

~Dissertation Proposal~

Dissertation Topic:

**Determinants of Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Real Estate Agencies
for Clients in Hong Kong**

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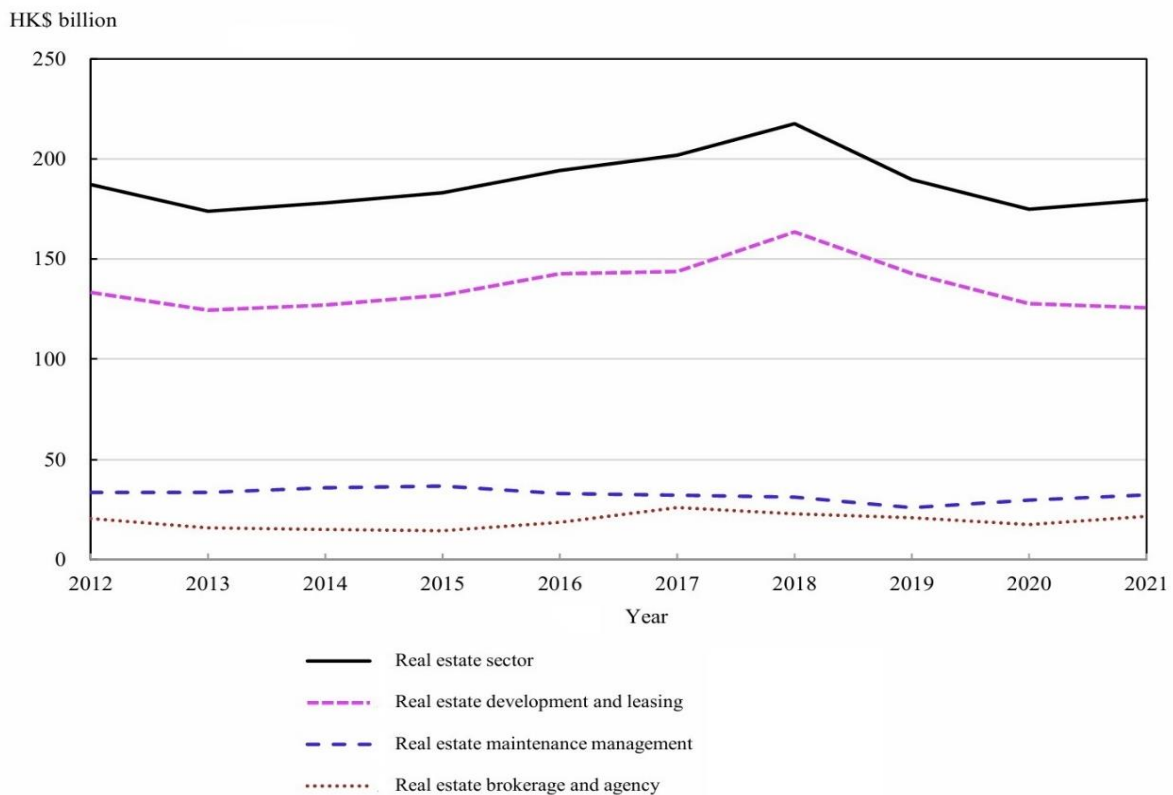
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1. Introduction

The real estate sector in Hong Kong is a critical component of the local economy, driven by three main industries: real estate development and leasing, real estate brokerage and agency, and real estate maintenance management. Real estate development and leasing industry, real estate developers involved in the transformation of land and/or the renovation of existing structures into new properties designated for sale or lease; and businesses that specialize in the rental or sub-rental of properties, such as commercial buildings, shopping mall, industrial facilities, and service apartments. Real estate brokerage and agency industry, which comprises companies involved in the trading of existing or potential properties and the leasing of premises, acting as intermediaries in these transactions. Real estate maintenance management industry, encompassing companies that specialize in keeping buildings in good physical condition and order for landlords and tenants, based on a fee or contractual agreement Census and Statistics Department HKSAR (2020).

Figure 01 Total Receipts of the Real Estate Sector, 2012 to 2021



Source: Census and Statistics Department HKSAR (2023)

Figure 01 showcases the overall performance of the real estate sector, illustrating total receipts from both the sector itself and its individual component industries over the period from 2012 to 2021.

The real estate brokerage and agency industry is characterized by its low barriers to entry and intense competition. To secure an individual estate agent or salesperson's license, applicants are required to meet several criteria: they must have reached the age of 18 by the date of the application, possess at least a Form 5 level of secondary education or its equivalent, and have successfully passed the relevant qualifying examination within the 12 months immediately preceding their application. In the case of corporations seeking an estate agent's license, the entity must be duly incorporated, with at least one director who holds a valid estate agent's license. The corporation must ensure that a licensed estate agent maintains effective control over the real estate activities of the business (Estate Agents Authority, 2024c).

Estate agents play a crucial role in the real estate market, performing a variety of services that facilitate property transactions. These licensed professionals are responsible for marketing properties, ensuring they reach potential buyers, sellers, landlords, or tenants effectively. They introduce properties to clients and connect individuals who are looking to buy, sell, or lease properties. Estate agents also organize property viewings and inspections, allowing clients to assess potential homes or investment opportunities firsthand. Furthermore, they provide clients with essential information about properties, helping them make informed decisions. Negotiating the terms of sale, purchase, or tenancy agreements is another key function, as is drafting and arranging the signing of Preliminary Agreements for Sale and Purchase. These activities underscore the significant role estate agents play in the smooth operation of the real estate sector (Estate Agents Authority, 2024d).

Table 01 presents a longitudinal analysis of the licensing trends for estate agents in Hong Kong from 2014 to 2024, distinguishing between individual and company licenses. The data reveals a steady increase in the number of licenses issued to companies, rising from 3,176 in 2014 to 4,001

Table 01 Number of Licence of Estate Agents (Company) and Estate Agents (Individual) in Hong Kong , 2014 to 2024

Year	Estate Agent Licence (Company)	Estate Agent Licence (Individual)
2014	3,176	35,502
2015	3,240	37,404
2016	3,364	37,111
2017	3,561	38,315
2018	3,768	40,142
2019	3,842	39,544
2020	3,876	40,284
2021	3,925	41,964
2022	3,941	41,239
2023	3,985	39,747
2024*	4,001	38,723

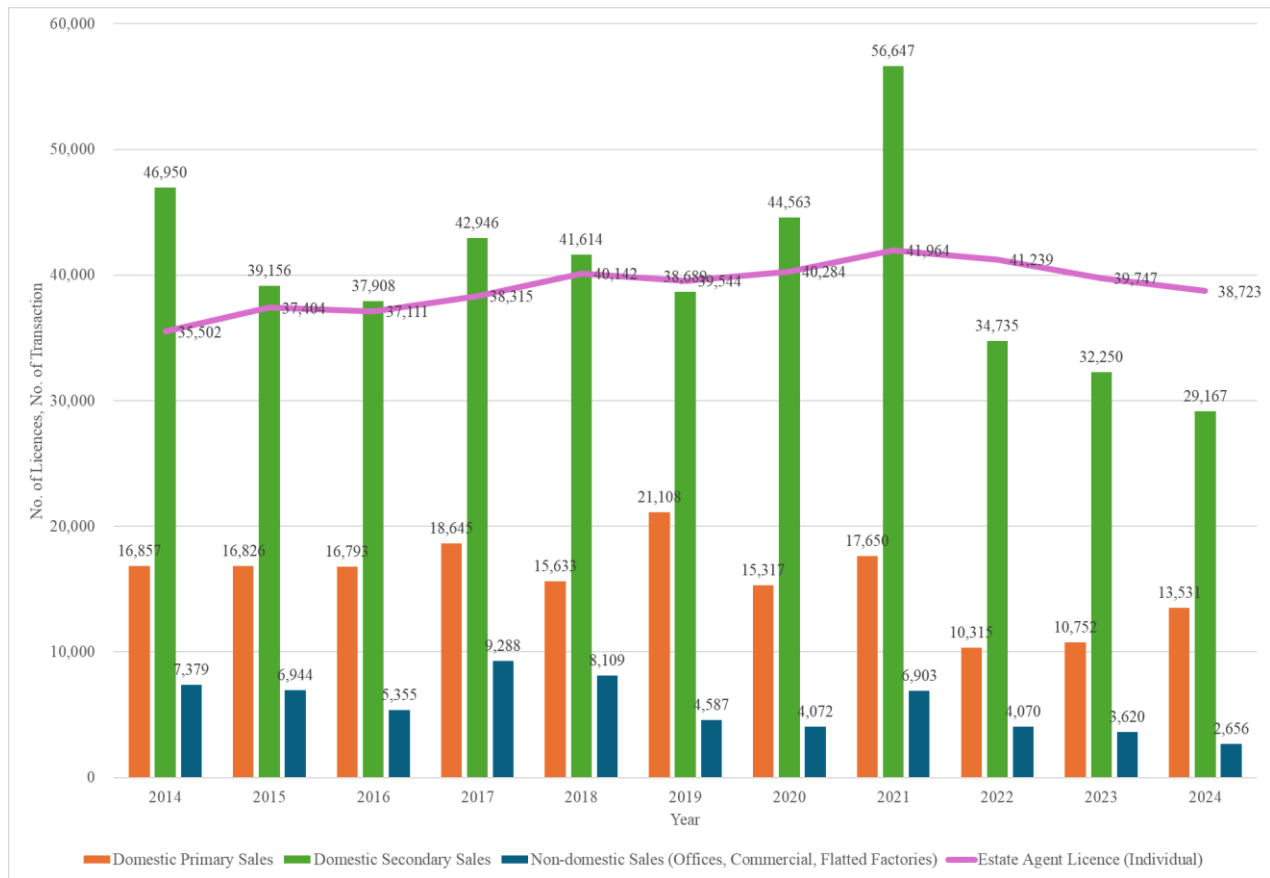
*Remark: The data for 2024 is updated until October.

Source: Estate Agents Authority (2014a), (2014b), (2015a), (2015b), (2016a), (2016b), (2017a), (2017b), (2018a), (2018b), (2019a), (2019b), (2020a), (2020b), (2021a), (2021b), (2022a), (2022b), (2023), (2023b), (2024a) & (2024b).

by 2024. In contrast, licenses for individual agents peaked in 2021 at 41,964 before showing a slight decline in subsequent years.

The real estate market has a direct influence on the brokerage and agency industry. In Hong Kong, developers typically sell primary residential properties through an estate agency appointed as the exclusive agent. On the other hand, major shopping malls and Grade A commercial buildings are predominantly leased rather than sold, with the property owners typically managing by their in-house leasing departments. Commercial and industrial buildings rated Grade B or lower exhibit less activity in the market. In contrast, the secondary residential market is vibrant, with robust activity in both rentals and sales transactions.

Figure 02 Number of Sales for Domestic Primary, Secondary, and Non-domestic and Number of Estate Agent Licence (Individual), 2014-2024



Remark: The data for 2024 is updated until October.

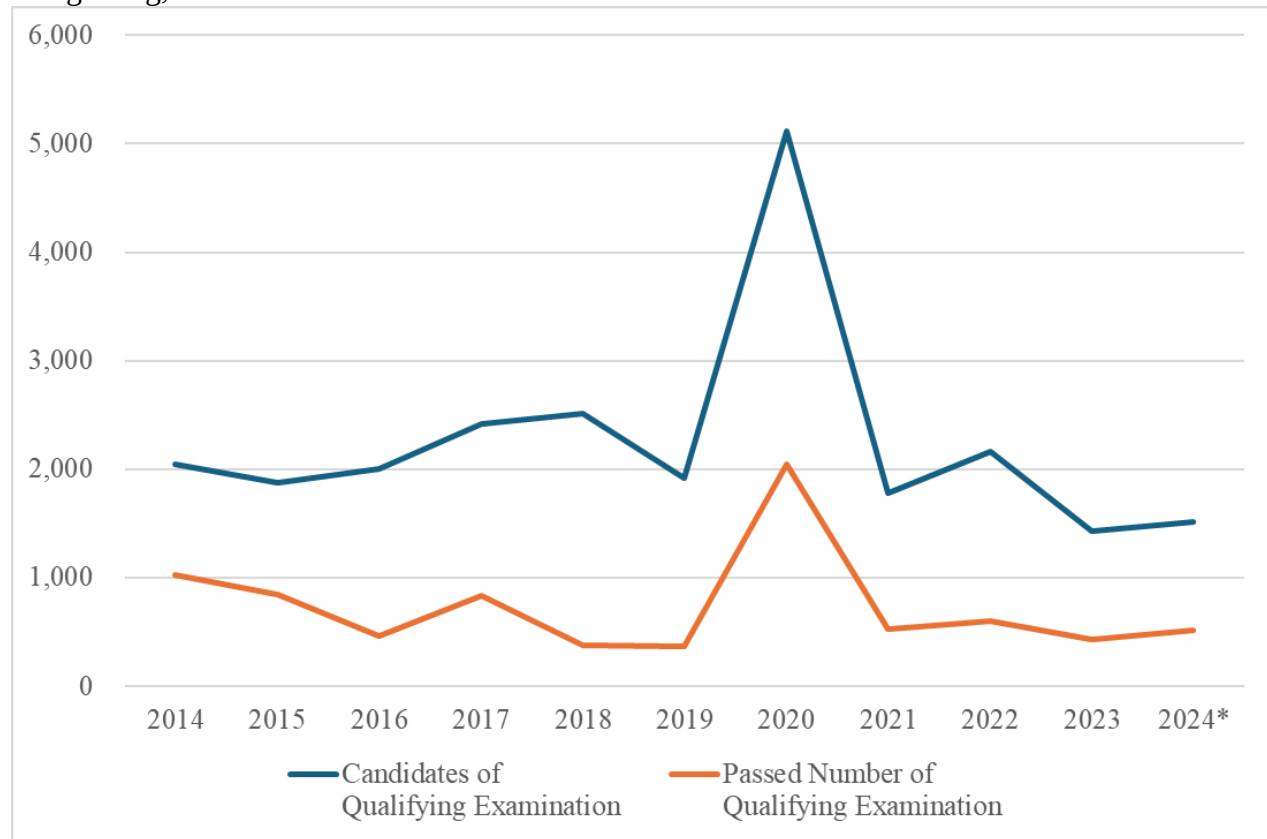
Source: Table 01 and Rating and Valuation Department (2024)

In Figure 02, the number of transactions for domestic primary sales has shown variability over the years, with a noticeable drop from 21,108 in 2019 to 10,752 by 2023. Meanwhile, domestic secondary sales peaked in 2021 with 56,647 transactions, which significantly dropped to 32,250 by 2023, indicating a sharp decline in activity in recent years. Moreover, non-domestic sales have consistently decreased, especially from 2019 onward, culminating in a low of 2,656 transactions in October 2024.

The number of individual estate agent licenses peaked in 2021 at 41,964 but then decreased to 38,723 by October 2024, following a trend similar to that seen in property transactions, particularly in the secondary market. The subsequent decline in both the number of licenses and transactions

across all categories from 2021 to 2024 indicates a market adjustment. The reduction in the number of agents may reflect a response to fewer transaction opportunities.

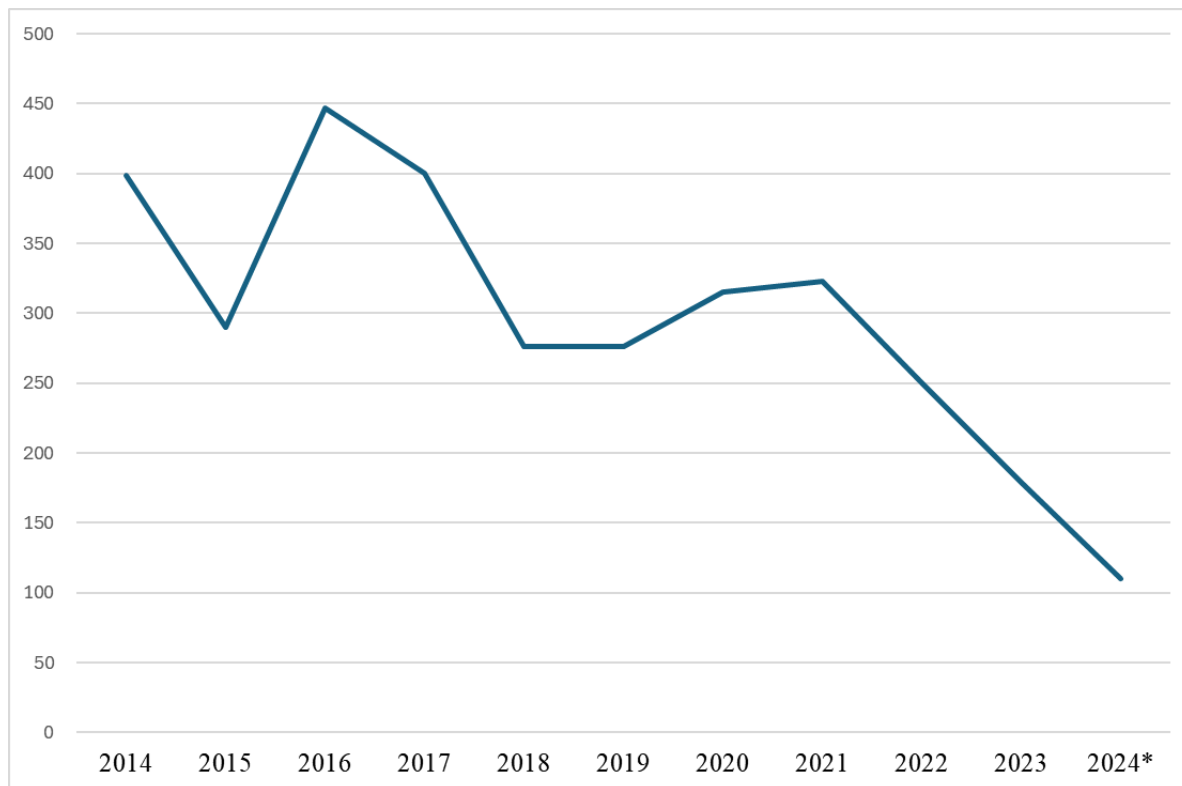
Figure 03 Number of Candidates and Passed Number of Estate Agents Qualifying Examination in Hong Kong, 2014-2024



Remark: The data for 2024 is updated until October.

Source: Estate Agents Authority (2014a), (2014b), (2015a), (2015b), (2016a), (2016b), (2017a), (2017b), (2018a), (2018b), (2019a), (2019b), (2020a), (2020b), (2021a), (2021b), (2022a), (2022b), (2023), (2023b), (2024a) & (2024b).

Figure 04 Number of Complaint Case against Estate Agents, 2014-2024

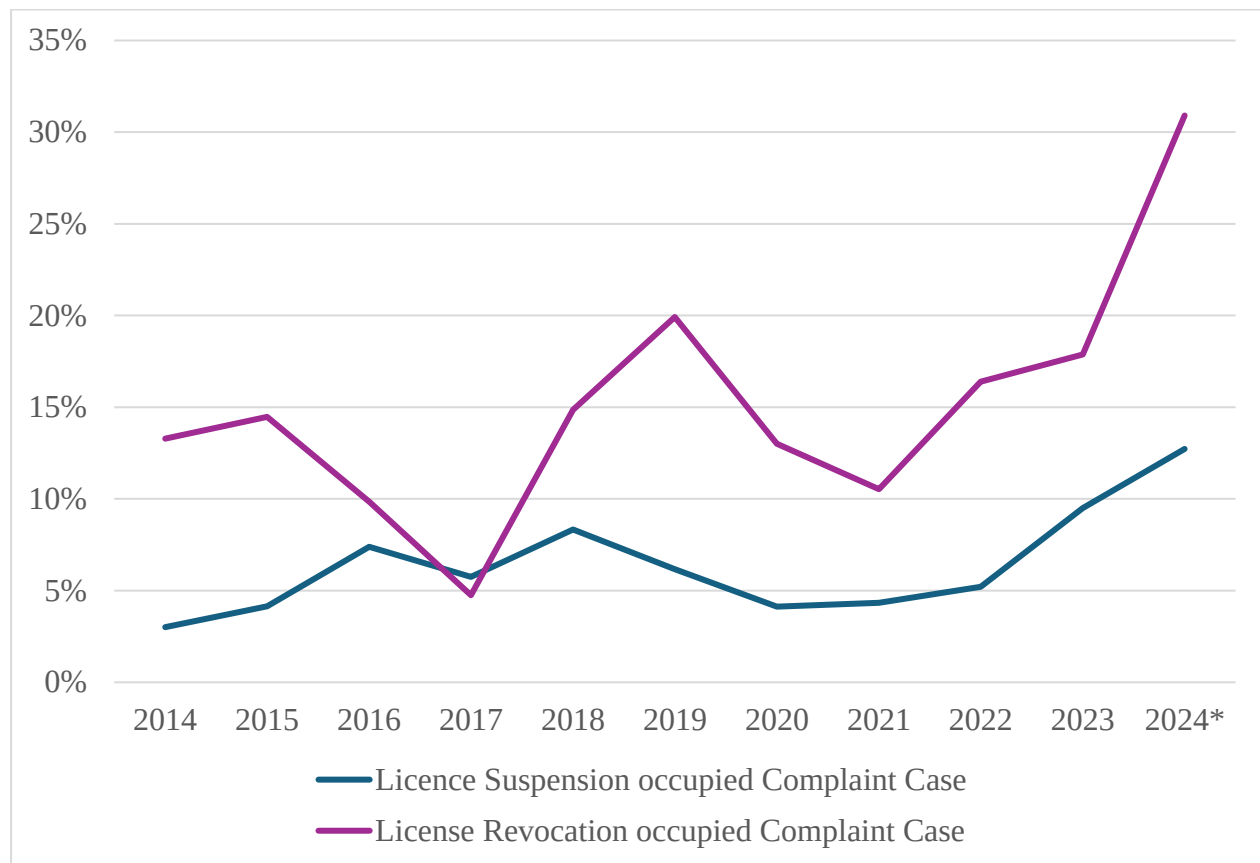


Remark: The data for 2024 is updated until October.

Source: Estate Agents Authority (2014a), (2014b), (2015a), (2015b), (2016a), (2016b), (2017a), (2017b), (2018a), (2018b), (2019a), (2019b), (2020a), (2020b), (2021a), (2021b), (2022a), (2022b), (2023), (2023b), (2024a) & (2024b).

Figure 03 presents data on the number of candidates who participated in and passed the Estate Agents Qualifying Examination in Hong Kong from January 2014 to October 2024. A sharp decline is observed in 2021, where only 1,779 candidates sat for the exam, and merely 527 passed. This drop aligns with a downturn in the property market during this period, which likely influenced fewer individuals to pursue a career in this industry.

Figure 5.0 Year-on-Year Percentage Change in Results Leading to Suspension and Revocation of Estate Agent Licenses in Hong Kong, 2014-2024



Remark: The data for 2024 is updated until October.

Source: Estate Agents Authority (2014a), (2014b), (2015a), (2015b), (2016a), (2016b), (2017a), (2017b), (2018a), (2018b), (2019a), (2019b), (2020a), (2020b), (2021a), (2021b), (2022a), (2022b), (2023), (2023b), (2024a) & (2024b).

Figure 04 outlines the number of complaint cases against estate agents in the decade, along with Figure 05 showing the outcomes in terms of license suspension and revocation. The number of complaints peaked in 2016 with 447 cases, most of them were related to the primary sales and advertisement (Estate Agents Authority, 2016b). Over the following years, the number of complaints generally trended downwards, reaching a low of 110 cases by October 2024. This decline could be indicative of improved industry standards or a decreased number of transactions leading to fewer opportunities for complaints. License revocations have shown more significant variability. Notably, in 2024, 31% of complaints led to revocation, up sharply from previous years. This substantial increase might imply that, although there are fewer complaints, the nature of these

complaints involves more grievous violations, possibly due to agents engaging in more aggressive or unethical practices to secure business in a market with fewer transactions.

In a sluggish real estate market, the number of individuals entering the industry declines, and there is an increase in the rate of companies facing suspension and revocation—this paints a somewhat bleak picture. However, challenges can also present opportunities for those who are prepared. Despite intense competition, the number of competitors decreases, and a steady rental market continues to provide a source of income. Data on the residential rental market primarily focuses on rates, with less emphasis on the number of transactions. According to Centaline Property Agency Limited (2024), there were 82,589 residential lease transactions over the past three years. This figure represents only those transactions announced by major real estate agencies in Hong Kong, suggesting that the actual total might be higher. Additionally, Ricacorp Properties Limited (2024) reported that residential rents in Hong Kong have consistently risen for 52 weeks (as of March 2024), indicating a persistent tight supply of residential buildings. With the future of property prices remaining uncertain, real estate developers show decreased interest in investing in land. This trend is likely to lead to a further reduction in the supply of residential buildings, causing rents to continue increasing. Furthermore, there is a possibility that interest rates may decrease, making the purchase of properties for rental income more financially appealing. As the owner or manager of a real estate agency, navigating these operational challenges may require tough decisions, such as layoffs. It is crucial for the company to consider which agents to retain based on their adaptability, skills, and ability to drive business in tough market conditions.

Estate agents must enhance their skills and services to maintain a competitive edge. In a fiercely competitive market, the ability to satisfy clients and secure their loyalty is more important than ever. This aspect is crucial for agents aiming to differentiate themselves and succeed long-term.

Research on this topic, specifically within the Hong Kong context, is limited, with few published journals outside of academic theses from local institutions. Most existing research tends to focus on the perspectives of industry practitioners rather than the end-users, such as property buyers or renters. There is a clear need for comprehensive research in the post-pandemic era, as other sectors like retail, finance, and catering also navigate through recessions and search for new survival

strategies. This research could provide invaluable insights into consumer needs and preferences, helping the real estate industry adapt and thrive in changing economic conditions.

The study attempts to answer three research questions:

Q1. What are the key determinants influencing customer satisfaction among purchasers and renters in Hong Kong's real estate market?

This question aims to explore and identify specific aspects among with the estate agents performing during the service delivery and property offerings that most significantly impact customer satisfaction. It could include determinants such as communication, professional knowledge, trust and reliability, and competence.

Q2. How do the attributes of real estate agents affect customer loyalty in a competitive and sluggish market environment?

Focusing on the attributes of real estate agents themselves, this question seeks to understand which qualities are most critical in retaining customers over the long term, especially when the market conditions are not favorable.

Q3. In what ways can real estate agencies leverage the reduced competition and steady rental market to enhance both customer satisfaction and loyalty during economic downturns?

This question explores strategic actions that real estate agencies can undertake to improve customer experiences and loyalty when facing an economic slowdown. It investigates how agencies can use advantages like less competition and a stable rental market to build stronger relationships with clients.

The research has commenced by delineating the context of the real estate sector in Hong Kong, with a particular emphasis on the brokerage and agency industry. It presents a comprehensive overview by providing pertinent statistics and discussing the inherent risks and challenges faced by the industry. This foundational understanding sets the stage for articulating the aims and importance of the study, highlighting how it can empower industry stakeholders to capitalize on emerging opportunities. The research questions will be clearly defined to guide the investigation.

In the second chapter, the literature review will systematically explore existing knowledge and past studies, enabling us to identify key determinants influencing the industry. This review will facilitate

a thorough analysis of previous perspectives and findings, leading to the robust formulation of research models and hypotheses.

The third chapter will outline the research methodology in detail, addressing the core components of the investigative process. This includes the specification of the research model and hypotheses, the application of a quantitative approach through surveys, the design of questionnaires, the selection of appropriate sampling methods, testing the questionnaire by carrying out the pilot test, correction, and finalization of the questionnaire. Additionally, this chapter will cover the logistics of conducting the survey, the timeline, the proposed statistical tests to be employed, and address any ethical concerns related to data usage.

In the fourth chapter, the results of the survey will be presented and meticulously analyzed to discuss their implications in depth. It will use the results and insights of the questionnaire survey to answer the two initial research questions regarding the satisfaction and loyalty of clients.

The final chapter will synthesize the findings, providing a conclusive overview. Based on these insights, tailored recommendations will be proposed to address the third research question – how to be outstanding for more opportunities in this post-pandemic period. Additionally, this chapter will outline the limitations encountered during the study and propose directions for future research, suggesting how subsequent investigations could build upon the findings of this study.

2. Literature review

This chapter aims to identify the key determinants that influence customer satisfaction among purchasers, renters, tenants, and landlords in Hong Kong's secondary real estate market. It begins with a thorough analysis of existing literature and previous research findings, which informs the development of research models and hypotheses.

During transactions, estate agents offer more than just standard service delivery and property listings; certain features of their performance significantly impact client satisfaction. These impactful features, which are central to this research, are identified as critical determinants of satisfaction. They include communication, professional knowledge, trust and reliability, and competence.

2.1 Communication

Communication in real estate involves agents clearly understanding and addressing the needs and requirements of their clients. Real estate agents must communicate clearly, concisely (Leung, 2021), meaningfully, and accurately, while staying current with information (Tuzovic, 2009). Effective communication also requires agents to listen attentively, think critically to respond (Deyong & Case, 1998), make suggestions, provide relevant information (Hemphill, 2007), and assist in solving any problems that arise (Le & Supphellen, 2017). By leveraging various media and adapting to new trends, such as using mobile applications, agents can respond more promptly (Singh & Gupta, 2020). Over time, effective communication fosters a cooperative relationship built on mutual trust and interaction, leading to a smoother process in buying, selling, or leasing properties. When clients have a positive and unique experience through good communication, it results in higher satisfaction (Yang, Huang & Chen, 2017)..

Authors / Researchers	Years of Publication	Respective Definitions or Understandings of Communication
Leung	2021	Communication entails communicating effectively using clear and concise language.
Singh & Gupta	2020	Communication is the most important factor in maintaining a good relationship between customer and real estate agents. Customers can communicate one-on-one with real estate agents using messaging applications including Whatsapp and Email.
Yang, Huang & Chen	2017	Effective communication between customers and service providers is essential for co-creating value in the real estate market. By supplying necessary information and offering tailored suggestions and services for buying, leasing, or selling properties, agents enhance the overall customer experience. This process involves an ongoing dialogue and interaction between the customer and the agent, which not only facilitates a smoother transaction but also helps in building a trusting relationship. Such interactions are crucial, as they enable agents to fully understand and meet the unique needs of each client, thereby significantly improving client satisfaction and loyalty.
Le & Supphellen	2017	Communication implies the ability to cooperate involves agents actively listening to the seller while also sharing their own insights and knowledge, thus collaboratively identifying effective solutions.
Tuzovic	2009	Communication includes: -Communicate with client -Listen to client -Give updates -Inform clients on important issues.
Hemphill	2007	Interpersonal skills refer to the abilities of a real estate agent to effectively communicate, empathize, and engage with vendors (sellers) in a manner that enhances the agent's likability and perceived competence.
Deyong & Case	1998	-Communication is defined as keeping customers informed using language they can easily understand. -Actively listening to customer feedback and concerns Access -Ensuring approachability for all client interactions -Facilitating ease of contact through various channels

2.2 Professional Knowledge

In Hong Kong, possessing professional knowledge is crucial for real estate agents. This knowledge encompasses the entire process of buying, selling, and leasing properties. It includes familiarity with relevant law, financial banking, insurance requirements, property valuation, and taxation (Leung, 2021). Additionally, a comprehensive understanding of current market conditions, pricing, district characteristics (Benites-Gambirazio, 2020) and specific details about units such as neighbors, building management, and reputedly haunted properties is essential (Tuzovic, 2009).

Additionally, sellers are naturally interested in receiving information that benefits and satisfies them (Crews & Hovell, 2005).

However, the literature does not address how an agent's professional knowledge should vary depending on their role. For instance, when representing a buyer, an agent must adopt the buyer's perspective to provide information that is most advantageous to them.

Authors / Researchers	Years of Publication	Respective Definitions or Understandings of Professional Knowledge
Leung	2021	Professional agents are expected to possess a deep understanding of the real estate market and its associated procedures. Many buyers and sellers may not be well-versed in the intricacies of property transactions, which can be complex even for those with previous experience. To effectively serve their clients, professional estate agents must be knowledgeable in several key areas: Land Search Analysis, Contractual Knowledge, Deposit Handling, Payment Management, Property Valuation, Mortgage Guidance, Property Age Impact , Mortgage Insurance, Taxation Expertise, Professional Referrals.
Benites-Gambirazio	2020	Agents help clients understand and accept what is presented as the market reality. This involves fostering a shared belief in the valuation of properties and the conditions of the market, which helps in positioning clients appropriately within the market landscape.
Tuzovic	2009	Knowledge -Knowledgeable -Knows real estate market -Knows city/neighbourhoods -Knows the property -Know History
Crews & Hovell	2005	One factor influencing customer satisfaction is the sellers' perception of the agents' knowledge of the market.

2.3 Trust and Reliability

The real estate industry, much like the finance and insurance sectors, often leaves customers questioning the veracity of the information they receive due to the eloquence of its employees. Consequently, trust and reliability are critical elements that must be firmly established (Benites-Gambirazio, 2020). To achieve this, it is essential to be accurate and honest, minimize errors (Karaduman & Kaya, 2016), follow through on commitments, avoid aggressive sales tactics (Tuzovic, 2009), provide quality service (Bishop, 2004), and uphold integrity (Johnson, Nourse & Day, 1988).

Authors / Researchers	Years of Publication	Respective Definitions or Understandings of Trust and Reliability
Benites-Gambirazio	2020	Real estate agents cultivate a client base by presenting themselves as trustworthy and accessible, moving away from the stereotypical image of aggressive salespeople. They emphasize their relational, social, and professional attributes to attract and retain clients.
Karaduman & Kaya	2016	-Reliability in real estate implies consumer trust in the dependability and integrity of real estate agencies. -Consumers expect real estate agencies to support them and provide assistance during any challenges that occur throughout the transaction process. -It is anticipated that real estate agencies will deliver accurate and honest information about properties available for purchase or rent. -Consumers trust that they will not be misled or encounter any adverse issues when engaging in transactions with a reputable agency.
Tuzovic	2009	Reliability: -Consistently dependable -Fulfills promises. Credible Personality: -Ethical behavior -Honesty -Agent is not pushy -Trustworthiness.
Bishop	2004	Consider the distinction between two types of estate agents: those who provide high-quality service and genuinely engage with clients versus those who exert minimal effort and potentially compromise the quality of service.
Johnson, Nourse & Day	1988	The three most crucial attributes of a successful agent are integrity, competence, and thorough market knowledge.

2.4 Competence

Competence is often intertwined with other factors, necessitating a precise definition. In the context of real estate, competence means that an agent can effectively handle and resolve clients' issues, regardless of the complexity. As a mediator, a real estate agent needs to be intelligent, skilled, and knowledgeable to facilitate consensus between parties (Tuzovic, 2009), (Le & Supphellen, 2017), (Yeh et al., 2020).

The literature has not mentioned that as a mediator requires not only experience but also resilience and a good understanding of customer psychology. However, it is important to note that highly competent agents may be assigned an excessive workload. which could limit their ability to provide personalized service and special hospitality. This potential drawback is generally underrepresented in the literatures.

Authors / Researchers	Years of Publication	Respective Definitions or Understandings of Competence
Yeh et al.	2020	-The professional competence of salespeople enables them to showcase their product knowledge and address customer needs, thereby strengthening customer trust. -The salespeople with competence can also diminish customers' perceived risks and enhance enjoyable interactions. Additionally, they acts as a mediator, influencing how customers perceive salesperson cooperation and the outcomes of relationships.
Le & Supphellen	2017	Competence in real estate agents encompasses intelligence, skillfulness, and knowledge specific to the industry. Property sellers highly value this competence, as they rely on agents for their specialized expertise in marketing and selling properties. However, there can be significant variation in the levels of competence among different agents.
Tuzovic	2009	<u>Competence:</u> -Experience -Knowledge -Provide useful information

2.5 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction arises when the services provided are effective, meet expectations, deliver consistently good experiences (Hassan, Basit & Sethumadavan, 2020), and fulfill personal needs (Amba-Rao, 1991). This satisfaction can evolve into loyalty leading customers to recommend the services to others or return for repeat business (Dash, Kiefer & Paul, 2021).

However, customer satisfaction is highly subjective. It may be influenced by factors as simple as an agent's appearance, which can inspire trust and lead to perceptions of competence. Thus, customers may deem everything about the service satisfactory based purely on their personal impressions of the agent (Yeh et al., 2020).

Authors / Researchers	Years of Publication	Respective Definitions or Understandings of Customer Satisfaction
Dash, Kiefer & Paul	2021	Customer satisfaction is a key construct in the service quality and service loyalty relationship. Customer satisfaction stimulates purchase intentions.
Yeh et al.	2020	Customer's satisfaction will be indirectly influenced by physical attractiveness through trust and intellectual competence, with satisfaction in turn an acting customer loyalty.
Hassan, Basit & Sethumadavan	2020	Customer satisfaction is a pivotal element in the real estate sector, deeply influenced by the effectiveness of sales representatives in understanding and meeting client expectations. This satisfaction encompasses both the immediate and cumulative experiences of the customer during the buying process. It becomes especially crucial during interactions such as property inspections, where the ability of the sales representative to effectively showcase the property's features and condition can significantly impact the client's satisfaction levels.
Amba-Rao	1991	Client satisfaction can be enhanced by service functions and behaviors individually and jointly. Of all the elements, fulfillment of client expectations had the most influence on satisfaction. In this process, the service providers' behavior and attitudes offer cues to the clients, which affect their sense of fulfillment and satisfaction and, perhaps, their motive to return for service. Hence, the sales associates need to develop sensitivity to the individual needs of the client at every phase of their service transaction.

2.6 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty in the real estate brokerage industry is primarily driven by customers' perceptions of the industry's attitude, with this relationship being mediated by trust. Trust enhances loyalty indirectly through shaping positive attitudes, highlighting the critical role of sales ethics and corporate social responsibility (Chen, 2020). Customer loyalty itself involves customers' motivated behavior to maintain and enhance long-term relationships with a firm (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006). Additionally, loyalty can be significantly boosted by focusing on the brand name, which serves as an intangible asset that attracts customers and bolsters their loyalty due to its social value (Li & Xu, 2008). The importance of loyal customers extends to their likelihood to repurchase and promote the company, a behavior crucial for managers to foster as it directly increases sales revenue and profits (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

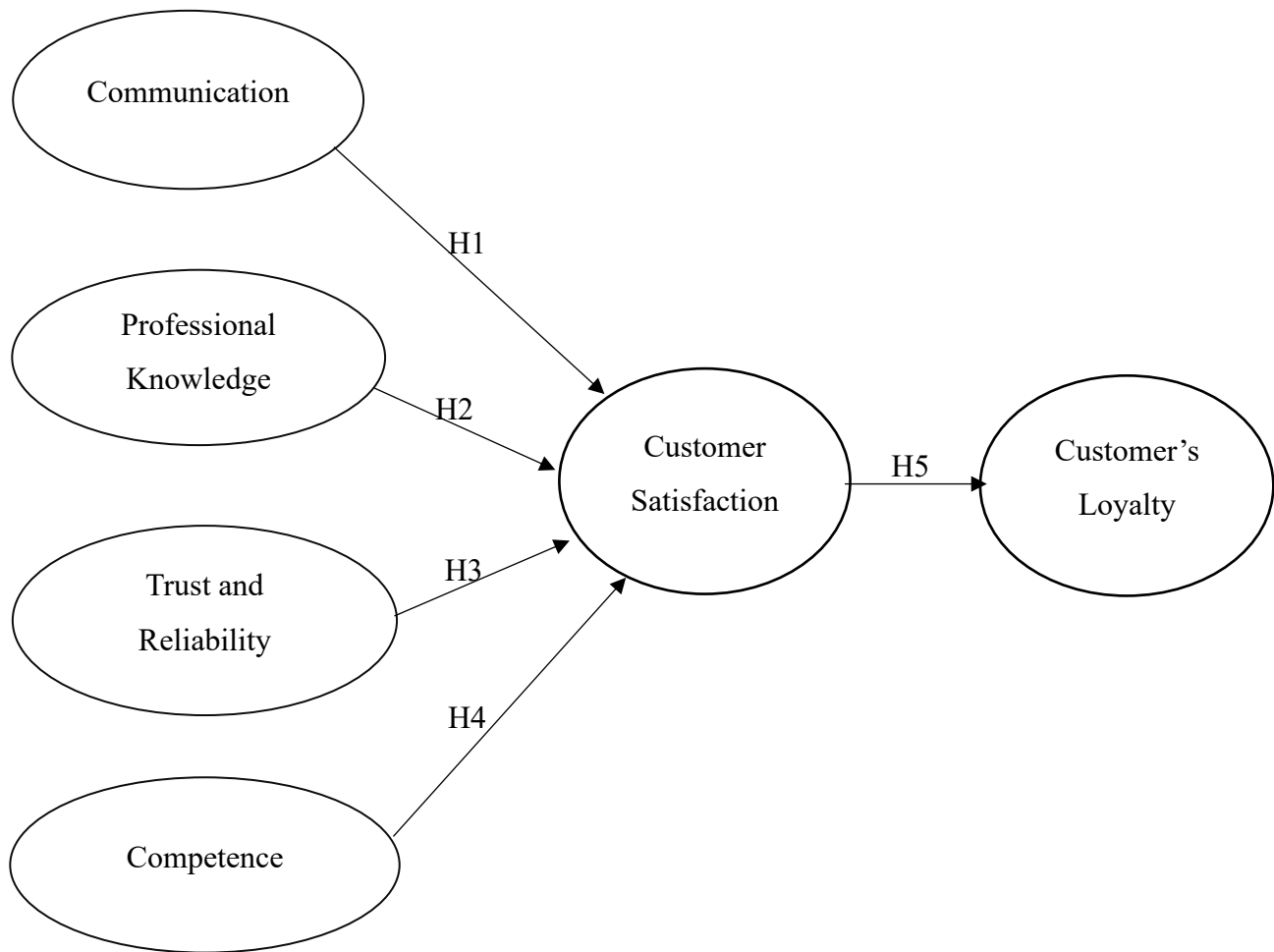
Authors / Researchers	Years of Publication	Respective Definitions or Understandings of Customer Loyalty
Chen	2020	Customers' loyalty in the real estate brokerage industry is significantly influenced by their perception of the industry's attitude. This relationship is mediated by trust, which indirectly enhances loyalty through attitude. This underscores the importance of sales ethics and corporate social responsibility as key factors driving customer loyalty.
Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans	2006	Customer loyalty is defined as the motivated behavior of customers who seek to enhance and sustain a long-term relationship with a firm.
Li & Xu	2008	Loyalty can be significantly reinforced by focusing on the brand name, an intangible asset for firms. A strong brand attracts more customers and enhances their loyalty due to its associated social value.
Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman	1996	Loyal customers, who are often willing to repurchase and promote the company through positive word of mouth, have made maintaining customer loyalty a crucial task for managers. This focus is essential because it significantly contributes to increasing the firm's sales revenue and profits.

3. Research Methodology

This research is designed to investigate and pinpoint key factors exhibited by estate agents during service delivery and property transactions that significantly influence customer satisfaction. The study will focus on identifying critical determinants such as communication, professional knowledge, trust, reliability, and overall competence. Additionally, it aims to examine how these factors contribute to customer loyalty according to the research model.

3.1 Research model

Figure 06 Research Model



3.2 Hypotheses

Based on the research model provided in Figure 06, the following hypotheses can be formulated to test the relationships among the variables:

H1: Positive effect of Communication by estate agents positively influences on customer satisfaction.

H2: Positive effect of Professional Knowledge of estate agents positively influences customer satisfaction.

H3: Positive effect of Trust and Reliability perceived in estate agents positively influences customer satisfaction.

H4: Positive effect of Competence of estate agents positively influences customer satisfaction.

H5: Customer satisfaction positively and significantly influences customer loyalty.

These hypotheses are designed to test the direct effects of each variable (communication, professional knowledge, trust and reliability, and competence) on customer satisfaction and subsequently the effect of customer satisfaction on loyalty.

3.3 Quantitative research

The decision to utilize a quantitative research method in this study is driven by the need for objective, numerical data to analyze the relationships and impacts of various factors on customer satisfaction and loyalty within the real estate industry. Quantitative methods allow for precise measurement and statistical analysis, enabling the validation of hypotheses through empirical data. This approach is particularly suitable for this research as it seeks to quantify the influence of specific variables like communication, professional knowledge, trust, reliability, and competence on measurable outcomes. Additionally, the use of surveys, a common quantitative technique, will facilitate the collection of data from a large sample of respondents, ensuring the generalizability of the findings. Ultimately, this method will provide a robust framework for drawing meaningful conclusions that can inform industry practices and contribute to academic discourse.

3.4 Survey

Snowball sampling will be employed in this study, which may introduce statistical bias. To collect data, a survey will be distributed using Google Forms to individuals who meet the target demographic criteria—those experienced in purchasing, selling, renting or renting out property. This online self-administered questionnaire follows the method described by De Leeuw et al. (2012).

It is crucial to include specific questions in the survey that directly relate to the research objectives. The survey aims to thoroughly evaluate the impact of the determinants to Customer Satisfaction and the relationship of Customer's satisfaction and loyalty. To achieve this, several questions will be formulated, each designed to gauge different levels of satisfaction, as outlined by De Leeuw et al. (2012).

3.5 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire will be divided into two parts: the first part will consist of questions related to the research model and hypotheses, and the second part will gather demographic information about the respondents.

The structure of the part 1 of the questionnaire design is as follows:

Question	Variable	Descriptions	Reference
Q1.1~Q1.5	Communication CN_1~CN_5	Agree that an effective message exchange process between the client and estate agents will increase client satisfaction.	Tuzovic (2009)
Q2.1~Q2.5	Professional Knowledge PK_1~PK_5	Agree that estate agents facilitate smooth transactions by providing critical and broad information, thereby satisfying the client.	Crews & Hovell (2005)
Q3.1~Q3.5	Trust and Reliability TR_1~TR_5	Agree that working with a trustworthy and reliable estate agent, thus eliminating any concerns, will satisfy the client.	Karaduman & Kaya (2016)
Q4.1~Q4.5	Competence CE_1~CE_5	Agree that an estate agent who can resolve any problems and meet all of the respondent's expectations will satisfy the client.	Tuzovic (2009)
Q5.1~Q5.5	Customer Loyalty CL_1~CL_5	When the client has a positive and satisfying experience, actions such as re-hiring the estate agent or recommending them to others are likely.	Hassan, Basit & Sethumadavan (2020)

Figure 07 illustrates the sample of Likert Scale (Joshi et al., 2015) of the questionnaire are going to set. A 5-Point Likert Scale will be applied to the questionnaire. It is easier for participants to make a decision without feeling overwhelmed by too many choices.

1 means 'Strongly Disagree', 2 means 'Disagree', 3 means 'Neutral', 4 means 'Agree', 5 means 'Strongly Agree'.

Figure 07 Sample of 5-Point Likert Scale

Effective communication throughout the entire sales, purchase, and renting process with the estate agent is crucial for enhancing my satisfaction. *

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

3.6 Sampling Method

The sample size will be calculated with 1.24 million private houses (Rating and Valuation Department, 2024).

- Assume $Z = 1.96$ for 95% confidence.
- Assume $D = 0.05$ (a typical margin of error for social science surveys).
- Assume $\sigma = 0.5$ (as a conservative estimate without specific data). This would typically be based on prior knowledge or pilot studies.

Step 2: Calculate initial sample size

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5^2}{0.05^2} = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} = 384.16$$

Since the sample size is more than 5% of the population, we need to use the finite population correction formula:

$$n_c = \frac{nN}{N+n-1}$$

Where:

- n_c is the corrected sample size.
- N is the population size (1.24 million).

$$n_c = \frac{384.16 \times 1,240,000}{1,240,000 + 384.16 - 1} = \frac{476,358,400}{1,240,383.16} \approx 384.04$$

The result indicates a slight correction due to the large population size. Therefore, the sample size required, accounting for the population size, is approximately 384.

Note: The exact values for σ and D might vary based on your specific study requirements and the variability of the data you expect. Adjust these parameters based on more accurate estimates if they are available.

Source: Mo, (2024)

It is concluded that it needs approximately 384 participants based on these assumptions.

This study employs a quantitative approach through a questionnaire survey. The sample size is set at 384 participants, all of whom have experience in buying, selling, renting, or leasing houses. This experience is considered irrespective of its extent. The sample is designed to include four distinct age groups:

Adults aged 20-39 years,

Adults aged 40-59 years,

Adults aged 60-79 years,

Adults aged 80 years and above.

This diverse age representation ensures comprehensive insights across different life stages to fulfill the objectives of the study.

3.7 Logistics

The questionnaire, formatted as a Google Form, will be disseminated via email and various messaging platforms including WhatsApp, WeChat, and Signal to an array of recipients comprising friends, colleagues, family members, online acquaintances, and individuals connected through social media who are engaged in research-related activities. Additionally, the questionnaire will be distributed to professionals within the property management sector and clients of real estate agents. To attain the desired sample size, the distribution strategy will utilize my extensive personal and professional networks, extend outreach to online communities, and actively recruit participants via social media platforms. This multifaceted approach ensures a comprehensive inclusion of diverse respondent groups, enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the research findings.

3.8 Statistical Tests

Parametric tests are statistical methods that assume data follows a specific distribution, usually normal, and are used when data is continuous and adheres to certain distributional assumptions. Common parametric tests include t-tests, which come in various forms such as the one-sample t-test, independent two-sample t-test, and paired t-test, all designed to compare the means between one or two groups. Additionally, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) is utilized for comparing means

across three or more groups, and regression analysis is employed to examine relationships between variables. These tests are integral in analyzing data that meets the prerequisites of parametric statistical testing.

3.9 Objective

The objective is to confirm the validity of the proposed hypothesis and ascertain the key determinant that maximizes customer satisfaction.

3.10 Interpretation, Ethical Concerns of Data Usage and Pilot Test

All collected questionnaires will be analyzed using SPSS to achieve the results outlined by the objectives. The analysis will present the data for each determinant in figures and charts. Following this analysis, the findings will be discussed to interpret the implications and insights derived from the data.

At the beginning of the google form (the questionnaire), the introduction of the purpose of this research will be written to inform the respondents and also the following statement:

‘Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential, and your anonymity will be preserved. You also have the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

In this research project, data integrity was upheld, and the information provided was used solely for the purposes of this research/dissertation. All the collected data will be only use for research purpose and will delete with three months after the research is completed.’

The schedule of the whole project with the test of questionnaire timeline:

Table 02 Schedule of the Research Project

#	Task	Planned Timeline	Required Day
1.	Completed the proposal of the dissertation and submitted to Supervisor and Turnitin.	On 19 Dec 2024	-
2.	Draft questionnaire and submit to Supervisor for review.	By 24 Dec 2024	5
3.	Correction for #2.	By 28 Dec 2024	4
4.	Test the questionnaire Targeted 10 respondents.	By 2 Jan 2025	5
5.	Analyze feedback from test and make corrections	By 3 Jan 2025	1
6.	Conduct a Pilot Test Targeted 40 respondents.	By 9 Jan 2025	6
7.	Attend the SPSS course and data processing for the Pilot Test.	On 12 Jan 2025	3
8.	Adjust the questionnaire if necessary.	By 14 Jan 2025	2
9.	Submit the result of the Pilot Test and Adjustment to Supervisor.	By 15 Jan 2025	1
10.	Start the main survey Targeted 390 respondents.	By 19 Jan 2025	4
11.	Complete the main survey.	By 8 Feb 2025	20
12.	Attend another SPSS course and data processing for the Survey.	On 16 Feb 2025	8
13.	Organize and prepare the results for analysis.	By 20 Feb 2025	4
14.	Write and submit Chapter 4 – Findings to Supervisor.	By 28 Feb 2025	8
15.	Correction for #14.	By 8 Mar 2025	8
16.	Write and submit Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendation to Supervisor.	By 20 Mar 2025	12
17.	Correction for #16.	By 25 Mar 2025	5
18.	Review the whole paper and correct defects, and resubmit it to Supervisor.	By 31 Mar 2025	6
19.	Correction for #18.	By 12 Apr 2025	12
20.	Buffer period		
21.	Complete all the required forms, bind the paper, and submit to school.	By 26 Apr 2025	-

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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:	Tsoi Mei Kwan			
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:	UWTSD MBA (The Hong Kong Management Association)
4	Campus:	Not Applicable
5	E-mail address:	cherriemktsoi@gmail.com
6	Contact Telephone Number:	6209 6664
For students:		
7	Student Number:	2322638
8	Programme of Study:	Master of Business Administration (MBA) Programme
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr. Terence Li

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		Research Degrees Committee	☐		

	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): <i>Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval</i>	Institute Research Committee	☐	
		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	<u>UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice</u>		☐
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy		☐
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i>		☐

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	Nil				
2	Contact person name	Nil				
3	Contact person e-mail address	Nil				
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 paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☒
7		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	☒

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:	Determinants of Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Real Estate Agencies for Clients in Hong Kong			
2	Proposed start date:	16 Oct 2024	Proposed end date:	30 Apr 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 <u>Existing Research</u> 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 Research on this topic, specifically within the Hong Kong context, is limited, with few published journals outside of academic theses from local institutions. Most existing research tends to focus on the perspectives of industry practitioners rather than the end-users, such as property buyers or renters. There is a clear need for comprehensive research in the post-pandemic era, as other sectors like retail, finance, and catering also navigate through recessions and search for new survival strategies. This research could				

	provide invaluable insights into consumer needs and preferences, helping the real estate industry adapt and thrive in changing economic conditions. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question The study attempts to answer three research questions: Q1. What are the key determinants influencing customer satisfaction among purchasers and renters in Hong Kong's real estate market? This question aims to explore and identify specific aspects among with the estate agents performing during the service delivery and property offerings that most significantly impact customer satisfaction. It could include determinants such as communication, professional knowledge, trust and reliability, and competence. Q2. How do the attributes of real estate agents affect customer loyalty in a competitive and sluggish market environment? Focusing on the attributes of real estate agents themselves, this question seeks to understand which qualities are most critical in retaining customers over the long term, especially when the market conditions are not favorable. Q3. In what ways can real estate agencies leverage the reduced competition and steady rental market to enhance both customer satisfaction and loyalty during economic downturns? This question explores strategic actions that real estate agencies can undertake to improve customer experiences and loyalty when facing an economic slowdown. It investigates how agencies can use advantages like less competition and a stable rental market to build stronger relationships with clients. (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity To understand the impact of the determinants to Customer Satisfaction and the relationship of Customer's satisfaction and loyalty. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity

	To finish the quantitative method according to the setup criteria and find the highlights for providing recommendation to the industry. (this box should expand as you type)
	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	Snowball sampling will be employed in this study, which may introduce statistical bias. To collect data, a survey will be distributed using Google Forms to individuals who meet the target demographic criteria—those experienced in purchasing, selling, renting or renting out property. This online self-administered questionnaire follows the method described by De Leeuw et al. (2012). It is crucial to include specific questions in the survey that directly relate to the research objectives. The survey aims to thoroughly evaluate the impact of online purchase intentions on watch buying behavior, necessitating a detailed assessment of customer satisfaction. To achieve this, several questions will be formulated, each designed to gauge different levels of satisfaction, as outlined by De Leeuw et al. (2012). (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Hong Kong. (this box should expand as you type)
	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	Yes, I understood. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

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:		
	Not applicable <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: Not applicable (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: Not applicable (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 (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	Friends and fellows. Family and relatives. Online friends. Research participants on social media (e.g. we chat). Property management practitioners. Real estate agents' client. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	Leverage my network. Reach out to outline communities. Find research participants on social media. (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐

14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	Not applicable <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			
	Not applicable <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		
	Risk to participants: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
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		
	Not applicable		

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	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: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	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? N/A	☐	☐	☒
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.	Not applicable		

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?
	Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential, and your anonymity will be preserved. You also have the option to withdraw from the study at any time. In this research project, data integrity was upheld, and the information provided was used solely for the purposes of this research/dissertation. To protect the privacy of our participants, no personally identifiable information required for focus group interviews, such as names, organizations, or professional details, will be disclosed. <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.
	In the upcoming survey of this research, a meticulously designed questionnaire will be employed to gather data from respondents on their perceptions of the importance of various variables related to estate agent performance. All the collected data will be only use for research purpose and will delete after the research is complete. Your assistance will be highly appreciated, your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and you stay anonymous. And you are allowed to withdraw at any time. Data integrity was respected in this research project, and the data provided was used exclusively for this research/dissertation. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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 following survey is study determinants of Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Real Estate Agencies for Clients in Hong Kong. All the collected data will be only use for research purpose and will delete after the research is complete. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

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	Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	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	Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	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:		
	Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
		YES	NO
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:		
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):		
	SPSS <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		

	Self and Supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Self and Supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
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.		
	No. After finished the assignment, all the data will be destroyed. <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>		
	Not applicable. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.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.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:		Date: 18 Dec 2024

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		

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) <i>ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT</i>
☒	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.uwtsd.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.