

BANKS IN POLAND – THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

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1. Introduction

Every bank or any other business interested in preserving a certain position on the market has to find ways of persuading their clients that the services they offer are among the best. The key to success is to maintain the best quality of the offered services. The main aim of this article is to characterize the quality of banking services on the Polish market. The data were collected from a variety of scientific research and reports prepared by institutions related to the banking industry.

2. The role of quality in banking services

“Quality” is a term of ambiguous meaning that is hard to pinpoint. It is used in many different contexts and may refer to many different domains of life and human activity, organizations and institutions. Using the best IT in banks, observing the security and safety rules or a sizeable ownership capital will be of a lesser importance if the whole banking system does not promote or implement strategies to achieve quality [1, p.397–404].

A consumer who has to make decisions concerning financial services is often uncertain [2, p.267–268]. The phenomenon of intense risk present in the market of financial services is related to the basic characteristics of these services, i.e. immateriality or elusiveness. The inability to check and compare the service with a similar one and the impossibility to own it after purchase lead to a greater uncertainty while buying a service than a good which can be inspected or returned [3, p.247]. Thus customers tend to look for more detailed information, often from their friends, Internet or other mass media. In their attempt to persuade their potential customers that their services are of the highest quality, banks use a variety of certificates, rewards or positive opinions of their clients. They try to build a good reputation and win the trust of customers who are already using their services. Besides the image of a financial institution, there are other factors encouraging a consumer to choose a particular bank's offer. These include staff competence, availability and the décor of the offices, the number of cash dispensers, the monthly fee for running an account etc [4, p.19; 5, p.17].

A. Styś [6, p.100] claims that the quality of banking services may be determined by the technological potential which shortens the time of services and improves their accuracy and reliability. He also points out that other important factors in banking services are reference, recommendation and good opinion which often guarantee high quality and reduce the risk on the part of the consumer.

The quality of banking services is directly related to the satisfaction and loyalty of customers. It may be assumed that the increase of quality of services results in the increase of customers' identification with their bank, their satisfaction with and loyalty to the bank. Hence, the decrease on the quality of services leads to less satisfaction, loyalty and lack of willingness to cooperate with the bank. V. Zeithalm, L. Berry and A. Parasuraman [7, p.35] showed that the higher is the opinion on the goods and services offered by a business, the higher is the loyalty of the customers as well as their willingness to pay more for the services.

J. Garczarezyk [8, p.126–127] tested the determinants influencing the perception of banking services by Polish customers. His research helped to distinguish the most important ones in shaping customers' opinions about banking services. They are presented in Tab. 1.

3. Results of empirical research

The empirical data usually confirm the positive evaluation of the quality of banking services in Poland. P. Stodulny's [4, p.143–144] study showed that on a scale of 1 to 10, the entire banking

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industry scored 7,43 points, which means that the customers are generally happy with the quality of the services. This has also been confirmed by the CBOS poll, where nearly all (93%) users of current bank accounts expressed their satisfaction with their bank and every third consumer (31%) expressed great satisfaction with the bank services. Very few customers were unhappy or could not assess the banks running their accounts (Fig. 1).

Tab. 1. Determinants of quality of banking services

Area	Determinants
The image of the financial institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Credibility and trust in institutions; – Security services (no risk); – Opinion of the institution among friends, experts; – Personal safety customer in the bank;
Facility and distribution services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Exterior and interior facilities; – Convenient location facility; – Number of service; – Opening the facility for customers; – Ability to travel, parking; – Ensure confidentiality
Staff, customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expertise and knowledge of staff; – Communicative personnel; – The speed and efficiency of customer service; – Timeliness of orders and transactions; – Kindness and friendliness of the staff; – The speed and efficiency of handling of complaints;
Offer, price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Range of services; – Adaptation of the offer to the needs; – The ability to use the cash machines; – The fees and commissions; – The interest rate on loans and deposits;
Communication with the customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Service information in the institution; – Sending an mail offer to the client; – Clarity and completeness of leaflets, brochures

Source: own work based on: [8, pp.126–127]

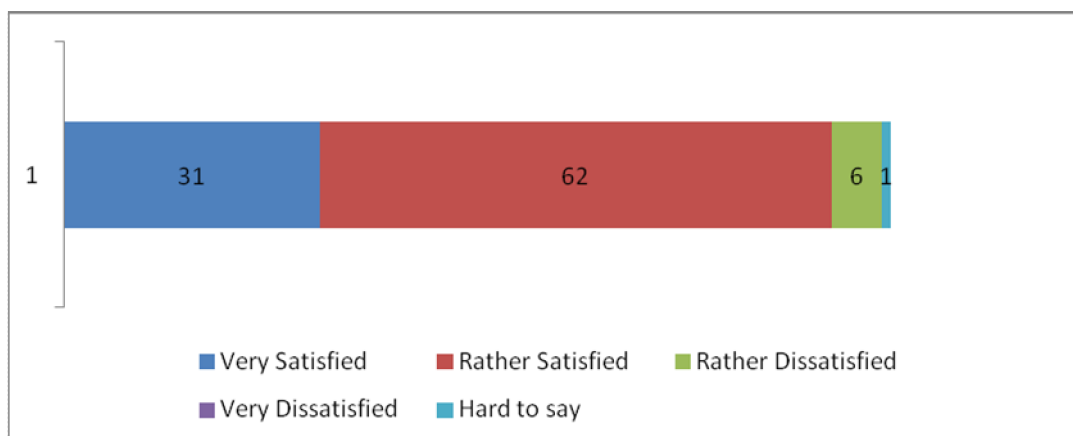


Fig. 1. Level of satisfaction with banking services (in %)

Source: own work based on [9]

While selecting the bank to run their personal account, 55% of Poles take into account its reliability. The second most important factor, selected by 51% of respondents, is the distance between the bank and home. Next in line, were the number of offices and cash dispensers, and the convenience of their location, selected by 40% of respondents. Such results may signify that convenience is of

significant importance. While putting money in a bank we want to be sure that we will have a steady and easy access to it (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2. Factors influencing the choice of bank

Determinants	% of answers
Solid bank	54,8
Bank branch close to home	51,1
Convenient location facilities	44,5
A large number of the cash machines	42
A large branch network	36,8
Habit	26,8
Access to banking services by phone	20,2
Interesting conditions for promotion	19,6
Access to banking services by Internet	19,4
Modern products	14,2

Source: own work based on [10]

Customers are increasingly interested in the online banking services since it is usually much faster and more comfortable than actually going to the bank. They are less interested in bank consultants' services, their knowledge, manner or personality. The direct service parameters give way to the speed and comfort of online banking [11, p.242].

The factors which have the worst influence on the banks' reliability is their willingness to gain profit at the expense of customers' ignorance (33% of the respondents) and the regular increase in costs (32% of the respondents). 29% of the respondents would not open accounts in a newly opened bank and for 7% of the respondents the aggressive bank commercials are rather discouraging. In the last two years the number of Poles satisfied with banking sector has increased from 30% in 2012 to 46% at present. The image of financial institutions has improved – 67% of the respondents believe it is more positive whereas only 16% of respondents believe otherwise. Elevated service fees and unfavorable interest rates for both, loans and deposits are the real weaknesses of the Polish banking sector. Fees and commissions are factors which have the strongest influence on Poles who want to open an account or buy new bank products (44%). The main assets of banks are security, financial stability and a variety of deals [12].

According to bankers, customers display much trust in the banking sector in Poland. Nearly half of them (46%) believe that the customers' trust is very high. The assessment of this respect of the banking sector in Europe is lower (Fig. 2).

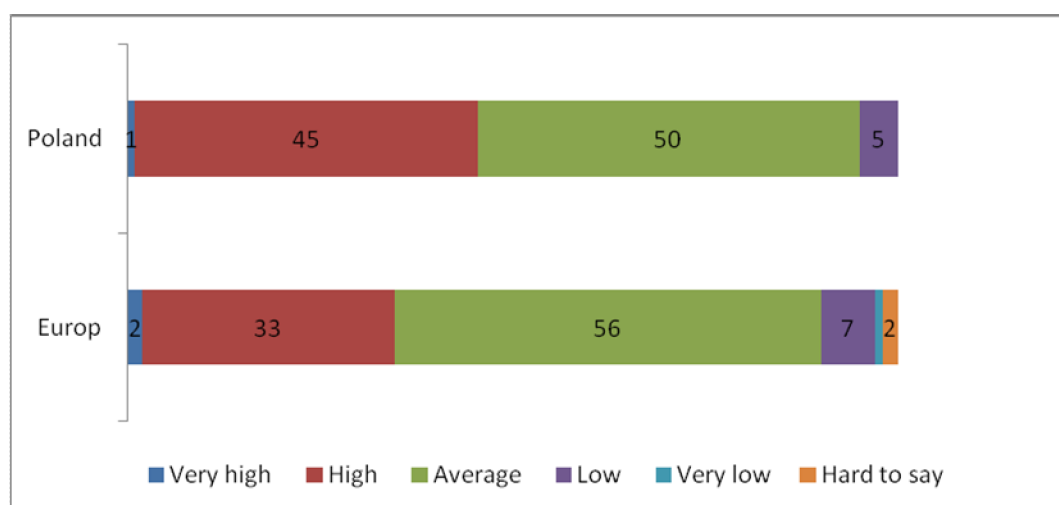


Fig. 2. Level of customers' confidence to banks (in %)

Source: own work based on [13]

According to the study carried out by TNS Polska in March and April of 2015, 87% of the respondents claim that their choice of a bank was a good choice. Even though the bank has not always met their expectations, the majority still uses its services. Nine out of ten customers claim that they have not switched to a different bank in the last five years [14].

4. Conclusions

Each bank or any other company that wants to maintain a certain position on the market must find ways to convince the customer that only their services or goods are competitive. The key to success is to maintain the best quality of service. The main aim of this article is to characterize the quality of banking services on the Polish market. Data sources are the research and reports of many institutions connected with the banking sector.

The best information technology in the bank, duly complied with prudential standards of sizable equity would mean much less if the whole bank organism was not set to promoting the quality and it will not be strategy focusing on its achievement.

High maintenance costs and unfavorable customer interest, both deposits and loans, according to customers are weaknesses of Polish banking. On the other hand, the main strengths of banks which the Poles include are: security, financial stability, and a large variety of offers.

The studies by many institutions confirm good results of Polish banks in the dimension of trust and reputation. 87% of respondents claim that the choice of the bank was a good choice for them. Nine out of ten customers of the banks replied that in the past five years have not changed their bank. Services provided by banks in Poland are highly rated.

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Summary

The quality of services is an essential factor in customer service and one of the best ways to distinguish a bank from its competitors. The banking sector in Poland is undergoing development and becoming increasingly competitive by prioritizing the question of quality and correct relations with customers, which is confirmed by research carried out by a variety of institutions. It does not mean, however, that all banks enjoy similar trust from its customers. In general, the Polish banking sector compares really well with other banks in Europe.

Keywords: banking services; quality of services; banks' reliability; determinants of quality of banking services; level of satisfaction with banking services.

JEL classification: G210

UD classification: 336.71(438)

Date of acceptance: 17.11.2015.