

Church Livestream Metrics

(Andy Kerr – MBM Sydney)

It has been so encouraging during these difficult times to see churches working together and pivoting so quickly. Praise the Lord!

With so much of church life now happening online:

- *How do we think about the impact of our videos/livestreams?*
- *How do we think about ‘church attendance’?*
- *How effective are the platforms we are using for our streams?*

I don’t have the answers to those questions, but I want to begin exploring it. Especially as some of the numbers that we come across play nicely with our pastor maths. Other numbers... not so much. These are the typical numbers that we see with our videos across platforms:

1. Reach.

This is the number of people that had the video in their feed. Live/ Premiere videos are favoured by platforms so that are pushed into many more peoples feeds than average content. This number is like a sugar hit. You feel amazing seeing it, but there is no substance behind it.

2. Engagement.

Number of comments and likes both on your post and on shares of the post. This metric is somewhat helpful, but hard to draw conclusions from.

3. Total Views.

Platforms measure this differently.

Facebook - if you the leave the stream and come back to watch, that counts as two views (but one device). You need to dig into metrics and look for “unique viewers”.

Youtube - one view is one device, no matter how many times they come back to watch. Understanding how many unique devices is important but it doesn’t give us the complete story.

4. Concurrent viewers.

This (and total views) seem to be the main metric that churches are using to think about how many people ‘attended’ their online church service. The nature of online media is that people come and go as they please. It’s fantastic to know that at a particular point you have 50, 100, 200... eyes on your stream but again it’s a brief moment in time.

5. Audience Retention.

This metric is front and centre on youtube but buried on facebook (probably because it's the most depressing). This metric tells us the average time each person watched for. And in my experience, it's never pretty. However, I think it's the most helpful metric in helping us answer the 3 original questions above.

CASE STUDY.

At MBM our livestream to Youtube (35mins in length) was watched by 1988 unique devices - impressive right?! Nope.

- Average watch time 7mins 🙄🙄 (Facebook was even worse).
- If we break down audience retention even further **spoiler alert** it gets worse.
- 70% watched less than 1 minute.
- 22% watch half of it.
- Only 16% watched the entire thing (or 327 devices).

Don't get me wrong, 327 devices (possible more because people watched together) is wonderful news. 327 people praising and hearing from God is brilliant! One of those was my aunty who doesn't yet know Jesus. So I praise God for this wonderful new platform! But I think it's wise to understand the numbers and the real world impact that these new opportunities are affording us and how we might be even more effective in reaching people for Jesus.

- What reflections have you had about the numbers you see?
- Is audience retention a helpful metric?
- How should watch time shape our online services? Should it?