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TV & STREAMING

Nielsen measurement accreditation faces uncertain future—again

Media Rating Council members are voting on whether to begin the process of stripping Nielsen's Big Data + Panel of its accreditation or giving Nielsen more time to address concerns.



Francis Scialabba

By Jasmine Sheena

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The Media Rating Council (MRC), the independent governing body that reviews, audits, and accredits media measurement products, is reviewing Nielsen's Big Data + Panel product, which combines household panel data measuring TV measurement with data from set-top boxes and connected TVs, according to an email sent to audit committee members who attended a Sept. 10 MRC meeting that was reviewed by Marketing Brew.

The email requests that members vote to start the process of stripping Big Data + Panel of its accreditation or to give Nielsen an additional 60 days to address some of the organization's concerns about the product. (Members could also abstain.) Those concerns include delays in processing; Nielsen's comprehensive weighting; Nielsen's Household Demographic Assessment Model, which estimates demographic data for "data sets lacking those details," according to [AdExchanger](#); its sample representation; and its Hispanic measurement.

A removal of the accreditation could represent a step backwards for Nielsen's Big Data + Panel measurement product, which the MRC accredited in January and has become a key currency for broadcasters and agencies during negotiations. At the time of the product's accreditation, Nielsen CEO Karthik Rao [described the accreditation](#) as a "landmark moment for TV ratings" that would "forever change audience measurement."

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Bill Dodd, a public relations representative for the MRC, noted in response to a request

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Measuring up

Nielsen has had a grip on the TV industry for quite some time, operating household panels that have been used to estimate TV viewership for decades.

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In recent years, though, that grip has loosened, particularly after its flagship National Television Audience Measurement product lost accreditation in 2021 after the measurement giant acknowledged it undercounted TV viewing audiences in the earliest months of the pandemic, which the MRC estimated could have cost broadcasters hundreds of millions of dollars in lost ad revenue. (That product's accreditation has since been reinstated.)

Since then, it hasn't exactly been smooth sailing for Nielsen. Paramount made headlines late last year when it allowed a contract with Nielsen to expire over a pricing dispute and opted to use data from alternate measurement partner VideoAmp instead, although the companies have since come to an agreement. Just last month, the NFL's chief data and analytics officer, Paul Ballew, criticized Nielsen, telling the Wall Street Journal that

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Amid the measurement disagreements, alternative measurement providers like VideoAmp, Comscore, and iSpot have all jockeyed for more market share and legitimacy among advertisers and agencies. Ahead of this year's upfront season, the US Joint Industry Committee recertified all three as currencies of record. According to a 2024 survey from Advertiser Perceptions cited by eMarketer, 85% of US brand and agency decision-makers said they view alternatives to Nielsen "to be more or just as effective than the legacy currency provider."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jasmine Sheena is a reporter for Marketing Brew writing about adtech, Big Tech, and streaming.

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