

YouTube Shorts' biggest strength is its creators

Article

YouTube has begun **rolling out** its TikTok competitor Shorts in the US after a successful few months of testing in India. Shorts is still in beta, however, and is somewhat limited: Users can shoot videos and scroll through an endless, algorithmically-driven feed, but so far, there are no collaborative options like TikTok's duet or stitch features, and the search functionality is lacking. YouTube likely felt pressure to roll out quickly to capture the excitement around short videos, which could explain the lack of features.

However, a few creator-focused perks could help Shorts stand out in an increasingly-crowded market.

- Subscriptions are shared across the entire YouTube ecosystem: If a user subscribes to a creator on Shorts, they're also subscribed to that creator's long-form content, so it could be an effective funnel to that creator's more lucrative main channel. Focusing on existing creators partly helped Instagram's Reels succeed—influencers on the platform **realized** that Reels was a great way to expose their account to a wider audience, which served to draw those influencers to Reels instead of TikTok. Sharing subscriptions between Shorts and main channels will give Shorts a similar draw. Plus, YouTube also said it plans to introduce more monetization features native to Shorts.
- YouTube can also offer creators a lot more freedom than other platforms due to its longstanding agreements with music labels and huge library of existing user-generated content. Creators will be able to choose from more than 250 music labels' sounds without worrying about copyright claims. And the platform plans to eventually let users remix sounds from any YouTube video into a Shorts video. This gives creators more options and helps them repurpose or bump up some of their older content.

Shorts will likely occupy a different niche more focused on diversifying YouTube's content mix, rather than encouraging average users to create innovative content—but that's not a bad thing. Part of TikTok's appeal is in its inherent promise that anyone can go viral. It's always encouraged participation from regular users, rolling out collaboration tools like its duet feature before it even had ads, let alone creator monetization. YouTube, meanwhile, has clearly hinged a lot of its strategy on its existing base of larger content creators. That could be a good strategic move—people are already used to watching their favorite creators on YouTube, rather than making videos themselves. Leaning into that strength could help Shorts succeed long term and differentiate itself enough to be more than just another TikTok clone.

*For more on YouTube Shorts, TikTok, and the wider short-form video ecosystem, read our recent report, **"The US Short Video Landscape: What Marketers Should Know About TikTok, Instagram Reels, and 4 Other Players in This Fast-Changing Space."***