

APPLICABILITY OF DRIVE-THRU BANKING FACILITY FOR THE NEW NORMAL SETUP: A CASE OF COVID-19 PANDAMIC IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Banks play an important role in economic growth and social welfare enhancement. However, the COVID-19 epidemic had an unanticipated significant impact on enterprises and organisations. Nonetheless, due to the crucial nature of their services, banks should continue to operate. As a result, to increase efficiency and profitability, the banking industry has embraced cutting-edge technology and access techniques. One of the most popular methods in the worldwide banking sector is drive-thru banking. However, in Sri Lanka, no particular emphasis has been paid to this type of facility, and there has been no adequate study on this topic addressing the applicability of drive-thru banking facility. A detailed literature analysis was conducted to review the concept and important components of drive-thru banking, as well as elements of the banking business globally and regarding to the Sri Lanka. Case studies and a survey were used to continue the study using the qualitative research approach. The study examined how each of the implementation factors, such as enablers, barriers, benefits, limitations, requirements, and customer perspectives on this facility, affected the applicability. Accordingly, certain factors such as high initial costs, supplier and maintenance constraints, carparking limitations, queue control, and accessibility need to be addressed. The study concludes that by considering these implementation variables, drive-thru banking can yield positive outcomes for both customers and bankers. The study recommends that banks in Sri Lanka explore the potential of drive-thru banking facilities and adopt them as a means of improving their services and meeting customer needs in a changing landscape.

Keywords: Barriers; Benefits; Drive-Thru Banking Facilities; Enablers; New Normal Situation; Sri Lankan Banking Sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

Banks play a key role in the process of economic growth and social welfare enhancement by mobilising and investing most society's savings. Thus, maintaining banking system efficiency remains a critical concern in raising economic growth in the bank-dominated Sri Lankan financial system (Kumara & Yasushi, 2010). However, unexpectedly, the

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COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on businesses and workplaces. Therefore, it is necessary to keep social distance as a configuration to prevent pandemic outbreak among individuals. Although banks continue to operate due to the critical nature of their services (KPMG in Sri Lanka, 2020). Hence, there have been fewer customer visits other than the essential services. Nevertheless, the same energy consumption is required to continue the bank operation. Therefore, bank cost was higher than the revenue (Robinson & Kengatharan, 2020). As a result, the banking sector has adopted innovative technology and access methods to increase efficiency and profitability required to address long-term goals (Kobika, 2019). The drive-thru banking facility is one of them, in the global banking industry, this is a very popular method, and it was a more applicable method to provide essential and other banking services to consumers safely during the COVID-19 pandemic situation (Sergeant, 2020). Since most of transactions at banks with a teller drive-thru take place outside the bank (Platt, 2016).

While some banks in Sri Lanka have already implemented drive-thru ATMs in populated areas (CBSL, 2021), the applicability of the drive-thru banking facility to the wider Sri Lankan banking sector in the new normal situation remains largely unexplored.

The identification of the applicability of drive-thru banking facilities in the Sri Lankan banking sector during the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial for increasing efficiency and productivity (KPMG in Sri Lanka, 2020). Despite the significance of this topic, only a limited number of studies have been conducted in this field, such as those by Baxter and Stafford (1985), Lay (2007), Gupta (2015), and Kaur, et al. (2020), along with some urban development reports. However, these studies primarily focused on identifying different aspects of drive-thru banking and exploring existing facilities, without specifically addressing the Sri Lankan context. Consequently, there is a clear research gap in the evaluation of drive-thru banking's applicability within the Sri Lankan banking sector, particularly in the context of the "new normal" situation. Thus, there is a need to conduct an in-depth exploration of the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka to fill these knowledge gaps. This research area holds great potential and is a critical requirement for determining innovative access methods, such as drive-thru banking, that can provide customers with more secure and convenient services during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (KPMG in Sri Lanka, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to initiate research in the Sri Lankan context to bridge this gap and ascertain the suitability of drive-thru banking, making it a worthy and timely researchable area in the banking industry.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to explore various aspects relevant to the research topic, including the banking industry's contribution to the economy and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The review also examined the implementation, enablers, and barriers of drive-thru banking facilities. By analysing existing literature, this review aims to provide a solid foundation for understanding the current state of the banking sector in Sri Lanka and the potential applicability of drive-thru banking. Additionally, the research findings will be discussed, further contributing to the existing knowledge gap in this area.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The banking sector plays a major role in the economy, and it is often called the backbone of the financial system. The necessity of stability in the banking sector in a financial system was highlighted by various scholars during the recent financial crisis (Tafri,

Rashidah, & Normah, 2011). Because domestic and foreign payments are exchanged through the banking system, a well-functioning banking system is required for the smooth operation of economic activity (Kumar & Bird, 2020).

2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BANKING SECTOR FOR THE SRI LANKAN ECONOMY

The banking sector plays a crucial role in the Sri Lankan financial system, serving as a key player by providing liquidity to the economy and adjusting asset risk characteristics. By mobilising and investing a significant portion of society's savings, the banking sector contributes to economic development and progress in social welfare (Kumara & Yasushi, 2010). Preserving banking system efficiency is of utmost importance in promoting economic growth within Sri Lanka's bank-dominated financial system. The Banking Act of 1988 empowered the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) to implement tighter regulations and controls over the banking industry following a series of reforms in both the banking sector and the economy (Thilakaweera, et al., 2016). As of the end of 2020, the banking industry accounted for 72.5% of the financial sector's assets. The sector's asset base witnessed significant growth, reaching Rs. 14.6 trillion by the end of December 2020, an increase of Rs. 2.1 trillion and representing a year-on-year growth rate of 17.1%, surpassing the 6.2% reported at the end of 2019 (CBSL, 2021).

The profitability of the banking sector is critical in overcoming economic disruptions (Panayiotis, et al., 2008). Profitable banks are more likely to attract capital from investors and generate additional capital through retained earnings, as highlighted by the European Central Bank (2016). Furthermore, Trujillo-Ponce (2013) emphasised that bank profitability is crucial for the long-term viability of the financial system, as profitable banks can inject capital into the economy through lending activities. In line with this, the policies introduced by the CBSL to promote the regional dispersion of bank branches aim to enhance broad-based and equitable access to finance. Policymakers in developing countries widely support the expansion of the banking sector, as it improves regional reach of banking services and facilitates increased access to funding, which are crucial for achieving strong and sustainable economic development (Thilakaweera, et al., 2016).

2.2 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SRI LANKAN ECONOMY AND BANKING INDUSTRY

The spread of COVID-19 represents an unprecedented global shock, with both the disease itself and mitigation actions, such as social distancing measures and partial or national lockdowns, significantly impacting the economy. According to the World Health Organisation (2021), a pandemic is defined as an epidemic that occurs worldwide or over a wide area, crossing international boundaries and affecting a large number of people. In the aftermath of the initial outbreak, the financial sector, particularly banks, were expected to play a crucial role in mitigating the shock by providing essential loans to corporations and households (Demirguc-Kunt, et al., 2020). As a result, banks have been disproportionately affected by the rapid global spread of COVID-19 compared to other sectors (Aldasoro, et al., 2020). Supply chain disruptions have also contributed to the economic impact of the pandemic. These disruptions arise from workers' inability to go to work, border closures, travel bans, and limitations on the movement of goods, people, and capital. As a consequence, production and trade have been significantly affected, particularly in import-dependent countries (Roshana, et al., 2020). The explosive growth

of the COVID-19 pandemic has become a major global economic issue that has garnered significant attention worldwide (Roshana, et al., 2020). Developing countries, in particular, face increased vulnerability due to lower economic immunity.

Unfortunately, the new dynamics that COVID-19 has ushered in will drive banks' cost bases up rather than down. The implications of COVID-19, including its impact on security, user patterns, and other aspects, have had a short-term effect on retail and commercial banks (KPMG in Sri Lanka, 2020). A probably higher level of arrears and collections, necessitating additional staff, increased on-shoring and multi-sourcing of suppliers to bolster operational resilience, lower staff productivity due to reduced demand for traditional accounts and products, higher insurance and telecoms costs with more staff working from home, and higher fraud costs are among the factors driving this increase (Aldasoro, et al., 2020).

The rapid global spread of COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the economy, affecting various sectors through the disease itself and mitigation actions like social distancing and lockdowns. In the aftermath, the banking sector was expected to play a vital role in absorbing the shock by providing crucial loans to the corporate sector and households (Demirguc-Kunt, et al., 2020). Consequently, banks have been significantly affected by the pandemic compared to other sectors (Aldasoro, et al., 2020).

The economic impact during COVID-19 has been further amplified by disruptions in the global supply chain due to border closures, travel bans, and restrictions on movement of goods, people, and capital. These disruptions have severely affected production and trade, particularly impacting countries that heavily rely on imports (Roshana, et al., 2020). Furthermore, the rapid growth of the COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as a major global economic issue, particularly for developing countries with lower economic resilience (Robinson & Kengatharan, 2020). In response to these challenges, central banks and governments worldwide have implemented various policy measures to ensure liquidity and support credit flow. However, the potential impact of these countercyclical lending practices on the stability of the banking system as well as the resilience of banks' enhanced capital levels since the global financial crisis, remain significant policy concerns (Demirguc-Kunt, et al., 2020).

In Sri Lanka, precautionary measures were strictly enforced, including social distancing interventions, suspension of public transportation and marketplaces, closure of schools and universities, island-wide curfew, and work from home policies (Hewage et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the new dynamics brought about by COVID-19 have increased banks' cost bases rather than reducing them. Factors such as higher arrears and collections, increased staffing needs, bolstering operational resilience through on-shoring and multi-sourcing, reduced staff productivity, higher insurance and telecoms costs, and increased fraud costs have contributed to this rise (Aldasoro, et al., 2020). Additionally, Robinson and Kengatharan (2020) highlight that certain activities cannot be effectively conducted remotely or from home, underscoring the importance of IT infrastructure, workforce considerations, fiscal status, and the nature of the business in maintaining smooth operations. Similarly, Omary et al. (2020) found that working from home has negatively impacted operational efficiency, reduced productivity due to social distancing measures, and curtailed production levels.

2.3 DRIVE-THRU BANKING FACILITY

The concept of drive-thru facilities, originally designed for fast-food restaurants and coffee shops, found its way into the banking sector. As customers faced the complexities of traditional banking, including long wait times and interactions with tellers for simple transactions, the need for faster and more convenient services became evident (NCR Globle, 2021). Drive-thru banking is allowing customers to drive up to the bank and carry out transactions without leaving their vehicles (Bartlett, 2017). As a result of banking complexity, customers had to take hours out of their day to prepare their financial information, travel to the bank, wait in long lines and speak with an individual teller. Customers who wanted assistance with simple transactions (such as cashing a cheque) were ushered into the same lines as those who needed assistance with more complicated transactions, such as mortgages or business loans (NCR Globle, 2021). Furthermore, it is stated that the old banking system was simply unsustainable as people demanded faster and more efficient services to fit their faster-paced lifestyles. As a result, there was a growing need for faster, more convenient banking services that decreased difficulties and saved time, and drive-thru service became available. A lane exists where a customer can do a transaction through a window. As well as voice Artificial Intelligent (AI) systems can even be used to replace humans in drive-thru banking. Its conversational AI innovation can understand orders and make corrections in the discussion if participants have language problems or heavy accents (Kaur, et al., 2020). Even there can be seen customers are flocking to use drive-thru banking facilities to accomplish a range of transactions. However, these operations entail more than just cashing a cheque or depositing money. Since then, cash withdrawals, cardless cash facilities, credit card settlements, utility bill payments, mobile cash facilities, loan payments, balance inquires, cashiers' cheques/money orders, master card/gift cards, ordering checks, changing orders, and many other services are provided (FCB, 2020).

A drive-thru facility has become a crucial component of modern banking, with most banks incorporating multiple lanes, including a dedicated lane for commercial and large transactions (Lay, 2007). Pneumatic tubes system, drive-thru windows for ATMs and counters are all examples of ways to employ drive-thru banking facilities. Although the processes remain the same, the usage method differs (Baxter & Stafford, 1985; WSP, 2020; NCR Globle, 2021). In terms of service times at drive-thru facilities, observations have shown a negative exponential distribution, with an average service time of 1.96 minutes based on 676 instances. Approximately 88% of service times were below 4 minutes. The process when a customer goes through while waiting in line to be served, the total amount of time spent in the drive-thru system was separated into waiting time and service time components (Baxter & Stafford, 1985). Furthermore, the authors stated the cost of inside service at a financial institution is calculated by adding the value of personal time to the cost of fuel required to start a vehicle engine. The time it takes to use an inside facility can be broken down into five parts: (a) time to park and exit the vehicle, (b) time to walk into the facility, (c) time to complete the transaction (including waiting in line), (d) time to return to the vehicle, and (e) time to get back into the vehicle and start the engine. By adding the various components of time that would be utilised to compute user charges connected with the inside service, a value is obtained. The total time required for using inside service at financial institutions was found to be 3.9 minutes on average during off-peak periods and 4.7 minutes during peak periods. The cost of time to the

customer was estimated at USD 0.325 during off-peak periods and USD 0.39 during peak periods, assuming a conservative valuation of a person's time at USD 5.00 per hour.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research process is known as the comprehensive plan of research development, which illustrates a defined series of stages in a logical order that will guide the research to efficiently accomplish the intended goals (Babin, et al., 2012). Furthermore, it could be identified as a systematic process that typically consists of a background study, literature review, data collection, data analysis, conclusion, and validation of research findings (Bradbury, 2015). A literature review and a theoretical model were conducted following a background study to determine the aim, objectives, and research problem. Further, study was conducted using a qualitative approach.

Case studies were used as the research strategy, and semi-structured interviews were used as data collection procedures in each case. The banks, which were selected based on the availability of drive-thru ATMs, established the study's boundary, as the applicability of drive-thru banking facility was assessed using drive-thru ATMs. According to the selection criteria, Cases A and B are banks with drive-thru ATM facilities (context 1), and Cases C and D are banks without drive-thru ATM facilities (context 2). To collect data, respondents were selected from both the management and supervisory levels. Managerial level respondents were selected based on their involvement in the bank's operations. As a result, the applicability of drive-thru banking facility identification was implemented in two independent cases for this study due to drive-thru ATMs' availability and unavailability. Content analysis was determined to be the best data analysis technique. In the data analysis process, the NVivo software was employed to facilitate computer-aided content analysis.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC TO THE BANKING SERVICES AND OPERATION

The case study discusses the impact of the pandemic on banking services and operations, highlighting various modifications that were necessary. These changes included adopting the work-from-home concept, employing a restricted number of essential personnel, and adjusting banking rules to meet evolving customer needs. However, these adjustments led to a gradual decline in bank income, prompting efforts to lower overall maintenance costs. Technical involvement played a critical role in navigating the challenges, with banks relying heavily on technology to maintain smooth operations and ensure data security. Queue control became crucial, necessitating strategies to enforce social distancing. Additionally, space allocation was required for sanitisation, raising pandemic awareness, and addressing supply chain disruptions. While these modifications incurred additional costs, prioritising safety and delivering essential banking services remained paramount during the pandemic.

The similarities between two cases of operating bank procedures during the pandemic situation. Despite differences in the cases and the types of respondents, the majority of respondents agreed that the bank's operational costs should be reduced due to energy consumption and maintenance. However, bank income was reduced due to restrictions on

services and central bank policies. Similarly, the branch operations might have different operating costs due to lower energy consumption. The pandemic has caused additional operating costs due to increased sanitation, pest control, and provision of hygiene facilities. Supply chains have also been disrupted, affecting core and non-core business activities because of island wide lockdown and boarder closure. In context 01, drive-thru ATMs have proved to be popular and beneficial in reducing customer queues and wait times, while in context 02, there were queues outside the bank that put people at risk of exposure to the pandemic.

4.1.1 Drive-Thru Banking Facility's Appropriateness with Current Bank Practices

The drive-thru banking facility has emerged as an appropriate addition to current bank practices, addressing the need for faster and more convenient transactions. With the aim of providing a secure environment for financial activities, drive-thru banking has gained popularity and is being integrated into upcoming development projects. In today's fast-paced lifestyle, time-saving has become crucial, and drive-thru banking caters to this demand by offering quicker transactions.

The traditional banking system was unsustainable in meeting the growing demand for faster, more convenient banking services that reduced difficulties and saved time. Drive-thru banking can add value to the bank and the city by moving with people's faster lifestyles, providing an efficient banking service, and reducing energy consumption. However, the adoption of drive-thru banking may require more time for adaptation due to various factors. These include initial costs, limited space availability, data protection concerns, and the need for staff training and maintenance. Despite these challenges, drive-thru banking is seen as a viable solution to reduce energy consumption, improve customer experiences, and align with the evolving banking landscape in the new normal situation.

4.2 ENABLERS AND BARRIERS OF IMPLEMENTING THE DRIVE-THRU BANKING FACILITY IN THE SRI LANKAN BANKING SECTOR

4.2.1 Barriers of Implementing Drive-Thru Banking Facility

The identified barriers include high initial costs, limited space availability, the need for moderately expensive technology, data protection challenges, staff training, and system maintenance. Additionally, obtaining approval from relevant authorities can be a lengthy and challenging process. The lack of sufficient lanes to accommodate drive-thru traffic and design issues can also be barriers. Cities and towns must consider the impact on traffic flow, noise pollution, and potential traffic snarls. These barriers can be categorised into two groups: internal barriers related to the internal banking environment, and external barriers associated with the external environment and conditions. The barriers to implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka are shown in Figure 1.

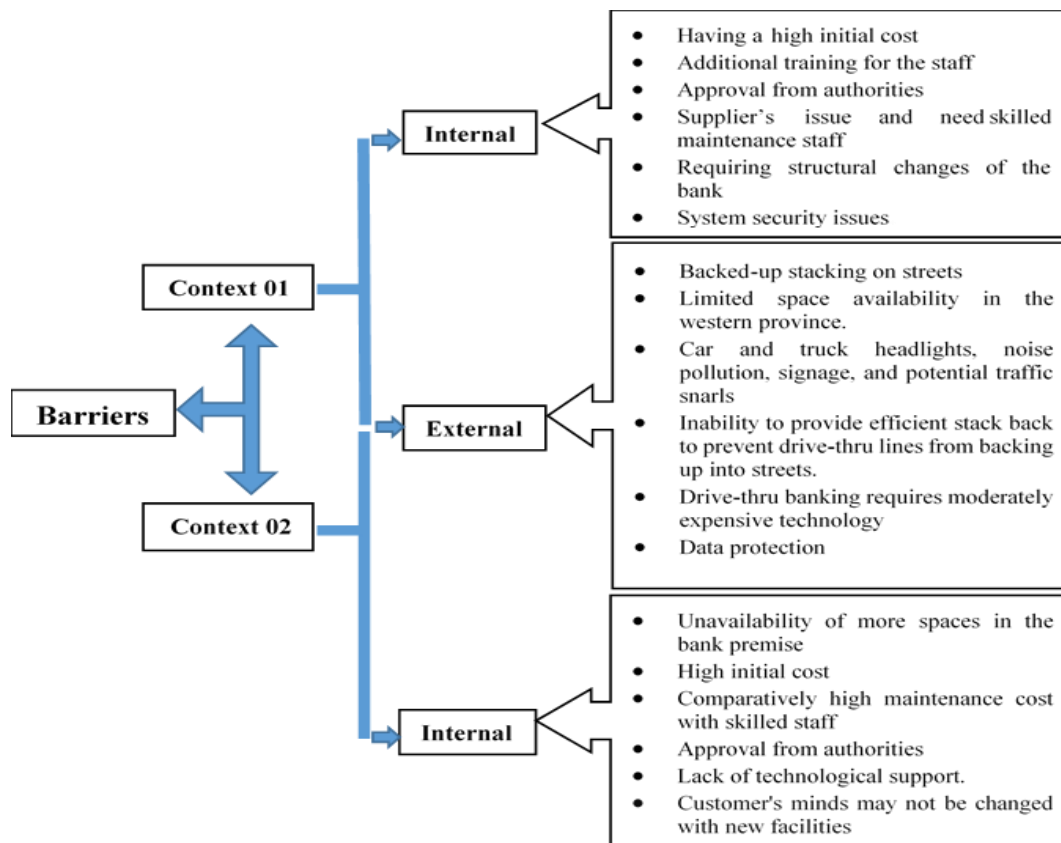


Figure 1: The barriers to implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka

The barriers to implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka under contexts 1 and 2 were determined separately, as shown in Figure 1. Then, because the external barriers to implementing drive-thru banking facilities were similar in both contexts, the external barriers were identified together.

4.2.2 Enablers of Implementing Drive-Thru Banking Facility

It is mentioned that most banks have similar layouts and forms, and implementing a drive-thru facility would provide more secure procedures during a pandemic situation and reduce customer gathering inside the bank. Furthermore, implementing a drive-thru facility would help address parking space challenges, decrease energy consumption, and bring added value to ongoing development projects in the western province. Enablers were categorised as internal and external, with internal enablers originating from the internal banking environment, and external enablers stemming from external conditions and factors. The enablers for implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka are shown in Figure 2

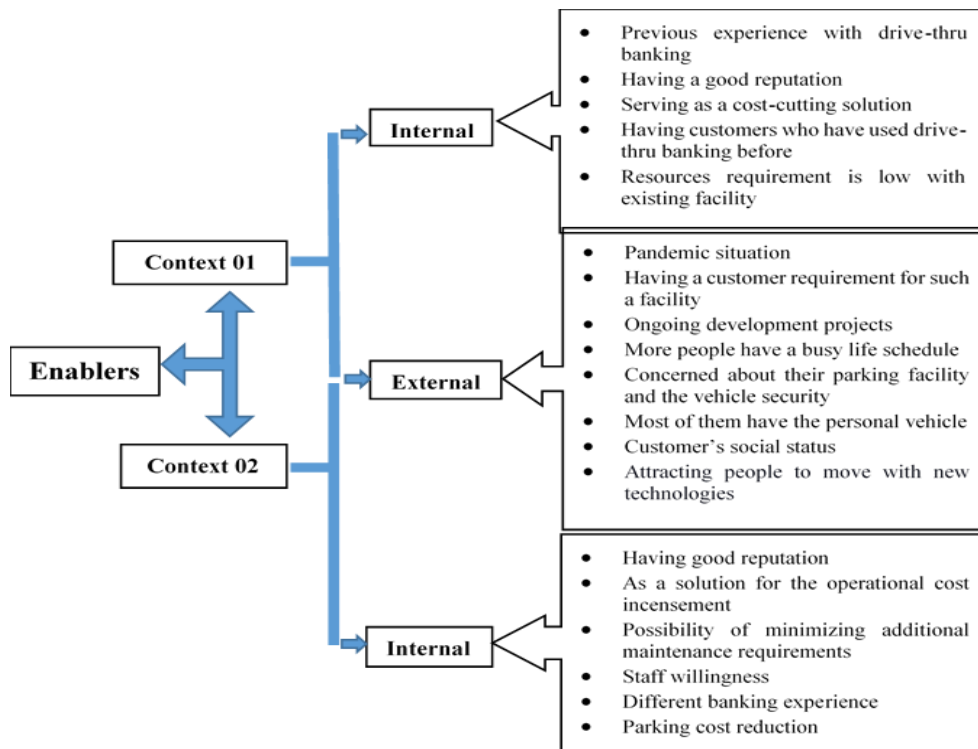


Figure 2: The enablers to implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka

The enablers for implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka under contexts 01 and 02 were determined separately, as shown in Figure 2. In the subsequent analysis, the external enablers for implementing drive-thru banking facilities were identified collectively for both contexts, as they exhibited similarities across the two contexts.

4.2.3 Benefits of having the Drive-Thru Banking Facility

Drive-thru banking facilities offer several advantages, as highlighted by professional respondents. These include improved accessibility for all customers, reduced queues and wait times, enhanced security and privacy, decreased human interaction, high customer attraction, reduced traffic congestion, fast and efficient service delivery, cost savings for banks, minimised breakdowns and system errors, and the potential for marketing and branding. These benefits make drive-thru banking a convenient, time-saving, and customer-centric solution, while also providing operational efficiencies for financial institutions. The total time consumed for a transaction is estimated to be between 3.9 and 4.7 minutes, with a cost ranging from USD 0.3 to 0.4. Additionally, respondents emphasised the convenience, accessibility, and reliability offered by these facilities. Figure 3 provides a summary of these benefits.

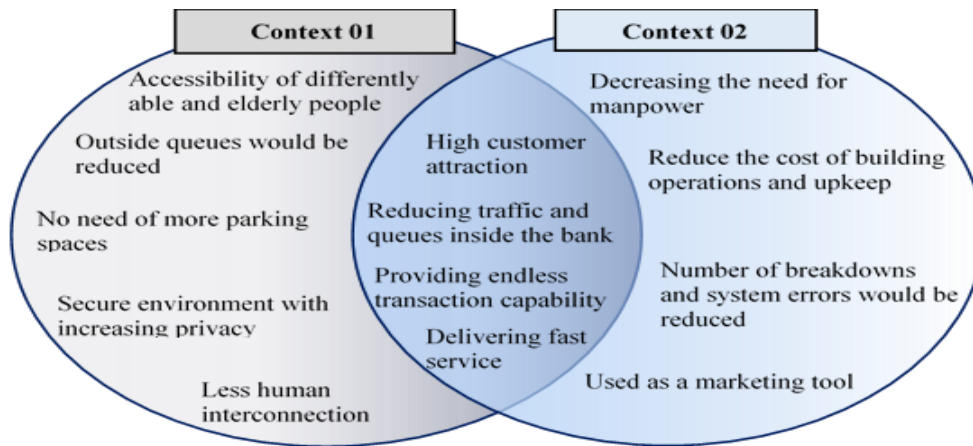


Figure 3: The benefits of implementing the drive-thru banking facility in Sri Lanka

4.3 OVERALL ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICABILITY OF DRIVE-THRU BANKING FACILITY FOR THE SRI LANKAN BANKING SECTOR

The applicability of a drive-thru banking facility was assessed based on the identified criteria of time savings, convenience, cost savings, accessibility, and reliability. The views of 35 customers' responses in the Sri Lankan banking industry were checked against 16 statements about drive-thru banking facilities identified in the literature and applied to the Sri Lankan banking system. The level of concurrence was measured using a five-point Likert scale: 1-"Strongly disagree," 2-"Disagree," 3-"Neutral," 4-"Agree," 5-"Strongly agree." Furthermore, descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data.

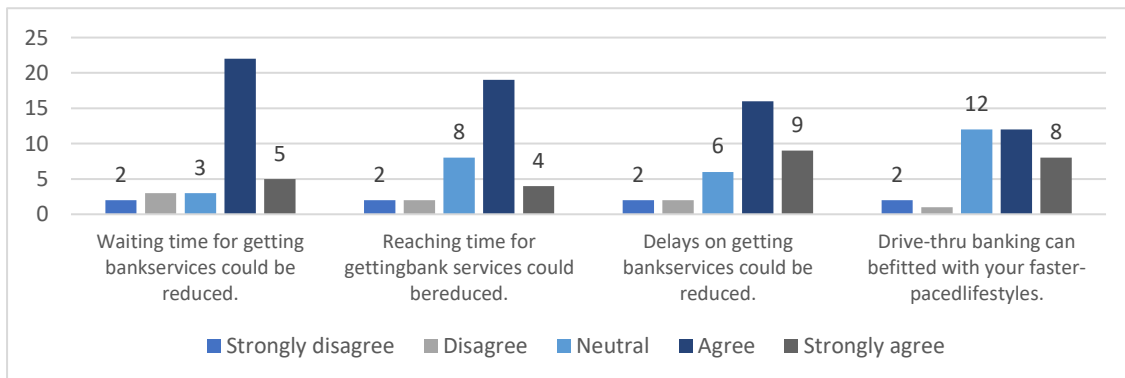


Figure 4: Time saving

When examining the timesaving benefits of a drive-thru banking facility, multiple time-related factors were taken into account, such as waiting time, reaching time, delays, and alignment with a faster-paced lifestyle. Figure 4 depicts the favourable reception of a drive-thru banking facility based on its ability to save time. Furthermore, there seems to be an increase in the neutrality of response under match with the faster-paced lifestyle, reflecting the same equal value as the agreed responses.

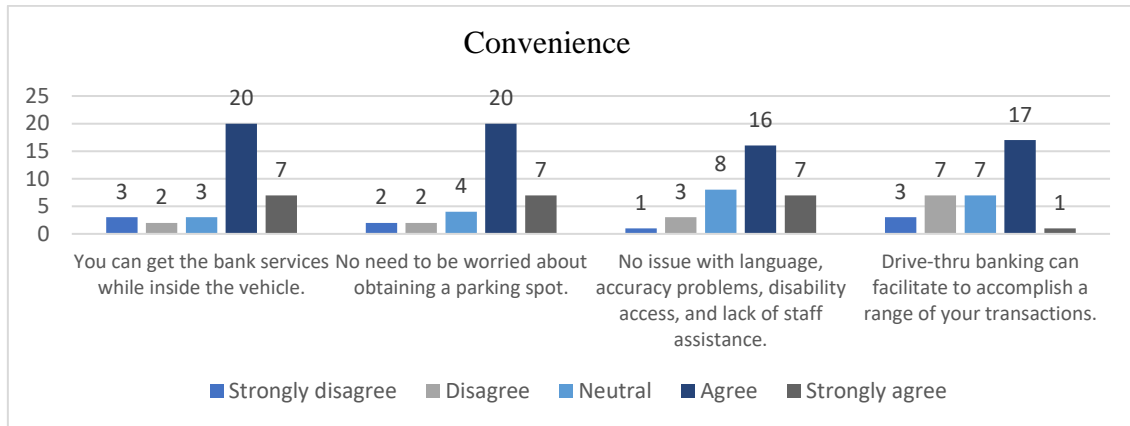


Figure 5: Convenience

The convenience of a drive-thru banking facility was evaluated based on various factors that enhance the customer experience. These factors include the ability to access services while remaining inside the vehicle, eliminating the need to search for parking, alleviating concerns about language barriers, ensuring accuracy of transactions, receiving staff assistance, and providing ease of access for individuals with disabilities. According to figure 5, the neutral response appears to increase under the final factor of variety of transactions. However, it was not having a significant impact on making a decision on that factor.

Cost Benefits

The cost benefit of a drive-thru banking facility was assessed based on various factors, including waiting time and parking expenses, additional costs for bank services, energy consumption, and document preparation costs. Figure 6 displays the responses, indicating that the drive-thru banking facility offers substantial cost benefits, as the majority of responses were positive. However, when compared to other cost factors, additional costs and document preparation elicited a higher number of neutral responses.

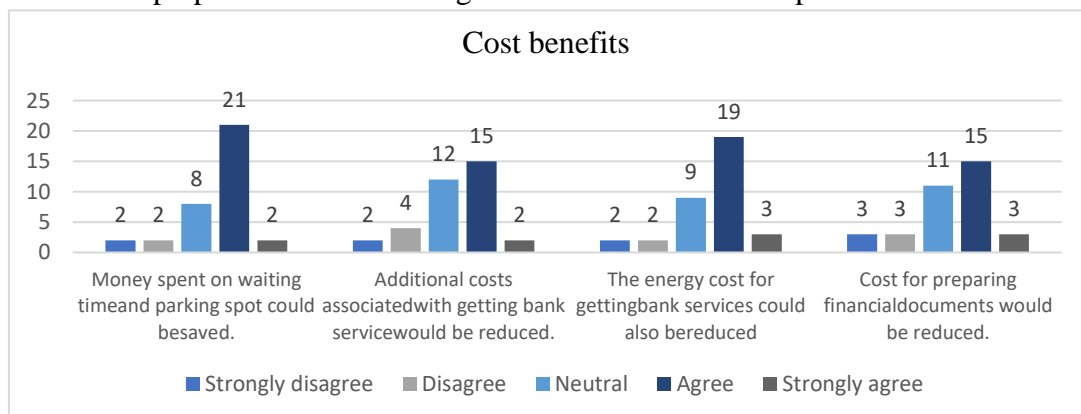


Figure 6: Cost benefits

Accessibility and Reliability

Drive-thru banking's accessibility and reliability were assessed using factors such as difficulty in digital banking, reliability in comparison to digital banking, having a secure environment, and accessibility difficulty. Figure 7 illustrates responses for drive-thru banking facilities under the accessibility and reliability criterion, and it was shown to have a similar pattern for all four factors.

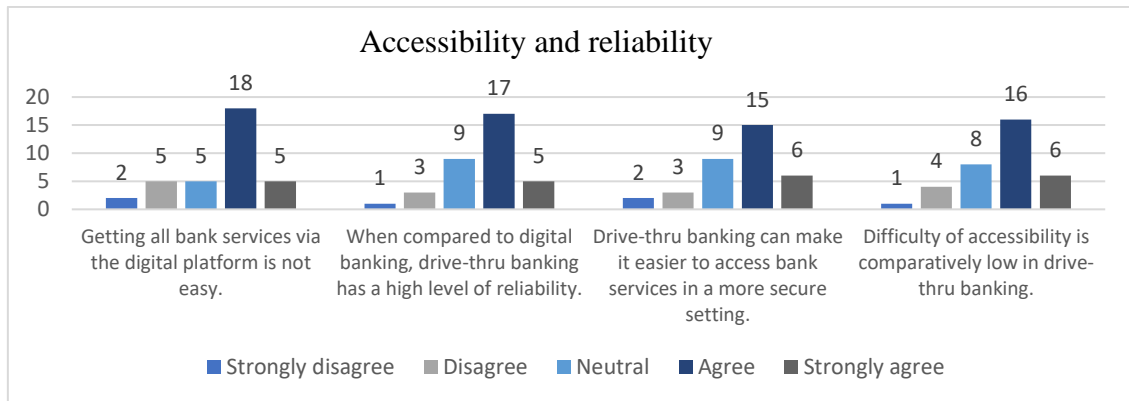


Figure 7: Accessibility and reliability

5. DISCUSSION

The findings highlighted the applicability of drive-thru banking to the Sri Lankan context as evidenced by case studies, as well as evaluated the applicability of drive-thru banking to the Sri Lankan context using the identified criteria via a questionnaire survey. The literature review and objectives were re-examined in order to arrive at a critically evaluated final outcome. As a first step, evaluate the influence of COVID-19 on the bank operation process in Sri Lanka and critically assess how it affected general banking procedures, which has been further elaborated as maintenance and the additional cost arising from supply chain disruption, restrictions on working procedures, reduction of the bank's income, and rearrangement of the banking process. As a result, digital banking became widely used, but it had some issues from the perspective of both customers and employees, including reliability, connectivity, security, and access difficulties, which were critically assessed to determine the need for drive-thru banking in the Sri Lankan banking context. With that concern, it moved on to determine the applicability of drive-thru banking by identifying its benefits, enablers, barriers, limitations, requirements, and customer feedback.

When it came to requirements, the major requirements for drive-thru banking implementation were determined to be space, investment, legal approval, and technology, as well as other requirements such as staking lanes, noise, and access, which were determined through the literature. Furthermore, it has some limitations in that it would not be used for certain banking services that require a lengthy process to verify the information. Furthermore, customers' positive feedback has been demonstrated through criteria including time savings, convenience, cost savings, accessibility, and reliability on the drive-thru banking facility. Moreover, key finding showed the applicability of drive-thru banking facilities with the impact of a pandemic situation. Digital banking and drive-thru banking were the options most of the banks followed globally in order to face the pandemic situation. With that, here mainly focused on the drive-thru banking facility, which was evaluated by determining the requirements, barriers, enablers, limitations, benefits, and customer opinions as briefly described with the key findings. Finally, it can be concluded that the use of a drive-thru banking facility should place a greater emphasis on properly managing the banking system by providing a better banking experience in order to achieve customer satisfaction through a secure banking process in the new normal situation.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic is regarded as a major disaster that is wreaking havoc on people all over the world. Similarly, the business community in Sri Lanka was impacted by the pandemic as a result of the lockdown and supply chain disruption. Furthermore, the banking sector was hit harder than other sectors as a result of the economy's decline and the inability to recover loans. However, there was a digital banking enhancement that had some limitations due to a lack of knowledge and resources. With that in mind, determining the applicability of a drive-thru banking facility would be preferable to meet this challenge while ensuring a secure environment for both customers and employees. As a result, the research aim of determining the applicability of drive-thru banking facility by understanding community needs and the banking system in Sri Lanka was achieved by completing four main objectives.

The banking sector is critical to economic development and is a key player in the Sri Lankan financial system because it provides liquidity to the economy as a whole while also adjusting asset risk characteristics. Similarly, it contributes to economic development and social welfare progress by mobilising and spending the vast majority of society's savings. Furthermore, banks' operations have grown to include a variety of loan grant and deposit schemes, leasing, investments, foreign exchange operations, and international trade facilitation, all of which contribute to the country's economic growth. The COVID-19 pandemic's rapid spread is a major global economic issue that has drawn widespread attention. The vulnerability of the pandemic in developing countries is increased due to lower economic immunity. To help with this, central banks and governments around the world have implemented a variety of policies to increase liquidity and support the flow of credit. In addition, the cost of sanitisation, pest control, PPEs, and the provision of self-hygiene facilities, as well as the rearrangement of workplaces following health requirements, increased the cost of maintenance and operating costs in the Sri Lankan banking system. Similarly, the island-wide lockdown and border closure disrupted supply chains, affecting the bank's ability to survive operations with supporting materials for the core and non-core business activities.

When comparing the two contexts, drive-thru ATMs provide a better opportunity to control the queue because customer gathering inside the bank is reduced, and it also helps to reduce energy consumption, which aids in the reduction of pandemic spread and operational costs. Similarly, drive-thru banking can address the parking issue because most customers are concerned about their parking facility and the security of their vehicle, even if they used a third-party vehicle, which would charge for the time spent waiting. Furthermore, it would add more value to the ongoing development project in the western province as well. When it comes to barriers, drive-thru banking necessitates a technology that is moderately expensive; data protection is another challenge for drive-thru banking adoption; and bank employees must be trained in all drive-thru practices because it is a new concept that customers will take time to adopt. Furthermore, due to the limited space availability in the western province, the initial cost of achieving the system and space requirements for the facility was high. In the country's new normal situation, drive-thru banking is a viable option for lowering energy costs as well. When comparing the two contexts, banks that do not have the drive-thru ATMs have reservations about their applicability to current banking practices when considering their various products. However, a questionnaire survey revealed that drive-thru banking has a positive impact

on customer perspective when considering time savings, convenience, cost savings, accessibility, and reliability.

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