

1.1 Background

The mobile network industry in Hong Kong is highly competitive and diverse, led by four primary operators: China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited (CMHK), Hutchison Telephone Company Limited, SmarTone Mobile Communications Limited, and Hong Kong Broadband Network Limited. In addition, the region hosts twenty-four other service providers, including numerous Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs), which lease infrastructure from established carriers to offer their own services (Office of the Communications Authority, 2023, 2025). This extensive ecosystem provides consumers with a wide variety of service options, plans, and pricing, fostering a highly competitive environment. The industry has advanced notably with the rollout of 4G and 5G networks, which have significantly enhanced speed, coverage, and connectivity quality. The presence of MVNOs further intensifies competition, offering consumers flexible choices and often more affordable plans. This vibrant market promotes innovation and consumer-oriented services, supported by regulatory bodies that ensure fair competition and service quality standards. Overall, this robust infrastructure supports Hong Kong's digital economy and addresses the diverse needs of its residents.

Over recent decades, the industry has undergone substantial evolution. It started with basic 2G networks supporting voice calls and limited text messaging. The emergence of 3G technology introduced mobile internet access, enabling a more connected lifestyle. The expansion of 4G networks marked a breakthrough with higher speeds and reliability, enabling services such as real-time streaming, faster downloads, and richer multimedia experiences. Currently, the deployment of 5G technology offers ultra-fast speeds, lower latency, and supports emerging innovations like the Internet of Things (IoT). This progression has led to a rapid increase in mobile broadband subscriptions, with users subscribing to or utilizing services across all generations—2.5G, 3G, 4G, and 5G. Mobile broadband has become integral to daily life, transforming how residents communicate, conduct business, and enjoy entertainment. As of January 2025, Hong Kong boasts approximately 27.6 million mobile broadband subscriptions, indicating widespread engagement with mobile data services (Office of the communications authority, 2025a). The mobile subscriber penetration rate is an impressive 357.1%, meaning many residents hold multiple SIM cards or plans to benefit from competitive offerings. This high density underscores the region's reliance on mobile connectivity for various personal and professional activities. With continuous technological upgrades and expanding network coverage, Hong Kong remains at the forefront of digital

integration, positioning itself as a major global digital hub. The industry's ongoing evolution and intense competition ensure that consumers enjoy diverse, accessible, and innovative mobile services capable of meeting the demands of a highly connected society.

1.2 Research Drivers

The rapid evolution of the mobile telecommunications sector has led to a complex landscape where consumers face numerous challenges when selecting mobile network providers. One of the primary issues is the overwhelming variety of service options, which can create decision fatigue and uncertainty. Many consumers struggle to identify the most suitable plan that balances cost, coverage, and quality of service (Unhelkar, 2009). Furthermore, the proliferation of Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) complicates the competitive landscape, as consumers often lack sufficient information about the differences between traditional operators and MVNOs, including factors like network quality and customer service (Wang et al, 2022).

Market competition has played a dual role in shaping consumer choices. While increased competition tends to lower prices and improve service quality, it also leads to market fragmentation and frequent promotional offers, which can be confusing for consumers (Liu, 2024). Additionally, technological advancements such as 4G and 5G have transformed the industry, raising concerns about equitable access and consumers' ability to keep up with the latest developments. Not all consumers are equally technologically savvy, which can limit their capacity to make informed choices—particularly among older populations or less digital-savvy users (Akello, 2024).

Another significant challenge lies in consumer perceptions of transparency and trust. Consumers often find it difficult to evaluate the actual network performance and service quality, which are not always transparent or easily measurable. The complexity of data plans, contractual terms, and hidden charges further exacerbates these issues, often leading to dissatisfaction post-purchase. With many providers offering similar packages, consumers tend to rely on brand reputation, customer reviews, or promotional campaigns, which may not accurately reflect service quality (Zhani, Mori, and Ahmed, 2022).

Finally, demographic factors such as age, income, and digital literacy influence mobile network selection. Vulnerable groups may face difficulties in understanding technical details

and comparing different options, thereby impacting their decision-making processes (Wanuyu, 2017).

1.3 Research Objectives

The rapid growth and technological advancement of Hong Kong's mobile industry have heightened the importance of understanding consumer decision-making processes. The key objective of this research is to identify and analyze the primary factors influencing Hong Kong residents' choice of mobile network providers. Among the most significant determinants are price, features, brand reputation, and security. Price remains a critical factor, with consumers typically seeking cost-effective plans that offer good value for money (Kim and Seol, 2007). Features such as high-speed data, 5G connectivity, multi-number plans (e.g., one card, two numbers), and security enhancements have gained prominence as differentiating factors, appealing to tech-savvy users and business customers alike (Williams, 2025).

Secondly, this study aims to evaluate the role of customer service quality, network coverage, and overall network performance in consumer decision-making. Prior research suggests that consumers place considerable emphasis on the reliability and quality of network services, especially in densely populated regions like Hong Kong where constant connectivity is essential (Kim et al., 2017). Customer service, including responsiveness and after-sales support, significantly impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty (Alshurideh et al., 2022). Understanding how these factors influence consumer preferences can help providers tailor their offerings more effectively.

Lastly, the research seeks to propose strategic recommendations for mobile network operators to enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage. In a highly saturated market, fostering positive brand perceptions, transparency, and innovative service offerings are vital for retaining customers (Izogo, 2017). Strategies may include improving customer service experiences, offering flexible and transparent pricing plans, and deploying cutting-edge features like 5G and security solutions to meet the evolving needs of consumers (Cihák, 2023).

Overall, this research aims to deliver comprehensive insights into the factors that shape consumer choices in Hong Kong's mobile industry and suggest actionable strategies for

providers to strengthen consumer relationships. This will benefit industry stakeholders by guiding product development, marketing strategies, and service quality improvements.

1.4 Research Questions

Understanding the factors that influence Hong Kong residents' choice of mobile network providers is crucial for industry stakeholders aiming to enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The first question seeks to identify the primary determinants, such as price, network features, brand reputation, security, and technological offerings like 5G connectivity. Previous studies indicate that price remains a dominant factor, with consumers seeking the best value for money (Kalmus and Wiethaus, 2010). Additionally, features such as data allowances, security protocols, and innovative services like one card, two numbers plans significantly influence consumer preferences .

The second question investigates how pricing strategies impact consumer choices. Pricing plans—offering competitive rates, discounts, and flexible packages—are critical in attracting and retaining customers, especially in a saturated market (Soltani et al., 2024).

Network quality and coverage are fundamental aspects influencing user decisions, primarily because reliable connectivity directly impacts user experience. Prior research demonstrates that network speed, coverage coverage, and service reliability are pivotal in shaping consumer satisfaction and provider preference (Chivanov and Dymkova, 2024).

Lastly, customer service quality plays a significant role in fostering loyalty and influencing network choice. Excellent support, responsiveness, and problem resolution directly impact customer retention, as consumers tend to stay with providers who offer superior service (Hasan and Mahmud, 2023).

Addressing these questions allows for a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional factors affecting consumer decision-making within Hong Kong's highly competitive mobile industry. This understanding can help providers tailor their strategies, innovate services, and build stronger long-term relationships with their customers.

1.5 Value/Contribution of the Research

This research offers significant value to various stakeholders within Hong Kong's dynamic telecommunications industry. Firstly, by identifying the primary factors influencing consumer choice—including price, network features, brand reputation, security, and service quality—providers can tailor their offerings more effectively. For instance, understanding the importance of rapid network speeds and security protocols can guide firms in investing in infrastructure and service enhancements, directly translating into increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Dey et al., 2020). The insights into consumer preferences also enable operators to design competitive pricing strategies, innovative service packages, and personalized marketing efforts, thus gaining a competitive edge in a saturated market (Namvar, Ghazanfari, and Naderpour, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings can inform policymakers and industry regulators on the key drivers affecting consumer welfare and market competition. Enhanced understanding of consumer priorities—such as the demand for reliable coverage and customer support—can lead to the formulation of policies that promote service standards, transparency, and fair competition. For example, regulatory bodies might implement guidelines to ensure operators provide transparent information about network quality and service features, fostering consumer trust and protecting customer rights (OECD, 2024).

Academically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on consumer behavior in the telecommunications sector by integrating multiple variables—such as technological features and service quality—that influence consumer preferences. Although existing research emphasizes certain factors like price, this study underscores the interplay of multiple determinants, enriching theoretical models of consumer decision-making in a digital economy (Chen and Shen, 2015). It also advances understanding of emerging features like 5G connectivity, multi-number plans, and security enhancements, which are vital in contemporary telecom markets.

Finally, the practical implications are profound. Industry players can leverage the findings to develop targeted marketing campaigns, enhance customer engagement strategies, and foster brand loyalty through superior service quality. Incorporating insights on consumer priorities enables providers to innovate continuously and adapt to changing technological landscapes, ensuring sustained competitiveness. Overall, this research not only bridges academic gaps but

also offers actionable insights to improve strategic decision-making, stimulate industry growth, and enhance customer-centric approaches.

2.1 Discussion of research focus areas

This research focuses on understanding the key factors that influence Hong Kong residents' choice of mobile network providers, with particular attention to price and technological features such as data, 5G connectivity, multi-number plans, brand reputation, and security. Price remains a fundamental determinant, as consumers seek affordable plans that offer the best value for money in a saturated market (Hwang, 2024). However, technological features are increasingly vital; high-speed data and 5G access are now expected, especially among tech-savvy users and business clients (Lu and Huang, 2025). Multi-number plans like "one card, two numbers" provide flexibility and convenience, influencing provider choice by catering to personal and professional needs simultaneously (Hettiarachchi, Wickramasinghe and Ranathunga, 2018). Additionally, brand reputation and security protocols impact trust and perceived service quality, shaping long-term loyalty (Fife and Orjuela, 2012). Understanding how these factors interact enables providers to tailor their offerings effectively, emphasizing technological innovation while maintaining competitive pricing. These focus areas are essential for developing strategies that meet consumer preferences and sustain competitive advantage amidst ongoing industry digital transformation.

3.1 Research Method

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gain comprehensive insights into consumer decision-making in Hong Kong's mobile industry. The survey will collect numerical data on factors such as price sensitivity, network features, and brand perception, while interviews will explore deeper motivations and consumer attitudes. This approach enables triangulation to enhance the reliability and depth of findings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Population

The target population comprises Hong Kong residents aged 18 and above who are current or potential users of mobile network services. A stratified random sampling method will be employed to ensure representation across various demographics such as age, occupation, and

usage patterns. This diverse sample aims to reflect the heterogeneity and dynamic nature of the market, providing insights applicable to different consumer segments (Verdugo, 1998).

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

Descriptive statistics, such as mean, frequency, and standard deviation, will be utilized to summarize demographic information and key variables, providing an overview of the sample characteristics and variable distributions (Field, 2013).

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APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

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".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	LEUNG WING CHONG FION			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	LAI ON YI DORY			
4	Campus:				
5	E-mail address:	doryloy@gmailil.com			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	+852 5606 8992			
For students:					
7	Student Number:	2337393			

8	Programme of Study:	Master of Business Administration
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr. Arion Wong

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☒	15 Jan 2025	
Institute Research Committee		☒	15 Jan 2025		
Other (write in)		☐			

SECTION C: 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	[List any other relevant documents here]	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	
2	Contact person name	
3	Contact person e-mail address	
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES ☐ NO ☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES ☐ NO ☐
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a	Voluntary YES ☐ NO ☐
7	paid or voluntary capacity?	Employed YES ☐ NO ☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered. YES ☐ NO ☐

9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐
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Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	An analysis of the factors influencing Hong Kong residents' choice of mobile network providers			
2	Proposed start date:	15 Jan 2025	Proposed end date:	17 Nov 2025	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> 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 aim of this research is to examine how factors such as price, privacy, brand, and product features influence Hong Kong residents' selection of mobile service providers, as illustrated in the attached research model.				
4	Research Question How do brand trust and other factors influence consumers' purchase intention? Additionally, does any specific factor mediate the relationship between these elements and purchase intention? Furthermore, how do concerns such as the importance of price in service provider selection, the tendency to pay more for functional features, and privacy concerns related to disclosing personal data impact this relationship?				
5	Aims of Research Activity The aim is to understand and measure the direct and indirect influences of key factors such as brand trust, pricing, product features, and privacy concerns on consumers' intentions to choose and purchase mobile service providers.				
6	Objectives of Research Activity The objectives are to test the hypothesized relationships within the model, evaluate the impact of each factor—such as price, product features, privacy concerns, and brand trust—on consumers'				

	intention to choose a mobile service provider, and examine the mediating role of consumer perceptions in this decision-making process.
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, 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	This research will adopt a quantitative, survey-based approach to examine the factors influencing consumers' selection of mobile service providers, focusing on how price, product features, privacy concerns, and brand trust affect purchase decisions. 1. Survey Data Collection Data will be gathered through a structured, self-administered online questionnaire. The survey will be distributed via email, social media platforms, and consumer panels to reach a diverse group of active mobile users and potential customers. 2. Questionnaire Design The questionnaire will include multiple sections: • Demographic Information: Age, gender, education level, and income • Main Constructs: - Price: Measured with items adapted from validated scales (Yokoyama, Azuma and Kim, 2022). - Product Features: Assessed using items based on existing product measures Rakib al et., 2022). - Privacy concern: Items derived from established privacy attitude research (Cai, Wang and Sun, 2023). - Brand identification: Measured using items from Li, Tan and Jiao (2024). - Purchase Intention: Assessed with statements adapted from Park and Ahn (2025). All items will be rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree). 3. Sampling Method A stratified random sampling approach will be employed to ensure representation across key demographic segments. If needed, convenience sampling may be used for initial recruitment. The targeted sample size aims for at least 300 respondents to ensure reliable statistical analysis. 4. Pilot Study A pilot test with 20–30 participants sharing similar demographic backgrounds will be conducted to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. Feedback will be used to refine survey questions and procedures prior to the main data collection. 5. Data Management Responses will be collected anonymously and securely stored on password-protected devices or encrypted cloud services. Access to raw data will be limited to the research team to maintain confidentiality. 6. Statistical Analysis The following analyses will be performed: - Preliminary Pilot Analysis: To assess question clarity, completion time, and technical issues. - Descriptive Statistics: To summarize demographic data and main variables. - Correlation Analysis: To explore relationships among variables. - Multiple Regression Analysis: To examine the direct effects of price importance, product features, privacy concerns, and brand trust on purchase intention (H1–H4). - Mediation Analysis: To test whether privacy concerns mediate the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention (H5). 7. Ethical Considerations All participants will provide informed consent before participating. The study will comply with institutional ethical standards, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. Data will be used solely for academic research purposes.
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	the research activity will take place in various locations throughout Hong Kong.

	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	The proposed research will be carried out in Hong Kong. Conducting the study in this region necessitates compliance with local ethical standards and the acquisition of all required permissions.

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

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

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

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

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

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: (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?	300 – 400
11	Who will the participants be?	Participants will included individuals aged 18 and older who are Hong Kong residents with mobile devices
12	How will you identify the participants?	Participants

Information for participants:		YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☐	☒
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☒
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒

20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☐	☒
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
<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			
<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

SECTION H: 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. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.			
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?		Yes ☐ No ☒
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Emotional Distress Certain survey questions, such as those related to environmental concerns or personal consumption habits, may lead to minor emotional discomfort or prompts for self-reflection, which could be unsettling for a small subset of participants. Transfer of Personal Data / Privacy Concerns Gathering demographic details or personal opinions might raise concerns regarding privacy or the potential for misuse of sensitive information.	Mitigation Measures: - The survey introduction will inform participants that they can skip any questions they prefer not to answer and withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalty. - Contact details for support services, such as counseling or helplines, will be provided for participants who experience distress. - All data collected will be anonymous, with no personal identifiers associated with individual responses. - Data will be securely stored on password-protected devices and accessed only by the research team. - Findings will be reported in aggregate, ensuring that individual participants cannot be identified.	

3	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	
	Procedures for Handling Sensitive Topics: Informed Consent: Participants will be briefed about the nature of the survey and any potentially sensitive topics involved. They will have the option to skip any questions they feel uncomfortable with and will be assured that their participation is entirely voluntary. Anonymization: All responses will be anonymized to protect participants' identities and ensure confidentiality, minimizing the risk of personal exposure. Data Security: Data collected via Google Forms will be stored securely with encryption, accessible only to authorized personnel. Disclosure Clause: The consent form will include a statement informing participants that, if any potentially illegal activities are disclosed during the survey, relevant authorities may need to be informed in accordance with legal requirements.	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risks to the investigator Emotional Distress from Participant Feedback: The researcher may receive negative, critical, or emotionally distressing feedback from participants, particularly if participants express strong opinions or dissatisfaction concerning the survey content or research subject. Risk of Accusations of Harm or Impropriety: There is a possibility that participants might misunderstand aspects of the research process or feel that their privacy has been violated, potentially leading to claims of harm, unethical conduct, or misconduct.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to investigator:</i> -The researcher will uphold professional boundaries and seek guidance from supervisors or colleagues if any feedback causes considerable stress. - Periodic debriefing sessions will be arranged to discuss and manage any emotional difficulties experienced during the data collection process. - The researcher will provide Participants with clear, written information regarding the study's aims, procedures, and data protection protocols, and will secure informed consent from all participants. - All interactions and procedures will strictly follow institutional ethical standards, and any concerns raised by participants will be addressed promptly and transparently.
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to University - Mishandling participant data may violate data protection regulations, potentially resulting in reputational harm and legal repercussions for the university. -If the research reveals sensitive or contentious findings—such as negative opinions about brands or marketing practices—there is a risk of adverse publicity that could negatively impact the university's reputation.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to university:</i> - All data will be anonymized and securely stored on password-protected systems, with access limited to authorized members of the research team. Data collection and storage will conform to institutional data protection policies and applicable legal standards (such as GDPR), and all data transfers will be encrypted. - The research findings will be presented in an objective and considerate manner, thoughtfully addressing language and context. Prior to publishing any potentially sensitive results, the university's

		communications or PR office will be notified, and all external communications will undergo review to ensure appropriateness.
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: Increased Electronic Waste or Energy Consumption The deployment of electronic devices for distributing surveys, storing data, and analyzing results may lead to higher energy usage and, over time, generate electronic waste. Paper Waste (if applicable) If any part of the survey or consent process involves printed materials, there is a potential for unnecessary paper waste., there is a risk of unnecessary paper waste.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to environment:</i> - Utilize energy-efficient devices and cloud services that adhere to sustainable practices. - Encourage the research team to turn off devices when not in use and to recycle electronics responsibly. - Prioritize digital formats for all research materials and communications to reduce paper use. - If printing is necessary, use recycled paper and print double-sided to minimize waste.

Disclosure and Barring Service				
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	Post-survey communication: Upon completing the survey, participants will be sent a Thank-You message via email or through the survey platform, expressing appreciation for their participation and time.
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.
	Information Provision to Potential Participants: Before giving their consent, participants will receive comprehensive details about the study through an introductory section embedded within the online survey, which will include: - The purpose of the research - The actions required for participation (e.g., completing the questionnaire) - The approximate time needed to complete the survey - The voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty - Contact details for the researcher in case of questions or need for further clarification Consent Procedures:

	- Participants will indicate their consent by checking a box on the Google Forms survey, which affirms they understand the study's purpose and agree to participate. This checkbox will be mandatory before they can access the questionnaire. - The consent will be automatically recorded through Google Forms, which logs responses along with timestamps, providing a clear record of participants' agreement to participate. - All consent procedures will adhere to relevant data protection laws, ensuring participants' rights and privacy are maintained throughout the research process. By implementing these measures, the study ensures that participants are fully informed and provide their consent prior to data collection.
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.
	The anonymity and confidentiality of all research participants will be rigorously maintained throughout the study and in all resulting publications. No personally identifiable information, such as names, email addresses, or contact details, will be collected through the survey. All responses will be recorded anonymously, ensuring that individual participants cannot be identified at any stage of data collection, analysis, or dissemination. Data will be stored securely on password-protected devices and will only be accessible to the research team. In all reports, publications, and presentations, findings will be presented in aggregate form (e.g., summary statistics, group averages), with no individual responses disclosed. If any direct quotations from open-ended questions are used, any potentially identifying information will be removed or modified to protect participant anonymity. In cases where full anonymity cannot be guaranteed—for example, if follow-up interviews require the collection of contact details—participants will be fully informed, and explicit consent will be obtained. However, for this survey-based research, complete anonymity will be assured. These protocols are implemented to ensure participant privacy is respected and confidentiality is upheld in accordance with institutional ethical standards.

SECTION J: 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 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	(this box should expand as you type)		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	(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	Use of data management system?	☒	☐
20	Data archiving?	☒	☐
21	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 any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Informed Consent: Participants will be provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. They will have the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. Consent Mechanism:		

	Consent will be collected through a required checkbox on the Google Forms survey, indicating participants' understanding and agreement to participate. Data Anonymization: Responses will be anonymized to safeguard participants' identities and ensure confidentiality. Data Security: Data will be securely stored within Google Forms, utilizing encryption and access controls to prevent unauthorized access. Access Control: Only authorized personnel will have access to the data, with all access logged for accountability purposes. Backup Procedures: Regular backups of data will be performed using secure cloud storage solutions to prevent any data loss. Compliance with Legislation: All procedures will adhere to GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, ensuring the protection of participants' rights throughout the research process.
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:
	Researcher: The main investigator responsible for designing, conducting the study, and analyzing the data. Supervisor/Advisor: The faculty member or mentor overseeing the project to ensure adherence to academic standards and ethical guidelines. Statistical Analyst: If necessary, a qualified analyst may be granted access to anonymized data to perform statistical analyses.
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:
	Researcher
24	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. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.
	Store Location: All data collected will be securely stored on Google's Cloud servers. Security Measures: - Encryption: Data will be encrypted both during transmission and at rest. - Password Protection: Access will be restricted through strong passwords, ensuring only authorized individuals can access the data. - Access Control: Only the researcher, supervisor, and designated statistical analysts will have access rights. - Data Retention Period: Data will be retained solely for the duration of the research project and will be securely destroyed afterward to prevent long-term storage. - Data Archiving: Data will not be archived post-destruction to avoid any future access or misuse. - Backup: Regular backups will be performed using secure cloud storage solutions to prevent data loss. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>
	No

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtssd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: 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.uwtssd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	<i>Dory</i>	Date: 24 Jun, 2025

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Joe Leung	Date: 24 Jun, 2025
3	Signature:	<i>Joe Leung</i>	

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☒	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtssd.ac.uk>).



RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.