CULTSCALE

Infrastructure for independent cinema

SlasherPlay.tv

MENA Horror Platform Strategy, Operating Plan, and Financial Case

ABOUT THIS ASSESSMENT

Scope and Key Findings

CULTSCALE's mission is **Infrastructure for independent cinema**. This assessment is part of that mission: turning strong content positions into durable, operating streaming businesses. Our work covers subscription product design, launch strategy, content programming, audience development, and the B2B commercial structures that make regional streaming economics work.

We were asked to assess SlasherPlay.tv ahead of its public launch and define a management scope of work for the first operating stages. This document covers three things: the platform as it exists today, the market it is entering, and the operating scope required for launch and year-one execution. We reviewed the live platform, the full catalogue, and the competitive landscape across MENA.

WHAT WE ASSESSED

Platform against a launch readiness checklist
Catalogue size, rights designations, and MENA availability
Competitive landscape across MENA and comparable markets
The structural conditions for category ownership
A phased launch and operating roadmap through year one

WHAT WE FOUND

A platform close to ready but not there yet
A rights position that is stronger than it appears publicly
A competitive window that is real and time-limited
A structural advantage the distributor already holds
A clear role for focused operations management

The management scope of work is on the final pages. The case for it follows from the assessment: SlasherPlay's structural assets are already in place. What the platform needs is the operational layer to convert them into a subscriber business that behaves like a product.

ALIGNMENT MAP

Six Questions, Six Positions

The sections that follow go deep on each question. This page is the summary: where we stand and why it matters.

QUESTION	OUR POSITION
1. Is there a real category to own?	Yes. The MENA horror category is open. No regional platform has built an identity for this audience. Distributor backing creates a content access and distribution advantage that a startup entrant cannot replicate.
2. Is the competitive window real?	Yes, and it has a shelf life. No MENA platform has claimed the horror category. Shudder's absence is structural. The window closes when someone else claims the position.
3. Is the content position defensible?	Conditionally. 42.9% of titles carry an exclusivity designation. The actual value depends on how many of those carry verified MENA exclusive windows. A rights audit is the first step before any content marketing claim.
4. Is the platform ready to acquire subscribers?	Not yet. Nine items need resolution before any press or paid activity. None requires structural change. Two to three weeks of focused work closes all of them.
5. What should the first twelve months look like?	Three phases: Pre-Launch Sprint, Launch Operations, and Intelligence, Community, and Positioning. Phase 1 starts immediately.
6. What does owning this category require?	Five conditions. SlasherPlay holds a structural advantage on all five. The question is whether they are activated within the competitive window.

SECTION 01

Is There a Real Category to Own?

> **Shudder, the global horror-category benchmark, is geoblocked across the entire MENA region. The category is open, and permanent category ownership in a defined niche is genuinely rare.**

The MENA Streaming Market

MENA streaming is in its second phase of growth. The first wave established the habit of paid streaming across the Gulf and Egypt, driven by Shahid, beIN, STARZPLAY, and Netflix's regional investment. Their programming concentrated on Arabic drama, sports, and premium Hollywood content, leaving genre audiences – horror fans in particular – outside every regional content roadmap.

MENA is already a paying streaming market at scale: Omdia reports more than 27 million SVOD subscriptions across the region at end-2024. To keep the strategy and model fully aligned, this assessment then uses a bottom-up paying-streamer base (Appendix F) for launch execution planning. In the core launch region (GCC, Egypt, and the Levant), the model assumes 7.07 million paying streamers. Applying the same 3–4% horror-share assumption used in the workbook yields an immediate paying horror TAM of roughly 212K–283K (sensitivity: 106K at 1.5%, 212K at 3%, 354K at 5%). This audience currently accesses horror through Netflix's generalist catalogue, piracy, and informal social viewing. A dedicated home for them remains the unclaimed space in MENA streaming.

The Distributor's Structural Advantage

SlasherPlay's position, as a platform owned by a major regional distributor, is its primary competitive asset. Three things follow directly from it.

Content access at the rights level

The platform can acquire exclusive MENA rights to horror titles that a new streaming startup cannot negotiate. The difference between a catalogue and a rights position is the difference between a video store and a streaming platform.

Telco and IPTV access

Existing relationships with STC, du, Mobily, and e& convert B2B distribution infrastructure into the highest-leverage subscriber acquisition channel available at launch. Bundle placements reach audiences that paid social advertising cannot.

Regional credibility with filmmakers and press

Established relationships with Arabic horror filmmakers, regional festival programmers, and entertainment press create a credibility foundation that takes years to build from scratch. A SlasherPlay Original co-produced with a recognized regional filmmaker carries weight that paid marketing alone cannot generate.

OUR POSITION

The MENA horror category is open. No regional platform has built an identity for this audience. Distributor backing creates a content access and distribution advantage that a startup entrant cannot replicate. The category is yours to define.

Cultural Context: Horror in MENA

Horror has specific resonances across MENA that generalist platforms, optimized for breadth over depth, are not positioned to serve.

The demand is real. Gen Z audiences across the region (born 1997–2012) are the most horror-literate cohort in MENA's media history. They grew up on international horror content, participate actively in global horror communities on TikTok, Reddit, and Discord, and are actively looking for a platform that takes their taste seriously.

The cultural material is rich and underexplored. The Arabic horror tradition (djinn, sihr, the ayn, folk demons, haunted sacred spaces) sits at the intersection of deeply local cultural memory and global genre entertainment. No international platform has built an editorial identity around it. That gap belongs to whoever claims it durably.

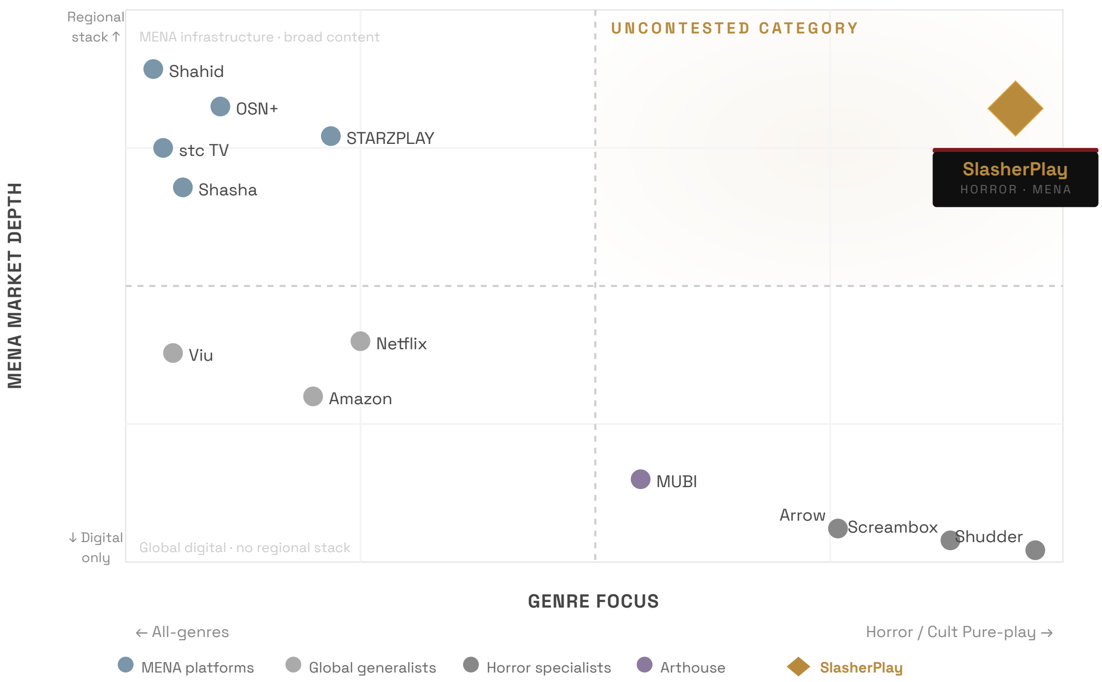
The regulatory picture is navigable. Content classification requirements vary by territory: the UAE and Saudi Arabia have active frameworks; Egypt has specific considerations around religious imagery. The platform's 18+ rating system is the right infrastructure. A MENA-specific content policy, reviewed against the regulatory requirements of the priority territories, should be finalized before any marketing campaign.

SECTION 02

Is the Competitive Window Real?

MENA streaming comprises overlapping territories with different dominant players, regulatory environments, and audience behaviors.

The Competitive Vacuum



Y-axis reflects depth of regional distribution infrastructure: telco bundling, carrier billing, and local licensing relationships; platforms with digital availability only sit lower on this axis. Netflix and MUBI are both accessible in MENA but operate with a digital-only presence; their positions reflect that distinction. Shudder is the horror category benchmark, geoblocked across MENA with no expansion announced. STARZPLAY Arabia is 57% owned by e& (Etisalat) and ADQ following a 2022 acquisition. 12 platforms mapped.

Platform Comparison

PLATFORM	MENA FOOTPRINT	HORROR CATALOGUE	RELEVANCE
Shahid MBC Group	65M+ registered users; Arabic-first; dominant across the region	No horror vertical. Some thriller elements in crime and drama content.	**Indirect** Distinct audience mandate; no genre overlap
Netflix Nasdaq: NFLX	Available across 20+ MENA territories; localized pricing in KSA, UAE, and Egypt	Horror titles in catalogue; no dedicated shelf or editorial identity for the genre	**Monitor** Scale and discovery algorithms affect early subscriber acquisition
OSN+ KIPCO / Mawarid Group · WBD minority stake (2023)	GCC-anchored; exclusive HBO regional rights; 18,000+ hours of content	HBO-affiliated horror and thriller titles present; no dedicated horror curation. Donnie Darko confirmed active on platform.	**Indirect** Premium Hollywood focus; no horror positioning
STARZPLAY Arabia e& (Etisalat) / ADQ, 57% majority	3M+ subscribers; strong in KSA and UAE via telco carrier bundling	Some genre content via Lionsgate/Starz library; no horror editorial identity	**Indirect** Telco distribution model is a commercial channel opportunity
stc TV STC Group	Saudi-first; bundled within STC mobile and IPTV subscriber base	Arabic-first entertainment focus; no horror catalogue	**Low** No content overlap; potential distribution channel
Amazon Prime Amazon.com Inc	Active in KSA, UAE, and Egypt; bundled with Prime membership; local content investment increasing	Genre titles available; no horror editorial position or dedicated curation	**Indirect** Breadth platform; no genre identity to defend
Shasha Kuwait-based; London HQ	Gulf-first; original Khaleeji drama and exclusive Gulf sports rights; active across KSA, UAE, and Kuwait	No horror content. Drama, comedy, and live sports only.	**Comparable** Niche MENA vertical SVOD proof-of-concept: focused cultural identity competing alongside Shahid and Netflix
Shudder AMC Networks	**Geoblocked across MENA** No regional licensing; no Arabic subtitles	**100% horror and dark genre** Standalone subscriber count not publicly broken out by AMC; originals include Creepshow and The Last Drive-In	**Watch closely** Category benchmark; MENA expansion would close the window
SlasherPlay assessed platform	**First MENA horror destination; distributor-backed infrastructure**	**100% horror; 252 titles at launch; 42.9% carry an exclusivity designation**	**Category owner** Uncontested category position in MENA

The Shudder Question

Shudder is the world's only scaled horror SVOD. AMC Networks launched it in 2015. AMC Networks does not publicly break out a standalone Shudder subscriber figure; the platform operates across nine or more markets, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It has not launched in MENA.

The absence is structural, not accidental. Shudder's catalogue rights are negotiated for Anglophone markets, which means the content rights that define its product do not extend to the region. Its editorial identity is built around English-language curation, US horror culture, and community formats (The Last Drive-In with Joe Bob Briggs, the annual Ghoul Log) that have no local equivalent. Its owner, AMC Networks, has no MENA infrastructure, no Arabic-language capability, and no regional distribution relationships.

If Shudder decided to enter MENA tomorrow, here is what it would have.

A recognizable brand among the English-speaking horror community, a catalogue whose MENA rights it does not currently hold, and no local partnerships. It would face the same content acquisition process, the same regulatory navigation, and the same cold-start subscriber problem as any new entrant. The brand alone does not translate: the MENA horror audience is not waiting for an American platform to arrive. They are waiting for a platform that understands them.

Understanding a horror audience means recognising that genre functions as identity. These are fans who seek the content out, who know the subcategories that general platforms routinely collapse into a single label, and who share discoveries obsessively within communities that algorithmic recommendation never reaches. They have been watching horror on services whose logic was built for audiences with completely different tastes. A platform that earns their loyalty does so through editorial intelligence, what gets front placement, how films are described, whether the curation signals that someone who actually cares about the genre made these decisions. That signal is the product, as much as the catalogue.

The moat against Shudder's entry is built from five assets that compound with time:

MENA rights position

Exclusive MENA windows, secured before Shudder identifies the market as a priority, are not replicable. Once content is locked to SlasherPlay in the region, it is unavailable to a competitor regardless of how much they are willing to spend.

Genre intelligence and editorial voice

Shudder's editorial identity is calibrated for an Anglophone audience, its community formats, critical framing, and host talent are built around US horror culture. A platform operating inside the MENA context, understanding what transgressive content means here and how to programme for it, cannot be replicated from New York. That gap widens with every programming decision SlasherPlay makes.

Distribution infrastructure

The telco and IPTV relationships that make a regional bundle deal possible are not available to a US operator without a local partner. SlasherPlay's parent company has spent years building those relationships. That pipeline is a structural barrier for any outside entrant.

Community ownership

A MENA horror community that formed around SlasherPlay – its editorial voice, its events, its cultural anchors – does not migrate to a foreign competitor without a compelling reason. The switching cost is not price; it is identity. Shudder would need to build that from zero.

Monetization architecture

Shudder stayed pure SVOD. Its cross-sell vehicle was AMC+: a bundle upgrade that moved subscribers laterally rather than building multi-engine conversion into the platform itself. Shudder never ran a free tier as top-of-funnel, and it never treated TVOD rentals as a path into subscription. A user who is not ready to pay for a subscription has no way in. A user who rents a title once has no structured pathway to become a subscriber.

None of these are passive advantages. Each requires a decision and a sprint. The goal is not to outpace Shudder – it is to build something Shudder cannot displace. Early position matters only if it converts to permanent ownership. The window to build that claim is measured in quarters, not years.

A fifth advantage is architectural. SlasherPlay is designed with three revenue engines from launch: SVOD as the economic core, AVOD as top-of-funnel for audiences not yet ready to pay, and TVOD as a premium window that converts engaged renters into subscribers. The cross-sell that works is not SVOD pushing TVOD rentals to existing paying subscribers, which feels extractive. It is AVOD free-tier viewers converting to SVOD as catalogue depth earns their trust, and TVOD premiere buyers discovering the subscription library after a transactional purchase. The PRISM model quantifies this directly: TVOD organic share starts at 50% in Year 1 (existing platform users, not net-new acquisition spend) and rises to 70% by Year 5. SVOD organic contribution starts at 10% and grows to 30% as word-of-mouth compounds. Shudder left this mechanism entirely unbuilt.

OUR POSITION

The category is genuinely unoccupied in MENA, and Shudder's absence is structural rather than temporary. The window closes if a global platform expands or another distributor claims the position first. The competitive advantage exists, but it requires activation to become durable.

SECTION 03

Is the Content Position Defensible?

The 252 titles in the catalogue show genuine editorial highlights: **Donnie Darko**, **Angel Heart**, **Escape From New York**, the **Winnie-the-Pooh** franchise, the Hell House LLC franchise. The thematic collection structure (“Midnight Movies”, “Young Audiences”, “Fantasia”) shows curatorial intelligence. For context, Shudder entered beta in 2015 with approximately 200 titles before its full 2016 launch; SlasherPlay’s 252-title inventory is a credible starting position. Full catalogue data, platform availability, and brand classification are in the PRISM model workbook (Catalog tab).

Of the 252 titles, 144 carry no exclusivity designation and are available on competing platforms. The remaining 108 titles carry an Exclusive label – 42.9% of the catalogue – representing the actual rights position. At launch, subscribers choose for the destination experience: curation, brand, editorial voice. What they return for is what only this platform carries.

Genre Identity and Catalogue Boundaries

Crime is the largest single genre tag in the catalogue at 76 titles. That concentration raises a question the platform needs to answer before launch: is SlasherPlay a horror platform, or a dark-genre destination? The answer shapes every content acquisition decision, every piece of subscriber-facing copy, and the expectations a subscriber arrives with. Clarity here is not a marketing exercise – it is an editorial contract with the audience.

A small number of titles in the catalogue have no clear adjacency to horror: **Apocalypse Now**, **Bulletproof Monk**, and a handful of others appeared during the content audit. At this stage that is a routine gap. A final editorial pass before launch should remove or recategorize anything that does not belong in a horror destination – an unaligned title does more damage to the editorial identity than an empty slot.

None of the 252 titles currently carry Arabic as a primary language or include an Arabic dub. For a MENA horror platform whose differentiation includes the Arabic horror tradition, that absence needs to be part of the Year 1 content brief. Even a curated selection of 20 to 30 Arabic-language titles would anchor the claim and make it legible to the audience it intends to reach.

Niche and indie cinema functions like a luxury product. Exclusivity, curation, and fit are not optional attributes – they are definitional. A title that does not belong in the catalogue damages the brand in exactly the same way a wrong product on a luxury shelf does. The audience arrived for something specific. Serving them something generic is not neutral – it is a breach of the trust that brought them through the door. This logic governs every catalogue decision in this assessment.

Brand Alignment and Catalog Dilution Risk

A full classification of all 252 titles against the horror genre core was conducted for this assessment. Titles were scored against genre tags and editorial categories and placed into three groups.

On-brand (173 titles, 68.7%): Titles with a primary genre tag of Horror, Slasher, Terror, Ghost, Supernatural, Serial Killer, or Psycho. These are the titles a horror subscriber came for.

Borderline (7 titles, 2.8%): Thriller or multi-genre titles with a strong horror-category signal (slasher, terror, or midnight-movies editorial placement). These are defensible as horror-adjacent and likely serve the core audience.

Off-brand (72 titles, 28.6%): Titles primarily tagged as Crime, Action, Sci-Fi, Comedy, Animation, Family, or Western with no horror-category anchor. These include Action-Crime thrillers, franchise action titles, and family-fare that were likely added for catalog breadth or licensing bundling reasons.

The practical implication is that nearly one in three titles on SlasherPlay does not serve the subscriber the platform is marketing to. A horror fan browsing the library encounters 72 titles that signal the platform does not fully understand its own genre identity.

The PRISM model reflects this in two ways. First, the effective launch library is set at 173 titles – the on-brand count only. The 72 off-brand titles are excluded from subscriber value calculations because they do not drive acquisition, retention, or the horror identity the platform is selling. This means the platform is not launching with 252 titles in any meaningful sense; it is launching with 173. Second, the model applies a dilution churn multiplier for the 72 titles that are still visible to subscribers: even if they do not count toward the value proposition, encountering them creates noise and erodes trust. At the current on-brand share of 68.7% and an assumed dilution sensitivity of 0.20, blended monthly churn runs approximately 6.3% above the clean-catalog baseline (sensitivity should be stress-tested).

Starting from 173 effective titles rather than 252 also changes the content acquisition brief. The model targets 50 on-brand additions per year with no automatic ceiling. With Year 1 being a launch-only year, the first 50 additions arrive in Year 2. The catalog grows to 223 by Year 2, 273 by Year 3, 323 by Year 4, and 373 by Year 5. Titles are not permanently cumulative – the team reviews the library periodically against performance data and acquisition patterns, retiring titles that no longer serve the audience or that are displaced by better acquisitions. The model does not force retirements by formula; that is an editorial call, not a financial one.

The editorial fix – removing or de-shelving the 72 off-brand titles – is the single highest-leverage action available before launch. It costs nothing, it improves every downstream metric, and it sharpens the subscriber proposition from “a large MENA streaming library with horror in it” to “the MENA home for horror.”

ON-BRAND	BORDERLINE	OFF-BRAND
173	7	72
68.7% of catalogue	2.8% of catalogue	28.6% of catalogue

On the Exclusivity and Originals Labels

The platform uses two labels that carry subscriber trust and marketing implications.

Exclusive (108 titles): SlasherPlay designates these titles as exclusive to the platform within MENA – 90 licensed titles with asserted regional exclusivity, plus 18 titles that hold exclusive MENA rights and are tagged as Originals. One additional title tagged as an Original (Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey 2) is available on OSN+ (formerly STARZPLAY) and is excluded from the exclusive 108 count. All 90 licensed exclusives showed no competing MENA availability on verified platforms; verification against the underlying rights agreements is the definitive check.

Originals (18 exclusive titles, 19 total): The catalogue carries 19 titles tagged as Originals. Of these, 18 hold exclusive MENA rights and none of those 18 appear on other MENA platforms. One title tagged as Original (Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey 2) is available on OSN+ (formerly STARZPLAY) and is therefore counted outside the exclusive 108. What the designation means in practice is not stated: whether these are commissioned productions, co-productions, or acquisitions carrying a first-window MENA deal is unclear from the platform. That distinction is commercially significant – a commissioned original and a licensed exclusive carry different marketing weight and require different chain-of-title documentation. The label needs an internal definition before it appears in subscriber communications or press coverage.

The content position: **108 Exclusive titles (90 licensed exclusives, 18 Originals with designation pending clarification). 144 titles with no exclusivity claim.**

OUR POSITION

Conditionally strong. 42.9% of the catalogue carries an exclusivity designation, which is a credible rights position at this stage. The actual value depends on how many of those 108 titles carry verified MENA exclusive windows and for how long. A rights audit is the necessary first step before any content marketing claim.

SECTION 04

Is the Platform Ready to Acquire Subscribers?

The visual design and technical architecture are solid. All issues identified are configuration, copy, or metadata fixes, with no structural changes required. A focused sprint of two to three weeks resolves all of them; full detail and screenshots are in Appendix B and Appendix E.

Nine items to resolve before any press, influencer, or paid activity:

	ITEM	OWNER
!	Replace About page development placeholder with published brand content	Content
!	Replace Collections page development placeholder with curated editorial collections	Content
!	Replace placeholder page titles and meta descriptions	Tech / Content
!	Localize subscription pricing to MENA currencies	Product
!	Activate or remove social links; remove unpublished app store links	Marketing
!	Complete transcoding audit; resolve unplayable titles	Tech
!	Fix title metadata: missing year values, placeholder genre entry, collection label typos	Content
!	Fix SEO metadata: OG tags, JSON-LD schema, Search Console verification	Tech
!	Replace Korean-language privacy policy with a MENA-appropriate document	Legal

Detail and evidence for each item in Appendix B and Appendix E.

Separate legal track: A MENA-specific content classification and moderation policy should be drafted in parallel, reviewed against the regulatory requirements of the priority territories (UAE, KSA, Egypt), and finalized before any public press activity. This is not a platform configuration fix but a compliance prerequisite for operating as a licensed content platform in the region (see Section 01).

Subscription Model & Product Feature Gaps

The subscription module is active but not ready for users. Pricing shows placeholder amounts; MENA currency localization, concurrent device policy, and tier structure are all unresolved.

Feature baseline.

FEATURE	SLASHERPLAY NOW	INDUSTRY STANDARD	STATUS
Pricing currency	Placeholder / not MENA-localized	Local MENA currencies	**Critical**
Concurrent streams	Not defined	1 (basic) – 4 (premium)	**Define**
Offline / downloads	Not observed	Standard on mobile apps	**Gap**
Free trial period	Not observed	7–30 days typical	**Gap**
Mobile apps (iOS/Android)	Not published	Required for mobile-first MENA	**Critical**
Content quality declaration	Not specified	1080p minimum; 4K on premium tier	**Define**
Multiple user profiles	Not observed	2–5 profiles standard	**Gap**
Arabic subtitles / dubbing	Partial	Expected across catalogue	**Gap**
Age / content ratings	Not observed	Required in KSA and UAE	**Gap**
Watchlist / continue watching	Present	Standard	**OK**

Feature decisions are appropriate to defer through a limited beta, but require resolution before any public-facing marketing or press activity. The subscription module should be gated from public view until properly configured for MENA.

From external inspection, the platform appears to be built on a modern and capable foundation, appropriate for an SVOD at this stage. A full technical assessment with direct codebase access is required before we can define what it would take to support a five-year subscriber growth agenda: localization pipelines, recommendation and personalisation infrastructure, multi-territory subscription management, and the data architecture needed to make carrier deals legible at the platform level. That assessment is scoped into Phase 1.

> **OUR POSITION**
>
> Not yet. Nine configuration and compliance items need resolution before any press, influencer, or paid activity. None requires structural changes to the platform. Two to three focused weeks closes all of them.

MODEL SYNTHESIS

PRISM Model Summary & Strategic Path

This page summarizes the latest integrated PRISM scenario (SVOD + AVOD + TVOD), using activity-driven opex and fee logic aligned with the operating model.

The workbook committed in this repository is the canonical source for current model outputs and fee lines; the table below is a compact extract for readability.

Model summary (current PRISM workbook)

Metric	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total revenue	254,792	1,509,442	3,963,971	7,842,634	12,492,006
Paid users (avg)	19,800	66,880	150,500	268,800	401,800
Hours streamed	439,220	3,163,890	9,460,157	21,023,168	37,225,950
Total shared opex	193,718	476,114	1,022,842	1,858,264	2,733,071
Total model-specific costs	98,363	443,190	1,078,948	2,245,746	3,524,101
EBITDA (management view)	-37,289	590,138	1,862,181	3,738,624	6,234,834
EBITDA margin	-14.6%	39.1%	47.0%	47.7%	49.9%
Total fees	43,812	226,417	594,596	1,176,396	1,873,801
Net P&L after fees (opex view)	-81,101	363,721	1,267,585	2,562,228	4,361,033
Owner P&L (incl. content licensing)	-428,501	-59,556	766,914	1,982,615	3,700,900

All figures USD unless noted. Paid users are overlap-adjusted averages. EBITDA margin is EBITDA / total revenue. SVOD revenue is gross; AVOD and TVOD revenue is net of platform/transaction fees.

Repo workbook: cultscale-prism-slasherplay.xlsx. Live sheet (if shared): CULTSCALE PRISM, SlasherPlay Revenue Intelligence.

Recommended strategy

1) **SVOD first**: treat SVOD as the economic core and catalogue moat.
2) **AVOD disciplined:** run AVOD as top-of-funnel with strict paid-acquisition and retention gates.
3) **TVOD selective**: reserve TVOD for premium windows and eventized drops.
4) **Phased regional execution:** protect ARPU and operations in Phase 1 markets before scaling outward.

Key watchpoint: AVOD monthly attrition annualizes above 80% in Year 1, which can overstate paid reacquisition pressure; this should be monitored and re-calibrated with live cohort data after launch.

MANAGEMENT SCOPE ECONOMICS

The Commercial Framework

The CULTSCALE management scope is structured on two linked components. The first is a percentage of operational expenditure: 15% of all opex, excluding content acquisition and licensing costs. This covers the full operating scope across all five phases – subscription design, programming, editorial, community, B2B deal structuring, audience development, localization programme management, and strategic execution support.

The second component is a 15% share of positive management EBITDA in the model. “Management EBITDA” is defined here as operating revenue less operational costs, excluding content licensing amortization (treated as a standalone capex line). This aligns scope economics directly with commercial performance. CULTSCALE earns this profit-share component only when the platform is in positive territory.

FEE STRUCTURE

15% of operational expenditure

Platform, marketing, team, and operations. Content acquisition and licensing excluded.

15% of positive management EBITDA

Applies only in positive-profit years and updates dynamically with model assumptions.

COMMERCIAL GUARDRAILS

AREA	POLICY
Included fee base	Platform operations, team, marketing execution, product/programming workstreams, and management scope activities.
Excluded fee base	All content acquisition/licensing costs, minimum guarantees, and rights-holder payments are outside the opex fee base and treated as catalogue cost lines.
Pass-through treatment	Third-party pass-through costs are booked at cost against source invoices; no markup unless explicitly approved in writing by the owner.
Reporting cadence	Monthly operating pack (P&L, cash movement, KPI variance) plus quarterly strategy review with gate decisions and model re-forecast.
Change control	Any scope or budget change outside the approved envelope moves through written change approval before execution.

Built-in assumptions. The financial core now runs as one integrated framework across SVOD, AVOD, and TVOD. Revenue, churn/attrition, paid growth, overlap-adjusted users, and activity-driven opex are linked in a single model so channel decisions can be compared on the same economic basis.

DRIVER	Y1	Y5	BASIS
SVOD CAC (gross adds)	USD 12	USD 28	Paid acquisition benchmarked to niche streaming launch-to-scale progression in MENA.
AVOD paid share of gross additions	35%	25%	Assumes rising organic/referral contribution as catalogue depth and brand awareness improve.
AVOD paid acquisition cost (gross MAU add)	USD 0.80	USD 1.20	Social/video platform CPM/CPV environment plus quality filtering for genre-fit traffic.
AVOD monthly attrition	15%	8%	Conservative early volatility assumption; primary calibration watchpoint after launch cohorts are observable.
TVOD buyer conversion	8%	15%	Premium-window behavior for eventized drops and new-release positioning.
SVOD organic / cross-sell rate	10%	30%	Share of gross SVOD adds from organic discovery or spillover from AVOD/TVOD. Reduces paid CAC spend; grows as brand and catalogue depth compound.
TVOD organic / cross-sell rate	50%	70%	Share of TVOD buyers who are existing platform users (SVOD subs or AVOD viewers). These buyers cost no paid acquisition spend – the platform already holds the relationship.
Cross-model user overlap adjustment	10%	18%	Prevents double-counting shared users when deriving hosting/support drivers.
Catalog licensing escalation	0%	2%	Annual roll-forward on catalogue licensing value plus additions from new titles.
CULTSCALE fee structure	15% opex 15% profit	15% opex 15% profit	Opex fee applies to operational spend excluding content licensing pass-through; profit share applies on positive EBITDA.

Five-year integrated P&L. The scenario remains an investment year in Year 1, then turns positive on management EBITDA in Year 2. Including content licensing amortization, the owner-level P&L turns positive annually in Year 3, with cumulative owner breakeven in Year 3.

> The detailed five-year outputs are maintained directly in the live PRISM workbook and model snapshot so all revenue, cost, and fee lines remain synchronized from a single source of truth.

What this means commercially. The platform is no longer modelled as a single-channel subscription business. It is a three-engine system where SVOD carries most of retained margin, AVOD expands reach and conversion surface, and TVOD monetises premium windows. The primary execution risk remains early AVOD attrition and paid reacquisition intensity, which should be re-calibrated with live cohort data in the first operating quarters.

Model snapshot and live workbook link are provided in the dedicated MODEL SYNTHESIS page.

AD-SUPPORTED STRATEGY

AVOD and the Brand Safety Reality

The PRISM model shows AVOD operating at a structural loss in Years 1 through 3. This is not a modeling error. It reflects what happens when you run standard programmatic advertising against horror and extreme genre content at sub-100K MAU scale.

Why programmatic AVOD does not work for horror. Automated brand safety systems – IAS, DoubleVerify, and their equivalents – classify inventory by content category before any impression is served. Horror content is consistently flagged as violence, disturbing imagery, or sensitive material. Most brand advertisers set these filters to block by default. The result is structural: fill rates are suppressed well below the generic OTT benchmark, CPMs on what does fill are discounted to reflect the perceived adjacency risk, and large categories of DSP demand are simply unavailable. The model uses open-auction in-stream video benchmarks adjusted for horror-category brand-safety suppression: GCC USD 7 (mainstream GCC video CPM of USD 10–15 compressed by roughly 35%), Levant USD 4, North Africa USD 2.50 per thousand filled opportunities. These are in-stream pre-roll and mid-roll rates, not display. Even at these adjusted levels, real-world clearance for horror-specific inventory without a direct relationship in place will likely fall below the modelled assumption.

The sanitization trap. The obvious response — make the content more brand-friendly — is not available here. SlasherPlay's value proposition is precisely the content that programmatic systems reject. Sanitizing for mainstream advertiser comfort means removing the horror, the provocation, and the identity that creates audience loyalty. That trade destroys the platform from the inside.

AVOD's correct role in this architecture. In the PRISM model, AVOD is a subscriber acquisition engine, not a profit center. The right measure is not AVOD EBITDA — it is the conversion rate of AVOD free-tier viewers into SVOD paying subscribers. An AVOD MAU who converts to SVOD was acquired at a fraction of the direct SVOD CAC. The ad revenue is a secondary by-product; the primary value is audience qualification and catalogue discovery at scale. Under this framing, AVOD losses in the model are acquisition costs, not operational failures. The question is whether the cost per converted subscriber is competitive with direct paid acquisition.

How to read AVOD performance

Primary metric: AVOD-to-SVOD conversion rate and effective cost-per-converted-subscriber.
Secondary metric: AVOD fill rate improvement and blended net yield per MAU.
Warning metric: Monthly attrition above 15%; at that rate, paid reacquisition dominates the cost line.
Revenue metric: Direct-sold share trending toward 15% or more, which signals endemic audience value is being priced into packages.

The path to AVOD revenue. If AVOD is going to generate meaningful ad income for this content type, it will come from direct-sold packages with endemic advertisers, not from open-auction programmatic. Brands in gaming, horror merchandise, genre film studios, streaming hardware, and seasonal entertainment (Halloween campaigns, horror festivals) do not classify horror content as brand-unsafe — they classify it as brand-ideal. A direct sponsorship package sold to a horror-native brand at a USD 20–30 in-stream video CPM equivalent is achievable where an open-auction impression for the same slot clears at USD 3–6. The PRISM model captures this pathway through the direct-sold share parameter, which starts at 8% and rises to 18% by Year 5 — a ceiling that reflects the realistic depth of the endemic advertiser pool in MENA, not a growth constraint. Closing that gap from assumption to reality requires an active ad sales function, which is why ad operations headcount enters the model in Year 2.

The ceiling on direct sales. It is important to be clear about what direct-sold AVOD cannot become. The platform's content category and audience scale impose a hard ceiling on addressable demand. The pool of endemic advertisers in the MENA horror genre is small: a handful of gaming publishers, genre merchandise brands, select streaming hardware vendors, and seasonal campaign budgets from studio partners. These budgets are real, but they are finite. A horror-specific AVOD will never generate the direct-sold revenue of a general-interest OTT platform of similar MAU size. The direct-sold upside modelled in PRISM is realistic, but it should not be extrapolated beyond the endemic segment. Scale beyond that ceiling requires either moving the content positioning toward more brand-friendly adjacent genres (which is the sanitisation trap) or growing MAU to the point where even a modest endemic fill rate produces material revenue, which is a Year 4 to Year 5 outcome.

Year 1 posture. In Year 1, run AVOD without a meaningful revenue target. Use it to build MAU scale, validate content preferences, and identify the audience cohorts most likely to convert to SVOD. Avoid scaling programmatic in the first operating period: at low scale, CPMs and brand-safety-suppressed fill are not strong enough for this to be a planning driver, and the brand-safety filter behavior creates reputational surface area (rejected impressions and low-quality fill can degrade advertiser relationships before an endemic sales motion is established). Direct sponsorship conversations with one or two genre-aligned brands can be initiated early, but revenue from this channel should not appear in Year 1 operating plans.

What changes the AVOD economics. Three inputs move the AVOD P&L toward viability: AVOD attrition falling to 8% monthly (the Year 5 model target), direct-sold share reaching 15–18%, and AVOD net revenue rising above the level where ad server and stack costs become cost-efficient (PRISM models this as above roughly USD 100K annual AVOD revenue, Year 3+). None of these are available at launch. They are Year 3 through Year 5 outcomes, contingent on retention improvement and an active endemic sales programme. Until then, AVOD should be managed as a low-cost acquisition channel, not a revenue line.

AVOD OPERATING POSTURE BY PHASE

PHASE	POSTURE	PRIMARY OBJECTIVE
Year 1	Acquisition mode	Build MAU base and AVOD-to-SVOD conversion signal. No programmatic. Direct sponsorship conversations only.
Year 2	Hybrid mode	Launch selective programmatic with tight brand safety controls. Close first direct-sold endemic package. Ad ops hire justifies itself.
Year 3–5	Revenue mode	Direct-sold share approaching 18% ceiling. ARPMAU improving. AVOD approaches EBITDA breakeven as attrition stabilizes and endemic sales compound.

All AVOD parameters are configurable in the live PRISM workbook. Attrition rate, fill rate, direct-sold share, and paid acquisition assumptions are the four primary levers for AVOD scenario planning.

APP STORE STRATEGY

Platform Distribution, Store Economics, and Content Rating

Horror streaming sits in a specific regulatory and commercial grey zone that every distribution decision must account for. The app stores that carry the product treat the content category differently from general entertainment. The rating systems that govern discovery suppress horror titles from default search results. And the commercial terms vary enough across platforms that the distribution mix is itself a meaningful financial lever.

This chapter covers three questions: how Shudder navigated the age-rating and app store problem in Anglophone markets; how the MENA regulatory environment adds a second layer of classification pressure; and what store economics mean for the financial model.

How Shudder Handles It

Shudder is rated **17+** on the Apple App Store and **Mature (17+)** on Google Play. The rating is driven primarily by Frequent or Intense Horror / Fear Themes, the category that places a horror platform in the 17+ tier on Apple. Secondary content descriptors include Infrequent or Mild Sexual Content and Nudity and Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References, which on their own would trigger a 12+ classification. That rating is non-negotiable for a horror platform — the content requires it and the stores enforce it.

The commercial consequence of a 17+ rating is structural. Apple excludes 17+ apps from default search results for users with Screen Time parental controls enabled. Family-shared devices running a child or teen profile cannot access the app at all. On Android, 17+ apps are excluded from general category browsing for users who have not completed Google's age verification flow. Editorial featuring is possible but not dependable for a 17+ app; assume it is unlikely and do not model it as an acquisition channel.

This is not an obstacle unique to SlasherPlay. It is the operating environment for every horror streaming service that distributes through mobile app stores. Shudder manages it through three decisions:

Explicit 18+ positioning in all marketing. Shudder does not soft-pedal the adult content label; it makes the 17+ rating a selling point. The restriction signals category authenticity to the target audience and filters out casual browsers who would churn anyway.

Web-first subscriber acquisition. Shudder drives sign-ups through its website rather than in-app flows, which reduces exposure to app store subscription fees for users who subscribe on the web and then sign in for playback. App store presence is primarily for playback, not acquisition.

No sanitisation of content to chase a lower rating. Shudder has never pursued a 12+ or 15 rating Doing so would require cutting the films that define its catalogue and destroying the editorial identity that drives its subscriber retention.

SlasherPlay should operate from the same framework. The 18+ rating is the product, not a compromise. The suppression effects on app store discovery are real but manageable; they apply equally to every competitor in the horror niche.

Store Economics: What Each Platform Takes

App store take rates vary significantly by platform, by revenue tier, and by billing method. The PRISM financial model includes a full Distribution Mix section (Platform Config, Section 10) that lets the operator configure channel allocation and see the resulting blended take rate. The reference benchmarks:

Platform	Take rate	Key conditions
Web / Direct (Stripe AE / Telr / Moyasar / PayTabs)	3.0–3.5%	MENA-native gateway stack. Stripe AE: 2.9% + fixed; Telr (UAE) and Moyasar (KSA) negotiate to 2.5–3.0% at scale. Currency conversion uplift included. No platform content rules; lowest effective cost channel. Ref: stripe.com/ae/pricing | telr.com/pricing | moyasar.com/en/pricing
iOS App Store	15% – 22%	Apple Small Business Program: 15% while total App Store gross < USD 1M/yr (prior-year qualification test). Above threshold: 30% on new subs (first 12 months) + 15% on recurring. With approx 5% monthly SVOD churn, long-term subs are 54% of base at maturity, giving a blended rate of 22% above the threshold. PRISM models 15% in Y1–Y3 and 22% in Y4–Y5 as iOS gross crosses USD 1M. The External Link Account Entitlement (reader apps) is conditional and requires Apple approval; do not assume in-app link-out or IAP bypass in the base case. 17+ age gate limits store discovery in GCC storefronts. Ref: developer.apple.com/app-store/small-business-program | developer.apple.com/support/reader-apps/
Google Play	15%	15% flat on subscription products (current as of March 2026). No revenue threshold and no subscriber-month condition applies to subscriptions under the current policy, but terms can change. Android dominates Levant and North Africa (60–70% device share); GCC is more balanced with iOS. Ref: support.google.com/googleplay/android-developer/answer/112622
Apple TV (tvOS)	15% – 22%	Same rate structure as iOS App Store. Follows the same SBP threshold and new/recurring blended logic. Apple TV 4K is widely used in GCC households. PRISM treats tvOS billing within the iOS App Store mix row.
Samsung / LG Smart TV (MENA)	15–30%	Samsung Tizen 30% (dominant in KSA and GCC). LG webOS 30%. Android TV / Google TV on Sony, TCL, Hisense follows Google Play 15%. GCC subscribers frequently sign up via web and use the TV app for playback only, reducing effective in-app billing. Roku and Amazon Fire TV excluded – negligible MENA presence. Ref: developer.samsung.com/smarttv | webostv.developer.lge.com/distribute

All take rates are subject to change by platform operators. Apple's Small Business Program requires annual qualification. Google's 15% subscription rate was updated in January 2022 and is current as of March 2026, but it is still subject to change. The blended take rate in the PRISM model is configurable in Platform Config Section 10.

The strategic implication is straightforward. A service that processes the majority of subscriptions through web sign-up carries a blended take rate under 5%. A service that allows in-app subscription on iOS and Android carries a blended take rate of 10–14% on the same revenue base given the channel mix modelled for SlasherPlay. For a platform at USD 500K ARR, that is a difference of USD 25–50K per year in platform fees, and the gap widens substantially as revenue scales.

> **The best horror niche in the MENA market carries a 17+ rating on every major app store. That is the operating environment. The right response is a web-first acquisition strategy, not content sanitisation.**

The MENA Regulatory Layer

App store ratings address platform-level classification. MENA adds a second layer: national content regulatory frameworks that apply independently of what the stores require.

UAE (TRA / GCAM-adjacent). The UAE operates a content classification system administered by the National Media Council. Video content available to UAE residents should comply with classification guidelines; 18+ content must be age-gated at the application level. Horror content involving extreme violence or certain religious imagery may require review. Geo-restriction of specific titles is simpler than platform-level review in practice.

Saudi Arabia (GCAM). The General Commission for Audiovisual Media regulates streaming services operating in the Kingdom. As of 2023, foreign streaming platforms serving Saudi users are expected to comply with Saudi content standards. Horror content involving religious themes, certain forms of violence, or content deemed contrary to public order is subject to restriction. Platform-level age gating (18+) with a Saudi-compliant terms-of-use structure is the minimum required infrastructure.

Egypt. Egypt has specific sensitivities around religious content, political themes, and certain depictions of violence. Horror that does not invoke religious imagery or political themes is generally navigable. The regulatory framework is less systematised than the Gulf but no less real; enforcement is reactive rather than prospective.

Other markets. Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia have lighter regulatory touch at the platform level. Content available in these markets should still carry age gates; the risk of enforcement action is lower but non-zero.

Pre-launch content policy checklist

"–" Finalize an 18+ rating and age-gate on sign-up and app launch, consistent across all platforms.
"–" Build a MENA content policy document covering: prohibited content categories per territory, restricted content categories (age-gated only), and an escalation process for edge cases.
"–" Review the existing catalogue against the policy before any marketing campaign. Identify titles that require geo-restriction in specific markets.

- Implement territory-level geo-restriction infrastructure for Saudi Arabia and UAE as a minimum.
- Ensure app store listings in UAE and Saudi storefronts carry explicit content warnings and comply with local store guidelines.
- Do not depend on app store ratings alone to satisfy regulatory age-gate obligations. An in-app age verification step (at first launch or sign-in) provides the defensible layer in regulated markets.
- Display a full-screen content warning before each title that carries extreme violence, gore, or adult themes. This is standard practice on genre platforms and reduces regulatory exposure.
- Assign a named internal owner for content compliance decisions. Regulatory enquiries, content escalations, and geo-restriction requests need a defined response path before any marketing campaign creates public visibility.
- Document a takedown protocol: who authorizes content removal, what timeline applies, and how the platform communicates decisions to rights holders and users.

What This Means for Distribution Architecture

The combined constraints – app store ratings, store economics, and regulatory age-gate obligations – point to the same distribution architecture:

Sign-up and billing live on the web. Users are redirected to the SlasherPlay website for account creation, plan selection, and payment. The iOS and Android apps function as playback clients. Smart TV apps handle playback only. This model eliminates in-app purchase fees on the majority of subscriber revenue, preserves the platform's relationship with the subscriber (not the app store), and satisfies age-gate obligations through the web sign-up flow rather than relying on app store parental controls.

The tradeoff is acquisition friction. App-store-native sign-up converts higher on mobile than a web redirect. For a niche horror platform with a defined, intentional audience, the conversion difference is tolerable. The revenue difference is not.

Distribution mix assumptions, per-platform take rates, and blended platform take rate are configurable in PRISM Platform Config, Section 10. SVOD and TVOD net revenue formulas reference the blended rate automatically.

SECTION 05

What Should the First Twelve Months Look Like?

Section 05 is the strategic roadmap. It defines the sequence, the objective of each phase, and the owner decision gates. The next section (Management Scope of Work) is the execution layer with the full workplan, deliverables, and operating cadence.

PHASE	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	OWNER DECISION GATE
Phase 1 (2–3 weeks)	Close every pre-launch blocker before traffic scale.	Go/no-go to launch only after all nine pre-launch items are signed off, including pricing, metadata, links, and rights documentation.
Phase 2 (Months 1–3)	Prove launch quality, early retention, and first B2B distribution path.	Scale spend requires owner approval against agreed launch KPIs: seed cohort quality, onboarding conversion, and first carrier deal progression.
Phase 3 (Months 4–12)	Convert early traction into category ownership and defensible positioning.	Approve Year 2 expansion only after quarterly intelligence, content roadmap, and retention/cohort evidence support the move.

Strategic principles for Year 1

1) Sequence by dependency: no scale before readiness.
2) Build the dark-genre identity through curation, community, and festival-linked moments.
3) Prioritise B2B distribution where subscriber quality and economics outperform paid social.
4) Keep owner-controlled stage gates at every phase transition.

OUR POSITION

One strategic roadmap, one execution plan: Section 05 defines where to go and what must be true before each move; the Management Scope section that follows defines who does the work, how it is measured, and how decisions are governed.

Management Scope of Work

SlasherPlay's structural assets are already in place: a genre-defined catalogue, a regional distributor with rights relationships and B2B channels, and a platform that is close to launch. The gap is operational. Converting a rights position into a subscriber product requires a different discipline from content acquisition, and it is one that compounds quickly if it is not set up correctly.

CULTSCALE specialises in the layer between a content position and a working consumer product: subscription architecture, genre editorial programming, audience development, and the B2B deal structuring specific to MENA's carrier-led distribution landscape. The MENA streaming market requires a different approach from Western direct-to-consumer models: telco bundle economics work differently, payment method selection has a measurable impact on conversion, and the data flows from carrier deals require explicit negotiation or the platform is flying blind on churn. That is the environment we build for.

WHAT SLASHERPLAY BRINGS

Content acquisition relationships and existing catalogue
Regional distribution infrastructure (telco and IPTV)
Territory rights management experience
Knowledge of MENA regulatory and classification landscape
Production relationships for future originals pipeline

WHAT CULTSCALE MANAGES

Subscription product design: tier logic, MENA price points, and local payment methods (STC Pay, KNET, Fawry, Apple Pay) that convert
Genre editorial programming: homepage architecture, browse hierarchy, and seasonal calendar built around horror audience behaviour
Audience seeding: building the first subscriber cohort with documented engagement data before public launch
Editorial voice: the tone, copy standards, and content framing that make a specialist platform feel built for its audience
B2B deal structuring: bundle economics, subscriber data flow requirements, and churn cliff prevention, from the platform side

On operating model: The management scope runs across five phases over five years. Phase 1 is a focused sprint with direct access to the development team and CMS. Phase 2 covers launch operations through the first three months after soft launch. Phase 3 is a quarterly strategy and execution cadence through year one. Phase 4 (Years 2–3) covers localization and regional expansion. Phase 5 (Years 3–5) consolidates the market position and deepens the competitive moat. Each phase produces defined deliverables.

Each can be contracted independently, though the phases are designed to build on each other.

DECISION RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY (OWNER-CONTROLLED)

DECISION AREA	SLASHERPLAY (OWNER)	CULTSCALE (MANAGEMENT)
Rights and title commitments	Final approval and signature authority on licensing/ exclusivity commitments.	Rights-packaging recommendations, sequencing, and escalation tracking.
Budget and cash deployment	Approve operating envelopes and material reallocations.	Allocate and execute spend within approved limits; report variance.
Carrier/B2B commercial terms	Final commercial approval and contract signature.	Structure economics, prepare negotiation materials, and support negotiation.
Material product/pricing changes	Approve customer-facing or commercial-impacting changes before release.	Design tests, implement approved changes, and report outcomes.

PHASE CONTROL GATES (EXECUTION KPI CHECKPOINTS)

PHASE	MINIMUM EXIT EVIDENCE BEFORE NEXT PHASE
Phase 1	All pre-launch blockers closed with owner sign-off; soft-launch readiness checklist approved.
Phase 2	Seed cohort quality and retention baseline established; first carrier deal in active negotiation with documented economics.
Phase 3	Quarterly cohort/churn/LTV review complete; Year 2 content and localization roadmap approved by owner.
Phases 4–5	Territory expansion proceeds only when prior-market unit economics stay within owner-approved sensitivity bands.

TWO THINGS TO CONFIRM BEFORE SCOPING

1. **Access level.** What degree of customization is available in the current architecture: full source access, CMS-only, or vendor-managed? This determines the Phase 1 timeline and what is fixable in a sprint vs what requires a development cycle.
2. **Team availability.** Is the team that built the platform available for a focused sprint? If not, is handover documentation available? Both scenarios work; the timeline changes.

Phase 1: Pre-Launch Sprint (2–3 Weeks)

Direct, bounded work with the development team to close every blocker before public activity begins. The output of this phase is a platform that can receive press attention, influencer traffic, and early subscribers without exposing configuration issues.

Technical Configuration and QA

Work through all nine pre-launch items identified in Section 04 with the development team. Each item has a defined fix; CULTSCALE coordinates and verifies resolution. Output is a checklist with sign-off before soft launch proceeds.

Subscription Architecture for MENA

Design the subscription module: pricing tiers for at minimum UAE, KSA, and Egypt; currency configuration; payment gateway selection (local methods matter more than most platforms account for); free trial logic; and the feature matrix that differentiates tiers without over-engineering the choice. Output is a configured subscription product and a pricing rationale document.

Playback Audit

Systematic review of all 252 titles for playback reliability, subtitle availability, and metadata completeness. This is unglamorous work but it directly affects first impressions. A subscriber who encounters a broken title in their first session rarely returns. Output is an audit report with remediation status.

Rights Documentation Matrix

Work with the rights team to document MENA window status for all exclusive and Originals titles. This is the foundation for every content marketing claim the platform makes. Without it, exclusivity designations are assertions; with it, they are defensible. Output is a rights matrix covering all 108 exclusive titles with window dates, territory scope, and escalation flags for titles requiring clarification.

Metadata and SEO Configuration

Apply all three SEO items identified in the audit: Open Graph tags for all title pages, structured data markup for search engines, and canonical URL configuration. A platform with missing OG tags looks broken when someone shares a title link. These fixes cost nothing to implement and have a direct impact on organic discovery. Output: all metadata fixes verified live, search preview audit confirming correct rendering across Google and social platforms.

Phase 1 deliverables: All nine pre-launch items resolved and verified. MENA subscription module configured and documented. Playback audit complete with remediation tracking. Rights matrix for all exclusive and Originals titles. Metadata and SEO fixes applied (OG tags, structured data, canonical URLs). Soft-launch readiness sign-off.

Phase 2: Launch Operations (Months 1–3)

The transition from platform to product. Three parallel workstreams: seeding the audience through a managed soft launch, building the programming and editorial infrastructure, and structuring the first B2B deals as streaming product offerings.

Soft Launch Programme

Recruit a community of horror enthusiasts as early access subscribers. This is not a beta test; it is an audience seed. The programme is structured to collect engagement data (watch-through rates, search behaviour, discovery patterns, feature requests) and deliver a validated product at public launch, not after it. Output: onboarding playbook, feedback collection system, engagement data report, and 500+ seeded subscribers with documented behaviour profiles.

Content Programming and Editorial Voice

Streaming programming operates by a different logic than licensing. The distribution discipline asks: what can we acquire? The programming discipline asks: in what sequence should subscribers encounter what we have? Homepage rotation, featured title selection, editorial calendar alignment with horror seasons, and the sequencing of new arrivals all affect churn. Getting this wrong is invisible until the renewal data arrives. CULTSCALE builds the programming framework: the editorial calendar, the seasonal moments, the homepage hierarchy, the tone of every piece of subscriber-facing copy. Output: 12-week programming calendar, editorial voice guide, homepage programming framework, and content discovery architecture.

Community Infrastructure

A specialist SVOD with an active community has a retention mechanism that a generalist platform cannot replicate. CULTSCALE sets up the community infrastructure (dedicated space, onboarding flow, moderation protocols, engagement mechanics) and runs it through the launch period, then transfers operations with full documentation. Output: live community, moderation handbook, engagement cadence, community-to-subscriber conversion tracking.

B2B Deal Structuring for Streaming

The distributor's telco and IPTV relationships, e&, STC, Zain, du, and beIN infrastructure partners, are the highest-yield subscriber acquisition channel available at launch. What most distributors lack is the product layer to make these deals work: how to structure bundle pricing so it serves both the carrier's ARPU targets and the platform's unit economics, what subscriber data flows must look like so the platform is not flying blind on churn, and how to prevent cliff effects when bundle terms expire. CULTSCALE designs the deal structure, builds the carrier pitch deck, and participates in the commercial negotiations. Output: bundle pricing model, data flow requirements document, carrier pitch deck, at least one deal in active negotiation.

Platform Channel Partnerships

Shahid, OSN+, and stc TV each operate channel or add-on stores where a branded vertical can be distributed to their existing subscriber base at a negotiated wholesale rate. For SlasherPlay, this means a horror channel within a general MENA platform: zero consumer acquisition cost, immediate reach into an established payment-verified audience, and a revenue-sharing structure that maps directly to the PRISM B2B model. The wholesale rate is lower than direct SVOD ARPU, but the absence of CAC and the subscriber volume available from day one make the unit economics competitive. Structuring these deals requires a product layer – branded channel UX, content feed integration, and data flow agreements – that the distributor relationship opens but does not automatically deliver.

Phase 2 deliverables: Soft-launch programme with 500+ subscribers and engagement data. 12-week editorial calendar and homepage programming framework. Community infrastructure live and documented. Editorial voice guide and content copy standards. B2B deal framework and at least one carrier deal in negotiation.

Phase 3: Intelligence, Community, and Positioning (Months 4–12)

Quarterly strategic management cadence through year one. The focus shifts from launch operations to compounding the position: deepening genre community, tracking the competitive landscape for signals that require course corrections, and analysing what the subscriber base is actually telling us about the next catalogue phase.

Competitive Intelligence

Three quarterly reports covering: Shudder expansion activity, Netflix genre investment in MENA, regional platform moves (Shahid, Anghami, OSN+, stc TV), and emerging market comparables. Each report is written in the context of a specialist horror SVOD, not a general streaming market overview. It closes with specific recommended adjustments to SlasherPlay's positioning, pricing, or content strategy.

Content Development Roadmap

Twelve months of subscriber data changes the content conversation. This workstream analyses what the audience is actually watching, what drives renewal, and where the catalogue has gaps that licensed content cannot fill. The output is a content development roadmap defining SlasherPlay's next catalogue phase: which sub-genres to prioritise, which content types are underserved, and what the investment-to-impact ratio looks like for each option, including whether purpose-built content becomes viable at the subscriber base's scale. That is a month-12 question, not a launch commitment.

Festival, Cinema, and Event Audience Development

Horror fans do not subscribe because they saw an advertisement. They subscribe because someone in their community vouched for a platform, or because they encountered it somewhere that already meant something to them. Festivals and cinemas are where that happens. The acquisition strategy runs at four points of contact.

The first is genre-native events: Maskoon Fantastic Film Festival and any horror-adjacent screenings, genre nights, or fan cons in the region, self-selected audiences with the highest conversion probability and the lowest cost per acquired subscriber.

The second is regional flagship festivals, RSIFF, El Gouna, Cairo, Amman, where the broader cinephile audience that overlaps with SlasherPlay's subscriber profile is concentrated. Brand presence here builds the top of funnel. Outreach for the December RSIFF window begins in Phase 2.

The third is the festival streaming exclusive: when a title screens at a festival and becomes available on SlasherPlay the following week, the audience at that screening has a direct reason to subscribe. The exclusive window converts the festival into a call to action.

The fourth is cinema partnerships. SlasherPlay subscribers receive priority booking and early access to horror theatrical releases before those titles arrive on the platform, an opening-night invitation at VOX, Reel, or Empire, a reserved block for a genre double-bill, a Q&A evening curated for the community. For cinema chains, this means a guaranteed audience for genre titles that might otherwise play to thin houses. For SlasherPlay, each theatrical event becomes a subscriber acquisition moment: co-branded promotions in the cinema, QR-driven sign-up flows at the door, and a clear message that the subscription extends beyond the home screen. The subscriber who attended the premiere and then streams the title two weeks later has a materially different relationship with the platform than one who found it through a digital ad.

CULTSCALE maps which events have genre-relevant audiences, designs the on-ground activation for each, negotiates festival streaming tie-ins and cinema partner agreements, and tracks the resulting subscriber cohort by event source to measure which touchpoints convert.

Subscriber Lifecycle and Data Advisory

Annual deep-dive on subscriber cohort health: LTV by acquisition channel, churn by content category, content investment recommendations based on what the data shows about what actually drives renewal. The analysis is written as a content strategy input, not a data report.

Phase 3 deliverables: Three quarterly competitive intelligence reports. Content development roadmap with catalogue gap analysis and strategic options. Festival and cinema acquisition calendar mapped across genre-native and regional flagship events; at least one festival streaming exclusive and one cinema partner agreement completed; subscriber cohort tracked by event source. Annual subscriber cohort analysis with content investment recommendations.

Phase 4: Localization and Regional Expansion (Years 2–3)

Phase 1 through 3 prove the model in the core market, GCC and Egypt, and establish the subscriber base, the editorial identity, and the content position. Phase 4 applies the same discipline to language and territory: one market at a time, each validated before the next. The ambition is regional; the execution is sequential.

Arabic Localization Programme

Subtitles across the full catalogue first; Egyptian Arabic dubs for the top 30 most-watched titles; MSA versions for IPTV and broadcast licensing contexts. This is not a translation exercise, it is the cultural claim made legible. The Arabic horror editorial identity requires Arabic-language access to the catalogue. Without it, the claim that SlasherPlay is built for the MENA horror audience remains aspirational. With it, the platform becomes the first streaming destination where that audience can watch horror in their own language. CULTSCALE manages the localization pipeline: vendor selection, quality control, subtitle timing standards, and the CMS workflow for rollout.

Turkish Subtitle Integration

Turkey has an 85-million population, a strong genre film culture, and an active horror production tradition. Turkish audiences are accustomed to subtitled international content. Subtitles for the full catalogue unlock the market without the cost of dubbing, and Turkey's carrier billing infrastructure (Turkcell, Vodafone TR, Türk Telekom) makes bundle distribution structurally viable. Year 2 priority, contingent on Year 1 subscriber data confirming demand signals from the Turkish market.

Kurdish-Language Access (Iraq)

Sorani Kurdish subtitles for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah) and the broader Iraqi market represent a high-differentiation, low-cost entry into a territory with no genre-specific streaming option. Carrier billing infrastructure exists, Asiacell, Zain Iraq, and Korek serve the market, and the distributor's regional relationships can be activated here at relatively low incremental cost. Kurmanji subtitles extend reach across Kurdish-speaking audiences in nearby markets where rights and payments are executable. This is an underserved market with no established competition: the platform that arrives first and makes the experience work in the local language claims the position durably.

Territory Subscription and Payment Expansion

Each new territory requires a localized pricing tier and appropriate payment methods. Iraq: cash-to-digital vouchers and telco billing. Turkey: TRY pricing and carrier billing. Morocco and the North Africa markets (Years 3–5): French-Arabic bilingual configuration, separate content classification track. CULTSCALE designs the subscription architecture and deal structure for each market as it enters the expansion sequence.

Phase 4 deliverables: Arabic subtitles across the full catalogue; Egyptian Arabic dubs for top 30 titles; MSA versions for IPTV licensing contexts. Turkish subtitles for full catalogue. Sorani and Kurmanji Kurdish subtitles for top 50 titles. Territory subscription configurations for Turkey and Iraq. At least one carrier deal in each new territory.

Phase 5: Scale, Moat, and Market Consolidation (Years 3–5)

By Year 3, SlasherPlay holds exclusive MENA rights to a catalogue that competitors cannot access, operates in four languages covering the majority of the region's addressable market, and is the only streaming destination built specifically for the horror audience in the Arab world and its neighbours. Phase 5 is about deepening that position until it cannot be replicated from the outside.

North Africa and Francophone MENA

Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia represent a 90-million-population market with a distinct French-Arabic bilingual streaming culture. Content classification requirements differ from the Gulf. A dedicated entry plan, pricing in MAD, DZD, and TND; French subtitle track; separate IPTV distribution partnerships, is developed in Year 3 for Year 4 activation.

Content Investment and Moat Assessment

Twenty-four months of subscriber data informs the first serious content investment decisions: which sub-genres drive renewal, where the catalogue has gaps licensed content cannot fill, and whether the subscriber base can support purpose-built production at any scale. The moat closes when the best Arabic-language horror productions come to SlasherPlay as their streaming home, not because they were solicited, but because the platform has established itself as the distribution destination. That is the Year 5 benchmark.

Phase 5 deliverables: North Africa market entry plan with regulatory track and distribution partnerships. Annual content investment recommendation based on 24+ months of subscriber data. Moat assessment: which competitive positions have been durably closed and what the next chapter of platform differentiation requires.

ENTRY POINT

Phase 1 is the natural starting point: bounded, deliverable in 2–3 weeks, and contractable independently while Phase 2 and 3 are scoped in parallel. The two things that determine the start date are access level and team availability (above). Once confirmed, work begins within two weeks.

When you are ready to proceed, the next step is a scoping call – typically 30–45 minutes – to determine access levels, team availability, and Phase 1 start date.

SECTION 06

What Does Category Ownership Actually Require?

Five conditions determine whether SlasherPlay builds a category or occupies a space. SlasherPlay holds a structural advantage on all five. These conditions translate the five structural assets identified in Section 02 into concrete actions, each one within reach from the current position.

01 Own the niche before expanding it

POSITION 252-title catalogue, genre-coherent UX, and thematic collections demonstrate focus. A small number of non-horror genre entries are present, as expected at this stage of development. Rights exclusivity across the 108 claimed exclusive titles is pending a full rights audit.

ACTION Treat the horror catalogue as the core product; treat acquiring MENA exclusive rights on the non-exclusive 144 titles as an immediate content acquisition brief. Genre adjacencies (psychological thriller, folk horror) should follow, not precede, a consolidated horror identity.

02 Activate the distribution advantage

POSITION Distribution relationships at this scale are the hardest competitive asset to replicate. They translate into B2B bundle placements and exclusive rights at terms a new entrant cannot access. This is the single variable with the most asymmetric upside: a successful carrier deal in Year 1 changes the competitive calculus entirely.

ACTION Pursue two parallel B2B tracks within the first 12 months: telco and IPTV carrier placements (e&, STC, Zain, du), and platform channel partnerships with regional SVODs (Shahid, OSN+, stc TV) where SlasherPlay operates as a branded horror vertical within their channel store. Each track has different economics: carrier deals offer volume at lower per-sub ARPU; platform channel deals offer a curated subscriber base with stronger conversion intent. Both map to the PRISM B2B model. Separately, initiate rights conversations for MENA exclusive windows on the current library, prioritizing titles currently available on competing regional platforms.

SEE ALSO Management Scope of Work → Phase 2

03 Build on the Arabic horror blind spot

POSITION The Arabic horror tradition is one of the richest untapped territories in contemporary media. Global platforms are structurally English-language-first and cannot build an editorial identity around it.

ACTION Build the definitive editorial authority on Arabic-language horror. Source and license titles from the Egyptian and Levantine traditions that no international platform has curated. Publish the curation – the selection, the framing, the voice. That position costs less than any production, creates the anchor for every content acquisition that follows, and builds a moat no later entrant can replicate from the outside.

SEE ALSO Management Scope of Work → Phase 2

04 Community is the moat that compounds through presence

POSITION Horror fans rank, discover, and share titles through tight communities. This audience behaviour is platform-agnostic until a platform earns their loyalty through editorial voice and exclusive content.

ACTION Build community infrastructure from launch: watchalongs, editorial programming, curated shelves, direct fan engagement. This creates switching costs no competitor can replicate with catalogue alone.

05 Move within the window

POSITION MENA horror SVOD is unclaimed. The competitive map shows no equivalent service in the region. The window closes if a global platform expands, or another distributor claims the position.

ACTION Resolve the nine pre-launch items. Fix pricing and feature parity. Set a launch date. Every quarter without a defined MENA horror destination is a quarter in which the category remains available to a competitor.

SEE ALSO Section 04 → Pre-Launch Blockers; Management Scope of Work → Phase 1

OUR POSITION

SlasherPlay holds a structural advantage on all five conditions. Each is accessible from the current position. Condition 02, the distribution advantage, is the one with the most disproportionate upside: a single carrier deal changes the subscriber trajectory permanently. The question is whether all five are activated within the competitive window.

The failure scenario is specific.

The platform launches under press or marketing pressure before the nine pre-launch items are closed. Early subscribers arrive to a product that does not match the marketing claim. They leave and do not return. The horror community – which communicates obsessively and globally – forms a view of the platform before the product is ready. That view is very difficult to reverse. The window described in this section is measured in quarters, but the subscriber trust window is measured in weeks. They are not the same window.

CONCLUSION

Three Conversations That Matter

Three questions remain open at this stage. Each has a clear direction from our side. The question is whether you land in the same place.

01

What is the actual rights position?

Of the 252 titles in the catalogue, how many carry exclusive MENA rights, and for how long? The answer determines the actual value of the library and the content acquisition brief for the next 12 months.

02

What does “dark genre” mean for SlasherPlay?

The platform’s long-term identity depends on whether it remains a pure horror service or evolves toward a broader dark genre destination. This decision shapes every content acquisition, every curatorial choice, and every marketing campaign for the next three years. Shudder’s expansion into thriller, folk horror, and supernatural drama did not dilute the brand; it deepened it. The question is whether SlasherPlay makes this decision intentionally or by accumulation.

03

What is the first B2B distribution deal?

One telco bundle or IPTV placement that goes live on or before public launch day. Of the three questions on this page, this one has disproportionate impact: a distribution deal at launch converts a streaming app into infrastructure. Infrastructure has switching costs. Streaming apps do not. The relationships are already in the room, the question is whether they are structured as streaming product deals before launch or left as future conversations.

APPENDIX A

Platform Readiness Scorecard

AREA	SCORE	PRIORITY	NOTES
Visual Design & Brand Expression	8/10	LOW	Strong horror aesthetic; dark palette; thematic collections
Homepage UX	7/10	LOW	Hero carousel and row layout work; clean navigation
Content Categorization	7/10	LOW	10 categories + collection curation shows editorial taste
Technical Infrastructure	8/10	LOW	Next.js, versioned API, Cloudflare + BunnyCDN: solid stack
About Page	1/10	CRITICAL	Development placeholder live in production; replace immediately
Collections Page	2/10	CRITICAL	Development placeholder live in production; replace immediately
Subscription / Pricing	2/10	CRITICAL	Configured with placeholder pricing; MENA localization required
Social Media Links	0/10	CRITICAL	All links inactive; activate accounts or remove icons
App Store Links	0/10	CRITICAL	Apps not published; remove from footer until available
Playback Readiness	?/10	CRITICAL	Transcoding status unaudited; full audit required pre-launch
Content Metadata	6/10	HIGH	Missing metadata values; placeholder genre entry; collection label typo
SEO Configuration	2/10	HIGH	10 metadata issues: wrong site name, placeholder OG/Twitter/JSON-LD, malformed URLs, verification placeholder, missing-slash schema errors
Arabic Localization	4/10	HIGH	Language toggle exists; Arabic-language content is minimal
Originals Programme	5/10	MEDIUM	19 titles tagged Originals; 18 hold exclusive MENA rights (production credentials unverified); 1 (Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey 2) available on OSN+ (formerly STARZPLAY); 90 licensed titles with claimed MENA exclusivity; full rights audit required

APPENDIX B

Pre-Launch Checklist

The following items must be resolved before any public-facing activity, listed in order of impact.

CRITICAL: Resolve before any press, influencer, or marketing activity

- **About page is a development placeholder.** The about page at `/en/about` is a development placeholder live in production. It should be replaced with published brand content before any press, influencer, or marketing activity.
- **Collections page is a development placeholder.** The collections page at `/en/collections` displays a development placeholder. It should be replaced with curated content before launch.
- **Subscription module not ready for users.** The pricing page shows placeholder amounts with no finalized tier structure. MENA currency localization is required, and the subscription flow should not be visible to users until pricing, tier structure, and feature decisions are confirmed.
- **Social media links are inactive.** All social media icons in the footer link to the # placeholder. Live accounts should be linked directly.
- **App store links are inactive.** The "Available On" section (App Store, Google Play) also links to #. Sections for apps pending publication should be removed until launch.
- **Playback readiness audit required.** The platform API includes a transcoding status flag that returns false for a number of video files. A full audit of playback readiness across all 252 titles is necessary before launch.

HIGH: Resolve within the first month of operation

- **Content metadata gaps.** Several titles carry incomplete or placeholder metadata values: missing release year, a test genre placeholder, and a collections label spelling error ("HESTERIA" should read "HYSTERIA"). One title with a test genre value should be removed from the live catalogue until properly configured.
- **Korean privacy policy link in footer.** The footer currently includes a live link to an `/en/privacy-policy-korean` page. This should be removed or replaced before any public-facing launch activity.
- **SEO metadata: multiple items pending.** The following issues were confirmed on the live site and require resolution before any press, influencer, or marketing activity: (1) `og:title` and `og:description` both read "Home page OG", a literal development placeholder; (2) `twitter:title` and `twitter:description` read "Home page Twitter", the same placeholder text; (3) `og:url` points to `slasherplay.tv/home-page`, a non-existent path; (4) the canonical URL contains a double-slash and resolves to `/en/homepage` rather than `/en`; (5) the OG image URL also contains a double-slash (`//og-image.jpg`); (6) the Google Search Console verification meta tag contains the literal string "your-google-verification-code", meaning the site is unverified with Google; (7) the JSON-LD

SearchAction `urlTemplate` reads `https://slasherplay.tvsearch?q=...` (missing the slash after `.tv`); (8) the JSON-LD Organization logo URL reads `https://slasherplay.tvimages/Slasher-Logo-1.png` (same missing-slash issue); (9) JSON-LD schema `name` is "Slasher OTT" across all three structured data blocks; (10) the `keywords` meta tag reads "home page,base", a development placeholder.

APPENDIX C

Catalogue Summary by Category

CATEGORY	TITLES	SELECTED TITLES
Exclusive	108	Includes 18 claimed Originals + 90 licensed titles with asserted MENA exclusivity. Rights audit required to validate full exclusivity chain.
Crime	76	American Violence, Altitude, Blood Sucking Bastards, The Crime Boss
Terror	60	Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The Innkeepers, Dead Awake, Black Water
Fantasia	42	Abigail, Underworld series, dark fantasy and supernatural titles
Sci-Fi	36	Coherence, Level 16, Time Lapse, Below Zero
Slasher	21	Bastard, Hell House LLC franchise, Babysitter Must Die
Originals	19	A 100 Candles Game, A Million Days, Aftermath, Slotherhouse
Midnight Movies	13	Last Shift, House of Bodies, Coming Home in the Dark
Franchise	9	Hell House LLC 1–3, Underworld Evolution
Young Audiences	4	Abigail, Monster Island, Monkey King Reborn
Coming Soon	4–10	Mischief Night, The Devil's Doorway

Note: titles appear across multiple categories. Total unique titles: 252. The catalogue carries 19 titles tagged as Originals; 18 hold exclusive MENA rights and none of those 18 appear on other MENA platforms (production credentials unverified). One Original (Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey 2) is available on OSN+ (formerly STARZPLAY) and is not counted within the exclusive 108. The broader "Exclusive" category (108 titles) includes the 18 exclusive Originals and 90 licensed titles with asserted MENA exclusivity; all 90 licensed exclusives showed no competing MENA availability on verified platforms. Full catalogue with brand classification and platform availability data is in the PRISM model workbook (Catalog tab).

APPENDIX D

Comparable Market Precedents

How the model has worked elsewhere, and what conditions made it work

The streaming landscape for niche and genre content has produced a handful of platforms that demonstrate what becomes possible when a passionate, underserved audience finally gets a home built specifically for them. The five cases below are not blueprints. Each platform found its answer within the specific conditions of its market and moment. What they share is a logic: they built something small that was the best in the world at exactly one thing, and then held that position until the audience found them.

Crunchyroll

ANIME · GLOBAL · EST. 2006

Subscribers	Acquired by Sony	Model
17M	**$1.175B**	**SVOD**
paying (2025)	2021	1. community + simulcast

Crunchyroll did not create interest in anime. It found a community already paying for content informally, through piracy, and built the one thing the piracy ecosystem could not offer: a legal, community-connected destination that fans felt good about. Three elements drove the subscription conversion. Completeness: if a title was anime, it was on Crunchyroll. Speed: simulcast streaming on the day of Japanese broadcast, ahead of piracy. Community: discussion, watch parties, and fan infrastructure that made the platform feel like a home rather than a library. No general-purpose platform could credibly replicate any of these.

Relevance: The horror audience in MENA is in an equivalent position. They consume content through whatever channels are available because no legal, MENA-first home exists. The subscription conversion opportunity follows the same mechanics, and the precedent shows the scale it can reach.

Shudder

HORROR · US / CA / UK / IE / AU / NZ · EST. 2015

Subscribers	Price point	MENA availability
N/D	**$6.99**	**None**
standalone figure not publicly broken out	per month	not offered in the region

Shudder launched on a single contrarian conviction: horror fans would pay specifically for a horror service, not simply accept horror content inside a general subscription. That conviction proved correct. The platform operates at one of the lowest price points in SVOD, grows through originals (Creepshow, Cursed Films), and maintains community events including the annual Ghoul Log and The Last Drive-In with Joe Bob Briggs that have become part of the genre's cultural conversation. As the platform matured, it expanded into adjacent dark genres, thriller, folk horror, and supernatural drama, without diluting its identity; each addition reinforced the brand because the editorial voice remained consistent throughout. AMC Networks has not pursued MENA rights.

Relevance: The closest structural parallel to SlasherPlay in terms of genre, content model, and community positioning. Shudder's absence from MENA is not an oversight; it reflects the economics of small English-language subscriber bases in the region. SlasherPlay occupies the position Shudder has not claimed, in a market that requires Arabic-language curation and regional content relationships that a US-based platform cannot build from the outside.

SHUDDER: ORIGINALS STRATEGY

2017	**Primal Screen** – first original: a short documentary establishing the horror editorial voice before any scripted commitment.
2018	Exclusive films (**Mayhem**, **Downrange**, **Revenge**) and **Channel Zero** (acquired from Syfy). First clear signal that exclusives, not catalogue breadth, drive subscriptions.
2018	**The Last Drive-In with Joe Bob Briggs** – live watch event that crashed Shudder's servers. Within hours it became the most-discussed thing in horror fandom. Commissioned as a full series. Community format proved more powerful than any film acquisition.
2019	**Creepshow** (TV series) – flagship scripted original, now multiple seasons. Became the editorial identity of the platform: anthology horror in the tradition of the genre's classics.
2019+	**Cursed Films** documentary series (seasons 1 and 2) exploring the mythology behind legendary horror productions. Docuseries as genre appreciation content – high engagement, low production cost relative to scripted.

What this model teaches: Shudder's most effective original was a live community event, not a film. The community format (Joe Bob, Ghoul Log) built identity and retention faster than any content acquisition. Creepshow arrived four years into the platform's life, after subscriber trust and editorial identity were already established. The lesson for SlasherPlay is sequencing: community formats first, scripted only after the audience exists and the editorial identity is set. A regional horror host series or curated editorial show costs a fraction of scripted and builds the same community infrastructure. Scripted originals, if and when they make sense, are a year-three question.

MUBI

ARTHOUSE · 190+ COUNTRIES · EST. 2007

Users	Model	MENA presence
20M	**SVOD**	**Active**
May 2025	1. production + theatrical	TR, EG, MA, AE and beyond

MUBI launched with exactly 30 films available at any time, one new title curated each day, each available for 30 days. The constraint was the product. It communicated taste, scarcity, and editorial authority in a way that a 10,000-title catalogue never could. The business model evolved from pure SVOD into a production company and theatrical distributor: MUBI now acquires festival films, premieres them theatrically, then streams them exclusively on the platform. The streaming service and the content acquisition pipeline are the same asset. MUBI Go extends the model into physical cinema tickets for new-release films.

Relevance: MUBI is active in MENA but does not serve the horror or dark genre audience. Its trajectory demonstrates two things: that an editorial voice built around a specific taste community can sustain a global platform at modest scale, and that a distributor controlling the content acquisition pipeline has a compounding advantage over a platform that only licenses. SlasherPlay's distribution infrastructure positions it to pursue the same integration.

Hoichoi

BENGALI-LANGUAGE · INDIA / BANGLADESH · EST. 2017

Audience	Profitability	Model
242M	**Yes**	**Tiered SVOD**
native Bengali speakers	via local-language vertical focus	local/regional pricing

Hoichoi's model is built on language-vertical execution: disciplined pricing for local purchasing power, steady catalogue depth in one language community, and a product experience that is clearly not generic entertainment. The content acquisition strategy followed the Crunchyroll logic: secure Bengali-language content that major platforms were under-serving, at costs that matched the audience scale. The platform built a complete home for a specific language community rather than competing on the same terms as Netflix or Amazon.

Relevance: The useful lesson for SlasherPlay is local-market execution discipline: own a specific audience, price for local conversion, and build catalogue depth that a generalist cannot match. This case is included for vertical-product mechanics, not for geographic expansion logic.

CuriosityStream

DOCUMENTARY · GLOBAL · EST. 2015

Users	Listed	Entry strategy
20M	**NASDAQ**	**Telco first**
as of 2021	CURI	direct subscription goal

Founded by the creator of the Discovery Channel, CuriosityStream entered streaming with a clear understanding of legacy television distribution. Rather than beginning with consumer marketing, it used telco and IPTV bundle agreements to reach audiences at scale, often at near-zero incremental cost to subscribers. The bundle strategy placed the platform on devices that direct-to-consumer marketing would not have reached, and the resulting data on which bundle subscribers converted to direct subscriptions informed the upsell and retention playbook.

Relevance: SlasherPlay's B2B distribution background maps directly onto this entry strategy. The telco relationship does not substitute for direct subscription; it creates it. A bundle deal on day one tells content partners, press, and investors that the platform has real distribution infrastructure rather than a consumer website. The CuriosityStream case also illustrates the ceiling: bundle ARPU alone does not sustain a niche SVOD, and the transition to direct subscriber growth requires a content and community investment that bundle economics alone will not fund.

Shasha

GULF DRAMA · GCC · EST. 2021

Focus	Pricing	MENA presence
Khaleeji	**USD 3–6**	**Gulf-first**
Gulf-original drama	per month	KSA, UAE, Kuwait

Shasha built its position not by competing on catalogue breadth against Shahid and Netflix, but by owning a single cultural identity: bold, contemporary Gulf storytelling that larger platforms were not making room for. The content strategy combined original Khaleeji drama productions with exclusive Gulf sports rights – two assets that are structurally unavailable to any non-regional competitor. Operating from a London headquarters while remaining culturally anchored in Kuwait and the wider Gulf, the platform demonstrated that a niche MENA SVOD can sustain a standalone business on cultural specificity alone, without the scale of a regional broadcast group behind it.

Relevance: Shasha is the most structurally comparable case in this appendix: a focused MENA vertical SVOD, backed by original production rather than licensed breadth, competing in a market already occupied by Shahid. The parallel for SlasherPlay is direct. Genre specificity – in Shasha's case, cultural identity; in SlasherPlay's case, horror – is the asset that justifies a standalone platform. The lesson is that the position is defensible from day one if the editorial commitment is unambiguous, and that original production, even at modest scale, converts that commitment into something a general platform cannot replicate by adding a shelf.

WHAT THESE CASES SHARE

Four conditions appear across every case where a niche SVOD reached sustainable scale.

01 **The audience already existed and was already paying, informally.** The platform formalizes behavior that had no legal alternative. Subscription conversion follows the existing demand curve; it does not create it from nothing.

02 **Completeness within the vertical preceded any expansion beyond it.** Crunchyroll had everything anime before it had anything else. MUBI curated arthouse with rigorous authority. Shudder built the deepest horror library in its markets. Partial coverage signals product immaturity; complete coverage within a defined scope signals authority.

03 **Community infrastructure was built before community growth began.** Platforms that launched watch parties, editorial features, fan events, and discussion functionality before scale retained subscribers at measurably higher rates than those that added community features after traction. The infrastructure creates the audience; the audience does not create the infrastructure.

04 **One exclusive content event defined the brand early.** Shudder's most viral moment was not a film but The Last Drive-In with Joe Bob Briggs, a live watch event that crashed their servers and became the most-discussed event in horror fandom within hours. Creepshow followed one year later, after the community already existed. MUBI built its reputation on theatrical-first festival acquisitions, streaming exclusively after the theatrical window. Crunchyroll owned the simulcast window. Each platform had a moment where it offered something the subscriber could not get anywhere else on the day they wanted it. For SlasherPlay, this event has not yet been staged. Identifying and committing to it is the highest-leverage pre-launch decision.

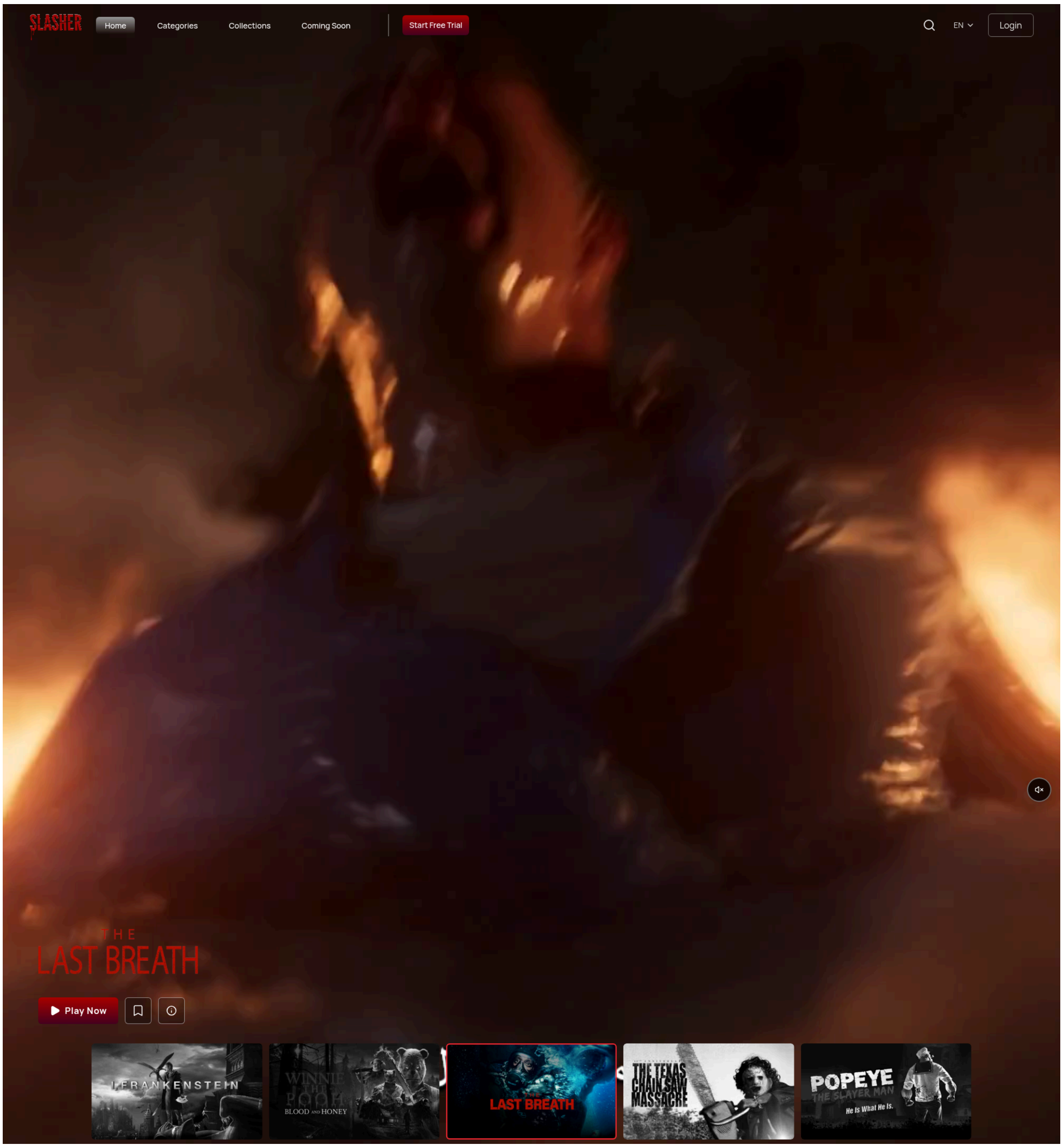
Research compiled February 2026. Comparable-platform figures use checkable public sources: Crunchyroll paid subscribers (2025 reporting): https://www.animationxpress.com/latest-news/crunchyroll-surpasses-17-million-subscribers/ ; MUBI registered users (May 2025 reporting): https://variety.com/2025/film/features/mubi-worth-billion-streamer-taking-on-a24-1236395959/ ; CuriosityStream paying subscribers (2021): https://www.tvtechnology.com/news/curiositystream-hits-20-million-paying-subs ; AMC Networks total streaming subscribers (2024, includes Shudder): https://investors.amcnetworks.com/news-releases/news-release-details/amc-networks-inc-reports-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-2024 . Shudder standalone subscriber counts are not currently broken out by AMC, so this deck treats Shudder as a strategic benchmark rather than a fixed-count comparator.

APPENDIX E

Technical Evidence

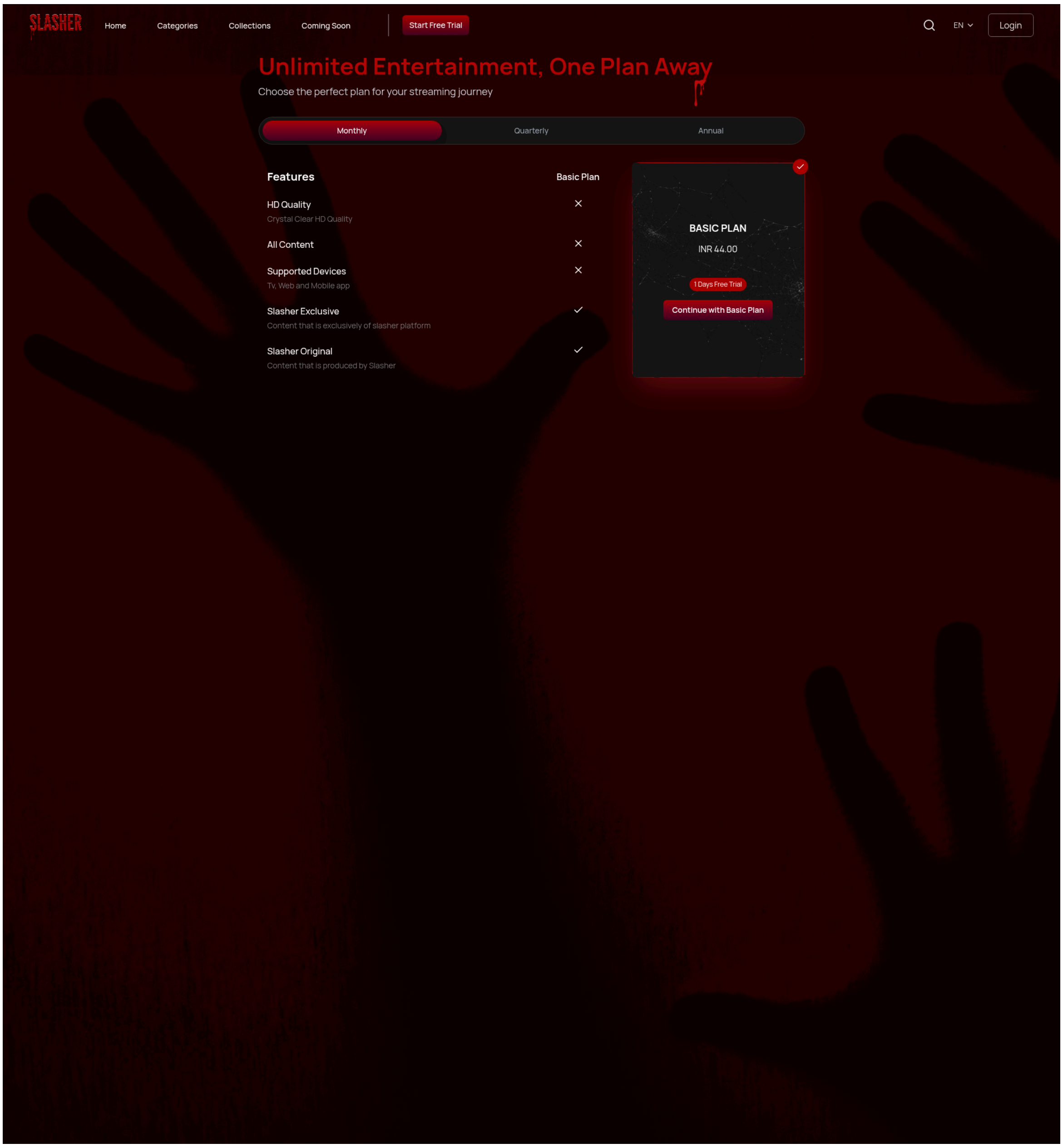
The following screenshots document the platform issues referenced in Appendix B. All captures were taken in February 2026 using a desktop browser at standard viewport width (1280px). No modifications were made to the live site; annotations and highlights were applied in-browser via JavaScript overlay for clarity.

Figure 1: Homepage



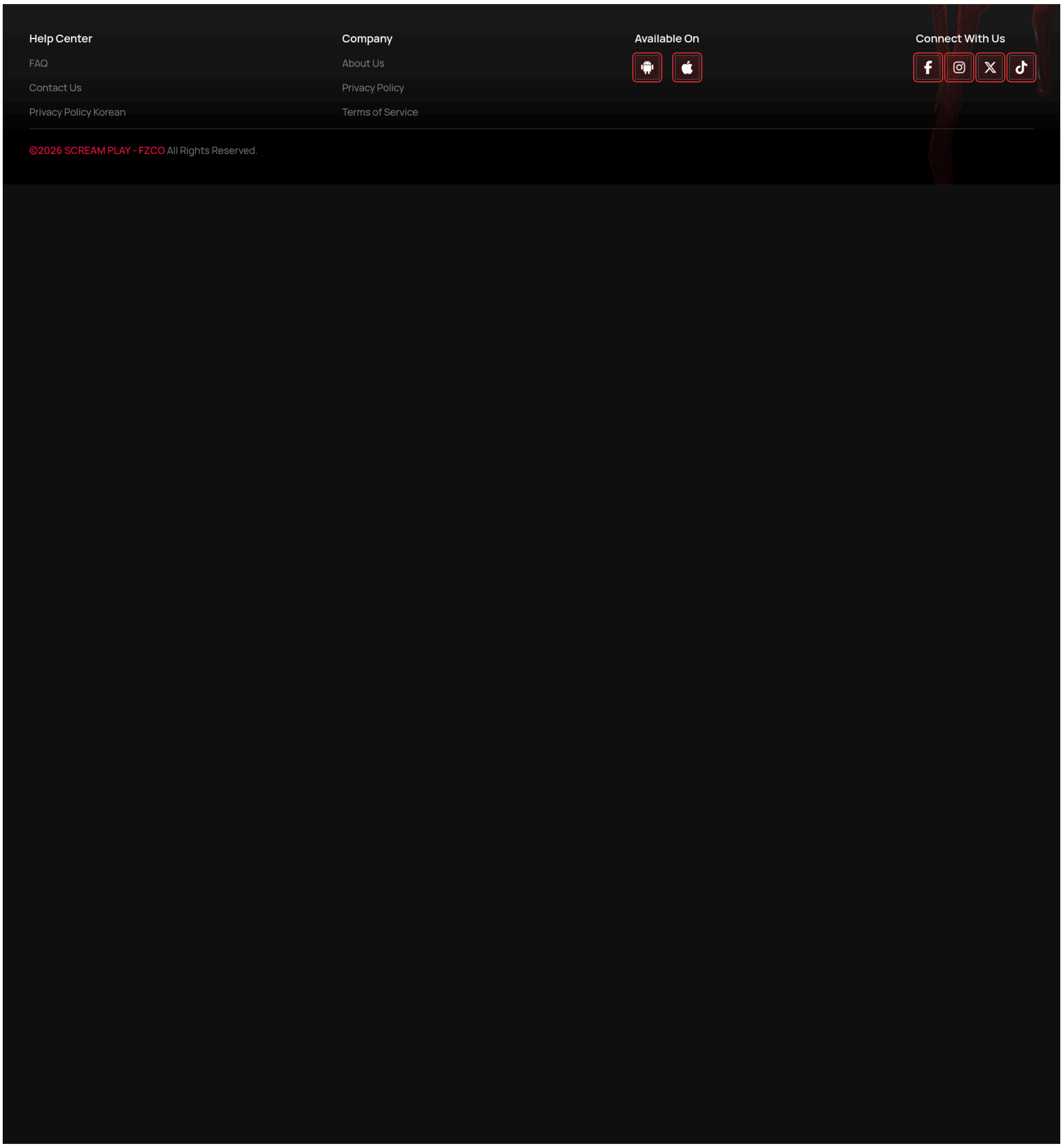
The platform homepage as seen by a first-time visitor. Navigation, hero banner, and content browsing are functional. The subscription call-to-action links to the pricing page, which currently displays placeholder INR amounts rather than localised MENA pricing.

Figure 2: Subscription Page, INR Pricing and Missing Feature Detail



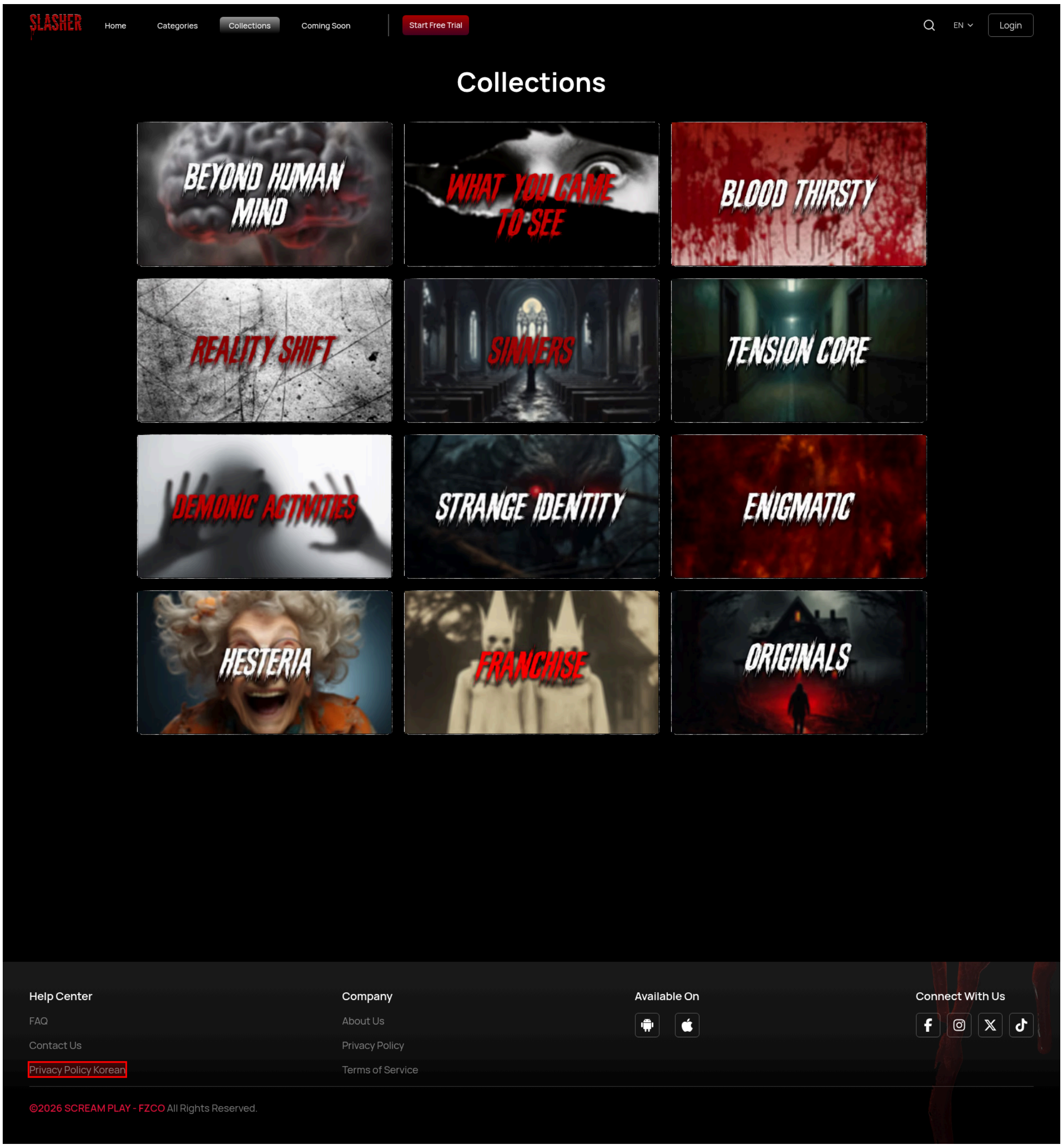
The subscription page displays pricing in Indian Rupees and offers a single “Basic Plan” with no tier differentiation. Subscriber-facing detail standard across the industry, including concurrent streams, download allowance, and supported device count, requires completion before launch.

Figure 3: Footer, Inactive Social and App Store Links



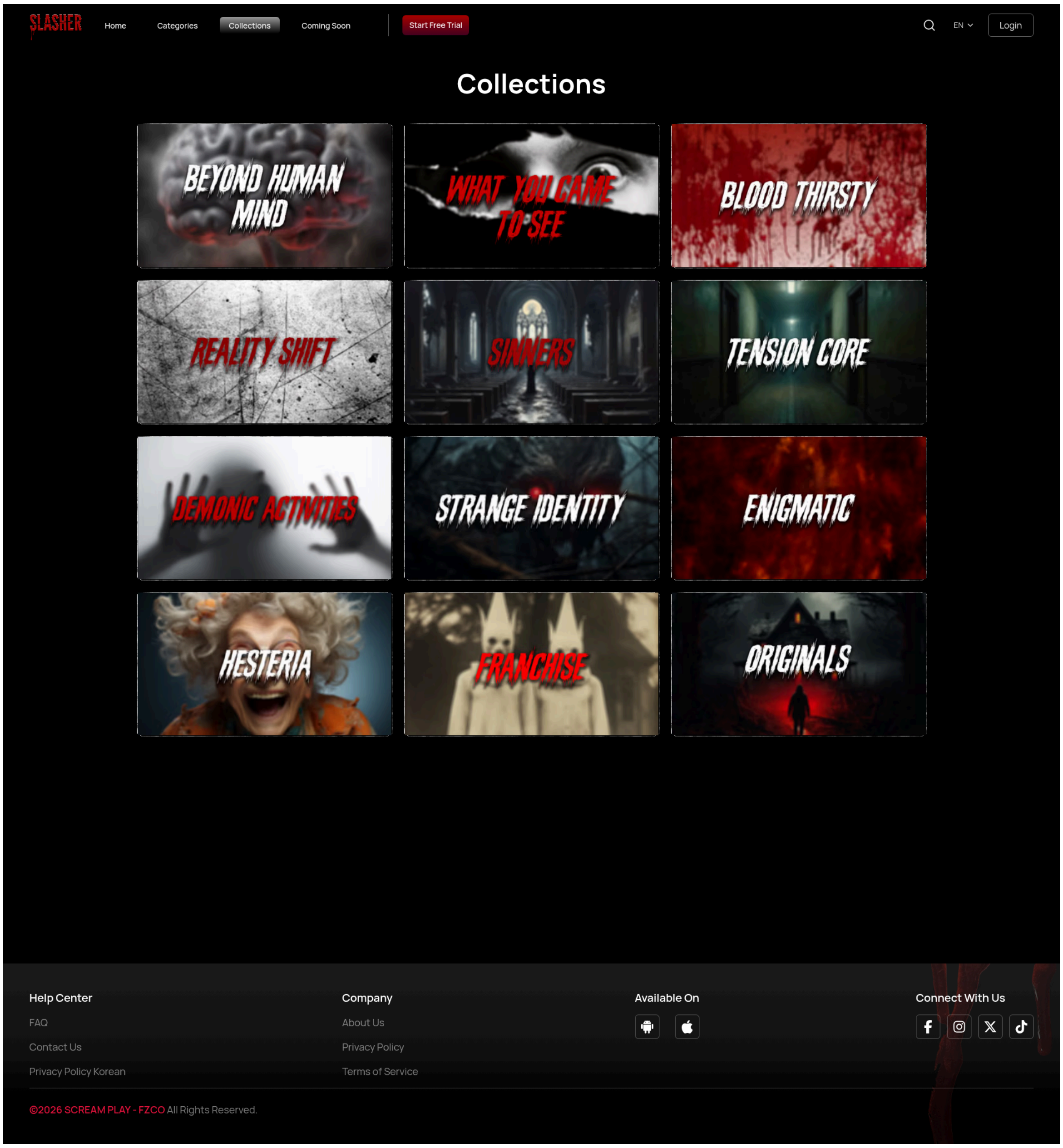
All social media icons (Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok) and both app store badges (App Store, Google Play) in the footer resolve to `href="#"`, a placeholder anchor. Clicking any of them produces no navigation. Red highlights mark the affected elements. These links are visible on every page of the platform.

Figure 4: Korean Privacy Policy Link in Footer



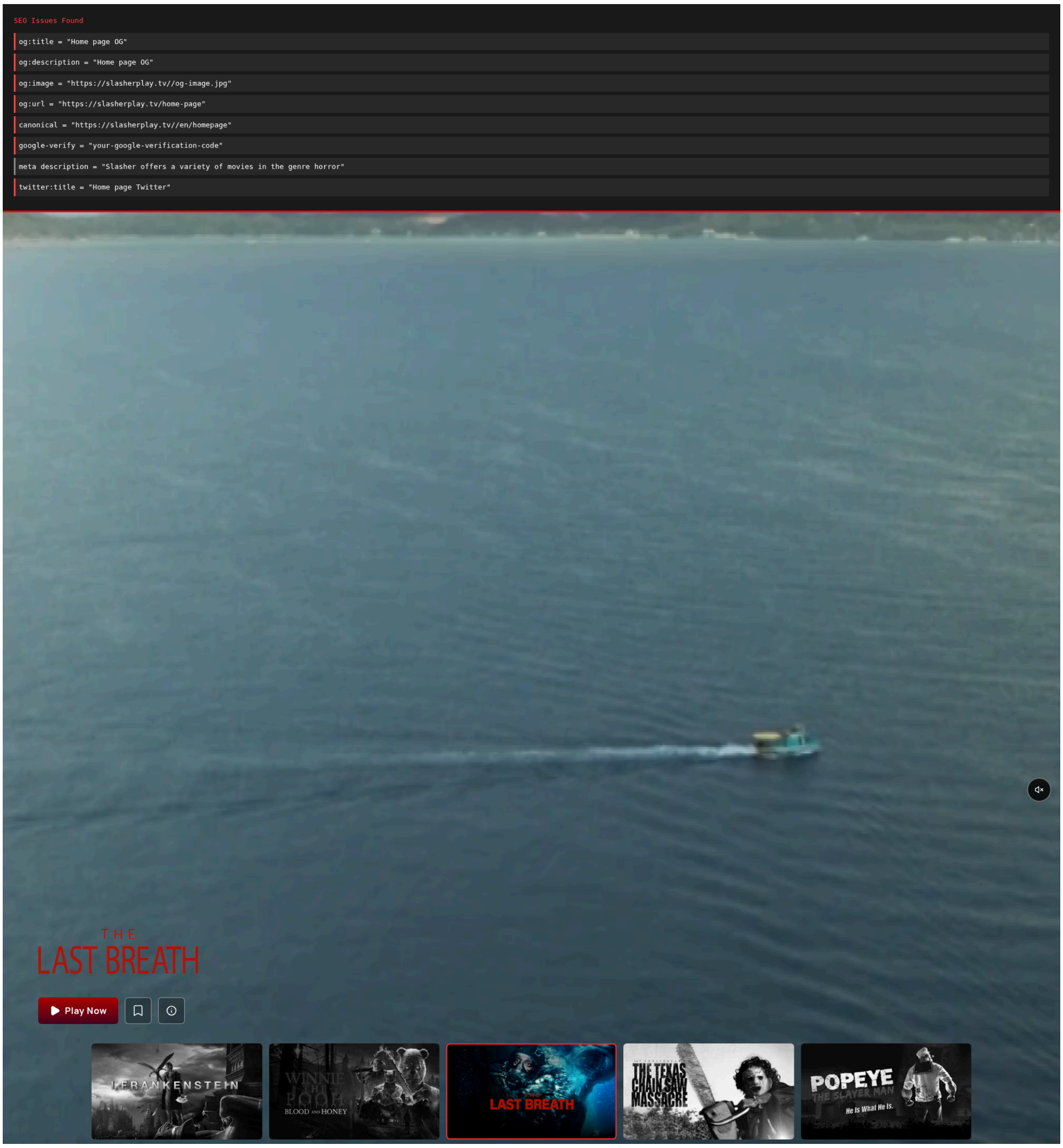
The footer includes a live link to `/en/privacy-policy-korean`, a Korean-language privacy policy page (highlighted in red). This is a development artifact with no relevance to the platform's MENA audience and should be removed before launch.

Figure 5: Collections Page, “HESTERIA” Spelling Error



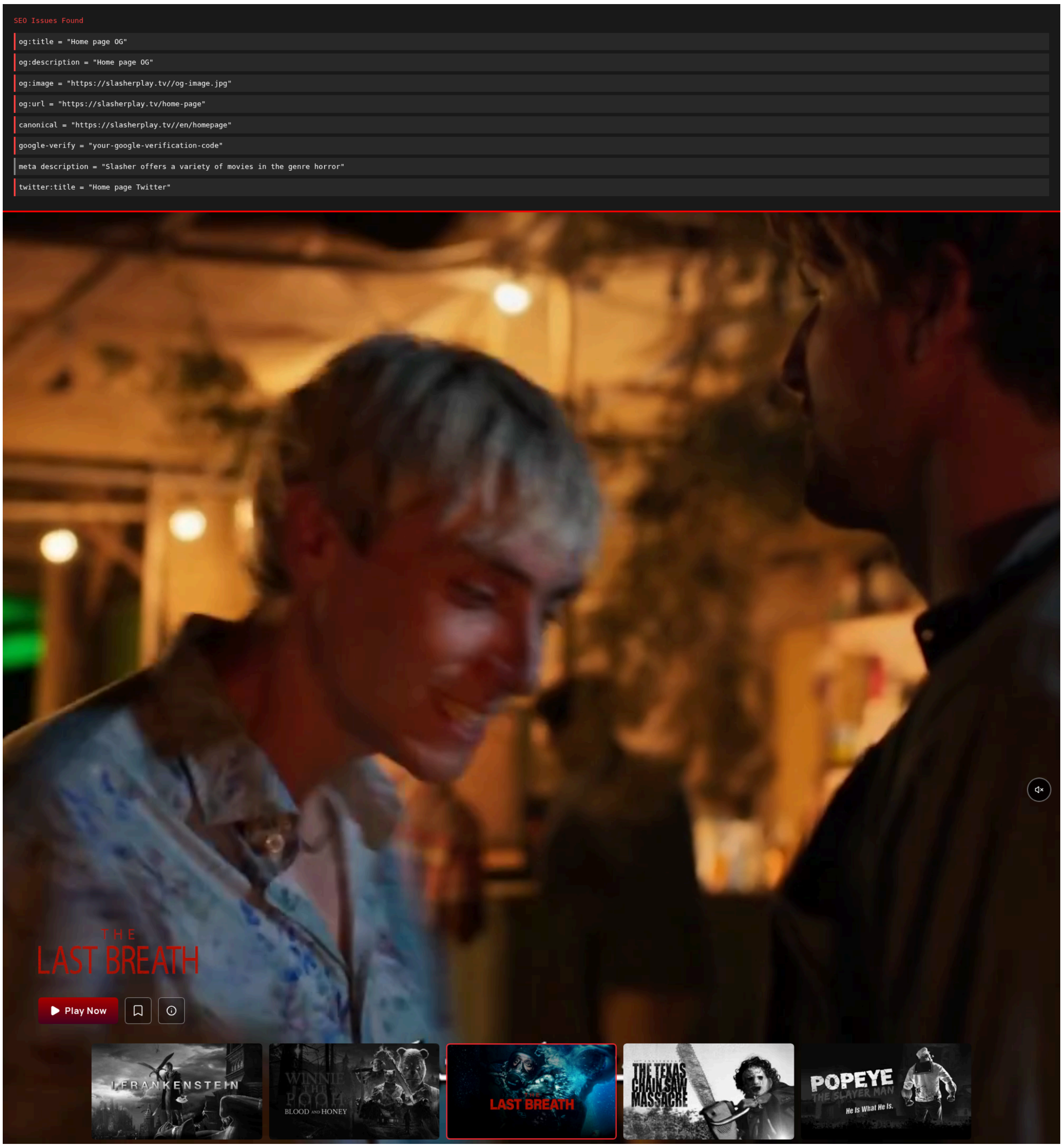
The Collections page displays a section label reading “HESTERIA” (highlighted in red). The correct spelling is “HYSTERIA”. This appears prominently in the main content browsing area and is one of several content metadata issues visible to all visitors.

Figure 6: Homepage SEO Metadata, Placeholder Values



A browser diagnostic overlay on the homepage exposes the metadata issues referenced in Appendix B. The `og:title` and `og:description` both read "Home page OG"; the canonical URL is malformed (`//en/homepage`); the Google site verification tag contains the literal string "your-google-verification-code"; and `og:url` resolves to a path outside the active site structure. All of these values are currently indexed by search engines and social platforms.

Figure 7: Homepage Structured Data, JSON-LD Schema Errors



A second diagnostic overlay surfaces the three JSON-LD structured data blocks on the homepage (WebSite, SiteNavigationElement, Organization). All three identify the platform as “Slasher OTT” rather than the public brand name. The `SearchAction urlTemplate` and the `Organization logo` URL are both missing the trailing slash after `.tv`, producing malformed absolute URLs that fail Google’s Rich Results validation.

Screenshots captured February 2026. Browser: Chrome (current release) at 1280px viewport width.

APPENDIX F

Market Pricing & TAM Analysis

The subscriber and ARPU projections in this model are grounded in a country-level assessment of MENA streaming markets. Each country carries a different price ceiling (driven by purchasing power, existing streaming penetration, and local competition), a different scale of potential horror audience, and a different go-to-market priority for SlasherPlay.

How to read this table. Internet and population baselines use public datasets (World Bank + GSMA, see citation index below). Broader MENA paying-market context uses Omdia's reported regional SVOD total. Paying-streamer estimates in this table are internal scenario assumptions derived from explicit penetration ranges by country group, then converted to horror TAM using a fixed 3–4% niche-share multiplier. They are not copied from third-party platform league tables. The ranges are reviewed against primary issuer disclosures and live plan pricing pages. Effective D2C ARPU applies a 15% discount for trials, churn, and payment failures — standard practice for emerging-market SVOD modelling.

Core-region model check (used across the deck, as a subset of the wider MENA paying base): GCC paying streamers (4.72M) + Levant & Egypt paying streamers (2.35M) = 7.07M. Applying 3–4% horror share gives 212K–283K paying horror TAM. This is the figure range used in Section 01 and the PRISM workbook.

Citation index (public/checkable):
[1] World Bank population indicator (SP.POP.TOTL): https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL
[2] World Bank internet usage indicator (IT.NET.USER.ZS): https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS
[3] GSMA Mobile Economy MENA 2024 (PDF): https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-economy/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/181124-Mobile-Economy-MENA-2024.pdf
[4] Omdia MENA streaming baseline (27M+ SVOD subscriptions at end-2024): https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20250513597916/en/Omdia-SVOD-Growth-to-Drive-MENA-Streaming-Market-Past-%241.5-Billion-in-2025
[5] MBC Group investor reports and presentations (primary issuer disclosures for Shahid KPIs): https://www.mbc.net/ir/reports-and-presentations
[6] AMC Networks FY2024 results (primary issuer disclosure, includes total streaming subscribers with Shudder in portfolio): https://investors.amcnetworks.com/news-releases/news-release-details/amc-networks-inc-reports-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-2024
[7] Netflix official plan benchmark page: https://help.netflix.com/en/node/24926

Country	Pop. (M)	Internet (M)	Paying streamers (M)	Horror TAM	Retail / mo	Eff. ARPU	Notes
GCC markets							
Saudi Arabia	37.9	32.4	2.85	114K	USD 7.99	USD 6.79	Largest SVOD market; Arabic dubbing essential
UAE	9.8	9.3	0.82	33K	USD 8.99	USD 7.64	Highest ARPU; expat base receptive to genre
Kuwait	4.9	4.4	0.39	16K	USD 7.99	USD 6.79	Strong purchasing power; smaller scale
Qatar	2.9	2.7	0.24	10K	USD 8.99	USD 7.64	Premium ceiling; large expat base

Bahrain	1.7	1.5	0.13	5K	USD 7.99	USD 6.79	Small affluent market; bundle with KSA
Oman	4.9	4.1	0.29	12K	USD 6.99	USD 5.94	Slightly lower ceiling; growing digital penetration
GCC sub-total	**62.1**		**4.72M**	**190K**		**~USD 7.00 wtd**	
Levant & Egypt							
Egypt	107.4	72.0	1.58	63K	USD 3.99	USD 3.39	Volume market; price-sensitive; dub required
Jordan	10.3	8.5	0.19	8K	USD 4.99	USD 4.24	English + Arabic; tech-literate audience
Iraq	42.3	28.0	0.45	18K	USD 3.49	USD 2.97	Kurdish subs/ dubs unlock north; payment friction high
Lebanon	5.5	4.7	0.08	3K	USD 4.49	USD 3.82	Economic crisis constrains near-term paid scale
Palestine	5.4	3.2	0.05	2K	USD 3.99	USD 3.39	Limited addressable paying base near-term
Levant & Egypt sub-total	**171.0**		**2.35M**	**94K**		**~USD 3.39 wtd**	
North Africa							
Morocco	37.5	29.0	0.38	15K	USD 3.49	USD 2.97	Arabic + Darija; French horror crossover potential
Algeria	46.2	29.5	0.33	13K	USD 2.99	USD 2.54	Large population; payment infrastructure constraints
Tunisia	12.0	9.2	0.14	6K	USD 3.49	USD 2.97	High digital literacy; French-language crossover
Libya	7.2	4.1	0.06	2K	USD 2.99	USD 2.54	Infrastructure limitations; long-term market
North Africa sub-total	**102.9**		**0.91M**	**36K**		**~USD 2.79 wtd**	
MENA Total	**336.0**		**7.98M**	**320K**		**~USD 5.42 blended**	Theoretical D2C ceiling at full maturity

How the subscriber model uses this data. The 320,000 theoretical D2C horror TAM is the ceiling – not a target. In the current PRISM setup, these country-level TAM and ARPU inputs drive the SVOD and wholesale channel assumptions, while AVOD and TVOD are modelled in parallel as separate monetization engines. In other words, this appendix informs one channel stack inside the integrated model rather than representing total platform economics on its own.

TAM scope by channel. The 320K ceiling applies specifically to paying SVOD subscribers. AVOD and TVOD address different audience segments and operate against a separate, larger free-viewer pool. The MENA horror content audience (people who watch horror but would not pay a recurring subscription fee) is estimated at roughly 1.5–2x the paying base, or 480–640K total free viewers. The PRISM model targets 175K AVOD MAU by Year 5, representing 30–40% reach of that pool – conservative given MENA AVOD infrastructure immaturity. TVOD targets 85K registered buyers by Year 5, representing a transactional subset of the horror audience (27% of the SVOD TAM ceiling) who prefer pay-per-title over subscription. Combined overlap-adjusted platform reach peaks at roughly 400–420K unique users by Year 5 – above the 320K SVOD-only ceiling, but grounded in the broader horror audience rather than inflating the paying TAM.

Why the GCC leads. Year 1 D2C revenue is concentrated in GCC markets (effectively all early D2C subscribers; 100% territory allocation in Year 1), which is why the Year 1 effective net D2C ARPU of approximately USD 6.50 (after paying rate and channel take) is materially higher than the USD 5.42 full-MENA theoretical blended ceiling shown in the table above. As the Levant and North Africa scale in Years 3 to 5, effective ARPU compresses. This is expected and modelled. The higher GCC ARPU in the early years is what makes Year 1 unit economics viable despite the modest absolute subscriber count.

Payment infrastructure. Iraq, Algeria, and Libya carry elevated payment friction risk: limited credit card penetration, reliance on mobile money or cash payment agents, and intermittent payment processor coverage. B2B distribution through telco carriers is often the only practical revenue path in these markets near-term, and the model treats them accordingly. These constraints are not permanent; payment infrastructure across MENA is improving, and the 5-year model conservatively assumes they remain partial friction markets throughout.

APPENDIX G

MENA Payment Options and Gateway Map

This appendix summarizes payment methods and integration routes for priority MENA markets, cross-checked against public gateway and scheme documentation.

Market payment options (priority rails by territory).

Market	Primary options	Integration note
KSA	Mada, stc pay	Mada is the dominant Saudi debit rail, integrated through Moyasar, Checkout.com, and Tap. stc pay offers wallet checkout with OTP flows; supported through major PSP routes in current research.
Egypt	FawryPay, Meeza QR	Fawry for reference/wallet-adjacent flows; Meeza QR commonly integrated through partners.
Kuwait	KNET	Dominant local debit checkout rail and a launch-critical method for Kuwait conversion.
Qatar	QPay (QNB), Ooredoo Money	Blend of local bank gateway and wallet route for wider consumer coverage.
Jordan	eFawateercom, Zain Cash	National bill-pay rail plus wallet checkout option.
Lebanon	Whish, OMT Pay	Wallet and merchant pay-link routes, useful under higher card-friction conditions.
UAE	Careem Pay, Apple Pay	Wallet and merchant services route to complement standard card checkout.

Gateway routes and documentation references.

Rail	Gateway path in research	Operational implication
stc pay	Checkout.com, Tap, Amazon Payment Services	Can be integrated via primary PSP layer instead of direct bespoke build.
KNET	Tap, Checkout.com, Amazon Payment Services	Supports Kuwait launch readiness with a single PSP-centered architecture.
Meeza QR	Geidea partner docs referenced	Egypt QR acceptance may require partner-specific integration sequencing.
FawryPay, QPay, Ooredoo Money, eFawateercom, Zain Cash, Whish, OMT Pay, Careem Pay	Direct operator or bank APIs in current research	These methods need market-by-market prioritization against launch geography and team capacity.

Recommended rollout sequence for this scope.

1. Phase 1 (core launch markets): prioritize KNET and stc pay on top of baseline card checkout. Egypt and FawryPay are Years 3–5.
2. Phase 2 (next expansion): add Qatar and Jordan local rails where subscriber cohorts justify incremental integration cost.
3. Phase 3 (higher-friction territories): activate Lebanon-specific wallet rails and additional options based on conversion data.

Documentation links referenced in this appendix:
stc pay: checkout.com ; tap.company ; amazon payment services.
FawryPay: developer portal.
Meeza QR: meeza ; geidea docs.
KNET: tap docs ; amazon payment services ; checkout.com.
QPay: qnb ; ooredoo qatar.
Ooredoo Money: developer portal.
eFawateercom: cbj.
Zain Cash: zain jordan.
Whish: api docs.
OMT Pay: omt lebanon.
Careem Pay: api docs.
Apple Pay: developer docs.