



# Nielsen Holdings plc (NLSN)

Updated August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 by Jonathan Weber

## Key Metrics

<b>Current Price:</b>	\$16	<b>5 Year CAGR Estimate:</b>	7.6%	<b>Market Cap:</b>	\$5.8B
<b>Fair Value Price:</b>	\$19	<b>5 Year Growth Estimate:</b>	3.0%	<b>Ex-Dividend Date:</b>	08/19/20
<b>% Fair Value:</b>	85%	<b>5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:</b>	3.2%	<b>Dividend Payment Date:</b>	09/03/20
<b>Dividend Yield:</b>	1.5%	<b>5 Year Price Target</b>	\$22	<b>Years Of Dividend Growth:</b>	0
<b>Dividend Risk Score:</b>	C	<b>Retirement Suitability Score:</b>	D	<b>Last Dividend Increase:</b>	-

## Overview & Current Events

Nielsen Holdings plc is the global leader in market share research, data, information, and measurement. The company was originally founded by Arthur C. Nielsen, Sr., who invented the approach to measure sales performance using the concept of 'market share'. Nielsen operates in two reporting segments: Watch, which provides television ratings, and Buy, which provides research on consumer behavior. The revenues that the company generates are roughly equally split between the two business units. Nielsen was taken private in May 2006 by a consortium of private equity firms, and later was listed in the public markets through an IPO in January of 2011.

Nielsen reported its second quarter earnings results on August 5. The company announced that its revenues totaled \$1.5 billion during the quarter, which was down 8% from the revenues the company generated during the previous year's quarter. Revenues nevertheless were above what the analyst community had forecasted by \$10 million.

Nielsen reported earnings-per-share of \$0.41 for the second quarter, which was better than what the analyst community had expected. For fiscal 2020, Nielsen forecasts that its revenues will decline by roughly 2%-4% at constant currency rates. On top of that, Nielsen forecasts that its earnings-per-share should come in at a range of \$1.50 to \$1.62 during the current year, which represents a decline versus 2019. An earnings decline was already expected before the coronavirus crisis emerged, so it is not correct to blame this year's weaker profitability on the pandemic.

## Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
<b>EPS</b>	---	\$1.61	\$1.87	\$2.08	\$2.52	\$2.63	\$1.39	\$1.20	\$0.96	\$1.80	<b>\$1.56</b>	<b>\$1.81</b>
<b>DPS</b>	---	---	---	\$0.72	\$1.00	\$1.09	\$1.21	\$1.33	\$1.39	\$1.11	<b>\$0.24</b>	<b>\$0.30</b>
<b>Shares<sup>1</sup></b>	---	360	363	379	371	362	358	356	355	356	<b>357</b>	<b>360</b>

Nielsen went public in 2011, following a go-private deal in 2006. Therefore there is no public data on how Nielsen performed during the years of the financial crisis. Since its IPO, Nielsen has not been able to grow on a consistent basis. The company's earnings-per-share grew at an attractive pace between 2011 and 2015, before falling for 3 years in a row. Management expects earnings-per-share will decline during the current year as well, even without the impact of the coronavirus crisis. In 2020, Nielsen's profits will be more or less on par with profits in its IPO year 2011.

Nielsen has been negatively impacted by adverse currency rate movements during the recent past, as a lot of its revenues are generated outside of the US and suffer from a strong USD. Nielsen is not active in a high-growth business, which is why investors should not expect overly high revenue growth rates, even when currency rates cease to be a headwind. Management believes that the company's growth will improve once the company has split into two separate entities, as this should allow for more nuanced strategies in its different markets. On top of that, the dividend cut frees up cash that can be invested in growth initiatives that should be beneficial for its long-term revenue performance.

Following a year of strong growth in 2019, 2020 will likely be a less successful year for Nielsen, but we believe that some earnings growth should be achievable in the long run thanks to growing investments and a slow pace of market growth.

<sup>1</sup> In Millions

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## Valuation Analysis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Now	2025
Avg. P/E	---	17.8	15.4	17.3	18.0	17.3	35.9	33.5	24.0	11.1	<b>10.3</b>	<b>12.0</b>
Avg. Yld.	---	---	---	2.0%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	3.3%	6.1%	5.6%	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

Nielsen trades at around 10 times this year's expected net earnings, using the midpoint of management's guidance. This is the lowest valuation in years, which is why shares look relatively cheap versus how Nielsen's stock was valued in the past. We believe that the 20+ price to earnings multiples from 2016-2018 were far too high, but we still see meaningful upside potential towards an earnings multiple of around 12.

## Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
Payout	---	---	---	34.6%	39.7%	41.4%	87.1%	111%	145%	61.7%	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>

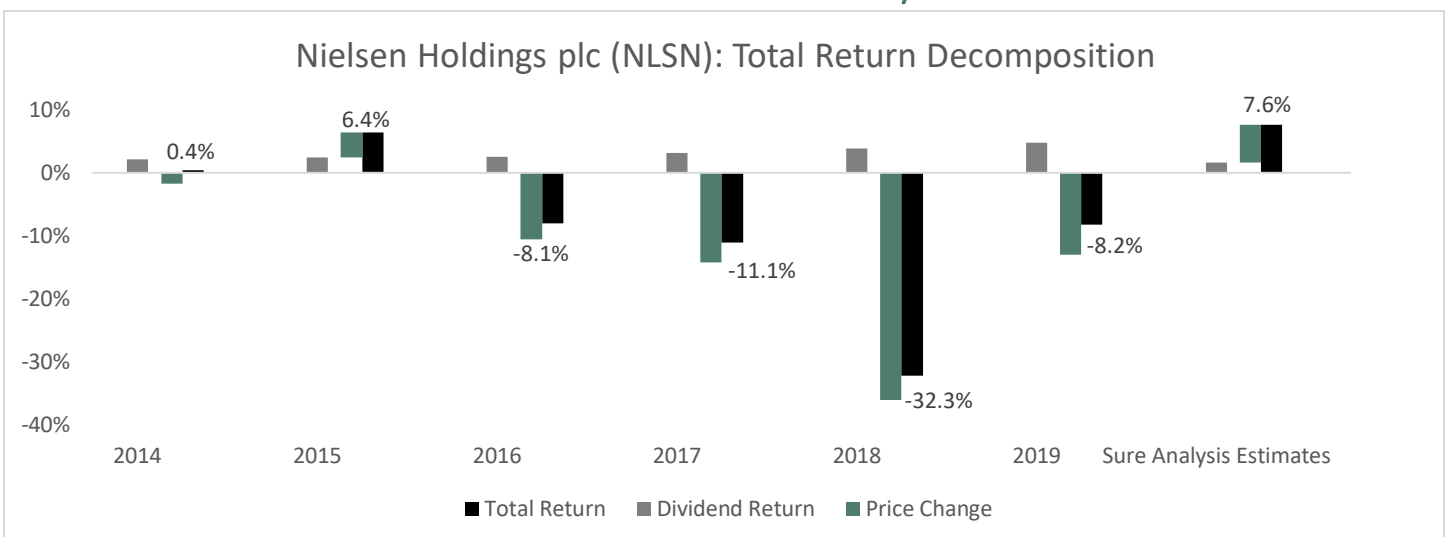
Nielsen's dividend history is not overly long, but since 2013 the company had paid dividends regularly, while also increasing its payout for several years in a row. Following the decision to cut its dividend to just \$0.06, the stock is no longer interesting for income-focused investors. Management explains that the dividend cut was based on a decision to improve Nielsen's balance sheet strength and to allow for higher growth investment spending.

Nielsen is the global leader in its industry, which makes it relatively safe versus competition from other market research companies. The company has advantages in terms of scale, and benefits from a presence in all relevant markets. Cord-cutting and the rise of TV alternatives such as Netflix is a long-term headwind for Nielsen's television rating business. Nielsen would likely see considerable declines in its profitability during a major economic downturn.

## Final Thoughts & Recommendation

Nielsen is an industry leader, but unfortunately the company has not been able to capitalize on its scale advantage over the last couple of years, as profitability remains well below peak levels. 2019 was a stronger year, but Nielsen will most likely not turn in high rates of growth in the future. Following the recent dividend cut, Nielsen is not attractive for income investors any longer. Shares promise solid total returns, which is why we rate the stock a hold at current prices, although we note that both results and its share price can be cyclical.

## Total Return Breakdown by Year



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## Income Statement Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenue	5,126	5,328	5,407	5,703	6,288	6,172	6,309	6,572	6,515	6,498
Gross Profit	2,997	3,140	3,182	3,305	3,668	3,633	3,702	3,807	3,710	3,676
Gross Margin	58.5%	58.9%	58.8%	58.0%	58.3%	58.9%	58.7%	57.9%	56.9%	56.6%
SG&A Exp.	1,648	1,829	1,724	1,815	1,917	1,915	1,864	1,873	1,958	1,929
D&A Exp.	558	529	520	521	573	574	603	640	675	756
Operating Profit	791	809	965	980	1,178	1,144	1,235	1,294	1,077	991
Op. Margin	15.4%	15.2%	17.8%	17.2%	18.7%	18.5%	19.6%	19.7%	16.5%	15.3%
Net Profit	130	84	273	740	384	570	502	429	(712)	(415)
Net Margin	2.5%	1.6%	5.0%	13.0%	6.1%	9.2%	8.0%	6.5%	-10.9%	-6.4%
Free Cash Flow	209	274	426	527	681	801	863	821	538	547
Income Tax	(46)	6	122	91	236	383	309	388	(182)	(260)

## Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Assets	14,429	14,504	14,585	15,530	15,326	15,303	15,730	16,866	15,179	14,319
Cash & Equivalents	421	319	288	564	273	357	754	656	524	454
Acc. Receivable		1,080	1,110	1,196	1,241	1,235	1,171	1,280	1,118	1,103
Goodwill & Int.	11,703	11,716	11,907	12,465	12,386	12,555	12,581	13,572	12,011	10,874
Total Liabilities	11,533	9,863	9,607	9,723	10,193	10,676	11,437	12,423	12,136	11,931
Accounts Payable	962	180	150	143	223	216	238	296	288	230
Long-Term Debt	8,558	6,763	6,584	6,640	6,812	7,338	7,926	8,441	8,387	8,309
Total Equity	2,887	4,633	4,930	5,729	5,056	4,433	4,102	4,245	2,847	2,195
D/E Ratio	2.96	1.46	1.34	1.16	1.35	1.66	1.93	1.99	2.95	3.79

## Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Return on Assets	0.9%	0.6%	1.9%	4.9%	2.5%	3.7%	3.2%	2.6%	-4.4%	-2.8%
Return on Equity	4.6%	2.2%	5.7%	13.9%	7.1%	12.0%	11.8%	10.3%	-20.1%	-16.5%
ROIC	1.1%	0.7%	2.4%	6.2%	3.1%	4.8%	4.2%	3.4%	-5.9%	-3.8%
Shares Out.	---	360	363	379	371	362	358	356	355	356
Revenue/Share	18.33	14.90	14.76	14.97	16.36	16.64	17.42	18.35	18.32	18.27
FCF/Share	0.75	0.77	1.16	1.38	1.77	2.16	2.38	2.29	1.51	1.54

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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