



## The Scroll Effect: Examining the Drivers of Gen Z's Impulse Buying Behavior on TikTok

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Impulse Buying Behavior, Utilitarian Value, Urge to Buy Impulsively, Gen Z, TikTok.

*Received :* 27, July

*Revised :* 20, August

*Accepted:* 23, September

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity on impulse buying behavior among Gen Z TikTok users in Makassar, Indonesia. Data were collected from 183 respondents using purposive sampling and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results show that utilitarian value ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) and urge to buy impulsively ( $\beta = 0.620$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) significantly influenced impulse buying behavior, while co-promotion and perceived similarity had no significant direct effects. The model explained 63.4% of the variance in impulse buying behavior. These findings highlight that functional shopping value and, particularly, consumers' immediate purchasing urges are more directly associated with impulse buying than social engagement factors in the TikTok shopping environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

The convergence of social media and e-commerce has created digital environments in which content consumption, social interaction, product discovery, and purchasing increasingly occur within the same platform (Meng et al., 2024; Xie, 2025; Yang et al., 2026). Social commerce facilitates purchasing activities through integrated commercial features, while video-based commerce further combines visual content and interactive experiences with product promotion (Azad et al., 2024; Hsu et al., 2026; X. Li et al., 2025). TikTok Shop reflects this development by integrating commerce into short-form video consumption, creating an environment in which users may encounter products while engaging with entertaining and personalized content (Ngo et al., 2025). As product exposure can occur during routine content consumption rather than only through deliberate product searches, TikTok provides a relevant setting for examining impulse buying (Li et al., 2025; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2026; Yi et al., 2023).

Impulse buying refers to spontaneous and unplanned purchasing behavior involving limited prior deliberation. In digital commerce, such behavior can be shaped by various marketing, situational, social, and psychological factors (Kong et al., 2025). Research on AI-driven personalized marketing further shows that psychological mechanisms such as consumer trust can play an important role in shaping purchase decisions in personalized digital environments (Azmi et al., 2026). Lee et al. (2025), for example, identify multiple groups of antecedents across live-streaming commerce research, while studies in video-based commerce have examined factors such as economic benefits, social influence, entertainment, information usefulness, emotional responses, and consumer vulnerability (Mudjahidin et al., 2026; Ngo et al., 2025; Xiao et al., 2026). These findings indicate that impulse buying in digital environments is not driven by a single stimulus but may involve a combination of consumers' evaluations, social experiences, and internal psychological responses.

Within the short-video context, Vinkóczy et al. (2026) identified four factors associated with consumers' involvement in the impulse purchase cycle: utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity. These dimensions capture different aspects of the consumer experience, including the functional value of using TikTok for shopping, consumers' promotional engagement, their immediate urge to purchase, and their perceived similarity with content creators. Related studies provide further evidence that both functional and psychological mechanisms are relevant to digital impulse buying. Economic benefits have been associated with impulse buying among TikTok Shop users (Ngo et al., 2025), while studies of digital and video commerce emphasize the role of consumers' internal responses in translating platform or content stimuli into impulsive purchasing outcomes (Qiu et al., 2026; To & Nguyen, 2026).

However, existing research does not suggest that these factors operate uniformly across digital-commerce settings. Lee et al. (2025) describe the literature on impulse buying in live-streaming commerce as fragmented across streamer characteristics, social dynamics, platform features, and psychological

mechanisms. Empirical studies also emphasize different pathways: Azad et al. (2024) examine social-commerce motivations and the urge to buy impulsively; Ngo et al. (2025) investigate pressure, economic benefits, social influence, entertainment, information usefulness, and arousal among TikTok Shop users; and Mudjahidin et al. (2026) examine platform-related stimuli and consumer vulnerability in the Indonesian video-commerce context. Such variation indicates that the relationships between digital-commerce factors and impulse buying depend on the constructs and behavioral outcomes being examined.

More specifically, Vinkóczy et al. (2026) incorporated utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity within an impulse purchase-cycle framework rather than testing the four constructs simultaneously as direct antecedents of a separately measured impulse buying behavior construct. This distinction is important because the urge to make an impulsive purchase and the purchasing behavior itself represent related but conceptually distinct consumer responses. Yi et al. (2023), for instance, distinguish impulse buying tendency from subsequent purchase decisions, while other studies examine impulse buying as a behavioral outcome of digital-commerce stimuli (Cao et al., 2026; Vinkóczy et al., 2024). Examining the four TikTok-related dimensions against a distinct impulse buying behavior construct therefore provides an extension of the existing framework rather than a direct replication.

Against this background, this study examines the effects of utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity on impulse buying behavior among Generation Z TikTok users in Makassar, Indonesia. By linking the four dimensions identified by Vinkóczy et al. (2026) to a separately measured impulse buying behavior construct, this study integrates functional, social, psychological, and creator-related factors within a single empirical model. The study thereby provides evidence on whether these dimensions are directly associated with impulse buying behavior in an Indonesian Gen Z context and complements existing research conducted across short-video, social-commerce, and video-commerce settings.

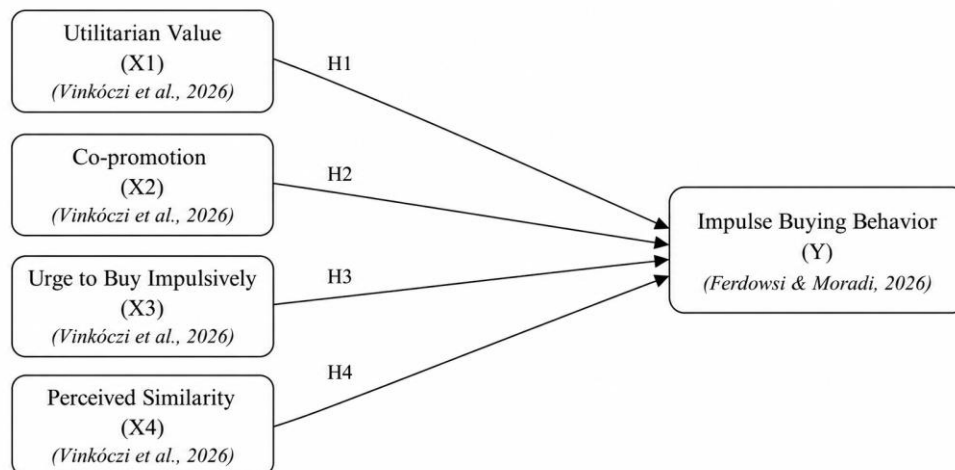
## **IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to examine the effects of utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity on impulse buying behavior in the context of TikTok-based shopping. The study focused on Generation Z TikTok users residing in Makassar, Indonesia. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed, with respondents required to meet the study's eligibility criteria, including being within the Generation Z age range, residing in Makassar, using TikTok, and having purchased a product after encountering it on TikTok. Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire using Google Forms from August 29 to September 14, 2026. A total of 185 responses were initially obtained; two responses that did not meet the purchase eligibility criterion were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 183 respondents.

The measurement instrument was adapted from previously established scales and contextualized for TikTok-based shopping. Utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity were adapted from Vinkóczy et al. (2026), while impulse buying behavior was adapted from Ferdowsi and Moradi (2026). All measurement items were assessed using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

The conceptual framework specifies utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity as exogenous constructs and impulse buying behavior as the endogenous construct. The model extends the TikTok-related dimensions examined by Vinkóczy et al. (2026) by linking them to impulse buying behavior as a separately measured behavioral outcome. Accordingly, the study proposes that utilitarian value (H1), co-promotion (H2), urge to buy impulsively (H3), and perceived similarity (H4) have positive effects on impulse buying behavior. The proposed relationships are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**



Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The analysis comprised measurement-model and structural-model assessments. The measurement model was evaluated using indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, composite reliability (rho\_C), average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) for discriminant validity. Following the measurement-model assessment, the structural model was evaluated using inner variance inflation factors (VIF), the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and bootstrapped path coefficients to assess the proposed hypotheses. Statistical significance of the structural relationships was determined from the bootstrapped  $t$ - and  $p$ -values (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2022; Shmueli et al., 2019).

## RESULTS

A total of 185 responses were initially collected, of which two were excluded because they did not meet the purchase eligibility criterion. The final sample therefore consisted of 183 respondents. Female respondents accounted for 62.3% of the sample, while 37.7% were male. The largest age group was 21–24 years (44.8%), followed by 17–20 years (28.4%) and 25–29 years (26.8%). More than half of the respondents (53.0%) reported using TikTok for more than four hours, while 53.6% had purchased products encountered through TikTok more than five times.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

| Characteristic         | Category          | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender                 | Female            | 114           | 62.3           |
|                        | Male              | 69            | 37.7           |
| Age                    | 17–20 years       | 52            | 28.4           |
|                        | 21–24 years       | 82            | 44.8           |
|                        | 25–29 years       | 49            | 26.8           |
| Employment Status      | Student           | 55            | 30.1           |
|                        | Entrepreneur      | 44            | 24.0           |
|                        | Civil Servant     | 43            | 23.5           |
|                        | Employee          | 40            | 21.9           |
|                        | Others            | 1             | 0.5            |
| TikTok Usage Intensity | Less than 1 hour  | 2             | 1.1            |
|                        | 1–2 hours         | 38            | 20.8           |
|                        | 3–4 hours         | 46            | 25.1           |
|                        | More than 4 hours | 97            | 53.0           |
| Purchase Frequency     | Once              | 5             | 2.7            |
|                        | 2–3 times         | 54            | 29.5           |
|                        | 4–5 times         | 26            | 14.2           |
|                        | More than 5 times | 98            | 53.6           |

Source: Authors' Survey

### Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed before evaluating the structural relationships. As presented in Table 2, most indicator loadings exceeded 0.70. PS1 recorded a lower loading of 0.657 but was retained within the perceived similarity construct. All constructs demonstrated Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 and composite reliability (rho\_C) values ranging from 0.888 to 0.920. The AVE values ranged from 0.731 to 0.793, indicating adequate convergent validity. During measurement-model refinement, IBB4 was excluded because of empirical overlap with urge to buy impulsively.

**Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment**

| Construct         | Indicator | Loading | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | rho_A | rho_C | AVE   |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Utilitarian Value | UV1       | 0.856   | 0.846               | 0.850 | 0.907 | 0.765 |
|                   | UV2       | 0.921   |                     |       |       |       |
|                   | UV3       | 0.846   |                     |       |       |       |
| Co-promotion      | Co-P1     | 0.923   | 0.823               | 0.833 | 0.896 | 0.742 |

|                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                               | Co-P2 | 0.876 |       |       |       |       |
|                               | Co-P3 | 0.778 |       |       |       |       |
| Urge to Buy<br>Impulsively    | UBI1  | 0.898 |       |       |       |       |
|                               | UBI2  | 0.859 | 0.869 | 0.874 | 0.920 | 0.793 |
|                               | UBI3  | 0.913 |       |       |       |       |
| Perceived<br>Similarity       | PS1   | 0.657 |       |       |       |       |
|                               | PS2   | 0.945 | 0.823 | 0.963 | 0.888 | 0.731 |
|                               | PS3   | 0.931 |       |       |       |       |
| Impulse<br>Buying<br>Behavior | IBB1  | 0.922 |       |       |       |       |
|                               | IBB2  | 0.866 | 0.850 | 0.857 | 0.909 | 0.770 |
|                               | IBB3  | 0.843 |       |       |       |       |

Source: SmartPLS Results

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). All HTMT point estimates were below the threshold of 0.90. The highest value was observed between urge to buy impulsively and impulse buying behavior (HTMT = 0.891), indicating a relatively close relationship between the two constructs. However, the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval [0.813, 0.954] did not include 1, supporting their empirical distinction. Overall, the results provide support for discriminant validity, although the relatively high UBI-IBB association should be considered when interpreting their structural relationship.

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Matrix)**

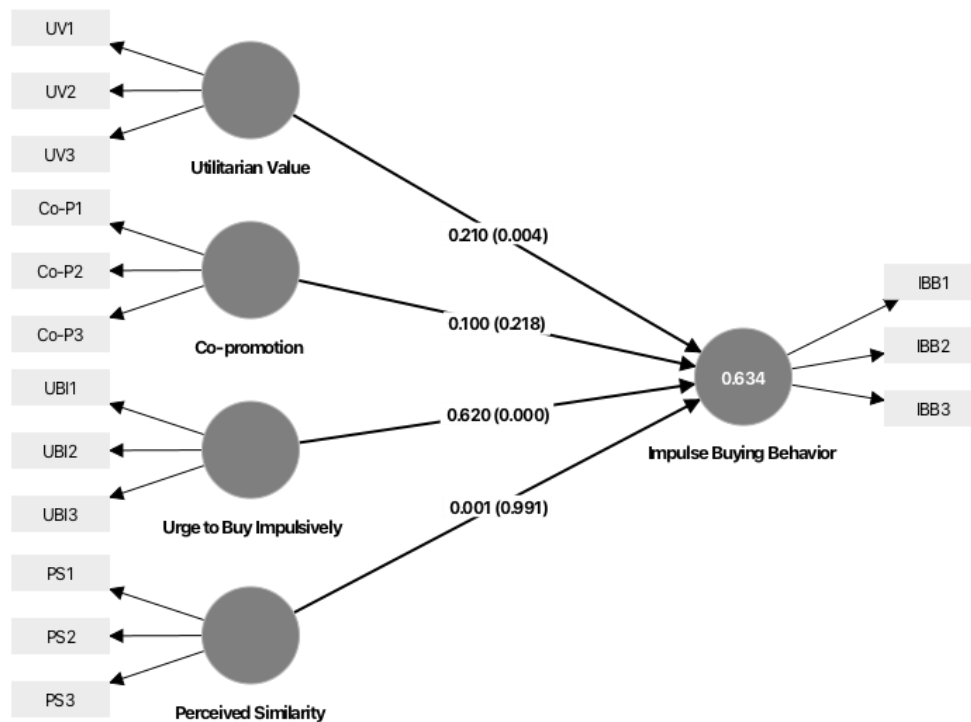
| Construct               | Co-promotion | IBB   | Perceived Similarity | UBI   | Utilitarian Value |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Co-promotion            | —            |       |                      |       |                   |
| Impulse Buying Behavior | 0.386        | —     |                      |       |                   |
| Perceived Similarity    | 0.854        | 0.461 | —                    |       |                   |
| Urge to Buy Impulsively | 0.346        | 0.891 | 0.518                | —     |                   |
| Utilitarian Value       | 0.237        | 0.690 | 0.369                | 0.664 | —                 |

Source: SmartPLS Results

### Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Following the measurement-model assessment, the structural model was evaluated to examine the proposed relationships. The structural model results are presented in Figure 2. The model explained 63.4% of the variance in impulse buying behavior ( $R^2 = 0.634$ ). The estimated path coefficients indicate positive relationships between utilitarian value and impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.210$ ) and between urge to buy impulsively and impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.620$ ). In comparison, the coefficients for co-promotion ( $\beta = 0.100$ ) and perceived similarity ( $\beta = 0.001$ ) were considerably smaller. Statistical significance was subsequently evaluated through the bootstrapping results presented in Table 4.

**Figure 2. Structural Model Results**



Source: SmartPLS Results

**Table 4. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing**

| Hypothesis | Relationship                                               | $\beta$ | STDEV | t-value | p-value | Decision         |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|---------|---------|------------------|
| H1         | Utilitarian Value<br>→ Impulse<br>Buying Behavior          | 0.210   | 0.073 | 2.887   | 0.004   | Supported        |
| H2         | Co-promotion →<br>Impulse Buying<br>Behavior               | 0.100   | 0.081 | 1.232   | 0.218   | Not<br>supported |
| H3         | Urge to Buy<br>Impulsively →<br>Impulse Buying<br>Behavior | 0.620   | 0.075 | 8.246   | <0.001  | Supported        |
| H4         | Perceived<br>Similarity →<br>Impulse Buying<br>Behavior    | 0.001   | 0.073 | 0.011   | 0.991   | Not<br>supported |

Source: SmartPLS Results

The hypothesis-testing results reveal that utilitarian value had a positive and statistically significant effect on impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $t = 2.887$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), supporting H1. Urge to buy impulsively also showed a positive and statistically significant relationship with impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.620$ ,  $t = 8.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3. In contrast, the effects of co-promotion ( $\beta = 0.100$ ,  $t = 1.232$ ,  $p = 0.218$ ) and perceived similarity ( $\beta = 0.001$ ,  $t = 0.011$ ,  $p = 0.991$ ) were not statistically significant; therefore, H2 and H4 were not supported.

## DISCUSSION

The findings show that utilitarian value and urge to buy impulsively significantly influenced impulse buying behavior, whereas co-promotion and perceived similarity did not have significant direct effects. With the model explaining 63.4% of the variance in impulse buying behavior, the results indicate that functional, social, and psychological factors do not contribute equally to unplanned purchasing on TikTok. This pattern is consistent with Lee et al. (2025), who show that impulse buying in digital commerce involves different platform, social, and psychological mechanisms.

Utilitarian value had a significant positive effect on impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.210, p = 0.004$ ), supporting H1. This finding suggests that the ease and efficiency consumers experience when searching for and purchasing products on TikTok can contribute to unplanned purchases. Related evidence from Ngo et al. (2025) shows that economic benefits contributed to impulse buying among TikTok Shop users, although information usefulness did not have a significant direct effect. Kong et al. (2025) also found that value perception mediated the relationship between livestream stimuli and impulse buying. Thus, different forms of perceived value may operate differently in digital shopping. The present study adds to this evidence by showing that utilitarian value, reflecting the functional benefits of TikTok for shopping, was directly associated with impulse buying behavior.

In contrast, co-promotion did not significantly influence impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.100, p = 0.218$ ), leaving H2 unsupported. This result suggests an important distinction between consumers being socially influenced and consumers actively promoting products to others. While Ngo et al. (2025) found that social influence contributed to impulse buying among TikTok Shop users, co-promotion represents a different response involving recommendation, sharing, or positive communication about a brand. Therefore, consumers may be willing to advocate a product without necessarily making their own spontaneous purchase. This interpretation also reflects the broader view of Lee et al. (2025) that social dynamics represent one of several mechanisms involved in digital impulse buying rather than a uniform direct driver of purchasing behavior.

Urge to buy impulsively had the strongest relationship with impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.620, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3. This strong association is theoretically plausible because the urge represents an immediate psychological response that is closely related to an impulsive purchasing action. Yi et al. (2023) distinguish impulse buying tendency from subsequent purchase decisions and show that psychological processes, including anticipated emotions, are involved in translating impulsive tendencies into purchasing outcomes. Similarly, Nguyen and Nguyen (2026) found that cognitive resonance was positively associated with impulse buying in short-video e-commerce, while Mudjahidin et al. (2026) emphasize the role of psychological vulnerability and emotional decision-making in impulsive consumption. Nevertheless, the relatively high HTMT value between UBI and IBB indicates that the two constructs are conceptually and empirically close. Therefore, the strong path coefficient should be interpreted with some caution. Although UBI captures an immediate psychological urge

whereas IBB represents enacted unplanned purchasing behavior, their close relationship may partly account for the comparatively strong effect observed in this study.

Perceived similarity did not significantly influence impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.001$ ,  $p = 0.991$ ), leaving H4 unsupported. Feeling similar to a TikTok creator in terms of product style or preferences may help consumers relate to the creator, but this perception alone may not be sufficient to trigger an unplanned purchase. Xiao et al. (2026) found that livestream content characteristics influenced impulse-buying intentions partly through pleasure and arousal, while Nguyen and Nguyen (2026) show that short-video content characteristics operate through cognitive and emotional resonance. Although these studies did not examine the same perceived-similarity relationship, they indicate that external and social cues may operate through internal psychological responses before translating into purchasing outcomes. The role of context should also be considered, as Vinkóczy et al. (2024) found that a short-video impulse-buying model previously validated in China could not be fully reproduced among Hungarian consumers. Future research could therefore examine whether perceived similarity influences impulse buying indirectly through psychological or relational mechanisms.

Overall, the findings show that factors associated with TikTok shopping differ in their direct relationships with impulse buying behavior. Utilitarian value was positively associated with impulse buying, while the immediate urge to purchase showed the strongest relationship. In contrast, co-promotion and perceived similarity did not directly predict impulse buying behavior. This pattern complements previous research showing that digital impulse buying involves both external stimuli and consumers' internal responses (Lee et al., 2025; Xiao et al., 2026; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026; Yi et al., 2023). The contribution of this study lies in showing that factors associated with the broader TikTok shopping experience do not have uniform direct relationships with impulse buying behavior, while highlighting the particularly important role of consumers' immediate urge to buy.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the effects of utilitarian value, co-promotion, urge to buy impulsively, and perceived similarity on impulse buying behavior among Gen Z TikTok users in Makassar. The findings show that utilitarian value and urge to buy impulsively significantly influenced impulse buying behavior, while co-promotion and perceived similarity did not have significant direct effects. Among the predictors, urge to buy impulsively showed the strongest relationship with impulse buying behavior. The model explained 63.4% of the variance in impulse buying behavior, indicating that functional shopping benefits and consumers' immediate purchasing urges are particularly relevant in explaining unplanned purchases in the TikTok environment. Overall, the findings demonstrate that factors associated with TikTok shopping differ in their direct relationships with actual impulse buying behavior.

Based on these findings, brands and sellers using TikTok should focus on providing a convenient and efficient shopping experience by presenting clear product information, simplifying product discovery, and reducing unnecessary barriers in the purchasing process. At the same time, strategies designed to encourage spontaneous purchases should be implemented responsibly and should not rely on misleading information or excessive pressure on consumers. Since co-promotion and perceived similarity did not directly predict impulse buying behavior, these factors may be more relevant to other consumer responses or may operate through additional psychological or relational mechanisms. Future studies could therefore examine mediating variables such as trust, emotional responses, or consumer-creator relationships, and test the model across different demographic groups, geographic settings, or social-commerce platforms. Future research could also further distinguish the psychological urge to buy impulsively from enacted impulse buying behavior by using temporally separated measurements, longitudinal designs, or behavioral purchase data. Such approaches could complement the cross-sectional self-reported data employed in this study and provide a clearer understanding of how impulsive urges translate into actual purchasing behavior.

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