

# Addressing consumer awareness and (in)action towards modern slavery

Rapid research report: review of existing evidence

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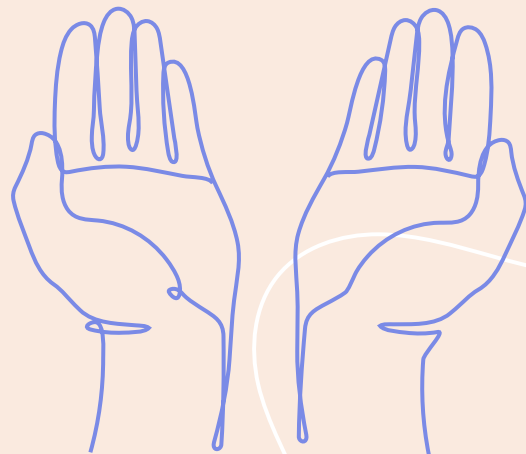
Research by:



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# 1. Introduction

Modern slavery has affected the many products and services we consume as part of our everyday lives. Even if unwillingly, we are implicated in it through our everyday consumption choices. This is not a comfortable position. Current business models can contribute to increasing the risks of exploitative labour practices occurring, whilst complex global supply chains mean that modern slavery can be less visible to the public eye. This issue exists not only in well-cited locations, such as, Bangladesh or India, but also in the UK. The support, for example, for the End Uyghur Forced Labour Campaign by many consumer-facing companies, such as, Marks and Spencer and Asos, illustrates that action by business can be driven by concerns for reputational damage and consumer action. Conversely, the relative lack of response to the Boohoo case, despite considerable media attention, also illustrates that consumer voice and power is not always collectivised and leveraged effectively. A critical question, therefore, is how can consumer mobilisation towards addressing modern slavery be supported?

Consumers “spend money on goods [and services] that are produced with the input of persons trapped in exploitation.... Thus, consumers knowingly or unknowingly feed exploitation through their spending”.<sup>1</sup> It is important to clarify that consumers rarely ‘demand’ products (or services) of modern slavery. Consumers typically prioritise other factors, such as, price, convenience, identity projection and so on. In doing so, however, they (consciously or not so consciously) create demand for products and services that are produced through modern slavery and labour exploitation. Thus, consumption choices create demand, and by definition consumers are a key actor on the “demand-side” (vs. supply-side) of modern slavery prevention.

The current research is, therefore, driven by the need to unpack the role of consumers in modern slavery and associated action. While consumers play an important role in creating demand for cheap products and services, by the same token they could also play a critical part in exerting pressure for change. In this study, we examine how consumer attitudes, intentions and behaviour can be mobilised to address modern slavery and what interventions are effective in operationalising consumer action on modern slavery.

First, we undertake a comprehensive review of existing academic research in the area of modern slavery and consumption, as well as the broader area of consumption ethics. Here we specifically examine research that investigates actual behaviour and gaps between attitudes, intentions and behaviours.



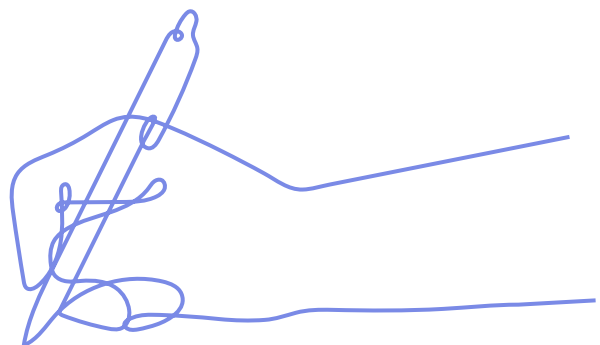
1. Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings." p 21.

Second, we undertake a comprehensive review of academic research into anti-trafficking and anti-slavery campaigns to identify common methods and outcomes. The papers generated from both of these stages were analysed through a systematic content and thematic analysis that enabled the categorisation, analysis, synthesis and contrast of findings across our results.

Third, through the use of secondary data, we identified and analysed case studies of real-world interventions that attempt to mobilise the consumer towards instances of modern slavery. This resulted in the inclusion of ten case studies for analysis. We also undertook expert interviews with key individuals from these case studies. This enabled academic findings to be juxtaposed with real-world experience and insights and the identification of further pathways for effective campaigns and policy that can mobilise the consumer.

In this study, we see modern slavery as part of a continuum of human (and broader environmental) exploitation. In many instances, it is difficult, if seen as unhelpful, to attempt to isolate modern slavery from wider forms of exploitation that remain systemic and impossible to address via issue-specific campaigns. Consumers, however, while perhaps confused about modern slavery, are generally familiar with different forms of exploitation and often aware of the limits of their own actions, if and when dis-embedded from broader political and institutional dynamics. To effectively mobilise the consumer, it is important to position modern slavery within the context of such wider concerns.

Our report considers both insights for immediate application and future research needs.



## 2. Methodology

**Two academic literature searches were conducted, in addition to a case study analysis of real-world interventions.**

### Study 1: Modern slavery and consumption ethics

Considering the nascent state of consumer studies in the context of modern slavery, **Study 1** draws insights from journal publications focused on modern slavery and also from ethical consumption research more broadly.

First, focusing on consumer studies situated in varied contexts of modern slavery, an expanded **set of search terms** was constructed based on commonly accepted definitions (e.g. International Labour Organisation, Anti-Slavery International) and academic conventions. An extensive literature search with these search terms was conducted across leading academic research databases. This resulted in the identification of 271 published journal articles. A rigorous screening process assessed relevance in terms of a consumer focus and reduced this to 16 articles that were included for analysis. Second, in light of limited consumer research on modern slavery, the literature search was then expanded to include broader search terms that encompassed ethical consumption studies. This expanded set of search terms significantly increased the number of articles to be screened and was limited to leading academic journals in the fields of marketing and psychology, as well as journals known to systematically publish on ethical consumption. A total of 388 papers were identified in this second search and were rigorously screened based on citations (staggered across years) as an appropriate measure of the impact of each article on the field.

This screening process resulted in an additional 66 journal articles included for analysis (see Appendix 3 for full list of search terms, databases and journals).

Criteria for inclusion across both searches was primarily focused on consumer behaviour and behaviour change. Screened journal articles were then further categorised based on modelled or observed behaviour change following an intervention. Rather than relying on consumer self-reporting regarding attitudes and behaviours, this research aims to draw on more objective measures of behaviour change, which remove the risk of self-reporting bias.

Each journal article was systematically categorised to capture:

- a. research methods;
- b. specific measures relating to behaviour change (what and how);
- c. whether the paper captured attitudes, intentions, and/or behaviour;
- d. high level themes;
- e. key insights.

The categorised papers were then thematically analysed and coded, and key themes developed.



## Study 2: Anti-trafficking and anti-slavery campaigns

We conducted a further literature search across published journal articles that evaluated anti-trafficking and anti-slavery campaigns, using the same set of modern slavery search terms and key academic databases as Study 1. This search resulted in the screening of 184 papers, of which 23 were included for final analysis (see Appendix 3 for details). Papers were screened to include studies that focus on behaviour change and specific and identifiable campaigns.

These papers were systematically categorised to capture:

- a. research methods;
- b. evaluation measures (how the campaign measures its success);
- c. campaign outcomes;
- d. the role of the consumer;
- e. key insights relating to consumer action.

The categorised papers were then thematically analysed and coded, and key themes developed.

## Study 3: Case study analysis of real-world interventions

**Study 3** proceeded through four stages. In the first stage, we undertook preliminary desktop research and consulted key stakeholders (i.e. the Modern Slavery PEC, UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Anti-Slavery International) with a view to identifying appropriate case studies and ensuring access to key informants. Subsequently, we focused on three key sectors (services, agriculture, fashion) and aimed for a minimum of two cases per sector. These three sectors were chosen due to their proximity to the consumer, for having known and publicised cases of modern slavery and responded with consumer-focused anti-slavery campaigns. This resulted in the inclusion of ten case studies with at least one key informant being interviewed per case.

In the second stage, we conducted further desk research (e.g. websites, news articles and social media) on these cases and organised the data by common categories. These categories built on previous reviews,<sup>2</sup> and were adapted to our study needs.

In the third stage, we conducted nine interviews with 12 key informants. A key aim was to add to already collected secondary data and to gain further insight in relation to themes that were not covered in other media (e.g., whether there were any methods of evaluation, specific campaign objectives etc.).

The fourth stage of **Study 3** included finalising data entry and analysing our case studies on the basis of common themes. These were identified inductively from our data and iteratively between researchers.

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2. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings."

## 3. Findings

Our literature review analysis is comprised of three sections.

In the first section we respond to the research question (RQ 1): **How can consumer attitudes, intentions and behaviour be mobilised to address issues of modern slavery?** In this section, we review and analyse the streams of academic literature that focus on bridging the gaps between positive consumer attitudes towards addressing modern slavery, consumption intentions and actual purchasing/consumption behaviours.

In the second section, we respond to the research question (RQ 2): **What interventions are effective in operationalising consumer action on modern slavery?** This section analyses the academic literature that explicitly evaluates the effectiveness and outcomes of consumer-focused campaigns and interventions that address the demand-side of modern slavery.

The final section of this review collates these findings and outlines methodological issues that limit the rigour and usefulness of much of this extant research. This summative section provides a useful overview of the extant body of knowledge – with insights that can be integrated into future consumer-focused modern slavery campaigns; and informs our recommendations for future research.

### 3.1. Study 1. Analysis: academic literature review

**Research question 1:** How can consumer attitudes, intentions and behaviour be mobilised to address issues of modern slavery?

Examining multiple literature streams with a dual focus on consumption of the products of modern slavery specifically and social *and* environmental concerns more broadly, revealed nine key themes concerning consumer mobilisation to address modern slavery or other social and environmental concerns in their consumption. Given the small number of studies with an explicit focus on modern slavery, these themes were primarily corroborated with the expanded set of studies. The nine themes include:

- Communication message framing appeals: self versus other orientation
- Communicating pathways to action
- High involvement vs. low involvement decision making
- Influential word-of-mouth communication brings credibility and trust
- Communication of efficacy, quality and functional utility
- Communication framing: ascription of consumer responsibility
- Awareness
- Barriers
- Methodological limitations

Each theme is expanded below.



### 3.1.1. Communication message framing appeals: self versus other orientation

The review illustrated that research focused on communication messaging used two contrasting types of appeals: (1) appeals to the consumer's self-benefit; (2) appeals to the consumer's concerns for entities beyond themselves, such as, other individuals, groups or elements of the environment.

Communication framed with a *self-orientation* had an emphasis on either improving the functional utility of the consumer or on the psychological self-benefits that result from acting altruistically. Appeals to functional self-benefits tap into consumer motivations to improve their material lives by purchasing and consuming ethically, such as, cost savings to enable further spending in other aspects of their consumption lives, the social capital that comes from visibly consuming ethically and perceived health/wellbeing benefits to self.<sup>3</sup> This contrasted with appeals to psychological self-benefits, such as, the sense of "warm glow" that results from making choices that align with self-orientated values;<sup>4</sup> or the more narcissistic motives of self-happiness through self-actualisation.<sup>5</sup> Whether functional or psychological, the benefits resulting from purchasing and consuming ethically, being conveyed through communication with a self-orientation, are for the self.

In contrast, communication appeals with an *other-orientation* are focused on 'doing good' for the benefit of others, and these 'others' could be collectives or individuals, people, animals and/or elements of the environment. This communication often has a *civic-minded* framing and emphasises the benefits to others that result from positive consumption choices, such as, addressing modern slavery and environmental degradation.<sup>6</sup>

While some studies do suggest that an *other-orientation* is the most effective communication appeal to mobilise consumer action,<sup>7</sup> this body of research is thin. The majority of studies in this theme focus on self-oriented communication framing and, depending on the study focus, suggest that functional and psychological self-benefits are more motivating and effective in mobilising consumer action.

### 3.1.2. Communicating a 'pathway to action'

The importance of communicating a clear pathway to action is a dominant theme that arose in this literature review. A clear pathway to action enables consumers to form a plan to implement/mobilise their ethical intentions.<sup>8</sup> Forming this plan to act creates in consumers a sense of power, agency and purpose<sup>9</sup> and assists them in prioritising social, environmental and ethical issues – such as modern slavery – over other considerations.<sup>10</sup> Breaking existing habits is a key barrier to shifting consumer behaviour and forming a plan from a clearly

3. E.g., Lanzini and Thøgersen, "Behavioural Spillover in the Environmental Domain: An Intervention Study"; Pelozo, White, and Shang, "Good and Guilt-Free: The Role of Self-Accountability in Influencing Preferences for Products with Ethical Attributes."

4. E.g., Iweala, Spiller, and Meyerding, "Buy Good, Feel Good? The Influence of the Warm Glow of Giving on the Evaluation of Food Items with Ethical Claims in the U.K. and Germany."

5. Hwang and Kim, "Are Ethical Consumers Happy? Effects of Ethical Consumers' Motivations Based on Empathy Versus Self-Orientation on Their Happiness."

6. E.g., Liobikiene and Juknys, "The Role of Values, Environmental Risk Perception, Awareness of Consequences, and Willingness to Assume Responsibility for Environmentally-Friendly Behaviour: The Lithuanian Case."

7. E.g., Liobikiene and Juknys.

8. E.g., Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, "Why Ethical Consumers Don't Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers"; Shaw et al., "Fashion Victim: The Impact of Fair Trade Concerns on Clothing Choice"; Hassan, Shiu, and Shaw, "Who Says There Is an Intention-Behaviour Gap? Assessing the Empirical Evidence of an Intention-Behaviour Gap in Ethical Consumption."

9. E.g., Ertz, Karakas, and Sarigöllü, "Exploring Pro-Environmental Behaviors of Consumers: An Analysis of Contextual Factors, Attitude, and Behaviors"; Toni, Renzi, and Mattia, "Understanding the Link between Collaborative Economy and Sustainable Behaviour: An Empirical Investigation."

10. E.g., Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, "Lost in Translation: Exploring the Ethical Consumer Intention-Behavior Gap."

communicated pathway to action is a critical step in deconstructing old habits and developing new habits that stick.<sup>11</sup> Reminding the consumer of these pathways to action and triggering them at the point of purchase – through, for example, targeted communication and special offers – further reinforces this newly formed habit.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1.3. Differentiating between high involvement versus low involvement decision making

In situations of *high involvement* decision making, consumers research, consider and evaluate multiple options, make their consumption decision – often still deliberating at the point-of-purchase, and then evaluate the performance of the product/service post-consumption. This is effortful decision-making that involves in-depth decision making and higher risk, especially for first time purchases and big-ticket items, such as, purchasing a holiday or a computer. In amongst all this effort and deliberation, this literature review suggests that the clear communication and reinforcement of pathways to action is a critical condition to mobilising consumers.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, *low involvement* consumer decision-making is rapid, often driven by habit rather than careful evaluation, and the consumer is seeking ‘grab and go’ convenience. In these situations, such as, milk, laundry detergent, or a chocolate bar,<sup>14</sup> clear labelling can act as an effective rule of thumb or short cut – providing visual cues to enable an easy pathway to action that does not require considered research and evaluation.<sup>15</sup> To be noted and effective, however, the label must come from a source that is credible and trusted by consumers, such as, ‘Fair Trade’. This can be all the more challenging given the difficulty in fully eliminating (as opposed to reducing) the risk of slavery in most global supply chains. Current attempts to introduce slavery-free labelling, such as, Tony Chocolonely’s (discussed below), are fraught with various problems and contradictions (e.g. being recently removed from ethical lists).<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1.4. Influential word-of-mouth brings credibility and trust

It has long been understood that Word of Mouth (WoM) from a trusted source is viewed as credible and trustworthy over-and-above communication from a source with known vested interests, and this is no different for modern slavery or consumer ethics more broadly.

The key role that WoM plays across a variety of different contexts has been further enhanced with the advent of social media influencers and online WoM, including, and particularly, from trusted product review sites.<sup>17</sup> Messages coming from these sources carry an enhanced level of trust in the message and can be more effective in evoking consumer action.

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11. E.g., de Koning et al., “GetGreen Vietnam: Towards More Sustainable Behaviour among the Urban Middle Class”; Katzeff et al., “Encouraging Organic Food Consumption through Visualization of Personal Shopping Data.”

12. E.g., Baca-Motes et al., “Commitment and Behavior Change: Evidence from the Field”; Katzeff et al., “Encouraging Organic Food Consumption through Visualization of Personal Shopping Data.”

13. E.g., Rahman, “The Interplay of Product Involvement and Sustainable Consumption: An Empirical Analysis of Behavioral Intentions Related to Green Hotels, Organic Wines and Green Cars.”

14. E.g., Atkinson and Rosenthal, “Signaling the Green Sell: The Influence of Eco-Label Source, Argument Specificity, and Product Involvement on Consumer Trust.”

15. E.g., Atkinson and Rosenthal, “Signaling the Green Sell: The Influence of Eco-Label Source, Argument Specificity, and Product Involvement on Consumer Trust.”

16. E.g., <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/anti-slavery-chocolate-is-taken-off-ethical-list-ghsrh06vs>

17. E.g., Mulcahy, Russell-Bennett, and Iacobucci, “Designing Gamified Apps for Sustainable Consumption: A Field Study”; Baden and Prasad, “Applying Behavioural Theory to the Challenge of Sustainable Development: Using Hairdressers as Diffusers of More Sustainable Hair-Care Practices.”

### 3.1.5, Communication of efficacy, quality and functional utility

Studies in this review suggest that consumers may not be willing to trade-off product/service efficacy, quality or the functional utility of a product or service in exchange for taking action against modern slavery in the consumption. In other words, there are some elements of the product/service that the consumer is not willing to sacrifice for the benefit of others.<sup>18</sup>

Consumer perceptions of the efficacy and quality of 'ethical' and 'slavery-free' products can often be that these market offerings are of lower quality and may not meet their needs – irrespective of the price relative to competitive offerings. It is suggested that these perceptions can be negated, and the consumer mobilised to action by communicating the functional benefits and quality of the product/service – in addition to slavery-free credentials.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.1.6. Communication message framing: responsabilising the consumer

An emerging theme in this literature suggests that communication which directs the responsibility for action solely at the consumer is not effective and easily deflected. Rather, communication should take a multi-stakeholder approach. Thus, ascription of agency and the distribution of responsibility to act should be shared by the key stakeholders across the entire production-to-consumption supply chain – of which consumers are but one stakeholder, along with corporate, government and non-government organisations.<sup>20</sup>

Consumers are ascribed a shared responsibility and are reassured that they can continue to consume – just differently.<sup>21</sup> In this case, consumers do not perceive sacrifice and abstinence as the costs they must bear to be responsible. Communicating a clear '*pathway to action*', however, is essential to enabling consumers to act on their sense of shared responsibility and to consume differently.

### 3.1.7. Awareness is just the beginning

Communication campaigns aimed at increasing consumer awareness can be broad, such as, modern slavery in general, or issue specific, such as, modern slavery in hand car washes.<sup>22</sup> Studies suggest that increases in consumer awareness have a direct and positive impact on consumer attitudes towards the issue and, accordingly, intention to act/ behave.<sup>23</sup> The impact of awareness stops at intentions, however, with increasing awareness of an issue commonly having little effect on actual consumption behaviour towards the issue.<sup>24</sup> In addition, any shift in consumer attitudes and intentions is influenced by the credibility of the information source.

18. E.g., Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, "Lost in Translation: Exploring the Ethical Consumer Intention-Behavior Gap."

19. E.g., Jacobs et al., "Green Thinking but Thoughtless Buying? An Empirical Extension of the Value-Attitude-Behaviour Hierarchy in Sustainable Clothing"; Olson, "It's Not Easy Being Green: The Effects of Attribute Tradeoffs on Green Product Preference and Choice."

20. E.g., Haucke, "Smartphone-Enabled Social Change: Evidence from the Fairphone Case?"; Roberts and Bacon, "Exploring the Subtle Relationships between Environmental Concern and Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior."

21. E.g., Haucke, "Smartphone-Enabled Social Change: Evidence from the Fairphone Case?"; Roberts and Bacon, "Exploring the Subtle Relationships between Environmental Concern and Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior."

22. E.g., Yu, Cao, and Tan, "CSR-Consumption Paradox: Examination of UK Apparel Companies"; Phau, Teah, and Chuah, "Consumer Attitudes towards Luxury Fashion Apparel Made in Sweatshops."

23. E.g., Li et al., "Propensity of Green Consumption Behaviors in Representative Cities in China"; Parsa et al., "Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility in Services: Will Consumers Pay for It?"

24. E.g., Parsa et al., "Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility in Services: Will Consumers Pay for It?"

### 3.1.8. Barriers to mobilising attitudes into action

Irrespective of awareness, motivation and a clear pathway to action, extant literature reveals a number of barriers that can get in the way of consumer mobilisation. *Cultural practices* and *social norms* that engage and interact with consumption practices, such as, nationalism, racism and the ‘othering’ of certain ethnicities – can act as powerful barriers to consumer action.<sup>25</sup> These cultural practices and social norms enable consumers to engage in psychological tactics to neutralise any sense of guilt or responsibility, and to legitimise consumption of products likely to be produced with the use of modern slavery.<sup>26</sup>

Contextual barriers can work to intervene and block the translation of positive attitudes and intentions into actual behaviour. For example, the presence of influential others while making consumption decisions and the inability to form solid plans, can interfere and steer consumer choices to alternative or habitual choices.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1.9. Methodological limitations

Examination of the literature considering the decision-making processes of consumers towards ethics and, more specifically modern slavery, in consumption, reveals two significant methodological limitations. First, very few studies observe and measure *actual consumer behaviour*. Limited by survey and lab-style experimental methods, the majority of research studies measure attitudes, intended consumption behaviours, self-reported behaviour, and hypothetical behaviour in response to experimental conditions. It is widely recognised that the translation of ethical consumption intentions into actual behaviour is rare,<sup>28</sup> whereas self-reported survey data is inherently open to social desirability bias, where individuals may seek to represent themselves in a positive light.<sup>29</sup> It is only through observation of actual consumption behaviours through, for example, ethnographic observation or field (real-world) experiments and the analysis of shopping and consumption data with advanced analytics and machine learning techniques, that the factors underpinning consumer mobilisation can be robustly distilled with confidence.

Second, the majority of communication studies focus on appeals to self-interest and self-values, with scant consideration of the impact of framing communication to appeal to *civic values* or an *other-orientation*. Thus, the extant literature is largely underpinned by the economic ‘rational man’ assumption that individuals’ dominant motives are focused on self-utility maximisation. The few studies that do consider consumer response to communication appeals that are civic-mindedness and have an other-orientation, however, challenge this assumption.<sup>30</sup> Further research is needed to understand consumer responses to communication appeals across the continuum from self-focus to other-focus across different consumer groups to enable targeted campaigns and communication.

25. E.g., Smith and Johns, “Historicizing Modern Slavery: Free-Grown Sugar as an Ethics-Driven Market Category in Nineteenth-Century Britain.”

26. Carrington, Chatzidakis, and Shaw, “Consuming Worker Exploitation? Accounts and Justifications for Consumer (In)Action to Modern Slavery”; Chatzidakis, Hibbert, and Smith, “Why People Don’t Take Their Concerns about Fair Trade to the Supermarket: The Role of Neutralisation.”

27. E.g., Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, “Why Ethical Consumers Don’t Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers”; Hassan, Shiu, and Shaw, “Who Says There Is an Intention–Behaviour Gap? Assessing the Empirical Evidence of an Intention–Behaviour Gap in Ethical Consumption.”

28. E.g., Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, “Why Ethical Consumers Don’t Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers”; Caruana et al., “Modern Slavery in Business: The Sad and Sorry State of a Non-Field.”

29. E.g., Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, “Why Ethical Consumers Don’t Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers.”

30. E.g., Kesenheimer and Greitemeyer, “Ego or Eco? Neither Ecological nor Egoistic Appeals of Persuasive Climate Change Messages Impacted pro-Environmental Behavior.”

## 3.2. Study 2. Analysis: campaign literature review

### Research question 2: What interventions are effective in operationalising consumer action on modern slavery?

It is important to note that, in general, the campaign literature available and reviewed were critical investigations of modern slavery/human trafficking campaigns at an abstract level – rather than the evaluation of the effectiveness of single campaigns and interventions. As such, these papers primarily present a range of concerns (what not to do) and critiques of modern slavery or human trafficking campaigns (watch-outs), with the evaluation and presentation of effective interventions (what to do) taking a secondary focus – if at all. This lack of focus on specific campaign effectiveness is reflective of the general lack of campaign evaluation. Accordingly, in this report we understand effectiveness broadly as the extent to which there is some evidence of successful engagement with consumers, as opposed to focusing on more specific objectives or industry-level outcomes.

We identify five key themes:

- Effective awareness campaigns are targeted and tailored to specific audiences
- Rigorous evaluation of campaigns is limited
- Impactful, authentic and credible communication
- Communication: pathways to action
- Unintended consequences

These themes are expanded upon in the discussion that follows.

#### 3.2.1. Effective awareness campaigns are targeted and tailored

Modern slavery and human trafficking consumer awareness campaigns are also critically evaluated in the campaign-based literature. A key theme emerging in these studies, that pushes our understanding further, is that being *targeted* and *tailored* – in contrast to ‘general’ awareness campaigns – is central to the effectiveness of these communication appeals.

To be effective in mobilising consumer action, awareness campaigns must be targeted at specific audiences and tailored to specific actions or issues. This target audience/s can be consumers or other stakeholders. To be tailored, the communication campaign will focus on the specific knowledge gaps, motivations and pathways to action that are relevant to each target audience.<sup>31</sup> For example, the Lumos ‘Helping Not Helping’ campaign focuses on university students – who are the predominant consumers of orphanage volunteer tourism – by tailoring the campaign communication methods (social media, YouTube, online), message framing and pathways to action (informed consumption choices, civic activism) to shifting the social norms of this specific audience.

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31. E.g., Sharapov, “Public Understanding of Trafficking in Human Beings in Great Britain, Hungary and Ukraine.”

To be effective, the target audience must also have the capacity to respond and act impactfully and appropriately.<sup>32</sup> For example, consumer-focused anti-trafficking campaigns aim to mobilise positive action in the forms of shifting consumption or reporting.<sup>33</sup> For these outcomes to be *impactful*, the target consumer must have the financial means and credible alternatives to shift consumption. For these outcomes to be *appropriate*, risks and unintended consequences must be mitigated – such as, the risk of further stigmatising marginalised communities or normalising practices of buying sex from minors through imagery.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in scenarios where consumers' ability to mobilise is limited or compromised, there may be other audiences (such as, the media, producers, collectives) that can be targeted as an indirect route to reducing and shifting consumer demand for products of slavery. This might include making threats to brand equity to shift consumer perception of the desirability ('coolness') of the brand,<sup>35</sup> or direct consumer action to civic activities, such as, sending emails to institutions/organisations with the agency to affect change (e.g. Lumos 'Helping not Helping' campaign).

Concepts of targeting and tailoring to specific audiences that are capable of appropriate action in response to a given issue are foundational to marketing strategy and implementation.

### 3.2.2. Rigorous evaluation of campaigns is limited

A key criticism of campaigns that mobilise consumers to act against modern slavery and human trafficking is that these campaigns are poorly evaluated by campaign organisers, if at all.<sup>36</sup> This lack of appropriate evaluation of the elements of campaign success and failure also points to a concerning lack of clear campaign objectives and SMART (simple, measurable, achievable, realistic, timebound) targets that each campaign can be measured and assessed against.<sup>37</sup>

In the absence of rigorous campaign evaluation and broad communication of these outcome metrics – and associated analysis of drivers of success and failure – it is difficult to assess, let alone improve campaign effectiveness and return on investment at both an organisational campaign level and a broader sector level.<sup>38</sup> Evaluation needs to span different stages, that is, from reaching the intended consumer audience and effectively communicating the message to getting consumers to change their attitudes and behaviour; and different levels of outcome(s), that is, from getting consumers to support a campaign and effectively harnessing consumer power on the demand side, to achieving sector-wide changes that ultimately reduce the use of modern slavery and labour exploitation on the production side.

The lack of clear and rigorous campaign objective/target setting and evaluation also suggests that while organisations are harnessing marketing concepts and tools to communicate to and persuade consumers, these are not always being followed through to target setting, measurement and rigorous evaluation.

32. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings."

33. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel.

34. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel.

35. E.g., Bennett and Lagos, "Logo Logic: The Ups and Downs of Branded Political Communication."

36. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings"; Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, and Gómez-Lorenzini, "Advocacy of Trafficking Campaigns: A Controversy Story."

37. E.g., Szablewska and Kubacki, "Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns: A Systematic Literature Review."

38. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings"; Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, and Gómez-Lorenzini, "Advocacy of Trafficking Campaigns: A Controversy Story"; Szablewska and Kubacki, "Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns: A Systematic Literature Review."

### 3.2.3. Impactful, authentic and credible communication

Central to any marketing communication is the credibility and trust associated with it. This campaign review reveals that credibility and trust is also central to the impact of modern slavery and human trafficking campaigns' ability to mobilise consumer action. This review identifies two routes through which trust in the message can be evoked: (a) the voices of *people with lived experience*; and (2) the use of *social media influencers*.

Giving primacy to the stories and voices of people with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking is highly impactful in both encouraging engagement with the message, and in engendering a sense of credibility, authenticity and trust.<sup>39</sup> It is suggested that the inclusion of stories of empowerment – as well as disempowerment and degradation – can be very powerful in evoking consumer response and action.<sup>40</sup> For example, communication of real, human stories of localised modern slavery and exploitation can evoke consumer attention and awareness of forms of modern slavery that occur within their local community.<sup>41</sup> Linking with earlier concepts emerging from this review, it can be conceived that conveying stories of empowerment can give consumers faith that the proposed pathways to action, and subsequent consumer action, can have a positive and meaningful impact in addressing slavery and human trafficking. In addition, many campaigns emphasise the products of slavery, which can inadvertently shift the focus from the human cost of modern slavery (from subject to object). Projecting the voices of those with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking can re-centre the narrative and consumer's attention to this human-side of the products of slavery.

As noted in the first literature review (see section 3.1), credible word of mouth is a powerful driver of persuasion and consumer mobilisation. In contemporary society, the word of mouth of social media influencers can be highly impactful if emanating from a trusted source. These 'norm entrepreneurs' can use their social media influence to shift social norms away from the products of modern slavery.<sup>42</sup> As noted in section 2.1 Awareness Campaigns, trusted norm entrepreneurs – such as, the Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore (K&M) anti-trafficking campaign in the US, and influencers who are particularly relevant to the target audience<sup>43</sup> – can use their credibility in the social media universe to shift consumer perception of what is desirable and 'cool' away from products and services produced with the input of modern slavery thus, representing an indirect means of mobilising consumers and reducing the demand-side of modern slavery.

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39. E.g., Birks and Gardner, "Introducing the Slave Next Door."

40. E.g., Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, and Gómez-Lorenzini, "Advocacy of Trafficking Campaigns: A Controversy Story."

41. E.g., Birks and Gardner, "Introducing the Slave Next Door."

42. E.g., Majic, "Real Men Set Norms? Anti-Trafficking Campaigns and the Limits of Celebrity Norm Entrepreneurship."

43. E.g., Johnstone and Lindh, "The Sustainability-Age Dilemma: A Theory of (Un)Planned Behaviour via Influencers"; Majic, "Real Men Set Norms? Anti-Trafficking Campaigns and the Limits of Celebrity Norm Entrepreneurship."

### 3.2.4. Communication: pathways to action

Reflecting the literature streams analysed in response to our first research question (RQ1), studies evaluating campaigns also point to the importance of the communication of clear pathways to action. These studies suggest that clear pathways to action are imperative to mobilising consumer action at both an individual and collective level.<sup>44</sup>

Building on the first literature review (see section 3.1) and connecting with the “Awareness Campaigns” theme emerging from this second review, these studies suggest that like awareness campaigns – pathways to action should also be tailored to specific target audiences and flexible enough to be adapted to meet the needs and the contexts and conditions of the target audiences.<sup>45</sup> Again, this finding suggests a need for organisations to understand and fully implement key marketing principles – in this case, the concepts of clustering and segmenting consumers into groups with similar needs and attitudes, that are subsequently appropriately targeted and engaged using communication, media and activities that are meaningful to them. One example, for instance, is the Lumos ‘Helping Not Helping’ campaign initially identified and segmented the orphanage volunteer tourist market, before specifically selecting and targeting university students with the campaign.

### 3.2.5. Unintended consequences

As noted, the literature examining the effectiveness of modern slavery and human trafficking takes a critical approach to this evaluation and, in doing so, highlights a range of significant and harmful unintended consequences potentially emanating from the execution of some of these campaigns.

These potential unintended consequences include the reinforcement of unhelpful and often harmful *stereotypes* and *assumptions*, such as, racial, migrant and gender stereotypes, profiling of people who are affected by and perpetrators of modern slavery, the conflation of all modern slavery with migration and sex work – resulting in further reinforcement of the hidden nature of modern slavery, and the eroticisation of women and girls through the use of sexualised imagery in campaigns.<sup>46</sup> Further, the reinforcement of such stereotypes can work to further embed stigmas, such as, stigma associated with sex work that results in marginalising people who have been sexually exploited and reducing the propensity of both people affected by modern slavery and witnesses to report these forms of modern slavery.<sup>47</sup>

It is also suggested that some campaigns over-simplify highly complex situations and phenomenon, reducing consumer concern and action. In contrast, other campaigns can lead to consumer confusion, with the communication of seemingly contrasting pathways to action, conflicting use of labelling systems and assumptions of knowledge that are lacking.<sup>48</sup>

44. E.g., Szablewska and Kubacki, “Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns: A Systematic Literature Review.”

45. E.g., Andrijasevic and Anderson, “Anti-Trafficking Campaigns : Decent? Honest? Truthful?”; Xu and Chan, “Conductive Activism: Anti-Sweatshop Campaigns across Hong Kong and Mainland China.”

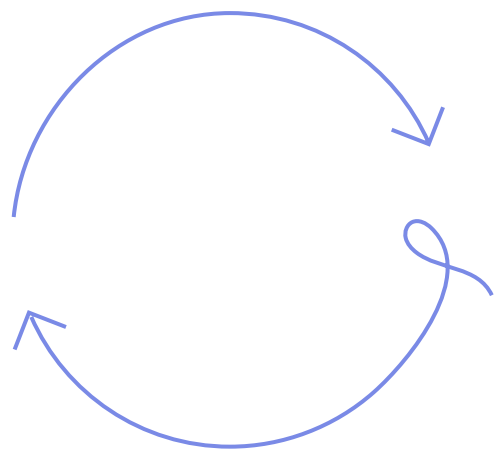
46. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel, “Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings”; Kimm and Sauer, “Discourses on Forced Prostitution, Trafficking in Women, and Football: A Comparison of Anti-Trafficking Campaigns during the World Cup 2006 and the European Championship 2008”; Shih, “Not in My ‘Backyard Abolitionism’: Vigilante Rescue against American Sex Trafficking”; Steele and Shores, “Real and Unreal Masculinities: The Celebrity Image in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns.”

47. E.g., Shih, “Not in My ‘Backyard Abolitionism’: Vigilante Rescue against American Sex Trafficking.”

48. E.g., Bennett and Lagos, “Logo Logic: The Ups and Downs of Branded Political Communication”; Page, “How Many Slaves Work for You? Race, New Media, and Neoliberal Consumer Activism”; Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, and Gómez-Lorenzini, “Advocacy of Trafficking Campaigns: A Controversy Story.”



Finally, an interesting dichotomy has emerged from the campaign evaluation literature between *making the consumer overly responsible* and *absolving the consumer of responsibility*. Some studies suggest that directing the focus on consumers to reduce their consumption of products and services produced with the input of modern slavery works to evade the structural and systemic underpinnings of modern slavery and enables other powerful stakeholders (e.g. corporations, government) to avoid mobilisation of their responsibilities to act to address modern slavery in their supply chains.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, other studies highlight that campaigns that *focus on reporting* work to absolve consumers of any responsibility to shift their consumption away from products and services produced with the input of modern slavery – obscuring their role in the demand-side of modern slavery.<sup>50</sup> Absolving consumer responsibility and focusing consumer action on reporting presents the consumer as the ‘hero’ and part of the solution, never part of the problem of modern slavery.



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49. E.g. Limoncelli, "There's an App for That? Ethical Consumption in the Fight against Trafficking for Labour Exploitation"; O'Brien, "Human Trafficking Heroes and Villains: Representing the Problem in Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaigns"; Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, and Gómez-Lorenzini, "Advocacy of Trafficking Campaigns: A Controversy Story."

50. E.g. O'Brien, "Human Trafficking Heroes and Villains: Representing the Problem in Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaigns."

### 3.3. Study 3: Analysis of case studies

The academic literature on the attitude-behaviour gap and the literature on consumer-focused campaign effectiveness provide valuable insights and lessons in relation to mobilising the consumer, yet these literature streams also suffer from a number of limitations. To begin with, academic findings are rarely tested in real-world applications. Thus, it is difficult to assert the extent to which different theories of intervention or specific variables prove to be as crucial in the real world. The influence of multiple contextual factors may confound any effects observed in surveys or controlled experimental settings. Where literature on campaign effectiveness addresses real-world examples, these tend to be concentrated on trafficking-related contexts (potentially due to the availability of more research funding in this area) and biased towards campaigns that are officially reported (if not evaluated) as archetypal examples. These issues limit current knowledge of consumer mobilisation, making it essential to extend our investigation across different sectors and campaign scenarios.

To address these knowledge gaps, this section offers a more exploratory assessment of specific campaigns that share in common their attempt to mobilise the consumer as a primary actor. Rather than reviewing these campaigns against a predefined set of criteria, we rely on secondary research and primary data (interviews with key campaign actors) with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the campaigns in delivering their objectives. We attempt to account for every case study's broader socio-economic-cultural context and more specific aims and objectives. In this sense, this section is akin to an exploratory case study analysis.<sup>51</sup>

An important difference here is also that many of our examples concern ongoing movements that aim to achieve more systemic change, not single campaigns with more specific objectives and outcomes. In this sense, many (but not all) of the campaigns assessed specific fields of concern- rather than campaign-specific interventions.<sup>52</sup>

**We focus on three key sectors, namely services, agriculture and fashion, examining 10 campaigns.**

#### Service sector campaigns

**'Safe Carwash App'**: a campaign jointly developed and run by two church/faith-based organisations in 2018, The Clewer Initiative and Santa Marta Group. The campaign targets consumers of hand carwashes in the UK and asks them to observe the signs of modern slavery and report suspected instances using the Safe Car Wash App. The campaign had a relatively healthy take-up, with a flurry of reports coming in the first few weeks and almost 1,000 in the whole of June 2018. However, the rate dropped off from that initial level and stabilised by about September 2018 at a rate of almost 200 alerts per month. A report into the scheme's first few months concluded that only 18% of people followed advice to call the modern slavery hotline, which is triggered when users highlight enough signs of human trafficking.

51. Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*.

52. E.g., Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings."

**'Helping Not Helping'**: a campaign launched in 2019 by Lumos to tackle the abuse and trafficking of children through orphanage tourism. It has a dual focus to end of consumption of voluntourism – university students, and the institutions that promote these experiences – predominately UK universities. Accordingly, the campaign asks people not to visit child orphanages as a volunteer or a tourist (boycott, abstain) and/or do the research and use a reputable agency (substitute to responsible form). It also asks consumer-citizens to directly campaign and challenge institutions which support orphanage volunteering by emailing them and by helping to build a broader social movement through sharing their actions on social media. So far, there has been strong engagement and interaction with the campaign website and social media and there has been some impact in terms of getting a number of corporate businesses and universities in the UK to sign a pledge. There is also evidence of consumer-citizen mobilisation on social media but no measure yet of actual demand for orphanage volunteerism.

## Agriculture sector campaigns

**Fair Food Programme**: a highly successful worker-driven CSR initiative in the US led by the Coalition of Imokalee Workers, relying both on responsible buying and consumer-citizen action (including, donating and petitioning/campaigning options). The campaign claims to be “consumer powered, worker certified”, yet it aims to achieve change by primarily impacting on the recruitment/supplier context (i.e. corporate buyers) through targeting the consumer context (i.e. getting consumers to put pressure on corporations). In turn, the participation of corporate buyers reduces exploitation in the production context.<sup>53</sup> The campaign has effectively mobilised consumers, broken down into student, religious and community groups. It now has over 12 major participating buyers (e.g. Walmart, McDonalds) committed to purchasing Florida tomatoes only from participating growers in the Fair Food Program.

**Manolada strawberries**: a campaign to boycott strawberries from the Manolada region of Greece (aka “blood strawberries”), in response to the shooting of Bangladeshi workers by a farmer in 2013. The campaign was bottom-up (multiple actors) and social media focused, calling for a direct boycott of all strawberries made in this specific geographic region. Although the boycott was hugely successful it was also short-lived. Many farmers began rebranding their strawberries as “strawberries from Helia” (the broader region) or intensified exports to other countries, such as, Russia.

**NoCap tomatoes**: an Italian certification scheme that relies on responsible buying. The campaign has successfully involved some distribution chains by emphasising how it has guaranteed a fair income and the rights of hundreds of workers in Italy. To do so the campaign relies upstream on a supportive consumer market. The campaign has, therefore, leveraged some consumer buying power but overall, it is fair to say that it has more (so far unfulfilled) potential.

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53. Cyrus and Vogel. P 29.

**Tony's Chocolonely:** a mainstreamed slavery-free chocolate brand, relying both on responsible buying and consumer-citizen action (including, donating and petitioning/campaigning options). The campaign is "consumer powered", trying to educate and mobilise consumers. Indirectly, however, Tony's Chocolonely also aims to mobilise big chocolate actors and governments (by holding companies more accountable, e.g. there have been a couple of high profile/symbolic court cases). There is, in this sense, a broader attempt to harness the power of the consumer by collectivising it. Similar to Imokalee Tomatoes, Tony's Chocolonely has also heavily relied on "brand ambassadors". The campaign has achieved significant mobilisation by consumers, both in terms of market share but also petitions and the creation of brand ambassadors.

## Fashion sector campaigns

**Cotton Campaign:** a campaign established in 2007 by a coalition of different organisations, aiming to end forced labour in raw cotton production in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The campaign relies on consumer-citizen actions, such as, writing to companies, signing petitions and building a social movement through activism and social media. It claims to have achieved changes in consumer behaviour but also company and government behaviour.

**End Uyghur Forced Labour:** the campaign is a more recent response to the treatment of Uyghur peoples. It is supported by a coalition of organisations who also have related actions. The campaign asks consumers to buy responsibly, i.e. from companies that have made a commitment to end any links to Uyghur forced labour, and to take civic action through emailing, signing petitions and supporting the campaign on social media. The campaign has been successful in gaining a lot of media attention, persuading companies to sign up, and in garnering civic support by consumers, although the specific effects on consumer behaviour are not evaluated.

**Dresseember:** a campaign that started in 2009 by Blythe Hill, aiming to utilise "fashion and creativity to help end human trafficking". The Dresseember foundation became a non-profit organisation in the US in 2013 and as of 2021 is now also registered in Canada, although the foundation has supporters internationally. It is primarily a consumer-focused response to trafficking and worker exploitation, includes ethical buying and concentrates its communication efforts on a month of focused consumer-citizen actions. In addition to raising awareness and strong consumer engagement, the campaign has observed some shift in consumer behaviour (wearing the same dress and buying ethically), consumer-citizen actions as part of the Dresseember movement and the achievement of fundraising goals (over \$11 million since 2013).

**Boowho?:** a campaign run by Labour Behind the Label which seeks transparency in supply chains. This is largely in response to Boohoo's failure to reveal the factories where its clothes are made despite media exposes on the exploitation of Leicester garment factory workers. The campaign explicitly calls on consumers to take action as citizen activists. It specifically does not support boycotting, on the basis that no brands are doing significantly better than others and this could have a negative impact on workers and jobs. The campaign is still in progress but has achieved significant milestones, such as, a Covid-19 petition that resulted in 18,000 signatures and respective linking emails to Boohoo and other brands.

## 4. Conclusions from the research

Six key themes emerged from the secondary research and interviews with key actors related to each case study:

- Apportioning consumer responsibility within a multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder approach
- Pathways to action – don't stop at awareness
- Employ key marketing principles comprehensively
- Context matters
- The role of key interest and advocacy support groups
- The role of unintended consequences

We now expand on and explain these themes and observations.

### 4.1. Apportioning consumer responsibility within a multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder approach

An emerging theme in both the consumer decision-making and campaign evaluation literature critically assesses the effectiveness and consequences of 'responsibilising' the consumer. This responsibilisation is both for the negative externalities of consumption choices, as well as, taking action to shift demand away from the consumption of products and services produced with the input of modern slavery.

This dichotomy raises the question: **how much and what forms of responsibility should campaigns attribute to the consumer? What is the tipping point between too much and not enough attribution of responsibility?** The academic debate on so-called responsibilisation of consumption<sup>54</sup> commonly refers to how neoliberal ideologies rely on moving responsibility away from businesses and governments onto the shoulders of the consumer. In the context of the 2015 UK Modern Slavery Act, for instance, authors such as Emily Kenway<sup>55</sup> argue that the legislation has in effect relied on responsibilising consumers, while (to some extent) removing responsibility for enforcement from business and governmental bodies. Many studies, however, have illustrated that the role and place of the consumer-citizen is far more complex than originally assumed, with neoliberalism being used as a simplistic and totalising explanation of *all* attempts to mobilise consumers in favour of social and environmental causes.<sup>56</sup> While one should be suspicious of attempts to *pass the buck* on to consumers, the opposite, i.e. fully *de-responsibilising* consumers and insisting that the realm of consumption remains a seemingly benign and apolitical arena is not a feasible way forward either.<sup>57</sup> The considerable consumer inertia in response to scandals, such as, Boohoo illustrates the need to consider ways of sensitising consumers and elevating the power they have in the modern slavery nexus.

54. E.g. Shamir, "The Age of Responsibilization: On Market-Embedded Morality"; Giesler and Veresiu, "Creating the Responsible Consumer: Moralistic Governance Regimes and Consumer Subjectivity"; Barnett, Cloke, Clarke and Malpass, "Globalizing Responsibility: The Political Rationalities of Ethical Consumption"; Thompson and Kumar, "Beyond Consumer Responsibilization: Slow Food's Actually Existing Neoliberalism."

55. Kenway, *The Truth About Modern Slavery*.

56. Thompson and Kumar, "Beyond Consumer Responsibilization: Slow Food's Actually Existing Neoliberalism."

57. Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, and Gómez-Lorenzini, "Advocacy of Trafficking Campaigns: A Controversy Story."

This debate points to a precarious balance that must be struck between holding consumers responsible, and yet, not holding consumers as solely responsible. A balanced multi-stakeholder approach assigns levels and actions of responsibility that are proportionate to their power in overarching supply and demand.

### The importance of a multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder outlook

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 is a realisation that has been strikingly common across our case studies. Very few, if any, of the campaign organisers we interviewed aimed to mobilise the consumer in a way that is oblivious to the responsibilities of other stakeholders. Indeed, in most cases, the actions of businesses and governmental bodies were viewed as more central than those of the consumer. Yet, the primary aim of consumer-oriented campaigns was to leverage buying power by politicising it, acknowledging that the demand-side of modern slavery cannot be ignored. In the words of the Founder of Fair Food programme, “to respond to the power of the ‘purchasing order’ (big supplier) you have to harness the power of the consumer by collectivising it.”

It is important to note that leveraging consumer power does not always equate with asking consumers to buy (or not buy) specific services and products. Instead, it means analysing the source of consumer power and thinking creatively as to how to use it. Consumers are also citizens and have a very wide pool of actions to choose from, including, reporting abuses, signing petitions, writing to local MPs and corporations and taking part in social movements across digital and non-digital spaces. Accordingly, across our campaigns we identify a very rich range of ‘spending-shifts’ and ‘civic actions’. For Labour Behind the Label, for example, greater power is within our role as citizens taking actions outside of our purchasing. And even for campaigns that do rely on buyer power, such as, the Fair Food Programme, the primary focus is on consumers’ ability to threaten the reputation of big brands, or in other words, the power of their “purchasing order”, that in turn results in more responsibility and diligence across the entire supply chain. It is, therefore, wrong to assume that the only way to mobilise the consumer is through better market choice. Indeed, as Barnett et al.<sup>58</sup> observe in the context of Fair Trade consumerism, a range of NGOs and business actors have successfully engaged with the consumer even at a more rhetorical level, putting pressure on procurement bodies to source ethical products on the basis of what “responsible consumers” want, rather than evidencing actual consumer demand for Fair Trade products.

A multi-stakeholder outlook is also in line with consumers’ own need to know that their actions are part of a more holistic approach, as opposed to a way of shouldering the responsibilities of business and governmental actors. Contrary to some commentators<sup>59</sup> the agenda hardly ever is to solely responsabilise consumers or to dissociate them from their broader civic and political responsibilities (e.g. BooWho? campaign) and/or the socio-economic context of labour exploitation. It is also worth reflecting on the opposite scenario; not expecting or discouraging consumers from playing any role in eradicating modern slavery and extreme labour exploitation means that scandals, such as, those connected to Boohoo or Uyghur forced labour, are likely to carry on despite wide media exposure and clear public opposition to exploitative labour conditions.

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58. Barnett, Cloke, Clarke and Malpass, “Globalizing Responsibility: The Political Rationalities of Ethical Consumption”

59. E.g., Kenway, *The Truth About Modern Slavery*.

The way forward is concerted actions both at the points of consumption and production, as well as within the civic realm. Put differently, factors affecting the production versus demand side of modern slavery work best in a synergistic fashion. The 'consumer' can be mobilised in multiple, and often creative, ways that escape the pitfalls of both ineffective action and disproportionate responsabilisation. What this balance between consumption and production is, however, requires future research.

## 4.2. Pathways to action – don't stop at awareness

Successful awareness campaigns have resulted in substantial (and often measurable) increases in overall consumer-citizen awareness. Yet, awareness campaigns are just the beginning. To be effective, awareness campaigns also need to be specific, targeted and accompanied by the communication of pathways to action.

A dominant theme arising in all three studies is that clear pathways to action are essential to mobilising consumer action in response to anti-slavery communication and campaigns. These pathways to action need to be tailored to a target audience and be flexible to adapt to the local context and conditions. These pathways to action can be focused on: changing consumption behaviours (abstaining from consumption, shifting to alternatives); and/or, civic actions, such as, reporting instances of modern slavery and signing petitions.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, for awareness raising to be effective, it needs to go hand in hand with communication of clear and issue specific pathways to action that enable consumers to plan and prioritise actions, break old habits and form new habits. For Dressember, providing consumers with tangible actions is central to their mission. Continuous consumer engagement is vital coupled with clearly identified consumer actions. Similarly, the Safe Carwash App provided consumers with very clear criteria for assessing potential sites of modern slavery, and a one-step path to reporting. Lumos and Labour Behind the Label provide consumers with a range of templated options to petition targeted institutions and utilise social networks to support their campaigns. Conversely, a challenge recognised in the Cotton Campaign concerned what actions consumers could take in relation to raw cotton production. To engage consumers, they needed to focus on specific actions related to the broader campaign, for example, activism during New York Fashion Week that targeted Uzbekistan cotton.

Yet, there are instances when awareness may not translate into action even when the pathways to action are clear and issue specific. In the safe car wash campaign, only 18% of people followed advice to call the Modern Slavery Helpline. Our prior research ([consumingmodernslavery.com](http://consumingmodernslavery.com))<sup>61</sup> shows that this may be due to a lack of conviction that reporting is a good outcome for people affected by modern slavery (subject as it is to appropriate provisions for support). In addition, conflicting consumer motivations may be prioritised, as was found with some consumers of orphanage voluntourism who participated in these experiences despite being aware of the harms – believing that potential enhancement of their career prospects out-trumped the harms caused to others. Further, broader ideological considerations and concerns regarding assigning consumer-citizens roles of enforcing or policing may inhibit action. Thus, pathways to action need to be deemed clear, reasonable but also appropriate to the broader institutional and socio-economic

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60. Cyrus and Vogel, "Evaluation as Knowledge Generator and Project Improver. Learning from Demand-Side Campaigns against Trafficking in Human Beings."

61. E.g., Carrington, Chatzidakis, and Shaw, "Consuming Modern Slavery."

context within which modern slavery and extreme labour exploitation is enabled. Oftentimes, for instance, consumer boycotting or buycotting may be the least appropriate action, as illustrated in Labour Behind the Label's BooWho? campaign, given the potential negative impact on garment workers. This is an observation that is also strongly supported by our review of the campaign literature (see section 3.2). In addition, how social norms impact upon willingness to take action, irrespective of how clear these pathways may be, needs to be understood and addressed.

Pathways to action also need to be relatable. As noted previously in relation to the Cotton Campaign, the focus on raw cotton production meant that consumers found it hard to connect with a cause that is far removed from their everyday experiences. Conversely, the End Uyghur Forced Labour campaign was more successful because it gave primacy to the end product (directly subject to consumer demand), where the consumer could connect the issue with products on sale in their locality, and the politics of the entire supply chain.

### **4.3. Employ key marketing principles comprehensively – from deeply understanding stakeholders and target marketing, to employing rigorous evaluation and post-campaign analysis**

The concepts used in anti-slavery campaigns towards informing, persuading, motivating and mobilising consumer action are aligned with components of overarching marketing principles – in particular, advertising and communication. Evaluation of such campaigns, however, suggests that key elements of marketing – that support and improve communication campaigns – are often lacking from the design, development and evaluation of these campaigns.

First, marketing should be targeted and tailored to specific consumer groups. This requires in-depth understanding of these consumer groups to enable the tailoring of communication framing, messaging, etc. to be meaningful and motivating to the target audience. While some of the studies in the campaign review focused on a target audience, many were more generalist in nature.

Second, marketing campaigns are underpinned by clear objectives, target/goal setting, measured evaluation against goals and analysis to determine the factors/elements impacting the successes and failures of the campaign. Such evaluation is necessary to learn and continuously improve both return on investment and campaign impact towards mobilising consumer action. The findings of the campaign literature review suggest that this underlying governance structure and campaign evaluation is often lacking.



## 4.4. Context matters

Attempts to mobilise the consumer are always embedded within specific institutional and socio-economic contexts. For example, in a monopsony (a market situation where there is only one buyer) one (or very few) firm(s) has exclusive buyer power and the capacity to demand lower prices and faster delivery times from suppliers,<sup>62</sup> inadvertently increasing the risk of modern slavery and extreme labour exploitation. This is a realisation common in many of our campaigns, from NoCap tomatoes in Italy to Fair Food Programme tomatoes in Florida. At the same time, however, the presence of fewer buyers can increase the risk of exposure and reputation damage. This is something that the Fair Food Campaign successfully turned to its advantage, by pushing brands, including, Taco Bell and McDonalds, to sign up to their programme. From our review of the campaign literature, we also see how this opens up possibilities for further routes towards “taking brands hostage” and threatening their brand equity. In other instances, such as the case of the End Uyghur Forced Labour campaign, it was the added brand equity or positive reputation for the brands committed to the pledge that acted as a catalyst.

Conversely, the case of so-called “blood strawberries” in Manolada, Greece, highlights the problems when multiple suppliers of opaque origin and geographical reach are the target of consumer boycotts. Although extremely successful in terms of demand shift, the boycott of strawberries from the Manolada region proved to be short-lived, with many of the producers eventually rebranding their strawberries or exporting them to other destinations. It seems, therefore, that the business to business or supplier context can be a key facilitator or inhibitor of consumer mobilisation.

The Cotton Campaign highlights the challenge of mobilising consumer action around raw cotton which is so far removed from the garments they buy, lacking a clear link from raw material to finished garment. This is in contrast to the End Uyghur Forced Labour campaign, where forced labour was linked to high street retailers and end garments, bringing the issue much closer to the consumer and their consumption choices. Dressember similarly sought to make a direct link between consumer clothing choice, wearing a dress during the month of December, and exploitation. These cases also illustrate that concern for reputation is not limited to corporate organisations. Indeed, Lumos have tapped into the fear of reputational damage within the university sector with the focus on students taking civic action and lobbying their institutions to sign a pledge to stop the promotion of orphanage voluntourism.

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62. E.g., Kumar, “Deriving a Tangible Promotional Calculus: Platform Monopolies and Political Advertising.”

## 4.5. Role of key interest and support groups

The presence of clearly identifiable and targetable support groups, such as, young consumers are key in mobilising the consumer. Any social cause, including, modern slavery, needs enthusiastic supporters that have the time and resources needed to act as advocates and to represent early adopters of suitable pathways to action. The case of Immokalee Tomatoes, for instance, has been largely successful because of its heavy focus (at least in the early stages) on university procurement and its reliance on student groups to work for the cause. Likewise, the #HelpingNotHelping and Dressember campaigns strongly (and successfully) relied on student bodies to directly petition within their schools, colleges and universities. In other instances, support groups are formed on the basis of their investment in the case rather than pre-determined socio-demographic criteria. Tony's Chocolonely, for instance, consistently relies on brand ambassadors (called "serious friends") for its expansion across different market contexts. Similarly, Dressember has grown its reach not just by recruiting university campus ambassadors but also by engaging a broader range of campaign supporters.

Directly reaching consumers is important, but at times that reach is supported by other organisations who coalesce around the campaign to form a network or coalition. This is important in extending the reach of the campaign both in terms of supporters but also activities. For example, for the Cotton Campaign coalition partners assist with campaign evaluation and international reach. Other commonly engaged actors are religious groups. These have been successfully mobilised across a range of studies from Imokalee tomatoes to Safe Car Wash App.

## 4.6. Unintended consequences

The gap between what an anti-slavery campaign aims to achieve and actual outcomes can often be significant. In the case of Safe Car Wash App, for example, unintended consequences, included, a suspicious explosion of "yellow safety jackets" as car washes sought to comply with the minimum standards of safety and public misconceptions of car washes as main or sole sites of modern slavery. Likewise, in the case of the Greek "blood strawberries", the otherwise successful boycott led to their producers rebranding them according to their broader geographical origin (rather than the specific Manolada region) and on exporting larger numbers to other countries. Our review of the campaign literature reveals a myriad of other unintended consequences, including, stereotyping, reinforcement of harmful assumptions, oversimplification and consumer confusion, among others.

## 5. Recommendations

The aim of this report has been to identify interventions that can effectively leverage the power of the consumer as a key stakeholder in putting pressure on other stakeholders to prevent modern slavery and extreme labour exploitation. Drawing on three studies that sought to address this aim, we present a number of key recommendations for immediate application.

The first systematic review of academic studies into the attitude-behaviour gap identifies a range of factors that can increase the success of consumer-oriented campaigns. A key strength of these studies is their distinct focus on message framing and various psychosocial variables that may affect the effectiveness of anti-slavery communication campaigns. Key recommendations for immediate application include:

### 1. Communication message framing

- a. Communication message framing needs to be carefully balanced in terms of consumer responsabilisation. Consumers need to be reassured that responsibility is distributed equally and fairly across different stakeholders and that they can continue to consume but differently. Building on this, we would argue that beyond consuming differently, consumers also need to reflect on their levels of consumption and understand the role that their (non)consumption has more broadly on people and the planet.
- b. Communication campaigns need to consider the extent to which messages appeal to consumers' self-focused values, benefits and motivations versus more collective benefits. This decision, however, is deeply contextual and subject to additional variables that have yet to be fully accounted for in current research.

### 2. Level of decision-making involvement underpins effective communication content

Consumers' high versus low involvement with the product or service under consideration is a key defining variable. The lower consumers' involvement, the higher the need for clear and credible labelling that can act as a heuristic in the absence of further thinking or information search. Conversely, the higher the involvement the stronger the need for communicating clear pathways to action.

### 3. The impact of [social media] influencers

Credible influencers (e.g. peers, social media influencers) are a key factor in enhancing the effectiveness of any anti-slavery campaign and need to be considered (and approached) carefully and strategically prior to any campaign launch.

#### 4. Ethical products can be perceived as lower quality

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

#### 5. Pathways to action need to be clear and transparent

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. This is even more important for high involvement contexts.

#### 6. Effective awareness campaigns are targeted

Awareness raising needs to be considered in terms of whether the campaign is targeting a specific issue in relation to modern slavery, or modern slavery more generally. Awareness is important in terms of having a subsequent impact on attitudes and behaviour and is largely impacted by source credibility.

#### 7. The barriers that block consumer action are complex and contextual

Barriers to anti-slavery consumer action are multiple, both contextual (e.g. availability of appropriate opportunities in the consumer's everyday environment, constraints pertaining to time and money) and psychosocial (e.g. the presence of readily available neutralising and legitimisation tactics). Any anti-slavery campaign needs to carefully consider these and in certain instances, directly attempt to break down these barriers (e.g. by countering commonplace defences that a single symbolic act 'won't make much of a difference' or that in some instances 'it is the victim's fault', etc).

#### 8. Modern slavery campaigns need to be strategically targeted and tailored to the most appropriate audience

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.

#### 9. Credible communication can shift norms and unsettle habitual consumption behaviours

Well designed and crafted communication needs to focus on norm shifting and be viewed as trusted and credible. Consumption is a fundamentally habitual domain. The voices of those currently or previously affected by modern slavery, or key influencers, when appropriately framed, can play a key role in unsettling and de-normalising otherwise habitual and taken for granted behaviours.

## 10. Anti-slavery campaigns can result in unintended consequences that are harmful

Unintended side-effects and consequences are worryingly common across various anti-slavery campaigns. This may include, for instance, stereotyping and the reinforcement of harmful assumptions, unhelpful stigmatisation and oversimplification of highly complicated contexts, consumer confusion, among others. Accordingly, such potential side-effects need to be considered and countered prior to any campaign being launched.

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

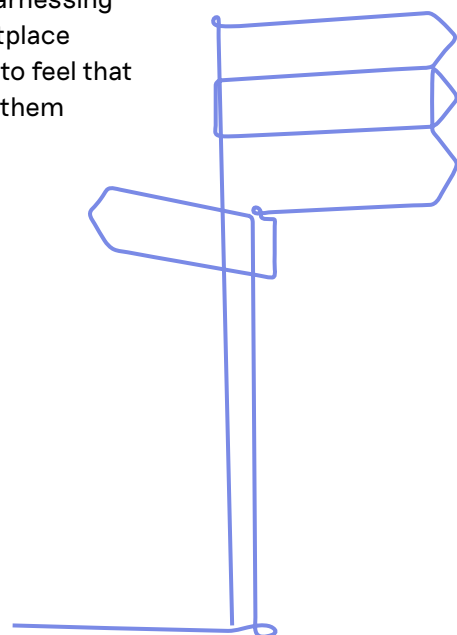
The number of anti-slavery campaigns with clear aims and objectives that are appropriately evaluated is strikingly low. Improvements in the realm of campaign evaluation and application of marketing principles are essential to continue improving campaign effectiveness and learning from previous experience.

## 12. Effective campaigns are always subject to meso- and macro-level factors

These factors commonly include the number and concentration of buyers along key stages of the supply chain, brands and retailers' reputational risks, opportunities for the building of coalitions, ways in which the voice of the consumer be "collectivised" and availability of key constituent groups that can play a central role in advocacy and support.

## 13. Effective campaigns are (almost) always part of a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach

This multi-stakeholder approach is complex yet also essential both in terms of collectivising the voice of the consumer and harnessing their power in affecting a range of institutional and marketplace outcomes; but also because consumers themselves need to feel that their power is used in such a way as opposed to expecting them to solely effect change.



## 6. Future research

Our study clearly highlights that the consumer can be a powerful stakeholder in eradicating modern slavery. Despite this, however, how to effectively harness consumer power is in many respects, less well understood. We, thus, identify five overarching recommendations for future consumer citizen research:

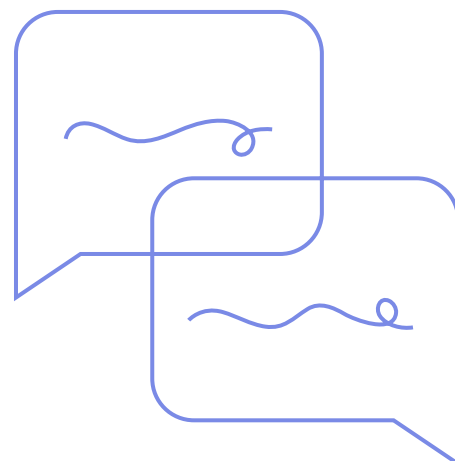
1. There is need for further research into modern slavery campaigns and message framing, with a view to identifying the most effective communication variables and dimensions. Although there are some early indications as to the appropriateness of collective- versus self- orientation, and the optimal extent of responsabilisation, message framing can and should be analysed on the basis of further dimensions. Our own earlier research, for instance, has highlighted that consumer responsibilities are consistently framed in civic versus market versus domestic terms both by consumers themselves and other campaign actors.<sup>63</sup> This to a certain extent overlaps with previous research on self- and other- orientation<sup>64</sup> but moves further to explore the main themes or logics that drive consumer mobilisation. Research could, for example, explore the extent to which each of these frames are effective across time and under different conditions.
2. Consumer mobilisation is currently challenging as there is no guidance for consumers concerning modern slavery across the multitude of products/services that they consume both directly and indirectly. It is vital to develop an infrastructure and content for consumer pathways to action in on/off line formats that are appropriate to the aims and context, as well as, proportionate to other stakeholder responsibilities. It is also important to explore whether different forms of consumer mobilisation (e.g. boycotting, buycotting, petitioning, civic initiatives) fluctuate among different segments and how they can be subject to different motivations and psychosocial influences. More generally, there is hardly any comparative research on pathways to action.
3. In identifying consumer pathways to action, it is also important to recognise that consumers can (and should) act both in their role as marketplace actors and decision-makers but also in their civic role as part of society. At times these roles may be intertwined, where shifts in consumption are also accompanied by forms of protest (e.g. the Fair Food programme). Indeed, this study reveals that consumer action can be used to pressure companies through shifts in demand for their products/services, as well as, through reputational concerns and broader political/civic campaigns that aim to challenge company behaviour and supply chain arrangements (e.g. End Uyghur Forced Labour and Boowho? campaigns). Understanding these multiple actions, their motivation and impacts across differing supply chains and institutional contexts is key if we are to fully harness the power of consumer citizens in effecting positive socio-economic change.

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63. Carrington, Chatzidakis, and Shaw, "Consuming Worker Exploitation? Accounts and Justifications for Consumer (In)Action to Modern Slavery."

64. E.g., Liobikiene and Juknys, "The Role of Values, Environmental Risk Perception, Awareness of Consequences, and Willingness to Assume Responsibility for Environmentally-Friendly Behaviour: The Lithuanian Case."

4. Current research suffers from a variety of methodological limitations that need to be overcome. Very few studies rely on actual measures or observations of consumer behaviour. To do so, we need more studies that rely on ethnographic observation or real-world experimentation across different dimensions. Future research should also take advantage of advanced analytics and machine learning techniques that have been successfully employed in other realms of consumer behaviour but not in relation to modern slavery.
5. A key challenge in the work to end modern slavery is how to successfully collectivise consumers' voices and power without responsabilising or disproportionately focusing on individual actions (e.g. boycotting or buycotting specific services and products). Beyond the need for research on the optimal levels of consumer responsabilisation across different domains (noted above) it is also important, from a campaigning point of view, to identify appropriate cases, appeals and pathways to action that channel rather than deplete consumer power and enthusiasm. Such challenges are all the more significant given that on the whole, there is lack of adequate and reliable campaign evaluation data.



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## 8.3. Appendix 3: Methodology: search terms, databases, qualifiers

| Search                        | Search terms  | Databases   | Citation cut-off | Journal qualifier |
|-------------------------------|---|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Modern Slavery (Study 1)      | <p>"modern slavery" OR "contemporary slavery" OR "labour exploitation" OR "sweatshop" OR "modern slavery" OR "forced labour" OR "bonded labour" OR "forced labor" OR "bonded labor" OR slavery OR "human trafficking" OR "sex* slav*" OR "sexual servitude" OR "domestic servitude" OR "forced marriage" OR "serfdom" OR "economic exploitation" OR "debt bondage" OR "domestic servitude" AND TOPIC: consum*</p> <p><i>Nb: above is the Web of Science search string, this was slightly adjusted for other databases</i></p> <p>Noting a number of papers published in the apparel field relating to socially responsible consumption, the following additional search was conducted:</p> <p>(apparel OR fashion OR footwear) AND TOPIC: (consum*) AND TOPIC: ("socially responsible")</p> | <p>-Web of Science</p> <p>-Proquest</p> <p>-Scopus</p> <p>-Google Scholar</p> | None             | None              |
| Ethical Consumption (Study 1) | <p>("consum* ethics" OR "ethical consum*" OR "green consum*" OR "pro-environmental consum*" OR "Consum* ethics" OR "fair trade" OR "ecologically conscious" OR "green purchas*" OR "environmental* aware*" OR "ecologically green" OR "pro-green" OR "environmental*-friendl*" OR "sustainable consumption" OR "green marketing" OR "environmental sustainability" OR "green perceptions" OR "green attitude" OR "environmentally-conscious" OR "ethical concern" OR "ethically-concerned" OR "Ethical* motiv*" OR "eco-label*" OR "pro-environment*") AND (attitud* OR behav*)</p>   | <p>-Web of Science</p> <p>-Proquest</p> <p>-Scopus</p> <p>-Google Scholar</p> | Yes, see below   | Yes, see below    |
| Campaigns (Study 2)           | <p>"modern slavery" OR "contemporary slavery" OR "labour exploitation" OR "sweatshop" OR "modern slavery" OR "forced labour" OR "bonded labour" OR "forced labor" OR "bonded labor" OR slavery OR "human trafficking" OR "sex* slav*" OR "sexual servitude" OR "domestic servitude" OR "forced marriage" OR "serfdom" OR "economic exploitation" OR "debt bondage" OR "domestic servitude" AND TOPIC: consum* AND TOPIC: campaign*</p> <p><i>Nb: above is the Web of Science search string, this was slightly adjusted for other databases</i></p>  | <p>-Web of Science</p> <p>-Proquest</p> <p>-Scopus</p> <p>-Google Scholar</p> | None             | None              |

Citation cut-off noted above:

**Publication year(s) and Web of Science citation cut-off**

- 2010: 100+
- 2011-2015: 80+
- 2015-2019: 60+
- 2020: 4+
- 2021: 0+

**Journal qualifier noted above:**

Top 10 SCImago ranked journals in the following fields:

- Business, Management and Accounting | Marketing
- Psychology
- Social Sciences | Communication
- Social Sciences | Sociology & Political Science

A range of additional journals were included based on their relevance of publishing papers on ethical consumption. The final list of qualifying journals includes the following:

Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Research, Marketing Science, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Supply Chain Management, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Academy of Management, Political Communication, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Communication, Big Data and Society, Applied Linguistics, Communication Methods and Measures, New Media and Society, Human Communication Research, Public Opinion Quarterly, Digital Journalism, Administrative Science Quarterly, American Journal of Political Science, American Sociological Review, American Political Science Review, International Organization, Leadership Quarterly, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Political Analysis Journal of Politics , Annual Review of Political Science, Journal of Cleaner Production, Sustainability, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, Journal of Business Ethics, Business Ethics Quarterly, Business Ethics European Review, Journal of Consumer Culture, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, Journal of Consumer Culture, Journal of Environmental Psychology, Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, Consumption Markets & Culture, Journal of Business Research, Sustainable Development, Antipode, Journal of Consumer Policy, Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, Personality and Social Psychology Review, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Social Issues and Policy Review, Nature Human Behaviour, Social Psychological and Personality Science, Organizational Psychology Review, European Journal of Personality , Political Psychology, Journal of Personality

# MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS | POLICY & EVIDENCE CENTRE

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