

BUILD *vs* BUY

The \$70 Billion Lesson

A Strategic Framework for African Media Companies



THE CORE INSIGHT



Meta and Google are fighting a capital-intensive war to own the **power plant**.

Apple is content owning the **light switch**.

The winner will not be who builds the best model.

It will be who controls the question.



THE \$70 BILLION CONTEXT

Annual AI Infrastructure Spend (2025)

Google

\$90B+

Meta

\$72B

ramping to \$100B+

Microsoft

\$80B+

OpenAI

\$5B+

(compute only)

THE INFRASTRUCTURE TAX — This is the annual cost of participating in frontier AI development. It is not a one-time investment—it is perpetual expenditure required simply to remain relevant.

Apple made a different call. They chose to RENT the capability.



THE OPERATOR CHECKLIST

Five Strategic Questions Apple Asked

I | **Who owns the customer?** The entity with direct customer relationship holds strategic advantage

II | **Is this a core competency?** Build devices & UX, not massive language models

III | **Can you create leverage?** Google needs iPhone distribution—Apple used this to negotiate

IV | **Can you control the boundary?** Simple tasks on-device, complex through cloud, hardest to partners

V | **Product vs Ecosystem?** Netscape had the browser. Microsoft had the OS. History picked the ecosystem



PRINCIPLE I

Platform Arbitrage

Be present everywhere, owned nowhere.

THE PROBLEM

African media typically either stays off major platforms (losing reach) or becomes entirely dependent on them (losing control and revenue).

THE STRATEGY

- Deploy across multiple FAST platforms
- Negotiate non-exclusive arrangements
- Use platforms for discovery only
- Drive loyalty to owned properties

Use third-party platforms for discovery; drive loyalty to your owned properties.



Data Sovereignty

Platforms provide aggregated metrics. They rarely share granular, actionable audience intelligence.

1 First-Party Data

Build infrastructure through owned apps and websites

2 Direct Capture

Collect emails, preferences, and engagement patterns directly

3 Content Analytics

Invest in per-show performance, not just channel metrics

4 Strategic Acquisition

Use platforms for reach; capture intelligence yourself

The operator who owns first-party data owns strategic advantage.



PRINCIPLE III

Advertising Stack Independence

Platform-Controlled Revenue Split



Content Owner

STRATEGIC APPROACH

- Build direct advertiser relationships
- Implement SSAI for owned properties
- Layer premium direct-sold campaigns
- Form advertising cooperatives for scale

TARGET ADVERTISERS: Telecoms, remittance services, beauty brands, airlines, financial services—brands specifically targeting African and diaspora audiences.



Content as Strategic Leverage

Platforms need content more than content owners realize—but only for content that performs.

1

Flagship Content

Develop exclusive formats platforms will compete for: live events, appointment viewing, cultural moments

2

Exclusivity Windows

Premiere on owned platforms; release to partners 30-90 days later

3

Platform Optimization

Create versions that perform well in each ecosystem's discovery algorithm

Use demonstrated performance metrics to negotiate improved revenue splits.



PRINCIPLES V & VI

Technical Parity

Technical sophistication is a prerequisite for strategic leverage.

- Cloud playout solutions matching platform-grade quality
- Technical certifications for premium FAST destinations
- Real-time performance monitoring
- Rent infrastructure—apply Build vs Buy recursively

Collective Bargaining

Individual operators have limited leverage. Collectively, you represent significant reach.

- Form/strengthen industry associations for negotiation
- Pool content libraries when pitching platforms
- Share technical infrastructure costs
- Present unified audience data to advertisers

One negotiation for multiple operators changes the power dynamic entirely.



THE MINDSET SHIFT

Big technology platforms are infrastructure providers, not partners.

Distribution

→ Pipes, not homes

Audience Reach

→ Acquisition channels, not audience owners

Monetization

→ Revenue supplements, not primary business models

Technology

→ Capabilities to rent, not competencies to build

Own the customer. Rent the capability.



IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

PHASE I

0–6 Months

Foundation

- Audit platform dependencies
- Implement first-party data capture
- Secure 2-3 FAST distributions
- Join industry collective

PHASE II

6–12 Months

Capability

- Launch direct ad sales
- Develop flagship content
- Content-level analytics
- Technical certifications

PHASE III

12–24 Months

Position

- Renegotiate platform terms
- Launch ad cooperative
- Implement windowing strategy
- Position as regional gateway





OPERATOR TAKEAWAY

The engine gets headlines.

The ecosystem collects rent.

Never build what you can lease.

Unless it is the singular reason your customer stays loyal.



SOURCE & ATTRIBUTION

Source Inspiration

“Build vs. Buy: The \$70 Billion Lesson”
by Zoë Rowell, Veya Strategy Group

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/posts/znrowell_veyastrategygroup-activity-7417241603423068160](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/znrowell_veyastrategygroup-activity-7417241603423068160)

Presentation Prepared By

TDMedia Company

Strategic Media Consultancy

London | Abuja

