

LatAm & SEA Fintech Expansion

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TL;DR

Emerging market fintech expansion is transitioning from localized consumer digital wallets to deeply integrated, cross-border infrastructure and automated commercial rails. In Latin America, central bank-backed networks are rapidly positioning themselves to capture high-value remittance and subscription flows, while Southeast Asian markets are prioritizing enterprise-grade stablecoin settlement and advanced fraud resilience. For expansion strategy teams, success now requires navigating highly specific local operational regulations rather than simply deploying lightweight digital interfaces.

Real-Time Payment Rails Intersecting with Cross-Border Remittances

National real-time payment networks are rapidly moving beyond domestic borders to challenge the traditional remittance corridors dominated by legacy players.

"In just five months, Bre-B has processed more than 500 million transactions and registered over 100 million payment keys, firmly establishing the scheme as one of the most rapidly scaled real-time payment systems in Latin America." — [colombia-bre-b-real-time-payments-rollout-2026]

The rapid domestic adoption of Colombia's central-bank-operated Bre-B has created a highly interoperable account-to-account baseline [colombia-bre-b-real-time-payments-rollout-2026]. By shifting focus to interoperability with global real-time networks, technology partners like ACI Worldwide are enabling regional banks to directly challenge the high-friction, high-cost legacy corridors that have historically dominated US-to-Latin America money transfers (ACI Worldwide).

What to watch: The execution of ACI Worldwide's plans to plug global real-time networks into Bre-B's domestic rails to capture US-to-LatAm remittances (ACI Worldwide).

The Operational Realities of Cardless Recurring Payments in Brazil

Subscription-based businesses are unlocking massive cardless customer segments in Latin America, but must re-engineer their billing systems to survive strict local operational rules.

"A subscription company that integrated the new recurring payment feature in August saw its share of new customers skyrocket. The amount of new customers accessing the platform's services via EBANX and Pix Automático was three times the amount of new customers using credit cards." — [brazil-pix-automatico-recurring-payments-scaling-2026]

For global merchants, Pix Automático acts as a powerful acquisition engine for the millions of Brazilians who do not own a credit card [brazil-pix-automatico-recurring-payments-scaling-2026]. However, adapting to this ecosystem requires moving away from synchronous credit card authorizations toward complex, asynchronous

scheduling flows that must adhere to rigid central bank rules—such as restricting failed transaction retries to a maximum of three attempts (EBANX Insights).

What to watch: Whether Pix Automático successfully captures its projected USD 30 billion slice of Brazil's recurring payment market (EBANX Insights).

Southeast Asia's Transition to Production-Grade Enterprise Fintech

Southeast Asia is cementing its position as the primary expansion target in the Asia-Pacific region by shifting from experimental digital pilots to robust, fraud-resilient financial infrastructure.

"Across Asia, stablecoins are already embedded in real economic activity from payments and cross-border settlements to treasury optimization... The region is demonstrating how digital assets can scale within financial systems..." — [apac-fintech-trends-money2020-report-2026]

The massive growth of digital payments in Southeast Asia has outpaced legacy risk models, turning cyber-resilience into a critical operational priority for 63.5% of financial leaders (Blockhead). To succeed, international expansion teams must shift away from basic consumer-facing apps to focus on deep-tier enterprise challenges, such as integrating regulated stablecoins for corporate settlements and deploying real-time, device-level risk intelligence [apac-fintech-trends-money2020-report-2026].

What to watch: How rapidly digital lenders in underbanked markets like the Philippines scale by utilizing alternative data and mobile onboarding (Blockhead).

What surprised us

- **Plata's regulatory leapfrog in Mexico.** It is highly surprising that Plata secured a full Mexican banking license in early 2026, completely leapfrogging massive regional heavyweights like Nubank and Mercado Pago [Mexico's Digital Banking License Race: Tracking Nubank, Mercado Pago, and Plata in late 2026]. This proves that regulatory agility and licensing speed can disrupt market-share dominance even before highly capitalized neobanks can secure their own licenses.
- **The absolute scale of Colombia's Bre-B adoption.** Processing over 500 million transactions in just five months after its launch is an astronomical adoption rate for a freshly launched national payment system [colombia-bre-b-real-time-payments-rollout-2026]. It signals that fragmented private networks were a massive bottleneck waiting to be solved by a unified central bank directory mapping aliases to accounts.
- **The sheer dominance of Pix Automático over credit cards.** We expected Pix Automático to be a convenient alternative, but seeing a global subscription merchant acquire *three times* as many new customers via Pix Automático than via credit cards is a massive wake-up call [brazil-pix-automatico-recurring-payments-scaling-2026]. It shows that cardless recurring billing is not just a secondary payment option; in Brazil, it is quickly becoming the primary growth driver.

Open threads worth a vote

- Mexico's Digital Banking License Race: Tracking Nubank, Mercado Pago, and Plata in late 2026 — Plata's early 2026 license win has disrupted the Mexican neobanking landscape. Vote to track how Nubank and Mercado Pago respond with their own licensing efforts and subsequent shifts in market share.

Appendix: Findings

Colombia's Bre-B Real-Time Payments: 500 Million Transactions and Cross-Border Ambitions in 2026

Colombia's national real-time payment system, **Bre-B**, has achieved unparalleled velocity and scale in Latin America. Only five months after its launch on October 6, 2025, the central-bank-operated system has processed over half a billion transactions and registered over 100 million payment keys.

Key Developments in 2026

- **Rapid Scale and Penetration:** Operated by the central bank, Banco de la República, and built on ACI Worldwide's Digital Central Infrastructure, Bre-B's rapid adoption represents one of the strongest national real-time deployments globally.
- **National Governance Model:** Bre-B represents a regional first—a nationally coordinated real-time payments scheme jointly developed by the central bank, regulators, commercial banks, and technology partners.
- **Targeting the US-LatAm Remittance Corridor:** With domestic rails firmly established, the ecosystem is shifting focus to cross-border opportunities. In March 2026, technology partner ACI Worldwide outlined plans to interoperate domestic real-time schemes like Bre-B with global real-time networks, allowing regional banks to capture a larger share of the lucrative US-to-Latin America remittance corridor.

Strategic Takeaways for US Fintechs

For US fintechs looking to expand into Colombia, Bre-B has established a highly interoperable, account-to-account (A2A) baseline. The system's impending cross-border integrations represent a prime opportunity for international payment providers, remittance platforms, and digital wallets to plug into Colombia's financial system with minimal friction.

Sources

- Colombia's Bre-B Hits More than 500 Million Transactions as ACI Worldwide and Banco de la República Take the Stage at Fintech Americas 2026
- Ana Carolina Ramírez Pineda, Banco de la República

Brazil's Pix Automático: Redefining Recurring Payments and Cardless Subscriptions in 2026

Brazil's instant payment system, Pix, has fundamentally captured the country's financial ecosystem, reaching **95% of the adult population** (162 million users). Following the June 2025 launch of **Pix Automático** (Automatic Pix), the central bank's recurring payments rail is driving a massive transition from credit cards to account-to-account (A2A) recurring billing.

Traction and Projections in 2026

- **Accelerating Volumes:** Projections from regional payments giant EBANX show that subscriptions and transaction volumes via Pix Automático are on track to grow by **34% and 41% per month, respectively, through May 2026**, marking the feature's first anniversary.
- **Sizing the Market:** Brazil's recurring payment market moves approximately **USD 50 billion annually**, historically dominated by credit cards. EBANX estimates that Pix Automático could capture **USD 30 billion** of this volume within its first two years (by June 2027), representing 12% of all financial volume handled by Pix.
- **Unlocking New Customer Segments:** Pix Automático acts as a powerful acquisition tool for global subscription-based platforms (such as streaming, online education, and SaaS) targeting the 60 million Brazilians who do not own a credit card. One global subscription provider that integrated Pix Automático saw the volume of new customers accessing its services via Pix Automático surge to **three times** the volume of new customers acquired via credit cards.
- **Early Adoption Trends:** Online education merchants have recorded the highest average order value (AOV) at **USD 31**, while streaming services have driven the highest overall transaction volume.

Technical and Operational Realities for Strategy Teams

For US fintechs and global merchants, implementing Pix Automático is not as simple as integrating credit card APIs due to several strict regulatory and design constraints:

1. **The Scheduled Nature:** Recurring payments must be posted in advance, between **10 and 2 days before the desired due date**. This gives consumers visibility to manage their balances, but forces merchants to adapt synchronous billing engines (designed for instant credit card authorizations) to a complex, asynchronous scheduling flow.
2. **Strict Retry Mechanics:** If a transaction fails (usually due to insufficient funds), merchants cannot arbitrarily retry the charge. The Central Bank of Brazil restricts retries to **up to three attempts within a seven-day window**. Each retry must be scheduled for the following day, and a new attempt can only be set after the previous one has been processed.
3. **Ecosystem Fine-Tuning:** Early adoption was plagued by low conversion rates. Technical collaboration between major payment providers like EBANX and issuer banks has resolved initial integration issues—such as timeouts and incorrect validations—driving a **17 percentage point improvement in approval rates**. Today, the vast majority of declines are driven by insufficient funds rather than technical friction.

Sources

- Pix Automático growth: what EBANX data reveals so far
- EBANX GlobeNewswire Release
- Fernando Pankiewicz, Product Manager at EBANX

Southeast Asia Leads Expansion as APAC Fintech Prioritizes AI, Stablecoins, and Fraud Resilience in 2026

The Southeast Asian fintech landscape has reached a critical inflection point, shifting from experimental pilots to production-grade, enterprise-scale deployments. According to the *Future of Fintech in APAC* report published by Money20/20 Asia in March 2026 (based on a survey of over 130 senior financial executives), the region is solidifying its position as a global laboratory for digital payments, Web3 rails, and AI-driven inclusion.

Key Strategic Trends for Expansion Teams

- **Southeast Asia remains the Primary Growth Target:** Despite pulling back from 31.4% last year, **22.9% of respondents** identify Southeast Asia as their primary growth target, leading all other sub-regions and cementing its status as the APAC region's growth engine.
- **Stablecoins and Tokenized Assets Enter Mainstream Infrastructure:** Supported by clear, progressive regulatory frameworks in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan, stablecoins are no longer speculative assets. Instead, they are actively embedded in real economic activity, including B2B cross-border payments, merchant settlements, and corporate treasury optimization. Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) were ranked by **17.9% of respondents** as the most impactful emerging technology after AI.
- **Financial Inclusion as a Commercial Imperative:** An overwhelming **90.6% of executives** report that financial inclusion and social impact initiatives are embedded directly into corporate strategy rather than treated as corporate social responsibility (CSR) side projects. In underbanked markets like the Philippines, digital lenders are scaling rapidly by deploying alternative data and mobile-first onboarding.
- **SME-Tailored Fintech as a Growth Engine:** **72.9% of respondents** believe that fintech solutions specifically tailored to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the most critical driver of economic growth in the region.
- **AI and Fraud Prevention as Operational Priorities:** **61.2% of organizations** have already adopted AI or machine learning. However, the rapid pace of digital payment adoption has outpaced traditional fraud models, making cyber-resilience the top operational concern for **63.5% of leaders**. This is driving massive regional investment in real-time, device-level risk intelligence.

Strategic Takeaways for US Fintechs

For US fintech companies evaluating expansion into Southeast Asia, the report underscores that success requires localized, trust-centric credit models and robust fraud-prevention infrastructure. Additionally, stablecoins and tokenized assets are becoming viable, lower-cost rails for B2B and cross-border settlement, particularly when operating through regulated hubs like Singapore.

Sources

- Southeast Asia Leads Expansion as APAC Fintech Prioritizes AI, Inclusion and Fraud Resilience
- Yam Ki Chan, Vice President, Asia Pacific at Circle
- Moritz Gastl, General Manager of Tala Philippines