



**THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY:  
MUTUAL FUNDS AND PRIVATE PENSION FUNDS INDUSTRY, WHO GETS THE  
LION'S SHARE: GOVERNMENT, ASSET MANAGERS OR CLIENTS?**

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**ABSTRACT**

The most important retail banks in Brazil have created private pension funds' structures to be offered to clients that normally are investors or potential investors of their mutual funds. Despite being a much more recent activity, the social penetration of private pension funds has increased faster than mutual funds. As there are some operational similarities between the mutual funds and private pension funds structures, it turns out important to understand if the recent lack of performance noticed in the Brazilian mutual funds will be replicated in the private pension funds. The question that arises is who will get the lion's share in this segment of the financial market: clients, asset managers or the government. Finally, this article will explore an alternative solution: Electronic Platforms of Investment (EPIs). These financial institutions would foster the disintermediation between savings and investments through electronic channels; and as a consequence, they would increase the efficiency of funding productive investments through better remunerating Brazilian savings.

**KEYWORDS:** Banks in Brazil. Private pension funds. Financial market. Electronic Platforms of Investment.

## Introduction

Many emerging markets are catching up and closing the gap between the most advanced countries. Volatile and unstable regions in the past are now leading part of the progress. This has been happening in economies overall, as Jim O'Neill forecasted at Goldman in 2001 with the BRICs concept; and it is also occurring in segments or industries, majorly in the technological front, as it is described by Khalil and Kenny MIT paper: "The Next Decade of ICT Development". Brazil, the B of the BRICs, with its now stable economy and its reliable institutions, is paramount in Latin America.

Based on this global scenario, the back ground of this paper is the Brazilian economic environment that might emerge with the impacts of a lower structural interest rate combined with the expansion of life expectancy; and the focus will be on the necessity of changing part of the financial market, bearing in mind that Brazilian middle class will live much longer and will not have any more the stratospheric interest rates to boost their future income. Brazilians will have to save more and to become far more efficient when investing and managing their financial portfolios. Finally, immersed in the context of the electronic technological revolution, this paper will propose an alternative solution: Electronic Platforms of Investments (EPIs).

EPIs would foster the disintermediation between savings and investments through electronic channels. A sample of this potential solution is Tesouro Direto: an alternative electronic investment channel to buy Brazilian Treasury Bonds through Home Brokers (HB). Basically, this paper is aiming at one solution that might increase the efficiency of funding productive investments through better remunerating Brazilian savings. If this nation intends to structurally increase the expansion ratio of its potential GDP, so will be necessary to increase the savings/investment ration that nowadays is just below 20% of GDP.

To gaze this future and to understand the present necessity of changing the fund industry, based on the utilization of electronic technological revolution, is the major target of this paper.

### **I. The social and the economic importance of this financial activity**

One of the most important investment instruments for the local high middle class is the mutual fund industry and, its twin brother, the pension fund industry. According to Ibope, a Brazilian pollster, the number of mutual fund retail investors increased from 2.4 million in 2005

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to 4.3 million in 2011. This poll was sponsored by Anbima (Associação Brasileira das Entidades dos Mercados Financeiro e de Capitais) and was released on May 18<sup>th</sup> of 2011.

This strong expansion is not happening exclusively in Brazil. Other emerging markets have presented the same kind of movement, as it is mentioned at MarketWatch: Financial Services, on April 2012 “Retail mutual funds are gaining rapid popularity in emerging markets to Brazil, China and India. Lauren Young also wrote about the booming of mutual funds in Brazil in his article “Homing in Brazil”, published at BusinessWeek; 7/27/2009.

Nevertheless, Ibope’s poll pointed towards a much more profound transformation and with long run remarkable consequences: that the ratio of Brazilians (18 or older) without financial investments felt from 65% to 51%. Obviously, the penetration of “Poupança” (saving account) prevails over other investment instruments. However, there is a clear trend that, as Brazilians get wealthier, better financial solutions will be required to attend higher expectations of savings and investments performance.

Table 1

Types of Investment owned by Brazilians\* (%)

2005 2011

Savings Account 35 44

Private pension fund 2 7

Mutual funds 4 7

Shares - 3

Time deposits (CDB) 2 3

Hypothecary bonds - 1

None 65 51

Source: Ibope / Anbima

\* 18 or older

Table 2

Who are the Mutual Fund investors?

(Participation among Brazilians 18 or older / PNAD IBGE 2009)\*

Monthly income 2005 2011

(4%)\*R\$ 19,200.00 or more 10% 21%

(2%)\*R\$ 9,600.00 till R\$ 19,200.00 22% 34%

(7%)\*R\$ 4,800.00 till R\$ 9,600.00 30% 22%

(47%)\*R\$ 1,200.00 till R\$ 4,800.00 24% 12%

(40%)\*Less than R\$ 1,200.00 5% 2%

Source: Ibope / Anbima

The Mutual and Pension funds are concentrated in the middle to top of the social ladder: less than 15% of investors own more than 85% of the financial resources. Nevertheless, despite the improvement in recent years, even these members of the local elite are not properly informed about the service offered by the financial institutions. Part of the explanation could be justified by the past generous local interest rates that gave comfort for consumers to not be concerned about the costs.

Table 3

How much is the minimum annual management/administrative fee?

(This question was only asked among mutual fund investors)

2005 2011

Till 0.9% 7% 14%

1% to 3% 15% 33%

3% or more 17% 39%

Do not know 62% 16%

Source: Ibope / Anbima

It is also shocking that, among mutual fund investors, only 69% knew that the bonds, the shares or the other assets in their mutual fund are their property and do not belong to the asset management company. It is true that this awareness increased from 63% in 2005. Finally, in terms of misinformation, the investors have also a poor knowledge regarding taxation.

Table 4

Which are the taxes over mutual funds?

(This question was only asked to mutual fund investors)

2005 2011

Income Tax 59% 65%

IOF 40% 53%

CPMF 39%

Others 5% 8%

None/Do not know 23% 19%

Source: Ibope / Anbima

Part of the explanation lies on how the information is obtained and where the decision process is taken. Retail bank managers are still the biggest influence when clients are choosing their investment portfolio. Definitely, this process at a retail bank branch, during a meeting to discuss the mortgage, refinancing an auto loan or a credit card limit, arouses some conflict of interest. The perception that Brazil should improve the investment environment is supported by other researchers, as Adriana Wilner, that have been pointing to a similar conclusion in her thesis "Conflitos de interesses entre investidor e administrador de fundos: evidências e mecanismos de controle no Brasil". EAESP; 2000.

Table 5

How the investment information is obtained?

(This question was only asked to mutual fund investors)

2005 2011

Retail bank manager 54% 43%

Newspaper 45% 31%

Journals/Magazines 17% 12%

TV/Radio 17% 13%

Electronic sites (banks/HB) 22% 39%

Mailing 15% 7%

Friends/relatives 10% 10%

Independent broker 2% 4%

Banking central adviser - 5%

Do not know 2% 3%

Source: Ibope / Anbima

It is important to notice that an improvement in the information of clients occurred simultaneously with the relative decrease in the influence of bank manager *vis-à-vis* the increase of electronic sites: 27% mentioned to search financial information alone in the internet. This was a specific question that was not even asked in the previous poll of 2005. Internet is the way and Electronic Platforms of Investment (EPIs) may become the foundation to intensify this process.

Another interesting aspect is the huge increase of the intention to use mutual funds as part of the resources for retirement. This specific mention grew from 5% to 20%. Brazilians are getting more conscious and concerned about how to plan for retirement and mutual funds are being used as an alternative. Evidently, for PGBL and VGBL – Private Pension Funds (similar to American 401k programs) the answer, that was not in the poll, should be close to 100%. All this information supports even further the social/economic importance of having an financial industry capable of delivering the results expected by Brazilian families. Plus, as Brazil develops and becomes wealthier, the number of families accessing this industry will increase in a more intense pace (beta above 1).

## **II. Financial market *status quo* will not be jeopardized by reshaping mutual fund industry**

As it will be presented, many papers and researches point to a not satisfactory panorama for what mutual fund industry is delivering to its customers. Even worst are the recent years and the future perspective: the net profitability tends to be consistently close or below inflation. And this is happening *urbi et orbi*. Despite the fact that in Brazil the pace is more intense and the scenario more dramatic, this movement has been happening in many different countries for more than a decade. However, it is important to stress that this situation does not result from some conspiracy or predatory approach of financial institutions or, more specifically, banks.

According to Koyama and Takeda, at the Relatório do Banco Central do Brasil de Economia Bancária e Crédito 2007, Capítulo IX, around the world fees are not relevant when we analyze total revenues of the financial industry.

Regarding fund fees, the contribution to the overall revenues is really marginal in relative terms. Credit is the central aspect of the financial industry. Thus, discussing portfolio allocation

with a bank is simply a lack of scope. The major concern of a bank regarding a client will always be the long term credit, limits, mortgage, credit card, etc.

Table 6

Financial Market Fee as a ratio to total revenues (%)

Countries 2001 2003 2005

Average 11 14 14

Czech Republic 14 23 23

Swiss 20 25 22

Poland 11 22 19

Sweden 13 17 18

Italy 13 15 16

Slovakia 9 12 16

Spain 12 15 16

Austria 12 15 16

Denmark 12 15 16

Finland 9 13 15

France 9 12 14

USA 11 14 14

Brazil 11 12 13

Norway 8 10 12

Germany 9 11 11



Luxemburg n.a. 9 11

Ireland 11 12 9

Netherland 11 12 9

South Korea 5 8 8

Belgium 5 6 7

Source: Relatório de Economia Bancária e Crédito 2007, Capítulo IX, page 164.

Evidently, the nominal amounts and some strategic aspects of the mutual fund business justify the efforts of the financial institutions in assembling their asset manager units, as Lin Jwo Shiow describes at his thesis “Análise do papel de fundos de investimento no modelo de negócios dos bancos de varejo no Brasil. Aplicação nos casos de Itaú e Bradesco. EAESP; 2003. Retail banks do care about their asset management companies, nevertheless, they are not a top priority. The financial system in Brazil, and more specifically local banks, are much more concerned with corporate credit exposure or the expansion of its client basis to lower levels of the social ladder (aiming class D) than to settle the best investment approach to clients from class A, B and C. Thus, meanwhile the very high end of Brazilian clients can access better solutions through private banking platforms, mass affluent clients or middle class are left behind. Again, their investments are not a priority.

### **III. Brazilian Fund industry does not add as much value to its customers.**

Many papers in Brazil have been analyzing who gets the lion’s share of the fund industry: asset managers (administrative / management fees), government (taxes), or clients. It is important to notice that we found works from analysts, academics and researchers that have been aiming at the overall activity, that is the mutual fund industry *per se*; and there are articles targeting the major two segments: fixed income and equities. However, despite a broad perspective or a more focused one, the results are consistently similar towards a not favorable direction to clients.

The selected Works that have analyzed the overall activity are: Jose Suaide with “Análise de desempenho de fundos de investimento no Brasil: como seus administradores adicionam

valor?” EAESP; 2001. Or Fernandes Malaquias with his PhD thesis “Desempenho de fundos multimercados”. EAESP; 2012. Lilitiana Leusin with her article “Market timing e avaliação de desempenho dos fundos brasileiros.” RAE: Revista de Administração de Empresas; Abril 2008. And Claudio Manassero with his thesis “Avaliação da performance dos fundos mútuos de investimento”. EAESP; 1986. Or even Bruno Milani thesis “Avaliação da performance dos fundos de investimento no contexto Brasileiro”. UFSM; 2011.

Fixed income funds, as the most representative segment of the industry, are the focus of papers as the one that Alvarez Vilella and Câmara Leal wrote to Revista de Administração de Empresas – Eletrônica; Jan-Jun 2008 “O desempenho de fundos de renda fixa e o índice de renda de mercado”.

Equities are also targeted in papers as Herculano Alves work “Avaliação de performance de fundos mútuos de ações” or Oliveira Filho paper, “Análise de desempenho de fundos de investimento em ações brasileiros”. EAESP. Or Diniz Júnior thesis “Análise de desempenho de fundos mútuos de ações” EAESP; 1997.

Despite the fact of not being considered part of the mutual fund industry, the situation of pension funds finds many similarities, as it is described in the thesis of Baima “Análise de Desempenho dos Investimentos dos Fundos de Pensão no Brasil”. Or Rabelo with “Gestão e Desempenho dos Fundos de Pensão; Management and Performance of Pension Funds”. EAESP; 2005. Guimarães da Silva with his PhD thesis “As filosofias de investimento e o desempenho dos fundos abertos de previdência complementar: um estudo descritivo”. PUC-Paraná; 2011.

#### **IV. Lackluster performance is a global trend**

The problem of administrative costs of individual portfolios has been studied for a long time in the northern hemisphere. Gil-Bazo and Ruiz-Verd mention the problem in their article “The relation between price and performance in the mutual fund industry” to the Journal of Finance; October 2009. Cuthbertson, Nitzsche and O’Sullivan also have presented the problem in their article “Mutual Fund Performance: Measurement and Evidence”, published in the Financial Markets, Institutions & Instruments; May 2010. Other papers that should be mentioned with similar conclusions are:

- Hao, (Grace) Qing; Yan, Xuemin (Sterling). The performance of investment bank-affiliated mutual funds: conflicts of interest or informational advantage? Article; Journal of Financial & Quantitative Analysis; September 2012.
- Haslem, John; Baker, Kent; Smith, David. Identification and Performance of equity mutual funds with high management fees and expense ratios. Article; Journal of Investing; Summer 2007.
- Matallin-Saez, Juan Carlos; Soler-Dominguez, Amparo; Tortosa-Ausina, Emili. Mutual fund performance: banking versus independent managers. Article; Applied Economic Letters; May 2012.
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Thus, almost as a constant result, most of that intellectual production has been pointing towards a not reasonable situation for clients. Actually, in the last couple of years, after fees and taxes, the net performance is close, or in many cases below, the inflation rate. This assumption has found many echoes abroad, not only in USA, as many countries are dealing with the same global situation.

Nevertheless, more recently, not only academic papers are aimed at this subject. As the mutual fund and the pension fund industry has a broad basis with an important social impact, the problem has echoed in the media, with many articles targeting this situation in newspaper, journals and other publications to the common public - not exclusive to financial pundits anymore.

The Economist, in its edition of October 6<sup>th</sup> 2012 pointed to the North America situation in the article “The battle to cut costs causes a rift between Vanguard and MSCI”. Vanguard,

that was founded in 1975 to sell index funds in response to research showing that few mutual funds performed well enough to justify their fees, has been consistently gaining market share.

Newspapers are also present. Tim Grant wrote “Mutual fund churns can damage investments” at Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (PA); 6/8/2012. And Alison Griffiths “Don’t pay fees for poor-quality mutual funds”; “Fees eat up mutual fund gains”; and “Fees can destroy mutual fund returns”; Articles at Toronto Star (Canada), 6/4/2012; 1/27/2012; and 1/23/2012. Hilel Koren at Globes (Israel), “Securities Authority cuts mutual funds fees”; 7/3/2012.

Even in Brazil the media is in the initial stages of being aware to the problem, as was indicated at O Estado de São Paulo “Mudanças inadiáveis na previdência privada” in 9/4/2012.

## V. Technology: On the Eve of a New Financial Era

A considerable part of any population feels uncomfortable with change. One of the most negative aspects is the unforecastable environment that they will have to deal with. An electronic technological revolution is even more challenging. For instance, Jeremy Rifkin wrote at “The Age of Access” that market economy faces a “*new threat to its existence, however, it is neither external nor ideological, but rather technological and entrepreneurial*”. “*In the new era, markets give way to networks*”.

Back the beginning of the XXI century; Rifkin could envision some part of the future. However, for the financial market, the present technological revolution does not represent a treat at all. Quite the opposite, physical floor at stock exchanges around the world were very successfully replaced by electronic trading. Volumes were multiplied by more than hundred times, turning it much more accessible and affordable to economic agents and, most important, to the regular citizen. There was a democratization of financial markets. Meanwhile, the organized (floor) markets also became more professional and efficient. For instance, electronic technology and its “perpetual flow of feedback activity” allowed *robo* traders to replace scalpers as arbitrators and liquidity providers, what represented a huge improvement in terms of environment, transparency and soundness.

Shapiro and Varian properly mention in page 13 of “Information Rules” that the technology may change, not the economic laws. Thus, all these new technology became an

important opportunity that will boost even further financial market social and economic penetration, not the opposite.

It is also important to stress that the present financial market crisis is related to the excess of leverage and debt. The segment involved with fees, despite its modest relative representativeness, is getting stronger and gaining more importance than before.

Compared with Rifkin and aiming for the next decade, there is a more technical and pragmatic perspective from Gershenfeld, Krikorian and Cohen in their paper at Scientific American “The Internet of Things: The principles that gave rise to the internet are now leading to a new kind of network of everyday devices, an “Internet-0””. The vast number of new gadgets and electronic products are increasing the capacity of the population to connect to a data network. Regarding the present paper, this represents more clients accessing the financial markets, more frequently, at any place, at any time, at a lower cost and in a customized version.

## **VI. Electronic Platforms of Investment (EPIs) Framework**

Electronic Platforms of Investment (EPIs) would concentrate the fee oriented part of the financial market involved in the process of funding investments. From the antipode front, EPIs would deal with portfolio allocation of institutional and individual clients. In order to do it properly, there should be two independent areas, with all the regulatory / compliance / Chinese Wall red lines: an investment bank unit; and a distribution area, that could be a brokerage house CTVM (corretora) or a DTVM (distribuidora).

Thus, an EPI would be involved in all the process, from identifying a company and understanding with its “investment bank” team all different investment moments and alternatives to fund (equity/debt) or to foster (M&A) them. The linked brokerage house would distribute (sell) these investment opportunities to clients (institutional or individuals). However, the biggest difference is that an EPI should have a partnership with an industrial group or a syndicate of sizable companies. This would assure a pipe line of productive deals to be sold.

Regulators should establish patterns of remuneration linked with the success of the investors’ portfolio in the long run. Instead of having every trade being paid, what may stimulate the broker/banker to recommend unnecessary or excessive investment movements, there should be a monthly fee (compos) based in the volume of the total investments,

complemented by the kind of access of trading and service that is expected. And, looking for the long run, EPIs would charge a success fee, to be accrued, depending on the performance/volatility of each client's portfolio.

Some brokers, with a short term strategy, could intentionally instigate clients to trade. Bankers may have other approach, in selling "good" products as "Capitalization Letters" or other "lottery" derivatives. Asset management companies may allocate clients in funds with unfavorable performance/fee ratios.

Thus, to avoid the same present inefficiencies, transparency should be fostered, reassuring that each client is being properly informed (and is aware) of how much is being charged for each investment and its performance.

Is it possible to reshape the financial market? A recent example occurred after September 11<sup>th</sup>, when a series of anti-laundry measures changed the financial industry approach around the world. EPIs would not require the same amount of effort and would not face the same level of resistance.

The standardization of this process would be completed by changing the legal framework in Brazil, introducing individual retirement accounts (IRA), that could be a merge between FGTS accounts and the IRA model in USA (instead of the 401k that resembles the PGBL model). In the Brazilian case, long term investment should be stimulated by tax shield incentives.

Finally, it would be important the introduction of mandatory financial education. Companies, universities and high/middle/elementary schools should introduce personal finance classes. This would be important not only to allow individuals to be ready for a long term retirement. There is plenty of evidence that modern society should prepare citizens to better deal with their personal finances.

## **Conclusions**

The overall Picture, confirmed by research and hard data presented in this paper indicates the importance for Brazil to reshape its financial market, by fostering the creation of Electronic Platforms of Investment (EPIs). Banks would stay focused on credit and EPIs would target investment/savings correlated activities.

Looking for the medium run, it is important to bear in mind the coming new Basileia III rules, and the credit global crisis hangover that banks will have to keep dealing with. For, at least, the next couple of years, banks will have to maintain the process of deleveraging. Alone, this would be a strong argument to split these two activities, freeing EPIs to seek the disintermediation between of the productive investments and savings.

However, structurally, Banks, due to their core activity, are *capital intensive*, and have their Return on Equity (ROE) defined by the spread and delinquency ratios. Meanwhile, EPIs would be activities are *labor intensive* and *fee oriented*. It is a matter of very different targets and this will not change in the long run. Quite the opposite, even in good times there are question marks regarding the performance of banks in this segment. The fact that global credit crises hangover would have relatively fewer negative side effects over *labor intensive* group activities, allowing a faster pace of investments/savings-performance than the present one, just reinforce the importance of starting to implement changes in the financial market.

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