

Article

What Grounds Our Loyalty towards “Authentic Brand Activism” of a Sustainable Food Brand?

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Abstract: “Authentic brand activism” is an under-researched area of study, and it suffers from a clear lack of understanding concerning the effectiveness of its practices. This study aims to assess how consumers’ evaluations of a brand regarding brand reputation, competence, credibility, and benevolence affect consumers’ brand trust and brand loyalty. This research focuses on the Italian brand “Libera Terra” (“Free Land”), an organisation that uses assets confiscated from the mafias for the production of environmentally and socially sustainable agri-food products. Based on a sample of 366 randomly chosen consumers in a supermarket in the urban district of Bologna (Italy), the results show that consumers’ perceptions of brand performance contribute to their perceived levels of brand trust. The brand trust subsequently impacts consumers’ brand loyalty. This research confirms that alignment between an organisation’s values, business practices, and marketing strategies ensures that authentic brand activism is effective, highlighting the need for businesses to consciously adopt brand activism and avoid “woke washing” practices. The theoretical and managerial implications arising from this research are also presented.

Citation: Rivaroli, S.; Spadoni, R.; Bregoli, I. What Grounds Our Loyalty towards “Authentic Brand Activism” of a Sustainable Food Brand? *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 7341. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14127341>

Academic Editor: Attila Gere

Received: 12 May 2022

Accepted: 14 June 2022

Published: 15 June 2022

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Keywords: authentic brand activism; brand activism effectiveness; brand trust; brand loyalty; agri-food products; Libera Terra

1. Introduction

Organisations taking a stand over potentially divisive topics have been growing in recent years (Starbucks and Nike are just two famous examples). This phenomenon, named “brand activism”, has not been the subject of many research papers. However, the attention paid to brand activism is growing due to current market trends, which see consumers focus on the brands they use, giving preference to those whose values fit in with their values and identities [1]. Brand activism is commonly accepted as a vehicle that aims to promote change (i.e., social, environmental, or political) and, as a result, seeks to improve society [2]. Different angles of brand activism have emerged in existing research, including free speech boundary work [2]; social justice branding [3]; brand activism change agents [4]; brand political activism [5]; anti-brand activism [6]; socio-political activist brands [1]; and authentic brand activism [7]. Thus, the topic has experienced a surge in research seeking to clarify its characteristics, typologies, and boundaries.

Nevertheless, researchers agree on one key feature of brand activism: i.e., the potential risk of alienation for consumers whose views oppose those supported by the brand. Indeed, in this case, the levels of consumer-brand alignment may be low, potentially leading to negative repercussions on attitudes, intentions, and behaviours [8]. The same authors have also empirically demonstrated that the effects of brand activism are asymmetric. When consumers disagree with the brand’s supported stand, the impact on attitudes

and behaviours is greater than in the opposite case—i.e., when consumers support the socio-political issue discussed [8].

In full consideration of the different perspectives on brand activism, this study adopts the angle of authentic brand activism as this focuses not only on the message conveyed by the business through the brand but also on the whole business practice [7]. In other words, there must be a complete alignment between marketing strategies and the organisation's practice. This study aims to understand the roles of brand reputation, benevolence, credibility, and competence in forming brand trust and, indirectly, brand loyalty towards a brand charged with political meaning and devoted to promoting a sustainable social change.

This research is focused on the brand "Libera Terra" ("Free Land", i.e., land free from the mafias). "Libera Terra" is the most widely recognised Italian organisation that grows agri-food products on lands confiscated from the mafias. Mafia-type organisations refer to any typology of Italian territorial criminal organisations (i.e., Cosa Nostra, n'drangheta, Camorra, and Apulian organised crime and other Mafias) that strongly affect Italian gross domestic product (GDP), generating high social costs and worsening citizens' quality of life [9]. Thus, "Libera Terra", in force to the Italian law n° 109/96, contributes to revitalising goods and lands confiscated from criminal organisations by the Italian jurisdiction by using them for social and sustainable activities. Specifically, this organisation aims to grow quality products and, at the same time, foster social and environmental sustainability (<https://www.liberaterra.it/en/>, accessed on 11 May 2022).

The remainder of this article is organised as follows: a review of scholarly literature on authentic brand activism, brand loyalty, and brand trust is presented. Subsequently, the hypothesis at the core of this study is presented, along with the empirical research. This is then followed by the results, the discussion, the conclusions, and the implications for research and businesses.

2. Theoretical Domain

2.1. Authentic Brand Activism

Authentic brand activism has been defined as "a purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a nonneutral stance on institutionally contested sociopolitical issues, to create social change and marketing success" [7] (p. 446). According to this definition, a brand should contribute to the achievement of social and/or environmental goals; it should engage with contested or controversial issues in full awareness of the risk of alienating consumers whose views oppose those supported by the brand; and its marketing messages, business values, purpose, and practices should all be aligned [7]. In short, consumers must perceive a brand to be authentic. Indeed, recent research has shown that consumers positively view brands that authentically support a socio-political stance (i.e., those demonstrating alignment between the socio-political issue and the organisation's values) [3,10]. If an organisation displays authentic brand activism, it will be more likely to differentiate itself from competitors and enhance brand equity, as consumers will develop a stronger emotional bond [1].

2.2. Brand Loyalty

Although brand loyalty is a widely studied concept, this study embraces Oliver's concept of loyalty [11] (p. 34): "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour".

According to Watson et al. [12], this definition reveals brand loyalty to be made up of a mix of attitudes (i.e., positive emotional feelings towards the brand) and behaviours (i.e., repeated purchase of the brand) that benefit one firm relative to its competitors. Thus, positive evaluations of a seller, rooted in previous purchasing experiences, can lead to

attitudinal loyalty [13], and behavioural loyalty arises from situational triggers and habits [14]. The development of these two types of loyalty is essential for a brand due to the effects that they can bring about. Behavioural loyalty directly impacts the firm's revenue through consumers' repurchasing activities, and in contrast, attitudinal loyalty can enable a business to charge a premium price due to consumers' positive evaluations of the seller and their commitment to the brand. It is thus evident that enhancing the consumers' loyalty towards a brand is pivotal to a firm's brand performance outcome (i.e., its market share and its product's price).

2.3. Brand Trust

Brand trust, considered to be "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" [15] (p. 82), is derived from positive beliefs about a firm's behaviour and its product's performance, as embodied by its brand [16]. This results in satisfying relationships between consumers and businesses [17]. Brand trust can be conceived by combining specific individuals' perceptions of the brand, such as competence, credibility, benevolence, and reputation [18,19], which are considered in this research. Brand trust is recognised as one of the main drivers of brand loyalty, and the link between these two dimensions has been confirmed in previous research [15,20–22].

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Building on previous studies that established brand trust as a second-order construct [18,23], the conceptual framework adopted in this study to verify the direct relationship between "Libera Terra" brand trust (hereafter called *Btrust*) and brand loyalty (hereafter called *Bloy*) was gauged considering five constructs. *Btrust* and *Bloy* represent the model's latent endogenous variables, whereas brand competence (*Bcomp*), brand reputation (*Brep*), brand benevolence (*Bben*), and brand credibility (*Bcred*) represent the latent exogenous variables (Figure 1).

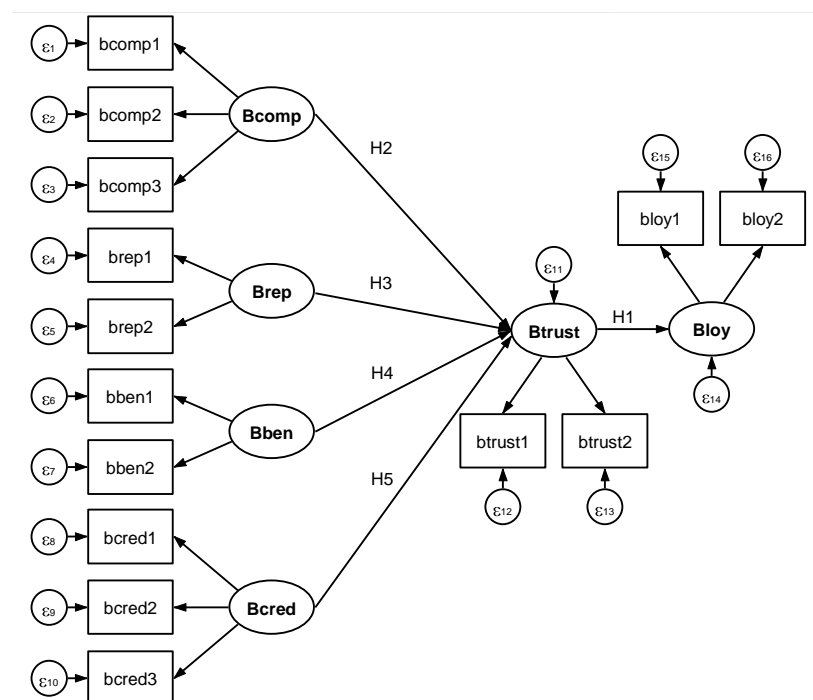


Figure 1. Hypothesised model.

Btrust, in line with Lassoued and Hobbs's [19] conceptualisation of brand trust, is considered to be how reliable the brand is when it comes to performing its stated function

based on customers' perceptions of the product's quality and safety. *Bloy*, i.e., an individual's commitment and attachment to a brand, is linked to this, as mentioned in the previous section. According to Lau and Lee [21], when consumers trust a brand, they are more prone to relying on it and have a positive buying intention. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that loyalty is a direct consequence of a trust triggered by the brand [15]. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *“Libera Terra” brand trust leads to increased brand loyalty.*

In line with prior research on brand trust, *Btrust* is a multidimensional construct encompassing specific attitudes, such as brand competence and reputation [18,23]. Here, *Bcomp* is considered the brand's supremacy in terms of its quality and ability to better meet consumers' needs than other brands [21]. Consumers can acquire *Bcomp* through their own direct experiences with the brand and word-of-mouth communication. When a brand satisfies the needs of consumers better than competitors, it develops *Btrust* [21]. *Brep* is the consumer's overall perceived brand quality, arising from the stratification of individuals' opinions about the coherence between a firm's communication and its actions [19,21,24]. According to Lau and Lee [21], when a brand is perceived as good and reliable in light of personal experience or word of mouth, its good reputation reinforces the individual's *Btrust*. Considering *Btrust* as a second-order construct, it can be hypothesised that it is a function of consumers' trust in *Bcomp* and *Brep*. Hence, the following research hypotheses are postulated:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *“Libera Terra” brand competence leads to increased brand trust.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *“Libera Terra” brand reputation leads to increased brand trust.*

Btrust is enhanced through two other dimensions: brand benevolence (*Bben*) and brand credibility (*Bcred*). The former is an individual's belief that a firm has a positive orientation towards consumers and society beyond its self-interest, while the latter refers to the consumer's perception that the brand can deliver its brand promise [19]. The role that *Bcred* has in the formation of *Btrust* has been highlighted in previous research. For instance, in a study carried out in the food context, the role of *Bcred* was found to be relevant to the formation of *Btrust* [25]. While Reitsamer and Brunner-Sperdin [26] found that, due to imperfections in the information characterising most products, the role of *Bcred* as a source of brand trustworthiness and a predictor of purchase intention is enhanced. Hence, considering *Btrust* as a second-order construct as a function of consumers' trust in *Bben* and *Bcred*, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *“Libera Terra” brand benevolence leads to increased brand trust.*

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *“Libera Terra” brand credibility leads to increased brand trust.*

In summary, *Btrust* represents one of the main components of the individual perception of *Bloy*, and consumers' commitment and attachment to a brand lead to purchasing intentions. The dyadic relationship between “Libera Terra” *Btrust* and *Bloy* is displayed in Figure 1. This trust-based conceptual model hypothesises that *Btrust* is a second-order construct affected by the individual's perception of competence, reputation, benevolence, and credibility of the “Libera Terra” brand.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Sampling

The current investigation was based on a non-probabilistic sampling design, using data collected between September 2017 and June 2018. Because the data collection occurred before the COVID-19 pandemic, we expect that our answers were not affected by any external environmental force that may have impacted respondents and their views. Data were collected through a face-to-face structured questionnaire among Italian consumers randomly selected in the food aisles of supermarkets in Bologna, north Italy. Only customers who confirmed that they knew of the “*Libera Terra*” brand and passed along the food aisle where “*Libera Terra*” food products were located were interviewed. Interviewers read the cover letter, which explained the aims of the study, and they gave interviewees instructions on how to complete the survey. People aged 18 years or above were eligible to participate. Four hundred interviewees were involved in the survey, resulting in a final sample of 366 valid responses.

The target of an even distribution for gender was closely reached (i.e., 50.82% women and 49.18% men), and the respondents’ ages ranged between 20 and 83 ($M = 40.5$; $SD = 18.6$).

A total of 36.1% ($N = 132$) of respondents had an academic degree, and 49.2% ($N = 175$) of them were employed, 29.5% ($N = 108$) were students, and 8.2% ($N = 30$) were looking for a job. A total of 14.5% ($N = 53$) of respondents were retired. The details of the participants’ demographics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample description.

Data Collected	N	%
Gender		
Male	180	49.2
Female	186	50.8
Other	0	0.0
Age		
Mean	40.5	
(SD)	(18.6)	
Min	20	
Max	83	
Education level		
With academic degree	132	36.1
Without academic degree	234	63.9
Employment situation		
Full/part time	175	47.8
Students not employed	108	29.5
Looking for a job	30	8.2
Retired	53	14.5

4.2. Questionnaire and Measurement Scales

The survey was set out in three sections. The first part included a preliminary overview of the study’s aim and contained a question asking participants if they already knew of the food products labelled “*Libera Terra*”. If they did not know the brand, the survey ended; otherwise, they were asked to fill in the questionnaire in exchange for a discount voucher for purchasing these products from the site bottegaliberaterra.it [27]. In order to make sure that only the right participants filled in the survey, the following statement was included: “*The ‘Libera Terra’ branded food products are food and beverages derived from processing agricultural raw materials produced by companies that manage land confiscated from mafia-type organisations, according to the Italian law 106/96*”. The second section of the survey

consisted of a closed-ended question, including fourteen items (Table 2) that respondents had to evaluate on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1–strongly disagree to 7–strongly agree. The question was introduced using the following sentence “By referring to ‘Libera Terra’ labelled food products, express your opinion on the following statements:”. The items allowed respondents to measure the constructs: (1) *Btrust* and *Bloy* were measured by adopting the two-item scale proposed by Delgado-Ballester and Luis Munuera-Alemán [28] and a modified version of the Quester and Lin Lim [29] three-item scale, respectively; (2) *Bcomp* and *Brep* were measured using an adapted version of Lau and Lee’s [21] constructs; and (3) *Bben* and *Bcred* were measured by adopting the two- and three-item scales proposed by Lassoued and Hobbs [19]. Items were randomised to avoid possible order effects and to prevent interviewees from guessing the specific construct being investigated through the questions. The third section of the questionnaire included socio-demographic questions to collect participants’ information, such as gender, level of education, profession, and age. The face-to-face interviews lasted, on average, around fifteen minutes each.

Table 2. Measurement assessment: convergent validity.

PCs /Construct	Item	Description	PCs		PCs		PCs	
			PC1	PC2	PC1	PC2	PC1	PC2
			M (SD)		Cronbach’s α (Eigenvalues)/Factor Loadings		Explained Variance (%)	
PC1 = Brand overall performance; PC2 = Brand quality performance			5.03 (1.19)	5.22 (1.23)	0.89 (4.97)	0.40 (1.08)	49.70	10.87
Brand competence	bcomp1	I believe that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” is of high quality.	5.34 (1.48)	-	0.71	-		
	bcomp2	I believe that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” is safe to eat.	5.42 (1.58)	-	0.76	-		
	bcomp3	I believe that food products labelled “Libera Terra” is better than generic versions.	4.43 (1.60)	-	0.72	-		
Brand credibility	bcred1	I believe that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” has transparent quality information.	4.88 (1.62)	-	0.88	-		
	bcred2	I believe that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” has accurate safety information.	4.79 (1.59)	-	0.87	-		
	bcred3	I think the reason food products labelled “Libera Terra” are usually more expensive than generic versions is their higher quality.	-	4.71 (1.55)	-	0.75		
Brand benevolence	bben1	I think that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” enhance my well-being in terms of nutrition and health.	5.08 (1.53)	-	0.56	-		
	bben2	I think that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” are produced in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.	5.72 (1.52)	-	0.63	-		
Brand reputation	brep1	I think that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” has a consistent overall quality.	-	5.73 (1.57)	-	0.69		
	brep2	I hear positive comments about the food products labelled “Libera Terra” from my family and my friends.	4.58 (1.78)		0.48	-		
Brand trust					0.89 (1.80)		90.02	

btrust1	I think that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” can be trusted for their high quality.	0.94	
btrust2	I think that the food products labelled “Libera Terra” has reliable quality.	0.94	
Brand loyalty		0.68 (1.52)	75.96
bloy1	As long as I am satisfied, I will stick with purchasing the food products labelled “Libera Terra”.	0.87	
bloy2	I would buy the food products labelled “Libera Terra” regardless of the price of other food brands	0.87	

4.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using STATA 16.0 (StataCorp, LLC., College Station, TX, USA) and carried out through the following steps. First, after checking the hypothesised four-factor brand trust drivers by performing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), an explanatory factor analysis (EFA) through a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using the Maximum Likelihood estimation (varimax rotation method) [30] was carried out to examine whether this study replicated the hypothesised brand trust drivers’ structure proposed in Lassoued and Hobbs (2015). The data suitability for the EFA was tested using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure (KMO; 0.07 or above), and the number of factors retained was based on the eigenvalues ≥ 1 and the inspection scree plot. Afterwards, each extracted factor’s internal consistency was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha [31]. Next, before examining the structural part of the model using a Structural Equation Model (SEM), a CFA was conducted to examine whether the measurement model had a good fit with the sample. The goodness-of-fit was evaluated using the cut-off criteria of the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; values close to 0.08 or below), the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; values close to 0.08 or below), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; values above 0.95), the normalised Chi-square (CMIN/DF; values close to 5 or below), and the standardised loading estimates of 0.30 and above [32,33]. Convergent validity was tested considering a relative Average Variance Extracted (AVE) close to or above the recommended level of 0.05 [30].

5. Results

5.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The dimensionality of the four-factor brand trust structure demonstrated a poor fit to the data ($\chi^2(29) = 165.11$; $p = 0.000$; RMSEA = 0.113; CFI = 0.928; SRMR = 0.058), with standardised factor loadings ranging from 0.165 to 0.927; thus, the EFA was performed on the ten items measuring the four *Btrust* drivers in order to identify the number of latent factors. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy (KMO = 0.850) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($\chi^2(45) = 1898.50$, $p < 0.000$) confirmed the appropriateness of conducting the EFA. Although the EFA produced a two-factor solution with an eigenvalue greater than one (Table 2), the second component’s low level of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.40$) led us to drop it as the antecedent of *Btrust*. Thus, only the first factor ($\alpha = 0.89$; $M = 5.03 \pm 1.19$), named ‘brand performance’ for its multifaceted nature, was considered a determinant of *Btrust*. This finding led us to reject hypotheses H2–H5 and to consider the reduced conceptual model in Figure 2, in which it was hypothesised that “Libera Terra” brand performance leads to increased *Btrust* (H6). The Cronbach’s alpha values associated with the *Btrust* and *Bloy* factors are greater, or very close, to the acceptable level (i.e., 0.70), thus revealing the good internal reliability of each of them (Table 2).

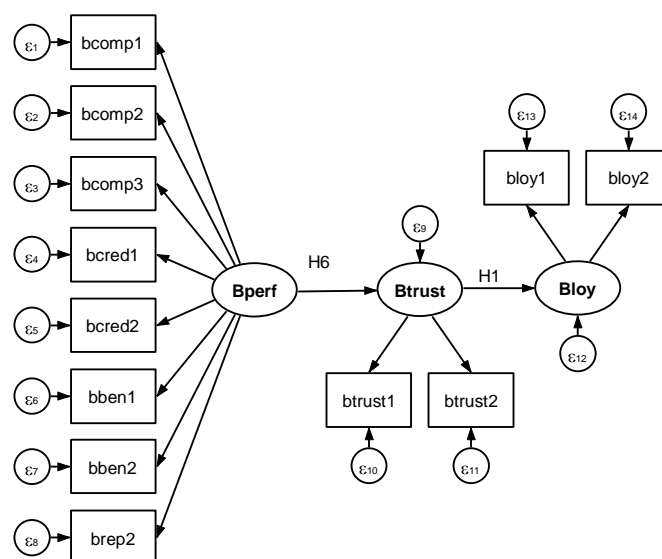


Figure 2. Reduced hypothesised model.

5.2. Measurement Assessment

A CFA was applied to test the statistical robustness of the constructs referred to in the reduced conceptual model solution, demonstrating an acceptable overall fit based on established standards. The analysis resulted in $\chi^2(42) = 139.49$, $p = 0.000$, RMSEA = 0.080, CFI = 0.966, and SRMR = 0.040, except for an item which referred to *Brep* (i.e., “I hear positive comments about the food products labelled “*Libera Terra*” from my family and my friends.”), which is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.43$, $p = 0.000$), all scores exhibited the ideally recommended level of 0.70 (Table 3). The AVE of the three factors (*Bperf*, *Btrust*, and *Bloy*) ranged from 0.49 to 0.80 (Table 4), indicating an acceptable average variance explained by the latent factor structure. Despite more errors remaining in the items referring to the *Bperf* construct than in the variance explained by the latent structure itself, no significant improvement occurred when removing items. Moreover, we did not change the reduced model solution factors because both internal consistency and goodness-of-fit indices were satisfactory.

Table 3. Measurement assessment: standardised factor loadings.

Variable and Indicator	β	SE
1. Brand performance		
bcomp1	0.86 ***	0.02
bcomp2	0.88 ***	0.02
bcomp3	0.56 ***	0.02
bcred1	0.65 ***	0.03
bcred2	0.64 ***	0.03
bben1	0.63 ***	0.03
bben2	0.79 ***	0.02
brep2	0.43 ***	0.05
2. Brand trust		
btrust1	0.92 ***	0.01
btrust2	0.87 ***	0.02
3. Brand loyalty		
bloy1	0.74 ***	0.04
bloy2	0.70 ***	0.04

Note: *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. Measurement assessment: discriminant validity.

Variable	1	2	3	M	SD
1. Brand performance	0.49 *			5.03	1.19
2. Brand trust	0.77	0.80		5.83	1.45
3. Brand loyalty	0.72	0.063	0.52	5.44	1.41

*: Values on the diagonal: AVE; under diagonal: correlation coefficients.

5.3. Structural Model Evaluation and Path Analysis

In evaluating the structural relationships in the reduced conceptual model, the hypothesised causal paths were estimated. The CFI was 0.982 (≥ 0.95), RMSEA was 0.073 (≤ 0.08), SRMR was 0.040 (≤ 0.08), and the normalised Chi-square values (i.e., ≤ 5) demonstrated a good fit of the structural model. The results are shown in Figure 3 and Table 5, and they indicate that perceived *Bperf* has a positive effect on *Btrust* ($\beta = 0.88$; $p = 0.000$), while *Btrust* positively affects the individual’s commitment and attachment to a brand (i.e., *Bloy*) ($\beta = 0.85$; $p = 0.000$), thus supporting the hypothesised relationships (i.e., H1 and H6). The determination coefficients referred to the latent construct *Btrust* ($R^2 = 0.79$), *Bloy* ($R^2 = 0.72$), and the overall model ($R^2 = 0.95$). All are above the threshold of 10% [34], demonstrating the predictive relevance of the reduced conceptual model.

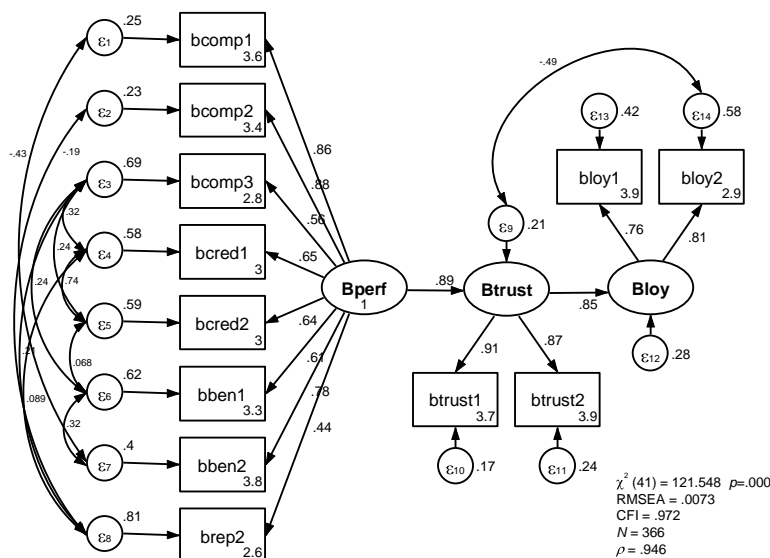


Figure 3. Path diagram of structural equation modelling.

Table 5. Measurement assessment: discriminant validity.

	Estimate	Coefficients	SE	p-Value	95% CI Bias	Result
H1: <i>Btrust</i> → <i>Bloy</i>	0.89		0.028	0.000	[0.80; 0.91]	Supported
H6: <i>Bperf</i> → <i>Btrust</i>	0.85		0.017	0.000	[0.85; 0.92]	Supported

6. Discussions

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research aimed to contribute to the academic literature on brand activism by focusing on the “Liberia Terra” brand. As this brand contributes to the achievement of social and environmental goals; engages with contested issues; and has marketing strategies aligned with its business values, purposes, and practices, the “Liberia Terra” brand can be

considered an example of authentic brand activism, according to Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, and Kemper's [7] conceptualisation. More precisely, this research contributes to the study of the effectiveness of authentic brand activism—a field of research that, so far, has lacked investigation [7]—by analysing the impact that the development of brand trust has on consumers' brand loyalty.

Similar to previous studies on branding, these findings highlight that brand trust leads to brand loyalty [21], thus supporting the conceived hypothesis. On the contrary, our findings partially support previous research when examining the drivers of consumers' brand trust. Indeed, following a review of the literature, it was found that previous studies highlighted how brand competence, brand reputation, brand benevolence, and brand credibility lead to an increase in brand trust [21,25,26]. Our research reveals that it was impossible to state that the aforementioned constructs lead to individual brand trust development. On the contrary, it was found that different dimensions collectively contribute to the formation of brand trust, thus allowing us to identify a single driver of brand trust—'brand performance'. This finding supports the idea that brand trust summarises a combination of consumers' perceptions of a brand [18,19]. This result could be since the focus of this research was a brand characterised by authentic brand activism, in which the practical actions taken by the management and the marketing communications carried out were perceived to be consistent and in support of one another. As a result, we may expect that the different constructs making up 'brand performance' contributed to brand trust in the broader case of authentic brand activism.

6.2. Managerial Implications

From a managerial point of view, as previous research has highlighted, businesses involved in brand activism should avoid "woke washing", as this could be detrimental to the brand and its relationship with consumers [7]. It is pivotal that organisations clearly understand the need for consistency between brand communication and actual business and branding practices; this means that support towards a social and/or environmental issue should be decided from the beginning, and it should not be seen as necessary to follow consumers' trends emerging in the market. More precisely, taking this step from the beginning means that the organisation's social and/or environmental issues need to be put at the centre of the overall organisation, with the view of implementing a clear organisational culture that stresses the need for consistency between actions and communications. Moreover, both an organisation's leaders and employees need to understand and internalise the supported issue. Hence, clear internal branding and marketing strategies should be developed to ensure that brand values are communicated, understood, and internalised and that the supported issue is at the core of authentic brand activism.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this is one of the first pieces of research to study authentic brand activism empirically, it is necessary to acknowledge some limitations that may have affected the findings. First of all, this research was carried out based on a non-probabilistic sample; thus, results cannot be generalised. Therefore, future research should be carried out through probabilistic sample designs that would allow for more generalisable results. Second, the sample consisted of consumers aware of the "Liberia Terra" brand; this does not mean that they were all-consuming products of the "Liberia Terra" brand at the time of the study or prior to it. Hence, future research should investigate the perceptions of current consumers of the brand. In addition, it would also be worth researching differences in the perceptions and behaviours of consumers and non-consumers of the brand. It would then be possible for us to understand the factors that impact the consumer's choice as to whether to select these types of brands, i.e., whether the organisation's social and/or environmental issue is the main factor explaining the choice of non-consumption. Third, no data were collected to assess respondents' values in this research. Thus, future research should embed into the proposed theoretical model of the constructs related to personal

values, thereby assessing how similarities/differences between an individual's and a brand's values impact the level of brand trust and loyalty in the case of authentic brand activism. Fourth, only one driver impacts brand trust in this research, but it is impossible to state whether this construct is applicable to other forms of brand activism. Hence, future research should be carried out on other types of brand activism to understand whether brand performance is the main driver of brand trust or whether the single dimensions of competence, credibility, benevolence, and reputation impact brand trust.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, S.R. and R.S.; methodology, S.R.; software, S.R.; validation, S.R.; formal analysis, S.R.; investigation, S.R. and R.S.; resources, S.R. and R.S.; data curation, S.R.; writing—original draft preparation, S.R. and I.B.; writing—review and editing, S.R. and I.B.; visualisation, S.R., R.S., and I.B.; supervision, S.R. and R.S.; project administration, S.R. and R.S.; funding acquisition, S.R. and R.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: We thank Pietro D'Aleo, Consorzio Libera Terra Mediterraneo Cooperativa sociale ONLUS, for supporting the research. We also thank Anna Zilier and Andrea Baroni for the data collection.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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