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The CTV Media Market

2026 Landscape, Distribution Strategy, and Advertising Economics

A research-led view of the global and US Connected TV ecosystem, the strategic power of the OS/device layer, distribution levers, and where advertising value accrues.

11 MIN READ | 9 VISUAL FRAMEWORKS | RESEARCH-LED ONLINE EDITION | REVIEWED JULY 2026

2026 Landscape, Distribution Strategy, and Advertising Economics

13.8%	36%	5
PROJECTED US CTV AD-SPEND GROWTH IN 2026	ROKU SHARE OF US OPEN-PROGRAMMATIC CTV AD SOV, Q1 2026	DISTRIBUTION LEVERS IN THE OPERATING FRAMEWORK

AT A GLANCE

Why this paper matters

A research-led view of the global and US Connected TV ecosystem, the strategic power of the OS/device layer, distribution levers, and where advertising value accrues.

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Executive Summary

Connected TV (CTV) has evolved beyond a simple extension of linear television—it is now the central nervous system of video content distribution and advertising. For media companies, advertisers, and telcos alike, understanding the structural dynamics of the CTV ecosystem has moved from "nice-to-know" to "strategic imperative."

This whitepaper synthesizes market research reviewed through Q1 2026 to address three core questions. Market-share measures are source-specific: device shipments, installed base, viewing, and open-programmatic advertising share of voice are not directly interchangeable.

1. **Market Landscape:** Who leads the US and global CTV markets, and why the distinction between smart TV OS share and total device share matters.
2. **Distribution Strategy:** Why OS-level presence has become the primary determinant of discoverability, engagement, and monetization—and how different levers (pre-installs, premium placement, remote buttons, deep linking) drive incremental lift.
3. **Advertising Economics:** How continued CTV ad-spend growth, programmatic buying, and platform control influence where value accrues.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- IAB projects US connected-TV ad spend to grow 13.8% in 2026, reinforcing CTV's role as a priority digital channel.
- Premium placement, OS-level merchandising, and deep linking should be treated as testable distribution levers, with lift validated against platform-specific baselines rather than assumed from universal benchmarks.
- The CTV ad market is growing rapidly but becoming a buyer's market: CPMs are under pressure, programmatic share is rising, and value is concentrated among OS platforms and OEMs—not publishers.

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Market Overview: Global and US CTV Landscape

Global Market Dynamics

The Connected TV (CTV) ecosystem has evolved into a globally scaled, platform-driven market, with regional dynamics shaped by device penetration, broadband infrastructure, and platform dominance.

APAC: The Growth Engine of Global CTV

APAC is a high-growth and highly fragmented CTV region, shaped by affordable smart-TV adoption, mobile-to-large-screen migration, and a wider mix of OEM and operating-system ecosystems. Because market estimates vary by category and methodology, regional strategy should be based on current country-level device, viewing, and advertising data.

Key Drivers of APAC Growth:

1. Rapid Smart TV Penetration

- Strong growth in mid-range and affordable smart TVs (TCL, Xiaomi, Hisense)
- Increasing adoption in price-sensitive but high-volume markets like India and Southeast Asia

2. Mobile-First to TV Migration

Users are transitioning from mobile video consumption to large-screen viewing, making CTV the primary household entertainment hub.

3. OS Fragmentation with OEM Control

- Unlike the US, APAC has:

- Multiple OS ecosystems (Android TV, VIDAA, PatchWall, Tizen)
- Strong influence of OEM-led platforms
- This creates:
- Lower platform concentration
- Higher complexity for advertisers

4. Ad-Supported Growth (AVOD/FAST)

- Price sensitivity drives:
- Free, ad-supported streaming models
- Rapid expansion of FAST channels

North America: The Most Mature & Monetized Market

While APAC leads in growth, North America (especially the US) remains the most mature and monetized CTV market globally.

Key Characteristics:

1. Platform Consolidation

- Dominated by a few key players:
- Roku
- Amazon Fire TV
- Samsung Tizen
- Leads to:

• High bargaining power at OS level

- Concentration of advertising value

1. Advanced Programmatic Ecosystem

- Programmatic buying is a major route to market, but its role varies by publisher, platform, inventory type, and measurement source.
- Strong adoption of:
- Private marketplaces (PMPs)
- Data-driven targeting

1. High ARPU & Ad Spend

- Higher ad loads and CPMs vs global markets
- CTV is now a core channel in media planning, not experimental

Europe: Fragmented but Regulated Growth

EUROPE REPRESENTS A MID-MATURITY MARKET, WITH GROWTH CONSTRAINED BY:

- Regulatory environments (GDPR)
- Fragmented language and content ecosystems

KEY TRAITS

- Strong public broadcasters transitioning to CTV
- Slower programmatic adoption vs US
- Increasing focus on privacy-compliant targeting

Global Strategic Insights

1. Growth vs Monetization Split

• APAC = Scale + Growth

- US = Monetization + Control **Implication:** Global players must balance volume markets (APAC) with high-yield markets (US)

1. OS Layer Determines Market Power

US

- Platform-controlled ecosystem

APAC

- OEM + fragmented OS ecosystem **Implication:** The degree of OS consolidation directly impacts who captures value

1. Advertising Models Diverge by Region

APAC

- AVOD / FAST driven

US

- Programmatic + premium inventory **Implication:** Monetization strategies must be region-specific, not global templates

1. The Convergence Trend Despite regional differences, all markets are moving toward:

- Platform-led discovery
- Content-level targeting
- OS-level monetization

While APAC is defining the future scale of CTV, the US continues to define its economic model. The winners in this ecosystem will be those who can operate effectively across both paradigms—balancing scale with monetization, and distribution with platform control.

Global smart-TV brand and OS landscape

Hardware brand share and operating-system reach do not map cleanly to one another. Some manufacturers operate their own OS, while others distribute Google TV, Roku OS, Fire TV, VIDAA, or multiple systems across markets. For distribution planning, the relevant question is not simply which brand sold the television, but which platform controls discovery, identity, advertising, and app-store access in the target market.

US Market: Smart TV OS vs. Total CTV Device Share

THE US CONNECTED TV (CTV) ECOSYSTEM REQUIRES A CRITICAL STRUCTURAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN:

SMART TV OS SHARE

- The operating system embedded in the television

TOTAL CTV DEVICE SHARE

- All access points, including:

> **• Smart TVs • Streaming sticks/boxes (Roku, Fire TV, Apple TV) • Gaming consoles (PlayStation, Xbox)**

Why This Distinction Matters

At a surface level, market share data may appear straightforward—but platform power is determined by access layer aggregation, not just TV shipments.

> **Key Insight:** The battle for CTV dominance is not won at the TV level—it is won at the access layer.

Market Structure Explained

Smart TV OS Share (Embedded Layer)

- Dominated by OEM-driven platforms:
- Samsung (Tizen)

- LG (webOS)
- Strength comes from:
- Hardware sales
- Default OS control at device activation

Limitation: No presence in external streaming devices

FIGURE Top smart TV operating systems worldwide

Total CTV Device Share (Access Layer)

- Includes:
- Built-in OS
- Plug-in streaming devices
- Consoles

This is where true user reach is measured

> **Measurement note:** Pixalate's Q1 2026 report measured US open-programmatic CTV advertising share of voice at Roku 36%, Amazon Fire TV 19%, Samsung Smart TV 15%, Apple TV 13%, and LG 4%. This measures open-programmatic ad transactions, not the installed base of television operating systems. Source: Pixalate, 30 April 2026.

Platform Positioning: Who Really Leads?

Roku: The Aggregation Leader

Samsung: The Hardware-Led Leader

Amazon Fire TV: The Hybrid Challenger

- Dominates total device share
- Strategy:
- Leads Smart TV OS share
- Strong in:
- **Embedded OS (via OEM partnerships:** Hisense, TCL, Philips)
- Strength:
- Streaming devices
- Premium TV dominance
- Increasing OEM integrations

POSITIONED BETWEEN ROKU AND OEMS

- Strong streaming device ecosystem (sticks, boxes)

RESULT

- Global hardware scale

LIMITATION

- No meaningful presence in:
- Presence across both embedded + external layers
- Streaming sticks
- Maximum reach across households
- External device ecosystem

Growth Dynamics: Emerging Players

- Integrated into:

Xumo (Comcast / Charter)

- Broadband bundles
- Fastest-growing platform:
- Pay-TV transitions

ANDROID TV (GOOGLE)

- Growing through OEM partnerships and global platform availability.

Growth is market-specific

- Backed by distribution power of ISPs
- Strength:
- Global ecosystem
- Fragmented UX vs Roku/Amazon
- OEM flexibility

CHALLENGE

Strategic Implications

1. Distribution Strategy Must Be Multi-Layered

- Smart TV presence alone is insufficient
- Must optimize across:

FIGURE Who wins the U.S. CTV market?

- Embedded OS
- Streaming devices
- Content surfaces

2. Roku’s Advantage Is Structural, Not Just Scale

Roku wins because it exists everywhere the user can enter

- TV
- HDMI
- OS layer

3. OEM Leadership ≠ Platform Control

HARDWARE

- Platforms

4. Telco-Led Platforms Are the Next Disruptor

- Xumo signals a new model:
- Distribution + connectivity + platform

POTENTIAL FUTURE SHIFT: ISPS BECOMING CTV GATEKEEPERS.

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Distribution Strategy: The OS/Device Layer as a Strategic Control Point

The Paradigm Shift: From App-Centric to OS-Centric Behavior

One of the most common strategic errors is treating CTV distribution as a linear extension of mobile app ecosystems. This assumption is fundamentally flawed.

CTV environments—across Android TV, Tizen, webOS, and Roku OS—operate as closed, platform-governed ecosystems where the OS is not merely a technical layer but the primary orchestrator of user attention.

UNLIKE MOBILE, WHERE USERS ACTIVELY SEARCH, CTV IS CHARACTERIZED BY:

- Lean-back consumption behavior (users turn on the TV often without knowing what they want to watch)
- Limited input mechanisms (remote controls vs. touchscreens)
- High reliance on algorithmic and editorial surfacing

As a result: "Installed but not surfaced" is functionally equivalent to "non-existent" for a majority of users.

The Five Levers of CTV Distribution: A Hierarchical Framework

Not all distribution levers are created equal. Their strategic value increases exponentially as one moves up the stack.

FIGURE Strategic levers for CTV distribution

FIG 5: STRATEGIC LEVERS FOR CTV DISTRIBUTION

Key operating insight: Premium home-screen placement typically receives disproportionate visibility. The actual impact should be measured by platform, market, content type, and campaign period rather than treated as a universal percentage.

Quantifying Incremental Lift by Lever

BASED ON RECURRING PATTERNS OBSERVED ACROSS STREAMING LAUNCHES AND TELCO-MEDIA INTEGRATIONS, THE LEVERS SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED BY THE BUSINESS OUTCOME THEY ARE EXPECTED TO INFLUENCE:

FIGURE Performance impact on TV app ecosystems

- **For volume (MAU growth):** Prioritize pre-installs + premium row placement.
- **For revenue (paid conversion):** Prioritize OS-level content merchandising (featured rails, Watch Next) and deep linking.
- **For valuation (LTV/churn reduction):** The remote button is the only lever that builds a sustainable habit resistant to competitive poaching.

Deep Linking: The Highest-Value Conversion Lever

Deep linking—directing a user to a specific piece of content (a live match, a specific episode) rather than the app Home page—is arguably the most underutilized conversion lever in CTV.

Why it matters:

- **Friction reduction:** Deep linking can shorten the path from campaign exposure to playback by removing search and navigation steps.
- **Conversion impact:** Landing directly on relevant content can improve completion and subscription journeys, but the lift must be validated through controlled platform-specific testing.
- **Live events:** For time-sensitive content (sports, news), deep linking is the difference between capturing the viewer and losing them to Twitter for updates.

The "Netflix problem": Netflix often blocks deep linking from third-party OSs (e.g., Apple TV's "Up Next") to control the user journey and prioritize their own algorithmic recommendations. This highlights that deep linking is not just technical—it is strategic.

Telco advantage: Telcos can mandate deep-linking capabilities as part of distribution deals, ensuring that marketing spend (SMS, email, bill inserts) converts to consumption.

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Advertising Economics: Growth, Structure, and Value Distribution

Market Size and Growth

CTV advertising remains one of the faster-growing digital channels. IAB's 2026 Outlook projects US connected-TV ad spend to rise 13.8% in 2026, compared with 9.5% growth for total US advertising.

> **Source: IAB, *2026 Outlook Study: U.S. Ad Spend to Rise 9.5%*, 28 January 2026. Review the IAB release.**

- Shift from linear TV to streaming
- Increasing ad-supported tier adoption (Netflix Basic with Ads, Disney+ Ads, etc.)
- Programmatic automation and improved targeting

Competitive Landscape: Programmatic Ad Share (US)

The US programmatic CTV ad market is highly concentrated among a few platforms:

FIGURE US open-programmatic CTV advertising share of voice, Q1 2026. Source: Pixalate; share is based on open-programmatic ad transactions and is not installed-base market share.

CPM Trends: A Buyer's Market Emerges

CTV PRICING VARIES WIDELY BY INVENTORY QUALITY, AUDIENCE, MARKET, BUYING ROUTE, LIVE-EVENT RIGHTS, MEASUREMENT GUARANTEES, AND DEAL STRUCTURE. OPEN-AUCTION INVENTORY MAY PRICE BELOW CURATED OR PLATFORM-DIRECT SUPPLY, WHILE PREMIUM SPORTS AND HIGH-DEMAND PROGRAMMING CAN COMMAND SUBSTANTIAL PREMIUMS.

Planning implication: Use current deal-level benchmarks and transparent supply-path data rather than relying on a single market-wide CPM range.

Why CPMs are falling:

- **Supply surge:** More ad-supported tiers (Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video ads) have dramatically increased available inventory.
- **Ad load increases:** Platforms are increasing ad minutes per hour, further suppressing prices.
- **Buyer consolidation:** Major agency holding groups and DSPs (The Trade Desk, Google DV360) wield significant negotiating power.
- **Implication for advertisers:** CTV is becoming a buyer's market. Advertisers can secure high-reach, brand-safe inventory at declining prices. However, fragmentation remains a challenge.

Programmatic Trends and Ad Fraud

THE CTV PROGRAMMATIC ECOSYSTEM IS MATURING BUT FACES STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES:

FIGURE CTV advertising structural challenges

Key risk: As CTV programmatic grows, so does "made-for-advertising" (MFA) CTV inventory—channels with minimal legitimate viewership designed to capture programmatic spend.

The Publisher Squeeze: Where Value Actually Accrues

The most important structural insight for media companies: The CTV advertising value chain is highly concentrated at the OS/platform layer, not the content publisher layer.

Who captures value

FIGURE Connected TV ad ecosystem breakdown

1. **OS platforms control the home screen:** They decide which content gets surfaced. Without placement, even high-quality content can go unwatched.
2. **ACR data creates an advantage:** OEMs such as Samsung and LG capture Automatic Content Recognition data, giving them targeting insight that publishers cannot easily replicate.

3. **Revenue-share requirements compress margins:** Many OS partners require a share of subscription revenue from apps receiving premium placement.
4. **Content ownership alone is insufficient:** Winning in CTV requires owning the OS layer, partnering deeply with it, or accepting reduced control and margin.

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Strategic Implications for Advertisers and Publishers

For Advertisers

- **Leverage falling CPMs:** Run programmatic CTV tests while the market favors buyers.
- **Demand measurement rigor:** Work with partners that support accredited measurement and avoid made-for-advertising inventory.
- **Prioritize platform-direct deals:** Platform DSPs can offer stronger targeting and inventory access than a pure open auction.
- **Use deep linking in creative:** QR codes and companion ads can take viewers directly to relevant content and improve conversion.

For Publishers (Media Companies)

- **Invest in OS integration, not just distribution:** Prioritize universal search, "Watch Next" integration, and premium placement negotiations.
- **Use telco leverage where available:** Bundled devices and broadband relationships can strengthen placement negotiations.
- **Make deep linking contractual:** Distribution agreements should explicitly support campaign-level deep links.
- **Consider OS ownership or deep partnership:** Where ownership is unrealistic, pursue a strategic platform relationship rather than a basic app listing.

For Telco-Media Partnerships

TELCOS HAVE A UNIQUE STRUCTURAL ADVANTAGE IN CTV NEGOTIATIONS:

1. **Hardware distribution leverage:** "We will buy 1 million Samsung TVs for our broadband customers if Samsung puts our app in the top row."
2. **Bundled billing:** OS partners prioritize services that are bundled into mobile or broadband bills (reduces payment friction).
3. **Set-top box control:** Telcos that own the gateway or set-top box can pre-install and feature their own apps without depending entirely on third-party platforms.

> **Recommended baseline for telco-media partnerships: Pre-installs + premium row placement as the minimum ROI driver, with the remote button as the ultimate strategic asset for high-value customer segments.**

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Conclusion: The Three Pillars of CTV Success

Based on the Q1 2026 market research and behavioral analysis, three pillars define success in CTV:

FIGURE The three pillars of Connected TV success

Final synthesis: Winning in CTV is no longer about having the best content alone. It is about winning the moments before the app is even launched—through OS prominence, deep integration, and a distribution strategy that treats the platform as a strategic partner, not just a channel.

In the US CTV market, ownership of the television does not equate to ownership of the viewer. The true power lies with platforms that control multiple entry points into the ecosystem—making aggregation, not installation, the defining metric of dominance.

Sources and methodology. The strategic framework combines operating analysis with current public market evidence. Key dated sources used for the refreshed online edition include IAB's 2026 Outlook (28 January 2026) and Pixalate's Q1 2026 CTV Device Market Share report (30 April 2026). Pixalate's share-of-voice figures are based on open-programmatic ad transactions and should not be treated as installed-base or shipment share. Other market references should be validated against the latest country, platform, and measurement-specific data before investment decisions. IAB source · Pixalate source.

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