

An exploration of Human Interaction as an element of Customer Experience within the Age of
Digital Transformation:
A Multi - Case Study on Standard Bank and Capitec Bank

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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Abstract

The digital revolution is redefining the banking customer experience in the digital age. As a result, two of South Africa's major banks – Standard Bank and Capitec Bank – have developed contrasting experience strategies. With one bank deciding to minimize their bank branch footprint and the other increasing its footprint. This raises the question of the role the bank branch (human interaction) has in the banking customer experience of the digital age?

This qualitative, Multi Case-Study was conducted on the two abovementioned banks to compare and gain an understanding of what role the bank branch plays to the customer experience. The primary data collection took place in the form of Semi-Structured interviews with customers, consultants and branch managers of both banks to gain a rich understanding of their customer experience strategies.

The results revealed that the introduction of digital banking channels has resulted in fewer branch visits because of the independence and convenience that digital banking has. As a result, the role of the bank branch has evolved to serve the purpose of support and “advisory hubs”. Both the banks and some customers feel that there is value to the bank branch although they don't use it often, they appreciate the option of having it there when they do need it.

Key words:

Customer Experience, Digital Transformation, Human Interaction, Customer Experience Dimensions, Brand Trust, Meaningful relationships.

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODCUTION

1.1 Research Background

It is imperative for organisations and brands to keep up with the everchanging cultural shifts in our society in order to stay relevant. The rise in digital technology is the current phenomenon that has brands desperate to keep up. Digital Transformation can be described as the integration of digital technology into all areas of business that has ultimately changed the way that businesses operate and how they deliver unique and valuable experiences to the customer (The Enterprisers Project, 2019). This phenomenon is dictating the future of organisations in all industries. The banking sector is no exception.

This rise in digital technology has resulted in changing consumer needs, behaviours and increasingly higher expectations (Gujral, 2017), all of which aggregate the need for more personalised customer experiences (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). This demands organisations to adopt digital strategies in order to remain relevant and competitive. Demonstrating that at the heart of digital transformation is the customer and the Customer Experience.

The introduction of digital technologies in the banking industry has resulted in a critical change and disruption to the banking customer experience. Subsequently, a prominent trend in the industry is the significant reduction of bank branches across the globe (Whitefield, 2019).

In March 2019, one of South Africa's "Big Five" banks, Standard Bank, announced their decision to close down 25% of their branches by the end of June (Coetzee, 2019; Whitefield, 2019). The bank, like other banks worldwide, are adopting a technology- driven business model (Whitefield, 2019). On the contrary, despite being one of South Africa's biggest digital banks (Business Tech, 2019), Capitec have strategically decided to open more branches across the country (Whitefield, 2019). This discrepancy in the customer experiences amongst the banks is what has sparked the interest in the research study.

The purpose of the Customer Experience is to build, maintain and deepen the customer – business relationship by engaging the customer in a cognitive, emotional, social and sensory experience at the various touchpoints of the brand (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Bolton

(2018), encapsulates the various dimensions of the customer experience into three realms; *physical*, *digital* and *social*. All of which are essential in creating a holistic, meaningful brand experience that ultimately leads to brand satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. This is of particular importance within the banking industry because of the level of trust consumers need to have with their banks who deal with their assets and finances. The future of customer experience is the convergence of all these elements (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, enforcing that the human element remains a critical factor within the customer experience.

1.2 Rational and Problem Statement

This topic has been selected as a result of the major announcement that Standard Bank made about the reduction of their bank branches. The news came as a shock to many of the bank's customers and was the catalyst for further research on the situation. Concurrently, Capitec Bank's decision to be growing their number of branches fuelled more curiosity into this research.

The two aforementioned banks are not the only South African banks to reduce their branches. In fact, the majority of the South African banking sector seems to be following suit (Coetzee, 2018; Tarrant, 2019). Making this study more relevant and imperative than ever.

Digital Transformation Strategy does not necessarily mean the elimination of human interaction in the customer experience. The use of technology can be used to enhance human interaction within Customer Experience (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). It is therefore important to delve deeper into how the human interaction in the customer experience plays a role in creating and maintaining meaningful relationships with the customer. And investigate the value human interaction in the banking customer experience holds - especially in this age of digital transformation.

Whilst there have been numerous previous studies on the physical customer experience, there has been little research on the value of physical/ human interaction with the customer in the customer experience in building and fostering meaningful relationships with customers. More so in the South African banking industry context and in the age of digital transformation. Therefore, this research will contribute to the broader knowledge and ongoing discourse on the evolution of the Customer Experience in the age of digital transformation and will look specifically at the South African banking industry context.

Of course, every business strategy is different. But what remains consistent and important across all business strategies is the ultimate goal of building and maintaining meaningful relationships with customers. If the reduction of bank branches in South Africa is having an effect on building or enhancing relationships with the customers, it is important for banks to know.

This reduction of physical bank branches is leading to dehumanised client- bank relationships (Krstić and Tešić, 2016) which may be detrimental to meaningful brand relationships with customers.

1.3 Purpose of Study

Digital Transformation has brought about many questions and changes with regards to the customer experience in the banking sector. This research aims to gain an understanding of the banking customer experience in South Africa in the context of digitization. The purpose of this study is to explore the effect that the physical interaction with the customer at the bank branch has on building and maintaining a meaningful relationship with the customer. The importance it holds in the banking sector.

And whether by reducing bank branches (physical human interaction with customers) has a detrimental effect on the relationships and trust of customers with their banks. With higher expectations of customers and digital self-service, customers are becoming less loyal to brands (Johnson, 2018). The stakes are even higher now to retain customers (Johnson, 2018). Can reducing bank branches affect relationships with customers and therefore risk losing them – in the context of South African Banking customer experience?

From this study, South African banks will be able to gain a deeper understanding on the value of human interaction in their customer experience. Particularly at the branch because this is where the most human interaction with banks takes place. And the effects it has on the bank when there has been a decision to close down branches.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

It is for this reason that the following research objectives and questions apply;

	Research Question	Research Objective
1.	How do Standard Bank and Capitec Bank recognise the value of human interaction with their customers within the customer experience?	To identify what two of South Africa's major banks value about human interaction in the customer experience in building and sustaining meaningful relationships with the customer.
2.	What aspects of human interaction at the bank branch do these banks recognise as important to their growth?	To identify which aspects of human interaction at the bank branch the banks recognise as important to their growth.
3.	What do the banks' customers feel towards their customer experience?	To identify what the banks' consumers feel towards their customer experience.

2 CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Conceptual Framework/ Theoretical Foundation

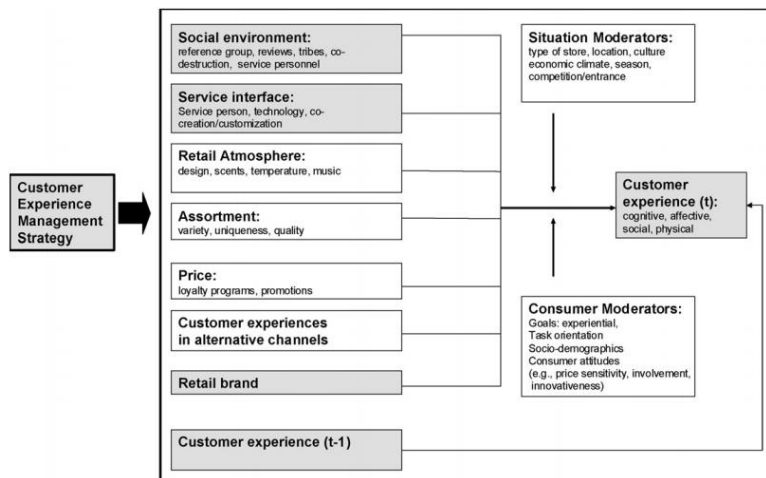


Figure 1. Conceptual model of customer experience creation (Verhoef

Figure 1

(Verhoef *et al.*, 2009)

Customer Experience Management is a concept explored by Verhoef. The conceptual model in Figure 1 above looks at creating the customer experience in a holistic way by looking the various elements. These elements are; the social environment, the retail atmosphere, service interface, assortment, price, customer experience in alternative channels, retail brand (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). Verhoef states that ultimately, the customer experience needs to engage the customer in an experience that is a cognitive, effective, social and physical (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009).

This model forms the theoretical basis of the customer experience. It includes elements of the customer experiences that were developed from past literature to create a holistic framework of the customer experience phenomenon (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). For the sake of this study, the social environment and the service interface are combined to create the physical dimension (Schmitt, 1999) of the banking customer experience which will be referred to as **human interaction** in the rest of the study.

2.2 Conceptualisation

The following concepts apply to this research paper.

Concept	Definition
Digital Transformation	"The integration of digital technology into all areas of a business, fundamentally changing how you operate and deliver value to customers" (The Enterprisers Project, no date).
Customer Experience	Verhoef et al. (2009) describe the customer experience as holistic involving the customer's "cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer".
Social (human) Interaction	"The interactions between the actors (employees and customers)" (Bolton et al., 2018). Can be in the physical or virtual realm but in the case of this study, the focus is on the physical realm.

3 CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

3.1 Defining the Customer Experience

Customer Experience (CX) has been a concept that has been explored and developed for many years.

In the early 1990s, the phenomenon started becoming part of the marketing concept as companies realised the importance of being “customer orientated” in satisfying customer needs and wants as a way of staying relevant and competitive.

There are many definitions of the customer experience:

“Companies stage an experience when they engage customers in a memorable way” - (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999)

The phenomena of the experience economy was first introduced by (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999). The term “experience economy” came about because people started valuing experiences over products and services being offered and organisations saw it as a strategic opportunity to create great economic value and differentiate themselves from their competition (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999). For an experience to be considered one, Pine II and Gilmore (1999) state that the customer needs to be “engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level”.

According to (Schmitt, 1999) brand experiences offer a combination of “sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values that replace functional values”. Similarly to the reasoning of Pine II and Gilmore (1999), Schmitt (1999) state that these experiences offer meaning and value to the consumer more than the product or service itself. He further goes on to describe the 5 types of customer experiences that form the foundation of the Experiential Marketing framework are – sense, feel, think, act and relate. Schmitt sees the customer experience as a holistic approach to creating value for the customer which ultimately leads to satisfaction and loyalty (Schmitt, 1999).

(Verhoef *et al.*, 2009), define the customer experience as “holistic in nature and involves the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer across multiple touchpoints” (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009; Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Again, we see the idea of *holistic* approach, where all of the above aspects combine to create a comprehensive experience, particularly in the retail environment.

Recently, (Bolton *et al.*, 2018) created the Customer Experience Framework by dividing the customer experience was into three realms – digital, physical and social. The purpose of this framework is to understand what the customer experience of the future looks like and how to manage it (Bolton *et al.*, 2018).

A brand’s experiences can consists of it communication efforts, advertising, design of brand environments such as the physical store, online presence such as websites, social media, contact with brand personnel, websites, etc. The purpose of the brand experience is to cater to the customer’s rational and emotional needs (Harris, Kluppel-Strobel and Shakhiry, 2017).

Customers are rational and emotionally driven. (Schmitt, 1999) argues that brands need to attend to the emotional aspects of the consumer who want to be entertained, emotionally affected, stimulated and creatively challenged. Which can only be accomplished by offering brand experiences.

Financial products and organisations, in particular, are rational marketing products. With that being said, people hold strong emotions towards feeling a sense of security financially (Schmitt, 1999). It is therefore useful to financial organisations to make use of experiences as it provides an opportunity to respond to these emotions without losing the essence of conservatism and responsibility associated with financial products (Schmitt, 1999). These experiences can offer a competitive advantage in the financial industry.

The customer experience has extensively been explored in academic literature and in the banking experience. However, there has been a little exploration done on the specific elements of the customer experience in relation to digital transformation in the banking sector. This literature review seeks to gain an understanding of the physical aspect of the customer experience within the baking sector – particularity in the age of digital transformation.

Although it is recognised that all aspects of the customer experience are vital and contribute to value creation, the particular role of the *physical* realm within the customer experience would like to be investigated. With specific reference to the banking industry in South Africa – particularly in the age of digital transformation. Recently, Standard Bank made the decision to close down some of their branches whilst on the contrary Capitec made the decision to open more branches (Bruce Whitefield, 2019). Both banks operate within the South African market. It was from these statistics that the question arose; what is it about the physical customer experiences (at branches) that Capitec recognise as valuable that the other South African banks are not?

3.2 Physical Realm of the customer service experience

This is known as the humanistic realm as it is the one realm that specifically recognises the value of human interaction within the customer experience.

At the heart of the *physical* brand experience is that of emotion and *feeling* an experience dimension of which Schmitt (1999) describes as creating positive customer experiences that result in the same emotion being evoked towards the brand.

Schmitt (1999) describes the tangible dimension of the customer experience as *Act*, the physical experiences that include interacting with people (Schmitt, 1999). This is consistent with Bolton *et al.*'s (2018) *Physical* realm, and *Servicescapes*.

In the service and retail context, the physical realm offers customers an experience to be immersed into the brand's "phenomenological" environment and experience (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Physical interaction with a brand can evoke emotional connection to the brand - *feeling*.

The physical environment of the brand has an influence on the way that the brand is perceived in the consumer mind (Bitner, 1992). These environments are rich in cues and have a powerful influence on communicating and presenting the brand's identity, purpose and promise to its customers (Bitner, 1992). This realm plays a significant role in the customer's satisfaction towards the brand. Interpersonal communication takes place within these service environments where customers interact with brand personnel (staff). This

interaction plays a significant role developing a relationship and trust with the consumer. This is particularly vital within the financial sector that require customers to have a high level of trust towards their financial service providers who deal with their money and assets. The physical setting can hinder or accomplish an organisations internal goals or external marketing goals.

Bitner (1992) states that typically, physical environments are important in the service sector. This substitutes the argument of the importance of bank branches because banks are part of the service sector.

An emphasis is placed on the physical realm within the customer experience because of the age of digital transformation we find ourselves in.

Experiences are humanistic and add value to the lives of customers (Schmitt, 1999). Experiences involve the entire living being.

Although the definition of the customer experience has fundamentally remained the same in all industries, aspects of it have decreased in importance due to the rise of digital technology in the banking sector. With the rise of Fintech in the age of digital transformation, the customer experience is entering a new age where banking industry is being disrupted by the rise of financial technology.

Although there are many ways that an organisation can create meaningful experiences for their customers – digitally, socially and physically – one can argue that because experiences are meant to be humanistic and personal, there is no more personal and effective way to connect with your consumers than interpersonally (physically/ socially). Particularly when the only humanistic touchpoint that financial institutions can have with their consumers is through their branches. The question persists; are banks omitting a valuable touchpoint by diminishing the amount of their branches in attempts to adopting a digital strategy to stay relevant?

3.3 Importance of Trust in the Banking Industry

Trust is one of the most important aspects that organisations should always be striving to strengthen within their customer relationships (Bada and Karupiah, 2014). The banking

industry is no exception. Trust is a crucial aspect in developing relationships with customers because of the level of risk associated with handling people's assets and finances. Additionally, trust in the banking sector is more imperative than ever due to the ever-growing competition within the market (Camarate and Maritz, 2017; Tabrani, Amin and Nizam, 2017), rapidly changing consumer behaviour and increased adoption of technology (Cvijović, Kostić-Stanković and Reljić, 2017).

Modern retail banking is characterized by an increasing shift from physical to digital service delivery. The consistent shift to digital resulted in increased online and mobile banking usage and the reduction of physical branches leading to dehumanised client-bank relationships (Krstić and Tešić, 2016). Traditional bank relationships have relied on the interpersonal interaction with customers in building sustainable relationships (Coetzee, 2019).

3.4 Understanding the customer – segmentation

Customers are have the largest influence in digitization because of their ever changing and evolving expectations and behaviour. Mobile banking has increased because of its convenience to purchase products and services anytime and anywhere. Convenience plays a vital role in the current customer needs.

With new digital banks such as Discovery Bank, Bank Zero and African Bank's 'My World', entering the market, the already saturated retail financial sector is expanding in competition. Camarate and Maritz (2017) suggest that for banks within the South African landscape to stay relevant and competitive, they need to start with who they are targeting. Understanding their consumers is incredibly important in delivering experiences that are valuable to them. Subsequently, analysis shows that many banks rely on broad customer segmentation, which is to their detriment as it does not allow for in-depth customer insight that can be used to create substantial market strategies (Camarate and Maritz, 2017). In accordance with the above, Brain & Company (2013) further goes on to say that "catering to an average customer segment equates to catering to no one in particular". Every customer segment has its specific needs and priorities (Brain & Company, 2013).

Whilst digital strategies are important in the digitization context, South African banks need to take the market context into consideration. The market is incredibly diverse in terms of socio-economic, demographic and behavioural variables, which means that banks need to

cater to this diversity (Camarate and Maritz, 2017). Additionally, the adoption of technology within developing regions is slower than that of developed regions (Brain & Company, 2013; Camarate and Maritz, 2017).

The *Differentiation Framework for Innovation* created by Camarate and Maritz (2017) suggests that banks within the South African context need to design customer experiences to drive customer engagement through External interaction and Internal processes (Camarate and Maritz, 2017). One would argue that physical experiences (branches) is an aspect of external interaction that can be used to differentiate the banks from one another, particularly in a landscape where many digital banks are penetrating the scene.

Younger consumers tend to place more value on mobile banking and digital interactions. On the other hand, the elderly and lower income consumer groups tend to place more value on branch location and quality of branch staff.

Capitec Bank targets the lower -income segment, the largest percentage of the South African population. The bank became a pioneer within the banking industry with their meaningful strategy. They opened branches in lower -income areas where traditional banks did not pay much attention to (Vermeulen, 2018). Branches were opened in relevant locations such as near taxi ranks, closed at 6pm and 8pm (significantly later than that of traditional banks - 3pm), as well as opening on Sundays so as to cater to their working customers (Vermeulen, 2018). Capitec also noticed that the banking experience can be intimidating and unclear, and consequently decided to strategically make their experience more comfortable for the customer. This is done by asking them to sit down instead of standing a long waiting queue and the bank consultants sit side-by-side with the customer so both can see the screen (Vermeulen, 2018).

All of these efforts by Capitec display strong segmentation strategies. Moreover, highlighting the *humanistic* aspect of the customer experience that no other medium can replace. As a result, Capitec customers have a strong emotional connection to the brand (Schmitt, 1999). All of which has contributed to Capitec becoming a truly a meaningful brand.

“..the traditional branch is not dead.” – (Schmidt, Drews and Schirmer, 2017)

According to Schmidt, Drews and Schirmer (2017), customers wish to obtain advice on complex financial products from the bank branch. Furthermore, according to an empirical, quantitative study done by Graupner *et al.* (2015), it can be concluded that “The greater the perceived information requirements for a particular process, the lower is the customers’ intended digital process use.” and “The greater the perceived process risk, the lower is the customers’ intended digital process use.” (Graupner *et al.*, 2015).

This proves that there will always be a need for human assistance for as long as there are aspects of banking services that are complex, of high risk or that require advice.

3.5 The evolution of the bank branch

The bank branch is where the most of the interpersonal interaction with banks and their consumers takes place. As a result of the digital revolution, the bank branch is however, undergoing a major transformation (PWC, 2014). The branch strategy has evolved and takes on a new role – “advisory and engagement hubs” (PWC, 2014). Digital technologies will improve the branch customer experience. However, there will still be a continuous decrease in branches as time goes on (PWC, 2014; Handro, 2018). PWC (2014) explains that human interaction may still be available but through increased digital channels.

A relevant example can be provided by American bank, Capital One, who implemented this new and improved branch strategy by creating *Capital One Café*. It is a space where customers can come and engage with their bank without feeling as though they are in a bank (Capital One, 2019). The atmosphere is more approachable, less bureaucratic and interactive.

By adopting such a branch strategy, banks will still be able to retain this vital, human aspect of their customer experience which is valuable in building and developing relationships with their current and new customers.

3.6 Concluding comments

This study does not aim to disregard the other dimension of the customer experience, it is however, about recognising the importance of every aspect of the customer experience and giving attention to the one aspect that seems to be taking less interest in this time of digital

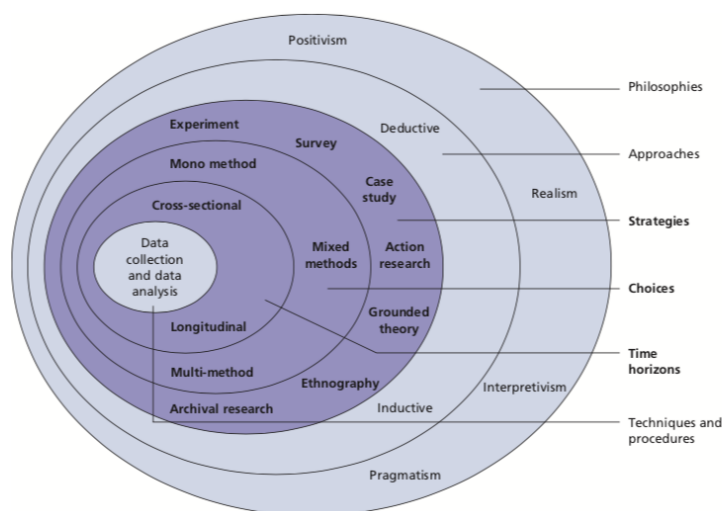
technology adoption within the South African banking context. The power still remains in the humanistic quality of physical experiences that digital technology adoption simply cannot replace.

It is for this reason that the following research questions are valid;

1. How do Standard Bank and Capitec Bank recognise the value of human interaction with their customers within the customer experience?
2. What aspects of human interaction at the bank branches do these banks recognise as important to their growth?
3. What do the banks' customers feel towards their customer experience?

4 CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

Saunders (2009) Research Onion has been adapted to establish the research design of this study. The various layers of Saunders' research onion will be applied below in the context of this study.



This research study seeks to gain an in- depth understanding of the value of human interaction in the banking experience in fostering and building a meaningful relationship with customers. Most research has looked at the customer experience in general, its application to brands and in recent years the customer experience on digital channels. But little research has been conducted on the value that human interaction with the customer has in the customer experience in the light of building and maintaining meaningful relationships with the customer – particularly in the context of digital transformation.

As a result of minimal research in this area, this study takes on an exploratory nature. Exploratory research seeks to find out 'what is happening' in a situation and to seek new insights on a particular situation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

4.1 Research Paradigm (Philosophy)

This research is underpinned by an Interpretivist philosophy in which it “advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

Considering the purpose of this study is to understand the value of human interaction in the banking customer experience, which requires deep information from both internal (management) and external (consumers) perspectives, the interpretivist paradigm is best suited to the study.

The ontological stance of this study suggests that reality is subjective, context bound, and subject to change (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). If the study was applied in a different context such as a different country or social context, the results could vary. This study will take place in the South African banking context particularly that of Cape Town.

The evolution of society is constant and perpetual. It is thus important to consider that the factors make the ontology of this study such as consumer behaviour and expectations, the socio – economic context, customer experience and digital transformation are ever changing. It is for this reason that the findings cannot be generalised but rather can be used to gain an understanding on consumer behaviour in this specific context. Additionally, the customer experience of banks is relative to various target groups and their needs, wants and preferences. There are group- shared realities (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). One target group may have different motivations for valuing the bank branch, whilst another target group may have different motivations for not making use of the bank branch.

The epistemological stance of this paradigm suggests that knowledge is gained through experiences. Customers will therefore only have knowledge on the customer experience with their bank because they have experienced and engaged with their particular bank over time.

Axiology plays a significant role in this study because of the. The Axiological stance if this study will be Pragmatic in that values play a role in this research. The researcher is adopting a subjective and objective point of view. The researcher will do their best to interpret the

results objectively. The researcher values personal interaction because of the insights that can be gained through personally interacting with participants.

4.2 Research Strategy

Case Study Design

Case study research seeks to address research questions that ask “how” or “why” and are typically qualitative in nature (Yin, 2015). Robson (2002) describes a case study as “a strategy of doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real like context using multiple sources of evidence”(p.178). This can be an individual, group, organization, neighbourhood, social or political institution, event or even a programme. Case studies can be used for all three of the purposes of research – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (Yin, 2015). The purpose of a case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context.

Case studies can adopt both qualitative and quantitative methods but are typically qualitative in nature. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and the end result is strongly descriptive. Interviews, observations, audio- visuals, documents and reports tend to be the data collection instruments of case study research (Merriam, 2015).

Case studies come in various forms; single site or multiple site. A single case study seeks to research one entity without comparing it to another. They may be historical such as understanding the history of an organisation or institution, biographical where a first person narrative seeks to be understood or comparative (Merriam, 2015). Comparative or multi-case studies seek to research and compare multiple cases. These cases generally share a common characteristic or may be categorically bound together. Merriam (2015) posits that the more cases that a case study has, the greater variation there is – creating a more compelling interpretation by understanding the case context more holistically. Investigating similar and contrasting entities enhances the stability, precision and validity of the findings (Merriam, 2015). Concurrently, it is important to note that case studies do not seek to generalise findings – the purpose is to merely gain an in- depth understanding of a particular social phenomenon.

Case Study Rationale

The research questions of the study inform the adopted research method. Thus, the researcher reverted to the purpose: to understand how human interaction at the bank branch has an impact on the banking customer experience in the age of digital transformation. Consequently, answering the research questions requires an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon, the customer experience of the bank branch – which is the essence of case study design. Yin (2015), articulates that a case study “would be the preferred method, compared to the others, in situations when the main research questions are “how” or “why” questions; (2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioural events; and (3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon” (p. 54).

As Yin suggests, the researcher will investigate a contemporary phenomenon, making a case study the most appropriate method for the study. Moreover, the primary research questions are exploratory in nature as they seek to explore the banking customer experience in the digital age and the role that branches have in this context.

Multiple- Case Defence

Multiple case study design refers to the in- depth analysis of more than one case. Yin (2015) proposes that multi case studies are preferred as several cases (more than one) may be substantial and will offer more powerful analytical conclusions than that of a single case. Single- case studies are more vulnerable because all efforts are put into one entity which poses more risk.

This study deliberately selects two cases because they offer contrasting situations or entities – the two banks’ contrasting customer experience strategies (Yin, 2015). In multiple case studies, the research processes are replicated for each case separately. The researcher recognises that the customers experience of these banks are respectively unique but they do share the experience of banking in the digital age. The researcher has chosen to look at various perspectives of the banking customer experience: from that of the customers themselves, the experience managers as well as the branch consultants to provide a fuller synthesis of the banking customer experience within the selected population. Subsequently, investigating multiple cases (the two banks) will provide both reliability and validity by drawing from multiple perspectives of which to draw conclusions from (Merriam, 2015).

This study draws from two of South Africa's leading banks and looks at their contrasting branch strategies – with one bank choosing to close down bank branches and the other choosing to open more. The researcher will conduct a cross- case analysis where each case is first treated as an individual case to gain rich understanding of the particular entity then synthesise and compare findings across both cases to build abstractions across both cases (Merriam, 2015).

4.3 Time Horizon

Saunders describes this section as the time of which the study is undertaken (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

4.3.1 Cross- Sectional Study

This research design involves qualitative methods to understand the customer experience at this particular point in time through in- depth interviews with multiple sources. As the research has been undertaken under an academic course, it is necessarily time constrained (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This study began in April 2019 and will conclude in October 2019.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A Qualitative approach to the research is taken as the aim of this study is to understand human behaviour rather than measure it. Qualitative research is subjective in nature and involves examining and reflecting on the less tangible aspects of a research subject such as feelings, attitudes, values and perceptions (Neville, 2017). Qualitative research methods are particularly suitable in gaining an understanding on the value human interaction in the banking customer experience.

5.1 Sampling Technique

Due to the nature of the research questions and the purpose of the study, the researcher will use a *nonprobability* sampling strategy. This is the most common sampling method used in qualitative research as generalisability in a statistical sense is not the goal (Merriam, 2015). Nonprobability sampling is logical if the researcher aims to use the data to solve qualitative problems such as understanding why or how something occurs. Not to answer questions like “how much” and “how often” (Honingmann, 1982). Since the researcher aims to understand human interaction in banking customer experience in the digital age, nonprobability sampling is the most logical method to use.

Thus, the most common form of nonprobability sampling is *Purposive*. The purposive sampling method has been chosen as it assumes that the researcher aims to “discover, understand and gain insight” on a particular phenomenon and should therefore select a sample that they can learn the most from (Merriam, 2015). With purposive sampling, the emphasis is put on gaining an in- depth understanding of the case.

5.2 Target Population

Participant selection criteria

To begin with purposive sampling, Merriam (2015) suggests that the selection criteria of the sample should be established. The selection criteria is a list of attributes that are crucial to the study and directly reflect the purpose and objective of the research. The purpose of the current study is to understand what role human interaction in the banking customer

experience has in the age of digital transformation. The following selection criteria was determined from the purpose of this study.

Bank Criteria

The cases chosen are two of South Africa's largest banks. This particular country was selected not only because of the geographical proximity but also because this study was chosen in light of the current state of affairs of these banks in light of digital transformation. Additionally, the two particular banks are at the forefront of digital transformation discourse in South Africa due to their contrasting customer experience strategies. The researcher does not bank with and has never banked with either of the selected banks which minimises selection bias.

Bank Branch/Site Criteria

The bank branches chosen are geographically located in the city of Cape Town and more specifically in the Cape Town CBD. This is due to the accessibility for the researcher and because this region represents the demographic being researched.

List of Bank Branches to select from:

Standard Bank	Capitec Bank
Gardens Service Branch	Adderley Street
Long Street Service Centre	Woodstock
Sea Point Service Centre	Gardens Centre
Claremont Service Branch	Kenilworth
Rondebosch Service Branch	Mowbray

Interview Participant Selection Criteria

As stated previously, the participants represent various aspects of the banks – customers, experience managers and bank consultants . All participants need to be over 18 years old for ethical reasons.

Customers

- All customers need to be Middle class, South African citizens.
- All customers need to bank with Standard Bank or Capitec.
- They need to have been with the bank for over 5 years to ensure that they understand the bank well.
- They need to use their bank on a regular basis.

Experience Manager and Bank Consultants

- Need to have worked for the banks for over 1 year to ensure that they have been present during the branch closure/ opening strategies.

5.3 Sample Size

Case study research is in – depth and “allows the researcher to investigate a topic in far more detail than it might be possible if they were dealing with a large population”. Therefore, the sample of this study will consist of 10 participants. 5 stakeholders from each bank – Standard Bank and Capitec Bank as shown below.

Standard Bank	Capitec Bank
Customer Experience Manager (1)	Customer Experience Manager (1)
Bank Consultant (1)	Bank Consultant (1)
Customers (3)	Customers (3)

For the purpose of this study, it is important that both the internal and external stakeholders are interviewed so the researcher can gain an holistic understanding of each bank’s customer experience.

The same stakeholders are chosen for each bank so that the analysis of the findings can be compare horizontally and vertically.

5.4 Data Collection Methods

This study focuses on qualitative data collection; In- depth interviews. The purpose for this data collection method is to gain an understanding on the customers and bank's sentiments on the customer experience. According to Yin (2015) triangulation of data is important in increasing validity of the research – particularly that of qualitative research. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 8 participants and consulted relevant literature such as customer experience studies to triangulate the data.

5.4.1 Semi – Structured Interviews

The primary method of research used for this study was a series of interviews that were conducted with customers and employees of Standard Bank and Capitec Bank to gain an understanding of each bank's customer experience.

As the role researcher, the interviews were conducted using the iPhone audio-recorder to enable the researcher to be fully present in the interviews without being distracted by note-taking and to allow her to review and transcribe the interviews during the data analysis process. All participants were asked to give consent to be being recorded at the beginning of each interview. All interviews were conducted in person, either at the respective bank branches or at a coffee shop.

Prior to the interview process, the researcher created interview protocols that were used as guides throughout the interview process (See APPENDIX B). Semi- structured interviews were chosen in order to guide the interview process but all also allowed participants to talk extensively on the topics covered which presented new insights and themes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The interview questions were concise and aligned with the research questions of the study to ensure they addressed the purpose of the study.

The interviews began with general questions about the participants and then gradually became more specific in order to ease the participants into the interview and make them comfortable (Merriam, 2015). The researcher adapted the interview questions of the customers (external stakeholders) to the bank consultants and managers (internal stakeholders) in order for the data to be coherently compared horizontally and vertically

(across both banks, the managers and the customers). This allowed for more comprehensive analysis of the results.

Data Management

Merriam (2015) suggests data management is important in the data collection process as it allows the researcher to keep the data organised. The researcher named coded each interview by interview number and date (Ex: Interview1_17.10.19).

5.5 Data Analysis Methods

According to Merriam (2015), “data analysis is the process of making sense of the data” (p. 175). This process involved consolidating, sorting and interpreting the interviews of the 8 participants. Marriam (2015) states that qualitative data collection is a timely process and is inductive and comparative in nature. This constant comparative method allowed the researcher to establish patterns and themes from the interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of each case.

The interviews were broken down into various categories such as a segment on the *Introduction to Banking, Client- Bank Relationship, Impact of Digital Age on Banking and The Bank Branch*. These themes assisted the researcher in interpreting the data from each case (See APPENDIX D).

5.5.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis will be key to deriving insights and themes from the semi- structured interviews. This will be done in the five steps below;

	Steps	Description
1.	Familiarize yourself with your data	The researcher will transcribe the audio interviews and take notes. Here, the researcher can start to get preliminary codes for themes.
2.	Assign preliminary codes to your data in order to describe your content	Here, the researcher can ascribed codes to the data. It's a way to start organising the data into groups or categories.
3.	Search for patterns or themes in your code for the different interviews	Now the researcher can start organising the data into themes. Themes are broader and require interpretation of the coded data.
4.	Review themes	Review all the themes identified in step 3 to make sure that there are clear distinctions between them and there are no overlaps.
5.	Define and name themes	Here, the researcher will name and describe the themes. These names should be interesting, engaging and relevant.

Adapted from (The Interaction Design Foundation, 2019)

Cross Case Analysis

Finally, cross case analysis was used to compare the two cases (Merriam, 2015) to “build abstractions across both cases” (p.234). The results of participants from each bank were identified respectively and then analysed comparatively in the analysis section.

6 ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION

This study will contribute to the ongoing discourse and broader knowledge of the customer experience. It will offer particular insight into the South African banking customer experience in a time where digital transformation is having great impact on the banking industry. This research will offer banks and consumers insight into how the human interaction with banks at the bank brand has an effect on developing a meaningful relationship with the consumer and ultimately contribute to brand building.

7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS & LIMITATIONS

Prior to the interview process, the researcher obtained verbal consent from the participants to conduct the interviews and the participants were informed on the purpose of the research. This allowed the participants to make informed decision of whether or not they wanted to participate. Participants have a right to privacy and thus their identities remained confidential for the research.

Case Study research focuses on one or very few social artefacts and therefore cannot be generalised. It is for this reason that this study can only give an in-depth understanding on customer experience. The findings and conclusion of the research are not the “be all, end all” of the South African banking context and further research would be required to draw broader conclusions on the topic.

The population and sample of this study is limited to the Middle Class South African demographic. This is only a portion of the South Africa population and will only provide an understanding of the banking customer experience to this specific target group. Future research can be conducted on other demographics of the South African population such as the Low Income bracket. This demographic presents a large portion of the South African population.

A general concern towards Case Study research is researcher bias. This is because the researcher's own subjective views, perceptions and feelings can have an influence on the research. It is for this reason that the researcher will take the following precautions to minimize as much researcher bias as possible;

1. Use multiple people to code the data (Baseline Help Center, n.d.)

The researcher asked a few other people to have a look at and interpret the data. If there were any discrepancies between the various interpretations then the research would be required to review their research (Baseline Help Center, n.d.).

2. Triangulation

The researcher made use of multiple qualitative methods to ensure triangulation in their research such as interviews and past literature reviews.

3. Review findings with peers (Baseline Help Center, n.d.).

The researcher ask others to review her conclusions made from the data. This provided affirmation to the researcher's conclusions (Baseline Help Center, n.d.).

Finally, due to ethical reasons, the researcher only conducted research on participants over the age of 18 and ensured the anonymity of the participants for their comfort and protection.

8 FINDINGS

This chapter will present the empirical findings collected for the study. The data will be outlined in reference to each individual case – Standard Bank and Capitec and further divided into two sections; Bank Clients and Bank Managers and Consultants. Semi-structured interviews were carried out either face to face and were recorded and later transcribed.

8.1 Case 1: Capitec Bank

8.1.1 Customers

The two Capitec Bank customers that participated in this study are both females in their mid-twenties who reside in Cape Town. Participant 1 is a 4th year medical student who moved out of home when she started university. Participant 2 is freelance copywriter who comes from KZN but works and resides in Cape Town with her boyfriend.

Client – Bank Relationship

Both participants have a good relationship with Capitec. According to Participant 2, this is because they are easy to deal with, helpful and polite. Participant 2 echo's the same sentiments saying that her relationship with the bank is good because of the ease-of-use of both the digital and branch channels. She further goes on the mention that the disappointing customer service she has received at her regular Standard Bank branch is one of the reasons why she feels that her relationship with Capitec is better. She posits that although Standard Bank has a good digital banking system, she often wants “more” from them; referring to a positive and helpful branch experience.

Although, both participants have positive feelings towards Capitec, they feel that banking is just another part of life with Participant 1 citing *“I don't really feel like you have a personal relationship with your banking partner. It's kind of just a business thing they offer a service”*.

According to these Capitec customers, their banking needs and expectations are being met the bank which helps build a strong relationship with them. These needs and expectations include the ease of use of the digital banking platforms, the extended branch operating hours for after-hours branch visits, friendly and helpful staff, the convenience and efficiency of the bank branches, low bank fees

and overall safe banking. Particularly in this digital age, the participants do worry about the safety of their money due to hacking and theft on digital channels.

The Impact of the Digital Age on Banking

Both participants agree that digital transformation in the banking industry has made banking easier and more convenient than what it used to be, thus, making it a more pleasant experience. The introduction of digital banking has resulted in these participants doing their own banking which creates a sense of independence and control over their finances, subsequently resulting less bank branch visits.

Participant 2 states that the easy accessibility to their money makes banking an easier experience and further posits that it makes sense because *“It shouldn’t be that difficult to deal with your own money”*.

Concurrently, with these digital channels, comes mistrust as these participants often worry about the safety of their money. “It’s something that as soon as you have entered the working world, becomes much more real. You work really hard to earn not a lot of money and you need to know that that money is safe and being taken care of” (Participant 1).

The Bank Branch

The participants’ sentiments of the bank branch are mixed. According to both of them, their number of bank branch visits have significantly declined over the past few years with both stating that their visits amount to “once” and “only a handful of times” a year. This is attributed to the role that digital banking has played in their lives. The participants make use of their branch for the occasional query, assistance or card collection. Both see the value that the bank branch has in offering support to customers with participant 1 citing “ I need someone who knows more about my banking needs, I really expect the support.”

However, neither of them would be completely affected if their branch were to close and believe that there is sense in it – “I do think that they might become obsolete because so many do transactions online” (Participant 2).

Participant 1 iterates that she is okay with it - *“I just need a secure alternative that's going to reassure me that everything is going to still have the same kind of operating and security as if I had to walk into the bank branch”*.

Sentiments on Customer Experience

Both participants have a substantial understanding of the concept of Customer Experience and the role it has in the success of an organisation and are ultimately satisfied with the Capitec Customer experience because of their understanding of the participants' banking needs and expectations.

8.1.2 Brand Consultant and Experience Manager

The Capitec Bank employees that participated in this study work at a Capitec branch in the Cape Town CBD. The Brand Manager (Participant 3) has worked for Capitec for 5 years, whilst the consultant (Participant 4) has worked there for 10 months.

Client – Bank Relationship

According to both participants, Capitec's relationship with its clients is "personal, unique and simple". They both recognise that their clients want to feel in control of their finances, want convenience, safety, efficiency, transparency and low bank fees, all of which correspond with that of Participants' 1 and 2 expectations. This is displayed by the "Shared Screen" offering at the branch which allows customers have full view of the computer screen, the ticket system incorporated at the branches that makes the queues move quicker, the app for accessible banking, a large branch network at convenient locations such as transportation areas (for example) and extended operating hours. Participant 4 shows this understanding by stating "...say for instance that you're working till 5. In most cases when you go to the bank they're closed. But capitec has extended hours if you need to go to the bank for assistance. I mean that says it all."

Participant 3 states that Capitec is always making improvements to the customer service and systems in order to keep the clients satisfied. This is integral in keeping customers satisfied as stated from Participant 1 when referring to the impact of outdated services on the overall customer experience and bank trust; "...and that just makes me think that what else has not changed since then? You've got to keep moving with the times". One of the ways that Capitec ensure this is through their SMS rating system "We choose random clients that visit the branch to rate our services and that is also for us to tap into our service to ensure that we are providing our clients with the best experience" (Participant 3).

Impact of the digital age on banking

Similar to that of Participants 1 and 2's responses, these Capitec internal stakeholders feel that the digital age has impacted the banking experience with Participant 4 citing that "we do also make use

of digital technology to enhance the customer experience in the branch of capitec” such as the ticketing system. Furthermore, digital transformation has allowed customers to do their own banking on the available digital channels such as their app, internet banking and ATMs. They recognise the significant reduction in number of branch visits is a result of these digital channels, however, still think the bank branch has meaningful value.

The Bank Branch

Participant 3 states that Capitec make use the bank branch to connect with their customers – “It’s also just for us to touch base with the client and make sure that they are still fine and happy with the brand”. They view the branch as a necessary touchpoint that helps support the customer in their banking and brings an aspect of humanity to the customer experience, as mentioned by Participant 3 - “Without bank branches, banks will lose their unique value because there won't be questions like ‘how are you?’”

Capitec also view their bank branches as a competitive differentiator from other banks and recognise that not all their bank clients are comfortable with, or like digital banking. Participant 4 cites “I think capitec is striving to stay ahead of everyone... I think when most banks are moving away from the face-to-face interaction Capitec is still keeping that because some clients do feel more comfortable speaking to a person...”

Ultimately, these internal stakeholders are proud of the Capitec Bank branch and see it as a unique and integral element of the bank’s customer experience.

8.2 Case 2: Standard Bank

8.2.1 Customers

Client – Bank Relationship

Both participants feel that their relationship with Standard Bank is transactional and surface-level. This is due to the fact that both participants are students and have less of a connection to their finances than that of working professionals who work hard for their money. Participant 5 states that she is not really involved with her bank and describes the relationship as “Ok”. Participant 6 posits that he does not have a connection to Standard Bank as money is not very important to him at the moment. He further goes on to suggest that perhaps when he is earning an income in the future there will be more of a relationship.

As of now, Standard Bank keeps both the participants satisfied by fulfilling their very basic banking needs such as checking bank balances, sending money, and making online payments (Participant 3). Similar to that of the Capitec Customer Participants, low bank fees are important to participants 5 and 6 citing “I just need a bank that doesn't charge me too high a bank fee and that are very versatile especially for me as a student”.

Furthermore, good communication and understanding of their student financial needs were both mentioned by the participants when asked what they felt builds a strong relationship with Standard Bank – “...banks monitor my spending habits and my transaction history so I expect them to take that information and maybe inform me about different accounts that might be suited to me” explains Participant 6.

The Impact of the Digital Age on Banking

Comparably to the Capitec Bank Participants, both participants felt that the digital age has made banking more seamless and convenient. Participant 5 agrees that the app has made performing transactions between accounts and across platforms easier.

Both participants do not make use of the bank branch any longer. Participant 5 argues that this is ideal for her as she does not like going to the branch, waiting and doing tedious admin and paperwork. “It's a lot of bureaucracy that I just don't want to do. So to have everything on the app or online is a lot easier for me” and goes on to admits that it has actually improved her bank relationship.

Participant 6 does experience some discomfort in digital banking as the digital age does have its flaws.

The Bank Branch

Both participants were more inclined to digital banking channels, but presented mixed views of the bank branch. Participant 6 last made use of his Standard Bank branch for a currency exchange. Participant 5 feels strongly that there is not much purpose in bank branches anymore citing “personally other said I don't see the value or the purpose of Bank branches anymore”. However, similarly to participants 1 and 2, they do understand that there may be some customers that do find value in it.

Participant 6 summarizes, “Well for me personally, again like I said, I would feel bit displaced but I could handle it. I guess there are some people who do need the bank branch. Everybody is different”.

8.2.2 Brand Consultant and Experience Manager

Client – Bank Relationship

Both participants feel that Standard Bank's relationship with its clients is good because of the bank's diverse product offerings that cater to various client needs as well as the available digital banking platforms that make banking convenient for the clients.

Additionally, Participant 7 admits that at the moment, some Standard Bank clients are not very happy with the bank due to the implementation of their digital migration strategy. This is particularly due to the fact that the change has been abrupt which has left some people unsettled. But further goes on to mention that it is beneficial in the long term.

In light of this digital migration strategy, Participant 7 asserts that keeping communication open and consistent with the clients about this digital changes will help foster a strong relationship with them and allow them to make their own informed decisions going forward.

This corresponds with the needs and expectations of Standard Bank Participants 5 and 6 who require good communication and understanding of their financial needs from the bank.

The Impact of the Digital Age on Banking

As stated above, Standard Bank's big digital migration move has had an effect of the clients but bank sees value in migrating digitally and therefore continues to implement the strategy. In parallel with all the participants, Participants 7 and 8 recognise that the digital banking has made banking more convenient for clients which results in fewer clients visiting the bank branch. Participant 8 highlights that because the bank branch has fewer visits, it actually allows better service for the customers who really need to make use of the branch as it is less populated meaning clients get attended to, faster.

The bank Branch

Standard Bank has now divided the bank branch into two categories; the **Branch** and **Service Centres**. In light of the fact that customers are making predominant use of the available digital platforms resulting in fewer branch visits, the abovementioned branch categories fulfil different purposes. Service centres are smaller in size and staff and fulfil specific services that required in that particular area.

The above displays that although the digital age is changing the banking habits of clients, it's seems to bring a new light and role of the bank branch.

9 ANALYSIS

This chapter will present the analysis of the collected data. The data will be analysed by through cross-case analysis in order to highlight the main points and findings of the study.

Customer Experience

The general customer experience strategies of both banks – Standard Bank and Capitec are similar in that they engage the consumer in both physical and digital channels to create an omni-channel experience. This holistic view is reminiscent in Verhoef *et al.* (2009), definition the customer experience as “holistic in nature across multiple touchpoints”.

According to Bolton (2015), physical interaction with a brand can evoke emotional *feelings* towards the brand. This is evident in the study where both positive and negative feelings were evoked towards the banks. Participant 1’s negative experience with a consultant and participant 5’s tedious process resulted in both participants having negative feelings towards Standard Bank’s branch experience. On the contrary, Capitec’s bank branch received positive feelings with Participant 1 and 2 reiterating their positive sentiments towards the bank branch within the customer experience.

Understanding your Target Market needs

At the end of the day, it all comes down to the customer experience strategy and the target market of the bank. In the study, it was evident that Capitec places a strong emphasis on the bank branch as one of their integral brand touchpoints. Whilst Standard Bank places strong emphasis on migration to digital channels. These two banks display different strategies that do resonate with their customers.

As Camarate and Maritz (2017) suggests, for South African banks to stay relevant and competitive, they need to have a thorough understanding their consumers in order to deliver products and experiences that relevant and meaningful to them. From the study,

the demographic of the Standard Bank customers related more with digital banking. Participant 5 cited “I don't see the value or the purpose of Bank branches anymore”. Whilst Participant 1 from Capitec argues that “.. a bank branch is something that has to be around. Yes I might only go there once a year, but I do have to go there and my customer experience does matter too.”

Untimely the participants can do without the branch if it was necessary but ideally, they would like the luxury of having the option of it being there in the case that they do need it.

Bank Trust in the digital age

The research displays that trust is an important factor in the banking experience, particularly in this digital age. Participant 6 explains that despite being a digital native, there is still an aspect of worry he feels because with digital banking, accounts are more subject to being hacked. Participant 1 shares, the same sentiments. Moreover, Participant 1 displayed outdated systems also affect the level of trust as she questions what else could be outdated.

The participants displayed that the bank branch does offer a sense of security and support within the banking customer experience, which helps build bank trust in this digital age.

Brand Switching

The participants displayed a lack of emotional connection towards their banks. Citing that “I don't feel in any way emotionally connected to them. If anything had to happen I would change to another bank in a second”. With such a highly saturated bank market and high expectations and customer needs, customers are very willing and capable of switching banks as soon as they experience something wrong. According to (ABDEL HAMID SALEH, 2015), customer satisfaction is considered a positive determinant of how strong the relationship between the customer and the product provider is. Furthermore, dissatisfied customers are more likely to search for what satisfies them in services provided by competitors (ABDEL HAMID SALEH, 2015). Service quality is considered a positive driver for behavioural intentions of leaving, switching or remaining (Saunders and Petzer, 2010).

This lack in emotional connection to banks means that they need to work even harder to retain clients as they are not emotionally connected and are therefore more susceptible to brand switching.

Banking in the Digital Age

From the research, it is clear that the digital age has changed the way customers bank. The Convenience and autonomy that digital banking offers customers has resulted in them feeling more control over their finances and less need for branch visits. Accessibility and convenience are integral the definition of banking in this new age. This refers to both the digital and physical touchpoints of the customer experience.

Role of the bank branch

From the study, it is evident that the role of the bank has changed. As stated by PWC (2014), the branch strategy has evolved and takes on a new purpose of “advisory and engagement hubs” (PWC, 2014). Digital technology will be used to enhance the branch experience (PWC,2014). Participant 1 cited “I think they have really infiltrated the digital age in their store approach which is why I feel like it is so much more convenient” when referring to Capitec. Participant 3 and 4 explain that human interaction should still be made available to customers as there are customers who do need it and it allows the bank to personally check-in with their clients. Capitec views their branches as an integral element to their customer experience and a competitive differentiator amongst other South African Banks.

10 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the role that human interaction at the bank branch has in the banking customer experience of the digital age. This topic was chosen based on the contrasting branch strategies of both banks that was announced in recent news. Thus, the following research questions were developed and addressed;

- *How do South African banks recognise the value of human interaction with their customers within the customer experience?*

Although both banks engage their customers in an omni-channel experience. The research outcome demonstrates that both banks have different customer experience strategies. In light of the digital age, Standard Bank is placing strong emphasis on migrating their clients to digital channels. Whilst Capitec Bank places high value on their physical branch touchpoints. This is reminiscent to the needs and expectations of the banks' particular target markets.

Both banks recognise that the bank branch offers customers a sense of support and security to the customer experience in the digital age.

- What aspects of human interaction at the bank branch do the banks recognise as important to their growth?

Both banks recognised that the branch offers support, education, advice to clients. It gives the banks an opportunity to touch-base with their clients to ensure their needs and expectations are understood met. This helps facilitate a strong relationship with the banks.

- *What do the banks' customers feel towards their customer experience?*

Both the Capitec and Standard Bank customers were satisfied with their overall customer experience. This is because the banks displayed an understanding of the needs and expectations of their clients which aligns with their experience strategies.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Customer Experience in the banking industry is more important than ever due to the digital age that we are currently in. This is due to the fact that these digital channels have allowed customer to bank independently. Consequently, the role of the bank branch has evolved to being a touchpoint that serves as a support to customers when they do need it. It is vital for banks to ensure that they understand their customers' needs so as to develop meaningful experience strategies to resonate with them.

11 Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on the role of the bank branch in the customer experience at two Capitec and Standard Bank branches in the Cape Town CBD. Therefore, limiting the findings to this area and these specific banks. Future research can be conducted on this topic at a national level and on more of the South African banks to gain a holistic understanding of the South African bank context.

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13 APPENDIX A: LETTER OF ETHICAL CONSENT



18 October 2019

Student name: Amara Nkem- Abonta

Student number: 15000597

Campus: Vega Cape Town



Re: Approval of BA Strategic Brand Communication Proposal and Ethics Clearance

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,

Dr Patricia Harpur
Supervisor
Coordinator

Dr Franci Cronje
Campus Postgraduate

ADvTECH HOUSE

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14 APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Appendix B.1: Interview Guideline Questions for Bank Customers

Note: The interviews were semi- structured in order to gain a rich understanding of each participant's particular experience with both banks. Thus, the following questions served as a guide for the interviewer to follow. However, the questions may have changed or been added to depending on the participants' responses. Ultimately, the goal was to obtain a thorough account of each participant's banking customer experiences.

Bank Customer Experience Questions:

Semi- Structured Interviews

(For The Customers)

(Ask for permission to record the interview): Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session? You will remain anonymous.

(Review the purpose of the research): To understand what value of the bank branch in the banking customer experience in the digital age.

1. Tell me about yourself...
2. When and why did you start banking?

3. What bank was it? Why did you choose it?
4. What do you remember about your first banking experience? How did it make you feel?
5. What is your experience now of banking?
6. How long have you been banking with Bank x?
7. In one sentence how would you describe your relationship with your bank?
8. Please describe your feelings towards your bank?

Probe: Why do you feel this way?

9. In your opinion, what reasons can you recall that help build a strong relationship with your bank?
10. Tell me about your expectations as a bank customer? What are your needs?
11. Do you feel that your bank understands you and your banking needs?

Probe: What examples can you give to substantiate this?

12. How have your banking habits changed over the years?

Probe: How has the digital age affected your banking habits and experience?

13. Describe the evolution of your bank customer experience over the past few years?
14. How supported do you feel by your bank in this digital age?
15. In light of the digital age, have there been any changes to the nature of your bank relationship?

Probes: In what ways? Why do you think this is?

16. What are your general thoughts towards bank branches?
17. Under what circumstances do you use the bank branch? How often?
18. How has the nature of your branch visits evolved over the past few years?

Probes: More/ less often? Branch uses?

19. Describe any changes made to your bank branch of the last few years?

Probes: What changes? Have you been affected by these changes?

20. What do you understand from the concept of *Customer Experience*?

21. What role do you think your bank branch has in the banking customer experience?

22. What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

23. Describe how you would feel if your regular bank branch was to close down.

Probes: Why would you feel this way?

24. Describe any challenges you face with banking in the digital age.

25. What are your overall feelings towards your customer experience of Bank X?

26. Would you make any changes towards your customer experience going forward?

27. What other banks have you banked with?

28. How does your experience with Bank X compare to your previous bank? What was the main decision to switch banks?

29. Are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some South African banks?

Probes: What are your feelings towards this?

30. Are you aware of the branch opening strategies of bank x?

Probes: What are your feelings towards this?

31. What are your overall sentiments on digital migration of banks in the digital age?

32. Is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand your customer experience with Bank X?

Thank you!

Appendix B.2: Interview Guideline Questions for Bank Branch Managers and Consultants

Bank Customer Experience Questions:

Semi- Structured Interviews

(For The Branch Managers & Consultants)

(Ask for permission to record the interview): Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session? You will remain anonymous.

(Review the purpose of the research): To understand what value of the bank branch in the banking customer experience in the digital age.

1. Tell me about yourself...
2. When did you start working for *Bank X*?
3. Why did you choose to work for this bank?
4. What do you remember about your first experience working for *Bank X*?
5. What is your experience of working for the bank now?

Probe: How has it changed/ evolved?

6. How do you feel about working for *Bank X*?
7. How would you describe *Bank X*'s relationship with its clients?

8. In your opinion, what reasons can you recall that help Bank X build a strong relationship with its clients?
9. Do you feel that *Bank X* understands its clients?
10. What are your clients' expectations of *Bank X*? How does Bank X meet these expectations/needs?
11. In what ways do your clients come into contact with *Bank X*?
12. What are your feelings towards these various points of contact?
13. How has *Bank X*'s banking experience changed over the years?
14. In light of the digital age, has there been any changes to the nature of the client- bank relationship of *Bank X*?
15. What are your general thoughts towards bank branches?
16. Under what circumstances do your clients use the bank branch? How often?
17. How has the nature of bank visits changed over the past few years?
18. What changes have been made to *Bank X* bank branches over the past few years? Why were these changes made?
19. What do you understand about the concept of *Customer Experience*?
20. What role do you think the bank branch has in the banking customer experience?
21. Describe how you would feel if *Bank X*'s branch were to close down?
22. What are your overall feelings towards *Bank X*'s customer experience?
- Probe:** How do you think the customers feel?
23. How do you think *Bank X*'s customer experience differs from other South African banks?
24. Would you make any changes to *Bank X*'s your customer experience going forward?
25. What other banks have you worked for?
26. Are you aware of the branch opening strategies of some South African banks?

Probes: What are your feelings towards this?

27. Are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some South African banks?

Probes: What are your feelings towards this?

28. What are your overall sentiments on digital migration of banks in the digital age?

Probe: Are there any challenges?

29. What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

Thank you!

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW 1: (PARTICIPANT 1)

Interviewee: Capitec and Standard Bank Client (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 21 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: CL= Client, IN: Interviewer

IN: Hi there, so I'm just going to do a quick introduction. Part of the interview process requires that I do an audio recording just so that I can review what we talk about. So do you give consent to me Audio recording? You will remain anonymous.

CL: Yes, you do have consent to use all the information I give.

IN: And just for you to understand the research I'm doing; I'm trying to understand the value Bank branches have in the banking customer experience in the digital age.

CL: Alright, sounds good.

IN: So, please briefly tell me about yourself...

CL: I currently work for a non-profit and I freelance. I am from a small farming area in KwaZulu-Natal but have been living and studying in Cape Town for 6 years. I come from a big family. I'm a copywriter and I actually studied at Vega two years ago.

IN: So, when and why did you start banking?

CL: I got my first bank card at 16. My mum and dad got it for me so they could upload money and transfer money onto the bank card so that I could keep my money instead of spending it. I kind of had the habit of spending my money as soon as I had it so, the account helped me with building up the money instead. It was with Standard Bank.

IN: Okay and why Standard Bank?

CL: I chose them purely because my parents banked with them and were the ones who got the card for me, to help me try and get to know how to use banking.

IN: And what can you tell me about your first banking experience? How did it make you feel?

CL: Well, made me feel like an adult. I felt very cool because I obviously now had this card. To be honest it kind of withered away in my purse. I barely used it at all. My parents forgot about it so I didn't actually use my bank card until I was out of school. It was a bit of a waste but I suppose when I first got it, it did feel cool.

IN: And what is your experience now of banking?

CL: So, I bank with standard bank still and I also bank with Capitec. Standard Bank is the account that my salary gets paid into and Capitec is an account that my boyfriend and I use. We got it so we can both transfer our monthly spending for the house. So, this includes cleaning, groceries and electricity and any other entertainment. We put it all in that card and then we both have one card that's linked to that account so we can both go and buy groceries. I just found that it could help us manage our money better. I have a bit of frustration when it comes to Standard Bank. I've been in-store and the process is quite frustrating and long. Last time I ended up leaving without the answer that I needed. I needed a bank later and I wanted to potentially move to a different package and the lady told me that 'you don't really need to move over because it's a lot of paperwork but here's your back letter and thank you and goodbye' and that was my experience with Standard Bank. Capitec; the initial sign-up was really long and I had to get approval from my work that I had a job, but now when I go into the bank it's very easy. They literally just scan my fingerprint and then it's done. Standard Bank phones me a lot to try and do banking but I'm a bit old school. I don't bank on the phone. I refused to do it so that does happen often and I do have to say 'no I won't do the call' that's a bit of some of my experience banking now.

IN: Okay and how long have been banking with both banks?

CL: I have been banking with Capitec for two years now and standard bank since 16. My account obviously changed when I became a student and then again now that I'm working.

IN: I see. It's interesting how people tend to choose banks based on what their family or parents banked with and then stay with the bank even going into adulthood.

CL: Yeah, it seems like it's generational doesn't it?

IN: Yeah, interesting. And in one sentence, how would you describe your relationship with your bank?

Uhm, I can't do this in one sentence. With Standard bank, I have a lot of frustrations just because the best operating system is there but sometimes you want more than that. And like I said, I'm old school so I still want to go into the bank if I want to change my package to upgrade. I want to go into the bank and speak to someone directly and do it that way because too much can go wrong over the phone or online. With Capitec, I've really had great experiences. They've got really low rates, particularly if you get a cashback instead of withdrawal from an ATM. The transfer fees are minuscule. If I'm transferring from one Capitec account to another, it's free so it has a lot of benefits. I really enjoyed that.

IN: In your opinion, what reasons can you recall that help these banks build a strong relationship with you, the client?

CL: Well, with Capitec, I think the ease-of-use has helped me enjoy it more than Standard Bank. The app is easy to navigate, it's easy to login to, I can update most of the things on my app so that helps a lot. My relationship with standard bank is rocky. I think this is reinforced by the experience of going into the bank. First of all, I struggled to find a bank that was open after working hours even though I work until 3:30. There's obviously driving in between so trying to find a place I could actually get to, for Standard Bank to be open at the right time was initially an issue. And then the

person at the counter when I was last there was more concerned about the paperwork she had to do more than what I needed.

IN: OK, so the simplicity of the banking process and the instore customer service have an effect of your relationship with your banks?

CL: Yes, definitely.

IN: I see. And so what would you say are your expectations and needs as a bank customer?

CL: Well, leading on from the previous answer, I want efficiency and safety. I want my money to be safe because it's money I've worked hard for and I just want it to work. I don't want things to be tricky. I would say the one thing that Capitec has let me down on is the online payment system sometimes is a bit faulty. Because, you book something and you pay online and I pay with Instant EFT. So when you have to pay you have to go into the app to approve it from there and sometimes it doesn't work. So, I end up having to do most of my online transactions through Standard Bank and then still buy electricity and stuff from Capitec. But those are my expectations - safety and efficiency.

IN: So do you feel like your bank understands you?

CL: I don't think that Standard Bank understands my banking needs, but I don't think that they need to or that they want to. I guess Capitec kind of understand that I want low rates. I didn't mention that, but that is something that I want. I think this is a bit of a hard one to say because I don't really feel like you have a personal relationship with your banking partner. It's kind of just a business thing they offer a service

IN: Oh that's interesting. So you don't feel any emotional connection to your bank?

CL: No, I don't feel in any way emotionally connected to them if anything had to happen I would change to another bank in a second.

IN: Oh, I see. And how would you say your banking habits have changed over the years?

CL: I never used to bank online. My banking habits have changed a lot because I do a lot of online shopping and a lot of banking online and through the app. So, I never used to do any of that now I do most of my banking online.

IN: Ok, so the digital age has affected your banking habits and experience?

CL: Yes, very much. I mean with standard bank I went there when I was super young so initially a lot of it was managed by my mum. And then as I became a student I took over. But then the only interaction with the bank is every now and then when I've lost my bank card. Like I said, I don't really feel like I have a relationship with my bank. There are lots of Capitec Stores opening. I live in Real Ascot and Capitec has opened literally 500m down the road from me. So that is actually why we started the account with them; because the branch is literally on my doorstep and the rates are so affordable. So for the account that we use it for it make sense for us to be with Capitec they are right there I can access them all the time it's really so easier.

IN: So, you're saying that your visits to the bank have decreased over the years but branch convenience is still important?

CL: Well, yes. I mean although I don't visit the branch often, the fact that it's right where I stay is an advantage. Like I said, it's one of the reasons why I started banking with them. So yes, convenience is very important.

IN: I see. How supported do you feel by your bank?

CL: My opinion on standard bank is a bit tainted my parents have been hacked once or twice and the bank kind of couldn't really do much about it so I'm a bit sceptical about payment through standard bank left so much through the app because I can log in with my own info but with regard to other forms of payment my parents have or when they paying a new supplier somehow things manage to go haywire I'm a little bit sceptical of that. However, with Capitec, I do feel supported just cause both their online banking and their branches are accessible so I can really choose how I want to bank on certain days.

IN: In light of the digital age, have there been any changes to the nature of your bank relationship?

CL: Yes, now that everything is digital, like I said, initially when things weren't so digital online my mum more controlled my bank account back then. And now that things are all online and everything, I don't really feel the need to go into the bank. For Capitec I went into to get my card and I went in the second time to get my boyfriend's card with him. Standard Bank, I go if I absolutely have to. As much as I love the fact that Capitec is right here if I need it, I don't often because everything is digital. I would really like if Standard Bank had better service considering I am driving further and working around their times to make sure that I can get to them. So, I expect good service once I'm there which I don't get. But I don't really use it often so it's a bit of a catch 22.

IN: What are your general thoughts towards bank Branches?

I think Bank branches are great and I feel much more secure that Capitec is closer to me and I have access to them all times. And with Standard Bank with regards to them having less branches and not being as accessible - it is frustrating because on the odd occasion that I need to go into the bank - it's always a story. I have to arrange to leave work early and my office hours are only until 3:30. So, I can't imagine how people struggle with this who close office at 5. It would be nice to make sure that as easy it is to use the app it would also be that easy to get help at the branches.

IN: Okay, so how often would you say you go to the branch then?

CL: Well, I only go if I want to change anything about my account, or if I need bank letters. So literally only once a year. But, especially with Standard Bank, because it's a mission I really trying keep it to the minimum.

IN: Please describe any changes made to your bank branch over the last few years.

CL: I don't know if I have notice the changes that I made to my bank branch over the last few years. Standard Bank is a bit more old school and Capitec has got a modern feel so when I go to Capitec it works like the new clicks till. I get a slip to say what I'm there for and then I sit the queue and someone will help me. By the time I get there, they already know what I want to discuss and it's literally a thumbprint away; they have access to all my information. so I think they have really infiltrated the digital age in their store approach which is why I feel like it is so much more convenient. Whereas Standard Bank is very much 'go there with all your printed documentation,

stand in the queue with everyone'. It's still the same as when I remember going there when my mum was helping me with my account. So maybe that's why I feel that there is something so much more convenient about Capitec

IN: What do you understand about the concept of Customer Experience?

CL: Customer experience is what we've been talking about the entire time. It's my perception of whether or not they're living up to my expectations as a bank customer. We talk about brand equity in strategy and how when you're reaching brand equity your customer's expectations meet what the brand promise is and you meet both. You live up to your promise and you live up to their expectations. Customer experience is an essential part when it comes to banking because you're spending so much time in the stores. And you then go from customer experience to user experience when it comes to the app. Making those things run smoothly and making people feel - especially like it said in the beginning its peoples hard earned money. Customer experience is important because I need to feel safe, I need to feel like you know what you are doing with my money and that I'm not going to transfer my full salary into account that's going to up and vanish, you know? So this is something that I feel that is really important for banks.

IN: What role do you feel your bank branch has in the banking customer experience?

CL: I think I've reinforced this a few times. With Capitec everything feels easy and they've kind of upgrade their bank branch to match the efficiency of the app. I go in and touch my finger and that makes it easy for me. That makes me know that even if I do have to go to this dreaded banking store, which everybody hates doing, like if I have to live up and do the bank branch thing, then I know that I'm going scan my finger have access to everything, and my banking history and the accounts I have and everything. As opposed to Standard Bank where I don't think anything has changed since I used to go there with my mum. And that just makes me think that what else has not changed since then? You've got to keep moving with the times.

IN: What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

I think that bank branches are always going to be important for someone like me who doesn't want to bank over the phone because too much can go wrong. And I've seen it with my parents - it can go wrong. It's not that I'm just being that old- school farm girl who's pedantic about my bank. The reason I'm saying too much can go wrong is because I've heard too many cases where it does go wrong. So a bank branch is something that has to be around. Yes I might only go there once a year, but I do have to go there and my customer experience does matter too. Because it's the one time I have to do this thing I absolutely hate doing. Imagine how chuffed I'd be if the experience was easy. Like Capitec where everything is smooth and they know what I want from the bank branch. They know that I want to be in and out as fast as quickly as possible and I want the process to be as smooth as possible. I don't want to wait there while you print my 27 page lease so that you can prove that I am who I am.

IN: Describe how you would feel if your bank branch were to close down?

CL: So this has happened to me with Standard Bank. It just makes it more of a mission. So I try and avoid going to the bank much more and I definitely have considered moving from Standard Bank repeatedly. I'm not so concerned about the actual branch if I knew that the systems were trustworthy. And I kind of feel more comfortable if I had to do everything if I logged in and did everything online. But instead it's a phone call thing and I don't feel comfortable with that. Online banking is different because you've got the control. When you phone it's a very different situation.

IN: Please describe any challenges you face banking in the digital age.

CL: With Capitec, you have to go into the app to do the approval process for online transactions and sometimes it doesn't load and then my online banking expires so that is a bit of a hassle. And then, as I said earlier, I worry about things going wrong in terms of hacking and stuff because it happened to my parents.

IN: Would you make any changes to the customer experience of your banks?

CL: Yes, when I go to Standard Bank and ask them about my other account options, I would like them to not say that it's a lot of paperwork. That would be really great because I'm not happy with the package that I have and the account that I have at them but when I went into the branch to get the help that I need and someone who knows more about my banking needs, I really expect the support. And the answers should be informed. Not to be told that the paperwork is hectic. I know the paperwork is hectic, that's why I avoided it like the plague.

IN: What other banks have you banked with?

CL: Capitec and Standard Bank - those are the only two.

IN: How does the customer experiences of the two banks compare?

CL: The things with Capitec is, for what I use the account for; my groceries etc, it's lots of smaller transactions. So the affordable fees and the fact that it's right on my doorstep really helped with that.

IN: Are you aware of the branch closing strategies of some South African banks?

CL: No, I was not aware but Discovery bank kind of makes me assume that, because they are going to be the first bank with no branches. So my assumption is that they are the trail blazers in the market space at the moment. My assumption is that people are going to start following suit even though ABSA has put that ridiculous logo across the country, my assumption is that they will then follow them knowing that people are a bit Discovery- crazy at the moment, with reason. I wasn't aware of it and I haven't done research on it or anything like that but that is my assumption.

IN: And what do you think of this?

CL: I'm really okay with the branches closing. Like I said, I think I go to the bank once a year if I have to. But then I need to know, and I need a way to know, that the alternative is a secure way of doing my banking. I'm never going to be ok with someone phoning me to do banking because every Tom Dick and Harry can pick up the phone on the street and say 'I'm Standard Bank'. That's exactly what happened to my parents. So, I don't have a problem with or I'm not opposed to branches closing. I just need a secure alternative that's going to reassure me that everything is going to still have the same kind of operating and security as if I had to walk into the bank branch.

IN: Are you aware of the branch opening strategies of some of South Africa's banks?

CL: Capitec has just opened in my area so my assumption is that they're opening a lot of branches. Their branches are really, snazzy, sleek, fast and easy-to-use so I'm really positive about that.

IN: Great. And finally, what are your overall sentiments on digital migration of banks in the digital era?

CL: I think my overall sentiment is what I mentioned in the first question; I'm okay with the bank branches closing but then how would you ensure that there's real security with my banking? It's something that as soon as you have entered the working world, becomes much more real. You work really hard to earn not a lot of money and you need to know that that money is safe and being taken care of. It goes back to what I want from my customer experience or banking experience; security and ease of use. Two simple things that should not be that hard to deliver.

INTERVIEW 2:
(PARTICIPANT 2)

Interviewee: Capitec Client (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 21 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: CL= Client, IN: Interviewer

IN: Okay, Thank you for taking the time to do this. Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session? You will remain anonymous.

CL: My pleasure. Yes, I give you consent.

IN: Okay, so just to understand what my study is about; the aim is to understand what value of the bank branch in the banking customer experience of the digital age. So, please tell me about yourself...

CL: I'm a 24 year old medical student. I live in Cape Town, South Africa.

IN: When and why did you start banking?

CL: I started banking when I was about 13. And I started because my parents thought it would be a good idea because it would teach us how to save and work with money.

IN: What bank was it? Why did you choose it?

CL: It was with standard bank. I cannot remember exactly the reason why it was Standard Bank.

IN: What do you remember about your first banking experience? How did it make you feel?

CL: The first thing I remember about my banking experience is that we were really excited about being able to pick our own debit cards because we could pick cartoon characters and things on it. It was just very exciting to have something that was ours.

IN: What is your experience now of banking?

CL: I think it's now just a part of life and an admin thing. It's obviously not as exciting as it used to be.

IN: How long have you been banking with Standard Bank?

CL: So I am currently banking with Capitec. I've been banking with them for approximately 7/8 years, I think.

IN: How would you describe your relationship with your bank?

CL: I would say I have a good relationship with my bank. I find them very easy to deal with. They are always willing to help me and they always seem to be very polite and informed . So I have positive feelings toward my bank - I feel like they treat me really well.

IN: In your opinion, what reasons can you recall that help build a strong relationship with your bank?

CL: They really take the time to explain concepts to me that I didn't understand. Such as doing EFTs and things like that. And they were more than happy to sit down and explain to me.

IN: Tell me about your expectations as a bank customer? What are your needs?

CL: I don't have a lot of needs. I just basically want cheap transaction costs. So that's including overseas and I just need to be able to see how my money is going in and out easily. But, I don't have any special needs in terms of bank. I'd like the bank employees to be approachable so that if I have questions and things like that that it would be easy for them to be answered.

IN: So, do you feel that your bank understands you and your banking needs?

CL: Yes, I feel like Capitec does understand my needs. They are very approachable. The app really allows you to track your spending and I think they really meet all my needs. And costs are very cheap especially overseas.

IN: How do you think your banking habits changed over the years?

CL: Well, now being in varsity, I'm obviously being paid a larger amount of money that I did when I was at home because I have to cover things like electricity and food, you know? The basics and all of that, so I've been dealing with larger amounts of money. And then I've been doing more things like EFTs and things like that.

IN: How would you say the digital age affected your banking habits and experience?

CL: I think it's a lot easier to make transactions. So with things like Snapscan; if I go for a jog or whatever I can still get a smoothie or something just by having my phone on me. But it does make me a bit nervous because there are so many fraudulent things out there.

IN: Describe the evolution of your bank customer experience over the past few years?

CL: I think Capitec has been quite consistent. It is quite a new bank so that must be bared in mind but I think they've always kind of had the philosophy that they need to be approachable, that they're there to answer questions and that everything is very user-friendly so their app and things are just simple.

IN: Okay, so how supported do you feel by your bank in this digital age?

CL: I do feel supported by my bank in the digital age. I had questions about my app and they were more than happy for me to sit down and they explained every how everything worked. And the app is very user-friendly so yes, I do feel supported.

IN: In light of the digital age, have there been any changes to the nature of your bank relationship?

CL: I wouldn't say that the digital age has really changed my relationship with my bank. I still don't do that many transactions online so I would say that it's been pretty much the same.

IN: What are your general thoughts towards bank branches?

CL: I think that there is very much a divide between customer and the bank employees often. So, the whole glass panel separating the customers and the tellers, and that you can't see what's on the computer often and things like that. They are not very approachable and not as transparent as I think Capitec is.

IN: Under what circumstances do you use the bank branch? How often?

CL: I don't use the bank branch very often. I generally just go to ask questions and before the Capitec ATMs could print your bank statement I had to go to them. So, I would say only a handful of times in a year and that's mostly been during my time in university.

IN: How has the nature of your branch visits evolved over the past few years?

CL: I'm not accompanied by my mother's much would probably be the only thing I could really say. But otherwise it's pretty much been the same.

IN: Describe any changes made to your bank branch of the last few years?

CL: We have a new branch that opened up in Gardens Shopping centre recently. So I would say that they've just been more there's just a lot more convenient.

IN: What do you understand from the concept of *Customer Experience*?

CL: I think it's about how satisfied a customer is with the business and the product or the service. I think it's to do with that and the environment of the business.

IN: What role do you think your bank branch has in the banking customer experience?

CL: I would say that my customer experience at my bank right just been really good. I barely have to wait in queues and they are just very informative stuff and I would say it's very good and efficient.

IN: What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

CL: I do think that they might become obsolete because so many do transactions online. If they have questions you can often go to a query page or you'll find the answer online, you know?

IN: So would it affect you if your regular bank branch was to close down?

CL: It wouldn't really affect me if my branch were to close down. But if you're talking about Capitec as a whole, I would be very surprised because Capitec has such a large footprint, they have managed to generate so much customers in the small time frame that they have existed. I think the customers would feel disappointed if they were to close down. I don't think that Capitec would close bank branches down because their whole philosophy is to make things very easy for consumers and not everybody understands how to work apps and things like that.

IN: Describe any challenges you face with banking in the digital age.

CL: So, banking in the digital age I think I just find things like EFTs really daunting, making transactions online can be if I'm unfamiliar with the website. I just know that there's so many ways in which people can steal your money and I'm so nervous of me falling for some sort of trap that would result in that.

IN: What are your overall feelings towards your customer experience of Capitec?

CL: I would say that my overall customer experience of Capitec is great. Whenever I have a question they're always ready to answer it. I don't have any complaints really.

IN: Would you make any changes towards your customer experience going forward?

CL: If this is classified as customer experience, I would say that they need more ATMs. I think it's incredibly difficult to find one a Capitec ATM but that's the only complaint I have.

IN: What other banks have you banked with?

CL: The only other bank that I have banked with is Standard Bank right in the beginning. I do have a credit card linked with my dad's Investec account so I don't know if you would regard that as me banking with Investec?

IN: How does your experience with Capitec compare to your previous bank?

CL: I would say that Capitec is just a whole lot more user-friendly in comparison to Standard Bank. They just allowed me to understand banking better. I do acknowledge that there is an age difference since I started banking. But I think it is easier to understand what was going on just in terms of transactions, or how your money moves. It's just a lot more user friendly and I found the staff much friendlier.

IN: What was the main decision to switch banks?

CL: The main reason why I switched banks was transaction costs actually. So Capitec basically having such low transaction costs both locally and overseas.

IN: Are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some South African banks?

CL: I'm not aware of any the branch closure strategies of any South African banks but it does make sense because I think it's very costly to run a physical bank and so many people do transactions online now.

IN: Are you aware of the branch opening strategies of some South African banks?

CL: Capitec has opened more branches. I don't know if they've got any specific opening strategies. But I have seen more branches been opening up over the years. I don't have any particular feelings towards Capitec opening more branches. I think the fact that there is a new one that's opened up closer to me makes things more convenient but that's pretty much it.

IN: What are your overall sentiments on digital migration of banks in the digital age?

CL: I think that the digital migration of banks in the digital age allows us to track I'll spend it and make transactions a lot easier. I think it was just too complicated. If I look at my gran's age, you know, going to the bank with such a big deal that you know you dressed up. And the banks only opened at the small amount of time. Whereas today I mean if you have to access your money or do anything like that you could just go online and do it. It doesn't matter what time of day or what country. I just think that it makes more sense. It shouldn't be that difficult to be able to deal with your own money.

IN: Thank you. And is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand your customer experience with Capitec?

CL: I don't have anything in particular.

INTERVIEW 3:
(PARTICIPANT 3)

Interviewee: Capitec Branch Experience Manager (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 21 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: XM= Experience Manager 1, IN: Interviewer

IN: So, I'm just going to do a quick introduction. Part of the interview process requires that I do an audio recording just so that I can review what we talk about. So do you give consent to me Audio recording? You will remain anonymous.

XM: Yes.

IN: And then just to understand the research I'm doing; I'm trying to understand the value Bank branches have in the banking customer experience in the digital age.

XM: Ok.

IN: So can you tell me about yourself? What is your role here at the bank?

XM: Ok. I've been with the company for 5 years. Currently, I am what you call an HPC which is a High Potential Consultant. It is basically a consultant that can stand in as management when management is not around. That means that we get trained on things that management does. Especially in the type of branch that we are currently in. Because it is a small branch they would need an experienced employee to manage the branch.

IN: OK cool. And when did you start working for Capitec?

XM: It was the 18th of August 2014.

IN: Wow. That's quite a while ago. And why did you choose to work for Capitec?

XM: Well, I studied business management and I wanted to go into the finance sector.

IN: And what do you remember about your first experience working with Capitec when you started at off?

XM: When I started, the first thing I remember was doing a loan application and the person that I assisted did not qualify so it had quite an emotional impact on me.

IN: And what is your experience of working for the bank now?

XM: Especially over time, Capitec has evolved in these five years. It is a brand to be quite proud of in terms how far they have come. When I started, there was the whole African bank saga so initially I was also a bit sceptical to work for the brand at that point. But the way that Capitec has fought back on all the stigma attached to them from being a new bank is incredible. They really have done an incredible job in establishing themselves in the SA market.

IN: How would you describe Capitec's relationship with their clients?

XM: It's very personal, unique and simple. Our clients know what they are paying for. We allow the client to take control of their own banking. So, basically all consultants are not allowed to tell clients what to do. We can only give you options and that allows clients to make their own decisions so that they cannot basically turn around a few months down the line and say 'I didn't make the best choice'. But with Capitec we give all the possible options in order for customers to know this is what they truly want.

IN: Wow that's great. So it's really about giving customers autonomy of their finances.

XM: Yes, that precisely it.

IN: Great. And how do you feel about working for Capitec?

XM: It's a big accomplishment in terms of being part of a brand that's becoming so successful. When I started with Capitec their main vision as a bank was always to become the best retail bank in the world. Because of the unique service experience, we as employees are seeing how far Capitec is going compared to back when Capitec was a small entity. Now they are taking over the SA banking industry.

IN: They really are doing so well. In your opinion what reasons can you think of that help Capitec build a strong relationship with its clients?

XM: I think it's for clients to know that there is a structure behind how we serve our clients. Also with all of us treating all clients fairly. Whether you are earning below average/ above average you still get classified as the same client base in our branch. That is what Capitec wanted to do. They came up with a new Black card. Everybody gets a black card. Even If you are a low income earner- They value each and every client.

IN: Do you feel that Capitec understands its clients?

XM: Yes. Look, we upgrade our product offerings all the time to suit our clients' needs. We are always asked to give feedback on what clients are still looking for interns of the bank I remember when I started with Capitec it was the credit card and then 2016 they came out with the credit card. So, they are constantly listening to their clients to know what they need in terms of bettering the brand and satisfying the client's needs.

IN: Yes, being client centric is very important. In what ways do Capitec clients come into contact with the brand? What are the different touch points?

XM: So, we have the branches which have extended trading hours. At this branch, for example, we close at 6 pm during the week where the other banks in the centre close around 3pm. We also have remote banking which is the internet banking. We have a Client Care department where you can call in. But most importantly it is the trading times - you can come after work and the branches will still be open.

IN: Yes, and do you guys have an app?

XM: Yes, it's a remote banking app that we have and a USSD function as well where you can put your code on your phone.

IN: Oh interesting. How has Capitec's customer experience changed over the years from when you started?

XM: I think clients are becoming more aware of Capitec's product offering. I think at the beginning Capitec was labelled for more lower-income earners but now it's not necessarily that way anymore. Capitec changed the vision of banking so much that clients are questioning themselves as to 'why I need to pay so much money for bank charges?'

IN: Yes they seem to be paving the way for other banks. What are your feelings towards the different points of contact that Capitec have?

XM: I think it's amazing for clients to know that they can do their banking on their phone. Capitec is always updating their software so clients don't always have to come to the branch. They can basically do it on the app.

IN: Right, so it's a convenient way of banking.

XM: Yes, a convenient way of banking.

IN: Would you make any changes or improvements to any of the various touch points?

XM: I don't think so. Capitec recently upgraded their app. I'm sure you'll see that the update has happened. The necessary changes are being done when they need to be.

IN: In light of the digital age, have you seen any changes in the nature of the client- bank relationship?

XM: Yes, clients are more inclined to do internet banking now than five years ago. Five years ago it wasn't a big thing to have an app on their phone but now clients come into the branch and the first thing they ask is 'do you have a banking app so I can do banking on my phone?' You will see the client on the day they open the account and sometimes never see them again.

IN: So it seems like trust is a big factor.

XM: Yes, our clients are becoming more open and trusting to do internet banking now.

IN: What are your general thoughts towards bank branches? What value do you see in them?

XM: I think it's the way that Capitec has instilled values of the company in every consultant. It's demonstrated from the beginning of training. We are able to interpret things and put our clients first and keep their best interests at heart. We always follow the Capitec values.

IN: And how do you think this has an impact on the relationship with your clients?

XM: I believe that when every client sees how we are truthfully serving them as in being the most important person to us at that point in time, there is trust that is immediately built between us and the client.

IN: Under what circumstances do your clients visit your branch? What kind of services do they come in for?

XM: So it's mostly for opening accounts, credit applications, new cards...

IN: Ok and are any of those services, things that can be done over the app or internet banking?

XM: No

IN: I see. So they can't apply for an account on the app or internet?

XM: Well, they can't apply for account but they can, however, apply for a loan. We have a department that does loan applications. However if you want a credit card you have to come into the branch because we have to issue you the card. So, anything that has to do with issuing a card you would need to come into the branch. But anything else you can do online.

IN: Ok, and because people can do it online, what do you think the reason would be for coming in and doing it at the branch as opposed to doing it online if it's easier?

XM: Well, particularly for older clients, I think it's more of the one-on-one interaction. The younger demographic is more about 'can I do this online?', 'do I need to visit the branch?'. That is why Capitec values catering to different age groups and banking preferences in terms of updating the app to make it more convenient for people to not have to visit the branch all the time.

IN: How has the nature of banking changed or evolved from 5 years ago?

XM: So, like I said, now you don't get your average client coming in to open an investment account because they could do it on the app or they don't come into the branch to just check their statement because they could do it at the ATM or on the phone.

IN: Ok, so I suppose they're coming in for support?

XM: Yes, they're coming in for things that we can only help them with at the branch.

IN: Have there been any or what changes have been made to Capitec Bank branches over the past few years?

XM: So, the look of the branches changed. Previously, Capitec had a different colour scheme. Now this look has been in for about 3 to 4 years. It's brighter, more "out there", there is media that plays on the screens. We never had that, we only had a ticket system but now they've implemented TVs. The look of the branch is different, brighter and more open. It all stems down to if the client must walk into the branch, we want you to feel comfortable. You need to know that anyone that's working here is competent to serve you.

IN: Yes, I heard about a system that is unique to Capitec about the screens being visible to both the consultant and the client? Can you tell me more about that?

XM: That is correct, yes. So basically the screen has been coming on for a long time with Capitec and the reason why is because they want the client to share screen with a consultant so that the client can also feel at ease when you're busy with a transaction. It's for them to know what you are doing on the account. Basically you go into a client profile and there is a roadmap that we follow - we call it a world map. It's shown at the top of the screen and it will flash where you are in the stage of your transaction so the client can know exactly where we are and how far away we are with completing the transaction.

IN: Ok so again, it all goes back to trust and being transparent and just knowing your client.

XM: Hmm.

IN: What do you understand of the concept of customer experience? What does it mean to you?

XM: To me it means everything. Especially if you are operating a business in the service environment because that is your most important aspect of your business- your client. How you serve your client is how your business will grow. Clients' word of mouth goes further than any media because if I had a unique service experience in the branch I'm going back to tell my friends and family about the experience I had. And that's how I personally feel that Capitec grows.

IN: And what role do you think Capitec's bank branch has in its overall customer experience?

XM: I think boils down to the unique service experience. Certain things Capitec has changed in comparison to their competitors. The Shared Screen, the queuematic system, the staff. One consultant is able to do everything for you. So, each consultant is equipped to do anything that needs to be done in the branch. Whereas other banks you might have to go to different departments about certain things, here one consultant can give you the full Global One experience of Capitec.

IN: What is the queuematic system that you are referring to?

XM: When you come into the branch there is someone that greets you at the door and they would ask you what are you here for today and you would tell them. Then they issue you a ticket pertaining to your need and you would sit in the queue by the chairs and wait for your number to be called which gets shown on the screen. Once your ticket gets called you'll be seen by a consultant. So that basically allows a more controlled environment because there won't be an incident where someone will be assisted before the other because you have a physical ticket and number that proves the sequence of events.

IN: Describe how you would feel if the bank branch were to close down?

XM: We have confidence in working for Capitec. We know that Capitec will never close down unless the whole mall closes down. I don't think we will ever have that fear in us that that would ever take place.

IN: What are you overall feelings towards Capitec customer experience? How do you think customers feel about the experience?

XM: I think it's excellent. Capitec has a system which they SMS all clients to rate our services. We choose random clients that visit the branch to rate our services and that is also for us to tap into our service to ensure that we are providing our clients with the best experience. And so that we are also knowing that when the clients leave the branch they are completely satisfied with the experience.

IN: Would you make any changes to the customer experience going forward?

XM: No.

IN: Have you worked for any other banks?

XM: No.

IN: Are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some of the South African Banks?

XM: I've heard about them.

IN: Which banks are you aware of?

XM: Well, social media tells you a lot of things. I heard of Standard Bank and all of their branches that were closing down. And what was strange was that there was an interview that was done without CEO, I'm not sure if you've seen, it where he promoted to open more branches and employ more staff members instead of closing down which is quite interesting. That's why I would say we don't have that fear in us that we are going to be retrenched.

IN: Are you aware of any branch opening strategies of South African Banks?

XM: Yes, Capitec is one, as I said. Capitec is always growing and that is the main thing. They are always looking at opening branches closest to transportation as well where there's a taxi rank or bus terminal or train station. And now they're opening branches for convenience of residential areas like this branch for example is in a residential area even though it in a shopping centre. It's still a residential area. So they are looking at the client base and what the clients need because these clients would need to go down to the CBD which has a high volume. Capitec is constantly looking at the client's needs such as where the branches are situated or demographics of the branches, which is the most important thing. We value understanding our clients to provide service that is personal to them.

IN: What are your overall feelings on digital migration of banks in the digital age?

XM: I think it's a good thing that banks are moving away from clients coming into the branch and wanting extra attention or extra help from a personal point of view. But also feel that it's important that's why Capitec keeps similar transactions that require to come into the branch. It's also just for us to touch base with the client and make sure that they are still fine and happy with the brand.

IN: How do you think the customer experience would be any different if branches were non-existent to Capitec?

XM: I think it would be very frustrating because who is going to speak to clients? They need support and there's just something about personal interaction that can change a lot of perspective on things.

IN: What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

XM: Without bank branches banks will lose their unique value because they won't be questions like 'how are you?'. If you're going to be fully digital, banking will just be another task that you have to do in your day. Sometimes walking into the branch can change your life forever because a consultant can tell you something you never knew. Banking is such an integral part of our lives and the branch is how you build that connection with your clients when you sit down them.

INTERVIEW 4:
(PARTICIPANT 4)

Interviewee: Capitec Branch Consultant (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 21 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: BC:= Branch Consultant, IN =Interviewer

IN: Part of the Interview process includes audio recording so my data may be reviewed. Do you gift consent to me audio recording you during this time? You will remain anonymous.

BC:: Yes I do.

IN: Ok, I just to understand what I'm doing; I'm looking at the value that bank branches have in the bank and customer experience within the digital age. Can you tell me about yourself what role do you have here at the bank?

BC: I am a service consultant. I deal directly with clients coming in for any type of query. If it is so that I cannot assist a client we call in to the helpdesk where they assist the client with anything they help need help with.

IN: And when did you start working for Capitec?

BC: I started here last year December so it's effectively 10 months that I've been with the company now

IN: And why did you choose to work for Capitec?

BC: Well, I came from a retail background. I was in sales for the last six years prior to coming to Capitec and, I mean, I wanted to further my horizons by going still in the same field but in a different position. So I was a sales consultant and now I am a service consultant.

IN: What do you remember about your first experience working for Capitec?

BC: Well, it was a lot to take in. It was a big adjustment from my previous employer to this one. It took a while for me to adjust to the different pace of things and I would say the service value is different from where I came from.

IN: Different how?

BC: It's more relaxed environment. Where Capitec Bank is more professional. So in terms of that it is more strict or more professional environment. Where my previous employer was more relaxed.

IN: So what is your experience working now?

BC: Well, it took me more or less four months to get into the way of doing things. But it's a learning experience from a day-to-day point of view. You learn something new every day and things change every day in terms of digitisation being incorporated into the banking system. Obviously to keep up with the times and the changes that are happening so the beginning up to now I would say it's been an everyday learning experience.

IN: How do you feel about working for Capitec bank?

BC: Look, it's my first year still but it's positive for me. I think at the end of the day I've learnt quite a lot in terms of where I am. So yes, I'd say it's been positive for me. Learning more about the banking sector and more about the nitty-gritty. When it comes to banking and more about how the banks assist clients and how we as service providers assisted clients in making the best decision for themselves.

IN: How would you describe Capitec's relationship with its clients?

BC: Capitec is striving to become a part of your life. It's trying to become like a sibling to you, if you could put it in that way. It's trying to become part of your life on an everyday basis to make your life better in terms of your banking. It's a place you can always go to if you need something and try to make things simpler for you. For instance the app. The app is something that is designed specifically for the client so they can have everything at their fingertips instead of having to come to the actual branch and standing in the queue and wait for a consultant we give you everything at your Fingertips.

IN: I see, so it's about giving what kind control of their finances?

BC: Yes, it's about control convenience and obviously, about saving time instead of having to come out during the day.

IN: In your opinion what reasons can you think of that help Capitec build a strong relationship with its clients?

BC: I would say that Capitec started out as a bank that was open to accept all types of clients, not just specific types of clients that earn income from a specific bracket. We took in everyone. We didn't discriminate against your income. And then we created accounts for everyone equal so that no one feels discriminated. And we offer services to each and every client at the same standard regardless the type of income you earn. Whereas other banks still have that disconnect, we make things simpler. We only offer one account so everyone can understand how the account works. Whereas other banks have different types of accounts with different people and different types of cards. Obviously you have this colour card which means you earn this amount of money. Some people can take offence to that and some people can discriminate against that. So we implemented the same card for everyone so we value each kind exactly the same instead of discriminating.

IN: Do you feel that Capitec understands its clients?

BC: I think they do just based on how many things they implement on a day-to-day basis to assist their clients with their everyday bugging needs. Like I said the app which is one of the major things because most people don't have that time in the day to come into the branch and say for instance that you're working till 5. In most cases when you go to the bank they're closed but Capitec has extended hours if you need to go to the bank for assistance. I mean that says it all.

IN: What do you think the needs and expectations are of the clients in terms of banking?

BC: I would say it's about having the best experience. The best kind of service, making sure that their money is safe, getting the best experience from the service consultant. Someone to be friendly and helpful. I think that is one of the main things a Capitec is trying to instil. And also importantly cost-effective bank fees. You know some customers of other banks really don't understand why they having to pay so much for their bank fees. But with us that's something that we also find very important.

IN: In what ways to your clients come into contact with the bank?

BC: So first of all there is the app where you can access your account anywhere. Then we also have branches located all over South Africa. We have ATMs that can do your deposits, your account changes, printing statements so you don't necessarily have to come to a branch to do your everyday banking. So accessibility is something Capitec really tries to create for their clients.

IN: How do you feel these various touch points reflect Capitec's essence as a brand?

BC: I think at the end of the day it benefits the client quite a lot because, like I said, not every person has the time to go and find the branch go and find ATM or just have the time. I mean you look at people who work double jobs to sustain their family and they just don't have that time to go to the branch. So I think at the end of the day all these things that we're implementing really benefit them mostly in terms of them having that accessibility and that convenience. That they can do it without having to come to the branch and saving them the time of maybe taking a day off from work just to come into the branch. I mean obviously I don't know about every person's circumstances but some clients cannot afford to take day out because they will risk not getting paid. So we are trying to avoid inconvenience in their lives which banking can sometimes do.

IN: How would you say Capitec banking experience has changed or evolved over the last few years?

BC: Look we've always been ahead of the rest in terms of digitisation and I think Capitec is striving to stay ahead of everyone by implementing everything in the digital platform but still keeping the face-to-face contact where the consultant and look I can speak face-to-face and I think when most banks are moving away from the face-to-face interaction Capitec is still keeping that because some clients do feel more comfortable speaking to a person instead of speaking to an automated system or phone call so we are trying to stay ahead of think game while still keeping the human interaction

IN: so finding the balance between catering to all different client needs

BC: yes absolutely

IN: in light of the digital age do you think there has been any changes in light of the digital age do you think there has been any changes towards the nature of the kind bank relationship?

BC: It is slowly moving towards a more digital platform clients are more becoming more tech-savvy so they're starting to use the applications more Then coming into the branch they're using more of the interim platforms to excess the accounts statements and so on so I think that at the end of the

day it's going to move to digital but like I said we still assist the clients that need that face-to-face interaction but at the end of the day I feel that everything is going to move digital.

IN: I see.

BC: but we do also make use of digital Technology to enhance the customer experience in the branch of Capitec

IN: that's great so in light of the digital age what are your thoughts towards the bank branch like what role do you think Bank branches have in this digital context

BC: I think at the end of the day the bank branch still needs to be around because the clients who still need that face-to-face interaction will be left behind if you look at it from an age perspective we often see that the elderly clients I'm not that comfortable and using the app on their phone I mean I spent that on a day-to-day basis where the elderly come in and we explain that they can access account from the phone but they say I don't know how to use the system or I don't feel comfortable using the system and from that standpoint branch you should still be around to assist its customers

IN: under what circumstances do your clients come to the branch what are the services that the branches offer that have the kinds come in

BC: first and foremost it would be for opening new accounts it would be for accounting for credit it would be for replacing a card or adjusting something of your personal details or getting an application registered on your device which is a more common when we see nowadays

IN: really so they need to be educated on how to use it

BC: So yes registration of it and demonstration of it on how to use it that would be one of my main things because we are promoting the application to save the client's time and give them more convenient and accessibility towards for them but we still say to the kind that we are still here should they need any assistance

IN: how often do you see clients coming in to the branch

BC: returning client or

IN: Yes

BC: I would say quite regularly so I would say on an average probably about every second week but kind would return but it would be various types of things they would return for it could possibly be a card replacement or just updating their personal details on the system or just a general enquiry

IN: how would you say the nature of bank branch visit has changed over the years

BC:: I would say it's changed for the fact that clients don't necessarily have to come to the branch anymore the thing is way back all banking services would require the client to go to the branch but now with the digital platforms kinds don't necessarily have to come in because they can do those things from the internet banking from the app on their phone so from that standpoint I would say kind of slowly moving away from coming to branches but like I said there's still that market or that percentage of people that feel more comfortable with coming to the branch

IN: have you seen any changes being made to the interior of The Bank branches of the last few years any changes

BC: well I haven't been here that long from when I start and up till now there hasn't been that much change in terms of the actual look of the branch the actual feel the branch I'd say there's a lot of system Changes with regards to our banking system but other than that there hasn't been that much change

IN: how would you say the Capitec bank branch is competitively different to other Bank branches of South African Banks

BC: so I would say the fact that we are more transparent in the way that we deal with our clients the way our bank is structured our banking screen monitor is visible by assess the consultants as well as the clients while some are the bank's clients look at the back of the computer so you so they can't see what they are actually doing. at Capitec or structures designed where the client can see exactly what we are doing in real time they can obviously see that there is no funny Business happening and they can obviously check and confirm that everything is Done correctly

IN: what do you understand about the concept of customer experience

BC: I'd say satisfaction is a key thing in terms of customer experience so Capitec prides itself in delivering the best kind of service possible so we will try to resolve any queries that the client might

have that is a strong point and something that we like to focus on whether it be waiting time just normal satisfaction Whether you need for successfully attended to.

IN: how would you feel if the bank branch were to close down or more specifically how would how do you think your customers would fail

BC: I think that the customers would feel quite last especially those who are accustomed to the actual branch being in their vicinity for instances branch hasn't been here for that long it's just been here for about a year and a half kind of don't actually know it was here and when they did find out it was here there was so glad and because it's closer to their residential areas as opposed to the one in the town beautiful we are parking is a struggle for them so I feel like the customers are very disappointed if the branch had to close.

IN: what are your feelings towards Capitec's general customer experience

BC: I think it is in my personal opinion it is the best bank at the moment in terms of the way it's structured the way it is situated I mean Capitec is at basically all access points in terms of traveling were located near call traveling spots we are opening branches every couple of months across South Africa I think Capitec is going Places it's basically trying to put themselves out there for everyone to have access to

IN: And do you think the customers feel this way

BC: look they appreciate that we're opening there is a few queries for branches to be open in certain areas but I think that we always need to review first whether or not the branch would be able to sustain itself and those areas because yes we can attend to the clients need of having that branch there but at the end of the day if the branch cannot sustain itself then we have to close down and we wouldn't want that to happen because like I said the guy becomes accustomed to that branch I will be disappointed if it had to move away

IN: would you make any changes to the customer experience going forward or do you think the clients would

BC: my personal experience I haven't had any types of changes that customers have requested or brought forward in terms of service and how the branches are structured so no there's no actual changes that I myself would suggest that the company makes

IN: have you worked for any other South African Banks

BC: no I have not

IN: are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some other South African Banks

BC: I have been made aware of that, yes.

IN: which banks are you aware of

BC: standard bank specifically so they were closing branches due to digitisation and where they're going more digital And removing branches I think that that is I can't really say what is happening in their toenails of the company and why they doing that but I feel that it is a bit unfair towards the staff because it's something that the company is implementing not the not the staff so why do they need to be retrenched for that specific reason like Capitec is making provisions for their staff the branches are still something that they will keep where other banks are just letting go. I think that it's a bit unfair especially If you put that time and effort into working for the company and now they're doing this to you

IN: what are you overall feelings towards digital migration of banks in the digital era

BC: I would say there are mixed feelings it is it gives you can't Rainier and it gives you saving your time it gives your accessibility but at the end of the day the digital platform Is not a hundred percent safe I'm in the cyber hacking those type of things happen on a daily basis across the world not just in South Africa so I'm excited to see that it's going in that direction but also have those fears of what could happen so yes that's my stand point.

INTERVIEW 5:

(PARTICIPANT 5)

Interviewee: Standard Bank Client (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 21 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: CL= Client, IN: Interviewer

IN: Hi there, so I'm just going to do a quick introduction. Part of the interview process requires that I do an audio recording just so that I can review what we talk about. So do you give consent to me Audio recording? You will remain anonymous.

CL: Yes, you do have consent to use all the information I give.

IN: And just for you to understand the research I'm doing; I'm trying to understand the value Bank branches have in the banking customer experience in the digital age.

CL: Alright, sounds good. Tell me about yourself...

I am truly and 21 years old I'm currently doing a degree in digital marketing

When and why did you start banking?

I started banking when I was 18 I got my debit card and I got this because I moved out of her and I went to Cape Town so I needed my own debit card to do transactions because I didn't have my parents so I started banking with standard bank

Why did you choose it?

I don't really know why I chose it I think it's because my mum recommended me 2 standard bank. they recommended that I get a student achievers account for my banking because it was just a debit card.

What do you remember about your first banking experience? How did it make you feel?

my first banking experience I went to the bank branch in Mowbray. I waited for a while when I finally got help. I needed a whole bunch of documents to get the debit card I need a proof of address things I got my ID and everything. I felt ok when I went there I'm not really sure how it made me feel like ever really thought about it. I guess it just felt like a really long tedious process that I thought was quite intensive just to get a debit card.

What is your experience now of banking?

now my banking experience is mostly online and never go to the bank I just use the standard bank I've because I don't really feel like going to the bank it's so much quicker and easier to do the banking myself so if it's not on the app then it's online but I haven't really been back to a bank branch in about a year or two

How long have you been banking with Bank x?

I've been banking with standard bank for 3 years now

how would you describe your relationship with your bank?

I don't know I'm not that involved so it's basically used to check how much I have my balance maybe to send money or pay for things online such as festival tickets or things like that.

Please describe your feelings towards your bank?

my feelings towards my bank is ok sometimes I do get a bit annoyed because it does tend to have their off days when the whole system is offline which happened to me a couple of times where ATMs are not working the app wasn't working you couldn't really do anything and that really hinders your day.

In your opinion, what reasons can you recall that help build a strong relationship with your bank?

it will probably be really good communication just about them being up-front about what's happening I've heard of Friends our banking with FNB and they had a banking error on their side which caused a whole upheaval. I will say that Now the communication with the biking a whole lot better they do send to you SMS as they will tell you if the app is being worked on or if it's being done for the day or if something is Happening so that it better so I would say overall communication is what is really important for banks to build a strong relationship the customers.

Tell me about your expectations as a bank customer? What are your needs?

my needs are quite minimal at the moment just because I don't work so I'm not getting an income or anything just my allowed to my parents give me so my needs are quite minimal I don't have debit orders or anything like that so it's not really an intensive relationship.

Do you feel that your bank understands you and your banking needs?

at this point in time not really I keep getting offered to sign up for credit card and I don't work so I can't get this I feel like as a bank they should know this because they have all my information and they see my transactions so they see what's coming and then what's going out and they also know that is the student achievers account so I don't feel like they should be offering students credit card because that could just lead to death along the way.

How have your banking habits changed over the years?

not really they've been quite consistent. As I said mostly swipe I don't really take out money. I don't really read your cash a lot so I never really have cash with me so that sometimes a problem because I'm so used to swipe bang but I actually want to change that because I don't like getting all these bank charges from swiping so I think that maybe withdrawing cash would be easier.

Positive side effects of your banking habits?

yes the app has made it so much easier to make transfers between people so if I borrowed money from a friend I can either send it back and if I have all these people are under my beneficiaries it's very easy because all the details are listed there and they save so I don't have to go back again and redo the whole process of doing the banking details just really easy it's quick to do if two payments across platforms like doing Mr delivery or something I got that so easy for me to do

How supported do you feel by your bank in this digital age?

quite supported I'm not really sure maybe if I was doing more with my bank right now I'm satisfied it's fulfilling my basic banking needs I'm able to do what I want to do when it's not too much of a hassle and it's quite efficient which I like

In light of the digital age, have there been any changes to the nature of your bank relationship?

So yes I do not go into the actual Bank branches anymore because I don't feel that there's and there's also cut out the middle man then I don't have to go out of my way to more convenient for me I don't actually like being in the bank and standing there and waiting for a while and waiting to be helped and doing a lot of forms and filing it's a lot of bureaucracy that I just don't want to do so to have everything on the app or online is a lot easier for me. I think it's made the relationship easier

What are your general thoughts towards bank branches?

I personally think that buying branches are a bit outdated just because everybody is using their apps and doing banking transactions online I don't really see the use of Bank branches that much anymore that's just my personal opinion I guess because I don't use them as much so I cannot speak for everyone but I don't know I just don't see the value or the need for them anymore. Also I think bank banking and store is quite a tedious process from my experience like I said having to open up the account I need all this paperwork to be done which is really an unpleasant situation to be in I would just rather avoid it by all costs so again I don't see the reason why people would go into the bank branch if it's you know if it's easy and accessible to do banking wherever you are on your phone that you're always carrying with you.

17. Under what circumstances do you use the bank branch? How often?

other said not really maybe if I have to do a huge transaction where they said no I have to come install and they have to get my ID or anything then I will go to the bank branch but I generally use the app or online. I mean I use it daily to check my balance see how much I have or sending money or transferring money or swiping my card or something like that.

18. How has the nature of your branch visits evolved over the past few years?

so it's definitely a lot less often just because as I said I use the app and online banking.

19. Describe any changes made to your bank branch of the last few years?

I'm not sure what changes they have done just because I'm never there but with the banking app and know that they've made it's more efficient and that you can actually do more with the banking app so you won't have to go into the branch as much so I guess somehow standard bank is trying to get people to go to the branches less by having more services on the app that fulfil the same kind of purpose or needs that one would generally require or look for in a bank branch.

20. What do you understand from the concept of *Customer Experience*?

Well customer experience relates to how customers journey throughout your Brand and how they feel about the brand while still using a product or service so yes.

21. What role do you think your bank branch has in the banking customer experience?

well I'm not really sure what role background house in my particular customer experience because I'm not physically engaging with the brand but online through mobile applications I think the customer experience is really good they are very little hindrances and inconveniences it's all very easy to use in my opinion and I don't know it's just a lot easier to do everything myself and then I feel better because if I'm doing everything myself I have more power and autonomy over my finances and I'm more control of what's happening with my money and stuff like that.

What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

I feel that in the digital age more banks need to move towards doing things online because people like to and want to feel in control of their money and what they doing it's also a lot easier for most people I believe to have it in a mobile form because I things happen and it just everyone is very busy lives so they don't have time to go into the bank and plus banks are very weird hours and they close very early so if you get off work at 5 you not going to make it to the bank and sometimes

you don't have time during your lunch break to go so this whole thing of having up and being online is 24-hour access so I feel like that's more beneficial

Describe how you would feel if your regular bank branch was to close down.

if my regular Bank branch were to close down I didn't think I would feel much I wouldn't really feel the So hurt I probably wouldn't even know that they would have closed down as long as everything online and the app was working and still carrying on I would still be completely fine

Why would you feel this way?

I feel this way because I don't really go into the bag as I said so for me it really wouldn't affect me or my day. I mean I would feel bad maybe because of the people that work there because of its closing down and maybe people have lost their jobs so that would be bad

Describe any challenges you face with banking in the digital age.

well I'm not that adaptors banking so if I need to set like a stop order or regular payments that happened months there I still don't know how to do that even though I have been trying for a while I haven't really looked it up so I can't really say I don't know if it's the banks fault all my fault so yeah so if I need to do more than a simple transaction sometimes I get a bit stuck maybe they need to be more thorough explaining on how I can do certain things on the apple online

do you feel in any way that the bank branch might be able to assist with these challenges that you face

well yes I'm sure it can but again going to a bank branches really inconvenient thing and out of my routine so I would rather just try and figure it out on my own or not attend to it at all I just think if they were tutorials online it will make it a lot easier and better for me personally

What are your overall feelings towards your customer experience of Bank X?

well since I've been doing everything by myself I'm quite happy with how it's been working online and on the app. there was one experience well for some reason my password wasn't working and I had not changed it and it took a while for me to change it back to what it was and then I had to call someone from branch and confirm and do a whole lot of things and now it was quite time consuming and annoying and taxiing.

Would you make any changes towards your customer experience going forward?

as I said may be more thorough explanations on how to do more things online on the app and

giving customers more control about what they can do on their banking apps and also just making sure it's as secure as it can possibly be.

What other banks have you banked with?

no I have not done it with any other banks

How does your experience with Bank X compare to your previous bank? What was the main decision to switch banks?

I've never switched banks either.

Are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some South African banks?

no I'm not really aware of the branch closer strategies of standard bank maybe I should be aware and this is what I was talking about it turns of communication they can't communicate better with us and let us know about these changes if they are going to be strike so if they are opening and closing branches just so that people know and so people do need to go in let them know that a specific way just closed before they get there so they're not inconvenienced.

yes I think I heard something about is it what bank is a Capitec opening a quite a significant amount of branches I feel that you know personally other said I don't see the value or the purpose of Bank branches anymore but again do you know if Capitec does cater to a different demographic as far as I know so if they have done the research to find that you know these consumers need the bank branch then then that makes sense as a plan going forward for them yeah that's how I feel.

What are your overall sentiments on digital migration of banks in the digital age?

I think it's a really good thing for customers because you know it's very easy for us it's 24hrs it's convenient it's efficient we can do it we like we don't have to go into the branch we don't have to spend large amounts of time going into the bank or wasting petrol and signing things and doing everything else but I also think it means that people will lose their jobs because there won't be much of a need for them anymore because everything will be doing ourselves

Is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand your customer experience with Bank X?

no not that I can think of I as I said I don't really see the purpose of a bank branch anymore I do feel like it is quite old school so I make use of online banking just because of there is an accessibility it has yeah thanks.

INTERVIEW 6:
(PARTICIPANT 6)

Interviewee: Standard Bank Client (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 21 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: CL= Client, IN: Interviewer

Tell me about yourself...

I'm a student currently doing my in-service training at a company in Cape Town and 22 years old notice board on the side yeah quite focused on my career goals

When and why did you start banking?

a person only started interacting with a bank in 2016 and matriculated 2015 so I took the gap year and that's when I started interacting with banks and started using my card and monitoring my cash flow I did that because like I said I was on my gap year and I needed to buy groceries and living expenses and all that type of stuff so

What bank was it? Why did you choose it?

the bank that I've been banking with a standard bank I didn't choose it just my parents are worth so it's easy for them to open up account for me and it was easy for them to start up the account for me when I was a kid birthday Monday money and all those things they put it in there.

What do you remember about your first banking experience? How did it make you feel?

It was a little bit overwhelming going to the bank and I like I said I was going to get beer so I need to change things with details and I needed to go into the bank it was overwhelming and nerve-racking not knowing a lot about the banking sector and how these things work in support of a new experience and intimidating but also exciting knowing that there's going to be something I'm going to be doing on the regular and it's a sign of growth again

What is your experience now of banking?

very blouse say if I could say that I have a whole lot more confident and it is at the banking world

How long have you been banking with Bank x?

as I said my parents open that account for me when I was 16 or 17 that's when they open the account for myself I didn't actually use the money I mean I didn't have a need but me personally into acting with the bank cause of its 6822 so about 6 years

In one sentence how would you describe your relationship with your bank?

so that ties into what I said earlier about why are my banking being blasé I don't really mind I respect the bank I guess I don't have a hate relationship with the bank I don't like money let me just say that.

Please describe your feelings towards your bank?

my feelings towards my bank are very chilled right now I'm too young to have many aspirations and I don't have a lot of knowledge about the banking sector so I'm just going along with what I know and what's comfortable as I get older and I start to earn a profit salary after finding out more about the banks and the fees that I'm paying all of that and then I'll start to progress in there but at the moment my feelings towards bank are very chilled very happy

In your opinion, what reasons can you recall that help build a strong relationship with your bank?

I mean I wouldn't go as far as to say strong relationship just because as I said I don't really think I have a relationship with the bank but I think what starter packs really good I just stay quiet and formative like they update me about my transactions and all of that and help me with any questions that I have about my card or about accounts so they were open to questions and very happy to educate me

Tell me about your expectations as a bank customer. What are your needs?

Well is at the moment of a basic I just need a bank that doesn't charge me too high a bank fee and that are very versatile especially for me as a student obviously with me as a student I can't afford a luxurious lifestyle so I can't afford to pay a lot of money On withdrawals at ATMs or card swipes And all of those type of things that are so right now my expectations as a bank customer or just

affordable banking experience informative bank with me so if there are any irregularities that may have occurred expect the bank to inform me of them and to keep me in the loop of new accounts because obviously banks or monitor my spending habits and my transaction history so I expect him to take that information and maybe inform me about different accounts that might be suited to me or anything like that.

Do you feel that your bank understands you and your banking needs?

in Arabic I am a student and I am on a student account is not much more they can offer me but I guess I could say yes they understand because they would offer student account or wouldn't offer student account if they didn't understand the banking needs of the Third Kind tell so yes

How have your banking habits changed over the years

my banking habits have changed over the years due to biggest spending habits their social life offer doing more things now so I'm spending more money on social activities I'm spending more and doing more social activities.

How has the digital age affected your banking habits and experience?

I would say it has changed just cause I'm able to do online banking and I use the app to do my transactions so yeah I was saying that way it has changed all the digital age has changed my habits a bit.

Describe the evolution of your bank customer experience over the past few years?

If I'm honest there hasn't been much of an evolution. It's remained quite the same. You know as being a student I've had quite basic needs. it's been quite a simplistic lifestyle so I don't think there's going to be much of an evolution until I start earning a proper salary and starting to evaluate more of where I can save money and all of that type of stuff.

How supported do you feel by your bank in this digital age?

I feel very supported they do send me SMSs about Any irregularities that might have occurred. that was a big thing for me. the very informative when I do have questions they are always willing to help I don't feel neglected or that I'm just a number and a big pool if you know what I mean there is a personal touch to it.

In light of the digital age, have there been any changes to the nature of your bank relationship?

well I've only really started banking properly within the digital age so the digital age is kind of what I'm used to or all I know so I wouldn't say that there have been any changes really. obviously all banks have their own apps which is been a great help really efficient.

What are your general thoughts towards bank branches?

I think Bank branches are important although I don't make use of them I would say they have some important.

Under what circumstances do you use the bank branch? How often?

I don't use the bank branch very often and less Unless I have queries if I've got an SMS saying that my account needs to be figured or if there are any major irregularities or if I'm going overseas those are the main reasons I use the bank branch otherwise I don't really visit the bank branch that often.

How has the nature of your branch visits evolved over the past few years?

well last year I needed to go to the bank branch because I needed to exchange from Rands to dollars because I was going travelling and so it's a little bit different as opposed to going in there changing the limits or anything like that or getting a new card I suppose that's how it's evolved there's not really much of a need to go into the bank branch anymore because I am able to do things like change my limit on my app

Describe any changes made to your bank branch of the last few years?

I can't really answer that one as I don't know I don't go to the bank branch so I really don't know. I don't follow my bad but intuitively that I would know that.

What do you understand from the concept of *Customer Experience*?

customer experience for me is how your customer interacting with your bank or a bank how the customer feels he or she is being treated by the bank if their interaction or experience has been good or bad obviously means they've had a positive or negative customer experience.

What role do you think your bank branch has in the banking customer experience?

It has a large role your bank indirectly affects actually directly affects the customer experience if the bank isn't helpful or open or welcoming in the customer experience at that bank could be negative my bank standard bank has a positive customer experience from my experience as I said earlier.

What are your thoughts towards bank branches in the digital age?

I think Bank branches are very important because a lot of things can't be solved over the banking app and there are more questions that people have which people feel more comfortable and allow more in-depth answers when going into the bank branch and dealing with a person Behind the Counter and asking questions and getting feedback it's very quick as well you know if you had to ask a question over the app or anything you would have to send email you get to answer maybe the next day and probably not as in-depth as you would be able to receive as if you had gone to the bank branch so Bank branches are very important especially if there are any issues with your banking app you can go to the bank branch and relay your queries effectively and immediately.

Describe how you would feel if your regular bank branch was to close down.

I might feel a bit uneasy because it's familiar and comfortable it's become a comfort zone if I could put it like that if I have to go to a new bank I would be dealing with new people not saying that I go to the same person every time I do go to this Bank branch but it's convenient to have the bank branch here and if it had to close down there would be an inconvenience and I will have to go find a new bank and trouble little bit further.

Describe any challenges you face with banking in the digital age.

I don't have any challenges with banking and they did it because like I said I live a very simplistic lifestyle I don't have any major needs the age is really effective in paying people so I haven't had many challenges

What are your overall feelings towards your customer experience of Bank X?

positive put it in one word my feelings towards standard bank customer experience is positive.

Would you make any changes towards your customer experience going forward?

actually I think I'm very happy

What other banks have you banked with?

I haven't banked with any other banks

Are you aware of the branch closure strategies of some South African banks?

no I am not.

And what are your thoughts about banks closing their branches in the digital age?

well for me personally again like I said I it would be I would feel bit displaced but I could handle it I guess there are some people who do need the bank branch everybody is different so if we talking specifically about me it will be a little bit and convince in little bit and convenient thing to find out to drive further.

Are you aware of the branch opening strategies of bank x?

No. and no I'm not aware of any particular banks doing that but I suppose if it works for them then that's good I mean it makes some sense because again like I said earlier when you are in this digital age sometimes communicating or banking over the app or online isn't as in-depth as it as we always wanted to be so it might make some sense to open branches really depends on your preferences I guess.

What are your overall sentiments on digital migration of banks in the digital age?

A little bit uneasy I guess because the digital age Has its own flaws. If a bank's migrate I guess it would make your money more fluent and more subject to things like hacking and theft so a little bit uneasy but nothing I can really do about it.

Is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand your customer experience with Bank X?

other than that I don't use my bank branch that often I'm quite happy with the card and the app, no. I don't know much about the banking sector and I don't know much about banking itself just as long as I have my money then I can swipe my card and everything works fine then I'm happy.

INTERVIEW 7:
(PARTICIPANT 7)

Interviewee: Standard Bank Branch Manager (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 20 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: BM= Branch Manager, IN: Interviewer

(Ask for permission to record the interview): Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session? You will remain anonymous.

YES.

Thank you. And just again the purpose of my research; it's to understand what value of the bank branch in the banking customer experience in the digital age.

Tell me about yourself...

Ok I'm a mum, I'm a wife and then I have all of these children (the consultants). So my role here this is basically a service centre which means there is no branch manager and it runs on less people so my role is to manage the staff to make sure that we get our numbers cash wise sales wise and all those things so I'm basically here to manage them.

When did you start working for standard bank?

not too long ago I started in standard bank at 2017 I come from another bank

Why did you choose to work for standard bank?

well I work for another financial institution I left until a bit of mummy and then I knew someone that work at standard bank it said there was a vacancy would I be interested I said yes let's try and I tell I started here

What do you remember about your first experience working here?

it wasn't as stressful as where I came from it felt a bit late back at the time when I started

And what is your experience now? How has it changes?

from then to now the pressure is there but still not as bad as it was before so it's manageable

How do you feel about working for standard bank? The standard bank brand, how does it make you feel working for them?

Well I enjoy working for the brand I enjoy working for the company if I look at benefits why is it better if I look at people while people are people so I won't even say that better

and how would you describe a standard bank's relationship with its kind

if I look at the people that work here it's a very good very good because they get to know the client's very well as a brand it speaks to a lot of clients and what they like and there are a lot of benefits as a client on certain things you know standard bank right now is going through a transformation right now that not everyone is happy about so I can't lie and say the clients are happy with less staff.

yes it is going to quite a major change it's actually one of the reasons why I wanted to do more research on it I find this change very interesting.

yes it's not and ice thing. I think in the long term it is beneficial it is just the fact that standard bank has decided to do it and abrupt kind of way and not a slow transition from ok this is what we have and this is where we going forward to so I think that unsettles people.

in your opinion what reasons can you think of that help standard bank build a strong relationship with its clients

basically I would say if you look at relationship by saying it's always about keeping the client's abreast of the changes if we look at what's just happened standard bank with only banked and now answer branches are closing the other institutions are all doing the exact same thing but no one verbally said anything you know Celeste changes happening in the background but started buying is actually being upfront and letting their clients know what's happening I think the customers appreciate the honesty they can then also make Better Decisions so if I look at that prospective that to me is client service because the fact is a lot of a time people are told different things and there is spin around so of kinds know where they stand at build a good relationship from the get-go

Do you feel that standard bank understand it's clients?

I'll say 80% of the time.

why only 80% of the time?

Because I don't ever feel that we'll get it to 100%. so I'm a realist at I think it's still a little short but if I think if we look at the fact that not the whole of South Africa are banking people anyway you know she could take 5% out but I mean we are never going to meet everybody is expectations

and what are the Expectations that she think you can't we meet for your customers

if we look at the fact that were in a digital world innovation is happening all the time they are always upgrades and new features that I ordered which talks to the millennials and they are always upgrades and new features that are added which talks to the millennials and the tech type of guys so that is definitely type of guys so that is definitely being met. whether people are actually exploring the apps And seeing what they can do is a different story I mean you don't need to come into the branch anymore and that is what people like.

what would you say your clients expect from the standard bank I do feel like you're meeting with expectations

I think the expectation is that what they're asking they are getting

for example being able to print a 3-month statement for example without having to come into a branch that is being done on the app it's done online it's being done at the Auto Plus machines that's one small example that if the kind doesn't want to come in and stand in the line to get something as small as that also where pricing is concerned it's cheaper for you to do it yourself then to come in So that also saving client time and saving money

in what ways do your clients come into contact with standard bank what are the various touch points

we've got the app we've got online banking auto plus machines telephone banking USSD, call centres.

what are your feelings towards these various touch points how do you think they are reflection of standard bank as a brand

well I think they represent with standard bank is trying to go in terms of digital like I said people don't want to come and two branches and so that is the one way or the few ways of them transacting without being able to come in the branch and we can see on the numbers a people that come into the branch that numbers have dropped significantly. but at the same time yes there are a lot of things if you can't do online. you know there are 20 products that you can choose from online but which one is actually suited to you and good for you so sometimes they just need someone to ask them a few questions and give them out of the 22 options you know what I mean so some people still like that element of the actual person or I'm stuck on my app and I don't know how to go back or do something they still want to come in and sit together that is the one thing that people still need. also another thing simple the collection of Cards it would cost all banks way too much money to do face-to-face delivery because it's a third party it's not like we have our own courier service so that's the one aspect of it and also pins and things like that need to be done for security reasons. I understand convenient but there's also security.

and from your knowledge how would you say the customer experience of standard bank has changed or evolved until now

well previously if you weren't happy with the debit order you would have to come in so you would be annoyed because this is going to come off your account again you would be annoyed because you'd have to do it at the branch and wait an hour to see a consultant because 10 years ago the bank branch was useful or banking. since then you're able to do it at work quickly phone The Call Centre yourself so if we look at that type of thing... also you won't be able to swipe your card anywhere you would have to physically draw a whole lot of cash and pay by cash so if you look at where that is going from there to hear people are definitely spoiled. they're able to do banking anyway so if we look at that innovation and not just digital in terms of apps but also swipe machines, etc.

Has there been any digital Technology incorporated into the branch?

Remember standard bank doesn't have a ticket system at any of the branches. they haven't gone that way yet so they've changed everything else but that we are yet to discover The Blueprint project where branches that have all the space that don't need it will be changed so we don't know how that model is going to look. I've worked at an institution where there was a ticket system and again not everyone likes it so I know that way as well.

in light of the digital age do you feel like there's been any changes in the nature the client bank relationship

prior kinds used to be more needy because I couldn't do banking themselves. They would need a small when now they don't really need us as much as they needed us before unless they have a problem or unless you know the need has changed from needing everything to be done when it's just crisis mode that they need us

I see. so the role of branch has changed.

Yeah.

ok and what would you say the role of the bank branch is in the digital age?

Like I said it's when people need assistance or Assurance of I've gone through the product but is this the right one? it feels like branches will become more servicing

as opposed to run their business that's how it feels there's a lot more stuff that they can do themselves

I see so that is that why they've called it service centres now?

yes so how it works between a calling someplace as a service centre and some places a bank branch is about how many staff there are and what services are offered. like we don't have Business Banking that sits here or relationship banking. so they look at numbers What is coming and what do we need what does the actual space need so I was Space looks like there should be a whole lot of people but the need isn't there for all of that tow service centres less people because it's service is a smaller community also so if we look at where we situated we service federal coroner's act which is smaller if they wanted a bigger branch they would go into town Long Street sea point. so that's how you become a service centre you look at the names of the people in the area, how much stuff there is and they look at how many transactions are actually done at the branch do we need all these consultants know you don't. sometimes it feels like we need it but technically we don't.

what do you understand about the concept of customer experience

If I look at the survey or SMS at clients get the first question is was your needs met the second is how was the experience and then rate and the overall experience the person that assisted you and then overall. Did I come in and my needs were met to my satisfaction how is the person that assisted me? so I think those are the elements of customer experience.

and how does this SMS system work?

so let's say you are my client I put in your ID number on the computer which will check you in here at the branch and then you automatically send you a message

describe how you would feel if this Bank branch were to close down or how you feel your customers would feel if this branch were to close down

they would be very annoyed how I would feel is I'm never surprised you cannot be surprised understand age I've heard of a branch that's closing at the end of November that was busy so that was more surprising than our branch. of course we

would be surprising For the client that weren't either leave the bank or have to adjust by finding a new branch people aren't ready to adjust now with the digital age so it would mean another space that kind can't go to.

is there a fair at all that it could happen to this branch

well not really because if the branch is closing it doesn't mean the staff are going to be retrenched. so because I know that there's not that much fear sometimes people think if it closes where are they going to put you were which branch are you going to go it's more that with the fears not that I'm going to lose my job. the media and created this perception is that standard bank is retrenching their staff but they actually aren't. it was just announced that Bank branches of clothing and 1200 people will be affected. people assume that that meant retrenched you know what I mean. so far just work clothing 200 people were affected. that didn't mean that they were affected and people lost their jobs that's not what they said people just assumed. standard bank gave you a choice of whether you wanted to stay or go if he wanted to stay there were vacancies available. and I always tell people this.

what are your feelings towards standard bank's overall banking customer experience

I don't think it's bad I think what service there's always room to improve there are always aspects that can be changed. as a whole the needs are being met whether it's kind of a thing or digital so if we look at just that the basic needs of a guide to being met. I mean if you go to the branch and there is a queue and may not be met instant there when you get there but it's being met at the end of the day you may just have to wait a little

how do you think standard bank customer experience the first competitive there from some of South Africa's other banks

I think they are competitively similar because we all do the same things the fingerprints customer service is generally the same as just how quick it's done so if we look at that it's similar

would you make any changes to the customer experience or from your experience would customers want to change anything about the experience

I think if the customers come into the branches of service centres they would want to be served quicker but it's not always possible. if we look at ten years ago people would come in and sit and wait for an hour or two and now the expectation is that they come in and they want to be served instant there so there's a lot of instant gratification that people want and sometimes it's not practical or realistic . so out of kind services people get annoyed with that they feel like they should be served instantly. persistence that way you have improved but they're still systems that were used 10 years ago. there's a lot of that people expect stuff instantly which really isn't realistic.

you mentioned earlier that you've worked for another financial institution can you disclose what are the banks you've worked for?

I work at Nedbank I see you have the app on your phone.

yes I do have the app on my phone.

are you aware of any of the branch opening strategies of any of South Africa's Banks?

yes Capitec is opening more branches. so my take on that is that they are newer than the other four major banks so most of the other four major banks might already have branches situated in those areas that they are trying to infiltrate so yes they are growing but the other four major banks might reside in that area already. that's how I see it. and also if we look at their style they also only have consultant and 1 cash person standard bank has almost adopted the same kind of model. I used to work in constantia Capitec just opened up a branch there. standard bank ABSA FNB have already been there. so essentially the established banks Already have a footprint there So it looks like Capitec is revolutionary and opening all these branches when actually they are just getting on the same branch capacity as they already established Banks.

Oh that's an interesting perspective .

I mean if you look at the branch here it's very small and there probably about 5 staff members if you look at Capitec they are also opening small spaces with small amount of staff Where some of these South African banks are already existing.

what are your overall feelings on digital migration of banks in this digital age?

I think it's more convenient for everyone if I didn't work at the bank I wouldn't be at the bike I would want to do everything and do as little as possible at the branch . But maybe because I'm a little older and I remember how banking used to appear for my idea of going to a brown just like hell no but I work here but you wouldn't see me going to a branch on a Saturday. so it's a convenient thing and again with the age of everyone wanting gun instant gratification that ties into the convenience of having not having to stand in the line or not having to do something they don't want.

and finally what value do you see in the bank branch in this digital age

as I said earlier I do see value in it there are many different kinds of customers and I think it's important to cater to the ones that do need help with certain things in terms of their banking so I think there is important in accommodating all types of bank customers which as I said earlier that it started buying is doing or trying to do rather.

INTERVIEW 8:
(PARTICIPANT 8)

Interviewee: Standard Bank Branch Consultant (Anonymous)

Interviewer: Amara Nkem Abonta

Date: 20 October 2019

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

List of Acronyms: **BC:** = Branch Consultant, **IN:** Interviewer

Do you give consent to me audio calling you

yes that's fine.

Research

so briefly without giving too much information can you tell me about yourself like what is your role
he had started bank

so I am a universal banker so being a universal banker means you do everything that is done in
the branch almost everything the only thing that I don't do is telling I'm not a Teller but when it
comes to resolving queries assisting with enquiries and opening accounts that's my job and also
your vehicle finance your home loans that's what a universal banker does

when did you start working for standard bank

first of June last year

and what was the decision to work for standard bank

Standard bank is a very big company it has a very large footprint all over Africa and it is also
recognised internationally so working for standard bank is quite an achievement

OK cool so that's why you wanted to work for them because they're quite prestigious I suppose

and also for growth they offer many opportunities for their employees

do you remember how I was starting out working at standard bank

it was quite frustrating because I had to learn a new system I was moving from branch to branch but it did help me a lot because I quickly knew people. They were very helpful although it was frustrating to learn the system at the time the staff were helpful

what is your experience now working for standard bank in comparison to when you started

I'm happy although I do feel that there is a lot of pressure because we also started a new program which we always go to training and on the other side have to push my work stuff so it's a lot of pressure but other than that it's fine

and can you please elaborate on this new program that you mentioned

it's universal banking program

does it have anything to do with the digital age or the digital migration at standard bank is doing at the moment

so basically the direction that standard bank is focusing on is to bring everything into one platform so I see as universal bank is our role or one of our roles is to educate clients and bring them closer to the Digital environment so part of this program incorporates teaching the clients and getting them to familiarise themselves with the digital platforms

how do you feel about working for standard bank

I feel proud with the processes as I've said there's a lot of pressure because the shift in the way that things are going is a very fast pace so we have to adapt to these changes as quickly as possible but other than that the brand itself it's quite a huge brand as I've said so when you're working for standard bank you feel that you're working for a really good company and what the benefits and how they treat their employees it's also wonderful so I wouldn't have any regrets working for standard bank

how would you describe standard bank relationship with its clients

had a good one because standard bank isn't only focusing on the us when it comes to clients or office clients are being taken care of in terms of their needs because we've got what we've called a

voice branch which is when people have a query they can dial I'll contact centre and then they get assistance there and then we've got this huge campaign on the digital platform where you can do a lot of things without even coming to the branch although some people still prefer the personal touch when they want their needs to be satisfied so standard bank is catering to every client within the platforms that they have made available so it's very client-centric

you mentioned this universal banking do you think your bank branches reflect the digital red that you guys are taking

well some of the branches have been revamped so I'm like well the one that we are in because the program is something that was still in the process of implementing the direction at standard bank is looking at has been an instant change so whilst we are embracing digital platforms we are still river revamping other branches so as to accommodate that digital migration but even besides that we've got our ATMs you can open the loan that we can open an account there make an ankle issue that matter can decrease or limit you can do your transfers without even coming inside the branch so it is quite really advanced and it does support this digital campaign that standard bank is focusing on

in your opinion what reasons or what can you recall that helps standard bank build a strong relationship with its clients

it's convenient in terms of the digital platforms that we have available so if you remember back in the day person we need to come into the bank branch to increase the limit but now you can do so on the app on your smartphone at home or in your office for a new taxi so that's what I mean when I talk about convenience it's not a hassle to do things you can multitask if you want to do a transfer you don't have to come into the branch whilst just still busy doing another thing you just take out your smartphone and do a transfer just there and then so that is what builds a strong relationship with the client and also what the type of products that we offer because there's a variety of products for instance and not sure about the number of the account we have available but we do have a few account each designed for specific for specific means according to the different types of people that is also another way we are building strong relationships with the clients were not only focusing on a certain group of clients we try as much as we can to accommodate each and everyone

to fill that standard bank understands its clients' needs and expectations of the bank

there is quite a huge improvement in that and it will always come down to the Digital aspect that we've been preaching since towards the end of last year we've been pushing the digital platforms

and then in terms of the product range that I just mentioned for instance we've got a minor account these are the types of things which make me say that standard bank is really going to satisfy its clients and it is making a footprint that will be were in the fourth Industrial Revolution and all of that so standard bank is one of the banks that is pioneering that fourth Industrial Revolution

in what ways do your clients come into contact with standard bank so what are the various touch points

so we've got the branch we've got a boyfriend which is our contact centre

what are the operating hours for your voice branch

it's 24 hours for different accounts. so whenever you have a problem you can call and you will be assisted at any time and what is nice about this voice branch is that consultants like me are also at the voice branch so it doesn't mean that when you call you get less service as opposed to coming into the branch so everything can be done at the boys branch to and also we have internet banking for those who do not have smartphones to download the app and we also have the app and we are still keeping with cell phone banking operator so there are various platforms one can use the bank

I will what are your feelings towards this various contact points?

I feel that these touch points are a reflection of where we are trying to go in terms of digital especially the app and internet banking and also as I've said before the focus is not only on millennials there is an understanding that we've got elderly people who unlocked quite familiar with these digital platforms so we still cater for them so I feel like standard bank is in the right direction in terms of taking care of each and every client no matter how different the client is from the other one then needs are being satisfied at these various touch points that we have

how would you say standard bank's customer experience has changed or evolved over the last few years

well there's been a positive change in terms of customer experience because one key thing which is it convenient suspect that I keep mentioning it has brought a lot of changes and the customer experience in that back in the day he would have to come into the branch for anything but now because they are these digital platforms so cute and not long anymore so it also create convenience even in the branch because not everyone is coming to the branch anymore so it gives those people who can't access the digital platforms convenience in terms of how soon they can be

assisted when they come into the branch so I can say that it has taken a positive turn and it has brought a good quality in terms of customer experience

so you are saying that because they are such a large amount of people using the digital platforms those who need the bank branch are really getting the right attention here because of branches and no longer overpopulated

yes exactly

In light of the digital age have you seen any changes in the nature of the client bank relationship

it is had a good impact. I mean at first before client's really understood why they were branch closures and they were they were afraid that standard bank was going to close down and they were having all sorts of ideas but once they grew to understand why this is being done they got more comfortable because standard bank is not only just closing branches but it's also coming up with better Solutions in terms of how the client can be better satisfied in terms of their needs

can you elaborate on these better Solutions

well when you do things inside the branch they are quite expensive so if you transfer money inside here it will be more expensive than when you're doing it outside so the branch closest to not really have a negative impact on the client because the branch closes there is a solution that is there for those people there are ATMs that do almost everything that you could do at the bank branch and it's much more cheaper when you're doing it there then inside the branch so there is an advantage although I know that people are very scared

yes I guess there are pros and cons

what are your general thoughts towards Bank branches? is there value in it anymore
there is value because As much as the digital platforms are taking over there are a lot of clients that still prefer coming into the branch to speak directly to the person than to just read something online and do it online because some of the questions are not answered by just reading via the internet so branches are still playing a specific pie in terms of bringing the personal touch to the clients and another thing I feel not with standard bank alone but with other banks what I think is a problem is moving other facilities from the branch it does and convenient clients like for instance if you're looking out in all banks other departments like your business banking it's rare to find a business banker in the branch so I can't have to make an appointment and then see the business

banker it's convenient in that the business banker goes to the client but whatever kind comes and hoping to get a matter resolved immediately

right so takes the spontaneity out of visiting branch. I heard actually earlier that a client came in looking for an investment Planner...

A financial planner yes that's exactly what I'm talking about. because even in the branch you should have at least a consultant for business financial planner so that the people who prefer coming into the branch don't have to wait longer or make appointments

so you're saying that this is something that South African banks do in general or so just this bank

it's what the banks are doing

under what circumstances to your client visit the bank branch why do clients now it has come to the branch

sometimes there are transactions that a client it doesn't understand why it happened so instead of just looking at the bank statement because you can print it at the ATM or downloaded from the app but some transactions they don't understand why they would done so they would come into the branch to speak to a consultant to get a better explanation as to what's going on or what happened some would come into the branch to say you know what I'm getting a lot of bank charges lately on my bank account you can't ask these things over internet banking you would have to come inside and when you're speaking to a person we give you different options on how not to incur a lot of charges so those are some of the things that make clients come in and sometimes the most common things are you forget your pin you have to come into the branch to do that or maybe you've lost your card although you can order card on the app and have it delivered to you or you may collect it but it comes at a cost. People would prefer to collect their card from the branch as there's no extra cost but if you have forgotten your pin code and your previous pin then you would need to come into the branch. and then for some as I've mentioned earlier when they want to invest money they obviously want to talk to someone so they get the different on options so they can make informed decisions some will come for credit but when I come for credits that personal touch they'd prefer to speak to someone to ask what would be the easiest way to quickly finish this loan if I take it what interest rate or which product would suit me in terms of getting the best interest rate so they came here to the branch but those particular things so that they get more understanding on a personal level over the digital platforms

how the bank was changed over the past few years

the inflow of customers has really decreased and well that has a positive impact in terms of the level of service that it's been offered as I spoke about convenient so people are able to do things outside of the branch and those who can't they are quickly and easily assisted when they come into the branch because it's not packed but the ends of customers has decreased significantly

what changes have been made to the standard bank branches and why do you think those changes were made

one of the other things that stand bank has done in terms of the universal banking program is when you come into a branch or member previously he would have an enquiry's consultant a sales consultant So when you are done at one section you would be required to go to the next but now if they've done in the branches earthworks your code for your person you do everything with that one consult and you don't have to queue to go and see a different consultant which is quite a very good thing in terms of the convenience. convenient is really something at standard bank is bringing to the client in terms of the branches they are equipment inside those branches that have been revamped and platforms whereby you can do things on your own when you come into the branch you don't need to see the consultant but those things are still going to be implemented and other branches as well but yes it's in the process

what do you understand about the concept of customer experience

I think customer experience is the main thing that drives a business whatever business it always relies on customer experience so if you're treating a client's well and you're giving them the service but they expect then that is where the prosperity of your business will come from so it's basically two ways bad customer experience means business doesn't do well so what the high level customer experience the business will do well so that is what standard bank is really working on building the customer experience in order to retain the client and to make the client's happy in terms of meeting their needs

what role do you think Bank branches have in the customer experience of the digital age

So I'm sure you noticed that I'm only consultant here for now but when you come into a branch I'm just going to give me an idea of the rebound branches so there are instances where clients cannot access the digital platform so the branches are there to educate and show the client's how these digital platforms work so that in future they'll be able to do it themselves so in order for the client to learn how the app works they would need to come in and see a person so we can give them the ins and outs of the app when you want to do something you go here you do this you do that you do

this you do that and as I mentioned before the branches are also assisting with personal touch because different people have different banking preferences in terms of their banking some do not trust the app of them money so they would prefer to speak to a consultant so the branches are still playing a major role in meeting the client needs and expectations

Can you describe how you would feel if the bank branch were to close down are you concerned that that would ever be something

I mean anything is possible but I'm sure that before the branch closes their first look at the activities that have been done and also the number of clients that are coming in for those particular services so if clients are no longer coming into the branch and then it might as well just be closed but as for us as staff it's not nice for us to be relocating so if it closes down we'll have to go to another branch we would need to adapt and those kind of things but this branch particularly wouldn't be a great thing because we still have a lot of clients who come into the branch you prefer to come in and see us

how do you think standard bank's customer experience compared to other banks

essay the digital platform has been strongly put out there by our competitors but when standard bank started to adapt the popular Ballroom because if you can check with the other apps or their banking Solutions on their digital platforms it's nothing Compared to its digital platforms yes standard bank came in late but when they came and they took over in terms of the services you can get on the digital platforms so I think it's quite amazing and from time to time there are additional services that are being put into that digital platform so that a person can completely do the banking without coming into the branch which is when you're compared to the other banks some apps don't have the features that standard bank does

and branch wise how to fill you guys are competitively different to other banks

well that's a tough one. I think it's the level of service we give to our clients and as I've mentioned with the universal banker program even if you are private banking clients if you come into the branch you will be assistant you don't need to see a private banker you don't need to see a prestige banker so I think compared to other banks this is been quite a very big move into the right direction because with other banks they're still using this method saying that since you are a private banking client you really have to wait for a private banker or call private banker and set up an appointment and time doesn't wait but what standard bank is done is to say that whether you are a client that falls within private prestige banking or whatever type of banking client to our if you come into the branch we will get everything that you need so I think that's very competitive

Would you make any changes to standard bank's customer experience if you could just base on what you know about your client's and what you know as an experienced employee here is there anything you feel that you would want to improve about the experience

well currently I think the issue is with the staffing because in the branches lately there is quite a few staff so that's another thing I feel needs to be changed. if I could change it I would employ more people

and why is it that there is low staff

ok how do I answer this... there have been some rumours about retrenchment which was not retrenchment exactly because people are being taken into training for instance let me put it this way the regulators for you to perform a certain activity in the bank you need to have a certain qualification so what the bank does is they take the employees who need to improve in terms of qualifications or training or whatever and then they take the person to training or to school in order for the person to get that qualification so for some people they would feel like no that's a lot for me but all in all it's not what is required by the bank but rather by the law to say that you must have a certain qualification in order to work here so other people decided to opt out so it's not I wouldn't blame the branch to say that they retrenched people because all measures were put in place if you still want to stay will take you to school will provide you with training. With the approach that standard bank has taken I wouldn't say it's retrenchment because no one has been told that ok we no longer need to you are given an option to say if you want to stay you need to UPS kill yourself and as standard bank we are providing you with the necessary tools to upscale yourself and then it's up to the person

have you worked for any other banks before

I have worked for Capitec and NetBank

and you are happy here in comparison to the other banks

I cannot answer this question

are you aware of the branch opening strategies of some of South Africa's other banks

yes I'm in Capitec has been opening more branches

and how do you feel about that in comparison to standard bank strategy

well it depends on where they operate because in some places you would find that people are more inclined with the personal touch over the digital space and have it as I said earlier before the branch closest they have to look at the activities that are done at the clients are not coming into the branches for these services that can be done on the digital or platforms then that branch might as well be closed. It doesn't make any business sense to have three branches and one area I'm not saying they are doing something wrong but it doesn't make business sense to her through brokers at one place they're paying rent in all the branches and yet most of the clients are going digital so from a business perspective it's not a right move but then when you come to think of it in terms of the personal touch where clients require seeing someone in person then it's a good move when you think of it in that way but from a business perspective it's not a good move

right so I guess it's just about finding that balance between catering to your clients' needs and also to be a viable business in this economy

What are your overall feelings towards digital banking in the digital age what do you think about banks going digital in this digital Revolution that were experiencing

I think it's quite amazing because the way things are done so conveniently it's amazing you can do almost everything at the tip of your finger imagine went back in the day you'd have to set up a day and order for you to go to the bank you can't just go for one thing you'd have to have a whole list of things for you spend the whole day there and doing everything you need and the rest of your life is on pause because you have to focus on banking for that day but now within five minutes you can do something in 5 minutes that he would usually have spent an hour doing so yeah it's really quite amazing.

15 APPENDIX D: Themes Established from Findings

Theme: INTROUCTION TO BANKING Codes Introduced at a young age Taught them how to manage money as children Gave them a sense of independence and responsibility Subtheme: USES OF BANKING To manage money	Theme: CLIENT- BANK RELATIONSHIP Codes Not seen as an emotional relationship Transactional – provides a service Overall good with relationship with Capitec client. Leads to >	Theme: CLEINT NEEDS & EXPECTATIONS Codes Low fees Convenience (Digital and Physical) Safety Ease of use/ simple banking Transparency Approachable consultants
	Theme: IMPACT OF DIGITAL AGE ON BANKING Codes Easier + convenient Less branch visits Independent and control of money	Theme: THE BANK BRANCH Subtheme: USES Codes Card, admin, queries, questions. Subtheme: VALUE/ ROLE

	Scepticism and wariness of online banking (hacking)	Changed over the years Codes Less of a need but still want the option To offer support, educate, security, convenience Wouldn't be too affected if the branch has to close down.
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Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
To explore the perceived value of human interaction within the banking CX within the Age of Digital Transformation	How do SA banks recognize the value of human interaction with their customers within the customer experience (CX)?	Banks taking on digital strategy are making decisions to close their. This study will evaluate whether the human interaction aspect of CX is still valuable in SA context.	-Customer Experience Creation (Verhoef et al.,2009) - Servicescapes : The Impact of Physical Surroundings on customers and employees (Bitner, 1992)	Theme 1: Background on Customer Experience Theme 2: The Customer Experience Social Environment Theme 3: Changing Consumer Behavior and Expectations	Paradigm <i>Interpretivism</i> Epistemology <i>The gain an understanding of social interaction in the CX within the age of Digital Transformation – in the SA context.</i> Ontology <i>Reality is a social construction and acquired by social interaction.</i> Axiology	Qualitative	8 Semi – structured interviews	-Bias: The researcher will ensure that they remain as objective as possible to ensure accurate findings. -Recorded consent instead of written to cater for participants with lower education levels. -Participants ensured confidentiality	That the human interaction of the customer experience is still very valuable and creates trust and rapport for the brand.	-Strategic Implications for Fintech SA retail Banks (Coetzee, 2018) -The Social Psychology Service Interaction (Guterk, 1992) -- Servicescapes : The Impact of Physical Surroundings on customers and
						Population				
						Population Parameters				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 4:		Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	

<i>A gap in knowledge : whether digital transformation affects the value of human interaction of the banking customer experience</i>	- identify what two of Standard Bank and Capitec value about human interaction in the customer experience in building and sustaining meaningful relationships with the customer. - identify which aspects of human interaction at the bank branch the banks recognise at import to their growth. - To identify what the banks' consumers feel towards their customer experience	<i>-Customer Experience</i> <i>- Digital Transformation</i> <i>-human Interaction</i>	<i>-Customer Experience Conceptual Framework (Verhoef et al., 2009)</i> <i>-The Social Psychology of Social Interactions (Gutek, 1999)</i>	Fintech (Financial Technology)	<i>The research is subjective and based on context. The research will contribute to gaining an understanding on people and their experiences within their contexts.</i>	Non-probability Sampling method Non Probability - Convenience sampling Size: 10 Participants (for the interviews)	Unit of Analysis Capitec Bank and Standard Bank Consumer perception of social interaction within customer experience. Data Analysis Method(s) Inductive – Themed according to objectives and reoccurring concepts.	<i>-Researcher needs to be aware of biases that can affect final product. The researcher must have integrity.</i> <i>-The findings can only be interpreted in the South African context.</i>	<i>This study will contribute to the knowledge of the SA banking CX – There is little/ limited research that currently exists on the topic.</i>	<i>employee (Bitner, 1990)</i> <i>-Customer Experience Creation (Verhoef et al., 2009)</i>
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16 APPENDIX B: CONCEPT TABLE

17 SAFE ASSIGN REPORT

GRADE	
LAST GRADED ATTEMPT	/200
ATTEMPT	
25/10/19 16:56	/200
SafeAssign ^	5% overall match
SafeAssign Submission	
Amara Nkem - Abonta RESM 5%	
POE.docx	
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