



Photographer: Peter Foley/Bloomberg

## Deals

# Nielsen to Sell Retail Arm to Advent in \$2.7 Billion Deal

by [Crystal Tse](#)  
November 1, 2020

- ▶ Divestiture replaces plan for a public spinoff of the unit
- ▶ Sale provides more certainty, reduces debt more: Nielsen CEO

Nielsen Holdings Plc said it would sell an arm that measures consumer insights for \$2.7 billion to private equity firm Advent International.

Advent will buy the Global Connect unit along with Jim Peck, the former chief executive officer of the credit reporting company TransUnion, according to a statement.

The sale will replace Nielsen's earlier plan to spin off the unit tax-free into a publicly listed company in the first quarter of 2021. It had unveiled that plan last year after it came under pressure from activist investor Elliott Management Corp.

Nielsen's media business will remain a publicly traded company based in New York run by Chief Executive Officer David Kenny.

"The Advent and Peck offer was, in our view, just better value and more certainty for our shareholders," Kenny said in an interview.

Multiple parties, including strategic buyers and private equity firms, have showed interest, Kenny added.

Nielsen said the proceeds of the deal will help it reduce its debt load. Nielsen

has about \$8 billion in net debt as of June 30 with the majority of it coming due between now and the end of 2023, according to a presentation on its website.

The sale would bring down leverage of the remaining Nielsen business to about four times whereas it would be five times at the time of a spinoff," Kenny said. "That also creates value," he said. "And it creates stability and certainty."

Nielsen's shares have slid 33% this year, giving the company a market value of \$4.8 billion as of Friday's close.

Elliott, which is the seventh largest shareholder with a 4.6% stake as of June 30, according to data compiled by Bloomberg, said it supported the deal.

"Following this transaction, Nielsen will begin to realize its significant value-creation potential as a pure-play, faster-growing and higher-margin media measurement business," Elliott partner Jesse Cohn said in a statement.

### Advent Partner

The deal is expected to close in the second quarter of 2021. After that, it will be

renamed NielsenIQ and based in Chicago. It will license Nielsen's branding for 20 years, the statement said.

This is the first joint-deal for Peck and Advent since they announced a partnership in August to acquire businesses in the data and information services space. It's a space Advent has experience, having invested in CCC Information Services, TransUnion and Definitive Healthcare. The Advent talks were first reported by the Financial Times.

Peck said in a statement that similar to the unit's consumer goods customers, which are facing changing tastes and competitive threats, the Nielsen Global Connect Business is also undergoing its own changes.

"We see significant opportunity to build on this momentum and invest in innovation to further strengthen the client offering and drive growth," Peck said.

Nielsen was advised by JPMorgan Chase & Co and Guggenheim Securities. Advent was advised by Bank of America Corp. as well as Deutsche Bank AG, Royal Bank of Canada and UBS Group AG.