RedNote revolution: TikTok's US ban sparks Mandarin boom on Duolingo

Article

The news: **Duolingo** reported a 216% increase in US users learning Mandarin Chinese compared with last year. This surge coincides with the sudden spike in downloads of

RedNote, a Chinese social media app, as US **TikTok** users prepare for the ban that's set to take place this weekend.

- US users flocking to Duolingo are overcoming language barriers by taking on one of the most difficult languages for English speakers to learn.

- **Duolingo's marketing targeting "TikTok refugees" has successfully engaged younger users**. The 18- to 24-year-old demographic made up the largest group of Duolingo users in November 2024, per Similarweb.

RedNote revolution: RedNote, which gained over 700,000 US downloads in just two days, per Reuters, is shaping up to be the winner of TikTok's proposed US ban. It continues to be the most downloaded free app on the US **Apple App Store** and on **Google Play** this week, per Appfigures.

The shift to RedNote has created unexpected cultural exchanges.

- RedNote's English interface hosts mostly Chinese content, prompting **US users to learn the language to engage and contribute more**.

- Meanwhile, **Chinese users are picking up TikTok slang**.

This blending of communities demonstrates an **overwhelming preference for social apps with TikTok-like engagement**.

Safety and security fall by the wayside: Despite the enthusiasm for RedNote, questions remain about data privacy, data sovereignty, and effects on minors, which are key reasons behind the impending TikTok ban.

- RedNote, owned by Shanghai-based **Xiaohongshu** ("Little Red Book" in English), raises the same concerns that led to TikTok's ban, including whether it will hand US user data to Beijing.

- The sudden RedNote migration shows **many US users are willing to overlook these risks for a familiar social media experience**.

Our take: The overwhelming popularity of RedNote is creating a ripple effect of engagement on Duolingo, indicating that **social media users are willing to overcome language barriers to migrate to a new service**.

This development could undermine US security efforts and challenge regulators to go after alternative social media platforms. A whack-a-mole approach to regulating social media could be ineffective as TikTok alternatives arise.

This article is part of EMARKETER's client-only subscription Briefings—daily newsletters authored by industry analysts who are experts in marketing, advertising, media, and tech trends. To help you finish 2024 strong, and start 2025 off on the right foot, articles like this one—delivering the latest news and insights—are completely free through January 31, 2025. If you want to learn how to get insights like these delivered to your inbox every day, and get access to our data-driven forecasts, reports, and industry benchmarks, schedule a demo with our sales team.