

Elon Musk could be China's pick to buy TikTok, report says

TikTokers could also flock to YouTube, which remains one of the most profitable platforms for creators on the planet. But that would surely rile some YouTube users who dislike YouTube Shorts clogging up the homepage.

Rather than move to a popular US app, however, many contrarian TikTokers are eyeing other Chinese-owned apps, including ByteDance-owned Lemon8. Both Lemon8 and an app owned by another Chinese company called Xiaohongshu—which Americans know as Red Note—reached the top two spots in Apple's App Store rankings Monday, Business Insider reported.

On Red Note, TikTokers are gathering under a hashtag, "TikTokrefugee," The New York Times reported. As of Tuesday, the hashtag had been viewed more than 100 million times and referenced in 2.5 million comments.

According to a Times review of TikTok videos, TikTokers said they were moving to Red Note because "they wanted to show they do not share Washington's concerns about TikTok's ties to China." But TikTokers could be in for a rude awakening if TikTok is banned and the Chinese-owned app they choose as their new home quickly becomes the next app to be blocked in the US within a few months.

Under the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act that would force TikTok's sale or require a ban, any "foreign adversary controlled" social media app with more than 1 million monthly active users could be

banned. ByteDance and TikTok are both singled out by the law, meaning any meaningful spike in US users on other ByteDance apps would likely trigger scrutiny.

It's unclear if Red Note would be as easily targeted by the government, but any Chinese-owned social media app that meets very basic requirements—allowing more than a million monthly active users to share content that can be viewed by others—could potentially be banned if the Supreme Court upholds the law.

An analyst at the market research company Emarketer, Jasmine Enberg, told The Independent that TikTokers recommending apps like Lemon8 “may not be aware of the possible implications for the other ByteDance apps because the law does not identify them.”

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/01/elon-musk-could-be-chinas-pick-to-buy-tiktok-report-says/>