

**UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549
FORM 20-F**

(Mark One)

☐ REGISTRATION STATEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 12(b) OR 12(g) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

OR

☒ ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15 (d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934
For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2022

OR

☐ TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15 (d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934
For the transition period from to

OR

☐ SHELL COMPANY REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Date of event requiring this shell company report

Commission File Number: 001-40253

Zhihu Inc.

(Exact Name of Registrant as Specified in Its Charter)
N/A

(Translation of Registrant's Name into English)
Cayman Islands

(Jurisdiction of Incorporation or Organization)
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People's Republic of China

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People's Republic of China

(Name, Telephone, Email and/or Facsimile Number and Address of Company Contact Person)

Securities registered or to be registered pursuant to Section 12 (b) of the Act:

Title of Each Class	Trading Symbol	Name of Each Exchange on Which Registered
American depositary shares (each representing 0.5 Class A ordinary shares, par value US\$0.000125 per share)	ZH	New York Stock Exchange
Class A ordinary shares, par value US\$0.000125 per share	2390	The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited

Securities registered or to be registered pursuant to Section 12 (g) of the Act:

None

(Title of Class)

Securities for which there is a reporting obligation pursuant to Section 15 (d) of the Act:

None

(Title of Class)

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Indicate the number of outstanding shares of each of the issuer's classes of capital or common stock as of the close of the period covered by the annual report : 297,419,878 Class A ordinary shares (excluding 4,841,744 Class A ordinary shares issued to the depositary bank for bulk issuance of ADSs reserved for future issuances upon the exercise or vesting of awards granted under our share incentive plan), par value US\$0.000125 per share, and 18,940,652 Class B ordinary shares, par value US\$0.000125 per share, as of December 31, 2022.

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act.

☒ Yes ☐ No

If this report is an annual or transition report, indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Note — Checking the box above will not relieve any registrant required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 from their obligations under those Sections.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant: (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15 (d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically every Interactive Data File required to be submitted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit such files).

☒ Yes ☐ No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or an emerging growth company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer," and "emerging growth company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large Accelerated Filer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accelerated Filer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Accelerated Filer	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Emerging Growth Company	<input type="checkbox"/>

If an emerging growth company that prepares its financial statements in accordance with U.S. GAAP, indicate by check mark if the registrant has elected not to use the extended transition period for complying with any new or revised financial accounting standards† provided pursuant to Section 13(a) of the Exchange Act. ☐

†The term "new or revised financial accounting standard" refers to any update issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board to its Accounting Standards Codification after April 5, 2012.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has filed a report on and attestation to its management's assessment of the effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting under Section 404(b) of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (15 U.S.C. 7262(b)) by the registered public accounting firm that prepared or issued its audit report. ☒

If securities are registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act, indicate by check mark whether the financial statements of the registrant included in the filing reflect the correction of an error to previously issued financial statements. ☐

Indicate by check mark whether any of those error corrections are restatements that required a recovery analysis of incentive-based compensation received by any of the registrant's executive officers during the relevant recovery period pursuant to §240.10D-1(b). ☐

Indicate by check mark which basis of accounting the registrant has used to prepare the financial statements included in this filing:

U.S. GAAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	International Financial Reporting Standards as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
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If "Other" has been checked in response to the previous question, indicate by check mark which financial statement item the registrant has elected to follow.

☐ Item 17 ☐ Item 18

If this is an annual report, indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act).

☐ Yes ☒ No

(APPLICABLE ONLY TO ISSUERS INVOLVED IN BANKRUPTCY PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS)

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has filed all documents and reports required to be filed by Section 12, 13, or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 subsequent to the distribution of securities under a plan confirmed by a court.

☐ Yes ☐ No

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INTRODUCTION

In this annual report, unless otherwise indicated or unless the context otherwise requires:

- “ADRs” refers to the American depositary receipts that evidence the ADSs;
- “ADSs” refers to the American depositary shares, two of which represent one Class A ordinary share;
- “CAGR” refers to compound annual growth rate;
- “CCASS” refers to the Central Clearing and Settlement System established and operated by Hong Kong Securities Clearing Company Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited;
- “China” or “PRC” refers to the People’s Republic of China;
- “content creators” refers to users who have generated at least one piece of content;
- “Hong Kong” refers to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China;
- “Hong Kong dollars” or “HK\$” refers to Hong Kong dollars, the lawful currency of Hong Kong;
- “Hong Kong Listing Rules” refers to the Rules Governing the Listing of Securities on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited, as amended, supplemented, or otherwise modified from time to time;
- “Hong Kong Stock Exchange” refers to The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited;
- “Macao” refers to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China;
- “mobile MAUs” refers to the number of mobile devices that launch our mobile app at least once in a given month;
- “monthly active users” or “MAUs” refers to the sum of our mobile MAUs and the number of logged-in users who visit our PC or mobile website at least once in a given month, after eliminating duplicates. “average MAUs” for a period is calculated by dividing the sum of MAUs for each month during a specified period by the number of months in the period;
- “monthly subscribing members” refers to the number of our Yan Selection members in a specified month; and “average monthly subscribing members” for a period is calculated by dividing the sum of monthly subscribing members for each month during a specified period by the number of months in the period;
- “monthly viewers” refers to the sum of the number of mobile devices that launch our mobile app at least once in a specified month and the number of independent cookies that visit our PC or mobile website at least once in a specified month. The number of monthly viewers is calculated by treating each distinguishable independent cookie or mobile device as a separate user even though some individuals may access our community with more than one independent cookie or using more than one mobile device and multiple individuals may access our community with the same independent cookie or using the same mobile device;
- “ordinary shares” or “shares” refers to our Class A ordinary shares and Class B ordinary shares, par value US\$0.000125 per share;
- “paying ratio” for a given period refers to the ratio of our average monthly subscribing members divided by the average MAUs in the period;

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- “PCAOB” refers to Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, a nonprofit corporation established by the United States Congress to oversee the audits of public companies, among others;
- “PGC” refers to professionally generated content;
- “piece of content” refers to any piece of questions, answers, articles, videos, groups, or live streaming in our community;
- “Renminbi” or “RMB” refers to the legal currency of China;
- “SEC” refers to the United States Securities and Exchange Commission;
- “SFC” refers to Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong;
- “UGC” refers to user-generated content;
- “U.S. dollars” or “US\$” refers to the legal currency of the United States;
- “VIEs” refers to variable interest entities, which are companies established in China that have entered into a series of contractual arrangements with their respective shareholders and our PRC subsidiaries. Under these contractual arrangements, Zhihu Inc. has a “controlling financing interest” in the VIEs as defined in FASB ASC 810 so that it is considered the primary beneficiary of the VIEs for accounting purposes only and thus consolidates each of these entities under U.S. GAAP. The VIEs that Zhihu Inc. consolidates under U.S. GAAP include Beijing Zhizhe Tianxia Technology Co., Ltd., or Zhizhe Tianxia, Shanghai Pinzhi Education Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Pinzhi, and Shanghai Biban Network Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Biban;
- “WFOEs” refers to wholly foreign-owned enterprises, and “our WFOEs” refers to Zhizhe Sihai (Beijing) Technology Co., Ltd., or Zhizhe Sihai, Shanghai Zhishi Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Zhishi, and Shanghai Paya Information Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Paya; and
- “Zhihu,” “we,” or “our company” refers to Zhihu Inc., a Cayman Islands holding company, and its subsidiaries (where the context requires, in respect of the period prior to our company becoming the holding company of its present subsidiaries, such subsidiaries as if they were subsidiaries of our company at the relevant time) and, in the context of describing our operations and consolidated financial information, the VIEs and their respective subsidiaries, unless otherwise indicated herein. For the avoidance of confusion, “our holding company” or “Zhihu Inc.” only refers to Zhihu Inc., and unless the context requires otherwise, include its predecessor entities; “our subsidiaries” refers to the entities in which Zhihu Inc. holds direct or indirect equity ownership, and thus consolidates their financial results; for “variable interest entities” or “VIEs,” see stand-alone definition sets forth above. Zhihu Inc. does not conduct operations of its own and does not have any equity ownership in the VIEs.

Any discrepancies in any table between the amounts identified as total amounts and the sum of the amounts listed therein are due to rounding.

Our reporting currency is Renminbi. This annual report contains translations from Renminbi to U.S. dollars solely for the convenience of the reader. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Renminbi to U.S. dollars were made at a rate of RMB6.8972 to US\$1.00, which was the exchange rate in effect as of December 30, 2022 as set forth in the H.10 statistical release of The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. The exchange rate in effect as of April 21, 2023 was RMB6.8920 to US\$1.00. We make no representation that any Renminbi amounts referred to in this annual report could have been, or could be, converted into U.S. dollars at any particular rate, or at all.

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This annual report contains forward-looking statements that reflect our current expectations and views of future events. These forward-looking statements are made under the “safe harbor” provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors, including those included in “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors,” may cause our actual results, performance, or achievements to be materially different from those expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements.

You can identify some of these forward-looking statements by words or phrases such as “may,” “might,” “will,” “would,” “expect,” “anticipate,” “aim,” “estimate,” “intend,” “plan,” “believe,” “is/are likely to,” “future,” “potential,” “continue,” or other similar expressions. We have based these forward-looking statements largely on our current expectations and projections about future events that we believe may affect our financial condition, results of operations, business strategy, and financial needs. These forward-looking statements include statements relating to:

- our goals and strategies,
- our future business development, financial condition, and results of operations,
- the expected outlook of the online content market in China,
- our expectations regarding demand for and market acceptance of our products and services,
- our expectations regarding our relationships with our users, clients, business partners, and other stakeholders,
- competition in our industry,
- relevant government policies and regulations relating to our industry, and
- general economic and business conditions globally and in China.

These forward-looking statements involve various risks and uncertainties. Although we believe that our expectations expressed in these forward-looking statements are reasonable, our expectations may later be found to be incorrect. Our actual results could be materially different from our expectations. Important risks and factors that could cause our actual results to be materially different from our expectations are generally set forth in “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors,” “Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview,” “Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects,” and other sections in this annual report. You should read thoroughly this annual report and the documents that we refer to in this annual report with the understanding that our actual future results may be materially different from and worse than what we expect. We qualify all of our forward-looking statements by these cautionary statements.

We operate in an evolving environment. New risk factors and uncertainties emerge from time to time and it is not possible for our management to predict all risk factors and uncertainties, nor can we assess the impact of all factors on our business or the extent to which any factor, or combination of factors, may cause actual results to differ materially from those contained in any forward-looking statements.

You should not rely upon forward-looking statements as predictions of future events. The forward-looking statements made in this annual report relate only to events or information as of the date on which the statements are made in this annual report. We undertake no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise.

PART I

ITEM 1. IDENTITY OF DIRECTORS, SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND ADVISERS

Not applicable.

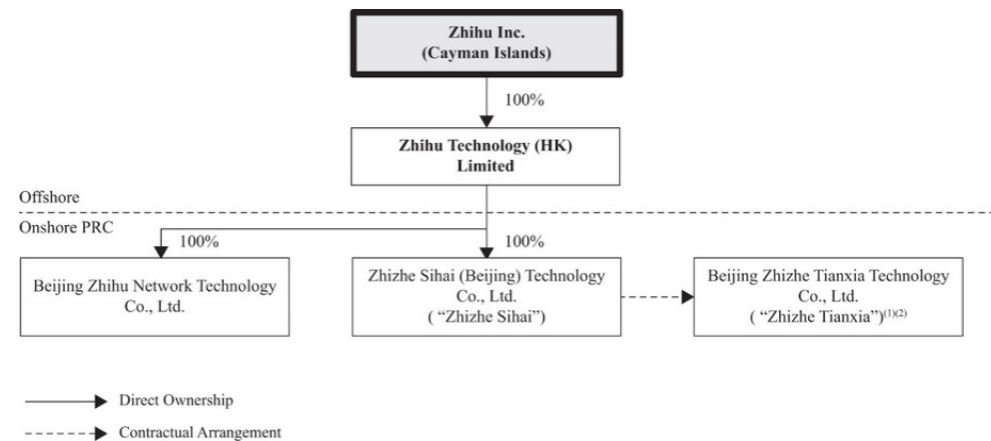
ITEM 2. OFFER STATISTICS AND EXPECTED TIMETABLE

Not applicable.

ITEM 3. KEY INFORMATION

Our Holding Company Structure and Contractual Arrangements with the VIEs and Their Shareholders

The following diagram illustrates our corporate structure, including our principal subsidiaries and the VIEs, as of the date of this annual report.



Notes:

- (1) Yuan Zhou and Dahai Li each holds 99.31% and 0.69% of the equity interests in Zhizhe Tianxia, respectively.
- (2) Zhizhe Tianxia owns, through its wholly-owned subsidiaries, 55% equity interests in each of Shanghai Pinzhi Education Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Pinzhi, and Shanghai Biban Network Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Biban. Shanghai Pinzhi and its shareholders entered into a series of contractual arrangements with Shanghai Zhishi Technology Co., Ltd., our subsidiary in China, and Shanghai Biban and its shareholders entered into a series of contractual arrangements with Shanghai Paya Information Technology co., Ltd, or Shanghai Paya, our subsidiary in China.

Zhihu Inc. is a Cayman Islands holding company with no equity ownership in its VIEs and their subsidiaries and not a Chinese operating company. We conduct our operations in China through (i) our PRC subsidiaries and (ii) the VIEs, with which we have maintained contractual arrangements, and their subsidiaries. PRC laws and regulations restrict and impose conditions on foreign investment in value-added telecommunication services and certain other businesses. Accordingly, we operate these businesses in China through the VIEs and their subsidiaries, and rely on contractual arrangements among our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, and their nominee shareholders to direct the business operations of the VIEs. Such structure enables investors to share economic interests in China-based companies in sectors where foreign direct investment is prohibited or restricted under PRC laws and regulations. Revenues contributed by the VIEs accounted for 27.4%, 25.9%, and 43.0% of our total revenues in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. As used in this annual report, “we,” “our company,” or “Zhihu” refers to Zhihu Inc., its subsidiaries, and, in the context of describing our operations and consolidated financial information, the VIEs in China, including Beijing Zhizhe Tianxia Technology Co., Ltd., or Zhizhe Tianxia, Shanghai Pinzhi Education Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Pinzhi, and Shanghai Biban Network Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Biban. Investors in the ADSs are not purchasing any equity interest in the VIEs in China but instead are purchasing equity interest in a holding company incorporated in the Cayman Islands, and may never directly hold equity interests in the VIEs in China.

A series of contractual agreements, including exclusive business cooperation agreement or exclusive technology development, consultancy and services agreements, shareholders’ rights entrustment agreement or powers of attorney, share pledge agreements, and exclusive option agreements, have been entered into by and among our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, and the VIEs’ nominee shareholders. There is no material difference between the effect of each set of contractual arrangements. As advised by Commerce & Finance Law Offices, our PRC legal counsel, (i) as of the date of this annual report, the ownership structures of our WFOEs and the VIEs in China do not violate any applicable and explicit PRC laws and regulations currently in effect; (ii) subject to the disclosure in this annual report, each agreement of the contractual arrangements between our WFOEs, the VIEs, and the VIEs’ nominee shareholders governed by PRC law is valid, binding, and enforceable in accordance with their terms, subject to enforceability to applicable laws affecting creditors’ rights generally, the discretion of relevant government authorities in exercising their authority in connection with the interpretation and implementation thereof and the application of relevant PRC laws and policies thereto, and general equity principles; and (iii) each of said agreement does not violate any applicable and explicit PRC laws currently in effect. As a result of the contractual arrangements, we are considered the primary beneficiary of the VIEs for accounting purposes, and Zhihu Inc. has consolidated the results of operations, financial position, and cash flows of the VIEs in its consolidated financial statements under U.S. GAAP. The contractual arrangements with the VIEs provide us with a “controlling financial interest” in the VIEs as defined in FASB ASC 810 by entitling us to (i) the power to direct activities of the VIEs that most significantly affect their economic performance, and (ii) the right to receive the economic benefits from the VIEs that could be significant to them. Neither Zhihu Inc. nor its investors has an equity ownership (including foreign direct investment) in, or control through such equity ownership of, the VIEs, and the contractual arrangements are not equivalent to an equity ownership in the business of the VIEs. For more details of these contractual arrangements, see “Item 4. Information on the Company—C. Organizational Structure—Contractual Arrangements with the VIEs and Their Shareholders.”

However, the contractual arrangements may not be as effective as direct ownership in providing us with control over the VIEs and their subsidiaries and we may incur substantial costs to enforce the terms of the arrangements. As such, the VIE structure involves unique risks to investors of our Cayman Islands holding company. In addition, the legality and enforceability of the contractual agreements by and among our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, and the VIEs’ nominee shareholders, as a whole, have not been tested in a court of law in China. See “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure—Our contractual arrangements may not be as effective in providing operational control as direct ownership and shareholders of the VIEs may fail to perform their obligations under our contractual arrangements.” and “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure—The equity holders, directors, and executive officers of the VIEs, as well as our employees who execute other strategic initiatives may have potential conflicts of interest with our company.”

There are also substantial uncertainties regarding the interpretation and application of current and future PRC laws, regulations, and rules regarding the status of the rights of our Cayman Islands holding company with respect to its contractual arrangements with the VIEs and their nominee shareholders. It is uncertain whether any new PRC laws or regulations relating to variable interest entity structures will be adopted or, if adopted, what they would provide. If we or any of the VIEs is found to be in violation of any existing or future PRC laws or regulations, or fail to obtain or maintain any of the required licenses, permits, registrations, or approvals, the relevant PRC regulatory authorities would have broad discretion to take action in dealing with such violations or failures. See “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure—If the PRC government finds that the agreements that establish the structure for operating our business do not comply with PRC laws and regulations, or if these regulations or their interpretations change in the future, we could be subject to severe penalties or be forced to relinquish our interests in those operations” and “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure—Our current corporate structure and business operations may be affected by the Foreign Investment Law.”

Our corporate structure is subject to risks associated with our contractual arrangements with the VIEs. If the PRC government deems that our contractual arrangements with the VIEs do not comply with PRC regulatory restrictions on foreign investment in the relevant industries, or if these regulations or the interpretation of existing regulations change or are interpreted differently in the future, we could be subject to severe penalties or be forced to relinquish our interests in those operations. Our Cayman Islands holding company, our PRC subsidiaries, and the VIEs and their subsidiaries, and investors of our company face uncertainty with respect to potential future actions by the PRC government that could affect the enforceability of the contractual arrangements with the VIEs and, consequently, significantly affect the financial performance of the VIEs and our company as a whole. The PRC regulatory authorities could disallow the VIE structure, which would likely result in a material change in our operations and cause the value of our securities, including those that we may register for sale, to significantly decline or become worthless. For a detailed description of the risks associated with our corporate structure, see “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure.”

We face various legal and operational risks and uncertainties relating to doing business in China. Our business operations are primarily conducted in China, and we are subject to complex and evolving PRC laws and regulations. For example, the PRC government has recently issued statements and regulatory actions relating to areas such as the use of contractual arrangements in certain industries, regulatory approvals on overseas offerings and listings by, and foreign investment in, China-based issuers, anti-monopoly regulatory actions, and oversight on cybersecurity and data privacy. It remains uncertain how PRC government authorities will regulate overseas listings and offerings in general and whether we can fully comply with the relevant regulatory requirements, including completing filings with the China Securities Regulatory Commission, or the CSRC, pursuant to the Trial Administrative Measures of Overseas Securities Offering and Listing by Domestic Companies, or the Overseas Listing Trial Measures, and five supporting guidelines released by the CSRC and effective on March 31, 2023, and whether we are required to complete other filings or obtain any specific regulatory approvals from the CSRC, the Cyberspace Administration of China, or the CAC, or any other PRC government authorities for our overseas offerings and listings, as applicable. In addition, if future regulatory developments mandate clearance of cybersecurity review or other specific actions to be completed by China-based companies listed on foreign stock exchanges, such as us, we face uncertainties as to whether such clearance can be timely obtained, or at all. These risks may impact our ability to conduct certain businesses, accept foreign investments, or list and conduct offerings on a stock exchange in the United States or another foreign country. These risks could result in a material adverse change in our operations and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs, significantly limit or completely hinder our ability to continue to offer securities to investors, or cause the value of such securities to significantly decline or become worthless. For a detailed description of risks relating to doing business in China, see “Item 3.D. Key Information—Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China.”

The PRC government’s significant authority in regulating our operations and its oversight and control over offerings conducted overseas by, and foreign investment in, China-based issuers could significantly limit or completely hinder our ability to offer or continue to offer securities to investors. Implementation of industry-wide regulations in this nature, such as data security or anti-monopoly related regulations, may cause the value of such securities to significantly decline. For more details, see “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—The PRC government’s oversight over our business operations could result in a material adverse change in our operations and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs.”

Risks and uncertainties arising from the legal system in China, including risks and uncertainties regarding the enforcement of laws and quickly evolving rules and regulations in China, could result in a material adverse change in our operations and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs. For more details, see “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—The legal system in China embodies uncertainties which could limit the legal protections available to us or impose additional requirements and obligations on our business, and PRC laws, rules, and regulations can evolve quickly, which may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.”

The Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act

Pursuant to the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act, or the HFCAA, if the SEC determines that we have filed audit reports issued by a registered public accounting firm that has not been subject to inspections by the PCAOB for two consecutive years, the SEC will prohibit our shares or the ADSs from being traded on a national securities exchange or in the over-the-counter trading market in the United States. On December 16, 2021, the PCAOB issued a report to notify the SEC of its determination that the PCAOB was unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms headquartered in mainland China and Hong Kong, including our auditor. In May 2022, the SEC conclusively listed us as a Commission-Identified Issuer under the HFCAA following the filing of our annual report on Form 20-F for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021. On December 15, 2022, the PCAOB issued a report that vacated its December 16, 2021 determination and removed mainland China and Hong Kong from the list of jurisdictions where it is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms. For this reason, we do not expect to be identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer under the HFCAA after we file this annual report on Form 20-F. Each year, the PCAOB will determine whether it can inspect and investigate completely audit firms in mainland China and Hong Kong, among other jurisdictions. If PCAOB determines in the future that it no longer has full access to inspect and investigate completely accounting firms in mainland China and Hong Kong and we continue to use an accounting firm headquartered in one of these jurisdictions to issue an audit report on our financial statements filed with the SEC, we would be identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer following the filing of the annual report on Form 20-F for the relevant fiscal year. There can be no assurance that we would not be identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer for any future fiscal year, and if we were so identified for two consecutive years, we would become subject to the prohibition on trading in the United States under the HFCAA. For more details, see “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—The PCAOB had historically been unable to inspect our auditor in relation to their audit work performed for our financial statements and the inability of the PCAOB to conduct inspections of our auditor in the past has deprived our investors with the benefits of such inspection” and “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—Our ADSs may be prohibited from trading in the United States under the HFCAA in the future if the PCAOB is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms located in China. The delisting of the ADSs, or the threat of their being delisted, may materially and adversely affect the value of your investment.”

Permissions Required from the PRC Authorities for Our Operations

We conduct our business primarily through our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs in China. Our operations in China are governed by PRC laws and regulations. As of the date of this annual report, as advised by Commerce & Finance Law Offices, our PRC legal counsel, except as disclosed in this annual report and subject to the uncertainties with respect to the interpretation and application of PRC laws, regulations, and policies, our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, and the VIEs' subsidiaries have obtained the requisite licenses, permits, filings, and approvals from the PRC government authorities that are material for their business operations in China, including, among others, Value-Added Telecommunication Business Operation Licenses, or ICP Licenses, Internet Cultural Business Licenses, or ICB Licenses, Radio and Television Program Production and Operation Licenses, an Internet Medicine Information Services Qualification, and Publication Operation Licenses. However, given the uncertainties of interpretation and implementation of relevant laws and regulations and the enforcement practice by relevant government authorities, we cannot assure you that our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs have obtained all the permits or licenses required for conducting businesses in China. And we may be required to obtain additional licenses, permits, filings, or approvals for our business operations in the future. We cannot assure you that we will be able to obtain such additional licenses, permits, qualifications, or approvals in a timely manner, or at all. For more detailed information, see "Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—If we fail to obtain and maintain the requisite licenses and approvals required under the complex regulatory environment applicable to our businesses in China, or if we are required to take compliance actions in this regard, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected."

For example, on December 28, 2021, the CAC and several other PRC government authorities jointly issued the Cybersecurity Review Measures, which took effect on February 15, 2022. Pursuant to the Cybersecurity Review Measures, critical information infrastructure operators that intend to purchase internet products and services and internet platform operators engaging in data processing activities that affect or may affect national security must be subject to the cybersecurity review. The Cybersecurity Review Measures further stipulate that if an internet platform operator has personal information of over one million users and pursues a foreign listing, it must be subject to the cybersecurity review. In addition, on February 17, 2023, the CSRC promulgated the Trial Administrative Measures of Overseas Securities Offering and Listing by Domestic Companies, or the Overseas Offering and Listing Measures, which came into effect on March 31, 2023. On the same day, the CSRC also published a series of guidance rules and Q&As in connection with the implementation of the Overseas Offering and Listing Measures. The Overseas Offering and Listing Measures establishes a new filing-based regime to regulate overseas offerings and listings by PRC domestic companies, according to which an overseas offering of securities (including shares, depository receipts, corporate bonds convertible into shares and other securities in nature of equity) and listing by a PRC domestic company, either in direct or indirect manner, has to be filed with the CSRC. On February 17, 2023, the CSRC also held a press conference for the release of the Overseas Offering and Listing Measures, which, among other things, clarifies that companies that have already been listed overseas before the effective date of the Overseas Offering and Listing Measures are not required to complete the overseas listing filing immediately, but shall complete filings as required if they conduct refinancing or are involved in other circumstances that require filing with the CSRC.

As of the date of this annual report, we have not been asked to obtain or denied any permission by any PRC government authority in connection with our historical issuances of securities to foreign investors. Based on the foregoing and pursuant to current PRC laws and regulations and in connection with our historical issuances of securities to foreign investors that have been completed before the effective date of the Overseas Offering and Listing Measures, as advised by Commerce & Finance Law Offices, our PRC legal counsel, we, our PRC subsidiaries, and the VIEs, (i) are not required to obtain permissions from the CSRC despite that we shall be required to go through filing procedures with the CSRC for our future issuance or offering of securities (including shares, depository receipts, corporate bonds convertible into shares, and other securities in nature of equity) to foreign investors if we meet certain conditions set forth in the Overseas Offering and Listing Measures for an indirect overseas offering and listing by a PRC domestic company, and (ii) are not required to go through cybersecurity review by the CAC. However, if any of our holding company, our PRC subsidiaries, and the VIEs are deemed to be a critical information infrastructure operator, or CIIIO, or a network platform operator, whose network product or service purchasing or data processing activities affect or may affect national security, we would be required to go through a cybersecurity review by the CAC.

However, the PRC government has recently indicated an intent to exert more oversight and control over offerings that are conducted overseas by, and foreign investment in, China-based issuers, and has promulgated certain regulations and rules in this respect. For more detailed information, see "Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—The PRC government's oversight over our business operations could result in a material adverse change in our operations and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs."

Cash and Asset Flows Through Our Organization

Zhihu Inc. is a holding company with no operations of its own. We conduct our operations in China primarily through our PRC subsidiaries and VIEs in China. As a result, although other means are available for us to obtain financing at the holding company level, Zhihu Inc.'s ability to pay dividends to the shareholders and to service any debt it may incur may depend upon dividends paid by our PRC subsidiaries and service fees paid by the VIEs and their subsidiaries. If any of our subsidiaries incurs debt on its own behalf in the future, the instruments governing such debt may restrict its ability to pay dividends to Zhihu Inc. In addition, under PRC laws and regulations, our PRC subsidiaries are permitted to pay dividends only out of their retained earnings, if any, as determined in accordance with PRC accounting standards and regulations. Furthermore, our PRC subsidiaries and VIEs and their subsidiaries are required to make appropriations to certain statutory reserve funds or may make appropriations to certain discretionary funds, which are not distributable as cash dividends except in the event of a solvent liquidation of the companies. For more details, see "Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—Liquidity and Capital Resources—Holding Company Structure."

The VIEs may transfer cash to the relevant WFOE by paying service fees according to the exclusive business cooperation agreement or exclusive technology development, consultancy and services agreements. In 2020, 2021, and 2022, the total amount of such service fees that VIEs paid to the relevant WFOE under the relevant agreements was RMB159.7 million, RMB45.6 million, and RMB896.3 million (US\$130.0 million), respectively.

Under PRC laws and regulations, our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs and their subsidiaries are subject to certain restrictions with respect to payment of dividends or otherwise transfers of any of their net assets to us. Remittance of dividends by a wholly foreign-owned enterprise out of China is also subject to examination by the banks designated by the PRC State Administration of Foreign Exchange, or the SAFE. These restrictions are benchmarked against the paid-up capital and the statutory reserve funds of our PRC subsidiaries and the net assets of the VIEs in which we have no legal ownership. As of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, the total amount of such restriction to which our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs and their subsidiaries are subject was RMB754.4 million, RMB3.6 billion, and RMB3.1 billion (US\$442.8 million), respectively. For risks relating to the fund flows of our operations in China, see "Item 3. Key Information—Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—We principally rely on dividends and other distributions on equity paid by our PRC subsidiaries to fund any cash and financing requirements we may have. Any limitation on the ability of our PRC subsidiaries to make payments to us could materially and adversely affect our ability to conduct our business or financial condition."

Under PRC laws, Zhihu Inc. may fund its PRC subsidiaries only through capital contributions or loans, and fund the VIEs or their subsidiaries only through loans, subject to satisfaction of applicable government registration and approval requirements. As of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, the aggregate amount of capital contribution by Zhihu Inc. to its intermediate holding companies and subsidiaries was RMB5.9 billion, RMB10.5 billion, and RMB10.3 billion (US\$1.5 billion), respectively, and the outstanding balance of the principal amount of loans to the VIEs and their subsidiaries was RMB45.7 million, RMB51.7 million, and RMB51.7 million (US\$7.5 million), respectively.

In 2020, 2021, and 2022, no assets other than cash were transferred through our organization.

Zhihu Inc. has not declared or paid any cash dividends, nor does it have any present plan to pay any cash dividends on its ordinary shares in the foreseeable future. We currently intend to retain most, if not all, of our available funds and any future earnings to operate and expand our business. See "Item 8. Financial Information—A. Consolidated Statements and Other Financial Information—Dividend Policy." For PRC and United States federal income tax considerations of an investment in our ADSs, see "Item 10. Additional Information—E. Taxation."

A. [Reserved]

Selected Financial Data

The following selected consolidated statements of operations data and selected consolidated statements of cash flow data for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022 and the selected consolidated balance sheet data as of December 31, 2021 and 2022 have been derived from our audited consolidated financial statements, which are included in this annual report beginning on page F-1. Our historical results are not necessarily indicative of results expected for future periods. You should read this selected financial data together with our audited consolidated financial statements and the related notes and information under "Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects" in this annual report. Our consolidated financial statements are prepared and presented in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, or U.S. GAAP.

The following table sets forth our selected consolidated statements of operations data for the years indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	
	RMB	RMB	RMB	US\$
	(in thousands)			
Selected Consolidated Statements of Operations Data:				
Revenues	1,352,196	2,959,324	3,604,919	522,664
Cost of revenues	(594,399)	(1,405,423)	(1,796,867)	(260,521)
Gross profit	757,797	1,553,901	1,808,052	262,143
Selling and marketing expenses	(734,753)	(1,634,733)	(2,026,468)	(293,810)
Research and development expenses	(329,763)	(619,585)	(763,362)	(110,677)
General and administrative expenses	(296,162)	(690,292)	(621,973)	(90,178)
Total operating expenses	(1,360,678)	(2,944,610)	(3,411,803)	(494,665)
Loss from operations	(602,881)	(1,390,709)	(1,603,751)	(232,522)
Investment income	56,087	59,177	70,380	10,204
Interest income	24,751	31,305	68,104	9,874
Fair value change of financial instrument	(68,818)	27,846	(176,685)	(25,617)
Exchange gains/(losses)	62,663	(16,665)	71,749	10,403
Others, net	11,728	(4,391)	5,983	867
Loss before income tax	(516,470)	(1,293,437)	(1,564,220)	(226,791)
Income tax expense	(1,080)	(5,443)	(14,183)	(2,056)
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,578,403)	(228,847)
Net income attributable to noncontrolling interests	—	—	(2,754)	(399)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	(170,585)	—	—
Net loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,198,284)	(1,469,465)	(1,581,157)	(229,246)
Net loss per share				
Basic	(18.36)	(6.12)	(5.19)	(0.75)
Diluted	(18.36)	(6.12)	(5.19)	(0.75)
Weighted average shares used in net loss per share				
Basic	65,279,970	240,174,108	304,836,318	304,836,318
Diluted	65,279,970	240,174,108	304,836,318	304,836,318

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The following table sets forth our selected consolidated balance sheet data as of the dates indicated.

	As of December 31,		
	2021	2022	
	RMB	RMB	US\$
		(in thousands)	
Selected Consolidated Balance Sheet Data:			
Cash and cash equivalents	2,157,161	4,525,852	656,187
Term deposits	2,815,509	948,390	137,504
Short-term investments	2,239,596	787,259	114,142
Total current assets	8,334,165	7,319,799	1,061,272
Term deposits	159,393	—	—
Intangible assets, net	68,308	80,237	11,633
Total non-current assets	471,000	336,440	48,779
Total assets	8,805,165	7,656,239	1,110,051
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,026,534	916,112	132,824
Salary and welfare payables	313,676	283,546	41,110
Contract liabilities	239,757	355,626	51,561
Total current liabilities	1,897,714	1,824,841	264,578
Net current assets	6,436,451	5,494,958	796,694
Total non-current liabilities	169,302	137,130	19,882
Total liabilities	2,067,016	1,961,971	284,460
Net assets	6,738,149	5,694,268	825,591
Total shareholders' equity	6,738,149	5,694,268	825,591
Total liabilities and shareholders' equity	8,805,165	7,656,239	1,110,051

The following table sets forth our selected consolidated statements of cash flow data for the years indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	
	RMB	RMB	RMB	US\$
	(in thousands)			
Selected Consolidated Statements of Cash Flow Data:				
Net cash used in operating activities	(244,421)	(440,234)	(1,114,954)	(161,653)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	430,113	(3,136,503)	3,490,467	506,071
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	9,286	4,876,247	(108,350)	(15,710)
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	(137,508)	(100,169)	101,528	14,720
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	57,470	1,199,341	2,368,691	343,428
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	900,350	957,820	2,157,161	312,759
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	957,820	2,157,161	4,525,852	656,187

Financial Information Relating to the VIEs

The following tables present the condensed consolidating schedules for our consolidated variable interest entities and other entities for the years and as of the dates indicated.

Selected Condensed Consolidated Statements of Operations and Comprehensive Loss Data

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2022					
	Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIEs and Their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	Consolidated Total
			(RMB in thousands)			
Inter-company revenues ⁽¹⁾⁽⁴⁾	—	143,888	1,930,305	866	(2,075,059)	—
Third-party revenues	—	2,034,032	22,884	1,548,003	—	3,604,919
Inter-company cost ^{(1) (4)}	—	(1,358,161)	(133,729)	(582,440)	2,074,330	—
Third-party cost	—	(539,352)	(639,150)	(618,365)	—	(1,796,867)
Gross profit	—	280,407	1,180,310	348,064	(729)	1,808,052
Others, net	—	(8,083)	15,574	(1,508)	—	5,983
Loss of the VIEs	—	—	(11,027)	—	11,027	—
Share of (loss)/income of subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	(1,502,792)	(1,507,327)	9,097	—	3,001,022	—
Loss before income tax	(1,581,157)	(1,487,230)	(1,503,674)	(4,207)	3,012,048	(1,564,220)
Income tax expense	—	(3,583)	(3,652)	(6,948)	—	(14,183)
Net loss	(1,581,157)	(1,490,813)	(1,507,326)	(11,155)	3,012,048	(1,578,403)
Net (income)/loss attributable to noncontrolling interests						
shareholders	—	(2,882)	—	128	—	(2,754)
Foreign currency translation adjustments	273,310	(276,630)	9,350	—	267,280	273,310
Comprehensive loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,307,847)	(1,770,325)	(1,497,976)	(11,027)	3,279,328	(1,307,847)

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2021					
	Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIEs and its Subsidiaries	Eliminations	Consolidated Total
			(RMB in thousands)			
Inter-company revenues ⁽¹⁾⁽⁴⁾	—	85,835	1,817,488	196	(1,903,519)	—
Third-party revenues	—	2,187,253	6,039	766,032	—	2,959,324
Inter-company cost ^{(1) (4)}	—	(1,487,138)	(85,844)	(330,486)	1,903,468	—
Third-party cost	—	(444,113)	(587,920)	(373,390)	—	(1,405,423)
Gross profit	—	341,837	1,149,763	62,352	(51)	1,553,901
Others, net	—	11,770	(13,075)	(3,137)	51	(4,391)
Loss of the VIEs	—	—	(21,266)	—	21,266	—
Share of loss of subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	(1,268,461)	(1,308,592)	(1,480)	—	2,578,533	—
Loss before income tax	(1,298,880)	(1,267,933)	(1,308,592)	(17,831)	2,599,799	(1,293,437)
Income tax expense	—	(2,008)	—	(3,435)	—	(5,443)
Net loss	(1,298,880)	(1,269,941)	(1,308,592)	(21,266)	2,599,799	(1,298,880)
Foreign currency translation adjustments	(143,190)	(65,566)	—	—	65,566	(143,190)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(170,585)	—	—	—	—	(170,585)
Comprehensive loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,612,655)	(1,335,507)	(1,308,592)	(21,266)	2,665,365	(1,612,655)



	For the Year Ended December 31, 2020					Consolidated Total
	Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIEs and their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	
			(RMB in thousands)			
Inter-company revenues ⁽¹⁾⁽⁴⁾	—	30,547	991,771	1,113	(1,023,431)	—
Third-party revenues	—	982,821	442	368,933	—	1,352,196
Inter-company cost ⁽¹⁾⁽⁴⁾	—	(804,374)	(31,064)	(187,993)	1,023,431	—
Third-party cost	—	(101,203)	(315,598)	(177,598)	—	(594,399)
Gross profit	—	107,791	645,551	4,455	—	757,797
Loss of the VIEs	—	—	(7,583)	—	7,583	—
Share of loss of subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	(507,712)	(524,073)	(5,839)	—	1,037,624	—
Loss before income tax	(517,550)	(513,520)	(524,073)	(6,534)	1,045,207	(516,470)
Income tax expense	—	(31)	—	(1,049)	—	(1,080)
Net loss	(517,550)	(513,551)	(524,073)	(7,583)	1,045,207	(517,550)
Foreign currency translation adjustments	(143,326)	(98,859)	—	—	98,859	(143,326)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	—	—	—	—	(680,734)
Comprehensive loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,341,610)	(612,410)	(524,073)	(7,583)	1,144,066	(1,341,610)

Selected Condensed Consolidated Balance Sheet Data

	As of December 31, 2022					
	Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIEs and their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	Consolidated Total
	(RMB in thousands)					
Cash and cash equivalents	197,012	1,761,406	2,316,675	250,759	—	4,525,852
Term deposits	—	803,714	144,676	—	—	948,390
Short-term investments	—	139,966	608,793	38,500	—	787,259
Trade receivable, net	—	701,883	10,572	121,796	—	834,251
Amounts due from related parties	—	2,283	502	22,013	—	24,798
Amounts due from group companies ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾	1,981	153,757	317,515	8,671	(481,924)	—
Prepayments and other current assets	7,651	27,910	95,197	68,491	—	199,249
Total current assets	206,644	3,590,919	3,493,930	510,230	(481,924)	7,319,799
Property and equipment, net	—	1,723	4,754	813	—	7,290
Intangible assets, net	—	12,300	1,813	66,124	—	80,237
Goodwill	—	22,830	—	103,514	—	126,344
Net assets of the VIEs	—	—	(18,602)	—	(18,602)	—
Investment in subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	5,527,483	2,770,503	42,053	—	(8,340,039)	—
Right-of-use assets	—	10,109	85,238	4,772	—	100,119
Other non-current assets	—	791	12,716	8,943	—	22,450
Total non-current assets	5,527,483	2,818,256	127,972	184,166	(8,321,437)	336,440
Total assets	5,734,127	6,409,175	3,621,902	694,396	(8,803,361)	7,656,239
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	4,841	319,274	404,402	187,595	—	916,112
Salary and welfare payables	—	17,928	255,486	10,132	—	283,546
Taxes payable	—	6,583	15,467	3,925	—	25,975
Contract liabilities	—	85,717	484	269,425	—	355,626
Amounts due to related parties	—	—	8,861	16,000	—	24,861
Amounts due to group companies ^{(3) (4)}	58,665	186,544	91,468	145,247	(481,924)	—
Short term lease liabilities	—	6,491	44,271	2,428	—	53,190
Other current liabilities	16,925	110,186	15,429	22,991	—	165,531
Total current liabilities	80,431	732,723	835,868	657,743	(481,924)	1,824,841
Long term lease liabilities	—	3,875	36,967	2,525	—	43,367
Deferred tax liabilities	—	3,075	—	8,555	—	11,630
Other non-current liabilities	—	51,760	—	30,373	—	82,133
Total non-current liabilities	—	58,710	36,967	41,453	—	137,130
Total liabilities	80,431	791,433	872,835	699,196	(481,924)	1,961,971
Total Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders' equity	5,653,696	5,614,860	2,749,067	(18,602)	(8,345,325)	5,653,696
Noncontrolling interests	—	2,882	—	13,802	23,888	40,572
Total shareholders' equity	5,653,696	5,617,742	2,749,067	(4,800)	(8,321,437)	5,694,268
Total liabilities and shareholders' equity	5,734,127	6,409,175	3,621,902	694,396	(8,803,361)	7,656,239

As of December 31, 2021						
Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIEs and their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	Consolidated Total	
(RMB in thousands)						
Cash and cash equivalents	94,427	478,265	1,525,156	59,313	—	2,157,161
Term deposits	—	2,815,509	—	—	—	2,815,509
Short-term investments	—	941,909	863,182	434,505	—	2,239,596
Trade receivable, net	—	771,225	2,121	58,282	—	831,628
Amounts due from related parties	—	5,818	4,407	7,971	—	18,196
Amounts due from group companies ^{(3) (4)}	12,711	62,646	1,553,054	7,742	(1,636,153)	—
Prepayments and other current assets	42,232	33,149	145,941	50,753	—	272,075
Total current assets	149,370	5,108,521	4,093,861	618,566	(1,636,153)	8,334,165
Property and equipment, net	—	2,700	6,608	557	—	9,865
Intangible assets, net	—	—	2,122	66,186	—	68,308
Goodwill	—	—	—	73,663	—	73,663
Net assets of the VIEs	—	—	22,613	—	(22,613)	—
Investment in subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	6,666,713	3,260,373	(14,905)	—	(9,912,181)	—
Long-term investments	—	19,127	—	—	—	19,127
Term deposits	—	159,393	—	—	—	159,393
Right-of-use assets	—	14,504	106,130	5,878	—	126,512
Other non-current assets	—	791	13,098	243	—	14,132
Total non-current assets	6,666,713	3,456,888	135,666	146,527	(9,934,794)	471,000
Total assets	6,816,083	8,565,409	4,229,527	765,093	(11,570,947)	8,805,165
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	30,828	455,139	420,510	120,057	—	1,026,534
Salary and welfare payables	—	29,956	281,247	2,473	—	313,676
Taxes payable	—	3,359	60,317	2,508	—	66,184
Contract liabilities	—	108,994	343	130,420	—	239,757
Amounts due to related parties	—	—	67,288	16,303	—	83,591
Amounts due to group companies ^{(3) (4)}	54,601	1,139,697	21,444	420,411	(1,636,153)	—
Short term lease liabilities	—	5,927	32,985	1,613	—	40,525
Other current liabilities	—	89,204	15,706	22,537	—	127,447
Total current liabilities	85,429	1,832,276	899,840	716,322	(1,636,153)	1,897,714
Long term lease liabilities	—	9,130	69,314	3,689	—	82,133
Deferred tax liabilities	—	—	—	14,030	—	14,030
Other non-current liabilities	—	64,700	—	8,439	—	73,139
Total non-current liabilities	—	73,830	69,314	26,158	—	169,302
Total liabilities	85,429	1,906,106	969,154	742,480	(1,636,153)	2,067,016
Total Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders' equity	6,730,654	6,651,808	3,260,373	22,613	(9,934,794)	6,730,654
Noncontrolling interests	—	7,495	—	—	—	7,495
Total shareholders' equity	6,730,654	6,659,303	3,260,373	22,613	(9,934,794)	6,738,149
Total liabilities and shareholders' equity	6,816,083	8,565,409	4,229,527	765,093	(11,570,947)	8,805,165

Selected Condensed Consolidated Statements of Cash Flow Data

	Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	For the Year Ended December 31, 2022			Consolidated Total
			WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIE and their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	
			(RMB in thousands)			
Purchases of goods and services from group companies ⁽¹⁾	—	(2,429,435)	(98,100)	(906,100)	3,433,635	—
Sales of goods and services to group companies ⁽¹⁾	—	107,900	3,325,735	—	(3,433,635)	—
Other operating/administrative activities with external parties	(51,752)	1,348,530	(3,139,585)	727,853	—	(1,114,954)
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	(51,752)	(973,005)	88,050	(178,247)	—	(1,114,954)
Purchases of short-term investments	—	(4,394,721)	(4,638,000)	(1,513,535)	—	(10,546,256)
Proceeds of maturities of short-term investments	—	5,215,100	4,906,959	1,924,071	—	12,046,130
Purchases of term deposits	—	(3,426,857)	(144,833)	—	—	(3,571,690)
Proceeds from withdrawal of term deposits	—	5,768,675	—	—	—	5,768,675
Repayment from subsidiaries of investment	256,942	—	—	—	(256,942)	—
Investment in subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	—	(649,935)	—	—	649,935	—
Other investing activities with external parties	—	(19,782)	(145,767)	(40,843)	—	(206,392)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	256,942	2,492,480	(21,641)	369,693	392,993	3,490,467
Repayment from subsidiaries of investment	—	(256,942)	—	—	256,942	—
Investment from group companies ⁽²⁾	—	—	649,935	—	(649,935)	—
Payments for repurchase of shares	(127,962)	—	—	—	—	(127,962)
Other financing activities with external parties	19,612	—	—	—	—	19,612
Net cash (used in)/ provided by financing activities	(108,350)	(256,942)	649,935	—	(392,993)	(108,350)
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	5,745	20,608	75,175	—	—	101,528
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	102,585	1,283,141	791,519	191,446	—	2,368,691
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	94,427	478,265	1,525,156	59,313	—	2,157,161
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	197,012	1,761,406	2,316,675	250,759	—	4,525,852

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2021					Consolidated Total
	Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries	VIE and their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	
			(RMB in thousands)			
Purchases of goods and services from group companies ⁽¹⁾	—	(676,191)	(95,561)	(45,579)	817,331	—
Sales of goods and services to group companies ⁽¹⁾	—	115,561	701,770	—	(817,331)	—
Other operating/administrative activities with external parties	(3,182)	1,490,154	(2,359,237)	432,031	—	(440,234)
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	(3,182)	929,524	(1,753,028)	386,452	—	(440,234)
Purchases of short-term investments	—	(2,532,000)	(3,016,000)	(870,000)	—	(6,418,000)
Proceeds of maturities of short-term investments	—	1,804,592	2,940,000	490,000	—	5,234,592
Purchases of term deposits	(64,596)	(3,719,638)	(1,162,729)	—	—	(4,946,963)
Proceeds from withdrawal of term deposits	64,707	1,788,963	1,164,726	—	—	3,018,396
Investment in subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	(4,695,120)	(3,301,321)	—	—	7,996,441	—
Other investing activities with external parties	(19,380)	(2,571)	31,049	(33,626)	—	(24,528)
Net cash (used in)/ provided by investing activities	(4,714,389)	(5,961,975)	(42,954)	(413,626)	7,996,441	(3,136,503)
Proceeds from issuance of Class A ordinary shares upon the completion of IPO, net of issuance cost	4,853,293	—	—	—	—	4,853,293
Investment from group companies ⁽²⁾	—	4,695,120	3,301,321	—	(7,996,441)	—
Other financing activities with external parties	15,544	—	7,410	—	—	22,954
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	4,868,837	4,695,120	3,308,731	—	(7,996,441)	4,876,247
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	(63,673)	(29,602)	(6,894)	—	—	(100,169)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	87,593	(366,933)	1,505,855	(27,174)	—	1,199,341
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	6,834	845,198	19,301	86,487	—	957,820
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	94,427	478,265	1,525,156	59,313	—	2,157,161

For the Year Ended December 31, 2020						
Parent Company	Other Subsidiaries	WFOEs as Primary Beneficiaries (RMB in thousands)	VIE and their Subsidiaries	Eliminations	Consolidated Total	
Purchases of goods and services from group companies ⁽¹⁾	—	(965,110)	(35,230)	(159,651)	1,159,991	—
Sales of goods and services to group companies ⁽¹⁾	—	35,230	1,124,761	—	(1,159,991)	—
Other operating/administrative activities with external parties	(2,606)	837,392	(1,304,643)	225,436	—	(244,421)
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	(2,606)	(92,488)	(215,112)	65,785	—	(244,421)
Purchases of short-term investments	—	(1,013,104)	(4,965,000)	(175,000)	—	(6,153,104)
Proceeds of maturities of short-term investments	—	1,199,676	5,230,000	165,000	—	6,594,676
Purchases of term deposits	—	(2,328,717)	—	—	—	(2,328,717)
Proceeds from withdrawal of term deposits	356,580	1,962,621	—	—	—	2,319,201
Proceeds from repayments of loans to Group companies	978,735	—	45,000	—	(1,023,735)	—
Loans to Group companies	—	—	(70,000)	—	70,000	—
Investment in subsidiaries ⁽²⁾	(1,407,173)	(893,805)	—	—	2,300,978	—
Other investing activities with external parties	—	(586)	(1,357)	—	—	(1,943)
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities	(71,858)	(1,073,915)	238,643	(10,000)	1,347,243	430,113
Repayments of loans from group companies	—	(45,000)	(978,735)	—	1,023,735	—
Loans from group companies	—	70,000	—	—	(70,000)	—
Investment from group companies ⁽²⁾	—	1,407,173	893,805	—	(2,300,978)	—
Other financing activities with external parties	—	739	8,547	—	—	9,286
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	—	1,432,912	(76,383)	—	(1,347,243)	9,286
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	(4,450)	(67,996)	(65,062)	—	—	(137,508)
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents	(78,914)	198,513	(117,914)	55,785	—	57,470
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	85,748	646,685	137,215	30,702	—	900,350
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	6,834	845,198	19,301	86,487	—	957,820

Notes:

- (1) Intercompany sales of goods and services were eliminated at the consolidation level.
- (2) It represents the elimination of the investment in the subsidiaries by group companies.
- (3) The amounts due to group companies mainly represent unsettled service fees among WFOEs as primary beneficiaries, the VIEs and their subsidiaries and other subsidiaries, which are eliminated in the consolidated balance sheet.
- (4) For the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, VIEs have incurred RMB186.1 million, RMB330.5 million, and RMB572.3 million in fees related services provided by the WFOEs and WFOEs concurrently recognized same amounts as revenues. Cash paid by VIEs to WFOEs for service fees were RMB159.7 million, RMB45.6 million, and RMB896.3 million, respectively. Unsettled balance of such transactions was RMB345.9 million and RMB54.6 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

B. Capitalization and Indebtedness

Not applicable.

C. Reasons for the Offer and Use of Proceeds

Not applicable.

D. Risks Factors

Summary of Risk Factors

An investment in the ADSs or our Class A ordinary shares involves significant risks. Below is a summary of material risks that we face, organized under relevant headings. These risks are discussed more fully in “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors.”

Risks Relating to Our Business and Industry

- Our business depends on our ability to offer high-quality user-generated content for our users.
- Our success depends on our ability to attract and maintain an engaged user base.
- If we fail to maintain and strengthen our community culture, brand, and reputation, our ability to expand our user base and enhance content-centric monetization could be impaired, and our business, financial condition, and results of operations could be materially and adversely affected.
- We have incurred net loss and negative operating cash flow in the past, which may continue in the future.
- We may not be able to manage our growth effectively, which may compromise the success of our business.
- We are subject to risks associated with financing activities and liquidity.
- If we fail to retain or attract merchants and brands, or to increase their spending with us, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.
- We cannot assure you that our new business initiatives and monetization strategies will be successfully implemented.
- We operate in a highly competitive market, and may not be able to compete effectively.
- If we fail to keep up with the technological developments, our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects may be materially and adversely affected.
- Our business is subject to complex and evolving laws and regulations regarding cybersecurity and data privacy.

Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure

- We are a Cayman Islands holding company with no equity ownership in the VIEs and we conduct our operations in China through (i) our PRC subsidiaries and (ii) the VIEs, with which we have maintained contractual arrangements, and their subsidiaries. Investors in our ADSs thus are not purchasing equity interest in the VIEs in China but instead are purchasing equity interest in a Cayman Islands holding company. If the PRC government deems that our contractual arrangements with the VIEs do not comply with PRC regulatory restrictions on foreign investment in the relevant industries, or if these regulations or the interpretation of existing regulations change in the future, we could be subject to severe penalties or be forced to relinquish our interests in those operations. Our holding company in the Cayman Islands, the VIEs, and investors of our company face uncertainty about potential future actions by the PRC government that could affect the enforceability of the contractual arrangements with the VIEs and, consequently, significantly affect the financial performance of our consolidated VIEs and our company as a group.
- Our contractual arrangements may not be as effective in providing operational control as direct ownership and shareholders of the VIEs may fail to perform their obligations under our contractual arrangements.
- Our current corporate structure and business operations may be affected by the Foreign Investment Law.

Risks Relating to Doing Business in China

- Changes in China's economic, political or social conditions, or government policies could materially and adversely affect our business and results of operations.
- The legal system in China embodies uncertainties which could limit the legal protections available to us or impose additional requirements and obligations on our business, and PRC laws, rules, and regulations can evolve quickly, which may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.
- The PRC government's oversight over our business operations could result in a material adverse change in our operations and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs.
- If we fail to obtain and maintain the requisite licenses and approvals required under the complex regulatory environment applicable to our businesses in China, or if we are required to take compliance actions in this regard, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.
- The PCAOB had historically been unable to inspect our auditor in relation to their audit work performed for our financial statements and the inability of the PCAOB to conduct inspections of our auditor in the past has deprived our investors with the benefits of such inspections.
- Our ADSs may be prohibited from trading in the United States under the HFCAA in the future if the PCAOB is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms located in China. The delisting of the ADSs, or the threat of their being delisted, may materially and adversely affect the value of your investment.

Risks Relating to Our Class A Ordinary Shares and the ADSs

- The trading prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs have been and may be volatile, which could result in substantial losses to investors.
- Our dual-class voting structure will limit your ability to influence corporate matters and could discourage others from pursuing any change of control transactions that holders of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs may view as beneficial.

Risks Relating to Our Business and Industry

Our business depends on our ability to offer high-quality user-generated content for our users.

Our success depends on our ability to offer high-quality user-generated content, including such content that broadens horizons, provides solutions, and resonates with minds, for our users, which we refer to as “fulfilling” content. The quality of the Zhihu content is fundamental in providing superior user experience and maintaining the attractiveness and value of the Zhihu community. We rely on our experience from past and current operations to inspire, manage, and refine high-quality content, which may not be effective as we do not simply follow user preferences and market trends. If we are unable to expand into new verticals or further develop existing verticals, we may not be able to keep our content offerings comprehensive and up to date. If we fail to maintain the balance between user preferences and our assessment of content quality, the quality of the Zhihu content may be compromised, and the Zhihu community may be less attractive for users. We cannot assure you that our “fulfillment” approach made through our content operations could always effectively yield fulfilling content for users, or that the function and iteration of TopicRank algorithms could interact smoothly with such “fulfillment” approach with our understanding as expected.

We are a UGC-based online content community, where content creators are critical to our continued success. We encourage users to become content creators and provide ongoing support and guidance to them. We cannot assure you that our content creators will continue to create sufficient high-quality content for the Zhihu community, or at all. Any failure to continue to encourage, support, or incentivize content creators may materially and adversely affect the quality of our content offerings.

We offer and curate premium content for our subscribing members through our Yan Selection membership program. If our premium content fails to attract users or meet their expectations, we may not be able to maintain or increase the number of our subscribing members, which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

If we cannot continue to offer high-quality content and enhance our content offerings, the reputation and attractiveness of the Zhihu community could be compromised and we may experience a decline in our user base, which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

Our success depends on our ability to attract and maintain an engaged user base.

Our success and continued growth are driven by our fast growing, diverse, and highly engaged user base. We have experienced significant user growth since inception. Our average MAUs increased by 5.6% from 95.9 million in 2021 to 101.3 million in 2022. Our users also exhibit a high level of engagement through active participation and contribution. We attract and retain users with high-quality content, and any decline in the breadth, depth, and quality of our content offerings may adversely affect our ability to maintain and further expand a large and engaged user base.

We also strategically deploy multi-dimensional growth strategies to complement our word-of-mouth referrals, such as brand marketing, targeted campaigns, and pre-installations on mobile devices, to achieve user growth and increase the engagement of new and existing users. These strategies and user growth efforts may turn out to be ineffective, and we may not be able to acquire more users effectively or may experience a decline in our user base. For example, if some of our efforts to increase user traffic are found to be ineffective or even objectionable, such efforts may not justify the associated costs and could be counterproductive if they lead to negative user experience. Furthermore, we benefit from our strong Zhihu brand and reputation as a go-to destination for trustworthy content, which leads to our low user acquisition costs. Damage to our brand and reputation could materially and adversely affect our user growth and increase our user acquisitions costs.

If we fail to maintain and strengthen our community culture, brand, and reputation, our ability to expand our user base and enhance content-centric monetization could be impaired, and our business, financial condition, and results of operations could be materially and adversely affected.

Our community culture, underpinned by sincerity, expertise, and respect, is critical to the attractiveness of the Zhihu community and user experience. However, we cannot assure you that we can maintain our community culture along with our fast growth, as new users may not honor our community governance protocols or fit well into our culture, which could disrupt the good order of the Zhihu community despite our efforts to encourage new users to embrace and honor our community culture, which could in turn damage other users' experience and discourage them from joining, engaging in, or contributing to, the Zhihu community. In addition, frictions among users and objectionable or otherwise valueless content in our community may damage our community culture and adversely affect the emotional and psychological well-being of our users. If we are unable to maintain our sound community culture, the attractiveness of the Zhihu community could be diminished.

In addition, our brand and reputation are critical to our success and may be adversely affected by objectionable content or user activities in the Zhihu community that are perceived as inappropriate, hostile, or illegal, or by information that is perceived as misleading. We may fail to respond expeditiously to such objectionable content or user activity, or otherwise address user concerns. As our community further grows in scale, we may not be able to identify and respond to such content or user activity in a timely manner, which could erode the trust in our brand and damage our reputation. Any government or regulatory inquiry, investigation, or action based on objectionable content or user activity in the Zhihu community, our business practices, or failure to comply with laws and regulations, could damage our brand and reputation regardless of the outcome.

Furthermore, it is important for us to maintain a good balance between monetization and our reputation for providing superior user experience. Our users may find the advertisements or the commercial content in the Zhihu community irrelevant, unhelpful, or intrusive. If we fail to balance user experience as we further enhance monetization, our brand and reputation may be adversely affected.

We have experienced, and may continue to experience, government, regulatory, investor, media, and other third-party scrutiny of our community, content, data privacy, cybersecurity, or other business practice. Actions of our employees, users, or business partners, or other issues, may also harm our brand and reputation. If we fail to promote and maintain the Zhihu brand or preserve our reputation, or if we incur excessive expenses in this effort, our business, financial condition, and results of operations could be materially and adversely affected.

We have incurred net loss and negative operating cash flow in the past, which may continue in the future.

We have incurred net loss and negative operating cash flow in the past. In 2020, 2021, and 2022, we had net loss of RMB517.6 million, RMB1.3 billion, and RMB1.6 billion (US\$228.8 million) and negative operating cash flow of RMB244.4 million, RMB440.2 million, and RMB1.1 billion (US\$161.7 million), respectively. We cannot assure you that we will be able to generate net profit or positive operating cash flow in the future. Our ability to achieve profitability and positive operating cash flow largely depends on our ability to further expand our user base and enhance monetization, but we cannot assure you that we will continue to maintain a sound growth momentum. We may continue to experience net loss and negative operating cash flow in the future due to increasing content and other costs, including those for commercial content, as well as our continued spending in growth and marketing and investments in technology, people, infrastructure, and new initiatives. We incurred in the past, and expect to continue to incur in future periods, share-based compensation expenses, and we expect our costs and operating expenses to continue to increase in absolute amounts as we expand our business, which may result in future losses. In addition, our ability to achieve and sustain profitability is affected by various factors, some of which are beyond our control, such as changes in macroeconomic conditions, regulatory environment, or competitive dynamics in the industry. If we cannot effectively maintain or achieve revenue growth at scale, or if we are unable to achieve profitability or maintain and enhance our liquidity, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.

We may not be able to manage our growth effectively, which may compromise the success of our business.

We have experienced rapid growth since our inception. The success of our business largely depends on our ability to effectively maintain our user and revenue growth. We attract and retain users with high-quality content, and we also strategically deploy marketing and other user acquisition strategies. Our MAU growth may fluctuate on a quarterly basis, which makes it difficult to predict. Although we expect our user base to continue to experience a growing trend in the near future, we may experience fluctuations of quarterly average MAUs on a quarterly basis, particularly during the fourth and first quarter of a year. For further details, see “Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Our Monetization.”

As we further expand our business, content offerings, and products and services, we may face challenges arising from our continued growth in relation to managerial resources, human resources, technological infrastructure, capital resources, and corporate culture. Therefore, we need to continually expand and enhance our technological infrastructure, operating and financial systems, and other controls and procedures. We also need to expand, train, and manage our growing employees while maintaining our corporate culture. We cannot assure you that our current infrastructure, systems, procedures, and internal controls will be adequate to support our expanding operations, that we can maintain our collaborative corporate culture, or that we can continuously manage our relationships with third parties with success. If we fail to manage our expansion effectively, our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects may be materially and adversely affected.

As we only have a limited history of operating our business at scale, it is difficult to evaluate our current business and future prospects, including our ability to grow in the future. Continued growth could also challenge our ability to provide consistent experience for new and existing users, content creators, and business partners, develop and improve our operating, financial, legal, and management controls, and enhance our reporting systems and procedures. Our costs and expenses may grow faster than our revenues and may be greater than what we anticipate. Managing our growth will require significant expenditures and appropriate allocation of valuable management resources. If we fail to achieve the necessary level of efficiency in our organization as it grows, our business, financial condition, and results of operations could be adversely affected.

We are subject to risks associated with financing activities and liquidity.

Growing and operating our business may require significant cash investments, capital expenditures, and commitments to respond to business challenges, including developing or enhancing new or existing services and technologies and expanding our infrastructure. If cash on hand and cash generated from operations are not sufficient to meet our cash and liquidity needs, we may need to seek additional capital, potentially through debt or equity financings. We may not be able to raise required cash on terms acceptable to us in a timely manner, or at all. Such financings may be on terms that are dilutive or potentially dilutive to our shareholders, and the prices at which new investors would be willing to purchase our securities or related financial instruments may be lower than the current market prices of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs. The holders of new securities may also have rights, preferences, or privileges that are senior to those of existing stockholders. In addition, we currently have limited asset to pledge for loans or other debt financing transactions. If new financing sources are required, but are insufficient or unavailable, we may need to modify our growth and operating plans and business strategies based on available funding, if any, which would harm our ability to grow our business.

If we fail to retain or attract merchants and brands, or to increase their spending with us, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.

Revenues generated from our business side customers, such as advertising and content-commerce solutions revenue from merchants and brands, is crucial to our business. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, the combined revenues from advertising and content-commerce solutions accounted for 72.4%, 72.1%, and 54.3% of our total revenue, respectively. We cannot assure you that we will be able to retain existing or attract new merchants and brands effectively. If the marketing budgets of merchants and brands decrease, or if they believe that they can achieve better returns elsewhere, we may experience a decline in their spending with us. Our competitors may provide better advertising or content-commerce solutions. If merchants and brands believe that their spending on online content communities do not generate expected returns, they may also switch to other internet channels such as search engines, news platforms, short video platforms, e-commerce platforms, and social media platforms, or other traditional channels such as television, newspapers, and magazines, and reduce or discontinue business with us. Merchants and brands may find online advertising to be ineffective to market their products and services, and competition may lead to a decrease in our fee rates. In addition, our content-commerce solutions are still at an early stage of development. If the commercial content created through our content-commerce solutions does not appeal to or is not successfully distributed to the targeted audience, this business may not attract sufficient merchants and brands or generate expected revenue. Moreover, merchants and brands may have limited experience in content-commerce solutions, and may not be able to utilize our solutions effectively to achieve expected commercial results or otherwise meet their expectation. Furthermore, some of the merchants and brands may have different budget allocation strategies, which may affect their spending on our online advertising and content-commerce solutions. Failure to retain existing or attract new merchants and brands, to increase their spending with us, or to develop effective online advertising or content-commerce solutions may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We cannot assure you that our new business initiatives and monetization strategies will be successfully implemented.

Our content-centric monetization strategies are evolving. We derive revenues primarily from online advertising, paid membership, content-commerce solutions, and vocational training. We seek to maintain a delicate balance between our monetization needs and the necessity of maintaining a positive user experience on Zhihu with a reasonable level of presentation of advertising and commercial content. We also continue to identify monetization opportunities and introduce additional products and services, such as e-commerce. We may have limited experience in operating and achieving profitability in new business initiatives. If our new business initiatives or monetization strategies fail, we may not be able to maintain or increase our revenue or recover any associated costs, expenses, and other expenditures. If these new business initiatives fail to attract or retain users or to generate sufficient revenue to justify our investments, or if our advertising and commercial content significantly impedes user experience, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.

We operate in a highly competitive market, and may not be able to compete effectively.

We operate along other online content communities, including Q&A-inspired online communities. Some of our competitors have a longer operating history, a larger user base, or greater financial resources than we do. We compete to attract, engage, and retain users, content creators, and merchants and brands. Our competitors may compete with us in a variety of ways, including by providing better content, fulfilling evolving user needs, providing content creation utilities, as well as conducting brand promotions and other marketing activities. Except for certain exclusive content on Zhihu, our content creators are generally free to post their content on our competitors' communities or platforms, which may divert user traffic from the Zhihu community. If any of our competitors achieves greater market acceptance than we do or is able to offer more attractive content, our user base and our market share may decrease, which may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

If we fail to keep up with the technological developments, our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects may be materially and adversely affected.

The online content communities are rapidly evolving with continued technological advancement, and our success will depend on our ability to keep up with such technological advancement. For example, failure to maintain or improve the effectiveness of our "fulfillness" approach and TopicRank algorithms may impair our comprehension of content and understanding of content creators and thus adversely affect our capability to manage content operations and the user experience; failure of our low-quality content-filtering system and anti-spamming system may adversely affect our ability to ensure a healthy community culture and provide superior user experience; failure to introduce effective productivity tools to content creators may cause a decline in the volume and quality of our content, which would adversely affect the attractiveness of the Zhihu community; and failure to continually refine our question routing system may lead to difficulties in distributing content to relevant users, which could result in reduced user traffic and user base.

We may not be able to execute our technological strategies successfully due to a variety of reasons such as technical difficulties, inaccurate predictions of industry trend and demand, or lack of necessary resources. Failure to keep up with technological advancement may result in less attractive products and services, which may in turn materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects.

Our business is subject to complex and evolving laws and regulations regarding cybersecurity and data privacy.

We face challenges with respect to the complex and evolving laws and regulations regarding cybersecurity and data privacy. We collect personal data from our users in order to better understand them and their needs, and are subject to cybersecurity and data privacy laws in China and other applicable jurisdictions, including without limitation the PRC Cybersecurity Law, the PRC Data Security Law, and the PRC Personal Information Protection Law, pursuant to which we are required to maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the information of our users, customers, and suppliers, which is also essential to maintaining their confidence in our services. However, the interpretation and implementation of such laws in China and elsewhere are often subject to uncertainties. Concerns about the collection, use, disclosure, or security of personal information or other privacy-related matters, with or without merit, or failure to comply with the relevant laws and regulations could subject us to penalties, damage our reputation and brand, cause us to lose users, or result in increased operating cost and expenses, any of which could materially and adversely affect our business and results of operations.

In November 2016, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress promulgated the PRC Cybersecurity Law, which took effect on June 1, 2017 and provides that network operators must meet their cybersecurity obligations and must take technical measures and other necessary measures to protect the safety and stability of their networks. The Cybersecurity Law is still subject to interpretation by the PRC government authorities. Although we only gain access to user information that is necessary for, and relevant to, the services provided, the data we obtain and use may include information that is deemed as "personal information" under the Cybersecurity Law and related data privacy and protection laws and regulations. See "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—Regulations Relating to Information Security."

In addition, on June 10, 2021, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress promulgated the PRC Data Security Law, which took effect on September 1, 2021. The PRC Data Security Law provides for a data security review procedure for the data processing activities that affect or may affect national security. It also imposes data security obligations on persons and entities conducting data processing activities and requires data processors to take necessary measures to protect data security. On August 20, 2021, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress promulgated the PRC Personal Information Protection Law, which took effect on November 1, 2021. Although it is our policy to only access user information that is necessary for, and relevant to, the services provided and we update our privacy policies and practices in accordance with regulatory developments, we may be required to make further adjustments to our data practices as the PRC Personal Information Protection Law is newly promulgated and the interpretation of many of its specific requirements remain to be clarified by the government authorities or is otherwise subject to uncertainties.

The PRC government authorities also further enhanced the supervision and regulation of cross-border data transmission. On July 7, 2022, the CAC promulgated the Measures for the Security Assessment of Cross-Border Data Transmission, which took effect on September 1, 2022. In accordance with these measures, data processors will be subject to security assessment conducted by the CAC prior to any cross-border data transmission if the transmission involves (i) important data, (ii) personal information transmitted overseas by a critical information infrastructure operator or a data processor that has processed personal data of more than one million persons, (iii) personal information transmitted overseas by a data processor that has already provided personal data of 100,000 persons or sensitive personal data of 10,000 persons overseas since January 1 of the preceding year, or (iv) other circumstances as required by the CAC. In addition, any cross-border data transmission activities conducted in violation of the Measures for the Security Assessment of Cross-Border Data Transmission before the effectiveness of these measures are required to be rectified within six months of the effectiveness date thereof. Since these measures are relatively new, there are still substantial uncertainties with respect to the interpretation and implementation of these measures in practice and how they will affect our business operation.

While we take measures to comply with all applicable cybersecurity and data privacy laws and regulations, we cannot assure you the effectiveness of the measures undertaken by us and our business partners. The activities of third parties, such as merchants, brands, and other business partners are beyond our control. If any of these third parties violate the PRC Cybersecurity Law and related laws and regulations, or fail to fully comply with the service agreements with us, or if any of our employees fails to comply with our control measures and misuses the information, we may be subject to regulatory actions, disputes and litigations. Any actual or perceived failure to comply with all applicable cybersecurity and data privacy laws and regulations, or any actual or perceived failure of our business partners to do so, or any actual or perceived failure of our employees to comply with our internal control measures, may result in legal proceedings or regulatory actions against us, and could damage our reputation, discourage current and potential users and business partners from using our services and subject us to claims, fines, and damages, which could materially and adversely affect our business and results of operations.

New laws or regulations concerning data protection, or the interpretation and implementation of existing data security and privacy protection laws or regulations may be announced, published for public consultations, issued, or promulgated from time to time. For example, on December 28, 2021, the CAC, the NDRC, the MIIT, and several other PRC government authorities jointly issued the Cybersecurity Review Measures, which took effect on February 15, 2022 and restate and expand the applicable scope of the cybersecurity review as set forth in the Measures for Cybersecurity Review that were promulgated in April 2020 and effective in June 2020. Pursuant to the Cybersecurity Review Measures, critical information infrastructure operators that intend to purchase internet products and services and internet platform operators engaging in data processing activities that affect or may affect national security must be subject to the cybersecurity review. The Cybersecurity Review Measures further stipulate that if an internet platform operator has personal information of over one million users and pursues a foreign listing, it must be subject to the cybersecurity review. Given that the Cybersecurity Review Measures was recently promulgated, there are substantial uncertainties as to its interpretation, application, and enforcement. On November 14, 2021, the CAC published a draft of the Administrative Regulations for Internet Data Security, or the Draft Data Security Regulations, for public comments. The Draft Data Security Regulations provides that data processors conducting the following activities must apply for cybersecurity review: (i) merger, reorganization, or division of internet platform operators that have acquired a large number of data resources related to national security, economic development, or public interests, which affects or may affect national security; (ii) a foreign listing by a data processor processing personal information of over one million users; (iii) a listing in Hong Kong which affects or may affect national security; or (iv) other data processing activities that affect or may affect national security. There have been no further clarifications from the authorities as of the date of this annual report as to the standards for determining such activities that “affects or may affect national security.” The period for which the CAC solicited comments on this draft ended on December 13, 2021, but there is no timetable as to when the draft regulations will be enacted. As such, substantial uncertainties exist with respect to the enactment timetable, final content, interpretation, and implementation of the draft regulations, including the standards for determining activities that “affects or may affect national security.”

Furthermore, the PRC government authorities have taken steps to limit the method and manner that the internet companies may apply when using the algorithms. For instance, the CAC, together with eight other government authorities, jointly issued the Guidelines on Strengthening the Comprehensive Regulation of Algorithms for Internet Information Services on September 17, 2021, which provide that daily monitoring of data use, application scenarios, and effects of algorithms must be carried out by the relevant regulators, and relevant regulators should conduct security assessments of algorithms. The guidelines also provide that an algorithm filing system should be established, and classified security management of algorithms should be promoted. In addition, on December 31, 2021, the CAC, the MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security, and the SAMR promulgated the Administrative Provisions on Internet Information Service Algorithm-Based Recommendation, which took effect on March 1, 2022. The Administrative Provisions on Internet Information Service Algorithm-Based Recommendation stipulates that algorithm-based recommendation service providers should inform users of their provision of algorithm-based recommendation services in a conspicuous manner, and publicize the basic principles, purpose intentions, and main operating mechanisms of algorithm-based recommendation services in an appropriate manner. Although our current operations were in compliance in material respects with the algorithm-based recommendation rules, we cannot assure you that our content operations will continue to be in compliance with the algorithm-based recommendation rules in all respects. If our content operations are forced to change in a way to ensure full compliance with the algorithm-based recommendation rules, our ability to enhance the quality of content in the Zhihu community may be adversely affected.

The interpretation and application of these PRC cybersecurity and data privacy laws, regulations, and standards are still evolving. It hence remains uncertain whether the future regulatory changes would impose additional compliance requirements on companies like us. We cannot predict the impact of the Draft Data Security Regulations, if any, at this stage, and we will closely monitor and follow any development in the promulgation process. It is uncertain when the final measures will be issued and take effect, how they will be enacted, interpreted, or implemented, and whether and how they will affect us. If the enacted version of the Draft Data Security Regulations mandates clearance of cybersecurity review and other specific actions on companies like us, we face uncertainties as to whether such clearance can be timely obtained, or at all. If we are not able to comply with the cybersecurity and data privacy requirements in a timely manner, or at all, we may be subject to government enforcement actions and investigations, fines, penalties, suspension of our non-compliant operations, or removal of our app from the relevant application stores, among other penalties, which could materially and adversely affect our business and results of operations. See “Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—Regulations Relating to Information Security.”

Complying with evolving laws and regulations could cause us to incur substantial costs or require us to change our business practices in a manner materially increases our operating cost and expenses or affects our growth momentum that can be adverse to our business. In addition, some foreign countries are considering or have passed legislation implementing data protection requirements or requiring local storage and processing of data or similar requirements that could increase the cost and complexity of delivering our services.

Any compromise of the cybersecurity of our online community could materially and adversely affect our business, operations, and reputation.

Our products and services involve the storage and transmission of users’ and other customers’ information, and security breaches or vulnerabilities affecting our or our vendors’ technology, products, and systems could expose us to a risk of loss of this information, litigation, and potential liability. We experience cyber-attacks of varying degrees from time to time, and we have been able to neutralize attacks without significant impact to our operations in the past. We use third-party technology and systems for a variety of reasons, such as data storage and transmission, cloud services, and other functions. Some of such systems have experienced past security breaches, and, although they did not have a material adverse effect on our operating results, we cannot assure you a similar result in the future. Our security measures may also be breached due to employee error, malfeasance, or otherwise. In addition, outside parties may attempt to fraudulently induce employees, users, or other customers to disclose sensitive information in order to gain access to our data or our users’ or other customers’ data or accounts, or may otherwise obtain access to such data or accounts. Because the techniques used to obtain unauthorized access, disable, or degrade service or sabotage systems change frequently and often are not recognized until launched against a target, we may be unable to anticipate these techniques or to implement adequate preventative measures. If an actual or perceived breach of our security occurs, the market perception of the effectiveness of our security measures could be harmed, we could lose users and other customers, and may be exposed to significant legal and financial risks, including legal claims and regulatory fines and penalties. Any of these actions could materially and adversely affect our business, reputation, and results of operations.

We may be subject to regulatory actions or legal proceedings in the ordinary course of our business. If the outcomes of these regulatory actions or legal proceedings are adverse to us, it could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We may be subject to regulatory actions, litigation, disputes, or claims of various types brought by relevant regulatory authorities or our competitors, users, content creators, employees, or other third parties against us in the ordinary course of our business. Such regulatory actions, disputes, allegations, complaints, or legal proceedings may damage our reputation, evolve into litigations, or otherwise materially and adversely affect our reputation and business. For example, as a UGC-based online content community, we may not be able to identify and remove all illegal or inappropriate content in response to user or any third-party complaints on a timely basis. As such, we have been, and expect to continue to be, involved in disputes or legal proceedings arising out of defamation, invasion of privacy, or other infringement claims. We may become subject to additional types of legal or regulatory proceedings as our business grows and the variety of our services expands. Litigation is expensive, may subject us to the risk of significant damages, requires significant managerial resources and attention, and could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations. The outcomes of actions we institute may not be successful or favorable to us. Lawsuits against us, whether meritorious or not, may also generate negative publicity that significantly harms our reputation, which may adversely affect our user base.

Advertisements displayed in the Zhihu community may subject us to penalties and other administrative actions.

We monitor the advertisements displayed in the Zhihu community to ensure that they comply with applicable laws and regulations. In addition, where advertisers are required to obtain special government approvals for specific types of advertisements prior to delivering such advertisements on the internet, such as advertisements relating to medical care, pharmaceuticals, medical instruments, agrochemicals, and veterinary pharmaceuticals, we take steps to check or verify that the advertisers have fulfilled the requisite government requirements. Non-compliance with these laws and regulations may subject us to penalties, including imposition of fines, confiscation of our advertising income, order to cease dissemination of the advertisements, and order to publish an announcement correcting the misleading information. Under the circumstances of any serious violation by us, PRC government authorities may force us to terminate our online advertising services or revoke our licenses, and we and responsible persons may incur criminal liability.

We cannot assure you that all content contained in the advertisements displayed in the Zhihu community complies with applicable advertising laws and regulations, especially given the uncertainty in the interpretation of certain relevant PRC laws and regulations. The PRC government may, from time to time, promulgate new advertising laws and regulations in the future to impose further requirements on online advertising services relating to specific industries, such as medical care, pharmaceuticals, health care, and other similar businesses. If we are found to be in violation of applicable PRC advertising laws and regulations, we may be subject to penalties and our reputation may be harmed, which may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects.

We depend on service providers to provide services that are critical to our business, which exposes us to various risks that may materially and adversely affect our reputation, business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We currently use a large number of third-party service providers to provide services that are critical to our businesses. We have engaged third-party service providers to provide online payment, content distribution, data support, and other services. If any of these service providers breaches the obligations under the contractual arrangements to provide such service to us, or refuses to renew these service agreements on terms acceptable to us, we may not be able to find a suitable alternative provider for the service. Similarly, any failure of or significant quality deterioration in such service provider's service platform or system could materially and adversely affect our user perception and may also result in reduced user visits or cancellation of premium content purchases. If any such risks were to materialize, our reputation, business, financial condition, and results of operations could be materially and adversely affected.

Any significant disruption to our technology infrastructure or our failure to maintain the satisfactory performance, security, and integrity of our technology infrastructure would adversely affect user experience and harm our reputation.

Our ability to provide users with superior experience depends on the continuous and reliable operation of our technology infrastructure, including our IT systems and cloud infrastructure, the failure of which may significantly impair our user experience and decrease the overall attractiveness of our community to both users and advertisers. Disruptions, failures, or unscheduled service interruptions could hurt our reputation and cause our users and advertising clients to choose our competitors' platforms. Our IT systems are vulnerable to damage or interruption as a result of fires, floods, earthquakes, power losses, telecommunications failures, undetected errors in software, computer viruses, hacking, and other attempts to harm our systems. These interruptions may be due to unforeseen events that are beyond our control or the control of our third-party service providers. We have experienced general intermittent interruptions in the past, and may continue to experience similar interruptions in the future despite our continuous efforts to improve our IT systems. Since we host our servers at third-party internet data centers, any natural disaster or unexpected closure of internet data centers operated by third-party providers may result in lengthy service interruptions.

If we experience frequent or persistent service disruptions, whether caused by failures of our own systems or those of third-party service providers, the experience of our users and merchants and brands with us may be negatively affected, which in turn, may materially and adversely affect our reputation. We cannot assure you that we will be successful in minimizing the frequency or duration of service interruptions. As our user base further grows and our users generate more content in our community, including videos which are larger in size, we may be required to expand and adapt our technology infrastructure to reliably store, process, monitor, and distribute the content, the failure of which could also adversely affect our user experience.

Non-compliance on the part of our employees, business partners, or other third parties involved in our business could adversely affect our business.

Our compliance controls, policies, and procedures may not protect us from acts of our employees, business partners, or other third-parties that violate the laws or regulations of the jurisdictions in which we operate, which may adversely affect our business. In addition, our business partners may be subject to regulatory penalties or punishments because of their regulatory compliance failures, which may, directly or indirectly, disrupt our business. We identify irregularities or non-compliance in the business practices of any parties with whom we pursue existing or future cooperation and we cannot assure you that any of these irregularities will be corrected in a prompt and proper manner. The legal liabilities and regulatory actions on our business partners or other third parties involved in our business may affect our business activities and reputation and in turn, our results of operations.

If content in our online community is found to be objectionable or in violation of any PRC laws or regulations, we may be subject to administrative actions or negative publicity.

Content in our community may draw social attention, which may cause controversies. Moreover, the PRC government and regulatory authorities have adopted regulations governing illegal content and information over the internet. Under these regulations, internet content providers are prohibited from posting or displaying over the internet content that, among other things, violates PRC laws and regulations, impairs the national dignity of China or the public interest, or is obscene, superstitious, fraudulent, violent, or defamatory. Internet content providers are also prohibited from displaying content that may be deemed by relevant government authorities as socially destabilizing or leaking state secrets of China. The PRC government and regulatory authorities strengthen the regulation on internet content from time to time. For example, the PRC Cybersecurity Law provides that, among other things, a network operator must keep record of and report any instances of public dissemination of prohibited content and failure to do so may result in revocation of its relevant business license and termination of business. With respect to audio-visual and live streaming content, the Administrative Provisions on Online Audio-Visual Information Services provide that online audio-visual information service providers are the principals responsible for managing the security of information content, and should establish and improve their internal policies on user registration, scrutiny of information publication, and information security management, and that they must report users' production, publication, and dissemination of prohibited content. In addition, the Regulations on Administration of Network Short Video Platforms require that all short videos to be reviewed before being broadcasted. Moreover, the Circular of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television on Issues Concerning Strengthening the Administration of Online Live Streaming of Audio-Visual Programs requires online audio-visual live streaming service providers to monitor the living streaming content, and to have an established emergency reaction plan to replace content that violates PRC laws and regulations. The Administrative Regulations on Online Live Streaming Services require online live streaming service providers to establish review platforms for live streaming content. Any failure to comply with the aforementioned regulations may cause negative publicity and subject us to fines or other penalties, which could materially and adversely affect our business, reputation, and results of operations. We have been fined and subject to other penalties imposed by the relevant authorities, including official reprimands, suspension of content dissemination, fines, and removal or suspension of our apps from mobile app distribution channels, due to illegal content in our community. For example, in March 2018, per order by Beijing Cybersecurity Administration, our Zhihu app was temporarily removed from Apple's and Android's app stores for seven days due to dissemination of inappropriate information and mismanagement of the community. In addition, the PRC regulatory authorities may conduct supervisory interviews with internet content providers, including us, regarding content deemed to be inappropriate or objectionable. We have been subject to, and expect to continue to be subject to, supervisory interviews from time to time, which may cause negative publicity and harm our reputation. For more information on relevant laws and regulations, see "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—Regulations Relating to Internet Audio-Visual Program Services," and "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—Regulations Relating to Information Security."

We cannot assure you that we can identify all objectionable or illicit content or timely remove such content due to the large amount of content uploaded by our users every day. Failure to identify and prevent illegal or inappropriate content from being uploaded to our community could, from time to time, subject us to negative publicity or regulatory challenges and actions, such as official reprimands, imposition of fines, limiting the dissemination of content, and suspension or removal from app distribution channels.

Laws, regulations, and rules, government or judicial interpretations, and implementations may change in a manner that could render our current efforts insufficient. If government actions or penalties are brought or pending against us, or if there is publicity that government actions or penalties have been brought or otherwise are pending against us, our reputation and brand image could be harmed, we may lose users and business partners, and our revenue and results of operation may be materially and adversely affected.

We may be subject to risks associated with strategic acquisitions.

When appropriate opportunities arise, we may strategically acquire additional businesses or assets that are complementary to our existing business. The acquisitions and the subsequent integration of new businesses and assets into our own require significant attention from our management and could result in a diversion of resources from our existing business, which in turn could materially and adversely affect our operations. Acquired assets or businesses may not generate the financial results or realize the synergies as we expect. For example, we may not realize the intended synergies following our acquisitions of related businesses in vocational training space in enriching the content supply for our relevant operations if we fail to effectively integrate their businesses.

In addition, we may not be able to effectively identify appropriate businesses for strategic acquisitions, and the costs of identifying and consummating acquisitions may be significant. Acquisitions could result in the use of substantial amount of cash, potentially dilutive issuances of equity securities, the recognition of goodwill in connection with acquisitions, which may lead to significant impairment charges, amortization expenses for other intangible assets, and exposure to potential unknown liabilities of the acquired business. Our acquisitions involved and may continue to involve performance-based purchase price adjustments, which may result in an increase in the cash or equity-based consideration. We may need approvals and licenses from relevant government authorities for the acquisitions and to comply with any applicable PRC laws and regulations, which could result in increasing delay and costs and may derail our business strategy if we fail to do so. Any failure in relation to the potential strategic acquisitions, or other potential strategic alliances we may enter with various parties from time to time, may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We work with certain channel partners, which mainly include partners for pre-installations on mobile devices and application marketplaces, for our user growth. If any of our major channel partners becomes less effective or terminates collaboration with us, our user growth, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects could be materially and adversely affected.

We work with certain channel partners for app pre-installations of on mobile devices to support our user growth. Currently, all pre-installations of the Zhihu app are made on Android devices, representing an insignificant portion of the Zhihu app installations on Android devices. Due to the intense competition, these channel partners may raise their charges on us to a point where it becomes cost inefficient for us to increase user growth through them, or they may decide to discontinue their collaboration with us. In addition, if these channel partners raise their charges on us, our margins could be adversely affected. The collaboration also highly depends on the total amount of smartphone shipment and sales of these channel partners, which may fluctuate or slow down compared with prior years. The growth of our user base is impacted by the pre-installations of the Zhihu app on mobile devices. A continued slowdown of new smartphone market in China may adversely affect our user growth.

In addition, we work with application marketplaces, such as Apple's app store and various app stores on Android devices, to drive downloads of the Zhihu app. Currently, a majority of the downloads of the Zhihu app are from the app stores on Android devices. As such, the promotion, distribution, and operation of the Zhihu app are subject to the standard terms and policies for application developers of these application marketplaces, which are subject to the interpretation of, and frequent changes by, these application marketplaces. If these third-party application marketplaces change their terms and conditions in a manner that is detrimental to us, or refuse to distribute the Zhihu app, or if any other major channel with which we seek collaboration becomes less popular or effective, or refuses to collaborate with us in the future on commercially favorable terms, our user growth, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects may be materially and adversely affected.

Many of our products and services utilize open-source software, which may pose particular risks to our proprietary software, products and services in a manner that negatively affects our business.

We use open source software in our products and services and will continue to use open source software in the future. There is a risk that open source software licenses could be construed in a manner that imposes unanticipated conditions or restrictions on our ability to provide or distribute our products or services. Additionally, we may face claims from third parties claiming ownership of, or demanding release of, the open source software or derivative works that we developed using such software. These claims could result in litigation and could require us to make our software source code freely available, purchase a costly license or cease offering the implicated products or services unless and until we can re-engineer them to avoid infringement. This re-engineering process could require significant additional research and development resources, and we may not be able to complete it successfully.

Our success depends on the efforts of our key employees, including our senior management members and other technology talents. If we fail to hire, retain, and motivate our key employees, our business may suffer.

We depend on the continued contributions of our senior management and other key employees, many of whom are difficult to replace. The loss of the services of any of our executive officers or other key employees could harm our business. Competition for qualified talent in China is intense, particularly in the content-related internet and technology industries. Our future success depends on our ability to attract a large number of qualified employees and retain existing key employees. If we are unable to do so, our business and growth may be materially and adversely affected and the trading prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs could suffer. Our need to significantly increase the number of our qualified employees and retain key employees may cause us to materially increase compensation-related costs, including stock-based compensation.

We have granted, and may continue to grant, options and other types of awards under our share incentive plan, which may result in increased share-based compensation expenses.

We adopted an equity incentive plan in 2012, or the 2012 Plan, and a 2022 share incentive plan, or the 2022 Plan. For the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, we recorded RMB180.1 million, RMB548.5 million, and RMB373.9 million (US\$54.2 million), respectively, in share-based compensation expenses. Competition for highly skilled personnel is often intense and we may incur significant costs or may not be successful in attracting, integrating, or retaining qualified personnel to fulfill our current or future needs. We believe the granting of share-based awards is of significant importance to our ability to attract and retain key personnel and employees, and we will continue to grant share-based awards in the future. As a result, our expenses associated with share-based compensation may increase, which may have an adverse effect on our results of operations.

Furthermore, perspective candidates and existing employees often consider the value of the equity awards they receive in connection with their employment. Thus, our ability to attract or retain highly skilled employees may be adversely affected by declines in the perceived value of our equity or equity awards. Furthermore, there are no assurances that the number of shares reserved for issuance under the 2022 Plan will be sufficient to grant equity awards adequate to recruit new employees and to compensate existing employees

We are subject to risks associated with cash management activities.

We invest our cash reserved for future deployment in wealth management products for cash management purposes from time to time, which generate investment income. Our investments in wealth management products are associated with various risks. Under PRC law, banks and wealth management agencies are not allowed to contractually promise that the wealth management products that they offer are principal-guaranteed or will yield interest income. In addition, we are subject to risks that any of the banks or wealth management agencies that sell us wealth management products may not perform their contractual obligations, such as in the event of insolvency. As a result, the income generated from and the market value of the wealth management products that we purchase may be adversely affected. The aforementioned risks are subject to market and economic conditions. Government policies affecting wealth management products and our investment policy may also change in ways unfavorable to us. As we may continue to conduct those cash management activities, if any of the above adverse events occur, the products may fail to generate our expected return and we may even incur loss as a result.

We are subject to payment processing risk.

Our subscribing members and business partners pay us using a variety of different online payment methods. We rely on third parties to process such payment. Acceptance and processing of these payment methods are subject to certain rules and regulations and require payment of interchange and other fees. To the extent there are increases in payment processing fees, material changes in the payment ecosystem, such as delays in receiving payments from payment processors and/or changes to rules or regulations concerning payment processing, our revenue, operating expenses and results of operation could be adversely impacted.

We also do not have control over the security measures of our third-party payment service providers, and security breaches of the online payment systems that we use could expose us to litigation and possible liability for failing to secure confidential customer information and could, among other things, damage our reputation and the perceived security of all of the online payment systems that we use. If a well-publicized internet security breach were to occur, users concerned about the security of their online payments may become reluctant to purchase our products and services through payment service providers even if the publicized breach did not involve the payment systems or methods we use. If any of the above were to occur and damage our reputation or the perceived security of the payment systems that we use, we may lose subscribing members as they may be discouraged from purchasing products or services in our community, which may adversely affect our business and results of operations.

We have been, and may continue to be, subject to claims and allegations relating to intellectual property and other causes.

As a leading online content community, it is essential for us to operate our business without infringing or otherwise violating third-party rights, including third-party intellectual property rights. Companies in the internet, technology, and media industries own, and are seeking to obtain, a large number of patents, copyrights, trademarks, know-how, and trade secrets, and they are frequently involved in litigation arising from allegations of infringement, misappropriation, or other violations of intellectual property rights. There may be third-party patents issued or pending that cover significant aspects of our technologies, products, or services, and such third parties may attempt to enforce such rights against us. The content in our community may expose us to claims and allegations relating to intellectual property and other causes. Although we have processes and procedures to screen content that is subject to copyright or other intellectual property right claims, we may not be able to identify, remove, or disable all potentially infringing content that may exist. As a result, third parties may act and file claims against us if they believe that certain Zhihu content violates their copyright or other intellectual property rights.

We are presently involved in and expect to continue to be subject to legal or administrative actions for defamation, negligence, copyright and trademark infringement, unfair competition, breach of service terms, or other purported injuries resulting from the Zhihu content and the nature of our services. Such legal and administrative actions, with or without merits, may be expensive and time-consuming, may result in significant diversion of resources and management attention from our business operations, and may adversely affect our brand and reputation. As of the date of this annual report, we were not subject to any claims or allegations relating to intellectual property that were material to our business operations.

We may not be able to adequately protect our intellectual property rights, and any failure to protect our intellectual property rights from infringement such as unauthorized use of our intellectual properties by third parties and the expenses incurred in protecting our intellectual property rights could materially and adversely affect our business and competitive position.

We rely on a combination of patent, trademark, copyright, domain name, and trade secret protection laws in China and other jurisdictions, as well as confidentiality procedures and other contractual terms to protect our intellectual property rights and brand. Protection of intellectual property rights in China may not be effective in protecting our rights, and, as a result, we may not be able to adequately protect our intellectual property rights, which could materially and adversely affect our business and competitive position. These violations of intellectual property rights, whether or not successfully defended, may also discourage content creation. In addition, any unauthorized use of our intellectual properties by third parties may adversely affect our business and reputation. In particular, our members may abuse their membership privilege or illegally distribute paid content exclusively available to paid members, which could materially and adversely affect our business. Furthermore, we may have difficulty addressing the threats to our business associated with infringement of our copyrighted content, particularly our premium content available under our Yan Selection membership program. Our content may be potentially subject to unauthorized copying and illegal digital dissemination without any economic return to us. We adopt a variety of measures to mitigate such risks, including by litigation and through technology measures. However, we cannot assure you that such measures will be effective in protecting our intellectual property rights.

While we typically require our employees, consultants, and contractors who may be involved in the development of intellectual properties to execute agreements assigning such intellectual property rights to us, we may fail to execute such an agreement with each party who in fact develops intellectual properties that we regard as our own. In addition, such agreements may not be self-executing such that the intellectual property rights subject to such agreements may be assigned to us only with additional assignments being executed, and we may fail to obtain such assignments. Furthermore, such agreements may be breached. Accordingly, we may be forced to act against third parties, or defend claims that they may bring against us relating to the ownership of such intellectual property rights.

Managing or preventing unauthorized use of intellectual properties is difficult and expensive, and we may need to resort to litigation or other legal proceedings to enforce or defend intellectual property rights or to determine the enforceability, scope, and validity of our proprietary rights or those of others. Such litigation or other legal proceedings and an adverse determination in any such litigation or other legal proceedings could result in significant costs and diversion of resources and management attention, which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

If we fail to implement and maintain an effective system of internal controls over financial reporting, we may be unable to accurately report our results of operations, meet our reporting obligations or prevent fraud, and investor confidence and the market prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs may be materially and adversely affected.

We are a public company in the United States and are subject to the reporting requirements of the Exchange Act, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, and the rules and regulations of the New York Stock Exchange. Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, or Section 404, requires that we include a report from management on our internal control over financial reporting in our annual report on Form 20-F beginning with our annual report for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2022. In addition, as we ceased to be an “emerging growth company” as such term is defined in the JOBS Act, our independent registered public accounting firm must attest to and report on the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting beginning with our annual report for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2022.

In the course of auditing our consolidated financial statements as of and for the years ended December 31, 2019, 2020 and 2021, we and our independent registered public accounting firm identified one material weakness in our internal control over financial reporting and other control deficiencies. The material weakness identified relates to our lack of sufficient financial reporting and accounting personnel with appropriate understanding and knowledge of U.S. GAAP to handle complex accounting issues and to establish and implement key controls over period end closing and financial reporting to properly prepare and review financial statements and related disclosures in accordance with U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements.

Following the identification of the material weakness, we have taken measures to remedy the material weakness. We have implemented a number of measures to address the material weakness, including: (i) we have hired additional accounting staff with adequate experience and knowledge with U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements to address complex U.S. GAAP technical accounting issues, strengthen the financial reporting function, and set up an internal control framework to prepare and review the financial statements and related disclosures in accordance with U.S. GAAP and SEC financial reporting requirements; (ii) we have implemented regular U.S. GAAP and SEC financial reporting training programs for the accounting and financial personnel to equip them with sufficient knowledge and practical experience of preparing financial statements under U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements; and (iii) we have developed and implement a comprehensive set of period-end financial reporting policies and procedures, especially for non-recurring and complex transactions to ensure consolidated financial statements and related disclosures are in compliance with U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements. Our management has concluded that our internal control over financial reporting was effective as of December 31, 2022 after the remediation. See “Item 15. Controls and Procedures—Management’s Annual Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting.” In addition, our independent registered public accounting firm has audited the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022, as stated in its report which appears on page F-2 of this annual report on Form 20-F.

In the future, our management may conclude that our internal control over financial reporting is not effective. Moreover, even if our management concludes that our internal control over financial reporting is effective, our independent registered public accounting firm, after conducting its own independent testing, may issue a report that is qualified if it is not satisfied with our internal controls or the level at which our controls are documented, designed, operated, or reviewed, or if it interprets the relevant requirements differently from us. In addition, as we have become a public company, our reporting obligations may place a significant strain on our management, operational and financial resources and systems for the foreseeable future. We may be unable to timely complete our evaluation testing and any required remediation.

During the course of documenting and testing our internal control procedures, in order to satisfy the requirements of Section 404, we may identify other or more material weaknesses or deficiencies in our internal control over financial reporting. In addition, if we fail to maintain the adequacy of our internal control over financial reporting, as these standards are modified, supplemented, or amended from time to time, we may not be able to conclude on an ongoing basis that we have effective internal control over financial reporting in accordance with Section 404. Generally speaking, if we fail to achieve and maintain an effective internal control environment, we could suffer material misstatements in our financial statements and fail to meet our reporting obligations, which would likely cause investors to lose confidence in our reported financial information. This could in turn limit our access to capital markets, harm our results of operations, and lead to a decline in the trading prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs. Additionally, ineffective internal control over financial reporting could expose us to increased risk of fraud or misuse of corporate assets and subject us to potential delisting from the stock exchange on which we list, regulatory investigations, and civil or criminal liabilities.

A severe or prolonged downturn in the Chinese or global economy could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

The post-COVID macroeconomic environment in China and elsewhere globally continues to face challenges, which may have a severe and prolonged negative impact on the Chinese and global economy, including potential reductions in the advertising budget of our merchants and brands, which in turn may affect our revenue and financial performance generally. The growth rate of the Chinese economy has gradually slowed in recent years and the trend may continue. There is considerable uncertainty over the long-term effects of the monetary and fiscal policies adopted by the central banks and financial authorities of some of the world's leading economies, including the United States and China. The conflict in Ukraine and the imposition of broad economic sanctions on Russia could raise energy prices and disrupt global markets. Unrest, terrorist threats and the potential for war in the Middle East and elsewhere may increase market volatility across the globe. There have also been concerns about the relationship between China and certain other countries, including the surrounding Asian countries, which may potentially have economic effects. In particular, there is significant uncertainty about the future relationship between the United States and China with respect to trade policies, treaties, government regulations, and tariffs. Economic conditions in China are sensitive to global economic conditions, as well as changes in domestic economic and political policies and the expected or perceived overall economic growth rate in China. Any severe or prolonged slowdown in the global or Chinese economy may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations. In addition, continued turbulence in the international markets may adversely affect our ability to access capital markets to meet liquidity needs.

We face uncertainties associated with real name registration requirements.

In accordance with the Administrative Provisions on Mobile Internet Applications Information Services and Administrative Provisions on Account Names of Internet Users, among other relevant laws and regulations, we impose real name registration requirements for all users in our Zhihu community when they sign up. When registering a Zhihu account, an individual user is required to submit her or his mobile phone number or alternative identification information, and a non-individual user is required to submit information of its business license and basic information of its designated person in charge of the account (including her or his real name, mobile phone number, identification card number, and other relevant identification documents). However, the relevant laws and regulations on real name registration, data privacy, and the internet information services in general are evolving, the interpretation and implementation of which are subject to uncertainties. See "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations —Regulations Relating to Mobile Internet Applications Information Services" and "Regulations—Regulations Relating to Internet Privacy" for more details. Any further rulemaking or intensifying regulations with respect to real name registration may increase our compliance burden and may adversely affect our user growth. In addition, we cannot assure you that all the information provided by our users will be accurate and free from fraudulent behaviors, which may adversely affect our compliance with the relevant provisions on real name registration requirements. Furthermore, in light of the evolving industry and technological advancements, we face challenges in developing our capabilities to meet the evolving demand for providing more meaningful identity means for our users while staying in compliance with the regulatory developments on real name registration and user privacy protection. Any failure in compliance may materially and adversely affect our business and prospects.

Our insurance coverage may not be adequate, which could expose us to costs and business disruption.

We do not have any business liability or disruption insurance coverage for our operations in China. Any material or extended business disruption may result in substantial costs and expenses and the diversion of our resources, financial, managerial, or otherwise, which could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects.

We face risks relating to natural disasters, health epidemics (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), and other outbreaks, which could significantly disrupt our operations and materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

Our business could be adversely affected by the effects of epidemics. The COVID-19 pandemic that first broke out in 2020 had caused, and may continue to cause, us and certain of our business partners to implement adjustment of work arrangements enabling employees to work from home and collaborate remotely. Despite our series of measures to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect our employees, including upgrading our telecommuting system or monitoring our employees' health on a daily basis, travel restrictions and delay or cancelation in our offline events adversely affected our service quality. As a result, our business, financial condition, and results of operations had been adversely affected. For example, we experienced negative impact on our advertising revenue during times when the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was significant, such as in the first half of 2020 and fourth quarter of 2022.

Starting in December 2022, most of the travel restrictions and quarantine requirements in China were lifted. Although there were significant surges of COVID-19 infections in various regions in China during that month, the situation has been significantly improved and normalized since January 2023. There remains uncertainty as to the future impact of the virus. The extent to which the pandemic affects our results of operations going forward will depend on future developments that are highly uncertain and unpredictable, including the frequency, duration, and extent of COVID-19 outbreaks, the appearance of new variants with different characteristics, the effectiveness of efforts to contain or treat cases, and future actions that may be taken in response to these developments. China may experience lower domestic consumption, higher unemployment, severe disruptions to exporting of goods to other countries and greater economic uncertainty, which may materially and adversely affect our business. There can be no assurance as to whether the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption to our business will extend over a prolonged period, and if yes, it could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

In recent years, there have been other breakouts of epidemics in China and globally. Our operations could be disrupted if one of our employees is suspected of having H1N1 flu, avian flu, or another epidemic, since it could require our employees to be quarantined and/or our offices to be disinfected. In addition, our results of operations could be adversely affected to the extent that the outbreak harms the PRC economy in general.

We are also vulnerable to natural disasters, extreme weather (including as a result of the global climate change) and other calamities. Although we have servers that are hosted in an offsite location, our backup system does not capture data on a real-time basis and we may be unable to recover certain data in the event of a server failure. We cannot assure you that any backup systems will be adequate to protect us from the effects of fire, floods, typhoons, earthquakes, power loss, telecommunications failures, break-ins, war, riots, terrorist attacks, or similar events. Any of the foregoing events may give rise to server interruptions, breakdowns, system failures, technology platform failures or internet failures, which could cause the loss or corruption of data or malfunctions of software or hardware as well as adversely affect our ability to provide services.

Any future outbreak of contagious diseases, extreme unexpected bad weather or natural disasters (including as a result of the climate change) would adversely affect our offline events. If there is a recurrence of an outbreak of certain contagious diseases or natural disasters, the offline events operated by us may be canceled or delayed. Government advices regarding, or restrictions on, holding offline events, in the event of an outbreak of any contagious disease or occurrence of natural disasters may materially and adversely affect our business and operating results.

The current tensions in international trade and rising geopolitical tensions involving China may adversely impact our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

Our business could be materially and adversely affected by the tensions in international trade such as the one between the United States and China in recent years. Changes to international trade policies could adversely affect the global economic conditions. In addition, geopolitical tensions between the United States and China have escalated due to, among other things, trade disputes, the COVID-19 outbreak, sanctions imposed by the U.S. Department of Treasury, proposed trade restrictions and export control imposed by the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the executive orders issued by the U.S. government that may prohibit transactions with certain selected Chinese companies as well as their products and services. Rising political tensions could reduce levels of trades, investments, technological exchanges, and other economic activities between the two major economies. Such tensions involving China, and any escalation thereof, may negatively affect trading and business environments, which may, in turn, adversely impacting our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We use certain key operating metrics to evaluate the performance of our business, and real or perceived inaccuracies in such metrics may harm our reputation and adversely affect our business.

We use certain key operating metrics, such as MAUs, number of monthly subscribing members, and paying ratio, among others, to evaluate the performance of our business. Our operating metrics may differ from estimates published by third parties or from similarly titled metrics used by other companies due to differences in methodology and assumptions. We calculate these operating metrics using internal company data. There are inherent challenges in measuring such key metrics and internal data, and measurement of such metrics and data may be susceptible to delays and technical errors. For example, for purposes of calculating mobile MAUs, we treat each device as a separate user even though it is possible that there may be circumstances where some users may use more than one mobile devices to access our platform or where multiple users may share one mobile device to access our platform. As such, we are unable to quantify such potential duplication. If we discover material inaccuracies in the operating metrics we use, or if they are perceived to be inaccurate, our reputation may be harmed and the evaluation methods and results of our business may be impaired, which could adversely affect our business. If investors make investment decisions based on the operating metrics we disclose that are inaccurate, we may also face potential lawsuits or disputes.

The fair value measurement of our short-term investments inherently involves a certain degree of uncertainty, and such investments may incur fair value losses.

From time to time, we purchase short-term investments, which mainly include investments in financial instruments with a variable interest rate indexed to performance of underlying assets, mostly held in state-owned or reputable financial institutions in China and reputable international financial institutions outside of China. Our short-term investments amounted to RMB1.0 billion, RMB2.2 billion, and RMB787.3 million (US\$114.1 million) as of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. The methodologies that we use to assess the fair value of the short-term investments involve a significant degree of management judgment and are inherently uncertain. In addition, although we prudently manage our short-term investments portfolio and their respective term to ensure that they are readily convertible into cash from time to time in the event that there is a need for liquidity, we are exposed to credit risks in relation to our short-term investments, which may adversely affect the net changes in their fair value. We cannot assure you that market conditions will create fair value gains on our short-term investments or we will not incur any fair value losses on our investments in the future. If we incur such fair value losses, our liquidity, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects may be adversely affected.

Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure

If the PRC government finds that the agreements that establish the structure for operating our business do not comply with PRC laws and regulations, or if these regulations or their interpretations change in the future, we could be subject to severe penalties or be forced to relinquish our interests in those operations.

Foreign ownership of internet-based businesses, such as provision of commercial internet information services, internet culture activities, and internet audio-visual program services, is subject to restrictions under current PRC laws and regulations. For example, foreign investors are not allowed to own more than 50% of the equity interests in a value-added telecommunication enterprise (except for e-commerce, domestic multi-party communications, storage-forwarding, and call centers) and the main foreign investor of such enterprise must have experience in providing value-added telecommunications services overseas and maintain a good track record in accordance with the Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for Foreign Investment Access (2021 Edition) issued on December 27, 2021 and effective on January 1, 2022, by the NDRC and the PRC Ministry of Commerce, and other applicable laws and regulations. In addition, foreign investors are prohibited from investing in enterprises engaging in internet culture activities except for music and providing internet audio-visual program services.

We are an exempted company with limited liability incorporated under the laws of the Cayman Islands. To comply with PRC laws and regulations, we conduct our internet-related business in China through the VIEs incorporated in China. The VIEs are owned by PRC citizens or entities with whom we have contractual arrangements. The contractual arrangements give us effective control over the VIEs and enable us to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits arising from the VIEs as well as consolidate the financial results of the VIEs in our results of operations. Although the structure we have adopted is consistent with longstanding industry practice, and is commonly adopted by comparable companies in China, the PRC government may not agree that these arrangements comply with PRC licensing, registration or other regulatory requirements, with existing policies or with requirements or policies that may be adopted in the future. The VIEs and their subsidiaries hold the licenses, approvals, and key assets that are essential for the operations of certain of our businesses.

In the opinion of Commerce & Finance Law Offices, our PRC legal counsel, (i) as of the date of this annual report, the ownership structures of our WFOEs and the VIEs in China do not violate any applicable and explicit PRC law and regulations currently in effect; (ii) subject to the risks as disclosed in “—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure” and “Item 4. Information on the Company—C. Organizational Structure—Contractual Arrangements with the VIEs and Their Shareholders,” each agreement of the contractual arrangements between our WFOEs, the VIEs, and their equity holders governed by PRC law is valid, binding, and enforceable in accordance with their terms, subject to enforceability to applicable bankruptcy, insolvency, moratorium, reorganization, and similar laws affecting creditors’ rights generally, the discretion of relevant government authorities in exercising their authority in connection with the interpretation and implementation thereof, and the application of relevant PRC laws and policies thereto, and general equity principles; and (iii) each such agreement does not violate any applicable and explicit PRC law currently in effect. There may be, however, uncertainties regarding the interpretation and application of current or future PRC laws and regulations. The relevant PRC regulatory authorities have broad discretion in determining whether a particular contractual structure violates PRC laws and regulations. Thus, we cannot assure you that the PRC government will not ultimately take a view contrary to the opinion of Commerce & Finance Law Offices. If we are found in violation of any PRC laws or regulations or if the contractual arrangements among our WFOEs, the VIEs, and their equity holders are determined as illegal or invalid by any PRC court, arbitral tribunal or regulatory authorities, the relevant governmental authorities would have broad discretion in dealing with such violation, including, without limitation:

- revoke the agreements constituting the contractual arrangements;
- revoke our business and operating licenses;
- require us to discontinue or restrict operations;
- restrict our right to collect revenue;
- restrict or prohibit our use of the proceeds from our offshore offerings to fund our business and operations in China;
- shut down all or part of our websites, apps, or services;
- levy fines on us or confiscate the proceeds that they deem to have been obtained through non-compliant operations;
- require us to restructure the operations in such a way as to compel us to establish a new enterprise, re-apply for the necessary licenses or relocate our businesses, staff, and assets;
- impose additional conditions or requirements with which we may not be able to comply; or
- take other regulatory or enforcement actions that could be harmful to our business.

Consequently, if the PRC government determines that the contractual arrangements constituting part of the VIE structure do not comply with PRC regulations, or if these regulations change or are interpreted differently in the future, our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs may decline in value or become worthless if we are unable to assert our contractual control rights over the assets of the VIEs. Our holding company in the Cayman Islands, the VIEs, and investors of our company face uncertainty about potential future actions by the PRC government that could affect the enforceability of the contractual arrangements with the VIEs and, consequently, significantly affect the financial performance of the VIEs and our company as a group.

Furthermore, any of the equity interest in the VIEs under the name of any record equity holder of the VIEs may be put under court custody in connection with litigation, arbitration, or other judicial or dispute resolution proceedings against that record holder. We cannot be certain that the equity interest will be disposed of in accordance with the contractual arrangements. In addition, new PRC laws, rules, and regulations may be introduced to impose additional requirements that may impose additional challenges to our corporate structure and contractual arrangements. The occurrence of any of these events or the imposition of any of these penalties may materially and adversely affect our ability to conduct internet-related businesses. In addition, if the imposition of any of these penalties causes us to be unable to direct the activities of the VIEs and their subsidiaries or the right to receive their economic benefits, we would no longer be able to consolidate the VIEs into our financial statements, which could materially and adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations.

Our contractual arrangements may not be as effective in providing operational control as direct ownership and shareholders of the VIEs may fail to perform their obligations under our contractual arrangements.

Since PRC laws limit foreign equity ownership in certain businesses in China, such as provision of commercial internet information services, internet culture activities, and internet audio-visual program services, we operate such businesses in China through the VIEs, in which we have no ownership interest and rely on a series of contractual arrangements with the VIEs and their respective equity holders to control and operate these businesses. Our revenue and cash flow from our such businesses are attributed to the VIEs. The contractual arrangements may not be as effective as direct ownership in providing us with control over the VIEs. Direct ownership would allow us, for example, to exercise our rights directly or indirectly as a shareholder to effect changes in the boards of directors of the VIEs, which, in turn, could effect changes, subject to any applicable fiduciary obligations at the management level. However, under the contractual arrangements, as a legal matter, if the VIEs or their equity holders fail to perform their respective obligations under the contractual arrangements, we may have to incur substantial costs and expend significant resources to enforce those arrangements and resort to litigation or arbitration and rely on legal remedies under PRC laws. These remedies may include seeking specific performance or injunctive relief and claiming damages, any of which may not be effective. In the event we are unable to enforce these contractual arrangements or we experience significant delays or other obstacles in the process of enforcing these contractual arrangements, we may not be able to exert effective control over the VIEs and may lose control over the assets owned by the VIEs. As a result, we may be unable to consolidate the VIEs in our consolidated financial statements, which could materially and adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations.

Our current corporate structure and business operations may be affected by the Foreign Investment Law.

On March 15, 2019, the National People's Congress approved the Foreign Investment Law, which took effect on January 1, 2020. Along with the Foreign Investment Law, the Implementing Rules of Foreign Investment Law promulgated by the State Council and the Interpretation of the Supreme People's Court on Several Issues Concerning the Application of the Foreign Investment Law promulgated by the Supreme People's Court became effective on January 1, 2020. However, uncertainties still exist in relation to further application and improvement of the Foreign Investment Law and its current implementation and interpretation rules. According to the Foreign Investment Law, "foreign investment" refers to investment activities carried out directly or indirectly by foreign natural persons, enterprises, or other organizations, or "foreign investors," including the following: (i) foreign investors establishing foreign-invested enterprises in China alone or collectively with other investors; (ii) foreign investors acquiring shares, equities, properties, or other similar rights of Chinese domestic enterprises; (iii) foreign investors investing in new projects in China alone or collectively with other investors; and (iv) foreign investors investing through other ways prescribed by laws, regulations, or guidelines of the State Council. The Foreign Investment Law and its current implementation and interpretation rules do not explicitly classify whether variable interest entities that are controlled through contractual arrangements would be deemed as foreign-invested enterprises if they are ultimately "controlled" by foreign investors. However, it has a catch-all provision under the definition of "foreign investment" that includes investments made by foreign investors in China through other means as provided by laws, administrative regulations, or the State Council. Therefore, it still leaves leeway for future laws, administrative regulations, or provisions of the State Council to provide for contractual arrangements as a form of foreign investment. Therefore, there can be no assurance that our control over the VIEs through contractual arrangements will not be deemed as a foreign investment in the future.

The Foreign Investment Law grants national treatment to foreign-invested entities, except for those foreign-invested entities that operate in industries specified as either "restricted" or "prohibited" from foreign investment in a "negative list." The Foreign Investment Law provides that foreign-invested entities operating in "restricted" industries will require market entry clearance and other approvals from relevant PRC government authorities. Pursuant to the Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for Foreign Investment Access (2021 Edition), the value-added telecommunication services we provide fall within the restricted category. If our control over the VIEs through contractual arrangements is deemed as a foreign investment in the future, and any business of the VIEs is "restricted" or "prohibited" from foreign investment under the "negative list" effective at the time, we may be deemed to be in violation of the Foreign Investment Law, the contractual arrangements that allow us to have control over the VIEs may be deemed as invalid and illegal, and we may be required to unwind such contractual arrangements and/or restructure our business operations, any of which may materially and adversely affect our business operations.

Furthermore, if future laws, administrative regulations or provisions mandate further actions to be taken by companies with respect to existing contractual arrangements, we may face substantial uncertainties as to whether we can complete such actions in a timely manner, or at all. Failure to take timely and appropriate measures to cope with any of these or similar regulatory compliance challenges could materially and adversely affect our current corporate structure and business operations.

We may lose the ability to use, or otherwise benefit from, the licenses, approvals, and assets held by the VIEs, which could, render us unable to conduct some or all of our business operations and constrain our growth.

The VIEs and their subsidiaries hold licenses, approvals, and assets that are necessary for the operation of certain of our businesses, as well as equity interests in a series of our portfolio companies, to which foreign investments are typically restricted or prohibited under applicable PRC law. The contractual arrangements contain terms that specifically obligate the equity holders of the VIEs to ensure the valid existence of the VIEs and restrict the disposition of material assets or any equity interest of the VIEs. However, in the event the equity holders of the VIEs breach the terms of these contractual arrangements and voluntarily liquidate any of the VIEs, or any of the VIEs declares bankruptcy and all or part of its assets become subject to liens or rights of third-party creditors, or are otherwise disposed of without our consent, we may be unable to operate some or all of our businesses or otherwise benefit from the assets held by the VIEs, which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations. Furthermore, if any of the VIEs undergoes a voluntary or involuntary liquidation proceeding, its equity holders or unrelated third-party creditors may claim rights to some or all of the assets of the VIEs, thereby hindering our ability to operate our business as well as constrain our growth.

The contractual arrangements with the VIEs may be subject to scrutiny by the tax authorities in China. Any adjustment of related party transaction pricing could lead to additional taxes, and therefore substantially reduce our consolidated profit and the value of your investment.

The tax regime in China is rapidly evolving, and there is significant uncertainty for taxpayers in China as PRC tax laws may be interpreted in different ways. The PRC tax authorities may assert that we or our subsidiaries or the VIEs owe and/or are required to pay additional taxes on previous or future revenue or income. In particular, under applicable PRC laws, rules, and regulations, arrangements and transactions among related parties, such as the contractual arrangements with the VIEs, may be subject to audit or challenge by the PRC tax authorities. If the PRC tax authorities determine that any contractual arrangements were not entered into on an arm's length basis and therefore constitute a favorable transfer pricing, the PRC tax liabilities of the relevant subsidiaries or the VIEs could be increased, which could increase our overall tax liabilities. In addition, the PRC tax authorities may impose late payment interest. Our profit may be materially reduced if our tax liabilities increase.

The equity holders, directors, and executive officers of the VIEs, as well as our employees who execute other strategic initiatives may have potential conflicts of interest with our company.

The PRC laws provide that a director and an executive officer owes a fiduciary duty to the company he or she directs or manages. The directors and executive officers of the VIEs must act in good faith and in the best interests of the VIEs and must not use their respective positions for personal gain. On the other hand, under Cayman Islands law, our directors (i) owe fiduciary duties to our company, including a duty of loyalty, a duty to act honestly, and a duty to act in what they consider in good faith to be in our best interests, (ii) must also exercise their powers only for a proper purpose, and (iii) owe to our company a duty to act with skill and care. We control the VIEs through contractual arrangements, and the business and operations of the VIEs are closely integrated with the business and operations of our subsidiaries. Nonetheless, conflicts of interests for these persons may arise due to dual roles both as directors and executive officers of the VIEs and as directors or employees of our company, and may also arise due to dual roles both as equity holders of the VIEs and as directors or employees of our company.

We cannot assure you that these persons will always act in the best interests of our company should any conflicts of interest arise, or that any conflicts of interest will always be resolved in our favor. We also cannot assure you that these persons will ensure that the VIEs will not breach the existing contractual arrangements. If we cannot resolve any such conflicts of interest or any related disputes, we would have to rely on legal proceedings to resolve these disputes and/or take enforcement action under the contractual arrangements. There is substantial uncertainty as to the outcome of any such legal proceedings. See “—We may lose the ability to use, or otherwise benefit from, the licenses, approvals, and assets held by the VIEs, which could, render us unable to conduct some or all of our business operations and constrain our growth” above.

If we exercise the option to acquire equity ownership of the VIEs, the ownership transfer may subject us to certain limitations and substantial costs.

Pursuant to the Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for Foreign Investment Access (2021 Edition), foreign investors are not allowed to hold more than 50% of the equity interests of any company providing value-added telecommunications services, including ICP services, with the exception of e-commerce, domestic multi-party communications, storage-forwarding, and call centers businesses. Pursuant to the Regulations for the Administration of Foreign-Invested Telecommunications Enterprises promulgated by the State Council, the main foreign investor who invests in a value-added telecommunications business in China must possess prior experience in operating value-added telecommunications businesses and a proven track record of business operations overseas, or the Qualification Requirements. Currently none of the applicable PRC laws, regulations, or rules provides clear guidance or interpretation on the Qualification Requirements. We face the risk of not satisfying the requirement promptly. In addition, the Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for Foreign Investment Access (2021 Edition) prohibits foreign investors from investing in internet audio-visual program services and internet culture activities with the exception of music. If the PRC laws were revised to allow foreign investors to invest in enterprises with internet audio-visual program or internet culture activities businesses in China, or to hold more than 50% of the equity interests of value-added telecommunications enterprises, due to the necessity of ICP services for internet audio-visual program services and internet cultural activities, we might be unable to unwind the contractual arrangements before we were able to comply with the Qualification Requirements, or if we attempt to unwind the contractual arrangements before we are able to comply with the Qualification Requirements we may be ineligible to operate our value-added telecommunication, internet audio-visual program, and internet culture activities businesses and may be forced to suspend their operations, which could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

Pursuant to the contractual arrangements, we have the exclusive right to purchase all or any part of the equity interests in the VIEs from the respective equity holders for a nominal price, unless the relevant government authorities or PRC laws request otherwise, in which case the purchase price shall be adjusted to a minimum amount that meets the relevant requirements. Subject to relevant laws and regulations, the respective equity holders shall return any amount of purchase price they have received to the respective WFOE. If such a return of purchase price takes place, the competent tax authority may require the WFOE to pay enterprise income tax for ownership transfer income, in which case the amount of tax could be substantial.

Risks Relating to Doing Business in China

Changes in China's economic, political or social conditions, or government policies could materially and adversely affect our business and results of operations.

Substantially all of our operations are conducted in China. Accordingly, our financial condition, results of operations, and prospects are influenced by economic, political, and legal developments in China. While the PRC economy has experienced significant growth over the past decades, there can be no assurance that the growth would be maintained or equitable across sectors. The growth of the Chinese economy may not continue at a rate experienced in the past, and the impact of COVID-19 on the Chinese economy may continue. Any prolonged slowdown in the Chinese economy may reduce the demand for our services and materially and adversely affect our business and results of operations.

The legal system in China embodies uncertainties which could limit the legal protections available to us or impose additional requirements and obligations on our business, and PRC laws, rules, and regulations can evolve quickly, which may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We conduct our business primarily through our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs and their subsidiaries in China. Our operations in China are governed by PRC laws and regulations. The legal system in China is a civil law system based on statutes. Unlike common law systems, it is a system in which decided legal cases may be of reference value but have less precedential value. The legal system in China evolves rapidly, and the interpretations of laws, regulations, and rules may contain uncertainties. These uncertainties could limit the legal protections available to us. In addition, we cannot predict the effect of future developments in the PRC legal system, particularly with regard to internet-related industries, including the promulgation of new laws, changes to existing laws or the interpretation or enforcement thereof, or the preemption of local regulations by national laws. Such unpredictability towards our contractual, property (including intellectual property) and procedural rights could adversely affect our business and impede our ability to continue our operations. Furthermore, any litigation may be protracted and result in substantial costs and diversion of resources and management attention.

In addition, new laws and regulations may be enacted from time to time, and PRC laws, rules, and regulations can evolve quickly. Substantial uncertainties exist regarding the interpretation and implementation of current and any future PRC laws and regulations applicable to our businesses. In particular, the PRC government authorities may continue to promulgate new laws, regulations, rules and guidelines governing internet companies with respect to a wide range of issues, such as competition and antitrust, privacy and data protection, intellectual property, and other matters, which may result in additional obligations imposed on us. Compliance with these laws, regulations, rules, guidelines, and implementations may be costly, and any incompliance or associated inquiries, investigations, and other governmental actions may divert significant management time and attention and our financial resources, bring negative publicity, subject us to liabilities or administrative penalties, or materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

The PRC government's oversight over our business operations could result in a material adverse change in our operations and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs.

We conduct our business primarily through our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs and their subsidiaries in China. Our operations in China are governed by PRC laws and regulations. The PRC government has significant oversight over the operation of our business, and it may influence our operations, which could result in a material adverse change in our operation and the value of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs.

The PRC government authorities may strengthen oversight over offerings that are conducted overseas and/or foreign investment in overseas-listed China-based issuers like us. Such actions taken by the PRC government authorities may intervene our operations at any time, which are beyond our control. For instance, on July 6, 2021, the relevant PRC governments promulgated the Opinions on Lawfully and Strictly Cracking Down Illegal Securities Activities, among which it is mentioned that the administration and supervision of overseas-listed China-based companies will be strengthened, and the special provisions of the State Council on overseas issuance and listing of shares by such companies will be revised, clarifying the responsibilities of relevant domestic industry regulatory authorities and other regulatory authorities. However, the Opinions on Lawfully and Strictly Cracking Down Illegal Securities Activities were only issued recently, leaving uncertainties regarding the interpretation and implementation of these opinions. There is no assurance that any new rules or regulations promulgated in the future will impose additional requirements on us. On February 17, 2023, the CSRC released the Trial Administrative Measures of Overseas Securities Offering and Listing by Domestic Companies, or the Overseas Listing Trial Measures, and five supporting guidelines, which took effect on March 31, 2023. Pursuant to the Overseas Listing Trial Measures, a domestic company that seeks to offer or list its securities overseas, directly or indirectly, should fulfill filing procedures with, and report relevant information to, the CSRC. If the domestic company fails to complete the filing procedures, conceals any material fact, or falsifies any major content in its filing documents, the domestic company may be subject to administrative penalties, such as order to rectify, warnings, and fines, and its controlling shareholders, actual controllers, the persons directly in charge, and other directly liable persons may also be subject to administrative penalties, such as warnings and fines. See “Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—M&A Rules and Overseas Listing.” However, since the Overseas Listing Trial Measures was relatively new, its interpretation, application, and enforcement remain unclear.

In a Q&A released on the CSRC's official website, an CSRC official respondent indicated that companies that have been listed overseas, or existing companies, are not required to complete the filing procedures immediately, and the existing companies should complete the filing procedures with respect to their future overseas financings. Given the substantial uncertainties regarding the CSRC filing requirements currently, we cannot assure you that we will be able to complete the CSRC filings and fully comply with the relevant new rules on a timely basis with respect to our future overseas security issuances, or at all.

In addition, on November 14, 2021, the CAC published the Draft Data Security Regulations for public comments, according to which, among others, a foreign listing of data processors processing personal information of over one million users and listing in Hong Kong by data processors that affects or may affect national security must apply for cybersecurity review. In addition, on December 28, 2021, the CAC and several other PRC government authorities jointly issued the Cybersecurity Review Measures, according to which, among others, if an internet platform operator has personal information of over one million users and pursues a foreign listing, it must be subject to the cybersecurity review. The Cybersecurity Review Measures took effect on February 15, 2022. As the Draft Data Security Regulations have not been adopted and it remains unclear whether the formal version adopted in the future will have any further material changes, it is uncertain how the draft regulations will be enacted, interpreted or implemented and how they will affect us.

It remains uncertain how PRC government authorities will regulate overseas listing in general and whether we are required to complete filing or obtain any specific regulatory approvals from the CSRC, CAC, or any other PRC government authorities for our overseas offerings. If the CSRC, CAC, or other government authorities later promulgate new rules or explanations requiring that we obtain their approvals or complete filing procedures with them for our future overseas offerings, we may be unable to obtain such approvals or complete such filing procedures in a timely manner, or at all, and such approvals or filings may be rescinded even if obtained or completed. Any such circumstance could significantly limit or completely hinder our ability to continue to offer securities to investors and cause the value of such securities to significantly decline or be worthless. In addition, implementation of industry-wide regulations directly targeting our operations could cause the value of our securities to significantly decline. Therefore, investors of our company and our business face potential uncertainty from actions taken by the PRC government affecting our business.

If we fail to obtain and maintain the requisite licenses and approvals required under the complex regulatory environment applicable to our businesses in China, or if we are required to take compliance actions in this regard, our business, financial condition, and results of operations may be materially and adversely affected.

The internet and mobile internet industries in China are highly regulated. The VIEs and their subsidiaries are required to obtain and maintain applicable licenses and approvals from different regulatory authorities in order to provide their current services. Under the current PRC regulatory regime, a number of regulatory authorities, including but not limited to the NRTA, the PRC Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the MIIT, the PRC State Council Information Office, and the CAC, jointly regulate all major aspects of the internet industry, including the mobile internet and online content communities. Operators must obtain various government approvals and licenses for relevant business.

We have obtained, among others, Value-Added Telecommunication Business Operation Licenses, or ICP Licenses, for the provision of commercial internet information services, Internet Cultural Business Licenses, or ICB Licenses, for commercial internet culture activities, Radio and Television Program Production and Operation Licenses, an Internet Medicine Information Services Qualification for non-commercial internet medicine information services, and Publication Operation Licenses through the VIEs and their subsidiaries.

We offer content in various formats, including certain video and live streaming content on our Zhihu app and website operated by Zhizhe Tianxia, and we plan to continue to offer video and live streaming content in our community. As such content offerings are considered as online transmission of audio and video programs, we may be required to obtain a Permit for Transmission of Audio-Visual Programs via Information Network, or an Audio-Visual Permit. Zhizhe Tianxia, the operator of our Zhihu app and website, does not hold the Audio-Visual Permit, but has registered with the National Internet Audio-Visual Platforms Information Registration and Management System instead. Based on our consultation with the NRTA, Zhizhe Tianxia is able to carry on its provision of video and live streaming contents on our Zhihu app and website upon registration with the National Internet Audio-Visual Platforms Information Registration and Management System. However, if the PRC regulatory authorities deem that we are not in compliance with the relevant legal requirements of holding a valid Audio-Visual Permit to cover the video and live streaming content in our community, we may be subject to fines, penalties, and/or orders to cease offering video and live streaming content, shut down website or revoke licenses, which may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations. In addition, certain information posted on our Zhihu app and website by our users may be viewed as news information and the transmission of such information may be deemed as internet news information services, thereby requiring us to obtain an internet news information license. We cannot assure you that we will be able to obtain all the licenses necessary for our business operations if and when we are required to do so. Moreover, as we are and will continue to further develop and expand our business, we may need to obtain additional qualifications, permits, approvals, or licenses. We may also be required to obtain additional licenses or approvals if the PRC government adopts more stringent policies or regulations for our business. There is no assurance that we will be able to obtain such additional qualifications, permits, approvals, or licenses in a timely manner, or at all.

These licenses are essential to the operation of our business and are generally subject to regular government review or renewal. We cannot assure you that we will be able to maintain our existing licenses or permits necessary for our business operations, update information (such as website, apps, or legal representative) on file, or renew any of them when their current term expires.

In addition, considerable uncertainties exist in relation to the interpretation and implementation of existing and future laws and regulations governing our business activities. We could be found not in compliance with any future laws and regulations or of the laws and regulations currently in effect due to changes in the relevant authorities' interpretation of these laws and regulations. If we fail to complete, obtain, or maintain any of the required licenses or approvals or make the necessary filings, we may be subject to various penalties, such as confiscation of unlawful gains, the imposition of fines, revocation of licenses, and the discontinuation or restriction of our operations. Any such penalties or changes in policies, regulations, or enforcement by government authorities, may disrupt our operations and materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

The PCAOB had historically been unable to inspect our auditor in relation to their audit work performed for our financial statements and the inability of the PCAOB to conduct inspections of our auditor in the past has deprived our investors with the benefits of such inspections.

Our auditor, the independent registered public accounting firm that issues the audit report included elsewhere in this annual report, as an auditor of companies that are traded publicly in the United States and a firm registered with the PCAOB, is subject to laws in the United States pursuant to which the PCAOB conducts regular inspections to assess its compliance with the applicable professional standards. The auditor is located in mainland China, a jurisdiction where the PCAOB had historically been unable to conduct inspections and investigations completely before 2022. As a result, we and investors in the ADSs were deprived of the benefits of such PCAOB inspections. The inability of the PCAOB to conduct inspections of auditors in China in the past made it more difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of our independent registered public accounting firm's audit procedures or quality control procedures as compared to auditors outside of China that are subject to the PCAOB inspections. On December 15, 2022, the PCAOB issued a report that vacated its December 16, 2021 determination and removed mainland China and Hong Kong from the list of jurisdictions where it is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms. However, if the PCAOB determines in the future that it no longer has full access to inspect and investigate completely accounting firms in mainland China and Hong Kong, and we use an accounting firm headquartered in one of these jurisdictions to issue an audit report on our financial statements filed with the SEC, we and investors in the ADSs would be deprived of the benefits of such PCAOB inspections again, which could cause investors and potential investors in the ADSs to lose confidence in our audit procedures and reported financial information and the quality of our financial statements.

Our ADSs may be prohibited from trading in the United States under the HFCAA in the future if the PCAOB is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms located in China. The delisting of the ADSs, or the threat of their being delisted, may materially and adversely affect the value of your investment.

Pursuant to the HFCAA, if the SEC determines that we have filed audit reports issued by a registered public accounting firm that has not been subject to inspections by the PCAOB for two consecutive years, the SEC will prohibit our shares or the ADSs from being traded on a national securities exchange or in the over-the-counter trading market in the United States.

On December 16, 2021, the PCAOB issued a report to notify the SEC of its determination that the PCAOB was unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms headquartered in mainland China and Hong Kong and our auditor was subject to that determination. In May 2022, the SEC conclusively listed us as a Commission-Identified Issuer under the HFCAA following the filing of our annual report on Form 20-F for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021. On December 15, 2022, the PCAOB removed mainland China and Hong Kong from the list of jurisdictions where it is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms. For this reason, we do not expect to be identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer under the HFCAA after we file this annual report on Form 20-F for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2022.

Each year, the PCAOB will determine whether it can inspect and investigate completely audit firms in mainland China and Hong Kong, among other jurisdictions. If the PCAOB determines in the future that it no longer has full access to inspect and investigate completely accounting firms in mainland China and Hong Kong and we use an accounting firm headquartered in one of these jurisdictions to issue an audit report on our financial statements filed with the SEC, we would be identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer following the filing of the annual report on Form 20-F for the relevant fiscal year. In accordance with the HFCAA, our securities would be prohibited from being traded on a national securities exchange or in the over-the-counter trading market in the United States if we are identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer for two consecutive years in the future. Although our Class A ordinary shares have been listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and the ADSs and Class A ordinary shares are fully fungible, we cannot assure you that an active trading market for our Class A ordinary shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange will be sustained or that the ADSs can be converted and traded with sufficient market recognition and liquidity, if our shares and the ADSs are prohibited from trading in the United States. A prohibition of being able to trade in the United States would substantially impair your ability to sell or purchase the ADSs when you wish to do so, and the risk and uncertainty associated with delisting would have a negative impact on the price of the ADSs. In addition, such a prohibition would significantly affect our ability to raise capital on terms acceptable to us, or at all, which would have a material adverse impact on our business, financial condition, and prospects.

It may be difficult for overseas regulators to conduct investigations or collect evidence within China.

Shareholder claims or regulatory investigation that are initiated in or otherwise relevant to jurisdictions outside China are difficult to pursue as a matter of law or practicality in China. For example, in China, there are legal and other requirements for providing information needed for regulatory investigations or litigation initiated outside China. Although the authorities in China may establish a regulatory cooperation mechanism with the securities regulatory authorities of another country or region to implement cross-border supervision and administration, such cooperation with the securities regulatory authorities in the United States or other jurisdictions may not be efficient in the absence of mutual and practical cooperation mechanism. Furthermore, according to Article 177 of the PRC Securities Law, which became effective in March 2020, no overseas securities regulator is allowed to directly conduct investigations or evidence collection activities within the PRC territory, and without the consent by the Chinese securities regulatory authorities and the other competent governmental agencies, no entity or individual may provide documents or materials related to securities business to any foreign party. While detailed interpretation of or implementation rules under the article have yet to be promulgated, the inability for an overseas securities regulator to directly conduct investigations or evidence collection activities within China and the potential obstacles for information provision may further increase difficulties faced by you in protecting your interests. See also “-Risks Relating to Our Class A Ordinary Shares and ADSs-You may face difficulties in protecting your interests, and your ability to protect your rights through U.S. courts may be limited, because we are incorporated under Cayman Islands law” for risks associated with investing in us as a Cayman Islands company.

We may be classified as a “PRC resident enterprise” for PRC enterprise income tax purposes, which could result in unfavorable tax consequences to us and our shareholders and materially and adversely affect our results of operations and the value of your investment.

Under the PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law, or the EIT Law, which became effective on January 1, 2008, an enterprise established outside China whose “de facto management body” is located in China is considered a “PRC resident enterprise” and will generally be subject to the uniform 25% enterprise income tax rate, or the EIT rate, on its global income. Under the implementation rules of the EIT Law, “de facto management body” is defined as the organization body that effectively exercises full management and control over such aspects as the business operations, personnel, accounting and properties of the enterprise.

On April 22, 2009, the STA released the Notice of the State Taxation Administration Regarding the Determination of Chinese-Controlled Offshore Incorporated Enterprises as People’s Republic of China Tax Resident Enterprises on the Basis of De Facto Management Bodies, or STA Circular 82, that sets out the standards and procedures for determining whether the “de facto management body” of an enterprise registered outside of China and controlled by PRC enterprises or PRC enterprise groups is located within China. Further to STA Circular 82, on July 27, 2011, STA issued the Administrative Measures for Enterprise Income Tax of Chinese-Controlled Offshore Incorporated Resident Enterprises (Trial), or STA Bulletin 45, to provide more guidance on the implementation of STA Circular 82; the bulletin became effective on September 1, 2011 and revised on June 15, 2018. STA Bulletin 45 clarified certain issues in the areas of resident status determination, post-determination administration and competent tax authorities’ procedures.

Under STA Circular 82, a foreign enterprise controlled by a PRC enterprise or PRC enterprise group is considered a PRC resident enterprise if all of the following apply: (i) the senior management and core management departments in charge of daily operations are located mainly within China; (ii) financial and human resources decisions are subject to determination or approval by persons or bodies in China; (iii) major assets, accounting books, company seals, and minutes and files of board and shareholders' meetings are located or kept within China; and (iv) at least half of the enterprise's directors with voting rights or senior management reside within China. STA Bulletin 45 specifies that when provided with a copy of Chinese tax resident determination certificate from a resident Chinese controlled offshore incorporated enterprise, the payer should not withhold 10% income tax when paying the Chinese-sourced dividends, interest, royalties, etc. to the PRC controlled offshore incorporated enterprise.

Although STA Circular 82 and STA Bulletin 45 explicitly provide that the above standards only apply to enterprises which are registered outside of China and controlled by PRC enterprises or PRC enterprise groups, not those controlled by PRC individuals or foreign individuals, STA Circular 82 and STA Bulletin 45 may reflect STA's criteria for how the "de facto management body" test should be applied in determining the tax residence of foreign enterprises in general, regardless of whether they are controlled by PRC enterprises or PRC enterprise groups or by PRC or foreign individuals. If the PRC tax authorities determine that we were treated as a PRC resident enterprise for PRC enterprise income tax purposes, the 25% PRC enterprise income tax on our global taxable income could materially and adversely affect our ability to satisfy any cash requirements we may have.

China's M&A Rules and certain other regulations establish complex procedures for certain acquisitions of PRC companies by foreign investors, which could make it more difficult for us to pursue growth through acquisitions in China.

A number of PRC laws and regulations have established procedures and requirements that could make merger and acquisition activities in China by foreign investors more time consuming and complex. In addition to the PRC Anti-Monopoly Law, these include the M&A Rules adopted by six PRC regulatory authorities in 2006 and amended in 2009 and the Rules of the Ministry of Commerce on Implementation of Security Review System of Mergers and Acquisitions of Domestic Enterprises by Foreign Investors, or the M&A Security Review Rules, promulgated in 2011. These laws and regulations impose requirements in some instances that the Ministry of Commerce be notified in advance of any change-of-control transaction in which a foreign investor takes control of a PRC domestic enterprise. In addition, the Anti-Monopoly Law requires that the anti-monopoly enforcement agency be notified in advance of any concentration of undertaking if certain thresholds are triggered. On February 7, 2021, the Anti-Monopoly Committee of the State Council published the Anti-Monopoly Guidelines for the Internet Platform Economy Sector, which stipulates that any concentration of undertakings involving variable interest entities is subject to anti-monopoly review. Moreover, the M&A Security Review Rules specify that mergers and acquisitions by foreign investors that raise "national defense and security" concerns and mergers and acquisitions through which foreign investors may acquire de facto control over domestic enterprises that raise "national security" concerns are subject to strict review by the Ministry of Commerce, and prohibit any attempt to bypass a security review, including by structuring the transaction through a proxy or contractual control arrangement. On December 19, 2020, the NDRC and the Ministry of Commerce jointly issued the Measures for the Security Review for Foreign Investment, which took effect on January 18, 2021. These measures set forth the provisions concerning the security review mechanism on foreign investment, including, among others, the types of investments subject to review, and the review scopes and procedures. In the future, we may grow our business by acquiring complementary businesses. Complying with the requirements of the relevant regulations to complete such transactions could be time consuming, and any required approval processes, including approval from the Ministry of Commerce and other PRC government authorities, may delay or inhibit our ability to complete such transactions, which could affect our ability to expand our business or maintain our market share.

If the chops of our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, and their subsidiaries are not kept safely, are stolen, or are used by unauthorized persons or for unauthorized purposes, the corporate governance of these entities could be severely and adversely compromised.

Under PRC laws, a company chop or seal serves as the legal representation of the company towards third parties. The company chop of a legally registered company in China shall be registered with the local Public Security Bureau. In addition to this mandatory company chop, companies may have several other chops which can be used for specific purposes. The chops of our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, and their subsidiaries are generally held securely by personnel designated or approved by us in accordance with our internal control procedures. To the extent those chops are not kept safe, are stolen, or are used by unauthorized persons or for unauthorized purposes, the corporate governance of these entities could be severely and adversely compromised and those corporate entities may be bound to abide by the terms of any documents so chopped, even if they were chopped by an individual who lacked the requisite power and authority to do so.

The heightened scrutiny over acquisition transactions by PRC tax authorities may have a negative impact on our business operations, our acquisition or restructuring strategy or the value of your investment in us.

On February 3, 2015, STA issued the Bulletin of the State Taxation Administration on Issues of Enterprise Income Tax on Indirect Transfers of Assets by Non-PRC Resident Enterprises, or STA Bulletin 7, which provided comprehensive guidelines relating to, and also heightened the PRC tax authorities' scrutiny over, indirect transfers by a non-resident enterprise of PRC taxable assets. Under STA Bulletin 7, the PRC tax authorities are entitled to reclassify the nature of an indirect transfer of PRC taxable assets, when a non-resident enterprise transfers PRC taxable assets indirectly by disposing of equity interests in an overseas holding company directly or indirectly holding such PRC taxable assets, by disregarding the existence of such overseas holding company and considering the transaction to be a direct transfer of PRC taxable assets and without any other reasonable commercial purpose. However, STA Bulletin 7 contains certain exemptions, including (i) where a non-resident enterprise derives income from the indirect transfer of PRC taxable assets by acquiring and selling shares of an overseas listed company which holds such PRC taxable assets on a public market; and (ii) where there is an indirect transfer of PRC taxable assets, but if the non-resident enterprise had directly held and disposed of such PRC taxable assets, the income from the transfer would have been exempted from PRC enterprise income tax under an applicable tax treaty or arrangement.

On October 17, 2017, STA issued the Announcement of the State Taxation Administration on Issues Concerning the Withholding of Enterprise Income Tax at Source on Non-PRC Resident Enterprises, or STA Circular 37, which became effective on December 1, 2017 and abolish certain provisions in STA Bulletin 7. STA Circular 37 further clarifies the practice and procedure of withholding non-resident enterprise income tax. Pursuant to STA Circular 37, where the party responsible to deduct such income tax did not or was unable to make such deduction, or the non-resident enterprise receiving such income failed to declare and pay the taxes that should have been deducted to the relevant tax authority, both parties may be subject to penalties. The taxable gain is calculated as balance of the total income from such transfer net of the net book value of equity interest.

We may conduct acquisitions involving changes in corporate structures. We cannot assure you that the PRC tax authorities will not, at their discretion, adjust any capital gains and impose tax return filing obligations on us or require us to provide assistance for the investigation of PRC tax authorities with respect thereto. Any PRC tax imposed on a transfer of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs or any adjustment of such gains would cause us to incur additional costs and may have a negative impact on the value of your investment in us.

Discontinuation of preferential tax treatments we currently enjoy or other unfavorable changes in tax law could result in additional compliance obligations and costs.

A number of our PRC operating entities enjoy various types of preferential tax treatment pursuant to the prevailing PRC tax laws. Our PRC subsidiaries and VIEs may, if they meet the relevant requirements, qualify for certain preferential tax treatment.

For a qualified "high and new technology enterprise," the applicable enterprise income tax rate is 15%. For a qualified "small low-profit enterprise," the applicable enterprise income tax rate is 20%. Zhizhe Sihai was certified as a "high and new technology enterprise," and some of our PRC subsidiaries were qualified as "small low-profit enterprises" under the relevant PRC laws and regulations. If these entities fail to maintain their respective qualification under the relevant PRC laws and regulations, their applicable enterprise income tax rates may increase to up to 25%, which could materially and adversely affect our financial condition.

PRC regulations of loans and direct investment by offshore holding companies to PRC entities may delay or prevent us from using the proceeds of our offshore financing to make loans or additional capital contributions to our PRC subsidiaries, which could materially and adversely affect our liquidity and our ability to fund and expand our business.

We may transfer funds to our PRC subsidiaries or finance our PRC subsidiaries by means of shareholders' loans or capital contributions. Any loans to our PRC subsidiaries, which are foreign-invested enterprises, cannot exceed a statutory limit, and shall be filed with the SAFE or its local counterparts. Furthermore, any capital contributions we make to our PRC subsidiaries shall be registered with the PRC State Administration for Market Regulation or its local counterparts, and filed with the Ministry of Commerce or its local counterparts.

On March 30, 2015, SAFE promulgated the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Reforming the Administration Measures on Conversion of Foreign Exchange Registered Capital of Foreign-invested Enterprises, or SAFE Circular 19. SAFE Circular 19, however, allows foreign invested enterprises in China to use their registered capital settled in Renminbi converted from foreign currencies to make equity investments, but the registered capital of a foreign invested company settled in Renminbi converted from foreign currencies remains not allowed to be used, among other things, for investment in the security markets, or offering entrustment loans, unless otherwise regulated by other laws and regulations. On June 9, 2016, SAFE further issued the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Reforming and Regulating Policies on the Control over Foreign Exchange Settlement of Capital Accounts, or SAFE Circular 16, which, among other things, amended certain provisions of Circular 19. According to SAFE Circular 19 and SAFE Circular 16, the flow and use of the Renminbi capital converted from foreign currency-denominated registered capital of a foreign invested company is regulated such that Renminbi capital may not be used for purposes beyond its business scope or to provide loans to non-affiliates unless otherwise permitted under its business scope. On October 23, 2019, SAFE promulgated the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Further Promoting the Facilitation of Cross-Border Trade and Investment, or SAFE Circular 28, which removes the restrictions on domestic equity investments by non-investment foreign-invested enterprises with their capital funds, provided that certain conditions are met. If the VIEs require financial support from us or our PRC subsidiaries in the future, and we find it necessary to use foreign currency-denominated capital to provide such financial support, our ability to fund the VIEs' operations will be subject to statutory limits and restrictions, including those described above. The applicable foreign exchange circulars and rules may limit our ability to transfer the net proceeds from our overseas offerings to our PRC subsidiaries and convert the net proceeds into Renminbi, which may adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

We may be subject to penalties, including restriction on our ability to inject capital into our PRC subsidiaries and our PRC subsidiaries' ability to distribute profits to us, if our resident shareholders or beneficial owners in China fail to comply with relevant PRC foreign exchange regulations.

SAFE issued the Notice of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Relevant Issues Concerning Foreign Exchange Administration for Domestic Residents to Engage in Overseas Investment, Financing and Round-Trip Investment via Special Purpose Vehicles, or SAFE Circular 37, effective on July 4, 2014. The SAFE Circular 37 requires PRC residents, including PRC individuals and institutions, to register with SAFE or its local branches in connection with their direct establishment or indirect control of an offshore special purpose vehicle, for the purpose of overseas investment and financing, with such PRC residents' legally owned assets or equity interests in domestic enterprises or offshore assets or interests. In addition, such PRC residents must update their foreign exchange registrations with SAFE or its local branches when the offshore special purpose vehicle in which such residents directly hold the equity interests undergoes material events relating to any change of basic information (including change of such PRC individual shareholder, name and operation term), increases or decreases in investment amount, share transfers or exchanges, or mergers or divisions.

If any shareholder holding interest in an offshore special purpose vehicle, who is a PRC resident as determined by SAFE Circular 37, fails to fulfill the required foreign exchange registration with the local SAFE branches, the PRC subsidiaries of that offshore special purpose vehicle may be prohibited from distributing their profits and dividends to their offshore parent company or from carrying out other subsequent cross-border foreign exchange activities, and the offshore special purpose vehicle may be restricted in its ability to contribute additional capital to its PRC subsidiaries. Moreover, failure to comply with SAFE registration described above could result in liability under PRC laws for evasion of applicable foreign exchange restrictions.

On February 13, 2015, SAFE promulgated a Notice of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Further Simplifying and Improving Foreign Exchange Administration Policy on Direct Investment, or SAFE Notice 13, effective on June 1, 2015. In accordance with SAFE Notice 13, entities and individuals are required to apply for foreign exchange registration of foreign direct investment and overseas direct investment, including those required under SAFE Circular 37, with qualified banks, instead of SAFE or its local branches. The qualified banks, under the supervision of SAFE, directly examine the applications and conduct the registration.

We may not be fully informed of the identities of all our shareholders or beneficial owners who are PRC residents, and therefore, we may not be able to identify all our shareholders or beneficial owners who are PRC residents to ensure their compliance with SAFE Circular 37 or other related rules. In addition, we cannot provide any assurance that all of our shareholders and beneficial owners who are PRC residents will comply with our request to make, obtain or update any applicable registrations or comply with other requirements required by the SAFE Circular 37 or other related rules in a timely manner. Even if our shareholders and beneficial owners who are PRC residents comply with such request, we cannot provide any assurance that they will successfully obtain or update any registration required by the SAFE Circular 37 or other related rules in a timely manner due to many factors, including those beyond our and their control. If any of our shareholders who is a PRC resident as determined by SAFE Circular 37 fails to fulfill the required foreign exchange registration, they could be subject to fines or legal penalties, our PRC subsidiaries may be prohibited from distributing their profits and dividends to us or from carrying out other subsequent cross-border foreign exchange activities, and we may be restricted in our ability to contribute additional capital to our PRC subsidiaries, which may adversely affect our business.

We principally rely on dividends and other distributions on equity paid by our PRC subsidiaries to fund any cash and financing requirements we may have. Any limitation on the ability of our PRC subsidiaries to make payments to us could materially and adversely affect our ability to conduct our business or financial condition.

We are a holding company, and we principally rely on dividends and other distributions on equity that may be paid by our PRC subsidiaries and remittances from the VIEs, for our cash and financing requirements, including the funds necessary to pay dividends and other cash distributions to the holders of our ordinary shares and service any debt we may incur. If any of our PRC subsidiaries, the VIEs, or their subsidiaries incur debt on their own behalf in the future, the instruments governing the debt may restrict their ability to pay dividends or make other distributions to us.

Under PRC laws and regulations, wholly foreign-owned enterprises in China, may pay dividends only out of their accumulated after-tax profits as determined in accordance with PRC accounting standards and regulations. In addition, a wholly foreign-owned enterprise is required to set aside at least 10% of its after-tax profits each year, after making up previous years' accumulated losses, if any, to fund certain statutory reserve funds, until the aggregate amount of such a fund reaches 50% of its registered capital. At the discretion of the wholly foreign-owned enterprise, it may allocate a portion of its after-tax profits based on PRC accounting standards to enterprise expansion funds, and staff welfare and bonus funds. These reserve funds and staff welfare and bonus funds are not distributable as cash dividends. Any limitation on the ability of the VIEs to make remittance to our wholly-owned PRC subsidiaries to pay dividends or make other distributions to us could materially and adversely limit our ability to grow, make investments or acquisitions that could be beneficial to our business, pay dividends, or otherwise fund and conduct our business.

Restrictions on the remittance of Renminbi into and out of China and governmental control of currency conversion may limit our ability to pay dividends and other obligations, and affect the value of your investment.

The PRC government imposes controls on the convertibility of Renminbi into foreign currencies and the remittance of currency out of China. We receive substantially all of our revenue in Renminbi. Under our current corporate structure, our income is primarily derived from dividend payments from our PRC subsidiaries. We may convert a portion of our revenue into other currencies to meet our foreign currency obligations, such as payments of dividends declared in respect of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs, if any. Shortages in the availability of foreign currency may restrict the ability of our PRC subsidiaries to remit sufficient foreign currency to pay dividends or other payments to us, or otherwise satisfy their foreign currency denominated obligations.

Under existing PRC foreign exchange regulations, payments of current account items, including profit distributions, interest payments, and trade and service-related foreign exchange transactions, can be made in foreign currencies without prior SAFE approval by complying with certain procedural requirements. However, approval from or registration or filings with competent government authorities is required where Renminbi is to be converted into foreign currency and remitted out of China to pay capital expenses such as the repayment of loans denominated in foreign currencies. Pursuant to SAFE Circular 19, a foreign-invested enterprise may convert up to 100% of the foreign currency in its capital account into Renminbi on a discretionary basis according to the actual needs. The SAFE Circular 16 provides for an integrated standard for conversion of foreign exchange under capital account items on a discretionary basis, which applies to all enterprises registered in China. In addition, SAFE Circular 16 has narrowed the scope of purposes for which an enterprise must not use the Renminbi funds so converted, which include, among others, (i) payment for expenditure beyond its business scope or otherwise as prohibited by the applicable laws and regulations, (ii) investment in securities or other financial products other than banks' principal-secured products, (iii) provision of loans to non-affiliated enterprises, except where it is expressly permitted in the business scope of the enterprise, and (iv) construction or purchase of non-self-used real properties, except for real estate developers. The PRC government may at its discretion further restrict access to foreign currencies for current account transactions or capital account transactions in the future. If the foreign exchange control system prevents us from obtaining sufficient foreign currencies to satisfy our foreign currency needs, we may not be able to pay dividends in foreign currencies to our shareholders. Further, there is no assurance that new regulations will not be promulgated in the future that would have the effect of further restricting the remittance of Renminbi into or out of China.

Fluctuations in exchange rates could result in foreign currency exchange losses.

The conversion of Renminbi into foreign currencies, including Hong Kong dollars and the U.S. dollars, is based on rates set by the People's Bank of China. The Renminbi has fluctuated against Hong Kong dollars and the U.S. dollars, at times significantly and unpredictably. The value of Renminbi against Hong Kong dollars, the U.S. dollars and other currencies is affected by changes in China's political and economic conditions and by China's foreign exchange policies, among other things. We cannot assure you that Renminbi will not appreciate or depreciate significantly in value against Hong Kong dollars and the U.S. dollars in the future. It is difficult to predict how market forces or PRC or U.S. government policy may impact the exchange rate between Renminbi and the U.S. dollars in the future.

There remains significant international pressure on the PRC government to adopt a more flexible currency policy. Any significant appreciation or depreciation of Renminbi may materially and adversely affect our revenues, earnings and financial position, and the value of, and any dividends payable on, our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs in foreign currency.

Very limited hedging options are available in China to reduce our exposure to exchange rate fluctuations. While we may decide to enter into further hedging transactions in the future, the availability and effectiveness of these hedges may be limited and we may not be able to adequately hedge our exposure or at all. In addition, our currency exchange losses may be magnified by PRC exchange control regulations that restrict our ability to convert Renminbi into foreign currency. As a result, fluctuations in exchange rates may materially and adversely affect your investment.

Any failure to comply with PRC regulations regarding the registration requirements for employee stock incentive plans may subject the PRC plan participants or us to fines and other legal or administrative penalties.

In February 2012, SAFE promulgated the Notices of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Issues Concerning the Foreign Exchange Administration for Domestic Individuals Participating in Stock Incentive Plan of Overseas Publicly-Listed Company, replacing earlier rules promulgated in 2007. Pursuant to these rules, PRC citizens and non-PRC citizens who reside in China for a continuous period of not less than one year participating in any stock incentive plan of an overseas publicly listed company, subject to a few exceptions, are required to register with SAFE through a domestic qualified agent, which could be the PRC subsidiaries of such overseas-listed company, and complete certain other procedures. In addition, an overseas-entrusted institution must be retained to handle matters in connection with the exercise or sale of stock options and the purchase or sale of shares and interests. We and our executive officers and other employees who are PRC citizens or who reside in China for a continuous period of not less than one year and who have been granted options are subject to these regulations as our company is an overseas-listed company. Failure to complete SAFE registrations may subject them to fines and legal penalties, and may also limit our ability to contribute additional capital into our PRC subsidiary and limit our PRC subsidiary's ability to distribute dividends to us. We also face regulatory uncertainties that could restrict our ability to adopt additional incentive plans for our directors, executive officers and employees under PRC law.

In addition, the STA has issued certain circulars concerning employee share options and restricted shares. Under these circulars, our employees working in China who exercise share options or are granted restricted shares will be subject to PRC individual income tax. Our PRC subsidiaries have obligations to file documents related to employee share options or restricted shares with relevant tax authorities and to withhold individual income taxes of those employees who exercise their share options. If our employees fail to pay or we fail to withhold their income taxes according to relevant laws and regulations, we may face penalties imposed by the tax authorities or other PRC government authorities. See "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—Regulations Relating to Stock Incentive Plans" for further details.

Failure to make adequate contributions to various employee benefit plans as required by PRC regulations may subject us to penalties.

Companies operating in China are required to participate in various government sponsored employee benefit plans, including certain social insurance, housing funds and other welfare-oriented payment obligations, and contribute to the plans in amounts equal to certain percentages of salaries, including bonuses and allowances, of their employees up to a maximum amount specified by the local government from time to time at locations where the businesses are operated. The requirement of employee benefit plans has not been implemented consistently by the local governments in China given the different levels of economic development in different locations. Certain of our PRC operating entities incorporated in various locations in China have not completed necessary registrations, or made adequate contributions to the employee benefit plans, and we have recorded accruals for estimated underpaid amounts in our financial statements. We may be required to make up the contributions for these plans as well as to pay late fees and fines. If we are subject to late fees or fines in relation to the underpaid employee benefits, our financial condition and results of operations may be adversely affected.

Risks Relating to Our ADSs and Class A Ordinary Shares

The trading prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs have been and may be volatile, which could result in substantial losses to investors.

The trading prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs have been volatile, and could fluctuate widely due to factors beyond our control. This may happen because of broad market and industry factors, including the performance and fluctuation of the market prices of other companies with business operations located mainly in China that have listed their securities in the United States or Hong Kong. In addition to market and industry factors, the price and trading volume for our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs may be highly volatile for factors specific to our own operations, including the following:

- Actual or anticipated variations in our revenues, earnings, cash flow, and changes or revisions of our expected results;
- fluctuations in operating metrics;
- announcements of new investments, acquisitions, strategic partnerships, or joint ventures by us or our competitors;
- announcements of new products and services and expansions by us or our competitors;
- changes in financial estimates by securities analysts;
- announcements of studies and reports relating to the quality of our product and service offerings or those of our competitors;
- changes in the economic performance or market valuations of our peer companies;
- conditions in the online content community market;
- detrimental negative publicity about us, our competitors, or our industry;
- additions or departures of key personnel;
- release of lockup or other transfer restrictions on our outstanding equity securities or sales of additional equity securities;
- regulatory developments affecting us or our industry;
- any share repurchase program;
- general economic or political conditions in China or elsewhere in the world;
- fluctuations of exchange rates between the RMB and the U.S. dollar; and
- potential litigation or regulatory investigations.

Any of these factors may result in large and sudden changes in the price and volume at which our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs will trade. Furthermore, the stock market in general experiences price and volume fluctuations that are often unrelated or disproportionate to the operating performance of companies like us. These broad market and industry fluctuations may adversely affect the market price of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs. Volatility or a lack of positive performance in the price of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs may also adversely affect our ability to retain key employees, most of whom have been granted equity incentives.

In the past, shareholders of public companies have often brought securities class action suits against companies following periods of instability in the market price of their securities. If we were involved in a class action suit, it could divert a significant amount of our management's attention and other resources from our business and operations and require us to incur significant expenses to defend the suit, which could harm our results of operations. Any such class action suit, whether or not successful, could harm our reputation and restrict our ability to raise capital in the future. In addition, if a claim is successfully made against us, we may be required to pay significant damages, which could materially and adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations.

Our dual-class voting structure will limit your ability to influence corporate matters and could discourage others from pursuing any change of control transactions that holders of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs may view as beneficial.

Pursuant to our currently effective memorandum and articles of association, our authorized and issued ordinary shares are divided into Class A ordinary shares and Class B ordinary shares. Holders of Class A ordinary shares are entitled to one vote per share, while holders of Class B ordinary shares are entitled to ten votes per share. Each Class B ordinary share is convertible into one Class A ordinary share at any time by the holder thereof, while Class A ordinary shares are not convertible into Class B ordinary shares under any circumstances.

As of March 31, 2023, Mr. Yuan Zhou beneficially owned 18,008,292 Class A ordinary shares and 18,846,286 Class B ordinary shares, representing 42.5% of the aggregate voting power of our total issued and outstanding share capital due to the disparate voting powers associated with our dual-class share structure. As a result of the dual-class share structure and the concentration of ownership, holders of Class B ordinary shares have considerable influence over matters such as decisions regarding mergers and consolidations, election of directors, and other significant corporate actions. Such holders may take actions that are not in the best interest of us or our other shareholders. This concentration of ownership may discourage, delay, or prevent a change in control of our company, which could have the effect of depriving our other shareholders of the opportunity to receive a premium for their shares as part of a sale of our company and may reduce the price of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs. This concentrated control will limit your ability to influence corporate matters and could discourage others from pursuing any potential merger, takeover, or other change of control transactions that holders of Class A ordinary shares and ADSs may view as beneficial.

If securities or industry analysts cease to publish research or reports about our business, or if they adversely change their recommendations regarding our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs, the market price and trading volume for our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs could decline.

The trading market for our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs will be influenced by research or reports that industry or securities analysts publish about our business. If one or more analysts who cover us downgrade our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs, the market price for our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs would likely decline. If one or more of these analysts cease to cover us or fail to regularly publish reports on us, we could lose visibility in the financial markets, which, in turn, could cause the market price or trading volume for our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs to decline.

Techniques employed by short sellers may drive down the market prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs.

Short selling is the practice of selling securities that a seller does not own but rather has borrowed from a third party with the intention of buying identical securities back at a later date to return to the lender. The short seller hopes to profit from a decline in the value of the securities between the sale of the borrowed securities and the purchase of the replacement shares, as the short seller expects to pay less in that purchase than it received in the sale. As it is in the short seller's interest for the price of the security to decline, many short sellers publish, or arrange for the publication of, negative opinions regarding relevant issuers and their business prospects in order to create negative market momentum and generate profits for themselves after selling securities short.

Public companies listed in the United States that have substantially all of their operations in China have been the subject of short selling. Much of the scrutiny and negative publicity has centered on allegations of a lack of effective internal control over financial reporting resulting in financial and accounting irregularities and mistakes, inadequate corporate governance policies or a lack of adherence thereto and, in many cases, allegations of fraud. As a result, many of these companies are now conducting internal and external investigations into the allegations and, in the interim, are subject to shareholder lawsuits or SEC enforcement actions.

It is not clear what effect such negative publicity could have on us. If we were to become the subject of any unfavorable allegations, whether such allegations are proven to be true or untrue, we could have to expend a significant amount of resources to investigate such allegations or defend ourselves. While we would strongly defend against any such short seller attacks, we may be constrained in the manner in which we can proceed against the relevant short seller by principles of freedom of speech, applicable state law, or issues of commercial confidentiality. Such a situation could be costly and time-consuming and could distract our management from growing our business. Even if such allegations are ultimately proven to be groundless, allegations against us could severely impact our business operations and shareholders' equity, and any investment in our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs could be greatly reduced or rendered worthless.

We currently do not expect to pay dividends in the foreseeable future and you must rely on price appreciation of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs for return on your investment.

We currently intend to retain most, if not all, of our available funds and any future earnings to fund the development and growth of our business. As a result, we do not expect to pay any cash dividends in the foreseeable future. Therefore, you should not rely on an investment in our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs as a source for any future dividend income.

Our board of directors has complete discretion as to whether to distribute dividends, subject to certain requirements of Cayman Islands law. In addition, our shareholders may by ordinary resolution declare a dividend, but no dividend may exceed the amount recommended by our directors. Under Cayman Islands law, a Cayman Islands company may pay a dividend out of either profit or share premium account, provided that in no circumstances may a dividend be paid if this would result in the company being unable to pay its debts as they fall due in the ordinary course of business. Even if our board of directors decides to declare and pay dividends, the timing, amount and form of future dividends, if any, will depend on our future results of operations and cash flow, our capital requirements and surplus, the amount of distributions, if any, received by us from our subsidiaries, our financial condition, contractual restrictions and other factors deemed relevant by our board of directors. Accordingly, the return on your investment in our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs will likely depend entirely upon any future price appreciation of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs. There is no guarantee that our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs will appreciate in value or even maintain the price at which you purchased the Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs. You may not realize a return on your investment in the ADSs and you may even lose your entire investment in our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs.

Substantial future sales or perceived potential sales of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs in the public market could cause the prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs to decline.

Sales of our Class A ordinary shares or the ADSs in the public market, or the perception that these sales could occur, could cause the market prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs to decline. The Class A ordinary shares held by our existing shareholders may be sold in the public market subject to volume and other restrictions as applicable provided in Rules 144 and 701 under the Securities Act and the applicable lock-up periods.

Certain holders of our Class A ordinary shares may cause us to register under the Securities Act the sale of their shares. Registration of these shares under the Securities Act would result in ADSs representing these Class A ordinary shares becoming freely tradable without restriction under the Securities Act immediately upon the effectiveness of such registration. Sales of these registered shares in the form of ADSs in the public market could cause the prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs to decline.

The voting rights of holders of ADSs are limited by the terms of the deposit agreement, and you may not be able to exercise your right to direct the voting of the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs.

Holders of ADSs do not have the same rights as our registered shareholders. As a holder of ADSs, you will not have any direct right to attend general meetings of our shareholders or to cast any votes at such meetings. You will only be able to exercise the voting rights attached to the Class A ordinary shares underlying your ADSs indirectly by giving voting instructions to the depositary in accordance with the provisions of the deposit agreement. Where any matter is to be put to a vote at a general meeting, then upon receipt of your voting instructions, the depositary will try, as far as is practicable, to vote the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs in accordance with your instructions. You will not be able to directly exercise your right to vote with respect to the underlying Class A ordinary shares unless you cancel and withdraw the shares and become the registered holder of such shares prior to the record date for the general meeting.

When a general meeting is convened, you may not receive sufficient advance notice of the meeting to withdraw the Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs and become the registered holder of such shares to allow you to attend the general meeting and to vote directly with respect to any specific matter or resolution to be considered and voted upon at the general meeting. In addition, under our currently effective memorandum and articles of association, for the purposes of determining those shareholders who are entitled to attend and vote at any general meeting, our directors may close our register of members and/or fix in advance a record date for such meeting, and such closure of our register of members or the setting of such a record date may prevent you from withdrawing the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs and from becoming the registered holder of such shares prior to the record date, so that you would not be able to attend the general meeting or to vote directly. Where any matter is to be put to a vote at a general meeting, upon our instruction the depositary will notify you of the upcoming vote and will arrange to deliver our voting materials to you. We cannot assure you that you will receive the voting materials in time to ensure that you can instruct the depositary to vote the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs.

In addition, the depositary and its agents are not responsible for failing to carry out voting instructions or for their manner of carrying out your voting instructions. This means that you may not be able to exercise your right to direct how the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs are voted and you may have no legal remedy if the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by your ADSs are not voted as you requested. In addition, in your capacity as an ADS holder, you will not be able to call a shareholders' meeting.

Further, under the deposit agreement for the ADSs, if you do not vote, the depositary will give us a discretionary proxy to vote the Class A ordinary shares underlying your ADSs at shareholders' meetings unless:

- we have instructed the depositary that we do not wish a discretionary proxy to be given;
- we have informed the depositary that there is substantial opposition as to a matter to be voted on at the meeting;
- a matter to be voted on at the meeting would have a material adverse impact on shareholders; or
- the voting at the meeting is to be made on a show of hands.

The effect of this discretionary proxy is that you cannot prevent our Class A ordinary shares underlying your ADSs from being voted, except under the circumstances described above. This may adversely affect your interests and make it more difficult for shareholders to influence the management of our company. Holders of our Class A ordinary shares are not subject to this discretionary proxy.

You may not receive cash dividends if the depositary decides it is impractical to make them available to you.

The depositary will pay cash distributions on the ADSs only to the extent that we decide to distribute dividends on our ordinary shares or other deposited securities, and we do not have any present plan to pay any cash dividends on our ordinary shares in the foreseeable future. To the extent that there is a distribution, the depositary has agreed to pay you the cash dividends or other distributions it or the custodian receives on our shares or other deposited securities after deducting its fees and expenses. You will receive these distributions in proportion to the number of shares your ADSs represent. However, the depositary may, at its discretion, decide that it is inequitable or impractical to make a distribution available to any holders of ADSs. For example, the depositary may determine that it is not practicable to distribute certain property through the mail, or that the value of certain distributions may be less than the cost of mailing them. In these cases, the depositary may decide not to distribute such property to you.

You may be subject to limitations on transfer of your ADSs.

Your ADSs are transferable on the books of the depositary. However, the depositary may close its books at any time or from time to time when it deems expedient in connection with the performance of its duties. The depositary may close its books from time to time for a number of reasons, including in connection with corporate events such as a rights offering, during which time the depositary needs to maintain an exact number of ADS holders on its books for a specified period. The depositary may also close its books in emergencies, and on weekends and public holidays. The depositary may refuse to deliver, transfer or register transfers of the ADSs generally when our share register or the books of the depositary are closed, or at any time if we or the depositary thinks it is advisable to do so because of any requirement of law or of any government or governmental body, or under any provision of the deposit agreement, or for any other reason.

You may experience dilution of your holdings due to inability to participate in rights offerings.

We may, from time to time, distribute rights to our shareholders, including rights to acquire securities. Under the deposit agreement, the depository will not distribute rights to holders of ADSs unless the distribution and sale of rights and the securities to which these rights relate are either exempt from registration under the Securities Act with respect to all holders of ADSs, or are registered under the provisions of the Securities Act. The depository may, but is not required to, attempt to sell these undistributed rights to third parties, and may allow the rights to lapse. We may be unable to establish an exemption from registration under the Securities Act, and we are under no obligation to file a registration statement with respect to these rights or underlying securities or to endeavor to have a registration statement declared effective. Accordingly, holders of ADSs may be unable to participate in our rights offerings and may experience dilution of their holdings as a result.

You may face difficulties in protecting your interests, and your ability to protect your rights through Hong Kong or U.S. courts may be limited, because we are incorporated under Cayman Islands law.

We are an exempted company incorporated under the laws of the Cayman Islands. Our corporate affairs are governed by our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, the Companies Act (As Revised) of the Cayman Islands, and the common law of the Cayman Islands. The rights of shareholders to take action against our directors, actions by our minority shareholders and the fiduciary duties of our directors to us under Cayman Islands law are to a large extent governed by the common law of the Cayman Islands. The common law of the Cayman Islands is derived in part from comparatively limited judicial precedent in the Cayman Islands as well as from the common law of England, the decisions of whose courts are of persuasive authority, but are not binding, on a court in the Cayman Islands. The rights of our shareholders and the fiduciary duties of our directors under Cayman Islands law are not as clearly established as they would be under statutes or judicial precedents in Hong Kong or some jurisdictions in the United States. In particular, the Cayman Islands has a less developed body of securities laws than Hong Kong or the United States. Some U.S. states, such as Delaware, have more fully developed and judicially interpreted bodies of corporate law than the Cayman Islands. In addition, Cayman Islands companies may not have the standing to initiate a shareholder derivative action in a Hong Kong court or a federal court of the United States.

Shareholders of Cayman Islands exempted companies like us have no general rights under Cayman Islands law to inspect corporate records (other than the memorandum and articles of association and any special resolutions passed by such companies, and the registers of mortgages and charges of such companies) or to obtain copies of lists of shareholders of these companies. Under Cayman Islands law, the names of our current directors can be obtained from a search conducted at the Registrar of Companies. Our directors have discretion under our currently effective memorandum and articles of association to determine whether or not, and under what conditions, our corporate records may be inspected by our shareholders, but are not obliged to make them available to our shareholders. This may make it more difficult for you to obtain the information needed to establish any facts necessary for a shareholder motion or to solicit proxies from other shareholders in connection with a proxy contest.

As a result of all of the above, our public shareholders may have more difficulty in protecting their interests in the face of actions taken by management, members of our board of directors or controlling shareholders than they would as public shareholders of a company incorporated in Hong Kong or the United States.

Certain judgments obtained against us by our shareholders may not be enforceable.

We are a Cayman Islands company and substantially all of our assets are located outside of Hong Kong or the United States. Substantially all of our current operations are conducted in China. In addition, many of our current directors and officers are nationals and residents of countries other than Hong Kong or the United States. As a result, it may be difficult or impossible for you to bring an action against us or against these individuals in Hong Kong or the United States in the event that you believe that your rights have been infringed under Hong Kong laws, the U.S. federal securities laws or otherwise. Even if you are successful in bringing an action of this kind, the laws of the Cayman Islands and of China may render you unable to enforce a judgment against our assets or the assets of our directors and officers.

Forum selection provisions in our currently effective memorandum and articles of association and our deposit agreement with the depositary bank could limit the ability of holders of our Class A ordinary shares, ADSs, or other securities to obtain a favorable judicial forum for disputes with us, our directors and officers, the depositary bank, and potentially others.

Our currently effective memorandum and articles of association provide that the federal district courts of the United States are the exclusive forum within the United States (or, if the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York lacks subject matter jurisdiction over a particular dispute, the state courts in New York County, New York) for the resolution of any complaint asserting a cause of action arising out of or relating in any way to the federal securities laws of the United States, regardless of whether such legal suit, action, or proceeding also involves parties other than us. Our deposit agreement with the depositary bank also provides that the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York (or, if the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York lacks subject matter jurisdiction over a particular dispute, the state courts in New York County, New York) will have jurisdiction to hear and determine any suit, action, or proceeding and to settle any dispute between the depositary bank and us that does not involve any other person or party that may arise out of or relate in any way to the deposit agreement, including claims under the Securities Act or the Exchange Act. Holders and beneficial owners of our ADSs, by holding an ADS or an interest therein, understand and irrevocably agree that any legal suit, action, or proceeding against or involving us or the depositary bank arising out of or related in any way to the deposit agreement, ADSs, or the transactions contemplated thereby or by virtue of ownership thereof, including without limitation claims under the Securities Act or the Exchange Act, may only be instituted in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York (or, if the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York lacks jurisdiction or such designation of the exclusive forum is, or becomes, invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, in the state courts of New York County, New York). However, the enforceability of similar federal court choice of forum provisions has been challenged in legal proceedings in the United States, and it is possible that a court could find this type of provision to be inapplicable, unenforceable, or inconsistent with other documents that are relevant to the filing of such lawsuits. If a court were to find the federal choice of forum provision contained in our currently effective memorandum and articles of association or our deposit agreement with the depositary bank to be inapplicable or unenforceable in an action, we may incur additional costs associated with resolving such action in other jurisdictions. If upheld, the forum selection clause in our currently effective memorandum and articles of association, as well as the forum selection provisions in the deposit agreement, may limit a security-holder's ability to bring a claim against us, our directors and officers, the depositary bank, and potentially others in his or her preferred judicial forum, and this limitation may discourage such lawsuits. In addition, the Securities Act provides that both federal and state courts have jurisdiction over suits brought to enforce any duty or liability under the Securities Act or the rules and regulations thereunder. Accepting or consent to this forum selection provision does not constitute a waiver by you of compliance with federal securities laws and the rules and regulations thereunder. You may not waive compliance with federal securities laws and the rules and regulations thereunder. The exclusive forum provision in our currently effective memorandum and articles of association will not operate so as to deprive the courts of the Cayman Islands from having jurisdiction over matters relating to our internal affairs.

ADSs holders may not be entitled to a jury trial with respect to claims arising under the deposit agreement, which could result in less favorable outcomes to the plaintiff(s) in any such action.

The deposit agreement governing the ADSs representing our ordinary shares provides that, to the fullest extent permitted by law, ADS holders waive the right to a jury trial of any claim they may have against us or the depositary arising out of or relating to our shares, the ADSs or the deposit agreement, including any claim under the U.S. federal securities laws.

If we or the depositary opposed a jury trial demand based on the waiver, the court would determine whether the waiver was enforceable based on the facts and circumstances of that case in accordance with the applicable state and federal law. To our knowledge, the enforceability of a contractual pre-dispute jury trial waiver in connection with claims arising under the federal securities laws has not been finally adjudicated by the United States Supreme Court. However, we believe that a contractual pre-dispute jury trial waiver provision is generally enforceable, including under the laws of the State of New York, which govern the deposit agreement, by a federal or state court in the City of New York, which has nonexclusive jurisdiction over matters arising under the deposit agreement. In determining whether to enforce a contractual pre-dispute jury trial waiver provision, courts will generally consider whether a party knowingly, intelligently and voluntarily waive the right to a jury trial. We believe that this is the case with respect to the deposit agreement and the ADSs. It is advisable that you consult legal counsel regarding the jury waiver provision before entering into the deposit agreement.

If you or any other holders or beneficial owners of ADSs bring a claim against us or the depositary in connection with matters arising under the deposit agreement or the ADSs, including claims under federal securities laws, you or such other holder or beneficial owner may not be entitled to a jury trial with respect to such claims, which may have the effect of limiting and discouraging lawsuits against us or the depositary, lead to increased costs to bring a claim, limited access to information and other imbalances of resources between such holder and us, or limit such holder's ability to bring a claim in a judicial forum that such holder finds favorable. If a lawsuit is brought against us or the depositary under the deposit agreement, it may be heard only by a judge or justice of the applicable trial court, which would be conducted according to different civil procedures and may result in different outcomes than a trial by jury would have had, including results that could be less favorable to the plaintiff(s) in any such action.

Nevertheless, if this jury trial waiver provision is not permitted by applicable law, an action could proceed under the terms of the deposit agreement with a jury trial. No condition, stipulation or provision of the deposit agreement or ADSs shall relieve us or the depositary from our respective obligations to comply with the Securities Act and the Exchange Act nor serve as a waiver by any holder or beneficial owner of ADSs of compliance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

An ADS holder's right to pursue claims against the depositary is limited by the terms of the deposit agreement.

Under the deposit agreement, the United States District Court of the Southern District of New York (or, if the United States District Court of the Southern District of New York lacks subject matter jurisdiction over a particular dispute, the state courts of New York County, New York) will have jurisdiction to hear and determine any suit, action, or proceeding and to settle any dispute between the depositary bank and us that does not involve any other person or party that may arise out of or relate in any way to the deposit agreement, including claims under the Securities Act or the Exchange Act. Holders and beneficial owners of our ADSs, by holding an ADS or an interest therein, understand and irrevocably agree that any legal suit, action, or proceeding against or involving us or the depositary, arising out of or related in any way to the deposit agreement, ADSs, or the transactions contemplated thereby or by virtue of ownership thereof, including without limitation claims under the Securities Act or the Exchange Act, may only be instituted in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York (or, if the Southern District of New York lacks jurisdiction or such designation of the exclusive forum is, or becomes, invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, in the state courts of New York County, New York), and a holder of our ADSs will have irrevocably waived any objection which such holder may have to the laying of venue of any such proceeding, and irrevocably submitted to the exclusive jurisdiction of such courts in any such suit, action, or proceeding. However, the enforceability of similar federal court choice of forum provisions in other companies' organizational documents has been challenged in legal proceedings in the United States, and it is possible that a court could find this type of provision to be inapplicable or unenforceable. Accepting or consenting to this forum selection provision does not represent you are waiving compliance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. Furthermore, investors cannot waive compliance with the U.S. federal securities laws and rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

The depositary may, in its sole discretion, require that any dispute or difference arising from the relationship created by the deposit agreement, our shares, the ADSs, or the transactions contemplated thereby be referred to and finally settled by an arbitration conducted under the terms described in the deposit agreement, while to the extent there are specific federal securities law violation aspects to any claims against us and/or the depositary brought by any holder or beneficial owner of ADSs, the federal securities law violation aspects of such claims may, at the option of such holders or beneficial owners, remain in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York (or, if the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York lacks subject matter jurisdiction over a particular dispute or such designation of the exclusive forum is, or becomes, invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, in the state courts of New York County in New York). We believe that a contractual arbitration provision, especially when excluding matters relating to federal securities law violation, is generally enforceable, including under the laws of the State of New York, which govern the deposit agreement.

As a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands, we are permitted to adopt certain home country practices in relation to corporate governance matters that differ significantly from the New York Stock Exchange listing standards.

As a Cayman Islands company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, we are subject to the New York Stock Exchange listing standards, which requires listed companies to have, among other things, a majority of their board members to be independent and independent director oversight of executive compensation and nomination of directors. However, New York Stock Exchange rules permit a foreign private issuer like us to follow the corporate governance practices of its home country. Certain corporate governance practices in the Cayman Islands, which is our home country, may differ significantly from the New York Stock Exchange listing standards.

We are permitted to elect to rely on home country practice to be exempted from the corporate governance requirements. If we choose to follow home country practice in the future, our shareholders may be afforded less protection than they would otherwise enjoy if we complied fully with the New York Stock Exchange listing standards.

We are a foreign private issuer within the meaning of the rules under the Exchange Act, and as such we are exempt from certain provisions applicable to U.S. domestic public companies.

Because we qualify as a foreign private issuer under the Exchange Act, we are exempt from certain provisions of the securities rules and regulations in the United States that are applicable to U.S. domestic issuers, including:

- the rules under the Exchange Act requiring the filing with the SEC of quarterly reports on Form 10-Q or current reports on Form 8-K;
- the sections of the Exchange Act regulating the solicitation of proxies, consents, or authorizations in respect of a security registered under the Exchange Act;
- the sections of the Exchange Act requiring insiders to file public reports of their stock ownership and trading activities and liability for insiders who profit from trades made in a short period of time; and
- the selective disclosure rules by issuers of material nonpublic information under Regulation FD.

We are required to file an annual report on Form 20-F within four months of the end of each fiscal year. In addition, we intend to publish our results on a quarterly basis as press releases, distributed pursuant to the rules and regulations of the New York Stock Exchange. Press releases relating to financial results and material events will also be furnished to the SEC on Form 6-K. However, the information we are required to file with or furnish to the SEC is less extensive and less timely compared to that required to be filed with the SEC by U.S. domestic issuers. As a result, you may not be afforded the same protections or information that would be made available to you were you investing in a U.S. domestic issuer.

We believe that we were a passive foreign investment company, or PFIC, for United States federal income tax purposes for the taxable year ended December 31, 2022, which could subject United States investors in our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares to significant adverse United States income tax consequences.

We will be classified as a passive foreign investment company for United States federal income tax purposes for any taxable year if either (a) 75% or more of our gross income for such year consists of certain types of “passive” income or (b) 50% or more of the value of our assets (generally determined on the basis of a quarterly average) during such year is attributable to assets that produce or are held for the production of passive income, or the “asset test.” Although the law in this regard is unclear, we intend to treat the VIEs (including their subsidiaries) as being owned by us for United States federal income tax purposes, not only because we exercise effective control over the operation of such entities but also because we are entitled to substantially all of their economic benefits and, as a result, we consolidate their results of operations in our consolidated financial statements.

Based upon the nature and composition of our income and assets, and the market price of the ADSs, we believe that we were a PFIC for United States federal income tax purposes for the taxable year ended December 31, 2022, and we will likely be a PFIC for our current taxable year unless the market price of the ADSs increases and/or we invest a substantial amount of the cash and other passive assets we hold in assets that produce or are held for the production of active income.

If we are a PFIC in any taxable year, a U.S. Holder (as defined in “Item 10. Additional Information—E. Taxation—United States Federal Income Tax Considerations”) may incur significantly increased United States income tax on gain recognized on the sale or other disposition of the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares and on the receipt of distributions on the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares to the extent such gain or distribution is treated as an “excess distribution” under the United States federal income tax rules, and such U.S. Holder may be subject to burdensome reporting requirements. Further, if we are a PFIC for any year during which a U.S. Holder holds our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares, we will generally continue to be treated as a PFIC for all succeeding years during which such U.S. Holder holds our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares. For more information see “Item 10. Additional Information—E. Taxation—United States Federal Income Tax Considerations—Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations” and “Item 10. Additional Information—E. Taxation—United States Federal Income Tax Considerations—Passive Foreign Investment Company Rules.”

We may incur increased costs as a result of being a public company, particularly after we ceased to qualify as an “emerging growth company.”

We are a public company and incur significant legal, accounting and other expenses that we did not incur as a private company. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, as well as rules subsequently implemented by the SEC and New York Stock Exchange, impose various requirements on the corporate governance practices of public companies. We expect these rules and regulations to increase our legal and financial compliance costs and to make some corporate activities more time-consuming and costly.

As a result of becoming a public company, we increased the number of independent directors and have adopted policies regarding internal controls and disclosure controls and procedures. Operating as a public company also makes it more difficult and more expensive for us to obtain director and officer liability insurance, and we may be required to accept reduced policy limits and coverage or incur substantially higher costs to obtain the same or similar coverage. In addition, we will incur additional costs associated with our public company reporting requirements. It may also be more difficult for us to find qualified persons to serve on our board of directors or as executive officers. We are currently evaluating and monitoring developments with respect to these rules and regulations, and we cannot predict or estimate with any degree of certainty the amount of additional costs we may incur or the timing of such costs.

In addition, as we are no longer an “emerging growth company” since December 31, 2022, we incur significant expenses and devote substantial management effort toward ensuring compliance with the requirements of Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and the other rules and regulations of the SEC.

The characteristics of the U.S. and the Hong Kong capital markets are different.

The New York Stock Exchange and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange have different trading hours, trading characteristics (including trading volume and liquidity), trading and listing rules, and investor bases (including different levels of retail and institutional participation). As a result of these differences, the trading prices of our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs representing them might not be the same, even allowing for currency differences. Fluctuations in the price of the ADSs due to circumstances peculiar to its home capital market could materially and adversely affect the price of the Class A ordinary shares. Because of the different characteristics of the U.S. and Hong Kong equity markets, the historic market prices of the ADSs may not be indicative of the performance of our securities (including the Class A ordinary shares).

Exchange between our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs may adversely affect the liquidity or trading price of each other.

The ADSs are currently traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Subject to compliance with U.S. securities laws and the terms of the deposit agreement, holders of our Class A ordinary shares may deposit Class A ordinary shares with the depositary in exchange for the issuance of the ADSs. Any holder of ADSs may also withdraw the underlying Class A ordinary shares represented by the ADSs pursuant to the terms of the deposit agreement for trading on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. In the event that a substantial number of Class A ordinary shares are deposited with the depositary in exchange for ADSs or vice versa, the liquidity and trading price of our Class A ordinary shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and the ADSs on the New York Stock Exchange may be adversely affected.

The time required for the exchange between our Class A ordinary shares and the ADSs might be longer than expected and investors might not be able to settle or effect any sale of their securities during this period, and the exchange of Class A ordinary shares into ADSs involves costs.

There is no direct trading or settlement between the New York Stock Exchange and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on which the ADSs and our Class A ordinary shares are respectively traded. In addition, the time differences between Hong Kong and New York, unforeseen market circumstances, or other factors may delay the deposit of Class A ordinary shares in exchange for the ADSs or the withdrawal of Class A ordinary shares underlying the ADSs. Investors will be prevented from settling or effecting the sale of their securities during such periods of delay. In addition, we cannot assure you that any exchange for Class A ordinary shares into ADSs (and vice versa) will be completed in accordance with the timelines that investors may anticipate.

Furthermore, the depositary for the ADSs is entitled to charge holders fees for various services including for the issuance of ADSs upon deposit of Class A ordinary shares, cancellation of ADSs, distributions of cash dividends or other cash distributions, distributions of ADSs pursuant to share dividends or other free share distributions, distributions of securities other than ADSs, and annual service fees. As a result, shareholders who exchange Class A ordinary shares into ADSs, and vice versa, may not achieve the level of economic return the shareholders may anticipate.

We may be subject to securities litigation, which is expensive and could divert management attention.

Companies that have experienced volatility in the volume and market price of their shares have been subject to an increased incidence of securities class action litigation. We may be the target of this type of litigation in the future. Securities litigation against us could result in substantial costs and divert our management's attention from other business concerns, and, if adversely determined, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

ITEM 4. INFORMATION ON THE COMPANY

A. History and Development of the Company

In late 2010, our founder, Mr. Yuan Zhou, founded Zhihu. Between 2010 and 2012, Zhihu was a by-invitation-only, Q&A community. Zhihu opened up registration to the general public in 2013 and has since grown into one of the largest comprehensive online content communities in China. We started to offer online advertising in 2016, introduced paid content in 2018, started our paid Yan Selection membership program in the first half of 2019, and formally launched our content-commerce solutions in early 2020. We have continued to expand our content-centric monetization channels since 2020, including offering vocational training and e-commerce initiatives.

We established Zhihu Technology Limited under the laws of the Cayman Islands as our offshore holding company in May 2011, which later changed its name to Zhihu Inc. in October 2020.

In June 2011, we established Zhihu Technology (HK) Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of our Cayman Islands holding company, in Hong Kong as our intermediary holding company. In the same month, we established Zhizhe Tianxia in China. In January 2012, Zhihu Technology (HK) Limited established Zhizhe Sihai, a wholly-owned subsidiary in China. In January 2018, we established Beijing Zhihu Network Technology Co., Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Zhihu Technology (HK) Limited, in China.

In July 2018, we gained control over Zhizhe Tianxia through Zhizhe Sihai by entering into a series of contractual arrangements with Zhizhe Tianxia and its shareholders. We replaced such contractual arrangements with the contractual arrangements currently in effect in December 2021.

In September 2021, we gained control over Shanghai Pinzhi by entering into a series of contractual arrangements through Shanghai Zhishi with Shanghai Pinzhi and its shareholders. In November 2021, we gained control over Shanghai Biban and its subsidiaries by entering into a series of contractual arrangements through Shanghai Paya with Shanghai Biban and its shareholders.

On March 26, 2021, the ADSs commenced trading on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol "ZH." Concurrently with our initial public offering, we also entered into private placement transactions with certain investors. Net proceeds from our initial public offering, including the exercise of the underwriters' option to purchase additional ADSs, and the concurrent private placements, after deducting the underwriting discounts and offering expenses, were US\$739.4 million.

On April 22, 2022, our Class A ordinary shares commenced trading on the Main Board of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange under the stock code "2390." The selling shareholders received all the net proceeds of that global offering, and we did not receive any net proceeds therefrom.

Our principal executive offices are located at A5 Xueyuan Road, Haidian District, Beijing 100083, People's Republic of China. Our telephone number at this address is +86 (10) 8271-6605. Our registered office in the Cayman Islands is located at offices of Maples Corporate Services Limited, PO Box 309, Ugland House, Grand Cayman KY1-1104, Cayman Islands. Our agent for service of process in the United States is Cogency Global Inc., located at 122 East 42nd Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10168. Our website is <http://www.zhihu.com>. The information on our websites should not be deemed to be part of this annual report. The SEC also maintains a website at <http://www.sec.gov> that contains reports, proxy, and information statements, and other information regarding registrants that make electronic filings with the SEC using its EDGAR system.

B. Business Overview

Overview

Zhihu is an iconic online content community where people come to find solutions, make decisions, seek inspiration, and have fun. On Zhihu, our users explore and enjoy content that broadens horizons, provides solutions, and resonates with minds, which we refer to as “fulfilling content,” ranging from daily life choices such as the television or mobile phone, an inspirational holiday hide-away, a puzzle book, or a reality show, to sophisticated knowledge or unique experience such as learning about the Tiangong space station or visiting a 2022 Winter Olympics venue, and to bigger decisions such as a college or a good exam preparation program, career choices, or managing a relationship or expecting a baby. A full spectrum of high-quality content on Zhihu appeals to an ever growing user base and content creators, who have come to Zhihu to share their knowledge, experience, and insights. Zhihu goes beyond that first question, and brings people together through their commonality.

What Have We Accomplished?

Launched in 2010, we have been dedicated to expanding our content and service offerings to meet the diverse needs of our users, content creators, and business partners. A content-centric business model has been formed during our development and continues to evolve. We have grown from a Q&A community into one of the largest comprehensive online content communities in China. In 2022, Zhihu had 101.3 million average MAUs and 9.8 million average monthly subscribing members. As of December 31, 2022, Zhihu had 63.1 million cumulative content creators, who had contributed 505.9 million cumulative Q&As covering over 1,000 verticals. We continue to leverage our content-centric business model and launch new monetization channels such as offering vocational training and e-commerce related services. However, we believe that we are still at an early stage of monetization with significant runway for growth across a span of monetization channels.

What Makes Zhihu Great?

The Zhihu model is centered around a virtuous cycle that seeks to achieve a content equilibrium between what our content creators contribute and what our users consume. We continually reinforce Zhihu with its technological foundation and we seek to achieve optimal monetization and deliver value to our shareholders and other stakeholders.

Our users and content creators actively interact with each other and share knowledge, experience, and insights, forming a content ecosystem spanning a wide range of verticals and topics across diverse content forms. Our deep content and user insights play an essential role in optimizing user experience and maintaining robust community governance, which reinforces our community culture of sincerity, expertise, and respect. Our community culture and trustworthy brand further strengthen our content ecosystem, which attracts and retains more users and content creators to our community. Our superior technology infrastructure supports our business in various aspects, from understanding our users and content quality, promoting fulfilling content and user engagement, nurturing our community, to enhancing our content and service offerings and forging a trustworthy brand. As we continue to enhance user experience and serve our users, content creators, and business partners, we have established diverse and expanding content-centric monetization channels. This self-reinforcing cycle has been emerging with our growth and solidify our leaderships.

Zhihu Content

The comprehensive, high-quality Zhihu content is continually enriched by our content creators with systematic support from our content operations, reinforcing Zhihu’s reputation as a trustworthy online content community.

Content Offerings

We are a UGC-based online content community, where content creators contribute a wealth of knowledge, experience, and insights. The Zhihu content is presented in various forms and features such as Q&As, articles, videos, live streaming, and groups. Our community had 649.3 million cumulative pieces of content as of December 31, 2022, including 505.9 million Q&As. The comprehensive Zhihu content encompasses over 1,000 verticals. Popular categories include consumer digital, movies and videos, lifestyle and fashion, mother and baby care, arts and science, education, sports and games, business and finance, and automobiles, among others. Various distribution channels are available for users to effectively and efficiently explore the Zhihu content, such as feeds, searches, trending topics, and follows. As a comprehensive online content community, we seek to maintain a diverse content portfolio.

The Zhihu content is primarily organized in the Q&A form, as we believe that Q&A is an intuitive and efficient way to inspire and facilitate discovery, learning, discussion, and engagement. A question may become trending immediately attracting a string of answers of different lengths, styles, and perspectives. A question may also remain relevant over a long period of time, with answers accumulating, reflecting timeless value of such content. As we accumulate experience in comprehending content through our “fulfillness” approach and understanding users and content creators through TopicRank algorithms, we are able to effectively facilitate creation of high-quality content and its distribution to users for consumption. In addition to Q&As, the Zhihu content can be contributed in the form of articles to facilitate more focused discussions in particular fields and to build systematic knowledge graphs. Users can also form and join groups to explore their commonality.

Aside from the Zhihu content available to all users, we offer a paid Yan Selection membership program where we curate premium content for our subscribing members. The premium content primarily consists of works contributed by professional or experienced content creators and high-quality works licensed by third parties. As of December 31, 2022, the Yan Selection membership program provides access to 4.2 million pieces of premium content, such as fictions and novels, other books and magazines, live and recorded lectures, and audio books, serving a wide range of users who view for pleasure, look to acquire knowledges and skills, and search for credible references. We diligently expand and curate premium content offerings to satisfy the demand of our increasing subscribing members, which incentivizes the growth of our subscribing members and strengthens our trustworthy brand image.

Content Operations

As the foundation of the Zhihu model is a content equilibrium between what our content creators contribute and what our users consume, our content operations rely on our overall comprehension of content through our “fulfillness” approach and the understanding of content creators leveraging TopicRank algorithms. We strive to understand why the “fulfilling content” is fulfilling through our evolving and developing technological capabilities so that we can maintain and further enhance the fulfillment of the Zhihu content. We believe that this “fulfillment” approach, combined with our TopicRank algorithms, could deepen our comprehension of the Zhihu content, which fuels all aspects of our business.

We continually iterate TopicRank algorithms over time to enhance our understanding of content creators to help us comprehend our content ecosystem. As content creators continue to contribute content on Zhihu, our TopicRank algorithms continually assess content through the understanding of content creators based on their contributions and engagements as well as other users’ engagements with their contributions. A content creator can be perceived as an expert by our TopicRank algorithms in a field, large or small, and generally receives more weight in that field for future assessment. The content quality is not merely determined by the popularity or the number of upvotes of the contents. The TopicRank algorithms assess the quality of content based on all relevant information available to Zhihu, and regularly updates such assessment. The high-quality content portfolio and accumulated user engagement data optimize TopicRank through iterations. These continuing iterations create a virtuous cycle to enhance the quality of Zhihu content through our continually refined understanding of content creators, which contributes to the effective creation, distribution, and consumption of content on Zhihu.

In addition, we have been further deepening our comprehension of the content ecosystem by revealing the intrinsic value of the Zhihu content through what we refer to as the “fulfillment” approach. Through our years’ of relentless work to enhance user experience, we have become aware that users love the Zhihu content because such content broadens horizons, provides solutions, and resonates with minds and is exemplary high-quality content. This deepened comprehension is continually iterated through input from our operations and technology teams. We leverage a technology-driven approach to optimize the operation of such content and follow up to re-assess such content. We will continue to apply our technological capabilities, including artificial intelligence, natural language processing, and machine learning to further develop our “fulfillment” approach.

We have years of experience in identifying and promoting worthwhile questions and then using an AI-powered question routing system to invite users to answer questions that correspond to their interests and expertise. This not only incites users' desire to create, but also helps new users quickly get on track with answering questions. We also offer productivity tools to help content creators efficiently produce high-quality content. We use a feed recommendation system and a search system to efficiently distribute content of interest to users. Users can browse their personalized home feeds on the Zhihu app and website based on their profiles and prior behaviors, and search keywords to quickly access relevant content. As our search functions become more popular, we are increasingly recognized by Chinese netizens as a go-to destination to find trustworthy answers to their questions. Users can see updates from content creators and topics that they have followed, read trending topics, watch videos, and browse channels to discover content.

From time to time, we also launch various initiatives and campaigns to further enhance the depth, breadth, and quality of the Zhihu content. We focus on promoting timely content, which covers a wide spectrum of trending events to satisfy our diverse user base. We have a dedicated content operations team facilitating the content creation and distribution relating to the most notable events from time to time. We also utilize AI-powered technologies to produce and supplement relevant questions, allowing users to easily explore trending events of interest. We collaborate with various media to ensure our content covers popular events to the interest of the general public from time to time.

Content Creators

The Zhihu brand has inspired our users to contribute and become content creators. As a UGC-based online content community, we pride ourselves on the 63.1 million cumulative content creators who had contributed 649.3 million cumulative pieces of content, including 505.9 million cumulative Q&As, to our community as of December 31, 2022. Our users and content creators function in a complementary manner in our content ecosystem, sharing their collective intelligence to create a marketplace of answers. We strive to continually empower them to generate high-quality content and encourage content diversity. Our efforts in discovering, developing, and supporting content creators help realize and enhance the potential of each content creator regardless of one's background or field of specialty, allowing us to continually convert more users into content creators.

We understand and support the different needs of content creators at different stages. Leveraging the Q&A form that sparks creativity, we encourage users to contribute their first piece of content and thereby become content creators in the Zhihu community. Our technology can help content creators select the right topics for them. For example, our AI-powered question routing system distributes questions suitable for entry-level content creators, and will gradually increase the sophistication of questions as content creators become more experienced. Content creators can be rewarded financially from their creative works through various channels, such as income for creation of quality commercial and premium content, commission from Recommended Goodies, among other things.

Zhihu Users

We have a large, vibrant, and rapidly growing user base. We had average MAUs of 68.5 million, 95.9 million, and 101.3 million in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. We have a balanced user base. For example, as of December 31, 2022, over 74% of our average MAUs were under 30, and female users accounted for 48.5% of our MAUs in December 2022. We will continue to expand and further diversify our user base, and aim to serve a broader set of internet users.

Our users are highly engaged. Our users can leverage a series of features to engage actively within the Zhihu community. For example, users can upvote and downvote answers and comments, which serve an instrumental role in our community engagements. Users can also identify and invite other users to answer any question in our community. Other engagement features include comments, likes, follows, favorites, and shares.

Our users are instrumental in building and maintaining our community culture of sincerity, expertise, and respect. We provide a set of comprehensive community identity and recognition systems that strengthen users' sense of community belonging.

We adopt a systematic approach in regard to our user growth management. In particular, we seamlessly integrate our growth management strategies with all aspects of our operations, including our brand building efforts. Our product, content, community governance, technology, and sales and marketing teams collaborate closely with our growth management team to align and execute our user growth strategies and ensure optimized user acquisition. We also strategically deploy multi-dimensional user growth strategies to complement our word-of-mouth referrals, such as brand marketing, targeted campaigns, and pre-installations on mobile devices. To keep up with the dynamic market conditions and competitive landscape, we continually review and refine our user growth strategy. For example, to attract users of a broader and more diverse background, we focus on promoting ourselves as an online community where everyone can find their own answers, and we highlight our strength as the go-to online community for content coverage on trending topics with significant social impact.

Our Monetization

We have adopted a content-centric monetization approach. We derive revenues from online advertising, paid membership, content-commerce solutions, vocational training, and other services such as e-commerce.

The following table sets forth certain of our operating data for the periods indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			2020-2022
	2020	2021	2022	CAGR
Average MAUs (in millions)	68.5	95.9	101.3	21.6 %
Average monthly subscribing members (in thousands)	2,362.6	5,076.0	9,806.9	103.7 %
Paying ratio	3.4 %	5.3 %	9.7 %	68.9 %

Online Advertising

We offer merchants and brands online advertising services to help them deliver advertisements effectively to their targeted audience. Our advertisers are generally attracted by, among other things, the expanding user base and user profiles as well as the content generated in our community. They typically select target audience based on user profiles and review performance indices instead of specifying target content category or monitoring other similar metrics. Our online advertising services primarily include launch-screen and feed advertisements. Advertisements can be placed at various parts in our Zhihu app and website in different formats. Merchants and brands can place display-based or performance-based advertisements. We primarily charge display-based advertisements by the cost-per-mille model, and primarily charge performance-based advertisements by the cost-per-click model and cost-per-mille model. The pricing of our advertising is determined based on our internal marked price guidelines that are updated from time to time. The guidelines generally take into consideration factors including, among other things, nature and type of advertisers, products and services to be marketed, prior relationships, level of comparable demands, and scale of orders, and are implemented based on marked price for our advertising services.

Paid Membership

We offer Yan Selection membership program, which provides our subscribing members with access to our premium content library, serving a wide range of users who view for pleasure, look to acquire knowledges and skills, and search for credible references. We offer subscription plans for the Yan Selection membership, and offer trials to attract more members. Our subscription plans are offered for monthly, quarterly, and annual membership services. Compared to content that can be viewed free of charge, premium content under the paid membership subscription program primarily consists of content generated by content creators on our platform, some of which are professional content creators, and user-generated content licensed from third parties on a compensated basis. Specifically, these third parties primarily include professional or experienced content creators that provide us with commissioned works and copyright licensors that license us to use certain copyrighted works, although we are not a reseller of third-party content. We also offer an on-demand access option to our content library to supplement our Yan Selection membership program. In 2022, we had 9.8 million average monthly subscribing members, representing a paying ratio of 9.7% of our paid membership program, up from 5.3% in 2021. We expect to expand our paid membership services by continuing to enhance the quality of our premium content, including professionally generated content and professional user-generated content, and diversifying the spectrum of our premium content library.

Content-Commerce Solutions

Our innovative content-commerce solutions provide merchants and brands with online marketing solutions that are seamlessly integrated into our online content community. As opposed to traffic-based online marketing, our content-commerce solutions adopt a content-based approach focusing on the content itself and its appeal to targeted audience to help merchants and brands engage with their target consumers in a more direct, accurate, and effective manner. Content-commerce solutions enable merchants and brands to create high-quality commercial content about their products and services, which can be distributed by and remain relevant to our users over a period of time, contributing to a rich content portfolio that can enhance our clients' branding. The typical duration of content relating to our content-commerce solutions ranges from a couple of days to one year. Such content is seamlessly embedded into answers, articles, and videos on Zhihu, to effectively capitalize on users' actionable intent. When high-quality commercial content is consumed in the relevant context, superior marketing effects could be achieved. In addition, through collaborating with us under content-commerce solutions, content creators can serve merchants and brands in their brand building, sales conversion, or other promotional needs.

We establish our content-commerce solutions based on a highly productive content creation community generating massive opportunities. Depending on the demand of merchants and brands, content can be created primarily through content creators in our community directly or through service agents such as multi-channel network or in-house production by merchants and brands. As we continue to facilitate content creation, enhance user experience, and provide monetization opportunities on Zhihu, an increasing number of content creators currently constitute the content creation force of our content-commerce solutions. Accordingly, we have rolled out the Cheese platform, which is a utility that enhances the effectiveness of content creators to generate commercial content that can be utilized by content-commerce solutions and other monetization channels such as online advertising. With the Cheese platform, merchants and brands can present high-quality commercial content through suitable topics and Q&As.

Leveraging the volume of high-quality content on Zhihu, our content commerce-solutions have proven to be a highly effective marketing approach for merchants and brands, evidenced by an overall click-through rate multiple times higher than that of traditional advertising.

Vocational Training

We have launched our vocational training service in 2020. We offer a diverse course portfolio with a focus on professional qualification exams and other vocational education, which is a valuable supplement to our content offerings. Our vocational training service experienced rapid growth since launch. In 2022, we generated RMB248.3 million (US\$36.0 million) in revenues from our vocational training services.

Our courses include vocational training courses that are self-developed and developed in collaboration with third-party education service providers. We utilize our existing technological infrastructure, including our content distribution engine, customer relationship management, data management platform, and transaction system, to smoothly support the growth of our vocational training services. We attract users by creating and distributing content that stimulate users' interest in topics that relate to the courses and facilitate users to purchase such courses. In addition, we conduct strategic acquisitions to strengthen our content supply. Since 2021, we have enriched the content supply for our vocational training services through acquisitions of equity interests in companies that provide certain exam preparation courses.

Other Monetization Channels

As part of our efforts to grow our content portfolio and cater to the evolving trend of our users' content consumption, we continue to identify and introduce additional products and services. We believe that there are significant monetization opportunities in many of our content domains, such as e-commerce, where users are highly engaged and we have accumulated a vast depositary of content.

Our e-commerce operations enable content creators to embed actionable utilities in their content to introduce and recommend products to our users. We currently direct traffic externally to third-party e-commerce platforms, which pay us commissions based on pre-agreed percentages of the relevant GMV realized on these platforms, and we split the commissions with the content creators.

Our trustworthy brand image makes Zhihu popular in various product categories. Our e-commerce service currently covers digital consumer products, home appliances, and lifestyle products. We also work with third parties to offer book series. Benefiting

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from our rich content portfolio, we are exploring opportunities to further develop the related intellectual property in collaboration with third parties, such as Zhihu-branded merchandise.

Zhihu Community Governance

We maintain community culture through our comprehensive community governance system, comprising our users, protocols, and algorithms. These elements interact with one another to build and maintain our culture.

Our community governance team actively identifies and responds to content that contradicts our community guidelines, assisted by our proprietary know-how and AI-powered content assessment algorithms as well as a set of system and protocols built upon years of operations. We analyze content, assess user behaviors and interactions, and ultimately enhance the quality of our content portfolio. As a result, content quality ultimately determines the order by which content is presented. Influential, reputable, and well-recognized users generally have more weight in the content assessment process. Through years of experience, we have accumulated a set of community guidelines in addition to our community by-laws and terms of service to help regulate all major aspects of our community's operations and activities.

People within the Zhihu community value our culture and can help safeguard an environment where everyone is encouraged to share their knowledge, experience, and insights while treating each other with respect. For example, our users can actively participate in community governance by initiating and participating in dispute review process, and certain users can even become "jurors" on Zhihu to decide on fact-finding in community disputes.

Sales and Marketing

We strategically deploy multi-dimensional marketing strategies to complement our word-of-mouth referrals, such as brand marketing, targeted campaigns, and pre-installations on mobile devices. Currently, a majority of the downloads of the Zhihu app are from the app stores on Android devices, and all pre-installations of the Zhihu app are made on Android devices, which represent an insignificant portion of the Zhihu app installations on Android devices.

Our content-centric approach to boost our brand recognition and our marketing also includes cooperation with celebrities, targeted event campaigns, and fans events, as well as collaboration with major TV stations and online video platforms in China. Because the Zhihu brand itself imparts strong recognition of content quality and trustworthiness, our marketing strategy to combine brand building with user growth enables us to benefit from a lower customer acquisition cost and achieve a faster rate of user growth.

Data analytics underlie our marketing strategies. We constantly refine our algorithms for accurate identification of trending topics and user demand to better connect the right users with the right content. We also market our community and quality content through popular search engines, social media, trending apps, web navigation portals, and third-party mini-programs.

Technological Infrastructure

We develop and deploy our technological infrastructure and data capabilities based on and suitable for the nature of our content and our content-centric monetization strategies.

TopicRank sets the technological foundation of Zhihu as a trustworthy online content community from the content creator perspective. Powered by our AI capabilities, TopicRank assesses content through understanding of content creators and is continually refined by machine learning technology and our proprietary know-how and data insights derived from our decade-long operations. We have been enhancing TopicRank's iterative process by allowing an overlay of our "fulfilling" approach, leveraging our deepened understanding of content. As part of our efforts in developing and implementing our "fulfillness" approach, we are applying various technical means, including AI, machine learning, and natural language processing, in cultivating our technological capability of identifying and promoting "fulfilling content." We believe that we are uniquely positioned to develop this "fulfillness" approach benefiting from our rich and deep content portfolio as well as our over a decade of operating experience.

We also seek to enhance our technological capability to support content management through an interplay and iteration between the "fulfillness" approach and the TopicRank algorithms. Credentials of content creators identified by TopicRank may be of high reference value, especially in the stage of initial development of the "fulfillness" approach, and this approach will feed TopicRank with accurate data to strengthen its content comprehension capabilities through better profiling of content creators.

We use an intelligent question routing system to accurately invite users to contribute answers. Based on the analysis of a particular question and data insights on users, the question routing system identifies users who have created content (preferably with

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positive feedback by other users) or shown interest in the relevant field based on user profiles and behaviors, and distributes the question to these users, prompting for a response. In addition, we also supply content creators with a suite of productivity tools to assist in creating content in various forms and easily editing texts, images, and videos.

We also use a feed recommendation system and a search system to efficiently distribute content of interest to users. The feed recommendation system creates personalized home feeds when users access the Zhihu app and website based on user profiles and behaviors. The feed recommendation system enables us to optimize user experience and improve the signal-to-noise ratio. We continue to improve both the feed recommendation and search systems through TopicRank and machine learning technology.

We apply multiple technologies based on natural language processing (NLP) to understand and respond to content, users, and their behaviors and interactions, ultimately to maintain the culture of the Zhihu community. We maintain and develop knowledge graphs to arrange content in a structured system, and, with the accumulation of information over years of operations, to organize and present knowledge, experience, and insights for users. We use graph embedding machine learning models to analyze interactions between users and determine user affinity, which together with other factors help refine our assessment of the appropriateness of any particular content and determine corresponding reactions. We also use AI-powered proprietary systems to defend against inappropriate content. In addition, we have implemented AI-powered systems to enhance our ability to understand and manage video content. We believe that we are one of the few online content market players that are capable of managing content by recognizing tones and attitudes expressed by users under complex context and circumstances.

Our research and development team is comprised of highly qualified employees, substantially all of whom held bachelor's or higher degrees as of December 31, 2022. Our research and development expenses consist primarily of payroll and related expenses for research and development professionals. We plan to continue to invest in technology and innovation to enhance user and customer experience.

User Privacy and Data Security

Data security is crucial to our business operations. We have internal rules and policy to govern how we may use and share personal information, as well as protocols, technologies and systems in place to ensure that such information will not be accessed or disclosed improperly. Users must acknowledge the terms and conditions of the user agreement before accessing our products and services, under which they consent to our collection, use, and disclosure of their data in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

When our users access and interact on Zhihu, certain personal information is directly collected by us, primarily including name, email address, mobile number, ID number, behavioral data, and other personal information. We would first obtain consent from our users to collect, store, and transmit data for providing services to them on Zhihu. Our data privacy policy agreed by our users describes our data practices in our operations, and we do not use any data for any purpose other than those specified in the data privacy policy with our users.

We store in-house all the data accumulated in our operations. Neither do we currently have any data sharing arrangement with external parties, nor does our business involve any cross-border data transfer. From an internal policy perspective, we limit access to our servers that store our user and internal data on a "need-to-know" basis. Our employees are granted access to the minimum extent that is necessary to fulfill their job responsibilities and are required to go through strict internal approval procedure before operating on such data. We also have entered into confidentiality agreements with relevant employees and organized trainings to strengthen their awareness for data privacy and protection. In addition, we adopt a data encryption system intended to ensure the secured storage and transmission of data, and prevent any unauthorized member of the public or third parties from accessing or using our data in any unauthorized manner. We have implemented relevant internal controls to ensure that user data is protected and that leakage and loss of such data is avoided. Furthermore, we have appointed a team of dedicated data protection professionals who are responsible for designing and monitoring data security management and emergency response. Data access attempts by any third party are subject to our evaluation and approval procedure based on the necessity and scope of the attempts and appropriate consent from our users. We typically provide third parties with anonymous and desensitized personal information and require such third parties to undertake equivalent data protection measures.

To date, we have not been subject to any material fines or other material penalties due to non-compliance with data privacy and security laws or regulations. Based on the foregoing, Commerce & Finance Law Offices, our PRC legal counsel, is of the view that we are in compliance with currently applicable PRC data privacy and cybersecurity laws and regulations that may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, or results of operations in all material respects as of the date of this annual report.

Intellectual Property

We rely on a combination of patent, copyright, trademark, domain name, and trade secret laws and restrictions on disclosure to protect our intellectual property rights. As of March 31, 2023, we had 59 registered patents, 23 pending patent registration applications, 957 registered trademarks, 57 pending trademark registration applications, registered copyrights to 20 pieces of software, and 16 domain names (including zhihu.com). As of the date of this annual report, we were not subject to any claims or allegations relating to intellectual property that were material to our business operations.

Competition

We operate along other online content communities, including Q&A-inspired online communities. Our competitors mainly include (i) comprehensive online content communities and (ii) other online content communities that specialize in certain content verticals, such as certain lifestyle sharing platforms, live streaming platforms, knowledge sharing platforms, and hobby communities.

China's online content communities industry is highly competitive and rapidly changing with the evolving market demand and user preferences. We compete to attract, engage, and retain users, content creators, and merchants and brands. Our competitors may compete with us in a variety of ways, including by providing better content, fulfilling evolving user needs, providing content creation utilities, and conducting brand promotions and other marketing activities. Our content creators are generally free to post their content on our competitors' platforms, which may divert user traffic or attention from our platform.

We face competition for advertising and marketing spending of merchants and brands. We compete against other online content communities that offer services similar to our online advertising and content-commerce solutions. We also compete with internet companies that offer similar services, including but not limited to PGC-focused online content market players, search service providers, e-commerce platforms, and social networking platforms. We also compete against traditional media outlets, such as television, radio, and print for advertising and marketing budget.

Our paid membership service offerings compete with platforms that provide similar services to paying users, including other online content communities and PGC-focused online content market players that offer subscription programs or on-demand access to content library.

Our vocational training business faces competition for consumer spending with online or offline training players that focus on professional qualification exams and other vocational education.

Besides advertising, paid membership, and content-commerce solutions, we also generate revenue through other services, including e-commerce services, for which we may face competition for consumer spending with other online content communities and e-commerce platforms.

We will continue to compete effectively with our competitors based on the community culture, content quality and richness, and governance mechanism that we have cultivated and precipitated for a decade, the strength and reputation of our Zhihu brand of trustworthiness, our ability to provide high-quality content, our ability to develop new products and services and enhancements to existing products and services to keep up with user preferences and demands, and our ability to continue to grow our user base.

As we introduce new products and services on our platform, as our existing products and services continue to evolve, or as other companies introduce new products and services, we may become subject to additional competition.

Regulations

Regulations on Value-Added Telecommunications Services

Licenses for Value-Added Telecommunications Services

The PRC Telecommunications Regulations, promulgated by the State Council on September 25, 2000 and last amended with immediate effect on February 6, 2016, provides the regulatory framework for telecommunications service providers in China. The PRC Telecommunications Regulations classify telecommunications services into basic telecommunications services and value-added telecommunications services. Providers of value-added telecommunications services are required to obtain a license for value-added telecommunications services. According to the Catalog of Telecommunications Services, attached to the PRC Telecommunications Regulations and last amended by the PRC Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, or the MIIT, on June 6, 2019, information services provided via public communication network or the internet are value-added telecommunications services.

As a subcategory of the value-added telecommunications services, internet information services are regulated by the Administrative Measures on Internet Information Services, or the Internet Measures, which was promulgated by the State Council on September 25, 2000 and last amended with immediate effect on January 8, 2011. Internet information services are defined as “services that provide information to online users through the internet.” The Internet Measures classifies internet information services into non-commercial internet information services and commercial internet information services. Commercial internet information service providers must obtain an ICP License from appropriate telecommunications authorities. An ICP License has a term of five years and can be renewed within 90 days prior to its expiration, according to the Administrative Measures for Telecommunications Businesses Operating Licensing, which was promulgated by the MIIT on March 1, 2009, last amended on July 3, 2017, and became effective on September 1, 2017.

Restrictions on Foreign Investment in Value-Added Telecommunications Services

The Regulations for the Administration of Foreign-Invested Telecommunications Enterprises, promulgated by the State Council on December 11, 2001, most recently amended on March 29, 2022, and effective on May 1, 2022, requires foreign-invested value-added telecommunications enterprises in China to be established as Sino-foreign joint ventures, and foreign investors shall not acquire more than 50% of the equity interest of such an enterprise. Moreover, the joint ventures must obtain approvals from the MIIT or their authorized local counterparts, before launching the value-added telecommunications business in China.

The Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for Foreign Investment Access (2021 Edition), or the 2021 Negative List, was promulgated by the NDRC and the Ministry of Commerce jointly on December 27, 2021 and effective on January 1, 2022. According to the 2021 Negative List, the proportion of foreign investments in an entity engaging in value-added telecommunications business (except for e-commerce, domestic multi-party communications, storage-forwarding, and call centers) shall not exceed 50%.

Pursuant to the Ministry of Information Industry’s Notice on Strengthening the Administration of Foreign Investment in and Operation of Value-Added Telecommunications Services, issued by the Ministry of Information Industry, the predecessor of the MIIT, on July 13, 2006, domestic value-added telecommunications enterprises were prohibited to rent, transfer, or sell licenses for value-added telecommunications services to foreign investors in any form, or provide any resources, premises, facilities, or other assistance in any form to foreign investors for their illegal operation of any value-added telecommunications business in China.

Regulations on Internet Content Services

The PRC government authorities have adopted regulations governing illegal content and information over the internet. The PRC government authorities strengthen the regulations on internet content from time to time to, among others, maintain the security of internet operations and internet content (see “—Regulations Relating to Information Security”) and manage specific categories of internet content such as internet audio-visual programs (see “—Regulations Relating to Internet Audio-Visual Program Services”).

On August 25, 2017, the CAC promulgated the Administrative Provisions on Internet Comment Threading Services and the Administrative Provisions on Internet Forum and Community Services, both of which took effect on October 1, 2017. As stipulated in the provisions, the online comment threading service providers are imposed on strict primary obligations such as verifying the authenticity of registered users' identity information, protecting personal information of users, and developing systems to review comment threading on news information prior to the publication. In addition, the services providers may establish information review, real-time public information check, emergency response, personal information protection, and other information security administration systems. Furthermore, the service providers should not publish information in violation of PRC laws, regulations, and other relevant provisions. The Administrative Provisions on Internet Comment Threading Services was later amended on November 16, 2022 and took effect on December 15, 2022. The new amendment further clarifies the obligations of service providers of online comment threading. Service providers must regulate and manage users, producers, and operators of official accounts in accordance with user agreements. For users of comment threading services that release unlawful and detrimental content, the service providers must take necessary measures to manage such actions, such as giving warnings, refusing publication of comment, deleting comment, restricting account functions, suspending account updates, closing accounts, and prohibiting re-registration, and save relevant records; for producers and operators of official accounts that fail to fulfil their management obligations resulting in circulation of unlawful and detrimental information on the online comment threading, the service providers must take necessary measures to manage such actions, such as giving warnings, deleting relevant information, suspending the function of comment threading until the permanent closure of online comment threading area, restricting account functions, suspending account updates, closing accounts, and prohibiting re-registration, save relevant records, and promptly report to the cyberspace administration authorities. The new amendment defines "comment threading services" as services provided by internet websites, applications, and other online platforms of a public opinion nature or with the capacity to mobilize the public, for users to express text, code, emojis, pictures, audio, video, or other information through methods such as comments, responses, private messages, live streaming comments, likes, and so forth.

On September 7, 2017, the CAC promulgated the Administrative Provisions on the Information Services Provided Through Public Accounts of Internet Users, which was last amended on January 22, 2021 and took effect on February 22, 2021. It requires information service platforms for public accounts to, among others, establish and improve a management system for user registration, information content security, content ecology, data security, personal information protection, intellectual property protection, and credit assessment, and establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for public accounts to prevent data falsification on account subscriptions and interaction counts.

On December 15, 2019, the CAC promulgated the Provisions on the Ecological Governance of Internet Information Content, which took effect on March 1, 2020 and specifies the content scopes that are encouraged, prohibited, or prevented from producing, reproducing, and publishing. The internet information content producers must take measures to prevent and resist the production of content that, among others, uses exaggerated titles that are inconsistent with the content, may incite racism or discrimination against geographic region, and propagates scandals. The internet information content service platforms must fulfill the main responsibility of content management, establish an ecological governance mechanism of the internet information, and improve system for user registration, account management, information publishing review, and emergency response. The internet information content service users, internet information content producers, and internet information content service platforms cannot, through manual or technical means, conduct acts that destroy the internet ecosystem.

On June 27, 2022, the CAC promulgated the Administrative Provisions on the Account Information of Internet Users, which took effect on August 1, 2022. Internet-based information service providers that provide users with information release services, should provide and disclose the rules for the management of user accounts and platform conventions and enter into service agreements with users. Internet-based information service providers should authenticate the identification information of the users who apply for registration of accounts for production of information content in areas such as economics, education, medical care and health, and justice, and the service providers should require these users to provide relevant documents such as service qualification, professional qualification, and professional background information for verification and add a special label to the accounts that have been verified. Any internet-based information service provider in violation of these provisions should be punished in accordance with relevant laws and administrative regulations.

On September 9, 2022, the CAC, the MIIT, and the SAMR issued the Administrative Provisions on Internet Pop-up Push Notification Services, which took effect on September 30, 2022. The provisions require that internet pop-up push notification service providers should implement the responsibilities as subjects of information content management and establish and improve management systems for censoring of information content, ecological governance, data security, and personal information protection, and protection of minors.

On November 25, 2022, the CAC, MIIT, and Ministry of Public Security jointly issued the Administrative Provisions on Deep Synthesis of Internet Information Services, which took effect on January 10, 2023. According to the provisions, deep synthesis technology refers to any technology that utilizes deep learning, virtual reality, or any other generative or synthetic algorithm to produce text, images, audio, video, virtual scenes, or other network information. The provisions emphasize that deep synthesis service providers, as the primary entities responsible for the information security, should not use deep synthesis services to engage in activities prohibited by laws and regulations.

Regulations Relating to Mobile Internet Applications Information Services

In addition to the PRC Telecommunications Regulations and other regulations above, mobile internet applications, or Apps, are specially regulated by the Administrative Provisions on Mobile Internet Applications Information Services, which was promulgated by the CAC on June 28, 2016 and last amended on June 14, 2022 and took effect on August 1, 2022. The provisions set forth the relevant requirements on the App information service providers and the App Store service providers. The CAC and its local branches shall be responsible for the supervision and administration of nationwide and local App information respectively.

App providers shall strictly fulfill their responsibilities of information security management, and perform the following duties: (i) in accordance with the principle of “real name at background, any name at foreground,” verify identities with the registered users through mobile phone numbers, ID numbers, unified social credit codes, and other measures; (ii) establish and improve the mechanism for user information security protection, follow the principle of “legality, appropriateness, necessity, and good faith” in collection and use of personal information, expressly state the purpose, methods, and scope of information collection, and obtain the users’ consent; (iii) establish a sound information content review and management mechanism, and establish and improve management measures for user registration, account management, information review, routine inspections, and emergency response, with professionals and technical capabilities commensurate with their service scale; (iv) adhere to the principle of being most beneficial to minors, and strictly implement the requirements for the registration and login of minors’ user accounts with real identity information in accordance with the law; (v) do not induce users to download apps by means of false advertisement, bundled downloads, or other acts, or via machine or manual comment control, or by using illegal and harmful information; and (vi) perform the obligation of ensuring data security, establish a sound whole-process data security management system, take technical measures to ensure data security and other security measures, and strengthen risk monitoring, and cannot endanger national security or public interests, or damage the legitimate rights and interests of others.

Regulations Relating to Internet Culture Activities

Internet audio-visual program services are categorized as internet culture business. The Interim Administrative Provisions on Internet Culture, or the Internet Culture Provisions, promulgated by the Ministry of Culture on May 10, 2003, and last amended with immediate effect on December 15, 2017, provides that internet culture activities are classified into non-commercial internet cultural activities and commercial internet cultural entities. Under the Internet Culture Provisions, internet culture activities include: (i) the production, reproduction, importation, distribution, or streaming of internet culture products (such as online music, online game, online program, online series, online performance, online cartoon, etc.); (ii) the dissemination of culture products via internet; and (iii) the exhibitions, competitions, and other similar activities concerning internet culture products. To conduct commercial internet culture activities, the ICB License is a prerequisite.

On April 13, 2005, the State Council promulgated Decisions on the Entry of the Non-state-owned Capital into the Cultural Industry. On July 6, 2005, five PRC regulatory agencies, namely, the Ministry of Culture, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, or the SARFT, the General Administration of Press and Publications, or the GAPP, the NDRC, and the Ministry of Commerce, jointly adopted Opinions on Introducing Foreign Investments to the Cultural Sector. According to these regulations, non-state-owned capital and foreign investors are generally not allowed to conduct the business of transmitting audio-visual programs via information network. In addition, internet cultural business (except for music) remains a prohibited area for foreign investment on the 2021 Negative List.

The Administrative Measures for Content Self-review by Internet Culture Business Entities, which were promulgated by the Ministry of Culture on August 12, 2013, and took effect on December 1, 2013, require internet culture business entities to review the content of culture products and services before providing them to the public. The content management system required to be established by an internet culture business entity shall specify the responsibilities, standards and processes for content review as well as accountability measures, and be filed with the local provincial branch of the Ministry of Culture.

Regulations Relating to Internet Audio-Visual Program Services

According to the Administrative Regulations on Internet Audio-Visual Program Service, or the Audio-Visual Regulations, promulgated by the SARFT and the Ministry of Information Industry on December 20, 2007, as amended on August 28, 2015, internet audio-visual program service refers to activities of making, editing, and integrating audio-visual programs, providing them to the general public via internet, and providing such services to other people by uploading. An internet audio-visual program service provider must obtain an Audio-Visual Permit issued by the SARFT or complete certain registration procedures with the SARFT. On March 30, 2009, the SARFT promulgated the Notice on Strengthening the Administration of the Content of Internet Audio-Visual Programs, which reiterates the pre-approval requirements for the internet audio-visual programs, including those on mobile network (if applicable), and prohibits internet audio-visual programs containing violence, pornography, gambling, terrorism, superstition, or other prohibited elements. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, or the SAPPRFT, issued the Supplemental Notice on Improving the Administration of Online Audio-visual Content Including Internet Drama and Micro Films on January 2, 2014. This notice emphasizes that entities producing online audio-visual content, such as internet drama and micro films, must obtain a Radio and Television Program Production and Operation License, and that online audio-visual content service providers cannot release any internet drama or micro films that were produced by any entity lacking such license. For internet drama or micro films produced and uploaded by individual users, the online audio-visual service providers transmitting such content will be deemed responsible as a producer. Further, under this notice, online audio-visual service providers can only transmit content uploaded by individuals whose identity has been verified and such content shall comply with the relevant content management rules. This notice also requires that online audio-visual content, including internet drama and micro films, to be filed with the relevant authorities before release.

Pursuant to the Audio-Visual Regulations, providers of internet audio-visual program services are generally required to be either state-owned or state-controlled. According to the Official Answers to Press Questions Regarding the Audio-Visual Regulations published on the SARFT's website on February 3, 2008, the SARFT and Ministry of Information Industry clarified that providers of internet audio-visual program services who had legally engaged in such services prior to the adoption of the Audio-visual Regulations are eligible to re-register their businesses and continue their operations of internet audio-visual program services so long as those providers have not been in violation of the laws and regulations. This exemption will not be granted to internet audio-visual program service providers established after the adoption of the Audio-Visual Regulations.

These policies have later been reflected in the Notice on Relevant Issues Concerning Application and Approval of Audio-Visual Permit, issued by SARFT on April 8, 2008 and amended on August 28, 2015.

In March 2018, the SAPPRFT issued the Notice on Further Regulating the Transmission Order of Internet Audio-visual Programs, which requires that, among others, audio-visual platforms shall: (i) not produce or transmit programs intended to parody or denigrate classic works, (ii) not re-edit, re-dub, re-caption or otherwise ridicule classic works, radio and television programs, or original internet audio-visual programs without authorization, (iii) not transmit re-edited programs which unfairly distort the original content, (iv) strictly monitor the adapted content uploaded by platform users and not provide transmission channels for illicit content, (v) immediately take down unauthorized content upon receipt of complaints from copyright owners, radio and television stations, or film and television production institutions, (vi) strengthen the administration of movie trailers and prevent improper broadcasting of movie clips and trailers prior to authorized release, and (vii) strengthen the administration of sponsorship and endorsement for internet audio-visual programs. Pursuant to this notice, the provincial branches of SAPPRFT shall have the authority to supervise radio and television stations and websites that offer audio-visual programs within its jurisdiction and require them to further improve their content management systems and implement relevant management requirements.

According to the Administrative Provisions on Online Audio-Visual Information Services, promulgated jointly by the CAC, the PRC Ministry of Culture and Tourism, or the MCT, and the NRTA on November 18, 2019, and came into effect on January 1, 2020, online audio-visual information service providers shall authenticate user's real identity information based on organization code, identity card number, mobile phone number, etc. Online audio-visual information service providers shall not serve users who fail to provide their real identity information. Online audio-visual information service providers are the principals responsible for information content security management, and should, among other things, establish and improve their internal policies in relation to user registration, scrutiny of information publication, and information safety management. Organizations and individuals are prohibited from using online audio-visual information services and related information technology to carry out illegal activities and infringe legal rights and interests of others. Online audio-visual information service providers shall strengthen the management of the audio-visual information posted by users, deploy and apply identification technologies for illegal and non-real audio and video; if any user is found to produce, post or disseminate content prohibited by laws or regulations, the transmission of such information shall be ceased, and disposal measures such as deletion shall be taken to prevent the information from spreading, and such service providers shall save relevant records, and report to the CAC, the MCT, and the NRTA.

Under the Regulations on the Administration of Production of Radio and Television Programs, promulgated by the SARFT on July 19, 2004, and amended on October 29, 2020, any entities that engage in the production of radio and television programs are required to apply for a license from the SARFT or its local level counterparts. Entities with the Radio and Television Program Production and Operation License must conduct their operations strictly within the approved scope of production and operation. Except for radio and television broadcasting institutions, the above-mentioned permit holders shall not produce radio and television programs concerning current political news or special topics, columns and other programs of the same kind.

On January 9, 2019, the China Net-casting Services Association, or the CNSA, issued the Regulations on Administration of Network Short Video Platforms, pursuant to which a network platform is required to obtain the Audio-Visual Permit and relevant qualifications to provide short video services, and to strictly operate within the scope of such permit. The network short video platform is required to establish a chief-editor content management and responsibility system, and all content of a short video, including but not limited to its title, description, bullet-chats and comments shall be reviewed in advance before the content is broadcasted. Furthermore, the number of content reviewers a platform is required to host should, in principle, be more than one-thousandth of the number of short videos newly broadcasted on the platform per day. The content reviewers are expected to have high political awareness and professionalism. CNSA issued the Censoring Criteria for Network Short Video Content on January 9, 2019 and amended it on December 15, 2021, which set forth certain details of content prohibited to be broadcasted, such as violence, pornography, gambling, terrorism, and other illegal or immoral content.

Regulations Relating to Publication

Restriction on Internet Publication

According to the Opinions on Introducing Foreign Investments to the Cultural Sector, foreign investors are prohibited from engaging in businesses such as internet publication and offline publication.

Pursuant to the Internet Measures, any engagement in internet information services related to publication, prior to applying for an operation permit or going through the record-filing formalities, are subject to the examination and consent of the relevant competent authorities as required by the laws, administrative regulations, and other relevant provisions. Pursuant to the Administrative Measures for Internet Publication Services, which were jointly promulgated by the SAPPRFT and the MIIT on February 4, 2016 and became effective on March 10, 2016, the entities providing internet publication services shall adopt a system of responsibility for examination of the content of publications, an editor responsibility system, a proofreader responsibility system, and other management systems to ensure the quality of its web publications. The SAPPRFT and its local branches are responsible for the prior approval, supervision, and administration of the internet publication services nationwide, and any internet publication service and internet publication item, or publication of internet publication item is required to obtain an internet publishing service license. Pursuant to the Administrative Measures for Internet Publication Services, Sino-foreign equity joint ventures, Sino-foreign cooperative ventures, and foreign-invested entities cannot engage in internet publication services.

The Administrative Measures for Internet Publication Services stipulate precise conditions for entities (except book, audio-visual, electronic, newspaper, and periodical publishers) engaging in internet publication services to meet, including: (i) have definite website domains, intelligent terminal applications and other publishing platforms for engaging in online publishing business; (ii) have a definite scope of internet publication services; (iii) have technical equipment necessary for engaging in internet publication services, provided that the relevant servers and storage devices must be located within the PRC territory; (iv) have the name and the articles of association for the online publishing service provider, and the name is definite and different from any of those of other publishers; (v) have a legal representative and main responsible person in compliance with the relevant requirements, which means that the legal representative must be a Chinese citizen with full civil capacity and permanently residing in the PRC territory, and that either the legal representative or the main responsible person should have vocational qualifications for technicians engaged in the profession of publishing at or above the intermediate level; (vi) in addition to the legal representative and the main responsible person, have at least eight full-time editorial and publishing employees having technical and vocational qualifications for the profession of publishing and other related professions as approved by the SAPPRFT that can meet the needs within the scope of online publishing services, of which there are at least three employees with professional qualifications at or above the intermediate level; (vii) have a content review system required for engaging in online publishing services; (viii) have a fixed work place; and (ix) other conditions as provided by laws, administrative regulations, and the SAPPRFT. The entities providing internet publication services implement a system of special management shares.

If any entity arbitrarily engages in internet publication services or arbitrarily launches online games (including online games authorized by foreign copyright owners) without approval, it might be banned by the competent publication administrative department and the administrative department for industry and commerce with statutory authority and a fine up to ten times the illegal operating income may be imposed.

In addition, based on the Administrative Measures for Internet Publication Services, an annual verification system shall apply to internet publishing service providers and shall be carried out once every year. The competent administrative departments for SAPPRFT should carry out the annual verification of internet publishing service providers within their respective administrative regions and report relevant information to the SAPPRFT.

Pursuant to the Administrative Regulations on Publishing (2020 Revised) promulgated by the State Council on November 29, 2020, organizations and individually owned businesses engaging in distribution of publications through information network such as the internet shall obtain a Publication Operation License pursuant to the provisions of these regulations.

Restriction on Offline Distribution

The Administrative Provisions on the Publication Market were jointly issued by the SAPPRFT and Ministry of Commerce on May 31, 2016 and became effective on June 1, 2016. The provisions regulate the activities of publication distribution, including publication wholesale or retail activities, which shall be carried with the Publication Operation License. Without licensing, such entity or individual may be ordered to cease illegal acts by the competent administrative department of publication, be given a warning, and be concurrently subject to a fine.

On June 28, 2012, the GAPP promulgated the Implementing Rules of the General Administration of Press and Publication for Supporting Private Capital's Participation in Publishing Operation Activities, pursuant to which, the GAPP, among other things, (i) continuously supports private capital to invest in the establishment of enterprises of publication issuance, wholesale, retailing, and chain operation to engage in the issuance and operation activities of publication products, such as books, newspaper, periodicals, video and audio products, and electronic publications; and (ii) continuously supports private capital to invest in the establishment of internet digital publishing enterprises, including online game publishing, mobile publishing, e-book publishing, and content software development to engage in publishing and operation activities.

Regulations Relating to Private Education

The PRC Education Law

The PRC Education Law, which was promulgated by the PRC National People's Congress on March 18, 1995, last amended on April 29, 2021 and effective on April 30, 2021, sets forth provisions relating to the fundamental education systems of the PRC, including a school education system comprising pre-school education, elementary education, secondary education and higher education, a system of nine-year compulsory education, a national education examination system, and a system of education certificates. The PRC Education Law stipulates that the state formulates plans for education development, establishes and operates schools and other educational institutions, and in principle, enterprises, institutions, social organizations and individuals are encouraged to operate schools and other educational institutions in accordance with PRC laws and regulations. Other than those sponsored wholly or partially by governmental funds or donated assets, schools or other educational institutions may be established for profit-making purposes.

The Law for Promoting Private Education of the PRC and Its Implementation Rules

The principal laws and regulations governing the private education industry in China are the Law for Promoting Private Education of the PRC, promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, or the SCNPC, on December 28, 2002, last amended and became effective on December 29, 2018, and the Implementation Rules for the Law for Promoting Private Education of the PRC, promulgated by the State Council on March 5, 2004, last amended on April 7 and became effective on September 1, 2021, or collectively, the Private Education Law and Implementation Rules. Under the Private Education Law and Implementation Rules, "private schools" are schools established by non-governmental organizations or individuals using non-government funds. Private schools providing certifications, pre-school education, self-study aid and other academic education are subject to approval by the education authorities, while private schools engaging in vocational qualification training and vocational skill training are subject to approval by the authorities in charge of labor and social welfare. Private schools have the same status as public schools, though private schools are prohibited from providing military, police, political and other kinds of education that are of a special nature. In addition, online education activities using internet technology are encouraged by the regulatory authorities and shall comply with laws and regulations related to internet management. A private school engaging in online education activities using internet technology shall obtain the relevant operating permit. It shall also establish and implement internet security management systems and take technical security measures. Upon discovery of any information whose release or transmission is prohibited by applicable laws or regulations, the private school shall immediately cease the transmission of that information and take further remedial actions, such as deleting that information, to prevent it from spreading. Records pertaining to the situation shall be kept and reported to the appropriate authorities.

On December 29, 2016, the State Council issued the Several Opinions of the State Council on Encouraging the Operation of Education by Social Forces and Promoting the Healthy Development of Private Education, which calls for the ease of access to the operation of private schools and encourage social forces to enter into the education industry. The opinions also provide that each level of the government shall increase their support to the private schools in terms of financial investment, financial support, autonomy policies, preferential tax treatments, land policies, fee policies, autonomy operation, protection of the rights of teachers and students etc. Further, the opinions require each level of the government to improve local policies on government support to for-profit and non-profit private schools by such means as preferential tax treatments.

Regulations on Online Education

On September 19, 2019, the Ministry of Education jointly with certain other PRC government authorities issued the Guidance Opinions on Promoting the Healthy Development of Online Education, which provides, among others, that (i) social forces are encouraged to establish online education institutions, develop online education resources, and provide high quality educational services; and (ii) an online education negative list shall be promulgated and industries not included in the negative list are open for all types of entities to enter into. Moreover, the Ministry of Education jointly with certain other PRC government authorities promulgated the Opinions on Guiding and Regulating the Orderly and Healthy Development of Educational Mobile Apps on August 10, 2019, which requires, among others, mobile apps that provide services for school teaching and management, student learning and student life, or home-school interactions, with school faculty, students or parents as the main users, and with education or learning as the main application scenarios, be filed with competent provincial regulatory authorities for education.

Regulations on Vocational Education

The PRC Vocational Education Law, promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on May 15, 1996, amended on April 20, 2022, and effective on May 1, 2022, applies to vocational schools of all types and levels and vocational training of to all forms. According to this law, institutional organizations, social organizations, and other social groups and individuals are encouraged to operate vocational schools and vocational training institutions according to relevant provisions. The law divides vocational school education into elementary, secondary, and higher vocational education. Vocational school education includes secondary vocational school education and tertiary vocational school education. The secondary vocational school education must be conducted by secondary vocational schools (including technical training schools) at the advanced level of secondary education. The tertiary vocational school education must be conducted by tertiary vocational schools and regular higher education institutions at or above the levels of junior college education and regular course education. Other schools, education institutions, or eligible enterprises and industry organizations may provide corresponding levels of vocational school education or courses for credit included in talent training plans in accordance with the overall planning of education administrative departments. Vocational training includes pre-employment training, on-the-job training, re-employment training, and other vocational training, which may be provided by grade and class according to actual conditions. Vocational training may be carried out by the corresponding vocational training institutions or vocational schools. Other schools or educational institutions as well as enterprises and social organizations may provide various forms of vocational training to the society in accordance with the law according to their capability to provide education and social needs.

The government authorities have issued various rules and regulations in recent years regarding the reform and promotion of vocational education. For example, the Opinions of the State Council on the Implementation of Lifetime Vocational Skills Training System issued on May 3, 2018 proposes, among others, to improve the policy of lifelong vocational skills training for all workers in urban and rural areas from the beginning of labor preparation to the realization of employment and entrepreneurship and throughout the whole process of learning and career. The Notice of the State Council on Promulgation of the Implementation Plan for National Vocational Education Reform issued on January 24, 2019 provides, among others, that vocational education is as important as general education, and shall be put in a more prominent position in the reform and innovation of education and economic and social development of China. All sectors of the society, especially enterprises, are encouraged and supported to actively support vocational education and focus on cultivating high-quality workers and technical and skilled personnel. The Notice on the Implementation of Vocational skills-Upgrading Action “Internet + Vocational Skills Training Plan” issued on February 17, 2020 proposes, among others, to vigorously carry out online vocational skills training by innovating training methods, making full use of channels such as websites and mobile applications, and expanding the coverage of online vocational skills training, as well as to enrich the resources of online training courses by actively procuring technical colleges, enterprises and social training institutions to develop online training courses, grant access to online training resources, and cooperate with online training platforms to carry out online training. The Opinions on Promoting the High-quality Development of Modern Vocational Education issued on October 12, 2021, targets, among others, fundamental establishment of modern vocational education system, and significant improvement in the appeal and training quality of vocational education by 2025.

Regulations Relating to Internet Advertisement

The PRC Advertisement Law, which was promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress on October 27, 1994 and last amended on April 29, 2021, requires advertisers to ensure that the contents of the advertisements are true. The content of advertisements cannot contain prohibited information, including but not limited to: (i) information that harms the dignity or interests of the nation or divulges state secret, (ii) information that contains wordings such as “national level,” “highest level,” and “best,” and (iii) information that contains ethnic, racial, religious, or sexual discrimination. Advertisements posted or published through the internet cannot affect normal usage of network by users. Advertisements published in the form of pop-up window on the internet must display the close button clearly to make sure that the viewers can close the advertisement by one-click.

On July 4, 2016, the PRC State Administration for Industry and Commerce, promulgated the Internet Advertisement Measures, which became effective on September 1, 2016. The Internet Advertisement Measures regulates any advertisement published on the internet, including but not limited to, those on websites, webpage, and Apps, those in the forms of word, picture, audio and video. According to the Internet Advertisement Measures, internet information service providers must stop any person from using their information services to publish illegal advertisements if they are aware of, or should reasonably be aware of, such illegal advertisements even though the internet information service provider merely provides information services and is not involved in the internet advertisement businesses. The following activities are prohibited under the Internet Advertisement Measures: (i) providing or using applications and hardware to block, filter, skip over, tamper with, or cover up lawful advertisements provided by others; (ii) using network access, network equipment, and applications to disrupt the normal transmission of lawful advertisements provided by others or adding or uploading advertisements without permission; or (iii) harming the interests of others by using false statistics or traffic data.

On February 25, 2023, the SAMR promulgated the Measures for the Administration of Internet Advertising, which will take effect on May 1, 2023 and replace the Internet Advertising Measures. The Measures for the Administration of Internet Advertising Administration strengthen the management of pop-up advertisements, link advertisements, and advertorials, among others. The measures stipulate that the promotion of commodities or services in the form of paid listing on the internet must be conspicuously identified as an advertisement, and it requires advertisers, operators, and publishers of internet advertisements containing links to examine the content directed by the next-level link. In addition, internet platform operators are obliged to cooperate with advertising monitoring and assist in supervision and provide statistical data.

Regulations Relating to Information Security

Internet content in the PRC is also regulated and restricted from a state security point of view. The Decision Regarding the Safeguarding of Internet Security, enacted by the SCNPC on December 28, 2000, and amended with immediate effect on August 27, 2009, makes it unlawful to: (i) gain improper entry into a computer or system of strategic importance; (ii) disseminate politically disruptive information; (iii) leak state secrets; (iv) spread false commercial information; or (v) infringe intellectual property rights.

The Administrative Measures for the Security Protection of International Connections to Computer Information Network, issued by the Ministry of Public Security on December 16, 1997, and amended on January 8, 2011, prohibits the use of the internet in ways that, among other things, result in a leakage of state secrets or the distribution of socially destabilizing content. Socially destabilizing content includes any content that incites defiance or violations of PRC laws or regulations or subversion of the PRC government or its political system, spreads socially disruptive rumors or involves cult activities, superstition, obscenities, pornography, gambling or violence. State secrets are defined broadly to include information concerning PRC's national defense affairs, state affairs and other matters as determined by the PRC authorities.

In addition, the State Secrecy Bureau is authorized for the blocking of access to any website it deems to be leaking state secrets or failing to comply with the relevant legislation regarding the protection of state secrets.

On July 1, 2015, the SCNPC issued the National Security Law, which came into effect on the same day. The National Security Law provides that the state shall safeguard the sovereignty, security and cybersecurity development interests of the state, and that the state shall establish a national security review and supervision system to review, among other things, foreign investment, key technologies, internet, and information technology products and services, and other important activities that are likely to impact the national security of the PRC.

On November 7, 2016, the SCNPC issued the PRC Cybersecurity Law, which came into effect on June 1, 2017. This is the first Chinese law that focuses exclusively on cybersecurity. The PRC Cybersecurity Law provides that network operators must set up internal security management systems that meet the requirements of a classified protection system for cybersecurity, including appointing dedicated cybersecurity personnel, taking technical measures to prevent computer viruses, network attacks and intrusions, taking technical measures to monitor and record network operation status and cybersecurity incidents, and taking data security measures such as data classification, backups and encryption. The PRC Cybersecurity Law also imposes a relatively vague but broad obligation to provide technical support and assistance to the public and state security authorities in connection with criminal investigations or for reasons of national security. The PRC Cybersecurity Law also requires network operators that provide network access or domain name registration services, landline or mobile phone network access, or that provide users with information publication or instant messaging services, to require users to provide a real identity when they sign up. The PRC Cybersecurity Law sets high requirements for the operational security of facilities deemed to be part of the PRC's "critical information infrastructure." These requirements include data localization, i.e., storing personal information and important business data in China, and national security review requirements for any network products or services that may impact national security. Among other factors, "critical information infrastructure" is defined as critical information infrastructure, that will, in the event of destruction, loss of function or data leak, result in serious damage to national security, the national economy and people's livelihoods, or the public interest. Specific reference is made to key sectors such as public communication and information services, energy, transportation, water-resources, finance, public services, and e-government.

The Provisions on Technological Measures for Internet Security Protection, promulgated by the Ministry of Public Security on December 13, 2005, and became effective on March 1, 2006, requires internet service providers to keep records of certain information about their users (including user registration information, log-in and log-out times, IP addresses, content and time of posts by users) for at least 60 days. Under the PRC Cybersecurity Law, network operators must also report any instances of public dissemination of prohibited content. If a network operator fails to comply with such requirements, the PRC government may revoke its ICP License and shut down its websites.

On March 13, 2019, the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission and the SAMR jointly issued the Notice on App Security Certification and the Implementation Rules on Security Certification of Mobile Internet Application, which encourages mobile application operators to voluntarily obtain app security certification, and search engines and app stores are encouraged to recommend certified applications to users.

On July 22, 2020, the Ministry of Public Security published the Guiding Opinions on the Implementation of Cybersecurity Hierarchical Protection System and Critical Information Infrastructure Security Protection System, which require, among others, to determine the cybersecurity protection level in a scientific manner based on the importance of network (including network facilities, information system, and data resources) in national security, economic construction, and social life, as well as factors such as the degree of harm after its destruction, to implement hierarchical protection and supervision, with emphasis on ensuring the security of critical information infrastructure and networks at or above the third level.

On June 10, 2021, the SCNPC issued the PRC Data Security Law, which has taken effect on September 1, 2021. The PRC Data Security Law provides a national data security review system, under which data processing activities that affect or may affect national security shall be reviewed. In addition, it clarifies the data security protection obligations of organizations and individuals carrying out data activities and implementing data security protection responsibility, data processors shall establish and improve the whole-process data security management rules, organize and implement data security trainings as well as take appropriate technical measures and other necessary measures to protect data security. Any organizational or individual data processing activities that violate the PRC Data Security Law shall bear the corresponding civil, administrative or criminal liabilities depending on specific circumstances.

The Opinions on Lawfully and Strictly Cracking Down Illegal Securities Activities, promulgated by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on July 6, 2021, called for the enhanced administration and supervision of overseas-listed China-based companies, proposed to revise the relevant regulation governing the overseas issuance and listing of shares by such companies and clarified the responsibilities of competent domestic industry regulators and government authorities. The aforesaid Opinions also called for the improvement of the relevant laws and regulations on data security, cross-border data flow and confidential information management, and proposed to revise the provisions on strengthening confidentiality and archive administration of overseas issuance and listing of securities, to consolidate responsibility for information security of overseas listed companies, and to strengthen the standardized management of the cross-border information provision mechanism and process.

On July 30, 2021, the State Council promulgated the Regulations for the Security Protection of Critical Information Infrastructure, which became effective on September 1, 2021, referring “critical information infrastructures” as important network facilities and information systems in important industries including public communications and information services, as well as those that may seriously endanger national security, national economy, people’s livelihood, or public interests in the event of damage, loss of function, or data leakage. On November 14, 2021, the CAC published a draft of the Administrative Regulations for Internet Data Security, providing that data processors conducting the following activities shall apply for cybersecurity review: (i) merger, reorganization or division of internet platform operators that have acquired a large number of data resources related to national security, economic development or public interests affects or may affect national security; (ii) listing in a foreign country of data processors processing over one million users’ personal information; (iii) listing in Hong Kong which affects or may affect national security; or (iv) other data processing activities that affect or may affect national security. The CAC solicited comments until December 13, 2021, but there is no timetable as to when it will be enacted. On December 28, 2021, the CAC, the NDRC, the MIIT, and several other PRC governmental authorities jointly promulgated the Cybersecurity Review Measures, which took effect on February 15, 2022 and replaced the Measures for Cybersecurity Review promulgated in April 2020 and effective in June 2020. According to the Cybersecurity Review Measures, critical information infrastructure operators that intend to purchase internet products and services and internet platform operators engaging in data processing activities that affect or may affect national security must be subject to the cybersecurity review, and an internet platform operator possessing personal information of over one million users and intending to be listed on a foreign stock exchange must be subject to the cybersecurity review.

On July 7, 2022, the CAC promulgated the Measures for the Security Assessment of Cross-Border Data Transmission, which took effect on September 1, 2022. In accordance with these measures, data processors will be subject to security assessment conducted by the CAC prior to any cross-border data transmission if it involves (i) important data, (ii) personal information transmitted overseas by a critical information infrastructure operator or a data processor that has processed personal data of more than one million persons, (iii) personal information transmitted overseas by a data processor who has already provided personal data of 100,000 persons or sensitive personal data of 10,000 persons overseas since January 1 of last year, or (iv) other circumstances as requested by the CAC. In addition, data processors are required to conduct self-assessment on the risks of cross-border data transmission prior to their applying for the security assessment and focus on assessment of the following significant matters, including, among others: (i) the legality and necessity of the purpose, scope, and method of cross-border data transmission, (ii) the scale, scope, type, and sensitivity of data transmitted overseas, and risks to the national security, public interests, or legitimate rights of individuals or organizations caused by such cross-border data transmission, (iii) the responsibilities and obligations that the overseas recipient of such data promises to undertake, and whether such overseas recipient’s management and technical measures and capabilities for performing its responsibilities and obligations can guarantee the security of cross-border data transmission, (iv) the risks that the data transmitted overseas may be falsified, destroyed, divulged, lost, transferred, illegally obtained, or illegally used during and after the cross-border transmission, and (v) whether contracts or other legally binding documents entered into with the overseas recipient have fully stipulated the responsibilities and obligations to protect data security. Furthermore, any cross-border data transmission activities conducted in violation of the Measures for the Security Assessment of Cross-Border Data Transmission before the effectiveness of such measures are required to be rectified within six months of the effectiveness date thereof.

Regulations Relating to Internet Privacy

In recent years, PRC government authorities have enacted legislation on internet use to protect personal information from any unauthorized disclosure. PRC law does not prohibit internet content provision operators from collecting and analyzing personal information from their users. However, the Internet Measures prohibits an internet content provision operator from insulting or slandering a third party or infringing the lawful rights and interests of a third party.

The Several Provisions on Regulating the Market Order of Internet Information Services, promulgated by the MIIT on December 29, 2011 and became effective on March 15, 2012, stipulates that internet content provision operators must not, without user consent, collect user personal information, which is defined as user information that can be used alone or in combination with other information to identify the user, and may not provide any such information to third parties without prior user consent. Internet content provision operators may only collect user personal information necessary to provide their services and must expressly inform the users of the method, content and purpose of the collection and processing of such user personal information. In addition, an internet content provision operator may only use such user personal information for the stated purposes under the internet content provision operator's scope of service. Internet content provision operators are also required to ensure the proper security of user personal information and take immediate remedial measures if user personal information is suspected to have been disclosed. If the consequences of any such disclosure are expected to be serious, ICP operators must immediately report the incident to the telecommunications regulatory authority and cooperate with the authorities in their investigations.

On December 28, 2012, the SCNPC promulgated the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on Strengthening Online Information Protection (with immediate effect). The Decision provides that, among others, internet service providers shall abide by the principles of legality, legitimacy and necessity, clearly state the purpose, method and scope of the collection and use of information, obtain the consent of the person whose information is being collected when collecting and using a citizen's personal information during business activities, and shall not violate the provisions of laws and regulations or the agreement between the parties when collecting and using information.

On July 16, 2013, the MIIT issued the Order for the Protection of Telecommunication and Internet User Personal Information, which came into effect on September 1, 2013. Most requirements under the order that are relevant to internet content provision operators are consistent with pre-existing requirements but the requirements under the order are often more stringent and have a wider scope. If an internet content provision operator wishes to collect or use personal information, it may do so only if such collection is necessary for the services it provides. Further, it must disclose to its users the purpose, method and scope of any such collection or use, and must obtain consent from its users whose information is being collected or used. Internet content provision operators are also required to establish and publish their rules relating to personal information collection or use, keep any collected information strictly confidential, and take technological and other measures to maintain the security of such information. Internet content provision operators are required to cease any collection or use of the user personal information, and de-register the relevant user account, when a given user stops using the relevant internet service. Internet content provision operators are further prohibited from divulging, distorting or destroying any such personal information, or selling or providing such information unlawfully to other parties.

The PRC Cybersecurity Law imposes certain data protection obligations on network operators, including that network operators may not disclose, tamper with, or damage users' personal information that they have collected, and are obligated to delete unlawfully collected information and to amend incorrect information. Moreover, internet operators may not provide users' personal information to others without consent. Exempted from these rules is information irreversibly processed to preclude identification of specific individuals. Also, the PRC Cybersecurity Law imposes breach notification requirements that will apply to breaches involving personal information.

On February 4, 2015, the CAC promulgated the Provisions on the Administrative of Account Names of Internet Users, which became effective as of March 1, 2015, setting forth the authentication requirement for the real identity of internet users by requiring users to provide their real names during the registration process. In addition, these provisions specify that internet information service providers are required by these provisions to accept public supervision, and promptly remove illegal and malicious information in account names, profile photos, introductions and other registration-related information reported by the public in a timely manner. On October 26, 2021, the CAC published the Provisions on the Administrative of Account Names Information of Internet Users (Draft for Comments) for public comments. Pursuant to these provisions, internet user account service platforms shall, among others, establish, improve and strictly implement account name information management system, information content security system, and personal information protection system, and establish an account name information dynamic check patrol system for the verification of real identity information, improve their technical measures for purposes of account information legal compliance, and support account name authenticity checks.

On January 23, 2019, the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, the MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security, and the SAMR jointly issued the Notice on Special Governance of Illegal Collection and Use of Personal Information via Apps, which restates the requirement of legal collection and use of personal information, encourages app operators to conduct security certifications, and encourages search engines and APP stores to clearly mark and recommend those certified Apps.

On August 22, 2019, the CAC issued the Regulation on Cyber Protection of Children's Personal Information, effective on October 1, 2019. Network operators are required to establish special policies and user agreements to protect children's personal information, and to appoint special personnel in charge of protecting children's personal information. Network operators who collect, use, transfer or disclose personal information of children are required to, in a prominent and clear way, notify and obtain consent from children's guardians.

On November 28, 2019, the CAC, MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security and SAMR jointly issued the Measures to Identify Illegal Collection and Usage of Personal Information by Apps, which lists six types of illegal collection and usage of personal information, including "not publishing rules on the collection and usage of personal information" and "not providing privacy rules."

Pursuant to the Ninth Amendment to the PRC Criminal Law, issued by the SCNPC on August 29, 2015, and became effective on November 1, 2015, any internet service provider that fails to fulfill its obligations related to internet information security administration as required under applicable laws and refuses to rectify upon orders shall be subject to criminal penalty. In addition, Interpretations of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Several Issues Concerning the Application of Law in the Handling of Criminal Cases Involving Infringement of Personal Information, issued on May 8, 2017, and effective as of June 1, 2017, clarified certain standards for the conviction and sentencing of the criminals in relation to personal information infringement. In addition, on May 28, 2020, the National People's Congress adopted the PRC Civil Code, which came into effect on January 1, 2021. Pursuant to the PRC Civil Code, the personal information of a natural person shall be protected by the law. Any organization or individual shall legally obtain such personal information of others when necessary and ensure the safety of such information, and shall not illegally collect, use, process or transmit personal information of others, or illegally purchase or sell, provide or make public personal information of others.

The MIIT issued the Notice on the Further Special Rectification of App Infringing upon Users' Personal Rights and Interests on July 22, 2020, which requires that certain conducts of app service providers should be inspected, including, among others, (i) collecting or using personal information without the user's consent, collecting or using personal information beyond the necessary scope of providing services, and forcing users to receive advertisements; (ii) requesting user's permission in a compulsory and frequent manner, or frequently launching third- parties apps; and (iii) deceiving and misleading users into downloading apps or providing personal information. It also sets forth that the period for the regulatory specific inspection on apps and that the MIIT will order the non-compliant entities to modify their business within five business days, or otherwise the MIIT will make public announcement, remove the apps from the app stores or impose other administrative penalties.

On June 1, 2021, the Law of the PRC on the Protection of Minors (Revised in 2020), promulgated by the SCNPC, has come into effect, which specifies stringent requirements for the protection of minors' information.

On August 20, 2021, the SCNPC promulgated the PRC Personal Information Protection Law, which became effective on November 1, 2021. The PRC Personal Information Protection Law specifically specifies the rules for handling sensitive personal information, i.e., personal information that, once leaked or illegally used, may easily cause harm to the dignity of natural persons or grave harm to personal or property security, including information on biometric characteristics, financial accounts, individual location tracking, etc., as well as the personal information of minors under the age of 14. Personal information handlers shall bear responsibility for their personal information handling activities and adopt the necessary measures to safeguard the security of the personal information they handle. Otherwise, the personal information handlers will be ordered to correct or suspend or terminate the provision of services, confiscation of illegal income, fines or other penalties.

On September 17, 2021, the CAC, together with eight other government authorities, jointly issued the Guidelines on Strengthening the Comprehensive Regulation of Algorithms for Internet Information Services. The guidelines provide that daily monitoring of data use, application scenarios, and effects of algorithms must be carried out by the relevant regulators, and relevant regulators should conduct security assessments of algorithms. The guidelines also provide that an algorithm filing system should be established, and classified security management of algorithms should be promoted.

On December 31, 2021, the CAC, the MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security, and the SAMR jointly promulgated the Administrative Provisions on Internet Information Service Algorithm Recommendation, which took effect on March 1, 2022. The Administrative Provisions on Internet Information Service Algorithm Recommendation, among others, implements classification and hierarchical management for algorithm recommendation service providers based on various criteria, requires algorithm recommendation service providers to inform users of their provision of algorithm recommendation services in a conspicuous manner, and publicize the basic principles, purpose intentions, and main operating mechanisms of algorithm recommendation services in an appropriate manner, and requires such service providers to provide users with options that are not specific to their personal profiles, or convenient options to cancel algorithmic recommendation services.

Regulations Relating to Online Live Streaming Services

On November 4, 2016, the CAC issued the Administrative Regulations on Online Live Streaming Services, which came into effect on December 1, 2016, pursuant to which all online livestreaming service providers must take various measures during operation of live streaming services, including but not limited to: (i) establish platforms for reviewing live streaming content, conducting classification, and grading management according to the online live streaming content categories, user scale, and others, and adding tags to graphics, video, audio, or broadcast tag information for platforms; (ii) conduct verification on online live streaming users with valid identification information (e.g., authentic mobile phone numbers) and validate the registration of online live streaming publishers based on their identification documents (such as identity documents, business licenses, and organization code certificates); (iii) examine and verify the authenticity of the identification information of online live streaming service publishers, classify and file such identification information records with the internet information offices at the provincial level where they are located and provide such information to relevant law enforcement departments upon legal request; (iv) enter into a service agreement with the users of online live streaming services of which the essential clauses should be under guidance of internet information offices at the provincial level, to clarify the rights and obligations of the parties and require them to comply with the laws, regulations, and platform conventions; and (v) establish a credit-rating system and a blacklist system, to provide management and services according to such credit rating, prohibit re-registration of accounts by online live streaming service users on the black list, and promptly report such users to relevant internet information offices.

According to the Administrative Regulations on Online Live Streaming Services, online live streaming service providers and online live streaming publishers that provide internet news information services without licenses, or exceed the scope of their licenses, shall subject to punishment by the CAC and its provincial counterparts which may include an order to cease such services and a fine of RMB10,000 to RMB30,000. Other violations of the Administrative Regulations on Online Live Streaming Services are subject to punishment by the national and local internet information offices; if such violations constitute criminal offenses, criminal investigations or penalties may be imposed.

On September 2, 2016, the SAPPRFT issued the Circular of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television on Issues Concerning Strengthening the Administration of Online Live Streaming of Audio-Visual Programs. According to the circular, appropriate Audio-Visual Permit is a prerequisite for online audio-visual live streaming of general cultural events of social communities, sports events, important political, military, economic, social, and cultural events. Relevant information about specific activities to be streamed shall be filled in advance to the provincial counterparts of the SAPPRFT. Online audio-visual live streaming service providers shall censor and tape such programs and retain them for at least 60 days for future check by the administrative departments; and they shall have an established emergency reaction plan in place to replace programs in violation of laws and regulations. Bullet-screen comments shall be forbidden in the live streaming of important political, military, economic, social, sports, and cultural events. Special censor shall be appointed for bullet-screen comments in the live streaming of general cultural events of social communities and sports events. Hosts, guests, and targets hired or invited by online audio-visual live streaming programs shall meet the following requirements: (i) patriotic and law-abiding; (ii) good public reputation and social image, no scandals and no misdeeds; (iii) dress, hairstyle, language, and actions are consistent with public order and good morals, and not drawing topics with vulgar contents or contents inappropriate to discuss in public.

According to the Measures for the Administration of Cyber Performance Business Operations, promulgated by the Ministry of Culture on December 2, 2016 and became effective on January 1, 2017, a cyber-performance business entity engaging in cyber performance business operations shall, in accordance with the Internet Culture Provisions, apply to the cultural administrative department at the provincial level for an ICB License, and the license shall specify the scope of its cyber performance. A cyber-performance business entity shall indicate the number of its ICB License in a conspicuous position on its homepage. According to the 2021 Negative List, foreign investors are prohibited from investing in an entity holding an ICB License (except for music). Consequently, foreign investors are prohibited from investing in businesses that carry out and operate the short video and live streaming and online game via platform(s), as these businesses are deemed as businesses subject to foreign-investment prohibition by virtue of the platform's need to obtain an ICB License (except for music).

According to the Notice on Strengthening the Management of Internet Live Streaming Service issued by Office of the National "Anti- pornography and Anti-illegal" Working Group, MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security, MCT, NRTA and CAC on August 1, 2018, live streaming service providers shall perform website ICP filing procedures with the competent telecommunication department according to law, and live streaming service providers involved in operating telecommunication business and internet news information, network performance, live streaming of audio-visual programs and other businesses shall apply to the relevant departments to obtain licenses for telecommunication business operation, internet news information services, network culture operation, and Audio-Visual Permit, etc., and within 30 days of the live streaming service going online, shall carry out public security registration procedures in accordance with relevant regulations with the public security authorities.

According to the Notice on Strengthening the Administration of the Online Show Live Streaming and E-commerce Live Streaming issued by the NRTA on November 12, 2020, with respect to platforms providing online show live streaming services or e-commerce live streaming services, the overall ratio of front-line content reviewers to online live streaming rooms shall be 1:50 or higher. A platform shall report the number of its live streaming rooms, streamers and content reviewers to the provincial branch of the NRTA on a quarterly basis. Online show live streaming platforms shall tag content and streamers by category. A streamer cannot change the category of the programs offered in his or her live streaming room without prior approval from the platform. Users that are minors or without real-name registration are forbidden from virtual gifting, and platforms shall limit the maximum amount of virtual gifting per time, per day, and per month. When the virtual gifting by a user reaches half of the daily/monthly limit, a consumption reminder from the platform and a confirmation from the user by text messages or other means are required before the next transaction. When the amount of virtual gifting by a user reaches the daily/monthly limit, the platform shall suspend the virtual gifting function for such user for that day or month.

According to the Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Standardized Management of Network Live Broadcasting issued by CAC, Office of the National "Anti-pornography and Anti-illegal" Working Group, MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security, MCT, the State Administration for Market Regulation, or the SAMR and NRTA on February 9, 2021, live streaming platforms that carry out business- oriented network performance activities must hold the ICB License and carry out an ICP filing; live streaming platforms that carry out internet audio-visual program services must hold the Audio-Visual Permit (or complete the registration in the national internet audio-visual platforms information registration and management system) and carry out an ICP filing; live streaming platforms that carry internet news information service must hold internet news information service license. Live streaming platforms shall file with local cyberspace administration office in a timely manner and shall cancel its filing immediately after it ceases to provide live streaming services.

The Law of the PRC on the Protection of Minors (Revised in 2020) promulgated on October 17, 2020 and effective on June 1, 2021, provide that, among others, internet live streaming service providers shall not provide minors under age 16 with online live streaming publisher account registration service, and must obtain the consent from parents or guardians and verify the identity of the minors before allowing minors aged 16 or above to register live streaming publisher accounts.

Regulations Relating to Companies

The establishment, operation and management of corporate entities in China are governed by the PRC Company Law, which was promulgated on December 29, 1993, last amended with immediate effect on October 26, 2018. Under the PRC Company Law, companies are generally classified into two categories: limited liability companies and limited companies by shares. The PRC Company Law also applies to foreign-invested limited liability companies but where other relevant laws regarding foreign investment have provided otherwise, such other laws shall prevail.

The latest major amendment to the PRC Company Law took effect on March 1, 2014, pursuant to which there is no longer a prescribed timeframe for shareholders of a company to make full capital contribution to a company, except as otherwise provided in other relevant laws, administrative regulations and State Council decisions. Instead, shareholders are only required to state the capital amount that they commit to subscribe to in the articles of association of the company. Furthermore, the initial payment of a company's registered capital is no longer subject to a minimum capital requirement, and the business license of a company will not show its paid-up capital. In addition, shareholders' contribution of the registered capital is no longer required to be verified by capital verification agencies.

Regulations Relating to Foreign Investment

Investment activities in the PRC by foreign investors are principally governed by the Catalog of Industries for Encouraging Foreign Investment, or the Encouraging Catalog, and the Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for Foreign Investment Access, or the Negative List, which were promulgated and are amended from time to time by the Ministry of Commerce and the NDRC, and together with the Foreign Investment Law, and their respective implementation rules and ancillary regulations. The Encouraging Catalog and the Negative List lay out the basic framework for foreign investment in China, classifying businesses into three categories with regard to foreign investment: "encouraged," "restricted," and "prohibited." Industries not listed in the Catalog are generally deemed as falling into a fourth category "permitted" unless specifically restricted by other PRC laws.

On December 27, 2020, the Ministry of Commerce and the NDRC released the Catalog of Industries for Encouraging Foreign Investment (2020 Version), which became effective on January 27, 2021, to replace the previous Encouraging Catalog. On December 27, 2021, the Ministry of Commerce and the NDRC released the 2021 Negative List, which became effective on January 1, 2022, to replace the previous Negative List.

On March 15, 2019, the National People's Congress promulgated the Foreign Investment Law, or the FIL, which became effective on January 1, 2020, and replaced the major laws and regulations governing foreign investment in China. Pursuant to the FIL, "foreign investments" refer to investment activities conducted by foreign investors directly or indirectly in China, which include any of the following circumstances: (i) foreign investors setting up foreign-invested enterprises in China solely or jointly with other investors, (ii) foreign investors obtaining shares, equity interests, property portions or other similar rights and interests of enterprises within China, (iii) foreign investors investing in new projects in China solely or jointly with other investors, and (iv) investment of other methods as specified in laws, administrative regulations, or as stipulated by the State Council.

According to the FIL, foreign investment shall enjoy pre-entry national treatment, except for foreign invested entities that operate in industries deemed to be either "restricted" or "prohibited" in the Negative List. The FIL provides that foreign invested entities operating in foreign "restricted" or "prohibited" industries will require entry clearance and other approvals. The FIL does not comment on the concept of "de facto control" or contractual arrangements with variable interest entities, however, it has a catch-all provision under definition of "foreign investment" to include investments made by foreign investors in China through means stipulated by laws or administrative regulations or other methods prescribed by the State Council. Therefore, it still leaves leeway for future laws, administrative regulations or provisions to provide for contractual arrangements as a form of foreign investment.

The FIL also provides several protective rules and principles for foreign investors and their investments in China, including, among others, that local governments shall abide by their commitments to the foreign investors; foreign-invested enterprises are allowed to issue stocks and corporate bonds; except for special circumstances, in which case statutory procedures shall be followed and fair and reasonable compensation shall be made in a timely manner, expropriate or requisition the investment of foreign investors is prohibited; mandatory technology transfer is prohibited, allows foreign investors' funds to be freely transferred out and into the PRC territory, which run through the entire lifecycle from the entry to the exit of foreign investment, and provide an all-around and multi-angle system to guarantee fair competition of foreign-invested enterprises in the market economy. In addition, foreign investors or the foreign investment enterprise should be imposed legal liabilities for failing to report investment information in accordance with the requirements. Furthermore, the FIL provides that foreign invested enterprises established according to the existing laws regulating foreign investment may maintain their structure and corporate governance within five years after the implementing of the FIL, which means that foreign invested enterprises may be required to adjust the structure and corporate governance in accordance with the current PRC Company Law and other laws and regulations governing the corporate governance.

Along with the FIL, the Implementing Rules of Foreign Investment Law promulgated by the State Council and the Interpretation of the Supreme People's Court on Several Issues Concerning the Application of the Foreign Investment Law promulgated by the Supreme People's Court became effective on January 1, 2020. The Implementing Rules of Foreign Investment Law further clarified that the state encourages and promotes foreign investment, protects the lawful rights and interests of foreign investors, regulates foreign investment administration, continues to optimize foreign investment environment, and advances a higher-level opening.

On December 30, 2019, the Ministry of Commerce and the SAMR, jointly promulgated the Measures for Information Reporting on Foreign Investment, which became effective on January 1, 2020. Pursuant to the Measures for Information Reporting on Foreign Investment, where a foreign investor carries out investment activities in China directly or indirectly, the foreign investor or the foreign-invested enterprise shall submit the investment information to the competent commerce department.

Regulations Relating to Dividend Distribution

The principal laws and regulations regulating the dividend distribution of dividends by foreign-invested enterprises in China include the PRC Company Law and the FIL. Under the current regulatory regime in the PRC, foreign-invested enterprises in China may pay dividends only out of their accumulated profit, if any, determined in accordance with PRC accounting standards and regulations. A PRC company is required to set aside as general reserves at least 10% of its after-tax profit, until the cumulative amount of such reserves reaches 50% of its registered capital. A PRC company shall not distribute any profits until any losses from prior fiscal years have been offset.

Regulations Relating to Intellectual Property

Copyright

The PRC has enacted various laws and regulations relating to the protection of copyright. China is a signatory to some major international conventions on protection of copyright and became a member of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works in October 1992, the Universal Copyright Convention in October 1992, and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights upon its accession to the World Trade Organization in December 2001.

The PRC Copyright Law promulgated by the SCNPC on September 7, 1990, last amended on November 11, 2020 and became effective on June 1, 2021, and its related Implementing Regulations issued by the State Council on August 2, 2002 and last amended on January 30, 2013 and became effective on March 1, 2013, provides that Chinese citizens, legal persons, or other organizations shall, whether published or not, enjoy copyright in their works, which include, among others, works of literature, art, natural science, social science, engineering technology and computer software. The purpose of the PRC Copyright Law aims to encourage the creation and dissemination of works which is beneficial for the construction of socialist spiritual civilization and material civilization and promote the development and prosperity of Chinese culture.

Under the Regulations on Protection of the Right to Network Dissemination of Information that took effect on July 1, 2006 and was amended on January 30, 2013, it is further provided that an internet information service provider may be held liable under various situations, including if it knows or should reasonably have known a copyright infringement through the internet and the service provider fails to take measures to remove or block or disconnects links to the relevant content, or, although not aware of the infringement, the internet information service provider fails to take such measures upon receipt of the copyright holder's notice of infringement. The internet information service provider may be exempted from indemnification liabilities under the following circumstances:

- (i) any internet information service provider that provides automatic internet access service upon instructions from its users or provides automatic transmission service for works, performances and audio/visual products provided by its users is not required to assume indemnification liabilities if (a) it has not chosen or altered the transmitted works, performance and audio/visual products and (b) it provides such works, performances and audio/visual products to the designated users and prevents any person other than such designated users from obtaining access;

- (ii) any internet information service provider that, for the sake of improving network transmission efficiency, automatically stores and provides to its own users the relevant works, performances and audio/visual products obtained from any other internet information service providers, is not required to assume the indemnification liabilities if (a) it has not altered any of the works, performances or audio/visual products that are automatically stored; (b) it has not affected such original internet information service provider in holding the information about where the users obtain the relevant works, performances and audio/visual products; and (c) when the original internet information service provider revises, deletes or shields the works, performances and audio/visual products, it will automatically revise, delete or shield the same;
- (iii) any internet information service provider that provides its users with information memory space for such users to provide the works, performances and audio/visual products to the general public via an informational network is not required to assume the indemnification liabilities if (a) it clearly indicates that the information memory space is provided to the users and publicizes its own name, contact person and web address; (b) it has not altered the works, performances and audio/visual products that are provided by the users; (c) it is not aware of or has no justified reason to know that the works, performances and audio/visual products provided by the users infringe upon the copyrights of others; (d) it has not directly derived any economic benefit from the providing of the works, performances and audio/visual products by its users; and (e) after receiving a notice from the copyright holder, it promptly deletes the allegedly infringing works, performances and audio/visual products pursuant to the regulation;
- (iv) an internet information service provider that provides its users with search engine or link services should not be required to assume the indemnification liabilities if, after receiving a notice from the copyright holder, it disconnects the link to the allegedly infringing works, performances and audio/visual products pursuant to the regulation, unless it is aware of or should reasonably have known the infringement.

The Measures on Administrative Protection of Internet Copyright, that were promulgated by the Ministry of Information Industry and National Copyright Administration, or the NCA on April 29, 2005, and became effective on May 30, 2005, provided that an internet information service provider shall take measures to remove the relevant contents, record relevant information after receiving the notice from the copyright owner that some content communicated through internet infringes upon his/its copyright and preserve the copyright owner's notice for 6 months. Where an internet information service provider clearly knows an internet content provider's tortuous act of infringing upon another's copyright through internet, or fails to take measures to remove relevant contents after receipt of the copyright owner's notice although it does not know it clearly, and meanwhile damages public benefits, the infringer shall be ordered to stop the tortious act, and may be imposed of confiscation of the illegal proceeds and a fine of not more than 3 times the illegal business amount; if the illegal business amount is difficult to be calculated, a fine of not more than RMB100,000 may be imposed.

The Notice on Regulating Copyright Order of Internet Reproduction issued by the NCA on April 17, 2015 includes the following four major points: (i) clarify certain important issues related to internet copyrights in existing laws and regulations, including the definition of news, clarify statutory licenses that are not applicable to internet copyrights and prohibit the distortion of title and work intent; (ii) guide the press and media to further improve the internal management of copyrights, especially requesting the press to clarify the copyright sources of their content; (iii) encourage the press and internet media to actively carry out copyright cooperation; and (iv) ask the copyright administrations at all levels to strictly implement copyright supervision.

The Computer Software Copyright Registration Measures, promulgated by the NCA on February 20, 2002, regulate registrations of software copyright, exclusive licensing contracts for software copyright and transfer contracts. The NCA shall be the competent authority for the nationwide administration of software copyright registration and the PRC Copyright Protection Center, is designated as the software registration authority. The PRC Copyright Protection Center shall grant registration certificates to the Computer Software Copyrights applicants which conforms to the provisions of both the Computer Software Copyright Registration Measures and the Computer Software Protection Regulations (Revised in 2013).

The Provisions of the Supreme People's Court on Certain Issues Related to the Application of Law in the Trial of Civil Cases Involving Disputes over Infringement of the Right of Dissemination through Information Networks, promulgated by the Supreme People's Court on December 17, 2012, last amended on December 29, 2020 and came into effect on January 1, 2021, provide that web users or web service providers who create works, performances or audio-video products, for which others have the right of dissemination through information networks or are available on any information network without authorization shall be deemed to have infringed upon the right of dissemination through information networks.

The Notice on Launching “Jian Wang 2020” Special Actions Against Internet Piracy and Copyright Infringement, jointly issued by NCA, MIIT, the Ministry of Public Security, and CAC in 2020 includes carrying out special rectification of audio-visual works copyright and social platform copyright, and consolidating the achievements of copyright management in key areas, including strengthening the rectification of the infringements such as plagiarism, adaptation and database copying in the knowledge sharing field and the copyright supervision over large-scale knowledge sharing platforms.

Trademark

Trademarks are protected by the PRC Trademark Law which was promulgated on August 23, 1982, and last amended on April 23, 2019 as well as the Implementation Regulation of the PRC Trademark Law which was adopted by the State Council on August 3, 2002 and amended on April 29, 2014. In the PRC, registered trademarks include commodity trademarks, service trademarks, collective marks and certification marks.

The PRC Trademark Office of National Intellectual Property Administration is responsible for the registration and administration of trademarks throughout the PRC and grants a term of ten years to registered trademarks. Trademarks are renewable every ten years where a registered trademark needs to be used after the expiration of its validity term. A registration renewal application shall be filed within twelve months prior to the expiration of the term. A trademark registrant may license its registered trademark to another party by entering into a trademark license contract. Trademark license agreements must be filed with the trademark office to be recorded. The licensor shall supervise the quality of the commodities on which the trademark is used, and the licensee shall guarantee the quality of such commodities. As with trademarks, the PRC Trademark Law has adopted a “first come, first file” principle with respect to trademark registration. Where trademark for which a registration application has been made is identical or similar to another trademark which has already been registered or been subject to a preliminary examination and approval for use on the same kind of or similar commodities or services, the application for registration of such trademark may be rejected. Any person applying for the registration of a trademark may not prejudice the existing right first obtained by others, nor may any person register in advance a trademark that has already been used by another party and has already gained a “sufficient degree of reputation” through such party’s use.

Patent

Patents are protected by the PRC Patent Law which was promulgated on March 12, 1984, last amended on October 17, 2020, and effective on June 1, 2021, and its Implementation Rules promulgated on January 19, 1985 and last amended on January 9, 2010 by the State Council. A patentable invention or utility model must meet three conditions: novelty, inventiveness and practical applicability. Patents cannot be granted for scientific discoveries, rules and methods for intellectual activities, methods used to diagnose or treat diseases, animal and plant breeds or substances obtained by means of nuclear transformation. The Patent Office under the National Intellectual Property Administration is responsible for receiving, examining and approving patent applications. A patent is valid for a twenty-year term for an invention, a ten-year term for a utility model, and a fifteen-year term for a design. Except under certain specific circumstances provided by law, any third-party user must obtain consent or a proper license from the patent owner to use the patent, or else the use will constitute an infringement of the rights of the patent holder.

Domain Names

Domain names are protected under the Administrative Measures on the Internet Domain Names promulgated by the MIIT on August 24, 2017. The MIIT is the major regulatory body responsible for the administration of the PRC internet domain names, under supervision of which the China Internet Network Information Center is responsible for the daily administration of .cn domain names and Chinese domain names. China Internet Network Information Center adopts the “first to file” principle with respect to the registration of domain names. In November 2017, the MIIT promulgated the Notice of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology on Regulating the Use of Domain Names in Providing Internet-based Information Services, which became effective on January 1, 2018. Pursuant to the notice, the domain names used by an internet-based information service provider in providing internet-based information services must be registered and owned by such provider in accordance with the law. If the internet-based information service provider is an entity, the domain name registrant must be the entity (or any of the entity’s shareholders), or the entity’s principal or senior manager.

Regulations Relating to Foreign Exchange

General Administration of Foreign Exchange

Under the PRC Foreign Currency Administration Rules promulgated by the State Council on January 29, 1996, and last amended on August 5, 2008 and various regulations issued by the SAFE and other relevant PRC government authorities, Renminbi is convertible into other currencies for the purpose of current account items, such as trade related receipts and payments, payment of interest and dividends. The conversion of Renminbi into other currencies and remittance of the converted foreign currency outside China for the purpose of capital account items, such as direct equity investments, loans and repatriation of investment, requires the prior approval from the SAFE or its local branches. Payments for transactions that take place within China must be made in Renminbi. Unless otherwise provided by laws and regulations, PRC companies may repatriate foreign currency payments received from abroad or retain the same abroad. Foreign exchange proceeds under the current accounts may be either retained or sold to a financial institution engaging in settlement and sale of foreign exchange pursuant to relevant PRC rules and regulations. For foreign exchange proceeds under the capital accounts, approval from the SAFE is required for its retention or sale to a financial institution engaging in settlement and sale of foreign exchange, except where such approval is not required under the relevant PRC rules and regulations.

Regulations Relating to Offshore Investment

On July 4, 2014, the SAFE promulgated the Notice of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Relevant Issues Concerning Foreign Exchange Administration for Domestic Residents to Engage in Overseas Investment, Financing and Round-Trip Investment via Special Purpose Vehicles, or SAFE Circular 37, which regulates the relevant matters involving foreign exchange registration for round-trip investment. Under SAFE Circular 37, a PRC resident must register with the local SAFE counterpart before contributing assets or equity interests in an offshore special purpose vehicle, that is directly established or indirectly controlled by such PRC resident for the purpose of conducting investment or financing. In addition, following the initial registration, in the event of any major change in respect of the offshore special purpose vehicle, including, among other things, a change of offshore special purpose vehicle's PRC resident shareholder(s), the name of the offshore special purpose vehicle, terms of operation, or any increase or reduction of the offshore special purpose vehicle's capital, share transfer or swap, and merger or division, the PRC resident shall complete the change of foreign exchange registration procedures for offshore investment with the local SAFE counterpart. According to the procedural guideline as attached to SAFE Circular 37, the principle of review has been changed to "the domestic individual resident shall only register the offshore special purpose vehicle directly established or controlled (first level)." At the same time, the SAFE has issued the Operation Guidance for the Issues Concerning Foreign Exchange Administration over Round-trip Investment with respect to the procedures for SAFE registration under SAFE Circular 37, which became effective on July 4, 2014, as an attachment to SAFE Circular 37. Under the relevant rules, failure to comply with the registration procedures set out in SAFE Circular 37 may result in restrictions being imposed on the foreign exchange activities of the relevant onshore company, including the payment of dividends and other distributions to its offshore parent or affiliate, and may also subject relevant PRC residents to penalties under PRC foreign exchange administration regulations. PRC residents who hold any shares in the company from time to time are required to register with the SAFE in connection with their investments in the company.

On February 13, 2015, the SAFE promulgated the Notice of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Further Simplifying and Improving Foreign Exchange Administration Policy on Direct Investment, or SAFE Notice 13, effective on June 1, 2015, which further amended SAFE Circular 37 by requiring domestic residents to register with qualified banks rather than SAFE or its local counterpart in connection with their establishment or control of an offshore entity established for the purpose of overseas investment or financing.

On March 30, 2015, SAFE promulgated the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Reforming the Administration Measures on Conversion of Foreign Exchange Registered Capital of Foreign-invested Enterprises, or SAFE Circular 19, effective on June 1, 2015, according to which the foreign exchange capital of foreign-invested enterprises must be subject to the Discretionary Foreign Exchange Settlement, which refers to the foreign exchange capital in the capital account of a foreign-invested enterprise for which the rights and interests of monetary contribution has been confirmed by the local foreign exchange bureau (or the book-entry registration of monetary contribution by the banks) can be settled at the banks based on the actual operational needs of the foreign-invested enterprise. The proportion of Discretionary Foreign Exchange Settlement of the foreign exchange capital of a foreign-invested enterprise is temporarily determined to be 100%. The Renminbi converted from the foreign exchange capital will be kept in a designated account, and if a foreign-invested enterprise needs to make further payment from such account, it still needs to provide supporting documents and go through the review process with the banks.

SAFE issued the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Reforming and Regulating Policies on the Control over Foreign Exchange Settlement of Capital Accounts, or SAFE Circular 16, on June 9, 2016, which became effective on the same day. Pursuant to SAFE Circular 16, enterprises registered in China may also convert their foreign debts from foreign currency to Renminbi on a discretionary basis. SAFE Circular 16 provides an integrated standard for conversion of foreign exchange under capital account items (including but not limited to foreign currency capital and foreign debts) on a discretionary basis which applies to all enterprises registered in China. SAFE Circular 16 reiterates the principle that Renminbi converted from foreign currency-denominated capital of a company may not be directly or indirectly used for purposes beyond its business scope or prohibited by PRC laws or regulations, while such converted Renminbi shall not be provided as loans to its non-affiliated entities. On October 23, 2019, SAFE promulgated the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Further Promoting the Facilitation of Cross-Border Trade and Investment, or SAFE Circular 28, which became effective on the same day. SAFE Circular 28 allows non-investment foreign-invested enterprises to use their capital funds to make equity investments in China as long as such investments do not violate the currently effective Negative List and the target investment projects are genuine and in compliance with laws. In addition, SAFE Circular 28 stipulates that qualified enterprises in certain pilot areas may use their capital income from registered capital, foreign debt, and overseas listing for the purpose of domestic payments without providing authenticity certifications to the relevant banks in advance for those domestic payments.

Regulations Relating to Stock Incentive Plans

In February 2012, SAFE promulgated the Notices of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Issues Concerning the Foreign Exchange Administration for Domestic Individuals Participating in Stock Incentive Plan of Overseas Publicly-Listed Company, individuals participating in any stock incentive plan of any overseas publicly listed company who are PRC citizens or non-PRC citizens who reside in China for a continuous period of not less than one year, subject to a few exceptions are required to register with SAFE or its local branches and complete certain other procedures through a domestic qualified agent, which could be a PRC subsidiary of such overseas listed company, and complete certain other procedures. The participants must also retain an overseas entrusted institution to handle matters in connection with their exercise of stock options, the purchase and sale of corresponding stocks or interests and fund transfers. In addition, the PRC agent is required to amend the SAFE registration with respect to the stock incentive plan if there is any material change to the stock incentive plan, the PRC agent or the overseas entrusted institution or other material changes. The PRC agents must, on behalf of the PRC residents who have the right to exercise the employee share options, apply to SAFE or its local branches for an annual quota for the payment of foreign currencies in connection with the PRC residents' exercise of the employee share options. The foreign exchange proceeds received by the PRC residents from the sale of shares under the stock incentive plans granted and dividends distributed by the overseas listed companies must be remitted into the bank accounts in China opened by the PRC agents before distribution to such PRC residents. Under the Circular of the State Taxation Administration on Issues Concerning Individual Income Tax in Relation to Equity Incentives promulgated by the STA and effective from August 24, 2009, listed companies and their domestic organizations shall, according to the individual income tax calculation methods for "wage and salary income" and stock option income, lawfully withhold and pay individual income tax on such income.

Regulations Relating to Tax

Enterprise Income Tax

The PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Enterprise Income Tax, or collectively, the EIT Laws, were promulgated on March 16, 2007, and December 6, 2007, respectively and were most recently amended on December 29, 2018 and April 23, 2019, respectively. According to the EIT Laws, taxpayers consist of resident enterprises and non-resident enterprises. Resident enterprises are defined as enterprises that are established in China in accordance with PRC laws, or that are established in accordance with the laws of foreign countries but whose actual or de facto control is administered from within China. Non-resident enterprises are defined as enterprises that are set up in accordance with the laws of foreign countries and whose actual administration is conducted outside China, but have established institutions or premises in China, or have no such established institutions or premises but have income generated from inside China. Under the EIT Laws and relevant implementing regulations, a uniform EIT rate of 25% is applicable. However, if non-resident enterprises have not formed permanent establishments or premises in China, or if they have formed permanent establishment institutions or premises in China but there is no actual relationship between the relevant income derived in China and the established institutions or premises set up by them, the enterprise income tax is, in that case, set at the rate of 10% for their income sourced from inside China.

The Notice of the State Taxation Administration Regarding the Determination of Chinese-Controlled Offshore Incorporated Enterprises as People's Republic of China Tax Resident Enterprises on the Basis of De Facto Management Bodies, or STA Circular 82, promulgated on April 22, 2009 and amended on January 29, 2014 and December 29, 2017, sets out the standards and procedures for determining whether the "de facto management body" of an enterprise registered outside of China and controlled by PRC enterprises or PRC enterprise groups is located within China. The Administrative Measures for Enterprise Income Tax of Chinese-Controlled Offshore Incorporated Resident Enterprises (Trial), or STA Bulletin 45, which was promulgated on July 27, 2011, amended on June 15, 2018, and effective on September 1, 2011, further provides guidance on the implementation of STA Circular 82 and clarifies certain issues in the areas of resident status determination, post-determination administration and competent tax authorities' procedures.

According to STA Circular 82, a Chinese-controlled offshore incorporated enterprise will be regarded as a PRC tax resident by virtue of having a "de facto management body" in China and will be subject to PRC EIT on its worldwide income only if all of the following criteria are met: (i) the primary location of the day-to-day operational management is in China; (ii) decisions relating to the enterprise's financial and human resource matters are made or are subject to approval by organizations or personnel in China; (iii) the enterprise's primary assets, accounting books and records, company seals, and board and shareholders meeting minutes are located or maintained in China; and (iv) 50% or more of voting board members or senior executives habitually reside in China. According to STA Bulletin 45, when provided with a copy of Chinese tax resident determination certificate from a resident Chinese controlled offshore incorporated enterprise, the payer should not withhold income tax when paying the Chinese-sourced dividends, interest, royalties, etc. to the PRC controlled offshore incorporated enterprise.

The EIT Laws permit certain High and New Technology Enterprises, or HNTEs, to enjoy a reduced 15% EIT rate subject to these HNTEs meeting certain qualification criteria and permit certain small low-profit enterprises to enjoy a reduced 20% EIT rate subject to certain conditions. In addition, the relevant EIT laws and regulations also provide that entities recognized as software enterprises are able to enjoy a tax holiday consisting of a two-year- exemption commencing from their first profitable calendar year and a 50% reduction in ordinary tax rate for the following three calendar years, while entities qualified as key software enterprises can enjoy a preferential EIT rate of 10%.

The Bulletin of the State Taxation Administration on Issues of Enterprise Income Tax on Indirect Transfers of Assets by Non-PRC Resident Enterprises, or STA Bulletin 7, was issued on February 3, 2015 and most recently amended pursuant to the Announcement of the State Taxation Administration on Issues Concerning the Withholding of Enterprise Income Tax at Source on Non-PRC Resident Enterprises, which was issued on October 17, 2017, amended on June 15, 2018 and effective as of December 1, 2017. Pursuant to STA Bulletin 7, an "indirect transfer" of assets, including equity interests in a PRC resident enterprise, by non-PRC resident enterprises may be recharacterized and treated as a direct transfer of PRC taxable assets, if the arrangement does not have a reasonable commercial purpose and was established for the purpose of avoiding payment of PRC EIT. As a result, gains derived from an indirect transfer may be subject to PRC EIT. According to STA Bulletin 7, "PRC taxable assets" include assets attributed to an establishment or a place of business in China, immovable properties in China, and equity investments in PRC resident enterprises. In respect of an indirect offshore transfer of assets of a PRC establishment or place of business, the relevant gain is to be regarded as effectively connected with the PRC establishment or a place of business and therefore included in its EIT filing and would consequently be subject to PRC EIT at a rate of 25%. Where the underlying transfer relates to the immovable properties in China or to equity investments in a PRC resident enterprise, which is not effectively connected to a PRC establishment or a place of business of a non-resident enterprise, a PRC EIT at 10% would apply, subject to available preferential tax treatment under applicable tax treaties or similar arrangements, and the party who is obligated to make the transfer payments has the withholding obligation. There is uncertainty as to the implementation details of STA Bulletin 7.

VAT and Business Tax

Before August 2013 and pursuant to applicable PRC tax regulations, any entity or individual conducting business in the service industry is generally required to pay a business tax at the rate of 5% on the revenue generated from providing services. However, if the services provided are related to technology development and transfer, the business tax may be exempted subject to approval by the relevant tax authorities.

In November 2011, the Ministry of Finance and the STA promulgated the Pilot Plan for Imposition of Value-Added Tax to Replace Business Tax. In May and December 2013, April 2014, March 2016 and July 2017, the Ministry of Finance and the STA promulgated five circulars to further expand the scope of services that are to be subject to VAT instead of business tax. Pursuant to these tax rules, from August 1, 2013, a VAT was imposed to replace the business tax in certain service industries, including technology services and advertising services, and from May 1, 2016, VAT replaced business tax in all industries, on a nationwide basis. On November 19, 2017, the State Council further amended the Interim Regulation of the People's Republic of China on Value Added Tax to reflect the normalization of the pilot program. The VAT rates generally applicable are simplified as 17%, 11%, 6% and 0%, and the VAT rate applicable to the small-scale taxpayers is 3%. Unlike business tax, a taxpayer is allowed to offset the qualified input VAT paid on taxable purchases against the output VAT chargeable on the revenue from services provided.

On April 4, 2018, the Ministry of Finance and the STA issued the Notice on Adjustment of VAT Rates, which came into effect on May 1, 2018. According to the above-mentioned notice, the taxable goods previously subject to VAT rates of 17% and 11% respectively become subject to lower VAT rates of 16% and 10%, respectively starting from May 1, 2018.

On March 20, 2019, the Ministry of Finance, the STA and the General Administration of Customs issued the Announcement on Policies for Deepening the VAT Reform, which came into effect on April 1, 2019, to further slash VAT rates. According to the announcement, (i) for general VAT payers' sales activities or imports previously subject to VAT at an existing applicable rate of 16% or 10%, the applicable VAT rate is adjusted to 13% or 9% respectively; (ii) for the agricultural products purchased by taxpayers to which an existing 10% deduction rate is applicable, the deduction rate is adjusted to 9%; (iii) for the agricultural products purchased by taxpayers for production or commissioned processing, which are subject to VAT at 13%, the input VAT will be calculated at a 10% deduction rate; (iv) for the exportation of goods or labor services that are subject to VAT at 16%, with the applicable export refund at the same rate, the export refund rate is adjusted to 13%; and (v) for the exportation of goods or cross-border taxable activities that are subject to VAT at 10%, with the export refund at the same rate, the export refund rate is adjusted to 9%.

Dividend Withholding Tax

The PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law provides that since January 1, 2008, an enterprise income tax rate of 10% will normally be applicable to dividends declared to non-PRC resident investors which do not have an establishment or place of business in the PRC, or which have such establishment or place of business, but the relevant income is not effectively connected with the establishment or place of business, to the extent such dividends are derived from sources within the PRC.

Pursuant to the Arrangement Between the Mainland of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Incomes, and other applicable PRC laws, if a Hong Kong resident enterprise is determined by the competent PRC tax authority to have satisfied the relevant conditions and requirements under this arrangement and other applicable laws, the 10% withholding tax on the dividends the Hong Kong resident enterprise receives from a PRC resident enterprise may be reduced to 5%. However, based on the Notice of the State Taxation Administration on Issues Relating to the Implementation of Dividend Clauses in Tax Treaties issued on February 20, 2009, if the relevant PRC tax authorities determine, in their discretion, that a company benefits from such reduced income tax rate due to a structure or arrangement that is primarily tax-driven, such PRC tax authorities may adjust the preferential tax treatment. According to the Announcement of the State Taxation Administration on Issues Relating to "Beneficial Owner" in Tax Treaties, which was issued on February 3, 2018 by the STA, effective as of April 1, 2018, when determining the applicant's status of the "beneficial owner" regarding tax treatments in connection with dividends, interests or royalties in the tax treaties, several factors, including without limitation, whether the applicant is obligated to pay more than 50% of its income in twelve months to residents in third country or region, whether the business operated by the applicant constitutes the actual business activities, and whether the counterparty country or region to the tax treaties does not levy any tax or grant tax exemption on relevant incomes or levy tax at an extremely low rate, will be taken into account, and it will be analyzed according to the actual circumstances of the specific cases. This notice further provides that applicants who intend to prove his or her status of the "beneficial owner" shall submit the relevant documents to the relevant tax bureau according to the Announcement of State Taxation Administration on Promulgation of the Administrative Measures on Non-resident Taxpayers Enjoying Treaty Benefits.

Regulations Relating to Employment and Social Welfare

The Labor Contract Law

According to the PRC Labor Law promulgated on July 5, 1994, and last amended on December 29, 2018, enterprises and institutions shall establish and improve their system of workplace safety and sanitation, strictly abide by state rules and standards on workplace safety, educate laborers in labor safety and sanitation in China. Labor safety and sanitation facilities shall comply with state-fixed standards. Enterprises and institutions shall provide laborers with a safe workplace and sanitation conditions which are in compliance with state stipulations and the relevant articles of labor protection. The PRC Labor Contract Law, which was implemented on January 1, 2008, and amended on December 28, 2012, is primarily aimed at regulating employee/employer rights and obligations, including matters with respect to the establishment, performance and termination of labor contracts. Pursuant to the PRC Labor Contract Law, labor contracts shall be concluded in writing if labor relationships are to be or have been established between enterprises or institutions and the laborers. Enterprises and institutions are forbidden to force laborers to work beyond the time limit and employers shall pay laborers for overtime work in accordance with the laws and regulations. In addition, labor wages shall not be lower than local standards on minimum wages and shall be paid to laborers in a timely manner.

Social Insurance and Housing Fund

As required under the Regulation of Insurance for Labor Injury implemented on January 1, 2004 and amended on December 20, 2010, the Provisional Measures for Maternity Insurance of Employees of Corporations implemented on January 1, 1995, the Decisions on the Establishment of a Unified Program for Basic Old-Aged Pension Insurance for Employees of Corporations of the State Council issued on July 16, 1997, the Decisions on the Establishment of the Medical Insurance Program for Urban Workers of the State Council promulgated on December 14, 1998, the Unemployment Insurance Measures promulgated on January 22, 1999 and the Social Insurance Law of the PRC implemented on July 1, 2011 and amended on December 29, 2018, enterprises are obliged to provide their employees in China with welfare schemes covering pension insurance, unemployment insurance, maternity insurance, labor injury insurance and medical insurance. These payments are made to local administrative authorities and any employer that fails to contribute may be fined and ordered to make up within a prescribed time limit.

In accordance with the Regulations on the Management of Housing Funds which was promulgated by the State Council on April 3, 1999 and last amended on March 24, 2019, enterprises must register at the competent managing center for housing funds and upon the examination by such managing center of housing funds, these enterprises shall complete procedures for opening an account at the relevant bank for the deposit of employees' housing funds. Enterprises are also required to pay and deposit housing funds on behalf of their employees in full and in a timely manner.

Regulations Relating to Unfair Competition and Anti-Monopoly

According to the PRC Anti-unfair Competition Law, promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on September 2, 1993 and last amended with immediate effect on April 23, 2019, unfair competition refers to that the operator disrupts the market competition order and damages the legitimate rights and interests of other operators or consumers in violation of the provisions set forth therein in its production and operating activities. Operators shall abide by the principle of voluntariness, equality, impartiality, integrity, as well as laws and business ethics during production and operating activities.

On August 17, 2021, the SAMR issued a draft of the Provisions on the Prohibition of Internet Unfair Competition for public comments, which, among others, prohibit operators from carrying out or assisting in carrying out acts of internet unfair competition, disrupt the market competition order, affect market fair trade, or harm the legitimate rights and interests of other business operators or consumers directly or indirectly.

The PRC Anti-Monopoly Law, which was promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 2007 and amended on June 24, 2022 and took effect on August 1, 2022, and the Rules of the State Council on Declaration Threshold for Concentration of Undertakings promulgated by the State Council on August 3, 2008 and latest amended on September 18, 2018, require that where a concentration reaches one of the following thresholds, a declaration must be lodged in advance with the anti-monopoly law enforcement agency under the State Council, or otherwise the concentration shall not be implemented: (i) during the previous fiscal year, the total global turnover of all undertakings participating in the concentration exceeded RMB10 billion, and at least two of these undertakings each had a turnover of more than RMB400 million within China; or (ii) during the previous fiscal year, the total turnover within China of all the undertakings participating in the concentration exceeded RMB2 billion, and at least two of these undertakings each had a turnover of more than RMB400 million within China. Pursuant to the Anti-Monopoly Law, the relevant operators of a concentration of undertakings which reaches the standard for declaration shall make an advance declaration to the anti-monopoly law enforcement authority under the State Council. If any business operator fails to comply with the mandatory declaration requirement, the relevant authority is empowered to order the operator to terminate and/or unwind the transaction, dispose of relevant assets, shares or businesses within a certain period of time and impose fines of up to 10% of its sales revenue in the previous year if the concentration of business operator has or may have an effect of excluding or limiting competition; or up to RMB5,000,000 if the concentration of business operator does not have an effect of excluding or limiting competition. The Anti-Monopoly Law also requires relevant government authorities to strengthen the examination of concentration of undertakings in certain key industries, such as national economy and people's livelihood.

On October 23, 2020, the SAMR further issued the Measures for Examination and Approval of Concentration of Business Operators, which was amended on March 24, 2022 and took effect on May 1, 2022. These measures refer concentration as (i) a merger of undertakings; (ii) acquiring control over other undertakings by acquiring equities or assets; or (iii) acquisition of control over, or the possibility of exercising decisive influence on, an undertaking by contract or by any other means.

In early February 2021, the Anti-Monopoly Commission of the State Council published the Anti-Monopoly Guidelines for the Internet Platform Economy Sector, which provides that the calculation of turnover in the field of platform economy may be different depending on the business model of the operators: for platform operators who only provide information matchings and collect commissions, their turnovers should be calculated including the service fee charged by the platform and other platform income; for the platform operators who participate in the market competition on the platform side, their turnovers shall be calculated including the transaction amount involved in the platform and other platforms. The concentration of undertakings involving the agreement control (VIE) structure falls within the scope of the antitrust review of concentration of undertakings. Where the concentration of undertakings meets the declaration standards set by the State Council, the operators shall declare to the Anti-Monopoly Law Enforcement Agency of the State Council in advance, and the concentration shall not be implemented if the concentration is not declared. According to the Anti-Monopoly Law of the PRC, if business operators fail to comply with the mandatory declaration requirement, the anti-monopoly authority is empowered to terminate and/or unwind the transaction, dispose of relevant assets, shares or businesses within certain periods and impose fines of up to RMB500,000.

M&A Rules and Overseas Listing

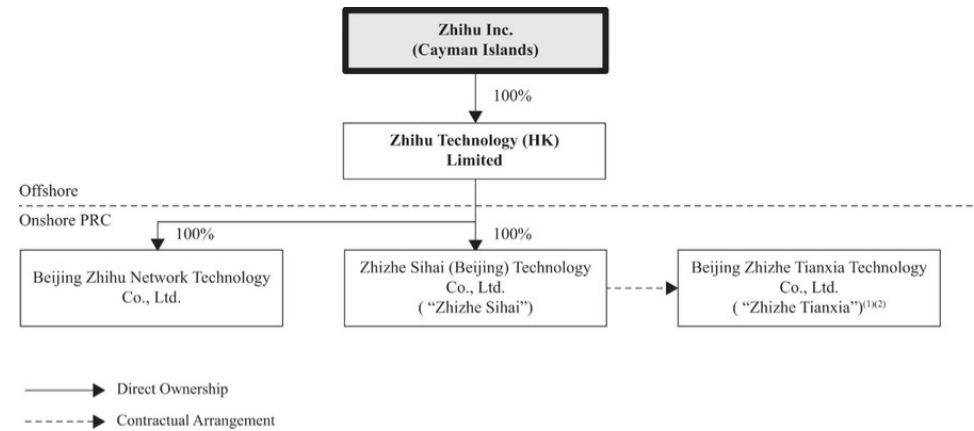
On August 8, 2006, six PRC government and regulatory authorities, including the Ministry of Commerce and the CSRC, promulgated the M&A Rules governing the mergers and acquisitions of domestic enterprises by foreign investors, which took effect on September 8, 2006 and was amended on June 22, 2009. The M&A Rules requires, among others, that a special purpose vehicle, formed for overseas listing purposes and controlled directly or indirectly by PRC companies or individuals through acquisitions of shares of or equity interests in PRC domestic companies, must obtain the approval of the CSRC prior to the listing and trading of such special purpose vehicle's securities on an overseas stock exchange.

In addition, in 2011, the General Office of the State Council promulgated the Notice on Establishing the Security Review System for Mergers and Acquisitions of Domestic Enterprises by Foreign Investors, or the Circular 6, which officially established a security review system for mergers and acquisitions of domestic enterprises by foreign investors. Further, the Ministry of Commerce promulgated the Rules of the Ministry of Commerce on Implementation of Security Review System of Mergers and Acquisitions of Domestic Enterprises by Foreign Investors, effective in September 2011, to implement Circular 6. Under Circular 6, security review is required for mergers and acquisitions by foreign investors having “national defense and security” concerns and mergers and acquisitions by which foreign investors may acquire the “de facto control” of domestic enterprises with “national security” concerns. Under the foregoing the Ministry of Commerce regulations, the Ministry of Commerce will focus on the substance and actual impact of the transaction when deciding whether a specific merger or acquisition is subject to security review. If the Ministry of Commerce decides that a specific merger or acquisition is subject to a security review, it will submit it to the Inter-Ministerial Panel, an authority established under Circular 6 led by the NDRC, and the Ministry of Commerce under the leadership of the State Council, to carry out security review. The rules prohibit foreign investors from bypassing the security review by structuring transactions through trusts, indirect investments, leases, loans, control through contractual arrangements or offshore transactions. There is no explicit provision or official interpretation stating that the merging or acquisition of a company engaged in the internet content business requires security review, and there is no requirement that acquisitions completed prior to the promulgation of the M&A Security Review Rules are subject to the Ministry of Commerce’s review. On December 19, 2020, the NDRC and the Ministry of Commerce jointly promulgated the Measures for the Security Review for Foreign Investment, effective on January 18, 2021, setting forth provisions concerning the security review mechanism on foreign investment, including the types of investments subject to review, review scopes and procedures, among others. The Office of the Working Mechanism of the Security Review of Foreign Investment, who will lead the task together with the Ministry of Commerce. Foreign investor or relevant parties in China must declare the security review to the aforesaid office prior to the investments in, among other industries, important cultural products and services, important information technology and internet products and services, important financial services, key technologies, and other important fields relating to national security and obtain control in the target enterprise.

On February 17, 2023, the CSRC released the Overseas Listing Trial Measures and five supporting guidelines, which took effect on March 31, 2023. According to the Overseas Listing Trial Measures, (i) domestic companies that seek to offer or list its securities overseas, either directly or indirectly, should fulfill filing procedure with, and report relevant information to, the CSRC. If a domestic company fails to complete the filing procedure, conceals any material fact, or falsifies any major content in its filing documents, such domestic company may be subject to administrative penalties, such as order to rectify, warnings, and fines, and its controlling shareholders, actual controllers, the person directly in charge, and other directly liable persons may also be subject to administrative penalties, such as warnings and fines; (ii) if the issuer meets both of the following conditions, the overseas offering and listing should be determined as an indirect overseas offering and listing by a domestic company: (a) any of the total assets, net assets, revenues or profits of the domestic operating entities of the issuer in the most recent accounting year accounts for more than 50% of the corresponding figure in the issuer’s audited consolidated financial statements for the same period, and (b) its major operational activities are carried out in China, its main places of business are located in China, or most of the senior management in charge of operation and management of the issuer are Chinese citizens or are domiciled in China; and (iii) where a domestic company seeks to indirectly offer and list securities in an overseas market, the issuer should designate a major domestic operating entity responsible for all filing procedures with the CSRC. Domestic companies that violate the provisions of the Overseas Listing Trial Measures in failure to perform filing procedures should be simultaneously ordered by the CSRC to make correction, be given a warning, and be subject to a fine ranging from RMB1 million to RMB10 million. The directly accountable persons in charge and other directly accountable personnel should simultaneously be given a warning and be subject to a fine ranging from RMB500,000 to RMB5 million.

C. Organizational Structure

The following diagram illustrates our corporate structure, including our principal subsidiaries and the VIEs as of the date of this annual report.



Notes:

- (1) Yuan Zhou and Dahai Li each holds 99.31% and 0.69% of the equity interests in Zhizhe Tianxia, respectively.
- (2) Zhizhe Tianxia owns, through its wholly-owned subsidiaries, 55% equity interests in each of Shanghai Pinzhi Education Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Pinzhi, and Shanghai Biban Network Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Biban. Shanghai Pinzhi and its shareholders (including a wholly-owned subsidiary of Zhizhe Tianxia) entered into a series of contractual arrangements with Shanghai Zhishi Technology Co., Ltd., our subsidiary in China, and Shanghai Biban and its shareholders (including a wholly-owned subsidiary of Zhizhe Tianxia) entered into a series of contractual arrangements with Shanghai Paya Information Technology Co., Ltd., or Shanghai Paya, our subsidiary in China.

Contractual Arrangements with the VIEs and Their Shareholders

Current PRC laws and regulations impose certain restrictions or prohibitions on foreign ownership of companies that engage in value-added telecommunication services and certain other businesses. Zhihu Inc. is an exempted company with limited liability established in the Cayman Islands. To comply with PRC laws and regulations, we conduct certain of our businesses in China through Zhizhe Tianxia, Shanghai Pinzhi and Shanghai Biban, the VIEs, based on a series of contractual arrangements by and among our WFOEs, the VIEs, and their shareholders.

Our contractual arrangements with the VIE and their shareholders allow us to (i) exercise effective control over the VIEs, (ii) receive substantially all of the economic benefits of the VIEs, and (iii) have an exclusive option to purchase all or part of the equity interests in the VIEs when and to the extent permitted by the PRC law.

As a result of our direct ownership in our WFOEs and the contractual arrangements with the VIEs, we are regarded as the primary beneficiary of the VIEs, and we treat the VIEs and their subsidiaries as our consolidated entities under U.S. GAAP. We have consolidated the financial results of the VIEs and their subsidiaries in our consolidated financial statements in accordance with U.S. GAAP.

The following is a summary of the currently effective contractual arrangements by and among our WFOEs, the VIEs, and their respective shareholders.

Agreements that provide us with effective control over the VIEs

Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreements

Zhizhe Tianxia entered into an exclusive business cooperation agreement with Zhizhe Sihai on December 21, 2021 (the “Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement”), pursuant to which Zhizhe Tianxia agrees to engage Zhizhe Sihai as its exclusive provider of business support, technical and consulting services, including without limitation technical services, network support, business consultation, intellectual property licensing, equipment and leasing, market consultancy, system integration, product research and development and system maintenance, and management consulting services relating to Zhizhe Tianxia’s operations, in exchange for service fees. Under these arrangements, the service fees, subject to Zhizhe Sihai’s adjustment, are equal to all of the net profit of the Zhizhe Tianxia and its subsidiaries. Zhizhe Sihai may adjust the service fees at its sole discretion, after consideration of certain factors, including but not limited to the deduction of necessary costs, expenses, taxes and other statutory contribution in relation to the respective fiscal year, and may also include accumulated losses of Zhizhe Tianxia and its subsidiaries from previous financial periods. If Zhizhe Tianxia runs into financial deficit or suffers severe operation difficulties, Zhizhe Sihai will provide financial support to Zhizhe Tianxia.

Intellectual property rights are developed during the normal course of business of Zhizhe Tianxia and its subsidiaries. Pursuant to the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement, Zhizhe Sihai will have the exclusive and proprietary rights to all intellectual properties developed by Zhizhe Tianxia and its subsidiaries, in connection with performance of the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement.

Unless otherwise terminated early by Zhizhe Sihai, the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement will remain effective unless terminated in the event that (a) the entire equity interests held by the shareholders in Zhizhe Tianxia or the entire assets of Zhizhe Tianxia have been transferred to Zhizhe Sihai; (b) in accordance with the other provisions of the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement.

Shanghai Pinzhi entered into an exclusive technology development, consultancy and services agreement with Shanghai Zhishi on September 7, 2021 (the “Pinzhi Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement”), pursuant to which Shanghai Pinzhi agrees to engage Shanghai Zhishi as its exclusive provider of technology development, consultancy and services in exchange for service fees. The service fees shall be equal to the total consolidated net profit of Shanghai Pinzhi, after deducting the business expenses as confirmed by both parties. Shanghai Zhishi may adjust the service fees at its sole discretion, taking into account the content of the services provided during the year and the business need of Shanghai Pinzhi. Shanghai Zhishi may provide financial support to Shanghai Pinzhi to ensure Shanghai Pinzhi can meet its operational cash flow requirements and/or to support it when it suffers operational losses. Unless otherwise terminated early by mutual agreement or pursuant to provisions set forth therein, the Pinzhi Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement shall have a term of twenty years from date of signing. The remaining principal terms of the Pinzhi Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement are substantially similar to those under the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement as set out above.

Shanghai Biban entered into an exclusive technology development, consultancy and services agreement with Shanghai Paya on November 9, 2021 (the “Biban Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement”), the principal terms of which are substantially the same as those under the Pinzhi Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement.

Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement and Powers of Attorney

Pursuant to the shareholder's rights entrustment agreement entered into among the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia, Zhizhe Sihai and Zhizhe Tianxia on December 21, 2021 (the "Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement"), and the irrevocable power of attorney executed by each of the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia on the same day (the "Power of Attorney"), whereby the shareholders appointed Zhizhe Sihai or a director of its offshore holding company or his or her successor (including a liquidator replacing such director) as their exclusive agent and attorney to act on their behalf on all matters concerning Zhizhe Tianxia and its subsidiaries and to exercise all of its rights as a registered shareholder of Zhizhe Tianxia; such attorney cannot be the shareholder himself/herself or another shareholder of Zhizhe Tianxia. These rights include (i) the right to propose, convene and attend shareholders' meetings; (ii) the right to sell, transfer, pledge or dispose of shares; (iii) the right to exercise shareholders' voting rights; and (iv) the right to appoint the legal representative (chairperson), the director, supervisor, the chief executive officer (or general manager) and other senior management members of Zhizhe Tianxia. The authorized person is entitled to sign minutes, file documents with the relevant companies registry and exercise voting rights in Zhizhe Tianxia on behalf of the relevant shareholders. As a result of the Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement and the Powers of Attorney, we, through Zhizhe Sihai, are able to exercise management control over the activities that most significantly impact the economic performance of Zhizhe Tianxia. The Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement and the Powers of Attorney shall automatically terminate once Zhizhe Sihai or its designee directly holds the entire equity interests in and/or the entire assets of Zhizhe Tianxia once permitted under the then PRC laws and Zhizhe Sihai or its designee is allowed to conduct the Relevant Businesses of Zhizhe Tianxia.

The shareholders of Shanghai Pinzhi each entered into a power of attorney on September 7, 2021 (the "Pinzhi Power of Attorney") in favor of Shanghai Zhishi, the principal terms of which are substantially similar to those under the Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement as set out above except that the Pinzhi Power of Attorney shall terminate upon the earlier of (a) the relevant shareholder ceasing to be a shareholder of Shanghai Pinzhi and (b) when the attorney terminates such Power of Attorney by written notice to the relevant shareholder. The shareholders of Shanghai Biban each entered into a power of attorney on November 9, 2021 (the "Biban Power of Attorney") in favor of Shanghai Paya, the principal terms of which are substantially the same as those under the Pinzhi Powers of Attorney.

Share Pledge Agreement

Zhizhe Tianxia, the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia and Zhizhe Sihai entered into a share pledge agreement on December 21, 2021 (the "Share Pledge Agreement"). Under the Share Pledge Agreement, the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia will pledge all of their respective equity interests in Zhizhe Tianxia to Zhizhe Sihai as collateral security for any or all of their payments due to Zhizhe Sihai and to secure performance of their obligations under the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement, the Exclusive Option Agreement, Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement and the Powers of Attorney. The Share Pledge Agreement will not terminate until (i) all obligations of Zhizhe Tianxia and its shareholders are satisfied in full; (ii) Zhizhe Sihai exercises its exclusive option to purchase the entire equity interests held by the shareholders in Zhizhe Tianxia and/or the entire assets of Zhizhe Tianxia pursuant to the Exclusive Option Agreement when it is permitted to do so under the applicable PRC laws; (iii) Zhizhe Sihai exercises its unilateral and unconditional right of termination; or (iv) the Share Pledge Agreement is required to be terminated in accordance with applicable PRC laws. Should an event of default (as provided in the Share Pledge Agreement) occur, unless it is successfully resolved to Zhizhe Sihai's satisfaction within 30 days upon being notified by Zhizhe Sihai, Zhizhe Sihai may demand that Zhizhe Tianxia immediately pay all outstanding payments due under the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement, repay any loans and make all other payments due to it, and/or dispose of the pledged equity interests and use the proceeds to repay any outstanding payments due to Zhizhe Sihai. The shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia have pledged their equity interests in Zhizhe Tianxia to Zhizhe Sihai and registered such pledges with the relevant PRC governmental authority pursuant to PRC laws and regulations.

Shanghai Pinzhi, the shareholders of Shanghai Pinzhi and Shanghai Zhishi entered into a share pledge agreement on September 7, 2021 (the "Pinzhi Share Pledge Agreement") which shall terminate upon all obligations of Shanghai Pinzhi and its shareholders under the Pinzhi Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement, the Pinzhi Exclusive Option Agreement and the Pinzhi Powers of Attorney are satisfied in full. The remaining principal terms of the Pinzhi Share Pledge Agreement are substantially similar to those under the Share Pledge Agreement as set out above. Shanghai Biban, the shareholders of Shanghai Biban and Shanghai Paya entered into a share pledge agreement on November 9, 2021 (the "Biban Share Pledge Agreement"), the principal terms of which are substantially the same as those under the Pinzhi Share Pledge Agreement.

Agreements that provide us with the option to purchase the equity interests in and assets of the VIEs

Exclusive Option Agreements

Zhizhe Tianxia and its shareholders entered into an exclusive option agreement with Zhizhe Sihai dated December 21, 2021 (the “Exclusive Option Agreement”), pursuant to which Zhizhe Sihai or its designee is granted an irrevocable and exclusive right to purchase all of the equity interest in and/or assets of Zhizhe Tianxia for a nominal price, unless the relevant government authorities or the PRC laws request that another amount be used as the purchase price, in which case the purchase price shall be the lowest amount under such request. Subject to relevant PRC laws and regulations, the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia and/or Zhizhe Tianxia shall return any amount of purchase price they have received to Zhizhe Sihai or its designee. At Zhizhe Sihai’s request, the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia will promptly transfer their respective equity interests in and/or the relevant assets of Zhizhe Tianxia to Zhizhe Sihai or its designee after Zhizhe Sihai exercises its purchase right. Unless otherwise terminated early by Zhizhe Sihai through written notice, the Exclusive Option Agreement will remain effective until when all the purchased equity interests and/or the relevant assets are transferred to Zhizhe Sihai and/or the designee and Zhizhe Sihai and its subsidiaries have the right to legally conduct the business of Zhizhe Tianxia according to the PRC law.

During the term of the Exclusive Option Agreement, Zhizhe Tianxia is not allowed to, and shall procure its subsidiaries not to, sell, transfer, mortgage or otherwise dispose of any of its assets (exceeding the value of RMB1 million) without the prior written consent of Zhizhe Sihai. In addition, the shareholders are not allowed to request for any distributions, gains or other form of profits sharing and should forgo such distributions, gains or any other form of profits sharing within the scope permitted by the PRC law. In the event that the shareholders of Zhizhe Tianxia receive any distribution from Zhizhe Tianxia and/or its subsidiaries and subject to the PRC laws, the shareholders must immediately pay or transfer such distribution to Zhizhe Sihai or its designee. If Zhizhe Sihai exercises its purchase right, all or any part of the equity interests in and/or assets of Zhizhe Tianxia acquired would be transferred to Zhizhe Sihai and the benefits of equity ownership and/or assets, as applicable, would flow to us and our Shareholders.

As provided in the Exclusive Option Agreement, without the prior written consent of Zhizhe Sihai, Zhizhe Tianxia shall not, and shall procure its subsidiaries not to, among other things, (i) sell, transfer, pledge or dispose of in any manner any of its assets for a value more than RMB1 million; (ii) execute any material contract for a value more than RMB1 million, except any contracts in the ordinary course of business and any contracts entered into with any members of our Group; (iii) provide any loan, financial support, pledge or guarantees in any form to any third party, or allow any third party create any pledge or other security interest on its assets or equity; (iv) incur, inherit, guarantee or allow any debt that is not incurred in the ordinary course of business of Zhizhe Tianxia or not disclosed and consented to by Zhizhe Sihai; (v) enter into any consolidation or merger with any third party, or acquire or invest in any third party; (vi) increase or reduce its registered capital, or alter the structure of the registered capital in any other way. As such, the potential adverse effect on Zhizhe Sihai and us in the event of any loss suffered from Zhizhe Tianxia and/or its subsidiaries can be limited to a certain extent.

Shanghai Pinzhi entered into an exclusive option agreement with Shanghai Zhishi on September 7, 2021 (the “Pinzhi Exclusive Option Agreement”), pursuant to which Shanghai Zhishi or its designee is granted an irrevocable and exclusive right to purchase all of the equity interest in and/or assets of Shanghai Pinzhi for RMB10 or the lowest amount allowed by PRC laws and regulations. The Pinzhi Exclusive Option Agreement shall take effect from the date of signing and terminate when all the purchased equity interests and/or assets are transferred to Shanghai Zhishi or its designee. The remaining principal terms of the Pinzhi Exclusive Option Agreement are substantially similar to those under the Exclusive Option Agreement, except that the materiality threshold under the Pinzhi Exclusive Option Agreement for the corporate actions that require Shanghai Zhishi’s consent is RMB500 thousand or higher (rather than RMB1 million). Shanghai Biban entered into an exclusive option agreement with Shanghai Paya on November 9, 2021 (the “Biban Exclusive Option Agreement”), the principal terms of which are substantially the same as those under the Pinzhi Exclusive Option Agreement.

D. Property, Plants and Equipment

Our principal place of business is located in Beijing, China. As of March 31, 2023 we lease 19 properties in Beijing and other cities in China with an aggregate gross floor area of over 27,200 square meters. These leases vary in duration from approximately 12 to 48 months.

Our leased properties in China serve as our offices and data centers. We believe that there is sufficient supply of properties in China, and thus we do not rely on existing leases for our business operations.

As of March 31, 2023, landlord of one of our 19 leased properties in China has not provided us with valid title certificates or relevant authorization documents evidencing their rights to lease the properties to us. Consequently, if this lease is terminated as a result of challenges by third parties, we may not be able to continue to use the leased property. We believe that alternative premises are available at reasonable market rates if we were forced to relocate our premises which lack valid title certificates.

Pursuant to the applicable PRC laws and regulations, property lease contracts must be registered with the relevant local branches of the PRC Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. As of March 31, 2023, we had not completed lease registration of 18 properties we leased in China, primarily due to the difficulty of procuring the relevant landlords' cooperation to register such leases. The registration of such leases will require cooperation of our landlords. Our PRC legal counsel has advised us that the lack of registration for the lease contracts will not affect the validity of such lease contracts under PRC law, and has also advised us that a maximum penalty of RMB10,000 may be imposed for each incident of noncompliance of lease registration requirements.

ITEM 4A. UNRESOLVED STAFF COMMENTS

Not applicable.

ITEM 5. OPERATING AND FINANCIAL REVIEW AND PROSPECTS

You should read the following discussion and analysis of our financial condition and results of operations in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements and the related notes included elsewhere in this annual report on Form 20-F. This discussion may contain forward-looking statements based upon current expectations that involve risks and uncertainties. Our actual results may differ materially from those anticipated in these forward-looking statements as a result of various factors, including those set forth under "Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors" or in other parts of this annual report.

A. Operating Results

Launched in 2010, we have been dedicated to expanding our content and service offerings to meet the diverse needs of our users, content creators, and business partners. We have grown from a Q&A community into one of the largest comprehensive online content communities in China. Our average MAUs increased by 5.6% from 95.9 million in 2021 to 101.3 million in 2022. Our average monthly viewers increased by 20.6% from 503.6 million in 2021 to 607.4 million in 2022. Our average monthly subscribing members increased by 93.2% from 5.1 million in 2021 to 9.8 million in 2022. As of December 31, 2022, Zhihu had 63.1 million cumulative content creators, who had contributed 505.9 million cumulative Q&As covering over 1,000 verticals. We continue to leverage our content-centric business model and launch new monetization channels such as offering vocational training and e-commerce services. We believe that we are still in an early stage of monetization with significant runway for growth across a span of monetization channels.

Our revenues increased from RMB1.4 billion in 2020 to RMB3.0 billion in 2021, and further to RMB3.6 billion (US\$522.7 million) in 2022, representing a CAGR of 63.3% from 2020. Our gross profit increased from RMB757.8 million in 2020 to RMB1.6 billion in 2021, and further to RMB1.8 billion (US\$262.1 million) in 2022. Our net loss was RMB517.6 million in 2020, RMB1.3 billion in 2021, and RMB1.6 billion (US\$228.8 million) in 2022. We had net operating cash outflows of RMB244.4 million, RMB440.2 million, and RMB1.1 billion (US\$161.7 million) in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. We expect to continue incurring net loss and net operating cash outflow in the near future as we continue to strategically incurred expenditures to build up and expand our content ecosystem to further enhance Zhihu's content quality and content portfolio, promote community culture and user engagement, and solidify organic growth.

Key Factors Affecting Our Results of Operations

Our results of operations are affected by the following factors.

Our content offerings

As an online content community, the overall scale of our user base, level of user engagement, and content creation all depend on the breadth, depth, richness, and quality of our content offerings. As of December 31, 2022, our community had 649.3 million cumulative pieces of content, including 505.9 million cumulative Q&As. The ever-growing Zhihu content has expanded to include timely content covering trending events to satisfy the needs and improve the experience of our increasingly diverse user base. In addition, the increasingly broad content coverage and diverse content formats cater to our users' continually evolving preferences. We have been deepening our exiting content products and adding new product categories to cover a wider spectrum of content consumption scenarios in our users' daily lives. We will continue to motivate and support content creators to create more high-quality content. Furthermore, we have developed and will continue to develop utilities and incentives to facilitate the content creation process.

Our user base

Our business and revenue growth rely on our ability to further grow our user base. We believe that a strong increase in the size of our user base, coupled with a more vibrant community, could deepen our monetization and lead to growth of our business and revenue. Our user base also helps us motivate content creators to produce more high-quality content, which further stimulates user interactions and spending. With the fast-growing user base, more content creators have emerged on Zhihu. We provide multiple channels for content creators to monetize their contribution in our community.

We have experienced rapid user growth since our inception. Our average MAUs increased from 68.5 million in 2020 to 95.9 million in 2021, and further to 101.3 million in 2022. Benefiting from our expanding user base and comprehensive content offerings, we have created a vibrant community with expanding subscribing members and other customers. For example, our average monthly subscribing members increased significantly from 2.4 million in 2020 to 5.1 million in 2021, and further to 9.8 million in 2022. In addition, the growth of our user base has attracted more merchants and brands to our community and increased their spending to pursue more effective branding and advertising.

Our content-centric monetization

Our revenue and business scale depend on our ability to further enhance our monetization by increasing the effectiveness of diversified monetization model for each revenue stream and expanding our revenue streams.

We have been expanding our service offerings to meet the diverse needs of our users, content creators and business partners. We have been enhancing our content-centric monetization in each of our revenue streams, including advertising, paid membership, content-commerce solutions, vocational training, and other services that we introduce from time to time, such as e-commerce. The willingness of our users to pay for premium content largely depends on the breadth, depth, and quality of our premium content, and thus better premium content could result in higher value for our paid membership services. Our rich content offerings and user base attract more merchants and brands to promote their products and services and achieve other commercial goals through our advertising services and content-commerce solutions. In addition to continuously expanding our customer base via our diversified service offerings, we plan to further improve the effectiveness of our monetization channels and increase the spending of our existing merchants and brands as well as paying users.

We have consistently explored additional content-centric monetization channels and added new revenue streams. For example, we have launched our vocational training and e-commerce services to expand our vertical service coverage and meet user demand. We plan to further expand monetization of our content community and seek to further diversify our revenue streams.

Our operating efficiency

Our efficiency and margin depend on our ability to strategically increase our scale and manage our costs and expenses. As the majority of our content is UGC, we benefit from our organically generated diverse content that stimulate interactions among users and content creators, as well as efficient content acquisition. We also deploy resources to strategically acquire high-quality content to enrich our premium content library. As we continue to expand our revenue streams, our revenue mix and ability to manage the level of revenue sharing to content providers might also affect our gross profit margin.

We seek to continually optimize our expense structure. Our operating efficiency is significantly affected by our user acquisition strategy. We actively engage in selling and marketing efforts to capture marketing opportunities from which we can effectively increase our user base, while focusing on more precise and effective ways of user acquisition. To further drive our sales and marketing effectiveness, we will continue to enhance our brand recognition to achieve organic user acquisition and retention.

Our people and technology

We focus on investing in our people and technology, which are crucial for us to enrich our content offerings, further grow our user base, incentivize content creators, and attract merchants and brands. We recruit, retain, and motivate talented employees to support our growth. Our technology infrastructure supports our business model in various aspects, from understanding our users, optimizing our content offerings, promoting interaction and engagement between our users and content creators, nurturing our community, to enhancing our service offerings. We will continue to develop and apply artificial intelligence technologies to keep pace with the growth of our business, scale our content offerings, and improve operating efficiency. We will continue to invest in people and technology to facilitate our future growth.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Our Operations and Financial Performance

Normal economic life throughout China was sharply curtailed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which first broke out in 2020. Despite our series of measures to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect our employees, including upgrading our telecommuting system or monitoring our employees' health on a daily basis, travel restrictions and delay or cancelation in our offline events adversely affected our service quality. As a result, our business, financial condition, and results of operations had been adversely affected. For example, we experienced negative impact on our advertising revenue during times when the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was significant, such as in the first half of 2020 and fourth quarter of 2022.

Starting in December 2022, most of the travel restrictions and quarantine requirements in China were lifted. Although there were significant surges of COVID-19 infections in various regions in China during that month, the situation has been significantly improved and normalized since January 2023. There remains uncertainty as to the future impact of the virus. The extent to which the pandemic affects our results of operations going forward will depend on future developments that are highly uncertain and unpredictable. There can be no assurance as to whether the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption to our business will extend over a prolonged period, and if yes, it could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations. See "Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Business and Industry—We face risks relating to natural disasters, health epidemics (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), and other outbreaks, which could significantly disrupt our operations and materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations."

Key Components of Results of Operations

Revenue

We generate revenue primarily through (i) advertising, (ii) paid membership, (iii) content-commerce solutions, (iv) vocational training, and (v) other services. The following table sets forth a breakdown of revenue by type both in absolute amount and as a percentage of our revenue for the periods indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,						
	2020		2021		2022		
	RMB	%	RMB	%	RMB	US\$	%
	(in thousands, except percentages)						
Revenue							
Advertising	843,284	62.4	1,160,886	39.2	926,296	134,300	25.7
Paid membership	320,471	23.7	668,507	22.6	1,230,804	178,450	34.1
Content-commerce solutions	135,813	10.0	973,986	32.9	1,030,184	149,363	28.6
Vocational training ⁽¹⁾	7,080	0.5	45,823	1.6	248,266	35,995	6.9
Others ⁽¹⁾	45,548	3.4	110,122	3.7	169,369	24,556	4.7
Total	1,352,196	100.0	2,959,324	100.0	3,604,919	522,664	100.0

Note:

(1) We separately reported the revenue of our vocational training business, which was formerly included in “others,” and for comparison purposes, the revenue of vocational training business and the revenue for others for years ended December 31, 2021 and 2020 have been retrospectively re-classified.

Advertising. We generate revenue from advertising services. Our advertising revenue is primarily driven by our MAUs and advertising revenue per MAU. We experienced fluctuation in our advertising revenue in 2022 primarily due to the challenging macroeconomic environment in China, which negatively impacted the spending power of our business customers.

Our advertisers are generally attracted by, among other things, the expanding user base, high-quality user profiles, and the content generated in our community. They typically select target audience based on user profiles and review performance indices instead of specifying target content category or monitoring other similar metrics. We do not believe that we have concentration in terms of user profiles. The pricing of our advertising is determined based on our internal marked price guidelines that are updated from time to time. The guidelines generally take into consideration factors including, among other things, nature and type of advertisers, products and services to be marketed, prior relationships, level of comparable demands, and scale of orders, and are implemented based on marked price for our advertising services.

Paid Membership. We generate substantially all of our paid membership revenue from Yan Selection membership fees. The following table sets forth our average MAUs, average monthly subscribing members, and paying ratio for the periods indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	CAGR
Average MAUs (in millions)	68.5	95.9	101.3	21.6 %
Average monthly subscribing members (in thousands)	2,362.6	5,076.0	9,806.9	103.7 %
Paying ratio	3.4	5.3	9.7	68.9 %

We formally launched our Yan Selection membership program in March 2019, and since then have continued to enhance the volume and quality of our premium content. The increase in paid membership revenue during the periods primarily reflected the continued increases in our MAUs as well as the paying ratio. In particular, the continued increase in paying ratio reflects the wider acceptance of the paid membership among our community.

Content-Commerce Solutions. We generate content-commerce solutions revenue primarily from service fees from our Zhi+ solutions. We formally launched our content-commerce solutions in early 2020. The content-commerce solutions have demonstrated strong growth momentum since the launch. Our revenue from content-commerce solutions increased from RMB135.8 million in 2020 to RMB974.0 million in 2021, and further to RMB1,030.2 million (US\$149.4 million) in 2022, primarily driven by the increasing number of our MAUs and average content-commerce solutions revenue per MAU.

Vocational training. We offer self-developed vocational training products and services, in addition to third-party vocational training courses, to further deepen our monetization channel. We offer various types of vocational trainings, which cover practical training courses focusing on acquisition of specific skills, professional qualification exam preparation courses, vocational language exam preparation courses, and other vocational training courses. Our vocational training courses primarily consist of pre-recorded audio-video courses and live online training courses. Course fees are generally collected in advance and are initially recorded as contract liability. For vocational training, revenue is recognized proportionately over the relevant period in which the training courses are delivered.

Others. Other revenue is mainly generated from the sales of our private label products and book series, as well as revenue from our e-commerce services. We have been strategically identifying opportunities for expanding our revenue streams. We expect an increase in revenue from the sales of our private label products and book series and we will benefit from continued diversification of our content-centric monetization channels in the foreseeable future.

Cost of Revenues

Our cost of revenues primarily consists of: (i) content and operational costs, (ii) cloud service and bandwidth costs, (iii) staff costs, and (iv) payment processing costs. Content and operational costs primarily include payments for content creators with respect to content included in our premium content library, other content-related costs and other business-related execution costs.

The following table sets forth a breakdown of our cost of revenues by nature both in absolute amount and as a percentage of our revenue for the periods indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,					
	2020		2021		2022	
	RMB	%	RMB	%	RMB	US\$
	(in thousands, except percentages)					
Cost of revenues						
Content and operational costs	204,397	15.1	750,554	25.4	906,224	131,390
Cloud service and bandwidth costs	226,684	16.8	328,346	11.1	403,442	58,494
Staff costs	75,412	5.6	142,699	4.8	206,633	29,959
Payment processing costs	39,536	2.9	74,285	2.5	136,778	19,831
Others	48,370	3.6	109,539	3.7	143,790	20,847
Total	594,399	44.0	1,405,423	47.5	1,796,867	260,521

Gross Profit and Gross Profit Margin

Our gross profit increased from RMB757.8 million in 2020 to RMB1.6 billion in 2021 and further to RMB1.8 billion (US\$262.1 million) in 2022. Our gross profit margin was 56.0% in 2020, 52.5% in 2021, and 50.2% in 2022.

Operating Expenses

Our operating expenses consist of (i) selling and marketing expenses, (ii) research and development expenses, and (iii) general and administrative expenses.

The following table sets forth a breakdown of our operating expenses both in absolute amount and as a percentage of our revenue for the periods indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,				2022		
	2020		2021		RMB		US\$
	RMB	%	RMB	%	(in thousands, except percentages)		
Operating expenses							
Selling and marketing expenses	734,753	54.3	1,634,733	55.3	2,026,468	293,810	56.2
Research and development expenses	329,763	24.4	619,585	20.9	763,362	110,677	21.2
General and administrative expenses	296,162	21.9	690,292	23.3	621,973	90,178	17.2
Total	1,360,678	100.6	2,944,610	99.5	3,411,803	494,665	94.6

Selling and Marketing Expenses. Our selling and marketing expenses primarily consist of expenses associated with promotion and advertising and staff costs.

Research and Development Expenses. Our research and development expenses primarily consist of research and development related staff costs.

General and Administrative Expenses. General and administrative expenses primarily consist of staff costs, traveling and general expenses, and professional service fees.

Inflation

To date, inflation in China has not materially affected our results of operations. According to the PRC National Bureau of Statistics, the year-over-year percentage changes in the consumer price index for December 2020, 2021, and 2022 were increases of 0.2%, 1.5%, and 1.8%, respectively. Although we have not been materially affected by inflation in the past, we may be affected if China experiences higher rates of inflation in the future. For example, certain operating expenses, such as employee, technology, and office related expenses may increase as a result of higher inflation. Additionally, because a substantial portion of our assets consists of cash and cash equivalents and short-term investments, high inflation could significantly reduce the value and purchasing power of these assets. We are not able to hedge our exposure to higher inflation in China.

Results of Operations

The following table sets forth our results of operations with line items in absolute amount and as a percentage of our revenue for the periods indicated. This information should be read together with our consolidated financial statements and related notes included elsewhere in this annual. The results of operations in any period are not necessarily indicative of our future trends.

	For the Year Ended December 31,						
	2020		2021		2022		
	RMB	%	RMB	%	RMB	US\$	%
	(in thousands, except percentages)						
Revenues	1,352,196	100.0	2,959,324	100.0	3,604,919	522,664	100.0
Cost of revenues	(594,399)	(44.0)	(1,405,423)	(47.5)	(1,796,867)	(260,521)	(49.8)
Gross profit	757,797	56.0	1,553,901	52.5	1,808,052	262,143	50.2
Selling and marketing expenses	(734,753)	(54.3)	(1,634,733)	(55.2)	(2,026,468)	(293,810)	(56.2)
Research and development expenses	(329,763)	(24.4)	(619,585)	(20.9)	(763,362)	(110,677)	(21.2)
General and administrative expenses	(296,162)	(21.9)	(690,292)	(23.3)	(621,973)	(90,178)	(17.3)
Total operating expenses	(1,360,678)	(100.6)	(2,944,610)	(99.5)	(3,411,803)	(494,665)	(94.6)
Loss from operations	(602,881)	(44.6)	(1,390,709)	(47.0)	(1,603,751)	(232,522)	(44.5)
Investment income	56,087	4.2	59,177	2.0	70,380	10,204	2.0
Interest income	24,751	1.8	31,305	1.1	68,104	9,874	1.9
Fair value change of financial instrument	(68,818)	(5.1)	27,846	0.9	(176,685)	(25,617)	(4.9)
Exchange gains/(losses)	62,663	4.6	(16,665)	(0.6)	71,749	10,403	2.0
Others, net	11,728	0.9	(4,391)	(0.1)	5,983	867	0.2
Loss before income tax	(516,470)	(38.2)	(1,293,437)	(43.7)	(1,564,220)	(226,791)	(43.4)
Income tax expense	(1,080)	(0.1)	(5,443)	(0.2)	(14,183)	(2,056)	(0.4)
Net loss	(517,550)	(38.3)	(1,298,880)	(43.9)	(1,578,403)	(228,847)	(43.8)

Year Ended December 31, 2022 Compared to Year Ended December 31, 2021

Revenues

	For the Year Ended December 31,					
	2021	2022		Change		
	RMB	RMB	US\$	RMB	US\$	%
	(in thousands, except percentages)					
Revenues						
Advertising	1,160,886	926,296	134,300	(234,590)	(34,012)	(20.2)
Paid membership	668,507	1,230,804	178,450	562,297	81,525	84.1
Content-commerce solutions	973,986	1,030,184	149,363	56,198	8,148	5.8
Vocational training ⁽¹⁾	45,823	248,266	35,995	202,443	29,351	441.8
Others ⁽¹⁾	110,122	169,369	24,556	59,247	8,590	53.8
Total	2,959,324	3,604,919	522,664	645,595	93,602	21.8

Note:

(1) We separately reported the revenue of our vocational training business, which was formerly included in “others,” and for comparison purposes, the revenue of vocational training business and the revenue for others for years ended December 31, 2021 and 2020 have been retrospectively re-classified.

Our revenues increased by 21.8% from RMB3.0 billion in 2021 to RMB3.6 billion (US\$522.7 million) in 2022.

Advertising. Advertising revenue decreased by 20.2% from RMB1.2 billion in 2021 to RMB926.3 million (US\$134.3 million) in 2022. The decrease primarily reflected

the headwinds faced by the general online advertising industry in China under the challenging macroeconomic environment in China and the COVID-19 pandemic situation in 2022.

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Paid Membership. Paid membership revenue increased significantly by 84.1% from RMB668.5 million in 2021 to RMB1.2 billion (US\$178.5 million) in 2022, primarily due to the continued growth of our subscribing members. The number of our average monthly subscribing members increased significantly from 5.1 million in 2021 to 9.8 million in 2022, demonstrating the attractiveness of our premium content library.

Content-Commerce Solutions. Content-commerce solutions revenue increased from RMB974.0 million in 2021 to RMB1.03 billion (US\$149.4 million) in 2022. The increase was primarily driven by the development of our user base in 2022.

Vocational training. Vocational training revenue increased from RMB45.8 million in 2021 to RMB248.3 million (US\$36.0 million) in 2022, primarily driven by the growth of our diverse online course offerings and the revenue contributions from our recently acquired business in 2022.

Others. Other revenue increased substantially from RMB110.1 million in 2021 to RMB169.4 million (US\$24.6 million) in 2022, primarily due to the increased sales of our private label products and book series.

Cost of Revenues

	For the Year Ended December 31,					
	2021	2022		Change		
	RMB	RMB	US\$	RMB	US\$	%
	(in thousands, except percentages)					
Cost of revenues						
Content and operational costs	750,554	906,224	131,390	155,670	22,570	20.7
Cloud service and bandwidth costs	328,346	403,442	58,494	75,096	10,888	22.9
Staff costs	142,699	206,633	29,959	63,934	9,270	44.8
Payment processing costs	74,285	136,778	19,831	62,493	9,061	84.1
Others	109,539	143,790	20,847	34,251	4,965	31.3
Total	1,405,423	1,796,867	260,521	391,444	56,754	27.9

Our cost of revenues increased by 27.9% from RMB1.4 billion in 2021 to RMB1.8 billion (US\$260.5 million) in 2022. The increase was primarily attributable to (i) an increase in content and operational costs of RMB155.7 million to enhance our content attractiveness, (ii) an increase in cloud service and bandwidth costs of RMB75.1 million due to the growth in our user traffic, and (iii) increases in staff costs, payment processing costs, and others in connection with our business growth.

Gross Profit and Gross Profit Margin

	For the Year Ended December 31,					
	2021	2022		Change		
	RMB	RMB	US\$	RMB	US\$	%
	(in thousands, except percentages)					
Gross profit	1,553,901	1,808,052	262,143	254,151	36,848	16.4

In 2021 and 2022, our gross profit was RMB1.6 billion and RMB1.8 billion (US\$262.1 million), respectively, and our gross profit margin was 52.5% and 50.2%, respectively. The slight decrease in gross profit margin was primarily due to the increase of our staff costs and payment processing costs.

Operating Expenses

	For the Year Ended December 31,					
	2021	2022		Change		
	RMB	RMB	US\$	RMB	US\$	%
	(in thousands, except percentages)					
Operating expenses						
Selling and marketing expenses	1,634,733	2,026,468	293,810	391,735	56,796	24.0
Research and development expenses	619,585	763,362	110,677	143,777	20,846	23.2
General and administrative expenses	690,292	621,973	90,178	(68,319)	(9,905)	(9.9)
Total	2,944,610	3,411,803	494,665	467,193	67,737	15.9

Selling and Marketing Expenses. Our selling and marketing expenses increased by 24.0% from RMB1.6 billion in 2021 to RMB2.0 billion (US\$293.8 million) in 2022, primarily due to our increased marketing activities to promote our products and service offerings and to strengthen Zhihu's brand awareness.

Research and Development Expenses. Our research and development expenses increased by 23.2% from RMB619.6 million in 2021 to RMB763.4 million (US\$110.7 million) in 2022, primarily due to the increase in salaries and welfare of research and development personnel in 2022.

General and Administrative Expenses. Our general and administrative expenses decreased by 9.9% from RMB690.3 million in 2021 to RMB622.0 million (US\$90.2 million) in 2022, primarily due to lower share-based compensation expenses recognized, partially offset by the increase in salaries and welfare of management personnel and the expense related to our dual primary listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

Loss from Operations

As a result of the foregoing, we had a loss from operations of RMB1.6 billion (US\$232.5 million) in 2022, in comparison with a loss from operations of RMB1.4 billion in 2021.

Investment Income

Our investment income increased from RMB59.2 million in 2021 to RMB70.4 million (US\$10.2 million) in 2022, primarily due to an increase in income from short-term investment that we held for cash management purpose.

Interest Income

Our interest income increased from RMB31.3 million in 2021 to RMB68.1 million (US\$9.9 million) in 2022, primarily due to an increase in the yield on term deposits.

Fair Value Change of Financial Instrument

We recorded a loss of RMB176.7 million (US\$25.6 million) from fair value change of financial instrument in 2022, which reflected the fair value change of financial instruments related to currency exchange options and forward contracts due to the appreciation of U.S. dollars against Renminbi in the second quarter of 2022. We had a profit of RMB27.8 million from fair value change of financial instrument in 2021, which primarily reflected the fair value change of financial instruments related to foreign exchange options and forward contracts.

Exchange Gains/(Losses)

We had exchange gains of RMB71.7 million (US\$10.4 million) in 2022, in comparison with exchange losses of RMB16.7 million in 2021, as a result of fluctuations of the exchange rates of Renminbi against U.S. dollars.

Others, Net

We had net other gains of RMB6.0 million (US\$0.9 million) in 2022, in comparison with net other losses of RMB4.4 million in 2021, primarily due to an increase in

non-operating income.

Loss Before Income Tax

Primarily as a result of the foregoing, our loss before income tax in 2022 was RMB1.6 billion (US\$226.8 million), increased by 20.9% from RMB1.3 billion in 2021.

Income Tax Expenses

Our income tax expense increased from RMB5.4 million in 2021 to RMB14.2 million (US\$2.1 million) in 2022.

Net Loss

As a result of the foregoing, our net loss increased by 21.5% from RMB1.3 billion in 2021 to RMB1.6 billion (US\$228.8 million) in 2022.

Year Ended December 31, 2021 Compared to Year Ended December 31, 2020

For a detailed description of the comparison of our operating results for the year ended December 31, 2021 to the year ended December 31, 2020, see “Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—A. Operating Results—Results of Operations—Year Ended December 31, 2021 Compared to Year Ended December 31, 2020” of our annual report on Form 20-F filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022.

B. Liquidity and Capital Resources

To date, we have financed our operations primarily through cash generated by historical equity financing. We had cash and cash equivalents, term deposits, and short-term investments of RMB3.1 billion, RMB7.4 billion, and RMB6.3 billion (US\$0.9 billion) as of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively.

We may decide to enhance our liquidity position or increase our cash reserve for future operations and investments through additional financing. The issuance and sale of additional equity would result in further dilution to our shareholders. The incurrence of indebtedness would result in increasing fixed obligations and could result in operating covenants that would restrict our operations. We cannot assure you that financing will be available in amounts or on terms acceptable to us, if at all.

As of December 31, 2022, 64.5% of our cash and cash equivalents were held in China. As of December 31, 2022, 5.5% of our cash and cash equivalents were held by the VIE and its subsidiaries.

Substantially all of our revenues have been, and we expect will likely to continue to be, denominated in Renminbi. Under existing PRC foreign exchange regulations, payments of current account items, including profit distributions, interest payments and trade and service-related foreign exchange transactions, can be made in foreign currencies without prior SAFE approval as long as certain routine procedural requirements are fulfilled. Therefore, our PRC subsidiaries are allowed to pay dividends in foreign currencies to us without prior SAFE approval by following certain routine procedural requirements. However, approval from or registration with competent government authorities is required where the Renminbi is to be converted into foreign currency and remitted out of China to pay capital expenses such as the repayment of loans denominated in foreign currencies. The PRC government may at its discretion restrict access to foreign currencies for current account transactions in the future.

Although we consolidate the results of the variable interest entities and their subsidiaries, we only have access to the assets or earnings of the variable interest entities and their subsidiaries through contractual arrangements.

We believe that, taking into account the cash and cash equivalents on hand and the financial resources available to us, including internally generated funds, we have sufficient working capital for our present requirement, which is, for at least the next 12 months from the date of this annual report.

Our short-term investments mainly include investments in financial instruments with a variable interest rate indexed to performance of underlying assets for cash management purposes. From the cash management and risk control perspective, we diversify our investment portfolios and mainly purchase low risk products from reputable banks in China and overseas and prefer those products with high liquidity. We prudently manage our short-term investments portfolio and their respective term to ensure that we have short-term investments readily convertible into cash from time to time in the event that there is a need for liquidity.

Our trade receivables primarily consist of outstanding amounts payable by third parties. Our trade receivables increased from RMB486.0 million as of December 31, 2020 to RMB831.6 million as of December 31, 2021 and remained stable at RMB834.3 million (US\$121.0 million) as of December 31, 2022. We applied ASC Topic 326 to measure current expected credit losses for all trade receivables. We recorded provision of allowance for expected credit losses of trade receivables of RMB27.9 million, RMB58.6 million, and RMB92.9 million (US\$13.5 million) as of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively.

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities represent (i) accrued sales rebates, (ii) operational costs payables and accruals, and (iii) marketing expenses payables and accruals. Accounts payable and accrued liabilities increased from RMB501.8 million as of December 31, 2020 to RMB1,026.5 million as of December 31, 2021, and slightly decreased to RMB916.1 million (US\$132.8 million) as of December 31, 2022, primarily due to a decrease in marketing expenses payables and accrued sales rebates.

Cash Flows

The following table sets forth a summary of our cash flows for the periods indicated.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	
	RMB	RMB	RMB	US\$
	(in thousands)			
Net cash used in operating activities	(244,421)	(440,234)	(1,114,954)	(161,653)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	430,113	(3,136,503)	3,490,467	506,071
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	9,286	4,876,247	(108,350)	(15,710)
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	(137,508)	(100,169)	101,528	14,720
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	57,470	1,199,341	2,368,691	343,428
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	900,350	957,820	2,157,161	312,759
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	957,820	2,157,161	4,525,852	656,187

Operating Activities

For the year ended December 31, 2022, net cash used in operating activities was RMB1.1 billion (US\$161.7 million), primarily attributable to our net loss of RMB1.6 billion (US\$228.8 million) adjusted mainly by deducting an accrued investment income of short-term investments of RMB31.5 million, adding back a fair value change of financial instrument of RMB176.7 million and other non-cash items of RMB454.5 million, which primarily comprised share-based compensation expenses of RMB373.9 million, provision of allowance for expected credit losses of RMB34.5 million, and an impairment of long-term investments of RMB20.9 million, and further deducting another RMB133.8 million used for working capital. The cash used for working capital was primarily the result of (i) an increase of RMB132.8 million in trade receivables, (ii) a decrease of RMB65.3 million in net amount due to related parties, (iii) a decrease of RMB40.8 million in taxes payable, and (iv) a decrease of RMB36.5 million in salary and welfare payables to our employees, partially offset by (y) a decrease of RMB87.1 million in prepayments and other current assets and (z) an increase of RMB78.2 million in contract liabilities, reflecting the increasing scale of our paid membership service and vocational training business.

For the year ended December 31, 2021, net cash used in operating activities was RMB440.2 million, which was primarily attributable to our net loss of RMB1.3 billion, as adjusted by deducting a fair value change of financial instrument of RMB27.8 million, an accrued investment income of short-term investments of RMB6.4 million and a deferred income tax of RMB1.1 million, adding back other non-cash items of RMB602.5 million, which primarily comprised share-based compensation expenses of RMB548.5 million and provision of allowance for expected credit losses of RMB32.6 million, and adding another RMB291.4 million released from working capital. The cash released from working capital was primarily the result of (i) an increase of RMB524.2 million in accounts payable and accrued liabilities, (ii) an increase of RMB119.8 million in lease liabilities, and (iii) an increase of RMB81.4 million in salary and welfare payables to our employees, partially offset by an increase of RMB374.7 million in trade receivables.

For the year ended December 31, 2020, net cash used in operating activities was RMB244.4 million, which was primarily attributable to our net loss of RMB517.6 million, as adjusted by deducting an accrued investment income of short-term investments of RMB2.4 million, adding back other non-cash items of RMB285.5 million, which primarily comprised share-based compensation expenses of RMB180.1 million and fair value change of financial instrument of RMB68.8 million, and deducting RMB10.1 million used for working capital. The cash used for working capital was primarily the result of (i) an increase of RMB257.1 million in trade receivables in relation to the increasing scale of our advertising business and (ii) a decrease of RMB57.9 million in net amount due to related parties, which reflected an increase in settlement of cloud service fees with service providers who are also our shareholders, which was partially offset by (y) an increase of RMB214.8 million in accounts payable and accrued liabilities and (z) an increase of RMB52.9 million in contract liabilities, both reflecting the increasing scale of our advertising business.

Investing Activities

For the year ended December 31, 2022, net cash provided by investing activities was RMB3.5 billion (US\$506.1 million), which was primarily attributable to (i) proceeds of maturities of short-term investments of RMB12.0 billion and (ii) proceeds from disposal of term deposits of RMB5.8 billion, partially offset by (y) purchase of short-term investments of RMB10.5 billion and (z) purchase of term deposits of RMB3.6 billion.

For the year ended December 31, 2021, net cash used in investing activities was RMB3,136.5 million, which was primarily attributable to (i) purchase of short-term investments of RMB6.4 billion and (ii) purchase of term deposits of RMB4.9 billion, partially offset by (y) proceeds of maturities of short-term investments of RMB5.2 billion and (z) proceeds from disposal of term deposits of RMB3.0 billion.

For the year ended December 31, 2020, net cash provided by investing activities was RMB430.1 million, which was mainly attributable to (i) proceeds of maturities of short-term investments of RMB6,594.7 million and (ii) proceeds from disposal of term deposits of RMB2,319.2 million, partially offset by (y) purchases of short-term investments of RMB6,153.1 million and (z) purchases of term deposits of RMB2,328.7 million.

Financing Activities

For the year ended December 31, 2022, net cash used in financing activities was RMB108.4 million (US\$15.7 million), which was primarily attributable to payment to the shares repurchase by us.

For the year ended December 31, 2021, net cash provided by financing activities was RMB4,876.2 million, which was primarily attributable to net proceeds from issuance of Class A ordinary shares upon the completion of our initial public offering.

For the year ended December 31, 2020, net cash provided by financing activities was RMB9.3 million, which primarily comprised proceeds received from employees in relation to share options.

Capital Expenditures

Our capital expenditures are primarily incurred for purchases of property and equipment. Our total capital expenditures were RMB2.0 million in 2020, RMB7.4 million in 2021, and RMB0.7 million (US\$0.1 million) in 2022. We intend to fund our future capital expenditures with our existing cash balance. We will continue to make capital expenditures to meet the expected growth of our business.

Material Cash Requirements

Other than the ordinary cash requirements for our operations, our material cash requirements as of December 31, 2022 and any subsequent interim period primarily include our capital expenditures and operating lease obligations, as well as cash requirements for potential investments.

Our operating lease obligations primarily represent consist of the commitments under the lease agreements for our office premises. We lease our office facilities under non-cancelable operating leases with various expiration dates. Our leasing expense was RMB23.4 million, RMB38.7 million and RMB54.3 million (US\$7.9 million) for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. The majority of our operating lease commitments are related to our office lease agreements in China.

We intend to fund our existing and future material cash requirements with our existing cash balance and other financing alternatives. We will continue to make cash commitments, including capital expenditures, to support the growth of our business.

We have not entered into any financial guarantees or other commitments to guarantee the payment obligations of any third parties. We do not have retained or contingent interests in assets transferred. We have not entered into contractual arrangements that support the credit, liquidity or market risk for transferred assets. We do not have obligations that arise or could arise from variable interests held in an unconsolidated entity, or obligations related to derivative instruments that are both indexed to and classified in our own equity, or not reflected in the statement of financial position.

Other than as discussed above, we did not have any significant capital and other commitments, long-term obligations or guarantees as of December 31, 2022.

Holding Company Structure

Zhihu Inc. is a holding company with no material operations of its own. We conduct our operations through our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs in China. As a result, our ability to pay dividends depends significantly upon dividends paid by our PRC subsidiaries. If our existing PRC subsidiaries or any newly formed ones incur debt on their own behalf in the future, the instruments governing their debt may restrict their ability to pay dividends to us. In addition, our wholly foreign-owned subsidiaries in China are permitted to pay dividends to us only out of their accumulated after-tax profits, if any, as determined in accordance with PRC accounting standards and regulations. Under the PRC law, each of our PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs in China is required to set aside at least 10% of its after-tax profits each year, if any, after making up previous years' accumulated losses, if any, to fund certain statutory reserve funds until such reserve funds reach 50% of its registered capital. In addition, each of our wholly foreign-owned subsidiaries in China may allocate a portion of its after-tax profits based on PRC accounting standards to enterprise expansion funds and staff bonus and welfare funds at its discretion, and the VIE may allocate a portion of its after-tax profits based on PRC accounting standards to a discretionary surplus fund at its discretion. The statutory reserve funds and the discretionary funds are not distributable as cash dividends. Remittance of dividends by a wholly foreign-owned company out of China is subject to examination by the banks designated by the SAFE. Our PRC subsidiaries have not paid dividends and will not be able to pay dividends until they generate accumulated profits and meet the requirements for statutory reserve funds.

C. Research and Development, Patents and Licenses, etc.

See "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview— Technological Infrastructure" And "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview— Intellectual Property."

D. Trend Information

Other than as disclosed elsewhere in this annual report, we are not aware of any trends, uncertainties, demands, commitments or events for the period from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022 that are reasonably likely to have a material adverse effect on our total revenues, profitability, liquidity, or capital resources, or that caused the disclosed financial information to be not necessarily indicative of future operating results or financial conditions.

E. Critical Accounting Estimates

Our consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with U.S. GAAP and pursuant to the regulations of the SEC. The preparation of the consolidated financial statements requires management to make assumptions, judgments and estimates that can have a significant impact on the reported amounts of assets, liabilities, revenue and expenses. We base our estimates on historical experience and on various other assumptions believed to be applicable and reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results could differ significantly from these estimates. These estimates may change as new events occur, as additional information is obtained and as our operating environment changes. On a regular basis, we evaluate our assumptions, judgments and estimates and make changes accordingly. We also discuss our critical accounting estimates with the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors. Note 2, Summary of Significant Accounting Policies in the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements describes the significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the consolidated financial statements.

We have listed below our critical accounting estimates which require management to make difficult, subjective and complex judgements often as a result of the need to make estimate on matters that are inherently uncertain and because it is likely that materially different amounts would be reported under different conditions or assumptions. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Allowance for Expected Credit Losses on Trade Receivables

The allowance for expected credit losses represents our estimate of the expected lifetime expected credit losses inherent on trade receivables as of the balance sheet date. The adequacy of our allowance for expected credit losses is assessed quarterly, and the assumptions and models used in establishing the allowance are evaluated regularly. Because expected credit losses can vary substantially over time, estimating expected credit losses requires a number of assumptions about matters that are uncertain. Changes in assumptions affect *general and administrative expenses* on our consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss and the allowance for expected credit losses contained within *trade receivables* on our consolidated balance sheets. See Note 2 - "Significant Accounting Policies" of the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements for more information regarding expected credit losses.

Nature of Estimates Required. We estimate the allowance for expected credit losses on receivables that share similar risk characteristics based on a collective assessment using measurement models. The models vary by portfolio groups and consider factors such as historical trends in credit losses, external credit evaluations, and forward-looking macroeconomic conditions.

Assumptions Used. The key assumptions used in the process of estimating the allowance for expected credit losses include:

Portfolio groups: In evaluating financial assets on a collective basis, we aggregate financial assets on the basis of similar risk characteristics, which include a combination of size, type of the services or the products we provide.

Historical default rate: The percentage of non-payment or default on receivables over an extended time period. In determining historical loss rate, we consider historical collectability based on past due status, the age of the trade receivables balances, credit quality of customers based on ongoing credit evaluations; and

Forward-looking information incorporated in the expected credit losses models: The impact of economic indicators on loss rate varies to different. We comprehensively consider internal and external data, future forecasts and statistical analysis to determine the relationship between economic indicators with loss rate. We evaluate and forecast economic indicators at least annually at balance sheet date, and regularly evaluates the results based on changes in macroeconomics.

As of December 31,2022, the key macroeconomics assumptions used to estimate current expected losses are listed below.

	<u>As of December 31, 2022</u>
GDP-year on year percentage change	5.17 %
PPI-year on year percentage change	(0.06)%
Broad measure of money supply (M2)- year on year percentage change	9.65 %

Sensitivity Analysis. When one of our estimates of historical default rate and forward-looking information decreased/increased by 5% while holding all other estimates constant, there would be no significant impact to our consolidated financial statements.

Business combinations

We account for business combinations using the acquisition method of accounting, which requires that once control is obtained, the purchase price be allocated to all tangible assets and identifiable intangible assets acquired and liabilities assumed based on their estimated fair values as of the acquisition date. Any excess purchase price over the fair value of the net assets acquired is recorded as goodwill. The determination of the fair value of assets acquired and liabilities assumed requires estimates and assumptions with respect to the revenue growth rates, perpetual growth rate, discount rates and useful lives which to base the cash flow projections. Although we believe that the assumptions applied in the determination are reasonable based on information available at the date of acquisition, actual results may differ from the forecasted amounts and the difference could be material.

The following are key assumptions we use in making cash flow projections.

Revenue growth rate. We make assumptions about the demand for our products in the marketplace. These projections are derived using our internal business plan forecasts that are updated at least annually and reviewed by our Board of Directors. The higher the revenue growth rate, the higher the fair value of assets acquired and liabilities assumed.

Perpetual growth rate. A growth rate is used to calculate the terminal value of the business and is added to the present value of the debt-free interim cash flows. The growth rate is the expected rate at which an asset group's business unit's earnings stream is projected to grow beyond the planning period. The higher the perpetual growth rate, the higher the fair value of assets acquired and liabilities assumed.

Discount rate. When measuring the fair value of assets acquired and liabilities assumed, future cash flows are discounted at a rate that is consistent with a weighted-average cost of capital that we anticipate a potential market participant would use. Weighted-average cost of capital is an estimate of the overall risk-adjusted pre-tax rate of return expected by equity and debt holders of a business enterprise. The higher the discount rate, the lower the fair value of assets acquired and liabilities assumed.

ITEM 6. DIRECTORS, SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES

A. Directors and Senior Management

The following table sets forth information regarding our directors and executive officers as of the date of this annual report.

Directors and Executive Officers	Age	Position/Title
Yuan Zhou	42	Founder, Chairman, and Chief Executive Officer
Dahai Li	42	Director and Chief Technology Officer
Henry Dachuan Sha	37	Director and Chief Financial Officer
Zhaohui Li	47	Director
Bing Yu	43	Director
Hanhui Sam Sun	50	Independent Director
Hope Ni	50	Independent Director
Derek Chen	47	Independent Director

Yuan Zhou is our founder and has served as the chairman of our board of directors and chief executive officer since our inception. Mr. Zhou is an entrepreneur with over 15 years of experience in internet and media. Prior to founding our company, Mr. Zhou founded Beijing Nuobote Informational Technology Co., Ltd., a start-up company that focused on the development of big data analytics for e-commerce businesses from October 2008 to November 2010. Before that, Mr. Zhou worked as a journalist for the IT Management World magazine from June 2006 to December 2007. Mr. Zhou received a bachelor's degree in computer science and technology from Chengdu University of Technology in China in June 2003 and a master's degree in software engineering from Southeast University in China in March 2006.

Dahai Li has served as our chief technology officer since May 2018 and as our director since March 2021. Mr. Li served as our senior vice president from December 2015 to April 2018. Prior to joining us, Mr. Li served as the head of search technology at Wandoujia, a leading app store in China, from August 2013 to December 2015. Prior to that, Mr. Li served as the engineering director at YunYun, a start-up search engine company in China, from August 2010 to August 2013. From June 2007 to September 2010, Mr. Li served as an engineer at Google China, focusing on search engine. Mr. Li received a bachelor's degree in mathematics and applied mathematics from Beijing University of Chemical Technology in China in July 2003 and a master's degree in mathematics from Peking University in July 2006.

Henry Dachuan Sha has served as our director and chief financial officer since January 2023. Prior to joining Zhihu, Mr. Sha served as the Chief Financial Officer of Quwan Holding Limited between October 2020 and December 2022. From September 2017 to December 2019, Mr. Sha served as the Chief Financial Officer of Huya Inc. (NYSE: HUYA). Before his corporate career, Mr. Sha was a director of Greenwood Asset Management from May 2015 to August 2017. He also worked at China Media Capital between August 2013 and July 2014. From August 2011 to August 2013, Mr. Sha worked in the Investment Banking Division of Goldman Sachs. Mr. Sha received a bachelor's degree in electronic engineering and a bachelor's degree in accounting from Fudan University in China in July 2008 and July 2009, respectively.

Zhaohui Li has served as our director since September 2015 and, for purposes of the Hong Kong Listing Rules, a non-executive director. Mr. Li joined Tencent in 2011 and has worked there as the vice president and head of mergers and acquisitions department, and as the managing partner of Tencent Investment. Before joining Tencent, Mr. Li served as an investment principal at Bertelsmann Asia Investment from September 2008 to May 2010. Prior to that, Mr. Li held various positions related to product and business in Google and Nokia. Mr. Li received a bachelor's degree in economics from Peking University in July 1998 and an MBA degree from Duke University Fuqua School of Business in May 2004.

Bing Yu has served as our director since March 2023 and, for purposes of the Hong Kong Listing Rules, a non-executive director. Mr. Yu has served as the senior vice president at Kuaishou Technology (HKEX: 1024) since August 2016, primarily responsible for technology development, product testing, operation maintenance, and ToB business relating to StreamLake of the Kuaishou group. Before joining the Kuaishou group, Mr. Yu led video and infrastructure teams in multinational companies such as Hulu, LLC from September 2014 to August 2016 and FreeWheel Media Inc. from July 2010 to April 2013. Mr. Yu received his bachelor's degree in engineering mechanics from Tsinghua University in Beijing, China in June 2002 and a master's degree in software engineering from Tsinghua University in June 2006.

Hanhui Sam Sun has served as our independent director since March 2021 and, for purposes of the Hong Kong Listing Rules, an independent non-executive director. Mr. Sun has served as the chairman of VSP Zhuhai Asset Management Company since January 2021. From January 2010 to September 2015, Mr. Sun assumed various positions at Qunar Cayman Islands Limited, a mobile and online travel platform then listed on Nasdaq (former Nasdaq ticker: QUNR), including serving as Qunar's president from May 2015 to September 2015 and its chief financial officer from January 2010 to April 2015. Prior to joining Qunar, Mr. Sun was the chief financial officer of KongZhong Corporation, an online game developer and operator then listed on Nasdaq (former Nasdaq ticker: KZ), from February 2007 to February 2009. Mr. Sun was also an independent director and audit committee member of KongZhong Corporation from July 2005 through January 2007. Prior to that, Mr. Sun successively worked in KPMG, Microsoft China R&D Group, Maersk China Co. Ltd. and SouFun.com. Mr. Sun has served as an independent director and chairman of the audit committee of iQIYI Inc. (Nasdaq: IQ) since March 2018 and Yiren Digital Ltd. (NYSE: YRD) since December 2015. Mr. Sun received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Beijing Institute of Technology in July 1993. He was qualified as a Certified Public Accountant in China in April 1998.

Hope Ni has served as our independent director since March 2021 and, for purposes of the Hong Kong Listing Rules, an independent non-executive director. Ms. Ni has served as an independent non-executive director of Acotec Scientific Holdings Limited (HKEX: 6669) since August 2021. Ms. Ni currently serves as an independent director of Digital China Holdings Limited (HKEX: 0861), UCLLOUDLINK GROUP INC. (Nasdaq: UCL), and ATA Creativity Global (Nasdaq: AACG). From June 2020 to June 2022, she served as a non-executive director of Ingdan, Inc. (HKEX: 0400), previously known as Cogobuy Group, and prior to that, she served as an executive director of Ingdan, Inc. from 2015 to 2020. From 2004 to 2007, Ms. Ni was the chief financial officer and a director of Viewtran Group, Inc. In 2008, Ms. Ni served as the vice chairman of Viewtran Group, Inc. Prior to that, Ms. Ni spent six years as a practicing attorney at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP in New York and Hong Kong. Earlier in her career, Ms. Ni worked at Merrill Lynch's investment banking division in New York. Ms. Ni received a J.D. degree from University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1998 and a bachelor's degree in applied economics and business management from Cornell University in 1994.

Derek Chen as served as our independent director since April 2022 and, for purposes of the Hong Kong Listing Rules, an independent non-executive director. Mr. Chen was a partner of TPG Capital (Beijing) Limited from September 2013 to 2019 and was responsible for Growth Equity investments in China. Prior to joining TPG Capital (Beijing) Limited, Mr. Chen worked at SAIF (Beijing) Advisors Ltd. from March 2004 with a focus on private equity and capital market investments, and he was a principal of the firm when he left in September 2009. He was a non-executive director of VCREDIT Holdings Limited (HKEX: 2003) from March 2018 to October 2019, and has been re-appointed as an independent non-executive director since December 2021. Mr. Chen accumulated extensive corporate governance knowledge and experience through his senior management roles and directorships described above. Mr. Chen received a master's degree in business administration from Columbia Business School in 2001.

B. Compensation

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2022, we paid an aggregate of RMB9.2 million (US\$1.3 million) in cash to our directors and executive officers. We have not set aside or accrued any amount to provide pension, retirement or other similar benefits to our executive officers and directors. Our PRC subsidiaries are required by law to make contributions equal to certain percentages of each employee's salary for his or her pension insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance and other statutory benefits and a housing provident fund.

Employment Agreements and Indemnification Agreements

We have entered into employment agreements with each of our executive officers. Under these agreements, each of our executive officers is employed for a specified time period. We may terminate employment for cause, at any time, without advance notice or remuneration, for certain acts of the executive officer, such as conviction or plea of guilty to a felony or any crime involving moral turpitude, negligent or dishonest acts to our detriment, or misconduct or a failure to perform agreed duties. We may also terminate an executive officer's employment without cause upon three-month advance written notice. In such case of termination by us, we will provide severance payments to the executive officer as expressly required by applicable law of the jurisdiction where the executive officer is based. The executive officer may resign at any time with a three-month advance written notice.

Each executive officer has agreed to hold, both during and after the termination or expiry of his or her employment agreement, in strict confidence and not to use, except as required in the performance of his or her duties in connection with the employment or pursuant to applicable law, any of our confidential information or trade secrets, any confidential information or trade secrets of our customers or prospective customers, or the confidential or proprietary information of any third party received by us and for which we have confidential obligations. The executive officers have also agreed to disclose in confidence to us all inventions, designs, and trade secrets which they conceive, develop, or reduce to practice during the executive officer's employment with us and to assign all right, title and interest in them to us, and assist us in obtaining and enforcing patents, copyrights and other legal rights for these inventions, designs, and trade secrets.

In addition, each executive officer has agreed to be bound by non-competition and non-solicitation restrictions during the term of his or her employment and typically for one year following the last date of employment. Specifically, each executive officer has agreed not to (i) approach our suppliers, clients, customers or contacts or other persons or entities introduced to the executive officer in his or her capacity as a representative of us for the purpose of doing business with such persons or entities that will harm our business relationships with these persons or entities; (ii) assume employment with or provide services to any of our competitors, or engage, whether as principal, partner, licensor or otherwise, any of our competitors, without our express consent; or (iii) seek directly or indirectly, to solicit the services of any of our employees who is employed by us on or after the date of the executive officer's termination, or in the year preceding such termination, without our express consent.

We have also entered into indemnification agreements with each of our directors and executive officers. Under these agreements, we agree to indemnify our directors and executive officers against certain liabilities and expenses incurred by such persons in connection with claims made by reason of their being a director or officer of our company.

Share Incentive Plans

2012 Incentive Compensation Plan

In June 2012, our board of directors and members approved an equity incentive plan, which we refer to as the 2012 Plan, to secure and retain the services of valuable employees and consultants and provide incentives for such persons to exert their best efforts for the success of our business. The maximum aggregate number of Class A ordinary shares which may be issued pursuant to all awards under the 2012 Plan is 44,021,165. The 2012 Plan does not involve the grant of any share options after our listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in April 2022. As of March 31, 2023, awards to purchase 5,032,062 Class A ordinary shares under the 2012 Plan have been granted and remain outstanding, excluding awards that were forfeited or canceled after the relevant grant dates.

The following paragraphs describe the principal terms of the 2012 Plan.

Types of Awards. The 2012 Plan permits the awards of options and restricted shares.

Plan Administration. Our board of directors, a committee of one or more members of the board of directors, or any director appointed to be the administrator administers the 2012 Plan. The administrator determines, among other things, the fair market value of ordinary shares, the employees and consultants eligible to receive awards, the number of options or restricted shares to be granted to each eligible employee, and the terms and conditions of each option grant.

Award Agreement. Awards granted under the 2012 Plan are evidenced by an award agreement that sets forth terms, conditions and limitations for each award, which is subject to any modification as determined by the administrator.

Eligibility. We may grant awards to employees and consultants.

Vesting Schedule. In general, the plan administrator determines the vesting schedule, which is specified in the relevant award agreement.

Exercise of Options. The plan administrator determines the exercise price for each award, which is stated in the relevant award agreement. Options that are vested and exercisable will terminate if they are not exercised prior to the time as the plan administrator determines at the time of grant. However, the maximum exercisable term is ten years from the date of grant.

Transfer Restrictions. Awards may not be transferred in any manner by the eligible employee other than in accordance with the exceptions provided in the 2012 Plan, such as by will or by the laws of descent or distribution.

Termination and Amendment of the 2012 Plan. Unless terminated earlier, the 2012 Plan has a term of ten years. The board of directors has the authority to terminate, amend, add to, or delete any of the provisions of the plan, subject to the restrictions set out in our memorandum and articles of associations. However, no termination, amendment or modification of the 2012 Plan may adversely affect in any material way any award previously granted pursuant to the 2012 Plan.

For the year ended December 31, 2022, we did not grant any options to our directors and executive officers under the 2012 Plan.

The following table summarizes, for the year ended December 31, 2022, the number of restricted shares that we granted to certain of our directors and executive officers under the 2012 Plan.

Name	Restricted Shares	Date of Grant
Hanhui Sam Sun	10,000	January 7, 2022
Hope Ni	10,000	January 7, 2022
Derek Chen	10,000	April 29, 2022

As of March 31, 2023, employees other than our directors and executive officers as a group hold options to purchase a total of 3,594,108 Class A ordinary shares of our company, with an average weighted exercise price of US\$3.75 per share, and 1,412,954 restricted shares, under the 2012 Plan.

2022 Share Incentive Plan

In connection with our dual primary listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, our board of directors adopted a 2022 share incentive plan in March 2022 to promote the success and enhance the value of our company by linking the personal interests of the directors, employees, and consultants to our shareholders, which became effective upon the our listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. As of March 31, 2023, the maximum aggregate number of Class A ordinary shares which may be issued pursuant to all awards under the plan is be the sum of (i) a maximum of 13,042,731 Class A ordinary shares which may be issued pursuant to awards in the form of options, and (ii) the sum of (A) 26,085,463 Class A ordinary shares and (B) such number of Class A ordinary shares equivalent to the unused portion of the number of shares of our 2012 Share Incentive Plan of the Company at its expiration, which may be issued pursuant to awards in the form of restricted share units. Unless approved by the shareholders in general meeting, the total number of Class A ordinary shares issued and to be issued upon the exercise of options granted and to be granted under the 2022 Plan and any other plan of us to an eligible participant within any 12-month period shall not exceed 1% of the Class A Ordinary Shares issued and outstanding at the date of any grant. As of March 31, 2023, awards to purchase 9,642,281 Class A ordinary shares under the 2022 Plan have been granted and remain outstanding, excluding awards that were forfeited or canceled after the relevant grant dates. Pursuant to the terms of the 2022 Plan, any shares distributed pursuant to an award may consist, in whole or in part, of authorized and unissued shares, or shares purchased on the open market.

The following paragraphs describe the principal terms of the 2022 Plan.

Types of Awards. The 2022 Plan permits the awards of options and restricted shares.

Plan Administration. Our board of directors, a committee of one or more members of the board of directors, or any director appointed to be the administrator administers the 2022 Plan. The administrator determines, among other things, the fair market value of ordinary shares, the employees and consultants eligible to receive awards, the number of options or restricted shares to be granted to each eligible employee, and the terms and conditions of each option grant.

Award Agreement. Awards granted under the 2022 Plan are evidenced by an award agreement that sets forth terms, conditions and limitations for each award, which is subject to any modification as determined by the administrator.

Eligibility. We may grant awards to directors, employees and consultants.

Vesting Schedule. In general, the plan administrator determines the vesting schedule, which is specified in the relevant award agreement.

Exercise of Options. The plan administrator determines the exercise price for each award, which is stated in the relevant award agreement shall not be lower than the fair market value of the Shares on the date of grant, which shall be the higher of: (i) the closing sales price for such shares or securities as quoted on the principal exchange or system on which our shares or securities are listed (as determined by the board or the committee delegated with the authority to administer the plan) on the date of grant, and (ii) average closing sales price as quoted on the principal exchange or system on which our shares or securities are listed for the five business days immediately preceding the date of grant.

Transfer Restrictions. Awards may not be transferred in any manner by the eligible employee other than in accordance with the exceptions provided in the 2022 Plan, such as by will or by the laws of descent or distribution.

Termination and Amendment of the 2022 Plan. Unless terminated earlier, the 2022 Plan has a term of ten years. The board of directors has the authority to terminate, amend, add to, or delete any of the provisions of the plan, subject to the restrictions set out in our memorandum and articles of association. However, no termination, amendment or modification of the 2022 Plan may adversely affect in any material way any award previously granted pursuant to the 2022 Plan.

For the year ended December 31, 2022, we did not grant any share incentive awards to our directors and executive officers under the 2022 Plan.

As of March 31, 2023, employees other than our directors and executive officers as a group hold 8,239,387 restricted shares, under the 2022 Plan.

C. Board Practices

Board of Directors

Our board of directors currently consists of eight directors. A director is not required to hold any shares in our company by way of qualification. Subject to the New York Stock Exchange rules and disqualification by the chairman of the relevant board meeting, a director may vote with respect to any contract, proposed contract, or arrangement in which he is materially interested, provided that (i) such director, if his or her interest in such contract or arrangement is material, has declared the nature of his or her interest at the earliest meeting of the board at which it is practicable for him or her to do so, either specifically or by way of a general notice and (ii) if such contract or arrangement is a transaction with a related party, such transaction has been approved by the audit committee. The directors may exercise all the powers of the company to borrow money, mortgage or charge its undertaking, property, and uncalled capital, and issue debentures or other securities whenever money is borrowed or as security for any debt, liability, or obligation of the company or of any third party. None of our directors has a service contract with us that provides for benefits upon termination of service as a director.

Committees of the Board of Directors

We have established three committees under the board of directors: an audit committee, a compensation committee, and a nominating and corporate governance committee. We have adopted a charter for each of the three committees. Each committee's members and functions are described below.

Audit Committee. Our audit committee consists of Hanhui Sam Sun, Hope Ni, and Derek Chen. Hanhui Sam Sun is the chairman of our audit committee. We have determined that Hanhui Sam Sun, Hope Ni, and Derek Chen each satisfies the "independence" requirements of Section 303A of the Corporate Governance Rules of the New York Stock Exchange and meet the independence standards under Rule 10A-3 under the Exchange Act, as amended. We have determined that Hanhui Sam Sun qualifies as an "audit committee financial expert." The audit committee oversees our accounting and financial reporting processes and the audits of the financial statements of our company. The audit committee is responsible for, among other things:

- appointing the independent auditors and pre-approving all auditing and non-auditing services permitted to be performed by the independent auditors;
- reviewing with the independent auditors any audit problems or difficulties and management's response;
- discussing the annual audited financial statements with management and the independent auditors;
- reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of our accounting and internal control policies and procedures and any steps taken to monitor and control major financial risk exposures;
- reviewing and approving all proposed related party transactions;
- meeting separately and periodically with management and the independent auditors; and
- monitoring compliance with our code of business conduct and ethics, including reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of our procedures to ensure proper compliance.

Compensation Committee. Our compensation committee consists of Hanhui Sam Sun, Hope Ni, and Yuan Zhou. Hanhui Sam Sun is the chairman of our compensation committee. We have determined that Hanhui Sam Sun and Hope Ni satisfy the "independence" requirements of Section 303A of the Corporate Governance Rules of the New York Stock Exchange. The compensation committee assists the board in reviewing and approving the compensation structure, including all forms of compensation, relating to our directors and executive officers. Our chief executive officer may not be present at any committee meeting during which his compensation is deliberated. The compensation committee is responsible for, among other things:

- reviewing and approving, or recommending to the board for its approval, the compensation for our chief executive officer and other executive officers;

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- reviewing and recommending to the board for determination with respect to the compensation of our non-employee directors;
- reviewing periodically and approving any incentive compensation or equity plans, programs or similar arrangements; and
- selecting a compensation consultant, legal counsel or other adviser only after taking into consideration all factors relevant to that person's independence from management.

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. Our nominating and corporate governance committee consists of Hope Ni, Hanhui Sam Sun, and Derek Chen. Hope Ni is the chairman of our nominating and corporate governance committee. We have determined that Hope Ni, Hanhui Sam Sun, and Derek Chen satisfy the "independence" requirements of Section 303A of the Corporate Governance Rules of the New York Stock Exchange. The nominating and corporate governance committee assists the board of directors in selecting individuals qualified to become our directors and in determining the composition of the board and its committees. The nominating and corporate governance committee is responsible for, among other things:

- reviewing the structure, size and composition (including the skills, knowledge and experience) of the board at least annually and make recommendations on any proposed changes to the board to complement our corporate strategy;
- identifying individuals suitably qualified to become directors and selecting or making recommendations to the board on the selection of individuals nominated for directorships;
- assessing the independence of independent directors;
- making recommendations to the board on the appointment or re-appointment of directors and succession planning for directors, in particular the chairman and the chief executive officer;
- developing and reviewing our policies and practices on corporate governance and make recommendations to the board;
- reviewing and monitoring the training and continuous professional development of directors and senior management; and
- reviewing and monitoring our policies and practices on compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Duties of Directors

Under Cayman Islands law, our directors owe fiduciary duties to our company, including a duty of loyalty, a duty to act honestly, and a duty to act in what they consider in good faith to be in our best interests. Our directors must also exercise their powers only for a proper purpose. Our directors also have a duty to exercise the skill they actually possess and such care and diligence that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in comparable circumstances. In fulfilling their duty of care to us, our directors must ensure compliance with our memorandum and articles of association, as amended and restated from time to time, and the class rights vested thereunder in the holders of the shares. Our company has the right to seek damages if a duty owed by our directors is breached. A shareholder may in certain circumstances have rights to damages if a duty owed by the directors is breached.

Our board of directors has all the powers necessary for managing, and for directing and supervising, our business affairs. The functions and powers of our board of directors include, among others:

- convening shareholders' annual general meetings and reporting its work to shareholders at such meetings;
- declaring dividends and distributions;
- appointing officers and determining the term of office of the officers;
- exercising the borrowing powers of our company and mortgaging the property of our company; and

- approving the transfer of shares in our company, including the registration of such shares in our share register.

Terms of Directors and Officers

Our directors may be elected by an ordinary resolution of our shareholders. Each Class A ordinary share and each Class B ordinary share shall entitle its holder to one vote on a poll at a general meeting in respect of a resolution approving the appointment, election or removal of any Independent Non-executive Director (as defined in our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association). Alternatively, our board of directors may, by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the directors present and voting at a board meeting appoint any person as a director to fill a casual vacancy on our board or as an addition to the existing board. Any director so appointed shall hold office only until the first annual general meeting of the Company after his or her appointment and shall then be eligible for re-election at that meeting. Our directors are not automatically subject to a term of office and hold office until such time as they are removed from office by an ordinary resolution of our shareholders. At every annual general meeting of the Company, the Independent Non-Executive Directors for the time being shall retire from office by rotation provided that every Independent Non-Executive Director (including those appointed for a specific term) shall be subject to retirement by rotation at least once every three years. A retiring Independent Non-Executive Director shall retain office until the close of the meeting at which he retires and shall be eligible for re-election thereat. In addition, a director will cease to be a director if he

- (i) becomes bankrupt or makes any arrangement or composition with his creditors;
- (ii) dies or is found to be or becomes of unsound mind;
- (iii) resigns his office by notice in writing;
- (iv) without special leave of absence from our board, is absent from meetings of our board for three consecutive meetings and our board resolves that his office be vacated; or
- (v) is removed from office pursuant to any other provision of our articles of association.

Our officers are appointed by and serve at the discretion of the board of directors, and may be removed by our board of directors.

D. Employees

As of December 31, 2022, we had 2,515 full-time employees, all of whom were based in China, primarily at our headquarters in Beijing, China.

The following table sets forth the number of our employees by function as of December 31, 2022.

Function	Number of Employees	Percentage
Content and Content-Related Operations	810	32.2 %
Research and Development	981	39.0 %
Sales and Marketing	484	19.3 %
General Administration	240	9.5 %
Total	2,515	100 %

Our success depends on our ability to attract, retain, and motivate qualified personnel. We offer employees competitive salaries, performance-based cash bonuses, regular awards, and long-term incentives. We consider that we maintain a generally good working relationship with our employees, and we did not experience any material labor disputes or work stoppages or any difficulty in recruiting staff for our operations during 2020, 2021, and 2022. However, as our operations may further expand, we cannot assure you that we will always be able to maintain good relations with all of our employees.

We primarily recruit our employees through on-campus job fairs, industry referrals, online channels, and recruitment agencies. In addition to on-the-job training, we have adopted a training system, pursuant to which management, technology, regulatory, and other trainings are regularly provided to our employees by internally sourced speakers or externally hired consultants. To efficiently manage our human resources, we have in place an employee handbook approved by our management and distributed to all our employees, which contains internal rules and guidelines regarding best commercial practice, work ethics, fraud prevention mechanism, negligence, and corruption. In addition, we have in place an anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy to safeguard against any corruption within our company. The policy explains potential bribery and corruption conducts and our anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures. Improper payments prohibited by the policy include bribes, kickbacks, excessive gifts or facilitation payment, or any other payment made or offered to obtain an undue business advantage. We keep accurate books and records that reflect the substance of transactions and asset dispositions in reasonable detail. We specifically require that the employees submit all reimbursement requests related to entertainment related fee or gifts presented to third parties on behalf of the company in accordance with our expense expenditure policy, and specifically record the reason for the expenditure. We also have regular trainings for employees regarding anti-bribery and anti-corruption policies to facilitate better implementation.

As required by PRC laws and regulations in respect of our PRC employment, we participate in housing fund and various employee social insurance plans that are organized by applicable competent authorities, including housing, pension, medical, work-related injury, maternity, and unemployment insurance, under which we make contributions at specified percentages of the salaries of our employees. We also purchase certain supplemental health and accidental insurance coverage for our employees. Bonuses are generally discretionary and based in part on the overall performance of our business and in part on employee individual performance. We have adopted share incentive plans to grant share-based incentive awards to our eligible employees to incentivize their contributions to our growth and development.

We enter into standard confidentiality and employment agreements with our employees. The contracts with our key personnel typically include a standard non-compete covenant that prohibits the employee from competing with us, directly or indirectly, during his or her employment and typically for one year after the termination of his or her employment, provided that we pay a certain amount of compensation during the restriction period.

E. Share Ownership

The following table sets forth information with respect to the beneficial ownership of our ordinary shares as of March 31, 2023 by:

- each of our directors and executive officers; and
- each person known to us to own beneficially more than 5% of our ordinary shares.

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The calculations in the shareholder table below are based on 297,906,416 Class A ordinary shares (excluding the 2,849,286 Class A ordinary shares issued to the depositary bank for bulk issuance of ADSs reserved for future issuances upon the exercise or vesting of awards granted under our share incentive plan) and 18,846,286 Class B ordinary shares issued and outstanding as of March 31, 2023.

	Class A Ordinary Shares	Class B Ordinary Shares	% of Beneficial Ownership [†]	% of Aggregate Voting Power ^{††}
Directors and Executive Officers**:				
Yuan Zhou ⁽¹⁾	18,008,292	18,846,286	11.6	42.5
Dahai Li ⁽²⁾	2,878,690	—	0.9	0.6
Henry Dachuan Sha	—	—	—	—
Zhaohui Li	—	—	—	—
Bing Yu	—	—	—	—
Hanhui Sam Sun	*	—	*	*
Hope Ni	*	—	*	*
Derek Chen	*	—	*	*
All Directors and Executive Officers as a Group	20,886,982	18,846,286	12.5	43.0
Principal Shareholders:				
MO Holding Ltd ⁽¹⁾	18,008,292	18,846,286	11.6	42.5
Tencent Entities ⁽³⁾	38,066,599	—	12.0	7.8
Qiming Entities ⁽⁴⁾	22,945,598	—	7.2	4.7
Innovation Works Entities ⁽⁵⁾	22,287,618	—	7.0	4.6
Cosmic Blue Investments Limited ⁽⁶⁾	19,975,733	—	6.3	4.1

Notes:

* Less than 1% of our total outstanding ordinary shares on an as-converted basis.

** Except as otherwise indicated below, the business address of our directors and executive officers is A5 Xueyuan Road, Haidian District, Beijing 100083, People's Republic of China. The business address of Mr. Zhaohui Li is 10/F, China Technology Trade Center, No. 66 North 4th Ring West Road, Haidian District, Beijing, People's Republic of China. The business address of Mr. Bing Yu is No. 6 Shangdi West Road, Haidian District, Beijing, People's Republic of China. The business address of Mr. Hanhui Sam Sun is 64 Donggong Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing 100009, People's Republic of China. The business address of Ms. Hope Ni is House 17B, Shouson Peak, 9-19 Shouson Hill Road, Deep Water Bay, Hong Kong. The business address of Mr. Derek Chen is 1601, G3, Bihaiyuan, 97 Yaojiayuan Road, Beijing, China 100026.

† For each person and group included in this column, percentage ownership is calculated by dividing the number of shares beneficially owned by such person or group by the sum of the total number of shares outstanding and the number of shares such person or group has the right to acquire upon exercise of option, warrant or other right within 60 days after March 31, 2023.

†† For each person and group included in this column, percentage of voting power is calculated by dividing the voting power beneficially owned by such person or group by the voting power of all of our Class A and Class B ordinary shares as a single class. Each holder of Class B ordinary shares is entitled to ten votes per share, subject to certain conditions, and each holder of our Class A ordinary shares is entitled to one vote per share on all matters submitted to them for a vote. Our Class A ordinary shares and Class B ordinary shares vote together as a single class on all matters submitted to a vote of our shareholders, except as may otherwise be required by law. Our Class B ordinary shares are convertible at any time by the holder thereof into Class A ordinary shares on a one-for-one basis.

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- (1) Represents 18,008,292 Class A ordinary shares, including 9,621,477 Class A ordinary shares granted on April 8, 2022, or the CEO Award Shares, and 18,846,286 Class B ordinary shares held by MO Holding Ltd. MO Holding Ltd is a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands. More than 99% of the interest of MO Holding Ltd is held by a trust that was established for the benefit of Mr. Zhou and his family, and the remaining interest of MO Holding Ltd is held by Mr. Zhou. The registered address of MO Holding Ltd is Start Chambers, Wickham's Cay II, P.O. Box 2221, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Mr. Zhou has undertaken and covenanted that, unless and until the performance results targets set by the audit committee of the board directors have been met, (a) he shall not offer, pledge, sell, contract to sell, lend, or otherwise transfer or dispose of, directly or indirectly, any interest in the CEO Award Shares; and (b) he will cast votes of all of the CEO Award Shares at our shareholder meetings or with respect to written resolution of shareholders in the manner consistent with the views and suggestions of the board of directors; he will abstain from voting if no such view or suggestion is formulated by the board as a whole.
- (2) Represents (i) 99,450 Class A ordinary shares held by Mr. Dahai Li in the form of ADSs, (ii) 1,673,042 Class A ordinary shares held by Ocean Alpha Investment Limited, a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands, and (iii) 1,106,198 Class A ordinary shares held by SEA & SANDRA Global Limited, a company incorporated in Seychelles. Ocean Alpha Investment Limited is wholly owned by Ark Trust (Singapore) Ltd, a company incorporated in Singapore and wholly owned by Mr. Dahai Li. SEA & SANDRA Global Limited is wholly owned by Mr. Dahai Li. The registered address of Ocean Alpha Investment Limited is Vistra Corporate Services Centre, Wickhams Cay II, Road Town, Tortola, VG1110, British Virgin Islands. The registered address of SEA & SANDRA Global Limited is Sertus Chambers, Suite F24, First Floor, Eden Plaza, Eden Island, PO Box 334, Mahe, Seychelles. Information regarding beneficial ownership is reported as of January 30, 2023, based on the information contained in the form of disclosure of interests filed by Mr. Dahai Li with the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on January 30, 2023.
- (3) Represents (i) 20,457,894 Class A ordinary shares held by Dandelion Investment Limited, a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands, (ii) 10,617,666 Class A ordinary shares held by Image Frame Investment (HK) Limited, a company incorporated in Hong Kong, and (iii) 6,991,039 Class A ordinary shares held by Sogou Technology Hong Kong Limited a company incorporated in Hong Kong. Dandelion Investment Limited, Image Frame Investment (HK) Limited, and Sogou Technology Hong Kong Limited, or Tencent Entities, are subsidiaries of Tencent Holdings Limited. The registered address of Dandelion Investment Limited is Vistra Corporate Services Centre, Wickhams Cay II, Road Town, Tortola, VG1110, British Virgin Islands. The registered address of Image Frame Investment (HK) Limited is 29/F., Three Pacific Place, No. 1 Queen's Road East, Wanchai, Hong Kong. Information regarding beneficial ownership is reported as of April 22, 2022, based on the information contained in the form of disclosure of interests filed by the Tencent Entities with the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on April 22, 2022.
- (4) Represents (i) 18,851,909 Class A ordinary shares (including in the form of ADSs) held by Qiming Venture Partners III, L.P., an exempted limited partnership organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands, (ii) 594,060 Class A ordinary shares (including in the form of ADSs) held by Qiming Managing Directors Fund III, L.P., an exempted limited partnership organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands, and (iii) 3,499,629 Class A ordinary shares (including in the form of ADSs) held by Qiming Venture Partners III Annex Fund, L.P., an exempted limited partnership organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands. Qiming Venture Partners III, L.P., Qiming Managing Directors Fund III, L.P., and Qiming Venture Partners III Annex Fund, L.P., or Qiming entities, are beneficially owned by Qiming Corporate GP III, Ltd., an exempted company incorporated in the Cayman Islands. The registered address of the Qiming entities is Maples Corporate Services Limited, P.O. Box 309, Ugland House, Grand Cayman, KY1-1104, Cayman Islands. Information regarding beneficial ownership is reported as of December 31, 2022, based on the information contained in the Schedule 13G/A filed by the Qiming Entities with the SEC on February 14, 2023.
- (5) Represents (i) 16,635,560 Class A ordinary shares held by Innovation Works Development Fund, L.P., a fund organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands, and (ii) 5,652,058 Class A ordinary shares held by Innovation Works Holdings Limited, a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands. The general partner of Innovation Works Development Fund, L.P. is Innovation Works Development Fund GP, L.P., whose general partner is Innovation Works Development Fund GP, LLC. Innovation Works Development Fund GP, LLC is beneficially owned by Peter Liu and Kai-Fu Lee. Innovation Works Holdings Limited is wholly owned by Kai-Fu Lee. The registered address of Innovation Works Holdings Limited is P.O. Box 3321, Drake Chambers, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. The registered address of Innovation Works Development Fund, L.P. is Maples Corporate Services Limited, P.O. Box 309, Ugland House, Grand Cayman, KY1-1104, Cayman Islands. Information regarding beneficial ownership is reported as of December 31, 2022, based on the information contained in the Schedule 13G filed by Innovation Works Development Fund, L.P. and Innovation Works Holdings Limited, among other reporting persons, with the SEC on February 9, 2023.
- (6) Represents 19,975,733 Class A ordinary shares held by Cosmic Blue Investments Limited, a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands. Cosmic Investments Limited is wholly owned by Kuaishou Technology (HKEX: 1024). The registered address of Cosmic Blue Investments Limited is Kingston Chambers, P.O. Box 173, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Information regarding beneficial ownership is reported as of May 10, 2022, based on the information contained in the form of disclosure of interests filed by Cosmic Blue Investments Limited with the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on May 10, 2022.

To our knowledge and based on our review of our register of members as of March 31, 2023, 69,231,123 Class A ordinary shares, including Class A ordinary shares issued to our depositary bank for bulk issuance of ADSs reserved for future issuances upon the exercise or vesting of awards granted under our share incentive plan, were held of record by one holder that reside in the United States, being JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., the depositary of our ADS program. The number of beneficial owners of our ADSs in the United States is likely to be much larger than the number of record holder of our Class A ordinary shares in the United States. We are not aware of any arrangement that may, at a subsequent date, result in a change of control of our company.

F. Disclosure of A Registrant's Action to Recover Erroneously Awarded Compensation

Not applicable.

ITEM 7. MAJOR SHAREHOLDERS AND RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

A. Major Shareholders

See “Item 6. Directors, Senior Management and Employees—E. Share Ownership.”

B. Related Party Transactions

Contractual Arrangements with the VIEs and Their Shareholders

See “Item 4. Information on the Company—C. Organizational Structure.”

Private Placements

See “Item 4. Information on the Company—A. History and Development of the Company.”

Shareholders Agreement

We entered into our sixth amended and restated shareholders agreement on August 7, 2019 with our shareholders, which consist of holders of preferred shares and holder of warrant to purchase our preferred shares. The sixth amended and restated shareholders agreement provide for certain shareholders’ rights, including registration rights, information and inspection rights, preemptive rights, rights of first refusal and co-sale rights, and voting rights and contains provisions governing our board of directors and other corporate governance matters. The special rights other than registration rights and the corporate governance provisions automatically terminated upon the completion of our initial public offering.

Registration Rights

We have granted certain registration rights to our shareholders who hold our preferred shares prior to our initial public offering. Set forth below is a description of the registration rights granted under the shareholders agreement.

Demand Registration Rights. At any time after the earlier of (i) August 7, 2024 or (ii) six months following the closing of our initial public offering, holders of at least ten percent of Class A ordinary shares issued and Class A ordinary shares issuable upon conversion of the preferred shares held by all such holders, or registrable securities, may request in writing that we effect a registration of at least ten percent of the registrable securities. We have a right to defer filing of a registration statement for the period during which such filing would be materially detrimental to us or our members on the condition that we furnish to the holders a certificate signed by our chief executive officer. However, we cannot exercise the deferral right for more than 90 days on any one occasion or more than once during any twelve-month period and cannot register any other securities during such 90-day period. We are obligated to effect no more than three demand registrations that have been declared and ordered effective.

Registration on Form F-3. Holders of at least ten percent of the registrable securities may request us to effect a registration on Form F-3 if we qualify for registration on Form F-3. We have a right to defer filing of a registration statement for the period during which such filing would be materially detrimental to us or our members on the condition that we furnish to the holders a certificate signed by our chief executive officer. However, we cannot exercise the deferral right for more than 90 days on any one occasion or more than once during any twelve-month period and cannot register any other securities during such 90-day period.

Piggyback Registration Rights. If we propose to register for our own account any of our equity securities, in connection with the public offering of such equity securities, we should promptly give holders of our registrable securities written notice of such registration and, upon the written request of any holder given within fifteen (15) days after delivery of such notice, we should use our reasonable best efforts to include in such registration the registrable securities requested to be registered by such holder.

Expenses of Registration. We will bear all registration expenses, other than the underwriting discounts and selling commissions applicable to the sale of the registrable securities.

Termination of Obligations. The shareholders' registration rights will terminate upon the earlier of (i) the fifth anniversary of the date of closing of our initial public offering, and (ii) with respect to any holder, the date on which such holder may sell all of such holder' registrable securities under Rule 144 of the Securities Act in any 90-day period.

Employment Agreements and Indemnification Agreements

See "Item 6. Directors, Senior Management and Employees—B. Compensation of Directors and Executive Officers—Employment Agreements and Indemnification Agreements."

Share Incentive Plans

See "Item 6. Directors, Senior Management and Employees—B. Compensation—Share Incentive Plans." For share incentive awards granted to our directors and officers under the 2012 Plan and the 2022 Plan in 2020 and 2021, see "Item 6. Directors, Senior Management and Employees—B. Compensation—Share Incentive Plans" of our annual report on Form 20-F for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021 filed with the SEC on April 8, 2022.

Other Transactions with Related Parties

Transactions with Tencent entities. Our transactions with Tencent Holdings Limited, one of our principal beneficial owners, and its subsidiaries, included (i) purchase of services which primarily related to cloud and bandwidth services, amounting to RMB77.3 million, RMB110.8 million, and RMB137.7 million (US\$20.0 million) in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively; and (ii) provision of services which primarily related to advertising services, amounting to RMB12.6 million, RMB10.9 million, and RMB25.7 million (US\$3.7 million) in 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. The amount due from the Tencent entities were RMB7.4 million, RMB8.8 million, and RMB22.6 million (US\$3.3 million) as of December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, and the amount due to the Tencent entities were RMB41.5 million, RMB67.4 million, and RMB19.1 million (US\$2.8 million) as of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively.

Transactions with Baidu entities. Our transactions with Baidu, Inc., one of our beneficial owners, and its subsidiaries, included (i) purchase of services which primarily related to marketing services and cloud and bandwidth services, amounting to RMB48.7 million and RMB142.3 million in 2020 and 2021, respectively; and (ii) provision of services which primarily related to advertising services, amounting to RMB17.2 million and RMB19.7 million in 2020 and 2021, respectively. The amount due from the Baidu entities were RMB3.9 million and RMB6.4 million as of December 31, 2020 and 2021, respectively, and the amount due to the Baidu entities were RMB4.5 million and RMB14.6 million as of December 31, 2020 and 2021, respectively. As of December 31, 2021, Baidu entities were no longer a related party of us.

Transactions with Kuaishou entities. Our transactions with Kuaishou Technology, one of our principal beneficial owners, and its subsidiary, included (i) purchase of services which primarily related to cloud and bandwidth services, amounting to nil, RMB2.2 million, and RMB14.4 million (US\$2.1 million) in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively; and (ii) provision of services, which primarily related to advertising services, amounting to RMB7.4 million, RMB7.9 million, and RMB14.8 million (US\$2.1 million) in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. The amount due from the Kuaishou entities was RMB2.5 million, RMB3.0 million, and RMB2.2 million (US\$0.3 million) as of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively, and the amount due to the Kuaishou entities was nil, RMB1.6 million, and RMB5.8 million (US\$0.8 million) as of December 31, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively.

C. Interests of Experts and Counsel

Not applicable.

ITEM 8. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

A. Consolidated Statements and Other Financial Information

We have appended consolidated financial statements filed as part of this annual report.

Legal Proceedings

We may from time to time be subject to various legal or administrative claims and proceedings arising in the ordinary course of our business. We are currently not a party to any material legal or administrative proceedings. Litigation or any other legal or administrative proceeding, regardless of the outcome, could result in substantial costs and diversion of our resources, including our management's time and attention.

Litigation or any other legal or administrative proceeding, regardless of the outcome, is likely to result in substantial costs and diversion of our resources, including our management's time and attention. For potential impact of legal or administrative proceedings on us, see "Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Business and Industry—We may be subject to regulatory actions or legal proceedings in the ordinary course of our business. If the outcomes of these regulatory actions or legal proceedings are adverse to us, it could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations."

Dividend Policy

Our board of directors has discretion on whether to distribute dividends, subject to certain requirements of Cayman Islands law. In addition, our shareholders may by ordinary resolution declare a dividend, but no dividend may exceed the amount recommended by our board of directors. In either case, all dividends are subject to certain restrictions under Cayman Islands law, namely that our company may only pay dividends out of profits or share premium, and provided always that in no circumstances may a dividend be paid if this would result in our company being unable to pay its debts as they fall due in the ordinary course of business. Even if we decide to pay dividends, the form, frequency, and amount will depend upon our future operations and earnings, capital requirements and surplus, general financial condition, contractual restrictions, and other factors that the board of directors may deem relevant.

We do not have any present plan to pay any cash dividends on our ordinary shares in the foreseeable future. We currently intend to retain most, if not all, of our available funds and any future earnings our business operations.

We are a holding company incorporated in the Cayman Islands. We may rely on dividends from our subsidiaries in China for our cash requirements, including any payment of dividends to our shareholders. PRC regulations may restrict the ability of our PRC subsidiaries to pay dividends to us. See "Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulations—Regulations Relating to Dividend Distribution."

If we pay any dividends on our Class A ordinary shares, we will pay those dividends that are payable in respect of the Class A ordinary shares underlying our ADSs to the depositary, as the registered holder of such Class A ordinary shares, and the depositary then will pay such amounts to holders of ADSs in proportion to the Class A ordinary shares underlying the ADSs held by such ADS holders, subject to the terms of the deposit agreement, including the fees and expenses payable thereunder. Cash dividends on our Class A ordinary shares, if any, will be paid in U.S. dollars.

B. Significant Changes

Except as disclosed elsewhere in this annual report, we have not experienced any significant changes since the date of our audited consolidated financial statements included in this annual report.

ITEM 9. THE OFFER AND LISTING

A. Offer and Listing Details

Our ADSs have been listed on New York Stock Exchange since March 26, 2021. The ADSs trade under the ticker symbol "ZH." Two ADSs represent one Class A ordinary share, par value US\$0.000125 per share.

B. Plan of Distribution

Not applicable.

C. Markets

Our ADSs have been listed on New York Stock Exchange since March 26, 2021. The ADSs trade under the ticker symbol “ZH.” Two ADSs represent one Class A ordinary share, par value US\$0.000125 per share.

Our Class A ordinary shares have been listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange since April 22, 2022 under the stock code “2390.”

D. Selling Shareholders

Not applicable.

E. Dilution

Not applicable.

F. Expenses of the Issue

Not applicable.

ITEM 10. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Share Capital

Not applicable.

B. Memorandum and Articles of Association

We are a Cayman Islands exempted company and our affairs are governed by our memorandum and articles of association, as amended from time to time, the Companies Act (As Revised) of the Cayman Islands, which we refer to as the Companies Act below, and the common law of the Cayman Islands.

Our shareholders have conditionally adopted the eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, which became effective on June 10, 2022. The following are summaries of material provisions of the eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association and of the Companies Act, insofar as they relate to the material terms of our ordinary shares.

Registered Office and Objects

Pursuant to Article 2 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum of association, our registered office is at the offices of Maples Corporate Services Limited, P.O. Box 309, Ugland House, Grand Cayman KY1-1104, Cayman Islands, or at such other location within the Cayman Islands as our directors may from time to time determine. Pursuant to Article 3 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum of association, the objects for which our company is established are unrestricted and our company shall have full power and authority to carry out any object not prohibited by the Companies Act or any other law of the Cayman Islands.

Directors

See “Item 6. Directors, Senior Management and Employees—C. Board Practices.”

Ordinary Shares

General. Our ordinary shares are divided into Class A ordinary shares and Class B ordinary shares. Holders of our Class A ordinary shares and Class B ordinary shares will have the same rights except for voting and conversion rights. Our ordinary shares are issued in registered form and are issued when registered in our register of members. We may not issue shares to bearer. Our shareholders who are non-residents of the Cayman Islands may freely hold and vote their shares.

Conversion. Each Class B ordinary share is convertible into one Class A ordinary share at any time by the holder thereof. Class A ordinary shares are not convertible into Class B ordinary shares under any circumstances. Class B Ordinary Shares shall only be held by Mr. Yuan Zhou or a director holding vehicle as defined in our eleventh amended and restated memorandum of association. Subject to the Hong Kong Listing Rules or other applicable laws or regulations, each Class B ordinary share shall be automatically converted into one Class A ordinary share upon the occurrence of any of the following events:

- the death of the holder of such Class B ordinary share (or, where the holder is a director holding vehicle, the death of Mr. Yuan Zhou);
- the holder of such Class B ordinary share ceasing to be a director or a director holding vehicle for any reason;
- the holder of such Class B ordinary share (or, where the holder is a director holding vehicle, Mr. Yuan Zhou) being deemed by The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited to be incapacitated for the purpose of performing his duties as a director;
- the holder of such Class B ordinary share (or, where the holder is a director holding vehicle, Mr. Yuan Zhou) being deemed by The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited to no longer meet the requirements of a director set out in the Hong Kong Listing Rules; or
- any direct or indirect sale, transfer, assignment, or disposition of the beneficial ownership of, or economic interest in, such Class B ordinary share or the control over the voting rights attached to such Class B ordinary share through voting proxy or otherwise to any person, including by reason that a director holding vehicle no longer complies with Rule 8A.18(2) of the Hong Kong Listing Rules (in which case we and Mr. Yuan Zhou or the director holding vehicle must notify The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited as soon as practicable with details of the non-compliance), other than a transfer of the legal title to such Class B ordinary share by Mr. Yuan Zhou to a director holding vehicle wholly-owned and wholly controlled by him, or by a director holding vehicle to Mr. Yuan Zhou or another director holding vehicle wholly-owned and wholly controlled by Mr. Yuan Zhou.

For the avoidance of doubt, the creation of any pledge, charge, encumbrance, or other third party right of whatever description on any of Class B ordinary shares to secure a holder's contractual or legal obligations shall not be deemed as a sale, transfer, assignment, or disposition under this Article 14 unless and until any such pledge, charge, encumbrance, or other third party right is enforced and results in a third party that is not Mr. Yuan Zhou or the director holding vehicle wholly-owned and wholly controlled by Mr. Yuan Zhou holding directly or indirectly legal or beneficial ownership or voting power through voting proxy or otherwise to the related Class B ordinary shares, in which case all the related Class B ordinary shares shall be automatically converted into the same number of Class A ordinary shares. All of the Class B ordinary shares in the authorised share capital shall be automatically re-designated into Class A ordinary shares in the event all of the Class B ordinary shares in issue are converted into Class A ordinary shares, or that none of the holders of Class B ordinary shares at the time of our initial listing on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited hold any Class B ordinary shares, and no further Class B ordinary shares shall be issued by us.

Furthermore, our eleventh amended and restated memorandum of association provide that in the event we reduce the number of Class A ordinary shares in issue (e.g. through a purchase of its own shares), the holders of Class B ordinary shares shall reduce their weighted voting rights in us proportionately, whether through a conversion of a portion of their Class B ordinary shares or otherwise, if the reduction in the number of Class A ordinary shares in issue would otherwise result in an increase in the proportion of Class B ordinary shares to the total number of shares in issue.

No further Class B ordinary shares shall be issued by us, except with the prior approval of The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited and pursuant to (i) an offer to subscribe for ordinary shares made to all the shareholders pro rata (apart from fractional entitlements) to their existing holdings; (ii) a pro rata issue of ordinary shares to all the shareholder by way of scrip dividends; or (iii) a ordinary share subdivision or other similar capital reorganisation; provided that, each shareholder shall be entitled to subscribe for (in a pro rata offer) or be issued (in an issue of ordinary shares by way of scrip dividends) ordinary shares in the same class as the ordinary shares then held by him, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 23 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum of association; and further provided that the proposed allotment or issuance will not result in an increase in the proportion of Class B ordinary shares in issue, so that: (a) if, under a pro rata offer, any holder of Class B ordinary shares does not take up any part of the Class B ordinary shares or the rights thereto offered to him, such untaken Shares (or rights) shall only be transferred to another person on the basis that such transferred rights will only entitle the transferee to an equivalent number of Class A ordinary shares; and (b) to the extent that rights to Class A ordinary shares in a pro rata offer are not taken up in their entirety, the number of Class B ordinary shares that shall be allotted, issued or granted in such pro rata offer shall be reduced proportionately.

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We shall not take any action (including the issue or repurchase of ordinary shares of any class) that would result in (a) the aggregate number of votes entitled to be cast by all holders of Class A ordinary shares (for the avoidance of doubt, excluding those who are also holders of Class B ordinary shares) present at a general meeting to be less than 10% of the votes entitled to be cast by all members at a general meeting; or (b) an increase in the proportion of Class B ordinary shares to the total number of ordinary shares in issue.

Dividends. Our directors may from time to time declare dividends (including interim dividends) and other distributions on our shares in issue and authorize payment of the same out of the funds of our company lawfully available therefor. In addition, our shareholders may declare dividends by ordinary resolution, but no dividend may exceed the amount recommended by our directors. Our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association provide that dividends may be declared and paid out of the funds of our company lawfully available therefor. Under the laws of the Cayman Islands, our company may pay a dividend out of either profit or share premium account; provided that in no circumstances may a dividend be paid if that would result in our company being unable to pay its debts as they fall due in the ordinary course of business.

Voting Rights. Subject to any rights and restrictions for the time being attached to any ordinary share, every shareholder present shall, at a general meeting of our company, have the right to speak. Notwithstanding any provisions in our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association to the contrary, each Class A ordinary share and each Class B ordinary share shall entitle its holder to one vote on a poll at a general meeting in respect of a resolution on any of the following matters:

- (a) any amendment to our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, including the variation of the rights attached to any class of shares;
- (b) the appointment, election or removal of any independent non-executive director;
- (c) the appointment or removal of the auditors; or
- (d) the voluntary liquidation or winding-up of our company.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, where a holder of Class B ordinary shares is permitted by The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited from time to time to exercise more than one vote per ordinary share when voting on a resolution to amend our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, any holder of Class B ordinary share may elect to exercise such number of votes per ordinary share as is permitted by The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited, up to the maximum number of votes attached to each Class B ordinary share as set out above.

Except for matters mentioned above, on a show of hands every shareholder present at the meeting shall, at a general meeting of our company, each have one vote, and on a poll each holder of Class A ordinary shares present at the meeting is entitled to one vote per share and each holder of Class B ordinary shares present at the meeting is entitled to ten votes per share. At any general meeting a resolution put to the vote of the meeting shall be decided on a poll save that the chairman of such meeting may, in good faith, allow a resolution which relates purely to a procedural or administrative matter as prescribed under the Hong Kong Listing Rules to be voted on by a show of hands.

An ordinary resolution to be passed at a meeting by the shareholders requires the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the votes attaching to the ordinary shares cast at a meeting, while a special resolution requires the affirmative vote of not less than three-fourths of the votes cast by holders of the issued and outstanding ordinary shares at a meeting and includes a unanimous written resolution passed. A special resolution will be required for important matters such as reduction of share capital or making changes to our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association.

General Meetings of Shareholders. As a Cayman Islands exempted company, we are not obliged by the Companies Act to call shareholders' annual general meetings. Our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association provide that we shall in each financial year hold a general meeting as our annual general meeting in which case we will specify the meeting as such in the notices calling it, and the annual general meeting will be held at such time and place as may be determined by our directors.

Shareholders' general meetings may be convened by the chairman of our board of directors or by our directors (acting by a resolution of our board). An annual general meeting shall be called by not less than 21 days' notice in writing and any other general meeting (including an extraordinary general meeting) shall be called by not less than 14 days' notice in writing. A quorum required for any general meeting of shareholders consists of one or more of our shareholders holding shares which carry in aggregate (or representing by proxy) not less than 10% of all votes attaching to the issued and outstanding shares in our company entitled to vote at such general meeting (on a one vote per ordinary share basis).

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The Companies Act provides shareholders with only limited rights to requisition a general meeting, and does not provide shareholders with any right to put any proposal before a general meeting. However, these rights may be provided in a company's articles of association. Our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association provide that upon the requisition of any one or more of our shareholders holding shares which carry in aggregate not less than one-tenth of the paid up capital of our company, on a one vote per share basis, that as at the date of the deposit entitled to vote at general meetings, our board will convene an extraordinary general meeting and put the resolutions so requisitioned to a vote at such meeting. The requisition must state the objects of the meeting and the resolutions to be added to the meeting agenda.

Transfer of Ordinary Shares. Subject to the restrictions set out below, any of our shareholders may transfer all or any of his or her ordinary shares by an instrument of transfer in the usual or common form or any other form approved by our board of directors. The instrument of transfer of any ordinary share shall be in writing and shall be executed with a manual signature or facsimile signature (which may be machine imprinted or otherwise) by or on behalf of the transferor and transferee provided that in the case of execution by facsimile signature by or on behalf of a transferor or transferee, our board of directors shall have previously been provided with a list of specimen signatures of the authorised signatories of such transferor or transferee and our board of directors shall be reasonably satisfied that such facsimile signature corresponds to one of those specimen signatures.

Our board of directors may, in its absolute discretion, decline to register any transfer of any ordinary share which is not fully paid up or on which we have a lien. Our board of directors may also decline to register any transfer of any ordinary share unless:

- the instrument of transfer is lodged with us, accompanied by the certificate for the ordinary shares to which it relates and such other evidence as our board of directors may reasonably require to show the right of the transferor to make the transfer;
- the instrument of transfer is in respect of only one class of ordinary shares;
- the instrument of transfer is properly stamped, if required;
- in the case of a transfer to joint holders, the number of joint holders to whom the ordinary share is to be transferred does not exceed four;
- the shares are free from any lien in favor of the Company; and
- a fee of such maximum sum as the New York Stock Exchange may determine to be payable or such lesser sum as our directors may from time to time require is paid to us in respect thereof.

If our directors refuse to register a transfer they must, within three calendar months after the date on which the instrument of transfer was lodged, send to each of the transferor and the transferee notice of such refusal.

The registration of transfers may, on ten calendar days' notice being given by advertisement in such one or more newspapers, by electronic means or by any other means in accordance with the rules of the New York Stock Exchange be suspended and the register closed at such times and for such periods as our board of directors may from time to time determine; provided, however, that the registration of transfers may not be suspended nor the register closed for more than 30 days in any year as our board may determine.

Liquidation. On the winding up of our company, if the assets available for distribution amongst our shareholders will be more than sufficient to repay the whole of the share capital at the commencement of the winding up, the surplus will be distributed amongst our shareholders in proportion to the par value of the shares held by them at the commencement of the winding up, subject to a deduction from those shares in respect of which there are monies due, of all monies payable to our company for unpaid calls or otherwise. If our assets available for distribution are insufficient to repay all of the paid-up capital, such assets will be distributed so that, as nearly as may be, the losses are borne by our shareholders in proportion to the par value of the shares held by them.

Calls on Shares and Forfeiture of Shares. Our board of directors may from time to time make calls upon shareholders for any amounts unpaid on their shares in a notice served to such shareholders at least 14 calendar days prior to the specified time and place of payment. The shares that have been called upon and remain unpaid are subject to forfeiture.

Redemption, Repurchase and Surrender of Shares. We may issue shares on terms that such shares are subject to redemption, at our option or at the option of the holders of these shares, on such terms and in such manner as may be determined, before the issue of such shares, by our board of directors or by our shareholders by special resolution. Our company may also repurchase any of our shares on such terms and in such manner as have been approved by our board of directors or by an ordinary resolution of our shareholders, provided always that any such purchase shall only be made in accordance with any relevant code, rules, or regulations issued by The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited or the Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong from time to time in force. Under the Companies Act, the redemption or repurchase of any share may be paid out of our company's profits or out of the proceeds of a new issue of shares made for the purpose of such redemption or repurchase, or out of capital (including share premium account and capital redemption reserve) if our company can, immediately following such payment, pay its debts as they fall due in the ordinary course of business. In addition, under the Companies Act no such share may be redeemed or repurchased (a) unless it is fully paid up, (b) if such redemption or repurchase would result in there being no shares outstanding or (c) if the company has commenced liquidation. In addition, our company may accept the surrender of any fully paid share for no consideration.

Variation of Rights of Shares. Whenever the capital of our company is divided into different classes, the rights attached to any such class may, subject to any rights or restrictions for the time being attached to any class, only be materially adversely varied with the consent in writing of the holders of all of the issued shares of that class or with the sanction of a special resolution passed at a separate meeting of the holders of the shares of that class. The rights conferred upon the holders of the shares of any class issued will not, unless otherwise expressly provided by the terms of issue of the shares of that class, be deemed to be varied by the creation, allotment, or issue of further shares ranking *pari passu* with such existing class of shares.

Issuance of Additional Shares. Our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association authorize our board of directors to issue additional ordinary shares from time to time as our board of directors may determine, to the extent of available authorized but unissued shares. No further Class B ordinary shares shall be issued by us, except with the prior approval of The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited and pursuant to (i) an offer to subscribe for ordinary shares made to all the shareholders pro rata (apart from fractional entitlements) to their existing holdings; (ii) a pro rata issue of ordinary shares to all the shareholder by way of scrip dividends; or (iii) a ordinary share subdivision or other similar capital reorganization; provided that, each shareholder shall be entitled to subscribe for (in a pro rata offer) or be issued (in an issue of ordinary shares by way of scrip dividends) ordinary shares in the same class as the ordinary shares then held by him, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 23 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum of association; and further provided that the proposed allotment or issuance will not result in an increase in the proportion of Class B ordinary shares in issue, so that: (a) if, under a pro rata offer, any holder of Class B ordinary shares does not take up any part of the Class B ordinary shares or the rights thereto offered to him, such untaken Shares (or rights) shall only be transferred to another person on the basis that such transferred rights will only entitle the transferee to an equivalent number of Class A ordinary shares; and (b) to the extent that rights to Class A ordinary shares in a pro rata offer are not taken up in their entirety, the number of Class B ordinary shares that shall be allotted, issued or granted in such pro rata offer shall be reduced proportionately.

Subject to the Articles and compliance with the Hong Kong Listing Rules and the Takeovers Code, and on the conditions that (a) no new Class of Shares with voting rights superior to those of Class A Ordinary Shares will be created; and (b) any variations in the relative rights as between the different classes will not result in the creation of new Class of Shares with voting rights superior to those of Class A ordinary shares, our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association also authorize our board of directors to establish from time to time one or more series of preference shares and to determine, with respect to any series of preference shares, the terms and rights of that series, including:

- the designation of the series;
- the number of shares of the series;
- the dividend rights, dividend rates, conversion rights, voting rights; and
- the rights and terms of redemption and liquidation preferences.

Our board of directors may issue preference shares without action by our shareholders to the extent authorized but unissued. Issuance of these shares may dilute the voting power of holders of ordinary shares.

Inspection of Books and Records. Holders of our ordinary shares will have no general right under Cayman Islands law to inspect or obtain copies of our list of shareholders or our corporate records (other than copies of our memorandum and articles of association and register of mortgages and charges, and any special resolution passed by our shareholders). However, we intend to provide our shareholders with annual audited financial statements.

Exempted Company. We are an exempted company with limited liability under the Companies Act. The Companies Act distinguishes between ordinary resident companies and exempted companies. Any company that is registered in the Cayman Islands but conducts business mainly outside of the Cayman Islands may apply to be registered as an exempted company. The requirements for an exempted company are essentially the same as for an ordinary company except that an exempted company:

- does not have to file an annual return of its shareholders with the Registrar of Companies;
- is not required to open its register of members for inspection;
- does not have to hold an annual general meeting;
- may issue negotiable or bearer shares or shares with no par value;
- may obtain an undertaking against the imposition of any future taxation (such undertakings are usually given for 20 years in the first instance);
- may register by way of continuation in another jurisdiction and be deregistered in the Cayman Islands;
- may register as a limited duration company; and
- may register as a segregated portfolio company.

“Limited liability” means that the liability of each shareholder is limited to the amount unpaid by the shareholder on the shares of the company (except in exceptional circumstances, such as involving fraud, the establishment of an agency relationship or an illegal or improper purpose or other circumstances in which a court may be prepared to pierce or lift the corporate veil).

Exclusive forum. Pursuant to article 188 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, for the avoidance of doubt and without limiting the jurisdiction of the courts of the Cayman Islands and the courts of Hong Kong to hear, settle and/or determine disputes related to us and without prejudice to article 189 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, we, our shareholders, directors and officers agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the courts of the Cayman Islands and Hong Kong, to the exclusion of other jurisdictions, for (i) any derivative action or proceeding brought on behalf of us, (ii) any action asserting a claim of breach of a fiduciary duty owed by any director, officer, or other employee of us to the Company or the Members, (iii) any action asserting a claim arising pursuant to any provision of the Companies Act or these Articles including but not limited to any purchase or acquisition of Shares, security, or guarantee provided in consideration thereof, or (iv) any action asserting a claim against us which if brought in the United States of America would be a claim arising under the internal affairs doctrine (as such concept is recognized under the laws of the United States from time to time). Notwithstanding Article 188 of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association, the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York (or, if the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York lacks subject matter jurisdiction over a particular dispute, the state courts in New York County, New York) shall be the exclusive forum within the United States for the resolution of any complaint asserting a cause of action arising under the Securities Act and the Exchange Act. Any person or entity purchasing or otherwise acquiring any of our shares, ADSs or other securities shall be deemed to have notice of and consented to the provisions of our eleventh amended and restated memorandum and articles of association. See “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to the ADSs—Forum selection provisions in our currently effective memorandum and articles of association and our deposit agreement with the depositary bank could limit the ability of holders of our Class A ordinary shares, ADSs, or other securities to obtain a favorable judicial forum for disputes with us, our directors and officers, the depositary bank, and potentially others.”

C. Material Contracts

Other than in the ordinary course of business and other than those described under this item, in “Item 4. Information on the Company,” “Item 7. Major Shareholders and Related Party Transactions—B. Related Party Transactions,” or elsewhere in this annual report, we have not entered into any material contract during the two years immediately preceding the date of this annual report.

D. Exchange Controls

The Cayman Islands currently has no exchange control restrictions. See also “Item 4. Information on the Company—B. Business Overview—Regulation—Regulations on Foreign Exchange.”

E. Taxation

Cayman Islands Taxation

The Cayman Islands currently levies no taxes on individuals or corporations based upon profits, income, gains, or appreciation, and there is no taxation in the nature of inheritance tax or estate duty. There are no other taxes likely to be material to us levied by the government of the Cayman Islands except for stamp duties, which may be applicable on instruments executed in, or brought within the jurisdiction of, the Cayman Islands. Payments of dividends and capital in respect of our ordinary shares will not be subject to taxation in the Cayman Islands and no withholding will be required on the payment of a dividend or capital to any holder of our ordinary shares, nor will gains derived from the disposal of our ordinary shares be subject to Cayman Islands income or corporation tax. The Cayman Islands is not party to any double tax treaties that are applicable to any payments made to or by our company. There are no exchange control regulations or currency restrictions in the Cayman Islands.

PRC Taxation

Under the PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law effective from January 1, 2008, our PRC subsidiaries, and consolidated affiliated entities and their subsidiaries are subject to the statutory rate of 25%, subject to preferential tax treatments available to qualified enterprises in certain encouraged sectors of the economy.

Enterprises that qualify as “high and new technology enterprises” are entitled to a preferential rate of 15% for three years. Enterprises that qualify as “small low-profit enterprises” are entitled to a preferential rate of 20%. Specifically, during the period from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022, the portion of annual taxable income amount of a small low-profit enterprise not exceeding RMB1 million is computed at a reduced rate of 25% as taxable income amount, subject to an enterprise income tax rate of 20%, and the portion of annual taxable income amount exceeding RMB1 million and not exceeding RMB3 million is computed at a reduced rate of 50% as taxable income amount, subject to an enterprise income tax rate of 20%. In addition to the aforementioned preferential tax treatments, during the period from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022, for the portion of annual taxable income amount of small low-profit enterprises which does not exceed RMB1 million, enterprise income tax should be reduced by 50%.

Each of Zhizhe Sihai and Beijing Qingzhong Education Technology Co., Ltd, a subsidiary of our company, was certified as a “high and new technology enterprise” under the relevant PRC laws and regulations, and accordingly was eligible for a preferential tax rate of 15% in each of 2020, 2021, and 2022. Some of our subsidiaries were “small low-profit enterprises” under the relevant PRC laws and regulations, and accordingly were eligible for a preferential tax rate of 20% in each of 2020, 2021, and 2022. Our other PRC entities were subject to enterprise income tax at a rate of 25% in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Pursuant to the PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law, a 5% or 10% withholding tax is levied on dividends declared to foreign investors from China effective from January 1, 2008.

Under the PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law, an enterprise established outside China whose “de facto management body” is located in China is considered a “PRC resident enterprise” and will generally be subject to the uniform 25% enterprise income tax rate, or the EIT rate, on its global income. Under the implementation rules of the EIT Law, “de facto management body” is defined as the organization body that effectively exercises full management and control over such aspects as the business operations, personnel, accounting and properties of the enterprise.

According to STA Circular 82 promulgated in April 2009, a Chinese-controlled offshore incorporated enterprise will be regarded as a PRC tax resident by virtue of having a “de facto management body” in China and will be subject to the ETI rate on its worldwide income only if all of the following criteria are met: (i) the primary location of the day-to-day operational management is in China; (ii) decisions relating to the enterprise’s financial and human resource matters are made or are subject to approval by organizations or personnel in China; (iii) the enterprise’s primary assets, accounting books and records, company seals, and board and shareholders meeting minutes are located or maintained in China; and (iv) 50% or more of voting board members or senior executives habitually reside in China.

We believe that Zhihu Inc. is not a PRC resident enterprise for PRC tax purposes. Zhihu Inc. is not controlled by a PRC enterprise or PRC enterprise group and we do not believe that Zhihu Inc. meets all of the conditions above. Zhihu Inc. is a company incorporated outside China. As a holding company, its key assets are its ownership interests in its subsidiaries, and its key assets are located, and its records (including the resolutions of its board of directors and the resolutions of its shareholders) are maintained, outside China. However, the tax resident status of an enterprise is subject to determination by the PRC tax authorities and uncertainties remain with respect to the interpretation of the term “de facto management body.” There can be no assurance that the PRC government will ultimately take a view that is consistent with ours.

If the PRC tax authorities determine that Zhihu Inc. is a PRC resident enterprise for enterprise income tax purposes, we may be required to withhold a 10% withholding tax from dividends we pay to our shareholders that are non-resident enterprises, including the holders of our ADSs. In addition, non-PRC resident enterprise shareholders (including our ADS holders) may be subject to a 10% PRC tax on gains realized on the sale or other disposition of ADSs or ordinary shares, if such income is treated as sourced from within China. It is unclear whether our non-PRC resident individual shareholders (including our ADS holders) would be subject to any PRC tax on dividends or gains obtained by such non-PRC resident individual shareholders in the event we are determined to be a PRC resident enterprise. If any PRC tax were to apply to such dividends or gains, it would generally apply at a rate of 20% unless a reduced rate is available under an applicable tax treaty. However, it is also unclear whether non-PRC shareholders of Zhihu Inc. would be able to claim the benefits of any tax treaties between their country of tax residence and China in the event that Zhihu Inc. is treated as a PRC resident enterprise. See “Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Doing Business in China—We may be classified as a “PRC resident enterprise” for PRC enterprise income tax purposes, which could result in unfavorable tax consequences to us and our shareholders and have a material adverse effect on our results of operations and the value of your investment.”

Hong Kong Taxation

On March 21, 2018, the Hong Kong Legislative Council passed The Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 7) Bill 2017, which introduces the two-tiered profits tax rates regime. The bill was signed into law on March 28, 2018 and was gazetted on the following day. Under the two-tiered profits tax rates regime, the first HK\$2 million of profits of the qualifying group entity will be taxed at 8.25%, and profits above HK\$2 million will be taxed at 16.5%. The profits of group entities not qualifying for the two-tiered profits tax rates regime will continue to be taxed at a flat rate of 16.5%.

Accordingly, the Hong Kong profits tax of the qualifying group entity is calculated at 8.25% on the first HK\$2 million of the estimated assessable profits and at 16.5% on the estimated assessable profits above HK\$2 million.

In addition, payments of dividends from our subsidiary in Hong Kong to us are not subject to any Hong Kong withholding tax.

United States Federal Income Tax Considerations

The following discussion is a summary of U.S. federal income tax considerations generally applicable to the ownership and disposition of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares by a U.S. Holder (as defined below) that acquires our ADSs and holds our ADSs as “capital assets” (generally, property held for investment) under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”). This discussion is based upon existing U.S. federal tax law, which is subject to differing interpretations or change, possibly with retroactive effect. There can be no assurance that the IRS or a court will not take a contrary position. This discussion, moreover, does not address the U.S. federal estate, gift, alternative minimum tax, and other non-income tax considerations, the Medicare tax on certain net investment income or any state, local, or non-U.S. tax considerations, relating to the ownership or disposition of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares. The following summary does not address all aspects of U.S. federal income taxation that may be important to particular investors in light of their individual circumstances or to persons in special tax situations such as:

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- banks and other financial institutions;
- insurance companies;
- pension plans;
- cooperatives;
- regulated investment companies;
- real estate investment trusts;
- broker-dealers;
- traders that elect to use a mark-to-market method of accounting;
- certain former U.S. citizens or long-term residents;
- tax-exempt entities (including private foundations);
- holders who acquire their ADSs or Class A ordinary shares pursuant to any employee share option or otherwise as compensation;
- investors that will hold their ADSs or Class A ordinary shares as part of a straddle, hedge, conversion, constructive sale, or other integrated transaction for U.S. federal income tax purposes;
- investors that have a functional currency other than the U.S. dollar;
- persons that actually or constructively own 10% or more of our stock (by vote or value); or
- partnerships or other entities taxable as partnerships for U.S. federal income tax purposes, or persons holding ADSs or Class A ordinary shares through such entities;

all of whom may be subject to tax rules that differ significantly from those discussed below.

Each U.S. Holder is urged to consult its tax advisor regarding the application of U.S. federal taxation to its particular circumstances, and the state, local, non-U.S. and other tax considerations of the ownership and disposition of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares.

General

For purposes of this discussion, a “U.S. Holder” is a beneficial owner of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares that is, for U.S. federal income tax purposes:

- an individual who is a citizen or resident of the United States;
- a corporation (or other entity treated as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes) created in, or organized under the law of the United States or any state thereof or the District of Columbia;
- an estate the income of which is includible in gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes regardless of its source; or

- a trust (A) the administration of which is subject to the primary supervision of a U.S. court and which has one or more U.S. persons who have the authority to control all substantial decisions of the trust or (B) that has otherwise validly elected to be treated as a U.S. person under the Code.

If a partnership (or other entity treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes) is a beneficial owner of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares, the tax treatment of a partner in the partnership will generally depend upon the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. Partnerships holding our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares and their partners are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding an investment in our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares.

For U.S. federal income tax purposes, it is generally expected that a U.S. Holder of ADSs will be treated as the beneficial owner of the underlying shares represented by the ADSs. The remainder of this discussion assumes that a U.S. Holder of our ADSs will be treated in this manner. Accordingly, deposits or withdrawals of Class A ordinary shares for ADSs will generally not be subject to U.S. federal income tax.

Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations

A non-U.S. corporation, such as our company, will be classified as a PFIC for United States federal income tax purposes for any taxable year, if either (i) 75% or more of its gross income for such year consists of certain types of “passive” income (the “income test”) or (ii) 50% or more of the value of its assets (generally determined on the basis of a quarterly average) during such year is attributable to assets that produce or are held for the production of passive income (the “asset test”). For this purpose, cash and assets readily convertible into cash are categorized as passive assets and the company’s goodwill and other unbooked intangibles are taken into account. Passive income generally includes, among other things, dividends, interest, rents, royalties, and gains from the disposition of passive assets. We will be treated as owning a proportionate share of the assets and earning a proportionate share of the income of any other corporation in which we own, directly or indirectly, at least 25% (by value) of the stock.

Although the law in this regard is not entirely clear, we treat the VIEs and their subsidiaries as being owned by us for U.S. federal income tax purposes because we control their management decisions and are entitled to substantially all of the economic benefits associated with them. As a result, we consolidated their results of operations in our consolidated U.S. GAAP financial statements.

Based upon the nature and composition of our income and assets, and the market price of our ADSs, we believe that we were a PFIC for United States federal income tax purposes for the taxable year ended December 31, 2022, and we will likely be a PFIC for our current taxable year unless the market price of our ADSs increases and/or we invest a substantial amount of the cash and other passive assets we hold in assets that produce or are held for the production of active income.

If we are classified as a PFIC for any taxable year during which a U.S. Holder holds our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares, the PFIC rules discussed below under “—Passive Foreign Investment Company Rules” generally will apply to such U.S. Holder for such taxable year, and unless the U.S. Holder makes certain elections, will apply in future years even if we cease to be a PFIC.

The discussion below under “—Dividends” and “—Sale or Other Disposition” is written on the basis that we will not be or become classified as a PFIC for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The U.S. federal income tax rules that apply generally if we are treated as a PFIC for any taxable year are discussed below under “—Passive Foreign Investment Company Rules.”

Dividends

Any cash distributions (including the amount of any PRC tax withheld) paid on our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares out of our current or accumulated earnings and profits, as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles, will generally be includible in the gross income of a U.S. Holder as dividend income on the day actually or constructively received by the U.S. Holder, in the case of Class A ordinary shares, or by the depositary, in the case of ADSs. Because we do not intend to determine our earnings and profits on the basis of U.S. federal income tax principles, any distribution we pay will generally be treated as a “dividend” for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Dividends received on our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares will not be eligible for the dividends received deduction generally allowed to corporations. A non-corporate U.S. Holder will be subject to tax at the lower capital gain tax rate applicable to “qualified dividend income,” provided that certain conditions are satisfied, including that (1) our ADSs or ordinary shares on which the dividends are paid are readily tradeable on an established securities market in the United States, or, in the event that we are deemed to be a PRC resident enterprise under the PRC tax law, we are eligible for the benefits of the United States-PRC income tax treaty (the “Treaty”), (2) we are neither a PFIC nor treated as such with respect to such a U.S. Holder for the taxable year in which the dividend was paid and the preceding taxable year, and (3) certain holding period requirements are met. Our ADSs (but not our Class A ordinary shares) are readily tradeable on the New York Stock Exchange, which is an established securities market in the United States. There can be no assurance, however, that our ADSs will be considered readily tradeable on an established securities market in later years.

In the event that we are deemed to be a PRC resident enterprise under the PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law (see “—PRC Taxation”), we may be eligible for the benefits of the Treaty. If we are eligible for such benefits, dividends we pay on our Class A ordinary shares, regardless of whether such shares are represented by the ADSs, would be eligible for the reduced rates of taxation described in the preceding paragraph.

Dividends paid on our ADSs or ordinary shares, if any, will generally be treated as income from foreign sources and will generally constitute passive category income for U.S. foreign tax credit purposes. Depending on the U.S. Holder’s individual facts and circumstances, a U.S. Holder may be eligible, subject to a number of complex limitations, to claim a foreign tax credit in respect of any nonrefundable foreign withholding taxes imposed on dividends received on our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares. A U.S. Holder who does not elect to claim a foreign tax credit for foreign taxes withheld may instead claim a deduction, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, in respect of such withholding, but only for a year in which such holder elects to do so for all creditable foreign income taxes. The rules governing the foreign tax credit are complex and their outcome depends in large part on the U.S. Holder’s individual facts and circumstances. Accordingly, U.S. Holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the availability of the foreign tax credit under their particular circumstances.

As mentioned above, we believe that we were a PFIC for the taxable year ended December 31, 2022, and we will likely be classified as a PFIC for our current taxable year. U.S. Holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the availability of the reduced tax rate on dividends with respect to the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares in their particular circumstances.

Sale or Other Disposition

A U.S. Holder will generally recognize capital gain or loss upon the sale or other disposition of ADSs or Class A ordinary shares in an amount equal to the difference between the amount realized upon the disposition and the holder’s adjusted tax basis in such ADSs or Class A ordinary shares. Any capital gain or loss will be long-term if the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares have been held for more than one year and will generally be U.S.-source gain or loss for U.S. foreign tax credit purposes. Long-term capital gain of non-corporate U.S. Holders will generally be eligible for a reduced rate of taxation. In the event that gain from the disposition of the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares is subject to tax in China, a U.S. Holder may elect to treat such gain as PRC-source gain under the Treaty. Pursuant to recently issued Treasury Regulations, however, if a U.S. Holder is not eligible for the benefits of the Treaty or does not elect to apply the Treaty, then such holder may not be able to claim a foreign tax credit arising from any PRC tax imposed on the disposition of the ADSs or common shares. The deductibility of a capital loss may be subject to limitations. U.S. Holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the tax consequences if a foreign tax is imposed on a disposition of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares, including the availability of the foreign tax credit or deduction under their particular circumstances, their eligibility for benefits under the Treaty, and the potential impact of the recently issued Treasury Regulations.

As mentioned above, we believe that we were a PFIC for the taxable year ended December 31, 2022, and we will likely be classified as a PFIC for our current taxable year. U.S. Holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the tax considerations of the sale or other disposition of the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares in their particular circumstances.

Passive Foreign Investment Company Rules

As mentioned above, we believe that we were a PFIC for the taxable year ended December 31, 2022, and we will likely be classified as a PFIC for our current taxable year. If we are classified as a PFIC for any taxable year during which a U.S. Holder holds our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares, and unless the U.S. Holder makes a mark-to-market election (as described below), the U.S. Holder will generally be subject to special tax rules on (i) any excess distribution that we make to the U.S. Holder (which generally means any distribution paid during a taxable year to a U.S. Holder that is greater than 125 percent of the average annual distributions paid in the three preceding taxable years or, if shorter, the U.S. Holder's holding period for the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares), and (ii) any gain realized on the sale or other disposition of ADSs or Class A ordinary shares. Under the PFIC rules:

- the excess distribution or gain will be allocated ratably over the U.S. Holder's holding period for the ADSs or Class A ordinary shares;
- the amount allocated to the current taxable year and any taxable years in the U.S. Holder's holding period prior to the first taxable year in which we are classified as a PFIC (each, a "pre-PFIC year"), will be taxable as ordinary income;
- the amount allocated to each prior taxable year, other than a pre-PFIC year, will be subject to tax at the highest tax rate in effect for individuals or corporations, as appropriate, for that year; and
- an additional tax equal to the interest charge generally applicable to underpayments of tax will be imposed on the tax attributable to each prior taxable year, other than a pre-PFIC year.

If we are a PFIC for any taxable year during which a U.S. Holder holds our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares and any of our subsidiaries, the VIEs or any of their subsidiaries is also a PFIC, such U.S. Holder would be treated as owning a proportionate amount (by value) of the shares of the lower-tier PFIC for purposes of the application of these rules. U.S. Holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the application of the PFIC rules to any of our subsidiaries, the VIEs, or their subsidiaries.

As an alternative to the foregoing rules, a U.S. Holder of "marketable stock" in a PFIC may make a mark-to-market election with respect to such stock, provided that such stock is regularly traded on a qualified exchange or other market, as defined in applicable United States Treasury regulations. For those purposes, our ADSs, but not our Class A ordinary shares, are listed on the New York Stock Exchange, which is a qualified exchange. We anticipate that our ADSs should qualify as being regularly traded, but no assurances may be given in this regard. If a U.S. Holder makes this election, the holder will generally (i) include as ordinary income for each taxable year that we are a PFIC the excess, if any, of the fair market value of ADSs held at the end of the taxable year over the adjusted tax basis of such ADSs and (ii) deduct as an ordinary loss the excess, if any, of the adjusted tax basis of the ADSs over the fair market value of such ADSs held at the end of the taxable year, but such deduction will only be allowed to the extent of the amount previously included in income as a result of the mark-to-market election. The U.S. Holder's adjusted tax basis in the ADSs would be adjusted to reflect any income or loss resulting from the mark-to-market election. If a U.S. Holder makes a mark-to-market election in respect of a corporation classified as a PFIC and such corporation ceases to be classified as a PFIC, the holder will not be required to take into account the gain or loss described above during any period that such corporation is not classified as a PFIC. If a U.S. Holder makes a mark-to-market election, any gain such U.S. Holder recognizes upon the sale or other disposition of our ADSs in a year when we are a PFIC will be treated as ordinary income and any loss will be treated as ordinary loss, but such loss will only be treated as ordinary loss to the extent of the net amount previously included in income as a result of the mark-to-market election.

Because a mark-to-market election cannot be made for any lower-tier PFICs that we may own, a U.S. Holder may continue to be subject to the PFIC rules with respect to such U.S. Holder's indirect interest in any investments held by us that are treated as an equity interest in a PFIC for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

We do not intend to provide information necessary for U.S. Holders to make qualified electing fund elections which, if available, would result in tax treatment different from (and generally less adverse than) the general tax treatment for PFICs described above.

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If a U.S. Holder owns our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares during any taxable year that we are a PFIC, the holder must generally file an annual IRS Form 8621. You should consult your tax advisors regarding the U.S. federal income tax consequences of owning and disposing of our ADSs or Class A ordinary shares if we are or become a PFIC.

F. Dividends and Paying Agents

Not applicable.

G. Statement by Experts

Not applicable.

H. Documents on Display

We are subject to periodic reporting and other informational requirements of the Exchange Act as applicable to foreign private issuers, and are required to file reports and other information with the SEC. Specifically, we are required to file annually an annual report on Form 20-F within four months after the end of each fiscal year, which is December 31. All information filed with the SEC can be obtained over the internet at the SEC's website at www.sec.gov. As a foreign private issuer, we are exempt from the rules under the Exchange Act prescribing the furnishing and content of quarterly reports and proxy statements, and officers, directors and principal shareholders are exempt from the reporting and short-swing profit recovery provisions contained in Section 16 of the Exchange Act.

We will furnish JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., the depository of our ADSs, with our annual reports, which will include a review of operations and annual audited consolidated financial statements prepared in conformity with U.S. GAAP, and all notices of shareholders' meetings and other reports and communications that are made generally available to our shareholders. The depository will make such notices, reports and communications available to holders of ADSs and, upon our request, will mail to all record holders of ADSs the information contained in any notice of a shareholders' meeting received by the depository from us.

In accordance with NYSE Rule 203.01, we will post this annual report on Form 20-F on our website at <http://ir.zhihu.com>. In addition, we will provide hardcopies of our annual report free of charge to shareholders and ADS holders upon request.

I. Subsidiary Information

Not applicable.

J. Annual Report to Security Holders

We intend to submit an annual report provided to security holders in electronic format pursuant to the Hong Kong Listing Rules as an exhibit to a current report on Form 6-K.

ITEM 11. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DISCLOSURES ABOUT MARKET RISK

Interest Rate Risk

Our exposure to interest rate risk primarily relates to the interest income generated by excess cash, which is mostly held in interest-bearing bank deposits and wealth management products. Interest-earning instruments carry a degree of interest rate risk. We have not been exposed to material risks due to changes in market interest rates, and we have not used any derivative financial instruments to manage our interest risk exposure.

We may invest the net proceeds that we receive from our overseas offerings in interest-earning instruments. Investments in both fixed-rate and floating rate interest-earning instruments carry a degree of interest rate risk. Fixed-rate securities may have their fair market value adversely impacted due to a rise in interest rates, while floating-rate securities may produce less income than expected if interest rates fall.

Foreign Exchange Risk

Our expenditures are mainly denominated in Renminbi and, therefore, we are exposed to risks related to movements between Renminbi and U.S. dollars. We enter into hedging transactions in an effort to reduce our exposure to foreign currency exchange risk when we deem appropriate. In addition, the value of your investment in our ADSs will be affected by the exchange rate between U.S. dollars and Renminbi because the value of our business is effectively denominated in Renminbi, while our ADSs will be traded in U.S. dollars.

The value of Renminbi against U.S. dollars and other currencies may fluctuate and is affected by, among other things, changes in political and economic conditions and the foreign exchange policy adopted by the PRC government. On July 21, 2005, the PRC government changed its policy of pegging the value of Renminbi to U.S. dollars. Following the removal of the U.S. dollar peg, Renminbi appreciated over 20% against U.S. dollars over the following three years. Between July 2008 and June 2010, this appreciation halted and the exchange rate between Renminbi and U.S. dollars remained within a narrow band. Since June 2010, the PRC government has allowed Renminbi to appreciate slowly against U.S. dollars again, and it has appreciated over 10% since June 2010. On August 11, 2015, the People's Bank of China, or the PBOC, announced plans to improve the central parity rate of Renminbi against U.S. dollars by authorizing market-makers to provide parity to the China Foreign Exchange Trading Center operated by the PBOC with reference to the interbank foreign exchange market closing rate of the previous day, the supply and demand for foreign currencies as well as changes in exchange rates of major international currencies. Effective from October 1, 2016, the International Monetary Fund added Renminbi to its Special Drawing Rights currency basket. Such change and additional future changes may increase volatility in the trading value of the Renminbi against foreign currencies. The PRC government may adopt further reforms of its exchange rate system, including making the Renminbi freely convertible in the future. Accordingly, it is difficult to predict how market forces or PRC or U.S. government policy may impact the exchange rate between Renminbi and U.S. dollars in the future.

To the extent that we need to convert U.S. dollars or other currencies into Renminbi for our operations, appreciation of Renminbi against U.S. dollars would have an adverse effect on the Renminbi amount we receive from the conversion. Conversely, if we decide to convert Renminbi into U.S. dollars or other currency for the purpose of making payments to suppliers or for dividends on our ordinary shares or ADSs or for other business purposes, appreciation of U.S. dollars against Renminbi would have a negative effect on the U.S. dollar amounts available to us.

ITEM 12. DESCRIPTION OF SECURITIES OTHER THAN EQUITY SECURITIES

A. Debt Securities

Not applicable.

B. Warrants and Rights

Not applicable.

C. Other Securities

Not applicable.

D. American Depositary Shares

Fees and Charges Our ADS Holders May Have to Pay

The depositary may charge each person to whom ADSs are issued, including, without limitation, issuances against deposits of shares, issuances in respect of share distributions, rights and other distributions, issuances pursuant to a stock dividend or stock split declared by us or issuances pursuant to a merger, exchange of securities, or any other transaction or event affecting the ADSs or deposited securities, and each person surrendering ADSs for withdrawal of deposited securities or whose ADRs are cancelled or reduced for any other reason, \$5.00 for each 100 ADSs (or any portion thereof) issued, delivered, reduced, cancelled or surrendered, or upon which a share distribution or elective distribution is made or offered, as the case may be. The depositary may sell (by public or private sale) sufficient securities and property received in respect of a share distribution, rights, and/or other distribution prior to such deposit to pay such charge.

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The following additional charges shall also be incurred by the ADR holders, the beneficial owners, by any party depositing or withdrawing shares or by any party surrendering ADSs and/or to whom ADSs are issued (including, without limitation, issuance pursuant to a stock dividend or stock split declared by us or an exchange of stock regarding the ADSs or the deposited securities or a distribution of ADSs), whichever is applicable:

- a fee of US\$1.50 per ADR or ADRs for transfers of certificated or direct registration ADRs;
- a fee of US\$0.05 or less per ADS held for any cash distribution made, or for any elective cash/stock dividend offered, pursuant to the deposit agreement;
- an aggregate fee of US\$0.05 or less per ADS per calendar year (or portion thereof) for services performed by the depositary in administering the ADRs (which fee may be charged on a periodic basis during each calendar year and shall be assessed against holders of ADRs as of the record date or record dates set by the depositary during each calendar year and shall be payable in the manner described in the next succeeding provision);
- a fee for the reimbursement of such fees, charges, and expenses as are incurred by the depositary and/or any of its agents (including, without limitation, the custodian and expenses incurred on behalf of ADR holders in connection with compliance with foreign exchange control regulations or any law or regulation relating to foreign investment) in connection with the servicing of the shares or other deposited securities, the sale of securities (including, without limitation, deposited securities), the delivery of deposited securities or otherwise in connection with the depositary's or its custodian's compliance with applicable law, rule or regulation (which fees and charges shall be assessed on a proportionate basis against ADR holders as of the record date or dates set by the depositary and shall be payable at the sole discretion of the depositary by billing such ADR holders or by deducting such charge from one or more cash dividends or other cash distributions);
- a fee for the distribution of securities (or the sale of securities in connection with a distribution), such fee being in an amount equal to the \$0.05 per ADS issuance fee for the execution and delivery of ADSs which would have been charged as a result of the deposit of such securities (treating all such securities as if they were shares) but which securities or the net cash proceeds from the sale thereof are instead distributed by the depositary to those ADR holders entitled thereto;
- stock transfer or other taxes and other governmental charges.

Fees and Other Payments Made by the Depositary to Us

Our depositary anticipates to reimburse us for certain expenses we incur that are related to establishment and maintenance of the ADR program upon such terms and conditions as we and the depositary may agree from time to time. The depositary may make available to us a set amount or a portion of the depositary fees charged in respect of the ADR program or otherwise upon such terms and conditions as we and the depositary may agree from time to time. For the year ended December 31, 2022, we received US\$1.8 million of cash reimbursement, net of tax, from the depositary.

Conversion between Class A Ordinary Shares and ADSs

Dealings and Settlement of Class A Ordinary Shares in Hong Kong

Dealings in our Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange are conducted in Hong Kong dollars. Our Class A Ordinary Shares will be traded on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in board lots of 100 Class A Ordinary Shares.

The transaction costs of dealings in our Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange include:

- Hong Kong Stock Exchange trading fee of 0.005% of the consideration of the transaction, charged to each of the buyer and seller;
- SFC transaction levy of 0.0027% of the consideration of the transaction, charged to each of the buyer and seller;

- FRC (Financial Reporting Council) transaction levy of 0.00015% of the consideration of the transaction, charged to each of the buyer and seller;
- trading tariff of HK\$0.50 on each and every purchase or sale transaction. The decision on whether or not to pass the trading tariff onto investors is at the discretion of brokers;
- transfer deed stamp duty of HK\$5.00 per transfer deed (if applicable), payable by the seller;
- ad valorem stamp duty at a total rate of 0.26% of the value of the transaction, with 0.13% payable by each of the buyer and the seller;
- stock settlement fee, which is currently 0.002% of the gross transaction value, subject to a minimum fee of HK\$2.00 and a maximum fee of HK\$100.00 per side per trade;
- brokerage commission, which is freely negotiable with the broker (other than brokerage commissions for IPO transactions which are currently set at 1% of the subscription or purchase price and will be payable by the person subscribing for or purchasing the securities); and
- Computershare Hong Kong Investor Services Limited, our Hong Kong Share Registrar, will charge between HK\$2.50 to HK\$20, depending on the speed of service (or such higher fee as may from time to time be permitted under the Hong Kong Listing Rules), for each transfer of Class A Ordinary Shares from one registered owner to another, each share certificate canceled or issued by it and any applicable fee as stated in the share transfer forms used in Hong Kong.

Investors in Hong Kong must settle their trades executed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange through their brokers directly or through custodians. For an investor in Hong Kong who has deposited his/her Class A Ordinary Shares in his/her stock account or in his/her designated CCASS Participant's stock account maintained with CCASS, settlement will be effected in CCASS in accordance with the General Rules of CCASS and CCASS Operational Procedures in effect from time to time. For an investor who holds the physical certificates, settlement certificates and the duly executed transfer forms must be delivered to his/her broker or custodian before the settlement date.

An investor may arrange with his/her broker or custodian on a settlement date in respect of his/her trades executed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Under the Hong Kong Listing Rules and the General Rules of CCASS and CCASS Operational Procedures in effect from time to time, the date of settlement must be the second settlement day (a day on which the settlement services of CCASS are open for use by CCASS Participants) following the trade date (T+2). For trades settled under CCASS, the General Rules of CCASS and CCASS Operational Procedures in effect from time to time provided that the defaulting broker may be compelled to compulsorily buy-in by HKSCC the day after the date of settlement (T+3), or if it is not practicable to do so on T+3, at any time thereafter. HKSCC may also impose fines from T+2 onwards.

Depository

The depository for our ADSs is JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. (the "Depository"), whose office is located at 383 Madison Avenue, Floor 11, New York, NY 10179. The certificated ADSs are evidenced by certificates referred to as American Depositary Receipts ("ADRs") that are issued by the Depository.

Every two ADSs represent ownership interests in one Class A Ordinary Shares, and any and all securities, cash or other property deposited with the Depository in respect of such Class A Ordinary Shares but not distributed to ADS holders.

ADSs may be held either (a) directly, by having an ADR in physical certificated form registered in the holder's name (b) indirectly, through the holder's brokerage or safekeeping account or (c) by holding a "Direct Registration ADR" in book-entry form in the "Direct Registration System," the system established by the Depositary Trust Company ("DTC") for the uncertificated registration of ownership of securities utilized by the depositary to record the ownership of ADRs without the issuance of certificates, in which case the ownership is evidenced by periodic statements issued by the Depositary to the holders of ADRs entitled thereto. The following discussion regarding ADSs assumes the holder holds its ADSs directly. If a holder holds the ADSs indirectly through its brokerage or safekeeping account, it must rely on the procedures of its broker or other financial institution to assert the rights of ADS holders described in this section. If applicable, you should consult with your broker or financial institution to find out what those procedures are. Banks and brokers typically hold securities such as the ADSs through participants in the DTC clearing and settlement system. ADSs held through DTC will be registered in the name of a nominee of DTC.

We do not treat ADS holders as Shareholders, and ADS holders have no Shareholder rights. Cayman Islands law governs Shareholder rights. Because the Depositary actually holds the legal title to our Class A Ordinary Shares represented by ADSs (through the Depositary's Custodian (as defined below)), ADS holders must rely on it to exercise the rights of a Shareholder. The obligations of the Depositary are set out in the deposit agreement among us, the Depositary and our ADS holders and beneficial owners as amended from time to time (the "Deposit Agreement"). The Deposit Agreement, the ADSs and the ADRs evidencing ADSs are governed by the law of the State of New York without giving effect to the application of the conflict of law principles thereof.

Transfer of Shares to Hong Kong Share Register

For the purposes of trading on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, the Class A Ordinary Shares must be registered in the Hong Kong Share Register. ADSs are quoted for trading on NYSE. An investor who holds Class A Ordinary Shares and wishes to trade ADSs on NYSE must deposit or have his broker deposit with J.P. Morgan Chase Bank N.A. Hong Kong, as custodian of the Depositary (the "Depositary's Custodian"), Class A Ordinary Shares, or evidence of rights to receive Class A Ordinary Shares, so as to receive the corresponding ADSs as described below.

Converting Class A Ordinary Shares Trading in Hong Kong to ADSs

An investor who holds Class A Ordinary Shares registered in Hong Kong and who intends to convert them to ADSs to trade on the New York Stock Exchange must deposit or have his or her broker deposit the Class A Ordinary Shares with the Depositary's Hong Kong Custodian, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank N.A. Hong Kong, in exchange for ADSs. A deposit of Class A Ordinary Shares trading in Hong Kong in exchange for ADSs involves the following procedures:

- If Class A Ordinary Shares have been deposited with CCASS, the investor must transfer Class A Ordinary Shares to the depositary's account with the custodian within CCASS by following the CCASS procedures for transfer and submit and deliver a duly completed and signed letter of transmittal to the custodian via his or her broker.
- If Class A Ordinary Shares are held outside CCASS, the investor must arrange to deposit his or her Class A Ordinary Shares into the CCASS for delivery to the depositary's account with the custodian within CCASS, and must submit and deliver a duly completed and signed letter of transmittal to the custodian via his or her broker.
- Upon payment of its fees and expenses, payment or net of the depositary's fees and expenses, and payment of any taxes or charges, such as stamp taxes or stock transfer taxes or fees, if applicable, and subject in all cases to the terms of the deposit agreement, the depositary will register the corresponding number of ADSs in the name(s) requested by an investor and will deliver the ADSs to the designated DTC account of the person(s) designated by an investor or his or her broker if such ADSs are to be held in book-entry form through DTC's "Direct Registration System".

For Class A Ordinary Shares deposited in CCASS, under normal circumstances, the above steps generally require two business days, provided that the investor has provided timely and complete instructions. For Class A Ordinary Shares held outside CCASS in physical form, the above steps may take 14 business days, or more, to complete. Temporary delays may arise. For example, the transfer books of the depositary may from time to time be closed to ADS issuances. The investor will be unable to trade the ADSs until the procedures are completed.

Converting ADSs to Class A Ordinary Shares Trading in Hong Kong

Following the listing of our Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Class A Ordinary Shares registered on the Hong Kong share register will be able to convert these Class A Ordinary Shares into ADSs, and vice versa, subject to certain exceptions as provided herein. In addition, thereafter all deposits of Class A Ordinary Shares for the issuance of ADSs and all withdrawals of Class A Ordinary Shares upon the cancellation of ADSs will be in the form of Class A Ordinary Shares registered on our Hong Kong share register and all corporate actions with respect thereto will be processed via the depositary's custodian account at CCASS, subject to the rules and procedures applicable to CCASS – eligible securities, and also subject, in each case, to certain exceptions described below and provided that the foregoing shall not apply to certain of our “restricted” Class A Ordinary Shares and Class A Ordinary Shares as determined by the Company and the depositary, which will be via our principal register in the Cayman Islands.

An Investor who holds ADSs and who Intends to convert his or her ADSs Class A Ordinary Shares that trade on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange must cancel the ADSs the investor holds and withdraw Class A Ordinary Shares from our ADS program and cause his or her broker or other financial institution to trade such Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

An investor that holds ADSs indirectly through a broker or other financial institution should follow the procedure of the broker or financial institution and instruct the broker to arrange for cancelation of the ADSs, and transfer of the underlying Class A Ordinary Shares from the depositary's account with the custodian within the CCASS system to the investor's Hong Kong stock account. For investors holding ADSs directly, the following steps must be taken:

- To withdraw Class A Ordinary Shares from our ADS program, an investor who holds ADSs may turn in such ADSs at the office of the depositary (and the applicable ADR(s) if the ADSs are held in certificated form), and send an instruction to cancel such ADSs to the depositary.
- Upon payment or net of its fees, payment of CCASS' fees and expenses, and payment of expenses and of any taxes or charges, such as stamp taxes or stock transfer taxes or fees, if applicable, and subject in all cases to the terms of the deposit agreement, the depositary will instruct the custodian to deliver Class A Ordinary Shares underlying the canceled ADSs to the CCASS account designated by an investor.
- If an investor prefers to receive Class A Ordinary Shares outside CCASS, he or she must receive Class A Ordinary Shares in CCASS first and then arrange for withdrawal from CCASS. Investors can then obtain a transfer form signed by HKSCC Nominees Limited (as the transferor) and register Class A Ordinary Shares in their own names with our Hong Kong Share Registrar.

For Class A Ordinary Shares to be received in CCASS, under normal circumstances, the above steps generally require two business days, provided that the investor has provided timely and complete instructions. For Class A Ordinary Shares to be received outside CCASS in physical form, the above steps may take 14 business days, or more, to complete. The investor will be unable to trade the Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange until the procedures are completed.

Temporary delays may arise. For example, the transfer books of the depositary may from time to time be closed to ADS cancelations. In addition, completion of the above steps and procedures for delivery for Class A Ordinary Shares in a CCASS account is subject to there being a sufficient number of Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong share register to facilitate a withdrawal from the ADS program directly into the CCASS system. We are not under any obligation to maintain or increase the number of Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong share register to facilitate such withdrawals.

In the event there are not a sufficient number of Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong share register in the account of the depositary's custodian at CCASS to satisfy a cancellation of ADSs and withdrawal of Class A Ordinary Shares in whole or in part, such withdrawal shall be in the form of Class A Ordinary Shares on the Hong Kong share register to the extent available with the balance to be in the form of Class A Ordinary Shares on the Company's principal share register in the Cayman Islands. The depositary is not under any obligation, and has no ability, to maintain or increase the number of Class A Ordinary Shares held by its custodian on the Hong Kong share register to facilitate such withdrawals.

Depository Requirements

Before the depository delivers ADSs or permits withdrawal of Class A Ordinary Shares, the depository may require:

- payment of all amounts required pursuant to the deposit agreement, including the issuance and cancellation fees therein, any stock transfer or other tax or other governmental charges and any stock transfer or registration fees in effect;
- production of satisfactory proof of the identity and genuineness of any signature or other information it deems necessary; and
- compliance with procedures it may establish, from time to time, consistent with the deposit agreement, including completion and presentation of transfer documents.

The depository may refuse to deliver, transfer, or register issuances, transfers and cancelations of ADSs generally when the transfer books of the depository or our Hong Kong share registrar or Cayman share registrar are closed or at any time if the depository or we determine it advisable to do so, subject to such refusal complying with U.S. federal securities laws.

All costs attributable to the transfer of Class A Ordinary Shares to effect a withdrawal from or deposit of Class A Ordinary Shares into our ADS program will be borne by the investor requesting the transfer. In particular, holders of Class A Ordinary Shares and ADSs should note that our Hong Kong Share Registrar will charge between HK\$2.50 to HK\$20, depending on the speed of service (or such higher fee as may from time to time be permitted under the Hong Kong Listing Rules), for each transfer of Class A Ordinary Shares from one registered owner to another, each share certificate canceled or issued by it and any applicable fee as stated in the share transfer forms used in Hong Kong. In addition, holders of Class A Ordinary Shares and ADSs must pay up to US\$5.00 per 100 ADSs (or portion thereof) for each issuance of ADSs and each cancelation of ADSs, as the case may be, in connection with the deposit of Class A Ordinary Shares into, or withdrawal of Class A Ordinary Shares from, our ADS program.

PART II

ITEM 13. DEFAULTS, DIVIDEND ARREARAGES AND DELINQUENCIES

None.

ITEM 14. MATERIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE RIGHTS OF SECURITY HOLDERS AND USE OF PROCEEDS

Material Modifications to the Rights of Security Holders

See “Item 10. Additional Information” for a description of the rights of securities holders, which remain unchanged.

Use of Proceeds

The following “Use of Proceeds” information relates to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File Number: 333-253910) relating to our initial public offering of 55,000,000 ADSs representing 27,500,000 Class A ordinary shares, and the underwriters’ partial exercise of their option to purchase from us 259,904 additional ADSs representing 129,952 Class A ordinary shares, at an initial offering price of US\$9.50 per ADS. The registration statement was declared effective by the SEC on March 25, 2021. Credit Suisse Securities (USA) LLC, Goldman Sachs (Asia) L.L.C., and J.P. Morgan Securities LLC were the representatives of the underwriters.

We raised approximately US\$739.4 million in net proceeds from our initial public offering, after deducting underwriting commissions and the offering expenses payable by us, including the net proceeds we received from the underwriters’ partial exercise of their option to purchase additional ADSs from us. None of the transaction expenses included payments to directors or officers of our company or their associates, persons owning more than 10% or more of our equity securities, or our affiliates. None of the net proceeds from the initial public offering were paid, directly or indirectly, to any of our directors or officers or their associates, persons owning 10% or more of our equity securities, or our affiliates.

For the period from March 25, 2021 to December 31, 2022, we have used less than 5% of the net proceeds from our initial public offering for the development of product and service, market and user growth, research and development, and general corporate purposes. There is no material change in the use of proceeds as described in our registration statement on Form F-1. We still intend to use the remainder of the proceeds from our initial public offering for purposes as disclosed in our registration statement on Form F-1.

ITEM 15. CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES

Disclosure Controls and Procedures

Under the supervision and with the participation of our management, including our chief executive officer and our chief financial officer, we carried out an evaluation of the effectiveness of our disclosure controls and procedures, which is defined in Rules 13a-15(e) of the Exchange Act, as of December 31, 2022. Based upon that evaluation, our management, with the participation of our chief executive officer and chief financial officer, has concluded that, as of December 31, 2022, our disclosure controls and procedures were effective in ensuring that the information required to be disclosed by us in the reports that we file or submit under the Exchange Act was recorded, processed, summarized and reported, within the time periods specified in the SEC’s rules and forms, and that the information required to be disclosed by us in the reports that we file or submit under the Exchange Act was accumulated and communicated to our management, including our chief executive officer and chief financial officer, as appropriate, to allow timely decisions regarding required disclosure.

Management's Annual Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting

Our management is responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting as defined in Rules 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. Our internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of our financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) in the United States of America and includes those policies and procedures that (1) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of our company; (2) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of consolidated financial statements in accordance with GAAP, and that receipts and expenditures of our company are being made only in accordance with authorizations of our management and directors; and (3) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of the unauthorized acquisition, use or disposition of our company's assets that could have a material effect on the consolidated financial statements.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risks that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

As required by Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and related rules as promulgated by the Securities and Exchange Commission, our management including our chief executive officer and chief financial officer assessed the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022 using the criteria set forth in the report "Internal Control—Integrated Framework (2013)" published by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission. Our management has excluded Beijing Pocket Gardener Technology Co., Ltd. and its subsidiaries (collectively referred to as the "Yiqikao") from our assessment of internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022 because it was acquired by us in a business combination during 2022. The total assets and total revenues of Yiqikao excluded from our assessment represented 0.6% and 0.9%, respectively, of the related consolidated financial statement amounts as of and for the year ended December 31, 2022.

Based on this evaluation, management concluded that our internal control over financial reporting was effective as of December 31, 2022.

Attestation Report of the Registered Public Accounting Firm

Our independent registered public accounting firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP, has audited the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022, as stated in its report, which appears on page F- 2 of this annual report on Form 20-F.

Changes in Internal Control over Financial Reporting

As of December 31, 2022, based on an assessment performed by our management on the performance of certain remediation measures (specified below), we concluded that the material weakness in our internal control over financial reporting previously identified by us and our independent registered public accounting firm in connection with the audit of our consolidated financial statements as of and for the year ended December 31, 2021 has been remediated.

A material weakness is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over financial reporting, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the company's annual or interim financial statements will not be prevented or detected on a timely basis. The material weakness in our internal control over financial reporting identified as of December 31, 2021 was that we did not have sufficient competent financial reporting and accounting personnel with an appropriate understanding of U.S. GAAP to design and implement formal period-end financial reporting controls and procedures to address complex U.S. GAAP technical accounting issues, and to prepare and review the consolidated financial statements and related disclosures in accordance with U.S. GAAP and financial reporting requirements set forth by the SEC.

We have implemented a number of measures to address the material weakness, including: (i) we have hired additional accounting staff with adequate experience and knowledge with U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements to address complex U.S. GAAP technical accounting issues, strengthen the financial reporting function, and set up an internal control framework to prepare and review the financial statements and related disclosures in accordance with U.S. GAAP and SEC financial reporting requirements; (ii) we have implemented regular U.S. GAAP and SEC financial reporting training programs for the accounting and financial personnel to equip them with sufficient knowledge and practical experience of preparing financial statements under U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements; and (iii) we have developed and implement a comprehensive set of period-end financial reporting policies and procedures, especially for non-recurring and complex transactions to ensure consolidated financial statements and related disclosures are in compliance with U.S. GAAP and SEC reporting requirements.

Except for the measures to improve our internal control over financial reporting as described above, there were no changes in our internal control over financial reporting that occurred during the period covered by this annual report that have materially affected, or are reasonably likely to materially affect, our internal control over financial reporting.

ITEM 16. [RESERVED]

ITEM 16AAUDIT COMMITTEE FINANCIAL EXPERT

Our board of directors has determined that Mr. Hanhui Sam Sun, an independent director (under the standards set forth in Section 303A of the Corporate Governance Rules of the New York Stock Exchange and Rule 10A-3 under the Exchange Act) and member of our audit committee, is an audit committee financial expert.

ITEM 16BCODE OF ETHICS

Our board of directors has adopted a code of ethics that applies to all of the directors, officers and employees of us and our subsidiaries, whether they work for us on a full-time, part-time, consultative, or temporary basis. In addition, we expect those who do business with us, such as consultants, suppliers and collaborators, to also adhere to the principles outlined in the code of ethics. Certain provisions of the code of ethics apply specifically to our chief executive officer, chief financial officer, senior finance officer, controller, vice presidents and any other persons who perform similar functions for us. We have filed our code of business conduct and ethics as an exhibit to our registration statement on Form F-1 (No. 333-253910) in connection with our initial public offering in March 2021, which was incorporated by reference thereto in this annual report.

ITEM 16CPRINCIPAL ACCOUNTANT FEES AND SERVICES

The following table sets forth the aggregate fees by categories specified below in connection with certain professional services rendered by PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm, for the periods indicated. We did not pay any other fees to our principal accountant during the periods except as indicated below.

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2021	2022	
	RMB	RMB	US\$
		(in thousands)	
Audit fees ⁽¹⁾	14,160	21,080	3,056
All other fees ⁽²⁾	605	1,583	229

Notes:

(1) "Audit fees" represent the aggregate fees billed or to be billed for each of the fiscal years listed for professional services rendered by our principal accountant for the audit of our annual consolidated financial statements and the review of quarterly financial information, including the audit fees relating to our initial public offering in 2021 and our dual primary listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 2022.

(2) "All other fees" represent the aggregate fees billed or to be billed for professional services rendered by our principal external auditors other than services reported under "Audit fees."

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The policy of our audit committee is to pre-approve all audit and other service provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP and its affiliates, including audit services, audit-related services, tax services and other services as described above.

ITEM 16DEXEMPTIONS FROM THE LISTING STANDARDS FOR AUDIT COMMITTEES

Not applicable.

ITEM 16EPURCHASES OF EQUITY SECURITIES BY THE ISSUER AND AFFILIATED PURCHASERS

On June 10, 2022, our shareholders approved a share repurchase program, pursuant to which we may repurchase up to US\$100 million of our shares over the next 12 months. For the year ended December 31, 2022, we repurchased under this program a total of 6,466,307 Class A ordinary shares, comprising 46,100 Class A ordinary shares on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange at an aggregate consideration of HK\$1.3 million and 6,420,207 Class A ordinary shares in the form of ADSs on the New York Stock Exchange at an aggregate consideration of US\$16.5 million.

Period	Total Number of Class A Ordinary Shares Purchased	Average Price Paid Per Class A Ordinary Shares	Total Number of Class A Ordinary Shares Purchased as Part of the Publicly Announced Plan	Approximate Dollar Value of Class A Ordinary Shares That May Yet Be Purchased Under the Program*
January 1, 2022—January 31, 2022	—	—	—	—
February 1, 2022—February 28, 2022	—	—	—	—
March 1, 2022—March 31, 2022	—	—	—	—
April 1, 2022—April 30, 2022	—	—	—	—
May 1, 2022—May 31, 2022	—	—	—	—
June 1, 2022—June 30, 2022	275,550	3.80	275,550	98,953,841
July 1, 2022—July 31, 2022	1,555,400	3.19	1,830,950	93,991,145
August 1, 2022—August 31, 2022	—	—	1,830,950	93,991,145
September 1, 2022—September 30, 2022	3,035,071	2.36	4,866,021	86,829,873
October 1, 2022—October 31, 2022	665,974	2.14	5,531,995	85,407,728
November 1, 2022—November 30, 2022	598,191	2.07	6,130,186	84,166,675
December 1, 2022—December 31, 2022	336,121	2.58	6,466,307	83,297,817
Total	6,466,307	2.58	6,466,307	83,297,817

ITEM 16FCHANGE IN REGISTRANT’S CERTIFYING ACCOUNTANT

Not applicable.

ITEM 16GCORPORATE GOVERNANCE

As a Cayman Islands company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, we are subject to the New York Stock Exchange listing standards, which requires listed companies to have, among other things, a majority of their board members to be independent and independent director oversight of executive compensation and nomination of directors. However, New York Stock Exchange rules permit a foreign private issuer like us to follow the corporate governance practices of its home country. Certain corporate governance practices in the Cayman Islands, which is our home country, may differ significantly from the New York Stock Exchange listing standards. We have elected to follow our home country practice in lieu of the corporate governance requirements of the New York Stock Exchange that a listed company must have (i) a majority of independent directors and (ii) a compensation committee composed entirely of independent directors, and with respect to the adoption of our 2022 share incentive plan without the approval of our shareholders. As a result, our shareholders may be afforded less protection than they otherwise would enjoy under New York Stock Exchange corporate governance listing standards applicable to U.S. domestic issuers. See “Item 3. Key Information—D. Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Business and Industry—As a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands, we are permitted to adopt certain home country practices in relation to corporate governance matters

that differ significantly from the New York Stock Exchange listing standards.”

Other than the requirements discussed above, there are no significant differences between our corporate governance practices and those followed by domestic listed companies as required under the NYSE Listed Company Manual.

ITEM 16H MINE SAFETY DISCLOSURE

Not applicable.

ITEM 16I. DISCLOSURE REGARDING FOREIGN JURISDICTIONS THAT PREVENT INSPECTIONS.

In May 2022, the SEC conclusively listed Zhihu Inc. as a Commission-Identified Issuer under the HFCAA following the filing of our annual report on Form 20-F for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021. Our auditor who issued the audit report for us for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021 is a registered public accounting firm headquartered in mainland China, a jurisdiction where the PCAOB determined that it was unable to inspect or investigate registered public accounting firms headquartered there until December 2022.

On December 15, 2022, the PCAOB issued a report that vacated its December 16, 2021 determination and removed mainland China and Hong Kong from the list of jurisdictions where it is unable to inspect or investigate completely registered public accounting firms. For this reason, we do not expect to be identified as a Commission-Identified Issuer under the HFCAA after we file this annual report on Form 20-F.

As of the date of this annual report, to our knowledge, (i) no Cayman Islands or PRC government entities owns any shares of Zhihu Inc., the VIEs, or the VIEs' subsidiaries, (ii) the PRC government entities do not have a controlling financial interest in Zhihu Inc., the VIEs, or the VIEs' subsidiaries, (iii) none of the members of the board of directors of Zhihu Inc. or its operating entities, including the VIEs and the VIEs' subsidiaries, is an official of the Communist Party of China, and (iv) none of the currently effective memorandum and articles of association (or equivalent organizing document) of Zhihu Inc., the VIEs, or the VIEs' subsidiaries contains any charter of the Communist Party of China.

**ITEM
16J. INSIDER TRADING POLICIES**

Not applicable.

PART III

ITEM 17. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

We have elected to provide financial statements pursuant to Item 18.

ITEM 18. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The consolidated financial statements of Zhihu Inc. are included at the end of this annual report.

ITEM 19. EXHIBITS

Exhibit Number	Document
1.1	Eleventh Amended and Restated Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Registrant (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to the current report on Form 6-K (File No. 001-40253) furnished with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 13, 2022)
2.1	Registrant's Specimen American Depositary Receipt (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.1 to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-253910), as amended, initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
2.2	Registrant's Specimen Certificate for Class A Ordinary Shares (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.2 to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-253910), as amended, initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
2.3	Deposit Agreement, among the Registrant, JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., as depositary, and holders and beneficial owners of the American Depositary Receipts issued thereunder dated March 25, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.3 to the registration statement on Form S-8 (File No. 333-256178) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on May 17, 2021)
2.4	Sixth Amended and Restated Shareholders' Agreement between the Registrant and other parties thereto dated August 7, 2019 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-253910), as amended, initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
2.5*	Description of Securities
4.1	2012 Incentive Compensation Plan (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-253910), as amended, initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
4.2	Form of Employment Agreement between the Registrant and its executive officers (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 10.2 to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-253910), as amended, initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
4.3	Form of Indemnification Agreement between the Registrant and its directors and executive officers (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 10.3 to the registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-253910), as amended, initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
4.4	English translation of the Exclusive Business Cooperation Agreement between Zhizhe Sihai and Zhizhe Tianxia dated December 21, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.4 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.5	English translation of executed form of Shareholders' Rights Entrustment Agreement between the Zhizhe Tianxia, its shareholders, and Zhizhe Sihai dated December 21, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.5 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.6	English translation of Share Pledge Agreement between Zhizhe Sihai, Zhizhe Tianxia, and its shareholders dated December 21, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.6 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.7	English translation of Exclusive Option Agreement between Zhizhe Sihai, Zhizhe Tianxia, and its shareholders dated December 21, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.7 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.8	English translation of Exclusive Technology Development, Consultancy, and Services Agreement between Shanghai Zhishi and Shanghai Pinzhi dated September 7, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.8 to



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4.9	the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.10	English translation of Power of Attorney issued by the shareholders of Shanghai Pinzhi dated September 7, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.9 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.11	English translation of Share Pledge Agreement between Shanghai Zhishi, Shanghai Pinzhi, and its shareholders dated September 7, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.10 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.12	English translation of Exclusive Option Agreement between Shanghai Zhishi, Shanghai Pinzhi, and its shareholders dated September 7, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.11 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.13	English translation of Exclusive Technology Development, Consultancy, and Services Agreement between Shanghai Paya and Shanghai Biban dated November 9, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.12 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.14	English translation of Power of Attorney issued by the shareholders of Shanghai Biban dated November 9, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.13 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.15	English translation of Share Pledge Agreement between Shanghai Paya, Shanghai Biban, and its shareholders dated November 9, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.14 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
4.16	English translation of Exclusive Option Agreement between Shanghai Paya, Shanghai Biban, and its shareholders dated November 9, 2021 (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 4.15 to the annual report on Form 20-F (File No. 001-40253) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 8, 2022)
8.1*	2022 Share Incentive Plan (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 10.1 to the registration statement on Form S-8 (File No. 333-265451) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 7, 2022)
11.1	Principal Subsidiaries of the Registrant
12.1*	Code of Business Conduct and Ethics of the Registrant (incorporated herein by reference to Exhibit 99.1 to the registration statement on Form F-1, as amended (File No. 333-253910), initially filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 5, 2021)
12.2*	CEO Certification Pursuant to Section 302 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002
13.1**	CFO Certification Pursuant to Section 302 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002
13.2**	CEO Certification Pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002
15.1*	CFO Certification Pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002
15.2*	Consent of Maples and Calder (Hong Kong) LLP
15.3*	Consent of Commerce & Finance Law Offices
	Consent of PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP
101.INS*	Inline XBRL Instance Document
101.SCH*	Inline XBRL Taxonomy Extension Scheme Document
101.CAL*	Inline XBRL Taxonomy Extension Calculation Linkbase Document
101.DEF*	Inline XBRL Taxonomy Extension Definition Linkbase Document
101.LAB*	Inline XBRL Taxonomy Extension Label Linkbase Document
101.PRE*	Inline XBRL Taxonomy Extension Presentation Linkbase Document
104	Cover Page Interactive Data File (embedded within the Inline XBRL document)

Notes:

* Filed with this annual report on Form 20-F.

** Furnished with this annual report on Form 20-F.

SIGNATURES

The registrant hereby certifies that it meets all of the requirements for filing on Form 20-F and that it has duly caused and authorized the undersigned to sign this annual report on its behalf.

Zhihu Inc.

By: /s/ Yuan Zhou

Name: Yuan Zhou

Title: Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

Date: April 28, 2023

Zhihu Inc.

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Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm

To the Board of Directors and Shareholders of Zhihu Inc.

Opinions on the Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting

We have audited the accompanying consolidated balance sheets of Zhihu Inc. and its subsidiaries (the “Company”) as of December 31, 2022 and 2021, and the related consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss, of changes in shareholders’ (deficit)/equity and of cash flows for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2022, including the related notes (collectively referred to as the “consolidated financial statements”). We also have audited the Company's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022, based on criteria established in Internal Control - Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO).

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as of December 31, 2022 and 2021, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2022 in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Also in our opinion, the Company maintained, in all material respects, effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022, based on criteria established in Internal Control - Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the COSO.

Basis for Opinions

The Company's management is responsible for these consolidated financial statements, for maintaining effective internal control over financial reporting, and for its assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, included in Management's Annual Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting appearing under Item 15. Our responsibility is to express opinions on the Company's consolidated financial statements and on the Company's internal control over financial reporting based on our audits. We are a public accounting firm registered with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (PCAOB) and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB.

We conducted our audits in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether due to error or fraud, and whether effective internal control over financial reporting was maintained in all material respects.

Our audits of the consolidated financial statements included performing procedures to assess the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to error or fraud, and performing procedures that respond to those risks. Such procedures included examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. Our audits also included evaluating the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements. Our audit of internal control over financial reporting included obtaining an understanding of internal control over financial reporting, assessing the risk that a material weakness exists, and testing and evaluating the design and operating effectiveness of internal control based on the assessed risk. Our audits also included performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinions.

As described in Management's Annual Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting, management has excluded Beijing Pocket Gardener Technology Co., Ltd. and its subsidiaries (collectively referred to as the “Yiqikao”) from its assessment of internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2022 because it was acquired by the Company in a business combination during 2022. We have also excluded Yiqikao from our audit of internal control over financial reporting. Yiqikao is a subsidiary whose total assets and total revenues excluded from management's assessment and our audit of internal control over financial reporting represent 0.6% and 0.9%, respectively, of the related consolidated financial statement amounts as of and for the year ended December 31, 2022.

Definition and Limitations of Internal Control over Financial Reporting

A company's internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A company's internal control over financial reporting includes those policies and procedures that (i) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of the company; (ii) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and that receipts and expenditures of the company are being made only in accordance with authorizations of management and directors of the company; and (iii) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of unauthorized acquisition, use, or disposition of the company's assets that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

Critical Audit Matters

The critical audit matters communicated below are matters arising from the current period audit of the consolidated financial statements that were communicated or required to be communicated to the audit committee and that (i) relate to accounts or disclosures that are material to the consolidated financial statements and (ii) involved our especially challenging, subjective, or complex judgments. The communication of critical audit matters does not alter in any way our opinion on the consolidated financial statements, taken as a whole, and we are not, by communicating the critical audit matters below, providing separate opinions on the critical audit matters or on the accounts or disclosures to which they relate.

Purchase price allocation for business combination

As described in Notes 2 (aa) and 22 to the consolidated financial statements, the Group acquired 51% equity interests of Yiqikao in September 2022. The aggregate consideration is RMB99.8 million, which is comprised of cash consideration of RMB66.5 million and contingent consideration at fair value of RMB33.3 million subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions. As of the acquisition date, the purchase price was preliminarily allocated to the identified assets and liabilities assumed, which were recorded at fair value, including intangible assets of RMB33.3 million and goodwill of RMB52.4 million. Management applied significant judgments and estimates in the determination of the appropriate valuation models used in support of the purchase price allocation and the application of significant assumptions in the models relating to forecast revenue growth rates, terminal growth rates, and discount rates used.

The principal considerations for our determination that performing procedures relating to purchase price allocation is a critical audit matter are due to the significant judgment by management when developing the estimates and the high degree of auditor judgment and subjectivity in performing procedures relating to the valuation of acquired intangible assets. This in turn led to significant audit effort in performing procedures and evaluating management's significant assumptions and estimates related to the purchase price allocation. In addition, the audit effort involved the use of professionals with specialized skill and knowledge.

Addressing the matter involved performing procedures and evaluating audit evidence in connection with forming our overall opinion on the consolidated financial statements. These procedures included testing the effectiveness of controls relating to the purchase price allocation, including controls over development of the assumptions and estimates related to management's valuation of acquired intangible assets. These procedures also included, among others, testing management's process to determine the fair value of acquired intangible assets and purchase price allocation. The testing of management's process included (i) reviewing the purchase agreement, (ii) assessing the competence, capability and objectivity of the external valuation experts engaged by the management, (iii) evaluating the appropriateness of the valuation methods used, (iv) testing the completeness, accuracy and reliability of underlying data used in the valuation, (v) evaluating the reasonableness of the significant assumptions and estimates, which involved considering the past performance of Yiqikao and industry data, and (vi) testing the mathematical accuracy of the calculation of fair value of intangible assets in the valuation model. Professionals with specialized skill and knowledge were used to assist in the evaluation of the appropriateness of the valuation methods used by management and reasonableness of certain significant assumptions and judgments made by management in estimating the fair value of acquired intangible assets as of the acquisition date relating to discount rates used.

Allowance for expected credit losses on trade receivables

As described in Note 2 (j) to the consolidated financial statements, the balance of gross trade receivables was RMB927.1 million, against which an allowance for expected credit losses of RMB92.9 million was made as of December 31, 2022. The allowance for credit losses was made based on an estimate of the current credit losses to be incurred over the expected life of these receivables. Management applied significant judgments and estimates in the determination of models and the application of significant assumptions relating to portfolio groups of trade receivables and estimated credit loss rates.

The principal considerations for our determination that performing procedures relating to the allowance for expected credit losses on trade receivables is a critical audit matter are the significant judgment by management when developing the current expected credit losses to be incurred over the expected life of these receivables, which in turn led to a high degree of auditor judgment and significant audit effort in performing procedures and evaluating management's significant assumptions and estimates. In addition, the audit effort involved the use of professionals with specialized skill and knowledge.

Addressing the matter involved performing procedures and evaluating audit evidence in connection with forming our overall opinion on the consolidated financial statements. These procedures included testing the effectiveness of controls relating to the assumptions of portfolio groups of trade receivables and estimated credit loss rates. These procedures also included evaluating the outcome of the prior period assessment of the provision for loss allowance on trade receivables, to assess the effectiveness of management's estimation process by comparing the expected credit losses in the prior period to the actual collection performance of debtors in the current year. These procedures also included, among others, the involvement of professionals with specialized skill and knowledge to assist in testing management's process to estimate the allowance for expected credit losses on trade receivables. The testing of management's process included (i) assessing the appropriateness of the model and methodology used; (ii) assessing the reasonableness of portfolio groups of the receivables used by management by evaluating the heterogeneity among different portfolio groups and the homogeneity within the same portfolio groups; (iii) assessing the reasonableness of estimated loss rates used by management by evaluating the historical default rates and assessing the reasonableness and application of forward-looking information by comparing with publicly available forecasts from third-party institutions and performing a sensitivity test; and (iv) testing the accuracy, on a sample basis, of the key data inputs such as the ending balance and aging schedule of trade receivables, and testing the mathematical accuracy of the calculation of the current expected credit losses.

/s/PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP
Beijing, the People's Republic of China
April 28, 2023

We have served as the Company's auditor since 2017.

Zhihu Inc.
CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS
(All amounts in thousands, except for share and per share data)

	As of December 31,		
	2021	2022	2022
	RMB	RMB	US\$
ASSETS			
Current assets:			
Cash and cash equivalents	2,157,161	4,525,852	656,187
Term deposits	2,815,509	948,390	137,504
Short-term investments	2,239,596	787,259	114,142
Trade receivables	831,628	834,251	120,955
Amounts due from related parties	18,196	24,798	3,595
Prepayments and other current assets	272,075	199,249	28,889
Total current assets	8,334,165	7,319,799	1,061,272
Non-current assets:			
Property and equipment, net	9,865	7,290	1,057
Intangible assets, net	68,308	80,237	11,633
Goodwill	73,663	126,344	18,318
Long-term investments	19,127	—	—
Term deposits	159,393	—	—
Right-of-use assets	126,512	100,119	14,516
Other non-current assets	14,132	22,450	3,255
Total non-current assets	471,000	336,440	48,779
Total assets	8,805,165	7,656,239	1,110,051
LIABILITIES AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY			
Current liabilities (including amounts of the consolidated VIEs and their subsidiaries without recourse to the primary beneficiaries of RMB 295,911 and RMB512,496 as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively)			
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,026,534	916,112	132,824
Salary and welfare payables	313,676	283,546	41,110
Taxes payable	66,184	25,975	3,766
Contract liabilities	239,757	355,626	51,561
Amounts due to related parties	83,591	24,861	3,605
Short-term lease liabilities	40,525	53,190	7,712
Other current liabilities	127,447	165,531	24,000
Total current liabilities	1,897,714	1,824,841	264,578
Non-current liabilities (including amounts of the consolidated VIEs and their subsidiaries without recourse to the primary beneficiaries of RMB 26,158 and RMB41,453 as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively)			
Long-term lease liabilities	82,133	43,367	6,288
Deferred tax liabilities	14,030	11,630	1,686
Other non-current liabilities	73,139	82,133	11,908
Total non-current liabilities	169,302	137,130	19,882
Total liabilities	2,067,016	1,961,971	284,460
Commitments and contingencies (See Note 17)			
Shareholders' equity:			
Class A Ordinary shares (US \$0.000125 par value, 1,500,000,000 and 1,550,000,000 shares authorized as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively; 279,835,705 and 297,419,878 shares issued and outstanding as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively)	226	234	34
Class B Ordinary shares (US \$0.000125 par value, 50,000,000 and 50,000,000 shares authorized as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively; 19,227,592 and 18,940,652 shares issued and outstanding as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively)	15	15	2
Treasury stock	—	(33,814)	(4,903)
Additional paid-in capital	13,350,347	13,615,042	1,973,996
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(339,118)	(65,808)	(9,541)
Accumulated deficit	(6,280,816)	(7,861,973)	(1,139,879)
Total Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders' equity	6,730,654	5,653,696	819,709
Noncontrolling interests	7,495	40,572	5,882
Total shareholders' equity	6,738,149	5,694,268	825,591
Total liabilities and shareholders' equity	8,805,165	7,656,239	1,110,051

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these consolidated financial statements.

Zhihu Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF OPERATIONS AND COMPREHENSIVE LOSS

(All amounts in thousands, except for share and per share data)

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB	US\$
Revenues (including transactions with related parties of RMB 37,152, RMB38,471 and RMB40,520 for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively)	1,352,196	2,959,324	3,604,919	522,664
Cost of revenues (including transactions with related parties of RMB 91,989, RMB135,058 and RMB149,547 for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively)	(594,399)	(1,405,423)	(1,796,867)	(260,521)
Gross profit	757,797	1,553,901	1,808,052	262,143
Operating expenses:				
Selling and marketing expenses (including transactions with related parties of RMB 33,921, RMB120,315 and RMB2,541 for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively)	(734,753)	(1,634,733)	(2,026,468)	(293,810)
Research and development expenses	(329,763)	(619,585)	(763,362)	(110,677)
General and administrative expenses	(296,162)	(690,292)	(621,973)	(90,178)
Total operating expenses	(1,360,678)	(2,944,610)	(3,411,803)	(494,665)
Loss from operations	(602,881)	(1,390,709)	(1,603,751)	(232,522)
Other income/(expenses):				
Investment income	56,087	59,177	70,380	10,204
Interest income	24,751	31,305	68,104	9,874
Fair value change of financial instruments	(68,818)	27,846	(176,685)	(25,617)
Exchange gains/(losses)	62,663	(16,665)	71,749	10,403
Others, net	11,728	(4,391)	5,983	867
Loss before income tax	(516,470)	(1,293,437)	(1,564,220)	(226,791)
Income tax expense	(1,080)	(5,443)	(14,183)	(2,056)
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,578,403)	(228,847)
Net income attributable to noncontrolling interests	—	—	(2,754)	(399)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	(170,585)	—	—
Net loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,198,284)	(1,469,465)	(1,581,157)	(229,246)
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,578,403)	(228,847)
Other comprehensive (loss)/income:				
Foreign currency translation adjustments	(143,326)	(143,190)	273,310	39,626
Total other comprehensive (loss)/income	(143,326)	(143,190)	273,310	39,626
Total comprehensive loss	(660,876)	(1,442,070)	(1,305,093)	(189,221)
Net income attributable to noncontrolling interests	—	—	(2,754)	(399)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	(170,585)	—	—
Comprehensive loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,341,610)	(1,612,655)	(1,307,847)	(189,620)
Net loss per share, basic and diluted	(18.36)	(6.12)	(5.19)	(0.75)
Weighted average number of ordinary shares, basic and diluted	65,279,970	240,174,108	304,836,318	304,836,318
Share-based compensation expenses included in:				
Cost of revenues	5,424	18,973	11,861	1,720
Selling and marketing expenses	15,973	31,947	24,334	3,528
Research and development expenses	15,281	57,595	62,503	9,062
General and administrative expenses	143,412	439,950	275,197	39,900

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these consolidated financial statements

Zhihu Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN SHAREHOLDERS' (DEFICIT)/EQUITY

(All amounts in thousands, except for share and per share data)

	Class A ordinary shares		Class B ordinary shares		Additional paid-in capital	Accumulated other comprehensive loss	Accumulated deficit	Total shareholders' deficit
	Shares	Amount RMB	Shares	Amount RMB				
Balance as of December 31, 2019	40,080,478	31	18,727,592	15	—	(52,602)	(3,939,685)	(3,992,241)
Net loss	—	—	—	—	—	—	(517,550)	(517,550)
Share-based compensation	—	—	—	—	180,090	—	—	180,090
Foreign currency translation adjustment	—	—	—	—	—	(143,326)	—	(143,326)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	—	—	—	—	(189,376)	—	(491,358)	(680,734)
Exercise of share options	—	—	500,000	—	—	—	—	—
Proceeds received from employees in relation to share options	—	—	—	—	9,286	—	—	9,286
Balance as of December 31, 2020	<u>40,080,478</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>19,227,592</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>(195,928)</u>	<u>(4,948,593)</u>	<u>(5,144,475)</u>

Zhihu Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN SHAREHOLDERS' (DEFICIT)/EQUITY (Continued)

(All amounts in thousands, except for share and per share data)

	Class A ordinary shares		Class B ordinary shares		Additional paid-in capital	Accumulated other comprehensive loss	Accumulated deficit	Noncontrolling interests	Total shareholders' (deficit)/ equity
	Shares	Amount RMB	Shares	Amount RMB	RMB	RMB	RMB	RMB	RMB
Balance as of December 31, 2020	40,080,478	31	19,227,592	15	—	(195,928)	(4,948,593)	—	(5,144,475)
Net loss	—	—	—	—	—	—	(1,298,880)	—	(1,298,880)
Share-based compensation expenses	—	—	—	—	540,970	—	—	7,495	548,465
Foreign currency translation adjustment	—	—	—	—	—	(143,190)	—	—	(143,190)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	—	—	—	—	(137,242)	—	(33,343)	—	(170,585)
Proceeds/receivables in relation to share options	—	—	—	—	31,588	—	—	—	31,588
Issuance of Class A ordinary shares upon the completion of IPO, net of issuance cost	40,787,844	33	—	—	4,853,260	—	—	—	4,853,293
Conversion of convertible redeemable preferred shares into Class A shares upon the completion of IPO	180,336,722	148	—	—	8,061,785	—	—	—	8,061,933
Exercise of share options and restricted shares	16,528,770	14	—	—	(14)	—	—	—	—
Balance as of December 31, 2021	<u>277,733,814</u>	<u>226</u>	<u>19,227,592</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>13,350,347</u>	<u>(339,118)</u>	<u>(6,280,816)</u>	<u>7,495</u>	<u>6,738,149</u>

Zhihu Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN SHAREHOLDERS' (DEFICIT)/EQUITY (Continued)

(All amounts in thousands, except for share and per share data)

	Class A ordinary shares		Class B ordinary shares		Treasury stock		Additional paid-in capital	Accumulated other comprehensive loss	Accumulated deficit	Non controlling interests	Total shareholders' equity
	Shares	Amount RMB	Shares	Amount RMB	Shares	Amount RMB					
Balance as of December 31, 2021	277,733,814	226	19,227,592	15	—	—	13,350,347	(339,118)	(6,280,816)	7,495	6,738,149
Net loss	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	(1,581,157)	2,754	(1,578,403)
Share-based compensation expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	350,810	—	—	23,085	373,895
Acquisition of a subsidiary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7,238	7,238
Foreign currency translation adjustment	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	273,310	—	—	273,310
Repurchase of shares	—	—	—	—	(7,032,108)	(127,962)	—	—	—	—	(127,962)
Cancellation of shares	(4,866,021)	(4)	—	—	4,866,021	94,148	(97,508)	—	—	—	(3,364)
Proceeds/receivables in relation to share options	—	—	—	—	—	—	11,405	—	—	—	11,405
Exercise of share options and restricted shares	14,994,777	12	—	—	—	—	(12)	—	—	—	—
Conversion of ordinary shares	286,940	—	(286,940)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Balance as of December 31, 2022	<u>288,149,510</u>	<u>234</u>	<u>18,940,652</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>(2,166,087)</u>	<u>(33,814)</u>	<u>13,615,042</u>	<u>(65,808)</u>	<u>(7,861,973)</u>	<u>40,572</u>	<u>5,694,268</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these consolidated financial statements.

Zhihu Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS

(All amounts in thousands, except for share and per share data)

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB	US\$
Cash flows from operating activities:				
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,578,403)	(228,847)
Depreciation of property and equipment and amortization of intangible assets	19,611	21,451	25,210	3,655
Share-based compensation expenses	180,090	548,465	373,895	54,210
Accrued investment income of short-term investments	(2,359)	(6,366)	(31,537)	(4,572)
Deferred income tax	—	(1,095)	(2,400)	(348)
Provision of allowance for expected credit loss	16,773	32,633	34,457	4,996
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	255	—	77	11
Impairment of long-term investments	—	—	20,894	3,029
Fair value change of financial instrument	68,818	(27,846)	176,685	25,617
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:				
Trade receivables	(257,070)	(374,676)	(132,839)	(19,260)
Prepayments and other current assets	(17,061)	(134,357)	87,134	12,633
Right-of-use assets	22,744	(123,271)	26,393	3,827
Other non-current assets	412	(7,681)	382	55
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	214,807	524,245	(15,870)	(2,301)
Contract liabilities	52,867	79,404	78,219	11,341
Amounts due from/to related parties	(57,921)	33,203	(65,287)	(9,466)
Taxes payable	20	59,017	(40,849)	(5,923)
Salary and welfare payables	25,007	81,422	(36,542)	(5,298)
Other current liabilities	28,883	34,333	(8,472)	(1,228)
Lease liabilities	(22,747)	119,765	(26,101)	(3,784)
Net cash used in operating activities	(244,421)	(440,234)	(1,114,954)	(161,653)
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Cash paid for long-term investments	—	(19,380)	—	—
Purchases of short-term investments	(6,153,104)	(6,418,000)	(10,546,256)	(1,529,063)
Proceeds of maturities of short-term investments	6,594,676	5,234,592	12,046,130	1,746,525
Purchases of term deposits	(2,328,717)	(4,946,963)	(3,571,690)	(517,846)
Proceeds from withdrawal of term deposits	2,319,201	3,018,396	5,768,675	836,379
Purchases of property and equipment	(1,952)	(7,440)	(714)	(104)
Proceeds from disposal of property and equipment	9	—	123	18
Acquisition of subsidiaries, net of cash acquired	—	(33,180)	(60,608)	(8,787)
Proceeds from/(payment of) foreign exchange options	—	35,472	(145,193)	(21,051)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	430,113	(3,136,503)	3,490,467	506,071
Cash flows from financing activities:				
Proceeds from issuance of Class A ordinary shares upon the completion of IPO, net of issuance cost	—	4,853,293	—	—
Proceeds received from employees in relation to share options	9,286	22,954	19,612	2,843
Payments for repurchase of shares	—	—	(127,962)	(18,553)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	9,286	4,876,247	(108,350)	(15,710)
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	(137,508)	(100,169)	101,528	14,720
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	57,470	1,199,341	2,368,691	343,428
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	900,350	957,820	2,157,161	312,759
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	957,820	2,157,161	4,525,852	656,187

Supplemental schedule of non-cash investing and financing activities:

Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	680,734	170,585	—	—
Unpaid consideration for acquisition (including contingent consideration)	—	79,636	22,858	3,314

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these consolidated financial statements.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Operations and Principal Activities

(a) Principal activities

Zhihu Inc., (the “Company” or “Zhihu”), previously known as Zhihu Technology Limited, was incorporated in the Cayman Islands on May 17, 2011 under the Cayman Islands Companies Law as an exempted company with limited liability. The Company, through its consolidated subsidiaries and variable interest entities (“VIEs”) (collectively referred to as the “Group”), is primarily engaged in the operation of one online content community which monetizes through paid membership services, advertising services, content-commerce solutions services and vocational training in the People’s Republic of China (the “PRC” or “China”). The Company completed its initial public offering (the “IPO”) on the New York Stock Exchange in the United States of America in March 2021, and successfully listed its Class A ordinary shares on the Main Board of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in April 2022.

As of December 31, 2022, the Company’s major subsidiaries, VIEs and VIE’s subsidiary are as follows:

	Place and year of Incorporation/acquisition	Principal activities
Major Subsidiaries		
Zhihu Technology (HK) Limited	Hong Kong, 2011	Investment holding
Zhizhe Sihai (Beijing) Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2012	Technology, business support and consulting service
Beijing Zhihu Network Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2018	Information and marketing service
Shanghai Zhishi Technology Co., Ltd. (formerly known as “Shanghai Zhishi Commercial Consulting Co., Ltd.”)	PRC, 2021	Technology and consulting service
Shanghai Paya Information Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2021	Consulting service
Zhizhe Information Technology Services Chengdu Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2016	Technology, business support in the PRC
Chengdu Zhizhewanjian Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2017	Information transmission, software and information technology service in the PRC
VIEs		
Beijing Zhizhe Tianxia Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2011	Internet service
Shanghai Pinzhi Education Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2021	Vocational training
Shanghai Biban Network Technology Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2021	Vocational training
VIE’s subsidiary		
Beijing Leimeng Shengtong Cultural Development Co., Ltd.	PRC, 2017	Audio-Visual Permit holder in the PRC

(b) VIE arrangements between the Company’s PRC subsidiaries

As of December 31, 2022, the Company, through the Zhizhe Sihai (Beijing) Technology Co., Ltd., Shanghai Zhishi Technology Co., Ltd and Shanghai Paya Information Technology Co., Ltd. (“WFOEs”), entered into the following contractual arrangements with the Beijing Zhizhe Tianxia Technology Co., Ltd., Shanghai Pinzhi Education Technology Co., Ltd and Shanghai Biban Network Technology Co., Ltd (“VIEs”) and their shareholders, respectively, that enabled the Company to (1) have power to direct the activities that most significantly affect the economic performance of the VIEs, and (2) bear the risks and enjoy the rewards normally associated with ownership of the VIEs. Accordingly, the WFOEs have a controlling financial interest in the VIEs and are considered the primary beneficiary of the VIEs. As such, and the financial results of operations, assets and liabilities of the VIEs are consolidated pursuant to US GAAP (ASC 810) in the Group’s consolidated financial statements.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

1. Operations and Principal Activities (Continued)

(b) VIE arrangements between the Company's PRC subsidiaries (Continued)

The following is a summary of the contractual agreements entered into by and among the WFOEs, the VIEs and their shareholders:

i) Contracts that give the Company effective control of the VIEs

Exclusive Share Option Agreements. Pursuant to the exclusive share option agreements among the WFOEs, the VIEs and the VIEs' shareholders, each of the shareholders of the relevant VIE irrevocably granted the relevant WFOE an exclusive option to purchase, or have its designated person to purchase, at its discretion, to the extent permitted under PRC law, all or part of his or her equity interests in the relevant VIE, and the purchase price shall be RMB10 or the price permitted by applicable the PRC law. The shareholders of the VIEs undertake that, without the prior written consent of the WFOEs, they will not, among other things, (i) change VIEs' registered capital, (ii) merge VIEs with any other entity, (iii) sell, transfer, mortgage, or dispose of VIEs' assets, or (iv) amend VIEs' articles of association. The exclusive share option agreements will remain effective unless the WFOEs terminate these agreements with written request or other circumstances mentioned therein take place. The agreements amongst the VIEs, the relevant subsidiaries and VIE's shareholders that provide the Company effective control over these VIEs contain substantially the same terms, except that contract termination date and materiality threshold for the corporate actions that require WFOEs' consent vary.

Shareholders Voting Proxy Agreements. Pursuant to the shareholders voting proxy agreement, each shareholder of the relevant VIE irrevocably authorized the relevant WFOE to act on his or her respective behalf as proxy attorney, to exercise the voting and management rights of shareholders concerning all the equity interests held by each of them in the VIEs, including but not limited to voting rights, rights of operation and management, and all other rights as shareholders under the articles of association of the VIEs. The agreements amongst the VIEs, the relevant subsidiaries and VIEs' shareholders that provide the Company effective control over these VIEs contain substantially the same terms, except that contract termination date varies.

Equity Interest Pledge Agreements. Pursuant to the equity interest pledge agreements, the shareholders pledge 100% of their equity interests in the VIEs to the WFOEs to guarantee the performance by the VIEs and their shareholders of their obligations under the exclusive business cooperation agreement, the exclusive share option agreements and the shareholders voting proxy agreement. In the event of a breach by the VIEs or any shareholder of contractual obligations under the equity interest pledge agreement, the WFOEs, as pledgee, will have the right to dispose of the pledged equity interests in the VIEs and will have priority in receiving the proceeds from such disposal. The shareholders of the VIEs agree that, without the WFOEs' prior written consent, during the term of the equity interest pledge agreements, they will not dispose of, create, or allow any encumbrance on the pledged equity interests. The agreements amongst the VIEs, the relevant subsidiaries and VIEs' shareholders that provide the Company effective control over these VIEs contain substantially the same terms, except that contract termination date varies.

Spousal Consent Letters. Spouses of shareholders of the VIEs have each signed a spousal consent letter. Each signing spouse of the relevant shareholder unconditionally and irrevocably agreed that the equity interests in the VIEs held by and registered in the name of such shareholder be disposed of in accordance with the equity interest pledge agreements, the exclusive share option agreements, the shareholders voting proxy agreements, and the exclusive business cooperation agreements, and that such shareholder may perform, amend or terminate such agreements without any additional consent of his or her spouse. Additionally, the signing spouses agreed not to assert any rights over the equity interests in the VIEs held by the shareholders. In addition, in the event that the signing spouses obtain any equity interests in the VIEs held by the shareholders for any reason, they agree to be bound by and sign any legal documents substantially similar to the contractual arrangements described above, as may be amended from time to time.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

1. Operations and Principal Activities (Continued)

(b) VIE arrangements between the Company's PRC subsidiaries (Continued)

ii) Contracts that enable the Company to receive substantially all of the economic benefits from the VIEs

Exclusive business cooperation agreements. Each VIE has entered into an exclusive business cooperation agreement with the relevant WFOE, pursuant to which the WFOEs provides exclusive services to the VIEs. In exchange, the VIEs pay a service fee to the WFOEs, the amount of which shall be determined, to the extent permitted by applicable PRC laws as proposed by the WFOEs, resulting in a transfer of substantially all of the profits from the VIEs to the WFOEs. The agreements amongst the VIEs, the relevant subsidiaries and VIE's shareholders that provide the Company effective control over these VIEs contain substantially the same terms, except that contract termination date varies.

iii) Risks in relation to VIE structure

Part of the Group's business is conducted through the VIEs of the Group, of which the Company is the ultimate primary beneficiary. In the opinion of the management, the contractual arrangements with the VIEs and the nominee shareholders are in compliance with PRC laws and regulations and are legally binding and enforceable. The nominee shareholders indicate they will not act contrary to the contractual arrangements. However, there are substantial uncertainties regarding the interpretation and application of the PRC laws and regulations including those that govern the contractual arrangements, which could limit the Group's ability to enforce these contractual arrangements and if the nominee shareholders of the VIEs were to reduce their interests in the Group, their interests may diverge from that of the Group and that may potentially increase the risk that they would seek to act contrary to the contractual arrangements.

On March 15, 2019, the National People's Congress approved the Foreign Investment Law, which took effect on January 1, 2020. Along with the Foreign Investment Law, the Implementing Regulation of Foreign Investment Law promulgated by the State Council and the Interpretation of the Supreme People's Court on Several Issues Concerning the Application of the Foreign Investment Law promulgated by the Supreme People's Court became effective on January 1, 2020. Since the Foreign Investment Law and its current implementation and interpretation rules are relatively new, uncertainties still exist in relation to their further application and improvement. The Foreign Investment Law and its current implementation and interpretation rules do not explicitly classify whether variable interest entities that are controlled through contractual arrangements would be deemed as foreign-invested enterprises if they are ultimately "controlled" by foreign investors. However, it has a catch-all provision under the definition of "foreign investment" that includes investments made by foreign investors in China through other means as provided by laws, administrative regulations, or the State Council. Therefore, it still leaves leeway for future laws, administrative regulations, or provisions of the State Council to provide for contractual arrangements as a form of foreign investment. Therefore, there can be no assurance that the Group's control over the variable interest entities through contractual arrangements will not be deemed as a foreign investment in the future. Furthermore, if future laws, administrative regulations or provisions mandate further actions to be taken by companies with respect to existing contractual arrangements, the Group may face substantial uncertainties as to whether the Group can complete such actions in a timely manner, or at all. Failure to take timely and appropriate measures to cope with any of these or similar regulatory compliance challenges could materially and adversely affect the Group's current corporate structure and business operations.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

1. Operations and Principal Activities (Continued)

(b) VIE arrangements between the Company's PRC subsidiaries (Continued)

iii) Risks in relation to VIE structure (Continued)

If the Group is found in violation of any PRC laws or regulations or if the contractual arrangements among WFOEs, VIEs and their nominee shareholders are determined as illegal or invalid by any PRC court, arbitral tribunal or regulatory authorities, the relevant governmental authorities would have broad discretion in dealing with such violation, including, without limitation:

- revoke the agreements constituting the contractual arrangements;
- revoke the Group's business and operating licenses;
- require the Group to discontinue or restrict operations;
- restrict the Group's right to collect revenue;
- restrict or prohibit the Group's use of the proceeds from the public offering to fund the Group's business and operations in China;
- shut down all or part of the Group's websites or services;
- levy fines on the Group or confiscate the proceeds that they deem to have been obtained through non-compliant operations;
- require the Group to restructure the operations in such a way as to compel the Group to establish a new enterprise, re-apply for the necessary licenses or relocate the Group's businesses, staff, and assets;
- impose additional conditions or requirements with which the Group may not be able to comply; or
- take other regulatory or enforcement actions that could be harmful to the Group's business.

The imposition of any of these penalties may result in a material and adverse effect on the Group's ability to conduct the Group's businesses. In addition, if the imposition of any of these penalties causes the Group to lose the right to direct the activities of the VIE (through its equity interests in its subsidiaries) or the right to receive their economic benefits, the Group will no longer be able to consolidate the VIEs and their subsidiaries, if any. In the opinion of management, the likelihood of loss in respect of the Group's current ownership structure or the contractual arrangements with its VIEs is remote. The Group's operations depend on the VIEs and their nominee shareholders to honor their contractual arrangements with the Group. These contractual arrangements are governed by PRC law and disputes arising out of these agreements are expected to be decided by arbitration in the PRC. The management believes that each of the contractual arrangements constitutes valid and legally binding obligations of each party to such contractual arrangements under the PRC laws. However, the interpretation and implementation of the laws and regulations in the PRC and their application on the legality, binding effect and enforceability of contracts are subject to the discretion of competent PRC authorities, and therefore there is no assurance that relevant PRC authorities will take the same position as the Group herein in respect of the legality, binding effect and enforceability of each of the contractual arrangements. Meanwhile, since the PRC legal system continues to evolve, the interpretations of many laws, regulations and rules are not always uniform and enforcement of these laws, regulations and rules involve uncertainties, which may limit legal protections available to the Group to enforce the contractual arrangements should the VIEs or the nominee shareholders of the VIEs fail to perform their obligations under those arrangements.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

1. Operations and Principal Activities (Continued)

(b) VIE arrangements between the Company's PRC subsidiaries (Continued)

iii) Risks in relation to VIE structure (Continued)

The following consolidated financial information of the Group's VIEs and their subsidiaries as of December 31, 2021 and 2022 and for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022 was included in the accompanying consolidated financial statements of the Group as follows (in thousands):

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
ASSETS		
Current assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	59,313	250,759
Short-term investments	434,505	38,500
Trade receivables	58,282	121,796
Amounts due from related parties	7,971	22,013
Amounts due from Group companies	7,742	8,671
Prepayments and other current assets	50,753	68,491
Non-current assets:		
Property and equipment, net	557	813
Intangible assets, net	66,186	66,124
Goodwill	73,663	103,514
Right-of-use assets	5,878	4,772
Other non-current assets	243	8,943
Total assets	765,093	694,396
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	120,057	187,595
Salary and welfare payables	2,473	10,132
Taxes payable	2,508	3,925
Contract liabilities	130,420	269,425
Amounts due to related parties	16,303	16,000
Amounts due to Group companies ^(a)	420,411	145,247
Short-term lease liabilities	1,613	2,428
Other current liabilities	22,537	22,991
Non-current liabilities		
Long-term lease liabilities	3,689	2,525
Deferred tax liabilities	14,030	8,555
Other non-current liabilities	8,439	30,373
Total liabilities	742,480	699,196

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

1. Operations and Principal Activities (Continued)

(b) VIE arrangements between the Company's PRC subsidiaries (Continued)

iii) Risks in relation to VIE structure (Continued)

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Inter-company revenues	1,113	196	866
Third-party revenues	368,933	766,032	1,548,003
Inter-company cost ^(a)	(187,993)	(330,486)	(582,440)
Third-party cost	(177,598)	(373,390)	(618,365)
Gross Profit	4,455	62,352	348,064
Operating Expenses	(15,561)	(85,017)	(361,723)
Other income	4,572	4,834	9,452
Loss before income tax	(6,534)	(17,831)	(4,207)
Income tax expense	(1,049)	(3,435)	(6,948)
Net loss	(7,583)	(21,266)	(11,155)
Net loss attributable to non-controlling interests shareholders	—	—	128
Net loss attributable to the Company	(7,583)	(21,266)	(11,027)

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Purchases of goods and services from Group Companies ^(a)	(159,651)	(45,579)	(906,100)
Operating activities with external parties	225,436	432,031	727,853
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	65,785	386,452	(178,247)
Purchases of short-term investments	(175,000)	(870,000)	(1,513,535)
Proceeds of maturities of short-term investments	165,000	490,000	1,924,071
Other investing activities with external parties	—	(33,626)	(40,843)
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities	(10,000)	(413,626)	369,693
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	55,785	(27,174)	191,446
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	30,702	86,487	59,313
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	86,487	59,313	250,759

(a) VIEs have incurred RMB186.1 million, RMB330.5 million and RMB572.3 million in fees related to services provided by the WFOEs and WFOEs concurrently recognized same amounts as revenues for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. In 2020, 2021, and 2022, the total amount of such service fees that VIEs paid to the relevant WFOE under the relevant agreements was RMB159.7 million, RMB45.6 million and RMB896.3 million, respectively. Unsettled balance of such transactions was RMB345.9 million and RMB54.6 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

In accordance with various contractual agreements, the Company has the power to direct the activities of the VIEs and can have assets transferred out of the VIEs and their subsidiaries. Therefore, the Company considers that there are no assets in the VIEs and their subsidiaries that can be used only to settle obligations of the VIEs and their subsidiaries, except for the registered capital of the VIEs and their subsidiaries amounting to approximately RMB22.8 million and RMB22.9 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively. As the VIEs are incorporated as limited liability company under the PRC Company Law, creditors do not have recourse to the general

credit of the Company for the liabilities of the VIEs and their subsidiaries. There is currently no contractual arrangement that would require the Company to provide additional financial support to the VIEs.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

1. Operations and Principal Activities (Continued)

(c) Liquidity

The Group incurred net losses of RMB517.6 million, RMB1,298.9 million and RMB1,578.4 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. Net cash used in operating activities was RMB244.4 million, RMB440.2 million and RMB1,115.0 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. Accumulated deficit was RMB6,280.8 million and RMB7,862.0 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively. The Group assesses its liquidity by its ability to generate cash from operating activities and attract investors' investments.

Historically, the Group has relied principally on both operational sources of cash and non-operational sources of financing from investors to fund its operations and business development. The Group's ability to continue as a going concern is dependent on management's ability to successfully execute its business plan, which includes increasing revenues while controlling operating expenses, as well as, generating operational cash flows and continuing to gain support from outside sources of financing. The Group has been continuously receiving financing support from outside investors through the issuance of preferred shares. In March 2021, with the completion of its initial public offering on New York Stock Exchange, the Group received net proceeds of RMB4,838.2 million. In April 2021, the underwriters exercised their option to purchase additional ADSs and the Company received net proceeds of RMB15.1 million. As of December 31, 2021 and 2022, the Group had RMB6,436.5 million and RMB5,495.0 million of net current assets. Based on the above considerations, the Group believes the cash and cash equivalents, term deposits and short-term investments are sufficient to meet the cash requirements to fund planned operations and other commitments for at least the next twelve months from the issuance of the consolidated financial statements. The Group's consolidated financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis, which contemplates the realization of assets and liquidation of liabilities in the normal course of business.

2. Significant Accounting Policies

(a) Basis of presentation

The consolidated financial statements of the Group have been prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("U.S. GAAP"). Significant accounting policies followed by the Group in the preparation of the accompanying consolidated financial statements are summarized below.

(b) Principles of consolidation

The consolidated financial statements include the financial statements of the Company, its subsidiaries, the VIEs and subsidiaries of the VIEs for which the Company are the primary beneficiary.

Subsidiaries are those entities in which the Company, directly or indirectly, controls more than one half of the voting power, has the power to appoint or remove the majority of the members of the board of directors, or to cast a majority of votes at the meeting of the board of directors, or has the power to govern the financial and operating policies of the investee under a statute or agreement among the shareholders or equity holders.

Consolidated VIEs are entities in which the Company, or its subsidiaries, through contractual arrangements, has the power to direct the activities that most significantly impact the entities' economic performance, bears the risks of and enjoys the rewards normally associated with ownership of the entity. Therefore, the Company has a controlling financial interest in each VIE, is the primary beneficiary of each entity, and consolidates each VIE (and the VIE subsidiaries) under US GAAP (ASC 810).

All transactions and balances among the Company, its subsidiaries, the consolidated VIEs and subsidiaries of the VIEs have been eliminated upon consolidation.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(c) Use of estimates

The preparation of the Group's consolidated financial statements in conformity with the U.S. GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent liabilities at the balance sheet date and reported revenues and expenses during the reported periods in the consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes. Significant accounting estimates include but are not limited to assessment for the allowance for credit losses on trade receivables and purchase price allocation in relation to acquisitions.

(d) Functional currency and foreign currency translation

The Group uses Renminbi ("RMB") as its reporting currency. The functional currency of the Company and its overseas subsidiaries which are incorporated in the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Hong Kong is United States dollars ("US\$"). The functional currency of the Group's PRC entities is RMB.

In the consolidated financial statements, the financial information of the Company and other entities located outside of the PRC have been translated into RMB. Assets and liabilities are translated at the exchange rates on the balance sheet date, equity amounts are translated at historical exchange rates, and revenues, expenses, gains and losses are translated using the periodic average exchange rate. Translation adjustments are reported as foreign currency translation adjustments and are shown as a component of other comprehensive (loss)/income in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss.

Foreign currency transactions denominated in currencies other than the functional currency are translated into the functional currency using the exchange rates prevailing at the dates of the transactions. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are translated into the functional currency using the applicable exchange rates at the balance sheet dates. Net gains and losses resulting from foreign exchange transactions are included in others, net in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss.

(e) Convenience Translation

Translations of balances in the consolidated balance sheets, consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss and consolidated statements of cash flows from RMB into US\$ as of and the year ended December 31, 2022 are solely for the convenience of the reader and were calculated at the rate of US\$1.00 = RMB6.8972, representing the exchange rate set forth in the H.10 statistical release of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board on December 30, 2022. No representation is made that the RMB amounts represent or could have been, or could be, converted, realized or settled into US\$ at that rate on December 31, 2022, or at any other rate.

(f) Fair value measurements

Fair value reflects the price that would be received from selling an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. When determining the fair value measurements for assets and liabilities required or permitted to be recorded at fair value, the Group considers the principal or most advantageous market in which it would transact and it considers assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(f) Fair value measurements (Continued)

The Group applies a fair value hierarchy that requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs when measuring fair value. A financial instrument's categorization within the fair value hierarchy is based upon the lowest level of input that is significant to the fair value measurement. Accounting guidance specifies a hierarchy of valuation techniques, which is based on whether the inputs into the valuation techniques are observable or unobservable. The hierarchy is as follows:

- Level 1 applies to assets or liabilities for which there are quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities.
- Level 2 applies to assets or liabilities for which there are inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities in active markets; quoted prices for identical asset or liabilities in markets with insufficient volume or infrequent transactions (less active markets); or model-derived valuations in which significant inputs are observable or can be derived principally from, or corroborated by, observable market data.
- Level 3 applies to asset or liabilities for which there are unobservable inputs to the valuation methodology that are significant to the measurement of the fair value of the assets or liabilities.

Accounting guidance also describes three main approaches to measure the fair value of assets and liabilities: (1) market approach; (2) income approach and (3) cost approach. The market approach uses prices and other relevant information generated from market transactions involving identical or comparable assets or liabilities. The income approach uses valuation techniques to convert future amounts to a single present value amount. The measurement is based on the value indicated by current market expectations about those future amounts. The cost approach is based on the amount that would currently be required to replace an asset.

When available, the Group uses quoted market prices to determine the fair value of an asset or liability. If quoted market prices are not available, the Group will measure fair value using valuation techniques that use, when possible, current market-based or independently sourced market parameters, such as interest rates and currency rates.

Financial assets and liabilities of the Group primarily consist of cash and cash equivalents, term deposits, short-term investments, trade receivables, other receivables and amounts due from/to related parties, accounts payable and accrued liabilities and other current liabilities and contingent consideration in relation to acquisitions. As of December 31, 2021 and 2022, the carrying values of cash and cash equivalents, term deposits, trade receivables, amounts due from/to related parties, other receivables, accounts payable and accrued liabilities and other current liabilities approximate their respective fair values due to their short-term duration. Please see Note 22 for additional information of contingent consideration.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(g) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits held at call with financial institutions, other short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

(h) Term deposits

Term deposits are the balances placed with the banks with original maturities over three months. The term deposits are unsecured and carry fixed interest per annum for the years presented.

(i) Short-term investments

Short-term investments mainly include investments in financial instruments with a variable interest rate indexed to performance of underlying assets. In accordance with ASC 825 — “Financial Instruments”, the Group elected the fair value method at the date of initial recognition and carried these investments at fair value. Changes in the fair value are reflected “investment income” in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss as other income/(expense).

(j) Expected credit losses

In 2016, the FASB issued ASC Topic 326, which amends previously issued guidance regarding the impairment of financial instruments by creating an impairment model that is based on expected losses.

The Group’s trade receivables and other receivables included in prepayment and other current assets and other non-current assets are within the scope of ASC Topic 326. The Group has identified the relevant risk characteristics of its customers and the related receivables and other receivables which include size, type of the services or the products the Group provides, or a combination of these characteristics. Receivables with similar risk characteristics have been grouped into portfolio groups. For each portfolio group, the Group considers the historical credit loss experience, current economic conditions, supportable forecasts of future economic conditions, and any recoveries in assessing the lifetime expected credit losses. Other key factors that influence the expected credit loss analysis include payment terms offered in the normal course of business to customers and industry-specific factors that could impact the Group’s receivables. Additionally, external data and macroeconomic factors are also considered. They are assessed at each quarter based on the Group’s specific facts and circumstances. Changes in these factors in the current expected credit loss model from January 1, 2019 had no significant impact on the consolidated financial statements.

The Group’s trade receivables consist primarily of advertising agencies and direct advertising customers. The Group recorded a provision for current expected credit loss. The balance of gross trade receivables was RMB890.2 million and RMB927.1 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, against which an allowance for expected credit losses of RMB58.6 million and RMB92.9 million was made as of December 31, 2021 and 2022. The following table sets out movements of the allowance for expected credit losses on trade receivables, amount due from related parties and other receivables for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022 (in thousands):

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Beginning balance	12,193	28,035	60,531
Additional allowance for credit losses, net of recoveries	16,773	32,633	34,457
Write-off	(931)	(137)	—
Ending balance	<u>28,035</u>	<u>60,531</u>	<u>94,988</u>

Zhihu Inc.**NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)****2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)****(k) Property and equipment, net**

Property and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment, if any. Depreciation is computed using the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of the assets, which range as follows:

Electronic equipment	3 years
Office equipment and furniture	3 - 5 years
Leasehold improvement	Shorter of their useful life and the lease term

Expenditures for maintenance and repairs are expensed as incurred. The gain or loss on the disposal of property and equipment is the difference between the net sales proceeds and the carrying amount of the relevant assets and is recognized in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss.

(l) Intangible assets, net

Separately acquired license, software and other intangible assets are shown at historical cost. Intangible assets acquired in a business combination were recognized initially at fair value at the date of acquisition. They have finite useful lives and are subsequently carried at cost less accumulated amortization and impairment losses (if any). The Group amortizes intangible assets with a limited useful life using the straight-line method over the following years:

Licenses	5 years
Software	10 years
Content	5 years
Brand name	10 years
Technology	5 years

(m) Goodwill

Goodwill represents the excess of the purchase consideration over the acquisition date amounts of the identifiable tangible and intangible assets acquired and liabilities assumed from the acquired entity in a business combination. Goodwill is not amortized but is tested for impairment on December 31 annually, or more frequently if events or changes in circumstances indicate that it might be impaired. The Company first assesses qualitative factors to determine whether it is necessary to perform the quantitative goodwill impairment test. In the qualitative assessment, the Company considers factors such as macroeconomic conditions, industry and market considerations, overall financial performance of its only reporting unit, and other specific information related to the operations, business plans and strategies of the reporting unit, including consideration of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the qualitative assessment, if it is more likely than not that the fair value of a reporting unit is less than the carrying amount, the quantitative impairment test is performed. Otherwise, no further testing is required.

On January 1, 2020, the Group adopted ASU No. 2017-04, Simplifying the Test for Goodwill Impairment to simplify the test for goodwill impairment by removing Step 2, which was issued by the FASB in January 2017. If the carrying amount of a reporting unit exceeds its fair value, an impairment loss shall be recognized in an amount equal to that excess, versus determining an implied fair value in Step 2 to measure the impairment loss.

Based on an assessment of the qualitative factors, management determined that it is more-likely-than-not that the fair value of its reporting unit is in excess of its carrying amount as of December 31, 2022. Therefore, no impairment loss was recorded for the year ended December 31, 2022 (2021: nil).

Zhihu Inc.**NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)****2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)****(n) Derivative instruments**

Derivative instruments are carried at fair value, which generally represent the estimated amounts expect to receive or pay upon termination of the contracts as of the reporting date. Derivative financial instruments are not used for trading or speculative purposes.

The Group has entered into several currency exchange options and forward contracts with certain commercial banks in PRC to mitigate the risks of foreign exchange gain/loss generated from the Group's balances of cash and cash equivalents and term deposits denominated in US dollars. As such instruments do not qualify for hedge accounting treatment, the Group records the changes in fair value of the derivatives in Fair value change of financial instruments in the statements of operations and comprehensive loss. For years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, nil, a gain of RMB31.8 million and a loss of RMB145.2 million were recorded in fair value change of financial instruments, respectively.

(o) Leases

In February 2016, the Financial Accounting Standards Board ("FASB") issued ASU 2016-02, Leases, which specifies the accounting for leases. Earlier application is permitted for all entities as of February 25, 2016, the issuance date of the final standard. The Group early adopted ASC 842 on January 1, 2018, along with all subsequent ASU clarifications and improvements that are applicable to the Group, to each lease that existed in the years presented in the financial statements, using the modified retrospective transition method and used the commencement date of the leases as the date of initial application. Consequently, financial information and the disclosures required under ASC 842 are provided for dates and years presented in the financial statements. The Group has applied the practical expedient to not recognize short-term leases with lease terms of one year or less.

The Group determines if a contract contains a lease based on whether it has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from the use of an identified asset which the Group does not own and whether it has the right to direct the use of an identified asset in exchange for consideration. Right-of-use assets represent the Group's right to use an underlying asset for the lease term and lease liabilities represent the Group's obligation to make lease payments arising from the lease. Right-of-use assets are recognized as the amount of the lease liability, adjusted for lease incentives received. Lease liabilities are recognized at the present value of the future lease payments at the lease commencement date. The interest rate used to determine the present value of the future lease payments is the Group's incremental borrowing rate ("IBR"), because the interest rate implicit in most of the Group's leases is not readily determinable. The IBR is a hypothetical rate based on the Group's understanding of what its credit rating would be to borrow and resulting interest the Group would pay to borrow an amount equal to the lease payments in a similar economic environment over the lease term on a collateralized basis. Lease payments may be fixed or variable, however, only fixed payments or in-substance fixed payments are included in the Group's lease liability calculation. Variable lease payments are recognized in operating expenses in the year in which the obligation for those payments is incurred.

(p) Revenue recognition

The Group adopted ASC 606 — "Revenue from Contracts with Customers" for all years presented. According to ASC 606, revenue is recognized as the control of the goods or services is transferred to a customer. Depending on the terms of the contract and the laws that apply to the contract, control of the goods and services may be transferred over time or at a point in time. Control of the goods and services is transferred over time if the Group's performance:

- provides all of the benefits received and consumed simultaneously by the customer;
- creates and enhances an asset that the customer controls as the Group performs; or
- does not create an asset with an alternative use to the Group and the Group has an enforceable right to payment for performance completed to date.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(p) Revenue recognition (Continued)

If control of the goods and services transfers over time, revenue is recognized over the period of the contract by reference to the progress towards complete satisfaction of that performance obligation. Otherwise, revenue is recognized at a point in time when the customer obtains control of the goods and services.

Contracts with customers may include multiple performance obligations. For such arrangements, the Group allocates revenue to each performance obligation based on its relative standalone selling price. The Group generally determines standalone selling prices based on the prices charged to customers. If the standalone selling price is not directly observable, it is estimated using expected cost plus a margin or adjusted market assessment approach, depending on the availability of observable information. Assumptions and estimations have been made in estimating the relative selling price of each distinct performance obligation, and changes in judgements on these assumptions and estimates may impact the revenue recognition.

Trade receivable is recorded when the Group has an unconditional right to consideration. A right to consideration is unconditional if only the passage of time is required before payment of that consideration is due.

If a customer pays consideration or the Group has a right to an amount of consideration that is unconditional, before the Group transfers a good or service to the customer, the Group presents the contract liability when the payment is made or a receivable is recorded (whichever is earlier). A contract liability is the Group's obligation to transfer goods or services to a customer for which the Group has received consideration (or an amount of consideration is due) from the customer.

Paid membership services

The Group generates revenue through paid membership services on its community where users pay a membership fee to access premium content library for a fixed time period. The Group is determined to be the primary obligor and accordingly, the Group records revenue on a gross basis, and the revenue sharing to the content providers is recorded as cost of revenues.

The Group offers membership service which provides subscription members' access right to premium content. Membership periods range from one month to twelve months. Membership service represents a stand ready obligation to provide the paid content service and the customer simultaneously receives and consumes the benefits as the Group provide such services throughout the membership period. The receipt of membership fees is initially recorded as contract liabilities and revenue is recognized ratably over the membership period as services are rendered.

Users who are undecided about or otherwise do not need paid memberships can pay retail prices to access the premium content. This on-demand access option supplements the membership programs as an additional revenue stream and provides flexibility to the users. The Group determined that the retail purchase consists of two performance obligations: the content and the hosted connection for content online playback ("online hosting"). The transaction price is allocated between the two performance obligations based on the relative standalone selling price. The purchased content usually has no expiry period unless otherwise stated. As the Group does not have further obligation after making the content available to the user for content performance obligation, the revenue from content performance obligation is recognized at the time of purchase for pre-recorded content and at the time of completion of live streaming for live streaming content. The online hosting performance obligation is satisfied over the viewing period of the customers. Accordingly, the Group recognizes the revenue over the estimated benefit periods. The revenue derived from the retail purchase is not significant for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The Group also provides discount coupons to its customers for use in purchasing online paid contents, which were not material for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, and treated as a reduction of revenue upon usage of coupon.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(p) Revenue recognition (Continued)

Advertising services

Advertising revenues are derived principally from advertising contracts with customers where the customers pay to place their advertisements on the Group's community over a particular period of time. Such formats generally include but are not limited to launch screen advertisements, in-app bannered advertisements and feed advertisements. Merchants and brands can choose to compose their advertisements in text, images or videos and decide whether they are display-based or performance-based. Zhihu primarily charge display-based advertisements by cost-per -mille ("CPM") model and cost-per-day ("CPD") model, and primarily charge performance-based advertisements by cost-by-click ("CPC") model and CPM model.

Content-commerce solutions services

Content-commerce solution services are online marketing solutions that are seamlessly integrated into our regular content operations. The Group provides content-commerce solutions services to expose the designated content to a more targeted audience. Zhihu primarily charges the content-commerce solutions service by CPC model.

For advertising and content-commerce solutions, the Group recognizes revenue on the satisfied performance obligations and defers the recognition of revenue for the estimated value of the undelivered elements until the remaining performance obligations have been satisfied. When all of the elements within arrangement are delivered uniformly over the agreement period, the revenues are recognized on a straight-line basis over the contract period. The primary services and pricing models of advertising and content-commerce solutions are summarized as below:

CPM model

Under the CPM model, the unit price for each qualified display is fixed and stated in the contract with advertisers. A qualified display is defined as the appearance of an advertisement, where advertisement meets the criteria specified in the contract. Given the fees are priced consistently throughout the contract and the unit prices for each qualified display is fixed accordingly, the Group recognizes revenue based on the fixed unit prices and the number of qualified displays upon occurrence of display, provided all revenue recognition criteria have been met.

CPC model

Under the CPC model, there is no fixed price for advertising services or content-commerce solutions services stated in the contract with the advertiser and the unit price for each click is auction-based. The Group charges merchants and brands on a per-click basis, when the users click on the advertisements or the designated content. Given that the unit price is fixed, the Group recognizes revenue based on qualifying clicks and unit price upon the occurrence of a click, provided all revenue recognition criteria have been met.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(p) Revenue recognition (Continued)

CPD model

Under the CPD model, a contract is signed to establish a fixed price for the advertising services to be provided over a period of time. Given the advertisers benefit from the displayed advertising evenly, the Group recognizes revenue on a straight-line basis over the period of display, provided all revenue recognition criteria have been met.

Sales rebate to certain customers

Certain customers may receive sales rebates, which are accounted for as variable consideration. The Group estimates annual expected revenue volume of each individual customer with reference to their historical results. The sales rebate reduces revenues recognized. The Group recognizes revenue for the amount of fees it receives from its advertisers, after deducting sales rebates and net of value-added tax ("VAT"). The Group believes that there will not be significant changes to its estimates of variable consideration.

Vocational Training revenue

The Group offers various types of vocational trainings, which cover practical training courses focusing on acquisition of specific skills, professional qualification exam preparation courses, vocational language exam preparation courses, and other vocational training courses. Our vocational training courses primarily consist of pre-recorded audio-video courses and live online training courses. Course fees are generally collected in advance and are initially recorded as contract liability. Revenue is recognized proportionately over the relevant period in which the training courses are delivered.

Other revenues

The Group's other revenues are primarily generated from e-commerce services and other activities. Other revenues are recognized when control of promised goods or services is transferred to the customers, which generally occurs upon the acceptance of the goods or services by the customers. Pursuant to ASC 606-10-55-39, for arrangements where the Group is primarily responsible for fulfilling the promise to provide the goods or services, are subject to inventory risk, and have latitude in establishing prices and selecting suppliers, revenues are recorded on a gross basis. Otherwise, revenues are recorded on a net basis.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(p) Revenue recognition (Continued)

Nonmonetary transactions

The group entered into nonmonetary transactions with certain advertising service providers whereby each party of these transactions would place counter parties' advertisement on their own platform. Revenue from the nonmonetary transactions is recognized when advertising service is provided as discussed above and the expense related to the advertising activities is recognized over the duration of display. The Group use the fair value of the goods or services received when measuring the non-cash consideration for advertising service revenue earned. The Group will only measure the non-cash consideration indirectly by reference to the standalone selling price of the goods or services surrendered if the fair value of the goods or services received is not reasonably estimable.

Principal expedients and exemptions

The transaction price allocated to the performance obligations that are unsatisfied, or partially unsatisfied, has not been disclosed, as substantially all of the Group's contracts have a duration of one year or less.

The Group recognizes an asset for the incremental costs of obtaining a contract if those costs are expected recoverable. The Group elects to expense certain costs to obtain a contract as incurred when the expected recover period is one year or less.

(q) Cost of revenues

Cost of revenues consist primarily of cloud service and bandwidth costs, staff costs including share-based compensation, content and operational cost, payment processing cost, and other direct costs related to the operation of business. These costs are charged to the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss as incurred.

(r) Selling and marketing expenses

Selling and marketing expenses consist primarily of promotion and advertising expenses, staff costs including share-based compensation and other daily expenses which are related to the selling and marketing departments. For the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, advertising expenses were RMB311.0 million, RMB782.6 million and RMB967.4 million.

(s) General and administrative expenses

General and administrative expenses consist of staff costs including share-based compensation expenses and related expenses for employees involved in general corporate functions, including accounting, finance, tax, legal and human resources and costs associated with use by these functions such as depreciation of related facilities and equipment, traveling and general expenses, professional service fees and other related expenses.

(t) Research and development expenses

Research and development expenses mainly consist of staff costs including share-based compensation expenses, rental expenses incurred associated with research and development departments.

For those websites and platforms of applications, the Group expenses all costs incurred for the preliminary project stage and post implementation-operation stage of development, and costs associated with repair or maintenance of the existing platform. Costs incurred in the application development stage are capitalized and amortized over the estimated useful life. Since the amount of the Group's research and development expenses qualifying for capitalization has been immaterial, as a result, all website and software development costs have been expensed in "research and development expenses" as incurred.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(u) Share-based compensation

Share-based compensation benefits are provided to employees under the 2012 incentive compensation plan (the “2012 incentive plan”) and the 2022 incentive plan (the “2022 incentive plan”), collectively the “Zhihu Employee Incentive Plan” or the “Plan”. The Company accounts for share-based compensation benefits granted to employees in accordance with ASC 718 Stock Compensation. Information relating to the plan is set out in Note 14.

Prior to the completion of the IPO, the Company has used the discounted cash flow method to determine the underlying equity fair value of the Company and adopted an equity allocation model to determine the fair value of the underlying ordinary share. After the completion of the IPO, the Company has used share prices as the fair value of the underlying ordinary share. The determination of estimated fair value of share-based compensation on the grant date using binomial option-pricing model is affected by the fair value of the Company’s ordinary shares as well as assumptions in relation to a number of complex and subjective variables. These variables include the expected value volatility of the Company over the expected term of the awards, actual and projected employee share option exercise behaviors, a risk-free interest rate and expected dividends, if any.

The fair value of options granted under the plan is recognized as an employee benefits expense with a corresponding increase in equity. The total amount to be expensed is determined by reference to the fair value of the options granted.

The total expense is recognized over the vesting period, over which all the specified vesting conditions are to be satisfied, using a graded vesting method. The Group accounts for forfeitures in the period they occur as a reduction to expense.

(v) Employee benefits

PRC Contribution Plan

Full time employees of the Group in the PRC participate in a government mandated defined contribution plan, pursuant to which certain pension benefits, medical care, employee housing fund and other welfare benefits are provided to the employees. Chinese labor regulations require that the PRC subsidiaries and the VIEs of the Group make contributions to the government for these benefits based on certain percentages of the salaries, up to a maximum amount specified by the local government. The Group has no legal obligation for the benefits beyond making the required contributions. The total amounts of such employee benefit expenses, which were expensed as incurred, were approximately RMB63.6 million, RMB148.5 million and RMB216.2 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. The total balances of such employee benefit including the accrual for estimated underpaid amounts were approximately RMB112.9 million and RMB90.4 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

(w) Taxation

Income taxes

Current income taxes are provided on the basis of income/(loss) for financial reporting purposes, adjusted for income and expense items which are not assessable or deductible for income tax purposes, in accordance with the regulations of the relevant tax jurisdictions. Deferred income taxes are provided using the liability method. Under this method, deferred income taxes are recognized for the tax consequences of temporary differences by applying enacted statutory rates applicable to future years to differences between the financial statement carrying amounts and the tax bases of existing assets and liabilities. The tax basis of an asset or liability is the amount attributed to that asset or liability for tax purposes. The effect on deferred taxes of a change in tax rates is recognized in the consolidated statement of operations and comprehensive loss in the year of change. A valuation allowance is provided to reduce the amount of deferred tax assets if it is considered more likely than not that some portion of, or all of the deferred tax assets will not be realized.

Zhihu Inc.**NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)****2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)****(w) Taxation (Continued)***Uncertain tax positions*

In order to assess uncertain tax positions, the Group applies a more likely than not threshold and a two-step approach for the tax position measurement and financial statement recognition. Under the two-step approach, the first step is to evaluate the tax position for recognition by determining if the weight of available evidence indicates that it is more likely than not that the position will be sustained, including resolution of related appeals or litigation processes, if any. The second step is to measure the tax benefit as the largest amount that is more than 50% likely of being realized upon settlement. The Group recognizes interest and penalties, if any, under other current liabilities on its consolidated balance sheet and under other expenses in its consolidated statement of operations and comprehensive loss. The Group did not have any significant unrecognized uncertain tax positions or any unrecognized liabilities, interest or penalties associated with unrecognized tax benefits as of and for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

(x) Related parties

Parties are considered to be related if one party has the ability, directly or indirectly, to control the other party or exercise significant influence over the other party in making financial and operating decisions. Parties are also considered to be related if they are subject to common control or significant influence. Related parties may be individual or corporation entities.

(y) Net loss per share

Net loss per share is computed in accordance with ASC 260, "Earnings per Share". The two-class method is used for computing earnings per share in the event the Group has net income available for distribution. Under the two-class method, net income is allocated between ordinary shares and other participating securities based on their participating rights. Class A ordinary share and Class B ordinary share have the same rights in dividend. Therefore, basic and diluted loss per share are the same for both classes of ordinary shares. The Company's convertible redeemable preferred shares may be considered as participating securities because they are entitled to receive dividends or distributions on an as if converted basis if the Group has net income available for distribution under certain circumstances. Net losses are not allocated to other participating securities as they are not obligated to share the losses based on their contractual terms.

Basic net loss per share is computed by dividing net loss attributable to ordinary shareholders, considering the accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares, by the weighted average number of ordinary shares outstanding during the year. Diluted net loss per share is calculated by dividing net loss attributable to ordinary shareholders, as adjusted for the effect of dilutive ordinary equivalent shares, if any, by the weighted average number of ordinary and dilutive ordinary equivalent shares outstanding during the years. Ordinary equivalent shares consist of ordinary shares issuable upon the conversion of the convertible redeemable preferred shares using as if converted method and ordinary shares issuable upon the exercise of share options using the treasury stock method. Ordinary equivalent shares are not included in the denominator of the diluted net loss per share calculation when inclusion of such share would be anti-dilutive.

(z) Statutory reserves

In accordance with China's Company Laws, the Company's VIE in PRC must make appropriations from their after-tax profit (as determined under the accounting principles generally acceptable in the People's Republic of China ("PRC GAAP")), after offsetting accumulated losses from prior years to non-distributable reserve funds including (i) statutory surplus fund and (ii) discretionary surplus fund. The appropriation to the statutory surplus fund must be at least 10% of the after-tax profits calculated in accordance with PRC GAAP. Appropriation is not required if the statutory surplus fund has reached 50% of the registered capital of the respective company. Appropriation to the discretionary surplus fund is made at the discretion of the respective company.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(z) Statutory reserves (Continued)

Pursuant to the laws applicable to China's Foreign Investment Enterprises, the Company's subsidiary that is a foreign investment enterprise in China has to make appropriations from their after-tax profit (as determined under PRC GAAP), after offsetting accumulated losses from prior years to reserve funds including (i) general reserve fund, (ii) enterprise expansion fund and (iii) staff bonus and welfare fund. The appropriation to the general reserve fund must be at least 10% of the after-tax profits calculated in accordance with PRC GAAP. Appropriation is not required if the general reserve fund has reached 50% of the registered capital of the respective company. Appropriations to the other two reserve funds are at the respective companies' discretion. The Foreign Investment Law of the PRC (the Foreign Investment Law) and the Regulation on the Implementation of the Foreign Investment Law are effective from January 1, 2020, and the Law of the PRC on Sino-Foreign Equity Joint Ventures, the Law of the PRC on Wholly Foreign-owned Enterprises, and the Law of the PRC on Sino-Foreign Contractual Joint Ventures as well as relevant regulations for the implementation of these laws and specific clauses shall be repealed simultaneously. According to Article 46 of the Regulation on the Implementation of the Foreign Investment Law, the original joint operators and cooperators in pre-existing foreign-invested enterprises may continue to follow the agreed upon terms in their contract on methods for profit allocation, distribution of surplus property, etc. Enterprises shall determine the applicability of the agreed-upon terms by taking into account of their own circumstances.

The use of general reserve fund, enterprise expansion fund, statutory surplus fund and discretionary surplus fund are restricted to the offsetting of losses or increasing of the registered capital of the respective company.

The Group did not make any appropriations to its any reserve funds for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, as each subsidiary was in an accumulated loss position.

(aa) Business combination and noncontrolling interests

The Group accounts for its business combinations using the acquisition method of accounting in accordance with ASC 805, Business Combinations. Transaction costs directly attributable to the acquisition are expensed as incurred. Identifiable assets and liabilities acquired or assumed are measured separately at their fair values as of the acquisition date, irrespective of the extent of any noncontrolling interests. The excess of (i) the total costs of acquisition, fair value of the noncontrolling interests and acquisition date fair value of any previously held equity interest in the acquiree over (ii) the fair value of the identifiable net assets of the acquiree is recorded as goodwill. During the measurement period, which can be up to one year from the acquisition date, the Group may record adjustments to the assets acquired and liabilities assumed with the corresponding offset to goodwill. Upon the conclusion of the measurement period or final determination of the values of assets acquired or liabilities assumed, whichever comes first, any subsequent adjustments are recorded as gain or loss on the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss.

In a business combination achieved in stages, the Group re-measures the previously held equity interests in the acquiree when obtaining control at its acquisition date fair value and the re-measurement gain or loss, if any, is recognized in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss.

For the Company's majority-owned subsidiaries and consolidated VIEs, noncontrolling interests are recognized to reflect the portion of the equity, which is not attributable, directly or indirectly, to the Company as the controlling shareholder. Noncontrolling interests acquired through a business combination are recognized at fair value at the acquisition date, which is estimated with reference to the purchase price per share as of the acquisition date.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

2. Significant Accounting Policies (Continued)

(ab) Comprehensive (loss)/income

Comprehensive (loss)/income is defined to include all changes in (deficit)/equity of the Group during a year arising from transactions and other events and circumstances excluding transactions resulting from investments by shareholders and distributions to shareholders. Other comprehensive (loss)/income, as presented on the consolidated balance sheets, consists of accumulated foreign currency translation adjustments.

(ac) Treasury stock

The Company accounted for those shares repurchased as treasury stock at cost in accordance with ASC 505-30, Treasury Stock, and is shown separately in the shareholders' equity as the Company has not yet decided on the ultimate disposition of those shares acquired. At retirement of the treasury shares, the ordinary shares account is charged only for the aggregate par value of the shares. The excess of the acquisition cost of treasury shares over the aggregate par value is allocated between additional paid-in capital and retained earnings. Refer to Note 16 for details.

(ad) Segment reporting

Operating segments are defined as components of an enterprise engaging in business activities for which separate financial information is available that is regularly evaluated by the Group's chief operating decision makers ("CODM"). Based on the criteria established by ASC280 "Segment Reporting", the Group's CODM has been identified as the Chief Executive Officer, who reviews consolidated results of the Group when making decisions about allocating resources and assessing performance.

The Group's CODM reviews consolidated results including revenue and operating income at a consolidated level. This resulted in only one operating and reportable segment in the Group.

The Group's long-lived assets are substantially all located in the PRC and substantially all the Group's revenues are derived from within the PRC, therefore, no geographical segments are presented.

(ae) Recently issued accounting pronouncements not yet adopted

In October 2021, the FASB issued ASU No. 2021-08, Business Combinations (Topic 805): Accounting for Contract Assets and Contract Liabilities from Contracts with Customers, which clarifies that an acquirer of a business should recognize and measure contract assets and contract liabilities in a business combination in accordance with Topic 606, Revenue from Contracts with Customers. The amendments in this update are effective for public business entities for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2022, including interim periods within those fiscal years. The amendments should be applied prospectively to business combinations occurring on or after the effective date of the amendments, with early adoption permitted. The Group is currently evaluating the impact of these accounting standard updates on its consolidated financial statements.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

3. Concentrations and Risks

(a) Foreign currency exchange rate risk

In July 2005, the PRC government changed its decades-old policy of pegging the value of the RMB to the US\$, and the RMB appreciated by more than 20% against the US\$ over the following three years. Between July 2008 and June 2010, this appreciation halted and the exchange rate between the RMB and the US\$ remained within a narrow band. Since June 2010, the RMB has fluctuated against the US\$, at times significantly and unpredictably. The depreciation of the RMB against the US\$ was approximately 5%, 2% and 9% in 2018, 2019 and 2022, respectively. The appreciation of the RMB against the US\$ was approximately 6% and 2% in 2020 and 2021, respectively. It is difficult to predict how market forces or PRC or U.S. government policy may impact the exchange rate between the RMB and the US\$ in the future.

(b) Credit and concentration risk

Financial instruments that potentially subject the Group to significant concentrations of credit risk consist primarily of cash and cash equivalents, term deposits, trade receivables, other receivables and short-term investments. The carrying amounts of these financial instruments represent the maximum amount of loss due to credit risk.

As of December 31, 2021 and 2022, substantially all of the Group's cash and cash equivalents, term deposits and short-term investments were held in state-owned or reputable financial institutions in the PRC and reputable international financial institutions outside of the PRC.

Trade receivables are typically unsecured and are generally derived from customers. No single customer represented greater than 10% of the Group's total revenues for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Two and two customers accounted for greater than 10% of the Group's trade receivables as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Two, nil and nil suppliers represented more than 10% of the Group's total purchases for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, but accounts payable due to one supplier accounted for greater than 10% of the Group's accounts payable as of December 31, 2021 and 2022.

(c) Currency convertibility risk

The PRC government imposes controls on the convertibility of RMB into foreign currencies. The Group's cash and cash equivalents, term deposits and short-term investments denominated in RMB that are subject to such government controls amounted to RMB2,821.1 million and RMB3,455.3 million as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively. The value of RMB is subject to changes in the central government policies and to international economic and political developments affecting supply and demand in the PRC foreign exchange trading system market. In the PRC, certain foreign exchange transactions are required by law to be transacted only by authorized financial institutions at exchange rates set by the People's Bank of China (the "PBOC"). Remittances in currencies other than RMB by the Group in the PRC must be processed through PBOC or other Chinese foreign exchange regulatory bodies which require certain supporting documentation in order to process the remittance.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

4. Prepayments and Other Current Assets

The following is a summary of prepayments and other current assets (in thousands):

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
Deductible input value-added tax	29,567	29,941
Prepayment for promotion and advertising expense and other operation expenses	70,628	59,409
Other receivable related to exercise of employee options	94,264	11,216
Prepaid content cost	35,204	36,884
Interest income receivable	15,303	12,320
Rental and other deposits	19,336	31,181
Inventories	4,603	10,347
Others	3,170	7,951
Total	272,075	199,249

5. Short-term Investments

As of December 31, 2021 and 2022, the Group's short-term investments consisted of wealth management products and structured deposits, which contain a variable interest rate. To estimate the fair value of short-term investments, the Group refers to the quoted rate of return provided by financial institutions at the end of each year/period using discounted cash flow method. The Group classifies the valuation techniques that use these inputs as level 2 of fair value measurement.

The following is a summary of short-term investments (in thousands):

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
Structured deposits	230,993	380,941
Wealth management products	2,008,603	406,318
Total	2,239,596	787,259

During the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, the Group recorded investment income related to short-term investments of RMB56.1 million, RMB59.2 million and RMB70.4 million in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss, respectively.

6. Property and equipment, net

The following is a summary of property and equipment, net (in thousands):

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
Electronic equipment	15,443	16,391
Office equipment and furniture	7,209	7,559
Leasehold improvement	13,700	14,021
Total	36,352	37,971

Less: Accumulated depreciation	(26,487)	(30,681)
Net book value	<u>9,865</u>	<u>7,290</u>

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

6. Property and equipment, net (Continued)

Depreciation expenses were RMB8.1 million, RMB5.8 million and RMB5.6 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

7. Intangible assets, net

The following is a summary of intangible assets, net (in thousands):

	As of December 31, 2021		
	Gross	Accumulated	Net
	carrying value	amortization	carrying value
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Software	3,083	(961)	2,122
License	54,904	(44,839)	10,065
Content	31,500	(3,150)	28,350
Brand name	25,000	(950)	24,050
Technology	4,000	(280)	3,720
Others	9	(8)	1
Total	118,496	(50,188)	68,308

	As of December 31, 2022		
	Gross	Accumulated	Net
	carrying value	amortization	carrying value
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Software	3,192	(1,322)	1,870
License	54,904	(54,904)	—
Content	38,300	(9,903)	28,397
Brand name	48,000	(4,217)	43,783
Technology	7,500	(1,313)	6,187
Others	9	(9)	—
Total	151,905	(71,668)	80,237

Amortization expenses were RMB11.5 million, RMB15.7 million and RMB21.5 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. No impairment charge was recognized for any of the years presented.

As of December 31, 2022, estimated amortization expense for intangible assets subject to amortization is as follows (in thousands):

	RMB
2023	14,268
2024	14,268
2025	14,268
2026	10,838
2027	6,482
Thereafter	20,113
Total	80,237

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

8. Lease

The Group's leasing activities primarily consist of operating leases for offices. The Group adopted ASC 842 effective January 1, 2018. ASC 842 requires lessees to recognize right-of-use assets and lease liabilities on the balance sheet. The Group has applied the available practical expedient to not recognize short-term leases with lease terms of one year or less on the balance sheet.

As of December 31, 2021 and 2022, the Group recorded right-of-use assets of approximately RMB126.5 million and RMB100.1 million and lease liabilities of approximately RMB122.7 million and RMB96.6 million, respectively, for operating leases as a lessee. Supplemental cash flow information related to operating leases was as follows (in thousands):

	For the Year Ended December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
Cash payments for operating leases	38,532	56,717
Right-of-use assets obtained in exchange for operating lease liabilities	157,946	24,818

Future lease payments under operating leases as of December 31, 2022 were as follows (in thousands):

	RMB
2023	54,976
2024	43,184
2025	1,211
Total future lease payments	99,371
Less: imputed interest	(2,814)
Total lease liabilities	96,557

The weighted-average remaining lease term was 2.95 years and 2.01 years as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

The weighted-average discount rate used to determine the operating lease liability as of December 31, 2021 and 2022 was 4.75% and 4.75%, respectively.

Operating lease expenses for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022 was RMB23.4 million, RMB38.7 million and RMB54.3 million, respectively, which excluded expenses of short-term contracts. Short-term lease expenses for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022 were RMB2.0 million, RMB0.5 million and RMB2.4 million, respectively.

9. Taxation

(a) Value-added tax ("VAT")

The Group's subsidiaries, consolidated VIEs and VIEs' subsidiaries incorporated in China are subject to statutory VAT rate of 6% for services rendered and 9% or 13% for goods sold.

(b) Income taxes

Composition of income tax

The current income tax expenses for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022 were approximately RMB1,080,000, RMB5,443,000 and RMB16,583,000 respectively.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

9. Taxation (Continued)

(b) Income taxes (Continued)

Cayman Islands

Under the current laws of the Cayman Islands, the Company is not subject to tax on income or capital gain. Additionally, upon payments of dividends by the Company in the Cayman Islands to their shareholders, no Cayman Islands withholding tax will be imposed.

Hong Kong

Under the current Hong Kong Inland Revenue Ordinance, from the year of assessment 2018/2019 onwards, the subsidiaries in Hong Kong are subject to profits tax at the rate of 8.25% on assessable profits up to HK\$2 million, and 16.5% on any part of assessable profits over HK\$2 million. The payments of dividends by these companies to their shareholders are not subject to any Hong Kong withholding tax.

China

On March 16, 2007, the National People's Congress of PRC enacted the Enterprise Income Tax ("EIT") Law, under which Foreign Invested Enterprises ("FIEs") and domestic companies would be subject to EIT at a uniform rate of 25%. Preferential tax treatments will continue to be granted to FIEs or domestic companies which conduct businesses in certain encouraged sectors and to otherwise classified as "Software Enterprises", "Key Software Enterprises" and/or "High and New Technology Enterprises" ("HNTEs"). The Enterprise Income Tax Law became effective on January 1, 2008.

The aforementioned preferential tax rates are subject to annual review by the relevant tax authorities in China. One subsidiary, and two subsidiaries of the Company were accredited as HNTEs and are entitled to a preferential income tax rate at 15% for the years ended December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively. All other major PRC incorporated entities of the Group were subject to a 25% income tax rate for all the years presented.

In accordance with PRC Tax Administration Law on the Levying and Collection of Taxes, the PRC tax authorities generally have up to five years to claw back underpaid tax plus penalties and interest for PRC entities' tax filings. The tax years ended December 31, 2018 through 2022 for the Company's PRC subsidiaries and VIEs remain subject to examination by the PRC tax authorities. In the case of tax evasion, which is not clearly defined in the law, there is no limitation on the tax years open for investigation.

The Company may also be subject to the examination of the tax filings in other jurisdictions, which are not material to the consolidated financial statements.

There were no ongoing examinations by tax authorities as of December 31, 2022.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

9. Taxation (Continued)

(b) Income taxes (Continued)

The following table presents a reconciliation of the income tax expenses computed by the statutory income tax rate to the Group's income tax expense of the year presented are as follows (in thousands):

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Income tax computed at statutory EIT rate (25%)	(129,117)	(323,359)	(391,056)
Permanent differences ⁽¹⁾	30,326	125,132	47,981
Effect of different tax jurisdictions	(2,574)	4,077	20,714
Effect of preferential tax rate	51,055	128,584	151,971
Change in deferred tax assets valuation allowance	51,390	71,009	184,573
Income tax expenses	<u>1,080</u>	<u>5,443</u>	<u>14,183</u>

(1) The permanent differences mainly consist of additional deduction for research and development expenditures and non-deductible expenses.

The following table sets forth the effect of preferential tax rate on the PRC operations (in thousands except per share data):

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Tax holiday effect	51,055	128,584	151,971
Basic and diluted net loss per share effect	0.78	0.54	0.50

(c) Deferred tax assets and liabilities

The following table presents the tax impact of significant temporary differences that give rise to the deferred tax assets and liabilities as of the years presented (in thousands):

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
Deferred tax assets:		
Net operating tax loss carry forwards	345,744	461,751
Advertising and promotion expenses in excess of deduction limit	232,339	296,037
Provision of allowance for expected credit losses	14,570	23,178
Payroll and expense accrued	15,994	12,254
Less: valuation allowance	(608,647)	(793,220)
Total deferred tax assets, net	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
Deferred tax liabilities:		
Acquired intangible assets	14,030	11,630
Total deferred tax liabilities	<u>14,030</u>	<u>11,630</u>

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

9. Taxation (Continued)

(c) Deferred tax assets and liabilities (Continued)

The following table sets forth the movement of the valuation allowances for deferred tax assets for the years presented (in thousands):

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
	<u>RMB</u>	<u>RMB</u>
Deferred tax assets:		
Balance as of January 1,	(537,638)	(608,647)
Change of valuation allowance	(71,009)	(184,573)
Balance as of December 31,	<u>(608,647)</u>	<u>(793,220)</u>

The tax losses of the Group expire over different time intervals depending on local jurisdiction. Certain entity's expiration year for tax losses has been extended from five years to ten years due to new tax legislation released in 2018. As of December 31, 2022, certain entities in mainland China of the Group had net operating tax loss carry forwards, if not utilized, which would expire as follows (in thousands):

	<u>RMB</u>
Loss expiring in 2023	46,532
Loss expiring in 2024	32,013
Loss expiring in 2025	180,546
Loss expiring after 2025	2,591,834
Total	<u>2,850,925</u>

(d) Withholding income tax

The EIT Law also imposes a withholding income tax of 10% on dividends distributed by a foreign invested entity ("FIE") to its immediate holding company outside of China, if such immediate holding company is considered as a non-resident enterprise without any establishment or place within China or if the received dividends have no connection with the establishment or place of such immediate holding company within China, unless such immediate holding company's jurisdiction of incorporation has a tax treaty with China that provides for a different withholding arrangement. Such withholding income tax was exempted under the Previous EIT Law. The Cayman Islands, where the Company incorporated, does not have such tax treaty with China.

According to the arrangement between Mainland China and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion in August 2006, dividends paid by a FIE in China to its immediate holding company in Hong Kong will be subject to withholding tax at a rate that may be lowered to 5% (if the foreign investor owns directly at least 25% of the shares of the FIE). The State Administration of Taxation ("SAT") further promulgated Circular 601 on October 27, 2009, which provides that tax treaty benefits will be denied to "conduit" or shell companies without business substance and that a beneficial ownership analysis will be used based on a "substance-over-form" principle to determine whether or not to grant the tax treaty benefits.

To the extent that subsidiaries and VIEs and the subsidiaries of VIEs of the Group have undistributed earnings, the Company will accrue appropriate expected tax associated with repatriation of such undistributed earnings. As of December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, the Company did not record any withholding tax on the retained earnings of its subsidiaries and VIEs in the PRC as they were still in accumulated deficit position.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

10. Other Current Liabilities

The following is a summary of other current liabilities as of December 31, 2021 and 2022 (in thousands):

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB
Payable of deposits	28,234	23,455
Accrued VAT tax payable	52,675	42,204
Payable to the users	13,434	28,243
Payable of employee benefits	5,993	8,637
Consideration and contingent consideration payables for acquisitions	18,936	43,565
Reimbursement from the depositary bank	—	12,376
Others	8,175	7,051
Total	<u>127,447</u>	<u>165,531</u>

11. Contract Liabilities

Contract liabilities primarily relate to the payments received for advertising services, paid content services, content-commerce solutions and vocational training in advance of revenue recognition. The increase in contract liabilities over the prior year was a result of the increase in consideration received from the Group's customers, which was in line with the growth of revenues in content-commerce solutions, paid membership service and vocational training. Due to the generally short-term duration of the relevant contracts, the majority of the performance obligations are satisfied within one year. The amount of revenue recognized that was included in the contract liabilities balance at the beginning of the year was RMB105.8 million, RMB138.6 million and RMB215.5 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

12. Ordinary Shares

The Company was incorporated on May 17, 2011 with an authorized share capital of US\$50,000 divided into 50,000 ordinary shares of US\$1 each, of which 10 ordinary shares had been issued. Zhihu Holdings Inc. and Innovation Works Holdings Limited, companies organized under the laws of the British Virgin Islands, held 80% and 20% of total equities of the Company, respectively.

After several issuances, share splits and repurchases of certain shares held by investors prior to 2019, the Company had 58,808,070 of ordinary shares issued and outstanding as of December 31, 2018.

In March 2021, the Company completed the IPO. Immediately prior to the completion of the IPO, the Company's authorized share capital was changed into US\$200,000 divided into 1,600,000,000 shares comprising (i) 1,500,000,000 Class A ordinary shares of a par value of US\$0.000125 each, (ii) 50,000,000 Class B ordinary shares of a par value of US\$0.000125 each, and (iii) 50,000,000 shares of a par value of US\$0.000125 each of such class or classes (however designated) as the board of directors may determine in accordance with the Company's post-offering memorandum and articles of association. Immediately prior to the completion of the IPO, all of the Company's issued and outstanding preferred shares and ordinary shares were converted into, and re-designated and re-classified, as Class A ordinary shares on a one-for-one basis, except that the 19,227,592 shares beneficially owned by Mr. Yuan Zhou continue to be Class B ordinary shares.

During the IPO, the Company sold a total of 55,000,000 ADSs, with two ADSs representing one Class A ordinary share of the Company with par value of US\$0.000125 per share. In addition, the Company sold and issued 13,157,892 Class A ordinary shares in the concurrent private placements to certain investors based on the IPO price of US\$9.50 per ADS. The Company received a total of approximately US\$737.1 million (RMB4.8 billion) of net proceeds after deducting the underwriter commissions and relevant offering expenses.

In April 2021, the underwriters exercised their option to purchase 259,904 additional ADSs and the Company received a total of approximately US\$2.3 million (RMB15.1

million) of net proceeds after deducting the underwriter commissions.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

12. Ordinary Shares (Continued)

In June 2022, 50,000,000 shares were designated as Class A ordinary shares of a par value of US\$0.000125 each. As a result, the Company had 1,600,000,000 authorized shares in total, comprising (i) 1,550,000,000 Class A ordinary shares of a par value of US\$0.000125 each, (ii) 50,000,000 Class B ordinary shares of a par value of US\$0.000125 each.

13. Preferred Shares

The following table summarizes the issuances of convertible redeemable preferred shares (collectively, “Preferred Shares”).

<u>Series of Preferred Shares</u>	<u>Date of issuance</u>	<u>Total number of shares issued</u>	<u>Consideration per share US\$</u>
Series A	08/11/2011	37,858,584	0.26
Series B	05/05/2014	25,164,697	0.93
Series C	21/09/2015	27,935,316	2.17
Series D	08/12/2016	22,334,525	4.63
Series D1	22/03/2017	6,947,330	5.04
Series E	26/07/2018, 14/09/2018	27,267,380	9.89
Series F	07/08/2019	34,677,872 (i)	12.52
		<u>182,185,704</u>	

(i) Including 11,985,440 Series F preferred shares legally issued in December 2020 upon the exercise of the warrant as discussed in Accounting of Preferred Shares.

The key terms of the preferred shares are as follows:

Conversion rights

Unless converted earlier pursuant to the provisions with respect to automatic conversion as set out below, preferred shares shall be convertible, at the option of the holder thereof, at any time into such number of fully paid and non-assessable Class A ordinary shares at an initial conversion ratio of 1:1, and thereafter shall be subject to adjustment and readjustment from time to time for (a) share splits and combination, (b) ordinary share dividends and distributions, (c) reorganizations, mergers, consolidations, reclassifications, exchanges, substitution, (d) dilutive issuance.

Each Preferred Shares shall automatically be converted, based on the then-effective conversion price, without the payment of any additional consideration, into fully-paid and non-assessable Class A ordinary shares upon the earlier of (i) the consummation of the qualified initial public offering (“Qualified IPO”), or (ii) the date specified by the written consent of the majority Preferred Shareholders of each Preferred Shares.

Qualified IPO means a closing of an IPO on a stock exchange reasonably accepted to the majority Preferred Shareholders with the company’s market capitalization, immediately after the offering of at least US\$4 billion.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

13. Preferred Shares (Continued)

Redemption rights

The shareholders of preferred shares may request redemption of all or any part of the then outstanding shares held, at any time after the occurrence of (i) if a Qualified IPO or a trade sale is not consummated within forty-two month period after the closing of Series F financing, or (ii) if any Preferred Shares are required to be redeemed by any preferred shareholder after the closing of Series F financing, or (iii) if there has been any change that does not allow or materially restricts the company to effectively control its structured entities as defined in Note 2 (b), or (iv) the occurrence of a material breach of the transaction documents by any of the Group, founders, co-founders and other parties specified in the transaction documents during the forty-two month period after the closing of Series F financing. The commencement date of term (i) mentioned above was originally five-year period after the issuance date of each preferred share and modified to forty-two-month period after the closing of Series F financing.

The redemption price of each share to be redeemed shall equal to (i) 150% of each series stated issue price, plus (ii) any accrued but unpaid dividends on such share, proportionally adjusted for share subdivisions, share dividends, reorganizations, reclassifications, consolidations, or mergers.

Voting rights

Each Preferred Shares has voting rights equivalent to the number of Class A ordinary shares into which such Preferred Shares could be then convertible.

Dividend rights

Each preferred shareholder shall be entitled to receive the dividends on pro-rata basis according to the relative number of shares held by them on an as-converted basis, only when, as and if declared at the sole discretion of the Board and duly approved. The distribution sequence should be in the following order: Series F preferred shareholders, Series E preferred shareholders, Series D and/or Series D1 preferred shareholders, Series C preferred shareholders, Series B preferred shareholders, Series A preferred shareholders, ordinary shareholders.

Liquidation rights

In the event of any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Company, either voluntary or involuntary, the assets and funds of the Company legally available for distribution to the shareholders shall be distributed to shareholders in the following manner and order:

Each preferred shareholder shall be entitled to receive, prior and in preference to any distribution of any of the assets or funds of the Company to the holders of any previous preferred shares and ordinary shares, the amount equal to one hundred percent (100%) of the original issue price on each preferred share, plus all declared but unpaid dividends thereon up to the date of liquidation or otherwise agreed in the transaction documents. The liquidation preference amount will be paid to the Preferred Shareholders in the following order: first to holders of Series F Preferred Shares, second to holders of Series E Preferred Shares, third to holders of Series D/D1 Preferred Shares, forth to holders of Series C Preferred Shares, fifth to holders of Series B Preferred Shares and lastly to holders of Series A Preferred Shares. After distributing or paying in full the liquidation preference amount to all of the Preferred Shareholders, the remaining assets of the Company available for distribution, if any, shall distributed to the holders of ordinary shares and the Preferred Shareholders on a pro rata basis, based on the number of ordinary shares then held by each shareholder on an as converted basis. If the value of the remaining assets of the Company is less than aggregate liquidation preference amounts payable to the holders of a particular series of Preferred Shares, then the remaining assets of the Company shall be distributed pro rata amongst the holders of all outstanding Preferred Shares of that series.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

13. Preferred Shares (Continued)

Accounting of Preferred Shares

The Company has classified the Preferred Shares in the mezzanine equity of the consolidated balance sheets as they are contingently redeemable at the options of the holders. In addition, the Company records accretions on the Preferred Shares to the redemption value from the issuance dates to the earliest redemption dates. The accretions using the effective interest method, are recorded against retained earnings, or in the absence of retained earnings, by charges against additional paid-in capital. Once additional paid-in capital has been exhausted, additional charges are recorded by increasing the accumulated deficit. Each issuance of the Preferred Shares is recognized at the respective fair value at the date of issuance net of issuance costs. The issuance costs for Series A, Series B, Series C, Series D, Series D1, Series E Preferred Shares and Series F Preferred Shares were RMB0.5 million, RMB0.5 million, RMB0.8 million, RMB6.1 million, RMB2.2 million, RMB35.0 million and RMB27.0 million, respectively.

The Company has determined that there was no beneficial conversion feature attributable to the Preferred Shares because the initial effective conversion prices of these Preferred Shares were higher than the fair value of the Company's ordinary shares determined by the Company taking into account independent valuations.

Pursuant to laws applicable to PRC entities incorporated in the PRC, PRC investors should complete its statutory filings and foreign exchange registrations for outbound investment, before such PRC entities can legally own offshore investments or equity interests in offshore entities. As such, all PRC shareholders of Zhihu Inc. must complete their relevant registrations and statutory filings, as appropriate, before they can, in accordance with applicable PRC laws, hold directly or indirectly any share of the Company, which is incorporated under the laws of the Cayman Islands. Certain Preferred Shareholder who made full payment of the purchase consideration holds warrant and one Preferred Share in the Company to reflect such holder's rights, obligations, and interests in the Company as if such holder were holding all Preferred Shares of the Company issuable upon exercise of the warrant before such holder completes its necessary registration for outbound investment to exercise its warrant to purchase Preferred Shares of the Company. This was a transitional arrangement pending completion of necessary registration process by such holder. Once such holder completes the necessary registration for outbound investment, such holder is required to exercise the warrant immediately. Accordingly, the one Preferred Share was accounted for and represented based on the terms on all Preferred Shares of the Company issuable upon exercise of the warrant. Concurrently, the Group entered into a foreign exchange forward contract with the investor. The Group accounts for the foreign exchange forward contract and the warrant as derivative asset (included in other current assets), which was measured at fair value with the changes in the fair value recorded within other income/(expenses) in the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss. The holder of the warrant has completed the relevant registration and filing and exercised the warrant in December 2020. The underlying Preferred Shares have been legally issued accordingly.

Upon the completion of the IPO, all of issued and outstanding Preferred Shares automatically converted into ordinary shares on a one-for-one basis.

14. Share-based Compensation

In June 2012, the Company established 2012 Incentive Plan, which permits the grant of options, and restricted shares of the Company to relevant directors, officer and other employees of the Company and its affiliates. In December 2021, the maximum number of shares that may be issued under the 2012 incentive compensation plan was 44,021,165 Class A ordinary shares.

In June 2022, the Company established 2022 Incentive Plan, which permits the grant of options, and restricted shares of the Company to relevant directors, officer, employees and consultants of the Company and its affiliates. The maximum number of shares that may be issued under the 2022 Incentive Plan is 39,128,194 Class A ordinary shares, an aggregate number of (i) the maximum of 13,042,731 shares which may be issued pursuant to awards in the form of options, and (ii) the maximum of 26,085,463 shares and such number of shares equivalent to the unused portion of the 2012 Incentive Plan as at the expiry of such plan, which may be issued pursuant to awards in the form of restricted shares.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

14. Share-based Compensation (Continued)

Under the 2012 Incentive Plan, during 2012 and 2013, options or restricted shares granted are subject to both service conditions and the occurrence of an initial public offering (“IPO”) as a performance condition, which are measured at the grant date fair value.

After 2013, participants are granted options or restricted shares which only vest if certain service conditions are met. Participation in the 2012 Incentive Plan is at the board’s discretion, and no individual has a contractual right to participate in the 2012 Incentive Plan or to receive any guaranteed benefits. Options issued under the 2012 Incentive Plan are valid and effective for 10 years from the grant date.

Majority of the share options shall be subject to different vesting schedules of three, three and a half or four years from the vesting commencement date, subject to the participant continuing to be an employee through each vesting date. For vesting schedule of three years, 25% of the granted share options are vested on the vesting commencement date; and 75% of the granted shares options are vested in equal monthly installments over the following thirty six (36) months. For vesting schedule of three and a half years, 25% of the granted share options are vested on the 6-month anniversary of the vesting commencement date; and 75% of the granted shares options are vested in equal monthly installments over the following thirty six (36) months. For vesting schedule of four years, 25% of the granted share options are vested on the first anniversary from the vesting commencement date; and 75% of the granted shares options are vested in equal monthly installments over the following thirty six (36) months or vested in equal yearly installments over the following three years.

Employees’ share-based compensation awards are measured at the grant date fair value of the awards and recognized as expenses (a) for share options granted with only service conditions, using the graded vesting method, net of actual forfeitures, over the vesting period; or (b) for share options granted with service conditions and performance condition, the share-based compensation expenses are recorded when the performance condition is considered probable using the graded vesting method. Where the occurrence of an IPO is a performance condition, cumulative share-based compensation expenses for the options that have satisfied the service condition should be recorded upon the completion of the IPO.

Compensation expenses related to options granted during 2012 and 2013 with a performance condition of an IPO were RMB6.3 million, for which the service condition had been met and were recognized when the performance target of an IPO was achieved in March 2021.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

14. Share-based Compensation (Continued)

Share options activities

The following table presents a summary of the Company's options activities for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022:

	Number of options (in thousands)	Weighted Average Exercise Price US\$	Weighted Average Remaining Contractual Life	Aggregate Intrinsic Value (US\$ in thousands)
Outstanding as of January 1, 2020	26,248	1.01	7.22	159,818
Granted	11,811	0.60		
Exercised	(500)	0.01		
Forfeited	(1,699)	2.22		
Outstanding as of December 31, 2020	<u>35,860</u>	0.84	7.33	339,953
Outstanding as of January 1, 2021	35,860	0.84	7.33	339,953
Granted	1,846	2.14		
Exercised	(15,568)	0.40		
Forfeited	(954)	4.49		
Outstanding as of December 31, 2021	<u>21,184</u>	1.10	6.39	211,515
Outstanding as of January 1, 2022	21,184	1.10	6.39	211,515
Granted	—	—		
Exercised	(14,289)	0.32		
Forfeited	(857)	2.89		
Outstanding as of December 31, 2022	<u>6,038</u>	2.68	6.08	6,838
Exercisable as of December 31, 2022	4,007	3.24	5.26	2,686

The weighted-average fair value of granted share options was US\$9.33, US\$13.55 and nil for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. The total intrinsic value of share options exercised was US\$5.2 million, US\$239.3 million and US\$65.0 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

14. Share-based Compensation (Continued)

Restricted shares activities

The following table presents a summary of the Company's restricted shares activities for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022:

	Number of Restricted shares (in thousands)	Weighted Average Grant Date Fair Value US\$
Unvested as of January 1, 2020	214	2.70
Vested	(123)	2.56
Unvested as of December 31, 2020	<u>91</u>	<u>2.90</u>
Unvested as of January 1, 2021	91	2.90
Granted	1,598	22.49
Vested	(81)	2.86
Forfeited	(127)	24.10
Unvested as of December 31, 2021	<u>1,481</u>	<u>22.22</u>
Unvested as of January 1, 2022	1,481	22.22
Granted	20,116	4.11
Vested	(738)	12.90
Forfeited	(1,543)	9.33
Unvested as of December 31, 2022	<u>19,316</u>	<u>4.75</u>

As of December 31, 2022, the weighted average remaining contractual life of outstanding restricted shares is 9.43 years.

Valuation

Prior to the completion of the initial public offering in the United States, the Company used the discounted cash flow method to determine the underlying equity fair value of the Company and adopted the equity allocation model to determine the fair value of each underlying ordinary share. Key assumptions, such as discount rate and projections of future performance, are required to be determined, on a best estimate basis, by the Company.

After the completion of the initial public offering in the United States, the fair value of the share options is estimated based on the fair market value of the underlying ordinary shares at the grant date.

Based on fair value of each underlying ordinary share, the Company used the Binomial option-pricing model to determine the fair value of the share options as at the grant date. Key assumptions are set as below:

	For the Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2021
Fair value per share (US\$)	\$ 7.42-10.32	\$ 25.02
Risk-free interest rate	0.70%-0.93 %	1.44 %
Expected volatility	54.94%-59.31 %	54.85%-55.51 %
Expected term (in years)	10	10
Dividend yield	0.00 %	0.00 %

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

14. Share-based Compensation (Continued)

Valuation (Continued)

The expected volatility at the grant date and each option valuation date was estimated based on the annualized standard deviation of the daily return embedded in historical share prices of comparable peer companies with a time horizon close to the expected expiry of the term of the options. The Company has never declared or paid any cash dividends on its capital stock, and the Group does not anticipate any dividend payments in the foreseeable future. Expected term is the contractual life of the options. The Group estimated the risk-free interest rate based on the yield to maturity of U.S. treasury bonds denominated in US\$ at the option valuation date.

The total expenses recognized in profit or loss in respect of the share-based compensation under the Plan was RMB180.1 million, RMB541.0 million and RMB350.9 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. As of December 31, 2022, total unrecognized compensation expenses under the Plan granted after 2013 were US\$33.1 million, which is expected to be recognized over a weighted average period of 2.7 years.

15. Net Loss Per Share

Basic and diluted loss per share have been calculated in accordance with ASC260 for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Shares issuable for little consideration have been included in the number of outstanding shares used for basic loss per share.

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
Numerator (RMB in thousands):			
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,578,403)
Net income attributable to noncontrolling interests	—	—	(2,754)
Accretions of preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	(170,585)	—
Net loss attributable to ordinary shareholders	(1,198,284)	(1,469,465)	(1,581,157)
Denominator:			
Weighted average number of ordinary shares outstanding, basic	65,279,970	240,174,108	304,836,318
Weighted average number of ordinary shares outstanding, diluted	65,279,970	240,174,108	304,836,318
Net loss per share, basic (RMB)	(18.36)	(6.12)	(5.19)
Net loss per share, diluted (RMB)	(18.36)	(6.12)	(5.19)

Basic and diluted loss per ordinary share is computed using the weighted average number of ordinary shares outstanding during the year. Both Class A and Class B ordinary shares are included in the calculation of the weighted average number of ordinary shares outstanding, basic and diluted.

The following ordinary shares equivalents were excluded from the computation of dilutive net loss per share to eliminate any antidilutive effect:

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
Preferred shares	180,336,722	—	—
Share options	15,922,419	24,368,217	5,144,513
	<u>196,259,141</u>	<u>24,368,217</u>	<u>5,144,513</u>

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

16. Treasury Stock

On June 10, 2022, the Company's annual general meeting approved a share repurchase program of up to US\$100 million for the next 12 months. As of December 31, 2022, the Company has repurchased a total of 6.5 million Class A ordinary shares on both the New York Stock Exchange and The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited under the program for a total consideration of US\$16.7 million (RMB 118.5 million). As of December 31, 2022, the number of Class A Ordinary Shares in issue was reduced by 4.9 million shares as a result of the cancellation of the repurchased shares. In addition, as of December 31, 2022, the Company has purchased a total of 0.6 million Class A ordinary shares for a total consideration of US\$1.3 million (RMB 9.5 million) to be utilized upon vesting of restricted shares in future.

17. Commitments and Contingencies

Commitments

Upon the adoption of ASC 842, future minimum lease payments for operating lease as of December 31, 2022 are disclosed in Note 8.

Litigation

From time to time, the Group is involved in claims and legal proceedings that arise in the ordinary course of business. Based on currently available information, management does not believe that the ultimate outcome of any unresolved matters, individually and in the aggregate, is reasonably possible to have a material adverse effect on the Group's financial position, results of operations or cash flows. However, litigation is subject to inherent uncertainties and the Group's view of these matters may change in the future. The Group records a liability when it is both probable that a liability has been incurred and the amount of the loss can be reasonably estimated. The Group reviews the need for any such liability on a regular basis. The Group has not recorded any material liabilities in this regard as of December 31, 2021 and 2022.

18. Fair Value Measurement

(a) Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis

The following table sets forth the financial instruments, measured at fair value on a recurring basis, by level within the fair value hierarchy as of December 31, 2022 (in thousands):

Items	Fair Value as of December 31, 2022	Fair value measurement at reporting date using		
		Quoted Prices in Active Market for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Unobservable inputs (Level 3)
Assets				
Short-term investments	787,259	—	787,259	—
Liabilities				
Contingent consideration payables for acquisitions (current)	38,940	—	—	38,940
Contingent consideration payables for acquisitions (non-current)	74,618	—	—	74,618

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

18. Fair Value Measurement (Continued)

(a) Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis (Continued)

The following table sets forth the financial instruments, measured at fair value on a recurring basis, by level within the fair value hierarchy as of December 31, 2021 (in thousands):

Items	Fair Value as of December 31, 2021	Fair value measurement at reporting date using		
		Quoted Prices in Active Market for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Unobservable inputs (Level 3)
Assets				
Short-term investments	2,239,596	—	2,239,596	—
Liabilities				
Contingent consideration payables for acquisitions (non-current)	64,700	—	—	64,700

Short-term investments

As of December 31, 2021 and 2022, the Group's short-term investments consisted of wealth management products and structured deposits, the rates of interest under these investments were determined based on quoted rate of return provided by financial institutions at the end of each year. The Group classifies the valuation techniques that use these inputs as Level 2 of fair value measurement.

Contingent consideration payables for acquisitions

The Group's estimated liability for contingent consideration payables for our acquisitions measured at fair (see Note (22)). The contingent consideration payables are included in other current liabilities and other non-current liabilities on the consolidated balance sheets. The Group estimated the fair value of contingent consideration payables using an expected cash flow method with unobservable inputs of probabilities of successful achievements of certain specified conditions post-acquisition, and accordingly the Group classifies the valuation techniques that use these inputs as Level 3. For years ended December 31, 2021 and 2022, the Group recognized a loss of RMB4.0 million and RMB31.5 million of fair value changes for the contingent consideration payables and recorded in fair value change of financial instruments in the statement of operations and comprehensive loss, respectively.

Other financial instruments

Trade receivables, amounts due from/to related parties and other current assets are financial assets with carrying values that approximate fair value due to their short-term nature. Accounts payable and accrued liabilities and other payables are financial liabilities with carrying values that approximate fair value due to their short-term nature.

(b) Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a nonrecurring basis

The Group measures the equity investment accounted for using the equity method at fair value on a non-recurring basis only if an impairment charge was to be recognized. The equity investment accounted for using the measurement alternative is generally not categorized in the fair value hierarchy. As of December 31, 2022, the equity investment was measured using significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) and written down from its carrying value to fair value, considering the stage of development, the business plan, the financial condition, the sufficiency of funding and the operating performance of the investee company, with impairment charges incurred and recorded in earnings for the years then ended. The Group recognized impairment charges of nil and RMB20.9 million for the equity investment for the years ended December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

18. Fair Value Measurement (Continued)

(b) Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a nonrecurring basis (Continued)

The Group's other non-financial assets, such as intangible asset, goodwill, fixed assets and operating lease assets, are measured at fair value only if they are determined to be impaired. The inputs used to measure the estimated fair value of such assets are classified as Level 3 in the fair value hierarchy due to the significance of unobservable inputs used. The Group recognized no impairment charges of these assets arising from our acquisitions for the years ended December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively.

19. Related Party Transactions

During the years presented, other than disclosed elsewhere, the Company mainly had the following related party transactions:

Names of the major related parties	Nature of relationship
Tencent Holdings Limited and its subsidiaries (the "Tencent Group")	A shareholder that has significant influence over the Group
Kuaishou Technology and its subsidiary (the "Kuaishou Group")	A shareholder that has significant influence over the Group
Baidu, Inc. and its subsidiaries (the "Baidu Group") ⁽ⁱ⁾	A shareholder that has significant influence over the Group as of December 31, 2021

(i) As Baidu Group's shares in the Company is further diluted after the IPO, the Company considers that Baidu is no longer its related party since 2022.

(a) Significant transactions with related parties

The following table presents significant transactions with Tencent Group and Kuaishou Group for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022. The transactions with Baidu Group included (i) purchase of services amounting to RMB48.7 million and RMB142.3 million for the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2021, respectively; and (ii) provision of services amounting to RMB17.2 million and RMB19.7 million for the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2021, respectively.

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB in thousands		
Services purchased from related parties			
Tencent Group ⁽ⁱ⁾	77,254	110,849	137,715
Kuaishou Group ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾	—	2,179	14,373
Services provided to related parties ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾			
Tencent Group	12,569	10,876	25,741
Kuaishou Group	7,412	7,864	14,779

(i) Service purchased from Tencent Group primarily related to cloud and bandwidth services.

(ii) Service purchased from Kuaishou Group primarily related to marketing services and cloud and bandwidth services.

(iii) Service provided to related parties mainly refer to advertising service provided to Tencent Group, Baidu Group and Kuaishou Group.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

19. Related Party Transactions (Continued)

(b) Balances with related parties

The following table presents balances with Tencent Group and Kuaishou Group as of December 31, 2021 and 2022. The amount due from Baidu Group was RMB6.4 million as of December 31, 2021, and the amount due to Baidu Group was RMB14.6 million as of December 31, 2021.

	As of December 31,	
	2021	2022
	RMB in thousands	
Amount due from related parties		
Tencent Group	8,763	22,616
Kuaishou Group	2,998	2,182
Amount due to related parties		
Tencent Group	67,370	19,081
Kuaishou Group	1,640	5,780

The transactions and balances with related parties are all trade in nature.

20. Segment Information

The Group's organizational structure is based on a number of factors that the CODM uses to evaluate, view and run its business operations which include, but not limited to, customer base, products and technology. The Group's operating segments are based on such organizational structure and information reviewed by the Group's CODM to evaluate the operating segment results. The Group has internal reporting of revenue, cost and expenses by nature as a whole. Hence, the Group has only one operating segment.

Key revenue streams are as below (in thousands):

	For the Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2021	2022
	RMB	RMB	RMB
Advertising service	843,284	1,160,886	926,296
Paid membership service	320,471	668,507	1,230,804
Content-commerce solutions	135,813	973,986	1,030,184
Vocational training*	7,080	45,823	248,266
Others	45,548	110,122	169,369
Total	1,352,196	2,959,324	3,604,919

* The Company separately reported the revenue of its vocational training business during the year ended December 31, 2022, which was formerly included in "others," and for comparison purposes, the revenue of vocational training business and others for years ended December 31, 2020 and 2021 have been retrospectively re-classified.

All revenues are derived from China based on the geographical locations where services are provided to customers. In addition, the Group's long-lived assets are substantially located in China, and the amount of long-lived assets attributable to any individual other country is not material. Therefore, no geographical segments are presented.

Zhihu Inc.**NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)****21. Restricted Net Assets**

Relevant PRC laws and regulations permit PRC companies to pay dividends only out of their retained earnings, if any, as determined in accordance with PRC accounting standards and regulations. Additionally, the Company's PRC subsidiaries and VIEs can only distribute dividends upon approval of the shareholders after they have met the PRC requirements for appropriation to the general reserve fund and the statutory surplus fund respectively. The general reserve fund and the statutory surplus fund require that annual appropriations of 10% of net after-tax income should be set aside prior to payment of any dividends. As a result of these and other restrictions under PRC laws and regulations, the PRC subsidiaries and VIEs are restricted in their ability to transfer a portion of their net assets to the Company either in the form of dividends, loans or advances, with restricted portions amounted to approximately RMB3,573.1 million and RMB3,054.1 million of the Company's total consolidated net assets, as of December 31, 2021 and 2022, respectively. Even though the Company currently does not require any dividends, loans or advances from the PRC entities for working capital and other funding purposes, the Company may in the future require additional cash resources from them due to changes in business conditions, to fund future acquisitions and development, or merely to declare and pay dividends or distributions to its shareholders. Except for the above, there is no other restriction on use of proceeds generated by the Group's subsidiaries, the VIEs and their subsidiaries to satisfy any obligations of the Company.

Furthermore, cash transfers from the Company's PRC subsidiaries to their parent companies outside of China are subject to PRC government control of currency conversion. Shortages in the availability of foreign currency may restrict the ability of the PRC subsidiaries and VIEs to remit sufficient foreign currency to pay dividends or other payments to the Company, or otherwise satisfy their foreign currency denominated obligations.

22. Business combination

Prez Limited, a Cayman Islands company, through its subsidiaries and variable interest entity (collectively referred to as the "Pinzhi"), is a vocational training provider which mainly focuses on Chartered Financial Analyst and Certified Public Accountant examinations in the PRC. In July 2021, the Group acquired 55% of the equity interest in Pinzhi at an aggregate purchase price of RMB83.9 million, comprising cash and contingent consideration at fair value. Contingent consideration is subject to Pinzhi's future operating results and initially and subsequently measured at fair value through profit and loss, which was classified as a liability in consolidated balance sheets. The remaining 45% shares held by the founder is subject to a 5 years' service period. That is, if the founder left the Company within 5 years after the closing of the acquisition, Zhihu has the option to either exercise its redemption right or purchase the remaining 45% shares held by the founder without consideration. As such, the transaction was regarded as the Group has effectively acquired 100% of equity interests at the acquisition date with 45% equity interests granted to the founder as share-based compensation for the future service and a put option which was recognized as financial instruments measured at fair value.

The allocation of the purchase price as of the date of acquisition is summarized as follows (in thousands):

	RMB
Net liabilities acquired	(1,468)
Amortizable intangible assets	
Content	31,500
Brand name	13,000
Technology	1,600
Goodwill	50,833
Deferred tax liabilities	(11,525)
	<u>83,940</u>

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

22. Business combination (Continued)

Total purchase price comprised of (in thousands):

	RMB
Cash consideration	38,940
Contingent consideration at fair value	45,000
Total	<u>83,940</u>

Yincheng Limited, a Cayman Islands company, through its subsidiaries and variable interest entity (collectively referred to as the “Papa”), is a vocational training provider which mainly focuses on vocational language exam preparation courses, under the Papa brand. In November 2021, the Group acquired 55% of the equity interest in Papa at an aggregate purchase price of RMB35.6 million, comprising cash and contingent consideration at fair value. Contingent consideration is subject to Papa’s future operating results and initially and subsequently measured at fair value through profit and loss, which was classified as a liability in consolidated balance sheets. The remaining 45% shares held by the founder is subject to a 6 years’ service period. That is, if the founder left the Company within 6 years after the closing of the acquisition, Zhihu has the option to either exercise its redemption right or purchase the remaining 45% shares held by the founder without consideration. As such, the transaction was regarded as the Group has effectively acquired 100% of equity interests at the acquisition date with 45% equity interests granted to the founder as share-based compensation for the future service and a put option which was recognized as financial instruments measured at fair value.

The allocation of the purchase price as of the date of acquisition is summarized as follows (in thousands):

	RMB
Net assets acquired	1,945
Amortizable intangible assets	
Brand name	12,000
Technology	2,400
Goodwill	22,830
Deferred tax liabilities	(3,600)
	<u>35,575</u>

Total purchase price comprised of (in thousands):

	RMB
Cash consideration	19,875
Contingent consideration at fair value	15,700
Total	<u>35,575</u>

Goodwill arising from the above acquisitions was attributable to the synergies expected from the combined operations of Pinzhi and the Company as well as Papa and the Company in the vocational education sector in the PRC. The Company does not expect the goodwill recognized to be deductible for income tax purposes.

Pro forma results of operations for the Pinzhi and Papa have not been presented because they were not material to the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss for the year ended December 31, 2021, either individually or in aggregate.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

22. Business combination (Continued)

Beijing Pocket Gardener Technology Co., Ltd., a Chinese company, through its subsidiaries (collectively referred to as the “Yiqikao”), is a vocational training provider which mainly focuses on teacher qualification and recruitment tutoring courses, and civil servants examination tutoring courses. In September 2022, the Group acquired 51% of the equity interest in Yiqikao at an aggregate purchase price of RMB99.8 million, comprising cash and contingent consideration at fair value. Contingent consideration is subject to Yiqikao’s future operating results and initially and subsequently measured at fair value through profit and loss, which was classified as a liability in consolidated balance sheets. The remaining 45.0% shares held by the founder is subject to a 4 years’ service period. That is, if the founder left the Company within 4 years after the closing of the acquisition, Zhihu has the option to either exercise its redemption right or purchase the remaining 45.0% shares held by the founder without consideration. As such, the transaction was regarded as the Group has effectively acquired 96.0% of equity interests at the acquisition date with 45.0% equity interests granted to the founder as share-based compensation for the future service and a put option which was recognized as financial instruments measured at fair value.

The allocation of the purchase price as of the date of acquisition is summarized as follows (in thousands):

	RMB
Net assets acquired	12,624
Amortizable intangible assets	
Brand name	23,000
Content	6,800
Technology	3,500
Financial instruments arising from acquisition	8,700
Goodwill	52,444
Noncontrolling interests	(7,238)
	<u>99,830</u>

Total purchase price comprised of (in thousands):

	RMB
Cash consideration	66,530
Contingent consideration at fair value	33,300
Total	<u>99,830</u>

Goodwill arising from the above acquisitions was attributable to the synergies expected from the combined operations of Yiqikao and the Company in the vocational education sector in the PRC. The Company does not expect the goodwill recognized to be deductible for income tax purposes.

Pro forma results of operations for Yiqikao have not been presented because they were not material to the consolidated statements of operations and comprehensive loss for the year ended December 31, 2022.

23. Subsequent Event

No subsequent event which had a material impact on the Company was identified through the date of issuance of the financial statements.

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

24. Additional Information—Parent Company Only Condensed Financial Information

The Company performed a test on the restricted net assets of subsidiaries and VIE in accordance with Securities and Exchange Commission Regulation S-X Rule 4-08 (e) (3), “General Notes to Financial Statements” and concluded that the condensed financial information of the Company is required to be presented. The Company did not have significant capital and other commitments, or guarantees as of December 31, 2021 and 2022.

(a) Condensed balance sheets of Zhihu Inc.

	As of December 31,		
	2021	2022	2022
	RMB in thousands		US\$ in thousands
ASSETS			
Current assets:			
Cash and cash equivalents	94,427	197,012	28,564
Amounts due from subsidiaries and VIEs and VIEs’ subsidiaries	12,711	1,981	287
Prepayments and other current assets	42,232	7,651	1,110
Total current assets	149,370	206,644	29,961
Non-current assets:			
Investments in subsidiaries	6,666,713	5,527,483	801,410
Total non-current assets	6,666,713	5,527,483	801,410
Total assets	6,816,083	5,734,127	831,371
LIABILITIES AND SHAREHOLDER’S EQUITY			
Current liabilities			
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	30,828	4,841	702
Other current liabilities	—	16,925	2,454
Amounts due to subsidiaries and VIEs and VIEs’ subsidiaries	54,601	58,665	8,506
Total current liabilities	85,429	80,431	11,662
Total liabilities	85,429	80,431	11,662
Shareholders’ equity:			
Ordinary shares, US\$0.000125 par value	241	249	36
Treasury stock	—	(33,814)	(4,903)
Additional paid-in capital	13,350,347	13,615,042	1,973,996
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(339,118)	(65,808)	(9,541)
Accumulated deficit	(6,280,816)	(7,861,973)	(1,139,879)
Total shareholders’ equity	6,730,654	5,653,696	819,709
Total liabilities and shareholders’ equity	6,816,083	5,734,127	831,371

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

24. Additional Information—Parent Company Only Condensed Financial Information (Continued)

(b) Condensed statements of operations and comprehensive loss of Zhihu Inc.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2021	2022	2022
	RMB in thousands			US\$ in thousands
Operating expenses:				
General and administrative expenses	(13,914)	(30,019)	(79,908)	(11,586)
Total operating expenses	(13,914)	(30,019)	(79,908)	(11,586)
Loss from operations	(13,914)	(30,019)	(79,908)	(11,586)
Other (expenses)/income:				
Fair value change of financial instruments	(68,818)	—	—	—
Interest income	3,244	123	1,027	149
Exchange gains/(losses)	69,650	(523)	516	75
Share of loss of subsidiaries	(507,712)	(1,268,461)	(1,502,792)	(217,884)
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,581,157)	(229,246)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	(170,585)	—	—
Net loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,198,284)	(1,469,465)	(1,581,157)	(229,246)
Net loss	(517,550)	(1,298,880)	(1,581,157)	(229,246)
Other comprehensive loss:				
Foreign currency translation adjustments	(143,326)	(143,190)	273,310	39,626
Total other comprehensive (loss)/income	(143,326)	(143,190)	273,310	39,626
Total comprehensive loss	(660,876)	(1,442,070)	(1,307,847)	(189,620)
Accretions of convertible redeemable preferred shares to redemption value	(680,734)	(170,585)	—	—
Comprehensive loss attributable to Zhihu Inc.'s shareholders	(1,341,610)	(1,612,655)	(1,307,847)	(189,620)

Zhihu Inc.

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Continued)

24. Additional Information—Parent Company Only Condensed Financial Information (Continued)

(c) Condensed statements of cash flows of Zhihu Inc.

	For the Year Ended December 31,			2022 US\$ in thousands
	2020	2021	2022	
	RMB in thousands			
Net cash used in operating activities	(2,606)	(3,182)	(51,752)	(7,503)
Purchases of term deposits	—	(64,596)	—	—
Proceeds from withdrawal of term deposits	356,580	64,707	—	—
Proceeds from repayment of loans to Group companies	978,735	—	—	—
Repayment from subsidiaries of investment	—	—	256,942	37,253
Investment in subsidiaries	(1,407,173)	(4,695,120)	—	—
Investment in equity investments	—	(19,380)	—	—
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities	(71,858)	(4,714,389)	256,942	37,253
Proceeds from issuance of Class A ordinary shares upon the completion of IPO, net of issuance cost	—	4,853,293	—	—
Proceeds received from employees in relation to share options	—	15,544	19,612	2,843
Payments for repurchase of shares	—	—	(127,962)	(18,553)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	—	4,868,837	(108,350)	(15,710)
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	(4,450)	(63,673)	5,745	833
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents	(78,914)	87,593	102,585	14,873
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	85,748	6,834	94,427	13,691
Cash and cash equivalents at ending of year	6,834	94,427	197,012	28,564