

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Measuring Stick: Nielsen Evolves Amid Competition, Criticism

The past few years have seen more competition among measurement firms that are trying to separate themselves from the rest of the pack. Though **Nielsen** has traditionally been seen as the most popular audience measurement company, folks like **Comscore**, **iSpot.tv** and **VideoAmp** are continuing to make advancements and provide alternative insights and solutions for consumers, marketers and other clients they may have—all while Nielsen is adding to its portfolio as well.

For consumers, Nielsen has released its monthly “The Gauge” report since 2021 to illustrate which platforms—broadcast, cable, streaming and “other”—are being used the most by viewers. The Gauge has gone through evolutions, different calculations and models as clients began to desire a bigger window into the reach of specific media distributors. That pushed Nielsen to add the Media Distributor Gauge back in May.

“One of the things that was pointed out is ... ‘Look, you’re breaking out the pure play streamers, but you really don’t give context as to the multi-platform companies and how they compare,’” *Brian Fuhrer*, Nielsen’s SVP, Product Strategy and Thought Leadership, told **CFX**. “So the perception is **Netflix**, **YouTube** and all these others are way bigger than **ABC**, **CBS**, **NBC** or these other companies. So we thought it was good to be able to have the context of really combining all the assets of these various companies, whether it’s broadcast or cable or

streaming, to see how big it really represents how they engage with consumers in total.”

Fuhrer elaborated that the Media Distributor Gauge showcases how companies interact with consumers in different ways, pointing to **Disney** with **Disney+**, **ABC** and **ESPN** as an example of one company spanning multiple platforms. Those public insights are still a small snippet of its full-fledged solutions offered to customers, and the hope is they keep consumers informed while catching the eyes of potential future clients.

While Nielsen is continuing to bolster its portfolio, it’s no secret it’s been under scrutiny over the past few years regarding the accuracy of its measurement. **TVB**, the trade association that represents the local broadcast TV industry in the U.S., specifically sees an issue with how Nielsen’s Gauge doesn’t separate ad-supported from non-ad-supported viewing.

“Advertisers’ commercials only reach consumers on ad-supported video platforms. When viewing of ad-supported platforms is analyzed alone, the results are very different from what is shown in the Gauge report because many streaming viewers do not receive ads. TVB is doubling down on our request for Nielsen to include an ad-supported-only analysis in all future Gauge Reports,” TVB CEO/President *Steve Lanzano* said in a statement.

As Nielsen has come under fire, others in the space have seen an opportunity to become the new industry leaders. Comscore is among those who’ve stepped up to the plate with a focus on operating at the hyperlocal level and being able to

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report insights in a timelier manner. CCO Steve Bagdasarian sees the increased level of competition as a result of not only frustration with incumbent players like Nielsen, but the need for marketers and sellers to respond to cross-media consumption.

“There’s this reality that third-party, independent measurement is an absolute must-have. There has to be arbiters of the space that exist to be able to ensure that actors on both sides are doing the right things on behalf of the end marketer who ultimately funds the entire scenario. And that continues to persist,” said Bagdasarian. “I think the biggest change, though, is that in the age of where we are in terms of peak cross-media consumption from the consumer lens, there’s a different need for measurement to evolve from being such a retroactive player in the space to being proactive with the data.”

That consumption varies based on where the premium content is, which brings forth a need for authentication to confirm the identity of a consumer to ensure their needs are still being tailored to across different platforms.

“Consumers are going to authenticate in certain environments, and where they do, they’re going to go tremendously deep,” Bagdasarian said. “We see that with the relationship that Google, Meta, Amazon have with the connection to their consumer, so I think authentication is going to become one where it’s more constrained, but it’s deeper, which puts those that are at data disadvantages in a harder spot.”

## DIRECTV CHARGES AHEAD IN NEXSTAR ANTITRUST SUIT APPEAL

**DirecTV** is back in court, filing the opening brief in its Second Circuit appeal of a lower court decision granting **Nexstar’s** motion to dismiss the provider’s antitrust lawsuit. DirecTV originally filed a lawsuit in March 2023 alleging the broadcaster was violating federal antitrust law by using its relationships with **Mission Broadcasting** and **White Knight** to manipulate and raise the pricing of retransmission consent fees. Judge **Kevin Castel** decided that because it was DirecTV’s decision not to enter into deals with Mission and White Knight that would have required it to pay “supracompetitive” fees, DirecTV was responsible for its profit losses, not Nexstar. In the opening brief for the appeal, DirecTV said the belief that only a plaintiff that pays the supracompetitive prices demanded by a price-fixing conspiracy has an injury that gives it antitrust standing is logically flawed and legally erroneous. “It is contrary to fundamental principles of antitrust law, as well as cases from across the circuits establishing that (1) lost profits are a form of antitrust injury, and (2) a distributor has antitrust standing where it is forced to stop distributing the conspirators’ products because it refuses to pay fixed prices and therefore lost

profits,” DirecTV said. The provider also took issue with the district court’s finding that DirecTV was not an efficient enforcer of antitrust laws. It argued there is a direct and non-speculative link between DirecTV’s lost profits and the alleged pricing conspiracy that kept the provider from being able to offer programming to its customers. “Left in place, the district court’s decision will undermine private enforcement of the antitrust laws because it would require customers to pay illegally fixed prices before they can seek redress. That rule is inconsistent with Section 4 of the Clayton Act; antitrust standing case law; and Congress’s intent in enacting the antitrust laws,” DirecTV said. “This Court should reverse and allow DirecTV’s antitrust claims to proceed.”

## BET BACK ON THE MARKET?

The M&A rumors are swirling around **Paramount Global** once again with **Bloomberg** reporting it is in exclusive talks to sell **BET**. Buyers include BET CEO **Scott Mills** and **CC Capital** Founder and Senior Managing Director **Chinh Chu**. The rumored offer is in the ballpark of \$1.6-1.7 billion. Paramount accepted bids last year for a majority stake in BET Media Group, which includes **VH1**, the BET cable networks and the **BET+** streaming service. Reported bidders included **Byron Allen** and **Tyler Perry**. Paramount stock rose nearly 6% on the back of the report.

## EVERPASS M&A BRINGS SUNDAY TICKET TO BUSINESSES

Live sports content distributor **EverPass Media** has acquired **UPshow**, an on-premise entertainment and performance marketing platform. The integration of UPshow into EverPass means businesses will have the option to stream **NFL Sunday Ticket** for the first time ever starting with the 2024 NFL season. Both EverPass and UPshow are partners for Peacock Sports Pass, a package allowing commercial businesses access to certain events from Peacock’s live sports content library. In addition to the acquisition, **TKO Holdings**, parent company of **UFC** and **WWE**, made a strategic investment in Everpass. TKO President/COO **Mark Shapiro** has joined the board of EverPass following the investment.

## TUBI ON ITS WAY TO THE U.K.

**Tubi** is headed across the pond, debuting in the U.K. in the coming weeks. At launch, Tubi’s U.K. offering will have 20,000 movies and TV episodes on-demand including originals and curated content from partners like **Disney**, **Lionsgate**, **NBCU**

and **Sony Pictures Entertainment**. When it arrives, Tubi will be available for viewers via a free app on every major connected TV platform, iOS and Android smartphones and on the web.

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## CNBC DEBUTS NEW SPORTS BUSINESS VERTICAL

**CNBC** is expanding its coverage with the launch of new vertical **CNBC Sport**. It will focus on the intersection of business and sports, particularly as sports is increasingly being seen as an investible asset. *Michael Ozanian* has been hired as Senior Sports Reporter while *Alex Sherman* will expand his role to become CNBC's Media and Sports Reporter. Ozanian joins from **Forbes** where he served as Managing editor and co-host of Forbes SportsMoney. Others contributing to the vertical include *Contessa Brewer* (sports betting), *Scott Wapner* (league commissioners, team owners and investors) and *Jessica Golden* (Senior Sports Business Producer). Upcoming action from the team includes a live interview with **Boston Celtics'** Lead Owner and Governor *Wycliff Grousbeck* July 8 during "Closing Bell."

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## SCRIPPS SPORTS PICKS UP PANTHERS GAMES

**NHL's Florida Panthers** signed a multi-year agreement with **Scripps Sports** to locally broadcast the team's matches free for residents of Miami/Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Fort Myers. Under the deal, Scripps is able to televise all locally broadcast Panthers preseason, regular-season and round one postseason games with distribution on cable, satellite and OTA television. Scripps Sports and the Panthers are also collaborating to launch a team-branded DTC application that will be the destination for the live streaming of all Scripps Sports-produced games in the team's territory. Details will be announced before the start of the 2024-25 season.

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## QUARTERLY RATINGS

**Fox News** made it 90 consecutive quarters being at the top of the primetime and total-day cable ratings. On the heels of events like the recent presidential debate, the network averaged 2.1 million viewers P2+ in prime during 2Q24. **ESPN** and **TNT** came second and third with 1.82 million and 1.72 million, respectively, as the two shared **NBA** and **NHL** post-season coverage. **MSNBC** checked in fourth with 1.19 million and **HGTV** fifth with 728,000. In total day, Fox News led with an average of 1.3 million viewers as MSNBC followed with 810,000. ESPN (653,000) and TNT (481,000) were joined together once again in Nos. 3 and 4, while **CNN** came in with 473,000. For the business nets, **Fox Business** finished 2Q24 with 124,000 viewers P2+ and **CNBC** had 119,000. Those numbers are from weekday shows based on each network's Nielsen-defined programming day. CNBC did surpass Fox Busi-

ness among A25-54 in total day, recording 27,000 vs 12,000 viewers. Fox Business led business day (9:30am-5pm) hours with 187,000 viewers compared to CNBC's 178,000, but it was the same story for A25-54 with CNBC averaging 38,000 and Fox Business averaging 10,000 in that timeframe.

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## ION PLUS GOES OTA

Scripps' FAST channel **ION Plus** is now available free and over the air with a digital antenna, making the network present in 90% of U.S. TV homes in addition to the distribution it has on FAST platforms. ION Plus has general entertainment programming with shows like "MacGyver," "Scorpion," "Murdoch Mysteries" and "Hudson & Rex."

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## WBD PLACES SPOTLIGHT ON SHARK WEEK AD PARTNERS

**Warner Bros. Discovery** revealed its advertising partners for this year's Shark Week, airing July 7-13 on **Discovery Channel** and streaming on **Max**. New this year are Ford, Harbor Freight and Universal Pictures. Returning advertisers include Gorilla Glue, PNC Bank, Sherwin Williams, Sport Clips and University of Phoenix. Sponsorships included convergent opportunities like custom video, tagged tune-in, billboards, in-program messaging and streaming collections.

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## FIBER FRENZY

**Charter** launched Spectrum internet, mobile, TV and voice services to approximately 2,900 homes and small businesses across Outagamie County, Wisconsin. It also brought the services to more than 350 locations in previously unserved or underserved portions of Butterfield, Clam Union, Forest, Norwich and Pioneer Townships, Michigan as well as nearly 100 additional locations in portions of Big Creek Township. The investments are part of the operator's approximately \$5 billion investment in unserved rural communities, partly offset by \$1.2 billion in FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund winnings. – **Fidium Fiber** is now available to more than 4,600 homes and businesses in Bar Harbor and Mount Desert, Maine. More than 260,000 homes and businesses in the state now have access to the company's offerings, and more availability is coming soon.

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## PEOPLE

**Comcast** named *Javier Garcia* as SVP, Sales & Marketing for its 12-state Central Division. He'll oversee the group's sales and marketing functions which encompasses brand and product marketing, sales and customer retention strategies. Garcia, who's been with Comcast since 2014, was most recently SVP, Competitive Marketing and Strategy for the Central Division. He's also worked as GM of **Yahoo** U.S. Hispanic.