

MEDIA/PUBLISHING

Facebook introduces new social audio features

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Audio networking is growing in popularity. Image credit: Facebook

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Social tech giant Facebook has announced it is building audio features which will allow users to engage in real-time conversations.

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COVID-19 protocols over the past year have made it difficult for people to socialize, giving rise to audio-based platforms. Over the next few months, Facebook will be rolling out features known as Live Audio Rooms and Soundbites, as well as introducing new podcasting capabilities.

Listen up

The company has started testing Live Audio Rooms in Groups and expects it to be available to all Facebook app users by the summer.

As part of this initial rollout, Facebook is bringing Live Audio Rooms to public figures so they can host conversations with other public figures, experts and fans. Facebook hopes that by making the feature accessible by public figures, they can share ideas with new audiences and create a forum for discussion without the added pressure of being on camera.

In addition to bringing this to Facebook, the company also plans to release Live Audio Rooms on Messenger.

Facebook is also introducing Soundbites, short-form, creative audio clips aimed at capturing anecdotes, jokes, moments of inspiration and more. It will begin testing Soundbites throughout the next few months with a small number of creators before making it available to everyone.



Live Audio Rooms on the Facebook and Messenger apps. Image credit: Facebook

Soon, Facebook users will also be able to listen to podcasts directly on the Facebook app, both while using the app or when the app is in the background. The new feature can help users find new podcasts and episodes based on their interests and connect listeners with podcast creators.

In the past, Facebook has been accused of buying out its competitors, raising some concerns over its new audio features which nearly mimic those of audio-based startup platform Clubhouse, which was founded in early 2020 and is now **reportedly** valued at \$4 billion.

In December 2020, the **United States Federal Trade Commission** (FTC) sued Facebook for engaging in a systematic strategy to eliminate threats to its monopoly through, but not limited to, the acquisition of rival platforms Instagram and WhatsApp.

The lawsuit alleged that Facebook had initially attempted to compete with Instagram by improving its own services, but it ultimately chose to buy the platform rather than compete with them. The complaint suggests that Facebook's acquisition of Instagram neutralized the direct threat and made it more difficult for other social networking competitors to gain traction (**see story**).