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UK Banking Gains Ground – Relationships Make the Difference

The UK banking market shows signs of a general improvement in customer experience. Recent independent market data indicate a broadly positive development in service quality, supported by stronger competition, continued improvements in digital banking and an increased focus on relationship management and customer service. The 2026 EPSI Banking Study points in the same direction.

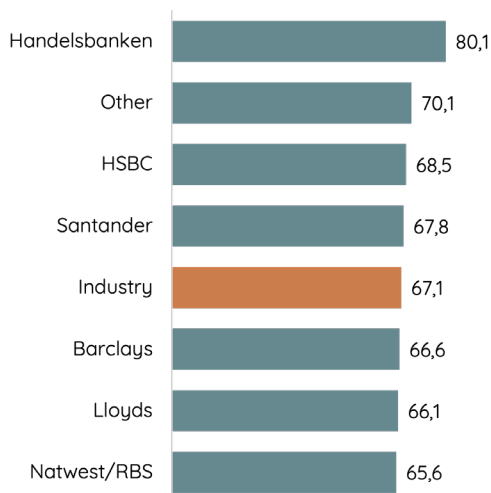
Customer satisfaction is improving in the UK, with an increase in both personal and corporate banking. The development is interesting in a wider European context. There is no longer a common direction across banking markets. The picture is increasingly one of divergence rather than convergence, as different economic conditions, competitive dynamics and customer expectations play out differently across markets.

Relationship banking gains ground

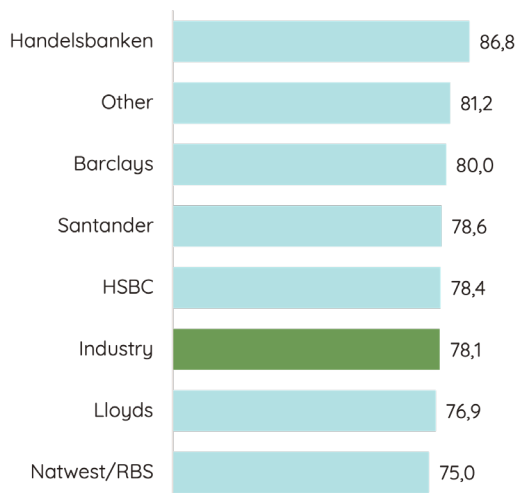
The results also point to a renewed importance of relationship banking. As digital services become more standardised, differentiation shifts towards how well banks understand their customers, anticipate their needs and provide relevant advice.

This is particularly important when financial decisions become more complex. Technology can make banking faster and easier, but strong

Corporate Banking (0-100) EPSI Bank UK, 2026



Personal Banking (0-100) EPSI Bank UK, 2026



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customer relationships remain difficult to replicate. This suggests that the 2026 results are not simply a reflection of the economic environment.

The UK market is also intensely competitive. Digital challengers have raised expectations around speed, simplicity and accessibility, while established banks continue to invest heavily in digital platforms and customer experience. The result is that good digital banking is rapidly becoming a hygiene factor rather than a source of differentiation.

Handelsbanken ranked number one

Against this changing backdrop, Handelsbanken once again records the highest customer satisfaction score in both personal and corporate banking. While technology and digital convenience continue to improve across the industry, Handelsbanken's proposition remains strongly centred on local decision-making, accessibility and personal customer relationships.

Digital convenience gets banks into the game. Relevance, proactivity and relationships determine who stands out. The results suggest that these qualities remain highly relevant even as banking becomes more digital. Customers now expect both: seamless digital functionality for everyday banking and knowledgeable human support when needs become more complex.

From digital transformation to customer relevance

This also points to a broader change in banking competition. For several years, much of the industry debate has focused on digital transformation. In

2026, that distinction is becoming less useful. Digital capability is now well established across major banks.

The competitive challenge is therefore no longer simply about adding more technology. It is about using technology to create a better and more relevant customer experience, while retaining the human interaction customers value when it matters.

This is particularly visible among corporate customers. Efficient digital services are expected, but businesses also value proactive contact, relevant advice and a bank that understands their situation.

A European banking market that is pulling apart

The 2026 picture can be summarised in three words: resilience, divergence and relevance. The UK is showing signs of resilience. Customer satisfaction is improving, competition remains strong and service expectations continue to rise. Elsewhere in Europe, the picture is more mixed.

That divergence carries an important message for banks. External uncertainty may be shared, but customer experience is not predetermined by it. What banks do, and how customers experience what they do, still matters.

For the UK market, 2026 therefore represents more than simply another year of digitalisation. It marks a shift towards a more mature competitive environment in which technology is expected, service quality is improving and customer relevance is becoming an increasingly important differentiator.

About EPSI

EPSI Rating Group (Extended Performance Satisfaction Index) is a system to collect, analyse and disseminate information about image, preferences and perceived quality as well as loyalty of customers, employees and other stakeholders to commercial entities, NPOs, governmental bodies and other organisations. The EPSI approach focuses on causal analysis derived from structural model elaboration and thorough empirical studies in order to estimate numerical relationships.

About the EPSI Model

In the EPSI index model, the satisfaction score ranges from 0 to 100. A score above 75 indicates a very strong customer relationship with very satisfied customers. A score below 60 indicates customer dissatisfaction.

For more insights and information about the study, please contact EPSI Rating.