

# Clubhouse: A popular audio social application

Binhe Zhu

Communication, Culture, Technology, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20057, US, 1103558596@qq.com

## ABSTRACT

With the outbreak of COVID-19, most people have been quarantined at home for more than a year. Social life is limited by the restrict on travel. The explosion of the Clubhouse has greatly relieved people's social pressure at home. This paper makes a simple analysis of the opinions of young people in their 20s about Clubhouse and the operation mode of Clubhouse and the future development of the Clubhouse is simply predicted.

**Keywords:** Clubhouse, Mental Health, Social Media Communication.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the rise of live-streaming and short video platforms, social networks have gradually penetrated all aspects of people's lives. This paper will analyze the reasons that Clubhouse, an emerging social, platform becomes popular among young people by comparing it with other social media. This paper mainly introduces the origin of Clubhouse. In what way does Clubhouse help people to communicate and open up a social circle? Clubhouse's popularity is directly related to the epidemic. With the rise of live-streaming and short video platforms, social networks have gradually penetrated all aspects of people's lives. This paper will analyze Club House, an emerging social platform. Compared with other social media, the reasons that Club House can become popular among young people are analyzed.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the beginning of the epidemic, the needs for online office and socialization have increased greatly. In this context, Clubhouse has become the most popular social application. A voice-mediated social networking app, Clubhouse, was launched in March 2020 and is seen as the "audio Twitter" of the industry. The Clubhouse has a group of high-quality "invite-only" audiences of politicians, venture capitalists, professors, filmmakers, artists, and engineers. As influencer marketing mentions, it was these high-quality users who first entered the Clubhouse app. With constant invitations, users feel it is "niche" and popular [1]. As a result, more users prefer to spend more time on Clubhouse. In addition, users can share information in real-time through a short conversation, which is much closer than posting comments on Twitter or Facebook [2]. When users enter

a live room, they find a "decentralized" room where everyone can talk and follow each other. Socialization begins when they click into the room.

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on psychosocial outcomes due to increased isolation, economic unpredictability, and overall stress. The latest data of the COVID-19 pandemic indicates that anxiety among Canadians increased from 5% to 20% and depression increased from 4% to 10% [3]. In addition, it was reported that 33% of participants had limited access to mental health support, and 27% reported a decrease in the quality of support [3]. Studies have found that those with pre-existing mental health issues are particularly vulnerable during an influenza pandemic due to barriers to accessing to healthcare, such as discrimination, access to information, and service closures [4].

Additionally, the additional stress of COVID-19 can exacerbate pre-existing conditions due to higher stress levels, which is particularly salient for individuals with psychiatric symptoms [5]. This is notable because many club members perceive themselves to have serious mental illnesses, including psychotic spectrum disorders [6]. Clubhouse nicely bridges the social gap that people lack due to the epidemic. Clubhouse allows people to express themselves only through their voices rather than focus on their appearance. While socializing is done through voice, new friends can be made by the introduction of friends. The paper will analyze from three aspects, these are What is Clubhouse? The differences among Clubhouse and other social media, and Clubhouse's development in the future.

### 3. METHODS

This study adopts questionnaire survey. The research was intentionally conducted through social media, email, etc. The MAGE was 25.71 years old, and SD was 2.53 years old. Most of the participants were Chinese students who had lived in the UK or the US for many years and native Americans, including workers and college students who were entering the workforce. They represented a diverse racial group (25.3 percent of whites, 50.9 percent of Asians, 10.1 percent of blacks, and 13.5 percent of others). In the questionnaire, young people's online time, primary interest points, and views on different applications were investigated.

In this part, a questionnaire is necessary. The questionnaire will set a couple of demographic questions (age, gender, perhaps geography).

#### Questionnaire as follow:

What are your favorite social apps on a daily basis?

Twitter

Clubhouse

Facebook

Instagrams

Wechat

Tiktok

Do you use Clubhouse?

Yes

No

How long have you used Clubhouse?

Less than 1 month

1 ~ 3 months

3 ~ 6 months

6 ~ 12 months

Over 12 months

On average, how many hours do you spend on Clubhouse every week ?

Less than 5 hours

5 to 10 hours

10 to 15 hours

15 to 20 hours

Over 20 hours

What do you usually do in a clubhouse room?

Entertainment

Get information

Socialization and Communication

Profit behavior

Your level of participation in using Clubhouse

Look around rooms and listen

Often opens a room

Often interacts with others in rooms

Interact only when you mention what you're interested in

What is your favorite clubhouse room to share

Celebrity share

Professional knowledge

entertainment

Social chat

other

Does Clubhouse have impact on your normal life?

Almost no effect

A relatively small impact

Not sure

A relatively large impact

Great impact

Does Clubhouse affect your communication with your family and friends?

Yes, it strengthens communication

Yes, it reduces communication

No, it doesn't

How old are you?

Under 20

20 - 22 years old

22 - 24 years old

More than 25 years old

What is your gender?

Male

Female

What is your status ?

Office worker

Undergraduate student

Graduate student

PHD

#### 4. FINDINGS

As a social software that can only perform synchronous voice communication, Clubhouse was developed by Paul Davidson and Rohan Seth from Silicon Valley in March 2020. Since social software has already passed the explosive growth stage, neither the voice platform based on sound transmission nor the content platform based on "ear economy" is new. Therefore, many people wonder why this software with such simple functions is so popular.

As the pandemic has not been controlled, yet, the day that the global quarantine is unblocked seems a light-year away. Isolation at home or being required to distance or isolate themselves socially for a long time has increased people's feelings of loneliness. Besides, people have an excess of energy yet lack synchronous social networking channels. Although there are some social products such as Twitter, Facebook, WeChat, etc. Most of them are in asynchronous communication. The "message" - "message back" asynchronous communication cannot bring people a strong feeling of presence and have much difference with offline and face-to-face social interaction. However, Clubhouse provide people with the chance to achieve their "social dreams" during the coronavirus outbreak. The synchronous message in Clubhouse gives people an on-site experience and connects people worldwide in a wide range of fields.

In Clubhouse, users not only can enter the room they are interested in to discuss topics, but also can act as the organizer of topics and the opener of rooms. Each user can select three identities: Moderator, Speaker, and Listener. In conversation, Clubhouse is not limited by time and space. People who have been living at home for a long time have a new social place. Clubhouse is a suitable medium for users to communicate with family and friends, as well as to make new friends.

In addition, Clubhouse an invitation system rather than a system that everyone has access to. This system is similar to the traditional elite Clubhouse. Both of them adopt a top-down system that allows the invitation code to be passed down level by some entrepreneurs, investors, celebrities, and experts. However, there are also some difference between it with traditional Clubhouse. For example, users do not need to provide some necessary documentations like bank certificates, in other words, everyone can use Clubhouse with an invitation code. Therefore, by the comparison with traditional Clubhouse and the analysis of Clubhouse's features, Clubhouse may be summarized as a sociotechnical system for creating a connection between elites and the public, in which the public represents general users and the elite represents celebrities and experts.

As a growing number of celebrities are joining in, it is unknown that how much this system will be changed and reconstructed, but no doubt, some registered users

have already learned something from Clubhouse. With various topics in Clubhouse, users from different classes or fields have access to the information they want. It is expected that Clubhouse will become the next big knowledge-sharing platform.

The most significant difference between Clubhouse and mainstream social media today is that it is an audio social app. Clubhouse allows people to abandon their polished appearance. Users use sound to learn what they are looking for. Voice-based social media platforms are not new. As early as 2004, YY, a Chinese social network, provided a live audio sharing application in the game industry and became the game voice communication platform in China. With the rise of podcasts, audio-sharing products have attracted the attention of a large amount of users and investors. A significant characteristic of Clubhouse is that it does not allow any texting, users can only choose to enter a room as a speaker or audience. The clubhouse does not have a text or live commenting function - it allows synchronous chat. All registered users can create a room and become a moderator.

Unlike TikTok, Clubhouse offers the same experience for all users. TikTok only start streaming when followers have reached a specific number. While Clubhouse allows anyone to unlock their room. In decentralization, Clubhouse is also very successful. The person who starts the room is not necessarily the person who dominates it. Everyone has an equal right to talk.

Different from mainstream social media in which people show lives through pictures and videos to achieve a common social purpose, Clubhouse skips the sharing of daily life based on protecting everyone's privacy so that each user can communicate with others more directly and efficiently. As we know, some celebrities' lives are disturbed because their locations were found out through the pics they share on Weibo or Twitter. But Clubhouse solves the problem well through not revealing users' lives. By doing so, users can find a sense of security in it.

In addition, other software is available at will to apply for an account. The invitation system in Clubhouse stands out. People pay for invitations, because, as a social animal, it is essential to gain "identity" and "a sense of community," regardless of westerners or Chinese they are. However, invitation-based products, whether online or offline clubs or membership experience consumption, arouse people's urgent need for identity and peer attraction -- to be recognized by others, and also to find and become a member of a peer group whose economic strength, social status and interests match their own. Clubhouse captures this characteristic of people and helps them feel a sense of belonging when they join the app. When using it, users enter a room through others' recommendation, so as to increase the room heat. Users also have a good experience with the app.

In the questionnaire, 58 percent subjects use social media for more than two hours daily. The daily usage of Clubhouse is even more than other social apps such as Instagram. Thus, it can be seen that Clubhouse provides opportunities for people isolated at home to communicate to a large extent. Increased isolation, financial unpredictability, and overall stress caused by COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on psychosocial health. Due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, individuals surveyed experienced increases in mental health symptoms, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness.

There is no denying that social networking is more popular than ever. The Clubhouse app can function as a type of psychosocial rehabilitation that provides individuals with mental health concerns to engage within their communities through various exciting topics. Users can choose topics they are interested in the Clubhouse app and chat about them with other users in the room. Those who act as a role of speaker in the room share their opinions or thoughts with other users, including other speakers and audience members. At the same time, audience members may develop other ideas and be ready to raise their hands to speak. Therefore, this new form of communication makes a connection among people.

As a speaker and certified trauma recovery coach, Will Wissmiller said, "The superpower of Clubhouse lies in its ability that allows humans to be emotionally naked and to support and help each other to obtain growth. "Indeed, words alone have the power to give and take in life, so it definitely can help people in this way. Finally, Clubhouse, as a medium or platform, has provided users a chance to express their emotions and rehabilitate their mental health, and users, as a kind of productivity, have provided topics and contents to Clubhouse, so as to form a loop.

Clubhouse's introduction to the public came in March, 2020, meaning the app's humble beginnings will always be intertwined with the COVID-19 pandemic. People have talked about various reasons that this app gained popularity. The mass shutdowns of public spaces across the world drove up demand for informal avenues of interacting beyond what was already available. People saw Zoom have a massive boom in business at the beginning of the pandemic, but Clubhouse provided something different. There is not as much of a commitment to interact when communication is audio-only. One can take their phone with them on a walk or have it on while doing chores. The app better simulates informal friendly interactions.

The pandemic will end eventually. Once it does, where does Clubhouse go? Is the app strong enough to hold its own? Twitter has launched a competitive software called Twitter Spaces, which allows audio chatting. Slack has expressed interest in doing the same. Discord, which is used often in the gaming community,

has always had an audio chat function. Because Clubhouse is riding a wave of hype from its forced exclusivity (the app is in Beta and is only available through invitation, and only to Apple users) in addition to an increase in interest due to social distancing measures, it is likely that interest will severely plummet once the app is open to all users and the pandemic is over. However, there is a big possibility that the live audio chat format is here to stay. It is a question of whether Clubhouse itself will maintain its status as the top app for the format, or if another app will use the idea and execute it better, similar to how Instagram has integrated Snapchat's "Story" feature seamlessly into its own app.

Clubhouse is also shifting the monetization of social media from a visual economy to an auditory economy. Clubhouse will set up charge rooms for different professional courses to realize the conversion of audience currency in the future. The room not only meets the audience's high standards of professional accuracy. Due to the uniquely interactive nature of Clubhouse, the audience can also ask questions and solve them in time. For instance, Clubhouse said that it will launch "first test" around each of the three areas it mentions (tipping, tickets, and subscriptions) over the "next few months." [7] In addition, the entry and joining of related brands can also achieve a certain degree of currency conversion. Clubhouse provides convenience for corresponding brands to enter. Clubhouse helps enterprises enhance brand awareness and continuously conveys new directions of entertainment to the audience.

In addition, the unique nature of Clubhouse is a constant incentive for everyone who joins the room to get involved in the discussion. The audience will also learn about new information in the room and pass it on. In this way, a sustainable development of Clubhouse's platform can be realized. While realizing economic realization, Clubhouse can also get sustainable development in new social forms.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In a word, no matter how Clubhouse develops, its idea that encourages users to socialize and share with strangers is valuable. It is often said that new media has given ordinary people a platform to learn and show themselves, which increases Dunbar's number for individuals. However, after long-term use of various social softwares, people still live in an "uploading" relation rather than a "downloading" relation. The world is constantly globalizing, but some users are constantly being layered. It seems that there is no way to break the social barrier. After the emergence of Clubhouse, we know a growing number of people desire freedom because we can hear sincere expressions from users, and we can get more valuable opinions from others. Clubhouse truly breaks the boundaries between the private and the public domain and creates a small society.



Whether Clubhouse will become the next social media giant or not, it is expected that the public's independent perspective can be expressed everywhere.

Clubhouse was introduced as an audio social application in 2020. At present, there are few cases for reference to analyze Clubhouse's future development. Most of the mainstream social media is visual. In many cases, there is no comparison between Clubhouse and other social media. So it is not very well analyzed in Clubhouse. In addition, because only 50 samples was studied and the subjects were generally aged 22 to 25, the results of the survey are not universally applicable.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Chung-Wha (Chloe) Ki, Leslie M. Cuevas, Sze Man Chong, Heejin Lim, (2021) Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102133>.
- [2] Radcliffe, Damian, Audio Chatrooms like Clubhouse Have Become the Hot New Media by Tapping into the Age-Old Appeal of the Human Voice (February 25, 2021). *The Conversation* 2021, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3796686>
- [3] Liselot Hudders, Steffi De Jans & Marijke De Veirman (2020) The commercialization of social media stars: a literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers, *International Journal of Advertising*, DOI: [10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925](https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925) Biegel, D.E., Pernice-Duca, F., Chang, CW. *et al.* (2013) Correlates of Peer Support in a Clubhouse Setting. *Community Ment Health J* 49, 249–259. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-012-9502-5>
- [4] Kristine J. Ajrouch, Toni C. Antonucci, Mary R. Janevic, (2021) Social Networks Among Blacks and Whites: The Interaction Between Race and Age, *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, Volume 56, Issue 2, 1 March 2001, Pages S112–S118, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/56.2.S112>
- [5] Strielkowski, W. (2021) The Clubhouse Phenomenon: Do We Need Another Social Network?. Preprints 2021, 2021030503 (doi: 10.20944/preprints202103.0503.v1).
- [6] Biegel, D.E., Pernice-Duca, F., Chang, CW. *et al.* (2013) Correlates of Peer Support in a Clubhouse Setting. *Community Ment Health J* 49, 249–259. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-012-9502-5>
- [7] Etherington, Darrell. (2021) Clubhouse announces plans for creator payments and raises new funding led by Andreessen Horowitz, January 2021 <https://cutt.ly/ubvozR0>
- [8] Berry N, Lobban F, Belousov M, Emsley R, Nenadic G, Bucci S. (2017) WhyWeTweetMH: Understanding Why People Use Twitter to Discuss Mental Health Problems. *J Med Internet Res* 2017. <https://www.jmir.org/2017/4/e107>
- [9] McDonald, Jason. (2021) Social Media Marketing Workbook. *JM Internet Group*. <https://www.jm-seo.org/>
- [10] Mutschler, C., Junaid, S., McShane, K. *et al.* (2021) Clubhouses Response to COVID-19: Member Challenges and Clubhouse Adaptations. *Community Ment Health J* 57, 424–437. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-020-00753-x>