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**THE INFLUENCE OF SUSTAINABLE SOURCING ON CONSUMER TRUST AND
BRAND REPUTATION IN THE UK FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRY**

An Extended Literature Review

A dissertation submitted for the award of the Master of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how sustainable sourcing influences consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. It addresses a central problem in the literature: sourcing governance is often examined operationally, while consumer research frequently treats sustainability as a broad corporate social responsibility or marketing construct. An Extended Literature Review synthesises peer-reviewed studies, regulatory guidance and relevant industry evidence published primarily from 2018 onwards, with UK-focused evidence prioritised where available and international studies used to illuminate mechanisms across relevant product categories in contemporary UK consumer markets today. The analysis integrates signalling theory, stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory and trust perspectives to explain how hidden sourcing practices become consumer-relevant evidence. Findings indicate that sustainable sourcing does not produce automatic reputational value. Supplier standards, due diligence, traceability, verification and remediation create the foundation for credibility, but their influence depends on clear, accurate, specific, material and independently supported disclosure. Consumer comprehension, authenticity, value congruence and prior reputation condition whether evidence is accepted as trustworthy. Greenwashing, supplier misconduct, weak multi-tier control and information overload can reverse the pathway and transfer upstream failure to the focal brand. The dissertation proposes a conceptual framework linking sourcing substance, evidence architecture, consumer interpretation, trust judgement and brand reputation. It concludes that managers should govern sustainability claims as evidence systems rather than promotional statements, connecting procurement practice with comprehensible communication and accountable remediation. The study contributes a conditional explanation of the sourcing-to-reputation relationship and identifies priorities for empirical testing through experiments, longitudinal studies and multi-tier case research.

Keywords: sustainable sourcing; consumer trust; brand reputation; supply-chain governance; UK FMCG

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The UK fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry provides a demanding context in which to evaluate whether corporate sustainability activity becomes credible to consumers. Lacy, Long and Spindler (2020) defined FMCG as a large-volume industry, so that it encompasses regularly-bought food, beverage, personal-care and household goods, the environmental impacts of which are dispersed over international value chains. This disconnection between buy and impact generates an evidential challenge: buyers have a chance to evaluate cost and short-term product efficiency, whereas they cannot see how suppliers are chosen, where raw-materials come, or whether they cause environmental damage. Besides, Young (2018) also stressed that sustainable sourcing is not just a label in procurement; it is a governance capacity that touches on supplier standards, due diligence, traceability, corrective action and verification at various levels. Koberg and Longoni (2019) asserted that sustainable supply-chain performance requires governance beyond the immediate suppliers since significant risks are often found upstream. Their discussion is operationally significant, but it fails to capture in detail how such governance becomes significant in consumer markets.

1.2 Background of the research topic

A firm may improve supplier control without producing an intelligible signal for consumers; equally, persuasive sustainability communication may lack equivalent operational substance. The main question thus becomes whether good sourcing practices are converted to evidence that can be identified, assessed and relied on by the consumers. Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021) defined disclosure, clarity and accuracy as the determinants of transparency but not the amount of information published. The framework they develop questions the belief that the more supply-chain information is available, the more trust is generated. Wu et al. (2021) concurred with this finding, finding that food-system trust is based on product assurances (e.g. certification, origin and traceability, and confidence in the providers) and trust in the actors offering these assurances. Nuojua, Pahl and Thompson (2024) however demonstrated a significant discrepancy in the interpretation of the UK consumers of the environmental packaging attributes. Information can then be kept ineffective, or can create confusion, where the consumer will not be able to relate a technical assertion with an

environmental consequence. Sustainable sourcing is to be reviewed, therefore, as a process of credibility, rather than a desirable brand attribute.

1.3 Research problem or gap in the Literature

The modern managerial dilemma is to converse complicated sustainable sourcing conducts into plausible consumer-facing statements. White et al. (2025) claimed that sustainability marketing is currently operating at organisational, consumer and systemic levels, which enhances the necessity of the consistency between the functioning practices and communication. In accordance with this change, Competition and Markets Authority (CMA, 2021) has defined that the environmental claims should be true, supported and reflect the lifecycle of the product, and the further clarifications have stated that the brands are not relieved of the responsibility of their suppliers (CMA, 2026). Nonetheless, increased disclosure generates a paradox where it is accurate, but can lead to a greater reputational harm when discrepancies arise. De Freitas Netto et al. (2020) described greenwashing as a form of misleading environmental communication and Gatti, Seele and Rademacher (2019) pointed out that greenwashing has unclear regulations. There is also empirical evidence that perceived greenwashing weakens consumer ratings and trust (Szabo and Webster, 2021), but the impacts of reputation on capability may be moderating (Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis, 2023). Moreover, when the supplier misbehaves, it can also produce vicarious greenwashing, tainting brand credibility (Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele, 2021), and Persakis et al. (2025) found that these inconsistencies significantly undermine consumer trust and brand reputation.

1.4 Urgency or timeliness of the topic

There is substantial evidence that is fragmented. Supply-chain scholarship describes supplier governance, traceability and multi-tier accountability, but generally analyzes operational or inter-organisational performance, rather than consumer interpretation. Responsible activity is associated by marketing scholarship with trust, loyalty and reputation, often through a broad category like corporate social responsibility or green marketing. Iglesias et al. (2020) indicated that customer trust and loyalty can be enhanced through responsible co-creation, and Huo et al. (2022) conceptualized brand trust as the link between corporate responsibility and sustainable purchase intentions. However, these methods do not separate the unique input of sourcing evidence. Generalized actions might mask the reaction of consumers to proven procurement,

overall brand values or persuasive messages. Another weakness is that of causal direction. It is possible that trust intermediates the impact of sourcing evidence on the reputation, however current reputation can also affect the initial belief of a claim among consumers. The argument of Golob et al. (2022) was that sustainability could enable the transformative role of brands, and the results will be determined by the consistency between brand identity, stakeholder expectations, and organisational behaviour. Reputation can thus exist as both antecedent and concurrently as a boundary condition and as a result. Predominantly cross-sectional evidence cannot separate these possibilities conclusively. The gap is therefore not the lack of sustainability research, but the poor adoption of operational sourcing, consumer credibility and reputational effects within UK FMCG.

1.5 Research aim and objectives

To critically synthesise contemporary evidence on how sustainable sourcing influences consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG industry, and to develop an integrated framework explaining the mechanisms and conditions that shape this relationship.

1.5.1 Research objectives

- To critically examine sustainable sourcing as an FMCG governance practice involving supplier selection, accountability, traceability and verification.
- To evaluate evidence linking sustainable sourcing to consumer trust and brand reputation.
- To analyse credibility, authenticity and value congruence as explanatory mechanisms, alongside greenwashing and supplier misconduct as rival explanations.
- To identify methodological contradictions, sectoral limitations and UK-specific evidence gaps.
- To develop evidence-informed theoretical and managerial implications for UK FMCG organisations.

1.6 Research questions

- How does sustainable sourcing influence consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG industry?

- Which credibility mechanisms, boundary conditions and rival explanations strengthen, weaken or reverse the relationship between sustainable sourcing and consumer trust and brand reputation?

1.7 Scope of the review

The review is based on the consumer-facing categories of FMCG in the UK, such as food, beverages, personal care and household products. Sustainable sourcing is also restricted to the selection of suppliers, standards, responsibility, traceability, monitoring and verification. The results are consumer trust and brand reputation; mechanisms are credibility, authenticity and value congruence and boundary conditions or rival explanations are greenwashing, supplier misconduct, consumer scepticism and previous reputation. The primary evidence timeframe is 2018-2026, and prior literature is kept only to a vital theoretical background. The UK research and regulation are given priority with international evidence on consumer-goods incorporated in cases where mechanisms can be transferred. Research focusing on operational efficiency, business-to-business performance or generic sustainability perceptions without sourcing-to-consumer connection is not included.

1.8 Structure of the dissertation

Subsequent to this introduction is the methodology chapter that describes the semi-systematic Extended Literature Review, database strategy, eligibility criteria, quality appraisal and thematic synthesis. Evidence of sustainable sourcing governance, credibility and trust, brand reputation, greenwashing and boundary conditions is incorporated in the thematic review. The discussion provides answers to the research questions based on convergent and contradictory findings and developing an integrated framework. The implications chapter transforms the synthesis into theoretical, managerial and policy implications on the UK FMCG organisations. The conclusion summarizes the results and addresses the limitations of evidence and sets priorities regarding the future research.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the literature was located, selected, appraised and synthesised in order to answer the two research questions on sustainable sourcing, consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. The dissertation is not a primary empirical study, so methodological quality is more related to the way in which the evidence base is presented, transparent, relevant and critical, than to the sample recruitment. A semi-systematic review design is used due to the subject matter spanning across the various topics of supply-chain governance, sustainability marketing, consumer trust, brand reputation and greenwashing. The inclusion and exclusion of conceptually important branding and credibility studies in a narrowly bounded systematic-effectiveness review would be potentially problematic, and a traditional narrative review would not have an auditable basis for inclusion/exclusion.

Semi-systematic review logic may also be appropriate for fields that are interdisciplinary but lack the theoretical structure that would warrant a systematic review. When a field is interdisciplinary but lacks the theoretical structure to support a systematic review, the search, screening, and synthesis decisions should be made explicit (Snyder, 2019; Paul and Criado, 2020). The method is not simply procedural, but rather analytical. The core methodological challenge lies in the fact that many studies have touched upon the topic of sustainability generally and corporate social responsibility in particular, whereas this dissertation deals with the more specific process by which sustainable sourcing can become visible, credible and reputationally meaningful to consumers. The review thus takes relevance, construct precision and explanatory power as methodological tests.

2.2 Search strategy

A protocol was used for disciplining the review prior to detailed interpretation. This is important because otherwise, an ELR may be more susceptible to confirmation bias, particularly if the topic is of managerial interest and if positive sustainability assertions are more easily seen than opposing arguments. The protocol differentiates searching from screening, appraisal and

synthesis, such that the rules of eligibility are not revised in a post-hoc manner. Table 1 summarises the protocol used for the review.

Search was carried out in a staged manner. First, mixtures of the 5 concept clusters were queried in both Scopus and Web of Science, as well as Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight, whereas citation chaining and finding relevant reports not consistently indexed were done within Google Scholar. Search terms were tailored to the syntax of each database, but the principle logic was the same: a sourcing word needed to be accompanied by a trust, reputation, credibility, transparency, or greenwashing word. This minimized the chances of the evidence base being dominated by a wide sustainability search. Database, search date, title, year, DOI or URL, sector, geography and initial relevance decision were logged against each of the recovered records. This was done by eliminating duplicates, after which titles and abstracts were screened. The full texts were then checked against the inclusion and exclusion criteria in Section 2.6, and the reason why they were not included was noted. Citation chaining was applied in order to highlight the potentially relevant items only; it did not omit the same eligibility and quality-assessment criteria. This made sure that the origin of databases did not dictate inclusion and the eventual synthesis was in line with the research questions.

2.3 Databases and sources

The protocol makes the dissertation stronger by making the review replicable, but also does not assume the field is so easy that a single-effect model can be created. It also maintains the review in line with the research question: to synthesise evidence on influence, mechanisms and boundary conditions, rather than to treat studies as if each design has equal inferential weight.

Table 1: Review protocol for the Extended Literature Review

Source: Author

Protocol element	Final specification
Review design	Secondary, semi-systematic Extended Literature Review with thematic narrative synthesis.
Primary databases	Scopus, Web of Science, Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect and Emerald Insight.
Supplementary searching	Google Scholar used only for citation chaining and retrieval checks, not as the main evidence base.
Coverage	2018-2026, with pre-2018 exceptions restricted to foundational theory or method.
Geographical logic	Two streams: UK-specific evidence and transferable international FMCG/consumer-goods evidence.
Screening	Deduplication, title/abstract review, full-text eligibility and reason-coded exclusions.
Appraisal	Conceptual clarity, design fit, sample adequacy, measurement validity, analytical transparency and contextual relevance.
Synthesis	Deductive and inductive thematic coding, narrative integration, evidence weighting and contradiction logging.

2.4 Keywords and search terms

The five concept clusters that were used as the basis for the searches were: sustainable sourcing, transparency/verification, consumer trust, brand reputation, and negative credibility mechanisms. The information in the database was intentionally designed to be wide enough to include relevant terms like ethical sourcing, sustainable procurement, or transparency in supply chains, but not so broad as to include general climate, logistics or operational-performance studies that have no relevance to the consumer. Boolean operators were applied consistently; phrase searching and truncation were also used, and modified for the use of each database. Table 2 shows the final search strings, which constitute the core search framework.

Table 2: Keywords and search terms

Source: Author

Database	Search field	Core search string
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Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY	("sustainable sourcing" OR "responsible sourcing" OR "ethical sourcing" OR "sustainable procurement" OR "supplier sustainability" OR "supply chain transparency" OR traceab*) AND ("consumer trust" OR "brand trust" OR "green trust" OR credibility OR authenticity) AND ("brand reputation" OR "corporate reputation" OR "brand image" OR "brand legitimacy") AND (FMCG OR "fast-moving consumer goods" OR "consumer goods" OR food OR beverage OR packaging OR "personal care")
Web of Science	Topic	TS= (("sustainable sourcing" OR "responsible sourcing" OR "ethical sourcing" OR "sustainable procurement" OR "supply chain transparency" OR traceab*) AND ("consumer trust" OR "brand trust" OR credibility OR authenticity) AND ("brand reputation" OR "corporate reputation" OR "brand image")) AND (FMCG OR "fast-moving consumer goods" OR "consumer goods" OR food OR packaging))
Business Source Premier	Abstract/Subject	("sustainable sourcing" OR "responsible sourcing" OR "ethical sourcing" OR "sustainable procurement" OR "supply chain transparency") AND ("consumer trust" OR "brand trust" OR credibility OR authenticity OR greenwashing) AND ("brand reputation" OR "corporate reputation" OR "brand image")

Science Direct	Title/Abstract/Keywords	("sustainable sourcing" OR "responsible sourcing" OR "sustainable procurement" OR "supply chain transparency" OR traceability) AND ("consumer trust" OR "brand trust" OR credibility OR authenticity OR greenwashing) AND ("brand reputation" OR "brand image" OR "consumer goods")
Emerald Insight	All fields	("sustainable sourcing" OR "responsible sourcing" OR "ethical sourcing" OR "sustainable procurement") AND ("consumer trust" OR credibility OR authenticity OR greenwashing) AND ("brand reputation" OR "brand image" OR FMCG OR "consumer goods")

2.5 Time frame for included publications

The core time frame is 2018-2026 due to recent changes of the topic in terms of supply-chain transparency, environmental assertions and consumer scepticism. Archived studies were only kept to provide background theory, e.g., signalling, review-method guidance. A two-stream geographical search was also employed. Stream A put priority on evidence of UK FMCG since the dissertation is UK-based. Stream B retained international consumer-goods studies in which the mechanism was transferable, such as a study that described the impact of traceability, certification, perceived authenticity or greenwashing on trust. This avoids a false trade-off between contextual relevance and theoretical depth.

Two plausible biases were also predetermined not to be affected by the search strategy. To begin with, it would be too limited to use exclusively UK-specific terminology since numerous important processes are investigated in the context of international consumer-goods relations. Second, the application of general sustainability terminologies would lead to an evidence base that is characterized by generic CSR and green-marketing research. The last approach is one that integrates scope management and conceptual flexibility: UK research has a

higher contextual authority, yet non-UK research is employed where it elucidates mechanisms that can be reasonably moved across consumer-goods markets.

2.6 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The research questions controlled the eligibility decisions and not by the presence of the key words themselves. This is significant since research may include the word sustainability without adding much to the sourcing-to-consumer channel that is under investigation. On the other hand, transparency, assurance or greenwashing research also might be applicable in other situations without the specific term sustainable sourcing. Table 3 relates the inclusion and exclusion criteria at full-text stage.

Table 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Source: Author

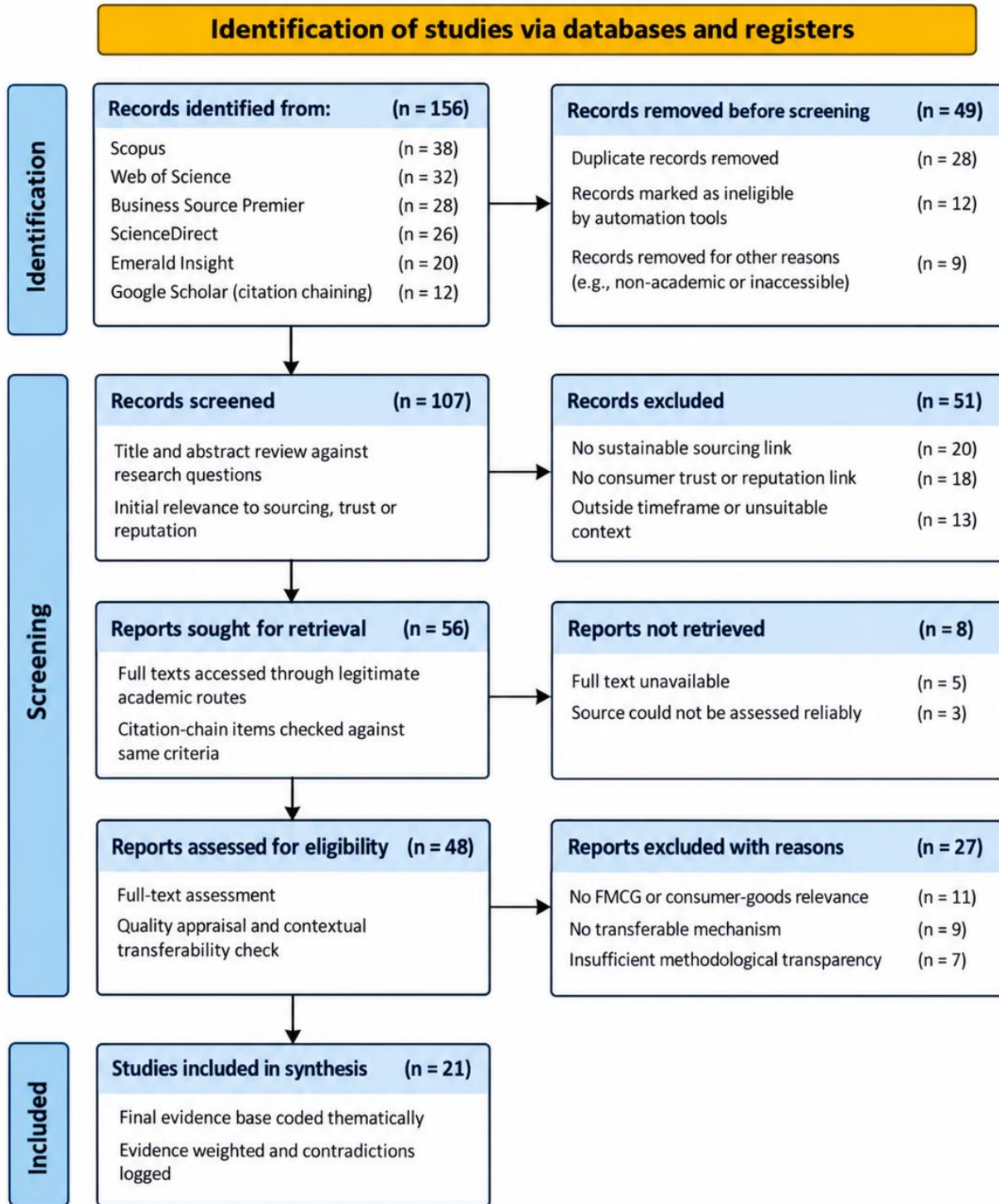
Dimension	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles; high-quality academic books or chapters where conceptually necessary; authoritative UK regulatory guidance.	Opinion pieces, promotional material, unsupported web commentary and conference abstracts without a full paper.
Date	2018-2026; earlier sources only for foundational theory or method.	Pre-2018 empirical studies where adequate contemporary evidence exists.
Topic relevance	Direct treatment of sustainable sourcing, supply-chain transparency, green claims, consumer trust or brand reputation.	Studies concerned only with operational efficiency or environmental performance without consumer or reputational relevance.
Sector/context	UK FMCG and consumer-goods studies; international evidence with clearly transferable mechanisms.	Highly specialised B2B or industrial contexts lacking a defensible connection to FMCG consumer evaluation.
Methodological adequacy	Transparent design, sufficient evidence, clear constructs and interpretable outcomes.	Untraceable claims, duplicate reports, unclear methods or studies lacking usable findings.
Language/access	English-language full texts available through legitimate academic or open-access routes.	Non-English items without reliable translation and sources whose full text could not be assessed.

These standards underpin the texture of the review, ensuring that it does not degenerate into a generic sustainability-marketing debate. Absence of credible evidence of linkage between

sourcing evidence and consumer level trust or reputation is thus the most significant exclusion rule. Borderline studies were only retained in which they could be explicitly mapped to one of the research questions.

2.7 Screening process (PRISMA-style)

The study-selection process utilized PRISMA 2020 screening sequence due to the transparency offered by PRISMA to facilitate the transition between identification and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the chapter does not make excessive claims that the dissertation is a clinical/effect-size systematic review. PRISMA 2020 is a screening and reporting process in a semi-systematic ELR, such that decisions can be traced and the synthesis continues to be conceptually integrative. This is a significant difference: PRISMA enhances the transparency of reporting, but intellectual activities of the chapter are thematic and explanatory instead of statistical.



Note: Record counts and exclusion decisions are traceable to database exports and the retained search log.

Source: Author-developed PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (adapted from Page et al., 2021).

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 screening sequence used in the review

Source: Author

Figure 1 shows the sequence of the screening and is backed by the search log retained. The screening process was done by reviewing titles and abstracts followed by full-text eligibility. The reason-coded exclusions were to enable the discussion to differentiate weak evidence, missing evidence and contradictory evidence instead of considering all non-included literature as irrelevant. This is important as non-inclusion can convey a number of different messages: a study may be irrelevant, inaccessible, have methodological weakness, or simply relevant to sustainability in general, but not the particular sourcing-trust-reputation pathway that is the focus of this dissertation.

2.8 Quality assessment of included studies

Quality appraisal was required since the final synthesis relies on evidence strength and not the number of supportive studies. Journal ranking was considered contextual information and not used with study-level appraisal as an alternative. Quantitative studies were assessed for construct validity, sampling logic, common-method risk and causal overstatement. Qualitative research was evaluated in terms of sampling transparency, analytical traceability and interpretive fit. The reviews were evaluated based on search reproducibility, evaluation methods and their synthesis clarity. Table 4 reveals the weighting of evidence to the dissertation.

Table 4: Quality appraisal and evidence-weighting rubric

Source: Author

Appraisal dimension	High-weight evidence	Lower-weight evidence
Construct precision	Defines sustainable sourcing, trust, reputation, transparency or greenwashing clearly and measures them distinctly.	Uses broad sustainability or CSR language without separating sourcing from general responsible behaviour.
Design strength	Experimental, longitudinal, triangulated or theoretically coherent design; clear limitations.	Single-source cross-sectional design with causal claims stronger than the method supports.
Contextual relevance	UK FMCG evidence or transferable consumer-goods mechanism.	Context too distant from consumer-facing FMCG evaluation.
Analytical transparency	Methods, sample, analysis and findings are traceable.	Opaque method, unsupported assertions or unclear relationship between evidence and conclusion.
Contradictory value	Explains boundary conditions, failures or negative cases.	Reports only positive associations without considering alternative explanations.

The extraction matrix included the author, year, geography, sector, theoretical lens, method, sample, sourcing construct, trust or reputation finding, moderator, moderator, principal finding, limitation and relevance to each research question. It was necessary to decouple findings and author interpretation since a number of studies were able to derive causal and reputational effects based on cross-sectional perception data. The appraisal thus safeguards the discussion later on to avoid overstatement of influence where the evidence can only yield an association.

2.9 Analytical method: how the literature was examined

Thematic synthesis was the method of analysis of the literature with references to the principle of coding and building of themes in Braun and Clarke (2006), but being aware that an ELR needs not just the constructive category building as a descriptive form of analysis. The dissertation framework formed the deductive codes; sourcing substance, visibility, verification, authenticity, value congruence, consumer trust, brand reputation, greenwashing, supplier misconduct, consumer scepticism and prior reputation. The use of inductive coding was preserved to allow the identification of unexpected mechanisms in particular cases when in the studies, the authors explained the phenomenon of information overload, expectation violation, or reputational buffering. Synthesis involved cross-studies on four questions of analysis: whether sustainable sourcing is operationally substantial; whether evidence can be perceived and interpreted by the consumers; whether trust is a mediator of reputational assessment; and whether the presence of boundary conditions undermines or reverses the anticipated correlation.

It also directly addresses reverse causality: sustainable sourcing can create reputation, but reputation may also affect initial beliefs in sourcing claims. Contradictions were thus recorded as indicators of boundary conditions not seen as errors to be swept out. The last themes were narrowed by inquiring whether the theme responded to a research question, described a mechanism or explained a boundary condition. Common claims about sustainability that were repeated were not considered adequate as themes. This served to ensure that the next chapter after the methodology would not turn to an operation sourcing and then consumer credibility and then reputational consequences, but instead would turn towards a general discussion of environmental responsibility.

No human subjects or personal information were involved, so the ethical risk is concentrated on evidence management. The primary integrity obligations included proper

attribution, true representation of original research, clear cut decisions on exclusion and avoidance of selective citation. The eligibility was not decided with AI tools and did not produce any unprovable references; the inclusion of the source relies on the literature that is retained and the review protocol. This is relevant since the subject is commercially and normatively appealing, posing a risk of the dissertation skewing to positive sustainability narratives, instead of evidence of scepticism, greenwashing or reputational contamination of suppliers. In general, the methodology is suitable as it corresponds to the type of research problem. A semi-systematic ELR enables the dissertation to incorporate the literatures of supply-chain and branding, and still follow the transparent principles of search, screening, appraisal and synthesis. The PRISMA 2020 used as a screening sequence, paired with quality appraisal and contradiction logging will ensure that the final discussion will be able to answer the research questions critically, instead of summarising sustainability claims. The chapter thus offers the factual foundation of the thematic review further.

CHAPTER THREE: THEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW / ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter develops the central thematic review by synthesising evidence on how sustainable sourcing influences consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG industry. In line with the Extended Literature Review brief, it is organised through four themes rather than by author: theoretical foundations, empirical findings, emerging debates and research gaps. The structure suits the literature since the literature is disjointed in the areas of sustainable supply-chain management, sustainability marketing, transparency, traceability, greenwashing, trust and reputation scholarship. The chapter addresses the two research questions directly: how sustainable sourcing affects consumer trust and brand reputation, and what mechanisms or boundary conditions support, weaken, or give the relationship the opposite direction. This analytical stand is that sustainable sourcing can be consumer relevant when the standards of procurement, the accountability of suppliers, traceability, and verification are translated into acceptable market signals.

The review also takes a critical stance towards the assumed positivity of Sustainability. Supply-chain literature demonstrates that sourcing is linked to multi-tier governance (Young, 2018; Koberg and Longoni, 2019), and marketing literature tends to quantify the level of broad CSR or green positioning. Positive relationships between responsibility and trust and reputation can consequently conceal the existence of a weak relationship between sourcing evidence and consumer judgement, particularly when sourcing evidence is mediated by greenwashing or supplier malpractice. In line with Chapter 2 protocol, the primary interpretive emphasis in this review is on the recent literature. Older literature is only retained in the sense that it has defined a theory behind which a line of inquiry, or has established a construct which is commonly used and which later studies do further study. They are not thus considered direct evidence of existing UK FMCG impacts; their transferability is evaluated in conjunction with the circumstances, design, and outcome measured.

3.2 Theme 1: Theoretical Foundations

3.2.1 Sustainable sourcing as governance rather than a promotional claim

The first theoretical issue is definitional. Sustainable sourcing is not something that can be made to pass as a green statement or buying choice. It is a governmental custom whereby companies choose, oversee and cultivate suppliers in line with environmental, social and ethical requirements. Koberg and Longoni (2019) demonstrated that sustainable supply-chain management should be examined in terms of governance mechanisms and environmental, social and economic consequences, whereas Hastig and Sodhi (2020) discovered that the conditions of implementation are capability, collaboration and governance. Through these definitions, sourcing is perceived as a system of management but not a marketing outcome. The difference is important as UK FMCG brands are sold based on statements that the consumers cannot ascertain directly. A logo, origin claim or recycling statement may be displayed to consumers, but they seldom require a look at supplier audits or remediation records. Figure 2 reveals that green claims also can often be unproven, ambiguous, or lack proper evidence, indicating that there is a high risk of greenwashing product descriptions.



Figure 2: How Green are Green Claims?

Source: (Chan, 2025)

According to Young (2018), responsible sourcing relies on certification, due diligence, and traceability, whereas Koberg and Longoni (2019) demonstrated that risks often exist outside of direct suppliers. Sustainable sourcing thus does not only have to do with better selection of

suppliers but also with regulating opaque multi-tier systems in a manner that can subsequently facilitate plausible consumer affirmations.

Critically, the governance definition does not allow the review to consider all sustainability communication as evidence to demonstrate sustainable sourcing. A brand can convey responsibility without demonstrating supplier-level content, whereas another can do a better job of sourcing but cannot create trust because the evidence is not available. Koeborg and Longoni (2019) claimed that sustainable supply-chain capacity should be ensured on the levels of governance and business model, yet the consumer-interpretation connection is still in its infancy. The transferability of the literature on sourcing is, however, required to be direct. The discussion by Young (2018) is about metals and conflict-mineral certification instead of consumer behaviour of UK FMCG. It thus educates the logic of assurance and multi-tier governance, but it alone will not show how certification develops trust in food, household or personal-care brands.

3.2.2 Signalling theory and the credibility of sourcing evidence

Signalling theory offers the most direct theoretical bridge between hidden sourcing practices and consumer judgement. Riva et al. (2024) demonstrate that sustainability positioning may serve as a quality and responsibility indicator, although its impact on green brand trust is diluted by scepticism. Information asymmetry in UK FMCG is self-evident: brands have more information than consumers do; they are aware of how they choose suppliers, of the sources of their ingredients, of labour standards, of their packaging material and verification protocols. The signal is thus best when it is particular, externally verifiable and in line with the history of the brand. Wu et al. (2021) support this claim by demonstrating that food-system trust is contingent on the trustworthiness of information, institutions and actors. As shown in Figure 3, the UK sustainable-claims substantiation market will experience a 12.2% CAGR during 2026-2036, given that India, nevertheless, is expected to grow at the quickest rate of 18.2% during the same period.

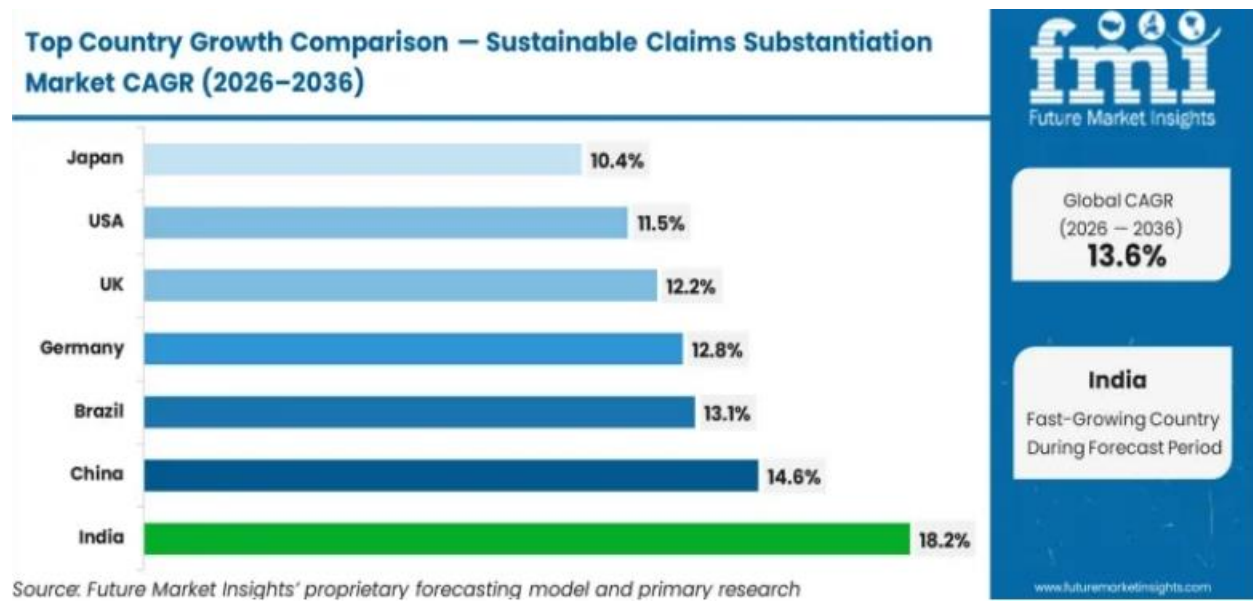


Figure 3: UK's sustainable-claims substantiation market

Source: (Sharma, 2026)

Their reasoning is supported by the fact that trust in FMCG frequently occurs in the framework of low-involvement purchasing, in which consumers do not have enough time to handle complicated sustainability information. Huo et al. (2022) also connect CSR with sustainable purchase intentions based on brand trust and loyalty, whereas Asioli, Aschemann-Witzel and Nayga (2020) warn that additional labels or information may not necessarily induce understanding. Hence, sustainable sourcing supports trust not by making visible, but by a plausible signal architecture: specificity of a given claim, assurance by a third party, traceability, consistency with past behaviour, and compatibility with the product category. The analytical value of signalling theory is that it isolates operational content and reception of claims. Orazi and Chan (2020) also revealed that certain negative evaluations may increase in the case of specific environmental claims that are refuted.

3.2.3 Stakeholder, legitimacy and reputation perspectives

Stakeholder theory offers a broader set of reasons why sustainable sourcing is a source of reputational importance. Jones, Harrison and Felps (2018) believed that sustainable advantage was created when stakeholder relationships were developed using trust, cooperation and information sharing. With FMCG, sustainable sourcing is influenced by consumer expectations, in addition to NGOs, regulators, retailers, investors, employees and suppliers. The broader

stakeholder field is that consumer trust is not established solely on a product-by-product basis; rather, it is also shaped by broader popular discourses regarding brand responsibility. According to Golob et al. (2022), having identity, stakeholder expectations and organisational behaviour aligned, brands can transform by assuming a sustainability role. Their reasoning is convincing as it places reputation in the context of being a socially negotiated judgment, rather than a mere outcome of advertising. This interpretation is further enhanced by the legitimacy theory. Liang, Hu and Meng (2020) demonstrated that perceived fit between reported values and real behaviour is the key factor to legitimacy, as consumers draw a distinction between substantive sustainable orientation and corporate hypocrisy.

However, the theory of legitimacy also exposes a risk: companies are able to seek symbolic legitimacy by acting responsibly without a need to integrate such an aspect into procurement practice. Gatti, Seele and Rademacher (2019) clarified that greenwashing continues when voluntary CSR communication surpasses substantiated evidence, whereas Liang, Hu and Meng (2020) demonstrated that perceived inconsistency may harm quality perceptions and trust. As shown in Figure 4, greenwashing is a worldwide issue; regulatory inquiry and company fines have been noted in the United Kingdom, European Union, the United States, Italy, China and Japan.



Figure 4: Greenwashing vs Authentic Sustainability

Source: (Senior Copywriter, 2024)

Here, the identical legitimacy pressure that promotes sustainable sourcing can promote overstated claims. The theory thus explains the positive route as well as the competition theory. Reputation scholarship views brand reputation as a cumulative judgement, and not an attitude. Pajuelo-Moreno, Barroso-Méndez and Gallardo-Vazquez (2024) discovered a positive disclosure-reputation relationship in 92 empirical studies, and Barroso-Méndez, Pajuelo-Moreno and Gallardo-Vazquez (2024) demonstrated that firm and sector characteristics contribute to the variation in the relationship. Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023) also discovered that perceived greenwashing can be mitigated by the ability reputation. Reputation is thus a consequence of credible sourcing and a lens through which consumers discern sourcing assertions.

3.2.4 Trust, authenticity and value congruence as conceptual mechanisms

The key mediating concept in the dissertation is trust since sustainable sourcing cannot have a meaningful impact on reputation unless the customers consider the brand to be trustworthy and truthful. Wu et al. (2021) modeled food-system trust to be dependent upon credibility of information, institutions, and actors, whereas Huo et al. (2022) modeled CSR to be dependent upon sustainable purchase intentions based on brand trust and loyalty. The dimensions, when applied to UK FMCG, are the ones that are overlaid on sustainable sourcing. Ability is that the brand demonstrates the ability to handle complicated supply chains. Benevolence is that it seems to have concern about its environmental and social effects beyond short-term profits. Credibility and value congruence perfect the trust mechanism. Iglesias et al. (2020) and Huo et al. (2022) demonstrated that responsibility has the potential to affect trust and loyalty, yet their constructs of CSR are more comprehensive than sourcing. Their evidence substantiates the trust pathway indirectly as well as demonstrates the reason why this dissertation needs to detach sourcing evidence on general responsible branding. Figure 5 is a comparison of the sustainability efforts of Tesco, Marks and Spencer and Aldi UK and shows the difference in their objectives to reduce emissions, transform to net-zero, source sustainably, and use recyclable packaging.



Figure 5: Supermarket Sustainability Strategy Is Reshaping UK Grocery Retail

Source: (Petto, 2025)

The synthesis of the theoretical basis is now possible. Sustainable sourcing can have an impact on consumer trust and brand reputation in that it can narrow the information asymmetry, prove to the stakeholders that they are responsible, and build legitimacy and brand integrity. This route, however, is not automatic but conditional. A sourcing claim should be operationally based, effectively conveyed, understandable to the consumers, and not subject to contradictions between supplier malpractices or greenwashing. The theoretical body of literature consequently supports a suggested contingent indirect route: sustainable sourcing could impact brand reputation through trust, and the correlation could be modulated by the quality of transparency, reputation previously, consumer scepticism, specificity of claims, third-party assurance, and demonstration of actual supplier control. It is not an empirical model, but a conceptual suggestion.

Table 5: Theoretical lenses used in the thematic review

Source: Author

Lens	Core argument	Application to this dissertation
Signalling theory	Signals reduce information asymmetry when they are costly, credible and interpretable.	Sourcing evidence can reduce consumer uncertainty, but vague claims may fail as signals.
Stakeholder theory	Firms are evaluated by multiple audiences with competing expectations.	FMCG reputation is shaped by consumers, regulators, NGOs, suppliers and retailers.
Legitimacy theory	Firms seek acceptance by aligning with social norms and expectations.	Sustainable sourcing can build moral legitimacy, but symbolic claims create greenwashing risk.
Commitment-trust theory	Trust and commitment explain durable relationship outcomes.	Consumer trust mediates the influence of credible sourcing on loyalty and reputation.
Reputation theory	Reputation reflects accumulated judgements about past behaviour and future reliability.	Brand reputation is both an outcome of sourcing credibility and a filter for claim interpretation.

3.3 Theme 2: Empirical Findings

3.3.1 Evidence that sourcing governance can support trust

Empirical evidence widely confirms that responsible supply-chain practices can enhance consumer trust, albeit with uneven support due to the fact that much of the existing literature focuses on related constructs as opposed to sustainable sourcing as a construct. According to Wu et al. (2021), in their critical review on food-system trust, the authors mentioned that consumers depend on both the assurances of the products and their trust in the people who give them these assurances. Trust is thus reliant on how credible labels, certificates, retailer standards, and institutional assurance are. Nevertheless, Wu et al. (2021) also reminded us that trust is multi-level and cannot be described by the product information in isolation. This undermines any naive argument that traceability or certification automatically constructs trust; the origin and control of the assurance is as important as the information itself. A beneficial UK lens is offered by packaging studies. Norton et al. (2022) examined the perception of sustainable food packaging by UK consumers, and Nuojuia, Pahl and Thompson (2024) established that consumers are faced with a problem of struggling to understand the plastic alternatives in cases where the implications of Sustainability are not well understood in the lifecycle.

Trust in FMCG involves communicative translation as well as sourcing effort, as claims are frequently summarized in short-cued packaging. Responsible branding and CSR studies will help in the trust pathway but need to be interpreted. Iglesias et al. (2020) revealed how CSR can

enhance customer trust and loyalty by co-creation, and Huo et al. (2022) related responsibility to the desire to purchase sustainably by brand trust and brand loyalty. Fig. 6 shows Carroll's CSR Pyramid, which shows the corporate social responsibility in four dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities.

The CSR Pyramid In A Nutshell

The CSR pyramid is a framework guiding how and why an organization should meet its social responsibilities.

Developed by University of Georgia Professor Archie B. Carroll who adapted earlier work from the 1950s. The CSR pyramid is based on four levels: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic.

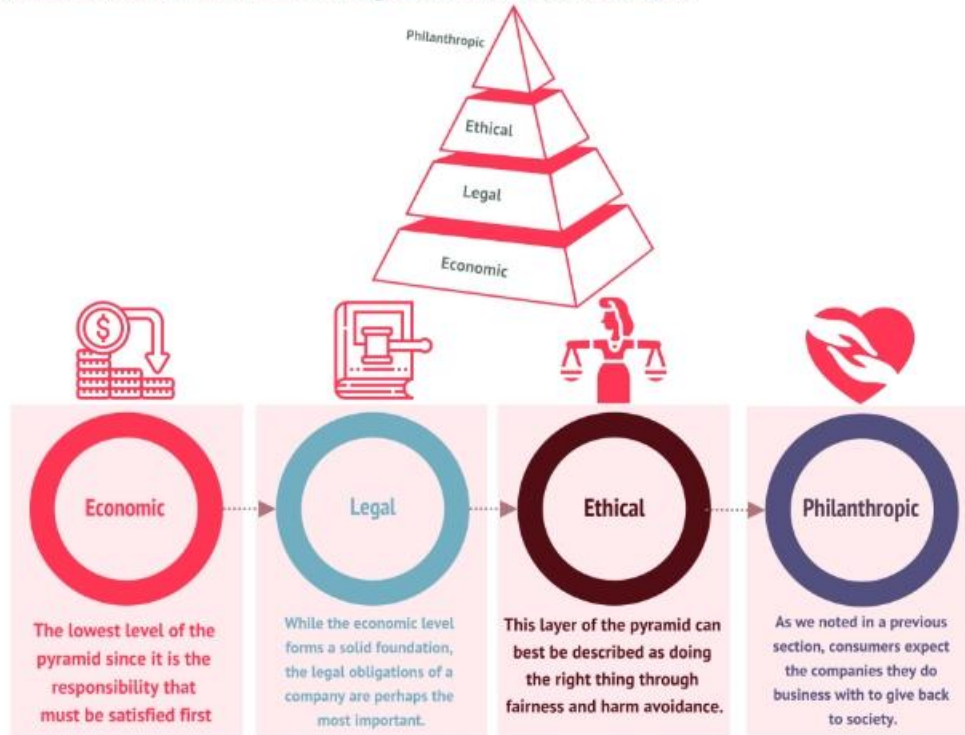


Figure 6: Carroll's CSR Pyramid

Source: (Gennaro Cuofano, 2024)

However, CSR extends beyond sustainable sourcing. According to these studies, responsibility is an important issue to consumers, although it does not show that consumers differentiate between supplier governance and brand image, advertisement tone, or product experience. The closer the gap between general CSR research and FMCG, the narrower the direct UK evidence. Jin et al. (2024) conducted online surveys (quota) of 1,656 UK and 1515 Chinese customers, and path models across apples, milk and beef. Perceived environmental benefits exerted small positive impacts on purchase intention, with effects stronger among UK

respondents, in part mediated by safety and quality. Hutchings et al. (2024) systematically reviewed 1,522 open-ended reactions of 1,522 consumers in the UK and identified scarce and disparate perceptions of food sustainability, with no brand-outcome argument advocated but a comprehension boundary. Van Bussel et al. (2022) summarised 76 articles and said that Sustainability is frequently outmuscled by price, taste, and health. But even though Wang et al. (2022) consider short food supply chains, as opposed to brand reputation, the same study reveals the same finding: consumer reactions to Sustainability are determined by the visibility and meaningfulness of the supply-chain proposition of a specific type.

3.3.2 Traceability, transparency and certification as empirical mechanisms

One of the most commonly mentioned tools by which sourcing could be made visible is traceability. Koberg and Longoni (2019) concluded that the complexity of global supply chains can undermine sustainability governance, particularly in the context of supplier relationships at multiple levels. Recent traceability studies have introduced the use of digital tools, blockchain, and data-sharing mechanisms as possible means to enhance visibility. Westerlund et al. (2021) explained food traceability based on blockchain as a method of enhancing data integrity across the supply chain. Figure 7 demonstrates that blockchain networks, smart contracts, security controls, and audit trails can be incorporated to enhance supply-chain traceability and data integrity.

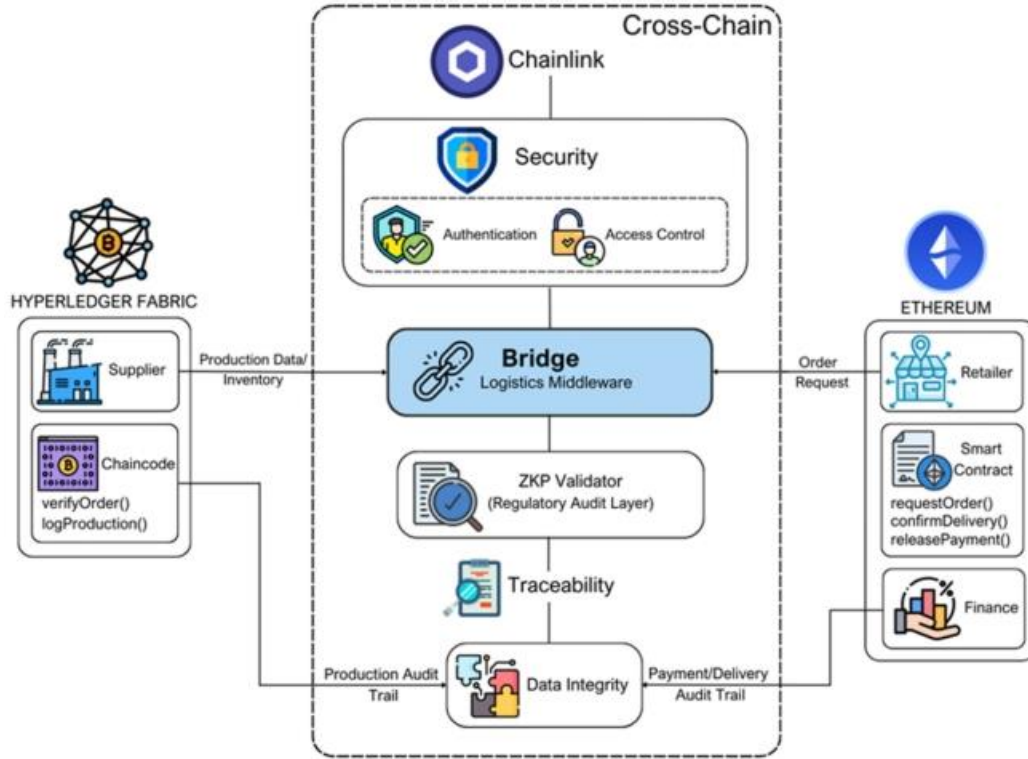


Figure 7: Blockchain-Enabled Supply Chain Management

Source: (Karaduman and Gülhas, 2025)

Nonetheless, the purported advantage of traceability should not be exaggerated. Traceability generates the potential of evidence, yet not consumer understanding, institutional trust, and moral enhancement. Information can be included in a QR code or digital ledger, but consumers must trust the information source, make sense of it, and feel that it is material to the product. These findings are particularly helpful in understanding the results by Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021) since they decouple disclosure, clarity and accuracy. Their construct validation reveals the reasons why transparency cannot be considered a single variable. This contravenience is not simply empirical noise, but can indicate other dimensions of transparency. In the case of UK FMCG, the implication is that the evidence about sustainable sourcing should not be assessed based on its presence but rather based on its specific, clear, accurate, and proportionate to the product claim. To ensure responsible sourcing, Young (2018) identified that certification systems can be used to deliver standards and verification, especially in complex material supply chains.

In the consumer markets, certification can ease consumer burden by transforming complicated information about suppliers into a familiar trust message. But the issue of certification is not beyond doubt. Asioli, Aschemann-Witzel and Nayga (2020) demonstrated that sustainability labels have a conditional functioning: the definitions, consumer awareness and institutions do influence whether sustainability labels reduce uncertainty or reproduce it. Meta-analysis of 72 peer-reviewed studies by Tran et al. (2024) revealed there is a positive willingness-to-pay premium for traceable food, but significant heterogeneity; willingness to pay is not trust or reputation. Chaudhary, Sharma and Vemireddy (2024) define conflicting consumer reactions, whereas Reitano et al. (2024) conducted a PRISMA-based search of Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed articles to chart perceptions of blockchain-monitored food. Queiroz, Telles and Bonilla (2019) screened 27 articles and concluded that blockchain-SCM integration is still in its infancy; Saberi et al. (2019), Kamilaris, Fonts and Prenafeta-Boldú (2019) and Kshetri (2018) found sustainability potential and adoption, governance and data-quality obstacles.

3.3.3 Evidence linking trust to brand reputation

The correlation between trust and brand reputation is stronger from the direct relationship between sustainable sourcing and reputation. Iglesias et al. (2020) demonstrated how CSR can enhance customer trust and loyalty due to co-creation, whereas Huo et al. (2022) simulated brand trust and loyalty as channels to sustainable purchase intentions. Riva et al. (2024) included direct evidence of green-brand through the demonstration that green brand associations are capable of establishing trust, but green scepticism weakens the route. The studies on sustainability-branding expand on this assertion and reveal the complexity of causation. Golob et al. (2022) postulated that the power of brands can be transformative in cases where identity and behaviour coincide, which suggests that sourcing becomes useful in cases where sourcing is incorporated in the strategic identity. According to Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023), capability reputation may play the role of moderating the impact of greenwashing, and to this end, reputation, rather than just being an outward expression, was also found to be a buffer and an interpretative filter. Figure 8 shows that quality delivery, good reviews, fair price, and responsibility to the customers and employees are the most trusted brand attributes among the consumers.

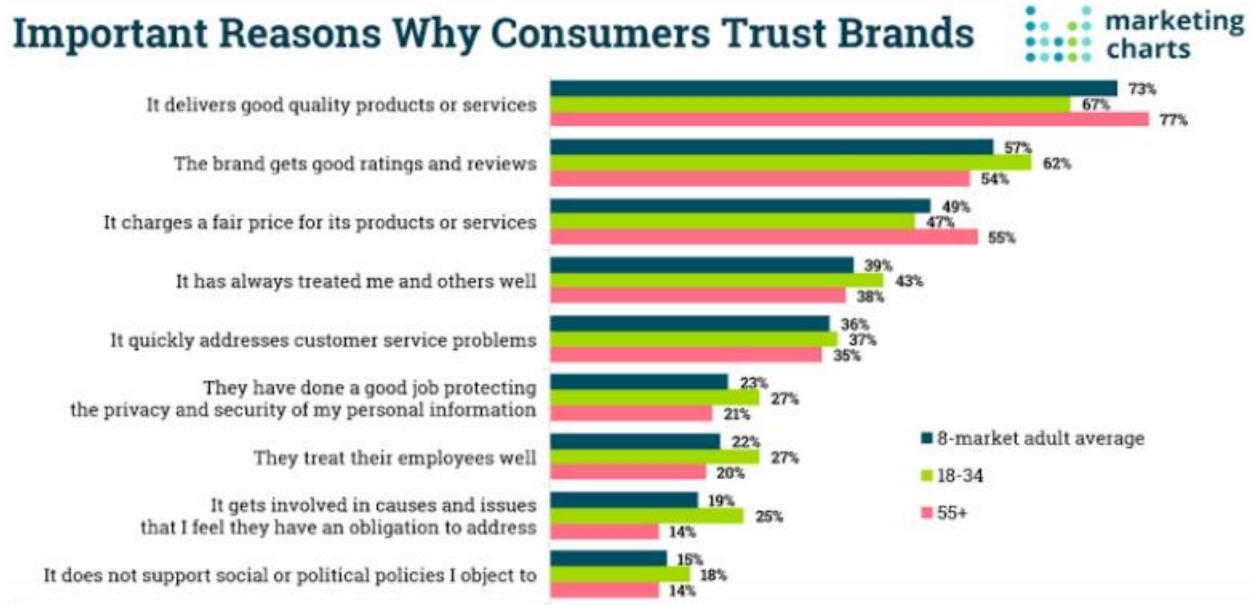


Figure 8: Important Reasons why Consumers Trust Brands

Source: (Statista, 2024)

The FMCG context intensifies this dynamic because purchasing is frequent, competitive, and often low-involvement. Consumers might not always make in-depth sustainability analysis when purchasing shampoo, cereal, detergent or packaged food. Rather, they tend to use simplified reputation indicators. The study by Veit et al. (2018) revealed the possibility of scandals related to sourcing nations influencing customer perception by association with guilt, meaning that all consumers can punish companies that engage in upstream malpractice despite not directly witnessing the harm being caused by the focal company. In their article, Flores-Hernandez et al. (2020) applied PLS-SEM to 403 Peruvian retail consumers and discovered that perceived CSR dictated corporate reputation and brand image, which were connected to satisfaction and positive word of mouth. Extensive CSR and the emerging-market environment inhibit pinpointing to sourcing. The meta-analysis of 92 empirical studies by Pajuelo-Moreno, Barroso-Méndez and Gallardo-Vázquez (2024) suggests that there is a positive sustainability-disclosure-reputation relation, with measurement and country, and methodological moderators explaining the variation.

The outcome measures should also not be used as substitutes. The related yet different constructs are trust, credibility, loyalty, satisfaction, purchase intention, and reputation. Iglesias

et al. (2020) relate CSR, trust and loyalty; Riva et al. (2024) relate a green brand image to trust, and Jančiauskaitė, Lasickaitė and Ripkauskaitė (2019) suggest a sustainability -reputation-customer-behaviour model whereby brand image mediates. Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023) analyze customer satisfaction and capability reputation in the greenwashing context. Taken together, these research findings indicate a conceivable reputational route, but do not entail a single test of sustainable sourcing on the brand reputation of UK FMCG. The generalization of this review in this respect is that trust is considered to be an explanatory mechanism that is proposed, and reputation is an accumulated judgement, although direct and indirect evidence is differentiated.

3.3.4 Contradictions across empirical findings

The empirical literature has a number of contradictions which are directly related to the research questions. The initial contradiction is associated with the amount of information. The premises in transparency research and supply-chain governance studies are that information is likely to lower uncertainty; however, consumer research demonstrates that more information may lead to overload, confusion, or scepticism. The study that was conducted by Nuojuo, Pahl and Thompson (2024) showed that consumers cannot comprehend the attributes of environmental packaging even when sustainable-related information is provided to consumers. In the case of FMCG, it is not just the question of whether brands provide disclosure of sourcing information, but whether the consumer translates this disclosure into an evaluative conclusion. The second contradiction is related to the specificity of claims. Special sourcing claims are usually deemed better since they are more tangible and measurable. Nevertheless, Orazi and Chan (2020) discovered that certain environmental assertions could be detrimental to evaluations in the future when proved false. This applies to the UK FMCG since the regulatory expectations as per the Green Claims Code are that environmental claims must be true, clear, substantiated and reflective of the entire lifecycle where applicable (CMA, 2021). Figure 9 contains the 2026 UK environmental compliance roadmap, which includes the requirements of green-claims audits, packaging EPR, emissions reporting, and climate-risk disclosure and the increased CMA penalties.



Figure 9: 2026 UK environmental compliance roadmap

Source: (Voice of Environment, 2026)

As the CMA later asserted in supply-chain guidance, companies do not have an easy time separating consumer-facing claims and supplier liabilities (CMA, 2026). In this way, the context of regulation contributes to uncertainty in risky claims made by vague assertions, yet increased risky assertions demand increased evidence as well.

The third contradiction is on the role of prior reputation. Trust is an example of how sustainable sourcing enhances reputation in a simple model. However, reputation may come before and precondition trust. As demonstrated by Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023), capability reputation can lessen the harm related to perceived greenwashing. A brand with trusted status can get the benefit of the doubt, and a brand that is not trusted may have to show greater evidence to attain the same status of trust. The contradiction thus becomes theoretically fruitful: sustainable sourcing is not a universal reputational tool but a statement whose impacts rely on previously held beliefs, quality of evidence, and the authority of the actor communicating such. Sustainable sourcing may affect consumer faith and brand image particularly when it is seen to be credible by assurance that is consistent with brand name and pertinent to consumer issues. Nevertheless, the weak evidence points include indirect measurement, cross-sectional designs, broad CSR constructs and studies of UK-specific sourcing. These constraints do not refute the pathway but render the second research question more significant.

3.3.5 Evidence weighting and transferability

An evidence base is tiered by a cross-study comparison. Veit et al. (2018), Norton et al. (2022), Nuijja, Pahl and Thompson (2024) and Orazi and Chan (2020) give evidence that is consumer-facing on the perceptions of sourcing, packaging interpretation or claim specificity, though the context and levels of their directness vary. Wu et al. (2021) and Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021) enhance knowledge on trust and transparency constructs, but no causal sourcing-to-reputation effect can be determined with the help of review and construct-validation work. Iglesias et al. (2020) and Huo et al. (2022) endorse links between general corporate responsibility and trust, but their general constructs complicate pinpointing the result to sourcing. This weight contributes to ensuring the synthesis is in line with the appraisal criteria in Chapter 2. In line with this, positive results are deemed as associative except where the design directly tests a claim, an assurance mechanism, or consumer response attributable to sourcing. The adjacent evidence is retained in cases where it sheds light on a mechanism, but the transferability of the same to UK FMCG is said but not assumed. This method yields a more justifiable response to RQ1: literature underpins a conditional pathway, but the strength of such a pathway depends on how well the construct measure is, how much consumers are interested, and the quality of assurance and the capacity of the research design to determine whether sourcing or general brand responsibility is being tested.

3.4 Theme 3: Emerging Debates

3.4.1 Transparency versus comprehension

A major emerging debate concerns whether supply-chain transparency should be understood as disclosure or as consumer comprehension. The previous discourse of Sustainability used to hail transparency as a trust-building strategy. Nevertheless, recent studies indicate that transparency may miscarry at the point of being overly technical, incomplete, or incomprehensible. According to Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021), transparency includes such elements as disclosure, clarity and accuracy; therefore, even a strategy that is disclosure-heavy may be weak in terms of disclosure that is not clear or completely accurate. This is an important difference, especially in the case of FMCG since consumers can make fast decisions in busy retail settings. On the other hand, when brands reduce complex sourcing problems to slogans, there is a chance of enhanced understanding, but they also tend to overstate.

The problem of management then is to communicate evidence at the appropriate degree of abstraction. CMA (2021) has outlined that environmental assertions must be precise, honest, supported, and not withhold critical details. This regulatory framing contributes to a stricter understanding of transparency: not only should brands disclose, but they should not be misleading through their selectivity, ambiguity, or lifecycle suppression. According to Figure 10, 80 percent of UK consumers expect retailers to disclose information on AI use, and only 25 percent say that they are familiar with AI.



Figure 10: Transparency, digital transformation and purchases

Source: (Lyons, 2018)

In the case of UK FMCG, transparency should be evaluated in terms of communicative accountability and not through the availability of information. Another distinction in the debate is traceability to the managers and consumers. A company can take the supplier information to a detailed level to enhance procurement control, but the consumers might just require a plausible summary backed by available verification. Digital systems have been seen as one path to supply-chain visibility, and subsequently traceability discussions have focused on the West, but digital traceability does not solve the interpretive problem on its own. Online assertions can be doubted by consumers when they are perceived to be marketing technology, as opposed to independent verification.

3.4.2 Greenwashing and vicarious greenwashing

The second arising debate surrounds greenwashing, which is no longer a peripheral ethical issue but has become a central cause of why sustainability claims can undermine trust. De Freitas Netto et al. (2020) established greenwashing as a deceptive environmental communication and established that it assumes various forms such as selective disclosure, ambiguous claims, and symbolic imagery. Gatti, Seele and Rademacher (2019) presented an argument that greenwashing lies in a grey area between voluntary and mandatory CSR reporting, where criteria are not at all clear. This research is significant in that they indicate that greenwashing is not necessarily a mere instance of overt deception. It can be caused by exaggeration, omission, selective emphasis, or lack of a connection between policies and implementation. Based on empirical evidence, perceived greenwashing is capable of compromising consumer trust and judgments. The study by Szabo and Webster (2021) established that green marketing may hurt the perception of the environment and products in situations where consumers think that there is greenwashing.

Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023) believe that the discrepancy between the policies of green product innovation and its practical implementation is perceived as corporate hypocrisy. This is very pertinent to sustainable sourcing since the claims of procurement are not usually testable by the consumers. Should the assertion be subsequently undermined by the media, NGOs, regulatory bodies, or supplier scandals, customers might fail to draw the distinction between brand lie and supplier meltdown. This destroys trust since the brand seemed to seek moral confidence, and it did not take control of the evidence that supported the moral confidence. Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele (2021) introduced an extension of this argument by referring to the instance of vicarious greenwashing wherein supplier behaviour compromises the credibility of the object of interest in the focal firm. This is important to UK FMCG since the brands are dependent on long chains of suppliers as the controlling mechanism of the consumer-facing message.

3.4.3 Digital traceability, certification fatigue and assurance quality

A third controversy is based on the issue of technology and certification in eliminating credibility issues. Proposals to use blockchain-enabled systems and QR-code product journeys are discussed as solutions to consumer distrust. The gap between the technical ability and

consumer trust is, however, becoming a sensitive topic in the literature. When the brand itself controls digital traceability, it could be seen as an extra marketing tool instead of independent evidence. This is the reason why assurance quality and governance hold higher significance than just the adoption of technology alone. There is a similar issue of exhaustion and dividedness of certification. The FMCG consumer might come across a variety of labels such as organic production, fair trade, recyclable packaging, cruelty-free products, carbon reduction, responsible palm oil, or sustainable fish. Figure 11 shows how the traceability systems of manufacture rely on QR codes, RFID, ERP and MES data to connect products and processes across the supply chain.

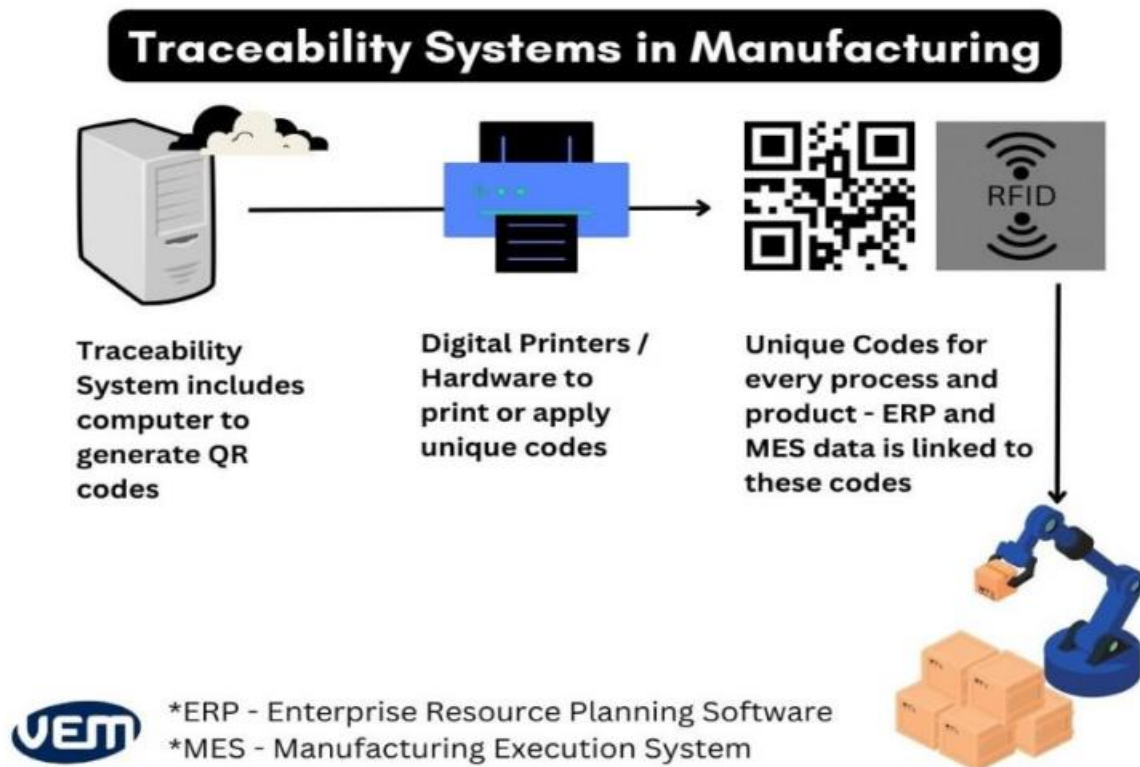


Figure 11: Traceability in Manufacturing

Source: (max.zm, 2023)

In a meta-analysis of 80 studies, Li and Kallas (2021) discovered that willingness-to-pay premiums on sustainable food are positive but hypothetical bias-sensitive, and Asioli, Aschemann-Witzel and Nayga (2020) highlighted the significance of label understanding and institutional trustworthiness. This is supported by Norton et al. (2022) and Nuaju, Pahl, and

Thompson (2024) within the context of packaging in the UK. Consumers can be well-intentioned toward sustainability but are not able to evaluate what claim is actual progress. This argument carries significance since it aids in avoiding a technologically deterministic response to RQ1. Sustainable sourcing does not affect trust simply due to being digitalized or being certified by an external body. The influence will be based on the independence of assurance, materiality, understandability, and relatability to the claim being made. A certification confirming one ingredient but which is claimed to represent the sustainability of the entire brand might be deceptive. Informationally impressive but ethically incomplete may be a QR traceability tool that presents origin in a manner that does not elaborate on labour, biodiversity or lifecycle implications.

3.4.4 Value congruence, scepticism and the attitude-behaviour gap

The fourth debate concerns why consumers who express support for sustainable FMCG do not always reward sustainable sourcing in purchase behaviour. The existence of an attitude-behaviour gap, where consumers say they want to buy pro-environmental products but behave in ways that are price-, convenience-, availability-, or habit-driven, has long been acknowledged in sustainability marketing research. This is important to the dissertation as consumer trust and brand reputation might be enhanced without generating sales impacts. White et al. (2025) concluded that sustainability marketing is currently functioning at the consumer, organisational, and systemic level. Their framing suggests that brands cannot afford to solely depend on the virtue of individual consumers; they need to develop viable, convenient and value-appropriate products that can make it into the routine of purchasing activities. Borah, Dogbe and Marwa (2024) also demonstrate in a Chinese Gen-Z footwear sample that the interaction exists between green knowledge, advertising and green consumer trust; this can be used to make a comparison across mechanisms, but does not provide UK FMCG-specific Evidence.

Recent review evidence strengthens the argument in terms of making claims and behaviour distinct. White, Habib and Hardisty (2019) have synthesised behavioural research using SHIFT, whereas Habib et al. (2021) focused on interventions and real behaviour. ElHaffar, Durif and Dubé (2020) suggested that the attitude-intention-behaviour gap is a matter of theoretical and methodological options; Bangsa and Schlegelmilch (2020) discovered that sustainable-product studies usually presume a rational, linear consumer. Potter et al. (2021) have

synthesised 56 studies with 42,768 participants, 39 with unclear or high risk of bias; Rossi and Rivetti (2023) demonstrated that labels may lead to confusion and distrust. Fragmented definitions and measures were found by Santos, Coelho and Marques (2024), who mapped 310 documents of the Web of Science, and also by Huang, Shi and Jia (2025), who searched 180 articles. Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018) demonstrate that perceptions of brands can be negatively affected by misleading environmental advertising, which is not primary sourcing evidence. Specificity of claims and quality of evidence are thus plausible moderators, rather than causality.

The context of FMCG is thus unlike the high-involvement ethical purchases, as numerous decisions made are routine and fast. This discussion is associated with authenticity. A sourcing claim that fits the brand category and record has more chances of being trusted as compared to one that does not seem to be opportunistic. Sustainable cocoa, palm oil, fish, packaging, or animal-welfare claims are significant in certain types of FMCGs, whereas wide-ranging claims that a brand is green can lack credibility. Rossi and Rivetti (2023) discovered that scepticism is a significant boundary condition when responding to sustainably labelled food by young consumers, whereas Riva et al. (2024) reported that green scepticism impairs the transfer of green associations into brand trust. Borah, Dogbe and Marwa (2024) also demonstrate in a Chinese Gen-Z footwear sample that green knowledge, advertisement and green consumer trust are interdependent; this plays a useful role in the comparison of mechanisms but not direct evidence in the UK FMCG.

3.4.5 Regulation and the movement from voluntary claims to accountable Evidence

One more emerging controversy is the growing regulatory skepticism of ecological assertions. The legal and reputational environment has become more challenging due to the UK CMA Green Claims Code stating that claims should be factual, accurate, clear, substantiated, fair in comparison, and representative of the entire lifecycle where relevant (CMA, 2021).



Figure 12: UK CMA's Green Claims Code

Source: (Green claims code, 2024)

Late supply-chain guidance stated that when making green claims, the brands should look to the responsibility throughout the supply chain (CMA, 2026). It is not just a compliance matter, but it alters the credibility space where sustainable sourcing functions. Higher regulation is likely to make consumers more conscious that green claims need to be proven, and brands themselves might be more vulnerable in case sourcing messages cannot be proven. The limits of voluntary sustainability branding also lie within regulatory pressure. Gatti, Seele and Rademacher (2019) said that greenwashing research was placed on the voluntary-mandatory and borderline of CSR. This can provide reputational benefits to brands in voluntary settings by acting as an early communicator about Sustainability. Under stricter settings, though, the benefits run to those firms that are able to bring forth claims in systematic form. This has significant implications for UK FMCG.

The brand that presents sustainable sourcing as a marketing message can be more under legal and reputational liability, whereas the brand that presents it as auditable procurement

governance can be in a better place to create long-lasting trust. The connection between sourcing substance and reputational credibility is thus reinforced by regulation as it increases the cost of unsubstantiated assertions. The issue of trust cannot be resolved completely by regulation, however. Compliance creates the minimum standards, yet emotional confidence and reputation built over time tend to be more depended on by consumers in terms of perceived authenticity. A brand can be in conformity with the Green Claims Code and fail to engender trust when it is unclear in its communication and when it is perceived by consumers as justifying.

3.5 Theme 4: Research Gaps

3.5.1 Construct gap: sustainable sourcing is often hidden inside CSR

Construct precision is the most crucial gap in research. Much of the literature focuses on CSR, green marketing, sustainable packaging, or corporate Sustainability, but not sustainable sourcing as an individual governance practice. The constructs of Iglesias et al. (2020) and Huo et al. (2022) are too broad to answer the question of whether the active ingredients are supplier selection, traceability, verification, or corrective action, but there is also valuable evidence that responsible corporate activity can foster trust and loyalty. This poses a conceptual inflation threat: scholars can label the earnings of trust with sustainable sourcing in cases where consumers are reacting either to brand familiarity, product quality, overall CSR, price, pack design, or advertising tone. The gap is important as sourcing is operationally particular and communicatively indirect. Unless future studies separate sourcing governance and sustainability communication, we will have issues with determining which actions on the managerial side do provide trust. As an example, a brand can enhance trust by posting third-party audit reports, by streamlining packaging assertions, by becoming a member of a well-known certification scheme, or by enhancing supplier mitigation.

3.5.2 Context gap: limited UK FMCG evidence

The second gap is related to context. The dissertation concentrates on UK FMCG, but a lot of the available evidence is in broader markets of consumer goods, food systems, service, and packaging research or general research on CSR. International evidence can be useful when mechanisms are transferable, but cannot explain the UK regulatory environment, retailer concentration, consumer expectations, media scrutiny and product-category norms. The recent

studies by Norton et al. (2022) and Nuijja, Pahl and Thompson (2024) focused on UK consumers are useful as they reveal how sustainable packaging is perceived by UK consumers. Nevertheless, even these studies fail to establish full links between sourcing governance and brand reputation at a broader scope of the FMCG industry. The UK situation is also unique due to the active interventions of the CMA in environmental claims (CMA, 2026). This turns sustainable sourcing not just a problem of marketing but a problem of consumer protection and an issue of evidence. However, scholarly studies have not adequately studied the way in which consumers in the UK respond to sourcing claims in this regulatory environment. Compared to FMCG categories, including food, beverages, personal care and household goods, they are also not very well-evidenced. The perceived risk, moral salience and materiality of claims vary, and consumers might be concerned with sourcing differently across these categories.

3.5.3 Methodological gap: association is often mistaken for influence

The third is a methodological gap. A lot of research incorporates cross-sectional surveys and structural equation modelling to establish a relationship between CSR and green trust, green image, or purchase intention. These designs are helpful in testing associations, but cannot conclusively determine the direction of influence. This poses a challenge to the current study since the reputation of the brand can be a determinant of trust in the sourcing claims, just as sourcing claims can be a determinant of reputation. Partially, Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023) resolve this issue by demonstrating the mediating role of capability reputation in the effects of greenwashing, but additional longitudinal and experimental data is required. In the absence of time-based evidence, the literature will run the risk of showing reputational results as having been caused by sustainable sourcing when, in fact, it is, in part, because of already built brand credibility. The measurement of consumer comprehension also has a methodological gap.

The studies can inquire whether consumers believe a claim or are going to purchase a sustainable product, but only a small fraction investigate whether consumers interpret the sourcing evidence correctly. It is an essential difference. A claim will make a consumer trust it due to its familiarity and not its knownness. A claim may rather be distrusted by another consumer due to its complex nature of evidence rather than due to its weakness. Future studies should thus provide more robust designs to test the comprehension of claims, quality of

evidence, and behavioural response as a combination. Varying experiments are especially relevant with respect to specificity of the claim, source of certification, detail on traceability and previous brand reputation to provide answers to RQ2.

3.5.4 Supply-chain depth gap: multi-tier sourcing remains under-explained

The fourth gap is about the depth of supply chains. The literature on sustainable sourcing acknowledges that risks are usually found beyond the first-tier suppliers, and little consumer research has studied consumer reactions to varying degrees of sourcing control. Koberg and Longoni (2019) emphasized that sustainable supply-chain management should deal with multi-tier complexity. Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele (2021) demonstrated that manipulations by the suppliers can lead to vicarious greenwashing, yet the implications of varied degrees of governance on the consumer are poorly developed. This is a significant loophole in the FMCG since most of the product claims rely on upstream inputs such as agricultural commodities, packaging materials, and the labour-intensive production phases.

It is not merely an empirical gap but a normative gap. When a brand enjoys the benefits of a claim of Sustainability, to what extent will its responsibility run in the supply chain? Consumers might demand complete responsibility, regulators might demand justification, and firms might claim that regulation is ineffective at more fundamental levels. This accountability boundary has not been completely clear in the literature. This is important to reputation in that consumers might not simply evaluate brands by the fact that a failure is possible but by whether there was a credible system in place by the brand to prevent, detect, and rectify the failure. Future studies should then look into the possibility that consumers differentiate between direct misconduct, supplier misconduct, weak due diligence, and unavoidable complexity.

3.5.5 Integration gap: trust and reputation need a dynamic model

The last gap is the theoretical integration. The studies on supply-chain explicate sourcing governance; information-quality research explains transparency; trust theory explains confidence; reputation scholarship explains accumulated judgement; and greenwashing research explains credibility collapse. However, this body of work is hardly incorporated into a vibrant UK FMCG model. The information indicates that the relationship is conditional, where sourcing will be able to establish trust, reputation may be based on trust, previously existing reputation may influence the establishment of belief, and greenwashing may require the opposite effect.

Another consequence of this integration gap is that evidence would be scaled by how well it can be explained but not by how favourable to Sustainability it seems. The research finding a positive relationship between CSR and trust is helpful, but it cannot even come close to the same level of inference as research that examines specificity of claims and assurance credibility, consumer confusion, or supplier-related failures. On the same note, greenwashing research must not be employed as warning systems alone since they also outline the circumstances in which the desired sourcing-trust relationship fails. This is important for a distinction-level review since there is no objective of proving that sustainable sourcing is good but simply to show why, when, and how it becomes credible to the consumers. The greatest synthesis thus considers the positive effects of trust, reputational buffering, scepticism, and vicarious greenwashing as linked evidence systems. This makes the subsequent discussion in a position to respond to the research questions using a conditional set of arguments rather than a unidirectional promotional postulation. The gap in integration is the reason the development of the conceptual framework should be discussed in the chapter. This does not mean that sustainable sourcing is an independent variable and brand reputation is a dependent variable just because the framework begins with these two variables.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, sustainable sourcing can have an effect on consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG market by a contingent credibility route; sustainable sourcing has not been proven to affect customer trust and brand reputation directly. The theoretical evidence shows that sustainable sourcing is relevant as it may act as a signal in information asymmetry, stakeholder responsibility can be demonstrated, and legitimacy and reputation accumulation are supported. Such effects, however, are conditional upon the operationally grounded sourcing claims being transparent in the richer sense of disclosure, clarity and accuracy, and brand behavior in the long run. Trust is thus not an easy response to Sustainability; but rather is an appraisal of capacity, goodwill and honesty. The pathway is supported by evidence-based knowledge but exposes significant flaws. Research on food-system trust, sustainable packaging, CSR and green branding indicates responsible behavior can reinforce trust and reputation, but much of the research considers large constructs that fail to isolate sourcing. Studies conducted on UK unique packaging illustrate that product consumers

might not easily understand the sustainability cues; thus, translation of evidence has to be adopted, as opposed to disclosure.

Greenwashing and vicarious greenwashing literature also indicate that sourcing claims can destroy trust when it is felt that they are overstated, unfounded, or refuted in supplier behavior. The most compelling conclusion is thus analytical and not promotional: sustainable sourcing is a reputational worthwhile thing when it is credible, verifiable and intelligible but reputational is risky when it is a symbolic gesture that is not connected to governance of supply chains. The chapter also revealed gaps in research which will be used to lead the discussion. These are sustainable sourcing disguised in general CSR, the lack of UK-specific Evidence on FMCGs, associative research design, and limited discussion of multi-level sourcing responsibility and dynamic trust- reputational model. The discussion chapter can subsequently draw upon this review to assemble the evidence into a direct response to the research questions as well as formulating an evidence-based conceptual model of credible sourcing of sustainable FMCG in the UK.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on the evidence reviewed in Chapter Three to respond to the two research questions of the dissertation. The former poses the question of the impact of sustainable sourcing on consumer confidence and brand image within the United Kingdom fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. The second asks which credibility mechanisms, boundary conditions, and rival explanations strengthen, weaken, or reverse that relationship. Its main conclusion is also conditional: sustainable sourcing can reinforce trust and reputation, but operational sourcing substance must be translated into evidence, which can be interpreted and taken into consideration by the consumers as material and credible. Sourcing is thus a credibility channel as opposed to direct reputational input. It is an interpretation made in line with the methodological stand taken in Chapter Two.

The review did not consider all the positive sustainability associations as evidence of impact. Rather, it gave direct consumer evidence a weighting, along with construct clarity, methodological soundness, and transferability to the UK FMCG. This difference is important, as in the literature one can find a considerable amount of research on corporate social responsibility, sustainability marketing and green purchasing, but far less evidence can be found that isolates supplier governance as the active ingredient. This discussion thus incorporates the scholarship of supply-chain, consumer-trust, branding and greenwashing without reducing them into a single umbrella sustainability tool (Paul and Criado, 2020; Snyder, 2019).

4.2 An integrated answer to the research questions

The response to RQ1 is that sustainable sourcing has a contingent impact on consumer trust and brand reputation. To begin with, a company needs to have substantive sourcing practices, such as standards for suppliers, due diligence, traceability, verification, and corrective action. Second, such practices should result in evidence that is disclosed, clear, and accurate. Third, consumers need to make the evidence relevant, understandable and consistent with the behavior of the brand. Trust is established when the evidence confirms the feelings of competence, goodwill and trustworthiness. Reputation follows after this, whereby the repeated socially distributed judgement about the brand being responsible, reliable and authentic is created. The relationship is therefore better represented as sourcing substance → credible

evidence → consumer trust → brand reputation than as sourcing substance → reputation. The evidence fails to uphold a universal or automatic effect. The studies by Koberg and Longoni (2019) and Young (2018) provided the foundations that sustainable sourcing is a governance issue, and thus involves the relationship with the supplier, certification, due diligence, and risks beyond the direct supplier.

Nevertheless, these studies alone do not prove that governance is perceived by consumers and rewarded. Research based on consumers provides the interpretive gap. According to Wu et al. (2021), trust does not rely solely on the guarantees of the products, but also on the institutions and the actors that offer these guarantees. Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021) also detailed that transparency would be multidimensional: it cannot be disclosed without clarifying and pinpointing accuracy. These findings together suggest that credible translation is the proximate condition of consumer response, whereas operational practice is the necessary condition. The reputational effect is also indirect, which is explained by the trust pathway. Iglesias et al. (2020) or Huo et al. (2022) have found that responsible organisational behaviour can boost trust and loyalty by value-creating relationships, and corporate responsibility is associated with sustainable purchase intentions due to brand trust and loyalty. They find that these studies affirm the importance of trust, but their general corporate-responsibility constructs are unable to determine whether consumers reacted to sourcing, product quality, communication, employee treatment, or familiarity with the brand in general.

The current synthesis thus relies on those studies to show the plausibility of a trust mechanism, not to demonstrate that sustainable sourcing by itself had the effect. This differentiation bridges the construct gap that is shown in Chapter Three. Five mechanisms and conditions are of special importance and are the answer to RQ2. The former is the quality of evidence: definite claims that are accurate and are supported by specific and clear evidence are more believable than challenges, generalisations that have no support. Secondly is comprehension: a traceability system or label can exist without being comprehended. The third one is competence and value alignment: sourcing claims are more compelling when they are relevant to the product category, as well as to the visible behavior of the brand. The fourth is past reputation: the future of a new claim may be influenced by past ability and dependability. The fifth one is accountability throughout the supply chain: Supplier malpractice, low remediation, and selective disclosure can produce vicarious greenwashing and reverse the route. Price,

convenience, and routine buying also make the difference between trust becoming behaviour, though behaviour is not to be considered as a substitute for trust or reputation.

4.3 Sourcing substance must be converted into a credible signal

The initial synthesis is that sustainable sourcing acts as a signal when there is information asymmetry. Brands are familiar to consumers in how to select suppliers, labour standards, agricultural inputs, packaging material, audits and remediation. Consumers hence make inferences of invisible organisational attributes based on visible assertions, labels, certifications and brand behaviour. Spence (1973) signalling logic is practical since it focuses on the credibility of the signal, rather than just its existence. A signal is more compelling when it is expensive to forge, specific to be measured, has independent verification, and coherent with the behavior of the sender. The implication of this for UK FMCG would be that the claim involving responsibly sourced cocoa, palm oil, fish, or packaging would be linked up with supplier-level evidence, as opposed to being a free-standing green identity. The meaning is supported, but it is limited, by the literature. Young (2018) mentioned that responsible sourcing involves certification, due diligence, and traceability, whereas Hastig and Sodhi (2020) mentioned capability, collaboration, and governance as prerequisites of successful traceability. These authors describe the manner in which a company can produce evidence.

Asioli, Aschemann-Witzel and Nayga (2020) thus offer a significant qualification by demonstrating the conditional nature of sustainability labels based on consumer awareness, clarity of definitions and institutional faith. The signal is therefore relational: the same label can cause less uncertainty to one consumer and replicate uncertainty to another. Digital traceability depicts the difference between evidence production and evidence reception. Westerlund et al. (2021) and Kamilaris, Fonts and Prenafeta-Boldú (2019) found the opportunity to enhance the integrity and visibility of data with the help of blockchain-based systems. Queiroz, Telles and Bonilla (2019) and Saberi et al. (2019), however, claimed that governance, data quality, interoperability and organisational capability all limit adoption. Reitano et al. (2024) also mapped the change in consumer reactions to food being tracked by blockchain. It means that technology has the potential to render evidence accessible, though it cannot alone instill institutional trust, understanding or authenticity. A QR code which presents the origin but not

labour, biodiversity or remediation information can be technically impressive but substantively incomplete.

Table 6: Integrated interpretation of the sourcing-to-reputation pathway

Source: Author's synthesis of the evidence reviewed in Chapters 1–3.

Element	What the element contains	Interpretive role	Evidence base
Sourcing substance	Supplier selection, standards, due diligence, traceability, verification, and corrective action	Creates potential evidence; without multi-tier control, the claim remains vulnerable.	Koberg and Longoni (2019); Young (2018); Hastig and Sodhi (2020)
Evidence architecture	Disclosure that is clear, accurate, specific, material, and independently assured	Converts hidden governance into a signal consumers can assess	Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021); Wu et al. (2021); Asioli, Aschemann-Witzel and Nayga (2020)
Consumer interpretation	Comprehension, authenticity, value congruence and category relevance	Determines whether evidence is accepted rather than ignored or treated as promotional noise	Norton et al. (2022); Nuojuua, Pahl and Thompson (2024); Riva et al. (2024)
Trust formation	Perceived ability, benevolence and credibility of the brand and assurance actors	Provides the principal pathway from evidence to reputational judgement	Iglesias et al. (2020); Huo et al. (2022); Morgan and Hunt (1994)

Element	What the element contains	Interpretive role	Evidence base
Reputation outcome	Accumulated judgement of responsibility, reliability and integrity	Strengthens future interpretation but can also buffer or intensify reactions to new claims	Pajuelo-Moreno, Barroso-Méndez and Gallardo-Vázquez (2024); Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023)
Failure route	Greenwashing, supplier misconduct, weak remediation, overload, or claim contradiction	Breaks trust and can transfer upstream misconduct to the focal brand	de Freitas Netto et al. (2020); Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele (2021); Szabo and Webster (2021)

Table 4.1 illustrates that sourcing governance will only be meaningful once it is transformed into credible and interpretable evidence. This difference brings one to the second part, which looks at how consumers derive trust on that basis.

4.4 Consumer interpretation, trust and the reputational route

The second synthesis is on the translation of evidence into trust by consumers. Trust is neither the same as awareness nor willingness to pay, purchase intention, or satisfaction. It is a conclusion that the brand and the actors behind its assertion are adequately able, truthful, and aligned with pertinent stakeholder interests. Morgan and Hunt (1994) discovered that trust was key to lasting relationships, whereas Wu et al. (2021) made the food-system trust state information, institutions, and actors distributed. In the case of UK FMCG, this implies that consumers can judge the credibility of not only the statement made by the brand, but also the credibility of the certifier, retailer, regulator, NGO, or supply-chain partner in relation to the brand. Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen (2021) contribute to the understanding of the poor relationship between the amount of information and trust. Disclosure could be high with a low level of clarity and accuracy. Studies in the UK support this difference. Norton et al. (2022)

studied consumer knowledge of sustainable food packaging, and Nuojuia, Pahl and Thompson (2024) found it challenging to interpret alternatives to plastic. Their results indicate that breakdown of communication occurs when technical differences fail to create a definite consumer perception of environmental consequence.

Hutchings et al. (2024) also found a variety of heterogeneous and even limited knowledge on food sustainability among UK consumers. Authenticity contributes an evaluative aspect to its role. Liang, Hu and Meng (2020) demonstrated that perceived fit between sustainable orientation and real behaviour has an impact on quality perceptions and trust. According to Golob et al. (2022), identity, stakeholder expectations and organisational behaviour should align, and in this case, the brands can transform their power. These results clarify the reason why sourcing claims may have a more significant impact by being material to the category and being consistent with the information that consumers already have about the brand. A thin-sliced, evidence-supported statement can, thus, be more valid than a sweeping statement that the whole brand is green. It is also shown how an otherwise legally-compliant claim can still fail to yield trust when it feels opportunistic, confusing, or unrelated to the lived brand experience. Empirical studies showed that there is a positive relationship between sustainability disclosure and corporate reputation (Pajuelo-Moreno, Barroso-Méndez and Gallardo-Vazquez, 2024), and that this relationship is moderated by firm, sector and methodological characteristics (Barroso-Méndez, Pajuelo-Moreno and Gallardo-Vazquez, 2024).

4.5 Why findings differ across studies

The differences in constructs, contexts, and methods are more likely to explain the apparent contradiction in the literature. The positive sustainability impacts reported in studies tend to be of broad CSR or green brand associations, purchase intention, or willingness to pay. Work that finds weak or negative effects more frequently investigates comprehension, scepticism, disconfirmed claims, or label ambiguity. These are not completely mutually exclusive. On the other hand, a consumer might interpret a claim and decline it when the actions of the brand seem to be inconsistent. The first source of difference is the measurement breadth. Huo et al. (2022) and Iglesias et al. (2020) find a positive responsibility-to-trust pathway, but their measures of CSR include various activities other than sourcing. In comparison, the works by Norton et al. (2022), Nuojuia, Pahl and Thompson (2024), and Orazi and Chan (2020) look

into the information interpretation and specificity of claims. Orazi and Chan (2020) have discovered that certain claims can lead to stronger negative responses when disproved in the future. The implication of the methodology is that when evidence is available, specificity can enhance credibility, whereas when the organisation is not able to prove the assertion, then specificity can heighten reputational exposure.

Positive and negative effects are two different conditions of evidence and not a mere dispute over whether sustainability should be on the agenda. Context is the second source of difference. Jin et al. (2024) compared UK and Chinese consumers during traced-food preferences and discovered that the environmental information worked concomitantly with safety and quality. Borah, Dogbe and Marwa (2024) conducted a study focusing on the evidence of green knowledge, advertising and trust among Chinese consumers of Generation Z, in the context of footwear. These studies shed light on mechanisms, although their type, demographic conditions, and national conditions vary in comparison with UK FMCG. The perceived risk, habit, sensory evaluation, and moral salience in food, personal care, and household products are at varying levels. International evidence is then able to explain a mechanism without giving a full estimate of its effect on the UK FMCG. This is the reason why the current review provides UK studies with a higher level of contextual authority and selective application of international studies to transfer the theories. The third difference is in research design. The patterns of associations and mediation can be determined through cross-sectional surveys and structural equation models, though this does not completely answer the question of whether sourcing has generated reputation or whether a given reputation has determined the belief in the sourcing claim.

However, there is limited longitudinal and experimental data. The influence direction may be considered in both directions: credible sourcing may create reputation, and a good reputation beforehand can make consumers more receptive to a new claim. This two-way potentiality is significant in the understanding of the positive disclosure-reputation relationships indicated by Pajuelo-Moreno, Barroso-Méndez and Gallardo-Vazquez (2024).

4.6 Greenwashing and supplier misconduct as reversal mechanisms

The greatest competitor justification is the fact that sustainability communication can cause reputational damage instead of benefit. de Freitas Netto et al. (2020) have described greenwashing as deceptive environmental communication, which can be characterized by

ambiguity, selective disclosure, symbolic imagery, or a disparity between statement and action. Gatti, Seele and Rademacher (2019) also added that greenwashing may take up an intermediate position between voluntary and mandatory CSR reporting. This is analytically important since a company does not have to make an obviously false statement in order to cause a decrease in trust. Hypocrisy in perception may also be caused by omission, exaggeration, limited evidence of performance offered as universal, or failure to disclose material limitations. Expectation violation enhances the reversal mechanism. Szabo and Webster (2021) discovered that perceived greenwashing is potentially harmful to both environmental perceptions and product perceptions, whereas Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer (2018) demonstrated that negative reactions can be caused by deceptive green advertising.

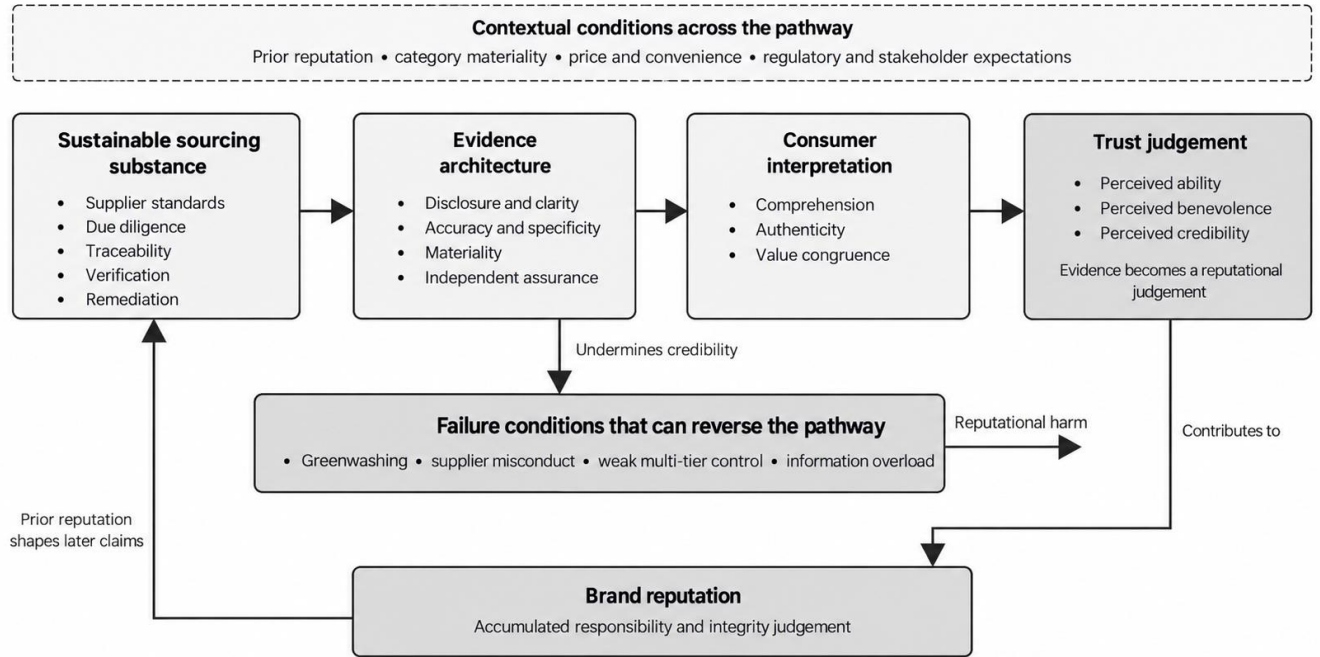
The greater the extent to which a brand encourages a consumer to accept a statement as a sign of integrity, the more pernicious a contradiction can be. This issue is systemic, not just communicative, with the aid of supplier misconduct. The idea of vicarious greenwashing presented by Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele (2021) can be used to understand how the actions of suppliers can taint the sustainability-related communication of the focal firm. The system is particularly applicable in FMCG since the ingredients, packaging, agriculture, and manufacturing can typically be multi-tier and therefore not directly inspected by the consumer. The CMA (2026) thus outlined that when green claims are made, businesses should take into account the responsibility throughout the supply chain.

4.7 Theoretical implications and the proposed framework

The synthesis builds on the signalling theory by defining the organisational and interpretive circumstances under which a sustainability signal is credible. In a straightforward information-asymmetry model, the hidden quality would be sourcing practice, and a claim would be the visible signal. This is incomplete, as demonstrated by the reviewed evidence. The signal must be supported by traceability, independent assurance, materiality, and comprehension. The model thus changes into signal transmission that is signaled to signal evaluation. A firm can send a signal but still fail to create trust; trust is based on whether the consumers are able to interpret the signal and whether the institutional actors help to support the credibility of the signal. The model also streamlines the stakeholder and legitimacy views. According to Jones, Harrison and Felps (2018), stakeholder relationships can be used to facilitate sustainable advantage via trust,

cooperation and information sharing. The legitimacy perspective by Suchman (1995) provides an understanding of the reasons and motives why firms are interested in co-ordinating organisational behaviours and social expectations.

The current synthesis verifies that the process of establishing legitimacy in UK FMCG is achieved via a chain of evidence between suppliers and consumers, retailers, regulators, NGOs and the assurance providers. Sustainable sourcing thus only creates legitimacy where the firms have assertions that the governance supports and that the stakeholders could review or have a reasonable confidence in such governance. The role of reputation is further elaborated in the framework. A well-known brand can have the benefit of the doubt; a bad brand will require more independent validation to reach the same degree of belief. This creates a back-and-forth relationship: good sourcing can boost credibility, and credibility can make future sourcing claims accepted. Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis (2023) discuss this conditional interpretation through the moderating role of capability reputation in greenwashing. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 13. It is composed of five consecutive components: sourcing substance, evidence architecture, consumer interpretation, trust judgement, and brand reputation. It also involves contextual conditions that act on the pathway and a failure pathway that will reverse the result.



Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on the thematic evidence and identified gaps in Chapters 1–3.

Figure 13: Credible sustainable sourcing pathway in UK FMCG

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on the thematic evidence and identified gaps in Chapters 1–3. The figure is an interpretive framework, not an empirical causal model.

The framework thus considers reputation as a result and feedback state. It also demonstrates that the same sourcing investment may introduce trust or reputational risk, and this will depend on the quality of evidence, how the consumer perceives it, and the reaction of the organisation to failure.

4.8 How the discussion addresses the identified gaps

The construct gap is bridged by making distinctions between sustainable sourcing and generic CSR. The structure recognizes supplier selection, standards, traceability, verification and remediation as sourcing substance, communication as evidence architecture and trust as a different judgement. This avoids lumping any broad CSR impacts due to procurement governance by default and lets future researchers have better variables. The context gap is addressed by providing priority to UK FMCG evidence and using international studies as mechanism evidence instead of direct UK estimations. The UK environment is important as buyers make high-frequency, low-involvement purchases, customers might depend on simplified

forms of reputation cues, and suppliers have improved requirements in relation to making environmental claims and responsibility in the supply chain. The review, however, also indicates that the UK evidence is still most robust in packaging, and on traced food, rather than on the entire group of FMCGs. The proposed framework thus bridges an integrative gap but clearly indicates that contextual validation is required.

The methodological gap is filled through the differentiation of association and influence, and reverse causality is located within the framework. There is evidence of a pathway, but it cannot be identified whether sourcing, trust, or reputation is the first driver. Future research ought to be manipulated in terms of quality of evidence, existing reputation, and to assess and track change. The misconduct of suppliers and remediation are handled as a consumer-facing reputation system as opposed to an external operational problem. The discussion, as such, then gives a conditional response. Sustainable sourcing is important where operationally it is substantial, credible, intelligible, and consistent with the expectation of the stakeholders. It is undermined by overload, low materiality, scepticism, price and convenience pressure, and distrust; it can be overturned by greenwashing, misconduct, or poor accountability by suppliers.

4.9 Chapter conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter is that sustainable sourcing affects trust and reputation via a contingent credibility pathway. It is premised on sourcing substance, but the quality of evidence and interpretation is what makes it trusted. The pathway is directed by previous reputation into subsequent assertions, and vice versa: the greenwashing of the process, malpractices of suppliers, and poor multi-tiered control may be reversed. Figure 4.1 provides the basis for Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five interprets the discussion into theory implications, management implications, policy implications, and future research implications. Its key prescription is that UK FMCG organisations must administer sourcing claims as evidence systems: substance must be controlled, evidence warranted, communication made clear and transparent, and failure remedied. The chapter uses the lenses of theory, practice and future research, and each of the recommendations is connected to Chapter Four.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The initial implication is an extension of the signalling theory. Sustainable sourcing is not a visible, easy show of responsible quality but a signal architecture that has to be operational content, quality of evidence, consumer understanding, and institutional backing. The information-asymmetry logic by Spence (1973) is thus further expanded by the difference between the production and the interpretation of evidence. Certification or digital traceability can be invalid when the information is incomplete, assurances are not independent, or the assertion lacks meaning to consumers. The second implication is related to the theory of stakeholder and legitimacy. Legitimacy is shared throughout the supply chain: suppliers' capability, assurance providers, retailers, regulators, NGOs, and affected communities are all involved in the way a brand is assessed. Jones, Harrison and Felps (2018) related relationships between stakeholders to trust and cooperation, and Liang, Hu and Meng (2020) related perceived fit between claims and conduct to trust.

The framework renders the evidence chain transparent: legitimacy is greatest when systems choose, check, confirm, and mitigate sourcing risks. The third implication is a dynamic trust and reputation account. Evidence is connected to reputational judgement through trust; however, prior reputation influences reception of evidence. The reciprocal structure is a structure that includes greenwashing as a boundary condition and supplier misconduct as reputational spillover. Pajuelo-Moreno, Barroso-Méndez and Gallardo-Vázquez (2024) found that there is a positive disclosure-reputation relationship; the framework explains how the relationship is diverse depending on assurance, comprehension, previous reputation and actual supply-chain performance. The fourth implication is constructing discipline. The terms CSR, green trust, green

image, loyalty, satisfaction, and purchase intention cannot be interchanged. Responsibility-to-trust relationships are supported by Iglesias et al. (2020) and Huo et al. (2022), yet broad constructs cannot put supplier governance in isolation.

5.3 Practical and managerial implications

Managers are required to maintain a sourcing evidence register on any consumer-facing claim. It must point out the material or supplier procedure, risk, standard, verifying technique, scope of evidence, constraint, and corrective-action path. This is in reaction to the discovery that trust is not developed by disclosure that is not understandable and truthful (Schnackenberg, Tomlinson and Coen, 2021) and to the CMA (2021, 2026) anticipation of substantiation of supply chains. Specificity matches should be applied between managers and the strength of evidence. A statement of limited scope is better than a statement of general scope, which suggests more than the organisation can demonstrate. Brands ought to differentiate between a certified ingredient, a supplier improvement and an entire product outcome. Due to the possibility of confusion with labels (Asioli, Aschemann-Witzel and Nayga, 2020; Nuujja, Pahl and Thompson, 2024), a consumer-comprehension test must be incorporated into claim approval, in addition to a legal review. High-risk claims should be given first priority by managers, who should be independent. Blockchain, QR codes and enterprise systems are potentially beneficial to enhance visibility, yet they do not present evidence of sustainability without data quality, scope, and interpretation controls.

Technology must address an evidence need and be backed by assurance which is recognised by consumers and stakeholders (Kamilaris, Fonts and Prenafeta-Boldu, 2019; Reitano et al., 2024). There should be a single claim-governance process between procurement, sustainability, legal, marketing and quality functions. Evidence boundaries, wording, status of assurance, frequency of monitoring, and withdrawal triggers must be approved by a cross-functional committee. Firms must also set a response policy that entails fact-finding, claim review, transparent explanation, remediation, and independent checking following supplier misconduct, since failures upstream may pollute the focal brand (Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele, 2021). Incentives should be rewarded based on quality of evidence, not quantity. The procurement performance must measure supplier performance and data completeness; the marketing

performance should measure claim comprehension, reducing complaints and no substantiation failures.

5.4 Policy and industry implications

To enhance investor confidence, the UK policymakers and industry organisations need to focus on comparability, clarity and assurance, and not merely augmenting disclosure. The CMA (2021) Code and CMA (2026) supply-chain guidance offer a framework to base enforcement on the evidence boundaries, lifecycle relevance, selective disclosure and the connection between a claim and the supplier system. The scope and limits of certification schemes must be made known such that a single accredited input is not confused with the brand's sustainability as a whole. Regulators ought to promote the availability of user-friendly language of claims since UK evidence suggests that consumers may find it challenging to navigate the complex meaning of sustainability (Norton et al., 2022; Nuojuua, Pahl and Thompson, 2024). Compliance must not only inquire into whether there is any technical evidence but also whether a reasonable consumer can comprehend the claim without being misled. Common standards of multi-tier due diligence, incident reporting and remediation without losing focus on brand should be created by the industry associations (Koberg and Longoni, 2019; Young, 2018).

5.5 Action plan for UK FMCG organisations

- The first stage is diagnosis: source material risks and invisible layers, distinguish between verified performance and ambition, and catalyse a ranking of claims based on risk.
- Stage two is strengthening evidence: establish criteria in the supplier base, enhance material tracking, conduct independent verification, keep remediation records, and delineate the evidence boundary prior to communication.
- Stage three is interpretation: write definite claims, trial understanding, match claims with category expectations, and supply adequate supporting data.
- The fourth stage is accountability: assess supplier mishaps, completion of corrective action, consumer understanding and reputational markers, and reconsider or retract claims in case of evidence alteration.

Monitoring of the action plan needs to be provided in a small dashboard, which includes evidence completeness, coverage during independent audits, and results of comprehension,

unresolved supplier risks, and time and claim withdrawals of remediation. These indicators link the operational control and the consumer outcome.

5.6 Research implications, limitations and future directions

This dissertation is a semi-systematic Extended Literature Review, not a primary study or statistical meta-analysis. It has conceptual integration and critical weighting of evidence, but is unable to estimate effect sizes. Despite the increased transparency of PRISMA-style screening, database coverage, language choices, and language interpretation can still exclude studies or influence borderline decisions (Page et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019). The UK-based review is focused, but direct UK-based information is in packaging, traced food, and environmental reading, but not each FMCG category. The international studies explain the mechanism but are unable to transfer without regard to category risk, consumer norms, regulation, retail structure, and purchasing habits. The framework then ought to be tested and not to be considered as a universal effect.

Construct and causal boundaries also persist. CSR, disclosure, green trust, brand image, purchase intention, or willingness to pay are commonly used as proxies in studies, and the cross-sectional design is incapable of determining whether sourcing forms or beliefs are formed by reputation. Future studies would compare independent assurance with brand-controlled traceability to manipulate previous reputation as well as differentiate between direct misconduct, supplier misconduct, and weak due diligence. Factorial experiments must manipulate specificity of claims, source of assurance, detail of traceability and limitations, prior reputation and reputation, individually as a measure of comprehension, trust and reputation. The reputational change and supplier incidents should be followed with longitudinal panels. Mixed-method research ought to relate consumer reactions to procurement documents and multi-tier governance.

5.7 Chapter conclusion

Sourcing should be managed by managers as a claim-support system, ensuring that when the risk is high, they plan remediation. Policymakers are advised to enhance comparability of the claims and supply chain accountability. Researchers need to disassociate sourcing from generic CSR and experiment with the pathway using experiments, longitudinal designs and multi-tier evidence.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In the final chapter, the focus is the same question of how sustainable sourcing can shape trust and reputation in UK FMCG. Supply-chain governance, consumer trust, transparency, reputation, and greenwashing research were integrated in the review to clarify when sourcing is credible. It also goes back to the research gap of a weak connection between the evidence of operational sourcing and consumer judgement.

- RQ1: How does sustainable sourcing influence consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG industry?
- RQ2: Which credibility mechanisms, boundary conditions and rival explanations strengthen, weaken or reverse the relationship between sustainable sourcing and consumer trust and brand reputation?

6.2 Answer to the research question

The ultimate response is that sustainable sourcing may build trust and reputation, but the impact is contrived and indirect, primarily. The potential of a credible signal has been introduced by supplier standards, due diligence, traceability, verification and corrective action. This substance becomes consumer-relevant when it is converted to clear, accurate, specific, material, and independently supported information. Consumers then decide that the brand and its assurance actors are capable, benevolent, and credible, and trust can add to the accumulated brand reputation. The review came up with four key findings. Sustainable sourcing needs to be distinguished from generic CSR; transparency needs to be understood, as opposed to being disclosed; reputation is both a consequence and a predisposition to further assertions; and greenwashing, malpractice on the part of suppliers and lax multi-tier accountability can turn the relationship around. The pathway is reinforced by credibility, authenticity, value congruence and independent assurance and is undermined by scepticism, overload, low materiality, price and convenience pressures. The response to the second research question is conditional as well. Previously established reputation can cushion or act as an amplifier to a new statement, and where routine buying, the trust may not always flow into immediate buying behaviour.

6.3 Contributions of the dissertation

The research input is a comprehensive framework of plausible sustainable sourcing within the UK FMCG. It relates sourcing matters to the evidence architecture, consumer interpretation, trust and reputation, and expands signalling, stakeholder and legitimacy perspectives by clarifying why evidence quality, comprehension and supply-chain alignment are important. The action logic of the practitioner is a governance-related action logic. The managers are expected to map material risks, check the performance of the suppliers, regulate claim scope, test understanding, keep track of reputation, and react to failure. This is significant as consumers frequently engage in low-involvement buying and cannot directly examine upstream sourcing, and brands are required to transform hidden governance into plausible information.

The policy contribution is that regulation of environmental claims is involved in reputation governance. The CMA (2021, 2026) requirements support supply-chain and lifecycle substantiation. Compliance is a bare qualification, not a warrant of trust, but it lacks regulation and reputational risk. Combined, these contributions offer an alternative perspective on promotional sustainability narratives that is more accurate. The research contributes to the body of knowledge by describing the processes and failure states, and recognizes that the framework remains to be empirically justified. The ending is therefore even. It appreciates the strategic importance of sustainable sourcing without thinking that consumer trust is automatic or that a positive attitude will lead to purchase.

6.4 Limitations of the conclusions

The interdisciplinary, semi-systematic evidence base limits the conclusions to a critical synthesis, but not a pooled estimate of causation. Cross-sectional and construct variation designs open up the direction of influence to test. The evidence from the UK is imbalanced in categories, and the results from foreign countries might not be transferable, as consumer expectations, involvement, and regulation are different. This framework is not a testable causal model, but rather a theoretically-based proposal. Any inference of trust to purchasing is also constrained by the attitude-behaviour gap: consumers might trust a brand and choose a cheaper or more convenient option (White, Habib and Hardisty, 2019; ElHaffar, Durif and Dubé, 2020; van Bussel et al., 2022). The boundaries imply that we should only use the conclusions to lead testing and not to construct it as a universal causal assertion.

6.5 Final recommendations and future research

The final recommendations are discussed below.

- Controlled experiments: Should manipulate the specificity of claims, independence of assurance, traceability detail, and prior reputation when assessing (measuring) comprehension, trust, and reputation alone.
- Longitudinal studies are supposed to be in line with reputational resilience and supplier incidents. Multi-level case studies need to link consumer decisions with procurement history and correction, differentiating direct misbehaviour, supplier misbehaviour, and lax organisational regulation.
- For industry, the next step to be taken immediately is to follow the four-stage action plan of diagnosing risks, strengthening evidence, communicating to understand and learn through accountability. The credible brand claim would be backed by credible procurement practice, evidence, and response to changes in conditions.
- Sustainable sourcing is relevant because accountable sourcing provides information to enable informed judgement rather than because the language of sustainability works to produce goodwill as a matter of fact.
- Brands which match supplier control, such as evidential evidence and truthful claims, might transform responsibility into long-lasting trust; brands that talk more than their evidence might harm reputation. Further research ought to ask whether this correlation yields lasting reputation across type and time.

6.6 Chapter conclusion

Reputation in UK FMCG only comes after sustainable sourcing where there is a balance in governance, evidence, interpretation and accountability throughout the supply chain. This is the ultimate contribution of the dissertation on the aspect of responsible brand management to consumers, firms and future researchers in a complex and changing environment of the global market.

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Chapter 1 — Publications Considered

Extracted from the References section of the current Chapter 1 file. Full references are preserved as written; the register does not invent or silently remove sources.

Reference No.	Author / Organisation	Year	Source Type	Full Reference	DOI / URL	Chapter Source File	Record Key	Notes
1	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)	2021	Industry, regulator or market source	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) (2021) Green Claims Code: making environmental claims. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims	Dissertation (Chapter 1) LCMB70 35 (1) (1).docx	URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims	
2	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)	2026	Industry, regulator or market source	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) (2026) Making green claims: getting it right, across the supply chain. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-green-claims-getting-it-right-across-the-supply-chain	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-green-claims-getting-it-right-across-the-supply-chain	Dissertation (Chapter 1) LCMB70 35 (1) (1).docx	URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-green-claims-getting-it-right-across-the-supply-chain	
3	de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. and Soares, G.R.L	2020	Academic journal article	de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. and Soares, G.R.L. (2020) 'Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review', Environmental Sciences Europe, 32, 19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3 .	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3	Dissertation (Chapter 1) LCMB70 35 (1) (1).docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3	

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Reference No.	Author / Organisation	Year	Source Type	Full Reference	DOI / URL	Chapter Source File	Record Key	Notes
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3	Barroso-Méndez, M.J., Pajuelo-Moreno, M.-L. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D	2024	Academic journal article	Barroso-Méndez, M.J., Pajuelo-Moreno, M.-L. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D. (2024) 'A meta-analytic review of the sustainability disclosure and reputation relationship: aggregating findings in the field of social and environmental accounting', Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal, 15(5), pp. 1210-1254. https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-04-2022-0168	https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-04-2022-0168	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1108/sampj-04-2022-0168	

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8	de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. and Soares, G.R.L	2 0 2 0	Acade mic journa l article	de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. and Soares, G.R.L. (2020) 'Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review', Environmental Sciences Europe, 32, 19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3 .	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018plu s_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3
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31	Pajuelo-Moreno, M.L., Barroso-Méndez, M.J. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D	2024	Academic journal article	Pajuelo-Moreno, M.L., Barroso-Méndez, M.J. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D. (2024) 'Relationship between sustainability disclosure and corporate reputation: evidence from a meta-analysis', <i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i> , 33(8), pp. 8593-8615. https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3933	https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3933	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3933

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33	Potter, C., Bastounis, A., Hartmann-Boyce, J., Stewart, C., Frie, K., Tudor, K., Bianchi, F., Cartwright, E., Cook, B., Rayner, M. and Jebb, S.A	2021	Academic journal article	Potter, C., Bastounis, A., Hartmann-Boyce, J., Stewart, C., Frie, K., Tudor, K., Bianchi, F., Cartwright, E., Cook, B., Rayner, M. and Jebb, S.A. (2021) 'The effects of environmental sustainability labels on selection, purchase, and consumption of food and drink products: a systematic review', Environment and Behavior, 53(8), pp. 891-925. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916521995473 .	https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916521995473	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916521995473
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35	Reitano, M., Pappalardo, G., and Selvaggi, R.	2024	Academic journal article	Reitano, M., Pappalardo, G., Selvaggi, R., Zarbà, C. and Chinnici, G. (2024) 'Factors influencing consumer perceptions of food tracked with	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afres.2024.100455	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afres.2024.100455

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38	Saberi, S., Kouhizadeh, M., Sarkis, J. and Shen, L	2019	Academic journal article	Saberi, S., Kouhizadeh, M., Sarkis, J. and Shen, L. (2019) 'Blockchain technology and its relationships to sustainable supply chain management', International Journal of Production Research, 57(7), pp. 2117-2135. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2018.1533261 .	https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2018.1533261	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2018.1533261
39	Santos, C., Coelho, A. and Marques, A	2024	Academic journal article	Santos, C., Coelho, A. and Marques, A. (2024) 'A systematic literature review on greenwashing and its relationship to stakeholders: state of art and future research	https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00337-5	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00337-5

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45	Veit, C., Lambrechts, W., Quintens, L. and Semeijn, J	2018	Academic journal article	Veit, C., Lambrechts, W., Quintens, L. and Semeijn, J. (2018) 'The impact of sustainable sourcing on customer perceptions: association by guilt from scandals in local versus offshore sourcing countries', Sustainability, 10(7), 2519. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072519	https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072519	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072519
46	Wang, M., Kumar, V., Ruan, X., Saad, M., Garza-Reyes, J.A. and Kumar, A	2022	Academic journal article	Wang, M., Kumar, V., Ruan, X., Saad, M., Garza-Reyes, J.A. and Kumar, A. (2022) 'Sustainability concerns on consumers' attitude towards short food supply chains: an empirical investigation', Operations Management Research, 15(1-2), pp. 76-92. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12063-021-00188-x	https://doi.org/10.1007/s12063-021-00188-x	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12063-021-00188-x
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48	White, K., Cakanlar, A., Sethi, S. and Trudel, R	2025	Academic journal article	White, K., Cakanlar, A., Sethi, S. and Trudel, R. (2025) 'The past, present, and future of sustainability marketing: how did we get here and where might we go?', Journal of Business Research, 187, 115056. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115056 .	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115056	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115056		
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50	Wu, W., Zhang, A., van Klinken, R.D., Schrobback, P. and Muller, J.M	2021	Academic journal article	Wu, W., Zhang, A., van Klinken, R.D., Schrobback, P. and Muller, J.M. (2021) 'Consumer trust in food and the food system: a critical review', Foods, 10(10), 2490. https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10102490 .	https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10102490	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10102490		
51	Young, S.B	2018	Academic journal article	Young, S.B. (2018) 'Responsible sourcing of metals: certification approaches for conflict minerals and conflict-free metals', The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment, 23(7), pp. 1429-1447. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11367-015-0932-5 .	https://doi.org/10.1007/s11367-015-0932-5	Thematic_Review_Chapter_3_2018pluss_Final.docx	URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11367-015-0932-5		
Rec	Author /	Year	Source Type	Full Reference	DOI / URL	Chapters	Chapter	Original Chapter	Notes

ord Key	Organization	Year				Count	Record(s)		
REF-001	Asioli, F., Aschemann-Witzel, J. and Nayga, R.M.	2020	Journal article	Asioli, F., Aschemann-Witzel, J. and Nayga, R.M. (2020) 'Sustainability-related food labels', Annual Review of Resource Economics, 12, pp. 171–185. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-100518-094103 .	https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-100518-094103	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-001; Ch5-001	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.3, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.3. Reference-list paragraph 279.
REF-002	Barroso-Méndez, M.J., Pajuelo-Moreno, M.-L. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D.	2024	Journal article	Barroso-Méndez, M.J., Pajuelo-Moreno, M.-L. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D. (2024) 'A meta-analytic review of the sustainability disclosure and reputation relationship: aggregating findings in the field of social and environmental accounting', Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal, 15(5), pp. 1210–1254. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-04-2022-0168 .	https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-04-2022-0168	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-002	Chapter text omits the accent in Vázquez in some citations; matched to the reference-list entry. Ch4: §4.4. Reference-list paragraph 281.

REF 46-003	Borah, P.S., Dogbe, C.S.K. and Marwa, N.	2024	Journal article	Borah, P.S., Dogbe, C.S.K. and Marwa, N. (2024) 'Generation Z's green purchase behavior: do green consumer knowledge, consumer social responsibility, green advertising, and green consumer trust matter for sustainable development?', Business Strategy and the Environment, 33(5), pp. 4530–4546. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3714 .	https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3714	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-003	Ch4: §4.5. Reference-list paragraph 282.
	Competition and Markets Authority	2021	Regulatory guidance	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) (2021) Green Claims Code: making environmental claims. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims .	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims	Chapter 5; Chapter 6	2	Ch5-002; Ch6-001	Ch5: §5.3, §5.4 Ch6: §6.3. Reference-list paragraph 286.
	Competition and Markets Authority	2026	Regulatory guidance	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) (2026) Making green claims: getting it right, across the supply chain. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-green-claims-getting-it-right-across-the-supply-chain	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-green-claims-getting-it-right-across-the-supply-chain	Chapter 4; Chapter 5; Chapter 6	3	Ch4-004; Ch5-003; Ch6-002	Ch4: §4.6 Ch5: §5.3, §5.4 Ch6: §6.3. Reference-list paragraph 287.

					https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-green-claims-getting-it-right-across-the-supply-chain .					
R EF 46 - 00 6	de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. and Soares, G.R.L.	2 0 2 0	Journal article		de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. and Soares, G.R.L. (2020) 'Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review', Environmental Sciences Europe, 32, 19. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3 .	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-005	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.6, Table 4.1. Reference-list paragraph 289.
R EF 46 - 00 7	ElHaffar, G., Durif, F. and Dubé, L.	2 0 2 0	Journal article		ElHaffar, G., Durif, F. and Dubé, L. (2020) 'Towards closing the attitude-intention-behaviour gap in green consumption: a narrative review of the literature and an overview of future research directions', Journal of Cleaner Production, 275, 122556. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122556 .	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122556	Chapter 6	1	Ch6-003	Ch6: §6.4. Reference-list paragraph 290.
R EF 46 -	Gatti, L., Seele, P. and	2 0 1 9	Journal article		Gatti, L., Seele, P. and Rademacher, L. (2019) 'Grey zone in – greenwash out: a	https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-019-0044-9	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-006	Ch4: §4.6. Reference-list paragraph 291.

008	Rademacher, L.			review of greenwashing research and implications for the voluntary-mandatory transition of CSR', International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility, 4, 6. Available at: https://doi.org/10.186/s40991-019-0044-9 .					
REF46-009	Golob, U., Burghausen, M., Kernstock, J. and Davies, M.A.P.	2022	Journal article	Golob, U., Burghausen, M., Kernstock, J. and Davies, M.A.P. (2022) 'Brand management and sustainability: exploring potential for the transformative power of brands', Journal of Brand Management, 29(6), pp. 513–519. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-022-00293-7 .	https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-022-00293-7	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-007	Ch4: §4.4. Reference-list paragraph 292.
REF46-010	Hastig, G.M. and Sodhi, M.S.	2020	Journal article	Hastig, G.M. and Sodhi, M.S. (2020) 'Blockchain for supply chain traceability: business requirements and critical success factors', Production and Operations	https://doi.org/10.111/poms.13147	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-008	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.3, Table 4.1. Reference-list paragraph 295.

					Management, 29(4), pp. 935–954. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/poms.13147 .					
R EF 46 - 01 1	Huo, C., Hameed, J., Zhang, M., Bin Mohd Ali, A.F. and Nik Hashim, N.A.A.	2 0 2 2	Journal article		Huo, C., Hameed, J., Zhang, M., Bin Mohd Ali, A.F. and Nik Hashim, N.A.A. (2022) 'Modelling the impact of corporate social responsibility on sustainable purchase intentions: insights into brand trust and brand loyalty', Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja, 35(1), pp. 4710–4739. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2021.2016465 .	https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2021.2016465	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-009; Ch5-004	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.5, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.2. Reference-list paragraph 297.
R EF 46 - 01 2	Hutchings, S., Chheang, S., Hedderley, D., Realini, C. and Jaeger, S.	2 0 2 4	Journal article		Hutchings, S., Chheang, S., Hedderley, D., Realini, C. and Jaeger, S. (2024) 'Investigating UK consumer perception of food sustainability and consumer strategies for improving the sustainability of their most recent meal', Journal of Sensory Studies, 39(5),	https://doi.org/10.1111/joss.12948	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-010	Ch4: §4.4. Reference-list paragraph 298.

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REF 46-013	Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., Bagherzadeh, M. and Singh, J.J.	2020	Journal article	Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., Bagherzadeh, M. and Singh, J.J. (2020) 'Co-creation: a key link between corporate social responsibility, customer trust, and customer loyalty', Journal of Business Ethics, 163(1), pp. 151–166. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-4015-y.	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-4015-y	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-011; Ch5-005	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.5, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.2. Reference-list paragraph 299.
REF 46-014	Ioannou, I., Kassinis, G.I. and Papagiannakis, G.	2023	Journal article	Ioannou, I., Kassinis, G.I. and Papagiannakis, G. (2023) 'The impact of perceived greenwashing on customer satisfaction and the contingent role of capability reputation', Journal of Business Ethics, 185(2), pp. 333–347. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05151-9.	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05151-9	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-012	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.7, Table 4.1. Reference-list paragraph 300.
REF 46-014	Jin, S., Matsuoka, Y., Yue,	2024	Journal article	Jin, S., Matsuoka, Y., Yue, M., Jones, G. and Frewer, L.J. (2024) 'Does information	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-024-05097-0	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-013	Ch4: §4.5. Reference-list paragraph 302.

01 5	M., Jones, G. and Frewe r, L.J.			about environmental considerations affect Chinese and UK consumers' purchase intentions for traced foods? A path analysis', Environment, Development and Sustainability, 26, pp. 32287–32318. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-024-05097-0 .					
R EF 46 - 01 6	Jones, T.M., Harris on, J.S. and Felps, W.	2 0 1 8	Journal article	Jones, T.M., Harrison, J.S. and Felps, W. (2018) 'How applying instrumental stakeholder theory can provide sustainable competitive advantage', Academy of Management Review, 43(3), pp. 371–391. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2016.0111 .	https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2016.0111	Chap ter 4; Chap ter 5	2	Ch4-014; Ch5- 006	Ch4: §4.7 Ch5: §5.2. Reference-list paragraph 303.
R EF 46 - 01 7	Kamila ris, A., Fonts, A. and Prenaf eta- Boldú, F.X.	2 0 1 9	Journal article	Kamilaris, A., Fonts, A. and Prenafeta- Boldú, F.X. (2019) 'The rise of blockchain technology in agriculture and food supply chains', Trends in Food	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2019.07.034	Chap ter 4; Chap ter 5	2	Ch4-015; Ch5- 007	Some chapter text omits the accent in 'Prenafeta-Boldú'; matched to the reference-list entry. Ch4: §4.3 Ch5: §5.3. Reference-list paragraph 304.

				Science & Technology, 91, pp. 640–652. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2019.07.034 .					
REF 46 - 018	Koberg, E. and Longoni, A.	2019	Journal article	Koberg, E. and Longoni, A. (2019) 'A systematic review of sustainable supply chain management in global supply chains', Journal of Cleaner Production, 207, pp. 1084–1098. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.10.033 .	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.10.033	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-016; Ch5-008	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.4. Reference-list paragraph 306.
REF 46 - 019	Liang, X., Hu, X. and Meng, H.	2020	Journal article	Liang, X., Hu, X. and Meng, H. (2020) 'Truly sustainability or hypocrisy: the effects of corporate sustainable orientation on consumers' quality perception and trust based on evidence from China', Sustainability, 12(7), 2735. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072735 .	https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072735	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-017; Ch5-009	Ch4: §4.4 Ch5: §5.2. Reference-list paragraph 310.
REF 46 -	Morgan, R.M. and Hunt, S.D.	1994	Theory article	Morgan, R.M. and Hunt, S.D. (1994) 'The commitment-trust theory of	https://doi.org/10.2307/1252308	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-018	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4:

020	S.D.			relationship marketing', Journal of Marketing, 58(3), pp. 20–38. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1252308					§4.4, Table 4.1. Reference-list paragraph 369.
REF 46 - 021	Norton, V., Oloyede, O.O., Lignou, S., Wang, Q.J., Methven, L. and Gosney, M.A.	2022	Journal article	Norton, V., Oloyede, O.O., Lignou, S., Wang, Q.J., Methven, L. and Gosney, M.A. (2022) 'Exploring consumers' understanding and perception of sustainable food packaging in the UK', Foods, 11(21), 3424. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11213424	https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11213424	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-019; Ch5-010	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.4, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.4. Reference-list paragraph 313.
REF 46 - 022	Nuojua, S., Pahl, S. and Thompson, R.C.	2024	Journal article	Nuojua, S., Pahl, S. and Thompson, R.C. (2024) 'Plastic alternatives and substitutes in the packaging sector: a UK consumer perspective', Sustainable Production and Consumption, 46, pp. 68–81. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2024.02.019	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2024.02.019	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-020; Ch5-011	Chapter 5 text contains the typographical form 'Nuujja'; matched to the reference-list entry. Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.4, §4.5, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.3, §5.4. Reference-list paragraph 314.
REF 46 -	Orazi, D.C. and Chan, D.C.	2020	Journal article	Orazi, D.C. and Chan, E.Y. (2020) 'They did not walk the green talk!: how	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-4028-6	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-021	Ch4: §4.5. Reference-list paragraph 315.

02 3	E.Y.			information specificity influences consumer evaluations of disconfirmed environmental claims', Journal of Business Ethics, 163(1), pp. 107–123. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-4028-6 .					
REF 46 - 02 4	Page, M.J. et al.	2 0 2 1	Methodology / review article	Page, M.J. et al. (2021) 'The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews', BMJ, 372, n71. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71	https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71	Chapter 5	1	Ch5-012	Ch5: §5.6. Reference-list paragraph 373.
REF 46 - 02 5	Pajuelo-Moreno, M.L., Barroso-Méndez, M.J. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D.	2 0 2 4	Journal article	Pajuelo-Moreno, M.L., Barroso-Méndez, M.J. and Gallardo-Vázquez, D. (2024) 'Relationship between sustainability disclosure and corporate reputation: evidence from a meta-analysis', Business Strategy and the Environment, 33(8), pp. 8593–8615. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3933 .	https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3933	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-022; Ch5-013	Chapter text omits the accent in Vázquez in some citations; matched to the reference-list entry. Ch4: §4.4, §4.5 Ch5: §5.2. Reference-list paragraph 317.

R EF 46 - 02 6	Paul, J. and Criado, A.R.	2020	Methodology / review article	Paul, J. and Criado, A.R. (2020) 'The art of writing literature review: what do we know and what do we need to know?', International Business Review, 29(4), 101717. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101717	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101717	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-023	Ch4: §4.1. Reference-list paragraph 375.
R EF 46 - 02 7	Pizzetti, M., Gatti, L. and Seele, P.	2021	Journal article	Pizzetti, M., Gatti, L. and Seele, P. (2021) 'Firms talk, suppliers walk: analysing the locus of greenwashing in the blame game and introducing vicarious greenwashing', Journal of Business Ethics, 170(1), pp. 21–38. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04406-2	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04406-2	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-024; Ch5-014	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.6, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.3. Reference-list paragraph 321.
R EF 46 - 02 8	Queiroz, M.M., Telles, R. and Bonilla, S.H.	2019	Journal article	Queiroz, M.M., Telles, R. and Bonilla, S.H. (2019) 'Blockchain and supply chain management integration: a systematic review of the literature', Supply Chain Management: An International Journal, 25(2), pp.	https://doi.org/10.1080/SCM-03-2018-0143	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-025	Ch4: §4.3. Reference-list paragraph 323.

				241–254. Available at: https://doi.org/10.108/SCM-03-2018-0143 .					
REF 46 - 029	Reitano, M., Pappalardo, G., Selvaggi, R., Zarbà, C. and Chinnici, G.	2024	Journal article	Reitano, M., Pappalardo, G., Selvaggi, R., Zarbà, C. and Chinnici, G. (2024) 'Factors influencing consumer perceptions of food tracked with blockchain technology: a systematic literature review', <i>Applied Food Research</i> , 4(2), 100455. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afres.2024.100455 .	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afres.2024.100455	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-026; Ch5-015	Ch4: §4.3 Ch5: §5.3. Reference-list paragraph 324.
REF 46 - 030	Riva, F., Magrizos, S., Rizomyliotis, I. and Uddin, S.M.F.	2024	Journal article	Riva, F., Magrizos, S., Rizomyliotis, I. and Uddin, S.M.F. (2024) 'Green brand associations and green brand trust: the role of green brand positioning and green scepticism', <i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i> , 33(7), pp. 6491–6506. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3829 .	https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3829	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-027	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: Table 4.1. Reference-list paragraph 325.

R EF 46 - 03 1	Saberi, S., Kouhizadeh, M., Sarkis, J. and Shen, L.	2019	Journal article	Saberi, S., Kouhizadeh, M., Sarkis, J. and Shen, L. (2019) 'Blockchain technology and its relationships to sustainable supply chain management', <i>International Journal of Production Research</i> , 57(7), pp. 2117–2135. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2018.1533261	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-028	Ch4: §4.3. Reference-list paragraph 327.
	Schmuck, D., Matthes, J. and Naderer, B.	2018	Journal article	Schmuck, D., Matthes, J. and Naderer, B. (2018) 'Misleading consumers with green advertising? An affect-reason-involvement account of greenwashing effects in environmental advertising', <i>Journal of Advertising</i> , 47(2), pp. 127–145. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2018.1452652	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-029	Ch4: §4.6. Reference-list paragraph 329.
	Schnackenberg, A.K., Tomlinson, E.C. and Coen, C.A.	2021	Journal article	Schnackenberg, A.K., Tomlinson, E.C. and Coen, C.A. (2021) 'The dimensional structure of transparency: a	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-030; Ch5-016	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.4, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.3. Reference-list paragraph 330.

	and Coen, C.A.			construct validation of transparency as disclosure, clarity, and accuracy in organizations', Human Relations, 74(10), pp. 1628–1660. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720933317 .					
R EF 46 - 03 4	Snyder, H.	2 0 1 9	Method ology / review article	Snyder, H. (2019) 'Literature review as a research methodology: an overview and guidelines', Journal of Business Research, 104, pp. 333–339. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-031; Ch5-017	Ch4: §4.1 Ch5: §5.6. Reference-list paragraph 383.
R EF 46 - 03 5	Spence, M.	1 9 7 3	Theory article	Spence, M. (1973) 'Job market signaling', The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87(3), pp. 355–374. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010	https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010	Chapter 4; Chapter 5	2	Ch4-032; Ch5-018	Ch4: §4.3 Ch5: §5.2. Reference-list paragraph 384.
R EF 46 - 03 6	Suchman, M.C.	1 9 9 5	Theory article	Suchman, M.C. (1995) 'Managing legitimacy: strategic and institutional approaches', Academy of Management Review, 20(3), pp. 556–582. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/258788	https://doi.org/10.2307/258788	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-033	Ch4: §4.7. Reference-list paragraph 385.

				20(3), pp. 571–610. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/258788					
R EF 46 - 03 7	Szabo, S. and Webster, J.	2021	Journal article	Szabo, S. and Webster, J. (2021) 'Perceived greenwashing: the effects of green marketing on environmental and product perceptions', <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> , 171(4), pp. 719–739. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04461-0	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04461-0	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-034	Ch4: §4.6. Reference-list paragraph 335.
R EF 46 - 03 8	van Bussel, L.M., Kuijsten, A., Mars, M. and van 't Veer, P.	2022	Journal article	van Bussel, L.M., Kuijsten, A., Mars, M. and van 't Veer, P. (2022) 'Consumers' perceptions on food-related sustainability: a systematic review', <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i> , 341, 130904. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.130904	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.130904	Chapter 6	1	Ch6-004	Ch6: §6.4. Reference-list paragraph 337.
R EF 46 - 03 9	Westerlund, M., Nene, S., Leminen, S.	2021	Journal article	Westerlund, M., Nene, S., Leminen, S. and Rajahonka, M. (2021) 'An exploration of blockchain-based traceability in food supply chains',	https://doi.org/10.2215/timreview/1446	Chapter 4	1	Ch4-035	Ch4: §4.3. Reference-list paragraph 341.

	and Rajaho nka, M.			Technology Innovation Management Review, 11(6), pp. 6–18. Available at: https://doi.org/10.22215/timreview/1446 .					
R EF 46 - 04 0	White, K., Habib, R. and Hardis ty, D.J.	2 0 1 9	Journal article	White, K., Habib, R. and Hardisty, D.J. (2019) 'How to SHIFT consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: a literature review and guiding framework', Journal of Marketing, 83(3), pp. 22–49. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649 .	https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649	Chap ter 6	1	Ch6-005	Ch6: §6.4. Reference-list paragraph 343.
R EF 46 - 04 1	Wu, W., Zhang, A., van Klinke n, R.D., Schrob back, P. and Muller, J.M.	2 0 2 1	Journal article	Wu, W., Zhang, A., van Klinken, R.D., Schrobbach, P. and Muller, J.M. (2021) 'Consumer trust in food and the food system: a critical review', Foods, 10(10), 2490. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10102490 .	https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10102490	Chap ter 4	1	Ch4-036	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.4, Table 4.1. Reference-list paragraph 344.
R EF 46 - 04	Young, S.B.	2 0 1 8	Journal article	Young, S.B. (2018) 'Responsible sourcing of metals: certification approaches for	https://doi.org/10.1007/s11367-015-0932-5	Chap ter 4; Chap ter 5	2	Ch4-037; Ch5- 019	Included because it appears in the Evidence base column of Table 4.1, even where not repeated in body prose. Ch4: §4.2, §4.3, Table 4.1 Ch5: §5.4.

2	conflict minerals and conflict-free metals', The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment, 23(7), pp. 1429–1447. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11367-015-0932-5 .	Reference-list paragraph 345.
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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:	Kumail abbas
2	Student Number:	2436863
3	Email address:	2436863@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
4	Programme of Study:	Master of Business Administration (MBA)
5	Supervisor:	Alireza Nazarian

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	UWTSD guidance on the use of generative AI in academic work	☒
4		☐

SECTION C: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	The Influence of Sustainable Sourcing and Environmental Ethics on Consumer Trust and Brand Reputation in the UK Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Industry: An Extended Literature Review		
2	Proposed start date:	01/08/2026	Proposed end date:	02/09/2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words in each section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the three points below: • Purpose of Research Activity • Proposed Research Question • Aims of Research Activity • Objectives of Research Activity			

ETHICS FORM – UNDERGRADUATE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE COURSES ONLY

	Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain • <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> • <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>
3	Purpose of Research Activity The proposed research will examine how sustainable sourcing and environmental ethics shape consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. Existing research indicates that consumers increasingly evaluate brands not only by price and quality, but also by the credibility of their sourcing, environmental conduct and sustainability communication. However, the evidence is fragmented across marketing, business ethics and supply-chain research, and the four central concepts are often examined separately. This extended literature review will therefore synthesise recent peer-reviewed evidence to clarify the relationships among sustainable sourcing, environmental ethics, consumer trust and brand reputation. It will also examine conditions that may strengthen or weaken these relationships, including transparency, certification, perceived authenticity and greenwashing. The research will add to the body of knowledge by integrating findings that are currently dispersed across disciplines and by developing a coherent conceptual account relevant to the UK FMCG context. This is an important area because FMCG firms operate in highly visible and competitive markets where questionable environmental claims or supply-chain practices can quickly damage consumer confidence and corporate reputation. The study will use published academic literature only and will not involve human participants or primary data. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question How do sustainable sourcing and environmental ethics influence consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK fast-moving consumer goods industry, according to the existing academic literature? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity Number your aims and link them to your objectives Aim 1 (linked to Objectives 1-5): To critically synthesise existing academic evidence on how sustainable sourcing and environmental ethics influence consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG industry. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity 1. To critically review the principal theories and concepts connecting sustainable sourcing, environmental ethics, consumer trust and brand reputation. 2. To examine evidence concerning the influence of sustainable sourcing on consumer trust in the UK FMCG industry. 3. To assess how corporate environmental ethics shape brand reputation and consumer perceptions in the UK FMCG industry. 4. To identify contextual factors, including transparency, certification, authenticity and greenwashing, that strengthen or weaken these relationships. 5. To develop evidence-based theoretical and managerial implications and identify priorities for future research. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed data collection methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity to collect data, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	<i>This should describe how you intend to collect data. It should not include a discussion of the theoretical basis for your data collection methods. Please note, that if you intend to collect any audio/video recordings of interviews with participants then these will be classified as Personal Data under GDPR/DPA2018. If you intend to use these then note this in section H.</i>

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	The research will collect secondary data only through a semi-systematic extended literature review. Searches will be undertaken in Scopus, Web of Science, Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect and Emerald Insight. Google Scholar will be used as a supplementary tool to identify relevant studies and trace citations. Search strings will combine terms such as “sustainable sourcing”, “ethical sourcing”, “responsible sourcing”, “environmental ethics”, “environmental responsibility”, “consumer trust”, “brand trust”, “brand reputation”, “corporate reputation”, “FMCG”, “consumer goods”, “United Kingdom” and “UK”, using the Boolean operators AND and OR. The principal publication period will be 2015-2026, although earlier foundational studies may be included where they are necessary to explain established theories or concepts. Search results will be recorded in a reference-management file and duplicate records will be removed. Titles and abstracts will first be screened against predefined eligibility criteria, followed by full-text assessment. Included sources will principally comprise peer-reviewed English-language journal articles and selected high-quality academic books or chapters that directly address the research question. Priority will be given to UK-focused studies; international FMCG studies will be retained where they provide directly transferable evidence or address gaps in the UK literature. Non-academic websites, news reports, opinion pieces, conference abstracts without full papers, duplicate records and studies unrelated to the relevant concepts or industry context will be excluded. The selection process will be documented through a PRISMA-style flow diagram. The final studies will be entered into a structured data-extraction table recording citation details, country, sector, theoretical basis, methodology, sample or data source, principal findings and stated limitations. Study quality will be assessed using source quality, methodological transparency, robustness, relevance to the research question and theoretical contribution. The evidence will then be analysed through thematic analysis and narrative synthesis to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, contextual differences and research gaps. No questionnaires, interviews, observations, confidential organisational records, personal data or special-category data will be collected. (this box should expand as you type)
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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.	☐	☒

ETHICS FORM – UNDERGRADUATE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE COURSES ONLY

	Details of any other primary data collection method: No primary data will be collected. The dissertation is an extended literature review based solely on published academic sources. (this box should expand as you type)		
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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 N/A - the research will not involve human or animal participants. (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. 0. No participants will be recruited. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	N/A - secondary literature review only. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	N/A - no participants will be identified or contacted. (this box should expand as you type)

Information for participants:		YES	NO	N/A

ETHICS FORM – UNDERGRADUATE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE COURSES ONLY

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. N/A - no participants are involved in the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

	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. N/A - no participants are involved in the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

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. N/A - the research has no participants. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: N/A - the research has no participants. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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	

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	N/A - the review will not collect participant disclosures or investigate sensitive, embarrassing, illegal or upsetting personal matters. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
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. Low-level risks include eye strain or fatigue from prolonged screen-based reviewing and an academic-integrity risk if sources or AI-supported wording are inaccurately represented. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: The researcher will use an ergonomic workspace, take regular breaks, maintain a transparent search and extraction record, verify every claim against the original source, cite accurately and seek supervisor guidance where uncertainty arises. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
4	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There are always risks. Do not write NA. Potential institutional risks are limited to academic-integrity, copyright, data-management or reputational concerns arising from inaccurate reporting, poor referencing or inappropriate use of published material. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: The research will follow UWTSD ethics, data-management and AI guidance; use legitimate library or open-access sources; apply accurate Harvard referencing; avoid excessive reproduction of copyrighted material; and undergo supervisor review before submission. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: The environmental risk is very low and is limited to electricity use and possible paper consumption during the desk-based review. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: The project will use a digital-first workflow, avoid unnecessary printing, use energy-saving device settings and retain only essential electronic copies of research materials. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

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. N/A - no participants will be recruited or debriefed. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
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.	

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	N/A - no participants will be recruited and no consent process is required. (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. N/A - no participant data will be collected. (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. N/A - no personal data will be collected. The research materials will consist only of published academic sources, bibliographic records, extraction notes and dissertation drafts. (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 - no special-category data will be collected. (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?	☒	☐

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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. Research materials will consist of published articles, reference-manager records, data-extraction tables and dissertation drafts. Files will be stored in password-protected University Office 365 storage and on a password-protected personal laptop with current security updates and device encryption where available. The University account will provide the main backup. No personal or special-category data will be collected. Access will be limited to the principal researcher and, where required, the supervisor and authorised markers or examiners. Unencrypted portable media will not be used, and temporary duplicate files will be securely removed when no longer required. <i>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.</i> (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. Electronic transfer will be limited to downloading lawfully accessible academic publications, synchronising bibliographic records and dissertation drafts with the University Office 365 account, and submitting work through authorised University systems. No personal, confidential or special-category data will be transferred. Files will be protected by account authentication, passwords and the security controls provided by the University system. <i>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.</i> (this box should expand as you type)		

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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? The principal researcher will have routine access. The supervisor and authorised University markers or examiners may access relevant research records or dissertation drafts where required for supervision and assessment. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
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 control and act as custodian of the research materials, subject to UWTSD requirements and supervisor oversight. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
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.	
	<i>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.</i> Electronic copies of articles, bibliographic records, extraction tables and dissertation drafts will be stored in password-protected University Office 365 storage and on a password-protected personal laptop. The University account will serve as the principal backup. No unencrypted USB drive, CD or other removable medium will be used. Materials will be retained until the dissertation, assessment and any applicable review or appeal processes have been completed, in accordance with UWTSD data-management requirements, after which unnecessary duplicate files will be securely deleted. Published sources and the final dissertation may be retained where permitted for academic record purposes. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
22	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtss.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		YES	NO	N/A
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-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?	☐	☒	☐

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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. OpenAI ChatGPT, operated by the US-based provider OpenAI, may be used in a limited supporting role to help generate or edit non-confidential text, for example to improve clarity, grammar, structure and presentation. A paid version will be used; the free version is not intended. AI will not be used to capture primary data, generate synthetic data, analyse or classify the selected literature, make final inclusion decisions, or analyse personal or sensitive data. No participant information, confidential organisational material, unpublished data, login details or other personal data will be entered into the tool. AI output will not be treated as an academic source. Every factual statement, citation and interpretation will be independently checked against the original peer-reviewed literature, and the researcher will retain responsibility for the search strategy, screening, quality assessment, thematic synthesis and final written work. Any use of AI will be declared in accordance with current UWTSD guidance and the dissertation AI-use acknowledgement requirements. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

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.uwtss.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/			
1	Signature of applicant:	Kumail Abbas	Date: 14/07/2026
2	Supervisor:	Alireza Nazarian	Date: 29/07/2026
3	Signature:	Alireza Nazarian	