

Private Club GMs'/COOs' Perceptions in Adopting Social Media: Applying the Technology Acceptance Model*

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Social media have emerged as an important component of technology-mediated communications and many companies have been supporting the development of social networking sites as a part of brand communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This study was undertaken to understand how private club general managers (GMs) and chief operating officers (COOs) perceive their ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment of social media. Surveys were completed by attendees at the Club Managers Association of America Business Management Institute III (CMAA BMI III) executive development in Spring 2014 and Fall 2014. As one of a few empirical information technology (IT) studies in the context of the private club industry, the findings of this study are expected to provide baselines to academics and private club GMs/COOs in understanding the processes of social media technology adoption and acceptance in the private club industry.

Keywords: technology, social media, technology acceptance model (TAM), theory of reasoned action (TRA), private club

Introduction

The rapid growth of technology applications makes social media easier to access and more useful while prompting customers' active participation in social media. So, social media have emerged as important technology-mediated communications between hospitality business organizations and customers (Leung, Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013; Pantelidis, 2010; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Many companies have been supporting the creation and development of social media as a part of business communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In particular, it is critical for private club managers to understand new forms of service delivery system (i.e., social media) using information technology (IT) in building up relationships with members in the new era.

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Further, given the current challenges in the private club industry, e.g., increased competition among clubs, the decline in membership retention rate, and the changes in membership demographics, club general managers/chief operating officers (GMs/COOs) need to shift their strategic focus for understanding the needs and developing new services/products that are geared towards attracting and retaining younger members (Barrows, 1999; Barrows & Ridout, 2010). However, it is generally known that the private club industry tends to be conservative and reluctant to accept the development of IT (Avery, 2012; Morosan & DeFranco, 2014). Also, there are few conceptual or empirical studies investigating IT in the private club industry (Morosan & DeFranco, 2014).

Therefore, it is meaningful to understand the perceptions of club managers; their beliefs and attitudes associated with their social media usage behavior to provide baselines to academics and private club managers. The purpose of this study is to examine a conceptual framework applying the technology acceptance model (TAM) in understanding the process of the adoption of social media by private club members. While this present study is of the perceptions of GMs/COOs as to their members social media technology acceptance, a future study will ask the private club members directly about social media technology in their own clubs.

Specifically, this study was a necessary first step in understanding: (1) how perceived ease of use influences perceived usefulness and enjoyment of social media; (2) how perceived ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment of social media influence attitudes towards social media involvement; and (3) the relationship between attitude towards social media involvement and behavioral intention of social media use.

As one of a few empirical technology studies in the context of the private club industry, the findings of this study are expected to provide a baseline to private club GMs/COOs, as well as academicians, in understanding the psychological processes of social media adoption and acceptance.

Literature Preview

Private Club Industry and Technology

Private clubs are hospitality organizations where individual owners with common interests, experiences, backgrounds, and professions congregate for social and recreational purposes (Perdue & Koenigsfeld, 2013). The members are more attached to their clubs for social and recreational purposes with common interests, experiences, backgrounds, and professions compared to customers in other hospitality segments (Perdue, 2007). Private club members own a stake in their clubs; they are owner-members.

Some private club decision-makers, that is board members and committee members, seem to be skeptical regarding the development of an IT infrastructure due to the conservative tendency (Morosan & DeFranco, 2014). It is part of the legacy of some private clubs where innovation is not of interest to older, more seasoned members and the private club industry is sometimes perceived as non-progressive and reluctant to adopt changes (Avery, 2012). Rather, reluctant-to-change private club members are likely to stick to traditional ways of communication adding to the exclusive and private character of club membership. According to a study by Brasser (2011), the private club industry is behind in their use of technology by 5-10 years compared to other industries. He argued that many clubs are losing sales opportunity because they solely rely on the outdated methods such as sticky notes and Excel spreadsheets. Morosan and DeFranco (2014) pointed out that the concern for privacy of the private club members could result in reduced popularity of technology applications in the private clubs.

However, even though some private club members say they do not want new technology in their clubs, other clubs are adopting new technology for better performance (Brasser, 2011). For example, clubs are adopting iPhone apps that include a GPS range finder on the golf course or enable their members to analyze golf swings and upload their interactive golf lessons to social media (Brasser, 2011). Further, Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) emphasizes the importance of embracing the latest innovations to be successful, and it has been actively adopting and utilizing social media through Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Flickr (Avery, 2012).

Social Media Technology

Social media are defined as "Internet-based applications that carry customer-generated content, which are typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable customers" (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, p. 180). More recently, Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015) emphasized both technical and ideological aspects of social media by defining as "a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 190). Social media technology applications seem to grow each day, and this form of communication is here to stay.

With the higher level of efficiency of social media compared to traditional communication channels, more companies try to benefit from social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media also influence customer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior (Ross, E. S. Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, & R. R. Orr, 2009). In joining social media technology, customers can interact with each other via a variety of social media applications that allow them to share information. Customers can also fulfill their needs for a sense of belonging and connection with those who have shared norms, values, and interests as a central element in one's psychological sense of community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). These have traditionally taken place face-to-face, but now increasingly through social media technology in private clubs.

Davis (1986) introduced the TAM, which was developed specifically and applied to explain technology usage behavior. The TAM has been the most widely accepted model explaining individuals' attitudes towards technology. TAM sets out to understand the psychological processes of information technology adoption and acceptance (Wang, Chung, Park, McLaughlin, & Fulk, 2012). Three key constructs have been introduced and examined in different generations of TAM models: (1) perceived ease of use; (2) perceived usefulness; and (3) perceived enjoyment (e.g., Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2006; Kim, Suh, Lee, & Choi, 2010; Morosan & Jeong, 2008). For example, Lam, Cho, and Qu (2007) explored the influence of perceived technology beliefs, task-technology fit, attitude, self-efficacy, and subjective norm on people's behavioral intention of technology adoption in China. In addition, Varol and Tarcan (2009) adopted an extended TAM (TAM2) to investigate the relationship between antecedents such as personal innovativeness, organizational innovativeness, and users' acceptance of hotel information systems.

In this study, TAM and the theory of reasoned action (TRA) are used as a theoretical basis to identify the relationships among the three key beliefs (perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived enjoyment) attitude towards social media technology involvement, and behavioral intention to use social media.

According to Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989, p. 985), perceived ease of use refers to "the degree to which the prospective user expects the potential system to be free of effort". Perceived usefulness is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis et al., 1989, p. 985). Venkatesh and Davis (1996) suggested that a user's familiarity with technology makes the user interact with it in a manner resulting in efficiency in task completion. In the empirical study of Facebook adoption as a promotion tool for special events, Lee and Paris (2013) found that perceived ease of use directly impacted perceived usefulness. In our study, the perceptions of the private club GMs/COOs as to their ease of use and perceived usefulness were studied. This study is the precursor of a future study; the future study will survey private club members imagining an "ideal" private club, from the standpoint of their members, defined about their ease of use and usefulness of social media technology. In this current GMs/COOs study, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Perceived ease of use of social media is positively related to perceived usefulness of social media.

Perceived enjoyment is defined as "the extent to which the activity of using the technology is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated" (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992, p. 1112). In the relation between perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment, learning is quick and easy, the enjoyment of learning increased (Davis et al., 1992). Based on their assumptions and arguments, Davis et al. (1992) proved that perceived ease of use has a direct impact on perceived enjoyment, as well as perceived usefulness. In the study of Facebook users, Lee, Xiong, and Hu (2012) also showed that perceived ease of use is significantly related to perceived enjoyment.

Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Perceived ease of social media is positively related to perceived enjoyment of social media.

Within an organizational context, technology users believe that a system that is perceived high in usefulness is more likely to produce a positive use-performance relationship. Basically, taking advantages of the strong usefulness of social media, customers can contribute, create, and join communities to fulfill their emotional needs for belongingness, being socially connected and being recognized or simply enjoying interactions with other like-minded members. Further, social media do not just provide companies with an additional communication channel, but a possibility of establishing a linkage with loyal customers (Andersen, 2005). Customers could be a valuable source of information for companies with a rich source of innovative ideas, which can be used in developing company's strategies and producing the right products/services (Andersen, 2005). Kaplanidou and Vogt (2006) studied the influence of tourism website characteristics on perceived website usefulness using TAM and tried to explain how the perceived usefulness influences attitude towards social media involvement. Theses researchers found that website usefulness was a significant predictor of intent to travel to the destination. Therefore, given the discussion above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Perceived usefulness of social media will be positively related to the attitude towards social media involvement.

A number of theoretical and empirical studies support that perceived ease of use is one of the key determinants of technology use (Guriting & Ndubisi, 2006; Ndubisi, Gupta, & Massoud, 2003; Adams, Nelson, & Todd, 1992). For example, Amin, Baba, and Muhammad (2007) found that there is a significant relationship between perceived ease of use and mobile banking usage intentions. The significant relationship between perceived ease of use and usage intentions is also found in the studies by Kleijnen, de Ruyter, and Wetzels

(2004). Based on these findings, the researchers believe that perceived ease of use is important in explaining the social media adoption and usage intentions in the private club industry. In line with this, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: Perceived ease of use of social media will be positively related to the attitude towards social media involvement.

Numerous studies assert the importance of enjoyment in use of information and communication technology (Chung & Koo, 2015; Kang & Schuett, 2013; Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). For example, Antón, Camarero, and Rodríguez (2013) emphasized the significance of the perceived enjoyment as a predictor of technology adoption. Other studies have also demonstrated the effect of perceived enjoyment, serving as an intrinsic motivator, on the attitude and adopting intention towards information technology (e.g., Davis et al., 1992; Teo, Lim, & Lai, 1999; Yu, Ha, Choi, & Rho, 2005). Further, Chung and Koo (2015) examined benefits and sacrifices that influenced travel information search using social media and found that a benefit of enjoyment has a direct impact on social media usage. A study by Kang and Schuett (2013) showed a similar finding that enjoyment encourages Internet users to share their travel experiences through social media. Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015) conducted both qualitative and quantitative research to investigate how social media needs and innovation influence the adoption of social media, and found that social media adoption is significantly driven by three types of need categories: (1) personal (consisting of enjoyment and entertainment); (2) social (consisting of social influence and interaction); and (3) tension release (consisting of belongingness, companionship, and playfulness). In their research, they operationalized enjoyment as happiness and pleasure when using any medium. From the focus group discussion, they found that all participants agreed that enjoyment motivated the participants to use social media. Thus, given the discussion above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Perceived enjoyment of social media will be positively related to attitude towards social media involvement.

In the TAM-based technology adoption literature, TAM uses TRA as a theoretical basis for identifying the causal relationships among three beliefs, users' attitudes and behavioral intentions of technology adoption. TRA is a widely utilized model from social psychology with key concepts of attitudes and intentions related to actual behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). A person's performance of a specified behavior is determined by his or her behavioral intention to perform the behavior, and behavioral intention is jointly determined by the person's attitude and subjective norm concerning the behavior under review. Behavior intention is a measure of the strength of one's intention to perform a specified behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitude is defined as "an individual's positive or negative feelings (evaluative affect) about performing the target behavior" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 216). According to TRA, a person's attitude towards a behavior is a learned predisposition to act consistently towards a behavior and it is determined by his or her salient beliefs about consequences of performing the behavior multiplied by the evaluation of those consequences (Fishbein, 1963).

Given the discussion above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H6: Attitude towards social media involvement will be positively related to behavioral intention of social media use.

Based on the proposed hypotheses, the following conceptual model was developed as shown in Figure 1.

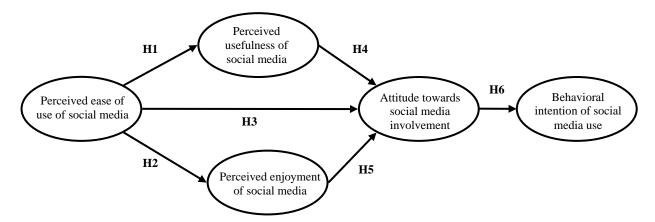


Figure 1. Proposed model.

Methodology

Sample Frame

This study was designed to understand the perceptions of GMs and COOs when it comes to social media technology adoption and acceptance in their private clubs. Participants in this study were private club GMs/COOs, all members of the CMAA attending Business Management Institute (BMI) III in Spring 2014 and Fall 2014. In total, 73 BMI III attendees completed a paper survey. Prior to beginning the survey, each participant was asked to picture their perceptions of the ideal private club from a social media perspective. They responded to the survey about the club's social media technology offerings, use, usefulness, enjoyment, attitudes, and behaviors.

The questionnaire instrument consisted of three sections, designed to take about 15 minutes to complete. The first section asked for demographic information on the clubs where GMs/COOs were leading, the second section was designed to understand club GMs'/COOs' perceptions of social media use, and the third section asked for respondents' socio-demographic information.

Survey items of each construct were developed referring to previous studies using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree". Five items were adapted to measure perceived ease of use of social media (Gefen & Keil, 1998; Davis et al., 1989; 1992): (1) "This club's social media sites are easy to use"; (2) "I can quickly find the information that I need from the social media sites of this club"; (3) "This club's social media is user-friendly"; (4) "Interaction with this club's social media is clear and understandable"; and (5) "Interaction with this club's social media does not require a lot of mental efforts". Perceived usefulness of social media was measured by four questions (Davis et al., 1989; 1992; Gefen & Keil, 1998): (1) "Using this club's social media enables me to acquire more information or know more people"; (2) "Using this club's social media improves my efficiency in sharing information and connecting with others"; (3) "This club's social media is useful for interaction among members"; and (4) "Using this club's social media enables me to access the latest information". Perceived enjoyment of social media was measured by asking five questions (Davis et al., 1992): (1) "Using this club's social media is enjoyable"; (2) "I have fun using this club's social media"; (3) "Using this club's social media bores me (reversed)"; (4) "Using this club's social media puts me in a good mood"; and (5) "Using this club's social media stimulates my curiosity".

Attitude towards social media involvement was measured with five items (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992): (1) "Being involved with this club's social media is important to me"; (2) "Being involved with this club's social media is practical"; (4) "This club's social media is practical"; (4) "This club's social media matters a lot to me"; and (5) "This club's social media is an important part of my life". Three items were adapted to measure behavioral intention of social media use (Davis et al., 1989; 1992): (1) "I intend to keep using this club's social media in the future"; (2) "I intend to recommend to my friends that they should use this club's social media in the future"; and (3) "I plan on using this club's social media on a regular basis in the future".

Survey data were analyzed using a two-step process using SPSS 22.0 software. Descriptive statistics helped determine demographic information of the respondents and their clubs. To examine any relationships among the five constructs, multiple regression analysis was performed.

Findings

Profile of the Survey Clubs and Respondents

The majority of the participants in this study represented golf/country clubs (70%). Also represented were city/athletic clubs (10%), yacht clubs (5%), and others (12%). Others included beach clubs, tennis clubs, and social clubs. In 86% of the clubs represented, members were the owners; corporate ownership was 7%, family-owned (3%) and developer owned (3%) were tied for third. Other ownership at 1% included a single owner. The primary purpose of membership at the club was to play golf and/or participate in other sports activities (43%). Other purposes included that family/friends are members (25%). A third purpose was exclusivity (10%).

The participants were more than 85% male, and the majority of them were of Caucasian descent (87%). The average age was 41 years old; about 76% of the respondents had an annual household income over \$100,000, and almost 70% of the respondents had obtained a 4-year degree or a higher level of education. GMs/COOs, who completed this survey, perceive that the top two forms of social media are the club's website and emails from the club. Next in perceived usage were Facebook (64%), followed by text messages by phone (29%), Twitter (26%), LinkedIn (22%), and Instagram (21%). The two top reasons for using the club's social media were to learn about club events/activities (86%) and to obtain information about the club (79%). These two were closely followed (75%) by learning about the club's promotions.

Main Findings

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to confirm the relationships among variables. As shown in Figure 2, we examined the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment, respectively. The results suggest that perceived ease of use has a positive impact on perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.36$, t = 3.22, p < 0.01, adjusted R square = 0.12) as well as perceived enjoyment ($\beta = 0.46$, t = 4.37, p < 0.001, adjusted R square = 0.20), which supported H1 and H2. Second, a regression was performed with perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment as independent variables, and attitude towards social media involvement as a dependent variable (Adjusted R square = 0.41). The results indicate that perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.31$, t = 3.19, p < 0.01) and perceived enjoyment ($\beta = 0.48$, t = 4.57, p < 0.001) are significant predictors of attitude towards social media involvement (H3 and H5 were supported). However, perceived ease of use was not significant ($\beta = -0.01$, t = -0.09, t = 0.92) (H4 was not supported).

We also analyzed the data using a regression of attitude towards social media involvement on behavioral intention of social media uses (Adjusted R square = 0.48) and the results show that attitude towards social media involvement is a significant predictor of individuals' behavioral intentions (β = 0.69, t = 8.17, p < 0.001), which supported H6.

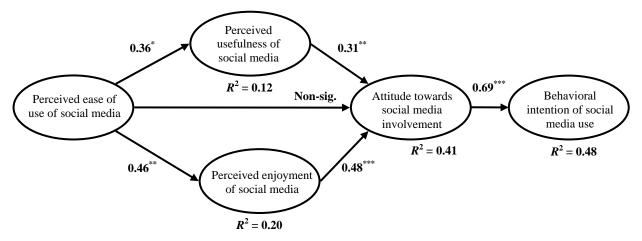


Figure 2. Model testing. *Note.* ***: < 0.001; **: < 0.01; *: < 0.05.

Discussions

Implications

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of private club GMs/COOs as to the ease of use, usefulness, enjoyment, attitude towards social media involvement, and behavioral intention of social media in a private club setting. Significant contributions provided by the current study are discussed below. Firstly, TAM has been extensively tested, and it has been proven to be a robust theoretical framework in many different contexts (Wang et al., 2012); however, only a few studies have employed the TAM model to examine the acceptance behavior of technology in hospitality business settings (Kim et al., 2008). Further, most previous social media studies have consisted of conceptual studies and there is still a lack of empirical research in this area (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Lim, Chung, & Weaver, 2012). In particular, there are few conceptual or empirical studies investigating social media technology in the private club industry (Morosan & DeFranco, 2014). Therefore, with the increasing number of private clubs participating in social media, this empirical study can provide baseline insights into social media technology use in the private club industry based on TAM and TRA theories. Secondly, the results of this study confirm previous studies, which provide evidence of the antecedent role of perceived ease of use on the relationships among perceived usefulness, enjoyment, attitude, and behavioral intention of social media use. As Antón et al. (2013) proposed the significance of perceived usefulness as functional motivation and perceived enjoyment as hedonic motivation, this study also proved that perceived usefulness and enjoyment were important predictors of technology adoption in the setting of social media. Contrary to our hypothesis, perceived ease of use was not significantly related to attitude towards social media involvement, while perceived usefulness and enjoyment are critical determinants of social media users' attitudes and behavior intentions (Davis et al., 1992; Wu & Li, 2007). Perceived ease of use had an indirect impact on the attitude via perceived usefulness and enjoyment of social media. These findings were similar to studies by Moon and Kim (2001) and Lee et al. (2012). They asserted that perceived ease of use did not fully determine the acceptance of technology. The higher the level of perceived ease of use, the higher the level of perceived enjoyment. According to the findings, club social media sites must be user-friendly and easy to stimulate the member's curiosity and be an enjoyable, often fun, experience.

Lastly, this study can also provide valuable insights into the understanding of social media for GMs/COOs as perceived, the follow-up study of private club members, and the findings of this study can be useful for those who lead private clubs (i.e., paid GMs/COOs/executives as well as volunteer boards of directors and committees members in developing and implementing better strategies regarding social media technology). The findings of this study show that GMs/COOs believe that usage of social media enables knowing more people in the club, sharing and acquiring more information, and connecting with others. Connectivity and networking within a club's membership have always been at the very core of why members join a club. Above all, using the club's social media helps the members access the latest information. Ultimately, social media can help private clubs to succeed in online communication environments as it can facilitate the interactions between members via technology with low cost and high communication efficiency (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). It also helps a club to maximize opportunities to attract new members and collaborate closely with existing members by building relationships with them (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

The practical implications of this study also include the identification of the perceived ease of use of social media related to the perceived enjoyment. Private club GMs/COOs must design their social media technology to be easy to use so members will enjoy using the various social media of the club, and perceiving the time doing so as useful. When social media technology is easy to use and useful, the members have an attitude towards the technology that affects their behavior. That is to say, more are expected to behave in ways that use social media technology to the advantage of the individual member-owner, as well as the private club as a whole.

Communication via social media technology is not an either-or compared to traditional face-to-face communication. Rather, it is a complement to traditional communication. It requires listening as does traditional communication. However, the listening is done through the technology media. Social media technology has the possibility strengthening belonging needs and satisfying them through a technology supplement to the traditional communication. Through technology, this communication will positively influence the club member's experiences, and could lead to greater loyalty and retention of their club member mediated, in fact, through positive social media technology experiences.

Sometimes, private clubs promote a "club within a club". Take, for example, a fitness club within a social club. So to with social media technology, there may be a club within a club that prefers to communicate via the various social media channels rather than in person. This club within a club could exist and strengthen the retention of members by being an exclusive, inclusive club. That is, one that is self-chosen to admission (inclusive), yet centers around specific social activities (e.g., junior golf, tennis lessons) for an exclusive subset of that private club's membership.

Limitations and Future Research

A relatively small sample was used as an exploratory pilot study. Therefore, replication with a bigger size of the sample is needed prior to generalization. As stated earlier, the perceptions of what the private clubs' membership believes to be the case with their members can only be verified by surveying the owner members directly. This research is also limited in that we only examined the variables of TAM and TRA theories. Future

studies can yield additional insights by integrating other variables related to TAM (e.g., antecedents, moderators, outcomes). For example, as the findings of this study highlight the importance of social media use in the private club industry, it will be meaningful to explore the effects of clubs' social media use for the club's value (i.e., social capital) to its members, as well as of the club's loyalty of its members. Following collection of data from club members directly, the results of the GMs'/COOs' perceptions can be compared to what the members say directly, utilizing the same conceptual model.

Private clubs are unique as to their history, membership of owner, vision and values, and mission. In that regard, each individual club is a brand not duplicated at another club. There does not seem to be a growing tendency to develop a brand or chain of private clubs, all affiliated under one flag. Most private clubs owned by individual member do not have a larger corporate entity to support the individual club. Therefore, research into the private club industry is most meaningful when it provides these non-brand/non-chain hospitality businesses with the club a best practices identification of social media's usage and value as technology is a private club. In the past, private clubs were famous for their connection of like-minded people through face-to-face conversation. A future study may examine ways that social media technology is a good supplement to face-to-face communication. It will likely never replace the face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball, and pupil-to-pupil interaction that is in so many ways unique to private clubs.

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