

The following piece, quoting SparkATM founder Mark Sternberg, was recently published in the Argus. It discussed the relative merits of independent ATM technology and how it has contributed to public safety.

The demand for safe, convenient cash-dispensing machines is pushing merchants to install independent ATMs in grocery shops, pubs, garages and other shopping outlets, says entrepreneur Marc Sternberg.

Founder of Spark ATM Systems, Sternberg says 15 percent of ATMs in this country are independently owned - proof of consumers' preference to transact indoors instead of at banks' street ATMs. His systems are geared only for cash withdrawals and balance inquiries.

"There are about 17,000 ATMs in South Africa, of which about 2,500 are independent, offering a low-transaction volume service of between 200 and 2,000 transactions a month, as opposed to the 6,000 minimum at bank-owned ATMs."

The cost of using independent cash-dispensers is the usual Saswitch fee at an ATM other than those provided by the user's bank. Because of safety and convenience, most consumers are happy to pay the extra Rands to transact inside a store. Sternberg says ATMs have become the most commonly accepted means of getting cash, pointing to the enduring preference for cash.

"Tourism and urbanisation are expanding rapidly, and with the World Cup set to attract large numbers of visitors, the requirement for safe and cost-effective cash dispensing points is growing," said Sternberg, whose business extends into neighbouring countries.

It seems the both the public and the media are reacting positively to the introduction of the company's comprehensive ATM solutions.

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