

The potential of Filipino senior citizens in the digitalization of financial services is often left unnoticed. However, specific barriers exist in e-wallet applications that the untapped segment could overcome and could further the central bank's goal of digital financial inclusion.

In the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2022-2028, the underserved and unserved segments of the country are part of the financially excluded persons that it targets to accommodate in their seven-year plan.

"Senior citizens, just like other underserved sectors, are also afforded the financial inclusion benefits from the priority initiatives of the NSFI, including digital finance," the BSP said in an e-mail interview.

"In fact, one of the four strategic objectives identified in the NSFI is to promote inclusive digital finance as it enables cost efficiencies and innovations that improve the customer experience, affordability, availability, and personalization of welfare-enhancing financial products and services," it added.

In the 2021 Financial Inclusion Survey (FIS), it was estimated that there are 5.4 million senior citizens. The share of senior citizens that own a smartphone more than tripled to 39% in 2021 from 12% in 2019. Similarly, the elderly population that has access to the internet rose to 26% in 2021 from 8% previously.

Those that hold an electronic money (e-money) account reached 11% of the senior citizens. They remain to be the smallest age group that utilizes e-money, next to

those who are 50 to 59 years old (21% share).

Of the Filipino elderly, only 37% have a savings account in 2021 and about 54% of their pension payouts were received through an account. Moreover, 80% of Filipino seniors still made transaction payments as of 2021.

AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

In the research paper titled "Younger Persons are More Likely to Adopt the Mobile Wallet than Older Persons, or are they? The Moderating Role of Age" (2015) by Norman Shaw, the hypothesis that age as a moderator in terms of adopting to e-wallets was proven otherwise.

Results showed that the intention of use was slightly different between the younger generation and the senior citizens, but the age difference was not significant.

Despite this, there is still a gap between the elderly and the digital experience. Both Ms. Medez and Mr. Gonzales face constant struggles in the digital age.

"How to use it at first was the hardest part. I didn't know what I was doing. It's still very convenient in my opinion, I pay off all my bills through e-wallets," Ms. Medez said.

For Mr. Gonzales, he uses his smartphone as his source of daily news, entertainment, and communication.

"I already have difficulty understanding some of the icons and features in my own iPhone, what more with an e-wallet," he said.

The common ground for both these pain points is the digital experience that could be constantly improved. Thus, user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) are