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Nielsen Pulls Paramount Data From Advertiser Analysis Tool as Contract Dispute Drags On

The firm calls the move a “necessary step to safeguard the investments” of paying partners



Lucas Manfredi

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The Paramount+ logo is displayed during San Diego Comic-Con International at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California, on July 24, 2024. (Photo by Chris DELMAS / AFP)



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Nielsen has removed some of Paramount Global's data for advertising measurement in a new product update. The move comes as the two parties have been locked in a contract renewal dispute that has stretched over two months.

The media conglomerate's data was removed from Nielsen's Media Information Tape, a service provided to advertising agencies that acts as a one-stop shop to view ratings and check them against their ad buys to determine if they hit their targets.

"All of our clients continue to have a full view of the marketplace, as Nielsen continues to measure Paramount networks and streaming services. However, we have removed Paramount data from transactional files," a spokesperson for the ratings measurement firm told TheWrap in a statement. "We have made this data available in good faith over the past three months, even without Paramount as a client."

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Nielsen said that removing the data is a "necessary step to protect the investments of our paying partners."

"We remain open to future collaboration with Paramount and are engaged with select clients who are impacted and are working on a new product update," the statement concluded.

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In a memo to ad agencies, Paramount Advertising president John Halley said the media giant would continue to provide Nielsen with the “first party schedule and program information they require to accurately measure our viewership,” including for live events.

“To be clear, Nielsen will be in possession of the relevant data but will be suppressing your access to that data. This decision was made by Nielsen and will affect the value and utility of your Nielsen data and tool licenses,” Halley said. “Rest assured, we have a clear path forward to maintaining the continuity of value your advertisers receive from investing with us.”

“We will continue to send you stewardship, plans, etc., in terms of alternative currency, and will work with your teams to provide holistic supply looks at the market, in terms of that data, for use in your upfront planning,” he continued. “We understand this is disruptive. We will bear as much of the operational burden as possible, and will continue to strive to be the best partners in the market.”

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Nielsen and Paramount's contract has been expired since Oct. 1.

Paramount has argued that Nielsen's costs as a percentage of the company's ad revenue have "quintupled" over significant parts of its business, and proposed fees exceed the total ad revenue of the network being measured in some instances. In the interim, the company has been using VideoAmp as its data partner and said it's prepared to make a permanent switch.

Meanwhile, Nielsen says that Paramount is demanding a "nearly 50% reduction" in the price of its service, which "not only undervalues our substantial investments, but makes it unsustainable to provide the support and quality that all Nielsen clients rely upon."

"We can not reset the value of our services to a fraction of their worth due to the circumstances and demands of one client," [CEO Karthik Rao said in a memo last month](#). "We are an industry solution and price integrity matters for the role we play in the industry."

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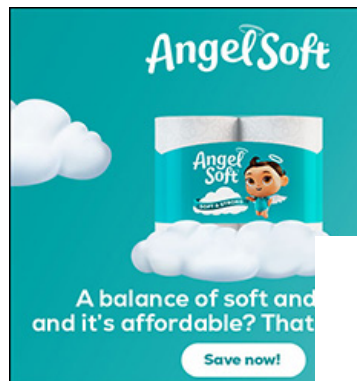
Nielsen has dominated media measurement for the better part of a century. Advertisers largely depend on its data, which includes the Streaming Top 10 and The Gauge, in order to help determine their spending on commercials as audiences shift from linear TV to streaming.

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But TV networks have complained that the firm is not measuring audiences as well as it should amid the transition from linear to streaming. In 2021, the MRC found that the firm [undercounted viewers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), which [temporarily resulted in a suspension of their national accreditation](#).

Over the past six months, Nielsen has launched new capabilities to expand its measurement around audience and out-of-home viewing. Its data currently covers 45 million households and 75 million devices in the U.S. alone. While Nielsen's national accreditation was recently renewed by the MRC, the move did not include local, big data or digital measurement.

Amazon has notably used Nielsen's big data panel measurement tools for its "Thursday Night Football" ratings. It also recently struck an agreement with Netflix to measure live ratings of the streamer's NFL Christmas Day Games, with the two parties collaborating on first-party streaming data. Netflix also struck a deal with VideoAmp to deliver cross-screen and live viewership measurement starting with the launch of WWE in January.

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The dispute with Nielsen comes as Paramount has been tightening its belt ahead of a merger with Skydance Media, laying off 15% of its U.S. workforce to generate \$500 million in annual run rate cost savings. The [advertising division is among the already impacted areas](#).

"This really is not about affordability. It's about getting the value we need for what we pay," Paramount Global co-CEO George Cheeks told analysts during the company's third quarter earnings call. "We haven't seen any adverse impact on ad revenue to date and we don't expect a material impact in Q4. But I do want to be clear that we do recognize that Nielsen can be a valuable resource. It's just that the economics have to make sense for the business."

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A recent survey by Advertiser Perceptions found that the multi-currency landscape is the future, but the respective marketplace needs an agreed-upon shortlist of no more than 3 in 5 used alternative currencies for TV transaction. The survey said they are using more TV currencies, reporting that they will add one more to their roster within the next two years.

VideoAmp, which is not accredited by the MRC, is certified by the Joint Industry Committee, which represents advertisers, agencies and media owners. Other

ratings measurement competitors include Comscore and iSpot.tv, which have both received accreditations from the MRC.

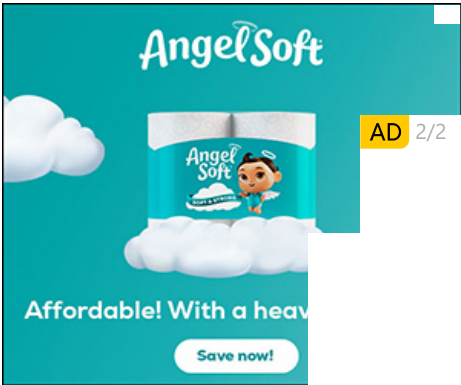
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