

# How to engage consumers in addressing modern slavery

Brief guidance for practitioners

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Based on the research by: Dr Michal Carrington, University of Melbourne, Professor Andreas Chatzidakis, Royal Holloway University of London, Professor Deirdre Shaw, University of Glasgow



Research by:



Consumers have a key role to play in addressing modern slavery in global supply chains. The Modern Slavery PEC research project, led by Dr Michal Carrington, Professor Andreas Chatzidakis and Professor Deirdre Shaw, analysed consumer behaviour in relation to modern slavery and developed recommendations for practitioners planning to run campaigns engaging consumers, change their consumer habits and use their power to influence decisionmakers to address modern slavery. You can read the full report and a brief research summary at [www.modernslaverypec.org](http://www.modernslaverypec.org).

## Message Framing – are consumers responsible for modern slavery?

Responsibility needs to be fairly distributed across different stakeholders and consumers need to be reassured that they aren't solely responsible for the causes of modern slavery but are co-responsible for addressing it. Consumers need to be assured that they can continue to consume, just differently.



### Consumers are citizens

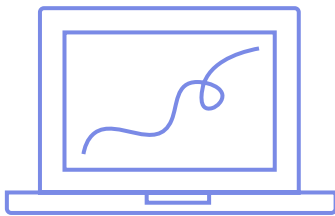
The range of possible consumer actions extend beyond decisions to (not)buy. Consumer-citizen actions can take the form of broader civic and political mobilisation, where consumer voices and actions can be supported and collectivised.

## Pathways to action need to be clear and transparent

The communication of a clear and plausible call to action is essential in enabling consumers to take action, feel a shared sense of responsibility and to consume differently. These pathways to action can be focused both on changing consumption behaviours and on civic actions, such as signing petitions. Pathways to action need to be explained in terms of their underlying logic, sense of urgency/priority and be sensitised to consumers' old versus new habits.

## Consider what level of involvement is required from consumers

The lower consumers' involvement (i.e. buying a small item such as food or chocolate), the higher the need for clear and credible labelling that can act as a short cut, providing visual cues to enable an easy action without requiring considered research and evaluation. Conversely, the higher the involvement (such as buying a computer or writing a letter to a brand as part of citizen action) the stronger the need for communicating clear pathways to action.



## Strategically identify influencers

Credible influencers, for example peers or social media influencers, are a key factor in enhancing the effectiveness of any anti-slavery campaign and need to be strategically identified prior to any campaign launch.

## Don't stop at awareness raising

Awareness is important in terms of having a subsequent impact on attitudes and behaviour and is largely impacted by source credibility. However, a clear pathway to action helping to address specific modern slavery issues is more effective in engaging consumers.

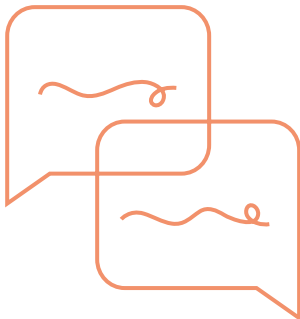
## Consider the barriers blocking consumer action



Any anti-slavery campaign needs to carefully consider barriers stopping consumers from taking action. These can be contextual, such as the availability of opportunities to take action in the consumer's everyday environment or constraints linked to time and money; and psychosocial, for example a commonplace view that a single symbolic act won't make much difference.

## Tailor your audience

Modern slavery campaigns need to be strategically tailored and targeted to the most appropriate audiences with the ability to act. While specific consumer groups are targeted for consumer-focused campaigns, media influencers, branded producers and other stakeholders who can exert influence on brand reputation can also be effectively targeted to indirectly impact consumer action.



## Credible communication can shift consumption norms and habitual behaviour

Well designed communication needs to focus on shifting norms in a fundamentally habitual domain that is consumption. The voices of people affected by modern slavery or credible influencers can play a key role in unsettling often taken for granted behaviours.

## Think of potentially harmful unintended consequences

Considering potentially harmful unintended consequences need to be considered prior to launching campaigns. Worryingly common, they may include stereotyping and reinforcement of harmful assumptions, unhelpful stigmatisation and oversimplification of highly complicated contexts, consumer confusion, amongst others.

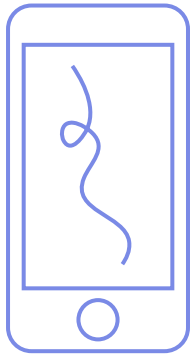


## Consider wider factors

Attempts to mobilise the consumer work best when they are part of a multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder strategy that aims to build coalitions among workers, NGOs, businesses, investors, governments, regulatory bodies and, not least, consumers. This multi-stakeholder approach is essential both in terms of collectivising the voice of the consumer and harnessing their power in affecting change; but also because consumers themselves need to feel that their actions are part of a more holistic approach, as opposed to a way of shouldering the responsibilities of business and governmental actors.

## Ethical products can be perceived as lower quality

When considering forced labour-free products or services it is important to keep emphasising functionality and key quality indicators in addition to ethical attributes.

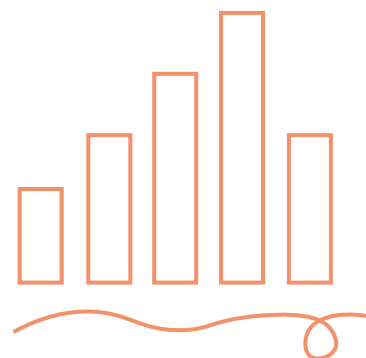


## Employ marketing principles

Marketing principles, such as segmentation and targeting, branding, advertising and communication should be engaged to support campaigns in informing, persuading, motivating and mobilising consumer action and implemented through the design, development and evaluation of modern slavery campaigns.

## Effective campaigns need to have clear objectives – that are measured

Campaigns must be supported by clear objectives, goal setting and evaluation measurement. A strategic approach to evaluation is essential to learn from and continuously improve upon the impact of campaigns that seek to mobilise consumer-citizen action.



Acknowledgment: This guidance is based on the recommendations of the report: *Addressing Consumer Awareness and (In)Action Towards Modern Slavery: A Review of Existing Evidence*. It was a research project of the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (the Modern Slavery PEC) research funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, conducted by Dr Michal Carrington, Professor Andreas Chatzidakis and Professor Deirdre Shaw.

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Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre  
c/o British Institute of International and Comparative Law  
Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5JP

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[office@modernslaverypec.org](mailto:office@modernslaverypec.org)

[www.modernslaverypec.org](http://www.modernslaverypec.org)