



IMPACT OF E-COMMERCE AI HOST CHARACTERISTICS ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS: AN INVESTIGATION OF SUZHOU INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of AI host characteristics on consumer purchase intentions in livestreaming e-commerce, focusing on Suzhou's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) products. It aims to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding how AI host traits influence consumer engagement and purchase behaviour in the context of cultural product promotion.

The research utilises a quantitative method, combining theoretical analysis with empirical data. A survey was conducted to assess the influence of AI host characteristics, including cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness, on consumer purchase intentions. The study also examines the mediating roles of perceived novelty and social presence, and the moderating effect of consumer innovativeness, using structural equation modelling (SEM) and regression analysis.

The findings indicate that AI host characteristics significantly affect consumer purchase intentions. Cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness positively influence consumer attitudes and purchase decisions. Perceived novelty and social presence were identified as key mediators in this relationship. Consumer innovativeness was found to enhance the impact of AI host traits, particularly vitality and responsiveness, on consumer perceptions.

This study extends research on AI-enabled livestream commerce and virtual influencers to the context of ICH product commercialisation. It proposes a dual-mechanism framework linking AI host characteristics to purchase intentions through perceived novelty and social presence, and identifies consumer innovativeness as a key boundary condition.

The study offers practical insights for e-commerce platforms and businesses by identifying the AI host traits that drive consumer engagement. The findings can guide the optimisation of AI hosts to improve consumer experience and sales. It also highlights the need for businesses to tailor their AI-driven marketing strategies to different consumer segments based on innovativeness.

KEY WORDS

AI hosts, consumer purchase intentions, intangible cultural heritage, innovation

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INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of e-commerce live streaming, AI hosts have gradually become a significant form of influencer marketing, especially with the added advantages of their technological features and

social attributes. Unlike human hosts, AI hosts create a more complex formation of consumer behavioural intentions by combining interactions with new technologies and social engagement (Peltier et al., 2024). AI hosts, through highly personalised images, language, and actions, provide not only interactive experiences with new technology but also social

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properties that evoke emotional responses from consumers, influencing their purchase intentions. Current research has mainly focused on the social attributes of AI hosts, exploring factors such as perceived credibility, empathy, perceived closeness, social presence, and arousal that affect consumer experience and purchase intentions (Gupta et al., 2025; Islam & Hossain, 2023). However, research on the technological experience perceived by consumers when interacting with AI hosts remains relatively scarce, particularly the lack of a comprehensive framework that integrates technological experience and social interaction perspectives to analyse the effectiveness of AI host-driven marketing.

Meanwhile, Suzhou, a hub of traditional Chinese culture, boasts a rich intangible cultural heritage (ICH), including Suzhou embroidery, Kunqu opera, and classical gardens, all of which have profound historical and artistic value. Against this cultural backdrop, e-commerce live streaming of Suzhou ICH products is not merely about product promotion but also about the preservation and innovative expression of traditional culture (Zhu et al., 2024). As AI hosts have gained popularity, more e-commerce platforms are exploring the combination of ICH with AI technology to promote and sell locally specialised heritage products. This integration not only revitalises traditional culture but also offers e-commerce platforms an innovative marketing approach (Xu et al., 2021). Through the personalised image and interaction of AI hosts, consumers are not only afforded the convenience of modern shopping but also exposed to the allure of ICH, enhancing their cultural identity and, in turn, increasing their purchase intentions.

However, despite the widespread use of AI hosts in e-commerce live streaming, especially in promoting ICH products, existing research does not fully explain the specific impact of AI hosts' individual characteristics on consumer purchase intentions (Niazi et al., 2022). AI hosts differ significantly from human hosts due to their technological innovation and social attributes. Characteristics, such as cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness, in AI hosts enable them to interact with consumers in a more approachable manner, conveying both warmth and expertise, especially when promoting ICH products (Zhu & Liu, 2025). These traits increase consumer interest in ICH products and foster emotional resonance and cultural connection, thereby influencing purchase decisions.

Additionally, the role of technological innovation in AI host-driven marketing - how it evokes consumer perceptions of novelty and engages social presence - remains a critical research gap. Consumer innovativeness may moderate their psychological reactions to different characteristics of AI hosts, which in turn affect their purchase behaviours (Kim et al., 2024). In the context of AI host-driven sales, consumer innovativeness plays a crucial role in determining their response to AI hosts' individual traits and how these traits influence purchasing intentions through mechanisms such as novelty perception and social presence (Kim et al., 2022; Just et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study, guided by theories of anthropomorphism and social cognition, aims to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding AI hosts' individual characteristics, particularly their role in promoting ICH products. The study will investigate how characteristics like cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness impact consumer purchase intentions through technological experience and social interaction. By adopting a dual perspective - focusing on technological experience and social interaction - this study aims to uncover the unique mechanisms through which AI hosts influence purchase intentions in the context of ICH, while also examining the moderating role of consumer innovativeness.

Although prior studies have examined virtual influencers, digital avatars, and livestream commerce, most of them have focused on general consumer products or entertainment-oriented virtual agents. Less attention has been paid to how AI hosts influence consumers in the culturally specific context of ICH product commercialisation. This study addresses this gap by examining AI-hosted livestreaming of Suzhou ICH products, where consumer purchase decisions are shaped not only by product information but also by cultural meaning, perceived authenticity, and emotional engagement.

This study makes three main contributions. First, it extends AI-enabled livestream commerce research to the context of ICH product marketing, thereby linking human-AI interaction with cultural product commercialisation. Second, it develops a dual psychological mechanism by distinguishing perceived novelty as a technology-related response and social presence as a social-interaction response. Third, it clarifies the boundary role of consumer innovativeness by showing that innovativeness does not

strengthen all AI host effects equally, but is particularly relevant to vitality and responsiveness.

In summary, the novelty of this study does not lie merely in applying existing consumer behaviour theories to AI-hosted livestreaming. Rather, it lies in integrating AI host characteristics, perceived novelty, social presence, and consumer innovativeness into a unified framework for explaining consumer purchase intentions toward ICH products. By doing so, this study extends livestream commerce research beyond general product promotion to culturally embedded product commercialisation and explains how AI hosts influence consumers through technological and social-psychological mechanisms.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND KEY CONCEPTS

1.1.1. SOR THEORY (STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE MODEL)

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model is one of the foundational theories in consumer behaviour research. This theory suggests that external situational stimuli (Stimulus) influence an individual's internal cognition and emotions (Organism), which in turn affect behavioural responses (Response) (Sultan et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2020). In the context of AI host livestreamed e-commerce, the AI host, with its appealing, lively, natural, and organic appearance, acts as an external stimulus that attracts consumers, offers product recommendations using professional knowledge, and responds to consumers' questions (Shi et al., 2025). This interaction becomes a key factor influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Moreover, the real-time interactions with the AI host, alongside its technological novelty, awaken consumers' perception of newness and excitement (Dash, 2024; Wen & Li, 2025). These experiences contribute to consumers' internal emotional and cognitive responses, ultimately triggering purchase intentions as their behavioural response.

Existing international research on AI-enabled marketing has developed across several related streams, including virtual influencers, AI-generated content, livestream commerce, and human-AI interaction. Studies on virtual influencers emphasise how attractiveness, authenticity, credibility, and parasocial

interaction influence consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions. Research on AI-generated content and digital avatars further highlights the importance of anthropomorphism, perceived intelligence, responsiveness, and social presence in shaping user experience. In livestream commerce, host characteristics and real-time interaction have been shown to affect trust, engagement, and purchase intention. However, these research streams have rarely been integrated into the context of ICH product commercialisation. Therefore, this study connects AI host characteristics with consumers' psychological responses in a culturally embedded livestreaming context.

1.1.2. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AI HOSTS

AI hosts in livestreaming e-commerce exhibit a range of characteristics. Previous research has primarily focused on the interactivity and social attributes of AI hosts, which positively correlate with perceived social presence and enhance perceived value and purchase intentions (Elste et al., 2024). Further studies have refined this by emphasising the affinity, vitality, and responsiveness of AI hosts, all of which enhance social presence during interactions and ultimately increase purchase intentions (Xu et al., 2025). Among these, responsiveness has been found to have the strongest impact on both social presence and purchase intentions (Wen & Li, 2025). Recent studies also suggest that characteristics such as attractiveness, professionalism, and intelligence can increase consumer satisfaction and purchase intentions (Leoni et al., 2024; Trincado-Munoz et al., 2024).

From a visual perspective, AI hosts typically display either hyper-realistic or cartoon-like styles, and the level of "cuteness" varies across these formats. Cuteness has been identified as a key factor in the effectiveness of virtual spokespersons, and since AI hosts share similarities with virtual spokespersons, "cuteness" will be used as one of the metrics for AI host characteristics (Zou et al., 2024). Studies have shown that a host's professionalism enhances perceived value and consumer trust, positively correlating with purchase intentions. This study also considers the impact of professionalism on consumer purchasing intentions. Additionally, characteristics such as vitality and responsiveness have been shown to positively impact purchase intentions (Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, a framework for AI host characteristics is

constructed, based on warmth and competence perceptions, comprising four key dimensions: Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, and Responsiveness. Cuteness measures the attractiveness and likability of the AI host's appearance; Vitality measures the naturalness and liveliness of the AI host's form; Professionalism measures the host's ability to deliver accurate product information; and Responsiveness measures the AI host's ability to promptly respond to consumer queries.

1.1.3. PERCEIVED NOVELTY

According to novelty classification theory, stimuli that do not fit an individual's existing mental categories are perceived as novel. Perceived novelty refers to a subjective feeling of encountering something new or unfamiliar, which triggers attention and excitement (Just et al., 2023; Talukdar & Yu, 2021). The greater the deviation from familiar expectations, the higher the perceived novelty. If the novelty is within an acceptable range, it can evoke positive emotions such as enjoyment or flow, which can influence consumer behaviour. In the context of new technologies, researchers, e.g., Ligeiro et al. (2024), suggest that perceived novelty arises when users encounter new and innovative technologies. Existing studies show that technologies such as augmented reality (AR) in e-commerce enhance the sense of novelty, increasing online purchase intentions. Similarly, AI interactions with virtual assistants create novelty, fostering brand loyalty (Rawool et al., 2024). This study focuses on the novelty created by the AI host's interaction style, considering it as a form of technological innovation that provides consumers with a new, exciting, and interesting experience.

1.1.4. SOCIAL PRESENCE

Social presence, initially introduced in communication studies, refers to the perceived "realness" of others during interactions (Lee & Nass, 2005). This concept has been extended to human-computer interactions, where it refers to the degree to which individuals perceive others as "real" in virtual environments, such as online marketing and human-computer interactions (Kreijns et al., 2022). In the e-commerce context, scholars like Tan and Liew (2020) have suggested that social presence is a multi-dimensional concept that includes familiarity, warmth, and intimacy in interactions. Social presence helps increase trust in e-commerce sites, immersing

consumers in a flow state and ultimately enhancing purchase intentions. In human-computer interaction, a higher degree of social presence is achieved when users perceive an AI system as "real", particularly when the system exhibits anthropomorphic characteristics such as virtual assistants or chatbots, leading to a greater sense of "human-like" interaction (Zhong et al., 2025). This study defines social presence in the context of AI host livestreamed e-commerce as the degree to which consumers perceive the AI host's presence as genuine and interactive.

1.1.5. CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS

Consumer innovativeness refers to the degree to which individuals are early adopters of new products or technologies compared to others in their social group (Vandecasteele & Geuens, 2010). Early studies viewed consumer innovativeness as a personality trait, reflecting differences in individuals' willingness to accept new information and try new things (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991; Roehrich, 2004). Motivations for innovative consumers include the desire for novelty, independence, and uniqueness. High-innovativeness consumers are more likely to accept and purchase innovative products, such as AI-powered products, compared to those with lower innovativeness (Zhang et al., 2024). AI-hosted e-commerce is a marketing innovation, and consumer innovativeness can play a crucial role in determining their receptivity to this new form of interaction (Parvez et al., 2025). High-innovativeness consumers are expected to find AI-hosted e-commerce more appealing and are likely to experience higher levels of perceived novelty, social presence, and purchase intentions.

1.2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1.2.1 AI HOST CHARACTERISTICS AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Cuteness refers to the likability and popularity of the AI host. The higher the cuteness, the more positive the attitude people tend to have towards it. Research in advertising suggests that the cuteness of virtual spokespersons is related to consumer trust and quasi-social interactions, which in turn enhance brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Wen & Li, 2025). Cuteness is closely associated with affinity, and studies have shown that the affinity of virtual hosts increases purchase intentions. It is hypothesised that AI hosts with higher cuteness are more likely to evoke

positive attitudes in consumers, potentially boosting purchase intentions.

For service robots and smart voice products, higher levels of cuteness tend to trigger positive emotions in consumers, leading to greater emotional engagement and higher satisfaction with interpersonal interactions, which increases both use and purchase intentions (Elste et al., 2024). As AI hosts are virtual, intelligent media, it is assumed that the higher the cuteness of the AI host, the more approachable the consumer perceives it to be, leading to a more positive attitude towards both the AI host and the products being promoted, and ultimately increasing purchase intentions.

Vitality refers to the naturalness and realism of the AI host's appearance, which is closely related to authenticity. The higher the vitality of the AI host, the stronger the sense of realism it creates, making consumers more likely to perceive the possibility of forming a deeper connection with the host, thereby triggering stronger positive emotions (Qiqige & Xiaohua, 2024). The more prominent the vitality characteristics of the AI host, the smoother and more comfortable the interaction process becomes, which helps foster a more positive attitude towards the AI host and enhances purchase intentions for the recommended products. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that the higher the vitality of the AI host, the more natural and realistic the interaction, leading to more positive attitudes towards the AI host and increased purchase intentions for the recommended products.

Professionalism measures the degree to which the AI host delivers product information accurately and expertly. Research on e-commerce live streaming has shown that the professionalism of human hosts is positively correlated with perceived value, trust, and purchase intentions. In the context of AI live streaming, AI hosts can provide professional introductions based on pre-set scripts, which enhances consumer trust and willingness to engage. Recent studies have found that the professionalism of AI hosts in live-streaming e-commerce is positively correlated with consumer satisfaction, further boosting purchase intentions (Trincado-Munoz et al., 2024). It is hypothesised that the greater the professionalism of the AI host, the higher the perceived value by consumers, leading to more active interaction and stronger purchase intentions.

Responsiveness refers to the speed and efficiency with which the AI host replies to consumer inquiries, serving as an important indicator of service quality. In e-commerce live streaming, higher responsiveness

from the host increases perceived value, thus enhancing purchase intentions. A host's quick responses help reduce social distance, making consumers feel closer and fostering positive online relationships (Wang et al., 2024). A previous study has consistently found that higher responsiveness from AI hosts during livestreaming sales increases consumers' online purchase intentions (Islam et al., 2025). Therefore, it is hypothesised that the higher the responsiveness of the AI host, the stronger the perception of its agency, and the greater the sense of realism, closeness, and usefulness in the interaction, which in turn increases purchase intentions.

Based on the above elaboration, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Cuteness of the AI host is positively correlated with online purchase intentions.

H1b: Vitality of the AI host is positively correlated with online purchase intentions.

H1c: Professionalism of the AI host is positively correlated with online purchase intentions.

H1d: Responsiveness of the AI host is positively correlated with online purchase intentions.

1.2.2. AI HOST CHARACTERISTICS AND PERCEIVED NOVELTY

Livestreaming e-commerce with AI hosts relies on the support of intelligent technologies. Previous research has shown that the interactive nature of AI hosts creates intelligent and unique experiences for consumers, enhancing their sense of novelty (Ligeiro et al., 2024). First, the cuteness and vitality of the AI host reflect its ability to design the host's image through technology. The higher the cuteness, the more lively, enthusiastic, and interesting the experience becomes, triggering emotional responses and increasing novelty. Second, vitality reflects the natural and organic characteristics of the AI host's appearance. The higher the vitality, the more real and novel the AI-hosted e-commerce format appears to consumers, thereby increasing perceived enjoyment and novelty.

Additionally, the professionalism and responsiveness of AI hosts reflect their technical ability to interact with consumers (Wang et al., 2024). The higher the professionalism, the more valuable product information the AI host can provide, and consumers perceive the AI host as equally capable as a human, potentially exceeding expectations and creating a sense of surprise and novelty. Furthermore, higher responsiveness means smoother interactions

with the AI host, enhancing consumers' perception of its intelligence and creating more satisfying experiences, which in turn increases their sense of novelty.

Therefore, it is hypothesised that the cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness of AI hosts contribute to creating a novel, interesting, intelligent, and unique experience for consumers, thereby enhancing their perception of novelty.

H2a: Cuteness of the AI host is positively correlated with perceived novelty.

H2b: Vitality of the AI host is positively correlated with perceived novelty.

H2c: Professionalism of the AI host is positively correlated with perceived novelty.

H2d: Responsiveness of the AI host is positively correlated with perceived novelty.

1.2.3. AI HOST CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIAL PRESENCE

E-commerce live streaming research has shown that the likability, attractiveness, professionalism, and responsiveness of human hosts create a sense of warmth in interactions, known as social presence. Similar conclusions have been found in studies of virtual spokespersons and AI hosts (Wang et al., 2024). Regarding cuteness, the image of virtual spokespersons is closely related to affinity, with higher cuteness leading to a stronger sense of interacting with a human, triggering quasi-social interactions. AI hosts, resembling virtual spokespersons, are likely to create a more pleasant, intimate, and relaxed viewing experience as their cuteness increases, enhancing the warmth of human-like interactions. Research in the field of artificial intelligence has found that the cute appearance of service robots triggers stronger anthropomorphism, fostering a sense of closeness, social presence, and satisfaction in human-computer interactions (Zhong et al., 2025). As AI hosts are essentially intelligent machines, it is hypothesised that the higher the cuteness of the AI host, the stronger the perceived closeness and warmth in interactions, thus enhancing social presence.

Concerning vitality, previous studies have shown that vitality is associated with the realism, lifelike quality, and naturalness of virtual images. The stronger the perceived realism of the virtual image, the more likely consumers are to feel as if they are interacting with a human, which increases emotional attachment. This implies that the higher the vitality of an AI host, the more likely consumers are to perceive

the AI host as real and experience a stronger sense of intimacy and authenticity in the interaction (Qiqige & Xiaohua, 2024). Additionally, virtual influencers with lifelike appearances and dynamic movements create an authentic and warm social presence, driving consumers to follow the influencer and purchase endorsed brands. Therefore, it is expected that interacting with a highly vibrant AI host will make consumers perceive the AI host as more real, the interaction process smoother, and the sense of intimacy and coexistence with the host stronger, thereby enhancing social presence.

Regarding professionalism, professional interactions by human hosts create a sense of expert-level communication and social presence, which enhances purchase intentions. It is hypothesised that when AI hosts introduce products and respond in a professional manner, the perception of the host's humanoid identity and professional attributes will increase, enhancing the sense of coexistence and trust in human-computer interaction and further strengthening social presence. Professionalism in virtual hosts is also linked to perceived usefulness and satisfaction, indicating that AI hosts' professional interactions not only create practical value but also satisfy emotional needs, providing a sense of authenticity and fulfilment in human-like communication, which boosts social presence. Lastly, responsiveness reflects the depth of interaction by AI hosts. The higher the responsiveness, the more intelligent and flexible the AI host appears. Research indicates that AI hosts who respond promptly and efficiently enhance both coexistence and social presence. It is hypothesised that higher responsiveness would activate positive emotions, triggering a stronger social presence, and that responsiveness in online intelligent service robots is positively correlated with users' feelings of closeness, warmth, comfort, and support, which all contribute to social presence (Wang et al., 2024). As AI hosts share similarities with intelligent service robots, it is expected that higher responsiveness in AI hosts will make consumers more likely to experience positive emotions such as authenticity, intimacy, and satisfaction, further enhancing social presence.

Based on these considerations, it is hypothesised that the cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness of AI hosts significantly enhance social presence in interactions with them.

H3a: Cuteness of the AI host is positively correlated with social presence.

H3b: Vitality of the AI host is positively correlated with social presence.

H3c: Professionalism of the AI host is positively correlated with social presence.

H3d: Responsiveness of the AI host is positively correlated with social presence.

1.2.4. PERCEIVED NOVELTY AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Perceived novelty is a key psychological factor influencing consumers' acceptance of new technologies and their willingness to purchase new products. This sense of novelty plays a crucial role in the marketing of innovative products. Driven by artificial intelligence, AI-hosted live streaming is an innovative marketing approach that creates a novel experience for consumers, leading to more positive attitudes towards the AI host and increased willingness to engage (Zhang et al., 2025). E-commerce livestreaming research has shown that the more novel consumers perceive the AI-hosted sales format, the higher their acceptance, and consequently, their purchase intentions are stronger. This study posits that as consumers engage with AI-hosted livestreaming, the more novel and innovative the technology behind the AI host, the more interesting and unique the interaction will be, fostering a positive attitude toward AI-hosted sales, which will likely translate into increased purchase intentions. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Perceived novelty is positively correlated with purchase intentions.

1.2.5. SOCIAL PRESENCE AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Research has shown that social presence has a positive impact on increasing online purchase intentions (Lu et al., 2016). For example, interactions between consumers and online customer service, as well as with user reviews, can enhance social presence, which in turn boosts purchase intentions. In e-commerce livestreaming, the social presence created by interactions between consumers, human hosts, and fellow viewers also plays a key psychological role in stimulating purchase intentions. This conclusion is equally applicable in the context of AI-hosted sales. A previous study has found that watching AI-hosted livestreamed sales can trigger social presence and enhance purchase intentions (Huang et al., 2023). It is hypothesised that in AI-hosted livestreaming sales, interactions between consumers and the AI host, with different character-

istics, create a real, intimate, and warm emotional experience, which in turn drives consumers to develop purchase intentions. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Social presence is positively correlated with purchase intentions.

1.2.6. MEDIATING EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED NOVELTY AND SOCIAL PRESENCE

Previous research has shown that service innovations can create a sense of novelty, which in turn drives consumers to develop positive attitudes and behavioural intentions. In the context of online shopping, technologies such as virtual reality (VR) create immersive and novel experiences, and this perception of novelty further enhances brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Zhang et al., 2025). AI hosts, with their technology-driven characteristics, provide an innovative and unique livestreaming experience. In the field of journalism and communication, audiences perceive AI-hosted livestreams as a novel and unique format, which increases their willingness to accept the AI host. In e-commerce, the technical design and supporting effects of AI-hosted live streams are even more pronounced. It is hypothesised that AI hosts, with characteristics such as cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness, trigger consumer perception of technological innovation. The more prominent these features are, the more novel the consumer experience becomes, and this sense of novelty, as a form of technological cognition, further enhances consumers' positive attitudes towards the AI host, thereby increasing purchase intentions.

E-commerce research has shown that social presence, triggered by human-computer or interpersonal interactions, plays a key psychological role in influencing online purchase intentions. Characteristics such as the attractiveness and professionalism of e-commerce hosts can enhance purchase intentions by influencing social presence. Social presence mediates the relationship between interactions in livestreaming environments, including bullet comments, product displays, promotional information, and purchase intentions. Even in human-computer interaction settings, social presence is a mechanism that triggers continued usage intention through the anthropomorphic interactions of service robots (Huang et al., 2023). It is hypothesised that AI-hosted livestreaming interactions can also trigger social presence, thereby increasing purchase intentions.

Recent studies support this hypothesis, indicating that the affability and lively interactions of virtual hosts impact consumers' sense of social presence, further enhancing purchase intentions. Based on this, it is proposed that the cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness of AI hosts create a real, warm, and intimate social interaction experience, which satisfies consumers emotionally and encourages them to purchase the products recommended by the AI host. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: Perceived novelty mediates the relationship between AI host characteristics and purchase intentions.

H7: Social presence mediates the relationship between AI host characteristics and purchase intentions.

1.2.7. MODERATING EFFECTS OF CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS

Consumer innovativeness refers to the level at which individuals adopt new things and ideas, and their willingness to try new experiences ahead of others in their social group. Consumer innovativeness can reduce the perceived risk of adopting new technologies and increase the willingness to purchase new technology products, such as green products or even artificial intelligence products (Parvez et al., 2025). AI-hosted livestreaming e-commerce is a form of technological innovation in marketing. High novelty seekers tend to enjoy risks, pursue novelty, and are more sensitive to technologies like AI. Therefore, they perceive interactions with AI hosts as more

engaging and interesting, leading to higher purchase intentions. In contrast, low novelty seekers are less sensitive to new technologies, and their perception of closeness during AI-host interactions is lower, resulting in reduced purchase intentions.

A typical characteristic of innovative consumers is their pursuit of novelty. It is hypothesised that consumers with higher innovativeness will be more interested in AI live streaming as a new technology and more willing to interact with AI hosts. They are likely to perceive novelty and enjoyment in the AI host's characteristics, which will result in higher purchase intentions. Conversely, when consumer innovativeness is low, although AI-hosted live streaming offers a real shopping experience, consumers are more conservative in their attitudes towards this form of interaction (Zhang et al., 2024). Even when AI hosts engage with different features, these consumers are less responsive, leading to lower perceptions of novelty and, consequently, lower purchase intentions.

Moreover, studies have found that high novelty seekers perceive AI hosts' responsiveness more strongly and show higher purchase intentions, while low novelty seekers are less sensitive to AI-hosted live streaming, resulting in lower perceived responsiveness and purchase intentions. Perceived responsiveness is a key precursor to social presence (Huang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Extending this to the current context, it is hypothesised that highly innovative consumers are more likely to feel warmth, closeness, and authenticity in their interactions with AI hosts, thereby enhancing both social presence and purchase intentions. In contrast, when consumers have low innovativeness, their acceptance of AI-

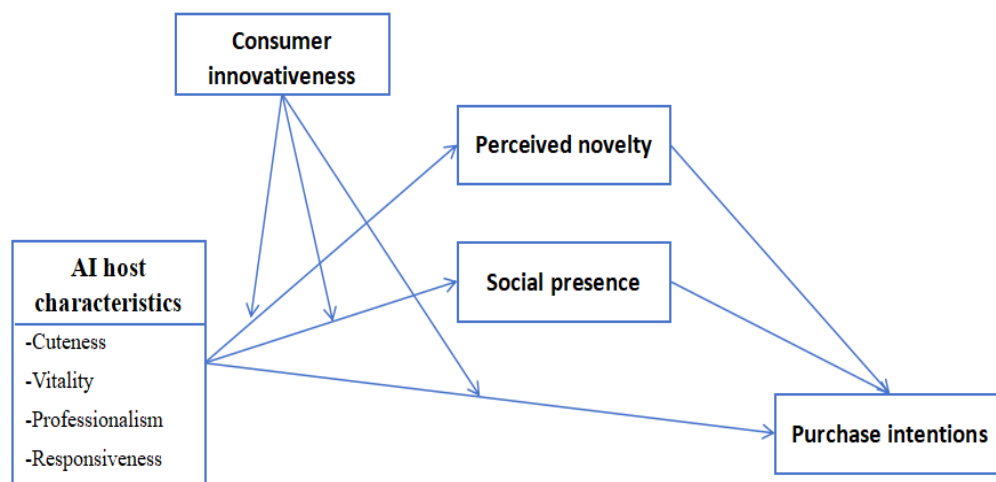


Fig. 1. Research framework

hosted livestreaming e-commerce is slower, and their interest is lower. Even if AI hosts interact with them in a cute, vibrant, or professional manner and respond quickly, the perceived social presence will be weak, leading to lower purchase intentions. Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H8: The positive effect of AI host characteristics on perceived novelty increases with higher consumer innovativeness.

H9: The positive effect of AI host characteristics on social presence increases with higher consumer innovativeness.

H10: The positive effect of AI host characteristics on purchase intentions increases with higher consumer innovativeness.

The designed overall research framework is shown in Figure 1.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1. MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

This study involves eight variables: cuteness, vitality, professionalism, responsiveness, perceived

Tab. 1. Variables and measurement items

VARIABLES	CODE	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	FACTOR LOADING	SOURCES
Cuteness	CU1	The AI host is very cute	0.788	Zou et al., 2024
	CU2	The AI host is very likeable	0.871	
	CU3	The AI host is very popular	0.835	
Vitality	VI1	The AI host is very realistic and lively	0.858	Qiqige & Xiaohua, 2024
	VI2	The AI host is very energetic	0.779	
	VI3	The AI host is very natural	0.872	
Professionalism	PR1	The process of the AI host introducing products is very professional	0.819	Wang et al., 2024
	PR2	The AI host is very familiar with the products it recommends	0.855	
	PR3	The product information conveyed by the AI host is very accurate and objective	0.810	
Responsiveness	RE1	The AI host can communicate with people at any time	0.838	Wang et al., 2024
	RE2	The AI host can quickly respond to viewers' questions	0.849	
	RE3	The AI host's replies are closely related to viewers' questions	0.771	
Perceived novelty	PN1	When watching the AI host livestream, you feel that this format is novel	0.779	Rawool et al., 2024
	PN2	When watching this AI host livestream, you feel very novel	0.722	
	PN3	When watching this AI host livestream, you feel awakened and excited	0.713	
	PN4	When watching this AI host livestream, you experience something different	0.837	
Social presence	SP1	In the AI host's livestream, there is a sense of humanity	0.864	Huang et al., 2023; Zhong et al., 2025
	SP2	In the AI host's livestream, there is a sense of contact with people	0.829	
	SP3	In the AI host's livestream, there is a warm feeling of communication	0.833	
	SP4	In the AI host's livestream, there is a sense of social interaction	0.727	
Purchase intentions	PI1	You are very likely to purchase the product recommended by the AI host	0.851	Zhang et al., 2025
	PI2	If needed, you are willing to purchase the product recommended by the AI host	0.866	
	PI3	You want to purchase the product recommended by the AI host	0.783	
Consumer innovativeness	CI1	You like to be the first to experience new things	0.844	Parvez et al., 2025
	CI2	You are an early adopter of many new products	0.838	
	CI3	You like to purchase new products or adopt new technologies	0.841	

novelty, social presence, consumer innovativeness, and purchase intentions. To ensure the reliability and validity of the measurements, the study adapted mature scales from domestic and international sources and made appropriate modifications based on the research context. All variables were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strongly disagree, and 7 indicates strongly agree. The specific measurement items are listed in Table 1.

2.2. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

This study focuses on consumers who had prior experience watching AI-hosted livestreaming related to Suzhou intangible cultural heritage (ICH) products. In this study, AI hosts refer to AI-generated or digitally operated virtual presenters that introduce products, interact with viewers, and provide product-related information during livestreaming sessions. Respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire based on their previous experience of watching AI hosts promote Suzhou ICH products, rather than based on a purely hypothetical scenario.

The survey was distributed through a link on the Wenjuanxing website (www.wenjuanxing.com), which was shared via social media platforms such as WeChat and QQ. Data were collected using Wenjuanxing's sample pool and targeted promotional channels. Participants were consumers who had watched AI hosts selling ICH products on platforms such as "Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Online Mall," "Suzhou Cultural Product E-commerce Platform," and "Suzhou Craft Live Streaming Sales Platform".

Before the formal survey, a pilot test was conducted with 50 questionnaires. Based on feedback, one measurement item was revised, resulting in the final version of the questionnaire. To ensure that the sample was appropriate for the research purpose, respondents were required to have experience watching AI-hosted livestreaming related to Suzhou ICH products. Questionnaires from respondents without such experience were excluded. In addition, incomplete questionnaires, responses with obvious response patterns, and questionnaires with inconsistent answers were treated as invalid. After these screening procedures, 420 valid responses were retained from 450 collected questionnaires, yielding a valid response rate of 93%. More than 97% of participants answered the questionnaire via mobile devices, while the remainder completed it on desktop computers.

The final sample size was considered adequate for SEM and regression-based mediation and moderation analyses, as it provided sufficient observations for testing the proposed relationships among multiple latent variables.

In terms of regional distribution, the sample is primarily concentrated in Suzhou and its surrounding areas, especially among individuals familiar with or experienced in purchasing Suzhou ICH products. However, the sample size from other provinces and cities is relatively small. In terms of urban distribution, the majority of respondents come from Suzhou and first- and second-tier cities, while fourth- and fifth-tier cities are underrepresented. Gender-wise, 41.9% of respondents were male, and 58.1% were female. In terms of age, 68.1% of respondents were aged 18-30, 29.3% were aged 31-45, and 2.6% were over 45 years old. Regarding income, 10% of respondents had a monthly income below 3,000 yuan, 28.6% had an income between CNY 3,000 and 6,000, 46.4% had an income between CNY 6,000 and 9,000, and 15% had a monthly income above CNY 9,000. In terms of education, 21.9% of respondents had an associate degree or lower, 37.1% had a bachelor's degree, 31.7% had a master's degree, and 9.3% had a graduate degree or higher. These characteristics align with the typical profile of consumers engaging in livestream shopping with virtual hosts, who tend to be younger, predominantly female, well-educated, and have moderate to high income levels, with a strong interest in Suzhou's intangible cultural heritage products. This sample specifically targets consumers who engage with AI-hosted livestreaming for Suzhou ICH products.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. COMMON METHOD BIAS TEST

To mitigate common method bias, this study implemented procedural and statistical remedies. Procedurally, the research adapted established scales from diverse sources and employed anonymous data collection while concealing the true research purpose during the investigation. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was first conducted, revealing that the first factor accounted for 28.87% of the total variance, which is below the critical threshold of 40%. Furthermore, the marker variable technique was applied for additional verification. The results showed a non-significant difference ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.1$, $p > 0.05$) between

the constrained model ($\chi^2 = 105.176$, $df = 77$) and the baseline model ($\chi^2 = 105.255$, $df = 81$). Collectively, these findings indicate that common method bias is not a serious concern in this study.

3.2. MODEL FIT ANALYSIS

In structural equation modelling (SEM), model fit testing serves as a critical step for evaluating the degree of alignment between theoretical models and observed data (Fan et al., 2016). By examining various fit indices, one can determine whether the constructed theoretical model effectively reflects the actual structure of the data, thereby ensuring the reliability of subsequent path analysis and hypothesis testing results.

To assess the alignment between the theoretical model and the observed data, this study employed SEM using Amos 23.0. Multiple fit indices were examined to evaluate the overall model adequacy. As summarised in Table 2, all fit indices meet the accepted thresholds, indicating that the research model exhibits an ideal goodness-of-fit.

The goodness-of-fit analysis of the SEM demonstrates satisfactory results across all key indices. The χ^2/df ratio of 2.08 falls well below the threshold of 3.00, while the RMSEA value of 0.047 meets the stringent criterion of <0.050 , indicating adequate

approximate fit. Among the relative fit indices, both CFI (0.947) and TLI (0.939) substantially exceed the 0.900 benchmark, reflecting strong alignment between the model and the observed covariance structure. Although the GFI (0.916) and IFI (0.932) values marginally surpass the critical value, when considered alongside the other robust indicators, the collective evidence supports the overall reasonableness of the model specification. These comprehensive results confirm that the theoretical framework effectively corresponds with the empirical data, thereby establishing a solid foundation for subsequent path analysis.

3.3. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TESTING OF THE SCALES

This study assessed the reliability and validity of the scales using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The overall reliability of the measurement scales was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α). The alpha value for the entire scale was found to be 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Additionally, as shown in Table 3, all individual variables have α values exceeding the threshold of 0.70, which suggests that each variable has acceptable internal consistency. The

Tab. 2. SEM fit index

FIT INDEX	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	NFI
Result	2.08	0.047	0.916	0.932	0.947	0.939	0.928
Criterion	<3.00	<0.050	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900

Tab. 3. Mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficients, and reliability of variables

VARIABLE	α	MEAN	AVE	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. CU	0.83	5.32	0.71	0.83	0.82							
2. VI	0.81	5.11	0.69	0.81	0.33**	0.81						
3. PR	0.85	4.96	0.68	0.85	0.31**	0.35**	0.83					
4. RE	0.83	5.27	0.69	0.84	0.35**	0.47***	0.36**	0.80				
5. PN	0.87	5.21	0.59	0.83	0.40***	0.36**	0.29**	0.34**	0.77			
6. SP	0.88	4.79	0.63	0.89	0.43***	0.33**	0.43***	0.49***	0.38**	0.80		
7. PI	0.85	5.10	0.62	0.86	0.39**	0.31**	0.38**	0.37**	0.38**	0.38**	0.82	
8. CI	0.86	4.93	0.71	0.85	0.32**	0.29**	0.27**	0.30**	0.41**	0.37**	0.34**	0.83

Notes: The bold values on the diagonal represent the square root of the AVE. The values below the diagonal represent the correlation coefficients between the variables. The significance levels for the correlation coefficients are indicated as follows: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

composite reliability (CR) values for each construct also exceed the recommended value of 0.70, further confirming the reliability of the scales. Regarding validity, all variables had AVE values greater than 0.50, and the square roots of the AVE values were higher than the correlations between variables, confirming both convergent and discriminant validity (Fitzner, 2007). Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between most variables, indicating reasonable relationships between them. For instance, Cuteness was significantly correlated with Social Presence and Purchase Intention, supporting the expected associations between the variables. In summary, the scales demonstrated strong reliability and validity.

3.4. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Previous studies have indicated significant differences in sensory experiences and acceptance intentions towards AI hosts based on variables such as gender, education, age, and income (Kim et al., 2024; Wen & Li, 2025). The attractiveness of the AI host, the familiarity with the host, and the product's appeal have been shown to significantly affect purchase intentions. Moreover, the match between the host and the product could potentially interfere with the impact of other characteristics on purchase intentions. To minimise the influence of these factors, they were included as control variables in the analysis.

In this study, purchase intention was set as the dependent variable, while the four characteristics of the AI host served as independent variables. Regression analysis was performed using SPSS 26.0, and the results are shown in Table 4. As indicated in model M1, the effects of Cuteness ($\beta=0.20$, $p<0.001$), Vitality ($\beta=0.18$, $p<0.001$), Professionalism ($\beta=0.15$, $p<0.001$), and Responsiveness ($\beta=0.20$, $p<0.001$) on purchase intention were all significant. These results support hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d.

This study employed stepwise regression analysis to verify the mediating effects of Perceived Novelty and Social Presence. From Model M2, it is evident that Cuteness ($\beta=0.26$, $p<0.001$), Vitality ($\beta=0.29$, $p<0.001$), Professionalism ($\beta=0.10$, $p<0.01$), and Responsiveness ($\beta=0.12$, $p<0.01$) all significantly influence Perceived Novelty. These results provide support for hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, and H2d.

Model M3 shows that Perceived Novelty has a significant effect on Purchase Intention ($\beta=0.43$, $p<0.001$), confirming hypothesis H4. After adding

Perceived Novelty as a mediator, it continues to significantly affect Purchase Intention ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$), while Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, and Responsiveness still show significant effects on Purchase Intention, with effect sizes of 0.14, 0.13, 0.13, and 0.17, respectively (M4). This suggests that Perceived Novelty partially mediates the relationship between the AI host characteristics (Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, Responsiveness) and Purchase Intention, thereby supporting hypothesis H6.

Model M5 reveals that Cuteness ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$), Vitality ($\beta=0.17$, $p<0.001$), Professionalism ($\beta=0.10$, $p<0.05$), and Responsiveness ($\beta=0.33$, $p<0.001$) all significantly influence Social Presence, supporting hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d. Model M6 further shows that Social Presence has a significant impact on Purchase Intention ($\beta=0.38$, $p<0.001$), confirming hypothesis H5. After adding Social Presence as a mediator, its effect on Purchase Intention remains significant ($\beta=0.17$, $p<0.001$), and the effects of Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, and Responsiveness on Purchase Intention remain significant, with effect sizes of 0.16, 0.15, 0.13, and 0.14, respectively (M7). These findings indicate that Social Presence partially mediates the relationship between the AI host characteristics and Purchase Intention, supporting hypothesis H7.

Moreover, this study used Consumer Innovativeness as a moderating variable and constructed interaction terms between Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, Responsiveness, and Consumer Innovativeness by centring the variables. The moderating effects were tested using regression analysis, as shown in Table 4.

The results indicate that the moderating role of consumer innovativeness is selective. In Model M8, consumer innovativeness significantly strengthens the effects of cuteness, vitality, and responsiveness on perceived novelty, while the interaction between professionalism and consumer innovativeness is not significant. Therefore, H8 is partially supported.

In Model M9, consumer innovativeness significantly strengthens the effects of vitality and responsiveness on social presence, whereas the moderating effects involving cuteness and professionalism are not significant. Therefore, H9 is partially supported.

In Model M10, consumer innovativeness significantly strengthens the effects of vitality and responsiveness on purchase intention. However, it does not significantly moderate the effects of cuteness or professionalism on purchase intention. Therefore, H10 is partially supported. Overall, consumer innovative-

Tab. 4. Results of regression analysis

DV		PURCHASE INTENTIONS						PERCEIVED NOVELTY		SOCIAL PRESENCE	
MODELS		M1	M3	M4	M6	M7	M10	M2	M8	M5	M9
CONSTANT		1.07	3.09 ***	1.53 **	0.08	0.89	4.79 ***	1.30	4.70 ***	0.95	5.18 ***
CV	Gender	-0.05	-0.03	0.1	-0.05	-0.03	-0.03	-0.1	-0.01	-0.14	-0.13
	Age	0.04	-0.01	-0.22	0.05	0.05	0.08	-0.04	0.04	0.05	0.02
	Education	-0.08	-0.09	0.05	-0.08	-0.07	-0.09	0.01	-0.01	-0.1	-0.02
	Income	0.05	0.01	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.10	0.07	-0.01	-0.03
	Streamer Familiarity	-0.03	-0.03		-0.04	-0.03	-0.04	0.02	0.01	-0.01	-0.01
	Streamer Attractiveness	-0.02	-0.01		-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02
	Product Attractiveness	0.075 **	0.05		0.07	0.06	0.07 **	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.05
	Streamer-Product Fit	0.08	0.06		0.08	0.07	0.08	0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.01
IV	Cuteness	0.20 ***		0.14 **		0.16 **	0.14 **	0.26 ***	0.23 ***	0.22 ***	0.17 ***
	Vitality	0.18 ***		0.13 **		0.15 **	0.20 ***	0.29***	0.19 ***	0.17 ***	0.15 ***
	Professionalism	0.15 ***		0.13 **		0.13 **	0.12 **	0.10 **	0.07 *	0.10 *	0.08 *
	Responsiveness	0.20 ***		0.17 **		0.14 **	0.20 ***	0.12 **	0.11 **	0.33 ***	0.36 ***
MEV	Perceived Novelty		0.43 **	0.22 ***							
	Social Presence				0.38 ***	0.17 **					
MOV	Consumer Innova- tiveness						0.16 ***		0.21 ***		0.18 ***
IT	Innovativeness × Cuteness						0.07 *		0.04 *		0.04
	Innovativeness × Vitality						0.08 **		0.09 ***		0.05 *
	Innovativeness × Professionalism						-0.01		-0.01		-0.06
	Innovativeness × Responsiveness						0.07 **		0.07 **		0.11 ***
R^2		0.24	0.16	0.27	0.16	0.27	0.31	0.26	0.37	0.32	0.40
Adjusted R^2		0.22	0.14	0.25	0.15	0.24	0.28	0.24	0.35	0.30	0.37
F-value		12.91 ***	8.66 ***	11.78 ***	8.72 **	11.36 ***	10.69 ***	12.08 ***	14.13 ***	15.90 ***	15.51 ***

Notes: DV = Dependent Variable, M = Model, CV = Control Variable, IV = Independent Variable, MEV = Mediating Variable, MOV = Moderating Variable, IT = Interaction Terms. The significance levels for the correlation coefficients are indicated as follows: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

ness mainly enhances consumers' responses to the more vivid and interactive features of AI hosts, rather than uniformly strengthening the effects of all AI host characteristics.

To further validate the robustness of the study's findings, a Bootstrapping procedure was conducted to test the hypotheses, with 5,000 samples and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. Model 4 was chosen to test the mediating effects, as shown in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, the direct effects of Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, and Responsiveness on Purchase Intention are 0.19, 0.17, 0.18, and 0.19, respectively, with confidence intervals that do not include zero, indicating that these four characteristics of the AI host have a significant direct impact on Purchase Intention. Moreover, the indirect effects of Perceived Novelty in the paths from Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, and Responsiveness to Purchase

Intention are 0.09, 0.08, 0.05, and 0.07, respectively, with confidence intervals that do not include zero. This confirms that Perceived Novelty plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between the AI host's characteristics and Purchase Intention.

Similarly, Social Presence also plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between Cuteness, Vitality, Professionalism, Responsiveness, and Purchase Intention. The indirect effects are 0.08, 0.07, 0.06, and 0.08, respectively, with confidence intervals that do not include 0, indicating that Social Presence has a stable and significant mediating effect in these relationships.

As shown in Table 6, the results of the moderating effect analysis reveal that Consumer Innovativeness significantly enhances the positive impacts of Vitality and Responsiveness on Perceived Novelty, Social Presence, and Purchase Intention, with effect

Tab. 5. Path analysis results for direct and mediating effects

EFFECT TYPE	PATH	EFFECT VALUE	STD. ERROR	T	P	CI LOWER LIMIT	CI UPPER LIMIT
Direct Effects	Cuteness → Purchase Intentions	0.19	0.05	3.67	0.01	0.09	0.29
	Vitality → Purchase Intentions	0.17	0.05	3.35	0.01	0.07	0.27
	Professionalism → Purchase Intentions	0.18	0.04	3.97	0.00	0.08	0.25
	Responsiveness → Purchase Intentions	0.19	0.05	3.84	0.00	0.09	0.29
Mediating Effects	Cuteness → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.09	0.02	3.41	0.00	0.05	0.15
	Cuteness → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.08	0.02	2.13	0.01	0.04	0.14
	Vitality → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.08	0.02	2.99	0.00	0.04	0.13
	Vitality → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.07	0.02	3.55	0.00	0.03	0.12
	Professionalism → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.05	0.02	1.99	0.04	0.03	0.09
	Professionalism → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.06	0.01	2.83	0.01	0.03	0.1
	Responsiveness → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intention	0.07	0.02	2.46	0.01	0.04	0.12
	Responsiveness → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.08	0.03	2.77	0.01	0.03	0.14

Note: CI = Confidence Interval.

Tab. 6. Path analysis results for moderating effects

EFFECT TYPE	PATH	EFFECT VALUE	STD. ERROR	T	P	CI LOWER LIMIT	CI UPPER LIMIT
Moderating Effects	Cuteness × Innovativeness → Perceived Novelty	0.06	0.03	2.27	0.02	0.01	0.11
	Cuteness × Innovativeness → Social Presence	0.05	0.03	1.59	0.11	-0.01	0.11
	Vitality × Innovativeness → Perceived Novelty	0.12	0.02	4.87	0.01	0.07	0.17
	Vitality × Innovativeness → Social Presence	0.09	0.03	2.98	0.01	0.03	0.14
	Professionalism × Innovativeness → Perceived Novelty	0.03	0.02	1.19	0.23	-0.02	0.07
	Professionalism × Innovativeness → Social Presence	-0.02	0.03	-0.69	0.49	-0.07	0.03
	Responsiveness × Innovativeness → Perceived Novelty	0.10	0.02	4.48	0.01	0.06	0.03
	Responsiveness × Innovativeness → Social Presence	0.12	0.02	4.96	0.01	0.07	0.17
	Cuteness × Innovativeness → Purchase Intentions	-0.29	0.03	-0.96	0.34	-0.09	0.03
	Vitality × Innovativeness → Purchase Intentions	0.10	0.03	3.46	0.01	0.04	0.16
	Professionalism × Innovativeness → Purchase Intentions	-0.01	0.02	-0.08	0.94	-0.05	0.05
	Responsiveness × Innovativeness → Purchase Intentions	0.08	0.03	3.06	0.01	0.03	0.13

Note: CI = Confidence Interval.

Tab. 7. Simple slope analysis results for moderating effects

EFFECT TYPE	PATH	INDICATOR	EFFECT VALUE	STD. ERROR	T	P	CI LOWER LIMIT	CI UPPER LIMIT
Simple Slope Effects	Cuteness → Perceived Novelty	M+1SD	0.42	0.07	6.19	0.00	0.28	0.55
		M-1SD	0.17	0.06	4.37	0.06	-0.05	0.4
	Cuteness → Social Presence	M+1SD	0.43	0.08	5.65	0.00	0.28	0.58
		M-1SD	0.25	0.07	3.54	0.00	0.11	0.39
	Cuteness → Purchase Intentions	M+1SD	0.16	0.07	2.23	0.03	0.02	0.29
		M-1SD	0.23	0.07	3.44	0.00	0.09	0.36
	Vitality → Perceived Novelty	M+1SD	0.35	0.07	4.99	0.00	0.21	0.49
		M-1SD	0.25	0.06	3.89	0.13	-0.02	0.58
	Vitality → Social Presence	M+1SD	0.3	0.08	3.82	0.00	0.15	0.46
		M-1SD	0.24	0.07	3.86	0.06	-0.04	0.53
	Vitality → Purchase Intentions	M+1SD	0.33	0.06	1.6	0.00	0.01	0.67
		M-1SD	0.12	0.07	5.07	0.11	-0.02	0.26
	Professionalism → Perceived Novelty	M+1SD	0.12	0.06	1.89	0.06	-0.01	0.24
		M-1SD	0.1	0.05	1.8	0.07	-0.01	0.21
	Professionalism → Social Presence	M+1SD	0.15	0.07	2.16	0.03	0.01	0.29
		M-1SD	0.05	0.06	0.8	0.02	0.03	0.07
	Professionalism → Purchase Intentions	M+1SD	0.09	0.06	1.39	0.16	-0.04	0.21
		M-1SD	0.06	0.06	1.04	0.30	-0.05	0.17
	Responsiveness → Perceived Novelty	M+1SD	0.13	0.07	1.79	0.00	0.01	0.28
		M-1SD	0.21	0.06	3.48	0.06	-0.03	0.45
	Responsiveness → Social Presence	M+1SD	0.46	0.08	6.05	0.00	0.31	0.61
		M-1SD	0.27	0.07	5.75	0.12	-0.05	0.59
	Responsiveness → Purchase Intentions	M+1SD	0.13	0.07	1.8	0.00	0.01	0.25
		M-1SD	0.23	0.06	3.67	0.07	-0.02	0.45

Note: CI = Confidence Interval. M+1SD and M-1SD represent high and low levels of the moderating variable (Consumer Innovativeness), respectively.

values of 0.12, 0.10, 0.09, 0.12, 0.10, and 0.08, respectively, and confidence intervals that do not contain 0. This suggests that as the level of Consumer Innovativeness increases, AI hosts with high levels of Vitality and Responsiveness significantly enhance consumers' perceptions of novelty and Social Presence, thereby increasing Purchase Intention. At the same time, Consumer Innovativeness significantly strengthens the effect of Cuteness on Perceived Novelty (effect value = 0.06), indicating that consumers with higher Innovativeness perceive greater novelty when watching AI hosts with a cute image. However, the perception of Social Presence does not differ from that of consumers with lower Innovativeness. In conclusion,

Consumer Innovativeness plays a significant moderating role in these relationships.

Further, a simple slope analysis was conducted (Table 7). For the high innovativeness group, the simple slope for Cuteness influencing Perceived Novelty is 0.42 ($t = 6.19$, $p < 0.01$), which is significant. In contrast, for the low innovativeness group, the simple slope for Cuteness influencing Perceived Novelty is 0.17 ($t = 4.37$, $p > 0.05$), but not significant. This indicates that Consumer Innovativeness moderates the relationship between Cuteness and Perceived Novelty.

Similarly, for the high innovativeness group, the simple slopes for Cuteness influencing Social Pres-

Tab. 8. Analysis results of moderated mediating effects

EFFECT TYPE	PATH	EFFECT VALUE	STD. ERROR	CI LOWER LIMIT	CI UPPER LIMIT
Moderated Mediation Effect	Cuteness → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03
	Cuteness → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.02
	Vitality → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.05
	Vitality → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04
	Professionalism → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.02
	Professionalism → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01
	Responsiveness → Perceived Novelty → Purchase Intentions	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.04
	Responsiveness → Social Presence → Purchase Intentions	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.05

Note: CI = Confidence Interval.

ence and Purchase Intention are 0.43 ($t = 5.65$, $p < 0.01$) and 0.16 ($t = 2.23$, $p < 0.05$), both of which are significant. For the low innovativeness group, the simple slopes for Cuteness influencing Social Presence and Purchase Intention are 0.25 ($t = 3.54$, $p < 0.01$) and 0.23 ($t = 3.44$, $p < 0.01$), both of which are also significant. These results suggest that Consumer Innovativeness does not moderate the relationships between Cuteness and Social Presence, nor between Cuteness and Purchase Intention.

In the high innovativeness group, the simple slope of vitality affecting perceived novelty was 0.35 ($t=4.99$, $p < 0.01$) and significant, while in the low innovativeness group, the simple slope was 0.25 ($t=3.89$, $p > 0.05$), but this positive predictive effect was not significant, indicating that innovativeness plays a positive moderating role in the relationship between vitality and perceived novelty. Similarly, in the high innovativeness group, the simple slope of vitality affecting social presence was 0.30 ($t=3.82$, $p < 0.01$) and significant, while in the low innovativeness group, the simple slope was 0.24 ($t=3.86$, $p > 0.05$) and not significant, indicating that innovativeness plays a positive moderating role in the relationship between vitality and social presence. Likewise, in the high innovativeness group, the simple slope of vitality affecting purchase intention was 0.33 ($t=1.60$, $p < 0.01$) and significant, while in the low innovativeness group, the simple slope was 0.12 ($t=5.07$, $p > 0.05$) and not significant, indicating that innovativeness also plays a moderating role in the relationship between vitality and purchase intention.

In the high innovativeness group, the simple slopes of professionalism affecting perceived novelty, social presence, and purchase intention were 0.12 ($t=1.89$, $p > 0.05$, not significant), 0.15 ($t=2.16$, $p < 0.05$, significant), and 0.09 ($t=1.39$, $p > 0.05$, not

significant), respectively; in the low innovativeness group, the corresponding simple slopes were 0.10 ($t=1.80$, $p > 0.05$, not significant), 0.05 ($t=0.80$, $p < 0.05$, significant), and 0.06 ($t=1.04$, $p > 0.05$, not significant). This indicates that at different levels of innovativeness, the predictive effects of professionalism on perceived novelty and purchase intention were consistently non-significant, but its predictive effect on social presence was consistently significant. Therefore, innovativeness did not play a moderating role in the relationships between professionalism and perceived novelty, social presence, or purchase intention.

Finally, in the high innovativeness group, the simple slope of responsiveness affecting perceived novelty was 0.13 ($t=1.79$, $p < 0.01$) and significant, while in the low innovativeness group, the simple slope of responsiveness affecting perceived novelty was 0.21 ($t=3.48$, $p > 0.05$), and this positive predictive effect was not significant at this level. This indicates that as innovativeness increases, the positive predictive effect of responsiveness on perceived novelty gradually strengthens. Similarly, in the high innovativeness group, the simple slope of responsiveness affecting social presence was 0.46 ($t=6.05$, $p < 0.01$) and significant, while in the low innovativeness group, the simple slope was 0.27 ($t=5.75$, $p > 0.05$) and not significant, which also indicates that innovativeness plays a positive moderating role in the relationship between responsiveness and social presence. Likewise, in the high innovativeness group, the simple slope of responsiveness affecting purchase intention was 0.13 ($t=1.80$, $p < 0.01$) and significant, while in the low innovativeness group, the simple slope of responsiveness affecting purchase intention was 0.23 ($t=3.67$, $p > 0.05$) and not significant, indicating that innovativeness also plays a moderating

role in the relationship between responsiveness and purchase intention.

Based on the analysis using Model 8 to examine the moderated mediation effects, the results are presented in Table 8. As consumer innovativeness increases, the mediating effect of perceived novelty in the relationships between cuteness, vitality, responsiveness and purchase intention is strengthened. However, in the relationship between professionalism and purchase intention, the mediating effect of perceived novelty does not change significantly with the increase in innovativeness. Similarly, as consumer innovativeness increases, the mediating role of social presence in the relationships between vitality, responsiveness and purchase intention is also enhanced. In contrast, for the relationships between cuteness, professionalism and purchase intention, the mediating effect of social presence does not significantly improve with the increase in innovativeness.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The findings of this study provide a clearer understanding of how AI host characteristics influence consumers' purchase intentions in livestreaming e-commerce. In the context of Suzhou ICH products, AI hosts are not only product presenters but also technology-enabled communicators that shape consumers' perceptions of cultural products. The results show that cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness have significant positive effects on purchase intentions. These findings suggest that consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by AI hosts is influenced by both the external appeal of the AI host and the quality of its interaction and product presentation.

Specifically, cuteness makes AI hosts more likeable and approachable, which helps attract consumers' attention and improves their attitudes towards the products being recommended. Vitality, reflected in the AI host's lively, realistic, and natural presentation, creates a fresher and more immersive viewing experience, thereby increasing consumers' willingness to purchase (Wang et al., 2024). Professionalism also plays an important role because ICH products often require an accurate explanation of craftsmanship, cultural background, and product value. When AI hosts provide objective and professional information, consumers are more likely to perceive them as trustworthy and useful in the purchase decision-making process. In addition, responsiveness strengthens consumers' perception

that the AI host is intelligent and interactive. Timely and relevant responses can satisfy utilitarian and emotional needs, leading to more positive attitudes towards the AI host and stronger purchase intentions (Gupta et al., 2025).

The mediating results further show that perceived novelty and social presence are important mechanisms linking AI host characteristics to purchase intentions. Cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness make AI-hosted live streaming appear more innovative, interesting, and different from traditional forms of online product promotion. This perceived novelty enhances consumers' positive attitudes toward the AI host and then increases their willingness to purchase. At the same time, AI hosts also create a sense of human-like interaction. Their anthropomorphic presentation and interactive features can evoke feelings of warmth, proximity, and authenticity during the viewing process (Ligeiro et al., 2024). As the AI host becomes cuter, more vivid, more professional, and more responsive, consumers are more likely to experience social presence, which further promotes purchase intentions (Wang et al., 2024). These findings indicate that AI hosts influence consumers not only through technological novelty but also through socially meaningful interaction.

The moderating role of consumer innovativeness provides a more nuanced explanation of these relationships. The results show that consumer innovativeness strengthens the positive effects of AI host vitality and responsiveness on perceived novelty, social presence, and purchase intentions. This may be because vitality is closely related to realism and liveliness, which makes AI hosts appear more natural and approachable (Qiqige & Xiaohua, 2024). Consumers with higher innovativeness are more willing to accept new technologies and are therefore more likely to respond positively to vivid and realistic AI hosts. Similarly, responsiveness reflects the AI host's ability to interact with consumers in a timely and effective way. Highly innovative consumers may perceive such responsiveness as evidence of intelligence and technological advancement, which increases their perceived novelty, social presence, and purchase intentions.

However, consumer innovativeness does not significantly moderate all relationships. In particular, its moderating effect on the relationship between professionalism and perceived novelty or social presence is not significant. This may be because professionalism is a basic and widely valued quality in livestreaming commerce. Regardless of whether consumers are highly innovative, accurate product information and

reliable explanations remain important for evaluating ICH products. Similarly, consumer innovativeness does not significantly moderate the effect of cuteness on purchase intentions. Cuteness is mainly an external and affective feature of the AI host, and its attention-attracting effect may remain relatively stable across consumers with different levels of innovativeness. For professionalism, the current level of AI host product explanation may also be relatively standardised, which limits differences in perceived value among consumers with different levels of innovativeness (Zhang et al., 2025).

This study contributes to the literature on AI hosts and livestreaming e-commerce by examining their role in the specific context of Suzhou ICH product promotion. Previous research has explored the effects of sociality, intelligence, likability, and interaction in AI-based or virtual-host commerce. Building on this literature, the present study systematically examines four individual characteristics of AI hosts - cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness - and confirms their positive influence on consumer purchase intentions. By focusing on ICH products, this study also extends existing research beyond general consumer goods and shows that AI hosts can be used to promote culturally meaningful products. In this context, AI hosts need to do more than display products; they should also help communicate the cultural value, craftsmanship, and symbolic meaning of Suzhou's ICH products.

Another contribution of this study lies in its integration of technological and social interaction perspectives. Earlier studies on livestreaming commerce have often emphasised social presence, satisfaction, or interaction quality, while research on AI-related marketing has highlighted technological novelty and intelligence. This study combines these two perspectives by showing that perceived novelty and social presence both mediate the effects of AI host characteristics on purchase intentions (Zhu et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2024). Perceived novelty reflects consumers' response to the technological features of AI-hosted live streaming, whereas social presence reflects the warmth and human-like quality of the interaction. This dual perspective enriches the understanding of AI-driven live commerce and helps explain how AI hosts can make ICH products more attractive to modern consumers while preserving their cultural significance.

The findings also have practical implications for e-commerce platforms promoting Suzhou ICH products. Platforms should pay attention to the design of AI hosts' appearance, behaviour, and interaction style. AI hosts with cuteness and vitality can make traditional

cultural products feel more accessible and appealing, especially to younger consumers. At the same time, AI hosts should reflect the cultural identity of Suzhou ICH products through appropriate visual design, language style, and storytelling. By highlighting charm, warmth, creativity, and cultural meaning, AI hosts can help consumers form a stronger emotional connection with ICH products.

In addition, platforms should improve the professionalism and responsiveness of AI hosts. Since many consumers may not be familiar with the craftsmanship, history, or symbolic value of ICH products, AI hosts should provide clear, accurate, and detailed product information. They should also respond to consumers' questions in a friendly and timely manner so that viewers feel supported during the livestreaming process. Such interaction can encourage quasi-social relationships, enhance trust, and improve the overall shopping experience.

Finally, platforms should consider consumer differences when designing AI-hosted marketing strategies. For consumers with higher innovativeness, AI hosts can emphasise vivid presentation, real-time interaction, and technology-enabled novelty. These consumers are more likely to respond positively to lively and responsive AI hosts. For consumers with lower innovativeness, platforms may need to place greater emphasis on credibility, product authenticity, and cultural explanation. In this way, AI-hosted live streaming can help make Suzhou ICH products more accessible to a wider consumer group while maintaining their authenticity and cultural significance.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how AI host characteristics influence consumers' purchase intentions towards Suzhou ICH products in livestreaming e-commerce. The findings show that cuteness, vitality, professionalism, and responsiveness all contribute to purchase intention, but they operate through both technology-related and social-interaction mechanisms. Perceived novelty captures consumers' cognitive response to the technological novelty of AI-hosted livestreaming, while social presence reflects the human-like and relational experience generated through consumer-AI interaction. Together, these two mechanisms explain why AI hosts can be effective in promoting culturally meaningful products such as Suzhou ICH products.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. First, the research primarily focuses on Guangzhou,

which, while representative of rapidly urbanising cities, may limit the generalisability of the findings to other cities with differing tourism infrastructures, regulatory environments, or technological capabilities. Second, the proposed model remains theoretical, and its practical implementation has not yet been empirically tested, leaving room for uncertainty regarding its scalability and adaptability in real-world scenarios. Lastly, the analysis of external influencing factors, such as social acceptance of drones and cost-benefit trade-offs, requires further empirical validation to understand their broader implications in diverse urban contexts.

Future research may build on this study by examining AI-hosted ICH product promotion in broader cultural and market contexts. Since the present study focuses on Suzhou ICH products, it would be meaningful to investigate whether consumers in other regions or cultural backgrounds respond to AI hosts in similar ways. Cross-cultural comparison is particularly important because consumers' understanding of heritage products, authenticity, and human-AI interaction may vary across cultural settings.

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