

# Asia Com Bank (ACB)

# Thanks to its prudence

## Well-managed credit cost

Positive economy growth (2.62% in 3Q20 despite of the COVID-19 second wave), SBV's stimulus and regulatory relaxation are favorable for overall banking sector to contain bad debts. Particularly, ACB with its low risk appetite should suffer the credit cost as low as only around 0.6% in 2020 – 2021.

## **Promising non-credit services**

A new bancassurance exclusive distribution agreement, which is scheduled for finalization in 4Q20, may not only bring a great upfront fee (~VND3.5tn) but also a kick-off for non-credit services. We believe ACB is able to leverage its strong retail customer base to promote non-interest income further. The weight of NFI to TOI is forecast to accelerate from 14% in 2019 to 23% in the next five years.

## **Reward to the solid bank**

We forecast 2020 NP at VND6.3tn, an increase of 4% yoy and outpacing the company's guidance by 2%. Although provision expense may be still heavy in 2021, we expect NP to grow by 18% yoy to VND7.4tn thanks to stronger revenue and better OPEX management. We reiterate BUY on the bank's high-quality assets and high earning growth at CAGR of 16% in 2020-2024.

	2017A	2018A	2019A	2020F	2021F
Total operating income (VND bn)	11,439	14,033	16,097	17,378	20,101
(chg, %)	51.3	22.7	14.7	8.0	15.7
PPE (VND bn)	5,222	7,321	7,790	9,503	10,992
NP of controlling interest (VND bn)	2,118	5,137	6,010	6,250	7,370
NIM (%)	3.48	3.57	3.57	3.38	3.42
Credit cost ratio (%)	0.89	0.43	0.11	0.60	0.57
Credit growth (%)	19.3	16.0	16.6	10.3	12.0
Cost-income ratio (%)	54.4	47.8	51.6	45.3	45.3
NPL ratio (%)	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.9	1.0
NPL coverage ratio (%)	132.7	151.9	175.0	140.2	139.6
CAR ratio (%)	8.0	10.1	10.9	11.7	12.1
BPS (VND, adj.)	7,606	9,972	12,893	15,737	18,098
EPS (VND, adj.)	981	2,390	2,744	2,845	3,361
(chg, %)	62.2	143.6	14.8	3.7	18.1
PB (x)	3.1	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.3
PE (x)	23.6	9.7	8.5	8.2	6.9
ROA (%)	0.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.6
ROE (%)	14.1	27.7	24.6	20.2	20.2
Dividend yield (%)	1.4	-	-	-	4.3

Note: Net profit, EPS and ROE attributed to controlling interest

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## Company

In-depth

## Banking

12 Oct 2020

12M rating	BUY (Reiterate)				
12M TP	25,800	from 22,200			
Up/Downside	+15.6% (incl 4.3%	cash dividend)			
Stock data					

VNIndex (Oct 08, pt)	919
Stock price (Oct 08, VND)	23,200
Market cap (USD mn)	2,162
Shares outstanding (mn)	2,162
52-Week high/low (VND)	24,000/13,693
6M avg. daily turnover (USD mn)	4.87
Free float / Foreign ownership (%)	77.2/39.
Major shareholders (%)	
Dragon capital	14.1
ALP Asia Finance	10.1
Chairman & affiliates	6.1

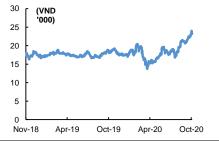
#### EPS revision (KIS estimates, VND)

	Previous	Revised	(%)
2020F	2,914	2,932	0.6
2021F	3,192	3,532	10.7

#### Performance

	1M	6M	12M
Absolute (%)	12.6	49.3	29.4
Relative to VNIndex (%p)	9.2	25.2	34.8

#### Stock price



Source: Bloomberg

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## What is the report about?

- COVID-19-induced credit cost is manageable thanks to ACB's prudent credit practice.
- Bright fee income outlook following an exclusive bancassurance agreement.
- BUY on the bank's solid results and rerating potential after moving to HSX.

## I. Thanks to its prudence

Reiterate BUY with TP VND25,800 We reiterate BUY on ACB with TP at VND25,800 after rolling forward to 2021 and adjust assumptions related to lending, securities investment, banca and non-interest incomes. The fair value is estimated as an average of residual income and P/B multiple valuation as the following:

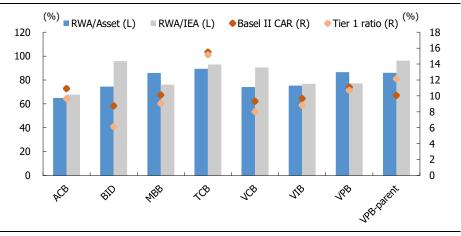
Table 1. Fair value calculation				(VND	bn, VND, %)
1. Residual approach	2020F	2021F	2022F	2023F	2024F
Net attributable profit	6,250	7,370	8,640	9,929	11,132
Equity	34,016	39,120	45,476	53,099	61,904
ROE	20%	20%	20%	20%	19%
Cost of equity		15%	15%	15%	15%
Residual income		2,268	2,772	3,107	3,167
Discount factor		1.00	0.87	0.76	0.66
PV of FCF 2021-2024		9,110			
Persistence factor		0.62			
Terminal value		3,929			
Total value		13,039			
Outstanding shares		2,162			
Price (A)		24,130			
2. P/B multiple approach					
BVPS (2021F)		18,098			
Fair PB (x)		1.52			
Price (B)		27,509			
Fair value		25,802			

- **Good assets quality** First, ACB's prudent credit practice produces a solid balance sheet which helps ACB be well-braced for the COVID-19 storm. It has high-quality assets with NPL ratio at the industry bottom of 0.54%, vs. 1.4% of KIS banking universe (adjusted for VAMC bonds & other non-performing assets) in 2019. Loans account for 70% of assets, of which the majority (>90%) are secured by high-quality collaterals. Its accumulated 10-year (2010-2019) net credit cost as low as 0.3% vs. 0.8-1.3% of its peers in our universe is an evidence for ACB's prudence.
- To promote non-interest<br/>incomerSecond, ACB has a strong retail banking brand and a resilient client base, giving<br/>the bank an upper hand in negotiation for an exclusive distribution<br/>bancassurance agreement. Besides, such a client base will be able to promote<br/>non-interest income further in the coming years via cross-selling and enhancing<br/>customer experience.

And last, ACB has held a big government bond holding (G-bond), equaling to 14-16% of total assets, for many years. 77% of these bonds are not marked to the market since being classified as HTM. The depressed fixed-income yields to historical lows in 2020 are a great chance for the revaluation the bank's large G-bond holding. In 1H20, ACB realized a gain of VND753bn and cut the holding by 1.7 % points to 13.7% of its total assets. As ACB's remaining G-bond size still outsizes its peers, one-off gains from asset revaluation is still tremendous.

# II. Well-managed credit cost

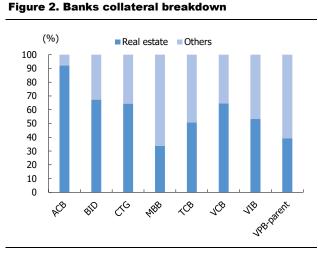
**A low risk appetite** ACB employs prudent credit policies with the target of balancing the bank's growth trajectory and risk. The bank's low risk appetite has been seen by its lowest risk weighted indicators as compared to its peers in KIS banking universe. Particularly, the risk weighted assets (RWA) to total assets and RWA to IEAs in 2019 were 65% and 68% respectively while those of the peers ranged from 74% to 96%.



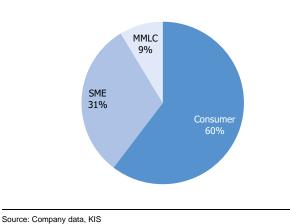
## Figure 1. Average risk weight indicators of banks in 2019

Source: Company data, KIS

Diversified loan book with a strong retail banking arm ACB has low concentration risk thanks to its diversified lending portfolio with ~60% to consumers and 30% to SME. In addition, a high proportion (more than 90%) is secured by liquid collaterals (~90% is real estate, especially townhouses), helping ACB ensure low bad debt ratios and a good recovery ability even in tough times.



#### Figure 3. ACB's loan structure

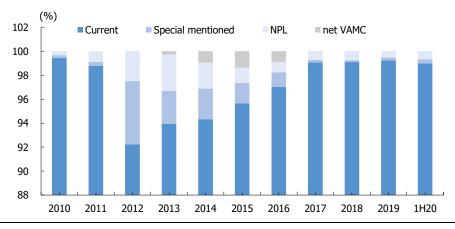


Source: Company data, KIS

## Thick loss buffer

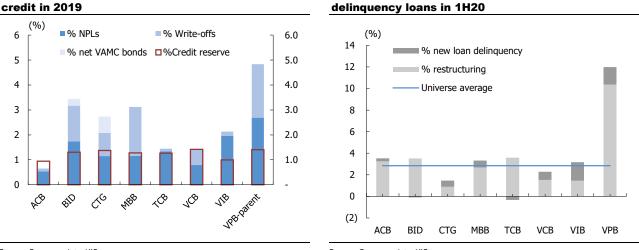
ACB achieved a CAGR credit growth of 18%, a 3%p above industry average, in 2015-2019 and also cleared all legacy assets out of the bank's loans book. NPLs and other non-performing assets narrowed to less than 1% as at 2019end, the lowest ratios in the market. Therefore, although ACB's credit reserve was equivalent to 0.9% of total credit, relatively small as compared to 1-1.4% of peers in KIS banking universe, NPL coverage ratio was 175% in 2019, the second highest in the industry right after VCB.

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#### Figure 4. ACB loans breakdown by grade

Source: Company data, KIS



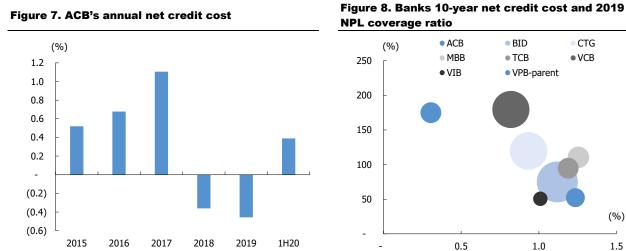
## Figure 5. Banks bad debt and credit reserve to gross credit in 2019

Source: Company data, KIS

Prudent credit practice allows ACB to keep low credit cost. ACB even recorded negative net credit cost in two consecutive years in 2018-2019 before returning to 0.4% in 1H20 due to the COVID-19. Its accumulated net credit cost in 2010-2019 was tiny at 0.3% while it still ensured high NPL coverage ratio at 175% as of 2019. In the meantime, its peers suffered higher 10-year net credit cost, between 0.8-1.3%, and NPL coverage ratios were smaller (except for VCB), between 50-120%.

Figure 6. Proportion of restructured COVID-19 and

We don't expect ACB to expand its restructured debt balance in 2H20. We NPL is expected to be contained at ~1% believe the recovery of the local economy from 2Q20 low will assist ACB to achieve a credit growth of 10.3%, and contain NPL ratio at around 1% and NPL coverage ratio above 100% by the end of this year. Credit provision is forecasted at VND1.8tn, meaning a gross credit cost of 0.6%.



Source: Company data, KIS

Source: Company data, KIS

true Friend KIS Viet Nam Securities Corporation 5

1.0

CTG

VCB

(%)

1.5

Source: Company data, KIS

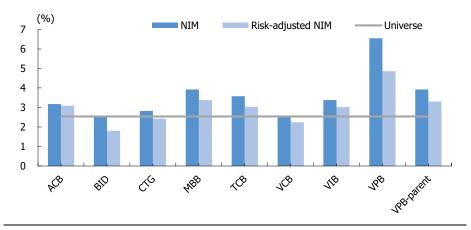


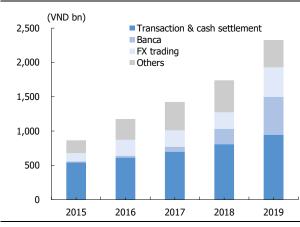
Figure 9. Banks 10-year NIM and risk-adjusted NIM

Source: Company data, KIS

## **III. Develop non-interest income**

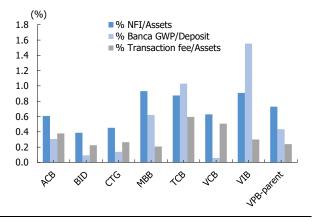
## Solid retail client base to promote non-interest incomes

ACB's net fee income (including gain from FX trading) posted a CAGR of 28% in 2015-2019. However, ACB's fee generation, especially bancasurrance fee, in relative to total assets/deposit is still behind those which have had exclusive distribution agreement via their channels such as VIB, TCB and MBB. As ACB is promoting noncredit services, its NFI is expected to keep growing at above 20% p.a in the coming years. The proportion of NFI to total TOI may increase from the current 14% to ~20% by 2024. A strong brand and customer base in retail banking segment (3.5 million customers at present) are sharp edges for ACB to achieve that.



#### Figure 10. ACB' NFI breakdown

## Figure 11. Fee generation capability



Source: Company data, KIS

Source: Company data, KIS

(1) A huge upfront fee from exclusive bancassurance distribution agreement which may go online next year. The bank's BOM plans to switch from a partnership with multiple insurers (AIA, Manulife and FWD) into an exclusive partnership and the deal is under negotiation. In our assumptions, we expect ACB to enter a 15-year exclusive agreement with the upfront fee of VND3.6tn based on multiples approach and deposit size at the inked year.

Bank	Insurer	Start year	Upfront fee	Year	Dep't	Ind.Dep't	Fee/VND1tn Dep't/y	vear
			(VND bn)		(VND tn)	(VND tn)	Dep't	Ind. Dep't
OCB	Generali	2019	890	15	60	37	0.98	1.61
SHB	Dai ichi life	2017	800	15	167	103	0.32	0.52
STB	Dai ichi life	2017	2,000	20	292	254	0.34	0.39
TCB	Manulife	2018	1,543	15	173	112	0.59	0.92
TPB	Sunlife	2020	1,700	15	92	41	1.23	2.78
VCB	FWD	2020	9,400	15	928	422	0.67	1.49
VIB	Prudential	2015	600	15	49	31	0.82	1.31
VPB	AIA	2018	1,700	15	124	74	0.92	1.53
ACB		2021	3,580	15	308	247	0.77	1.11

Table 2. List of recent exclusive bancasurrance agreements

Note: 1) Dep't (Customer deposit) and Ind Dep't (individual customer deposit) at the start year. Source: Respective company data, Local press, KIS

(2) As ACB follows a direct bancassurance model with in-house insurance staffs, we expect a disruption in transition period may be limited with a flat banca fee in 2021. Bancassurance may accelerate and win a CAGR growth of 40% in 2019-2024 thanks to the bank's focused execution, rich client base, wide distribution channel, and under-insured population.

(3) The recent surging digitalization in financial sector is both threat and opportunity for banks. ACB has a large budget for technology development (VND1.1tn as of 2019-end and extra VND800bn in 2020) together with a plan to acquire more customers to gain more fees via digital channels. We project transaction and settlement fees to grow at CARG of 19% in the next five years.

(4) A roadmap to enlarge ACB's client base to 5 million customers by 2024 is another push for non-interest income. ACB eyes urban professional and entrepreneur as its potential customers. The bank branding campaign, which has changed since 2015 toward a modern, young and dynamic image, is for approaching such potential clients. We believe digitization is critical trend in the banking industry in the near future and some banks will take that chance to narrow the gap with the top players.

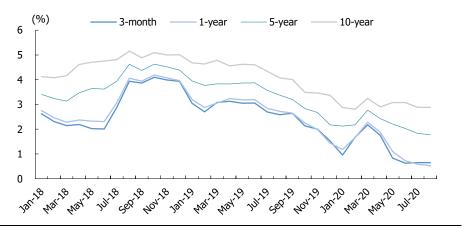
# **II. Great G-bond treasury**

Profit realization opportunity thanks to historical low G-bond vields Historical low G-bond yields in Vietnam in the theme of ample liquidity has delivered great opportunities for banks, the largest G-bond holder, to take profit. Short and medium-term bond yields (<= three-year maturity) have tumbled by ~300 bps and long-term bond yields (> three-years maturity) has dropped by ~200-260 bps from 2018-end. We don't expect the yields to bounce back significantly any time soon given that the difficulties of the economy are still lingering. SBV has recently repeated its monetary easing message in order to lower interest rate in Vietnam. Banks who have rich G-bond portfolios like ACB may recorded one-off profit in the coming quarters.

Thanks to the bank's low risk appetite, ACB has restructured portfolio toward safety assets with G-bond making up 99-100% of its fixed-income portfolio since 2018-2019. Given thick liquidity reserves and large contribution of G-bond to total assets, we expect ACB may take the advantage of the current low-yield environment in Vietnam to revalue a part of its excessive G-bond holding. In 1H20, ACB booked a gain VND753bn from securities trading and investment,

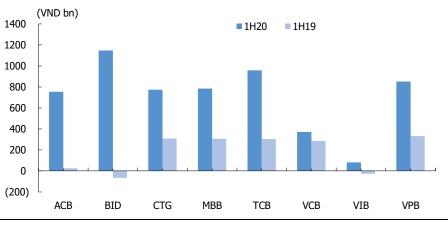
compared with VND25bn of the same period last year. We expect this item may reach VND1-1.3tn in 2020 and 2021.

Figure 12. G-bond yields on secondary market



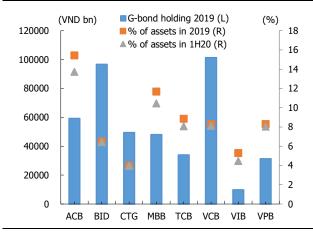
Source: Bloomberg, KIS





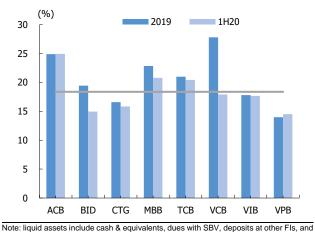
Source: Company data, KIS

# Figure 14. G-bond holding and its weight in total assets in 2019 and 1H20



Source: Company data, KIS

Figure 15. Percentage of liquid assets to total assets in 2019 and 1H20



Note: Inquid assets include cash & equivalents, dues with SBV, deposits at other FIs, and G-bond holding. Source: Company data, KISs

#### ■ Company overview

ACB is one of the leading private banks in Vietnam, operating 369 branches and transaction offices in 47/64 provinces nationwide (2019). ACB positioned itself as the leader in retail banking market with two key focuses including consumer and SME. It has four subsidiaries including ACB Securities (VND1,500bn of charter capital), ACB Assets Management (VND340bn), ACB Leasing (VND300bn) and ACB Capital (VND50bn).

Balance sheet					(VND bn)
	2017A	2018A	2019A	2020F	2021F
Total assets	284,316	329,333	383,514	431,855	479,359
Gross IEAs	269,537	314,817	368,778	415,224	461,071
Loans and corp bonds	198,689	230,527	268,701	296,482	332,059
Household	197,294	215,713	247,094	-	-
Corporate	1,395	14,814	21,606	296,482	332,059
Dep't and loans to FIs	12,768	19,460	30,442	39,780	42,730
Dep't to SBV and G-bond	58,080	64,829	69,636	78,963	86,281
VAMC bond	40	40	-	-	-
NIEAs	18,659	19,109	19,609	23,038	26,010
Others	3,920	4,633	4,873	6,408	7,722
Total liabilities	268,285	308,315	355,749	397,839	440,239
Deposits	241,393	269,999	308,129	346,732	385,487
Debentures	6,761	8,291	20,831	23,441	26,061
Dep't and loans from Fls	15,590	20,878	19,405	19,405	19,405
Loans from Gov't and SBV	-	3,074	-	-	-
Other liabilities	4,541	6,073	7,384	8,262	9,286
Total equities	16,031	21,018	27,765	34,016	39,120
Controlling interests	16,031	21,018	27,765	34,016	39,120
Capital stock	10,273	12,886	16,627	21,616	21,616
Capital surplus	-	-	272	272	272
Other reserves	2,914	3,693	4,596	5,497	6,435
Retained earnings	2,844	4,439	6,270	6,631	10,798
OCI	-	-	-	-	-
Minority interest	-	-	-	-	-

Income statement (VND bn)						
	2017A	2018A	2019A	2020F	2021F	
Total operating income	11,439	14,033	16,097	17,378	20,101	
Net interest income	8,458	10,363	12,112	13,138	14,831	
Interest income	20,320	24,015	28,318	31,185	35,004	
Interest cost	11,862	13,652	16,205	18,047	20,173	
Non-interest income	2,981	3,670	3,985	4,240	5,270	
Net commission income	1,425	1,739	2,327	2,641	3,599	
Gains on investment securities	664	117	158	1,031	1,304	
Other non-interest income	892	1,815	1,500	568	368	
Provision for credit losses	2,565	932	274	1,690	1,780	
Net operating revenue	8,874	13,101	15,824	15,688	18,322	
SG&A	6,217	6,712	8,308	7,875	9,109	
Employee benefits	2,668	3,220	3,746	4,044	4,678	
Pre-provision earnings	5,222	7,321	7,790	9,503	10,992	
Earnings before tax	2,656	6,389	7,516	7,813	9,212	
Тах	538	1,252	1,506	1,563	1,842	
Tax rate (%)	20.3	19.6	20.0	20.0	20.0	
Continuing operations profit	1,749	3,372	4,510	5,682	7,002	
Reversals of written-off loans	369	1,765	1,500	568	368	
Net profit	2,118	5,137	6,010	6,250	7,370	
Net profit of controlling interest	2,118	5,137	6,010	6,250	7,370	

## Key financial data

	2017A	2018A	2019A	2020F	2021F
Profitability and efficiency (%)					
ROE	14.1	27.7	24.6	20.2	20.2
ROA	0.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.6
NIM	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.4
Asset yield	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.0	8.1
Cost of fund	4.9	4.8	5.0	4.9	4.9
Cost-income ratio	54.4	47.8	51.6	45.3	45.3
Credit cost	0.9	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.6
Growth (%)					
Net profit of controlling interest	59.8	142.5	17.0	4.0	17.9
Pre-provision earnings	81.0	40.2	6.4	22.0	15.7
Credit growth	19.3	16.0	16.6	10.3	12.0
Total assets	21.7	15.8	16.5	12.6	11.0
Asset quality (%)					
NPL ratio	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.9	1.0
NPL coverage ratio	132.7	151.9	175.0	140.2	139.6
Loan to deposit	76.9	78.6	78.4	77.2	78.1
Capital adequacy (%)					
CAR ratio	8.0	10.1	10.9	11.7	12.1
CET1 ratio	n.a	n.a	9.7	10.5	10.9
Tier 1 ratio	6.7	8.6	9.7	10.6	10.9

## Valuation

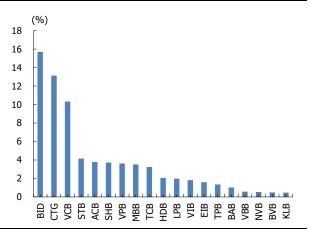
	2017A	2018A	2019A	2020F	2021F
Per share (VND, adj.)					
BPS	7,606	9,972	12,893	15,737	18,098
EPS	981	2,390	2,744	2,845	3,361
DPS	327	-	-	-	1,000
Valuation (x)					
РВ	3.1	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.3
PE	23.6	9.7	8.5	8.2	6.9
P/PPE	9.4	6.7	6.4	5.3	4.6
Dividend yield (%)	1.4	-	-	-	4.3
Dividend payout ratio (%)	33.4	-	-	-	29.7
ROE analysis (%)					
ROE	14.1	27.7	24.6	20.2	20.2
Leverage(x)	17.7	15.7	13.8	12.7	12.3
IEAs to total assets	93.5	94.3	95.0	94.7	94.7
Net income to IEAs	0.8	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6
Net interest income to IEAs	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2
Non-interest income to IEAs	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1
Credit cost to IEAs	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.4
SG&A to IEAs	2.3	2.1	2.3	1.9	2.0

## Changes to recommendation and target price

Company (code)	Date	Recommendation	Target price (VND)	% vs. avg. price	% vs. high (low)
Asia Com Bank (ACB)	20-03-20	BUY	22,200	-	-
	28-04-20	BUY	22,200	-	-
	29-07-20	BUY	22,200	-	-
	05-10-20	BUY	25,800	-	-
30,000 25,000 20,000 15,000 5,000 0		v m	- Martin		
Oct-19	Jan-20	Apr-20		Jul-20	Oct-20

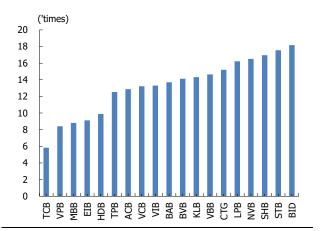
# **Appendix**

## Figure 16. Market share by lending in 2019



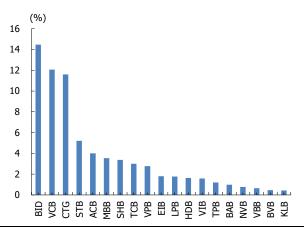
Note; based on data of 31 local commercial banks Source: Company data, KIS

## Figure 18. Equity multiplier in 1H20



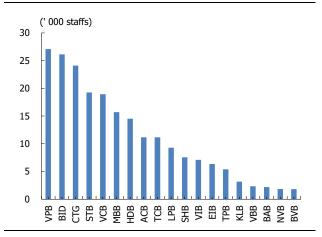
Source: Company data, KIS

## Figure 17. Market share by deposit in 2019



Note; based on data of 31 local commercial banks Source: Company data, KIS

## Figure 19. Bank staff headcount in 1H20



Source: Fiinpro, company data, KIS

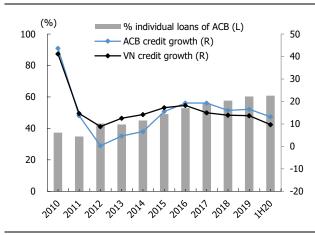
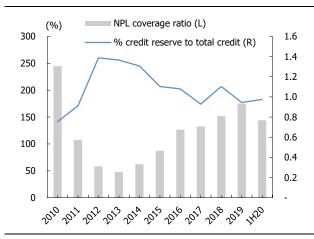


Figure 20. ACB credit growth

## Source: Company data, KIS

Figure 22. ACB bad debt coverage



Source: Company data, KIS

## Figure 24. ACB PPE and PBT

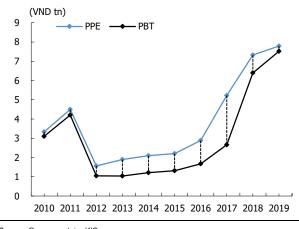
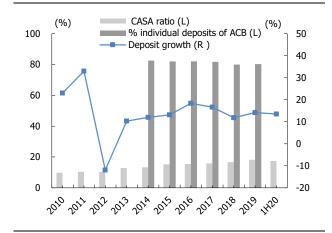


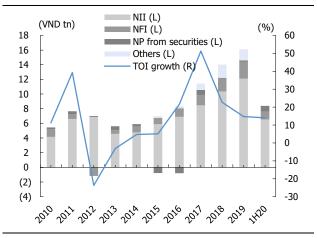


Figure 21. ACB deposit growth



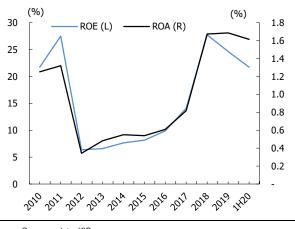
Source: Company data, KIS

## Figure 23. ACB TOI breakdown



Source: Company data, KIS

## Figure 25. ACB ROE and ROA



Source: Company data, KIS

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