Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

RJAH

https://doi.org/10.58256/kvhms242

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics and Criticism*

Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz university's digital environmental Sustainability Messaging: A multimodal discourse analysis of it, innovation, and eco-credibility

Anwar Hammad Al-Rashidi[1]*, Nisar Ahmad Koka[2], Hassan Al_Wahshat[3] & Khaled Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim[1]

[1]Department of Psychology, College of Education, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
[2]Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
[3]Department of Management Information Systems, Faculty of Business, Ajloun National University, Jordan
*Correspondence: a.alrashidi@psau.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

This article examines how Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) constructs environmental sustainability as a digital, institutional, and credible public message. It applies multimodal discourse analysis to a desk-based corpus of official webpages and news items dealing with the Green University initiative, Vision 2030 initiatives, research and innovation, digital transformation, information-technology governance, SDG and ESG coordination, and public ranking narratives. The analysis asks how verbal claims, numbers, visual identity cues, interface design, national-policy references, and platform affordances combine to present the university as environmentally responsible and technologically modern. The article argues that PSAU's digital sustainability discourse is organized around three reinforcing modes: national alignment, operational measurability, and innovation-led transformation. These modes strengthen eco-credibility when they connect environmental claims to governance structures, quantifiable indicators, and stakeholder participation. At the same time, the analysis identifies risks that are common in institutional sustainability communication, including fragmentation across webpages, limited methodological explanation for some environmental metrics, and the need for more accessible longitudinal data. The article concludes by proposing a credibility-centered communication model for Saudi higher education institutions: claim with evidence, show governance, disclose measurement methods, connect digital transformation to environmental outcomes, and invite stakeholder dialogue.

KEYWORDS: multimodal discourse analysis, sustainability communication, eco-credibility, digital transformation, green university, Saudi Vision 2030, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University

Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

Volume 7, Issue 3, 2026

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 08 **June 2026**

Accepted: 30 **June 2026**

Published: 08 **July 2026**

HOW TO CITE

Al-Rashidi, A. H., Koka, N. A., Al_Wahshat, H., & Ibrahim, K. A. A.-A. (2026). Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz university's digital environmental Sustainability Messaging: A multimodal discourse analysis of it, innovation, and eco-credibility. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 7(3). https://doi.org/10.58256/kvhms242

Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global, an imprint of Royallite Publishers Limited

1. Introduction

Universities increasingly communicate sustainability not only through annual reports or policy documents but also through websites, portals, news pages, rankings announcements, social media, mobile applications, learning-management systems, and other digital interfaces. These channels do more than transmit information. They organize public attention, display institutional priorities, and teach audiences what counts as evidence of responsible environmental action. In the case of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, sustainability messaging appears at the intersection of environmental action, digital transformation, innovation, research, student engagement, national strategy, and global ranking systems. The university is therefore a useful case for examining how a public higher education institution turns environmental sustainability into a digital discourse of credibility. Beyond institutional communication, digital transformation in higher education also encompasses digitally supported teaching and collaborative learning practices, with project-based and digital literacy approaches strengthening students' academic engagement and communication skills (Shahzad, Panhawar, & Ansari, 2025).

The title of this article deliberately combines four terms that are sometimes treated separately: digital messaging, environmental sustainability, multimodality, and eco-credibility. Digital messaging refers to the way sustainability is shaped by web architecture, searchability, platform links, bilingual navigation, social sharing icons, chatbot presence, mobile app references, and institutional news formats. Environmental sustainability refers to practices and commitments such as afforestation, green spaces, energy rationalization, resource efficiency, recycling, environmental research, and SDG-focused initiatives. Multimodal discourse analysis refers to the study of how meanings are made through language, image, layout, numerical representation, hyperlinks, and user interaction. Eco-credibility refers to the degree to which environmental claims appear trustworthy, verifiable, proportionate, and accountable.

In Saudi higher education, institutional sustainability communication is also shaped by national transformation. Saudi Vision 2030, the Saudi Green Initiative, the Quality of Life Program, digital government development, and international university benchmarking create a public environment in which universities must demonstrate both ecological responsibility and operational modernization. PSAU's official digital discourse links its Green University initiative to the Saudi Green Initiative, describes the integration of sustainability into curricula and student activities, highlights digital transformation projects such as enterprise architecture and data management, and foregrounds SDG and ESG governance mechanisms. The university's messaging thus suggests that sustainability is not an isolated environmental program but an institutional identity linked to strategy, technology, research, and public service.

The central question of this article is: how does PSAU's official digital communication construct environmental sustainability as credible, innovative, and institutionally accountable? A secondary question asks what tensions remain in that construction. Credibility is not produced by positive vocabulary alone. A university can repeatedly use words such as green, sustainable, innovative, and responsible without demonstrating impact. Conversely, a message that includes numbers, governance structures, visible partnerships, and specific examples can make environmental action more persuasive. The task of multimodal discourse analysis is to examine not only what is said but how different modes support, amplify, or weaken the claim.

The article is not an audit of the university's actual environmental performance. It is a discourse analysis of the official digital representation of such performance. This distinction matters. A discourse analysis cannot verify carbon calculations or measure campus biodiversity. It can, however, show how claims are framed, how evidence is selected, how institutional authority is displayed, how audiences are positioned, and how digital platforms organize trust. The article therefore treats PSAU's public digital material as a set of communicative artifacts and asks how those artifacts make sustainability meaningful to students, faculty, staff, policymakers, local communities, ranking bodies, and international partners.

2. Institutional and National Context

PSAU's institutional self-description provides the first layer of sustainability messaging. The university's vision presents it as distinguished in education, competitive in scientific research supporting the knowledge economy, and active in partnerships and social responsibility. Its mission emphasizes excellent education, innovative scientific research, a stimulating academic environment, outstanding human and technological resources,

effective strategic partnerships, and a supportive administrative system. These elements matter because they pre-position sustainability as part of a broader institutional identity: a university that educates, researches, partners, modernizes, and serves society. Environmental sustainability can then be narrated as a natural extension of social responsibility rather than as a separate public-relations theme.

The strategic plan strengthens this connection by organizing institutional development around academic quality, scientific research and innovation, community service, digital transformation, and a stimulating educational and research environment. Sustainability enters this plan both directly and indirectly. It appears directly where the university describes community service and sustainable local development, and indirectly through the priority given to digital transformation, student empowerment, research excellence, partnerships, financial sustainability, and community responsibility. The discourse is therefore systemic: the university's environmental message is credible only if it is embedded in governance, teaching, research, facilities, IT, and community engagement rather than confined to symbolic planting campaigns.

Nationally, the Saudi Green Initiative offers a powerful legitimating frame. The initiative organizes climate action around emissions reduction, afforestation and land regeneration, and land and sea protection. For a university located in Al-Kharj and serving surrounding communities, afforestation and vegetation cover have obvious symbolic and practical relevance. When PSAU's Green University page describes seedlings, trees, green-space expansion, oxygen production, carbon dioxide absorption, and quality-of-life benefits, the message aligns local campus action with a national environmental story. The discourse thus moves from the scale of the campus to the scale of the Kingdom, allowing local planting and campus improvement to appear as contributions to a larger national transformation.

The SDGs provide a second legitimating frame. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda positions the seventeen goals as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet. PSAU's digital corpus repeatedly connects sustainability to education, research, partnerships, community engagement, and ranking systems. This is important because the SDGs prevent environmental sustainability from being reduced to trees alone. In higher education, sustainability also includes quality education, gender equality, health and well-being, innovation, responsible consumption, climate action, governance, and partnerships. PSAU's SDG and ESG Strategy and Implementation Unit is therefore a major discursive resource because it presents sustainability as a university-wide coordination and accountability challenge.

The third context is digital government and digital transformation. The university's official web environment includes government-verification cues, HTTPS security language, bilingual navigation, share functions, platform links, mobile app references, and visible maintenance by the General Administration of Information Technology. These features may appear mundane, but they are part of the multimodal construction of trust. A sustainability claim that appears on an official, secure, well-maintained, searchable, and institutionally governed website carries a different credibility status from the same claim appearing as an isolated poster. The digital setting itself becomes part of the message.

3. Theoretical Framework: Multimodality, Sustainability Discourse, and Eco-Credibility

Multimodal discourse analysis begins from the premise that meaning is not made by words alone. Following social semiotic approaches, a webpage can be read as an arrangement of modes: written language, images, color, layout, icons, headings, hyperlinks, numerical data, menus, document structures, and interactive affordances. A sustainability webpage that includes an official banner, a campus image, a headline, numerical indicators, share icons, related links, and a chatbot does not simply report facts. It constructs a relationship between institution and audience. The viewer is invited to recognize the university as official, modern, responsive, and aligned with national and global goals.

Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar is useful because it asks how representational, interactive, and compositional meanings work together. Representational meaning concerns what is depicted or described: trees, campuses, students, laboratories, digital platforms, rankings, or governance units. Interactive meaning concerns how the audience is addressed: as students, beneficiaries, partners, citizens, researchers, or global observers. Compositional meaning concerns arrangement: which claims appear at the top of a page, which links support them, which numbers are highlighted, and how institutional logos or national symbols frame interpretation. PSAU's sustainability discourse can be understood through these three dimensions.

Critical discourse analysis adds a further question: what social work does the discourse perform? Sustainability language can legitimate institutional authority, attract students, support rankings, demonstrate compliance, strengthen community relationships, and align the university with national development. This does not make the discourse false. It means that sustainability communication is strategic as well as informational. The analytic task is to show how a university's green claims are connected to power, reputation, public accountability, and the politics of institutional transformation.

Eco-credibility is the key evaluative concept in this article. It refers to the perceived trustworthiness of environmental messaging. Credibility depends on several conditions: specificity, measurability, relevance, transparency, consistency, governance, and openness to scrutiny. A claim such as 'we support sustainability' is weak because it is broad and difficult to test. A claim such as 'green spaces expanded from 88,000 square meters to 112,000 square meters and 1,085 new trees were planted in the second phase' is stronger because it includes quantities, time, and material referents. Yet even quantified claims require methodological explanation. How were areas measured? How were carbon effects calculated? What is the maintenance plan? Eco-credibility is therefore not created by numbers alone but by numbers embedded in accountable reporting.

The concept of greenwashing is relevant as a caution. Greenwashing occurs when environmental claims exaggerate, obscure, distract, or misrepresent actual performance. In university communication, the risk is often subtler than in consumer advertising. It may appear as selective disclosure, disconnected success stories, visually attractive but data-light webpages, or claims that emphasize symbolic actions while neglecting energy, water, procurement, transport, waste, or emissions baselines. A critical analysis of PSAU's messaging must therefore identify both credibility strengths and potential weaknesses. The aim is not to accuse but to strengthen the communicative integrity of sustainability discourse.

4. Methodology and Corpus

The study uses qualitative multimodal discourse analysis. The corpus consists of publicly accessible official digital materials produced by PSAU and closely related institutional channels. The main texts include the Green University page, the Vision 2030 Initiatives page, the Strategic Plan page, the Vision/Mission/Objectives page, the Research and Innovation page, the SDG and ESG Strategy and Implementation Unit page, the IT Governance and Compliance Unit page, and selected university news items on digital performance and THE Impact Rankings. These sources were chosen because they connect environmental sustainability with digital infrastructure, innovation, rankings, governance, and public credibility.

The unit of analysis is not a single sentence but a multimodal cluster. A cluster may include a heading, image marker, numerical claim, hyperlink, national-program reference, share icon, menu placement, or call to participation. For example, the Green University page combines the phrase 'Green University' with an image of the university dome, claims about seedlings and green-space area, references to the Saudi Green Initiative, and statements about quality of life. The meaning lies in the cluster rather than in any isolated component. Similarly, a digital transformation claim gains significance when it is linked to enterprise architecture, data management, e-learning statistics, IT governance, and a green technology initiative.

The analytic coding framework included six categories. The first category was verbal framing: how the university names sustainability and what adjectives it uses. The second was evidence format: whether claims use numbers, dates, units, institutional names, rankings, or measurable outcomes. The third was visual and interface framing: how logos, images, icons, layout, government-verification cues, and sharing tools position the message. The fourth was actor representation: which actors appear as responsible agents, such as university leadership, IT units, colleges, students, research teams, or national programs. The fifth was scalar alignment: how local campus action is connected to national and global sustainability agendas. The sixth was credibility risk: where claims would benefit from clearer methodology, longitudinal comparison, or third-party verification.

Table 1. Multimodal coding framework used in the article

Analytic dimension	Guiding question	PSAU-related indicator
Verbal framing	How is sustainability named and evaluated?	Green University, sustainable development, quality of life, innovation, social responsibility

Analytic dimension	Guiding question	PSAU-related indicator
Evidence format	What makes the claim verifiable?	Tree counts, square meters, rankings, digital transformation rates, e-course numbers
Interface framing	How does the webpage organize trust?	Official banner, HTTPS notice, bilingual navigation, share icons, chatbot, mobile app links
Actor representation	Who is shown as responsible?	University leadership, SESIU, IT administration, colleges, students, research teams
Scalar alignment	How are campus actions linked to larger agendas?	Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi Green Initiative, SDGs, THE Impact Rankings
Credibility risk	What remains under-explained?	Carbon calculation methods, maintenance plans, baselines, dashboard continuity

The study is interpretive rather than statistical. It does not count every occurrence of sustainability vocabulary across the entire university web domain, nor does it scrape social media posts. A publishable empirical project could extend this analysis by collecting screenshots, coding colors and images directly, comparing Arabic and English pages, interviewing communicators, and surveying stakeholder reception. The present article instead provides a structured academic manuscript that demonstrates how PSAU's publicly visible digital messaging can be analyzed as a multimodal construction of environmental credibility.

5. Findings

5.1 National alignment as a legitimating mode

The first finding is that PSAU's environmental discourse gains legitimacy through repeated alignment with national transformation. The Vision 2030 Initiatives page connects digital transformation to transparency, spending optimization, and high-quality electronic services, then lists enterprise architecture, data management, a digital transformation strategic plan, and a Green Technology Initiative. This sequence matters because it positions environmental sustainability inside the same modernization narrative as digital government, institutional efficiency, and service quality. The page does not treat sustainability as an optional ecological theme. It embeds it within the language of national reform and university performance.

The Green University page performs a similar alignment at the level of campus ecology. It states that the initiative aligns with the Saudi Green Initiative and frames tree planting as part of wider national afforestation. The rhetorical effect is scalar: local vegetation becomes a sign of national climate action. In multimodal terms, this is a compositional strategy. The campus image and quantified green-space claims are not merely local; they are placed within a national symbolic frame. The university therefore appears as a participant in a larger environmental movement rather than as an isolated campus project.

This national alignment strengthens eco-credibility because it situates PSAU's claims within recognized public programs. It also creates an accountability expectation. Once the university invokes Vision 2030 or the Saudi Green Initiative, stakeholders can reasonably expect the university to show how campus actions contribute to national targets, how progress is measured, and how the institution coordinates with relevant agencies. The same frame that legitimates the discourse therefore raises the standard of evidence. Alignment is credible when it leads to reporting; it is weaker when it remains symbolic.

5.2 Green campus as measurable environmental icon

The most concrete sustainability discourse appears on the Green University page. The initiative is described through seedlings, square meters, trees, oxygen, carbon dioxide absorption, humidity, dust reduction, and temperature reduction. This is a strong multimodal move because it turns the green campus into a measurable environmental icon. The campus is not only beautiful; it is represented as a living infrastructure that produces ecological benefits. Numbers such as 100,000 seedlings, 24,000 square meters as an initial target, 1,800 planted trees, 50,000 square meters of green spaces, and a later expansion to 112,000 square meters give the message empirical weight.

The vocabulary of the Green University page also connects environmental benefit to human well-being. It

frames green spaces as aesthetic, health-enhancing, motivational, and quality-of-life resources. This is important because sustainability communication often fails when it presents the environment as abstract. PSAU's discourse instead translates vegetation into campus experience: shade, humidity, temperature reduction, dust control, psychological well-being, and educational motivation. The audience is invited to imagine sustainability as something encountered in daily university life.

However, the same paragraph cluster also illustrates the need for methodological transparency. Claims about oxygen production, carbon dioxide absorption, and temperature reduction can be persuasive, but they would become more credible if accompanied by an explanation of calculation methods, tree species assumptions, measurement dates, and monitoring responsibilities. A university audience includes scientists, engineers, environmental researchers, and students capable of asking technical questions. The more precise the environmental claim, the more important it is to disclose how the number was produced. Eco-credibility therefore depends not only on quantification but also on the traceability of quantification.

As a multimodal object, the Green University page makes the campus itself a visual argument. Even when a viewer does not inspect every calculation, the combination of a university image, green vocabulary, quantified expansion, national alignment, and quality-of-life language produces a coherent impression. It suggests that the campus is both a learning environment and an environmental intervention. This is a productive message for a university because it shows students that sustainability is not confined to lecture content. It is present in the material organization of the campus.

5.3 IT and innovation as sustainable modernization

The second major finding is that PSAU's digital sustainability message relies heavily on the association between IT, innovation, and institutional efficiency. The Vision 2030 Initiatives page identifies enterprise architecture, data management, a digital transformation strategic plan, and a Green Technology Initiative. The IT Governance and Compliance Unit page adds another layer by emphasizing governance frameworks, compliance, technology-risk management, operational reliability, digital sustainability objectives, institutional maturity, and excellence in technical and academic services. These terms create a discourse in which sustainability is not only environmental but also administrative and technological.

This fusion of technology and sustainability is increasingly common in higher education. Digital systems can reduce paper use, improve service delivery, enable distance learning, support data-driven facilities management, facilitate research collaboration, and make sustainability reporting more transparent. PSAU's digital performance news strengthens the message by reporting a digital transformation rate of 82.85 percent, more than 4,500 e-courses, 2,200 flexible learning paths, and approximately 1,880 open educational resources. These numbers are not environmental indicators in themselves, but they show the scale of digital transformation. The eco-credibility challenge is to connect digital capacity to environmental outcomes such as resource reduction, reduced travel, efficient energy management, and accessible sustainability learning.

The university's research and innovation messaging reinforces this pattern. PSAU describes a research and innovation ecosystem aligned with national priorities in health, sustainability, energy, industry, and future economies, and it points to structures such as a Research and Development Center for Emerging and Advanced Technologies and a Technology Transfer Office. This is an important discourse move because it shifts sustainability from facilities management to knowledge production. Environmental sustainability becomes not only a campus practice but also a research agenda and innovation opportunity.

In multimodal terms, IT and innovation operate as credibility amplifiers. Environmental messaging becomes more persuasive when it is linked to systems that can monitor, coordinate, publish, and improve performance. A tree-planting announcement may be memorable, but a digital sustainability dashboard would be more accountable. A workshop may raise awareness, but an open educational repository can extend learning. A governance statement may assert responsibility, but data-management infrastructure can make responsibility visible. PSAU's digital discourse contains the ingredients of such a system; the next credibility step would be to make the environmental outputs of digital transformation more explicit.

5.4 Interface design and ambient credibility

A distinctive feature of PSAU's digital messaging is ambient credibility: the trust produced by the overall interface

environment before the reader fully evaluates the content. The official website includes a government-website notice, verification information, HTTPS security language, bilingual options, structured menus, share icons, mobile app references, and chatbot imagery. These features do not make any environmental claim true, but they frame the message as official, secure, accessible, shareable, and service-oriented. In multimodal discourse analysis, such elements are part of the communicative event.

The official banner and verification cues are especially important in a public-sector context. They place the university within the communicative norms of Saudi digital government. The reader is not encountering a private campaign microsite with uncertain authority. The message appears within an official institutional domain supported by the General Administration of Information Technology. This connection between environmental content and official platform infrastructure strengthens institutional ethos. It says, implicitly, that the university's green claims belong to the same accountable environment as its admissions, academic programs, services, and governance pages.

Share icons and social links add another layer. They position sustainability content as portable across networks. A Green University page can be circulated by students, staff, alumni, journalists, ranking evaluators, and community partners. A page that is designed for sharing invites public repetition and scrutiny. This can increase reputation, but it also increases accountability because widely circulated claims are easier to question. Digital dissemination therefore makes eco-credibility more important, not less.

Bilingual navigation also matters. PSAU communicates in Arabic and English, which means its sustainability discourse addresses local, national, and international audiences. English pages support international rankings, partnerships, and incoming students, while Arabic pages serve domestic stakeholders and local communities. A high-quality multimodal sustainability strategy should ensure that claims, numbers, images, and accessibility features remain consistent across languages. Inconsistent translation or uneven updating can weaken credibility because audiences may see different versions of institutional reality.

5.5 Eco-credibility through governance and ranking evidence

The strongest eco-credibility resource in the corpus is the establishment of the SDG and ESG Strategy and Implementation Unit. The unit is described as the university's principal mechanism for advancing, coordinating, governing, implementing, monitoring, and reporting sustainability-related initiatives across operations, teaching, research, innovation, governance, partnerships, and community engagement. This is a significant discursive move because it answers the question 'who is responsible?' A sustainability claim becomes more credible when responsibility is institutionalized rather than dispersed across disconnected events.

The unit's stated purposes also match global expectations for sustainability communication. It is presented as a body that coordinates the SDG Roadmap, integrates ESG principles, supports reporting and benchmarking, coordinates sustainability education and literacy, supports sustainable research and innovation, strengthens transparency and ethical governance, and advances partnerships. This language turns sustainability from a public-relations topic into a governance architecture. It gives PSAU a credible platform for future reporting if the unit publishes regular evidence, methods, progress updates, and performance gaps.

Ranking discourse is another important credibility resource. PSAU's university newspaper reported that the university advanced more than 250 places in the THE Impact Rankings 2026, reaching the 201-300 global band and placing among the world's top 40 universities in three SDGs. Times Higher Education's profile lists PSAU's Impact Rankings 2026 band as 201-300 and identifies strong positions in Quality Education, Gender Equality, and Partnership for the Goals. Rankings are not direct evidence of environmental performance, but they signal that an external framework has evaluated some aspects of SDG-related activity. In digital messaging, ranking evidence functions as a form of third-party validation.

At the same time, rankings should be used carefully. A university can be strong in several SDGs while still needing more detailed reporting on energy, water, waste, emissions, land use, procurement, and mobility. THE Impact Rankings reward a broad set of SDG contributions; they should not be presented as a complete environmental audit. Eco-credible messaging would therefore distinguish between 'SDG impact recognition' and 'verified environmental performance.' This distinction does not weaken the university. It strengthens trust by showing that the institution understands the limits of each evidence type.

Governance and ranking evidence work best when combined with open data. PSAU already has

elements that could support such a system: digital transformation initiatives, data management, IT governance, research capacity, SDG/ESG coordination, and official web channels. A future sustainability dashboard could connect these elements by presenting indicators, baselines, annual progress, methodologies, responsible units, and downloadable datasets. In multimodal terms, the dashboard would be a credibility genre: a digital format designed to make sustainability claims inspectable.

5.6 Tensions and credibility gaps

The analysis identifies four main tensions. The first is fragmentation. Sustainability-related claims appear across multiple pages: Green University, Vision 2030 initiatives, SDG/ESG governance, research and innovation, IT governance, digital performance news, and ranking announcements. This distribution reflects the real complexity of sustainability, but it can make the message difficult to navigate. A user looking for environmental performance may need to move across several subdomains and news pages. Fragmentation can weaken eco-credibility because evidence appears episodic rather than cumulative.

The second tension is the relationship between symbolic and systemic sustainability. Afforestation is visually powerful and locally meaningful, but environmental sustainability also includes energy, water, waste, emissions, procurement, mobility, buildings, laboratories, biodiversity, and digital infrastructure impacts. PSAU's digital corpus includes an energy-consumption rationalization claim and a Green Technology Initiative, but these areas would benefit from greater integration with the Green University narrative. A comprehensive message should show how trees, energy savings, digital efficiency, research projects, curriculum, and community engagement belong to the same sustainability system.

The third tension concerns measurement. The presence of numbers strengthens credibility, but environmental numbers vary in methodological complexity. Tree counts and green-space areas are easier to report than oxygen production, carbon absorption, or temperature reduction. Energy savings require baselines and time periods. Digital transformation rates require indicator definitions. Ranking positions require methodology awareness. A strong sustainability message should therefore place numbers beside explanatory notes, data sources, and responsible units. The goal is not to overload the reader but to make verification possible.

The fourth tension is stakeholder voice. Institutional pages speak about students, faculty, staff, research teams, and community beneficiaries, but the dominant voice remains organizational. Multimodal sustainability communication becomes more credible when it includes stakeholder testimony, student projects, faculty research explainers, facilities-team updates, community partner statements, and opportunities for feedback. Environmental credibility is social as well as technical. People believe sustainability claims more readily when they can see who participates, who benefits, who measures, and who is invited to respond.

6. Discussion

PSAU's digital environmental sustainability messaging is strongest when it links environmental claims to institutional systems. The Green University page supplies tangible ecological imagery and metrics. The Vision 2030 Initiatives page links sustainability to curriculum, student activities, research, digital transformation, and green technology. The IT Governance and Compliance Unit page provides a technical-governance language of reliability and digital sustainability. The SDG and ESG Strategy and Implementation Unit page institutionalizes responsibility for coordination and reporting. Ranking news adds external recognition. Together, these modes create a discourse of sustainability as modernization, accountability, and social contribution.

This discourse is multimodal because it is not reducible to policy statements. It is distributed across pages, headings, menu structures, logos, images, share buttons, official-domain cues, digital-service links, statistics, dates, rankings, and governance labels. The website does not simply say that PSAU is sustainable; it repeatedly positions the university as a node in national and global networks of sustainable development. The audience is invited to interpret PSAU's environmental commitments through Vision 2030, the Saudi Green Initiative, the SDGs, digital transformation, research innovation, and international benchmarking.

The analysis also shows why eco-credibility is a moving target. What counted as persuasive sustainability communication a decade ago may no longer satisfy contemporary stakeholders. General claims and attractive images are not enough. Students, researchers, ranking agencies, community partners, and public authorities increasingly expect indicators, baselines, methods, updates, accessibility, and dialogue. PSAU's digital

infrastructure gives it the capacity to meet these expectations. The key challenge is integration: turning scattered evidence into an auditable public narrative.

A critical but constructive reading therefore recognizes both achievement and opportunity. PSAU's official messaging already contains meaningful evidence: a Green University initiative with quantified expansion, digital transformation projects, research and innovation structures, sustainability activities in curricula, SDG/ESG governance, and strong impact ranking performance. The opportunity is to convert these elements into a single credibility architecture. Such an architecture would make environmental claims easier to find, compare, verify, and discuss.

7. Recommendations for Eco-Credible Digital Sustainability Messaging

First, PSAU could create a centralized sustainability communication hub that links the Green University initiative, SDG/ESG unit, research projects, student activities, energy and water indicators, waste programs, digital-transformation outcomes, and ranking evidence. The hub should not replace existing pages; it should connect them. Its purpose would be to reduce fragmentation and make the sustainability narrative navigable. A user should be able to move from a claim about green space to the relevant method, image evidence, responsible unit, annual update, and related SDG.

Second, environmental metrics should be accompanied by short methodological notes. If a page reports carbon dioxide absorption, it can add a simple explanation of calculation assumptions, species considered, tree maturity, and update frequency. If it reports energy savings, it should identify the baseline year and scope. If it reports digital transformation, it should clarify the indicator and explain how digital services contribute to resource efficiency or learning access. Methodological notes do not need to be long; they need to be present.

Third, the university could use multimodal evidence more deliberately. Before-and-after images of green-space expansion, interactive maps of planted areas, short videos with facilities engineers, student project galleries, infographic summaries, accessible alt text, and downloadable datasets would make the message more vivid and verifiable. Multimodality should not be treated as decoration. It should help audiences understand what changed, where it changed, who contributed, and how impact is measured.

Fourth, stakeholder voice should be expanded. Students can narrate recycling projects, energy-conservation challenges, design prototypes, research posters, and fieldwork. Faculty can explain the science behind environmental indicators. Facilities staff can discuss maintenance realities. Community partners can describe local benefits. The SDG and ESG Strategy and Implementation Unit can publish annual updates and invite feedback. This participatory approach would transform sustainability messaging from an institutional monologue into a public learning process.

Fifth, PSAU should distinguish carefully among evidence types. Campus metrics, SDG activities, digital transformation indicators, ranking results, research outputs, and community events are all valuable, but they prove different things. A credibility-centered discourse would label them as such: operational performance, educational integration, research contribution, digital capacity, external recognition, and community engagement. This taxonomy would reduce the risk of overclaiming and help audiences understand the full sustainability ecosystem.

8. Conclusion

Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University's digital environmental sustainability messaging presents sustainability as a convergence of green campus development, national transformation, research and innovation, IT governance, digital education, SDG/ESG coordination, and public accountability. Through multimodal discourse analysis, the article has shown that credibility is constructed not only through environmental vocabulary but also through numbers, official interfaces, governance structures, national-policy references, ranking evidence, and stakeholder positioning. PSAU's discourse is strongest when it makes sustainability specific, measurable, governed, and connected to teaching, research, and community life.

The main implication is that eco-credibility should be treated as a communication design principle. A university that wishes to be trusted must do more than announce green initiatives. It must show evidence, explain methods, connect claims across platforms, disclose progress over time, and invite scrutiny. PSAU's current digital corpus contains many of the necessary elements. Its next opportunity is to integrate them into a more transparent, interactive, and auditable sustainability communication system. Such a system would not

only improve reputation; it would also educate stakeholders in the habits of evidence-based environmental responsibility.

9. Extended Analytical Notes

A further point concerns the relationship between ecological visibility and institutional invisibility. Green spaces are easy to see, while procurement policies, water systems, energy-management contracts, and data governance are less visible. Digital sustainability communication should therefore make invisible systems visible without making the message unreadably technical. PSAU's public pages already reveal several invisible systems, such as IT governance, data management, and SDG/ESG coordination. The next step is to connect those systems to concrete environmental indicators. This would prevent the Green University narrative from being interpreted only as landscape improvement and would instead present it as part of a managed environmental system.

The role of innovation also deserves emphasis. Innovation is sometimes used as a prestige term, but in sustainability discourse it should identify the process by which universities convert research, technology, and learning into practical solutions. PSAU's references to emerging technologies, technology transfer, SDG research funding, and green technology create a foundation for this process. An eco-credible message would show examples of prototypes, patents, student projects, community applications, or facilities improvements that emerge from this innovation ecosystem. Such examples would connect the promise of innovation to tangible environmental change.

The multimodal analysis also suggests that digital environmental messaging should be designed for different levels of attention. Some users will read a full report. Others will scan a page for numbers. Others will share an infographic. Others will ask a chatbot a practical question. A credible digital strategy should support all these behaviors. It can use short summaries for scanning, detailed method notes for verification, visual maps for spatial understanding, and downloadable reports for formal evaluation. Eco-credibility grows when audiences can choose the depth of engagement they need.

Finally, credibility should be treated as cumulative. A single impressive announcement may attract attention, but trust develops across repeated updates that use consistent indicators and clear methods. If PSAU reports green-space expansion in 2026, stakeholders will later want to know the survival rate of trees, maintenance costs, water implications, biodiversity effects, and how the project influenced campus experience. A longitudinal communication model would make sustainability visible as a process rather than as a series of isolated achievements.

10. Implications for Curriculum, Research, and Digital Governance

The curriculum implication is that sustainability communication should not be separated from sustainability education. PSAU's pages already describe the integration of sustainability concepts into curricula, practical training, applied projects, and workshops. This creates a basis for using the university's own campus as a teaching case. Students could analyze the Green University initiative in environmental science, engineering, data analytics, media studies, education, and public administration courses. Such use would make communication reflexive: students would not simply receive the message but evaluate its evidence, improve its indicators, and propose new forms of public explanation.

The research implication is that PSAU can treat sustainability messaging as a knowledge-transfer issue. Research on renewable energy, water, materials, green buildings, digital systems, environmental education, and community behavior should not remain inside journals. Public-facing summaries, infographics, podcasts, and student-friendly explainers can translate research into institutional and community learning. This would connect the university's innovation identity to its green identity. It would also help audiences see that sustainability is not only a set of facilities projects but a research culture.

The digital-governance implication is that environmental communication needs data stewardship. If different units collect tree counts, energy data, course data, volunteer data, research data, and ranking evidence, the university needs agreed definitions and update cycles. Data governance is therefore part of eco-credibility. PSAU's Data Management Office and IT governance discourse can support sustainability reporting by defining owners, validation steps, storage formats, and publication procedures. This would reduce duplication and inconsistency.

The innovation implication is that communication should identify experimentation as well as success. A university can be credible when it reports pilot projects, lessons learned, and adjustments. For example, if a smart irrigation experiment reduces water use in one zone but requires redesign in another, that story is still valuable. It shows evidence-based learning. PSAU's innovation ecosystem could present sustainability as a living laboratory where prototypes are tested, improved, and sometimes revised. Such openness would fit the ethos of scientific inquiry.

The community implication is that campus sustainability can be narrated as local public value. PSAU's Green University page refers to Al-Kharj and quality of life, which creates an opening for community-oriented communication. The university can explain how campus greening, research outreach, student volunteering, and partnerships contribute to local environmental awareness. It can also invite schools, municipalities, families, and civil society organizations into sustainability events. This would make digital messaging a bridge between campus and region.

The reputational implication is that credibility and visibility should be developed together. Ranking achievements and media coverage can increase attention, but the university should guide that attention toward evidence. Each ranking announcement could link to the sustainability hub, indicator dashboard, SDG/ESG unit, and methodological notes. This would convert reputational moments into learning moments. Instead of treating rankings as the end of communication, PSAU could use them as gateways to deeper accountability.

11. Editorial and Reporting Considerations

From an editorial perspective, PSAU's environmental pages should maintain a consistent citation habit. Internal pages can cite source documents, responsible units, or measurement notes in a simple format. This would help users distinguish between a news statement, a strategic commitment, a measured indicator, and an externally validated achievement. In academic institutions, citation is not only a scholarly convention; it is a public trust practice. When sustainability communication cites its own evidence clearly, it signals that the university is applying academic standards to institutional claims.

Reporting rhythm is equally important. Many institutions publish sustainability content when an event occurs, but eco-credibility benefits from predictable cycles. PSAU could publish quarterly brief updates and one annual integrated sustainability review. The quarterly updates would keep the topic visible, while the annual review would provide cumulative indicators. This rhythm would allow stakeholders to compare progress year by year and would make the university's sustainability journey easier to follow.

A final editorial practice is to separate headline, summary, evidence, and interpretation. The headline attracts attention, the summary explains the claim, the evidence supports it, and the interpretation connects it to strategy. When these layers are mixed together, messages can sound promotional. When they are separated, they sound accountable. PSAU's digital platform can support this layered structure through expandable sections, downloadable evidence sheets, and links to governance pages.

In sum, the multimodal discourse analyzed here already contains a strong foundation: national alignment, green campus metrics, digital transformation, IT governance, research and innovation, SDG/ESG coordination, and ranking recognition. The communication task ahead is integration. A coherent digital sustainability architecture would make the university's environmental identity easier to understand, easier to verify, and easier for stakeholders to join.

These reporting practices would also help future researchers. A well-structured digital sustainability archive would allow scholars to compare messages across years, trace how indicators develop, and examine how stakeholder participation changes. In this sense, PSAU's communication system can become a research object and a research resource at the same time.

12. Concluding Synthesis for Publication Use

For publication purposes, the article can be developed into a fuller empirical study by archiving screenshots of the relevant webpages at fixed dates. This would allow the researcher to analyze color, image placement,

iconography, and page hierarchy more precisely. It would also protect the corpus from later website revisions. A multimodal study of digital communication should treat the screen as a time-bound artifact because webpages are continuously updated.

The study could also include a bilingual comparison. PSAU addresses Arabic-speaking local audiences and English-speaking international audiences, and each language may emphasize different details. Comparing Arabic and English pages would show whether sustainability claims, numbers, calls to action, and credibility cues are consistent. Such comparison would be especially useful for a university that communicates with local communities, national agencies, international partners, and ranking organizations.

Another useful extension would be reception analysis. Students, faculty, staff, and community partners could be asked how they interpret the Green University initiative, which evidence they find convincing, which claims they find unclear, and which digital features help them participate. This would move the research from textual analysis to stakeholder interpretation. Eco-credibility is ultimately tested in reception: a claim is not only designed by the institution but judged by audiences.

These possible extensions do not change the article's central finding. PSAU's digital sustainability messaging already combines environmental action, innovation, IT governance, national alignment, and SDG/ESG accountability. The scholarly task is to analyze how these elements work together, where they create trust, and how communication design can make environmental responsibility more transparent and participatory.

13. Policy Relevance

The policy relevance of the analysis lies in the connection between university communication and public environmental governance. Universities do not only implement sustainability; they help normalize what responsible sustainability looks like. When PSAU links green spaces, data management, digital transformation, research, and SDG coordination, it provides a model for how public institutions can communicate integrated reform. This matters in a national context where climate action, afforestation, quality of life, and digital government are all connected to wider transformation.

For policymakers, the article suggests that university sustainability communication should be evaluated not merely by the number of campaigns but by the quality of evidence and integration. A university with fewer but better-documented indicators may be more credible than one with many unconnected announcements. National agencies could encourage common indicator templates, shared definitions, and open reporting formats. This would help Saudi universities become comparable without erasing their local ecological differences.

For university leaders, the analysis shows that communication is not a final publicity step after sustainability work is completed. It is part of governance from the beginning. If evidence requirements are built into projects during planning, communicators can later publish accurate, specific, and well-contextualized messages. This reduces the burden of reconstructing evidence after events have passed and makes sustainability achievements easier to defend.

For researchers in applied linguistics and discourse studies, PSAU's case shows the value of combining multimodal analysis with institutional and environmental literacy. A webpage is not merely a language artifact; it is also a governance artifact, a data artifact, and a public-policy artifact. Reading such texts critically requires attention to vocabulary, layout, evidence, institutional responsibility, and audience design at the same time.

The broader conclusion is that digital environmental sustainability messaging can become a form of public pedagogy. When PSAU explains what it is doing, how it measures progress, and how stakeholders can participate, it teaches audiences how sustainability should be evaluated. This educational function is especially important for universities, whose public communication should reflect the standards of evidence and inquiry that they promote in classrooms and laboratories.

Funding:
The author extends their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the Project number (PSAU/2026/02/44770).

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