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“How convenience, employees and servicescape, influenced by cultural differences, affect customer experience in banks”

- a cross-cultural study comparing Sweden and the United States.

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Abstract

The importance of *customer experience* in the *banking sector* is steadily increasing due to product similarity, competition and the global expansion. Additionally, in the twenty-first century, the focus has shifted from a service-based to an experience-based economy where senses, feelings, impressions, perceptions and emotional connections have become central.

The global expansion in the banking sector has created a need for *cross-cultural* studies of customer experience, because of the increase of success when the service delivery is in tune with the *cultural differences* of customers. Despite the scarcity of cross-cultural studies, the few existing studies have shown significant results.

The purpose of this study is hence to compare the perceived customer experience in the banking sector in *Sweden* and *the United States*. These two countries are culturally different on the *masculinity versus femininity* dimension explained by *Hofstede* in the universally acknowledged study on cross-cultural dimensions.

The study has a positivistic, deductive, cross-sectional approach. A questionnaire survey is used based on the three most critical factors affecting customer experience: *convenience*, *employees* and *servicescape*.

The findings are significant, showing how culture is affecting customer experience. Swedish respondents have a more positive perception of the total customer experience despite scoring lower on the critical factors than their American counterparts. This can be linked to the high degree of femininity in Sweden, meaning that Swedish customers are putting emphasis on balance, care for others and the quality of life, rather than being materialistic, goal-oriented and competitive.

The original value of this dissertation is a better understanding of the impact of cultural differences in customer experience in banks in two culturally different countries: Sweden and the United States.

Keywords: *Banks, customer experience, convenience, employees, servicescape, cross-cultural, cultural differences, Hofstede, masculinity vs. femininity, Sweden, the United States.*

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, the following are presented: background, problematisation, research question, research purpose and the outline of the dissertation.

1.1 Background

The competition in the banking sector has increased due to deregulation and technology development (O'Loughlin & Szmigin, 2005) as well as due to the global expansion (Timothy & Robin, 2009). Thus the customers are progressively provided with more alternatives to choose from (Timothy & Robin, 2009), which in turn makes it more challenging for banks to compete because of their almost identical products (Lo, Osman, Ramayall & Rahim, 2010).

In order to compete and to keep the customers loyal in today's competitive market, banks are hence forced to use other tools than the products, which are easy to copy and can quickly be adapted by other banks (Wilkinson & Balmer, 1996). The complex relationship building between banks and their customers can be one of those critical tools helping banks to survive (Jos'ee, Ko de, & Pascal, 1998; Lo *et al.*, 2010). Creating and providing superior customer experience has, therefore, become one of the prime objectives in the banking sector (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009).

To achieve excellent customer experience, it is foremost vital to firmly understand customer needs and to design the services appropriately (Papassapa & Kenneth, 2007). As businesses, including banks, grow bigger - involvement of the entire organization becomes essential in order to provide a complete customer experience; hence, there is a need to shift from a cross-functional approach to a journey orientation connecting every touch point between the business and the customer (Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007; Garg, Rahman, Qureshi & Kumar, 2012; Grewal, Levy & Kumar, 2009). Long-term customer relationships should consequently be a common goal for the bank (Papassapa & Kenneth, 2007). Studies also show that it is five times more expensive to acquire new customers than to keep existing ones (Athanasopoulou, 2009), which makes it worthwhile for the management to work on improving customer experience in order to keep the customers loyal (Garg *et al.*, 2012).

Customer experience in banks has thoroughly been examined by Garg *et al.*, (2012); 14 critical success factors for measuring customer experience in banks have subsequently been identified and ranked in order of importance. These factors include customer interaction, employees, presence of other customers, convenience, servicescape, customization, speed, online functional elements, service process, core service, marketing mix, value addition, online aesthetics and online hedonic elements; convenience being the most important factor followed by employees and by the servicescape (Garg *et al.*, 2012).

Yet, to fully understand the most effective ways of creating and developing the service delivery process and the service quality expectations, managers must also be aware of the cultural values of customers (Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009). Five cultural differences in customer values have been identified by Hofstede (2001): power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and long-term versus short-term orientation. A total of 1036 quotations from Hofstede's cultural differences, including their consequences in various issues, were found by the Social Science Citation Index listings in journals between 1980 and 1993 (Sondergaard, 1994). These five cultural differences are thus universally accepted as one of the most important concepts of culture types (Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009) and have become a benchmark for cross-cultural studies (Malhotra *et al.*, 2005).

1.2 Problematisation

In the twenty-first century, the focus has been shifting from a service-based to an experience-based economy (Kim, Cha, Knutson & Beck, 2011), with a holistic focus on senses, feelings, impressions, perceptions and emotional connection (Garg, Rahman & Qureshi, 2014). However, in service research, "customer experience" has frequently been merged with service quality and measured with the broadly accepted SERVQUAL by Parsuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988).

Additionally, customer experience in banks has been studied, most commonly using SERVQUAL, in various countries including: Australia (Avkiran, 1994; Baumann, Burton, Elliott & Kehr, 2007); Canada (Bahia & Nantel, 2000); China (Guo, Duff & Hair, 2008); Cyprus (Karatepe, Yavas & Babakus, 2005); Malaysia (Amin & Isa, 2008); Nigeria (Ehigie, 2006); South Africa (Mels, Boshoff & Deon, 1997); South Korea (Chi Cui, Lewis & Park,

2003); United Arab Emirates (Jabnoun & Al-Tamimi, 2003) and the United Kingdom (Aldlaigan & Buttle, 2002), just to name a few.

However, according to Garg *et al.* (2012), the SERVQUAL measurement scale is not sufficient enough to measure the experiences of customers at every touch point with the organization. Garg *et al.* (2012) have instead identified 14 critical success factors for measuring customer experience in banks (customer interaction, employees, presence of other customers, convenience, servicescape, customization, speed, online functional elements, service process, core service, marketing mix, value addition, online aesthetics and online hedonic elements); resulting in convenience, employees and servicescape being recognized as the three most important factors. Convenience is defined by Anderson (1991) as the time and effort a customer has to use to obtain a product or service. Employees are the ones delivering the service. And the servicescape are the physical facilities consisting of internal and external surroundings such as ambient conditions (Garg *et al.*, 2012). These 14 factors have been identified to make the measurement of customer experience in banks more effective and purposeful, and have subsequently been validated in a study on Indian banks (Garg *et al.*, 2012; Garg, Rahman & Qureshi, 2014).

Despite numerous studies on service quality and customer experience in banks in individual countries, few studies properly compare customer experience in banks between different countries. (Ladhari, Ladhari & Mourales, 2010). Yet, cross-cultural studies in the banking sector have shown significant results (Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009; Glaveli, Petridou, Liassides & Spathis, 2006; Ladhari, Ladhari & Mourales, 2010; Malhotra *et al.*, 2005) and have become increasingly relevant as the banking sector has become more globally integrated along with international business (Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009).

The most exhaustive cross-cultural study to date has been made by Hofstede in 1968 and 1972, based on questionnaire data from 117,000 IBM employees in 66 countries across 7 occupations. Although the data originally was collected from only one company, it was later compared with other unrelated populations and found to be matching with the IBM study. Five dimensions of national culture were found: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term versus short-term orientation. (Hofstede, 2001).

Hofstede's (2001, 2010) power distance measures the degree of inequality in a society, individualism versus collectivism measures the degree to which people in a society depend on

other people, masculinity versus femininity measures the differences in gender role in a society and the degree of competitiveness, uncertainty avoidance measures the degree to which a society is (in)tolerant of unknown situations and long-term versus short-term orientation measures the degree to which a society is oriented towards the present or towards future rewards (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Ever since the first publication about national cultures in the 1970s, the masculinity versus femininity dimension has been the most controversial of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010) notes that: "the dimension is politically incorrect mainly in masculine cultures such as the United States and the UK, but not in feminine countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands" (p. 144).

Culturally, Sweden and the United States score fairly similarly on all of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions, except for the masculinity versus femininity dimension. Sweden is considered as the most feminine country in the world, with a score of 5; while the United States is in top 15 amongst the most masculine countries, with a score of 62 (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

However, despite the significant difference in masculinity versus femininity between Sweden and the United States, there are still no studies comparing customer experience in banks between these two countries. Bank customers in these two countries are expected to have different expectations for convenience, employees and servicescape due to this significant cultural disparity - hence affecting the total experience.

1.3 Research Question

"How convenience, employees and servicescape - influenced by cultural differences - affects customer experience in banks".

1.4 Research Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore and to compare the perceived customer experience in the banking sector in Sweden and the United States - two culturally different countries on Hofstede's masculinity versus femininity dimension.

This dissertation will provide a better understanding on the impact of cultural differences in customer experience in banks, and could potentially become a valuable contribution to the existing field of customer experience measurements.

1.5 Outline

The dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter presents the background and the problematisation, along with the research question and the purpose. The chapter ends with the outline of the dissertation.

The second chapter reviews the relevant literature, by firstly describing the service marketing field; secondly defining the customer experience including the three factors convenience, employees and servicescape; thirdly covering the literature regarding cultural differences, mainly by Hofstede with an extensive discussion on masculinity versus femininity; and lastly presenting a hypothesis and the research model.

The third chapter discusses the methodology. It includes the research philosophy, research approach and research strategy, plus the choice of methodology and theory.

The fourth chapter covers the outline of the empirical method. The chapter begins with the theoretical framework, then the research process, data collection method, operationalization, sample selection, time horizon, reliability, validity and generalizability. The chapter ends with ethical considerations.

The fifth chapter presents and analyses the results.

The sixth chapter concludes the dissertation, including a summary of the results, limitations, practical and ethical implications and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the theory is presented. The chapter is covering the following: the service marketing research field, the definition of customer experience including three key factors; convenience, employees and servicescape, and the definition of the cultural differences including Hofstede's five cultural dimensions with an extensive discussion on masculinity versus femininity. Conclusively, one hypothesis is formulated and the model is presented.

2.1 Service Marketing

There are two main areas of study within the field of service marketing. One is concerned with the aspects of service management, while the other one predominantly focuses on the customers (Gilmore, 2003). In the field of service marketing, plenty of research has already been made within the customer area. The research area about customers is hence well adapted, identifying customers as “users” of services and providing a lot of information about customer behaviors, preferences, perceptions, opinions, experiences and satisfactions, as well changes in trends and perspectives (ibid., 2003).

Service marketing is an ever evolving research field. There has been plenty of changes in service marketing in certain areas, and large developments in other areas. In today's banking sector, there are plenty of services that are offered to customers. It is thus important to recognize the significance of service marketing in order to provide the best possible customer experience (Gilmore, 2003).

2.2 Customer Experience

The concept of customer experience was firstly introduced in the 1980s when customers commenced to be seen as rational decision makers (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Customer experience was defined as the result of living through situations. It replaced the functional values - instead providing sensitive, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational values (Schmitt, 1999). During the period of the last 30 years, plenty of contributions were added to the field of customer experience (Schmitt, 1999; Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Prahalad &

Ramaswamy, 2004; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009;). These contributions consider the familiar concept of consumption as a complete experience involving a person, not just a customer, at different levels and in every interaction between such person and a business (Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007).

Furthermore, as the number of contact points between the business and the customer have increased, monitoring the many experiences that originate from those contact points has become of fundamental importance. The aim for businesses, including banks, is to increase the transaction-based customer relationship to the continuous concept of customer experience (Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007). Additionally, Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007 state that 85 % of senior business managers believe that differentiating only on traditional components, such as price, product and quality, is no longer a sustainable competitive advantage and embrace customer experience as the next competitive battleground. This turns out to be especially true in the banking sector, where the products are already almost identical (Lo *et al.*, 2010). Customer experience has hence turned out to be a hotspot in the growth cycle of any business. The customer encounter plays an essential role because of the fact that customers are not just buying the service delivery, but also the whole “experience” of the service encounter (Garg *et al.*, 2012).

In an up-to-date study, Garg *et al.*, (2012) define customer experience as “*the summation of the good minus the bad experiences*” (p. 214), pointing out the fact that it is essential for managers to focus just as much on the lowest priority factors as on the highest priority factors, because all factors are simultaneously contributing to the total customer experience. Garg *et al.*, (2012) further identify the 14 most important factors for customer experience in banks: customer interaction, employees, presence of other customers, convenience, servicescape, customization, speed, online functional elements, service process, core service, marketing mix, value addition, online aesthetics and online hedonic elements. Garg *et al.*, (2012) subsequently list convenience, employees and the servicescape as the three most important factors influencing the customer experience in banks. These three key factors, affecting customer experience in banks, are explained in detail below.

2.2.1 Convenience

Convenience has been described as a combination of each point of contact with the bank, which imposes the importance of a smooth linkage between all service activities (Garg *et al.*, 2012; Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007; Levy & Kumar, 2009). Convenience has also been

explained as the fact that everything can be done with minimal effort and ease, where savings in time and effort are the two key aspects of convenience. The definition of convenience is hence how much time and effort a customer has to use to acquire a product or service (Anderson, 1991). A convenience-oriented customer seeks to “*accomplish a task in the shortest time with the least expenditure of human energy*” (Morganosky, 1986, p. 37). Convenience has likewise been conceptualized by Berry, Seiders and Grewal (2002) as the “*consumers’ time and effort perceptions related to buying or using a service*” (p. 4). Convenience is thus methods of adding value to customers by decreasing the time and effort a customer must spend on a service (Colwell, Aung, Kanetkar & Holden, 2008).

2.2.2 Employees

Employees are the ones delivering the services and should therefore be friendly, helpful, proficient to solve problems and stay at an appropriate social distance (Garg *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner (1998) emphasize the importance of customer familiarity and development of friendship with the customers. Garg *et al.* (2012) stress the importance of capability and punctuality amongst front-liners in banking organizations, emphasizing proper skills training for employees, which is the key for boosting customer experience.

2.2.3 Servicescape

Servicescape is the physical facilities shared by the employees and the customers (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Garg *et al.*, 2012). It consists of internal and external surroundings such as lightning, colors, background music, equipment (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005), space function, signs and ambient conditions (Garg *et al.*, 2012). The servicescape has both a direct and an indirect effect on the perceived customer experience – for example “*a disorganized law office might not only suggest bad service quality, but also poor reliability on the part of the lawyer himself*” (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005, p. 789). According to Bitner (1992), the physical environment is particularly able to influence customer behavior in banks, hotels, restaurants, retail stores and hospitals. This is because the service in these businesses is simultaneously produced and consumed by the customer. The servicescape can consequently add or hinder the ability of the customers and employees to carry out their activities (Bitner, 1992). Hence, the servicescape acts as a whole package for customer experience, providing a total image, and portraying the potential usage and quality of the service (Solomon, 1985).

2.3 Cultural Differences; Sweden versus the United States

Cultural differences in customer behavior have mainly been studied by Hofstede (2001, 2010), and then cited in numerous articles (Sondergaard, 1994; Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009; Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2013). Although Hofstede's (2001, 2010) five cultural differences are universally accepted as being one of the most important concepts of culture types (Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009), it has nevertheless been criticized for not being relevant; and for having limitations such as oversimplification, inconsistencies, and a lack of empirical evidence (Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murph, 2009; Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2013). However, the five dimensions of cultural differences developed by Hofstede (2001) are still the most universally acknowledged, validated in numerous empirical studies (Dash, Bruning & Acharya, 2009), and used most frequently in various studies of cultural consequences - especially in international marketing and management (Sondergaard, 1994; Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu & Sudharshan, 2000).

Hofstede (2001), defines culture as a “*collective programming of the mind*” (p. 4), which refers to the common personality characteristics that are standardized in a society (Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu & Sudharshan, 2000). The first cultural dimension, established by Hofstede, is power distance, referring to the extent to which less powerful members of institutions accept, and expect, inequality between individuals. The second dimension is individualism versus collectivism, which is defined as the degree to which individuals have the self-image of “I”, and look after themselves, or have the self-image of “we”, and stay united in groups - commonly around the family. The third dimension is masculinity versus femininity, referring to the distribution of roles between genders and suggesting that societies range from being “tough” masculine to “tender” feminine. The fourth dimension is uncertainty avoidance, expressed as the extent to which members of a culture are feeling either comfortable or uncomfortable in unknown, unusual and surprising situations, it is the degree to which a society is dealing with the unpredictable. And the fifth cultural dimension is long- versus short-term orientation, referring to the degree to which members of a culture accept delayed gratification of emotional, social and material needs.

2.3.1 Masculinity versus Femininity

The masculinity versus femininity dimension does not biologically compare differences between men and women, but focuses on “gender roles”. Masculinity stands for achievement, assertiveness, competition, recognition, challenge, domination, power, toughness and alike.

While femininity stands for tenderness, cooperation, security, relationships and care for the living environment. An individual could for instance be both masculine and feminine at the same time, while the culture in a country is either predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine because the majority of the population is either being more masculine or more feminine (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

“A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 140).

Masculine societies, such as the United States, are hence driven by competition, accomplishment and material success – a value system originating as early as in school, subsequently continuing throughout organizational behavior. The gap between cultural values tend to be big in masculine countries, while both sexes express tender values in feminine countries (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Feminine societies, such as Sweden, are consequently motivated by care for others and by the quality of life using negotiation and compromise when solving problems. It is also important to ensure that everyone is included, and to keep a steady balance between work and life. (Hofstede, 2001). Feminine countries are generally based on “Jante Law” - a concept advising people not to brag about themselves.

Customer experience is expected to differ in societies with a high degree of masculinity, depending on whether the service is provided by male or female employees. Customers expect male service employees to be professional, materialistic, more reliable and more responsive than female employees. Female service employees are expected to have a more tender, empathic, feminine appearance. Additionally, material goods including money, are expected to be more important in masculine societies (Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu & Sudharshan, 2000). Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu and Sudharshan (2000) further argue that there should be no expected difference in customer experience with respect to the gender of the service provider in feminine societies.

2.4 Research Hypotheses

Based on Hofstede's studies on cultural differences, American customers should be driven by competition and be concerned about material goods and accomplishment in contrast to Swedish customers who should be driven by balance, care for others and by the quality of life. Additionally, based on studies by Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu and Sudharshan (2000), American customers are expected to put more emphasis on the employees, preferring male employees due to the high degree of masculinity in the United States. The hypothesis is hence formulated as following:

H: Swedish customers are expected to be more positive about the total customer experience, despite the rating on individual independent variables, while individual independent variables are expected to have a greater impact on the total experience for American customers.

* is based on the belief that feminine societies tend to care more about the totality, rather than its parts (Hofstede, 2001).

2.5 Research Model

Customer experience in the banking sector, measured by the three key factors (convenience, employees and servicescape), by Garg et al. (2012), is expected to differ in masculine versus feminine societies because of different customer values, and thus different customer expectations (Hofstede, 2001, 2010; Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu & Sudharshan, 2000). The model (fig. 2.1) is illustrating the measurement of customer experience in two culturally different countries on Hofstede's masculinity versus femininity dimension. The three dependent variables of convenience, employees and servicescape are expected to affect the customer experience differently in Sweden and in the United States, which are significantly culturally distinctive countries on Hofstede's masculinity versus femininity dimension:

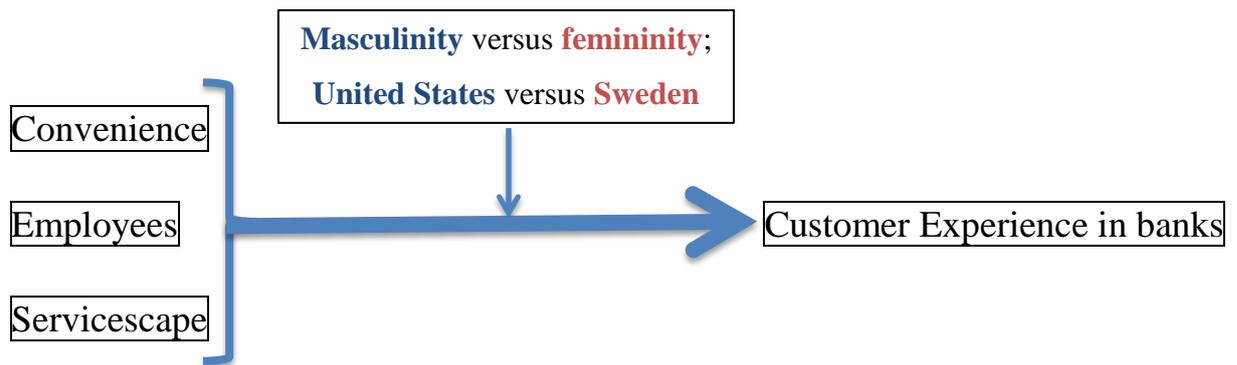


Figure 2.1 The Research Model for Customer Experience.

The three key factors of convenience, employees and servicescape are all affecting the total customer experience in banks, which is supported by the studies of Garg et al. (2012), but the affect is expected to be altered by the significant cultural differences in masculinity versus femininity - because these differences generate dissimilar expectations for the three key factors.

3. Research Method

In this chapter, the methodology is presented as following: methodological considerations including research philosophy, research approach and research strategy, choice of methodology and choice of theory.

3.1 Methodological considerations

3.1.1 Research Philosophy

Research is defined by Saunders *et al.* (2009) as a purposeful and systematical data collection and data interpretation. Furthermore, Saunders *et al.* (2009) state that there are four main views on research philosophy; positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism - all proven to play an important role, especially in business research. The choice of research philosophy is therefore of significant importance for the entire outcome of the research, as it underpins the research strategy as well as the choice of the research method (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

Positivism is a philosophy observing the social reality, developing a generalization similar to those developed by natural scientists. This philosophy is concerned with facts rather than impressions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Realism is considering the reality as being independent of the human thoughts. A realist is trying to understand the collected data by trying to understand human interpretations (*ibid*, 2009). Interpretivism differs from the other two approaches because of the common view that the world is complex, changing from one situation to the other. It is hence difficult to make generalizations in the interpretivistic research philosophy (*ibid*, 2009). Pragmatism is the philosophy where the best view is chosen for answering the research question. Subjective values are favored, as well as practical research (*ibid*, 2009).

In this dissertation, the positivistic research philosophy is used because of the purpose to explore how the three independent variables convenience, employees and servicescape are affecting the dependent variable customer experience and because of the purpose to compare the results from two different samples. The interference with survey participants will be minimal for an objective data collection. Additionally, some generalizations are going to be made, which is another reason for using the positivistic research philosophy.

3.1.2 Research Approach

A research can be approached either inductively or deductively according to Saunders *et al.*, (2009). The inductive approach is taken when data firstly is collected, and then a theory is developed as a result of the data analysis. The deductive approach is highly structured. It is considered as a positivistic approach, testing existing theory with a development of hypotheses and a development of a research strategy to test the hypotheses. The inductive approach is hence collecting new data, while the deductive approach is testing causal relationships in existing data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

In this dissertation, a positive deductive approach is taken in order to study the relationship between the independent variables (convenience, employees and servicescape) and the dependent variable (customer experience). The approach is deductive because the research model is based on previous studies in the field, because the research is highly objective, and because limited generalizations are going to be made based on the quantitative analysis of the findings.

3.1.3 Research Strategy

Because of the exploratory nature of the research purpose, an exploratory strategy is going to be used. This kind of strategy is exploring what is currently happening, for the purpose of seeking new insights, asking questions and assessing the happenings in new light (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Further, a questionnaire is going to be used for data collection. Not only because questionnaire surveys are considered as the most common way to collect data - particularly in business research (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Denscombe, 2009; Saunders *et al.*, 2009) - but also because questionnaire surveys are most frequently used for exploratory research, for answering “how” questions and for collecting large samples of quantitative data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

3.2 Choice of Methodology

Two types of data are most commonly being used for research in business and management; quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative data is linked to numerical values, such as questionnaires and statistics (Saunders *et al.*, 2009), while qualitative data is presented in form of words or pictures (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Denscombe, 2009). Quantitative data is straightforwardly comparable because of the accurate numerical results, whereas qualitative

data mainly consists of theories and descriptions (Denscombe, 2009). Additionally, qualitative data has been criticized for being too subjective, too hard to generalize, and too difficult to replicate (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The choice of which data to use is, according to Saunders *et al.* (2009), highly dependent on the research purpose.

Due to the positivistic and deductive approach of the research in this dissertation, quantitative data from questionnaires will be used. Most previous studies in business research are using the quantitative method for data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The methodology used in this dissertation will consequently be a mono method quantitative study (*ibid*, 2009). Furthermore, the research approach will be cross-sectional, meaning that the study will be conducted as a snapshot of the current situation, rather than enduring over a longer period of time. Questionnaire-data will be collected on an adequate scale, so that it can be generalized and so that patterns can be detected (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.3 Choice of Theory

Early studies on customer experience are mainly based on theory on service quality, frequently using the SERVQUAL measurement scale (Ladhari, Ladhari & Mourales, 2010). However, in the twenty-first century, customer experience has been separated from service quality measurements, evolving to a branch on its own. This separation has been made because of the shift from a service-based to an experience-based, holistic view in the economy (Kim, Cha, Knutson & Beck, 2011). Additionally, cross-cultural studies of customer experience are just beginning to emerge. This dissertation will hence be based on current scientific articles in business research, mainly on the up-to-date theory on customer experience measurement by Garg *et al.* (2012), and on Hofstede's universally acknowledged theory on cultural differences.

4. Empirical Method

This chapter is covering the outline of the empirical method. First, the theoretical framework is summarized, then the research process, data collection method and operationalization are described, then the sample selection, reliability, validity and generalizability are discussed. Furthermore, the ethical considerations are reviewed.

4.1 Theoretical framework

The importance of customer experience in the banking sector has gradually increased along with the flourishing international business (Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007; Lo *et al.*, 2010; Garg *et al.*, 2012). Many studies have already been made in this particular field of research, but there are still plenty of gaps ready to be filled. Garg *et al.* (2012) have recently filled one of these gaps by conceptualizing customer experience, with a main focus on banks, separating it from previous measurements of service quality. The previous measurements of service quality were mostly using SERVQUAL by Parsuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988), which is no longer considered as being sufficient enough in the ever evolving banking business.

Garg *et al.* (2012) identified critical success factors for customer experience in banks by examining and comparing existing literature on the subject. AHP - a multi-criteria decision making method capable to process both quantitative and qualitative parameters by breaking down complex problems into several, logically structured levels - was used to develop a model and to rank the identified critical success factors in order of their importance (Garg *et al.*, 2012). The study resulted in convenience, employees and servicescape being considered as the most important factors for measuring customer experience in banks.

Because of the increase of internalization in the banking sector, it has furthermore become increasingly important to study cross-cultural differences. Dash, Bruning and Acharya (2009) suggest that banks will achieve greater success, including an increase in customer experience, when the service delivery is in tune with the cultural differences of customers. Hence, Hofstede's broadly accepted and thoroughly validated studies on cultural dimensions are going to be used as the fundamental theory, when comparing the customer experience in Swedish and American banks.

This dissertation will hence, by studying the affect of cultural differences on the perceived customer experience in banks, add a nuanced twist to the existing literature on customer experience in the service marketing research field

4.2 Research Process

The research process in this dissertation starts with an extensive research of the current literature, mostly scientific articles. When searching for scientific articles, the search engine “Summon@HKR”, provided by Kristianstad University, was used. Search terms used are customer experience, service quality, cultural differences, cross-cultural, convenience, employees and servicescape; combined with terms such as banks, Sweden and United States.

All sources are critically judged. Scientific, peer-reviewed articles from recognized journals are used for best validity of this dissertation. Articles inspiring the research topic are "The effect of power distance and individualism on service quality expectations in banking: A two-country individual- and national-cultural comparison" by Dash, Bruning and Acharya (2009), "Identifying and ranking critical success factors of customer experience in banks: an analytical hierarchy process (AHP) approach" by Garg *et al.* (2012), "Measuring customer experience in banks: scale development and validation" by Garg, Rahman and Qureshi (2014), "Bank service quality: comparing Canadian and Tunisian customer perceptions" by Ladhari, Ladhari and Morales (2011) and "Dimensions of service quality in developed and developing economies: multi-country cross-cultural comparisons" by Malhotra *et al.* (2005). These articles have also been inspirational for formulating questions for the questionnaire.

Quantitative data is collected through a questionnaire in both Sweden and in the United States. The data is then compiled and compared using the statistical program “SPSS”. Finally, an analysis is made based on the data comparison.

4.3 Sample Selection

Bank customers of physical banks are chosen as participants of this study. The choice is based upon the nature of the used dependent factors – convenience, employees and servicescape, which are difficult to measure for internet bank customers.

The questionnaires are handed out randomly to individuals who had visited a physical bank in the past twelve months. All individuals remain anonymous because their names are not relevant for the study. The anonymity is also important in order to receive more open and honest answers from the respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2010). However, they are asked to write their gender and age, which are used as descriptive statistics, and to also write their nationality, which is used as a control variable to assure the relevance and thus the validity of the answers.

A total of 200 people of age 18+ were asked to participate in the questionnaire survey in the United States in three different states – New York, Florida and California. A total of 45 people chose to answer, but only 43 answers were valid for the study because 2 two of the respondents were not born in America. 29 of the respondents in the United States were male and 14 were female. In Sweden, Skåne, a total of 150 people of age 18+ had to be asked to participate, in order to receive 43 valid answers. 20 of the respondents were male and 23 were female.

The low response rate might be due to the choice to ask people randomly on the streets, preferably outside banks, where most were in a hurry and chose the simple “no” for an answer. A higher response-rate could have been achieved if the questions would have been sent out to random respondents using the internet, but the aim was not to exclude those bank customers who might not be internet-users.

4.4 Data collection

A questionnaire survey is chosen as the data collection method because of the explanatory strategy of this dissertation. The choice is based on the research questions and the objectives, which are to compare perceived customer experience in banks, in two culturally different countries on Hofstede’s masculinity versus femininity dimension. Saunders et al. (2009) is dividing data collection into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is a new collection of data, while secondary data is already collected data from various sources, documentaries or surveys (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Hence, this dissertation is based on secondary data from scientific articles. Secondary data is also used as a basis for the layout of the questionnaire. Primary data is then collected through the questionnaire.

Other methods such as experiments, interviews, case studies and observations, described by Saunders *et al.* (2009), have been considered for collecting the quantitative data for this dissertation. The main reasons why a questionnaire survey was chosen, are limitations in time and resources. Questionnaire surveys are not as time consuming and expensive as other methods (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). It might also be difficult to observe cultural differences through interviews, case studies, experiments or observations.

The questionnaire was self-administrated. It was handed out face-to-face to the respondents and collected once it was completed, both in Sweden and in the United States. The reason why a web survey was not used, was the aim to not exclude the bank customers who might not have access to the internet. First, an English version (appendix 1.1) was used for American respondents and the data was collected in the United States, and then the questions were translated into Swedish (appendix 1.2) for Swedish respondents and the data was collected in Sweden. Before the questionnaire was handed out for data collection, the questions were checked by three different people to ensure the quality, readability, ethical implications, and also the accuracy of the translation.

4.5 Time horizon

The data was collected from April 18 to May 16 in 2014. The first, three weeks were spent in the United States where data was collected from American respondents, and the last week was spent in Sweden where data was collected from Swedish respondents.

4.6 Operationalization

Denscombe (2009), Saunders *et al.* (2009) and Bryman and Bell (2011), all describe operationalization as something theoretical, converted into something concrete and measurable. In order to make measurements, indicators need to be chosen. As a questionnaire is used in this dissertation, questions are composed as indicators. Hence, it is essential to formulate the questions properly, and to distinguish between the dependent and the independent variables.

In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents are asked to fill in the control variables country, gender and age. In the second part, independent variables are measured. These are divided into three categories, measuring the three key-factors convenience, employees and servicescape. In the last part, the dependent variable customer experience in banks is measured. All questions, except for the control variables, are graded on a 7-point likert scale with self-anchoring ratings.

4.6.1 Independent Variables

The independent variables in the questionnaire are based on the three most important critical success factors for customer experience in banks, identified by Garg *et al.* (2012).

Convenience is the first, and most important factor (Garg *et al.*, 2012). It is measured with questions about opening hours, information, and service speed (appendix 1.1; appendix 1.2). These questions are based upon the definition of convenience, which is time and effort perceptions related to consuming a service (Berry, Seiders & Grewal, 2002). The anchoring points on the 7-point likert scale are “poor” to “excellent”.

Employees is the second most important factor affecting customer experience in banks (Garg *et al.*, 2012). The rating of employees is based on the perceived sociability, provided service quality, and finally if any gender differences between male and female employees are experienced (appendix 1.1; appendix 1.2). Garg *et al.* (2012) stress the importance of sociability, helpfulness and punctuality among employees, while Furrer, Shaw-Ching Liu and Sudharshan (2000) argues that American customers are expected to prefer male employees based on Hofstede’s (2001, 2010) study on cultural differences. These three questions about employees are hence foremost measuring the affect on customer experience. However, the question about perceived gender differences has to be included for not excluding expected cultural values of American respondents. The anchoring points on the 7-point likert scale are “very unsociable” to “very sociable” for the first question, “poor” to “excellent” for the second question, and “big difference” to “no difference” on the third question. A big perceived difference in service quality between the gender of employees is hence considered having a negative impact on the total customer experience.

Servicescape is the third factor affecting customer experience in banks (Garg *et al.*, 2012). Servicescape is defined by Reimer and Kuehn (2005) and by Garg *et al.* (2012), as the physical facilities shared by the employees and the customers, consisting of internal and external surroundings. The questions about servicescape are hence measuring the cleanliness and pleasantness of the facilities, the appearance of the employees and the appealingness of the interior design (appendix 1.1; appendix 1.2).

4.6.2 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is customer experience. It is the summation of the good minus the bad experiences (Garg *et al.*, 2012). The ratings on the independent variables convenience, employees and servicescape, are hence expected to affect the rating on customer experience. Customer experience is measured by questions about the total experience, fulfillment of expectations, and the probability of recommending the bank to others (appendix 1.1; appendix 1.2). Similarly to the measurement of the independent variables, the questions on the dependent variable are graded on a 7-point likert scale with self-anchoring ratings.

4.6.3 Control Variables

The first three questions in the questionnaire consists of open-ended questions about gender, age and nationality (appendix 1.1; appendix 1.2). These are control variables, which according to Pallant (2010), are used to reduce the risk of drawing wrong conclusions about the context. The demographic variables on gender and age were used only for the purpose of exploring if there might be any significant differences in the answers. Previous studies have for example shown that the reasoning behavior differ between males and females (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

The question about nationality might be considered unethical and discriminative, but it is of great importance for this research because of the aim to measure the cultural differences. Respondents in Sweden or in the United States might for example not have a Swedish or an American background, which is hence affecting their cultural values and perceptions.

4.7 Data Analysis

The statistical program "SPSS" is used for the data analysis. First, a Cronbach's alpha test is made to test the reliability of the collected questionnaire answers, then a factor analysis is created to reassure that the questions in each category are measuring the same thing, then Pearson's correlation matrix is used to test the significance of the results, and finally a regression analysis is created to test if the hypotheses are supported.

4.8 Validity and Reliability

In order to prevent errors and to draw wrong conclusions, validity and reliability have to be considered when conducting a study. Without validity, the research would be considered as irrelevant for the field of study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Measurement validity is the reassurance that the data measurements are measuring the intended concept. Internal validity is the reassurance that relationships between variables can be drawn to conclusions, external validity refers to how well the results can be generalized. And the ecological validity is the reassurance of how well the study of one group can be generalized to other groups (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Further, Bryman and Bell (2010) state five factors for validity determination. The first factor is face validity, which is achieved by taking help of experts in the field to check the measurements. The second factor is concurrent validity, which is achieved by using universally acknowledged criteria to describe a concept. The third factor is predictive validity, which is achieved by describing a future concept instead of using an existing one. The fourth factor is constructed validity, which is achieved by carefully observing the studied field, subsequently correctly quantifying the measured concept. And the fifth factor is convergent validity, which is achieved by comparing the measurement to other measurements already made in the research field, where a high correlation indicates high validity.

Additionally, for a questionnaire to have a high validity, the questions should obtain the same answers regardless of which channel the questions are distributed through (Bryman & Bell, 2010).

Reliability implies the consistency of a measure of a model – the likelihood that the respondents would respond similarly if the survey was handed out a second time. It is determined on the stability of the measure, which can be tested by conducting a second identical study to see how the results correlate. It is also determined on internal reliability, which is the likelihood that the respondents will answer consistently. And finally, reliability is also determined on the basis of inter-observer consistency, which is the correspondence between independent observer's judgments (Bryman & Bell, 2010).

In this study, no real face validity is used, but both the model and the questionnaire survey have been reviewed by three different tutors at Kristianstad University in Sweden to check the validity. Concurrent validity is then used by the choice to use Hofstede's theory on cross-cultural differences, which are expected to create differences in the perceived customer experience. Neither predictive nor constructive validity could be used because of the limitations in time. However, convergent validity was used to some extent by comparing the significance of the measurements and of the results to other similar studies, but this was nevertheless difficult because of the lack of similar studies.

Further, the degree of stability of the measure of this study can not be obtained, because a second identical study can not be made - yet again because of the limitations in time. Internal reliability is however thoroughly assessed by careful evaluation and translation of the survey. Three tutors at Kristianstad University, all fluent in both Swedish and English, have evaluated the survey to reassure the reliability of the questions. The internal reliability is also tested by the Cronbach's Alpha test. Inter-observer consistency is not relevant for this study because of the objective nature of the data collection method.

4.9 Generalizability

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), generalizability is restricted to the studied population. The generalizability in this dissertation is thus limited to customers of physical banks in Sweden and in the United States. Additionally, the measurements can only be generalized to Swedish and American values and perceptions.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

The biggest, most controversial, issue of this study was the choice to include “nationality” as one of the descriptive statistics in the questionnaire. The question was evaluated, written and rewritten many times, ending up as “What is your country of birth” (appendix 1.1). Nationality is often considered as being a sensitive issue, but it had to be included because of the purpose to make a cross-cultural comparison.

Another issue was the integrity of the respondents who were randomly asked to answer the questionnaire, but this was not a big issue because they had the choice to simply decline.

5. Analysis

In this chapter, the results are presented, analyzed and compared between the two culturally different countries. The chapter begins with an overview of the descriptive statistics, then the independent factors and the dependent factor are presented in a factor analysis. Finally the results are tested in a correlation matrix and displayed in a linear regression and in a t-test.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are included in order to provide an overview of the collected information of the selected sample of the respondents. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the response rate, while table 5.2 provides descriptive statistics for the control variables gender and age from all 86 valid responses.

Table 5.1 Response rate

	Numbers	Percent
Sample selection United States	200	100 %
Sample selection Sweden	150	100 %
Responses United States	45	22,5 %
Invalid Responses United States	2	1 %
Responses Sweden	43	28,7 %
Invalid Responses Sweden	-	-
Total Sample Selection	350	100 %
Total Valid Responses N	86	24,6 %

As shown in table 5.1, the response rate is marginally higher in Sweden than in the United States. A total of 200 individuals were asked to participate in the questionnaire survey in the United States, of which 45 chose to participate. Two of the answers were however invalid due to their nationalities; one person was born in Mexico and the other one was born in Ireland. A total of 150 individuals were questioned to participate in the questionnaire survey in Sweden, of which 43 valid answers were collected. All 43 collected answers from the Swedish respondents were valid.

Table 5.2 Gender and Age

GENDER			AGE		
	N	Percent	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
U.S Male	29	67,4 %	18	89	-
U.S Female	14	32,6 %	18	65	-
Sweden Male	20	46,5 %	18	78	-
Sweden Female	23	53,5 %	18	85	-
Total Male	49	57 %	18	89	-
Total Female	37	43 %	18	85	-
Total Male and Female	86	100 %	18	89	44,5698

The control variables for gender and age show the total of 86 respondents with a minimum age of 18, the maximum age of 89 and the mean age of 44,5. A total of 49 respondents were male, representing 57 % of the measured population, and 37 respondents were female, representing 43 % of the measures population. No significant differences were found when comparing the answers from male and female respondents, however older people were slightly more positive, scoring a bit higher on all variables.

5.2 Factor Analysis

To make sure that the questions on each variable are all measuring the same thing, and hence are reliable, a Cronbach's Alpha test is made (table 5.3). The reliability is assured for those cases where the Alpha is higher than 7:

Table 5.3 Cronbach's Alpha Test

	N Questions	Cronbach's Alpha
Convenience (ID)	3	0,76
Employees (ID)	3	0,73
Servicescape (ID)	3	0,71
Customer Experience (D)	3	0,81

ID = Independent variable, D = Dependent variable

As shown in table 5.3, all measured variables are accepted as being reliable. The first independent factor, convenience, is determined by questions about opening hours, proper information and speed of the service process (appendix 1.1). The second factor, employees, is measured by questions about employee sociability, quality of service provided by the employees and if there are any perceived differences in the service quality between male and female employees. The last question about perceived gender differences is expected to affect customer experience in a negative way if there is a “big difference”, which is hence on the left side on the 7-point likert-scale, while “no difference” is expected to affect customer experience positively and is hence on the right side on the 7-point likert-scale (appendix 1.1). Servicescape is measured by questions about cleanliness of facilities, appearance of employees and appearance of interior design (appendix 1,1). The dependent factor customer experience is then measured by questions about the overall customer satisfaction, met expectations and how likely the respondent would recommend the bank to other customers (appendix 1,1).

5.3 Pearson Correlation Matrix

Person correlation matrix is provided to show if there are any significant relationships between the measured variables convenience, employees, servicescape and customer experience. The Pearson correlations coefficient indicates if the relationship is positive or negative, and how strong the relationship is between the measured variables. A significance level of 5 percent is used (table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Customer Exp.	Convenience	Employer	Service	Country	Gender	Age
Customer Exp.	1						
Convenience	0,644**	1					
Employer	0,642**	0,609**	1				
Service	0,657**	0,516**	0,650**	1			
Country	-0,185	-0,362**	-0,336**	-0,318**	1		
Gender	-0,104	-0,122	-0,171	-0,243*	-0,280**	1	
Age	0,002	0,134	0,010	0,008	-0,041	-0,264*	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level Sig. (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level Sig. (2-tailed)

The correlation matrix (table 5.4) shows positive relationships between all three dependent variables (convenience, employees and servicescape) and customer experience. There is also a significant negative relationship between country and the measured variables, showing that respondents in the United States are overall more positive on the three measured independent variables. However, there is no significance for country differences in the dependent variable customer experience, which is in tune with the expected hypothesis that people in feminine countries such as Sweden tend to be more positive about the totality despite having issues about its parts (this is explained in more detail in chapter 6). The relationships between gender and age and the measured variables are not significant.

5.4 Regression analysis and mean values

Regression analysis is used to explore the relationships between multiple independent variables and the dependent variable (Pallant, 2010). The whole model is tested in a regression analysis, which not only includes information about how each tested variable contributes to the model, but also how it contributes to the tested control variables (ibid., 2010).

Table 5.5 Regression analysis

Independent- and control variables	Standardized Beta	T-value	VIF
Constant	-	0,650	-
Convenience Mean	0,375	3,946	1,780
Employer Mean	0,226	2,177	2,128
Service Mean	0,364	3,729	1,880
Country	0,135	1,687	1,261
Gender	0,019	0,241	1,217
Age	-0,044	-0,579	1,116

All three independent variables; convenience, employees and servicescape contribute to the model, as well as country, which has lower significance than the independent variables, but the significance is still strong enough to be accepted. Therefore, the model is fully supported.

Table 5.6. Means

Questions on each variable	Sweden Mean	USA Mean
2.1. Opening hours [CON]	4,51	5,41*
2.2. Proper information [CON]	5,33	5,88**
2.3. Speed of the service [CON]	5,02	5,88*
3.1. Sociable employees [EMP]	5,00	5,98*
3.2. Service quality provided by employees [EMP]	5,37	5,86**
3.3 Gender differences of employees [EMP]	5,16	5,72****
4.1. Cleanliness of physical facilities [SER]	5,56	6,05***
4.2. Professional appearance of employees [SER]	5,42	6,14*
4.3. Appealing interior design [SER]	5,07	5,74***
5.1. Satisfaction of total experience [CE]	5,51	5,98**
5.2. Expectations are met [CE]	5,47	5,84*****
5.3. Likely to recommend the bank [CE]	5,47	5,74*****

Notes: * p≤ 0.01, ** p≤ 0.03, *** p≤ 0.05, **** p≤ 0.1, ***** p≤ 1; scale 1 (=“poor”) to 7 (=“excellent”).

The mean values for all questions are higher in the United States, but the difference is not as big on the questions on the dependent variable customer experience (CE) as on the questions regarding the independent variables. The hypothesis is hence supported:

H: Swedish customers are expected to be more positive about the total customer experience, despite the rating on individual independent variables, while individual independent variables are expected to have a greater impact on the total experience for American customers.

* is based on the belief that feminine societies tend to care more about the totality, rather than its parts (Hofstede, 2001).

6. Conclusions

In this final chapter, conclusions of the dissertation are presented, including a summary and an analysis of the results, limitations, practical- and ethical implications and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary of the Results

The response rate was higher in Sweden than in the United States. Of the 88 collected answers, 2 were invalid due to nationality. The other 86 answers consists of a total of 49 male and 37 female respondents. No significant differences were found in the responses based on the control variables gender and age, older people were marginally more positive on all variables, but this was not of any great significance.

The questions on all measured variables, both the independent and the dependent were accepted as reliable on the Cronbach's Alpha test. The correlation matrix revealed positive relationships between all three independent variables and customer experience. A difference could also be seen between the countries, where Swedish people were more negative on all independent variables, but scored similarly to Americans on the dependent variable – supporting hypothesis 2.

All independent variables, as well as the control variable of country is found to be contributing to the model, which makes the proposed model fully supported. The hypothesis is also accepted.

6.2 Conclusions

Today's modern world is full of alternatives, which makes competing quite a difficult task, especially in the service marketing field. And particularly within the banking sector, the competition is tremendous because the products are identical, and the service is hence the central method for differentiation. In order to be able to differentiate on the service aspect, it is of vital importance to first understand the customers' needs and preferences and then to adjust every single detail from the recognized preferences. It is also important to understand

that customers of different cultures have different preferences – the perceived customer experiences of a bank are not the same for individuals with different nationalities.

We live in a hectic society where time and speed are principal aspects. Convenience is hence important in order to keep the customers satisfied. Aspects of convenience are late opening hours, fast service and proper information such as signs, numbers, brochures and custom-made offers. We also have high expectations when it comes to the staff in the banking sector. The employees have to be helpful, trustful, service-minded and sociable in order to create long-term relationships with the customers. We are finally becoming more and more materialistic, which banks have to adjust to by creating a pleasant servicescape for the customers. Not only the exterior and the interior has to be enjoyable for the customers, all inventories and also the staff must have a pleasant appearance.

Based on the test results from the collected data, the model is supported, acknowledging the cultural differences of the perceived customer experience. The hypothesis is fully supported, which can be used by banks in different ways in these two countries; banks in Sweden do not need to focus on the details as much as banks in the United States, because Swedish customers are not as affected by the details when evaluating the total experience than Americans.

6.3 Limitations

The study is unfortunately limited to physical banks, because the most important factors for customer experience in the banking sector are connected with physical banks. The use of online services are however steadily increasing, which reveals new possibilities for future research.

The other limitation is the small sample size of the respondents. This is mostly due to limitations in time and resources, but also due to the low response frequency. Other data collection methods could have been considered in order to gather a bigger sample size.

The study is also limited to the two countries Sweden and the United States and to Hofstede's cultural dimension masculinity versus femininity.

6.4 Practical Implications

The aim of the study was to fill the gap in the current research on customer experience in the banking sector by comparing customer experience with cultural differences. This comparison has significant academic value because no studies comparing the cultural aspect on the masculinity versus femininity dimension have yet been made. The comparison of Sweden to the United States is of particular interest because Sweden is considered as the most feminine country in the world, while the United States is in the top 5 of the most masculine countries.

This study could also be valuable for the banking sector in both Sweden and in the United States, because of the new insights on customer experience. Banks could use these new insights to further improve their services.

6.5 Ethical Implications

The choice of conducting a study on cultural differences has consequences in the form of ethical implications. Nationality is a very controversial subject. An exclusion of non-native Swedish and American respondents can easily be associated with discrimination. But the aim of this study is obviously not to discriminate people, but to measure possible differences in customer experience due to differences in cultural values.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research in the service marketing field considering customer experience could be covering online banking. It would be interesting not only to measure cultural differences on customer experience in the online banking, but also to compare these measured differences with the differences for physical banks.

Another suggestion is to repeat the study on a bigger sample size to confirm the validity. The study could also be repeated in other countries or exploring how other cultural differences affect customer experience in the banking sector.

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Appendix

1.1 Questionnaire - Customer Experience in banks, English version:

EvaSys		Electric Paper
Amanda Sidark & Dylberina Koci Customer Experience in banks		

Mark as shown: Please use a ball-point pen or a thin felt tip. This form will be processed automatically.
 Correction: Please follow the examples shown on the left hand side to help optimize the reading results.

1. Investigative/Filtering questions

- 1.1 **Are you** Male Female
- 1.2 How **old** are you?
- 1.3 What is your **country of birth**?

2. Convenience - independent variable

- 2.1 How would you rate the **opening hours** of the bank you most frequently visit? Poor Excellent
- 2.2 How **proper is the information** provided by the bank you most frequently visit? Poor Excellent
- 2.3 How would you rate the **speed of the service** at the bank you most frequently visit? Poor Excellent

3. Employees - independent variable

- 3.1 How **sociable are the employees** at the bank you most frequently visit? Very Unsociable Very Sociable
- 3.2 How would you rate the **quality of the service provided by the employees** of the bank you most frequently visit? Poor Excellent
- 3.3 Do you experience any **difference in service quality provided by male versus female employees** of the bank you most frequently visit? Big difference No difference

4. Servicescape - independent variable

- 4.1 How **clean and pleasant are the physical facilities** of the bank you most frequently visit? Very Unpleasant Very Pleasant
- 4.2 How **neat and professional is the appearance of the employees** at the bank you most frequently visit? Poor Excellent
- 4.3 How **appealing is the interior design** of the bank you most frequently visit? Poor Excellent

5. Customer Experience - dependent variable

- 5.1 How **satisfied are you with the overall experience** of the bank you most frequently visit? Very Dissatisfied Very Satisfied
- 5.2 To what extent are **your expectations being met** at the bank you most frequently visit? To very little extent To very great extent
- 5.3 How likely would you be to **recommend** the bank you most frequently visit for friends and family? Not very likely Very likely

1.2 Questionnaire - Customer Experience in banks, Swedish version:

EvaSys		Electric Paper
Amanda Sidark & Dylberina Koci Kundupplevelse på banker		

Mark as shown: Please use a ball-point pen or a thin felt tip. This form will be processed automatically.

Correction: Please follow the examples shown on the left hand side to help optimize the reading results.

1. Filtreringsfrågor

1.1 Är du Man Kvinna

1.2 Hur **gammal** är du?

1.3 Vilket är ditt **modersmål**?

2. Bekvämlighet - oberoende variabel

- | | | | |
|---|--------|---|----------|
| 2.1 Hur skulle du betygsätta öppettiderna på banken som du oftast besöker? | Dåliga | <input type="checkbox"/> | Utmärkta |
| 2.2 Hur bra är informationen erhållen från banken som du oftast besöker? | Dålig | <input type="checkbox"/> | Utmärkt |
| 2.3 Hur skulle du betygsätta servicehastigheten på banken som du oftast besöker? | Dålig | <input type="checkbox"/> | Utmärkt |

3. Anställda - oberoende variabel

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|----------------|
| 3.1 Hur sociala är de anställda på banken som du oftast besöker? | Mycket osociala | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mycket sociala |
| 3.2 Hur skulle du betygsätta servicekvaliteten på banken som du oftast besöker? | Dålig | <input type="checkbox"/> | Utmärkt |
| 3.3 Upplever du någon skillnad i servicekvaliteten mellan manliga och kvinnliga anställda på banken som du oftast besöker? | Stor skillnad | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ingen skillnad |

4. Miljö - oberoende variabel

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|--------------------|
| 4.1 Hur ren och trivsamt är omgivningen på banken som du oftast besöker? | Inte alls trivsamt | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mycket trivsamt |
| 4.2 Hur snygg och professionell är stilen på de anställda på banken som du oftast besöker? | Dålig | <input type="checkbox"/> | Utmärkt |
| 4.3 Hur tilltalande är inredningen på banken som du oftast besöker? | Inte alls tilltalande | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mycket tilltalande |

5. Kundupplevelse - beroende variabel

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 5.1 Hur nöjd är du med den totala upplevelsen av banken som du oftast besöker? | Mycket missnöjd | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mycket nöjd |
| 5.2 Till vilken utsträckning uppfylls dina förväntningar på banken som du oftast besöker? | Mycket liten utsträckning | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mycket stor utsträckning |
| 5.3 Hur sannolikt är det att du skulle rekommendera banken som du oftast besöker till vänner och familj? | Inte sannolikt | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mycket sannolikt |