



REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***Ecocritical narratives as drivers of green perceived external prestige and brand citizenship behaviour in tourism and hospitality**Anwar A. Almajed*, Hebatallah A. M. Ahmed², Bassam Samir Al-Romeedy³, Aya Ahmed Abdel Majeed⁴ & Abdelrahman A. A. Abdelghani²¹College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia,²Applied College, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia³Tourism Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, University of Sadat City, Egypt⁴Tourism Studies Department Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Mansoura University, Egypt; Tourism and Hospitality Department Jeddah International College, Saudi Arabia*Correspondence: a.almajed@psau.edu.sa**ABSTRACT**

Tourism and hospitality organisations increasingly narrate sustainability through websites, social media, recruitment materials, staff communication and the stories told during service encounters. Yet scholarship has rarely explained how the ecological form of those narratives enters employees' judgements about reputation and, ultimately, their willingness to act for the brand. This conceptual article develops an interdisciplinary framework connecting ecocriticism, perceived external prestige, social identity and internal branding. It defines ecocritical narratives as stories that represent tourism places as living socio-ecological relations, distribute agency beyond the firm and the tourist, acknowledge ecological limits and contested consequences, and connect claims to accountable practice. The model proposes that such narratives foster perceived environmental authenticity and credible external corroboration, which strengthen green perceived external prestige: employees' belief that outsiders respect the organisation for its environmental conduct. Prestige then supports green brand identification and moral pride, enabling brand citizenship behaviour in the form of ecological advocacy, helping, service recovery, stewardship and constructive challenge. These effects are contingent rather than automatic. Narrative–practice congruence, employee co-authorship, stakeholder voice and individual green values strengthen the pathway; symbolic storytelling, silenced trade-offs and weak employment conditions can interrupt or reverse it. Eight propositions are advanced, together with a multilevel research agenda and practical principles for narrative governance. The article contributes by bringing the critical attention of ecocriticism to the behavioural mechanisms of tourism branding and by treating employees not as channels for a finished sustainability message but as interpreters, witnesses and co-authors of an ecological brand. The framework advances SDG 8, 12, and 13 and Saudi Vision 2030 RDI priorities in sustainable tourism, responsible consumption, and environmental stewardship.

KEYWORDS: ecocriticism, environmental narratives, green perceived external prestige, brand citizenship behavior, sustainable tourism, hospitality employees, SDGs, organizational identification, greenwashing

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1. Introduction

A hotel may publish a story about restoring a coastal wetland, a tour operator may describe a community-led wildlife encounter, and a destination organisation may invite visitors to travel with a lighter footprint. Such accounts do more than advertise environmental attributes. They arrange actors, causes and responsibilities; make some losses visible while leaving others outside the frame; and give employees a vocabulary with which to explain what their organisation stands for. In tourism and hospitality, where the product is inseparable from place and is enacted in encounters between employees, residents and visitors, sustainability is therefore experienced partly as a narrative problem. The industry must not only reduce material impacts but also make ecological responsibility intelligible without turning threatened landscapes into decorative scenery or complex obligations into a marketable mood.

Research has established that corporate social responsibility and environmental policies can shape employees' attitudes and discretionary green behaviour (AlSuwaidi et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Norton et al., 2014). Internal-branding scholarship likewise shows that employees' brand understanding and commitment matter for voluntary behaviours that sustain a brand promise (Burmahn & Zeplin, 2005; Piehler, 2018). A parallel body of work demonstrates that perceived external prestige—the belief that outsiders hold one's organisation in high regard—supports organisational identification, pride and citizenship (Dutton et al., 1994; Smidts et al., 2001). These streams offer a persuasive account of why employees may work beyond their formal role. They say much less, however, about the stories through which an environmental reputation is made meaningful, questioned and carried into everyday service work.

This omission matters because not every sustainability story deserves the same behavioural response. A polished tale of carbon neutrality may omit outsourced emissions; an eco-lodge's celebration of pristine wilderness may erase residents whose livelihoods and knowledge made conservation possible; and a campaign that personifies a destination as fragile may coexist with incentives for relentless visitor growth. Conventional brand-story research is well equipped to examine coherence, emotional transportation and favourable brand image (Green & Brock, 2000; Ryu et al., 2019; van Laer et al., 2014). Ecocriticism asks a different set of questions: What relation between human and nonhuman life does the story normalise? Whose agency and vulnerability become legible? What temporal horizon and ecological limits organise the plot? What material practices authorise the claim? Bringing these questions into organisational research can distinguish a genuinely ecological narrative from an ordinary corporate success story decorated with green language.

The article therefore asks: how, and under what conditions, can ecocritical narratives contribute to employees' green perceived external prestige and brand citizenship behaviour in tourism and hospitality? It develops a conceptual model in which narrative quality affects perceived environmental authenticity and external corroboration; these judgements inform green perceived external prestige; and prestige becomes behaviour through green brand identification and moral pride. The argument is not that discourse substitutes for environmental performance. Its sharper claim is that narrative translates material practice into shared meaning, while employees' proximity to operations makes them unusually sensitive to gaps between the two. The same communicative capacity that can mobilise citizenship can consequently produce cynicism when the story demands admiration that organisational conduct has not earned.

Three contributions follow. First, the article recasts ecocriticism as a resource for analysing organisational and destination narratives without reducing it to a checklist of environmental words. Second, it introduces green perceived external prestige (GPEP) as a domain-specific reputational judgement and specifies how it differs from objective environmental reputation, general prestige and personal environmental pride. Third, it extends brand citizenship behaviour (BCB) by showing that ecological citizenship includes both supportive and challenging acts. A responsible employee may advocate for the brand, help a guest adopt a low-impact option, redesign a wasteful routine or question a campaign that overstates progress. Treating only cheerful advocacy as citizenship would miss the corrective labour on which a credible green brand depends.

2. Conceptual Approach and Scope

This is a theory-building article rather than a report of an empirical study. It integrates four bodies of peer-reviewed scholarship: literary and cultural work on ecocriticism and environmental narrative; organisational research on perceived external prestige, pride and identification; internal-branding research on employee brand

citizenship; and tourism and hospitality research on sustainability communication, corporate responsibility and employee green behaviour. The purpose is conceptual integration—clarifying constructs, identifying mechanisms and deriving propositions that can later be tested—not estimating effects from an undisclosed sample. No participants, dataset or statistical results are claimed.

The synthesis proceeds by treating narrative as both form and organisational practice. Form concerns plot, focalisation, agency, scale, temporality and the implied moral relation between visitor and place. Practice concerns who is permitted to tell the story, what operational evidence supports it, where it circulates and how employees and external audiences respond. This dual attention prevents two common reductions. The first treats sustainability narrative as a bundle of keywords whose frequency signals ecological commitment. The second treats employee response as a passive consequence of managerial communication. In the proposed model, employees interpret stories against direct knowledge of rooms, kitchens, transport, procurement, wildlife encounters and community relations. They are simultaneously audiences, evidence holders and potential narrators.

Tourism and hospitality provide the focal context because their brands are performed in real time and attached to ecologically and culturally specific places. The framework applies to hotels, resorts, attractions, airlines, tour operators, cruise firms and destination organisations, although the salience of individual mechanisms will vary. A wilderness operator, for example, faces particularly visible nonhuman consequences, whereas an urban hotel may build its ecological story around energy, food systems, labour, mobility and neighbourhood relations. The model is deliberately multilevel: narrative characteristics may originate at corporate or destination level, prestige is perceived by individuals, identification is relational, and citizenship behaviour can be observed at employee, team and property levels. Also, the framework advances SDG 8, 12, and 13 and Saudi Vision 2030 RDI priorities in sustainable tourism, responsible consumption, and environmental stewardship.

3. From Green Stories to Ecocritical Narratives

Ecocriticism studies how texts imagine the relationship between human life and the material environment and how literary form distributes value, voice and agency. The field has moved beyond a narrow concern with pastoral nature writing toward questions of climate scale, environmental justice, risk, infrastructure and the uneven exposure of communities to ecological harm (Heise, 2006; Johns-Putra, 2016; Trexler & Johns-Putra, 2011). For tourism research, its importance lies less in importing a canon than in sharpening attention to the narrative conventions through which destinations are made consumable. A beach becomes empty paradise, a desert becomes timeless silence, and wildlife becomes an encounter arranged for the visitor's self-discovery. These familiar plots can hide labour, seasonal scarcity, displacement, extraction and the agency of nonhuman beings.

An ecocritical narrative is not simply a story that mentions recycling, renewable energy or conservation. It is a narrative whose organisation unsettles the assumption that the firm and tourist are the only consequential actors. Five qualities are especially relevant. First, relational place-making represents a destination as a web of ecological and social dependencies rather than a backdrop. Second, distributed agency recognises residents, employees, ecosystems, animals, technologies and institutions as participants in outcomes. Third, scalar and temporal depth links an immediate guest experience to supply chains, cumulative impacts and future conditions. Fourth, ethical complexity acknowledges trade-offs, uncertainty and the unequal distribution of benefits and burdens. Fifth, accountable employment connects aspiration to specified action, evidence, limits and opportunities for correction.

These qualities change the narrative roles offered to employees. In a conventional corporate story, management is the heroic agent, nature is the beneficiary, and employees are supporting characters asked to deliver a predetermined promise. In an ecocritical account, employees may appear as observers of ecological conditions, custodians of shared resources, translators between operational constraints and guest expectations, and co-designers of improvement. The distinction is behavioural as well as aesthetic. A front-desk employee who can explain why linen reuse supports a documented water-stress plan is positioned differently from one required to recite a generic slogan. A guide permitted to discuss uncertainty in wildlife sightings and limits on visitor access performs a different brand from one instructed to guarantee spectacle.

Narrative research helps explain why form matters. Transportation can focus attention and emotion,

while identifiable characters and causal sequence make abstract issues easier to process and connect audiences to brands (Escalas, 2004; Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000; van Laer et al., 2014). Such effects can travel across media, although each medium supplies different imaginative cues (Green et al., 2008). Firm-originated stories can strengthen brand experience, and hotel narratives can influence brand image when their structure draws audiences into a meaningful sequence (Lundqvist et al., 2013; Ryu et al., 2019). Yet transportation is ethically neutral: an absorbing story may clarify interdependence or conceal it. Ecocritical evaluation therefore supplements persuasion research by asking whether narrative coherence has been achieved through omission. An emotionally appealing rescue plot, for example, may secure admiration while obscuring the organisation's contribution to the threat it claims to solve.

Recent sustainable-tourism scholarship has begun to treat storytelling as more than promotional packaging. Small providers' accounts reveal that sustainability is narrated through personal histories, local attachments and practical constraints, not only corporate metrics (Bertella, 2023). Digital tourism narratives can also invite participation, but social-media formats reward brevity, visual spectacle and affirmative emotion, conditions that can flatten conflict (Beach et al., 2026). Ecocritical narration does not require every public message to become a technical report. It requires a governed relationship between story and evidence: a concise post can link to transparent data, a guide can acknowledge what remains unresolved, and an employee story can identify the collective work behind an achievement rather than attributing change to a solitary visionary.

The term 'driver' in the title should thus be read as a conditional meaning-making mechanism, not as a guarantee of causation. Stories become organisational resources when audiences recognise them as plausible, employees can reconcile them with experience, and external stakeholders provide at least partial confirmation. This interpretation preserves the critical force of ecocriticism. It also avoids the managerial temptation to mine environmental humanities for a more sophisticated sales vocabulary while leaving the growth model, labour conditions and ecological impacts untouched.

4. Green Perceived External Prestige

Perceived external prestige refers to members' beliefs about how outsiders evaluate their organisation (Dutton et al., 1994; Smidts et al., 2001). It is a reflected appraisal: employees imagine the judgement of guests, residents, professional peers, regulators, environmental groups and the wider public. The perception may draw on media coverage, awards, customer comments, social-media conversations and personal encounters, but it is not identical to any objective ranking. Its importance follows from social identity theory. When membership in an organisation is socially valued and self-relevant, employees can incorporate that membership into their self-concept and experience pride in belonging (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Meta-analytic evidence also links organisational identification to favourable work attitudes and behaviour (Riketta, 2005). Green perceived external prestige narrows this judgement to environmental conduct: the employee's belief that relevant outsiders respect the organisation for how it understands and manages ecological responsibilities. The domain-specific formulation is necessary because a famous luxury hotel may enjoy high general prestige while employees judge its environmental reputation poorly. Conversely, a modest community enterprise may be locally respected for ecological care without possessing broad market visibility. GPEP is therefore neither objective performance nor simple awareness. It combines an external referent, an environmental basis of evaluation and an employee's interpretation of that evaluation.

Hospitality evidence indicates that perceived external prestige and pride can carry responsibility perceptions into organisational citizenship behaviour (Boğan & Dedeoğlu, 2020). Other organisational studies connect prestige to identification, retention and customer-oriented citizenship (Helm, 2013; Herrbach et al., 2004; Kang & Bartlett, 2013). These findings make GPEP a plausible bridge between public ecological narratives and internal conduct, but they do not establish that any positive green message will raise prestige. Employees observe backstage operations unavailable to many external audiences. A public accolade can generate pride when it matches those observations; when it does not, it may feel like proof that outsiders have been misled.

External corroboration is consequently part of the mechanism. A sustainability story gains reputational force when stakeholders who are sufficiently independent—local partners, guests, certifiers, journalists or community organisations—confirm relevant aspects of it. Corroboration need not be unanimous or celebratory. Indeed, a narrative that reports criticism and the organisation's response may be more credible than a seamless

victory story. What matters for GPEP is that employees can reasonably believe that informed outsiders recognise both the effort and its integrity. Prestige grounded only in paid promotion is structurally fragile.

5. Brand Citizenship Behaviour as Ecological Practice

Brand citizenship behaviour describes discretionary employee actions that strengthen the brand beyond formally prescribed performance. Internal-branding research associates it with helping colleagues, conscientiousness, brand endorsement, initiative, sportsmanship and participation in brand development (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al., 2009; Piehler, 2018). The idea is especially important in services because employees do not merely communicate the brand; through judgement, emotion and interaction, they become part of the experience customers interpret as the brand. A sustainability promise can therefore fail in a single conversation when an employee cannot explain it, or become credible when an employee adapts it intelligently to a guest's needs.

Environmental behaviour at work overlaps with BCB but should not be collapsed into it. Employee green behaviour includes task-related and discretionary conduct intended to reduce harm or improve environmental performance (Norton et al., 2015). Organisational citizenship behaviour for the environment includes eco-initiatives, eco-helping and eco-civic engagement (Boiral & Paillé, 2012), while green HRM and psychological green climate can support such conduct (Dumont et al., 2017; Norton et al., 2014). Hospitality research also connects green HRM with brand citizenship and links corporate responsibility to environmental citizenship in hotels (Elshaer et al., 2023; Luu, 2017). Green BCB is narrower in one respect and broader in another. It is narrower because the action must express or protect the organisation's ecological brand promise. It is broader because it includes communicative and relational work—not only conserving resources but also explaining, advocating, repairing credibility and aligning a guest experience with ecological commitments.

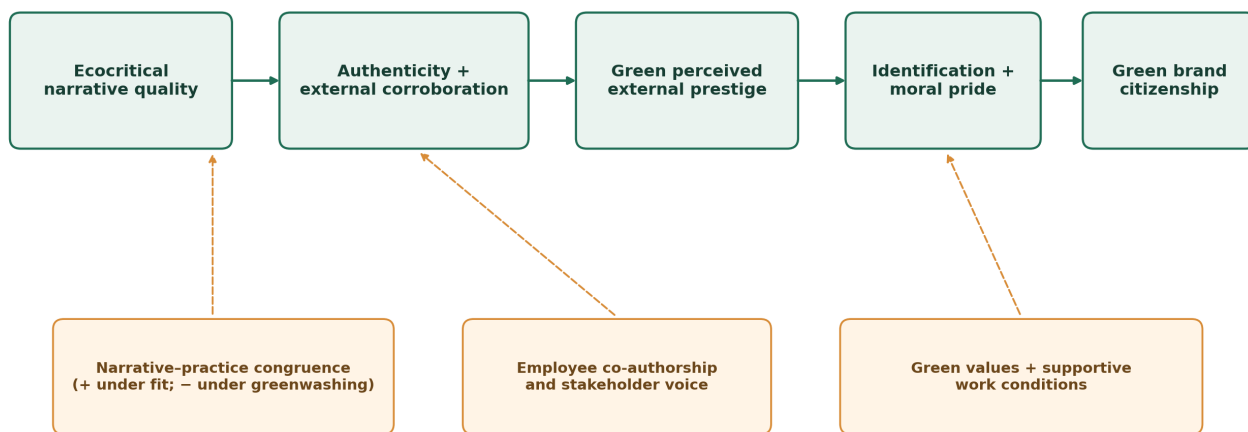
In tourism and hospitality, green BCB may take at least five forms. Ecological advocacy occurs when employees explain verified practices and invite appropriate participation without coercion. Stewardship includes careful use of energy, water, food and materials and attention to place-specific ecological limits. Eco-helping occurs when colleagues share knowledge or coordinate across departmental boundaries. Brand development includes proposing a lower-impact service, identifying a misleading claim or contributing local knowledge to a campaign. Constructive challenge occurs when an employee contests a practice or narrative that threatens ecological integrity. This final form is easily misclassified as disloyalty, yet a credible sustainability brand may depend on employees willing to prevent exaggeration and operational drift.

The distinction between citizenship and compulsory performance must remain clear. Asking housekeepers to absorb extra labour created by a poorly designed sustainability programme is not citizenship; nor is requiring unpaid emotional work to defend controversial policy. Discretionary behaviour presupposes a minimally fair employment relationship and meaningful room for judgement. In settings characterised by understaffing, precarity or punitive supervision, appeals to ecological citizenship can become a way of transferring organisational responsibility to employees. A theory that celebrates extra-role conduct without recognising this risk would reproduce the very silences an ecocritical approach is meant to expose.

6. An Integrative Framework

Figure 1 presents the proposed sequence. Ecocritical narrative quality supplies interpretive resources, but its initial effects depend on two judgements: perceived environmental authenticity and external corroboration. Together these support GPEP. Prestige then becomes personally and behaviourally relevant through green brand identification and moral pride, which enable green BCB. The model is neither a simple communication-effects chain nor a claim that employees mechanically adopt the organisation's story. At every stage, they compare narrative form with operational evidence, stakeholder response and their own values.

Proposed reputational pathway from ecological storytelling to employee citizenship



Arrows indicate theoretical relationships, not estimated causal effects.

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework.

6.1 Ecocritical Narrative Quality, Authenticity and Corroboration

Authenticity is the judgement that an organisation's environmental account expresses a durable commitment, accepts accountability and is broadly consistent with conduct. Ecocritical narrative qualities can support this judgement because they resist the familiar signals of promotional opportunism. A story that names ecological limits, explains unresolved tensions and gives residents or frontline workers narrative agency appears less controlled than one in which the firm solves an environmental problem without sacrifice. Specificity also permits verification. Dates, boundaries, operational choices and acknowledged failures create points at which employees and outsiders can compare words with practice.

This does not mean complexity is automatically persuasive. An incoherent or relentlessly negative account may make action appear futile. The relevant quality is accountable coherence: the story connects problems, responsibilities and actions without pretending that the organisation controls the entire system. Conflict can be narratively productive when it reveals competing values and the work of negotiation (Donly, 2017). In a destination facing water scarcity, for example, the narrative might connect guest use, employee routines, agricultural demand and municipal infrastructure, while explaining what the property controls and where collective action is required. Such a plot gives employees a defensible account rather than a heroic fiction. External audiences matter because prestige is, by definition, perceived to reside outside the organisation. Relational, polyphonic narratives invite stakeholder recognition by making room for situated knowledge and contestation. Community testimony, guest observation and independent assessment can then corroborate particular claims. When employees encounter this confirmation, they are more likely to infer that environmental respect is not merely an internal campaign metric. Accordingly:

Proposition 1. Ecocritical narrative quality is positively associated with employees' green perceived external prestige.

Proposition 2. Perceived environmental authenticity and credible external corroboration jointly mediate the positive relationship between ecocritical narrative quality and green perceived external prestige.

6.2 From Prestige to Identification and Moral Pride

A prestigious environmental identity offers employees positive distinctiveness: membership says something valued about who they are and the kind of work to which they contribute. Social-identity research predicts stronger identification when organisational attributes are distinctive, attractive and salient (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). Ecological prestige may be particularly potent for employees who routinely face

questions about tourism's carbon, water, waste, biodiversity and community impacts. It can replace a defensive occupational identity with a sense that one's organisation is trying, credibly, to participate in repair.

Identification is not admiration at a distance. It is a perceived overlap between self and organisational identity. Ecocritical narrative can deepen that overlap when it offers employees substantive roles and recognises their knowledge. If the narrative represents sustainability as the achievement of an abstract brand, employees may enjoy prestige without identifying with its source. If it represents a collective practice to which their work visibly contributes, prestige can become belonging. Communication quality matters here: Smidts et al. (2001) show that employee communication helps shape organisational identification alongside perceived external prestige.

Moral pride is related but distinct. It is the positive self-conscious emotion associated with participation in conduct judged worthwhile. Helm (2013) treats pride as an important pathway through which reputation affects employee outcomes, and hospitality research identifies pride in chains linking responsibility, prestige and citizenship (Boğan & Dedeoğlu, 2020). Ecocritical narrative can support authentic pride by showing the partial, collective and accountable nature of achievement. It can also discipline pride, preventing it from becoming moral licensing. Employees may be proud of measurable progress while retaining attention to remaining harm.

Proposition 3. Green perceived external prestige is positively associated with employees' green brand identification.

Proposition 4. Green brand identification and moral pride sequentially mediate the relationship between green perceived external prestige and green brand citizenship behaviour.

6.3 Translating Identification into Green Brand Citizenship

Employees who identify with an ecological brand have both motive and interpretive capacity to protect it. Motive follows from self-definition: a threat to the brand's integrity touches a valued identity. Capacity follows from narrative resources: employees possess characters, causal links and examples with which to explain the organisation's environmental choices. In a guest encounter, this may involve reframing a restricted activity not as diminished service but as protection of a breeding season; in operations, it may involve helping a colleague understand why separation of waste matters within a supplier partnership. The story turns isolated instructions into a connected purpose.

The hospitality setting also reveals why BCB cannot be reduced to compliance. Service encounters are variable, and ecological tensions often require situated judgement. A visitor may resist a lower-impact option, a supplier may undermine a sourcing commitment, or a promotional image may contradict conditions on the ground. Employees who understand the ecological plot can improvise without abandoning its ethical direction. They may advocate, educate, repair a service failure or escalate a contradiction. These acts sustain the brand precisely because they are not fully scriptable.

Proposition 5. Green brand identification is positively associated with ecological advocacy, stewardship, eco-helping, brand development and constructive challenge as dimensions of green brand citizenship behaviour.

6.4 Boundary Conditions: When the Pathway Holds or Fails

Narrative–practice congruence is the model's central boundary condition. Employees have access to mundane evidence: overflowing waste rooms, procurement decisions, energy-management failures, wildlife-disturbance complaints and the treatment of community partners. When this evidence supports the public account, narrative and practice reinforce each other. When it contradicts the account, the narrative may be interpreted as greenwashing. Greenwashing scholarship shows that selective disclosure and misleading environmental communication expose organisations to scepticism and legitimacy risk (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015; Torelli et al., 2020). For employees, incongruence is also an identity threat: the prestigious image they are asked to embody becomes difficult to reconcile with what they know.

The consequences may be nonlinear. Minor gaps that are acknowledged, explained and assigned a corrective process can signal honesty; no organisation is environmentally complete. Large or concealed gaps are

different. They can reduce perceived authenticity, weaken GPEP and turn external praise into embarrassment. Employees may withdraw discretionary effort, remain silent, or engage in constructive challenge. The last response should not be treated as a failure of citizenship. It may be the most brand-protective action available.

Proposition 6. Narrative–practice congruence strengthens the indirect effect of ecocritical narrative quality on green BCB through authenticity, GPEP, identification and pride; substantial incongruence weakens or reverses that effect.

Employee co-authorship is a second boundary condition. Participation supplies local evidence, corrects implausible claims and gives employees ownership of the interpretive frame. Co-authorship can include story circles, staff review of campaign language, channels for documenting operational contradictions, and permission for frontline employees to adapt explanations to context. It should not be confused with using employee testimonials to lend a managerial script a human face. Genuine co-authorship includes the ability to withhold endorsement, name uncertainty and influence practice.

Proposition 7. Employee co-authorship strengthens the positive relationship between ecocritical narrative quality and perceived environmental authenticity, thereby increasing the indirect effect on green brand citizenship behaviour.

Finally, the pathway varies with values and workplace conditions. Employees with strong green values may experience greater self–brand overlap when the narrative is credible, consistent with research showing that employee values shape responses to green HRM (Dumont et al., 2017). Yet value congruence can also intensify disappointment when conduct is symbolic. Employment conditions determine whether identification can be enacted. Time, training, psychological safety, discretion and supervisory support make citizenship feasible; chronic overload and retaliation make it costly. Environmental enthusiasm cannot compensate indefinitely for poor work design.

Proposition 8. Individual green values amplify both the positive effect of authentic GPEP and the negative effect of narrative–practice incongruence on green brand identification, while supportive work conditions strengthen the translation of identification into green BCB.

Taken together, the propositions describe a reputational pathway governed by interpretation and evidence. Ecocritical narrative changes what counts as a credible green brand story; GPEP describes employees' reading of external recognition; identification and pride make that recognition self-relevant; and work conditions determine whether it becomes action. The model also clarifies why the most visible environmental campaign may not produce the strongest citizenship. Visibility without integrity raises the stakes of contradiction.

7. Theoretical Contributions

The first contribution is to environmental humanities. Ecocriticism has usually examined literary, cinematic and cultural texts, including the representational challenges of climate change (Heise, 2006; Johns-Putra, 2016). Applying its questions to tourism organisations does not turn ecocriticism into a marketing technique. It shows that brand narratives are consequential cultural texts embedded in material systems. Hotels and destinations circulate stories about what nature is for, who belongs in a place and which futures are desirable. Employees help reproduce or revise those stories at the point where discourse meets service practice. This institutional location extends ecocritical inquiry from representation alone to the organisational conditions of narration.

The second contribution is to prestige research. General perceived external prestige cannot explain why an employee may feel proud of a hotel's design reputation but ashamed of its water use. GPEP identifies the evaluative domain and foregrounds the audiences whose judgement matters. It also adds narrative antecedents to a literature often concerned with downstream outcomes. The framework specifies that prestige is not generated directly by communication volume or positive tone. It arises through an employee's inference that a credible ecological story is recognised by informed outsiders.

The third contribution is to internal branding. Classic BCB models emphasise consistent brand delivery, helping and advocacy. An ecologically credible brand, however, sometimes requires employees to disrupt consistency—to question a claim, reveal an operational contradiction or resist a guest practice. By including constructive challenge, the framework distinguishes loyalty to brand integrity from obedience to current messaging. It aligns brand citizenship with environmental citizenship, in which participation includes deliberation and accountability rather than simple compliance.

The fourth contribution is to sustainable-tourism research. Studies have linked responsibility perceptions to employee green behaviour, customer commitment and hospitality brand equity (AlSuwaidi et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2018; Martínez & Nishiyama, 2019; Martínez et al., 2013; Mohammed & Al-Swidi, 2021). The proposed model connects these outcomes through a mechanism attentive to tourism's dependence on stories of place. It explains why the same environmental practice may produce different employee responses depending on how it is narrated, whose voice authorises it and whether outsiders' recognition feels deserved.

8. Implications for Tourism and Hospitality Practice

Managers should begin with narrative governance rather than a campaign. Governance means deciding who can contribute evidence, challenge a claim and approve environmental language. A cross-functional group should include operations, frontline staff, sustainability specialists and, where relevant, community or conservation partners. Its first task is to map every major story claim to a practice owner, boundary, indicator and review date. The resulting evidence register need not appear in every public message, but it must be available to employees expected to represent the claim.

Second, organisations should replace the generic green hero plot with place-based relational accounts. A useful story answers five questions: what ecological relation is at stake; who and what are affected; what the organisation controls; what remains dependent on partners or policy; and what employees and guests can meaningfully do. The approach permits emotion and memorable characters, but it resists making landscape or wildlife a passive reward for consumption. It also prevents token references to local communities by specifying their knowledge, authority and share in benefits.

Third, employees should be trained as interpreters, not as reciters. Training can combine a short narrative spine with operational evidence, likely guest questions, limits of the claim and escalation routes. Role-play should include sceptical and ethically difficult encounters: a guest challenges the carbon claim; a promised local product is unavailable; a colleague notices waste created by an event; a guide sees behaviour that threatens wildlife. The objective is not a perfect script but confident, accurate judgement. Employees should be able to say what is known, what is improving and what is not yet solved.

Fourth, organisations should monitor GPEP as a diagnostic rather than a vanity measure. A short employee instrument can ask whether informed outsiders respect the organisation's environmental conduct, whether external recognition appears deserved and whether staff feel comfortable explaining the basis of that recognition. Results should be compared across departments and employment groups. A wide gap between communications staff and operational teams may indicate that the public narrative is travelling further than the practice.

Fifth, citizenship needs resources. If a hotel invites employees to redesign waste routines, schedules must include time for improvement work; if guides are expected to enforce ecological limits, supervisors must support them when guests object. Recognition systems should reward eco-helping and constructive challenge as well as public advocacy. Otherwise, the organisation signals that visible enthusiasm matters more than difficult operational care.

Finally, silence and correction should be treated as reputational assets. Pausing a claim whose evidence has weakened, publishing a bounded correction or explaining a missed target can protect authenticity. The alternative—defending a seamless narrative at all costs—may preserve short-term appearance while damaging the employees whose citizenship the brand requires. Narrative governance is therefore a form of risk management as well as ethical communication.

9. Agenda for Empirical Research

The framework invites measurement at several levels. Ecocritical narrative quality should not be operationalised

by counting environmental terms. A coding scheme could assess relational place-making, distribution of agency, scalar and temporal depth, ethical complexity and accountable employment. Multiple trained coders could analyse corporate websites, social-media posts, recruitment materials, guest communications and staff-facing stories. Reliability tests should be paired with interpretive close reading, since a high count of stakeholder references may still conceal tokenism. Computational text analysis could support scale, but human interpretation remains necessary for focalisation, silence and irony.

GPEP requires a domain-specific scale. Researchers could adapt perceived-external-prestige items (Smidts et al., 2001) so that the referent is informed external judgement of environmental conduct. Measures should name relevant audiences rather than assuming an undifferentiated public. Perceived authenticity, external corroboration, green brand identification, moral pride and narrative–practice congruence should be tested as distinct constructs. Green BCB can draw from internal-branding scales (Piehler, 2018), employee green behaviour (Norton et al., 2015) and organisational citizenship behaviour for the environment (Boiral & Paillé, 2012), but new items are needed for ecological advocacy, narrative repair and constructive challenge.

A strong initial design would be a three-wave, multisource study across hotel properties or tour operations. At Time 1, independent coders would score organisational narratives and employees would report exposure, participation and perceived congruence. At Time 2, employees would report authenticity, audience-specific GPEP, identification and pride. At Time 3, supervisors and peers would assess green BCB, supplemented where possible by operational indicators and documented suggestions. Separating sources and times would reduce common-method inflation, while multilevel modelling would recognise employees nested within teams, properties and brands. Preregistration should classify the proposed tests as confirmatory and any additional comparisons as exploratory.

Experiments could isolate narrative form. Participants with tourism or hospitality experience might receive matched accounts of the same verified practice: a conventional heroic brand story, an ecocritical relational narrative, and a data-only statement. Manipulations should hold factual content constant while varying agency, conflict and temporal scale. Outcomes could include authenticity, expected external prestige, identification and willingness to perform specific citizenship acts. A second factor could vary narrative–practice congruence through credible operational evidence. Such designs would test whether ecocritical form adds explanatory value beyond positive environmental information.

Qualitative research is equally important. Ethnographic observation can reveal how employees negotiate the official story in briefings, service recovery, guided encounters and backstage talk. Interviews with residents and conservation partners can identify where an organisation's narrative appropriates, simplifies or genuinely shares authority. Longitudinal case studies are well suited to moments of disruption—a failed target, environmental controversy or certification loss—when the relationship among narrative, prestige and citizenship becomes visible. The key question is not simply whether employees believe the story, but how they repair, refuse or rewrite it.

Cross-cultural and occupational comparisons should examine whose external judgement matters. In some destinations, local community recognition may dominate employee prestige; in global hotel brands, professional awards and international reviews may be more salient. Frontline workers, managers, outsourced staff and seasonal employees may receive different access to narrative-making and evidence. Researchers should also test whether strong green values create a symmetrical amplification, strengthening identification under congruence but deepening moral injury under greenwashing. This possibility would explain why environmentally committed employees can become either a brand's most energetic citizens or its most forceful critics.

10. Limitations and Ethical Cautions

The framework is conceptual and awaits empirical evaluation. Its sequence may be recursive: employees' citizenship can itself generate authentic stories and external recognition, producing a feedback loop rather than a one-way chain. The constructs may also vary across national regulatory settings, labour regimes and forms of tourism. Most importantly, a focus on employee perception cannot substitute for independent assessment of ecological outcomes. High GPEP may be sincerely held and still rest on incomplete information.

There is also a risk in bringing ecocriticism into managerial discourse. Its vocabulary could be appropriated to make promotional storytelling appear more reflective while material impacts remain unchanged. The

safeguards proposed here—operational evidence, stakeholder voice, employee challenge and explicit limits—are intended to resist that outcome, but they do not eliminate it. Researchers should therefore evaluate both narrative quality and ecological performance and should ask who bears the costs of the citizenship behaviour being celebrated.

11. Conclusion

Tourism and hospitality brands do not become environmentally credible simply by telling better stories. They become credible when stories organise truthful attention: to the ecological relations that make travel possible, to the people and nonhuman lives affected by it, to the limits of organisational control and to the evidence by which promises can be judged. Ecocritical narratives matter because they can perform this organising work. They can make environmental practice intelligible, invite employees into meaningful authorship and provide outsiders with claims they can examine rather than merely admire.

The proposed framework explains how that narrative work may reach behaviour. Authenticity and external corroboration support green perceived external prestige; prestige supports identification and moral pride; and those states can enable advocacy, stewardship, helping, innovation and constructive challenge. Every link is conditional. Where narrative and practice diverge, the same visibility that might have produced pride can generate cynicism. Where employees are denied voice or time, identification cannot easily become citizenship. The practical implication is exacting but useful: a green brand should be narrated as an accountable, unfinished collective practice. Employees can then act not as performers of borrowed virtue but as knowledgeable citizens of the brand and the places on which it depends.

Table 1. Summary of Propositions

ID	Proposition
P1	Ecocritical narrative quality is positively associated with employees' green perceived external prestige.
P2	Perceived environmental authenticity and credible external corroboration jointly mediate the relationship between ecocritical narrative quality and green perceived external prestige.
P3	Green perceived external prestige is positively associated with employees' green brand identification.
P4	Green brand identification and moral pride sequentially mediate the relationship between green perceived external prestige and green brand citizenship behaviour.
P5	Green brand identification is positively associated with ecological advocacy, stewardship, eco-helping, brand development and constructive challenge.
P6	Narrative–practice congruence strengthens the proposed indirect pathway; substantial incongruence weakens or reverses it.
P7	Employee co-authorship strengthens the relationship between ecocritical narrative quality and perceived environmental authenticity.
P8	Green values amplify responses to congruence and incongruence, while supportive work conditions strengthen the translation of identification into green brand citizenship behaviour.

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