

CONVERSATIONS THAT CONNECT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CLUBHOUSE USE AND MOTIVATIONS

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Abstract

The rise of audio-based social platforms has transformed how individuals interact, network, and share information in real time. One of the most notable of these is Clubhouse, a drop-in voice conversation app that gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic. While originally marketed as a space for casual socializing, Clubhouse has evolved into a dynamic venue for professional discourse, collaborative learning, and community engagement (Chen et al., 2022). Functioning as an audio-based social media platform, Clubhouse enables users to engage in real-time voice conversations in virtual rooms, fostering spontaneous and meaningful interactions akin to a live podcast or networking event. Its unique format offers a sense of exclusivity through its initial invite-only model and appeals to users seeking immediate, authentic social exchange beyond traditional text or video platforms until today. This paper explores the core motivations driving users to participate on Clubhouse, including the desire for social belonging, access to diverse perspectives, opportunities for learning, and engagement with people from various backgrounds. Past research highlights how Clubhouse's exclusivity and surprise elements enhance user engagement while fostering strong community bonds (Hult et al., 2021). Furthermore, the voice-centered nature of Clubhouse significantly influences how users communicate and build social connections, differentiating it from other social media platforms (Carroll et al., 2021). This paper highlights how Clubhouse redefines social networking by emphasizing voice as a medium for connection, self-expression, and community building in the digital age.

Keywords: *Clubhouse, audio-based social platform, real-time voice conversations, user motivations, social networking*

The emergence of audio-based social networking platforms represents a transformative phase in digital communication. Clubhouse, launched in 2020, pioneered real-time, voice-led social interaction, setting it apart from asynchronous text-based platforms like Twitter and forums. Unlike traditional text-based platforms, Clubhouse facilitates spontaneous yet substantive professional discourse, collaborative knowledge sharing, and community engagement, foregrounding human voice as the core medium (Darda et al., 2025). This facilitates credibility building, cooperative learning, and cohesion among diverse professional communities. While challenges in accessibility and information verification persist, Clubhouse's flexibility offers new possibilities for digital professionalization and empowered online communities. This paper investigates how Clubhouse's design and social dynamics promote three intersecting domains: professional communication, cooperative learning, and psychosocial empowerment.

Unlike curated text profiles and posts, the oral modality of Clubhouse enables authentic, unscripted dialogue with immediate feedback, building trust and professional credibility in ways distinct from conventional social media (Xiao, Wang, & Wei, 2022). Furthermore, Clubhouse draws inspiration from mental health clubhouse models emphasizing partnership, inclusivity, and peer support (Staples & Stein, 2008). Translated into a digital space, this ethos fosters empowering learning environments and belonging within professional communities.

Clubhouse's signature feature—the live, voice-only discussions—creates a communicative environment characterized by spontaneity, presence, and authenticity. Unlike text-based exchanges that allow for careful editing and delayed responses, voice interaction reduces performative curation and invites more nuanced, immediate dialogue (Darda et al., 2025). This oral immediacy fosters serendipitous encounters, enabling professionals to join dynamic conversations led by domain experts, thought leaders, and influencers, which might otherwise be difficult to access.

Clubhouse extends beyond casual socializing to offer robust opportunities for professional development. It provides a venue for knowledge dissemination, identity formation, and networking essential in contemporary work and education ecosystems (Rollings, 2022). Particularly for marginalized groups, the platform supports recovery-oriented growth by fostering autonomy, self-confidence, and agency (McKay, 2024; Chen & Oh, 2019). Participation links individuals to employment, educational, and social integration opportunities, demonstrating the platform's socio-economic impact. Professional credibility on Clubhouse arises through a dual mechanism combining curated self-presentation and live oral performance. Users construct profiles highlighting qualifications, affiliations, and expertise, visually signalling their professional identity and establishing legitimacy (Xiao, Wang, & Wei,

2022). During live conversations, voice projects authority, personality, and accountability, reinforcing trustworthiness.

The live format supports back-and-forth exchanges and rapid clarification, enhancing the quality and depth of professional discourse. It also humanizes interlocutors through tone and inflection, fostering relational trust typically diminished in text environments. This synchronous modality emphasizes real-time engagement and responsiveness, vital for building conversational authenticity and mutual understanding in professional settings. The platform's conversational nature displaces monologic broadcasting, favoring dialogic exchanges where expertise is demonstrated interactively rather than merely declared. This dynamic allows professionals to substantiate claims, respond to critique, and co-construct knowledge, which enhances persuasive power and credibility. Similar to other social media platforms, motivations such as knowledge acquisition and personal gain strongly influence participation (Oh & Syn, 2015). Users are therefore drawn to Clubhouse not only for social interaction but also for intellectual enrichment and the pursuit of new insights. The integration of written biography and live voice thus creates layered professional legitimacy; blending asynchronous identity cues with synchronous communicative authenticity.

The foundational ethos of Clubhouse draws on mental health clubhouse models emphasizing consumer-provider partnership in recovery-oriented, peer-supported environments (Staples & Stein, 2008). This participatory framework translates into the digital Clubhouse, where members co-create knowledge through cooperative dialogue, sharing experiences, skills, and resources. Such partnership models decentralize expertise, positioning all participants as potential contributors to collective learning. This co-ownership fosters engagement, motivation, and a sense of agency among users, transforming learning from passive reception to active collaboration. The Clubhouse environment encourages egalitarian participation, minimizing hierarchical barriers often present in professional and educational contexts.

Clubhouse spaces also function as intentional communities offering psychological safety, belonging, and shared purpose. Members' active contributions stimulate mutual learning and the emergence of networked expertise (Carolan et al., 2011; Meyer et al., 2023). This environment aligns with collaborative learning theories emphasizing knowledge co-construction through interaction rather than unidirectional transmission. Live voice interactions facilitate immediate feedback and clarification, enriching understanding and retention. The interplay of diverse perspectives broadens conceptual frameworks and problem-solving approaches. Clubhouse thus supports dynamic, participatory learning ecosystems that empower individuals and foster collective intellectual growth.

In many natural ways, community engagement on Clubhouse is nurtured through shared experiences and a collective sense of fellowship. This solidarity enhances self-efficacy and autonomy, contributing to users' resilience and social well-being (Kvalsvik & Tokovska, 2023). The platform's dialogic nature fosters interpersonal validation and emotional support, important for both professional and psychosocial growth. Members often develop sustained relationships through repeated interactions, creating micro-communities within the broader platform. These digital communities replicate social support functions traditionally found in face-to-face settings, enabling users to navigate professional and personal challenges collaboratively.

Interactions at Clubhouse promote closeness and interpersonal connections through repeated exposure and cooperative dialogues. They function to deepen interpersonal connections, fostering mutuality and trust. Clubhouse's non-hierarchical interaction structure reduces power asymmetries, promoting inclusive participation and equitable influence (Prince et al., 2018). Such dynamics help develop social skills and relational competencies vital for professional success and community engagement. The platform's intimacy contrasts with the often-anonymous nature of other online networks, providing a space where authentic connection and empathy thrive.

Comparison with Other Social Media Platforms

Communication Modality and Interaction Style

Clubhouse differentiates itself from mainstream platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok primarily through its exclusive reliance on live, voice-based interactions. While Twitter and Facebook are text-centric, asynchronous platforms emphasizing written posts, comments, and multimedia sharing, Clubhouse foregrounds synchronous oral dialogue as the basis of engagement. Instagram and TikTok focus heavily on visual content (photos and short videos), offering limited space for real-time conversational exchange.

This voice modality enables nuanced, spontaneous conversations that are less performative and more relational, fostering authentic presence and immediacy absent in text and image-based interactions. The synchronous nature also supports dynamic back-and-forth feedback uncommon on platforms designed around broadcasting or curated content.

Professional Discourse and Credibility

On platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter, professional discourse often unfolds through text-based posts, threads, and profile information emphasizing formal credentials and curated self-presentation. While effective for reputation building, these modes lack the immediacy and

vocal nuance through which Clubhouse users can demonstrate expertise, confidence, and interpersonal authority in real time.

The live voice environment on Clubhouse encourages dialogic knowledge construction, enabling professionals to engage in authentic debates, clarify points instantly, and build credibility through oral performance. This contrasts with the largely monologic and edited nature of professional communication on text-oriented networks.

Community Engagement and Learning

Facebook and Instagram foster community through group posts, comments, and shared multimedia, often relying on visual storytelling and textual dialogue. TikTok facilitates community via short videos driving trends and viral interactions. However, these interactions tend to be asynchronous and fragmented, limiting depth of conversational learning.

Clubhouse's intentional community-building draws on dialogic, peer-supported learning reminiscent of mental health clubhouse models, emphasizing psychological safety, cooperative partnership, and sustained interaction. This creates immersive learning environments and social support networks that are less prevalent on other platforms.

Networking and Accessibility

While Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter enable passive and active networking through connections, followers, and professional groups, Clubhouse's real-time audio discussions enable direct personal interaction with domain experts and influencers without the barriers of in-person events or extensive written exchange.

However, Clubhouse's voice-only format presents accessibility challenges, especially for users with hearing impairments, unlike text-based platforms which provide greater inclusivity through screen readers and captioning. Furthermore, the ephemeral nature of live discussions contrasts with the persistent, searchable content on traditional social media.

In conclusion, Clubhouse offers a complementary, rather than substitutive, social media experience. By focusing on voice-led synchronous interaction, it fills unique niches in professional discourse, collaborative learning, and community engagement not well served by dominant text and image-based platforms. Its affordances for immediacy, authenticity, and dialogic knowledge exchange create distinct opportunities and challenges that differentiate it within the evolving digital landscape. Clubhouse presents the potential as a hybrid platform that integrates oral communication with digital connectivity to transform how professionals connect, learn, and build community in the 21st century.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This exploratory study synthesizes interdisciplinary insights from social media studies, professional communication, education, and community mental health. It explores Clubhouse as a novel space supporting professional discourse, collaborative learning, and community engagement; seeking to identify and understand the core motivations driving users to participate on Clubhouse. Also, the study explores the relationship between motivations and user engagement levels.

Drawing on interdisciplinary literature and empirical evidence, this paper presents Clubhouse's unique features—including live voice-led interactions, partnership models, and intentional community-building—create affordances for knowledge exchange, professional networking, and psychosocial support. The findings integrate both quantitative and qualitative data, presenting demographics, motivational factors, engagement levels, satisfaction ratings, and user suggestions.

The study involved a diverse group of Clubhouse users varying in age, gender, and occupation. The data revealed several key motivations and behavioral patterns among users engaging with Clubhouse. The 5-point Likert scale survey included 22 respondents with diverse demographics: the majority (86.3%) were aged 35-54 years, with a gender split of approximately 60% male and 40% female. Occupations ranged from professionals, entrepreneurs, managers, to roles such as *silat* (martial arts) instructor and busker. Most respondents (80%) had used Clubhouse for more than six months, reflecting a relatively experienced user base.

User Motivations

Respondents rated their motivations on various factors with results summarized in Table 1. Respondents strongly agreed that social belonging is a primary motivation for joining Clubhouse, with many expressing a sense of community and comfort in sharing opinions within discussions. A strong sense of social belonging was the highest-rated motivator, averaging 4.6 out of 5, reflecting users' desires to feel part of an interactive community. The platform's emphasis on interactivity and intimacy enables users to form meaningful connections (Jung et al., 2022). Users also valued exposure to diverse perspectives with an average score of 4.3 and appreciated the opportunity to learn new skills and information through conversations, with an average score of 4.1. This reaffirmed past research that indicates that the social value of participation is linked to users' attitudes toward sharing information, suggesting that Clubhouse motivates users to both consume and disseminate diverse content (Wu et al., 2024). Networking emerged as another significant driver,

particularly among professionals and entrepreneurs, who utilized the platform for meaningful work-related discussions, collaboration, and potential business opportunities. Professional networking and collaboration show scores near 3.8 and 3.7 respectively, underscoring Clubhouse’s role as both a social and professional platform.

Table 1: User Motivations

Motivation	Average Score
Sense of Social Belonging	4.6
Exposure to Diverse Perspectives	4.3
Learning New Information/Skills	4.1
Networking & Building Professional Connections	3.8
Professional Discussion and Collaboration	3.7
Comfort in Sharing Opinions	4.5

Engagement Patterns

User participation was frequent and sustained (see Table 2). Most users reported frequent participation in discussions, with many joining multiple times per week and spending over two hours per session. About 80% engaged in discussions several times weekly or daily. A significant 60% spent over two hours per session, highlighting deep involvement. Users expressed satisfaction with the platform overall, highlighting its ability to foster real-time, voice-based social interaction and creativity within the community. The platform’s immediacy also encourages what Wu et al. (2024) describe as the “immediate response syndrome,” where users react spontaneously to ongoing discussions. This phenomenon enhances active engagement and creates a sense of urgency in participation. Respondents attributed their engagement to the interactive and dynamic nature of discussions, which differ markedly from more scripted, less spontaneous webinar formats. The interactive and spontaneous nature of discussions was commonly cited as a key factor that distinguishes Clubhouse from other online platforms.

Table 2: Engagement Patterns

Engagement Metric	Percentage / Description
Frequency of Participation	Several times per week or daily: 80%
Average Session Duration	More than 2 hours: 60%
Typical Session Length	36< 2 hours: 20%

	30 minutes-1 hour: 13%
	Less than 30 minutes: 7%

Satisfaction and User Experience

The majority indicated positive experiences, noting the relaxed and engaging environment that allows for a wide range of topics without judgment. Satisfaction levels were generally high, with 81.8% indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall Clubhouse experience (Table 3). Users valued the welcoming, judgment-free environment and enjoyed the wide range of available topics.

Table 3: Satisfaction and User Experience

Satisfaction Level	Percentage / Description
Very Satisfied / Satisfied	81.8%
Neutral	18.2%
Dissatisfied	0%

However, several areas for improvement were noted, including audio quality and the user interface, especially for newcomers. Additional features like text chat and emojis were also suggested to make discussions more engaging. The possibility of introducing reward systems to encourage higher-quality interactions was also proposed by the respondents.

Overall, the findings confirm Clubhouse’s effectiveness as a platform that fosters social belonging, professional networking, and knowledge sharing through its exclusive audio-based format. Users are strongly motivated by community and learning opportunities and tend to engage deeply with the platform. Addressing technical and usability challenges is crucial to maintaining and expanding Clubhouse’s vibrant user community.

CONCLUSION

Clubhouse, a voice-centered social media platform, has attracted widespread attention due to its unique format and real-time interactivity. Users are motivated to join and actively participate in Clubhouse for several reasons, including the desire for social belonging, access to diverse perspectives, opportunities for learning, and real-time engagement. These motivations collectively illustrate the platform’s distinct appeal and its role in shaping digital social interaction.

Clubhouse's distinctive affordances—voice-led discourse, partnership models, and intentional environments—enable it to serve as a hybrid space for professional discourse, collaborative learning, and community engagement. By combining the immediacy of oral exchange with digital connectivity, Clubhouse fosters professional networking, peer learning, and psychosocial support.

However, its full potential depends on sustainable adoption, inclusive design, and careful integration into professional and educational practices. As audio-based platforms evolve, further research should explore how these digital spaces transform professional communication, community belonging, and knowledge production.

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