British Food Journal

The nexus between green influencers and green customer citizenship behavior: do environmental self-identity and dynamic norms matter?

Received 6 March 2025
Revised 6 June 2025
Accepted 24 June 2025

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Abstract

Purpose – Green customer citizenship behavior (CCB) is a relatively new concept, with limited research on its antecedents. This study used an integrated theoretical framework to examine how green influencer influencers influence green CCB through environmental self-identity.

Design/methodology/approach – The study combines social identity theory with social norms theory to propose a research framework. A within-subject experiment was conducted with 257 coffee shop customers in the United States.

Findings – The results indicate that green influencers are stronger predictors of green CCB than non-green influencers, with this relationship mediated by environmental self-identity. Additionally, dynamic norms do not moderate the direct relationship between green influencers and green CCB. However, it moderates this relation indirectly through environmental self-identity.

Originality/value – This study, for the first time, examines the differential impact of green versus non-green influencers on green CCB. It also explores the mechanism by which, and the conditions under which, these two types of influencers most effectively impact green CCB through the mediating role of environmental self-identity and the moderating role of dynamic norms.

Keywords Green influencer, Green CCB, Environmental self-identity, Dynamic norms, Coffee shop

Paper type Research article

Introduction

Green customer citizenship behavior (CCB) involves customers voluntarily engaging in actions that, while not mandatory, support and enhance a firm's environmental initiatives (Deng and Yang, 2022). For example, a customer of a sustainable fashion brand who shares a positive review on social media – highlighting the company's use of recycled materials and ethical labor practices – demonstrates green CCB. While there is a common agreement among scholars that the real birth of the concept of CCB traces back to Groth (2005), the concept of green CCB is relatively new, apparently first introduced in 2020 in van Tonder *et al*. (2020). Since then, many studies have emerged to understand this phenomenon better and examine the factors influencing customers to engage in such behavior.

British Food Journal
Vol. 127 No. 10, 2025
pp. 3825-3841

e-ISSN: 1758-4108
p-ISSN: 0007-070X
DOI 10.1108/BFJ-03-2025-0254

The existing literature on green CCB reveals a broad range of factors influencing this behavior, from corporate initiatives such as environmental corporate social responsibility initiatives (Waris *et al*., 2024) and green hotel initiatives (Tran *et al*., 2024) to individual values such as internal values (Van Tonder *et al*., 2023), to advertising such as the attribute of green animation advertising (Zhang and Yang, 2023), to brand attributes such as green attribute transparency (Deng and Yang, 2022), green brand love (Zhang and Yang, 2023), green brand uniqueness, credibility and innovativeness (Zhang *et al*., 2022) and even community expertise (Kuang and Lyu, 2024). While the existing studies provide valuable insights into the factors influencing green CCB, several gaps remain. One significant gap is the influence of individuals. Most studies focus on organizational practices, brand attributes and community experiences, overlooking the significant role that individuals, especially influencers, might play in shaping green CCB. This research aims to fill this gap and provide new insights into this.

Social media influencers – anyone who has social media followers (Esber and Wong, 2020) – play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and behavior (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023). Many studies have shown that influencers can promote ethical behavior, sustainable development and environmental awareness through their social media pages (Knupfer *et al*., 2023; Polat *et al*., 2024). The popularity of influencer marketing has been experiencing exponential growth (Alboqami, 2023; Lou and Yuan, 2019). This could be attributed to the growing number of people using social media platforms (e.g. Instagram). In May 2024, the size of the influencer marketing industry surged by approximately 147%, reaching over $24 bn compared to its 2020 figures (Statista, 2024). Among different types of influencers, green influencers – a subgroup of influencers (Knupfer *et al*., 2023) – have emerged as an increasingly prevalent behavior among environmental advocates that play a vital role in promoting sustainable lifestyles (König and Maier, 2024). Green influencers are social media personalities who specifically promote sustainable lifestyles and eco-consciousness, while non-green influencers are broader content creators who promote various products and lifestyles without an environmental focus (Pittman and Abell, 2021). They are often referred to as "sustainability superheroes" (Townsend, 2022) and typically promote sustainable consumption to their engaged audiences. Lauren Singer (@trashisfortossers) is an example of a green influencer, an American environmental activist known for her dedication to the "zero-waste movement."

The positive outcomes of green influencers on consumer behavior have been well-documented in past studies. For instance, green influencers are seen as significant predictors of purchase intention (Pittman and Abell, 2021), green behavioral intention (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023), environmental knowledge (Knupfer *et al*., 2023) and green usage intention (König and Maier, 2024). Yet, the extent to which green influencers may contribute to green CCB is still unclear. In their systematic review of influencer marketing, Polat *et al*. (2024) suggested that future studies should explore how green influencers can enhance green CCB across various tourism and hospitality settings. To help bridge this gap, this study aims to investigate green influencers as possible antecedents to green CCB. This study draws on social identity theory (Turner and Tajfel, 1986) by introducing environmental self-identity as a potential mechanism through which green influencers affect green CCB. Environmental self-identity plays a crucial role in understanding why consumers engage in (un)sustainable consumption (Dermody *et al*., 2015). Social identity theory posits that individuals derive a sense of identity from their group memberships, which can influence their attitudes and behaviors (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Based on this, the study investigates how green influencers can shape environmental self-identity and, consequently, promote green CCB.

Moreover, the social identity model of pro-environmental action (Fritsche *et al*., 2018) suggests that individuals' pro-environmental behaviors are likely shaped by their identification with a group and the norms upheld by that group. Social norms are seen as an effective motivator that can drive changes in consumer behavior (Ball *et al*., 2010). The role of normative concerns on customer pro-environmental behavior has been highlighted in the green CCB literature. For instance, Van Tonder *et al*. (2023) found that subjective norms (e.g. what do others do?) significantly influence customer pro-environmental behavior (e.g. green

CCB). Their findings underscore the importance of social factors (e.g. subjective norms) in promoting sustainable behavior. However, past studies do not account for how these social influences might change over time or how dynamic societal shifts could impact customer engagement in green CCB. Hence, this study also aims to extend past studies on green CCB (e.g. Van Tonder *et al*., 2023) by introducing dynamic norms – defined as information that highlights a significant shift in the behaviors or attitudes of others, indicating a trend or movement toward change (Sparkman and Walton 2019) – as social factors that could affect the relationship between green influencers and green CCB, an area that remains underexplored in this context.

In sum, this study aims to answer three main questions: Do green influencers predict green CCB? If so, is this relationship mediated by environmental self-identity? Is the interplay between green influencers, green CCB and environmental self-identity moderated by dynamic norms? This study provides at least three novel contributions. First, it advances our understanding of the direct effect that green influencers may have as predictors of green CCB. By doing so, it explores an uncovered relationship and responds to recent calls for further studies that expand our knowledge of green influencers (e.g. Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023) and green CCB (e.g. Van Tonder *et al*., 2023). Second, this study takes a step further by investigating the mechanism through which green influencers affect green CCB by introducing environmental self-identity as a mediator. This responds to calls from past studies within the green CCB domain (e.g. Tran *et al*., 2024) for more mediation mechanisms between companies' pro-social initiatives and green CCB. Lastly, this study assesses the proposed conceptual model under two specific conditions – dynamic and static norms – to better understand how green influencers affect green CCB.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Green influencer

The widespread growth and evolution of social media platforms have revolutionized communication, information sharing and interpersonal connections. In addition to the increasing number of users, influencers and individuals who have established a strong reputation for their expertise in a specific area within the digital context have emerged as the primary point of contact for users or consumers (Pop *et al*., 2022). Nearly 50% of consumers trust recommendations from influencers and 40% make purchases after encountering these recommendations on social media platforms (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). Therefore, the use of influencers in marketing has become inevitable. Influencers, also known as native advertising or product placement strategy, involve sponsoring a brand's product or service in the content shared by an influencer (J. A. Lee and Eastin, 2021). As a result, since influencers can set trends and persuade followers, many businesses are now identifying and encouraging them to advertise their services (Barbe and Neuburger, 2021).

Recently, social media has evolved beyond platforms for marketing brands and services for various products. They have transformed into a platform that benefits from its broad reach to promote green products (Polat *et al*., 2024). Social media sites have provided an ideal stage for green influencers to connect with a wide audience and share their messages (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023; Townsend, 2022). In the context of sustainability and the environment, green influencers are defined as a subset of influencers who focus on content related to sustainability, including advertising for eco-friendly brands, raising awareness about climate change and promoting environmental activism (Knupfer *et al*., 2023). By posting engaging and informative content, green influencers can increase awareness of environmental issues and inspire others to take positive action (Knupfer *et al*., 2023). Consequently, green influencers are emerging as a new category of thought leaders who influence public opinions about environmentally conscious products by sharing content on social media platforms (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023).

Green influencers are a novel and compelling concept that has gained traction in various industries. Several studies have shown that green influencers play a unique role in promoting

sustainability. They do this by raising awareness, driving change, supporting green businesses and fostering communities that are passionate about environmental protection (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023; Knupfer *et al*., 2023; van Tonder *et al*., 2020). Green influencers can leverage the interactive nature of social media to craft their messages, inspiring sustainable behavior and fostering stronger customer relationships, which in turn leads to increased customer engagement (Knupfer *et al*., 2023). For instance, Lifebuoy's collaboration with nearly 100 influencers for Global Handwashing Day resulted in a combined reach of over 3.6 m people worldwide. This initiative significantly boosted awareness and participation, with over 500 m individuals from 100 countries coming together to celebrate handwashing in just one day in October (Sidibe, 2020). Yıldırım (2021) explored how women influencers can promote and transform sustainable consumption patterns across various domains like fashion, food, travel and lifestyle. The findings revealed that green influencer women are more influential than their male counterparts in shifting societal behaviors toward sustainability.

The hospitality marketing sector has caught the attention of individuals who have embraced being green influencers. These influencers promote sustainability in various ways, including sharing information about the benefits of sustainable eating with a broad audience. They can endorse restaurants and cafes that follow environmentally friendly practices and share healthy recipes and tips for maintaining a balanced diet. In the tourism and travel context, the study of Kılıç and Gürlek (2023) analyzed the posts of green influencers through four studies and clarified that green influencer marketing can be divided into two main subcategories: influence focused on eco-friendly products and influence centered on broader environmental sustainability. The study of (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023) tested this new scale of green influencers on green behavior intention. In addition, green influencers use social media platforms in the food and café sector to promote sustainable and healthy food practices. In a recent systematic study, the analysis of 75 studies on influencer marketing in tourism and hospitality has conclusively confirmed the relatively new concept of green influencers (Polat *et al*., 2024). These influencers have the capacity to greatly affect pro-environmental behaviors, particularly in reducing adverse environmental impacts. The study strongly encourages further examination of the impact of influencers on promoting sustainable practices and shaping positive attitudes toward environmental efforts. Supplement file 1 provides a summary of key studies on green influencers.

Green CCB

The green CCB is close to CCB. CCB refers to voluntary behaviors that go beyond the company's expectations and are not necessary for the success of value creation but still contribute to the firm by providing exceptional value (Groth, 2005). In simpler terms, it involves customers voluntarily engaging in positive behaviors toward companies or brands that surpass basic service expectations. Moreover, green CCB is an extension concept of CCB (van Tonder *et al*., 2020). This is particularly evident in customers' actions and initiatives to support environmentally friendly companies and products, which contribute to environmental protection.

Evidence suggests that consumers' attitudes, values and knowledge influence their behavior, and that efforts to communicate information or change attitudes can encourage environmentally sustainable behaviors (Goldman *et al*., 2020). Green CCB refers to voluntary and discretionary actions by customers that are not obligatory but contribute positively to a company's environmental initiatives (Deng and Yang, 2022). Green CCB consists of voluntary positive actions taken by consumers to minimize the environmental impact of their consumption while endorsing and supporting companies that engage in eco-friendly practices (Hwang and Lyu, 2020). The importance of this behavior lies in supporting the green economy and promoting sustainable practices that minimize environmental harm (Waris *et al*., 2024). It also helps build a positive reputation for companies that care about the environment.

Green CCB includes speaking positively about firms that sell green brands, recommending these companies to others and promising friends and family to purchase from them (Deng and Yang, 2022; Van Tonder *et al*., 2023). The behavior consists of assisting customers with purchasing green products, offering advice to other customers, informing company employees of valuable ideas to improve green products and giving positive feedback to the firm and its workers (Van Tonder *et al*., 2020; Hwang and Lyu, 2020). Previous research within the context of green specified that CCB is multidimensional, with advocacy, feedback and helping behaviors (Van Tonder *et al*., 2020; Hwang and Lyu, 2020). A study by Van Tonder *et al*. (2020) in South Africa has investigated green CCB as second-order variables and found that internal values effect attitudes, motivating overall green CCB. In addition, subjective norms also effect both green attitudes and CCB. From the perspective of 320 passengers in Korea, Hwang and Lyu (2020) also illustrated that green images significantly predict consumer attitudes and their willingness to choose an environmentally friendly airline, which positively impacts dimensions of green CCB: feedback, advocacy, helping and tolerance. Supplement file 2 provides a summary of the key studies on green CCB.

Environmental self-identity

Identity is a key factor in understanding human behavior, especially regarding consumption choices (Oyserman, 2009; Zhao *et al*., 2024a). Self-identity is an individual's perception and understanding of who they are (Cook *et al*., 2002) and reflects a person's sense of self (Lalot *et al*., 2019). The key aspect of one's self-concept pertains to a specific behavior (Conner and Armitage, 1998). Building on the concept of self-identity, environmental self-identity in this study refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as persons whose actions are environmentally friendly (Van der Werff *et al*., 2013b). In other words, it indicates the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as being environmentally conscious (Lalot *et al*., 2019). For instance, in the coffee shop context, a customer with a high level of environmental self-identity is a customer who uses Butterfly cups that are compostable and recyclable and doesn't need straws to signal to others that they are concerned about environmental aspects. Environmental self-identity is one of the major predictors of consumption choice-making, particularly sustainable consumption behavior (Dermody *et al*., 2015). While there is a broader literature examining identity-driven behavior in economics (Atkin *et al*., 2021; Azmat *et al*., 2019), this study takes a distinct approach grounded in psychological and marketing perspectives. Specifically, this study builds on social identity theory and social norms theory to examine how green influencers activate environmental self-identity, which in turn promotes voluntary pro-environmental behavior. This framing positions environmental self-identity as a psychosocial mechanism rather than an economic utility function and allows exploitation of non-monetary drivers of sustainable behaviors.

Connecting the dots: green influencer, environmental self-identity and green CCB

Social identity theory can link green influencers, environmental self-identity and green CCB. The central principle of SIT is that individuals form their self-concept based on their membership in social groups, referred to as in-groups. They seek to maintain a positive social identity by favorably comparing their in-group to relevant out-groups (Tajfel, 1974). SIT processes are categorization, social identity and social comparison (Trepte and Loy, 2017). As part of this process, people categorize themselves into groups (e.g. environmentalists vs. non-environmentalists) (Billig and Tajfel, 1973). They then adopt the identity of these groups and seek to align their attitudes and behavior with group norms (Hogg and Reid, 2006). Central to SIT is the notion that when people define and evaluate themselves based on their group membership, they engage in social comparisons to distinguish their group from others (Hogg, 2000). In any intergroup situation where categorization serves the purpose of social identification and is relevant to a valued dimension, individuals strive to differentiate their group positively from others to enhance their self-esteem (Turner, 1975). Green influencers

aim to lead and educate the community in adopting environmentally friendly practices and a sustainable lifestyle (König and Maier, 2024; Pittman and Abell, 2021). In other words, green influencers promote socially desirable norms and values, which are considered significant predictors of pro-environmental behavior and central to individuals' identities (Zhao *et al*., 2024a). Therefore, followers of green influencers will emphasize their environmentally friendly behaviors to differentiate themselves from followers of non-green influencers positively.

Reimer *et al*. (2022) state that social identification changes the nature of social categorization, suggesting that as individuals increasingly identify with their environmental group, the categorization becomes more significant and influential in guiding behavior. This differentiation enhances their self-esteem (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000) and reinforces their environmental self-identity, as self-esteem is a core antecedent of environmental self-identity (Whitmarsh and O'Neill, 2010). Previous research indicates that the more strongly one self-identifies as an environmentalist, the higher their intention to act environmentally friendly in the future (Lalot *et al*., 2019). Therefore, a high level of environmental self-identity is considered a predictor of pro-environmental behavior (Van der Werff *et al*., 2013b) because such actions align with one's self-concept and social group norms. Empirically, Van der Werff *et al*. (2013b) found a positive association between environmental self-identity and pro-environmental behavior, such as willingness to pay more for green energy. All things considered, we posit that there could be a direct relationship between green influencers and green CCB and that this relationship is explained by environmental self-identity. Thus, we propose the following two hypotheses:

H1. The influence of different influencer types (green vs non-green) varies in its relative impact on green CCB.

H2. Environmental self-identity mediates the differential impact of influencer types (green vs non-green) and green CCB.

The moderation effect of dynamic norms

Social norms interventions can potentially enhance intergroup relations and bolster the efficacy of existing interventions (Prentice and Paluck, 2020). Norms are common patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving (Hogg and Reid, 2006). While several types of norms are discussed in the literature, the most frequently used social norms are descriptive norms – referring to "what most people are doing" (e.g. recycling because the majority of people in the community do so) – and injunctive norms, which refer to what is socially accepted (e.g. recycling because it is deemed the right thing to do by society) (Berkowitz, 2005). The common point between descriptive and injunctive norms is that both focus on the current state of behavior; in other words, they emphasize static norms. However, norms are not always static and can be dynamic, reflecting changes in behavior over time (Sparkman and Walton, 2017). An example of a static norm could be saying that the majority of American people make a great effort to consume eco-friendly products. This norm becomes dynamic if we say that, in recent years, the majority of American people have started making a great effort to consume eco-friendly products.

The literature suggests that individuals are influenced by what most people do and adjust their behavior accordingly to fit in (Dong *et al*., 2023). Dynamic norms, in particular, are significant predictors of personal change and promote behavior change across different contexts (Sparkman and Walton, 2019). Sparkman and Walton (2017) demonstrated that dynamic norms (e.g. behaviors that are becoming more common) could lead to greater pro-environmental behavior than static norms. The effect of norms on consumer perception could be rooted in social norms theory. The social norms theory posits that individuals' attitudes and behaviors are significantly influenced by their perceptions of their social group's actions (Trivedi and Beck, 2018). Individuals constantly change their behavior to align with perceived

norms (Berkowitz, 2005). In this vein, Sparkman and Walton (2017) found that a dynamic-norm message, highlighting the recent increase in the number of people reducing their meat consumption, was more effective at encouraging pro-environmental behavior than static-norm messages that simply indicated how many people currently limit their meat consumption. Similarly, Mortensen *et al*. (2017) conducted a study where participants faced three types of norm conditions: no norm, static norm and dynamic norm. Those exposed to the dynamic norm, which showed an increasing participation rate over time, were more inclined to engage in environmental advocacy compared to those in the static norm or no-norm groups. They were more likely to engage in environmental advocacy efforts than those in the static norm condition or the no-norm control group. All considered, we posit in this study that the magnitude effect of green influencers on green CCB will be affected by dynamic norms. Hence, we hypothesize:

H3. Dynamic norms moderate the effect of influencer type (green vs non-green) on green CCB, such that the impact is stronger when dynamic norms are emphasized.

Dynamic norms have also been demonstrated to promote changes in identity, as individuals seek to align themselves with the suggested societal change (Sparkman and Walton, 2019). Hence, it is logical to posit that the mediation effect of environmental self-identity on the relationship between green influencers and green CCB could be influenced by dynamic norms. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4. The mediation effect of environmental self-identity on the relationship between influencer types and green CCB is moderated by dynamic norms.

The research conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Methodology

This study employed a 2 (Source of green post: green influencer vs non-green influencer) by 2 (Dynamic norms: dynamic vs static) within-subjects experimental design. A total of 257

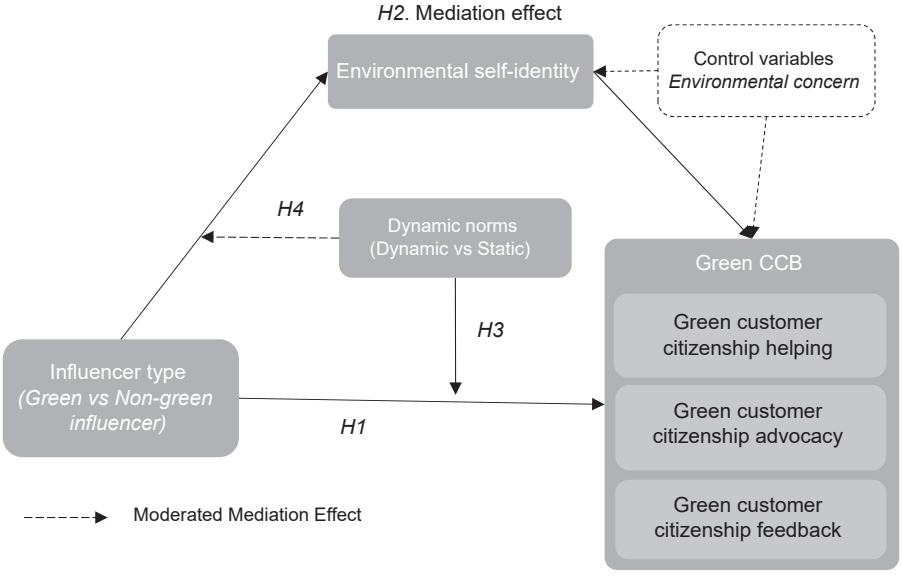

Figure 1. Research model. Source: Authors' own work

coffee shop consumers in the United States were recruited using MTurk as a sampling source to collect data. MTurk is a crowdsourcing platform widely utilized in experimental design studies (e.g. Aljarah *et al*., 2022a; König and Maier, 2024).

We followed the approach of Aljarah *et al.* (2022b) by using a pre- and post-test design to control for baseline differences and more accurately attribute changes in green CCB to the influencer-type manipulation. After reading the background information, participants' initial green CCB (ten-item scale, Van Tonder *et al*., 2023) and environmental self-identity (four-item scale, Whitmarsh and O'Neill, 2010) were measured. Next, the post source was manipulated using two mock Instagram accounts for a fictitious influencer, Stella Nova (Figure 2), to eliminate prior knowledge effects. Inspired by Pittman and Abell (2021), the green influencer condition featured a bio stating Stella is a green influencer, while the non-green condition had the same profile with a neutral bio (Figure 1). Both groups saw the same green post promoting

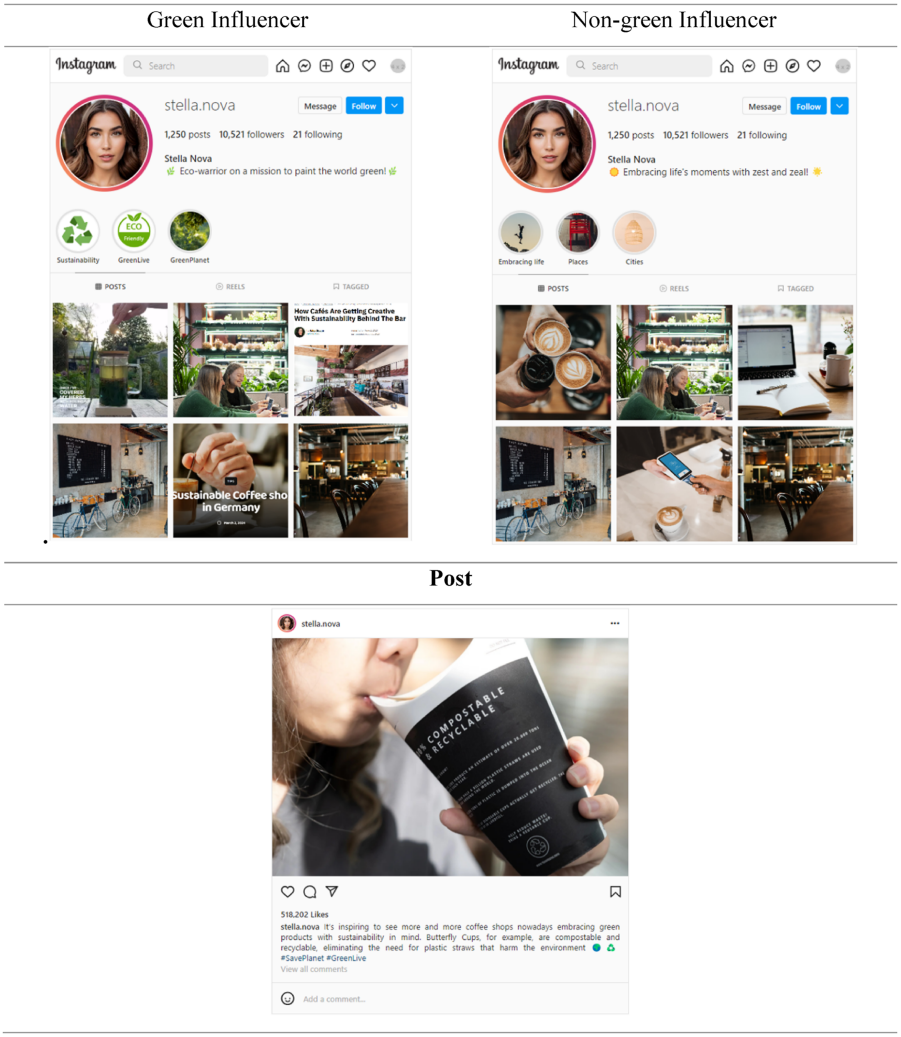

Figure 2. Stimuli. Source: Authors' own work

coffee shops. A manipulation check asked, "Based on the influencer's profile, how much do you think this influencer cares about the environment?" (1 = not at all, 7 = very much).

The dynamic norm manipulation was adapted from Sparkman and Walton (2017) and revised for this study. In the static norm condition, participants read: "30% of people in the U.S. make an effort to use eco-friendly cups." In the dynamic norm condition, they read: "In the last five years, 30% of people in the U.S. have started making an effort to use eco-friendly cups." This framing emphasized either the norm's current status or its change over time, following prior studies (Boenke *et al*., 2022; Sparkman and Walton, 2017, 2019). To ensure engagement, participants answered an open-ended question: "Why do you think this is?" A manipulation check assessed their perception of eco-friendly cup use trends. Finally, green CCB and environmental self-identity were measured using the same initial scales.

Since an individual's concerns about the environment could affect the influence of environmentally related messages on the message's effectiveness (Chang *et al*., 2015; Pittman and Milfeld, 2023), participants' environmental concern is measured as a control variable by adopting a four-items scale from Chuah *et al*. (2020). Furthermore, previous research has suggested that participants' perception of the realism of each scenario can influence the observed differences between control and treatment groups (Meertens *et al*., 2013). Therefore, to verify the realism of the scenarios, a control question was included to evaluate how much participants viewed the scenarios as representative of real-life situations. This assessment used a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Extremely likely, 7 = Extremely unlikely) (Meertens *et al*., 2013).

Results

Demographic profile

The majority of respondents (48.2%) were aged 35–44, followed by 27.6% aged 25–34 and 23.7% aged 18–24. In terms of gender, 58.0% identified as male, while 42.0% identified as female. Regarding employment status, 67.3% of participants were employed full-time, with 13.6% identifying as students and 8.2% reporting being unemployed and seeking work. Smaller proportions were working part-time (4.3%) or were homemakers/stay-at-home parents (6.6%). Educational attainment was relatively high among participants: 66.5% held a bachelor's degree, and 6.6% reported having a graduate or professional degree. In contrast, only 10.1% had completed some high school or less. Marital status data indicated that the majority were married (68.1%), followed by divorced (16.3%), single (8.6%) and widowed (7.0%). Annual income was concentrated in the middle-income ranges, with 45.1% earning between $40,000 and $59,999 and 34.2% earning between $60,000 and $79,999. A smaller percentage reported higher earnings, with 1.9% earning $100,000 or more and 0.4% earning less than $20,000. Detailed demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Manipulation check

A manipulation check is a standard technique used in experimental research (e.g. Lee and Ham, 2023; Zhao *et al*., 2024b) to determine whether the experimental manipulation was successfully perceived by participants as intended. The manipulation check showed that participants perceived Stella as a green influencer more strongly in the green influencer condition ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.21$) than in the non-green condition ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.46$), with a significant difference ($F(257) = 275.25$, $p < 0.05$). A chi-square test confirmed a significant link between dynamic norms and perceptions of eco-friendly cup use, $\chi^2(1, N = 259) = 69.378$, $p < 0.001$, indicating the effectiveness of the manipulation. Scenario realism was tested using Meertens *et al*.'s (2013) approach, with no significant differences between conditions ($F(1,257) = 1.14$, $p = 0.28$). Most participants found the scenario realistic ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.59$).

Table 1. Demographic profile

Demographic category	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–24	61	23.7%
	25–34	71	27.6%
	35–44	124	48.2%
	45–54	1	0.4%
Gender	Male	149	58.0%
	Female	108	42.0%
Employment status	Working full-time	173	67.3%
	Working part-time	11	4.3%
	Unemployed and looking for work	21	8.2%
	A homemaker or stay-at-home parent	17	6.6%
	Student	35	13.6%
Education level	Some high school or less	26	10.1%
	High school diploma or GED	18	7.0%
	Some college, but no degree	9	3.5%
	Associates or technical degree	16	6.2%
	Bachelor's degree	171	66.5%
	Graduate or professional degree	17	6.6%
Marital status	Single	22	8.6%
	Married	175	68.1%
	Divorced	42	16.3%
	Widowed	18	7.0%
Annual income	Less than $20,000	1	0.4%
	$20,000–$39,999	13	5.1%
	$40,000–$59,999	116	45.1%
	$60,000–$79,999	88	34.2%
	$80,000–$99,999	34	13.2%
	$100,000 or more	5	1.9%

Source(s): Authors' own work

Construct reliability

Cronbach's alpha (α) is employed to evaluate the reliability of the continuous variables in the study. The results indicate satisfactory reliability for all variables ($\alpha_{\text{Pre Green CCB}} = 0.88$; $\alpha_{\text{Post Green CCB}} = 0.87$; $\alpha_{\text{Pre Environmental Self-Identity}} = 0.78$; $\alpha_{\text{Post Environmental Self-Identity}} = 0.82$; $\alpha_{\text{Environmental Concern}} = 0.81$) (Nunnally, 1978).

Hypotheses testing

A repeated-measures general linear model was conducted to assess whether participants' willingness to engage in green CCB differed depending on the type of influencer they were exposed to (H1). This analysis included time (pre- vs post-exposure) as a within-subject factor, influencer type (green vs. non-green) as a between-subjects factor, and environmental concern as a covariate. At baseline (pre-exposure), no significant differences in green CCB were observed between the two groups ($F(1, 256) = 2.94$, $p > 0.05$), with similar mean scores ($M = 4.92$ for the green influencer group and $M = 4.83$ for the non-green influencer group). However, a significant interaction effect between time and influencer type was observed, $F(1, 257) = 66.58$, $p < 0.05$. Participants exposed to green influencers reported a larger increase in green CCB ($M = 6.07$, $SE = 0.03$) than those in the non-green condition ($M = 5.79$), suggesting that green influencers were more effective in promoting sustainable behavior. This supports the expectation that the type of influencer affects green behavioral intentions over time.

To examine whether the effect of influencer type on green CCB operates through changes in environmental self-identity (H2), a mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2013) with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. This approach is in line with past studies (Aljarah *et al.*, 2022b; Nickerson *et al.*, 2021; Su *et al.*, 2020). In this model, the independent variable (influencer type) was coded as 0 (non-green) and 1 (green), the mediator was the change in environmental self-identity and the outcome was the change in green CCB. Pre-exposure scores were included as covariates to isolate post-manipulation effects, and environmental concern was also controlled. The analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of influencer type on green CCB through environmental self-identity ($\beta = 0.283$, 95% CI [0.1591, 0.3909]). This suggests that exposure to a green influencer increased participants' self-perception as environmentally conscious individuals, which in turn led to greater willingness to engage in green behaviors – consistent with the hypothesized mediation pathway (H2).

A further analysis explored whether the influence of green versus non-green influencers on green CCB varied depending on whether static or dynamic social norms were present (H3). A two-way ANOVA found no significant interaction between influencer types and dynamic norms ($F(243) = 1.91$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that the presence of dynamic norms did not significantly amplify or weaken the direct effect of influencer type on green behavioral intentions. This result suggests that dynamic norms alone did not moderate the relationship between influencer type and green CCB. Hence, H3 is not supported.

Finally, to explore whether dynamic norms enhanced the indirect effect of influencer type on green CCB via environmental self-identity (H4), a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro Model 8. Using the Macro Process tool (Model 8), results showed a significant indirect effect of environmental self-identity on the influencer type – green CCB relationship under both static ($\beta = 0.1295$, 95% CI [0.0282, 0.2396]) and dynamic ($\beta = 0.3670$, 95% CI [0.1915, 0.5411]) norm conditions. The effect was stronger under dynamic norms. The moderated mediation index confirmed a significant difference (Index = 0.2375, 95% CI [0.0348, 0.4292]), confirming that dynamic norms amplified the strength of the mediating process. These findings align with the proposition that the effectiveness of green influencers in promoting environmentally conscious behavior is enhanced when participants also perceive that such behaviors are increasingly normative. Hence, H4 is supported.

Discussion

Theoretical contributions

This study makes significant theoretical contributions in three key areas. First, it is the pioneering research to explore the differential impact of two types of influencers – green influencers versus non-green influencers – on green CCB. While prior studies have investigated the consequences of green influencers (Knupfer *et al.*, 2023) and the antecedents of green CCB (Waris *et al.*, 2024), none have explored the association between these two phenomena. Our findings extend the existing literature by providing empirical evidence that content posted by green influencers is a stronger predictor of green CCB than content from non-green influencers. This supports earlier research indicating the positive effects of influencers on pro-environmental behavior and confirms the status of green influencers as digital opinion leaders (Knupfer *et al.*, 2023). For instance, Kılıç and Gürlek (2023) demonstrated that green influencer marketing significantly predicts green purchase intention, while Knupfer *et al.* (2023) found that engagement with green influencers on social media promotes environmental activism. Thus, our study introduces a novel consequence of green influencers, empirically showing their influence on green CCB. Additionally, this research addresses calls for further studies to deepen our understanding of green CCB (e.g. Deng and Yang, 2022; Van Tonder *et al.*, 2023). Specifically, it responds directly to a recent call by Tran

et al. (2024) to further examine the moderating and mediating variables that enhance our understanding of green CCB.

Second, this study advances the literature by examining how green influencers impact green CCB, specifically by introducing environmental self-identity as a mediating factor. Doing so highlights the crucial role of environmental self-identity in the relationship between green influencers and green CCB. Past research argued that environmental self-identity mediates the relationship between values and sustainable consumption (Dermody *et al*., 2015). Our empirical findings confirm that green influencers enhance customers' environmental self-identity, subsequently motivating voluntary pro-environmental behaviors manifested as green CCB. Previous research has concentrated on factors such as trust and attitude (Pittman and Abell, 2021), perceived fit with personal interest and environmental consciousness (Kılıç and Gürlek, 2023) and environmental commitment (Pittman and Milfeld, 2023) to explain the impact of green influencers on consumer behavior. Our study, however, leverages SIT to introduce environmental self-identity as a key mediating mechanism that explains the effect of green influencers on consumer behavior.

Third, this study makes a substantial theoretical contribution to the literature on dynamic norms and green consumer behavior by examining its moderation effect on the relationship between the construct of the study. Previous research has demonstrated that dynamic norms can promote sustainable behaviors by highlighting changes in collective behavior over time (Boenke *et al*., 2022; Sparkman and Walton, 2017). However, this study uniquely identifies that while dynamic norms do not directly affect the relationship between green influencers and green CCB, they significantly enhance the mediating effect of environmental self-identity. This finding aligns with and extends Sparkman and Walton's (2017) conclusions by showing that dynamic norms strengthen the internal psychological processes that facilitate behavior change, rather than directly altering behavior through external influence. Moreover, while Boenke *et al*. (2022) focused on the source credibility of dynamic norm messages, this research highlights the critical boundary conditions created by dynamic norms, thus providing a more general understanding of their function. In particular, this study empirically confirmed that the power of environmental self-identity in explaining the relationship between green influencers and green CCB is stronger when customers perceive the norm as dynamic rather than static. This, in turn, suggests that dynamic norms create a more conducive environment for identity-based behavior change.

Managerial contributions

The present study yields several valuable implications for practical application. First, the finding that content from green influencers is a stronger predictor of customer pro-environmental voluntary behaviors (e.g. green CCB) than non-green influencers suggests that companies should strategically prioritize partnerships with influencers who have a clearly articulated environmental mission. Managers should implement structured influencer vetting processes that assess not only reach and engagement but also credibility, past environmental advocacy and audience alignment. For example, firms could create sustainability influencer criteria to ensure brand alignment and avoid greenwashing risks.

Second, this study highlighted the crucial role of environmental self-identity as a mediating factor in the relationship between green influencers and green CCB. Managers should go beyond product promotion and instead craft influencer content that reinforces consumers' self-perception as environmentally responsible individuals. This can be achieved, for instance, through using narrative storytelling where the influencer shares personal environmental journeys, encouraging followers' perception in eco-challenges or pledges to foster identity engagement and aligning messaging with core consumer values, such as community impact or ethical conception. By doing so, consumers will internalize green values, which may increase the likelihood of voluntary eco-friendly behavior.

Third, the study reveals that dynamic norms significantly enhance the mediating effect of environmental self-identity on green CCB. This suggests that timely, data-driven norm messaging should be integrated into green campaigns. Managers should incorporate dynamic norm messages into their marketing communications to amplify the impact of green influencers. This can be done by continuously monitoring the community and identifying positive trending beliefs and behaviors. For instance, brands can emphasize increasing recycling rates or participation in eco-friendly initiatives. By doing so, companies can create a more conducive environment for identity-based behavior change, ultimately driving greater consumer engagement in sustainable practices.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

No study is without limitations. Using MTurk participants may introduce bias, as they are more familiar with online surveys and often motivated by monetary incentives, limiting generalizability. Future research could use real customers for broader applicability. This study measured green CCB as an intention rather than actual behavior; field experiments could examine real actions. Additionally, a fictitious influencer was used – future studies should explore real influencers for greater ecological validity. The source of dynamic norms may also impact consumer responses (Boenke *et al.*, 2022); investigating whether an influencer or brand as the source alters the effect is needed. Lastly, this study did not consider message consistency – future research should examine whether repeated pro-environmental posts from a green influencer influence consumer responses.

Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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