

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

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

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

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

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

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Naitik Kantibhai Sheladiya
2	Student Number:	2430954
3	Email address:	2430954@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
4	Programme of Study:	MBA International Business
5	Supervisor:	Dr Jean Wang

SECTION B: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

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

SECTION C: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	The Role of Mobile App Usability in Shaping Customer Loyalty in Fashion E-Commerce Platforms in India		
2	Proposed start date:	15-02-2026	Proposed end date:	03-06-2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words in each section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the three points below: • <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 The purpose of this research activity is to investigate the effect of mobile app usability on customer loyalty in fashion e-commerce sites in India. The use of the mobile apps has become a significant platform where customers seek, compare, and buy fashion products. However, the usefulness of the applications is usually determined by the ease of interaction with the app and the ability to do shopping activities. The data will be collected through an <i>online survey questionnaire</i> from users of fashion e-commerce mobile applications. The survey will target consumer experiences related to mobile app usability features, like including interface simplicity, ease of navigation, personalised suggestions and push notifications, and payment convenience. Further, the research will examine effect of these usability factors on customer loyalty and promotion of repeat purchase behaviour. Other than the usability factors, the research shall also be conducted to determine the presence of customer satisfaction as a mediating variable between mobile app usability and customer loyalty. The outcome of the findings would be helpful in informing fashion e-commerce companies on how to develop design and functionality of their mobile apps. Thus, the research project will not only add to the existing literature on digital consumer behaviour, but also offer practical recommendations on how to develop customer interaction and long-term loyalty in e-commerce sector of fashion industry.
4	Research Questions 1. What is the relationship between mobile app usability and customer loyalty with fashion e-commerce sites in India? 2. How do mobile app features (such as interface design, notifications, personalized recommendations, and payment convenience) drives customer loyalty on fashion e-commerce apps in India? 3. What usability challenges are faced by customers while using fashion e-commerce mobile apps in India that impact their loyalty?
5	Aims of Research Activity

	The research aim is to analyse the role of mobile app usability in shaping customer loyalty in fashion E-Commerce platforms in India.
6	Objectives of Research Activity ❖ To investigate effects the mobile app usability that affects customer loyalty in fashion E-commerce platforms in India ❖ To identify the challenges faced by customers towards mobile app usability in shaping customer loyalty in fashion e-commerce platforms ❖ To establish whether customer loyalty will mediate the relation between app usability and the customer loyalty ❖ To provide evidence-based recommendations for app design and engagement tactics to boost retention and loyalty for Indian fashion apps
	Proposed data collection methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity to collect data, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	The research will be done using primary data through <i>online survey questionnaire</i>. This approach will enable the researcher to obtain data from people that uses fashion e-commerce mobile apps in India. The data collection will help to know how users view mobile app usability, and impact of these experiences on customer loyalty and behaviour. The survey questionnaire will be structured to include responses from participants that have already purchased fashion items including clothes, shoes, or accessories using mobile apps. Further, the questionnaire will be designed with the help of Google Form, which is an online survey platform. Through this platform, the researcher will be able to distribute the questionnaire without any difficulty and receive the responses in a well-organised format. The survey invitation will be distributed online, using digital platforms like social networks, online discussion

groups, and messaging applications. These platforms will help in reaching customers who shop online using mobile applications.

A brief statement on purpose of the research and voluntary nature of participation will be provided to participants before starting the questionnaire. The respondents will also be informed that their responses will not be disclosed and will be used exclusively for academic research. The participants will proceed for the survey, after providing the informed consent. A screening question will be integrated before starting the survey to ensure that respondent has used a fashion e-commerce mobile app in the last 6 months. Only the participants who confirm that have used such applications would continue with the questionnaire format. Thus, this will also contribute towards the relevance of responses for the research topic.

The questionnaire will be divided into major sections. The first part will obtain some demographics including age, gender, and frequency of online shopping of fashion products. This data will be used to explain characteristics of respondents. The second part will collect data regarding experiences of using mobile apps. The respondents will be asked to respond to statements that will relate to usability of fashion e-commerce mobile applications. Thus, these statements will look into aspects, like the easy navigation, usability of interface, loading time, customised recommendations, push notifications, and payment convenience. Moreover, the respondents will be asked to respond based on a 5-point Likert scale, with strongly disagree on one end, to strongly agree on other end. The 3rd section of questionnaire will ideally measure customer loyalty and behaviour. The participants will be asked about their loyalty with fashion e-commerce mobile apps, likelihood to make repeat purchases via mobile app, and how they feel to recommend the application to other people. Hence, the Likert scale will also be used in these questions to capture opinion of respondents.

The survey will not involve collecting any personal data to identify an individual, including names, phone numbers, or addresses. All the responses will be anonymous. The survey shall only gather data regarding the experiences and opinion of individuals with respect to usability of mobile apps. The research will not involve any kind of audio recordings and video recordings as well as interviews. Consequently, all the responses will be stored in a secure password protected digital file, which will only be opened by the researcher during the dissertation. However, the online survey will remain open

	for 2-3 weeks to allow enough time for the participants to respond. The responses collected will be subsequently downloaded and ready to be analysed to support the research objectives.
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SECTION D: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒

16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

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

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

SECTION E: Intended Participants

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒

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5	Prisoners?	☐	✓
6	Young offenders?	☐	✓
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	✓
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	✓
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	✓
	Details of any other participant groups: Complete this only if your participants cannot give consent. This includes animals (this box should expand as you type)		

Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?		
10	How many participants are expected?	100 Participants
11	Who will the participants be?	Individual consumers in India that use mobile applications to purchase fashion products

		<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
12	How will you identify the participants?	The participants will be identified via a screening question to confirm, if they have used a fashion e-commerce mobile app, within the last 6 months.

	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?	✓	☐	☐

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21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	You should be able to tick YES for all of these questions. If not, then explain why not in this box. (this box should expand as you type)			

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

SECTION F: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.	
1	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information. If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter N/A and go skip to question 3.	
	Risk to participants: The participants may find minor privacy issues or discomfort while responding to questions regarding their online shopping behaviour, mobile app usage, or loyalty over fashion e-commerce apps. As the survey is not asking any sensitive personal or financial details, there is a possibility that the respondents will be hesitant about how their answers will be utilised.	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: <i>The whole process of participation will be fully voluntary, and the respondents will be informed about purpose of the research prior to the start of survey. No personal data like names, phone numbers and addresses will be obtained. Responses will be anonymous and confidential and the participant is free to withdraw at any point in time without giving an explanation.</i>
2	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	The questions related to sensitive and distressing topics, like <i>personal finances, health conditions, illegal activities, or personal relationships</i> will not be a part of the research. The questionnaire will not	

	inquire anything more than general experiences with fashion e-commerce mobile apps and customer loyalty. In case any respondent is not comfortable with responding to a question, he/ she can avoid that question or stop the survey. The research will not involve any personal or sensitive disclosures.	
3	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: The researcher may face data manipulation risks or even the risk of data abuse, particularly when collecting and storing survey data. It is also possible that there will be a risk of misunderstanding of responses of participants or addressing personal opinions of respondents.	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: <i>All the information will be gathered by use of a secure online survey system and will be saved in password-protected files. The researcher will solely make analyses of anonymous responses, and he will also abide by university principles on ethical research. The research process will also be properly documented to maintain transparency and academic integrity.</i>
4	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There is a risk of data protection or reputational risks, in case the research data is not processed properly or when participants believe that information, they provided was misused.	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: <i>The research will be guided by ethical rules of research in the university and data protection laws. No personally identifying information will be collected and all the responses will be anonymous. The collected data will not be utilised in any other purpose other than academic</i>

		<i>purpose for the dissertation. This will be safely stored and destroyed once the research project is over.</i>
5	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: The study process is carried through an online survey, which do not include use of physical resources, laboratory, or interaction with the environment. Thus, there are minimal environmental risks.	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: <i>As the research will involve the use of digital data collection methods, there will be no environmental implications. The research will not avoid unwarranted printing and it will be based on use of electronic data storage and communication, which will make the research process environmentally responsible.</i>

SECTION G: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

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

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	After finishing the survey, participants would be shown a brief debriefing message, which explains the research purpose and how the responses would contribute to research. Besides, the participants will be given a specific email address, in which they can seek additional details regarding findings of

	research. Thus, the participants can address the researcher, in case they wish to receive a summary of research results.
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.
	Before start of the survey, the participants will be informed about purpose of research, requirements of participation, and their right by an information screen. The screen will display that participation will be voluntary and responses will remain anonymous. The participants will offer their consent by clicking on next button, which states that they agreed to participate before accessing questionnaire.
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 research will provide full anonymity and confidentiality of all the participants. The questionnaire will not collect any personal data like names, telephone numbers or addresses. All the responses will be saved in password secured digital files, which will only be accessed by the researcher. Hence, all the results will be disseminated in shortened form, so that individual participants cannot be traced in the dissertation.

SECTION H: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	<i>“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural</i>	☐	☒

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	<i>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.</i>		
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	This includes audio/video data of participants but can also include IP addresses and usernames. Names, addresses and emails also count, as do consent forms. <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	What counts as 'sensitive' will differ between cultures. Any information on behaviour that is not in accordance with cultural norms would count as sensitive personal data. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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	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:		
	All survey data will be stored on a password protected computer and encrypted cloud storage. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	✓
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	✓
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	✓
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	✓
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	✓
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	✓
19	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and/or any international equivalent):		
	This includes data such as drafts of your thesis as well as experimental or survey data. An example of suitable text is given below. <i>All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All data transfers will be encrypted and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project.</i>		

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	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
20	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:	
	Normally the principal researcher, possibly also the supervisor and, if the project has an industrial partner, a representative of that partner. Possibly also external examiner or second marker? <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
21	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:	
	Usually the principal researcher. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
22	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form.	
	<i>All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected, and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted.</i> <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
22	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtسد.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	✓
23	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	✓

SECTION I: Use of AI tools

Use of generative AI and other AI-based tools		YES	NO	N/A
There are a number of ethical issues relating to the use of generative AI and other AI-based tools, including data security, output bias, and output errors. In general you should assume that any generative AI or other AI-based tool that you pay to use is more secure and accurate than one which is free to use. Will the research use AI tools to do any of the following:				
1	Capture data?	☐	☒	☐
2	Generate and/or edit text?	☐	☒	☐
3	Generate graphics?	☐	☒	☐
4	Generate video?	☐	☒	☐
5	Generate sound/music?	☐	☒	☐
6	Generate code?	☐	☒	☐
7	Generate synthetic data?	☐	☒	☐
8	Analyse data?	☐	☒	☐
9	Analyse personal or sensitive data?	☐	☒	☐
10	Classify data?	☐	☒	☐
11	Do you intend to use the free version of any AI tools?	☐	☒	☐
If you have answered YES to any of questions O1-O11, please provide justification detailing why this is necessary for the research.				

12	State which AI tool or tools you will be using, and where they are based (or store their data – you may need to check their webpages or user agreement for this). If you are planning to use Copilot then say if you're using the UWTSD version of it or the public version. You should also show how you are complying with current UWTSD guidance/policy of the use of AI. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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SECTION J: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtss.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	Naitik Kantibhai Sheladiya	Date: 19-03-2026
2	Supervisor:	Dr Jean Wang	Date: 19-03-2026
3	Signature:		