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In the News

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Challenges to Nielsen Ratings Of Latino Television Viewing National Latino Media Council (213) 746-6988



New Study Challenges Nielsen Ratings Of Latino Television Viewing


New York - The National Latino Media Council today released their Latino Television Study that challenges the Nielsen rating system's approach to measuring Latino television viewership. The study, conducted by Rincon & Associates of Dallas, Texas, concludes that despite the growing Latino presence in the United States (currently at 39 million in the U.S. and 4 million in Puerto Rico, and with an estimated buying power of close to \$653 billion) Latinos television viewers, especially those who watch English-language television, are severely undercounted by Nielsen Media Research.


The study pointed out that the methodology used by Nielsen can lead to the premature cancellation of Latino-targeted programs and reluctance among executives to produce


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and air new shows, exacerbating the invisibility of Latinos on television. This in turn leads to diminished employment opportunities for Latino actors, writers, directors and other behind the camera professionals, as well as to significant loss of revenue from potential advertisers seeking to reach Latino audiences.

"Nielsen's systematic exclusion of Latinos is shameful; the company has been slow in remedying this despite the significant economic losses to both the industry and our community," said Esteban Torres, former Congressman and Chair of the National Latino Media Council. He went on to note that, "Latinos spent an estimated \$12 billion on entertainment in 2003; \$680 million on movies alone."

"The Nielsen's undercounting of Latino viewers of English-language television programs," added Alex Nogales, spokesman for the Council, "has a tremendous impact on our negotiations with the networks for Latino-themed programming." He explained that, "Nielsen estimated that The George Lopez Show was watched by 1.21 million Latinos, but that may be a significant underestimate, according to what we found in our study. Furthermore, the home language measure used by Nielsen Media Research to classify Latino households was unstable and inadequate as a measure to weight Latino television ratings."

The study results point to the need:

for external audits to verify the accuracy of the Nielsen estimates of Latino television audiences

for expanding the variety of programming targeted to U.S.-born Latinos, and

to evaluate the entertainment needs and preferences of both U.S.- and foreign-born Latinos.

Moreover, the rise of second and third generation Latinos will profoundly impact the demographic composition of future Latino audiences and their demand for English-language programming. Second generation Latinos (children of immigrants) will comprise 47 percent of the Latino population growth in the next two decades. The impact of this generational shift is evident in the viewing habits found in the study for The George Lopez Show, which indicates that 41 percent of the third-generation and 34 percent of second-generation watched the show. Thus, the inclusion of Latino markets with higher concentration of U.S.-born Latinos in current surveys would, the study found, represent a major improvement in accurately measuring Latino viewing. The study also criticized Nielsen for not doing a better job of recruiting both U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinos into their research panels.

The National Latino Media Council, a coalition of all of

the major national Latino organizations in the country, will be bringing the report's findings to the attention of Nielsen Media Research and all of the major television broadcast and cable networks and other interested parties that use their service to demand changes that more accurately measure Latino English-language television viewing. "Our study demonstrates that there is a serious problem here," concluded Nogales, "and we need the television industry to address it seriously and quickly."

The National Latino Media Council, founded in 1997 with its call for a national "Brownout" of the networks, has been at the forefront of advocating for the responsiveness of the nation's media to the growing Latino market. Among the accomplishments of this coalition was the signing of the Memorandums of Understanding with ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox and the issuing of an annual report card on their progress in meeting the goals agreed to. More recently, the Coalition has entered into talks with TimeWarner on its relationship to the Latino community in terms of its broadcast and cable television networks, movie production, internet services, and publications properties.

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