



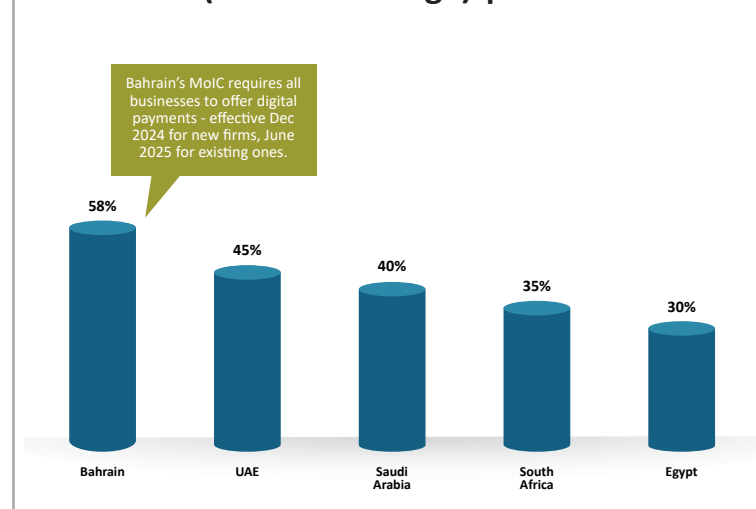
Building a Future-Ready Bank

📅 29 October 2025 📍 Wyndham Grand, Manama

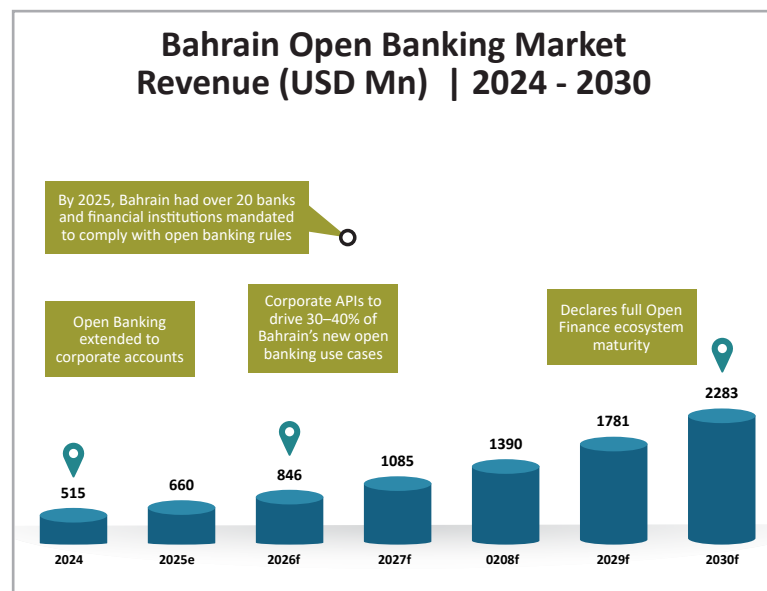
TRANSITIONING TOWARDS CASHLESS ECONOMIES

Digital payment adoption across the Middle East is accelerating, with countries steadily reducing their reliance on cash. Bahrain leads with 58% of consumers reporting only one to two of their last ten transactions were cash, reflecting one of the region's highest levels of cashless usage. On the demand side, high smartphone penetration; over 130% in Bahrain and 120% in the UAE- combined with the ubiquity of mobile wallets and super apps, is fostering rapid adoption among both consumers and SMEs. For banks and FinTechs, this presents opportunities to monetize transaction flows, build embedded finance products, and extend services to underbanked segments. As digital payments become the default, the region is not only closing the gap with advanced markets but also setting a benchmark for emerging economies in how policy alignment and technology investment can accelerate the transition toward cashless societies.

Digital Payment Adoption (Low Cash Usage) | 2025



Bahrain Open Banking Market Revenue (USD Mn) | 2024 - 2030



FROM REGULATORY MANDATE TO ECOSYSTEM EXPANSION

Bahrain is emerging as a GCC leader in open banking, underpinned by the Central Bank of Bahrain's mandate that extended APIs to corporate accounts in 2024. Bahrain already accounts for over 22% of the MEA open banking market, highlighting its outsized influence relative to its size. Banks such as Al Baraka Islamic are early adopters, supported by compliance hubs from Spire and Salt Edge, while FinTechs like Tarabut Gateway are scaling use cases across payments, credit scoring, and wealth advisory. This shift significantly broadens the addressable market, creating opportunities for SMEs to benefit from integrated financial services such as automated cash management, ERP connectivity, and data-driven lending. With open finance expected by 2026, Bahrain is building a high-growth, innovation-driven ecosystem that positions it as a regional benchmark for digital finance transformation.

AGENDA

08:00 - 09:00 AM **Breakfast and Registration**

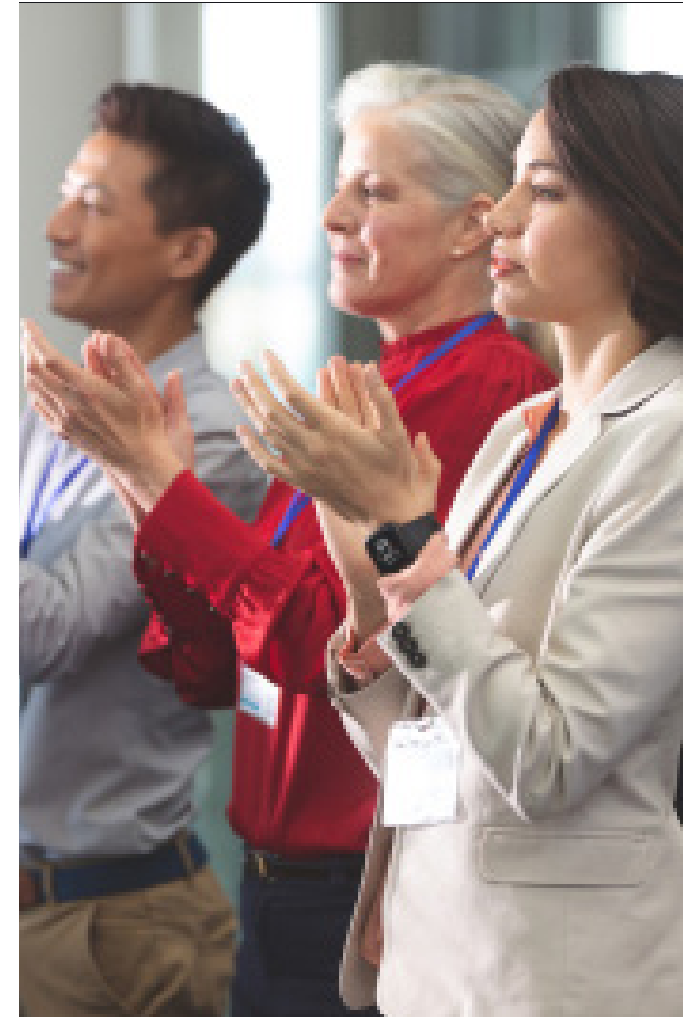
09:00 - 09:15 AM **Welcome Note**

09:15 - 09:30 AM **Market Overview and Trends**

09:30 - 10:15 AM **Panel 1: Future of Banking | A Business Leaders Perspective**
Strategy drives technology, or is it now the other way around? Enjoy an interesting conversation with banking business leaders on what's the right answer to this question, and how will a bank strategy evolve for the future. Also, the kind of organization, skills, and culture needed to make it work.

10:15 - 11:00 AM **Panel 2: NextGen Transaction Banking | The Digital Value Chain from SMEs to Corporates**
Transaction banking is unlocking new efficiencies across small, medium and large enterprises. This panel will explore innovations driving payments, trade finance, supply chain finance, and cash management, and how banks can build seamless digital value chains to empower corporate and SME clients. What are the key challenges and opportunities in creating an interconnected ecosystem?

11:00 - 11:15 AM **Tea/Coffee Break**





11.15 - 12.00 PM

Panel 3: AI in Action | Pioneering the Next Wave of Digital Banking

Welcome to the new industrial revolution – AI. AI is reshaping the financial services industry globally. This panel will discuss how AI is driving personalized customer experiences, optimizing operations, and enabling real-time decision-making. The financial services industry embraces data-driven strategies, what are the key opportunities and challenges in adopting AI and analytics at scale? How can financial institutions leverage these innovations?

12.00 - 12.45 PM

Panel 4: Future of Digital Lending & Payments | A Cashless Economy

Instant payments are surging driven by customer preferences, progressive regulations, and a thriving FinTech ecosystem. What are the emerging global trends and adoption? More importantly, how can banks remain competitive amid opportunities such as mobile wallets, cross-border remittances, BNPL, and real-time payments?

12.45 - 01.00 PM

Closing Note

01.00 - 02.00 PM

Lunch and Networking

PANELISTS

PANEL 1: Future of Banking | A Business Leaders Perspective



V. Ramkumar
Senior Partner
Cedar
Moderator



Sukhwinder Nijjar
Group Chief
Transformation Officer
GIB



Cian Bracken
Chief Operating Officer
ila Bank

PANEL 2: NextGen Transaction Banking | The Digital Value Chain from SMEs to Corporates



Chetan Parekh
Managing Partner,
MENA FinTech Practice
Cedar
Moderator



Shahzad Iqbal
Head of Project
Management Office &
Corporate Development
MENA Industrial Bank



Ashish Kumar
Head of Corporate
Banking
Standard
Chartered Bank

PANEL 3: AI in Action | Pioneering the Next Wave of Digital Banking



Pankul Verma
Director
Cedar
Moderator



Abbas Malalla
Head of Information
Technology
MENA Industrial Bank



Amit Bajaj
Group Head of IT
Kuwait Finance House (AUB)



Govind Shukla
Digital Architect at ABC Labs
Bank ABC



Marwan Abouzeid
Principal Digital Strategy
Consultant
Backbase

PANEL 4: Future of Digital Lending & Payments | A Cashless Economy



Ramakrishnan Viswanathan (Ramki)
Senior Partner, Financial Services Practice, Cedar
Moderator



Yousif Al Nefaiei
Deputy Chief Executive Business Development & Services
The Benefit Company



Maitham Abbas
Head of Business Development
Khaleeji Bank B.S.C



Ahmed Al Maskati
Head - Product Development & Project Management
NBB



Ahmed Lamei
Sr. Manager – Product Management
International Turnkey Systems - ITS



Saqib Khan
Sales Director
i2c Inc.

PANELIST FIRMS



ABOUT CEDAR

With a 40-year track record, Cedar is a Forbes-ranked global consulting firm with deep expertise in strategy & driving performance powered by the Balanced Scorecard. Its Financial Services & Financial Technology Practice is a Centre-of-Excellence transforming leading financial services institutions & technology companies as the digital and AI revolution accelerates.

ABOUT IBS INTELLIGENCE

Founded in 1991 and headquartered in the UK, Cedar's group firm, IBS Intelligence (IBSi) is the world's only pure-play Financial Technology focused research, advisory, and news analysis firm, with a 30-year track record and clients globally. We take pride in covering 5,000+ technology vendors globally – the largest by any analyst firm in this space. IBSi's Sales League Table is the industry barometer ranking banking technology suppliers globally for 20+ years.

ABOUT CEDAR-IBSI FINTECH LAB

Founded in 2017, the Cedar-IBSi FinTech lab has been home to 60+ global financial technology companies seeking “soft-landing” and POC opportunities with banks across the region, making it one of the only such FinTech ecosystems in Asia.

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ABOUT CEDAR-IBSI CAPITAL

Cedar-IBSi Capital is a leading early-stage tech venture capital fund backing founders building next-gen enterprise software for the Financial Services industry; leveraging AI and deep technologies. The fund has completed initial investments in Cogniquest and WonderLend Hubs, both disruptive solutions that address large opportunities in Banking and Financial Services and beyond.

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