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Promoting Digital Technologies to Enhance Human Resource Progress in Banking

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Abstract: The banking industry has been using digital technologies for several decades to improve its operations and customer service. Digital transformation has marked the competitive banking market worldwide. It has been prominent in hardware and software banks use to attract and keep customers, pursuing the recent trends of digital advancement. Strategic human resource management is an area in the Albanian banks' activity that can increase the use of digital tools to benefit from their remarkable attributes. The bank workforce should be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies for utilizing the new technologies and processes. Training and development of employees are key to ensuring they can contribute to the achievement of banks strategic objectives. This study points out the potential of digital tools to drive the improvements of employees in terms of performance, motivation, job satisfaction, and customer service. The role of learning management systems for employees' training in banks is given particular attention. The method applied is a combination of the desk study with a field survey carried out in the banking sector in Albania. It reveals a positive relationship between the use of appropriate digital tools for employees' learning and development process and their commitment to work. The survey indicates the employees' appreciation for the organizations that care about their workforce development, which contributes to a successful implementation of their competitive strategy in the Albanian market. Increased use of digital technologies for human resource development in banks could support the digital advancement of the whole economy.

Keywords: Banking sector in Albania, Digital technology, Human resource development, Learning management systems, Workforce training, Performance increase, Customer service improvement

1. Introduction

Digital transformation in the banking sector is a complex process that includes the adoption of new technologies, changes in business processes and upskilling of the workforce. Digital technologies have triggered disruptive changes that incite companies to find strategic responses for balancing their positive and negative outcomes. Recently, banks have invested heavily in digital technologies and systems to improve their services and maintain a competitive position. Meanwhile, the development of human resources in parallel with these digital initiatives remains an important strategic approach to benefit from the full range of opportunities that technology offers. The role of Learning Management Systems (LMS) in supporting employee learning and development in the context of digital transformation deserves special attention and consideration. Learning Management Systems has the potential to develop employees, while improving their performance, motivation, employees' engagement, and job satisfaction. On the other side, they contribute to improved service provided by employees, endowing them with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to changes in technology and new processes. However, if the LMS is not effectively implemented and supported by the bank, it can lead to frustration, disengagement, and even resistance from employees.

This groundwork highlights the need for considering the broader framework of LMS, both from the technological and managerial point of view, in the context of the banking industry. Going digital in the banking industry in Albania remains in focus of the market actors and the institutions, as confirmed by the Albanian Association of Banks in several cases (AAB, 2017; AAB, 2023). Such a trend necessitates the presentation of every sustainable approach, broad analysis, and discussion of expected challenges, encouraging academic and practitioners research.

This study aims to observe the impact of LMS usage by employees and provide insights and recommendations for banks to effectively apply LMS to support the learning and development of their employees in the digital age. LMS is strongly considered as a digital instrument that is not intended – at least for the moment – to substitute the traditional training methods used in banks. Otherwise, the applications of customized learning management systems in combination with traditional ones can help banks improve their digital transformation initiatives and ensure that their employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the rapidly evolving banking landscape.

2. Literature Review

The importance of digital transformation in the business world is uncontested. Companies are aware the digitalization contributes to increasing short-term profits, but the main goal of digital strategy is instead to build a competitive business for the long term, through improving the ability to meet customer demands. There are intensive efforts even in the level of international organizations (Eurostat, 2024) to propel the digital transformation of businesses by 2030 with more than 90% of SMEs reaching at least a basic level of digital intensity, and 75% of EU companies using cloud computing services, perform big data analysis, or use artificial intelligence. According to a recent survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit, nine out of ten companies believe digital transformation is now a requirement for success, while almost four out of five say that without further digital transformation, they will be at a competitive disadvantage within three years (The Economist, 2022).

Digital transformation is present in all sectors, including industrial companies, various administrations, educational institutions, the financial sector, etc., and has a noticeable impact on them (Diener and Spacek, 2021). Research highlights that within the financial sector, commercial banks have been at the forefront of the technological revolution, characterized by rapid deployment and innovation of digital services leading to new banking practices (Krasonikolakis et al., 2020). Keeping the pace of technological change requires people and businesses to acquire new digital skills and competencies (Eurostat, 2024), which intends increase of digital skills for individuals for their everyday life needs and as employees.

There is an obvious increase in digital skills for people in European countries according to the Eurostat publication (2024), with effect on their communication, education and information needs, medical and banking services as well. It is reported that 70% of internet users used online banking services in 2023 compared with 55% in 2013. The increasing trend reinforces the need for banking and financial services to facilitate the process by better infrastructure and highly skilled workforce.

2.1. Drivers of Digital Technologies Applied in Banking

The banking sector is highly affected and has benefitted from different digital technologies. Digital advancement through the years has involved a broad range of banking activities, among which: digitization of documents, an electronic signature for transactions, e-learning, teleconference, online trading platforms, digital stores, e-statements, and m-payments (Kitsios et al., 2021). The recent trends in the financial industry (Wewege et al., 2020) and the boost in artificial intelligence use in banking (Kaya, 2019; McKinsey, 2021), are bringing new products, platforms and tools purposedly designed or adaptable to digital banking services.

Some of the key drivers of digital transformation in banks include:
- increased customer demand and expectations for personalized, faster, more convenient services (Baxter and Rigby, 2014). They are fueled by the digital technologies' development and pressure the banks to adopt digital transformation strategies (Valdez-de-Leon, 2016).
- intensive competition, especially augmented by the fin-tech start-ups that are using technology to provide the most innovative banking products and services. Traditional banks are forced to revise their business models and adopt new stechnologies to remain competitive (Diener and Spacek, 2021; Wewege et al., 2020).
- pressure for cost reduction and efficiency, as an internal need that orients them toward process automatization, operations digitalization, data analysis, etc. This approach helps them to reduce costs, increase efficiency and improve the customer experience (Kitsios et al., 2021).

- technological advancement provides innovative products and services, like Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain, that are highly promising for banks to achieve their key profitability objectives and remain competitive,

as the research from Deutsche Bank reveals (Kaya, 2019). Banks cannot neglect to cope with these trends, although the pace is not equal within the sector and countries.
- banks can more easily comply with the reinforced regulatory standards and requirements while assisted by information technology and digital innovations. According to Valdez-de-Leon (2016), the reduction of compliance costs and improvement of risk management are expected from the process.

2.2. Beneficiaries of Digital Applications in the Banking Sector

The use of digital technologies in banking affects both internal and external stakeholders. The broad range of benefits can be divided into three sets of benefits, for customers, banks as organizations, and bank employees.

Customers can benefit in several directions:
• Receiving customized services - Digital transformation allows banks to offer adapted services that meet the unique needs of each customer.
• Convenience: Digital banking services can be accessed anytime, anywhere and on any device, making it more convenient for customers to conduct banking transactions (Baxter and Rigby, 2014).
• Improved customer experience: Digital transformation enables banks to offer a smoother, more efficient, personalized and more profitable customer experience in all service delivery channels. This can increase customer loyalty, contributing to the bank's competitive position in the market.
• Faster services: Digital banking services can significantly reduce the time it takes customers to complete transactions (Skrtic et al., 2012).

The banks themselves can have:
• Cost savings: Digital transformation can help banks reduce operational costs by automating processes and digitizing operations (Humes, 2011).
• Improved efficiency: the use of digital technologies leads banks to improve their operations and increase efficiency (Chang, 2016).
• Better risk management: digital tools enable banks to improve risk management by using data analytics to identify and mitigate potential risks.
• Gaining and maintaining the competitive advantage: digital transformation can provide banks with a competitive advantage by enabling them to offer innovative products and services that meet the changing needs of customers (Baxter and Rigby, 2014).

The bank employees, as important stakeholders in business (Eden et al., 2019), can also have many benefits:
• Expanding skills and competencies: Digital technologies can provide employees with new skills and knowledge to perform their roles more effectively.
• Increased job satisfaction: the use of digital technologies affects the organization of work and can provide employees with more challenging and interesting work roles, leading to increased job satisfaction.
• Improved collaboration: Digital transformation can improve collaboration between employees and work groups, leading to better results and higher productivity from teamwork as well.

2.3. Digital Transformation Is Made by Trained People

The benefits from digital technologies are not reached automatically. They can be achieved if all the factors that influence their proper use are combined. Technological development must be accompanied by increasing the knowledge of the employees and stimulating the use of advanced tools on a large scale. Continuous efforts and projects dedicated to increase of digital skills both for businesses and population (final users of those services) are orienting toward the use of different tools, predominantly of digital ones (Eurostat, 2024).

Banks can ensure that they have a skilled and developed workforce by investing in the continuous training and development of their employees using all available instruments (Ambrosetti, 2019). The staff that is capable of adapting to new digital technologies and processes contribute to meeting the changing needs of their clients and also move forward their professional careers.

Learning Management System (LMS) is one of the digital tools that has been developed in recent decades and that contributes to the development of human resources.

LMS has its roots in the years 1980-1990 with Computer-Based Training (CBT) which is considered as the foundation of today's electronic learning (eLearning). Following the invention of the Internet system, the new Web-Based Training (WBT) was formed (Hubackova, 2015). The pedagogical approach, which began to be more applied in 2002 has pointed out that eLearning has many advantages and could be effectively used not only for distance education, but also for face-to-face education" (Hubackova, 2015; Kitsios et al., 2021). From that time, and especially stimulated during COVID-19, Learning Management System was developed as a software application that gives organizations the opportunity to offer training programs and educational courses to their employees. Examples of using it in education and medical field (Chang, 2016; Ilyaz et al., 2017) and efforts to recently stimulate it (WB, 2022) have been abundant, while its potential is high even in other sectors as well.

The software can be used by banks to manage their programs of staff training and development through its key functions (Humes, 2011; Kitsios et al., 2021). There are several main duties the system can be designed to realize:
- Course and content management according to the organization needs, uploading them in a centralized folder to save and manage course materials.
- Training delivery, because LMS software serves as a platform for organizations to deliver their training programs to employees sustainably and efficiently, both for standardized and customized courses.
- Employee evaluation, as LMS software allows organizations to evaluate the employee training process. It can provide measurable results at the end of the course regarding "user" performance and knowledge development to ensure that employees have achieved the required level of development after training.
- Monitoring and reporting: LMS software provides organizations with real-time data on the employee training process, allowing them to track employee progress, monitor overall training effectiveness, their performance, and generate reports and detailed analyses on the results of the learning process.

The limited available literature about the use of LMS for training employees in banking institutions highlights its role, considering both employees and the organizations. The experience in the context of digital transformation in the banking sector shows that since the late nineties, a Learning Management System (eLearning) can play a crucial role in helping bank employees adapt to new digital technologies and processes (Skrtic et al., 2012; Chang, 2016). Earlier research (Hubackova, 2015; Skrtic et al., 2012) has evidenced that learning software offers flexibility, allowing employees to access training materials at their own pace, making learning more convenient and fitting to their learning needs and schedules. From its side, this leads to a more cost-effective solution for organizations as it can reduce the cost of delivering training programs, avoiding training costs on site and reducing travel costs for staff, according to several surveys (Watson and Watson, 2007; Ilyas et al., 2017). A LMS platform can facilitate collaboration and communication between employees and trainers through discussion forums, chat group discussions or messaging within the software (Hubackova, 2015). The use of LMS brings acceptable advantages and challenges to face (Diener and Spacek, 2016; Eden et al., 2019). Despite the country context - developed or developing country - when banks plan to deploy e-learning systems to support their employees training, they must take into consideration behavioral, managerial and technical factors. Research from Abdou and Jasimuddin (2020) (in the milieu of France based banks) and Kitsios et al. (2021) (in Greece banks) evidence social influence and interaction, employees' perception of performance, satisfaction and contribution, together with facilitating conditions as driving factors to help employees and the organization itself to effectively use LMS. Similar factors have been highlighted as instruments to overcome the barriers to LMS use, like lack of confidence, resistance to change, technical complications or IT limited literacy in several developing countries (Tarhini et al., 2016; Purnomo and Jee, 2013).

Throughout explored literature there is a common recognition that learning management system is a helpful instrument to be used by banks in combination with traditional training methods, like in-person, on-site/ online trainings, etc., in an organized way and aligned with the strategic objectives of the organization (Abdou and Jasimuddin, 2020; John,2022).

3. Research Methodology - Materials and Methods

3.1. Albanian Digital Banking – An Overview

Digital banking technology has been available in Albania for a couple of decades (AAB, 2017) and keeps advancing to close the gap with more advanced European markets. Electronic retail banking technology started being introduced in Albania in the form of Internet Banking, then Mobile Banking, followed by Mobile Payments (Kripa and Seitaj, 2015; Sherifi, 2015; AAB, 2023) and other forms including e-learning as well (bankacredins.com, 2022). The Albanian banking sector is now made of 11 commercial banks (Bank of Albania, 2024). They all provide e-banking and mobile banking services, while four of them provide even e-commerce service (AAB, 2023). The continuous changes imposed by technological advancement have gone through a combined process of progress and challenges, as Albanian research highlights (Bezo and Bezo, 2023). Still, the results have been worthy. According to official records, in 2012, about

96% of transfers were initiated in paper form at banks' outlets, while in 2022 about 50% of transfers are processed remotely (Sejko, 2022). If taking into consideration the payments by card for the same period, it turns out that 79% of payments and transfers are made remotely and only 21% in bank branches (Bank of Albania).

The high investment made by commercial banks has sometimes been accompanied by resistance to change either because of a lack of knowledge or skills required to implement the change, both on the organizational and individual level (AAB, 2023. From this point of view, it is essential for banks to provide or enable the proper training and education programs for employees, following the best practices the sector offers. Although Albanian banks report annually that they are committed to their workforce development, there is a gap between the employee training and development practices in the banking sector and the generalization of the results. Dissemination of the achievements and practices from more experienced organizations could be helpful for the whole banking sector and other industries as well. By now, there are scarce publications about this topic in the Albanian banking sector, fact that has encouraged the authors to undertake this study.

3.2. Research Framework

The research question is how the use of Learning Management System affects the development of employees, their performance and job satisfaction, and customer service. The study has gone through the following steps to enable the evaluation of the role of LMS in the banking sector in Albania:

- survey the actual use of digital technologies in the banking sector,
- identify the drivers for effective use of LMS for supporting the staff training and development,
- assess the impact of LMS use on staff performance, motivation, satisfaction, and engagement at work,
- evaluate the impact of LMS use in customer service improvement,
- identify what challenges banks can face while using LMS.

These steps correspond to the objectives of the study, whose fulfillment leads to answering the compound research question and extending the knowledge about LMS use in the banking sector.The method is a combination of desk study and literature exploration with a purposedly designed field survey carried out in June 2023. The literature review intended to highlight the expected outcomes of LMS application in the banking industry. At the same time, it served as the source for the list of drivers and challenges accompanying this digital tool. Lastly, the previous research could justify and support the design of a survey that encompasses a broad range of issues without becoming too long and laborious for the respondents.

The instrument used for collecting the primary data was a survey carried out in some Albanian bank branches. The collection of quantitative data was important to support the arguments and provide findings and conclusions related to the study topics. A structured questionnaire was drafted, made of 21 closed-ended and multiple-choice questions. The questions' constructs and the scale used enable the respondents - bank employees - to express their nuanced opinions in a measurable way. The personal experience of one of the authors with the LMS use and how it works in a bank's environment has facilitated the survey design and carry out.

The questionnaire was administered online and has ensured confidentiality and anonymity. Simple random sampling was used. Random sampling could ensure the proper representation of the base population and provide information that can be used to draw conclusions and generalizations about the entire population. In order to ensure the participation of a diverse group of employees, every employee of the bank's branch network was given the opportunity to be part of the study by answering the survey questions. Because of the employees' education level (at least holding a university degree), job position requirements (defined level of digital literacy) and the digital infrastructure Albanian banks have in place (continuous access of staff in bank platform), there is no risk of excluding from the survey individuals or groups whose opinion would influence the survey results.

Keeping in mind the aim of the study to provide sound results that would be representable for the sector and could bring applicable recommendations, we made the following choice. By June 2023 (time of the survey) the banking sector has 6743 employees in total, working in 396 outlets (AAB, quarterly statistics 2023). Three biggest banks (in terms of assets, provision of products and services, experience in use of digital banking technologies) were employing 49% of banks workforce (AAB, Annual Report 2023), so representing a target population suitable for our survey. The questionnaire was sent to employees of these banks, asking for their participation based on the free will to share their opinion and experience by filling in the survey. Our study intention was to ensure the participation of employees in different work positions (cashier, customer service/credit analysts, branch controller, branch assistant manager/manager), of different ages and education level, and varied years of experience. So, no discrimination criteria were used, while sending the survey to the employees in those banks.

At the end of the survey period, it was received feedback from one hundred and ten employees who were freely willing to contribute to this study.The information obtained from the questionnaires distributed in commercial banks helped to evidence and assess the employees' perceptions about the LMS impact on their work. The processed information enabled the quantitative evaluation of learning systems' influence on employees' motivation, satisfaction, improvement, as well as on the organizations' performance. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data and results are presented in tables and graphs, facilitating the presentation and discussion of findings.

4. Results and Discussion

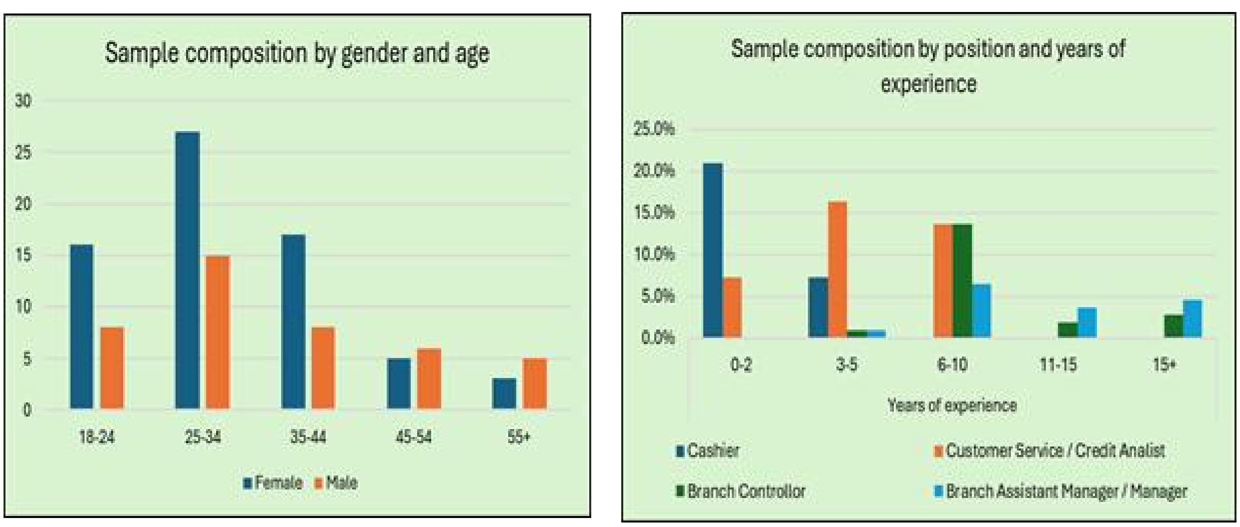
4.1. Main Data

The first part of the questionnaire has enabled the collection and processing of the sample demographic and work data. As expected, the sample composition generally resembles the bank employee' structure in terms of age and gender. Albanian commercial banks have a relatively young and educated workforce, predominantly women (AAB, 2023). The sample composition by gender and age is shown in Figure 1, a.

A considerable number of respondents are young and have a limited time working in the banking sector. More than half of them have been working in the bank branches for less than 5 years, consequently facing the need for training and continuous development, especially to the digital ones. Moreover, more than half of them (Figure 1, b) hold the positions of customer service, credit analyst and cashier, working in direct contact with customers, which makes quite important their qualifications and digital skills to contribute to better customer service and the deriving benefits for the triplet Customer-Bank-Employee.

There is a prevalence of these work positions in the sample, that together with branch controllers constitute 85% of it, while 15% of respondents hold upper management positions. This ratio is similar to the Albanian banks structure (at least those included in this survey), that, according to their annual reports, have from 15%-19% of their workforce in the management ladder. It is evident the relationship between increasing years of experience bringing to higher work position. However, the need for life-long learning remains uncontested and their opinion counts both in the user's and supervisor's role.

There is a high level of education evidenced from the sample data, with around 13% holding a doctoral degree, more than 46% holding a master's degree, and the others having a bachelor's diploma. The education level combined with the relatively young age facilitates the engagement in further training and qualification and ensures the capability to advance the knowledge in accordance with the development of digital technologies.



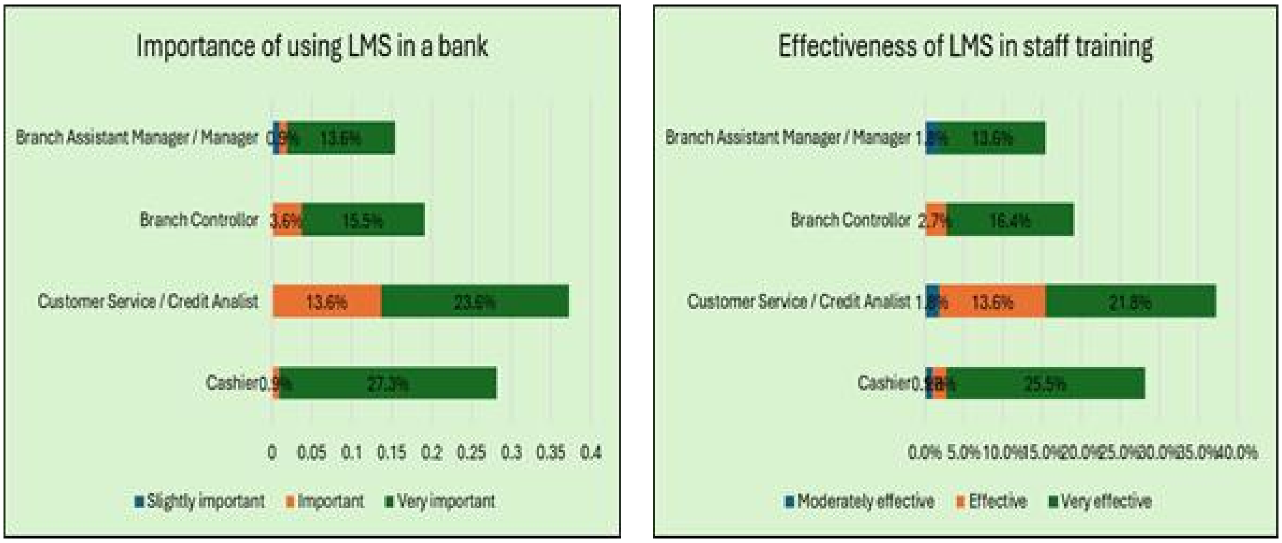
(a) Sample composition by gender and age

(b) Position and experience of respondents

Figure 1: Sample composition

4.2. How Is LMS Affecting the Bank Work

The general perception of the employees about the bank's response to the digital advancement in the industry and the challenges faced is analyzed based on the data from the second part of the questionnaire. There is a unanimous confirmation from the respondents for the positive impact of digital transformation in the banking sector and also a high incidence of affirmation that the banking sector has seriously been engaged in it (Figure 2, a). This reinforces the results of previous research (Bezo and Bezo, 2023) and recent publications on banking industry in Albania (AAB, 2023). In a few cases, the respondents opted for the response "not sufficiently engaged", showing their willingness to increase the use of digital instruments and technologies at their bank. However, there is resistance to change, mostly in the level of individuals and worries about cybersecurity, customer privacy, and data security in the organization level. As other research confirms nowadays most critical need in research is training on the usage of new technologies through training programs and e-learning programs are now taking place in the banking sector to create a smooth transition to the new era (Kitsios et al. 2021).



(a) Role of using LMS (b) Effectiveness of LMS

Figure 2: Importance and effects of LMS use

The core of the survey is focused on the LMS use in the bank branches. The interviewed employees have confirmed having access to the LMS platform where they can follow training about their work processes. The questions of parts three and four intended to reveal how important the use of LMS is for employees and how much are they prepared of it. Furthermore, employees are asked to make their evaluation for this digital tool used in the banking sector in terms of effectiveness, performance increase and motivation.

LMS is a digital tool, the use of which has helped the bank staff have access to all the information needed for development and professional advancement. This increases the importance of using this software, becoming an integral tool in every employee's daily routine. This is confirmed by the survey data, while the employees from all work positions consider its use as very important (80%). There is a limited number of employees (all in the position of branch managers) viewing it as slightly important (0.9%). In our opinion, it is mainly related to their high position and based on their individual needs and opportunities for training, which might go beyond the materials and options the LMS can provide.

The high interest of employees in being involved in initiatives of a digital nature goes in line with the staff's disposition to read manuals or instructions and their commitment to training for enlarging the banking experience. Continuous learning, the increase in the knowledge, skills and competencies level of all staff makes the workforce more capable of the processes required by their job positions. Knowing and mastering the use of the LMS application helps improve response time to situations and reduce unnecessary technical errors. In general, well-trained staff are more efficient and productive. Consequently, the employees are faced with and can acknowledge the effectiveness of the LMS in their training and development. Their evaluation is expressed through the high figures considering the LMS very effective (around 77% of the respondents), with no differences between work positions (Figure 2, b). It is expected in such combined sample to have even lower "grades" for the effectiveness of the programs they have been using in recent years. It might stem from varied reasons, from personal capabilities and engagement to age, professional career path, and other circumstances. The high evaluation granted might help the bank management to stimulate and facilitate e-learning through such platforms. It might be a model to follow from other financial organizations having similar processes and training needs, especially while facing the recent disruption and digital trends (Wewege et al., 2020). The experience of distance/e-learning during the COVID-19 outbreak points out how fast effective digital tools can be adapted to the needs of different industries.

4.3.Advantages and Challenges of Using LMS in Banks

The bank branches that have organized, informed, and invited their employees to use the LMS platform expect to have an important versatile impact. Continuous and standardized training is among the key benefits expected by the users of LMS, both at organizational and individual level and it is confirmed even from the survey (Figure 3). The bank provides training materials about standard, unified processes and procedures, in compliance with regulatory requirements to all the employees in their respective positions. This enables them to have access to the same level of training and avoid discrepancies or breaches of regulations. The employees are helped and guided to act in a safe and ethical manner during their work. From its side, the bank can prepare a broad range of materials on different topics and administer them effectively.

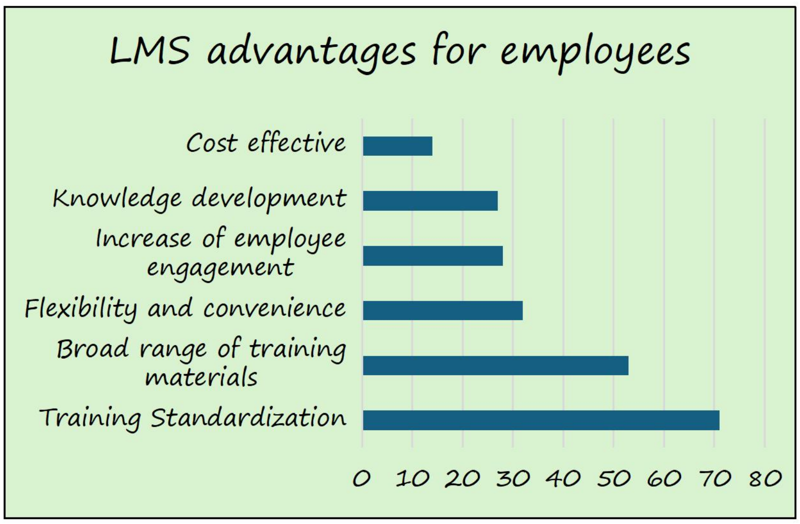


Figure 3: LMS advantages

When the bank and employees themselves demonstrate the specific needs, the training on LMS platform can be enriched with required materials and facilitate the training management. This enables also “customization” of trainings, fulfilling needs of smaller groups for training on specific topics, while keeping the general standards of the bank for the whole staff needs. It lasts on time, while ensuring better use of resources allocated.

LMS provides employees with flexibility and convenience during training. Employees have accessed training content whenever possible and have followed training modules at their own pace. So, the learning process can be improved and become more attractive, as well as more effective.

The LMS is comfortable to use as it adapts to the different learning styles of individuals through video, audio or reading training content. The opportunities digital technology and Industry 4.0 enabling technologies provide are immense and the banking sector can make best use of them even for the qualification of the workforce. While digital banking products and services to customers are spreading up in all Albanian banks, there is little advancement in use of digital tools for employees and customers education. LMS can contribute to increased engagement and motivation of employees as they are provided with personalized training material according to their work position and responsibilities. This enables the employees to manage individual training in accordance with their needs and career intentions while ensuring cost and time savings for the organization. According to the respondents’ opinion, an increase of employees’ engagement brings improved work performance by contributing to new skills and knowledge acquired by employees when they have continuous access to training materials. Although there isn’t any direct cost reduction regarding the training activities at the individual level, still the respondents have mentioned cost-effectiveness as one of the advantages LMS brings. It refers mainly to the time savings for them, as well as the cost of organized training sessions on bank premises (both in person and online). It demonstrates their consideration goes beyond individual benefits and expresses their opinion on an organization’s level.

Taking advantage of increased skills and knowledge, ease and speed up of doing the work, more opportunities to pursue their careers, employees feel more satisfied from their work. Such a relationship between the use of LMS and increase of satisfaction from the work is confirmed by the majority of the respondents (95%). As highlighted by several research (Literature review section), using LMS provides employees with improved communication skills, the ability to solve customer problems, and increased knowledge about banking products and services offered. Through regular, relevant, and focused training in their daily tasks, employees are better prepared and able to provide a better-quality service. Using video, simulations, and more interactive learning tools assists employees to be better prepared for the challenges customer service presents. This positive impact on service quality can lead to higher customer satisfaction and, ultimately, to increased loyalty to the organization. In our survey, it is confirmed as one of the results from use of learning management systems by the bank employees', most of which opt for a high impact on customer service improvement as per their own experience (Figure 4).

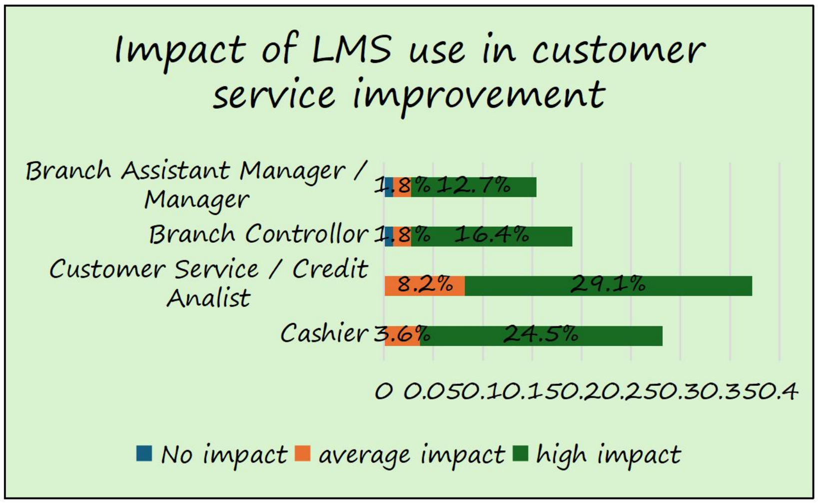


Figure 4: Impact on customer service

There is no doubt that in addition to the benefits LMS offers to employees and organizations in the banking sector, its implementation also presents some challenges. They need to be recognized, analyzed, and taken into consideration for mitigating them.

According to our survey (Figure 5) lack of personal interaction is most concerning for the employees. LMS can be isolating, as it does not offer the same level of social interaction and collaboration as in-person training sessions by trainers and other colleagues. Some employees may feel they are not sufficiently bound with the training process, which can make the learning experience less engaging, or even reduce motivation to complete the training. At this point, the bank human resource management can play an important role by combining different training and development methods according to specific features and behavioral traits of employees, as recommended in several recent research (Abdou and Jasimuddin, 2020; Kitsios et al., 2021).

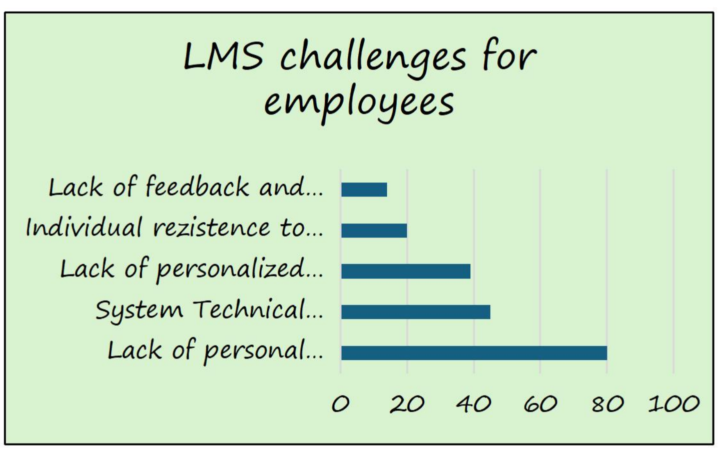


Figure 5: Challenges to LMS use

One of the biggest challenges of using LMS for employees is the technical difficulties. LMS platforms may require employees to use unfamiliar software, which can lead to technical difficulties. Employees may experience problems accessing the system, navigating through the content of the LMS platform, or using the software. These issues can be frustrating for employees, can result in lost productivity or delayed completion of training, and can require time and technical support to resolve them. It remains to the bank itself to enable smooth operation of systems and increase the support of IT specialists for less skilled employees it might have in different positions. The country education system as well might be a contributing stakeholder, providing new generations with strong digital skills and competences, easily applicable to the actual and future workplaces.

While LMS platforms offer the ability to customize the learning process, some employees may feel that the training is too generic and not tailored to their specific job roles or skills. This can result in disengagement and lack of interest in the training, hindering these employees from their development even temporarily. Some of the banks that are using LMS have optimally addressed this concern by preparing training materials on specific fields, like data analysis and artificial intelligence use in banking, leadership education and sustainability, customized to fit to the needs of distinct staff members.

Some employees may resist using the LMS platform due to a preference for traditional training methods. Age, previous experience or even personality traits can be some of the reasons. This can create a barrier to adapting to change and may require additional support and training to overcome.

Lack of feedback and support from the trainer can make it difficult for employees to assess their progress and identify areas where they need to improve when using LMS instead of participating in in-person training sessions.

A few other drawbacks include time management, especially for employees who have heavy workloads or those who work erratic schedules. Although the time flexibility LMS enables, still it might be difficult for them to find time for completing the training modules.

Information overload is another challenge, as the employees might attempt to grasp most of the knowledge the bank has made available in the system. It might result in lower effectiveness due to the excessive amount of information provided and time spent by employees to mentally process it.

The mentioned challenges do not lower the importance and role the use of LMS can play in the development of employees in the banking sector. They are mostly “reminders” for the organizations to find the best balance between the advantages and disadvantages accompanying this digital tool.

5. Conclusion

The banking industry is among the leading sectors that are using digital technologies and deploying advanced systems in their daily work. This has generally contributed to improvements in customer services, better performance of banks themselves, and continuous efforts for success in a competitive market. The banking industry advancement is certainly relying on human resources, whose development should follow the digital initiatives and make the best use of opportunities that technology offers.

This study has observed the recent trends of using digital technologies in the banking industry, mainly focused on those tools that contribute to banks’ workforce development. Besides a considerable number of products and services oriented towards the customer, digital technologies have provided digital platforms and other tools that support directly the employees, as well.

Learning Management System is one of these digital tools designed to provide a convenient environment for employee training and development. The platform, customized according to the needs, features and objectives of the bank using it, can contain a wide range of training and educational materials to help employees develop new skills and competencies. LMS can include varied learning tools that facilitate the training of employees and enable them to get the necessary knowledge to perform their duties more efficiently. Moreover, it is usable in combination with traditional learning and training methods, increasing the chances for a higher qualification of the workforce.

This study intended to reveal how the recent use of LMS in Albanian bank branches affects the development of employees. It was based on a theoretical background built through the literature review and a purposedly designed survey carried out in the Albanian banking milieu. This combined method enabled us to respond to the main research question and draw some conclusions. There are some key findings to mention:
-The study confirms there is a positive relationship between the use of LMS in banks and the employees’ development.

-Employees are motivated and freely engaged to choose the training and track their progress, which makes them more committed to their advancement.
-It is reported an increase in employees' performance and job satisfaction.
-A higher performance, motivation and commitment level of employees contributes to the improvement of customer service, as confirmed by this survey.

There is a general positive attitude of employees toward using digital technologies that banks should take advantage of when making their strategic decisions for human resource development. From this point of view, the practical implications of this study include:
- Provide well-founded recommendations for banking institutions to implement learning management systems for improving employee training and development in the digital age. This recommendation is valid for all banks carrying out activity in Albania, despite of their local or international origin of capitals.
- Recommending banks to draw up effective strategies for managing their training and development programs in the context of digital transformation. The banking institutions should take care to receive employee feedback and seriously consider it to upgrade and improve training process by using combined traditional and digital learning systems.
- Emphasizing that the investment in technology – obvious in many bank branches - is not sufficient for increasing the competitiveness of bank institutions, unless they ensure their employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to use such technology and to succeed in the digital age.This study is the first attempt to evaluate the role of learning management systems in the Albanian bank industry. So, beyond its originality, there are several limitations and many opportunities for further research in varied directions:
-a bigger sample size, including all Albanian bank branches, would have been more representative to the bank industry situation in terms of employees' development. At the same time, it would have contributed to the dissemination of information about e-learning opportunities among employees in the banks that are not using such systems.
-advantages from LMS and the improvements it brings are evaluated based on e-learning users' perceptions. Evaluation of customer service improvement can be further extended by taking into consideration also the customers' opinions by appropriate measuring.
-data analysis is limited to descriptive analysis, instead of using advanced statistical methods to measure the variables relationship. It remains a suggestion for future studies, which can also include longitudinal data. This was not possible for the survey carried out because learning management system is being used in the Albanian banks only during the last years.
-a broader study could take into consideration the bank's top management opinion and make the cost–benefit analysis for a certain period of LMS use.
-future research can include measuring the success of LMS through combined indicators, both of financial and managerial nature. As an instrument applicable to different sectors, it might be useful observing it in other implementation cases and making cross-sector analysis for a deeper understanding and more effective use of e-learning in the future.

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