

**Media release:**

**CONSUMER SPENDING GATHERS MOMENTUM AS CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DEADLINE NEARS**

20 December 2011: Latest cash withdrawal statistics released by Spark ATM Systems, South Africa's premier independent ATM deployer, reveal that festive season spending for December is fast gathering momentum and will reach its peak this coming week as more consumers head to the tills as the Christmas shopping deadline nears.

The Spark Cash Index (SCI)\*, which measures the average value of withdrawals across more than 1,500 Spark ATMs throughout the country, reflected a 2% year-on-year increase for the period 1 - 18 December, increasing from R436 in 2010 to R445 in 2011. The average withdrawal value recorded for the period 11 - 18 December 2011 was R449.

As the Stats SA's Retail Trade Sales report only releases figures two months in arrears, the SCI provides invaluable real-time insight into retail trading and cash availability conditions in South Africa. Since its launch in September 2007, it has proven to be an accurate leading indicator of retail sales.

"Following the first major Christmas shopping weekend in South Africa, the increase in the value of cash in circulation as we pass the mid-December point is positive and is in-line with the historic spend over this time of year.

"With the final Christmas shopping deadline nearing on Saturday, coupled with the timing of month-end salaries, consumer spending will increase significantly this week. The amplified retail activity will also ensure that the highest average withdrawal value of R447, recorded during December 2010, will be beaten this month," says Marc Sternberg, MD of Spark ATM Systems.

*\*About the Spark Cash Index (SCI): The amount of cash withdrawn at ATMs is a real-time indicator of cash availability and consumer spending in the economy. From Spark ATM Systems' records the company has noticed that over time the average amount of cash withdrawn at its network of ATMs corresponds with general economic conditions in South Africa. The Index also points to consumer trends such as the variations in cash withdrawn based on prevailing economic conditions, particularly variations in the prime interest rate and seasonal peaks and dips.*

*The value for the SCI is obtained using the following formula: Cash dispensed for the month divided by the number of cash withdrawals for the month across a selection of Spark ATM's network of ATMs. The sample size is very large, and covers both urban and rural areas across all nine provinces of South Africa, therefore representing a very good cross section of South African consumers. The data presented is raw data and has not been adjusted for seasonality or for the effects of inflation.*

**About Spark ATM Systems:**

Spark ATM Systems is South Africa's premier independent ATM deployer importing, installing and maintaining world-leading Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in the South African convenience ATM market including retail, hospitality, leisure and rural locations. Established in 2005, Spark ATM Systems has a national footprint with sales and technical capabilities across the country, ensuring cash is readily available anytime, anywhere. Visit [www.sparkatm.co.za](http://www.sparkatm.co.za) for more information.

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