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ATMs may soon sell gift cards

Visa is conducting a test in Arizona to see if gift cards dispensed by ATMs will catch on with customers.

By MSN Money partner on Fri, Jan 13, 2012 2:20 PM

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This post comes from Jeanine Skowronski at partner site MainStreet.

Next holiday shopping season, gift cards may be even easier to purchase. Visa is testing a pilot program that allows consumers to purchase gift cards from drive-through and walk-up ATMs.



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The program, set to last through March, is being conducted in partnership with Better ATMs, which is selling Visa-branded gift cards at select machines belonging to three credit unions in Phoenix, Ariz.

Hyung Choi, Visa's head of U.S. prepaid products, says that adding gift cards to ATMs "provides a new way for consumers to have access to Visa-branded prepaid options." He cites the growing popularity of gift cards as another reason for testing the program. Post continues below.

The gift cards included in the pilot program are \$25 non-reloadable prepaid products that are slightly thinner than the ones you would find in stores. (As a side note, this smaller size seems to represent a pro and a con: It will make it easier to fit the cards into your wallet, but harder to disguise the fact that the gift you're giving was purchased at a local ATM.)

Visa says the results will ultimately dictate if the offering is added at other financial institutions in wider markets. It will also influence whether reloadable prepaid products will also be made available at ATM machines.

"At this point, it hasn't been determined," Choi says. "But you could think about the idea that any (applicable) prepaid card can be dispensed through an ATM."

Would you take advantage of the opportunity to purchase gift cards at your local ATM? Let us know in the comments below.

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-- Giselle Smith is a longtime editor and writer based in Seattle.

-- Donna Freedman lives and writes about the frugal life in Seattle. She also writes a column for MSN Money and blogs at donnafreedman.com.

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