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Customer Relationship Management in the Era of Social Web and Social Customer: An Investigation of Customer Engagement in the Greek Retail Banking Sector

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Abstract

The transition from a product-centric to a customer-centric business culture has been the subject of debate and research for more than a decade and in recent years many inquiries have been made about Customer Relationship Management. However, the main body of research around CRM was carried out in an environment quite different from the actual one. Apart from the possibilities and prospects that accompany new technologies and the new generation of Media, the big change stems from the strength gained by the contemporary Social Consumer which brings firms to operate within a Customer Ecosystem. Traditional CRM is morphing to Social CRM and the key concept in this new marketing and business environment is Customer Engagement. This is accompanied by the Involvement of the customer to a new type of relationship with the enterprise, characterized by co-creation of knowledge, offers, products and value. The present study attempts to estimate the degree to which the effectiveness of the so far (traditional) CRM practices, that are reflected on the customer-performance measures, affect the possibilities of Customer Engagement. The results show that the level of Customer Overall Satisfaction and Customer Affective Commitment to the bank, as well as the active Social Media Presence of the bank, should be considered as significant determinants of customer's willingness to get involved in a new type of relation with the bank.

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1. Introduction

The advent of the 21st century is marked by the introduction of a new generation of media in consumer's everyday life offering new entertainment options and communication possibilities. As reported by Hennig-Thurau et

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al (2010), the term New Media refers to (pp.312): “websites and other digital communication and information channels in which active consumers engage in behaviours that can be consumed by others both in real time and long afterwards regardless of their spatial location.”

In particular, the breakthrough in communications and information technology has provided consumers with a wide range of new on-line channels and possibilities to gather, exchange and share information around services and products along with personal experiences with brands (Hennig-Thurau, T., Malhotra, E. C., Frieger, C., Gensler, S., Lobschat, L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B., 2010). A new term, introduced by King (2010) is “Prosumer”, referring to the modern customer who is an information producer and consumer as well. The term Prosumer covers all modern Web users and especially those who make use of Web 2.0 tools for creation, distribution and use of on-line content with incessant veracity. As stated by Greenberg (2010a, 2010b), currently, business have to operate in market ecosystem in which the customer is the “king” and not the business. In this “Customer Ecosystem” the idea of Customer Engagement emerges as a new core focus for CRM strategy, accompanying the new and underdeveloped CRM form, Social CRM.

At the same time, the economic crisis and its consequences have delivered to business administrations the clear message that if they want to survive they should, first of all, retain existing customers and encourage them to continue to buy from them or remain subscribers to their services.

The purpose of the current research is to shed some light on the road towards Customer Engagement in the banking sector, a term which, definitely, is going to play a large part in the value feedback loop between customer and enterprise in the near future. More particularly, the goal of the current research is to attempt to approximate consumer thinking about the evolution of their relationships with the bank and the impact of the so far CRM policies to this evolution.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 CRM and Social CRM (or CRM 2.0)

In the 1990s, in the business domain gradually emerges the concept of «Customer Relationship Management» - briefly called CRM- which from the very first years, CRM prevailed, gained prominence as a legitimate area of scholarly inquiry and stimulated the interest of global business and research community. For Galbreath & Rogers (1999), CRM is nothing more than an approach that stems from the need to create a new business environment, which allows a more effective management of relationships with customers. Simultaneously, the concept CRM -for many academics- is theoretically founded on Relationship Marketing, whose philosophy lies on improving long-term profitability establish as strategic goal retention of the customer through a more effective management of customer relationships. Besides, in the academic community the terms «Relationship Marketing», «one - to - one Marketing» and «CRM» are often used interchangeably (Chen, I. J. and K. Popovic, 2003), (Frow, P. E., & Payne, A. F., 2009), (Payne, A. and Frow, P., 2005).

As far as the definition of CRM is concerned, the authors of this article consider as the most comprehensive definition the one cited by Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001, pp.5) who define CRM as: “a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organisation to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value”. As Parvatiyar & Seth pinpoint, what is derived as a conclusion from the above definition is that when someone talks about CRM, basically refers to marketing productivity improvement that is achieved by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing itself. With CRM, marketing efficiency is increased through cooperative and collaborative processes that help to reduce transaction costs and the total operational cost of the company (Parvatiyar, A. and J. N. Sheth, 2001).

Additionally, what led to the great development and establishment of CRM was the advancement of information technology tools and, particularly, the development of data storage and processing tools (Data Warehousing) with the remunerative possibility of producing customer knowledge through the technique of Data Mining (Berry, M., & Linoff, G., 1999), (Chan, J. O., 2005), (Chen, I. J. and K. Popovic, 2003), (Frow, P. E., & Payne, A. F., 2009), (Mack, O., Mayo, M. C., & Khare, A., 2005), (Parvatiyar, A. and J. N. Sheth, 2001), (Rababah, K., Mohd, H., &

Ibrahim, H., 2011), (Saini, A., Grewal, R., & Johnson, J. L., 2010), (Zablah, A., D. N. Bellenger and W.J. Johnston, 2004). However, the majority of tools of traditional CRM help greatly in managing relationships on a large scale, but they are not sufficient in the effort of effectively building a relationship of mutual trust between seller and buyer, a one to one, a peer-to-peer relationship. As emphasized by Woodcock & Green (2011), for an enterprise to build a relationship of mutual trust at the time of the Social Web is fundamental -above all- to be well aware of the consumer/customer, which in the context of a traditional CRM strategy is tending to be impossible. This makes the transition of CRM in a more advanced and collaborative form, which takes into account the new Social Web and Customer Ecosystem reality, of paramount importance.

Social CRM (or CRM 2.0) is considered to be the “sequel”, the “natural evolution” of traditional CRM, an evolution imposed by modern-Social Customer-reality. In this sense, the principles of traditional CRM remain in force in the context of Social CRM. Greenberg defines Social CRM as (2010a, pp. 34): “a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a technology platform, business rules, processes and social characteristics, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation in order to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment. It is the company's programmatic response to the customer's control of the conversation.”

Faase, Helms and Spruit (2011) argue that the Social CRM is a CRM strategy that uses Web 2.0 services in order to create a committed two-way relationship between (engagement) between customers and enterprises, which will generate mutual benefit. CRM 2.0 can be considered a new CRM environment in which businesses do not simply interact with their customers, but talk with them, listen to what they have to say and learn from them. Either directly, through discussions and interactions with customers, or indirectly, through analysis of the content produced by customers and consumers in Social Media (User Generated Content-UGC). This indicates definitely that one part of the planning of a strategic CRM 2.0 includes the integration of appropriate Web 2.0 services in the already CRM infrastructure of the company (Faase, R., R. Helms and M. Spruit, 2011), (Greenberg, P., 2010a).

2.2 Customer Engagement

The term was first mentioned in 2006, when the Advertising Research Foundation along with the American Association of Advertising Agencies and Association of National Advertisers, made an attempt to define this concept and prescribed it in a broader context as turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context. The traditional term Engagement was redefined by consumers themselves, when they began to act in an open, participatory, on-line Social environment. The one main difference with before is now the involvement (participation).

Higgins (2006) considers Engagement to be a second source of experience for the consumer, beyond the sensual experience that stems from the driving force to proceed (or not) with an action and Calder and Malthouse (2008) discuss the concept of Media Engagement focusing on the psychological experience of Media consumption by the consumer. Van Doorn et al (2010) examine Customer Engagement as behavior which is not limited to simple transactions and can be defined as (pp.256) “the customers’ behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”. Moreover, Van Doorn et al (2010) consider that, in the essence, customer engagement is manifested through an eagerness for participation in business processes and highlight the fact that engagement behaviors may be manifested by a wide range of different agents, like current and/or prospective customers, suppliers, the public, legislators, even by employees of the company and can have either positive or negative outcome for the enterprise.

3. Empirical Research

3.1 Industry of focus

The rationale behind the selection of the Greek Retail Banking in order to carry out an investigation on the perspectives of the customer engagement stems from: i. The banking sector and the industry of large financial institutions are among the pioneers in CRM programs and strategies (Ryals, L., & Payne, A., 2001) ii. The financial crisis has brought the banks at a particular disadvantage, having lost much of the respect and trust of their customer

base, seeking anxiously means and opportunities to re-establish their traumatized customer relationships. iii. Money was and remains the most important and crucial commodity for the general public (and businesses). iv. The aging of Generation Y (Gen-Y): By 2020, half of banks' most profitable customers would be this generation. Gen -Y members are born between 1980 and 1992 and comprise about 17 per cent of the world's overall population. What makes this generation unique is that is the first generation that has grown up in the era of the great advancements in communication and information technology industries. Indeed, many call this new generation «The Glass House Generation», because of their vulnerability to Social Media and especially to social networks (Qualman, E., 2009). The important thing for the banks is that his generation will shortly constitute the great majority of retail banking customers worldwide, since they are the heirs of the properties left behind by Baby Boomers and the following generation, X (born until 1980).

3.2 Conceptual model

Despite the fact that the transition procedure from CRM to Social CRM strategies and practices is still in its early stages, the investigation of a possible interrelationship between traditional and Social CRM strategies seem to be of great importance. More specifically, the main hypothesis of the current study is that the willingness of customers, members of banks to establish a new collaborative relationship with these financial industries is affected to a great extent from the effectiveness of the existing (traditional) CRM practices of each bank.

In this study, based on the research works of Gustafsson, Johnson & Roos (2005) and Wang, Lo, Chi & Yang (2004), Affective Commitment, Satisfaction and CRM Performance-based Customer Behaviour are considered to be the core “products” of a successful CRM practice with an impact on the prospect of engagement. Moreover, the presence of the bank in the Social Web (Media) is considered to be a vital (positive) factor in the road to engagement.

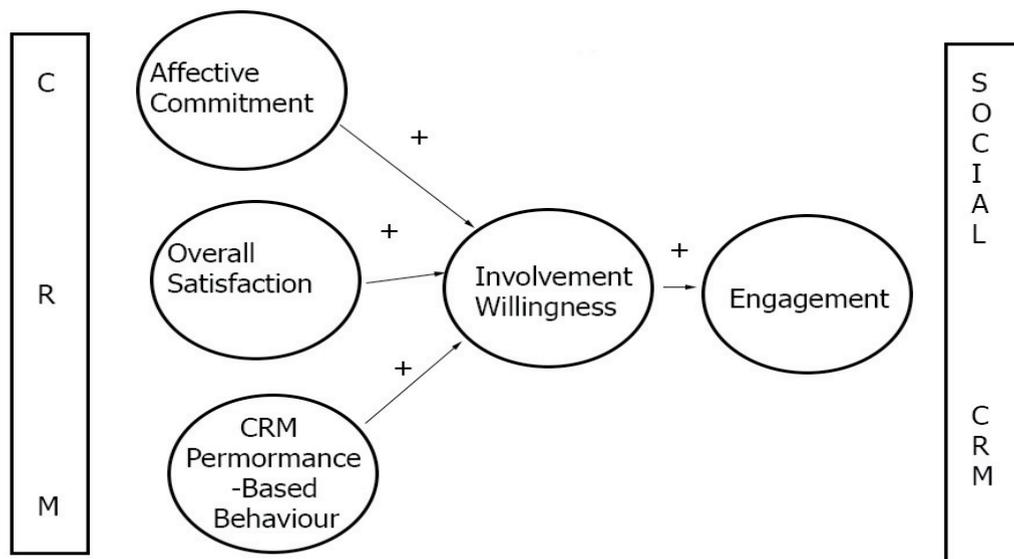


Fig: 1. Conceptual Model

Commitment: It has been recognized as an essential ingredient for successful long-term relationships (Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S., 1999), (Gustafsson, A., Johnson, M. D., & Roos, I., 2005) and it is defined as “an enduring

desire to maintain a valuable relationship value” (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992[†], p. 316; cited in Garbarino & Johnson, 1999, pp.71). Gundlach, Achrol, and Mentzer (1995) argue that commitment, as a fundamental factor for customer relationships, consists of three separate components (functions): instrumental as a form of investment, attitudinal, described as Affective - Commitment or Psychological Attachment, and a temporal dimension that indicates how resistant the relationship is over time (Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S., 1999).

For the purposes of the current research, commitment was investigated regarding its two dimensions stated and defined by Gustafsson, Johnson & Roos (2005), Affective and Calculative. Calculative Commitment “is the colder, or more rational, economic-based dependence on product benefits due to a lack of choice or switching costs”. On the other hand, Affective commitment “is a hotter, or more emotional, factor that develops through the degree of reciprocity or personal involvement that a customer has with a company, which results in a higher level of trust and commitment” (Gustafsson, Johnson & Roos, 2005, pp.211) One special reason that the two variables were selected for the research model is that a survey carried out in the field of financial services by Verhoef (2003), has demonstrated that there is a direct impact of Affective Commitment on both in building and maintaining relationships. Therefore it is suggested that:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between Customers’ Affective Commitment to the bank and their readiness to get involved to a new engagement-type relationship with the bank.

Hypothesis 2: There is no direct relationship between Customers’ Calculative Commitment to the bank and their readiness to get involved to a new engagement-type relationship with the bank.

CRM performance-based behaviour: The main reason that has been studied so far the specific behaviour is the fundamental goal of every business through its CRM strategy, to ensure a constant revenue stream from the customer base in the pursuit of the maximisation of benefits received from customers throughout their life. Therefore, the study of this behaviour is of strategic importance for any business that invests in CRM. The specific term stems from years of effort by researchers and companies to understand the duration and depth of a relationship in terms of customer retention, intensity of services (products) purchase as well as Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and Cross-buying activity (Wang, Y., Lo, H. P., Chi, R., & Yang, Y., 2004). The present study attempts to investigate whether this particular behaviour can be considered a "precursor" of the customer's readiness for a transition to a more collaborative relationship with the company leading to Engagement. Thus, hypothesis 3 is formulated.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between CRM performance-based customer behaviour and customers’ readiness to get involved to a new engagement-type relationship with the bank.

Satisfaction: Probably, along with the concept of Value, the most intimately related term with CRM. According to the CRM literature, the term Overall Satisfaction (or Cumulative Satisfaction) is defined as “an overall evaluation based on total purchase and consumption with a good or a service over time” (Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann 1994[‡], p. 54; Cited in Garbarino & Johnson, 1999, pp.71) and it is considered that it can express to a much greater extent the effectiveness of a CRM strategy which aims at a long-term satisfaction and client retention, compared with the Transaction- based satisfaction. Therefore it is suggested that:

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between customer’s overall satisfaction with his existing relationship with the bank and his readiness to get involved to a new engagement-type relationship with the bank.

Involvement willingness: According to Van Doorn et al (2010) engagement is reflected through a customer’s behavior towards a company or a Brand which exceeds a common purchase process and is affected by motivational drivers. However, in order to make clear to the respondents what this collaborative relationship could include, the present study accepts as the four main dimensions of such a relationship the ones defined by Kumar et al (2010), Sashi (2012), Van Doorn et al (2010) and Verhoef et al (2010).

First of all, a referral customer behavior related to the acquisition of new clients, which is extrinsically motivated through affiliate referral programs that provide incentives to customers and is translated to Customer Referral Value

[†] Moorman, C., Zaltman, G., & Deshpande, R. (1992). Relationships Between Providers and Users of Market Research: The Dynamics of Trust. *Journal of marketing research*, 29, 314-28.

[‡] Anderson, E. W., Fornell, C., & Lehmann, D. R. (1994). Customer satisfaction, market share, and profitability: findings from Sweden. *The Journal of Marketing*, 53-66.

(CRV) for the company. In addition, the influence customer behavior through which has WOM as the most characteristic example and common tool, through which many potential customers are persuaded and converted into active customers, by reducing their remorse for a purchase of the company and encouraging their share-of-wallet to the benefit of the business. It is usually an intrinsically motivated behavior, which is translated to Customer Influencer Value (CIV). At the same time, in accordance with Van Doorn et al (2010), in the context of customer engagement the co-production should be included, known also as co-creation- since the former is considered by Lusch and Vargo (2006) as a component of value co-creation between the company and its customers. They argue that co-production, “involves the participation (i.e. of the customer) in the creation of the core offering itself. It can occur through shared inventiveness, co-design, or shared production of related goods, and can occur with customers and any other partners in the value network” (2006, pp.284.) Last but not least, customer behavior associated with knowledge, manifested by customers’ supply of business ideas, suggestion and recommendations for improvement and innovation, all together contributing to the creation and storage of corporate knowledge. This kind of behavior can be stimulated either intrinsically or extrinsically and are translated into Customer Knowledge Value (CKV) for the company.

Taking all the above into account, the Main Hypothesis of this study is: Banking customers’ readiness/willingness to get involved to a new engagement-type relationship with the bank is positively related to their possible affective commitment with the bank, their overall satisfaction with the already existing relationship and their CRM performance-based behavior. Each dimension is further analyzed below.

3.3 Methodology

The empirical part of this study is based on a survey research that provides quantitative or numerical descriptions of trends, attitudes, opinions and desires of the target population through the study of a sample of this population (Creswell, J. W., 2003). The methodological tool chosen for the investigation in the Greek banking public is a questionnaire, which is defined as a standardized set of questions with the purpose to obtain information from respondents that are a subset (sample) of a target population (Malhotra, N., & Birks, D., 2007). It was preferred to be an on-line survey taking into account a. the easy and fast sharing of the questionnaire without time or geographic restrictions, b. the familiarity nowadays with new technologies, c. the absence of monetary cost for the execution of the research, d. the possibility of fast and easy input of responses to on-line spreadsheet, making it easy to store responses and monitor the flow of results while e. only fully answered questionnaires are accepted (compulsory completion of all questions before on-line submissions is possible) avoiding possible missing values which complicate the statistical analysis of results.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included questions that look into the profile of the respondent and it examined individuals’ relationship with Social Media, relationship with the technological side of the banking transactions (e.g. e-banking) as well as the most significant criterion for bank selection. The criteria were drawn from Mosad Zineldin’s research (2005), who studied the quality of product and customer service in the banking industry as decisive factors for bank selection. The second part of the questionnaire comprised of Likert-scale questions that serve for the hypotheses examination in the context of the empirical research. The third part of the questionnaire included demographic questions (age, sex, years working relationship with the bank and others) important for the comparative analysis of the data.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

Given the general and specific objectives of this research, the population group should address all Greek Bank customers. In order to draw firm conclusions around the relationship between independent and dependent variables, it was considered important that a significant number of the respondents in this survey should have a relationship experience for a significant period with a bank. In order to be achieved the greatest possible random sampling, non-random sampling techniques were used, which, however, are characterized as those with the largest possible randomness. More specifically:

- a. *Convenience Sampling*: Through this technique is attempted a collection of convenient responses. More specifically, people who are in the right spot at the right time fulfill the questionnaire.
- b. *Snowball sampling* was used. It is perhaps the most frequently applied technique worldwide, especially in qualitative research. While randomness is almost completely absent in the final sample, this technique offers the possibility to randomly select the first respondents and through them to reach people (through referrals) that initially would be impossible to be accessed and - possibly-have attributes (as persons and bank customers) that are not met in the rest of the sample, but valuable for research.

Eventually, during a sampling process that lasted thirteen (13) days 330 responses were collected. A sample size which, using the most recognized and widely applied approach for calculating the minimum required number of respondents is the Confidential Interval formula ($\text{Sample Size } ss = [Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)]/D^2$) and setting a 95% confidence interval, for a margin of statistical error 5% (given its population of Greek consumer banking public, from 6,500,000 to 7,000,000), is considered satisfactory.

3.5 Reliability test

To determine the validity of the structure of the questionnaire in the early stages of the investigation, it was considered important to check each of the research variables for reliability and uni-dimensionality. In the current study Cronbach alpha is used as the measure of the internal consistency that describes the extent to which all the items in a research/questionnaire measure the same concept and hence it is connected to the inter-relatedness of the items within the test (Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R., 2011) demonstrating in this way its uni-dimensionality. In table 1, the results for all Likert scale questions that correspond to different variables are presented.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alfa, Internal Consistency Coefficient.

No	Variable-Likert Scale	Source	Cronbach Alpha Test
1	Satisfaction (CRM)	Verhoef (2003)	CA.= 0.83
2	Affective Commitment	Gustafsson, Johnson & Roos (2005)	C.A= 0.692
3	Calculative Commitment	Gustafsson, Johnson & Roos (2005)	C.A= 0.630
4	CRM performance- based Behaviour	Wang, Lo, Chi & Yang (2004)	C.A= 0.84
5	Word-of-Mouth	Price & Arnould (1999)	C.A= 0.95
6	Involvement_Intention	Kumar, Askoy, Donkers, Venkatesan, Wiesel & Tillmanns (2010), Sashi (2012), Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner & Verhoef (2010), Verhoef, Reinartz & Krafft (2010)	C.A.:0.82

4. Findings

According to the sample demographics, 49,1% were male and 50,9 % female respondents. Also, the predetermined goal of the survey to gather responses mainly by people aged 25-45 years, for the reasons set out before (Gen Y, a significant experience with the bank) was met, since 65% of the sample belonged to this age group. Furthermore, a reasonable proportion of 23.6% of people aged 18-24, the young members of Generation Y, and thus prospective customers participated in the survey. Indeed cumulative generations X and Y (the two generations after the Baby Boomers) represent 89.4% of the sample, while 10.6% of the respondents belong to the age group 45 +.

Moreover, the majority of the sample (60.9%) has remained with the same banking institution for more than five years. This, leads to the conclusion that Greek bank customers do not show a high tendency to change their bank

while it is very positive for the purposes of the investigation that the majority of responses are from people with long-term experience with a bank. Regarding the utilization of new technologies by customers for on-line financial transactions, the survey results showed that, in contrast to e-banking, Mobile-banking has a long way to go before it can be considered a familiar transaction tool for Greek banking customers. Furthermore, the majority of the sample are members of the Social Web since the 95.5% of the sample has an account with in at least one Social Medium, with 79% signing in to his account at least once a day while only 0.7% of the respondents used to have an account in Social Media that they have stopped using. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of people surveyed were very familiar the concept of Social Media, 64.2% found it very familiar, while only 3 of the 330 people who took part in the survey answered that they did not even know the specific term at all.

Finally, the results indicate that in terms of the bank selection criteria, Greek customers want something they can trust. (53,33% opted for accuracy and reliability and 4.85% decided on recommendation by others). Also, important role seems to be attributed to the level of service (15,5%) in the specific decision process, a factor that could be improved through the use of Social Media.

4.1 Factory analysis

Factor analysis indicated the existence of seven factors interpreting the 68.5% of the total variance, a relatively good rate. Varimax rotation was used, which intends to maximize the dispersion of loads among factor so as fewer variables to be loaded at each factor. Table 2 presents the loading of each item to the corresponding factor after rotation (factors with eigenvalue smaller than one are omitted). Rotated Component Matrix table is not adjusted due to its large size. As is clearly stated in factor analysis theory, for a variable to belong to a factor its loading should be greater than 0.4.

Table 2. Factors and their Cronbach's Alfa coefficient

Factor – Variable	Cronbach alpha
Social CRM experience satisfaction	0.947
CRM satisfaction	0.9
Traditional CRM Performance –based Behaviour	0.913
Involvement Intention	0.884
Engagement	0.9
Affective Commitment	0.864
Calculative Commitment	0.65

Table 2 suggests that a Social CRM experience is fully recognizable from the “bank audience” while there also prevails another factor: CRM performance –based Behaviour, enhanced with WOM scale items. This factor, comprises of the variables CRM performance-based Behaviour and WOM Intention. Reliability check gave Cronbach alpha 0,913 for this factor, which is excellent. Engagement is the variable, which denotes the intention of people to remain loyal to the bank at the prospect of the exploitation of Social Web possibilities by the bank in order to “upgrade” their relationship with customers.

4.2 Final Model

Causal and inter-dependent relationships between the new factors-variables were estimated via multiple regressions. The beta value indicates how strongly each predictor variable influences the criterion (dependent) variable. In multiple regressions, to interpret the direction of the relationship between variables it is important to notice the signs (plus or minus) of the Beta coefficients (sig<0,05). Finally, if the Beta coefficient is equal to 0 then there is no relationship between the variables. In order to reach as solid conclusions as possible, only correlations with Beta \geq .300 were considered significant. Table 3 presents the eight strongest correlations of the model.

Table 3. Beta coefficient – Strong Correlations Between Variables (Factors)

No	Factors/Variables	Beta	T	p(Sig)
1	Calculative Commitment → Traditional CRM performance-based behavior	.403	7,969	.000
2	Affective Commitment→Traditional CRM performance-based behavior	.715	18,569	.000
3	Traditional CRM performance-based behaviour→ Involvement Willingness	.311	6,120	.000
4	Social CRM Experience Satisfaction→ Involvement Willingness	.668	16,380	.000
5	Calculative Commitment→ Affective Commitment	.407	8,078	.000
6	Satisfaction (CRM)→ Affective Commitment	.591	13,358	.000
7	Involvement Willingness→ Engagement	.351	6,838	.000
8	Social CRM Experience Satisfaction →Engagement	.473	9,716	.000
9	Satisfaction (CRM) → Traditional CRM performance-based behavior	.511	10,833	.000

Based on the information listed in table 3 and the diagram presented in figure 2, it could be argued that the basic hypothesis of the current research has been verified: banks (and perhaps businesses of other economic sectors) that have built a good foundation of customer relationships under traditional CRM are those who precede in the race to customer engagement. Nonetheless, the statistical analysis did not give a strong direct relationship neither between affective commitment and involvement willingness (hypothesis 1 rejected) nor between satisfaction and involvement willingness (hypothesis 4 rejected). On the other hand, hypothesis 2 is accepted - since there is not a strong relationship between calculative commitment and involvement willingness. Hypothesis 3 is also accepted since there seems to be a significant correlation (.311) between traditional CRM performance-based customer behaviour and involvement willingness.

It can be, however, supported that there is an indirect dependence of customer's involvement willingness and both affective commitment and overall satisfaction with the bank through the factor "traditional CRM performance-based behaviour". Additionally, a very interesting relationship can be noticed between calculative commitment and affective commitment (.407). Thus, it could be assumed that a long-term relationship on absolutely economic grounds between a consumer and a bank may gradually give birth to an emotional attachment that could affect customers' involvement willingness.

From the diagram (empirical model) presented in figure 2 it can be noticed that two variables play a significant role. In particular, the strongest correlation is that of traditional CRM performance-based behaviour and affective commitment (.715). Additionally, affective commitment has as causative factor customer satisfaction (CRM) [.591] and calculative commitment (.407). At the same time, according to the beta coefficient customer's satisfaction and calculative commitment may lead to Involvement Willingness and eventually to Engagement. As indicated on table 3 earlier not only emotional but also calculative attachment with a bank may create the conditions for a new collaborative relationship between a bank and its customers. However, the above would require a more open and on-line Social presence of the bank which could bring social customer's satisfaction leading to increased willingness to "get closer" with the bank (.665) and be engaged (.473).

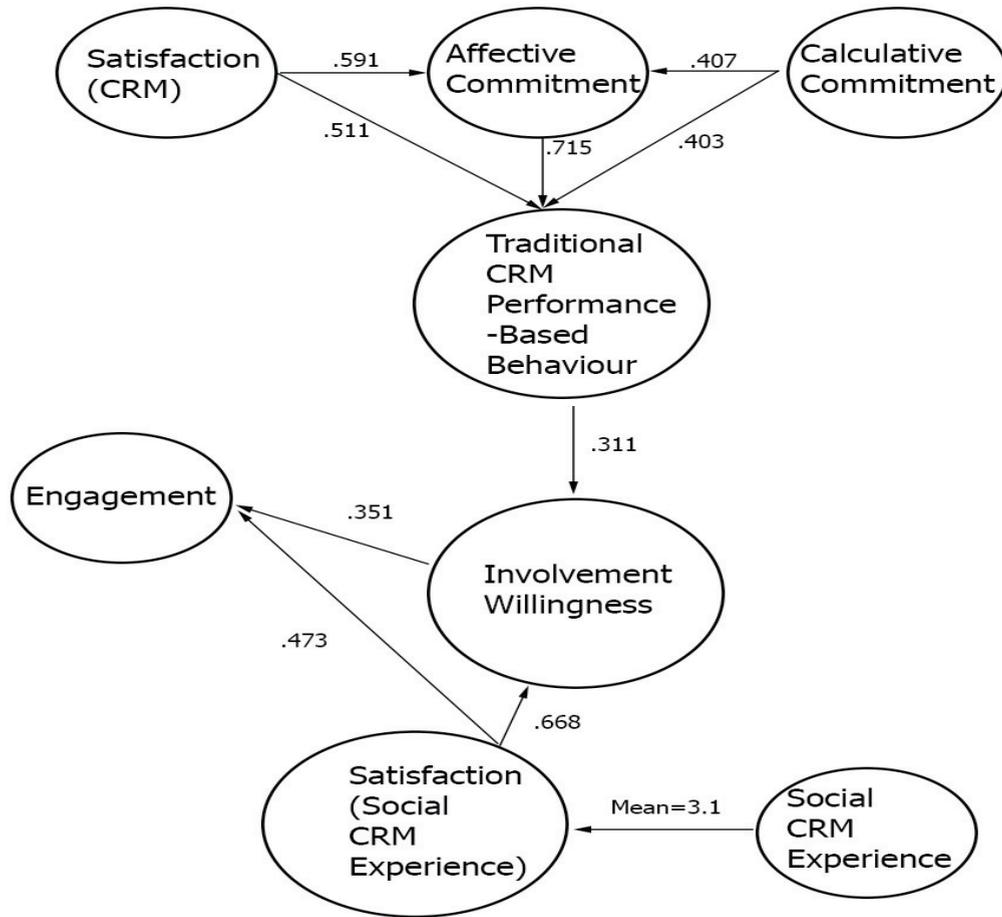


Fig 2. Final-Empirical Model

5. Discussion - Conclusions

The present study aims to provide an insight to the future developments in CRM. Focusing on the Greek retail-banking sector, the study investigated customer relationships and attitudes towards banking institutions. More specifically, the investigation focused on customers' views and attitudes, rather than their experience regarding their willingness to get involved in banking affairs as well as the consequences of a Social CRM experience on their loyalty (i.e. engagement in the context of Social CRM) to a bank.

The results of the regression analysis showed a relatively strong relationship between the past (behavior in the context of traditional CRM) and the future (behaviour in the context of Social CRM where the final goal is Customer Engagement). More specifically, what might be concluded (basic assumption of the model) is that what enables a company (bank in this case), to engage customers through Involvement to banking procedures, is "a good efficiency grade" in the context of traditional CRM. Banks should have satisfied their customers, have gained their confidence and be able under any circumstances to make the customer not only feel, but also act as a loyal.

Moreover, linear regression analysis indicated a relationship between the factors that contribute to customer's attitude towards the bank and consumers' relationship with these financial institutions. The aim of CRM is to optimize these factors to the benefit of the company in order to maintain the customers and maximize the benefits gained from them. However, nowadays, the development of the Social Web, (Web 2.0 technologies and Social Media, in conjunction with high-speed Internet access and free access to search engines) provides free access to knowledge and empowers consumers.

In Greece, customers are not prone to change bank, either due to convenience factors (eg payroll, mileage proximity) or due to the banking CRM programs efficiency, resulting in an opportunity for banks to improve the benefits received from customers and form the basis for a more collaborative relationship. In this way, banks will establish the conditions for a creation and stabilization of a feedback loop of customer. Traditional CRM performance-based behaviour, which will now have as causative factors (a) the involvement in banking procedures - with bankers as "collaborators" - and (b) the participation in community groups in social networks which will be expanded continuously through e-WOM. In case they manage to create this regenerative cycle, Greek banks could achieve customer engagement.

Despite the fact that research data showed a generalized long-term relationship of Greeks in their dealings with a bank, executives of every bank should take into consideration what will happen when the e- WOM of engaged customers of other banks starts to spread. Besides, in the new era of customer relationships, the ultimate goal for the enterprises remains the maximization of the received value. The transition, however, to the new target of "engagement" is expected to be followed correspondingly by a new perception of the customer value provided to the business from its "engaged" customer base. In the context of Customer Management, Customer Value Management has been connected - identified with the direct result of ongoing and future accomplished transactions. On the contrary, the contribution of the customer to business performance in the case of Customer Engagement is mainly indirect, through specific manifestations (non-purchasing behaviours). The latter, beyond all others, highlights the need for a reconsideration of the existing analytical decision models that are based on the transaction side of the relationship with the client. Future research should focus on existing knowledge in order to "give birth" to new models that will support companies in a Customer Engagement context.

In conclusion, as Greenberg (2010b) noted, CRM has begun to mature in the minds of the business world as a crucial strategic tool for maintaining relationships with customers and improving front line staff performance. The e-CRM that finds application in e-commerce and m-CRM that takes advantage of Mobile Devices (Smartphones, Blackberrys, Tablets) to avoid losing customers and business opportunities due to lack of direct and efficient service, reveals the penetration of the CRM philosophy in every facet of business. Greenberg (2010a, 2010b) supports that CRM, should not for any reason stop its evolution and improvement. Even if this process has to be inspired by recession.

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