



Bridging Expectations: Shaping Cross-Border Remittance Propositions in Asia

A dialogue with Citi Services'
Asia Pacific Leaders



How consumers access and use a wide range of products and services has dramatically evolved over the past decade. From streaming music and watchable content on online platforms instead of buying physical media to ordering groceries or booking a ride with a few taps on a smartphone, the pace of digital adoption continues to accelerate. This rapid digital adoption is especially pronounced in Asia, where mobile-first behaviors are prevalent.

The ASEAN digital economy is expected to double to \$2 trillion by 2030¹. This growth underscores the increasing reliance of

consumers on digital platforms for their daily needs. Utility companies now offer fully digital billing and monitoring through apps. Smart home devices help manage energy usage and security remotely. Consumers increasingly expect to run their households and lives via digital channels as the default.

Naturally, these expectations extend to financial services. Speed, flexibility and transparency are no longer nice-to-haves—they are must-haves. For Asian banks, the challenge is no longer whether to transform their offerings, but how to make every interaction as seamless and intuitive as the best digital consumer experiences on the market.

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Melissa Ongleo Yambao

Managing Director and Head of Asia South Financial Institutions Sales, Services, Citi

In response to these evolving customer expectations, many Asian banks are transforming their propositions and launching digital cross-border remittance services.

In this interview, Sheetal Kandola, Head of Asia Field & Client Marketing, Services, Citi, spoke with Melissa Ongleo Yambao, Managing Director and Head of Asia South Financial Institutions Sales, Services, Citi, on the key elements to consider when crafting relevant remittance experiences for Asian clients.

Sheetal: Melissa, with banks across Asia reshaping their customer propositions and launching digital platforms, how can they be confident their investment and efforts truly address customer pain points?

Melissa: As banks across Asia invest in reshaping their remittance propositions and launching digital platforms, aligning these efforts to effectively address customer pain points requires a deep understanding of customer needs and a commitment to meeting those needs throughout the entire value chain.

Sheetal: How can banks identify the most relevant customer needs that their remittance propositions need to address? Customer research can be expensive, and surveys may not always give you the whole picture.

Melissa: That's true, Sheetal—the more data points you have to draw upon, the more effectively you can understand customers' needs. At Citi, we design our products and services based on a combination of research and experience, and by analyzing the data we have from trillions of transactions. WorldLink

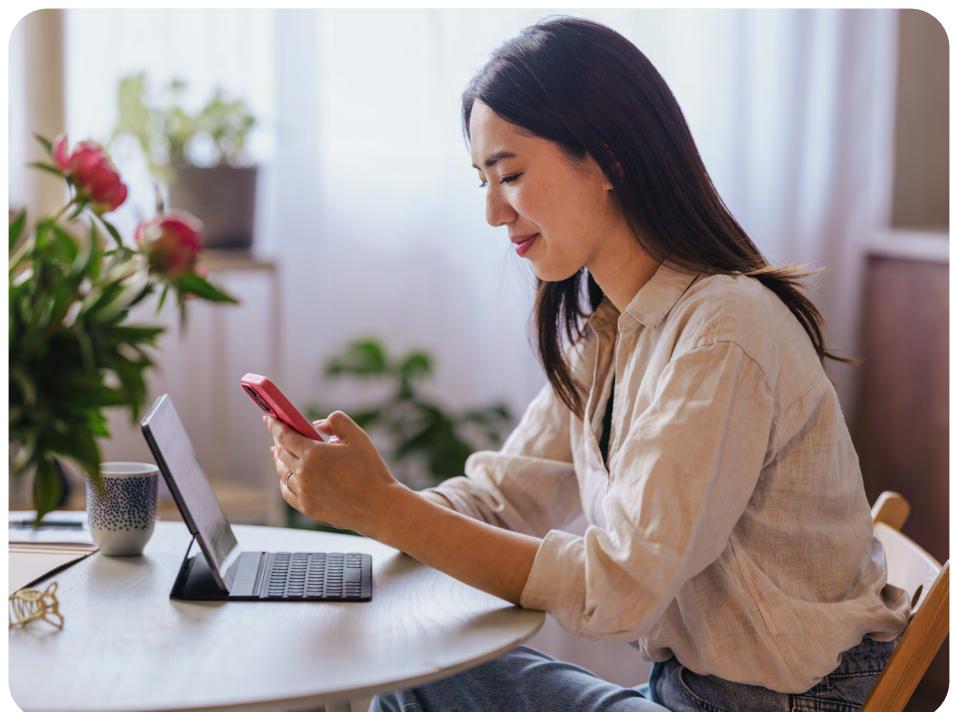
has been operating for over 40 years, and we have decades of institutional experience and knowledge underpinning our innovations. In addition, WorldLink is used by 1,500 financial institutions worldwide, and we process over \$4 trillion in transactions daily. This gives us a wealth of data to analyze, allowing us to gain unique insights into the needs and behaviors of customers. All these serve as input into our ongoing innovation process.

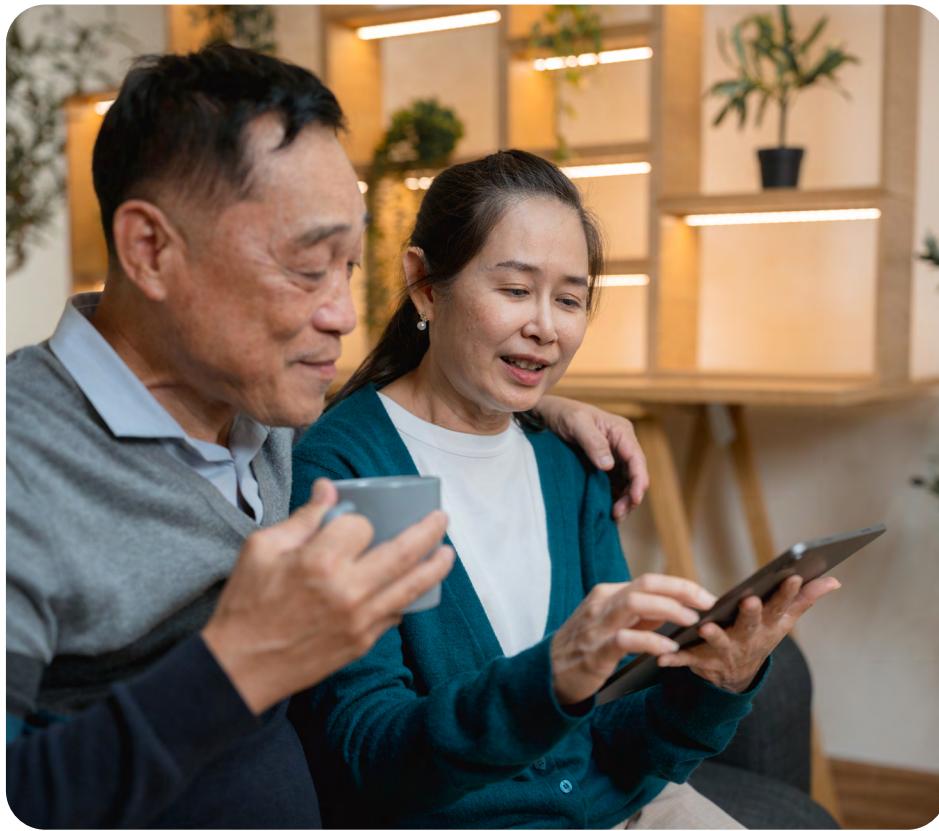
Sheetal: With Citi's insights and experience, what key elements have we discovered that Asian banks should consider when designing their remittance proposition?

Melissa: There are a few elements of customer experience that our insights have shown as critical for Asian banks to aim for. I like to think of these elements as a 'Customer-FIRST' formula. FIRST stands for Flexibility, Immediacy, Reliability, Security, Transparency.

Sheetal: Customer-first remittance propositions—I like that! Let's delve into it. What do you mean when you talk about flexibility?

Melissa: We know that customers value the ability to choose how and when they send or receive funds. They require the ability to select the platform through which they initiate remittances—whether online, via an app, phone banking, or in a branch. This flexibility allows banks to meet their customers where they are. Customers also need the ability to send funds in any currency, regardless of their own, to any beneficiary—from bank accounts to e-wallets—anywhere in the world.





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Sheetal: Are all of these possible with WorldLink?

Melissa: Yes. With WorldLink, banks can offer remittances in 135+ currencies to 180+ countries through both account-based solutions like Wires, Cross-Border ACH & Cross-Border Instant Payments to non-account based solutions.

Sheetal: Am I right to assume that this flexibility would also translate to immediacy, allowing customers to make payments as needed without waiting for banking hours?

Melissa: Absolutely. Immediacy spans the ability to initiate payments at any time, 24/7, and to ensure payments are delivered and credited to the beneficiary in real-time.

Sheetal: Transaction reliability must also be an important factor for consumers.

Melissa: Customers want peace of mind. They want to know that, in cases where real-time credit is not possible, their bank can be relied on to meet their committed time frames for the delivery of funds. In many cases, the funds being sent are vital lifelines for families. Leveraging our global network, WorldLink helps facilitate swift and reliable transfers, minimizing delays and allowing funds to reach recipients promptly.

Sheetal: Let's now discuss security. Given rising concerns over digital fraud and financial crime, robust security measures must be non-negotiable.

Melissa: Security and fraud prevention are definitely table stakes. Hence, when Asian banks develop their remittance propositions, they must be clear about how they protect their customers. They should prioritize risk management, fraud detection and protection, and compliance with regulations designed to keep payments safe. With WorldLink's multi-layered security features, encryption, and authorization controls, banks can be confident they are protecting their customers' transactions and data.

Sheetal: Finally, moving on to transparency—Asian customers are wary of hidden fees and complex processes.

Melissa: Transparency is paramount. When thinking about transparency, banks must consider transparency of fees and FX, as well as visibility throughout the remittance flow. First, fees are a big issue in cross-border remittances, as are currency exchange rates. WorldLink enables banks to offer real-time, competitive FX through API services, which banks can incorporate into their customer experience proposition. Secondly, regarding the transparency of remittance flows, WorldLink's enhanced beneficiary services allow banks to offer better visibility through real-time payment tracking for wires and ACH, alerts, and notifications through a white-labeled solution which can be integrated into the bank's front-end ecosystem.



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Head of Asia Field & Client Marketing, Services, Citi

Sheetal: How does Citi's experience and consultative approach contribute to designing and investing in the right customer experience for WorldLink?

Melissa: Our extensive experience in global financial services allows us to anticipate market trends and customer needs effectively. We continuously engage with our clients, gathering feedback and insights that inform our service enhancements. Our data analysis capabilities enable us to identify patterns and areas for improvement, providing WorldLink with insight to evolve with customer expectations.



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Sheetal: And for other banks utilizing WorldLink for their customers?

Melissa: They benefit from our ongoing investments in technology and customer experience. By leveraging WorldLink, banks can offer customers a service built on deep market insights and a commitment to excellence. This collaboration allows them to enhance their offerings without the need for significant individual investment in infrastructure or research.

Understanding and addressing customer expectations is paramount in delivering

effective remittance services. By focusing on customers FIRST—flexibility, immediacy, reliability, security and transparency, Asian banks can build remittance propositions that earn trust and loyalty among clients.

Source:

1. “Why ASEAN’s new Digital Economy Framework Agreement is a game-changer”, 26 May 2025. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/05/asean-digital-economy-framework-agreement-a-gamechanger/>; Accessed 29 May 2025

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