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Arbitron, Edison To Study Radio Spotloads

Dec. 22, 2004
 By Paul Heine

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For the first time in more than five years, Arbitron and Edison Media Research will revisit the thorny issue of radio spotloads and compare current listener perceptions about them with those from 1999. That's when the two companies issued "Will Your Audience Be Right Back After These Messages?" a controversial study that reinterviewed 1,071 Arbitron diarykeepers to probe their perceptions about radio commercials. While the two companies fielded 12 different studies about radio's relationship with the Internet, they - some might say conspicuously - never updated the spotload study.

The '99 study showed that listeners were hip to the increase in the number of commercials on the radio. "The younger the listener, the louder the complaints about stations playing too many commercials," Arbitron and Edison concluded then. The study also found listeners are just as bothered by annoying commercials as they are by too many commercials. The '99 spotload study found no difference in time spent listening among those that said radio is playing more, less or the same number of commercials as before.

Much has changed since the two companies first explored listener spotload perceptions, most recently the introduction of Clear Channel's Less Is More clutter reduction initiative and efforts to improve commercial quality. Will listeners have noticed? Will they perceive more or less commercials than they did in '99? And will Arbitron and Edison uncover a correlation between diminishing TSL and listener spotload perceptions? Look for answers to these and other important questions in the first part of 2005.

Edison and Arbitron also plan to release their 13th Internet study next year, examining new competitive challenges to radio and "how radio can compete in the busy environment that it now finds itself in," Edison president Larry Rosin tells Billboard Radio Monitor.

Paul Heine



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Rock WBCN Boston hires Rob "Hardy" Poole for afternoon drive, weekdays 3-7 p.m., beginning Jan. 17, 2005.

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