunity to have an accurate comparison, the author selected all participants depending on these following main criteria: student between 18 and 30 years old, lived for at least 5 years in France for French participants and lived for at least 5 years in Finland for Finnish participants. However, all nine interviewees were native which made them perfect candidates for more interesting and accurate observations. The field of study of students was not a criteria taken into account because the author believed that this detail was not relevant when conducting the analysis.

The interview requests were sent to about 15-17 students and it was at the time of the semester when students have lots of assignments and study works which made more than five students who could not participate for this research.

Seven out of nine interviews were done face-to-face and two of them were done via phone call due to their availability. All interviews were fully recorded and each interview lasted for at least 25 minutes. The meeting gave the author the ability to better understand participants' point of view and their feelings regarding their experience.

As this study involves a cross-cultural research, when collecting data, the researcher had to measure the intercultural differences during the interviews and during the data analysis. The selection of structured and face-to-face interviews enabled the author the ability to accurately understand participants' experience.

Plus, due to the non-Finnish origins of the author, it was required a good level of English language from Finnish interviewees.

This research involves many questions (Appendix 1) in regards to the main services that participants use on bank's online platforms, how satisfied they are, the special offers or dealings that students can benefit from it, the type of relationship that participants have developed with their bank/banking adviser and how they would feel if they had a completely virtual relationship with their bank. All key elements stated above enabled to achieve the research objectives.

4 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Each country will be analysed first with information gathered from interviews and from the theoretical part. Going through this process will help the reader to get a good understanding of interviewed students from each country and their experiences with their banks. After this, the author will use the analysis of each country to create a cross-cultural analysis.

In both countries, individuals can hold a bank account before their majority and are able to manage it on their own from 18 years old.

4.1 France

Four students were interviewed for this country. All participants are students and live near the capital of France, Paris.

Before starting the analysis of this country, it is required to give a short background explanation of each participant. This will help the reader to better relate the rest of the analysis. The author believed that mentioning the name of participants would not be relevant for this research. In order to maintain the anonymity, a number will be attributed to each participant.

Participant 1

21 years old, Man, this candidate has been at his current bank since his majority and never had a situation of changing for another bank. He came to open an account at his current bank after taking advices from his brother who is also at the same bank. This participant also added that his current bank proposed attractive prices compared to other banks.

Participant 2

22 years old, Woman, this participant's father worked as a banking adviser at the same bank brand as the candidate's own bank, which gave her the opportunity to less manage her account and mainly be aware of all interesting offers. From interviewing the Participant 2, the researcher noticed that this interviewee was

not deeply involved in managing her bank account as her parents were also much related to it.

Participant 3

24 years old, Woman, this interviewee held a bank account for a very long time and was at the same bank as her parents. This candidate developed a strong relationship with her bank even before her majority because she has always helped managing her parent's bank account too. Participant 3 had a more active interaction with her banking adviser and her bank.

Participant 4

26 years old, Woman, Participant 4 had always been at the same bank. She was a student but was also doing a part time job. She came to open a bank account at her current bank when at her majority she looked for a bank providing a student loan at very attractive interests. This candidate precised that at that time, this bank was particularly very flexible regarding student loan.

After asking the first two questions to interviewees in order to figure out their background, participant's frequency of internet banking use was investigated. As stated by My TF1 (2015), less and less people go to branches and it also worked for students. All participants reported that they were in the situation to go directly to their physical branch only two or three times maximum a year. Participants pointed out the need to visit their physical bank branch were only because it was something that they could not deal online such as to get their new credit card, to handle physical papers, to deposit bank checks or even when they want to get immediate answers to important questions. Thereby, all other transactions and interactions with their bank were made online.

Participant 1 declared that he would use internet banking services once a week, Participant 2 answered two to three times a month, and finally, for Participant 3 and Participant 4, it was at least every two days. From this, except for the Participant 2, we cannot deny that internet banking is an activity deeply involved in their life. Furthermore, when questioning the services they would use the most,

the interviewees commonly expressed that it was mainly to check their account balance and ensure that transactions processed successfully. There are also other services practiced occasionally such as to transfer money from their account to another account or finally, to use the messaging inbox when they needed to interact with their banking adviser.

All Participants clearly denoted that there were many services available through their banking website but they have never known their usefulness or have tried to understand their purposes. Plus, Participant 1 and 3 also added that in their case it might be because they have never been in dealing with big amount of money. The statement given by Participant 1 and 3 is definitely to be taken into account as it might also be the reason for what these participants paid attention to services and tools that were only useful for them.

All candidates from this country ensured that they were very satisfied with online banking and never had any problem with their bank. Participant 1 shared his thought regarding the lack of clarity on the bank statements that he can check online. He precised that details available when checking his online account transactions were clearer than his bank statements and he can get accessed to it only for 90 days. Therefore, Participant 1 wished to have the same information on both areas and to get access to it even after 90 days. In addition to it, Participant 3 shared her satisfaction regarding the efficiency of her bank's mobile application. She explained that her bank made regular updates and improvements to get the application easy to use. She also added that thanks to the new messaging service, the interaction with her banking adviser was fluent. Except Participant 1 and Participant 3, other candidates did not have any particular thought about their online services.

In the next two paragraphs, the answers given to questions eight and nine (Appendix 1) will be analysed. The purpose of asking about the special services and offers for students provided by banks was for the author to identify how much banks pay attention to students. This will also allow to examine from the customer's point of view if CRM is applied effectively as defined by Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) (see Payne, 2006, 19).

The author had to put more effort when asking the question eight because no candidates were able to understand the actual meaning of this question or what it was about. After asking in different ways, all candidates clearly stated that they never felt that their respective banks were using information related to them in order to advise them or make any suggestion. However, they noticed that they sometimes received general advertising emails or letters at home, as mentioned when describing the operational CRM in the chapter 2. They also added that comparing to few years back, they were getting less and less advertisements.

For the question seven, Participant 3 and Participant 4 confirmed that there were few minor advantages available only for students such as cheaper contract, discounts thanks to their credit card and flexible student loans. Whereas Participant 1 and Participant 2 declared that they absolutely did not know if their banks provide special dealings for students. The author did not expect to get the answers above. This might be explained by the fact that their respective banks do not provide any offer for students, otherwise, it might be because Participant 1 and Participant 2 were not aware of those offers available for them. If so, the question that comes to our mind is: “do banking advisers provide customers all necessary and valuable information?”. Answers gathered from these two questions and from Parvatiyar and Sheth’s (2001) definition of CRM show that CRM seems not to play a major role among students. However, banks do provide advantages for students such as student loans and discounts.

Coming to this research study’s main part which is about the relationship between students and their bank or banking adviser. This part will help to examine CRM for its building relationship value which was promoted by the definition given by Buttle (2000). In France, each customer detains a personal banking adviser who assists the customer with all banking processes. Regarding this country, when analysing the relationship between customer and his bank, it would be more about customer and his banking adviser. When interviewing French students, the author identified that these interviewees visualise their bank through their banking adviser.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 shared the same thought. They always had the same banking adviser, except for the Participant 2 who very recently was introduced to a new banking adviser, but these interviewees clearly expressed that their relationship with their banking adviser had never been more than professional. They explained that they never had the opportunity of building a relationship as they interact only when it was needed through phone call or through online messaging services. Especially, Participant 1 declared that he never felt the need of having a caring banking adviser because all he expected from his banking adviser was to be accessible and committed.

However, Participant 4 defined her relationship with her banking adviser as being “useless” because she had four different banking advisers and explained that she never obtained any further information regarding their change. Participant 4 also added that as being still a student and the fact she was not dealing with big amount of money, she only expected from her bank to be professional, be safe enough and fulfil her other requirements.

Participant 3 described a completely different experience from other interviewees. As described at the beginning of this part, this candidate developed a very strong and interactive relationship with her former banking adviser. She explained that she requested to have the same banking adviser as her parents because she could get the same advantages as her parents. From her perspective, the advantages that she could benefit from her relationship with her banking adviser were mainly helping to face financial problems by suggesting honest and caring solutions. As described by Grönroos (2000), in the case of the Participant 3, thanks to her valuable relationship, the candidate could get a special treatment and more advantage.

The review of each participant enabled a better understanding of customer relationship from their point of view. The researcher could find all general benefits for customers named by Buttle and Maklan (2015), Wellington (2010) and Grönroos (2000) among interviewed students such as the value for service quality, satisfaction, monetary benefits and finally online services making their life easier. The researcher also noticed that the concept ‘Triplet of Relationship

Marketing' developed by the Nordic school do not accordingly match with the customer experience described by Participant 1, 2 and 4. These candidates benefited very less '*interaction*', less '*dialogue*' through online and created less '*value*'. More elements of these candidates using the two perceived quality models will be analysed further in this chapter.

4.2 Finland

This part will analyse the information gathered from Finnish students interviewed. In this part, the author will already start some cross cultural analysis to avoid repetitiveness.

Five students were interviewed for this country. All participants are students and live in Turku.

As already explained in the previous part, a short background candidates will be presented and a number will also be attributed to each candidate interviewed from this country.

Participant 5, Participant 6 and Participant 7

20 years old for Participant 5 and 23 years old for Participant 6 and Participant 7. All candidates were women and came to open a bank account at the same bank as their parents. The main reason for giving that answer was because of the risk avoidance. They were all globally very satisfied and have always been at the same bank. Further information about these candidates will be given afterwards.

Participant 8

28 years old, Man, this candidate also came to open a bank account at the same bank as his parents. Participant 8 was not only a student but was also doing a part time job. It was interesting to get a point of view from an older candidate than others.

Participant 9

24 years old, Man, this participant was the only one who did not open a bank account at the same bank as his parents. The reason for choosing his current bank was its attractive and flexible prices compared to other banks.

After asking the first two questions to interviewees in order to figure out their background, participant's frequency of internet banking use was also investigated. For the same reasons listed in the previous part for French students, interviewed Finnish students were in the situation to go directly to their physical branch only two or three times maximum a year. There is another reason mentioned by Participant 7 which was for currency exchanging for free when the customer is aged under 25. Thereby, all other transactions and interactions with their bank were made online.

Participant 5 declared that she would use internet banking services once a week, Participant 6 answered two or three times a month, Participant 7 and Participant 9 reported at least two times a week, and finally, for Participant 8, it was almost on daily basis. From this, except for Participant 6, we cannot deny that internet banking is also an activity deeply involved in their life. The strong use of internet banking services by Participant 8 might be explained by the fact that this candidate is older and also involved in working life. Furthermore, when questioning the services they would use the most, the interviewees reported almost the same reasons as French candidates. There were other services added by Participant 5 and Participant 6 which was applying for loan through online, and from Participant 8, it was the currency converter. In addition to it, the researcher noticed that Finnish participants were using the online messaging services and the telephone contact more often than French participants. This point may wonder if there is place for a more interactive relationship in Finland. The answer for this doubt will be given afterwards.

When asking the questions four and five to Finnish candidates, the author noticed that they were not able to enumerate available services on the website. The

candidates clearly demonstrated that they paid attention to services and tools that were only useful for them. The author also felt the same from French interviewees.

All candidates from this country ensured that they were very satisfied with online banking and never had any problem with their bank. Participant 5 shared her thought regarding the lack of clarity of instructions available on the website. She explained her experience when she applied for a student loan through online that it was not enough clear about the steps to be followed. She added that she could contact by telephone her bank and it was very helpful. Furthermore, Participant 6 also shared her opinion about the fact that website and mobile application were not enough interactive for her. This interviewee wished to have more active and persistent interaction with her bank.

In the next two paragraphs, the answers given to questions eight and nine (Appendix 1) will be analysed.

Surprisingly, the author observed that Finnish students were able to better understand the question eight. Unfortunately, the answer was also the same as from French participants but Finnish interviewees added that service provider would sometimes try to suggest additional services through phone.

For the question seven, Participant 7 and Participant 8 confirmed that there very few minor advantages available for young students such as exchanging currency for free under 25, basic credit card contract. Whereas Participant 5, Participant 6 and Participant 9 declared that they absolutely did not know if their banks provide special dealings for students. Again, this might be explained by the fact that their respective banks do not provide any offer for students, otherwise, it might be because Participant 5, Participant 6 and Participant 9 were not aware of those offers available for them. Answers gathered from these two questions and from Parvatiyar and Sheth's (2001) definition of CRM, same as it was for French, CRM seems not to play a major role among students.

Coming to this research study's main part which is about the online relationship between students and their bank or banking adviser. This part will help to

examine CRM for its building relationship value which was promoted by the definition given by Buttle (2000). After interviewing Finnish candidates, the author realised that in the Finnish banking system, young customers do not benefit from a personal banking adviser. Which means, compared to the other country, when analysing the information gathered, it will be more about the relationship between customer and his bank in general.

All Finnish students interviewed declared that they never developed a personal relationship with their respective bank. They also added that they were all satisfied with the professional relationship that they built with their bank. Finnish candidates mostly interacted with their banks through online messaging services but also through telephone call. Participant 5, Participant 7 and Participant 8 mentioned that service providers are very easily accessible and try to reply to messages very fast. Participant 5 and Participant 6 clearly stated that as they did not deal with big amount of money and did not have any major actions going on, they did not feel the need of having a particular personal care. Concerning Participant 9, this candidate only expect from his bank a very professional and committed work. Furthermore, Participant 7 stated that she observed service providers on phone always tried to take a very caring tone of voice and she also described her conversations with them as “like they know me for very long time”.

The review of each participant enabled a better understanding of customer relationship from their point of view. The researcher could find all general benefits for customers listed by Buttle and Maklan (2015), Wellington (2010) and Grönroos (2000) among interviewed students. The most elements that the author could find in common were the value for service quality which will be reviewed in more detail in the next part, the next element is online services making their life easier and finally the satisfaction of having a very professional and dedicated relationship with their customers.

4.3 Cross-cultural analysis

All interviews were accomplished successfully and each participant gave very interesting and valuable statements. As mentioned earlier, the goal of this

analysis is to get a good understanding of interviewed students from each country. This part will be more a cross-cultural analysis by giving the main common points and differences.

All interviewed students never changed their current bank and as mentioned by Zeithaml et al. (2009), the concept of relationship marketing pretends that many customers prefer keeping one organization instead of switching. The researcher also noticed that all interviewed candidates were at the third stage which is the 'consumption process' of the customer relationship life cycle as described by Grönroos (2000, 237-238) because they were all at their current bank for very long time.

There are two questions from the interviews that have not been reviewed yet. The author decided to present the analysis directly in this part. The question six (Appendix 1) gave the opportunity to identify the way customers log in their online account from each country. For French candidates, it was required to put their identification number which has no link with their account number, adding to it, their own password was also asked. On the other side, Finnish interviewees also had the same process as French candidates but with an additional requirement which was completing with a random code. Finnish customers were provided from their bank a small card with random codes, when logging in their online account, each random code can be used only once. We cannot deny that the Finnish process seems to be more secured from the customer perspective. When asking about their feeling regarding the security, Finnish candidates clearly expressed their satisfaction for this process, however, Participant 5 and Participant 6 mentioned the inconveniency in regards with the random codes card that had to be with them all the time.

The question ten (Appendix 1) enabled to identify whether candidates would be able to keep a completely virtual relationship with their bank. French candidates mainly stated that they were performing online 75-80% of their banking process, for Finnish participants, it was 85-95%. From this, we can understand that there is not a major difference between these two countries. In addition to it, all candidates declared a virtual relationship with their bank would not be an

important issue, however, they do want at least few physical branches. The common reason from both countries given for this statement was about the safety because there is more risk to lose the trust in their bank when it is operated 100% online.

The perceived service quality will be reviewed for both countries using the two academic models as presented in part 2.3.3.

Grönroos' 'technical quality' consisted in very organised and functional website and other services. All participants from both countries expressed their satisfaction for the promptness of their bank's website and mobile application. On the other side, Grönroos' 'functional quality' was more about how the service providers or the bank itself give a positive and good accessibility online. This was especially mentioned by Finnish candidates. The author felt that, for this point, Finnish banks are more accessible through online than French banks.

The second service quality model identifies five core components: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness. The Table 6 provides an overall comparison of France and Finland.

Core components	France	Finland
Reliability	Yes	Yes
Assurance	Yes	Yes
Tangibles	Yes	Yes
Empathy	Yes/No (Yes for Participant 2 and Participant 3; No for Participant 1 and Participant 4)	No
Responsiveness	Yes	Yes

Table 6. France – Finland SERVQUAL analysis

The Table 6 helped to identify the main difference between France and Finland. From reviewing students' experience, the author could distinguish the level of

'*empathy*' provided by French banks is different. However, participants clearly stated that they did not expect from banks the personal care and attention.

The author identified lots of common points between these two countries such as the service quality and the usefulness of online services. However, the researcher distinguished a very minor difference regarding the expectations for customer relationship. Even though all candidates expect a very professional and committed relationship with their bank, Finnish participants seek for a little bit more empathy than French students.

5 CONCLUSION

In France, 100% online banking agencies are taking advantage on 2.0 phase and offer their customers fully digitalised services while traditional banks are about to lose their clients (La Tribune, 2016). The banking sector has inevitably chosen a service perspective as its strategic approach to handle the customer experience which means banks are in the necessity of building a valuable relationship with their customers. This was the main reason to conduct this research, to state the expectations of students from the generation Y and Z for a good online customer relationship.

Following research questions were defined by reviewing the main characteristics of customer relationship:

- How do relationship marketing and services marketing contribute to students' customer experience in online banking?
- How is customer relationship management involved in the retention of students from the generation Y and Z?
- What is a good online customer relationship for students from the generation Y and Z from France and Finland?

In order to find the answers for these questions, the researcher conducted qualitative interview-based cross cultural research which included young adults experience from France and Finland.

The end result of the research was quite consistent to the theories presented in the chapter 2. In the chapter 4, using the theories, the author analysed in more depth the information gathered from interviews.

The first research question was to explain the role of services marketing in the customer experience and the importance of implementing an effective relationship marketing if banks want to increase engaging customers and build long-term relationships. The theories explain that the services offered by banks

are mostly different depending on the customer situation. The analysis of interviews show that there is not any difference regarding the services available on the online platforms. As young students do not deal with big amount of money, from both countries, students have never known the usefulness or have tried to understand purposes of every single service provided by their banks. This shows that there is a gap between what theories say and what banks do. Participants value good service performance with a very effective and velocity online platforms. The relationship marketing for banks is definitely an important strategy. Based on the interviews, the author could see that the implementation of relationship marketing was conducted through messaging services and telephone call. The main components promoting this concept were the personal attention provided by the service provider and the willingness to provide prompt service by responding to emails quickly.

The answer to the second research question will enable to identify the involvement of customer relationship management in the customer retention. In the chapter 2, different perspectives of the CRM were reviewed and helped to select what it was needed to conduct this research. From the analysis, the author could figure out that CRM seemed not to play a major role among students. There are very minor advantages and special offers designed especially for students. Based on the analysis, there seem to be opportunities for banks to provide their customers, who have student status, targeted offers, instead of sending general advertisements as mentioned by some of interviewed students. Unfortunately, the author noticed that it was very difficult to effectively evaluate the involvement of CRM in the customer retention as the information given by interviewees for this point were not enough precise and relevant. All interviewed students were retained customer for the attractive prices, the professionalism and committed relationship of service providers and the usefulness of online services.

Finally, thanks to the comparison between Finland and France, the answer for the third research question will be able to present an effective customer relationship though online. Interviewed students shared a common thought about their relationship experience with their respective banks which was not

specifically have a personal banking adviser. They expect from their bank to provide prompt service by responding to emails quickly or even messaging the customer when he requires help. Students want the presence of their bank through online messaging service and through telephone because thanks to their presence students can get answers to questions and complex processes that they may not understand. The relationship expected from their bank is very professional and honest. The assurance was an aspect that the author could figure out in most interviewed students. Service providers should take a very comprehensive and understandable tone of voice because customers want the helpfulness and security about their data. The researcher identified interviewed candidates could feel more comfortable interacting with their bank when service providers are nice. From the analysis, the author also noticed that the personal care, or in other words the empathy, was not specifically an element awaited from service providers.

To conclude, every candidate interviewed clearly explained their experience with their bank or banking adviser and also shared their expectations. The author went through an interesting experience and this study fulfilled the author's expectations stated at the beginning of this research. From this research, the author figured out that young adults are a category of the population that are very independent in both countries. Furthermore, interviewing students in Finland enabled the author to learn more about this country.

As several students mentioned, students deal with low amount of money so they are not in need for special services. This explains the fact that most of students use only the basic services. Thereby, students population might not be the most interesting segmentation to study the use of online services offered by banks. A study of working people that are still from the generation Y and Z but with a population aged between 28 and 40 years old could give more insights about the use of online banking services.

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Interview questions

1. For how many years are you at your current bank? Are you so far satisfied?
2. How did you come to open an account in your current bank?
3. How frequently do you use internet banking services (mobile included)? How frequently do you visit your bank branch? What are the most main reasons?
4. What do you think about your banks online services? Could you give a short explanation of what kind of services you have?
5. Which services do you like the most? Which ones do you think they are useless or should be improved?
6. How do you log in your online account? How secured do you feel your account is?
7. Do you have a personal banking adviser? What kind of relationships do you have with him? How well do you interact with him? Have you ever changed your personal banking adviser? If so, could you tell for which reasons?
8. Have you ever felt that your bank is using information related to you in order to advice you or make any suggestion?
9. As a young adult, do you feel that your bank makes special services for you? Could you tell more about these services?
10. Would you be able to keep only a virtual relationship with your bank? Or banking adviser?