



THE PHILIPPINES

Pioneering Mobile
Money Growth





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Mobile Money

The GSMA Mobile Money programme works to accelerate the development of the mobile money ecosystem for the underserved.

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Executive summary



The Philippines was an early pioneer in mobile money, launching Smart Money (now Maya) in 2001 and GCash in 2004. Both providers emerged from an environment that included a high mobile phone penetration, a significant SMS messaging culture and low levels of access to financial services. This encouraged two major mobile network operators (MNOs) to offer their customers the ability to perform person-to-person (P2P) transactions, airtime top-ups and bill payments, primarily via SMS.

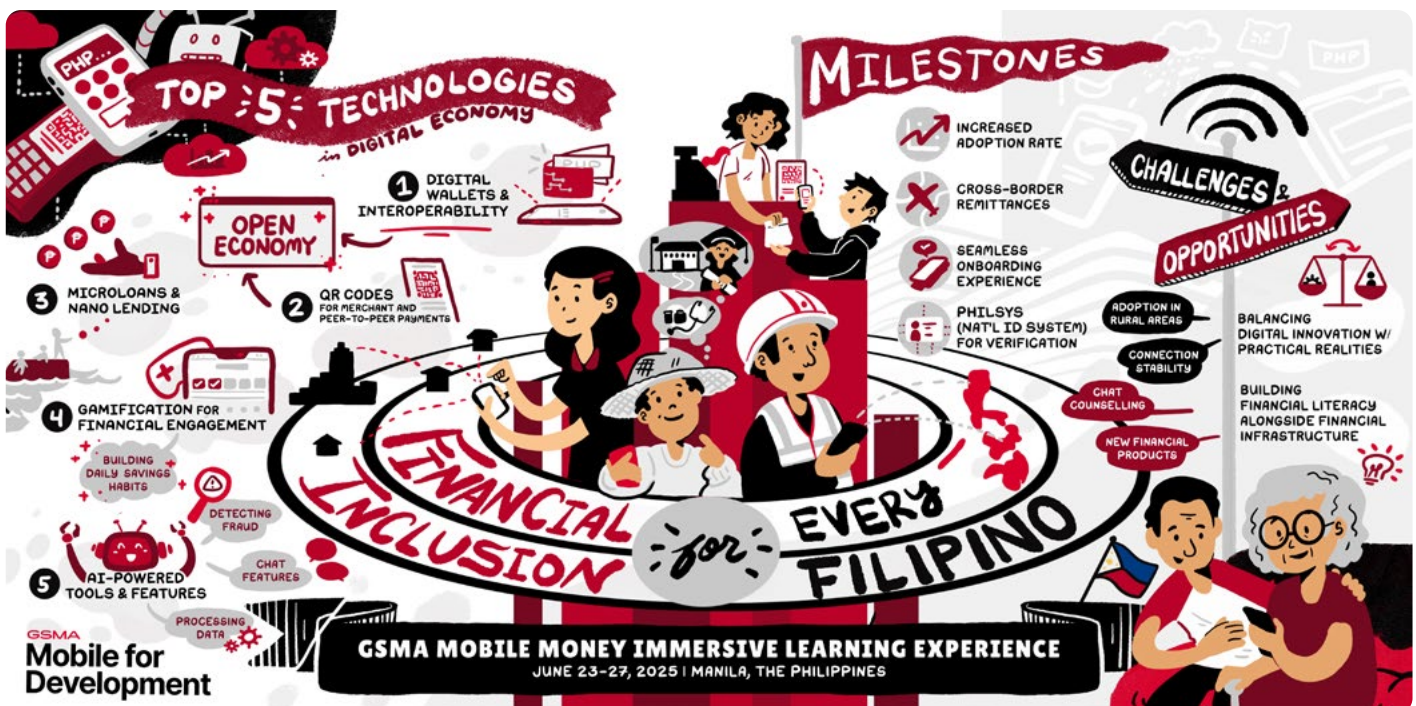
Two decades later, these experiments have evolved into mature fintechs, notably thanks to sound strategic decisions, appealing products and services, progressive regulation and strategic investments. This report summarises lessons from the GSMA Mobile Money Programme's 2025 immersive learning trip in Manila with global mobile money leaders, as well as desk research and follow-up interviews. It presents the industry's trajectory, its innovative value propositions, regulatory landscape, digital public infrastructure, success factors and challenges.

The evolution of mobile money in the Philippines

Early MNO-led products were able to operate under the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas's (BSP) "test-and-learn" approach, allowing the regulator to observe emerging risks before formulating regulation. Cash-in and cash-out agents consisted of partner banks and other independent businesses, and use cases were limited to airtime top-ups, P2P and bill payments.

Between 2010 and 2019, the two main providers transitioned to mobile apps. Their value propositions now included merchant payments, QR codes and financial services (credit, savings and insurance). This was in part enabled by spinning off mobile money operations into full-fledged fintechs and attracting strategic investors such as Chinese giants Ant Group and Tencent.

COVID-19 triggered a change: the use of digital payments and mobile money adoption grew, in part due to the disbursement of social and humanitarian cash transfers via mobile money. The BSP's newly available Digital Bank licence enabled some electronic money providers to upgrade to full-service banks, such as Maya Bank (then Smart Money). By 2024, mobile money penetration reached 29% of the population, while over 50% of retail payments were digital.



Corporate governance and commercial strategies

GCash, with close to 95 million users, has evolved from an MNO-led organisation to a financial services super-app. Its model emphasises partnerships, integrating third parties for credit, savings and insurance. Maya obtained a digital bank licence to offer financial services “in-house” through vertical integration and positioned itself as a B2B payments enabler. Both players’ revenue models rely on ecosystem-driven transactions and financial services, through commissions from third parties or interest from credit and savings products. This contrasts with mobile money providers from Sub-Saharan Africa, where most revenue is derived from P2P and cash-out transactions.

A progressive and risk-balancing regulation

The industry’s performance and ability to meet users’ needs can partly be attributed to the BSP’s progressive stance. This started with its “test and learn” approach, allowing Maya and GCash to experiment with the first mobile money services. This idea has since been formalised through a Regulatory Sandbox Framework for responsible experimentation.

A coherent digital public infrastructure strategy

The growth of digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the Philippines has been boosted by the increased adoption of mobile money services. DPI in the Philippines comprises key systems, such as PhilSys, PhilPaSSPlus, and eGovDX, that supporting financial inclusion and service digitalisation. PhilSys, the national ID system, enables remote electronic know-your-customer checks, which facilitates account opening and digital onboarding. PhilPaSSPlus, the real-time gross settlement system, boosts the capacity and efficiency of digital transactions among banks and non-banks. eGovDX integrates government data flows, enhancing e-service delivery. While these DPI elements benefit mobile money providers (MMPs) and fintechs by reducing onboarding friction and costs, they also introduce challenges around IT integration and heightened competition, as common standards make it easier for users to switch providers, pushing firms to differentiate on user experience, fees, and security.

Market strengths and challenges

The Filipino mobile money industry benefits from innovative private and public sectors. Other favourable circumstances include strong digital literacy fundamentals, a young and urbanising population, high mobile internet adoption, and a geography comprising thousands of islands. Together, these have propelled the adoption of digital financial services.

Certain challenges may prevent further growth and financial inclusion. Cash use is still prevalent: in 2024, only 32% of Filipino adults had performed a digital payment, and only 50% had an account at a financial institution. This particularly affects the rural population. While digital literacy is high, financial literacy remains low – a significant challenge for both public and private sectors.

Introduction and background



The Philippines was the first country to pioneer mobile money services. In 2001, Smart Money (now Maya) became the first official mobile money service in the world, followed by the launch of GCash in 2004. This was driven by a unique mix of macro-level factors. The country had a high level of digital literacy and mobile phone penetration. It was considered the “texting capital of the world” due to very high SMS usage rates.¹ However, access to financial services was limited: most adults were unbanked.² This digital readiness and financial exclusion enabled mobile network operators (MNOs) to introduce mobile money as an alternative to cash-based transactions.

Over the last 10 years, financial inclusion in the Philippines has grown. As of 2024, at least 50% of the country’s adults aged 15 and above have an account – either at a financial institution or with a mobile money provider.³ This is a lower rate than in Sub-Saharan Africa, which had an account ownership

rate of 58% in 2024. However, the Philippines has seen significant growth in mobile money adoption in the last decade. Mobile money account ownership stood at 5% in 2017, climbing to 22% in 2021 and reaching 29% in 2024.

GCash and Maya, the two leading mobile money providers (MMPs) in the country, have been at the forefront of fintech growth. Both have evolved from being entirely owned by MNOs to becoming fully fledged fintechs. Maya even acquired a Digital Bank licence in 2021, which allows it to offer a greater range of financial services “in-house”. Today, both MMPs are app-based, offering a range of financial products to meet the day-to-day needs of Filipinos of all income groups. Particularly since 2020, both have helped to grow financial inclusion in the Philippines, while serving as platforms for many other products and services.

Box 1:

The drivers of increased use in digital financial services in the Philippines

The COVID-19 pandemic push towards digitalisation helped to promote digital payments at a time when active use of mobile money services was particularly low in the country. While the pandemic played an important role, success was primarily driven by several endogenous factors:

- Strong organisational setups, including large and strong technical teams.
- A large portfolio of ecosystem-driven products, involving a vast network of partners, tailored to the inherent needs of Filipino households and businesses.
- High smartphone penetration, adoption and usage levels.
- A progressive and risk-balancing regulator – the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the country’s central bank – which adopted a “test and learn” approach.
- Strategic investments in 2018 by Ant Group and Tencent, the respective parent companies of Chinese fintech giants AliPay and WeChat Pay.
- Well-designed elements that comprise digital public infrastructure (DPI), including payment systems, a national ID system and QR code standards.

1 Arfel Arriola (2025). Texting Culture in The Philippines: How Filipinos Became the World’s Texting Capital. Codev.

2 The earliest account ownership data from the World Bank’s Global Findex Database, which provides key financial inclusion-related statistics, suggests that only 27% of Filipinos had an account at a bank or similar financial institution, or a mobile money account in 2011. This strongly implies that access to financial services upon the launch of the first mobile money service would have been even lower.

3 See [Global Findex Database](#). Statistic corresponds to the percentage of respondents who report having an account (by themselves or together with someone else) at a bank or similar financial institution (see the definition for “bank or similar financial institution account”) or report personally using a mobile money service in the past year (see the definition for “mobile money account”).

Why lessons from the Philippines could help the wider industry

The Philippines' mobile money growth and corporate evolution prompted the GSMA Mobile Money Programme to run an immersive learning trip in the country in June 2025. The week-long event exposed senior executives from mobile money services in Sub-Saharan Africa to GCash, Maya, the BSP, and other fintechs in the Philippines' ecosystem. Attendees also had the opportunity to interact with customer focus groups, and learned about adjacent financial service distribution.

The objective of this experience was to:

- Learn about innovation and digitalisation in the Philippines' digital financial services (DFS) sector that could inspire existing services in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Uncover regulatory initiatives that have enabled innovation and growth in the DFS sector.
- Understand how Filipino MMPs transitioned from payments to offering a range of use cases and non-payment financial services, such as credit, savings and insurance, among others.

The purpose of this report and its intended audience

The GSMA Mobile Money programme gathered the lessons learned during the trip for wider use by mobile money providers, their partners, and other organisations interested in mobile money. This analytical piece was based on a combination of information collected while in the Philippines (in June 2025) followed by interviews with key players in the Philippines and Sub-Saharan Africa. Desk research and data analysis (of the Global Findex 2025 and open-source data) were also carried out to provide context and complement findings from the in-market visit and interviews.

The lessons in this report can be used by mobile money providers to continue innovating in their respective markets and as lessons to consider for additional products and services. It presents a snapshot of the Philippines' mobile money industry, including its best practices, the specific circumstances that enabled market growth and the challenges it still faces. It is aimed at MNO-led MMPs, regulators and fintechs looking to grow mobile money or digital financial services in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

The report aims to uncover several key areas of analysis:

- The evolution of MMPs in the Philippines since 2001.
- Use cases that MMPs and fintechs in the Philippines have successfully penetrated, and the remaining opportunities for growth.
- Factors that have driven the growth of mobile money and fintech in the Philippines.
- The contribution of the regulatory environment in the Philippines to the growth of mobile money and fintech.
- Ways in which MMPs and fintechs have approached and sustained innovation

01. The evolution of mobile money in the Philippines



1.1

2001–2009: The early years

The early days of mobile money in the Philippines were characterised by MNO-led experiments under the BSP's supervision. This ultimately led to clear regulation at the end of the decade through the Electronic Money Issuer (EMI) licence in 2009. Three core factors made the Philippines a "fertile ground" for mobile money to emerge:

- Low access to formal financial services,⁴
- High SMS literacy, with the country even being considered the "texting capital of the world" since the early 2000s,⁵ and
- Rising mobile ownership levels, with 15 mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2001 (in 97th position out of 221, a relatively high ranking for a developing economy)⁶, in part due to an early adoption of the pre-paid model offered by MNOs.⁷

In 2001, Smart Communications, an MNO owned by Philippine Long Distance Telephone (PLDT), launched Smart Money – the world's first mobile money service.⁸ Smart Money initially operated in partnership with Banco de Oro (BDO) as its banking partner. Under this partnership, Smart Money provided its platform and telecommunication infrastructure, while BDO acted as its e-money issuer. This arrangement enabled Smart Money to operate within the then-permitted regulations. BDO also issued cards, provided POS terminals and a cash-in and cash-out (CICO) network through its branches.

Smart Money was soon followed by GCash's launch in 2004. GCash was set up by Globe Telecom (Globe) under a separate entity called G-Xchange, Inc. (GXI). This was done to comply with BSP regulations at the time. GCash had a different approach with its model of an open platform that can enter into bilateral agreements with many banks. GCash partnered with a wide network of mostly rural banks, who also played a role in facilitating CICO transactions⁹, and held its users' account balances in aggregate deposits at partner banks.

How Smart Money and GCash dealt with early regulation

While each MMP had found ways to navigate regulation, no mobile money regulation initially existed. Instead, the BSP chose to let Smart Money and GCash operate while carefully monitoring their activities and risks. In particular, the BSP acted as necessary to issue guidance on a needs basis. Until 2009, the BSP chose to follow this 'test and learn' approach before launching the first licence for mobile money activities: the Electronic Money Issuer licence.

4 The earliest data available in the Findex Database suggests that only 27% of Filipinos had an account at a bank or similar financial institution, or a mobile money account in 2011. This strongly implies that access to financial services upon the launch of the first mobile money service would have been even lower.

5 Arfel Arriola (2025). *Texting Culture in The Philippines: How Filipinos Became the World's Texting Capital*. Codev.

6 International Telecommunication Union (ITU). *Data query for 2001*

7 Philstar. (2004). *Smart captures 2 major international awards*

8 PLDT is currently 42.08% state-owned, with the second largest shareholder being Hong-Kong-based group First Pacific at 25.57% .

9 Alliance for Financial Inclusion. (2010). *Mobile Money Regulations in the Philippines*

Box 2:

How did mobile money work in the 2000s in the Philippines?

Use cases

Initial use cases offered by Smart Money and GCash during this period included person-to-person (P2P) transactions, airtime top-ups and bill payments.

User interface

Both services started as electronic money transfer services. Smart Money could be used via a user's SIM Application Toolkit¹⁰, with transaction confirmation messages sent via SMS. While GCash also enabled SIM toolkit usage, as well as USSD, SMS was its primary channel. For example, for P2P transactions, a user logged the recipient's phone number, transaction amount and their confidential m-PIN. Users were advised to delete their SMS history, as it contained their m-PIN. Unlike GCash, Smart Money automatically issued a debit card linked to its mobile money account.

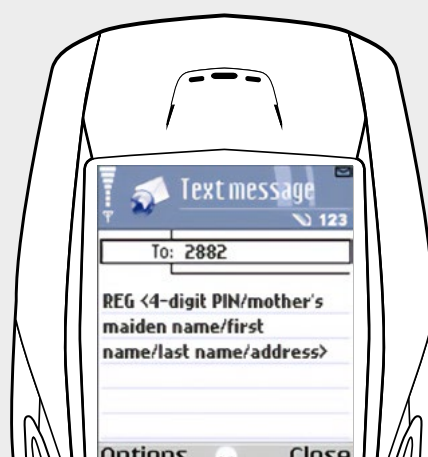
Cash-in and cash-out (CICO) and over the counter (OTC) transactions

In addition to BDO branches, Smart Money allowed CICO transactions via ATMs and non-bank agents, such as pawn shops and money exchange agents. GCash's CICO agents comprised Globe Telecom business centres, pawnshops, rural banks and non-bank remittance agents¹¹.

During this period, a high volume of remittances was initially conducted OTC, with agents handling users' transactions on their behalf with their own account. While still operational today, though less prevalent, this service caters for individuals with no mobile money account of their own, and who may not have sufficient digital or financial literacy levels to perform transactions themselves. Smart Money offered this service through its Smart Padala network of independent businesses, which is still operational today.

Figure 1:

A feature phone interface showing the GCash SMS registration process



Source: Sinel, C. (2008). Introduction to Globe GCash (SMS version)

¹⁰ A SIM Application Toolkit (STK) is an app pre-installed on a SIM card that allows users to conduct a few actions or access value-added services through their phone, including most feature phones, such as performing mobile money transactions.

¹¹ GSMA. (2012). Mobile Money in the Philippines – The Market, the Models and Regulation

1.2

2010 – 2019: Product upgrades and investments

From 2010 onwards, both MMPs saw several changes: shifting strategies, transitioning to apps and diversifying their offerings. In part, this was driven by capital injections from new investors. New investment, particularly from external sources, transformed both MMPs and led to strategic changes for both providers.

At the start of the 2010s, mobile money use cases had not yet evolved. They still primarily revolved around P2P transfers, airtime top-ups and bill payments. Access to financial services remained low: in 2011, only 27% of Filipinos had an account at a bank or similar financial institution, or a mobile money account.¹² Both GCash and Smart Money heavily relied on OTC transactions.

The growth of digital channels for mobile money was slow

By 2013, only about 1% of retail payments were digital.¹³ Several efforts were subsequently launched by both private and public actors to change this. There was an emphasis on trying to grow the use of digital financial services. Related to this, GCash launched its app in 2012. Soon after, in 2015, Smart Money followed: its new app was launched under the name PayMaya, alongside which a virtual debit card was issued to its users.

Launching an app was the start of GCash's use of the latest payment technology. In 2017, the company launched its QR code payment solution, "GoPay". This allowed users to pay for products and services by scanning QR codes at any of GCash's then 12,000 partner merchants. Initially proprietary and limited to the GCash ecosystem, the solution became widely available following investment by Ant Group, whose fintech AliPay had popularised QR code payments in China.¹⁴

The impact of investment on both providers

After 2015, both organisations raised strategic investment through Chinese fintech investors:

Ant Financial invests in GCash

GCash received significant investment in 2017 from Chinese fintech giant Ant Financial, the organisation behind AliPay, alongside Filipino conglomerate Ayala Corporation. The investment was made in Mynt, GCash's parent company, which was still wholly owned by Global Telecom.

Ant Financial was believed to have acquired a sizable minority interest, while Ayala acquired a minority interest. Despite Globe's divestment, strategic investment helped GCash become a leading payment provider – both from a product and scale perspective.

Tencent invests in PayMaya

In 2018, PayMaya received investment too. Chinese technology leader Tencent, the group behind WeChat and WeChat Pay, and private equity giant KKR invested \$175 million in Voyager Innovations, the parent company of PayMaya. This was followed by a \$40 million injection by the IFC, reducing the stake of PLDT's in Voyager. This new capital and TenCent's know-how boosted PayMaya's product suite and scale.

¹² Global Findex Database

¹³ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (Retrieved in 2025). [National Retail Payment System](#)

¹⁴ Ray Sharma. (2017). [Globe's GCash Launches Mobile Money QR Payment](#). The Fast Mode.

1.3

2020 – 2025: High growth and the launch of digital banks

Between 2020 and 2025, the fintech space in the Philippines saw even greater changes. From 2020 onward, the mobile money industry started to see significant shifts due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its digitalisation push, and the BSP's introduction of the Digital Bank licence. This impacted both GCash and Maya, in particular their growth, and served as the foundation of the progress made by both services as of 2025.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on digital payments

The services provided by EMIs, notably as GCash and PayMaya, became particularly important when the pandemic emerged in 2020. In response to government rules on social distancing, demand for contactless payments grew, given their convenience. This accelerated the adoption and use of mobile money and online banking across the country.

This was further accelerated by both the central and local governments endorsing the use of digital payments, especially to disburse social and humanitarian cash transfers. For example, the Social Amelioration program 2 (SAP 2), which provided cash transfers to about 14 million Filipino households, relied on six financial services providers (FSPs). These comprised three banks and three EMIs, two of which were GCash and PayMaya.

Due to the demand for digital services during the COVID-19 pandemic, GCash grew from 20 million registered users in January 2020 to 33 million by the end of the year. By July 2021, its user base had grown to 46 million.¹⁵ Similarly, PayMaya reported a 1,000% year-on-year growth in cashless transactions in May 2020, compared to the same month a year before.¹⁶

Why the new Digital Bank licence could improve customer choice

At the end of 2020, the BSP introduced the Digital Bank licence and made it available to six organisations. This new licence was designed to allow new market players to provide a full suite of banking services digitally, including direct deposit taking, credit and savings. GCash did not apply for a digital bank licence. PayMaya received its licence in 2021, when it changed its name to Maya.

In January 2025, the BSP allowed four more digital banks to launch in the Philippines.¹⁷ Initially, the BSP had capped the number of digital bank licences at six to monitor the impact of the newly licenced entities on the country's financial system.^{18,19} These digital banks were found to have performed to a satisfactory level, prompting the BSP to open applications for additional licences

The BSP's objective is to encourage new digital banks to offer customer value propositions that include new products and services. Digital banks would need to distinguish themselves from what is offered by existing market players. The BSP has also outlined how new product offerings need to reach a broader use base, particularly the unbanked or underserved market segments. This is in line with its digital transformation and financial inclusion goals.²⁰

¹⁵ Ravi Balakrishnan. (2021). [How the Philippines-based GCash more than doubled its user base through the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Deal Street Asia.

¹⁶ Catherine Talavera. (2021). [Paymaya Customers Reach 28 Million](#). Philstar.

¹⁷ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2024). [BSP Circular no. 1205](#)

¹⁸ The Digital Banker. (2024). [Philippines to lift moratorium on digital banking licences starting january 2025](#)

¹⁹ Asian Banking & Finance. (2024). [Philippine central bank to grant up to 4 new digital bank licences](#)

²⁰ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2024). [BSP Lifts Moratorium on Establishment of Digital Banks](#)

02. Corporate governance and commercial strategies



The historical evolution of the Philippines' mobile money industry has laid the foundation for its current success. This was driven by a range of corporate strategies that have led GCash and Maya to their current forms: innovative and commercially successful fintechs with diversified products, aligned with the needs of Filipino individuals and businesses.

External factors, such as regulation and wider market realities, have influenced the market's growth too. However, the strategies chosen by each mobile money provider are largely the result of internal choices. This has resulted in unique features that differentiate them from each other, and therefore from the wider mobile money industry in other regions.

Box 4:

The strategies pursued by GCash and Maya

- Both MMPs transitioned from MNO-led ventures to stand-alone fintech entities, mostly through ownership diversification.
- Each company has built a robust organisational setup with sound corporate governance leadership and teams, geared towards both innovation and productivity. These include large engineering teams and agile business processes.
- Both MMPs embarked on bold business model choices, such as whether to offer products as a platform (using third party solutions) or in a proprietary manner, and market segmentation.
- Each company has prioritised monetising ecosystem transactions, and generating revenue through third party commissions and/or interest spreads (for credit and savings products). This has distinguished GCash and Maya from other MMPs that are looking evolve from relying on P2P and CICO fees.



2.1

From MNO-led services to investor-backed fintechs

Spinning off mobile money operations and ownership diversification

Both Maya and GCash were initially launched by mobile network operators (MNOs). The respective MNOs initially owned both services in full, as is currently the case with many mobile money services in Sub-Saharan Africa. This changed after 2010 as both parent companies started opening GCash and Maya to other investors (Figure 2).

From the onset, spinning off mobile money operations as separate entities, even when fully owned by MNO parent companies, helped GCash and Maya to build MNO-agnostic services. This also allowed them to fully embrace typical fintech setups, rather than embrace a direct MNO-like organisational and governance structure. After divestment, structural changes were necessary for both GCash and Maya. Separating mobile money operations from MNO core businesses was a key driver of innovation for both companies. This has enabled riskier innovations, away from the immediate revenue priorities of MNOs.

Figure 2:

Shareholders of GCash and Maya (2025)

Mynt
(GCash's parent company)

Maya Innovations Holdings
(Maya's parent company)

Globe Telecom (36%²¹)

PLDT (37.66%²²)

The Ayala Corporation

KKR

Ant Group

Tencent

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group

IFC

Others

Others

²¹ As of 2024, according to Globe's 2024 Consolidated Financial Statements

²² As of 2024, according to PLDT's June 2025 Consolidated Financial Statements

Attracting strategic investors

A common trait between the two companies is that progressive divestment from MNO parents attracted new investors. The investment enabled GCash and Maya to start the transition towards becoming standalone fintechs. Importantly, the investors – the parent companies behind the Chinese mobile payment platform giants WeChat Pay and AliPay – brought significant know-how. These two companies are considered the world's most successful payment solutions, due to their vast user bases, respective user experience, ecosystem, ubiquity among merchants, and consumer trust in the system.

Ant Group and Tencent have had a considerable impact on the development of GCash and Maya. Both are active shareholders and have intervened when required. Notably, their input has led to:

- Product improvements, such as on QR code technology, and use case diversification.
- User base expansion strategies.
- Improved backend technology, allowing higher transaction volumes to be handled seamlessly as user bases and transaction frequencies have grown.
- Efficient operations, organisational design and governance.
- Access to global networks (suppliers, partners and human resources).

2.2

Distinct setups with robust leadership and teams

Sound corporate governance and technical teams

An important driver of success for both GCash and Maya is their organisational setup. This includes several characteristics that are geared towards innovation and productivity:

- Both have large engineering teams, including robust in-house development capabilities, product, data science and artificial intelligence. These teams were found to be larger than for similar MMP set-ups in Africa.
- Each company has a blend of local and international teams from different industries, not just limited to banking or fintech. The teams have very good knowledge of the Filipino market, particularly the needs of their target customers.
- Forward-thinking leadership with clear operational direction.
- An agile approach to their processes, such as product development and trials.

Structures designed for long-term success

Both GCash and Maya rely on related entities to provide a suite of products and services to their customers, albeit under one brand:

Why Maya operates as a dual structure

Maya operates as a unified brand and ecosystem, but has two distinct entities: Maya Philippines, Inc., which runs the e-wallet and payments acquiring (incoming merchant payments); and Maya Bank, Inc., which enables digital banking services. Each has its own governance structure and board, with Maya Bank operating under a related-party arrangement to provide regulated banking products within the Maya app.

This dual structure is an important enabler of the company's growth. Each entity has been set up to excel within its own sphere, and build competitive products and solutions for its users. Both entities remain accountable and aligned on strategies, innovation and execution.

Multiple entities with clear purposes

GCash is operated by GXI, which is responsible for all payment operations, and is itself owned by Mynt. Mynt also operates Fuse Financing, Inc. (known as Fuse), a credit company licenced by the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Fuse is responsible for powering GCash's credit products as its lending arm²³.

Fuse allows GCash to provide credit and savings products directly to its customers – despite not having a digital bank licence yet. Mynt, as the parent, acts as a strategic and investment vehicle, and coordinates product development, partnerships and shareholder input.

²³ Mynt. (retrieved in 2025).



2.3 Comparing business models

Partnership-driven vs. proprietary financial products

Similar to their respective structures, GCash and Maya have chosen two different business models, in line with their respective BSP licences.

GCash has adopted a partnership strategy, focusing on collaborations with licenced entities for all non-payment-related financial products (credits, savings, investments, and so on), rather than obtaining direct licences. This allows GCash to maintain its platform role. From a technology standpoint, this approach involves complex downstream API management across different partner technologies, which need robust cybersecurity measures.

Maya has acquired a digital bank licence to internalise as many financial products and services as possible, through its Maya Bank entity. However, Maya also has a very rich partnership model, particularly with merchants. It also has partnerships with other third parties, such as SEC-registered brokers, which allow it to offer popular investment and wealth management offerings.

Market segmentation

While both mobile money players have a diversified product portfolio to meet the financial needs of all possible user types, their market priorities differ. Maya continues to expand its merchant services, and has the largest market share in card acquiring and QR Ph transaction volumes. In 2024, Maya processed over \$17 billion, making it the largest merchant acquirer in the country.²⁴ It caters for businesses of all sizes: by 2024, Maya Business, the company's suite of solutions for merchants, surpassed one million registered businesses.²⁵

GCash's focus is on the mass market, aiming to maximise its reach to all customer segments, with an explicit mission to serve the underserved. This is underpinned by GCash's rural market penetration strategy, through its partnership with about 8,000 rural banks, resulting in high registration rates all over the Philippines.

²⁴ Insider Ph. (2025). MVP-backed Maya posts 1st ever quarterly profit at the start of 2025

²⁵ Business World. (2025). Four years as the Philippines' payments backbone: Maya leads the way in business payments across the Philippines

2.4

Revenue streams and drivers

Comparatively low reliance on CICO and P2P fees

The models adopted by MMPs in the Philippines encourage funds to remain digital within the mobile money system. This is done by not charging for on-network P2P transactions, incentivising ecosystem transactions through a wide network of merchants and other partners, and offering a variety of financial services and other value-added services.

As a result, Filipino MMPs' revenue mix varies significantly from their Sub-Saharan African counterparts, with no revenue from on-network P2P transactions, but also limited reliance on revenues from cash-out fees.

Ecosystem-driven transaction fees

MMPs in the Philippines instead rely on a diversified revenue mix driven by their ecosystem partners. This includes payment-related fees such as:

- Merchant payments, through the merchant discount rate (MDR): MDR refers to fees that merchants pay upon accepting payments from an EMI or bank. This is set at around 2% for GCash, significantly lower than the 4% typically charged for a credit card, with rates being negotiable based on transaction volume.²⁶ Both MMPs have registered many merchants – six million merchants and social sellers for GCash²⁷ and 1 million Maya Business users for Maya²⁸ – which represent a significant revenue source for the industry.
- Bill payments: These often involve a fixed fee per transaction, which can be charged to both the biller and users.

- Cash-in and cash-out (CICO) transactions: CICO transactions are not high in volume nor value compared to mobile money markets in Africa.
- International remittances: Commissions are earned from partner money transfer organisations, with additional revenue from the foreign exchange margin.
- Off-network P2P payments: Transactions to banks or other mobile money providers, enabled by the interoperable rails provided by the National Retail Payment System (NRPS), also provide some fee revenue.
- Airtime top-ups or load commissions: Though not an important revenue source, this can help customer engagement.

Financial services (in-house or marketplace)

Revenue from financial products and services can vary depending on whether the organisation only has an EMI licence (e.g., GCash) or is also a digital bank (e.g., Maya). This determines the MMPs' capacity to take deposits and market its own credit or savings solutions – excluding insurance.

Digital banks, such as Maya, can earn revenue through spreads on credit and savings interest, similar to traditional banks. EMIs like GCash (as well as some digital banks) provide such services to their users via a marketplace for financial services. In such instances, partners pay MMPs a commission for each sale via their app.

Both organisations also act as broker aggregators. They allow users to access investments in stocks or other specific financial products that they are typically not licenced to provide. In the process, they earn commissions from these partners as well.

²⁶ Rishi Raithatha. (2025). [Philippines immersive learning trip diary – Day 1](#). GSMA

²⁷ GCash. (retrieved in 2025).

²⁸ Business World. (2025). [Four years as the Philippines' payments backbone: Maya leads the way in business payments across the Philippines](#)

03. Mobile money use cases in the Philippines



3.1

How GCash and Maya compare across use cases

GCash and Maya both offer several similar cases, such as person-to-person (P2P) transactions, bill payments, international remittances, merchant payments, savings, and cash-in and cash-out. While the products are similar across both providers,

there are noticeable differences for some (such as savings). Both services offer digital financial use cases that prioritise their users' respective needs (Figure 3).

Figure 3:

Comparing GCash and Maya across the main mobile money use cases

Use case	GCash	Maya
 P2P on-network transactions	Via Express Send, Send Gift or Send with a Clip services.	Via Send Money.
 P2P off-net transactions	To a bank account or another e-wallet instantly via InstaPay.	Via Bank Transfer to a bank account or e-money wallet using InstaPay. Users can send larger amounts, using the PESONet ACH – though not instantly.
 P2P over-the-counter transactions	Users can send money to recipients without a GCash account for cash-out at over 110,000 GCash Padala ²⁹ outlets.	Account to cash-out via Maya Center: users can send money to recipients without a Maya account for cash-out at a Maya Center.
 P2P transactions via QR codes	Receive via instantly generated QR code or send by scanning QR code.	Send by scanning a user's custom QR code. Request money by generating a custom QR code under Request Money.
 International remittances	Receive money from Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) via money transfer operators (Western Union, MoneyGram, etc), over 16,000 bank partners in the USA and EU, and PayPal. Inbound remittances include bill payments for end users.	Via partnerships with money transfer operators (MoneyGram and Western Union), PayPal. OFWs can send money directly to users or for them to cash out. Bill payments are possible too, as are payments to merchants or buying airtime.
 Bill payments	Users can choose to pay 2,000 billers with their account balance or GCredit – the credit line provided by GCash.	Bills can be paid to over 900 billers with the e-wallet balance, a savings account or Maya Easy Credit.
 Merchant payments	Paying instore occurs by scanning the merchant's QR code or through NFC-enabled smartphones. Online payments are possible too, by selecting GCash on the merchant's checkout gateway (with SMS validation). GCash works with over six million merchants and social sellers in the Philippines.	Customers can pay merchants using their Maya Wallet through QR, Virtual Debit Card, Physical Debit Card (VISA or Mastercard). They can also use Maya Credit Cards (Maya Landers Credit Card and Maya Black Credit Card) in all VISA-accepting merchants globally.
 Cash in and cash out	GCash has diverse agent types: 8,000 banks with a rural footprint; chains, such as 7-Eleven convenience stores, Puregold supermarkets or Shell petrol stations; local sari-sari stores ³⁰ , and pawnshops. GCash has 413,000 cash out partners in the Philippines	Available via over 160,000 agents. This includes independent businesses, 7-Eleven convenience stores and SM Store department store chain. Cash-out transactions can also be performed at ATMs, if the user is equipped with a Maya debit card.

Source: Provider websites and interviews

²⁹ Padala in Tagalog means "parcel, package, remittance, sent thing(s) or consignment".

³⁰ Sari-sari stores are convenience stores found in the Philippines. In Tagalog, sari-sari means variety, assorted, various kinds.

Box 5:

Maya Merchant Solutions

Maya distinguishes itself in the Philippines' digital payments landscape by offering merchants a holistic value proposition. Maya integrates omnichannel payment solutions (QR Ph, its own POS terminals, online checkout) with merchant-specific financial services such as digital deposit, credit products, and business management solutions. Embedding these into a single platform, Maya positions itself as a partner in business growth, addressing everyday pain points for both micro-entrepreneurs and larger SMEs, customising packages and pricing for businesses of different sizes.

For micro-entrepreneurs:

- Maya Center – in addition to CICO services, a one-stop shop that enables local micro-entrepreneurs to facilitate P2P and international remittances, bill payments, and airtime top-ups.
- Maya Advance – a short term credit line (30/60/90-day terms available) offered to pre-qualified Maya Center agents, based on merchants' transaction history.
- Maya Business Mobile App – an all-in-one app to manage payments, loans, deposits and day-to-day cash flows.

For SMEs:

- Maya Terminal – In addition to in-store QR payment acceptance, Maya offers its own fully integrated portable POS terminal that helps accept card (dip and tap/NFC) and QR payments, manage transactions or generate digital receipts
- Online Checkout – Maya's own online payment Gateway, providing websites and apps the ability to accept payments via credit and debit cards, mobile money accounts (e-wallets), and even QR codes, providing customers with a seamless payment experience while empowering merchants with seamless integration with e-commerce platforms, reports and notifications, and so on.
- Maya Flexi Loan – Credit lines of up to PHP 2 million (\$35,400 as of August 2025), based on transaction data rather than collateral.

Upcoming: supply chain financing

Maya is planning to expand its financing solutions, tailoring it to merchants' business operations. This will include a trade financing platform that will enable lending across the end-to-end value chain, incorporating three key aspects: Invoice Financing, Inventory Financing, and Purchase Financing.

3.2

Comparing credit, savings, insurance and investment products





Both GCash and Maya offer a range of credit, savings, insurance and investment products or adjacent services (Figure 4). GCash's credit products include buy-now, pay-later schemes and various digital microloans. Conversely, Maya offers higher-value personal loans, emergency credit lines, and diverse credit card options. On savings, Maya offers solutions "in-house", whereas GCash provides a platform to third-party savings solutions.

On insurance, GCash is notable for its marketplace featuring more than 48 options spanning health, life, and travel. Maya's approach involves offering a partner's insurance products that combine investment and protection benefits. On investments, both providers have a wide range of partner-driven solutions including mutual funds, individual stocks and cryptocurrency.



Figure 4:

Comparing GCash and Maya across adjacent mobile money use cases

	GCash ³¹	Maya
 <p>Credit</p>	<p>GCredit: A “buy now pay later” (BNPL) product for purchases and bills via scanning a QR code.</p> <p>GGives: A BNPL solution allowing qualified users to purchase products or services from GCash partner merchants, even with zero account balance, and pay in instalments.</p> <p>GLoan: A cash loan of up to \$2,188³², through Fuse, Mynt’s lending arm.</p> <p>GLoan sakto: A micro-loan between \$1.70 and 5.1³³, payable after 14 days with low fees and 0% interest.</p>	<p>Maya Easy Credit is a digital credit line from Maya Bank that provides fast access to funds within the Maya app. It can be used for online shopping, paying bills, buying load, or transferring funds to your Maya Wallet, with a repayment period of up to 30 days.</p> <p>Maya Personal Loan is a type of loan from Maya Bank that provides up to \$4,266³⁴ in unsecured funds for various purposes, with flexible monthly instalments for a term of up to 24 months.</p> <p>Maya Credit Cards include: a standard point-earning credit card targeted at users with healthy credit scores (Landers Cashback Everywhere); a credit card targeted at users with a low credit score (Maya Black).</p>
 <p>Savings</p>	<p>GSave is a savings marketplace, which includes savings products from various partners. These products will have different terms and conditions, including interest rates, minimum deposits and fees, among others.</p>	<p>Maya Savings is a high-yield digital savings account offered through the app. It has a base interest of 3.5% which can be boosted to up to 15% by doing missions within the app. Customers looking for longer-term savings also have the option to open a Time Deposit Plus or a Maya Personal Goal.</p>
 <p>Insurance</p>	<p>GInsure is GCash’s insurance marketplace, offering coverage in various categories. As of Q1 2025, over 50 million policies had already been issued to close to 15 million users through GCash. GInsure offers over 48 insurance products through its partner insurers who underwrite the policies, covering health, life and travel.</p>	<p>As of 2025, Maya offers insurance policies via its partner, Singlife Philippines. Via Maya’s app, users can choose from the following Singlife products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash for Goals plan, a variable unit-linked insurance combining coverage and investment, • Cash for Medical Costs (health insurance), • Cash for Income Loss (accident protection), and • 3-in-1 protection.
 <p>Investments</p>	<p>GInvest is GCash’s suite of investment solutions powered by a range of specialised partners. It includes mutual funds (GFunds), PH stocks (GStocks), crypto (GCrypto), and government bonds (GBonds).</p>	<p>Maya Stocks offers users the possibility to invest in Filipino companies via partners.</p> <p>Maya Crypto is Maya’s cryptocurrency investment service.</p> <p>Maya Funds enables users to invest in a wide range of funds through a variety of partners.</p>

Source: Provider websites and interviews

31 As GCash does not have a digital banking licence, it cannot directly offer interest-earning loans. Instead, its loans are powered by Fuse, an entity owned by Mynt – Gcash’s mother company, which requires a licence (Certificate of Authority) from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). GCash can only offer savings as a platform, in partnership with third-party financial institutions with the required licensing.

32 PHP 1,250,000

33 PHP 100 to 300

34 PHP 250,000

Box 6:

Innovative solutions across bill payments, savings and credit scoring

How GCash is taking public transport payments to the next level

While both GCash and Maya already have in-app public transport payment options, GCash has launched a pilot to modernise Manila's public transportation ticketing system.³⁵ Under the pilot, GCash users can choose between three options to pay for their commutes on the Manila Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) railway line:

- "Tap to pay", allowing users with NFC-enabled Android smartphones to tap their device on the turnstile,
- "Commute QR", letting users generate a QR code in their GCash app, and
- Tapping their GCash Visa Card linked to their GCash wallet.³⁶

The transport sector currently lags with only 8% of ticket payments made digitally. The objective is to scale up these modes of payments across all turnstile carousels.³⁷

How Maya is driving savings and overall usage through gamification³⁸

Maya's high engagement savings solution – Maya Savings – was perceived as one of the most innovative features of Maya's products by participants in the GSMA's learning trip to the Philippines. The solution encourages users to simultaneously save and increase their overall engagement with Maya, using a gamification approach, offering them a tiered interest rate depending on the adoption of various Maya products.

Upon opening a Maya Savings account, users automatically start earning a base interest rate on their deposits (3.5% per annum). When users spend over \$4.30³⁹ using features such as bill payments, airtime top-ups or QR code payments, the annual interest rate grows to 5%. This grows further after exceeding specific spending thresholds on certain use cases, or spending via Maya's other products to reach a maximum rate of 15%. Savings balances over \$1,706⁴⁰ only earn the basic rate of interest.

How GCash is using bespoke credit scores for lending

GScore is GCash's proprietary credit scoring solution, enabling it to assess its users' eligibility and credit limits for all its credit products. Ranging between 0 and 1,000, GCash computes users' GScore using AI and machine learning models by analysing a user's transaction data. Increasing or maintaining a GScore depends on various factors including undergoing full account verification (through GCash's e-KYC processes requiring ID verification and a selfie scan), regular cash-ins, frequent transactions (including bill and online payments), in-app savings, investments and use of insurance, and timely repayment of credit products.

35 Railway Technology. (2025). [Philippine government and GCash collaborate on ticketing](#)

36 Fintech New Philippines. (2025). [GCash Launches Three Cashless Payment Options for MRT-3](#)

37 Railway Technology. (2025). [Philippine government and GCash collaborate on ticketing](#)

38 Maya Bank. (Retrieved in 2025).

39 PHP 250

40 PHP 100,000

04. The role of enabling regulation in the Philippines



In the Philippines, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the country’s central bank and industry regulator, has set a clear target to grow account ownership to 70% by 2023 (Figure 5).⁴¹ This is a key policy outcome in the country’s National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) covering 2022–2028. While mobile money providers have increased financial access, the BSP’s target remains in force: by 2024, around 50.2% of adults in the Philippines owned a financial account.

Over time, as part of its aim to support industry growth, the BSP has evolved alongside e-money regulations. It has learned from the industry to become a leading regulator. Since 2000, it has adopted its stance to ultimately use lessons learned in real-time to launch enabling policies and develop future-proof standards.

Figure 5:

Regulatory milestones for financial inclusion in the Philippines

2009	The BSP issues Circular no. 649, formalising the Electronic Money Issuer as a distinct status
2015	The National Retail Payment System (NRPS) provides the framework for the modernisation of payment systems
2017	Launch of the PESONet Automated Clearing House (ACH) for large and bulk payments
2018	Launch of the InstaPay ACH for real-time low-value transactions
2019	BSP Circular no. 1055 establishes a national QR code standard (QR Ph)
2020	The Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) is launched
2021	BSP Circular no. 1105 establishes Digital Banks
2023	BSP Circular no. 1166 updates the EMI licence, superseding Circular no. 649
2024	BSP Circular No. 1205 lifts the moratorium on new digital bank licences, allowing up to 10 digital banks

4.1

Test and learn until EMI licensing (2000-2009)

During the early days of mobile money in the Philippines, the BSP played a leading role in enabling the mobile money industry to flourish. With financial inclusion as a significant priority for the BSP, it encouraged MNO-led entities to develop their models through conducive regulation. Rather than insisting on pre-emptive guidance, the BSP adopted a “test and learn” approach. This involved extensive ongoing dialogue and oversight vis-à-vis emerging models or market players.

In practice, this meant identifying ongoing risks and developing corresponding mitigation strategies. Mobile money service providers were asked to make changes when required. As a result, the BSP was viewed by the industry as a progressive and unbiased trusted partner. It demonstrated a commitment to growth and piloting new solutions, and an openness to innovation. To date, the BSP continues to actively monitor the industry, both at home and developments in other markets, and engages in co-learning with market players in the Philippines.

41 Fintech News Philippines. (2022). [BSP Aims to Meet Its Financial Inclusion Target by 2023 With New Blueprint](#)

Box 7:

Formalising the “test and learn” approach into the Regulatory Sandbox Framework

The BSP has enabled innovation to emerge over time in line with its efforts to promote financial inclusion in the Philippines. It has achieved this through a “test and learn” approach. This allows new business models to be implemented under a limited scope or environment, with extensive scrutiny and dialogue with implementing partners. This approach was continuously used over the years, notably in the sphere of mobile money, leading to clear regulation and licensing such as the EMI licensing in 2009 or cloud computing for financial services.

In 2022, the BSP chose to formalise this “test and learn” approach through a Regulatory Sandbox Framework, through Circular no. 1153⁴², providing a controlled and time limited live testing environment to support the testing of responsible innovations in financial services. For each selected project, the BSP designates relevant units within its various teams to provide oversight to each endeavour being tested.

The sandbox operates through a four-stage process, which includes:

- Application stage: submission of documents such as a letter of intent, application form, test plan and eligibility checklist.
- Evaluation stage, where the BSP assesses the completeness and suitability of the application.
- The testing stage, consisting of two phases: design phase to finalise the test plan, including timelines, KPIs and risk safeguards, and the implementation phase.
- Exit stage: final report and an exit strategy to either scale or terminate the project.

Participants must inform users about their sandbox status and associated risks, while ensuring secure data handling, AML/CFT controls, dispute resolutions and safeguards for consumer protection.

Upon successful testing, participants may obtain regulatory approval to offer their product or service for public use and consumption by submitting a formal application to the BSP, and the Sandbox Oversight Team shall endorse the product or service internally.

42 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2022). [BSP Circular no. 1153](#)

4.2

The introduction of e-money regulations

In 2009, the BSP issued the E-money Circular 649, which regulated e-money activities for banks and non-banks alike.⁴³ Some of the key characteristics of the circular required organisations to allow customers an aggregate monthly load limit of \$866⁴⁴, unless a higher amount had been approved by BSP. As in other similar markets, e-money balances are not considered a deposit and cannot earn interest. Finally, all EMIs are required to provide an acceptable redress mechanism to address customer complaints.

Non-bank institutions, such as MNO-led entities (known as “EMI-Others”), were also required to have additional special provisions:

- Legally remain a stock corporation with a minimum paid-up capital of around \$866,000⁴⁵,
- If engaged in business other than e-money, the company should set up a separate incorporated entity for e-money issuance purposes,
- Refrain from engaging in providing credit directly off its own balance sheet,
- Maintain enough liquid assets to match the amount of outstanding e-money issued in its ecosystem, and
- Allow the BSP access to review its systems and databases, if needed.

Box 8:

EMI licence updates

In the years that followed its launch, the EMI licence (circular 649) was amended multiple times through various memos. Updates were made to strengthen AML/CFT compliance, clarify obligations or to introduce penalties for late reporting. In February 2023, major updates to EMI rules were introduced through Circular 1166⁴⁶ (superseding Circular no. 649). These updates introduced the following measures:

- Updated and new definitions for the providers,
- Simplified classifications of EMIs: EMI-Banks (for banks with EMI licences); and EMI-Non-Bank Financial Institutions (EMI-NBFI), which includes the now defunct “EMI-Others” category (under which G-Cash and Maya initially fell),
- Minimum systems and controls required,
- Requirements for interoperability,
- Aggregate limits: The \$866 monthly load limit was removed. Clients were instead categorised through risk assessments and due diligence processes, to offer differentiated transaction limits,
- Higher capitalization (\$3.4 million⁴⁷) for large-scale EMIs (with a 12-month average value of aggregated inflow and outflow transactions equal or greater than \$426 million⁴⁸)⁴⁹

As of February 2025, there are 71 EMIs in the Philippines. These include 28 Bank-EMIs, and 43 EMI-NBFI, including GCash and Maya’s e-wallet operations.

43 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2009). [BSP Circular no. 649](#)

44 PHP 100,000 as per Circular 649

45 PHP 100,000,000 as per Circular 649

46 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2023). [Bangko Sentral Amends Guidelines on Electronic Money and Operations of E-money Issuers](#)

47 PHP 200 million

48 PHP 25 billion

49 SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan. (2023). [Safe \(e\)money: BSP Updates E-money Regulations, Increases Prudential And Capitalization Requirements](#). Mondaq.

4.3

The introduction of the Digital Bank licence

The BSP launched the Digital Banking Framework (licence) in 2020 through Circular 1105.⁵⁰ This new status was designed to formalise and regulate digital-only models.⁵¹ The launch of the licence also sought to position digital banks as competitors to traditional banks, encouraging the latter to improve their digital services^{52,53}. Like EMLs, digital banks can only offer insurance policies as a platform. Insurance products still need to be underwritten by insurance companies licenced by the Insurance Commission, as this is beyond the BSP's remit.

According to the BSP, a digital bank is defined as an entity that "offers financial products and services that are processed end-to-end through a digital platform and/or electronic channels with no physical branch/sub-branch or branch-lite unit offering financial products and services." Like traditional banks, digital banks can accept deposits and facilitate payments or remittances (domestic and international), and directly offer savings, loans and investments. Like EMLs, they can only offer insurance policies as a platform. Insurance products still need to be underwritten by insurance underwriters licenced by the Insurance Commission (not the BSP).

Digital banks are subject to the same prudential regulations as other bank categories, including corporate governance, risk management (particularly information technology and cyber security), outsourcing, and AML/CFT. The licence allows digital banks to offer services through third parties (e.g., agents). Unlike EMLs, all digital banks have a capital requirement of \$17 million⁵⁴ (Figure 6).

This new licence has seen several new financial service providers emerge, while some existing EML licence holders have upgraded their status. As of August 2025, there were six digital banks in the Philippines, including Maya (the only digital bank that has at least partial MNO ownership), GoTyme Bank, Overseas Filipino Bank, Tonik Digital Bank, UnionDigital Bank and UNOBank.⁵⁵

In the future, four more digital banks will be licenced, following the lifting of a BSP moratorium on the grant of new digital banking licences.⁵⁶ This will bring the maximum number of digital banks to ten.

The BSP had previously capped the number of digital bank licences to six to monitor the impact of the newly licenced entities on the country's financial system, and their contribution to the BSP's objectives of digital transformation and financial inclusion^{57,58}. With the BSP satisfied on how the first six digital banks had performed so far, it has opened applications to new applicants that are innovative and able to reach the underserved.⁵⁹

50 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2020). [BSP Circular no. 1105](#)

51 Benjamin E Diokno (BSP Governor). (2021). [Benjamin E Diokno: The age of digital banking](#). Bank for International Settlements. Speech.

52 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2020). [BSP Circular no. 1105](#)

53 Guillaume de Gantès, Hernan Gerson, Kristine Romano. (2023). [On the verge of a digital banking revolution in the Philippines](#). McKinsey

54 PHP 1 billion

55 Fintech News Philippines. (2025). [The Full List of Digital Banks in the Philippines and Their Top Benefits](#)

56 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2024). [BSP Lifts Moratorium on Establishment of Digital Banks](#).






57 The Digital Banker. (2024). [Philippines to lift moratorium on digital banking licences starting January 2025](#)

58 Asian Banking & Finance. (2024). [Philippine central bank to grant up to 4 new digital bank licences](#)

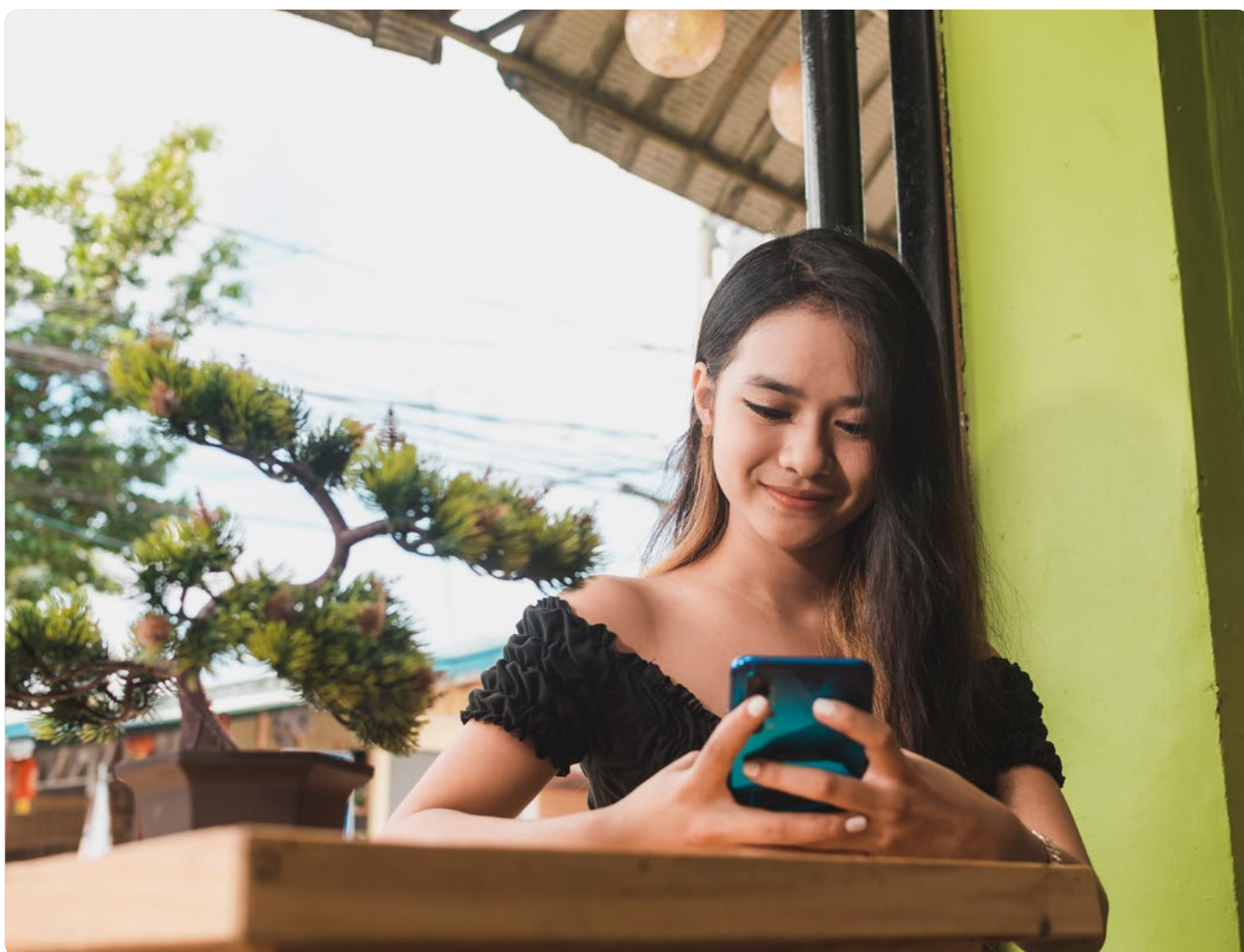
59 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2024). [BSP Lifts Moratorium on Establishment of Digital Banks](#).

Figure 6:

A summary of EMI and Digital Bank licence characteristics

Category	Digital Bank (BSP Circular 1105, 2020)	Electronic Money Issuer (EMI) (BSP Circular 649, 2009; updated 1166, 2023)
 Definition	A bank that delivers services through digital platforms, without physical branches (except for outsourced cash agents).	A bank or non-bank financing institution authorised to issue electronic money (stored value) for payments and transfers.
 Capital requirements	Minimum \$17 million ⁶⁰ paid-up capital	\$3.4 million ⁶¹ (large-scale EMIs); \$1.7 million ⁶² (small-scale EMIs)
 Deposit-taking	Yes	No – it can only hold prepaid value (e-money float) and must back 100% with liquid assets.
 Lending	Yes – it can lend directly.	No – it cannot lend on its own balance sheet (needs licenced lending partner).
 Prudential oversight	Full BSP banking supervision	BSP payments supervision. Must segregate customer funds, maintain liquidity and report transactions.

Source: BSP Circulars 1105, 649 and 2009



60 PHP 1 billion
 61 PHP 200 million
 62 PHP 100 million

Box 9:

Disrupting the market with instant cards, rewards and human CX: GOtyme's Phygital model

GOtyme was launched in October 2022, becoming the second BSP-licensed digital bank in the Philippines. It is a joint venture between Tyme Group, a multi-country digital bank initially launched in South Africa in 2019, and Gokongwei Group, one of the largest conglomerates in the Philippines. As a digital bank, GOtyme is primarily app-based, but embeds itself within the physical retail ecosystem, choosing the portmanteau word "Phygital" – physical and digital – to refer to its business model. While offering a range of digital products such as payments (including QR), credit and savings, GOtyme's value proposition differentiates itself in three ways:

- A large network of automated kiosks across partner retailers, particularly within the Gokongwei retail ecosystem (e.g. Robinsons malls) allowing customers to open accounts and print a debit card instantly. The latter operation typically takes days with other banks and EMIs.
- Integration with loyalty programmes through its Go Rewards platform, enabling GOtyme users to earn and spend points through several retailers, particularly within the Gokongwei ecosystem. Earning and spending over this network provides relatively more value to GOtyme users than other loyalty programmes. GOtyme are the only bank that has a reward system linked to a debit card, giving Filipinos the credit card experience (recent data shows that only 3% of Filipinos have access to a credit card⁶³).
- A human-centred customer experience, with quick access to assistance by a person when needing customer care. GOtyme's commitment is that a human agent, even called a personal banker, will pick up the phone in two minutes or less when a user contacts their customer care service.

As of July 2025, GOtyme has approximately seven million customers, and aims to achieve 9 million by the end of the year, growing at a very fast rate. Its qualitative service has resulted in a high Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 78, above the industry average of 58. As an overall strategy, the digital bank aims to bring as many Filipinos, unbanked and underbanked, into the banking ecosystem. However, given its close partnership with Gokongwei-affiliated retailers and rewards programme, GOtyme primarily targets the middle-class segment.

63 According to the World Bank's Global Findex Database in 2024



4.4 Powering interoperability

The second half of the 2010s also saw a push from the BSP towards interoperability, with the goal to promote digital payments and ultimately greater financial inclusion. This was initiated with the launch of the National Retail Payment System (NRPS) in 2015. This framework established a safe, reliable and affordable retail payment system, through a series of high-level policies on retail payment operations and infrastructures.⁶⁴ It led to the launch of private sector-operated automated clearing houses (ACHs), which set the clearing and settlement rules that govern fund transfers from one account to another.

As of 2025, these include:

- **InstaPay**, for transactions up to \$853⁶⁵; and
- **PESONet**, for larger transactions and bulk disbursements, processed in batches at specific times during the day.^{66,67}

In 2019, the BSP launched a unified, interoperable payment QR code standard: the QR Ph, based on the European EMV standard. While GCash developed a proprietary QR code in 2017, PayMaya was the first MMP to adopt the national standard in 2019. Initially limited to P2P payments, its use was expanded to merchant payments in 2021. By 2023, the BSP had mandated its adoption. Launched under the NRPS, QR Ph played a significant role in promoting interoperability and reducing merchant friction.

⁶⁴ Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI). (2017). [NATIONAL RETAIL PAYMENT SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT FINANCIAL INCLUSION](#)

⁶⁵ PHP 50,000

⁶⁶ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (Retrieved in 2025). [Payments and Settlements - National Retail Payment System: The Regulatory Framework](#)

⁶⁷ Bank of Commerce. (Retrieved in 2025). [Convenient Fund Transfers with PESONet and InstaPay](#)

05. Mobile money and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in the Philippines



While core DPI systems worldwide have existed for years, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the emergence of DPI as a concept and strategic area of focus. DPI refers to foundational digital systems that are meant

to enable the delivery of integrated, inclusive, secure, and scalable public and private services at a national or population scale.

Box 10:

Unpicking DPI elements in the Philippines

PhilSys

In 2018, the Philippine Identification System Act (PhilSys) was launched to establish a single national ID system for the first time. The Philippine Statistics Authority is the implementing agency. With no prior ID system, PhilSys has helped millions to acquire valid ID, the lack of which had previously prevented unbanked communities to access a mobile money or bank account. By providing a biometric ID to Filipinos, PhilSys enables electronic know-your-customer (e-KYC) verification. The ID is available in three formats: physical card, printable ePhilID at registration and a downloadable digital ID. As of December 2024, PhilSys had enrolled close to 94 million people, 98.7% of the target population to register.⁶⁸

PhilPaSSPlus

Adopted in 2021, PhilPaSSPlus is the Philippine's RTGS system⁶⁹, owned and operated by the BSP. It provides the instant settlement of payments, transfer instructions and other obligations on a transaction-by-transaction basis. Operating between Monday and Friday from 9 am until 5:45 pm, it ensures that individuals, businesses and the government can securely send and receive money through several channels (cheque, ATM, InstaPay and PESONet).

eGov Data Exchange Platform (eGovDX)

eGovDX is the Philippines' government's data exchange system governed by the Department of Information and Communications Technology. It serves as the backbone for the government's data-sharing framework, integrating various government agencies in a secure manner – at both national and local levels.

The platform connects over 10 specialised APIs to simplify public service interactions and reduce redundancies. By automating data flows and ensuring interoperability, eGovDX enhances operational efficiency and decision-making. It is also a key enabler of the eGovPH Superapp, which integrates multiple eGovernment services, acting as virtual one-stop shop for Filipino citizens, including for payments⁷⁰.

68 [Philippine Identification System \(PhilSys\)](#)

69 According to the [Bank for International Settlements](#), RTGS systems are fund transfer systems that continuously settle payments on an individual order basis, without netting debits with credits

70 Development Academy of the Philippines. (2025). [The Philippine Government's Digital Transformation through DICT's e-Government Initiatives](#)

A coherent DPI strategy supports the BSP's digitisation and financial inclusion agenda

While the Philippines does not have a single DPI policy, it has a coherent policy mix that supports different DPI components and their implementation to benefit individuals and businesses. Serving multiple purposes, DPI components either directly or indirectly support digital financial inclusion. For example, PhilSys's launch in 2018 unlocked a valuable use case: all banks and EMIs could remotely onboard customers through a risk-based e-KYC approach and set guidelines for it.

PhilSys (the national ID) aims to provide all Filipinos with identification, enabling anyone to open an account. This was enabled by the BSP's Circular 1170 in 2023⁷¹, which unlocked a valuable use case: allowing all banks and EMIs to remotely onboard customers through a risk-based e-KYC approach and setting guidelines for it.

PhilPaSSPlus, the Philippines' Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system, was rolled out to absorb greater retail and non-retail transactions, providing access to a greater set of transaction types and bank and non-bank players. This was rolled out in response to the growth of digital transactions partly resulting from COVID-19's digitisation push, as well as the BSP's successive regulations that led to greater interoperability (InstaPay, PESOnet, QR Ph). By enabling the financial system to absorb more frequent and diverse use cases in a quick and secure manner, PhilPaSSPlus allows greater use of mobile money and DFS.

eGovDX supports the integration of government services, via other platforms such as eGovPH. This encourages the use of eGovernment services. In turn, this may facilitate the adoption of digital transactions for person-to-government (P2G) and government-to-person (G2P) payments.

DPI-related opportunities and challenges for MMPs and fintechs

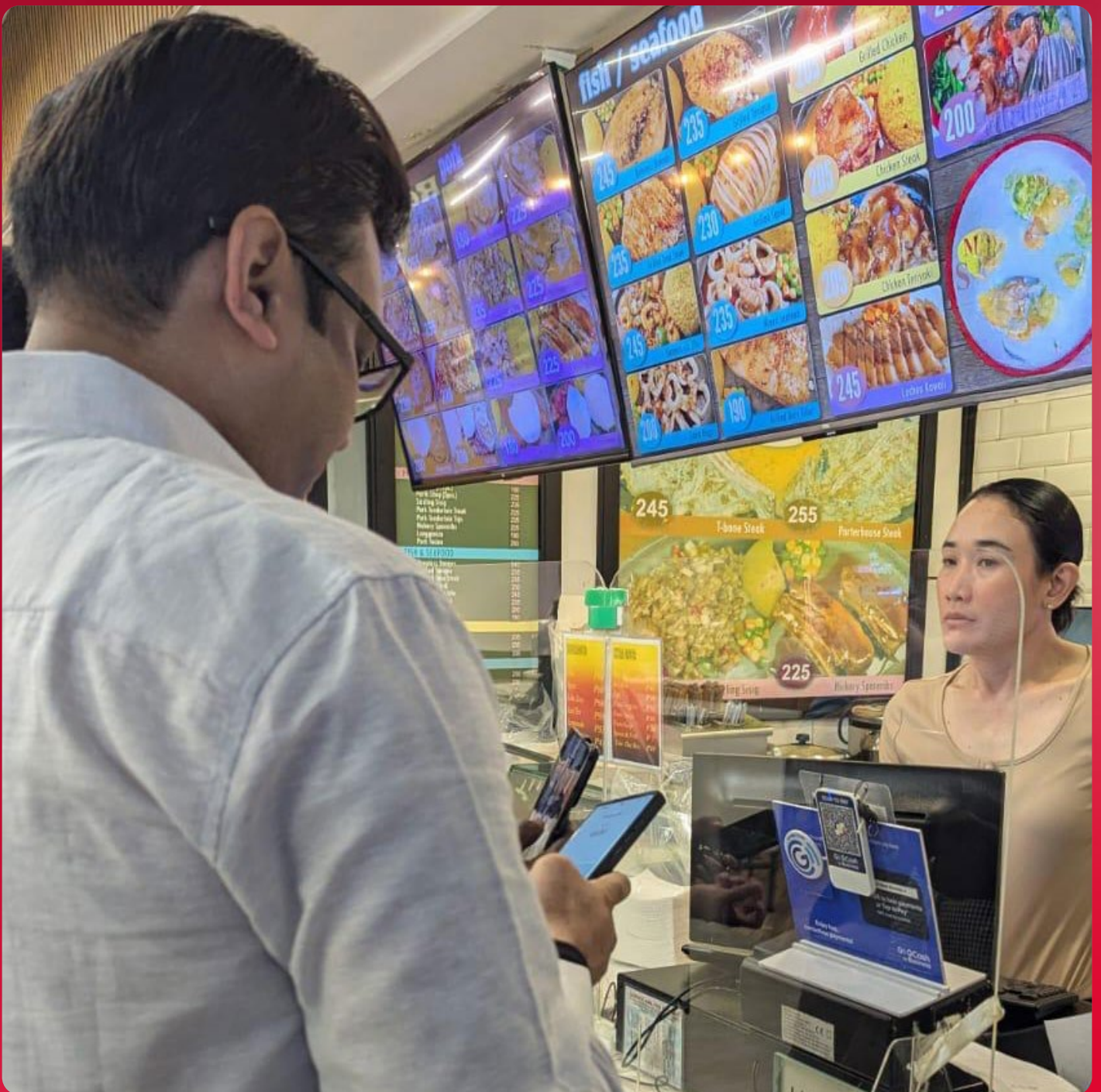
For MMPs, fintechs and the wider financial services sector, the current DPI stack offers benefits. Low-friction onboarding enabled by universal identification and e-KYC allows MMPs and other fintechs to grow their user base. This can reduce customer acquisition costs, making it easier for customers to open an account (through remote ID verification). Unlocking new customer segments could lead to greater usage and, therefore, higher revenue.

Despite these benefits, adapting to these DPI can involve challenges for the mobile money industry. For instance, providers would have to integrate their existing systems with newer elements of DPI rolled out in the last few years. This may lead to both higher operational and capital expenditures, as well as require complex alignments over governance and integration.

While increasingly interoperable systems and standards may help MMPs reach new potential users, they may lead to greater competition. For example, providers' use of the same digital rails could make it easier for users to switch to different providers without worrying about not being able to transfer or receive funds. This could prompt MMPs to compete on user experience (UX), fees, security and their overall product suite – as is commonly the case for banks and fintechs in high-income markets.

71 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2023). [BSP Circular no. 1170](#)

06. Other success-enabling factors



While private and public efforts have played a significant role in building a strong and inclusive mobile money industry, it is also important to point out specific circumstances – some also policy-influenced – that have played an important role in shaping it.

Strong digital literacy fundamentals

The Philippines was considered to be the SMS capital of the world in the early 2000's, showing widespread adoption and ease of using mobile technology. In 2003 – two years after the launch of Smart Money (now Maya) and a year before the launch of GCash – the average Filipino mobile subscriber sent an average of 195 SMSs per month (by comparison, the average user in the USA sent 13 a month)⁷². This set the stage for the early adoption of mobile money in the country, especially considering that mobile money services in the Philippines were SMS-based.

A young and urbanising population

As of the beginning of 2025, the median age in the Philippines was 26.1, a favourable factor for the adoption of new technologies. Moreover, close to half of the population (48.8%) lives in urban centres, where digital adoption is more likely due to typically higher education levels, better connectivity and strong network effects. High levels of English proficiency may also play a role in digital adoption: the Philippines ranks 22nd on EF's English Proficiency Index out of 116 countries (2nd out of 23 in Asia)⁷³.

Mobile internet adoption

High mobile internet usage levels were key in helping market players transition from SMS and USSD-based solutions to app-based ones. The ITU reports 92 million active mobile broadband subscriptions in 2024, or approximately 80% of the population⁷⁴. In comparison, according to the GSMA's 2025 State of Mobile Connectivity report, only 25% of the total population in Sub-Saharan Africa uses the internet⁷⁵. These factors have enabled GCash and Maya to provide wider offerings of product services that are easier to navigate and choose from for users, compared to USSD and SIM toolkit.

Geography

As a country that comprises thousands of islands it was difficult for traditional brick and mortar banks to reach rural areas. This encouraged the birth and flourishing of mobile money in the country and likely influenced the BSP's willingness to experiment with innovation.

72 HubPages. (2022). [The Philippines Is Still the Undisputed Text Capital of the World](#)

73 Business World. (2022). [Filipinos still 'highly proficient' in English language](#)

74 Based on the World Bank's 2024 population estimate

75 GSMA. (2025). [The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity](#)

07. Challenges to further growth in the Philippines



Despite slower growth between 2010 and 2019, several enablers have helped mobile money grow in the Philippines. These include high digital literacy, a young and urban population keen to use technology, and growing smartphone and internet adoption. The Philippines' geography also served as an unintended enabling factor: an archipelago with over 7,000 islands saw technology as a means for fast and affordable communications. Before the introduction of mobile, branch-based financial service providers had struggled to reach many remote and rural areas.

The Philippines has made significant progress in increasing access to financial services and products. The BSP has played an important role that cannot be understated. However, despite a significant degree of success, mobile money providers, digital banks, and fintechs still face several challenges. To achieve greater activity and more use of sophisticated use cases, the following key barriers will need to be overcome:

Cash use is still prevalent, given slow digital payments growth

Only 32% of Filipinos aged 15 and above had carried out a digital payment in 2024 – this is lower than the Sub-Saharan African average of 45%. Moreover, only 50% of Filipinos owned an account at any financial institution or had used mobile money in the past year. This gap widens when looking at rural areas. The BSP's Financial Inclusion Survey found that 73% of farmers and agricultural workers had no account in 2021.⁷⁶ These findings collectively demonstrate the inherent use of cash, which digital payments have not yet eclipsed. This was also clear during interactions with merchants by the GSMA in the Philippines in June 2025.

Financial literacy remains low

While the Philippines has done well to adopt digital solutions, financial literacy levels remain low. In part, this could explain why about half of the adult population does not own an account. In 2023, the Philippines' overall financial literacy score was 58 (out of 100), ranking 25th out of 39 countries surveyed by the OECD.⁷⁷ This is corroborated by a BSP finding, which showed that out of a series of six basic financial literacy questions, only 2% of Filipinos scored 100%.⁷⁸

As a result, the BSP has made financial education and consumer protection one of the pillars of its 2022-2028 National Strategy for Financial Inclusion.⁷⁹ Practically, both public and private sector-driven initiatives are aiming to overcome this challenge. This includes:

- Integrating financial education in school curricula through the Department of Education's Financial Education Policy⁸⁰. Additionally, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) has launched free financial literacy modules, in collaboration with the BSP and BDO Foundation.
- GCash running broad financial literacy initiatives, such as its "Pera Talks" programme. Since 2024, this programme has delivered in-person, bite-sized sessions across the country on financial management, saving, budgeting, debt management and cybersecurity.⁸¹
- Additional initiatives by GCash include its "Digital Financial Literacy Caravan" in collaboration with the Philippines Crop Insurance Corporation. The Caravan aims to educate and provide tools to farmers to make informed financial decisions, as well as to claim their insurance payouts digitally.⁸²
- Maya has been running an MSME-focused financial literacy programme since 2025. Called Negosyo Serye, it has equipped its Maya Centres with financial management skills and offers qualifying Centres with Maya Advance loans of about \$6,000.⁸³ Maya also regularly publishes plain-English guides on saving, budgeting and responsible borrowing on its website⁸⁵.

76 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2022). *Strengthening Financial Health through Financial Literacy*. Speech.

77 OECD. (2023). *OECD/INFE 2023 International Survey of Adult Financial Literacy*

78 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). (2021). *Financial Inclusion Survey*

79 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). *National Strategy for Financial Inclusions 2022-2028*

80 Republic of the Philippines, Department of Education. (2021). *DepEd expands financial education in K to 12 to improve literacy of Filipinos*. Press release.

81 Inquirer.net. (2024). *GCash scales up financial literacy efforts nationwide with "Pera Talks"*

82 Mynt. (2023). *GCash, SEC kickoff financial literacy campaign for Filipinos*

83 Business World. (2025). *Maya Bank launches MSME financial literacy program*

84 PHP 350,000

85 Maya Bank. (2025). *How Financial Literacy Can Help You Avoid Cash Advance Pitfalls*

08. Concluding remarks



The Philippines stands as a global pioneer in mobile money, with Smart Money (now Maya) and GCash launching some of the earliest mobile financial services in the world. The evolution from MNO-led experiments in the early 2000s to diversified, investor-backed fintechs reflects a journey marked by innovation, regulation, and digitalisation. Strategic investments from Ant Group and Tencent catalysed their transformation into full-fledged digital financial platforms, enabling a broad range of products across payments, credit, savings, insurance and investments. Both providers have demonstrated strong governance, agile leadership, and scalable technical capacity, helping mobile money transition from basic P2P transfers to complex financial ecosystems.

This progress has been underpinned by a progressive regulator. The BSP's "test and learn" approach, culminating in the EMI licence (2009) and Digital Bank licence (2020), has fostered innovation while safeguarding stability. Moreover, its commitment to financial inclusion and the modernisation of the Philippines' financial system, empowered by a robust DPI stack, has positioned the Philippines among Asia's most dynamic fintech markets.

The combination of private and public sector efforts has had a significant impact supported by several indicators: in 2017, only 5% of Filipino adults had a mobile money account (34% for any type of account), while 14% had made a digital payment in the past year. By 2024, mobile money penetration had grown to 29% (50% for any type of account), and 32% had performed a digital payment in the past year. By the end of 2023, 52.8% of retail payments were digital, exceeding the BSP's goal of digitalising 50% of payment volumes.⁸⁶

However, challenges persist. Despite significant account ownership gains, cash use remains high, and financial literacy relatively low, especially among rural populations. Digital payments still represent a fraction of total transactions. Sustained progress will depend on deepening literacy, expanding merchant acceptance, and strengthening user trust in digital finance.

For global mobile money providers, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines offers powerful lessons. Its combination of enabling regulation, corporate innovation, and DPI integration demonstrates how market maturity can emerge from collaboration between public and private actors.

86 Fintech News Philippines. (2024). [BSP Reports Philippines Exceeds 50% Digital Payment Transactions Target](#)

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