

## **Clothing Disposal Behavior of Teenage Consumers: A study with Reference to Bhopal City**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Today's teenagers growing up in a "disposable society" in which replacement is preferred over repair. This is responsible for putting less importance not only on maintaining and extending the life of clothing at present, but also prepares young people who will do so in the future. Present study explores clothing disposal behavior of teenagers. It reports result related to attitude, knowledge and perception of teenagers towards clothing disposal and sustainability along with their clothing disposal pattern. 404 male and female teenagers aged between 13-19 residing in Bhopal were administered self-designed questionnaire. Result shows that there is no significant difference in knowledge, attitude and perception about sustainability and disposal behavior of teenagers belonging to different gender, age group and socio economic status. Number of 16-19 year old teenagers is higher who use for more than one year whereas higher percentage of 13-15 year old use for one year. Highest percentage of lower SES respondent use garment for more than one year followed by middle and lower SES respondents.

**Key Words :** Teenage, Clothing, Disposal behaviour, Attitude, Perception, sustainability

### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a transformational period in which different important physical and emotional developments and social maturation take place. Research reveals that adolescents are very concerned about what others think about them. Early adolescents are particularly over sensitive to the opinions of others that is why they are very concern about physical appearance and clothing.

Clothing is a form of nonverbal communication and a means of communicating the social identity, social value or status of the wearer and considered as a path to reach a certain level. Often people make judgments about the value or social status of others based on what they wear. Clothing is a domain that is supposed to meet the functional and symbolic needs of consumers (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004). Through clothing, teenagers express their identity to others in terms of symbolic or expressive sense.

Globalization has made possible to produce garments at very low prices. Prices are so low that

consumers consider them as disposable. They are also known as "fast fashion", garment equivalent to fast food. Fashion appears in stores at prices that consumers make tempting purchases and disposal is very easy. They want to have the latest and if it is cheap, they buy more. Fast fashion, with each stage of the clothing life cycle, generates environmental hazards. As a result, the consumption of clothing is a contributing factor to environmental change.

The objective of this study is to understand disposal behavior of teenage consumers in the age of 13–19 years towards apparel products. It aims to determine the awareness of sustainability and clothing disposal behavior and practices of young Indian consumers Understanding the attitudes and perceptions associated with the disposal of garments may provide an insight on how to raise awareness regarding other available options.

### **Hypothesis:**

To achieve the objective of the study, following

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hypothesis have been formed:

H<sub>0</sub> 1: There is no association between clothing disposal behavior of teenagers and demographics.

H<sub>0</sub> 2: Knowledge, attitude and perception of teenagers toward clothing disposal is independent of their demographics.

### **Literature review:**

#### **Consumer's clothing disposition behavior:**

Apparel disposition behavior refers to the observable action of the person to permanently remove clothes from their possession or to reuse them for a purpose other than that for which they were originally designed. Consumer disposition behavior is the behavior and decisions taken at the time of disposition phase of the unused product. It is divided into two categories: maintenance and elimination (Jacoby *et al.*, 1977). Harrell and McConocha (1992) explained disposition behavior by including maintenance / storage, discarding, selling, donation or just do not use that. According to Jacoby's Disposition Decision Taxonomy, consumer disposition behavior can be classified into three categories: (a) Keep the product, (b) Temporary elimination and (c) Permanent disposal.

#### **Attitude towards clothing disposal:**

An attitude is negative or positive beliefs of a person about the results of a particular behavior. Attitude is learned because it is achieved from experiences, information and exposures. Shim's (1995) study analyzed the relationship between environmental attitudes of consumers and their clothing disposal patterns. The author discovered that consumers' environmental attitude and their knowledge of disposal options has a great impact on their clothing disposal methods. For example, people who emphasize respect and concern for the environment adopt a greener behavior. This means, consumers who think about the environment, make efforts to dispose their clothes in a more sustainable way. Demographic variables such as age, education, and gender also affect environmental concerns (Butler and Francis, 1997).

#### **Relationships between consumers' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior:**

In spite of having concern about environmental issues related to clothing production, distribution and consumption, consumers less participate in the sustainable clothing consumption and there is not always a significant positive relationship between knowledge,

attitudes and behaviors. Only some consumers who understand how irresponsible consumption affects the environment try to reduce the waste of clothing. In addition, Lee (2008) has shown that when consumers are concerned about environment, they are more willing to pay for more expensive sustainable clothing. Consumers with pro-environmental attitudes consider environmental effects when disposing their clothes and dispose in ways that minimize their impact on the environment. Sustainable clothing consumption includes the reuse of clothing, clothing that is environment friendly and the avoiding certain clothing items for environmental reasons.

#### **Apparel disposal motivation:**

Motivations are the internal forces or reasons that activate a person's behavior (Babin and Harris, 2010). Shim (1995) investigated the disposal of clothing and concluded that consumers were motivated by economic, environmental, charitable, awareness or convenience reasons. The main reasons for disposal of clothing are: a) Functional: when present clothing is replaced by a new product with improved utility, b) Quality: product fails in quality or wear and tear, c) Psychological: also called symbolic obsolescence. It means product is not satisfying, attractive any more, d) New consumer needs or desires, e) Fashion, f) Fitting, g) Unsuitability related to taste, h) Situational reasons, i) Functional shortcomings, j) Age and gender.

#### **Apparel disposal methods:**

Shim (1995) determined the most common disposal methods and found that resell, donation, reuse and discarding were the most used methods by the respondents. Birtwistle and Moore (2007) suggested that there are several ways in which consumers can dispose of their clothing as a donation to a charity organization, give away to family or friends, resell it, or throw it into trash cans. Specially, donation to charitable organizations and giving family and friends are the most common methods for setting up sustainable clothing disposal. Domina and Koch (1999) suggested that the re-designing of clothes is also a primary sustainable disposal method and some recyclers prefer to reuse or redesign their old clothes instead converting them into rags. Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found that consumers' awareness of the environment is significantly positive with reference to clothing disposal behavior. Consumers who are concerned with environmental problems will strive to get

rid of their used clothes using environment friendly methods. Sidique *et al.* (2010) concluded that the recycling behavior is highly dependent on the convenience of the recycling drop-off sites; Recyclers tend to recycle more if they know the delivery locations well.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory in nature. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the survey research design was employed.

### Selection of the study area:

The study was conducted in Bhopal city, capital of Madhya Pradesh. This has been selected for various reasons. Bhopal is a tier two city, growing with a number of reputed apparel retail stores of well-known brands, fashion stores and developing economy. People of different attitude, values, socio economic status and culture reside here. Ease of accessibility for researcher is another reason for selection of Bhopal.

### Sampling size:

It is the total number of respondents targeted for collecting the data for the research. Bhopal has total teenage population of 16,011,000 in year 2017. Population of the study comprises teenagers in 13-19 years age bracket. As it is impossible to contact each teenager, students studying in six schools will comprise sample of this research.

### Sampling technique:

Bhopal is divided in five different zones by Bhopal Municipal Corporation. There are some government and private schools in the residential zone of the researcher. Three government and three private schools were included. All the male and female students present at the time of conducting survey were selected. Attempt was made to include as many variables as possible to get

reliable result with as much as possible generalization. Principals of schools were contacted to discuss objectives and procedure of the study.

### Variables of the study:

#### *Socio demographic variables:*

1. Sex –Male and female
2. Age- Early teen -Adolescents in the age group of 13-15 years and  
Late teens - Adolescents in the age from 16-19 years
3. Socio Economic Status- High, Middle and lower

#### *Disposal behavior:*

##### *Tools and technique of data collection:*

1. Socio economic status of family was measured by the scale developed by Kuppusswamy's Socio-economic Scale (1976).
2. Clothing disposal behavior was measured by self-constructed questionnaire.

Questionnaire was developed using academic literature as guide. It consisted questions related to attitude, knowledge and perception about sustainable clothing behavior. Five point Likert Scale was used to measure all the variables. The scale varies from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for all the questions in the questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed to students and collected after one week.

### Data analysis:

The data collected was edited, coded and prepared for analysis. Results were analyzed and interpreted using percentage, graphs. Chi square and Z- test were used to find out difference in disposal behavior of teenagers of different demographics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

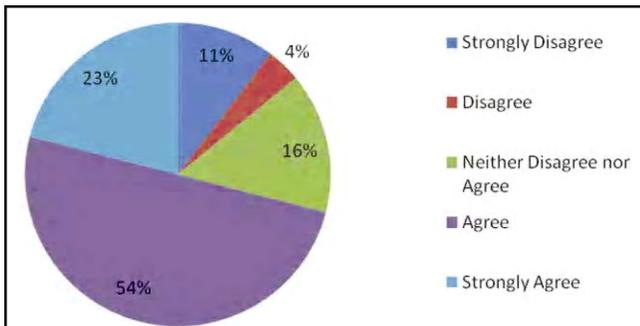
### Knowledge of sustainability and sustainable

Table 1 : Demographic profile of respondents				
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	208	51.48%	404 (100%)
	Female	196	48.51%	
Age (years)	13-15	211	52.22%	404 (100%)
	16-19	193	47.77%	
Social economic status	Upper	139	34.40%	404 (100%)
	Medium	210	51.98%	
	Lower	55	13.61%	

**disposal behavior:**

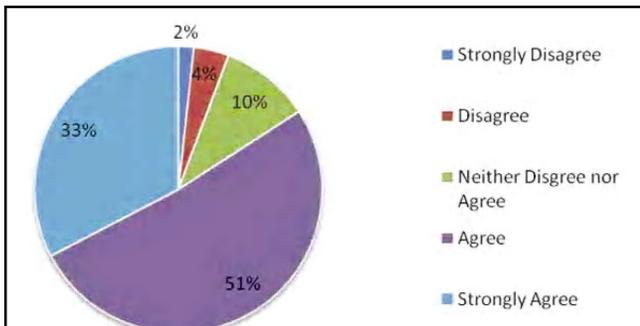
Three questions were asked to assess the knowledge about sustainability and sustainable disposal behavior. Results are given in Fig. 1 to 4.

Fig. 1 shows the result for the statement that reusing clothing items is significantly beneficial for the environment. 54% agree and 23% strongly agree that reusing clothing items is significantly beneficial for the environment. While 4% teenagers disagree and 11% strongly disagree with this. It can be said that most of the teenagers have knowledge that reusing clothing items is significantly beneficial for the environment.



**Fig. 1 : Reusing clothing items is significantly beneficial for the environment (n=404)**

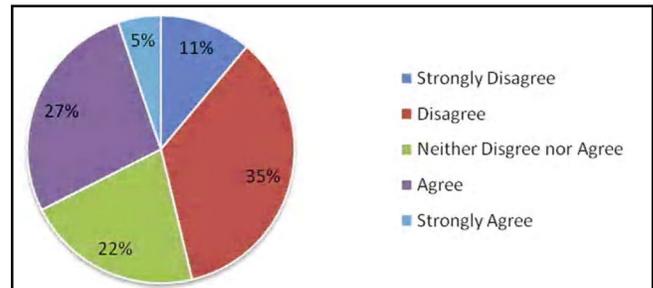
The response for the statement that old garments should be reused for other purposes also because throwing away them is the wastage of resources and contribute to the environmental problem is shown in Fig. 2. 51% teens agree and 33% strongly agree while meagre percentage of teens disagree and strongly disagree. Thus teenagers have knowledge that old garments should be reused for other purposes also because throwing away them is the



**Fig. 2 : Old garments should be reused for other purposes also because throwing away them is the wastage of resources and contribute to the environmental problem (n=404)**

wastage of resources and contribute to the environmental problem.

Fig. 3 presents data related to teenagers' response for the statement that they do not reuse/recycle clothing because they are not aware of how clothing can be recycled. 35% teenagers disagree and 11% strongly disagree. On the contrary, 27% agree and 5% strongly agree that they do not reuse/recycle clothing because they are not aware of how clothing can be recycled. The result shows that more teenagers are not aware of how clothing should be recycled that is why they do not reuse or recycle.

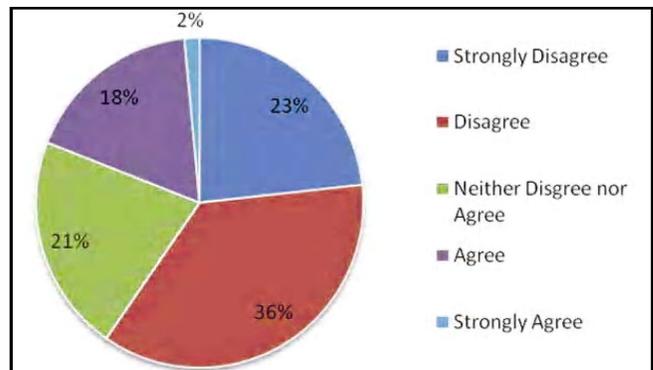


**Fig. 3 : I do not reuse/recycle clothing because I'm not aware of how clothing can be recycled (n=404)**

**Attitude towards sustainability:**

Four questions were assessed to find out the teenagers' attitude towards sustainability. Results are given in Fig. 4 to 7.

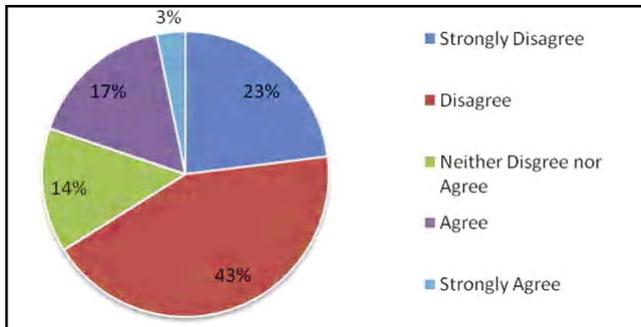
Respondents were asked if they don't reuse/recycle clothing because it is time-consuming and is a hassle for them. Result is given in Fig. 4. It can be seen that 36% disagreed and 23% strongly disagreed with this statement. This shows that most of the teenagers reuse/recycle clothing because it is not time-consuming and a hassle



**Fig. 4 : I don't reuse/recycle clothing because it is time-consuming and is a hassle for me (n=404)**

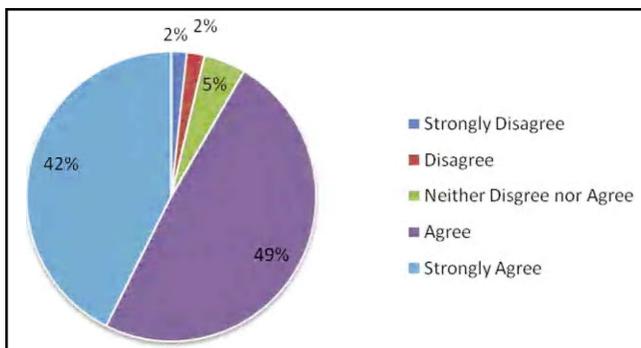
for them. On the other hand, 18% agree and 2% strongly agree.

Respondents were asked if they find convenient to throw away the unwanted garments. It is observed from the data shown in Fig. 5 that highest percentage of teens disagree and strongly disagree with this and lower percentage of teens agree and very few strongly agree. It can be inferred that most of them do not throw away unwanted garments.



**Fig. 5 : Finding convenient to throw away unwanted garments (n=404)**

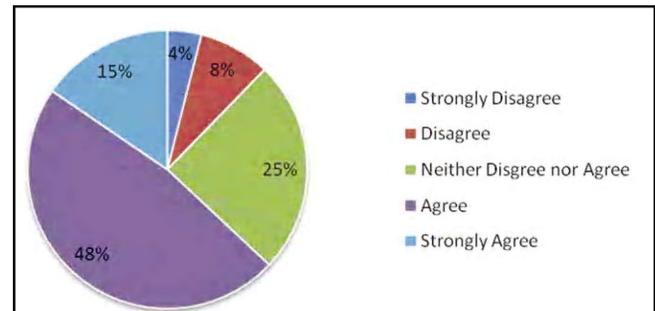
Respondents were asked if reselling, donating, and reusing clothing are good ideas or not. Result is shown in Fig. 6. 49% teenagers agree and 42% strongly agree that reselling, donating, and reusing clothing are good ideas. Very little percentage of them disagree and strongly disagree.



**Fig. 6 : Reselling, donating, and reusing clothing are good ideas (n=404)**

Willingness of teenagers to spend time and/or money to resell, donate and reuse old garments was assessed. It can be elucidated from Data shown in Fig. 7 that 48% teenagers agree and 15% strongly agree. On the other hand, very few of them disagree or strongly disagree. It is established that most of teenagers are willing to spend

time and/or money to resell, donate and reuse old garments.

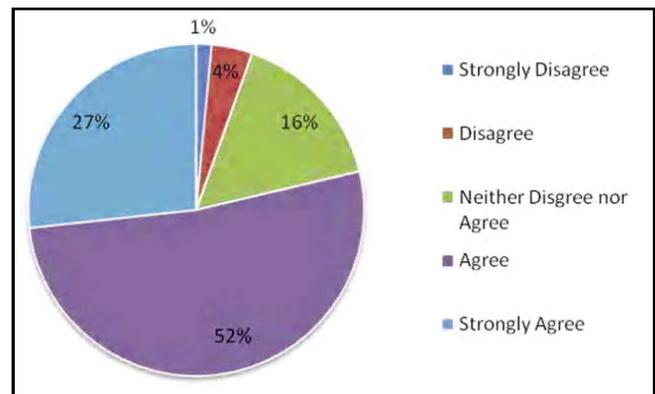


**Fig. 7 : Willingness to spend time and/or money to resell, donate and reuse old garments (n=404)**

**Perception about sustainability:**

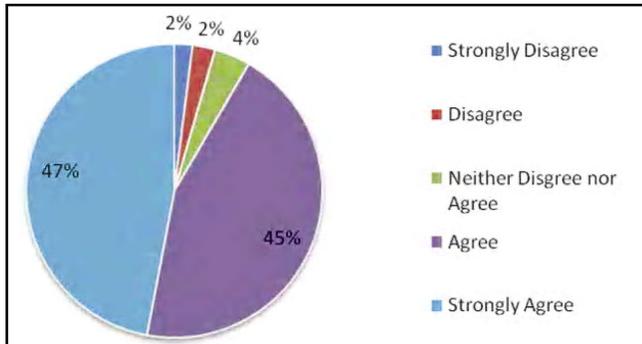
Two questions were related to perception about sustainability. Result is shown in Fig. 8 and 9.

Teenagers were asked whether information about garment reselling, donating, and reusing methods should be made more easily available. Results presented in Fig. 8 show that 52% agree and 27% strongly agree that information about garment reselling, donating, and reusing methods should be made more easily available. Negligible percentage of teenagers disagree and strongly disagree.



**Fig. 8 : Information about garment reselling, donating, and reusing methods should be made more easily available (n=404)**

Perception of teenagers for encouraging the people to resell, donate, and reuse clothing is shown in Fig. 9. It is evident that in general, majority of the respondents agree that people should be encouraged to resell, donate, and reuse clothing.



**Fig. 9 : People should be encouraged to resell, donate, and reuse clothing(n=404)**

**Disposal behavior of teenagers:**

It is evident from Table 2 that garments are used for more than one year by 37% teenagers. This is followed by use of garment for one year and six months. Very few teenagers use garment for two months. Chi square values show that duration of use is dependent on age and socioeconomic status of teenagers. Number of 16-19 year old teenagers is higher who use for more than one year whereas higher percentage of 13-15 year old use for one year. Highest percentage of lower SES respondent use garment for more than one year followed by middle and lower SES respondents.

It is clear from Table 3 that garment donation is most commonly used mode of disposal. Reuse of garment

and give to sibling are other modes of disposal but practiced by some teenagers only. Very few resell or just do not use. Chi square values given in Table shows that there is no significant association between demographics of teenagers and mode of discarding unwanted garments.

Table 4, 5 and 6 show that there is no significant difference in knowledge, attitude and perception about sustainability and disposal behavior of teenagers belonging to different gender, age group and socio economic status.

**Conclusion:**

It can be concluded that most of the teenagers have knowledge that reusing clothing items is significantly beneficial for the environment and throwing away of old garments is the wastage of resources and contribute to the environmental problem. Many of them are not aware of how clothing should be recycled that is why they do not recycle. Most of them do not throw away unwanted garments. Most of the teenagers are willing to spend time and/or money to resell, donate and reuse old garments. Majority of them agreed that information about garment reselling, donating, and reusing methods should be made more easily available and people should be encouraged to resell, donate, and reuse clothing.

Garment donation is most commonly used mode of disposal. Reuse of garment and give to sibling are other modes of disposal but practiced by some teenagers only.

Demographic variables	Duration				x <sup>2</sup> Value	
	Two months	Six months	One year	More than one year		
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)		
Sex	Male (n=208)	11 (5.28%)	60 (28.84%)	59 (28.36%)	78 (37.50%)	1.688 p=0.640
	Female (n=196)	13 (6.73%)	47 (23.97%)	63 (32.14%)	73 (37.24%)	
Age (yrs)	(13-15) (n=211)	16 (7.58%)	55 (26.06%)	74 (35.07%)	63 (29.85%)	12.085 p=0.007
	(16-19) (n=193)	8 (4.14%)	52 (26.94%)	48 (24.87%)	88 (45.59%)	
SES	Upper (n=139)	8 (5.75%)	41 (19.71%)	32 (15.38%)	58 (27.88%)	18.392 p=0.005
	Middle (n=210)	11 (5.23%)	50 (23.80%)	82 (39.04%)	67 (31.90%)	
	Lower (n=55)	5 (9.09%)	16 (29.09%)	8 (14.54%)	26 (47.27%)	
Total (N=404)		6%	27%	30%	37%	

**Table 3 : Mode of discarding unwanted garments**

Demographic Variables		Mode of discarding unwanted garments					x <sup>2</sup> Value
		Donate	Resell	Reuse	Give it to sibling/friend	Just don't use	
		Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	
Sex	Male (n=208)	121 (58.17%)	3 (1.44%)	30 (14.42%)	41 (19.71%)	13 (6.25%)	6.869 p=0.143
	Female (n=196)	102 (52.04%)	4 (2.04%)	47 (23.97%)	30 (15.30%)	13 (6.63%)	
Age (yrs)	(13-15) (n=211)	113 (53.55%)	4 (1.89%)	44 (20.85%)	36 (17.06%)	14 (6.63%)	1.123 p=0.891
	(16-19) (n=193)	110 (56.99%)	3 (1.55%)	33 (17.04%)	35 (18.13%)	12 (6.21%)	
SES	Upper (n=139)	72 (51.79%)	2 (1.44%)	26 (18.70%)	28 (20.14%)	11 (7.91%)	12.607 p=0.126
	Middle (n=210)	124 (59.04%)	4 (1.90%)	36 (17.14%)	38 (18.09%)	8 (3.81%)	
	Lower (n=55)	27 (49.09%)	1 (1.81%)	15 (27.27%)	5 (9.09%)	7 (12.72%)	
Total (N=404)		55%	2%	19%	17%	7%	

**Table 4 : Mean, standard deviation and Z-value of knowledge of sustainability and sustainable disposal behavior**

Demographic Factors		Mean	SD	Z test
Gender	Male (n=208)	10.333	1.858	0.000
	Female (n=196)	10.333	1.858	
Age	13-15 years (n=211)	10.334	1.856	0.018
	16-19 years (n=193)	10.331	1.860	
Socio-economic	Upper(n=139) and Middle (n=210)	10.334	1.856	0.045
Status	Middle (n=210) and Lower (n=55)	10.325	1.863	0.030
	Lower(n=55) and Upper(n=139)	10.317	1.863	0.059

**Table 5 : Mean, standard deviation and Z-value of attitude toward sustainable disposal**

Demographic Factors		Mean	SD	Z test
Gender	Male (n=208)	12.630	2.134	0.035
	Female (n=196)	12.623	2.134	
Age	13-15 years (n=211)	12.626	2.132	0.003
	16-19 years (n=193)	12.627	2.135	
Socioeconomic	Upper(n=139) and Middle (n=210)	12.626	2.132	0.036
Status	Middle (n=210)and Lower(n=55)	12.635	2.144	0.018
	Lower(n=55) and Upper(n=139)	12.641	2.140	0.042

**Table 6 : Mean, standard deviation and Z-value of perception about sustainability**

Demographic Factors		Mean	SD	Z test
Gender	Male (n=208)	8.403	1.407	0.018
	Female (n=196)	8.401	1.405	
Age	13-15years (n=211)	8.405	1.405	0.040
	16-19 years (n=193)	8.399	1.406	
Socioeconomic	Upper(n=139) and Middle (n=210)	8.416	1.422	0.034
Status	Middle (n=210)and Lower(n=55)	8.411	1.431	0.019
	Lower(n=55) and Upper(n=139)	8.415	1.430	0.006

Very few resell or just do not use.

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