

FinTech Adoption Strategies and their Impact on Financial Performance and Risk Management in Global Financial Markets

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Abstract

Financial technology has contributed to the structural changes in banking, driving the speed of change in how intermediation, risk and operational efficiency are managed across the banking sector. Although a body of empirical research has explored these changes, conclusions have been mixed on the positive impact of technology on the financial outcomes of companies and on the presence of unique risks. This paper is a structured evidence synthesis of 11 recent studies, to investigate the link between adoption of FinTech, financial performance and risk management across global markets. The synthesized evidence shows that internal technology integration provides positive quantitative results, such as accelerating mortgage processing times by up to 20% without a corresponding increase in loan default rates, reducing non-performing loans (NPLs) by 10% for every one standard deviation of the technology adoption, and expanding profitability including a 9.10% increase in return on assets (ROA), an 18.87% increase in return on equity (ROE), and a 7.98% increase in net interest margin (NIM). A comparison, however, of regional results shows that results are critically dependent on the market context, the capital position, and regulatory conditions. The analysis provides a synthesis of existing divergent literature and identifies internal digital capabilities and external competitive factors, leading to an action-oriented risk management and supervisory approach.

Keywords: Fintech Adoption; Bank Performance; Risk Management; Digital Lending; Evidence Synthesis; Global Financial Markets.

I. INTRODUCTION

Financial technology has gone from the fringe to the mainstream of contemporary financial systems. Mortgage and credit markets saw the market share of technology based lenders grow greatly, and cross-country flows of credit from fintech and BigTech providers grew to USD 223 billion and USD 572 billion respectively (Fuster et al., 2019; Cornelli et al., 2023). Once vying mostly in a race against one another, traditional banking institutions now operate in a competitive environment that involves non-bank start-ups and large technology platforms, both competing and cooperating. A key strategic question for financial institutions and their leaders is how to react to these digital transformations. Banks have three options to develop their technological

capacities: in-house development, joint ventures with FinTech companies, or direct investments or acquisitions of such firms, as well as partnerships or co-development is possible with large technology platforms. The different strategic pathways have different risk, learning and cost implications. At the same time, the regulators stress the fact that, although the use of technology can provide efficiency benefits, it also raises new operational, cyber, third-party and systemic risks.

While the field of digital finance has grown in literature, three main limitations hinder the insights managers and researchers can gain in the practical and theoretical dimensions. First, there is geographical and methodological fragmentation of empirical results and conflicting results about the direct benefits of technology adoption. Second, financial performance and institutional risk are often measured separately, so that it is hard to establish a link between increase of profits and increase of risk (Vučinić, 2020). Third, empirical research has been relatively sparse on whether certain forms of adoption (alliances, acquisitions or in-house development) systematically moderate outcomes. This paper aims to fill these gaps by examining the effect of the implementation of FinTech on financial performance and risk that are reported in the recently published empirical literature on the subject and what they mean for corporate strategy and risk management. This study is not an empirical study of primary data, but rather it reviews and contrasts values reported in recent empirical studies.

The main contribution of the paper is three-fold: (i) it gathers and summarizes reported empirical results from a set of studies from different parts of the world, (ii) it draws empirical evidence under four main propositions that outline the performance, risk, adoption strategy and the market context, and (iii) it turns these insights into an integrated framework of risk-management and supervisory efforts.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 develops the conceptual background and outlines the four propositions. Section 3 details the structured evidence-synthesis methodology. Section 4 reports and analyzes the empirical evidence. Section 5 discusses the managerial and risk-management implications, and Section 6 concludes with limitations and directions for future research.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, PROPOSITIONS, AND LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

The literature largely shows convergence on three theoretical perspectives for examining the impact of financial technology on the economic structure of financial institutions: information economics, resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capabilities and industrial organization competition theory.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

The first foundation driver is information asymmetry and screening capacity. Historical financial statements and standardized credit bureau scores are important pieces of information for traditional lenders (Berg et al., 2020). However, easily accessible digital footprint data, plus other metrics, offer better granularity of borrower behaviour. According to economic theory, lenders will be able to more accurately identify risky borrowers and solvent borrowers with

superior information access, which should lead to a lower credit loss and a better-quality portfolio. The second one is based on the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities theory. Proprietary data assets, specialised digital skills and organisational agility – the ability to change how everything is organised within the company to meet current market demand – are the keys to creating sustained competitive advantage rather than generic technology. Financial institutions can integrate the two resources into their business through internal adoption of FinTech or building up technological capabilities. The third factor is competition. Digital-native lenders and technology platforms shake up traditional banking moats (Buchak et al., 2018). Although technology can improve the operational efficiency of an incumbent, any external FinTech competition can tighten profit margins (Pierri & Timmer, 2020; Cheng & Qu, 2020). Additionally, traditional banking institutions are facing higher regulatory costs than shadow banks or tech platforms and this can pose a competitive disadvantage to traditional banks (Khan et al., 2023; Fan & Zhu, 2026).

2.2 Core Propositions

As the current empirical research provides mixed or context-specific results, the literature is structured around the four propositions that are not directionally formulated:

Proposition 1 (Performance): FinTech adoption is a driver of better financial performance for lenders, but this can be offset by the competitive pressures of third-party FinTech companies.

Proposition 2 (Risk): Adopting technology tends to be associated with reduced credit risk and greater financial stability, although there is a lack of consistency across banking sectors and institutional types.

Proposition 3 (Strategy): The modality of adoption (in-house development, strategic alliance, equity investment, or acquisition) and the executive digital strategy have a very strong impact on organizational results.

Proposition 4 (Context): The size, capital reserves, and ownership structure of banks and the regulatory environment and national income levels are all important moderators of the impact of FinTech.

2.3 Synthesis and Inference

Combining theory and research indicates that there are some important aspects of theory and practice that need to be noted:

Adoption and competition dichotomy:

One of the main take-aways from the literature is that the economic impact of FinTech varies only by whether or not an institution is a FinTech adopter or a FinTech competitor. With bank-owned technology as well as technology they integrate themselves, they are able to gain efficiency, speed (like faster mortgage processing), and less loan defaults (Phan et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2023). However, if FinTech is a standalone entity, it usually comes with a cost for incumbents, by cutting their margins and damaging their performance.

The Risk-Stability Disconnect:

Better credit ratings and reduced non-performing loans (NPLs) is not necessarily a

prerequisite for absolute institutional security. Digital screening is an effective way to limit credit risk at the portfolio level, but macroeconomic regulation, capital buffers, and liquidity management under digital business models are key elements in ensuring stability at the institutional level.

The Centrality of Governance and Capital Buffers:

Technologies are not a standalone solution to poor fundamentals. The risks of digital expansion are effectively managed only when accompanied by appropriate capital reserves, solid internal governance and good leadership, including the presence of Chief Digital Officers. Therefore, a digital strategy needs to be integrated with extensive operational and third party risk management frameworks.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a structured evidence synthesis method using secondary data to explore the relationship between the adoption of FinTech, financial performance and risk management. It is appropriate for this study topic because there is no main dataset or a standard meta-analysis pooling that is suitable for the subject, as there are many published studies with different empirical, but relevant, evidence, and the evidence is measured by different measures and analysed in various units.

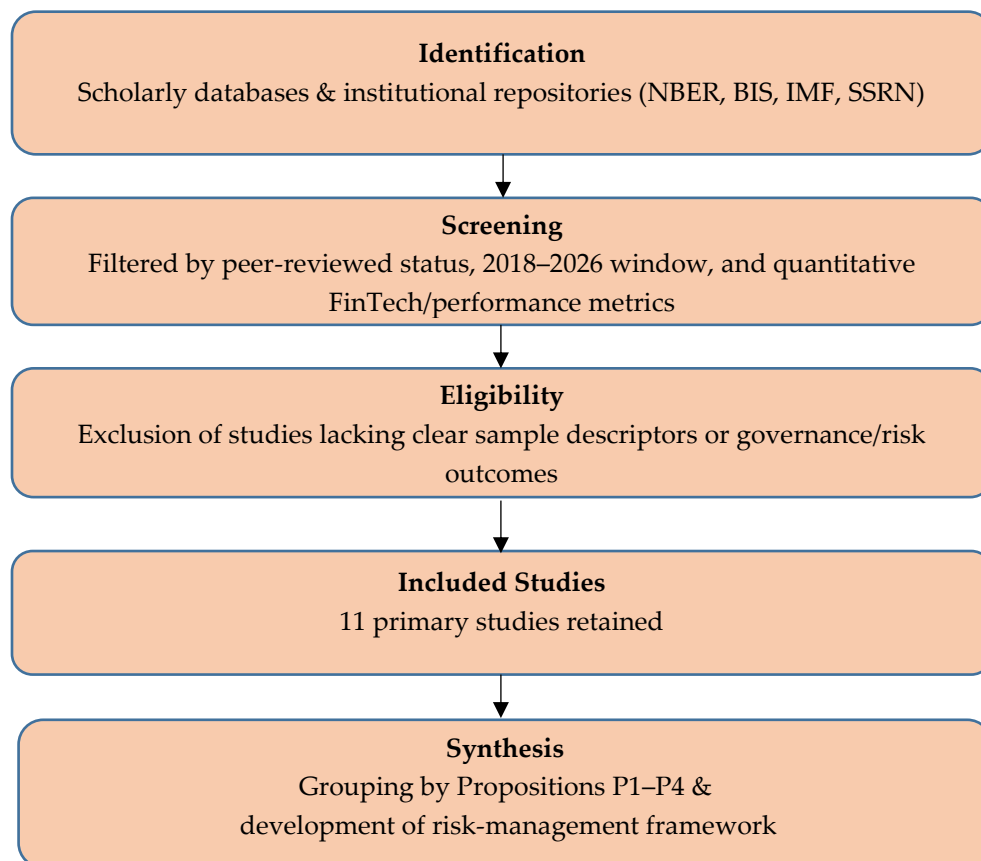


Figure 1: Structured Evidence-Synthesis and Study Selection Process

The systematic identification, screening and qualitative synthesis of the primary studies used to assess impacts of FinTech adoption is illustrated in figure 1.

3.1 Evidence-Synthesis Process

The structured review process follows a sequential framework, outlined below:

The structured review process will be sequential as described:

Step 1: Research Question Definition: The core research questions on the impact of FinTech adoption on bank performance and risk, FinTech adoption strategies and the assessment of propositions P1–P4.

Step 2: Search Published Literature: Search systematically the key words "FinTech adoption," "bank performance," "bank risk," "non-performing loans," "digital lending," and "bank–FinTech alliances" in the major scholarly web sources and the websites of key publishers as well as in NBER, BIS, IMF, and SSRN working-paper servers.

Step 3: Screen Inclusion Criteria: Screen the studies to meet specific criteria: (a) published or accepted between 2018 and 2026 in peer-reviewed journals or institutional major series; (b) reported quantitative evidence on lender/bank performance, risk, or strategy; and (c) clearly and explicitly defined their sample parameters and measures of FinTech.

Step 4: Select Studies: Keep all studies that fulfill all criteria (11 primary studies, 1 regulatory report for risk context).

Step 5: Extract Reported Values: Note the setting (empirical), time period (sample), FinTech measurement metric, observed outcome, direction and magnitude of the effect (reported).

Step 6: Classify and Synthesise: Organise findings around propositions P1–P4 using narrative synthesis and using comparative evidence tables, but not pooling effect sizes because of methodological differences.

Step 7: Derive Implications: Make synthesized evidence into an actionable risk-management and management framework.

IV.EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

The empirical literature offers a complex picture of the effects of digital financial integration on the performance of financial institutions, their exposure to risk and markets across different parts of the world. The findings are then synthesized and reported below in terms of performance outcomes, risk implications, strategies for adoption, and contextual moderators for the core propositions.

4.1 Performance and Efficiency Dynamics

Empirical studies always find that positive internal technological adoption is related to operational efficiency and lender profitability. Studies of mortgage markets show that technology-enabled lenders attain considerable gain in speed of processing, but do not do so at the expense of default rates. Likewise, broad-based cross-country evidence of technological integration of banking sectors suggests that it is associated with statistically significant increases in return on assets (ROA), return on equity (ROE) and net interest margin (NIM). At the same

time, research on the external pressures on the market, including the rapid expansion of independent FinTech firms, finds conflicting pressure on bank profitability, highlighting the difference between internal capability development and external competitive pressures.

4.2 Risk and Stability Outcomes

As far as risk management is concerned, there is ample evidence that there is a positive correlation between technology adoption and credit portfolio quality. Analysis of commercial banking crises from a historical perspective shows that the average non-performing loan ratio is strongly negatively related to the intensity of technological adoption prior to a crisis. In addition, alternative use of digital footprint variables alongside traditional scores from credit bureaus provides greater predictive power than using only credit bureau-based scores. The individual measures of credit risk are improving but systemic measures of stability are not. There is evidence from the regional banking sectors that digital growth can place pressures on stability at times if it is not matched by solid institutional foundations and capitalization.

4.3 Strategic Modes and Contextual Moderators

Table 1. Overview Of Selected Empirical Studies and Primary Findings

Ref.	Setting and Period	FinTech Measure	Primary Finding
(Fuster et al., 2019)	US mortgage lending (2010–2016)	Technology-based lenders	Faster processing speed without higher default rates.
(Cornelli et al., 2023)	79 countries (2013–2018)	FinTech and BigTech credit volumes	Significant volume growth; shaped by income, mark-ups, and regulation.
(Berg et al., 2020)	Consumer credit data	Digital footprint variables	High predictive accuracy; complements standard bureau scores.
(Buchak et al., 2018)	US mortgages (2007–2015)	Fintech vs. non-fintech shadow banks	Rapid market share growth driven largely by regulatory factors.
(Pierri & Timmer, 2020)	US commercial banks (Global Financial Crisis)	Pre-crisis IT adoption intensity	Higher IT intensity linked to lower non-performing loans.
(Cheng & Qu, 2020)	Chinese commercial banks (2008–2017)	Bank FinTech index	Reduction in credit risk, though weaker for large state-owned banks.
(Phan et al., 2020)	Indonesian banking sector	Growth of FinTech firms	Negative association with incumbent bank performance.
(Zheng et al., 2023)	40 developing countries (2011–2021)	FinTech inclusive-finance index	Positive associations with ROA, ROE, and net interest margin.
(Khan et al., 2023)	GCC banking sector (2010–2022)	Bank FinTech adoption index	Reduced bank stability, mitigated by capital strength and ownership.
(Fan & Zhu, 2026)	Chinese banking sector (2012–2022)	Disclosure-based FinTech index	Lower systemic risk mediated by investment efficiency.
(Hornuf et al., 2021)	Major international banks (Canada, France, Germany, UK)	FinTech start-up alliances	Alliances correlate with digital strategy and executive leadership.

In the existing literature, there are few direct empirical comparisons of the performance gaps between specific adoption approaches, including in-house development, strategic alliances, and acquisition. But studies of banking networks suggest that the formalization of digital strategies and executive leadership for those initiatives can effectively drive active technology partnerships. Moreover, these outcomes are also substantially modified by a macro-environment and institutions. National income levels, regulatory stringency, bank size and capital reserves systematically affect the scale and magnitude of the performance gains of digital credit.

A summary of the selected empirical studies in regards to geographic settings, measurement parameters and primary reported findings are presented in Table 1.

4.4 Proposition Assessment

The four core propositions are used to systematically review the theoretical framework developed in Section 2, using the synthesized empirical results. The results of the qualitative evaluation of each proposition summarized in Table 2, which includes the balance of supporting, contrasting, and qualifying evidence from the literature reviewed.

Table 2: Assessment of Propositions Regarding Fintech Adoption and Performance

Proposition	Supporting Evidence	Contrasting or Qualifying Evidence	Assessment
P1: Performance	Positive linkages to profitability metrics and operational speed advantages.	Adverse performance pressures associated with external FinTech firm growth.	Supported for internal adopters; mixed for incumbents facing external competition.
P2: Risk	Reductions in non-performing loans, enhanced credit-scoring predictive power, and lower systemic risk indicators.	Instances of reduced institutional stability in specific regional banking sectors.	Mostly supported; outcomes vary by institution type and regulatory environment.
P3: Strategy	Active technology alliances correlate with defined digital strategies and leadership.	Lack of direct comparative performance evaluations across distinct adoption modes.	Partly supported; highlights a critical gap regarding strategy-specific outcomes.
P4: Context	Performance gains and credit flows vary significantly by national income, growth, and bank scale.	Attenuated credit-risk mitigation effects observed among large, state-owned institutions.	Strongly supported across multiple global studies.

4.5 Comparative Magnitudes of FinTech Effects

While direct statistical meta-analysis is precluded by methodological heterogeneity across the literature, comparing the largest reported percentage changes illustrates the relative economic magnitude of documented FinTech impacts.

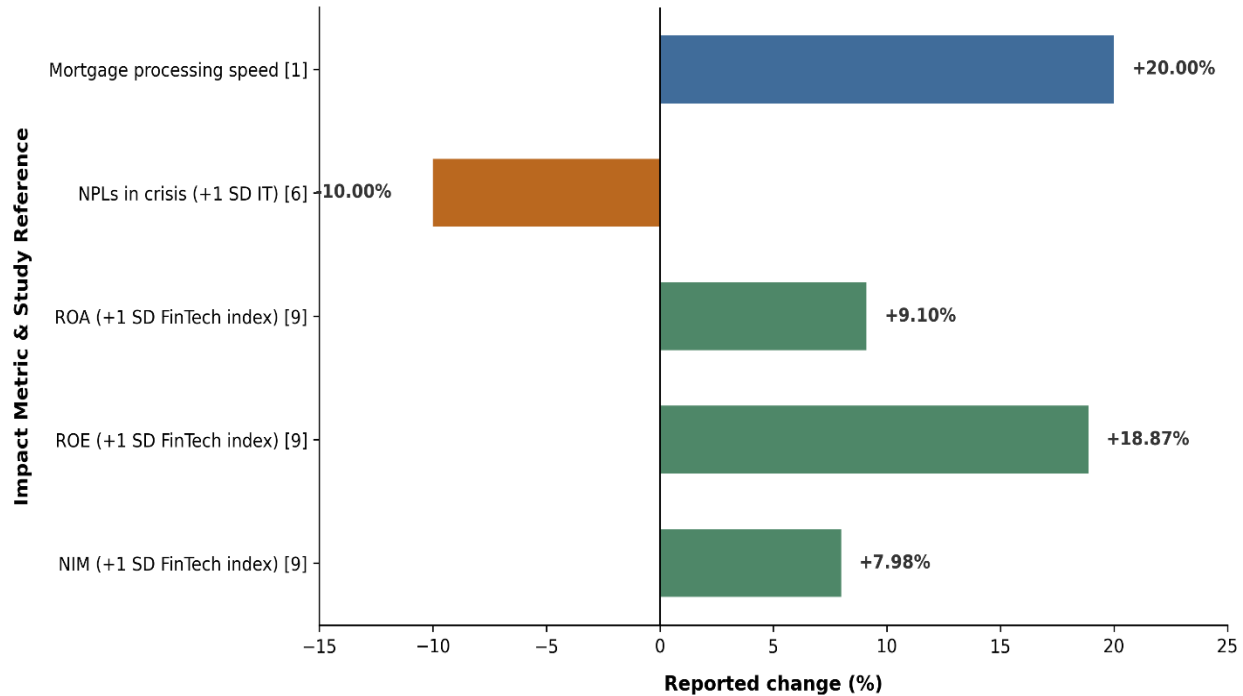


Figure 2: Largest Comparable Percentage Effects Reported in the Selected Studies

Figure 2 shows the maximum comparable percentage impacts reported from the literature reviewed, thereby providing a clear picture of the operational, risk mitigating and profitability effects of FinTech adoption. The data points represent separate empirical results: for every 10% improvement in return on assets (ROA) for global financial crisis (GFC) banks, there was a 50% increase in technology-based mortgage lenders' return on assets (ROA); for every 10% increase in return on equity (ROE), global financial crisis (GFC) banks' commercial banks had a 25% reduction in their NPL; and every one standard deviation increase in the banks' inclusive-finance index, based on IT, was associated with a 9.10% increase in return on assets (ROA), 18.87% increase in return on equity (ROE) and 7.98% increase in net interest margin (NIM) for banks in developing countries. The values shown are relative orders of magnitude and do not necessarily indicate statistical equivalence because the metrics are based on different measurement baselines (e.g., speed differentials, standard deviation shifts, etc.).

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Reconciling the Evidence

Through a synthesis of literature, an emerging pattern is exposed on the economic implications of financial technology, albeit with nuances. Empirical evidence consistently shows that digital tools, when well adopted by banking institutions to improve the efficiency of information

processing and to streamline operations, lead to improved efficiency, better profitability and better credit quality. On the other hand, if financial technology is used as an external disruptive entity (or a lack of proper capitalization and gaps in regulation), it can have negative consequences for traditional financial institutions. This separation of the internal adoption and external competitive exposure successfully resolves the possible conflicting findings found in previous studies. Moreover, the evidence brings to light a crucial disconnect between credit quality and institutional stability – namely, the fact that improvements in the quality of credit combined with a reduction in non-performing loans is not necessarily accompanied by absolute system-wide resilience.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The conclusions drawn provide some key recommendations for banking executives and institutional leaders. Financial technology adoption should be managed as an enterprise-wide business strategy, not a technology project, and research shows that banks with a formalised digital strategy and senior digital leadership are much more likely to be successful in implementing technology partnerships. As digital brings new vectors of risk, investments in technology need to be balanced with a strong level of capital buffers to protect from negative pressures on stability. Moreover, the return on digital investments can be very different depending on the institutional scale and macro-economic context, and managers must adapt digital investments to their market positioning. Traditional lenders shouldn't just be lender of last resort when it comes to interest rates because empirical evidence shows that digital lenders can use a convenience premium, making service speed and user experience a better way to compete.

5.3 Risk-Management Implications

There are several key dimensions that need to be supervised and operated to manage the risks of digital transformation. Independent model validation and comprehensive stress-testing over economic cycles are a must for alternative data models. Institutions should maintain sufficient capital buffers for digital assets, and should integrate digital asset technology-based credit channels into their regular macro-prudential stress tests. If external technology partnerships are used extensively, a thorough due diligence process of partners, clear accountability in contracts, comprehensive exit strategies, and continuous testing for cyber resilience are imperative. Last, but not least, financial institutions and supervisors need to closely track customer turnover, margin squeeze, and potential regulatory arbitrage from uneven application of regulations in traditional banking and shadow banking.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper consolidates recent research on the adoption, performance and risk of FinTechs. The results indicate that technology-based lending and IT adoption by banks is generally linked to positive efficiency, profitability and credit quality outcomes, as evidenced by increased processing speeds, improved credit quality measured by the number of non-performing loans per standard deviation of IT adoption, and positive profitability returns. Comparative results from regional studies, however, suggest that results are sensitive to institutional size, capital adequacy, institutional ownership and regulatory environment, and the major weakness in the empirical work is the lack of direct comparisons between the different approaches. There are

some restrictions to the conclusions. Searching of the literature was not exhaustive, but rather was done using a purposeful approach, with the potential of lacking a formal PRISMA protocol. In addition, because the major investigations were based on a wide variety of measurement units and identification methods, effect sizes were not aggregated into a formal meta-analysis, and many of the reported effect sizes were statistically significant measures of association not causal effects. The findings of existing studies also reflect the areas of geographic concentration that should be explored in research in the future. Future research should compare different strategic modes, including in-house development, strategic alliances, acquisitions, and collaborations with BigTechs, in a single bank panel and establish a formal test to investigate the moderating effects of capital reserves and regulatory stringency on institutional stability, and, finally, conduct a full systematic review with meta-analytic pooling once more quantitative estimates are available and comparable.

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