



PRESS RELEASE

London, 9th November 2021

Customer convenience and personalisation drive bank branch transformation

Banks worldwide embrace new technologies and branch strategies in response to changing customer behaviour and expectations

The demand for self-service continues to rise

RBR's report *Branch Transformation 2021* reveals key trends in customer behaviour which help to shape and drive branch transformation initiatives around the world. One notable trend is the ongoing shift away from the teller counter to self-service channels. In response to this change, banks are offering a wide range of self-service options, from the traditional ATM to non-cash kiosks. Kiosks can perform a variety of functions, such as bill payment or card issuance, and are present in the majority of the 24 markets covered in the report.

Self-service devices are often located in bank lobbies which are accessible after banking hours for customers' convenience. As demand for self-service continues to rise, the creation of these lobbies has become central to many banks' branch transformation schemes. Société Générale in France, for instance, has been remodelling its branches to include self-service spaces with extended opening hours to benefit people who finish work late.

Customers expect personalised services

Tailored experiences for online shopping and streaming services are increasingly the norm and the study reveals that this expectation of personalisation even extends to banks. To cater to this demand, some banks look to redefine the teller role, placing more emphasis on building customer relationships. This is aided by the shift towards self-service, which frees tellers from performing traditional over-the-counter transactions.

New branch layouts are used to foster stronger relationships. Open-plan branches – in which bulletproof glass and teller counters have been removed – allow customers and staff to engage more easily. Some banks in Russia are even moving towards a deskless model in which staff-customer interactions take place side-by-side in informal seating areas.

COVID-19 made crowding a key issue

To further improve the branch experience, many banks make use of technology to reduce queues and minimise in-branch crowding. Self-service appointment scheduling is available at self-service terminals in over half of the markets RBR examined. Once inside the branch, customers can often direct themselves to the correct area using interactive signage. A small number of banks even make use of welcome robots to direct customers, such as China's Bank of Communications in its flagship branches.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about the transmission of the virus made crowding an issue of hygiene as well as convenience, placing new relevance on queue management technologies. The demand for social distancing highlights the fluidity of customer expectations and the need for banks' continued adaptability.

Emily Beeby, who led RBR's *Branch Transformation 2021* research, remarked: *"Although branches vary by market and bank, they are united by the desire to serve the customer in the way they want to be served. This means that as customer behaviour continues to change, we can expect branches to evolve, implementing new strategies and adopting new technologies."*

Notes to editors

These figures and insights are based on RBR's study, *Branch Transformation 2021*. For more information about this report or to discuss the findings in more detail please email Emily Beeby (emily.beeby@rbrlondon.com) or call +44 20 8831 7323.

RBR is a strategic research and consulting firm with three decades of experience in banking and retail automation, cards and payments. It assists its clients by providing independent advice and intelligence through published reports, consulting, newsletters and events.



PRESS RELEASE

The information and data within this press release are the copyright of RBR, and may only be quoted with appropriate attribution to RBR. The information is provided free of charge and may not be resold.