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Factors influencing sustainable consumption in Tunisia: the role of influencer perceived credibility

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Abstract. *Sustainable consumption has become a central concern in both academic and managerial debates, particularly in light of Sustainable Development Goal 12, which emphasizes responsible consumption and production patterns. While previous research examined the drivers of sustainable consumer behaviour, limited attention has been given to the role of influencer marketing in shaping such practices. The aim of this study is to determine the impact of influencer perceived credibility on sustainable consumption. This study is also an opportunity to check the relationship between influencer-product congruence and customer experience on influencer perceived credibility. To test these relationships, a quantitative study was conducted among Tunisian social media users (n=192), and the model was tested using Smart PLS 4. The results showed that congruence and customer experience positively affect influencer perceived credibility, which in turn exerts a positive effect on the three dimensions of sustainable consumption: cognitive, affective and conative; thereby demonstrating its central role in fostering eco-conscious consumer behaviors.*

Keywords: influencer perceived credibility, congruence, customer experience, sustainable consumption.

JEL Codes: M31

1. Introduction

Sustainable consumption is widely recognized as a key driver of sustainable development (Abdulrazak & Quoquab, 2018; Barth et al., 2014; Bulut et al., 2017; Quoquab et al., 2019). It is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, which aims to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. Some authors (Farr, 2018; Hess, 2013) suggest that the sustainable development of nations will be severely hampered if consumers do not adopt sustainable consumption behaviours. Indeed, in the face of ever-increasing consumer demand, the planet's essential resources are dwindling at a worrying rate (Alisat & Reimer, 2015; Bogueva et al., 2017). It is therefore becoming crucial for individuals to adopt sustainable consumption behaviour by making a conscious effort to avoid over- and irresponsible consumption, which has a negative impact on the environment.

Then, to promote a change in consumer behavior, influencers are being increasingly used (Johnstone, L. 2018). These influencers can effectively convey their views through a variety of channels, including social networks. Indeed, thanks to social media, influencers are able to disseminate information, inspire ideas and shape the perception of others, which can lead to changes in behaviour (Balaban, D., 2019; Palazzo, M., 2021; Sesar, V., 2022). Moreover, influencers have been the most important factor influencing purchasing behavior over the past decade.

However, the previous literature has yet to provide a comprehensive answer to the question of whether influencers have a significant impact on sustainable consumption and, if so, how consumer perceptions of influencer affect different types of sustainable consumption. In order to address this research gap, this study

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aims to answer the following research question: How do congruence and customer experience influence influencer perceived credibility, and what effect does this perceived credibility have on sustainable consumption?

Study objective

The main objective of the study is to understand the factors that influence influencer perceived credibility, as well as the impact of this credibility on sustainable consumption.

2. Literature review

Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption is defined at the Oslo Symposium (1994) as "the use of goods and services that meet basic needs and improve quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants throughout the life cycle, so as not to compromise the needs of future generations." Epstein (2008) approached sustainable consumption as the consumer's long-term awareness of the consequences for the natural or social environment, often expressed by terms such as ecologically or socially responsible consumption behavior (Carrington, M.J et al. 2010). For Vilkaite-Vaitone, N. (2024), sustainable consumption is a multidimensional variable consisting of cognitive, affective and conative aspects.

Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is evolving and changing the way goods and services are marketed and used. It is marked by strategic partnerships between companies and individuals with large audiences on social media (Ancillai et al., 2019; Bala & Verma, 2018). The rise of social networks has strengthened the influence of opinions, both expert and non-expert, considerably extending their reach (Hu et al., 2020; Jacobson et al., 2020). Some individuals have thus chosen to share their views professionally, semi-professionally or voluntarily, becoming so-called influencers: independent third parties able to shape the attitudes of their online audience (Freberg et al., 2011).

To build strong communities, influencers seek to establish lasting relationships with their subscribers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). By addressing shared topics and encouraging interaction, they create a closeness reminiscent of friendship (Casaló et al., 2020; Sokolova & Perez, 2021). According to Chae (2017), influencers are frequently seen as being in a middle ground between intimate friends and far-off superstars. Through social media, people offer material and advice about their shared interests, values, or lifestyles with their audience in language they are acquainted with (Casaló et al., 2020; Sokolova & Perez, 2021). For De Veirman et al. (2017), Jin and Ryu (2020), and Tafesse and Wood (2021), their goal is to establish enduring partnerships through proximity. Furthermore, influencers strategically develop their personal image for business objectives, much like superstars do when rallying their fan base.

Influencer Credibility

Credibility is a major concern for influencers (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Stubb et al., 2019). Influencers' opinions have a bigger impact on their followers since they are seen as more trustworthy than celebrities because of their knowledge and connection to their interests (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Stubb et al., 2019). Therefore, marketers work with influencers as a successful means of promoting their products because of their capacity to affect their followers' responses to the items they recommend (Casaló et al., 2020) (Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

Influencers draw on their authenticity and credibility to engage and convince consumers by creating and sharing content designed to promote products and services to them. This collaborative approach is gaining in popularity in a variety of sectors. Influencers now play a key role as intermediaries between brands and customers, initiating trends and offering stylistic inspiration (Hariyanti and Wirapraja, 2018; Zhou et al., 2021).

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Influencer credibility is one of the key elements of successful influencer marketing, with influencers acting as trusted intermediaries between brands and consumers. By relying on their authenticity, expertise and reliability, they are able to mobilize their community while promoting products and services. This trust capital, essential to persuasion, differentiates influencer marketing from traditional advertising methods and explains its growing adoption in a variety of sectors, such as fashion and technology.

Theoretical background: The SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) Theory

Source credibility theory, rooted in communication and marketing psychology, is frequently applied to explain influencer marketing. It posits that the persuasiveness of a message hinges on how credible the audience perceives its source to be. According to Maming and Ardhiyansyah (2022) and Eriyanti and Ardhiyansyah (2023), an influencer's credibility plays a crucial role in fostering customer loyalty and trust. When consumers view influencers as trustworthy, they are more likely to confidently act on their recommendations (Fratea, 2019).

Moreover, many consumers develop parasocial relationships with influencers, perceiving them as friends or even confidants (Maming & Ardhiyansyah, 2022). This emotional connection amplifies the impact of influencers' suggestions on purchasing decisions. Research consistently supports this assumption, emphasizing that consumers tend more to engage with and buy products or services endorsed by influencers they trust (Ardhiyansyah & Jaman, 2023; Lopez-Sanz et al., 2021; Safeer & Liu, 2023).

As previously noted, influencers aiming to cultivate lasting relationships with their followers must carefully consider each point of engagement (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Every post matters—especially sponsored content, which may diverge from an influencer's typical style (Kim & Kim, 2020; Phua et al., 2018). Each message has the potential to shape followers' attitudes, perceptions, and future behaviors toward the influencer, ultimately affecting the sustainability of their connection.

The study uses the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework as it is the commonly used model in influencer marketing research (e.g., Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). This theory holds that the individuals who are exposed to stimuli are subjected to cognitive and emotional responses, which in turn becomes a behavioral response to such exposures (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

In this respect, stimuli are the individual elements that provoke mental and psychological responses (Eroglu et al., 2001). These stimuli, in the case of social media, have one thing in common: they are material about which an influencer posts audiovisuals. The consumption of this content by a follower (the organism) provides cognitive and affective assessments (Loureiro & Ribeiro, 2011) and, ultimately, influences the engagement interest and purchase actions.

Cognitive states are the mental activities involved in acquiring, processing, storing and recalling stimuli by the user (Eroglu et al., 2001). The emotional responses elicited by exposure to such stimuli, on the other hand, are known as affective states (Loureiro & Ribeiro, 2011).

Finally, responses represent the behavioral outcomes resulting from these internal reactions—specifically, whether an individual engages in approach or avoidance behaviors (Eroglu et al., 2001).

Approach behaviour revolves around desirable outcomes of a given stimulus, such as liking, sharing, or buying, whereas avoidance behaviour is the negation of positive outcomes: engaging in no action.

Perceived Credibility of Influencer: A Driving Factor to Sustainable Consumption

Perceived credibility in an influencer is the perceived trustworthiness and believability of a respective influencer by his/her audience (AlFarraj et al., 2021). The literature shows that both credibility dimensions, namely, reliability (including the perceptions of honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness), and expertise (the relevant skills, knowledge, or experience of the influencer that is being perceived) play an important role (Sesar et al., 2022; Belanche et al., 2021).

AlFarraj et al. (2021) expanded this framework by introducing a third dimension—attractiveness—as another component of influencer credibility.

As Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2021) argue, credibility develops through the formation of affective and relational bonds between influencers and their followers.

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This implies that the perceived importance of an influencer to the minds of their followers is imperative. Therefore, the high profile of the influencer on social media can perfectly boost their credibility.

The research findings available on a constant basis indicate that the credibility of an influencer is one of the key factors that enhance customer loyalty and trust (Maming & Ardhiyansyah, 2022; Eriyanti & Ardhiyansyah, 2023). Customers will trustingly follow the instructions of such influencers more when they consider them to be reliable sources of information (Battaglia et al., 2014; Fratea, 2019).

More than credibility, most consumers develop parasocial interactions with the influencers because they perceive them as true peers, or even confidants (Maming & Ardhiyansyah, 2022). These emotional relations go a long way towards putting the powers of influencers to the test in the form of consumer behaviour. As many studies attest, consumers are more likely to respond to the influence of influencers they trust, and to buy products they recommend (Ardhiyansyah & Jaman, 2023; Lopez-Sanz et al., 2021; Safeer & Liu, 2023).

Perceived credibility is the extent to which a source is considered to be an expert that one can hold responsible in its field (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Ohanian, 1990). The source credibility model argues the persuasive nature of a message is more founded on the message-transmitter within the perceptions of success and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990, 1991). Expertise provides a speciality based on specialised knowledge that an individual is considered to have on a particular topic (Erdogan, 1999), whereas trustworthiness is considered to be the trust according to perceived good-character beliefs, integrity, and reliability on the part of the communicator (Erdogan, 1999).

To successfully build and retain credibility with people in their social media, influencers have to demonstrate levels of expertise in their communication and levels of trustworthiness consistently (Schouten et al., 2020). This is a dual need to emphasize that influencers need to develop both in the field of specific knowledge and in the development of genuine relationships with subscribers.

The connection between the normal posts and product suggestions ensures that followers ascertain that this consistency is genuine when the influencers uphold a similar stance. This uniformity leads to an increased image of credibility that the influencer has with his or her masses.

Influencer credibility can be recognized as a crucial factor in the sustainable consumption conduct. Worth noting, the specificity of the role of influencer recommendations is that this technique can be highly effective in situations where customers display a certain degree of trust towards the legitimacy and authenticity of the influencer (Gadekar et al., 2024). Credible influencers serve as the instigators between the sustainability values and their followers, making them insisted into responsible consumption through the availability of multiple perspectives: cognitive, conative, and affections (Samala & Rawas, 2024).

On the cognitive level, credible influencers help consumers be more effective at processing and valuing product information that relates to sustainability. When influencers honestly discuss the positive environmental, social, or ethical attributes of a product, it will be taken into consideration during a purchase process. This transformation process displays how the credibility of influencers changes sustainability ## POVs into action.

On the level of conation, credibility goes beyond the thought process by informing actionable change in behavior (Annabathuni et al., 2024). When people trust that their role models are experts who want to lead a healthier lifestyle, these suggestions propagate and consumers will find themselves becoming more environmentally-conscious as users recycle responsibly or consciously cut consumption of certain goods, products or services that are technically harmful to the planet.

Affective dimension demonstrates the ability of credibility to create powerful emotional attachments. Individuals with strong ecological values can influence their community to feel a sense of collective responsibility and social awareness when they portray their values well enough (Afianto et al., 2024). This type of emotional connection enhances the effectiveness of sustainability messaging and project followers are more likely to be influenced and adopt environmentally-friendly consumption behaviors.

The foregoing suggestions prompt us to suggest the following hypothesis:

H1: Influencer perceived credibility positively affects sustainable consumption.

H1.1: Influencer perceived credibility has a positive effect on cognitive sustainable consumption.

H1.2: Influencer perceived credibility positively affects affective sustainable consumption.

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H1.3: Influencer perceived credibility positively affects conative sustainable consumption.

Congruence: Supporting the influencer's perceived credibility

The notion of congruence means the subjective correspondence between two objects or processes (Olson & Thjommoe, 2011). It has been highlighted to be a crucial element in numerous fields, such as communication studies (Kuo & Rice, 2015) or distribution channel management (Wang & Zhang, 2017) and tourism marketing (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

Being based on congruence theory (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955), it means that people tend to prefer such features that do not contradict each other cognitively. In online contexts, acceptance of the purchase decision by audiences when products are promoted by the perceived influencers (the sources) compels the audience to equilibrate towards both the influencer and the object (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955).

This happens when the followers test the seeming natural congruence that exists between the influencers and what they are promoting. Upon being exposed to the promotional material, users form a perception regarding the compatibility of this source-object, and it, in turn, influences their behavioural models (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020). To the extent of such perceived congruence, the better audiences rate both the credibility of the influencer and the advertised product.

That being said, the key to the success of influencers on social media is their willingness to build significant connections with their followers (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). These connections are formed under the influence of common interests in particular points and influencers become advisors with authority due to their regular flow of product suggestions (Zhang et al., 2020). Adherents form specific expectations in the form of perceptions of the kinds of materials and issues that each possessor is likely to cover (Casaló et al., 2020). Evidence supports the idea that the overall effectiveness of a marketing campaign immensely increases when there is congruity between the ones delivering the messages and the products that they support (Kim & Kim, 2020; Phua et al., 2018).

Theoretical thinking refers to congruence as consistency between personal brand in terms of personal values, aesthetic appeal and perceived expertise of an influencer with the qualities of promoted messages or products. High scores or high compatibility in these dimensions makes audiences believe that influencers are genuine and credible as well as experts (Belanche et al., 2021). Based on this established correlation between congruence and perceived credibility, we shall propose the following hypothesis, which aims at establishing the correlation between congruence and the perceived credibility of individuals.

H2: Product-influencer congruence positively affects influencer perceived credibility

Customer experience: a factor boosting the influencer's perceived credibility

Current social media networks encompass advanced functionality, which is utilised to support communication, sharing, and interaction with users. These technological functions prompt humans to become more dependent on social networking services to conduct different communication activities (Wibowo et al., 2021). When used in marketing, these functionality aspects of the platform and the content shared on them play a pivotal role in defining customer experiences. This aspect of experience is a key contributor to fulfilling the desired goals of marketing, especially when it comes to creating and maintaining credibility of the influencer in the minds of those who follow him/her.

Customer experience entails the cognitive, emotional, sensory, behavioral and social reaction of consumers as they progress in their buying process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). To develop trust and loyalty companies need to invest in quality digital communication and a smooth refined processing system that improves the overall experience of the customer. Researchers have defined a number of different dimensions of the customer experience that can guide strategy. The first dimension is connected with sensory involvement. Although the physical aspects of a product, such as its looks, texture, and taste, have a major impact on purchase behaviour, social marketing sites are unproductive where consumers will not have a chance of interacting with the products first before they make their purchases. The second dimension incorporates the sense of touch. Adler refers to touch as tactile experience. One other pain point that is most likely to remain absent within the social buying environment. People also cannot see products or physically review the

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quality of services on digital platforms, which limits their possibilities. Reflection is another important element of customer experience that allows one to think in a more innovative way, promote a positive perception of marketing interactions, and lead people to engage in them more genuinely. The experiential aspect of action consists of behavioral patterns which include the physical activities we engage in, lifestyles we endorse or follow and our social affiliations, which all make up acts that influence how users respond to marketing stimuli. Constructing relationships is another crucial dimension, as many humans inevitably feel a need to maintain relationships with other people and institutions (Wibowo et al., 2021).
All these experiential factors work collectively to influence the perceived credibility of an influencer, where good interactions build up credibility and negative interactions never do.
This reciprocal nature of the relationship draws on a number of established theoretical premises (Häregård, Edvardsson, & Boestam, 2018).

- Demonstrations of positive consumer experiences. Trading on positive experiences: When a consumer has positive experiences with a promoted product, they directly create credibility over the influencer. Beulah and Chitrakala (2024) report the positive correlation between customer satisfaction and engagement measures and measures of credibility. Authentic credibility is a form of true and correct sharing of product experiences (Thomas, 2024).
- Transparency and responsibility: Openly acknowledge and support brand partnerships and maintain integrity in representing sustainable products, and it will add tremendous value to the influencers. This is especially strong in the case of socially and environmentally conscious consumers (Arun, 2024). Ethical transparency has proved to be a major credibility-setter in influencer marketing nowadays.

Thus, customer experience plays a fundamental role in maintaining and reinforcing the influencer's perceived credibility, which leads us to conclude to a positive link between customer experience and the influencer's perceived credibility (Lie Ao et al., 2023. Then, our third hypothesis is formulated as follows:
H3: Customer experience positively affects the influencer's perceived credibility.
Bearing on the above hypotheses, our research model is as follows:

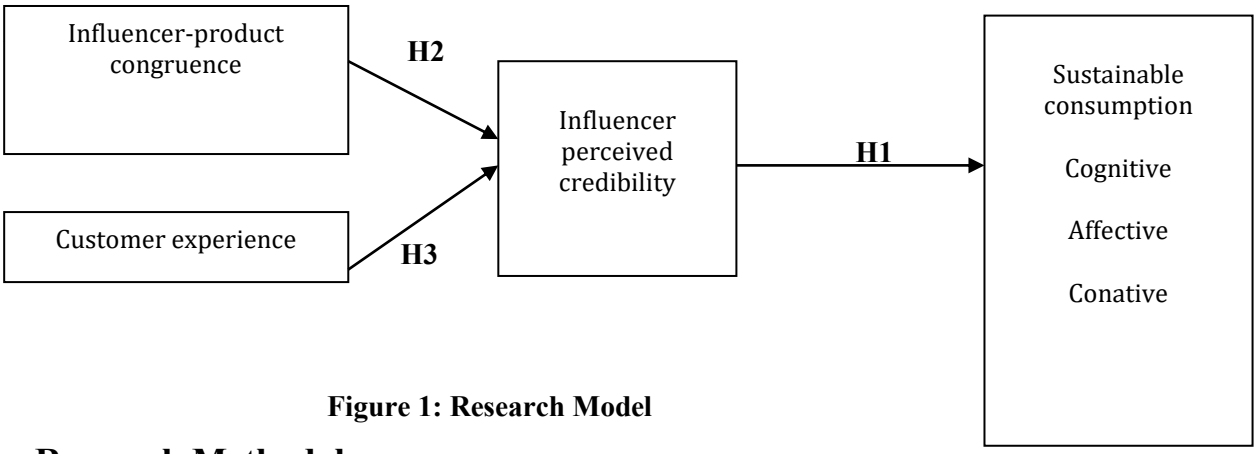

Figure 1: Research Model

3. Research Methodology

The methodological approach taken to evaluate the two measurement instruments and the structural relationships is equipped in this section. This study uses PLS-SEM in the validation of the model based on prior analyses (Hair et al., 2019).

3.1 Measures and Design of Questionnaire

All the construct measurements were based on symmetric 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The method allows the key categorical distinction of the attitudes of respondents and

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e-mail: editors@reaser.eu

preserving the reliability of the scale of measurement. All 34 measurement items of the scales are presented in Table 1, which indicates the authors of the original scales and their adaptation to the current study.

Table 1 : Measurement scales used in our study

Authors	Variables	Number of items	Dimensions
adapted from Xu and Pratt, 2018	**Congruence**	4	Unidimensional
Wibowo et al., 2021	**Customer experience**	10	Unidimensional
Adapted from Müller et al., 2018; Ohanian 1990	**Influencer's perceived credibility**	4	Unidimensional
Quaquab and Mohammad	**Sustainable consumption**	21	Three-dimensional

Source : Author

Data collection method and sample

The questionnaire was administered to Tunisian social media users. A total of 192 usable questionnaires were retained out of the 225 administered.

Table 2 : Description of sample

Variable		Frequency	%	% cumulative
Age	15-25	72	37,5	37,5
	25-35	45	28,1	65,6
	35-45	46	24	89,6
	45-55	10	5,2	94,8
	>55	10	5,2	100
Gender	Male	122	63,5	
	Female	70	36,5	

The final sample (n = 192) consisted of 70 males (36.5%) and 122 females (63.5%). Respondents' ages ranged from 15 to over 55, with an average of 40.

Data Analysis

One of the most commonly accepted ways of verifying influencer marketing studies is to use quantitative approaches. The current research also adopted an in-depth analytical process, which included scale validation via exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to test underlying factor structures and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the measurement models. In order to test and measure the structural model of our research, we used the partial least squares path modelling method (PLS-PM) via the SmartPLS 4 software, in accordance with the current methodological recommendations (Hair et al., 2019). Such a two-fold analysis will enable the reliability of the measurement instruments and path relationships in the presented theoretical framework to hold up.

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4. Results

Assessment of measurement models

To check convergent validity, three indices are commonly used: factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). The results of convergent validity are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Convergent validity results

Variable	Items	Outer loading (>0.7)	Cronbach's alpha (>0.7)	Rho-A (>0.7)	Composite reliability (>0.7)	Ave (>0.5)
Congruence	Cong1	0,739	0,838	0,872	0,846	0,586
	Cong2	0,915				
	Cong3	0,874				
	Cong4	0,680				
Customer experience	CX1	0,706	0,919	0,926	0,919	0,536
	CX 2	0,702				
	CX 3	0,867				
	CX 4	0,885				
	CX 5	0,775				
	CX 6	0,755				
	CX 7	0,720				
	CX 8	0,760				
	CX 9	0,735				
	CX 10	0,704				
Credibility	Cred1	0,872	0,894	0,902	0,893	0,679
	Cred2	0,835				
	Cred3	0,902				
	Cred4	0,882				
Affective	Aff1	0,935	0,973	0,978	0,972	0,834
	Aff2	0,936				
	Aff3	0,934				
	Aff4	0,846				
	Aff5	0,939				
	Aff6	0,951				
	Aff7	0,948				
Cognitive	Cog1	0,851	0,964	0,975	0,959	0,798
	Cog2	0,947				
	Cog3	0,921				
	Cog4	0,943				
	Cog5	0,931				
	Cog6	0,921				
Conative	Con1	0,881	0,969	0,975	0,968	0,792
	Con2	0,834				
	Con3	0,936				
	Con4	0,936				
	Con5	0,899				

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	Con6	0,922				
	Con7	0,953				
	Con8	0,877				

The convergent validity results show that all variables have factor loadings between 0.702 and 0.951, indicating good convergent validity. Furthermore, AVE coefficients for all variables are greater than 0.5, showing that the variables meet the criteria for discriminant validity. Table 3 also reports the results for reliability using two methods: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Hair et al. (2017) indicate that composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients should be examined, along with the average variance extracted (AVE), to check the reliability of a model. Consequently, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients must be greater than 0.7. Moreover, our results show that composite reliability coefficients range from 0.846 to 0.972, respectively (>0.70), to meet composite reliability criteria (Hair et al., 2017). Similarly, Cronbach's alpha (α) ranges from 0.838 to 0.973, respectively (>0.70), indicating that the composite reliability criterion is met (Hair et al., 2017).

Discriminant validity of constructs

The "Fornell-Larcker" criterion (1981) sheds light on the correlation of constructs and their differences (from each other). The coefficient of the variable with itself must be higher than that with the other constructs. This allows us to conclude that it is exclusive and that there is no correlation problem between the variables.

Table 4: Discriminant validity for all constructs of the measurement model ("Fornell-Larcker")

	Affective	Cognitive	Conative	Congruence	Customer Experience	Influencer's perceived credibility
Affective	0,913					
Cognitive	0,214	0,893				
Conative	0,565	0,572	0,890			
Congruence	0,327	0,312	0,410	0,766		
Customer Experience	0,292	0,361	0,409	0,650	0,732	
Influencer's perceived credibility	0,315	0,231	0,367	0,795	0,581	0,824

The results in this table show that, for each variable, the loadings of the indicator on one construct are greater than all its loadings crossed with the other constructs. The square root of AVE is greater than the inter-construct correlations. These results allow us to conclude that the discriminant validity of the measurement models is well justified.

Structural model goodness of fit

Several coefficients are generally used to test and ensure the structural validity of the conceptual model, including the coefficient of determination (R^2 value), structural coefficients, the "T" test and the Stone-Geisser Q^2 goodness-of-fit index.

ISSN: 2247-6172
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The coefficient of determination of the model "R²"

Recall that, according to Hair et al. (2017), "the coefficient of determination (R^2 value) is a measure of the predictive accuracy of the model and is calculated as the squared correlation between the actual and predicted values of a specific endogenous construct". Moreover, for Chin (1998), the effect is substantial for a coefficient greater than 0.67, moderate for a coefficient between 0.33 and 0.67 and low for a coefficient between 0.19 and 0.33.

The table shows that all endogenous latent variables have either moderate or substantial effects, since R^2 and adjusted R^2 coefficients are all greater than 0.25.

Table 5: Model coefficients of determination R²

	R²	Adjusted R²
Affective	0,49	0,45
Cognitive	0,43	0,38
Conative	0,195	0,19
Influencer's perceived credibility	0,64	0,636

Cohen's f^2 coefficient

Cohen's f^2 indicator is important insofar as, when a variable is explained by several determinants, this indicator makes it possible to assess the predictive contribution of endogenous variables. According to Cohen (1988), the f^2 coefficient indicates a low effect when it does not exceed 0.02, a medium effect when it is less than 0.15 and a strong effect when it is greater than 0.35.

All coefficients are summarized in the following table:

Table 6: f2 coefficients

	Congruence	Customer Experience	Influencer's perceived credibility	Affective	Cognitive	Conative
Congruence			0,492			
Customer Experience			0,045			
Influencer's perceived credibility				0,096	0,049	0,135

Model Predictivity Index Stone-Geisser Q²

We test the Stone-Geisser Q^2, also known as the redundancy index in cross-validation, to assess the predictive relevance of our model. Its purpose is to measure the quality of each structural equation. It is calculated using the blindfolding procedure. If it is positive, then the model has predictive validity. If it is close to 1, then the model has perfect predictive validity.

ISSN: 2247-6172
Review of Applied Socio- Economic Research
(Volume 30, Issue 2/ 2025), pp. 158 - 175
URL: http://www.reaser.eu
e-mail: editors@reaser.eu

Table 7: Model predictivity index Q²

	Q²
Influencer's perceived credibility	0,496
Affective	0,086
Cognitive	0,065
Conative	0,136

Overall, all coefficients are positive, so the model has perfect predictive validity.

Overall model quality: Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) index

In the PLS approach, there is no single model validation index. In this context, Tenenhaus et al (2005) introduced a Goodness-of-fit (GoF) index as an operational solution to this issue. The index takes into account both the measurement model and the structural model. The calculation formula is the geometric mean of the community mean (Mean Variance Extracted) and the mean of the coefficients of determination (calculated for each endogenous variable): $\boldsymbol{GOF} = \sqrt{\overline{\boldsymbol{R2}} * \overline{\boldsymbol{AVE}}}$

Applying the above formula, we obtain (GOF = $\sqrt{0.438 * 0.757} = 0.57$) a coefficient of 0.53 (greater than 0.36). Thus, referring to Wetzels et al. (2009), we can deduce that the estimated model is highly valid.

Testing the hypotheses of the structural model

1. MES enabled us to model the causal relationships between the different variables. Our model was evaluated using the MES and we obtained highly significant results, explaining the causal relationships between the different variables.
2. Bootstrapping analysis gives us the correlation between the constructs, using an estimate of the t-value (standard deviation), which must be greater than 1.96, which is Student's t-value, and the significance of the correlation links (P-value), which must be less than the 5% risk.
3. The table below (Table 63) presents the direct effects of all the relationships linking our different variables and the causal effects of the structural model as a whole.

Table 8: Coefficient of direct effects

	β	Adjusted β	STDEV	t-value (|O/STDEV|)	p-value
Congruence -> Influencer's perceived credibility	0,600	0,600	0,094	6,362	0,000
Customer experience-> Influencer's perceived credibility	0,180	0,183	0,077	2,339	0,019
Influencer's perceived credibility -> Affective	0,297	0,299	0,068	4,378	0,000
Influencer's perceived credibility -> Cognitive	0,216	0,220	0,082	2,631	0,009
Influencer's perceived credibility ->	0,345	0,348	0,070	4,914	0,000

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URL: http://www.reaser.eu
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Conative					

These results confirm all our hypotheses (H1, H2, H3.1, H3.2, H3.3). These results are presented in the following table:

Table 9: Summary of hypotheses

HYPOTHESES	RESULTS
H1: Congruence favours the influencer's perceived credibility.	Confirmed
H2: Customer experience has a positive effect on the influencer's perceived credibility.	Confirmed
H3: Influencer's perceived credibility enhances sustainable consumption	
H3.1: Influencer perceived credibility improves sustainable consumption	Confirmed
H3.2: Influencer perceived credibility improves sustainable consumption	Confirmed
H3.3: Influencer perceived credibility improves sustainable consumption	Confirmed

After empirical verification, our conceptual model is as follows:

ISSN: 2247-6172
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(Volume 30, Issue 2/ 2025), pp. 158 - 175
URL: http://www.reaser.eu
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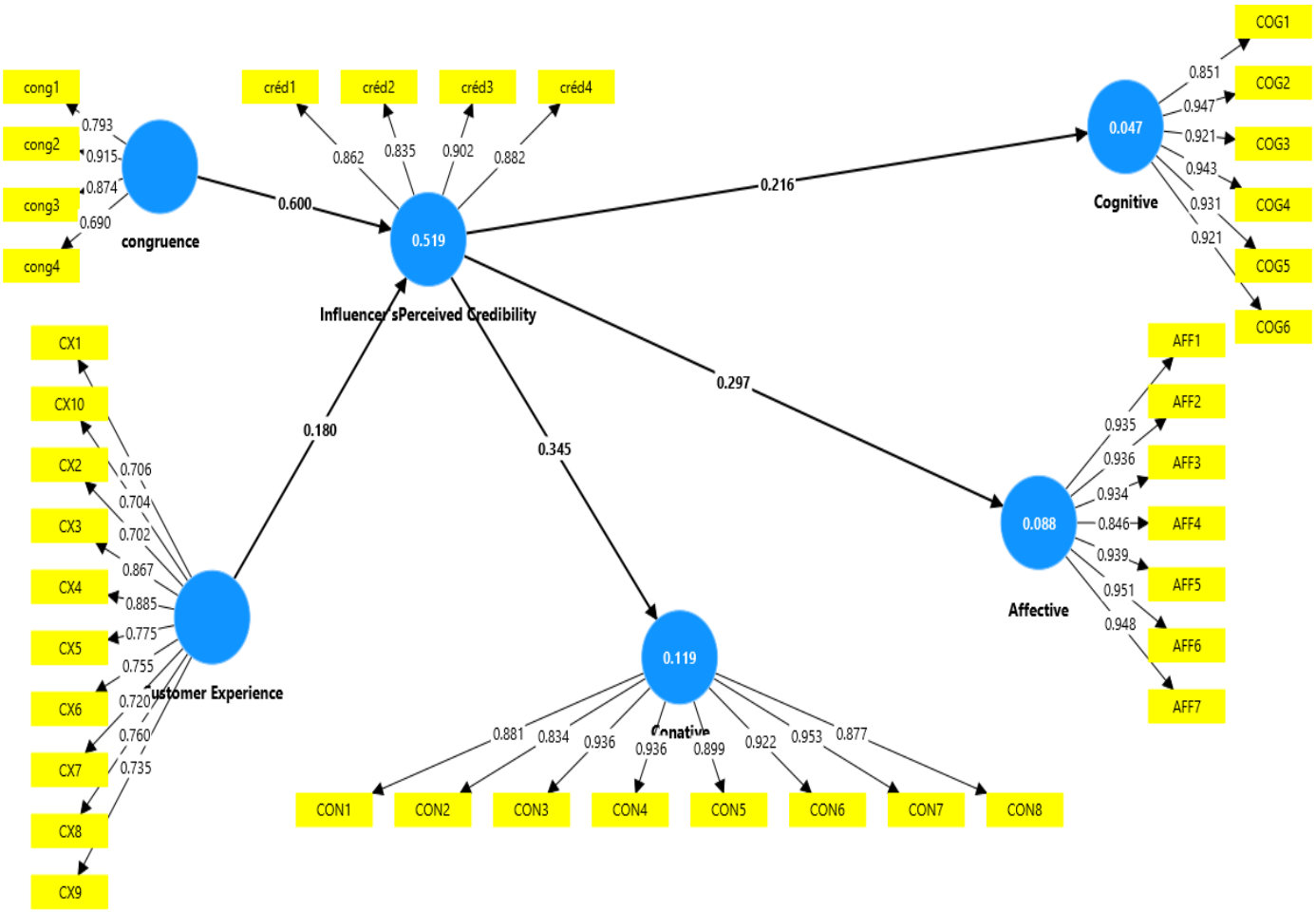

Figure 2: Representation of the PLS measurement model

5. Discussion

In this study, we have focused on sustainable consumption and its determinants. The choice of this topic was motivated by our desire to contribute to overcoming a number of shortcomings in the literature on sustainable consumption and to the development of research on this very important subject.

Hypothesis H1 suggests a positive relationship between congruence and the influencer's perceived credibility. The results show that this hypothesis is well verified, since the relationship between these two variables is significant, with a positive non-standardized regression coefficient (β=0.600; t= 6,362; p-value=0.000). This result supports those of Reinikainen et al, (2020), and Schouten et al, (2020), who all suggest a positive link between congruence and the influencer's perceived credibility. These authors confirmed that congruence between the influencer and the product/brand plays a crucial role in perceived credibility. If the audience perceives a mismatch between the influencer and what they are promoting, this reduces their credibility.

This study was able to identify the factors leading to better sustainable consumption in the Tunisian context. These are: Affective, Conative and Cognitive. We can report a positive relationship between the influencer's perceived credibility and the three dimensions of sustainable consumption. This finding is in line with those

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(Volume 30, Issue 2/ 2025), pp. 158 - 175
URL: http://www.reaser.eu
e-mail: editors@reaser.eu

of Gadekar et al (2024), Annabathuni et al (2024) and Afianto et al (2024), who have clearly demonstrated the role of influencer perceived credibility and the three dimensions of sustainable consumption.
According to the literature, there is a positive relationship between the customer's experience and the influencer's perceived credibility. Our results enabled us to validate this relationship. The literature explains this by the fact that positive customer experience positively affects the influencer's credibility, which in turn increases purchase intention (Lie Ao et al., 2023).
Hypothesis H1 suggests a positive relationship between influencer perceived credibility and the three dimensions of sustainable consumption: cognitive, affective and conative. This result is in line with those of Gadekar et al, (2024), Annabathuni et al, (2024) and Afianto et al, (2024) who have demonstrated these relationships. This study shows that credibility is an important factor in influencing customers' sustainable consumption behavior and underlines the importance of considering the role of credibility when seeking to run effective influencer marketing campaigns to promote sustainable consumption. Thus, we can conclude that credible influencers have the power to influence not only product choices, but also overall sustainable behavior, leading to significant and lasting changes in everyday consumption habits. Then, to meet sustainability expectations, organizations are well advised to choose influential and reputable influencers for their sustainable consumption campaigns.
Hypothesis H2 assumes a positive influence of congruence on influencer perceived credibility. This hypothesis is well verified, since the relationship between these two variables is significant. This result supports those of Reinikainen et al, (2020), and Schouten et al, (2020), who suggest a positive link between congruence and influencer perceived credibility. These authors confirmed that congruence between the influencer and the product/brand plays a crucial role in perceived credibility. If the audience perceives a mismatch between the influencer and what they are promoting, this reduces their credibility. On the other hand, when customers perceive consistency in campaign content, they tend to develop positive evaluations of their influencers. Thus, in their promotional actions, influencers need to be consistent with their usual content to avoid damaging their own reputation (Breves et al., 2019).
Finally, we proposed a positive relationship between customer experience and the influencer's perceived credibility. Our findings enabled us to validate that previous purchasing experiences influence the perceived credibility of the online influencer (Izogo et al., 2023).
A closer look at the connection between social media customer experience and influencer credibility highlights several key dimensions that shape consumer perceptions. When it comes to the cognitive aspect, audiences value the clear and straightforward information shared by trustworthy influencers, though some express a desire for more detailed or nuanced content. On an emotional level, credible influencers tend to evoke positive reactions, such as trust and enjoyment, particularly when their values align with those of their followers.
Behaviorally speaking, when good customer experience is supported by a credible influencer, better engagement and the probability of purchase decisions is more likely. Followers will find such recommendations more realistic and therefore more swaying and implementable. Besides personal responses, the social and relational aspect is important as well and each interaction between member and the audience makes a community, which will promote brand loyalty in the long term. In this manner, the influencers usher in a form of trust and the sense of connection with brands they are promoting.

6. Strengths, weaknesses and future research places

Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of the study can be seen as the connection between the theoretical perspective of multiculturalism and the multiculturalism of the present time.
This paper can be a beneficial contribution not only to scientists but also to the people engaged in marketing. It throws light on the theoretical implications in influencer marketing campaigning, whereby influencers and brands collaborate in sending messages on social networks. As our results demonstrate, perceived credibility of the influencer is vital in eliciting positive behavioral responses by the audience. This indicates that

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(Volume 30, Issue 2/ 2025), pp. 158 - 175
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influencer marketing is not only used to construct a favorable brand perception; influencer marketing directly influences the perception held by their followers towards the influencer him/herself. Influencers must be careful not to jeopardize their personal brand by betraying their typical style of content, but they must look to insert some form of promotional activity in a seamless, natural manner so that they do not risk damaging their own brand. In this way, they will be able to maintain the needs of their audience, such as the provision of useful information, entertainment, or inspiration (Ki et al., 2020).

Influencer marketing has emerged as an effective alternative as the conventional media are losing its effectiveness (Fransen et al., 2015). Considering that influencers tend to create and manage their effect through social media, our results can be seen as a strong testament to the authenticity that they should only endorse products relevant to their personal brand, values, and the topic of their regular content (Kim & Kim, 2020; Phua et al., 2018).

The strategy serves to erase blatancy of the advertisement, as well as cements the faith in the influencer and give a general perspective about them. Subsequently, this promotes even better interactions, which enables the influencers to create successful online communities (Stubb et al., 2019). Moreover, successful influencers will attract the attention of brands, and both sides might establish a partnership, which will be beneficial to the creators, the companies, and the audiences (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

The credibility of an influencer can be attributed to the alignment of their content with the products they market, as well as the general customer experience they create. This credibility can be one reason that spurs off on sustainable purchasing decisions.

The implications of our findings can make a significant contribution to the awareness about the eco- and pro-consumption effects of social media. The research highlights that consumers are increasingly appreciating- and being influenced by credible sources when making a purchase, especially of sustainable products and practices. Such attentiveness is an important change in how individuals assess their usage patterns in the era of digitalization.

When these are combined together harmoniously, they can present a tremendous kick to success in business. Brands can benefit most by strategic selection of influencers who have a personal brand that is aligned with the personal brand of the company. Such a combination of strategic fit to the delivery of genuine customer experiences, and straightforward, honest sustainability communications, has shown itself to guide consumers toward more mindful buying choices. The outcome is a welfare-to-welfare situation whereby businesses succeed whilst positively impacting the social arena through their influence.

Limitations and future research directions

Although this study has great value, the authors focus on Tunisian consumers and thus the findings cannot be applied generally. Also, since our research is based on a cross-sectional survey, we cannot trace the way in which perceptions of influencer credibility- and their impact on sustainable consumption- are changing over time. In order to overcome such weaknesses, future research may follow a longitudinal panel-based research design or include other variables, such as environmental consciousness or socio-demographic variables, such as age.

The next potential focus of inquiry should be understanding the effect of inconsistent content of influencers on the perceptions of the followers, varying by their levels of engagement and length of exposure. Such as, do committed or long-term followers respond to incongruent posts any differently to casual followers? An examination of this relationship had the potential to create further insight into the resistance of the audience to the misalignment between influencers and brands.

The small size of the sample could also be considered a limitation, specifying how generally the results could be used. To increase reliability and broader applicability of future studies, it would be worth extending the scope of participants considerably, with their diversity maximized. The sampling was narrow both in terms of socio-demographic background and online engagements; therefore, expanding the sample by including more socio-demographically diverse participants and those with diverse online engagement patterns would be useful in order to validate the obtained results.

ISSN: 2247-6172
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(Volume 30, Issue 2/ 2025), pp. 158 - 175
URL: http://www.reaser.eu
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7. Conclusions

The paper sheds light on the complex interrelations between brand-influencer fit and customer perceived credibility and customer experience in promoting sustainable consumption behavioral trends. This study portrays that business organisations that view influencer marketing as a strategic instrument to achieve business competitiveness, as well as service environmental responsibility, are highly effective. The results strongly point to the fact that, when influencers are genuine and true to the brands and produce meaningful customer experiences, they produce a great deal of credibility, which directly translates to sustainable buying decisions.

The research model used here tested 5 key hypotheses that were all approved empirically. The results of our analysis provide two important, insightful facts: congruence and customer experience are both valid measures of the perceived credibility of an influencer, and the latter acts as a driver of more sustainable consumption behaviour. These insights give real-world advice to both marketers and influencers on how to authentically engage their audience and establish trust to drive real consumer behaviour change.

In business terms, the implications of these findings are that it is essential to choose carefully the influencers that you collaborate with as their values and the content they produce should be in tune with what the brand stands for and its sustainability aspirations. This alignment and positive customer experiences then form a virtuous cycle that is beneficial to everyone- the influencer, the brand, and the consumers who are getting more and more mindful about sustainability. Future studies can be based on these results by examining the same processes in other cultures or through other social media platforms.

In conclusion, it is desirable that businesses and researchers engage in a holistic approach that draws together authentic marketing measures, customer experience, and an elevated awareness of sustainability to optimize the possibilities of influencing consumption patterns using influencers.

The study has valuable managerial implications for marketing practitioners in any developing country like Tunisia. These practitioners ought to consider influencer marketing as an effective approach that can be used to improve the performance of the business. Although our findings are useful, it is necessary to admit that they have certain limitations, which define the prospects of the future research.

The major weakness is associated with sample size. Future research ought to use a larger number of social media users to prove and validate our findings. Further extension of the study would assist in establishing the solidity behind our results and offer more viable insights into marketing practices in new markets.

It is an objective view of the power of influencer marketing and the necessity of a broader level of verification that is especially needed in the environment of the developing economy, where digital consumption habits might be less familiar than in the established markets. Further studies on the topic would be able to provide this domain with an even more subtle perspective of the functioning of influencer credibility in various cultural and economic conditions.

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Review of Applied Socio- Economic Research
(Volume 30, Issue 2/ 2025), pp. 158 - 175
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