



## A Public Relations Crisis Analysis and Counsel

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## RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

### *Organizational Context and Background*

TikTok is owned and operated by ByteDance which is a Beijing based Internet technology company founded in 2012 by Zhang Yiming (ByteDance, n.d.). ByteDance is a global well-known organization and it has over 60,000 employees and 15 research and development centers around the globe. The organization culture is fundamental to the corporate culture at ByteDance and represents the principles we uphold as employees. Specifically, it inducing aim for the highest, be grounded and courageous, be open and humble, be candid and clear, always think like day 1, and be a champion of inclusion (ByteDance, n.d.). ByteDance values uniqueness and appreciates the differences. Here's the chart of ByteDance corporate structure which includes only main operating entities. And here's another picture illustrating the products that ByteDance published throughout the last decade, in chronological order (see figure 1A in Appendix).

Before TikTok was begun, Douyin was started in China in September 2016 (Davis, 2018). Douyin is a short-video app with powerful editing capability which allows users to add music and effect to their videos in order to make them interesting. Once it launched, "Douyin is an impressive product: it was developed in 200 days, and within a year got 100 million users, with more than 1 billion videos viewed every day" (Graziani, 2018). The founder of ByteDance, Zhang Yiming, is not only focused on the development of Douyin in mainland China; he planned on Douyin to expand on a global scale.

Starting in 2017, TikTok was launched on iOS and Android outside of mainland China; while it only on 2 August 2018, TikTok became worldwide available including in the United States.

TikTok is one of the products and services under ByteDance. TikTok, known in China as Douyin, is a leading destination for short-term form mobile videos that are exciting, genuine, and spontaneous. TikTok and Douyin almost have the same user interface but they do not have access to each other's content. The mission of the TikTok is to inspire creativity and bring joy. The function of TikTok is used to "create short music, lipsync, dance, comedy and talent videos of 3 to 15 seconds and short looping videos of 3 to 60 seconds" (Mehvish, 2019). TikTok has global offices including Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Dubai, Mumbai, Singapore, Jakarta, Seoul, and Tokyo" (TikTok, n.d.).

Once TikTok launched, it rapidly expanded the popularity of its users. In the three years since launched, TikTok has 800 million active users worldwide (Datareportal, 2020). The users include Jimmy Fallon, Zack King, Will Smith, Justin Bieber, and Tony Hawk, more and more celebrities began to use TikTok.

According to the statistics, "TikTok revealed its monthly active users have grown nearly 800% since Jan. 2018, when the application was used by about 11 million Americans" (see figure 1B in Appendix). (Sherman, 2020). In addition, according to the data from app intelligence firm Sensor Tower, the installation of TikTok was the most-downloaded app on Apple's App Store in 2018 and 2019, even surpassing Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (Perez, 2018). TikTok has been downloaded more than 80 million times in the United States and has reached 2 billion downloads worldwide, according to data from mobile research firm Sensor Tower that excludes Android users in China (Yurieff, 2018). As we see the development of TikTok, it also faced serious challenges in the current environment. In 2019, TikTok was blocked in India after the Court order saying it was at risk of being targeted to the children by sexual predators. However, the ban was lifted after a plea from TikTok developer ByteDance Technology, it has lost at least 2 million users (Ians, 2019). However, later on, TikTok was banned

completed in India in June 2020. On 31 July 2020, President Donald Trump announced plans to ban TikTok in the United States in order to protect national security. And on 15 September 2020, TikTok is still held as an independent organization and has chosen Oracle as minority stakes, which they will be responsible for ensuring the data of users is processed under U.S. jurisdiction (Horowitz, 2020).

According to the TikTok website, it does not show the PR positions. However, under the positions of communications and marketing, they are developing situations in the U.S. related to the trust and safety efforts of the organization. Most importantly, communication and marketing specialists are establishing processes to connect global PR teams and agencies to best practice their efforts in the United States. Additionally, they are working closely with global PR across regions to build thought leadership campaigns and industry marketing campaigns and engage with media for the publicity campaign and issues.

Besides the official website of TikTok, it has social media accounts on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter. It is undeniable that social media is one of the ways of marketing to connect with the audience to build brand awareness, increase followers, and drive website traffic. TikTok joined YouTube in 2015, Instagram in 2014, and Twitter in 2014. They have over 18,372,359 people on Facebook who follow their page, over 26,300,000 followers on Instagram, 1,500,000 followers on Twitter, and 10,164,267 followers on YouTube. The types of topics that they engage in different social media are all presented differently.

- *YouTube*
  - The YouTube channel displayed multiple compilations of TikTok and there are both shorter and longer videos placed on it which is leading the video-sharing platform to the world. The messaging cultivates a voice of delight to the audience.
- *Instagram*
  - Instagram is another visual platform for the younger generation. It can post short time videos or stories of how daily life is. Therefore, the tone on Instagram is more inspiring and entertaining.
- *Facebook*
  - Facebook is a good platform for advertisement and announces upcoming events and update functions. TikTok on Facebook channel really fits into the atmosphere and keeps people interested in what they're posting. The whole environment is very engaging.
- *Twitter*
  - It is a place where TikTok shares quick pieces of information and videos to drive people back to the landing page or the platforms. The content of TikTok on Twitter is attracting and enticing for people to search through. They are using the hashtag, quotes, photos, short videos, gifs, and links where they can read more information.

#### SWOT Analysis

- **Strength:**
  - TikTok is actively targeting young people which with a lot of activities
  - The special effect and music category are very cool and fresh which meet the demand
  - TikTok is one of the most popular short videos platforms for the users

- The technical of algorithm can quickly capture the accurate posture of the human body and calculate users' preferences while watching the videos
- Weakness:
  - Since TikTok has algorithm technology it will frequently show users' favorite videos. It is one of the problems that users may have lost interest in the content due to similarity.
  - The time of TikTok in a short 15 second video is difficult to present, charge, and even put into the advertisement compared with the short video of 3 minutes.
- Opportunities:
  - With the development of big data technology, text and picture form of social demand is not satisfied with users, it is shifting and upgrading from text to visual videos. Watching short videos is no longer problem for most people
  - Besides that, with the maturity of the technical environment, the users can have an excellent and convincing experience and they can access anytime and anywhere while using the internet.
- Threats:
  - Other organizations may also begin to develop their own short videos platform because the market of short videos is arising. This is one of the invisible threats to the TikTok
  - Some countries are blocked by the TikTok which leads the users cannot upload and watch the videos, even causing them to lose the users in worse circumstances.

#### *Social and News Media Coverage on the TikTok Scandal*

Many prominent news outlets have made a great effort to cover this quick and unraveling story of how TikTok, the world-wide phenomena of a social media platform, has been banned in America by President Donald Trump. Since the ban, to be activated 45 days after President Trump announced the ban on TikTok, many people have been up-in-hands regarding how and where users will take their business elsewhere. Since the breaking news, there have been an array of emotions surrounding this major announcement. Media outlets of all sizes, large and small, have taken to the television and internet in order to report their findings on this decision and how its removal will potentially affect the American and global culture. With Facebook amounting 2.6 billion monthly visitors, Instagram amounting 1.08 billion monthly visitors, and just three cable news sources – FOX, CNN, and MSNBC – amounting more than 8.75 million monthly viewers, it is vital to understand how, why, and in what light they are covering this ever-reshaping news story (Clement, 2020; Watson, 2020). The impact and influence trusted networks and media platforms have on Americans is great – to say the least, and it is growing at a rapid pace. Understanding the message being spread through social and news channels would be wise.

The temperature of most news media outlets has generally been neutral to negative. Neutral as in most media outlets are reporting accurate statistics regarding who will be bidding and investing in TikTok stock. Negative as in most media outlets are swayed about the decision due to who called for the ban – President Donald Trump. While most outlets can acknowledge the potential threat regarding the Chinese government having access to millions of Americans' information, they tend to focus on asking questions as to President Trump's intention behind banning the popular media platform.

It is important to note that the media's critique of this decision to ban TikTok is rooted in a political bias – depending on the outlet's opinion of President Trump and his political decisions during his current presidency. While many media outlets profess their desire to remain politically-neutral and present unbiased facts and statistics, their news reporting tends to speak louder than their words of intention to be unbiased. According to a recent study by FiveThirtyEight, 43.3% of Americans approve of Donald Trump and his political decisions thus far (Silver, 2020). This is critical to spend time to understand and dissect as these shapes our context of understanding the media and social platforms' coverage and response to Trump's decision to ban TikTok. Given this understanding, CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC's reporting on President Trump's decision to ban TikTok almost always follows suit their attitude towards the President. Fox News' coverage on the ban has been mostly in favor of the President, given their conservatism and support of him. Given CNN's liberalism, and their history of critiquing the power moves of the President, their coverage of the ban has been mostly negative. They have been asking questions to try to undermine the intention of the President, to protect the American people and their personal information from being handed over to one of America's greatest threats, China. MSNBC, a more moderate liberal news outlet, is more neutral in its coverage of national news. Major social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have made a field day in the ban of TikTok as it has been, since its takeoff in the US, being a giant to conquer in this modern-day media-loving world.

Even before TikTok's national ban, Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, did not love its competitor (Bell, 2020). This was due to many reasons, one being the rapid growth of TikTok via the App Store and Google Play. Facebook has a lower growing rate than TikTok, as Facebook has a little less than 700 million downloads and TikTok – a whopping 738 million downloads. TikTok is an obvious threat to Facebook, even though Facebook is not an obvious threat to TikTok. With the ban of TikTok, Facebook released its own "reels" that would essentially mimic the video creation ability for its users. This is an attempt to sweep into ``steal" the specific, targeted audience of loyal, active users worldwide (Mohsin, 2020). These reels were released on Instagram, a major media platform in America and across the globe, since Facebook owns Instagram and Instagram has a similar young audience as TikTok, as opposed to Facebook's older user audience. Since the release of Facebook's TikTok "clone," Reels, released on August 5th, 2020, many media outlets have dismissed the new outlet to make and share videos by claiming it as a major "dud" (Chen, 2020).

Twitter's response the national TikTok ban was in part due to the number of Twitter users ranting and tagging #TikTokban on their media outlet. With Twitter being a major tool and temperature read for businesses globally, reading the political climate could not be complete without looking at what the millions of Twitter users are tweeting about. In fact, it was rumored that Twitter entertained an idea to go in on a deal with another American-made software company to buy TikTok software, but no interest has been publically displayed.

What many people do not know when discussing this major cultural event, is that the CEO of TikTok is the former Disney executive, Kevin Mayer (Spangler, 2020). What even fewer people know is that Twitter, who has not commented on their interest to be involved with TikTok ownership, does not have the funds to buy-out this social platform giant alone – Twitter has a stock price of \$29.38 billion while TikTok has a \$50 billion value (Wang, 2020). While Twitter may not appear to be the platform that comes to mind absorbing TikTok into their brand, they did, in fact, found Vine – the "original" video platform created and blown up in America. In 2012,

unfortunately, the video platform could not be continued as Twitter could not find a business model that would suit Vine. Twitter has not yet made a major business move regarding TikTok.

#### (Julia) Three obvious TikTok Competitors

According to Forbes, there are three major – and obvious – competitors of TikTok. The major competitors are Likee, Byte, and Triller (Bossi, 2020). While all of these social media platforms are based out of differing countries they all center around providing their global audiences video platforms to be able to create, connect, and influence. While all three of these platforms are fast-growing, it is vital to note that, according to Forbes, they are nowhere near stealing TikTok's global "throne" (Forbes, 2020). While Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter may seem to be plausible competitors of TikTok, as their pool of users are all similar, they do not come near Likee, Byte, and Triller – none of whom are threats to TikTok, even as they are their greatest opponents.

Byte, released in January of 2020, is a social media app that allows users to upload six-second, looped videos. It is based out of It is founded by Vine founder, Dom Hoffman, who pointed to a possible reprise of Vine, not affiliated with Twitter, upon the remission of Vine. Pointing out the differences of TikTok and Vine is critical when considering them as competitors. For one, Byte, much like the original Vine, does not offer many editing opportunities. The platform is in the midst of the platform and also hoped to solve the problems Vine fosters, which would eventually lead to its fall. Such things include creating a partner program for creators to monetize video and their creation. This draws popular and up-and-coming creators to build their status here, rather than one of the other many major video platforms. Its founder, Hofmann, is passionate about the platform being community-focused and quickly responding to user requests (Cyca, 2020).

Likee, a Singaporean video app, released in July of 2017, is making a major push towards the U.S. market. While most of its growth is featured in Southeast Asia, their popularity is rapidly growing in Russia and India. Currently, there are over 115 million monthly active users on Likee, and this number continues to grow. Likee offers users to publish 15-second videos, both live-streamed and recorded. It also allows users to create and edit content using 4-D effects, adding music, and filters and stickers (Hutchinson, 2020). It is important to note that there are no age restrictions, causing concerned parents and citizens to think twice before allowing their children to download this app. Given the current climate in America, being concerned with information security, it is imperative for Likee to recognize the ever-shifting needs of the U.S. and adjust accordingly if they hope to create an extensive user-base.

Triller is based in Beijing and has major partnerships with American companies, celebrities, and founders. It's video social platform allows users to make and upload music videos, using lip-syncing and video creating and editing capabilities (Scipioni, 2020). Its users include Justin Bieber, Chance the Rapper, and many other top-list celebrities. The founders include Colin Tilley, an award-winning director, and app developers David Leiberman and Sammy Rubin, who created Mibblie and Disney Frozen: Karaoke. Users can choose among a wide variety of songs, hit "record," and make multiple music video shots. They can then edit, share, and send videos they enjoy. This app company contains 65 million active monthly users, including being downloaded more than 250 million times worldwide (Scipioni, 2020). Observing, dissecting, and seeking to understand the context of the video platform world is vital to best grasp its impact and potential worldwide, in order to grasp the "throne" as the highest-rated video platform – like TikTok.

### TikTok's Key Publics

TikTok has become a global phenomenon driven by a young user base. 41% of TikTok users are between 14-24 (Beer 2019) compared to 36.5% on Instagram (Statista 2020). The clear divide although between these two apps is when the data between the ages of 13-17 are looked at. For TikTok, this makes up 27% (Hootsuite "Everything Brands Need to Know About TikTok in 2020," 2020) of this app whereas for Instagram this demographic only represents 7% (Statista 2020), a 20% difference. Another large difference that makes TikTok users skew younger is TikTok creating a "limited app experience" for users under 13 with additional safety measures put in place, "within TikTok for Younger Users, users are provided a viewing experience that does not permit sharing of personal information and puts extensive limitations on content and user interaction (TikTok 2019). TikTok is not only a phenomenon in the United States but also globally. TikTok is available in 155 countries with the most popular being India with 611 million downloads (before the ban), China with 196.6 million, and the United States with 165 million downloads (Sensor Tower 2020).

The in-app behavior of TikTok users is not much different than other popular social media apps with the average user spending 52 minutes on the app per day (TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics 2020). TikTok users also have a high percentage of engagement within the app itself: 68% have watched someone else's video, 63% liked someone else's video, 55% uploaded a video themselves, 54% commented on a video, and 50% shared someone else's video on another social network within the last month (Beer 2019).

Outside of parents' concern for privacy among children, there has not been a large outcry within the community of TikTok itself. Several popular creators, including Charli D'Amelio, the app's most popular creator, partnered with TikTok in the creation of videos about why Tik Tok matters to them (Wittek 2020). Another Popular creator Dixie D'Amelio has previously said on an episode of Jeffs's Barber Shop "I don't really care, I do not think anyone really cares about data." This quote perfectly describes how the younger (14-24) generation feels about these privacy concerns. Despite article after article, popular creators, their fan bases, and casual users have overwhelmingly dismissed any concern about data privacy. Some creators have gone as far as targeting the President and "his inability to focus on the important issues;" so TikTok is a national emergency but a global pandemic is not ("TikTok: Creators and users react to Trump's ban," 2020). Through not only TikTok but other social media it is clear that TikTok's main public has not assessed immense concern over this issue.

While the main public has not expressed much concern over privacy issues one of the biggest outspoken publics from the current PR crisis has been parents. A popular parenting website Parents.com has published several articles about safety concerns with TikTok, and the steps parents need to take to keep their kids safe. The concerns stem from possible data leaks and privacy concerns among other concerns, and this has become the root of what could become a larger issue with a young user base such as TikTok's ( Brown, 2019). After thousands of parents complained back in 2019 about data privacy concerns TikTok launched their "limited app experience" and have taken measures to increase safety measures. Parents have held and will continue to attempt to hold TikTok accountable for perceived actions in order to protect both their children and other people's children.  
Academic Study on Behavior, Motivations, and Identity of Users:

To further understand the global phenomenon of TikTok, the motivations of the publics, and why they are loyal to the app the Francis Academic Press conducted a study to outline the users of TikTok through their behavior, motivations, and identity. By learning about these things we not only get a stronger understanding of

TikTok's publics, but also begin to understand the phenom of TikTok through its users. This study helps to show why TikTok is a global phenomenon and why its users love and defend the app.

The first way to understand user behavior is to understand users as popular culture participants. The first breakdown of this is "popular culture producers." The Francis Academic Press found that the User Generated Content or UGC of TikTok "powers each ordinary user to produce content to meet the psychological needs of their self-presentation" (Zuo, Wang 2019). This means that TikTok is created in a way to allow users to find outlets specific for their desires. The second breakdown within this category is "Users as Popular Culture Disseminators." The study found that "Based on the transmission mode of TikTok, users will consciously or unconsciously become the disseminators of popular culture (Zuo, Wang 2019)." What this means for TikTok is that the free flow of information has allowed users to share information widely both within the app and outside the app. The final breakdown in this category is "Users as popular culture consumers." This is the most widely used way the publics interact with the app, consuming and interacting with popular posts or creators.

The second way the study understands publics behavior is through their motivations. The study found that the first motivation is "Entertainment pursuit and self-expression. The platform has created itself in an entertainment environment where videos are made to be extracted, humorous, and engaging for audiences. The authors of the study understand this through the "decentralization" of the app, "TikTok's "decentralization" operation allows users to create short videos anytime, anywhere, and express themselves and show their personality through the production and sharing of short videos. (Zuo, Wang 2019)." The second breakdown within this category is Following the trend and pursuing social intercourse. This trend especially in younger generations is when the behavior of an individual is influenced by the majority, "They will follow their friends or opinion leaders into TikTok to create a sense of belonging to the trend. Because of the low imitation threshold of TikTok content, users will follow the trend in content production" (Zuo, Wang 2019). The researchers found that TikTok is unique in the fact that it meets user needs in both entertainment and social. The final breakdown within this category is "obtaining benefits and consuming commodities. Users produce content for the purpose of obtaining commercial value; With the involvement of so many brands users see more possibilities to benefit from TikTok whereas they don't from other social media platforms.

The final way this study understands the publics of TikTok is through their Identity constructs. The first breakdown in this category is "self-identity." The study describes this as reflection and interaction, "Users can make or share short videos based on their personal experience, get opportunities to show themselves in reality that they don't have, and experience self-worth, which is a sense of recognition for what they think and do. At the same time, TikTok users use the evaluation and interaction of other users to complete the construction of self-identity after their self-presentation. Users not only consolidate self-confidence and self-esteem from this sense of identity but also do not blindly submit to the public opinion of society and others. (Zuo, Wang 2019)." The second breakdown within this category is "group-identity." The study explains that through the unique design of the algorithm of the app users can and have found a sense of community both within the "cyberspace" of the app and offline. TikTok provides a platform for its users to feel connected through mutual interest and the ability to divide into subdivisions within the app's algorithm. The final breakdown of this second is "cultural identity." TikTok is a breakthrough app in the fact that it is designed to cater to a young audience. This helps TikTok feel like an exclusive "Gen-Z" app which then other generations can come into whereas many other apps have a different

focus; "The initial product orientation of the TikTok platform is intended to cater to the habits of contemporary young users. Through participating in the activities of the exclusive youth groups provided by the platform, users can identify with the youth culture of TikTok platform" (Zuo, Wang 2019).

From the reading of the study is it both clear and evident that TikTok's success has come from the users. The users feel connected both with the app and what it provides them personally, but also with the community that has formed from it. The quality content along with an app that feels "specifically for young people" has led to a sense of loyalty among users.

### *The Lawsuit*

TikTok is filing an official "complaint in federal court challenging the Administration's efforts to ban TikTok in the US" according to their official website. This post was made on August 24, 2020. An executive order was issued on August 6, 2020 that could potentially remove TikTok from the American market. Executive Order 13942 specifically names TikTok and says that "action must be taken to address the threat posed" by this application in particular. The order calls for "additional steps" to be taken in regards to the national emergency of information and communications technology. It then specifies on "mobile applications developed and owned by companies in the People's Republic of China." It is called to be a threat to "national security, foreign policy, and the economy of the United States." In TikTok's explanation, they accuse the Administration of ignoring due process and misusing IEEPA (International Emergency Economic Powers Act). They believe that the Administration "failed to follow due process and act in good faith, neither providing evidence that TikTok was an actual threat, nor justification for its punitive actions." This, in turn, has resulted in TikTok suing the Administration under the previously mentioned accusations.

TikTok is owned by the parent company ByteDance. The United States government's main concern is in regards to the way the Chinese government does business in their country. The Chinese government has the liberty to demand information from ByteDance whenever they see fit. The national security threat lies in the fact that at any moment, all of the information that TikTok, and then ByteDance, has acquired from American users can be transferred to the Chinese government at will. Although it should not be, it can be seized from ByteDance at any moment. All of the information that American users were promised to be private in TikTok's terms of use will no longer be private in the hands of an outside entity, in this case that would be the Chinese government. On top of this, information gathered by TikTok can then potentially be used to gather even further information on American users.

### *National Security and Privacy*

Simply put, national security is the responsibility and duty of the government to protect and defend its people, institutions, and economy. In a more specific sense in relation to the United States and technology, cybersecurity is the protection of computer systems, networks, and data. Privacy and security laws are put in place by the United States government in order to protect users from malicious intentions of cyber criminals, hackers, and foreign entities. The responsibility of national security is heavily important in the realm of data and technology because of its wide reach and remote accessibility across the globe. Everyone who has used any electronic device or connected to the internet in America is affected by and protected by the United States government's national

security in order to keep people and their data safe. All people with technology are affected by the widely expansive world of the internet.

The National Security Agency (NSA) is in charge of all cryptology which includes both signals intelligence and cybersecurity. While the NSA does a handful of things, two of their main priorities that are relevant to TikTok include protecting privacy rights and defending vital networks. According to the NSA's "Understanding the Threat" on their government website, the newest, yet fastest growing threats to the United States are those in cyberspace. These threats increase every year in size, severity, and frequency. The main threats are of course cyber criminals, hackers, and, most importantly, foreign adversaries. Often cyber threats come from foreign adversaries with the goal of economic advantage or insight into military or foreign policy. This can all be done over the internet where data runs freely and rapidly if unprotected. This is why the National Security Agency works constantly in monitoring for threats that would endanger our country and its people.

Protecting privacy rights and defending vital networks are both crucial aspects in accordance to TikTok due to the potential threat and risk that is present from TikTok's parent company, ByteDance. Being a Chinese tech company, there is question and risk in TikTok pulling data from their users, American users to be specific, and then sending that information to a ByteDance. The use of the information from there is in question in why they would need user data and there are interactions with the Chinese government occurring. There is also risk of the Chinese government applying pressure to ByteDance for information that they have collected from TikTok users. This poses a national security threat due to Americans' data being mined, used, and possibly abused by a foreign superpower. It is the National Security Agency's job to prevent the misuse of information by protecting American citizens' privacy rights and defending the networks that this data is crossing.

Because all people with technology are at risk of being negatively affected by cyber criminals, hackers, and foreign entities through the internet, privacy laws and protections have been put in place to keep Americans and their information safe. These are some of the key laws put in place in regards to technology privacy and usage.

The Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 (ECPA) is an updated version of the Federal Wiretap Act of 1968. It protects wire, oral, and electronic communications while they are being made, are in transit, and when they are stored on computers. This Act applies to email, telephone conversations, and data stored electronically. It prohibits the intentional or attempted interception, use, and disclosure of any of these previously mentioned forms of electronic communication. These are important to note in the context of TikTok in how they were using information gathered from their users. While their terms of use could have specified the disclosure of their information because they willingly shared it, there is room for debate due to the Chinese government accessing this information from ByteDance. While TikTok could claim that users gave them, as a company, rights to their given information, users did not sign off for the Chinese government to access their information. This is where the main discrepancy lies that the Administration has identified as a tangible and real threat. American citizens' information could very much be, without consent, in the hands of a foreign adversary. This presents itself as a formidable security breach due to the nearly one hundred million American users on TikTok.

The Computer Fraud & Abuse Act (CFAA), enacted in 1986, is an amendment that was included in the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 in order to add further protections to computer users with the rapid growth of computer technology in the United States. This law prohibits the accessing of any computer without

authorization. This act was needed to cover a more vast array of situations that was not covered by the previously mentioned act. The Computer Fraud & Abuse Act is relevant because of the access that can be gained through ByteDance's servers to TikTok users. It would not be farfetched to say that information outside of the TikTok application that is stored on users' phones can be compromised. The Chinese government could gather any information that can be found on a phone which includes personal addresses, data history, passwords, banking information from applications such as Apple Pay, and even health metrics that users have put into their devices. While these are still probabilities at the current moment, probable cause is enough risk to pose a threat to the national security of the United States.

#### *Other Social Media Scandals and Recoveries*

The current climate surrounding TikTok is one of a loss of trust in the security and privacy of the information of the users. Even further than that, TikTok may also lose their access to the United States. This means that users will not only lose confidence in the company, but they would not even be able to make the decision to use or not use it. There have been a number of social media businesses who have run into problems surrounding the privacy of their users in which various governments have gotten involved. However, at the root of all of the data and privacy scandals, there is an underlying theme of a loss of trust. These social media businesses who solely rely on the public, have lost the trust of their lifeblood.

In a study centering around the fragility of organizational trust, trust was defined in very practical terms, "The trust decision is based on positive expectations of, or confidence in, the trustworthiness of another party. Therefore, trust arises from judgments we make about the likelihood that another party will behave in a trustworthy manner as well as assessments we make about the possible costs we will suffer if the other party turns out to be untrustworthy" (Currall & Epstein, 2003). The study goes on to describe the three main considerations that a decision to trust is based on: expectations about another's trustworthiness (which break down into three parts: benevolent intentions, technical competence, and commitment to be trustworthy), track record of another's trustworthiness, and social influences (Currall & Epstein, 2003). According to this study, one of the main considerations in someone deciding to trust is the track record. Therefore, if there is a breach of that trust at any point, it becomes much harder for that trust to ever be won back. However, it is not impossible. Track record of trustworthiness makes up only one third of the decision making process to trust. Therefore, if an organization leverages themselves and acts in such a way as to make themselves more trustworthy, trust can be won back. Two case studies on the loss of trust within the social media industry and data and privacy loss are the Cambridge Analytica Scandal of Facebook and the 2018 Twitter Data Breach Scandal.

#### *Facebook Cambridge Analytica Scandal and Fallout*

One of the arguably most infamous scandals to surround a social media platform was Facebook's Cambridge Analytica Scandal. On March 17, 2018, it was discovered that Facebook had been involved with a British-owned voter-profiling company named Cambridge Analytica. Harvesting data from over 87 million users in order to form voting profiles, Cambridge Analytica ran amuck for years, with Facebook's full knowledge. Facebook did not disclose this information to its users or the government (Sanders, 2020). Furthering the idea that the scandal was highly tied to the election, a map (see figure 2A in Appendix) of the users most affected was

published by Business Insider (Bhardwaj & Lee, 2018) with the highest affected areas being high “swing-states” and political centers.

In the wake of the scandal, Facebook lost \$120 billion dollars of stock value in one day and was sued by the United Kingdom’s Information Commissioner’s Office for £500,000 (Sanders, 2020). Many users deleted their accounts and the hashtag #DeleteFacebook was trending on Twitter. Contributing to the public outrage, Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s CEO, was silent for days, causing yet another hashtag to trend, #WheresZuck? (Confessore, 2018). With the loss of so many users and stock value, Facebook had a long way to go to earn back public trust. After days of silence, Zuckerberg broke his silence in an interview detailing Facebook’s plan of action (Roose & Frenkel, 2018). Their public commitments were to inform those who may have been affected by Cambridge Analytica, centralize app privacy settings, reducing the amount of information that apps’ will have access to, cutting off dormant apps, making it harder to search for people, ending certain types of targeted ads, disclose information on advertisers, and research the role that social media has on elections (Ivanova, 2018).

While the fallout from these actions were understandably sizable, the scandal did not cause permanent financial harm to the company. By May 10, 2018, a mere 3 months later, Facebook had made back the \$134 billion that it had lost through the span of the scandal (Mirhaydari, 2018). However, the ramifications regarding public sentiment were impacted on a much more long-term basis. According to a 2019 study conducted by The Manifest, “Nearly two-thirds of social media users (65%) are familiar with Cambridge Analytica’s Facebook data breach that made headlines in March 2018” and “The Cambridge Analytica scandal continues to impact how people view Facebook – nearly half of social media users (44%) view Facebook more negatively, including 15% who view it much more negatively” (Herhold, 2019). The study continues to show that there is a generational gap with the scandal impacting “millennials most, with 41% of the generation using Facebook less since the data breach, compared to 37% of Generation Xers and 24% of baby boomers” (Herhold, 2019). Even though the Cambridge Analytica Scandal was mainly centered around Facebook, it was such a massive breach that it affected many other social media platforms. A study conducted by Business Insider (see figure 2B in Appendix) showed that 37% of US consumers said that they did not trust any social media company to protect their data (Canales & Gal, 2018). While there was also talk centered around Twitter’s involvement with Cambridge Analytica, it was substantially less than Facebook. However, Twitter still experienced a drop in stock price as well.

#### **Twitter Data Breach Scandals**

While Facebook to date has the largest name when it comes to data mining and private information breaches, Twitter has also had some issues in the last couple of decades. In 2016, Twitter experienced a data breach in which 32 million usernames and passwords were potentially compromised. Twitter quickly stated that their servers were not hacked, instead the breach was due to malware on individuals’ machines. In response, Twitter temporarily locked millions of accounts and sent affected users a password reset notifications (USC, 2016). Due mainly to the expediency by which Twitter handled the breach, they experienced only a comparatively small 2 million dollar dip in their stock prices as seen in Figure 3 (Market Summary, 2020).

In 2018, Twitter experienced another privacy bug. They discovered a bug that “saved user passwords in an unprotected log” (Kelly, 2018). While they did not find any information indicating that the passwords had been

misused, Twitter still sent out information to all 336 million users, informing them and suggesting that they change their password (Kelly, 2018).

Most recently, Twitter experienced a phishing attack that initially targeted its employees. In this attack, the hackers used a socially engineered scam in order to gain access to the employee credentials and knowledge of Twitter's structure. They then were able to gain access to the accounts of 130 users (Twitter, 2020), including some very high profile. Some of the people who were hacked included, "Elon Musk, President Obama, Vice President (and current presidential candidate) Joe Biden, Mike Bloomberg, Bill Gates and others" (McSorley, 2020). After access was gained to these high profile accounts, the hackers sent tweets out saying that Bitcoin amounts would be double if routed to a certain address. Since the tweets came from verified and trusted accounts, they were trusted and the hacker was estimated to "have made \$118,000 on July 15 alone" (McSorley, 2020). While this is still an ongoing situation, Twitter has temporarily shut down many of the affected accounts and are working closely with the affected parties. In addition, they are carefully auditing how they may avoid another situation like this by assessing how their employees have access to the information that can be leaked (Twitter, 2020).

### *TikTok Scandals*

Since the rise of TikTok there have been many factors that have put this new app at the top, but there have also been a number of concerns being brought to the attention of many users. TikTok has over 1 billion monthly active users and is dominating the app store, according to Business Insider. Recently US senators have voiced their concerns that TikTok violates people's privacy, censorship, and child safety (Ghosh, 2019). While TikTok is known for their short and creative videos there has been an uproar with fear that the app has been harvesting personal information of their users and sending it to China, according to a proposed class-action lawsuit that had been filed in the federal court of California. TikTok is owned by a company located in China called ByteDance. These companies are also being sued for taking users' content such as draft videos without their consent. This has raised many concerns that the data TikTok gathers are being used to profile, track, and identify users residing in the United States (Wong, 2019).

For months now, TikTok has been carefully scrutinized with questions about the fate of the app in the United States. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reports that the administration under President Trump is considering the ban of TikTok to the users in the United States. According to Fox News, "Pompeo told "The Ingraham Angle" that he and President Trump are taking the reports seriously after host Laura Ingraham said India had already banned the app and Australia is considering doing so".

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States was heavily involved with President Trump's threat to ban TikTok. Trump backed down from his threat in order to allow TikTok an acquisition by U.S. investors (Quinn, 2020). Trump's response to the press after this decision was that, "It'll either be closed up, or they'll sell it." (Quinn, 2020). According to the National Review, "in the end, it might be that neither happens". As it hit ByteDance's deadline to submit their acquisition proposal to the administration of Trump, Microsoft, which was the top company said to buy TikTok, announced that ByteDance had declined their offer. As of now, TikTok is negotiating a deal with Oracle. Many reports had stated that TikTok's deal with Oracle had been presented to the Treasury Department for review but did not include a total sale of TikTok (Quinn, 2020). "The Financial Times

reports that under the arrangement negotiated by Oracle and ByteDance, TikTok would become its own entity, with global operations headquartered in the United States. Oracle and other U.S. companies that participated in the deal would get a sizable portion of the new entity's shares. ByteDance would retain a majority stake in TikTok, as well as control over the proprietary TikTok algorithm and other code, though some reports suggest that Oracle would have access to the algorithm", according to the National Review.

TikTok has responded with high hopes of continuing their accessibility to users globally. A spokesperson for TikTok responds by saying that, "TikTok is loved by 100 million Americans because it is a home for entertainment, self-expression, and connection. We're motivated by their passion and creativity, and committed to continuing to bring joy to families and meaningful careers to those who create on our platform as we build TikTok for the long term. TikTok will be here for many years to come"(Cathey, 2020). On TikTok's website they have provided a transparent response to the concerns of their users and plans for moving forward for the company. Vanessa Pappas, Interim Head of TikTok shares a message to their audience, "We're pleased that today we've confirmed a proposal that resolves the Administration's security concerns and settles questions around TikTok's future in the US. Our plan is extensive and consistent with previous CFIUS resolutions, including working with Oracle, who will be our trusted cloud and technology provider responsible for fully securing our users' data. We are committed to protecting our users globally and providing the highest levels of security. Both Oracle and Walmart will take part in a TikTok Global pre-IPO financing round in which they can take up to a 20% cumulative stake in the company. We will also maintain and expand the US as TikTok Global's headquarters while bringing 25,000 jobs across the country" (Pappas, 2020).

David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes from The New York Times took an interesting approach to this TikTok scandal while posing a question in a current article titled, "Is TikTok More of a Parenting Problem Than a Security Threat?". Sanger and Barnes open up by saying that, "TikTok has long presented a parenting problem, as millions of Americans raising preteens and teenagers distracted by its viral videos can attest". Intelligent officials state that the threat TikTok poses isn't as big as the threat by Huawei. The Huawei is the Chinese telecommunications giant that was seeking to wire up the United States, Europe and much of the developing world, using the transition to 5G networks to control global communications, according to Sanger and Barnes. They continue by addressing the fact that TikTok has been hit with a national security problem, but Huawei is a concern deeper than TikTok's. The New York Times perspective is that TikTok can't bring the economy of America or the NATO alliance to their knees— "though it can lead to a lot of dinner table arguments over the time and attention it has sucked away from other things". Although this does not mean that there is no threat by TikTok. Sanger and Barnes voice their concerns about security and privacy issues but the issue goes far beyond TikTok. President Trump is working towards the United States being in control of it's internet environment and keeping it out of Chinese hands, including smartphones and the fiber-optic cables that carry data across the Pacific"(Sanger & Barnes, 2020).

ByteDance, the owner of TikTok shares that they were completely unaware that \$5 billion of its deal with Oracle and Walmart would go towards President Trump's "patriotic education" initiative. While Trump agreed to the acquisition proposal of TikTok to Walmart and Oracle, which have major Trump campaign donors in their senior leadership positions, Trump announced at one of his campaign rallies that the money from TikTok being sold

would go towards funding his proposal to educate children about “the real history of our country— the real history, not the fake history”(Jones, 2020).

TikTok being an app that has surfaced globally has also come with many concerns. A recent video of a group of three underaged girls attending a private school in Melbourne, Australia driving through McDonalds had caused some commotion. These three girls attend St. Catherine’s School in Toorak. They had filmed and posted to TikTok a one minute video giving the unlicensed teen driver driving instructions while laughing and yelling during the act. The school had received some backlash as they claimed that the teens were, “under the supervision of a family guardian” at that time(Zagon, 2020). Deputy Principal Robert Marshall reported to the 9News that the “guardian” was not seen in the video but was in supervision of the car. The school claims that they were aware that this incident had happened, but that it occurred in the presence of a family member. The scandal had become a private matter of the families, while the school refuses to make any further comments at this current time.

Although TikTok allows users from the ages of 13 and older the ability to create an account and be a part of their TikTok community, it is also just as easily accessible for kids younger than the age of 13 (Ucciferri, 2020). TikTok has no sign-up process that ensures users are at the ages 13 and above. This opens the door to predators. TikTok’s allows your videos to be promoted “to users interested in accounts like yours”(OBE, 2020). It is not uncommon that pedophiles pretend to be children themselves in order to search for videos of children. The tactics that they use are to follow these children and lure them. An investigation led by The Sun found that kids as young as eight are being exposed to these sickening messages. Parents have become worried for their children’s safety as an influx of inappropriate direct messages are sent to them. TikTok, in the last year has made some significant changes to their system in order to bring awareness to kids of the dangers that may come while being an active user. TikTok has also claimed to have made other technical changes to spot messages that promote self-harm or of any interest in “hooking up with a stranger”(OBE, 2020).



## TIMELINE & SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

March 11, 2020

TikTok to launch Transparency Center for moderation and data practices

New center to allow experts to examine and verify TikTok's practices

By Vanessa Pappas, General Manager, TikTok US

Over the past few months, we have shared a series of announcements in this space related to our ongoing efforts to deepen our engagement with, and earn the trust of, our community as well as policymakers and the broader public. This included the release of our updated Community Guidelines and the publishing of our first ever Transparency Report. We've also hired a global General Counsel, a Chief Information Security Officer, and expanded our Trust & Safety hubs in the US, Ireland, and Singapore led by experienced industry veterans.

Today, we are pleased to announce another important step forward: our plan to open a TikTok Transparency Center. This new facility in our LA office will provide outside experts an opportunity to directly view how our teams at TikTok go about the day-to-day challenging, but critically important, work of moderating content on the platform.

Through this direct observation of our Trust & Safety practices, experts will get a chance to evaluate our moderation systems, processes and policies in a holistic manner. That includes, but is not limited to, seeing:

- how our trained content moderators apply those Guidelines to review the technology-based actions that are escalated to them, and to identify additional potential violations that the technology may miss;
- how users and creators are able to bring concerns to our attention and how those are handled;
- ultimately, how the content that is allowed on the platform aligns with our Guidelines.

We expect the Transparency Center to operate as a forum where observers will be able to provide meaningful feedback on our practices. Our landscape and industry is rapidly evolving, and we are aware that our systems, policies and practices are not flawless, which is why we are committed to constant improvement.

The Transparency Center will open in early May with an initial focus on TikTok's content moderation. Later, we will expand the Center to include insight into our source code, and our efforts around data privacy and security. This second phase of the initiative will be spearheaded by our newly appointed Chief Information Security Officer, Roland Cloutier, who starts with the company next month.

We look forward to hosting experts from around the world and continuing to find innovative ways to improve our content moderation and data security systems.

**Update (May 27):**

Due to physical constraints as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the opening of our Transparency Center in Los Angeles has been delayed. We look forward to being able to welcome guests in the near future.

**Update (July 22):**

We're committed to being transparent about our practices, which includes allowing invited experts to view TikTok's content policies and algorithm that are housed in our Transparency Center. While the full opening of the physical Transparency Center is still delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic, we've now made adjustments so that we can offer virtual tours for parts of the experience. If you're a policy, content safety, or security expert looking for more information, please email [transparency \[at\] tiktok \[dot\] com](mailto:transparency[at]tiktok[dot]com).

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*April 28, 2020*

**Our approach to security**

By Roland Cloutier, TikTok Chief Information Security Officer

As someone who has spent my entire adult life working on the industry's most challenging security issues, it is great to see that the broader community is now taking these issues as seriously as those of us who work on them everyday. People are asking tough questions of internet companies – and that's a good thing.

Since its creation, TikTok has been focused on protecting our users and building out an outstanding security team. However, we fully appreciate that the work of securing a global community of users is never done. We must constantly strive to do better and evolve to meet the next set of challenges.

That means looking both backwards and forwards.

Looking backwards means re-evaluating security practices that may have made sense when the platform was smaller, but which may no longer work at our current scale. Companies get into trouble when they assume that systems, technologies, policies, and practices that were sufficient at one point in time will work forever. That's rarely the case. Companies change, threats change, and security practices must adapt or risk falling behind.

Looking forward means trying to anticipate where the security needs of our community are going. That isn't easy. Six months ago, nobody would have guessed that programs like #HappyAtHome would be viewed billions of times as a tool to help people cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, or that people would be coming to TikTok not just for playful videos, but also for crucial content from health organizations. My team is laser-focused on building out our advanced security infrastructure, designing relevant programs, and engaging with the broader industry to further develop our capabilities, and lead as our sector continues to evolve and change.

With those goals in mind, in the weeks since I began, my team and I have been undertaking a broad review of TikTok's security, our infrastructure and practices, testing current practices and actively seeking to anticipate what we will need in the future. As I begin my work at TikTok, I am excited for the new challenge and appreciate how much everyone on the team has made it clear that security is a top priority for the company.

Let me take this chance to highlight a few areas where we are going to focus:

- We are engaged with the world's leading cyber security firms to accelerate our work advancing and validating our adherence to globally recognized security control standards like NIST CSF, ISO 27001 and SOC2.
- Transparency is the foundation of our next generation security programs underway here at TikTok, as we continue to work hard to earn our community's trust. Our Cyber Defense, Security Assurance, and Data Protection programs will be front and center in our new Transparency Center that we recently announced.
- Similar to industry peers, we will continue to drive our goal of limiting the number of employees who have access to user data and the scenarios where data access is enabled. Although we already have controls in place to protect user data, we will continue to focus on adding new technologies and programs focused on global data residency, data movement, and data storage access protections worldwide. Our goal is to minimize data access across regions so that, for example, employees in the APAC region, including China, would have very minimal access to user data from the EU and US.

In the same way that I hope we all continue to wash our hands thoroughly long after the COVID-19 crisis has ended, so too will we continue to advance the protection and privacy of your data. That's how together we can take some important lessons from this terrible crisis and use them to build a better, more secure future for us all.

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June 9, 2020

TikTok's security and data privacy roadmap

By Roland Cloutier, TikTok Chief Information Security Officer

When people think of TikTok, two words come to mind: creativity and joy. My goal is to add safety to that list. As I wrote in April, TikTok has always been committed to protecting the privacy of our community, but security is a job that is never done. We must always strive to do better and evolve to overcome the next set of industry challenges.

With this in mind, my team of security experts and I are undertaking a broad review of TikTok's security infrastructure and practices. In the months since we began this review, we've created a Security Roadmap to help us build best-in-class security infrastructure, champion transparency and accountability, and partner with third-party experts and regulators to validate our progress. We are working on these focus areas simultaneously and will update you on our progress as we go along.

### Build best-in-class security infrastructure.

People are the foundation of any organization. We're focused on hiring the world's top security experts to lead our efforts, while also expanding our security teams who work out of Mountain View, California and Washington, D.C. Our goal is to hire an additional 100 security, data, and privacy protection experts in the U.S. by the end of the year.

We are creating a centralized global security function, headquartered out of the U.S. and internationally deployed across all markets we serve. This will ensure consistency, availability, and faster responses to emerging global issues and threats to our users and platform. We will also expand our response efforts in Europe, the Middle East and Asia to further supplement ongoing and future security initiatives. The key areas of focus will be cyber defense and user-data access assurance, digital crimes, insider threat, cyber-threat intelligence, and risk management.

### Champion transparency and accountability

In March, we announced the opening of our Transparency Center in Los Angeles, California. I'm excited to share with you that we will also open a Transparency Center in Washington, D.C. Both of these centers will give lawmakers and experts the opportunity to look under the hood of TikTok and assess our security practices and infrastructure.

In addition, we will release a Transparency Report twice a year, providing more information on accounts that we have taken down for violations against our terms of service, unlawful acts, and issues that threaten the safety of users.

### Partner with third-party experts and regulators to validate our progress

While we have worked very hard to build best-in-class security infrastructure, we know that it's not enough to build it. We have to test it, validate it and work with our partners to make sure we're addressing the entirety of the threat surface we face every day. We must challenge our own concepts on vulnerabilities and our ability to defend against them. To that end, have been working with leading global security firms to ensure we comply with globally recognized security control standards like ISO 27001, SOC2, and NIST CSF. In the coming months, we'll announce more partnerships with security experts and regulators to ensure our community can trust that their data and privacy are protected.

We'll continue to make improvements to our security program, and we'll update you every step of the way. In the meantime, if you have questions or concerns, please let us know. We're here for you.

June 29, 2020

Updates on our security roadmap

By Roland Cloutier, TikTok Chief Information Security Officer

Building technology security defenses is a constant effort to anticipate, plan, and react. What has been clear since I started this job almost three months ago is that the team at TikTok is fully committed to protecting the privacy of our users and providing transparency on our overall security efforts. As I wrote a few weeks ago, my team of security experts and I are undertaking a broad review of our security processes and infrastructure. With this in mind, I would like to update the community on some recent developments.

First let me start with some background. Earlier this year a report noted that many prominent apps, including TikTok and other major entertainment as well as news apps, were requesting access to users' clipboards. There are many legitimate reasons why something like this would occur. For example, if you copy text for a website in one app and then open a browser, most browsers will ask if you want to paste the text and go to the URL directly. This is an example of how browsers attempt to make your user experience better, but it requires the app to know that a URL is sitting on the clipboard. There are dozens of other reasons why apps might want to see if information is sitting on a user's clipboard.

In the case of TikTok, this notification had been triggered by integration of the Google Ads SDK. While this type of data was not sent to TikTok, we appreciate that this issue was confusing to many users and could have led them to believe that TikTok itself was using the data for unclear purposes. Further, the ubiquitous nature of third party ad programs helps explain why so many other apps indicated similar behavior. In response, on April 16 we updated our app so the ad program would not be able to access users' clipboards.

Last week, following the launch of Beta iOS 14, TikTok users saw a similar iOS notification when they tried to type comments on a video. Users also saw notifications on a number of other popular apps. While I can't know for sure why users saw notifications for other apps, I can explain why this happened with TikTok, how this occurred shortly after a similar issue, and what we are doing to stop it again, given the perception that this type of action might compromise user security.

We are constantly building new features to improve the experience on TikTok. In this case, we had been working to address the problem of spam and incidents where users sometimes post the same comments on hundreds of videos. Our technology allowed us to identify users who were copying comments and placing them over and over in the comment section for different videos. We took this as a signal that the user had an agenda, such as promoting themselves to gain followers, or trolling other users.

We launched an anti-spam feature so that we could quickly detect spam and improve the experience for our community. This feature was added in the iOS version of the app released on May 22.

From a technical point of view, this anti-bot defense technology performed a string matching validation from the clipboard. Its only function was to validate whether matched text inputted into the application came from the clipboard. There was no collection of any data on the clipboard, simply a validation against data input into the app, like hashing validation.

In layman's terms, the anti-spam program never sent user data off the user's device. Nonetheless, we understand that the notification had the unintended consequence of making it appear as though we might be doing more with the feature. Last week we sent an update to the App Store removing this feature, and it has been resolved in version 16.6.1 of the TikTok app, which appeared in the Apple App Store on June 27. As always, we encourage all of our users to update their apps to the latest version.

The anti-spam feature was never added to the Android version of the app, and we are now addressing the issue of spam in both versions through other technology that does not involve the clipboard.

The anti-spam feature that was operational from May 22-June 27 is similar to other types of features that dozens, if not hundreds, of different apps have that triggered notifications from iOS 14. At the same time, we appreciate that it would have been better to avoid adding a feature that would raise questions about TikTok's access to the clipboard in any scenario, particularly so shortly after we had worked to eliminate this type of access for a different feature.

We also understand that while many apps are triggering this type of notification, often for innocuous reasons, users have legitimate questions about what companies are doing with data. We fully accept that and strive to be a leader in the industry, not only working every day to protect the safety and privacy of our users, but also being transparent and forthright about our practices.

With this in mind, I am leading a sprint initiative to conduct thorough, ongoing app security assessments, remediations, verifications, and pre-deployment tests and validation prevention efforts. This is the highest priority for the team, and we have the full support of our executive management team to conduct our analysis and take action. We will have a team of engineers fully dedicated to this project.

Further, we are conducting a review of our feature release processes to help limit the possibility that such issues might arise in the future when we roll out new features.

As part of this, we've undertaken a full review of all clipboard issues to consider other possible scenarios where this could occur. In particular, we looked at scenarios where there could be any type of clipboard access action that was not directly initiated by the user. For example, pasting information into TikTok would be a user-initiated action, and it brings value to the user. Over the next several days, we will work with our third-party partners to complete that review and confirm that no other such scenarios exist. We will report back on our findings shortly.

We're committed to building an app that respects the privacy of our users and to being more transparent with our community. We'll continue to update you about ways we are improving TikTok, and later this year, we'll open our Transparency Center to give experts a behind-the-scenes look at how we keep people safe and protect their privacy. Security is a job that is never finished, but I can tell you we'll continue to aggressively build an experience that respects and protects our community.

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*July 22, 2020*

Introducing the \$200M TikTok Creator Fund

By Vanessa Pappas, General Manager, TikTok US

[UPDATE - July 29]: We have seen an incredible response to the Creator Fund and are excited to share that we expect this Fund will grow to over \$1 billion in the US in the next 3 years, and more than double that globally. We will be sharing more information about the application process soon!

TikTok is a platform rooted in creativity. While the past few months have been challenging for many, we've been awed by the outpouring of empathy, humor, and truly uplifting content from our users. We love seeing community form on TikTok in uniquely expressive ways. The growth of relatable content, and the entertaining and refreshing experience on the app, is a direct testament to the spirit and creativity of our talented creators.

That spirit and ability to connect with and bring joy to large audiences has already propelled thousands of creators into brand partnerships, sponsorships, and representation deals with some of Hollywood's biggest talent agencies. We're proud and honored to celebrate our family of TikTok creators who've built careers through the platform, including:

- LGBTQ+ TikTok Trailblazer, @bomanizer, whose humorous reality-show style videos caught the attention of CAA and Scale Management.
- Kentucky's beloved father-son trio, @the.mcfarlands, whose comedic, wholesome content led to collaborations with brands like Colgate, Cheetos, and Little Caesars.
- @challxn, whose makeup videos, dances, and hair tutorials made her into Fenty Beauty's first Fenty house creator, and earned her a spot on the cover of The Hollywood Reporter.
- America's mom, @iamtabithabrown, who became the face of the vegan community with her loving and personable videos, signed with CAA, and was featured on the cover of Vanity Fair.

To further support our creators, we're launching the TikTok Creator Fund to encourage those who dream of using their voices and creativity to spark inspirational careers. The US fund will start with \$200 million to help support ambitious creators who are seeking opportunities to foster a livelihood through their innovative content. The fund will be distributed over the coming year and is expected to grow over that time.

The addition of the TikTok Creator Fund builds upon our ongoing commitment to support our creators through monetary opportunities including:

- Our \$50M Creative Learning Fund, which introduces emerging teachers to the platform – and has benefitted over 1,000 US creators who've been affected by the global pandemic;
- TikTok LIVE streams, which bring earnings to hundreds of thousands of US creators over the age of 18 who host live programs for their audience;
- The TikTok Creator Marketplace, which helps brands discover and partner with innovative creators to collaborate on paid campaigns that drive awareness and attract new customers;

Through the TikTok Creator Fund, our creators will be able to realize additional earnings that help reward the care and dedication they put into creatively connecting with an audience that's inspired by their ideas. To be eligible, users must be 18 years or older, meet a baseline for followers, and consistently post original content in line with our Community Guidelines. The TikTok Creator Fund will open to applications from US creators beginning in August.

In a relatively short time, TikTok has grown to become a source of income and opportunity for creators and their families – and we couldn't be more encouraged by their success. As our community continues to flourish, we're committed to fostering even more ways for our creators to earn livelihoods by inspiring joy and creativity.

*July 29, 2020 (Important: TikTok says experts can examine their code)*

Fair competition and transparency benefits us all

By Kevin Mayer, CEO, TikTok

Innovation is one of the defining characteristics of a competitive market. The introduction of a successful new product fuels growth and dynamism in any industry. It is unfortunate for creators, brands, and the broader community that it has been years since a company came along and reimagined what a social entertainment platform could be. But TikTok did just that.

TikTok brought a unique and intuitive interface. It gave creators easy, powerful tools. It also encouraged the formation of inclusive and meaningful communities. In short, TikTok brought successful competition to the marketplace. This is why I joined the company as CEO earlier this year: to help lead the next generation of creators to connect with their newly energized audience, while bringing fun entertainment to people's lives.

TikTok has become the place where new music is discovered and explodes onto the scene, such as Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road." During the pandemic, we saw the resonance of Curtis Roach, whose "Bored in the House" mantra became an anthem for putting a positive spin on tough times and helped people better cope with the lockdowns.

And best of all, we witnessed many examples of families coming together to perform multi-generational song and dance, which warmed all of our hearts.

With our success comes responsibility and accountability. The entire industry has received scrutiny, and rightly so. Yet, we have received even more scrutiny due to the company's Chinese origins. We accept this and embrace the challenge of giving peace of mind through greater transparency and accountability. We believe it is essential to show users, advertisers, creators, and regulators that we are responsible and committed members of the American community that follows US laws.

Even more, we believe our entire industry should be held to an exceptionally high standard. That's why we believe all companies should disclose their algorithms, moderation policies, and data flows to regulators. We will not wait for regulation to come, but instead, TikTok has taken the first step by launching a Transparency and Accountability Center for moderation and data practices. Experts can observe our moderation policies in real-time, as well as examine the actual code that drives our algorithms. This puts us a step ahead of the industry, and we encourage others to follow suit.

Beyond our commitment to accountability, we also believe all players in the industry should make a positive impact in the community. Our \$200 million Creator Fund will help American creators get the most out of TikTok, and we expect that this will grow to over \$1 billion in the US in the next 3 years, and more than double that globally. In addition to supporting these creative entrepreneurs, we are also on track to create 10,000 new TikTok jobs across the US.

At TikTok we welcome competition. We think fair competition makes all of us better. To those who wish to launch competitive products, we say bring it on. Facebook is even launching another copycat product, Reels (tied to Instagram), after their other copycat Lasso failed quickly. But let's focus our energies on fair and open competition in service of our consumers, rather than maligning attacks by our competitor – namely Facebook – disguised as patriotism and designed to put an end to our very presence in the US.

Without TikTok, American advertisers would again be left with few choices. Competition would dry up and so too will an outlet for America's creative energy. We are not political, we do not accept political advertising and have no agenda – our only objective is to remain a vibrant, dynamic platform for everyone to enjoy. Consumers can only benefit from the growth of healthy, successful platforms like TikTok and we will fight to continue to give American creators, users and brands an entertaining outlet for many years to come.

We are willing to take all necessary steps to ensure the long-term availability and success of TikTok. The one thing that will not change is our commitment to ensuring that TikTok remains a safe and secure platform for the tens of millions of American families that derive joy from it.

For our skeptics, I am confident we have the answers and where we do not, we will improve. The onus is on us to step up. We are doing so, and will continue to take the bold steps needed. I accept and appreciate the challenge. TikTok has become the latest target, but we are not the enemy. The bigger move is to use this moment to drive deeper conversations around algorithms, transparency, and content moderation, and to develop stricter rules of the road. We are taking the first step of many to address these concerns, and call on the industry to follow our lead for the benefit of users and creators everywhere.

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August 7, 2020

**Statement on the Administration's Executive Order**

TikTok is a community full of creativity and passion, a home that brings joy to families and meaningful careers to creators. And we are building this platform for the long term. TikTok will be here for many years to come.

We are shocked by the recent Executive Order, which was issued without any due process. For nearly a year, we have sought to engage with the US government in good faith to provide a constructive solution to the concerns that have been expressed. What we encountered instead was that the Administration paid no attention to facts, dictated terms of an agreement without going through standard legal processes, and tried to insert itself into negotiations between private businesses.

We made clear our intentions to work with the appropriate officials to devise a solution to benefit our users, creators, partners, employees, and the broader community in the United States. There has been, and continues to be, no due process or adherence to the law. The text of the decision makes it plain that there has been a reliance on unnamed "reports" with no citations, fears that the app "may be" used for misinformation campaigns with no substantiation of such fears, and concerns about the collection of data that is industry standard for thousands of mobile apps around the world. We have made clear that TikTok has never shared user data with the Chinese government, nor censored content at its request. In fact, we make our moderation guidelines and algorithm source code available in our Transparency Center, which is a level of accountability no peer company has committed to. We even expressed our willingness to pursue a full sale of the US business to an American company.

This Executive Order risks undermining global businesses' trust in the United States' commitment to the rule of law, which has served as a magnet for investment and spurred decades of American economic growth. And it sets a dangerous precedent for the concept of free expression and open markets. We will pursue all remedies available to us in order to ensure that the rule of law is not discarded and that our company and our users are treated fairly – if not by the Administration, then by the US courts.

We want the 100 million Americans who love our platform because it is your home for expression, entertainment, and connection to know: TikTok has never, and will never, waver in our commitment to you. We prioritize your safety, security, and the trust of our community – always. As TikTok users, creators, partners, and family, you have

the right to express your opinions to your elected representatives, including the White House. You have the right to be heard.

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August 8, 2020

TikTok launches PR campaign

The social media app recently published a video highlighting its users with the caption, "Celebrating you":

It's similar to another video featuring TikTok power users, with the message that the app stands for family, creativity and expression:

The videos and the Twitter account are part of an awareness campaign aimed at dispelling misinformation and strengthening TikTok's image.

TechCrunch reported:

On Monday, TikTok launched [tiktokus.info](http://tiktokus.info), a website that organizes the company's statements, news coverage, "expert opinions," FAQs and other resources in a single destination. Oddly titled "The Last Sunny Corner of the Internet," TikTok makes the case for its app as a place where millions express themselves creatively. It also goes on record to flatly deny that it would ever provide TikTok U.S. user data to the Chinese government. And it spells out its commitments to areas like user safety and security, as well as its commitments to combating election misinformation and interference, among other things.

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August 10, 2020

Cheddar - TikTok Is Not a National Security Threat 'In Any Way'

Tik Tok Chief Security officer interview

"Let me be clear, TikTok's number one focus is on the safety and security of our community, the users we serve all over the world," Cloutier told Cheddar. "And at no time have we ever given any information to the Chinese government, and if they asked, we would say no. So no, I do not believe we are a national security threat in any way."

August 18, 2020

TikTok Announces New Information to "set the record straight"

TikTok has launched a new website and Twitter account to help it combat what it says are unfounded accusations that the popular social media app is a risk to U.S. security.

The new online offensive comes almost two weeks after President Donald Trump signed an executive order demanding that TikTok's parent company, China-based ByteDance, sell its U.S. operations by September 20, though the deadline was this week extended to November 12.

"With rumors and misinformation about TikTok proliferating in Washington and in the media, let us set the record straight," TikTok said in a message on its new website.

TikTok Vice President interview with Fox Business: We are committed to providing value in the US

TikTok Vice President Michael Beckerman provides insight into its presence in the U.S. and argues that the company will be "around for the long haul."

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August 24, 2020

Why we are suing the Administration

Today we are filing a complaint in federal court challenging the Administration's efforts to ban TikTok in the US. As a company we have always focused on transparency, so we want to explain why we are taking this step.

Over the past few years, people of all backgrounds have embraced the TikTok community. Today, 100 million Americans turn to TikTok for entertainment, inspiration, and connection; countless creators rely on our platform to express their creativity, reach broad audiences, and generate income; our more than 1,500 employees across the US pour their hearts into building this platform every day, with 10,000 more jobs planned in California, Texas, New York, Tennessee, Florida, Michigan, Illinois, and Washington State; and many of the country's leading brands are on TikTok to connect with consumers more authentically and directly than they can elsewhere.

Put simply, we have a thriving community and we are grateful – and responsible – to them.

The Executive Order issued by the Administration on August 6, 2020 has the potential to strip the rights of that community without any evidence to justify such an extreme action, and without any due process. We strongly disagree with the Administration's position that TikTok is a national security threat and we have articulated these objections previously.

Now is the time for us to act. We do not take suing the government lightly, however we feel we have no choice but to take action to protect our rights, and the rights of our community and employees.

In our complaint we make clear that we believe the Administration ignored our extensive efforts to address its concerns, which we conducted fully and in good faith even as we disagreed with the concerns themselves:

"The executive order seeks to ban TikTok purportedly because of the speculative possibility that the application could be manipulated by the Chinese government. But, as the U.S. government is well aware, Plaintiffs have taken extraordinary measures to protect the privacy and security of TikTok's U.S. user data, including by having TikTok store such data outside of China (in the United States and Singapore) and by erecting software barriers that help ensure that TikTok stores its U.S. user data separately from the user data of other ByteDance products. These actions were made known to the U.S. government during a recent U.S. national security review of ByteDance's 2017 acquisition of a China-based company, Musical.ly. As part of that review, Plaintiffs provided voluminous documentation to the U.S. government documenting TikTok's security practices and made commitments that were more than sufficient to address any conceivable U.S. government privacy or national security concerns..."

The Administration ignored the great lengths that TikTok has gone to in order to demonstrate our commitment to serving the US market:

"The key personnel responsible for TikTok, including its CEO, Global Chief Security Officer, and General Counsel, are all Americans based in the United States—and therefore are not subject to Chinese law. U.S. content moderation is likewise led by a U.S.-based team and operates independently from China, and, as noted above, the TikTok application stores U.S. user data on servers located in the United States and Singapore."

Further, as we note in our complaint, not only does the Executive Order ignore due process, it also authorizes the prohibition of activities that have not been found to be "an unusual and extraordinary threat," as required by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), under which the Administration is purportedly acting:

"By banning TikTok with no notice or opportunity to be heard (whether before or after the fact), the executive order violates the due process protections of the Fifth Amendment.

"The order is ultra vires because it is not based on a bona fide national emergency and authorizes the prohibition of activities that have not been found to pose 'an unusual and extraordinary threat.'"

In the complaint we also point to the fact that the August 6 Executive Order is a misuse of IEEPA:

"...the actions directed in the August 6 executive order are not supported by the emergency declared a year earlier in Executive Order 13873.

"That previous executive order was designed to address asserted U.S. national security concerns about certain telecommunications companies' ability to abuse access to 'information and communications technology and services' that 'store and communicate vast amounts of sensitive information, facilitate the digital economy, and support critical infrastructure and vital emergency services, in order to commit malicious cyber-enabled actions, including economic and industrial espionage against the United States and its people.'

"TikTok Inc. is not a telecommunications provider and it does not provide the types of technology and services contemplated by the 2019 executive order. Specifically, TikTok Inc. does not provide the hardware backbone to 'facilitate the digital economy,' and TikTok Inc. has no role in providing 'critical infrastructure and vital emergency services.'"

In the complaint we also go into significant detail about the nearly year-long effort we made in good faith to provide the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States ("CFIUS") the voluminous information requested – was disregarded – and the numerous steps we offered to take in our commitment to transparency and cooperation:

"In 2019, CFIUS contacted ByteDance to consider whether to review its acquisition of Musical.ly, a China-based video-sharing platform—even though Musical.ly was based in China and had very limited assets in the United States. This review was highly unusual in that ByteDance had acquired Musical.ly two years earlier in 2017, Musical.ly was previously Chinese-owned and based in China, and ByteDance had predominantly abandoned Musical.ly's limited U.S. assets by the time of CFIUS's outreach in 2019.

"During this period, and through the course of the CFIUS review, ByteDance provided voluminous documentation and information in response to CFIUS's questions. Among other evidence, ByteDance submitted detailed documentation to CFIUS demonstrating TikTok's security measures to help ensure U.S. user data is safeguarded in storage and in transit and cannot be accessed by unauthorized persons—including any government—outside the United States.

"CFIUS never articulated any reason why TikTok's security measures were inadequate to address any national security concerns, and effectively terminated formal communications with Plaintiffs well before the conclusion of the initial statutory review period. Notwithstanding the U.S. government's failure to identify any security risk, in an effort to address any conceivable concerns that the U.S. government may have and to assure continuity for the U.S. users who had come to value and cherish the platform that TikTok provides, Plaintiffs took the extraordinary step of offering to restructure their U.S. business...

"Despite these repeated efforts and concrete proposals to alleviate any national security concerns, the agency record reflects that CFIUS repeatedly refused to engage with ByteDance and its counsel about CFIUS's concerns."

Finally, despite all of these efforts, without the standard communication appropriate in a CFIUS case, and with little regard to the mitigation proposals that TikTok had made, CFIUS rushed out its decision within five minutes of its deadline:

"At 11:55 p.m. on July 30, 2020—the final day of the statutory CFIUS review period—the Committee issued a letter stating that 'CFIUS has identified national security risks arising from the Transaction and that it has not identified mitigation measures that would address those risks.'

"The CFIUS letter was principally based on outdated news articles, failed to address the voluminous documentation that Plaintiffs had provided demonstrating the security of TikTok user data, and was flawed in numerous other respects."

Likewise, in the August 6 Executive Order issued under IEEPA, the Administration failed to follow due process and act in good faith, neither providing evidence that TikTok was an actual threat, nor justification for its punitive actions. We believe the Administration's decisions were heavily politicized, and industry experts have said the same. As the complaint explains:

"The executive order is not rooted in bona fide national security concerns. Independent national security and information security experts have criticized the political nature of this executive order, and expressed doubt as to whether its stated national security objective is genuine..."

"The President's demands for payments have no relationship to any conceivable national security concern and serve only to underscore that Defendants failed to provide Plaintiffs with the due process required by law." To be clear, we far prefer constructive dialogue over litigation. But with the Executive Order threatening to bring a ban on our US operations – eliminating the creation of 10,000 American jobs and irreparably harming the millions of Americans who turn to this app for entertainment, connection, and legitimate livelihoods that are vital especially during the pandemic – we simply have no choice.

We will continue the work we have long been undertaking to earn the trust of our full US community. For example, our Transparency and Accountability Center is central among those ongoing efforts as an industry-leading step to build trust and understanding of our moderation policies, source code, and data practices. Our legal challenge is a protection to ensure that these efforts can take place without the threat of an unwarranted ban hovering like a dark cloud over the joy and creativity of our community.

August 28, 2020

Harvard Business Review - TikTok Ban Should Worry Every Company

"If data collection by a company with overseas connections comprises a threat, there are threats all around. The data that TikTok collects pales in comparison to, say, what most American tech companies (as well as banks, credit agencies, and hotels) collect, both visibly and less so. Many institutions that collect sensitive data have already been hacked – it is estimated that there is a cyber attack every 39 seconds – and much of that information is for sale on the Dark Web. If the Chinese government wanted the kind of information TikTok could collect, it could be obtained in many other ways.

"What will likely prove a more pressing threat to U.S. customers is much more low-tech: Setting a precedent of banning everyday technologies could quickly spiral out of control and seriously disrupt almost all international trade."

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September 18, 2020

ACLU - If protecting our data were a true motivating factor, the Trump administration could support comprehensive surveillance reform and consumer privacy legislation

"This order violates the First Amendment rights of people in the United States by restricting their ability to communicate and conduct important transactions on the two social media platforms. The order also harms the privacy and security of millions of existing TikTok and WeChat users in the United States by blocking software updates, which can fix vulnerabilities and make the apps more secure. In implementing President Trump's abuse of emergency powers, Secretary Ross is undermining our rights and our security. To truly address privacy concerns raised by social media platforms, Congress should enact comprehensive surveillance reform and strong consumer data privacy legislation."

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September 18, 2020

We disagree with the decision from the Commerce Department

"We disagree with the decision from the Commerce Department, and are disappointed that it stands to block new app downloads from Sunday and ban use of the TikTok app in the US from November 12. Our community of 100 million US users love TikTok because it's a home for entertainment, self-expression, and connection, and we're committed to protecting their privacy and safety as we continue working to bring joy to families and meaningful careers to those who create on our platform.

In our proposal to the US Administration, we've already committed to unprecedented levels of additional transparency and accountability well beyond what other apps are willing to do, including third-party audits,

verification of code security, and US government oversight of US data security. Further, an American technology provider would be responsible for maintaining and operating the TikTok network in the US, which would include all services and data serving US consumers. We will continue to challenge the unjust executive order, which was enacted without due process and threatens to deprive the American people and small businesses across the US of a significant platform for both a voice and livelihoods.

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September 18, 2020

The Verge: Trump's TikTok ban is a gross abuse of power

"Make no mistake: something ugly and unprecedented is happening here. A social network that's used by millions of people is set to be banned by presidential fiat, with no public evidence of wrongdoing and only the thinnest gesture at constitutional restraints to executive power." – Russell Brandom, The Verge

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September 19, 2020

An update for our TikTok family

By Vanessa Pappas, Interim Head of TikTok

When I joined TikTok nearly two years ago, few Americans had heard of it. The marketplace of online social platforms had remained virtually unchanged for a decade. Few could have imagined TikTok would become a social phenomenon that would change the lives of hundreds of millions of people. In the process, TikTok has altered the competitive tech landscape, spurring companies across the industry to innovate. And at TikTok, we're just getting started.

TikTok has always been unique from other platforms. The app gives our community excitingly simple tools with which to foster their creativity and power their entertaining short-form videos. Our For You feed, where you first land upon opening the app, offers up videos based on your unique interests and has changed the way companies think about recommendation and discovery. That same ease of discovery also changed the game for creators – on TikTok, anyone has a chance to reach an audience, without needing to be a celebrity or social influencer with a large following.

TikTok's popularity grew much faster than any of us could have imagined. Today people come to this platform for entertainment, learning, and increasingly, as a place where small businesses can reach consumers and build a following. During the pandemic, like many platforms, we saw that growth increase significantly as families sought creative ways to connect with one another.

With our success has come added scrutiny. We appreciate this, as the tech industry has rightfully been asked tough questions in recent years. While we strongly disagree with the implications of TikTok as a national security threat, we nonetheless understand the concerns. Over the last year we've taken numerous steps to increase transparency, including hiring a world-class Chief Security Officer with decades of US law enforcement and industry experience; launching a Transparency and Accountability Center where experts can inspect our algorithm, code, and moderation practices; hiring hundreds of engineers in the US; and publishing our first Transparency Reports.

We're pleased that today we've confirmed a proposal that resolves the Administration's security concerns and settles questions around TikTok's future in the US. Our plan is extensive and consistent with previous CFIUS resolutions, including working with Oracle, who will be our trusted cloud and technology provider responsible for fully securing our users' data. We are committed to protecting our users globally and providing the highest levels of security. Both Oracle and Walmart will take part in a TikTok Global pre-IPO financing round in which they can take up to a 20% cumulative stake in the company. We will also maintain and expand the US as TikTok Global's headquarters while bringing 25,000 jobs across the country.

TikTok has won the hearts of hundreds of millions of people around the world, including 100 million Americans, because it's a home for entertainment, connection, and expression. We're delighted that the individuals who've turned their creativity on TikTok into thriving careers, the small businesses using TikTok to connect with customers during the pandemic, and the families who've found joy and connection through our platform will be able to use TikTok for many years to come.

We want to thank all of the members of our community who have shown tremendous support – to us, but more importantly, for each other – throughout this period of turbulence. TikTok is what it is because of all of you. Our team works tirelessly to provide a safe and inclusive platform, and we're thrilled that we will be able to continue serving our amazingly diverse and creative community. This is just the beginning for TikTok, and we're so excited to be with you in this journey for the long run.

September 20, 2020

**TikTok Statement on Proposed Deal**

We are pleased that the proposal by TikTok, Oracle, and Walmart will resolve the security concerns of the US Administration and settle questions around TikTok's future in the US.

As part of this proposal, Oracle will become our trusted technology provider, responsible for hosting all US user data and securing associated computer systems to ensure US national security requirements are fully satisfied. We are currently working with Walmart on a commercial partnership as well. Both companies will take part in a TikTok Global pre-IPO financing round in which they can take up to a 20% cumulative stake in the company. We will also maintain and expand TikTok Global's headquarters in the US, while bringing 25,000 jobs across the country.

TikTok has won the hearts of hundreds of millions of people around the world, including 100 million Americans, because it's a home for entertainment, connection, and expression. We're delighted that the individuals who've turned their creativity on TikTok into thriving careers, the small businesses using TikTok to reach customers during the pandemic, and the families who've found joy and connection through our platform will be able to use TikTok for many years to come.

Our team works tirelessly to provide a safe and inclusive platform and we're thrilled that we will be able to continue serving our amazingly diverse and creative community.

# TIKTOK'S SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS



2016

SEPTEMBER

ByteDance launched Douyin in China.



2017

SEPTEMBER

TikTok launched for iOS and Android outside of mainland China and expanded on a global scale.



2018

AUGUST

TikTok merged with Musical.ly (a Chinese social media service) and became available worldwide.



2019

FEBRUARY

Musical.ly, now known as TikTok, was fined 5.7 million dollars by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission for settling allegations that it illegally collected personal information from children under the age of 13, such as names, email addresses, pictures, and their locations (pham, 2019).



2019

APRIL 1

A temporary ban for two weeks by the Indian federal government, which a court ruled that it could expose children to sexual predators due to inappropriate content, such as pornographic material (Yadav, 2019). On the 12th of the month, TikTok responded saying that it removed 6 millions videos that violated its "Terms of Use and Community Guidelines". In the nearly two weeks blocked by the Indian government, TikTok "missed out on adding more than 15 million users" (Iyengar, 2019). "TikTok is resulting in "financial losses" of up to \$500,000 a day for its developer, and has put more than 250 jobs at risk", according to the ByteDance report (Kalra, 2019).

2019

APRIL

TikTok was huge in India. According to the statistics, despite the fact that TikTok was temporarily banned, in April, TikTok had "610 million downloads and 600 million active users within India –about 44 percent of the population and over a quarter of total worldwide TikTok downloads" (Pahwa, 2020).



2019

OCTOBER

TikTok becomes the most downloaded app, surpassing Facebook and Instagram (Sharma, 2020).



2019

NOVEMBER

TikTok downloads crossed the 1.5 billion threshold.



2019

DECEMBER

U.S. accused TikTok for transferring users' data server in China. Later, TikTok denied the claims and clarified that "the Chinese government has no access to its users' data and personal information, which is stored in the US" (Tillman, 2020). Theo Bertram, head of public policy for Europe at TikTok, said: "There is zero truth to the accusations the Chinese state has access to TikTok users' data" (Clements, 2020).

total 1.65 billion downloads in TikTok (see below chart).



2020

MARCH

Due to the sudden lockdown of Covid-19, people are forced to stay at home. This caused TikTok become a popular app for entertaining and people started to use and download. TikTok has been downloaded more than 2 billion times globally both on App Store and Google Play (Chapple, 2020).

2020

APRIL

TikTok to launch Transparency Center for moderation and data practices

Approach to security established

2020

MAY

According to ByteDance's statement, Disney's former head of streaming, Kevin Mayer, is TikTok's new Chief Operating Officer (C.O.O) effective June 1. "Kevin will report directly to ByteDance Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Yiming Zhang, and will be charged with driving the global development of ByteDance, as well as overseeing corporate functions including corporate development, sales, marketing, public affairs, security, moderation, and legal" (ByteDance, 2020).

Due to physical constraints as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the opening of our Transparency Center in Los Angeles has been delayed. We look forward to being able to welcome guests in the near future.

We're committed to being transparent about our practices, which includes allowing invited experts to view TikTok's content policies and algorithm that are housed in our Transparency Center. While the full opening of the physical Transparency Center is still delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic, we've now made adjustments so that we can offer virtual tours for parts of the experience. If you're a policy, content safety, or security expert looking for more information, please email transparency [at] tiktok [dot] com.

2020

JUNE



India government officially banned the TikTok app.

Security and data privacy roadmap established.

Updates on the security roadmap.

2020

AUGUST



Trump bans, by executive order, that ByteDance sell TikTok's U.S operations.

Trump bans WeChat - another Chinese app.

In the second order, Trump extended the date to 90 days. "To be clear, the initial part of the ban also prohibited companies in the US from having any dealings with TikTok. But the subsequent order enabled US suitors to talk to ByteDance about potential acquisitions of its US business, as long as all negotiations are finished and agreed by 12 November 2020" (Tillman, 2020).

At the same time, TikTok sues Trump administration, "alleging that its order banning transactions with parent company ByteDance infringes due process protections, goes beyond the purview of sanctions rules, and provides no evidence that TikTok is a national security threat" (Tillman, 2020).

TikTok sues the Trump Administration

Oracle wins bid to partner with TikTok in the U.S.



2020

JUNE

India government officially banned the TikTok app.

2020

JULY

TikTok was under scrutiny. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that "Trump administration was "certainly looking at" banning the app" (Byford, 2020).

U.S. security officials concerned about the app that it could be used to collect the personal data of Americans.

According to the Washington Post (Lerman, 2020), "As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the United States", President Trump said. "I have that authority. I can do it with an executive order or that."

Since Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the U.S. was considering banning TikTok over national security concerns, the users of TikTok have been scrambling (Lorenz, 2020). Users began to say goodbye to their followers in TikTok and share their handles on other platforms like Instagram or YouTube as a transfer address.





## THEORETICAL APPLICATION

### *The Sleeper Theory*

The theory that can best describe the PR issue that is facing TikTok is the sleeper theory. The sleeper theory was created by Carl Hovland during World War 2 when he discovered how soldiers' morale and opinion changed to army propaganda over time (Wikipedia Contributors, 2020). The definition of the sleeper effect can be described as "The sleeper effect is thus defined as the absolute increase in attitude change over time for receivers of a low-credibility message" (Schenk, 2008). The research done by Hovland showed that after about 6 weeks people tend to forget the source, but remember and even begin to believe the message (Public Relations Study Guide). Two things are needed for the sleeper theory: repetition of the message, and a discounting cue. TopThink describes this as, "when you watch the same commercial over and over the message will stick, but the lack of credibility will not" (TopThink, 2020). The public relations study guide provides an example of the sleeper theory as "I won't go to that coffee shop anymore. I read someplace that the pumpkin spice latte contains dangerous toxins (Public Relations Study Guide, 2015). The Sleep Theory is the dissociation of a message from its unreliable or biased source.

The public relations issue that is effecting TikTok is very similar to this example. There has been a constant bashing and exposing what could be a possible threat of China to the United States (see figure 3A in Appendix). The narrative of China being a threat to the global and national economy has been a statement President Trump has been saying since before he took office. In a tweet in 2011, President Donald Trump called China "neither an ally or a friend" and has called China since taking office the "greatest thefts in the history of the world" (Stracqualursi, 2017). The constant attacking on China has lead to an increased negative view of China in the US to 66% in 2020 (Kat Devlin, Silver, & Huang, 2020). An article by the Atlantic said, "many apparent Chinese strengths—including education, manufacturing, and technology—are not quite as strong as many Americans believe" (Schuman, 2020). Trump has instilled a growing fear of China in Americans, a fear that former diplomat Susan A. Thornton says, "are greatly exaggerated; China will not emerge from this crisis as a dominant world power" (Thornton, 2020). Along with being seen as biased against China, President Trump was also seen as biased against TikTok due to the rivalry between some users, the President, and his administration. The rivalry started in June when TikTok users began a trend of reserving tickets to Trump's rally without the intention of attending. This caused the President's administration to boast of 1 million registered and to prepare for a crowd of 20,000 along with overflow outside, but when it was time for the rally only 6,200 were in attendance (Russell, 2020). This caused embarrassment for the administration and created a ripple effect of politicians both condemning and applauding the action of the TikTok users, with Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez saying in response to the administration calling the night a success, "Actually you just got ROCKED by teens on TikTok" (Lorenz, Browning, & Frenkel, 2020). When the ban was first announced many articles believed that this embarrassment of this rally caused the President to create a vendetta against TikTok and Forbes wrote "the retaliation theory holds up well" (Brown, 2020). But months later people are no longer seeing the President as the source for TikTok concerns, so while the President may have started the TikTok claims as a vendetta public opinion now carries the weight.

When given the chance the Trump administration has taken every chance to relate TikTok as a bad company for Americans calling it an "untrusted Chinese app" (Reichert, 2020). TikTok has been adamant however

that they are not sharing data with the Chinese government and say in response to TikTok being banned in India, "TikTok continues to comply with all data privacy and security requirements under Indian law and has not shared any information of our users in India with any foreign government, including the Chinese government. Further, if we are requested to in the future we would not do so. We place the highest importance on user privacy and integrity," (Singh 2020). Tik Tok has even gone further than American based social media companies in its effort to dismav these claims by allowing skeptics to see their code (Washington Post 2020). TikTok has since been working on a deal with a US company to forgo their narrative that they are a Chinese company because if Americans and consumers continue to see Tik Tok as a Chinese company they will see TikTok as a threat. This is because Americans believe that China is stealing our data so Chinese companies such as TikTok must be as well despite any strong evidence of this. USA Today has said, "The claims in the post have been rated PARTLY FALSE. While it is true that TikTok, owned by a Chinese-based company, previously has faced scrutiny for its security, it is false to say it has no security. TikTok states it has addressed and solved identified security issues, taking action that has been verified by the cybersecurity company that identified the weaknesses" (Dunn, 2020).

### *The Agenda Building Theory*

According to Study Guide for the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations Examination we believe that the agenda building theory would be the best fit for our goals and expected outcomes for TikTok. Agenda building can be defined as, "as a subset of agenda-setting theory, agenda building describes how organizations can use "information subsidies" to news outlets to influence the media agenda. (Information subsidies include news releases, blog posts and interview opportunities with policymakers or advocates.) The thinking behind agenda-building theory is that news coverage doesn't just reflect reality. News coverage is a manufactured product that can be influenced. By working to boost media attention to a topic, organizations get more public attention for their issues. Increased news coverage can make those topics important to people in key publics (transfer of issue salience from media agenda to public agenda) (Public Relations Study Guide). There is a big influence on the way the media that can affect the public's mind. It is our job to put out news reports that will be set apart from other news sources in order to catch the attention and expose the importance of our message to the audience. Our goal is that our audience will perceive our news as the most important information given to them at the time. "The priorities of which news come first and then the next are set by the media according to how people think and how much influence it will have among the audience"(McCombs & Shaw, 2019). This is a cognitive process that can also be known as accessibility. Media should be used to portray the issue at hand in a way that allows the people to reflect on it.

An example that the Public Relations Study Guide provides for agenda building is, "A business might coordinate the use of news releases, blog posts, tweets, special events and interviews to build – and then sustain – media interest in a new product. News releases and story pitches could be timed in weeks before the product launch to draw attention to the story and highlight intriguing features of the planned item"(Public Relations Study Guide). This is an example that I believe can go hand in hand with our goals for TikTok. As TikTok continues to expand and become a global reaching app that encourages creativity, TikTok has also been faced with concerns about the safety of users' privacy. Agenda Building would allow TikTok to undergo slight rebranding in order to gain the trust back in the eyes of the media. We would use different types of media tactics to build and sustain the

public's interest in the new and improved adaptations of the app. We want to create media resources that will be deemed the 'most important' news to our audience and keep them interested in what additions TikTok now has to offer.

There are two levels that the agenda building theory can be broken up into. The first level "is usually used by the researchers to study media uses and its objectives or the influences that media creates on people and the most proximal thought that people will have on the exposure to the information given by media houses"(McCombs & Shaw, 2019). As for TikTok, researchers would have to be carefully utilized to decide whether the media that is planned to be released will be perceived in a way that influences the public in the most efficient way possible.

#### Second level

After we have completed our first level of agenda building, we will move on to implementing the second level. The second level of agenda building can be defined as when the media has its focus on the way people view and think about the nature of the issue. "Sensationalization of news reports may happen to bring in the interest of the audience. In fact, the media wants to grab attention and implant thoughts in people's minds about some serious issues. That's why the media turn certain issues viral"(McCombs & Shaw, 2019). TikTok already is such a creative space for people of a large demographic to experience, but as we attack our second level of agenda building we could use these tools that the app has to offer to achieve our goals. TikTok can release quick and fun videos that can grab the attention and shape the thoughts of their viewers' minds even if the topic may be about something as serious as privacy policies.

Priming is another important step to the agenda building theory process. Priming calls for consistent media releases throughout the months that will shed light on the message we are trying to have TikTok's public receive. By continuing to put out TikTok's new media content this will help enhance the time and space around this particular issue while allowing the issue to also become more vivid. Having a gatekeeper is also an important position that needs to be upheld during this process. A gatekeeper "is in charge of and has control of the selection of content discussed in the media"(McCombs & Shaw, 2019). Typically editors are the main gatekeepers of the media as a whole. As we progress through the priming and gatekeeping process we have to also keep in mind efficient framing. Framing can be explained in two meanings:

1. The way in which news content is typically shaped and contextualized within the same frame of reference
2. Audience adopts the frames of reference and to see the world in a similar way. This is how people attach importance to a piece of news and perceive its context within which an issue is viewed.(McCombs & Shaw, 2019)

As TikTok releases its media the messaging should be framed in a way that highlights the true importance of that message to their audience. The framing of the message should offer a new and different perspective that will guide the audience to want to learn more about the issue at hand.



## GOALS & STRATEGIES

In order for TikTok to not only reconcile, but secure their audience loyalty and trust, they need to structure their next steps according to the following goals:

1. Become a trusted social media platform
2. Educate on data protection and how TikTok uses data
3. Garner an altruistic public image and corporate structure
4. Maintain and acquire new competitive edges

### *Becoming a Trusted Social Media Platform*

According to TikTok (2020), their mission statement states they are “the leading destination for short-form mobile video. Our mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy.”(?) In line with their mission – to “inspire and create joy” – it is critical that TikTok fosters, sustains, and secures a platform that allows users to feel safe in order for them to truly inspire and create joy. In any relationship, until the persons, in this case users, believe that they are truly safe, they will not be able to truly offer what they bring to the table in an effective manner. While they may be intrigued by the concept of a potential “relationship” they will not remain loyal for long as their eye wanders across the plethora of other video platforms promising the security of user data. With COVID leading to an increase in social media use and the teetering social and political climate teetering by the minute, it is vital to understand the importance of creating a safe and positive platform for users to gather and create, despite the world’s current climate. According to an article by the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, “during the current global crises when ‘social distancing’ has become a norm, over-engagement in social media has become a ‘psychological necessity’ thereby helping people to address their needs of human interaction and coping with the pandemic” (Singh, 2020). With all that is floating about in the world, causing an increase of anxiety and depression, offering a safe, easy, and accessible social media platform has the potential to make a massive impact on the world – on both global and individual levels. To be truly successful in any competitive field, TikTok needs to redirect its focus to establish trust among the parental population, security-aware and young millennials, and the U.S. government.

- Strategy 1: Commission a task force in each major country where TikTok is present in order to keep up with the shifting political structures and make sure that all local laws are being followed. Audience(s):  
**Government Officials**
  - Tactic 1A: Release information about the task force, and an information hotline to report anything that may not apply with local law.
  - Tactic 1B: Mobilize a team with the sole intent to win back a relationship with India.
- Strategy 2: Communicate openly about the new deal with the American company, Oracle that is occurring. Audience(s): **Government Officials, TikTok Users, Parents of younger TikTok users**
  - Tactic 2A: Release statements, press releases, and emails in order to communicate openly about Oracle and the changes that this will make to TikTok.
  - Tactic 2B: Release TikTok videos touring the new office, having fun, and celebrating the merge.

- Strategy 3: Enhance the security of the app in regards to inappropriate content, age limit, and privacy policies. Audience(s): Parents of younger TikTok Users and TikTok Users
  - Tactic 3A: Practice organizational listening, and hear the concerns of the public
  - Tactic 3B: Put together a task force in charge of manually going through and ensuring the safety of the content that bots flag and are not able to determine with certainty.
  - Tactic 3C: Post articles on news sites and on Facebook highlighting this task force, and the statistical evidence of their effectiveness, hereby honoring the PRSA Code of Ethics value of honesty, advocacy, and the free flow of information.

#### *Educating on Data Protection*

It is no news that there has been a rise in concern regarding the personal safety risk of using TikTok in America. Many audiences – parents of children and teens, young millennials, and even the government are expressing concern about TikTok's data security. With the software company, ByteDance, which owns TikTok, is located in China, and China being one of America's rivals on an affair of assets, it is no surprise that the software company's location and intentions are of great concern to the U.S. government. They are concerned with investigating, establishing clear two-way communication, understanding, and securing a partnership with the CEOs of the company in order to safeguard the American people and their data. While the concern of many Americans is valid and applauded, their education on the topic is needed in order to calm their nerves and quite any suspicions they may have about this organization. With data on the side of TikTok, one must only let the truth loose, in a palatable contact and leave it up to the American people to decide their loyalties with or against TikTok. With a little education into the new partnership between TikTok and Oracle, an American-owned cloud data base, Americans can rest assured that their data is not being harvested for the use of the Chinese government. Many other features of TikTok walk confidently into the light, if only the American people would do the research and in doing so look to the light to see the reality of the pure and mutually beneficial relationship between America and TikTok.

- Strategy 1: Form a partnership with NSA or FBI to educate people on data protection, ensuring that the message of security and reliability come through. Audience(s): TikTok Users, Government Officials, and Parents of younger TikTok users
  - Tactic 1A: Do a collaborative interview, TikTok videos, and articles on how best to protect data.
- Strategy 2: Do a TikTok video series on data protection for users called 'Who Actually Reads the Disclosure Agreement??'. Audience(s): TikTok Users
- Strategy 3: Release clear information on how TikTok uses data to give more relevant content, and the safeguards in place from it being used for anything further. Audience(s): TikTok Users and Parents of younger TikTok users

### *Garnering an Altruistic Public Image & Corporate Structure*

With the image of TikTok marred due to the ban on TikTok by order of President Donald Trump due to a potential abuse of data security by a foreign government, Public Relations professionals have their work cut out for them in restoring the public's image of this social media platform. There are very specific publics which were more offended or cautious in approaching TikTok. Some of these publics include the parents of children and teens who are the prime TikTok users, the U.S. government, and security-concerned young millennials – all of which will need to be the audiences with whom TikTok needs to focus their attention on restoring their perspective of TikTok. There are, however, some audiences to which the idea of data risk does not phase nearly as much as the previously mentioned audiences. Some of these publics include younger millennials, teens and tweens, and children. In order to establish a flourishing corporate life, the garnering of the publics' image of TikTok is a critical goal to strategize accordingly.

- Strategy 1: Run a 'TikTok Gives Back' campaign, partnering with the nonprofit No Kid Hungry.
 

Audience(s): TikTok Users, Parents of younger TikTok users, Government Officials

  - Tactic 1A: Do a series of powerful and engaging TikToks that show the need and the work that No Kid Hungry is doing
  - Tactic 1B: Have an exclusive interview with a major news network detailing the current COVID-19 crisis and how it is affecting America's youth in order to reach a wider audience.
- Strategy 2: Make a TikTok dance challenge, partnered with the major company CVS Health, Dancing with the Stars, and International Arts & Artists. Audience(s): TikTok Users
  - Tactic 2A: Post on TikTok a dance that is made by this season's winner of Dancing with the Stars. For every video that is made including this dance, CVS and TikTok will donate \$1 to the international nonprofit arts service organization, International Arts & Artists, whose goal is to promote cross-cultural diversity through arts.
- Strategy 3: Promote mental health through a series of informational TikToks. Audience(s): TikTok Users
  - Tactic 3A: Partner with a series of celebrities as they talk about mental health, coping strategies, and navigating COVID in a way that is healthy.
  - Tactic 3B: Post a weekly 'Mood Boost Thursday' video on TikTok where a video is selected from a TikTok user who used the #moodboostthursday on their video. One of the most positive and uplifting videos will be selected every week and shared on TikTok's profile.

### *New Competitive Edges*

There are a plethora of video platforms which are fighting for the attention of global publics. With the diversity of social media platforms, the assets that they offer are just as diverse. Continuing to innovate and push the limits of the video platform field is required if wishing to remain relevant in this ever-changing, consuming, and producing world. Major companies took advantage of TikTok's decrease of public trust during President Trump's announcement to ban them until partnering with a trusted American company and throughout the determination process. These companies included Instagram, owned by Facebook, offering Instagram Reels which highly

resemble TikTok's video assets, offerings, and capabilities. Researching, executing and offering innovative and exclusive technologies to the public will be key in remaining above the other competitors in today's age.

- Strategy 1: Through organizational listening, find some of the features that TikTok users have been most asking for and find ways to meet those needs. Audience(s): TikTok Users
  - Tactic 1A: Implement a feature that will allow users to move to a certain place in a video. While the play/pause button is available, users have to watch videos from the beginning if they want to rewatch a certain aspect of the TikTok.
  - Tactic 1B: Allow people to visit and view TikToks that were sent to them without having to sign up for an account.
- Strategy 2: Implement new TikTok features
  - Tactic 2A: Allow users to search saved videos based upon key words, songs, or hashtags
  - Tactic 2B: Release a wider variety of TikTok templates available for creators



## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

After taking the time to deliberate the goals and strategies that we will be implementing for the good of TikTok and their reputation there will also be many expectations that come with this process. Our overall goal is to continue the growth of TikTok in a positive direction while making some changes to ensure safety, trust, and a strong distinction that will truly set TikTok apart from other creeping competitors.

Recent lawsuits and concerns for TikTok users' privacy has resulted in a decline of trust from their audience. Naturally, TikTok would like to be seen as reliable in the eyes of their faithful and interested users. We have strategized specific tactics that will be sure to reach this level of trust once again. As we put together a task force located in each major country this will allow government officials the ability to manage any alerts of obstruction of local laws. By doing this will enable countries to feel that they have some control of what is being published to the public. Recently TikTok has been banned from India, so we will be intentional to mend the relationship and trust between India and TikTok. The way we expect to achieve this is by sending out a team to India to take extra precautions with the safety and privacy of the app. Another way we will gain TikTok's trust back would be by open communication. After we release press releases and consistent media updates to their publics this will leave no room for users to feel blindsided by information that was obscure to TikTok's users. Communication about the new deal between Oracle and TikTok will be more formally announced to bring clarification to TikTok users and their parents. TikTok will create fun videos that will openly show the merge between what Oracle and TikTok has to offer. Another huge issue that caused many parents of young TikTok users to be wary of the app was the lack of enforcement on the age limit of TikTok. To solve this current issue we will be practicing organizational listening to the people's concerns, putting together a task force that will focus on managing the overall safety of the content that is being uploaded, as well as posting articles that highlight the high standard of ethics that are being implemented for this specific task force. These tactics will prove to TikTok's audience that there is nothing to hide and that many precautions are being made to ensure trust.

Reliable data protection has been questioned by many TikTok users. There has been talk throughout the media about TikTok user's personal information being compromised. The only way TikTok can promise honest data protection is by forming a partnership with NSA or the FBI. This will allow TikTok users to receive a clear understanding of what data protection looks like. Collaborating with the NSA or the FBI will provide opportunities for TikTok users to master the best ways to protect their personal data and feel safe. A way we expect to see users gain understanding of data protection is by creating captivating TikTok videos that give a short run down of how to protect their data. By making these videos fun and to the point, we expect TikTok users to gain an enjoyable experience while learning practical ways of data protection as well.

TikTok is one of the most leading entertainment apps of today, with around 800 million active users worldwide. With such a vast reach we believe that TikTok can use its voice to bring awareness to the nonprofits such as the No Kid Hungry organization. TikTok will be creating a campaign called TikTok Gives Back to engage with communities that are in need. A series of powerful videos that share the story of the No Kid Hungry nonprofit will allow users to become more aware of their cause and what they stand for. We expect TikTok users to feel called to either share the video with friends or even contribute to No Kid Hungry. These videos will share real statistics of how COVID-19 has increased the effects of youth in need of food. Another way we expect a corporate structure is by creating a dance challenge that invites all TikTok users to participate in. TikTok will partner with

major companies such as CVS Health, Dancing with the Stars, and International Arts & Artists for this dance challenge. Dance challenges are an easy way to go viral while also impacting our partnered companies. The challenge calls for users to post on TikTok a dance that is made by this season's winner of Dancing with the Stars. For every video that is made including this dance, CVS and TikTok will donate \$1 to the international nonprofit arts service organization, International Arts & Artists, whose goal is to promote cross-cultural diversity through arts. TikTok has also seen a need to bring more awareness to anyone struggling with mental illness, especially during these times. It's expected that TikTok's series of informational videos discussing mental health tips and tricks will gain a lot of attention from users of all ages on their app. Celebrities will share their personal insights on mental health and quickly get the attention of users who look up to them as public figures. Users will be challenged to post a weekly "Mood Boost Thursday" video using the #moodboostthursday. These videos will bring awareness to this important topic to be talked about more freely, to encourage others, and bring a strong community together.

TikTok has been faced with some upcoming competitors. Our goal is to find ways that truly can set TikTok apart from the rest. We expect to achieve this goal by taking the time to listen to what TikTok users have been complying for. TikTok wants their users to feel heard and for their needs to be met in a realistic way. TikTok will create features that will make the overall experience of the app more enjoyable and easier to use. One feature that TikTok will add is a play/pause button available so each user doesn't have to start from the beginning to watch the video over again. This will make the editing process a lot more smooth. Another feature that we expect to be beneficial for all TikTok users is an option to save videos based upon key words, songs, or hashtags. These tactics will guarantee TikTok with a new competitive edge over the others.



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## APPENDIX

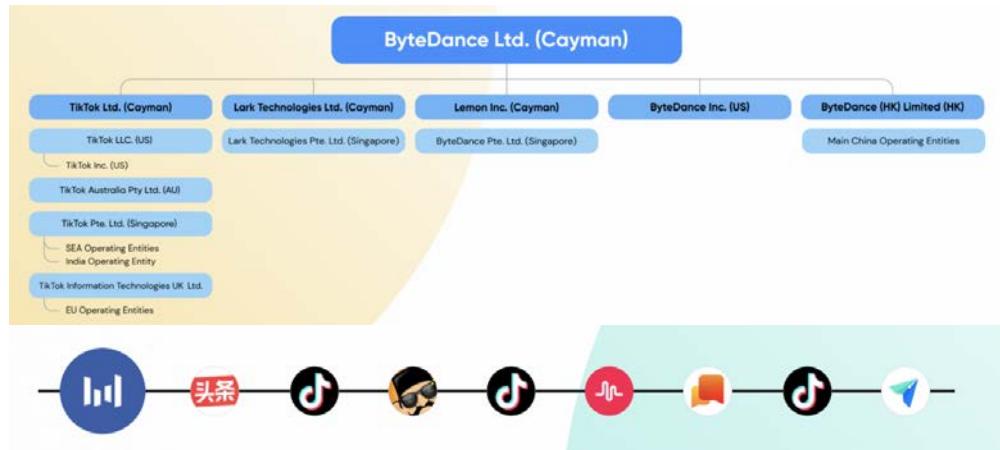


Figure 1A

### TikTok user growth

Monthly active users on dates provided by the company

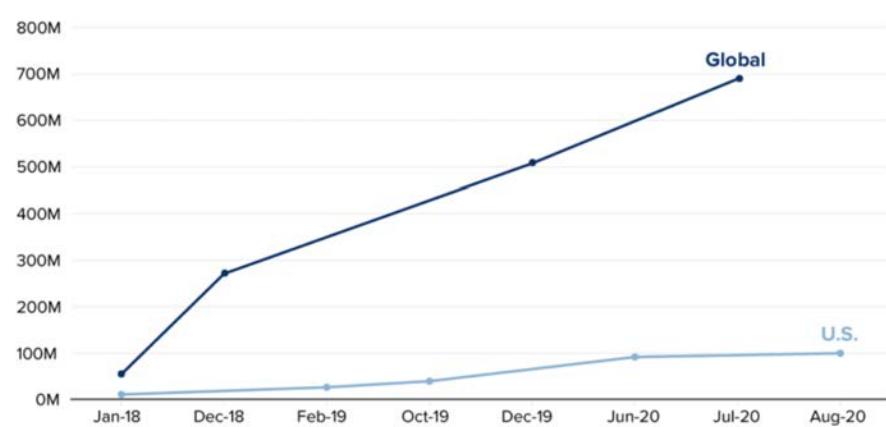


Figure 1B

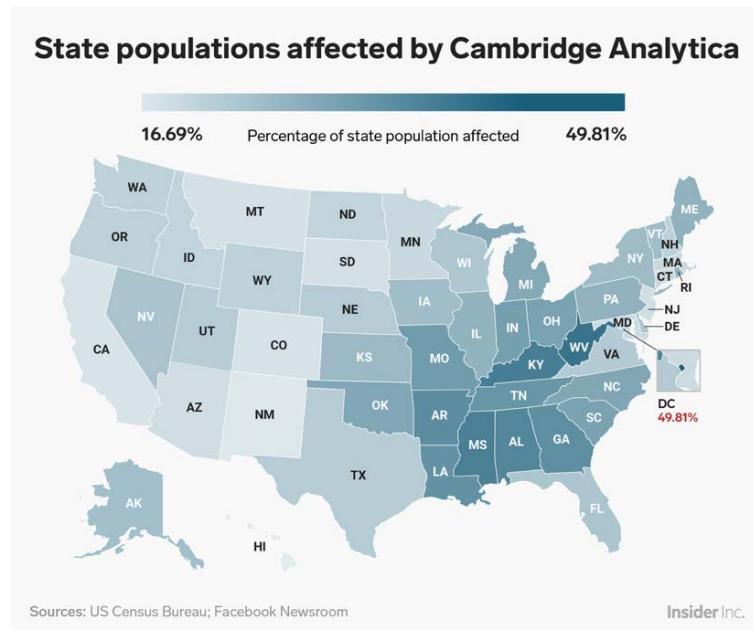


Figure 2A

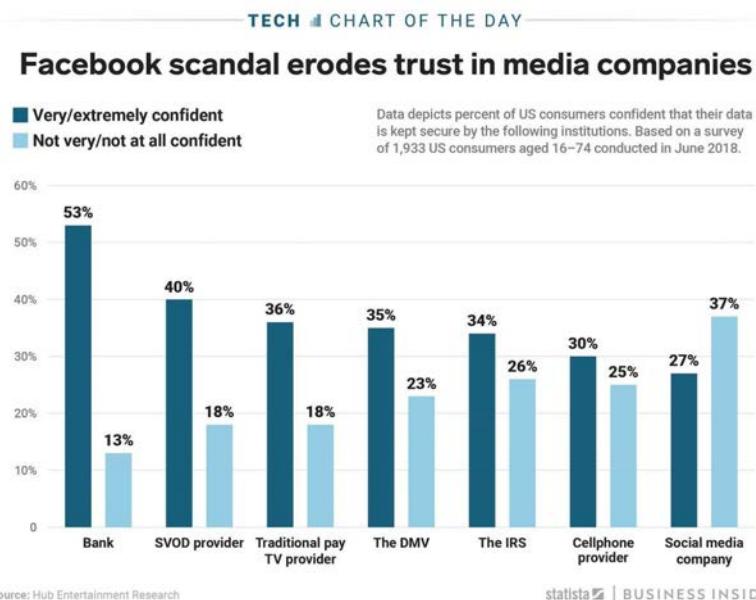
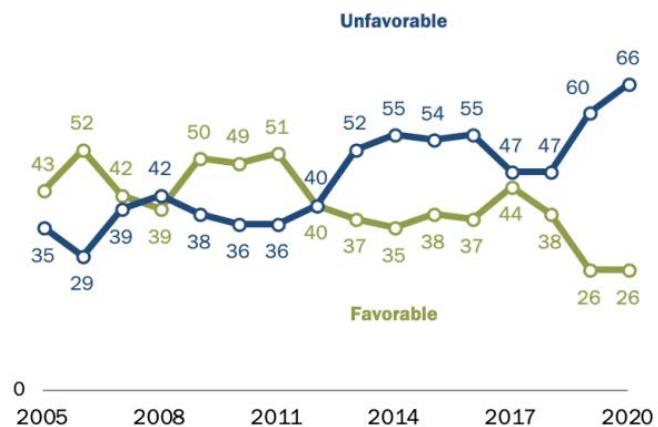


Figure 2B

### Negative views of China continue to grow in U.S.

*% who say they have a \_\_\_ opinion of China*

100 %



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 3-29, 2020. Q5b.

"U.S. Views of China Increasingly Negative Amid Coronavirus Outbreak"

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Figure 3A