
Nielsen Delivers Chicago Outdoor Data to GOAC

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By Katy Bachman

Nielsen Outdoor announced Wednesday it had delivered its first outdoor ratings for the Chicago market to its Global Outdoor Advisory Committee, a group of advertisers, agencies, and media owners who helped design and evaluate Nielsen's GPS-based outdoor ratings service.

As initial investors in the Chicago service, the GOAC members, including Starcom MediaVest Group, Universal McCann, Mindshare, Mediacom, Clear Channel, JCDcaux, Lamar, Viacom, Van Wagner, the Outdoor Advertising Association of America and the Traffic Audit Bureau, will have exclusive access to the data for planning and marketing purposes before Nielsen will market the data to new subscribers after Nov. 21.

To measure outdoor exposure, Nielsen recruited 750 consumers to carry small, cell-phone-sized GPS devices called Npods while they travel on foot or in cars. That travel log data was then linked with the daily effective circulation figures from the Traffic Audit Bureau to give estimates for consumer exposure to about 13,000 outdoor faces in the Chicago market.

The outdoor industry has been working towards the development of a reliable ratings service since 2002, when Arbitron conducted the first outdoor ratings test in Atlanta, releasing data from the test in Oct. 2003. While Arbitron tabled its service last year, Nielsen has since forged ahead with Chicago and hopes to work with the GOAC in rolling out additional markets in the U.S.

"It is now time for the outdoor industry to have a comparable currency with the other measured media to enable us to seriously consider outdoor in our media planning schedules and marketing mix models," said Kate Sirkin, executive vp global research director for Starcom. "We encourage the industry to embrace outdoor ratings by actively pursuing not only the general Chicago data release in a couple of months, but a commitment to encourage the accelerated rollout of additional markets with Nielsen Outdoor."

At the same time Nielsen, owned by Mediaweek parent VNU, pursues its survey-based outdoor ratings service, the Traffic Audit Bureau is working with its members to develop a census-based outdoor ratings currency building on the TAB's DEC figures.

"To have valid outdoor research, you need the foundation of the DECs, the refinement of the visibility adjustment indice ("likely to see" measure), and travel surveys," said Joe Philport, president for the TAB. "Travel surveys alone are limited because of instability. In order to produce reliable ratings in the U.S. to measure the large number of faces across a wide geography you need immense samples."

The TAB recently issued a request for proposal to 20 companies, including Arbitron and Nielsen, for a methodology to add demographic and reach and frequency data to DEC estimates. Earlier this year, the TAB awarded a contract to GfKNOP to develop visibility adjustment indices, the "likely to see" measure that will be applied to the TAB's DEC figures by fall 2006. The TAB hopes to award a contract for this next phase by March 2006.

"Nielsen Outdoor will be responding to the [TAB's] RFP request. Right now, we are continuing to negotiate with the US outdoor industry with the intention to deliver what is best solution for all stakeholders," said a Nielsen statement.

The outdoor industry, one of the few media this year showing robust advertising growth, is keeping its ratings options open. "There are many global alternatives being explored and developed," said Stephen Freitas, chief marketing officer for the OAAA. "The outdoor industry isn't committed yet to a single approach."

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