

(231)

**Awareness and Behavioural Contribution of Consumers Towards Fast Fashion and Carbon Footprint****Illawatura, A.M.A.L.\*, Denawaka, D.D.S.I., Ranchagoda, T.U.P.,****Munasinghe, M.A.H.S., Arachchi, T.P.S., Dissanayake, N.U.S.***Department of Forestry and Environmental Science, Faculty of Applied Sciences,**University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka**\*[illawaturaanja@gmail.com](mailto:illawaturaanja@gmail.com)***Abstract**

Fast fashion is one of the fastest-growing phenomena in the world apparel industry, marked by affordable and fashion-forward apparel at high speed. Conversely, with the continued surge in popularity, the resultant environmental impact has spurred concerns about carbon emission, textile waste, and microplastic pollution; hence, the need to understand consumer awareness and behaviour becomes relevant. This study explores consumer awareness, perceptions, and their behavioural contribution toward fast fashion and carbon footprint. A total of 256 respondents of varying age groups and academic and professional backgrounds participated in a structured quantitative survey. The survey assessed knowledge of the environmental impacts of fast fashion, their purchase and disposal practices, and their willingness to adopt sustainable alternatives. The majority of 63.7% respondents were between 18-22 years and predominantly female at 72.3%. More than half of the responses came from science or technological disciplines. Results showed that conceptual awareness was limited to only 27.3% of participants who had previously heard the term "fast fashion." Awareness of the environmental impacts of fast fashion was moderate; 43.4% reported being somewhat aware, and 14.1% very aware. While the majority acknowledged that fast fashion contributes to carbon emissions globally, the sustainability factor in purchasing choices was seldom considered, at 1.9%. Further evidence of the environmental gaps in behaviour was seen in the fact that 62.9% never purchased items second-hand or thrifted, while 37.1% did not check if the items contained sustainable or recycled materials. However, 64.5% were willing to support university or community initiatives that promoted sustainable fashion, and 80.9% felt individual choices could mitigate carbon emissions. There is significant potential for change in consumer behaviour with appropriate interventions. It is evident that the knowledge of the participants about fast fashion and its impact is limited. Textile consumption is driven more by the cost of the clothes, quality, and trendiness rather than sustainability concerns. Targeted education and awareness, together with better availability of sustainable clothing, will make a considerable difference in environmentally friendly behaviour. It is recommended that sustainability education be scaled up at the university level, public campaigns be run to raise awareness of carbon emissions related to fashion, eco-friendly clothes be made more available at affordable prices, and policy measures be taken to enhance textile recycling and waste reduction.

**Keywords:** *Fast fashion, Consumer awareness, Carbon footprint, Sustainable consumption, Consumer behaviour*