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OVER HALF A MILLION HONG KONG PEOPLE VISITED AN INTERNET BANKING SITE IN JANUARY 2003

HSBC retains its lead as premier online banking site Women are catching up

HONG KONG, 27 February 2003 - According to the latest research from Nielsen//NetRatings, the leading global Internet research and analysis company, 522,700 people visited an online banking site from their home computer in Hong Kong in January 2003. This represents almost one quarter of Hong Kong's online population.

The research shows that while the overall growth of the at-home Internet audience in Hong Kong has slowed down, the online banking sector continues to gain in popularity. Comparing January 2003 with the same time two years ago, the Hong Kong Internet audience has grown by 38%, with the online banking audience growing by 78%. The current online banking audience of over half a million represents a year-on-year growth of 42%, compared to the Internet audience growth of only 15%. A quarter of Internet users in January 2003 visited a banking site, compared with 19% in January 2002, and 18% in January 2001.

Hong Kong At-home Internet Users and Online Banking Audience

	Jan 2003
Active Internet Users	2,194,600
Year-on-year growth	15%
Past 2-year growth	38%
Online Banking Audience	522,700
Reach Among Active Internet Users	24%
Year-on-year growth	42%
Past 2-year growth	78%

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings

HSBC continues to lead the online banking category in both unique audience and total pages viewed, a position it has held now for the past three years. Its January 2003 unique audience of more than 318,800 people represents a significant growth of 42% from its audience in January 2002, and a growth of nearly 70% compared with two years ago.

Peter Steyn, Nielsen//NetRatings Director, Hong Kong, believes the growth of HSBC has been significant for the category as a whole: "HSBC's online audience has been the major driver of the online banking audience in Hong Kong. It leads the category by a significant margin".

Comparing January 2003 with a year ago, Hang Seng Bank also continues its strong second ranking, with Bank of China replacing Bank of East Asia for ranking number three. Rounding off the top five is Bank of East Asia at number four and Standard Chartered at number five, replacing CitiBank which moved to number six. Not far behind are Dah Sing Bank, Dao Heng Bank, and Wing Lung Bank. "While the majority of the banks have increased their audiences over the past 12 months, the relative higher growth of both Bank of China and Standard Chartered ensured them a move up the ladder" said Steyn.

Overall, the research suggests that Hong Kong people are becoming more confident with issues such as online security, which is illustrated by the number of users who are accessing banks' secured sites, where they offer confidential information and transact online. The top ranking banking sites, HSBC and Hang Seng, both have more than three quarters of their visitors going into their secure sites. This high percentage of transactional banking audience contrasts with a lower percentage of online "windowshoppers" going into the secure areas of shopping sites which indicates the potential for retailers to learn from and build on the experience of the online banks.

Top Ranking Online Banks Among Hong Kong At-home Internet Users (2001-2003)

	January 2003	January 2002	January 2001
HSBC	1	1	1
Hang Seng Bank	2	2	2
Bank of China	3	4	7
Bank of East Asia	4	3	3
Standard Chartered	5	6	4

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings

The increasing popularity of online banking is also reflected in the average time spent per month per visitor – which is 30 minutes among the top ranking banks. HSBC keeps visitors higher at almost 38 minutes, followed by Bank of China at 35.5 minutes, and Standard Chartered at almost 33 minutes.

Women are increasingly using online banking services, representing 39% of the audience, an increase from 35% a year ago. According to Steyn, “This growth in the number of women using online banking services indicates that the added control and convenience of managing finances from home is increasingly appealing to women. Women are still under-represented in the online banking audience compared with the overall gender composition in Hong Kong, where 45% of the Internet audience is female”.

In terms of the income level of people banking online, the highest proportion of the audience (18.5%) live in households with an annual household income of more than HK\$600,000. A third of the online banking audience live in a HK\$400,000+ household.

Steyn comments: “This latest research confirms that online banking is now an everyday part of life for many Internet users in Hong Kong. Internet users are benefiting from both the ease of use, and increased convenience by turning to the web to manage their finances.”

“Over the past two years we have generally seen a higher level of audience engagement with the banking audience spending more time on the sites, viewing more pages, and more people accessing the secured parts of the sites”.

About Nielsen//NetRatings

Nielsen//NetRatings is the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis and is the industry’s premier source for online advertising intelligence with its NetView, AdRelevance, @Plan and WebRF services. Covering 70 percent of the world’s Internet usage, the Nielsen//NetRatings services offer syndicated Internet and digital media research reports and custom-tailored data to help companies gain valuable insight into their business. For more information, please visit www.nielsen-netratings.com.

About NetRatings, Inc.

NetRatings, Inc. (Nasdaq: NTRT) is the provider of the Nielsen//NetRatings services, which set the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis. Nielsen//NetRatings enables its customers to make informed business decisions regarding their Internet strategies with its technology driven products and services, which include the Nielsen//NetRatings NetView Internet audience measurement service, AdRelevance online advertising intelligence, @Plan Web user lifestyle, demographic and product brand preferences data, WebRF, an Internet reach and frequency planning tool, and custom data, research and analysis. For more information, please visit www.nielsen-netratings.com.