

Research Article

Improving Branchless Banking in Berlin Germany: The Effects of Promotional Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of current study was to evaluate the function and importance of promotional strategies in branchless banking (BB) to capture a sizable portion of untargeted and unaddressed branchless banking volume in Germany. In both emerging and developed countries, commercial banks promote, influence, and integrate economic activities. This study aimed to determine importance of branchless banking in Berlin, Germany, to alleviate pressure on traditional banking practices. BB is used as a dependent variable, whereas promotional strategies such as below the line (BTL) and above the line (ATL) marketing are independent variables. Berlin, Germany, comprises population stratum in this cross-sectional survey. Additionally, snowball sampling technique which is non-probability sampling method was used in this research study. Both independent and dependent variables were analyzed using inferential statistics. Cronbach alpha (CA), average variance extracted AVE, composite reliability (CR), standard deviation (S.D) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were used. It was found that BTL marketing campaign and ATL marketing campaign positively related with branchless banking. The findings of the study are generalized to promote branchless banking through below-the-line and above-the-line marketing campaigns.

KEYWORDS

Branchless Banking, Below the Line Marketing, Digital Banking, Information Communication Technology, Above the Line Marketing

1 | INTRODUCTION

The banking industry of each country does business to improve economic development and trade processes. Commercial banks influence and integrate economic activities such as poverty alleviation, consolidation, and investment in emerging and developed economies alike. Branchless banking is a significant development as it uses idea of electronic banking channels and agency banks to distribute and supply banking products and services (Global, 2019). Thus, each country's banking business fulfills its economic development and modern trade obligations. Branchless banking benefits both businesses and customers (Palaon, Wiryono, & Faturohman, 2020), since it reaches one half of the world's population, allowing them to access financial goods and services. Only after Switzerland and U.S, Germany's economy is highly developed and inventive (Stewart, 2021). German banks need to accelerate their digital endeavors to stay competitive and keep pace with other banking structures as they face the growing competitive challenge from financial technology (Stulz, 2019).

Branchless banking is a creative mantra in the banking sector in terms of diversity. Thus, the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is an important part of corporate finance incorporating unbanked persons who do not have access to branched banking devices (Del Gaudio, Porzio, Sampagnaro, & Verdoliva, 2021). The advent of internet technologies has helped the banking industry to deliver services to customers regardless of their location while evaluating banking facilities (Sharif Abu Karsh, 2020). And it was found that technology is not a major stumbling block for German banks in their efforts to digitize their business models. Hence, long-term challenges to financial bank stability can be seen if banks do not move quickly to digital products and services (Chiaromonte, Dreassi, Girardone, & Piserà, 2022).

The purpose of this study was to confirm the role and importance of marketing strategies in non-branch banks to capture the bulk of non-targeted branchless banking in Germany and ensure that the growth of this sector is not ignored. According to reports, marketers needed to pay attention to conservative clients and the elderly population to fill in the gap (Chan & Ilicic, 2019). Branch less banking is a form of banking that does not require the construction of concrete buildings. Thus, its objectives are: i. the purpose is to reduce the cost of financial services. ii. primary goal of non-branch banking is to reach a point where your bank accounts can be accessed using mobile numbers. iii. another objective of non-branch banks is to identify the agent who initiates the establishment of a bank account, when in fact, the account is eventually commenced by the bank (Yusharto & BB, 2014). Branchless banking has the potential to reduce pressure on conventional banking. It was found that the complex structure of German banks results in a reduced level of innovation and rising costs, and as a result, most banks face difficulties with their current information technology (IT) systems (Kortsch, Rehwaltdt, Schwake, & Licari, 2022). In addition, cooperative and conservation banks are burdened by broad and expensive branch networks, which is one reason for their high cost (Taşkın & Sariyer, 2020).

Promotions are an essential part of the marketing process. Commercial banks have grown their business through marketing strategies. Four key types of personalized promotion are marketing, sales promotion, advertising, and direct marketing (Camilleri, 2018). In this study, we used two types of marketing activities in Berlin, Germany: BTL marketing campaign and ATL marketing campaign. The BTL was designed to improve product awareness and strengthen messages conveyed through agent trainings, outgoing calls, and other communications (Hussain, 2017). Promotional methods have been observed to have a direct impact on non-branch banking. BTL activities covered a range of events that were carried out on a wide scale (Cook, 2020).

The ATL marketing campaign has garnered a variety of media platforms, including national television commercials featuring well-known actors using ATM cards, advertisements published in national newspapers, radio commercials, and a public relations campaign to increase the spread of non-branch banks (Shahab, 2019). In this study, an attempt was made to address the problem how marketing campaigns promote the branchless banking in Germany and ensuring that this sector's growth is not overlooked? And the recent study contributes to the body of knowledge in the following ways:

1. Studies on BTL marketing campaign and ATL marketing campaign are limited.
2. BTL marketing campaign and ATL marketing campaign are used as predictors together for first time.
3. Literature on BTL marketing campaign and ATL marketing campaign in context of Germany needs to be enriched.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

The current section reviews non-branch banking publications, non-bank channels, marketing channels, promotional methods, and the relationship between offline marketing and banking strategies.

2.1 | BRANCHLESS BANKING AND INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Researchers have identified two distinct wireless banking systems enabled by information communication technology (ICT), one based on mobile networks and the other on personal computers or market terminals (POS) (Prochaska & Brix, 2008). Among the countries that support BB through digital banking are Mexico, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Brazil (Santoso & Ahmad, 2016). 1.5 million people in Taiwan signed up for mobile banking services in 2009; however, portable banks account for less than 2.3 percent of all banking transactions (Edwards, Johnson, & Weil, 2016). Mobile banking, in the case of market development, is a type of branchless bank where mobile phones are used as a tool to enhance the comfort of previously established institutions, thus bringing novel

and fictional services to the poor, especially in developing countries (Kihara, 2015). Experts say the banking sector has advanced from customer-focused computer systems (PCs), ATMs, and non-branch banks (Diniz, Birochi, & Pozzebon, 2012; Muthinja & Chipeta, 2018). Some studies indicate that the internet is widely used by ordinary people, retailers, and consumers in Germany. In addition, a growing number of people have access to the internet, which is increasingly being used to perform online financial services (Kurila, Lazuras, & Ketikidis, 2016). BB is part of the investment concept, which strives to eliminate barriers to financial services through ICT (Agyepong, 2018).

2.2 | BRANCHLESS BANKING AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Clients can perform basic financial transactions such as withdrawals and deposits at retail outlets using technology that is readily available to both customers and store staff in the form of mobile phones and authentication and security cards. Similarly, non-branch banking was preferred as banking outside the banking sector and as an essential function in the networks of non-bank banks in improving cash flow/cash flow (Buri, Cull, Gine, Harten, & Heitmann, 2018). In addition, there are two different types of banks available: traditional banks and transitional banks. Although conventional bank models use the mobile phone as an existing bank account route, flexible banking models provide financial products and services to low-income people (Lee, Cheng, Yeung, & Lai, 2011). In addition, e-banking covers a wide range of services, including mobile banking, ATMs, plastic cards, shopping malls, online banking, and a banking communication center (Nazaritehrani & Mashali, 2020). According to sources, branch less banking is accepted in many Asian countries, including Pakistan and India, and African and Latin American countries, including South Africa and Kenya (Onwonga, Achoki, & Omboi, 2017a, 2017b).

2.3 | BRANCHLESS BANKING AND GERMANY

N26 and ING-DiBa AG are two major market providers that provide non-branch banking services (Pavlyushchenko, 2017). Both have a larger market share compared to other smaller competitors. These two market rivals in Germany provide items and services directly to customers, passing through regular bank branches, agents of foreign companies, and other intermediaries. Typically, intermediary facilitators communicate with customers through retail outlets, financial markets, particularly the N26 and ING-DiBa AG areas. The N26 was discovered to be launched in 2015 and has already garnered more than 200,000 customers in Germany. The founder of the N26 has been impressed by the prospect of a pan-European approach that will disrupt commercial banks (Hauptert, Maier, & Müller, 2017). On the other hand, the N26 branch bank has partnered with Fintech companies to provide financial goods and services on request. The main objective of a non-branch banking organization is to reduce channel costs while improving customer confidence and comfort without compromising their security or privacy.

2.4 | BELOW THE LINE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Promotions are an essential part of the marketing process. Four key types of personalized promotion are marketing, sales promotion, advertising, and direct marketing (Camilleri, 2018). Commercial banks have grown their business through marketing strategies. According to the literature review, various promotions have increased trade opportunities in multiple sources of less developed, developing, and developed countries (Sukaatmadja, Yasa, Rahyuda, Setini, & Dharmanegara, 2021). The BTL marketing approach focuses on increasing brand awareness and strengthening messages conveyed through agent training, outgoing calls, and other communications (Hussain, 2017). A branch banking marketing campaign is an advertising strategy used to educate poor households and non-bankers about non-banking banks. Promoting branch banking has been shown to have a direct impact. BTL activities included several different events were performed on a large scale (Fins, Casais, Melão, & Pires, 2021). Branchless banking is enhanced by wall painting and other visible investments near agency locations. These investments include branding activities such as wall paintings and other visual aids to promote accounts, often located near the places of significant agents to drive foot traffic (Khouja, Subramaniam, & Vasudev, 2020). Cookies, such as these, are set up in crowded areas to provide additional customer information about zero accounts, to provide promotional gifts, and to direct customers to the nearest agent's site to use their first savings, among other things. Agencies are also encouraged when they see these promotional activities near their factories. Agents are provided with posters, gifts, agent items, printed items, and handouts with small tokens (pens, etc.) so that they can thank new and returning customers while improving store marketing.

2.5 | ABOVE THE LINE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

ATL marketing campaign used various media, including national television commercials featuring well-known ATM card actors, advertisements published in national newspapers, radio commercials, and a social media campaign to increase media coverage, primarily through non-branch banks (Shahab, 2019). ATL marketing is quite efficient because it may be repeated in the media numerous times. It undoubtedly adds to the establishment of consumer incentive for product purchasing (Chamchan, Apipornchaisakul, & Soparat, 2021). ATL is employed to impact brands and raise brand awareness in the minds of consumers (Shahab, 2019). Global technical advancements are an important factor to consider for ATL marketing. ATL also essential when a firm seeks to create a brand, a mythology, or generate particular connections among customers (Kateryna, 2022). The study of (Litwin, 2008) found that combining ATL and BTL operations with postponing ATL marketing until the end of BTL campaigns was beneficial. The combination of ATL and BTL has the greatest impact (Фурц, 2020). In order to create the best value for the client, it is vital to focus on the attributes of the products that generate the value. ATL marketing is applied to advertise megabrands that adopt a value-added strategy and can spend little on marketing (Shahab, 2019).

2.6 | RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

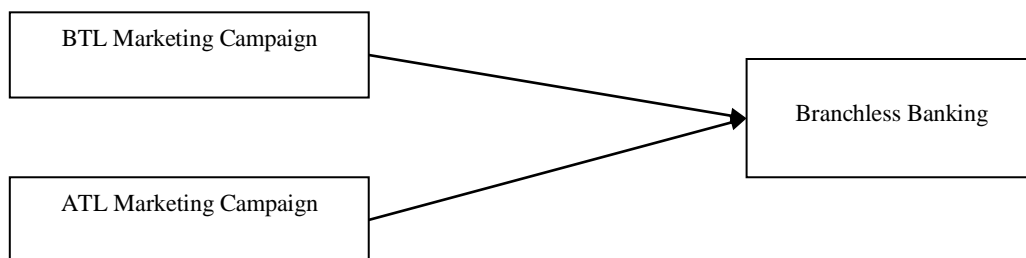


Figure 1: Research framework

This study considered BTL and ATL independent variables, while BB was used as a dependent variant. Following are research hypotheses designed to establish a possible relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): BTL is positively related with branchless banking.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): ATL is positively related with branchless banking.

3 | MATERIAL AND METHODS

This section provides details about the methods and procedures and tools and techniques for researching by applying the strategies required for conducting research systematically.

3.1 | POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Residents of Berlin, Germany, included the population in the study. The current number of studies is small due to the convenience of sampling. On the other hand, the population comprises people who do not have banks, the Poor who are not connected to the financial system, and the elderly. The second demographic is from February to June 2020 for data collection and processing. In addition, non-probability samples were used in this study because finding the right, and correct number of respondents was a challenge due to social behavior.

Similarly, because most respondents lived alone, a snowball sample was used to communicate with them (The

samples that are not likely to be called simple samples). Researchers can predict future attitudes and behaviors by conducting a comprehensive review of historical responses and trend analysis. Snowball sampling method is reliable and accurate due to its simplicity and oral nature. The number of bankers and poor households in Berlin, Germany, was sent 300 surveys via Gmail and in printed format, yet only 250 responses were considered valid and complete by all means, with a response rate of 83 percent. As a result, the sample size of the data collection was 250.

3.2 | MEASURES

Measurements and measurements are an essential part of scientific research because they serve as the basis for data collection and research tools. The average of nine BTL items is based on the standard nine-item scale (Futrell & Swan, 1977). Additionally, ATL is a social media platform to promote and educate the public about banking outside the branches. As a result, the scale was used to change the nine components of the ATL marketing campaign (Futrell & Swan, 1977). And seven items scale was adapted (Willis, Marshall, & Richardson, 2001). Because this was a field study, a comprehensive survey was conducted to find answers for respondents. For data collection, questionnaires were used. On Likert's five-point scale, responses were categorized as highly consistent, positive, neutral, negative, and strongly disagree (Malik, 2023; Malik, Chishti, & Shahzad, 2014). The Google survey and questionnaire were made accessible, and the results were classified as strong agreement, consent, neutrality, disagreement, and firm disagreement on a five-point Likert scale. Additionally, responses are imported into Microsoft Excel from a Gmail account and placed in the Social Sciences Statistics Package (SPSS 20).

3.3 | DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using version SPSS 20. Statistical parameters were used to analyze filtered data using descriptive and non-descriptive statistics. To test the reliability and validity of the tool, descriptive statistics such as description, standard deviation (S.D), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Cronbach alpha (CA), AVE, and CR were used (Azam et al., 2022; Jahangir, Ghafoor, & Hafeez, 2022b). Line regression was used to test ideas. Interview data were analyzed using content analysis.

4 | RESULTS

Table 1a

Mean, Standard Deviation, Variance, Exploratory Factor Analysis

Construct	Item No.	Mean	S.D.	% Variance	Loadings EFA
Below the line marketing campaign (BTL)	1	3.36	.882	KMO=0.766 BTS=779.03 Variance= 67.05 %	.814
	2	3.68	.776		.760
	3	4.00	.680		.727
	4	4.06	.694		.657
	5	4.14	.681		.612
	6	4.18	.643		.577
	7	4.24	.709		.409
	8	3.21	.796		.601
	9	3.65	.610		.522
Above the line marketing campaign (ATL)	1	3.92	.720	KMO=0.822 BTS=840.37 Variance= 60.37%	.678
	2	3.89	.611		.579
	3	3.99	.752		.709
	4	4.00	.685		.636
	5	3.93	.717		.713
	6	3.98	.661		.659
	7	4.06	.742		.719
	8	3.94	.677		.596
	9	3.98	.682		.648

Branchless banking (BB)	1	4.00	.734		.687
	2	3.98	.661	KMO=0.823	.666
	3	4.04	.678	BTS=690.380	.642
	4	4.09	.665	Variance=	.572
	5	3.93	.389	51.82 %	.749
	6	3.95	.476		.830
	7	4.00	.501		.850

Table 1b
 Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR

Construct	Cronbach (CA)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite reliability (CR)
BTL	0.816	0.412	0.859
ATL	0.839	0.437	0.874
BB	0.820	0.521	0.882

4.1 | RESULTS OF STUDY

The results indicated that BTL has nine items with standard deviations more than 0.60 and S.D.s close to one another, indicating response homogeneity. For example, the KMO value must exceed 0.50 (Malik, Yukun, & Khan, 2020; Manzoor & Jahangir, 2023), the BTS must be significant, and all factor loadings must exceed 0.40. KMO =0.766, BTS =779.03, results indicated that BTL has nine items with standard deviations more than 0.60 and S.D.s close to one another, indicating response homogeneity. For example, the KMO value must exceed 0.50 (Malik, Yukun, & Khan, 2020; Manzoor & Jahangir, 2023), the BTS must be significant, and all factor loadings must exceed and factor loadings range between 0.409 and 0.814 in Table-1a, while CA is greater than 0.70 in Table-1b, meaning that 0.816 is considered believable (Field, 2013). AVE and CR are calculated to aid in the investigation of scale validity. According to (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, & Chong, 2017; Jahangir, Ghafoor, & Hafeez, 2022a), if the AVE is larger than 0.5 and the CR is greater than 0.70, it is acceptable; nevertheless, if the AVE is less than 0.50, the CR is still greater than that 0.70, it is acceptable as well. According to table-1b, BTL has an AVE of 0.412 and a CR of 0.859. As a result, the BTL scale's reliability and validity have been established. On a nine-point scale, Table 1a depicts ATL objects. Factor loadings greater than 0.40 vary between 0.596 and 0.713, with a KMO of 0.822 and a BTS of 840.37. CA is greater than 0.70, i.e. 0.839, and AVE is 0.437, as well as CR=0.874 > 0.70 scale for ATL, as shown in Table 1b. On a seven-point scale, Table 1a depicts BB goods. While factoring loadings greater than 0.40 range between 0.572 and 0.850, KMO=0.823 and BTS=690.807, respectively. CA is greater than 0.70, i.e. 0.820, and AVE= 0.521 > 0.50, as well as CR=0.882 > 0.70 scale for ATL, as shown in Table 1b.

4.1.1 | Regression Model Testing

This study considered BTL and ATL independent variables, while non-branch banking was considered a dependent variant. As a result, the model was tested using linear regression. Reversal analysis determines the presence or absence of a link between the proposed variance. Table 2 shows the linear regression in hypothesis 1, meaning BTL positively correlates with non-branch banking. According to the model summary, R^2 were changed to 0.701 and 0.709, respectively. R^2 and the adjusted R^2 values directly mean that BTL defines part of the dependent variable. As a result, it was determined that BTL formed 70% of non-branch banking relationships, and other reasons could explain another 30%. Similarly, the value is 0.001, that's <than 0.05 and is considered satisfactory by statistical standards.

Table 2
Regression analysis of H1

Model Summary	R ²	R ² (Adjusted)	P value
Linear regression	0.701	0.709	0.001

Table 3 also includes the beta-coefficient values for the hypothesis that BTL has a positive relationship with branchless banking. One unit change in BTL resulted in a 0.423 unit change in branchless banking, demonstrating that BTL has a sizable effect on branchless banking. Additionally, the T value must be greater than 2 for the relationship to be accepted. As a result, it is frequently considered that BTL and BB have a beneficial relationship.

Table 3
Standardized coefficient of H1

Model Summary	β	T value	P value
BTL	0.423	6.516	0.001

ANOVA is an acronym for analysis of variances, and it is used to determine degree of variance in distinct constructs, as illustrated in Table 4. The regression sum of squares has a value of 10.984 and can describe both the deviation from the mean and the variability of a data set .F= 85.506, which is significant by statistical standards. Additionally, the significance level is 0.000, less than 0.05, indicating that the hypothesis is admissible.

Table 4
ANOVA of H1

Model	Sum of Sq	DF	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	10.984	1	10.984	85.506	.000
Residual	31.859	248	0.128		
Total	42.843	249			

Table 5 shows the regression analysis for the hypothesis that ATL positively correlates with BB. Consequently, the R² and modified R² values were 0.682 and 0.680, respectively, explained variance of the criterion variable was reported using the predictor variable ATL. Additionally, it was discovered that ATL accounts for 68% of the variance in BB, with the remainder explained by other independent variables.

Table 5
Regression analysis of H2

Model Summary	R ²	R ² (Adjusted)	P value
Linear regression	0.682	0.680	0.001

Table 6 illustrates the T values and coefficient values of the second hypothesis that ATL has a positive relationship with BB. One unit change in independent variable ATL had a 0.745 unit drift in branchless banking, showing that ATL significantly impacts BB. Also, T value predicted significance. Therefore, it was approved that ATL has a positive relationship with BB.

Table 6
Standardized coefficient of H2

Model Summary	β	T value	P value
ATL	0.745	8.112	0.001

The mathematical features of the ANOVA hypothesis analysis hypothesis ATL, linked to non-branch banks, are also described in Table 7. The ANOVA method determines the degree of variance between a few study variables. The total number of squares was 29.210 and accurately represented the variability and deviation of the data collection. As a result, the value of F was 531.335 in this study, which was significant. The value threshold is set to 0.001, sufficient to negate the hypothesis.

Table 7
ANOVA of H2

Model	Square sum	DF	Mean SqF	p
Regression	29.210	1	29.210	0.000
Residual	13.634	248	531.335	
Total	42.844	249	0.055	

4.2 | CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis is a statistical approach used to determine strength of a relationship between two variables in the study. Table 8 discusses the Pearson correlation coefficients between independent and dependent factors. Due to the similarity of the variables and data, the Pearson correlation coefficient of BTL with the same variable is 1. BTL and ATL had a correlation coefficient of 0.447**, showing a weak but beneficial association. Additionally, the Pearson correlation coefficient between BTL and branchless banking is 0.506**, indicating a moderate and favorable relationship. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between ATL and the dependent variable was 0.826**, showing a significant and beneficial relationship. All correlation tests were substantial because the sig value was smaller than 0.05.

Table 8
Pearson Correlation

Variables	1	2	3
BTL	1	0.447**	0.506**
sign	0.000	sign	0.005
N	250	N	250
ATL	0.447**	1	0.826**
sign	0.000	sign	0.857
N	250	N	250
BB	0.506**	0.826**	1
sign	sign	0.857	0.000
N	N	250	250

** Significant at 0.01 levels (2- tailed)

* Significant at 0.05 levels (1-tailed)

5 | DISCUSSION

Financial inclusion is synonymous with branchless banking, an ICT-enabled innovation. Financial inclusion provides low-cost, readily accessible financial products and services to the unbanked and under banked portions of society. It was determined that BB has large distribution networks and channels, which enable it to provide financial products and services to the unbanked masses (McKay & Pickens, 2010). BB's firm cannot expand until it becomes well-known among residents in isolated and rural areas. Consumers regularly shop for products and services until they are seen and made available to the broader public. The next stage after producing a product or service is to market it. The service providers' products and services must be promoted effectively and efficiently. It was determined that reaching out to customers for products and services were impossible without aggressive promotion. In developing countries, branch banking was developed through promotional programs that included direct, personal, and marketing (Shrader & Duflos, 2014). And this study examined the impact of promotional methods on non-branch banks using two strategies. In this case, BTL and ATL were used. To confirm its influence, two different types of connectors were introduced in the concepts, such as H1 and H2. The questionnaire collected questions and

sub-items from research variables such as BTL, ATL, and BB. Our sample included poor households and bankers living in rural Berlin, Germany.

Research has found that advertising methods have profoundly affected branch offices without branches and have increased public awareness. Due to the increase in consumption, the percentage of the general population that should have channels of banks without branches has doubled. Additionally, BTL marketed itself using kiosks, murals, visual aids, signposts, posters, gifts, agent supplies, and printed items. On the other hand, the second variable for research, ATL, has shown advertising strategies and strategies such as national television commercials featuring celebrity celebrities, ATM cards, print newspaper ads, radio commercials, and a public relations campaign. The data analysis reveals a strong correlation between below-and-line sales efforts, as well as non-branch banks; as a result, both assumptions were confirmed and approved.

6 | CONCLUSION

Branchless Banking is a new form of startup where financial institutions make their products available through the information technology and telecommunications industries. Branch banking emerged due to a combination of information technology and banking industries. Marketing strategies that can be used to grow the business of non-branch banks are inextricably linked to the growth of non-branch banks. Promotions significantly impact non-branch banking channels, rapidly increasing customer numbers and increasing the frequency of customers purchasing subsidiary banking services. Advancements significantly impact non-branch banking channels, rapidly growing customer numbers and increasing the frequency of purchasing subsidiary banking services. Low-income people can benefit from BTL strategies such as large posters placed in densely populated areas and small kiosks identified in remote areas. Similarly, ATL marketing strategies such as national television, print media, and collaborations with well-known television or film celebrities significantly impact non-branch banking channels. It was decided that BTL and ATL's marketing strategies have a good relationship with non-branch banks. BB discovered due to combining the information & communication technology and banking sectors.

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