

From fact-checking to women's rights: TikTok's promising rise in the Global South | Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

By Laura Oliver

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Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was TikTok's year. The app reportedly added 181 million monthly active users from December 2019 to July 2020 taking its total to 689 million. The growth didn't just happen in its native China: the proportion of global internet users aged 16-64 who used it grew from 11% in 2019 to 18% in 2020.

Although it's not the primary social network for most audiences, TikTok's popularity is growing in the Global South. Downloads in Southeast Asia reached 360 million in 2020, with 151% growth year-on-year. In Mexico, Brazil and Argentina downloads skyrocketed by July 2020 to 64.4 million. They were only 5 million a year before.

Journalists and newsrooms are looking to take advantage of this growth too. With its highly creative visuals and typically younger demographic, Tiktok offers newsrooms a chance to connect with the next generation of audiences and to pioneer new formats, while trying to understand how information (and misinformation) travels today. Outlets in Brazil and Nicaragua are just a year or less into their TikTok experiments, while AFP has expanded its fact-checking services to the platform in Asia-Pacific.

[...]

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