



Indian Banking Industry: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

The banking industry in India has a huge canvas of history, which covers the traditional banking Practices from the time of Britishers to the reforms period, nationalization to privatization of banks and now increasing numbers of foreign banks in India. Therefore, Banking in India has been through a long journey. Banking industry in India has also achieved a new height with the changing times. The use of technology has brought a revolution in the working style of the banks. Nevertheless, the fundamental aspects of banking i.e. trust and the confidence of the people on the institution remain the same. The majority of the banks are still successful in keeping with the confidence of the shareholders as well as other stakeholders. However, with the changing dynamics of banking business brings new kind of risk exposure.

In this paper an attempt has been made to identify the general sentiments, challenges and opportunities for the Indian Banking Industry. This article is divided in three parts. First part includes the introduction and general scenario of Indian banking industry. The second part discusses the various challenges and opportunities faced by Indian banking industry. Third part concludes that urgent emphasis is required on the Indian banking product and marketing strategies in order to get sustainable competitive edge over the intense competition from national and global banks.

This article is a small seed to existing branch of knowledge in banking industry and is useful for bankers, strategist, policy makers and researchers.

Keywords: Rural Market; Risk Management; Global Banking; Employee and Customer Retention.

1. Introduction

In recent time, we has witnessed that the World Economy is passing through some intricate circumstances as bankruptcy of banking & financial institutions, debt crisis in major economies of the world and euro zone crisis. The scenario has become very uncertain causing recession in major economies like US and Europe. This poses some serious questions about the survival, growth and maintaining the sustainable development. However, amidst all this turmoil India's Banking Industry has been amongst the few to maintain resilience. The tempo of development for the Indian banking industry has been remarkable over the past decade. It is evident from the higher pace of credit expansion, expanding profitability and productivity similar to banks in developed markets, lower incidence of non- performing assets and focus on financial inclusion have contributed to making Indian banking vibrant and strong. Indian banks have begun to revise their growth approach and re-evaluate the prospects on hand to keep the economy rolling.

In this paper an attempt has been made to review various challenges which are likely to be faced by Indian banking industry.

2. Historical Background

Bank of Hindustan was set up in 1870; it was the earliest Indian Bank. Later, three presidency banks under Presidency Bank's act 1876 i.e. Bank of Calcutta, Bank of Bombay and Bank of Madras were set up, which laid foundation for modern banking in India. In 1921, all presidency banks were amalgamated to form the Imperial Bank of India. Imperial bank carried out limited number of central banking functions prior to establishment of RBI. It engaged in all types of commercial banking business except dealing in foreign

exchange. Reserve Bank of India Act was passed in 1934 & Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was constituted as an apex body without major government ownership. Banking Regulations Act was passed in 1949. This regulation brought RBI under government control. Under the act, RBI got wide ranging powers for supervision & control of banks. The Act also vested licensing powers & the authority to conduct inspections in RBI.

In 1955, RBI acquired control of the Imperial Bank of India, which was renamed as State Bank of India. In 1959, SBI took over control of eight private banks floated in the erstwhile princely states, making them as its 100% subsidiaries. It was 1960, when RBI was empowered to force compulsory merger of weak banks with the strong ones. It significantly reduced the total number of banks from 566 in 1951 to 85 in 1969. In July 1969, government nationalised 14 banks having deposits of Rs. 50 crores & above. In 1980, government acquired 6 more banks with deposits of more than Rs.200 crores. Nationalisation of banks was to make them play the role of catalytic agents for economic growth. The Narasimha Committee report suggested wide ranging reforms for the banking sector in 1992 to introduce internationally accepted banking practices. The amendment of Banking Regulation Act in 1993 saw the entry of new private sector banks.

Banking industry is the back bone for growth of any economy. The journey of Indian Banking Industry has faced many waves of economic crisis. Recently, we have seen the economic crisis of US in 2008-09 and now the European crisis. The general scenario of the world economy is very critical. It is the banking rules and regulation framework of India which has prevented it from the world economic crisis. In order to understand the challenges and opportunities of Indian Banking Industry, first of all, we need to understand the general scenario and structure of Indian Banking Industry.

3. General Banking Scenario in India

The general banking scenario in India has become very dynamic now-a-days. Before preliberalization era, the picture of Indian Banking was completely different as the Government of India initiated measures to play an active role in the economic life of the nation, and the Industrial Policy Resolution adopted by the government in 1948 envisaged a mixed economy. This resulted into greater involvement of the state in different segments of the economy including banking and finance.

The Reserve Bank of India was nationalized on January 1, 1949 under the terms of the Reserve Bank of India (Transfer to Public Ownership) Act, 1948. In 1949, the Banking Regulation Act was enacted which empowered the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) "to regulate, control, and inspect the banks in India." The Banking Regulation Act also provided that no new bank or branch of an existing bank could be opened without a license from the RBI, and no two banks could have common directors.

By the 1960s, the Indian banking industry had become an important tool to facilitate the speed of development of the Indian economy. The Government of India issued an ordinance and nationalised the 14 largest commercial banks with effect from the midnight of July 19, 1969. A second dose of nationalization of 6 more commercial banks followed in 1980. The stated reason for the nationalization was to give the government more control of credit delivery. With the second dose of nationalization, the Government of India controlled around 91% of the banking business of India. Later on, in the year 1993, the government merged New Bank of India with Punjab National Bank. It was the only merger between nationalized banks and resulted in the reduction of the number of nationalised banks from 20 to 19. After this, until the 1990s, the nationalised banks grew at a pace of around 4%, closer to the average growth rate of the Indian economy.

In the early 1990s, the then Narasimha Rao government embarked on a policy of liberalization, licensing a small number of private banks.

The next stage for the Indian banking has been set up with the proposed relaxation in the norms for Foreign Direct Investment, where all Foreign Investors in banks may be given voting rights which could exceed the present cap of 10%, at present it has gone up to 74% with some restrictions. The new policy shook the Banking sector in India completely. Bankers, till this time, were used to the 4-6-4 method (Borrow at 4%; Lend at 6%; Go home at 4) of functioning.

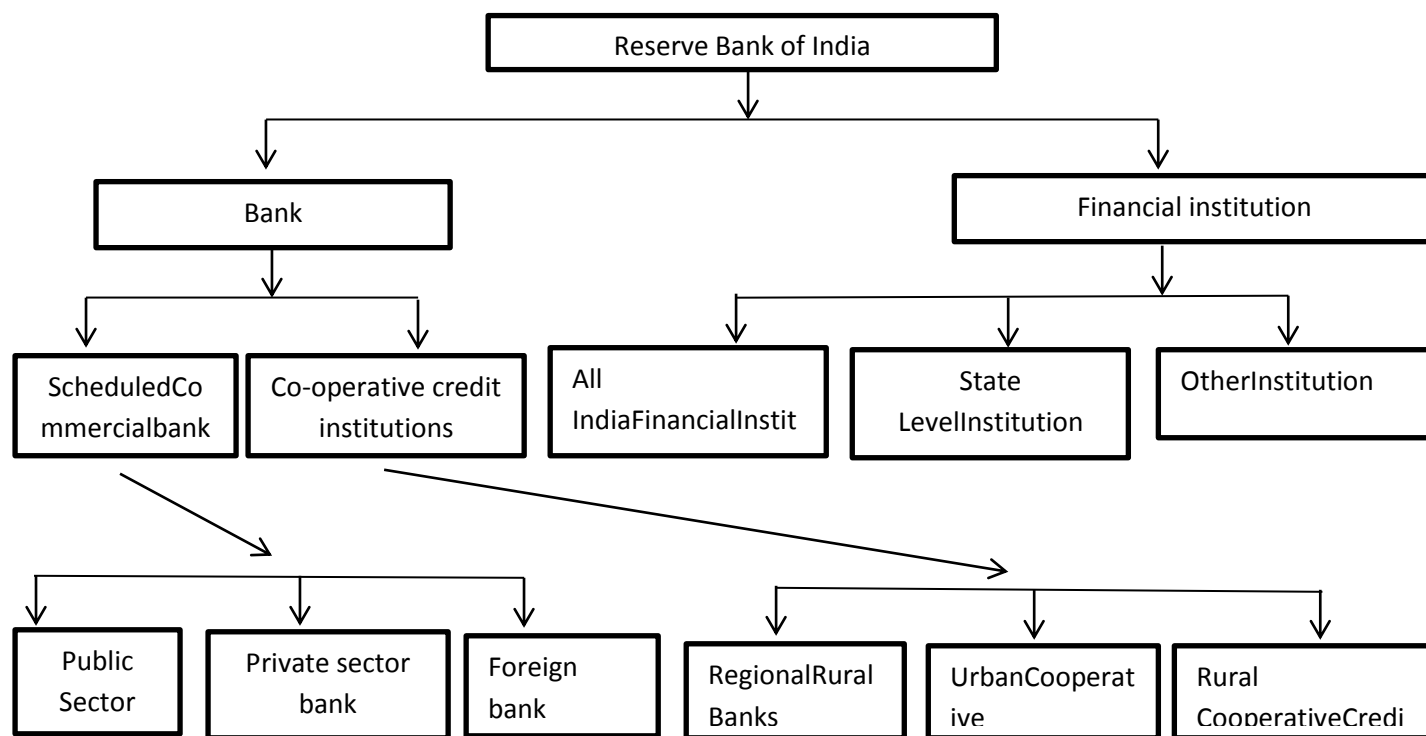
The new wave ushered in a modern outlook and tech-savvy methods of working for traditional banks. All this led to the retail boom in India. People not just demanded more from their banks but also received more.

4. Structure of Indian Banking Industry

Banking Industry in India functions under the sunshade of Reserve Bank of India - the regulatory, central bank. Banking Industry mainly consists of:

- Commercial Banks
- Co-operative Banks

The commercial banking structure in India consists of: Scheduled Commercial Banks, Unscheduled Bank, Scheduled commercial Banks constitute those banks which have been included in the Second Schedule of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934. RBI in turn includes only those banks in this schedule which satisfy the criteria laid down vide section 42 (60) of the Act. Some co-operative banks are scheduled commercial banks although not all co-operative banks are. Being a part of the second schedule confers some benefits to the bank in terms of access to accommodation by RBI during the times of liquidity constraints. At the same time, however, this status also subjects the bank certain conditions and obligation towards the reserve regulations of RBI. For the purpose of assessment of performance of banks, the Reserve Bank of India categorise them as public sector banks, old private sector banks, new private sector banks and foreign banks.



The commercial banking structure in India

5. CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIAN BANKING INDUSTRY

Developing countries like India, still has a huge number of people who do not have access to banking services due to scattered and fragmented locations. But if we talk about those people who are availing banking services, their expectations are raising as the level of services are increasing due to the emergence of Information Technology and competition. Since, foreign banks are playing in Indian market the number of services offered has increased and banks have laid emphasis on meeting the customer expectations.

Now, the existing situation has created various challenges and opportunity for Indian Commercial Banks. In order to encounter the general scenario of banking industry we need to understand the challenges and opportunities lying with banking industry of India.

5.1 Rural Market

Banking in India is generally fairly mature in terms of supply, product range and reach, even though reach in rural India still remains a challenge for the private sector and foreign banks. In terms of quality of assets and capital adequacy, Indian banks are considered to have clean, strong and transparent balance sheets relative to other banks in comparable economies in its region.

Consequently, we have seen some examples of inorganic growth strategy adopted by some nationalized and private sector banks to face upcoming challenges in banking industry of India. For example recently, ICICI Bank Ltd. merged the Bank of Rajasthan Ltd. in order to increase its reach in rural market and market share significantly. State Bank of India (SBI), the largest public sector bank in India has also adopted the same strategy to retain its position. It is in the process of acquiring its associates. Recently, SBI has merged State Bank of Indore in 2010.

5.2 Management of Risks

The growing competition increases the competitiveness among banks. But, existing global banking scenario is seriously posing threats for Indian banking industry. We have already witnessed the bankruptcy of some foreign banks.

According to Shrieves (1992), there is a positive association between changes in risk and capital. Research studied the large sample of banks and results reveal that regulation was partially effective during the period covered. Moreover, it was concluded that changes in bank capital over the period studied was risk-based.

Wolgast, (2001) studied the Merger and acquisition activity among financial firms. The author focused bank supervisors in context with success of mergers, risk management, financial system stability and market liquidity. The study concluded that large institutions are able to maintain a superior level of risk management .

Al-Tamimi and Al-Mazrooei (2007) examined the risk management practices and techniques in dealing with different types of risk. Moreover, they compared risk management practices between the two sets of banks. The study found the three most important types of risk i.e. commercial banks foreign exchange risk, followed by credit risk, and operating risk.

Sensarma and Jayadev (2009) used selected accounting ratios as risk management variables and attempted to gauge the overall risk management capability of banks. They used multivariate statistical techniques to summarize these accounting ratios. Moreover, the paper also analysed the impact of these risk management scores on stock returns through regression analysis. Researchers found that Indian banks' risk management capabilities have been improving over time. Returns on the banks' stocks appeared to be sensitive to risk management capability of banks. The study suggest that banks want to enhance shareholder wealth will have to focus on successfully managing various risks .

5.3 Growth of Banking

Zhao, Casu and Ferrari (2008) used a balanced panel data set covering the period of 1992-2004 and employing a Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA)-based Malmquist Total Factor Productivity (TFP) index. The empirical study indicated that, after an initial adjustment phase, the Indian banking industry experienced sustained productivity growth, which was driven mainly by technological progress. Banks' ownership structure does not seem to matter as much as increased competition in TFP growth. Foreign banks appear to have acted as technological innovators when competition increased, which added to the competitive pressure in the banking market. Finally, our results also indicate an increase in risk-taking behaviour, along with the whole deregulation process.

It was found in the study of Goyal and Joshi (2011a) that small and local banks face difficulty in bearing the impact of global economy therefore, they need support and it is one of the reasons for merger. Some private banks used mergers as a strategic tool for expanding their horizons. There is huge potential in rural markets of India, which is not yet explored by the major banks. Therefore ICICI Bank Ltd. has used mergers as their expansion strategy in rural market. They are successful in making their presence in rural India. It strengthens their network across geographical boundary, improves customer base and market share.

5.4 Market Discipline and Transparency

According to Fernando (2011) transparency and disclosure norms as part of internationally accepted corporate governance practices are assuming greater importance in the emerging environment. Banks are expected to be more responsive and accountable to the investors. Banks have to disclose in their balance sheets a plethora of information on the maturity profiles of assets and liabilities, lending to sensitive sectors, movements in NPAs, capital, provisions, shareholdings of the government, value of investment in India and abroad, operating and profitability indicators, the total investments made in the equity share, units of mutual funds, bonds, debentures, aggregate advances against shares and so on.

5.5 Human Resource Management

Gelade and Ivery (2003) examined relationships between human resource management (HRM), work climate, and organizational performance in the branch network of a retail bank. Significant correlations were found between work climate, human resource practices, and business performance. The results showed that the correlations between climate and performance cannot be explained by their common dependence on HRM factors, and that the data are consistent with a mediation model in which the effects of HRM practices on business performance are partially mediated by work climate.

Bartel (2004) studied the relationship between human resource management and establishment performance of employees on the manufacturing sector. Using a unique longitudinal dataset collected through site visits to branch operations of a large bank, the author extends his research to the service sector. Because branch managers had considerable discretion in managing their operations and employees, the HRM environment could vary across branches. Site visits provided specific examples of managerial practices that affected branch performance. An analysis of responses to the bank's employee

attitude survey that controls for unobserved branch and manager characteristics shows a positive relationship between branch performance and employees' satisfaction with the quality of performance evaluation, feedback, and recognition at the branch—the “incentives” dimension of a high-performance work system. In some fixed effects specifications, satisfaction with the quality of communications at the branch was also important.

5.6 Global Banking

It is practically and fundamentally impossible for any nation to exclude itself from world economy. Therefore, for sustainable development, one has to adopt integration process in the form of liberalization and globalization as India spread the red carpet for foreign firms in 1991. The impact of globalization becomes challenges for the domestic enterprises as they are bound to compete with global players.

If we look at the Indian Banking Industry, then we find that there are 36 foreign banks operating in India, which becomes a major challenge for Nationalized and private sector banks. These foreign banks are large in size, technically advanced and having presence in global market, which gives more and better options and services to Indian traders.

5.7 Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion has become a necessity in today's business environment. Whatever is produced by business houses, that has to be under the check from various perspectives like environmental concerns, corporate governance, social and ethical issues. Apart from it to bridge the gap between rich and poor, the poor people of the country should be given proper attention to improve their economic condition. Dev (2006) stated that financial inclusion is significant from the point of view of living conditions of poor people, farmers, rural non-farm enterprises and other vulnerable groups. Financial inclusion, in terms of access to credit from formal institutions to various social groups. Apart from formal banking institutions, which should look at inclusion both as a business opportunity and social responsibility, the author conclude that role of the self-help group movement and microfinance institutions is important to improve financial inclusion. The study suggested that this requires new regulatory procedures and de-politicisation of the financial system.

5.8 Employees' Retention

The banking industry has transformed rapidly in the last ten years, shifting from transactional and customer service-oriented to an increasingly aggressive environment, where competition for revenue is on top priority. Long-time banking employees are becoming disenchanted with the industry and are often resistant to perform up to new expectations. The diminishing employee morale results in decreased revenue. Due to the intrinsically close ties between staff and clients, losing those employees completely can mean the loss of valuable customer relationships. There tail banking industry is concerned about employee retention from all levels: from tellers to executives to customer service representatives because competition is always moving in to hire them away.

The competition to retain key employees is intense. Top-level executives and HR departments spend large amounts of time, effort, and money trying to figure out how to keep their people from leaving.

5.9 Customer Retention

Levesque and McDougall (1996) investigated the major determinants of customer satisfaction and future intentions in the retail bank sector. They identified the determinants which include service quality dimensions (e.g. getting it right the first time), service features (e.g. competitive interest rates), service problems, service recovery and products used. It was found, in particular, that service problems and the bank's service recovery ability have a major impact on customer satisfaction and intentions to switch.

Clark (1997) studied the impact of customer-employee relationships on customer retention rates in a major UK retail bank. He revealed that employee and customer perceptions of service quality are related to customer retention rates and that employee and customer perceptions of service quality are related to each other.

Clark (2002) examined the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational climate and customer retention in a specific service setting, viz. a major UK retail bank. Employees' perceptions of the practices and procedures in relation to customer care at their branch were investigated using a case study approach. The findings revealed that there is a relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational climate and customer retention at a micro organizational level. He suggested that organizational climate can be subdivided into five climate themes and that, within each climate theme, there are several dimensions that are critical to customer retention.

5.10 Environmental Concerns

It is quite clear from the recently formed Copenhagen Climate Council (CCC) that there is a severe need for environmental awareness among all the countries of the world. CCC published Thought Leadership Series on Climate Change which is a collection of inspirational, concise and clearly argued pieces from some of the world's most renowned thinkers and business leaders on climate change. The objective of the pieces is to assist in enhancing the public and political awareness of the actions that could have a

significant impact on global emissions growth and to disseminate the message that it is time to act. The Thought Leadership Series was aimed at explaining and spreading awareness of the key elements in the business and policy response to the climate problem. The rationale for the Thought Leadership Series was to change the focus of people.

5.11 Social and Ethical Aspects

There are some banks, which proactively undertake the responsibility to bear the social and ethical aspects of banking. This is a challenge for commercial banks to consider these aspects in their working. Apart from profit maximization, commercial banks are supposed to support those organizations, which have some social concerns.

Benedikter (2011) defines Social Banks as “banks with a conscience”. They focus on investing in community, providing opportunities to the disadvantaged, and supporting social, environmental, and ethical agendas. Social banks try to invest their money only in endeavours that promote the greater good of society, instead of those, which generate private profit just for a few. He has also explained the main difference between mainstream banks and social banks that mainstream banks are in most cases focused solely on the principle of profit maximization whereas, social banking implements the triple principle of profit-people-planet.

6. CONCLUSION

Over the years, it has been observed that clouds of trepidation and drops of growth are two important phenomena of market, which frequently changes in different sets of conditions. The pre and post liberalization era has witnessed various environmental changes which directly affects the aforesaid phenomena. It is evident that post liberalization era has spread new colours of growth in India, but simultaneously it has also posed some challenges.

This article discusses the various challenges and opportunities like rural market, transparency, customer expectations, management of risks, growth in banking sector, human factor, global banking, environmental concern, social, ethical issues, employee and customer retentions. Banks are striving to combat the competition. The competition from global banks and technological innovation has compelled the banks to rethink their policies and strategies.

7. SUGGESTIONS

As per the above discussion, we can say that the biggest challenge for banking industry is to serve the mass market of India. Companies have shifted their focus from product to customer. The better we understand our customers, the more successful we will be in meeting their needs. In order to mitigate above mentioned challenges Indian banks must cut their cost of their services. Another aspect to encounter the challenges is product differentiation. Apart from traditional banking services, Indian banks must adopt some product innovation so that they can compete in gamut of competition. Technology up gradation is an inevitable aspect to face challenges.

The level of consumer awareness is significantly higher as compared to previous years. Now-a days they need internet banking, mobile banking and ATM services.

Expansion of branch size in order to increase market share is another tool to combat competitors. Therefore, Indian nationalized and private sector banks must spread their wings towards global markets as some of them have already done it. Indian banks are trustworthy brands in Indian market; therefore, these banks must utilize their brand equity as it is a valuable asset for them.

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