

Consumer Trust, Confidence, and Price Sensitivity: Drivers of Engaged Consumption in Ethical Markets

Maher Toukabri¹, Aicha Shili²

Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of engaged consumption in ethical markets, emphasizing the roles of consumer trust, confidence, expertise, and price sensitivity. As consumer behavior increasingly reflects ethical considerations, particularly in the food sector, understanding the gap between ethical intentions and purchasing behaviors becomes paramount. We explore how consumer trust influences the engaged consumption of local products, the moderating effect of expertise on trust, and the role of price sensitivity in ethical purchasing decisions. Through a survey of 320 respondents in Saudi Arabia, our findings reveal that emotional and social values significantly enhance consumer confidence, which mediates the relationship between perceived value and engaged consumption. However, functional and monetary values do not show significant effects. Additionally, price sensitivity moderates the confidence-engaged consumption relationship, indicating that more price-sensitive consumers may hesitate to act on their ethical intentions despite having confidence in a product's ethical claims. This research offers actionable insights for businesses aiming to promote local and ethical products effectively, thereby fostering a more engaged and ethically aware consumer base.

Keywords: Engaged Consumption, Consumer Confidence, Price Sensitivity

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of consumer behavior, there is a marked shift towards engaged and ethical consumption, reflecting a growing awareness of the broader implications of purchasing decisions. Ethical consumption encompasses choices that prioritize social, environmental, and economic outcomes, driven by an increasing awareness of global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and resource depletion (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2022; Thøgersen et al., 2023). Contemporary consumers are not only more informed but actively engage with the ethical dimensions of their purchases, demonstrating a commitment to sustainable and responsible consumption practices (Newholm & Taylor, 2022; Penz & Hogg, 2022). This transformation is further amplified by the rise of digital communication and social media, which enhance awareness and facilitate information exchange about products and brands, enabling consumers to make more informed choices (Patterson et al., 2013).

A critical aspect of this movement is the increasing preference for local products, particularly in the food sector. Consumers increasingly value proximity to producers and perceive trustworthiness as a key determinant of their purchasing behavior (Herault-Fournier et al., 2022; Lebatto & Ferrandi, 2023). This inclination towards local products is often coupled with a desire to support local economies and reduce carbon footprints associated with transportation (Gustafson et al., 2020; Stolz et al., 2023). Research indicates that short supply chains enhance transparency, which fosters consumer loyalty by strengthening confidence in the ethical practices of local producers (Dupuy & Torre, 1998; Merle et al., 2016). Despite the positive trajectory toward ethical consumption, a significant gap persists between consumers' intentions and their actual purchasing behaviors, often referred to as the "intention-behavior gap." This gap underscores the necessity for deeper insights into the drivers of trust in ethical markets and the factors that inhibit consumers from acting on their ethical intentions (Harrison et al., 2020; Penz & Hogg, 2022; Thøgersen, 2006). Furthermore, understanding how consumer expertise and price sensitivity influence these dynamics is crucial for businesses aiming to navigate

¹ College of Business Administration, Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia University of Jendouba., Laboratory ARBRE, University of Tunis, Tunisia, E-mail: maher.toukab@nbu.edu.sa

² College of Business Administration, Marketing Department, Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia, University of Sfax Laboratory LRM, University of Sfax, Sfax, Tunisia E-mail: aicha.shili@yahoo.fr

the complexities of ethical consumption effectively (Harrison et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023; Chatzidakis et al., 2007).

This study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring the intricate interplay between consumer trust, confidence, expertise, and price sensitivity in the context of ethical consumption. Specifically, the research seeks to: (1) investigate how consumer trust influences the engaged consumption of local products, (2) explore the moderating effect of consumer expertise on the relationship between trust and engaged consumption, (3) analyze the role of price sensitivity in shaping purchasing behavior in ethical markets, and (4) provide actionable insights for businesses seeking to effectively promote local and ethical products.

To guide this exploration, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does consumer trust impact the engaged consumption of local products? (2) In what ways does consumer expertise moderate the relationship between trust and engaged consumption? (3) What role does price sensitivity play in influencing consumer purchasing decisions within ethical markets? (4) How can businesses leverage insights about trust, expertise, and price sensitivity to enhance the promotion of local and ethical products?

The findings from this research will contribute to the academic understanding of ethical consumption dynamics and offer practical strategies for marketers looking to connect with consumers regarding local products. By addressing challenges posed by consumer skepticism and varying price sensitivities, this research endeavors to foster a more engaged and ethically aware consumer base, ultimately benefiting both consumers and producers in the ethical marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Engaged Consumption and Ethical Markets

Engaged or ethical consumption signifies a profound shift in consumer behavior, highlighting moral, environmental, and social considerations over traditional factors such as price and convenience (Doane, 2011; Thøgersen et al., 2023). This transformation is driven by heightened awareness of global issues like climate change, social injustice, and unethical labor practices, compelling consumers to align their purchasing decisions with their values (Chiffolleau, 2008; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2009). Manifestations of engaged consumption include preferences for fair-trade and organic products, participation in ethical boycotts and buycotts, and an increasing inclination toward local and artisanal goods over mass-produced alternatives (Heilbrunn, 2005; Harrison et al., 2020).

Perceived value is a crucial component in this context, encompassing functional benefits and ethical and environmental dimensions. Research indicates that when consumers recognize the ethical value of a product—such as its positive societal or environmental impact—they are more likely to engage in responsible purchasing behaviors (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; White et al., 2019). Studies also show that a high perceived value in ethical products fosters a stronger emotional connection, potentially leading to increased brand loyalty (Klein et al., 2019).

In this evolving landscape, perceived value catalyzes consumer engagement. The ethical attributes of a product not only motivate purchases but also foster a sense of identity aligned with broader social causes. The focus on value extends beyond price, encompassing social and environmental implications, indicating that effective marketing must communicate these ethical dimensions to resonate with ethically-minded consumers (McCarthy et al., 2020).

Hypothesis H1: Perceived value positively impacts consumer confidence.

Confidence and Engaged Consumption

Confidence in a product or brand closely correlates with perceived value and plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior. It reflects beliefs about a product's quality, safety, and ethical integrity. Consumers recognizing ethical benefits, such as a product's positive environmental impact or commitment to fair labor practices, often find their confidence in those products enhanced (Gurviev & Korchia, 2002). Research

consistently shows that consumers who understand the ethical implications of buying organic or fair-trade products demonstrate higher confidence levels in their purchasing decisions (Ladhari et al., 2021).

Furthermore, confidence serves as a buffer against perceived risks associated with ethical consumption, such as concerns over authenticity and product safety (Herault-Fournier et al., 2012). When consumers trust the legitimacy of a product's ethical claims, they are more inclined to engage in ethical consumption, even when faced with higher prices or lower convenience (Arvola et al., 2021). This assurance, fueled by perceived value, empowers consumers to align their purchasing decisions with their ethical beliefs, fostering deeper loyalty toward brands that reflect these values.

In summary, confidence not only facilitates engagement in ethical consumption but also strengthens the link between perceived value and consumer behavior. By enhancing trust, confidence becomes a vital determinant in ethical purchasing decisions, emphasizing the need for brands to prioritize transparency and authenticity to cultivate consumer loyalty (Klein et al., 2019).

Hypothesis H2: Confidence positively influences engaged consumption.

Confidence as a Mediator

While confidence directly influences engaged consumption, it also mediates the relationship between perceived value and ethical behavior. Consumers may recognize high value in a product but may hesitate to purchase it without confidence in its ethical claims. Thus, trust becomes the bridge transforming perceived value into action (Gurviez & Korchia, 2002). For instance, consumers might see high value in a fair-trade product; however, their purchase decision depends significantly on their confidence in the brand or its certification (Dupuy & Torre, 1998 and Toukabri, 2024, 2023, 2022, 2020, 2015).

Research indicates that confidence significantly mediates the impact of perceived value on engaged consumption (Ladhari et al., 2021). This understanding underscores that while perceived value is crucial for driving ethical consumption, it is not solely sufficient. Consumers require assurance that a product will fulfill its ethical promises for their engagement to materialize. Effective brand communication regarding ethical practices and transparency is essential for cultivating this trust (Gurviez & Korchia, 2002).

Hypothesis H3: Confidence mediates the relationship between perceived value and engaged consumption.

Price Sensitivity as a Moderator

Price sensitivity, defined as the extent to which a product's price influences consumer purchasing decisions, plays a critical role in ethical consumption. Ethical products often carry a price premium due to their sustainable or socially responsible attributes (Richardson et al., 1996). For some consumers, this premium represents a barrier to purchase, while others, particularly those with lower price sensitivity, may justify the higher cost based on perceived value and trust in the product's ethical claims (Debbabi, 2010).

Studies show that consumers with lower price sensitivity are more likely to purchase ethical products when confident in the product's ethical claims, even at higher prices (Ladhari et al., 2021; Lebatto & Ferrandi, 2015). Conversely, price-sensitive consumers may prioritize cost over trust, diminishing their engagement with ethical products despite high confidence in their ethical attributes (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). Consequently, price sensitivity moderates the relationship between confidence and engaged consumption; consumers with lower sensitivity are more willing to trade off higher prices for ethical benefits, while highly price-sensitive consumers may engage with ethical products only when prices align with their budgetary constraints (Laure et al., 2014) and (Toukabri et al., 2022, 2021, 2020, 2017).

Understanding price sensitivity is crucial for marketers promoting ethical consumption. Strategies must balance pricing with perceived value and trustworthiness to attract a broader consumer base and encourage engaged purchasing behaviors.

Hypothesis H4: Price sensitivity moderates the relationship between confidence and engaged consumption.

This literature review elucidates the complex relationships among perceived value, confidence, price sensitivity, and engaged consumption. Perceived value acts as a primary driver of ethical consumption, enhancing consumer confidence in product attributes. Confidence, in turn, positively influences engaged consumption and mediates the relationship between perceived value and ethical purchasing behavior. Furthermore, price sensitivity moderates this dynamic, affecting how consumers engage with ethical products. Marketers must not only emphasize the ethical dimensions of their offerings but also build trust and implement value-based pricing strategies to cater to a diverse consumer base.

The synthesis of the model concerning the impact of proximity on confidence and ethical consumption while underlining the moderating role of consumer expertise and sensitivity to local product prices can be presented as follows:

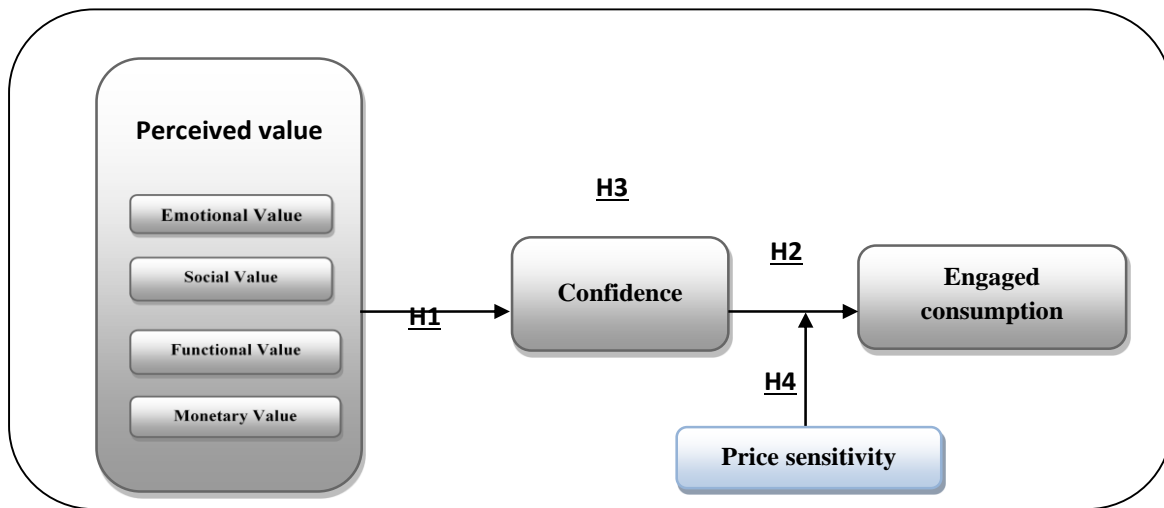


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research

The literature review allows us to expose the following Hypotheses:

- H1.** The perceived value impact positively the Confidence.
- H2.** The confidence influences positively the engaged consumption.
- H3.** The confidence mediates the relationship between the perceived value and the engaged consumption.
- H4.** The price sensitivity moderates the relationship between confidence and engaged consumption.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire, which was distributed using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was chosen for its accessibility and efficiency in collecting a large number of responses within the study's time frame. Although this method may limit generalizability, it was appropriate for reaching a broad audience in Saudi Arabia. The survey was conducted over a one-month period, from August 10, 2024, to September 12, 2024, during which 450 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 320 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 71%. This response rate is considered sufficient for ensuring the reliability of the findings and for conducting SEM analysis, which generally requires a sample size larger than 200 to provide stable and valid results. (Cortez & al.2024).

Instrument and Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire, which was distributed using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was chosen for its accessibility and efficiency in collecting a large number of responses within the study's time frame. Although this method may limit generalizability, it

was appropriate for reaching a broad audience in Saudi Arabia. The survey was conducted over a one-month period, from August 10, 2024, to September 12, 2024, during which 450 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 320 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 71%. This response rate is considered sufficient for ensuring the reliability of the findings and for conducting SEM analysis, which generally requires a sample size larger than 200 to provide stable and valid results.

The questionnaire was designed in reviewing previous studies. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: the first contained an introduction, while the second contained demographic information such as gender, age, academic level, and income. The third section included the following variables; Perceived value, Confidence, Price sensitivity and Ethical/Engaged consumption. These variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The measurement scales used in the questionnaire are listed in the following table.

Measurement Scales

The measurement items for each construct were adapted from validated scales used in previous studies to ensure their reliability and validity. For instance, the scale for confidence was adapted from consumer behavior research that measures an individual's belief in their ability to make informed purchasing decisions. Similarly, the price sensitivity scale was based on established measures that assess how price influences consumer behavior. Perceived value and ethical/engaged consumption were also measured using items derived from prior literature focused on consumer ethics and sustainability (Table 1).

Table 1: The measurements.

Dimensions		Items
Perceived value	Emotional Value	I feel happy when I purchase this product. Using this product makes me feel good about myself.
	Social Value	This product enhances my social status. I enjoy discussing this product with others.
	Functional Value	This product performs well. The benefits of this product are worth the price.
	Monetary Value	I believe the price of this product is fair. I feel that I receive good value for the money I spent.
Confidence	I have confidence in the quality of the products at my point of sale I do not run any risk when buying products from this point of sale The point of sale pays attention to what suits me best Producers of this product consider my interests. I believe in the sincerity of this point of sale	
Price sensitivity	When I buy this product category, I always look for the cheapest brand. Price is the thing I look for the most when I buy a brand of this product. For this type of products, I always compare prices before buying.	
Ethical / engaged consumption	I consume products that meet my expectations and my ethical needs My actions are consistent with my ethical expectations and needs. Before acting, I study the consequences of my actions on the people around me. My actions respect the rules of my group.	

Sample Profile

The demographic data of the respondents are presented in Table 2. In terms of gender, 43,4% of the respondents were male while 56,6% were female. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents were between 46 and 59 years old (41,6%), 26 and 45 years old (28,4%) and only 13,1% were Over 60 years old. All of them had a good level of education with 86% of the respondents having a university degree or higher. They represented various occupations such as government employees (45%) private sector employees (13,8%) and self-employed (16.6%).

Table 2. Profile of respondents (n=320)

Demographic Variables		Nombre	Percentage %
Gender	Male	139	43,4
	Female	181	56,6
Age (years)	Below 25	54	16,9
	26-45	91	28,4
	46-59	133	41,6
	Over 60	42	13,1
Academic Level	Undergraduate	45	14,1
	Graduate	124	38,8
	Postgraduate	151	47,2
Occupation	Student	38	11,9
	Not employed	14	4,4
	Self-employed	53	16,6
	Private sector employee	44	13,8
	Government employees	144	45,0
	Retired	27	8,4

RESULTS

The collected data were examined using SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 statistical packages. First, SPSS 22 was used to display the results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify factors to group the observed variables into latent variables. Then, AMOS 22 was used to display the results of structural equation modeling (SEM). Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-stage structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was used to verify the proposed model. First, we used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement model. To test the goodness of fit of the model, we examined the chi-square statistic (χ^2), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the adjusted fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Finally, the SEM model was used to assess the hypothesized relationships by standardized regression coefficients and p-values.

Model Assessment

Cronbach's alpha (α) and Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c) were used to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the scales. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.701 to 0.876, and Jöreskog's rho values ranged from 0.828 to 0.856, which exceeds the threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2014) of 0.7, suggesting high precision and internal reliability. The results are shown in Table 4.

Average variance extracted (AVE) measures were used to assess convergent validity. In the present study, AVE values ranged from 0.716 to 0.864, reaching an acceptable limit of 0.5 as Hair et al. (2014) suggested, as seen in Table 3. The Fornell-Larcker criteria ensures the discriminant validity of the latent variables. From Table 3 below, it can be inferred that all the values or figures in the diagonal form have exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5, which invariably demonstrates the average variance extracted (AVE) as stated by Hair et al. (2014). Consequently, the measurement scale items of each construct can be considered as having adequate internal consistency.

Finally, the results show that the measurement model provided a good fit to the data. The overall fit parameters show to be acceptable, with chi-square/ df = 1,868; RMSEA = 0.052; NFI = 0.933; CFI = 0.968; GFI = 0.927; AGFI = 0.897.

Table 3. Constructs' reliability

Construct	Item	SFL	Cronbach's Alpha	PC	AVE
Emotional Value	Emotional1	,909	,774	,856	,739
	Emotional2	,909			
Social Value	Social1	,939	,866		,824
	Social2	,939			
Functional Value	Functional1	,878	,704		,736
	Functional2	,878			
Monetary Value	Monetary1	,877	,701		,716
	Monetary2	,877			
Confidence	Confidence1	,787	,870	,837	,858
	Confidence2	,840			
	Confidence3	,748			
	Confidence4	,859			
	Confidence5	,822			
Price sensitivity	Price 1	,899	,871	,828	,832
	Price2	,886			
	Price3	,904			
Ethical / engaged consumption	Ethical1	,839	,876	,843	,864
	Ethical2	,866			
	Ethical3	,877			
	Ethical4	,835			
	Ethical5	,839			
Measurement model fit indexes: $\chi^2/df=1,868$; CFI = 0.968 ; GFI = 0.927; TLI = 0.959 ; RMSEA = 0.052,					

SFL = Standardized Factor Loading; pc= Jöreskog's rho; AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

Table 4 shows the discriminant validity analysis results, which assesses the degree to which constructs differ from each other. In this table, the diagonal elements (bolded) represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, while the off-diagonal elements represent the correlations between constructs. For discriminant validity to be established, the square root of the AVE (diagonal values) for each construct should be greater than its correlation with any other construct (off-diagonal values).

The table 4 displays that each construct meets the criterion for discriminant validity the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs. This confirms that the constructs used in the model (e.g., emotional, social, functional, and ethical consumption, as well as price and monetary sensitivity) are distinct from one another. As a result, the model can reliably differentiate between these variables, ensuring the validity of the measures used in the study.

Table 4. Analysis of discriminate validity

Dimensions	Emotional	Social	Functional	Monetary	Price	Price	Ethical
Emotional	,739						
Social	0.058	,824					
Functional	0.162	0.174	,736				
Monetary	0.124	0.268	0.149	,716			
Confidence	0.116	0.212	0.122	0.036	,858		
Price	0.138	0.146	0.189	0.148	0.022	,832	
Ethical	0.182	0.208	0,120	0.169	0.182	0,102	,864

Hypothesis Testing

The relationships between the study constructs and hypotheses testing results are shown in Table 5 and Figure. 2. Specifically, the results revealed that Emotional Value and Social Value had positive and significant effects on Confidence ($\beta_{\text{Emotional}}= 0.490$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta_{\text{Social}}=0.283$; $p=0.000$. Based on the findings, H1. a and H1. bare the hypotheses that were supported.

Furthermore, the results of the effect of Functional Value and Monetary Value on Confidence showed a non-significant role ($\beta_{\text{Functional}}= 0.192$; $p= 0,132$; $\beta_{\text{Monetary}}= 0.065$; $p= 0,487$), so H1.c and H1. d was not confirmed ($p \geq 0.05$).

About the relationship between Confidence and Ethical / engaged consumption, had statistically significant ($\beta = 0.870$; $p = 0.000$).

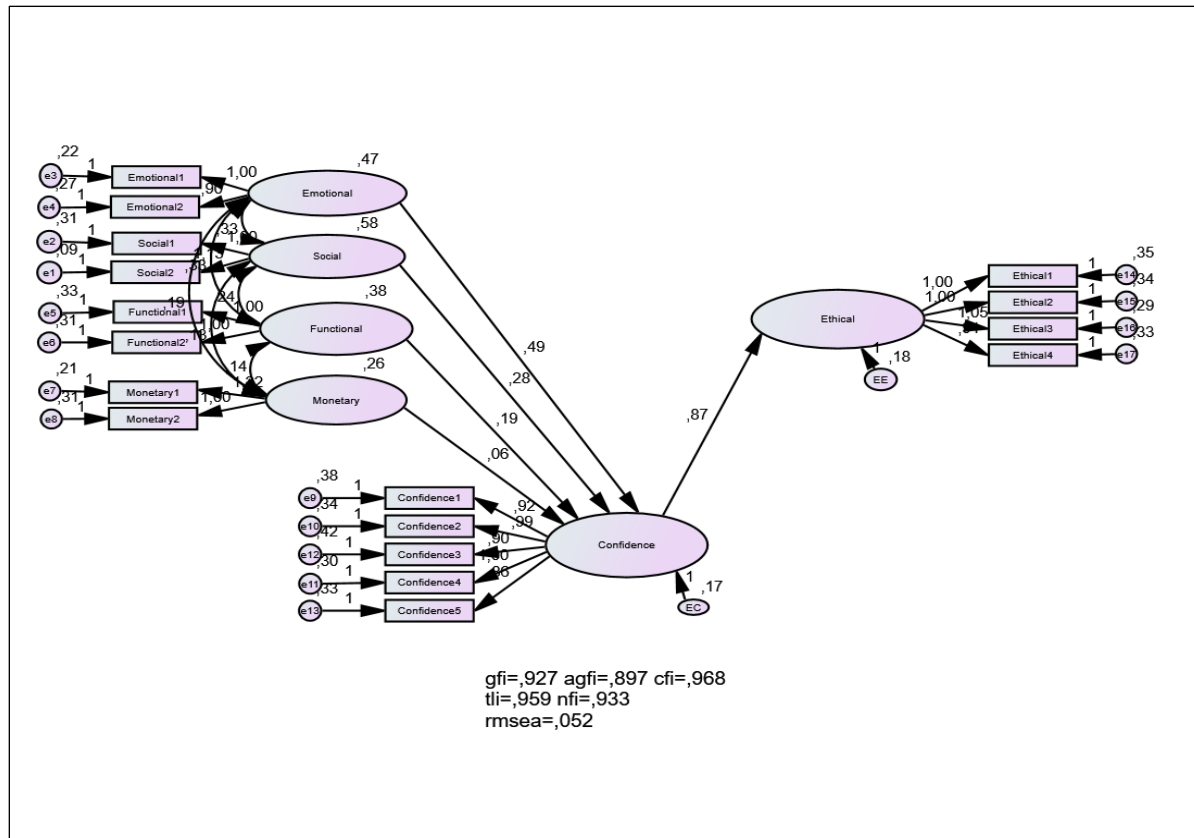


Figure. 2: Hypotheses results

Table 5 presents the results of hypotheses testing related to factors influencing **confidence** and the relationship between confidence and ethical consumption. Emotional engagement significantly enhances confidence ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$), as does social influence ($\beta = 0.283$, $p < 0.001$). However, functional ($\beta = 0.192$, $p = 0.132$) and monetary factors ($\beta = 0.065$, $p = 0.487$) do not significantly affect confidence. Notably, confidence is a strong predictor of ethical consumption ($\beta = 0.870$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that consumers with higher confidence are more likely to engage in ethical purchasing behaviors. These findings suggest that enhancing emotional and social connections can bolster consumer confidence and promote ethical consumption practices.

Table 5. Hypotheses results

Relations	β value	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Findings
Confidence <--- Emotional	,490	,142	3,436	***	H1.a. Supported
Confidence <--- Social	,283	,062	4,594	***	H1.b. Supported
Confidence <--- Functional	,192	,127	1,504	,132	H1.C. Not Supported
Confidence <--- Monetary	,065	,093	,695	,487	H1.d. Not Supported
Ethical <--- Confidence	,870	,068	12,802	***	H2. Supported

Confidence Mediation Role

Perceived value was included as the independent variable, Engaged consumption as the dependent variable and Confidence as the mediating variable. The results revealed that there is a significant and positive indirect effect of two dimensions (Social and Emotional) on Engaged consumption via Confidence ($\beta = 0.245$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.379$, $p < 0.000$), so H3.a. and H3.b. are confirmed. While the other two dimensions (Functional and Monetary) do not have indirect effects on Engaged consumption ($\beta = 0.133$, $p < 0.112$; $\beta = 0.037$, $p < 0.246$), so H3.c. and H3.d. are rejected.

Price Sensitivity Moderating Effect

The moderation test reveals that price sensitivity significantly influences the relationship between confidence and ethical/engaged consumption. The model is highly significant ($F = 155.884, p < .001$), showing that confidence, price sensitivity, and their interaction collectively explain a large portion of the variance in engaged consumption. Confidence has a strong positive effect on ethical consumption ($B = 0.558, p < .001$), while price sensitivity also has a positive but smaller impact ($B = 0.289, p < .001$). The interaction term ($B = -0.056, p = .020$) indicates that price sensitivity weakens the positive relationship between confidence and ethical consumption, suggesting that price-sensitive consumers may hesitate to act on their ethical intentions when they perceive higher costs. There are no multicollinearity concerns, confirming the stability of the model. Therefore, the hypothesis H4 was supported. Then, the price sensitivity moderates the relationship between confidence and engaged consumption.

Table 8. Moderation test

ANOVA ^a								
Model		Sum of Squares		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	190.366		3	63.455	155.884	.000 ^b	
	Residual	128.634		316	.407			
	Total	319.000		319				
a. Dependent Variable: Engaged_consumption								
b. Predictors: (Constant), Moderation_integration, Price_sensibility, Confidence								
Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.056	.043		1.298	.195		
	Confidence	.558	.042	.558	13.166	.000	.710	1.409
	Price_sensibility	.289	.040	.289	7.160	.000	.783	1.277
	Moderation_integration	-.056	.024	-.089	-2.337	.020	.879	1.137
a. Dependent Variable: Engaged_consumption								

In summary, while both confidence and price sensitivity independently promote ethical behavior, price sensitivity moderates this effect, slightly diminishing the influence of confidence. For marketers, addressing price concerns can help boost ethical consumption among price-sensitive consumers, and policymakers could reduce the price gap between ethical and conventional products to encourage more widespread adoption of ethical behaviors.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the factors driving engaged consumption in ethical markets, focusing on consumer confidence, perceived value, and price sensitivity. The findings offer valuable insights into the dynamics of ethical consumer behavior and contribute to both theory and practice.

First, the significant positive effects of emotional value and social value on consumer confidence suggest that consumers are not solely motivated by functional product benefits, but also by the emotional and social implications of their purchases. These results align with previous research that highlights the role of moral satisfaction and societal approval in driving ethical consumption (Thøgersen et al., 2021; White et al., 2019). Emotional value, such as the pride or satisfaction derived from supporting ethical brands, resonates with the growing trend of value-driven purchasing, where consumers prioritize aligning their actions with personal ethics and broader social goals (Schwartz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2020). Similarly, social value, which reflects peer influence and societal norms, plays a key role in building consumer confidence, supporting the view that ethical consumption is partly influenced by social approval (Hwang & Griffiths, 2017; White et al., 2021).

However, functional value and monetary value were not found to significantly influence consumer confidence. This contrasts with traditional consumer behavior models that emphasize practical benefits and price sensitivity as key drivers of decision-making (Ladhari et al., 2021). Ethical consumers often prioritize emotional and social motivations over economic and practical concerns, particularly when ethical considerations, such as

sustainability or fairness, are at stake (Carrington et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2023). As previous studies have suggested, ethical consumers are often willing to overlook higher prices or limited functionality in favor of supporting products that align with their moral values (Taufique & Vaithianathan, 2018). This finding further underscores the need for companies to appeal to moral identity and self-transcendence in their ethical marketing strategies, rather than relying heavily on product features or competitive pricing (Schwartz, 2012).

The study also found that consumer confidence mediates the relationship between perceived value and engaged consumption. This suggests that consumers' confidence in the ethical credentials of a product or brand is crucial for translating perceived value into purchasing behavior. This aligns with previous research, which highlights that **trust** in ethical claims is vital in closing the attitude-behavior gap in ethical markets (Barber et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2020). Without such confidence, even consumers who perceive ethical value in a product may refrain from engaging in ethical consumption (Ladhari et al., 2021). Confidence-building strategies, such as third-party certifications and transparent communication, are therefore critical for brands seeking to convert ethical consumer intentions into actual sales (Harrison et al., 2020; Gurviez & Korchia, 2002).

Additionally, price sensitivity was found to moderate the relationship between consumer confidence and engaged consumption. Specifically, consumers who exhibit higher price sensitivity are less likely to engage in ethical consumption, even when they have confidence in a product's ethical credentials. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that, while many consumers are willing to pay a premium for ethical goods, price-sensitive consumers may be deterred by the often higher costs associated with these products (Lichtenstein et al., 1993; Carrington et al., 2014). This highlights the importance of addressing the price barrier in ethical markets to appeal to a broader consumer base. Affordable options or strategies, such as offering budget-friendly ethical products or providing financial incentives, could help overcome this challenge (Debbabi, 2010; Gustafson et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the understanding of ethical consumption by emphasizing the pivotal role of consumer confidence in mediating the relationship between perceived value and engaged consumption. By showing that emotional and social values are more influential than functional or monetary values, the study challenges traditional models of consumer behavior that prioritize functional utility and price (White et al., 2019; Ladhari et al., 2021). The findings suggest that ethical consumption is more aligned with theories of moral identity and self-transcendence, where consumers prioritize moral and social motivations over personal gain (Schwartz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2020). This supports previous studies that argue ethical consumers are motivated by personal values and the desire to contribute to a larger societal good (Thøgersen et al., 2021; Barber et al., 2014).

The research also highlights the importance of consumer trust in ethical claims, reaffirming the need for transparency and certification to foster confidence in ethical products (Harrison et al., 2020). Furthermore, the moderating effect of price sensitivity offers a more nuanced view of the barriers to ethical consumption, showing that economic considerations remain important for a significant portion of consumers (Carrington et al., 2014; Lichtenstein et al., 1993).

From a practical standpoint, this research provides key recommendations for both businesses and policymakers to promote ethical consumption. Businesses should emphasize emotional and social benefits by creating marketing campaigns that highlight the personal satisfaction and social approval derived from supporting ethical causes, thereby boosting consumer confidence and engagement (White et al., 2019; Thøgersen et al., 2021). Building consumer trust through transparency is also crucial, with clear communication regarding sustainability practices, ethical certifications, and supply chain integrity helping to convert ethical intentions into actual purchases (Harrison et al., 2020; Gurviez & Korchia, 2002). Addressing price sensitivity is another important factor, as brands should implement strategies like offering affordable product lines or leveraging discounts to attract price-sensitive consumers (Debbabi, 2010; Gustafson et al., 2020). Policymakers, on the other hand, can support the growth of ethical markets by providing financial incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies to ethical producers, which can reduce the price of these products (Gustafson et al., 2020), and by

conducting public campaigns to raise awareness of the long-term societal and environmental benefits of ethical consumption, encouraging consumers to prioritize value-based over price-driven purchasing decisions (Stolz et al., 2023).

In conclusion, this study provides important insights into the drivers of engaged consumption in ethical markets, highlighting the roles of consumer confidence, emotional and social values, and the moderating effect of price sensitivity. The findings suggest that ethical consumption is motivated more by value-based considerations than by functional benefits or price alone. For ethical brands, the focus should be on building trust and emotional connections with consumers, while also finding ways to make ethical products more affordable. Policymakers can support these efforts by promoting public awareness and providing financial incentives to make ethical products more accessible to a wider audience. These combined efforts can help promote more sustainable consumption patterns, benefiting both society and the environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at Northern Border University, Arar, KSA for funding this research work through the project number “NBU-FFR-2024-2217-01

REFERENCES

- Arvola, A., Vassallo, M., Dean, M., Lampila, P., Saba, A., Lähteenmäki, L., & Shepherd, R. (2021). Predicting intentions to purchase organic food: The role of affective and moral attitudes in the Theory of Planned Behaviour. *Appetite*, 50(2), 109-119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2007.09.010>
- Barber, N., Kuo, P. J., Bishop, M., & Goodman, R. (2014). Measuring psychographics to assess purchase intention and willingness to pay. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 31(4), 311-320. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-02-2014-0871>
- Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A., & Whitwell, G. J. (2014). Lost in translation: Exploring the ethical consumer intention-behavior gap. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(1), 2759-2767. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.09.022>
- Chatzidakis, A., Hibbert, S., & Smith, A. P. (2007). Why people don't take their concerns about fair trade to the supermarket: The role of neutralization. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74(1), 89-100. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9222-2>
- Chiffolleau, Y. (2008). From politics to co-operation: The dynamics of embeddedness in alternative food supply chains. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 48(3), 189-205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2008.00461.x>
- Cortez, A., Johnson, R., & Albright, M. (2024). Structural equation modeling for market analysis: Best practices and recommendations. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.09.009>
- Debbabi, S. (2010). Ethical consumption and the attitude-behavior gap: The impact of price on green purchasing. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(12), 110-117.
- Debbabi, S. (2010). Ethical consumption and the attitude-behavior gap: The impact of price on green purchasing. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(12), 110-117. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v5n12p110>
- Doane, D. (2011). Taking responsibility: How the ethical consumer gives us a lesson in citizenship. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 25(3), 212-219. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1470-6431.2001.00203.x>
- Dubuisson-Quellier, S. (2009). The collective dynamics of practices in alternative food networks: The role of intermediation and legitimation. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 49(3), 249-267. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2009.00488.x>
- Dubuisson-Quellier, S. (2022). Ethical consumption and the politics of everyday life. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 22(4), 900-916. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405221136581>
- Dupuy, C., & Torre, A. (1998). Trust, reputations, and local development. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22(1), 66-82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00122>
- Gurviez, P., & Korchia, M. (2002). Proposition d'une échelle de mesure multidimensionnelle de la confiance dans la marque. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 17(3), 41-61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/076737010201700303>
- Gurviez, P., & Korchia, M. (2002). Proposition d'une échelle de mesure multidimensionnelle de la confiance dans la marque. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 17(3), 41-61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/076737010201700303>
- Gustafson, K., Chen, Z., & Chu, T. (2020). The role of perceived value in determining ethical consumption intentions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(3), 587-604. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04384-4>
- Gustafson, K., Chen, Z., & Chu, T. (2020). The role of perceived value in determining ethical consumption intentions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(3), 587-604. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04384-4>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Harrison, R., Newholm, T., & Shaw, D. (Eds.). (2020). *The ethical consumer*. SAGE Publications.
- Harrison, R., Newholm, T., & Shaw, D. (Eds.). (2020). *The ethical consumer*. SAGE Publications.
- Heilbrunn, B. (2005). Consumer resistance: Sociological perspectives on consumption. In *Research in Consumer Behavior* (Vol. 9, pp. 59-82). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2111\(04\)09004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2111(04)09004-9)

- Herauld-Fournier, C., Merle, A., & Humeau, L. (2022). Building trust and perceived value through short supply chains: A strategy for engaged consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 21(4), 641-654. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2041>
- Klein, J. G., Smith, N. C., & John, A. (2019). Why we boycott: Consumer motivations for boycott participation. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 92-109. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.3.92>
- Ladhari, R., Turgeon, N., & González, A. (2021). Understanding ethical consumer behavior: A social influence perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 153-161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.08.030>
- Ladhari, R., Turgeon, N., & González, A. (2021). Understanding ethical consumer behavior: A social influence perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 153-161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.08.030>
- Laure, B., Bourelly, A., & Godet, D. (2014). Ethical consumption and price sensitivity: A typology of consumers. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 37(3), 415-435. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10603-013-9241-3>
- Lebato, A., & Ferrandi, J. M. (2023). Promoting local food consumption: The role of trust and ethical concerns in purchase decisions. *Journal of Marketing Channels*, 30(1), 74-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1046669X.2023.1931972>
- Lee, Y., Hwang, J., & Lee, S. H. (2023). Ethical consumption and consumer expertise: The moderating role of sustainable consumer knowledge. *Sustainability*, 15(7), 5198. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15075198>
- Lichtenstein, D. R., Netemeyer, R. G., & Burton, S. (1993). Distinguishing coupon proneness from value consciousness: An acquisition-transaction utility theory perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(3), 54-67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1251850>
- Lichtenstein, D. R., Netemeyer, R. G., & Burton, S. (1993). Distinguishing coupon proneness from value consciousness: An acquisition-transaction utility theory perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(3), 54-67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1251850>
- McCarthy, B., O'Reilly, S., & O'Sullivan, C. (2020). Moral identity and prosocial consumer behavior: Exploring ethical consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46(1), 123-141. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucz046>
- McCarthy, B., O'Reilly, S., & O'Sullivan, C. (2020). Moral identity and prosocial consumer behavior: Exploring ethical consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46(1), 123-141. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucz046>
- Merle, A., Senecal, S., & St-Onge, A. (2016). Value co-creation and trust in local products: Examining the short supply chain in the organic food market. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 50(1), 170-190. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12094>
- Newholm, T., & Taylor, S. (2022). Discursive strategies and social positioning in ethical consumption: The negotiation of "ethical" food choices in community spaces. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 22(4), 922-939. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540518773825>
- Patterson, M., Hodgson, J., & Lee, M. (2013). Information and social media: The changing landscape of consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(6), 558-563. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-02-2013-0481>
- Penz, E., & Hogg, M. (2022). Barriers to ethical consumption: Understanding intention-behavior gaps. *Journal of Business Research*, 145, 392-401. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.013>
- Richardson, P. S., Jain, A. K., & Dick, A. S. (1996). Household store brand proneness: A framework. *Journal of Retailing*, 72(2), 159-185. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(96\)90012-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(96)90012-3)
- Schwartz, S. H. (2012). An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 11-16. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116>
- Stolz, I., Breit, E., & Berger, L. (2023). Moving toward a sustainable society: Consumer behaviors and corporate responsibility. *Sustainability*, 15(1), 109. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010109>
- Stolz, I., Breit, E., & Berger, L. (2023). Moving toward a sustainable society: Consumer behaviors and corporate responsibility. *Sustainability*, 15(1), 109. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010109>
- Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. N. (2001). Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203-220. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(01\)00041-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(01)00041-0)
- Thøgersen, J. (2006). Norms for environmentally responsible behaviour: An extended taxonomy. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 26(4), 247-261. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2006.09.004>
- Toukabri, M. (2019). The Saudi confidence process towards a store within objective and sensual antecedents. *Middle East Journal of Management*, 6(1), 51-74. <https://doi.org/10.1504/MEJM.2019.097366>
- Toukabri, M. (2021). The determinants of purchasing local food: Price transparency and customer expertise role. *International Journal of Business Environment*, 12(2), 149-169. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBE.2021.10037814>
- Toukabri, M. (2023). How to ensure a responsible and sustainable production-consumption process? *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 25(12), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-04241-6>
- Toukabri, M., & Gharbi, A. (2021). The ethical consumption within the price sensitivity moderation. *International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development*, 13(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJSESD.287883>
- Toukabri, M. (2024). Determinants of healthy eating intentions among young adults. *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing*, 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974438.2024.2421978>
- Toukabri, M., & AlGhaswyneh, O. (2019). Eco-friendly and healthy consumption of young Saudis: its stimuli and welfare. *Middle East Journal of Management*, 6 (6), 725-745. <https://doi.org/10.1504/MEJM.2019.097366>
- Toukabri, M. (2022). Teenagers consumption within the moderating role of Saudis habit through fuzzy set approach. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 236-249.
- Toukabri, M., & Toukabri, M. (2023). Football industry accounting as a social and organizational practice: from the implementation of the CSR process to integrated reporting. *Systemic practice and action research*, 36(5), 725-753.

- Toukabri, M., & Ibrahim, H. (2016). Challenges and ways to develop insurance industry in KSA market, *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (2), 152-182.
- Toukabri, M., & Ghali, Z. (2017). Commitment enhancement to an organic product through corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the mediating role of the consumers' emotional attachment. *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences*, 4(1), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2017.01.005>
- Toukabri, M., & Ghali, Z. (2020). Proximity and confidence in purchasing local food. *International Journal of Ecology & Development*, 35(4), 52–62.
- Toukabri, M., Gharbi, A. & Ghali, Z. (2015). Conception du modèle théorique de comportement de souscription en assurance vie, *Revue Marocaine de Recherche en Management et Marketing*, 1(11).
- Toukabri, M., Najjar, F. & Zaidi, C. (2022). Effect of sales force market-oriented behaviour on relational performance: emotional commitment and relational learning roles. *Middle East Journal of Management* 8 (5), 426-452.
- Toukabri, M., Najjar, F. & Yaich, B. (2022). The Congruence between the Sponsor-Sponsored Unit and its Effect on Behavioral Responses. *International Journal of Computer Science & Network Security*. 22 (3), 113-128
- Toukabri, M. (2022). How Atmosphere Oriented the Prospect Choose, *Journal of Business and Management Research* 7, 174-181.
- Toukabri, M. (2022). The real stimuli in popular stores. *Journal of Marketing Research & Case Studies*, 2015, e1-e12
- Thøgersen, J., de Barcellos, M. D., Perin, M. G., & Zhou, Y. (2021). Consumer buying motives and attitudes towards organic food in emerging markets: Evidence from Brazil and China. *International Marketing Review*, 38(5), 915-936. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-06-2020-0144>
- Thøgersen, J., Zhou, Y., & Cheng, S. (2023). Sustainable consumption in a globalized world: Understanding the motivations and behaviors of green consumers. *International Marketing Review*, 40(1), 45-66. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-07-2021-0213>
- White, K., Habib, R., & Hardisty, D. J. (2019). How to shift consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: A literature review and guiding framework. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(3), 22-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649>