

ANTI-RAPPORT — MARCH 2026

# 5 Things Everyone Gets Wrong About Vertical Drama

A \$14B market. Five persistent myths. Data-backed corrections from someone who's been building streaming platforms for 25 years.

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**\$14B**

Market 2026 (Omdia)

**2.3B**

Downloads 2025

**500M+**

Annual viewers

**331**

Apps worldwide

THING #1

## “It’s Just TikTok with a Paywall”

I hear this at every conference. TikTok is a feed — you scroll, you watch, you leave. Vertical drama is a format — you pay, you binge, you come back. One monetizes attention through ads. The other monetizes impatience through micropayments at **\$0.06 per episode unlock** with **60%+ gross margins**.

**\$0**

TIKTOK ARPU (AD-FUNDED)

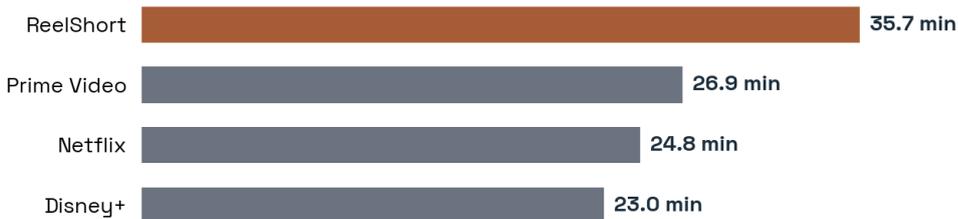
**\$80/mo**

REELSHORT VIP (\$19.99/WK)

**\$1.2B**

REELSHORT 2025 (+119% YOY)

### Daily Mobile Engagement, US (minutes)



Source: Omdia, Feb 2026

Revenue per download: **\$4.70 in North America** vs \$0.27 in LatAm (17x gap). Instagram started building dedicated “Short Drama” UX in Feb 2026. When Meta builds separate product infrastructure for your format, the argument dies.

THING #2

## “China Cracked It. Just Copy.”

I ran a streaming platform in 28 African countries. I know what “just copy the model” does to a business plan. China’s micro-drama market hit **\$13.8B** in 2025 — 350,000 enterprises, 100+ new dramas/day, 690,000 direct jobs. But it rests on pillars that don’t exist anywhere else:

**696M**

WECHAT/ALIPAY MICROPAYMENT USERS

**31M**

ONLINE AUTHORS → IP PIPELINE

**0.46%**

GENUINE HIT RATE

**56% break even or lose money. The top 1.38% of titles capture 18% of all audience heat. MRTA tripled licensing thresholds in Jan 2026. You can’t copy volume. You build infrastructure or you lose.**

THING #3

## “Hollywood Will Win This”

Disney launched “Locker Diaries” on Disney+ in Feb 2026. Trended #1 US. But the top 10 micro-drama apps by revenue in Q1 2025 are **all Chinese-owned or Chinese-founded**. ReelShort (COL Group). DramaBox (StoryMatrix). GoodShort. NetShort. DramaWave (SKYWORLD AI, Singapore shell).

### Cost Per Series (80–100 ep.) vs 1 Hollywood Episode



50–100x cost advantage

The Western players gaining traction aren’t studios — they’re startups with operator DNA:

**\$22M**

HOLYWATER (KYIV) — 85M INSTALLS

**\$14M**

GAMMATIME — OHANIAN

**Q2’26**

MICROCO — EX-SHOWTIME/NBCU

Disney’s “Locker Diaries” is an experiment. ReelShort’s 400+ shows generating \$1.2B is an industry. Experiments don’t compete with industries.

THING #4

## “You Need Massive Budgets”

Quibi raised \$1.75B and died in 6 months. It tried Hollywood budgets in a format that rewards narrative engineering, not production value. The screen is 5 inches.

**\$1.75B**

QUIBI — DEAD IN 6 MONTHS

**\$86M**

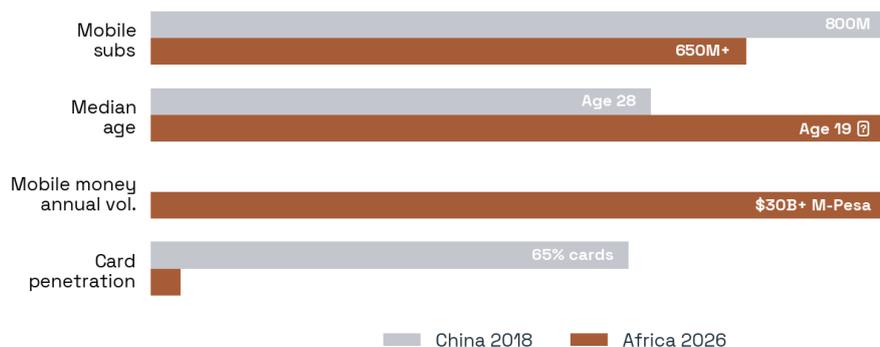
VIGLOO — 200 ORIGINALS/YR

\$430K per original at Vigloo vs \$1.75B per failure at Quibi. Capital-efficient beats capital-intensive. Every time. 895 AI-animated series with active ad creatives in China — the cost floor keeps dropping.

## “Africa Is Too Early for Vertical Drama”

This is the myth I take personally. I co-founded Afrostream in 2015 — a Netflix for the African diaspora, funded by Orange, M6, and Warner Bros through Y Combinator. I’ve spent a decade inside the “Africa isn’t ready” argument. It’s always wrong. And it’s always expensive to be late.

China 2018 vs Africa 2026: Structural Parallel



The first movers are here. Binyuma TV (Uganda): first native African vertical drama platform. Mansa (David Oyelowo, Nate Parker): targeting 7 diaspora markets. Both Worlds + Freeli Films: first US-Africa microdrama co-production starring Taye Diggs (March 2026, Joburg FF). DCAA: training micro-drama creators in Nigeria.

70%

OF NOLLYWOOD YOUTUBE VIEWS COME FROM OUTSIDE NIGERIA — THE DIASPORA IS THE MOST UNDERMONETIZED CONTENT AUDIENCE ON EARTH

Six Chinese-owned apps already operate through Singapore shells. The production-cost arbitrage (naira costs, dollar diaspora revenues) mirrors what China did. The question isn’t whether Africa gets a vertical drama market. It’s who builds it.

These five myths share a root: they treat vertical drama as a novelty. It’s a structural shift built on mobile-first consumption, micropayment infrastructure, and industrial-scale production. \$14B didn’t come from a trend. It came from convergence.

# This Was the Free Version. Here's What the Full Report Answers.

28

CHAPTERS

1,300+

DATA POINTS

65+

COMPANIES

33

CHARTS

EN/FR

BILINGUAL

Get the Full Report — €7,500 HT

Incl. exec deck, valuation, IC hostile pack, data room.  
Less than one day of McKinsey.

## WHAT YOU'LL KNOW THAT YOUR COMPETITORS WON'T

### The App Wars

Who's winning, who's burning, who's faking it. Sensor Tower Q1 2025. Singapore shells.

### Production Economics

Real cost benchmarks \$14K-\$500K. AI compression. Dual-format fiction.

### Investment Thesis

IP Factory vs app-layer valuation. DCF, comps, IC hostile pack. Red Team.

### China Ground Zero

NRTA regulation. iiMedia vs DataEye divergence. 690K jobs. 530 titles removed.

### Africa & Emerging

M-Pesa + telco bundling. Diaspora monetization. India. LatAm. MENA.

### Hits + Writers' Room

What makes a hit (0.46% rate). Retention mechanics. Coin psychology. SAG-AFTRA.

Book a 30-min call (no pitch, just answers):

[bostral.com/call](https://bostral.com/call)

Free weekly intelligence: [streaming-radar.com](https://streaming-radar.com)

Direct: [ludovic@streaming-radar.com](mailto:ludovic@streaming-radar.com)