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Last Updated: Thursday, 08 April 2010 08:17:18

# Index reveals record ATM withdrawals during March

I-NET BRIDGE PUBLISHED: 2010/04/07 01:11:06 PM

New data out today from the Spark Cash Index, a real-time indicator of cash availability and consumer spending, pointed to a record year-on-year increase of ATM withdrawals during March

According to Spark ATM Systems, the average value of cash withdrawn during March was 396 rand per withdrawal, the same value reported for February 2010.

This is consistent with the last three years, the group said, with minimal difference between February and March ATM activity.

March's annual withdrawal increase of 8.47%, follows a record year-on-year increase of 8.26% in February, and indicates a renewed appetite by consumers for higher withdrawal amounts, Spark said.

"A large element of these increases can be attributed to increases in CPI, which was 5.7% to February 2010, as the same basket of goods now costs more.

"March's CPI figures will only be released by Stats SA at the end of April. However, only a small portion of CPI relates to items that Spark ATM Systems' customers typically use their cash for, being in the food and non-alcoholic beverages category of CPI which only increased by 1.8% over the year to February 2010," the group said. Marc Sternberg, MD of Spark ATM Systems, said: "As the Spark Cash Index increased by more than four times this at 8.26% in February, it is therefore clear that a large element of the Spark Cash Index increase relates to factors other than inflation, including improving consumer sentiment, increasing retail sales and lower interest rates.

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With the lowering of the prime interest rate by 50 basis points to 10% at the end of March, it will be interesting to see how cash withdrawal values respond in the coming months," Sternberg said.



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