REPORT

The short drama apps report

Data and insights from the snack-sized entertainment boom

ADJUST

With insights from: SensorTower

INTRODUCTION

The global rise of short drama

Short drama (or micro-drama) is a genre of ultra-short, vertically-formatted video series featuring fast plots and cliffhangers. Episodes are as short as 60 to 90 seconds and in just a few years, it has transformed from a niche medium into an explosive new entertainment format. Kuaishou and Douyin were the first major platforms to formalize the trend in China, and short-dramas are now being produced in the U.S. and all around the world.

In 2025, short drama apps generated 2.3 billion downloads globally, and by Q4, downloads had surged 186% YoY, while "traditional" OTT streaming app downloads fell 7% in the same period. Time spent on short drama apps also grew 311% YoY by Q4 2025. In the U.S., ReelShort users were averaging 35.7 minutes per day, more than Netflix mobile at 24.8 minutes, Amazon Prime Video at 26.9 minutes, and Disney+ at 23 minutes. User spending followed, with in-app purchase revenue reaching $2.98 billion in 2025, the third-fastest growth rate of any app category tracked by Sensor Tower. Across all markets and revenue streams, Omdia forecasts total micro-drama revenues will grow to $14 billion by end of 2026, with $3 billion generated outside China.

Asia remains the largest market by engagement, but Latin America has become the fastest-growing region, with short dramas accounting for nearly 16% of total video entertainment time in Q4 2025. North America and Europe, where time share sits at just 5% and 4% respectively, remain the format's largest underpenetrated revenue opportunity.

The methodology

VERTICALS:
Short drama

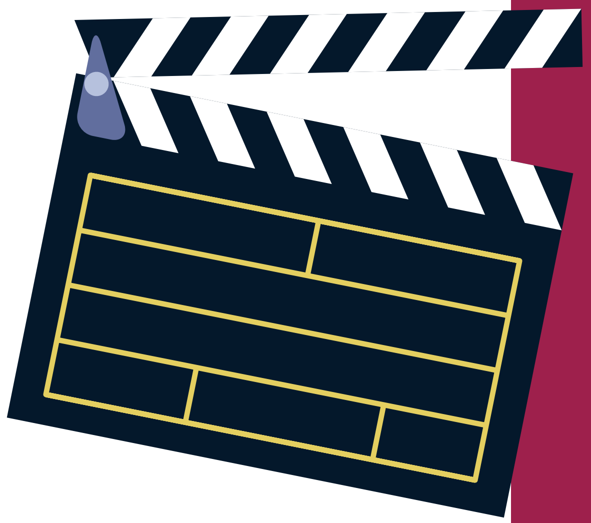
REGIONS:
Global, APAC, Europe, LATAM, MENA, North America

DATASET:
A mix of Adjust's top 5,000 apps and the total dataset of all apps tracked by Adjust. Our data comes from two sources, one including a list of 45 countries and one with approximately 250 countries and territories based on the ISO 3166-1 standard. Data is based on aggregated, anonymized data from apps tracked by Adjust and may not reflect the entire global app market. Unless otherwise noted, all figures in this report come from Adjust data.

DATA RANGE:
January 2025 - March 2026

Meanwhile, production of short dramas is getting faster and cheaper. More than 35 platforms surpassed 10 million global downloads in 2025, and the new entrants are no longer only small independents. [TikTok has launched PineDrama] and begun casting original productions. Disney, Fox, Amazon, and Netflix are all developing short-form serialized strategies of their own. All of that growth has made short drama one of the most competitive marketing environments in mobile. By the end of 2025, more than [700 distinct companies were actively advertising their short drama apps] every month, with creatives per advertiser up 145% YoY.

Drawing on app data across installs, engagement, retention, and revenue, we benchmark short drama performance across global and regional markets, giving developers and marketers a clear view of where growth is accelerating and where the strongest opportunities still lie.



"The short drama market is seeing rapid growth in user support, with both the number of operators and the volume of content continuing to surge. Overseas publishers are rolling out content quickly and in large volumes, while domestic publishers are distributing original works and locally produced content; as a result, the scale of promotional activities by each company is also expanding. Judging by current trends, the mobile entertainment short drama market is expected to continue experiencing significant growth in the future."

Hirotaka Ishizawa
Marketing Div. Manager
emole

	Top 10 short drama apps by downloads in Q1 2026 (Worldwide)
1	FreeReels
2	ReelShort
3	NetShort
4	DramaBox
5	Melolo
6	Story TV
7	Dramawave
8	Kuku TV
9	QuickTV
10	GoodShort

	Top 10 short drama apps by revenue in Q1 2026 (Worldwide)
1	DramaBox
2	ReelShort
3	NetShort
4	Dramawave
5	GoodShort
6	ShortMax
7	FlickReels
8	My Drama
9	StardustTV
10	FlareFlow

Source: SensorTower

What’s the industry's take on short drama?

Short drama may be exploding in downloads and revenue, but how are app marketers responding? To find out, we surveyed industry professionals working across app marketing.

AWARENESS IS ALREADY HIGH

69%

of respondents have seen ads for short drama apps.

CURIOSITY IS STRONG

80%

who have seen a short drama ad were interested.

ADVERTISERS ARE PAYING ATTENTION

67%

are advertising in short drama apps or interested in testing the channel.

DEVELOPMENT INTEREST IS EMERGING

50%

are actively building, or planning to build, a short drama app.

Q1 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

Short drama’s breakout season

EPISODE 1

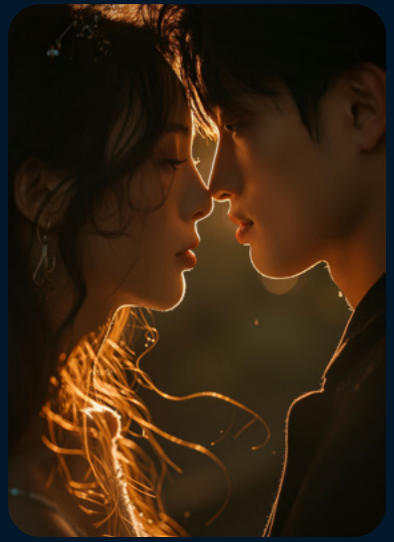
The global expansion
Short drama installs grew significantly around the world.

+238%
Installs YoY

EPISODE 2

Viewers return for more
Sessions grew nearly 3x more than installs.

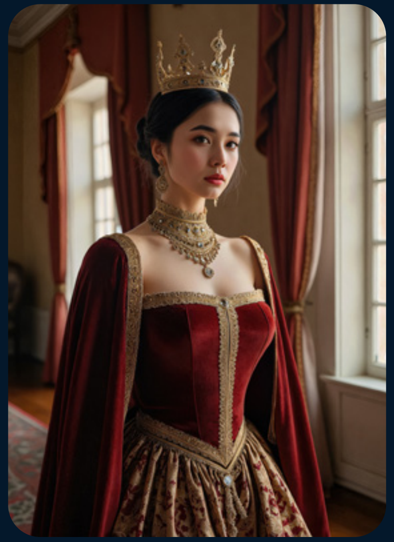
+679%
Sessions YoY



EPISODE 3

LATAM takes the lead
LATAM recorded the strongest install growth of any region.

+913%
Installs YoY



EPISODE 4

APAC’s growth accelerates
Session activity continued to climb across APAC.

+452%
Sessions YoY

EPISODE 5

MENA makes its mark
MENA showed strong adoption of short drama apps.

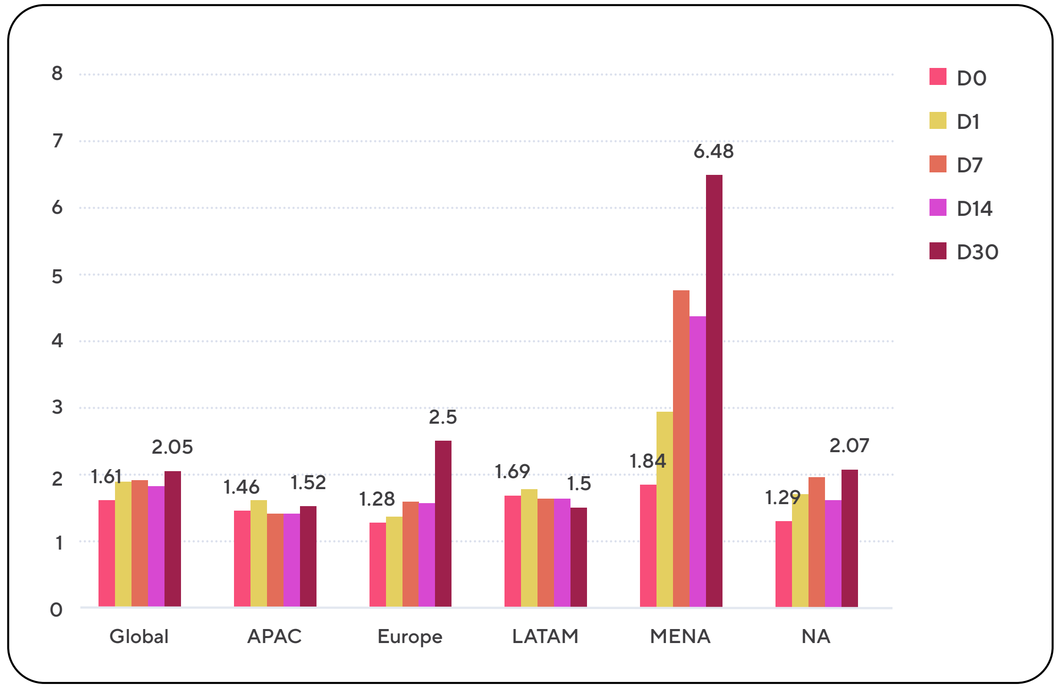
+323%
Installs YoY

EPISODE 6

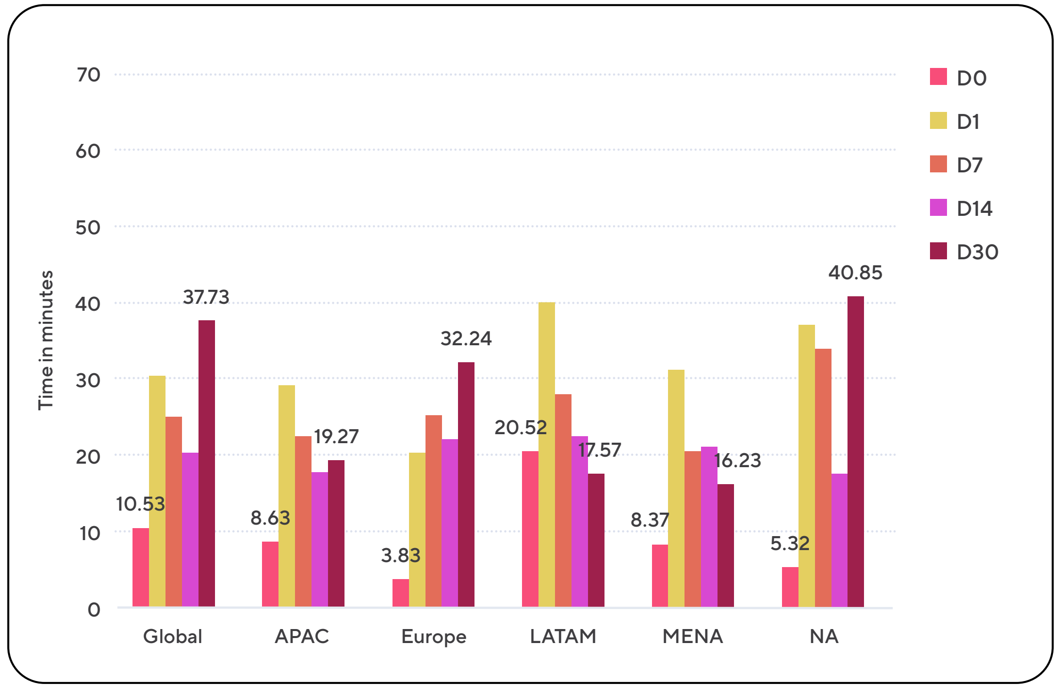
Viewers stay tuned in North America
North America stood out for its session growth.

+92%
Sessions YoY

Short drama app sessions per user per day Q1 2026



Short drama app time spent per user per day Q1 2026



Unlike most many categories where session frequency tapers off post-install, short drama apps showed the opposite pattern, with sessions per user per day generally increasing over the 30 day window across most regions.

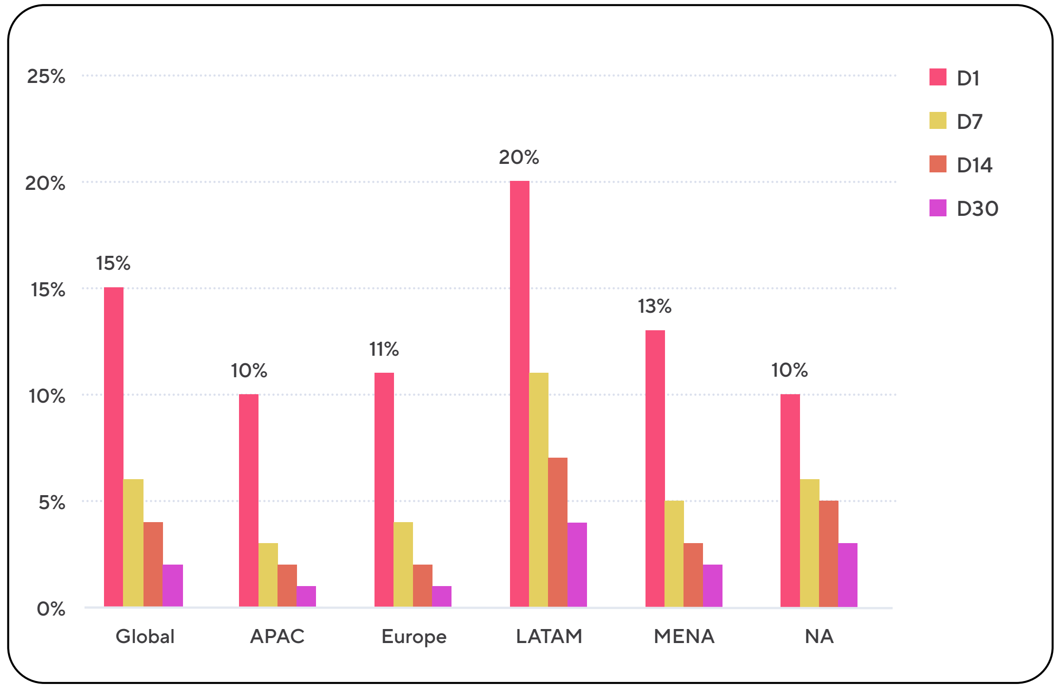
Globally, sessions per user jumped from 1.61 on day 0 to 2.05 by day 30. MENA had the highest levels throughout the period, reaching 4.76 sessions per user on day 7 and 6.48 by day 30.

Short drama numbers also perform well in terms of time spent in-app per day on day 30. This metric typically declines after install for most app categories. In North America and Europe, however, short drama goes the other way entirely. North America emerged as the strongest market at 40.85 minutes per user on day 30. Europe followed at 32.24 minutes, while the global average reached 37.73 minutes.

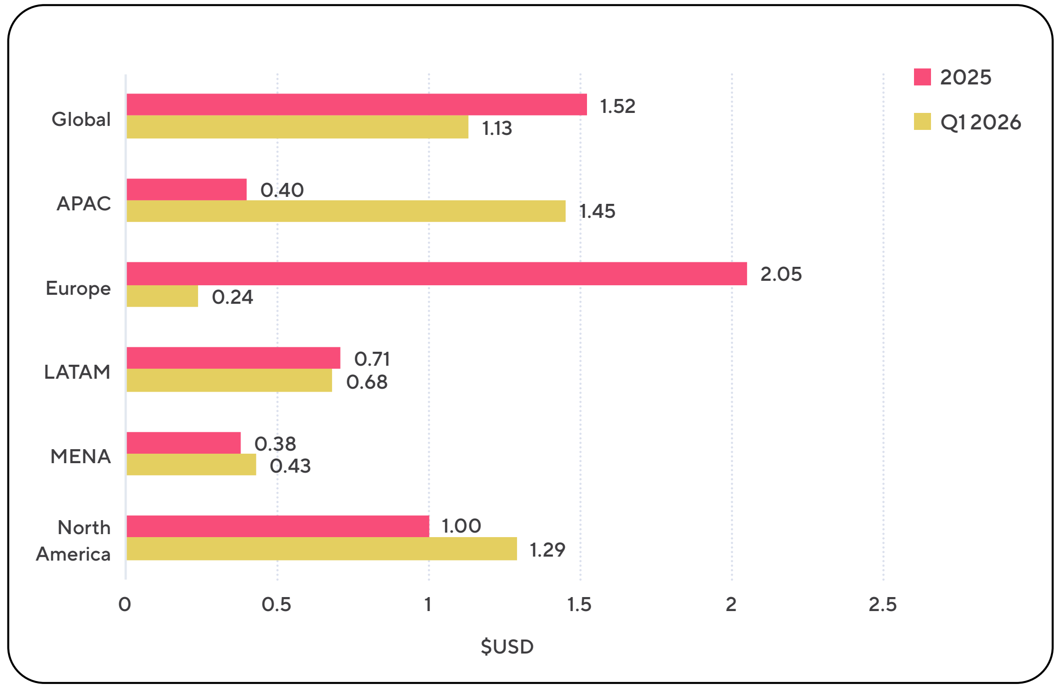
High engagement among retained users

Retention rates for short drama apps were broadly in line with what we see across other app categories. Engagement among retained users, however, was notably strong. By day 30, active users are still returning multiple times per day and spending substantial amounts of time watching content. This makes understanding which channels, creatives, and campaigns contribute to long-term activity critical as there are clearly super high-value users to acquire.

Short drama app retention rates Q1 2026



Short drama app total revenue per MAU 2025-Q1 2026



LATAM saw the strongest retention rates across all measured windows, reaching 20% on day 1 and remaining at 4% by day 30. This was higher than the global benchmark, which reached 15% on day 1 and 2% on day 30. MENA followed at 13%, while Europe hit 11%. APAC and North America both recorded 10% on day 1. By day 30, North America retained 3% of users, ahead of APAC and Europe, both 1%.

APAC and North America generated the highest revenue per monthly active user (MAU) in Q1 2026, reaching $1.45 and $1.29, respectively. Both regions improved compared to 2025, with APAC recording the largest increase overall (263%).

LATAM was one of the most consistent markets, with revenue per MAU decreasing slightly from $0.71 to $0.68. MENA increased from $0.38 to $0.43. Europe dropped from $2.05 in 2025 to $0.24 in Q1 2026.

ADJUST

ABOUT ADJUST

Adjust, an AppLovin (NASDAQ: APP) company, is a global leader in measurement, analytics, deep linking, and fraud prevention solutions for app marketers. Trusted by brands worldwide, Adjust helps marketers measure, optimize, and scale performance across every channel, platform, environment, and customer touchpoint. With AI-powered analytics, automation, privacy-centric attribution, engagement solutions, and much more, Adjust delivers the insights and tools marketers need to maximize ROI, improve user experiences, and drive omnichannel growth with confidence.

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