OTT Analytics Map & Honest-Counting Checklist

Fora Soft Learn

A streaming platform measures three families of numbers — audience (how many), engagement (how long), and quality (how well it played) — and they form a causal chain to revenue. Use this to map your dials, name their data sources, and avoid the counting traps that make naive metrics lie. Read the three families together, never one in isolation.

1 · AUDIENCE — WHO & HOW MANY

- ☐ **Subscribers & paying accounts** — the base headcount; an account is not a viewer.
- ☐ **Unique viewers** — distinct people/profiles who actually watched, de-duplicated across devices, in a stated window.
- ☐ **Concurrency** — how many watch at the same instant; your capacity-planning number, spikes hard on live.
- ☐ **Reach** — unique viewers an ad or title touched; sizes the advertising base.

2 · ENGAGEMENT — WHAT & HOW LONG

- ☐ **Plays** — define a qualifying play (minimum watch time); exclude autoplay previews and re-count.
- ☐ **Watch time** — total minutes; the ad inventory and the revenue-allocation key per title.
- ☐ **Completion rate** — fraction of a title finished; does the content deliver on its promise?
- ☐ **Retention / churn** — share who keep coming back vs leave; read as cohorts, not one average.

3 · QUALITY (QoE) — HOW WELL IT PLAYED

- ☐ **Video startup time** — press-play to first frame; target < ~2 s (abandonment climbs past it).
- ☐ **Rebuffering ratio** — share of viewing time frozen; target < ~1%, best-in-class ≤ 0.5%.
- ☐ **Average bitrate** — sharpness actually delivered; as high as the network sustains.
- ☐ **Playback failure rate** — attempts that error out; drive toward 0%. (Definitions: CTA-2066.)

4 · HONEST-COUNTING TRAPS TO AVOID

- ☐ **Accounts ≠ viewers** — one subscription can be several people on several devices; count unique viewers.
- ☐ **'Plays' is a defined event, not a guess** — autoplay, re-counts, and bots inflate raw plays.
- ☐ **Averages hide the tail** — read engagement as distributions and cohorts, not a single mean.
- ☐ **Don't steer by vanity metrics** — a high audience number is only good if engagement & quality are healthy.

THE CHAIN — WHY THE MAP MATTERS

The three families are not parallel report cards; they are a causal chain that points at revenue. Quality drives engagement: a 23-million-view Akamai study found viewers begin abandoning after about two seconds of startup delay, with each added second raising abandonment by 5.8%, and 1% rebuffering making viewers watch about 5% less. Engagement drives retention: viewers who finish titles and return build the habit that renews subscriptions and sees more ads. Retention drives revenue: in subscription (SVOD) it is the revenue line itself; in advertising (AVOD) watch time is the inventory. So a slow start is not an engineering footnote — at 1,000,000 daily play attempts, a two-second-slower start abandons roughly 11.6% more of them (≈116,000 plays/day), and at $0.02 a play that is about $847,000 a year before a single subscriber churns. Read the families together, source each from the right system (billing/app for audience and engagement, player beacons and CMCD for quality), and trace every revenue problem back through the chain to its cause.



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This checklist maps audience, engagement and quality metrics, their data sources and the counting traps. Our seven-volume handbook covers the stack behind those numbers: start with Volume 3 for QoE monitoring, players and ABR, then Volume 2 for delivery latency and Volume 1 for encoding quality that viewers feel.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- QoE metrics: startup time and rebuffering
- ABR decisions that change engagement
- Player beacons and CMCD data
- Encoding quality versus delivered bitrate

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