



Corporate Storytelling as a Strategic Tool for Brand Authenticity and Employee Identification in Multinational Enterprises: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract

Corporate storytelling has become an important component of contemporary corporate communication, yet existing scholarship has often examined storytelling, brand authenticity and employee identification as relatively separate phenomena. This article examines how authentic corporate storytelling can contribute to brand authenticity and organisational identification, particularly within globally dispersed firms. Drawing on a critical integrative review of the literature and selected empirical cases, the article synthesises evidence on the relationship between corporate narratives, organisational culture, employee identification and stakeholder perceptions. The analysis indicates that storytelling contributes to organisational outcomes when narratives are perceived as authentic, consistent with organisational values, culturally meaningful and supported by organisational practices. However, storytelling may undermine authenticity when corporate narratives are perceived as manufactured, inconsistent with employee experience or disconnected from organisational behaviour. This article offers an integrated framework of concepts to explain how truly realistic stories enhance brand credibility, employee association and solidarity throughout culturally heterogeneous multinational enterprises. It argues that authentic corporate stories need to demonstrate coherence between storytelling, values and conduct to ensure ongoing authenticity and employee bonding.

Keywords: Corporate storytelling, brand authenticity, employee identification, corporate communication, organisational culture

Introduction

The practice of organisational storytelling has grown to become one of the crucial ways an organisation disseminates strategic information. The essence of organisational storytelling is the sharing of one's own experiences with other people through the narration of stories (Kowalewski & Waukau-Villagomez, 2011). It is also an effective method through which an organisation communicates its story, mission, values and vision. However, unlike traditional means of corporate communication, storytelling goes a bit beyond just communicating a message; it also seeks to inspire, establish meaning and build bonds. This method has an impact on emotions, hence promoting emotional connections among stakeholders (Okafor, 2025). The highly competitive nature of the present global market has transformed the practice from simply being a marketing function to a vital management tool that is employed to promote a positive culture, foster productive leadership and engage with stakeholders. As such, more businesses have turned towards the storytelling model as a means of creating unique competitive advantages and forming lasting ties with internal and external audiences.

The noticeable and obvious trend these days is the growing emphasis on organisational authenticity. Firms should be clear and honest with all stakeholders about the way they engage



with one another. Customers, and even more importantly, employees, are now accustomed to organisations making consistent claims about what they represent instead of simply spreading promotional messages about products and services (Ofosu-Boateng & Jose, 2025). In global organisations, it can be extremely hard to remain authentic, since organisations are exposed to many different cultures and institutions. One of the strongest strategies for an organisation to demonstrate its authenticity throughout the globe without losing its credibility with stakeholders is to be clear about the organisation's narrative and adapt the message to the appropriate culture and society.

According to Bansal and Sisodial (2026), organisational identification refers to the psychological attachment an employee experiences with their organisation. Employee identification has an impact on how employees think about and behave within the workplace, and it has a great effect on their level of commitment to organisational goals. Those employees who have a stronger sense of identification with their organisations tend to portray greater engagement, organisational citizenship behaviour, innovative ideas and positive attitudes, and they also act as ambassadors for the brand. In an organisation operating globally, employees working in different parts of the world need to be united despite all cultural differences. Stories about the organisation help in this regard by enhancing shared identification, commemorating past events and communicating organisational purpose, which may lead employees to form emotional bonds with the organisation.

In the modern age, storytelling has spread across digital communication platforms, allowing firms to communicate narratives through websites, the internet (including social media), podcasts, videos and intrafirm media channels (Umoren et al., 2022). Whilst such channels enable firms to interact with key stakeholders and stimulate engagement, several key issues relating to narrative validity, consistency and cultural translation remain, particularly when stories circulate internationally among employees in multinational corporations. Most existing research has treated storytelling, brand authenticity and employee identification as distinct research topics, and the way in which authentic corporate stories can link these concepts across diverse national cultures has not been established. Through a critical review of the literature and empirical evidence, this paper addresses these shortcomings by enquiring into how corporate storytelling enhances brand authenticity and employee identification, exploring the conditions, opportunities and challenges influencing the process, and drawing these perspectives together to offer a conceptually integrated view of storytelling as a strategic tool for organisational engagement.

Materials and Methods

This paper utilises a critical integrative review to synthesise conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature regarding corporate storytelling, brand authenticity and employee identification in multinational enterprises. Literature related to our research concepts was identified through searches in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect and Emerald Insight, using variations of the keywords “corporate storytelling”, “organisational storytelling”, “brand authenticity”, “employee identification”, “organisational identity” and “multinational enterprises”. The criteria for inclusion consisted of peer-reviewed, English-language research that either examined our concepts or their respective relationships. Irrelevant documents, redundant studies and non-essential contributions were systematically excluded. Titles and abstracts were examined, followed by a full-text evaluation of the selected literature. The



literature obtained was then critically appraised, and thematic synthesis was used to identify patterns, themes, commonalities, differences, etc., to inform the conceptual claims.

Theoretical Framework and Concepts on Organisational Storytelling

The concept of organisational storytelling draws upon three interconnected theoretical underpinnings, namely Social Identity Theory, Narrative Paradigm Theory and Signalling Theory. Unlike separate explanations, these three perspectives are blended herein into an integrative explanation of how organisational narratives have the capacity to affect the sense of authenticity, brand authenticity and employee identification. Social Identity Theory accounts for the way a story makes a person feel part of something, and it can be used to enhance employees' identification with organisational identity. Narrative Paradigm Theory deals with the way people make sense of, and ultimately appraise, an organisation's story by applying the principles of coherence and verisimilitude, while Signalling Theory explains how organisations transmit what their organisational stories say about their values and purpose to stakeholder groups. Together, the theories form an architecture to guide the way organisational values can be transformed into effective narratives, through which a sense of authenticity and identification is built.

Social Identity Theory can inform how corporate storytelling benefits organisational and employee identification. It outlines that humans rely on belonging to social groups, including an organisation, as part of their self-concept. As an organisation tells its story, it communicates shared history, values, successes and aspirations so that individuals understand their membership as important in itself. Key et al. (2023) state the features that connect individuals with organisational identity. For the sustainability of the brand it promotes, Khan et al. (2025) explain how the enterprise narrative aids staff inclusivity within the organisational unit. In MNEs, storytelling can build collective symbolic meaning across dispersed working environments, thus increasing employees' identification, sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation.

Narrative Paradigm Theory describes how audiences evaluate an organisation's corporate stories. The central propositions of Narrative Paradigm Theory assert that people experience reality through stories and that stories are judged against their coherence and fidelity to human experience and values (Baldacci, 2025). This implies that organisations can use storytelling to enhance their perceived legitimacy, since storytelling has great potential to create a persuasive impact by linking organisational issues with human experiences and values and appealing to moral concerns. Indeed, Felix et al. (2023) place even greater importance on narrative processes in creating meaning within the organisation and enhancing engagement with stakeholders. Thus, Narrative Paradigm Theory demonstrates how people determine meaning as they read stories and assess whether corporate stories appear to be real.

Signalling Theory accounts for how corporate storytelling functions in an environment of information asymmetry by conveying organisational characteristics to different stakeholders. Following Connelly (2025), organisations use signals strategically to transmit "non-observable" traits to audiences, such as institutional values, principles of ethical responsibility or strategic intentions. Therefore, the corporate story works as a signal of what a multinational enterprise stands for around the world. A fit between narrative signals and organisational action is seen to decrease uncertainty, enhance authenticity and increase trustworthiness, upon which brand authenticity can be built (Hall et al., 2023). On the contrary, a discrepancy between the story and actual conduct leads to a signal-fidelity problem that creates doubt among investors (Korhaz &



Estima, 2022). The point above illustrates the applicability of Signalling Theory to the linkages between genuine brands and business stories.

the theories above offer an overarching insight into the processes by which corporate storytelling can improve brand authenticity and employee identification. Social Identity Theory assists in explaining stories as providing social identification and membership of organisations, whereas Narrative Paradigm Theory helps to explain stories in terms of their meaning and the assessment of their validity and credibility. Singh et al. (2025) also support the strategic benefits of organisational narratives in framing organisational relations with stakeholders. Additionally, earlier studies conclude that authenticity is a requirement in organisational communication and that coherent organisational stories within international contexts are related to stakeholder perceptions. Collectively, the theories imply that if an organisation's stories authentically communicate its values, they will encourage desirable identification and improve perceptions of the brand within international organisations.

Synthesis of Literature

Across multiple studies in the existing literature, there is general agreement that stories are effective in creating a sense of meaning for the organisation, shaping brand image and influencing stakeholders' associations; however, studies do emphasise different implications. Behery et al. (2024) explain how the concepts they introduce concerning leadership storytelling affect the strengthening of the employer brand by creating meaning in relation to organisational values and identity. Suryana (2024) relates stories to a better brand image because stories allow the organisation to establish strong brand meanings and brand recall. The studies involved in the discussion all examine leadership or marketing stories and do not address whether employees' internal perceptions and the external portrayal of the brand can be enhanced simultaneously; however, their evidence supports the effectiveness of stories.

Several writers emphasise authenticity and how it is key to an effective organisational narrative. Johansen and Gregersen (2024) demonstrate that authenticity in organisational visual identity is fundamental to strategic communication, with visual portrayals critically appraised against organisational reality by relevant audiences. Likewise, Tariq (2024) claims that credible organisational branding hinges on authentic narratives. To communicate stories credibly, organisational narratives need to align with organisational values. These streams of analysis converge in defining not just attractive communicative acts but also a judgement based on consistency and apparent truthfulness. The studies completed so far, however, seem more prone to analysing authentic communication than to explaining how a particular authentic account affects an employee's level of identification, specifically where multinational corporations are concerned.

An examination of existing research on organisational identity shows storytelling as a powerful tool for providing legitimacy to organisational identities with an institutional dimension within firms (Velyka & Birillo, 2024; Ramos et al., 2024). The research shows how, while identifying a singular form to describe the company, many acquisitions involving multinational companies cannot be universally sustained across diverse global emerging and developed environments. Therefore, the main challenge for storytelling strategies is to bridge the gap between a widely acclaimed narrative and local contextual specificity. However, these studies do not specify how storytelling may mediate this balance by giving organisational values meaning for employees and stakeholders. This point seems to have much greater relevance to Social Identity



Theory, Narrative Paradigm Theory and Signalling Theory, which combine to establish a link between identification, narrative credibility and the transmission of organisational values.

The body of research as seen above, although favouring storytelling, presents a fragmented view. Islami et al. (2024) discuss a comprehensive process of strategic branding to enhance the market position and growth of businesses, while Arceneaux (2024) establishes how stories generate value and transmit meanings globally. The two studies support Signalling Theory by demonstrating the communicative abilities of stories to convey the qualities of an organisation, but they are limited in explaining the journey from “signal” to “authenticity” and its effects on employee identification. Thus, a gap in combining the internal and external implications of corporate storytelling within MNCs (multinational companies) continues to remain. The present review therefore suggests that truthful corporate storytelling connects meaning, brand authenticity, credibility and employee identity by linking existing perspectives through an integrated relationship within varying multinational contexts.

Storytelling, Brand Authenticity and Employee Identification

Storytelling is increasingly employed by organisations as a key strategic communication device through which they build and reinforce brand authenticity for both their internal and external stakeholders (Stray & Jacobsson, 2025). Authentic storytelling in an organisational context goes beyond advertising, as it is built through genuine stories and representations that tell us about organisations’ histories, values, achievements, visions and the rest. These authentic organisational stories create a bridge between employees and their organisation because they provide an opportunity to establish an emotional connection that can increase trust and credibility in organisational operations. This is because they aid stakeholders in interpreting organisational reality and assessing whether an organisation’s operations comply with its mission, purpose and moral values. The telling of consistent and authentic organisational stories places an organisation in a strong position within the more competitive and global business arena, giving it a way to reaffirm its integrity, differentiate itself from the competition and create meaningful, lasting relationships with all audiences (Lal, 2024).

Employee identification can be increased when organisational storytelling assists employees in comprehending, admiring and internalising the company’s vision, mission and underlying values (Zimand-Sheiner, 2026). Organisational stories, such as stories of employee achievement, managerial stories, stories regarding employee contributions or organisation-wide struggles, may strengthen social ties by allowing employees to understand the part they play within the corporation and hence consider themselves members of the organisation. This inspires them to maintain corporate aims, pledge their commitment to the organisation and engage in organisationally beneficial conduct (Chinki et al., 2026). Within multinational corporations, stories serve as a means of connecting across borders and cultural gaps by promoting shared principles, fostering company traditions, promoting knowledge transfer and encouraging cooperation among workers belonging to diverse countries and cultures.

Storytelling and its relationship with brand authenticity, brand identification and organisational identification constitute a virtuous and interconnected relationship, making storytelling a strategic asset for global corporations. Authentic organisational stories provide the context that can build trust in the leadership team and enable employees to translate the organisation’s values into action. This allows organisations to influence culture and develop their brand, since employees are the ultimate face of the organisation (Fluhrer, 2026). The ability to



transform employees into highly motivated brand ambassadors is the critical element. Storytelling offers opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders by building employee commitment, strengthening brand authenticity, fostering trust, building confidence among external and internal audiences and eventually building a competitive advantage for any given organisation in the globalising market (Zhang, 2026).

Empirical Findings on Storytelling, Brand Authenticity and Employee Identification

Most researchers, however, have demonstrated that organisations have benefited from storytelling through improvements in brand authenticity, primarily through the development of positive employee perceptions of their organisation's credibility, honesty and reliability. Findings from Stefanova et al. (2025), McCaroll (2025), and Rao and Vohra (2026) have shown positive effects of organisational storytelling on the enhancement of brand authenticity by fostering positive stakeholder cognitions regarding the organisation's credibility, honesty and trustworthiness. A study conducted by Hou (2025) in marketing and corporate communication has illustrated that organisations that practise authentic storytelling are more effective in developing deep emotional bonds with customers and fostering desirable outcomes such as enhanced brand loyalty, positive word of mouth and greater corporate reputation. For instance, narratives that emphasise corporate origins and history, corporate ethics, corporate and employee social responsibilities, and customer experiences contribute more effectively to stakeholders' perceived authenticity than traditional communication strategies. Therefore, the use of storytelling represents an organisationally created and sustainable resource for developing competitive advantages in contemporary competitive and globalising business contexts.

Findings from Kaur et al. (2026) suggest that storytelling can improve employee identification by increasing emotional commitment and engagement with the organisation, as well as employee commitment to the organisation. Empirical evidence suggests that, in multinational corporations, employees who regularly read authentic organisational stories have higher levels of conformity to organisational values, show higher job satisfaction and are willing to provide additional discretionary work performance for the organisation (Hepworth, 2025). Research suggests that leadership storytelling facilitates understanding of the organisational vision by increasing employee collaboration, knowledge sharing and the exchange of innovation, regardless of organisational culture and functional departments (Sandham, 2025). Internal storytelling has also been found to lead to higher organisational citizenship behaviour, employee advocacy and employee ownership of the organisation (Gaur et al., 2026).

The interdependence of storytelling, brand authenticity and employee identification affects organisational performance and stakeholder relationships (Yakimov, 2026). Comparative studies across diverse industry sectors suggest that firms leveraging storytelling in branding, leadership communication and employee engagement communication show significantly stronger employee loyalty, more trusting customers and a better reputation than companies that traditionally utilise communication techniques. E-storytelling also proves to be a powerful tool for involving geographically diverse workforces and international audiences by leveraging interactive stories through various media (Virgolino et al., 2026). Based on this collective research evidence, it can be inferred that storytelling is a strategically multidimensional capacity that simultaneously boosts authentic branding, strengthens employee identification and improves long-term competitive advantage in global firms (Chetioui et al., 2026).



Storytelling Practice: The Cases of Global Organisations

Enterprises such as Apple have demonstrated the ability to boost brand authenticity and increase employees' identification with the company by using stories of invention, creativity and simplicity (Junaedi et al., 2026). The organisation, always eager to articulate its stories of entrepreneurial origins, product development processes and the impact that its products have had on the lives of consumers, has built a unique organisational identity. This process motivated employee commitment to excellence and helped customers trust the firm's consistent brand claims. Therefore, it assisted Apple in achieving loyalty from both employees and consumers, and thus a strong international reputation.

A different perspective on Nike's narrative engagement is the use of compelling storytelling that honours determination, inclusion and excellence. Nike has created inspirational advertising by depicting the stories of individuals, including employees and professional athletes, overcoming challenges and celebrating triumphs, which, in turn, strengthens employees' and consumers' connections with corporate values (Yonel, 2026). This approach allows employees and external stakeholders to build an emotional bond, identify the company with a meaningful purpose and commit to the achievement of organisational targets. Evidence has shown that employees and stakeholders across various cultural backgrounds will remain connected and engaged if these real stories are used (Du Plessis, 2025).

The Risks and Potential of Storytelling in International Corporations

Within the context of a multinational organisation, there are many different challenges associated with using storytelling in management as a communication strategy for its activities across culturally varied and dispersed organisations. Differences in language, values, norms and communication approaches can result in diverse interpretations of organisational stories in different locations (Setiana et al., 2026). Inconsistencies between organisational stories and practices lead to a lack of brand authenticity and trust, as well as employee scepticism. The digital era, which facilitates information transmission through the internet, also raises the possibility of rumours, reputational loss and public questioning of an organisation's authenticity when stories are unverified. Nevertheless, in the wake of such circumstances, storytelling provides outstanding opportunities to reinforce workplace culture, employee involvement and brand honesty for international organisations (Soliman et al., 2026). The development of technologies relating to digital communication provides an outlet through which organisations can spread engaging stories, as the method is supported by social networks, company websites, podcasts, films and internal communication channels. This makes it possible for an organisation to reach a wide range of stakeholders more efficiently and effectively. In addition, storytelling has likewise developed as a process that can be used to improve knowledge sharing, encourage teamwork among employees spread far and wide, and reinforce brand values by creating common experiences regardless of variations relating to country and tradition, thereby boosting stronger intra-organisational commitment and connections with clients (Rautrao & Kumar, 2026).

To best leverage these opportunities, organisations should incorporate storytelling within their communication and management systems and their internal branding, provided their narratives are truly consistent with organisational values and behaviours. Empowering employees to share stories from their own experiences may also create authenticity and enhance their sense of affiliation with and identity within the company. Ultimately, consistent assessment of implemented stories, using employee feedback or quantitative performance measures, helps



organisations respond and adjust communications accordingly. In short, authentic, pluralistic and cross-culturally sensitive stories offer great potential for building a long-lasting, sustainable competitive advantage for global companies (Raj & Manjusha, 2026).

Strategic Approach and Upcoming Developments for Organisational Storytelling

Corporate organisations must prepare their storytelling methodology by considering their mission, vision, values, goals, objectives and the longevity of the firm, which are prerequisites for enhancing organisational communication with their relevant audiences. A strategic framework and future directions for corporate storytelling, involving the development of a proper storytelling strategy according to the mission, vision, values, objectives and long-term plans of the company, are fundamental requirements for companies that want to improve their communication with stakeholders (Tyagi & Tyagi, 2026). Storytelling should focus on how organisations act rather than on their long-term desires to maintain alignment between brand messages and the reality experienced by customers. Top management should act as brand narrators who provide meaningful stories capable of inspiring confidence, enhancing self-confidence, creating engagement, etc. Likewise, organisations should implement organised storytelling processes involving internal and external communication and branding so that employees feel connected to the brand across any region of the world.

Another aspect of a sound strategic framework should promote employee contributions to the development and dissemination of organisational stories because stories originating from employees are often more persuasive and foster greater engagement among internal and external parties. Dave et al. (2025) submit that organisations need to adopt digital channels such as social media, intranets, podcasts and multimedia channels to spread authentic stories ubiquitously across distributed geographical locations. Storytelling projects need to be tracked consistently by collecting feedback from employees, understanding external stakeholder perspectives and analysing various performance indices to gauge their success rates and identify areas for improvement.

Future studies need to further analyse the growing and changing role of storytelling in increasingly digital and multicultural workplace settings (Kakade et al., 2025). Further studies should examine how artificial intelligence, immersive technology and digital media affect the performance of stories, brand authenticity and employees' identification with a particular firm across a range of sectors and cultural environments. A comparative analysis of organisations in developed and developing countries would be a beneficial step towards gaining deeper knowledge of storytelling practices and outcomes, which are context-dependent. The implications would then provide practical and theoretically based guidance for global companies to use more suitable, interactive and inclusive corporate storytelling practices in the future.

Conclusion

The review of the literature concludes by suggesting that, beyond simply transmitting information, organisational storytelling is unique in how it shapes organisational meaning, beliefs about authenticity, and both employee and stakeholder relations. The underlying theories show and further illustrate these connections: Narrative Paradigm Theory describes audience members' evaluation of narratives as they search for credibility and consistency in the corporate narrative; Signalling Theory provides insight into how corporate narratives convey the values and intentions of the organisation; and Social Identity Theory provides a perspective on how meaning-creating stories positively influence employees' sense of identification. In bringing these ideas together, it



is posited that genuine corporate storytelling acts as a linking process through which authentic business values are converted into convincing stories to enhance perceived brand authenticity and employee identification. Of greatest interest, this would perhaps be to firms with diverse workforces, such as multinational organisations, where the story should have a consistent strategic message but a relevant contextual impact. Companies should thus endeavour to relate their corporate stories to the real practices, values and experiences of their employee base.

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None.
