

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Rising Up: Comscore CEO on Sunday Ticket Measurement Deal, Upfronts

Comscore has been making a splash as the major alternative measurement competitor to **Nielsen**, and it gained a huge vote of confidence when **Google** chose its cross-platform ad measurement product for measuring the incremental reach it will achieve on **YouTube TV** with Sunday Ticket.

“It’s the largest content investment I think that Google has made in terms of the Sunday Ticket investment and it was a competitive process,” Comscore CEO *Jon Carpenter* said during a fireside chat at Gabelli Funds 15th Annual Media & Entertainment Symposium Thursday. “It kind of goes to show the momentum that’s starting to take place in terms of leveraging big data across digital and TV, traditional TV viewing to service audiences in a way that not only allows advertisers to reach them, but also to develop the valuable insights and outcomes that advertisers are looking for.”

The measurement firm has been bolstering its vMVPD and streaming product offerings for a while, rolling out a refreshed Comscore TV offering in January that captures linear viewing that is taking place on streaming platforms. “It’s gone a long way to helping our local clients shore up their audience and viewer behavior across those platforms as traditional kind of pay TV households continue to be under pressure,” he said.

There’s a lot of chatter around the use of alternative currencies, but the reality is that it will still be some time before there could be any sort of seismic shift that takes down Nielsen as the measurement king. Carpenter noted that that talk ramped up around the start of the upfronts last year, but the practical reality of it was that 85-90% of deals were still transacted on Nielsen.

That needle has seemed to move slightly more this year, and while nothing is final, Carpenter’s guess is that 20-30% of transactions of advertising this year will have been transacted

against alternative currencies.

“What you’re seeing is as buyers and sellers of media are looking to find and work with companies that have the ability to surface audiences in a way that they can be reached and ultimately garner the insights and outcomes from them, it is companies that have got big data assets that they’re gravitating towards, and we’re doing a great job of winning our fair share of those deals,” he said.

The number of players trying to grab a piece of the advertising pie has only grown, and Carpenter isn’t of the mind that everyone will be able to survive. With that, he believes folks will continue to see consolidation across the space. Where that ultimately shakes out is yet to be seen, but he’s confident Nielsen and Comscore will continue to be top dogs.

“There’s only so much money to go around to spend on measurement-related activity in terms of the tax on advertising,” Carpenter said. “But you know, fundamentally, where we are and how we’re integrated across this ecosystem gets me really excited about what we’ve got the opportunity to unlock here.”

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NO PRESS CONFERENCE FOR YOU

The **FCC** skipped its regular press conferences after Thursday’s open meeting because reporters weren’t there in person. The Commission webcasts its open meetings so reporters (including **CFX**) often watch hearings online. “I’m thinking like the rest of us, they were advised to stay home or limit time outside because of the wildfire advisory,” said FCC Press Secretary *Paloma Perez* said. Smoke from Canadian wildfires blanketed the DC region, resulting in a Code Purple unhealthy air quality alert. The lack of turnout also could be due to the light meeting agenda. The Commission zipped through the meeting in just about one hour, voting unanimously to launch a proceeding to consider sharing models in 500 megahertz of spectrum in the

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42 GHz band. The NPRM proposes licensing the 42 GHz band as five 100 megahertz channels, and seeks comment on other aspects of implementing a shared licensing approach. “When I took over at the Federal Communications Commission, I believed the agency had overinvested in millimeter wave auctions at the expense of moving to market the mid-band spectrum essential for nationwide 5G service. So we pivoted—fast. With the help of my colleagues, we quickly launched auctions in the 3.45 GHz band and 2.5 GHz band. With those successful mid-band efforts in the rear-view mirror, we are now turning back to millimeter wave,” said Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel*. The Commission also unanimously approved an NPRM that would make it easier for consumers to revoke previous consent for robocalls and robotexts as well as a report and order requiring video conferencing platforms, like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Webex, to comply with the accessibility requirements.

CABLE JUNK FEES A HOT TOPIC DURING SENATE HEARING

A **Senate Consumer Protection Subcommittee** hearing Thursday primarily focused on junk fees in the airline and live events industries, but the pricing of cable packages also earned a spot in the conversation. *Vicki Morwitz*, a professor at Columbia Business School, broached the topic when discussing a recent study conducted by her and others on drip pricing. That’s a practice that’s commonly used in the cable and ticketing industries where an advertised price for a product is revealed up front, but additional charges are shown to shoppers later in the buying process. “They may see an attractive base price offer and later learn there are also broadcast TV and set-top box fees, regional sports fees and TV connections that raise the price considerably,” she said. “What research has shown is that when surcharges are dripped, consumers end up being more likely to buy your product that appears cheaper upfront based only on the base price, but that’s more expensive in total given the drip fees.” George Mason law professor *Todd Zywicki* was reluctant to make a determination on when and where upfront pricing practices are most successful or effective, primarily because things can change over time. While services like **Amazon Prime** continue to win customers by offering a slew of services for one sticker price, the cable and streaming industries aren’t so clear cut when it comes to what consumers will appreciate most. “It used to be you got a whole bunch of cable packages, and people got tired of paying for cable channels they don’t want so now we’re seeing unbundling. My guess is we’ll probably see bundling. It’s a process that goes back and forth because bundling is convenient for people,” he said. “Upfront pricing

is convenient for people, but sometimes people say well, I don’t really use that. I don’t pay for that, so then you start getting these tendencies toward unbundling.”

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AD-TIER COMING TO PRIME VIDEO

Amazon is moving forward with plans to implement an ad-supported tier to **Prime Video**, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) citing people familiar with the situation. Talks are still in the early stages, but WSJ reports there are multiple avenues Prime Video could take. One is bringing more ads to existing subscribers and allowing them to pay more for an ad-free service, and another would follow a similar style as what Amazon did with Amazon Music. The company offered access to more songs at no additional cost but removed the ability to listen to most

Cablefax Executive Round Up

How do you see programmatic advertising evolving over the next few years?



Daniel Godoy
Global Head of Programmatic Evangelist
Microsoft

“Programmatic advertising will become the standard for all digital campaigns worldwide, as it grows in efficiency, transparency and control. CTV and retail media will use programmatic technology to optimize their ads and will need to respect consumer privacy. CTV will be the driver of attention metrics by reaching large and engaged audiences with high-quality video ads on smart TVs. Retail media will be the driver for performance by reaching ready-to-buy consumers with personalized ads across the full marketing funnel.”



Amy Leifer
Chief Advertising Sales Officer
DIRECTV

“Programmatic technology will transform TV advertising. As the TV and streaming ecosystem continues to fragment, advertisers and buyers need to use programmatic technology to bring together many publishers and providers to reach their audience at scale. And while this starts with digital and CTV, we expect to see more TV inventory transacted programmatically including addressable and linear TV.”



Jamie Power
SVP, Addressable Sales
Disney

“As programmatic advertising continues to advance, this space will quickly evolve from a trending marketplace to the preferred way we transact as an industry. Programmatic technology empowers brands to make informed, real-time decisions—unlocking even greater potential value from Disney’s premium supply. Disney is focused on maximizing audience scale, measurement accuracy, and giving our clients more control. The key to driving this evolution is data interoperability, allowing for increased audience discovery and measurement.”

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songs on demand unless users agreed to a higher price. Prime Video is included for Amazon Prime members and available for \$8.99/month as a standalone offering, but there's no word yet on what its ad-tier could potentially cost. For reference, **Netflix** and **Disney+** rolled out their ad-supported tiers in late 2022 for \$6.99/month and \$7.99/month, respectively.

BEVACQUA HEADS TO NOTRE DAME

It's going to be a homecoming for **NBC Sports** Chairman *Pete Bevacqua*, who will be leaving for his alma mater Notre Dame at the end of June. Bevacqua will become a Special Assistant to the President of Athletics on July 1 before taking over as Director of Athletics in 1Q24. He became the third chairman in NBC Sports' history in 2018 and has since guided its collection of assets and platforms including NBC Sports, NBC Olympics, **Golf Channel**, NBC Sports Digital and NBC Sports on **Peacock**. Bevacqua was also the chief steward of NBC's exclusive broadcast rights deal with Notre Dame—which is entering its 33rd season of existence—and played a key part in the securing of a seven-year agreement with the Big Ten to broadcast its Saturday night football games on NBC and Peacock. His exit adds to the growing list of departures in the NBC realm, with *Linda Yaccarino* and *Joe Benarroch* both headed to **Twitter** in the last month.

DOCSIS 4.0 AHEAD

Starting June 26, manufacturers will be able to submit cable modems for DOCSIS 4.0 compliance testing, **CableLabs** and **Kyrio** announced. Devices submitted for DOCSIS 4.0 Certification testing will be tested both for compliance to the DOCSIS 4.0 specifications as well as for interoperability with DOCSIS 3.1 networks in order to support some early deployments. CableLabs will hold an informational [Zoom session](#) on June 28 at 11am MT to review the details of the DOCSIS 4.0 Certification Program.

VIRGINIA DHCD KICKS OFF BROADBAND SURVEY EFFORT

The **Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development** launched a statewide Digital Opportunity Survey Thursday. The goal of the survey is for the state to better understand residents' current broadband accessibility, the affordability of broadband services and their comfort levels with navigating the internet and using digital devices. Data gathered will be used to supplement the Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan, something that will allow the state to apply for federal broadband funding aimed at closing the digital divide.

UNIVISION OPENS SHOP AT JFK

Univision cut the ribbon on its eighth branded store across

North America on Thursday, with the newest coming in Terminal 5 at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. The store will have Univision-branded products such as Latin American snacks and beverages as well as basic traveling merchandise. Like other stores, it also has Univision programming running throughout the day in Spanish.

CARRIAGE

Sling Freestream added two channels to its lineup: **Hunter**, which is dedicated to the 1980s cop show "Hunter," and **Film-Rise Sci-Fi**, which arrives with series "Beyond Belief: Fact or Fiction," "Upside Down" and "The War of the Worlds."

RATINGS

The championship round of the NCAA Women's College World Series began Wednesday, and so far through the semifinals, the event is averaging 969,000 viewers. That's over 12 games across **ESPN** platforms and is a 3% improvement compared to the 2022 WCWS. The top games include Tennessee vs Oklahoma (1.4 million on **ABC**), Florida State vs Tennessee (1.3 million on ESPN) and Washington vs Stanford (1.3 million on ABC). It's also postseason time for college baseball. The men's College World Series had its most-watched regionals round on ESPN platforms in over a decade, while also being up 37% YOY. The most-watched game of the round came Saturday on **ESPN2** as Tennessee vs Clemson averaged 736,000 viewers. – Wednesday's Season 6 premiere of "Tyler Perry's Sistas" on **BET** and **BET Her** had 1.2 million total viewers P2+ Live+3. On linear, it had a Live+3 rating of .596 for P18-49, and on digital it was the No. 1 episode across all connected devices including **Roku**, **Apple TV** and **Fire TV**.

PROGRAMMING

A&E Network is growing the "Secrets of Franchise" with two new spinoffs and the return of "Secrets of Playboy" on July 10 at 9pm. "Secrets of Miss America" will be a four-hour limited series that investigates the inner workings of the beauty pageant. It'll debut July 10 at 10pm. The second new series "Secrets of Penthouse" will premiere Aug. 22 at 9pm, looking at the rise and fall of Penthouse magazine founder *Bob Guccione*. – **National Geographic** will have 72 hours of "Sharkfest" programming starting July 2 on NatGeo, **Nat Geo WILD**, **Nat Geo Mundo**, **Disney+**, **Hulu** and **ESPN2**. Disney+ and Hulu will stream every Sharkfest premiere over the month-long event, and Disney Channel will have kid-themed shark content from July 8-9. Disney Junior will also join in with preschool-aged programming July 3-7. Additionally, the **ABC** and Nat Geo TV apps will have a Sharkfest collection page as well as a pop-up FAST channel available June 15. – "Rock Hudson: All That Heaven Allowed" will premiere on **HBO** on June 28 at 9pm. – **BYUtv** renewed "Studio C" for two more seasons. Season 17 will start in the fall and Season 18 will premiere in spring 2024.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

All Business in Big Freedia's Return to Fuse

It's been six years since the conclusion of *Big Freedia's* docuseries "Big Freedia Bounces Back," but now the New Orleans Queen of bounce is back on **Fuse** to give a glimpse of what she's been up to since her docuseries. "Big Freedia Means Business" was released on Fuse and **Fuse+** on Thursday and she's dipped her toes in quite a few business ventures since 2017. Ranging from makeup products, to cannabis and even opening her own hotel, Freedia's foray into business is the culmination of her 20-year rise to stardom as she steps more into entrepreneurship. While still focused on her music, she begins the premiere with a clear vision to take her enterprise team to the next level. Her on-the-go personality sets the tone for how she wants her team to operate, but that mantra stretched to the production crew as they needed to be quick on their feet to keep up with Freedia. "We had to ensure that all camera operators, audio engineers, lighting etc. were always all on the same page, so the final product stayed true to the look and feel of the series," Executive Producer and Showrunner *Paul Mays* told **CFX**. "Another difficulty was trying to keep up with Freedia's fast-paced touring schedule while following the stories of five other cast members, sometimes in three different cities." While a byproduct of Freedia's growing fame, her first series played a large part in getting to that point. *Big Freedia Bounces Back* remains the highest-rated show in Fuse's history, and while some would assume it's nerve-wracking to reach and exceed that expectation, Mays wasn't worried. For him, it was a blank canvas. "There really was no pressure knowing *Big Freedia's* first show was a success," Mays said. "I must confess, as the showrunner, I never watched a single episode of her earlier series because I didn't want to be influenced by anything that happened. In my mind, I was starting from the beginning of her story because this was a new chapter in her life." – *Noah Ziegler*

REVIEWS

"Reality," streaming, **Max**. Don't let the title of this excellent, simmering-timebomb of a film mislead you. It has nothing to do with what we think of as reality TV. There are no B-list celebrities exposing their larger-than-life adventures, for example. Instead, the title comes from the protagonist's name, Reality Winner, a 20-something Air Force retiree employed at a defense contractor, translating Farsi, Pashto and Dari. On the other hand, the film is plenty real. That's because it's a true story and the script wasn't written. Playwright *Tina Satter* and co-screenwriter *James Paul Dallas* assembled it from a recording made when FBI agents confronted Winner outside her Georgia home in 2017. The agents, (terrific performances from *Josh Hamilton* and *Marchánt Davis*, not quite playing good cop/bad cop) ask Winner, once they're inside her home, if she removed a classified document from her employer's offices. (You must have done it by mistake, right?) We'll provide no other details; part of the 90-minute film's fascination is discovering the agents' motivation. The result is a gripping procedural. Also fascinating is *Sydney Sweeney* (**HBO's** "The White Lotus" and "Euphoria") as Winner. Shorn of makeup and deftly mixing nervousness, confidence, and military bravado to impress and bond with the FBI agents, Sweeney delivers a standout performance. With classified documents in the news today, *Reality* is even more compelling. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(05/29/23-06/04/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
TNT	0.750	2341
FNC	0.429	1338
MSNBC	0.311	970
ESPN	0.276	861
INSP	0.254	792
HGTV	0.252	787
ID	0.225	703
HALL	0.208	650
HIST	0.194	605
TLC	0.193	603
USA	0.181	565
DISC	0.180	563
FOOD	0.177	553
TBSC	0.163	509
CNN	0.163	507
HMM	0.156	488
TVLAND	0.146	456
BRAVO	0.140	437
REELZ	0.118	368
ESPN2	0.114	356
BET	0.113	353
FX	0.113	353
GSN	0.109	341
WETV	0.109	341
LIFE	0.097	304
A&E	0.097	303
OXY	0.093	289
AMC	0.092	288
SYFY	0.091	283
PRMNT	0.087	273
NAN	0.081	252
NATGEO	0.079	248
ADSM	0.078	245
E!	0.074	230
LMN	0.073	227

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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