



PPM – Could Rock Formats Benefit and How Far Off Is The Diary Data?

We are now getting the first look at PPM generated numbers from Arbitron in Philadelphia. For years we've been playing a 'recall game' trying to get the sample to 'write it down.' Well now that the sample (in Philly and Houston at least) is carrying around the PPM and the data is automatically recorded the results are surprising. The difference in 12 plus shares between the 2 systems is significant. Take a look at the March PPM collected data compared to the Fall 06 data collected from diaries:

Philadelphia, PA

Station	Format	Owner	Mar '07 PPM Data – Fall 06	Rank
WBEB	AC	WEAZ-FM Radio	9.3 - 8.0	1-1
KYW-A	News	CBS Radio	8.6 -6.1	2-3
WMMR	Rock	Greater Media	7.9 -4.3	3-6
WOGL	Oldies	CBS Radio	7.5 -4.5	4-4t
WMGK	Classic Rock	Greater Media	5.7 -3.6	5-8
WXTU	Country	Beasley	5.3 -3.7	6-7
WDAS-F	Urban AC	Clear Channel	5.2 -6.3	7-2
WBEN	Adult Hits	Greater Media	4.1 -2.8	8-12 t
WPHT-A	Talk	CBS Radio	3.9 -3.5	9 – 9
WHYY	NPR		3.5	
WUSL	Urban	Clear Channel	3.4 -4.5	10- 4t
WIOQ	Top 40/M	Clear Channel	3.2 -2.8	11-12t
WISX	Rhythmic AC	Clear Channel	3.2 -2.3	12-17
WIP-A	Sports	CBS Radio	3.1 -2.7	13-15
WPHI	Top 40/R	Radio One	3.0 -3.2	14-10
WRDW	Top 40/R	Beasley	2.9 -2.8	15-12
WPPZ	Gospel	Radio One	2.2 -2.4	16 – 16
WRNB	Urban AC	Radio One	2.1 -3.0	17-11
WUBA	Tropical	Clear Channel	2.1 -2.1	18-19
WYSP	Talk	CBS Radio	2.0 -2.2	19 -18
WXPB	AAA	University Of Pennsylvania	1.9 –nothing	
WJJZ	Smooth Jazz	Greater Media	1.4 -1.3	20 -20

Look at all the trends that have suddenly reversed:

Rock: The format on the decline nationally in nearly every annual format analysis published by Arbitron for the last 10 years. Suddenly in Philly it's up 84% for active rock WMMR and 58% for Classic Rock WMGK. Now the format is back from the dead and suddenly both stations here are in the top 5.

Country: This format isn't supposed to work on the east coast in the urban markets like Boston or Philly or New York. Well it's up 43% from the Fall 06 shares.

Urban: Formerly some of the top ranking stations in the market are now out of the top 6. Nearly 1/3rd of the stations in the market are some form of Urban and almost all of them are down.

Oldies: Another format that has suffered with weaker numbers and in many cases getting shelved. Now in the top 5 and up 67% over its diary shares!!!

So what are we to believe? Did WMMR suddenly become that much better of a station to increase its audience 84%? I doubt it (although MMR sounds great) – it could be showing us how far off the diary system is.

Many of us in Rock Radio Programming have often felt that the diary system along with heavy sample weighting in 18- 44 males and the fact that Men often don't participate even when they are contacted has lowered our results. We also saw the huge TSL numbers that many Urban and Hispanic stations seemed to get time after time. Were these groups really listening to these stations that much or were they voting to promote, or vote, for the culture or music Urban and Hispanic stations played? Perhaps this is the case. Right now we only have the Philly numbers to base any conclusions on. Early returns on the Houston shares also show Rock stations on the rise. Wait till you see Houston where you'll likely see KBTZ (the Buzz) with stronger shares based on the 'test data.' Still, with only a few markets in it could be way too early to draw any conclusions, but what if this trend continues?

If we keep seeing Rock stations in PPM markets rising at this level rock formats could be the rising stars. That temptation to flip the 2 share active rock to Hispanic – a trend from 2-3 years ago – may have been a PPM mistake. Was it a mistake to change WYSP to Free – Talk FM? Looks like they would have probably fared better as some form of a rock station. Remember that Philly also let go of an alternative (WPHI –Urban/Hip Hop used to be WPLY/Y100 Alt) over the last few years - another missed opportunity? Now we see that Clear Channel has launched a rather gold based Alternative format on 104.5 in the market and CBS has ditched talk Free FM in San Francisco for Classic Hits. No doubt there will be more to come in PPM markets.

The diary has some faults and now we are seeing them up close. As PPM rolls out in the top 10 markets over the next 2 years rock's fate could change. But, we still will

have nearly 200 markets using the old/biased diary system. For Rock 2 different fields to play on – in one we score well and the other we struggle. As we use (and pay for) the diary data we have to wonder if it's right – obviously the early indicators here show that perhaps Rock radio has been living with a cloud over its head unnecessarily.

We also have to keep in mind that the sample size differences between the old diary method and the new PPM system and the differences we see from PPM data vs. diary data collection are producing a different overall share level. If you go back to my report on the PPM system (insert link here) AQH falls as TSL is lower while Cume goes up a lot in PPM data. Since shares are built on AQH we have to be experiencing some differences. The Urban stations combined only lose 2.4 shares 12 plus while we see Rock, Country, Oldies, N/T-Sports and AC pick up nearly 15 shares. Still when you look at the results by ranks there is considerable movement and for many that 3 deep buy based on rank is suddenly in play for the rock stations.

Arbitron claims in the press releases for the Philly data that the top 50 markets will be on PPM in the next 3 years, but right now the only plans officially on the table, according to their roll out schedule, is to cover the top 10 in the next 18 months. If that's the case 2009 and 2010 will be a very busy years. Let's hope their optimistic press release is right and we at least have PPM in the top 50 markets. Meanwhile how do we deal with the big difference in Diary vs PPM shares for the format?

~ Dave Lange

Dave Lange is VP/Rock for McVay Media. He is recognized across the country as a leading expert in all forms of radio programming. While Dave's worked successfully with all formats from News Talk to Active Rock he specializes in the Rock formats including Classic Rock, Classic Hits, Active Rock, Mainstream Rock and Alternative. Dave has an extensive programming, consulting and senior management background, spanning nearly 30 years. He most recently served as Senior VP of Programming for Clear Channel preceded by Programming VP assignments with Capstar and AMFM.

His "hands-on" programming background includes Chicago (WCKG), Pittsburgh (WDVE), Miami (WSHE), Grand Rapids (WLAV) and Lansing Michigan.

He's also been a consultant and owned his own broadcast company. His travels have covered well over 350 radio stations in over 50 markets. While Dave's worked successfully with all formats from News Talk to Active Rock he specializes in the Rock formats including Classic Rock, Classic Hits, Active Rock, Mainstream Rock and Alternative.

Contact Dave Lange at:
17530 Bending Oaks Ct.
Granger IN 46530
574-273-0559
dlange210@comcast.net