# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Background

The evolution of technology has given birth to new forms of communication that not only allows for a wider reach between communicators, but also greatly enhances quality of life aspects that were previously absent prior to the advent of communication technology. For example, with the invention and advent of the smartphone, communication over long distances no longer became a major obstacle to tackle, allowing for higher reaches in communication between differing parties. With the introduction and evolution of communication technology, problems that were initially considered major obstacles became non-existent hurdles *(Alhadlaq, 2016:961)*.

Digital Communication media is a type of communication media that involves the usage of modern technological mediums, such as the smartphone, computer and other devices. Any and all type of communication that encompasses internet-based application, including but not limited to: e-mail, text chat applications, and, especially in this case, voice over internet protocol (voIP) applications.

The usage of voIP applications have been documented since before the start of the COVID-19 lockdown period. In particular, the table below shows that Discord's user numbers were already in the millions even before the booming popularity of voIP applications. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic at the onset of 2020 only helped to exacerbate the usage of voIP as well as other similar applications that provided voice and video calling facilities. According to *Wahyuningsih E. & Baidi* (2021:10, accessed 5/9/21), the usage of these applications became mandatory at the start of the COVID-19 viral spread, and soon the popularity of several applications that offer these facilities skyrocketed as their usage became a necessity to facilitate continued education for the current generation of students. Based on the data above and below, the researcher believes that a study conducted to analyze the communication patterns of voIP users, particularly those of Discord, can be justified from both the user numbers displayed as well as the reasoning showcased.

VoIP applications offer the medium of voice and video chat, allowing for instant communication over long distances and without the worry of time zones and schedules. In particular, the voIP Discord, founded by Jason Citron in 2015, has established itself as a brand of voIP marketed towards the "gamer" audience, as well as the gaming community. According to *Malisi, Suharsono & Setiawan* (2017:618, accessed 6/9/21) the communication style and language of the gaming community distinguishes itself enough that there is a distinct difference between the communication style of gamers to those of other communities. Since Discord is a brand that markets itself to this gamer audience, the researcher then believes that a

strong correlation exists between the communication patterns and language used by Discord community members to that of the overall gamer audience.

VoIP applications come in different varieties and brands. The table constructed below lists several brands of voIP applications that are marketed heavily towards the gamer audience, and the column lists each brand's user number statistics. Since this research aims to analyze the communication patterns of a specific sub-community of users in a virtual ethnographic environment, the other brands used are also similar brands that heavily market toward the gaming community to provide a clear and similar comparison.

| **Application name** | **User numbers (concurrent 2020)** |
|---|---|
| **Discord** | 250 million registered users |
| Element | 35 million registered users |
| Skype | 300 million registered users |
| SteamChat | 120 million registered users |
| TeamSpeak 3 | 182 thousand registered users |

Figure 1.1 Comparison of registered users between four different voIP

Source: https://www.businessofapps.com/data/discord-statistics/
https://www.businessofapps.com/data/discord-statistics/ (Accessed 3/08/21)

Based on the table above, we can conclude that the statistics for user numbers of the Discord voIP surpass those of most other voIP services and similar mediums. Discord is by far one of the most popular voIP applications currently being used, despite it's rather niche image and marketing towards the "gamer" audience.

Discord is a voice over internet protocol (VoIP), instant messaging and shared distribution application that was first created as a concept by Jason Citron (https://www.protocol.com/discord accessed at 3/08/21 3:31 AM). Throughout the development process, Citron noted that gamers often found it difficult to formulate strategies and tactics during games using the available VoIP (Voiceover Internet Protocol) services at the time, and so Discord was created with the fundamental goals and emphasis on user friendliness and ease of access. Additional emphasis was also placed on creating an application that did not hinder performance.

Discord was launched in 2015 under the domain name discordapp.com, and, according to Citron, they had no plans to target to specific audiences nor market their application on a worldwide scale. Purely through the spread of word-of-mouth, Discord managed to rise in popularity as it is used by gamers, both casual and professional, all over the globe. Discord is one of the largest voice chat and social media platforms in the world. The platform promotes itself as an application oriented

towards gamers and other similar individuals, as such the majority of its promotion is geared towards promoting itself as a voice chat application that would suit the gamer consumer base, incorporating methods such as frequent collaborations with video game development studios and focusing development on seamless and uninterrupted voice chat technology. According to BusinessofApps.com, Discord currently holds 250 million registered users, reaching its peak of 10.6 million concurrent users during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Below is the chart that details Discord's registered user growth starting from 2016, one year after it was launched, up until 2019, as detailed in BusinessofApps.com. (https://www.businessofapps.com/data/discord-statistics/ accessed 3/08/21 3:35 AM)

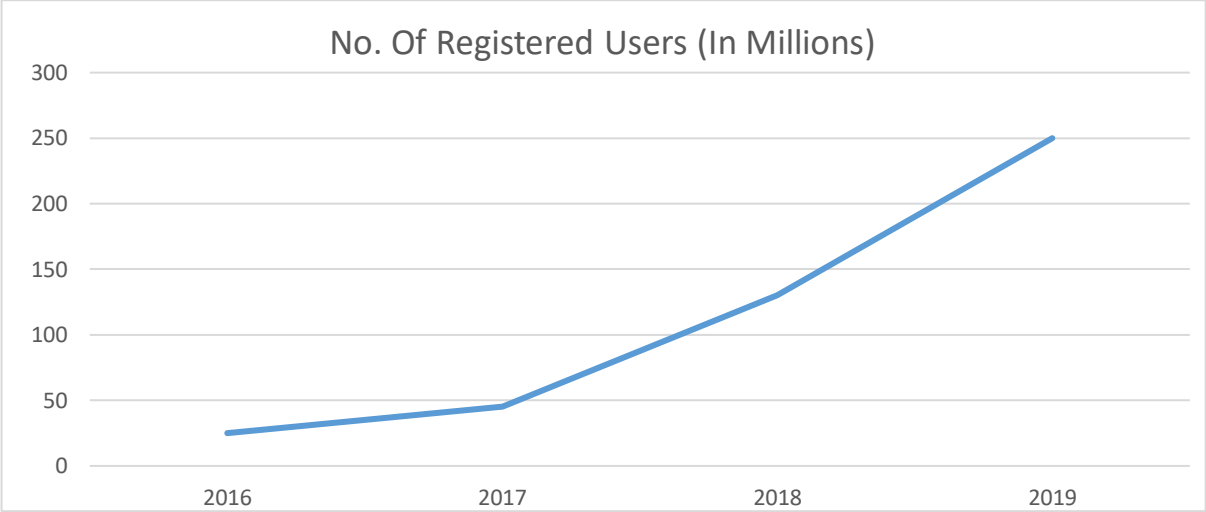


Figure 1.2 Growth chart of Discord's registered users

Source: Researcher process, 2021

Based on the chart above, it can be detailed that Discord has experienced massive rapid growth spanning a period starting from 2016 to 2019. Until 2017, we can see that Discord managed to gain an impressive 20 million registered users. Discord gained an additional 85 million new users over the span of 2017-2018. From the period spanning 2018 to 2019, Discord experienced its largest jump in registered users yet, surpassing 120 million newly registered users in only one year.

Discord is currently the largest voice chat platform in terms of user numbers and memberships. In another comparison by Slant.co (https://www.slant.co/versus/5637/18922/~discord_vs_facebook-messenger), Discord is listed on the website as the third most popular application used for voice chat purposes, with a score of 87. In the mobile market, Discord is currently the highest rated voice chat application, surpassing its competitor FaceBook Messenger according to AndroidAuthority.com. The researcher has therefore chosen this application due to it's user numbers and statistical popularity. To further support this decision, BusinessofApps.com (https://www.businessofapps.com/data/discord-statistics/) has stated that since the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the start of

lockdown in many countries, user numbers for Discord have risen tremendously, reaching a peak of 10.6 million new users. Below is a table detailing Discord's user numbers when compared to its primary competitors, Zoom and Google Meet, both of which are much more prevalent due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, which caused a surge in user numbers with voice and video chat applications in general. Discord ranks in second place with 250 million registered users.

Since the community that revolves around the hobby of gaming can be considered its own unique sub-culture, we can observe that this community has formed a language of its own, of sorts. While it is not fully considered a whole new different language, gamer lingo still has a widely expansive glossary of terms and speech patterns that enables it to be classified as a whole different dialect.

Discord is a voice chat application that marketed itself towards the gaming audience since its launch in 2015. It's established brand image has always been targeted towards those who are active in gaming and similar activities. As a result, the researcher believes that Discord is the perfect subject to research into, especially when using the virtual ethnography method of research approach. Recently through 2021, however, the application has chosen to change its overall public image in order to move away from its "gamer-oriented" focus in order to appeal to a wider range of users.

Communication patterns are defined as the structure in which communication flows within a specific organization or sub-community. As defined by communicationtheory.org, specific groups and organizations have differing patterns of communication that sets them apart from each other. (https://www.communicationtheory.org/patterns-of-communication/ accessed 5/08/21). The researcher has chosen to discuss the topic of communication patterns because they believe that communication patterns found within the sub-community of Discord server members are vastly different from those found in other communities, due in part to the structure of Discord itself as an application, as well as the various features and choices it offers.

It is based on the data above that the reasoning for this research can be concluded. The COVID-19 lockdown has caused the exploding popularity of services such as Discord, which facilitate long-range communication, and as such the usage numbers as well as registered users have seen a significant increase in numbers, due to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, where multiple nations across the globe have entered lockdown periods that last over the course of several months. Discord, an application previously catered toward *gamers*, has now become an application that is popular amongst the general population as well, being used by the likes of students, workers, and even seniors. This increase of population theorizes a change in communication pattern as well, as the increase of users would mean the communication activity found within Discord communities would also metamorphize. Below are the figures showcasing the increase in downloads involving the games Ázur Lane and Arknights, with each data showcasing a common trend of increased download numbers during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

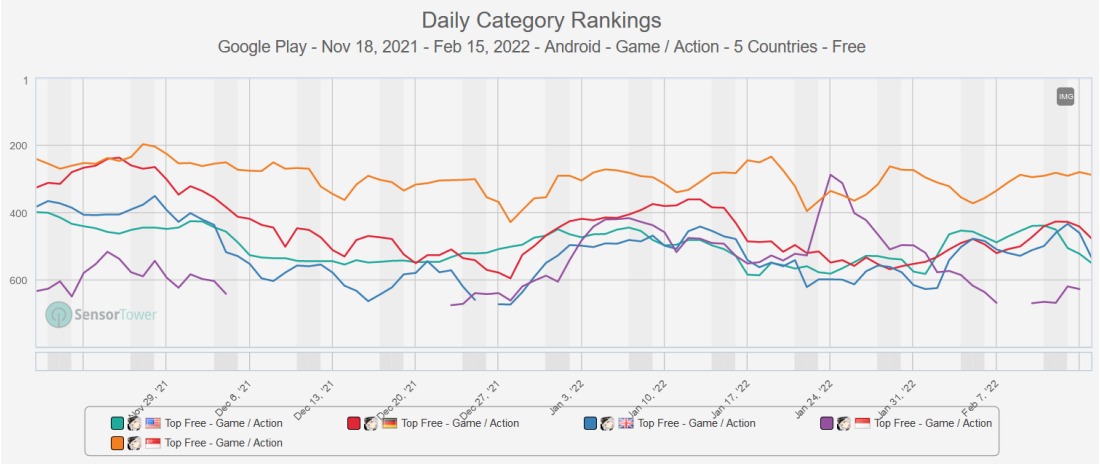


Figure 1.3 Statistics chart showcasing **Azur Lane** download numbers between five of its highest-population countries: **United States**, **Great Britain¸ Germany**, **Indonesia**, and **Singapore**.

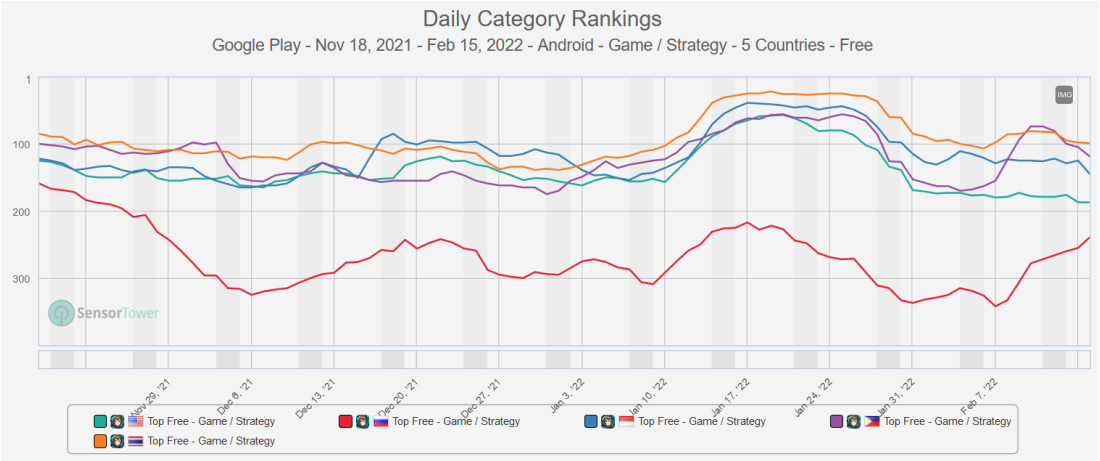


Figure 1.4 Statistics chart showcasing **Arknights** download numbers between five o its highest-population countries: **United States**, **Russia**, **Indonesia**, **Thailand**, and **The Philippines.**

## 1.2 Formulation of The Problem

The problem becomes wherein the research is now focused on determining the specific communication patterns of Discord users, prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and throughout the duration of the pandemic as it is currently ongoing.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the problem, the purpose of the study could then be interpreted as follows to determine and analyze communicative pattern found within the specific Discord servers "ShellsCrusades" and "Azur Knights Community Server", prior to, and throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1.4 *Research Benefits*

The research will hold various benefits in both theoretical and practical terms. They are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefits: This research is believed to be tackling a new topic, previously undiscussed in the archives. Therefore, it stands to reason that this research would be used as future reference for academics who wish to research similar topics and themes that are tackled in this research. Additionally, since the topic is new, it can be believed that this would be good general knowledge to add into the pool of academic research themes held by the institution.
2. Practical benefits:
   a. For researcher:
      Gain knowledge and information surrounding the different languages and cultures between vastly differing communities.
   b. For other academics
      Used as a reference for future researches tackling similar topics and/or themes.
   c. For Discord
      This research is conducted with the hope that Discord will use the data provided as a reference point for their future marketing plans and strategies.

### 1.5 Research Timeline and Period

| Period | Nov 2020 | Dec 2020 | Jan 2021 | Feb 2021 | Feb 2021 | Mar 2021 | April 2021 | May 2021 | Jun 2021 | Jul 2021 | Aug 2021 | Sep 2021 | Jan 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Title and Chapter I construction | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter II building | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter III and Methodology | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Field Research and Data collection | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter IV and V construction and Revision | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thesis Defense | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Figure 1.4 Research timeline for construction

*Source: Researcher efforts, 2021*

### 1.6 Systematics of Content

a. CHAPTER I

Chapter I consists of the research background, background data as well as scientific reasoning behind the researcher's decision to cover their topic and theme for the paper. Chapter I acts largely as an introduction toward the researcher's intentions, as well as a statement towards what the researcher wishes to perform in order to build their paper.

b. CHAPTER II

Chapter II will comprise mostly of the theories, backgrounds and hypotheses that will correlate with the research paper. The purpose of Chapter II is to introduce and establish a strong theoretical basis that will help support the data and further arguments for the later chapters.

c. CHAPTER III

Chapter III comprises of the methodologies, approach to research, and additional theories that the researcher has decided to use and plan for the paper. This chapter will mostly serve to give the research a proper plan and tools that will be utilized throughout the entire research time period.

d. CHAPTER IV

Chapter IV serves as the presentation of data gathered throughout the course of the reseach. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data in a concise and readable manner, while also providing arguments and answers to help support the researcher's initial theory.

e. CHAPTER V

Chapter V will conclude the entire paper, as well as provide supporting argument and evidence for the research subject that the researcher has chosen.