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Are Customers Satisfied with Automated Teller Machines Services in Ghana?: A Study of A Universal Bank

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Abstract

In a highly competitive industry like banking, one way to gain competitive advantage is to ensure that customers are satisfied and that the services being provided are not flawed with constraints. This study was aimed at finding out if Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), meet the expectations of the customers and what constrained their use by the customers. The study covered five selected branches of a case bank and involved the use of interview guide. In all, 120 respondents were sampled among the customers and 10 from the staff. The data were analyzed using SPSS. From the results, it was realized that the inadequate education given to users of ATMs and the functional limitations identified with the machines were major contributors to customers' unpleasant experiences at the ATM points. It was recommended that education given to customers on the use of the ATM should be improved and dummy ATMs be installed in the banking halls to facilitate practical training of prospective users.

Keywords: Banking; automated teller machines; customer satisfaction, universal bank, Ghana

Introduction

With advances in technology and the sophistication of customers, electronic commerce powered by hi-tech information technology is revolutionizing the way business is done. Arguably, the most revolutionary electronic innovation in the banking industry has been the Automated Teller Machine (ATM). ATM is a computerized telecommunication device that provides the customers of a financial institution with access to financial transactions in a public space at any time without the need for a human clerk or bank teller. Rose (1999), also describes ATM as a computer terminal, record-keeping system and cash vault in one unit, permitting customers to enter the bank's book keeping system with a plastic card containing a Personal Identification Number (PIN) or by punching a special code number into the computer terminal linked to the bank's computerized records 24 hours a day. Although ATMs were originally developed as just cash dispensers, they have evolved to include many other bank-related functions. In some countries, especially those which benefit

from a fully integrated cross-bank ATM network (e.g. Multibanco in Portugal), ATMs include many functions which are not directly related to the management of one's own bank account, such as paying routine bills, fees, taxes and loading monetary value into stored value cards. It can also be used for the purchase of items including postage stamps, lottery and train tickets. It has even been designed to include games, promotional features and cheque processing modules.

In Ghana, the Trust Bank Ghana Limited in 1995 installed the first ATM. Not long after, most of the major banks began their ATM networks. Even more revolutionary is that, they have had them networked to other banks and financial institutions (e.g. VISA & MASTERCARD) and this has increased their utility to their customers. Banks in Ghana face the enormous challenge of providing world-class customer service to delight their customers so as to retain and even beat the competition to increase its market share in this competitive service industry. This study was intended to evaluate customer satisfaction with

the use of ATMs and discover additional services customers expect from the use of ATMs at five branches of a case universal bank in Accra.

Literature Review

Organisations are established to provide products that meet the expectations of customers with respect to satisfying their specific needs and wants at a specific time. It is therefore necessary to link customer retention, customers' perception of value, the competitive advantage the ATM gives to banks, switching barriers, consumer's behavioural intentions and customer loyalty to customer satisfaction.

Today, customers are more value oriented in their consumption of services because they have alternative choices (Slater, 1997; Woodruff, 1997). Gale and Wood (1994) explain how customers make purchase decisions between competing providers, by arguing that customers buy value; they do not simply buy products. Interestingly, it was observed that customers learn to think objectively about value in the form of preferred attributes and their performance as well as consequences from using a product (Woodruff, 1997). For customers who value convenience most, banks must offer the latest products such as electronic banking, touch-tone phone account access and internet banking.

Reidenbach (1995) argues that customer value is a more viable element than customer satisfaction because it includes not only the usual benefits that most banks focus on but also a consideration of the price that the customer pays. Customer value is a dynamic concept that must be managed. Customer satisfaction is merely a response to the value proposition offered in specific markets (Reidenbach, 1995). By this view, banks must determine how customers define value in order to provide added-value services. Unless a bank can extend its product quality beyond the core service with additional and potential service features and value, it is unlikely to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Chang *et al.*, 1997). Thus, the most likely way to both retain customers and improve profitability is by adding value via a strategy of differentiation

(Baker, 1993) while increasing margins through higher prices.

Earlier research by Brownlie (1989) has recommended that some consumers have positive attitudes towards ATMs based on dominant perceptions of convenience in terms of accessibility and ease of use. In addition, Leonard and Spencer (1991) argue that consumers perceive that ATMs are indicative of achievement and contribute towards a positive organisational image.

To be successful in today's competitive market place, banks must focus on understanding the needs, attitudes, satisfaction and behavioural patterns of the market (Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu, 1992). Consumers evaluate a number of criteria when choosing a bank. However, the prioritisation and use of these criteria differ across countries and thus cannot be generalised. In a study of Canadian customers in Montreal, Laroche and Taylor (1988) found that convenience is the principal reason for bank selection, followed by parental influence with respect to the status of the bank. In support, Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu's (1992) study of the Hong Kong banking market discovered that customers choose their banks because of convenience, long association, recommendations of friends and relatives, and accessibility to credit.

Social and technological changes had dramatic impacts on banking. These developments, such as internationalisation and unification of money markets and the application of new technologies in information and communication systems to banking, have forced banks to adopt strategic marketing practices. These have included offering extended services, diversification of products, entry into new markets, and emphasising electronic banking (Reidenbach, 1995; Mylonakis *et al.*, 1998). This greater range of services along with improvements in communications efficiency could have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and consequent behavioural intentions.

According to Porter and Miller (1985), satisfaction can be defined as a post consumption evaluation that meets or exceeds expectations. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand,

is the outcome when expectations have not been met. Colgate and Lang (2001) define customer satisfaction as a feeling a person experiences when comparing what was received and what was expected. Kotler and Armstrong (1995) also define customer satisfaction as the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectations.

From the above definitions, it means that customers enter a market with expectations of benefits and performance. Comparing results of the service enjoyed with the expectations leads to a positive confirmation or negative disconfirmation. A positive confirmation is an expression of satisfaction through repeat purchases, continual usage of a service and telling others about their good experiences with the product. A negative disconfirmation is an expression of dissatisfaction through voice complaint, exit and no subsequent demand for the service (Fornell *et al.*, 1990). Voice complaint is an active and constructive response that is vocal and attempts to change practices, including policies put in place by an organisation. Exit is a destructive response that occurs when people dissociate themselves from objects of dissatisfaction by switching brands, reducing consumption or refusing to make further purchases (Fornell *et al.*, 1990).

Leeds (1992) observes that that approximately 40 percent of customers switched banks because of what they considered to be poor service. Leeds (1992) further argues that nearly three-quarters of the banking customers mentioned teller courtesy as a prime consideration in choosing a bank. The study also showed that increased use of service quality and professional behaviours (such as formal greetings) improved customer satisfaction and reduced customer attrition. Fornell (1992), in his study of Swedish consumers, notes that although customer satisfaction and quality appear to be important for all firms, satisfaction is more important for loyalty in industries such as banks, insurance, mail order, and automobiles.

Ioanna (2002) further proposes that product differentiation is impossible in a competitive environment like the banking industry. Banks everywhere are delivering the same products.

For example, there is usually only minimal variation in interest rates charged or the range of products available to customers. Bank prices are fixed and driven by the marketplace. Thus, bank management tends to differentiate their firm from competitors through service quality. Service quality is an imperative element impacting customers' satisfaction level in the banking industry. In banking, quality is a multi-variable concept, which includes differing types of convenience, reliability, services portfolio and the staff delivering the service.

It is essential for businesses to measure customer satisfaction in order to afford them the opportunity of staying in touch with their customers. Businesses that commit themselves to satisfying customers must institute a system to continually measure how well they perform the task. Boone and Kurtz (2001) identified three main steps involved in this process namely understanding customer needs, obtaining customer feedback and instituting an ongoing programme to ensure customer satisfaction.

Knowledge of what customers need, want, and expect is a central concern of businesses focused on customer satisfaction. This information is also a vital first step in setting up a system to measure customer satisfaction. Marketers must carefully monitor the characteristics that really matter to customers. They also must remain constantly alert to new elements that might affect customer satisfaction.

Obtaining customer feedback, the second step in measuring customer satisfaction, is to compile feedback from customers regarding present performance. In a sense, this action captures a snapshot of how well the firm currently meets customer expectations. This information can be gathered in two ways using either reactive or proactive methods. To monitor customer feedback, most firms rely on reactive methods that include toll-free customer service telephone lines and systems to track customer complaints. Increasingly, firms are monitoring Usenet and other online discussion groups as means of tracking customer comments and attitudes about the value received. Globally, ATMs have been adopted

and are still being adopted by banks. They offer considerable benefits to both banks and their depositors.

A recent survey conducted by Intermerc Consulting Limited revealed that ATM services provided by banks and non-financial institutions stood as the most popular e-business platform in Nigeria. The report showed that awareness for various banking services rendered by Nigerian banks is mostly limited to the traditional banking services. However, among the more modern banking services such as electronic banking, Internet banking, Point of Sales (PoS) transactions, money transfer, ATMs emerged as the most popular with 96 percent awareness level. ATM awareness also ranked higher than awareness level about current accounts and slightly below savings account (Omankhanlen, 2007).

A number of researchers have investigated the demographic characteristics of ATM adopters. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) studied a Kuwaiti population, Marshall and Heslop (1988) studied a Canadian population and Swinyard and Ghee (1987) studied a Southeast Asian population. All these researchers got consistent results of adopter characteristics of ATM, in which ATM users tend to be young and have above average incomes and at least some high school education. Taube (1988) and Amel (1986) in their studies also obtained similar results. Kennickell and Kwast (1997) specifically found that household heads under the age of 35 were considerably more likely to use computerized banking, ATMs and debit cards than older consumers, while consumers' use of direct deposit increased with age. Crosby and Johnson (2004) profiled users and non-users of ATMs in terms of demographic and perceptual variables. The main aim of the study was to discriminate users from non-users, using the demographic variables of respondents and their perceptions of ATM attributes in order to assess the relative importance of these predictor variables. It was found that perceptual variables were far more successful as predictors of ATM service usage than respondent demographic variables.

Rogers *et al.* (1996) stressed that the most technologically savvy bank customers sometimes had trouble comprehending the

maze of options available. A lot of people keep trying until they find solutions but the elderly usually have problems using ATMs. Banks may be losing the elderly as ATM customers. Education and machine redesign could be the best hope for elderly customers. Most systems designers and bank officers assumed that ATM was easy to use and required no training. Evidence however showed that users of all ages had problems using ATMs initially when no training is provided and that older adults have problems even after training. They indicated that banks could find better ways of teaching people how to use ATMs. Out of the 13 banks they randomly questioned, only two provided brochures that showed the user how to operate the ATM. In their study, non-users of ATMs did not use the machines as they did not see a need for the service. Many respondents were not aware of the different options offered on ATMs and were more predisposed to use it if they were provided training. Non-users and users stressed concerns about safety in using ATMs.

Hone *et al.* (1998) found that in spite of the success and widespread use of ATMs, a significant proportion of bank customers could not or would not use them, or experience difficulties in using ATMs. They suggested that speech technology should be used as a means by which non-users might be encouraged to use ATMs, while at the same time, improving usability for all. The advantages of this include hands-free and eyes-free use for physically and visually impaired users and improved ease of use. Hone *et al.* (1998) investigated user attitudes to the concepts of a speech-based ATM, via large-scale survey and a series of focus groups. They detected that the idea of using speech for ATM transactions led to concerns such as that of privacy and security. Visually impaired users were more likely to want speech technology which meant that enhancements to ATM did not necessarily suit all types of users.

Batiz-Lazo and Barrie (2005) argue that during the 1990s, Information Technology in banking (as measured by ATM) led to reduced operating costs, coupled with increased number of transactions that resulted in greater efficiency. They concluded that the introduction of ATM

was profitable for banks as well as customers. Their study indicated that banks' adoption of ATM was overall beneficial for banks.

Methodology

The data for the study were sourced from clients and staff of branches of a principal universal bank in Accra. The five branches were selected based on the high number of ATM cardholders and the volume of transactions indicated by the Bank's ATM monthly monitoring report. The population of the research was customers of the five branches of the bank who have ATM cards. The estimated size of the target population was six thousand one hundred and twenty two (6,122) customers of the five branches. Out of this, it is only about 50% of them who actively use their cards. Based on this situation, the estimated size of the accessible population was 3,000. Hence, a sample of one hundred and twenty (120) customers was randomly sampled. This was proportionally distributed among the branches based on number of ATM cardholders. In the case of Bank staff, two (2) staff i.e. the Branch Manager and the ATM Officer at each of the five (5) branches were sampled using purposive sampling because of their role in relation to ATMs. Thus, ten (10) bank staff was sampled. Personal interviews were conducted to gather data for the study. A research assistant was recruited who went round the branches to interview the sampled customers. Data collection was constrained by the bank's protocol. Officials were unwilling to release the necessary information. The fear of giving out information which their competitors can use against them is responsible for this. The management teams of the branches from which data were collected did not want to be seen as providing information which can be used by their competitors. This was paramount in their consideration to release information and

allowing the researchers to interview their customers. The study was allowed on goodwill and that the bank remained anonymous.

Results and Discussions

The results of the study are presented in this section. Subsequently, the results of the study are discussed.

Education given to ATM card applicants

Customers' responses on the clarity of instruction on the use of the ATM cards at the point of issue were appraised. This was important to ascertain the level of education given to the customers which has an impact on its use. Unfortunately, only 26 (30%) customers said the instructions given to them about the use of ATM were clear. The remaining 84 (70%) customers mentioned that the instructions were not clear to them. On the other hand, the views of Bank staffs about whether they think the kind of education they gave to customers about ATM use were instructive enough were gathered. It was gathered from the responses that the education given to customers were not explicitly clear enough. Customers were only told to keep their PIN codes highly secretive and to follow the prompts as it appears on the ATM screen. It was also realised that brochures were not attached to the cards. This made it more difficult for users, especially first time ATM cardholders. Clearly, the Bank needs to improve upon the level of education it gives its customers on the use of the ATM.

Relationship between understanding of ATM Education offered by the bank and the frequency of use

There is a link between the knowledge of ATM and frequency of ATM use. Table 1 below presents data on the level of knowledge of ATM and frequency of ATM use.

Table 1: Relationship between knowledge of ATM and frequency of ATM use

Monthly Average Use of ATM	Level of ATM Knowledge			
	Very Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Total
Once	6	26	1	33
Twice	11	35	1	47

Thrice	7	11	1	19
More than thrice	9	6	6	21
Total	33	78	9	120

It was expected that the more a customer understood education about ATM, the more he/she would use the ATM. On the contrary, the results of the study revealed the opposite. Majority of those who indicated that they understand the education they were offered clearly rather use it not more than twice in a month. On the other hand, those who have lesser knowledge in the use of ATMs rather frequent it mostly. Further investigation revealed that this was partly due to the fact that majority of the respondents did not know they could take up to GH¢ 500.00 which is the maximum allowed per day. They rather withdrew in bits.

Challenges Encountered by Customers in the Use of ATMs

The study shows that the respondents faced challenges when using the ATMs. The challenges identified were cash retraction, card retention, network failure and disputed withdrawal. The responses are shown in Table 2 below. From the responses, 30 (25%) customers complained of card retention. Also, 29 (24.17%) customers indicated the challenge of network failure. Finally, only 9 (7.5%) customers identified disputed withdrawal as a challenge.

Table 2: Customer challenges with ATM use and frequency of occurrence

Frequency of Occurrence	Types of Challenges			
	Cash Retraction	Card Retention	Network Failure	Disputed Withdrawal
Very frequent	14	4	9	1
Frequent	19	10	9	3
Not Frequent	28	16	11	5
Total	61	30	29	9

The challenges of ATM usage can be partly associated to the inadequate education offered to the ATM cardholders before the commencement of the use of the card. The aforementioned challenges were really worrisome to customers. As many as 61 (50.84%) respondents said they were challenged by cash retraction when they use the ATM.

Type of customer complaints as reported by the bank staff

The Bank staff provided some responses about complaints that customers make concerning the usage of the bank’s ATMs at the branches studied. A comparative analysis was done to draw some inferences from the various selected

branches in terms of the type of complaints that cut across the branches.

These complaints are presented in Table 3. It clearly shows that there are not many differences between the complaints and the challenges customers stated above. However, card retention was the predominant complaint logged by the ATM cardholders complaint registers of the selected branches. However, the frequency differs among the branches (Table 3). The next major challenge faced by the customers as reported in the complaint registers of the branches is cash retraction. Further probing indicated that most of the cash retractions occurred when customers used VISA cards and ATMs of other banks.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of types of complaints received per branch*

Branch	Types of Complaints				Total
	Cash Retraction	Card Retention	Disputed Withdrawal	ATM cash Limit	
A	11	33	6	7	57
B	6	24	5	11	46
C	10	22	3	9	44
D	17	13	4	2	36
E	8	17	2	8	35
Total	52	109	20	37	218

*Multiple responses

Customers’ views about the bank’s response to their ATM complaints

As many as 97 (81%) customers said they ever complained to the bank about their ATM challenges. However, 23 (19%) customers mentioned that they never complained to the bank about ATM challenges. According to an official of the bank, the bank attempts to resolve customer concerns as quickly as possible. The study revealed that more than half of ATM complaints are resolved within 72 hours. However, some of the complaints took

more than a week to resolve. The proportion of the complaints that took more than a week to resolve is quite high and this needs to be addressed as quickly as possible.

Customer satisfaction with use of ATMs

In today’s competitive business environment, it is important that every encounter the customer experiences with the Bank, should yield a high level of satisfaction. The ATM as a major point of contact for most of the Bank’s customers cannot be left out from this discussion.

Table 4: Reliability of ATM

Level of Reliability	Frequency	Percent
Very reliable	39	32.5
Reliable	66	55.0
Unreliable	15	12.5
Total	120	100

It can be inferred from the responses in Table 4 above that majority of respondents felt that the ATMs are reliable. Reasons assigned for the reliability includes 24 hour ATM service and reliable network service. This suggests that they would always use it when they have the chance.

reasons in no specific other: unstable network service, poor money quality, ATM cash depletion and hardware problems. However, apart from the unstable network system and the hardware problems which they emphasized were out of their control, they assured that the other factors would be mitigated to reduce the ATM breakdowns.

The responses above indicate that most of the respondents who make withdrawals from the ATM get the requested amount without fail. However, the cash retraction problem as discussed earlier still featured prominently when some respondents said they do not get what they ask for. Some also expressed concern about the ATM running out of cash, especially on weekends, which causes a lot of dissatisfaction. This should be a concern to the bank.

Overall satisfaction of the bank’s ATM services

Expectations, actual performance level and confirmation have effect on customer satisfaction. Since all the questions asked were geared towards finding out the satisfaction level of the users of the Bank’s ATM service, it is important for the study to solicit from respondents their overall satisfaction level.

Bank staff’s responses on the causes of the ATM breaking down reiterated the following

Table 5: Satisfaction with ATM services

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Very satisfied	27	22.5
Satisfied	56	46.7
Dissatisfied	37	30.8
Total	120	100

Though majority of respondents were satisfied with the Bank’s ATM services, it still shows that a lot of customers are not satisfied with the ATM services. Customers assigned three main reasons for their dissatisfaction. These include frequent machine breakdown, cash withdrawal limitations and frequent card retention.

Customers’ expected additional ATM services

With the introduction of ATMs into the banking sector with all the benefits it brings to users, it

is expected that more would be required of it as the years go by. As customer needs keep changing, it is argued that unless a bank can extend its product quality beyond the core services with additional and potential service features and value, it is unlikely to capture and retain existing customers. Today’s customers always expect more of whatever service they receive and that applies to what they expect the ATM to do for them which is not being rendered now.

Table 6: Expected ATM services

Services	Frequency	Percent
Payment of Utility Bills	21	17.5
Deposits	27	22.5
Funds Transfer	61	50.8
Loan Requisition	11	9.2
Total	120	100

From Table 6 above, a lot of customers expect to be able to undertake funds transfer, i.e. transfer of funds from one account to the other, with the ATM. They lamented about the unavailability of this service at the bank’s ATMs which according to them other banks offer their customers. Majority of the respondents therefore expect the bank to offer them this service on the ATM. Again, quite a number of the respondents expect to be able to make deposit (cash and cheque) via the ATM. This they believe will save them the stress of forming long queues in the various banking halls. Moreover, payment of utility bills with the ATM featured prominently in the responses. This according to them will afford them the opportunity of a one-stop banking service, as it exists in the developed countries.

Conclusions

The respondents expressed delight about the introduction of ATMs into the banking sector. They were particularly happy about the flexibility the machine has brought to bear in today’s banking. According to them, ATM has enabled them to access financial services at their own convenience. Inadequate education on the use of the ATM and technical defects of the machine were identified as major challenges affecting the customers’ satisfaction. Customers’ knowledge of the use of the ATM had a positive relationship with frequency of use of the ATM.

The types of challenges customers encountered are cash retraction and card retention as a result of unstable network system. Majority of the respondents felt the bank’s ATM services are reliable. Those who think the ATMs are not reliable mention instances when the ATMs run out of cash, as a major cause of unreliability of the ATM services. Different views were

expressed by customers when asked to state additional services they expect the ATM to offer them. However, funds transfer and deposits ranked high on the list. The bank officials interviewed however explained that funds transfer is possible with the ATM but that service had not been activated for customers because of operational and internal issues. Generally, a large proportion of the respondents were satisfied with the bank's overall ATM services.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings that have been established and conclusions drawn from the study, some recommendations have been made. The bank should enhance the education given to customers on the use of the ATM. This should begin at the point of issuing new ATM cards to customers. Procedure manuals should be provided to customers for ease of reference as done by other banks. The bank may consider the adoption of biometric prints in place of PIN codes to improve security and also make it easier for uneducated customers to use the ATM. The services provided by the ATM should be configured to accept cash and cheque deposits, enabling fund transfers and payments of bills. This would improve patronage of the ATM services. The network system should be improved to eliminate system disruption and closing down the ATM. The numerous challenges encountered by customers when using the ATM should be addressed to the minimum if not eliminated. This will give customers enough confidence in the use of the ATM and will encourage them to recommend it to non-users.

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