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Governing the Homo Economicus:

Changing representations of the consumer in Finnish bank advertisements in the 1970s and 1980s

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Governing the Homo Economicus:

Changing representations of the consumer in Finnish bank advertisements in the 1970s and 1980s

Liina Puustinen

ABSTRACT

This paper describes how the image of consumers changed in Finnish print advertisements for banks during the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing on Foucauldian studies of governmentality, advertising is seen as a form of government. Marketeers aim at mobilizing people as customers by constructing particular forms of subjectivity in their advertisements. Based on an empirical study of bank advertisements in two leading Finnish weekly magazines, I show that in the 1970s bank customers were represented mainly as rational subjects, but were treated rather like dependants. In the 1980s the popularity of customer relationship marketing produced a different image and the customer was addressed as if an equal. This set the direction for the contemporary image of an individualized customer.

INTRODUCTION

The fields of consumption studies and marketing include ample discussion of whether the consumers are free agents or are directed by marketers (e.g. Gabriel and Lang, 1996 and 2008; Denegri-Knott *et al*, 2006; Slater, 1997). Critical marketing and consumption studies discuss the ideas of Michel Foucault about the power relations between the consumer and the marketers, and how marketers try to govern free consumers (e.g. Zwick and Dholakia, 2004; Eräranta and Moisander, 2006; Moisander and Eriksson, 2006; Puustinen, 2008; Beckett and Nayak, 2008; Beckett, 2012; Zwick *et al*. 2008; Moisander *et al*, 2010; Beckett, 2012; Cova and Cova, 2012; Shankar *et al*, 2006). The aim in this paper is to contribute to this discussion from the perspective of analytics of government (Foucault, 1983; Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999), by analysing how bank's constructed consumers in the 1970s and 1980s by addressing them through advertisements.

Consumption sociologists, Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen and Mika Pantzar (2002), write that Finnish bank advertisements in the 1950s projected a general model of a good life, structured by the ethos of thrift. They argue that the banks aimed not only to educate Finns to save but also to shape their consumption, mostly in the direction of creating anticipatory pleasure by postponing their consumption to the future. The present study shows that in the 1970s and 1980s the focus of bank ads was especially on the pleasure of consumption aided by bank loans and credit cards. The 1970s and 1980s were important for establishing of the Nordic welfare state and the growth of a consumer society (Heinonen and Kontinen 2001; Kortti 2003; Lammi 2006). Advertising also played a key role in educating people to become consumers (Heinonen and Kontinen 2001). By the 1970s, the Finns were already trained as consumers, and were no longer reliant on self-sufficient household production. At the same time, the marketing paradigm changed which affected companies' views of their customers – as evidenced in the advertising representations from the Finnish magazines.

ADVERTISING AS A FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Advertising as form of communication, crystallizes cultural views, values, expectations, ideals and dreams typical of each era (e.g. Leiss *et al*, 1990) and, therefore, is a suitable approach to studying cultural subject positions. Advertising is aimed at directing people's consumption behaviour, and mobilizing individuals to participate in the market as consumers (Miller and Rose, 1997).

My approach draws on studies of governmentality (Foucault, 1983; Dean, 1999), and critical studies of consumption that view advertising as a form of government. I view as one of the

calculated practices of government aimed at shaping individual possibilities for action in the market (Moisander *et al*, 2010: 74; Eräranta and Moisander, 2006; Hodgson, 2002; Puustinen, 2008; Shankar *et al* 2006; Skålen *et al*, 2006; Beckett and Nayak, 2008; Zwick *et al*, 2008; Beckett, 2012). By government is meant the various ways used to direct and shape the behaviour of individuals. In modern society, this refers not only to the political conduct exercised by the state and public institutions but includes the *conduct of conduct*, and certain techniques for guiding and mobilizing people to self govern in a particular way (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). Mitchell Dean, (1999: 11) describes government as a more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies. It exploits a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seek to shape the conduct of individuals by working on their desires, aims, interests and beliefs: 'To analyse government is to analyse those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups' (Dean 1999: 12). Visual representations, such as advertising in the media, serve as tools for governing consumers.

The idea of governmentality encompasses the notion that people are free, they have a certain field of action in which to act freely within the social, political and economic structure. In other words, advertising does not make people act in a certain way, but it addresses its viewers as consumers, and offers them certain subject positions aimed at mobilizing them to behave in a certain way (Miller and Rose, 1997). The persuasion is subtle, and audiences of advertisements may participate voluntarily, may respond with nonchalance, or may oppose the promotional messages. Government aims to shape the field of action of individuals, yet the governed are, to some extent, capable of acting and thinking otherwise (Dean, 1999: 14-15). According to Michel Foucault (1980), the process of making individuals subjects is intertwined with power and knowledge. Analytics of government is aimed at analysing characteristic ways of forming subjects (Dean, 1999: 23). These subject positions or consumer positions offered by bank advertisements are the focus of this study.

THE TURNING POINT IN MARKETING

Throughout the history of marketing, companies have attempted to govern consumers; it is only the forms of government that have changed their shape (Skålen, Felleson and Fougère, 2006; 2008). A significant turning point in the way advertising addressed consumers occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, when the focus shifted gradually from viewing the customers as mass, to constructing the consumer as an active individual.

In the 1970s and 1980s new marketing approaches emerged such as experience marketing, collaborative marketing and relationship marketing (RM). All these approaches endorsed the idea of the individual consumer and segmentation of the market. The most prominent approach is RM (Cova and Cova, 2012: 152). The promoters of RM (e.g. Berry, 1983; Grönroos, 1990; Peppers and Rogers, 1993) criticized the mass marketing approach for its focus on the exchange value of the sales, and its inability to view the customers as an individual or to make a distinction between loyal and non-loyal customers.

RM was part of academic marketing as far as as the 1950s and 1960s, and stressed the importance of creating relationships between all the parties in the production process (Skålen *et al*, 2008: 98-104). The idea spread to marketing practice more generally in the 1970s, putting the focus on the end-user, which led to the term customer relationship marketing (CRM) (Missitus *et al*, 2006). The aim of CRM is to govern the consumer through their participation in a dialogue and co-operation with the firm (Beckett and Nayak, 2008; Beckett, 2012). According to Zwick and Dholakia (2004), the practice of CRM produced discursively the present commonly shared idea of the individual consumer.

CRM is aimed at governing the free consumer subject, Homo Economicus, by getting close to her and winning her trust. CRM includes techniques for gathering knowledge about the customer, and classifying customers into segments according to their consumption habits (see Knights and Sturdy 1997). New information technology helped the development of customer databases in 1970s and 1980s, which are crucial for enabling the exploitation of customer information for efficient target marketing (Zwick and Dholakia, 2004; Missitus *et al*, 2006).

Collecting and maintaining customer databases has always been central to banking business, and the financial sector in Great Britain was among the first to adopt CRM techniques (Hodgson, 2002: 324). The abolition of banking regulation in Finland in 1978 increased competition among the banks and gave impetus for adapting new marketing strategies like CRM (Kuusterä, 1997). However, according to marketing historians, the customer approach had been adopted before the popularization of CRM (Skålen *et al*, 2008: 98-104; Grönroos, 2000: 23; Fullerton, 1988; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). Bank marketeers in the US had for long collected data on customers, and at the end of 19th century the market was segmented according to gender, age and ethnic origin to enable target marketing. In the 1920s, segmenting was widespread in bank advertising (Germain, 2000: 55). However, in Finland, the ideas of CRM and segmentation techniques did not emerge until the 1970s.

THE FINNISH ECONOMY AND BANKS IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

From a broader perspective, the changes in marketing thinking in the 1970s and 1980s were following the development of a consumer society and financial institutions. Industrialization was both later and more rapid in Finland compared to other European countries. The development of Finnish consumer society was almost halted by the 1930s recession and the 2nd World War up to the end of regulation in the mid 1950s (Lammi and Pantzar, 2002: 3). This postponed the adoption of the new marketing trends. In the 1950s, the Finnish economy was still in recovery following the 2nd World War, and economic policy was focused on industry growth and reconstruction of the national economy. (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 132-133). The consumer society project, and construction of consumerhood, did not begin in Finland until the 1960s. Minna Lammi (2006: 245; also Lammi and Pantzar, 2002) writes about the construction of the modern consumer-citizen through Finnish short films. She suggests that educational short films focused on constructing the Finnish farmer, in a more or less discreet way, as an economic and rational consumer.

At the beginning of the 1970s the significant social phenomenon of ‘the great migration’ from the countryside to the cities occurred in Finland. By the early 1980s, the number of clerical and administrative workers exceeded agricultural workers, and majority of the population resided in cities (Kuusterä and Tarkka, 2011: 548-550). This gave impetus to the growth of an urban service- and consumer-oriented society. However, economic growth had slowed in the mid 1970s due to the global oil crisis. The increased prices for Finland’s most important energy source caused widespread problems. However, based on its increased trade with the Soviet Union, Finland was able to survive this second recession (Kuusterä and Tarkka, 2011: 351-387).

In the period 1970-84 many post-war reconstruction projects to construct a welfare society came to fruition. According to Heinonen and Konttinen (2001; also Heinonen, 1998) banks played an important role in the construction of the consumer society. For two decades after the war, banking business was strictly regulated to enable reconstruction of the national economy. In the 1970s, bank regulation became weaker, and was finally abolished in 1987. (Kuusterä 1996, 35-37; (Kuusterä and Tarkka 2012, 551-552). This was a major step towards market-driven banking business and competition for the best customers. The banks had to adopt new advertising and marketing strategies.

The amount of bank advertising grew year on year, as competition among the banks became tougher. In the 1970s and 1980s, three equally strong groups were competing for customers: the business banks (Liikepankit), the savings banks (Säästöpankit) and the co-operative

banks (Osuuspankit). Between 1985 and 1991 the four largest financial institutions in Finland were among the top ten advertisers in the media. In 1989, Säästöpankki Group became the biggest advertiser in Finland, and had its own advertising agency (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 235, 242; Kuusterä, 1994: 591-592). The banks competed over various services, but in the 1980s competition over market interest fund raising began with the marketing of mortgages. The banks were also competing over interest on deposits (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 214). Advertising was a central technique of government in the competition over interest and loan offers.

During the 1970s and 1980s CRM was adopted by the business as well as the banking sector. For instance, savings banks traditionally were based on the idea of acting for the good of the individual, but the orientation in CRM emphasized the new business ideas of the 1980s (Kuusterä, 1994). The technique of efficient target marketing was adopted, and the banks began mapping their most important customer segments by means of extensive market research. Customers' views on bank operations and customer demands were studied. Customer surveys mapped the structure of the population and directions for change. For instance, the Säästöpankki (Savings Bank) group's clientele comprised mainly salary earners, but also included pensioners who were targeted by advertising. (Kuusterä, 1994: 608-610).

CLOSE READING OF BANK ADS

The study exploits bank advertisements in two Finnish weekly magazines, *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu*, in the years 1973, 1978, 1981, 1986 and 1989. A sample of 20% of these advertisements was chosen randomly for qualitative analysis. The study sample includes 102 bank advertisements, 61 from *Suomen Kuvalehti* and 41 from *Apu* magazine. Multiple appearances of the same advertisement in different issues are excluded.

The sample years were chosen to coincide with significant events in Finland's economy and economic politics. The year 1973 is related to the global oil crisis; in 1978 the Bank of Finland abandoned some important regulation concerning financial institutions; 1981 saw the end of almost a quarter of a century long administration of President Urho Kekkonen; and 1986 Finland became a full member of the European Free Trade Association - EFTA. In 1989 consumption levels were high but most citizens and companies were burdened by big loans. This was the last year of the so called Casino Economy before the early 1990s bank crisis and resulting recession.

Suomen Kuvalehti is recognized as a publisher of factual journalism. The magazine includes extensive photo reportages, and timely images of Finland and the rest of the world. *Apu* is a family magazine, and its articles are less dense and shorter than those published in *Suomen Kuvalehti*. These magazines are interesting representations of publication forums for bank advertisements; their target profiles are very different, but both have been in circulation since the 1950s. These weekly magazines were the second most important advertising medium for banks after newspapers (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 235, 242).

The method of analysis adopted was qualitative close reading (e.g. Alasuutari 1995; Miles and Huberman 1994) directed by sensitising theoretical concepts (Bulmer 1979) of the analytics of government, focusing on the construction of the subject, which is one of the central techniques used for governing populations and individuals (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999). To provide a more specific label for the subject constructed in media representations I use the term 'subject position', which is borrowed from the discourse analysis framework influenced by the works of Michel Foucault (Fairclough, 1989; 1995). Foucault (1972) considered that discourses were cultural forms of knowledge, and subjects were constructed within discourses. The notion of subject position refers to a place offered respectively to the viewer or reader in a media text (both written and image), and the position taken by the viewer of the text. (The present analysis focuses on the former since the corpus does not include interviews with viewers of advertisements.)

Advertising discourses address the viewers and offer them the opportunity to position themselves in a certain way (Fairclough, 1989: 1995). Advertising and promotional communication speak to people as if they were already consumers (Williamson, 1978). Thus, the ideology of advertising constructs them as consumers. It works by building relationships between producers and potential consumers through advertising representations. The discourses of advertising construct people's subject positions as members of the consumer society (Fairclough, 1989: 202-206).

To process the data I used the qualitative analysis software *Atlas.ti* and also read through the material several times. With the help of the coding function in *Atlas.ti* I was able to construct categories i.e. codes, and trace the particular code through different parts of the data. I focus on both text and image in the advertisements paying attention to style of address and positioning of the viewer of the ad.

The findings related to consumer positions are reflected in the historical context of a turning point in marketing thinking and changes in the image of the consumer. I traced how the spread of the idea of CRM is evident in the changes to the way the consumer is addressed in

the ads. The significance of CRM, as described by Antony Beckett (2008: 300), ‘lies not only in its individualization and the subjectivization of the consumer, but also in its attempt to subjectivize the consumer through the construction of forms of identity with which consumers are encouraged to identify’.

EDUCATING THE CUSTOMER

The 1970s bank advertising often positions the customers as if they were the dependants of banks. The consumers were addressed in a friendly and familiar way in a bid to build a relationship, but nevertheless in instructional and patronizing terms. This is exemplified in Osuuspankki’s ‘sensible people’ campaign in 1973. The customer is advised about what would be a ‘sensible’ way of managing their finances: ‘More and more people concentrate their finances in Osuuspankki. Why wouldn’t you? It is worth concentrating. Salaries, pensions, child benefits, payments and bills. All finances in same hands [...]’ Finally the ad declares that those people who have all their financial dealings concentrated in one bank are ‘sensible people’. The pay-off sentence appearing just above the bank logo declares: ‘For your profit’ (Apu 1973/10).

Figure 1: 1973 Osuuspankki Bank advertisement aimed at ‘sensible people’.



The image in this advertisement shows the staff of a small grocery store posing and smiling at the camera. Other ads part of the same campaign, show representations of young and middle-aged working men and women, such as postmen, bus drivers, bakers and kindergarten teachers. This variety demonstrates that anyone earning a regular income will

be welcomed by the bank. They are the bank's desired customers as subjects acting within the circulation of money, in an active phase in their life cycle, earning money, making deposits, taking out loans, and buying and consuming. Representations of senior citizen (pensioners) are in the minority in the bank ads in this period, while for instance the unemployed are invisible and, thus, marginalized.

The inequality of the target groups is even more explicit in some bank ads, such as Kansallispankki's 1973 campaign that distinguished between people who had been granted a home loan and those who had failed to qualify. Kansallispankki's two-page advertisement (see image 2. Apu 42/1973) begins with the question in the title: 'Why Erkki and Tuula got the mortgage from Kansallispankki?' Below we see the happy family, parents and two children, sitting at a dining table, smiling. The copy tells that Erkki and Tuula applied for a mortgage for a bigger flat to accommodate their growing family. It describes them as:

they are already professional with a stable work relation and therefore also stable income. Besides having a monthly income Erkki and Tuula make regular deposits and already had a good amount of money saved in Kansallispankki to put towards the flat.

The second page of the ad bears the title: 'And why Seppo was left without?' and shows a serious-faced young man, dressed in an overcoat, standing alone in a city street. The text explains that Seppo had only just begun saving and, 'as a bachelor he does not have such an urgent need to acquire his own apartment as a family man'. The message to the reader is patronizing, especially at the end of the copy:

In Kansallispankki we decided to see how it goes together for a year or two. Then, if the deposit account has built up, we can negotiate a loan when it is clearer that it will not be too great a burden.

Here the bank is assuming the position of a parent who advises and instructs for the good of the child. Finally, the reader is encouraged to join the fatherly embrace of Kansallispankki: 'If you are planning a mortgage come and talk to us in Kansallispankki. If you don't qualify for a loan we can think about ways to make it happen.'

Figure 2. Mortgage advertisement of Kansallispankki, *Apu* 42/1973.

Miksi Erkki ja Tuula saivat asuntolainan Kansallispankista?



Erkin ja Tuulan tapaus oli tyyppinen. Vaikka molemmat olivat vielä suhteellisen nuoria, heillä oli jo ammatit ja vakintunut työsuhte ja siten myös vakintuneet tulot. Tulojen myötä oli myös säästäminen Erkillä ja Tuulalla jatkuvaa, ja Kansallispankin konttorissa heillä oli jo sievoinen summa säästöissä nimenomaan asunnon hankkimista varten. Erkin ja Tuulan kohdalla pankin piti tulla vasaan vain hiukan puolittia pitemmälle. Edelleen oli helppo todeta, että säästöohjelman jatkaminen sellaisenaan riittäisi lainan lyhentämiseen ilman, että se liikaa rasittaisi perheen taloutta. Erkki ja Tuula myös tarvitsivat asunnon. Oli lisäksi ymmärrettävää, että he halusivat muuttaa siihen ennen lasten koulunumenoa. Yhteistuumin Kansallispankissa todettiin, että edellytykset asuntolainalle olivat hyvät. Erkki ja Tuula saivat asuntolainan ja asunnon kuten kovin moni muukin joka päivä Kansallispankista.

Ja miksi Seppo jäi ilman?



Joka päivä jää joku ilman lainaa. Myös asuntoasioissa. Sepon kohdalla yksi iso syy oli se, että omaa rahaa ei ollut kuin nimeksi. Säästäminen oli vasta alullaan. Seppo oli vasta ammatissa aloittanut ja tulojensa kasvusta hänellä ei voinut olla vielä selvää kuvaa. Itseasiassa hän oli kuvitellut niiden kasvun ehkä liiankin nopeaksi. Poikamiehenä hänellä ei myöskään ollut yhtä kipeää omistusasunnon tarvetta kuin monella perheellillä. Kansallispankissa todettiin, että katsotaan nyt yhdessä vuosi pari. Sen jälkeen on säästöohjelman toteutuessa helppo neuvotella asuntolainasta jo varhaisestakin vaiheesta, kun käy selväksi, ettei lainasta tule ylivoimaista taakkaa. Jos sinulla on aikomus hankkia asuntolainaa, tule Kansallispankkiin keskustelemaan. Ellei sinulla vielä ole edellytyksiä saada lainaa, niin mietitään yhdessä miten ne luodaan.

ystävällisesti **KANSALLIS-OSAKE-PANKKI** 

This ad shows how banks in the 1970s were already segmenting the population and adopting a typical CRM approach. The banks were prepared for customer segmentation based on their collection of customer data before the introduction of electronic databases and new information technology (see Dholakia and Zwick, 2004: 216-217).

The bank's identification as 'Kindly, Kansallispankki' hails the consumer as a friend. But the discrimination displayed positions the bank as dominating the customer and the customer as a dependant of the bank. This contradicts the idea of CRM, aimed at respecting the customer. Bank historian Antti Kuusterä explains that requests for loans were frequent in the 1970s, but the banks were unable to fulfill all these requests because of Bank of Finland interest regulations. The banks could be flexible, and made exceptions for 'good regular customers', but if they did not want to grant a loan the reason given was central bank regulations. Bank managers were in positions of significant power when choosing among customers (Kuusterä, 1994: 552-553, 568).

Joseph Turow (1997 and 2011), a critic of the consumer society, writes about how targeted advertising shapes the way people evaluate their own worth in society. Advertising is a discriminating practice, some groups of the population are more desirable customers than others. Some are completely excluded and not addressed by the ads (Puustinen, 2005 and 2008). The bank advertisements connote the cultural climate of the 1970s, when families

with children who would become future tax payers, were highly valued. Single people were seen as having less value unless proven to be extremely wealthy.

The patronizing and instructional tone of the 1970s bank ads has its roots in the patterns of governing customers during the decades after the 2nd World War. In the 1950s, bank ads addressed customers politely, as rational individuals, but as still needing to be educated in the right kind of economic behaviour (Lehtonen and Pantzar, 2002). Minna Lammi and Mika Pantzar (2002: 15) write that citizens were not considered sufficiently mature for the new market economy and, therefore, were educated through various communication means including propagandist short films shown in cinemas.

Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen and Mika Pantzar (2002) write about the bank advertisements in the 1950s which promoted an ethos of thrift (also Lammi and Pantzar, 2002; Lammi, 2006). The banks encouraged customers to save money, and saving was presented as a virtuous means of moral self-control (Lammi, 2006: 250-253). The consumer in control of her or his personal economy was described as a responsible and independent economic actor. Through such images, bank advertisements educated people to postpone their purchases as future oriented investments. Lehtonen and Pantzar conclude that bank ads were aimed at mobilizing the citizen to make savings. This was driven by a political agenda of a government keen for the citizen to empower the state, business life and local communities. Individual households in a nation recovering from the war, were encouraged to participate in the construction of the national economy and markets (Lehtonen and Pantzar, 2002: 213-228).

TOWARDS CAREFREE CONSUMPTION

Most bank advertisements in the 1970s adopt the tone of earlier adverts of educating the customer. However, the advertisements no longer frightened the customers about possible penury, instead they lured the viewers by humour and positive images to become customers of the all-inclusive services of the banks. The increased economic and consumption capacity is evident in the bank ads of the 1970s. The ethos of thrift described by Lehtonen and Pantzar (2002) in the 1950s, has disappeared, and people are being encouraged to consume freely and take out loans, especially mortgages. These loans still included an element of saving and rational investment for the future, but the new subject position of a carefree customer was constructed alongside that of a dependant.

The banks offered easy and multiple financial services to carefree customers through humorous ads. Humour became a more frequent means of addressing viewers in the 1970s,

and especially in the 1980s (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 269). Both texts and pictures were joyous and teasing. For example, the Postipankki advertisement declares: 'We have nothing to worry about, we can get money whenever we want it with no problem. Just go to the post office and withdraw some cash' (Suomen Kuvalehti 19/1973; 42/1973). The picture is of a happy smiling family including a baby and its grandparents, the target group. The presence of three generations increases the sense of community, of caring, necessary also to guarantee the continuity of circulation of finance for the bank. The idea of CRM emerges in the aim to retain old and new customers.

Figure 3: Postipankki's ad about the ease of spending in Suomen Kuvalehti magazine 19/1973.



Signs of the customer relationship approach were already evident in the 1970s ads with a gradual rather than a clearcut shift in marketing thinking. An interesting example of this is the 1973 Helsingin Osakepankki's advertisement where the customer is positioned as an equal partner.

The copy reads:

Ideally, a confidential bank relationship is open, humane and intimate. Just like an honest human relationship. When the bank relationship is like this, the business is pleasant and individual. No matter how big or small your issues are. This is because we want to serve each customer as a person, not as a mere number [...] A good bank relationship has two equal parts: the customer and the bank. Helsingin Osakepankki is a service bank. (*Suomen Kuvalehti* 42/1973).

This illustrates an explicit approach to relationship marketing in the 1970s, which subsumes the ideal of the equal relationship between company and customer. However this relationship was not regarded as taken for granted. The text implies that there may be also bad bank relationships where the bank dictates to the customer.

THE CUSTOMER AS PARTNER

Throughout the 1980s, the ideas of CRM spread to marketing and advertising. The governmentality of CRM constructs the customer as an individual (Zwick and Dholakia 2004) and addresses her as an equal partner. Customers are no longer assumed as in need of education, and the banks seem to trust in the customers' ability to manage their finances wisely.

A good example of a typical positioning of the customer as partner is the Yhdyspankki ad in *Suomen Kuvalehti* magazine declaring 'Freedom to take the lead into your own hands'. The ad constructs the consumer as an independent, rational decision maker, in control of her own life. This Homo Economicus (Foucault, 2008: 270-271) is the subject produced by neo-liberal power. She is the partner of the marketeers, a free chooser, who nevertheless is governed by the markets that seduce her into collaborating with the marketeers (see Beckett, 2012). The ad depicts a view of a multi-lane city street, in front of the Eiffel tower, Paris, in the heart of the city of freedom and equality. The viewer is positioned behind the handlebars of a motorcycle, as if from the perspective of the busy and individualist Homo Economicus. The copy emphasizes this interpretation: 'A new kind of freedom, flexibility and speed – these are the things that we invest in Yhdyspankki right now.'

Figure 4: The Customer Loyalty campaign advertisement of Yhdyspankki from 1986 ‘Freedom to take the lead into your hands.’ (Suomen Kuvalehti 42/1986).



The advertisement can be interpreted as addressing the new life style segment defined in the 1980s, the Yuppie, who is young, urban and professional (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 214-218). The depiction also suits the image of the self-reflective consumer in CRM, described by Beckett and Nayak (2008: 310). The construction of the self-reflective consumer is part of the technique of subjectification. The successful consumer is the mirror image of the successful firm, but only the successful and self-driven consumers are capable to enter a dialogue with the company.

The advertisement resonates with the changes in the broader political ideas in the Finnish economic sphere, from a planned economy to a market economy, which stressed individuality, customer orientation and the role of market forces (Heinonen and Konttinen, 2001: 211–212). It connotes the economic optimism of a period of fast growth when the consumer society had developed to a relatively high level. At the end of the decade, the employment rate was high, and investment and consumption were growing fast, although to a large extent resting on debt. Economic optimism encouraged people to take out loans, and prices and salaries rose. This era was later called the Casino Economy and it was the forerunner of the bank crisis and recession of the 1990s (Kuusterä, 1996: 35-37).

The Yhdyspankki advertisement is marketing a customer loyalty programme. This is evident in the bank's golden logo of a key on a key chain with a tag saying 'Benefits for loyal

customers'. The banks began promoting customer loyalty programmes in the 1970s. It was a central governing technique of CRM aimed at retaining customers (Beckett, 2012; Beckett and Nayak, 2008). The customer loyalty programmes constructed the customer as an independent and intelligent subject, exploiting individualized information provided by the databases (Beckett, 2012: 10). The loyalty programmes were used to govern customers in a highly competitive market environment.

According to Antti Kuusterä (1994: 574-612) in the 1970s and 1980s competition among financial institutions was extremely strong. The major market share was split between the top three: the Business Banks Group, Säästöpankki Group, and Osuuspankki Group. The banks worked to keep existing customers and increase the profits from interest margins and service fees. The aim was to get customers to concentrate all their financial affairs in the same bank. The Co-operative group (Osuuspankki) was the first to launch a loyalty programme, followed with a couple of years by the other groups KOP and SYP (Yhdyspankki).

The bank ads in the 1980s magazines depict diversification and expansion of banking services. Bank cards, credit cards and automatic teller machines (ATM) became more frequent in the early 1980s (Kuusterä 1994, 574, 649). The advertisements offered ATM services to Homo Economicus as an easy and costless way to pay bills. For instance, Kansallispankki's advertisement says that from the 'Roope [The Finnish name for Uncle Scrooge in the Donald Duck comics] ATM's all over the country you can withdraw money using your own card outside of bank opening hours, on weekdays always until 11 pm' (Apu 14.3.1981).

The techniques of market segmentation had become more sophisticated and, therefore, the target groups of bank advertisements in the 1980s were better defined. The special groups assumed individual needs and wishes were addressed by different ad campaigns. For example, Yuppie customers were offered individual bank cards in advertisements described as 'tailor-made plastic money' (Apu 16/18.4.1986). A custom made bank card emphasizes the individuality of the bank customer (see Zwick and Dholakia, 2004). Consumer credit was offered to increase freedom of consumption while simultaneously raising the cost of future satisfaction (Shaoul, 1997). Competing bank advertisements hailed the consumer in a friendly way and joked about the difficulties of managing without a bank card. A wife reminds her husband not to forget his bank card as they pack the car for a trip with the children: 'last time we were in trouble when you left it at home' (Apu 14/3.4.1981). Future bank customers were also targeted. Parents were advised to open deposit accounts for their children and to contribute to a flat mortgage in the future. The importance of the youth

target group was evident in ads encouraging young people to have their salaries paid directly into the bank and to start saving for their future homes (e.g. Suomen Kuvalehti 9/1981).

Figure 5: Kansallispankki bank offers ‘tailor made plastic money’ in Apu 16/18.4.1986.

Muovirahaa ”mittatyönä.”



TOSIKORTTI 1, jolla saa käteistä pankki-automaateista.

TOSIKORTTI 2, jolla saa käteistä ja jolla voi maksaa.

TOSIKORTTI 3, jolla saa käteistä, jolla voi maksaa ja jolla saa maksuaikaa.

TOSIKORTTI 4, jolla saa käteistä, jolla voi maksaa myös ulkomailla ja jolla saa maksuaikaa.

TOSIKORTTI 5, jolla saa luottoa.

KÄYTTÖLUOTTO

Jotain näistä tarvitset varmasti. Tilaa se nyt!

KANSALLISPANKKI

The system of consumer credit constructs a close relationship between consumers and manufacturers via banks. But it also works as a discriminating practice; by selecting the people who are granted credit, it defines the consumers who have passed the test of creditworthiness and also those who have failed it (Shaoul, 1997).

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows how the Finnish banks' governmentality in their ways of addressing the consumer subject changed during the 1970-1980 period when CRM gained popularity. In the 1970s most bank ads still addressed the consumer as a dependant, a legacy from the post-war period of austerity. Gradually, advertisements changed to positioning the consumer as an equal partner. This coincided with the end to bank regulation and a move to a market-driven banking business. The competition among banks became tougher and drove them to adopt new approaches to marketing and advertising and led to new discreet ways of governing and mobilizing people as customers.

The CRM approach became more visible in Finnish marketing in the 1970s and during the 1980s became the dominant paradigm. Why is this historical turning point in how consumers were addressed of interest today?

Critical marketing and advertising research shows that the customer orientation was not a new phenomenon in the 1980s, but had been practised in some form since the early 1900s (Skålen *et al*, 2006 and 2008; Fullerton, 1988; Olsen, 2011; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). How CRM differed was that the governing of Homo Economicus became intentional and strategic. This turning point enabled more detailed techniques of governing consumers, such as audience metrics and digital user tracking, which provided data allowing the segmentation of the population into various groups to enable target marketing. Customer databases developed and expanded in the 1980s based on the use of new information technology and has become even more sophisticated and individualized in the digital era of the new millennium. These knowledge technologies provide information that enables individualized loyalty programmes which are a central technique for mobilizing consumers and governing their consumption behaviour (Beckett, 2012; Beckett and Nayak, 2008; Turow, 1997; 2011). All this has led to more specific knowledge on the consumer subject which can be used to govern consumers.

Finally, proliferation of the CRM approach in 1970s marketing is related to a wider economic and cultural turn which led Finland to become a fully-fledged consumer society. The consumer-oriented discourse had become a trend in the marketing field, and the whole of society adopted a *promotional culture* (Wernick, 1991), whose language and discursive marketing practices spread to all spheres of society.

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