

TikTok spends on lobbyists and marketing to counteract US ban

Article

The news: The US Department of Justice called TikTok's data collection practices a national security threat in response to the platform's [lawsuit attempting to block an impending US ban](#). The agency contends the Chinese government could compel the app to share sensitive information, according to court filings.

TikTok and its parent, ByteDance, who sued saying the ban violates the First Amendment, said in a statement on X that “we remain confident we will prevail in court.” The DOJ argued in its filings that the First Amendment does not protect collection of data by foreign powers.

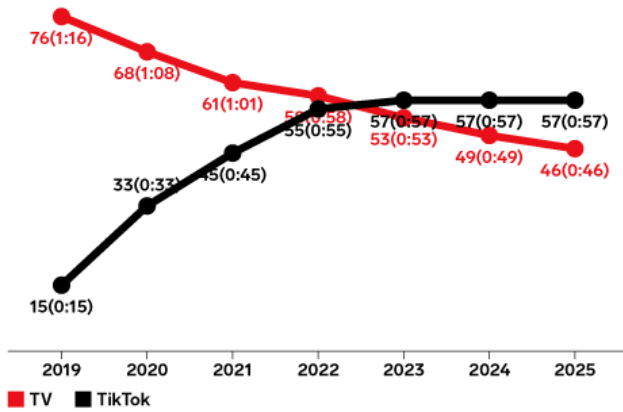
Politicking: There is no date set for TikTok’s suit against the US government, but the company is trying to influence public policy and opinion in its favor.

- TikTok is employing lobbyists in hopes of softening Washington’s stance on the short-form video app, according to Bloomberg, and is spending as much as \$1,500 per hour on lawyers in preparation for its court battle.
- But while it lobbies behind closed doors, TikTok is also spending \$4.8 million on an ad campaign that aims to sway public opinion about the service, which is heavily used by young consumers but has attracted negative attention for its potential impact on minors.
- TikTok’s ad campaign, which sometimes uses the slogan “TikTok changed my life,” focuses on the app’s effect on small businesses, veterans, and more to show that the app has positively contributed to American lives and business.
- Though the app is criticized by politicians, the now-defunct Biden presidential campaign and subsequent Harris campaign both increased their presence on the app as a way to reach young voters.

Our take: Regardless of the outcome of the US presidential election, TikTok will still have its day in court given bipartisan lawmaker support for restrictions on the app. A protracted legal battle will help TikTok stave off a ban for some time, but there are signs that some marketers are [testing the waters of other short-form platforms](#).

Average Time Spent per Day With TV vs. TikTok by US Adults*, 2019-2025

hrs:mins



Note: TV includes live, DVR, and other prerecorded video (such as video downloaded from the internet but saved locally); includes all time spent watching TV; excludes digital; TikTok includes all time spent on TikTok; includes usage via any device; *ages 18-24
Source: EMARKETER Forecast, June 2024

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