Either you control social media or social media controls you: Understanding the impact of self-control on excessive social media use from the dual-system perspective

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Drawing on dual-system theories, this study shows that excessive social media users demonstrate a psychological imbalance between the impulsive and reflective systems in their minds. We provide empirical evidence of an inconsistency between conscious attitudes and the actual behavior toward social media. The findings show that excessive users are driven more by their implicit attitudes rather than explicit beliefs in consuming social media. Although a high level of self-control indicates healthy social media use, the findings suggest that self-control has no significant influence on excessive users with a positive implicit attitude and high impulsive social media use. This duality of self-control dispels beliefs about its ability to regulate excessive online behaviors. Therefore, this study (1) theorizes what constitutes excessive social media use, (2) outlines how implicit measurements are incorporated in consumer research, and (3) offers practical implications for managing unhealthy online behaviors.