



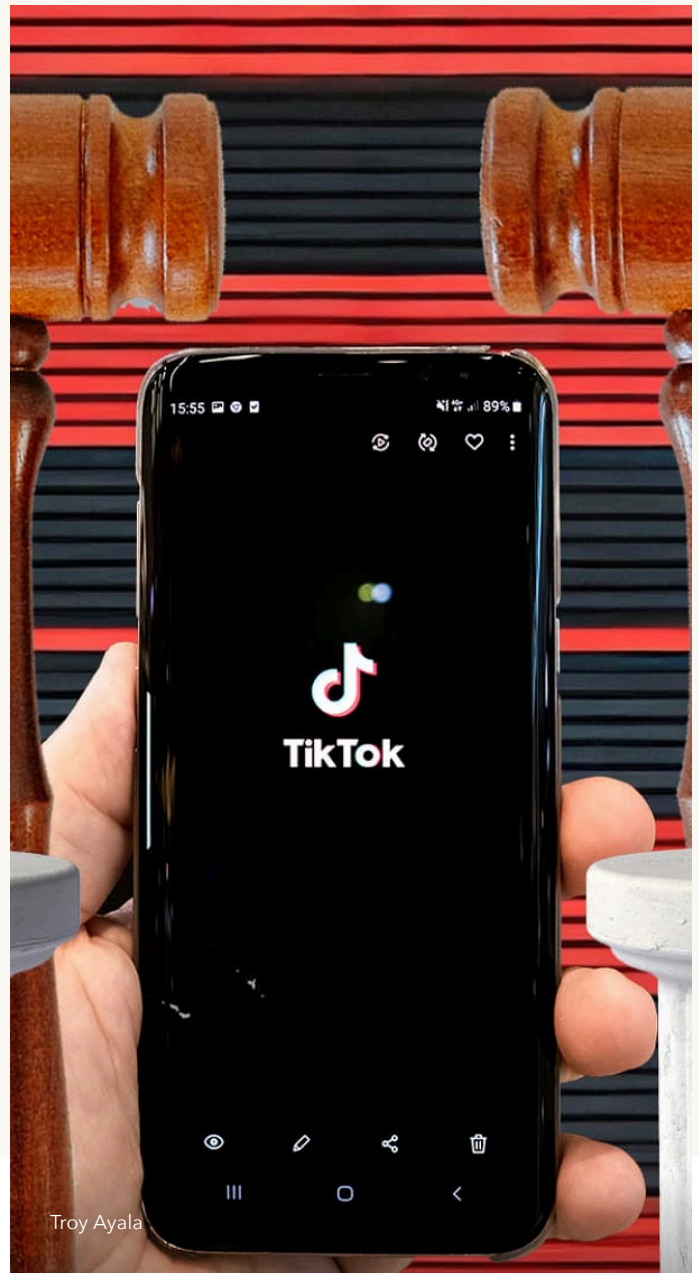
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## TIKTOK'S U-TURN: HOW BEAUTY BRANDS ARE NAVIGATING THE UNCERTAINTY

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After months of anticipation, the Supreme Court delivered its ruling on Friday, January 17, upholding the law mandating TikTok's sale or ban. TikTok and its China-based parent



company, ByteDance, had resisted US government demands to divest ownership of the widely popular short-form video app.

On Saturday night, one day before the US ban was supposed to take effect, TikTok abruptly stopped working earlier than expected. Users were met with a pop-up message that read: "A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now. We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned!"

Less than 12 hours later, the app roared back to life, this time with another pop message reading: "Welcome back!" Thanks for your patience and support. As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the US!"

"In agreement with our service providers, TikTok is in the process of restoring service," said TikTok in a statement on X. "We thank President Trump for providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans and allowing over 7 million small businesses to thrive. It's a strong stand for the First Amendment and against arbitrary censorship. We will work with President Trump on a long-term solution that keeps TikTok in the United States."

President Trump has previously suggested that he issue an executive order to pause the ban once he's sworn in, making TikTok's decision to restore services ahead of his inauguration at noon on Monday, January 20th, a surprising yet strategic move. Legal experts questioned whether he could use an executive order to override a law already passed in Congress. While Trump hasn't provided a timeline, he has said he wants to give his administration more time to work out a deal and is considering delaying the ban on Tiktok for another 90 days.

Despite TikTok's surprising return, the app has since disappeared from Apple and Google's app stores, which means that new users can't download the app, and the app can't receive important software updates to fix bugs. A law passed by Congress last year prohibits these companies from distributing or providing updates for TikTok. Violations carry fines of \$5,000 per American user, potentially totaling hundreds of billions of dollars. The law states the White House has to certify to Congress that a TikTok sale is in progress before it can pause the ban.

"I would like the United States to have a 50% ownership position in a joint venture," President Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. According to President Trump, the

executive order would specify there would be no liability for any company that helped keep TikTok from going dark before his order.

It's impossible to overstate TikTok's influence on the beauty industry. Since the app exploded in popularity in 2020, beauty brands have flourished on the platform, harnessing the power of influencers and user-generated content to boost product awareness and drive sales.

The future of TikTok remains uncertain. While the app is back online for now, a US ban is still possible if the conditions outlined in the law passed by Congress aren't met.

Given the uncertainty, brands must adapt their marketing strategies and find alternative platforms to engage their audience and drive sales. Options like Instagram and YouTube exist, but none offer the same viral potential and content discovery as TikTok. Influencers must also find new ways to connect with followers and maintain income.

Charlotte Palermino, co-founder and Chief Brand Officer of Dieux, notes that before TikTok, a social graph interaction—like following someone—was required for content to appear in feeds.

"Ultimately, what TikTok showed us is that humans are pretty bad at deciding what they actually want to see," says Palermino. "This is why time spent on the app is astronomical."

The potential ban leaves a significant gap in marketing strategies, particularly for creators. "My main concern is how new and very nascent brands break through the noise," Palermino explains.

While many brands couldn't have foreseen a TikTok ban before 2023, Palermino emphasizes the importance of diversifying platforms. "You can't ever put your eggs in one algorithmic basket," she says. "Community building across multiple platforms, including owned channels like email, is critical to sustained growth."

Gabrielle Requena, founder and CEO of Wrinkles Schminkles, would be disappointed to see the app disappear. The brand's silicone wrinkle patches became popular on TikTok, with users posting videos showing how the patches reduced the appearance of forehead lines.

“For all beauty brands who have worked hard to find their sweet spot on TikTok and deliver authentically entertaining content to their customers, this will be a difficult channel to replace—especially if there is an immediate ban rather than a notice period,” says Requena.

Wrinkles Schminkles plans to limit the impact on its business by focusing on first-party-owned data and continuing its multichannel approach to social. The brand is exploring new marketplaces, platforms, apps, and even revisiting the not-so-shiny world of affiliate marketing, which has come a long way since we all diverted our attention to these more shiny and highly viral channels.

“We are fortunate in that we have built a robust email list of customers who are highly engaged, and we continue to be able to acquire customers through off TikTok advertising at costs below our average order value,” says Requena. “More specifically, repurposing video content for Instagram reels and taking YouTube shorts more seriously is an area of focus for us.

“The impact of TikTok has made it America’s top entertainment channel and now the fifth largest beauty retailer in America.”

**BY LESLIE ANN HALL, CEO + FOUNDER, ICED MEDIA**

TikTok-viral brand The Beachwaver Co. thrived on the platform, selling more than one million products on the app. Sarah Potempa, CEO and co-founder of The Beachwaver Co., remains optimistic about the brand’s future off the app.

“We have loved having the opportunity to test the platform's innovations and to have built such an amazing, fun, enthusiastic following there,” says Potempa. “This ‘ban’ will just

give us the opportunity to refocus on our other incredible platforms and connect with even more incredible brand fans.”

Potempa says the brand has never relied solely on a single platform for outreach, so it will just be shifting the attention it gives to TikTok to other platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest.

“We always try to build solid relationships with our audiences, which will hopefully encourage those that have found us through TikTok to follow us on other platforms,” she says. “Our community is super important to us, and with that, we will always try to find each other and connect.”

Fiona Co Chan, CEO and founder of Youthforia, built the beginnings of her brand on TikTok in 2020, sharing everything from the product development process to what it was like to go on [Shark Tank](#).

“In the last four years, the beauty industry's trends and microtrends were driven by TikTok culture and influencers,” says Co Chan. “While I don't think short form content will go away anytime soon, there was something really special about the TikTok For You Page (FYP) algorithm for as a consumer of FYP content, and that'll be hard to replicate on other platforms.”

Co Chan is confident that Youthforia will find other platforms to share its unique brand story and connect with its community. “Each social platform has its own culture and inside jokes, so we'll amend our content to that,” she says.

Nathan Jun Poekert, Chief Marketing Officer of General Idea, a brand agency, has spent the past few weeks speaking with TikTok creators who rely on the platform as their primary source of income. Many of these creators have spent the last six months branching out to other channels like YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram, but the transition has been slow—especially for those with smaller followings under a million on TikTok.

“For written format publishing, Substack has been the most attractive platform for creators, with its built-in monetization tools, but in this realm, there is a large challenge that exists: most TikTok creators are only confident in one type of content creation, and the ROI is drastically lower than on TikTok if you are part of the affiliate or creator rewards program,” says Poekert.

According to Poekert, several creators are considering reentering the professional workforce after the ban goes into effect “rather than facing the daunting challenge of trying to rebuild from scratch.”

Leslie Ann Hall, CEO and founder of Iced Media, a performance marketing agency specializing in beauty brands, describes the TikTok ruling as a “huge blow” to both brands and the beauty industry at large. Iced Media, a TikTok Marketing Partner, manages tens of millions of dollars in ad spend and leverages TikTok’s advertising tools to drive sales through e-commerce and retail channels like Sephora, Ulta Beauty, and Amazon.

“The impact of TikTok has made it America’s top entertainment channel and now the fifth largest beauty retailer in America,” says Hall. “Beauty trends born on TikTok like #tomatogirl, #mobwife, #jellydonut, and #slugging create excitement and drive real business growth in our industry—not just on TikTok but across all beauty sales channels that benefit from this phenomenon.”

Iced Media is also a TikTok Shop Partner, scaling dozens of beauty brands, including Anastasia Beverly Hills, Saie, Glow Recipe, and Moroccanoil. Hall notes that some clients earn over \$1 million each month through TikTok Shop sales. “That may all go away,” she admits.

Beauty consumers will also be affected by the ban. “For beauty customers, TikTok is unmatched as a discovery platform for trends and new products,” says Hall. “Its absence leaves a gaping hole for brands that depend on TikTok’s algorithm to reach new, qualified customers at scale.”

However, Hall emphasizes that Iced Media has always taken a holistic approach to social media strategies, ensuring clients don’t rely too heavily on any one platform. “Diversified brands are better positioned to hedge against the disruption of any single channel,” she explains.

In response to the potential ban, Iced Media is actively helping clients minimize its impact by recommending tailored pivots based on each brand’s business goals.

“We are bullish on the social shopping, affiliate, and ad product roadmaps of [platforms like] Instagram, YouTube, Snap, and Pinterest, especially as some offer big incentives during this time of uncertainty,” says Hall. “While those platforms may lack the discovery

and robust shopping ecosystem that is unique to TikTok, they do offer real business solutions that will soften the business impact for our clients.”

Experts also suggest that building direct-to-consumer relationships through email campaigns and investing in blogs, websites, and other branded apps can provide a controlled environment for consumer interaction and help brands maintain engagement outside of social media, although initial difficulty is bound to surface.

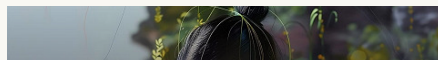
“TikTok has been known for creating a “see it, click it, buy it” experience for consumers that other social channels struggle to achieve. If the app is banned, influencers must tap into their social followings on other channels but will likely struggle to see the same sales performance as they did on TikTok Shop,” says Alex Nisenzon, CEO of Charm.io, an e-commerce intelligence platform.

With the future of TikTok still uncertain, “it’s likely we’ll see other platforms feel the pressure to pick up the slack and replicate the TikTok experience,” says Nisenzon.

While TikTok’s influence on the beauty industry is undeniable, its future is unclear. The ban may be lifted in the future if ByteDance decides to sell, which TikTok has said is unlikely, arguing that China would bar the export of ByteDance’s algorithm.

Brands must balance short-term gains with long-term resilience by adopting multichannel strategies, prioritizing authenticity, and preparing for potential platform disruptions. Whether TikTok remains a dominant force or becomes a case study in digital disruption, its impact on the beauty industry will be remembered as a pivotal chapter in the evolution of modern marketing.

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