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# TikTok Users Drawn to Rival Platforms as Trump Threatens U.S. Ban; Triller and byte rise in the App Store; 'it's been 24 hours of no sleep'

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Unfamiliar names such as byte and Triller have charged up the Apple App Store rankings because they offer short videos like those on TikTok, the social-media breakout facing an uncertain future in the U.S.

These nascent rivals are actively courting TikTok users, especially top influencers, in some instances offering cash payments to creators. They are trying to capitalize on a question that is dominating social-media chatter: What happens if TikTok really goes away?

Kyle Thomas, a 15-year-old TikTok user with more than 16 million followers, said he would be upset without TikTok. "I spend all of my time on it. As much as it is my job, it's also my entertainment," he said. "If I can't have it, I wouldn't be sure what to do."

The founders of the short-form video app Clash said they launched the service last week-months earlier than anticipated-to attract increasingly anxious social-media stars who made their home and livelihood on TikTok.

Other companies are rolling out copycat features. Facebook Inc.'s Instagram is on the cusp of debuting its new TikTok-like service, called Reels.

The moves by TikTok's large and small rivals come as the company's parent, ByteDance Ltd. of Beijing, responds to an unprecedented amount of pressure from the White House because of national-security concerns. Some Trump administration officials have said they want TikTok to be fully American-owned, although President Trump said Monday he would approve a purchase of TikTok's U.S. operations if the government receives "a lot of money" in exchange.

Among the potential suitors for TikTok is Microsoft Corp. On Sunday, Microsoft said it would move quickly to pursue discussions with ByteDance and aims to complete the negotiations by Sept. 15. It isn't clear if a deal will come to fruition.

Agents and managers of popular online influencers have long pushed clients to build audiences on multiple platforms, but the current uncertainty has pushed some TikTok stars to hedge their bets.

"It's the perfect time to play into the vulnerability and insecurities of creators," said Krishna Subramanian, chief executive of social-media data company Captiv8 Inc. "If TikTok disappears, what happens? Where do you go? If they get incentivized by a platform, you can easily see them creating content on these other platforms and channels."

Triller and byte (no relation to ByteDance) on Sunday were ranked the top two free iPhone apps in the U.S., while TikTok was number five, according to Sensor Tower data. Daily app rankings tend to fluctuate but Triller and byte have climbed in both the App Store and Google Play in recent months. Even with the latest rankings, TikTok has a much larger user base, with 100 million users in the U.S. and hundreds of millions more world-wide.

Triller, a music and video app that looks similar to TikTok, has seen several influencers from TikTok open accounts over the past several weeks, including this weekend.

"It's been 24 hours of no sleep," said Ryan Kavanaugh, a Hollywood veteran whose film-production company Proxima Media invested in Triller.

A spokeswoman for byte, created by Vine co-founder Dom Hofmann, said the company saw a huge influx of creators sign up for the app.

A TikTok ban in the U.S. wouldn't be the first time social media influencers have had to forcibly abandon their large followings and move to unfamiliar platforms. India earlier this summer banned many Chinese apps, including TikTok, amid a dispute between the two countries. When Twitter Inc. effectively shut down Vine, a social-media app that allowed users to share short video clips, in 2016, many of the platform's biggest stars were forced to rebuild their followings on YouTube and Instagram.

Clash, co-founded by a former Vine creator, launched Friday night, hours after Mr. Trump expressed opposition to a TikTok sale and said he preferred to ban the app altogether.

Clash CEO Brendon McNerney said he was sitting on a plane in a Vine sweatshirt when he got the news that Twitter was shutting down the looping video app in 2016. So he feels the pain of TikTok creators who are now grappling with uncertainty about the fate of the social-media powerhouse.

"I actually saw the demise of Vine," Mr. McNerney said. "I remember how that rocked all my creator friends."

Clash has been paying creators to test its service, and has climbed U.S. iPhone app download rankings in the free photo and video app category, ranking No. 14 as of Monday, according to Sensor Tower data.

Instagram's Reels has offered some creators hundreds of thousands of dollars to use the coming feature, The Wall Street Journal previously reported.

TikTok users have been encouraging their followers to subscribe to their channels, sometimes newly created, on other platforms, with Instagram and YouTube appearing to be popular destinations, said Alessandro Bogliari, CEO of the Influencer Marketing Factory, a marketing agency that works with brands and social-media personalities.

But it isn't so simple. Many TikTok stars have just a fraction of the following on other platforms, and it may be tough for influencers to get their TikTok fans to follow them elsewhere.

"I don't know how they're going to get folks to jump," said Kena Peay, a cooking and hiking influencer who previously worked at Instagram.

Charli D'Amelio—one of TikTok's biggest stars, with 76 million followers—has increasingly been posting on Instagram, where she has a little more than 25 million followers, Mr. Subramanian said. Ms. D'Amelio, who declined to comment, also has about 320,000 followers on Triller.

Brittany Furlan, 33, a California-based comedian and actress with more than a million followers on TikTok, had millions of followers on Vine before leaving a few months ahead of the shutdown. She advised fellow TikTok users who may be forced to move to other platforms to not be discouraged.

"Just don't stop creating," Ms. Furlan said, and advised them to use as many other social media platforms "as you can to get your views and get people to see it and share it."