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Going Inward First: Green Brand Positioning, Environmental Knowledge, and Employee Green Behaviour—Evidence from the Sri Lankan Apparel Sector

Sugeeth S. J. Patabendige ¹, Medhani K. Balasooriya ² and Chathuri L. Senarath ^{3,*}

¹ Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya 11600, Sri Lanka; sugeeth@kln.ac.lk

² Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya 11600, Sri Lanka; medhanibalasooriya@rocketmail.com

³ Department of Commerce & Financial Management, Faculty of Commerce & Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya 11600, Sri Lanka

* Correspondence: chathu@kln.ac.lk

Abstract

Green brand research has predominantly concentrated on external customers, including the impact of green brand positioning on consumer attitudes, purchasing behaviour, and brand loyalty. However, the ultimate success of a green branding strategy may depend on employees, i.e., the internal customers, who must first understand and embrace the environmental message before delivering it to external customers. This inside-out dynamic remains empirically underexplored. The study fills this void by examining the impact of Green Brand Positioning on Employee Green Behaviour and the moderating role of Employee Environmental Knowledge in the apparel industry, which accounts for up to 10% of global carbon emissions and over 40% of Sri Lanka's export earnings. The study draws data from 300 employees, using a structured questionnaire and multiple regression with moderation analysis. The findings confirm that Green Brand Positioning positively affects Employee Green Behaviour, with Emotional Green Brand Positioning having a greater impact than Functional Green Brand Positioning. Interestingly, employee environmental knowledge did not moderate either relationship, implying that green brand positioning is a direct and universal internal behavioural driver regardless of employees' environmental knowledge. The results have important implications for senior management and policymakers aiming to foster sustainable organisational cultures by first reaching internal stakeholders.

Keywords: green brand positioning; functional green brand positioning; emotional green brand positioning; employee green behaviour; environmental knowledge; internal customer; apparel sector; Sri Lanka



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1. Introduction

Faced with increasing environmental challenges, resource scarcity, and a global imperative towards sustainable development, the way organisations design, market, and communicate their products and services has changed significantly in recent times [1]. Moreover, contemporary consumers increasingly demonstrate a heightened awareness of environmental concerns, often opting for eco-friendly products [1]. Within this context, green products and services have emerged as a direct market-facing response to

consumer demand for environmentally responsible consumption, designed to address consumers' functional needs while also reducing ecological impacts [2,3]. Over the last three decades, topics such as green branding have also attracted much traction in academic discourse [2,4,5]. Green branding signifies a company's commitment to sustainable practices by conveying environmental responsibility, eco-friendly processes, and a focus on reducing its carbon footprint. However, much of green branding research appears to have focused on external consumer penetration, with little attention on internalising such efforts first among the employees who ultimately deliver their organisation's green promise to consumers.

Green brand positioning, an essential branch of green branding strategy, is now a significant area of interest in both practice and academia. Brand positioning strategies are a set of conscious, active actions used to create unique customer impressions and make the brand stand out in the market [6–8]. Strategies of green brand positioning can be divided into two main dimensions. Functional Green Brand Positioning (FGBP), which focuses on the utilitarian ecological benefits of a brand, i.e., energy-efficiency, carbon emission reduction, and recyclability [3,9]; and Emotional Green Brand Positioning (EGBP), concentrating on symbolic advantages like the social utility of the brand, including a sense of generosity, higher self-esteem, and emotions around nature [10,11]. Hartmann et al. (2005) [4] note that brand communication that emphasises functional green attributes cannot fully motivate stakeholders unless it is augmented by emotional brand benefits. While the theoretical complexity surrounding green brand positioning is well recognised, the research agenda appears somewhat biased. For instance, Gautam and Pokhrel (2023) [7] and Ha (2021) [12] note that this field of research has evolved into two leading strands: a behavioural strand that considers consumer values and attitudes and a communication strand that considers the effects of brand-building activities on the purchasing behaviours of the consumer as the unit of analysis.

This dominant consumer-focused orientation has resulted in a critical blind spot with regard to green brand positioning, i.e., we understand much less about how green brand positioning internalises into the workforce, how it influences the attitudes, motivations, and green behaviours of the workers who are, in the most basic sense, the initial audience any brand needs to convince. Green behaviour refers to behaviours that either enhance environmental sustainability or minimise environmental damage [13]. While green behaviour is applicable to both internal customers (i.e., employees) and external customers [14], the consumer side appears to have taken precedence in extant literature, with much attention placed on how green brand signals translate into green purchase intentions and brand loyalty by external customers [15,16]. Notably, while green behaviour of employees in the workplace has become a topic of increased interest [17–20], the current research agenda appears to be predominantly focused on green HRM practices, leadership styles, and organisational culture (e.g., [21–25]), and not on how green brand positioning is internalised or embraced by employees.

It is also probable that the relative neglect of internal stakeholders in the green brand positioning literature stems from its development within the domains of consumer behaviour and marketing communications, where the natural unit of analysis is the external customer. However, as Berry (1981) [26] asserted, the first market an organisation should target is its internal market, i.e., its internal customers, who must understand and believe the brand's promise in order to deliver it to external customers. Employees who are responsible for implementing corporate policies are the primary agents of corporate values to the outside world [27]. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) [28] also suggested that employees need to “walk the talk” internally before communicating the brand values outwards. This logic in green branding means that if employees do not believe in, are not emotionally

engaged with and do not possess a positive attitude towards the organisation's green positioning, the external green brand promise may lose its meaning and become symbolic rather than substantive, which is an issue increasingly acknowledged within concepts such as greenwashing [29].

Employee Environmental Knowledge (EEK) is also likely to play a critical moderating role in this relationship. Knowledge of the environment is fundamental to explaining green behaviours, as it entails general knowledge of the facts, concepts, and relationships of the natural environment and its key ecosystems [30]. Several studies (e.g., [21,31–35]) have highlighted that environmental knowledge is a key factor shaping employees' intentions to perform pro-environmental behaviours. Theoretically, the Theory of Planned Behaviour [36] offers a useful framework for explaining this relationship by positing that environmental knowledge positively influences attitudes, reinforces subjective norms, and increases perceived behavioural control. Within green brand positioning, EEK can serve as a cognitive amplifier, enabling employees to decode, internalise, and respond to green brand signals more easily. However, our knowledge of whether EEK reinforces, undermines, or has no effect on the relationship between green brand positioning and employee green behaviour to date remains limited.

Taken together, although there is merit in an inside-out dynamic in which internalising green brand positioning becomes a critical prelude to green branding, three interrelated gaps in the literature remain unexplored. First, the literature on green brand positioning has largely focused on external responses related to consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty, with a lack of empirical studies that distinguish employees as key recipients and enactors of green positioning signals. Second, there is no known direct empirical testing of the functional and emotional green brand positioning as antecedents of employee green behaviour, thus leaving the relative efficacy of the two positioning strategies within organisations untested. Third, although employee environmental knowledge is theoretically central to the knowledge-behaviour nexus, its moderating role in the relationship between green brand positioning and employee green behaviour has not received empirical attention. This study aims to fill these three gaps by focusing on three interrelated research questions: (i) Does functional green brand positioning significantly influence employee green behaviour? (ii) Does emotional green brand positioning significantly influence employee green behaviour? (iii) Is employee environmental knowledge a moderator of either of these relationships?

The Sri Lankan apparel industry offers a fertile environment for exploring these questions. By 2021, the apparel industry in Sri Lanka had an estimated value of \$5.42 billion, accounting for more than 40% of the country's total exports [37]. The apparel industry is also estimated to contribute up to 10% of global carbon emissions, making it the second-largest industrial polluter after the oil industry. Faced with such challenges, apparel companies have invested significantly in green branding programmes and sustainable business operations, offering a rich opportunity to examine how green brand positioning influences employee behaviour. Sri Lanka, as an emerging-economy setting, can also provide insights that supplement the highly developed-market scope of existing green branding studies, where institutional pressures, resource limitations, and cultural forces can result in significantly divergent patterns of impact.

This study makes three major contributions. First, it expands the green brand positioning literature by broadening the existing consumer-focused perspective to include internal stakeholders, making employees the main unit of analysis and internal customer logic as a conceptually grounded lens for green branding studies. Second, it presents one of the first empirical tests of FGBP and EGBP as immediate antecedents of EGB, adding new evidence on the relative efficacy of functional and emotional green brand positioning

in the workforce. Third, it empirically examines the moderating effect of EEK on this relationship, yielding results with implications for the knowledge-behaviour nexus and their applicability in internal branding settings.

2. Literature Review

In line with the introduction, the literature review first examines the current outward-focused literature on green brand positioning and then examines what remains unexamined from an inside-out perspective.

2.1. Green Brand Positioning

Brand positioning, a core strategy of brand management, entails the intentional communication of specific elements of brand identity and value to the target audience [38]. Brand positioning is the process of shaping a brand's image in the minds of target consumers, emphasising its values and attributes [39]. Brands that are green or eco-friendly will be perceived as organisations that give back to the environment, which sets them apart from their competitors [4]. Without strategically defining and communicating their attributes, green brands cannot generate substantial revenue in the market; consequently, green brand positioning strategies are vital to the success of green branding initiatives [8]. Moreover, studies also confirm that green brand positioning is a strategic asset at the firm level that shapes innovation and market results [6].

Aaker (1996) [40] notes that brand value propositions can be classified into functional and emotional benefits. Building on this distinction, Hartmann et al. (2005) [4] suggested a framework for green brand positioning, distinguishing between functional and emotional attribute positioning strategies. Functional positioning is operationalised around the tangible inputs and outputs of sustainable practice, including the materials, processes and measurable performance. While emotional positioning is operationalised around the brand's affective and identity-based appeal, i.e., the narrative connection to environmental values, rather than practices. Critically, the functional positioning highlights the utilitarian ecological benefits of a green brand, such as energy efficiency, lower carbon emissions, and recyclability [3,9]. In contrast, emotional positioning emphasises symbolic benefits, particularly the brand's social utility, including feelings of generosity, enhanced self-esteem, and experiences connected to nature [10,11].

According to Hartmann et al. (2005) [4], brand communication that focuses solely on functional green attributes is unlikely to fully motivate stakeholders unless it is complemented by emotional brand benefits, as consumers place significant value on the additional emotional benefits associated with green brands when making environmentally conscious decisions. Da Luz et al. (2020) [41] also observed that companies are transitioning from traditional to green brand positioning strategies by highlighting the importance of green elements in their market offerings. Importantly, while this body of work has generated rich insights into how green positioning shapes external stakeholder perceptions, comparatively little is known about how these same positioning signals operate upon the organisation's internal stakeholders, its employees [7].

2.2. Functional Green Brand Positioning

Functional Green Brand Positioning (FGBP) primarily comprises marketing tactics that emphasise a brand's environmental performance and sustainability features. This includes the use of environmentally friendly materials, energy-efficient production processes, and a sustainable supply chain in the apparel industry. According to a study by Chen (2010) [15], the focus on tangible environmental benefits not only encourages consumer trust but also builds brand equity, as consumers respond positively to explicit, articulated environmental

claims when supported by credible, verifiable information. Chen and Chang (2013) [42] emphasise that FGBP enhances an organisation's credibility by grounding green claims in evidence-based practices. Cronin et al. (2011) [43] emphasise the practical, performance-driven nature of FGBP, noting that stakeholders are drawn to its clarity and practicality because it offers visible goals and quantifiable results.

Although the benefits of functional green branding are apparent, it has major challenges. For instance, Lyon and Maxwell (2011) [44] warn about the risks of greenwashing, in which business organisations exaggerate or even lie about their sustainability-related actions. The increasing sensitivity of consumers and employees to inconsistencies between the claims and actions can seriously harm trust and credibility. Moreover, excessive functional appeals can promote a transactional mindset among employees, in which sustainability is seen as a job requirement rather than an intrinsic value [45,46]. Therefore, there is a need to balance functional appeals with emotional positioning strategies that link sustainability to employee value and identity systems [4].

2.3. Emotional Green Brand Positioning

Emotional Green Brand Positioning engages stakeholders by appealing to their emotions, values, and aspirations, linking the brand to broader environmental and ethical principles. An essential component of emotional green brand positioning is conveying messages that appeal to stakeholders' environmental values. Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2009) [47] assert that emotional benefits, such as the feeling of contributing to environmental sustainability, tend to outweigh functional benefits in determining attitudes towards green brands. This is in line with Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez's (2006) [48] earlier argument that green marketers need to reinforce the perception of the personal benefits individuals derive from "going green" by adding stronger emotional value to green brands, rather than relying on functional claims alone. Brand storytelling is a key element of emotional green brand positioning, offering an opportunity to craft narratives that resonate strongly with stakeholders [49]. According to Lin et al. (2017) [50], incorporating green functional features with green emotional utility via positioning techniques has the potential to create a green halo effect and create a positive association between the green brand and its stakeholders.

Notably, Emotional Green Brand Positioning also faces strong critique, particularly around authenticity and consumer scepticism. Delmas and Burbano (2011) [51] studied the effects of greenwashing on consumer trust and concluded that when people believe that a brand is being deceptive in its green messages, they tend to develop negative attitudes towards the brand. A related but more overarching concept is greenwashing, seen as more systematic efforts towards deceptive messages or action on green behaviour may affect consumers and employees to lose faith not only in the products and services but also to question the sustainability commitments of organisations in general [44,51]. Greenwashing has particular implications for internal stakeholders, as employees subjected to a greenwashing narrative may not only question their own organisation's conduct, resulting in an ethical dilemma, but also become counterproductive to its efforts towards green performance and external messaging. Such possibilities highlight the critical relationships suggested in this study and indicate a need for green brand positioning that is not just communicative but also supported by verifiable organisational practice [52].

2.4. Employee Green Behaviour

Employee green behaviour (EGB) refers to all environmentally sustainable behaviours carried out by employees in the workplace. The Green Five taxonomy by Ones and Dilchert (2012) [14] classifies such action into five types: (1) conserving, i.e., reducing resource

consumption, water, energy and raw materials; (2) avoiding harm, i.e., minimising environmental harm, safe disposal and waste reduction; (3) transforming, i.e., redesigning work processes to reduce environmental impact; (4) influencing others, i.e., encouraging colleagues and organisational networks to adopt green practices; and (5) taking initiative, i.e., proactively championing environmental sustainability beyond formal job requirements. For example, within the apparel industry, such actions include turning off machines when not in use, segregating textile waste for recycling, encouraging sustainable material procurement, conducting green audits, and implementing environmental training programmes. Furthermore, Norton et al.'s (2015) [17] EGB dimensional distinction plays an important role in this research, in which they distinguished between task-related and proactive EGB. Task-related EGB encompasses environmentally responsible actions that are formally embedded in employees' job roles, such as adherence to energy-efficiency protocols or waste-management procedures. Whereas proactive EGB refers to voluntary, discretionary behaviours that employees initiate beyond the formal boundaries of their tasks. This distinction is important because task-based EGB is more likely to be elicited by compliance-based or functional cues from the organisation, while proactive EGB is more likely to be elicited by more emotional signals from the organisation, such as when its products and services are positioned as a green brand [18,53].

Interestingly, Norton et al. (2015) [17], Tang et al. (2023) [18] and Kalkan (2025) [54] define EGB as a multidimensional concept that entails dynamic interactions among personal environmental value dimensions and organisational factors, including organisational practices and external motivators. Recent research has also reinforced this idea of the multidimensionality of EGB. For instance, Zacher et al. (2023) [55] find that EGB is influenced by multiple antecedents operating at the individual, team, and organisational levels, with organisational-level signals such as branding and culture expected to play an important role. Kim et al. (2019) [56] have also noted that highly pro-environmental employees tend to become more eco-friendly at the workplace. While recent EGB studies (e.g., [21–25]) have focused on green stimuli such as HRM practices, leadership styles, or organisational culture, the question of whether green brand positioning of the organisation, which normally serves as an outward-facing signal to the consumer, can equally serve as an inward-facing stimulus towards EGB has yet to receive adequate attention.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Drawing on the literature review, Figure 1 illustrates the study's conceptual framework, followed by the hypotheses.

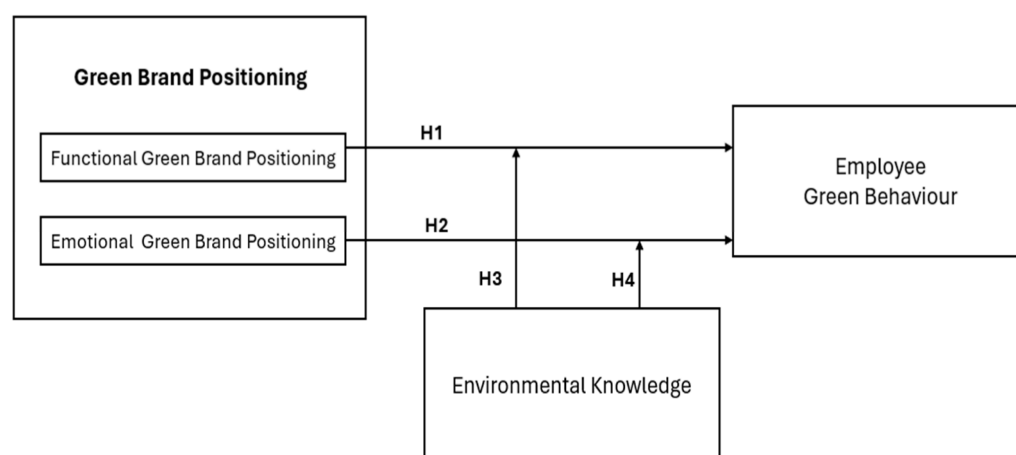


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study.

3.1. Green Brand Positioning and Employee Green Behaviour

The impact of green brand positioning on EGB can be explicated through several complementary lenses. Berry (1981) [26] highlights the notion of internal branding, explaining why an externally oriented brand signal may become personally meaningful to employees. The Theory of Planned Behaviour [36] proposes the psychological mechanism through which this internalised brand identification translates into behaviour. They include attitude towards green behaviour (indicating that green behaviour is valued and rewarded), serving as a subjective norm (indicating what behaviour is expected and approved within the organisation), and increasing perceived behavioural control (by indicating that the organisation provides the necessary resources, processes, and legitimacy to engage in green behaviour). In this way, green brand positioning can be considered an antecedent at the organisational level, internalised through the notion outlined in Berry's internal branding, and then having a behavioural impact via the proximal antecedents outlined in Ajzen's TPB. This integrated lens represents the present study's contribution because it allows it to view green brand positioning not only as informative communication but also as an internal branding signal that has the same effect on employee behaviour as any planned behaviour through attitudinal, normative, and control pathways.

3.1.1. Functional Green Brand Positioning and Employee Green Behaviour

Functional Green Brand Positioning (FGBP) involves marketing approaches in which a brand highlights its environmental performance and sustainability to attract a broad range of stakeholders, including customers and employees. By demonstrating tangible sustainability commitments such as eliminating waste, sustainable production, and energy-saving operations, FGBP conveys its commitment to reducing environmental impact. By making credible and actionable claims, FGBP not only increases organisational authenticity but also affects employee engagement, shaping their pro-environmental behaviours and fostering a stronger sense of commitment to sustainability.

As Chen and Chang (2013) [42] emphasise, FGBP improves the credibility of an organisation, as green claims are supported by evidence-based practices, employees become less sceptical of them and trust the company in its sustainability efforts. According to Afsar et al. (2016) [31], FGBP cultivates a sense of pride and responsibility among employees by emphasising their contributions to the internalisation of environmental initiatives. When employees believe that green practices are practical and effective, they are more likely to internalise the brand's sustainability goals and integrate these values into their practices and daily decisions. Employees are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behaviour when they feel their organisation is genuinely committed to sustainability [20], which is in line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which suggests that behaviour is determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control [36,57].

According to Robertson and Barling (2013) [58], functional green claims offer a framework that is structured and accessible to employees to participate in sustainability activities that are especially important in the sector, such as the apparel industry, where more concrete results can be seen in terms of improvements in textile recycling or fewer material wastes. Such tangible outcomes support the idea of employees' viability and significance in green endeavours, encouraging long-term engagement. However, the evidence for the effectiveness of Functional Green Brand Positioning is not always positive. As noted above, strong functional appeals can risk creating a rather transactional approach to sustainability among employees [45,46], and misaligned functional claims and actual organisational action can lead to perceptions of greenwashing, which in turn can decrease trust [44]. While such tensions within the FGBP literature remain unresolved, empirical evidence largely indicates a positive correlation between FGBP and EGB, supporting the first hypothesis.

H1. *Functional Green Brand Positioning has a significant positive influence on Employee Green Behaviour.*

3.1.2. Emotional Green Brand Positioning and Employee Green Behaviour

Emotional Green Brand Positioning (EGBP) engages stakeholders by appealing to their feelings, values, and aspirations and connecting the brand to broader environmental and moral principles. In contrast to functional approaches, EGBP creates a more emotional bond to sustainability, motivating employees to internalise green principles and engage in sustainability projects, often outside their official scope of duties. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) [59] suggest that brand identification with a higher-order environmental cause enables employees to become emotionally attached to the company's mission and to develop intrinsic motivation to pursue sustainable practices as a logical continuation of their professional identity.

EGBP also encourages employees to engage in green citizenship behaviours that are voluntary and sustainability-oriented, going beyond work obligations. Luu (2019) [60] highlights that employees who identify with a brand's environmental mission are more likely to support green practices, such as participating in workplace recycling or encouraging others to adopt environmentally friendly practices. Dumont et al. (2017) [22] suggest that EGBP can cultivate a culture of environmental citizenship by encouraging employees to serve as green ambassadors within and beyond the workplace. Emotional branding creates long-term loyalty by going beyond short-term goals and transactional relationships to forge lasting bonds between employees and the company's mission. When employees accept green brand values as an intrinsic rather than an extrinsic motivation, it promotes more independent, persistent, and congruent commitment [28,46].

Moreover, Emotional and Functional Green Brand Positioning complement each other, influencing employees' green behaviour and covering pragmatic and motivational aspects of sustainability engagement. Whereas functional positioning can meet employees' demands for practical, evidence-based practices, emotional positioning can foster a sense of meaning and self-identification with green values [60]. Given that intrinsically motivated behaviour is more autonomous and self-sustaining than behaviour that responds to external instrumental cues [46], emotional positioning is likely to have a stronger impact on employees' green behaviour. EGBP thus presents a holistic structure that motivates both short-term and long-term employee motivation towards sustainability, leading to the second hypothesis.

H2. *Emotional Green Brand Positioning has a significant positive influence on Employee Green Behaviour.*

3.2. Environmental Knowledge as a Moderator

Davenport and Prusak (1998) [61] define knowledge as a dynamic combination of framed experience, values, contextual data, and expert knowledge that provides a model for assessing and integrating new experience and information. Environmental knowledge is highly significant in explaining green behaviours because it encompasses a broad range of facts, ideas, and relationships with the natural environment and its key ecosystems, and it helps people understand the nature of environmental problems [30]. Knowledge about the environment can be categorised into three types: Declarative Knowledge, which entails basic factual knowledge on environmental issues; Procedural Knowledge, which deals with knowledge on the steps or actions to be taken when dealing with environmental problems; and Effectiveness Knowledge, which involves knowledge on the most effective actions to take in order to make a substantial impact on the environment [62].

Several studies (e.g., [31–35,63]) suggest that environmental knowledge plays a significant role in predicting employees' intentions towards pro-environmental behaviours. According to Safari et al. (2018) [64], good knowledge of environmental issues leads to better environmental attitudes and increases the chances of engaging in sustainable practices, and Fawehinmi et al. (2024) [65] emphasise that employees with good knowledge are more likely to engage in actions that advance sustainability goals. Within the green brand positioning scenario, EEK can also play a cognitive moderator role, enhancing the impact of green brand signals on employee behaviour by allowing employees to easily decode, critically assess and internalise both functional and emotional green brand messages. As Chen and Chang (2013) [42] observe, employees with high EEK are more likely to assess the validity of green claims and less likely to perceive greenwashing, which allows them to be confident that the brand aligns with its sustainability goals. Dumont et al. (2017) [22] also emphasise that EEK improves employees' critical assessment of green initiatives, thereby promoting better alignment with the organisation's environmental objectives.

The knowledge-behaviour relationship is not always straightforward. While employees may have environmental knowledge, they may not always translate it into behaviour; the conversion of this knowledge is contingent on the existence of organisational conditions, such as support, policy, and mechanisms [29,62,65]. Similarly, Laroche et al. (2001) [66] held that environmental knowledge alone is not a strong predictor of green behaviours. Employees, therefore, may have knowledge of the environment but not necessarily act in an environmentally friendly way, as this depends on enabling environmental conditions such as organisational policy and structural mechanisms [29,62,65]. With regard to EEK's moderation effects, both Farrukh et al. (2022) [32] and Saeed et al. (2019) [34] found a significant moderating effect of environmental knowledge on the link between green HRM practices and pro-environmental behaviour. By contrast, Dumont et al. (2017) [22] failed to identify a moderating effect of green values on in-role green behaviour, and Safari et al. (2018) [64] note that knowledge may act more as a mediator than as an amplifier of signals, operating within the cognitive pathway of attitude, intention, and commitment. This inconclusive empirical tension around EEK also provides impetus to the present study.

Despite this contrasting evidence, a case for moderation is theoretically possible within the current study. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour [36], environmental knowledge can be understood as a specific form of perceived behavioural control where employees who possess greater environmental knowledge are prepared to translate a green brand signal into tangible action effectively. This suggests that knowledge should strengthen, rather than substitute for, the effect of green brand positioning on EGB. Furthermore, prior moderation evidence is almost exclusively in green HRM contexts rather than brand-positioning contexts. Thus, it remains an open empirical question whether the same boundary condition applies when the antecedent is a brand signal rather than an HR practice. This study is therefore well-positioned to test this question. There remains a compelling logic that EEK can influence both FGBP and EGBP on EGB by helping employees understand, internalise, and respond to green brand messages more effectively, which supports the third and fourth hypotheses of this study.

H3. *Employee Environmental Knowledge moderates the effect of Functional Green Brand Positioning on Employee Green Behaviour, such that the relationship is stronger for employees with higher environmental knowledge.*

H4. *Employee Environmental Knowledge moderates the effect of Emotional Green Brand Positioning on Employee Green Behaviour, such that the relationship is stronger for employees with higher environmental knowledge.*

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design and Context

This research employs a quantitative design consistent with a positivist research paradigm, which assumes that reality is objective, measurable, and observable. The research also adopts a deductive approach, in which hypotheses are formulated based on existing theories and concepts. Primary data is collected through a cross-sectional survey of apparel sector employees. In line with the inside-out view adopted in this study, respondents are examined in their capacity as internal recipients of their employer's green brand positioning, rather than as consumers evaluating green brand claims in the marketplace. This separation concerns the role being analysed and in no way assumes that such employees may also act as participants in the marketplace. Such focus also remained consistent among respondents representing various apparel manufacturing companies surveyed in this study, with each respondent reporting solely on their employer's green brand positioning, their individual environmental knowledge, and their own workplace behaviour.

The research setting, the Sri Lankan apparel industry, is data-rich and compelling. Weerasinghe et al. (2023) [67] note that the Sri Lankan apparel industry has been highly proactive in undertaking environmental, social and governance-related action aimed at addressing sustainability concerns. Wijayasiri & Dissanayake (2008) [68] also assert that green branding is a strategic aspiration for this sector. Coupled with such sustainable action and the labour-intensive nature of this industry, employee behaviour is expected to serve as a key internal driver of green brand positioning for Sri Lankan apparel industry players.

4.2. Sample and Data Collection

An online survey using Google Forms was utilised to collect data, which was subsequently transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 28) for analysis. The survey was distributed via email, WhatsApp, and Messenger in English, reaching approximately 650 employees across the apparel industry. The study was anonymous and voluntary, with respondents told upfront that the purpose was academic research and that their answers would be kept confidential. To minimise common method bias, several procedural steps suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) [69] were employed. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed before answering questions, minimising social desirability bias and evaluation apprehension. Furthermore, the respondents were told only the general academic aim of the study, not the specific hypotheses or relationships being investigated, thus minimising the possibility that guesses would influence their responses. We received 300 responses from employees of apparel manufacturing firms in Sri Lanka, including small-, medium-, and large-scale firms, ranging from trainees to senior management. In this study, a non-probability convenience sampling method was used. The sampling period was one month (cross-sectional). Although convenience sampling limits the generalisability of results, it is acknowledged as acceptable for the study of employee behaviour processes within organisational environments with access restrictions [70]. To account for potential limitations of convenience sampling, deliberate efforts were made to sample representatives from a range of firm sizes (small, medium, and large) and organisational levels (from trainee to senior management) to maximise diversity of perspectives within a non-probability sampling design. Data preparation played a crucial role in this study, setting the foundation for valid statistical analysis. The initial data preparation step involved data cleansing. Incomplete responses with a large portion of missing data or random responses were eliminated. The data was also screened for and cleared of duplicate entries, reducing bias. Once cleaned, the data was coded and transformed to suit the variables and analyses required.

4.3. Measurement Instruments

This study employs a questionnaire as the primary research instrument to gather data on the following variables: functional green brand positioning, emotional green brand positioning, employee green behaviour, and environmental knowledge. The measurement items draw on both conceptual frameworks and dimensional structures used in prior studies. Measurement items were first validated through a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted with 30 observations to assess reliability and validity prior to the main data collection. The Cronbach's Alpha values for the four constructs were above 0.7, and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) values were above 0.6, indicating that the constructs were suitable for the study. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' agreement and disagreement (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree).

Green brand positioning is assessed by using both functional and emotional positioning approaches, as proposed by Gong et al. (2021) [71]. Functional Green Brand Positioning (FGBP) was assessed using four items spanning two dimensions: industry leadership in sustainability and environmentally friendly supply chain practices. Emotional Green Brand Positioning (EGBP) was assessed using four items that captured three dimensions: emotional connection to nature, employee pride in environmental contribution, and employee confidence in green commitment. All items were constructed to reflect the distinct functional and emotional positioning established by Hartmann et al. (2005) [4] and were worded in first-person, company-referencing language to suit the internal employee perspective of this study.

Employee Green Behaviour was assessed using the Green Work Behaviour Scale [64], which includes six items on two dimensions: in-role (three items) and extra-role (three items). The in-role and extra-role distinction follows the employee green behaviour taxonomy advanced by Ones and Dilchert (2012) [14] and Norton et al. (2015) [17]. The in-role items capture environmentally responsible task performance, whereas extra-role items capture voluntary, discretionary sustainability actions beyond formal job requirements.

The Environmental Knowledge variable was measured using five items spanning four dimensions: general environmental knowledge, knowledge of the company's green initiatives, industry-specific recycling knowledge, and belief in sustainable production to reduce pollution. The dimensional structure of the EEK items reflect the conceptualisations of Fryxell and Lo (2003) [30] and Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) [62], who distinguish between factual environmental awareness and context-specific applied knowledge, as well as the modified Environmental Knowledge Scale of Aboramadan (2022) [72].

5. Results

Prior to hypothesis testing, the dataset was screened for irregularities: frequency distributions of all variables were examined, and no problematic outliers were identified. Given the sample size ($N = 300$), the central limit theorem supports the use of parametric estimation; pilot-stage normality testing (Shapiro–Wilk, Kolmogorov–Smirnov) had already indicated a parametric approach was appropriate.

5.1. Sample Profile

This study involves a sample of 300 employees from the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Table 1 highlights the respondents' demographics. A majority of respondents were males (63%), while females constituted 37%. Most respondents fell within the 20–29 age range (49%), followed by those aged 30–39 (39%), 40–49 (11%), and 50 years and above (1%). By educational level, most have a bachelor's degree (64%), followed by a master's (30%), a diploma (4%), and a PhD (1%). As for years of work experience in the industry, 50% have less than 2 years, 28% have 2–5 years, 16% have 6–10 years, and 5% have more than

10 years. In terms of job title, 61% were executives, 10.3% managers, 10% trainees, 9.6% assistant managers, 7% senior executives, and 1% senior managers and above. By company size, 54% of respondents worked in medium-scale apparel manufacturing firms, 27% in large-scale firms, and 19% in small-scale firms.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	188	63%
	Female	112	37%
Age	20–29	147	49%
	30–39	117	39%
	40–49	33	11%
	50+	3	1%
Education	Bachelor's	193	64%
	Master's	90	30%
	Diploma	14	4%
	PhD	3	1%
Experience	<2 years	151	50%
	2–5 years	85	28%
	6–10 years	48	16%
	>10 years	16	5%
Company Scale	Medium	162	54%
	Large	81	27%
	Small	57	19%

5.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

To test reliability, the internal consistency of the scales was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The findings reveal that all variables have alpha values greater than 0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with principal component analysis and varimax rotation was used to test construct validity. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure was greater than 0.6 for all of the constructs, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate. The reliability and validity results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability and validity summary.

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	KMO	Bartlett's χ^2	Sig.
FGBP	4	0.929	0.831	1011.680	0.000
EGBP	4	0.823	0.684	502.521	0.000
EEK	5	0.739	0.676	419.767	0.000
EGB	6	0.871	0.781	993.921	0.000

Note. FGBP = Functional Green Brand Positioning; EGBP = Emotional Green Brand Positioning; EEK = Employee Environmental Knowledge; EGB = Employee Green Behaviour.

5.3. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis offers insights into the central tendency and variance of the main variables. The mean scores and standard deviations for the variables are shown in

Table 3. Functional Green Brand Positioning has mean scores ranging from 3.88 to 4.08, and Emotional Green Brand Positioning from 3.77 to 4.07, suggesting positive attitudes. The mean scores for Environmental Knowledge range from 3.48 to 4.30, and for Employee Green Behaviour from 3.39 to 4.09, indicating that staff are moderately to highly engaged in green practices.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix.

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. FGBP	4.005	0.829	1			
2. EGBP	3.889	0.969		1		
3. EEK	3.977	0.793			1	
4. EGB	3.746	0.931	0.646 **	0.762 **	—	1

Note. N = 300. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed). SD = Standard Deviation. FGBP = Functional Green Brand Positioning; EGBP = Emotional Green Brand Positioning; EEK = Employee Environmental Knowledge; EGB = Employee Green Behaviour. Construct means are computed as the average of item means. Correlations for Employee Environmental Knowledge (EEK) with other constructs are not reported in this table, as EEK was introduced solely as a moderating variable. Its independent effect on Employee Green Behaviour is reported in the moderation analysis.

5.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix of the variables. Functional Green Brand Positioning is positively associated with Employee Green Behaviour ($r = 0.646$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a moderate-to-strong positive relationship. Emotional Green Brand Positioning is more strongly positively correlated with Employee Green Behaviour ($r = 0.762$, $p < 0.01$). The stronger correlation between Emotional Green Brand Positioning and Employee Green Behaviour suggests that emotional engagement may be more important than instrumental, functional sustainability cues in shaping employee behaviour. These correlations are significant ($p < 0.01$), which suggests that as green brand positioning increases, employee green behaviour also increases.

5.5. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of Functional and Emotional Green Brand Positioning on Employee Green Behaviour. Throughout this section, effect sizes for these direct relationships are reported as R^2 and standardised β coefficients, in line with conventions for hypothesis testing in regression. The findings are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression analysis results.

	FGBP → EGB	EGBP → EGB
R	0.646	0.820
R^2	0.417	0.672
Adjusted R^2	0.415	0.671
Std. Error of Estimate	0.553	0.420
F	213.419	520.000
p	0.000	0.000
Constant (B)	1.265	1.001
B (Unstandardised)	0.620	0.752

Table 4. *Cont.*

	FGBP → EGB	EGBP → EGB
Beta (Standardised)	0.646	0.762
t	14.609	20.301
Sig.	0.000	0.000

Note. N = 300. FGBP = Functional Green Brand Positioning; EGBP = Emotional Green Brand Positioning; EGB = Employee Green Behaviour (dependent variable for both models).

Functional Green Brand Positioning accounts for 41.7% of variance in Employee Green Behaviour ($R^2 = 0.417$), suggesting a significant impact. The model is significant ($F = 213.419$, $p < 0.001$), and Functional Green Brand Positioning is a significant predictor of Employee Green Behaviour. The standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.646$) indicates a moderate-to-strong positive effect. Emotional Green Brand Positioning has a greater influence, accounting for 67% of the variance in Employee Green Behaviour ($R^2 = 0.672$). The model is significant ($F = 520.000$, $p < 0.001$), and the standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.762$) indicates a strong positive effect. This variation in R^2 increases the significance of emotional appeal in predicting employee green behaviour, relative to functional sustainability cues.

5.6. Moderation Analysis

Moderation analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS macro to test the moderating role of Environmental Knowledge in the relationship between Green Brand Positioning and Employee Green Behaviour (Table 5). Predictor and moderator variables were mean-centred prior to computing interaction terms, which is the standard recommended approach for addressing multicollinearity between predictor variables and their product terms in moderated regression. Table 5 shows the results. In Model 1, both Functional Green Brand Positioning ($\beta = 0.4039$, $p < 0.001$) and Environmental Knowledge ($\beta = 0.5703$, $p < 0.001$) positively impact Employee Green Behaviour. But the interaction effect (FGBP $\times$ EEK) is not significant ($\beta = 0.0294$, $p = 0.395$). For Model 2, Emotional Green Brand Positioning ($\beta = 0.5315$, $p < 0.001$) and Environmental Knowledge ($\beta = 0.4466$, $p < 0.001$) are significant. But the interaction term (EGBP $\times$ EEK) is not significant ($\beta = -0.0047$, $p = 0.875$) again with the interval spanning zero. The large sample size ($N = 300$) and the strong, highly significant overall model fits ($F = 117.00$, $p < 0.001$ for Model 1; $F = 203.26$, $p < 0.001$ for Model 2) further support the stability and robustness of the estimated coefficients. These findings suggest that although Environmental Knowledge has an independent effect on Employee Green Behaviour, it does not moderate the relationship between green brand positioning and Employee Green Behaviour.

Table 5. Moderation analysis results (Hayes' PROCESS Macro).

Parameter	Model 1 (FGBP $\times$ EEK)	Model 2 (EGBP $\times$ EEK)
R^2	0.5425	0.6732
F (overall model)	117.001 ***	203.255 ***
IV Coefficient	0.4039 ***	0.5315 ***
EEK Coefficient	0.5703 ***	0.4466 ***
Interaction Coefficient	0.0294	−0.0047
Interaction p -value	0.395	0.875
Interaction Significance	Not significant	Not significant

Note. N = 300. IV = Independent Variable; EEK = Employee Environmental Knowledge. *** $p < 0.001$. Interaction term coefficients represent FGBP $\times$ EEK (Model 1) and EGBP $\times$ EEK (Model 2).

5.7. Hypothesis Testing Outcomes

Results of the hypothesis tests are shown in Table 6. Hypotheses H1 and H2 are both supported as both Functional and Emotional Green Brand Positioning have a significant positive influence on Employee Green Behaviour. But the moderating effects of Environmental Knowledge on both relationships (H3 and H4) are not supported, as the interaction terms are not significant.

Table 6. Hypothesis testing summary.

Hypothesis	Statement	Key Statistics	Decision
H1	FGBP → EGB (+)	$r = 0.646$; $R^2 = 0.417$; $\beta = 0.646$; $p < 0.001$	Accepted
H2	EGBP → EGB (+)	$r = 0.820$; $R^2 = 0.672$; $\beta = 0.762$; $p < 0.001$	Accepted
H3	EEK moderates FGBP → EGB	Interaction coeff = 0.0294 ; $p = 0.395$	Not Accepted
H4	EEK moderates EGBP → EGB	Interaction coeff = -0.0047 ; $p = 0.875$	Not Accepted

Note. FGBP = Functional Green Brand Positioning; EGBP = Emotional Green Brand Positioning; EEK = Employee Environmental Knowledge; EGB = Employee Green Behaviour.

6. Discussion

The results reveal that both types of green brand positioning, i.e., Functional and Emotional, do affect employee behaviour, and that Environmental Knowledge does not moderate these relationships. A more in-depth discussion around these results is undertaken in three themes.

6.1. Functional and Emotional Pathways to Employee Green Behaviour

The results show that both Functional and Emotional Green Brand Positioning positively affect Employee Green Behaviour. With regards to functional positioning, employees are likely to respond positively to sustainability signals such as energy and waste management measures and ecologically sound processes. Such actions are also likely to foster employee trust in their organisation's green branding efforts, leading to positive green behaviour. These findings are consistent with previous literature (e.g., [42,43]) that emphasises the importance of tangible environmental initiatives in facilitating trust and engagement. Functional positioning can thus be recognised as offering a cognitive link to employee behaviour. Emotional positioning, on the other hand, stimulates feelings of pride, purpose and identification. Employees who tend to connect more emotionally with their organisation's green branding efforts are not only expected to demonstrate spontaneous and ongoing pro-environmental behaviours. They are also more likely to internalise organisational green branding overtures as part of their long-term professional identity. These results are consistent with Gautam and Pokhrel (2023) [7], Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibañez (2009) [47] and Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) [59] who emphasise the importance of emotional benefits for stakeholder behaviour.

While both Functional and Emotional Brand Positioning are found to significantly affect employee behaviour, the findings also reveal that their relative influence differs, suggesting distinct mechanisms at play. With emotional brand positioning, both the coefficient of determination and the standardised coefficient are notably higher than with functional positioning. Suggesting a greater explanatory power of employee green behaviour by emotional positioning. This indicates that employee actions are more influenced by emotional fit than by functional fit. Moreover, the emergence of distinct mechanisms can also be interpreted as functional positioning providing authenticity, whereas emotional positioning leads to behavioural engagement in employees' green behaviour. In other words, there

also seems to be a complementary relationship between the two types of brand positioning from an inside-out perspective.

6.2. Green Brand Positioning as an Internal Behavioural Mechanism

A critical insight of this study is that brand positioning signals, largely intended for the marketplace, also influence employee behaviour. While the past literature on green branding has largely focused on external consumers [15,16,18,23], our findings thus affirm the reconceptualisation of green brand positioning from an external to an internal phenomenon, as set out at the inception of this research. Conceptually, such findings are consistent with the notion of internal branding [26,28], which holds that employees must “buy into” the brand before they can communicate it to customers. For green branding, this internalisation is particularly important. When employees are not in line with the organisation’s environmental positioning, the external brand promise becomes more symbolic than real [21,23,24]. The findings indicate that green brand positioning serves as an internal signal to direct behaviour within the organisation. This adds a new dimension to green branding, serving as both an external market signal and an internal behavioural signal.

These findings also have larger implications for labour-intensive industries such as the apparel industry. Given the critical nature of green branding as an internalising mechanism for employees, such branding efforts are now likely to lead employees to more readily embrace greening initiatives, resulting in better organisational-level sustainable outcomes. This internal behavioural understanding can be further explored through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The functional positioning provides solid evidence of organisational practice, primarily enhancing employees’ perceived behavioural control (the belief that acting sustainably is feasible). Emotional positioning, on the other hand, directly affects attitude, the most consistently observed antecedent and the strongest predictor of behavioural intention [36]. This provides a sound theoretical explanation for why, as the findings demonstrate, the emotional brand positioning had a greater impact on employees’ green behaviour than the functional positioning.

6.3. Rethinking the Role of Environmental Knowledge

Contrary to the expectation set out with H3 and H4, Environmental Knowledge was found to have no significant moderating effect on Green Branding Efforts and Employee Behaviour. Conventional theories, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour [36], indicate that knowledge influences behaviour through attitudes and perceived behavioural control. However, the existing literature presents mixed evidence regarding the moderating role of environmental knowledge on employee behaviour. Farrukh et al. (2022) [32] and Saeed et al. (2019) [34] found that environmental knowledge significantly moderates the relationship between green HRM practices and pro-environmental behaviour, an outcome the present study does not support. By contrast, Dumont et al. (2017) [22] found no significant moderating effect of green values on in-role green behaviour, and Safari et al. (2018) [64] also showed that knowledge operates through mediated rather than moderating mechanisms. The findings of the present study are therefore more aligned with this latter literature. This indicates that the boundary role of environmental knowledge may be contingent on the type of organisational stimulus being examined, such as green HRM practices versus green brand positioning, rather than indicating the absence of a knowledge-based contingency effect more generally.

In addition, several contextual and cultural factors specific to this study’s setting may also help explain this finding. First, the relatively high and narrow distribution of environmental knowledge across the sample ($M = 3.48\text{--}4.30$ on a five-point scale; see Section 5.3)

suggests limited variability in employee environmental knowledge. This may have reduced the statistical power required to detect a moderating effect, even if it is present in the population. Second, Sri Lanka is generally characterised by relatively high power distance and collectivist organisational norms [73], which may encourage employees to align their behaviours more closely with organisational expectations and collective goals than with their own knowledge or judgement [74]. In such a cultural setting, organisationally communicated sustainability messages and brand-level environmental signals may have a stronger influence on employee behaviour than personal environmental knowledge. Thus, a well-defined and credible green brand positioning strategy may be sufficient to promote pro-environmental behaviour across employees regardless of differences in their environmental knowledge, thereby helping to explain the non-significant moderating effect observed in the present study.

In sum, our findings point to a multifaceted model of the effects of green brand positioning on employee behaviour. Functional positioning enhances trust and understanding, while emotional positioning fosters inspiration and engagement. Environmental knowledge contributes independently to employee pro-environmental behaviour, but it does not strengthen or weaken the effects of green brand positioning. Taken together, these results support the central thesis of this study that green brand positioning is not merely a communication strategy aimed at external stakeholders but also an internal behavioural system that influences employee conduct. Its effectiveness depends primarily on the extent to which employees internalise organisational sustainability values and messages, rather than on differences in their individual levels of environmental knowledge.

7. Conclusions

The central thesis of this study is that green brand positioning and its effects have been disproportionately framed as an external, market-related phenomenon, with limited attention to its internalising, or inside-out, properties. In other words, unlike most existing research on green branding that takes a consumer-centred view, this study adopts an internal stakeholder perspective, viewing employees as a critical target audience for their organisations' green brand positioning. Drawing on data from Sri Lanka's apparel industry, our findings suggest that functional and emotional aspects of green brand positioning have disproportionate effects on employees' green behaviour. These findings suggest different mechanisms at play, in which functional positioning is essential to provide authenticity and credibility for green behaviour. However, it is the emotional connectivity that really drives employee engagement and commitment to green behaviour within organisations. These findings thus identify emotional brand positioning as the key driver of employee green behaviour. By contrast, employee environmental knowledge was not found to moderate either functional or emotional positioning of employee behaviour. Although unexpected, this finding can be interpreted as indicating that environmental knowledge is neither a boon nor a hindrance to employees' green behaviour, particularly under strong green brand positioning by their organisations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of green branding literature by broadening its current external, consumer-centric focus to include internal stakeholders. In doing so, the results extend existing theory by showing that green brand positioning is not only an external marketing signal but also an internal behavioural mechanism. Where previous research has mostly focused on the effect of green brand positioning on customer attitudes and behaviour [15,16], this study shows it also serves as a direct antecedent of employee behaviour. In so doing, it confirms the usefulness of green brand positioning from an internal marketing perspective [26,28]. Our reframing of green branding thus contributes to the integration of external leaning branding literature with organisational behaviour

literature by showing how brand meanings are translated into organisational actions. The findings also challenge the existing theory, given the insignificant moderating role of environmental knowledge. The Theory of Planned Behaviour premises that knowledge influences behaviour through attitudes and perceived behavioural control [36]. However, our findings suggest that organisational green positionings can play an overwhelming role in employees' green behaviour, regardless of environmental knowledge disparities, and that such circumstances are likely to be pervasive in certain labour-centric cultural settings, such as that of Sri Lanka.

Empirically, this study is among the first to explicitly reframe green branding as an internal behavioural mechanism. Providing valuable insights to both academia and practitioners on the expanded and more intrinsic value of brand positioning as a driver of employee behaviour. Contextually, the study provides evidence from the Sri Lankan apparel sector, which is set within a developing economy and export-oriented manufacturing context where credible sustainability performance is increasingly demanded by international buyers. This setting remains underrepresented relative to the Western, consumer-market-focused samples that dominate the green branding literature, thereby broadening the geographical and industrial scope of existing knowledge.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest three main strategies for organisations in general and apparel companies in emerging economies in particular. First, given the stronger effect of emotional positioning over functional positioning, companies need to focus on narrative-based internal communication, such as employee testimonials, storytelling at team briefings, and visible recognition of individual sustainability contributions, rather than over-reporting on environmental metrics. Second, green brand values can be institutionalised by embedding them in onboarding and induction programmes, so that new employees encounter the organisation's environmental identity as part of their socialisation rather than as an isolated training module. Third, given the lack of moderating effects of environmental knowledge, firms operating with constrained training budgets need not treat extensive environmental literacy programmes as a precondition for behavioural change. Resources may be more efficiently directed toward supervisor-led reinforcement of green brand narratives, given the relatively high power distance and collectivist organisational norms common in South Asian manufacturing contexts, where managerial endorsement of sustainability carries considerable behavioural weight.

This research has several limitations. The cross-sectional and convenience sampling approach could limit the generalisability of the results. Furthermore, all data were self-reported, and although the procedures outlined in Section 4.3 were used to prevent common method bias and social desirability effects, these procedures do not eliminate the possibility of such effects. The sample was also drawn from a context with distinct cultural settings [73], raising concerns about generalisability. Some of these issues could be overcome by adopting longitudinal research designs to observe behaviour over time, cross-country comparative designs to examine whether the same results hold in other cultural and economic settings, and mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative inquiry with survey data to gain a deeper understanding of how green brand positioning affects employee behaviour.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that green brand positioning extends beyond external communication to serve as an internal behavioural mechanism that shapes how employees think, feel, and act in relation to organisational sustainability goals. In an increasingly demanding environment for genuine sustainability performance, organisations need to look not just at external messaging but also at the internalisation of sustainability among employees, and, in doing so, recognise that green branding is not only about creating an image but also about facilitating sustainable practice from within.

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