

TAMS panel expansion sees rating instabilities

During November and December 2013 Nielsen introduced a large number of new households into the TAMS panel as a part of the planned panel expansion and upgrade. With these enhancements there have been a number of factors that may have caused ratings to fluctuate.

Panel expansion commenced in September 2013 with the objective of expanding the panel as quickly as possible to 2500 reporting households in line with the new TAMS contract. During this time an additional 1122 households were installed, equating to over 3300 new respondents. This was done in accordance with an industry approved plan of expanding the panel to be representative and profiled according to the newly released population estimates from census 2011 and as incorporated into AMPS 2013A.



This expansion is the largest single increase ever made to the TAMS panel and incorporates the new census data, which includes large population shifts.

Over this period new homes were brought on to the panel at an average rate of 12 per day, increasing the panel size from 1700 to 2800 installed households or from about 6000 to more than 9300 individual respondents. November was the peak installation month where this rate increased to 16 households per day.

Major recruits

Throughout the panel build the LSM 5-7 group and Nguni speakers have been the major recruits required to balance the panel to new population estimates. "We installed 444 households with Nguni spoken as the home language, with 365 of these households falling within LSM 5-7" says Candice Ulrich, TAMS Lead for Recruitment and Panel Management at Nielsen. "This demographic group have traditionally been lighter viewers than English/Afrikaans speakers which have now been proportionally reduced in the panel resulting in total time spent viewing dropping off marginally".

In total there were 1122 households installed over the expansion period and 107 de-installed.

In the month of November alone 42 older tenure households, (mostly heavier viewers), were de-installed and the panel also experienced a proportionally higher turnover of panel households due to the new recruits and the retiring of long term households.

With the new households predominantly coming into the lower LSMS, it has had the effect of rebalancing the Pay to non-P ratio on the panel. Thus the over representation of DStv homes has been reduced as planned contributing to stronger overall panel efficiencies. It must be noted that the new Universe and panel proportions will have an effect on the total volume of viewing on the panel and this is now reflected in figures emanating from the panel.

Coding error leads to additional instability



It is important for media planners to recognise that the changes that occurred over the past few months and which will culminate in the introduction of the coding error correction, new improved RIMs and new population figures all as part of the AMPS 2013A universe update, have created a "step change" in the data and will make forecasting and planning very tricky. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

During the fourth quarter of 2013, additional instability in some target markets (particularly housewives) was identified coming from a coding error relating to the work status of children aged 4 to 6. This will also be rectified together with the introduction of the new RIMs and population figures as part of the AMPS 2013A universe update.

It is important to take into consideration that changes in panel balance proportions will have a fundamental impact on many "unseen" variables. By increasing one target and decreasing another, changes occur in the size and structure of the households, e.g. variables such as the number of TV sets in the home and how these TV sets are viewed. With changes to such key discriminating variables fluctuations in viewing levels will occur.

From a planning perspective it must be noted that the construct and profile of panellists who were included in source data periods (August/September), may not have been in the panel in November when campaigns were flighted. Even within target markets such as LSM 8-10, the profile of panellists would have shifted to become less English and Afrikaans and more Nguni/Sotho, in addition to being lighter and younger viewers.

Media planners please note...

It is thus important for media planners to recognise that the changes that occurred over the past few months and which will culminate in the introduction of the coding error correction, new improved RIMs and new population figures all as part of the AMPS 2013A universe update, have created a "step change" in the data and will make forecasting and planning very tricky. To assist users of the data to get a better understanding of the expected impact of the changes, TAMS Information days will be held on 17 and 18 February and everyone is encouraged to attend.

Whilst there is no easy way to implement change into a live panel, and there is no doubt these profile shifts could have affected post campaign results, we are confident that the health and representativeness [sic] of the panel has improved tremendously due to the expansion programme. Once the universe updates and new weighting structure are implemented March 2014, stability should return to the panel and we will have a stable and robust currency for the buying of television going forward.