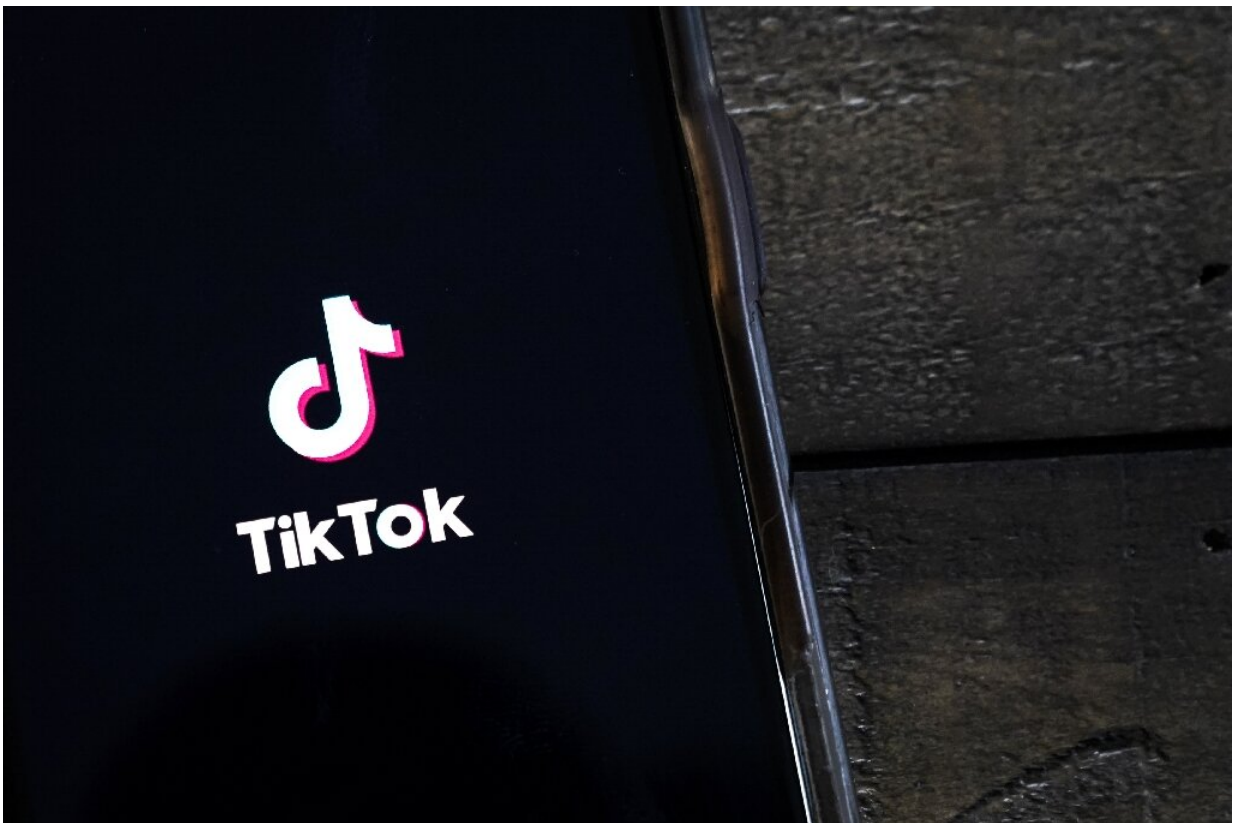


TikTok rivals do battle for hearts of teen video producers

August 12 2020, by Manon Billing



Other apps are looking to profit from TikTok's troubles in the US

Triller, Byte, Dubsmash and now Instagram—there's no shortage of rivals circling to grab a slice of troubled TikTok's teen-centric platform for short-form videos, but can any of them come out on top?

US President Donald Trump's offensive against two major Chinese internet brands, including TikTok's parent company ByteDance, has opened the door to competitors even if TikTok itself manages to find a buyer for its US operations by a mid-September deadline.

TikTok is now under further pressure in Europe, after the French privacy watchdog on Tuesday confirmed a probe in response to the firm's plans to set up a data centre in Ireland.

TikTok insists that its users' [personal information](#) is secure, despite US claims to the contrary.

The stakes are high given that the TikTok [mobile app](#) has been downloaded about 175 million times in the US and more than a billion times around the world, offering everything from make-up tutorials to dance routines and cookery tips.

With Trump intensifying his pre-election threats against China amid the coronavirus pandemic, TikTok suffered a 16-percent slump in US downloads from June to July, according to data from Sensor Tower.

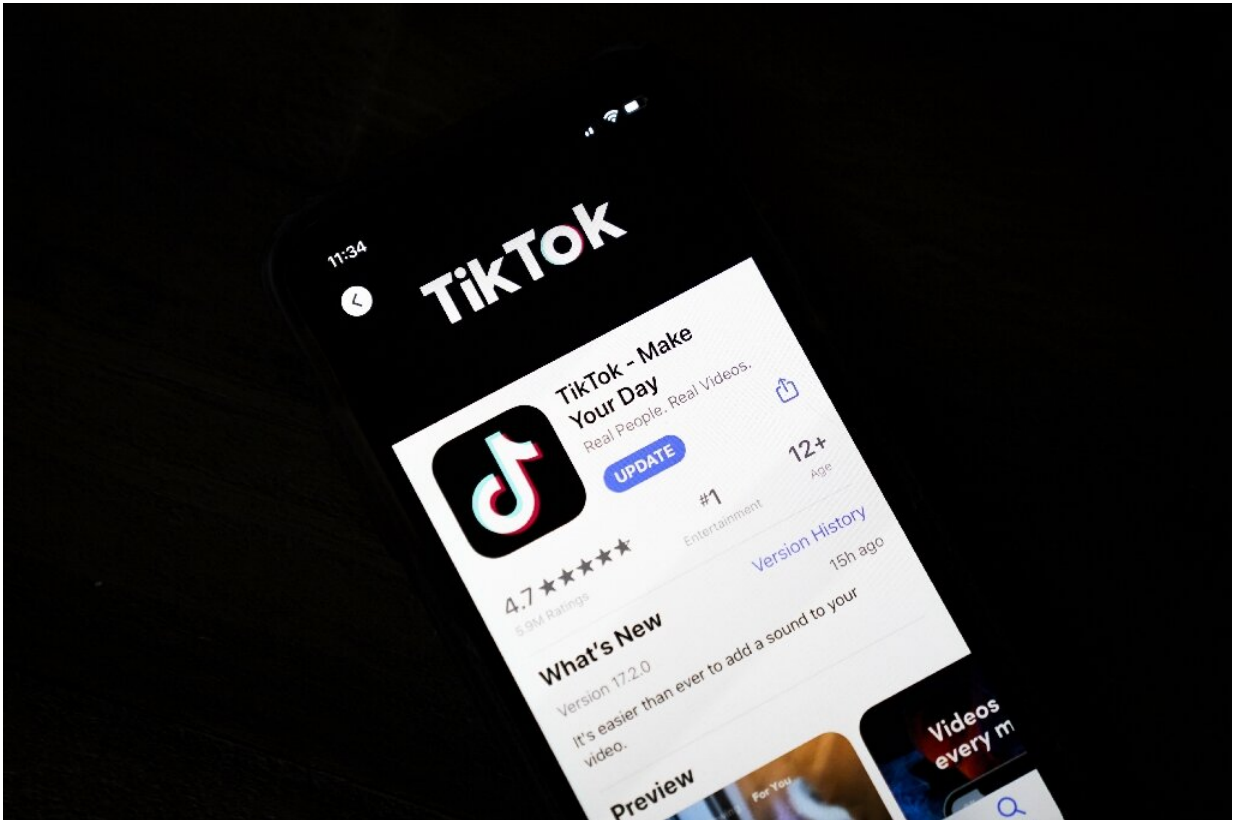
Rival Triller has since grabbed top ranking in Apple's App Store in 50 countries including the United States, helped by a rich catalogue of music from partnerships with major studios such as Sony, Universal and Warner, as well as with Spotify.

It gained a significant boost when India—TikTok's biggest international market—banned the app in late June along with dozens of others from China following a deadly border clash between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

"Triller seems the most serious competitor to TikTok, because it attracts influencers," Luis Rodriguez, social media expert at French consultancy

Mediatrium, told AFP.

Triller, which boasts more than 50 million monthly active users in the US, poached TikTok star Josh Richards to become its chief strategy officer in late July.



Tik Tok allows users to post short videos and is particularly popular among teens

'Years behind TikTok'

Three other leading influencers—Griffin Johnson, Noah Beck and Anthony Reeves—have also signed on as Triller advisors, "each of them

likely to bring millions of followers from TikTok with them", Triller claimed.

"That doesn't mean that they're all going to switch to Triller," Rodriguez stressed. "You could see a lot of losses (of followers) from one platform to another. The war isn't over yet."

Byte, Dubsmash and Clash are among other TikTok lookalikes bidding to cash in. Meanwhile more established internet players aren't sitting back.

Facebook-owned Instagram last week joined the fray with a new product, "Reels", which lets users record videos of up to 15 seconds and provides TikTok-style tools for editing, audio and effects.

The feature is launching in more than 50 countries including Australia, Brazil, Britain, France, Germany, India, Japan, and the United States, and poses a serious threat given Facebook's vast reach.

Also last week, Snapchat pushed into Triller's turf with a raft of music deals including with Warner and Universal, enabling its roughly 240 million daily active users to add hit tunes to their offbeat content.

Another industry behemoth could be waiting in the wings if Microsoft reaches a successful outcome in its talks to buy some or all of TikTok. Twitter has also emerged as a potential suitor for the app, according to the Wall Street Journal.

But so far, none of the rivals has found the heady mix of features, algorithms, influencers, creators and monetization options that made TikTok such a star, US tech commentator Josh Constine said.

"Frankly, these apps all feel years behind TikTok," he wrote on his blog.

"They also fail at the one thing that could make YouTube, despite its dead-in-the-water short-form video feature, the actual winner here: a predictable, sustainable way of paying creators."

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