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Exploring the Impact of Mobile Banking Usage on Spending Habits: A Qualitative Study on Financial Overspending

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Abstract
This study examines the influence of mobile banking on spending habits, focusing on its role in facilitating overspending. Utilizing a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to explore the interplay between mobile banking features and behavioral tendencies. The findings reveal a dual impact of mobile banking on financial behavior. On the positive side, mobile banking enhances financial awareness and discipline by providing tools such as real-time transaction monitoring, automated savings mechanisms, and budgeting features, enabling users to make informed decisions and maintain better control over their finances. However, the convenience and immediacy of mobile banking also present challenges, particularly the ease of completing transactions, which can encourage impulsive spending and reduce traditional psychological barriers to overspending. These insights highlight the need for targeted strategies to maximize the benefits of mobile banking while mitigating its risks. The study emphasizes the importance of designing responsible financial technologies and educational initiatives to promote disciplined financial behavior. Further research is suggested to explore the long-term effects of mobile banking usage on financial habits, including saving patterns, debt management, and overall financial health, with the goal of fostering a more financially resilient society.

Keywords
mobile banking, spending habits, financial overspending, behavioral finance, technology and consumer behavior

Introduction

The rapid development of technology has significantly improved human life in various aspects, ranging from daily activities to financial management. Technology has simplified tasks, increased efficiency, and provided innovative solutions to everyday challenges. In the financial sector, advancements such as mobile banking, digital wallets, and online investment platforms have made financial transactions faster, more accessible, and more secure. These tools allow individuals to manage their finances conveniently, enabling better planning and decision-making. With technology, life has become not only easier but also more organized, empowering people to achieve greater control over their resources and paving the way for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Technology has revolutionized the financial sector, particularly in banking, by enabling institutions to provide better services to their customers. Banking services have become more effective and efficient, with digital platforms allowing seamless access to transactions and financial management tools at any time, 24 hours a day. This convenience has transformed the way people interact with banks, fostering continuous engagement and creating a stronger connection between banking institutions and the community (Boz & Tesar, 2021). By leveraging technology, banks have not only improved operational efficiency but also enhanced customer experience, making financial services more accessible, reliable, and user-friendly for a broader audience.

There was a time when banking services were highly conventional, requiring customers to visit a branch and wait until the next business day to meet with a customer service representative for assistance. Transactions and inquiries were limited by operating hours, creating delays and inconveniences (Kumhof & Jakab, 2016). However, with the advent of technology, banking accessibility has undergone a transformative shift. Today, customers can access banking services effortlessly through mobile banking applications on their smartphones. Whether transferring funds, checking account balances, or paying bills, these services are now available anytime, anywhere, offering unparalleled convenience and putting financial management literally at the fingertips of the customer.

However, like two sides of a coin, the efficiency and effectiveness offered by banking services through mobile banking also present a contradiction. While these advancements provide unparalleled convenience, they can inadvertently encourage excessive spending habits (Graff, 2016; Kaufman & Woglom, 2005). The ease of access to financial transactions, combined with the instant gratification of payments and transfers, may lead users to spend more impulsively and lose track of their financial limits. According to the theory of Behavioral Finance, the availability of seamless technology can amplify emotional decision-making, reducing the perceived consequences of overspending. This paradox highlights the need for users to adopt disciplined financial behaviors while enjoying the benefits of mobile banking.

Overspending can be triggered by various factors, not only stemming from the genetic predispositions of the customer but also influenced by external elements such as environment, peer influence, and personal habits (Carrier & Maurice, 1998; Glatt & Cook, 1987; Morris et al., 1995). Environmental factors, including social norms and advertising, often encourage consumers to spend more than necessary, while the influence of friends and family can create pressure to maintain certain lifestyles. Additionally, ingrained habits, such as impulsive purchasing or a lack of budgeting, further contribute to overspending tendencies. In the context of banking customers, the convenience offered by modern banking services, particularly mobile banking, can inadvertently amplify these behaviors (Heffernan, 2005). The ease of accessing funds and making instant transactions reduces the psychological barriers to spending, potentially leading to frequent and unnecessary expenditures, thereby exacerbating the issue of overspending.

The phenomenon of overspending presents an intriguing contradiction: is it truly influenced by the medium, such as tools and technology like mobile banking, or is it primarily driven by inherent customer traits such as genetic predisposition or pre-existing habits? In the context of banking, mobile banking serves as a medium that simplifies financial transactions, offering unmatched convenience and accessibility. However, this very convenience might act as a catalyst, enabling or even encouraging impulsive spending behaviors (Carrier & Maurice, 1998). On the other hand, it is equally plausible that overspending stems from intrinsic factors, such as a person's habitual lack of financial discipline or psychological tendencies to indulge. This raises the question of whether mobile banking merely facilitates existing spending patterns or actively shapes them, making the interplay between the medium and the customer’s predispositions a crucial area for exploration (Sotiropoulos & d’Astous, 2013).

Understanding the interplay between technological mediums like mobile banking and individual traits is essential to address the underlying causes of overspending. This research is significant as it provides insights into whether the convenience offered by mobile banking fosters impulsive spending or simply amplifies pre-existing financial habits (Gautam, 2022; Tóth et al., 2020). By examining these dynamics, the study aims to contribute to the development of strategies for promoting responsible financial behavior and enhancing the design of financial technologies to minimize potential negative impacts. Such findings are critical for both financial institutions and users, ensuring that the benefits of technology are maximized while mitigating risks associated with overspending.

Literature Review

Overspending refers to the act of spending more money than one can afford or beyond what is necessary, often driven by emotional or psychological factors rather than practical needs. Philosophically, overspending represents a conflict between desire and necessity, where individuals prioritize short-term gratification over long-term financial stability. Research suggests that overspending is often tied to wants rather than needs, highlighting the role of consumer culture and psychological tendencies in influencing financial behavior.

According to studies (Dittmar & Beattie, 1998; Moser et al., 2019), overspending is frequently linked to impulsive buying, where individuals make purchases based on emotional triggers or societal pressures rather than rational evaluations of necessity. This perspective emphasizes that overspending is not merely a financial issue but a behavioral one, shaped by internal desires and external influences that drive individuals to prioritize wants over essential needs.

When linked to behavioral concepts, overspending becomes a critical issue to examine through the lens of behavioral finance. This field explores how psychological factors influence financial decision-making, often leading individuals away from rational economic behavior. One key concept in behavioral finance relevant to overspending is loss aversion, which suggests that individuals are more sensitive to losses than equivalent gains, driving them to spend impulsively to avoid perceived discomfort or deprivation (Karle et al., 2015). Another related concept is present bias, where individuals place disproportionate value on immediate gratification over future financial security, often resulting in unnecessary spending. Additionally, mental accounting plays a role, where individuals categorize money in subjective ways, justifying discretionary spending as separate from essential financial responsibilities (Shefrin & Thaler, 1992). By examining overspending through these behavioral finance lenses, researchers can uncover the underlying psychological drivers and develop strategies to encourage more disciplined and rational financial behaviors.

Several studies have focused on overspending from the perspective of behavioral finance (Choe, 2021; Heath & Soll, 1996; Shafir & Thaler, 2006; Stilley, 2008), exploring how psychological biases and decision-making patterns influence spending behaviors. These studies often highlight concepts such as impulsiveness, present bias, and overconfidence as key factors driving individuals to overspend. However, these investigations tend to focus primarily on human behavior without adequately addressing the role of external factors, such as technological affordance or user experience. Technology, particularly mobile banking, has introduced unprecedented ease and accessibility, allowing users to conduct financial transactions effortlessly. This technological convenience can act as a trigger for overspending, as it reduces friction in spending decisions and makes financial resources readily available at the touch of a button (Gurusamy, 2024; Honan & Ciotti, 2000). Consequently, the intersection of behavioral tendencies and the affordances of mobile banking technology creates a new dynamic that deserves further exploration to understand how accessibility and ease-of-use may amplify overspending behavior among banking customers.

This research is crucial to understanding whether overspending is merely influenced by the accessibility of technology, such as mobile banking, rather than being primarily driven by customer behavior (Gautam, 2022; Hinson, 2011; Shaikh, 2016). By investigating this gap, the study seeks to determine the extent to which technological affordances amplify overspending tendencies or whether behavioral factors remain the dominant cause. Addressing this question is essential not only to provide a deeper understanding of the interaction between technology and human behavior but also to refine existing literature in both behavioral finance and technology use. The findings can offer valuable insights for financial institutions to design more responsible and user-focused technologies, while also equipping customers with the knowledge to better manage their spending behaviors in an increasingly digitalized financial landscape.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Methodology

To explore whether overspending is primarily influenced by the accessibility of mobile banking technology or by customer behavior, a qualitative research methodology is employed (Creswell et al., 2007). This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the complex interplay between technological affordances and individual financial habits through rich, contextual data collection and analysis.

Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory case study design, focusing on mobile banking users who have experienced instances of overspending (Annells, 1996). The qualitative approach is ideal for uncovering nuanced perspectives and subjective experiences related to financial behavior and technology use.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this study will involve three primary methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between mobile banking and overspending. First, in-depth interviews will be conducted with mobile banking users from diverse demographic backgrounds. These semi-structured interviews will explore participants' spending habits, their experiences with mobile banking, perceptions of convenience, and any behavioral triggers that may contribute to overspending. Second, focus group discussions (FGDs) will be organized to capture group dynamics and shared experiences among users. These discussions will delve into how features of mobile banking, such as ease of access and instant transactions, influence financial decisions. Lastly, document analysis will be employed to examine supplementary data, including mobile banking transaction logs (with consent) and promotional materials from banking apps, to identify patterns in spending behaviors and the role of technology in facilitating overspending. Together, these methods will provide a rich and multifaceted understanding of the phenomena under study.

Sampling Strategy

The study will use purposive sampling to select participants who actively use mobile banking and have experienced overspending. Efforts will be made to ensure diversity in terms of age, income levels, and user experience with mobile banking. Approximately 15-20 participants will be included to achieve data saturation.

Data Analysis

Data collected through interviews and FGDs will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on identifying recurring themes and patterns. The analysis will examine technological affordance, exploring how mobile banking features influence spending behavior, and behavioral factors, including psychological and habitual tendencies that contribute to overspending. Additionally, the study will analyze the intersection of technology and behavior, highlighting the combined effects of user experience and individual tendencies on financial decision-making. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between technology and consumer behavior in the context of overspending.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis investigates the impact of mobile banking usage on spending habits, particularly focusing on financial overspending. The responses from participants have been analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns that highlight the effects of mobile banking on financial behavior. Key insights reveal that mobile banking has a dual impact on financial habits, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, mobile banking significantly enhances financial awareness and transparency by granting users instant access to transaction records, enabling them to monitor their spending patterns, track expenses in real time, and make more informed financial decisions. This level of accessibility empowers users to maintain better control over their finances and supports the development of disciplined money management practices. However, the negative implications of mobile banking cannot be overlooked. The convenience and speed of transactions, while advantageous, can inadvertently encourage impulsive purchases by reducing the friction traditionally associated with spending, such as handling cash or undergoing time-intensive payment processes. This ease of spending can lead to deviations from budget plans, potentially undermining financial goals and fostering unhealthy financial habits. Respondents in this study include workers from various sectors, such as entrepreneurs, employees in state-owned enterprises (BUMN), and civil servants (PNS), all of whom have been using mobile banking for more than three years. These respondents rely on mobile banking almost daily, particularly for payments involving virtual account numbers, transfers, and QRIS. Recognizing these dual effects underscores the importance of designing strategies, tools, and educational initiatives to maximize the benefits of mobile banking while mitigating its risks.

Identified Themes

1. Financial Management

Participants described how they manage their finances, including budgeting and planning their monthly expenses. The responses suggest that mobile banking can support financial management by providing tools to track expenditure, but it also challenges participants to maintain discipline.

Key Responses:
" I use a mobile banking app to monitor my daily expenses, but sometimes I forget to adjust to the budget I have set"
" Mobile banking helps me see transaction reports directly so it's easier for me to set spending priorities"

The two statements provide contrasting insights into the relationship between mobile banking usage and spending habits, offering valuable context for the research. The first statement highlights a behavioral gap, where users monitor expenses through mobile banking apps but struggle to adhere to their budgets, suggesting limitations in app design or self-regulation. This reflects the potential for overspending despite the availability of tracking tools. Conversely, the second statement emphasizes the positive impact of mobile banking, as the real-time access to transaction reports helps users prioritize spending and enhance financial awareness. Together, these perspectives underscore the duality in user experiences, where mobile banking facilitates financial visibility but may not fully mitigate impulsive or unplanned expenditures. This aligns with the research title, which explores the influence of mobile banking on spending habits, particularly in the context of financial overspending. A qualitative approach is ideal for investigating these dynamics, focusing on themes such as app features versus behavioral outcomes, inconsistencies between financial awareness and actions, and the psychological triggers that drive overspending. These insights can inform strategies to optimize mobile banking apps for better financial management.

Contrary to these findings, other research suggests that mobile banking apps consistently improve financial discipline by reinforcing self-regulation through real-time transaction data and automated alerts (Kinslin, 2025; Merhi et al., 2021; Servon & Kaestner, 2008). Features like spending caps and goal-setting tools are shown to help users adhere to budgets, reducing impulsive spending. This perspective attributes overspending more to user engagement levels than to app design limitations, framing mobile banking as a predominantly positive influence on financial habits.

2. Spending Behavior

This theme captures participants' behaviors regarding spending, including cautious spending, impulsive purchases, and decision-making processes.

Key Responses:
" I tend to be more careful when shopping online because I am aware that my balance can be seen directly through mobile banking"
" The ease of paying via QR code makes me make purchases more often without thinking twice."

The two statements highlight contrasting behavioral influences of mobile banking on online shopping habits. The first statement reflects a cautious approach, where the visibility of account balances through mobile banking creates a sense of financial awareness, encouraging users to be more mindful when shopping online. This demonstrates a positive impact of mobile banking on promoting financial discipline. In contrast, the second statement reveals an impulsive tendency triggered by the convenience of payment methods, such as QR codes, which lower psychological barriers to spending and lead to more frequent purchases without careful consideration. These perspectives illustrate the dual role of mobile banking as both a tool for fostering financial prudence and a potential enabler of impulsive spending. This dichotomy aligns with the research focus on how mobile banking usage affects spending habits, particularly in contexts that encourage overspending. Exploring these behaviors through a qualitative lens can uncover valuable insights into how mobile banking features influence decision-making processes, balancing the ease of transactions with the need for financial control.

In contrast, other research suggests that mobile banking primarily fosters financial prudence, even in the context of online shopping (Bons et al., 2012; Tiwari et al., 2006). The visibility of account balances and transaction histories consistently encourages users to make deliberate purchasing decisions, while the convenience of payment methods like QR codes is seen as a facilitator of planned, rather than impulsive, spending. This perspective challenges the notion of dual behavioral influences, arguing that mobile banking's ease of access enhances overall financial discipline by reducing friction in managing budgets and tracking expenses, rather than enabling overspending.

3. Impact of Mobile Banking

Participants discussed the overall impact of mobile banking on their financial habits, with some highlighting its benefits in increasing financial literacy, while others noted its potential to encourage overspending.

Key Responses:
"I feel more aware of my spending because all transactions are recorded, but on the other hand I feel the urge to keep shopping because it is so easy to access"
"With notifications from the mobile banking application, it is easier for me to control routine expenses such as bill payments."

The two statements reveal a nuanced relationship between mobile banking usage and spending behavior, highlighting both its advantages and challenges. The first statement underscores the dual impact of mobile banking: while transaction records enhance financial awareness and transparency, the ease of access to shopping platforms fosters an urge to spend impulsively. This reflects a tension between financial discipline and the convenience of digital transactions. The second statement, however, emphasizes a positive aspect of mobile banking, where notifications serve as helpful reminders for managing routine expenses, such as bill payments, facilitating better control over financial obligations. Together, these perspectives illustrate the complex role of mobile banking in shaping spending habits, balancing its potential to promote accountability with its tendency to encourage impulsive behavior. These dynamics support the research focus on the impact of mobile banking usage, particularly in understanding how its features influence spending priorities and financial overspending. A qualitative investigation can provide deeper insights into the interplay between user behavior, app functionality, and financial outcomes.

In contrast, other research suggests that mobile banking predominantly enhances financial discipline without significantly fostering impulsive spending (Mbama, 2018; Nier & Baumann, 2006). Transaction records and notifications not only increase financial transparency but also actively deter unnecessary expenditures by providing constant reminders of account balances and spending limits. Rather than creating tension between discipline and convenience, the ease of access to digital transactions is framed as a tool that streamlines budgeting and payment management. This perspective challenges the view of mobile banking as a double-edged sword, highlighting its overall positive influence on financial behavior and spending priorities.

4. Overspending Due to Mobile Banking

Many participants admitted that the convenience of mobile banking often leads to unplanned spending. Features such as one-click payments and quick transfers were noted as factors contributing to impulsive financial decisions.

Key Responses:
" The instant payment feature means that I often don't realize that I've spent more money than I planned"
" I find it hard to resist the temptation to shop online because everything can be done with just a few clicks"

The two statements highlight the challenges posed by mobile banking in promoting financial discipline, particularly in the context of online shopping. The first statement points to the unintended consequences of the instant payment feature, where the speed and convenience of transactions make users less aware of their spending, often leading to exceeding planned budgets. The second statement further emphasizes the ease of online shopping, where the simplicity of completing transactions with just a few clicks intensifies the temptation to make impulsive purchases. Together, these perspectives illustrate how the convenience offered by mobile banking and digital payments can undermine financial self-control, contributing to overspending. These insights align closely with the research focus on the impact of mobile banking usage on spending habits, particularly the behavioral shifts that arise from technological convenience. A qualitative study can delve deeper into these experiences to explore how instant payment features and online shopping ease influence financial decision-making and spending patterns.

In contrast, other research suggests that mobile banking enhances financial discipline even in the context of online shopping (Gu et al., 2009; Mbama, 2018; Nier & Baumann, 2006; To & Lai, 2014). Instant payment features and transaction simplicity are viewed as tools that empower users to track expenses in real time and maintain better control over their budgets. Rather than undermining self-control, the convenience of mobile banking is seen as reducing financial stress by streamlining payments and providing clear spending insights. This perspective challenges the notion that digital payment systems lead to overspending, highlighting their role in fostering responsible financial decision-making and planning.

Discussion

This analysis delves into the multifaceted impact of mobile banking on consumer spending habits, highlighting both its potential benefits and challenges. On the one hand, mobile banking offers a range of tools and features that can significantly enhance financial management. These include real-time transaction monitoring, simplified access to account details, automated savings mechanisms, and user-friendly budgeting tools that empower individuals to take control of their finances. Such functionalities can lead to more informed decision-making and better financial discipline.

On the other hand, the convenience and immediacy of mobile banking also introduce risks, particularly the temptation to overspend. The ease of completing transactions with just a few taps, coupled with the proliferation of seamless online payment options, can encourage impulsive purchases and reduce the psychological barriers traditionally associated with spending, such as handling cash. This duality underscores the need for targeted strategies and interventions to promote responsible usage and mitigate overspending tendencies.

To gain a deeper understanding of mobile banking's long-term effects, further research is warranted. Such studies could explore how sustained use of mobile banking influences financial behaviors over time, examining factors like changes in saving patterns, debt management, and overall financial health. Insights from this research could guide the development of policies and educational programs aimed at maximizing the benefits of mobile banking while addressing its inherent challenges, ultimately fostering a more financially literate and resilient society.

Key insights reveal that mobile banking has a dual impact on financial behavior, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, mobile banking significantly enhances financial awareness and transparency by granting users instant access to transaction records, enabling them to monitor their spending patterns, track expenses in real time, and make more informed financial decisions. This level of accessibility empowers users to maintain better control over their finances and supports the development of disciplined money management practices. However, the negative implications of mobile banking cannot be overlooked. The convenience and speed of transactions, while advantageous, can inadvertently encourage impulsive purchases by reducing the friction traditionally associated with spending, such as handling cash or undergoing time-intensive payment processes. This ease of spending can lead to deviations from budget plans, potentially undermining financial goals and fostering unhealthy financial habits. Recognizing these dual effects underscores the importance of designing strategies, tools, and educational initiatives to maximize the benefits of mobile banking while mitigating its risks.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This analysis underscores the complex and multifaceted effects of mobile banking on spending behaviors, revealing both its advantages and potential drawbacks. On the positive side, mobile banking empowers users with tools and resources to enhance financial management, such as real-time expense tracking, automated savings, and easy access to budgeting features. However, it also presents challenges, particularly the risk of encouraging impulsive spending due to the convenience and immediacy of digital transactions. These dual implications highlight the need for a balanced approach that maximizes the benefits while addressing the risks. Further research is essential to examine the long-term behavioral shifts associated with mobile banking, providing a more comprehensive understanding of its influence on financial habits and identifying strategies to foster sustainable and responsible usage.

To promote responsible financial management among mobile banking users, education on financial discipline is crucial, emphasizing strategies to curb impulsive spending, such as setting spending limits or leveraging budgeting applications. Financial institutions can enhance mobile banking features by integrating tools like spending alerts, budgeting functionalities, and purchase delays, fostering more mindful financial behaviors. Additionally, workshops or seminars focused on financial literacy, particularly on the effective use of digital financial tools, can empower users to make informed decisions and develop healthier spending habits.

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