

Authentic Brand Activism, and Consumer Loyalty to Sustainable Food Brands in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between authentic brand activism (consumer engagement, trust, transparency, and brand integrity) and consumer loyalty to sustainable food brands in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of consumer engagement, trust, transparency, and brand integrity on the consumer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis. The survey research design, primary data, was adopted for this study, and a 4-point structured Likert questionnaire was used in collecting data from 300 respondents. The test-retest method was employed to validate the questionnaire and test for reliability. The correlation between variables under study was determined with multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.155$, $p = 0.032$), brand integrity ($\beta = 0.144$, $p = 0.031$), transparency ($\beta = -0.043$, $p = 0.405$), and trust ($\beta = 0.087$, $p = 0.138$) of authentic brand activism have significant influence on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos Metropolis. The study showed the effect of transparency on customer loyalty, but consumer engagement to magnified its effect on customer loyalty. The researcher recommends, that transparency should be applied in the operations of food brands, ranging from ingredient components to manufacturing patterns. Banking on media realms to disseminate information and views on brands components and their effects, food brands can build trust and customer loyalty, and also open communication with customers should be enhanced via different media platforms. The brand promise should meet the standard communicated in the marketing realms. By ensuring that the brand's promises align with its marketing messages, food brands can reinforce their credibility and strengthen their relationship with customers. This alignment fosters a sense of reliability, encouraging customers to remain loyal to the brand.

Keywords: Authenticity, Brand Activism, Consumer Engagement, Consumer Loyalty, Food Brands, Sustainability, Transparency, Trust, Lagos Metropolis.

Introduction

In today's dynamic consumer landscape, authenticity and sustainability have emerged as vital pillars of successful food branding. Globally, food industries are increasingly focusing on brand authenticity and sustainability marketing, driven by changing customer expectations and a heightened awareness of environmental and social impacts (Atkinson & Barone, 2022). As consumers become more conscious of how their purchasing decisions

affect society and the environment, they demand more transparency, ethical practices, and value alignment from brands. This shift in behaviour is particularly evident in the food sector, where trust and health consciousness are deeply intertwined with consumption habits. Vredenburg *et al.* (2020) note that sustainable food brands are adapting to this new consumer reality by incorporating authentic brand activism deliberate, values-driven actions that address societal issues into their branding and communication strategies. Unlike profit-driven corporate social responsibility (CSR) or opportunistic green marketing, authentic brand activism reflects genuine commitment to causes, often through consistent messaging, ethical sourcing, inclusive supply chains, and environmental stewardship. Sarkar and Kotler (2020) further argue that modern brands are now expected to act as moral agents, actively promoting social, political, legal, and environmental reform. Authenticity in this context is not merely a marketing tactic it is foundational to building long-term consumer trust and loyalty.

In the Nigerian context, and more specifically in Lagos, these global trends are increasingly relevant. Lagos, the country's economic hub and one of the fastest-growing cities in Africa, presents both opportunity and challenge for food brands. The Nigerian foodservice market, valued at \$11.09 billion in 2025, is projected to reach \$19.31 billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 11.7% (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). Lagos alone accounts for a significant share of this growth, driven by a youthful population, increasing urbanization, and rising middle-class consumption. Simultaneously, Nigerian consumers are showing a strong inclination toward brands that demonstrate clear environmental and social responsibility. A 2023 study by Novatia Consulting revealed that 70% of Nigerian consumer's value sustainability, and 55% are willing to pay more for products that align with their values. Some Nigerian food brands have started responding to this shift. Companies are investing in renewable packaging, local sourcing, and climate-resilient agricultural practices (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023). Corporate coalitions like the Food and Beverage Recycling Alliance (FBRA) comprising Nestlé Nigeria, Unilever, Nigerian Breweries, and others illustrate a coordinated effort to address sustainability challenges in packaging waste recovery and environmental impact. However, despite these initiatives, challenges persist. Issues such as greenwashing, regulatory inconsistencies, and limited infrastructure for sustainable sourcing undermine consumer trust and complicate implementation efforts (Okonkwo & Adeyemi, 2023).

Moreover, while consumers in Lagos increasingly expect brands to stand for more than just profit, there is still limited empirical research on how authentic brand activism impacts brand loyalty in the sustainable food sector. This gap is significant given the growing influence of activism-driven marketing on consumer decision-making and brand performance in Nigeria's competitive food market.

Statement of Problem

Despite a growing demand for sustainable and values-driven products in Lagos, many food companies struggle to translate brand activism into authentic consumer engagement and loyalty. The key challenge lies in bridging the gap between consumer expectations and

actual brand practices, amidst structural, regulatory, and economic barriers. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the relationship between authentic brand activism and consumer loyalty in sustainable food brands within the Lagos metropolis. The rationale is rooted in the urgent need for brands to align their sustainability claims with genuine practices that resonate with consumers. With rising environmental awareness, increased scrutiny of corporate motives, and a booming food industry, understanding what drives loyalty in this context is both timely and critical.

Findings from this study will be valuable to food brand producers, marketers, and policymakers. By identifying which elements of authentic brand activism are most influential in cultivating trust and loyalty, the research will guide strategic brand development and support the design of supportive regulatory frameworks. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a more transparent, accountable, and sustainable food branding environment in Lagos and beyond.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are to;

- ascertain the effect of consumer transparency on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria,
- scrutinise the effect of consumer trust on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria,
- examine the effect of consumer engagement on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria,
- analyse the effect of brand integrity on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria,

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant effect of consumer transparency on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria

Ho2: There is no significant effect of consumer trust on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant effect of consumer engagement on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria.

Ho4: There is no significant effect of brand integrity on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in the Lagos metropolis, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Authentic Brand Activism

Authentic brand activism is a purpose, and values driven stratagem in which a brand adopts a non-natural position on institutionally challenged socio-political concerns to create social

transformation and marketing feat (Sergio et al., 2022). The definition states that brand partake in the social and environmental goal attainment, and also addresses issues that are controversial in the marketing realms. Practices, messages, values, and purpose should all be aligned towards the objectives of the food brand to enable customers to see the authenticity of a brand.

Displaying authentic brand activism by companies will aid in brand differentiation and an improved brand equity as customers will develop a stronger emotional bond. Loyalty in this case is tilted toward brands that avoid deception and demonstrate integrity (Adenuga & Montowska, 2023). In the food industry, authentic brand activism is crucial, where consumers expect clear, truthful information about sourcing, ingredient quality, and the environmental impact of production processes (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023). In contrast to the studies of Okonkwo and Adeyemi (2023), it was found that brands that demonstrate consistent ethical practices, such as traceable ingredient sourcing, recyclable packaging, and proactive engagement in food safety issues, built stronger emotional bonds with consumers, resulting in both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Consumers tend to support brands that uphold ethical practices and transparency when it involves ingredient sourcing and environmental responsibility (Akinbode et al., 2023). In Nigeria where consumers are increasingly aware of food safety, environmental degradation, and the ethical sourcing, food brands are under intensifying pressure from multiple stakeholders—consumers, civil society, regulators, and media to act responsibly and transparently (Okonkwo & Adeyemi, 2023; Bello et al., 2024). Authentic brand activism in this space entails not only aligning marketing messages with core brand values but also demonstrating consistent, traceable, and ethical practices across the supply chain.

Recent studies highlight that brand activism resonates strongly when it is perceived as genuine, traceable, and inclusive. For instance, Hakiki et al. (2025) found that ethical marketing transparency influences brand loyalty. Similarly, Akinbode et al. (2023) concluded that consumer engagement, particularly via digital channels and sustainability communication, is a determinant of loyalty and perceived authenticity. Globally, these findings mirror key trends. In Cambodia, the Cambodian Food-Delivery study, (2025) The studies demonstrated that a clear sustainability, communication, and honest labeling increased brand attachment among ethical consumers in Romanian, Bogdan et al. (2025) demonstrated that the success of loyalty programs was enhanced by trust. In Pakistan, Shahzad et al. (2025) found that the brand authenticity and brand loyalty of frozen foods directly correlates with brand loyalty. In China, Xio et al. (2024) found out that higher transparency in sustainability claims correlated positively with consumer loyalty, but warned against “greenwashing,” the risk of brands overstating their environmental commitments without action. In Nigeria, this risk is especially pronounced. Latif & Bashir (2024), in their study, it was reported that a widespread consumer skepticism due to enforcement, mislabeling, and inconsistent quality standards deterred loyalty. As such, brands attempting activism without operational integrity often face backlash, and losing stakeholder trust. In contrast, Okonkwo and Adeyemi (2023) found that brands

demonstrating consistent ethical practices, such as traceable ingredient sourcing, recyclable packaging, and proactive engagement in food safety issues, built stronger emotional bonds with consumers, resulting in both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. This is akin to Onuegbu et al. (2025), who argued that trust built through communication influenced loyalty.

Critically, authentic brand activism ought to respond to stakeholders' concerns. Food brands that failed to align with the stakeholder's expectations may fight to maintain trust and relevance in the market.

Loyalty

Watson *et al.* (2024), defined the above as a blend of attitude and behavior that benefits an organization relative to its competitors. The seller is being evaluated by experience on previous purchases, and it leads to attitudinal loyalty. Situations and habits pave the way for behavioral loyalty. They are important for a brand due to their impact. The revenue of a firm can be impacted by behavioral loyalty via customers' repurchasing actions, and in other words, businesses charging an exceptional price due to optimistic assessments of the vendor and their commitment to the brand can be enabled by attitudinal loyalty. It is marked that augmenting the customers' loyalty towards a brand is pivotal to a firm's brand performance outcome.

Sustainable Food Brands

Tastewise (2024) defined sustainable food brands as food-related businesses that integrate environmental, social, and economic sustainability into their operations, products, and marketing, minimizing environmental impact, ensuring ethical sourcing, and contributing positively to society while maintaining profitability. Companies that incorporate eco-friendly environmental practices in their manufacturing and distribution tend to make a positive impact on the welfare of their customers. This approach reduces greenhouse gas emissions and tends to be beneficial to the public space.

Key Dimensions of Authentic Brand Activism

Transparency

In building trust in a food brand, transparency plays a key role. Brand authenticity in Lagos is harnessed by a clear description of the nutritional values (Adesina *et al.*, 2022). In enhancing long-term trust in the Lagos metropolis, authentic brands reveal their source, sourcing process, and their environmental impact (Okonkwo & Adeyemi, 2023). The same was established globally in the study of eco-branding by Mohammadi *et al.* (2023); it was found that in green marketing transparency has a correlation with loyalty.

Trust

In a market where food fraud is common, customers need to be able to believe that businesses always do the right thing and can prove where the food they consumed came from. A survey from 2023 found that almost half of Nigerian customers think they have to protect themselves from fake foods, which shows that they don't trust the government to do its job (MDPI, 2023). Brands that transparently trace origins and ensure safety—like those studied by Abiodun (2023) at Nigerian Bottling Company—are more likely to gain trust and boost sales performance. This mirrors global research linking transparent practices to loyalty (Mohammadi et al., 2023).

Consumer Engagement

Digital platform for interactive sustainability programs, feedback loops, and participatory campaigns. Ilodigwe's 2024 Lagos survey (n=448) found that sustainable marketing campaigns directly increased consumer awareness and willingness to purchase sustainably sourced products. Brands that foster two-way engagement are seen as more authentic and build stronger loyalty (Ogundele & Bello, 2024). Similar results are reported in global studies, confirming engagement as a loyalty driver (Mohammadi et al., 2023).

Brand Integrity

Brand integrity reflects the consistency between a brand's promises and actual practices. In Nigeria, the effectiveness of food brands in maintaining ethical operations and avoiding misleading claims determines consumer trust (Abiodun, 2023). Without integrity, activism efforts can be perceived as superficial, threatening trust and loyalty, an insight echoed by Mohammadi et al. (2023) in studies of eco-friendly food exporters. Integrity requires alignment between a brand's public commitments and its internal operations. Without integrity, activism efforts risk being labelled as opportunistic. Adenuga and Montowska (2023) emphasized that Nigerian consumers, especially in urban food markets, are sensitive to inconsistencies, particularly around labeling, food origin, and ethical production. This confirms Sergio et al. (2022), who argue that integrity is the most powerful marker of authenticity in brand activism globally.

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory, posited by Edward Freeman (1984), is the anchor theory. The relationship between food brands and their stakeholders in Nigeria is increasingly shaped by how genuinely they engage in sustainability and activism. Authentic brand activism, when grounded in transparent communication, ethical sourcing, consumer engagement, and operational integrity, enhances trust and loyalty. For Nigerian food businesses operating in an environment marked by regulatory flux and consumer skepticism, these actions are not optional; they are essential. In the context of the food processing business, this theory provides a framework for understanding how ethical behaviors, transparency, and integrity contribute to authentic brand activism. The favorable correlations between

these characteristics and brand activism, as identified in this study, correspond with the theory's assumption that relationships between a business and its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities, and others who have a stake in the organization increase holistic decision marketing, improve corporate reputation and trust, and improve ethical orientation (Freeman, 1984; Donalson, 2025).

Furthermore, global debates around performative activism (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020; Heath & Norman, 2023) serve as cautionary tales. Brands in Lagos must tailor their activism to local stakeholder concerns, not just mimic Western narratives. By doing so, they can foster stakeholder trust, differentiate their brand, and strengthen loyalty in a highly competitive and values-sensitive market.

Table 1. Summary of Empirical Literature Reviewed on Trust & Customer Loyalty

S/N	Authors/Year	Methodology	Title	Major Findings	Gap in Literature
1	Bogdan <i>et al.</i> (2025)	Moderate mediation analysis using PROCESS in SPSS	eWON, Emotional Response and Trust: Drivers of online purchase intention in Romanian.	The success of Loyalty programs was enhanced by trust.	Methodology differs, Study was limited ewom.
2	Emuobor <i>et al.</i> (2025)	Survey of 150 staff customers in Lagos, Regression analysis using SPSS	Effectiveness of Loyalty Programs on Customer Retention in Nigeria Telecoms.	Trust did not significantly mediate between ewon and purchase intention	Sample was limited to employees, Sample size differs.
3	Kurniaawaty <i>et al.</i> (2025)	Survey of 180 customers, Regression, and correlation analysis	Customer Trust and Loyalty to Insurance in Indonesia	Positive relationship between trust and loyalty.	Few insurance sector studied. Sample size and location differs.
4	Okonkwo & Adeyemi (2023)	survey of 500 respondents	Role of influencer marketing in building authentic brand relationships online.	Transparent ingredient sourcing and consistent ethical practices were found to significantly enhance consumer trust, which in turn boosted long-term loyalty	Sample size and location differs.

5.	Onuegbu et al (2025)	Descriptive and inferential survey on 300 digital banking user, multiple regression.	Digital Banking Acceptance and Trust During Nigeria's Cash Crunch.	Trust built through communication influenced loyalty during cash crunch.	Proxies differ in terms of the dependent variable. Sample size and location differs. Methodology differs.
6	Putera & Famiola (2024)	Mixed methods, sample size of 220 respondents in Indonesia, PLS-SEM, and in depth interview.	Attitudinal Loyalty and trust in Banking CSR initiatives.	Trust influences loyalty.	Proxies differ in terms of the dependent variable. Sample size and location differs. Methodology differs
7	Quintus et al. (2024)	Survey, 600 respondents in Austria and Moldova, PLS-SEM	Managing Consumer Trust in E-Commerce	Trust driven by reputation, influences customer loyalty.	Proxies differ in terms of the dependent variable. Sample size and location differs.
8.	Shahzad et al. (2025)	PLS-SEM and fsQCA	Brand authenticity and brand loyalty of frozen foods in Pakistani	Study revealed that brand authenticity directly correlates with brand loyalty	Sample size and location differs. Proxies for independent variable differs
9.	Yum & kim(2025)	Quantitative survey, SEM, and 387 respondents	The Influence of Perceived Value, Customer Satisfaction, and trust on Loyalty in entertainment platform.	Trust does not mediate with loyalty.	Sample size and location differs. Proxies for independent variable differs
10.	So,Yang&Li(2024)	Meta-analysis of 557 empirical studies.	Meta-Model of Brand Loyalty Antecedents	Trust consistently correlates with loyalty.	Proxies for independent variable differs

Source: Authors Compilation (2025).

Table 1 contd. Summary of Empirical Literature Reviewed on Transparency & Customer Loyalty

S/N	Authors/Year	Methodology	Title	Major Findings	Gap in Literature
1	Cambodian Food-Delivery study (2025)	Survey SEM in emerging Market	Customer Loyalty in Digital Service: Food delivery in Cambodia	Trust likely from transparency strongly influences loyalty.	Study location is Cambodia, sample size differs. Independent variable differs.
2	Deloitte/Digital (2024)	Survey method, 1,300 respondents.	B2B supplier Transparency in Energy and Chemicals	Transparency enhances loyalty.	Proxies for both independent and dependents variable differ. Study location differs.
3.	Hakiki et al (2025)	Qualitative study- Interviews, Case studies.	Navigating ethical Marketing: How transparency influences brand loyalty in the digital age.	Transparency builds customer loyalty	Methodology differs Study location differs, sample size differs, Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs
4	Latif & Bashir (2024)	FsQCA on restaurants datasets in Pakistan	Achieving Customer Loyalty Post-Pandemic: An Asymmetric Approach.	Demonstrated that higher information transparency significantly increases consumer loyalty	Study location differs, sample size differs
5	"The Price of Trust" (2024)	Empirical study using marketing metrics with transparency disaggregated into four constructs	Marketing Transparency in Digital Marketplaces	Transparency builds customer loyalty	Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs
6	Smith & Wilson (2023).	surveyed 500 consumers	The Impact of Transparency on Customer Loyalty: A Quantitative Study	The study uncovered a positive correlation between transparency in brand communications and customer loyalty. Customers were more likely to remain loyal to brands that were transparent in their messaging and operations.	Target demographic was Canada, Study location differs, sample size differs

7	Siddiqi et al. (2024)	Survey SEM (n = 300 Bangladeshi consumers).	Online Food Delivery in Emerging Markets: Trust and Loyalty	Trust is a key mediator between service quality/convenience and loyalty in digital food platforms	Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs, Location differs.
8	Xiao, Liu, Piao & Liu (2024)	Experimental survey (n = 280 Chinese students), moderating-channel analysis.	The Effect of Transparency on Brand Loyalty	Information visibility and accessibility significantly increase participation intention	Focused on participation rather than actual loyalty; sample limited to students, location differs
9	Toukabri & Chaouachi (2025)	Survey(n=286) among Saudi consumers, SEM	Exploring the influence of CSR, Block chain Transparency & Cultural Alignment on Customer trust in local food.	Transparency INFLUENCES loyalty.	Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs, Location differs.
10	Chang, S. Y., & Kim, J. W. (2024).	conducted controlled experiments with a sample of 300 customers	Transparency as a Key Driver of Customer Loyalty: An Experimental Approach.	This study showed that exposing customers to transparent practices of a brand through experimental interventions increased customer loyalty. Customers who experienced greater transparency in brand operations were more likely to demonstrate loyalty.	Proxies for independent variable differs, Study location differs

Source: Authors Compilation (2025).

Table 1 contd. Summary of Empirical Literature Reviewed on Consumer Engagement & Consumer Loyalty

S/N	Authors/Year	Methodology	Title	Major Findings	Gap in Literature
1	Amira et al (2025)	Survey of 198 Gen Z users of online travel agents in Java; SEM analysis.	Optimizing Customer Engagement and Satisfaction on Loyalty through Self-Congruity Theory	Self-congruity boosts trust and engagement, which increase satisfaction and ultimately loyalty among Gen Z travellers.	Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs, Location differs.
2	Abdel Muhsen Irsheid Alafeef (2024)	Survey study (sample size unspecified) of streaming service users; analysed with SEM.	Exploring the Marketing Paradigm Using Customer Engagement for Loyalty Intentions towards Digital Streaming Services	Higher levels of customer engagement significantly drive loyalty intentions among streaming platform users.	Proxies for independent variable differs, Study location differs
3	Akinbode et al. (2023)	Survey, 350 respondents in Lagos	Digital marketing engagement, and customer loyalty	communication, and transparent content were identified as critical drivers of consumer engagement and loyalty	Proxies for independent variable differs, Study location differs
4	Cao Qian (2024)	Survey-based descriptive study of online shoppers; regression and ANOVA on consumer values and loyalty	Consumption Values, Consumer Loyalty and Customer Engagement Online Shopping: Basis for Strategic Marketing Improvement Framework	Functional, social, and emotional consumption values significantly correlate with both engagement and loyalty; satisfaction with product and delivery quality also matters	Cross-sectional design; does not use advanced modelling or cross-cultural samples
5	Liang Dong (2024)	Purposeful sampling of 385 online customers; data analysed via PLS-SEM	Digital Marketing Influences Customer Loyalty through Customer Engagement: A Case Study of TT Company in China	Digital marketing efforts significantly enhance customer loyalty through the mediation of consumer engagement ($R^2 \approx 0.73$)	Limited to a single company; lacks cross-industry or cross-cultural generalizability.

6	Zhang, S., Zhang, S., & Zhang, Y. (2024)	Three-stage, time-lagged survey with 246 participants; hierarchical regression and moderated mediation analysis	Impact of Customer Engagement Strategy on Customer Loyalty from the Perspective of Consumer Well-Being	Engagement strategies bolster loyalty, mediated by consumer well-being and moderated by information processing style especially for affective processors	Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs, Location differs.
7	Author: Chen, Jia, et al.2022	longitudinal study by tracking customer engagement metrics	The Impact of Experiential Marketing on Customer Engagement and Loyalty: A Longitudinal Study	The findings suggest that a consistent focus on providing positive and memorable experiences can lead to increased customer engagement and loyalty. marketing activities, such as events, workshops, and interactive displays, influence customer engagement	Study location differs, sample size differs, use of secondary data. Methodology differs. Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs
8	Wang et al. 2023	series of experiments	The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Customizing Customer Experiences for Enhanced Engagement and Loyalty	The findings indicate that personalized AI-driven interactions can significantly impact customer engagement and loyalty levels	Methodology differs. Measurement dimension for the dependent variable differs
9	Author: Park, Hyun, et al. Year: 2025	experiments	The Effect of Gamification on Customer Engagement and Loyalty in Mobile Applications	The findings indicate that integrating gamification features can create a more interactive and rewarding user experience, leading to higher levels of engagement and loyalty.	Proxies for independent variable differs, Study location differs

10	Zhang et al. 2022	surveys and interviews, regression analysis and structural equation modeling	The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Building Customer Engagement and Loyalty: A Cross-Industry Study	The findings suggest that companies that prioritize emotional intelligence training and culture are more likely to create positive customer experiences, leading to increased engagement and loyalty.	Proxies for both independent and dependents variable differ. Study location differs
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Source: Authors Compilation (2025)

Table 1 contd. Summary of Empirical Literature Reviewed on Brand Integrity & Customer Loyalty

S/N	Authors/Year	Methodology	Title	Major Findings	Gap in Literature
1	Brown, K. S., & White, M. D. (2025).	focus groups and surveys	Building Trust through Brand Transparency: Implications for Customer Loyalty.	The study demonstrated that brands that are transparent in their communications and operations are able to build trust with customers, leading to higher levels of loyalty and advocacy.	Study location differs, and target population study also differs. Different proxies were adopted.
2	Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2023).	survey of 500 consumers	The Authenticity Factor: How Brand Integrity Drives Customer Loyalty.	The study found a significant positive relationship between brand integrity and customer loyalty, indicating that customers are more likely to remain loyal to a brand that is authentic and transparent in its actions	Proxies for independent variable differs, Study location differs
3	Lee, S. Y., & Park, J. W. (2025)	comprehensive review of existing literature	The Role of Brand Reputation in Driving Customer Loyalty.	The study found that brands with a strong reputation among consumers are more likely to retain customer loyalty, as reputation acts as a signal of quality and trustworthiness.	Study location differs. Use of secondary data, proxy differs.

4	Patel et al. 2025	combines quantitative analysis of online customer behaviour data with qualitative interviews and focus groups	The Influence of Brand Integrity on Customer Loyalty in the Digital Age: A Mixed-Methods Study	The findings highlight the importance of maintaining brand integrity in digital channels to build trust, engagement, and loyalty among tech-savvy consumers	Mixed-Methods Study, sample size differs. Independent variable differs
5	Kim et al 2025	combination of survey data and structural equation modeling	Enhancing Customer Loyalty Through Brand Integrity: The Mediating Role of Perceived Value	The findings suggest that when customers perceive a brand as having high integrity, they are more likely to see value in its products or services, leading to increased loyalty	Study location differs
6	Smith et al. 2024	a cross-industry analysis using data from customer surveys, focus groups	Role of Brand Integrity in Building Customer Trust and Loyalty: A Cross-Industry Analysis	The findings indicate that brands that prioritize transparency, authenticity, and ethical practices are more likely to establish strong trust and loyalty among customers.	Proxies differ in terms of the dependent variable. Usage of secondary data. Methodology differs.
7	Chen,et al.2023	combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys	Consumer Perceptions of Brand Integrity and Its Influence on Customer Loyalty	The findings reveal that consumers value brands that are perceived as honest, trustworthy, and socially responsible, leading to stronger customer loyalty.	Proxies differ in terms of the dependent variable

Source: Authors Compilation (2025).

Methodology

The data for this research was derived from the primary source. Questionnaire was used in the distribution and collection of data from respondents.

Research Design

A survey research design was adopted to investigate the influence of authentic brand activism proxies-consumer engagement, Trust, brand integrity and transparency, on customer loyalty to sustainable food brands in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. This paved way for statistical analysis to determine the effects of these proxies on consumer loyalty.

Sampling Techniques

The population of consumers of food brands in Lagos are infinite, therefore the researcher adopted The Cochran's formula in the determining the study sample size with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error for reliability and sound representation. The quest for a sound representation from the demographic groups (socio-economic segment) lead the utilization of stratified random sampling technique, which will aid in data capturing within Lagos Metropolis.

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2} = \frac{0.9604}{0.003201} = 300$$

Where;

No= the required sample size

Z=standard normal variate at 95%

P=estimated proportion of the population or maximum variability 0.5

q=1-p=0.5

e=margin of error=0.05

Base on the above calculation, 300 respondents formed the considered sample size of the population of this study.

Data Collection Method

Structured questionnaire was utilized for data collection. The questionnaire was categorized in part A and B, with open ended questions. Demographic characteristics of the respondents forms the Part A and statements relating to proxies of the study variables is in part B. The questionnaire, was classified in 5-point Likert scale, rated on a 4-point Likert scale in form of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with the stated questions. The instrument passed through the appropriate validity and reliability procedures. Face and content validity measure were applied.

A pilot test on the questionnaire was carried out, adopting 30 respondents within Lagos. They share the same features with the target population, but were not included in the final sample. The aim was for clarity of the question, time required estimation, consistency measurement, and to dictate redundant questions.

Data cleaning, and analysis; The collected questionnaire was vetted for consistency and completeness. Inspecting the z-scores and mahalanobis distance addressed the outliers. Lost data were at minimal level of less than 3% and treated via substitution.

Table 1. The reliability statistics

Construct	No, of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Consumer Loyalty	5	0.87	V. Good
Consumer Engagement	4	0.78	Acceptable
Brand Integrity	4	0,80	Acceptable
Transparency	4	0,85	Good
Trust	4	0,83	Good

Interpretation: The constructs returned Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.7 which indicates acceptable, good and very good reliability which confirms the consistency of the instrument. The questionnaire was refined by the feedback from this test, to ensure that the final instrument was valid and reliable for capturing consumer loyalty in sustainable food brands.

Data Analysis Technique

Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized for data, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the correlation between trust, transparency, brand integrity, customer engagement, and customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos Metropolis. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software addressed the statistical analysis.

Table 2: Social Sciences software addressed the statistical analysis

Status	Frequency	Percentage
unusable	40	13.3%
usable	260	86.7%

Researchers' computation (SPSS 25)

Interpretation: 300 copies of the questionnaire administered, 260 copies were found usable at response level of 86.67%.

The respondent's demographics and the analysis and interpretation of their responses is shown in the tables below.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
SEX		
Female	98	37.7
Male	162	62.3
TOTAL	260	100.0
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	65	25.0
Married	150	57.7
Separated	42	16.2
Widowed	3	1.2
TOTAL	260	100.0

AGE		
18-29	75	28.8
30-39	178	68.5
40-49	5	1.9
50-Above	2	.8
TOTAL	260	100.0
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION		
SSCE	7	2.7
OND/NCE	19	7.3
HND/BSC	76	29.2
MSc	147	56.5
Ph.D.	11	4.2
TOTAL	260	100.0
INCOME		
₦77,000-₦176,000	129	49.6
₦177,000-₦276,000	73	28.1
₦277,000-₦376,000	30	11.5
₦377,000-₦476,000	17	6.5
₦477,000 and above	11	4.2
TOTAL	260	100.0

Source: Researchers computation (2025)

Interpretation; The above table highlights the respondents' profiles. It indicates that 162 of 62.3% the respondents were males, while female respondents make up the 98 of 37.7%, it was established that male formed major population sampled. 65 of 25% respondents were single, and 150 of 57.7% represent the married respondents, 42 of 16.2% represent the separated respondent, and widowed respondents represent 3 of 1.2%. It validates that married respondents as the major respondents. In ascertaining the respondents age, 75 of 28.8% respondents were within the ages of 18-29 years; 178 (68.5%) respondents were within the ages of 30-39 years, 40-49 years represents the 5 of 1.9%, and respondents within the ages of 50 and above represent the 2 of .8%

The respondent academic qualifications established that 7 of 2.7% respondents acquired Primary School Leaving Certificates, 19 of 7.3% of the respondents acquired OND/NCE, 76 of 29.2% of the respondents bagged HND/BSc, 147 of 56.5% obtained MSc, while 11 (4.2%) respondents bagged Ph.D. This revealed that the large population of the respondents had MSc. The respondents' level of income level showed that 129 of 49.6% respondents had income of ₦77,000-₦176,000, 73 (28.1%) respondents had income of ₦177,000-₦276,000, 30 (11.5%) respondents had income of ₦277,000-₦376,000, 17 (6.5%) respondents had income of ₦377,000-₦476,000, while 5 (4.2%) respondents had income of ₦477,000 and above.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 4: Respondents view on customer loyalty

S/N	Statement Customer Loyalty	SD F (%)	D F (%)	U F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x)
1	How often do you intend buying this food brand?	114 (43.8)	22 (8.5)	18 (6.9)	103 (39.6)	114 (43.8)	4.17
2	How do you recommend this brand to others?	6 (2.3)	5 (1.9)	5 (1.9)	122 (46.9)	122 (46.9)	4.34
3	How do you attached to this brand emotionally?	3 (1.2)	8 (3.1)	21 (8.1)	130 (50.0)	98 (37.7)	4.20
4	How much do you consider this brand as your first choice?	1 (0.4)	33 (12.7)	28 (10.8)	101 (38.8)	97 (37.3)	4.00
5	How much do you accept this "I am more loyal to brands that support local communities"?	9 (3.5)	28 (10.8)	48 (18.5)	97 (37.3)	78 (30.0)	3.80
	Average	(1.72)	(7.4)	(9.24)	(42.52)	(39.14)	4.10

Source: Researcher Computation (2025)

Table 4 shows 4.10 as an average mean value out of the maximum of 5, it is a strong indication of the respondents' positive assessment of authentic brand activism and customer patronage of sustainable food brands in Lagos metropolis. A large proportion of respondents, 42.52% and 39.14% strongly agreed and agreed to the statements respectively. On the other hand, 1.72% and 7.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statements respectively, while 9.24% were undecided.

Table 5: Respondents view on Trust

SN	Trust Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	U F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x)
1	How much do you trust the information the food brand provides?	17 (6.5)	22 (8.5)	48 (18.5)	136 (52.3)	37 (14.2)	3.59
2	How confident do you feel in relying on this food brand?	12 (4.6)	18 (6.9)	39 (15.0)	127 (48.8)	64 (24.6)	3.82
3	How often do you choose this brand over others because you trust it more?	9 (3.5)	19 (7.3)	43 (16.5)	104 (40.0)	85 (32.7)	3.91
4	How much do you accept this; I feel secure buying offerings from this brand	3 (1.2)	7 (2.7)	9 (3.5)	149 (57.3)	92 (35.4)	4.23
5	Do you believe that this brand is honest?	8 (3.1)	22 (8.5)	38 (14.6)	103 (47.6)	88 (33.8)	3.94
	Average	(3.78)	(11.03)	(13.62)	(46.22)	(28.14)	3.40

Table 5 shows 3.40 as an average mean value out of the maximum of 5, which is an indication of the respondents' positive evaluation of consumer trust and authentic brand activism and customer loyalty of sustainable food brand in Lagos Metropolis.

It was established that, a large proportion of respondents, 46.22% and 28.14% strongly agreed and agreed to the statements respectively. On the other hand, 3.78% and 11.03% disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statements respectively, while 13.62% were undecided.

Table 6: Respondents view on Transparency

SN	Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	U F (%)	AF (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x)
1	How does this brand provide clear and accurate information about its product?	5 (1.9)	2 (0.8)	12 (4.6)	118 (45.4)	121 (46.5)	4.35
2	How open is this band on how and where its products are made?	11 (4.2)	36 (13.8)	46 (17.7)	94 (36.2)	73 (28.1)	3.70
3	How often does this brand communicates honesty, even about weakness?	7 (2.7)	17 (6.5)	24 (9.2)	132 (50.8)	80 (30.8)	4.00
4	How does this brand discloses vital information without being asked?	1 (0.4)	8 (3.1)	18 (6.9)	157 (60.4)	76 (29.2)	4.15
5	How can you easily access the detailed information on the brand practice?	4 (1.5)	11 (4.2)	53 (20.4)	126 (48.5)	66 (25.4)	3.92
	Average	(2.14)	(5.68)	(11.76)	(48.26)	(32.00)	4.02

Source: Researcher computation (2025)

Table 6, shows 4.02 as an average mean value out of the maximum of 5, which is a strong indication of the respondents' positive evaluation of transparency with authentic brand activism and customer loyalty in the sustainable food brands in Lagos. It was established that, a significant proportion of respondents, 48.26% and 32.00% strongly agreed and agreed to the statements respectively. On the other hand, 2.14% and 5.76% disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statements respectively, while 11.76% were undecided.

Table 7: Respondents view on brand integrity

SN	Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	U F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x)
1	How does this brand acts consistently with it stated values?	7 (2.7)	35 (13.5)	36 (13.8)	118 (45.4)	64 (24.6)	3.76
2.	How does this brand deliver on its promise?	8 (3.1)	19 (7.3)	29 (11.2)	113 (43.5)	91 (35.0)	4.00
3.	How does this brand admit when it makes mistake and take corrective action?	5 (1.9)	22 (8.5)	37 (14.2)	140 (53.8)	56 (21.5)	3.85
4	How do they mislead customers?	14 (5.4)	39 (15.0)	68 (26.2)	101 (38.8)	38 (14.6)	3.42
5	How do they behave ethically?	20 (7.7)	39 (15.0)	55 (21.2)	90 (34.6)	56 (21.5)	3.47
	Average	(4.16)	(11.86)	(17.32)	(43.22)	23.44	3.70

Source: Researcher computation (2025)

Table 7 shows 3.70 as an average mean value of the maximum of 5, which is a strong indication of the respondents' positive evaluation of brand integrity and customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos. It reveals clearly that, a significant proportion of respondents, 43.22% and 23.44% strongly agreed and agreed to the statements respectively. On the other hand, 4.16% and 11.86% disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statements respectively, while 17.32% were undecided.

Table 8: Respondents view on consumer engagement

SN	Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	U F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x)
1	How often do you emotionally connects to the brand?	6 (2.3)	10 (3.8)	14 (5.4)	124 (47.7)	106 (40.8)	4.21
2	How do you share your experience with others about this brand?	5 (1.9)	15 (5.8)	21 (8.1)	138 (53.1)	81 (31.2)	4.06
3	How much do you interact with the brand?	7 (2.7)	18 (6.9)	52 (20.0)	122 (46.9)	61 (23.5)	3.82
4	How often do you seek information about this brand?	16 (6.2)	14 (5.4)	30 (11.5)	123 (47.3)	77 (29.6)	3.89
5	How do think you feel about the brand's mission or purpose?	14 (5.4)	12 (4.6)	25 (9.6)	118 (45.4)	91 (35.0)	4.05
	Average	(3.7)	(5.3)	(10.92)	(48.08)	32.02	4.01

Source: Researcher computation (2025)

Table 6 above shows an average mean value of 4.01 out of the maximum of 5, which is a strong indication of the respondents' positive evaluation of consumer engagement and

customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos Metropolis. It reveals clearly that, a significant proportion of respondents, 48.08% and 32.02% strongly agreed and agreed to the statements respectively. On the other hand, 3.07% and 5.3% disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statements respectively, while 10.92% were undecided.

Table 9: Relationship between authentic brand activism and customer loyalty to sustainable food brands

Model	Unstd. Coefficients*		Std. Coefficients		
	β	Std of Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)*	2.575	.402	-	6.409	.000
TRUST	.087	.059	.096	1.487	.138
TRANSPRANCY	-.043	.052	-.052	-.833	.405
BRAND INTEGRITY*	.144	.066	.136	2.174	.031
CONSUMER ENGAG*	.155	0.72	.137	2.163	.032

*Dependent-Variable: Consumer Loyalty

R=.242^a

R²=.58

Adj.R²=.44

F- Stat.=3.960

Prob.=.004

N=300

Table 9 presents the reg. analysis which assesses the connections between the proxies of the independent variables and customer loyalty.

The major findings show that the constant has 2.575 unstandardized coefficient, signifying zero level of the dependent variable.

The coefficient is significant statistically, where p is lesser than 0.001, as shown by t-value of 6.409. Trust has unstd. Coefficient of 0.087*, 1.487 as t-value, and 0.138 as p-value which suggest statistically an insignificant relationship with customer patronage. In the other hand, transparency recorded -0.043 as an unstandardized coefficient. This shows that there was an insignificant negative relationship with customer loyalty. The effect, p=0.405 is not significant statistically which is based on the -0.833 low t-value. It was also established that brand integrity has a positive effect on customer loyalty with a p-value of 0.031, t-value of 2.174, and an unstd. coefficient. With unstd. coefficient of 0.155, P.Value of 0.03, and a t.value of 2.163, it shows that Consumer engagement has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

Therefore, brand integrity and consumer engagement are positive predictors of customer loyalty, and the other dependent variables do not have a significant impact of this model statistically

Discussion of Findings

In other to determine the correlation between authentic brand activism and customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos Metropolis, the proxies of the independent variables were tested empirically.

The findings showed that Consumer engagement, a proxy of authentic brand activism with these values ($\beta = 0.155$, $p = 0.032$), established a strong influence on customer loyalty. This is in akin with the studies carried out by Amira et al (2025), Abdel Muhsen et al. (2024), Liang Dong (2024), Zhang, S., Zhang, S., & Zhang, Y. (2024). They established that digital marketing engagement, personalized communication, and transparent content were identified as critical drivers of consumer engagement and loyalty. Unlike the study of Akinbode *et al.* (2023), their results showed an area of improvement and x-rayed a gap in leveraging feedback loops effectively.

Secondly, brand integrity with these values ($\beta = 0.144$, $p = 0.031$), established a strong positive relationship with customer loyalty. This is in line with the study carried out by Chen, et al. 2023, Smith et al. 2024, Lee, S. Y., & Park, J. W. (2025), Patel et al. 2025, Kim et al 2025, Brown, K. S., & White, M. D. (2025). Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2023). Lee, S. Y., & Park, J. W. (2025) they linked integrity to customer loyalty.

Thirdly, it was found that transparency with these ($\beta = -0.043$, $p = 0.405$) values, have a little effect, but positive effect on customer loyalty. This not in line with the studies carried out by Cambodian Food-Delivery study (2025), Deloitte/Digital (2024), Hakiki et al (2025), Latif & Bashir (2024), Xiao, Liu, Piao & Liu (2024), Toukabri & Chaouachi(2025) which showed transparency as a bedrock of customer loyalty. The difference emanated from lack of information for public consumption, because Nigerian consumers value branding and features of a product.

Lastly, trust with ($\beta = 0.087$, $p = 0.138$) values shows a positive influence on customer loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos Metropolis. This aligns with the studies carried out by Bogdan *et al.* (2025), Kurniaawaty *et al.* (2025), Onuegbu *et al* (2025), Putera & Famiola (2024), Quintus *et al.* (2024), So, Yang & Li (2024), Okonkwo & Adeyemi (2023) they emphasized that trust plays a key role in loyalty. Though the studies by Yum & kim (2025), Emuobor *et al.* (2025) shows that trust does not influence loyalty.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was on authentic Brand Activism and Loyalty of Sustainable Food Brands in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. The results clearly showed that consumer transparency, consumer trust, consumer engagement, brand integrity have a significant positive effect on loyalty of sustainable food brands in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. The drivers of customer

loyalty were brand integrity and consumer trust. In line with aforementioned researches that establish the merits of transparency in aiding loyalty.

Though the study showed effect of transparency on customer loyalty, but it has to be backed up with consumer engagement to magnify its effect on customer loyalty. Consumer engagement was crucial in influencing customer loyalty,

Reviewing the importance of feedback, and consumers' involvement in the companies' program, consistent with preceding literature on its influence in its impact. This study shows the need for sustainable food brands to build on transparency as a strategy and integrity ploy in engaging customers on their loyalty journey. Engaging this, will enable food brands to create long-term trust and customer loyalty. To capture a wide understanding of customer loyalty and handle biases in quantitative analysis, Future study should explore mixed approach, and also expand the range of the scope of their study to aid in comparative views into the customer's behavioural mode across the borders of Nigeria.

The researchers recommend that;

- i. Transparency should be applied in the operations of food brands, ranging from ingredients components, manufacturing pattern. Banking on media realms to disseminate information, and views on brands components and its effects, food brands can build trust and customer loyalty as established by Akinbode et al. (2023), also open communication with customers should be enhanced via different media platform.
- ii. Food brands brand promise should meet the standard communicated in the marketing realms, their brand quality should not be compromised.
- iii. Food brands should open a feedback channel or an interactive platform that will include a loyalty rewards system, engagement to strengthen the bonding and customer loyalty. This supports findings from Toukabri & Chaouachi(2025)
- iv. Food brands should maintain consistency with their message content. They should bank on authentic brand activism as a marketing strategy, customers should be educated on sustainable consumption.

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