

# ATM withdrawals fall 9% in January

**Bernard Satheke**

AS EXPECTED, ATM cash withdrawals slipped in January when compared to December, denoting the extraordinary consumer activity of the festive season.

Figures released by Spark ATM Systems, which measures the average value of cash withdrawals across more than 1500 Spark ATMs throughout the country, showed an 8.81% fall in January. The 8.81% drop in the Spark Cash Index (SCI) translated to an average withdrawal of R417 per transaction in January compared with a record high average of R458 in December. However, average year-on-year withdrawal figures for January 2012 were up by 2.63%.

Marc Sternberg, MD of Spark ATM Systems, said since 2008, figures recorded for January withdrawals following the December festive period had consistently shown a decline.

The first month of the year was traditionally the time when consum-

ers adopted a conservative spending approach and cut back their spending after the festive.

He said that additional factors such as salaries being drawn earlier in December, also impacted on lower ATM withdrawals in January.

"The drop in January ATM withdrawal values will be consistent with a decrease in Stats SA's Retail Trade Sales figures for the same period. To date the SCI has been a leading indicator of these values (retail numbers).

"Although consumers will remain cautious, the stable interest rate environment will foster consumer spending and local retailers should still enjoy a positive trading environment in 2012," said Sternberg.

However, Sternberg expected the average monthly cash withdrawal figures in 2012 to return to positive territory in April due to higher retail spending during Easter.

*bernards@thenewage.co.za*