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The Self Control Paradox: Social Media Marketing and Impulsive Buying Tendency among Working Mothers

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Abstract

Purpose: This study addresses that gap among working mothers in the Manado area of Indonesia by examining how perceived social media marketing activities relate to impulsive buying tendency and whether self-control helps explain that relationship.

Methodology: Guided by the stimulus organism response framework.A quantitative approach was adopted, and a questionnaire-based survey was used working mothers who use social media in the Manado area of indonesia. A total of 205 responses were received, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) were conducted using Smart-PLS.

Results: Perceived social media marketing activities were not significantly associated with impulsive buying tendency. Their associations with self-control and impulsive buying tendency were positive, contrary to the hypothesized negative relationships. Although the indirect effect through self-control was statistically significant, its direction did not support the proposed explanation that social media marketing weakens self-control and subsequently increases impulsive buying tendency.

Conclusions: Perceived social media marketing activities were not significantly related to impulsive buying tendency. The positive associations between marketing activities, self-control, and impulsive buying tendency contradicted the hypothesized negative relationships, providing no support for the explanation that marketing weakens self-control and consequently increases impulsive buying tendency.

Limitations: The survey design cannot establish the order or causes of the observed relationships.

Contributions: Theoretically, this study extends the S-O-R framework by showing that self-control does not necessarily function as a negative regulatory mechanism between social media marketing and impulsive buying tendency. Practically, the findings highlight the need to distinguish perceived marketing activities from actual advertising exposure and purchasing behavior.

Keywords: *Impulsive Buying Tendency, Self-Control, Social Media Marketing, S-O-R Framework, Working Mothers*

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1. Introduction

Social media brings product information, entertainment, interpersonal interaction, and purchasing opportunities into the same digital environment. Its marketing activities are commonly assessed through consumers' perceptions of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and electronic word of mouth (Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018). Research across educational institutions, festivals, online retail, and restaurants has linked perceived social media marketing to brand awareness, image, attitude, gestalt, loyalty, and purchase intention (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Marhareita et al., 2022; Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023; Queenditya et al., 2024; Wantah & Mandagi, 2024; Waworuntu et al., 2022). These findings show that social media marketing relates to consumer evaluations and decisions, but they do not establish whether it is associated with a tendency to buy impulsively.

Impulsive buying tendency is an inclination toward spontaneous purchases made with limited deliberation. It differs from an immediate buying urge and from a completed purchase, even though these constructs can be related (Agung et al., 2021; Kwon & Ahn, 2021). In digital settings, social-commerce features, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth have been associated with impulsive buying tendency (Das et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). Research on short-video commerce also links advertising characteristics with impulsive buying intentions through consumers' perceptions of entertainment and trust (Cui et al., 2025). These studies make impulse-related consumption a relevant outcome for social media marketing research while underscoring the need to distinguish a self-reported tendency from actual purchasing behavior.

The relationship between marketing cues and impulse-related outcomes may involve internal consumer processes. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework provides a basis for examining these processes by relating environmental stimuli to internal responses and subsequent outcomes. Social media marketing studies have used this approach to investigate how information and interaction quality relate to social presence and purchase intention (Jiang et al., 2024). Research on digital impulse buying has likewise examined psychological responses between commercial cues and buying outcomes (Cui et al., 2025; Lo et al., 2022). The internal construct examined in the present study is self-control.

Self-control concerns the regulation of immediate desires in line with broader goals. Consumer research distinguishes relatively general self-control from temporary changes in regulatory capacity (Francke & Carrete, 2023). Studies have linked self-control to impulsive buying tendency and resistance to impulse buying (Baršytė & Fennis, 2025; Kakkar, Dugar, & Gupta, 2022). Its role in response to marketing cues is less straightforward. Research on media-influenced panic buying found negative associations between self-regulation and some forms of media influence but a positive association with media content (Anisimova, Billore, & Kitchen, 2025). Experimental research on online food delivery similarly suggests that self-control can limit some responses to promotions without eliminating all impulse-related responses (Liu, Huang, & Minamikawa, 2026). Together, these findings warrant testing the direction and extent of self-control's association with perceived marketing activities rather than assuming that marketing necessarily weakens it.

The distinction between general self-control and a temporary regulatory state is particularly important for the present study. Its cross-sectional survey measures self-reported self-control, not changes in self-control before and after marketing exposure. Consequently, an association between perceived social media marketing activities and self-control cannot demonstrate that marketing depletes a psychological resource. Likewise, a statistical indirect effect cannot establish that marketing first changes self-control and then changes impulsive buying tendency. Working mothers provide the setting for examining these relationships because employment, caregiving, digital media use, and household consumption can coexist in their daily lives. This context does not imply that working mothers have lower self-control or are uniformly susceptible to marketing. The study also does not measure role overload, work-family conflict, cognitive load, or time scarcity. These circumstances therefore define the study's context rather than serve as tested explanations for its findings.

Against this background, the study asks whether perceived social media marketing activities are associated with impulsive buying tendency among working mothers in the Manado area and whether self-control statistically accounts for part of that association. It tests four proposed relationships: a positive association between perceived social media marketing and impulsive buying tendency, a negative association between perceived social media marketing and self-control, a negative association between self-control and impulsive buying tendency, and an indirect association through self-control. The hypotheses are evaluated using survey responses from 205 working mothers and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

The study contributes to this literature in three ways. First, it examines perceived social media marketing activities rather than treating the measure as a record of advertising exposure. This distinction follows the established approach of assessing consumers' evaluations of marketing activities (Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018). Second, it tests self-control as a regulatory construct while keeping it distinct from temporary depletion. Third, it assesses the proposed S-O-R pattern in a setting where the direction of the self-control relationships matters: the significant paths involving self-control emerge in the opposite direction from the hypotheses. The study treats those results as evidence requiring theoretical interpretation, rather than as confirmation of the proposed mechanism.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Perceived Social Media Marketing Activities

Social media marketing refers to brand-related marketing activities conducted through social platforms to create, communicate, and exchange value with consumers. Kim and Ko (2012) operationalized social media marketing activities through entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. These dimensions capture consumers' evaluations of the quality and relevance of brand activity on social media rather than the objective frequency or intensity of advertising exposure. Seo and Park (2018) further demonstrated that these dimensions can shape brand-related consumer responses in service settings.

This multidimensional conceptualization has subsequently been applied across a wide range of empirical settings. In festival contexts, social media marketing has been associated with consumers' holistic perceptions of brands and related branding outcomes (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). Similar relationships have been documented in educational institutions, where SMMA contributes to brand awareness, image, attitude, Brand Gestalt, and loyalty-related responses (Carundeng, Rantung, & Mandagi, 2024; Kainde, & Mandagi, 2023; Marhareita, Kila, & Mandagi, 2022; Pasuhuk, & Mandagi, 2023). Evidence from commercial settings also indicates that social media marketing is associated with Brand Gestalt and loyalty in fast-food restaurants Wantah and Mandagi (2024), Brand Gestalt and brand personality Rayo, Rayo, and Mandagi (2024), and brand trust, satisfaction, and loyalty Queenditya, Lovely, and Mandagi (2024); Walean, Gerungan, and Mandagi (2025) similarly demonstrated the relevance of Brand Gestalt as an intervening mechanism linking social media marketing with brand loyalty.

Collectively, this literature indicates that SMMA should not be understood merely as the presence of promotional messages on social platforms. Rather, consumers respond to how social media activities are experienced and interpreted. Entertainment may increase enjoyment and attention, interaction facilitates two-way brand-consumer engagement, trendiness signals currency and relevance, customization enhances perceived personal relevance, and electronic word of mouth extends social influence through peer-generated communication. These experiential and social qualities help explain why perceived SMMA can influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses even when the amount of objective advertising exposure is not measured.

This distinction is important for the present study. A high SMMA score means that respondents perceive brand social media content as entertaining, interactive, current, personally relevant, or shareable. It does not necessarily mean that respondents have been exposed to a greater volume of advertising. Accordingly, the theoretical argument focuses on perceived persuasive and experiential qualities of social media marketing, not on repeated exposure or algorithmic saturation as an

unmeasured causal mechanism. The distinction is also consistent with recent developments in digital-marketing research. Social media is increasingly embedded within a broader digital ecosystem in which marketing communication, brand experience, social interaction, and technology-enabled consumer engagement converge. In tourism, Mandagi, Rantung, and Aseng (2026) identify digital marketing as an increasingly important component of contemporary marketing strategy while emphasizing the need to understand its broader behavioral and sustainability implications. Although the consumption context differs from the present study, this development reinforces the broader relevance of examining digital marketing not simply as message transmission but as a configuration of technologically mediated consumer experiences.

Prior work provides more direct evidence that social media marketing can influence purchase-related outcomes. Waworuntu, Mandagi, and Pangemanan (2022) found that social media marketing was relevant to the formation of brand image and Generation Z consumers' intentions to purchase local products, illustrating how favorable perceptions of social media activity can extend beyond branding outcomes to behavioral intentions. Safeer (2024) provides evidence closer to the present research problem, showing that brand social media marketing activities are associated with online impulse-buying intentions as well as internal emotional responses. Taken together, these findings support the broader proposition that favorable, engaging, and persuasive evaluations of social media marketing can contribute to purchase-related responses, including spontaneous purchasing tendencies, although the strength and psychological mechanism of this relationship may vary across consumers and contexts.

Importantly, the preceding evidence should not be interpreted as demonstrating that SMMA automatically produces impulse buying. Most existing studies focus on brand-related responses such as awareness, image, attitude, Brand Gestalt, personality, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention rather than impulse buying itself (Kainde and Mandagi, 2023; Mandagi and Aseng, 2021; Marhareita et al., 2022; Pasuhuk and Mandagi, 2023; Queenditya et al., 2024; Rayo et al., 2024; Walean et al., 2025; Wantah and Mandagi, 2024). Their relevance to the present study lies in demonstrating the capacity of perceived social media marketing to operate as a consequential digital stimulus. Whether that stimulus translates into impulsive buying requires a more specific behavioral explanation and consideration of consumers' internal regulatory processes. From an S-O-R perspective, SMMA can therefore be conceptualized as an external digital stimulus whose entertainment, interactive, personalized, socially endorsed, and trend-oriented characteristics may activate psychological responses that subsequently influence purchasing behavior. This formulation provides the basis for investigating both the direct relationship between perceived SMMA and impulsive buying tendency and the potential role of self-control as an internal regulatory mechanism.

2.2 Impulsive Buying Tendency

Impulsive buying tendency refers to a consumer's inclination to make spontaneous purchases with limited deliberation. It is distinct from an immediate urge to buy and from a purchase that actually occurs. Studies examining these constructs separately show that buying tendency can be associated with both buying urges and subsequent purchasing behavior (Agung et al., 2021; Kwon & Ahn, 2021). The present study therefore uses impulsive buying tendency consistently because its outcome is measured through self-reported questionnaire responses rather than verified transactions.

Digital commerce brings product discovery, social interaction, promotions, and purchase options into the same environment. Social commerce research identifies platform characteristics and marketing-related factors associated with impulsive buying tendency (Das et al., 2022). Online reviews and electronic word of mouth have also been positively associated with this tendency (Nguyen et al., 2024). In short-video commerce, research further links personalized and engaging advertising content to impulsive buying intentions through consumers' perceptions of entertainment and trust (Cui et al., 2025; Walewangko et al., 2024). Together, these findings provide a basis for examining whether working mothers' perceptions of social media marketing activities relate to their inclination toward spontaneous purchasing.

2.3 Self-Control and Self-Regulation

Self-control refers to a person's capacity to regulate immediate desires in line with broader goals. In a purchasing context, it may help consumers pause, consider whether a product is needed, and keep spending consistent with their priorities. Consumer research distinguishes trait self-control from temporary changes in regulatory capacity, treating both as potentially relevant to self-regulation (Francke & Carrete, 2023). Research examining self-control and impulsive buying tendency together also supports its relevance to purchasing decisions (Kakkar et al., 2022). Self-control does not necessarily prevent every impulsive response. Experimental research on online food delivery found that self-control reduced some responses to promotional cues but did not eliminate the direct relationship between price sensitivity and impulsive consumption (Liu et al., 2026). This suggests that self-control may be relevant to buying responses without accounting for every association between marketing cues and impulsive buying tendency. The present study measures general self-control rather than a temporary change during a particular social media session. It therefore cannot establish that marketing exposure depletes self-control. Instead, self-control is examined as a measured characteristic that may help account for differences in impulsive buying tendency and for the observed relationship between perceived social media marketing activities and that tendency.

2.4 Stimulus-Organism-Response Framework

The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework describes how environmental cues relate to consumer responses through internal processes. Studies of social media marketing have used this framework to examine how the quality of information and interaction relates to social presence and purchase intention (Jiang et al., 2024). Research on short-video commerce has likewise examined how advertising characteristics relate to impulsive buying intentions through perceptions of entertainment and trust (Cui et al., 2025). These studies support examining the internal processes associated with consumers' responses to digital marketing, although they do not establish self-control as the mechanism in the present model. Here, perceived social media marketing activities represent the stimulus, self-control is the measured internal regulatory construct, and impulsive buying tendency is the response. This application requires caution because general self-control may also shape how consumers perceive or respond to marketing. A statistical indirect effect would be consistent with the proposed model, but cross-sectional data cannot establish the causal sequence implied by S-O-R. The model also allows perceived marketing activities to remain directly associated with impulsive buying tendency after self-control is taken into account.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows perceived social media marketing activities was the independent variable, self-control was the mediating variable,and impulsive buying tendency was the dependent variable.

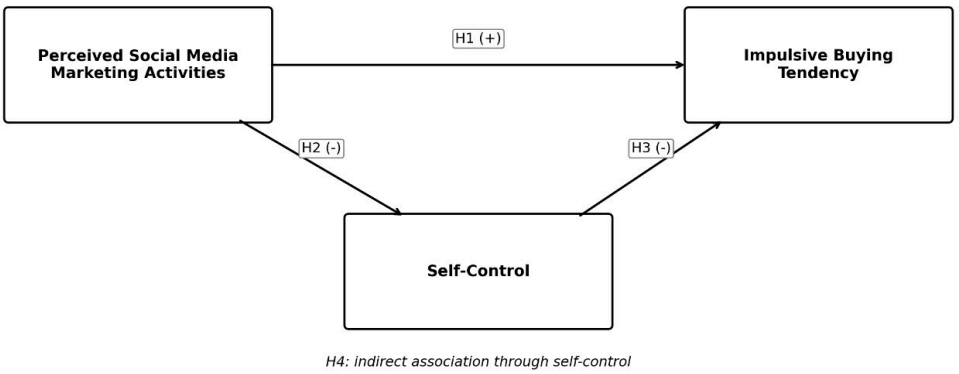


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2.6 Hypothesis Development

2.6.1 Social Media Marketing and Impulsive Buying Tendency

Social media marketing can make products more noticeable and appealing through engaging content, promotions, and social feedback. Prior research has linked social media marketing to brand image and purchase intention for local products (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Mandagi et al., 2024). Other studies

show that it relates to consumers' brand perceptions and loyalty in online retail and fast-food settings (Queenditya et al., 2024; Wantah & Mandagi, 2024). These studies establish the relevance of social media marketing to consumer responses, although purchase intention and loyalty are distinct from impulsive buying tendency. Evidence more directly related to the present outcome associates social commerce factors, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth with impulsive buying tendency (Das et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). Accordingly, working mothers who perceive stronger social media marketing activities may report a greater inclination toward spontaneous purchasing.

H_1: Perceived social media marketing activities are positively associated with impulsive buying tendency among working mothers

2.6.2 Social Media Marketing and Self-Control

Social media marketing may attract attention and encourage consumers to consider products they had not planned to buy. Its association with internal consumer responses has been examined in several contexts: brand image in local products (Waworuntu, Mandagi, & Pangemanan, 2022), brand gestalt in educational institutions (Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023) and brand attitude in education (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023). None of these findings establishes that marketing reduces self-control. Evidence from a separate media-influenced purchasing context is also mixed: media channels and word of mouth were negatively associated with self-regulation, whereas media content was positively associated with it (Anisimova, Billore, & Kitchen, 2025). The present study therefore tests the proposed negative association while recognizing that its direction may depend on how consumers perceive marketing activities.

H_2: Perceived social media marketing activities are negatively associated with self-control among working mother

2.6.3 Self-Control and Impulsive Buying Tendency

Self-control can help consumers resist immediate temptation and consider longer-term spending priorities. Research examining self-control alongside impulsive buying tendency supports its relevance to purchasing decisions (Kakkar et al., 2022). Related evidence links self-control-related values to a greater tendency to resist impulse buying (Baršytė & Fennis, 2025). Working mothers who report stronger self-control are therefore expected to report a lower inclination toward spontaneous purchasing.

H_3: Self-control is negatively associated with impulsive buying tendency among working mothers

2.6.4 The Mediating Role of Self-Control

Prior social media marketing studies illustrate why internal consumer responses deserve attention. Brand gestalt has been examined as a mediator between social media marketing and loyalty in festival branding and online retail (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Queenditya et al., 2024). Those studies support the broader rationale for testing an intervening construct, but they do not provide evidence that self-control mediates an association with impulsive buying tendency. In the present model, a negative association between perceived social media marketing activities and self-control, combined with a negative association between self-control and impulsive buying tendency, would produce a positive indirect association. Because the data are cross-sectional, this would be evidence of statistical mediation rather than proof that marketing activities first change self-control and then change buying tendency.

H_4: Self-control statistically mediates the relationship between perceived social media marketing activities and impulsive buying tendency among working mothers

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Analytical Approach

The study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine associations among perceived social media marketing activities, self-control, and impulsive buying tendency. PLS-SEM was used because the analysis involves latent constructs, simultaneous direct and indirect relationships, and an emphasis on explaining variance in endogenous constructs. Current methodological guidance also emphasizes that the use of PLS-SEM should be justified by the research objective and accompanied by transparent assessment of measurement quality, structural relationships, effect sizes, and predictive information rather than significance testing alone (Guenther, Guenther, Ringle, Zaefarian, & Cartwright, 2023; Hair & Alamer, 2022). SmartPLS 4 was used for model estimation. The cross-sectional design does not establish temporal ordering or causality. Terms such as 'association,' 'relationship,' and 'indirect effect' are therefore used in interpreting the empirical results. Causal language is reserved for theoretical propositions or prior experimental evidence, not for claims about the present survey estimates.

3.2 Population, Sampling, and Sample Adequacy

The target population consisted of working mothers residing in the Manado area who were active social media users. Working mothers were defined as women who had maternal responsibilities and were actively engaged in paid employment or an income-generating activity. Purposive sampling was applied because eligibility depended on characteristics directly relevant to the study. Respondents were screened to confirm that they (1) were mothers, (2) were actively working, (3) resided in the Manado area, and (4) actively used social media. The final analytical sample consisted of 205 respondents, consistent with the sample size used in the descriptive and PLS-SEM analyses. A statistical sensitivity check was conducted to supplement the model-based sample justification. With 205 observations and two predictors in the most complex endogenous equation, the sample is sufficient to detect an overall multiple-regression effect of approximately $f^2 = .048$ at $\alpha = .05$ and 80% power. The sensitivity analysis does not replace an a priori design-stage power analysis, but it provides a transparent indication of the effect magnitude that the available sample can detect.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from established scales. Screening questions appeared before the substantive measures so that only eligible respondents proceeded to the full questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their answers would be used for academic purposes. The questionnaires were checked for completeness, consistency, and eligibility before analysis. All substantive items used a five-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Before broad distribution, the wording was screened for clarity, readability, and alignment with the conceptual meaning of the constructs. The original instrument contained 37 items: 15 items for perceived social media marketing activities, 13 items for self-control, and 9 items for impulsive buying tendency.

3.4 Measures

The questionnaire initially comprised 37 indicators measuring three constructs. Perceived Social Media Marketing activities (SMM) were measured using 15 items adapted from Kim and Ko (2012), covering entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and electronic word of mouth. Self-Control (SC) was assessed using 13 items adapted from the Brief Self-Control Scale (Tangney et al., 2004). Impulsive Buying tendency (IB) was measured using nine items adapted from (Rook & Fisher, 1995). All items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The SC measure assessed general self-control rather than a temporary change in regulatory capacity following marketing exposure. Table 1 summarizes the initial measurement configuration.

Table 1. Measurement scale summary

Construct	Initial Items	Source	Illustrative Item
Perceived Social Media Marketing Activities (SMM)	15	Kim & Ko (2012)	The social media marketing content of brands I follow is enjoyable to view.
Self-Control (SC)	13	Tangney et al. (2004)	I am able to resist temptation when I see something attractive.
Impulsive Buying Tendency (IB)	9	Rook & Fisher (1995)	I often buy things spontaneously.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the respondent profile and construct distributions. Second, the reflective measurement model was evaluated using outer loadings, composite reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and indicator cross-loadings. Given the high number of indicators removed during scale purification, measurement quality was evaluated together with the potential loss of construct content. Third, the structural model was assessed using standardized path coefficients, bootstrapped standard errors, t statistics, p values, coefficients of determination (R^2), inner Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), and f^2 effect sizes. The indirect effect of SMM on impulsive buying tendency through self-control was evaluated using bootstrapping. SRMR and NFI are reported only as supplementary descriptive fit information and are not treated as substitutes for measurement and structural assessment.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondent Profile

Table 2. Respondent profile (N = 205)

Variables	Category	n	Percentage (%)
Age	20-24	54	26.3
	25-29	32	15.6
	30-34	37	18.0
	35-39	23	11.2
	40-44	24	11.7
	45+	35	17.1
Employment status	Full-time	128	62.4
	Part-time	77	37.6
Average Working Hours/Day	< 6 hours	61	29.8
	6-8 hours	99	48.3
	9-10 hours	32	15.6
	> 10 hours	13	6.3
Main Platform for Products/Brands	Facebook	39	19.0
	Instagram	44	21.5
	TikTok	99	48.3
	YouTube	6	2.9
	Other	17	8.3
Online Shopping Frequency, Last 3 Months	1-2 times	88	42.9
	3-7 times	75	36.6
	> 7 times	42	20.5
Average Monthly Online Spending	< Rp250,000	50	24.4
	Rp250,000-Rp500,000	68	33.2
	Rp500,001-Rp1,000,000	38	18.5

Variables	Category	n	Percentage (%)
Average Monthly Online Spending	Rp1,000,001-Rp2,000,000	28	13.7
	> Rp2,000,000	21	10.2

Table 2 shows the analytical sample consisted of 205 working mothers from the greater Manado area. The largest age group was 20 to 24 years (26.3%), followed by respondents aged 30 to 34 years (18.0%) and those aged 45 years or older (17.1%). Most respondents were employed full time (62.4%). Nearly half reported working 6 to 8 hours per day (48.3%). TikTok was the most frequently reported platform for viewing products or brands (48.3%), followed by Instagram (21.5%) and Facebook (19.0%). Online purchasing was common: 42.9% reported one or two online purchases during the previous three months, 36.6% reported three to seven purchases, and 20.5% reported more than seven.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Construct	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
SMM	205	1.000	5.000	3.951	0.526
Self-Control	205	1.769	4.615	3.281	0.344
Impulsive Buying Tendency	205	1.000	4.889	2.977	0.740

Table 3 shows perceived social media marketing activities had the highest mean (M = 3.951, SD = 0.526), followed by self-control (M = 3.281, SD = 0.344) and impulsive buying tendency (M = 2.977, SD = 0.740). Table 3 summarizes the construct-level descriptive statistics.

4.3 Measurement Model Assessment

Table 4. Retained indicators, composite reliability, and AVE

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE
Impulsive Buying Tendency	IB1	.756	.920	.621
	IB2	.783		
	IB3	.735		
	IB4	.822		
	IB5	.790		
	IB7	.789		
	IB9	.835		
Self-Control	SC12	.757	.834	.557
	SC4	.729		
	SC5	.760		
	SC6	.738		
Perceived SMM	SMM12	.708	.868	.569
	SMM14	.781		
	SMM4	.768		
	SMM8	.774		
	SMM9	.738		

Table 4 shows the reported measurement-model purification retained 16 of the original 37 indicators. Seven of nine impulsive-buying indicators, four of thirteen self-control indicators, and five of fifteen SMM indicators remained. All retained outer loadings exceeded .70, ranging from .708 to .835. Based on the retained loadings, composite reliability was .920 for impulsive buying tendency, .834 for self-control, and .868 for SMM. AVE values ranged from .557 to .621, exceeding the .50 benchmark for convergent validity. These statistics support reliability and convergent validity for the reduced item sets.The extent of indicator deletion nevertheless requires caution. Removing 21 of 37 original items can narrow construct coverage, especially for the multidimensional SMM scale and the self-control

scale. The reduced measures should therefore be interpreted as empirically purified representations of the constructs rather than complete reproductions of the original scales. Scale content should be reconfirmed in a subsequent sample before strong claims of measurement generalizability are made.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	IB	SC	SMM
Impulsive Buying Tendency (IB)	.788		
Self-Control (SC)	.693	.746	
Perceived SMM	.267	.289	.754
Note. Diagonal values are the square roots of AVE.			

Table 5 shows discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and indicator cross-loadings. The square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the other constructs. The strongest inter-construct correlation was between self-control and impulsive buying tendency (r = .693), which is substantial and warrants attention because the two constructs are theoretically related. The reported cross-loadings nevertheless show that each retained indicator loaded more strongly on its intended construct than on the alternatives (Appendix A).

4.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model explained 8.3% of the variance in self-control (R^2 = .083) and 48.5% of the variance in impulsive buying tendency (R^2 = .485). Predictor collinearity was low. The inner VIF for SMM predicting self-control was 1.00, and the VIFs for SMM and self-control jointly predicting impulsive buying tendency were approximately 1.09. The f^2 effect of SMM on self-control was .091, the direct effect of SMM on impulsive buying tendency was negligible (f^2 = .009), and the effect of self-control on impulsive buying tendency was large (f^2 = .803).

Table 6. Structural model results

Hypothesis/Path	β	SE	t	p	Decision
H_1: SMM → IB (+)	.072	.048	1.510	.131	Not supported
H_2: SMM → SC (-)	.289	.053	5.459	< .001	Not supported: opposite sign
H_3: SC → IB (-)	.672	.040	16.631	< .001	Not supported: opposite sign
H_4: SMM → SC → IB	.194	.038	5.178	< .001	Indirect effect significant

Table 6 reports the hypothesis tests. H_1 predicted a positive relationship between SMM and impulsive buying tendency. The estimated coefficient was positive but not statistically significant (β = .072, t = 1.510, p = .131); H_1 was therefore not supported. H_2 predicted a negative relationship between SMM and self-control. The observed coefficient was statistically significant but positive (β = .289, t = 5.459, p < .001). Statistical significance does not compensate for the opposite sign, so H_2 was not supported. H_3 predicted a negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying tendency. The coefficient was again statistically significant but positive (β = .672, t = 16.631, p < .001); H_3 was therefore not supported as hypothesized.

4.5 Indirect Effect and Supplementary Model Fit

The specific indirect effect of SMM on impulsive buying tendency through self-control was positive and statistically significant (β = .194, t = 5.178, p < .001). Combined with the nonsignificant direct SMM-impulsive buying path, the coefficients form an indirect-only statistical pattern. However, this result should not be described as evidence that SMM depletes self-control. Both component paths involving self-control are positive, whereas the depletion account predicted negative associations for H_2 and H_3. H_4 therefore receives statistical support for the existence of an indirect association, but the hypothesized self-regulatory depletion mechanism is not supported by the reported path directions.

Table 7. Supplementary model fit indices

Index	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	.081	.081
d_ULS	.901	.901
d_G	.254	.254
Chi-square	295.929	295.929
NFI	.808	.808

Table 7 shows supplementary model-fit indices were SRMR = .081 and NFI = .808. SRMR is marginally above the often-cited .08 benchmark, and NFI is below .90. These indices do not justify a claim of strong global fit. More importantly for PLS-SEM, inference should focus on measurement quality, explanatory power, effect sizes, and predictive performance rather than using global fit indices as the primary criterion.

4.6 Discussion

This study examined whether perceived social media marketing activities are associated with impulsive buying tendency among working mothers and whether self-control statistically mediates that relationship. Three findings shape the interpretation: the direct path from perceived social media marketing to impulsive buying tendency was not statistically significant; the two significant paths involving self-control were positive, contrary to their hypothesized negative directions; and the indirect effect was significant. Taken together, the results do not support the proposed account in which social media marketing is associated with lower self-control and, through it, greater impulsive buying tendency.

The nonsignificant direct path suggests that favorable perceptions of social media marketing do not necessarily correspond to a stronger general tendency to buy impulsively in this sample. This result needs to be distinguished from evidence linking social media marketing to purchase intention, brand image, and loyalty (Queenditya et al., 2024; Wantah & Mandagi, 2024; Waworuntu et al., 2022). Those outcomes do not require a spontaneous or insufficiently deliberated decision. It also differs from research associating social-commerce factors, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth with impulsive buying tendency (Das et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). The difference may reflect what the present marketing measure captures. Ratings of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and electronic word of mouth describe consumers' evaluations of marketing activities, but they do not necessarily indicate exposure to a time-limited offer, an immediately tempting product, or an easy opportunity to purchase. This is a possible explanation for the difference between findings, not a mechanism tested by the current data.

The result also places a limit on the S-O-R interpretation. A nonsignificant direct path does not, by itself, demonstrate that an internal process carries the relationship between marketing and impulsive buying tendency. The proposed process must be assessed through the indirect effect and, critically, through the direction and meaning of its component paths. Prior social media marketing research has examined internal responses such as brand gestalt and brand attitude in relation to loyalty (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Queenditya et al., 2024). The present study examines a different proposed internal construct and outcome, so those findings provide a rationale for testing a process rather than confirmation of this particular one.

The positive paths involving self-control are the most consequential findings. H_2 predicted a negative association between perceived social media marketing activities and self-control, while H_3 predicted a negative association between self-control and impulsive buying tendency. If higher scores on the retained indicators represent higher self-control, both estimated associations run opposite to those predictions. H_2 and H_3 must therefore be reported as unsupported, regardless of their statistical significance.

In particular, the positive association between self-control and impulsive buying tendency conflicts with research that treats self-control as relevant to resisting impulse buying (Baršytė & Fennis, 2025; Kakkar et al., 2022). The positive marketing–self-control association also provides no support for a depletion account. Consumer self-regulation research distinguishes general self-control from temporary regulatory states (Francke & Carrete, 2023), and this cross-sectional survey did not measure a change in self-control following marketing exposure. Findings from other media-influenced purchasing contexts further suggest that relationships with self-regulation can vary by the type of content or influence examined (Anisimova et al., 2025). The present coefficients should therefore be interpreted as associations among reported constructs, not evidence that social media marketing increases self-control.

Finally, the working-mother sample defines the context of these findings, not their cause. Participants occupy employment and caregiving roles, but the study did not measure role overload, work-family conflict, time scarcity, or fatigue. It cannot determine whether those experiences shaped their responses, nor can it establish that working mothers are more impulsive or have less self-control than other consumers. Future studies could measure these conditions directly and test whether they alter responses to specific social media marketing cues. Longitudinal or experimental designs, paired with a verified self-control measure and more precisely defined marketing stimuli, would also help distinguish stable individual differences from temporary regulatory responses.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined perceived social media marketing activities, self-control, and impulsive buying tendency among 205 working mothers in the Manado area. Perceived social media marketing was not directly associated with impulsive buying tendency in the estimated model. The paths from social media marketing to self-control and from self-control to impulsive buying tendency were statistically significant, but both were positive, contrary to their hypothesized negative directions. Although the indirect effect was significant, it does not support the proposed explanation that social media marketing reduces self-control and thereby increases impulsive buying tendency. The results demonstrate why the direction and meaning of each path must be considered alongside statistical significance.

The findings also highlight the need to match theoretical claims to the constructs measured. The social media marketing scale captures consumers' evaluations of activities such as entertainment, interaction, customization, trendiness, and electronic word of mouth; it does not measure how often they encounter advertisements. Similarly, the self-control scale primarily assesses general self-control, not a temporary loss of regulatory capacity following marketing exposure. The present data therefore cannot establish a depletion mechanism. Before a substantive explanation is assigned to the unexpected positive paths, the orientation and reverse scoring of the retained self-control items should be verified and the model re-estimated. The removal of nine of the original thirteen self-control items, within an overall reduction from 37 to 16 indicators, makes this measurement check especially important.

For practitioners, the nonsignificant direct path cautions against using favorable evaluations of social media marketing as a proxy for spontaneous purchasing. Campaign assessments should distinguish engagement with content from product clicks, cart additions, and verified purchases when those outcomes are the objective. The study provides no basis for targeting consumers on the assumption that marketing exposure depletes self-control, or for portraying working mothers as unusually susceptible to impulsive buying.

5.2 Research Limitations

Several limitations define what can be concluded. The cross-sectional, self-report design cannot establish causal order and may be affected by common-method variance. The purposive sample limits generalization beyond the participants, while impulsive buying tendency was not checked against observed transactions.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research should first reassess the shortened measures and report fuller measurement and structural diagnostics, including discriminant-validity and bootstrap confidence intervals. Longitudinal or experimental studies could then test responses to specific marketing cues using measures of temporary self-regulatory states, alongside behavioral purchase data. Alternatively, research that retains a general self-control scale could examine whether self-control conditions consumers' responses to social media marketing rather than treating it as a state changed by that marketing.

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Author Contributions

BRN was responsible for conceptualization, research design, theoretical framework development, methodology, data collection and manuscript drafting. JST was responsible data analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript revision. RHW contributed to critical review, validation, and final approval of the draft. DWM provided methodology refinement, critical review, editing, research supervision, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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