

Client profiles and access to retail bank services in South Africa

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ABSTRACT: *In many developed, and some developing countries, technological innovation has enabled banks to provide intermediary services and supply products via a variety of methods. This article uses econometric techniques to assess the impact of the product suite, credit score and the spatial availability of bank branches on the level of access to banking services in Gauteng Province, South Africa over the period 1999 to 2004. The results indicate that the allocated product suite and the credit score do not clearly influence the overall level of access. The spatial availability of branches has the most significant impact on overall access and at the margin, the number of bank branches is less important than the geographic distribution of the branches. Given the socio-economic profile of retail clients in South Africa, increases in investment in product suite inputs provides less productive benefits for overall access than bank branches do. This is contrary to the view that may hold for most developed economies.*