

# The Impact of Influencer Credibility and Green Advertising on Sustainable Food Consumption

Ichrak RIAHI<sup>1\*</sup> Khaoula OUNI<sup>2</sup>

1. Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management of Tunis, University of Tunis El Manar, ERMA Laboratory, P.O. Box 248, 2092 Tunis, Tunisia
2. Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management of Tunis, University of Tunis El Manar, P.O. Box 248, 2092 Tunis, Tunisia

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: [riahi.ichrak@fsegt.utm.tn](mailto:riahi.ichrak@fsegt.utm.tn)

## Abstract

Social media platforms have become a fundamental component of modern society, playing a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour. In recent years, influencers have emerged as key agents in promoting sustainable food consumption. Their ability to influence consumer decisions, alongside the incentives they receive from marketers, has made them valuable assets in marketing strategies. However, the credibility of influencers and the efficacy of green advertising are critical factors in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours. This study aims to examine the impact of influencer credibility on green advertising and, subsequently, on sustainable food consumption. A quantitative research design was employed, involving 300 followers of influencers on Instagram. The results of the Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis indicate that influencer credibility positively influences green advertising, which, in turn, has a favourable effect on the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of sustainable food consumption. These findings contribute to the understanding of how influencer marketing can foster more sustainable consumer behaviours.

**Keywords:** Sustainable food consumption, Influencer credibility, Green advertising

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## 1. Introduction

Food is a mainstay of human life, but food consumption has a negative impact on the environment. Likewise, numerous studies in the literature focus on sustainable food consumption. However, these studies are rather fragmented and only investigate certain aspects of food consumption (Phan 2024). On a global scale, food consumption has serious implications for public health and quality of life (Carrus & al. 2018). To make healthy food available to future generations, it is more necessary than ever to transform food systems towards sustainability.

Green consumerism ensures the sustainability of consumer behaviour by opting for more environmentally-friendly products. This begins with the production of such products and continues throughout their processing, promotion and packaging (Parvathi & Annamuthu 2024). Conscious consumption is based on consumers' desire to take care of themselves and their environmental well-being. It involves shifting consumers' mindset towards sustainability by recognizing that the results of their consumption habits help to avoid unnecessary consumption or impulse buying (Kumar & al. 2024).

The massive development of industries around the world is leading to increased pressure on environmental resources. Leaders are striving to adapt to the environment and are more focusing on "sustainability". The rapid increase in the production and distribution of products as well as services is causing considerable damage to the environment. The theme of sustainable consumption is attracting increasing attention. It is a crucial area of interest for scientific researchers, entrepreneurs and the media alike, as consumers become increasingly aware of the loss of biodiversity, the decline in nutritional quality, food preservation, air pollution and the loss of culinary know-how posed by the depletion of natural resources (Altun 2020).

Product elements that cannot be verified by consumers are called credibility attributes. These intangible attributes include environmental safety, product origin, social benefits, production conditions... (Kovacs & Keresztes 2022). Healthy, organic and other sustainability attributes of food products cannot be observed and experienced by consumers. They are often accepted as credibility attributes (Van Loo & al. 2017). Since

consumers cannot observe the credibility attributes of sustainable food products, ecolabels play a main role in promoting these products on the market (Lazzarini & al.2016). However, different labelling schemes have created their reach and influence, they have the ability to influence consumer decisions and win rewards from marketers. Influencer marketing has played a significant role in the emergence of sustainable consumption through the stimulation of sustainable behaviour. Indeed, influencers have been described as an important factor influencing the purchasing behaviours of the contemporary consumer. Nevertheless, the perceived credibility of an influencer by his or her followers is crucial to his or her ability to persuade others (Vilkaite-Vaitone 2024). In this perspective, our research uses a theoretical framework that combines network theory and theory of mind to shed light on the possible impact of influencers on sustainable consumption.

The aim of this article is to examine the effect of influencer credibility on green advertising and sustainable food consumption. To do so, we conducted a quantitative study among Instagram subscribers (followers) of a Tunisian influencer, which is characterized by the promotion of sustainability, the local product, the handmade product (such as traditional groceries) and healthy consumption. First, we will start with a state of the art on sustainable food consumption and the role of influencer marketing. Next, we will clarify the research methodology. And finally, we will present and discuss the results of our quantitative study of 300 Instagram followers.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Sustainable food consumption*

The current food system does not encourage healthy and sustainable eating. The nutritional and biochemical aspects of food consumption are just one aspect, as food production, processing, preparation and consumption influence individual and societal health security. Food plays a fundamental role in human health by providing necessary nutrients. However, it can also be directly linked to an increased risk of disease (Mensah & al. 2024). Sustainable development is a panacea for the sustainability of humanity. It is defined as the ability of individuals to meet their present needs without affecting those of future generations. Sustainable consumption is also a means of achieving sustainable development. It is linked to the social and ecological aspects of consumption and product use. For a country to achieve a high level of sustainable development, sustainable consumption trends must be omnipresent at the heart of citizens' eating habits. Underpinning this vision is the fact that increasing environmental pollution and the depletion of natural resources has heightened consumer awareness of sustainable consumption trends. Today, consumers are preoccupied with different facts such as green labels, natural ingredients and organic foods. These concerns put the spotlight back on human beings' desire to adopt more environmentally-friendly consumption behaviour. As a result, concepts such as “green marketing”, “green consumer” and “ethical consumer behaviour” have emerged (Quoquab & Mohammad 2020).

Sustainable food consumption refers to the consumption of food products that meet basic needs and provide a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollution, so as not to compromise the needs of future generations”. Although food preferences are difficult to change since they are at the heart of people's lifestyles, they are also subject to marketing efforts (De Keyzer 2023).

Barriers to sustainable food consumption can be classified into three groups: product barriers (product-related barrier), consumer barriers (consumer-related barrier) and food market barriers (food market-related barrier). In the product barriers group, the high price of sustainable products (organic) is the most mentioned in the literature (Haider & al.2022).With regard to the group of consumer barriers, eating habits are one of the main obstacles to sustainable food consumption since consumers want to eat the way they are used to (Mäkinen & Vainio 2014). Furthermore, consumers do not trust sustainable labels and certifications (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). In fact, dynamic lifestyles create temporal barriers and consumers do not have time to prepare a sustainable diet or consider information on sustainable labels in grocery stores (Mancini & al. 2017).

It is worth noting that Generation Z consumers are most ambitious when it comes to sustainability behaviours. Their widely reported eco-sensitivity seems to be overestimated, and their ideals do not translate into purchasing behaviour (O'Neill & al. 2023).

### *2.2. Influence marketing for sustainable food consumption*

Influencer marketing is one of the new forms of marketing communication. Thanks to social media, influencers are able to disseminate information, inspire ideas and shape the perceptions of others which can lead to behavioural changes (Hawkins & Saleem 2024). These changes are driven by a higher level of authenticity and credibility among influencers, which translates into less resistance to the advertising message. Social media can also be used to raise awareness and rapidly disseminate information to young people who are less receptive to

traditional media (Buvár & al.2023). The changing social behaviour of the modern generation is tending towards sustainability. Green consumption habits bring a balance between corporate profit objectives and sustainable customer behaviour (Parvathi & Annamuthu 2024).

The role of influencers in sustainable consumption is a much debated topic, with inconclusive results. Indeed, research by Johnstone & Lindh (2022) revealed that influencers play a crucial role in shaping sustainable fashion purchase intention. In the same perspective, Kilipiri & al. (2023) showed that travel influencers on Instagram hustle their followers towards the selection of a sustainable destination. On the other hand, Boerman & al. (2022) demonstrated that the credibility of socially responsible influencers has no direct impact on environmental intentions. It is imperative to note that most existing scientific research has focused on the impact of influencers on specific products, such as food (De Keyzer 2023) and tourism (Baltezarević & al. 2022). As such, these studies have been carried out with specific demographic groups, notably Generation Y (Jansom & Pongsakornrungrasit 2021).

To date, the literature has not provided a comprehensive answer to the question regarding the significant impact of influencers on sustainable consumption and how consumers' perceptions of influencer characteristics affect different types of sustainable consumption (Vilkaite-Vaitone 2024).

### 2.3. Conceptual model and research hypotheses

An influencer is qualified by a certain level of credibility if their recommendations are trustworthy and effective messages (Rebelo 2017). People are more likely to accept recommendations from credible sources or communicators. Social media can establish close relationships between influencers, having strong marketing potential, and subscribers (Yuan & Lou 2020). Moreover, the presence of a community leader can create a sense of proximity. The influencer's perceived credibility helps to highlight the "green content" of an advertisement (Hasanah & Anjaningrum 2023). Attitudes towards green advertising increased when the celebrity was perceived to be credible among followers. Thus, celebrity endorsement has a significant effect on green advertising taking into account the impact of product type (Eren-Erdogmus & al. 2016). In this regard, we propose to test the following hypothesis: **H1: Influencers' credibility has a positive impact on green advertising.**

By theoretical frame, consumers generally believe in the authenticity of content, broadcast by the celebrity they trust. The influencer's image and reputation contribute to belief in the advertising message (Kumar & Tripathi 2022). Green marketers are trying to combine new marketing communication formats, such as influencer marketing in order to change consumer behaviour and lead them to make more sustainable food choices (De Keyzer 2023). Green advertising highlights the environmental benefits associated with the purchase of certain products and raises awareness of organic consumption (Nyilasy & al. 2014). It shapes their feelings and judgments. Consumers perceive green ads as credible and authentic which encourages a consumption cycle that respects the environment and human health (Sun & al. 2021). As a result of greenwashing, consumers are becoming sceptical of green advertising, doubting the authenticity of green claims (Pittman & Sheehan 2021). This type of advertising can have a positive impact on sustainable behaviour. Beyond this, green advertising can encourage consumer commitment to sustainable food consumption (Borah & al. 2024). Within this framework, we submit the following hypotheses:

**H2a: Green advertising disseminated by the influencers' has a positive impact on affective sustainable food consumption.**

**H2b: Green advertising disseminated by the influencers' has a positive impact on conative sustainable food consumption.**

**H2c: Green advertising disseminated by the influencers' has a positive impact on cognitive sustainable food consumption.**

Previous research has shown that influencer credibility is an important factor in influencing purchase intention (Balaban & Mustăţ 2019). Audiences who follow a product based on influencer reviews are more likely to accept and use it. According to (Su & al. 2021), the influencers perceived as credible are highly effective in promoting products on social networks. According to Schorn & al. (2022), this effectiveness can be attributed to consumers' inability to verify product sustainability. Credibility is an important factor in influencing sustainable food consumption. Therefore, it is important to consider its role when setting up effective influencer marketing campaigns for promoting sustainable consumption (Vilkaite-Vaitone 2024). Based on these results, we put forward the following hypotheses:

**H3a: Influencers' credibility has a positive impact on affective sustainable food consumption.**

**H3b: Influencers' credibility has a positive impact on conative sustainable food consumption.**

**H3c: Influencers' credibility has a positive impact on cognitive sustainable food consumption.**

### 3. Research methodology

This research was conducted using a quantitative approach to examine the effect of influencer credibility on green advertising and sustainable food consumption. Our sample consisted of 300 followers of the Tunisian influencer *Ala Ben Amara* characterized by his promotion of organic local products, traditional consumption, authentic gastronomy, eco-tourism and sustainable lifestyle. The details of our quantitative sample will be the subject of Table 1 presented below;

Table 1. Sample details

	Details	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>	Men	42%
	Women	58%
<b>Age</b>	18--- 24 years	22 %
	25--- 34 years	51%
	35---49 years	27%
<b>Occupation</b>	Intermediate profession	46%
	Freelance	21%
	Student	20%
	Manager	13%

With reference to previous research, we chose the following measurement tools: the Weismueller & al. scale (2020) to operationalize the influencer credibility variable, Kim & Cha's scale (2021) for evaluating green advertising and Quoquab & Mohammad's three-dimensional scale (2020) for the sustainable food consumption variable.

### 4. Results

An exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement tools was carried out on our sample using two software packages, namely SPSS.20 and Smart PLS.4.

The exploratory analysis shows that the data are factorable, as all KMO values are greater than 0.5, range from 0.639 to 0.870 and Bartlett's test value is significant at the 5% threshold. Our analysis also shows that Cronbach's alpha for the different measures varies between 0.855 and 0.972, demonstrating good reliability of the scales used.

The results of the confirmatory analysis show that all constructs have a good level of composite reliability and that the items well correlate with their concepts, as their loadings are greater than 0.7 (Hair & al. 2009). Convergent validity was also verified by examining the AVE values, which were above the acceptability threshold of 0.5 (Chin 1998). With regard to discriminant validity, our results show that the square root of each factor's AVE is greater than the variance shared between the latent constructs. This confirms the discriminant validity of all constructs (Fornell & Larker 1981). Before examining the hypotheses put forward, this confirms the discriminant validity of all concepts (Fornell & Larker 1981). Before proceeding to the examination of the hypotheses put forward, the estimation of the structural model requires the examination of the predictive quality of the model based on the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  (Fernandes 2012), data analysis with PLS leads to satisfactory results for all endogenous variables. The evaluation of our model measures will be clarified in Table 2 presented below;

Table 2. Evaluation of model measures

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	$R^2$
<b>Influencer Credibility</b>	0.941	0.943	0.811	
<b>Green advertising</b>	0.892	0.903	0.755	0.689
<b>Affective sustainability</b>	0.856	0.859	0.697	0.839
<b>Conative sustainability</b>	0.971	0.973	0.855	0.885
<b>Cognitive sustainability</b>	0.892	0.894	0.822	0.824

To test for direct links between the variables studied, we adopted the PLS approach. The results presented in Table 3 below demonstrate that all the hypotheses of our research model have been validated;

Table 3. Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	$\beta$ (Path Coefficients)	T de Student	P-values	Hypotheses status
<b>H1:</b> Influencer credibility ==> Green advertising	0.830	56.035	0.000	Validated
<b>H2a:</b> Green advertising ==> Affective sustainability	0.700	20.595	0.000	Validated
<b>H2b:</b> Green advertising==> Conative sustainability	0.643	17.537	0.000	Validated
<b>H2c:</b> Green advertising==> Cognitive sustainability	0.230	4.279	0.000	Validated
<b>H3a:</b> Influencer credibility ==> Affective sustainability	0.247	7.040	0.000	Validated
<b>H3b:</b> Influencer credibility ==> Conative sustainability	0.336	8.941	0.000	Validated
<b>H3c:</b> Influencer credibility ==> Cognitive sustainability	0.707	14.347	0.000	Validated

The results of our quantitative study using the PLS software will be presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below;

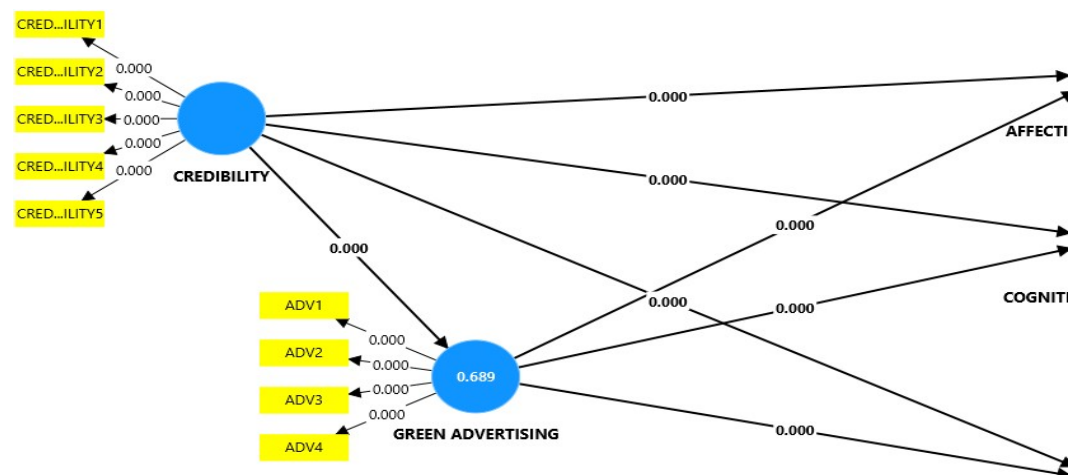


Figure 1. Output PLS (1)

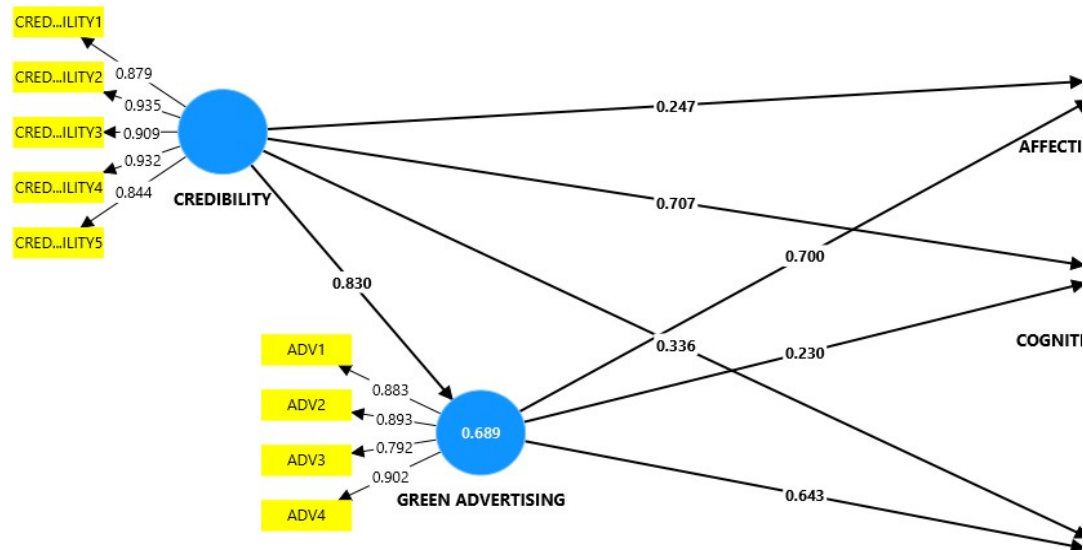


Figure 2. Output PLS (2)

## 5. Discussion

The aim of our paper is to examine the effect of credibility influencer on green advertising and sustainable food consumption. To this end, we conducted a quantitative study of 300 followers of Tunisian influencer. Having detailed the empirical results, it is imperative to compare them with theory. Beyond that, it would be desirable to provide marketing professionals with relevant recommendations.

Our first research hypothesis was to examine the relationship between influencer credibility and green advertising. This hypothesis has been validated. This result is a continuation of previous research. Green advertising is a conscious marketing strategy. It promotes green living practices by highlighting a brand green image (Borah & al. 2024). Influencer credibility positively influences attitudes towards green advertising. Green content is a powerful advertising message if it is disseminated by a credible influencer (Hasanah & Anjaningrum 2023). Advertising has increasingly been recognized as a powerful tool for raising awareness and promoting sustainable behaviours. For such communication to achieve its intended impact, it is essential to comprehend the mechanisms through which green messages influence sustainable decision-making. Additionally, understanding how these messages interact with individuals' pro-environmental predispositions and intrinsic motivations is crucial. A deeper insight into these processes is necessary to optimize the effectiveness of green advertising and facilitate long-term, environmentally responsible consumer behaviours (Lima & al. 2023).

The second hypothesis confirmed the positive effect of green advertising on sustainable food consumption. Organic consumption is widely recognized as sustainable consumption. Local products are also studied in the field of sustainable food through the concept of "food miles". Local produce is generally marketed in short, alternative food supply chains. This type of product is characterized by the absence of the psychological distance between producers and consumers (Scalvedi & Saba 2018). Green advertising is a promotional strategy aimed at implicitly or explicitly addressing the relationship between the company and sustainability, promoting a green lifestyle among consumers and projecting a company's image as environmentally and health-friendly (Sun & al., 2021). It shakes up consumers' commitment to sustainable food consumption, drawing on its three dimensions; cognitive, affective and conative (Quoquab & Mohammad 2020; Borah & al. 2024). Sustainable consumption refers to behaviors and patterns that meet ecological needs, protect the environment, and promote social development. It has become a central topic in academic research. This approach is seen as a solution to the environmental and social issues caused by traditional consumption. By encouraging sustainable practices, it aims to mitigate the negative impacts of conventional consumption. Ultimately, sustainable consumption seeks to foster long-term ecological and societal well-being. For this reason, there is a notable trend in the research domain of green marketing within the context of sustainable consumption. This shift reflects the increasing recognition of the need to align marketing strategies with environmentally sustainable practices, as well as the growing importance of influencing consumer behaviour toward more sustainable choices (Geng & Maimaituerxun 2022).



Thus, the third hypothesis was validated. Influencer credibility is a catalyst for sustainable consumption (Vilkaite-Vaitone 2024) and influencers can change the behavioural reactions of their followers. These changes are driven by a higher level of authenticity and credibility (Hawkins & Saleem, 2024). Furthermore, the informational value of content generated by influencers, in conjunction with their credibility and attractiveness, has been shown to significantly enhance trust in branded posts. This trust, in turn, contributes to increased brand awareness and influences consumers' purchase intentions (Patil & al. 2024).

## 6. Conclusion

In recent decades, influencer marketing has attracted considerable attention from researchers and branders alike. The growing collaboration between brands and influencers is a new strategic direction for responding to the postmodern consumer. Sustainable consumption has also begun to capitalize on this trend by identifying suitable influencers to promote their brands, hand over the attention of green consumers and expand their presence on social networks. With their credibility and large following, they have the ability to effectively communicate sustainability to a wide audience. Influencers have the potential to make sustainable consumption more accessible and affordable (Belanche & al. 2021; Vilkaite-Vaitone 2024).

*Theoretical implications:* The literature has not confirmed a complete answer to the question of whether influencers have a significant effect on sustainable food consumption. Our research combines network theory and theory of mind to shed light on the possible impact of influencers on sustainable consumption. This article discusses the powerful effect of influencer credibility and green advertising on Instagram in cognitive, affective and conative engagement with sustainability.

*Managerial implications:* Based on our empirical study, we found that influencer credibility had the strongest effect on sustainable food consumption. Consequently, managers need to collaborate with credible influencers to increase the effectiveness of green advertising. Particular attention needs to be paid to product-promoter fit when choosing influencers for marketing campaigns. Companies use celebrities to promote their products. On the other hand, pro-environmental celebrities are more effective in generating and stimulating a favourable attitude towards sustainable food consumption. A respectful influencer image could establish a green brand image. To encourage consumer engagement with green ads in social media contexts, marketers can suggest an optimal message strategy which leads to greater positive engagement.

*Limitations and future researches:* The current study is not immune to the limitations of the sampling procedure. First, the context of this research focuses on a single social media platform, Instagram, which is a rather young user base. In addition, the participants are the followers of a single influencer and a single geographical location (Tunisia). For these reasons, the sample is relatively small. The development of a precise category of consumers based on their sustainable behaviour is a future avenue of research. Creating such groups could benefit marketers wishing to promote sustainable products, regardless of the communication channel used. In addition, the specifics features of products promoted in a green advertisement may be antecedents of sustainable food consumption. Let's know that the local product, artisanal, authentic, traditional... builds a gastronomic identity that appeals to consumers who are concerned about their health and their environment. The need to adopt sustainable food consumption in daily life is due to the responsibility to ensure the well-being of future generations.

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