Participant Information Sheet

# [Research Project Title\*]

Instagram recommendation engine

## Invitation to research

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted as part of a software engineering project at Manchester Metropolitan University. The project aims to develop a social media recommendation engine that analyses user interactions on Instagram to provide personalised content recommendations. Your participation will help test and improve the accuracy and usability of the system.

## Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you meet the selection criteria of being an active Instagram user who interacts with posts through likes, comments, or shares. The study will involve 10–16 participants, including 2–4 alpha testers (who will test the early prototype) and 10-12 beta testers (who will test the refined system).

## Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and your data will be handled according to your withdrawal preferences.

## What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

* Use the Instagram recommendation engine and engage with suggested content.
* Provide feedback on the accuracy and relevance of the recommendations via surveys and/or short interviews.
* Share anonymised data on your interactions (likes, comments, shares) to help improve the system.

Participation will last approximately 4–6 weeks, with minimal time commitment required.

## Are there any risks if I participate?

The risks involved in this study are minimal. Your Instagram login details will not be required, and only anonymised interaction data will be collected. The main risk is potential privacy concerns, which will be mitigated by ensuring all data is securely stored and anonymised.

## Are there any advantages if I participate?

By taking part, you will:

* Help improve recommendation systems on social media.
* Gain insights into how Instagram content is recommended.
* Receive a summary of research findings if requested.

## Informed consent

You will be provided with a consent form explaining your rights, including the option to withdraw your data at any time. You must sign this form before participation.

## What information about me will you collect and why?

We will collect the following anonymised data:

* Your Instagram interactions (likes, comments, shares) to analyse content preferences.
* Your survey and interview responses to understand user experience with the system.

## How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

* All data will be anonymised and stored securely on the university OneDrive.
* No raw Instagram data or personal information will be stored.
* Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data.

## How will you use my information?

Your data will be used **solely for research purposes**, helping refine the recommendation system. Findings will be included in a research report, but individual participants will remain anonymous.

## Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

No personal data will be shared with external parties. Anonymised, aggregated data may be used in academic publications or presentations but will not be linked to any participant.

## When will you destroy my information?

All personal and research data will be retained for 12 months after project completion and then permanently deleted.

## Data Protection Law

The way we look after your information is ruled by UK law. Under UK law, we need to have a very good reason for using your information (this is called a ‘lawful basis’). Sometimes, we might also want to use sensitive information about you, like information about your health, religion and ethnic background. This is called ‘special category information’. We collect all this information from you to help with our research, which aims to benefit everyone (this means that it is in the ‘public interest’).

You have the right to make choices about your information under UK law. If you have any questions or would like to ask us to do something with your information, you can ask the researcher or a parent or guardian, or someone else at the University. Contact details are shown towards the bottom of this document.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information before 09/05/2025, we will make sure this is done. If you ask us to delete data after this point, we might not be able to. If your data is anonymised (where we take out your name and any other information that lets us know the information is about you), we will not be able to delete it, because we will not know which data is yours.

## What will happen to the results of the research study?

Findings will be included in an academic project report and may be published in research papers. Participants can request a summary of results.

## Who has reviewed this research project?

This project has been reviewed and approved by Manchester Metropolitan University’s Ethics Committee.

## Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

For any questions or concerns, you can contact:

* **Researcher:** Husnain Ahmed, Software Engineering Student, [21308666@stu.mmu.ac.uk](mailto:21308666@stu.mmu.ac.uk), 07853081698
* **Supervisor:** Ashley Williams, University Lecturer, [Ashley.Williams@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:Ashley.Williams@mmu.ac.uk), 01612471655
* **Ethics Committee:** [ethics-scieng@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:ethics-scieng@mmu.ac.uk)
* **Manchester Metropolitan Data Protection Officer:** our Data Protection Officer can be contacted using the dataprotection@mmu.ac.uk e-mail address, by calling +44 (0)7584 330586or in writing to: Data Protection Officer, Legal & Governance, Ormond Building, Lower Ormond Street, Manchester, M15 6BX
* **UK Information Commissioner’s Office:** You have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner’s Office if you would like to complain about how we process your personal data: <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

**THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT**