

## **Digitalization of financial services: analysis of customer experience in the Moroccan banking sector**

## **Digitalisation des services financiers : analyse de l'expérience client dans le secteur bancaire marocain**

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## Abstract

In a global context marked by accelerated digital transformation, financial systems are undergoing profound changes, particularly affecting the banking sector. This article focuses on the impact of digitalization on the customer experience in Moroccan banks. Through a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews conducted with a sample of 65 respondents, the study explores users' perceptions of digital banking services, as well as the barriers and levers linked to their adoption. The results highlight a shift in customer expectations, who are increasingly sensitive to the simplicity, speed, and security of online services. The analysis also reveals resistance, particularly related to trust and familiarity with digital tools. These findings provide a better understanding of the challenges of digital transformation in the Moroccan banking sector and identify areas for improvement to strengthen customer satisfaction and loyalty.

**Keywords :** Digitalization ; customer experience ; banking services ; Moroccan banking sector ; customer expectations.

## Résumé

Dans un contexte mondial marqué par une transformation digitale accélérée, les systèmes financiers connaissent des mutations profondes, touchant particulièrement le secteur bancaire. Cet article s'intéresse à l'impact de la digitalisation sur l'expérience client dans les banques marocaines. À travers une approche qualitative fondée sur des entretiens semi-directifs réalisés auprès d'un échantillon de 65 répondants, l'étude explore la perception des usagers vis-à-vis des services bancaires numériques, ainsi que les freins et les leviers liés à leur adoption. Les résultats mettent en évidence une évolution des attentes des clients, de plus en plus sensibles à la simplicité, à la rapidité et à la sécurité des services en ligne. L'analyse révèle également des résistances, notamment liées à la confiance et à la familiarité avec les outils digitaux. Ces constats permettent de mieux comprendre les enjeux de la transformation digitale dans le secteur bancaire marocain, et d'identifier les axes d'amélioration pour renforcer la satisfaction et la fidélisation de la clientèle.

**Mots clés :** Digitalisation ; expérience client ; services bancaires ; secteur bancaire marocain ; attentes des clients.

## Introduction

The rise of digital technology has profoundly transformed financial systems worldwide, redefining traditional operating models and introducing new dynamics in the services offered. This digital revolution has spared no country, and Morocco is fully aligned with this global trend. In pursuit of modernization and efficiency, stakeholders in the Moroccan financial system have made significant efforts to integrate digital technologies into their operations. Among the most impacted sectors is the banking industry.

In fact, in recent years, Moroccan banks have accelerated their digital transition through the development of mobile applications, the widespread adoption of electronic payments, the introduction of artificial intelligence in customer relations, and the rise of online banking. This transformation aims to offer more accessible, faster, and efficient services, in response to new customer expectations and the imperatives of an increasingly digitalized economy.

However, while the digital transformation of banking services paves the way for a modernization of the sector, it also raises questions about its adoption by customers. Indeed, the adoption of digital services varies according to socioeconomic categories, financial habits, and the degree of trust placed in new technologies. Some customers perceive these innovations as a lever for improving their banking experience, while others express resistance related to cybersecurity, the complexity of digital tools, or even the persistence of a preference for physical interactions in branches. Therefore, it becomes essential to analyze how this digitalization is perceived by customers, what are the facilitating factors, and what obstacles remain to its widespread adoption.

In this context, this article examines how Moroccan bank customers perceive the digital transformation of financial services and the dynamics that influence their adoption or reluctance. More specifically, we will seek to understand the perceived benefits of this transition, the obstacles encountered by users, and the adjustments that banks could make to promote broader and more inclusive adoption. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question : **What are the factors influencing Moroccan customers' adoption or resistance to the digitalization of banking services?**

To address this issue, we will adopt a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews conducted with a sample of banking customers with diverse profiles. First, we will take stock of the digitalization of the Moroccan banking sector and the main services offered. We will

then analyze customer perceptions, highlighting the perceived benefits, resistance, and challenges encountered. Finally, we will propose recommendations to improve customer adoption of digital banking services and support this transition to a more inclusive and efficient banking model.

This paper will be organized as follows: first, the literature review will be presented. Then, section 2 will detail the methodology used. Section 3 will present the key results obtained, while the last section, Section 4, will be devoted to the analysis of the results, their discussion, as well as the conclusions drawn from the study.

## **1. Literature review**

Artificial intelligence (AI), though its concept has existed for a long time, saw a major breakthrough in late 2019 with the rise of AI-powered tools made accessible to the general public. These advancements quickly gained attention by providing innovative solutions. As a result, AI is now interpreted in diverse ways, depending on the perspective considered.

Norvig & Russell (2010) define AI as “the emulation of human cognitive processes, including perception, reasoning, learning, and problem-solving.” However, Floridi & Cowls (2022) offer another viewpoint, stating that “with the rise of narrow or weak AI, which specializes in specific tasks such as image recognition or language translation, the concept of AI has expanded to encompass systems designed for targeted functions.”

Yaseen & El Qirem (2018) analyze the factors influencing the intention to use online banking services in Jordanian commercial banks. The study explores various determinants such as trust, perceived security, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived risk. The objective is to understand how these elements influence customer behavior towards digital banking services and to identify levers to improve their adoption.

Alsheikh & Bojei (2014) examine the determinants of customers’ intention to adopt mobile banking services in Saudi Arabia. Through an empirical study, the authors identify several key variables influencing this intention, including perceived trust, satisfaction, self-efficacy, and performance and effort expectations. The results show that these elements have a significant impact on users’ continued intention to use m-banking services, highlighting the importance of a reliable, accessible, and efficient user experience in the Saudi context.

Kassim (2017) explores the impact of perceived security and perceived privacy on user trust and their influence on the adoption of online banking services in Malaysia. The study examines how these factors influence customers' willingness to use online banking services, highlighting the key role of trust in the acceptance process of these technologies.

Bashir & Madhavaiah (2015) examine the acceptance of online banking services among adult customers in India. Through an empirical survey, it analyzes the factors influencing the adoption of e-banking, such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, security, and perceived risks. The study highlights the key determinants of customers' intention to use online banking services and offers recommendations to improve their adoption in India.

The study by (Damghanian et al., 2016) analyzes the relationship between perceived security and online banking acceptance among Iranian customers, taking into account the mediating effect of perceived risk and trust. The researchers used a structural equation model (SEM) to test their hypotheses on a sample of 395 customers. The results show that perceived security and trust in online banking positively influence online banking acceptance. On the other hand, although perceived risk does not directly affect acceptance, it has a significant negative impact on trust in online banking services.

On the other hand, the work of (Addai et al., 2015) shows a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and the availability, reliability and convenience of e-banking services. It is therefore recommended that banks offer uninterrupted, reliable and convenient e-banking services in order to satisfy and retain their customers.

Furthermore, research by (Katiyar & Badola, 2018) shows that a significant proportion of banking customers still resist online services and prefer traditional branches to carry out their transactions.

## **2. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative approach to better understand customer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward the digital transformation of banking services in Morocco. The objective is to explore in depth the underlying reasons for customer acceptance or reluctance toward digital banking services, particularly perceptions of security, ease of use, and consumer expectations.

The study uses a semi-structured interview data collection method, allowing for rich and detailed information. These interviews are conducted with customers of major Moroccan banks who have either adopted digital banking services or are reluctant to use them. The interviews are conducted face-to-face and remotely, depending on the participants' availability, and are recorded with their prior consent.

The sample for this study consists of 65 participants, carefully selected to reflect a diversity of opinions and profiles, in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic level, and geographic location. Participants are chosen from among regular users of digital banking services, but also from among those who have not yet adopted these services or who are hesitant.

Determining when to end data collection brings up the challenge of defining an appropriate sample size. Collection continues until no new meaningful insights surface a stage referred to as informational saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). At this point, known as semantic saturation, further data simply echo previously stated views without contributing fresh perspectives.

Each semi-structured interview was scheduled for a 30-minute duration. The interviews were conducted in an open-ended manner, with questions focused on the user experience of digital banking services, perceived benefits, barriers encountered, and factors influencing the decision to adopt or reject these services. Specific questions were asked about trust in banking technology, transaction security, ease of use of digital banking platforms, as well as customer expectations regarding the evolution of services offered by banks.

The interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach. This approach combined a vertical reading focusing on each interview in isolation and a horizontal reading aimed at identifying recurrences between the different interviews. This cross-referencing enabled structured results to be generated. In accordance with Wacheux (1996), qualitative analysis is based on data reduction, classification, and then the articulation of categories to construct a coherent and meaningful interpretation.

This thematic approach allows data to be structured around specific topics such as trust in technology, accessibility of services, psychological factors influencing reluctance to adopt digital banking services, and the role of banks in facilitating this adoption.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, several cross-checks are carried out between the different interviews to detect convergences or divergences. In addition, after the data analysis, feedback will be carried out to the participants (member-checking) to confirm that the interpretation of the data accurately reflects their real experiences and perceptions.

This qualitative methodology, combined with a thematic data analysis, will provide detailed and nuanced findings regarding customer acceptance and resistance to the digitalization of banking services in Morocco. The chosen approach ensures a thorough understanding of customer perceptions while highlighting the complex factors that influence their behavior.

### **3. Analysis of responses**

Analysis of participants' responses revealed several key themes that illustrate customers' perceptions and attitudes toward the digital transformation of banking services in Morocco. These themes are analyzed below through the main factors influencing acceptance and reluctance toward the digitalization of banking services.

#### **Confidence in technology**

A major theme that emerged during the interviews was trust in technology. Many participants expressed concern about the security of digital banking transactions. Many cited fears of fraud and hacking incidents, which made them reluctant to use digital banking services. However, some participants emphasized that greater security awareness and safeguards offered by banks, such as two-factor authentication, could strengthen their trust in digital services.

On the other hand, some regular users expressed high confidence in the security of digital banking services, highlighting the evolution of technology and the measures banks have put in place to protect their personal and financial data. This highlights a gap between cautious users and confident adopters.

#### **Simplicity and accessibility of services**

Ease of use was another recurring theme. Respondents shared mixed experiences regarding the ease of accessing and using digital banking platforms. Some participants expressed difficulty navigating online platforms, particularly due to interfaces they deemed complex or procedures deemed too lengthy to complete simple tasks such as making a transfer or checking a balance.

Conversely, some users highlighted the benefits of simplifying banking processes, such as the ability to manage their finances at any time and independently, without having to travel. They appreciated the efforts made by banks to make applications more user-friendly and suited to everyday use.

### **Role of security and data protection**

Another key theme that emerged was data security and protection. Several participants expressed concerns about the protection of their personal information. These concerns stem from the fear that banks do not have sufficiently robust security mechanisms to protect their data, particularly in the face of increasing cyberattacks. There was strong demand for banks to implement stricter security protocols and provide more information about the measures taken to ensure the confidentiality of banking data.

Some participants also raised questions about the impact of digitalization on traditional banking activities, such as face-to-face interactions with advisors, which they often consider essential for resolving complex problems or asking sensitive questions.

### **Psychological barriers and cultural perceptions**

Psychological and cultural factors also played a key role in the acceptance or reluctance of digital banking services. Participants with reservations about digital services often cited a general distrust of new technologies, primarily due to a lack of familiarity and concerns about the impact of new technologies on society.

Older adults, in particular, reported difficulty adapting to digital tools and expressed a preference for physical interactions with bank advisors. Moreover, some participants highlighted the importance of social context and cultural norms in the adoption process, mentioning that in some regions, customers prefer traditional methods due to deeply held cultural values.

### **Accessibility and inequality of access**

Accessibility to digital banking services was a central theme, particularly for customers living in rural or less connected areas. Participants noted that internet access is often insufficient or unstable in some regions, making the use of digital banking services problematic. These



geographical and technological barriers increase the gap between populations with easy access to technology and those excluded from it.

Unequal access has been seen as a major barrier to the adoption of digital banking services, particularly in less developed regions of the country, where the penetration of smartphones and internet services is still limited.

### **Role of banks in the adoption of digital services**

Participants also discussed the crucial role banks play in facilitating the adoption of digital services. Several suggested that banks should increase their communication about the benefits of digital services and educate their customers on how to use online platforms. Improved customer training, including online tutorials and free training sessions, could reduce customer reluctance to adopt digital banking services.

Additionally, participants expressed the need for more customer support to address their concerns in real time and quickly resolve technical issues related to the use of digital services.

Indeed, the analysis of the responses highlighted several key themes that influence customer acceptance or reluctance to the digital transformation of banking services. These themes range from trust in technology and the security of digital services to psychological, cultural, and accessibility factors. The study highlights the importance for banks to adopt a more inclusive and educational approach to encourage wider adoption of digital banking services in Morocco.

## **4. Results and discussion**

The results of the semi-structured interviews highlight a diversity of perceptions regarding the digital transformation of banking services in Morocco. The qualitative analysis reveals a tension between the enthusiasm generated by the opportunities offered by digitalization and the resistance expressed by some customers, who view these innovations with caution, even suspicion. This duality is based on several determining factors, including the trust placed in digital technologies, the perception of transaction security, the ease of use of banking platforms, and the sociocultural influences shaping user behavior.

One of the key observations concerns the existing divide between customers who feel comfortable with digital tools and those who encounter difficulties in their adoption. For the former, digital banking is perceived as a lever for autonomy and efficiency, facilitating daily

financial management and reducing the need to travel to branches. Conversely, the most reluctant customers highlight concerns related to cybersecurity, a lack of support, and, in some cases, a marked preference for human interaction with a banking advisor. Trust thus remains a central element in the adoption of digital banking services, influenced by past experiences, limited knowledge of IT security, and fears of technical errors that could lead to financial losses.

Discussions with participants also highlighted the importance of ease of use for digital platforms. While some customers expressed satisfaction with the user-friendliness and fluidity of banking applications, others reported perceived complexity, particularly when it came to carrying out specific transactions such as international transfers or subscribing to new products. This difficulty is particularly pronounced among customers less familiar with digital tools, who sometimes feel excluded by the rapid evolution of interfaces and functionalities. Accessibility to digital banking services thus appears to play a key role in their adoption, and several participants suggest that additional efforts should be made to optimize application design and offer more personalized support.

Another key issue raised by the interviews concerns transaction security and the protection of personal data. Many participants expressed concerns about the risks of fraud, account hacking, and the confidentiality of information shared online. Although Moroccan banks have implemented advanced security protocols, the perception of persistent vulnerability remains a significant obstacle to the widespread adoption of digital services. Some respondents cited past experiences with scam attempts or suspicious transactions, reinforcing their reluctance to use online services regularly. This finding underscores the need for banking institutions to step up their communication and awareness-raising efforts regarding the protective measures in place, while ensuring responsive and accessible support in the event of an incident.

Furthermore, sociocultural and psychological aspects also influence the acceptance of digital services. A commitment to face-to-face interactions with bank advisors remains a reality for some customers, who consider human interaction essential in managing their finances. This trend is particularly pronounced among older people and customers from less digitally savvy backgrounds, who perceive online platforms as impersonal and sometimes intimidating. Others point to a more general distrust of financial institutions, fueled by a perceived lack of transparency and unsatisfactory past experiences. This reluctance highlights the need to

maintain a hybrid approach combining digital services and physical branch support to meet the expectations of a diverse clientele.

Finally, the discussions highlighted the essential role of banks in facilitating the adoption of digital services. Several participants emphasized the importance of enhanced support, including training on the use of digital tools, cybersecurity awareness campaigns, and more accessible technical assistance.

Others have suggested that financial incentives, such as discounts on certain bank fees for online transactions, could encourage a smoother transition to digital services. Integrating responsive and personalized customer support also appears to be a key lever for reassuring users and encouraging their engagement in the digital banking ecosystem.

In summary, the analysis of the semi-structured interviews highlights a gradual but still mixed adoption of digital banking services in Morocco. While some customers see this as a beneficial step forward in terms of convenience and efficiency, others remain held back by concerns related to security, platform ergonomics, and traditional banking relationships. One of the major lessons of this study is that digital transformation is not based solely on technological innovation, but also on the ability of banks to establish a climate of trust, support their customers in this transition, and offer solutions adapted to their needs and expectations.

## **Conclusion**

This study analyzed the challenges related to the digital transformation of banking services in Morocco and its impact on customer experience. Through a qualitative approach and an analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with customers and banking sector stakeholders, several key findings emerged. On the one hand, digital advances in the Moroccan banking sector have generally improved access to and the quality of banking services, with a particular focus on facilitating transactions and reducing operational costs. On the other hand, this transformation has generated significant reluctance among a portion of the population, mainly due to mistrust of new technologies and a lack of ownership of digital tools.

The data analysis revealed two distinct groups: those who embrace digitalization, viewing new technologies as an asset for simplifying their banking interactions, and those who, on the contrary, remain attached to traditional methods due to concerns about data security and digital inaccessibility. These findings highlight the importance of developing awareness and training strategies to encourage broader and more inclusive adoption of digital banking services.

Finally, this study paves the way for future research on the impact of digitalization on other sectors in Morocco, particularly in rural areas where access to technology remains limited. The successful integration of digital transformation in the banking sector will also depend on the effectiveness of public policies aimed at strengthening digital infrastructure, while ensuring transaction security and protection.

In short, although the path towards full digitalization of banking services is fraught with pitfalls, it remains essential to take into account the perceptions and needs of customers in order to successfully make this transition and improve their experience while minimizing the risks of a digital divide.

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