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EGOCENTRISM, NEED FOR UNIQUENESS AND MOTIVATED CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS TO INFLUENCE THE CONSUMERS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTION OF INNOVATIVE FITNESS PRODUCTS, IN CHINA

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of individual consumer characteristics on behavioral intention towards innovative fitness products. As people's income levels and health awareness increase, national health has become a key part of the national strategy. This has led to an increase in health-related expenditures and an expansion and diversification of the fitness market. The adoption of innovative technologies provides new opportunities for health management. However, most studies on innovative and smart product adoption have focused primarily on technology, with less consideration of the impact of consumer characteristics. In this study, a questionnaire was used as the research tool, and a total of 260 valid questionnaires were collected and the data were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0. The results of the study showed that individuals with clear egocentrism and need for uniqueness were more likely to accept innovative fitness products. Positive consumer innovativeness plays a key mediating role in the influence of egocentrism and need for uniqueness on behavioral intention towards innovative fitness products. This study not only enriches the theoretical research in the field of smart product behavioral intention, but also provides valuable references and insights for the fitness market and practical applications in the field of innovative and smart technology.

Keywords: Self-completion, Egocentrism, Need for Uniqueness, Motivated Consumer Innovativeness, Behavioral Intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the awareness of national fitness has become increasingly strong, and there are more and more fitness venues and equipment. The enthusiasm of the masses to participate in sports activities is also constantly improving. Some scholars have found that people who do not exercise for a long time are more likely to have negative emotions, which will have a negative impact on their willingness to exercise and lead to a vicious cycle (Burtscher, Burtscher, and Millet, 2020). With the upgrading of people's consumption level, the demand for fitness scenes and fitness equipment types is gradually becoming diversified and intelligent. The combination of intelligent technology and gyms has brought new opportunities to the traditional fitness industry. At present, many smart gyms in China use technologies such as artificial intelligence algorithms, sensors, big data analysis, and naked eye 3D to help customers exercise (Eskiler&Safak, 2022).

However, people with different personality traits have different intentions for using smart products, especially egocentrism. Egocentrism refers to the cognitive ability to overly focus on

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oneself or view problems from the perspective of others. Egocentrism can drive individual consumer behavior as a way to validate overly positive self views (Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007). Based on the psychological motivation of egocentrism, the self-centered mentality of consumers who are showy, vulnerable, and expressive can affect people's preferences for innovative products in the context of gym consumption.

Therefore, based on the theory of self-completion, this article empirically examines the influence of consumer egocentrism and need for uniqueness on consumer preference for innovative products, by examining their impact on the development of the intelligent fitness industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Self-completion Theory

Self-completion theory (SCT) proposes that people can complete their self-definition by using indicators that symbolize accomplishments in the self-concept domain. For example, brand, titles, receiving promotions, or earning certificates are indicators that a person may use to recognize professional success (Saenger, Thomas & Bock, 2020). Social identity leads to a sense of progress or goal attainment from goals and their actions, and that the feedback from goals and actions in turn influences an individual's future goals (Susewind, Walkowitz, 2020). When the symbols of self-definition are lacking, people make further efforts to find other symbols of self-definition, and a positive self-description can further contribute to the formation of a complete self-definition (Wheeler & Bechler, 2021). As a result, some consumers go for innovative products, services, and branded products to protect or construct a complete and positive self-identity, which in turn pushes other people to evaluate and recognize them positively (Ismail, 2017).

The linkage between self-completion theory and its potential impact on consumption has been verified by recent case studies. We summarizes the application of Self-Completion Theory in understanding various aspects of consumer behavior across different contexts.Through this theory, we can reveal how egocentrism and the need for uniqueness indirectly influence consumers' behavioral intentions to use smart fitness devices by influencing innovation.

2.2 Egocentrism

Egocentrism is firstly developed as a cognitive bias or tendency in which an individual sees the world primarily from their own perspective and struggles to understand or take into account the perspective of others. It is initially developed by Jean Piaget in developmental psychology (Kesselring & Muller, 2011). Later, it has extended its definition to characterize a personality trait characterized by an excessive preoccupation with oneself (Tajmirriyahi, Ta & Ickes, 2020). Egocentrism may be considered innovative (Smith&Webster, 2018), as ecocentric consumers are more likely to experience satisfaction, excitement, and happiness by consuming innovative services or products (Ford&Nichols, 2019). Kashmiri, Nico, and Arora (2017) found that companies led by the CEO of egocentric may have higher new product release rates and a higher proportion of active innovation in their new product portfolio. When self-centered

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individuals successfully seek attention and appreciation (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004), they are more likely to use different innovative or novel products to further enhance consumer behavioral preferences for such products. Meanwhile, consumers with higher levels of self-efficacy lead to higher purchase intentions when using services supported by innovative technologies (artificial intelligence) (van Esch, Cui, & Jain, 2021).Based on this, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Egocentrism has a positive impact on motivated consumer innovativeness.

H2: Egocentrism has a positive impact on behavioral intention.

2.3 Need for Uniqueness

The need for uniqueness is a psychological concept, ans it refers to individuals seeking to differentiate themselves from others by purchasing and using innovative consumer goods, in order to develop and enhance their personal and social identity (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). Consumers are willing to pay higher prices for innovative products, and the pursuit of uniqueness also motivates them to innovate and showcase their uniqueness and differentiation (Irmak, Vallen, & Sen, 2010). The desire for uniqueness has long been considered to have a significant impact on consumer behavior (Chan, Berger, & Boven, 2012). The intensity of a person's behavioral changes depends on how much demand there is for uniqueness (Snyder, 1992).Based on this, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: Need for uniqueness has a positive impact on motivated consumer innovativeness.

H4: Need for uniqueness has a positive impact on behavioral intention.

2.4 Motivated Consumer Innovativeness

Motivated Consumer Innovation (MCI) refers to the positive willingness or motivation of consumers to innovate, describing their tendency to explore and adopt novel or innovative products and ideas. When evaluating new products, consumers with innovative motivation will have a greater impact on their perception of the new product (Klink, & Athaide, 2010), while innovative employees may provide new methods, methods, or technologies to perform critical tasks (Smith, & Webster, 2018). Innovation motivation has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention and their behavior of using new products and services (Seyed, Esfahani, & Reynolds, 2021).Based on this, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H5: Motivated consumer innovativeness has a positive impact on behavioral intention.

2.5 Behavioral Intention

Behavioral intention is the tendency of consumers to take a certain behavior, which is a prelude to actual behavior. It reveals the possibility of consumers purchasing products, using services, or adopting new behaviors. Chao et al. (2012) found that innovative products mediate the relationship between consumer innovativeness and willingness to purchase new products, and perceived value and the learning process mediate the effect of consumer innovation on willingness to purchase (Al-Jundi, Shuhaiber, & Augustine, 2019). Boakye (2015) found that consumer experience positively affects willingness to use a product or service and partially

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mediates the effect of service quality on willingness to continue using it, and that consumer motivation to innovate also significantly affects willingness to revisit through perceived value of the product (Terason, Tiwari, Pattanayanon, & Kulwanich, 2022). Based on this, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H6: Motivated consumer innovativeness has a mediation effect in the influence of egocentrism on behavioral intention.

H7: Motivated consumer innovativeness has a mediation effect in the influence of need for uniqueness on behavioral intention.

2.6 Research Theoretical Framework

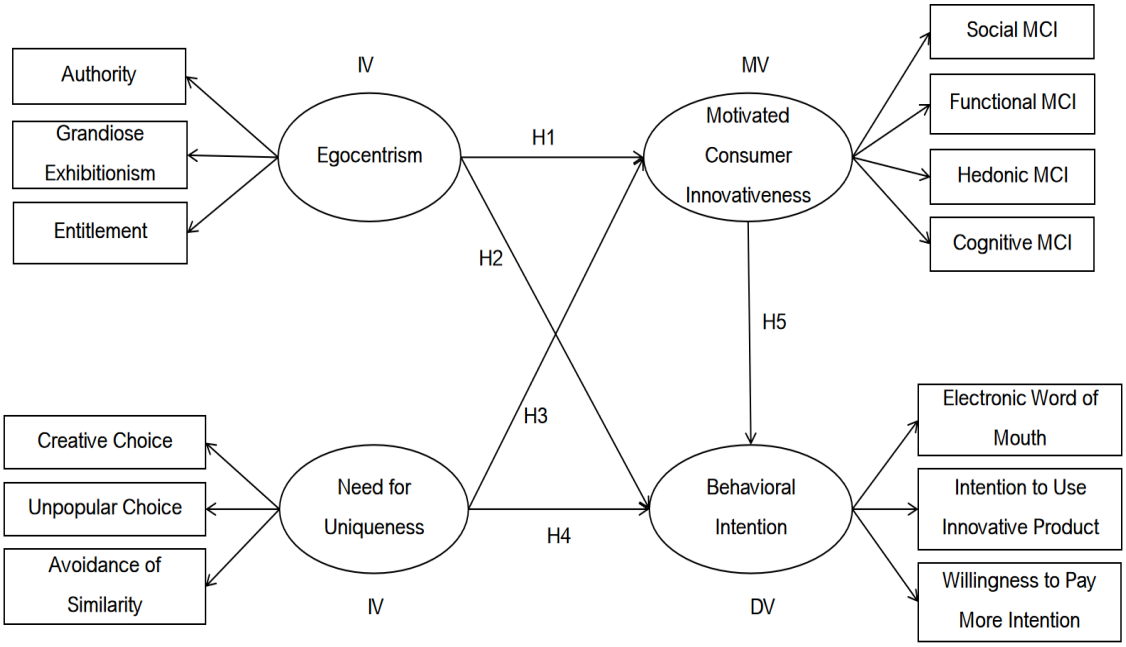

Figure 1: Research Theoretical Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

According to the "China Fitness Industry Competitive Situation and Investment Prospect Analysis Report 2021-2027", China's fitness industry is still in the early stages of development, and Guangdong Province tops the list of all provinces in the country with its huge number of fitness venues, including many venues offering smart fitness equipment and services. Given its prominence in this field, Guangdong province is an ideal location for this study. Meanwhile, the China 2023 Fitness Brand List shows that the Lefit brand tops the list with its significant influence and market share in the smart fitness market, featuring convenient, personalized fitness services and more than 1,000 stores in multiple cities. Therefore, Lefit stores in Guangdong Province were selected for this study.

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To ensure the relevance and usefulness of the findings, this study focuses on a sample population of consumers who have experience with smart fitness equipment or services. To ensure a broadly representative sample, a hierarchical sampling technique was used. First, gyms were selected from different administrative divisions in Guangdong Province to ensure coverage of all parts of the province, and 13 gyms were finally sampled and selected as the study sample. Subsequently, convenience sampling method was utilized to invite consumers from these gyms who had experience in using smart fitness devices as the study population. The sample size was determined based on the recommendations of Hair et al. (2016) and the number of observational variables involved in the study was taken into account, which was finally determined to be 260 samples. Questionnaire was used as a research instrument in this study. The researcher explained the purpose of the survey to the participants and invited them to complete the electronic questionnaire. Consumers completed the questionnaire by scanning the QR code, thus completing the data collection process. The basic personal information of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic Information of Respondents (n = 260)

Demographic Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	112	43.1	43.1
	Female	148	56.9	100
Age	18 years old and below	17	6.5	6.5
	19-30 years old	84	32.3	38.8
	31-40 years old	112	43.1	81.9
	41-50 years old	29	11.2	93.1
	51-60 years old	12	4.6	97.7
	Older than 60 years old	6	2.3	100
Marital status	Married	96	36.9	36.9
	Unmarried	143	55	91.9
	Others	21	8.1	100
Education background	High School and below	24	9.2	9.2
	Junior College	30	11.5	20.7
	Bachelor	144	55.4	76.1
	Master and above	62	23.9	100
Disposable monthly income	3000 RMB and below	23	8.8	8.8
	3001-5000 RMB	47	18.1	26.9
	5001-7000 RMB	102	39.2	66.1
	7001-9000 RMB	66	25.4	91.5
	More than 9000 RMB	22	8.5	100
Spend at the gym each month	Less than 3000 RMB	154	59.2	59.2
	3001-5000 RMB	57	21.9	81.1
	5001-7000 RMB	32	12.3	93.4
	7001-9000 RMB	14	5.4	98.8
	More than 9000 RMB	3	1.2	100
Number of gym visits per month	1-2 times	76	29.2	29.2
	3-4 times	133	51.2	80.4
	5-6 times	39	15.0	95.4
	7 times and more	12	4.6	100

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3.2 Measurement

All variables in this study were second-order constructs, and the measurement scales were selected from well-established scales from existing studies and adapted to the context of this study, involving a total of 54 entries. All entries were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

SmartPLS 3.0 software was used to analyze the data in this study. First, the measurement model was analyzed to confirm the structural validity and internal consistency of the measurement model and to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement tools used.

Subsequently, model fitting and path analysis were conducted using SmartPLS to assess the relationship between smart fitness products and consumer behavioral intentions and to test the significance of the paths. This data analysis technique enables in-depth exploration of the mechanisms that influence consumers' behavioral intentions towards smart fitness products.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Measurement Model

In this study, the reliability and validity were analyzed, mainly including internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha), construct reliability (Composite Reliability, CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). In terms of internal consistency, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables ranged from 0.865 to 0.949, which exceeded the commonly accepted criterion of 0.7, indicating good consistency of the measurement instrument. In terms of construct reliability, the CR values for all variables ranged from 0.857 to 0.939, which is much higher than the recommended criterion of 0.7, indicating that the constructs have high reliability (Hair et al., 2006).

In terms of mean variance explained, the AVE values of all variables ranged from 0.659 to 0.826, which exceeded the commonly accepted criterion of 0.5, indicating that the variables explained enough variance and had good convergent validity.

This study used the HTMT analysis method to assess the discriminant validity of measurement scales, which has more advantages in SmartPLS than the Fornell-Larcker criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Henseler et al. (2015) showed that the HTMT method was able to more accurately determine discriminant validity. According to the results shown in Table 3, for each study construct, the Heterotrimeric Trait - Homotrimeric Trait (HTMT) ratio was used to assess discriminant validity.

In general, HTMT values above 0.9 may cause potential problems with discriminant validity. However, in the present analysis, none of the values exceeded 0.9, suggesting that sufficient discriminant validity existed between the constructs.

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In summary, the results of the reliability and validity analysis of this study indicate that the measurement instrument used has high reliability and validity and is able to accurately reflect the concepts under study.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Analysis

First-ordered Construct	Factor loading	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Authority	0.869	0.918	0.939	0.754
Grandiose Exhibitionism	0.847	0.871	0.906	0.659
Entitlement	0.865	0.885	0.916	0.684
Creative Choice	0.884	0.876	0.910	0.670
Unpopular Choice	0.852	0.894	0.922	0.702
Avoidance of Similarity	0.868	0.899	0.925	0.712
Social MCI	0.881	0.890	0.919	0.694
Functional MCI	0.877	0.883	0.915	0.682
Hedonic MCI	0.867	0.904	0.929	0.722
Cognitive MCI	0.860	0.905	0.929	0.724
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.767	0.894	0.934	0.826
Intention to Use Innovative Product	0.850	0.895	0.927	0.761
Willingness to Pay More Intention	0.830	0.865	0.918	0.788

Table 3: Discriminant validity (HTMT Analysis)

	Behavioral Intention	Egocentrism	Motivated Consumer Innovativeness	Need for Uniqueness
Behavioral Intention				
Egocentrism	0.416			
Motivated Consumer Innovativeness	0.455	0.413		
Need for Uniqueness	0.379	0.413	0.383	

4.2 Common Method Biases Test

In survey research, a phenomenon known as "common method bias" often occurs, when the same or similar methods are used, bias may arise, thus affecting the accuracy and credibility of the results. In order to assess the impact of this bias on the results of the study, Harman's one-way test was used in this study.

This method detects common method bias by loading all measured variables onto a common factor and checking whether this single factor explains most of the variability in the data. The results showed that the variability explained by the single factor was 28.857%, which is well below the threshold of 40%, indicating that there is no serious problem of common method bias in the data of this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data in this study have high validity and provide a reliable basis for subsequent analysis.

4.3 Direct Path Analysis

In this study, the structural equation model was constructed using SmartPLS 3.0 as shown in Figure 1 and the path coefficients were tested. The results are shown in Table 4. The effect of Egocentrism on Motivated Consumer Innovativeness is significant (path coefficient = 0.290, t-

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statistic value = 4.069, p-value = 0.000); Egocentrism has a significant (path coefficient = 0.209, t-statistic value = 2.748, p-value = 0.006) and weak effect on Behavioral Intention; Need for Uniqueness has a significant effect on Motivated Consumer Innovativeness (path coefficient = 0.250, t-statistic value = 3.364, p-value = 0.001);

The effect of Need for Uniqueness on Behavioral Intention is significant (path coefficient = 0.169, t-statistic value = 2.140, p-value = 0.032); the effect of Motivated Consumer Innovativeness on Behavioral Intention is significant (path coefficient = 0.281, t-statistic value = 3.802, p-value = 0.000).

The R-squares of all the variables in this study ranged between 0.202 and 0.784 and the adjusted R-squares ranged between 0.196 and 0.783. The higher values of the latent variables such as authority and avoidance of similarity indicate a better fit, while the variables such as motivated consumer innovativeness and behavioral intention are weak in explaining the model. Overall, the model effectively explains the relationship between the variables.

Based on the criteria of Hair et al. (2017), we can determine the extent to which exogenous constructions affect specific endogenous constructions by looking at f-square values. In this study, egocentrism has a weak effect on behavioral intention (0.046) but a moderate effect on motivated consumer innovativeness (0.090). Motivated consumer innovativeness has a moderate effect on Behavioral Intention (0.085). The need for uniqueness has a weak effect on behavioral intention (0.031), but a moderate effect on motivated consumer innovativeness (0.067).

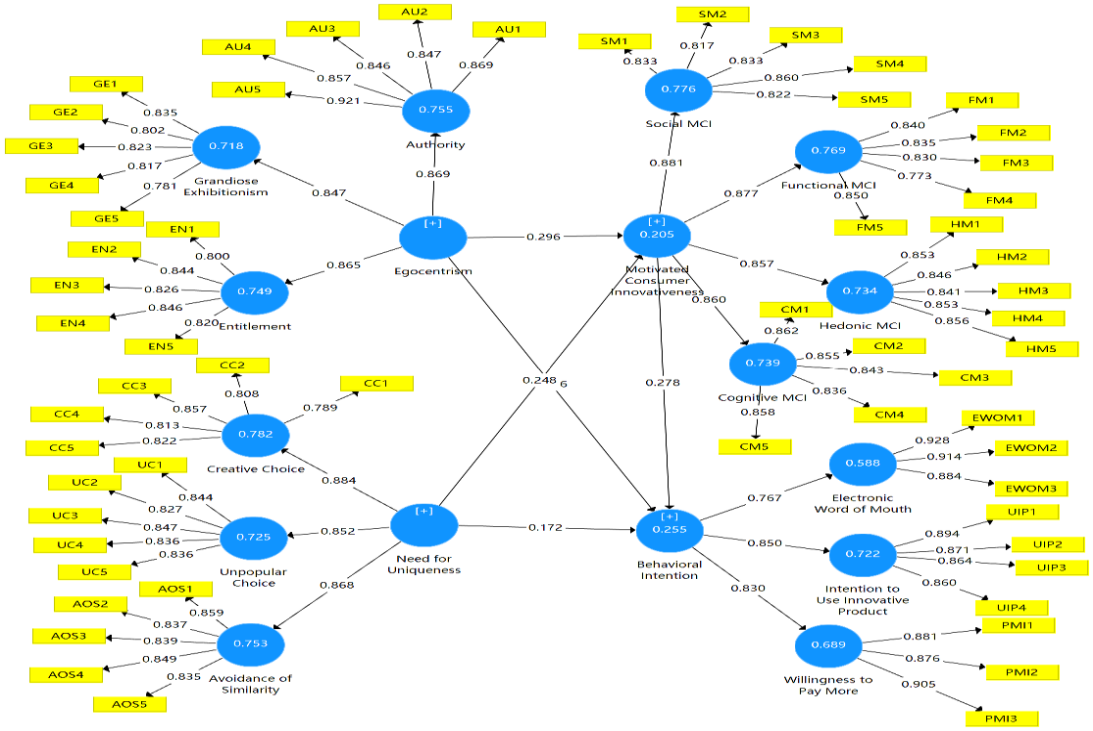

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model in SmartPLS 3.0

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Table 4: Path Coefficient Test of Structural Equation Model

No.	Path	Estimate (Standardized)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-value	f^2
H1	Egocentrism -> Motivated Consumer Innovativeness	0.290	0.071	4.069	0.000	0.090
H2	Egocentrism -> Behavioral Intention	0.209	0.076	2.748	0.006	0.046
H3	Need for Uniqueness -> Motivated Consumer Innovativeness	0.250	0.074	3.364	0.001	0.067
H4	Need for Uniqueness -> Behavioral Intention	0.169	0.079	2.140	0.032	0.031
H5	Motivated Consumer Innovativeness -> Behavioral Intention	0.281	0.074	3.802	0.000	0.085

4.4 Mediation effect in the Research Model

The results of the mediation effect analysis in this study are shown in Table 5. The indirect effect of Need for Uniqueness on Motivated Consumer Innovativeness in H6 was 0.070 with a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval of [0.022, 0.140] and a p-value of 0.019. The indirect effect of Egocentrism on Motivated Consumer Innovativeness in H7 was 0.082 with a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval of [0.030, 0.151] and a p-value of 0.008. These results indicate that Need for Uniqueness and Egocentrism have a significant mediating effect on Behavioral Intention through Motivated Consumer Innovativeness.

Table 5: Mediation Effect

No.	Path	Original sample (O)	Bias-corrected 95%CI		P-value
			2.50%	97.50%	
H6	Need for Uniqueness -> Motivated Consumer Innovativeness -> Behavioral Intention	0.070	0.022	0.140	0.019
H7	Egocentrism -> Motivated Consumer Innovativeness -> Behavioral Intention	0.082	0.030	0.151	0.008

4.5 Hypotheses Test

A total of seven hypotheses were formulated in this study and all of them were supported by the tests.

Table 6: Hypotheses Test Results

No.	Hypothesis	Results
H1	Egocentrism has a positive impact on motivated consumer innovativeness	Supported
H2	Egocentrism has a positive impact on behavioral intention	Supported
H3	Need for uniqueness has a positive impact on motivated consumer innovativeness	Supported
H4	Need for uniqueness has a positive impact on behavioral intention	Supported
H5	Motivated consumer innovativeness has a positive impact on behavioral intention	Supported
H6	Motivated consumer innovativeness mediates the effect of egocentrism on behavioral intention	Supported
H7	Motivated consumer innovativeness mediates the effect of need for uniqueness on behavioral intention	Supported

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5. CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to explore the impact of consumers' personality traits and needs on the intention to adopt innovative fitness products, constructing a comprehensive model based on self-completion theory. By delving into this, we not only deepen our understanding of consumer behavioral motives, but also offer important theoretical support for the innovative development of the fitness industry. The conclusion of this study includes the following key findings:

Firstly, the study results indicate that individual consumer characteristics and needs have a significant impact on behavioral intention towards smart fitness products. Specifically, individuals with clear egocentricity and a need for uniqueness are more inclined to accept smart fitness products, providing important clues for positioning and promoting products in the fitness market.

Secondly, the study found that consumer innovativeness plays a crucial mediating role in the influence of egocentrism and need for uniqueness on behavioral intention towards smart fitness products. This suggests that consumer innovativeness has a significant influence on their attitudes and behavioral choices towards smart fitness products, and fostering and guiding consumer innovativeness can promote product acceptance and market promotion.

In discussing the results, we emphasize the importance of individual consumer characteristics in influencing behavioral intention towards smart fitness products and highlight the practical significance of these findings for the fitness market and smart technology field. Understanding consumer psychological characteristics and needs is essential for product design and market promotion, especially in light of increasing health awareness and technological advancements. Theoretical contributions of this study enrich the theoretical research in the field of behavioral intention towards smart products, providing new perspectives and methods for understanding consumer behavior. On a practical level, the study offers valuable insights and guidance for the fitness industry, helping businesses better understand consumer needs and develop more effective marketing strategies and product promotion plans. In summary, the findings of this study not only advance the theoretical development of behavioral intention towards smart products but also provide important guidance for practical applications in the fitness market. Future research can further explore the relationship between individual characteristics and consumer behavior to gain deeper insights into market demand and consumer behavior towards smart fitness products.

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