



Rise of TikTok

How a China-based video app
is rewriting the rules of social
media and content creation

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Before we talk about TikTok...



Remember Vine?

TikTok is “the closest thing we'll get to having Vine back.” - The Verge (2018)



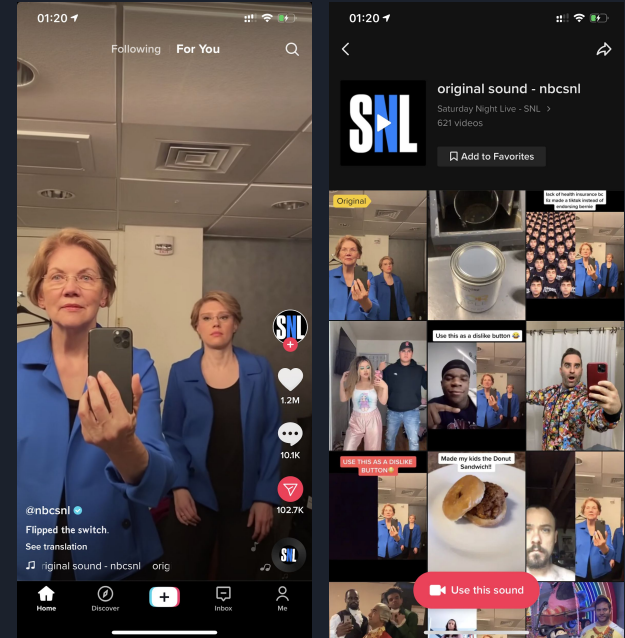
About TikTok (Douyin)

- Create and view short lip-sync, comedy and talent videos.
- Owned by ByteDance, a Beijing-based technology firm. Company formed in 2012 by Zhang Yiming.
- Service officially launched in September 2016 as Douyin in the Chinese market. TikTok was launched internationally a year later by merging with Musical.ly.
- Douyin and TikTok are basically the same application with same user interface and feature.



How TikTok Works

- Upload portrait video that are commonly taken on a smartphone.
- TikTok came built in with video editing feature such as animations and filters.
- Audio is vital to TikTok, sources includes original recording or excerpts from popular music, movie and TV show.
- Creator can reuse and backtrack existing audio pieces generated by other creators.
- Hashtag groups similar video of of the same topic.



How TikTok Became Successful

- Musical.ly has ≈200 million users in the United States before merging with TikTok.
- Instagram and Twitter can only take us that far with communication.
- TikTok creates addiction because the application will feed its viewers with an endless amount of “relatable contents” thanks to the implementation of AI.
- “Imagine a version of Facebook that was able to fill your feed before you’d friended a single person. That’s TikTok.” - The New York Times (2019)



The core technology behind TikTok's success





Why existing platforms failed to annihilate TikTok?

- Aggressive development start Adopting new features and updates at a rapid pace, much faster than competing products.
- An agile team and management style



Why traditional video hosting platforms failed to compete

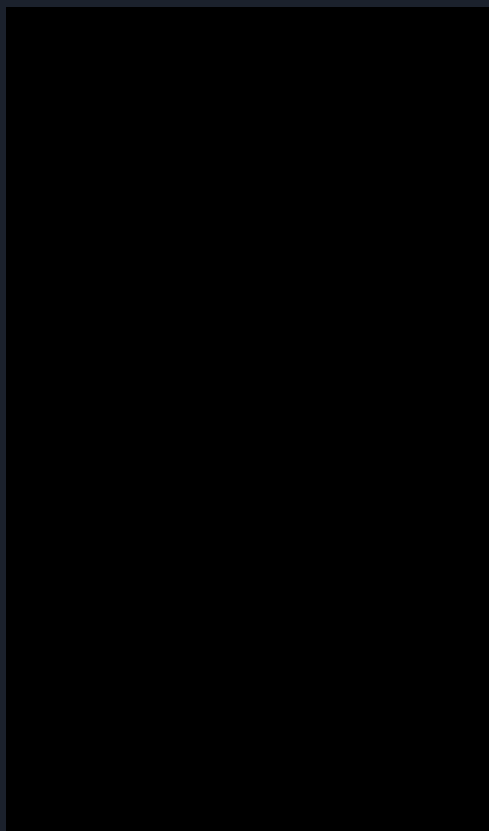
- Popularization Strategy:
 - Algorithm designed to promote potentially viral content from normal creators.
 - Circumventing production challenges for content creators



Versus



Samples





TikTok as a medium

- As traditional media declines in the industry, TikTok uses this opportunity to appeal to the younger generation with low-budget and mobile friendly video production.
- TikTok combines elements of YouTube and Instagram to suit the fast-paced environment in the digital era. It is fighting to secure the “free time” of our lives.
- TikTok acts like a graphical form of Twitter where idea can be quickly distributed in short length but carries strong theme.



Discussion Questions

1. TikTok currently faces multiple legal barriers in the United States in terms of privacy and the suppression on the freedom of speech. ByteDance claims that its servers are local based and the China has no influence over its content. What's your opinion on this and do you trust such a platform for content creation.
2. Does machine learning driven content curation scare you if it knows exactly what you want and works so seamlessly that you wouldn't notice it?
3. Do you think there should be new regulations on computer-driven content curation? You may elaborate.