

Nielsen
Consumer Buying Power
Methodology



Contents

Executive Summary	2
Survey Data	4
Consumer Expenditure Surveys	4
Consumer Expenditure Survey Sampling	4
Household Expenditure Coverage.....	4
College Dorm Population.....	4
Data Development.....	6
Model Specification.....	7
Nielsen Consumer Buying Power Regression Models.....	7
Nielsen Consumer Buying Power Grid Models	8
Geo-Demographic Estimation Technique	9
Five-year Projections	9
Data Verification.....	10
Nielsen Geo-Demographics Expertise	10
National Control Totals.....	10
Expenditure Geographic Coverage	11
Consumer Expenditures by Retail Store Type	12
Consumer Expenditures by Yellow Pages Categories	14

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Executive Summary

The Nielsen Consumer Buying Power database incorporates geography-based estimates of potential annual consumer expenditures for more than 350 household expenditure items. Consumer Buying Power data allows you to identify the potential demand of consumers for products and services by geographic area regardless of where the consumers make their purchase.

The database was developed using the Consumer Expenditure (CE) Surveys conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current-year (CY) estimates and five-year (FY) projections of potential consumer expenditures are available for all standard census, postal, and marketing geographies. Line item categories for Consumer Buying Power are listed in the table below.

Consumer Buying Power Line Item Categories	
Alcoholic Beverages	Jewelry
Automotive Maintenance/Repair	Medical Expenses and Healthcare
Contributions	Miscellaneous Household Equipment
Daycare	Personal Care Products and Services
Domestic Services	Pet Expenses
Drugs	Photographic Equipment
Education	Reading Materials
Food and Beverages at Home	Small Appliances and Housewares
Food and Beverages Outside the Home	Smoking Products
Health Care	Sports and Recreation
Home Electronics	Total Apparel
Household Furnishings	Transportation
Household Services	Travel
Housekeeping Supplies	TV, Radio, and Sound Equipment
House Wares and Home Appliances	Total Specified Consumer Expenses
Housing Expenses	

To develop the Consumer Buying Power household expenditure estimates, Nielsen standardized the two components of the CE Survey. The interview component of the CE Survey collects monthly expenditures for households over a 15-month period (five consecutive quarters), and the Diary Survey component tracks expenditures for households over a two-week period.

Both the interview data and diary data must be annualized to correspond with household expenditures in a 12-month period for model estimation. Nielsen maintains a CE Survey archive, and the Consumer Buying Power model coefficients are updated using CE Surveys administered during the previous five years. For example, the current Consumer Buying Power database uses data from the CE Survey administered between 2003 and 2007. This five year Survey data set provides information about household spending that is used to build Consumer Buying Power regression models.

Nielsen then uses the annualized Consumer Expenditure Survey data to estimate multivariate linear regression models that relate household characteristics to reported expenditures. The modeling process required developing over 350 individual regression models. The Nielsen modeling process ensures that similar types of expenditures in each Nielsen Consumer Buying Power category share common regression model inputs. This process ensures that the final

estimated values are consistent across each category. The models estimate the dollar-value of annual expenditures made by households.

Nielsen uses the estimated regression models and data from the Nielsen demographic update to generate the geographic database of expenditures.

By applying the current-year demographic characteristics of the block group to the estimated regression models, the current-year potential expenditures for a block group are generated. Five-year estimates are calculated by applying the five-year projected demographics of the block group to the regression models. Block groups with households present may exhibit demographic characteristics, which according to Consumer Buying Power models reflect zero expenditure capacity for a Consumer Buying Power item. In such a case, the estimated zero expenditure value is reflected in the Consumer Buying Power database.

Nielsen uses models based on the Nielsen Grid for Appliances and Household Repairs category expenditures. Grid models estimate block group expenditures by applying LOGIT models developed from the CE Survey to block group Grid counts of households to estimate purchasing households. The purchasing households are then related to average expenditure values developed in a separate Grid-based model from the CE Survey to render total annual expenditures in each block group across the nation.

Nielsen enhances the Consumer Buying Power geographic estimates by controlling them to independent national forecasted values. Current-year and five-year estimated expenditure figures are generated for each Consumer Buying Power category using industry sales information, Nielsen demographic data, and economic information as inputs into the time series models. The estimated geographic expenditures created by the Nielsen models are then aligned with the national forecasts to produce expenditure estimates based on household-level demographic characteristics that vary across geographies, and sum to industry-recognized national values that reflect both economic and demographics trends. Some categories from the CE Surveys have been found to under-represent expenditures when projected from individual households to annual aggregate consumer spending levels. The unique Nielsen method of controlling expenditures to national benchmarks corrects this issue.

Additionally, the Nielsen cross-reference mechanism leverages the Consumer Buying Power database to estimate potential consumer expenditures in any geography by store types for 38 distinct retail store types, including bookstores, eating places, hardware stores, shoe stores, gasoline service stations, etc. A complete listing is included later in this document. Consumer Buying Power line item expenditures for geography are assigned to each type of store by the proportion of total expenditures typically spent in each store type. The Consumer Buying Power by retail store-types proportions are calculated from Merchandise Line Sales data from the 2007 Economic Census of Retail Trade. This information consists of information about the dollar amount spent on various merchandise items at various types of retail stores. Nielsen uses this data to allocate the Consumer Buying Power consumer spending figures to various retail stores by calculating the proportion of the total expenditures that apply to each retail store type. Nielsen then links the merchandise items from the census to individual Consumer Buying Power items. The Consumer Buying Power items are then finally allocated to different store types.

A similar procedure is applied to estimate consumer expenditures in establishments categorized by more than 50 Yellow Pages categories. Each Yellow Pages category is assigned a proportion of total purchases for each Consumer Buying Power category according to the proportion of sales each attracts for the category.

Survey Data

The Nielsen Consumer Buying Power models are developed using the Consumer Expenditure (CE) Interview and Diary Surveys. These surveys collect actual expenditure information at the consumer-unit (e.g., household) level. The CE Surveys are administered and maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). According to BLS, these Surveys “provide a continuous and comprehensive flow of data on the buying habits of American consumers. This data is widely used in economic research and analysis, and in support of revisions of the Consumer Price Index.”

Consumer Expenditure Surveys

The Consumer Expenditure (CE) Interview Survey collects monthly retail expenditure information in one-on-one interview survey sessions that are conducted at the respondent’s residence by trained professional survey administrators. Survey-participants are included for up to five consecutive quarters, reporting spending and demographic information in each survey session. The CE Interview Survey is designed to collect expenditure data on major items that respondents can be expected to recall for three months or longer, like automotive repairs, home improvements, and clothing. Individual expenditures are aggregated to their corresponding Universal Classification Codes (UCCs) for each household record. The survey is compiled and released on an annual basis for approximately 7,000 households.

The CE Diary Survey collects expenditure information on a weekly basis using a mail-in diary survey format. It is designed to collect data on frequently purchased items such as grocery store items, food consumed away from home, personal care products, and gasoline. Each residence participates in the CE Diary Survey for two consecutive weeks. Individual expenditures are aggregated to their corresponding UCCs on each household record. The CE Dairy Survey information is compiled and released annually for approximately 5,000 households.

Consumer Expenditure Survey Sampling

New respondent households are added to both surveys on a rolling basis throughout each calendar year. Households are selected using national probability samples of U.S. households that are designed to be representative of the total U.S. civilian population.

The sample of households is first gathered from the 2000 Census of Population 100-percent-detail file using four categories of geographic areas based on urban/rural and population characteristics. The household sample is then selected using demographic information gathered from the 2000 Census with enhancements from the American Consumer Survey. The data is enhanced by using new construction permits and techniques to eliminate recognized deficiencies in census coverage.

Household Expenditure Coverage

The household expenditures collected by the CE Surveys do not include all household expenditures. The CE Interview Survey is estimated to collect detailed expenditure data on approximately 60 to 70 percent of total household expenditures, while the CE Diary Survey is estimated to collect approximately 5 to 15 percent of total household expenditures. Thus, not all household expenditures are captured by these surveys. Moreover, not all items collected by the surveys are included in the Nielsen Consumer Buying Power database. Therefore, an aggregation of all Consumer Buying Power variables should not be considered a complete measure of total annual household expenditures.

College Dorm Population

The Consumer Buying Power database estimates have become more accurate with the introduction of college dorm population expenditures. In areas where college dorms are present, the Consumer Buying Power estimates consist of both household and college population data. The college dorm

population represents a large portion of the market that, until now, has not been captured in the typical household expenditure estimate model. In 2002, spending by the college dorm population affects 4,029 block groups across the nation, where more than 2 million college students reside in college dorm group quarters.

College dorm population expenditures are estimated using information from the Consumer Expenditure Surveys. The CE Surveys collect spending information for households, as well as for people who reside in college dorm group quarters. Nielsen collects the survey respondent information from the college dorm population as a separate sub-sample of the CE Surveys. Spending amounts are then calculated for the college dorm populations and this data is applied at the block group level to the college dorm population demographic that Nielsen gathers from the U.S. Census and updates each year. This process results in the annual college dorm population expenditures estimated for the block group level. These college dorm population expenditures are then aggregated into the Consumer Buying Power database to create an accurate estimate of consumer expenditures by geography. In areas where there are no college dorms, the Consumer Buying Power estimates are purely household-based.

Data Development

Nielsen developed a comprehensive methodology to select survey respondent households to ensure the most accurate models possible. The CE Interview Survey information is first loaded by Nielsen as monthly expenditure and income information to capture and retain the number of months reported for the household. Monthly respondent records are aggregated to complete survey records for each respondent household. The records across survey periods are then aggregated to one record for each respondent. In cases where demographic characteristics change between surveys for a given respondent household, the differing survey records are not combined. The separate records stand alone through the record filtering process.

CE Survey respondents do not always begin reporting information on the first day of each calendar year and do not complete the survey process on the last day of each calendar year. This creates the need to develop a method of generating annual figures that efficiently utilizes known information.

Household expenditures in the CE Interview Survey are reported as dollar values spent each month over the five-quarter survey cycle. The typical method used by Nielsen to annualize expenditures is to apply the following calculation:

Equation 1:

$$(Annual\ Expenditure)_i = \sum (\text{monthly expenditures})_i * [12\ \text{months}/j]$$

For expenditure category i over j months in the target calendar year.

Some expenditures covered in the CE Interview Survey occur less frequently than every month in the average household. Any reported expenditure in these categories could represent the total value spent on the item for the calendar year, and thus the above procedure is not applied to estimate an annual expenditure. Such expenditures are included, but are not limited to, the following categories: auto maintenance, transportation, appliances, household repairs, furniture, sports, and electronics. The annual expenditures for these items are generated by summing the reported monthly expenditures.

Respondent household expenditures in the CE Diary Survey are reported as dollar values spent during the survey period. Nielsen aggregates expenditures to annual values by applying the following calculation:

Equation 2

$$(Annual\ Expenditure)_i = \sum (\text{weekly expenditures})_i * [52\ \text{weeks}/j]$$

For expenditure category i over j weeks reported.

One expenditure item covered in the CE Diary Survey, “Lawn and Garden Supplies” purchases, are considered to occur less frequently than every week in the average household. Thus, Equation (2.2) is not applied here. The annual expenditure for this item is generated by summing the reported weekly expenditures.

Model Specification

Nielsen Consumer Buying Power Regression Models

Most Nielsen Consumer Buying Power data items are modeled using multivariate linear regression analysis techniques. Potential model inputs are chosen from a comprehensive list of household-level information mined from the CE Surveys, including household demographics and geography-based variables. This exhaustive list of model inputs provides expenditure precision never before available in a geo-demographic consumer expenditure estimation database. These data elements are also maintained in the Nielsen Demographic Update at numerous levels of geography. The list of model inputs include:

Model Item	Definition
Household Income	Introduces household budgetary constraints to Consumer Buying Power models.
Age of Head of Household	Introduces the consumer lifecycle dimension to the Consumer Buying Power consumer demand models; affects spending on Education, Household Repairs, Travel, Apparel, Personal Expenses, Contributions, etc.
Number of Infants, Boys, Girls, Men, Women, and Seniors in Household	Highly detailed predictor of spending on Apparel, Medical Expenses and Healthcare, prescription drugs, infant items, Daycare, Education, Sports & Recreation, electronics, etc.
Household Size (total number of members in household)	Significant determinant of expenditures on Grocery, Personal Care Products and Services, etc.
Number Of Vehicles	Powerful determinant of household spending on Automotive Supplies, as well as purchases of all types of autos, etc.
Family Type	Useful predictor of expenditures on Furniture & Furnishings, Housewares and Home Appliances, Apparel Services, Pet Expenses, Food & Alcohol Away from Home, Photo, etc.
Race and Ethnicity (Hispanic/non-Hispanic)	Significant estimator of expenditure levels on Grocery, Food & Alcohol away from Home, Household Expenses, Sports & Recreation, Personal Care Products & Services, Smoking Products, etc.
Educational Attainment	Useful predictor of expenditure levels on Contributions, School Expenses, Reading Material, etc.
Housing Tenure (Own/Rent)	Important estimator of spending on Household Repairs, Household Expenses, Furniture & Furnishings, Domestic Services, Pet Expenses, Contributions, etc.
Census Region	Significant determinant of spending on Transportation, Apparel Services, Grocery, House Expense, Domestic Services, Apparel, Reading Materials, Food at Home, household durables, Smoking Products, etc.
Urban/Rural	Geographic determinant of spending on Household Repairs, Transportation, House Expense, Domestic Service, Travel, Medical Expense, Smoking Products, etc.
MSA Size	Estimates by size of city the spending per household on Transportation, Apparel Services, Domestic Services, Auto Maintenance, Grocery, Food & Alcohol Away from Home, Travel, Sports & Recreation, etc.

The final regression model specification for each Nielsen Consumer Buying Power category is determined in a three-step process:

1. Stepwise regression analysis is applied to a selection of Consumer Buying Power items in each retail category to determine which inputs explain household spending habits for the category.
2. Those inputs determine the initial model specification for the category.

3. The model for each Consumer Buying Power item is then further developed to maximize R. For more information, see the “Additional Reading” section.

The model methodology was expanded in the 2001 Consumer Buying Power release to include group quarters expenditure estimates for college housing group quarters along with the traditional household-level expenditure estimates. However, it is not possible to estimate expenditures for military group quarters, since the CE Surveys are not administered to military group quarter’ populations.

Nielsen Consumer Buying Power Grid Models

The current model of the Nielsen Consumer Buying Power uses demographically defined grid cells for estimates of Appliances and Household Repairs category expenditures. GRID models estimate block group expenditures in a multi-step process. First, LOGIT models are estimated from the CE Survey based on a categorization of respondents into household ownership, household income, and household age GRID cell dimensions. These models determine the propensity of a household in each GRID cell to purchase a product. The resulting purchasing propensities are applied to the Nielsen GRID block group database to determine the number of household expected to purchase the product “on the ground.” The purchasing households are then related to average expenditure values developed in a separate GRID-based model from the CES to render total annual expenditures in each block group across the nation.

In keeping with the established Consumer Buying Power methodology, college dorm population expenditures are also included in the Consumer Buying Power GRID model estimates. College dorm population contributes a significant amount of spending on Refrigerators and Cut Flowers & Potted Plants, among other Consumer Buying Power items in the GRID models.

Geo-Demographic Estimation Technique

The unsurpassed precision of Nielsen demographics is then leveraged to generate the most accurate consumer expenditure database possible. Household demographic and geographic data from the Nielsen demographic update is combined with the model coefficients, or the spending propensity exhibited by each of the Nielsen Consumer Buying Power model inputs, to build the Consumer Buying Power block group database of consumer expenditures. Expenditure estimates for all higher levels of geography are simply aggregated from block groups.

Current-year estimated household expenditures are generated for all block groups using the Nielsen current-year estimated demographic variables by applying the geo-demographic estimation technique method. Five-year projected household expenditures are then generated for all block groups using the Nielsen five-year projected demographic variables as inputs into the models.

Geographies with no households present will have zero expenditures. Geographies where, according to the Consumer Buying Power model, household demographic characteristics exhibit no expenditure capacity for an item exhibit zero expenditures for that item.

Five-year Projections

Five-year projections expenditure figures are generated for each Consumer Buying Power category utilizing the CY estimate, Nielsen demographic update five-year population forecasts, and economic information as inputs into the time series models. Then, the estimated geographic expenditures, which were created by the Nielsen models, align with the national forecasts to produce expenditure estimates based on household-level demographic characteristics. These characteristics vary across geographies, and sum to industry-recognized national values that reflect both economic and demographic trends.

Nielsen always strives to provide the most accurate, up-to-date products to our clients. In keeping with this goal, the 2010 update of Consumer Buying Power incorporated some enhancements to the five-year projections.

First among these enhancements, five-year projections are now forecasted from the current year. Before this release, each FY projection was trended from the previous release's five-year projection value. More specifically, the difference between the previous five-year trend and the current year greatly impacted how the latest five-year forecast would be projected. Now, each new FY projection is calculated from the CY estimate. This enables us to reflect the most recent changes in the five-year projections. On the other hand, there is no longer any trending that links the most recent FY projection to the previous one.

Next, five-year projections are now estimated in a fixed dollar amount instead of actual dollars. In past releases, the method for analyzing year over year change compared the total, or actual, dollars for each year. This resulted in differences from year to year that were due to changes in usage, population and price of goods (inflation). Therefore, with the purpose of isolating usage change in the current method, projection expenditures are first calculated in fixed, or constant dollars. After spending is calculated in a per capita, constant dollar rate, the five-year population estimates are then incorporated. Thus, changes from year to year are no longer dependent upon the rate of inflation.

Another key enhancement to the five-year projections is the improved use of historic trending in examining the projected growth rate. Historic trends are utilized to project approximated values that compare to the calculated forecasts. This year, there are the three refinements to historic trending evaluation:

- All years from 1970 going forward are examined
- An exclusion of the years with the extreme high or low values
- Historic trends are weighted to emphasize the recent changes more heavily.

The inclusions of the above three refinements enable our five-year projections to fall within an approximated range of values that are most likely to occur.

Data Verification

Recent studies have shown that when CE Survey data is projected to the national level to estimate aggregate annual expenditures for some product categories, the estimated values underrepresent actual annual expenditures for the category. This issue introduces the need to link any CE survey-based national estimates of consumer spending to a reliable, industry-accepted source of benchmark spending estimates. Nielsen uses the CE Surveys to discern between household-level expenditure propensities at low levels of geography. The geography expenditure estimates are then linked to aggregate industry sales data.

Nielsen Geo-Demographics Expertise

Nielsen is the leading expert in developing marketing information and applications based on geo-demographic and business information. Each year, Nielsen generates the demographic update—the industry benchmark for demographic estimation. The update includes current-year household and population counts for numerous demographic variables, including distinct household characteristics and population information. Nielsen demographers and statisticians are among the industry leaders, and represent decades of experience in the field of geography-based demographic estimation.

Nielsen leverages its renowned update in the Nielsen Consumer Buying Power production process by applying block-group level data elements to each household model developed from the CE Surveys. The result is an accurate database of estimated household expenditures aggregated to the block-group level of geography. These estimates are then aggregated to larger census, postal, and marketing geographies using proven, proprietary Nielsen methodologies.

National Control Totals

In order to verify expenditure data totals, national expenditure models for Consumer Buying Power items are created from Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) data generated from the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA). NIPA is developed by the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. PCE measures the market value of goods purchased by the personal sector of the U.S. economy each year. Source data for the PCE includes data from the Census of Manufacturers, Census of Retail Trade, and Census of Services Industries, as well as publications from other government agencies and trade organizations.

Then Nielsen develops time series models to create current-year estimates and five-year projections of national Consumer Buying Power category expenditures. Nielsen uses PCE annual data along with Nielsen demographic data, and proprietary economic time series data to forecast national sales figures. The resulting current-year and five-year annual aggregate expenditure values are used by Nielsen as benchmark figures to validate the current-year and five-year projected Consumer Buying Power expenditures.

Expenditure Geographic Coverage

Nielsen Consumer Buying Power databases of current-year estimated expenditures and five-year projected expenditures are maintained for all listed geographies. The benchmark-validated block group expenditures are aggregated to custom industry boundaries and to standard census, postal, and marketing geographies, including:

- Block Group
- Census Tract
- Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA)
- Congressional District (CNG)
- County
- Designated Marketing Area (DMA)
- Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)
- Minor Civil Division (MCD)
- National (USA)
- Place
- State
- Yellow Page Boundaries (YPD)
- ZIP Code

Relational tables are available for all listed geographies, which are updated in conjunction with geography updates in Nielsen software and e-commerce products.

Consumer Expenditures by Retail Store Type

Nielsen Consumer Buying Power expenditure estimates are organized by retail store types to enhance the usability of the data for retailers. The table below lists the retail store descriptions:

NAICS Code	Retail Store Description
44-45	All Retail Stores
4411+4412	Auto Dealers
4413	Automotive Part, Accessories, & Tire Stores
4421	Furniture Stores
4422	Other Home Furnishing Stores
443111	Household Appliance Stores
443112	Radio/TV/Other Electronics Stores
44312	Computer & Software Stores
44313	Camera/Photographic Supply Stores
444	Building Material & Garden Equipment and Supplies Dlrs
44411	Home Centers
44413	Hardware Stores
4442	Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supplies Stores
44422	Nursery and Garden Centers
4451	Grocery Stores
44512	Convenience Stores
446	Health and Personal Care Stores
44711	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores
44719	Gasoline Stations without Convenience Stores
448	Clothing and Clothing Accessory Stores
44815	Clothing Accessory Stores
4482	Shoe Stores
44831	Jewelry Stores
44832	Luggage and Leather Goods Stores
45111	Sporting Goods Stores
45112	Hobby, Toy, and Game Shops
45113	Sew/Needlework/Piece Goods Strs
451211	Book Stores
452	General Merchandise Stores
4521	Department Strs (excl. Leased)
45291	Warehouse Clubs and Superstores
4531	Florists

NAICS Code	Retail Store Description
45322	Gift, Novelty, and Souvenir Shops
4541	Electronic Shopping & Mail Order
72	Total Accommodation and Food Services Industry
7221	Full-Service Restaurants
7221+7222	Eating Places
7222	Limited-Service Restaurants
7224	Drinking Places

Each retail store type is assigned a proportion of purchases for each Nielsen Consumer Buying Power category according to the proportion of sales each store type attracts for each category. Nielsen gathers this information from Merchandise Line Data from the Census of Retail Trade, which is published by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Purchases by store type are presented in Consumer Buying Power reports that are available in Nielsen software and e-commerce products.

Consumer Expenditures by Yellow Pages Categories

Nielsen Consumer Buying Power expenditure estimates are also organized by Yellow Pages categories to enhance the usability of the data for the telecommunications industry and Yellow Pages advertisers. These categories are listed in the table below.

Yellow Page Categories	
Total Expenditures	Heating Contractors
Airline Companies	Home Improvements
Appliances-Household-Major Dealers	Hospitals
Appliances-Household-Major Services & Repair	Landscape Contractors
Attorneys/Lawyers	Lawn Maintenance
Automobile Body Repairing & Painting	Lumber-Retail
Automobile Dealers (New & Used)	Motels-Hotels
Automobile Parts (new & Used)	Motorcycles & Motor Scooter Dealers
Automobile Renting & Leasing	Movers
Automobile Repairing & Service	Nursing Homes
Beauty Salons	Optometrists/Optometrists O.D.
Book Dealers/Retail	Pest Control Service/Exterminators
Building Materials	Pet Grooming
Carpet & rug Dealers	Pet Shops
Child Care/Day Care Centers	Pharmacies & Drugstores
Cleaners-Dry	Physicians & Surgeons
Computer Dealers	Plumbing Contractors
Contractors-General	Rental Service-Stores-Yards
Dentists	Restaurants (Fast Food, Other & Non-Spec)
Departments Stores	Roofing Contractors
Electrical Contractors	Schools-Academics-Colleges & Universities
Electronic Equipments & Supplies-Dealers	Schools-Academics-Secondary & Elementary
Florists-Retail	Sporting Goods-Retail
Furniture (Retail & Non-Specific)	Television-Cable, CATV & Satellite
Golf Courses-Public	Theaters
Grocers-Retail	Tires Dealers
Hardware-Retail	Veterinarians

Each Yellow Pages category is assigned purchases for each Nielsen Consumer Buying Power category. Purchases by Yellow Pages category are presented in Consumer Buying Power reports that are available in Nielsen software and e-commerce products.



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