

THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF SELF-REWARD ON IMPULSE BUYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE ANALYSIS OF ANTICIPATED GRATIFICATION, HEDONIC BROWSING, AND TRAIT SELF-CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

Social-commerce environments have made impulse purchasing frictionless, and a growing share of consumers describe these purchases as things they deserve or as a way to feel better rather than as responses to product need. This study examines self-reward as a psychological mechanism behind impulse buying on social media, and asks through what intervening states it operates and what restrains it. Drawing on the stimulus-organism-response framework and self-regulation theory, a moderated parallel-mediation model was estimated in which self-reward motivation influences impulse buying through anticipated emotional gratification and hedonic browsing, with trait self-control moderating the organism-to-response paths. Survey data were collected from 428 Indonesian social-commerce shoppers between September 2025 and January 2026 and analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling in SmartPLS 4 with 5,000 bootstrap subsamples. Self-reward motivation predicts anticipated gratification ($\beta = 0.601$) and hedonic browsing ($\beta = 0.558$), both of which in turn predict impulse buying ($\beta = 0.319$ and 0.402). The two indirect paths together account for 70.5 per cent of the total effect, with hedonic browsing the stronger conduit; the direct path is weak but significant ($\beta = 0.174$). Trait self-control significantly attenuates the hedonic-browsing-to-impulse relationship (interaction $\beta = -0.163$) but does not moderate the gratification path ($\beta = -0.047$, $p = 0.284$). The model explains 54.8 per cent of variance in impulse buying. Findings indicate that self-reward rarely triggers purchase directly; it manufactures an affective and browsing state that does, and self-control governs enactment rather than desire.

Keywords: hedonic browsing; impulse buying; self-control; self-reward; social commerce

1. INTRODUCTION

A distinctive vocabulary now surrounds online shopping. Consumers speak of retail therapy, of treating themselves, of purchases they have earned after a difficult week, and platforms have learned to speak the same language back, timing promotions to paydays and framing checkout as a

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small act of self-care (Zahran & Rolando, 2025). The behaviour underneath the vocabulary is substantial. Impulse purchases account for a large and rising share of transactions in social-commerce environments, where livestream selling, shoppable video, and one-tap checkout have compressed the interval between wanting and buying to seconds (Xiang et al., 2016). In Indonesia, one of the largest social-commerce markets in the world, live-shopping features on TikTok Shop and Shopee Live have made unplanned purchasing a routine part of daily media use rather than an occasional lapse (Rolando & Mulyono, 2026). What is theoretically interesting is not that impulse buying occurs, but that consumers increasingly narrate it as a reward they are giving themselves. This framing suggests that a self-regulatory mechanism, self-reward, may be doing explanatory work that the impulse-buying literature has not fully captured.

Two research traditions bear on this and have developed largely in parallel. The first is the impulse-buying literature proper, which since Rook (1987) has treated impulse buying as a sudden, hedonically complex urge to buy immediately, and which Beatty and Ferrell (1998) organised into a process model in which situational and individual antecedents produce browsing and positive affect, and these in turn produce the urge. This tradition has repeatedly confirmed that positive affect and hedonic browsing are proximate drivers of the impulse, and that the stimulus-organism-response paradigm of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) organises those relationships well: environmental stimuli evoke internal states in the organism, which drive behavioural responses (Chan et al., 2017). What this tradition has examined less closely is the motivational content of the antecedent. It establishes that browsing and affect matter, but it is comparatively silent on why a given consumer is browsing in an affectively primed state to begin with.

The second tradition is the psychology of self-reward and compensatory consumption. Self-reward is a self-regulatory strategy in which individuals administer positive outcomes to themselves contingent on effort, endurance, or emotional need (Bandura, 1976; Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991). Consumer researchers have connected it to compensatory consumption, the use of purchasing to repair threatened self-worth or negative mood (Mandel et al., 2017), and to the deservingness beliefs that license indulgent choice (Cavanaugh, 2014). This literature explains the motivational content that the impulse-buying tradition leaves underspecified, but it has been developed largely in offline or general online contexts and has rarely been integrated into a structural model of the impulse-buying process. The two literatures, in short, hold complementary halves of the same explanation and have not been joined.

The disagreement between them, once they are placed side by side, is about mechanism rather than fact. The impulse-buying tradition would predict that self-reward, insofar as it matters, matters because it raises positive affect and prolongs browsing, that is, it should operate through the organism. The compensatory-consumption tradition sometimes writes as though self-reward motivates purchase more directly, as a deliberate act of mood repair whose object is the acquisition itself. Whether self-reward reaches impulse buying predominantly through intervening affective

and browsing states, or substantially around them, is an open and consequential question, because the answer determines where the behaviour is most tractable to intervention (Ingriana et al., 2024). Neither literature has tested the two channels against each other in a single model.

This study addresses three gaps. The theoretical gap concerns the self-regulation account of consumption. Self-regulation theory holds that behaviour reflects the balance between an impelling force and a restraining one (Hofmann et al., 2009); applied here, self-reward supplies the impelling force and trait self-control the restraint, but the literature has not specified where in the causal chain the restraint operates. Restraint could dampen the motivation itself, the intervening states, or only the final translation of state into action, and these are behaviourally distinct. The empirical gap concerns model specification. Studies of impulse buying overwhelmingly estimate direct effects of antecedents on the urge; parallel-mediation designs that separate an affective conduit from a browsing conduit, and that add a moderator on the response paths, are rare, which means the field lacks evidence on whether the two conduits are substitutes or complements and on whether self-control acts on both. The contextual gap concerns setting. The self-reward and compensatory-consumption literatures are dominated by North American and European samples, whereas live social commerce, in which the reward framing is most heavily cued, has its largest footprint in Southeast Asia; the mechanism has therefore been undertested precisely where it is most culturally salient.

Accordingly, the study pursues four objectives: to estimate the effect of self-reward motivation on impulse buying on social media; to test whether anticipated emotional gratification and hedonic browsing jointly mediate that effect and to compare the strength of the two conduits; to test whether trait self-control moderates the paths from the two intervening states to impulse buying; and to identify which psychological drivers offer the greatest leverage over impulse buying relative to their current level. The contribution is to integrate the self-reward and impulse-buying literatures into a single tested model, to locate the moderating role of self-control precisely within the response stage rather than treating it as a global brake, and to do so in the live-commerce context where the reward framing is most active.

1.1 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The stimulus-organism-response paradigm provides the model's architecture. In social commerce the platform environment is the stimulus, the consumer's internal affective and cognitive states are the organism, and impulse buying is the response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Chan et al., 2017). Self-reward motivation is positioned as an internalised stimulus condition, a standing disposition to construe consumption as deserved recompense, that activates two organism states. The first, anticipated emotional gratification, is the forward-looking pleasure a consumer expects to derive from acquiring an item, a construct rooted in the affect-as-information tradition and in research on hedonic anticipation (Ramanathan & Menon, 2006). A consumer oriented toward self-reward interprets available products as vehicles for a gratification they feel entitled to, which raises anticipated gratification. The second, hedonic browsing, is the pleasurable, exploratory, non-goal-

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directed consumption of platform content, scrolling live sellers and shoppable feeds for enjoyment rather than to fulfil a predefined need (Bloch et al., 1986). Self-reward motivation licenses such browsing as a legitimate pleasure rather than a waste of time, extending it. Prior work links reward orientation to both anticipatory pleasure and exploratory browsing (Mandel et al., 2017), yielding:

H1: Self-reward motivation has a positive effect on anticipated emotional gratification.

H2: Self-reward motivation has a positive effect on hedonic browsing.

Both organism states are established proximate drivers of the impulse. Anticipated gratification supplies the affective charge that Rook (1987) placed at the centre of the impulse: the vivid expectation of pleasure lowers deliberative resistance and makes the urge feel worth acting on. Hedonic browsing supplies exposure and momentum; the longer and more pleasurably a consumer browses, the more triggering stimuli they encounter and the more the exploratory frame shades into an acquisitive one (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). In social commerce these effects are amplified by livestream urgency cues and limited-time framing. Hence:

H3: Anticipated emotional gratification has a positive effect on impulse buying on social media.

H4: Hedonic browsing has a positive effect on impulse buying on social media.

A direct path from self-reward motivation to impulse buying is also theorised, capturing deliberate compensatory purchasing in which the acquisition itself, rather than any intervening pleasant state, is the object of the mood-repair strategy (Mandel et al., 2017). Because both direct and indirect channels are expected, the mediation should be partial and complementary, and the two indirect paths should be assessed separately so that the affective and browsing conduits can be compared:

H5: Self-reward motivation has a positive direct effect on impulse buying on social media.

H6: Anticipated emotional gratification and hedonic browsing jointly mediate the relationship between self-reward motivation and impulse buying on social media.

Self-regulation theory supplies the restraint. Dual-process accounts model behaviour as the outcome of an impulsive system that generates approach tendencies and a reflective system that can override them (Hofmann et al., 2009; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Trait self-control indexes the chronic strength of the reflective system (Tangney et al., 2004). The theoretically crucial question is where self-control intervenes. It is unlikely to reduce the motivation itself, which is dispositional, and it need not reduce the pleasantness of anticipation or browsing, which are largely automatic. What high self-control should do is interrupt the translation of a primed state into an actual purchase, the final approach movement. This predicts a negative interaction on the paths from the organism states to the response. The prediction is directional and, importantly, is not obviously symmetric across the two states: hedonic browsing culminates in a concrete behavioural opportunity, a live checkout button pressed in the moment, that self-control is well positioned to

interrupt, whereas anticipated gratification is a more diffuse affective appraisal that may bias choice before any discrete act of restraint is available. The hypotheses are stated in the buffering direction for both paths so that any asymmetry is informative:

H7: Trait self-control negatively moderates the relationship between hedonic browsing and impulse buying, such that the relationship is weaker at higher levels of self-control.

H8: Trait self-control negatively moderates the relationship between anticipated emotional gratification and impulse buying, such that the relationship is weaker at higher levels of self-control.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

The study uses an explanatory, cross-sectional survey design analysed with variance-based structural equation modelling. The design suits the theoretical task, which is to specify and compare intervening mechanisms and to locate a moderating effect, rather than to establish the incidence of impulse buying, which is already well documented. The unit of analysis is the individual social-commerce shopper. Figure 1 sets out the full research procedure.

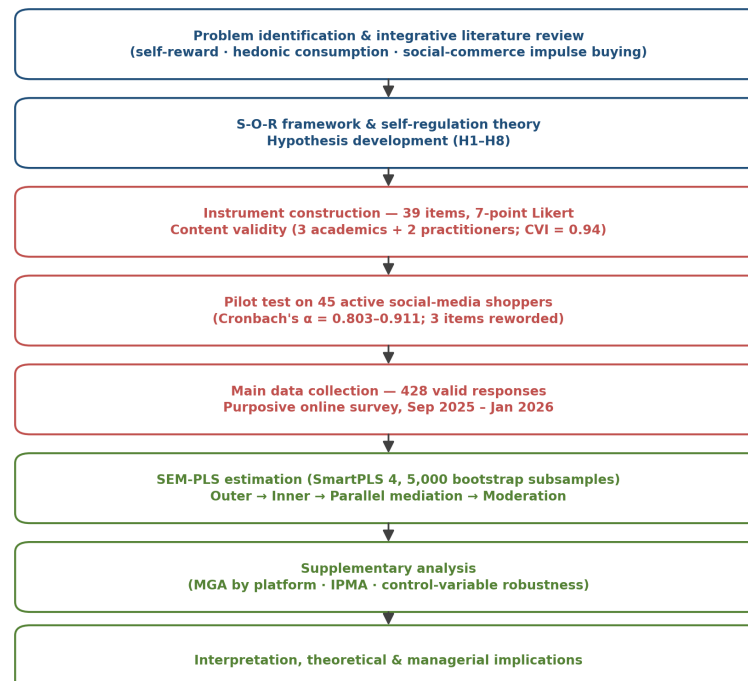


Figure 1. Research procedure

Source: Authors' construction (2026).

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2.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised Indonesian adults who had made at least one purchase through a social-commerce channel, defined as a livestream, shoppable video, or in-app storefront on TikTok Shop, Instagram, Shopee Live, Facebook Marketplace, or WhatsApp-based selling, within the three months preceding data collection. This recency screen ensured that respondents could report on recent, specific behaviour rather than general dispositions. Purposive sampling was applied with three inclusion criteria: respondents had to be eighteen years or older; to use at least one social-commerce platform on a weekly basis; and to confirm the three-month purchase screen, which functioned as an eligibility gate at the start of the instrument. Recruitment proceeded through advertisements placed in interest-based social-media communities and through snowball referral, with quotas applied to prevent any single platform's users from exceeding 40 per cent of the sample.

Sample size was determined *ex ante* using the inverse square root method of Kock and Hadaya (2018). Anticipating a minimum interaction path of approximately 0.16 at a significance level of 0.05 and power of 0.80, the required sample is $n = (2.486 / 0.16)^2$, or 242. A parallel G*Power 3.1 calculation for a regression with six predictors, a medium effect size of $f\text{-squared} = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$, and power = 0.80 returned 146. Both thresholds were exceeded. Of 604 respondents who passed the eligibility gate and began the survey, 456 completed it, and 428 were retained after data screening. Twenty-eight cases were removed: fourteen for failing one of two embedded attention checks, nine for completion times below one-third of the median, and five for uniform responding across more than 90 per cent of items.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected between September 2025 and January 2026 through a self-administered online questionnaire hosted on a survey platform and distributed by shareable link. The instrument was presented in Bahasa Indonesia, translated from English and back-translated by two bilingual consumer-behaviour researchers, with three discrepant items resolved by discussion. The landing page stated the academic purpose, guaranteed anonymity, and confirmed that no personally identifying information would be collected; respondents provided informed consent before the eligibility gate. To reduce the salience of the study's hypotheses, construct blocks were presented in a randomised order and no construct labels were shown. Median completion time was 14 minutes.

2.4 Measurement of Constructs

All constructs were measured reflectively on seven-point Likert scales anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree); the seven-point format was chosen over five points because the sample is a general consumer population for whom finer gradation improves variance capture in academic survey contexts. Self-reward motivation was modelled as a second-order construct with three dimensions and twelve items; anticipated emotional gratification, hedonic browsing, impulse

buying, and trait self-control were each modelled as single-dimension reflective constructs. Items were adapted rather than adopted verbatim, with wording revised for the social-commerce context and for reference to livestream and shoppable-feed behaviour specifically. Table 1 reports the measurement structure, a representative item per construct or dimension, and the source study from which it was adapted.

Table 1. Construct operationalisation and sources of measurement adaptation

Construct	Dimension	Items	Representative item (abbreviated)	Adapted from
Self-Reward Motivation (SRM)	Deservingness beliefs	4	When I have worked hard, I feel I deserve to buy something for myself	Cavanaugh (2014)
	Mood-repair motive	4	I shop online to lift my mood when I feel down or stressed	Mandel et al. (2017)
	Effort-contingent reward	4	Buying something is how I mark getting through a demanding period	Heatherton & Baumeister (1991)
Anticipated Emotional Gratification (AEG)	Single dimension	9	I can already imagine how good it will feel to own this item	Ramanathan & Menon (2006)
Hedonic Browsing (HB)	Single dimension	8	I enjoy scrolling live sellers and shoppable feeds even without intending to buy	Bloch et al. (1986)
Impulse Buying on Social Media (IB)	Single dimension	10	I have bought things during a livestream that I had not planned to buy	Rook (1987); Xiang et al. (2016)
Trait Self-Control (SC)	Single dimension	8	I am good at resisting the urge to buy things on the spur of the moment	Tangney et al. (2004)

Source: Authors' compilation (2026).

Content validity was established by an expert panel of three consumer-behaviour academics and two social-commerce practitioners, who rated each item for relevance and clarity; the scale-level content validity index was 0.94. A pilot study with 45 active social-commerce shoppers not included in the main sample produced Cronbach's alpha values between 0.803 and 0.911; three items with ambiguous phrasing around the anticipation and browsing constructs were reworded before the main survey.

2.5 Analytical Technique

Partial least squares structural equation modelling was selected over covariance-based alternatives for three reasons. First, the model is prediction-oriented and complex, involving a second-order construct, two parallel mediators, and two interaction terms, a configuration well suited to PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019). Second, several indicators departed from univariate normality, with absolute skewness up to 1.36 and kurtosis up to 1.98, violating the assumptions of maximum-likelihood estimation. Third, the study aims to maximise explained variance in impulse buying and to compare the predictive strength of two conduits rather than to confirm a fixed covariance structure. Estimation used SmartPLS 4 with the path weighting scheme, 5,000 bootstrap subsamples, no sign changes, and bias-corrected accelerated confidence intervals. The second-order construct was operationalised through the two-stage approach; interaction terms were

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estimated using the two-stage approach recommended for moderation with reflective constructs; and the two specific indirect effects were assessed following Preacher and Hayes (2008) as adapted for PLS by Sarstedt et al. (2020), with the variance accounted for reported for the joint mediation.

2.6 Validity, Reliability, and Common Method Bias

Convergent validity was assessed through outer loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted; discriminant validity through the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015) and the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. Because all measures came from a single respondent at one time point, common method bias was addressed both procedurally and statistically. Procedurally, anonymity was guaranteed to reduce evaluation apprehension; construct blocks were randomised and separated; item specificity was varied and two reverse-coded items were included per construct; and no construct labels or hypothesis cues were shown (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Statistically, Harman's single-factor test returned a first unrotated factor accounting for 29.4 per cent of variance, below the 50 per cent threshold, and a full collinearity assessment produced a maximum variance inflation factor of 2.213, below the conservative 3.3 criterion. Measurement invariance across the platform subsamples used in the multi-group analysis was confirmed at the configural and compositional stages using the MICOM procedure (Henseler et al., 2016).

3. RESULTS

3.1 Respondent Profile

Table 2 profiles the 428 respondents. The sample skews female (60.0 per cent) and young, with 79.9 per cent aged between eighteen and thirty-four, which is consistent with the demographic concentration of live social commerce in Indonesia. TikTok Shop and Shopee Live are the dominant primary platforms at 36.4 and 26.2 per cent respectively, and the platform quota held: no single platform exceeds the 40 per cent ceiling. Engagement is high, with 77.3 per cent of respondents spending three or more hours per week on social commerce and 65.9 per cent reporting at least three impulse purchases in a typical month. The behaviour under study is therefore common rather than marginal in this population, which supports the substantive relevance of the model.

Table 2. Respondent profile (n = 428)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	257	60.0
	Male	171	40.0
Age group	18-24	163	38.1
	25-34	179	41.8

	35-44	63	14.7
	45 and above	23	5.4
Monthly personal income	Under IDR 3 million	134	31.3
	IDR 3-7 million	192	44.9
	Above IDR 7 million	102	23.8
Primary social-commerce platform	TikTok Shop	156	36.4
	Shopee Live	112	26.2
	Instagram	84	19.6
	Facebook Marketplace	43	10.0
	WhatsApp commerce	33	7.7
Weekly time on social commerce	Under 3 hours	97	22.7
	3-7 hours	188	43.9
	Above 7 hours	143	33.4
Self-reported impulse purchases / month	0-2	146	34.1
	3-5	191	44.6
	6 or more	91	21.3

Source: Primary data (2026).

3.2 Measurement Model Assessment

All 39 indicators loaded on their intended constructs above the 0.70 criterion, ranging from 0.738 to 0.868, with no problematic cross-loadings. Table 3 reports reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.804 to 0.928 and composite reliability from 0.881 to 0.939, all above the 0.70 threshold and below the 0.95 ceiling. Average variance extracted ranges from 0.607 to 0.717, exceeding the 0.50 criterion throughout, so each construct explains the majority of the variance in its indicators. The measurement model is adequate for structural estimation.

Table 3. Measurement model: reliability and convergent validity

Construct / dimension	Items	Loading range	Mean loading	Alpha	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Self-Reward Motivation	12	0.738 - 0.851	0.804	0.902	0.921	0.647
Deservingness beliefs	4	0.762 - 0.838	0.801	0.818	0.881	0.649
Mood-repair motive	4	0.751 - 0.851	0.809	0.831	0.888	0.664
Effort-contingent reward	4	0.738 - 0.826	0.792	0.804	0.883	0.717
Anticipated Emotional Gratification	9	0.759 - 0.847	0.812	0.913	0.928	0.617

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Hedonic Browsing	8	0.766 - 0.859	0.821	0.906	0.924	0.635
Impulse Buying on Social Media	10	0.771 - 0.868	0.827	0.928	0.939	0.607
Trait Self-Control	8	0.743 - 0.842	0.806	0.899	0.919	0.619

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

3.3 Discriminant Validity

Table 4 reports heterotrait-monotrait ratios, which range from 0.388 to 0.703, all below the conservative 0.85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015). The highest ratio, 0.703 between hedonic browsing and impulse buying, is theoretically expected given their adjacency in the causal chain but remains within bounds, and its bootstrap upper confidence limit of 0.774 does not approach unity. Table 5 reports the Fornell-Larcker matrix with construct means and standard deviations; the square root of each construct's average variance extracted exceeds its correlations with other constructs. The correlations involving trait self-control are uniformly negative, as the theory predicts, and its mean of 4.33 is the lowest in the set, indicating that this sample of active social-commerce shoppers is, on average, modestly below the scale midpoint in dispositional restraint.

Table 4. Discriminant validity: heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations

Construct	SRM	AEG	HB	IB	SC
Self-Reward Motivation (SRM)	-				
Anticipated Gratification (AEG)	0.641	-			
Hedonic Browsing (HB)	0.612	0.658	-		
Impulse Buying (IB)	0.598	0.671	0.703	-	
Trait Self-Control (SC)	0.421	0.388	0.446	0.512	-

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	Mean	SD	SRM	AEG	HB	IB	SC
Self-Reward Motivation	4.72	1.18	0.804				
Anticipated Gratification	4.81	1.24	0.578	0.786			
Hedonic Browsing	4.89	1.31	0.551	0.592	0.797		
Impulse Buying	4.74	1.36	0.536	0.607	0.638	0.779	
Trait Self-Control	4.33	1.29	-0.381	-0.352	-0.404	-0.463	0.787

Note: Diagonal values are the square root of the average variance extracted; off-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations. Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

3.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 reports the structural model quality criteria. The model explains 36.1 per cent of the variance in anticipated gratification, 31.1 per cent in hedonic browsing, and 54.8 per cent in impulse buying, the last being substantial. Blindfolding returned Q-squared values of 0.238, 0.201, and 0.351, confirming predictive relevance for all three endogenous constructs. The maximum inner VIF of 2.213 rules out collinearity concerns, and approximate fit is acceptable, with an SRMR of 0.058 and an NFI of 0.914.

Table 6. Structural model quality criteria

Criterion	AEG	HB	IB	Threshold
R-squared	0.361	0.311	0.548	substantial > 0.33
Adjusted R-squared	0.359	0.309	0.541	-
Q-squared (blindfolding)	0.238	0.201	0.351	> 0
Maximum inner VIF	1.000	1.000	2.213	< 3.3
SRMR (saturated model)	0.058	0.058	0.058	< 0.08
NFI	0.914	0.914	0.914	> 0.90

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Table 7 presents the hypothesis tests and Figure 2 renders the estimated model. Seven of the eight hypotheses are supported. Self-reward motivation exerts strong positive effects on both anticipated gratification ($\beta = 0.601$, $t = 14.659$, $p < 0.001$) and hedonic browsing ($\beta = 0.558$, $t = 12.682$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1 and H2. Both organism states significantly predict impulse buying, with hedonic browsing the stronger of the two ($\beta = 0.402$, $f\text{-squared} = 0.231$) relative to anticipated gratification ($\beta = 0.319$, $f\text{-squared} = 0.142$), supporting H3 and H4. The direct path from self-reward motivation to impulse buying is positive and significant but weak ($\beta = 0.174$, $t = 3.164$, $p = 0.002$, $f\text{-squared} = 0.047$), supporting H5 while indicating that self-reward reaches impulse buying only modestly by a route that bypasses the two intervening states. Trait self-control also exerts a significant negative main effect on impulse buying ($\beta = -0.198$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with its role as a general restraint.

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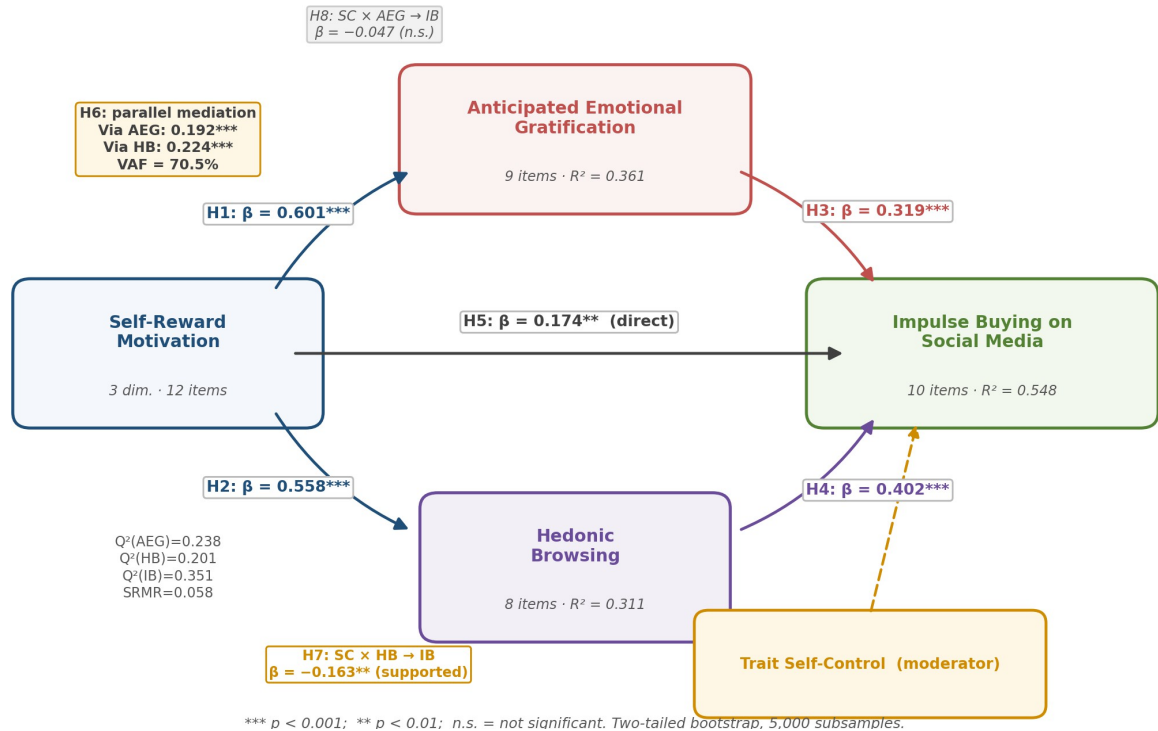


Figure 2. Estimated structural model with path coefficients

Source: Authors' analysis of SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Table 7. Hypothesis testing results

H	Path	Beta	SE	t	p	95% BCa CI	f-sq.	Decision
H1	SRM $\rightarrow$ AEG	0.601	0.041	14.659	< 0.001	[0.517, 0.678]	0.566	Supported
H2	SRM $\rightarrow$ HB	0.558	0.044	12.682	< 0.001	[0.468, 0.641]	0.451	Supported
H3	AEG $\rightarrow$ IB	0.319	0.052	6.135	< 0.001	[0.216, 0.419]	0.142	Supported
H4	HB $\rightarrow$ IB	0.402	0.049	8.204	< 0.001	[0.304, 0.496]	0.231	Supported
H5	SRM $\rightarrow$ IB (direct)	0.174	0.055	3.164	0.002	[0.066, 0.281]	0.047	Supported
H7	SC $\times$ HB $\rightarrow$ IB	-0.163	0.051	3.196	0.001	[-0.262, -0.062]	0.041	Supported
H8	SC $\times$ AEG $\rightarrow$ IB	-0.047	0.044	1.068	0.284	[-0.133, 0.040]	0.005	Not supported
-	SC $\rightarrow$ IB (main effect)	-0.198	0.047	4.213	< 0.001	[-0.289, -0.105]	0.098	-

Note: BCa = bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence interval, 5,000 subsamples, two-tailed. Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

3.5 Mediation Analysis

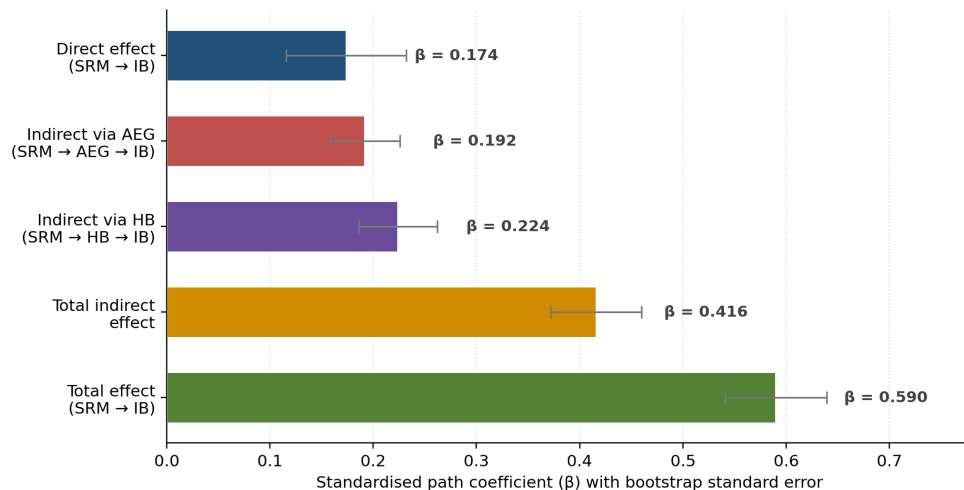
Table 8 decomposes the total effect of self-reward motivation on impulse buying, and Figure 3 renders the decomposition. Both specific indirect effects are positive and significant: the path

through anticipated gratification carries a coefficient of 0.192 ($t = 5.647$, $p < 0.001$) and the path through hedonic browsing a coefficient of 0.224 ($t = 5.895$, $p < 0.001$), with confidence intervals excluding zero in both cases. The total indirect effect is 0.416 against a total effect of 0.590, giving a variance accounted for of 70.5 per cent; because the direct effect also remains significant, H6 is supported as complementary partial mediation. The comparison of the two conduits is the substantive result: hedonic browsing accounts for 38.0 per cent of the total effect and anticipated gratification for 32.5 per cent, so slightly more of self-reward's influence flows through what consumers do, browsing, than through what they feel, anticipating. Both, however, dwarf the 29.5 per cent that reaches impulse buying directly. The practical reading is that self-reward is only weakly a direct trigger of purchase; it works predominantly by inducing an affectively primed browsing state that then does the triggering.

Table 8. Decomposition of the total effect

Effect	Coefficient	SE	t	p	95% BCa CI	Share of total
Direct (SRM → IB)	0.174	0.055	3.164	0.002	[0.066, 0.281]	29.5%
Indirect via AEG (SRM → AEG → IB)	0.192	0.034	5.647	< 0.001	[0.128, 0.261]	32.5%
Indirect via HB (SRM → HB → IB)	0.224	0.038	5.895	< 0.001	[0.153, 0.302]	38.0%
Total indirect	0.416	0.044	9.455	< 0.001	[0.332, 0.505]	70.5%
Total effect (SRM → IB)	0.590	0.049	12.041	< 0.001	[0.492, 0.684]	100.0%

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).



VAF = 70.5% → substantial complementary partial mediation; hedonic browsing is the stronger conduit

Figure 3. Direct, specific indirect, and total effects with bootstrap standard errors

Source: Authors' analysis (2026).

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3.6 Moderation Analysis

The two interaction terms behave asymmetrically, which is the study's central finding. The interaction between hedonic browsing and trait self-control is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.163$, $t = 3.196$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H7 and adding 4.1 percentage points of explained variance in impulse buying. The interaction between anticipated gratification and trait self-control is small and non-significant ($\beta = -0.047$, $t = 1.068$, $p = 0.284$), with a confidence interval spanning zero; H8 is not supported.

Table 9 and Figure 4 present the simple slopes that give the significant interaction meaning. At one standard deviation below the mean of self-control, the slope from hedonic browsing to impulse buying is 0.565; at the mean it is 0.402; and at one standard deviation above the mean it falls to 0.239. Restraint therefore attenuates the browsing-to-purchase link substantially, roughly halving it across the observed range of self-control, but does not abolish it: even highly self-controlled consumers convert browsing into impulse purchases, only less readily. The contrast with the non-significant gratification interaction is theoretically pointed. Self-control blunts the path that ends in a discrete, interruptible act, pressing a live checkout button, while leaving untouched the path that runs through a diffuse affective appraisal. The restraint operates on enactment, not on the formation of desire.

Table 9. Simple slopes of hedonic browsing on impulse buying at three levels of trait self-control

Level of trait self-control	Simple slope (HB → IB)	SE	t	p	Interpretation
Low (-1 SD)	0.565	0.062	9.113	< 0.001	Strong browsing-to-purchase link
Mean	0.402	0.049	8.204	< 0.001	Moderate positive link
High (+1 SD)	0.239	0.058	4.121	< 0.001	Attenuated but still significant

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

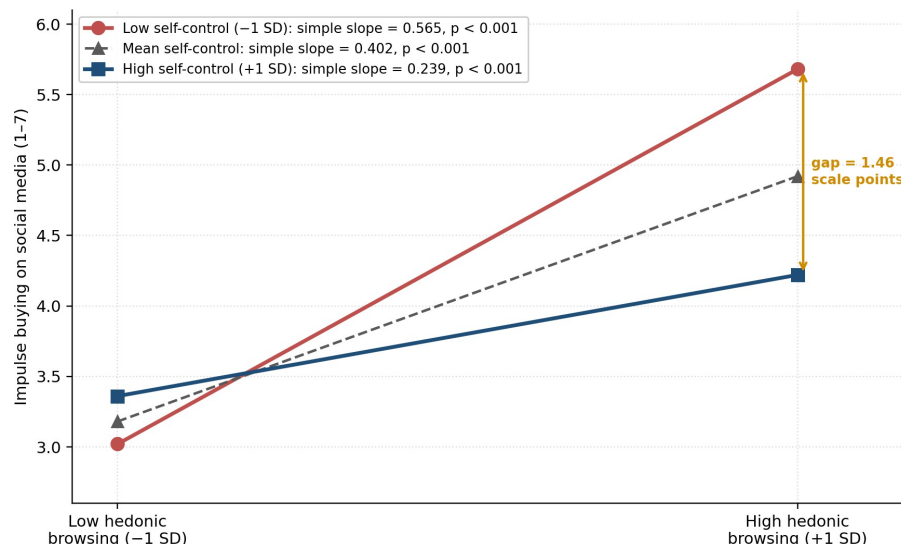


Figure 4. Simple slopes of the hedonic-browsing-to-impulse relationship at low, mean, and high self-control

Source: Authors' analysis (2026).

3.7 Subgroup Variation and Multi-Group Analysis

Two supplementary analyses probe consistency across the sample. Figure 5 plots construct means by primary platform. The three video-forward, livestream-native platforms, TikTok Shop, Shopee Live, and Instagram, score highest on all four focal constructs, while Facebook Marketplace and WhatsApp commerce, which are more transactional and less immersive, score lowest. TikTok Shop records the highest hedonic browsing mean at 5.21, consistent with its algorithmically driven, endlessly scrollable format. The ordering is stable across constructs, suggesting that platform format shapes the intensity of the whole mechanism rather than any single construct within it.

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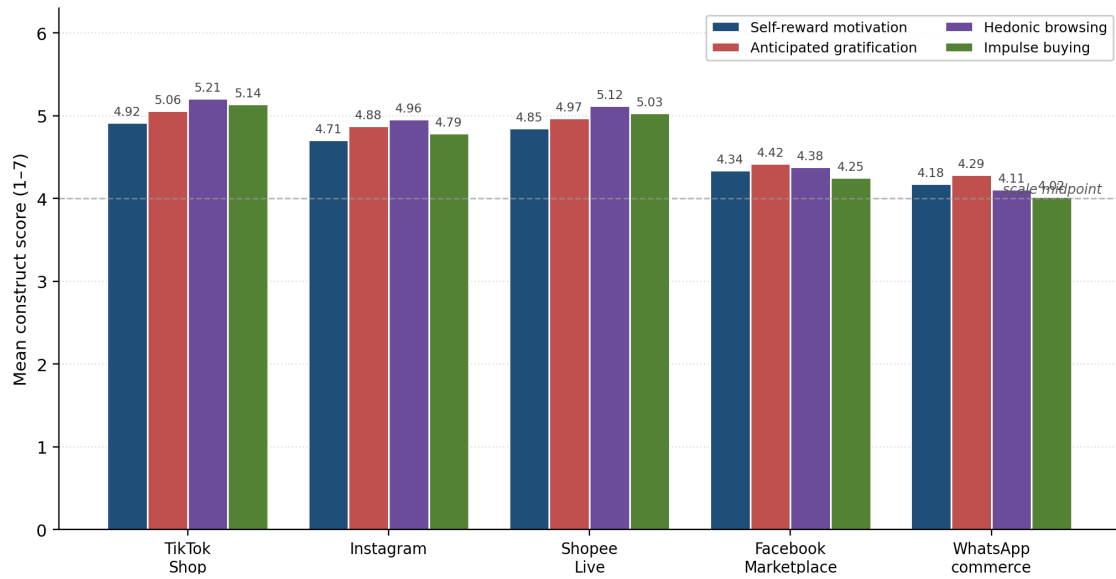


Figure 5. Mean construct scores by primary social-commerce platform

Source: Primary data (2026).

Table 10 reports a permutation-based multi-group analysis comparing TikTok Shop with Shopee Live users, conducted after MICOM confirmed partial measurement invariance. Three of the four paths are statistically invariant, indicating that the core mechanism operates similarly across the two dominant platforms. The exception is the moderating effect of self-control, which is significantly stronger for TikTok Shop users (-0.201) than for Shopee Live users (-0.108, difference = -0.093, $p = 0.041$). A plausible reading is that TikTok's continuous, high-velocity feed presents more frequent and more spontaneous purchase moments, giving trait self-control more occasions on which to intervene, so its buffering effect is more visible where the impulsive pull is strongest. This is examined in the discussion.

Table 10. Multi-group analysis by primary platform

Path	TikTok Shop (n = 156)	Shopee Live (n = 112)	Difference	p (permutation)	Conclusion
SRM -> AEG	0.618	0.594	0.024	0.712	Invariant
SRM -> HB	0.591	0.542	0.049	0.438	Invariant
HB -> IB	0.451	0.396	0.055	0.317	Invariant
SC x HB -> IB	-0.201	-0.108	-0.093	0.041	Differs

Source: SmartPLS 4 permutation test, 5,000 permutations (2026).

3.8 Robustness Check and Importance-Performance Analysis

Table 11 reports a robustness check adding four control variables to the impulse-buying equation: age, weekly platform time, personal income, and gender. All focal coefficients change by less than 0.013 and retain significance, and the interaction term remains significant at $p = 0.002$. Two controls are themselves significant, weekly platform time ($\beta = 0.121$, $p = 0.008$) and age ($\beta = -0.089$, $p = 0.028$, younger respondents buying more impulsively), while income and gender are not. Explained variance in impulse buying rises from 0.548 to 0.571. The stability of the estimates provides reasonable assurance that the relationships are not artefacts of demographic or exposure heterogeneity.

Table 11. Robustness check with control variables

Path / control variable	Base model	With controls	Change	p (with controls)
SRM → AEG	0.601	0.593	-0.008	< 0.001
SRM → HB	0.558	0.549	-0.009	< 0.001
AEG → IB	0.319	0.308	-0.011	< 0.001
HB → IB	0.402	0.389	-0.013	< 0.001
SRM → IB (direct)	0.174	0.166	-0.008	0.004
SC x HB → IB	-0.163	-0.157	+0.006	0.002
Control: age	-	-0.089	-	0.028
Control: weekly platform time	-	0.121	-	0.008
Control: personal income	-	0.058	-	0.164
Control: gender	-	0.041	-	0.312
R-squared (IB)	0.548	0.571	+0.023	-

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Figure 6 presents an importance-performance map analysis (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016) at the construct and dimension level, plotting each antecedent's total effect on impulse buying against its rescaled performance index. Self-reward motivation records the highest importance at 0.312, and hedonic browsing follows at 0.246, confirming that the browsing conduit is where the leverage concentrates. Within self-reward, the mood-repair motive combines above-median importance with the lowest performance index in the set at 63.5, marking it as the dimension most responsive to intervention. Trait self-control sits in the lower-left region with modest importance and the lowest performance of all, 58.7, reflecting the sample's below-midpoint restraint. The map's practical message is unambiguous: efforts to influence impulse buying, whether a platform seeking to encourage it or a consumer-protection body seeking to temper it, will find the greatest purchase on hedonic browsing and on the mood-repair motive that feeds it.

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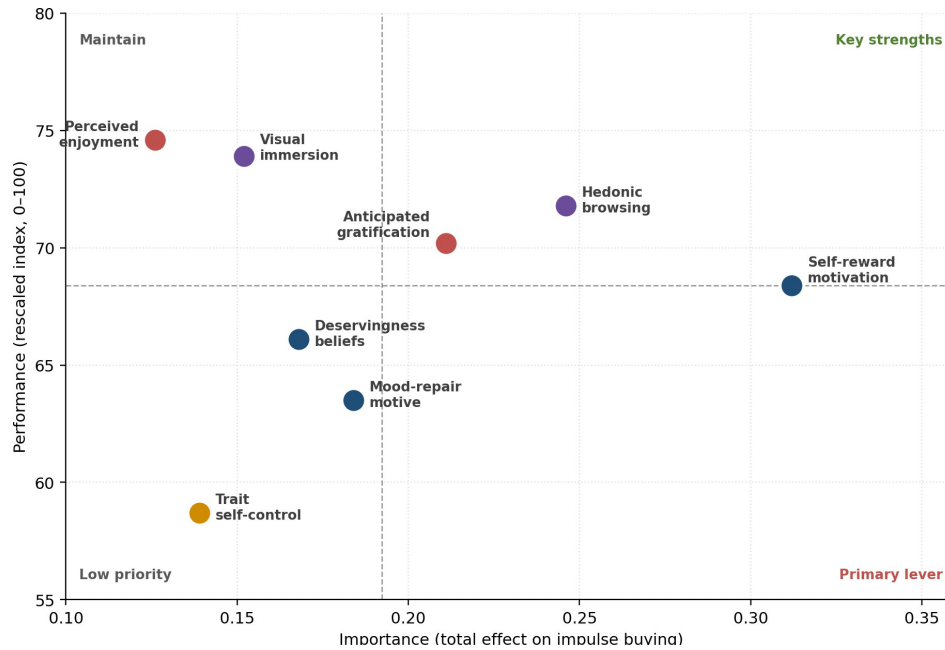


Figure 6. Importance-performance map analysis

Source: Authors' analysis of SmartPLS 4 IPMA output (2026).

3.9 Summary of Findings

Figure 7 consolidates the principal results. Seven of eight hypotheses are supported; self-reward reaches impulse buying overwhelmingly through the organism rather than directly; hedonic browsing is the stronger of the two conduits; and self-control restrains the browsing path to action without moderating the affective path. The single non-supported hypothesis, H8, is not incidental: it establishes that restraint is enactment-specific, which is the finding that carries the heaviest theoretical weight in the discussion.

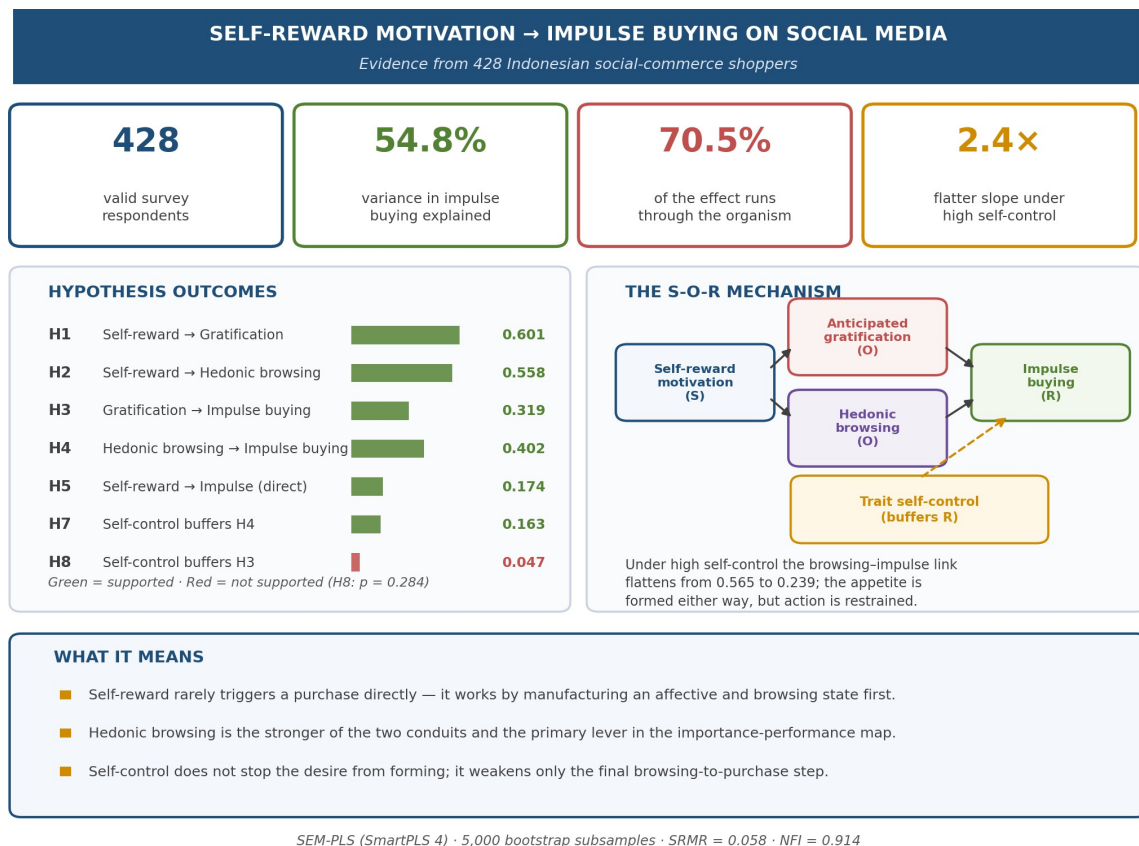


Figure 7. Summary of empirical findings

Source: Authors' analysis (2026).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of the Principal Findings

The study set out to explain how self-reward, a motivational framing that consumers increasingly attach to their online purchasing, produces impulse buying on social media, and what restrains it. Three results define the answer. First, self-reward is a poor direct trigger. Only 29.5 per cent of its total effect on impulse buying reaches the outcome without passing through an intervening state; the deliberate act of buying-as-mood-repair, in which the acquisition itself is the reward, exists but is the smallest of the three channels. Second, the mechanism is overwhelmingly indirect and, more precisely, more behavioural than affective: the path through hedonic browsing (38.0 per cent of the total effect) slightly exceeds the path through anticipated gratification (32.5 per cent). Self-reward, in other words, works less by making consumers feel that a purchase will be pleasurable and more by licensing them to browse pleurably, and browsing is what delivers them

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to the purchase. Third, restraint is selective. Trait self-control halves the browsing-to-purchase slope across its range but leaves the gratification-to-purchase path statistically untouched.

The asymmetry between H7 and H8 is the finding worth dwelling on, because it specifies where in the impulse process self-control actually operates. Dual-process theory holds that the reflective system overrides the impulsive one, but it is usually silent on which link in a multi-step process is the site of the override. The present results locate it. Self-control does not appear to dampen the pleasant anticipation that self-reward generates, nor does it detectably weaken the affective path from that anticipation to purchase; anticipated gratification does its work whether or not the consumer is dispositionally restrained. What self-control interrupts is the more concrete, more behaviourally proximate link, the one running from an active browsing state to a discrete purchase act. The most economical interpretation is that restraint requires an object, a specific approach movement to inhibit, and browsing culminating in a live checkout supplies one, whereas a diffuse affective appraisal does not. Restraint governs enactment, not desire.

4.2 Dialogue with Prior Literature

These findings speak to three bodies of work. They extend the impulse-buying process model of Beatty and Ferrell (1998), who established that browsing and positive affect precede the urge to buy. The present study confirms that both matter in the social-commerce context and adds a specification the original model did not contain: it identifies the upstream motivational content, self-reward, that sets browsing and anticipation in motion, and it shows that the browsing conduit is the stronger of the two. Where Beatty and Ferrell treated browsing and affect as parallel antecedents of roughly comparable status, the evidence here gives browsing a modest but consistent edge, which matters for anyone trying to intervene on the process.

They qualify the compensatory-consumption literature. Mandel et al. (2017), synthesising work on consumption as a response to self-threat, describe purchasing as a means of mood repair, a framing that can imply the acquisition is the direct instrument of regulation. The present results complicate that implication in a specific way: in social commerce, self-reward reaches purchase mainly by routing through hedonic browsing and anticipation rather than by directly instrumentalising acquisition. The mood-repair motive is real and is the single most intervention-responsive dimension in the importance-performance map, but it is more accurately understood as what starts a pleasurable browsing episode than as what directly commands a purchase. Compensatory consumption, in this setting, is enacted through the media environment rather than in spite of it.

They connect to the self-control literature in consumption, particularly Baumeister (2002) and Hofmann et al. (2009), who model consumer self-regulation as a contest between desire and restraint. The contribution here is to show that the contest is not fought at a single front. Restraint is effective at the behavioural front, browsing to purchase, and absent at the affective front,

anticipation to purchase. This helps reconcile a tension in that literature between findings that self-control reliably reduces impulsive spending and findings that consumers high in self-control still report strong consumption desires. Both can be true if self-control operates on enactment while leaving desire intact, which is precisely what the moderation pattern shows.

4.3 Theoretical Implications

Two theoretical adjustments follow. The first concerns the stimulus-organism-response paradigm as applied to social commerce. The paradigm is typically used to show that environmental stimuli produce responses via organism states, treating the organism as a single mediating box. The results here argue for disaggregating that box, because its components are not interchangeable: an affective component (anticipated gratification) and a behavioural-experiential component (hedonic browsing) carry the effect through different routes and, crucially, respond differently to moderation. A stimulus-organism-response model that collapses affect and browsing into one mediator would miss the selective moderation entirely and would misestimate where intervention bites. The proposition offered for future testing is that response-stage moderators will generally act on behavioural-experiential organism states rather than on affective ones, because the former terminate in interruptible acts.

The second concerns self-regulation theory. The dominant dual-process account pairs an impulsive system with a reflective one and predicts that trait self-control moderates the translation of impulse into behaviour. The present study refines that prediction by identifying a boundary on it: self-control moderates the translation only where the impulsive pathway terminates in a discrete, proximate behavioural opportunity. Where the pathway operates through a diffuse affective bias, dispositional self-control does not detectably intervene. This suggests that self-control is better modelled as an act-inhibition capacity than as a general desire-suppression capacity, at least in fast, cue-rich environments like live commerce. The distinction is testable and has implications well beyond consumption, wherever self-regulation is theorised.

4.4 Practical and Managerial Implications

For consumers and the advocates who seek to protect them, the results reframe what effective self-regulation looks like in social commerce. Because self-control operates on enactment rather than desire, advice to simply want less, or to feel less anticipation, is unlikely to work; the desire forms upstream and automatically (Rolando & Chondro, 2025). What the evidence supports instead is intervention at the enactment link, where restraint is effective: introducing friction into the browsing-to-purchase transition. Consumer-facing tools that impose a delay before livestream checkout, that require re-confirmation, or that surface a running monthly impulse total at the point of purchase target exactly the link the data show to be moderable, and they substitute an environmental brake for the dispositional one that low-self-control consumers lack (Rolando, 2025).

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For platform operators and social sellers, the same mechanism read from the other side identifies the levers of conversion, and the importance-performance analysis locates them (Rolando, 2023). Hedonic browsing is the primary conduit and the mood-repair motive its most responsive feeder. Design choices that deepen immersive, pleasurable, non-goal-directed browsing, autoplaying video feeds, algorithmic novelty, and ambient livestream presence, act directly on the strongest path in the model (Rolando et al., 2024). This is offered as an accurate description of how these systems convert, not as an endorsement; the same finding is what makes the consumer-protection case above coherent, since the mechanism a platform can amplify is the one a regulator would seek to dampen.

For policymakers and consumer-protection regulators, the results argue for attention to the design of the browsing-to-purchase transition specifically, rather than to advertising content or to disclosure alone. Because the behaviour is driven by an automatic upstream motive and a pleasurable browsing state that consumers do not experience as manipulation, disclosure-based remedies, which assume a deliberating consumer who can be informed into caution, are poorly matched to the mechanism. Remedies that regulate the frictionlessness of impulse checkout in livestream contexts, by contrast, target the one link the evidence identifies as both causally central and behaviourally interruptible. Indonesia's position as a leading live-commerce market makes it a natural site for such design-focused regulation.

4.5 Alternative Explanations and Validity Considerations

Four rival accounts warrant consideration. The first is common method bias. Harman's single-factor test returned 29.4 per cent and the maximum VIF was 2.213, both within accepted bounds. More decisively, method bias does not manufacture interaction effects and tends to attenuate them, so the significant moderation is unlikely to be a method artefact and may be conservatively estimated. The second is reverse causality: impulsive buyers might retrospectively describe themselves as self-reward oriented or as hedonic browsers. The cross-sectional design cannot exclude this, though the instrument's use of concrete, recent, behaviourally anchored items rather than global self-descriptions reduces its plausibility. A longitudinal or experience-sampling design would be preferable and is proposed below.

The third is that the self-reward and hedonic-browsing constructs overlap conceptually, inflating the mediation. Discriminant validity was satisfactory on both the HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criteria, and the constructs are theoretically distinct, one a standing motivation and the other a momentary activity, but their empirical proximity is real and the mediation estimate should be read with that proximity in mind. The fourth concerns the measurement of impulse buying, which relies on self-report rather than observed transaction logs. Respondents were screened for recent, specific behaviour and the items referenced concrete livestream episodes to mitigate recall

error, but behavioural-log data linked to survey responses would provide a stronger criterion and remain a goal for future work.

4.6 Boundary Conditions

The results apply most confidently to immersive, video-forward social-commerce environments in which browsing is pleasurable and checkout is frictionless and proximate, the configuration that gives hedonic browsing its strength and gives self-control a discrete act to interrupt. In more transactional, search-driven e-commerce, where purchase follows deliberate goal pursuit rather than exploratory browsing, both the browsing conduit and the enactment-specific moderation would likely weaken, since there is less pleasurable browsing to mediate and fewer spontaneous checkout moments to restrain (Rolando, 2024). The findings also reflect a young, highly engaged Indonesian sample with below-midpoint self-control; in populations with stronger dispositional restraint the moderation would have more room to operate but the base rate of impulse buying would be lower. The cultural salience of the reward framing in Southeast Asian live commerce may also amplify the self-reward pathway relative to markets where that framing is less heavily cued.

4.7 Limitations

Six limitations qualify the findings. First, the cross-sectional design supports mechanism specification but not temporal causal inference. Second, impulse buying was measured by self-report rather than transaction logs. Third, the sample was recruited online through interest communities and referral, which may over-represent highly engaged social-commerce users and inflate the base rates of the focal behaviours, though this does not bias the structural relationships in an obvious direction. Fourth, single-respondent, single-occasion measurement leaves the estimates exposed to residual common-method concerns despite the controls applied. Fifth, the model treats the platform environment as an implicit constant rather than measuring specific design stimuli, urgency cues, scarcity framing, or recommendation intensity, that likely drive hedonic browsing; these were black-boxed. Sixth, trait self-control was measured dispositionally, whereas momentary regulatory capacity fluctuates with fatigue, mood, and prior self-control exertion, and a state measure might reveal moderation the trait measure smooths over.

4.8 Future Research Agenda

Five extensions follow. First, an experience-sampling design that pings respondents during and immediately after live-shopping sessions would capture the mechanism as it unfolds and would resolve both the causality and the self-report limitations, while allowing state self-control to be measured at the moment of temptation. Second, a study measuring specific platform stimuli, scarcity cues, livestream urgency, and recommendation novelty, as antecedents of hedonic browsing would open the black box the present model left closed and connect the organism stage to concrete design features. Third, a field experiment introducing checkout friction into a live-commerce interface would test directly the enactment-link intervention the discussion proposes,

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moving from mechanism to remedy. Fourth, replication across a transactional e-commerce context and a search-driven marketplace would test the boundary condition in section 4.6 by varying the frictionlessness and pleasurability of the environment. Fifth, the enactment-versus-desire distinction invites work outside consumption: any domain with an impulsive pathway, eating, media use, gambling, could test whether trait self-control likewise moderates only the pathways terminating in discrete acts.

5. CONCLUSION

This study asked how self-reward produces impulse buying on social media and what restrains it, and tested a moderated parallel-mediation model on 428 Indonesian social-commerce shoppers. Four findings answer the question. Self-reward motivation raises impulse buying, but 70.5 per cent of that effect runs through two intervening states rather than directly. The two conduits differ: hedonic browsing carries slightly more of the effect than anticipated gratification, so self-reward operates more through pleasurable browsing than through anticipated pleasure. Trait self-control attenuates the browsing-to-purchase link but not the gratification-to-purchase link, locating restraint at the point of enactment rather than at the formation of desire.

The contribution is to integrate the self-reward and impulse-buying literatures into a single tested model, to disaggregate the organism stage of the stimulus-organism-response framework into affective and behavioural components that carry the effect differently and respond differently to restraint, and to refine dual-process self-regulation theory by showing that trait self-control acts as an act-inhibition capacity rather than a general desire-suppression capacity. The enactment-versus-desire distinction is, in the authors' view, the more portable of these, since it reframes self-control wherever an impulsive pathway is at issue.

For practice, the implication cuts in two directions from a single mechanism. The browsing-to-purchase transition is simultaneously where platforms convert impulse most effectively and where consumers, advocates, and regulators can most effectively intervene, because it is the one link that both drives the behaviour and yields to restraint. Telling consumers to want less will not work; the desire forms upstream and automatically. Placing friction between the pleasurable scroll and the frictionless checkout might, because that is the link the evidence shows to be both decisive and interruptible.

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