

Customer Service in Digital Era - A Study of Indian Banking Sector

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ABSTRACT:

Banking Industry being an integral part of the Indian Financial System (IFS) has become the backbone of our country by contributing substantially to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For enabling our country to economically prosper, Banks have undergone lot of transformation through Nationalization and introduction of financial sector reforms in the years 1969 and 1991 respectively.

Through nationalization, "Social Banking" has become the utmost priority for banks for bringing unbanked customer segments under the umbrella of Banking Sector through Priority Sector Advances and Massive Branch Expansion resulting in a heavy burden of overhead expenditure on Customers. For banking services to become cost effective, Banks started following the policy of containing huge manpower expenditures through replacing the manpower with technology and as a result of this, apart from customers being the beneficiaries through enjoying better customer services, Banks themselves are also getting benefitted through improved operating profits as well as operating efficiencies achieved by them.

Thus, Technology has become the key driver for enhancing the performance of the Banks. To make Banks face global challenges effectively, they are asked to reduce the dependence of customers on Teller Services available at Bank Branches, by ensuring them accessibility to the Banking Services via Technology platform. Thus Technology - Enabled Banking Services have become the need of the hour for banks to reach different customer segments through prudent Customer Service Strategies through Anywhere and Anytime Banking facilities provided by them. Though, Technology -Based Banking is expected to play a key role in the achievement of "Cashless Economy", performance of the banks in this direction is not satisfactory, as customers are yet to be prepared to accept the e- Banking as the real

substitute for Branch Banking. For this, Banks have to strive hard through more and more "Customer Education Programs" organized by them, failing which they have to lag behind the global players.

Key Words: Branch Banking (BB), New Generation Private Sector Banks (NGPSBs), Foreign Banks (FBs), Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Technology-Enabled Banking Services (TEBSs), Core Banking Solutions (CBSs), Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), Internet Banking (IB), Mobile Banking (MB), Telebanking (TB), Phone Banking (PB), Cheque Truncation System (CTS), Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT), Electronic Clearing Services (ECS), Point of Sales Terminals (POSTs).

I. INTRODUCTION

Banks which are considered as an integral part of the Indian Financial System (IFS) plays a strategic role in our country's economic development. By acting as the mobilizers of deposits and purveyors of credit, Banking Sector had earned recognition as one of the key segments of Service Sector and have been playing an undefinable role in our country's accelerated economic growth by facilitating people keep their savings with them in the form of deposits and utilizing these savings for the purpose of making investments on government securities and deployment of credit through term loans to those willing to set up industrial and commercial establishments. By undertaking these activities, Banks have become nerve centers playing a strategic role in the strict maintenance of economic equilibrium and stability in our country.

With the support of vibrant banking sector, different sectors of our economy are able to enjoy necessary financial services facilitating our country to prosper and grow from strength to strength.

Indian Banking Industry- A Transformation:

Indian Banking Industry with its roots traced back to eighteenth century during its long journey had underwent lot of transformation. Banking industry during pre-independence and post - independence era by limiting its services to mostly the affluent sections in the society could not resolve the issue of economic inequalities and to address this issue, Government of India headed by late Smt. Indira Gandhi, Former Prime Minister had to go for envisaging the policy of nationalization of Private Sector Banks twice, mainly to take banking activities to the unbanked rural areas.

Though, the nationalization of banks could bring the unaffordable and weaker sections into the realm of banking, unremunerative lending practices attempted by the Banks accompanied by the Branch expansion activity attempted on a large scale has resulted in erosion of profits and thereby making banking industry to miserably fail in coping with global standards. This has paved the way for the Union Government to seriously think of overhauling the entire banking industry in our country through the financial sector reforms introduced into it making it more vital and vibrant, to withstand the global challenges. With the introduction of reforms, New Generation Private Sector and Foreign Banks made their entry into the Banking field, ultimately resulting in intense competition requiring Banks to revamp their overall functioning with due emphasis given on customer services provided in a cost-effective manner.

Customer - A Kingpin for the survival of Banking Industry:

Banking known as the people sensitive service industry concerned with doing business with other people's money, for its long-term survival and existence is called upon to be responsive to the ever-changing customer needs. Today's customers, unlike those of yester years are impatient to stand in long queues to get varied banking services. As they are not only hard pressed for time and due to their living at scattered geographical locations, customers expect today's Banks to evolve suitable marketing strategies, enabling them get their ever-changing needs met with much ease and convenience.

Today's customers further expect banks to understand their needs first and to evolve appropriate business strategies enabling them meet their expectations fulfilled. Besides understanding the changing customer expectations, it is of paramount important for Banks respect the

sentiments of customers, failing which they will be required to experience the problem of losing these loyal customers.

Further, Customers expect Banks to be trustworthy by making their products and services to be not only qualitative, but also to be more and more reliable. Apart from this, they further expect banks to provide them rich experiences through the facility of easy banking provided to them.

As Banking products are almost similar, customers expect the Banks to differentiate themselves with other Banks especially regarding the service quality of these banking products and services. Otherwise, these Customers having frustrating experiences don't even hesitate to switchover to other Banks.

Today's customers who are more demanding than those of earlier years want value addition through the Banking products and services purchased by them as well as through Non-Banking Services (NBSs) availed by them.

As customer engagement is the pre-requisite condition to be fulfilled by the Banks for their survival, it is utmost important for the Banks to intensify their efforts for providing enhanced customer satisfaction to the customers, in the absence of which the very survival of banks is going to be a herculean task for the bank managements.

As today's Banks cannot succeed without being good at relationship building with the customers, it is the need of the hour for Banks to ensure customers interact with them at their convenience. Besides this, Banks are expected to be very prompt in resolving the customer queries, failing which customers are likely to get disgusted with the Banking services. Further, customers expect the banks to adopt a personal approach in attending to their needs through personalized services provided to them.

Above explanation vividly tells that, unless Banks accept the fact that, customer is the king pin, they are not going to succeed in their endeavor of customer retention. As it is an established fact that, satisfied customer is the "Brand Ambassador" and through "Word of Mouth Ad" given by these "Brand Ambassadors", Banks are going to venture upon "Customer Acquisition Strategies", it is of utmost importance for the Banks to understand the customer first, before going ahead with the "Marketing Strategies". Thus, "Customer Centricity" assumes all-round importance in Bank Marketing Strategies.

Customer Service in Indian Banking Sector - A Snapshot:

As Customer occupies a central place in Banking Sector, providing them prompt and error-free services with a smile assumes lot of importance. To ensure long lasting satisfaction to the end users of Banking Services, Banks working in a volatile, exciting and hypersensitive environment are invariably required to march ahead with prudent "Customer Service Strategies" (CSSs), failing which their long - term existence is going to be at stake.

As today's customers are more enlightened ,tech- savvy and more demanding changing their preferences from time to time, Banks are supposed to accept the naked truth that, customer service is a dynamic, creative and an interactive process, and to succeed in their attempt to reach vast network of these enlightened clientele, Banks are to prepare to fine tune their Customer Service Strategies, so as to become successful in retaining the existing customers as well as in attracting the new customers.

As "Reform- Era" has opened the doors not only for the entry of New Generation Private Sector Banks (NGPSBs) and Foreign Banks, but also for the Non- Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs) and Fin-Tech Companies, and due to the emergence of Unified Payments Interface(UPI) developed by the National Payments Council of India(NPCI), Paytm app, Google app, Amazon Pay, Apple Pay etc., Customers are enabled to enjoy a wider choice of these organizations in availing financial services with much ease. With this new development, Banks are to be more cautious while handling issues relating to the Customer Services, as there is a chance of losing their Customers, in case of any negligence in attending to the customer service-related issues.

Banks to remain competitive and profitable are in a dire necessity to consider the Customer Service as their noblest task. Otherwise, Customers who have been maintaining long-term relationships with the Banks do not even hesitate to shift their loyalties, but also start spreading bad propaganda among those who are considered to be the potential customers for the Banks.

As Customers are the backbone of any business organization including Banks, managements heading these organizations are to develop a visionary approach in devising Customer Service Strategies and for developing "Customer

Orientation (CO)", these organizations are expected to take up organization restructuring, staffing and coordination activities by treating customer as the focal point.

Since Banks like any other organization are working in a world of changes, they need to consider Customer Service as the key function and must gear up the machinery with every effort made for achieving enhanced customer satisfaction through regularly monitoring "Customer Satisfaction Levels".

Due to deregulation of the Banking Sector in the wake of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG), Banks are forced to work in an intensified competitive environment and to succeed themselves in this new environment, they are supposed to accept the fact that, there is no short route to reach the widely scattered customer groups, without achieving effectiveness and efficiency. For this, banking operations are to undergo lot of transformation, to enjoy continuous support and patronage from the different customer groups.

As going for "Mergers" has become more inevitable for Indian Banks especially to cope with the global level challenges in the Banking field, providing superior customer services has become an utmost requirement necessitating banks to think of bringing qualitative improvements in the area of Customer Services.

Today's Customers preoccupied with several engagements having no patience to visit physical Branches to avail "Teller Services" have been bringing irresistible pressures on Banks in our country to think of improvising the customer services through not only a basket of banking products and services provided to them, but also enabling them enjoy other services like payment of utilities, ticket booking, payment of income tax etc., For fulfilling these customer expectations, Banks are to take up the role of "Super Market", facilitating the customers enjoy the benefit of convenience in banking.

Banks to succeed in today's fast changing business environment are to take a shift in their thinking from product- centric to customer- centric, failing which they cannot avoid the chance of losing the loyal customers for grooming whom, banks had to make lot of efforts and heavy investments.

Though Banks immediately after nationalization chose the path of doing more banking business, in the present-day deregulated environment, they are to reorient their thinking from "More Banking" to "Better Banking" facilitating the customers derive maximum satisfaction.

Analysis of the evolutionary changes happening on the part of Banking Sector in our country take us to an understanding that, the Banks aimed at focusing on "Serving the Customers" during 60s, were made to go on changing their way of approach towards customers from time to time, with an emphasis laid on "Satisfying the Customers", "Pleasing the Customers", "Delighting the Customers" and "Retaining the Customers" during 1960-1970, 1970-1990, 1990-2000 and beyond 2000 respectively. These dramatic changes have become unavoidable for Banks to accept not only to survive, but also to excel their counter parts in winning the cooperation of the customers to retain their market share, as well as to add new customer groups. Thus, Customer Service has become prime important in the Bank Marketing Strategies (BMSs).

Technology - A Tool for Speedier and Error - Free Customer Services:

Technology has become a critical requirement for the people sensitive industry, not only in our country but worldwide. After nationalization of banks, Public Sector Banks which enjoy huge amount of share in the total banking business were required to take up "Priority Sector Lending" as well as "Massive Branch Expansion" to take banking to the unbanked areas, resulting in the problem of unremunerative lending leading to erosion of profits. To come out of this precarious situation, banks are required to increase not only the vast network of clientele, but also their volume of business. They are further called upon to envisage suitable policies for improving profitability through improving "Non-Interest Income". To succeed in their attempt to achieve more and more "Non-Interest Income", Banks are required to engage their manpower resources on "Cross Selling". For increasing their volume of banking business as well as capturing the untapped customer segments, Banks are left with no other option, except to concentrate on increasing the operating efficiencies, with cost cutting exercises, to contain their overhead expenditures. For this, Banks are left with no other alternative, but to resort to inviting technological inventions into the Banking Services. Thus, intervention of technology has become a timely

requirement for banks to make Banking Services speedier, error-free and more and more appealing to the customers.

As today's customers who are more demanding and tech-savvy and want Banking facilities everywhere and every time, to satisfy such customers who have outnumbered those still willing to rely upon banking services through physical branch networks via Tellers, Banks are required to infuse technology into the Banking services.

Though seeds were sown for computerization of banking services through introduction of Personal Computers (PCs), migration of banks to Local Area Network (LAN) and installation of Advanced Ledger Posting Machines (ALPMs), Total Automation of Branches (TAB) in pursuance of the recommendations of Dr. C. Rangarajan Committee, IT has gained its momentum and got deeply identified with the Banking Services only after the Reform-Era made its entry into the banking field after 90s to comply with Narasimhan Committee recommendations.

Banks in order to get vitality into their activities and to make their services comparable to the international standards were in a necessity to go for other steps like introduction of MICR/OCR Technology to make the processing of cheques easier and speedier aimed at ultimately achieving higher customer satisfaction. Besides these steps, Banks were further required to pay a serious thought for the introduction of "Core Banking Solutions" (CBSs), enabling the customer enjoy the facility of banking with any branch, though the account is maintained at a particular branch. As a result of this technology initiative, Customers are enabled to enjoy many banking services like cash deposits and withdrawals, updating of pass books, knowing balances, obtaining Transaction Statements from any Branch, though he / she had an account maintained at a particular branch known as "Home Branch".

With the inspiration received from the success of the above "Technology - Enabled Banking Initiatives" (TEBIs), Banks in our country were further enthused to step up their efforts in improvising the Customer Services, by ensuring the Banking Services via Alternative Channels of Banking. Thus, Technology has brought a sea change in the very functioning of Banks through ensuring speedier and error-free Customer Services making Customer experiences more and

more pleasing and appealing. Banking Services and Information delivered via Alternative Channels of Banking is known as "e- Banking".

Concept of e-Banking:

Delivery of different Banking Services at the convenience of the end user i.e., Customer either at home or office or from any geographical location is known as "e- Banking".

In general terms, e- Banking or electronic banking is to be viewed as the delivery of different banking and value-added services via different delivery platforms that can be used with different terminal devices such as Personal Computer (PC) and a Mobile Phone with browser or desktop software, telephone or digital television".

"e-Banking" also known as "Digital Banking" is a generic term for delivery of banking services and products through electronic channels such as the telephone, internet, Point of Sales (POS), Mobile Phone, etc.

With the launch of Internet for public use by the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) in the year 1995 and arrival of broad band in the early 2000, facilitating environment had been provided for the Banks and other Financial Services Providers (FSPs) to take "Digital Banking" to the nook and corner of the country.

Through "Digital Banking", both front and back- end operations are computerized facilitating both customers and bankers have a look at the banking products and services and customer experiences through the servers installed at Banks.

Alternative Channels of Banking:

Alternative Channels of Banking also known as e-Banking Channels launched by the Banks mainly comprise different technology platforms aimed at taking customer journey towards "Convenience Banking" from "Conventional Banking" enjoyed by them all these days via Physical Bank Branches.

As Banking through Physical Branches is proved to be expensive because of overheads involved in the branch set-up and the services routed through this channel are subjected to human errors as well as time consuming which are not tolerable to the today's customers, Banks to withstand their competitive ability are required to take the help of e- Banking Channels.

For ensuring convenience and ease of doing banking, Banks have gone with an innovative approach to make available different Alternative Banking Channels (ABCs), which include mainly Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), Internet Banking (IB), Tele Banking (TB), Mobile Banking (MB), IVR Banking, Phone Banking (PB), Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT), Electronic Clearing Services (ECS), Debit Card (DC), Credit Card (CC), Point of Sales Service (POSs), Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS), Use of MICR Technology (MICRT), Cheque Truncation System (CTS), SMS Banking (SMSB), Payment Gateway, White-Label ATMs (WLAs), Micro-ATMs (MAs), Aadhar-Enabled Payment System (AEPS), Call Centers. A brief sketch of these Channels is given here under.

I. ATMs:

Entry of ATMs is a landmark achievement in the technology journey of Indian Banking Sector. Acting as the "Virtual Branches", ATMs, an electronic communication device have made a humble beginning by acting as the "Cash Dispensation Machines" (CDMs) initiated for reducing the pressure on "Bank Tellers" from those customers who frequently visit Branches for "Cash Withdrawals". With this novel initiative launched by the Banking Sector, Customers have started enjoying exciting experiences by getting Cash Withdrawal transaction completed just in 20 seconds. With more popularity gained by these CDMs in making the process of cash withdrawals much faster and simpler, there was a need for the Banking Sector for enlarging the functionality of these CDMs to take over many other new services such as enabling customers view account balances, obtaining mini statements, order a cheque book and account statement, transfer of funds between accounts, refilling the mobile prepaid card, payment of utilities, cash and cheque deposits, change of PIN, knowing information about other products dealt by banks through Cross Selling etc., With addition of these new activities, "CDMs are renamed as "ATMs" and as a result of these dramatic changes, Banks could enable "ATMs" provide all the banking services on 24x7 basis. With this, work pressure on "Bank Tellers" got drastically reduced enabling them concentrate on "Customer Education" to make customers well prepared to accept the "Digital Banking" in the days to come.

ATMs which have become the "Game Changer" have been aiming at enabling customers to migrate from "Conventional Branch Banking" to "Digital Banking" with "Convenience" provided

to them in availing banking services in a more secured manner.

ATMs have begun their activities through Debit Card issued to the customers by the Banks. Banks by installing "on-site" and "off-site via ATMs" have travelled long distance in making "Customer Journey" in availing banking services more comfortable, with everlasting satisfaction provided to them.

Before the launch of "ATMs" as a real substitute for "Bank Tellers", customers were required to travel a distance of 3 tables to get the cheque processing completed and after this new channel made its entry, customers waiting time got heavily reduced, as the "Turn Around Time" (TAT) required for "ATM Transactions" is much less, when compared with the "TAT" taken by the Bank Tellers. Besides being convenient, ATMs could at last fulfil the long-cherished dream of the customers of "Any Time and Any Where Banking".

With more acceptability enjoyed by the ATMs from vast network of Customers, Banks were further enthused to bring revolutionary changes in the very functioning of ATMs, by going for the launch of "ATMs for Visually Challenged" "ATMs on Wheels", "ATMs at Petrol Pumps, Railway Stations, Retail Stores, ShoppingMalls", "Cash Recycling Machines(CRMs)", "ATMs without Cards", "Swadhan", "ATMs with Shared Network", etc. touching the lives of all customer groups.

Though, banks have been aiming at providing the banking services via ATMs on 24×7 basis, Customers real experience say that, they are unable to enjoy "Any Time Banking Facility" through these ATMs, as they face variety of problems like non-availability of cash due to logistic problems, inability to withdraw huge amounts due to the cap fixed on the amount of withdrawals per day and number of withdrawals per day, inability to get the prints of mini statements, etc. Unless these issues are addressed by the Banks, Government's move in taking the country towards "Digital Banking" is going to remain as a daytime dream resulting in an unavoidable situation to the Banks to continue "Branch Banking" for some more time.

II. Internet Banking:

Internet Banking also known as Online Banking is another innovative Alternative Banking Channel launched by the Banks mainly to facilitate the customers enjoy different banking services like fund transfer, account opening, payment of utility

bills, sending request for new cheque book, monitoring accounts on a regular basis to have financial control, payment of income tax and insurance premia, obtaining DDs, enquiring about banking products, ticket booking, etc.

For enjoying the above-mentioned banking services via Internet Banking, customer is required to own either a PC, Laptop, Mobile Phone and Internet connection. Banking through IB platform is considered to be not only convenient, but also time saving as the customers again here also as in case of ATMs are not required to pay visits to the branches and rather they are facilitated to enjoy the banking services from home, office and even during travel also.

Though IB is a very highly useful channel to the customers from the point of view of convenience and ease of doing banking, still IB penetration is very far from expectations, as many customers are unable to afford to go for a PC/laptop Smart Phone. Besides this, frequent disruptions in internet connectivity and security concerns raised by the customers and lack of operating knowledge on the part of many customers have become impediments for banks to take further Internet Banking.

III. Tele Banking:

Tele Banking is another important innovative initiative taken by the Banks mainly to facilitate the customers do all non-cash related banking activities like enquiring account balances, cheque status, etc. These services are made available to the customers through telephone owned by them. Banks through Automatic Voice Recorders (AVRs) and manned phone terminals attend to the customer queries and thus could save customers time enormously by avoiding their visits to the physical branches.

IV. Mobile Banking:

Mobile Banking is another important milestone in the history of Indian Banking Sector. With the advancements of technology, enormous opportunities are created for Mobile and Wireless Technology Markets to grow at faster pace in the entire world.

Though Internet Banking is proved to be more beneficial for customers to do all banking transactions except cash withdrawals, still this channel could not become more popular banking channel, as it requires customers to own either a PC or laptop. To ensure more convenience to the customers in availing banking services just at

fingertips, necessity has arisen for the Banks to think of providing banking facilities through Mobile Phones, which are widely used by the public as an important tool of communication.

As Mobile Phones have become the powerful instruments influencing people's social and economic life, Banks thought that, "Mobile Phone" would be the right type of medium to make people get ready for accepting digitalized banking services, so as to become active partners in the government's move to achieve "Cashless Economy".

Through Mobile Banking platform, customers are allowed to enjoy all banking services available under Internet Banking and the only difference here is that customers just by using the most handy Mobile Phone can avail Banking services everywhere and all the time. Thus, MB could avoid extra baggage to the customers for doing banking transactions even during travel also.

V. IVR Banking:

IVR Banking which stands for "Interactive Voice Response Banking" refers to the banking transactions that are done by the customers over phone. Customers using this Channel are required to give Credit Card details through an automated system enabling the system to proceed with merchant payments on goods and services purchased by them.

VI. Phone Banking (PB):

With the emergence of ATMs as an "Enabler" facilitating easy, convenient and simple way of banking on 24x7 basis, Phone Banking has been simultaneously launched by the banks in our country. With the help of this channel, customers could do all banking transactions except those not involving cash and documentation. Since ATM, IB, MB etc., facilitate the customers enjoy every banking service avoiding their visits to the Branches, for any enquiry, customers could as well take the help of this channel, as the timings of PB are longer than the Physical Branch Banking. As such, PB has come to the rescue of the customers for getting all support services, other than those requiring cash and documentation. Though PB appears to be a viable channel to the customers in getting informational services, with the advent of "Online Banking" or "Internet Banking", Phone Banking has almost become irrelevant to the customers, as Online Banking has the inbuilt mechanism addressing the informational requirements of the customers.

VII.SMS Banking:

This is another innovative development happened in the banks, and through this channel, customers are extended the support in getting up-to-date information on the new products and services launched by the Bank. Besides this, customers are allowed to enjoy the facility of SMS Alert on every completed bank transaction.

VIII. Debit Card:

Debit Card is another important facility kept in the hands of customers by the banks for doing online and offline shopping. These cards can be used by the customers for enjoying banking services like cash withdrawals, obtaining mini statement, change of PIN, etc., at ATMs and for making payments of online and offline shopping following the principle of "Pay First and Use Latter". Because of this innovative step initiated by the banks, customers are enabled to do "Any Time and Any Where Banking" without visiting branches and could avoid the risk of carrying cash while doing shopping. As it is a prepaid card, customers can use the card either for cash withdrawals at ATMs or for making merchant payments to the extent of balance available in his account.

IX. Credit Cards:

Unlike Debit Cards, Credit Cards are issued by the banks by asking the customer to follow the principle of "Use First and Pay Latter" to the extent of credit limit fixed by the bank at the time of issue of card. As customers are allowed to use Credit Cards for making purchases with an understanding that, customer is at liberty to use it till the credit limit gets exhausted, in a way, issue of Credit Cards by banks is to be construed as a type of loan facility extended by the banks to the customers. Unlike Debit Card, which is treated as Prepaid Card, Credit Card is to be understood as Post Paid Card and customers are allowed to enjoy reward points on merchant payments made by them via Credit Card.

X. Use of MICR Technology:

It is not the e-banking channel in its strict sense and only is a techno-logical advancement in Cheque Processing System allowing customers take the help of this system for cheque clearing beyond business hours to enjoy the credit quickly. Though MICR Technology is an improvement over earlier cheque clearing process followed at branches manually by ensuring speed in cheque processing, still this system also suffer from a limitation, as it could not avoid the necessity of

physical delivery of cheques by Banks for further processing and payment.

XI. Cheque Truncation System:

CTS is another landmark development achieved by the banks in the field of Information Technology and has been introduced mainly to improve the speed and safety in cheque processing, as the physical movement of cheques is not required under this system as in case of MICR Cheque Clearing System. Like MICR Cheque Clearing System, even CTS also is not an Alternative Channel and is only a facilitating system aimed at ensuring quick processing of Cheques of the Customers under this CTS, Banks are allowed to just send the electronic image of the cheque for its processing and final payment, and with the introduction of this novel step by bringing amendments to the IT Act,2000 in the year 2002, cheque processing and payment have become much faster and easier. CTS has not only ensured speed in the processing and payment of cheques, but also the safety.

XII. Real Time Cross Settlement (RTGS):

RTGS is another noteworthy achievement made by the banks in improving speed and ease electronic mode of payment system, as well as its effectiveness. This system working on the principle of real time and gross basis help the customers in avoiding the problem of credit risk by ensuring the electronic transfer of funds instantly.

XIII. Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT):

EFT is another important development in Bank's technology which is aimed at making payment system easier, speedier and hassle free. Under this, anyone who wants to make payment can either make payment of cash to the bank or issue instructions to the bank to transfer funds directly from his account to the receiver or beneficiary's account. With this type of electronic transfer of funds, receiver or beneficiary will get fundtransferfaster.

XIV. Electronic Clearing Services (ECS):

ECS is a retail payment system which is generally used by companies and government departments to have bulk receipts and payments and these should be of repetitive nature. For instance, payment of salaries and dividends, pensions interest etc., are being done via ECS(Credit) following "Single Debit and Multiple Credits" principle, where as in case of ECS(Debit), principle of "Single Credit and Multiple Debits" is being followed by utility service providers for

collection of electricity bills, telephone bills, and other charges and Banks will use this for collection of principal and interest amounts from the customers on various types of loans provided by them .

XV. Point of Sale Terminal (POS):

POS Terminals entered the "Distribution Channels (DCs)" of the Banks after ATMs are widely accepted by the customers. As these Terminals involve just Rs 20,000/- as acquisition cost against Rs 3 to 5 lac expenditure involved in case of installation of ATMs, they have become more popular. Besides acquisition cost being very meagre, their maintenance costs are also very low in comparison to the ATMs and as such they have become more popular within a very short period. As "Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme" has become mandatory for the governments to go ahead with the "Financial Inclusion Programmes (FIPs)", Governments made it compulsory for the government departments concerned with the implementation of "MGNREGP" to see that payments to the beneficiaries of this scheme for the work done are made by them via POS Terminals.

In view of low acquisition and maintenance cost and their outreach, Union Government and RBI were made to encourage the use of these Terminals and as result of this, their number has increased to 40 lacs at the end of April 2019 from just 15,000 stood at the end of October 2018.

Apart from the beneficiaries under DBT Scheme, general public willing to go for any purchases without carrying cash can as well go ahead with shopping by swiping either a credit or debit card on POS. Through swiping, customer account gets debited, and retailer's account gets credited. This channel has become very much useful to the customers especially in avoiding risk involved in carrying cash while doing shopping.

XVI. Payment Gateway:

It is a customer facing interface used by merchants to accept the card-based purchase transactions done by them. Through this Gateway, customers are allowed to enjoy the freedom of doing purchases through both online and offline mode without carrying cash. This novel step introduced by the Banks have made customers enjoy both convenience and comfort.

XVII. White-Label ATMs (WLAs):

As Banks' services through ATMs were mostly confined to the Urban and Metropolitan cities and could not penetrate into Rural India due

to prohibitive costs involved in their set-up and regular maintenance costs and due to lack of awareness on the part of rural customers, RBI thought that, there is a need to include Rural Customers also in the ambit of Digital Banking and in an attempt to reach these customers, Banks were asked to go for WLAs by using the services of Non- Banking Companies to setup these WLAs, whose net worth should be atleast Rs 100 crore. With about 25000 WLAs established by Non-Banking Companies, Banks in our country are able to reach the rural customers who hitherto were not covered by the Technology- Enabled Banking Services provided by the banks. These 25000 WLAs which constitute 8 % of the ATMs provide all banking services keeping utmost satisfaction of the customers on the top of their agenda.

XVIII. Micro-ATMs (MAs):

Micro-ATMs, a mini version of ATMs is also a modified POS Terminal with only difference that, these Micro- ATMs are not loaded with cash to allow customers enjoy cash withdrawal and fund transfer facility. Though these MAs do not have stored cash with them, still customers can enjoy all ATM services with the help of bank representatives who carry cash to facilitate rural customers make withdrawals through swiping Debit Card issued to them by the bank on the MA and take directly cash from the bank representative. Similarly, cash deposits are also permitted by the Bank Representative following the same procedure. Apart from cash deposits and withdrawals, customers are allowed to enjoy other banking services like fund transfers, obtaining mini statement, e- NYC based accounting opening, etc.

XIX. Aadhar-Enabled Payment System (AEPS):

Though, the rural customers are supported with Micro-ATMs and White- Label ATMs, National Payment Council of India felt that still, there is a scope for further supporting this customer group and for this it came up with an idea that "Aadhar-Enabled Payment System" would be able to meet this requirement. This payment channel works as "Cash-In and Cash-Out Centers" (CICOCs), and as per the data available with NPCI, it is clear that through AEPS, 80 crore people are enabled to enjoy "Any Time and Any Where Banking" facility, whereas UPI could reach only 8 crore people. This is a clear indication that, even the rural customers also started evincing keen interest towards e-Banking Channels and as such government's hope to see "Cash Less Economy" in our country would become a reality in near future.

XX. Call Centers:

Call Centers are set up in early part of 2001 mainly with a view to enable customers use Phone Banking in an organized manner. Though Phone Banking started losing its sanctity with the advent of Internet Banking, Call Centers are still considered to be the helping hand for the customers, as they help them in getting support from its staff, whenever the customer is encountered with a service failure. Apart from this, Call Centre Staff also further aid the customers through Telemarketing know about the new product arrivals. Further, these Centers are of immense use to the banks in debt collection and market research exercises.

Due to the technological revolutions happening in the banking field, as Branch Tellers services are almost becoming irrelevant and are going to come to halt in future, and human interface is conspicuously absent in e- Banking transactions, Banks could ensure human support only through these Call Centers. Though the customers have lot of expectations on Call Centre Staff, their real experience with them is quite discouraging, as the customers are required to wait for a long time to get the query redressed by the staff. To make Call Centers a real substitute for the Tellers Services, Banks are to intensify their efforts to improve the response skills among the Call Centre Staff through good training provided to them, failing which the Customers are forced to pay visits to the physical branches to get their issue resolved.

II. CONCLUSION:

Indian Banking Sector during its long journey ever since pre-independence days had been responsive to the societal needs by shifting its priorities from Class Banking to Mass Banking, Transactional Banking to Relationship Banking, Conventional Banking to Digital Banking. Though taking banking to the unbanked sections was attempted by the Indian Banking Sector at the expense of profitability, to match with global level banking standards, our Banks did not hesitate to adopt a new approach by realizing the importance of bringing the element of technology into their services. As a result of the sustained efforts made by those at the top echelons of the banking industry, today Indian Banking Sector could take Technology - Enabled Banking Services to 80 crore people through Aadhar-Enabled Payment Services, with 8 crore people enabled to enjoy the e- Banking services via UPI. Though the journey completed by the Indian Banking industry in technology front is satisfactory, still it has many miles to reach the

expectations of the policy makers in government circles and RBI, to get their dream of "**Cash Less Economy**" realized very soon. For this, top managements are to further step up their efforts for developing awareness among customers through "**Customer Education Programmes**" launched by them enabling the customers to overcome their apprehensions about e-Banking.

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