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## Messaging Has Surfers Glued To Screen

Instant Messaging has become one of the Internet's "killer apps", according to the latest research from Nielsen//NetRatings. The two largest IM applications attract enough visitors to put them in the Top 20 websites, while Yahoo! Messenger and MSN Messenger applications both kept their users for over 3 hours in February .

### *Top Six European Messenger/Chat Applications, Feb 04*

	Unique Audience	Active Reach	Time Per Person
MSN Messenger Service	26,935,000	22.8%	3hr 9min
AOL Instant Messenger (Prop)*	9,817,000	8.3%	1hr 28min
Yahoo! Messenger	3,611,000	3.1%	3hr 8min
ICQ	2,488,000	2.1%	2hr 48min
ICQ Lite	2,208,000	1.9%	2hr 15min
AOL Instant Messenger	1,426,000	1.2%	1hr 5min
IRC	1,234,000	1.0%	5hr 35min

(Includes home+work data for UK, FR,IT,DE,SE and home only data for ES, CH & NL)

\* AOL IM via proprietary services only available in UK, DE and FR

Confirming of how vital Instant Messaging is becoming for this generation of web users, MSN Messenger has overtaken Hotmail to become the portal's most popular channel. While e-mail is still the main form of online communication, the growth of IM has now put it on a level with several popular free webmail services. In addition, the time users are spending on Instant Messenger services is greater than the time they spend on webmail sites.



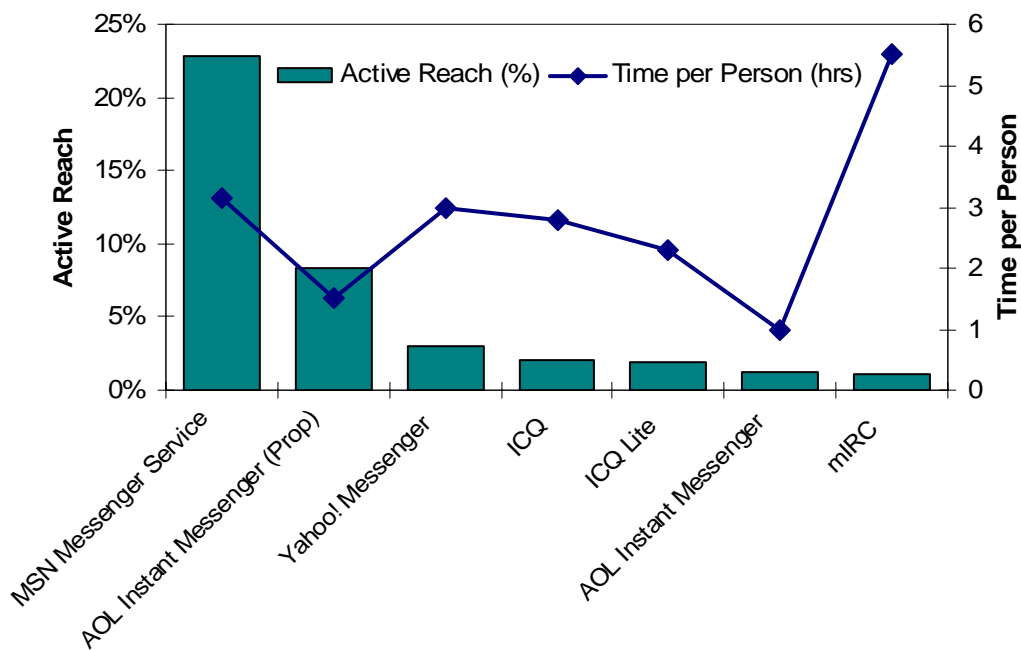
### Top Six European Mail Channels, Feb 04

	Unique Audience	Active Reach	Time Per Person
MSN Hotmail	24,014,160	20.34%	0:41:06
AOL Email	10,042,650	8.51%	1:35:28
Yahoo! Mail	8,898,463	7.54%	0:42:41
Web.de FreeMail	7,069,071	5.99%	1:11:55
Wanadoo Mail	3,413,150	2.89%	0:26:46
Tiscali Mail	2,782,275	2.36%	0:17:10

(Including applications and AOL Proprietary: home+work data for UK, FR,IT,DE,SE and home only data for ES, CH & NL)

In America this trend is even more pronounced, with AOL IM enticing their users to spend almost four and a half hours a month sending and reading messages.

The audience figures for IM applications compare favourably to the audience for online chat, which Instant Messaging resembles in many ways and may come to replace. The most popular downloadable chat program is mIRC, which has less users in Europe than any of the major IM services. However, mIRC users spend even longer on the programme than IM users – on average 5.5 hours per month.



“Instant Messaging has definite advantages over online chat and over some uses of email,” commented Analyst Gabrielle Prior. “IM offers more privacy than chat and it’s easier to keep track of who you’re talking to. At the same time, sending Instant Messages can be quicker and more efficient than sending short e-mails. Their huge popularity and high stickiness gives them massive potential for advertising or other promotional activity.”



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**About Nielsen//NetRatings**

Nielsen//NetRatings is the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis, providing companies with valuable insight into their businesses. Nielsen//NetRatings offers the industry's premier source of actionable Internet data and digital media research on Website usage, online advertising, consumer attitudes and competitive analysis. For more information, please visit [www.nielsen-netratings.com](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com)

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