APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Md Abdur Rahman Sayem
2	Student Number:	2503775
3	Email address:	2503775@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
4	Programme of Study:	MBA
5	Supervisor:	Dr Jean Wang

SECTION B: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	**UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice**	☐
2	**UWTSD Research Data Management Policy**	☐
3		☐
4		☐

SECTION C: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Consumer Perceptions of Greenwashing and Trust in Sustainability Marketing by UK Fast-Fashion Brands: A Qualitative Study Using Thematic Analysis		
2	Proposed start date:	05-07-2026	Proposed end date:	25-09-2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words in each section)			
3	**Purpose of Research Activity** This study examines the perception of sustainability by fast-fashion brands by consumers in the UK. Numerous brands encourage reused materials, sustainable production, and less negative impact on the environment. Nevertheless, some of the statements can be considered ambiguous, overstated, or deceptive by the			

	consumers. This is what is generally referred to as greenwashing. The paper will study the effects of such perceptions on brand trust and scepticism as well as future buying behaviour. (this box should expand as you type)
4	**Research Question** ● How do UK fast-fashion consumers interpret sustainability claims made by fashion brands? ● What factors lead consumers to perceive fast-fashion sustainability marketing as greenwashing? ● How does perceived greenwashing influence consumer trust and purchase intention? (this box should expand as you type)
5	**Aims of Research Activity** To explore how UK fast-fashion consumers perceive sustainability marketing claims and how perceived greenwashing influences their brand trust, scepticism and purchase attitudes. (this box should expand as you type)
6	**Objectives of Research Activity** ● To examine how UK consumers interpret sustainability claims made by fast-fashion brands through websites, labels and social media. ● To identify the key factors that lead consumers to perceive fast-fashion sustainability messages as greenwashing. ● To analyse how perceived greenwashing affects consumer trust, brand scepticism and future purchase intention. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed data collection methods (maximum 600 words)
7	Primary qualitative data will be gathered using semi-structured interviews in this study. This approach is appropriate as it provides an opportunity for individuals to be able to describe, their own experiences, opinions and interpretations in detail. The interviews will investigate the understanding of UK consumers on the meaning of sustainability claims by fast-fashion brands. They will also look at how trust, scepticism and buying behaviours are affected by perceived greenwashing. The research aim, objectives and questions will be used to guide the development of the interview guide. It will feature open-ended questions relating to sustainability awareness, brand communication, environmental claims, greenwashing concerns, and purchasing behaviour. Participants will also be asked to recall specific ads, labels, campaigns or social media posts they remember. Follow up questions will elicit further explanation and examples. This flexible structure will provide for the detailed discussion and will be consistent throughout all the interviews. 15 fast fashion consumers will be recruited using purposive sampling method in United Kingdom. Recruitment of participants will be in various online communities, social media and by means of university networks. Must be 18 years and older to participate. They have to reside in the UK and routinely buy their clothes from fast fashion companies. The participants should also be familiar with some sustainability marketing claims. Those who don't meet these requirements will not be involved. Interviews will be done online via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Interviews will be conducted over the internet to make it easy for people to attend from a variety of UK sites. The interview will be around 30-45 minutes long for each interview. An information sheet will be given to the participants prior to the interview. The document will include information on the purpose of the research, how they will participate, what will be kept confidential, and their right to withdraw. Consent (written, informed) will be obtained prior to data collection. Participants will be audio-recorded during each interview with their consent. Additionally, the researcher will make brief field notes while and after every interview. Important observations, ideas that have come forth, and potential follow-up issues will be documented in these notes. All recordings will be transcribed verbatim, so that participants' language and meaning are conveyed. Particpants' names will be removed by pseudonyms throughout the research process. Transcripts will be de-identified prior to analysis. Audio recordings, transcripts, consent forms and field notes will be kept in secure

	and password-protected folders. The information collected will only be accessed by the researcher. University ethical requirements and UK data protection principles will be adhered to in all research data handling. The final transcripts will be the key data used for thematic analysis. This data collection process will yield detailed evidence from the consumers' perspective regarding their understanding of sustainability marketing. It will also show you what factors lead to greenwashing perceptions and loss of brand trust.

SECTION D: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☒

If you have ticked NO to every question then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and you may skip section E and continue to section F.

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION E: Intended Participants

	Who are the intended participants:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐

2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: Complete this only if your participants cannot give consent. This includes animals (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	Ballpark figures are fine but make sure that you explain how you will identify and contact your participants. 15 participants are expected to take part in this study. A purposive sampling strategy will be used to recruit information-rich participants who regularly purchase fast-fashion clothing in the United Kingdom. Participants will be recruited through university networks, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn), and online consumer communities. Recruitment advertisements will briefly explain the study purpose, eligibility criteria, and voluntary nature of participation. *(this box should expand as you type)*
11	Who will the participants be?	The participants will be adults aged 18 years or above who currently reside in the United Kingdom and regularly purchase fast-fashion clothing. Participants should have experience of viewing sustainability marketing claims made by UK fast-fashion brands through websites, product labels, advertising campaigns, or social media. Individuals employed in the marketing departments of fast-fashion companies will not be recruited to avoid potential conflicts of interest. *(this box should expand as you type)*
12	How will you identify the participants?	Participants will be identified through purposive sampling based on predefined inclusion criteria. Interested individuals will respond to recruitment advertisements distributed through university networks and online platforms. A short screening questionnaire will confirm that potential participants are at least 18 years old, currently live in the United Kingdom, regularly purchase fast-fashion products, and have experience with sustainability marketing claims. Only those meeting these criteria will be invited to participate in the interviews. *(this box should expand as you type)*

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐

16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☐	☒
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	You should be able to tick YES for all of these questions. If not, then explain why not in this box. No items are marked "No." Questions 13, 17, 19, and 21 are not applicable because participants will receive advance information, complete interviews only, and receive appropriate closure. *(this box should expand as you type)*			

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	You should be able to tick NO for most of these questions. For any cases that you have ticked YES then provide details in this box. If you are using cameras/voice recorders to record interviews, then please state that in this box. *(this box should expand as you type)*			

SECTION F: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.	
1	**Risks to participants** For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information. If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter N/A and go skip to question 3.	
	Risk to participants: There are always risks. Do not write N/A unless you have no participants. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to participants:* Participants may experience mild discomfort when discussing distrust, purchasing habits, or negative opinions about fast-fashion brands. Personal data may also face confidentiality risks. Participants may skip questions or withdraw anytime. Pseudonyms, secure storage, informed consent, and removal of identifiable information will protect confidentiality. *(this box should expand as you type)*
2	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give	

	details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	The study does not intentionally examine highly sensitive topics. Participants may avoid uncomfortable questions, pause interviews, or withdraw without providing any reason. *(this box should expand as you type)*	
3	**Risks to the investigator** For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: There are always risks. Do not write NA. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:* The investigator may experience emotional fatigue, online communication difficulties, data-handling errors, or misunderstandings concerning professional conduct during participant interviews. Interviews will follow an approved guide and professional boundaries. Secure platforms, scheduled breaks, accurate records, and regular supervisor guidance will reduce risks. *(this box should expand as you type)*
4	**University/institutional risks** For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There are always risks. Do not write NA. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to the University:* Potential risks include data protection breaches, ethical complaints, reputational harm, or inaccurate presentation of participants' views and research findings. The researcher will follow university ethics procedures, UK data protection requirements, secure data-management practices, accurate reporting, and supervisory guidance. *(this box should expand as you type)*
5	**Environmental risks** For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to environment:* Environmental risk is minimal because interviews will occur online. Limited electricity use, digital storage, and electronic communication may create minor impacts. The study will minimise printing, use digital documents, avoid travel, store only necessary files, and delete data after the approved retention period. *(this box should expand as you type)*

SECTION G: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter skip this section and continue to section H.

1	**Feedback** What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	You don't need to email your participants with your final report. A good alternative is to set up an email address that they will be able to contact for further details or results. Participants will receive a short debrief after the interview. They may request further information or a summary of findings by contacting the researcher's email address. *(this box should expand as you type)*
2	**Informed consent** Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	If you are using a paper questionnaire then you should have the participants sign an appropriate consent form. These forms will count as personal data and should be noted as such in section J. If you are using an online questionnaire, then you should have a screen before the questions start that acts as a consent form, informing participants that by clicking on the NEXT button they are providing consent. Participants will receive an information sheet explaining the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and withdrawal rights. Written informed consent will be obtained before the interview begins. *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	**Confidentiality / Anonymity** Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	Do not collect names unless you really need them. Do not name participants or organisations in any research publications (including the thesis) without their explicit permission. Participants' identities will remain anonymous through pseudonyms. Personal information will be removed from transcripts, securely stored, and reported only in aggregated, non-identifiable form. *(this box should expand as you type)*

SECTION H: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	**YES**	**NO**
1	***"Personal data"*** *means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.*		☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	This includes audio/video data of participants but can also include IP addresses and usernames. Names, addresses and emails also count, as do consent forms. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	**YES**	**NO**
3	***"Special category data"*** *means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' –* *(a) racial or ethnic origin,*		☒

	(b) political opinions, *(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,* *(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),* *(e) physical or mental health or condition,* *(f) sexual life,* *(g) genetics,* *(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),*		
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	What counts as 'sensitive' will differ between cultures. Any information on behaviour that is not in accordance with cultural norms would count as sensitive personal data. N/A *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	**YES**	**NO**
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	If possible, save your data on computers that are secure and regularly backed up. Many cloud services only provide GDPR-compliant storage for business customers. An example of suitable text is given below. All data will be kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Audio/visual data will be transcribed and would be shown to participants to check accuracy of reporting. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Data Protection		
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	**YES**	**NO**
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒

18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and/or any international equivalent):		
	This includes data such as drafts of your thesis as well as experimental or survey data. An example of suitable text is given below. *All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All data transfers will be encrypted and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project.* All research data will be password-protected and securely stored in encrypted university cloud storage. Participants will receive unique codes, and data will be deleted after the required retention period. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
20	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Normally the principal researcher, possibly also the supervisor and, if the project has an industrial partner, a representative of that partner. Possibly also external examiner or second marker? Access will be limited to the principal researcher, dissertation supervisor, and authorised university examiners where necessary for academic assessment and quality assurance purposes. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
21	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Usually the principal researcher. The principal researcher will act as the data custodian and will be responsible for secure storage, management, confidentiality, and disposal of all research data. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
22	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form.		
	All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected, and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. Data will be stored electronically in encrypted, password-protected university cloud storage. Audio recordings and transcripts will be retained until project completion, then securely deleted according to university policy. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
22	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	☒	
23	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	☒	

SECTION I: Use of AI tools

Use of generative AI and other AI-based tools There are a number of ethical issues relating to the use of generative AI and other AI-based tools, including data security, output bias, and output errors. In general you should assume that any generative AI or other AI-	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

based tool that you pay to use is more secure and accurate than one which is free to use. Will the research use AI tools to do any of the following:				
1	Capture data?	☐	☒	☐
2	Generate and/or edit text?	☐	☒	☐
3	Generate graphics?	☐	☒	☐
4	Generate video?	☐	☒	☐
5	Generate sound/music?	☐	☒	☐
6	Generate code?	☐	☒	☐
7	Generate synthetic data?	☐	☒	☐
8	Analyse data?	☐	☒	☐
9	Analyse personal or sensitive data?	☐	☒	☐
10	Classify data?	☐	☒	☐
11	Do you intend to use the free version of any AI tools?	☐	☒	☐
If you have answered **YES** to any of questions O1-O11, please provide justification detailing why this is necessary for the research.				
12	State which AI tool or tools you will be using, and where they are based (or store their data – you may need to check their webpages or user agreement for this). If you are planning to use Copilot then say if you're using the UWTSD version of it or the public version. You should also show how you are complying with current UWTSD guidance/policy of the use of AI. Chat Gpt will be used for the grammar correction and some conceptual idea but no ai tools will be use for any kind of content writing. *(this box should expand as you type)*			

SECTION J: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants**.** In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	**Signature of applicant:**	Md. Abdur Rahman	**Date: 17-07-2026**
2	Supervisor:	Dr Jean Wang	**Date: 17-07-2026**
3	Signature:		