

TikTok Ban Sparks 5000% Surge In Alternative App Searches via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

The recent TikTok ban drama in the U.S. has caused a surge in search activity as people look for answers, alternatives, and workarounds.

The app temporarily shut down over the weekend and was restored after President-elect Donald Trump announced a 90-day extension. This led to a notable rise in search interest.

An SEO consultant named Sobhi Smat compiled a collection of search data and shared it on LinkedIn.

Here's what the data shows about people's reactions and what it means for marketers.

The Context: TikTok's Uncertain Future

On January 17, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld PAFACA. The original deadline for compliance was January 19.

In response, on January 18, TikTok began shutting down its services in the U.S., removing the app from app stores and displaying service discontinuation notices.

On January 19, President-elect Donald Trump announced plans for a 90-day extension via executive order, allowing TikTok to restore operations while negotiations continue temporarily.

Search Behavior: Three Key Trends Emerge

Analysis of Google search data from January 1 to January 16 reveals three dominant categories of search behavior related to the TikTok ban:

1. **Staying Informed**
2. **Exploring Alternatives**
3. **Circumventing the Ban**

1. Staying Informed

One of the largest spikes in search activity was caused by people trying to understand the reasons behind the ban and stay informed about recent developments.

Queries like *"TikTok ban update," "Supreme Court ruling on TikTok,"* and *"Is the TikTok ban extended?"* saw a breakout, with search interest increasing by over 5000%.

2. Exploring TikTok Alternatives: A Battle for User Attention

As fears of TikTok's potential shutdown grew, people turned to Google to explore alternative platforms.

The search term *"TikTok alternatives"* saw explosive growth, alongside interest in specific apps such as RedNote, Lemon8, Clapper, and Fanbase.

RedNote: The Rising Star

Among alternatives, RedNote attracted the most attention, with breakout search terms like *"What is RedNote?"*, *"Is RedNote safe?"*, and *"TikTok vs RedNote"*.

However, RedNote's surge in popularity exposed its challenges,

particularly in delivering high-quality English-language content and addressing translation issues. This led to a related search spike for *“Chinese to English translation.”*

Other Notable Alternatives

Other apps like Lemon8, Clapper, and Fanbase also saw increased search interest:

- **Lemon8:** Questions included “What is the *Lemon8 app?*” and “*Will Lemon8 be banned, too?*”
- **Clapper:** Searches like “*what is Clapper social media?*” and “*is Clapper safe?*” highlighted curiosity about this lesser-known platform.
- **Fanbase:** Users searched for “*how to invest in Fanbase?*” and “*Isaac Hayes Fanbase app,*” showing interest in the app’s unique monetization features.

3. Circumventing the Ban

Another trend involved users searching for ways to continue accessing TikTok despite the shutdown.

Queries like “Can I use TikTok with VPN?” “How to change location on TikTok?” and “VPN for TikTok?” spiked dramatically.

The interest in VPNs shows TikTok’s user base is determined to bypass restrictions and maintain access to the platform.

Deletion Trends

While people explored TikTok replacements, search trends indicate they were quickly disappointed.

A spike in searches like “*how to delete RedNote account?*” and “*delete Lemon8 app?*” suggests that not all alternatives met user expectations.

Potential Buyers

Search trends also reflect public curiosity about potential U.S. buyers, with queries mentioning various high-profile figures, including Mr. Beast, Elon Musk, and even Dolly Parton.

This aligns with the legislative requirement for ByteDance to sell to a U.S. company or cease operations.

What This Means for Marketers

For digital marketers, current events show that relying on one platform is risky.

Marketers should monitor these developments closely whether TikTok is sold, banned, or granted an extension.

This situation is a reminder of how legislative actions can influence online behavior and disrupt the market.

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