



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Leisure Involvement and Purchase Intention of Fitness Program in Taiwan: Mediation of eWOM and Corporate Image of Sponsor

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### ARTICLE INFO

Received: Dec 13, 2023

Accepted: Mar 11, 2024

### Keywords

Leisure involvement  
Electronic word of mouth  
Corporate image  
Purchase intentions  
Fitness programs

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the impact of leisure involvement, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), and corporate image on purchase intentions in the context of free fitness training courses in Taiwan. The study seeks to understand the interplay of these factors and their influence on consumer decisions within the fitness industry. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from 381 consumers through purposive and snowball samplings. The questionnaire, distributed on sports and fitness-related social networking sites, Line, Facebook, and Instagram, was designed to elicit responses anonymously. Statistical SPSS analysis examined the relationships between leisure involvement, e-WOM, corporate image, and purchase intentions. The study also explored moderation effects based on demographic variables. The findings reveal significant positive associations between leisure involvement and purchase intentions, with e-WOM and corporate image mediating in this relationship. Furthermore, demographic variables, particularly age, were identified as moderators, highlighting the nuanced impact of these factors across different consumer segments. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by empirically uncovering the intricate dynamics shaping consumer behaviour in the fitness industry. The study's originality lies in its holistic exploration of the relationships between leisure involvement, e-WOM, corporate image, and purchase intentions. The findings hold significance for marketing practitioners and fitness program providers, offering actionable insights to enhance consumer engagement and satisfaction.

### INTRODUCTION

Today, people prioritize fitness as part of their lifestyle (Shah et al., 2022). To meet this need, the fitness sector has grown into a diversified landscape with many programs and services (Haakstad et al.,

2021; Kim, 2022). Consumer preferences for fitness programs are heavily rooted in leisure in this changing environment (Nayak et al., 2021). This study examines how leisure engagement, e-WOM, and corporate image affect free fitness training course purchase

intentions (Alwan and Alshurideh, 2022). The research seeks to illuminate these linked aspects to improve marketing tactics, customer engagement, and leisure-based service industry discourse (Hallgren et al., 2020). This study is based on the idea that fitness consumers are not simply driven by functional or health-related factors (Volk et al., 2021). Instead, leisure interests and preferences drive these decisions (Choy and Yeung, 2023). Modern leisure activities include self-expression and identity-building (Levante et al., 2024). Fitness programs combine pleasure with health, allowing people to exhibit their dedication to well-being (Marcos-Pardo et al., 2023). Fitness program providers must recognize the many ways leisure engagement affects consumer decisions to fulfil the different needs of their target audience (McLaughlin et al., 2021).

Previous studies have helped us comprehend leisure engagement and consumer behaviour (Santos et al., 2022). Personal interest and leisure activity involvement affect decision-making, according to Chiu et al. (2020). The current study builds on this essential work, demonstrating that leisurely people may have different fitness program preferences (Balaban, 2022). E-WOM's impact on consumer perceptions and decisions has also been studied in electronic commerce (Bastos and Moore, 2021). These findings are helpful; however, the current research examines the relationship between leisure engagement, e-WOM, and corporate image in Taiwan's free fitness training courses. Despite current expertise, the fitness industry literature has gaps (Lan, 2020; Varshney et al., 2021). Leisure participation, e-WOM, and corporate image are interconnected, but past research needs to pay attention to this (Balaban, 2022). This study examines these characteristics' mediating and moderating effects to understand better how leisure engagement affects purchase intentions (Weybright and Caldwell, 2024). Signalling theory states that corporate image influences customer perceptions and behaviours (Bloxsome et al., 2020). The findings also support the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which holds that intensely interested people are more likely to analyze information systematically, rendering them sensitive to e-WOM (Shan et al., 2024).

This study examines the complex links between leisure engagement, e-WOM, corporate image, and

purchase intentions in Taiwan's free fitness training courses. The study experimentally examines these interactions to determine how leisure engagement affects consumers' willingness to invest in fitness programs. The research also seeks to understand how e-WOM and corporate image mediate consumer decisions in this arena. The study provides a nuanced understanding of fitness consumer behaviour by examining how people navigate the fitness landscape, making choices that match their leisure preferences and considering online discourse and perceptions of fitness program providers. This research is vital beyond fitness. Understanding consumer health and wellness decisions has broader ramifications as health and well-being become more critical in modern lifestyles. The study advances consumer behaviour and marketing theory by examining leisure engagement, e-WOM, and corporate image in fitness programs. The findings can also help fitness program suppliers adapt programs, manage internet presence, and build a favourable corporate image to connect and please customers. Its ability to deepen academic debate, inform industrial practices, and improve knowledge of leisure-based service businesses' dynamics makes the study important. In an era where the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle is increasingly intertwined with leisure activities, this research aligns with broader societal trends, making it particularly relevant and timely. The implications extend to marketing practitioners, policymakers, and educators, offering valuable insights into consumer preferences and decision-making processes within the fitness landscape. Ultimately, the study contributes to the holistic understanding of the intersection between leisure, technology-mediated communication, corporate image, and consumer choices in the context of health and wellness pursuits.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Leisure involvement and purchase intention

Leisure involvement is a psychological condition brought on by people's interactions with leisure activities, places, and products. Behavioural traits define it (Weybright and Caldwell, 2024). According to Kyle and Mowen (2005), leisure involvement is a complicated phrase that includes three primary elements: Appeal, centrality, and self-expression.

Attraction reflects the hedonic value and the pleasure obtained from an activity. Centrality refers to the degree of importance an activity holds in an individual's daily routine. Self-expression represents oneself or the image of oneself that individuals want to communicate to others via recreational activities (Hébert et al., 2022). De Temmerman et al. (2021) expanded to consumer behaviour studies to analyze how consumers buy things, and it has also been used in leisure settings (Pantano et al., 2021). Researchers have discovered that engaging in leisure activities positively impacts interactions through social networks and personal connections. It is also linked to developing a solid connection to certain places and identifying with those areas. Research by (Xu et al., 2023) discovered a positive correlation between bicycle users' leisure engagement level and their attachment to a region. Khed and Krishna (2023) showed that couple leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and marital relationship satisfaction were positively associated in their study. Lee et al. (2019) found that a single aspect of leisure engagement was linked to higher pleasure in several areas of life. Although a significant amount of literature is available, the idea of leisure involvement has not been well-researched in the fitness sector (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2023). We anticipate that the three aspects of leisure engagement in fitness activities would cater to psychological demands in distinct ways, ultimately enhancing satisfaction with fitness centre services, given the assumption that fitness has evolved into a way of life. Each aspect of involvement has a unique significance. For example, being attracted to fitness may lead to a disconnection from work, while viewing fitness as central may be linked to bonding with family or friends, and self-expression could be seen as pursuing life's meaning. To examine whether the leisure involvement of the customers of customized fitness services is related to repurchase intentions, our study puts forward the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Leisure involvement positively affects repurchase intentions.

**e-WOM as mediator**

So far, several authors have provided definitions for Word-Of-Mouth (WOM). Silverman (2011) defines WOM as the informal sharing of information about

products or services between two or more individuals, which is non-commercial. Word-of-mouth (WOM) is vital in influencing consumer behaviour about purchase intentions. Modern online word-of-mouth is called e-WOM (Hoang and Le Tan, 2023). Hong et al. (2020) defined e-WOM as an informal online conversation about product features, use, services, or e-retailers. Personal experiences concerning product/service providers shared through comments, online evaluations, and suggestions can persuade targeted buyers (Siqueira Jr et al., 2019). Internet technology has expanded the number of clients utilizing e-WOM to research products and companies. Shopping website reviews help consumers make purchases and are shared with others (Liu et al., 2024; Albon et al., 2018). People share their product experiences with family, friends, and others via e-commerce websites and social media. e-WOM is also advantageous since it is available to anybody who can use social media to share their suggestions and reviews with other consumers. Alzate et al. (2022) state that online comments and social media allow customers to interact and exchange product, service, and brand reviews. Customers often share product and service information on social media, the central e-WOM platform. On major consumer OPI platforms, e-WOM is credible, meaningful, authentic, and appealing (Bartschat et al., 2022). According to Kumar et al. (2023), e-WOM is a free promotion that boosts brand support and product sales by increasing buy rates. e-WOM is becoming essential for customer decision-making (Jam et al., 2010; Hussain et al., 2020). This study found that electronic word-of-mouth content strongly influences customers' purchase intentions (Siqueira Jr et al., 2019; Abbas et al., 2021). Research shows that e-WOM strongly influences customers' purchase intentions. Bilal et al. (2023) showed a strong positive correlation between e-WOM and purchasing intention on airline websites. e-WOM manages this complicated consumer dynamics dance in fitness programs by balancing leisure participation and purchase demand. Consumer fitness participation is affected by e-WOM. Active recreationists notice this most. They like e-WOM for delicate insights, suggestions, and honest reviews while making judgments. e-WOM mediates this complex connection. According to the ELM,

individuals digest e-WOM material methodically, especially those with high involvement in a topic (Shan et al., 2024). As people navigate the virtual world of information and views around fitness programs and related activities, this results in greater persuasion and attitude alteration. Given the broad framework of social influence theory, Internet users are not just information consumers but also active participants in social networks impacted by their peers' perspectives, experiences, and actions (Shankar et al., 2020). Leisure activities make individuals more receptive to trustworthy, relatable, and contextually relevant e-WOM, which mediates the complicated web of purchase intentions in fitness-related decisions. Leisure involvement also increases digital social influence. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** e-WOM mediates the relationship between leisure involvement and purchase intention.

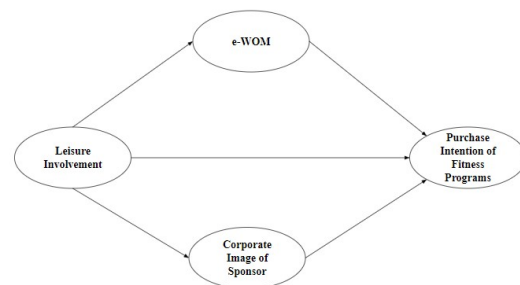
**Corporate image of sponsor as mediator**

Corporate image, according to Sriviboon (2022), is a combination of emotional and functional components. Avotra and Chengang (2021) defined corporate image as "the perceptions that a subset of the public has regarding a specific organization." Chen et al. (2023) say corporate image is how stakeholders regard the organization. He defines a corporate image as "a tangible, valuable entity that is difficult to replicate and can contribute to the achievement of superior, sustainable financial performance." Recently, Fröhlich and Knobloch (2021) defined "corporate image" as "the tangible and intangible associations interconnected with the concept of reputation." It covers company information, values, sentiments, thoughts, and beliefs. According to Den Hartog and Martínez (2022), one of the critical motivations of corporate contributors is to improve their image. According to Latif et al. (2020), corporate image is built by enhancing perception and customer experience. However, most previous research examined sponsors' perceptions of their organizations to establish corporate image. They are considering a company's qualitative personality when assessing its corporate image. Credibility, product, service, and nationality comprise a corporate image, according to Klein et al. (2020). Sponsor image positively correlated with future purchase intentions, according to Bloxsome et al. (2020). Dong et al. (2023)

examined how a sponsor's image affects product purchases. The results show that sponsor image strongly influences purchase intentions. Scholars have examined how sponsor image impacts conative characteristics, including purchase intentions.

The corporate image significantly affects how leisure involvement influences purchase intention in the context of fitness programs. An organization's corporate image links leisure involvement and consumer decision-making, symbolizing its standing and reputation. When a company's image reflects an individual's leisure-related values, it builds trust, loyalty, and a positive view of the sponsor Atkinson et al. (2021). Signalling and corporate brand management theories support corporate image as a mediator. Signalling theory states corporate images reflect sponsors' ideals, quality, and society (Ageeva et al., 2018). Leisure activity enthusiasts judge a sponsor by its corporate image and determine whether to acquire a fitness program. Corporate brand management theory states that a favourable corporate image builds a solid and enduring brand, giving the sponsor a distinctive identity and place in customers' thoughts (Chen et al., 2023). The companies' images shape leisure enthusiasts' impressions of the brand and their decisions to join the sponsoring company's fitness programs. The researcher will examine how the sponsor's corporate image affects brand love to establish the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Corporate image of sponsor mediates the relationship between leisure involvement and purchase intention.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

**METHODOLOGY**

This quantitative study delved into the intricate relationships between leisure involvement, e-WOM,

corporate image, and purchase intention among consumers in Taiwan who had participated in free fitness training courses. Employing a cross-sectional research design, data were collected simultaneously to capture a snapshot of participants' perceptions and behaviours within their engagement with fitness programs. The study targeted customers who had taken free fitness training classes, a group interested in health and well-being. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to disseminate 422 questionnaires via social media and gym-related personal networks. With 381 completed surveys returned for examination, the response rate was high. This study used purposive and snowball sampling. The researchers initially used their gym contacts to find people who had taken complimentary fitness classes. These participants were invited to participate in the study and requested to share the questionnaire link with their social network acquaintances. This snowball sampling method recruited more individuals, increasing sample diversity and representativeness. A well-constructed structured questionnaire was used to collect data on participants' leisure involvement, e-WOM engagement, corporate image impressions, and purchase intentions for fitness programs. The questionnaire was given electronically to promote honest and fair input, and respondents were promised anonymity and confidentiality. The survey instrument measured important factors using established scales and questions from earlier research. Leisure involvement was measured using Kyle and Mowen (2005) multidimensional scale. e-WOM was measured using Siddiqui et al. (2021)

3-item scale. Sponsor corporate image was assessed using a 6-item scale from Ko et al. (2008). A modified 3-item scale from Ko et al. (2008) examined purchase intention. SPSS, a popular social science quantitative analytic program, was used for data analysis. Statistics like means, standard deviations, and frequencies described sample characteristics. Correlation and regression analysis were used to investigate mediation effects and examine variable correlations. A *p*-value of < 0.05 was used to assess statistical significance and draw reliable conclusions.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics that provide information about the study's primary constructs. The average participant score on the leisure activity scale was 4.12 out of 5, with a standard deviation of 0.82, indicating a modest level of involvement. While most people are engaged in some activity, there appears to be variation in the degree of leisure involvement among individuals. The mean score of 4.07 with a standard deviation of 0.67 indicates the participants' high level of purchase intention. This implies that products related to the study will probably be considered for purchase. Individuals also showed positive e-WOM behaviour, with a standard deviation of 0.82 and an average score of 3.91. Online sharing of thoughts and experiences on goods and services is more common. Additionally, with an average score of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 0.69, respondents had a favourable opinion of the sponsor's corporate image. This demonstrates how important public perception of a company is in determining its target market.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics.**

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mini	Maxi
Leisure Involvement	4.12	0.82	1	5
Purchase Intention	4.07	0.67	1	5
e-WOM	3.91	0.82	1	5
Corporate Image of Sponsor	3.95	0.69	1	5

The results of the normality test performed on the primary research components are displayed in Table 2. Skewness and kurtosis statistics provide insight into the characteristics of data distribution. An indication of the majority of respondents' more significant levels of involvement in leisure activities

is the tiny leftward skewness score of -1.210. The 1.458 kurtosis score, which denotes a great degree of peakedness in the distribution, shows that the findings are substantially concentrated around the mean. Regarding purchase intent, participants often had more excellent intentions, as seen by a somewhat

peaked distribution (skewness = -0.956) and a skewed distribution to the left (kurtosis = 1.226). According to kurtosis and skewness data, e-WOM and the sponsor's corporate image both show significantly peaked distributions. Although the data may not be completely normal, this research indicates that the

differences could be more significant in undermining the study's statistical conclusions. Overall, the normality test results give confidence that the selected statistical techniques are adequate for analyzing the data and deriving significant findings regarding the connections between the constructs under study.

**Table 2: Normality assessment.**

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis
Leisure Involvement	-1.210	1.458
Purchase Intention	-0.956	1.226
e-WOM	-0.815	0.615
Corporate Image of Sponsor	-0.633	0.311

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the connections between the study's critical elements, as shown in Table 3. The correlation coefficients between two variables can be used to determine the link's direction and intensity. People who spend more time having fun are also more likely to have high purchase intentions, according to a substantial positive connection ( $r = 0.77$ ) between leisure involvement and purchase intention. e-WOM and purchase intention had a positive connection ( $r = 0.796$ ), indicating that persons with higher buying

inclinations are more likely to disseminate positive e-WOM. Leisure engagement positively correlates with e-WOM ( $r = 0.599$ ) and CIS ( $r = 0.688$ ), supporting their interaction. e-WOM also positively correlates with purchasing intention ( $r = 0.796$ ) and CIS ( $r = 0.792$ ). According to this study, good e-WOM involvement is associated with higher purchase intentions and a better sponsor corporate image. These findings demonstrate how the variables are interrelated and reveal customer views and behaviour.

**Table 3: Correlation analysis.**

	LI	PI	EWOM	CIS
Leisure Involvement	1.00			
Purchase Intention	0.77	1.00		
e-WOM	0.599	0.796	1.00	
Corporate Image of Sponsor	0.688	0.82	0.792	1.00

Table 4 shows the reliability analysis results for each study construct's measurement scales' internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine how healthy items in each construct assess the same concept. Leisure engagement has the constructs' highest cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.92), yet all are reliable. This demonstrates that the leisure involvement assessment items are internally consistent and correctly measure leisure activity. Purchase intention and the sponsor's corporate image are trustworthy, with cronbach's alpha scores of 0.84 and 0.90.

These findings support the study's conclusions since the corporate image and purchase intention instruments reliably assess the relevant variables. The reliability analysis also demonstrates that the e-WOM construct has sufficient internal consistency with a cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82. Thus, electronic word-of-mouth behaviour evaluation questions correctly measure people's online product and service promotion. Overall, the strong reliability coefficients for each construct demonstrate the validity of the research measuring scales and provide trust in the data's precision and consistency.

**Table 4: Reliability analysis.**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Leisure Involvement	0.92
Purchase Intention	0.84
e-WOM	0.82
Corporate Image of Sponsor	0.90

Table 5 shows the variables' outer loadings, demonstrating the strength of the correlations between latent constructs and observable indicators. The leisure participation construct's outer loadings range from 0.543 to 0.726, indicating a high item-latent variable association. LI5, LI3, and LI6 have the most significant outside loadings, indicating they best capture leisure engagement. Similarly, item PI2 has the highest buy intention loading, ranging from 0.582 to 0.720. The indicators properly reflect people's tendency to express purchase intentions. e-WOM outer loadings vary from 0.654 to 0.673, indicating

a high connection between the latent construct and observable indicators. This suggests that e-WOM activity measures people's online product and service information sharing. The sponsor's corporate image external loadings range from 0.643 to 0.789, with item CIS2 loading the highest. These data imply that the chosen metrics can measure sponsor business image perceptions. Overall, the outer loadings reveal the reliability and validity of the research's measuring scales, proving that the indicators were acceptable for assessing the constructs.

**Table 5: Outer loadings.**

Variables	Item	Outer Loadings
Leisure Involvement	LI1	0.709
	LI2	0.645
	LI3	0.716
	LI4	0.611
	LI5	0.726
	LI6	0.692
	LI7	0.660
	LI8	0.642
	LI9	0.543
	LI10	0.687
	LI11	0.690
	LI12	0.671
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.582
	PI2	0.720
	PI3	0.685
e-WOM	EWOM1	0.673
	EWOM2	0.654
	EWOM3	0.673
Corporate Image of Sponsor	CIS1	0.682
	CIS2	0.789
	CIS3	0.717
	CIS4	0.708
	CIS5	0.643

Table 6 shows buying intention *R* square values. *R* square shows the percentage of the dependent variable's variance explained by the model's independent variables. The *R* square score of 0.602 indicates that the independent factors in the study explain 60.2% of purchase intention variance. This

means that leisure activities, electronic word-of-mouth, and the sponsor's corporate image influence people's buying inclinations. The high *R* square value shows that the model with these independent variables fits the data well and provides valuable insight into customers' purchasing intentions.

**Table 6: R square.**

Dependent Variable	R Square
Purchase Intention	0.602

Table 7 displays the regression analysis findings investigating the correlation between leisure involvement and purchase intention. A beta value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.63 signifies a positive and statistically significant correlation between leisure involvement and purchase intention. The  $t$ -value of 3.963 and  $p$ -value of 0.000, below the significance level of 0.05, confirm the relevance of this connection. This shows that the association between leisure activity

and purchasing intention is not random. A  $\beta$  of 0.63 means that a one-unit increase in leisure engagement increases purchase intention by 0.63 units. The findings show that leisure activity increases purchase intentions. Regression research shows that leisure participation predicts purchase intention and influences consumer behaviour. This data can help marketers and organizations target leisure-loving people and boost sales.

**Table 7: Regression analysis.**

Independent Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	$t$ Value	$p$ Value
Leisure Involvement -> Purchase Intention	0.63	3.963	0.000

Table 8 shows the results of the mediation study of leisure involvement's indirect effect on purchase intention through e-WOM. Leisure participation indirectly affects purchase intention through e-WOM, as indicated by a substantial positive beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.162. The indirect effect's relevance is corroborated by the  $t$ -value of 2.626, which is less than 0.05 and has a  $p$ -value of 0.000. This means that the mediation effect is unlikely to be random. Mediation study supports the premise that leisure engagement affects purchase intention through e-WOM behaviour. Leisure-time activities boost positive e-WOM communication and purchase intentions. These findings demonstrate the importance of indirect pathways when examining dimension interactions and reveal how leisure engagement affects customer behaviour. Businesses and marketers may utilize this data to develop targeted strategies to boost purchase intentions and e-WOM among leisure-time customers. The mediation research found that the

sponsor's corporate image indirectly affected leisure engagement and purchase intention (Table 8). The beta value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.173 indicates a solid positive indirect influence of leisure activity on purchase intention via corporate image. This indirect route is resilient and vital, as indicated by its  $t$ -value of 11.447 and  $p$ -value of 0.000. These findings suggest that leisure engagement boosts purchase intention due to the sponsor's better corporate image. Leisure-goers see the sponsor's business image more positively, which improves their inclination to buy. This study underlines the importance of indirect pathways when examining dimension linkages and provides insight into how leisure engagement affects consumer behaviour. With this data, marketers and companies may create plans to improve customers' impressions of their brand among consumers actively participating in leisure activities. This will favourably impact consumers' intentions to purchase, ultimately leading to increased sales and brand loyalty.

**Table 8: Mediation analysis.**

Path	Beta ( $\beta$ )	$t$ Value	$p$ Value
Leisure Involvement -> e-WOM -> Purchase Intention	0.162	2.626	0.000
Leisure Involvement -> Corporate Image of Sponsor -> Purchase Intention	0.173	11.447	0.000

**DISCUSSION**

This study examined Taiwanese consumer behaviour in relation to fitness programs. The study examined the relationships between electronic word of

mouth, leisure involvement, and corporate image. Leisure involvement, e-WOM, corporate image, and purchase intent are complicated and affect marketing specialists, fitness program providers, and industry players. This chapter also discusses the



theoretical implications of the data, recommending further research on leisure-based services consumer behaviour. H1 proposed that leisure involvement boosts repurchase intentions in Taiwan's free fitness training courses. The quantitative analysis supports this idea, supporting prior research that demonstrates leisure involvement strongly influences consumer behaviour (Pantano et al., 2021). Leisure involvement and repurchase intentions are positively connected, showing that people who engage in more leisure activities—especially fitness-related ones—are more likely to acquire fitness training programs. This study highlights the intrinsic value people place on leisure activities and how those values affect fitness purchase decisions. Higher leisure involvement is connected with a more significant possibility that participants would consider fitness training programs necessary to their leisure activities, which boosts their enjoyment and fulfillment (Shuai et al., 2022). More people plan to buy workout programs to preserve leisure activities' social, emotional, and physical benefits. Leisure engagement positively affects repurchase intentions, suggesting fitness program providers may create and promote engaging leisure activities that match consumers' interests and preferences. Provide comprehensive fitness programs that suit various leisure interests and lifestyles to boost customer satisfaction and loyalty, resulting in repeat purchases and continuous engagement (Su et al., 2022). According to the findings, leisure engagement significantly impacts fitness training course value judgments. Health programs may help people reach their health goals and offer self-improvement, social engagement, and self-assertion, making them more desirable to leisure activity aficionados. This higher value perception increases clients' intentions to engage in fitness training and leisure activities.

The results support hypothesis 2, that e-WOM modulates leisure participation and purchase desire. This validates previous research indicating digital communication channels greatly influence consumer behaviour, particularly in recreation and fitness (Barkley et al., 2020). Internet forums, fitness conversations, and group help are connected to active leisure. e-WOM highlights the importance of peer opinions and virtual interactions in shaping attitudes and intentions toward fitness programs. Leisure

activity lovers use internet communities to seek and respect advice for fitness programs. Good e-WOM affects impressions and purchase intentions for leisure-active people (Nadrou et al., 2024). e-WOM mediates fitness industry decision-making, emphasizing social factors. Leisure activities develop community among like-minded people. People exchange experiences and reach agreements online using e-WOM. The results show that persons with higher leisure involvement are more open to the collective knowledge and experiences shared through e-WOM, which results in a more upbeat outlook and a desire to purchase fitness training courses (Zhao et al., 2023). Social media and other digital channels allow providers to promote user-generated content, establish conversations, and answer consumer inquiries. Customers' purchase intentions and fitness programs' perceived value and dependability might be influenced by suppliers' e-WOM.

Hypothesis 3—that the corporate image of the sponsor greatly impacts leisure involvement and purchase intention—is validated by quantitative data. This supports the signalling theory, which states that a company's corporate image communicates its dedication to excellence, morality, and social responsibility (Ageeva et al., 2018). Leisure involvement increases with sponsors' corporate image, which they consider vital when investing in and participating in fitness programs. Corporate image mediates fitness program providers' perceptions. Individuals with greater leisure involvement are more likely to evaluate fitness programs based on their reputation, values, image, and practical components (Fang et al., 2021). This detailed assessment affects their fitness training course repurchase and enrollment intentions. The corporate image mediating effect suggests that people who like major leisure activities want to align their values with the company that sponsors them. Honesty, reliability, and social responsibility in corporate image boost recruitment to fitness programs. Consumers who trust sponsors with a favourable corporate image in their wellness and health pursuits are likelier to invest in their programs, especially those with significant leisure involvement (Muflih, 2021). The data also show that fitness program providers may intentionally manage and improve their corporate

image to influence consumer behaviour. Promote quality, ethics, and social responsibility to build a favourable corporate image that attracts active leisure consumers. Improved consumer trust, loyalty, and fitness training course repurchase intentions may follow.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the complicated dynamics that affect consumer behaviour in Taiwan's free fitness classes. Leisure involvement, e-WOM, corporate image, and purchase intention were examined. The study found that leisure activity involvement strongly influences consumers' inclination to join fitness programs. Fitness enthusiasts spend more time and money on leisure activities. This emphasizes the need for engaging, relevant leisure activities that meet customers' needs. It was also demonstrated that the intermediate role of e-WOM significantly influenced customers' intentions to purchase fitness programs. Regarding fitness, consumers seek advice and trust peer comments on digital platforms. Fitness program providers should recognize the power of e-WOM and encourage pleasant online interactions to attract new customers. Leisure involvement and purchase intention were mediated by corporate image. Recreational consumers value the reputation and image of fitness program suppliers. Suppliers should provide excellent services and develop their corporate image to express integrity, dependability, and alignment with customer values to increase purchase intentions. The study found a synergy between corporate image, e-WOM, and leisure involvement, underlining the need for coordinated marketing. Service providers may improve recreational experiences, web presence, and corporate image to deliberately influence client purchase decisions.

### Implications

*Practical implications:* This research has practical applications. Its findings can help marketers, fitness program designers, and other wellness providers. First, the study emphasizes the necessity for compelling, customized leisure experiences that fit customers' interests. By examining their target audience's leisure habits, fitness program providers may tailor programs to different interests and activity

levels. Suppliers may increase client engagement, satisfaction, and physical activity devotion using this strategy. e-WOM influences customers' fitness decisions. Providers of fitness programs should aggressively interact with consumers on digital platforms by displaying good reviews, testimonials, and ideas, given the importance of digital connections. A welcoming online community may increase participation in fitness programs and the provider's reputation. Corporate image impacts client decisions. Thus, fitness program vendors must aggressively promote their brand. Establish your honesty, ethics, and ambitions before influencing a consumer's purchase or intentions. Open communication, morality, and CSR strengthen corporate image and competitiveness. The paper's marketing strategy includes leisure, e-WOM, and corporate image. Providers need comprehensive plans and interconnections to manage consumer engagement. Marketing, leisure experience, e-WOM, and corporate image may work together. This connection boosts consumer influence. Demographics impact marketing, increasing their relevance. Service providers should target age, gender, and socioeconomic groups through marketing and products. Targeting varied consumer demographics with this advanced strategy may improve marketing efforts.

*Theoretical implications:* To comprehend the complex health and wellness industry, the study has crucial theoretical implications for marketing, consumer behaviour, and leisure studies. According to the study, leisure participation considerably increases the likelihood of buying fitness programs. This shows how leisure interests and participation affect health and wellness consumer choices beyond enjoyment. Leisure participation theoretical frameworks may use the study's findings to develop complete leisure studies models. The study links leisure engagement and purchasing intent, boosting e-WOM. According to ELM and social influence theory, e-WOM influences exercise behaviours and attitudes. This study suggests that people who spend a lot of time on recreation have more structured interactions with e-WOM, allowing for additional psychological investigation. Academic frameworks based on corporate brand management and signalling theories benefit from corporate image mediation. The study shows

how fitness program providers' reputations affect users' choices. The findings may be employed by theoretical frameworks on corporate image to better understand how customers respond to health and wellness provider signals. The study illuminates how demographic factors and interaction effects affect user behaviour, boosting theoretical arguments. Future research should examine how age, gender, and income affect e-WOM, corporate image, leisure involvement, and purchase intention. This lets researchers study consumer behaviour across demographics.

#### **Limitations and future direction**

*Limitations:* The study has provided important insights, but its limitations must be acknowledged to improve and expand future research. The study began with Taiwanese free fitness training clients. The low sample size may limit generalizability. Future research should involve people with varying demographics, cultural backgrounds, and experience with fitness programs to understand the dynamics in diverse scenarios further. Reported data from an electronic questionnaire is more likely to be inaccurate and biased toward socially desired replies. Participants may answer according to society's norms or not truly reflect their behaviours and thoughts. Future corporate studies may use observational or qualitative interviews to supplement self-reported data. The cross-sectional study assessed participants' views and activities at a particular moment. This technique is suitable for correlated variables but not causal relationships. The timing and cause-and-effect links between e-WOM, purchase intention, leisure involvement, and corporate image need to be investigated further utilizing longitudinal or experimental techniques. This strategy would strengthen comprehension of the complexity of consumer behaviour in the fitness sector. The study solely looked at quantitative consumer behaviour, ignoring qualitative factors that may reveal more about motivations and experiences. Qualitative approaches like focus group discussions or in-depth interviews can be used to study customers' fitness program attitudes, preferences, and decision-making processes. The study did not examine contextual factors affecting customer health and wellness behaviour. Economic conditions, public health programs, and trends can influence consumer

behaviour. Additional research is needed to understand how these contextual factors affect the fitness industry and customer decisions.

*Future direction:* By looking more closely at the observed limits, we can better understand how people act in the health and fitness market. Future studies should focus on cultural and geographical differences in leisure involvement, e-WOM engagement, corporate image, and purchase intention. Examining how cultural differences impact customer preferences and activities in fitness programs can help build regionalized service offers and worldwide marketing tactics. Technology's influence on fitness consumer behaviour must also be examined. This research should have evaluated how upcoming technologies like virtual reality and fitness apps may affect consumer relationships and leisure activities.

Further research is needed to understand how technology affects consumer involvement and decision-making in the rapidly evolving health and wellness sector. Longitudinal research may also illuminate fitness consumer behaviour's many subtleties. Researchers can discover patterns, establish causation, and assess the long-term impacts of treatments or marketing tactics by tracking leisure involvement, e-WOM engagement, corporate image, and purchase intention. In addition to quantitative data, ethnographic investigations and in-depth interviews can reveal consumer behaviour's sensory and motivational components. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods would provide a complete understanding of the many aspects influencing health and wellness consumer choices. The diversity of fitness programs, competitive intensity, and regulatory environment may moderate findings in future studies. A tailored awareness of these industry-specific elements, leisure involvement, e-WOM, and corporate image may help fitness program providers navigate the competitive marketplace.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Questionnaire**

#### **Leisure involvement**

##### **Attraction**

1. It is very important to me.
2. It offers me relaxation when pressures build-up.
3. Participating in is one of the most satisfying things I do.
4. I really enjoy.

##### **Centrality**

1. I find a lot of my life is organized around.
2. It has a central role in my life.
3. I enjoy discussing with my friends.
4. I find a lot of my life is organized around.

##### **Self-expression**

1. Participating in says a lot about whom I am.
2. You can tell a lot about a person by seeing them participating in.
3. When I participate in I can really be myself.
4. When I participate in others see me the way they want to see me.

##### **Purchase intention**

1. I am willing to try the product/service of sponsors.
2. I am willing to buy the product/service of sponsors.
3. I seek out the product/service of sponsors.

##### **e-WOM**

1. To make sure that I buy the right products or brands, I often read online reviews of products and brands written by other fellow members in social networks.
2. To choose the right products or brands, I often consult online reviews of products and brands provided by other fellow members in social networks.
3. I always publish my experiences with products and brands in social networks on request of other members.

##### **Corporate image of sponsor**

1. Sponsors have good products/services.
2. Sponsors are well managed.
3. Sponsors only want to make money.
4. Sponsors are involved in the community.
5. Sponsors respond to consumer needs.
6. Sponsors are a good company to work for.