CIÊNCIAS SOCIALMENTE APLICÁVEIS:

INTEGRANDO SABERES E ABRINDO CAMINHOS

JORGE JOSÉ MARTINS RODRIGUES MARIA AMÉLIA MARQUES

(Organizadores)

VOL VII



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VOL VII



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APRESENTAÇÃO

O sétimo volume desta coleção continua a tradição de ser um livro de temáticas emergentes interdisciplinares e transdisciplinares no campo das ciências sociais aplicadas. Interdisciplinares porque cruzam várias disciplinas do saber e transdisciplinares pela diversidade de campos do conhecimento abrangidos.

À semelhança dos anteriores volumes, a metodologia seguida na organização deste volume, podendo ser discutível, privilegiou a relevância e atualidade dos artigos, o recurso a diferentes metodologias e técnicas de investigação em ciências sociais aplicadas; o estudo de casos internacionais e nacionais, bem como a multidisciplinaridade dos estudos.

Nesse quadro, o presente volume tem como tema Saúde, Cultura e Consumo e encontra-se em torno de quatro eixos: Saúde, Cultura, Finanças e Distribuição. Na construção da estrutura de cada eixo procurou-se seguir uma lógica em que cada artigo possa contribuir para uma melhor compreensão do artigo seguinte, gerando-se um fluxo de conhecimento acumulado que se pretende fluido e em espiral crescente.

Assim, a Saúde agrupa um conjunto de cinco artigos que se preocupam com o tema. A saúde é um bem comum transversal às sociedades, o que permite movimentos transnacionais dos pacientes, seja por motivos de esperança média de vida, tratamentos específicos geograficamente localizados ou experiências forçadas devido a pandemias.

A Cultura junta sete artigos relacionados. A cultura é um património imaterial das sociedades, que permite compreender os povos, sendo o resultado de paz e acções passadas e repensadas por aqueles, com implicações nas relações internacionais, culturais, patrimoniais, etnográficas e de trabalho, com impacto na economia dos países.

As Finanças juntam um conjunto de cinco artigos. Os projectos de investimento, na óptica puramente financeira deverão ser rentáveis. Esta avaliação privilegia os esforços efectuados em investigação, inovação e *design*, na geração de fluxos de tesouraria, sob pena de as organizações criadas entrarem em falência antes do termo do mesmo.

A Distribuição junta um conjunto de quatro artigos que exploram o estímulo ao consumo. Este estímulo passa pela publicidade e pelo uso de novas tecnologias, o que gera novas soluções para os canais de distribuição com impacto na economia.

Com a disponibilização deste livro e seus artigos esperamos que os mesmos gerem inquietude intelectual e curiosidade científica, procurando a satisfação de novas necessidades e descobertas, motor de todas as fontes de inovação.

Jorge Rodrigues, ISCAL/IPL, Portugal Maria Amélia Marques, ESCE/IPS, Portugal

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THE ROLE OF MOBILE BANKING IN THE NEW DIGITAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: The impacts **FinTechs** of (Financial Technology) and digitalization on the financial sector, and on the banking industry in particular, are more and more consistent, almost disruptive. Progress in mobile device development, with the actual diffusion of smartphones, with a cheaper and widely-spread Internet have led to a growing number of Mobile Banking users all over the world. The present research wants to analyze the role of Mobile Banking in the present financial digital framework according to the banking perspective. To reach this aim the paper starts with a literature review regarding the significance of Mobile Banking, being difficult to find a relative univocal definition in literature, with no consensus for example in its definition and role in developed and developing countries. Then the paper investigates how FinTech and Digitalization can impact on Banking Industry, considering

also the effects of Covid-19 crisis. The work wants also to explore the various channels through which Mobile Money Services affect bank performances. The analysis is able to point out that the actual disruptive changes in mobile financial services and payments can represent also a great opportunity for banks to reduce their marginal costs and to increase their productivity, giving them the possibility to leverage innovative and less costly business models too. The paper in its final part indicates also some critical issues concerning the development of Mobile Banking and, finally, some topics for further researches regarding these subjects.

KEYWORDS: Mobile Banking. Mobile Payments. Digitalization. FinTech. Covid-19 crisis.

1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction and successive growth of Internet, more and more cheaper and widely-spread, and of mobile technologies have transformed many branches of industries, including the banking one, changing markets and ways of competition. Technology-driven innovation in financial services – known as *FinTech*, resulting from *Fin*ancial *Tech*nology – is increasingly reshaping the financial landscape, and the banking one in a particular

way, as never before (Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2018; Sironi, 2016; Disse and Sommer, 2020; Ky et al. 2019). Considering that every innovation creates changes and these changes translates into risks, it's evident that FinTech can create the risk to disrupt the existing banking model. And mobile banking, combined with Internet diffusion, is today one of the biggest technological change agent, being among the latest in a series of recent mobile technological wonders.

But all these important changes can represent also an extraordinary way to progress and to reach new and better frontiers for banks. In other terms, the deep development of modern technologies can represent one of the biggest allies in order to redirect and to redesign banking activities. In fact, banks can use these technological innovations to create new communication channels to reach every kind of client, also the less accessible ones.

In their evolution from phone banking, through internet banking until mobile banking, banks have had a primary goal: to simplify their business model, going out of a rather conservative way of doing banking, offering new and less expensive distribution channels for their services. Consequently, it is important to monitor mobile banking, within the *FinTech* phenomenon, since, according to information system experts, it is surely a key for banking innovative activities in the future.

To analyse the role of mobile banking in the new digitalized framework and to investigate how it can represent an instrument to reshape the banking landscape, it's necessary to start with a literature review concerning the same definition of mobile banking. After this, the work continues with an analysis, based on a review of the relative existing literature, of the impact of Fintech and digitalization on the banking industry, considering also the various and important effects of the Coronavirus pandemic crisis on the diffusion of digitalization all over the world. Then the author wants to study the various channels through which Mobile Money Services, that of FinTech are a considerable part, affect bank performances, considering in a particular way the opportunities for banks deriving from the development of these mobile services. Some final considerations regarding the possible critical issues connected to the mobile payment services and M-banking diffusion close the work, with the indications of some elements for further researches.

2 MOBILE BANKING: THE DEFINING APPROACHES IN LITERATURE

Mobile banking enables users to have all financial resources "in their hands", via mobile devices, mobile phones and personal digital assistants. Although automated teller machine (ATM), telephone, and Internet banking offer effective delivery channels for traditional banking products, considering the newest delivery channel established by retail and microfinance banks in many developed and developing countries, mobile banking is likely to have significant effects on the market (Ashta and Biot-Paguerot, 2018).

The evolution of 3G phones, smartphones, and new 4G/5G technologies has surely widen the spectra of new and improved models of mobile banking. Smartphones and tablets are becoming new hardware devices present in everyday life, which will drive a bigger and faster supply of mobile solutions (DBResearch, 2012). In particular, the expanded use of smartphones has increased demand for mobile banking services, prompting many more banks, microfinance institutions, software houses and service providers to offer these innovative services together with new sets of products and applications, designed to reach more and more clients (including unbanked populations), improve customer retention, enhance operational efficiency, increase market share, providing new employment opportunities too (Dupas et al., 2018).

Academic research has started to analyze the role of m-banking in today's economy almost recently but, according to the findings indicated by Shaikh and Karjaluoto, who proposed a literature review on mobile banking adoption, "exiting research is fragmented, constituted by various theoretical frameworks, with relatively small sample sizes (average N=365) drawn from both developed and developing countries" (Shaikh and Karjaluoto, 2015, p. 14) Moreover, according to the same authors, "the existent literature appears limited by its narrow focus on SMS banking in developing countries (...)" (Ibidem, p.1).

It's necessary to underline that there is no consensus in the definition of mobile banking between North and South: in industrialized (or developed) countries, mobile banking refers to an extension of banking and financial services provided on mobile phones by financial institutions (Lin, 2011); by contrast, in developing countries, mobile banking is a broader form of banking that includes, for example, payment services (m-payments), transfer of funds, and deposits (Fall *et al.*, 2020; Jack and Suri, 2014; Suri and Jack, 2016).

The difficult in finding a univocal definition of mobile banking in literature derives also from the fact that researchers have used various terms to refer to mobile banking: branchless banking (Ivatury and Mas, 2008); m-payments, m-transfers, m-finance (Huili et al., 2013); pocket banking (Amin and Ramayah, 2010). Some authors identify the difference between mobile banking (or m-banking) and mobile payment (or m-payment) and argue that, if a bank is not directly involved in the instrumental gratification of a service offered, it can be called "m-payment" and examples of such services include payments through overhead-priced SMS, prepaid account loading, or a charge made to the subscriber's account (e.g., credit card or invoice based payment mechanism). (Cruz et al., 2010).

According to Ndiwalana and Popov (2016), m-payments are financial transactions actuated by users through the help of mobile devices, in our context the growing number of mobile phones. M-payments can be considered a subset of m-banking, which refers to accessing various banking services via mobile devices, so m-payments may be one of the services provided by a financial institution. On the other hand, mobile commerce (or m-commerce) refers to monetary transactions conducted and facilitated via mobile networks. All the above services can be considered subsets of their electronic counterparts: m-payments are a subset of electronic payments (e-payments), m-banking is a subset of electronic banking (e-banking) and m-commerce is a subset of electronic commerce (e-commerce). The distinction is their reliance on mobility. Being an important component of e-banking, m-banking usually constitutes an alternative delivery channel (ADC) for financial transactions (Shaikh and Karjaluoto, 2015).

According to Bank of Uganda, instead, "Mobile money, along with "mobile banking", pertains to the larger area of "mobile financial services". "Mobile money" is e-money available to a user to conduct transactions through a mobile phone. The mobile money wallet/mobile money account is an electronic money (e-money) account which receives electronic value either after the account holder deposits cash via an agent or receives a payment/remittance from elsewhere. "Mobile banking", on the other hand, refers to the use of a mobile phone to perform transactions on one's account in a licensed institution (including balance inquiries, mini-statements, statements and cheque books requisitions, forex rates enquiries and funds transfer to other nominated bank accounts). The term "mobile financial services" encompasses both "mobile money" and "mobile banking" (Bank of Uganda 2017, p.1).

Some studies (Akturan and Tezcan, 2012; Masrek et al., 2012) cite m-banking as an innovative communication channel that allows the customer to interacts with a bank through a portable device. According to Tomic and Stojanovicc (2018) "M-banking is one of the application that came out from mobile commerce (M-commerce). It is a channel through which banks interact with clients by using mobile devices in the most simplified form. Banks use m-banking, i.e. SMS services to send clients updated information". At the same time, according to these authors, the most adequate definition of mobile banking has been given by Luo et al. (2010): "Mobile banking is an innovative method to access to banking services through a channel, whereby the users interact with the bank via mobile devices (e.g. a mobile phone or a personal digital assistant)". In literature, also other researcher consider m-banking as an application of m-commerce, that enables customers to access bank accounts through mobile devices to conduct transactions,

such as checking account status, transferring money, making payments, or selling stocks (Alafeef *et al.*, 2012; Wu and Wang, 2005).

However, the dynamic markets for mobile devices and mobile banking suggest the need for a definition able to capture recent advances in the field. Previous definitions have not, for example, explicitly stated which mobile devices may be qualified for m-banking use: accessing banking services from a laptop should not be considered m-banking, because laptops are aligned with the online/Internet banking category rather than with m-banking.

According to Shaikh and Karjaluoto (2015), mobile banking can be defined as "A product or service offered by a bank or a microfinance institute (bank-led model) or MNO (non-bank-led model) for conducting financial and non-financial transactions using a mobile device, namely a mobile phone, smartphone, or tablet".

According to these authors, the digital mobile ecosystem comprises several applications, channels and methods for conducting m-banking, as well as major services offered through m-banking channels. "In fact, retail and microfinance banks, located both in developed and in developing countries, typically offer four points of access to m-banking services:

- (1) mobile applications, that can be downloaded to a smartphone;
- (2) mobile browsers, that can be used with any mobile or smartphone having a Web browser;
- (3) applications, that can be downloaded into a tablet;
- (4) short messaging services (SMS), that provide notifications of account information" (Shaikn and Karjaluoto 2015, p. 5).

"Other authors underline that communication due to the constant development of mobile communication technology can be defined as every direct or also indirect monetary transaction made by a wireless telecommunication network (...)" (Moro Visconti, Quirici and Borroni, 2020, p. 97). Considering this network perspective, it's possible to see, among others, also Mallat et al. (2004), Sharma and Al-Muharrami (2018), Dwivedi et al. (2017), Shih, Hung and Lin (2010). Fall et al. (2020), in particular, point out that mobile banking can be defined "as a platform accessed by a mobile phone to make payments, transfer funds, make deposits (withdrawals are unnecessary), and borrow money (overdraft allowed)".

So, according to these previous definitions, "it is possible to consider M-banking as a network based on digital platforms (...) in which several stakeholders (banks, microfinance institutions, mobile network operators, and, obviously, users) can play interdependence roles." (Moro Visconti, Quirici and Borroni, 2020, p. 97). In other terms, networking

platforms may be represented by bridging nodes like Mobile banking hotspots (Moro Visconti, 2020).

3 FINTECH AND DIGITALIZATION: A DEFINING APPROACH AND SOME EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

Mobile banking is surely a considerable part of FinTech, a complex phenomenon that can be defined in various ways. In literature, it's relevant the definition given by the Financial Stability Board, that adopted a rather broad definition of FinTech due to the rapidly and fluidity of its developments, considering it as "technologically-enabled financial innovation that could results in new business models, applications, processes, or products with an associated material effect on financial markets and institutions and the provision of financial services" (Financial Stability Board, 2017, p. 7).

The terminology "FinTech" can be alternatively used for various financial technologies and for their providers: in the first meaning, the FinTech ecosystem features a variety of business propositions which can span from peer-to-peer lending to digital payments (as mobile payments), or Big Data analytics, or blockchain technology; in the second one, FinTechs are all start-up companies which appeared between 2008 and 2010 particularly in the USA, but fast spreading out to the East Coast, Europe, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and much part of Asia (Sironi, 2016). Yet, according to Sironi, looking at the business philosophy and aspirations of their founders, "FinTechs are a global phenomenon, born at the intersection between financial firms and technology providers, attempting to leverage on digital technology and advanced analytics to unbundle financial services and harness economies of scale by targeting long-tail consumers" (Sironi, 2016, p. 5). Instead, FinTech can be described also as "the employment of information technology to provide innovative and improved financial services" (Disse and Sommer, 2020, p. 18).

Clearly, digitalization plays in this contest a key role, because just digital tools allow the creation of captive customer experiences as weapon to tear down the barriers to entry in financial services, fostering borderless competition against established institutions (Anagnostopoulos, 2018; Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, 2018).

FinTech innovations can disrupt existing industry structures and boundaries but, at the same time, they can democratize access to financial services, causing significant privacy, regulatory and law enforcement challenges (Carbò-Valverde, 2017, p. 134). In fact, the structural change in technology happens in parallel to competitive changes in the banking industry. So significant welfare gains from improvement in financial services are technologically feasible but unlikely to happen without the entry of new firms in the financial sector.

This complex combination of technological and competitive changes can be understood only if the features of the new financial activities are properly addressed. Many of the new services and activities related to digitalization and FinTech, often provided by multi-sided platforms, cannot be observed through the lens of the standard/traditional approach. So, regulators and supervisors have to monitor these technological challenges and to develop appropriate financial stability policies, taking into account the new ways of operating of these platforms. (Carbò-Valverde, 2017).

Surely, a deep impact on digitalization can be lead back to the Coronavirus global pandemic that has rapidly spread all around the world in 2020, demanding for social distancing measures as a strategy to soften contagions. The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, declared the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak - first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province - a global pandemic. The coronavirus crisis has had multiple deep effects all over the world, but according to our analysis one of the most important effect of this terrible crisis is that it has accelerated the digital transformation. In fact, the pandemic led to wider recognition of the importance of the digital transformation, particularly in the European Union. "Until recently, the implementation of digital technologies was considered important for market success and was usually associated with the most innovative and modern companies. Now, however, the pandemic has made the digital transformation integral to firms' survival. Many of the changes associated with digitalization - services provided remotely, teleworking and online meetings - are likely to stay. Investments in digitalization is vital to preventing business disruption, organizing work remotely, improving communications with customers, suppliers and employees and selling products and services online." (European Investment Bank, 2022, p. 2)

During the Covid-19 crisis, firms put more complex digitalization processes on hold. Beyond the short-term response to this crisis, a structural element for the digital transformation of the EU economy is the implementation of advanced digital technologies such as 3-D printing, advanced robotics, the Internet of Thing (IoT), Big Data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), drones or digital platforms. Just platforms and advanced robotics are the most widespread digital technologies (Croxson et al., 2022). The crisis forced firms and financial intermediaries to find more efficient ways of working with these new technologies, just considering that digitalization can transform business dynamics, work organization, education, health and government services. It's also necessary to point out that "Some EU firms are at risk of being left behind, in particular in regions where digital infrastructure is lacking. One in six EU firms consider access to digital infrastructure to be a major obstacle to investment, but there are differences across EU countries and among

regions within the same country. Significant investments in digital infrastructure is needed across the European Union to support a broad-based economic recovery" (European Investment Bank, 2022, p. 1)

In this context, technology has a tool called Mobile Banking services (M-banking) for all the payment and receipts transactions to maintain social distance and stay safe during Covid-19. In other term, M-Banking applications are fully consistent with distancing prescriptions of pandemic crisis, allowing for 24/7 operativity too (Moro Visconti, Quirici and Borroni, 2020, pp. 96-97; Ashta, 2021; Ojong and Asongu, 2021; Davidovic *et al.*, 2020). The pandemic fosters a fast increase in digital payments and a sharp rise in mobile app adoption (Bianchi *et al.*, 2022), even if advanced and developing countries favor different mobile payments solutions (Han and Wang, 2021). But these elements will be consider better successively.

4 HOW FINTECH AND DIGITAL IZATION CAN RESHAPE THE BANKING INDUSTRY

In other terms, also considering the pandemic crisis effects, a new financial intermediation framework is growing, with huge amounts of information processing (*big data*) and new delivery channels, to improve the access to credit or other services from different types of clients. A new business, where the distance between households, small firms and their lenders will be increasing, as communicating in more impersonal ways (Sy *et al.*, 2019).

However, banks will interact with new players into this new *FintTech* business in various ways, from fierce competition to cooperation. Regulators will need to check whether regulation offers a level-playing field for such interaction and the necessary tools to preserve financial stability. Therefore, the implications of digitalization in the financial sector, and in the banking one in particular, seem to be enormous. The locality and physical reality of financial services have been transformed, the same methods and customer expectations of delivering them have profoundly changed and they are continuing to change: in developed countries, digital distribution of data and networked systems driven by convenience and cost reduction are prevalent (De Almeida et al., 2018), while in developing countries there has been increasing access to inclusion in financial services (Wieser *et al.*, 2019).

In other terms, consumers will continue to need financial services, but they will embrace more decentralized solutions, as it is happening also in other industries. The sharing economy is foreseen to become embedded in financial products, including peer-to-peer lending, cashless and payment integrated services (such as Uber and Amazon). The

World Energy Forum and Deloitte identified 11 disrupting clusters of innovations related to digitalization and these innovations will exert pressure on the traditional financial services model in the near future. Traditionally, banking systems were largely impenetrable for new entrants. With the digital transformation, small and agile new suppliers have appeared in large numbers, and incumbents are losing leverage unless they adapt to the new financial ecosystem (McWaters, 2016).

FinTech disruptors are usually fast-moving, start-up companies that generally focus on a particular innovative technology or process. They have been invading various services, from mobile payments to insurance, and have more than tripled annual global investments in the last five years. The banking industry has recently seen the introduction of numerous online only or direct banks (N26), many of which offer worldwide access. Data and analysis are becoming key to revenues and profitability. Customer intelligence based on *big data*, but then translated to tailored services, is predicted to shape the future of service requirements. Financial services and technology companies more and more will use artificial intelligence to explore social and emotional intelligence, natural language processing, logical reasoning, pattern assessment, sensors, or mobility, and more. The services created are expected to growth, supplying a more personalized treatment (TWI2050-The World in 2050, 2019).

The current transformations of infrastructure will become the norm. Many banks already use cloud-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications for non-core processes, but shortly these will be the main (perhaps only) platforms for all business activities. On the customer side, mobile and online services will become the norm. In light of this, cyber-security is becoming a critical threat to be overcome.

So, it's possible to point out that online banking has won its place in the traditional bank transactions sector. In fact, digital innovations provide opportunities for banks to enhance their customer-interactions, improve their decision-making, and implement new business models in a more cost-effective and innovative way. Transactions are easily done by personal computers from home or office. Real-time transaction monitoring enables users to track their money flow and driving from one part of a town to another becomes obsolete, as well as waiting in bank queues. Transactions are fast and easily done, around the clock, from anywhere in the world. These activities are more and more important for people who want to get information on their bank account or make a transaction as soon as possible (Moro Visconti and Quirici, 2014). Rapid development of mobile technologies enables clients to do these bank operations from their mobile phones. Therefore, mobile banking "go" towards clients' growing needs for more convenient and easier managing of

their bank accounts and transactions, in a continuous progress from simple bank account checking to today's mobile on-the-spot payments in stores.

5 THE ROLE OF MOBILE FINANCIAL SERVICES: THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BANKS IN THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS (MNOS)

Mobile money technology allows users to conduct financial operations through mobile networks where cash-in cash-out services are provided by small business outlets better known as agents. Although mobile network operators are the most active actors, banks play a crucial role in mobile money provision. Specifically, to launch mobile money services, mobile network operators have to build partnership with banks or other financial institutions having a banking license (Aron 2017). In this case, banks play the role of custodians for mobile money users by holding a "trust" or "escrow" account deposits that match the full extent of e-money in the name of mobile network operators. Banks can use these additional funds to increase their lending and this is not different from the way banks use ordinary deposits.

Bank involvement in the mobile money scheme includes simply holding a trust/ escrow account (passive), building partnership to launch mobile money services (active), or both. To exploit other potential benefits associated with mobile money, some banks build partnership with *Mobile Network Operators* (MNOs) to increase the number of their ATM users: these interest and fee-generating activities constitute new sources of income that may potentially enhance bank profitability. In addition, banks can leverage mobile money platforms to reach more people in traditionally underserved areas at much lower cost. And being bank presence often limited to urban or highly populated areas, MNOs' extensive network may enhance bank efficiency in traditionally underserved areas at much lower cost (Ky et al, 2019, p. 6-7). In fact, if traditionally, banks provide cash-in/cash-out services via ATMs and bank branches, these solutions are too expensive to set up in markets that have low-income or low-density populations (Moro Visconti and Quirici, 2014).

Therefore, Bank-MNO partnership in mobile money provision may enable banks to leverage mobile money agent networks to reach those areas with limited population size or economic activities, catering to new segments of customers and so diversifying further their income streams. In a similar vein, banks' partnership with MNOs may allow customers to perform their banking transactions without visiting banks' agencies. Exploring channels through which mobile money affects bank performance, it's possible to find that improved access to retail deposits and income diversification are possible candidates (Ky et al., 2019).

Consequently, it is possible to underline that "A well-designed mobile payments solution has the potential to benefit all interested stakeholders: Network Mobile Operators will increase traffic on their networks and hence profits from usage fees; banking institutions may get the opportunity to service a larger population, many of whom were unreachable before because of the costs of serving them exceed expected return on investment.

It is possible also to point out the usefulness of M-banking services for banking and microfinance clients that are complementary between the banking and microfinance services, on one part, and the M-banking services, on the other. This result is also observed because of the greater maturity of customers of the banking system, compared with those who are not mature. Such customers have a better understanding of m-banking services because their financial knowledge is higher than that of others, which explains their greater propensity to adopt the technology." (Moro Visconti, Quirici and Borroni, 2020, p. 99).

In terms of bank stability, the literature purports that financial technology can potentially strengthen financial stability by fostering financial inclusion, increasing diversification and transparency as well as allowing better risk assessment. According to Ahamed and Mallick (2019), financial inclusion improves financial stability by accessing cheap retail deposits from a large clientele base, reducing financing constraints of SMEs and mitigating the post-lending moral hazard. Also Ky et al., considering the results of their analysis to know whether mobile money adoption enhances or worsens bank performance, "show that enhanced income diversification and broadened access to deposits are possible channels through which banks involved in mobile money improve their performance. Overall, our finding highlight the bright side of cooperation between banks and mobile network operators in the provision of mobile money" (Ky et al., 2019, p. 1).

An other factor that equally matters when it's investigated the potential impact of m-banking adoption on firm performance is bank size. According to Ky *et al.* cited analysis, small banks involved in mobile money show a strong association with both their profitability and efficiency in relation to their degree of involvement in a partnership with an MNO.

These results are consistent with those of Ahamed and Mallick (2019), who notice that for small banks the length of involvement in mobile money does not matter, being sufficient this kind of involvement to realize an improvement in bank performance. Scott *et al.* (2017), then, show that the effect of technological innovations on profitability are higher on small banks than on larger ones and this because the former can adapt faster to them compared to the second ones, that may be sluggish to respond due to their stable market position and legacy systems. According to these authors, the positive relationship shown between banks' involvement in mobile money and their performance is expected to be more pronounced for banks with low retail deposit funding or low income diversification.

The failure of the experience in Kenya of M-Kesho (launched in March 2010) vs. the spectacular success of its successor M-Shwari (launched in November 2012) can illustrate how decisive the sizes of the bank and MNOs involved in a partnership might be. In fact, M-Kesho and M-Shwari are digital credit products similar in every aspect except that Safaricom partnered with the largest bank in Kenya (Equity Bank) to launch the former, while for the later, the partner, CBA bank, was a small largely-unknown bank. A frequently cited reason behind the failure of M-Kesho mobile money service is that Equity Bank and Safaricom perceived each other as main competitors and failed to define the partnership in a way that satisfied both companies. This phenomenon has propelled some to ask whether cooperation between equals in this area was even desirable (Cook and McKay, 2017).

Thanks to an increased use of mobile banking, banks have transferred certain aspects of their business from branches, that were a traditional form of the bank-client interaction, and can offer cheaper and more affordable services, due to their lower costs (of human resources and offices). If all these advantages have led to a pronounced increasing trend of the number of users of m-banking, it's necessary to point out that the costs per transaction are lower not only for the clients, but also for the bank: KPMG (2015), in its cost analysis, shows transactions cost 43 times more when made in the bank than when made through distribution channels of mobile banking.

Consistent with the very notion that at the core of FinTech is the use of technology to provide new and improved financial services, mobile money technology allows banks to offer to their users financial services - such as money transfers, payments, savings, insurance and digital credit – that are cheaper and easier, saving their own coast (Ky et al., 2019).

"Over the last decade, mobile money has been disrupting traditional financial services and transforming the lives of hundreds of millions of people across developing countries. Today, with over \$1.3 billion a day processed by over 866 million registered accounts in 90 countries, mobile money has evolved into a broader payments platform that provides access to life-enhancing services, such as healthcare, education, employment, transportation and social protection. At a macro level, mobile money fuels economic growth by facilitating savings and investments, creates employment, drives business productivity and entrepreneurship, helps formalize the economy and provides stability during economic downturns. Mobile money is a key driver of socio-economic growth and is becoming a gateway to the digital economy. As national economies become increasingly dependent on digital technology, the power of mobile money to harness digital finance for sustainable development is strengthening" (GSMA 2019).

6 SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Today, mobile money is set to become the backbone of payments in the digital economy, facilitating platform solutions and driving innovation and economic growth (UNCTAD, 2019). Mobile money is positioned to be one of the leading forces of digital finance in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by UN 2030 Agenda, connecting more than five billion individuals around the globe, providing access to essential communications and life-enhancing services and transforming business models across industries and societies. To harness this power, partnerships and cross-sector collaborations with other stakeholders are required (United Nations Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Financing of the SDGs, 2019). These elements can have positive effects on banks, becoming, in their disruptive force, a great opportunity to seize.

But there also some critical aspects that it is necessary to control and to solve. "The development of M-banking presents two critical issue from a regulatory point of view: first of all, it is necessary to strengthen safeguards for the protection of users of financial services accessible through online channels (cyber-attacks, misleading news, misleading behavior by producers, etc.). Many mobile phone owners are financially "at-risk", due to a somewhat limited, if not completely absent, awareness of the operating mechanisms of even the simplest financial services (World Bank, 2017) (...) Secondly, the development and diffusion of FinTechs offering financial services like those offered by banks can generate confusion among users, leading them to equate these services with those traditionally provided by banks. However, it should be borne in mind that while credit institutions are subject to strict regulation and supervision, FinTechs operate in a much 'softer' regulatory environment (...)." (Moro Visconti, Quirici and Borroni, 2020, p. 105).

So, considering the role of mobile payments and M-banking in a financial services network, there are many necessary policy and regulatory implications. If this network have to work successfully, multiple stakeholders with varying interests need to work together (banking institutions, MNOs, payment processors, regulatory agencies, government departments, and so on). So there is the need for a high-level guidance in order to realize a national strategy within which various players may interact. Besides, the numerous different laws and regulations that are related to financial institutions, on one-hand, and MNOs, on the other, had to be analysed and synchronized to enable a successful implementation of mobile banking servives.

Then, besides creating an enabling regulatory environment, there is also the need to experiment different business models to identify the most appropriate one that can accommodate all the multiple players, even competitors from the same sector. And all

this considering that the Covid-19 pandemic surely has deeply reshaped the relationship among all the interacting stakeholders, with long-term effects that will be able to survive the emergency.

Finally, it's possible to share Carbò-Valverde's conclusions on the possible impacts of Digitalization and FinTechs, and of m-banking too, on banking activities:

- "i) The digitalization change has been around for decades but today, its impact and the speed of diffusion and change seem unprecedented. In line with other industries, this is transforming the competitive structure of the banking sector, with new entrants from the FinTech industry. It also implies a revolution for bank delivery channels and information processing systems, and change in the jobs and skills that are required in financial services. From an academic perspective, understanding the economics of banking currently requires a shift from the standard buyer-seller model of standard industrial organization to models based on network externalities and multi-sided platforms with several related prices and cross-subsidies;
- ii) Digitalization and FinTech are also an opportunity to reduce marginal costs and increase productivity in financial services. However, there are also financial stability concerns associated with these processes as they imply a massive accumulation of intangible capital which is not always appropriately valued in capital markets, and they also blur the industry boundaries and create significant privacy, regulatory and law enforcement challenges.
- iii) Giving its systemic nature, the new activities and players in the financial sector cannot be regulated (or unregulated) the same way that other industries are enforcing regulation (e.g. taxi cab industry, social media etc.). One potential solution would be to regulate each innovation according to its specialization. That is, regulating activities rather that the players.
- iv) Another important challenge for regulators is to ensure a level playing field between bank and non-bank providers, as well as an adequate level of control and oversight over them. There have been some regulatory initiatives in this direction particularly in Europe but they are still far from ensuring that level-playing field" (Carbò-Valverde, 2017).

It is also possible to specify some topics for further researches: becoming the mobile industry an instrument to achieve the SDGs, the financial inclusion and the reduction of gender gap in developing countries, connected to the development of mobile banking services, may represent an interesting research topic. In a similar way, very interesting can be considered the cyber-security necessary in mobile payments and also the critical aspects of personal data ownership to understand interoperability both of data and mobile payments.

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